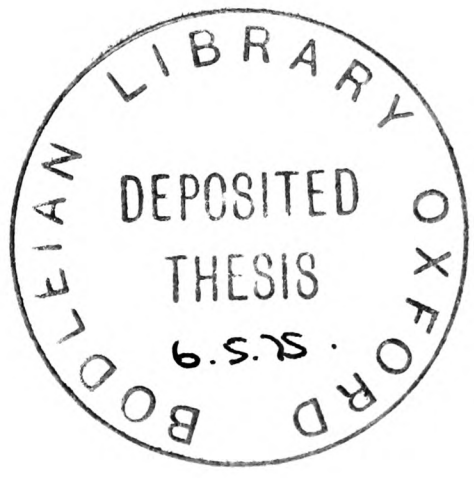
URBAN MARKETS AND RETAIL DISTRIBUTION 1730-1815 WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MACCLESFIELD, STOCKPORT AND CHESTER

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy submitted to the Faculty of Modern History in the University of Oxford

Michaelmas Term, 1974 [i.e 1975] HT

PREFACE

For such an important aspect of economic activity, retail distribution has been surprisingly neglected by scholars. Production has been treated in great depth and the factors making for increases in it analysed in detail, while the processes of economic growth in general have received considerable treatment in recent years. Consumption has similarly received some attention along with problems of income distribution and inequality. The institutions linking production and consumption have however received far less treatment. Yet without efficient instruments of distribution consumption is limited and the full productive potential of industrial plant is difficult to achieve. The operation of the market in satisfying the needs of consumers is not automatic and the mechanism of retail selling is worthy of serious consideration. This is as true for economic historians as for economists and Chapter 1 of this thesis explores some links between economic development and retailing.

Not all scholars have neglected retailing and some notable contributions to the study of the subject exist. Among economists the most important recent contributions have been from W.G. McClelland, particularly his Costs and Competition in Retailing, and the appearance of a volume, Economics of Retailing in the series of Penguin Modern Economics Readings in 1973 may herald increased interest in the subject. Much valuable work has been done by geographers and planners on the pattern of shopping centres and their internal structure and a useful summary of

this is provided by P. Scott, Geography and Retailing. Retailing after about 1820 has received some attention from economic historians. David Alexander's Retailing in England in the Industrial Revolution in particular is a pioneering study of the growth of fixed shop retailing and its organization, chiefly in the period 1820 to 1850. Overall developments in retail organization in the century after that have been studied by J.B. Jeffreys in Retail Trading in Britain 1850-1950 while Peter Mathias, Retailing Revolution studies the development of food retailing from about 1870 and particularly the emergence of multiple shops. Nineteenth-century fashion shops have been looked at by Alison Adburgham in Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914 and some of the histories of particular companies have value. Before 1800 there is very little. Dorothy Davis, A History of Shopping provides a general history from the angle of the consumer, making considerable use of literary evidence. T.S. Willan's, An Eighteenth-Century Shopkeeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen provides a detailed case study of a single small town shopkeeper, and references to shops are to be found in such studies of inland trade as R.B. Westerfield's Middlemen in English Business. There are occasional local surveys, but systematic studies of retailing are rare.

This thesis attempts to fill some of these gaps. It studies retailing in a particular area, and especially in three towns in the area, in the period from the stirrings of economic growth in the early eighteenth century to the eve of the development of railways in the early nineteenth century. It has proved possible to establish some basic data on shop numbers from about

1780 and to make some general estimates of the level of retail provision from about the same date. This, in its method, extends back by about 40 years the techniques used by Dr. Alexander in his study of the growth of shop numbers from the evidence of early trade directories, although the deficiencies of eighteenth century directories make the results very tentative. Much descriptive evidence on shops and markets has also been used to provide information on the types of goods sold, the customers served, the survival of craft skills and some of the general characteristics of shops and retailers. From all this it has become clear that shops were widespread and important from at least the beginning of the period studied and more especially from about 1780. Developments often associated with the nineteenth century such as the wide appearance of general shops in towns and of village shops in the countryside were taking place at least from the eighteenth century, and at similar dates a town like Chester had a range of highly sophisticated shops.

Little or nothing has been said about turnover, profits or many aspects of the economics of retailing and it is doubtful whether it will ever be possible to say much. The absence of any major body of business evidence produced by the retailers or of anything akin to a census of distribution was a major handicap to the writing of this thesis and the sort of questions asked by modern economists about modern retailing remain unanswerable. Instead of definitive statements about the economic organization of retailing and the manners in which retailers conducted their businesses, it has been possible only to make

inferences from a heterogeneous mass of miscellaneous data, frequently descriptive in nature. An overall picture has been built up, but it is one that is often impressionistic rather than detailed and precise. Undoubtedly it is likely that more case studies based on the surviving papers of retailers will in time be produced, but it will always be hazardous to generalize from these. Retail businesses were very small scale so that the typical eighteenth-century shop may be an elusive and slightly unreal concept.

The thesis takes a local approach, partly because retailing lends itself to being studied in a local economic context and partly for convenience. The study of a small region allows the development of arguments about retail provision for an area and the possibility of defining geographical patterns of service provision and examining the relationships between towns. Although shops may be small, they rarely operate without reference to their neighbours and frequently cluster in shopping centres, and it seemed wise to use an approach which would allow this aspect of retailing to be considered. Moreover much of the evidence relating to the nature of retailing is essentially local, and while there is always a danger that what was happening in one area will be untypical, three possibly untypical towns are probably better than one. Thus three Cheshire towns, all of a size which made them worthy of consideration as shopping centres, yet not too large to be unmanageable, were chosen. The county displays sharp contrasts between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural and the towns reflect this. Retailing could be examined both in the context of rapidly industrializing

areas and in an old city, much dependent for its prosperity on servicing the area around it and where retailing was a major economic activity.

I have been helped in the writing of this thesis by the staff of many record offices and libraries and I would particularly like to thank those of the Chester City Record Office, the Cheshire Record Office, the Public Record Office, Manchester Public Libraries Archives Department, Stockport Reference Library and Stockport Museum. Many individuals have allowed me access to records in their care or possession, and to these I am most grateful.

My tutors in Wadham College, Messrs. Pat Thompson and Cliff Davies, originally encouraged me to undertake historical research, and I have received help and encouragement from many scholars in the course of preparing and writing this thesis. Among these I would especially like to thank Dr. Joan Thirsk, Mr. Christopher Chalklin and Dr. John Patten. Above all I owe a very great debt to my supervisor, Professor Peter Mathias, who has given me much valuable advice, and has guided this thesis from conception to completion with great patience and good humour.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to examine the nature and extent of retail provision, chiefly in three Cheshire towns, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Traditionally major developments in retailing have been seen as taking place after 1850 with shops and shopping remaining traditionally organized, and probably of less importance than markets or even hawkers, during the early stages of industrialization in Britain. Such assumptions have rarely been based on very much evidence and it is hoped that by presenting some of the evidence relating to retailing immediately before and during the early industrial revolution a clearer picture will emerge. Thus it has been necessary to consider the extent to which shops existed in the eighteenth century, how widespread they were and how important they were in relation to non-shop retailing.

The context in which retailing is examined in the thesis is that of three contrasting towns. A local approach is taken because much of the evidence relating to retailing is essentially local and because by looking in depth at a small area retailing can be seen in relation to the general economic development of the area. Two of the towns, Macclesfield and Stockport, grew rapidly from the late eighteenth century as their textile industries developed and they thus provide good examples of towns where the demand for foodstuffs could have been in danger of outstripping the institutions for their supply. Chester by contrast grew much more slowly and had long been a commercial centre serving the needs of a wide area. Thus there was no

reason to look for a crisis of retail provision there, but rather to examine how far new retailing institutions were emerging to cater for growing demand for consumer goods and how far the organization of shops was changing. Furthermore the local approach made possible an examination of the regional pattern of retail provision. The pattern of market towns and their links with one another could be examined and an attempt made to describe the functional roles of the towns in the region. This involved making some tentative suggestions about the geography of shopping centres and trying to construct a hierarchy of service centres.

Although it was by no means possible to answer all the questions about retailing that could have been posed, and many questions relating to retailing economics in the eighteenth century will probably always remain unanswered, the study of markets and shops is of considerable importance. Distribution has too frequently been ignored when economic development and town growth have been under consideration, yet without adequate provision for the distribution of food and consumer goods, urban society can hardly be sustained. The classic period of the industrial revolution is a key period for the growth of towns and for the growth of home demand, and whatever the deficiencies of the data, increased information on these matters is of value. Only by examining distribution and the general growth of services can a fuller picture emerge of the great changes taking place in the economy and society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The thesis begins by suggesting some of the theoretical

linkages between industrial growth and the development of retailing and then suggesting the impact of different levels of demand and changes of levels of demand on the organization of retailing. The local background is then considered, both in terms of the network of trade links from the three towns chiefly examined and changes in these consequent on industrial developments in the towns, and in terms of local resources for food supply. Trading institutions such as fairs, and particularly the fairs at Chester, are examined in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 3 Cheshire agriculture, the urban demand for food, including questions of diet, and the mechanism linking supply and demand are considered. A brief survey of the role of middlemen, of private marketing and of the consequences for food supply of improved communications leads on to an examination of the market towns of Cheshire in their role as the traditional distribution points for local surpluses and for the exchange of rural and urban products. The pattern of market towns is considered in Chapter 4 with mention being made of the periodicity of markets, the shape and size of market areas and the extent to which prices imply that there was a relatively perfect market operating in the county. The history of the markets in Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester is examined in Chapter 5 and the extent to which markets were losing wholesale functions while retaining retail functions for the sale of perishable goods is considered. Also discussed is the ability of the markets to cope with rapidly growing demand particularly in years of scarcity, and the occasional market riots are described. Finally, before turning to shops, Chapter 6 attempts to suggest the importance of

itinerant trading both in the countryside and the towns in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The examination of the importance of fixed shops begins with a study of the county pattern of service centres and a discussion of the expected shape of shopping catchment areas and their size. Some suggestions are then made about the extent of retail provision in the county as a whole and particularly about the penetration of fixed shops into villages. It is further suggested that Chester had an overwhelmingly dominant position as a shopping centre with Stockport and Macclesfield next in importance in the county. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 turn to Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester for a more detailed examination of the shops in those towns. Firstly the numbers of shops are suggested, together with the chronology of growth in shop numbers, changes in the relative importance of different types of shop and the location pattern of shops. In Chapter 9 some of the general characteristics of shop retailing are analysed and the institutional context of urban and gild regulations in which shops, particularly in Chester, operated is described. The final section of the chapter looks at the risk of bankruptcy facing shopkeepers and by contrast the opportunities of making money from shops. Detailed examination of the different shop trades, including description of stocks held, of the nature of the business done and of the degree of integration or separation between producing and retailing is the subject of Chapter 10. Much of the information for this had to be based on very miscellaneous evidence, only occasionally confirmed by the business records of retailers, but an overall picture of shop retailing

nevertheless emerged.

The thesis demonstrates firstly the possibility of providing at least some quantitative information on shop numbers from the late eighteenth century, and to a very limited extent from the early eighteenth century. This makes possible comparison of shop provision between towns and over time and can demonstrate the specific role of certain towns as shopping centres in the eighteenth century as well as suggesting rapid growth in shop numbers from about 1780, and even more rapid growth after the first decade or two of the nineteenth century. Although the figures produced have to be treated with caution, they imply that at least initially shop provision may not have kept up with growing demand in the most rapidly growing towns. However, it is equally clear that shops were widespread in the eighteenth century and that general provisions shops were to be found in substantial numbers in towns before 1800. Secondly a pattern of service centres can be described, including not only market towns but also many villages in which shops were to be found. While market towns and their open markets remained of importance and indeed were probably expanding their facilities for the supply of perishable foods, the essential role of markets was complementary to that of shops and this complementarity was able to last well into the nineteenth century without hindering the development of fixed shop retailing. Although many of the major developments in retail organization almost certainly did take place in the period after that considered by this thesis, a final conclusion must be that many changes were foreshadowed by 1815. In Chester at least there were by then a substantial number of specialist town centre shops, where

commercial rather than manufacturing skills were the main attributes of the proprietor, where display and advertising were of considerable importance and perhaps even where the new ideas about ready money and fixed prices were beginning to be found. Both in terms of numbers and organization, the traditional chronology of shop development has almost certainly to be put back about fifty years in time, and probably much more than that with regard to the widespread existence of shops. It seems clear, at least from the evidence used for this thesis, that some innovations in retailing parallelled innovations in industry and that by 1815 retailing was already moving from a traditional to a modern structure.

ABBREVIATIONS

P.R.O.	Public Record Office
R.O.	Record Office
R.L.	Reference Library
M.P.L. Archives Dept.	Manchester Public Libraries Archives Department
Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc.	Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society
Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.	Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
Coll.	Collection
Inv.	Inventory

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CHAPTER 1

RETAILING IN AN INDUSTRIALIZING ECONOMY

Retailing and Industrialization

The essence of retailing is the sale of goods in small quantities to ultimate consumers, and thus inherent in retailing are the physical movement of goods and the arrangement of change of ownership. Seen simply in this way the origins of retailing can be looked for in the origins of organized society as household self-sufficiency broke down and local exchange became necessary. The development of retailing on a wider scale and the appearance of full-time intermediaries can be seen either as a consequence of the development of local surpluses allowing some elementary division of labour and the use of villages as local markets, or as resulting from exchange between alien populations with markets for the redistribution of local and regional surpluses slowly emerging on trade routes.[1] The need for local surpluses and the division of labour is, however, clear and is likely to have been an early development in most societies. Certainly medieval England was capable of supporting many hundred markets, and on the eve of industrialization even small settlements would be well integrated into the distributive system. One mark of modern retailing is the dropping by the retailer of functions other than those essential to the sale of goods to the consumer. Increasingly retailing

1. B.J.L. Berry, Geography of Market Centers and Retail Distribution (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967) pp. 108-9.

and producing have become separately located as the market has widened and recent trends, as in the manufacturer involving himself in packaging and the provision of information, have enhanced this.[1]

A simple model of the development of retailing in a small society was produced by Defoe in the early eighteenth century, and is instructive on contemporary attitudes about the role of retailing in the economy. Defoe postulated a situation of 50 farmers being granted 200 acres of land each rent free provided that each brought £200 worth of stock with him in order to create a new town, and of other persons being encouraged to build houses there by the promise of land and gardens rent free for 10 years. Immediately on the establishment of this community a butcher would appear and erect a shed until he could build a house and shop, and make his living killing and selling meat for the farmers. Since one butcher could not cope with supplying 50 families, several of them would be dependent on the nearest town until more butchers arrived to take advantage of the opportunities in the new settlement. The butchers would soon be followed by a baker who would set up an oven, while work would rapidly be provided for a smith or farrier, two wheelwrights, an ironmonger, one or two shoemakers, a turner, an earthen-ware seller, a glover, a ropemaker and three or four barbers to service the farming and domestic needs of the community. Three master carpenters would be required to

1. W.G. McClelland, Costs and Competition in Retailing (London, 1966) pp. 2-3. However, one can also see a counter-trend towards single companies controlling operations from manufacturing through to retailing due to backwards and forwards integration by both retailers and manufacturers.

build houses for the growing population and these would need to employ sawyers and bricklayers. Defoe now assumes that this rapidly growing town stands on a post road and thus posits the arrival of a victualler who will set up an ale-house, soon to be followed by others until there are a dozen public houses including some good inns. The next traders to arrive would be the shopkeepers proper, comprising a grocer, two or three chandlers who would be likely to establish their shops in the remoter parts of the town and buy goods for retail from the grocer, an apothecary, a mercer, a haberdasher of hats and a draper. At this point the town would probably acquire a market and one or two yearly fairs, and soon some specialist craftsmen and traders such as pewterers, coopers, brewers, attorneys and surgeons would begin to practise there. In conclusion Defoe says that, 'Wherever fifty Farmers were thus to settle, I insist, that at least 1,000 People must of course throng to them, and live about them'.[1]

Defoe's model assumes considerable surpluses being created by the original community of farmers, and thus the possibility of division of labour on a fairly wide scale. Both craftsmen and retailers are expected to appear and perform specialist functions, with those supplying the necessities of life and urgent farming needs coming first, but soon being followed by those providing decencies. What Defoe leaves out is factory-based industry, as of course one would expect from an early eighteenth-century writer reflecting the economic climate of his time. All the same this can serve to remind us that retailing,

1. Daniel Defoe, A Plan of the English Commerce (London, 1728) pp. 20-27.

and even fairly specialized retailing, can be more closely associated with those changes described as modernization than with industrialization proper. Of course the two are often closely related, but modernization - involving a wider acceptance of economic rationality in such matters as division of labour, increased mobility, and urbanization - can exist without being accompanied by industrialization. This may have been the case in parts of the eighteenth century Netherlands such as the Veluwe, where a money economy was normal even in small villages in which the existence of tailors, bakers and shopkeepers evidenced a breakdown of local and household self-sufficiency, but which was and which remained an agricultural area.[1] Nevertheless the extension of the tertiary sector, including retailing, has often been linked with economic growth in the form of industrial growth.[2] One word of warning can be sounded, however. There is a vast difference between trading carried on by specialist intermediaries, and the sort of part-time trading by virtually the entire population characteristic of certain underdeveloped economies. This latter sort of tertiary activity - caused by lack of other opportunities and the absence of good communications and stable markets - is clearly not a mark of an advanced or even an advancing economy.[3] In its early stages at least industrialization is more often marked by growth caused by intrasectoral advances than by

1. E.A. Wrigley, 'The Process of Modernization and the Industrial Revolution in England', Journal of Interdisciplinary History iii (1972) esp. pp. 229-37, 251.
2. See e.g. R.M. Hartwell, The Industrial Revolution and Economic Growth (London, 1971) cap. 10, 'The Neglected Variable: The Service Sector'.
3. P.T. Bauer & B.S. Yamey, 'Economic Progress and Occupational Distribution', Economic Journal lxi (1951) pp. 741-55.

inter-sectoral shifts. It is the development of retailing as a specific function, carried out from a fixed location, rather than an increase in the number of retailers, that we can look for as a mark of a modern and industrial society.

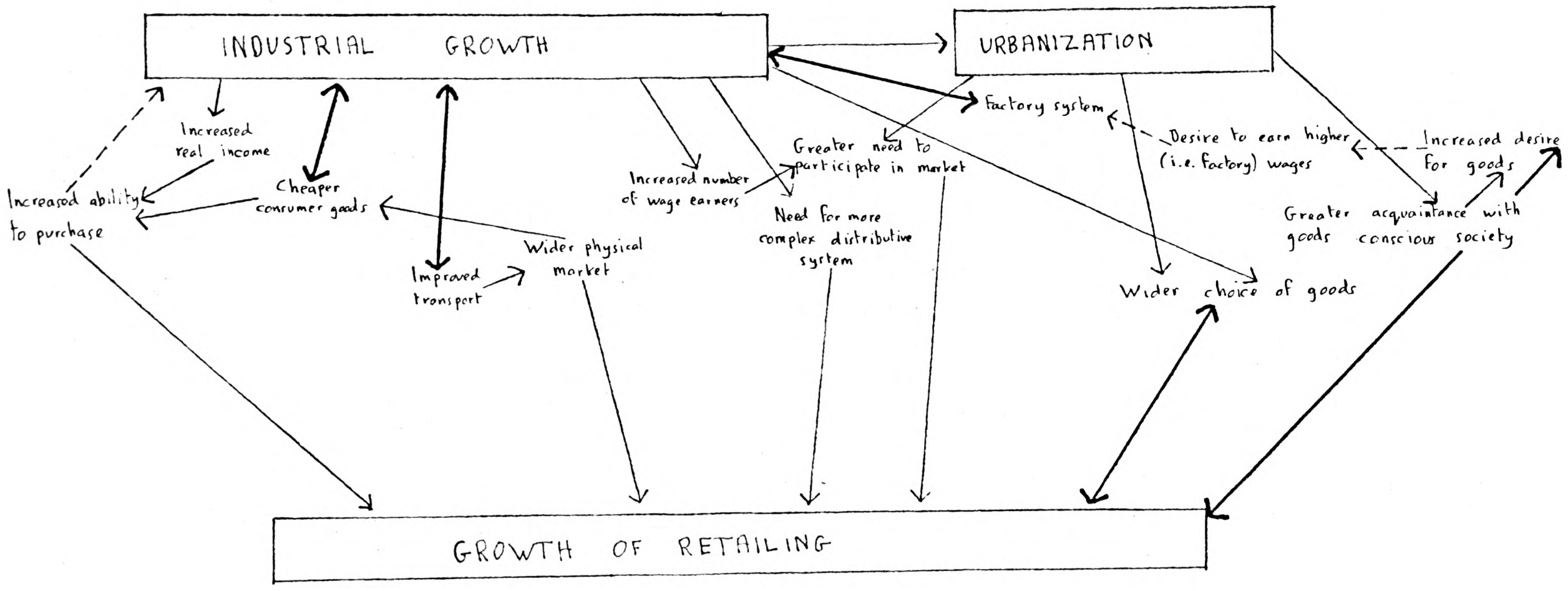
The model sketched out in Figure 1:1 suggests some possible links between industrial growth and the growth of retailing in the British situation. The development of large-scale industry had consequences which increased the need, the ability and the desirability of participation in the retail market by an increasing section of society. The increase in the number of wage earners consequent on growth of factory production meant that a large class was dependent, to a much greater extent than previously, on the market for the supply of necessities.[1] As production became increasingly concentrated in large urban areas, the need for intermediaries to channel the produce of the countryside to the urban workers became more acute, while a possible increase in the number of wage earners in agriculture meant that the rural population was increasingly involved in shopping. At the same time, the massive expansion of production beginning in the last years of the eighteenth century meant that well organized distribution capable of channelling mass-produced goods from centres of production to dispersed areas of consumption was increasingly needed.

As well as increasing the need for a modern distributive system in which shopping was a regular and normal activity, the industrialization process, in the long run at least, increased

1. Specialization and localization of industry are of course possible in the pre-factory era and necessitate market facilities and retailers. Factory development reinforces rather than initiates this process.

Figure 1:1

Retailing and Industrialization



the ability of the mass of the population to purchase goods and thereby increased the need for shops. Without entering into the details of the standard of living controversy, it seems reasonably clear that many sectors of the population were able to enjoy an increased real income from quite early in the industrial revolution, even if other sections were depressed and may have felt qualitative loss. Such an increase in real income meant an increased ability to purchase and thus to be involved in the world of shops. For the size of the retailing sector is obviously related to the size of demand which is itself a function not merely of population but of the real disposable income of that population. This the industrial revolution probably increased in the short term, and certainly increased enormously in the long term. Moreover even without an increase in income per capita, improvements in the efficiency of retailing resulting in lower costs and therefore lower prices of goods can increase individual purchasing power and lead to a greater use of shops. Improvements in transport, which were both consequence and part cause of industrialization, also helped widen the market. This was true in physical terms in that people had more easy access to shops and could buy further afield and more regularly, and in terms of reduced transport costs for both retailer and customer.

Several of these changes probably had an effect on attitudes. The frequent complaints by eighteenth-century writers about the poor indulging in luxuries imply that England was a goods conscious society before the beginnings of rapid industrialization. Industrial growth would be likely to

strengthen this desire for material possessions as choice was widened and the beginnings of production for a mass market brought more goods within reach of the middle classes and occasionally some of the lower classes. Cotton is the most obvious product of this sort, but pottery and glassware may have become similarly accessible and desirable and this has been reflected in the emergence of shops specializing in these articles in many towns. In any case, increased acquaintance with towns, even though they were often the hiding places of the poorest of the poor, would mean a greater acquaintance with a goods conscious society, and with attitudes of apeing ones better. All these are highly conducive to the growth of shops and to changed attitudes to shopping in which it can become pleasurable and an accepted part of life. An increased desire for possessions and an increased ability to have them could lead to attitudes conducive to industrial growth and thus effect a flow back from retailing to industrialization. For if shops satify needs, they can also create further desires and thus increase the incentive to earn the money necessary to satisfy those desires. This would normally mean earning factory wages and thus accepting that factory discipline which was an important part of the change in attitudes required by industrialization. Industrial growth was dependent on a market, and while the essential functions of retailing were to help provide the institutions to supply that market and provide for the support of the factory

masses created by industrialization, an efficient and attractive distributive system could itself foster demand and thus stimulate further growth. As in any discussion of the causes and consequences of industrial growth the threads become crossed and tangled, cause becomes consequence and a simple model appears increasingly inadequate.[1]

The Structure of Retailing

The above discussion has concentrated on general links between economic growth and the development of retailing, but it is also possible to suggest some more specific ties between the nature of the economy and the forms that retailing is likely to take. The variables to be considered here are of course demand, which was at the heart of the previous section, but also the supply of capital and the relative scarcities of capital and labour. The concepts of 'range' and 'threshold' can perhaps be of value in understanding the relationship between demand and retail structure. Both are usually applied to measure the prospects for the supply of a good from a particular centre; 'threshold' being the minimum amount of purchasing power necessary to support the supply of a good from a centre and 'range' the farthest distance that people are willing to travel

1. For further discussions of some of the above points see David Alexander, Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution (London, 1970) cap. 1; D.E.C. Eversley, 'The Home Market and Economic Growth in England, 1750-80' in Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution, ed. E.L. Jones and G.E. Mingay (London, 1967); E.W. Gilboy, 'Demand as a factor in the Industrial Revolution' in The Causes of the Industrial Revolution, ed. R.M. Hartwell (London, 1967); and A.H. John, 'Aspects of English Economic Growth in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', Economica xxviii (1961) 176-190.

to buy a good offered at a place.[1] Thus the appearance of a permanent retail outlet in an economic landscape is dependent upon the size of the population accessible to it, the size and distribution of the real disposable income per capita of that population and the demand patterns of the population. The particular level of purchasing power necessary will vary from good to good, but there will be a certain minimum in each place.

The relationship between varying levels of demand for goods and the varying distances that people are willing to travel to satisfy those demands leads to a hierarchy of centres providing retail outlets. Clearly convenience goods, bought frequently, will be purchased in local centres while major central places will be able to supply a wider variety of goods to customers travelling from a wide area. A simple law of retail gravitation will define the market boundary of a major centre in competition with another major centre in terms of the relative size of the centres and the distance between them.[2] Given identical customers, distributed at a uniform density over an unbounded plane it is possible to describe with some precision the expected shape of market areas. The central place will tend to locate at the centre of minimum aggregate travel for consumers and thus the simplest pattern on such a plane will be one of circular market areas. If, however, there are to be no unsatisfied customers and at the same time no overlapping of market areas, the pattern will have to be a

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1. Peter Scott, Geography and Retailing (London, 1970) pp. 13-14.
2. B.J.L. Berry, op.cit., p. 40. Reilly's law states that the trade area boundary between two towns, A and B, is, in miles from B, equal to:

$$\frac{\text{Miles between A and B}}{1 + \sqrt{\frac{\text{Size of A}}{\text{Size of B}}}}$$

hexagon and this is what both Losch and Christaller, the pioneers of central place studies, found working independently in different manners.[1]

Varying levels of demand, as suggested above, mean that there will be more than one set of hexagons. Centres of the highest order with a large range of functions form, in Christaller's theory, the basic service structure and superimposed on these according to a regular pattern and in a theoretically defined ratio will be centres of a lower order or of several lower orders. Shopping centres of each higher order provide all the goods and services provided by lower order centres together with a discrete group of higher order functions. Thus one may expect to have in a given region a hierarchy of service centres with each centre of a higher order providing additional services, and a regular pattern of market areas both between centres of the same order and within the market areas of higher order centres with boundaries defined according to the attractiveness of the centre and the time taken to reach it. The mapping of a modern landscape of service centres will demonstrate the truth of much of this theorizing, although a clustering of population in industrial urban areas distorts the regular hexagons of the models. Moreover consumers will not always behave rationally and use their nearest service centre or the hierarchy at all its levels, though they will normally move towards a dominant centre and not bypass a centre to reach another of comparable facility. Thus the market area of surburban shops and shopping centres tends to be elliptical

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1. Ibid. cap. 3.

with the longer axis trending away from the city core.[1] Similarly the market behaviour of the firm can be critically important and exercise a distorting effect on models assuming equal rationality and often, implicitly, the absence of management. Pricing policies, product mix and the ability of firms to enjoy economies of scale can affect the details of the pattern as it relates to individual businesses.[2]

Returning to the nature of the retail outlet, it can be seen that this will be affected by the available supply of capital, since some forms of retail outlet require considerably higher inputs of capital than others, and tend where possible to substitute capital for labour. A clear contrast here is between the large, town centre fixed shop representing a substantial investment and having high overheads, and the itinerant street seller whose capital consists entirely in his, probably small, stock. The dominant form of retailing in a given society will depend, at least in part, on the availability of capital and labour, and a seemingly excessive use of labour may in fact represent an efficient use of resources rather than mere backwardness.

Although fixed shop retailing is the normal form in modern industrial society, it is only one possible form and may be contrasted not only with a totally itinerant system in which the goods are taken to the consumer, but also with a market system where sales are concentrated in both timing and location to draw maximum benefit from a limited demand. Looked at in

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1. P. Scott, op.cit., pp. 60-61.
2. Ibid., pp. 15-16. Both Scott and Berry, op.cit., provide a valuable introduction to geographical considerations in retailing.

terms of the minimum purchasing power required to support a retail outlet, many of these forms of retailing can be seen as solutions to the problems of insufficient demand. Since demand is restricted not only by low per capita income but also by dispersal of populations or problems of transport, the market available to any retailer can be increased by his moving away from a central place into the countryside. Itinerant retailing of this form was common in eighteenth-century England[1] and could take the form of the hawker actually calling on his customers or meeting them at periodic fairs. Local fairs could provide a focal point for exchange, and by encouraging the saving up of demand until a particular day or two in the year ensure a reasonably high level of demand on those days.[2] Not only could the itinerants tap most of a year's demand for durable goods from a particular place in one or two days, but they were able to use the network of fairs to tap the demand of a very wide region. Itinerant retailing was well suited to a low demand economy, but it was not capable of great expansion, nor was it conducive to the encouragement of shopping habits. It was low in cost and therefore consumed little capital but in return the hawker could probably offer only a limited choice of goods, was not in a position to make shopping interesting, and, because of the probably irregular nature of his visits if he called house to house, would not stimulate regular shopping.

Increased concentration of people in towns and improvements in transport reduced the need for country hawkers. There were

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1. D. Alexander, op.cit., cap. 3.
2. See 2 below for some discussion of the nature of commodity fairs and their role in inland wholesale trade. (pp. 33-4)

however other itinerants whose main importance in industrializing England was that they could operate with very low costs.[1] These were the street traders of the growing towns who were often drawn from otherwise unemployed classes and thus as well as having low fixed costs had low opportunity costs and were content with small profits. They may have appealed to urban workers because they seemed less intimidating than fixed shops, and their goods were often likely to be cheaper if lower in quality. However, they were often willing to break bulk into the sort of small quantity that a shopkeeper could not be bothered with, but which was the only sort of quantity that many of the poor were able to afford. It is not unreasonable to argue that this sort of retailing met a real need and represented an efficient use of resources during one stage of industrialization and urbanization.[2]

Market retailing is similarly suited to a low demand economy. The vendors will often include some itinerants taking advantage of the weekly coming together of people, but the dominant groups are likely to be farmers disposing of surpluses and local traders benefiting from an influx of people into their town. Markets to some extent act to widen the geographical trading area of retailers by encouraging the saving up of demand from an area wider than that of the town where they are held and its immediate environs until a particular day of each week. Being held weekly they are particularly suited to the selling of provisions

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1. While little capital was certainly required to enter itinerant retailing, it should be stressed that productivity must have been extremely low and unit costs correspondingly high. This does not detract from the overall importance of the hawker and street trader in 18th and 19th century England.
2. See D. Alexander, op.cit., caps. 1, 3 & 7.

and other goods that are needed regularly in small quantities. Once demand has reached an economic level, these tend to be the first sort of goods to make their appearance in fixed shops. But markets not only get round the problem of low demand by extending market areas; they also provide an ideal focus for part-time retailing. When it is necessary to sell goods, but demand is not likely to support a full-time retailer in a particular locality, the easiest solution is for the producer to deal directly with the consumer. Moreover in the case of farm goods which tend to dominate markets, there is usually sufficient flexibility in the use of farm labour for the selling costs to be minimal. Fixed capital costs in markets are in any case low and thus this form of retailing places no strains on the supply of capital but rather uses probably underemployed labour. A system of periodic markets ensures the supply of necessities to the consumer on a regular basis, allows the farmer to economize on the time he spends on marketing and allows the itinerant trader to service several markets. This structure may long survive for the disposal of such surpluses as eggs, vegetables and some dairy products and can often provide an ideal outlet for part-time traders in small miscellaneous goods. However, the expansion of urban demand for provisions tends to lead to a drift towards fixed shops, or, because they can often supply goods cheaply, daily markets serviced by full-time retailers.[1]

The value of markets and itinerants for the cheap disposal of goods in a low demand economy is clear. Nevertheless the man selling from a fixed place in a town was a very early

1. Ibid. cap. 2; B.J.L. Berry, op.cit. cap. 5; P. Scott. op.cit., cap. 8.

development in England, and he must therefore have had sufficient capital to pay rents and perhaps hold stocks, and have been able to attract sufficient custom to make a living. In many cases though the shopkeeper would not depend entirely on the profit made just from selling, since he would also be the manufacturer of the good. The producer-retailer, particularly in the clothing and to some extent the household goods trades, was very common until recently, and because of his high unit profit was clearly suited to a society in which demand was low. The purchasing power necessary to support the shoemaker who both made and sold shoes, or the cabinet maker who made and sold furniture, would be lower than that required to support both a craftsman and a retailer. Producer-retailers are therefore among the first traders to appear in towns, alongside such essential suppliers as the baker and the butcher, who will almost certainly kill animals and may be involved in fattening. The craftsman-retailer is producing non-standardized goods, often for specific customers according to order, and is therefore frequently serving a known and fairly fixed market. This means that he need not be too concerned about advertising his presence, ensuring a good location within the town or arranging a large and expensive display. Thus as well as needing a smaller level of demand than the pure retailer, his costs will often be lower and by combining producing and selling according to need he can make the best use of his capital inputs.

The Defoe model described above shows how Defoe saw the arrival of producer-retailers as prior in time to the arrival

of pure retailers. These latter did arrive in time however and took the form of a grocer, some other food dealers and three dealers in cloth and clothing. Full-time fixed shop retailing implies the existence of a sufficient demand for a good, within a reasonable distance of the shop, to provide a living for the shopkeeper. There is therefore a need for a local population of some size and with a regular income that they can and will spend regularly on goods. This condition is quite easily satisfied in the case of many foodstuffs, but the resultant retailing structure is often based on the market. The shop also requires higher inputs of capital and thus demands entrepreneurs with that capital available, and a population willing to pay higher prices for extra services. In the case of rarely purchased luxury goods, the prospects for the shopkeeper can also be dependent on the state of local transport since he can expect to draw custom from some distance, provided that conditions of access make this possible. Improved transport also increases the shopkeeper's access to goods, and in certain cases, such as perishable foods, may enable him to provide new ranges. Fixed shops will flourish in a prosperous, goods conscious atmosphere, and can be expected to cluster in towns well served by transport networks. Since the shopkeeper is dependent only on selling for his living, he needs a greater turnover than the producer-retailers or higher unit profits, and the latter will of course make him vulnerable to competition from cheaper modes of selling.

In any case fixed shop retailing is not a cheap way of selling. Rents will normally be high for town-centre sites -

this seems to have become increasingly true in the nineteenth century in England - there is a need to hold substantial stocks and there is frequently a need to compete in terms of display, and facilities and services offered. Some of these factors can affect the location pattern of shops. Within a centre, assuming free competition for sites, a site will tend to be occupied by the trader able to pay the highest rent for it and therefore by the trader for whom a specific location confers the maximum advantage.[1] Under modern shopping conditions, location seems to be most important for variety stores, then women's clothing shops, then jewellers, then furniture stores and then men's clothing shops, with certain categories of shops, especially shoe-dealers, being able to draw great benefit from corner sites. Shops for which location is especially important will have a steeper rent gradient than those for which it is not i.e. the rent the shopkeeper can afford will fall much more rapidly the farther away the shop is located from an ideal site. Sites are of course more important for shops depending heavily on display and window shopping, where potential buyers want to make comparisons, than for those which buyers will seek out even in back streets because they serve a highly specialist need.[2] Finally there are cases of special locations outside the above pattern. Certain shops can best locate near complementary functions e.g. suppliers, while others benefit from clustering when it is valuable to attract buyers to a type of shop and then let them compare between several grouped together - antique shops often behave in this way.[3]

1. P. Scott, op.cit., pp. 19-21.
2. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
3. Ibid., pp. 26-28.

In the historical context such 'dirty' trades as butchers, tallow chandlers and others were often forced to group together, probably on the edge of the central area of the town.

The supposed unnecessary costs incurred by shopkeepers and passed on to consumers in terms of higher prices were a frequent complaint in the eighteenth century, but in many of the larger towns there seems to have been no shortage of entrepreneurs ready to risk their capital in opening shops. It was shop retailing of this sort that allowed the development of the traditional pattern of town centre shops and gave scope for innovation in retailing. Such shops would offer attractive displays of goods, hold a wide range of stock and be ready to provide an individual service for valued customers including the execution of special orders and the provision of substantial and long term credit. The origins of a modern consumer society can perhaps be found in the attitudes encouraged by retailing of this sort. At the same time the internal structure of retailing could respond to the beginnings of a new mass market within the cities by an increase in competition, the use of price tickets, the introduction of special sales and purchasing in bulk.[1] Not all retailing was of this sort, for the appearance of urban working class areas gave rise to a need for general shops, often operating at low cost in the middle of housing areas - in the same way Defoe expected two or three chandlers to set up shop in the remoter parts of his proposed town. With these shops it was the size rather than the prosperity of the local population that produced a need and their nature

1. D. Alexander, op.cit., cap. 7. On developments in retailing after 1850 see J.B. Jeffreys, Retail Trading in Britain 1850-1950 (Cambridge, 1954), and P. Mathias, Retailing Revolution (London, 1967).

would be determined by this.

The general consideration of the role and structure of retailing provided by this chapter will form a general framework within which retail trade, particularly in three Cheshire towns, can be examined. The background in terms of the trades and industries of the county and the towns and the supply of food to the towns will first be sketched and then the retail facilities looked at. This will involve a consideration of markets, of itinerants and especially of fixed shops. As well as examining the role of the towns as service centres, some attempt will be made to probe changes in the structure of retailing involving shifts from markets to shops and particularly the emergence of shops where manufacturing and processing functions were being increasingly abandoned.

CHAPTER 2

SOME ASPECTS OF CHESHIRE'S ROLE IN NATIONAL TRADE

'People make Trade, Trade builds Towns and Cities, and produces every Thing that is good and great in a Nation.'[1] Allowing for a typically Defoeian exaggeration and enthusiasm for commerce, this statement probably reflects the thinking of many eighteenth-century men involved in the world of trade. It was trade, both external and internal, which seemed to be one of the keys to prosperity in the early eighteenth century, and an economic survey of England was likely to make great play of trade networks. A main theme of Defoe's 'Tour' is that:

> 'It will be seen how this whole kingdom, as well the people, as the land, and even the sea, in every part of it, are employ'd to furnish something, and I may add, the best of every thing, to supply the city of London with provisions; I mean by provisions, corn, flesh, fish, butter, cheese, salt, fewel, timber, &c. and cloths also; with everything necessary for building and furniture for their own use, or for trades.' 2

The 'Tour' goes on to describe the particular contributions of many towns and counties in England to satisfying the seemingly ravenous appetite of London, while in 'The Complete English Tradesman' Defoe discusses more particularly the entrepot functions of London. In both clothing a man and furnishing a house, he lists the origin of individual items which will pass through London on their way from place of

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1. Daniel Defoe, A Plan of the English Commerce, p. 27.
2. Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman edn., London, 1962) i, 12.

manufacture to the big town wholesaler and then to the small town or village retailer.[1] Clearly there is truth in all this. It is none the less, as regards the provinces, the view of a Londoner concerned to fit places he is not necessarily well acquainted with into a national pattern and thus he stresses those aspects such as Macclesfield buttons or Cheshire cheese which bring the place in question into the national focus. Beginning from the other end, it will be instructive to see how certain Cheshire towns did indeed play a specific role in the supply of goods to the national market, but in doing so it will be useful to bear in mind the impact or lack of it that these long distance trade links had on the local economy.

Many more goods were brought into or sent out of Cheshire than it would be possible to deal with here, ranging from regular trade in bulk commodities to an occasional barrel of oysters for a landed family.[2] Much of the trade in minerals was essentially local, whether it was the supply of Chester with coal from Hawarden, Macclesfield with coal from Pott Shrigley, Stockport with coal from Poynton and Worth or any of the east Cheshire towns with stone from the Peak District. The Macclesfield copper industry which existed from the 1750's to about 1801 was originally based on local raw materials, but ore was early brought from Anglesey and the Lake District using sea routes and the Mersey and Weaver navigations.[3]

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1. Daniel Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman, 2 vols. (2nd edn., London, 1727) i, 328-334.
2. R.B. Westerfield, Middlemen in English Business particularly between 1660-1760 (Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences xix, 1915) remains the best general study of inland trade in the period despite its rather forced attempt at undue categorization of middlemen.
3. On Macclesfield copper see W.H. Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-81)', Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc. lxii (1950-1) 133-56, lxiii (1952-3) 52-86.

The Weaver navigation was also of great importance for the development of the Cheshire salt industry, especially in the Northwich area, and during the eighteenth century Liverpool became the chief port handling Cheshire salt.[1] Textiles were of some importance in the county and there was trade in some cloth accessory products from at least the seventeenth century.

These textile accessory trades - buttons, thread, ribbons, hosiety, hats and other items - were of considerable importance and probably quite widespread in England. Although they must have been major providers of employment and provide a vital link between the cloth industry and the consumer market they have received very little attention from the historian.[2] However such trades were as much representative of early industry as basic cloth. While they were widespread in general, many of the particular trades were highly localized and had developed a high degree of specialization by the eighteenth century. Evidence of localization can be found in Defoe's references to these trades when he describes where various items of clothing originate, mentioning stockings of Westmorland yarn, hats of Leicester felt, buttons from Macclesfield or Birmingham, garters from Manchester, linen shirts from Lancashire or Scotland, gloves from Somerset and shoes from Northampton.[3] Macclesfield and Stockport shared in certain

1. On salt see W.H. Chaloner, 'Salt in Cheshire 1600-1870', Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc. lxxi (1961) 58-74 and T.C. Barker, 'Lancashire Coal, Cheshire Salt and the Rise of Liverpool', Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. ciii (1951) 83-101.
2. Though see S.D. Chapman, 'The Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry, 1600-1750', Textile History iii (1972) 7-50, and J. Thirsk, 'The Fantastical Folly of Fashion' in Textile History and Economic History, Eds. N.B. Harte & K.G. Ponting, (Manchester, 1973) on stockings.
3. Defoe, Complete English Tradesman i, 330.

of these industries and developed trade links on which the later textile industries could build.

Industry and Trade in Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester

The Macclesfield button industry appears to have originated in the late sixteenth century and by 1700 it was both a staple trade of the town and the town's main claim to fame in England. Much of the manufacturing seems to have been done by outworkers in the countryside around the town, largely a rough grazing area of the sort especially conducive to domestic industry,[1] while Macclesfield merchants organized the distribution of raw materials and the sale of the finished article. Such merchants were operating on a substantial scale by the eighteenth century and were selling buttons over wide areas of northern England. Richard Worthington, one such chapman, had £591 7s 6d owing to him at his death in 1729 and his other assets included a stock of buttons, silk and mohair in his warehouse valued at £227 11s 1½d and similar goods valued at £46 12s 10d in his workpeople's hands.[2] The raw materials for the industry seem frequently to have come from London, and in about 1758 one Samuel Wood, in dispute with the Corporation of Macclesfield over fees due from non-freemen for the right to trade, described himself as a factor for some London mohair merchants. He had kept a warehouse in Macclesfield for some years and sold mohair by wholesale and retail.[3]

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1. Cf. Joan Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside' in Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, Ed. F.J. Fisher (Cambridge, 1961).
2. Cheshire R.O. Inventory of Richard Worthington 1729 (WS Series).
3. Chester City R.O. Earwaker Coll., Macclesfield Papers (CR 63/2/341).

The industry particularly associated with industrial growth in Macclesfield however is silk and there seem to have been some links between the button and silk industries. Entrepreneurs like Charles Roe and John Brocklehurst made a personal transition from buttons to silk and the trade contacts developed in the earlier trade may have been valuable in the later, while the existence of a pool of labour in the town and its neighbourhood used to working in silk thread was probably of value in the development of silk throwing. Charles Roe appears to have erected the first mill for silk throwing by water power in the town in 1743[1] and by 1761 the seven most important Macclesfield silk manufacturers employed almost 2,500 people and a further 1,000 were said to be employed by 12 lesser manufacturers.[2] Silk weaving was introduced by Leigh and Voce in 1790[3] and by that date a firm like Brocklehurst, Acton and Street had assets of over £9,000 and was selling silk throughout Great Britain.[4] There were reckoned to be 1,300 or 1,400 silk weavers in Macclesfield in 1818 including out-workers and a total of 4,000 to 5,000 persons employed in all aspects of the industry, while one of the leading manufacturers, John Ryle, employed about 100 looms of which 30 were in his factory and up to 700 persons of whom about half were in his factory.[5]

In Stockport weaving, button making and hatting all seem

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1. W.H. Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-81)', loc. cit. 133-38.
2. Commons Journals xxx, 216-19.
3. C.S. Davies (Ed.), A History of Macclesfield (Manchester, 1961), p. 128.
4. M. Crozier, An Old Silk Family 1745-1945 (Aberdeen, 1947) pp. 19-21.
5. Second Report of Minutes of Evidence....relating to Ribbon Weavers, Parl. Papers 1818 ix (211 & 278) pp. 66, 67, 110.

to have existed at least from the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century hatting was to develop into a major trade. The earliest hat manufacturer of whom there is record in the town was Anthony Carrington (1679-1762) who was making hats by 1710[1] and during the century links with the London hat industry developed. Between the 1770's and 1790's the firm of Thomas Davies and Co. of London had a Stockport branch at which hats were made up, often for dispatch to London. The business appears to have been quite large, for the initial capital of the firm in 1773 was £12,050 and in 1785 a new partnership was to put up a capital of £19,000. Information about the business chiefly consists of copies of letters from London to Stockport giving details of orders received from customers and of raw materials sent to Stockport. The Stockport end of the concern seems to have made considerable use of outworkers and letters from Stockport written in 1791 make several references to labour troubles. By that date hats were being sold direct from Stockport, to a value of £1,290 19s 9d in September and October 1791, mostly to Scotland.[2] Christys of London made similar use of a Stockport hatter, Thomas Worsley, from 1797 onwards. Worsley supplied hat bodies, ruffed or finished hats, dyed them, stiffened them and dispatched them to London in accordance with orders received from Christys and by 1798 he was making hats for no-one except Christy.[3] Raw materials such as wool and hair were sent from London and

1. William Astle (Ed.), History of Stockport (Stockport, 1922) pp. 106-7.
2. P.R.O. Chancery Masters Exhibits, French v. Davies, Letter Books, Deeds and Papers of Thomas Davies & Co. (C 107/104).
3. Astle, op.cit., pp. 106-7.

in 1802 Worsley was complaining of labour problems and of the need to raise the prices of hats.[1] However, his sales to Christy were growing each year, increasing from hats valued at £1,137 13s 1d in 1797 to hats valued at £3,859 15s 0d in 1802.[2]

The development of the textile industries in Stockport seems to have owed nothing to the hat industry and indeed preceded the major growth of hatting. Silk mills were established in Stockport in 1732[3] and in the 1760's London merchants took an interest in the Carrs Mills, and one of these merchants Richard Blackburn, was to supply the mill with raw China and Italian silk from London.[4] This venture soon ran into trouble and it was to be cotton, more suitable for production for a mass market, that was to be dominant in Stockport's industrial revolution.[5] The number of silk manufacturers in the town remained constant between the 1780's and 1810's at around ten while the number of cotton manufacturers had reached 100 by 1815.[6] The London market was not unimportant for the development of the provincial cotton industry and Samuel Oldknow relied heavily on his connection with S. and W. Salte for information about fashions and the changes in consumer demand.[7] Stockport was of course primarily a manufacturing centre, but some of its manufacturers had wide trade links,

1. Stockport R.L. Christy Mss, Worsley Letters 1801-02 (File 3W - 1801/2 (X3)).
2. Ibid., Worsleys Accounts 1797-99, 1800-03 (X4 & X5).
3. G. Unwin, Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights (2nd ed., Manchester, 1968) pp. 23-4.
4. P.R.O., Court of Bankruptcy, Order Books vol. 67 (B 1/67 pp. 182-5).
5. See Unwin, op.cit., for the best account of the industrial revolution at Stockport.
6. The Commercial Directory for 1814-15 (Manchester, n.d.).
7. Unwin, op.cit., pp. 55-68.

and by 1813 William Sykes, a bleacher, was selling cloth to London, the Midlands, Yorkshire and America to the value of over £20,000 a year.[1]

Chester's manufactures of gloves, tobacco, snuff and tobacco pipes were of little importance and seem to have been declining in the early nineteenth century,[2] but the city retained some importance as a port. Although complaints about the state of the Dee were almost continuous at least from the fifteenth century, there was no absolute decline in trade in the eighteenth century. Chester's share in national trade was falling, but apart from linen,[3] her import and export trade had never been of very great significance, and while foreign trade may have declined somewhat during the century coastal trade probably increased.[4] The cheese trade was of some importance and shipments to London during the period 1721 to 1774 were normally between 1,000 and 1,400 tons a year.[5] Most cheese shipped from Chester went to London, but there were some shipments to other areas as in 1751 when 12 tons went to Liverpool, 6 tons to Aberdovey, 60 tons to Rotterdam and 40 tons to Hamburg, or in 1761 when 60 tons were sent to Plymouth.[6] The cheese trade persisted into the nineteenth century but

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1. Stockport R.L., Sykes Mss., Banking Ledger 1813-24 (D 171/17/2).
2. J. Hemingway, History of the City of Chester 2 vols. (Chester, 1831) ii. 332-3.
3. See below on fairs for a discussion of the linen trade, pp. 42-9
4. Robert Craig, 'Some Aspects of the Trade and Shipping of the River Dee in the 18th Century', Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. cxiv (1962) 99-128 is a good survey of Chester's trade.
5. C. Armour, 'The Trade of Chester and the State of the Dee Navigation 1600-1800', (London University Ph.D. Thesis 1956) p. 291. See table 2:1.
6. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions, Navigation, River Dee Register of Vessels entering and leaving the Port of Chester, 1740-69 (QDN/).

did not expand as new markets were found in the industrial towns of north Staffordshire and south Lancashire.[1]

Table 2:1 Cheese Shipments from Chester to London

Year	Tons	Year	Tons
1721	1337	1756	1027
1726	1139	1760	1391
1729	1462	1765	1365
1740-1	1142	1770	1308
1745	700	1773-4	1111
1751	1152		

Source: C. Armour: 'The Trade of Chester and the State of the Dee Navigation 1600-1800', University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1956). Based on Port Books.

The grocery trade from Chester is also of particular interest.[2] Chester was acting as a small intermediary distribution point servicing the small towns of Wales with a great variety of semi-luxury goods which she herself had imported in bulk. Groceries received at Chester, chiefly from Liverpool, London and Bristol, were increasing rapidly in quantity in the middle of the eighteenth century and well out-stripping shipments to Wales. This would imply an increased consumption in Chester, and perhaps some distribution into Cheshire and possibly inland into Wales. Shipments to Wales do show a rising trend in the middle of the century, with Caernarvon and Beaumaris the most important receiving ports. Groceries (including wine

1. Armour, op.cit., p. 292.
2. See table 2:2.

Table 2:2 Grocery Trade to and from Chester

Inwards

From	1741 Tons	1751 Tons	1757 Tons	1761 Tons
Liverpool		264+280 sugar	446 + 396	1006 + 64
London		86	190	344
Bristol		80+30 sugar	136	285
Whitehaven			18	
Holywell				12
	None given	740	1186	1711

Outwards

To	1741 Tons	1751 Tons	1757 Tons	1761 Tons
Caernarvon	49	47	96	103
Bagillt	39			
Aberdovey	27	5	6	16
Beaumaris	18	36	54	66
Pwllheli	16	17	23	18
Conway	16	12	31	21
Holyhead	6	24	4	9
Rhuddlan	5		28	18
Bangor		6		
Barmouth		6	31	4
Mostyn			8	
Dulas			4	
Liverpool	80½	135	30	
London				36
	256½	288	315	291
Totals to Welsh ports	176	153	285	255

Source: Cheshire R.O., Register of Vessels.

N.B. Tonnages probable refer to burthen of vessel, on which dues were calculated.

and sugar) were not the only goods sent to Wales. In 1751 3 tons of oats were shipped to Caernarvon, 6 tons of potatoes to Conway and 6 tons of hops to Pwllheli as well as quantities of minerals, and similar agricultural produce figures in the 1757 shipments.[1] Some of these goods like potatoes and oats would probably be Cheshire produce, but hops were no doubt brought to Chester from Worcestershire for sale at the fairs and then distributed from Chester. Some impression of the variety of goods sent to Wales can be gained from the following fairly typical cargo, dispatched to Pwllheli in April 1770 in the 'Speedwell' by Evans and Thompson:

> '4 bags one box q[uanti]ty 415 lbs Tobacco, 58 lbs Snuff, 54 Gallons red Portugal Wine, 8 Gallons white Portugal Wine, 2 bundles Saws, 4 paper parcells Buttons, 12 Chalders of Coals Win[cheste]r measure, 5 dozen Earthenware, 32 Gallons British Sweets, 13 boxes pipes, 35 Gallons Rum, 20 Gallons Brandy, 2 G[allon]s Compounds, one h[ogs]h[ea]d one Tierce one Crate dry Goods, 7 Casks one loaf Sugar, one Cask Alum, one Cask Copperas, 8 bundles paper, one bundle miners Spades, 3 hampers Groceries, one box Candy, one end hops, one Sack Clover-seed, 11 Mats flax, 2 hampers one box drugs, one Cask Oil.' 2

Chester's trading links with Wales remained of importance throughout the period under consideration, and late eighteenth century Directories show that they had been regularized to some degree on both sea and land. A 1792 list of vessels regularly trading from Chester shows the 'Union' and the 'Peggy' trading to Caernarvon, the 'Barmouth' to Conway, the 'Dolphin' to Barmouth, the 'Nancy' to Amlwch and the 'Mary' to Greenfield

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1. Cheshire R.O., Dee Register of Vessels.
2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Port Books, Chester, Coastal, Customer and Comptroller, Christmas 1769 to Midsummer 1770 (E 190/1440/7).

and Holywell.[1] Similar lists appear in later Directories and there are usually substantial lists of Welsh carriers, often serving some of the smaller Welsh towns on journeys to the west coast. Thus in 1781 there was a twice weekly carrier to Mold, and weekly carriers to Wrexham, Caernarvon, Beaumaris, Anglesey, Ruthin, Bala, Denbigh, Holywell, St. Asaph and Newmarket.[2] By 1816 there were daily carriers to Wrexham and Mold, a carrier to Holywell three or four times a week, carriers twice weekly to Ruthin and Denbigh, weekly carriers to Holyhead, Llangollen, Pwllheli, Bala, Corwen, Mostyn, Caernarvon, Welshpool, Abergele, St. Asaph and Rhuddlan, a carrier every nine or ten days to Newtown and one fortnightly to Llanrwst.[3] The bulk of these carriers left from Lower Bridge Street on the way out of the city towards Wales, and such Inns as the Lower White Bear and the Falcon specialized in the handling of the Welsh trade.

The development of Chester as a centre for trade into Wales was one of the more important and lasting effects of its role as a port. For at no time was Chester really significant in national trade - except perhaps in the twice-yearly handling of linen which could probably have as easily passed through Liverpool, as it did in the nineteenth century - and events there were not going to influence the national economy greatly.

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1. The Chester Directory and Guide....printed for J. Poole (Chester, n.d. c. 1792) p. 38.
2. The Chester Guide...printed and sold by P. Broster (Chester, n.d.). With Directory for 1781, pp. 65-6.
3. The Commercial Directory for 1816-17 (Manchester, 1816) pp. 65-6.

The Fairs of Cheshire

While the developing industries of Macclesfield and Stockport made little, if any, use of fairs as centres for distribution, the fair was not yet defunct as a commercial institution in eighteenth-century England. At the outset we should be clear about what a fair is. The definition by André Allix that a fair is, 'A parasitic town, existing intermittently, periodically superposed upon a permanent town, for the needs of itinerant commerce of a region in its entirety'[1] provides a good starting point, although it is clearly more applicable to a large commodity fair than to many of the English eighteenth-century cattle fairs held in small villages. All the same the important distinction between fair and market needs to be constantly borne in mind, even when the evolution of these institutions had led to fairs appearing to be little more than infrequent markets. The key to this distinction is found in Allix's reference to the trading needs of a region in its entirety. For a market is essentially a medium for the redistribution of goods within a local area, whereas a fair is primarily a meeting point of two or more distinct economies. As such its links with the place where it is held are of convenience rather than of direct service, and because it allows contact between two areas it can be an important growth point in a developing economy.[2] Such characteristics of fairs as periodicity are products of the type of trading economy in which they are found, where regular demand is not sufficient to sustain more continuous

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1. Andre Allix, 'The Geography of Fairs: Illustrated by Old-World Examples', Geographical Review xii (1922) 568.
2. See the valuable discussion of the origins of markets and their relation to local and long-distance trade in Brian J.L. Berry, Geography of Market Centers, pp. 108-10.

trading contacts between two parties.

The fairs of eighteenth-century England retained certain features of the pattern described above. They were essentially concerned with long-distance trade and the occasional coming together of men from different parts of the kingdom who could meet each other's needs, and their location often depended more on trading routes than on the existence of large towns. A fair like Stourbridge as described by Defoe was very much of this type, with its rows of retail dealers, its vast trade in wool and hops and its provision of a market in the south for northern clothiers.[1] Stourbridge was an exceptional fair, but the sort of commodities that were normally sold at English fairs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show how they were much more directly linked with long-distance trade than were the markets in most market towns. Livestock being moved from one part of the country to another was the staple commodity of most fairs, with local specialization often important, such as sheep at Weyhill, horses at Penkridge, swine at Romford or geese and poultry at Glossop.[2] The timing and location of the livestock fair would depend chiefly on the needs of the agricultural community and the seasonal pattern of agriculture. General commodity fairs could be of importance both as a convenient place on a trade route where merchants could meet and exchange goods - this was essentially the nature of the Chester linen fairs - and as points of entry for specialist

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1. Daniel Defoe, Tour i. 80-85.
2. For general discussion of fairs see Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce' in The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. iv, 1500-1640, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967); and R.B. Westerfield, Middlemen in English Business.

goods into the local economy. These functions involving exchange between merchants and the supply of retailers and itinerants tended to be the first to disappear. Improved communications and the expansion of markets increasingly made fairs unnecessary and inefficient as intermediary meeting points.[1] The livestock fairs remained of importance longer, and in the nineteenth century urban fairs evolved as providers of pleasure to the working masses.

Most of the Cheshire fairs were essentially livestock fairs at which a number of itinerant dealers providing a range of consumer goods could also be found.[2] Details of the business done at these fairs are scanty, and there is practically no evidence on the quantity of business done. It is not therefore possible to assess the importance of trade in fairs in terms of a proportion of total trade, and all that can be given is some idea of the numbers and locations of fairs and of the types of goods sold. The only comprehensive records of the existence of fairs are almanacs and later the books of fairs, but these are certainly incomplete and include fairs which may have been of negligible importance along with fairs attracting goods and traders from wide areas. The period being studied saw no general reduction in the number of fairs : indeed there seem to have been 40 in 1756 in 14 different towns, 43 in 1799 in 15 towns and 48 in 1820 in 17 towns.[3] New fairs were being

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1. D. Alexander, Retailing in England, pp. 29-36.
2. See can. 1 above for discussion of the functions of fairs in retailing in low demand economies. (p. 13)
3. Owen's Book of Fairs (London, 1756 onwards) for 1756 and 1799; W. Pinnock, The History and Topography of Cheshire (London, 1820) for 1820.

founded in the early nineteenth century for the sale of livestock, as at Church Minshull where it was announced that there would be two yearly fairs from 1814 for the sale of cattle.[1] Although there were frequent changes in the dates of fairs and particular fairs frequently disappeared from or were added to the lists, the overall pattern does not seem to have changed much between the early eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries.[2]

The sale of livestock was important at all Cheshire fairs. Indeed after a three month suspension of business at all markets and fairs during the cattle distemper of 1749, it was declared by the justices that the absence of fairs had caused such great inconvenience that they were to be allowed again, provided that they were not held within a mile of an affected place and that no affected beasts were sold, although livestock markets remained banned.[3] Apart from livestock, pedlar's wares (presumably miscellaneous household goods), drapery and hardware were the usual goods listed in almanacs as on sale at fairs. Many small fairs were no doubt similar to the one advertised for Prestbury in 1738 :

> 'On Monday, the 17th of April next, will be held at Prestbury near Macclesfield, in the County of Chester, a Meeting for Selling of Horses, Cattle, Brass, Pewter, Bedding and other Commodities. All Persons may depend on good Entertainment and kind Usage'. 4

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1. Macclesfield Courier 18 December 1813.
2. The list and map appended to this chapter include all the fairs in Cheshire and its immediate neighbourhood traced in 1799. These demonstrate the periodicity of fairs and thus the possibility of a trader using the pattern of fairs to extend his trade area.
3. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions Order Book 1741-49, 15/26 Apr. 1749 (QJB/20a).
4. Adam's Weekly Courant, 29 Mar./9 Apr. 1738.

Certain fairs were of importance not merely for the sale of goods, but also for the settling of accounts on business already transacted. The fair established by Samuel Oldknow at Marple from 1797 was chiefly for this purpose, and the handbill giving details of it stated that lime accounts were to be settled from fair day to fair day, and that orders for lime would be taken on fair days.[1]

Turning now to the fairs of the three towns particularly under review, it seems that fairs were not of great importance at either Macclesfield or Stockport. Macclesfield had five fairs, the dates of which remained constant, throughout the period from 1756 to 1840 and the eighteenth-century books of fairs describe them all as being for cattle, wool and cloth. Livestock seems to have been the main item sold, and a few horses exchanged hands. Buyers and sellers of horses would come from a wide area in Cheshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire, as at the June 1744 fair when nine horse transactions were recorded.[2] Lists of tolls to be collected make it clear that manufactured goods such as cloth, clothing, clogs, pottery, pewter and metalware were expected to be on sale at fairs and that such entertainments as puppet shows and comedians could probably be found.[3] For many of these items tolls were quoted for both market and fair days with toll on fair days ½d or 1d more than on market days, presumably an indication that greater crowds were expected than at markets and that more business was

1. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Miscellaneous Oldknow Papers, Marple Fair Handbill (Misc 94/4).
2. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Macclesfield Papers, Register of Horse Transactions 11/22 June 1744 (CR 63/2/341).
3. Ibid. Tolls of Macclesfield drawn up by J. Downes (mid 18th century) (CR 63/2/341).

therefore likely to be done. There is no eighteenth-century evidence of the amounts of tolls collected at fairs, since tolls of fairs and markets were leased together, and thus it is not possible to give any indication of increases or decreases in the amount of business done. It is, however, probable that the overall trend was very much in line with that at Stockport.

There were four fairs at Stockport of which the ones in May and October seem to have been the most important, and that in May to have been chief by the end of the century. The duration of the fairs seems to have been increasing during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from two or three days in the 1730's to six days by 1840.[1] The types of goods sold were much the same as at Macclesfield with livestock - cattle, horses, pigs and sheep - most important, accounting for three-quarters or more of the tolls collected in the 1730's. Otherwise, as at Macclesfield, similar goods were sold at the fairs as at the markets, although there may have been a higher proportion of non-locally produced goods such as pewter and hardware at the fairs. In the same way as at Macclesfield tolls were higher on fair than on market days.[2] As table 2:3 shows, the tolls taken at the fairs declined steadily during the eighteenth century and this would seem to indicate a slow erosion in the importance of fairs as consumer goods entered the market in other ways, chiefly through fixed shops, and livestock marketing either concentrated in fairs in less urban areas, or was channelled through transactions outside fairs.

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1. J. Thorp, 'A History of Local Government in Stockport 1760-1820' (Univ. of Manchester M.A. Thesis, 1940) pp. 163-65; Cheshire R.O. Stockport Court Papers, Proclamation for the Fairs 1840 (DVE).
2. Thorp, op.cit.

Table 2:3 Toll Receipts at Stockport Fairs 1730-1784

Year	Receipts £	s	d	
1730	10	1	1	Accounts from
1731	11	6	7¼	1730 - 1739 were
1732	13	8	7½	made up at the
1733	9	7	1	end of April
1734	6	16	9	
1735	9	7	8	
1736	8	12	9	
1737	10	0	5	
1738	11	11	4	
1739	8	5	6	
1771	4	2	10½	Accounts from
1773	3	10	10½	1771 - 1784 were
1774	7	4	11½	made up at
1775	5	5	5½	Martinmas
1780	3	0	11	(11 November)
1781	3	19	6	
1782	2	14	3	
1783	3	18	3	
1784	4	2	2	

Source: Stockport Manorial Tolls Accounts as reproduced in J. Thorp. op.cit. It seems that the original documents are no longer in existence.

As a proportion of total receipts from fairs and markets, the share of the fairs fell from around 10 or 12 per cent in the 1730's to around 3 per cent in the 1780's, with the total remaining fairly constant.[1]

By the early nineteenth century such fairs were little

1. Ibid., p. 159.

more than large, infrequent markets at which some entertainments could be found. The Chester fairs retained important wholesaling functions much longer, however, and the fairs held there at Midsummer and Michaelmas of each year were of a type unique in Cheshire. These fairs, beginning on 5th July and 10th October and continuing for a fortnight each, were dominated by the linen trade but were also a focal point for wholesale and retail traders of all sorts to meet together to buy, sell and settle accounts, while the February fair was just a livestock fair of the usual type. Permanent facilities for the linen merchants were provided in the 1740's when a Linen Hall was erected to the east of Northgate Street and in 1778 a new Linen Hall was opened off Watergate Street. Further provision of accommodation for fair traders in the early nineteenth century probably reflected confidence in the future of the fairs for in 1809 the Union Hall off Foregate Street with 60 single and 10 double shops for the use of Manchester, Yorkshire, Midland and Scottish traders was built and in 1815 the Commercial Hall including 56 single and 20 double shops was built and used by similar groups.[1]

Business at the fairs was both wholesale and retail, with individual customers taking advantage of the coming together of a large number of traders, and retailers taking the opportunity of stocking up. At the same time the regularity with which traders would appear at fair after fair allowed them to be used for the placing of orders and the settling of accounts. Manufacturers of clothing, metalware, pottery and other goods

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1. J. Hemingway, History of Chester i 418-9.

would be in evidence at the fairs, while livestock and hops were of considerable importance. Livestock transactions, including dealings in horses, were particularly concentrated in February when Chester seems to have been acting as a normal market town serving the needs of an agricultural area. Hops were sold particularly in October and hop warehouses were situated in the back premises of the Blossoms Inn and the Hop Pole Inn, and hops were brought for sale from Worcester, Kent and Sussex.[1] The hop market could be profitable to the occupier of the Inns in which it was held for in 1744 Peter Leadbeater of Chester, brewer, leased the Blossoms Inn to William Adgett at a rent of £34 for the first year, including the benefit of the Hop Yard at fair time, and then for £14 in subsequent years, with Leadbeater having the benefit of the yard.[2]

The real significance of the fairs lay in the trade in manufactured rather than agricultural goods. Fairs could provide a valuable opportunity for contact between manufacturers and traders coming from different regions who would not be brought together by periodic markets and who might not have sufficient business to conduct with one another to make specific, regular contacts, feasible, at least in the first instance. Thus in the early eighteenth century Abraham Darby was selling his produce of pots and kettles in small quantities to customers he met in person at fairs.[3] His successors from 1718 onwards were regularly dealing at the Chester fairs but as some

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1. Ibid. i 417, ii. 335.
2. P.R.O. Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer Paper Pleadings (Chester 16/132).
3. Arthur Raistrick, Dynasty of Ironfounders. The Darbys and Coalbrookdale (2nd ed., Newton Abbot , 1970) p. 7.

customers began to place large and regular orders other forms of dealing became possible, as with such Chester ironmongers as Edward Griffith and Nathan Wright who were customers of the Darbys for over 20 years.[1] Manchester cloth dealers were well represented at the fairs as were London dealers and in 1751 William Lloyd, linen draper, advertised that, 'Wholesale Dealers may here have an Opportunity of compleating their Sortments, full as cheap as in London.'[2] By the early nineteenth century the influx of shopkeepers in the first two or three days of the fair stocking up had declined, and Hemingway noted that in his day travellers went round to collect orders and retail dealers went directly to manufacturers to buy.[3]

The linen trade, especially in the great days of the fairs in the late eighteenth century, was, however, the key activity of the fairs. The July and October fairs saw a gathering of dealers in linen from Dublin, Liverpool, Chester and London, particularly in war years when the sea route direct from Dublin to London was made dangerous by privateers and Chester was of especial importance as an entrepot. Normally the overland route would barely be competitive in terms of transport charges,[4] but in 1778 with the outbreak of war there was a switch to the use of west coast ports and rivalry developed between carriers operating from Chester and Liverpool evidenced in the appearance of advertisements in the Belfast Newsletter of September and October 1780 announcing that the

1. Ibid., p. 56.
2. Adam's Weekly Courant, 24 Sept./5 Oct. 1751.
3. J. Hemingway, op.cit., ii 336.
4. L.M. Cullen, Anglo-Irish Trade 1660-1800 (Manchester, 1968) p. 135.

costs of carriage by wagon from Chester to London had been reduced to 6 shillings per hundredweight.[1] From 1783 the use of the direct Belfast-London sea route became normal.[2]

The linen trade through Chester seems to have developed in the late seventeenth century with 61,400 yards of linen being imported in 1700. There was some falling off in the early eighteenth century followed by rapid growth from 1740.[3] Some business was conducted through Chester in the 1730's and letters to the London merchant James Hudson reveal him buying regularly at the Chester fairs from 1731 to 1734.[4] The trade was reckoned to be at its height in the mid 1780's, when as well as the Dublin drapers there were perhaps half a dozen Chester merchants involved in importing linen.[5] Although the trade was in decline from the early nineteenth century at the latest, linen ships were certainly still coming to Chester in 1815 when twelve merchants petitioned for an extension to the fair because adverse winds had delayed the arrival of their vessels.[6] By 1831 Hemingway was reporting that the trade had recently declined and that few shops in the new linen hall were still let.[7]

The building of a linen hall in the 1740's marked an advance in the organisation of the trade with permanent provision being made for merchants who must previously have had to rent private shops. William Smith of Chester, innholder, was responsible for the building of the hall and for leasing

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1. Ibid., p. 137.
2. Ibid.
3. C. Armour, op. cit., pp. 275-6. See Table 2:4.
4. P.R.O. Chancery Masters Exhibits, Herne v. Barber (C 105/15).
5. See lists of importers in Chester Chronicle.
6. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files 1811-18 (AF 60).
7. J. Hemingway, op.cit., ii. 12.

Table 2:4 Linen Imports at Chester

Year	Yards	Packs	Boxes
1736[a)]	449,654		
1744[b)]	426,103		
1750[b)]	572,157		
1755[b)]	968,019		
1761[b)]	2,818,156		
1765[b)]	1,121,628		
1770[b)]	1,181,969		
c. 1773[a)]	c.2,000,000	c. 1600	
1774[b)]	275,134		
1775[c)]		821	499
1786[a)]	c.5,500,000[d)]	1,684	788
1796[a)]		582	808
1806[a)]		327	936

a) J.H. Hanshall, The Stranger in Chester (Chester, 1816) pp. 157-8
b) C. Armour, op.cit. p. 276
c) Chester Chronicle 1775
d) D. & S. Lysons, Magna Britannia (London, 1810) ii, part 2, 605.

shops in it to drapers and merchants. The shops were to measure 14 feet by 12 feet and to be 9 feet high and were to have windows and counters. These shops were built from 1743 onwards and were occupied by merchants, chiefly from Dublin, though occasionally from Chester or Liverpool, at the time of the fairs. In the later leases linen dealers from Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury, Manchester and Whitchurch appear and there may have been some

desertion of the hall by Irish drapers in the mid 1760's, perhaps partly as a result of the return of peace.[1] The hall seems to have been intended for use by the independent Dublin drapers who probably traded on a relatively small scale once they had collected linen from the Irish manufacturers and who may not have been able to sustain a regular trade. Some regular trading seems in fact to have taken place outside the hall and outside the fairs for in 1746 a Chester merchant, John Mignett, announced that he had opened a wholesale Irish linen warehouse where he would serve people throughout the year as well as they could be served in the linen hall at fair time.[2]

The second linen hall erected in 1778 was similarly equipped with a large number of shops - 110 in all - which were expected to be leased to Irish traders at £3 a year each.[3] Rent receipts for these shops between 1783 and 1814 reveal the slow desertion of the fairs by the linen merchants[4] and by the early 1800's rooms seem to have been let to traders other than those attending the fairs and were used on a more regular basis for their business. The receipts for hallage given in table 2:7 although very fragmentary may give some indication of the amount of linen being imported and sold at the fairs, on which hallage of 6d per pack and box was charged. This undoubted decline in trade and in the use of the fairs seems to have been principally caused by increased penetration of the Irish manufacturing areas by English merchants and an

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1. Cheshire R.O., Lee, Bygott and Eccleston Coll., linen hall leases (DLB/1548/Chester). See tables 2:5 and 2:6.
2. Manchester Magazine 23 Sept./4 Oct. 1746.
3. Chester City R.O., Account Book of the Proprietors of the New Linen Hall 1776-1814 (G/Mc/11).
4. Ibid. See figure 2:1.

Table 2:5 Leases of Shops in Linen Hall 1743-54

Date	No. of Shops Leased	Average Rent per Shop £	s	d	Merchants Dublin	Liverpool	Others	Length of Lease
1743	26	3	0	0	12	1	0	14 yrs
1744	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	14 yrs
1746	10	2	18	10	8	1	0	21 yrs
1749	15	4	10	8	7	1	0	14 yrs
1752	5	4	16	0	1	0	0	11 yrs
1754	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	7 yrs

Table 2:6 Leases of Shops in Linen Hall 1755-62

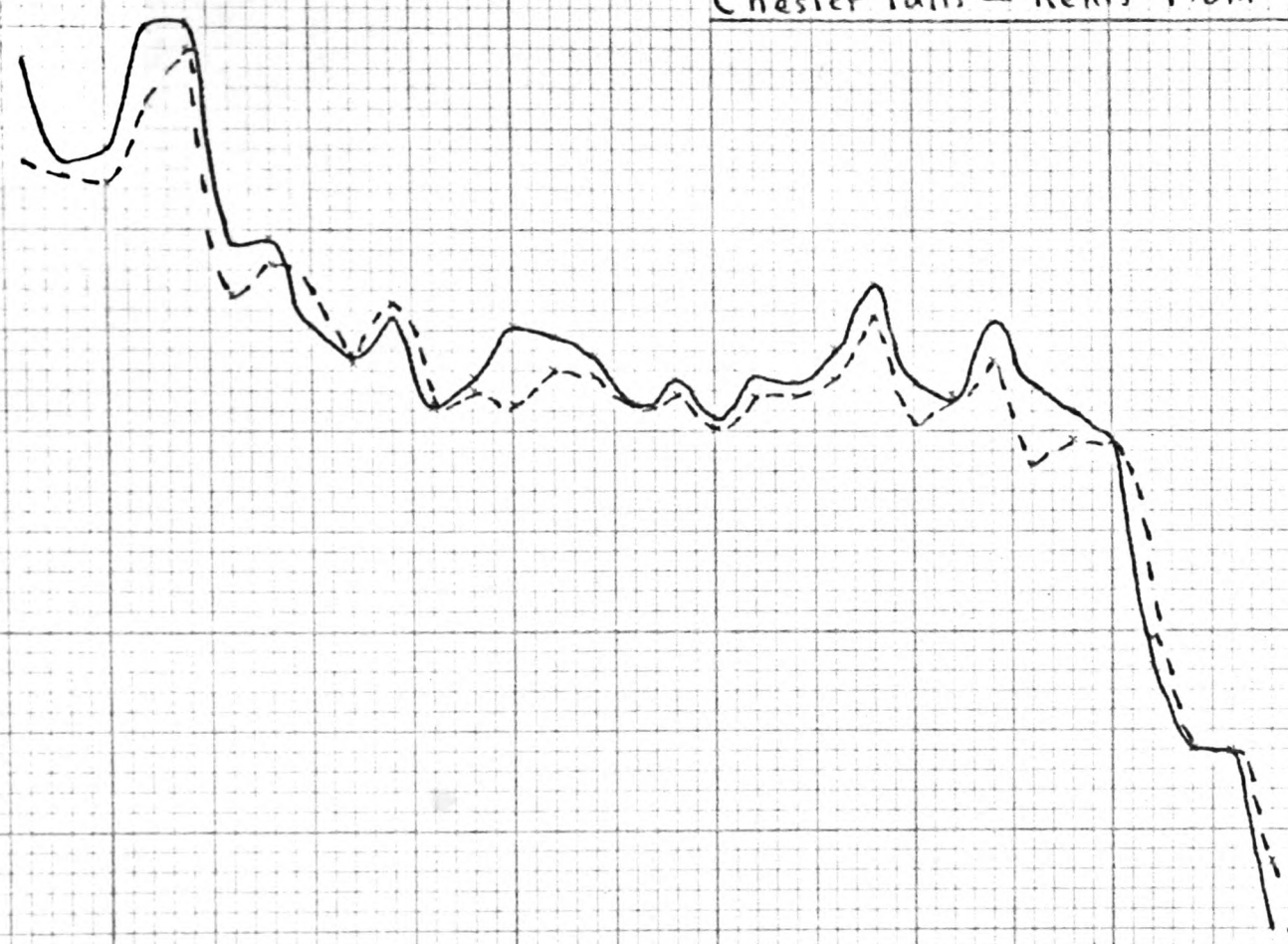
Date	No. of Shops Leased	Average Rent per Shop £	s	d	Merchants Dublin	Liverpool	Others	Length of Lease
1755	15	2	19	7	3	0	3	21 yrs
1756	9	3	6	8	4	0	1	21 yrs
1757	8	3	1	6	1	0	1	21 yrs
1759	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	21 yrs
1762	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	21 yrs

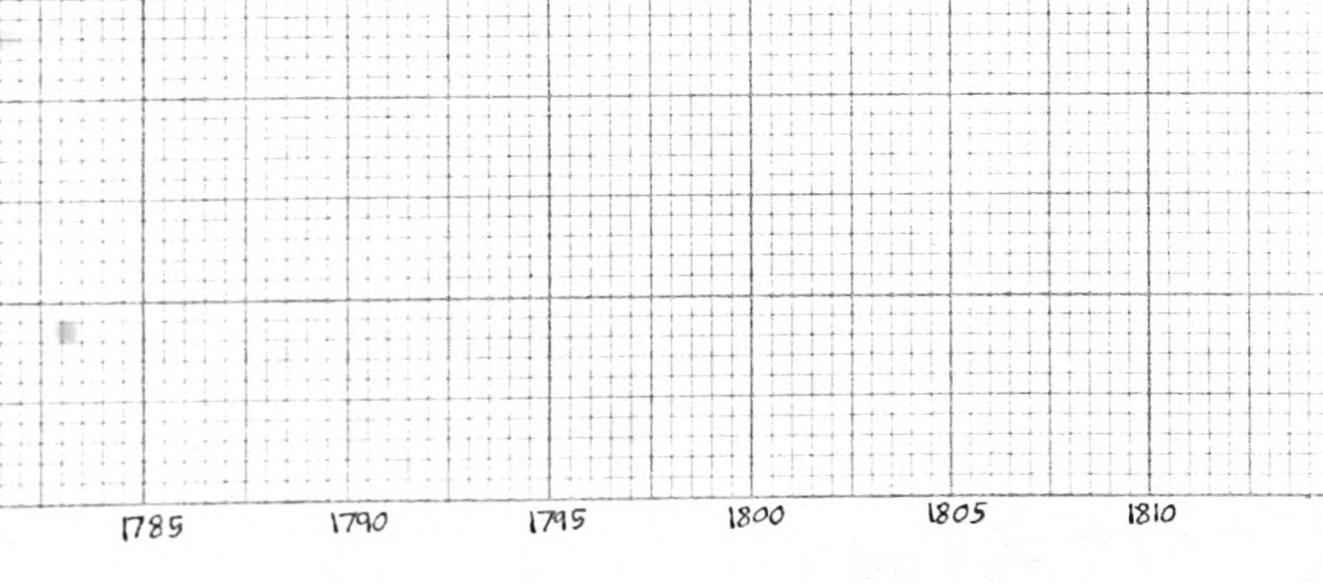
These are second leases of shops, first leases of which are recorded in Table 2:5

Source: Cheshire R.O. DLB/1548/Chester.

Figure 2:1

Chester Fairs — Rents from Rooms in New Linen Hall, 1783–1814





Source : Chester City R.O., G/Mc/11.

Table 2:7 Chester, New Linen Hall - Receipts for Hallage

Year	July £	s	d	October £	s	d
1798	15	14	6	13	6	0
1799	13	13	0	13	1	6
1800	18	2	0	8	6	6
1801	13	5	0	6	3	0
1802	8	5	6	7	10	0
1803						
1804	10	17	0	5	3	6
1805	9	0	6	6	16	6
1806	7	5	6			
1807						
1808	10	0	0			
1809						
1810						
1811	6	14	6	2	14	6
1812						
1813	14	1	6	10	3	6
1814	13	8	6	13	6	6

Source: Chester City R.O. G/Mc/11.

increase in direct ordering from manufacturers.[1] Competition from Liverpool, able to offer superior facilities and fewer restrictions, together with the deteriorating condition of the Dee, probably hastened the decline of the trade, but fairs were increasingly anachronistic as the Irish industry grew and demand in England became greater and more regular. Slowly purchases at Chester were replaced by orders for whole packs

1. Conrad Gill, The Rise of the Irish Linen Industry (Oxford, 1925), p. 176 ff.

to be sent through Liverpool as seen in the cash book of J. & J. Richardson for 1815-1822.[1] Indeed from the 1780's the Stockport bleacher William Sykes was dealing directly with a considerable number of merchants throughout Ireland.[2] As contacts of this sort multiplied there would be less and less place for the Chester fairs in their traditional role.

For the inhabitants of Chester the fairs were probably chiefly remarkable because of the influx of traders who greatly increased shopping facilities in the city. Such traders came from many parts of northern England and from London and displayed their goods in rooms in the main streets of the city. Eastgate Street seems to have been the main street frequented by retailers at the fairs and Eastgate Row was called the Manchester Row in the 1740's since it was, 'Where Manchester Tradesmen usually take Shops for exposing their Wares and Merchandizes to sale at the time of the Fairs'.[3] One example of such a trade arrangement is the leasing by William Huntington of Chester, whitesmith, of two shops in Eastgate Row to Benjamin Blinkhorn of Pendleton, Lancashire, dealer in Manchester wares. Blinkhorn was to hold the shops at fair time for a period of seven years at a rent of £2 15s per fair and before he entered them in Michaelmas 1747 Huntington was to convert the shops into one and fit it up with counters and shelves for goods to be put on.[4]

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1. Ibid. p. 253.
2. Stockport R.L., Sykes Mss., Stock and Debts of William Sykes 1786-1806 (D 177/17/8).
3. P.R.O., Chester 16/133.
4. Ibid.

Retailers attending fairs frequently advertised their presence and in 1751 William Lloyd of London announced that he sold linen drapery and haberdashery while one Alcock, also a London linen draper, announced that he would open a shop in Eastgate Street. Thomas Minshull advertised that:

> '(He) Will be at Mr Maddox's Cork Cutters Shop...in the Eastgate Street, Chester, during the Time of the Fair, with great Choice of China Ware, of the best and newest fashions, viz...Dishes...Plates...Bowls...Tea-pots... Sugar Dishes...Cups...Glasses (etc).'

Minshull was clearly a regular at the fairs and announced that this would be the last one he intended to keep and that therefore he was selling cheaply and was willing to consider exchanges for old clothes, old gold or old silver.[1] Most of these traders would have regular arrangements to attend each fair and presumably may have been active at fairs in other parts of the country. While London dealers seem to have been particularly well represented, Zephaniah Kinsley of Bristol, linen draper, was renting a shop under the Eastgate for fairs in the 1760's.[2] Trading of this nature was still continuing in the 1780's although the newspaper advertisements do not imply that as many London drapers may have been present as earlier. There was a greater emphasis on special offers as in July 1785 when a bankrupt's stock of men's clothes was to be sold at the Talbot Inn.[3] At the October fair in the same year ready made furniture was offered for sale at a Chester cabinet maker's and included desks, wardrobes, bookcases, tables and

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 24 Sept./5 Oct. 1751.
2. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examination 1766 (QSE/15/62, 102).
3. Adam's Weekly Courant, 5 July 1785.

chairs.[1] Although the fairs primarily represented opportunities for outsiders to trade in Chester, Chester retailers were not averse to taking advantage of the influx of customers occasioned by them. Some retailers could offer to supply traders attending the fair wholesale as Richard Taylor, music seller, did to Welsh traders in October 1804[2] while it was common for retailers to advertise new stock in July and October. One such retailer, Robert Bowers, goldsmith, announced in October 1785 that he was determined to sell his stock on as low terms as any stranger could.[3]

It is unclear just when fixed shop retailing effectively ousted fair retailing, although the predominance of fixed shops was clearly achieved by the mid-nineteenth century. Some degree of disillusionment with the traders at fairs can be detected in a 1775 letter from Mrs. Read in Chester to Miss Kitty Bolland at Nercwys Hall, Flintshire, when she was advising her on the choice of material for a new dress, 'But there is no occasion to be in a violent hurry for there is always great variety of choice in the Shops and full as cheap as what the people bring to the fair.'[4] Almost a century later Thomas Hughes expressed similar sentiments with regard to the decline of trade in the Commercial and Union Halls, 'Even the Cestrians have discovered that one of the worst things they can buy is "a pig in a poke"; and that their own tradesmen sell articles

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1. Ibid. 4 Oct. 1785.
2. Ibid. 9 Oct. 1804.
3. Ibid. 11 Oct. 1785.
4. Flintshire R.O., Nercwys Hall Mss., Letters of Bagot Read to Kitty Bolland 1766-1775, Letter of 14 Oct. 1775 (D/NH/1070).

every whit as cheap and as good as did those itinerant pedlars.'[1]

Even before the halls were built Henry Holland commented on the fairs that, 'I understand that they are not so well attended now as formerly'[2] and it may be that the building of the halls was an attempt to bring back the greatest days of the eighteenth century. By the 1830's the character of the fairs seems to have been entirely changed. The Irish linen trade was all but dead and while the Manchester, Midland, London and Scottish traders still attended, their wholesale business had much declined[3] and the development of shops in Chester lessened the need for them as retailers. By 1831 there were six live-stock fairs each year and in 1830 the activities at these had been extended to include dealing in cheese, bacon, butter and other provisions. A Directory of 1850 listed the six fairs and commented on the decline in the trade in manufactured goods - by then the linen hall had been turned into a cheese mart and the day before the official fair day was given over to the sale of cheese.[4] The fairs had increasingly absorbed the traditional local functions of markets in providing facilities for the direct exchange of goods between producer and consumer. The replacement of merchants and shopkeepers from all over England and Ireland by Cheshire farmers and their wives was clearly a change in kind as well as degree.

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1. Thomas Hughes, The Stranger's Handbook to Chester (Chester, 1856) p. 107.
2. Henry Holland, General View of the Agriculture of Cheshire (London, 1808) p. 313.
3. J. Hemingway, op.cit., ii 336.
4. S. Bagshaw, History, Directory and Gazeteer of the County Palatine of Chester (Sheffield, 1850) p. 76.

The decline of fairs was essentially a result of the growth in consumer demand allowing for more regular modes of trading, coupled with improved transport and improved merchanting making regular and direct contacts between manufacturers and wholesalers, without the use of a fair as a meeting point, possible and desirable. The decline of the linen trade and the desertion of the fairs by linen wholesalers must have reduced the incentive for other traders to attend since their suppliers or customers would no longer necessarily be there also. It seems likely that at a fair trade breeds trade and that the reverse is also true. On the side of retail trade Chester no longer needed itinerant traders by the early nineteenth century and may have been increasingly hostile to them. The city could provide a wide range of fixed shops for once there was sufficient demand to make this possible the shopkeepers responded and fully catered for the needs of the city and its surrounding area.

One setting to which wholesale trade, particularly in livestock and agricultural produce, shifted from the seventeenth century onwards was the inn.[1] The network of transactions, often between men from different counties and usually in corn, sheep, wool or hops, based on inns probably permeated virtually every community in the country, although inns of larger towns were the most widely used and frequently specialized in a particular commodity with innkeepers sometimes acting in a rudimentary banking capacity.[2] There is little Cheshire evidence

1. See below, cap. 3, for some discussion of the trade in corn at Cheshire inns. (pp. 93-4)
2. On inns see 'The English Urban Inn 1560-1760' in A. Everitt (Ed.), Perspectives in English Urban History (London, 1973).

to fill out the national picture, but it is clear that facilities for this sort of marketing were not lacking in the county. By the end of the seventeenth century most villages had an inn which could provide a guest bed or two and stabling for horses, while the chief market towns had 50 or more beds and facilities for 100 or more horses.[1]

It is difficult to assess the overall importance of the long-distance trade for the communities on which it centred, although it was probably of more importance than a simple measure of its share in the total trade in the towns would indicate. The button trade from Macclesfield and the hat trade from Stockport were long important as providers of employment for workers not merely in the towns but also in the countryside around the towns. The prosperity of a wide area was dependent on these trades - up to 30,000 people were said to be employed in the button and twist trades in east Cheshire, north Staffordshire and Manchester in the 1730's[2] - and this prosperity must have had its effect on the tradesmen of the towns by creating extra demand for goods. Moreover these early trades were often responsible for forging trade links, providing entrepreneurs, and creating pools of skilled labour which could be absorbed into the later textile industries. Particularly in Macclesfield, the late eighteenth-century industrial growth seems to have relied heavily on the foundations laid by the button trade. Although the wealth and activity represented by fairs probably

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1. P.R.O. War Office Miscellanea, Abstract of a Particular Account of all the Inns, Alehouses etc. in England 1686 (WO 30/48).
2. Commons Journals xxiii 76, 9/20 Mar. 1737/8.

had little lasting effect on towns, tradesmen, and perhaps especially innkeepers, could almost certainly benefit from the influx of strangers at fair time who brought additional purchasing power with them. This would be particularly true at Chester where trade in general, however, while creating some mercantile wealth, does not seem to have had a great impact on the general life of the city.

The general pattern that emerges here is of course not unique to Cheshire. The particular items that were traded in were determined by local conditions, but the general fact of specialization and participation in national trade was one aspect of that emergence of a national economy which is a clear feature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which Defoe was paying tribute to in his emphasis on the significance of London. Two strands in the growth of this trading economy can be mentioned here. The first of these is the widening of trade networks around major towns as they increasingly became distribution points for the industries of their locality. This can be seen in the case of Manchester for textiles and Birmingham for hardware with such towns also developing general service functions such as printing or book and newspaper publishing.[1] Secondly the eighteenth century saw a new emphasis on commercial expertise. Josiah Wedgwood's marketing innovations including gaining the patronage of leaders of fashion, using showrooms and exhibitions and new standards of display and his strivings

1. See A.P. Wadsworth & J. de Lacy Mann, The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire 1600-1780 (Manchester, 1931) esp. pp. 238-39 on home trade in cotton; M.J. Wise, 'Birmingham and its Trade Relations in the Early Eighteenth Century', University of Birmingham Historical Journal ii (1949-50) 53-79 on Birmingham.

to improve accountancy practices[1] are the most obvious examples of this, but if his achievement was greater than that of many of his contemporaries, he was not alone in the attempt. It is within this context of expanding trade and lively entrepreneurship that the activities of local suppliers in the busy Cheshire market towns must be set to explore the full potential of local servicing.

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1. N. McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques', Economic History Review, 2nd ser. vii (1959-60) 408-33; see also S. Pollard, The Genesis of Modern Management (London, 1965).

Fairs in Cheshire and Neighbourhood 1799

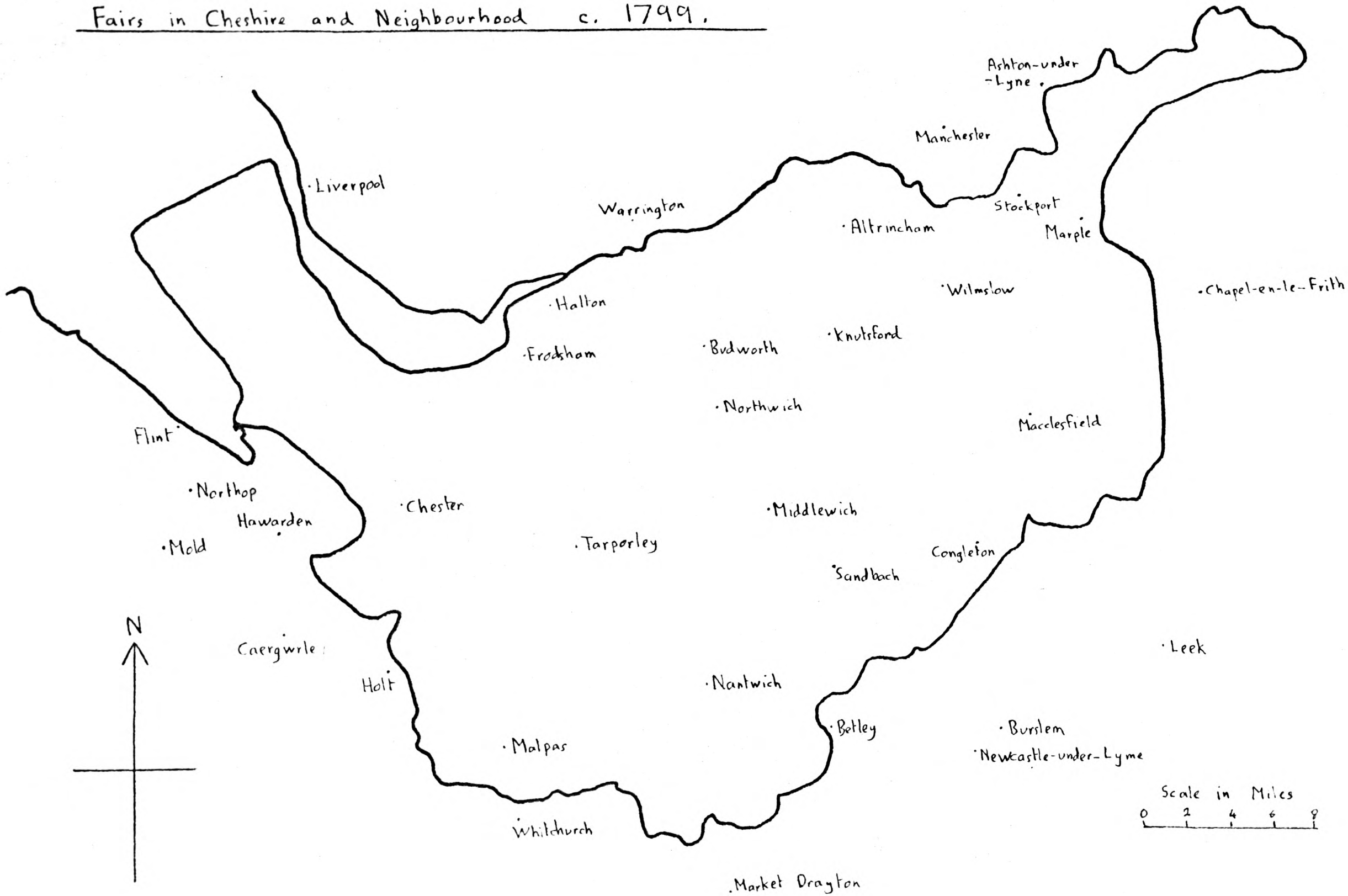
	Leek	Wed bef Candlemas
	Chapel	Thurs bef Feb 13
	Budworth	Feb 13
	Flint	Feb 14
	Mold	Feb 23
	Chester	Last Thurs in Feb
	Stockport	March 4
	Northop	March 14
	Nantwich	March 15
	Burslem	March 22
	Ashton-u-Lyne	March 23
⁑	Wilmslow	March 23
	Chapel	March 24
	Stockport	March 25
	Chapel	March 29
	Budworth	April 5
	Halton	April 5
	Malpas	April 5
*	Marple	2nd Thurs in April
	Altrincham	April 22
	Ashton-u-Lyne	April 29
	Chapel	April 30
	Stockport	May 1
	Tarporley	May 1
	Macclesfield	May 6
⁑	Wilmslow	May 7
	Congleton	May 12
	Mold	May 12
	Frodsham	May 15
	Caergwrle	May 16
	Leek	May 18
	Holt	June 22
	Macclesfield	June 22
	Flint	June 24
	Burslem	June 28
	Leek	July 3
	Chester	July 5
	Chapel	July 7
	Northop	July 7
	Knutsford	July 10
	Macclesfield	July 11
	Congleton	July 13
	Newcastle	Mon bef July 15
	Warrington	July 18
	Ashton-u-Lyne	July 25
	Liverpool	July 25
	Malpas	July 25
	Middlewich	July 25
	Leek	July 28
	Betley	July 31
	Mold	August 2
	Northwich	August 2
	Altrincham	August 5
	Flint	August 10
	Caergwrle	August 12
	Frodsham	August 21
	Chapel	Thurs bef August 24
	Tarporley	Mon after August 24
	Nantwich	September 4
	Sandbach	Thurs after Sept 10
	Newcastle	Mon after Sept 11
	Market Drayton	September 19
	Chapel	Thurs after Sept 29
	Hawarden	October 1
	Manchester	October 1
	Budworth	October 2
	Macclesfield	October 4
	Chester	October 10
	Leek	Wed after Oct 10
	Northop	October 12
	Burslem	October 13
	Market Drayton	October 24
	Stockport	October 25
	Caergwrle	October 27
	Whitchurch	October 28
	Holt	October 29
⁑	Marple	1st Thurs in Nov
	Newcastle	November 6
	Knutsford	November 8
	Chapel	Thurs bef Nov 11
	Liverpool	November 11
	Macclesfield	November 11
	Leek	November 13
⁑	Wilmslow	November 15
	Manchester	November 17
	Ashton-u-Lyne	November 21
	Altrincham	November 22
	Congleton	November 22
	Mold	November 22
	Flint	November 30
	Warrington	November 30
	Northwich	December 6
	Malpas	December 8
	Tarporley	December 10
	Nantwich	December 16
	Hawarden	December 24

⁑ Not in Owen.

Congleton	Thurs bef Shrovetide
Newcastle	Shrove Monday
Caergwrle	Shrove Tuesday
Market Drayton	Weds bef Palm Sunday
Chapel	Thurs bef Easter
Newcastle	Easter Monday
Sandbach	Easter Tuesday
Leek	Easter Wednesday
Chapel	Holy Thursday
Middlewich	Holy Thursday
Manchester	Whit Monday
Newcastle	Whit Monday
Whitchurch	Whit Monday
Knutsford	Whit Tuesday
Betley	Whit Wednesday
Leek	Whit Wednesday
Chapel	3 weeks after Holy Thursday

Map 2:1

Fairs in Cheshire and Neighbourhood c. 1799.



CHAPTER 3

FARMING AND THE FOOD SUPPLY

If marketing institutions exist to facilitate trading contacts between producers and consumers, their form is likely to be affected by the produce they are handling and by the nature of the demand for it. Thus in examining markets it is important to consider the potential supply and demand that they exist to link. In the case of the markets of most market towns, the key producers and consumers are the farmers of the countryside around the town, and the non farming inhabitants of the towns. This is not to say that all the produce consumed in a town will be local in origin, and clearly long distance trade in certain commodities has long been important, but it probably would be true that the smaller towns of eighteenth-century England were still looking to their rural hinterland for a substantial part of their food. Moreover it was certainly not necessary for farm produce to be brought directly into the town by the farmer, and probably common by the eighteenth century for some commodities to pass through the hands of middlemen, contracts with whom may well have been made in the countryside. Such middlemen could form an essential link between town and countryside, and create a host of private marketing institutions, possibly based on inns, through which trade was channelled. Such men could also be a vital first link in sending produce out of the area where it was grown or made for consumption in other parts of the country, for if towns were not dependent exclusively on local farmers for supply, neither were farmers exclusively dependent

on local towns for a market. Nevertheless a good starting point for looking at Cheshire markets is to consider the potential local supply, the potential urban demand and something of the middlemen engaged in the trade in agricultural produce.[1]

Cheshire Agriculture

The local supply area of Chester, Macclesfield and Stockport spread from the Pennine foothills of east Cheshire, across the rich grassland of the central Cheshire plain to the lowland area of the Dee valley and probably into the rougher land of the Welsh border or even into the fertile Vale of Clwyd. The soils of Cheshire are chiefly clay and sand, frequently mixed together, with some peat chiefly in the east of the county.[2] On this land the farming community of the eighteenth century was largely knit together by the landlord-tenant bond, although Macclesfield hundred had a substantial number of owner occupiers into the nineteenth century.[3] Farms do not seem to have been generally very big, but a few dairy farms reached 300 or more acres.[4] Tenancy arrangements during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth were showing a tendency to change from leases for lives to leases for a fixed term of years, ranging between five and twenty-one. Rents

1. For general studies of the trade in agricultural produce and marketing see R.B. Westerfield, Middlemen in English Business and, by Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc.cit.; 'Urban Growth 1570-1770', Local Historian viii (1968) 118-125; 'The Food Market of the English Town 1660-1760', Third International Conference of Economic History, Munich 1965, vol. 1 (Paris, 1968).
2. Henry Holland, Agriculture of Cheshire pp. 7-11; D. Sylvester & G. Nulty, The Historical Atlas of Cheshire (Chester, 1966) frontispiece (Geological Drift Map).
3. C.S. Davies, The Agricultural History of Cheshire 1750-1850, (Chetham Society, 3rd Ser., x, 1960) pp. 25-29.
4. Thomas Wedge, General View of the Agriculture....(London, 1794) p. 12.

seem to have been rising during this period from perhaps 10 shillings or £1 per acre in the mid-eighteenth century to around 30 shillings per acre for good arable in about 1808, with dairy land letting at 50 shillings or more, and land in the immediate vicinity of towns at £6 to £8.[1] In general the county was an old enclosed area, with few open arable fields remaining by 1700, and such enclosure as there was in the eighteenth century usually affected commons or wastes.[2]

Contemporary travellers in the county were frequently impressed by its farming. Most saw it as rich corn and cheese land, with of course the emphasis on the dairies and the cheese that they sent to London and other parts of the kingdom.[3] How far this reflected a real dominance of cheese and how far travellers were simply emphasizing those features of farming which they associated with Cheshire cannot be certain, but it is unlikely that many farms were relying entirely on cheese until well into the nineteenth century. Even in the classic cheese country of mid and south Cheshire the predominant farming was cheese and corn. The county reports produced for the Board of Agriculture provide descriptive evidence of the nature of Cheshire farming and of the main crops grown there.[4] Holland listed wheat and oats as the two crops commonly cultivated, and stated that in general the soil was unsuited to barley, although it was grown in some parts of the county. Other crops were much more localized in their distribution,

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1. C.S. Davies, op.cit. pp. 44-50; Holland, op.cit. p. 102.
2. C.S. Davies, op.cit. pp. 54-75.
3. E.G., R. Blome, Britannia (London, 1673); D. Defoe, Tour....; N. Spencer, The Complete English Traveller, (London, 1771).
4. Wedge and Holland, op.cit.

with turnips being found in the middle and south of the county, and certain vegetables such as carrots, onions and peas were grown in the vicinity of urban markets. The only other important crop was the potato which was used as fodder for horses, cattle, pigs and poultry and as a major foodstuff by the poor in Lancashire and Cheshire. The crop was particularly important around Frodsham, in the Wirral and near Altrincham.[1] The crop pattern may not have been much different in the adjacent Welsh counties, although there are fewer references to the cultivation of potatoes, and barley may have been of some importance in Denbighshire.[2]

These descriptions seem to be largely confirmed by the one statistical source on the agricultural geography of the county that can be utilised. The 1801 acreage returns, although decidedly defective in their coverage, do probably provide sufficient information for some limited generalizations to be made.[3] Fortunately they are at their best for east and west Cheshire, despite the absence of evidence for the enormous parish of Prestbury, and also provide some material on conditions in the Wirral and in the Nantwich area. The acreage totals given in the returns are almost certainly not to be relied on and are particularly difficult to evaluate because it is not always clear whether Cheshire or statute acres are being used.[4] Nevertheless they probably are an adequate guide to the relative importance of different crops. The predominance of the wheat-oats pattern of cropping is very clear from the returns, with

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1. Holland, op.cit. pp. 133-168.
2. George Kay, General View of the Agriculture of North Wales (Edinburgh, 1794).
3. See table 3:1 and map 3:1.
4. The Cheshire acre contained 10,240 square yards.

Table 3:1 Cheshire Acreage Returns 1801 - Percentage of Known Cropped Area

Parish	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Potatoes	Peas	Beans	Turnips/ Rape
Aldford	37.5	19.5	35.5	3.5	4	*	-
Ashton-upon-Mersey	31.5	8	30.5	30	-	-	-
Astbury	33	5.5	57	4	-	-	-
Backford	49.5	3	32.5	12	3	-	-
Baddiley	41.5	6	47.5	3	-	-	1.5
Birkenhead Priory	64.5	3.5	28.5	2	-	2	-
Bromborough	37.5	7	45	10.5	-	-	-
Chester, Holy Trinity	57.5	2	33.5	7	-	-	-
Chester, St.John	-	16	21	63	-	-	-
Christleton	32	6	49.5	11.5	-	0.5	1
Church Minshull	37.5	1	62	-	-	-	-
Coppenhall	42	-	56	2	-	-	0.5
Eccleston	42	3.5	49	2.5	1	0.5	1.5
Gawsworth	11	8	74.5	4.5	-	-	1.5
Guilden Sutton	18.5	12	65.5	3.5	-	-	-
Lawton	35.5	5	54	5	-	-	-
Mobberley	35	3.5	55.5	5	-	0.5	0.5
Nantwich	41	3	56	-	-	-	-
Northenden	42.5	1	44	10	1	1	0.5
Over	40	4	51	4	-	-	1
Overchurch	50.5	2.5	43.5	3.5	-	-	-
Plemstall	32	4.5	54	9	-	0.5	-
Pulford	44.5	2	48.5	-	5	-	-
Stockport	28.5	2	61	8	-	-	-
Tattenhall	39	3.5	48.5	7.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Taxal	3.5	5.5	84	6.5	-	-	-
Thurstaston	6.5	12	74	7.5	-	-	-
Warmingham	39	1	54	5	-	-	1
West Kirby	44	10.5	33.5	12	-	-	-
Wilmslow	44.5	4	45.5	5.5	-	0.5	-
Woodchurch	50.5	3.5	42.5	3.5	-	-	-

* Under 0.5

Source: P.R.O., Home Office, Acreage Returns 1801, Diocese of Chester (H.O. 67/6).

N.B. Figures rounded to nearest 0.5% and do not necessarily add up to exactly 100% for each parish.

Map 3:1
Cheshire Acreage Returns 1801 — Parishes Covered.



Source : P.R.O., H.O. 67/6

Scale in Miles
0 2 4 6 8

wheat generally being the main crop in west Cheshire and oats in the east, but both being of great importance in virtually all parishes. Barley never accounted for more than 20 per cent of the known cropped area, and the only parts of the county where it approached this figure were the Wirral and the south west. Crop rotations varied according to soil, but long leys were common and fallow every third year after wheat and oats not unknown on clay.[1] Since there is evidence of barley being an important bread corn in Cheshire, and since it was presumably of importance in the local brewing industry, the relative absence of the crop from the fields of Cheshire would seem to imply a substantial trade in barley, either coastwise, from Wales, or from Yorkshire. Potatoes were of occasional local importance, particularly in the parishes near Manchester and in the Chester parish of St. John, for which, however, only 19 acres of crops were returned.[2]

For the parish of Stockport a tithe survey of 1768[3] provides similar evidence to that in the 1801 returns and allows some comparison to be made over time. The 1768 survey returned crops for 4,383 acres as against 2,450 acres in 1801 (both statute measure) and this may well provide some indication of the level of omissions in the 1801 returns, even allowing for some land to have been lost to agriculture as the urban area grew. The main changes in cropping between the dates were that oats fell from 73.5 per cent to 61 per cent of the total, that wheat rose

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1. Wedge, op.cit. pp. 16-17.
2. P.R.O. Acreage Returns, Diocese of Chester, 1801, St. John, Chester (HO 67/6/96).
3. Stockport Museum, A Survey and Valuation of the Rectory of Stockport, 1768 (HX 489).

from 21.5 per cent to 28.5 per cent of the total and that potatoes rose from 1.5 per cent to 8 per cent. Such a movement away from oats towards wheat and potatoes is not unexpected and may reflect some changes in diet, or at least in the desirability of certain foodstuffs. Yet it is unlikely that a great deal of produce consumed in the Stockport area, or indeed in any of the towns of east Cheshire, was in fact grown locally. The returns to the government enquiry into agriculture in 1795 from Macclesfield hundred make this clear, as in the comment from the Stockport Division that, 'The cultivated lands....have been usually occupied as meadow and pasture lands only, with very little for corn of any kind, particularly wheat, and never in any degree adequate to the consumption of the inhabitants.'[1] Even in normal years it is probable that this area depended on supplies brought from the rest of Cheshire and maybe from outside the county, particularly from Yorkshire, to supplement local wheat, oats and potatoes.

A few surviving farm accounts can add some local detail to this information on land use and provide evidence on the crops grown for sale. The Stanley home farm at Alderley appears to have been chiefly devoted to livestock, but a few acres of crops, particularly oats, were grown. Cheese was produced and sold, but only in small quantities.[2] Also in east Cheshire, this time in the Cheadle area, Master Burchall was growing oats and barley in substantial quantities in the 1770's, and a little

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1. P.R.O. Home Office Correspondence, Return from Macclesfield Hundred, Stockport Division, 1795 (HO 42/37).
2. Cheshire R.O., Stanley of Alderley Coll. Stanley Farm Accounts 1798-1815 (DSA/241/1-2, 4-6).

wheat and potatoes. In most years he was selling wheat, barley, meal and cheese, and receiving around £30 a year for wheat, a little less for meal, usually much less for barley and between £50 and £100 for cheese. There appear to have been significant differences in the marketing of these various items. Wheat and meal were usually sold in one or two large transactions each year, probably to a miller or corn dealer, and livestock - calves and swine - also seem to have been sold to butchers or dealers. Barley on the other hand was normally sold in very small quantities of anything between a peck and a measure or two to people who would buy two or three times in the course of a winter.[1] Much of this may have been feed barley, or was perhaps sometimes used in home baking, and there is little evidence of bulk sales to brewers, although one Chester brewer in the 1780's was obtaining barley from his tenant on a Cheshire farm.[2] Cheese was a different matter entirely. Any farmer producing 40 or more hundredweight a year, as many Cheshire farmers did, was not looking for a local market. Rather he would dispose of it in bulk to a cheese factor, likely to have warehouses on a river or canal, who would then ship it to London. The only other east Cheshire farmer for whom there is evidence of this sort, Peter Pownall of Bramhall, appears to have been growing the same sort of crops and keeping cattle and pigs, though he was also growing such vegetables as onions, carrots, lettuces, celery and cabbages in the 1780's.[3] There is, however,

1. W. Norbury (Ed.), 'A Cheshire Farmer's Accounts', Cheshire Notes and Queries iii (1888) 158-62, 187-89, 256-58; iv (1889) 11-15, 60-62, 81-83.
2. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of John Ireland of Chester, brewer, 1790 (WC Series).
3. Reading University Library Farm Records Coll., Peter Pownall's Farm Diary, 1782-89 (CHE 1).

no information about how or where he was selling.

In the west wheat may have been a more important cash crop. Mr. Okell of Barrow, a few miles east of Chester, was selling wheat, barley, oats, potatoes and cheese in the 1800's and 1810's, with wheat receipts being £110 1s 0½d in 1802-3 and £350 9s 0d in 1812-3, while in the latter year barley brought in £97 and oats £55.[1] He was making about 70 cwt of cheese a year and selling it to Richard Alison & Co. of Liverpool, receiving about £200 in a normal year. In the north Wirral area an unnamed farmer from Bidston was selling wheat, barley, oats, cheese and sheep in the 1770's, though not in great quantities.[2] The cheese area of south Cheshire was also an area in which wheat and oats were important. Thomas Furber of Austerson was receiving about £30 or £40 a year for wheat and oats in the 1770's and as much as £80 or more by the early nineteenth century, while his cheese receipts rose from £80 to an average of £256 in 1801-10.[3] Corn, however, accounted for around 20 per cent of his receipts during this period. Ralph Basford, another dairy farmer this time in the Crewe area, was also obtaining up to a third of his total receipts from wheat and oats, with wheat particularly important by 1815, according to his early nineteenth-century accounts.[4] Both Furber and Basford were making around 70 cwt of cheese a year for sale to the cheese factors, usually at Frodsham or Wheelock.

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1. Cheshire R.O., Okell Mss., Account Book 3, 1798-1899 (Microfilm, MF 27).
2. Chester R.L., Farming Account Book, Thornton and Bidston Area, 1761-90.
3. Cheshire R.O., Account Books of Thomas Furber of Austerson 1767-96, 1796-1822 (Xerox copies, DDX 150, 223). C.f. W.B. Mercer, 'Thomas Furber', The Reaseheath Review, v (1933) 5-14.
4. W.B. Mercer, 'Ralph Basford', The Reaseheath Review, vi (1934) 16-17.

Mention has been made of the cultivation of potatoes, particularly in areas accessible to urban markets, and of Peter Pownall growing vegetables a few miles south of Stockport. Other farmers were involved in fruit and vegetable production, probably as a side-line to their main interests, while small landholders near towns could presumably take advantage of ready markets for such produce. John Jackson of High Legh in north Cheshire was selling gooseberries, cherries, apples and plums in the 1780's and earning a few pounds a year.[1] Thomas Wood of Didsbury sold apples, plums, pears and potatoes in small quantities in the 1790's and 1800's chiefly at Manchester or Stockport market.[2] This sort of activity raises questions about the impact of urban demand on agriculture and particularly on rents and the location pattern of crops. One would hardly expect to find a complete von Thünen pattern given the existence of several urban markets in a small area, water communication to some of the towns and variations in soil, yet farming near the Cheshire towns and near Liverpool and Manchester did display many of the features of his first ring. Of this ring of free cash cropping von Thünen writes, 'The rental of land is extremely high'[3] and that, 'Gardens will....occupy the land immediately around the town.'[4] The distinctive feature of the ring was that 'It buys most of the manure it uses from the Town, unlike the remoter areas, which produce their own.'[5]

1. MPL, Archives Dept., Account Book of John Jackson of High Legh, Farmer 1784-90 (Misc 254).
2. MPL, Archives Dept., Ledgers of Thomas Wood 1791-1838 (M62/1/2-3).
3. Von Thünen's Isolated State ed. P. Hall (Oxford, 1966) p.9.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 10.

Observers like Holland and Aikin noticed the high rents for land near to the growing manufacturing towns which could be used for gardens, and by 1815 such land could let for up to £8 an acre. Intensive farming, avoiding fallows and using town manure to sustain the fertility of the land was reported in the area to the south of Manchester, where early potatoes, cucumbers and carrots were also grown.[1] Around Stockport a certain amount of land appears to have been used for gardens, and in 1793 three or four acres of land in Edgeley was advertised to be let for this purpose, with mention being made of its vicinity to the town of Stockport.[2] Other advertisements for farms to be let in the vicinity of Stockport refer to the value of the Peak Forest Canal in opening advantageous markets, and of the ready availability of manure from Stockport.[3]

Market gardening was becoming very important by the late eighteenth century wherever there were good communications to the growing towns and wherever the soil was suited to it. The sandy lands around Altrincham were of particular importance in supplying potatoes and garden vegetables to Manchester, with use no doubt being made of the Bridgewater Canal for transport. The Wirral supplied Liverpool with potatoes, and the Frodsham area, with the Mersey and the Bridgewater Canal giving easy access to the markets of south Lancashire, was also of importance.[4] There does not seem to have been much specialization in fruit in Cheshire, but south Lancashire could boast one or two

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1. R.W. Dickson, General View of the Agriculture of Lancashire, (London, 1815), pp. 254-5, 363-4, 425.
2. Manchester Mercury, 12 Feb. 1793.
3. Ibid., 25 Nov. 1794; 20 Jan. 1795.
4. Holland, op.cit., pp. 139-49.

orchards, particularly at Barton-on-Irwell. There 64 acres of land had been planted with apple trees by the early 1790's, while on the same site pears, plums, cherries, gooseberries, beans and cabbages were grown.[1] There are fewer references to the supply of garden produce to Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester than to Manchester and Liverpool, though these towns probably benefited from the gardening practised by local farmers, and had a few specialist gardens operating in the town area. There seem usually to have been around four or five gardeners in Chester at the end of the eighteenth century, and one or two in the other towns. Some of the eighteenth-century Chester gardeners were operating on quite a large scale and could be quite wealthy men. Thomas Glover who died in 1736 had goods in four different gardens valued in his inventory, which also listed 17 seed tubs, garden tools, seeds and seedbags valued at £2 5s Od and garden glasses and frames valued at £2 Os Od.[2] The Nun's Garden, just inside the walls in the west of Chester was probably the most important of the Chester gardens and in the mid-eighteenth century this was worked by William Littleton who at his death in 1758 made money bequests of over £1000.[3] The garden, complete with fruit trees, forest trees, evergreens and kitchen garden seeds, passed to George Rogers in 1771 who held it until the end of the century.[4] George Raffald was supplying plants, seeds, potatoes, strawberries, beans, cherries,

1. J. Holt, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster (London, 1795) p. 79.
2. Cheshire R.O., Will and Inv. of Thomas Glover of Chester, Gardener, 1736 (WS).
3. Cheshire R.O., Will of William Littleton of Chester, Gardener, 1758 (WS series).
4. Adam's Chester Courant, 29 Oct. 1771.

turnips, cauliflowers, plums and pears in Stockport in the 1790's[1] while Alexander Hays seems to have been the chief gardener and nurseryman of the Macclesfield area in the 1810's.[2]

To supply these urban gardeners with their seeds and young plants, at least one firm of nurserymen developed in the 1780's and 1790's. This was Caldwell's of Knutsford who remain in business today as nurserymen, and in the 1790's they were supplying goods to individuals and gardeners in all parts of Cheshire and occasionally outside the county. Between 1797 and 1824 they supplied 36 customers in Macclesfield, 17 in Chester and 8 in Stockport. Typical of their transactions in the 1790's was the sale of onion seed, lettuce seed, cabbage seed, radishes, cucumbers, beans and peas to Jonathan Rigby, gardener of Macclesfield, in February 1790. During this period Caldwell's seem to have dealt with many of the gardeners in Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester whose names are to be found in the trade directories.[3]

Garden produce was not the only food item that needed to be produced near to its point of sale and the production of which could be greatly stimulated by urbanization. Milk was also a product of this sort and either had to be produced in town dairies, or brought in from only a moderate distance. Milk farms began to appear near the growing towns and one was advertised in 1812:

> 'A Milk Farm to be Let. Within a very short distance of the Town of Macclesfield. A Milk Farm, upon which

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1. Cheshire R.O., Arderne Coll., Vouchers 1793-4 (DAR/A/94). Bill from George Raffald, Mar.-Sept. 1794.
2. Macclesfield Courier advertisements 6 Mar. 1813, 31 July 1813.
3. Cheshire R.O., Caldwell's Nurseries, Knutsford, Ledger 1797-1824 and Day Books 1789-96 and 1795-97 (DDX 363/4,6 & 7).

> Seventeen Cows are now Milked, and with a little improvement more Cows might be Milked.' 1

Chester normally had a number of cowkeepers in the early nineteenth century who were likely to have been involved in the supply of milk, but none are recorded in Macclesfield or Stockport.[2] There was certainly a major contrast in milk supply between Manchester and Liverpool, for in 1795 it was reported that not more than six cows were kept in Manchester to supply milk and that large quantities of milk were brought daily to the town via the Bridgewater canal, while there were many cows in Liverpool.[3] This was still true in 1815 when it was reported that the larger towns in Lancashire were frequently supplied with milk from ten to fifteen miles distance, horses and carts or water transport being used to bring it in.[4] The rapid growth of towns had created opportunities and problems for agriculture and the distributive system and it is this urban demand that we must now examine.

Population and the Demand for Foodstuffs

The total population of towns was of course a major determinant of the demand for food, but it was not the only one. A simple increase in the size of a town would mean that more food would be needed there, but changes in the living standards of its inhabitants or in the structure of its population would also be important. An increase in living standards probably

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1. Macclesfield Courier, 31 Oct. 1812.
2. Evidence from directories, J. Pigot, National Commercial Directory (London, 1834) lists 5 cowkeepers in Chester.
3. Holt, op.cit., p. 149.
4. Dickson, op.cit., p. 545.

led to an increase in total food consumption, at least up to a certain point, while it certainly led to changes in the types of foods eaten and to an increase in variety. An increase in the proportion of the urban population engaged in factory work, or totally dependent on wages, was also likely to influence demand. Such people may have been less able to grow any of their own food than craftsmen and artisans, and less able to share in the food of their masters than the journeyman and apprentice. Similarly people engaged in full-time factory work frequently lacked either the time or the facilities to prepare soups or stews and were increasingly dependent on foods that required little preparation such as bread, potatoes, bacon and tea.[1] In relating urbanization to diet it is necessary to bear in mind not only the absolute size of towns but also their character.

Eighteenth-century Cheshire experienced population growth both in the county as a whole and in the three major towns, though growth in the county was very slow until 1751. Estimates of county population are 100,221 in 1701, 107,648 in 1751, at least 154,000 in 1781 and 197,871 in 1801.[2] Population figures for Chester, Macclesfield and Stockport at dates for which there is evidence are given in table 3:2 and figure 3:1 shows the general trend of the increase. All the towns were growing, and growing quite rapidly from the end of the eighteenth century, but Chester's growth was very much less than that of the other towns and its chronology seems to have been somewhat different.

1. John Burnett, Plenty and want (London, 1966) pp. 32-3.
2. P. Deane and W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959 (2nd ed. Cambridge, 1967) p. 163.

Table 3:2 Population of Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester

Year	Macclesfield	Stockport	(Heaton Norris)	Chester
1664	2,875	1,480		7,600
1720	4,625			10,100
1754		3,144		
1765		3,713		
1774			769	14,713
1779		4,975		
1801	8,743	14,830	3,768	15,052
1811	12,299	17,545	5,232	16,140
1821	17,746	21,726	6,958	19,949
1831	23,129	25,469	11,238	21,363

Sources:

1664 Estimated from Hearth Tax Assessments - Chester transcribed in Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire lii (1906); Macclesfield and Stockport P.R.O., E 179/86/145.

1720 Estimated from Francis Gastrell, Notitia Cestriensis printed in Chetham Society Publications viii (1845).

1754, 1765, and 1779 Figures given in Bodleian Library, Watson Mss., Collections towards a History of Cheshire, vol. 1 (Ms. Top. Cheshire b.1).

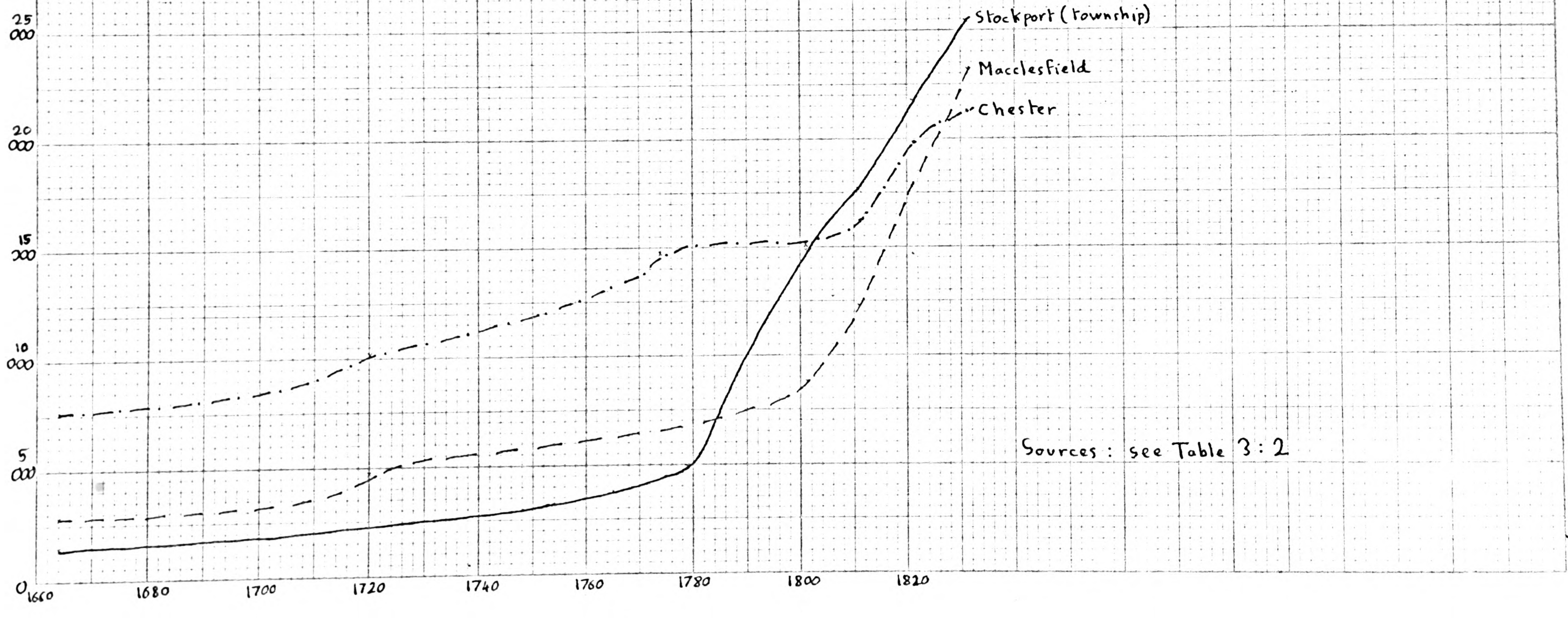
1774 (Chester) Figure given in J. Haygarth, 'Observations on the Population and Diseases of Chester, in the Year 1774', Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society lxviii (1778) 131-54.

1774 (Heaton Norris) Figure given in Chethams Library, Manchester, Census of Manchester 1774 (Mun. A.4. 55).

1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831 Census returns.

Figure 3:1

Population of Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester, 1664–1831



Sources: see Table 3:2

From being a town of perhaps 9,000 people at the opening of the eighteenth century it grew slowly until the 1770's, according to the figures, and then stagnated until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when moderate growth, quickening after 1811, was resumed. Macclesfield had been a fair sized market town in the late seventeenth century - probably the second largest town in the county - and was growing steadily in the eighteenth century and then very rapidly in the early nineteenth century. There are unfortunately no figures for Macclesfield between 1720 and 1801 but a quickening of growth towards the end of the century would be the most likely pattern. Over the century as a whole Macclesfield had a slightly higher annual growth rate than Chester, about 0.6 per cent as against 0.5 per cent. For Stockport there is more information and a very interesting pattern emerges. From being a very small market town at the end of the seventeenth century, Stockport had become the largest town in the county by 1811, after a period of very rapid growth at the end of the eighteenth century. In terms of annual growth rates, Stockport was growing at 0.8 per cent a year between 1664 and 1754, 1.5 per cent between 1754 and 1765, 2.1 per cent between 1765 and 1779 and 5.1 per cent between 1779 and 1801. In the next two decades growth slackened to nearer 2 per cent a year, with Macclesfield becoming the fastest growing town at almost twice that rate. This very rapid growth of Stockport in the last two decades of the eighteenth century was parallelled by equally rapid growth in the adjacent township of Heaton Norris on the north bank of the Mersey.

The fact of rapid urbanization in east Cheshire, particularly

after 1780, is clear but its impact on demand must be more conjectural. The population of the towns was almost certainly growing faster than that of the county as a whole in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the share of Chester, Stockport and Macclesfield in the county total rose from around 15 per cent in 1701 to around 19 per cent or 20 per cent in 1751 and then remained at about that level until at least 1831. There was, however, a major shift between these towns with the share of Macclesfield and Stockport rising from 5 or 6 per cent in 1701 to 7 or 8 per cent in 1751, 12 per cent in 1801 and 14 per cent in 1831, while the share of Chester, after reaching a peak of 11 or 12 per cent in 1751 experienced a slow decline in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[1] Population was beginning to concentrate in the factory towns where the mass of the people would probably be totally dependent on the market for food, and would be living on a few basic foodstuffs, easy to obtain and easy to prepare. Chester's population structure was probably less weighted towards wage earning labourers and probably had more servants and small traders and craftsmen who may have demanded a wider variety of foods. Chester was, however, likely to be ceasing to be the dominant market in the county by the late eighteenth century, and in any case the contrast between the towns should not be over-emphasized. In all towns most consumers were poor, depended essentially on wages, and purchased only a limited variety of foodstuffs.

Direct evidence on levels of demand is not available, but

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1. Percentages based on estimates of town size drawn from table 3:2 and on Deane and Cole estimates of county population. The figures are very approximate, but the overall trend cannot be doubted.

there is a certain amount of qualitative evidence on the types of food eaten and on diet generally. It seems probable that the normal diet of the labourer in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was high in carbohydrates, obtained chiefly from cereals and potatoes. The labourers diets collected by Davies and Eden in the late eighteenth century show in general an energy content of around 2,000 calories per day of which between two-thirds and three-quarters came from carbohydrates. Daily intake was between 380 and 400 grams of carbohydrates (compared with modern intake of 320 grams) with protein and fats being below modern levels and calcium significantly below them.[1] It seems clear from these diets, as well as from contemporary comments, that any examination of diet must begin with bread, and, in some parts of the country, potatoes. For regional variations in diet were of very great importance, particularly in the grain from which bread was made and in meat and dairy product consumption. While it may have been true for southern England that wheat was the standard grain used for bread at the end of the eighteenth century, and while the white wheaten loaf was almost certainly the desired bread of all,[2] the bread that the labourer was able to obtain was frequently different from his ideal. In 1766 Charles Smith reckoned that non-wheaten bread was still of great importance in northern and midland England, estimating, on the basis of his knowledge of the corn trade and from enquiries throughout England, that out of 738,150 people in the counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire,

1. D.J. Oddy, 'Trends in Working Class Food Consumption, 1780-1900.' Paper read at British Agricultural History Society Conference, 1 Dec. 1973.
2. Sir William Ashley, The Bread of Our Forefathers (Oxford, 1928) p. 2.

Lincolnshire and Lancashire 290,395 ate oat bread, 200,399 wheat bread, 128,621 barley bread and 118,795 rye bread.[1] Although the following thirty years probably saw an increased use of wheaten bread in this area, it was by no means universal in Cheshire by 1800.

The evidence for Cheshire is based on the 1800 returns from parish clergy on the state of agriculture and markets, which included a reply to a question on the use of substitutes for wheat.[2] These replies sometimes provide hints on the normal bread corn used by the poor, and table 3:4 and map 3:2 summarize this evidence for the parishes for which it is available while table 3:3 sets forth the evidence on substitute grains. Insofar as it is possible to draw any conclusions from this material, it is evident that both oats and barley were of major importance as bread corns in the 1790's. There appears to be a clear barley zone in the west of the county stretching into Wales and including the Wirral and the Chester area. The situation may not have changed greatly in the Wirral since the 1760's when descriptions of the parishes of Eastham and Bromborough referred to barley as the chief food of the poor, along with potatoes and buttermilk.[3] Both the Cheshire agricultural reporters also refer to the consumption of barley bread. In the east of the county, the normal consumption pattern may have been somewhat different, with oats assuming greater importance. The 1800

1. Charles Smith, Three Tracts on the Corn Trade (London, 1766) pp. 182-85.
2. P.R.O., Home Office Correspondence, Agricultural Returns, 1800 (H.O. 42/52-55). The returns for Cheshire parishes are all in H.O. 42/54.
3. 'Benevolus', 'A Description of the Parish of Eastham', Gentleman's Magazine xxxii (1762) 563-4; 'Ingenuus', 'A Description of the Parish of Bromborough', Ibid. p. 616.

Table 3:3 Use of Substitutes for Wheat in Bread 1800

Foreign Wheat	Oats	Barley	Rice	Potatoes
Alderley	Alderley	Alderley		
		Aldford		
	Astbury	Astbury		
		Backford		
Barthomley		Barthomley	Barthomley	
		Broxton		
Bunbury		Bunbury		
	Chelford	Chelford		
Chester		Chester		Chester
Coddington		Coddington		
Congleton		Congleton		
		Eastham		
		Eccleston		
		Farndon		
Knutsford	Knutsford	Knutsford		Knutsford
Little Leigh		Little Leigh	Little Leigh	
Lymm		Lymm		Lymm
	Macclesfield			
	Malpas	Malpas		
Middlewich		Middlewich		
Mottram	Mottram	Mottram	Mottram	
Nantwich		Nantwich	Nantwich	
		Neston		
Over		Over		
	Parkgate	Parkgate		
	Sandbach	Sandbach		
Stockport	Stockport	Stockport	Stockport	
		Tarvin		
Thelwall		Thelwall		
Tilston		Tilston		
Whitegate		Whitegate		
Wilmslow		Wilmslow	Wilmslow	
		Woodchurch		
Wrenbury		Wrenbury	Wrenbury	
Wybunbury		Wybunbury		
Ashton-u-Lyne	Ashton-u-Lyne	Ashton-u-Lyne		
Manchester	Manchester	Manchester	Manchester	
Gresford		Gresford	Gresford	
		Hawarden		
Holywell		Holywell	Holywell	
Mold		Mold		
	St. Asaph	St. Asaph		

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 42/52-55.

Table 3:4 Normal Bread in Use 1800 (when stated or implied)

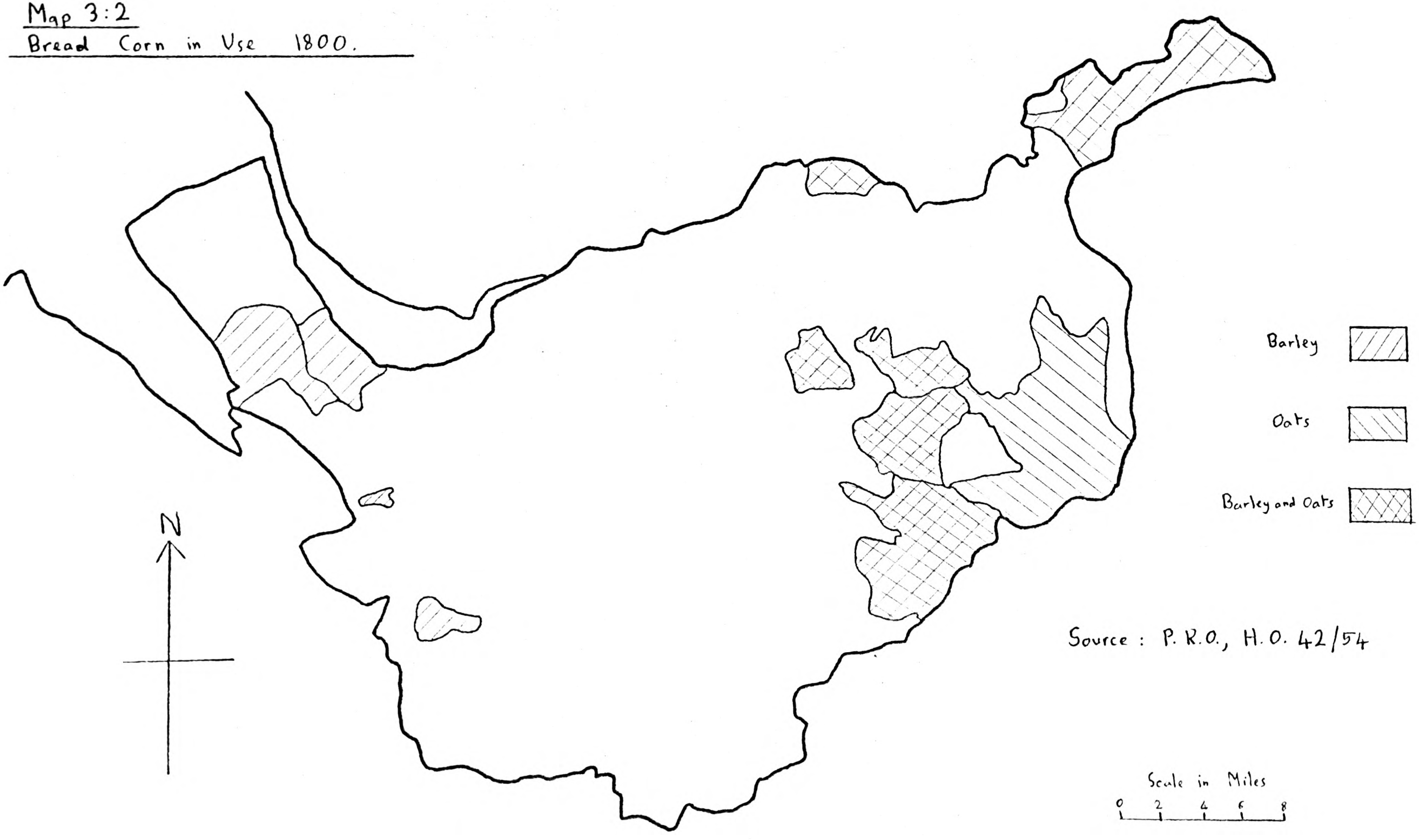
Alderley	- oats and barley form common bread
Astbury	- barley and oats principal subsistence of lower orders
Ashton-on-Mersey	- poorer classes less keen on barley and oat bread than formerly
Bunbury	- barley always much used
Chelford	- barley flour and oatmeal general bread of lower orders
Chester	- barley bread and potatoes normal food, though little barley bread in City of Chester
Coddington	- rye and barley mixed with wheat and barley used on its own
Eastham	- poor live chiefly on barley bread
Knutsford	- lower classes live on barley and oaten bread and potatoes
Macclesfield	- oat bread is norm, though consumption by horses made oats dear
Mottram	- oat bread is norm, though barley used of late
Neston	- barley much used when it can be procured
Ashton-u-Lyne	- oatmeal chief food of poor though barley much used recently
Gresford	- barley principal bread corn, alone or mixed with ¼ wheat
St. Asaph	- barley is usual food of labourer and smaller farmer

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 42/52-55.

N.B. The primary purpose of the 1800 returns was to indicate the availability and use of substitutes for wheat bread in a crisis year. However many of the comments, typified by those summarized above, clearly relate to normal conditions and strongly imply widespread consumption of non-wheaten bread in other than food shortage years.

Map 3:2

Bread Corn in Use 1800.



Source : P.R.O., H.O. 42/54

returns for east Cheshire generally refer to the use of oats, although in many places, particularly in the north-east corner of Cheshire and the adjacent part of Lancashire, barley was mentioned as slowly becoming important. The Macclesfield area seems to have been heavily dependent on oats both in 1600 and in 1796 when it was stated that, 'In this Town and Neighbourhood there is a great consumption of Bread made from Oats only.'[1]

As a substitute for wheat in a bad year barley was, however, almost universally used, and while non-wheat bread may have remained the norm for many of the poor into the nineteenth century, it seems to have been becoming less acceptable. Barley was listed as a potential substitute in virtually all Cheshire parishes, and in some cases in 1800 it may have been used as a substitute for oats which were somewhat deficient in supply in 1800, as is implied by a further crop return:

> 'With respect to Oats (the Meal from which constitutes a principal part of subsistence for the laborious Poor in this and the adjacent Populous and extensive County of Lancaster) they appear to have been most deficient in crop....' 2

It was proposed that the making of barley into malt be banned since barley was likely to be the chief substitute for oats. The use of oats as substitutes was normal only in east Cheshire, though some seem to have been used in parts of the Wirral and Wales. Foreign wheat was to be found in a few towns, and rice was used occasionally, chiefly where it had found a champion in one of the principal inhabitants of the parish, as in the case of Wilmslow where the rector had busied himself in teaching how

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1. P.R.O., Privy Council, Unbound Papers 1796 (P.C. 1/33/A87).
2. P.R.O., Board of Trade, Papers relating to Corn 1800 (B.T. 6/139).

it was to be prepared. Potatoes were probably of much greater importance than the returns imply, no direct question being asked about their role as substitutes for cereals.

Although a writer like Henry Holland was reporting on the increased use of wheat bread by 1808, Cheshire in the early nineteenth century remained a county where barley and oats were important bread corns, and may well have had definite barley bread and oat bread zones. There is less good evidence about other foodstuffs in normal use. Hedge lists potatoes, barley bread, butter, butter-milk, whey and perhaps a little meat or cheese as the normal diet of an agricultural labourer,[1] while Holland adds bacon and tea to this list.[2] Evidence of this nature chiefly relates to rural diets where items like butter-milk and some other dairy produce were more easily obtained than in towns, and may only be accurate for a very limited area. Generally in the north in the eighteenth century meat may have been more common than in other parts of England, though in towns it would often be bacon rather than fresh meat, tea was slowly becoming normal, while bread, potatoes and perhaps milk, cheese and green vegetables made up the diet.[3] Diets collected by Eden in the 1790's for Manchester, show bread, meat, milk, cheese, butter, beer, tea and sugar and potatoes and vegetables being purchased by a dyer, and oatmeal bread, meat, potatoes, tea and sugar, milk, cheese and butter by a labourer.[4] There are no diets for Cheshire, but it is unlikely that food

1. T. Hedge, op.cit., p. 25.
2. H. Holland, op.cit., pp. 298-9.
3. See J. Burnett, op.cit., esp. pp. 10-33 and E.C. Gilboy, Wages in Eighteenth Century England (Harvard, 1934) pp. 200-202 for discussions of diet.
4. Sir F.M. Eden, The State of the Poor (London, 1797) ii 358-9.

consumption in the Stockport area differed greatly from that in Manchester.

The only direct evidence for Cheshire comes from Poor House diets and accounts. A diet for the Chester St. John Poor House in the 1730's is made up chiefly of milk, bread, beef and potatoes with a little cheese,[1] while milk, potatoes, beef and bread were on the Chester Poor House menu in the 1790's.[2] How far such diets were observed is not known, but among items purchased regularly for the Poor House in St. John's parish in the 1730's were milk, bread, potatoes, beef, beer, butter and flour, while it seems that some green vegetables were grown there, and by the 1750's sugar was a regular purchase.[3] Purchases for the Poor House at Sutton near Macclesfield in the 1770's included meat, cheese, butter and milk and occasionally bacon, potatoes and other vegetables.[4] These were almost certainly the main items in the diet of the eighteenth-century urban workers. It was a diet that lacked much variety, that may not always have been very palatable, and which of course differed from place to place and among different classes in the same place. Taking this evidence together with the evidence on Cheshire farming it is clear that there must have been a substantial trade in agricultural produce, both from the farming areas of the county to the towns, and from outside into the county.

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1. Cheshire R.O., St. John Parish, Poor House Accounts 1731-56 (P 51/22).
2. Eden, op.cit. ii 38.
3. St. John's Poor House Accounts.
4. Chetham's Library, Manchester, Sutton Poor House Accounts 1769-1813, 4 vols. (Mun. A.7. 14-17).

Middlemen and the Trade in Farm Produce

The trade in farm produce which was so vital to the provisioning of towns was partly in the hands of the farmers themselves and partly in the hands of middlemen. It seems probable that bulk consignments of cheese, corn and livestock were handled largely by middlemen with farmers taking advantage of both public markets and the facilities offered by Inns, or even private houses, to make contracts with dealers and factors. On the other hand, small quantities of fruit, vegetables, eggs and perhaps some dairy produce would be likely to find themselves taken directly to a public market by the producer himself. What is clear is that most farmers within a reasonable distance of a large urban market had a choice of outlets for the disposal of crops and produce and could, if they so desired, take advantage of price variations. Farmers in north-east Kent had access to several local markets, of which Canterbury was the most important, and to the London market. In the early eighteenth century they seem to have availed themselves of local or metropolitan marketing opportunities according to the relative prices in each and according to the weather which could, if it were windy, keep the hoys in their local ports but at the same time turn the sails of the local windmills.[1] There does not seem to be any evidence of Cheshire farmers playing the available markets in this manner, but they certainly enjoyed a choice between selling locally, selling to millers, mealmen or other middlemen or selling in town markets. There was also a choice between

1. Dennis Baker, 'The Marketing of Corn in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century: North-East Kent', Agricultural History Review xviii (1970) 126-50.

urban markets and in 1802 and 1803 Thomas Wood of Didsbury was selling fruit at both Stockport and Manchester.[1] James Higginson, a farmer at Great Barrow, normally sold eggs and butter at Chester market through his wife, while his corn and cheese was disposed of by contract, with the agreements for its sale sometimes being made at Chester.[2]

As well as the major items of corn and cheese, many other minor items of produce could at times pass through the hands of middlemen and find their way to urban consumers. In the early nineteenth century large quantities of butter made in the hilly parts of north Wales were said to be sold at fairs at Chester, Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth and to be sent by sea to Liverpool. During the six summer months three tons each week were said to go to Chester from the Bala area.[3] Manchester was of course receiving foodstuffs from large parts of north west England including oatmeal, potatoes and some green vegetables from Cheshire. Apples were brought by canal from the cider counties in the 1790's and it was said that even the poor ate them in pies or puddings.[4] One non-agricultural food that was finding its way to Manchester in this period was fish which was brought from the Yorkshire coast, while salmon was found in the Mersey and Ribble and trout and eels in local rivers.[5] Fish was regarded as of particular importance at times of high grain prices and in 1800 there was a scheme to bring large quantities of fresh

1. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Ledger of Thomas Wood 1792-1838 (M 62/1/3).
2. Cheshire R.O., Diary of James Higginson, Farmer of Great Barrow 1817-19 (DDX 106).
3. Walter Davies, General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales (London, 1810) p. 315.
4. J. Aikin, A Description of the Country from 30 to 40 Miles around Manchester (London, 1795) pp. 203-5.
5. Ibid.

and salted fish to Manchester from north-east Yorkshire and retail it at very low prices to the poor.[1] There do not seem to be any references to fish consumption in Stockport or Macclesfield, but Chester had a fish market and a number of fishmongers presumably dealing in local salmon from the Dee and possibly some sea fish. It is not clear how important the trade in live cattle from Cheshire was, though in 1766 a Cheshire grazier testified to a Commons Committee on the dominance of the jobbers in the lean cattle trade in northern England, complaining of their role in increasing prices. He was buying lean cattle from jobbers and fattening them, possibly for local markets.[2]

It was, however, the trade in corn and cheese which was most important and where the middlemen were chiefly to be found. These may well have been increasing in number and importance during the eighteenth century as the traditional pitched markets gave way to sales by sample and by private contract. It is unlikely that the differentiation between different types of corn buyers suggested by Westerfield was a very real feature of the trade, but corn dealers certainly went under very many different names and an increasing number of types of traders were involving themselves in corn marketing.[3] Defoe in the early eighteenth century described corn factors travelling among farmers and buying corn while it was standing in the fields, and commented on the integration of functions in the corn trade with bakers buying for themselves and cutting out shopkeeping

1. P.R.O., H.O. 42/53/474.
2. Evidence of Thomas Weston, Common Journals XXX 787 1 May 1766.
3. R.B. Westerfield, Middlemen in English Business, pp. 135-58.

mealmen and millers buying on their own account and selling direct to bakers.[1] Although developments in the marketing of corn and the corn trade probably took place earlier in southern than in northern England, many of the features associated with the trade in the eighteenth century are probably to be found in Cheshire. Information, however, tends to be scanty and largely confined to periods of scarcity, possibly because the trade in corn was so much an accepted part of life that it was not normally worth commenting on and did not normally demand attention from the authorities.

The figures given in tables 3:5 and 3:6 give some indication of the numbers of licensed dealers in corn in parts of Cheshire in the eighteenth century. The large drop between 1733 and the 1750's almost certainly reflects major changes in the information collected, or in the interest the authorities took in enforcing the licensing legislation. It is clear that in the 1730's virtually all the townships in Macclesfield hundred had at least one dealer in corn, and many small villages had several persons licensed to deal in it. The licence book lists maltsters, swalers, badgers and drovers but most of the individuals listed are not placed in any category. Only 4 drovers were listed and it is unlikely that there were very many of them active in Macclesfield hundred. The figures for the 1750's and 1760's are described as being for badgers, and whatever their inadequacies they still indicate a wide distribution of corn dealers. Both Stockport and Macclesfield had a substantial number of corn dealers, though with very great yearly fluctuations in the 1760's.

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1. D. Defoe: The Complete English Tradesmen, II, part 2, 36-46.

Table 3:5 Licensed Dealers in Corn - Macclesfield Hundred

Township	1733	1759	1763	Township	1733	1759	1763
Adlington	5 (1)	2	4	Mottram	11		
Nether Alderley	15		2	Mottram Andrew	4		
Over Alderley	2			Newton	5		
Birtles	3	1		Norbury	7 (2)		
Bollin Fee	9			Northenden	2	1	
Bollington	11 (1)	1	1	Offerton	3		
Bosley	3	1		Pott Shrigley	10		1
Bredbury	9			Pownall	15		
Brinnington	2			Poynton and Worth	1	1	2
Butley	6	4	1	Prestbury	5	2	2
Cheadle	8			Rainow	18		1
Chelford	10	1	1	North Rode	2		
Chorley	1			Romiley	6 (1)		
Dean Row		1		Siddington	8	1	1
Disley	9	3	4	Snelson	6	1	
Duckinfield	19			Somerford		1	
Eaton	3	1		Stal y bridge	10		
Etchells	1	3		Sutton	10 (1)	5	6
Gawsworth	10	1	1	Taxal	3	2	1
Godley	5			Tintwistle	11		
Hattersley	4 (1)			Titherington	3 (1)		
Henbury	10		1	Torkington	2		
Hollinworth	1			Great Warford	11		
Hurdsfield	7 (2)			Werneth	15		
Hyde	7			Whaley			1
Kettleshulme	7			Wildboarclough	1	2	1
Lyme				Wilmslow	1	5	6
Marple	15			Wincle		1	
Marton	3	2	2	Lower Withington	6 (1)		
Mattley	6 (2)	2	2	Worth		2	
Mottley	1						

N.B. Figures in brackets after 1733 figures refer to dealers specified as badgers.

Source: P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer Miscellanea, Licence Book for Maltsters, Swaylers, Badgers and Drovers 1723-34 (Chester 38/28/12). For 1733 - drovers excluded. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions, Register of Badgers Licences 1759-72 (QDL/7) for 1759 and 1763.

Table 3:6 Licensed Dealers in Corn - Macclesfield and Stockport

	Macclesfield	Stockport
1723	21 (2)	38 (2)
1726	27 (2)	51 (3)
1733	36 (0)	53
1734	44?	52
1759	6	5
176-	3	1
1762	4	2
1763	4	1
1764	6	1
1765	7	8
1766	10	4
1767	9	10
1768	11	5
1769	9	14
1770	13	22
1771	8	26

N.B. Figures in brackets after 1733 figures refer to dealers specified as badgers.

Source: As for Table 3.5

Sureties had to be produced before a licence was granted, and in many cases it must have been possible to avoid the licensing legislation, particularly in remote areas. Chester was outside the normal county jurisdiction for purposes such as this and no figures survive for it.

If the figures for persons licensed to buy and sell corn do not give a very clear indication of the extent of such dealing, some aspects of the form of the trade can be suggested. During the high price year of 1757 the Cheshire justices seem to have become concerned about trade taking place in corn outside the public markets and action was commenced against engrossers. Examinations were taken of several persons involved in the corn trade and a picture of activities in the Chester area emerges.[1] It does not seem that there was anything very unusual about the trade in 1757: what was new was the interest of the county authorities. The examination of Lancelot Read of Chester, brewer, and John Sproston of Chester, maltman, revealed the existence of weekly meetings for buying and selling corn at Coal Brook on Mondays, Preston-on-the-Hill on Tuesdays and Kelsall on Thursdays which were attended by 29 named persons, chiefly from the villages to the east of Chester.[2] When John Robinson of Kelsall was examined he referred to several transactions in oats taking place in his house concerning grain that had never been exposed to sale in a public market.[3] John Stone of Coal Brook admitted that his house had been used for meetings at which corn was bought and sold and said that he believed such meetings

1. Sessions File, Nantwich Quarter Sessions, 10 Jan. 1758 (Cheshire R.O.) QJF 186/1.
2. 8 Nov. 1757 QJF 186/1/117.
3. 14 Nov. 1757 QJF 186/1/118.

had been held weekly for the past 60 years.[1] Other witnesses made specific references to transactions such as John Jones of Barrow who said he had sold over 20 measures of wheat to a Northwich corn factor, the agreement having been made in a public house in Northwich and only 1½ measures having been shown in the public market.[2] References were made to purchases by sample at markets with the corn being delivered in private houses, while David Thomas of Chester described the purchase of 200 or 300 measures of corn agreed while he was threshing it for which 2d or 3d above the market price was given because it was conveniently placed for delivery to Chester.[3]

There are a few other references to private dealings in corn. In 1765 William Lamb of Overton, a husbandman, was examined and stated that Jonathan Simcock of Dunham-on-the-Hill had in the previous two years made a practice of buying corn in Cheshire while it was still in the ground. He alleged that Simcock had sent the corn he bought to other counties and thus enhanced its price in Cheshire.[4] John Clayton, a Chester cornfactor, was in 1772 said to be indebted to John Barrow of Holt, Denbighshire in the sum of £100 9s 9d for oats that Barrow had sold to him.[5] Barrow is described in the affidavit as a boatman, and since the debt was owed to him, it seems not unlikely that he was a carrier acting as a middleman between the Welsh farmers and the Chester dealers, owning the goods he carried rather than

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1. 23 Nov. 1757 QJF 186/1/119.
2. 14 Nov. 1757 QJF 186/1/118.
3. 18 Nov. 1757 QJF 186/1/116.
4. Knutsford Sessions 8 Oct. 1765, Examination 21 Sept. 1765, QJF 193/4/91.
5. Chester City R.O. Portmote and Pentice Court Affidavit File, 1769-72 (MSAF/9).

being a mere factor. It seems that west Cheshire at least had by the mid-eighteenth century a regular private marketing network, involving not only individual purchases by dealers from farmers, but also set meetings between farmers and dealers, making use of the inns of market towns and of houses, quite possibly ale-houses, in villages.

Inns certainly appear to have been as important in the corn trade in Cheshire as they were in other counties. They were referred to several times in the examinations cited above and there are several other scraps of evidence providing hints of their role. The return to the government inquiry of 1800 on agriculture and markets from Bunbury in south Cheshire stated that there was no market town in the parish, but that great meetings for the buying and selling of corn took place at two public houses to which farmers, millers and corn dealers came weekly, particularly in the Autumn, chiefly to supply the Manchester district.[1] The rector added that 'The trade here is altogether carried on by samples'. Inns remained important as corn markets in the first decades of the nineteenth century as some newspaper advertisements show. In December 1813 it was announced that a corn market would be held at the Red Lion Inn in Church Minshull on Wednesdays opening at 2 p.m., the first market being on 5 Jan. 1814.[2] A further new market was established in 1815, this time in south Cheshire:

> 'From a wish expressed by several Gentlemen, Farmers, Millers, Corndealers, and others, to have a weekly Corn Market established at the Red Lion, Weston, near Nantwich, as its Local Advantage renders it most convenient both for

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1. P.R.O., H.O. 42/54/118.
2. Macclesfield Courier 18 Dec. 1813.

> Buyers and Sellers; Notice is hereby Given, that the first Market will be held on Monday, September 25 1815. 1

Among the corn traders said to have been dealing in the Inns at Bunbury were millers, and the eighteenth century apparently saw an increase in the number of millers buying and selling corn on their own account and not merely grinding for others. This seems to have been true in Kent where millers were moving into the meal and flour trades,[2] and to have been widely noticed by contemporaries, who, at times of high prices, were liable to blame the flour dealing millers and call for their prohibition from dealing in corn, grain or meal.[3] The miller could clearly be of considerable importance in the provisioning of towns and his role as a middleman deserves brief examination. Certainly there were some millers in Cheshire by the late eighteenth century who were dealing in corn, for among those taking oaths at Chester and Nantwich in 1789 and 1790 to return true prices of the corn they purchased were 14 millers from west Cheshire.[4] Many other mills may, however, have continued until relatively late to have the sole function of grinding corn for the inhabitants of their locality and to take toll in kind in the traditional manner. The accounts of Harden Mill near Stockport for the 1750's show regular receipts of toll corn, some of which was used in the Arderne household, but much of which was apparently sold in small quantities.[5] Water mills were widespread in

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1. Ibid. 23 Sept. 1815.
2. D. Baker, loc. cit. p. 149.
3. See e.g. Eusebius Silvester, The Causes of the present High Price of Corn and Grain (London, 1757) pp. 25-6.
4. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions, Corn Dealers Oaths 1789-91 (QDL/8).
5. Cheshire R.O., Arderne Coll., Harden Mill Book 1752-55, (DAR/F/12).

Cheshire in the eighteenth century with 140 being shown on Burdett's map of 1777, including a thick scattering in east Cheshire with mills in very many villages, but fewer around Chester though there was one wind mill in that area. The size of individual mills could vary greatly from a small village mill to the huge Dee Mills at Chester.[1]

In the towns there was frequently a local monopoly attached to the mills, and this, together with problems of the adequacy of milling facilities for the needs of the inhabitants, could often lead to disputes. In Macclesfield in 1731 there were complaints from Lady Fauconberg of the underuse of her mills at Sutton because, she claimed, there was a corporation monopoly of milling in the town. This was denied, but it was admitted that all malt ground in Macclesfield had to be ground at the corporation malt mill in Dog Lane.[2] Sir George Warren, lord of the manor of Stockport, attempted during the 1760's to enforce his milling monopoly in the face of purchases by the inhabitants of the town of malt and flour ground at mills outside the town. He complained of the small amounts of flour ground at his mill even though the cutting of a tunnel to improve the water supply to the mill had been authorised and executed in the 1740's. In reply the Stockport burgesses claimed that the limited amounts of corn grown in the manor and brought to market there forced them to buy quantities of flour by private agreement in order to supply the town.[3] By the end of the eighteenth century there

1. J. Harold Norris, 'The Water-Powered Corn Mills of Cheshire', Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc. lxxv & lxxvi (1965-6) 33-71; P.P. Burdett, Survey of the County Palatine of Chester, 1777.
2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Bills and Answers, Lady Fauconberg v. Macclesfield, 1731 (E 112/1086/30).
3. Stockport Museum, Cases re Manorial Rights (HX 53, HX 162).

was a windmill in Stockport situated in Edward Street and held by a corn dealer in the town, John Robinson, and when this was sold in 1817 two wheat mills, one meal mill, a flour machine, a pair of malt rollers and a drying kiln were listed among the fixtures.[1]

The monopoly exercised by the Dee Mills was a long-standing cause of complaints in Chester and the eighteenth century saw various attempts to erect new mills and improve the facilities available to the inhabitants of the city. In 1729 the Company of Bakers complained of the extraordinary profit taken by the tenants of the Dee Mills for grinding and asked leave of the Corporation to erect a windmill to compete with the Dee Mills and grind corn cheaply for the poor. The Company seems to have dropped the scheme quickly, but in 1730 two individual bakers were allowed to erect a windmill although it is not known whether they did so.[2] At least one of the later proposals for new mills came to fruition, for in 1764 Messrs. Samuel Walker and Lea purchased a steam engine from Boulton and Watt to drive one pair of French stones, one pair of grey stones, one pair of shilling stones for oats and a dressing machine.[3] A year later Walker and Lea announced that they had erected a large building in the east of Chester in which they had put machinery for grinding corn of all kinds. Since the mill would be of benefit to the inhabitants of the City by producing all types of bread corn at all times at reasonable rates, they asked for financial help

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1. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Burton Mss. vol. 5, p. 717.
2. Chester City R.O., Chester Assembly Files 1723-32 (AF 51).
3. Birmingham R.L., Boulton & Watt Coll., Blotting Book No. 3 f. 5.

in improving the road leading to it, and £10 seems to have been granted by the Corporation.[1]

Much of the grain from the farms of Cheshire, after passing through the hands of various middlemen, including millers, probably found its way to the towns of that county or of Lancashire. Cheese took a different journey, however, much of it passing through Wheelock on the Trent and Mersey Canal, Frodsham on the Mersey or Chester on the Dee on its way to London. Increasingly in the nineteenth century cheese from north and east Cheshire was being sold in the markets of Stockport, Manchester and perhaps to a lesser extent Macclesfield, either for the supply of those towns or of the populous areas of south Lancashire and west Yorkshire,[2] but cheese from the classic dairying area of mid and south Cheshire was long destined chiefly for London. It is difficult to estimate the size of the trade. Defoe's figure of 14,000 tons a year being sent to London in the early eighteenth century and 8,000 tons to other parts of the country via the Severn and Trent is certainly an exaggeration.[3] The account of cheese imports into London given by Maitland for 1729-30 shows 5,766 tons of Cheshire cheese imported which is probably a more reasonable figure.[4] Chester itself seems to have been shipping between 1,000 and 1,300 tons of cheese a year to London in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century,[5] and of course further quantities went from Liverpool or via the Trent and

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1. Chester City R.O., Chester Assembly Files 1775-90, Petition from Walker and Lea 1785/6 (AF 56).
2. H. Holland, op.cit. p. 316.
3. D. Defoe, Tour... ii. 72.
4. W. Maitland, The History and Survey of London, (London, 1756) ii 759.
5. See cap. 2 for detailed figures of cheese shipments. (p. 29)

the east coast. A fairly substantial Cheshire dairy farmer would probably be making between 3 and 4 tons of cheese a year in the early nineteenth century and expecting to receive about £200 for it.

The trade seems to have been entirely in the hands of middlemen, who were frequently accused of dealing unfairly both with the Cheshire farmers and with the London cheesemongers. The main allegations against the factors were that they made contracts with farmers in a clandestine manner so that farmers could not prove them, that they delayed weighing cheese until it had lost much of its weight, that they often failed to take cheese at the time agreed on and if the price dropped would refuse to take it claiming that it was damaged and that they frequently delayed paying for the cheese they had bought until several months after the agreed date.[1] A scheme for the 1730's to protect farmers from factors by making contracts more easily enforceable received much support in Cheshire,[2] though some farmers were happy with their present arrangements, but seems to have come to nothing. As late as the 1790's Thomas Wedge was complaining of the foolish and tyrannical custom of farmers making only verbal bargains with factors.[3]

Disputes between factors and farmers could and did arise and provide some information on cheese marketing. In 1731 George Salmon of Nantwich, cheese factor, took action against Hugh Eyres of Wistaston for breaking a contract he had made to supply cheese. Salmon was buying on behalf of Abraham Daking

1. Commons Journals xxiii 96, 16/27 March 1737/8.
2. Observations on the Cheese Scheme (n.p., n.d.) s/s c. 1738 (Among Earwaker Papers in Chester City R.O. EA 53/2/341).
3. T. Wedge, op.cit. p. 61.

and Hector Mandsley, London cheesemongers, but according to the usual custom he did not reveal whom he was acting for when he viewed Eyres' cheese and decided that about 5 tons were fit for the London market. The cheese was to be delivered at Prodsham and purchased for 30s per hundredweight. The dispute appears to have arisen because Salmon delayed weighing the cheese longer than Eyres expected, and Eyres sold to another factor in early May, 1731 at 31s per hundredweight before Salmon came to complete the transaction.[1] On other occasions the farmer felt himself ill used as when Thomas Joynson of Pickton agreed to sell all his 1737 make of cheese to Matthias Ireland of Chester, cheese factor. Joynson claimed he delivered 12 cwt of cheese to Ireland in December 1737 and 7 cwt in February 1738 which Ireland refused to pay for.[2] In all agreements there seems to have been a delay between the first visit of the factor and the weighing and delivery of the cheese, the cheese seems to have been sold in bulk to one factor, and the farmer normally arranged delivery. Actions for debt by farmers in the Chester area against Chester cheesemongers do not seem to have been uncommon throughout the eighteenth century, with sums owed ranging from ten to forty or more pounds.[3]

Despite disputes and a good deal of mistrust between farmers and factors, cheese reached the urban markets. Water communications seem to have particularly significant importance

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1. P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer Paper Pleadings (Chester 16/125).
2. Ibid., Chester 16/128.
3. Chester City R.O. MSAF/1-13.

in ensuring the supply of London, with canal, river and sea all sharing in the trade. Improvements to communications could widen all markets and aid the supply of food to towns and the final section of this chapter will consider land and water communications in Cheshire and their impact on the trade in agricultural goods.

Communications

The general benefits of improved communications by both land and water in the eighteenth century were clear to contemporaries and have been recognised by modern writers, though quantification has rarely been possible. These benefits seem chiefly to have been a cheapening of transport costs, an improvement in the reliability of transport and in some cases a speeding up of communications. All these could of course reduce the cost of goods either directly by reducing the share of transport in costs, or indirectly by reducing the amount of capital tied up in goods in transit or waiting to be moved. In all cases the market for goods was widened by such improvements and while bulky and heavy goods benefited most from the developments in water transport, road improvements were of benefit to a wide range of goods including agricultural products.[1] The social rate of return on turnpikes has been estimated at not less than 4 per cent and in general the money invested in them seems not to have been

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1. For contemporary comments on transport see e.g. A View of the Advantages of Inland Navigation (London, 1765); Henry Homer, An Enquiry into Preserving and Improving the Publick Roads of the Kingdom (Oxford, 1767). On canals see J.R. Ward, Finance of Canal Building in Eighteenth century England (Oxford, 1974).

misapplied.[1]

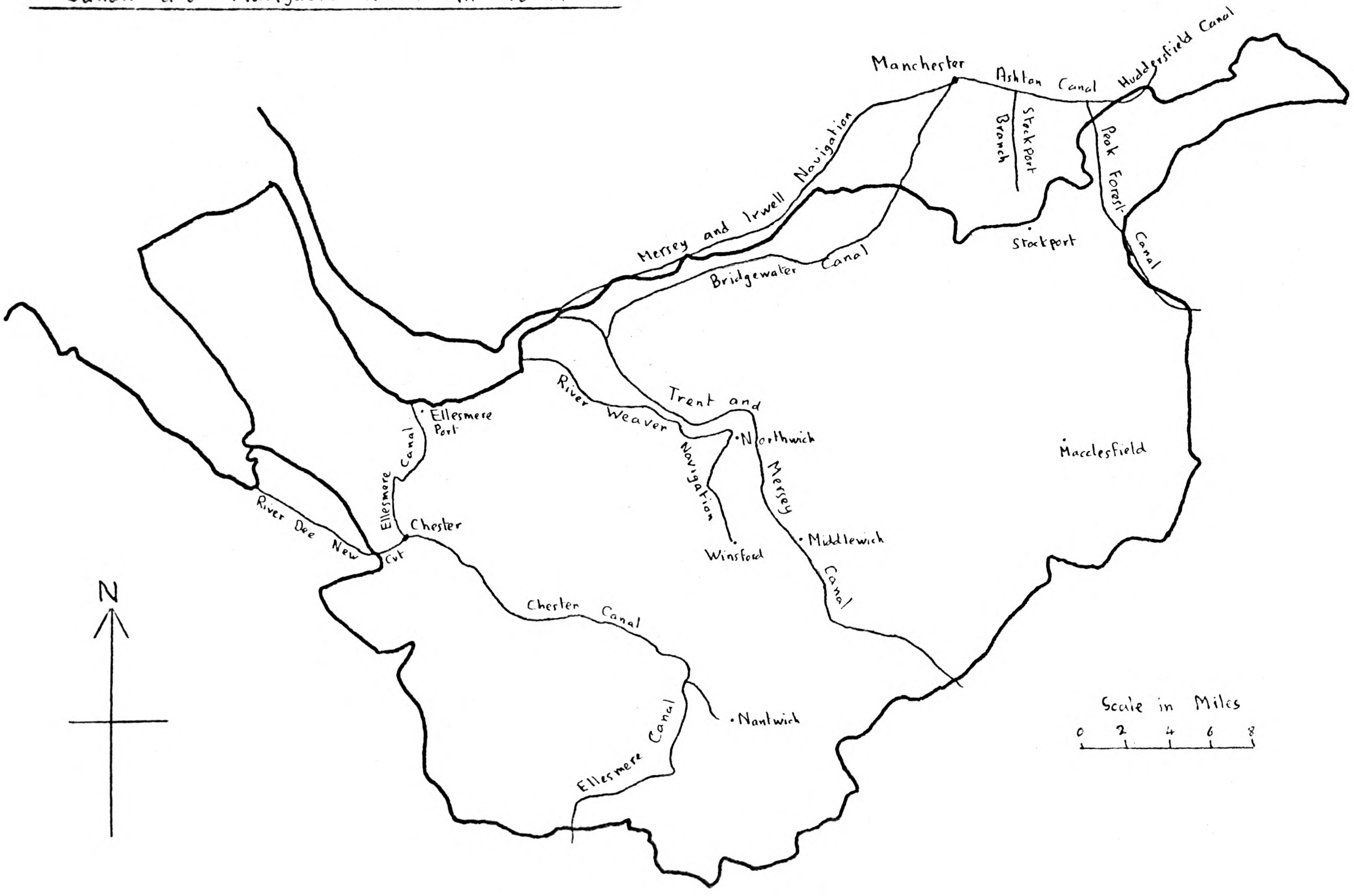
In Cheshire the canals were chiefly developed to facilitate the carriage of minerals, although agricultural produce was expected to be moved along the Chester canal. There were three main phases of improvements to rivers and construction of canals in and around the county. In the 1720's and 1730's the rivers Mersey, Weaver and Dee were improved, in the 1760's and early 1770's the Bridgewater, Trent and Mersey and Chester canals were projected and in the 1790's the Ellesmere, Ashton, Peak Forest and Huddersfield canals were begun.[2] Some of these canals developed subsidiary food carrying roles and while cheese never seems to have been carried in any quantity along the Weaver navigation[3] some cheese was passing along the Trent and Mersey canal from south Cheshire by the early nineteenth century bound for the Bridgewater canal and the Manchester market[4] or for the east coast and London. The Bridgewater canal was also important in carrying manure from Manchester and corn, flour and potatoes to Manchester.[5]

One scheme projected in the mid 1760's, for a canal from Hatton Bridge on the Weaver near Northwich, eastwards across Cheshire via Knutsford to Nottram Andrew, just north of Macclesfield, from where a branch would be taken to Macclesfield and a further branch through Stockport to Manchester, was intended

1. William Albert, The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840 (Cambridge, 1972) pp. 195-96.
2. On Cheshire canals see C. Hadfield, The Canals of the West Midlands (2nd ed. Newton Abbot , 1969) & C. Hadfield & G. Biddle, The Canals of North West England, 2 vols. (Newton Abbot , 1970). See Map 3:3.
3. T.S. Willan, The Navigation of the River Weaver in the Eighteenth Century (Chetham Soc., 3rd Ser., iii, 1951) 39-40.
4. F.C. Mather, After the Canal Duke (Oxford, 1970) p. 5.
5. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Map 3:3

Canals and Navigable Rivers in 1815



to help supply urban markets with food. It would also have helped Sir George Warren of Poynton find outlets for his coal in the east Cheshire towns and Charles Roe of Macclesfield bring coal, lime and copper ore to that town. But a chief argument for the canal was that it passed through those parts of Cheshire from which the markets of Macclesfield, Stockport and Manchester were supplied and thus farmers:

> 'Will be enabled to convey the produce of their farms to those markets, by vessels proposed to be stationed at convenient places, to go and return at stated hours, each market day, with their corn, cheese, and other goods.... the expence of which carriage will be much easier than at present'. 1

The scheme may have been generally viable - it was killed by the Duke of Bridgewater fearing that his own canals would be injured by a waterway linking Manchester, Stockport and Macclesfield and offering communication to Liverpool without touching the Bridgewater canal[2] - but later experience was to show that canals passing through farming areas and relying primarily on the transport of farm produce rarely succeeded.

The Chester canal was in fact to prove a good illustration of this. Once the possibility of a link with the Trent and Mersey canal at Middlewich had been blocked by the Trent and Mersey proprietors, any canal from mid Cheshire to Chester was bound to be dependent on the carriage of farm produce rather than salt from the Wiches or linen from Chester. It had been hoped that a canal network including the Chester canal could

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1. Scheme for an intended Canal Navigation, from Macclesfield... 1765, pp. 3-4, in The History of Inland Navigations, part 2 (London, 1766).
2. See Commons Journals xxx, 452 on Bridgewater's proposals, and Lords Journals xxxi, 338, 346, 350 and 353 for proceedings on the Witton scheme.

reduce the carriage rates of goods between Chester and London, of which 750 tons were said to go by road in peace time, and twice that in war, from £8 to £3 a ton.[1] The possible carriage of cheese, timber, corn, malt and potatoes also expected in 1770[2] may then have been regarded as less important, but the minutes of the Committee of Proprietors in the last quarter of the eighteenth century show an increasing concern with agricultural goods. Freight rates set in 1779 included rates for the carriage of oats, barley and wheat from Nantwich to Chester and from Nantwich to Liverpool via Chester.[3] The 1780's saw several orders concerning the carriage of manure on the canal and in 1798 an agreement was proposed between the Canal Company and the millers on the course of the canal for the carriage of their flour along the canal to Chester.[4] A boat from Beeston to Chester to take people and goods to the Saturday market in Chester was introduced in 1797,[5] and while the 1790's saw a slight recovery in the fortunes of the canal, it is hard to see it as anything but a flop. The canal had cost more to build than expected and trade was disappointing. By the 1780's the Company was heavily in debt and its creditors were threatening to run the water off from Bunbury reservoir when the collapse of Beeston lock in 1787 halted all traffic.[6] Only the link with the Ellesmere canal in the 1790's rescued anything from the project.

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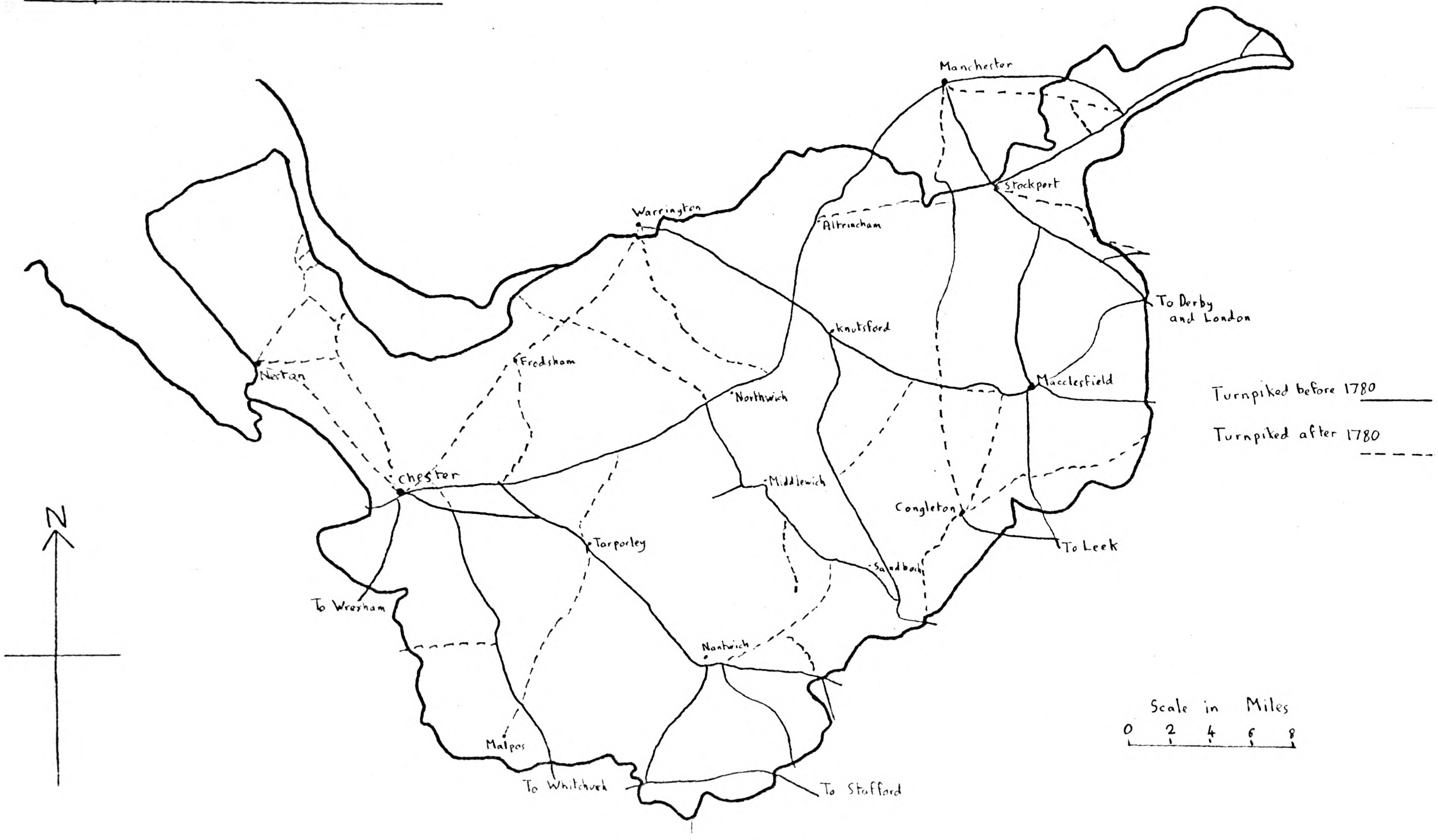
1. Remarks relating to a Canal....from the City of Chester (Chester, 1770), p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. P.R.O. British Transport Historical Records, Chester Canal Committee of Proprietors Minutes 1779-85, p. 36 (CC 1/4).
4. Ibid., 1796-1811, p. 58 (CC 1/6).
5. Ibid., p. 19.
6. C. Hadfield, The Canals of the West Midlands, p. 45.

Improved water communications had a part to play in the provisioning of towns, although their role may often have been marginal. Canals were not normally going to be built to carry food and they were probably most valuable when, having been built for another purpose, they could be exploited by farmers in the vicinity of a growing town. Roads were certainly of much greater importance both for the transport of grain from the countryside to the market town and for the movement of livestock. Much less, however, can be said about the traffic on roads than on canals since the improvement of roads was usually undertaken for general purposes as traffic of all types became heavier, rather than to exploit specific possible goods flows. Map 3:4 shows the roads turnpiked in Cheshire by 1820 and it can be seen that all the main towns had, in theory, adequate road links by then, and that most of the main routes, except to the north of Chester, had been turnpiked by 1780. The development of the turnpike system is the only way of measuring road improvements, but turnpikes must not be confused with available roads. Early maps and roadbooks make it quite plain that there was a well defined network of roads in the early eighteenth century - and before - which would certainly have been of the greatest importance for local and long-distance trade.[1] Many roads could retain their local importance long into the eighteenth century or later without being turnpiked, although successive

1. See e.g. Robert Morden's Map of Cheshire in R. Morden, The New Description and State of England, 2nd ed. (London, 1704); Britannia Depicta or Ogilby Improved (London, 1720); Daniel Patterson, A New and Accurate Description of all the Direct and principal Cross Roads in England and Wales (1st ed. London, 1771; 8th ed. London, 1789).

Map 3:4

Turnpike Roads in Cheshire



editions of roadbooks almost invariably include additional roads.

However such limited evidence as is available about road traffic relates to turnpikes and proposals for turnpikes. Such proposals did not always meet with unanimous approval and in 1770 a local M.P., Sir William Meredith, declined to introduce a bill turnpiking the Macclesfield to Chapel-en-le-Frith road, saying that while he favoured it he was, 'jammed between discordant sentiments'.[1] Such new roads, while cheapening the price of provisions for the inhabitants of Macclesfield, could reduce prices for some local producers by breaking down local supply monopolies. The value of road communications between villages and market towns was brought out in a petition from the inhabitants of Wildboarclough in 1783 asking to be exempted from tolls on the road between Sandon in Staffordshire and Macclesfield which they used for just over a mile, 'Going to, and returning from the Market at Macclesfield'.[2] Many turnpike acts included clauses exempting corn being taken to a mill to be ground for the use of the person owning the corn from toll, and millers at Barrow and Stamford mills near Chester made special agreements with the trustees of the Chester and Tarvin turnpike, paying two guineas a year for carrying corn along the road to their mills or meal from their mills.[3] The precise impact of improved roads on the food supply of towns is unclear, but it is not unlikely that pressure for turnpikes was at least partly caused by increases in the quantity of provisions being taken on roads.

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1. C.S. Davies, 'Agricultural Change in East Cheshire', (Univ. of Manchester M.A. Thesis, 1949) pp. 81-82.
2. Commons Journals xxxix 323-4 (28 Mar. 1783).
3. Cheshire R.O., Chester and Tarvin Turnpike Trust, Minutes 1769-96 (LTA/1/1).

Turnpike receipts usually show a rising trend in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but none of the records of the Cheshire trusts give any indication of the proportions of different types of goods using their roads.

Road improvements did not however prevent rises in the official freight rates laid down by the county justices, although the increases between 1760 and 1815 were perhaps less than they would have been without improved roads since the rising price of grain must have increased carriers' costs greatly. The Chester to London rate rose from 7s per cwt in summer and 8s per cwt in winter in 1762[1] to 9s and 10s in 1794,[2] 14s at any time of year in 1801[3] and then dropped to 12s in 1803[4] where it remained at least till 1817. Local rates rose less, however; that fixed for carriage between Shrewsbury, Liverpool, Manchester, Stockport or Macclesfield and Chester was 2s in summer and 2s 6d in winter in 1762 and 2s 10d at any time in 1803. While the cost of carriage was rising slowly, the facilities for carriage were increasing greatly. The number of carriers operating from the main towns of Cheshire, not only to London and Manchester but also to other Cheshire and midland towns, increased substantially after about 1780 and the regularity of the service was also growing.[5]

The benefits produced by improved communications would be particularly noticeable in years of local scarcity when the possibility of foodstuffs being moved from areas of surplus to

1. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions Book 1758-1765 (QJB 22a). Freight rates were fixed annually at the April sessions from 1762 at least until 1817.
2. Ibid. 1792-1798 (QJB 27a).
3. Ibid. 1798-1804 (QJB 28a).
4. Ibid.
5. See contemporary directories for details of carriers, esp. Commercial Directory for 1816-17.

areas of deficit depended largely on the state of communications. Chester in 1757 was able to derive very great benefit, in a year of widespread scarcity which saw riots in much of the country, from her coasting trade. Table 3:7 shows grain imports at Chester in the year and it is apparent that the city was able to draw on supplies from a very wide range of ports, particularly in East Anglia and on the south coast, with some rice being imported from America. The significance of Chester's coastal trade and its potential in bad years is particularly clear when the 1757 figures are compared with corn imports in normal years in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1751 no corn was shipped to Chester, though some was sent to Liverpool, Dublin and Caernarvon, and it was not unusual for little or no corn to be imported at Chester.[1] However, by the 1770's and 1780's Chester seems normally to have been importing rather than exporting corn, particularly oats. In the period 1 January 1775 to 1 January 1783 the city imported 14,886 quarters 6 bushels of oats, 2,516 quarters of barley and 1,698 quarters 5 bushels of wheat and only exported 250 quarters of barley.[2] Good communications meant that local self sufficiency could break down and long-distance trade in foodstuffs become increasingly important. The sequence could, however, be reversed, and the growth of urban demand outstripping local supply increase the trade in grain and other produce to the extent that it created pressure for improved communications. No doubt the trade in agricultural produce in Cheshire both responded to and created pressure for improved communications, but it is not

1. Cheshire R.O., Dee Register of Vessels.
2. Robert Craig, Loc. cit., p. 120.

Table 3:7 Corn Trade at Chester 1757

Port	Shipped to Chester Tons	Shipped from Chester Tons
Yarmouth	480	
Lynn	66	
Wells	40	
London	250	
Sandwich	166	
Shoreham	24	
Emsworth	25	
Portsmouth	30	
Southampton	124	
Newhaven	50	
Poole	52	
Cowes	95	
Teignmouth	40	
Bideford	16	
Cardigan	40 (oats)	
Holyhead	18	
Beaumaris		9
Liverpool	180 + 20 barley	9 (1751 - 244 + 40 oats)
Parkgate	25 + 6 malt	
Carolina	86 (rice)	

Source: Dee Register of Vessels.

N.B. Tonnages probably refer to burthen of vessel, on which dues were calculated. 1751 figure given to represent a normal year - no imports, corn sent to Liverpool, Caernarvon and Dublin.

impossible that in some parts of east Cheshire where urban growth was fastest the need to supply local markets was a major factor in precipitating action for better roads and even for new or improved water communications.

The provisioning of towns in the eighteenth century involved a very complex web of farmers, middlemen, carriers and urban markets. Local supply and local demand would not necessarily balance and trade in many agricultural products took place on a national as well as a local basis. The intermediaries between farmer and consumer could range from members of the farmer's family to specialist middlemen as in the Cheshire cheese trade. Marketing took place in official public markets, in urban inns widely known to be corn markets, in villages and in private houses and could take place at the officially appointed times or at the convenience of buyer and seller. Any attempt to impose a simple pattern on all this would be bound to fail, particularly since most of the evidence relating to the marketing activities of farmers and the supply of towns is very scrappy, as might be expected in view of the nature of much of the activity. Changing the perspective and looking at the problem of distribution from the urban point of view, some aspects of trading come into sharper focus. The well defined and regulated institution of the public market, and the independently operated food shops of the towns become the key factors and because of their importance to contemporaries and to urban authorities, some evidence about them survives. The retailers in markets and fixed shops represented the end of the food supply chain and the final link with the consumer and their role in making possible rapid urban

growth deserves acknowledgement and examination in some detail.

CHAPTER 4

THE MARKET TOWNS OF CHESHIRE

The importance of public markets and market towns in local life should not be underestimated even as late as the nineteenth century. Markets and fairs in early modern England were the time-pieces of the local community, major trading institutions and great social occasions, and their centrality was only slowly challenged.[1] Market day in a country town was a time for meeting and a time for trading, even when the open market in the town square had begun to give way to private marketing. The essential role of the market and market town in eighteenth-century England can almost certainly be parallelled by the role of markets in developing countries in the twentieth century[2] where trading can often almost be a way of life for the great majority of the population and participation in this trade involves participation in markets.[3]

Important as markets were and are, they have never been unchanging institutions and England in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries seems to have been passing through an important phase of market evolution. It seems likely that the number of market towns in England and Wales reached its

1. See cap. 1 above for some discussion of the differences between markets and fairs and their functions in industrializing economies. (pp. 13-14)
2. E.G. the Indians of Panajachel are almost entirely dependent on market places for the sale of agricultural surpluses and the purchasing of many basic goods. Markets are widespread, participation in the market almost universal and knowledge of price variations common. See Sol Tax, Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy, (Chicago, 1963), p. 14.
3. Cf. P.T. Bauer, 'Traders in West Africa', Economics of Retailing, eds. K.A. Tucker and B.S. Yamey, (London, 1973), pp. 347-356.

peak during the middle ages and that there was a slow decline in numbers into the seventeenth century when the number of market towns probably stood at around 800.[1] At the same time inland trade was certainly expanding from the mid or late sixteenth century onwards and such market towns as survived - and the one or two new ones that were created - were well placed to enjoy prosperity. Improvements to communications were probably the chief cause of the disappearance of some of the smaller market towns, but larger towns could also offer more variety and better service.[2] Linked to the trend for fewer market towns, each serving a wider area, was an increase in specialization in some towns. By the mid-seventeenth century about two in five English market towns specialized in the marketing of one food or textile product or group of products. In the Midlands, 25 markets concentrated on cattle, 14 on sheep, 7 on horses, 7 on swine and 6 on leather.[3] Although many market towns were clearly flourishing at least into the nineteenth century, there were by the mid or late eighteenth century strong hints that markets were losing some traditional and commercial functions. Trade was moving out of regulated public markets, and the rough entertainment of markets and fairs was giving way to the sophistication of races and balls. By looking in some detail at Cheshire and particularly at three

1. Alan Everitt, 'Urban Growth 1570-1770', Local Historian viii (1968) 118.
2. Ibid., p. 121.
3. Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc. cit., pp. 490-92. Such changes can be compared to changes in modern China where the number of centres is decreasing, the size of market areas increasing and functions being forced upwards in the hierarchy. Cf. G. William Skinner, 'Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China', Journal of Asian Studies xxiv (1964-5) 215.

of the towns in it, certain of these trends can be more clearly appreciated.

The Pattern of Cheshire Markets

A single county is of course not an ideal unit for the study of market patterns and market areas and reference will occasionally be made to market towns outside the boundaries of Cheshire. Nevertheless it is a convenient unit and the trends appearing in Cheshire towns are unlikely to be untypical. Certainly there appears to have been a reduction in the number of market towns in Cheshire between the middle ages and the early eighteenth century, with the less significant towns losing their markets and their functions being taken over by larger neighbours. There seem to have been at least twenty two market towns in medieval Cheshire[1] compared to around 13 during the eighteenth century.[2] Table 4:1 shows the variations in numbers of market towns and markets between 1673 and 1888 in the county, although some of the fluctuations in figures may represent omissions in the sources rather than the temporary disappearance of a market. Of the 9 towns that permanently lost their markets between the middle ages and the seventeenth century, 6 were in west Cheshire. These were Upton, Bromborough and Burton in the Wirral and Aldford, Coddington and Bunbury. The other

1. Dorothy Sylvester and Geoffrey Nulty (Eds.), The Historical Atlas of Cheshire, p. 27.
2. Slight uncertainty about the exact number of market towns can be caused by the temporary disuse of markets, the appearance of semi-official markets as trade increased which were not necessarily recorded, and by the disappearance of markets but the retention in gazetteers and year-books of the description 'market town'.

Table 4:1 Market Days of Cheshire Weekly Markets

Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
1673	2	1	1	1	2	4	11 (11)
1751	2	1	2	2	2	5	14 (13)
1783	2	2	2	1	2	4	13 (12)
1799	2	2	3	1	1	6	15 (14)
1810	1	2	2	2	4	7	18 (15)
1840	0	3	3	2	3	8	19 (16)
1888	0	2	0	1	2	4	9 (8)

N.B. Figures in brackets show number of market towns in Cheshire.

Source:

1673 : R. Blome, Britannia (London, 1673).
1751 : Stephen Whatley, England's Gazetteer, 3 vols. (London, 1751).
1783 : (W. Owen), Owen's New Book of Fairs (London, 1783).
1799 : Ibid., edition for 1799.
1810 : D. and S. Lysons, Magna Britannia ii, part 2 (London, 1810).
1840 : Samuel Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of England, 4 vols. (4th edn., London, 1840).
1888 : Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls, First Report, vol. 1, Parl. Papers 1888, liii (c. 5350).

towns losing markets were Over (whose market seems to have disappeared in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century), Audlem (between Nantwich and Market Drayton) and Brereton (near Sandbach, Congleton and Middlewich). It is thus likely that smaller markets were being squeezed out by competition from larger ones, and that certain towns were extending their dominance over a wider area. This must have been especially true of Chester which presumably dominated the Wirral (with perhaps some competition from Liverpool) and probably took over market town functions for the inhabitants of the Aldford and Coddington

areas. By the eighteenth century there almost appears to be an empty ring around Chester where markets could formerly have been, but which had been destroyed by the greater facilities of the county town.

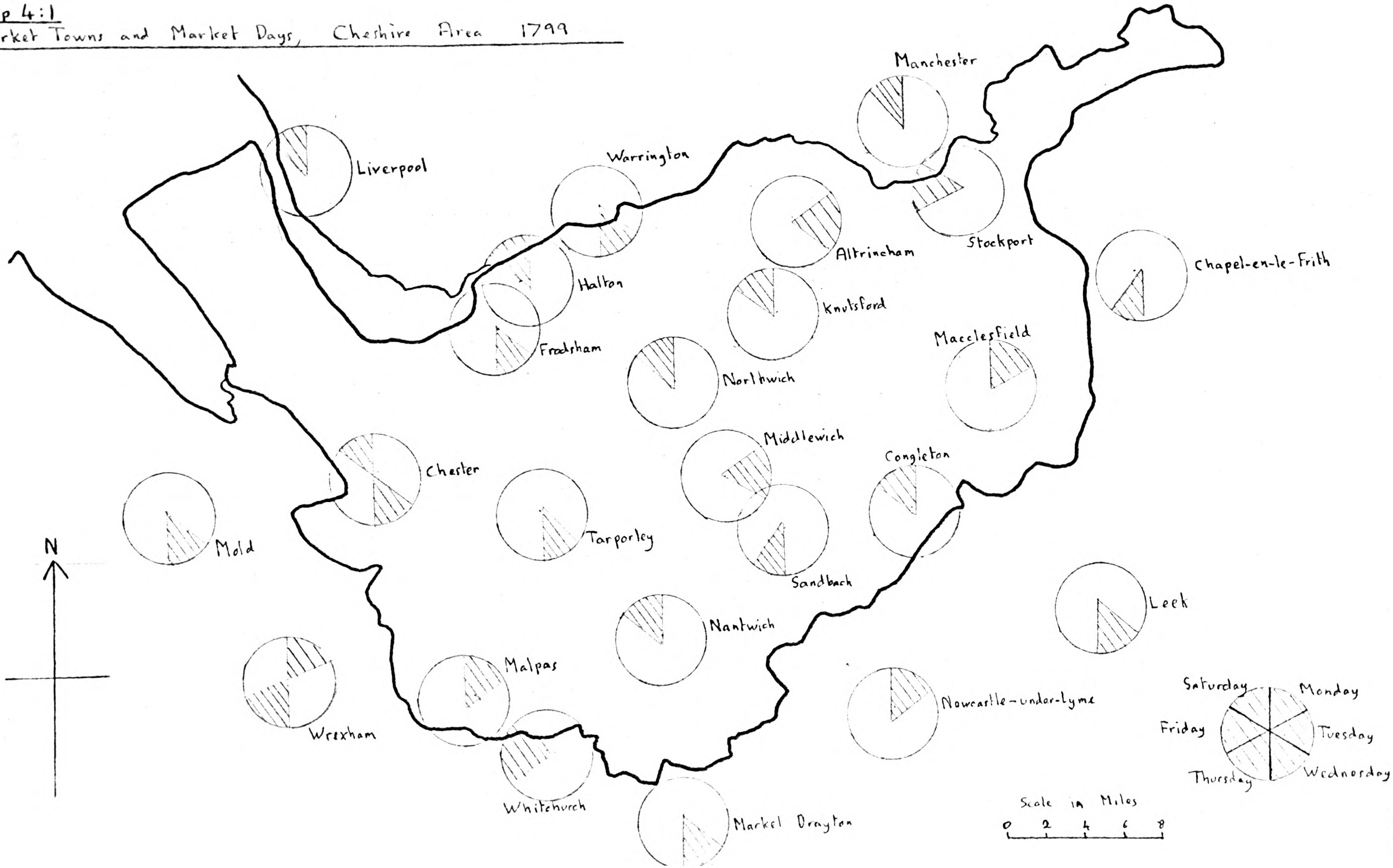
Blome's 'Britannia' of 1673[1] lists 12 market towns in Cheshire (Nantwich, Malpas, Tarvin, Frodsham, Northwich, Middlewich, Sandbach, Congleton, Macclesfield, Knutsford, Altrincham and Stockport) and to this list should certainly be added Chester, while Tarvin, for which no market day is given, had probably already lost its market and can be subtracted.[2] The eighteenth century saw the appearance of a market at Halton (recorded in 1751) and at Tarporley (recorded in 1792) while by 1810 there was a market for meat and provisions at Neston in the Wirral and one at Winsford. The slow rise in the number of market towns up to 1840 was, however, sharply reversed in the late nineteenth century, and by 1888 there were markets only at Congleton, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Northwich, Sandbach, Stockport and Winsford and a monthly market at Chester.[3] It would seem reasonable to suppose that in many smaller towns the coming of the railways had spelled the end of the weekly market while enhancing the importance of some of the larger towns. But the growth of urban population which had probably led to the eighteenth-century market foundations also led to the expansion of markets in some of the older market towns, particularly in the adding of extra days of trading. Altrincham by 1840 had its regular Tuesday market and also a Saturday market

1. R. Blome, Britannia, pp. 56-57.
2. The omission of a market day in such a list is frequently an indication of a recently decayed market.
3. See Table 4:1 for sources of information on markets. The details given in the text for each date are drawn from the sources listed there.

for butchers' meat, Chester had markets every Wednesday and Saturday until the mid-nineteenth century, Macclesfield had markets on Tuesday and Saturday by 1820, Middlewich on Tuesday and Friday in 1810 and Sandbach on Thursday and Saturday in 1810 with the Saturday market being for the sale of meat. In Stockport the Friday market seems, during the nineteenth century, to have spilled over into Saturday with Saturday evening an important time for the purchase of provisions by the working classes. The introduction of additional days, particularly Saturdays, is a clear indication of the continuing relevance of the market for provisioning urban populations well into the nineteenth century.

The day on which a market was held was not without significance. Map 4:1 shows the market days of all the Cheshire markets and markets immediately surrounding the county in 1799 and Table 4:1 the incidence of different days as market days. Saturday was clearly the most important day for markets, whenever it was possible to hold a market then without provoking a clash with a neighbouring market. The markets of both Manchester and Liverpool were held on Saturday in 1799, as was one of the Chester markets, as well as the markets of several other Cheshire towns. Northwich changed the day of its market from Friday to Saturday between 1783 and 1788, but it was back to Friday by 1808, possibly because the market of neighbouring Knutsford had long been held on Saturday and continued to be so held. Changes in market days were not infrequent, but nothing like so common as changes in the date of fairs. Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Saturday became even more popular as a market day, perhaps because it was the most convenient day

Map 4:1
Market Towns and Market Days, Cheshire Area 1799



for the urban poor to purchase provisions, while Monday slowly fell out of favour. In the case of Macclesfield which switched the day of its market from Monday to Tuesday in 1814, this was stated to be to avoid the need for butchers to slaughter their animals on Sunday.[1]

But on whatever day the market of an individual town was held, it was normal to have some regard for the days on which markets were held in neighbouring towns. This periodicity was not merely defensive: as well as avoiding clashes which could harm trade and therefore the finances of a town, it gave buyers and sellers the opportunity to exploit several neighbouring markets in turn. Several of the clusters of markets which appear on Map 4:1 show this pattern of market days allowing farmers and other traders to move from market to market in a reasonably efficient manner and thus satisfy demand in as large an area as possible. Thus in south-east Cheshire a trader could move from Middlewich market on a Tuesday, to Sandbach market on a Thursday and on to Congleton on Saturday. Similarly around the southern boundary of Cheshire there were markets at Market Drayton on Wednesday, Whitchurch on Friday, Nantwich on Saturday and Malpas on Monday. The nearest major rival to Chester, Wrexham, had its markets on Thursday and Monday, conveniently placed just after the Wednesday and Saturday markets at Chester. Certainly the Friday market at Stockport could provide a first collecting point for goods destined for the Manchester Saturday market, and an enterprising trader around north Cheshire and south Lancashire could perhaps also take in Altrincham on Tuesday and Warrington on Wednesday.

1. C.S. Davies, A History of Macclesfield, p. 62.

In west Cheshire and around Chester, Wednesday and Saturday were common market days, and were of course the days of the Chester market, so there was little opportunity for trading both in Chester and in the smaller towns. Distances between towns also tended to be greater, however, than in some other parts of the county, and this may have made the clash of days less significant.[1]

Market day was not only important for what was happening in the market place. In twentieth-century market towns, market day is frequently the busiest day of retail trading in shops,[2] and this would probably be even more true in the eighteenth century particularly for those shops relying heavily on customers from outside the town in which they were situated. Increasingly over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries general retail trading both in shops and market stalls was probably becoming the main feature of market days, rather than bulk trading in grain in the market place. Markets seem to have been deserted first by the wholesale traders in corn and cheese who turned to private transactions through middlemen. Retailing aspects survived longer, with vendors including professional retailers, part-time retailers and farmers or farmers' wives selling miscellaneous produce.[3] By 1810 comments on several Cheshire markets were reflecting these changes. Of Congleton it was said that the market was chiefly for butchers' meat and other provisions, although it had formerly been a considerable open

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1. The predominance of Wednesdays is nevertheless curious. The Chester Wednesday market may however have been small and not drawing on the market area of the other towns. Saturday seems to have been the major market day in Chester.
2. P. Scott, Geography and Retailing, p. 131.
3. See below, cap. 5, for discussion of developments at Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester markets.

corn market.[1] Nantwich market was disused for corn, but well supplied with provisions[2] while Macclesfield market, formerly a considerable corn market, had declined.[3] Even when a considerable trade in grain was still done in a market town, it was likely to take place in inns and be conducted by sample, as at Northwich where there was a considerable trade in butchers' meat and grain in the early nineteenth century but no market hall for corn.[4] The brief comments on Cheshire markets by the Lysons usually refer to their importance for provisions rather than for trade in corn, and certainly many markets were still very important for the former.

A certain amount of specialization was appearing in some markets in the Cheshire area though probably less than in some other parts of the country. Nantwich had developed a great cattle market between February and May on the same day as its normal market, and this still existed in the mid-nineteenth century.[5] Ashton-under-Lyne, just over the border into Lancashire, developed a weekly market for woollen cloth in 1757 at the instigation of the woollen clothiers of Saddleworth, Micklehurst, Sealey Wood, Glossop and Ashton itself.[6] The provision market at Ashton seems however to have declined in the sixteenth century, and although it may have been held intermittently in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was not formally restored until 1827, by which time Ashton was an

1. D. and S. Lysons, Magna Britannia ii, part 2, p. 489.
2. Ibid., p. 702.
3. Ibid., p. 735.
4. John Rylands Library, Nicholls Mss., Topography, Box E-R. (Eng. Ms. 920).
5. Lysons, op.cit., p. 328.
6. Whitworth's Manchester Advertiser, 11 Jan. 1757.

important manufacturing town.[1] Despite isolated specialization, the real importance of markets by 1600, especially in manufacturing areas, was provisioning urban workers and they were perhaps more important to the town dwellers than to the farmer who was increasingly dependent on specialist middlemen.

Market Areas

Traditionally the market was the meeting place of town and country. A flourishing market town could attract rural producers to its market place for them to sell their goods and take in return articles manufactured in the town or brought from a distance. The area from which people came to sell in a market town should be definable and should provide some indication of the area of countryside in which a given town was prominent.[2] The geographical pattern of market towns shown in Map 4:1 provides some hints of the market areas of each town, but of course does not provide any information on possible special attractions of any towns allowing them to draw deeply from the territory of their neighbours. The separation of markets in time as well as space already referred to implies that there were no rigid boundaries between the market areas of neighbouring towns and that farmers and others could be expected to make use of more than one market town. A study of stallagers at Preston in the seventeenth century[3] bears out the notion of a market

1. Winifred M. Bowman, England in Ashton-under-Lyne (Altrincham, 1960), pp. 290-97.
2. Further discussion of the spheres of influence of towns is to be found in cap. 7 below and the remarks following relate principally to the area from which rural producers came to sell at markets.
3. H.B. Rodgers, 'The Market Area of Preston in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', Geographical Studies iii (1956) 46-55.

area only partly limited by the existence of neighbouring markets. While there was a core area reaching up to about seven miles from Preston from which most of those participating in the activities of the market came, the town also drew some trade from around Kirkham, Chorley and Garstang with a number of stallagers living up to 15 miles from Preston.[1] In the sixteenth century Worcester similarly seems to have attracted traders to its market from distances of up to 12 miles and had an elliptical market area with a long east-west axis.[2]

In Cheshire in the eighteenth century such limited evidence as there is for market towns implies that the market area for those above the smallest was wider than the seven or so miles which lay between most of them. The best evidence is for Macclesfield and relates to the late seventeenth century, but there is no reason to expect the market area of that town to have been shrinking in the eighteenth century. The 1672 list of stall-holders summarized in Table 4:2 and Map 4:2 shows that traders were attracted to Macclesfield market from a very wide area in east Cheshire.[3] Traders were attracted from other market towns in the area, especially from Stockport in the north, two traders came from Derbyshire and one from Lancashire, about fifteen miles distant. Macclesfield's market area clearly overlapped with the market areas of Stockport, Knutsford and Congleton, and the town drew traders to a lesser extent from the directions of Leek and Chapel-en-le-Frith. Rarely is it

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1. Ibid., pp. 50-52.
2. Alan D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century (Leicester, 1973), p. 68
3. These figures must understate the number of traders at Macclesfield market living in the town and its immediate vicinity since burgesses of Macclesfield were exempt from stallage on a single stall.

Table 4:2 Macclesfield Stall-holders 1672

Residence	Number	Notes
Stockport	9	
Macclesfield	5	Includes 1 butcher
Congleton	4	Includes 2 shoemakers
Siddington	4	Includes 2 butchers
Hough	2	
Sutton	2	Includes 1 butcher
Withington	2	Includes 1 bread seller
Alderley	1	
Ashley	1	
Baguley	1	
Bollington	1	A butcher
Bosley	1	
Cheadle Hulme	1	
Eaton	1	A bread seller
Glossop	1	A hosier
Marton	1	A bread seller
Mobberley	1	
Nether Knutsford	1	
New Mills	1	
Offerton	1	
Ollerton	1	
Rainow	1	
Reddish	1	
Snelson	1	A butcher
Wilmslow	1	

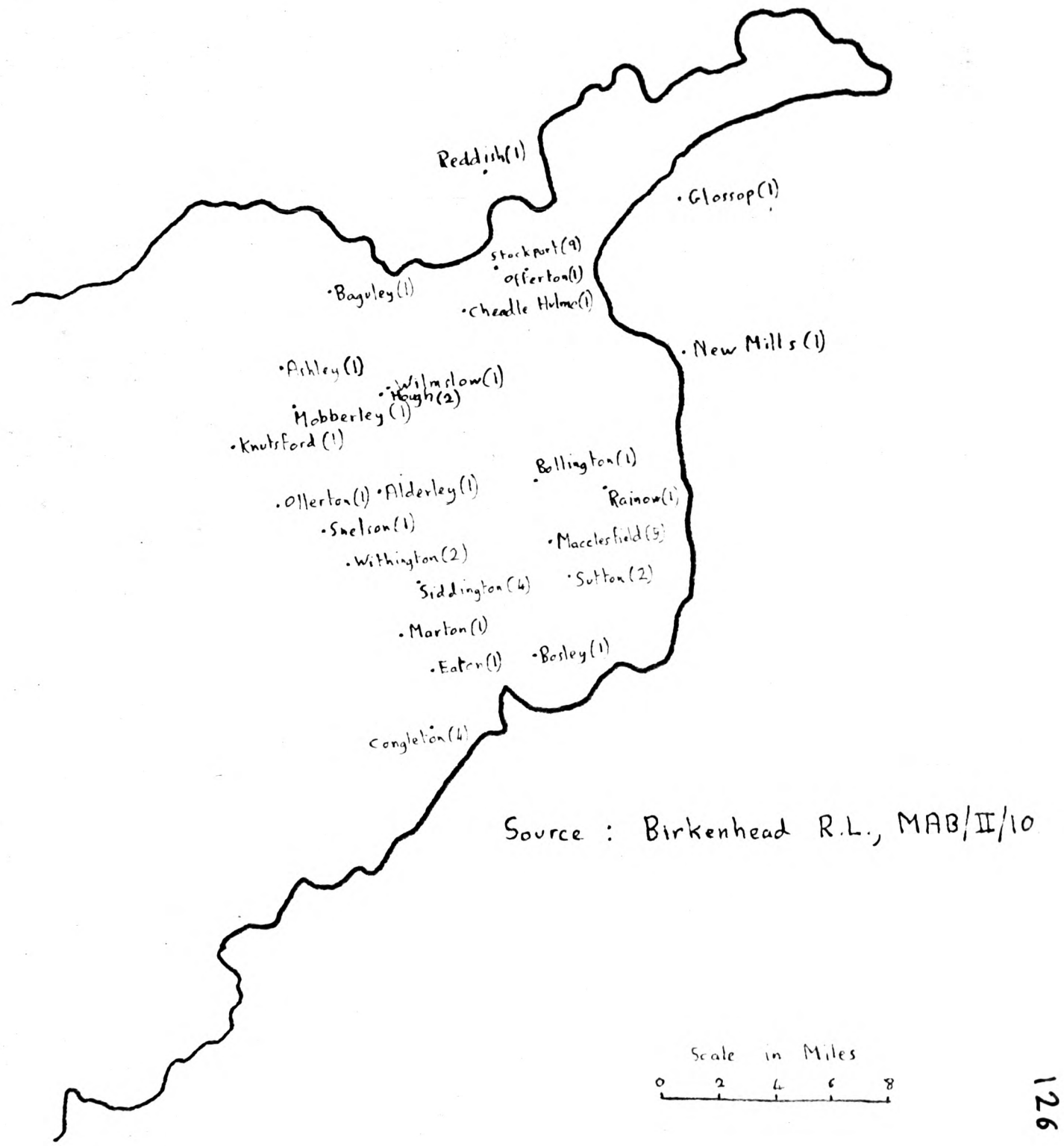
Trades not given for other stallholders.

Source: Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., List of Macclesfield Stallholders, 1672 (MAB/II/10).

Map 4:2
Stall-holders at Macclesfield Market, 1672

Figures in brackets denote numbers of stall-holders in each place.





Source : Birkenhead R.L., MAB/II/10

stated what the traders were selling, but butchers seem to have been attracted from surrounding villages (in all probability farming butchers) and bread sellers came from three villages. Craftsmen came from slightly larger places and included a hosier from distant Glossop, almost in the Peak District, as well as two shoemakers from Congleton. Although it can be seen that Macclesfield attracted traders from all directions, it was perhaps most dominant in the area to the west of the town, where there was less competition from other markets. There is no comparable evidence for other towns, but it is likely that many of these stall-holders, especially those dealing in more specialist commodities, would appear at other markets in the area.

Apart from this there is very little to be said about market areas except what can be deduced from the map of market towns. Later Macclesfield evidence shows the town drawing supplies from the same area as earlier, as in 1750 when an Alderley husbandman was to be tried for exposing to sale butter under the standard weight, and a Sandbach butcher for exposing to sale bad meat.[1] Eighteenth-century Court Leet evidence, which would give information on persons accused of market offences, is almost entirely absent for Stockport, and such nineteenth-century records as survive rarely give the residence of accused persons. In 1799 two persons from the Macclesfield area were hawking in Stockport, one of them a butcher who is likely to have made some use of the market, and in 1812 a Mrs. Royle of Baguley, about five miles west of Stockport, was amerced for a market offence.[2] A Manchester dealer was amerced in 1834 for exposing to sale

1. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Macclesfield Papers, list of market offences for 1750 (CR 63/2/341).
2. H. Heginbotham, Stockport: Ancient and Modern, 2 vols. (London, 1877-92) i, 169.

unwholesome hams and bacon in Stockport, and a further Manchester dealer appeared before the Court Leet in 1842.[1] Otherwise nothing definite can be said, but contemporary descriptions and reports of disputes make it clear that Stockport had a flourishing market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drawing trade from a wide area.

There is a similar lack of hard evidence about Chester, though again it is clear that the markets were regarded as well stocked and attracted country butchers and bakers as well as small farmers and other producers. Chester was not merely situated at some distance from its nearest neighbours, but because of its importance must have attracted trade away from such towns as Frodsham, Tarporley and Mold and presumably attracted traders from much of west Cheshire, the Wirral and north-east Wales. Fish seems to have been an important commodity in the Chester markets, and in 1766 one Alice Jones, wife of Richard Jones of Dawpool on the Dee estuary, a fisherman, was selling in Chester market to a Chester fishmonger.[2] One farmer who traded regularly in Chester market was James Higginson of Great Barrow, a few miles east of the city, and the diary he kept between 1817 and 1819 frequently notes visits to Chester.[3] Higginson himself, when in Chester, was making agreements about the sale of his corn, or actually selling it, as on 27 December 1817 when he sold oats there, or 25 July 1818 when he sold wheat. There are many entries regarding his wife selling butter and poultry at Chester market, normally the Saturday

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1. Cheshire R.O., Stockport Court Papers, Court Leet Proceedings 1834-50 (DVE).
2. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations and Depositions, 1766 (QSE/15/24).
3. Cheshire R.O., Diary of James Higginson, farmer of Great Barrow, 1817-1819 (DDX 106).

market, and journeys to sell produce occasionally saw Higginson buying goods such as seeds on 21 March 1818, or beef on 20 December 1817. Other shopping trips to Chester as for the purchase of clothing or furniture would take place on days other than market days. The activities of Higginson were no doubt little different from those of many other farmers around Chester.

The Macclesfield evidence has already shown that traders in one market town might well travel to another market town on its market day and set up stall there. In east Cheshire in the early eighteenth century this seems to have been quite normal and led to agreements between some towns on how freemen of one town should be treated in another. Thus, after goods had been seized from Christopher Sutton, hardwareman, and Charles Sherratt, butcher, both of Congleton for refusing to pay piccage when they exposed goods to sale in Macclesfield market, it was agreed on 19 February/2 March 1729/30 that freemen of Congleton were exempt from toll and piccage in Macclesfield. In return, freemen of Macclesfield were to be exempt from toll and piccage in Congleton.[1] Traders from Macclesfield were presumably trading in Stockport market at this time, for in 1735 it was complained that freemen of Macclesfield had been charged toll there when they sold goods on market days. Again an exemption from toll was to be claimed, but there is no evidence whether it was established.[2] While the extent of this inter-town trading is of course not known, it is clear that market towns were not isolated from each other, but that separation of markets by time met a real need in allowing traders, based in one town, to reach as wide a market

1. Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., (MA/T/1/37).
2. Ibid., (MA/B/II/14).

as possible by operating in several markets.

The Manchester market especially was the market in which Cheshire traders would additionally wish to operate and which would provide access to the greatest number of consumers. Manchester certainly drew on Cheshire for much of its food requirements[1] and Aikin claimed in 1795 that oatmeal had formerly been brought to Manchester from Stockport and that its price was ruled by the price in the Friday market of the latter town.[2] The substantial traffic in potatoes eastwards along the Bridgewater Canal seems to have had the effect of moving the potato market in Manchester to a site near the potato wharf.[3] Bunbury in south Cheshire was said to be a major meeting point for corn dealers operating in the Manchester market by the end of the eighteenth century,[4] and Manchester's market area extended well into Cheshire. With the exception of grain which would have been brought in from great distances by private traders, Manchester seems to have drawn most of the food offered for sale in its markets from an area bounded by Rochdale, the Pennines, Macclesfield, Northwich and Warrington.[5] The Manchester Court Leet records[6] provide evidence of the places of origin of traders committing offences at Manchester market, and such offending traders were probably a fair sample of the whole, though they may over-represent such traders as butchers who could commit offences relatively easily. The Court Leet seems

1. See cap. 2 above for further evidence of this. (pp. 87–88)
2. J. Aikin, Description of the Country around Manchester, p.203.
3. R.N. Salaman, 'The Oxnoble Potato: A Study in Public-House Nomenclature', Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc. lxiv (1954) 77.
4. P.R.O., H.O. 42/54/118.
5. Arthur Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, 3 vols. (London, 1939) i, 140.
6. J.P. Earwaker (Ed.), The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester, vols. vii to x, 1731-1815 (Manchester, 1888-9).

to have taken its responsibility with regard to the market seriously at least until the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Map 4:3 shows the places of origin of Cheshire traders amerced for market offences at Manchester. Most of the sellers amerced dealt in meat and were prosecuted because of its unfit state, but there were also a number of butter sellers appearing, accused of selling butter under the standard weight. Many of these came from the Altrincham area, though two came from near Macclesfield. Occasionally there were amercements for corn or potatoes short of weight, usually against traders from the Altrincham area, and in 1787 a Northwich apple dealer was amerced for giving short measure in the apples he sold.[1] Traders came chiefly from the area to the south-west of Manchester as far into Cheshire as Little Budworth over twenty miles from Manchester, and from the Stockport area. Some came from the area around Cheadle and Wilmslow and isolated traders from other parts of Cheshire, but not many from beyond Stockport. Any provisions originating in that area, and they were likely to be few, probably passed first through the Stockport Friday market before going on to Manchester.

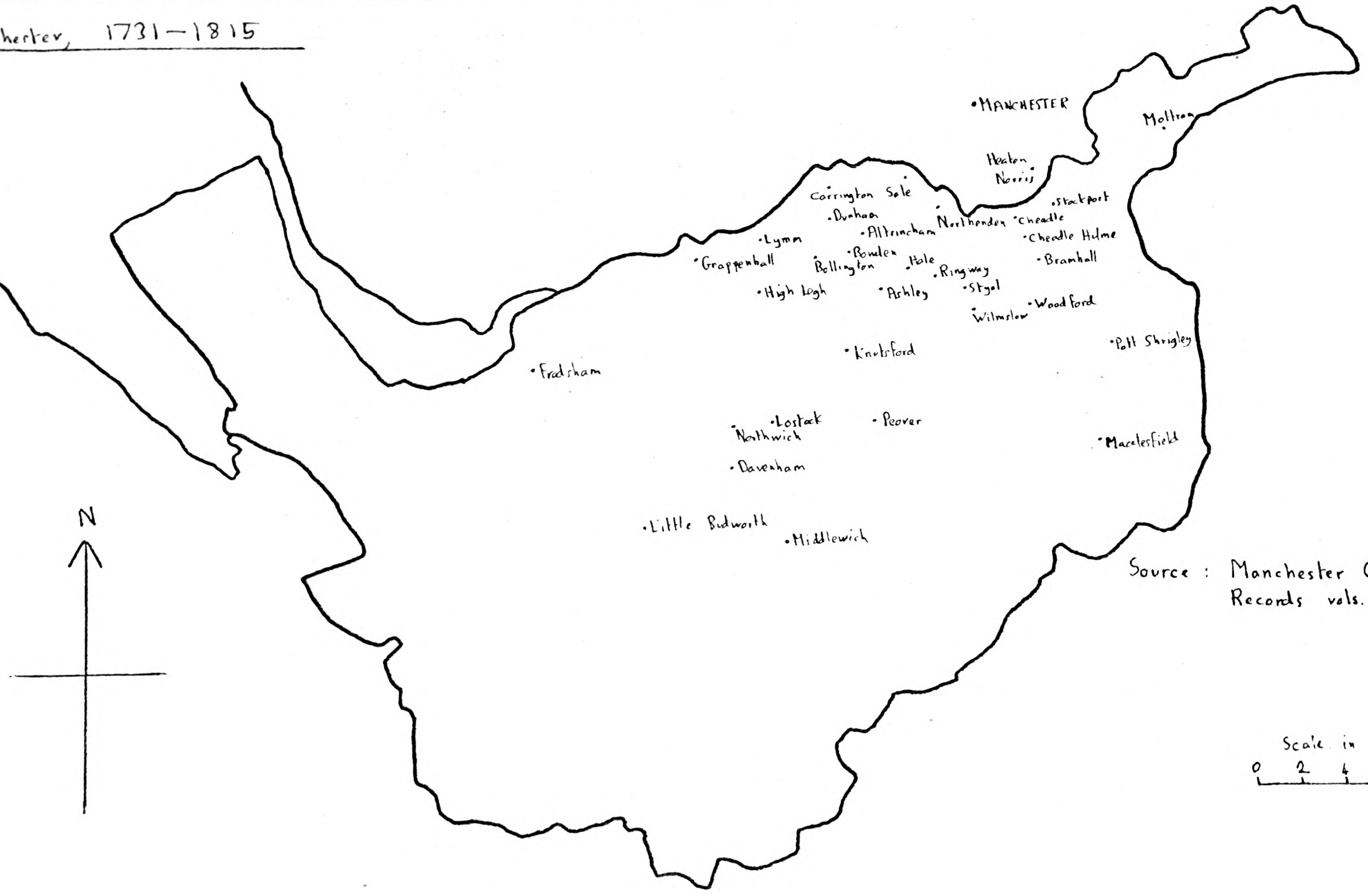
The Stockport traders formed a consistently important group at the Manchester market at least until the 1770's, and consisted chiefly of butchers, though including an occasional butter seller. Such butchers may well have traded first at Stockport on the Friday and then travelled on to Manchester with such meat as they had left to sell. Certain butchers appear regularly

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1. Ibid. ix, 25 Apr. 1787.

Map 4:3

Places of Origin of Cheshire Traders amerced for Market Offences at Manchester, 1731–1815



Source : Manchester Court Leet Records vols. vii–x.

in the records, such as James Green amerced five times between 1733 and 1735 for unmarketable beef and mutton,[1] or Henry Kemp who collected several amercements for bad beef and veal and was in 1739 described as an old offender.[2] The Stockport butchers appear to have been a recognized group of traders using the Manchester market, for an old man whose recollections of early eighteenth-century Manchester were taken down in 1787 referred to the stalls for the use of the Stockport butchers having been pitched on the site of the Exchange.[3] The number of amercements against these men declined sharply after 1770, and while this may partly reflect a general decline in market offences brought before the Leet, it is also possible that the rapid growth of Stockport was increasingly meaning that as much trade as any butcher desired could be found there and that there was no longer a need, and perhaps no longer the surplus provisions, to supply the Manchester market.

Changes in the nature of the Manchester market and its relations to the markets of surrounding towns were probably to be expected by the late eighteenth century. Local surpluses must have been diminishing as the population of all the towns around Manchester grew rapidly. In these circumstances the largest town in the area could be expected to draw on an ever widening area for supplies and perhaps even begin to take on the role of a metropolitan market collecting, organizing and distributing supplies to the whole of the area in which it was situated. By 1816 a guide to Manchester was stating that the

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1. Court Leet Records, vii.
2. Ibid.
3. John Harland (Ed.), Collectanea relating to Manchester and its Neighbourhood at Various Periods, vol. ii. (Chetham Society, vol. lxxii, 1867) 189.

country to the east and north of Manchester contributed nothing to the markets, but rather was supplied from the Manchester markets.[1] Whether there was at the same time any shift in the relative importance of shops and markets in supplying Manchester and the surrounding area is unclear. From about the mid-1780's onwards the number of shopkeepers amerced in the Court Leet grew greatly compared to the number of market traders, but the existence of sixteen separate market places in Manchester in 1816 for a wide range of goods including meat, fruit, cheese, shoes, hay, vegetables, poultry and butter hardly suggests that open markets were in decline.[2] It does, however, seem clear that by the start of the nineteenth century Manchester has to be regarded as the dominant market for east Cheshire, where goods originating at considerable distances would flow to, and which could possibly determine the behaviour of the markets of such towns as Stockport and Altrincham, and even Knutsford and Macclesfield.

A Unified Market?

The close relationships described above between the market towns in various parts of Cheshire are strong hints that a general view of the market behaviour of the county as a whole would reveal a high degree of 'perfection' in the market. Price behaviour is the clearest guide to the development of single markets in large geographical areas, and while it is still

1. Joseph Aston, A Picture of Manchester, 1816 (Reprint, Manchester, 1969), p. 216.
2. Ibid., pp. 216-18.

an open question how far regional markets survived in England in the eighteenth century, it seems clear that regional price variations were of no great importance.[1] This is not to say that price levels did not vary from region to region - transport costs and variations in products can cause this even in a perfect market - but that disequilibriating pressures in one market were quickly transferred to other markets. If this is the case, as it seems largely to have been for wheat in the markets of London, Eton, Winchester and Lincoln in the eighteenth century, the speed of the response of prices to changes in supply and demand will be roughly the same in all areas and the different markets can be treated as one.[2] It would be surprising if at any time the markets of such a restricted area as east Cheshire had behaved significantly differently from each other, but very close price relationships can probably be taken to indicate a single market with rapid information flows between the towns and rapid responses to these. Whether Chester would fit into the same pattern would seem to be a more open question and one of more significance in assessing the survival or otherwise of regional markets.

A necessary precondition for the emergence of a unified market is the easy availability of market information. The development of the provincial press in the eighteenth century, with newspapers circulating up to 100 miles from their place of origin and each copy being read by perhaps 20 people, allowed

1. Cf. A.H. John, 'The Course of Agricultural Change 1660-1760' in Studies in the Industrial Revolution, ed. L.S. Pressnell (London, 1960); C.W.J. Granger and C.M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', Economic History Review, 2nd Ser. XX (1967) 257-65.
2. Granger and Elliott, loc. cit., p. 262.

for the wide diffusion of information via advertisements and market reports.[1] Important as newspapers were, in Cheshire at least they are unlikely to have played much part in disseminating market prices and information, for only the Manchester and Chester markets received any coverage in the newspapers of those towns, and then only intermittently. At no time before at least 1815 were prices at Stockport market printed, and prices at Macclesfield market only appear from September 1812. Such information as was available probably circulated through private channels - correspondence, social gatherings, even the weekly Church or Chapel service - just as brewers received information on barley,[2] though probably in a much less sophisticated manner. This being the case it is much less easy to determine how widespread market information was, but references to market prices are not uncommon in letters. Letters by Samuel Finney II in the 1730's to Cornwall occasionally refer to Cheshire prices and the possibility of it being profitable to ship grain from Cornwall,[3] and local grain and cheese prices appear in some of the letters of Samuel Finney III, written from Wilmslow to Gabriel Mathias in London between 1775 and 1798.[4] James Higginson, the Great Barrow farmer, frequently entered Chester prices in his diary between 1817 and 1819, and these prices seemed largely to rule what he received for corn, even though he may have sold much of this

1. G.A. Cranfield, The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-60, (Oxford, 1962), pp. 176-7, 202-4.
2. P. Mathias, The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830, (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 450-1.
3. Cheshire R.O., Finney of Fulshaw Coll., Letterbook of Samuel Finney II, 1732-35 (DFF/21).
4. Ibid., Letters of Samuel Finney III to Gabriel Mathias, 1775-98 (DFF/34/1-51).

by private contract.[1]

As already implied, even with good market information widely available, variations in average price levels between town and country and between different towns are to be expected. Although variations in quality can make price comparisons hazardous, prices in Cheshire seem generally to have been higher in and around the manufacturing towns of the east of the county than in the west, and higher in any town than in villages. The weekly wheat price statistics shown in Figures 4:1 to 4:4 [2] bear this out with reference to Stockport and Chester, especially in the years of relatively good harvests, 1791 and 1798. Evidence on prices collected by Sir F.M. Eden shows Chester prices to be generally slightly higher than those of High Walton in north Cheshire near Warrington, e.g. old milk was 1d per quart in Chester and 3 pints per 1d in High Walton, while grain was a few pence per bushel dearer in Chester.[3] The price evidence collected by the government in the 1800 returns on agriculture and markets shows in general higher prices in the late 1790's in the manufacturing towns of east Cheshire and their Lancashire neighbours than in the towns of west and mid Cheshire, although price fluctuations could be more acute in the latter towns than in the former.[4] The higher prevailing level of prices was to be found not only in grain and potatoes but also in meat.

It is in price movements rather than price levels, however, that the key to the sophistication of any given market and the

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1. Cheshire R.O., Diary of James Higginson (DDX 106).
2. All weekly price evidence based on P.R.O., Corn Returns, Weekly Returns by District, 1791-1811 (MAF 10/277-295).
3. Sir F.M. Eden, The State of the Poor, ii, 34-40.
4. P.R.O., H.O. 42/52-55.

strength of the relationship between markets is to be found. Within any market a scarcity is likely to be the most testing time, when a highly developed market will respond relatively smoothly to disequilibrium by increasing prices while a less developed market may break down. The price evidence for 1795[1] from Stockport and Chester shows both markets coping reasonably well with the scarcity of wheat until August when prices had reached the level of 100 shillings a quarter. There is then a complete break in the Stockport series until mid September, although the series of oatmeal prices (not shown) is continuous, while at Chester, despite an occasional week's break, prices continued to soar reaching 134s 4d in the return dated 22 August. In 1799 and 1800 Stockport again continued to function as an oatmeal market throughout the weeks of shortage and high prices,[1] but the frequent gaps in the Macclesfield series imply that the market there was much less able to cope. Wheat sales to dealers had become irregular at the best of times in Stockport by the early nineteenth century, but the Chester wheat returns show very few breaks over the whole series, even in 1799 and 1800. If the activities of dealers at Macclesfield had almost ceased at times in 1799 and 1800, in 1808, a year of some scarcity, the price mechanism seems to have responded quite smoothly and price returns continued to be made.[3]

This price data can not only provide information on the reactions of each market to a scarcity, but can also suggest the extent to which shifts in supply and demand at one market were reflected at another. The 1791 wheat price evidence[4] shows

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1. See Figure 4:3.
2. Figures 4:5 and 4:6.
3. Figure 4:9.
4. Figure 4:1.

prices at Chester and Macclesfield moving along similar courses, although with a gap of up to 1s 6d per bushel between them, while prices at Stockport fluctuated violently. There are no wheat prices for Macclesfield for the later years of the decade but the Chester and Stockport series gradually seem to fit together better. Fluctuations at Stockport are still great in 1794, but the 1795 lines match each other well, while in 1798 it seems reasonably clear that Chester and Stockport are part of a single market.[1] The Macclesfield oatmeal prices are too scrappy in 1799 and 1800 for a close comparison to be made with Stockport, but the series appear to move together. From 1806 to 1811, however, it is quite clear that there is a single oatmeal market in east Cheshire with price movements in each market being closely parallelled in the other, and with price levels being almost the same in each town.[2] This was as true in relatively good years as in the year of higher prices, 1808.

In sum, the evidence suggests that there was a high degree of unity in the markets of east Cheshire by the early nineteenth century at latest, with Chester also forming part of the same market system to the extent that it dealt in the same goods.[3] For by about 1815 the markets of the east Cheshire towns were probably receiving little grain, but were dealing chiefly in wheat flour and oatmeal while wheat, oats, and to a lesser

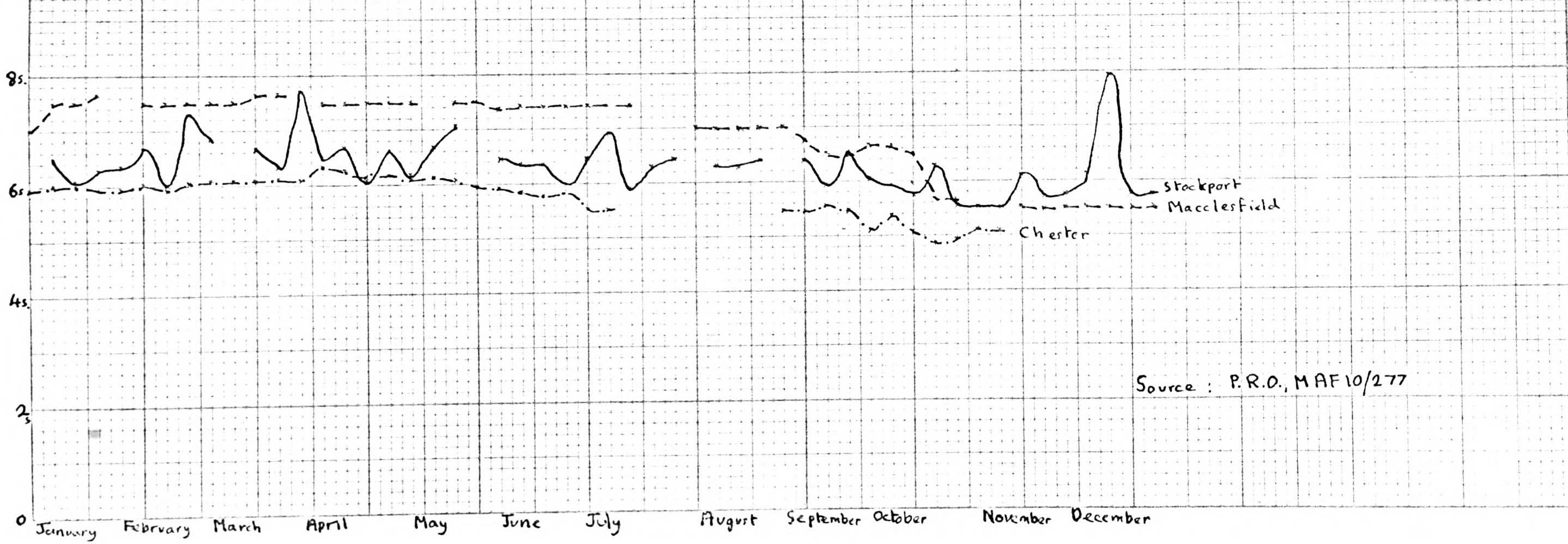
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1. Figures 4:2 to 4:4.
2. Figures 4:7 to 4:12.
3. This short examination of price trends is not intended to be a full discussion of prices, but merely an illustration of the working of one or two markets over a few years. A full examination of price history would involve the collection and collation of data which is not readily available, if available at all at such a local level, without adding greatly to the general themes of this thesis on retail provision and retail organization.

extent barley, were still being traded in at Chester. Only Stockport in the early 1790's was behaving in a relatively unpredictable manner with much greater price fluctuations than at Chester. Problems of supply may well have been the main cause of this as traditional supply channels failed to keep up with growing demand. Yet by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries none of the market towns of Cheshire were so isolated as to be unaffected by what happened in their neighbours, and in most cases markets seem to have responded well to changes in supply and demand and generally to have responded as a single market rather than as a group of highly localized markets.

Figure 4:1

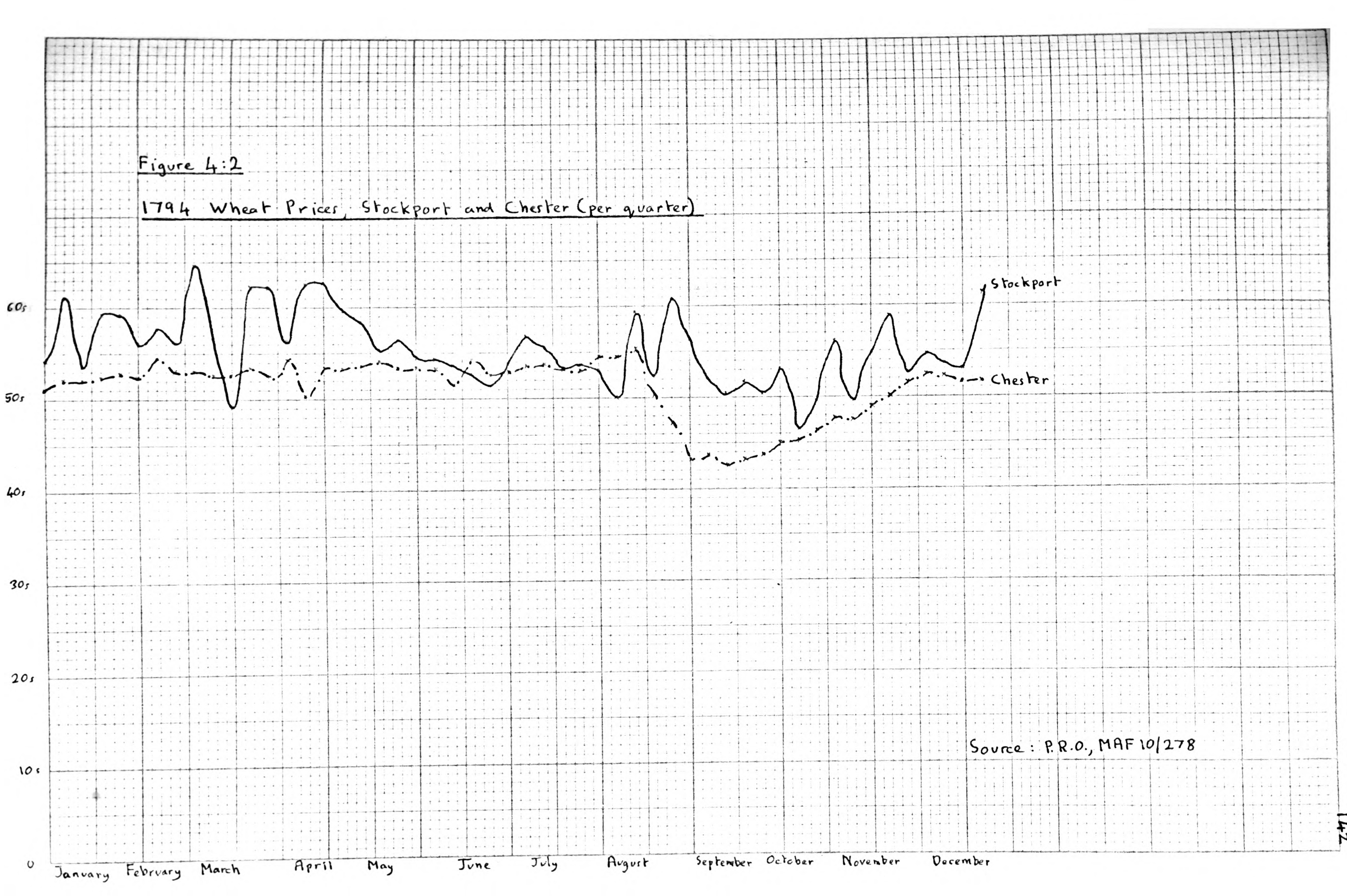
1791 Wheat Prices, Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester (per bushel)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/277

Figure 4:2

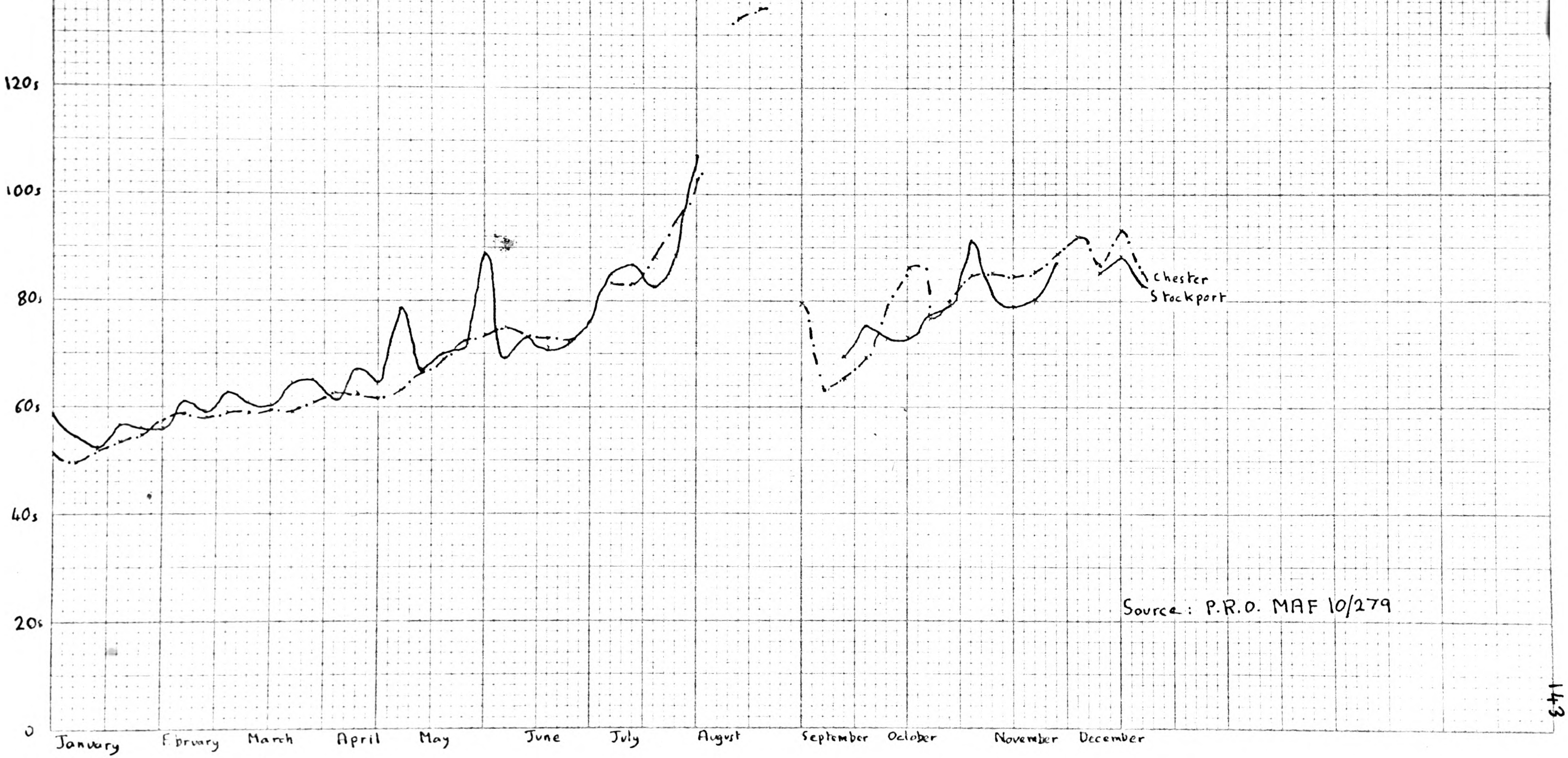
1794 Wheat Prices, Stockport and Chester (per quarter)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/278

Figure 4:3

1795 Wheat Prices Stockport and Chester (per quarter)



Source: P.R.O. MAF 10/279

Figure 4:4

1798 Wheat Prices, Stockport and Chester (per quarter)

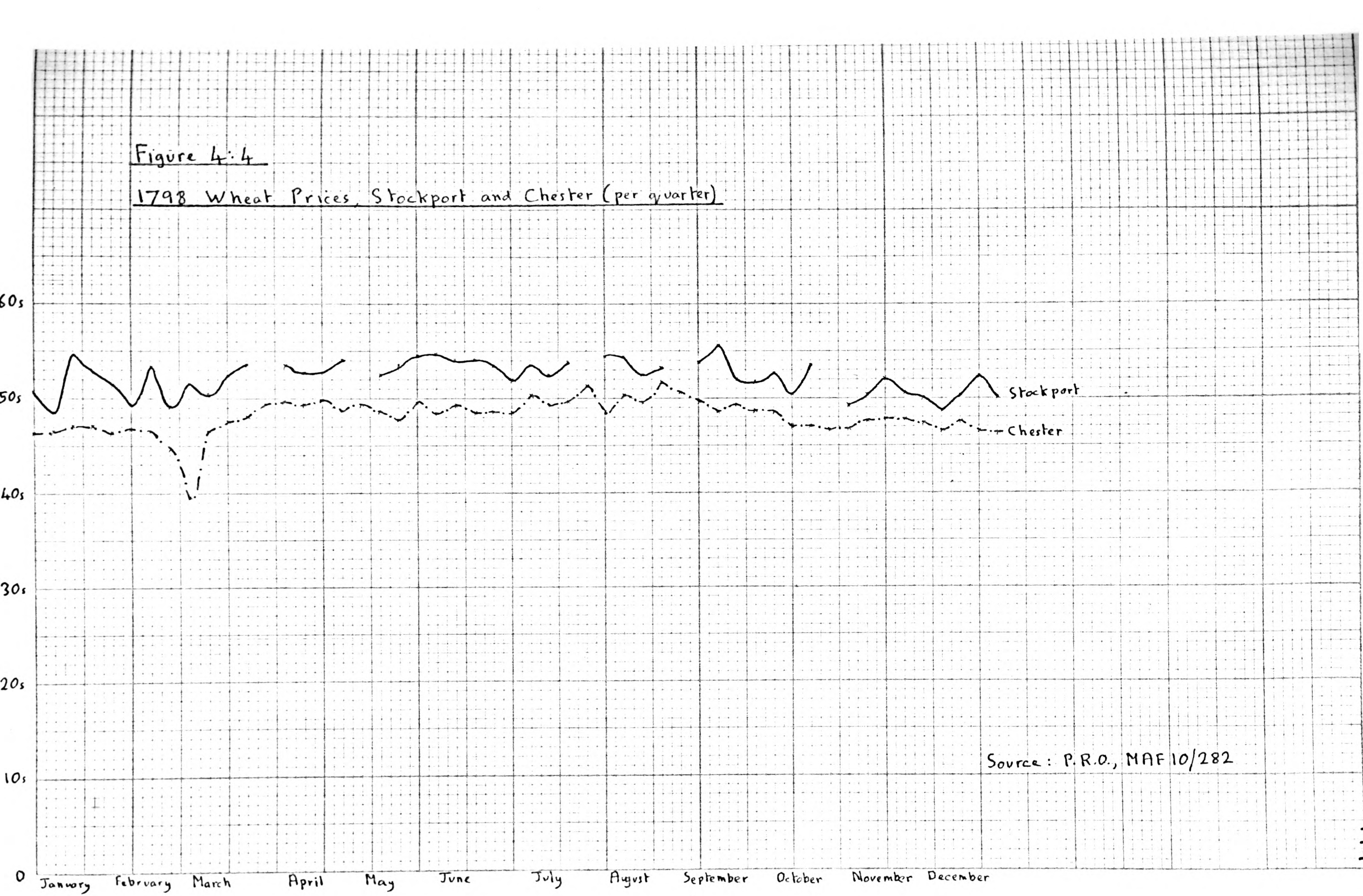


Figure 4:5

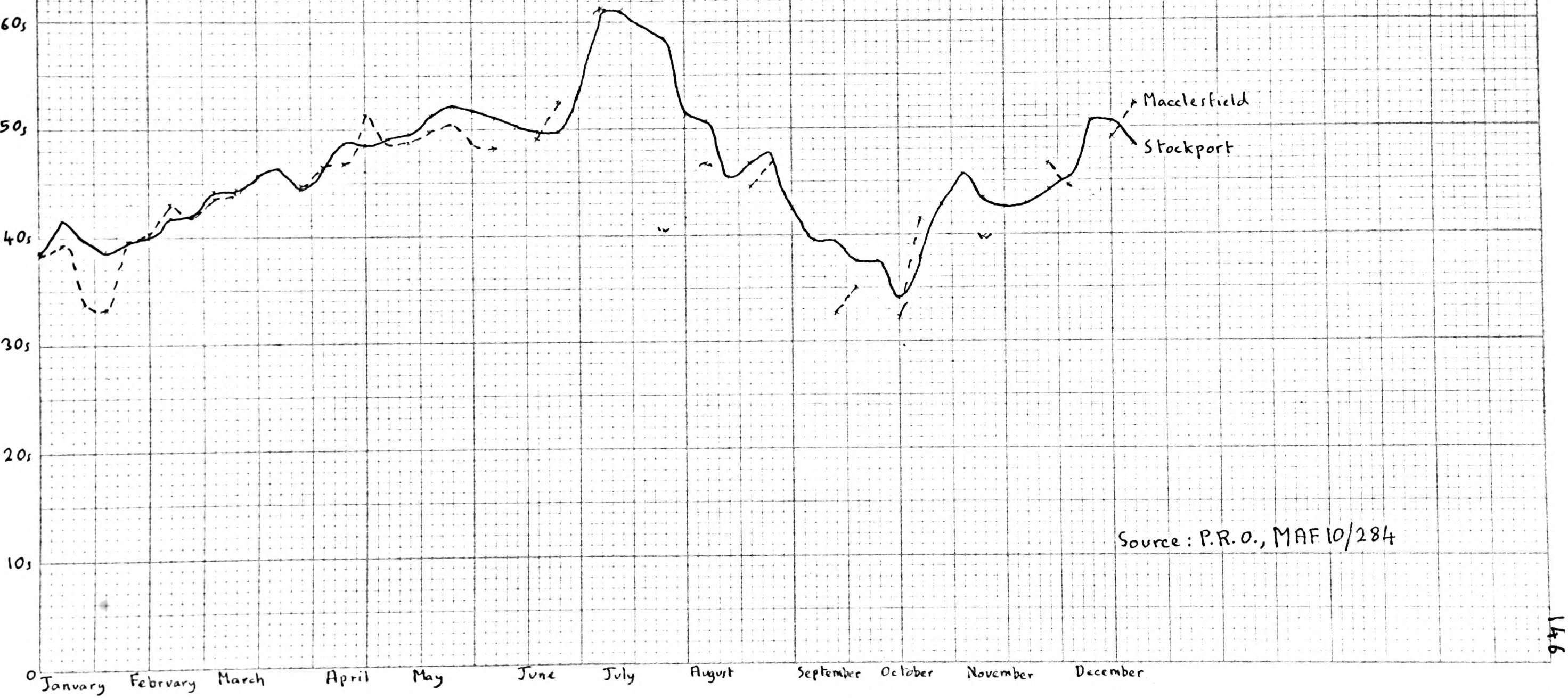
1799 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll — 140 lbs)



Source: P.R.O., MAF 10/283

Figure 4:6

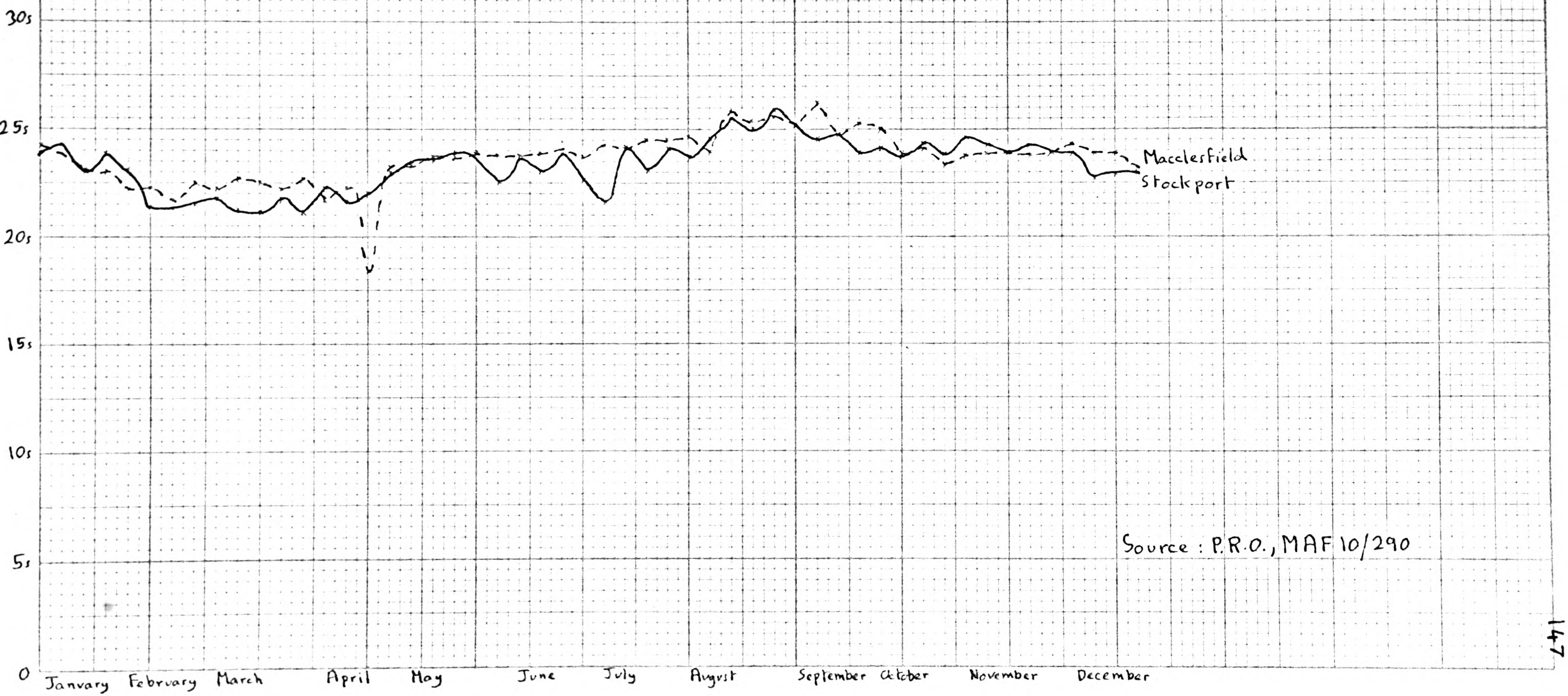
1800 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll – 140lbs)



Source: P.R.O., MAF 10/284

Figure 4:7

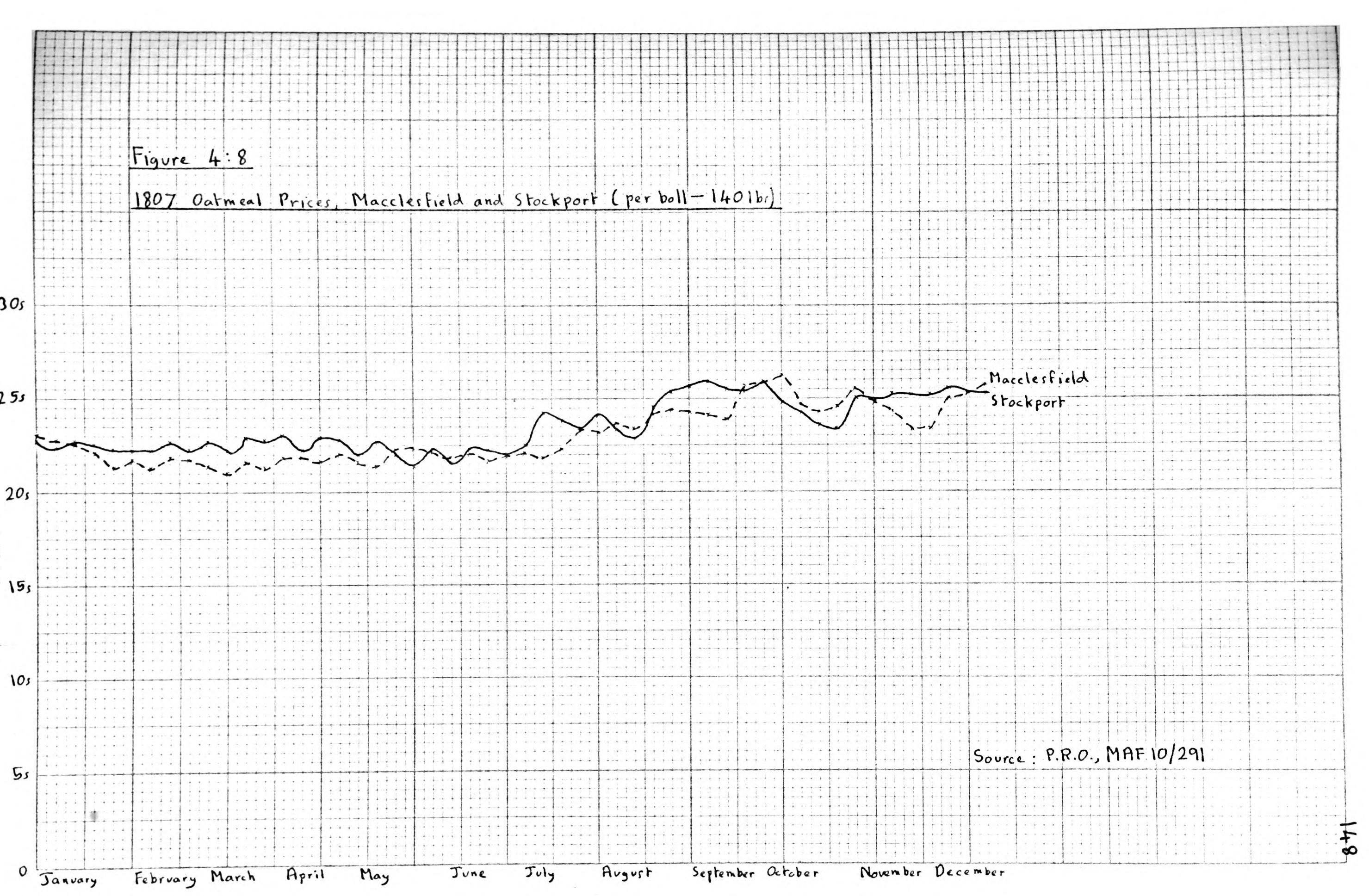
1806 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll — 140 lbs)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/290

Figure 4:8

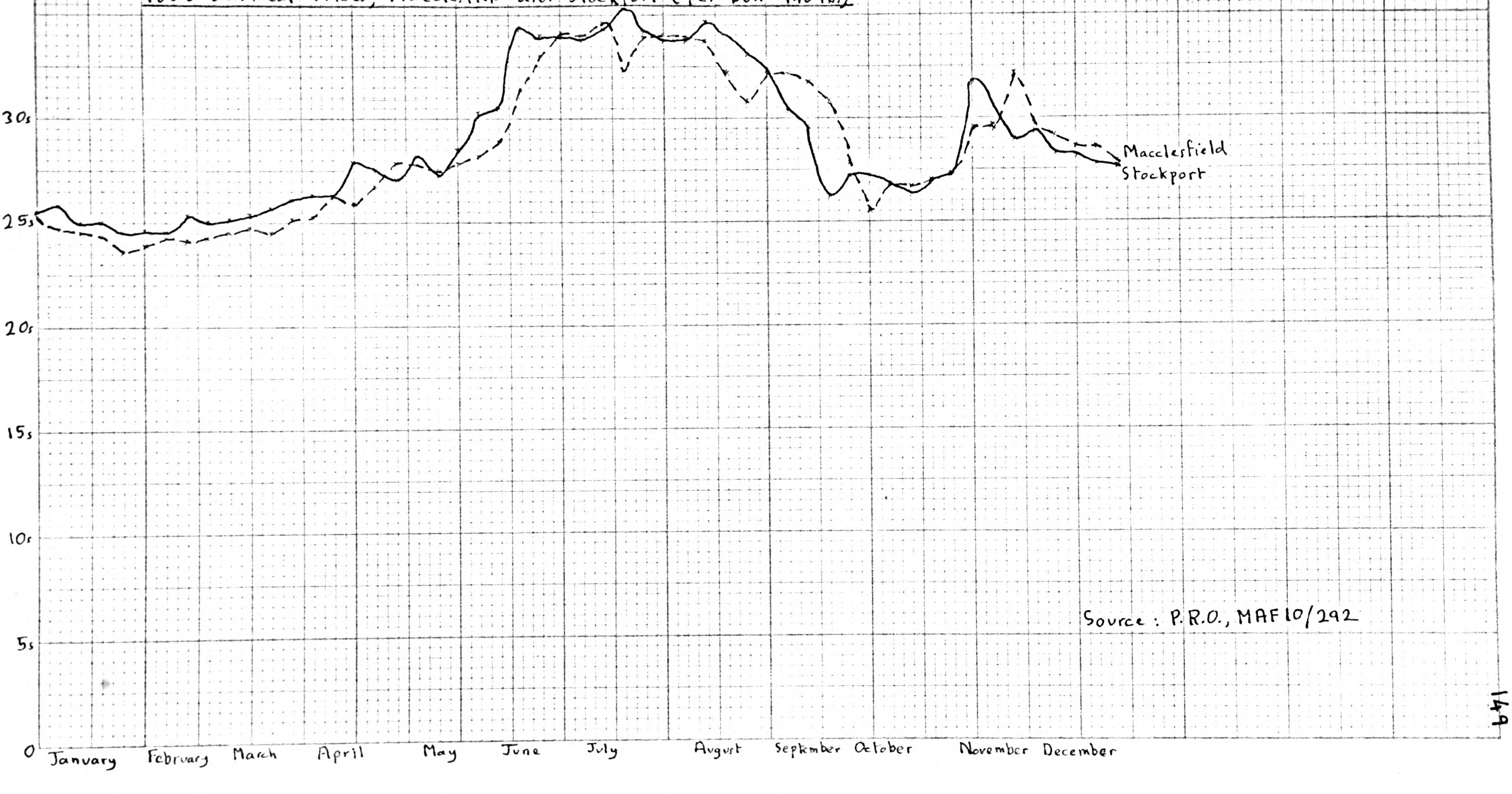
1807 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll – 140lbs)



Source: P.R.O., MAF 10/291

Figure 4:9

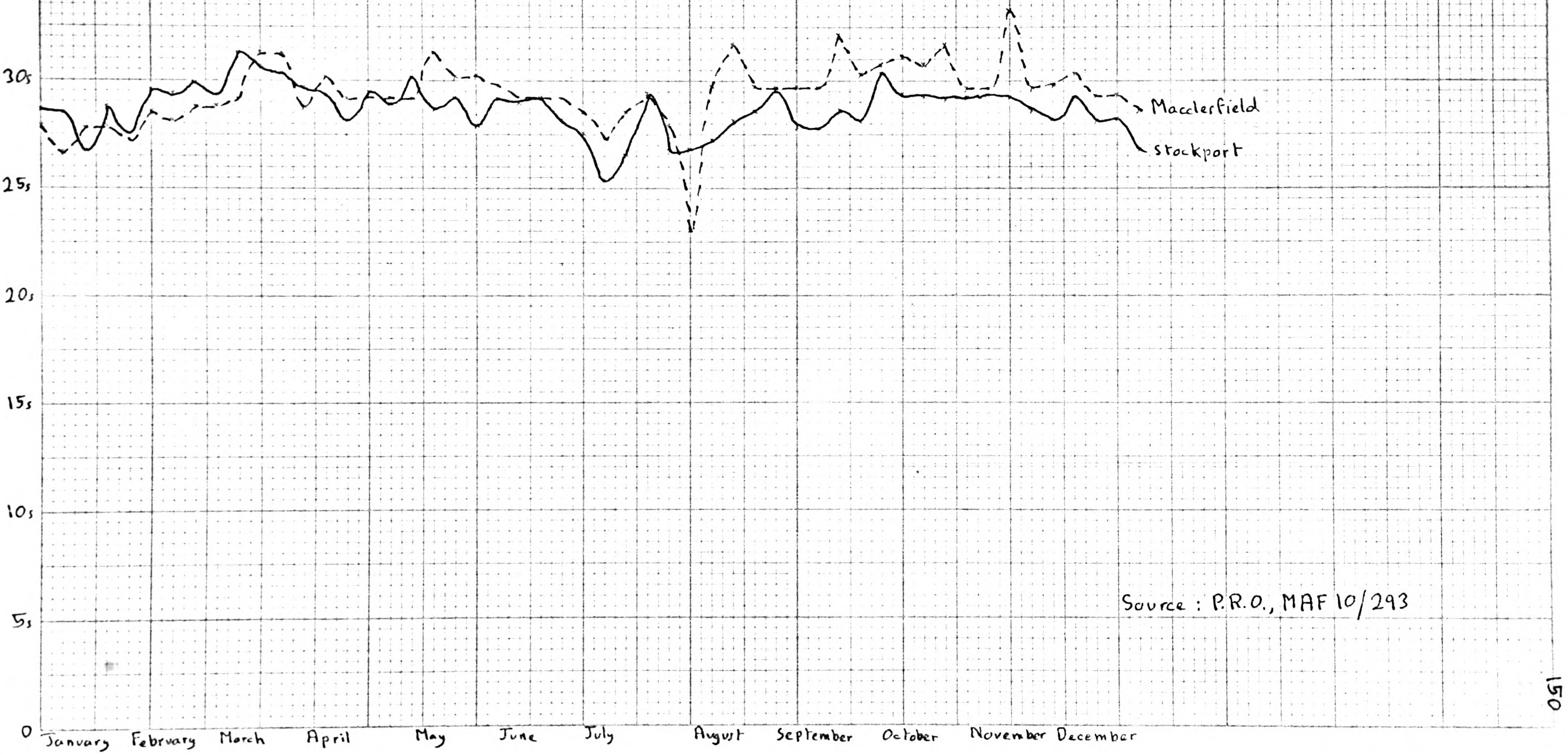
1808 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per Doll-140lbs)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/292

Figure 4:10

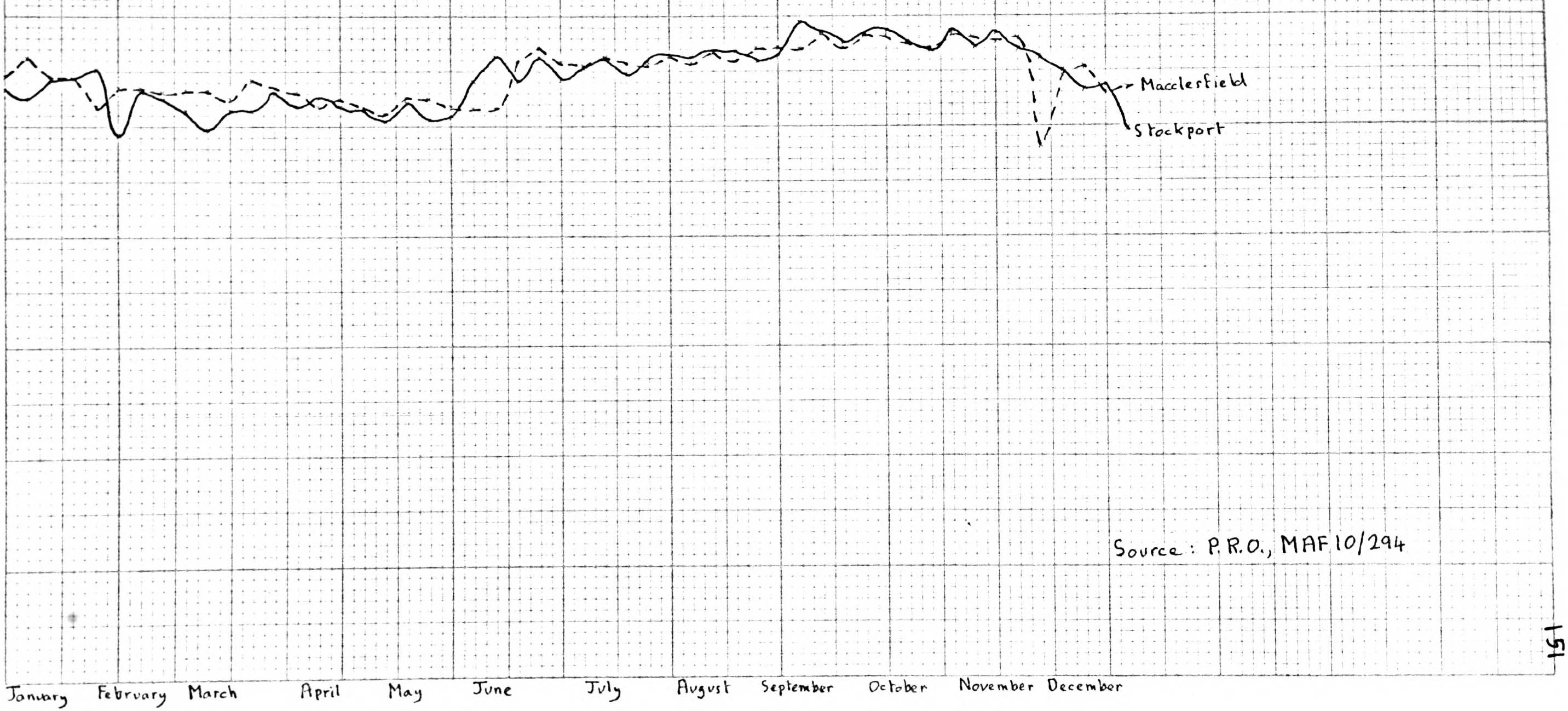
1809 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll—140 lbs)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/293

Figure 4:11

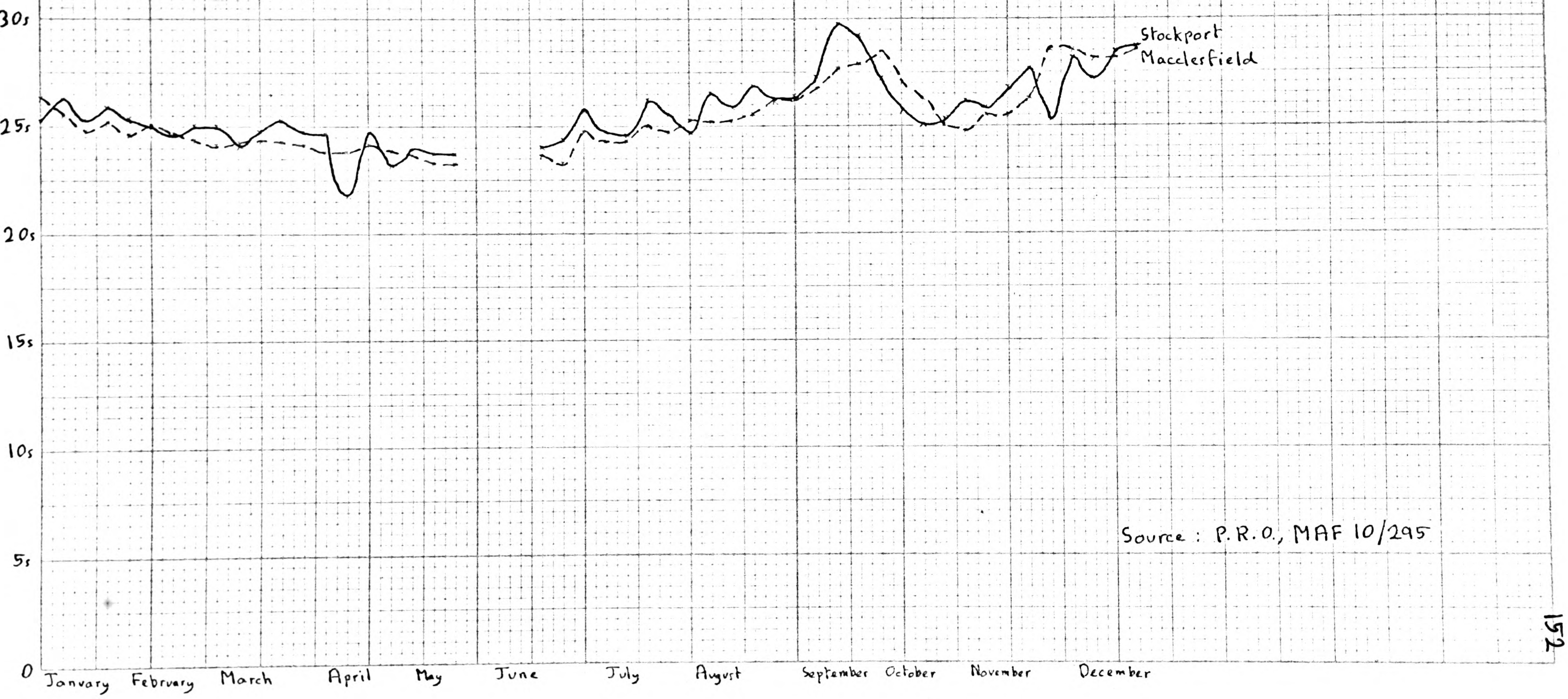
1810 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll—140 lbs)



Source: P.R.O., MAF 10/294

Figure 4:12

1811 Oatmeal Prices, Macclesfield and Stockport (per boll — 140 lbs)



Source : P.R.O., MAF 10/295

CHAPTER 5

THE PUBLIC MARKETS OF MACCLESFIELD, STOCKPORT AND CHESTER

The Market Place

The town market was not merely an abstraction to be discussed in terms of prices, catchment areas or periodicity; it also had a physical presence in the town. Buyers and sellers came into physical contact with each other in the market place of the towns, and this contact not only gave the market many of its social attributes, but could raise questions of public order. It could also, if the needs of the town for food and other goods were growing, make the location and size of the market a real problem. Severe pressure on the capacity of the market place not only made marketing less pleasant, but could impose restraints on the easy operation of the market if buyer and seller could not meet easily, and could perhaps even drive sellers away if conditions were not merely cramped but also heavily polluted. The need to expand the market place to allow for the development of the market in conditions of rapid urban expansion was common to many towns in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and later the need to control the market physically to limit its pollution and nuisance seems to have been felt. Seventeenth-century London experienced the need to expand market provision in the rapidly growing suburbs, and twelve new markets were established as well as four which developed from a building up of trade.[1] An act of 1784

1. P.V. McGrath, 'The Marketing of Food, Fodder and Livestock in the London Area in the Seventeenth Century', (Univ. of London M.A. Thesis, 1948), cap. 8, passim.

authorized the extension of the market in Sheffield and at the same time the slaughterhouses were moved to a location near the river where their pollution would be less serious.[1]

By the late eighteenth century the growing towns of Cheshire were facing similar problems about their markets. In Macclesfield the market was located in the old heart of the town, near the Church and Guildhall, but had probably spread along the streets of the town by the sixteenth century.[2] The problems of congestion and the need to expand the market place to allow the market proper room in which to function without disrupting town life excessively seem to have become acute by 1765. On the 22 of November in that year a Council minute[3] noted that several turnpike roads had recently been made through the town and that the present placing of market stalls was both inconvenient to travellers and dangerous to stall-holders. There were to be restrictions on stalls placed in Chestergate and Jordangate, while stalls were not to be placed on the south side of the town hall in order to ensure free passage to the corn and meal market. Stalls which had been there were to be placed where the shoemakers' stalls had been previously set, and the shoemakers stalls were to be placed where the Mayor ordered. Finally fruit and roots were to be placed on the south side of the market cross and cattle and swine on the south side of the channel in Goose Lane. This attempt to control market sprawl seems to have had little effect, for in 1774 there were complaints that Thomas Birchenall, who kept a Public House in the Market Place,

1. J. Blackman, 'The Food Supply of an Industrial Town - A Study of Sheffield's Public Markets 1780-1900', Business History, V, (1962-63), 86.
2. C.S. Davies (Ed.), A History of Macclesfield, pp. 56-58.
3. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book, 1734-1768.

had thrown down stalls which were obstructing passage to his house.[1]

The problems of the market engaged the attention of the Council several times in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the area available for the market seems to have been enlarged. In 1776 the Corporation advanced money to allow the purchase of some houses in the Market Place in order to pull them down and enlarge the street, and further property was pulled down in 1778.[2] In 1807 it was agreed to purchase buildings in the root market from William Lowe and lay the ground on which they stood open to the market.[3] At the same time attention was focused on the need to tidy up the market area and assign proper buildings to some of the traders. The butchers, always a problem in congested urban areas because of the mess their trade entailed, were provided with 80 stalls on land near the market in 1809. These were built by Mr. Deane, were to be covered with slate and to measure 14 feet by 5 feet, and were to be leased to the Corporation for 999 years at £200 a year with a provision for the Corporation to purchase the shambles at any time during the first 20 years of the lease on payment of 20 years rent.[4] Further improvements took place in the 1820's when a new Town Hall was built with space provided on the ground floor for sellers of flour, meal, cheese and butter on market days.[5] The town improvement act of 1825 contained provisions for the purchase of property near the market for

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1. Birkenhead R.L. Macclesfield Coll., Case for Mr. Arden's Opinion on Macclesfield Market 1774. (MA/B/II/21).
2. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book 1769-1824.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. The History and Directory of Macclesfield and its Vicinity (Manchester, 1825), pp. 11-12.

the purpose of pulling it down and using the land for enlarging the market place, and several buildings appear to have been purchased.[1]

Problems of a cramped market place from which trading was always threatening to overflow and disrupt traffic throughout the town centre were also to be found in Stockport, and there is a similar history there of attempts to provide adequate market facilities for the growing needs of the town, and to improve the condition and appearance of existing facilities. The problems were stated in a petition to the Commons in 1785:[2]

> 'The Place assigned to the Market weekly held in the said Town is, from the great Increase of Provisions and other Articles brought to Market, become insufficient for that Purpose, and the said Market Place, and Avenues leading thereto, are much incommoded by several Houses and other Buildings standing therein and adjoining thereto, and the Scite of the said Market Place is very high, uneven, and in great want of being reduced to a proper and convenient Level.'

Stockport Market Place was indeed on the top of the hill on which the town had been founded, near the Church and Castle. At the west end of the market was the 'Market House Chamber' where stalls, utensils and weights were stored and where a few stalls could be placed on market day, and adjoining it were the butchers' shambles. At the opposite end stood the meal and cheese house, so dilapidated by 1820 that it repelled rather than attracted business, and two rows of small shops.[3]

The narrow and incommodious streets leading to the market were referred to by Sir George Warren about 1770 when he proposed

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1. 'An Act for....improving the Borough and Township of Macclesfield' 1825 6 Geo. IV, cap. cxcvi cl. 95.
2. Commons Journals xl 563 (4 Mar. 1785).
3. J. Thorp, 'A History of Local Government in Stockport between 1760 and 1820', (Manchester University M.A. Thesis, 1940), pp. 156-57.

moving the market to a new site, but no action seems to have been taken.[1] Similarly the 1785 Improvement Bill, which resulted from the petition quoted above, failed in the Commons, probably because Warren feared a transference of power in the town from him to a group of commissioners, and there appear to have been no improvements made until 1818. Then 383 square yards of Churchgate was added to the highway near the market, but since a potato market immediately developed there, congestion was little eased.[2] The entire market place was repaved and levelled in 1820, and in 1824 the old meal and cheese house was pulled down and replaced by a brick corn exchange and meal mart.[3] These improvements may have added to the attractions of the market but they had not solved the problems of space and in 1835 the Court Leet presented a complaint to the Lady of the Manor, stating that, 'The present Market Place is insufficient for the public Business transacted there; And that it is therefore necessary that the accomodation be enlarged as speedily as possible'. Meanwhile the potato market was to be removed to the square behind the Admiral Public House in Hillgate.[4] After some disputes over his rights, Lord Vernon seems to have built a new market house in 1844,[5] but major improvements had to await the purchase of the market tolls by the Corporation. Complaints of the overcrowded state of the market were made in 1847 and it was still being argued then that extra land was

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1. Stockport Museum, HX 182 f. 10.
2. P.M. Giles, 'The Economic and Social Development of Stockport, 1815-36', (Manchester University M.A. Thesis, 1950) pp. 454-55.
3. Ibid., pp. 455-57.
4. Cheshire R.O., Stockport Court Papers, Leet of 15 Oct. 1835 (DVE).
5. Cheshire R.O., Stockport Court Papers, Memorial on Market House, 1844 (DVE).

needed and that a covered hall would be advantageous.[1] The purchase of the tolls in 1847 led to proposals for a market hall and careful regulation of where sellers of different goods should stand. Finally the present hall was built in 1861 and in 1862 the Corporation published details of the areas that were to be used for markets and where in them each type of goods should be placed.[2]

Chester seems to have suffered less than the other towns from an over-crowded market place, but the need for a well ordered and relatively unobjectionable market was felt there also. There was no single market place, but a series of regulations from 1705-1707 allow the location of the eighteenth-century markets to be fixed. On 26 January/6 February 1704/5 it was ordered that the beast market was to be held in further Northgate Street and the cloth market in Bridge Street, while on 16/27 August 1705 the fruit, herb and root market was ordered to be set in Northgate Street.[3] Northgate Street also seems to have been the location of the corn market, which in 1707 was extended by transferring some land from the grounds of the Bishop's Palace to the market place,[4] and Eastgate Street was used for the marketing of general country produce such as butter, eggs and fowls. This pattern remained fixed at least until the 1780's when a guide to Chester referred to, 'Eastgate Street, a large spacious Street where the Markets for Fowl, Butter, and Cheese are kept, which for Cheapness and Plenty, equal most in the

1. Minutes of Evidence....upon a preliminary Inquiry respecting the Stockport Manorial Tolls and Bridges Bill 22-23 Jan. 1847, Parl. Papers 1847 xix (124-4) p. 3.
2. Stockport Market Bye-Laws 1862.
3. Chester City R.O., Assembly Book Calendar, 1685-1725 ff. 131, 136 (AB/3).
4. Ibid. f. 155v.

Kingdom', adding that the markets for fish and vegetables and the flesh shambles were in Northgate Street.[1]

There do not seem to have been any complaints about cramped sites after 1707, and most of the changes in market location and buildings in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were occasioned by a desire to keep nuisance and pollution to a minimum, particularly in the busiest and often most respectable streets of the city. The trend was towards the provision of better facilities where the value of the market was recognized, as in 1807 when the corn dealers were allowed to transfer their market from the open street to the area under the Exchange, formerly occupied by country bakers.[2] The provision of shambles for butchers was reduced in 1812 when it was recommended by a committee of the Assembly that it would be a great public advantage if the flesh shambles next to the Exchange were pulled down and the space used for the purposes of a green market, while the remaining flesh shambles were appropriated to country butchers only on the Saturday market day.[3] The implication of this may well be that meat was increasingly provided by town butchers from permanent shops. The desire to avoid the obstructions markets could cause to busy roads led in 1818 to a proposal to move the beast market from Upper Northgate Street, the main route to Liverpool, to a piece of waste ground further out of the City,[4] and the suggestion in the same year of moving the market from Eastgate to Bridge Street[5] may have resulted from the growing importance of Eastgate Street as the City's

1. P. Broster, The Chester Guide.... for 1781, pp. 21-33.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes, 1785-1825 f. 127 (AB/5).
3. Chester City R.O., Assembly Committees Minute Book 1805-1835 f. 28-28v (AC/1).
4. AB/5 f. 207.
5. AC/1 f. 61-61v.

major shopping street. The best solution to the problems of produce markets disrupting City life was to build a market hall, and this was proposed to the Assembly in 1823, and finally in April 1828 an agreement was made for the erection of a flesh shambles, fowl market, butter market and fish shambles to be completed by July of that year.[1] By 1831 the markets were well established in and around the market hall in Northgate Street[2] and although further building took place later in the century, there is no evidence of seriously inadequate marketing facilities in Chester.

The Operation of the Market

The continuing importance of the public market for the supply of provisions is implied by the extensions and improvements to markets in many towns in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless the same period was also seeing an increase in the numbers of shops, and thus the degree to which markets and shops performed complementary functions is an important question. In general it seems that markets and shops each had a distinct role to play in the provisioning of towns and that conflict between the two sorts of trading was of little importance. Not only were markets characterized by low prices and rapid turnover in contrast to the quality goods and high standards of service to the customer in shops[3] but the types of goods sold differed. Meat and vegetables were normally purchased in markets while grocery was bought from shops[4] and of course shops had the bulk

1. Ibid. ff. 91v-92.
2. J. Hemingway, History of Chester ii, 14-16.
3. J. Blackman, 'The Food Supply of an Industrial Town', Loc. cit. p. 96.
4. J. Blackman, 'Changing Marketing Methods and Food Consumption', in Our Changing Fare (Ed. T.C. Barker, J.V. McKenzie & J. Yudkin) London, 1966, p. 39.

of urban retail trade in clothing and household goods. Henry Holland, describing markets in Cheshire, expressed this complementarity when he wrote that the principal articles for sale in the markets were meat, poultry, butter and all kinds of vegetables and fruit, while 'Bacon, oatmeal, flour, bread, and other articles of this kind, are usually purchased out of the retail shops; which scarcely a village, consisting of a dozen houses, is without'.[1] The relationship between shops and markets in Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester will be a constant theme of this examination of the goods sold in the markets, the receipts from the markets and the regulation of the markets.

Public markets traditionally had both wholesale and retail functions. They were particularly important for the sale of grain by wholesale to dealers, but many eighteenth-century observers were convinced that the pitched grain market was declining and that sales by sample, often taking place out of the public market, were becoming normal. Attitudes to the development of sale by sample ranged from complaints of the decay of market towns in which farmers had ceased attending markets but had allowed jobbers to do their business, in which grass grew in the market place and in which tradesmen were suffering from declining trade,[2] to a belief that the convenience of buyer and seller should dictate where trade took place and that antiquated market regulations could only harm trade and hurt the consumer.[3] The practice of sale by sample, in which a farmer made a deal

1. H. Holland, Agriculture of Cheshire, pp. 314-5.
2. An Essay to Prove; that Regrators....are Destructive of Trade..... (London, 1718), pp. 18-20.
3. J. Arbuthnot, An Inquiry into the Connection between the present Price of Provisions, and the Size of Farms (London, 1773), pp. 110-111.

with a factor on the basis of a few handfuls of grain, was regarded by Defoe as being chiefly confined to the market towns near London,[1] but by the end of the eighteenth century it was probably widespread in England. Despite increasing acceptance of sample sales as rational, the practice could still provoke criticism in high price years as in 1800 when Girdler wrote of, 'The pernicious custom of selling by sample'[2] by which a few rich corn dealers, he supposed, monopolized the grain trade to the detriment of the consumer.

The evolution of the markets of the Cheshire towns in the eighteenth century[3] saw the emergence of sample selling, though not without some opposition from the market authorities. Macclesfield market seems to have been declining as a pitched grain market by the 1750's when it was complained that,

> 'Many sellers of Corn Flour and Meal in order to avoid paying Toll pitch the same in publick or private houses within the Burrough on Fair Days and Market Days and there sell without bringing the same to open Market and refuse to pay Toll.' 4

At the same time it was stated that many of the huxters supplying flour and meal in small quantities were buying out of the market and receiving extra measure from the farmers because they thus avoided tolls.[5] By 1817 it was claimed that Macclesfield had largely ceased to function as an open grain market, and that most transactions took place by private contract.[6] In Stockport

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1. Daniel Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman ii, Part 2, 43-45.
2. J.S. Girdler, Observations on the Pernicious Consequences of Forestalling, Regrating, and Engrossing (London, 1800), p. 135.
3. See cap. 4 above for general comments on the development of Cheshire markets in the eighteenth century. (pp. 121-23)
4. Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., Case and Opinion on the Tolls of Fairs and Markets in the Borough of Macclesfield (MA/B/II/18).
5. Ibid.
6. J. Corry, The History of Macclesfield (London, 1817) p. 50.

it was the cheese wholesaling that chiefly declined in the early nineteenth century, as the Yorkshire cheese buyers ceased to attend the market and trade largely moved to Manchester.[1] Some transactions in corn may have continued at the Friday market, but these were probably diminishing in importance.

Chester may have retained its importance as an open corn market longer than the other towns, though not all the corn transactions settled there would have taken place in the public market with sacks of grain on display. There were complaints in the 1750's of purchases of corn by bakers out of the open market, to the extent that the market was so reduced that the Justices could not fairly ascertain the assize of bread.[2] In 1765 Thomas Brock, Mayor of Chester, complained of corn dealers and bakers buying secretly by sample out of the market and thus causing high prices. Only petty farmers still came to the market where the bulk buyers agreed to give artificially high prices to keep up the assize of bread. Thus the poor who had to buy in the markets suffered doubly through excessive nominal market prices and a high assize of bread, while it was,

> 'Notorious that the Principal Farmers Constantly Sell in Gross All their Corn without bringing more (if any to Market) than a Sample to an Inn, at least 3d pr Measure under the open Market, or pedling Price (as they call it)'.[3]

Prices in public markets seemed less and less to represent the realities of supply and demand and troubles in high price years could reflect the growing disillusionment with the market.

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1. P.M. Giles, op.cit., p. 445.
2. Chester City R.O., Legal Papers re Corn Trade, late 1750's (C/LP/120a).
3. House of Lords Record Office, Committee Papers (H.L.), Papers of the Committee on the Dearness of Provisions, 19 Mar. 1765, Letter from Thomas Brock of Chester.

Some corn was, however, still pitched in Chester market. In 1766 it was alleged that on one market day two Chester dealers had agreed with farmers for the purchase of sacks of corn standing in the market before the official opening of the market and thus were guilty of forestalling.[1] Farmers and corn dealers were still resorting to the market in large numbers in 1807 when their petition to be allowed to use the ground floor of the Exchange for their business attracted 91 signatures.[2]

Nevertheless wholesale trade in corn was almost certainly of diminishing importance in the public markets by the early nineteenth century, and the markets were increasingly significant for the retail trade in provisions. The list of Chester markets existing in 1835 gives a good impression of the range of market trading - flesh shambles, green market, fish market, mug market, fowl market, butter market and potato market.[3] In Stockport the expansion of trading in articles of this nature had led to the extension of the market to Saturdays when meat especially was said to be purchased by the town's people in the evening.[4] Many of these items chiefly handled in markets were goods that in rural society could be produced by most families or bought from local farmers and which only needed to pass through a marketing system when population was increasingly concentrated in towns. Tables of tolls from Macclesfield and Stockport show the types of goods expected in the markets, and in mid-eighteenth-century Macclesfield meat, bread, fruit, roots, seeds, butter,

1. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations, 1766 (QSE/15/112).
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1805-1811 (AF 59).
3. Municipal Corporations Commission 1835, Parl.Papers 1835 XXVI (116), p. 2626.
4. J. Butterworth, A History and Description of Stockport etc. (Manchester, 1827), p. 246.

lard, honey and bacon are listed[1] while at Stockport the tolls laid down in 1752 mentioned butchers, gingerbread sellers, gardeners, tobacconists, bread and salt sellers.[2] By the end of the century fruit and vegetables were regarded as major items and included apples, peas, potatoes, turnips, carrots and nuts, while butter, geese and fowl also appear in the list.[3] At Chester Mrs. Read was buying turkeys, salmon, mackerel and peas in the markets in the 1770's.[4] Although cooked meats and cheese were not absent from the markets, huxters' shops were probably slowly taking over the trade in such items, and bread seems to have been disappearing from the markets by the early nineteenth century. Country bakers were selling at the Chester markets for much of the eighteenth century and in 1775 thirty or more loaves, deficient in weight, were seized from them,[5] but by 1807 the corn dealers petition referred to above gave the desertion of the market by the country bakers as their reason for hoping to occupy the standings under the Exchange formerly used by bakers. The dominance of provisions dealers in nineteenth-century markets is clear at Leicester where in 1851, 79% of market traders dealt in foodstuffs, 12% in household goods and 9% in clothing and footwear with butchers accounting for 65% of the food dealers.[6]

The eighteenth-century market was, however, not without its importance in the distribution of clothing and household goods,

1. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book, 1734-68, Table of Tolls, 1752.
2. J. Thorp, op.cit., pp. 160-161.
3. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Burton Mss. vol. IX, pp. 43-44.
4. Flintshire R.O., Nercwys Hall Mss., Letters of Bagot Read to Kitty Boland, 1766-1775 (D/NH/1070).
5. Chester Chronicle 31 July 1775.
6. D. Alexander, Retailing in England, pp. 42-43.

even if many of these probably passed through fairs rather than markets. A table of tolls for Macclesfield market, probably from the 1740's, included charges on breeches makers, glovers, shoemakers, glass dealers, hatters, cloggers, linen sellers, sellers of maps and pictures and coopers[1] and Stockport market does not appear to have been dissimilar. Moreover there is evidence that dealers of this sort actually traded in markets for one of the traders named in the toll dispute with Congleton was a hardwareman[2] and in 1759 Mark Furnall, a breeches maker, found himself in dispute with Macclesfield Corporation over goods he was exposing to sale in the Market Place.[3] A dispute over tolls at Stockport in 1738 heard evidence of tolls being regularly collected from shoemakers there[4] and provision was made in the tolls tables for the collection of tolls from hatters and hosiers. Some of these traders probably had come to the market from other towns or villages, but others, particularly men like Mark Furnall in Macclesfield, had shops in the town and were using stalls in the market in addition to their shops. Most of the references to the sale of clothing and household goods in the market are pre-1760 and this trading may have been declining during the century. However, clothing was still sold in the Macclesfield market in the 1830's when complaints of excessive tolls on it were made[5] and Chester had a mug market at least from 1814 onwards where rough Staffordshire pottery

1. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Tolls of Macclesfield (CR 63/2/341).
2. Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., (MA/T/1/37).
3. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Toll dispute (CR 63/2/341).
4. Stockport Museum, Warren Papers, Document D.
5. Municipal Corporations Commission, Reports on Certain Boroughs by T.J. Hogg, Parl. Papers, 1837-8 XXXV (686), p. 68.

was sold.[1]

The market receipts shown in Tables 5:1 to 5:5 bear out the suggestion that the open market continued to flourish in the nineteenth century, even if its role was changing. It is not easy to determine the precise implications of the figures because rates of tolls may have changed, although they seem to have been static in most places during the eighteenth century, and efficiency of collection certainly varied over time. Nevertheless the steady rise in the amounts paid for leases of the tolls in Macclesfield in the eighteenth century and the sharp rise between 1794 and 1837 suggests a prosperous market. Much of this revenue is likely to have come from the butchers who were not expected to trade outside the market until the 1840's. The eighteenth-century figures from Stockport show little overall change, though the trend may be slightly downwards. The meal and cheese figures for the 1780's suggest that dealings in these commodities were still dominating the market, but the last available figures (1784) are for the years before the most rapid expansion of the town. In Chester receipts from butchers having stalls in the shambles show a fall in the mid-eighteenth century which may represent some transfer of trade to shops, but recovery at the end of the century. The sharp rise in receipts in 1812-13 may represent an adjustment of the rents, and certainly coincides with the appointment of a new rent collector.[2] The general trend of receipts from the fish shambles was upwards, but the early nineteenth-century receipts from the green market, mug market and standings under the Exchange was static or

1. Chester City R.O., Treasurers Account Book, 1798-1822 (TAB/9).
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar 1785-1825 f. 162 (AB/3).

Table 5:1 Leases of Macclesfield Market Tolls, 1744-1837

Date	Value per Annum (£)
1744	60
1752	65
1758	70
1765	96 a)
1779	90 b)
1789	102
1794	120
1808-9	120
1837	340

a) May include tolls of waterworks
b) Bids of £90 or more to be considered

Sources:

1744 Birkenhead R.L. Macclesfield Coll., Lease of Tolls, 1744 (MA/B/II/16)

1752-94 Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Books 1734-1768, 1769-1824

1808-9 Birkenhead R.L. Macclesfield Coll., Mayoral Accounts, 1808-9 (MA/B/III/5)

1837 Parl. Papers 1837-8 xxxv (686) p. 66.

Table 5:2 Stockport Market Tolls, 1730-1784

Date	Meal £	s	d	Cheese £	s	d	Standings £	s	d
1730	32	8	11				38	3	1
1731	24	14	0				62	5	6
1732	21	9	4¾				52	17	3½
1733	16	4	11				47	19	3
1734	16	3	2½				62	16	1¾
1735	37	6	3½				58	18	2½
1736	34	12	10½				58	0	5½
1737	24	18	2½				58	14	3½
1738	24	15	11				53	12	7½
1739	29	18	1				49	13	1
1780	23	11	7	28	19	6	39	6	10
1781	24	10	7	29	8	0	41	16	10
1782	22	18	7	29	11	10	40	12	5
1783	22	16	11	28	10	11	35	1	6
1784	21	16	10	25	8	5	38	6	2

Meal column includes meal, wheat, barley, oats and beans

Accounts made up at end of April 1730-39, and at Martinmas (11 November) 1780-84

1739 figures represent doubling of May to October figures (receipts usually slightly higher in second half of year).

Source: J. Thorp, op.cit., p. 159

N.B. Documents seem to have disappeared since 1940.

Table 5:3 Receipts from Chester Flesh Shambles 1735-1815

Year	Profits £	s	d	Year	Profits £	s	d	Expenses £	s	d
1735-36	101	17	0	1776-77	88	5	2			
1736-37	105	17	8	1777-78	84	0	0			
1737-38	104	2	1	1778-79	76	15	2			
1738-39	98	10	3	1779-80	78	0	11			
1739-40	102	9	1	1780-81	78	11	9			
1740-41	95	5	0	1781-82	77	16	3			
1741-42	92	2	8	1782-83	77	16	3			
1742-43	92	0	8	1783-84	73	4	1			
1743-44	97	6	10	1784-85	59	5	7			
1744-45	104	9	6	1785-86	72	16	11			
1745-46	106	3	6	1786-87	91	1	7			
1746-47	105	6	9	1787-88	83	15	6			
1747-48	100	6	0	1788-89	90	7	2			
1748-49	105	17	0	*	Receipts					
1749-50	113	19	2	1798-99	128	2	0	23	18	0
1750-51	101	3	9	1799-1800	141	0	1½	17	3	0
1751-52	89	13	9	1800-01	151	16	5	18	4	0
1752-53	92	12	7	1801-02	144	9	1	18	4	0
1753-54	90	2	11	1802-03	147	11	2	18	4	0
1754-55	91	15	5	1803-04	153	14	4	18	4	0
1755-56	85	5	8	1804-05	156	16	9	18	4	0
1756-57	90	0	6	1805-06	163	8	0	18	4	0
1757-58	89	18	7	1806-07	160	0	7	18	4	0
1758-59	91	0	11	1807-08	161	4	3	18	4	0
1759-60	96	3	1	1808-09	165	8	4½	18	4	0
1760-61	105	5	5	1809-10	149	12	11	18	4	0
1761-62	110	19	8	1810-11	152	5	0	18	4	0
1762-63	106	14	5	1811-12	148	13	0	18	4	0
1763-64	99	18	3	1812-13	220	10	6	18	4	0
1764-65	89	6	7	1813-14	219	16	11½	18	4	0
1765-66	83	2	10	1814-15	283	10	2½	32	11	0
1766-67	80	19	10	1815-16	279	15	5½			
1767-68	74	7	11							
1768-69	71	13	8							
1769-70	71	9	10½							
1770-71	66	12	4							
1771-72	72	14	0							
1772-73	72	9	7							
1773-74	66	2	1							
1774-75	62	5	2							
1775-76	80	4	7							

Table 5:4 Receipts from Chester Fish Shambles 1738-1815

Year	Profits £	s	d	Year	Profits £	s	d	Expenses £	s	d
1738-39	9	12	1	1776-77	11	11	0			
1739-40	7	5	6	1777-78	11	11	0			
1740-41	7	17	0	1778-79	11	11	0			
1741-42	9	16	6	1779-80	11	11	0			
1742-43	9	0	6	1780-81	11	11	0			
1743-44	9	6	6	1781-82	11	11	0			
1744-45	7	19	9	1782-83	11	11	0			
1745-46	8	14	0	1783-84	11	11	0			
1746-47	9	1	3	1784-85	11	11	0			
1747-48	8	16	6	1785-86	11	11	0			
1748-49	8	13	0	1786-87	11	11	0			
1749-50	9	17	0	1787-88	20	0	1			
1750-51	9	9	9	1788-89	12	10	7½			
1751-52	9	13	5	*						
1752-53	8	1	0		Receipts					
1753-54	8	15	6	1798-99	16	19	3	15	14	6
1754-55	8	10	0	1799-1800	19	9	8	20	6	0
1755-56	9	4	6	1800-01	20	9	3	18	18	0
1756-57	9	19	6	1801-02	21	3	11	22	12	0
1757-58	11	12	6	1802-03	19	14	5½	22	4	0
1758-59	10	13	6	1803-04	19	17	3	25	8	0
1759-60	4	16	0	1804-05	18	3	11	25	16	0
1760-61	12	11	8½	1805-06	20	8	9	26	18	0
1761-62	11	9	0½	1806-07	21	16	7	26	16	0
1762-63	10	10	0	1807-08	20	10	4	26	6	0
1763-64	11	18	0	1808-09	20	18	8½	26	6	0
1764-65	11	0	6	1809-10	22	11	1	27	16	0
1765-66	11	15	6	1810-11	21	18	11½	27	16	0
1766-67	10	14	6	1811-12	22	18	10	27	16	0
1767-68	8	6	6	1812-13	14	10	3½	15	11	0
1768-69	11	11	0	1813-14	35	11	6	27	16	0
1769-70	11	11	0	1814-15	48	5	1½	23	3	0
1770-71	11	11	0	1815-16	59	1	3			
1771-72	11	11	0							
1772-73	11	11	0							
1773-74	10	10	0							
1774 75	11	11	0							
1775-76	11	11	0							

Notes: Gap in Sources from 1788-89 to 1798-99: figures in first column after that date represent total receipts, not profits.

Year runs from October to September.

See Notes to Table 5:3.

Source: Chester City R.O., Treasurers Account Books, 1734-1822 (TAB/5-9).

Table 5:5 Chester Market Receipts, 1787-1835

Year	Green Market Receipts			Green Market Expenses			Mug Market Receipts			Exchange Receipts			Standings Expenses		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
1787-88	18	0	8½												
1788-89	20	3	8½												
1798-99	18	12	0½	5	0	0				8	19	3	2	12	0
1799-1800	18	18	6	5	0	0				8	12	11	2	12	0
1800-01	17	15	4	5	0	0				10	19	5	2	12	0
1801-02	15	16	0½	5	0	0				11	14	6	2	12	0
1802-03	15	9	11½	5	0	0				11	11	7	2	12	0
1803-04	16	8	11	5	0	0				13	2	6	2	12	0
1804-05	15	4	5	5	0	0				15	19	0	2	12	0
1805-06	17	7	5	5	0	0				16	8	5	2	12	0
1806-07	17	5	4	5	0	0				13	17	6	2	12	0
1807-08	18	10	8	5	0	0				14	14	3	2	12	0
1808-09	17	3	7	5	0	0				14	7	9	2	12	0
1809-10	10	5	0	5	0	0				13	3	6	2	12	0
1810-11	7	15	8	5	0	0				13	9	0	2	12	0
1811-12	7	0	8	5	0	0				14	13	6	2	12	0
1812-13	7	14	3	5	0	0				13	13	6	2	12	0
1813-14	12	14	6½	5	0	0				12	17	6	2	12	0
1814-15							3	3	9						
1815-16							8	5	9						
1816-17							7	6	1½						
1817-18							6	1	8						
1818-19							4	2	6						
1819-20							3	7	9						
1820-21							3	2	5						
1821-22							3	9	0						
1835	46	6	7				13	6	2	57	14	0			

Sources:

1787-1822 Chester City R.O.Treasurers Account Books 1773-1822 (TAB/8-9).

1835 Parl. Papers, 1835 xxvi(116) p. 2626.

downwards.

It is unclear how far this represents a movement towards trading from fixed shops and how far it merely reflects difficulty of collecting tolls, for there was sufficient confidence in the viability of the markets in Chester in the 1820's for a new market hall to be built, and all the receipts for 1835 are well above the level of twenty years earlier. Flesh shambles' rents had by then reached £662 16s 6d and those for the fish shambles £103 7s 5d while the fowl, butter and potato markets between them brought in over £116.[1] The butchers' shambles at that date were said to be chiefly occupied by country butchers and had been built in 1827 at the cost of £4,000. There were 120 stands which were not all let and new tenants were welcome. The report on Macclesfield stated that the tolls had greatly increased with the growth of the town, although the receipts from the butchers had recently fallen below the £200 a year that the Corporation paid as rent on the shambles as butchers tried to open shops at their own houses.[2] The evidence on Stockport market taken in 1847 included statements that the tolls had greatly increased in value since 1843 and that this was because of increased business at the market and not higher tolls.[3]

High receipts from markets not only meant a healthy level of trading, but were also an important contribution to a town's finances. This could lead to a conflict of interest between raising as much revenue as possible and providing an open market to the benefit of the inhabitants of the town. Eighteenth-century

1. Parl. Papers 1835 xxvi (116) p. 2626.
2. Parl. Papers 1837-8 xxxv (686) p. 67.
3. Parl. Papers 1847 xix (124-4) pp. 3, 12.

Manchester experienced this conflict between the Lord's financial rights and the need to open and expand the market to ensure adequate food supplies, and financial considerations usually triumphed.[1] In Macclesfield the making of freemen was tending to diminish market revenues in the mid-eighteenth century because of the exemptions they enjoyed, and in 1753 it was ordered that no butcher or other person who attended the markets or fair of the borough was to be made free gratis.[2] This tightening up on revenues led to a lengthy case in the 1750's and 1760's when stallage was claimed from Nicholas Chapman, a free butcher, for setting up a second stall in addition to the one he was allowed free of charge.[3] Sir George Warren, Lord of the Manor of Stockport, made determined efforts in the 1760's to insist on all the manorial dues owed him, particularly from cheesemongers frequenting the market.[4] The severity with which tolls were collected at Stockport market became an issue in the 1840's and the Stockport Advertiser commented on harsh exaction in 1843:

> 'It will surely not be denied that the inhabitants generally are deeply interested in having our markets supplied with all the necessaries and luxuries of life, as abundantly and at as cheap a rate as possible. We are afraid these desirable objects are not much promoted, either by levying heavy tolls on the farmers and other persons who bring their commodities to be sold, or collecting them with undistinguishing severity.
> ....It has even been alleged that tolls have been demanded, and the commodities on sale seized, even from very poor persons, who were endeavouring to earn a miserable livelihood by selling crumpets, water-cresses, or lemons...' [5]

1. Arthur Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester i, 139.
2. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book, 1734-68. Minute of 12 Oct. 1753.
3. Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., Chapman's Case (MA/B/II/17 and 20).
4. Stockport Museum, Testimonies on Cheese Tolls, 1770 (HX 229).
5. Stockport Advertiser, 2 June 1843.

A reduction in tolls was recommended in 1847 to encourage more sellers to come to market and thus increase and cheapen the supply of provisions to Stockport.[1]

Chester Corporation was similarly desirous of enforcing tolls, not only at the markets but also at the City gates, and in 1758 a toll free public market was advertised to be held at Gloverstone on Wednesdays and Saturdays.[2] Not surprisingly this enterprise on the part of Mrs. Mary Daffy who owned most of Gloverstone - a street about 100 yards long leading to Chester Castle - was popular with the traders but less so with Chester Corporation. Preparing legal action, the Corporation claimed that the market in Gloverstone:

> 'Hath been since Greatly frequented with large Quantity's of Corn and other Marketable Matters and the Markets of the City are already become much reduced, particularly as to Corn, of which the Mayor now takes the Toll to his own use by an Order of assembly....The Bakers within the City, The Maltsters, and other Dealers in Corn, Inhabitants of the City and Freemen are at present very Numerous in attending the Market.'[3]

Proceedings were taken in the King's Bench against Mrs. Daffy and evidence presented of considerable trade in corn there, with many sacks being exposed to sale by farmers.[4] Although there was some evidence of Gloverstone having been used as a provisions market in the early eighteenth century when meat, bread, flour, fish, eggs, butter, milk and cheese were said to have been sold there, and it was admitted that a few country butchers and bakers traded there in inferior products which they did not dare

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1. Parl. Papers 1847 xix (124-4), p. 4.
2. Chester City R.O., Corporation Lawsuits, Rex v. Daffy & Brereton re Gloverstone Market 1758 (C/LP/118a).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.,(C/LP/118c).

sell in the main markets,[1] the activities at Gloverstone were a clear challenge to the City markets and revenue. Mrs. Daffy however died while the case was being heard and the action was dropped, the market presumably not long surviving her.

Although an illegal market was set up in Stockport in 1843,[2] threats to tolls more often seemed to be coming from the increased use of shops or private rooms for trading. The concern expressed by market owners over such developments probably represented a real fear that those traders traditionally important in markets were deserting them. Dealers in corn and cheese were renting rooms on their visits to market towns, while town traders instead of paying for stalls in the market were making use of boards outside their houses, particularly if they lived in or near the market place. Macclesfield was particularly concerned about this latter development and by the letting of such standings to huxters:

> 'Several Inhabitants living in and near the Market Place have Annexed Sheds and Pentices to their houses and buildings and on Fair and Market Days Erect Stalls or Standings under them of which they make a profit by setting them to Huxters and others to the detriment of the Leesee of the Tolls....Note the Lessee is provided with a sufficient Number of Stalls for all Traders who frequent the Markets and Fairs....'[3]

The attempt to collect toll from Mark Furnall who hung goods for sale on the wall of his house in the Market Place, on boards fixed to his house and in a shed against his house has been referred to, and the Corporation in this case distrained a pair of breeches and a pair of stays.[4] The main dispute over the

1. Ibid. (C/LF/118i).
2. Cheshire R.O., Stockport Court Papers, 21 Jan. 1843 (DVE).
3. Birkenhead R.L., Case and Opinion on the Tolls of Fairs and Markets in the Borough of Macclesfield, 1758 (MA/B/11/18).
4. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., (CR 63/2/341).

use of the market at Macclesfield, however, came in the nineteenth century when the Corporation attempted to prevent butchers from trading in their own shops. Such a practice affected receipts from the shambles and possibly increased pollution in the town centre and in 1833 King's Bench decided that 'A custom to exclude all others from selling such commodities on the market day, except in the market, is valid in law.'[1] Not until 1843 was the right of butchers to sell meat in their shops on market days established in Macclesfield.[2]

At Stockport the main threat to the market came from the hiring of rooms around the Market Place by dealers coming in from outside, and Sir George Warren became particularly concerned about this in the late 1760's:

> 'Of Late, severall persons (who are Cheesemongers and who do not reside in Stockport but come from a Distance) bring their Cheese to Stockport to Sell on a Market Day and take private Rooms or Shops Adjoining to the Market Place and sell their Cheese and refuse to weigh the same at the Lords Scales when Sold, or to pay any Toll or other Satisfaction for the Benefit they Enjoy from the Markett.'[3]

In particular one Edward Green, living twelve miles from Stockport, was said to bring cheese regularly to the town and sell it in an open shop facing the Market Place. There is no evidence as to how far Warren was able to press his demands, but while cheese tolls were still bringing in between £25 and £30 in the 1780's, Stockport seems to have been declining as a wholesale cheese market by the 1810's. The campaign to prevent the extra trade which market day brought from escaping the market continued and the 1802 table of tolls stated that all persons bringing meal,

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1. English Reports cx, 504.
2. Ibid. clii, 1093.
3. Stockport Museum, HX 182.

flour, cheese, potatoes and other produce to Stockport and unloading it at any shop on market day were liable to toll.[1] Exactions of this sort, sometimes even claimed when it was not a market day, were much complained of in the 1843 attack on market tolls.[2]

Hostility to trading outside the market was much less in Chester than in the other towns, except when it threatened to get out of hand in the case of Gloverstone Market. Town retailers were normally expected to sell from their own shops rather than from the market,[3] and in 1812 it was ordered that the flesh shambles were to be occupied by country butchers only on Saturdays.[4] Indeed whatever the changes in the character of the market, its future in meeting the needs of urban populations in the nineteenth century was secure. Those types of traders most characteristic of the market were just those normally absent from the ranks of shop retailers. In the early nineteenth century fruiterers, greengrocers, fishmongers and possibly poulterers and butchers seem under-represented in trade directories largely because they were frequently selling in markets, except for a few catering for high class trade in a town like Chester. With the exception of butchers, in certain towns, these traders were operating through markets not because they were prevented from keeping shops, but because the low fixed costs, high turnover and possibility of periodic trading best suited the nature of their business. Only when a more certain demand for such highly perishable goods could be guaranteed was it possible for

1. M.P.L., Archives Dept., Burton Mss. vol. ix, p. 44.
2. Stockport Advertiser, 2 June 1843.
3. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar 1785-1825 f. 127 (AB/5).
4. Ibid. f. 160.

fruiterers and greengrocers and the like to establish shops. Butchers probably experienced this demand first, and, where it was allowed, were the first to desert markets.

Yet if excessive regulation was probably not necessary for the survival of the public market, it was thought to be necessary to ensure its fair operation. In particular this meant that the poor and the towns people should have an opportunity to satisfy the needs of their families before retailers, whether town or country, were allowed to buy. This attitude lay behind much of the legislation on forestalling and regrating, and also determined times of opening of markets. Such regulations were normal in medieval Chester,[1] and no doubt in the other towns, and in 1726 it was ordered that only inhabitants of Chester buying for their own households might purchase fish in the fish market before 10 A.M., that fishmongers might buy after 10 A.M. and country carriers only after 11 A.M..[2] In 1775 Mrs. Read was complaining of the activities of these carriers:

> 'Great plenty of salmon was in the market today, but the price was kept up to fourpence halfpenny or fivepence a pound, & the reason for it was that there were a great number of carriers ready to take it off their hands. I saw no other fish, except a few small stinking mackrel at ten pence each'. 3

Attempts to protect the public from frauds practised by corn dealers were made in the 1730's when it was ordered that all grain was to be sold by the Winchester Bushel of eight gallons.[4]

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1. R.H. Morris, Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns (Chester, 1894) pp. 393-400.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar 1725-85 f.5 4/15 Mar. 1725/26 (AB/4).
3. Flintshire R.O. Nercwys Hall Mss., Letters of Bagot Read to Kitty Boland 1766-1775 (D/NH/1070).
4. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1732-40 (AF 52).

The control exercised over butchers by preventing them from selling in the shambles after 3 P.M.[1] may chiefly have been intended to protect butchers from unfair competition from those who could sell later rather than as a means of safeguarding the consumer, but the threats of penalties in 1794 against butchers buying carcases and joints from country butchers in the shambles and selling them in their town shops was certainly intended to prevent excessive profits.[2] In the same year it was reported that:

> 'Mr. Mayor has had information that it has been the practice of the huxters and others to buy fowl, cheese, butter, and other articles in this City, before they are exposed to sale in the market; and that he is determined to punish every one who shall offend in this particular, with the utmost severity.' 3

Similar abuses of the market were said to be taking place at Macclesfield in the 1810's, with shop retailers buying up goods which ought to have been on open sale to the inhabitants of the town. The historian of Macclesfield, writing in 1817, proposed that no retailer, huxter or greengrocer should be able to buy any articles brought for sale from the farms till the townspeople were supplied and that shop retailers should be prevented from selling goods in their shops on the same day that they had purchased them in the market. In this way the farmers would receive a fair price, food would be cheaper and the extortion of petty shopkeepers would be prevented.[4] Such fears that the old moral economy symbolized by the open market was

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1. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files 1740-54, petition of Butchers Company 1752 (AF 53); Assembly Minutes Calendar, 1725-85, f. 148 v. Order of 6 Oct. 1752 (AB/4).
2. Chester Courant 5 June 1794.
3. Chester Courant 23 Dec. 1794.
4. J. Corry, The History of Macclesfield, p. 49.

being perverted often failed to take account of the real problems of supplying a growing town. Mere regulation could not of itself ensure supplies especially in years of scarcity, and it was in years of scarcity that the old laws were most often appealed to. They were one of the means employed to prevent that breakdown of public order in the market place so feared by the authorities and which was always a real threat when scarcity and high prices loomed near.

Scarcity and the Problem of Public Order

Renewed interest in the corn laws at times of national scarcity and high prices reflected a desire to ensure that the market operated effectively for the supply of all and to avoid that breakdown in public order which was likely to result if supplies of grain and flour failed. How these objectives should be achieved was a matter of considerable controversy in the second half of the eighteenth century. A bad harvest led to complaints of the evil practices of middlemen and calls for the enforcement of the laws against forestalling, regrating and engrossing on the one hand, and to pleas that middlemen were essential in ensuring wide distribution of corn on the other.[1] The government was no more able than the pamphleteers to decide the right course of action in times of shortage, and the Proclamations of 1756 and 1766 blaming the high prices of corn on the inefficient enforcement of the laws on forestalling were followed by an Act of 1772 blaming these very laws for preventing a free trade in corn and thus enhancing its price.[2] The

1. For the discussion of the pamphlets of 1756-57 see D.G. Barnes, A History of the English Corn Laws from 1660-1846 (London, 1930) pp. 32-34.
2. Proclamations for executing laws against forestalling etc. 26 Nov. 1756, 10 Sept. 1766; Act for repealing laws 1772. 12 Geo III cap. 71.

controversy raged as late as 1800 with men like J.S. Girdler proposing the rigid enforcement of all the old regulations on the corn trade[1] while Sir Gilbert Blane argued that the threat of conviction for forestalling or regrating increased the risks of trading in corn and thus forced the traders to look for high profits.[2]

Whatever the disagreements on the regulation of the internal corn trade, a year of scarcity meant that action was necessary. The second half of the eighteenth century saw a number of bad harvests accompanied by rioting, particularly in 1756-7, 1766-8 and in several years in the 1790's.[3] In many of the bad years the government reacted by banning the export of grain, and in some cases suspending the duties on imported grain. Other action frequently taken to conserve grain for the making of bread was the banning of the use of grain in distilleries, the banning of the use of wheat in making starch and hair powder and appeals for voluntary savings in the use of grain by those able to do so.[4] In 1795 the government appealed to workhouses and hospitals to rely on potatoes, rice, garden vegetables and meat and in December of that year the Home Office circulated resolutions for the saving of one-third in bread consumption to its correspondents and these were read out in Churches.[5] Campaigns of this sort often produced a sympathetic response in the provinces and the principal inhabitants of Macclesfield held a meeting on 6

1. J.S. Girdler, op.cit., pp. 141-46.
2. Sir Gilbert Blane, Inquiry into the Causes and Remedies of the Late and Present Scarcity and High Price of Provisions,.. (London, 1800) passim.
3. R.B. Rose, 'Eighteenth Century Price Riots and Public Policy in England', International Revue of Social History vi (1961) 284.
4. D.G. Barnes, op.cit., pp. 71-84.
5. Walter M. Stern, 'The Bread Crisis in Britain, 1795-96', Economica xxxi (1964), pp. 182-3.

January 1796, at which they promised to observe the resolutions themselves and encourage others to do the same.[1]

There was in fact a wide range of measures that could be and were taken at local level to prevent food shortages from leading to more hardship than was necessary and eventually to riot. Riots indeed often seem to have been a response not merely to scarcity and high prices, but also to a feeling that the authorities had failed to take the appropriate preventive measures. Such measures frequently included subscriptions to relieve the poor, often by purchasing provisions and selling them at below cost price. In 1757 it was reported from Stockport that a large sum of money had been collected from the chief inhabitants of the town and was to be used for purchasing wheat, oatmeal and cheese which would be sold to the poor on two days a week. The exceptional increases in the price of grain and meal had made it necessary to sell oatmeal at 5 shillings per load under cost price.[2] Similar action was taken again in 1812 when it was agreed to supply the poor of Stockport with bacon, peas, rice and herrings at reduced prices in proportion to the size of their families and the amount of their earnings.[3] Two very liberal subscriptions were said to have been made in Congleton in 1795 to purchase provisions for the poor, but in this case the action was not enough to prevent a riot.[4] In 1800 and 1801 there were reports from all over Cheshire of voluntary subscriptions for the relief of the poor or of action being taken by the overseers of the poor to lay in provisions. Subscriptions

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1. P.R.O., Privy Council Unbound Papers (P.C. 1/33/A87).
2. Whitworth's Manchester Advertiser, 25 Jan. 1757.
3. Macclesfield Courier, 13 June 1812.
4. Chester Courant, 10 Nov. 1795.

were normal in large towns, but distress could be acute in country areas, and in 1801 it was reported that the poor in Wilmslow were having great difficulty in obtaining provisions both because of the shops being ill supplied and because the stocks of many farmers were exhausted by the need to supply the neighbouring towns, and action by the overseers of the poor was felt to be necessary.[1]

In Chester voluntary subscriptions were made in 1795 and 1800 and trouble seems to have been avoided. In the latter year the Corporation subscribed £105[2] and in the former year took an active part in the purchase and distribution of corn to the poor of the City. Considerable quantities of barley were said to have been purchased, and barley flour would be supplied at the rate of 9 lbs for a shilling. For the purposes of distribution the City was divided into four districts and one day a week assigned for the provisioning of each district. Tickets signed by the corn committee would determine the amount each family was allowed to purchase and employers were requested to pay their employees part of their wages on the days stated to enable them to buy flour.[3]

Even though bread crises frequently led to such action to ensure supplies for the poor without their being dependent on the market, it was also normal to try to encourage as far as possible the supply of the public market and its fair operation. 1757 especially saw appeals to farmers to bring their corn to the market towns, including one from the Earl of Harrington at

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1. P.R.O., H.O. 42/56.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes 1785-1825, Order of 26 Dec. 1800 f. 77v (AB/5).
3. Chester Courant, 8 Dec. 1795.

Dunham near Altrincham:

> 'I recommend it to all my Farmers and Tenants, who have any Corn or other Eatables to dispose of, that they gradually thrash up their Corn, supply the Wants of their poor Neighbours, and afterwards bring what they have to spare to be sold in the public Markets on REASONABLE TERMS, which I hope will be a Means to silence and put a Stop to all future Riots and Disturbances; and such of my Farmers and Tenants as shall disoblige me in this reasonable Request are not to expect any future Favours from me.' 1

At the same time it was announced that all farmers who brought their corn to sell in Altrincham market for twelve months from 5 December 1757 would be exempt from paying toll.[2] A toll-free market was also instituted at Macclesfield in December 1757 'For the Encouragement of the farmers to bring their Corn to this Markett and to Lower the price' and such farmers were to be free of toll on corn for a year.[3] Exhortations to farmers to market their corn were again tried in 1800 when it was reported from Nantwich that a resolution had been passed calling on farmers to thrash their wheat and barley quickly, not to sell it by sample, but to bring it to market and sell it to the poor at moderate rates.[4] In Stockport a notice was issued by one of the magistrates to farmers stating, 'You are desired to bring your Corn, Meal and Flour, to the Market, and there retail it to the Poor at a reasonable profit.'[5]

Inducements and requests could quickly turn to threats. The notice from the Earl of Warrington quoted above ended on a threat, and a meeting was called at Nantwich for 15 September

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1. Whitworth's Manchester Advertiser, 19 Nov. 1757.
2. Ibid. 13 Dec. 1757.
3. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book, 1734-68. Minute of 15 Dec. 1757.
4. P.R.O., H.O. 42/51 / 307-9.
5. Stockport R.L., Scrapbook of J. Lloyd, 1792-1839 (Card from Charles Prescott dated 29 Jan. 1800).

1800 'To take into consideration the most effectual means of suppressing Forestalling, Regrating, and Engrossing....and to desire such Measures as may tend to reduce the price of Grain.'[1] Invoking the laws against forestalling was the normal way of dealing with those dealers assumed to be creating artificial scarcities and was particularly prevalent in the 1750's and 1760's. In Chester the Assembly ordered on 20 December 1757 that forestallers and ingrossers of corn were to be prosecuted, and in 1765 the Mayor was recommended to appoint a proper person to survey the markets of the City and be diligent in discovering forestallers, ingrossers and regrators.[2] A number of people were prosecuted at Chester Quarter Sessions in 1758 for forestalling, and the Mayor expressed his faith in regulation as a means of preventing serious scarcity in a letter to the M.P.'s for the City. He argued that the distress caused by the extravagent price of corn arose from the 'Combination of Selfish and avaricious Men, destitute of humanity and Compassion' and stated that while the City had attempted to execute the laws against forestalling they had been defeated by artful evasion. Improvements to the laws, including further restrictions on buying outside the market, buying excessive quantities and hoarding grain were necessary, and the Mayor added that while Chester had been free of riots there was an urgent need to suppress these grievances.[3]

Action was again taken against ingrossers in 1767 and an

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1. P.R.O., H.O. 42/51/308.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar 1725-85 ff. 174v, 235v. Minutes of 20 Dec. 1757 and 6 Sept. 1765. (AB/4).
3. Eaton Estate Office, Grosvenor Family Papers, Richard Grosvenor, 1st Earl 1731-1802, Petition from Richard Richardson, Mayor of Chester, 1758. (Seen at Chester City R.O..)

indictment was found against William Ridgway at Chester Sessions for buying five quarters of wheat with intent to sell again.[1] A case of regrating in Stockport market was brought before the County Sessions in 1800 but was respited.[2] As many of the contemporary writers pointed out, actions of this sort could have the opposite effect from that intended and discourage farmers and corn dealers from trading in markets because they feared that some of their activities might meet with disapproval. Riot, in a sense the ultimate weapon of the poor against the corn dealers, was resorted to in the growing towns in the worst years. In spite of, or perhaps sometimes because of, the measures taken by the authorities, sufficient grain for the needs of the town at a price the poor could afford was not always available and then riots could be looked for. Riots themselves could of course be counter-productive in discouraging dealers from coming to market, though Charles Prescott of Stockport, expressing his fear of riots occurring there in 1800, cited the reduction in prices in some places consequent on riots as a further reason for unease.[3]

Eighteenth-century food riots were not always a mere blind response to hunger, though this could certainly incite a crowd to act. As well as the simple outbreak of looting there were three other basic classes of grain riots; riots to prevent the transportation and exportation of corn, riots to fix market prices and riots to put pressure on the magistrates to fix prices.[4] Any or all of these features could of course be found in a single

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1. Chester City R.O., Legal Papers, Rex. v. William Ridgway (C/LP/121).
2. Cheshire R.O., Sessions Book 28a, 1798-1804, p. 625 (QJB/28a).
3. P.R.O., H.O. 42/51/346.
4. R.B. Rose, loc. cit. p. 279.

riot, and the disturbances in Cheshire towns between 1757 and 1812 illustrate these aspects of riot, with price fixing a particularly common feature of a riot. The high prices of 1740 led to riots in north-east Wales centred on Rhuddlan where colliers seized corn intended for exportation, possibly to Liverpool, and attempted to get corn dealers to swear not to export corn.[1] In Manchester there were serious riots in 1757 when a mob attempted to fix the prices of potatoes at the market and later attacked the warehouse of a prominent baker in the town. Further trouble occurred in November of that year when attempts were again made to set prices for potatoes, oatmeal and flour and the ensuing riots when this was not done led to the deaths of two persons.[2] Although riots of this type were by no means restricted to the market places of the towns where they occurred, they tended to start there and tended to take place on market day. Even if the traders most hated by the people were not market traders, the market was an obvious point of assembly and frequently a point of explosive contact between buyer and seller. From a beginning in the market, riots tended to spread into neighbouring streets and concentrate their fury on corn and flour dealers.

The first grain riots reported in eighteenth-century Cheshire were at Macclesfield in 1757 when it was alleged that a group of persons had seized 96 pecks of oatmeal from one Richard Pimlott. One of the leaders was further accused of having, with other persons, compelled Pimlott to undertake to

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1. P.R.O., State Papers Domestic, George II, 1740 (S.P. 36/50 ff. 443-8; / 51 f. 69).
2. F. Nicholson & E. Axon, 'The Hatfield Family, of Manchester, and the Food Riots of 1757 and 1812', Trans. Lancs. & Ches. Antiq. Soc. XXVIII (1910) 82-114.

deliver meal at Macclesfield at the price of 10 shillings per load on 12 December and 26 December.[1] The notion of a fair price was apparently to be found in this dispute as at the Manchester riots. No further such disturbances are reported until 1795 when there was trouble in Stockport on 1 August. The Manchester Mercury reported that the disturbances of 31 July and 1 August 'had a very alarming appearance; considerable damage did'[2] and at the trial of three of the participants a witness told what happened on the evening of 1 August. Between 9 and 10 o'clock a great number of people assembled in Stockport Market Place opposite the house of Bradford Norbury, a corn factor, and began throwing stones at his house, breaking windows.[3] In this case trouble had begun in the Market Place on market day, but had been directed not against market traders but against one of the most powerful dealers in corn in the town. The desperation of the mob is not hard to understand: wheat had reached 106s 10d in the market that week, a rise of 18s 6d per quarter on the previous week, and oatmeal prices had been rising steadily throughout the year, though they did not reach a peak until mid August.[4] The same year saw trouble at Congleton when, 'Several women violently seized a waggon laden with corn, and proceeded to sell it by public cry, having taken the town crier's bell for that purpose'. They further took some oats which they ground into meal and sold for half-price, and these troubles were reported to have continued several days.[5]

1. Cheshire R.O., Sessions Book 1749-58, Nantwich Sessions 10 Jan. 1758 (QJB/21a).
2. Manchester Mercury 1 Sept. 1795.
3. P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Gaol File, Autumn 1795 (Chester 24/178/4).
4. P.R.O., Corn Returns 1795 (MAF 10/279).
5. Chester Courant 10 Nov. 1795.

No further disturbances seem to have occurred in 1795, but there was what appears to have been a relatively sophisticated riot at Stockport in 1799. A mob assembled in Stockport Market Place on Friday 1 February and attacked the carts of meal and flour brought to the market. Some of the provisions were sold and others distributed free to the poor, and after disposing of these goods the mob began to attack shops. The magistrate who reported this, having seen the events while passing through Stockport, alleged that the mob had previously visited the town magistrates and threatened to come on that day, whereupon the magistrates had given them a letter to farmers and holders of corn requesting them to come to the market and sell supplies at a moderate rate.[1] Riot, or at least the threat of riot, was a means of putting pressure on the authorities to ensure supplies at moderate prices. The actuality of riot could do the opposite and after the events of 1 February the magistrates clearly became worried for they issued a handbill assuring farmers and others who attended Stockport market that protection would be given to themselves and their goods and that any persons attempting to disrupt the market would be punished severely.[2] Why the mob should have chosen this particular week to act is unclear, for neither wheat nor oatmeal prices were particularly high by the standards of the 1790's. There were, however, several weeks in the winter of 1798-99 when no wheat prices were returned, and it may be that occasional failures of supply rather than excessive prices provoked trouble.[3]

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1. P.R.O., Privy Council Unbound Papers, 1799 (P.C. 1/43/A151).
2. Ibid. Printed handbill.
3. P.R.O., Corn Returns 1798 and 1799 (MAF 10/282 and 283).

1800 seems to have seen less trouble than might have been expected in a year of such extraordinary prices. There was apparently some trouble early in the year at Macclesfield for in the March it was ordered that the persons who suffered loss of meal and flour in the late riot were to be reimbursed by the Corporation.[1] No trouble was reported from Stockport, but the rector and magistrate, Charles Prescott, was very jittery by the September, fearing disturbances and hoping for government action to reduce prices.[2] The troubles in Stockport in 1812 were largely Luddite with attacks on the houses and mills of some manufacturers.[3] High prices had almost certainly played their part in creating an atmosphere of unrest, and parts of north-east Cheshire experienced a new outbreak of food riots. A corn mill at Bredbury, a few miles from Stockport, was attacked in April 1812 by a mob wanting meal and flour and offering to pay 2s 6d per dozen for flour and 1s 6d per peck for meal as against market prices of 4s and 2s 9d. The occupiers of the mill agreed to these demands, but much meal and flour was said to have been taken without payment and much damage done.[4] On the Derbyshire border price fixing by the people spread to shops for at Tintwistle there were reports of mobs ordering dealers in flour, corn, bacon and groceries to sell at fixed prices.[5]

The main market riot of the year in Cheshire took place at Macclesfield on Monday, 13 April. A mob, said to consist largely of colliers and spinners from the area between Macclesfield

1. Macclesfield Town Hall, Council Minute Book, 1769-1824 Minute of 21 Mar. 1800.
2. P.R.O., H.O. 42/51/346.
3. H. Heginbotham, Stockport: Ancient and Modern i, 74.
4. P.R.O., King's Bench, Baga de Secreta, Cheshire Riots 1812 (K.B. 8/90/73-76).
5. P.R.O., H.O. 42/123.

and Stockport, entered the Market Place, enquired about the price of potatoes and, not liking the price, began to throw them about the streets. After these troubles in the market, the mob moved into the nearby streets and attacked the shop of Daniel Rowson, a cheesemonger, rolling cheeses about the streets. Other shops were attacked including those of John Holland, a cheesemonger and grocer, and Simon Malkin, Rupert Malkin and Samuel Clowes, all flour dealers. The situation was brought under control the same day and there do not appear to have been any further troubles at Macclesfield.[1] This riot appears to have been little more than an outbreak of mass looting and destruction, caused partly by high prices[2] and trade depression and partly by the prevailing atmosphere of rumour and unease in Lancashire and Cheshire. It seriously worried the town authorities who feared that dealers might stay away from the markets, and the Macclesfield Courier of 15 April 1812 carried an announcement that order had been restored and that persons bringing provisions to market would be protected.

There was an acute danger that riot would be counter-productive in the short term. The fear of a riot, however, and the knowledge of the inconvenience it caused by disrupting community life and perhaps necessitating the intervention of the military could possibly have a positive result in inducing farmers and corn dealers to maintain supplies to markets and

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1. Exchange Herald, Aston's Manchester Commercial Advertiser, 21 April 1812.
2. Although there are no Macclesfield prices for most of 1812, Cheshire averages show prices rising for all grains in the Spring and Summer, though not reaching their peak until August and September of the year, well after the trouble in all areas.

restrain their prices.[1] Scarcities and disturbances were exceptional but they provide important evidence about the working of public markets and the attitudes of various groups to the supply of towns and to the long established concepts of fairness in the market place. It is impossible to say whether the complaints of hoarding and of holding stocks off the market in anticipation of higher prices were justified, although price evidence suggests that the markets of east Cheshire responded well to changes in supply.[2] Temporary shortages may have been caused if higher prices in the larger towns drew off more supplies to them and the smaller towns took longer to react to supply shortages. However, there are not a great many references to farmers in markets and they may well have been largely absent from Stockport and Macclesfield markets, if not from Chester, by the early nineteenth century. Corn dealers and retailers bore the brunt of mob anger and if hoarding did exist it may well have been hoarding by such urban middlemen. Town shopkeepers were, however, vital links in the food supply chain and a full picture of retailing in towns can only be obtained when the shops as well as the markets are considered.

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1. E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present 50 (1971) 120-123.
2. See cap. 4 above for some evidence on price movements. (pp. 134-52)

CHAPTER 6

ITINERANT RETAILING

> 'The Hawker, Pedlar, and Petty-Chapman....are a Body of stroling, idle Vagrants, wandering about from Town to Town, and from House to House, vending deceitful Wares and Merchandizes, imposing upon the Ignorant and Unwary, and by artful Insinuations trick them of their Ready-Money in Exchange for Toys and Trifles of a bad Manufacture; wherein they are supported, to the great Disreputation of Trade, by a few Wholesale Men, who find their Account in contributing to the Imposition.'[1]

Charges of this nature against the hawkers and itinerant traders were not uncommon in the eighteenth century, and while the allegations frequently made in broadsides and pamphlets that hawkers were increasing may not have been true, there seems no reason to believe that there were not a substantial number of them throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The complaints and petitions against them, and occasionally in their favour, provide evidence of their existence and eighteenth-century England represented the sort of low demand economy where they were most likely to flourish. Itinerant retailing represented a rational way of tapping demand for manufactured goods in areas beyond the reach of fixed shops, while urban street traders had an important role in supplying small quantities of fresh foods to the poor.[2] There were several types of pedlars, ranging from the man with a pack or a horse dealing in cloth, clothing and hardware,[3] to urban traders either using inns at which special sales could be advertised or retailing foods from a street stall.

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1. The Case of the Fair Trader (n.p., n.d.) c. 1720 p.1.
2. See D. Alexander, Retailing in England and above cap. 1, on the role of hawkers. (pp. 13-14)
3. Dorothy Davis, A History of Shopping (London, 1966), pp. 236ff discusses 17th and 18th century country pedlars.

The country pedlars were the group that most often came to the notice of other traders and of the government. The eighteenth-century battles between the itinerants and the 'fair traders' chiefly concerned these men who could be in direct competition with the urban and village shopkeeper in the clothing trades above all. Criticisms from shopkeepers about pedlars lingering in towns and open country began in the late seventeenth century, and may be a symptom of the problems faced by people rushing unwisely into village shopkeeping rather than of the prosperity of hawkers.[1] Complaints about hawkers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reached their peak with petitions to the House of Commons from shopkeepers in towns throughout England between February 1729/30 and April 1730, and again in the same months the following year, but the year after saw a sharp drop in the number of petitions.[2] The complaints were resumed in the 1780's and were specifically linked to the proposed shop tax.

Apart from general complaints about the decay of market towns and the avoidance by pedlars of rates and taxes, the conflict between the fixed shopkeepers and the pedlars was concentrated on the areas of price and credit. That the pedlars were able to undercut the shopkeepers seems clear from the complaints of the latter who nevertheless argued that this seeming cheapness was really deception:

> 'That whereas 'tis supposed they sell cheaper than Tradesmen, 'tis at best a vulgar errour, unless some things that sinisterly come to their hands, by way of defrauding His Majesties Customs; otherwise taking all opportunities by false Measures, as a Yard when it should

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1. Ibid., pp. 240-1.
2. Commons Journals, xxi and xxii.

> be an Ell; by altering and false naming their Commodities, do to the utmost of their powers fraudulently deceive His Majesties honest, and well-meaning Subjects.' [1]

The cheapness of their way of life, and their purchasing of poor quality goods were also commonly given reasons for their cheapness, and in 1730 it was argued, probably rightly, that their having a smaller turnover than shopkeepers caused them to take a larger profit on each item.[2] Because they only sold for ready money, it was said that they took away the whole of the trade for cash in a place when they went there, leaving the shopkeepers with only the less reliable sales for credit causing many of them to go bankrupt.[3] If, it was argued in around 1706, hawkers were suppressed, shopkeepers having a large and safe credit would be able to supply their neighbourhood with all its wants and keep a large range of goods which their present insecurity prevented them from doing.[4]

A 1675 estimate put the number of hawkers at 18,000 people, while in 1720 there were said to be up to 30,000 of them of whom not 2,000 took out licences.[5] What their real numbers were cannot be determined, but the figures in Table 6:1 give an impression of the numbers of licensed hawkers in the early nineteenth century. However real the threat to the shopkeepers was, the government took action in 1697 when an Act decreed that all hawkers and pedlars were to obtain licences at £4 per annum with an extra £4 payable for each horse they might have.[6]

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1. Reasons Humbly Offered...by the Drapers, Mercers, (etc)... of the great Decay of their Trades (London, 1675). Broadsheet in Goldsmith's Coll.
2. A brief State of the Inland or Home Trade of England (London, 1730) pp. 33-4.
3. The Case of the Fair Trader, p. 1.
4. Further Reasons for suppressing all Pedlars and Hawkers (n.p., n.d.) c. 1706.
5. Reasons Humbly Offered...; Case of the Fair Trader.
6. 'An Act for licensing Hawkers and Pedlars' 8 & 9 Wil. III cap. 25.

Table 6:1 Licensed Hawkers and Pedlars in England 1800-1843

Year	Rate paid for each licence At £4	At £8	At £12	At £16	Total	Amount of Revenue £	s	d
1800						8,963	16	3¾
1810						17,898	3	4½
1817	4,160				5,030			
1818	4,468				5,396			
1819	4,869				5,806			
1820	5,369	912	36	2	6,319	29,236	0	0
1821	5,624				6,562			
1822	6,694				7,682			
1823	7,138				8,128			
1830	6,630	832	14	3	7,479	33,392	0	0
1840	6,020	1,005	30	2	7,057	32,512	0	0
1843	4,793	927	40	2	5,762	27,100	0	0

Sources: Return of the Number of Hawkers Licensed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in each of the Years 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840 and 1843, Parl. Papers 1844 XXXII (123) 377.

An Account of the Number of Licences granted to Hawkers and Pedlars, annually, for the last Seven Years, Parl. Papers 1824 XVIII (194) 225 (For 1817-19, 1821-23).

This remained in force until the mid 1780's when shopkeepers petitioned Parliament for the suppression of hawkers and pedlars, or at worst for increased restrictions on them, in return for an acceptance of the shop tax. The outcome was a new Act of 1785 increasing the basic fee to £8 and the additional fee for a horse to a further £8, but authorizing pedlars to set up shops in their towns of residence even if they had not be apprenticed to any trade.[1] This act was amended in 1789 and the old lidence fees restored, but all hawkers were to produce certificates of good character before their licence would be issued.[2] All this legislation excluded persons selling fish, fruit and victuals, official printed matter or goods of their own making, and travelling tinkers mending kettles and household goods. The cloth traders were the main target of the legislation, and if the petitions of the 1780's represent the last national attack on pedlars of this type, they also provoked a defence of the pedlar. The manufacturers and printers of silks, linens and cottons in Manchester petitioned the Commons in May 1785 arguing that many advantages had resulted from hawkers and pedlars in the Manchester area in increasing the sale of textiles and that, 'From the Mode of their Sale, which is generally from House to House in Country Villages and Districts, remote from Towns where Shopkeepers reside, great Quantities of British Manufactures are sold, which otherwise would not be disposed of'. There were also fears of considerable unemployment and poverty among those hawkers who had been brought up in the business from their infancy.[3] The next year the same manufacturers were

1. 'An Act for....additional Duties on Hawkers, Pedlars....' 25 Geo III cap. 78.
2. Amending Act 29 Geo III cap. 26.
3. Commons Journals xl p. 1001.

complaining that the increased licence fees had caused them to dismiss nearly half their employees and had left them with considerable quantities of goods on their hands which they no longer had the means of disposing of.[1]

Pedlars of this type, calling house to house, and often numbering the gentry among their clients do not seem to feature much in the nineteenth-century literature or records, but Cheap Jacks trading from fair to fair do. They dealt in a great variety of merchandise, particularly metal and leather goods, and were to be found at all important fairs, having worked the towns and villages on the way to them. They usually seem to have found more success in agricultural than in manufacturing districts,[2] though in the north-west a venue like Knott Mill fair in Manchester at Easter would attract its share of them. A former Cheap Jack writing in the 1870's recounted how he had worked in the 1830's and 1840's at fairs, chiefly in the south of England selling all forms of hardware goods and trifles. He reckoned that the profits arising from the trade were never less than 20% and never more than 40%, averaging around 30%. A horse and a carriage were essential for any self respecting Cheap Jack, and at least £100 worth of goods, purchased as cheaply as possible for ready money, were carried. By the 1870's the great increase in shops and the improvements in communications had led to a major decline in the trade of Cheap Jacks.[3]

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1. Ibid. xli 283.
2. Felix Folio, The Hawkers and Street Traders of the North of England Manufacturing Districts (Manchester, 1859) pp. 70-77.
3. Charles Hindley (Ed.), The Life and Adventures of a Cheap Jack (London, 1876).

Table 6:2 shows the number of licensed hawkers in Cheshire in 1697-98, but there are unfortunately no comparable eighteenth-century figures and no evidence of the number of hawkers evading the licensing legislation. However, it is clear that hawkers were to be found in most of the market towns and in many east Cheshire villages. A striking feature of these figures is that east Cheshire hawkers, from Macclesfield and the villages around, were operating on a much bigger scale, in terms of numbers of horses owned, than hawkers in the rest of Cheshire or the rest of the country. These large scale hawkers were probably less retailers than men engaged in the button and related trades and having extensive business links, both wholesale and retail, in northern England. Hawkers were considered a nuisance by the shopkeepers of Chester in February 1729/30 when they petitioned for their suppression on account of, 'Great Decays in their Trades, occasioned by the clandestine Trade and Dealings, carried on by Hawkers, Pedlars and petty Chapmen'.[1]

There are few details of the activities of these hawkers. Household accounts from Lyme Hall about six miles from Stockport on the Cheshire-Derbyshire border contain some references to purchases from 'Scotchmen' in the 1720's and 1730's who would have been pedlars of this type. On 16/27 April 1729 it was entered, 'Paid to a Scotchman for 3 Linen Handkerchiefs at 1s 6d a piece and for 1 yd of Cambric at 9s per yd.' while on 1/12 July 1737, Robert Hamilton, a Scotchman, was paid his

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1. Commons Journals xxi 448.

Table 6:2 Hawkers Licensed in Cheshire 1697-98

Place of Abode	Licences issued at £4	£8	£12	£16	£20	£24	Total Licences	Total of Fees (£)
Chester	26	3	0	0	0	0	29	128
Nantwich	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	12
Northwich	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	24
Knutsford	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	8
Sandbach	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Altrincham	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Ashton-on-Mersey	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	16
Macclesfield	2	6	10	9	3	1	31	404
Adlington	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	8
Bollington	0	0	1	3	0	0	4	60
Hurdsfield	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	32
Rainow	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	20
Sutton	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	16
Titherington	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	28
Wilmslow	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	16
Bramhall	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	32
Poynton	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	28
Woodford	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	12
Stockport	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	12
Marple	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Werneth	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	12
'Cheshire'	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	20
Totals	41	15	18	16	6	1	97	900
						National Totals:	2,559	12,544

Cheshire accounts for 3.8% of the total of licences and 7.2% of the total value of fees.

Source: P.R.O., Exchequer and Audit Office, Register of Hawkers Licences 24 June 1697-24 June 1698 (A.O. 3/370).

bill of £1 18s 0d for handkerchiefs, muslin and cambrics.[1] Hamilton was no doubt an itinerant trader, but this form of entry may imply regular dealing between him and the Leghs with some credit being granted. The petition of Manchester manufacturers in 1785 already referred to provides clear evidence of the existence of hawkers in the cloth trades in this area, having an important role in the distribution of Lancashire textiles to the home market. The only hawker's will found was made by one John Anderson of Mottram-in-Longdendale in the north-east corner of Cheshire in 1813. Anderson mentioned a partner, George Johnston, to whom he bequeathed his share of their stock in trade and book debts, among other property, on trust. When probate was granted on 13 March 1813, Anderson's personal estate was stated to be not more than £1,500[2] - an amount which implies that he was a man of some wealth. Indeed there was no reason why the hawker should not have been as wealthy and prosperous as the shopkeeper in a market town, and many probably were.

The same may well have been true of traders concentrating on private auctions and sales in towns. A pamphlet of 1720 referred to travelling retailers arriving in towns, taking up residence in Inns and, to avoid being deemed hawkers, renting a room for a year with the connivance of the landlord. The hawker would then advertise his cheap goods, sell what he could for cash, and, having drained the area of its ready money, move on after about two months. It was argued that such a

1. Stockport R.L., Lyme Hall Steward's Overseers Accounts 1728-38 (Deed Box 21A).
2. Cheshire R.O., Will of John Anderson, 13 Mar. 1813 (WS Series).

trader would probably only pay about £1 rent in each town (i.e. £6 a year) and could rob the shopkeepers of six towns of much of their trade.[1] A dispute in Macclesfield in 1742 provides evidence of a trader using urban Inns for sales. Samuel Reddish, a dealer in upholstery goods who travelled by licence from town to town, was said to have come into Macclesfield in 1738 and opened his goods in a room in the Angel Inn which he had hired for the purpose and exposed them to sale, having previously announced his presence in the town by printed bills advertising a sale by wholesale and retail. Reddish seems to have made Macclesfield a regular stopping place, selling there in 1739 and 1740 and possibly in subsequent years. His dispute with the town concerned his refusal to pay 12d stallage for selling in Macclesfield without being free of the town, and distraint was made of some of his goods which reveal a little of the nature of his business. Goods seized were a carpet valued at 20s, a coverlet valued at 15s and a hackney saddle valued at 20s. Hawkers were clearly not uncommon in the town for the toll collectors had clear guide-lines about exacting toll from Scotchmen, hawkers and pedlars who exposed goods to sale from door to door, in streets or in private or public houses - however, the case of Reddish may well have ended the practice since the Corporation's counsel advised them that they did not have a good case in law.[2]

Short-stay retailers do not seem to have been uncommon

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1. The Case of the Fair Trader, p. 2.
2. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Case of the Corporation of Macclesfield re tolls, 1742 (CR 63/2/341). Macclesfield traders again complained of travelling dealers selling goods by public auction in 1822, Commons Journals lxxvii, 91.

in the Cheshire towns in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Many of course came to the fairs, particularly Chester, but others took rooms in Inns or with trading contacts and advertised their presence in newspapers. In December 1765 Mr. Ell announced that he would be at the Wolf's Head in Watergate Street, Chester selling foreign china which he had just brought from London and warning that his stay would be but short.[1] Also in Chester, this time in 1784 was:

> 'Peter Billet, Merchant, Gardener, and Florist, from the South of France.
> Sells all Kinds of Seeds and Flower Roots, for the Ornament and Embellishment of Parterres or Flower Gardens.... He may be spoke with at Mr. Charles Kearney's, at the George, Linen-hall Street, Chester. Ladies and Gentlemen who will be so kind to send as above for his Catalogue may read in it the Names and Colours of all his Flowers. His stay will be very short, as he has no Acquaintance in this Town.'

Billet was certainly confident of the quality of his flowers, informing prospective customers that he would not expect payment until the flowers they bought were open and in blossom.[2] A similar type of trader, though less exotic, was M. Muirhead who was advertising in 1812 that she would be in Macclesfield for a few days from 21 May to sell millinery and dresses on her way to Buxton,[3] where no doubt she could look for a market among those taking the waters. This was not her only visit to Macclesfield, and it seems possible that she visited the town twice yearly with a selection of ladies' clothing, though she did not stay at the same house on each of her visits.[4]

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1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 3 Dec. 1765.
2. Adam's Weekly Courant, 13 Apr. 1784. Billet was earlier advertising in similar terms in Manchester, Manchester Mercury, 2 Mar. 1784.
3. Macclesfield Courier, 16 May 1812.
4. Other Muirhead advertisements, Macclesfield Courier, 21 Nov. 1812, 20 May 1815.

Another retailer, trading occasionally in Macclesfield, seems to represent something of an advance on this type of travelling dealer. This was J. Tidmas who in March 1815 was announcing that:

> 'He has taken a Room at Mr Pryatt's in Mill Street, where he intends having for sale, on Tuesday next, and every succeeding Tuesday, an elegant and fashionable assortment of Leghorn, Dunstable, and Fancy Hats and Bonnets.'

and describing himself as a licensed hawker.[1] But Tidmas, who appears in the 1814-5 Commercial Directory as a Linen Draper and Mercer of Market Place, Stockport was more than a mere itinerant. He seems to have begun business in April 1813, taking over the shop and stock of J. Wood and advertised several times in 1813, 1814 and 1815, stressing the cheapness of his goods and, in August 1815, referring to the two branches of his business in Stockport and Macclesfield.[2] The advertisements imply a substantial trader, stocking fashionable lines and aiming his sales at the middle classes and above. He seems to have been involved in the making up of some garments for in August 1815 he advertised for two good sewers, promising constant employ. A licensed hawker he may have been, but in his attempt to extend his market beyond Stockport by making an appearance regularly in Macclesfield on that town's market day, he was moving towards being a multiple retailer, trading from fixed shops. As growing markets allowed longer stays in towns until a fixed shop was possible, the possession of shops in more towns than one was a logical move for a man with sufficient capital and a wide

1. Macclesfield Courier, 18 and 25 Mar. 1815.
2. Macclesfield Courier, 3 Apr. 1813, 26 Nov. 1814, 29 Apr. 1815, 12 Aug. 1815.

range of trading contacts.

All the various types of pedlars so far discussed were men trading on their own or in partnership, who had the possibility of becoming prosperous through their trade, and who were aiming at an essentially middle class or gentry market. Very different were the travelling Scotchmen of the new industrial towns in the early nineteenth century. These aimed at the poorer sections of the community - though probably not the very poorest - and were selling clothing on credit. Their role in Stockport was described in 1833 by Henry W. Sefton who claimed that half the population of the town bought their clothing from such men who called on families every three weeks, some families dealing with four or five such Scotchmen. Such men were often the agents of larger firms, one Manchester firm having five travellers, one of whom had 360 customers in Stockport and 1,100 in Manchester. There were twenty of these firms in Manchester and their average receipts for clothes sold through agents were 2s 6d per family every three weeks. Sefton reckoned that the travelling dealers charged between 50 and 100% more than the Stockport shops, but nevertheless found a willing market because only through them could clothes be acquired by the purchaser before payment was completed.[1]

The typical urban street trader was, however, a food dealer, seeking his custom among the very poor and probably able to meet their needs better than could fixed shop retailers. In the food trades the shopkeeper and the market or street trader were able to complement each other rather than be in conflict, for if the

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1. Report from the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, Parl. Papers 1833 vi (690) pp. 625-6.

shopkeeper sold bread, cheese, cooked meats and imported foods, the itinerant trader sold fruit, vegetables and perhaps fish; where the fixed shop fruiterer and fishmonger was aiming at pleasing a high class custom, his itinerant counterpart satisfied lower class tastes.[1] The proximity of fixed shops and street traders in a given area could lead to an increase in trade for both, for they had complementary functions on the supply as well as the demand side, with poor quality food or food beginning to lose its freshness being passed from shopkeeper to street trader. This did not mean that the relationships between the two were necessarily harmonious, but when action was taken against street traders, often at the request of shopkeepers, trade was frequently lost by the shopkeepers near where the street traders had formerly stood.[2] Although most of the evidence about street traders relates to the nineteenth century, they were to be found much earlier, and their role in extending the market for goods to people who would not deal with shops was acknowledged in 1700:

> 'I would fain have those that are against them [street hawkers] consider what would become of our Milk and Makarel, our other Fish, Oranges and Limons, Etc if no body could buy a single Penny worth, unless they went to a Market or a Shop for them; besides there are vast Quantities of damaged Goods that would never be sold, if 'twere not for carrying to the Mobb in this manner.'[3]

Nevertheless early nineteenth-century urbanization very probably saw a considerable increase in their numbers, both in London and other major cities, for reasons that have previously been suggested. Their essential economic appeal to the new urban

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1. D. Alexander, op.cit., pp. 68-9.
2. Ibid. p. 69.
3. J. Houghton, A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade (London, 1692-1703) No. 399, 15/26 Mar. 1699/1700.

proletariat was their willingness to break bulk and thus to be able to supply the very poor who had to buy very frequently in small quantities, and their seeming cheapness. At the same time street traders could provide an essential link in rapidly growing areas between the first housing development and the appearance of fixed shops. They may also have been more socially acceptable to groups unacquainted with urban shops, particularly the more imposing shops of town centres, although the huckster's shop, possibly kept by a wife of a factory worker, was unlikely to have been much different from the average village shop. Clearly not all town hawkers in the early nineteenth century were dealing in fresh foods, and a Chester trader, Jacob Israel, described as a Jew Pedlar and imprisoned for debt in 1801 may be a variant on the type. While in prison he had earned money to support himself and his family by making boxes and sweetmeats, and among his possessions were tools and instruments for trunk making, and one marble and one slate table as utensils for the confectionary business.[1]

The multitude of men making simple household goods, making foodstuffs or selling fruit and vegetables who were probably to be found in every sizeable town by the early nineteenth century have gone largely unrecorded, and what can be said about them comes chiefly from the descriptions of contemporary observers. In London the costermongers of the mid-nineteenth century tended to trade on a minimum of capital, and it was estimated that up to three-quarters of them were trading on loans, the interest charges on which could be a heavy expense. They would often

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1. P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer, Papers in Causes, Bankruptcy, 1730-1820 (Chester 10/1).

group together to make their purchases, since otherwise they would have been in a weak position in the wholesale markets.[1] In Manchester it was said that many of the poorer people disliked respectable shops and preferred to buy at street stalls or from hawkers who would call on them, believing that they were saving money, but in fact getting much inferior products. Food sold by street traders was often alleged to have been tampered with to make it look fresher than it was - scalding and polishing oranges and putting fresh blood under the gills of stale fish were mentioned in this context.[2] The low prices of some street traders - 'dollopers' - were accounted for by their buying old fruit and vegetables at the markets for re-sale on the streets after they had ceased to be saleable in markets.[3]

There is little evidence about the activities of costermongers and other street traders in Cheshire, and while they would certainly have existed they may often have been absorbed into the public markets of medium sized towns and thus traded once or twice a week under the control of the town's authorities. In Stockport in 1822 a letter to the Stockport Advertiser complained of Hawkers, 'Exposing various kinds of Goods for sale, not only at our fairs and markets, but also, almost daily, at private houses, to the great injury of the fair trader and dealer'[4] and in 1843 an illegal market was said to have been established in Hillgate in the town.[5] The Chester butchers in 1822 complained of meat being hawked from house to house by

1. D. Alexander, op.cit., pp. 71-75 quoting Mayhew and others.
2. Felix Folio, op.cit., pp. 32-33.
3. Ibid. p. 128.
4. Stockport Advertiser, 29 Mar. 1822.
5. Cheshire R.O., Stockport Court Papers (DVS).

country butchers, not only on market days but also on other days.[1] Somewhat different, but representing a mode of selling food outside a single fixed shop, was John Chapman, a Chester baker, who in 1740 was using hucksters to sell bread for him in a part of the City away from his bakehouse. Whether these hucksters were selling from fixed shops or door to door is not known, but their customers were said to be poor labouring people living in Handbridge, just across the Dee from Chester.[2]

Having now said something about the various forms of itinerant retailing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is it possible to assess any general trends? The official figures given in table 6:1 show the number of licensed hawkers at such dates in the nineteenth century as information is available. Since these are figures for licensed hawkers, they exclude the street traders in foodstuffs and any persons trading in goods that they made themselves, and there were almost certainly very many hawkers who managed to avoid taking out licences even when they should have done. It was widely, and probably correctly, thought that the hawkers who took out licences were chiefly those travelling from town to town and county to county, rather than those remaining in one town and its immediate environs[3] and thus the figures chiefly represent country hawkers. Eighteenth-century estimates put the true numbers of hawkers at many times higher than the number of licence holders, but such figures invariably came from persons

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1. City of Chester, Butchers Company, Company Book, 1812-1937. In custody of the Company Steward.
2. P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer Paper Pleadings, (Chester 16/130).
3. Felix Folio, op.cit. p. 13.

hostile to hawkers. The census figures for hawkers, pedlars and hucksters in 1831, 1841 and 1851 show totals much higher than licence figures and reveal a sharply rising trend[1] but since these include hucksters, there may well be a large proportion of fixed shop retailers among them, and would certainly be a large proportion of food traders. The trend of the licence figures was for a sharp increase at the beginning of the nineteenth century, slackening off in the 1820's and then falling steadily from the 1830's. The £4 licences, i.e. those for foot traders, were consistently the most important and there were never above 50 pedlars with two or more horses. This pattern would fit an expected decline in the country trade as communications improved and town shops expanded and became more accessible. It would also fit a situation in which shop provision in the first 20 or 25 years of the nineteenth century was inadequate in growing towns, and this may well have been the real situation. If so the hawker was playing a very necessary role in the distributive system by filling a serious gap.

Over the long-term, the itinerant trader in cloth and household goods had a valuable function in a low demand economy in satisfying such irregular and isolated demand as existed. His history was probably long, and it was only when in the nineteenth century it became more convenient for most people to go to the shops in the nearest market town, and perhaps use the local carrier as an essential link, that he began to be obsolete. Although the urban street traders may well have

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1. D. Alexander, op.cit., p. 64.

existed as long as the country pedlars, their most important role was perhaps in carrying the rapidly growing towns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries over a difficult transitional period when shops were unable to cope with working class needs for essential foodstuffs. The street trader could establish himself more quickly than the shopkeeper and meet localized needs more easily, though how far he operated inside or outside the public market system is difficult to judge. Moreover in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when there may have been real difficulties in fixed shop provision, the role of the hawker probably extended beyond the food trades, and he had a vital role to play in maintaining the supply of goods to the growing urban proletariat.

CHAPTER 7

THE HIERARCHY OF SERVICE CENTRES

The Cheshire Hierarchy and Market Areas

Although complex geographical and economic models of urban functions and market areas[1] can hardly be applied to eighteenth-century Cheshire because of lack of adequate statistical materials, some attempt can be made to describe the apparent hierarchy of towns. This is of value since there is a need for integrated and comparative studies of towns in a regional setting to counterbalance the concentration hitherto by historians on single-town studies and hierarchies provide a useful descriptive framework by which towns of different sizes and functions can be related. Moreover such a hierarchy by suggesting the relative importance of and, by implication, attractiveness of towns can provide some hints about market areas which can be given more substantial backing from some contemporary evidence. The area within which this examination is carried out is in fact somewhat larger than the administrative county of Cheshire itself. This of course is because the importance of towns near the boundaries of Cheshire and their ability to attract customers was influenced by the existence or otherwise of towns outside the county. In some parts of the county, residents would have been - and no doubt still are - heavily dependent on towns outside the county for the provision of services, while in other parts a Cheshire town may well have

1. See cap. 1 above for a brief discussion of such theory. (pp. 9-12)

dominated an area in another county. Thus towns not only in Cheshire but also within an area of about ten miles of the county boundary have been considered. A further factor governing choice of towns was the need for data to be available at the relevant dates. Indeed the lack of data for the late eighteenth century has necessitated the exclusion of at least one town - Warrington - from the hierarchy when it certainly should be there.

The hierarchies suggested for the late eighteenth century and the period of about the 1830's have to be regarded as essentially approximate. The criteria used for ranking consist of eight functions which seem to represent various stages of importance for towns. This use of arbitrary criteria is no doubt much less satisfactory than an approach covering all functions, but provided the selected functions are carefully chosen and accord with a reasonable historical judgment they can probably provide a fairly rapid means of ranking, based on the most easily usable comparative sources, trade directories. The ranking is based on range of functions, unlike the ranking of towns in north-east Wales by Professor Carter at various dates from the sixteenth century onwards which uses a mixture of criteria representing function and absolute size.[1] Size is excluded because of the problem of ascertaining accurate population figures before 1801, especially for a number of small towns of approximately similar size where backward projection from 1801 would be particularly dangerous. Concentration on functions moreover counterbalances the frequently excessive

1. Harold Carter, 'The Urban Hierarchy and Historical Geography: A Consideration with Reference to North-East Wales', Geographical Studies iii (1956) 85-101.

stress given to population by historians considering the importance of towns. The evidence used for the ranking in the Cheshire area is taken for the late eighteenth century from the Universal British Directory as far as possible with Cheshire directories for the 1780's used to cover towns not in this, and from Pigot's 1834 directory for Lancashire and Cheshire towns and Pigot's 1828-9 directory for the other towns for the c. 1830 ranking. The eight functions are newspaper, bank, fire office, printer, wine merchant, draper, attorney and market which seem to represent a reasonable range of chiefly economic functions. The possession of a newspaper is taken to imply that a town had a regional importance, of a bank or fire office that it was of major local importance, of a printer or wine merchant that it had functions above those basic to a market town, and of a draper or attorney that it was merely a market town, while the possession of a market is regarded as the essential minimum for urban status. The ranking was produced by counting as Grade A towns with all eight functions, B_1 towns with seven, B_2 towns with six, C towns with 4 or 5 and D towns with 1 to 3.

The rankings produced probably show few major surprises, but the criteria do seem to have been essentially adequate to grade the towns at both dates. The exception to this is that by 1830 both Manchester and Liverpool were so much larger than any other towns in the area that the categories no longer provide a realistic assessment of their importance and it seems sensible to rank them separately as major regional centres. The general growth in towns and in the importance of some

commercial functions means that in general all towns move up one grade between the two dates and in assessing changes in relative importance it is towns that either stayed in the same grade or went up more than one that seem significant. Within each grade the towns are arranged in an order determined first by the number of different functions, and then by numbers within each category. The pattern in the late eighteenth century is one of a small group of important centres (in the A and both B categories) and then a large number of market towns, eight ranked C and seven ranked D. By 1830 the top group was split with Manchester and Liverpool of enormous importance while Chester, Stockport and Macclesfield were now of approximately equal rank as regional centres. Below them came thirteen towns (seven outside Cheshire and six inside) which were either growing industrial towns or continuingly important market towns, and these were followed by twelve small market towns of little more than very local importance. Apart from the fairly consistent upgrading of most towns, changes between the two dates were not very marked. The relative positions of several towns untouched by industry such as Nantwich or Market Drayton remained strong, while of the new industrial towns only Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge entered at a high level after being out of the picture in the 1790's, more probably because of their genuine unimportance then than because of deficiencies in the data. The enormous changes of the early nineteenth century, on these criteria at least, had not yet done great damage to the importance of the medium sized market town in its own area.

Urban Hierarchy - Cheshire and surrounding area

	Late 18th Century	c. 1830	
A	Liverpool Manchester and Salford Chester	Liverpool Manchester and Salford	Major centres
		Chester Macclesfield Stockport	Lesser regional centres
B_1	Stockport	Warrington Ashton-under-Lyne Nantwich Wrexham Northwich Mold Stalybridge Market Drayton	
B_2	Macclesfield Nantwich Middlewich Market Drayton Leek Congleton Wrexham Northwich Whitchurch Altrincham	Congleton Whitchurch Leek Middlewich Altrincham	
C		Runcorn Sandbach Frodsham Knutsford Chapel-en-le-Frith Malpas	
D	Knutsford Frodsham Sandbach Tarporley Chapel-en-le-Frith Malpas Caerwys	Over Buxton Hawarden Tarporley Audlem Neston	

The hierarchies imply a definite structure of market areas with certain towns being clearly dominant over a large area and a mass of others providing local service functions. To some extent the rankings represent population distributions with, particularly by 1830, a cluster of high ranked towns in the industrialized area of north-east Cheshire. Yet there was also a fairly regular distribution of market towns throughout the county and just outside it with such towns as Leek, Congleton, Sandbach, Nantwich, Market Drayton and Whitchurch being urban centres for south Cheshire and Northwich, Knutsford, Middlewich and Frodsham for mid Cheshire. Around Chester itself few towns appear at either date - only Hawarden ranked D in the 1830 ranking was within ten miles of Chester - implying that Chester was of importance over a wide area for relatively common goods as well as for items less frequently purchased. Market areas around many towns were probably fairly regular in shape and size, although a pattern of regular hexagons is hardly to be expected.[1] The distorting influence of Manchester and Liverpool on shopping areas was probably not great, whatever their influence on food supply areas or their importance in providing little used facilities. Certainly Liverpool is unlikely to have been important outside north Wirral, leaving Chester dominant in west Cheshire. Manchester almost certainly curtailed Stockport's shopping catchment area on the north

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1. A location matrix assessing distances between towns and relating these to ranks would have been interesting and has proved possible in some American studies. In Cheshire, however, special features, particularly the great concentration of population in the east, would probably be dominant and distort any regular pattern too greatly to allow it to be discerned.

and probably Ashton-under-Lyne's on the west, but the number of Stockport inhabitants shopping regularly in Manchester for convenience goods must have been low until the railway brought quick and cheap transit and there began to be complaints about workers going to Manchester instead of Stockport market because of the prestige value of travelling to shop. On the other hand Stockport's lack of a newspaper until 1822 and of a bank until the 1820's (except for a few years in the early 1790's) may well have been due to the dominance of Manchester.

If the suggested patterns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are compared with the hierarchy of 1961 some interesting features emerge. Manchester and Liverpool remain the only Grade I centres in the area with Chester, Stockport, Birkenhead and Hanley Grade IIA centres and Wrexham, Crewe, Warrington and Ashton Grade IIB centres. Birkenhead and Crewe were creations of the nineteenth century, and Macclesfield has slipped to the level of Leek, Northwich and Altrincham as Grade III centres, but the changes are not too dramatic. Chester still dominates west Cheshire and north-east Wales, though it faces competition from Birkenhead in the Wirral and at Grade III level from Rhyl on the north Wales coast. Stockport's hinterland is elliptical with its long axis south-eastwards, while Macclesfield has a much more circular hinterland.[1] The relative attraction of two of the major shopping centres in the county can be gauged from Chester having a sufficient value of shops to imply a population of

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1. University of Manchester, Department of Town and Country Planning, Regional Shopping Centres in North West England: Part Two, A Retail Shopping Model (Manchester, 1966), pp. 6-7.

147,000 thus leaving a surplus shopping population of 88,000 while Stockport has a surplus shopping population of minus 10,000.[1] The simple estimates of importance based on traditional descriptive ranking concepts compare well with estimates using a more complex gravity model taking account of attractiveness, travel time and potential spending power separately for each centre[2] - a model which could not of course be used with eighteenth-century data.

Nevertheless it is possible to say more about eighteenth and early nineteenth-century hinterlands and shopping catchment areas. Given differing levels of demand for different goods, it is theoretically possible for a centre to have as many market areas as it sells goods. In fact the market areas for goods of similar types tend to be about the same,[3] leaving a large centre with two or three market areas corresponding perhaps with its functions as local, county or regional centre. In the case of Chester it is likely that more than one market area existed in the eighteenth century, and that the largest market area was that represented by the distribution area of the city's newspapers. By the 1780's the proprietors of both Chester newspapers were sending newsmen to deliver their journals (and carry parcels) over virtually all Cheshire, north Shropshire, north-east Wales, south Lancashire (including Liverpool, Wigan and Manchester) and north Staffordshire. The Chester Courant employed nine newsmen in 1783 and the Chester Chronicle seven,

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1. J.P. Reynolds, 'Shopping in the North West', Town Planning Review xxxiv (1963-4) 230-31.
2. Retail Shopping Model, op.cit. passim.
3. E.M. Hoover, The Location of Economic Activity (New York, 1963) pp. 123-27.

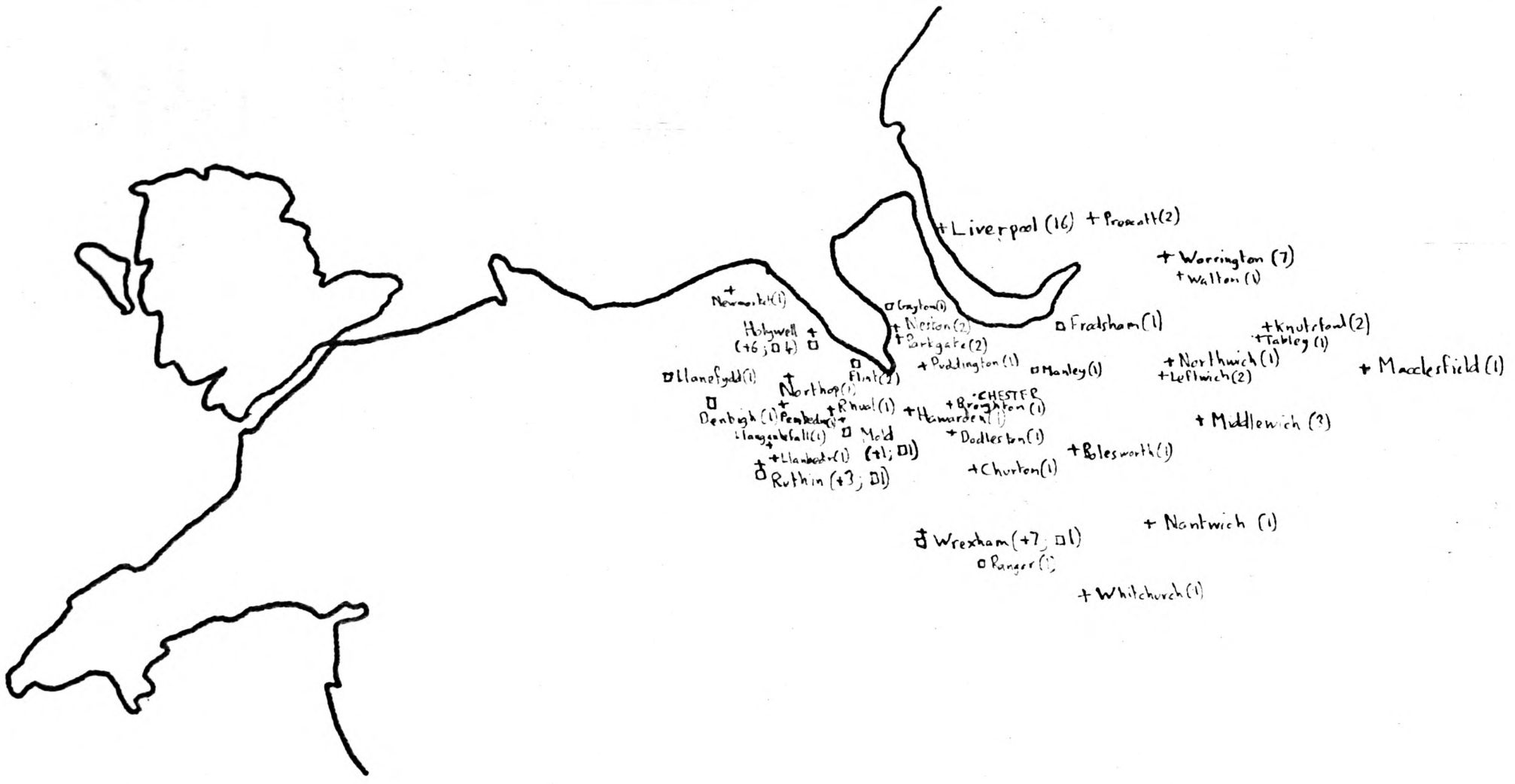
each with regular weekly routes and each newspaper covered approximately the same area in its distribution.[1] For less special items Chester's dominance would probably not extend into east Cheshire to the same degree, but in the supply of many goods and services the city was important throughout Cheshire, and especially in north Wales. Many Welsh landed families would purchase goods, except basic foodstuffs, there although Wrexham particularly could offer serious competition. The importance of Welsh customers was recognized by some shopkeepers, 'Wanted immediately, an Apprentice to an Ironmonger and Grocer, in this City. N.B. The preference will be given to one who understands the Welsh Language' advertised Mr. Wynn in 1775[2] and in 1784 an unnamed trader announced, 'Wanted, an Apprentice to a Woollen-Draper, in this City. A Preference will be given to one conversant in the Welsh Language.'[3]

The wide extent of Chester's trading area is confirmed by Map 7:1 which plots the residences of such debtors of two Chester retailer-craftsmen as have identifiable residences listed in the probate inventories of the traders. Abner Scholes, an upholsterer, had an estate appraised at £1675 in October 1736 when his inventory was drawn up,[4] and this included a substantial number of debts owing to him, only a few of which are shown on the map. There was some money owing to him in north Cheshire, but the bulk of it, outside Chester itself, was in Wales including debts owed him in the major towns of north-

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1. P. Broster, The Chester Guide (with Directory for 1783) (Chester, 1782) pp. 66-8.
2. Chester Chronicle 14 Aug. 1775.
3. Adam's Weekly Courant 23 Nov. 1784.
4. Cheshire R.O., Inv. of Abner Scholes, upholsterer 1736 (WS Series).

Map 7:1
Debts of Chester Traders



+ William Earle, Staymaker 1780
□ Abner Scholes, Upholsterer 1776

N

Figures in brackets denote number of debts in each place.

Inventories do not indicate residence of all debtors

Scale in Miles

0 10 20 30

Source: Cheshire R.O., Inventories

east Wales, Wrexham, Denbigh and Ruthin. William Earle, a staymaker, had a similarly wide distribution of debts owing him at his death in 1775 or 1776 and collected by the time his inventory was drawn up in 1780.[1] There were debts owing in the major Welsh towns, a number in villages around Chester and several in some of the more important Cheshire towns, even as far afield as Macclesfield and Knutsford. The same sort of distribution can be found for the customers of George Lowe, silversmith, in 1810 with many living in Wales and others scattered throughout Cheshire.[2] Scholes was trading on a large scale, both Earle and Lowe were patronised by the country gentry to some degree and none may have been typical. But there were certainly other Chester traders of the same sort, very probably drawing customers from similar areas. Unfortunately there is no direct customer evidence for food traders who would presumably have had much smaller catchment areas, though among these the grocers may well have drawn customers from surrounding villages and one of the traders wanting a Welsh speaking apprentice was a grocer.

Purchases by landed families from the vicinity of the towns imply that the nearest town was usually resorted to for buying all but the most frequently needed items, although families normally made use of more than one town. Chester was certainly one of the towns used by Welsh families and the accounts of disbursements by the Davies family at Gwysaney show hops, timber, drugs and grocery being bought from Chester retailers. Use was

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1. Cheshire R.O., Inv. of William Earle, staymaker, 1780, (WC Series).
2. Lowes Day Book, 1810-11. In possession of Lowe & Sons, Chester. See below cap. 10. (p. 377)

also made of retailers in Mold, Denbigh and St. Asaph while meat and grain were bought even more locally.[1] Simon Yorke at Erddig near Wrexham was similarly buying cloth, stockings, hats, wine, groceries and hops in Chester in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries though also making purchases in Wrexham and Shrewsbury.[2] While goods not in common use would normally have to be sought in a large town, there is little indication that choice of town was narrowly determined by the type of goods to be purchased. Families living only a few miles from Chester would, however, probably make almost exclusive use of that city for shopping and the Grosvenor household at Eaton in the early nineteenth century seems to have been buying all it required from a wide range of Chester shopkeepers, numbering forty or more in a single year.[3]

The same pattern of seemingly indiscriminate use of several towns can be found in east Cheshire, although the influence of Manchester as a top grade shopping centre is noticeable. The Leghs of Lyme in the 1720's and 1730's bought corn, grocery, ironmongery, cloth, shoes and paper in Stockport and paper, oil, soap, candles, stockings and shoes in Macclesfield while books and wine came from Manchester with wine being bought in London on one occasion. Regular accounts were perhaps more common with the Stockport than with the Macclesfield retailers, but there is no clearly apparent reason why either town should have been used in preference to the other

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1. Flintshire R.O., Gwysaney Rentals, Accounts for Disbursements 1759-1779 (Uncat. Mss.)
2. Erddig Estate Papers, Cash Books 1797-1811. Seen in Flint's R.O..
3. Eaton Estate Office, Grosvenor Mss., Household, List of Bills from Chester, 1805-1817 (Estate Books 376). Seen at Chester City R.O..

for frequently purchased goods.[1] The Ardernes, much nearer to Stockport, seem to have shopped there regularly in the 1730's and 1740's although cloth was often purchased in Manchester and plate was brought from London. In the 1790's they dealt with Stockport food dealers, drapers, tailors, upholsterers and druggists, but also with a Manchester grocer and Manchester cloth dealers.[2] The Stanleys at Alderley and the Finneys at Wilmslow both made use of Maccesfield retailers, and the Stanleys seem to have been able to obtain all their grocery requirements in Macclesfield but both families also had goods sent from Manchester.[3] In Macclesfield itself the trader John Swanwick bought bread, flour, meat, groceries, beer, shoes, drugs, hats and paper from his fellow shopkeepers in the town and only rarely bought elsewhere. Crockery on at least one occasion came from Ollivant and Sons of Manchester and in 1798 he bought two tubs of butter direct from a supplier in Shrewsbury.[4] A town like Macclesfield by the early nineteenth century was probably able to satisfy virtually all the shopping needs of its inhabitants.[5]

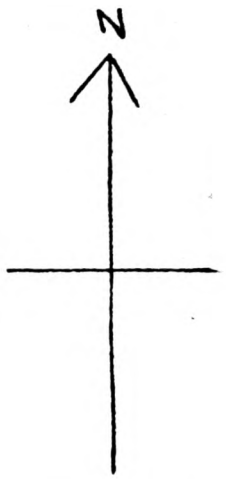
Direct evidence on shopping patterns is presented in Map 7:2 and Table 7:1 which show the distribution of debts owed to certain shopkeepers in Stockport and Macclesfield and can be taken as providing a general picture of customer distribution.

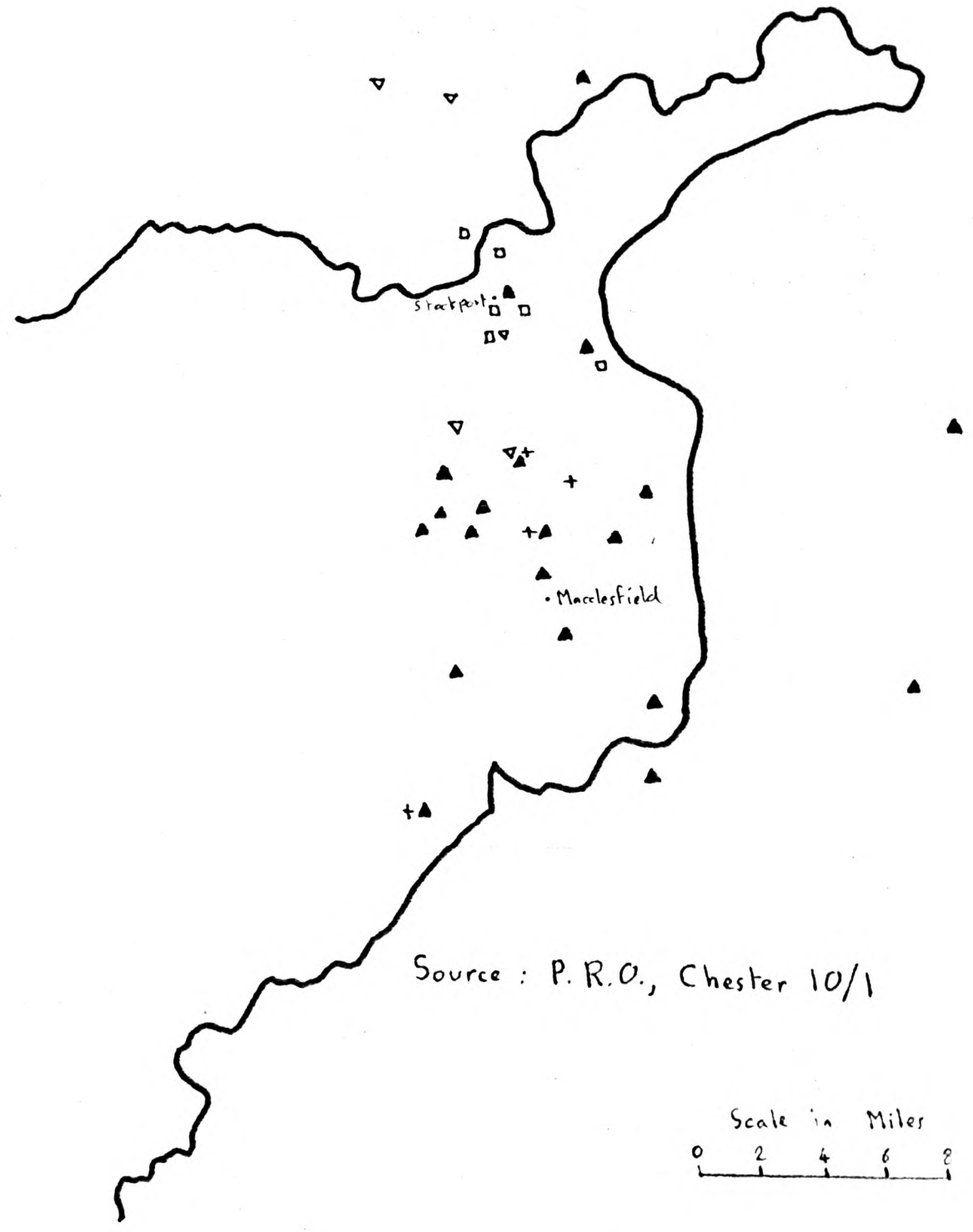
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1. Stockport R.L., Lyme Hall Steward's Overseers Accounts, 1728-1738 (Deed Box 21A).
2. Cheshire R.O., Arderne Coll., Vouchers for Expenditure (DAR/A/81-94).
3. John Rylands Library, Sir J.T. Stanley Housekeeping Book 1784 (Eng. Ms. 1096): Cheshire R.O., Finney of Fulshaw Coll., Letters 1765-67 (DFF/28/1-13).
4. Swanwick Papers, Household Vouchers.
5. See Appendix for a further discussion of shopping.

Map 7:2

Trade Debts of East Cheshire Shopkeepers





□ Thomas Shawcross of Stockport, Flour Dealer 1801
▽ John Jackson of Stockport, Shopkeeper 1801
+ George Greaves of Macclesfield, Butcher 1804.
▲ Peter Lowe of Macclesfield, Woollen Draper 1813

Map does not show number of debts owed to shopkeeper in each place, only places where debts owed.

All shopkeepers have debts owing to them in place of residence

Source : P.R.O., Chester 10/1

Table 7:1 Customer Distribution for East Cheshire Shopkeepers

	No. of Debtors	% in Home Town	% under 5 miles	% over 5 miles
George Greaves of Macclesfield, Butcher, 1804	27	15	81.5[a]	3.5
Peter Olerenshawe of Macclesfield, Grocer, 1737	15	73.5	20	6.5
Alexander Hays of Macclesfield, Nurseryman, 1814	6	33.3	50	16.7
Peter Lowe of Macclesfield, Woollen Draper, 1814	209	66.5	21.5	12
Samuel Wagstaffe of Stockport, Baker, 1801	9	78	0	22[b]
Thomas Shawcross of Stockport, Flour Dealer, 1801	90	94.5	5.5	0
John Jackson of Stockport, Shopkeeper, 1801	57	81	16	3
Richard Turnock of Stockport, Glover and Breeches Maker, 1730	25	20	12	68
George Oldham of Bullock Smithy, Shopkeeper, 1804	62	26	61	13
John Shard of Mottram-in-Longdendale, Grocer, 1804	11	100	0	0

a) Chiefly in Bollington
b) Both of Manchester

Source: P.R.O., Chester 10/1.

The shopkeepers for whom this evidence is available were those confined to prison in Chester for debt and who had to draw up a schedule of assets in order to obtain their release under one of the Insolvent Debtors Acts. It seems unlikely that these shopkeepers were especially untypical - shopkeeping could

always be a hazardous business and there was always the danger of even a relatively wealthy man being faced, in bad times, with a debt he could not meet. The debts they list as owing to themselves would not all be for goods sold - some were for money lent, and others on matters of purely private business - but where the schedules make these distinctions, the great majority of debts prove to be for goods sold.[1]

The table shows debt distribution for four Stockport and four Macclesfield shopkeepers, all of whom made schedules showing the residence of every debtor. In general terms the dominance of customers coming from five miles or under from the town of residence of the shopkeeper is clear. In all but two cases over 80% of customers fall in this category, and one of the exceptions (Samuel Wagstaffe) had few debts owed him, and the two owed in Manchester were large and may well not have been for goods sold. Provisions dealers like Thomas Shawcross and John Jackson of Stockport, or even Peter Olerenshawe of Macclesfield at a much earlier date, had a very high concentration of local customers, and in the case of Shawcross and Jackson over 80% in their home town. The major exception to the above generalization is Richard Turnock of Stockport who was probably more of a craftsman than a shopkeeper, but whose debt distribution is nevertheless puzzling. He had five debts owed him in Stockport, and the remaining twenty scattered in twenty different towns throughout the north of England including Kendal,

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1. All the schedules are in P.R.O., Palatinate of Chester, Exchequer, Papers in Causes - Bankruptcy 1730-1820 (Chester 10/1). Only schedules for the 1730's and early nineteenth century survive in this class.

Halifax, Preston and Ashbourne as well as a few towns nearer Stockport. Moreover all these debts are specifically stated to have been for goods sold. The implication is of a man with a wide range of trading contacts, but where he met them is mysterious and why he dealt with them in amounts of a few shillings more so.

Examining in a little more detail the customer distribution of some of the more normal traders, the patterns follow the sort of lines one would expect. George Greaves of Macclesfield seems to have been a member of a family of butchers, and although he had a large number of customers outside the town, these were heavily concentrated in Bollington. It is not unlikely that he would have held land there and thus had two sets of customers, one based on his Macclesfield business and the other where he grazed or fattened cattle. Alexander Hays was only owed money by six people and as might be expected for a nurseryman four of these were to be found in villages around Macclesfield. Although not to be found in contemporary directories, Hays seems to have had quite an important business and in March 1813 he was advertising from Dalkeith Gardens, Macclesfield:

> 'That he has just received from the first Houses in London, a large assortment of Kitchen Garden, and House Seeds, of the best quality, which he is now selling on the most reasonable terms. Orders from the country punctually executed.' 1

Three and a half months later his nursery ground, kitchen garden, house and shop were advertised to be let and Hays had presumably found himself in Chester gaol. Peter Lowe was partner to

1. Macclesfield Courier, 6 Mar. 1813.

William Brocklehurst who had been made a freeman of Macclesfield in 1798 and they occupied a shop in Mill Street until the end of 1811. As can be seen from Map 7:2, Lowe had customers from a wide area, although the majority were in the town of Macclesfield itself and a sizeable number near it. However he was selling as far afield as Ashton-under-Lyne, Marple, Stockport, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Congleton. In all these cases the distribution of customers seems to have been quite regular around Macclesfield. There is less to say of the remaining Stockport traders. They all seem to have been essentially small provisions dealers, drawing largely on inhabitants of Stockport for their customers, though with an occasional one in the villages to the south of the town, particularly around Bullock Smithy. Far fewer customers came from the area between Stockport and Manchester.

The catchment area for customers, insofar as one can generalize from admittedly scrappy evidence, seems to have depended on the nature of the trade and on the proximity of other towns. All shopkeepers would depend heavily on their own town for the bulk of their customers - out of 42 affidavits sworn by Macclesfield shopkeepers concerning money owed them for goods sold between 1764 and 1782, 38 gave the residence of the debtor as Macclesfield and only four elsewhere, and these were all in the Macclesfield area.[1] Shopkeepers selling basic foodstuffs would probably have a few customers from the immediate vicinity of their town and maybe one or two from

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1. P.R.O., Special Collections, Macclesfield Court Papers, Borough Affidavits, 1764-1791 (SC 2/324/2).

farther afield. Only shopkeepers in cloth or luxury trades could expect to have a wide catchment area, including customers coming from other market towns. A reasonably isolated town would probably draw customers from all directions, while one close to a larger town would expect to draw customers chiefly from the direction away from its rival. The debt distribution of the two village shopkeepers shown in the table adds a little variety to this. George Oldham of Bullock Smithy was trading in one village among several that were growing as textile areas around Stockport and was drawing customers from all these villages. He had moreover previously lived in Butley near Prestbury and eight of the debts owed him were from this area. John Shard of Mottram was in a larger and more isolated village from which he drew all his customers and was no doubt less well placed for attracting customers from a wide area than was George Oldham.

The existence of these two village shopkeepers serves as a reminder that while large-scale shopkeeping was an essentially urban function, shops as such were not found only in towns. The county pattern of retail provision ranged from the major centres like Chester, through smaller market towns to villages with one or two general shops. This pattern would be likely to respond to changes in population, at least in larger settlements, and it is the retail provision of Cheshire as a whole and the changes in this that the final section of this chapter will examine.

Shop Retailing in Cheshire

We now look briefly at the pattern of shop provision in

Cheshire in the later eighteenth century and the growth of shops in some of the smaller towns in the county during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There is no reason not to expect some specialized employments to have arisen in villages at least from the sixteenth century and probably very much earlier[1] and shops were probably to be found in them by the end of the seventeenth century. By the 1770's Essex had over 1,000 shops and most villages had general shops, together perhaps with butchers and bakers in larger villages.[2] The hypothesis of widespread existence of shops by the late eighteenth century can be tested by a study of the shop tax of the late 1780's.[3] This tax, which does not seem to have been used by historians hitherto, is of very considerable value in providing a basis for the systematic analysis of shop coverage. Moreover, although taxes collected from each township do not precisely reflect the value of shops in the township, the tax does give an indication of the relative value of shops in different places and thus indirectly of the relative size of retail trade.

The shop tax was first assessed in 1785 and met with considerable and vociferous opposition from the retailers of London and the provinces. The Journals of the House of Commons for 1785 and 1786 contain notes of many petitions against it,

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1. See John Patten, 'Village and Town: An Occupational Study', Agricultural History Review xx (1972) 1-16 for occupations in 16th century Suffolk and A. Raistrick, 'A Fourteenth Century Regional Survey', Sociological Review xxi (1929) 241-49 on occupations in Craven, Yorkshire.
2. A.F.J. Brown, Essex at Work, 1700-1815 (Essex R.O. Publications, No. 49, Chelmsford, 1969) pp. 62-66.
3. Parchment duplicates listing the totals paid by each township survive in P.R.O., Exchequer Tax Accounts, Land and Assessed Taxes, Subsidiary Documents (E 182).

usually taking a common form, including ones from the shopkeepers of Chester and of Stockport in February 1786.[1] The tax was short-lived, being abolished in 1789. While in existence it was assessed on the yearly rent, or putative rent, of all buildings, any part of which was used as a shop for selling goods by retail and on any building used only as a shop. A sliding-scale was used to calculate the amount of tax payable and from April 1786 the rate was 4d in the £ for shops valued at £5 and under £10, 8d in the £ for shops of £10 and under £15, 1s in the £ for shops of £15 and under £20, 1s 3d in the £ for shops of £20 and under £25, 1s 9d in the £ for shops of £25 and under £30 and then 2s in the £ for shops of £30 and over. Exempt from the tax were warehouses used for storage only, for the sale of goods by wholesale only or for the carrying on of some manufacture and shops where bread, flour, meal or bran only were sold.[2] Since the tax was assessed by value it does not indicate the number of shops in any place, and the sliding scale means that it is not an accurate guide to overall value, tending to over-stress shops of high value as against shops of low value.[3] Nevertheless it fell only on shops proper,[4] and as such can be taken as a reasonable guide to the penetration of

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1. Commons Journals xli 189-90 (Chester); 248 (Stockport).
2. 'An Act for granting to his Majesty certain Duties on Shops within Great Britain', 1785, 25 Geo III cap. 30 and amending Act 1786, 26 Geo III cap. 9.
3. Although detracting from the value of the tax in giving an accurate picture of shop values, this may help to redress a similarly unbalanced picture of the larger towns given by directories showing only numbers of shops and taking no account of their relative values in different towns.
4. However bankers were counted as retail dealers for the purposes of the tax, although publicans were excluded. See criticisms of the tax in Gentleman's Magazine lviii (1788) 255.

shops throughout any given area.

Table 7:2 shows the shop tax data for 1786, 1787 and 1788 as it relates to Cheshire. Apart from the ten Chester wards and Gloverstone, 58 townships were assessed in 1786, 57 in 1787 and 60 in 1788 and there were a number of changes in assessments in each year. Many of these may represent the appearance or disappearance of shops (e.g. Marple presumably had one shop in 1786, two in 1787 and one in 1788), some inaccurate assessments in certain years and a few possibly changes in valuations of shops perhaps reflecting changes in profitability. The rates at which the tax was assessed mean that all assessments of 3s and under must represent a single shop and all of from 3s 4d to 5s 8d two shops. Thus in each year nearly half the listed townships of the county had just one shop and a further substantial group had two shops. Most of these were small villages, and since the tax omits bakers and shops valued at under £5 it seems likely that a minimal provision of true shops was to be found across the county. The middle group - towns or villages with several small shops and perhaps one or two more valuable ones - is small. Between eight and ten townships were each year assessed at between 6s 8d and £2 and these represent the smaller market towns like Frodsham, Middlewich or Malpas and some large villages such as Chelford, Lymm or Bollin Fee, the latter being essentialy the modern Wilmslow. The more important market towns - Northwich, Knutsford, Nantwich, Altrincham, Congleton, Macclesfield and Stockport - are spread out in the list with assessments ranging from £2 or £3 to £15 or £16 for Macclesfield and over £30 for Stockport in 1787 and

Table 7:2 Cheshire Shop Tax, 1786-88

Township	1786 £	s	d	1787 £	s	d	1788 £	s	d
Chester									
Eastgate	50	10	4	53	18	7	47	12	11
St. Michael's	39	11	10½	37	5	4½	29	13	4
St. Bridget's	27	17	4½	23	14	8	20	9	0¼
St. Oswald's	16	1	2	17	5	6	16	16	0
St. John's	10	14	8	9	8	4	9	11	0
St. Olave's	9	16	8	10	17	2	11	0	4
Trinity	7	6	8	6	8	10	5	12	10
St. Martin's	4	9	4	4	10	2	4	9	4
Northgate	3	9	0	5	0	0	4	16	6
St. Giles'	0	5	4	0	9	10	0	16	4
(Gloverstone)		8	0	0	8	0	0	8	0
Total:	170	10	5	169	6	5½	151	5	7¼
Stockport	28	1	5½	33	14	8	33	2	8
Macclesfield	15	16	0	15	2	4	16	12	4
Congleton	9	17	0	9	12	4	9	17	4
Nantwich	4	17	4	4	11	1	4	10	8
Nether Knutsford	3	18	4	3	14	6	3	8	2
Altrincham	3	7	0	3	9	4	3	10	2
Sandbach	2	15	8	2	5	8	2	2	0
Northwich	2	12	10	4	2	0	4	6	0
Neston	1	8	0	1	10	0	1	6	4
Frodsham Township	1	6	8	1	9	2	1	10	0
Middlewich	1	5	6	1	5	8	1	3	10
Malpas	0	19	4	0	19	4	0	19	4
Mottram Longdendale	0	16	8		-			-	
Tarporley	0	14	4	0	12	4	1	6	8
Bollin Fee	0	12	0	0	11	4	0	11	8
Lymm	0	7	4	0	7	4	0	8	2
Chelford	0	6	8	0	6	8	0	6	8
Boughton	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	10	8
Witton	0	5	8	0	9	4	0	9	4
Newton	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	3	4
Prestbury	0	5	0	0	5	4	0	5	4
Sale	0	5	0	0	1	8	0	1	8
Timperley	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	5	0
Sutton	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	4
Tarvin	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	0
Over	0	3	8	0	3	8	0	3	8
Church Hulme	0	3	4	0	3	4	0	3	4
Halton	0	3	4	0	3	4	0	3	4
High Legh	0	3	4	0	3	4	0	3	4
Partington	0	3	4		-			-	
Church Lawton	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
Handforth	0	3	0	0	6	4	0	4	8
Latchford	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	8	0
Wernsth	0	3	0	0	4	8	0	3	0
Audlem	0	2	8	0	4	4	0	3	8
Marple	0	2	4	0	4	8	0	2	4
Nether Alderley	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Bosley	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Tattenhall	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Worth	0	1	10	0	1	10	0	1	10
Ashton-on-Mersey	0	1	8		-			-	
Baguley	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Bartington	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Budworth	0	1	8	0	2	0	0	2	0
Butley	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Cheadle Bulkeley	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	3	4
Dunham Massey	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Farndon	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Frodsham Lordship	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Handley	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Hyde	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Kinderton	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Lostock Gralam	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Northen	0	1	8	0	3	4	0	3	4
Castle Northwich	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Rostherne	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Stayley	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Warburton	0	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8
Upton		-		0	2	0	0	2	0
Broxton		-			-		0	1	8
Comberbach		-		0	1	8	0	1	8
Walton Superior		-			-		0	1	8
Waverham		-			-		0	1	8
Total:	255	4	4½	259	2	4½	242	18	1¼

Source: P.R.O., Exchequer Tax Accounts, Land and Assessed Taxes Subsidiary Documents, Chester 1785-88 (E 182/96).

1788. The dominance of Chester is total with assessments of around £170 in 1786 and 1787 and of £151 5s 7½d in 1788. Chester's share of the county total, however, fell from about 67% in 1786 to 65% in 1787 and to 62% in 1788 and while a trend over such a short period is hardly meaningful, the tax may have affected shop values or numbers in a place like Chester, while the £5 increase in Stockport's assessment may represent an increase in shops in a rapidly growing town.

It is unfortunately not possible to confirm this pyramid like pattern of a large base of many villages with one or two shops, a few large villages and small towns and then a hierarchy of market and industrial towns topped by Chester at any other date in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Evidence of growth in shop numbers only relates to the more substantial towns, chiefly with populations of over 1,000 in 1801, and has to be taken from the early trade directories. Shop growth in this period of rapid urbanization, chiefly consequent on industrial growth, might reasonably be expected to follow, fairly roughly, the pattern of population growth in towns. Dr. Alexander, using information on a group of both large and moderately large towns for the period 1822 to 1848-51, has shown that in all cases the percentage increase in the number of shops was substantially greater than the percentage increase in population, and that using a fairly narrow definition of retail shop, the rank correlation coefficient between these two variables is 0.77.[1] The Cheshire evidence for an earlier period, though much more shaky in its basis, does not present quite the same generally favourable picture for a group of

1. D. Alexander, Retailing in England, pp. 92-97.

smaller towns. Using population data from the 1801 and 1831 censuses and shop data from the Universal British Directory of the early 1790's and Pigot's 1834 Directory - a discrepancy in dates which ought to give an upward bias to the shop as against the population figures, but which is probably only serious in the case of Stockport - percentage growth figures for ten Cheshire towns have been calculated.[1] Of these Chester, Stockport, Knutsford, Altrincham, Frodsham, Neston and Tarvin had a larger increase in all shops than in population while in Macclesfield, Congleton and Tarporley the situation was reversed. Taking only food shops, which were probably the most vital group of shops for the urban population, only Macclesfield continues to show a slightly unfavourable trend, while the village of Tarvin now has faster population than food shop growth. Nevertheless although the number of food shops was generally increasing about as fast as population there seems to be no close correlation between the two series,[2] although by 1834 there does seem to be a close relationship in all the larger true towns between total population and total number of food shops.

The towns considered are those forming belts around Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester. In east Cheshire Congleton and Knutsford, both about ten miles from Macclesfield, and Altrincham, about ten miles from Stockport, and in the west Tarporley, Frodsham and Neston, all around ten miles from Chester, and Tarvin, around six miles from Chester, have been examined. Also by 1834 industrial and urban growth around Manchester and Stockport had led to the emergence of several new urban areas

1. See Table 7:3.
2. Rank correlation coefficient 0.48, rising to 0.75 if the three smallest towns (Tarporley, Neston and Tarvin) are excluded.

Table 7:3 Growth of Population and Shops in Cheshire Towns

Town	% Population Increase 1801-31	% Increase in Shops 1790's-1834	% Increase in Food Shops 1790's-1834
Chester	42	53	63
Stockport	97.5	179	210
Macclesfield	176.5	130	171
Congleton	161	134	189
Knutsford	28	69	71
Altrincham	41.5	71	61
Frodsham	81.5	136	100
Tarporley	32	26	100
Neston	18	179	116
Tarvin	34	38	8

Notes:- Food shops defined as in following tables except that farmers and gardeners are excluded.

Town areas reckoned as:-

Chester - City of Chester
Stockport - Stockport and Heaton Norris
Macclesfield - Macclesfield and Sutton
Congleton - Congleton and Buglawton
Knutsford - Knutsford
Altrincham - Altrincham, Bowdon, Dunham and Hale
Frodsham - Frodsham and Helsby
Tarporley - Tarporley and Eaton
Neston - Neston and Parkgate
Tarvin - Tarvin, Clotton and Duddon.

for which details are given in the directory but which seem often to be a convenient amalgamation of several growing villages for the purpose of compiling the directory rather than real towns. Small towns of this sort with populations ranging between 600 and 3,800 in 1801 were of the sort that had probably had some degree of retail provision above the barest minimum for a century or more. They could perhaps have been compared with

towns like Tonbridge in Kent[1] having sixteen food and drink traders and 27 clothing traders in the 1660's or Petworth in Sussex[2] having small groups of retailers ranging from mercers to butchers and bakers.

Certainly Congleton in the early eighteenth century had several shopkeepers dealing in food and clothing such as grocers, milliners, shoemakers or tailors,[3] and during the period of the early industrial revolution it developed as a silk town. This was reflected in town growth and in an expansion of the number of shopkeepers, particularly provision dealers, grocers and butchers.[4] Towns such as Knutsford, Tarporley or Neston were small market towns, largely unaffected by industrial growth and probably dependent for their prosperity on wealth generated by local gentry and farmers. Knutsford was a town of some local importance and shows around a 70% increase in most types of shops between the 1790's and 1834 but only a 27.5% increase in population between 1801 and 1831. Growth in the small market towns of west Cheshire was much less marked and Tarporley and Tarvin remained deficient in retailers outside the food and drink sector at least up to 1834. The urban development of the early nineteenth century centred around Stalybridge and Hyde produced substantial towns which by 1834 not only had a large number of food shops, but also had traders in a wide range of businesses including some luxury trades. By contrast the

1. C.W. Chalklin, 'A Seventeenth Century Market Town: Tonbridge', Archaeologia Cantiana lxxvi (1961) 152-162.
2. G.H. Kenyon, 'Petworth Town and Trades, 1610-1760', Sussex Archaeological Collections xcvi (1958) 35-107; xcviii (1960) 71-117.
3. List of traders fined for not being free 1709 in J. Corry, The History of Macclesfield....(and other towns) pp. 190-91.
4. See Tables 7:4 and 7:5.

Table 7:4 Retailers in Smaller Cheshire Towns c. 1789-95

	Altr.	Cong.	Knut.	Frod.	Tarp.	Nest.	Tarv.
1801 Population	3,687	4,378	2,372	1,819	1,134	1,740	1,209
Food and Drink							
Provisions dealers and bakers	6	15	12[a,b]	6[a]	3[c]	9	1
Grocery trades	9	2	9[a,b]	5[a]	5[c]	0	1
Butchers	3	1	4[b]	1	0	6	2
Wine and spirit dealers	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Brewers and accessory trades	3	2	1	2	0	2	1
Inns, ale and eating houses	18	24	15	12	5	8	3
Farmers and gardeners	23	0	2	34	5	1	0
Miscellaneous	4	0	0	0	1	0	5
Total:	67	46	43	60	19	26	13
Cloth and Clothing							
Mercers and drapers	5	8	4[a]	2[a]	4[c]	0	0
Clothes accessories	6	6	6	1	8	0	0
Clothes shops	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tailors	3	2	2	2	4	4	0
Hatters	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Shoe trades	9	6	12	1	6	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total:	23	24	25	6	22	4	0
Household Goods Trades							
Glass and china dealers	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Furniture dealers	3	2	4	1	1	0	0
Metal dealers	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Candle, soap and oil dealers	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Druggists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	5	5	8	1	2	0	0
Luxury trades	1	4	1	1	0	0	0
Printers and book trades	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Tobacconists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apothecaries	0	2	0	2	0	3	0
Building trades	7	6	9	6	3	10	2
Miscellaneous							
Merchants	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Bankers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

a) 2 Drapers and grocers
b) 1 Butcher and grocer
c) 3 Drapers and grocers

Altr. = Altrincham
Cong. = Congleton
Knut. = Knutsford
Frod. = Frodsham
Tarp. = Tarporley
Nest. = Neston and Parkgate
Tarv. = Tarvin

Town areas defined as in Table 7:3.

Source: Universal British Directory except Neston and Tarvin for which Cowdroy, 1789.

Table 7:5 Retailers in Smaller Cheshire Towns 1834

	Altr.	Cong.	Knut.	Bull.	Hyde	Stal.	Duck.	Chea.	Marp.	Wilm.	Frod.	Tarp.	Nest.	Tarv.
1831 Population	5,216	11,439	3,040	2,819	13,777		14,681	6,852	6,027	4,296	3,304	1,497	2,050	1,624
Food and Drink														
Provisions dealers and bakers	26	44	24	16	76	85	24	10	43	9	18	10	20	7
Grocery Trades	6	12	8	0	9	6	3	0	0	0	8[a]	0	0	1
Butchers	5	17	8	1	17	24	10	1	8	4	3	4	8	1
Wine and spirit dealers	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brewers and accessory trades	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Inns, ale and eating houses	30	59	30	23	68	72	18	12	48	9	22	14	24	5
Farmers and gardeners	3	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	74	135	73	41	170	188	55	24	99	22	54	28	55	14
Cloth and Clothing														
Mercers and drapers	6	10	5	0	11	11	1	2	2	2	5[a]	3	4	0
Clothes accessories	7	2	6	0	5	5	0	0	6	1	1	4	5	0
Clothes shops	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Tailors	6	13	11	1	13	5	1	0	12	4	7	3	6	2
Hatters	12	5	6	1	8	9	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0
Shoe trades	12	4	14	5	38	15	4	2	15	2	10	6	10	2
Miscellaneous	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	43	37	42	7	78	47	7	4	39	9	26	16	25	4
Household Goods Trades														
Glass and china dealers	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Furniture dealers	3	2	3	1	1	7	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Metal dealers	2	5	3	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Candle, soap and oil dealers	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Druggists	2	5	2	1	8	4	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total:	9	15	13	4	12	14	4	0	2	2	4	3	1	0
Luxury Trades	1	4	5	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0
Printers and book trades	1	3	2	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Tobacconists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apothecaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Trades	14	10	15	2	20	6	5	6	10	3	19	9	7	0
Miscellaneous														
Merchants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bankers	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

a) 3 Drapers and grocers.

Town areas defined as in Table 7:3.

Source : Pigot, 1834

Altr. = Altrincham
Cong. = Congleton
Knut. = Knutsford
Bull. = Bullock Smithy, Bramhall and Poynton
Hyde = Hyde
Stal. = Stalybridge
Duck. = Duckinfield
Chea. = Cheadle and Northen
Marp. = Marple, Romiley and Mellor
Wilm. = Wilmslow
Frod. = Frodsham
Tarp. = Tarporley
Nest. = Neston and Parkgate
Tarv. = Tarvin.

N.B. Population of Stalybridge Indeterminable; Duckinfield figure includes part of Stalybridge.

development around Cheadle, around Marple, to the south of Stockport and around Wilmslow appears to have been much more dependent on the larger towns for a wide range of shops, and except around Marple the number of shops by 1834 was less than the population of the area would have led one to expect. These were probably less true towns than expanded villages, lacking either an old market town heart or the sort of rapid expansion of the Stalybridge area and later Birkenhead which forced the development of a wide range of shops.

What is clear, from shop tax figures, from population figures and from shop data from directories, is the dominance of Chester, Stockport and Macclesfield in the county. These towns did not seriously affect the shopping potential of the market towns situated about ten miles from them, and were probably themselves little affected by Manchester or Liverpool - at least until the coming of the railway. All the older towns of any size had developed a reasonable range of services by the end of the eighteenth century and were self contained for the commoner sorts of shops. Nevertheless there were three towns which stood out above the others and it is these that deserve a more detailed analysis.

CHAPTER 8

THE GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF SHOP RETAILING IN MACCLESFIELD, STOCKPORT AND CHESTER

Before turning to a detailed examination of the shops in the three towns it will be valuable to try to discern the general trends in the development of shop retailing during the period 1730-1815. This is what this chapter sets out to do in so far as there is evidence available to do so. The growth or otherwise in the number of shops over the period, particularly after 1780, will be considered and as far as possible set in the context of population growth and therefore potential demand. But merely examining the overall growth in shop retailing would not provide a full picture of the changes taking place. The sorts of trades that were experiencing growth must be distinguished from those which were remaining relatively static and thus the overall pattern of retail provision and the changes in this pattern consequent on changes in population structure, particularly at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, glimpsed. The pattern of retail provision can also be viewed from another angle and the final section of this chapter will attempt to do this. This is the location pattern of shops and the possible emergence of clearly marked shopping centres. Developments of this nature can reveal much of the role of the individual town in the service provision of a region and of the character of the shopping that takes place there. However, it must be stressed now that the data available for measuring growth, structure and location is in many respects

very inadequate. Indeed the difficulty of producing quantitative evidence for the period prior to 1820 is such that any figures given must be treated with extreme caution, and before presenting any data it is essential to discuss the limitations and possibilities of the sources from which that data is drawn.

The Nature of the Evidence

A variety of sources have been used to produce the various tables accompanying this chapter and showing long and short term trends in retail provision and employment, but none of these are wholly satisfactory.[1] The probate evidence[2] used to suggest long trends will tend to be heavily skewed towards the wealthier classes who thought it worth their while to make wills or whose heirs felt the need to take out letters of administration. The more prosperous trades - grocers, some of the cloth trades, possibly brewers - are probably over-represented while bakers, tailors, shoemakers and some household goods dealers are greatly under-represented. Moreover there is a danger of changes over time in the propensity of people in general to make wills and in the relative likelihood of different occupational groupings to make wills. Finally there is the possibility of Chester testators being over-represented because of greater ease of access to the ecclesiastical courts of the diocese held in Chester.

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1. A possible source not used here is such parish registers as give occupations. Such information is however usually only given for a short period of time, and in any case it would be extremely difficult to treat a multi-parish city like Chester in this way.
2. Based on the Index to the Wills and Inventories at Chester, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vols. 22, 37, 38, 62, 63, 78 and 79.

Early trade directories provide much more satisfactory evidence on the growth of shop retailing.[1] Unfortunately the series of these does not begin for Cheshire until 1781 and thus there is no evidence for the first 50 years of the period being considered. The major advantage of trade directories, when they are available, is that they were compiled for a purpose not unlike the one that we are now using them for: to provide information on the whereabouts of the traders and principal inhabitants of certain towns. Clearly the criteria for inclusion can vary from directory to directory, and they are likely to be more reliable guides to the opulent trader or gentleman than to the poor back street cobbler, while the information available to the compiler probably varied with his familiarity with the town in question. They have a further advantage, however, in that they usually measure in the units this study is chiefly interested in i.e. shop outlets[2] rather than occupations. A good directory is able to provide a reasonably reliable guide to shopping provision in town centres at least.

It is not easy to assess the reliability of directories simply from internal evidence, but a number of the early Cheshire directories would seem to be sufficiently reliable to be used with a fair degree of confidence. The turnover of

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1. See D. Alexander, Retailing in England for a pioneering use of nineteenth century trade directories for some major towns.
2. Although a measure of shop outlets is the best available it should not be forgotten that shop turnover would ideally provide a much better guide to retail provision. Major changes in turnover could counteract trends in the number of shops, or of course reinforce them, but evidence on turnover is not available for this period.

names between directories in such a series as that produced by Peter Broster is neither so great as to raise questions about accuracy, nor so minute as to imply a mere copying of an earlier directory. All directories, as might be expected, seem to be more adequate in their coverage of higher class trades than of hucksters or other small food dealers or craftsmen. The Broster series,[1] produced by a Chester bookseller as appendices to his guide books to Chester, appear to provide a good coverage for Chester though they are less adequate for the other Cheshire towns. Cowdroy's directory[2] is scrappy, though of value for the towns other than Chester. Bailey[3] seems noticeably skewed towards inclusion of higher class trades but the Universal British Directory[4] is very comprehensive and probably provides the best coverage of all trades, certainly in Macclesfield and Stockport, until the Pigot directories of the 1820's and after. Holden's directories[5] only include the most important traders, but are the only directories available for the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century and have to be used despite their inadequacies. The Pigot series[6] seems generally reliable and comprehensive, though butchers and

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1. P. Broster, The Chester Guide (Chester, n.d.). With Directory for 1781. Subsequent editions for 1783, 1787, 1795 and 1797.
2. W. Cowdroy, The Directory and Guide for the City and County of Chester (Chester, 1789).
3. W. Bailey, Bailey's British Directory for 1784, 4 vols., vol. 3, The Northern Directory (London, 1784).
4. P. Barfoot and J. Wilkes, Universal British Directory, vols. 2-5 (London, n.d.) Chester, c. 1791, Macclesfield, c. 1793, Stockport c. 1797.
5. Holden's Triennial Directory for 1805, 1806, 1807 (London, 1805). Subsequent edition for 1809, 1810, and 1811 (London, n.d.).
6. The Commercial Directory for 1814-5 (Manchester n.d.). Subsequent edition 1815-17 (Manchester, 1816). J. Pigot & Co., National Commercial Directory (London, 1834).

KEY TO DIRECTORIES

1781 P. Broster, The Chester Guide (with Directory for 1781), (Chester, n.d.) Chester only.

1784 Bailey's British Directory for 1784, 4 Vols. Vol. 3. The Northern Directory (London 1784) All towns.

1787 P. Broster, The Chester Guide (with Directory for 1787) (Chester 1787) Chester only.

1789 W. Cowdroy: The Directory and Guide for the City and County of Chester (Chester, 1789). All towns.

U.B.D. P. Barfoot and J. Wilkes: Universal British Directory, vols. 2-4 (London, n.d.) (c. 1792-6). All towns.

1797 P. Broster, The Chester Guide (with Directory for 1797) (Chester, 1797). Chester only.

1809-11 Holden's Triennial Directory for 1809, 1810, 1811, Vol. 2 (London, n.d.). All towns.

1816-17 The Commercial Directory for 1816-17 (Manchester, 1816). All towns.

1834 J. Pigot and Company, National Commercial Directory (London, 1834). All towns.

some other poorer trades, are omitted in the earlier editions and the coverage in 1834 is clearly much greater than in 1816.

Evidence on occupations has been drawn from two sources as well as the probate material. The Chester Poll Books for 1734, 1747, 1784 and 1812 provide evidence on the occupations of Chester freemen and while the occupational structure of the freemen may have been substantially different from the occupational structure of the city as a whole the evidence is of some value. Freedom was still a live institution in Chester in the eighteenth century and numbers of freemen do provide a guide to numbers of master craftsmen and retailers. However, shifts in trade structure such as a decrease in the proportion of masters to journeymen will tend to distort these figures and a decline in numbers may represent such a structural change rather than a shrinkage of the trade. The occupational classification of trades in the Retail Trades and Handicrafts grouping of the 1831 census, covering males aged 20 upwards, also provides some comparative and probably accurate evidence. It does, however, by its very nature omit such female trades as millinery and probably underestimates employment in certain general shop trades where females were important. The census moreover does not distinguish between masters and employees. Nevertheless, despite the individual problems of each of the sources used, some broadly comparable figures on retail employment and shop outlets, particularly after 1780, can be produced. These provide valuable evidence on trends, though it must be again stressed that they are very tentative and that too much reliance should not be placed on individual figures.

KEY TO TRADE GROUPS

Provisions dealers and bakers	Bakers, Flour Dealers, Confectioners, Hucksters, Shopkeepers, Cheesemongers, Corn Dealers
Grocery Trades	Grocers, Tea Dealers
Butchers	Butchers, Poulterers
Wine and spirit dealers	
Brewers and accessory trades	Brewers, Maltsters, Hop Dealers, Porter Dealers
Inns, ale and eating houses	Innkeepers, Alehouses, Publicans, Victuallers, Coffee Houses
Other food trades	Fruiterers, Fishmongers, Sugar Bakers, Urban Producers (Gardeners, Cow Keepers, Milkmen)
Mercers and drapers	Mercers, Drapers, Haberdashers
Clothes accessories	Glovers, Hosiers, Milliners, Breeches Makers, Mantua Makers, Staymakers
Tailors*	
Hatters	Hatters, Straw Hat Makers
Shoe Trades	Boot and Shoemakers, Shoe Warehouses, Cloggers
Other clothing trades	Cotton Dealers, Smallware Dealers
Glass and china dealers	Glass Dealers, China Shops, Earthenware Shops
Furniture Dealers	Cabinet Makers, Chair Makers, Old Furniture Dealers, Upholsterers
Metal Dealers	Ironmongers, Hardwaremen, Cutlers, Gunsmiths
Candle, soap and oil dealers	Chandlers, Tallow Chandlers, Soap Boilers, Oil Merchants, Dry Salters
Druggists	Druggists, Chemists
Other Household Trades	Brush Shops, Umbrella Makers, Looking Glass Makers, Rag Dealers
Watch and Clock Makers	
Gold and Silversmiths	Goldsmiths, Silversmiths, Jewellers
Other luxury trades	Toy Shops, Perfumers
Printers and book trades	Printers, Booksellers, Bookbinders, Stationers, Music Sellers, Circulating Libraries
Tobacconists	
Apothecaries	
Building Trades	Glaziers, Plumbers, Carpenters, Joiners, Painters, Bricklayers, Slaters, Plasterers, Masons, Tilers, Sawyers, Builders
Merchants	
Bankers	
Pawnbrokers	
*Clothes shops	Clothes Dealers, Slop Shops, Old Clothes Dealers

The Growth of Shop Retailing

Any discussion of the growth of retailing in towns must be related to the available demand in those towns and the surrounding area. Changes in population totals are clearly of critical importance, but so is a rise in real income or changes in the distribution of income and in the structure of the population. It is however much easier to assess changes in totals than other changes, although the general economic development of the towns will provide some hints about changes in the nature of demand. In all these respects the history of Chester can be distinguished from the history of Stockport and Macclesfield. The population of Chester probably rose by about 50% in the period 1730 to 1780 and then by a further 20% up to 1815. Macclesfield's growth was about the same for the first period but the town's population then more than doubled between 1780 and 1815. Stockport's growth was even more rapid, perhaps doubling in the period 1730 to 1780 and then increasing three-fold up to 1815.[1] It would thus be in the two latter towns, and especially Stockport, where a major crisis in retail provision could be expected to occur and where the responsiveness of the retail sector to the growth of demand would be crucial. For much of the increased population of Macclesfield and Stockport took the form of factory workers in the textile industries almost totally dependent on the market for the supply of essentials, and thus creating a need for neighbourhood general shops selling in small quantities - or for an expanded public market or the emergence

1. The sources and figures on which these very approximate calculations are based are given in a fuller discussion of population and demand in cap. 3, above. (pp. 74-8)

of a group of street traders. The level of demand from factory workers is largely indeterminate, but it would clearly fluctuate according to the prosperity or otherwise of the industry and make shopkeeping a hazardous business in such bad times as the late 1810's in Macclesfield or the early 1840's in Stockport. Chester ought to be characterized by a greater stability, with demand continuing to come from urban craftsmen and their employees, urban merchants and gentry, and some country gentry. The 1831 Census figures on the employment of males aged 20 and over clearly show the contrast between the towns for in Macclesfield 40% of this group were employed in manufacturing industry, 40% in retail trade and handicraft and 2.7% were capitalists and professional men, while for Stockport the figures were 43%, 37%, and 2.3% and for Chester 1.25%, 55%, and 10.5% respectively.[1]

We can now look at the figures for changes in retail outlets and employment in this context of expected demand and see how far growth reflected the assumed needs of the towns. In the long term there is not a great deal to be said about changes in the retail structure, chiefly because of lack of good evidence. Contemporary comments on shops in these towns seem to be almost entirely absent prior to the 1780's and there is little comment before the 1820's when the writers of Guide Books to Chester began to take a pride in their shops, particularly the clothing establishments in the Rows in the centre of the town. The probate evidence[2] for Stockport and Macclesfield shows a very slow growth in all sectors up to 1780 and then

1. 1831 Census Return, Parl. Papers 1833 XXXVI (149).
2. See Tables 8:1 to 8:3.

Table 8:1 Macclesfield - Retailers 1721-1820 (Testators etc.)

	1721-40	1761-80	1801-20
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	2	3	6
Grocery trades	2	2	4
Butchers	0	1	6
Wine and spirit dealers	0	0	1
Brewers and accessory trades	0	2	1
Inns, ale and eating houses	5	10	21
Miscellaneous	1	0	5
Total:	10	18	44
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	2	1	5
Clothes accessories	0	0	3
Clothes shops	0	0	0
Tailors	0	1	5
Hatters	0	0	2
Shoe trades	1	2	3
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	3	4	18
Household Goods Trades			
Glass and china dealers	0	0	1
Furniture dealers	0	1	1
Metal dealers	0	0	3
Candle, soap and oil dealers	0	0	1
Druggists	0	2	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	0	3	6
Luxury Trades			
Watch and clock makers	0	1	1
Gold and silver smiths	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	0	1	1
Printers and book trades	0	1	0
Tobacconists	0	0	0
Apothecaries	1	2	0
Building trades	3	5	12
Miscellaneous			
Merchants	0	1	1
Bankers	0	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	0	4

Table 8:2 Stockport - Retailers 1721-1820 (Testators etc.)

	1721-40	1761-80	1801-20
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	1	3	16
Grocery trades	6	4	14
Butchers	4	2	5
Wine and spirit dealers	0	0	1
Brewers and accessory trades	0	0	1
Inns, ale and eating houses	2	4	40
Miscellaneous	0	0	10
Total:	13	13	87
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	3	1	6
Clothes accessories	1	3	3
Clothes shops	0	0	0
Tailors	2	0	3
Hatters	0	3	12
Shoe trades	2	4	8
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	8	11	32
Household Goods Trades			
Glass and china dealers	0	0	0
Furniture dealers	1	1	4
Metal dealers	0	1	2
Candle, soap and oil dealers	0	0	0
Druggists	0	1	3
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	1	3	9
Luxury Trades			
Watch and clock makers	0	0	1
Gold and silver smiths	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	1	0	1
Printers and book trades	0	0	1
Tobacconists	0	0	0
Apothecaries	1	0	0
Building trades	2	3	20
Miscellaneous			
Merchants	0	3	3
Bankers	0	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0

Table 8:3 Chester - Retailers 1721-1820 (Testators etc.)

	1721-40	1761-80	1801-20
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	13	8	17
Grocery trades	3	5	11
Butchers	1	4	9
Wine and spirit dealers	2	1	10
Brewers and accessory trades	16	6	8
Inns, ale and eating houses	13	14	31
Miscellaneous	3	3	14
Total:	51	41	100
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	7	2	14
Clothes accessories	5	4	6
Clothes shops	0	0	0
Tailors	1	3	8
Hatters	2	1	3
Shoe trades	6	3	18
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	21	13	49
Household Goods Trades			
Glass and china dealers	0	0	3
Furniture dealers	4	2	4
Metal dealers	9	2	7
Candle, soap and oil dealers	1	2	1
Druggists	1	1	1
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	15	7	16
Luxury Trades			
Watch and clock makers	0	7	2
Gold and silver smiths	4	1	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total:	4	8	2
Printers and book trades	0	2	7
Tobacconists	0	5	6
Apothecaries	12	6	1
Building trades	17	17	32
Miscellaneous			
Merchants	8	7	6
Bankers	0	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0

major growth by the early nineteenth century, very much in line with population trends. Growth is most marked among those groups that would be most likely to cater for working class demand such as provisions dealers, bakers, butchers and possibly grocers (the description 'grocer' seems capable of covering a multitude of food trades, from the high class dealer in imported specialities, teas and wine of central Chester to a simple provisions dealer akin to a village shopkeeper). Although the numbers of mercers and drapers and of some of the dealers in household goods (cabinet makers, ironmongers, china and earthenware dealers) are higher in the 1801-20 group than in the earlier groups, the increase is not so general as in the food trades. Given the nature of this sort of evidence one can only think in very general terms and precise comparisons with population trends would almost certainly be misleading.

The case of Chester is more puzzling. Numbers in all sectors seem to show a dip in the middle period, followed by a substantial rise in the food and clothing groups in 1801-20, a rise to the same level as in 1721-40 in the household goods group and a continued decline in the luxury trades. This may simply be a freak of the evidence, or it may reflect significant changes. Certainly there is nothing in the general development of Chester at this time that would lead one to expect decline. Probably it would be foolish to read anything into minor changes in the number of wills and administrations in the food and clothing trades, but the trend of relative and in some cases absolute decline in luxury and household trades may reflect a decline in the status of craftsmen rather than changes in

retail structure. What is clear in Chester is that the major growth areas in the early nineteenth century were in the same sorts of food trades as in the other towns, but also in wine and spirit dealers (2 in 1721-40, 1 in 1761-80 and 10 in 1801-20), mercers and drapers, and the printing and book trades. Other long-term Chester evidence bears out this sort of picture, with the poll books showing approximate stability among butchers and provision dealers at around 40-45 freemen in each group, but growth among grocers and wine and spirit dealers.[1] The decline among tailors and shoe makers may reflect changes in the organization of the craft, while other changes e.g. the five-fold increase in furniture dealers (chiefly cabinet makers) may reflect changes in nomenclature, as does the substitution of druggists for apothecaries. The rise in numbers engaged in the book and printing trades is very marked, there being 5 freemen in these trades in 1734, 8 in 1747, 10 in 1784 and 21 in 1812. As might be expected the trends in admissions of freemen over the eighteenth century are very similar to those indicated by poll books.

In all the towns, as one would expect in Macclesfield and Stockport but perhaps a little surprisingly in Chester, the main break in the long-term series comes after 1780. From this date it is possible to use trade directories to investigate in more detail what is happening.[2] In Macclesfield and Stockport particularly we have to look for an expansion linked to the rise in population which will manifest itself chiefly among shops catering for working class needs. The figures for both Macclesfield

1. See Table 8:4
2. See Tables 8:5 to 8:7.

Table 8:4 Retailers 1734-1812 (Poll Books)

	1734	1747	1784	1812
Food and Drink				
Provisions dealers and bakers	42	40	42	44
Grocery trades	0	4	26	12
Butchers	39	51	46	37
Wine and spirit dealers	0	0	9	18
Brewers and accessory trades	25	27	12	5
Inns, ale and eating houses	41	42	53	78
Miscellaneous	8	6	22	31
Total:	155	170	210	225
Cloth and Clothing				
Mercers and drapers	28	20	20	25
Clothes accessories	36	48	31	13
Clothes shops	0	0	0	0
Tailors	76	56	32	33
Hatters	0	0	14	10
Shoe trades	157	154	131	102
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0
Total:	297	278	228	183
Household Goods Trades				
Glassand china dealers	0	0	0	2
Furniture dealers	11	23	33	53
Metal dealers	32	29	11	9
Candle, soap and oil dealers	13	11	8	11
Druggists	0	2	9	18
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0
Total:	56	65	61	93
Luxury Trades				
Watch and clock makers	3	3	9	7
Gold and silver smiths	7	6	6	5
Miscellaneous	1	2	3	3
Total:	11	11	18	15
Printers and book trades	5	8	10	21
Tobacconists	5	12	10	18
Apothecaries	18	11	0	0
Building trades	208	185	178	185
Miscellaneous				
Merchants	19	15	7	7
Bankers	0	0	0	1
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0	1

Table 8:5 Macclesfield - Retailers 1784-1834

	1784	1789	U.B.D.	1809-11	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink						
Provisions dealers and bakers	1	13	21	1	50	119
Grocery trades	14	21	41	11	25 b)	27
Butchers	0	1	8	0	0	43
Wine and spirit dealers	0	0	3	5	7	5
Brewers and accessory trades	1	1	1	4	7	4
Inns, ale and eating houses	1	38	55	3	4	151
Miscellaneous	0	0	2	0	0	7
Total:	17	74	131	24	93	356
Cloth and Clothing						
Mercers and drapers	9	8	8	9	11	10
Clothes accessories	1	4	22	0	12	20
Clothes shops	0	0	0	0	2	4
Tailors	0	0	10 a)	0	8	25
Hatters	3	4	6	6	20	25
Shoe trades	0	1	18	2	19	34
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total:	13	17	64	17	72	124
Household Goods Trades						
Glass and china dealers	0	0	3 a)	0	4 c)	3
Furniture dealers	0	1	5	3	10	19
Metal dealers	2	5	7	6	8	8
Candle, soap and oil dealers	1	2	12	1	2	3
Druggists	3	4	3	5	5 b)	11
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total:	6	12	30	15	31	45
Luxury Trades						
Watch and clock makers	0	2	6	2	4	5
Gold and silver smiths	0	0	0	0	2 c)	1
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total:	0	2	6	3	6	6
Printers and book trades	1	1	2	4	4	7
Tobacconists	0	1	1	0	1	0
Apothecaries	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building trades	0	3	20	1	24	35
Miscellaneous						
Merchants	0	3	0	0	0	0
Bankers	0	0	1	2	0	3
Pawnbrokers	0	0	2	0	2	4

a) 1 Tailor and glass dealer

b) 4 Grocers and druggists

c) 2 Jewellers and glass and china dealers

Table 8:6 Stockport - Retailers 1784-1834

	1784	1789	U.B.D.	1809-11	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink						
Provisions dealers and bakers	8	5	69	13	56	196
Grocery trades	12 a)	12	25	23 b)	31 c)	34
Butchers	0	0	7	0	0	42
Wine and spirit dealers	4	2	4	4	9	6
Brewers and accessory trades	2	2	4	2	4	5
Inns, ale and eating houses	6	39	61	2	4	243
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	2	5
Total:	32	60	171	44	106	531
Cloth and Clothing						
Mercers and drapers	11 a)	9	16	21	16	36
Clothes accessories	8	4	18	6	12	41
Clothes shops	0	0	0	0	3	1
Tailors	0	0	15	1	6	24
Hatters	7	46	28	5	22	30
Shoe trades	3	3	24	11	16	64
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total:	29	62	101	44	75	206
Household Goods Trades						
Glass and china dealers	0	0	4	3	4	6
Furniture dealers	5	1	4	5	11	22
Metal dealers	5	3	5	7	8	8
Candle, soap and oil dealers	2	2	2	4 b)	5 c)	5
Druggists	0	1	2	4	9	20
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	1	9	5
Total:	12	7	17	24	46	66
Luxury Trades						
Watch and clock makers	3	2	6	2	3	6
Gold and silver smiths	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total:	3	2	7	2	3	7
Printers and book trades	2	2	3	4	7	7
Tobacconists	1	0	0	0	2	3
Apothecaries	0	0	0	1	0	0
Building trades	9	3	34	5	41	70
Miscellaneous						
Merchants	0	7	0	0	0	0
Bankers	0	0	1	0	0	3
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0	1	6	17

a) 1 Grocer and draper

b) 3 Grocers and tallow chandlers

c) 4 Grocers and tallow chandlers

Table 8:7 Chester - Retailers 1781-1834

	1781	1784	1787	1789	U.B.D.	1797	1809-11	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink									
Provisions dealers and bakers	41	14	33	30	67	50	4	57	143
Grocery trades	28 a)	28 a)	33	28	47 d)	36	20 f)	27	30
Butchers	15	0	20	15	19	14	0	0	103 h)
Wine and spirit dealers	13	13	11	15	18	14	17	21	25
Brewers and accessory trades	10	11	10	11	13	10	6	10	27
Inns, ale and eating houses	98	7	79	71	97	74	9	18	195
Miscellaneous	13	6	9	15	41	9	3	9	41
Total:	218	79	195	185	302	207	59	142	564
Cloth and Clothing									
Mercers and drapers	26 b)	26 b)	23 b)	25	23	22	25	24 g)	28
Clothes accessories	38 c)	32 c)	43 c)	39 c)	57 d,e)	40	6	19	36
Clothes shops	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	11
Tailors	19	0	17	20	27	17	0	9 g)	25
Hatters	6	6	4	4	5	5	4	15	18
Shoe trades	22	22	22	14	26	21	2	21	48
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	8
Total:	111	86	109	103	140	108	37	88	174
Household Goods Trades									
Glass and china dealers	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	10	7
Furniture dealers	10	9	8	12	14	13	5	26	26
Metal dealers	10	11	14	12	10	12	2	8	15
Candle, soap and oil dealers	7	3	6	7	6	4	6	9	11
Druggists	7	6	7	8	8	7	10 f)	13	15
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	1
Total:	36	31	36	41	45	39	25	67	75
Luxury Trades									
Watch and clock makers	11 a)	13 a)	12	10	11	7	1	6	10
Gold and silver smiths	5 b)	5 b)	6 b)	4	4	4	4	5	6
Miscellaneous	2	2	2	1	4 e)	4	0	4	3
Total:	18	20	20	15	19	15	5	15	19
Printers and book trades	8	5	10	13	12	13	10	14	33
Tobacconists	2	2	3	3	4	2	5	7	7
Apothecaries	3	3	2	4	1	2	0	0	0
Building trades	40 c)	9 c)	41 c)	41 c)	61	41	4	46	69
Miscellaneous									
Merchants	14	13	13	11	6	9	6	4	3
Bankers	1	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	3
Pawnbrokers	3	0	4	4	6	6	0	10	10

a) 1 Grocer and watchmaker
b) 1 Linen draper and silversmith
c) 1 Plumber and hosier
d) 1 Staymaker and tea dealer
e) 1 Hosier and toyman
f) 1 Grocer and druggist
g) 3 Woollen drapers and tailors
h) Includes 70 butchers attending market only

and Stockport tend to bear this out with very significant nineteenth-century increases in the numbers of provisions dealers and butchers[1] but less clear trends among grocers[2] and wine and spirit dealers. The early nineteenth century also appears to have seen an increase in the number of dealers in shoes who would presumably have had to cater at least to some degree for mass consumption. There were 18 shoe dealers in Macclesfield in the mid 1790's and 34 in 1834, while in Stockport and Heaton Norris[3] the number increased from 24 to 64 over the same period. The number of mercers and drapers, however, remained much more constant, though there was a substantial increase in the Stockport area after 1816. The end of the period also saw in both towns a substantial increase (5 to 19 in Macclesfield and 4 to 22 in Stockport from the mid 1790's to 1834) in the number of furniture dealers and in Stockport an even larger increase in the number of druggists. As the nature of the population would suggest there was no discernible trend in the number of clockmakers, goldsmiths or jewellers etc. and the growth in the book trades was very largely a post 1810 phenomenon.

The meaning of all these figures becomes much clearer when they are expressed in terms of population per shop outlet (see Tables 8:8 to 8:10). Such figures though can at best only be very approximate given the deficiencies of directories already

1. The massive increase in the number of provisions dealers between 1816-17 and 1834 seems largely due to the more comprehensive nature of the 1834 directory.
2. The large number of grocers in the Macclesfield U.B.D. is probably due to the inclusion of many general food dealers in this class.
3. Where possible Heaton Norris is included with Stockport in all tables.

Table 8:8 Macclesfield - Population per Retail Outlet

	U.B.D.	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	380	300	200
Grocery trades	195	600	890
Wine and spirit merchants	2,665	2,140	4,800
Butchers	1,000	-	560
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	1,000	1,365	2,400
Milliners	1,335	2,140	2,180
Tailors	800	1,875	960
Boot and shoe makers	445	790	705
Clothes shops	-	7,500	6,000
Others			
Glass and china dealers	2,665	3,750	8,000
Ironmongers	1,140	1,875	4,800
Watch and clock makers	1,335	3,750	4,800
Toymen	-	-	-
Chemists and druggists	2,665	3,000	2,180
Booksellers and stationers	4,000	3,750	4,000

Table 8:9 Stockport - Population per Retail Outlet

	U.B.D.	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	190	445	185
Grocery trades	520	805	1,060
Wine and spirit merchants	3,250	2,775	6,000
Butchers	1,855	-	855
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	810	1,560	1,000
Milliners	2,165	4,165	1,200
Tailors	865	4,165	1,500
Boot and shoe makers	540	1,560	560
Clothes shops	-	8,335	36,000
Others			
Glassand china dealers	3,250	6,250	6,000
Ironmongers	2,600	3,570	5,145
Watch and clock makers	2,165	8,335	6,000
Toymen	13,000	-	36,000
Chemists and druggists	6,500	2,775	1,800
Booksellers and stationers	13,000	6,250	18,000

Table 8:10 Chester - Population per Retail Outlet

	1797	1816-17	1834
Food and Drink			
Provisions dealers and bakers	300	305	150
Grocery trades	415	650	715
Wine and spirit merchants	1,070	835	860
Butchers	1,070	-	650
Cloth and Clothing			
Mercers and drapers	680	730	770
Milliners	1,875	1,945	895
Tailors	880	1,945	860
Boot and shoe makers	715	835	450
Clothes shops	7,500	-	1,955
Others			
Glass and china dealers	5,000	1,750	3,070
Ironmongers	3,750	3,500	2,150
Watch and clock makers	2,145	2,915	2,150
Toymen	5,000	4,375	21,500
Chemists and druggists	2,145	1,345	1,435
Booksellers and stationers	1,875	2,915	1,655

discussed and the difficulties of estimating population for pre-census and inter-censal years, especially at a time of rapid growth. But for what they are worth the figures for a selected group of differing trades show in general a substantial worsening of retail provision between the 1790's and 1816-17 followed in some, but by no means all, cases by improvement in 1834. To some extent the less comprehensive nature of the 1816-17 directory may account for this, but the figures seem nevertheless to reveal a real situation and one that, given the staggering urban growth of the period especially in Stockport, it is not hard to accept. For in the key area of general provisions dealers there was deterioration only in Stockport and there to the not unacceptable level of 445 persons per shop outlet. Similarly the provision of butchers (probably excluding those trading occasionally in the market) improved from one per 1,000 people in Macclesfield in the 1790's to one per 560 in 1834 and in Stockport from one per 1,855 to one per 855. In such other trades as shoemakers which were likely to affect the bulk of the population the 1790's situation had been recovered by 1834 in Stockport though the deterioration by 1816 had been severe, while in Macclesfield where the deterioration was less there had been a much more limited improvement. The trades where persons per shop outlet increased most drastically were those likely to be little used by a factory proletariat e.g. an increase from 2,665 to 4,800 persons per wine or spirit dealer in Macclesfield from the 1790's to 1834 or from 3,250 to 6,000 persons per glass and china dealer in Stockport in the same period. It seems clear that in the late eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries there was no such major increase in retail provision in growing towns as would divert scarce resources from other fields, but that retail provision of essential items was largely maintained with, no doubt, market and itinerant traders ready to take advantage of any gaps that appeared.

So far Macclesfield and Stockport have been treated together, but as well as essential similarities there were some differences between the pattern of retail provision in each town. The provision of grocers and wine and spirit dealers was consistently better in Macclesfield than in Stockport, perhaps because Macclesfield grew from a larger service base than did Stockport and grew initially at a slower rate. Similarly Macclesfield was generally better provided with ironmongers and with most of the dealers in luxuries and seems to have had a greater potential for exercising a general service role in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This would be due in part to a different internal population structure in Macclesfield - though such differences would probably be marginal - but also to the proximity of Stockport to Manchester which must have tended to inhibit the growth of a wide range of shops and services in Stockport. The detailed breakdown of male employment in retail trades and handicrafts in the 1831 Census confirms this picture, although the very great similarity in employment pattern between the two towns is very marked.[1] There was a slightly greater employment in food and drink trades in Macclesfield (9.339% as against 8.303%) and a reverse situation in household goods trades (2.183% as against 3.151%) though this

1. See Table 8:11.

Table 8:11 Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester, Male Retail Employment, 1831

	Macclesfield		Stockport		Chester	
	a	b	a	b	a	b
Food and drink						
Provisions dealers and bakers	211	3.872	200	3.333	164	3.419
Grocery trades	52	0.954	47	0.784	38	0.792
Butchers	71	1.303	74	1.234	72	1.501
Wine and spirit dealers	23	0.422	4	0.067	31	0.646
Brewers and accessory trades	15	0.275	33	0.550	45	0.938
Inns, ale and eating houses	94	1.725	98	1.634	92	1.918
Corn dealers and millers	4	0.073	18	0.300	49	1.021
Milkmen and cowkeepers	14	0.257	16	0.267	52	1.084
Miscellaneous	25	0.458	8	0.133	10	0.208
Total:	509	9.339	498	8.303	553	11.528
Cloth and Clothing						
Mercers and drapers	41	0.752	45	0.750	38	0.792
Clothes accessories	8	0.147	4	0.067	11	0.229
Clothes shops	25	0.458	15	0.250	6	0.125
Tailors	131	2.404	144	2.401	160	3.335
Hatters and hosiers	74	1.358	370	6.169	29	0.605
Shoe trades	240	4.404	299	4.985	263	5.483
Miscellaneous	0	-	0	-	0	-
Total:	519	9.523	877	14.622	507	10.569
Household Goods Trades						
Glass and china dealers	24	0.440	11	0.183	8	0.167
Furniture dealers	48	0.881	132	2.201	131	2.731
Metal dealers	17	0.312	12	0.200	24	0.500
Candle, soap and oil dealers	19	0.349	8	0.133	19	0.396
Druggists and chemists	11	0.202	18	0.300	23	0.479
Miscellaneous	0	-	8	0.133	0	-
Total:	119	2.183	189	3.151	205	4.273
Luxury Trades						
Watch and clock makers	8	0.147	10	0.167	16	0.334
Jewellers	1	0.018	0	-	8	0.167
Miscellaneous	5	0.092	8	0.133	7	0.146
Total:	14	0.257	18	0.300	31	0.646
Printers and book trades	41	0.752	23	0.383	58	1.209
Tobacconists	1	0.018	4	0.067	31	0.646
Building trades	353	6.477	214	3.568	468	9.756
Pawnbrokers	4	0.073	11	0.183	6	0.125

a. Number of males aged 20 upwards employed in trades.

b. Figure in (a) as percentage of total of males aged 20 upwards.

Source: 1831 Census.

latter may reflect the difficulties of classifying certain groups rather than a real difference. What does emerge however is that out of 59 groupings falling into the retail, building and similar categories, 55 were represented in Macclesfield and 48 in Stockport. Although the difference was probably not very great, it does seem possible that Stockport may have been slightly deficient in range of services well into the nineteenth century.

The general trends in Chester can be treated much more simply. The most striking feature of the figures is the stability in most trades from 1781 to 1816-17 and in some trades right through to 1834.[1] As in the other towns the 1820's seem to have seen the emergence of a large group of general dealers, though this is probably overstated by changes in directory comprehensiveness, and a doubling or more of the number of shoe traders. Otherwise there was a steady increase in the numbers of wine and spirit dealers from 13 in 1781 to 21 in 1816-17, in furniture dealers from 10 to 26 and printers and book traders from 8 to 14 with a leap to 33 by 1834. The absolute numbers of mercers and drapers remained remarkably stable as did those of grocers and of the various trades comprised in the luxuries group. Figures for population per retail outlet[2] similarly are much more even than those for Macclesfield or Stockport. The period 1797 to 1816 saw a slight deterioration in most food and clothing groups, but a slight improvement in some of the other categories while by 1834 retail provision was better or only marginally worse in all major groups except grocers and

1. Table 8:7.
2. Table 8:10.

this is likely to be because of a greater likelihood of describing small grocers as shopkeepers rather than grocers by 1834.

Not only does Chester show a different pattern of development from the other towns but, as would be expected for a county town drawing on a wide gentry trade and lacking a factory proletariat, the structure of its retail sector was very different. The directory totals show very clearly that Chester had many more wine merchants than the other towns, substantially more mercers and drapers until the 1830's, many more furniture makers and dealers, three or four times as many makers of or dealers in luxury goods and more printers and book traders. The City's advantage in terms of persons per retail outlet became more marked throughout the period under review, with little to choose between the towns in the 1790's, but with Chester having the advantage in almost all trades by 1834. Chester's better retail provision is marked in the mercers' and drapers' group where there were around 700 persons per shop as against 1,000 in nineteenth-century Stockport and over 2,000 in Macclesfield by 1834. There were 2½ times as many persons per wine or spirit dealer in Macclesfield or Stockport compared to Chester in 1816-17, and similar wide divergences among chemists and druggists and booksellers and stationers.

This contrast between the nature of the development of shops in Macclesfield and Stockport on the one hand and Chester on the other can be taken further by a more detailed look at the figures and by considering some of the comments of contemporaries and the activities of shopkeepers. The great growth

in the number of general provision dealers has already been mentioned as implying the development of shops catering especially for the working classes, and some other categories of shops may imply similar trends. The appearance of shops selling ready made clothes, whether described as 'slop sellers', 'clothes dealers' or 'old clothes dealers' is likely to indicate working class demand and shops of this nature appear in Stockport and Macclesfield from the 1810's, though there were also some in Chester in the 1790's and as many as 11 in Chester in 1834. Furniture brokers begin to appear in Macclesfield and Stockport in the early nineteenth century and were presumably filling working class needs, while there had been one or two dealers in old furniture in Chester from the 1790's. In the furniture and clothing sectors the contrast is less between the possible presence of shops catering for the lower classes in each town than between the relative absence of some of the higher class shops in Macclesfield and Stockport as compared with Chester. One group of traders, particularly present in Stockport, is very revealing about the nature of the market. These are the pawnbrokers who numbered 6 in Stockport in 1816-17 and 17 in 1834. While they existed in each of the towns, they were much less numerous in the other two and the large number of them in Stockport would seem to reflect the insecurity of a large mass of the population. In 1833 it was said that the average business of each pawnbroker in Stockport had increased three times in the preceding 25 years and that one quarter of the population of the town went weekly to the pawnbroker taking almost all their clothing.[1] It was argued in 1842 that such

1. Report from the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping - evidence of Henry W. Sefton, Parl. Papers 1833 VI (690), p. 624.

times of short-term distress as 1819 and 1826-27 led to an increased use of pawnbrokers, but that long-term distress led to the exhaustion of people's resources and a decline in the use of pawnbrokers. Indiscretion rather than poverty was said to be the main cause of people resorting to pawnbrokers.[1]

Pawnbrokers and other shops and trades serving a proletariat were of course not absent from Chester since the bulk of the population there as in the other towns can be assumed to have been poor and dependent on the market. Chester was, however, distinguished, at least in the eyes of early nineteenth-century observers, by the splendour of its central shopping area. Hemingway writing in 1831 observed that the Rows were generally considered the best situation for retail shopkeepers and that shops on the southern side of Eastgate Street and the eastern side of Bridge Street were especially preferred and let at very high rents and were in considerable demand. He remarked on the rapid and extensive improvements to shops during the previous 30 years, particularly the introduction of glass windows, and considered that many of the shops in the Rows were equal in elegance to those of Manchester or Liverpool. The establishment of Messrs. William and Henry Brown, silk mercers and milliners, which had recently been built in Eastgate Street he regarded as equalling the shops of Regent Street.[2] Certainly shop improvements were not uncommon in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and there is evidence of a concern for display facilities and appearance on the part of shopkeepers. The etchings of Chester streets executed by

1. Report...into the State of the Population of Stockport. Parl. Papers 1842 XXXV (158), p. 27.
2. J. Hemingway, History of the City of Chester i 387-8.

George Batenham in about 1815 show that glass windows were the norm by then in the centre of Chester. Eighteenth-century shop improvement petitions included one from Holme Burrowes in 1762 asking leave of the Corporation to extend his shop in order to lighten it and better display his toys and goods and one from Thomas Griffith, grocer, in 1768 who planned to extend a shop 4 feet 4 inches into the street to lighten it and ornament it to public view.[1] Some attempts to make shops more attractive were regarded as a public nuisance and several shopkeepers in the 1760's and 1770's were ordered to remove or reduce windows which were obstructing passage along streets or rows and on 22 October 1779 a general order was made that persons who had made projections in Chester by bow windows or otherwise were to remove them.[2] It is unlikely that the desire to make shops attractive and thus increase custom was confined to Chester, but the potential for elegant, high class shops was clearly greater in a regional centre like Chester than in manufacturing towns like Macclesfield and Stockport.

It is interesting to turn briefly to the 1840's and 1850's and look at the general character of the shops in these towns by the mid-nineteenth century. Macclesfield seems to have had a central group of high quality shops in which Swanwicks stood out above the rest, but which comprised a number of drapers, a few grocers and confectioners, one or two druggists, a wine and spirit merchant and a toy dealer[3] as well of course of a host

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1. Chester City R.O., Chester Assembly Minutes Calendar, ff.200v, 259v, (AB/4).
2. Ibid. ff. 257, 334, 336.
3. T.H. Worrall, Reminiscences of Early Life spent in my Native Town of Macclesfield, (Macclesfield, 1897), pp. 14-34.

of small provisions, clothing and other shops throughout the town. The shops grouped around the Market Place and in Underbank in Stockport probably represented the core of the shopping area with several high class shops such as Rostron's the drapers. But there is also evidence of continued vulnerability in the 1840's in times of economic distress. The lines of credit were extensive and a reduction in demand, or the failure of consumers to pay debts, could first threaten the small shopkeeper and then hurt men like Samuel Walker, flour, corn and provision dealer. He stated in 1842 that he supplied many small shopkeepers, one of whom had recently failed owing him £128, and others of whom owed £60 to £100 with little hope of settling. The depression was also said to have affected the value of property with shops in Chestergate only letting at £10. 10s. a year as against £14 previously, and one shop in the Market Place falling from £95 to £50.[1] In Chester the middle of the century was a time of expansion or establishment for such shops as Browns, Duttons, Bollands and others whose names were to symbolize high class and quality for a century or more. The advertisements in the endpapers of Thomas Hughes' Chester Guide reveal the nature of the shops of central Chester. Two chemists and a shoe maker announced that they supplied the Queen, while Richard Bolland described himself as 'Bride Cake Manufacturer by Appointment to the Queen'. Other shops were able to announce their early establishment and others their associations with the local nobility.[2] Hughes himself was ready to praise several shops, both for the quality of the goods they

1. State of the Population of Stockport, Parl. Papers 1842 (158), pp. 26, 29.
2. Thomas Hughes, The Stranger's Handbook to Chester, (Chester, 1856).

sold and for the fineness of the buildings they occupied. But the next section of this chapter will be devoted to a more detailed consideration of the shopping character of the towns and to the geography of the central shops.

The Location Pattern of Shops

A detailed analysis of shop location in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in terms of the identification of central shopping areas and the plotting of shop groupings within them is precluded by the nature of the evidence. What can be done is to suggest some of the main features of location chiefly after 1780 and chiefly in Chester, where trade directories and one or two other sources at least provide some evidence. Table 8:12 shows the location of certain groups of trades, ranging from bakers and food dealers to such highly specialized groups as goldsmiths, over the period 1781 to 1816-17. Of these groups of trades only one - the bakers' group - consistently shows a significant degree of dispersion throughout Chester, including a sizeable proportion of outlets away from the main shopping streets. Since bakers would be expected to serve a wide cross-section of the population and to do so frequently, this pattern is hardly surprising - indeed the degree of centrality is probably higher than would be expected and remains so throughout the period. Otherwise, apart from butchers who will be treated later and the furniture makers who were not a large group before 1800, all the other groups consistently show around 80% or more of their outlets in the main shopping streets of the inner city. Within this inner city area there

Table 8:12 Location of Selected Shop Groups in Chester 1781-1817

	% 5 Main Streets	% Elsewhere	Max. Street Group	
Bakers, Flour Dealers, Confectioners				
1781	60	40	30%	N
1787	76	24	28.5%	N
1797	66.7	33.3	18%	N
1816-17	72	28	21.5%	N
Grocers, Tea Dealers				
1781	90	10	27.5%	B
1787	88	12	33.3%	B
1797	81	19	30%	B
1816-17	92.5	7.5	27%	B
Wine and Spirit Merchants				
1781	100	0	38.5%	B
1787	91	9	36.5%	B
1797	92	8	31%	B
1816-17	84	16	37%	B
Butchers				
1781	78.5	21.5	64%	E
1787	55	45	40%	E, Cow Lane
1797	14	86	78.5%	Cow Lane
1816-17 - not given -				
Drapers and Mercers				
1781	100	0	55%	E
1787	100	0	44%	E
1797	100	0	32%	E,B,N
1816-17	96	4	30%	N
Milliners				
1781	100	0	54.5%	E
1787	100	0	50%	B
1797	87.5	12.5	37.5%	B
1816-17	100	0	30%	E
Shoemakers				
1781	90.5	9.5	24%	E,N
1787	77	23	27%	N
1797	90.5	9.5	33.3%	F
1816-17	95	5	24%	N
Furniture Makers and Dealers				
1781	83.5	16.5	50%	E
1787	40	60	20%	(5 equal)
1797	50	50	40%	B
1816-17	83.5	16.5	33.3%	B
Gold, Silver Smiths and Jewellers				
1781	100	0	100%	E
1787	100	0	80%	E
1797	100	0	50%	N
1816-17	80	20	40%	E,B

Third column shows percentage of total traders in street with largest group - key to streets: E = Eastgate Street; B = Bridge Street, N = Northgate Street, F = Foregate Street. These, with Watergate Street, taken as 5 main streets.

was perhaps a trend over the period for a greater dispersion of shops and for particular areas to be less dominant in any given trade. In most groups, particularly the non-food groups, the dominant street for any trade was much less dominant by 1816-17 than in 1781.

This raises the question of the specific location of types of shops and the grouping of shops of the same type within a street. It seems that a clustering of people following the same trade was normal in medieval cities, and in the sixteenth century there was a cluster of butter shops at the corner of Northgate Street and Eastgate Street while the butchers seem to have been chiefly established in Watergate Street.[1] By the late eighteenth century bakers and flour dealers appear to have been grouped in Northgate Street, although this pattern is much less obvious by 1816-17, while grocers and wine merchants had a high proportion of their shops in Bridge Street. The reasons for these groupings are not clear - the presence of the corn market in Northgate Street may have led to flour dealers locating in its vicinity, but there is no obvious reason for the location of the grocers. Watergate Street, where there were also a substantial number, was a more comprehensible location since it was the main road from the port to the city centre. The butchers form a very interesting group from this point of view. In the early 1750's there were a substantial number occupying cellars on the south side of Eastgate Street[2] and this still remained true in the 1780's. However by 1797 they had almost all moved outside the

1. Rupert H. Morris, Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns, pp. 295-98.
2. Sketch plan of Eastgate Street by Peter Broster, c. 1754. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll. (CR 63/2/133).

walled city to - rather appropriately - Cow Lane. The 1816-17 directory omits butchers, but the evidence of George Batenham's etchings about 1815 shows that a few remained in the central area, chiefly at street level on the east side of Bridge Street. As Chester developed as a shopping centre it would seem that such trades as butchers became less and less welcome in the centre, particularly in the show shopping street, Eastgate Street. Finally the drapers and similar traders show a consistent pattern of grouping in the heart of the city around the intersection of the main streets. The Broster plan of the 1750's shows a large group of drapers and mercers on the south side of Eastgate Street, especially in the row towards Bridge Street, and directories confirm their location in Eastgate Street and Bridge Street, with some expansion up Northgate Street in the early nineteenth century.

The above brief description of the location of some trade groups has provided several hints about the character of the main streets of Chester and these can now be developed further. The streets to be considered are Eastgate Street, Bridge Street, Northgate Street and Watergate Street which meet in the centre of Chester at the Cross, and Foregate Street which is the extension of Eastgate Street outside the walls. Before trying to characterize these streets, however, it must be stressed that the differences within the streets could be as great as the differences between them, and that this is much harder to measure. In the case of Eastgate Street there was a long-standing and still surviving contrast between the north side and the south side. The Broster plan shows that on the north

side were to be found a heterogeneous collection of food shops, inns, a few craftsmen and some miscellaneous dealers of all types while on the south, particularly in the Row, were drapers, mercers, goldsmiths, some dealers in luxury goods as well as a few more general shops. Batenham only etched one Eastgate Street scene, but this confirms the north of the street as occupied by food dealers and craftsmen to a large extent.[1] Both Bridge Street and Northgate Street were long streets and their character, particularly that of Bridge Street, changed with increasing distance from the Cross. Batenham's etchings reveal how grocers, drapers, druggists and others dominated the street near the Cross while provisions dealers, inns and craftsmen were the norm further down. The etchings of Northgate Street show chiefly grocers, drapers and clothes dealers - most probably the flour dealers and bakers were located at the far end where Batenham did not work. Finally by 1816-17, when directories seem to distinguish reliably between street and row, there were substantial differences between the levels, most strikingly in Eastgate Street where the higher class traders tended to locate at row level.[2]

The pattern revealed by Tables 8:13 to 8:17 is of three streets dominated by the same types of trades, with Watergate and Foregate Street less obviously developed as shopping streets. There are few major contrasts between the situation in 1787 and that in 1817 expect as previously noted, and no major contrasts between Bridge, Eastgate and Northgate Streets except that

1. Ancient Chester: A Series of Illustration of the Streets of this Old City....Drawn and Etched by George and William Batenham and John Musgrave. Ed. Thomas Hughes (London, 1880).
2. See Table 8:13.

Table 8:13 Eastgate Street Shops 1787-1817

	1787	1797	1816-17 Street	1816-17 Row
Provisions dealers and bakers	3	7	1	3
Grocers and wine dealers	6	5	5	3
Butchers	8	1	0	0
Brewers etc.	0	0	0	0
Other food traders	1	0	1	0
Mercers and drapers	8	6	0	6
Clothing traders	8	7	3	5
Shoemakers	2	1	0	1
Household goods trades	7	7	7	2
Luxury trades	8	4	2	6
Pawnbrokers	0	0	0	0
Other shops	4	4	7	2
Total:	55	42	26	28

Table 8:14 Bridge Street Shops 1787-1817

	1787	1797	1816-17 Street	1816-17 Row
Provisions dealers and bakers	5	11	13	0
Grocers and wine dealers	15	14	14	1
Butchers	3	0	0	0
Brewers etc.	0	1	1	0
Other food traders	0	1	1	0
Mercers and drapers	7	6	3	3
Clothing traders	11	11	1	4
Shoemakers	4	5	2	3
Household goods trades	10	13	19	3
Luxury trades	4	3	0	2
Pawnbrokers	0	0	1	0
Other shops	8	11	9	2
Total:	67	76	64	18

Table 8:15 Northgate Street Shops 1787-1817

	1787	1797	1816-17 Street	1816-17 Row
Provisions dealers and bakers	8	7	7	1
Grocers and wine dealers	7	7	6	1
Butchers	0	0	0	0
Brewers etc.	1	1	1	0
Other food traders	1	0	2	0
Mercers and drapers	2	5	5	2
Clothing traders	8	8	5	2
Shoemakers	6	4	4	1
Household goods trades	6	5	9	0
Luxury trades	2	3	0	0
Pawnbrokers	1	0	0	0
Other shops	3	3	2	2
Total:	45	43	41	9

Table 8:16 Watergate Street Shops 1787-1817

	1787	1797	1816-17 Street	1816-17 Row
Provisions dealers and bakers	4	3	0	4
Grocers and wine dealers	7	8	4	3
Butchers	0	0	0	0
Brewers etc.	0	0	0	0
Other food traders	1	0	0	0
Mercers and drapers	0	1	1	0
Clothing traders	2	4	0	2
Shoemakers	2	2	0	4
Household goods trades	0	1	0	2
Luxury trades	0	1	0	0
Pawnbrokers	0	2	0	1
Other shops	2	1	1	1
Total:	18	23	6	17

Table 8:17 Foregate Street Shops 1787-1817

	1787	1797	1816-17
Provisions dealers and bakers	5	7	10
Grocers and wine dealers	4	9	5
Butchers	0	1	0
Brewers etc.	5	5	2
Other food traders	0	0	0
Mercers and drapers	1	0	0
Clothing traders	4	3	1
Shoemakers	3	7	5
Household goods trades	2	2	8
Luxury trades	3	1	1
Pawnbrokers	0	1	1
Other shops	1	0	1
Total:	28	36	34

Eastgate Street generally had fewer provisions dealers - probably because it is shorter and does not tail off at an end. Bridge Street and Northgate Street show an increased number of shops over time[1] and this may represent an extension of the shopping area towards the north and south of the inner city. Foregate Street is revealed as being on the fringe of the shopping area, as its position would suggest, with a substantial number of brewers and provisions dealers. Watergate Street is however puzzling. Apart from a substantial number of grocers and wine merchants, it barely looks like a shopping street, having pawnbrokers and, not shown in the table but revealed by Batenham, a large number of craftsmen, particularly coopers. Chester had not developed evenly round its centre, but rather had developed on the roads leading to London, Wales and Liverpool. The pattern still remains, and Watergate Street is still the odd one out of the central streets with property values falling away from the Cross more sharply than in Eastgate Street.[2]

There is very much less to say about Macclesfield and Stockport. Not until 1816-17 are there sufficient data to gain a real impression of location within the towns, and this directory evidence is not backed by any other sources. Table 8:18 provides some information on the pattern of shops in the central area of the towns and shows that the sort of shops that might be expected to dominate did so. In the case of Stockport there is a clear contrast between the Market Place and the

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1. As far as possible I have only included traders in these tables who can reasonably be supposed to have been retailing goods.
2. T.J. Welsby, 'The Internal Structure of Retail Nucleations, the case of Chester', Univ. of Leeds Dept. of Geography Thesis, Jan. 1971. Copy in Chester City R.O..

Table 8:18 Macclesfield and Stockport Central Area Shops 1816-17

	Macclesfield Market Area	Stockport Market Place	Stockport Underbank
Provisions dealers and bakers	3	3	6
Grocers and wine dealers	8	8	2
Brewers etc.	0	0	1
Mercers and drapers	5	7	3
Clothing traders	0	2	2
Shoemakers	4	1	4
Household goods trades	4	3	6
Luxury trades	2	1	0
Other shops	4	3	3
Total:	30	28	27

adjoining central area of Underbank, with the higher quality shops grouping themselves around the Market Place.

So far we have considered almost exclusively the higher class shops and the central shopping area, chiefly because it is much easier to discuss the central area than to say anything about occasional shops dispersed throughout the towns. However, as the figures on the location of bakers in Chester revealed, traders of that sort at least were to be found out of the central area, with several located in the outlying parts of Chester which had been built up or absorbed into the City in the eighteenth century or earlier. Thus by 1816 there were 3 bakers across the river in Handbridge, 1 in Boughton on the eastern edge of Chester and several in the residential lanes

of the City. Stockport also seems to have had a not dissimilar pattern of a number of dealers in essential foodstuffs being located away from the Market Place, Underbank and Hillgate area in those parts of the town that had been built up during the great expansion of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That having been said, it is clear that we are here talking about isolated traders rather than any early sort of neighbourhood shopping area.

In general terms it seems clear that the location pattern of shops by the early nineteenth century makes it possible to talk about a central shopping area, at least in Chester and probably in the other towns. This area was characterized by a high proportion of grocery shops, wine merchants, mercers and drapers, some clothing shops including shoemakers, and a few dealers in luxuries. On the fringes of this area would be the main group of provisions dealers, probably more clothing dealers, some of the craftsmen-retailers like cabinet makers and maybe brewers and printers. In Chester this sort of pattern is shown not only by the directories but also by contemporary etchings of the central streets, and the area around the Cross formed the core of a central shopping area. Can one go further and try to define a Central Business District? In the case of Chester this may be possible although ideally one would want to know more about precise locations, and often the precise use to which property was put. Certainly Fire Offices tended to locate in the central area already described, and there was one bank in this area and another on the fringe of it. Attornies tended to be grouped together in 1816 just outside

the central area and near the Castle where Courts for the County were held. Without over-emphasizing the pattern, it seems to be true that early nineteenth-century Chester had developed a centre in which some fairly well defined areas could be identified.

The general trends in retail provision during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were for the number of shops to grow substantially, but at the same time for population per retail outlet to increase sharply in the early nineteenth century. The major changes probably took place after about 1780, corresponding with very considerable population growth in Macclesfield and Stockport. Although this rapid urbanization may have created problems in terms of retail provision, there was a major increase in the number of general food shops in the early nineteenth century and these were the shops that probably had the greatest importance for the factory proletariat. Although this rapid urbanization may have created problems in terms of retail provision, there was a major increase in the number of general food shops in the early nineteenth century and these were the shops that probably had the greatest importance for the factory proletariat. Although there were similarities in the trends in all three towns considered, Chester had far fewer problems in the early nineteenth century because its rate of growth was so much slower, and had a somewhat different retail structure in that it had proportionately more shops in the cloth, clothing and household goods fields. Quantitative growth, however, is not the only possible change, and the period may have seen some qualitative improvements. In Chester above all

it may be that a more modern form of retail provision was emerging in the period, both in terms of the overall nature of the city centre and in the nature of individual shops. One symptom of this may be the disappearance of some of the more surprising trade combinations of the 1780's and 1790's - grocer and watchmaker, linen draper and silversmith or plumber and hosier - and a greater differentiation between trades. The nature of the individual retail trades will be considered in detail in this thesis.[1] Taking a long view of the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, it would probably be true to say that development in Macclesfield and Stockport sprang from the expansion of those towns as manufacturing centres while development in Chester sprang from a strengthening of its position as a regional centre for west Cheshire and north-east Wales.

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1. See cap. 10 below.

CHAPTER 9

INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF RETAILING IN MACCLESFIELD, STOCKPORT AND CHESTER

Retailing and Municipal Regulation

Shop retailing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be discussed not only in terms of such standard economic variables as costs of goods, property and labour, turnover or profit - when data on them is available - but also in terms of the institutional constraints imposed on shopkeepers in some towns. Frequently these, insofar as they survived, affected the ability of the shopkeeper to employ what labour he wanted, charge what prices he wanted and even to trade at all. While municipal and gild regulations were clearly of decreasing importance during the eighteenth century, and while it would be foolish to suggest that they were major determinants of the prosperity or otherwise of towns, they were not yet defunct and may have been irritants, if no more, to some of the shopkeepers of a town like Chester. Lack of regulation was one of the reasons put forward in the seventeenth century for the difficulties faced by shopkeepers, since 'The ground of this grievance is....that all men promiscuously....have liberty to set up any trade for a livelihood, and especially the shopkeeping trade'.[1] The author of this pamphlet believed that greater enforcement of the need for shopkeepers to have

1. The Trade of England Revived (London, 1681), reprinted in Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents, ed. J. Thirsk and J.P. Cooper (Oxford, 1971) pp. 390, 400.

been properly trained and given freedom before they could trade, and greater influence allowed to gilds would improve matters.[1] Some towns were ready in the seventeenth century to limit numbers of traders as when Congleton in 1642 refused a request for freedom from a grocer because, 'There is a sufficient number of grocers in the Corporation already, and that an increase of the number would tend to the hurt rather than improvement of trade'.[2]

Of the Cheshire towns, Chester particularly imposed restrictions on the right to trade freely. Tolls were still collected in the eighteenth century at each of the City gates, but the century saw increasing complaints from toll collectors and lessees of the difficulties of taking toll on goods entering the City. Freemen were exempt from these tolls, and a further reason for the decline in receipts was said to be the changed methods of trading by which goods were bought and sold by order rather than being brought into Chester.[3] The Eastgate tolls were normally leased for £80 a year until the 1760's when the rent was reduced to £60[4] and in 1770 William Lewis asked for the rent he paid on the tolls of the Eastgate and Inner Bridge Gate to be further reduced.[5] Attempts were made to enforce the city tolls as in 1748 when Mary Crachley, keeper of the Bridge Gate, was promised help in defending an action brought against her for taking a ½d toll for 2,000 quilts brought into Chester for sale,[6] and similar support was offered

1. Ibid.
2. R. Head, Congleton, Past and Present (Congleton, 1887), p. 61.
3. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1740-54, Petitition of Leavelookers, 1749-50 (AF 53).
4. Chester City R.O., Treasurer's Account Book, 1758-73 (TAB/7).
5. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar 1725-85 f 277v, 1 June 1770 (AB/4).
6. Ibid. f. 128v-129, 2/13 Dec. 1748.

to toll collectors during the 1760's and 1770's. The liability of carriers to pay tolls was still stated in 1799[1] but the collecting of these tolls probably ceased soon after when most attempts at municipal regulation were abandoned

More important for traders resident in Chester and keeping shops there were the freedom and gild regulations of the City. The requirement that all traders should be free of the City was very ancient, and was restated in the bye-law of 1735:

> 'No Person whatsoever not being free of the City of Chester Shall....by any Colour way or means whatsoever either directly or indirectly by himself or any other Shew Sell or Put to Sale any Wares or Merchandizes whatsoever by retail or keep any Shop...or Use any Art Trade Occupation Mistery or Handicraft whatsoever within the said City or the Liberty or Suburbs of the same the time of Fairs in the said City only Excepted....' 2

Also exempt from this requirement were persons coming into the city to sell victuals who were free to trade as they had always been. Although the frequent need in the eighteenth century to restate the regulations and to circulate copies of them to traders who were not free implies that these rules were ignored, Chester seems in general to have been a place where resident traders were expected to be free and normally were free, and money payments for the right to trade without being free were of minimal importance. Demands for such payments, known in Chester as leavelookerage, were probably only made to a number of women shopkeepers.

Complaints about non freemen keeping shops in Chester, and attempts to enforce the regulations against this were frequent

1. Ibid. 1785-1825 f. 63 5 Mar. 1799 (AB/5).
2. Chester City R.O., Legal Papers, Ellames & Hesketh v. Braddock, copy of Assembly order of 26 Sept./7 Oct. 1735 (C/LP/119p).

items of Assembly business. As Table 9:1 shows, over 150 named individuals were reported as trading without being free between 1730 and 1815, and there were several occasions in the 1760's and 1770's when general complaints were made and orders given for action to be taken.[1] Although the complaints

Table 9:1 Enforcement of Freedom Regulations in Chester 1731-1815

1. By Periods

Years	a. Traders accused of not being free	b. Number taking up freedom	b. as percentage of a.
1731-55	6	3	50
1756-80	55	22	40
1781-1805	54	28	52
(1806-15	40	not known	-)*
Total:	115	53	46

*Not included in totals.

2. By Occupations (1731-1805)

	a.	b.	b. as % of a.
Provisions dealers	13	5	38
Other food and drink traders	10	6	60
Drapers and mercers	9	9	100
Other clothing traders	27	12	44
Household goods traders	10	6	60
Craftsmen	27	9	33
Others	19	6	32

about non freemen tended to be bunched together in certain years,

1. Names of non free traders taken from Chester City R.O., Assembly Books 1725-1825 (AB/4 & 5) and Assembly Files 1723-1818 (AF 51-60).

the campaign against them was sustained throughout the whole period, with little change in the success rate. In general just under half of the traders accused eventually took up their freedom, but this varied greatly from trade to trade. As might be expected, members of the higher class shopkeeping trades, especially drapers and mercers, were much more likely to petition for freedom than were craftsmen, and in general shop traders, except hucksters and flour dealers, took up freedom more frequently than did other groups.[1] Clearly freedom brought political and social as well as commercial benefits, and no-one could make a mark in Chester without being free, but it may also be that persons with conspicuous shops were more likely to feel the need of freedom than were back street artisans. Of those traders against whom action was threatened for not being free between the 1770's and 1805 and who can be identified as shopkeepers in directories, few continued to trade unfree for any length of time. Three tailors were threatened with action but continued to trade in the 1780's and 1790's without becoming free and a number of provisions dealers did so. Occasionally traders seem to have been in business for many years before their names appear on the lists of freemen - Charles Bebbington, George Preston and Bartholomew White, all tailors, were like this, - and one shoemaker, Peter Williams, was in business in Watergate Street from 1781 to at least 1816 apparently without being free.[2] Being free of the city does, however, seem to have

1. See Table 9:1.
2. Evidence on admissions to freedom from, The Rolls of the Freemen of the City of Chester, Part II, 1700-1805 (Transcribed and edited by J.H.E. Bennet, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 1v, 1908).

been the norm among traders into the nineteenth century.

Action by the Corporation against men who continued to trade without petitioning for freedom could be prolonged and serious in some cases. In May 1748 the City Treasurer was ordered to commence a suit against John Charles, tobacconist, for keeping open shop and exercising his trade in Chester without being free.[1] This case went in time to the Cheshire Court of Exchequer where Charles declared that he traded in Chester as a grocer, that he had been apprenticed to a tobacco cutter and spinner, but that he was neither free of the city nor of any gild and that many others traded in Chester without being free. Against him it was argued that there was no record of his apprenticeship, that while some persons traded without being free they had no right to do so, and that if he wished to trade he must do so at Gloverstone.[2] There is no evidence whether Charles continued to trade, but he certainly did not become free. Another trader who it was said should only trade at Gloverstone, out of the city's jurisdiction, was Samuel Braddock, a grocer, whose case dragged on from 1758 into the 1770's and which eventually led to the city authorities having to draft a new bye-law to ensure that they could enforce freedom regulations.[3]

The ease with which men could become free was likely to be of considerable importance in Chester in determining how open the trades of the city were to entrants possessing the necessary capital and skill. Freedom could be obtained by birth,

1. Chester City R.O., Assembly Minutes Calendar f. 125v (AB/4).
2. P.R.O., Palatine of Chester, Exchequer Paper Pleadings 1749 (Chester 16/134/1).
3. Chester City R.O., Legal Papers, Ellames & Hesketh v. Braddock (C/LP/119).

apprenticeship of seven years, gift or purchase, accompanied in each case by certain fees ranging from £2 12s for freemen by birth to £6 for freemen by purchase in the nineteenth century.[1] Freedom by gift tended to be reserved for non-residents being enfranchised for elections, and purchase was the normal means by which a stranger could gain the necessary qualification to enter Chester's commercial life. In the eighteenth century, sums of £10 or £20 and occasionally more were paid for freedom, and while purchases of freedom were frequent, requests to be allowed to do this were sometimes rejected by the Assembly. There is rarely any evidence why a particular freedom petition was accepted or rejected, though in 1751 or 1752 a petition from a would be linen draper, John Bird, seems to have been rejected because members of the linen drapers' gild objected to the prospect of extra competition from him.[2] Normally though a man who could afford to pay handsomely for freedom would not be turned down: a stranger who had a real chance of succeeding in trade in Chester was unlikely not to be allowed to trade there, although local journeymen or traders operating at Glover-stone and hoping for a cheap grant of freedom were more often rejected. If becoming free of the city remained in eighteenth-century Chester a barrier to be crossed by intending shopkeepers, there is little evidence that it was an insuperable barrier or that a man of capital and enterprise needed to think of the purchasing of freedom as more than a £10 or £20 addition to the initial capital needed to set up in trade.

1. Municipal Corporations Commission 1835, Parl. Papers 1835, XXVI (116) pp. 2622-3.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1740-54 (AF 53).

The other constraint on free trade by shopkeepers in Chester was the power of the gilds, some of which not only expected all persons exercising a certain trade to be members of the relevant gild, but also interfered in the conduct of trade. Twenty-three gilds still existed in 1835 and all of these seem to have been active to a greater or lesser extent in the eighteenth century. Such membership figures as are available suggest that while most master traders may have been members of their respective gilds in the first half of the eighteenth century, membership thereafter declined rapidly, though there was an increase in some cases in the 1820's.[1] The brewers had 12 members in 1731, but only 7 by the end of the century,[2] the merchant tailors between 30 and 40 in the 1730's and under 10 by 1800,[3] while membership of the Barber-Surgeons' Company dropped from 50 to under 20 in the same period.[4] While membership of one of the gilds might have been commercially necessary until the mid-eighteenth century, gilds do not seem to have evoked great loyalty or affection from members. Only two Chester traders from a wide group of trades who left wills between 1730 and 1760 referred to gilds. Nathaniel Selby, butcher, bequeathed a pair of gloves to each member of the Butchers' Company,[5] while John Sellar, brewer, invited each member of the Brewers' Company to his funeral and bequeathed them gloves and hatbands for the occasion.[6]

1. Parl. Papers 1835 xxvi (116) pp. 2633-37.
2. Chester City R.O., Brewers Company, Company Book, 1729-1966 (G3/3).
3. Chester City R.O., Merchant Tailors Company, Account and Minute Book, 1698-1860 (G 22/1).
4. Barber-Surgeons Company, Company Books, 1699-1777, 1778-1842. In custody of Gild Steward.
5. Cheshire R.O., Will 29 May 1753 (WS Series). It is interesting that this will was drawn up in 1700.
6. Cheshire R.O., Will 2/13 Dec. 1730 (WS Series).

Yet the gilds continued, in many instances, to insist that only persons who were members of a gild could exercise the trade of that gild. The Bakers in 1736 had taken action against John Northover, a pastrycook and confectioner, for not being a member of their Company,[1] and in 1737 were complaining that, 'Several persons who are not members of the said Company do come and Sell Great Quantitys of Bread to the Great prejudice of your petitioners' in consequence of a lifting of restrictions on bakers after the members of the gild went on strike.[2] There were even complaints as late as the 1820's of persons being forced into the Company.[3] The Brewers' Company in 1756 took action against William Sellers for carrying on the trade of a common brewer without being free of the Company, and action was taken against John Ireland two years later for the same reason. In both cases the men concerned became members of the gild.[4] The records of the Mercers' Company show prosecutions against several traders for not being free in the 1740's and in 1775 eight persons were asked to come into the Company and pay £10 because they were dealing in goods in which the Company claimed a monopoly.[5] Similar action was taken during the eighteenth century by the Merchant Tailors and by the Barber-Surgeons, who were still attempting to compel barbers and tallow chandlers to be members in 1817.[6]

Gild power was not however only exercised against persons

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1. P.R.O., Chester 16/127/1.
2. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1732-40 (AF 52).
3. Parl. Papers 1835 xxxi (116) p. 2636.
4. Chester City R.O., Brewers Company, Company Book, 1729-1966 (G 3/3).
5. Mercers Company, Account and Minute Books, 1668-1763, 1763-1923. In custody of Gild Steward.
6. Barber-Surgeons Company, Company Book, 1778-1842.

trading without being members of a company. Various aspects of trading came under their scrutiny and regulation, usually with the general aim of preventing any one trader from becoming too powerful. Thus the Bakers' Company in 1743 was taking action against John Chapman for selling bread to hucksters who would sell it again in parts of Chester away from his shop to the detriment of other bakers.[1] The Butchers' Company imposed a restriction of three apprentices on its members in 1733, and in 1736 ordered that no more apprentices were to be taken for the next 21 years.[2] The Barber-Surgeons made orders in 1741 designed to prevent members buying tallow before the butcher selling it was in the Shambles or buying it too early, and the Company was checking the weights of candles at least until 1752.[3] Gilds were also involved at times with price regulation as in 1756 when the Brewers' Company raised the price of ale to £1 14s per barrel and table beer to 8s per barrel because of the high price of barley. Prices were raised again in 1762 when ale was fixed at £1 18s and table beer at 10s for private families and 9s for retailers.[4] In 1756 the Cordwainers' Company raised the price of shoes because of the increase in the price of leather.[5] Although the gilds were not a negligible force in eighteenth-century Chester, their power declined sharply by the end of the century. Attempts to interfere with trade became less frequent and ceased completely by 1825 after the case of Harrison v. Williams. This not only challenged gild

1. P.R.O., Chester 16/130.
2. Butchers Company, Company Book, 1656-1812. In custody of Gild Steward.
3. Barber-Surgeons Company, Company Book, 1699-1777.
4. Chester City R.O., Brewers Company, Miscellaneous Papers (G 3/5); Company Book 1729-1966 (G 3/3).
5. H.D. Willcock (Ed.), Browns and Chester (London, 1947) p.10.

monopoly, but also the need for traders to be free of the City and effectively ended restrictive municipal regulation of trade.[1] The gilds, which by the 1830's were mostly meeting once or twice a year in an Inn, increasingly became social institutions, although the prospects of sharing in Owen Jones' charity by membership of a gild had in some cases led to a policy of discouraging new members by the early nineteenth century to keep the benefits of the charity for established members.

In Chester shopkeepers and others had to tread carefully through the trade regulations of the city and the gilds, but the impact of these on the pattern of retail provision in Chester was probably not great. Elsewhere in the county such institutional constraints were of even less importance. Macclesfield had its freemen, and they alone had full right to trade in the town without restriction. However, in Macclesfield it was normal for resident traders not to be free and to pay an annual sum of stallage money for the right to trade.[2] In the 1730's up to 60 people could be stallaged in a year, chiefly the humbler sorts of traders such as alesellers, tailors, shoemakers and twisters. Sums normally ranging between 1 shilling and 5 shillings were collected from these traders and they were then able to trade.[3] There is no evidence in Macclesfield of attempts to force traders to be free, but a number of persons were occasionally in dispute over stallage payments. There

1. Parl. Papers 1835 xxvi (116) p. 2636.
2. C.S. Davies (Ed.), A History of Macclesfield, pp. 55-6.
3. Birkenhead R.L., Macclesfield Coll., Stallage Court Books, 1732 & 1735 (MA/B/II/12 & 13).

are no references to stallage after the 1750's, and a legal opinion in 1743 questioned the right of the Corporation to demand it.[1] Congleton similarly charged stallage on traders who were not free, including, in 1709, a number of shopkeepers such as milliners and grocers.[2]

The payment of stallage rather than the strict enforcement of a trade monopoly by freemen effectively meant that trading in Macclesfield was open to all. Not that the freemen were a highly select group. Freedom could be acquired by birth or by gift or purchase, and a substantial number of Macclesfield's retailers were free, including many butchers. Charles Roe was admitted as a freeman in 1742, probably quite soon after he came to Macclesfield, and was mayor from 1747 to 1748,[3] while John Swanwick, after trading as a mercer for at least two years without being free, was made free gratis in October 1785. He rose rapidly in the politics of the borough, becoming a capital burgess in August 1788 and mayor in October 1789.[4] Certainly by the end of the eighteenth century freedom in Macclesfield was probably of honorific or political rather than commercial importance, and control over traders had completely ceased. In Stockport such municipal control had never existed, and entry to trades was probably largely unrestrained. There were, however, one or two attempts to enforce national regulations there as in 1737 when John Sudlow, tailor, and John Aspinall, draper, were indicted for exercising their trades contrary to the apprenticeship laws.[5] A similar case occurred in 1802 when

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1. Ibid, disputes on tolls etc. (MA/B/II/15, MA/B/IV/17).
2. J. Corry, The History of Macclesfield etc. pp. 190-91.
3. W.H. Chaloner, Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-81) loc. cit., pp. 134, 139-40.
4. Macclesfield Town Hall, Corporation Minute Book, 1769-1824.
5. Cheshire R.O., Sessions Book 1735-41, Knutsford Sessions 4/15 Oct. 1737 (QJB/19a).

a baker was prosecuted for trading without having been apprenticed for seven years, and it was reported that he promised to leave off trade in return for the prosecution being dropped.[1]

Such regulation was generally on the way out by then, even in Chester where the gilds were ceasing to be the force they had been, although attempts were still being made to insist that all traders should be freemen until at least 1816. How far the gradual freeing of trade reflected changed national attitudes is a matter of conjecture, but in any case it is doubtful whether the relaxation of these regulations greatly altered the climate in which retailers operated, since their real effects had probably never been great. The control of quality and fair trading did not in any case cease, and in some cases functions formerly exercised by gilds passed to local authorities. An act of 1795 required J.P.'s to appoint persons to examine weights and balances with authority to enter the shops of all persons selling by retail and examine their weights.[2] Such control had sometimes been exercised by Court Leets, but the intervention of the county authorities may have placed it on a more regular footing, and a county official was checking weights in the Stockport area from 1800.[3] In Chester the mayor was reported to have seized 165 defective weights and 18 pairs of defective scales in 1794, and at the

1. M.P.L., Archives Dept., Burton Mss., vol. v, p. 547.
2. 'An Act for the more effectual Prevention of the Use of defective Weights.....' 1795 (35 Geo III cap. 102).
3. J. Thorp, 'A History of Local Government in Stockport between 1760 and 1820', (M.A. Thesis, University of Manchester, 1940, p. 223).

same time discovered 255 loaves under the correct weight in the shops of three bakers.[1] Chester bakers were again in trouble for false weights and underweight bread in 1814,[2] and if enforcement of the assize of bread ceased in the nineteenth century, responsibility for weights and measures continued to be exercised. Retailers still had to operate in the context of local bye-laws, even if freedom to enter trades, set such prices and employ such labour as required had been established even in Chester by 1825.

Costs and Characteristics of Retailing[3]

Property costs could be of considerable importance to retailers since the nature of their business meant that, in general, they had to be well placed in the centre of towns where they could most easily attract customers. Some contemporaries recognized that included in the rent paid by a retailer for a particular site was a sum representing the profit potential of the site. Thus in reply to criticisms of the shop tax that two equally good shops might be charged different amounts in different towns it was argued that this was because the possibilities of making profits from that particular shop varied from town to town, or even street to street.[4] An estimate of

1. Manchester Mercury 9 Dec. 1794.
2. Macclesfield Courier 26 Nov. 1814.
3. Owing to the almost complete absence of retailers' account books the topics discussed in this section - property, labour, credit and advertising - can only be treated in a summary manner. Other important variables, such as initial capital, stocks, turnover and profit cannot be treated at all on a comparative basis, and such reference as can be made to them will be made in the discussion of individual retailers in Chapter 10.
4. A Vindication of the Shop Tax, (London, 1789), pp. 40-42.

shopkeepers' costs in London in 1731 put house rent for a high street shop at £60 and somewhat less for a back street shop, while the rent for a country town shop was said to be over half this.[1] These estimates seem rather high, for Francis Place in 1799 was only paying £50 a year for his first shop in Charing Cross, and £60 a year for his second shop from 1801.[2]

Precise evidence on shop rents in the Cheshire towns is not easy to come by, or easy to evaluate if found since most rents were for house and shop and it would be impossible to estimate the rent on the shop alone. Tables 9:2 and 9:3 give some idea of relative shop rents by location and type of trade in Macclesfield and Chester at the end of the eighteenth century, but too much reliance must not be placed on detailed figures.

Table 9:2 Land Tax Assessed on Macclesfield Shops 1785

Street	Average Tax s.	d.
Jordangate	9	1
Mill Street	7	4
Chestergate	6	5
Barn Street	8	5
Back Street	4	6
Dog Lane	4	0
Goose Lane	4	0

Traders	Average Tax s.	d.	Number of Traders
Mercers	11	4½	4
Butchers	8	4	3
Grocers	8	3	15
Ironmongers	8	3	4
Watch and Clock Makers	4	2	3
Shoemakers	3	6	4

Source: Cheshire R.O., Land Tax Assessments, Macclesfield 1785 (QDV 2/272).

Only traders identified from directories included.

1. Second Letter from a Hawker and Pedlar...to an M.P. (London, 1731) pp. 16-18.
2. The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854) ed. Mary Thale, (Cambridge, 1972) pp, 192, 214-5.

Table 9:3 Property Values of Chester Shopkeepers 1787-97

Street	Average Property Value £ s. d.	Year
Eastgate Street	12 2 7	1793
Eastgate Street	11 3 1	1796
Bridge Street	9 13 4	1787
Bridge Street	14 17 6	1793
Lower Bridge Street	23 0 0	1796
Northgate Street	14 5 0	1793
Foregate Street	5 1 10½	1797
Cow Lane	3 17 0	1797

Traders	Average Property Value £ s. d.	Number of Traders
Mercers and Drapers	17 10 4	15
Chandlers	16 15 0	4
Gold and Silversmiths	13 2 6	4
Wine Merchants	10 10 7½	8
Glovers	10 1 3	4
Hosiers	9 5 0	4
Bakers	7 16 0	7
Grocers	7 13 6	10
Flour and Cheese Dealers	7 6 3	4
Butchers	3 14 2	6

Property values are those given for rate or tax assessment purposes in the following sources:

1787 St. Michael's Ward Land Tax (covers southern end of Upper Bridge Street). Chester City R.O., Assessments, Various Taxes, 1704 - 1800 (CAS 2).

1793 St. Peter's Parish Poor Rate (covers most of Eastgate Street and parts of Bridge Street and Northgate Street nearest to the Cross). Cheshire R.O., St. Peter Parish, Parish Book, 1793-1803 (P 63/7/7).

1796 (Eastgate Street) Eastgate Ward Land Tax, Chester City R.O., (CAS 2).

1796 (Lower Bridge Street) A Survey and Valuation of the Lands and Houses in the Parish of St. Mary on the Hill, 1796. Cheshire R.O., St. Mary Parish (P 20/26/10).

1797 St. John's Ward Land Tax. Chester City R.O., (CAS 2).

Only traders identified from directories included.

In Macclesfield shops in the main streets leading from the market place - Jordangate, Mill Street and Chestergate - were worth more than shops in side streets such as Back Street, Dog Lane and Goose Lane, although the number of shops identified in any but the three main streets is very few. This pattern is much as one would expect as is the general pattern of property values of different types of shop. Mercers and drapers easily top the list, and were almost certainly the wealthiest of traders with the greatest need of and desire for good location and extensive shop premises. Butchers come surprisingly high and this may be because in a town like Macclesfield they were likely to have had land annexed to their houses,[1] while retailers like grocers and ironmongers had more valuable property than artisan-retailers like shoemakers.

A similar general pattern appears in Chester,[2] although here it is possible to say something about actual rents as well as about relativities. The taxable value of property was higher in the central streets than in Foregate Street and Cow Lane outside the walls, although there are some interesting differences in the value of shop property in the centre of the City. Eastgate Street probably comes lower than might be expected because there is evidence for most of the street rather than just for the part nearest the Cross in the heart of Chester, and because property values on the north of the street were markedly lower than those on the south, reflecting the higher class of shop on the south.[3] Property values for shops in the

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1. Butchers in Macclesfield were only allowed to trade from the Shambles; the values given are for their houses and land.
2. See Table 9:3.
3. See cap. 8 above for a general discussion of shop location and the characteristics of different streets in Chester. (pp. 270-77)

part of Upper Bridge Street nearest the Cross were higher than those for the street near its junction with Pepper Street as would be expected, but average values of shops in Lower Bridge Street were higher than any others. This may have been an area of substantial workshops making use of a location near the river and being valued at a high rate, or the basis for valuation in the St. Mary survey may have differed from that in the tax and rate assessments. As in Macclesfield, shops of mercers and drapers were rated most highly, while most food dealers came at the bottom of the list. Chandlers seem to have possessed surprisingly valuable property, and this may imply that the very few for whom there is information had substantial workshops, while grocers shops were less valuable than might have been expected. Butchers came bottom, probably because these are values for houses and shops with little or no land attached.

The money range of rents in Chester, shown in these tables and Tables 9:4 and 9:5, was very considerable. Some craftsmen, and some food dealers, could pay well under £5 a year for their premises while mercers and drapers especially could be paying over £20 a year. Such rents are however not always strictly comparable since the obligations of landlord and tenant with regard to the payment of taxes and rates and the upkeep of the property could vary greatly. Normally the tenant was responsible for repairing windows and the landlord for other repairs while rates and taxes were divided between the two parties, but both John Smith and John Larden were responsible for all leys and taxes.[1] There is barely any evidence on rents in Stockport,

1. See Table 9:5.

Table 9:4 Rents of Shops in Chester Exchange, 1780-1815

Tenant	1780 £	s	d	1806 £	s	d	1815 £	s	d
Edward Repington, Shoemaker	4	0	0						
Peter Broster, Bookseller	9	0	0	15	0	0	15	0	0
Ely Poynton, Hosier	6	0	0						
Mrs. Holland	5	0	0						
Miss Conway, Milliner	9	0	0						
Mr. Waterwood	5	0	0						
Mr. Leatherbarrow, Tinman	5	10	0	12	0	0*	12	0	0*
Mr. Wright	4	0	0						
Mr. Golborne	4	10	0						
Miss Weigh				7	0	0			
Miss Adamson, Milliner (2 shops)				12	0	0	12	0	0
J. Gregory				7	0	0	8	8	0
Miss Graham				10	0	0			
Mrs. Barlow				7	0	0			
Benjamin Jones, Shoemaker							12	12	0
Mr. Turner, Confectioner							7	0	0

* 2 shops

Source: Chester City R.O., Rentals of the City of Chester, 1777-1789 (TAP/6), 1813-1820 (TAP/9); 1806 rental in Assembly Committees Minute Book, 1805-35 (AC/1).

Table 9:5 Examples of Shop Rents in Chester 1728-1797

Date	Tenant	Rent £	s	d	
8/19 Mar.1727/8	Eliz. Gibbons, under Pentice	5	0	0	
15/26 Aug. 1734	John Kirkes, Upholsterer, under Pentice	10	0	0	
(14 Sept. 1763	Rebecca Randle, Milliner, Exchange	7	0	0)	
1780	Mr. Goulden, Hatter, under Pentice	8	10	0	
1780	Mr. Dixon, Silversmith, under Pentice	19	0	0	
1780	Mr. Ball, under Pentice	8	0	0	
1780	Mr. James, Hosier, under Pentice	4	0	0	
1780	Mr. French, Toy Shop (?), Northgate Street	6	0	0	
1780	Mr. James, Hosier, Northgate Street	15	0	0	
1780	Mr. Towsey, Hatter and Hosier, Northgate Street	9	0	0	
1780	Mrs. Harvey, Hosier, Northgate Street	4	0	0	
	All Corporation Tenants				
	Sources: Chester City R.O., Rental of the City of Chester, 1777-1789 (TAP/6) for 1780; Assembly Book Calendar, 1725-85 (AB/4) for others.				
		£	s	d	
20 Oct. 1759	Richard Ollerhead, Apothecary, Northgate Street	16	16	0	a)
29 Sept. 1776	Samuel Coulton, Baker, Northgate Street	15	0	0	a)
14 Feb. 1780	John Smith, Staymaker, Bridge Street	10	0	0	b)
25 Dec. 1779	John Larden, Woollen Draper, Bridge Street	24	0	0	c)
22 Dec. 1797	Samuel Hill, Wine Merchant, Castle Street	20	0	0	d)

Sources:

a) Cheshire R.O., Lee, Bygott and Eccleston, Coll., Leases (DLB/1548/Chester).
b) Cheshire R.O., Barnston of Churton Coll., Lease (DBA/40).
c) Cheshire R.O., Birch Cullimore Coll., Lease (DBC 1/2/40).
d) Chester City R.O., Birch Cullimore Coll., (DBC/3b).

but what there is tends to confirm the Chester picture of normal levels of rent. Thomas Shawcross, a flour dealer, seems to have been paying rent of £22 1s in 1800 presumably for his shop[1] which was quite a substantial amount but Shawcross appears to have traded on a relatively large scale. The Stockport Quakers were renting two shops under their Meeting House to different people in the early nineteenth century at a rent of £8 a year for the lower shop and £7 10s for the upper shop in 1805 and 1806. Rents then fell slightly to £5 4s for the upper shop and £6 10s for the lower shop at least until 1812, and were collected weekly. Various types of traders took the shops including a shoemaker, a milliner, a mantua maker and a joiner.[2]

As already implied, in return for these rents a shopkeeper would probably enjoy not only a shop but also a house for himself and his family. The rents of shops in Chester Exchange[3] however were probably for shops alone and thus give an impression of the range of rents paid for desirable property near the centre of a busy presperous town. Rents rose between 1780 and 1815 from around £4 to £6 for most shops to £6 to £8 for a single shop, with some paying a great deal more. Peter Broster, one of the chief booksellers in Chester, saw his rent rise from £9 to £15. The exact level of rents could be a matter of some concern to shopkeepers for in 1763 Rebecca Randles petitioned the Chester Assembly saying that she wished to keep the milliner's shop in the Exchange formerly held by Mr. Devereux, but that the £8 rent demanded for it was too high and that she would offer £6. A compromise was proposed in which the shop

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1. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/2.
2. Cheshire R.O., Society of Friends Account Book, 1805-30 (EFC 1/18).
3. See Table 9:4.

was agreed to be let at £7, but it is not known whether Miss Randles took up the offer.[1] The Exchange shops were however exceptional, and normal shop property probably included a shop room at the front, some storage space, and living room above.[2]

Few descriptions of shops are to be found, even in newspaper announcements for shops for sale or to be let, beyond the inevitable statement that the property was well appointed or ideally situated - the language of property advertisements changes little. A 1770 advertisement for a shop formerly occupied by a grocer in Chester described the property as, 'A Large House, and a large Shop under it, with a Warehouse and Stable....The Warehouse is Three Floors high, with a good Vault under them'.[3] A draper's shop in Stockport was described in more detail:

> 'These premises are in a central part of the Town, front the Great London Road, and possess every advantage of situation and convenience for carrying on an extensive business. They...are firmly and substantially built, have good Cellars, and besides a large and handsome Shop, there are on the first floor a handsome entrance to the House, a Sitting-room, and a large convenient kitchen; on the second floor an excellent Drawing-room, and three Bed-rooms; and also four other Bed-rooms in the Attic.' 4

Improvements to shop property were frequently made by retailers with a view to enhancing their facilities for display and making their shops more attractive to customers.[5] The location and

1. Chester City R.O., Assembly Book Calendar, 1725-85 f. 214 (AB/4).
2. This picture is suggested by inventories, and the outward appearence of Chester shops confirmed by the etchings of George Batenham, executed c. 1815.
3. Adam's Weekly Courant, 28 Aug. 1770.
4. Stockport Advertiser, 23 Aug. 1822.
5. See cap. 8 above for some details of shop improvements in Chester. (pp. 267-8)

nature of shop property were important, and money spent on this was almost certainly a vital part of retailers' costs and one that was probably relatively more important to them than to craftsmen or small manufacturers.

Labour costs on the other hand may not have been very important for the pure retailer.[1] Many must have relied heavily on family labour, particularly where business was largely routine and needed little formal training.[2] Retailers' craft skills, in such trades as that of the grocer, were residual and rarely extended beyond breaking bulk and packaging, although the craftsman retailer retained many more skills. There is no evidence either of the overall size of the retail labour force or of the numbers employed by individual shopkeepers, but there is evidence of shopkeepers continuing to recruit apprentices into the nineteenth century and of the employment of journeymen. Large grocers and drapers in Stockport in the 1810's were occasionally advertising for two apprentices or journeymen, while milliners and dressmakers in both Macclesfield and Stockport were able to offer employment to apprentices.[3] Retailers involved in making as well as in selling goods normally seem to have employed more men, and some Chester establishments in the early nineteenth century were being conducted on a

1. Many of the employees of retailers were probably engaged in a manufacturing rather than a selling capacity. This would be particularly true of journeymen shoemakers, tailors, cabinet makers etc. and the figures of employment suggested below provide an overall indication of the size of the manufacturing-retailing establishment rather than of the scale of selling. See cap. 10 below for an examination of trade structure and the degree of separation or integration between manufacturing and retailing.
2. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman (London, 1747) esp. pp. 195-97 on the pointlessness of retailers serving apprenticeships and p. 189 on grocers use of family labour.
3. Macclesfield Courier 1811 to 1815.

relatively large scale. Shoemakers in particular could be large employers and in 1775 William Brown advertised for, 'Any number of Journeymen Shoemakers....Good hands may depend on constant employ.'[1] Twelve cordwainers were required by Messrs. Smyth at the Cross in Chester in 1802[2] and nine journeymen shoemakers by J. Whitebrook in Watergate Street in 1807.[3] Some master tailors may similarly have been employing a dozen or more workmen, while Samuel Nickson, cabinet maker and upholsterer in 1807 advertised for, 'A few Women, to work at the Upholstery business, also twelve or fourteen Journeymen Cabinet-Makers.... likewise, an Apprentice to the upholstering business.'[4]

Although craft workshops operated by a master employing several workmen were probably quite common in Chester by the nineteenth century, apprenticeship there, and in the other towns, remained important both for the supply of labour and for the recruitment of new masters. All the advertisements in the Macclesfield Courier for shop workers in Macclesfield between 1811 and 1815 were for apprentices, and most of those regarding Stockport were the same. In Chester the number of apprentices in many retail trades was apparently growing at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[5] Food processors and craftsmen, such as bakers, butchers and tailors recruited the largest numbers of apprentices, though in the years from 1800 onwards shopkeeping traders such as linen drapers and druggists were taking considerable numbers of apprentices. Grocers, however,

1. Chester Chronicle 4 Sept. 1775.
2. Ibid. 31 Dec. 1802.
3. Ibid. 21 Aug. 1807.
4. Ibid. 3 Apr. 1807.
5. See Table 9:6. The increased number of apprentices at the end of the period may be partly due to increased insistence by the city authorities on registration.

Table 9:6 Numbers of Apprentices in Selected Trades in Chester 1731-1815

Years	Grocers	Bakers	Butchers	Brewers	Linen Drapers
1731-5	0	2	2	1	1
1736-40	0	4	5	1	0
1741-45	0	1	0	0	0
1746-50	0	2	1	4	2
1751-55	3	3	7	6	1
1756-60	3	3	0	1	1
1761-65	0	4	2	3	1
1766-70	1	5	2	3	0
1771-75	0	4	3	0	0
1776-80	0	3	4	0	0
1781-85	2	4	0	0	0
1786-90	1	10	3	0	0
1791-95	0	1	0	1	0
1796-1800	0	5	3	1	1
1801-05	3	8	6	3	0
1806-10	2	14	13	1	3
1811-15	0	12	8	1	6
Total:	15	85	59	26	16

Years	Tailors	Goldsmiths	Apothecaries/ Druggists	Total of Groups
1731-35	0	3	0	9
1736-40	1	0	1	12
1741-45	1	1	0	3
1746-50	4	0	0	13
1751-55	7	0	0	27
1756-60	2	0	0	10
1761-65	0	0	0	10
1766-70	3	0	2	16
1771-75	0	0	0	7
1776-80	8	0	2	17
1781-85	7	0	0	13
1786-90	7	0	0	21
1791-95	1	0	0	3
1796-1800	2	3	3	18
1801-05	8	0	10	38
1806-10	19	1	11	64
1811-15	20	0	7	54
Total:	90	8	36	(335)

Source: Chester City R.O., Apprenticeship Books, 1690-1794, 1798-1819 (M/Ap/B/2-3).

N.B. Efficiency of registration of apprenticeships varied during the eighteenth century, and the names recorded in the Apprenticeship Books do not necessarily include all the apprentices in the City.

had fewer apprentices than their numbers would lead one to expect and entry into the trade may rarely have depended on apprenticeship. In few cases do the Apprenticeship Books record the places of origin or the fathers' occupation of apprentices, but from the limited evidence available it seems that most apprentices came from Chester itself or within ten miles of the city and that while most apprentices did not follow the same trade as their fathers, more tended to do this in such craft groups as tailors and goldsmiths than among drapers or druggists.[1] Most masters who took apprentices, certainly in the period 1780 to 1815, only took one or two, though Hugh Lloyd, druggist, took eight between 1799 and 1814, Thomas Griffiths, woollen draper, seven between 1805 and 1815 and Charles Price, tailor, six between 1777 and 1786. How many apprentices eventually became masters is unclear, but only a handful between 1780 and 1815 went through the full cycle of being apprentices themselves, taking up their freedom and becoming masters to apprentices.[2]

Most other shop and craft employees were simply described as journeymen. These, presumably, would normally be men who had already served an apprenticeship or some other form of training and were thus expected to be experienced in the business that they were to undertake, and may have been a fairly mobile section of the retail labour force, moving between workshops. In some of the shop trades such employees were occasionally known as clerks, as in the case of William Edwards,

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1. Chester City R.O., Apprenticeship Books, 1690-1794, 1798-1819 (M/Ap/B/2-3), Apprenticeship Indentures, 1742-1783 (M/Ap/I/2).
2. Ibid.

clerk to Thomas Griffiths of Chester, grocer, who in 1766 was examined as a witness in a case concerning a fraud on his master and is clearly shown to have been involved in serving customers.[1] Employees, whether apprentices or journeymen, were normally helping a shopkeeper who was himself actively engaged in working in his shop. In one case in Macclesfield, however, a provisions shop was being run by a manager employed by Amos Slater, a cheesefactor of Gawsworth, a few miles out of the town. Marsden, who managed the shop, bought and sold flour, meal and cheese on behalf of Slater and was paid a weekly salary by him. Some of these goods for the shop were provided by Slater, but others were purchased from other suppliers.[2] Shop managers must also have existed in those rare cases when a retailer had established permanent shops in more than one town.

No shop employees, whether apprentices or others, could expect specially favourable treatment from their employers or good prospects of succeeding to the business. It is doubtful whether apprentices were more than a useful form of cheap labour in most cases, though a few of course followed the classic pattern of taking over their master's business, either with or without marrying his daughter. In Stockport Robert Rostron established a major drapery business in the centre of the town after being apprenticed to James Leech, a linen and woollen draper, and marrying his daughter[3] but this was certainly exceptional. Apprentices rarely rated a mention in their employer's will, and this was just as true in the 1730's as in

1. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations, 1766 (QSE/15/28).
2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Bills and Answers, George III, County of Chester (E 112/1386/235).
3. William Astle (Ed.), History of Stockport, p. 112.

the 1810's. Benjamin Clubbe of Chester, grocer, who died in 1811, left his apprentice John Hilditch the first option on buying his stock in trade and his household goods,[1] and Henry Hegg of Chester, druggist, willed one-quarter of his stock to Henry Bowers formerly his apprentice and at that time his journeyman with instructions that Bowers was to carry on the trade of druggist together with Hegg's nephew John Bakewell.[2] Neither of these cases was, however, typical.

Evidence on wages and conditions of shop workers is almost completely absent before the mid-nineteenth century. In any case living in by many employees, and the payment of many craftsmen by piece-work mean that even if there were some figures it would be virtually impossible to estimate weekly wages. In the 1820's and 1830's wages seem to have varied greatly according to the size and nature of the establishment and the position of the employee in it. In a small concern a young employee could earn as little as £20 a year while a senior man in a large shop might earn £90.[3] George Heywood, a Manchester grocer, noted in his diary that he was given wages of £20 a year by a Mr. Hyde when he first came to Manchester in 1809. In the next year he took the post of journeyman with Roylance and Jones at a salary of £30 a year which was increased to £35 in 1811 and to £40 in 1814. At this point Heywood left the service of other grocers and set up his own shop.[4]

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1. Cheshire R.O., Will of Benjamin Clubbe, 20 June 1812 (WS Series).
2. Cheshire R.O., Will of Henry Hegg, 1792 (WS Series).
3. D. Alexander, op.cit. pp. 193-95.
4. John Rylands Library, Manchester, Diary of George Heywood of Manchester, Grocer, 1788-1840 (Lng. Ms. 703).

In Chester only the tailors seem to have been much involved with problems over wages and working conditions. In April 1788 the journeymen tailors of the city, complaining that the lack of constant employment kept their wages down to an average of 8 shillings or 8s 6d a week, struck in support of a demand for 2s 4d a day wages (14 shillings per week). The master tailors refused to pay this, and threatened to prosecute their journeymen and not to employ any who should be found guilty of combination. The nominal wage was, they claimed, 12 shillings a week and they were ready to employ men at this rate.[1] The result of this confrontation is unknown, but the journeymen tailors of Chester were sufficiently well organised to strike again in 1792 for 13 shillings a week and to obtain this.[2] A further dispute took place in 1805 when an increase in wages on the 19 shillings a week then current was demanded and refused by the masters, one of whom claimed that journeymen tailors could earn up to 25 shillings a week with piece work. Three masters gave in to the demands of the journeymen, and although the others said that they would not follow suit,[3] once their unity was broken the need to get journeymen to work for them tended to outweigh the desire to keep wages down. In these disputes the journeymen seem to have been well organized and to have withdrawn their labour from the principal masters in Chester at the very time when the masters were busiest, making up Spring and Summer fashions in April and May. In 1792 the desire to avoid losing orders led to an agreement between the masters to raise

1. Cheshire Sheaf iii, (1883-1886) 212-213.
2. Chester Courant 5 June 1792.
3. Ibid. 16 Apr. 1805, 23 Apr. 1805.

temporarily the rates of their journeymen, but once one master failed to restore rates to their old level, all felt that they must do the same and keep rates at the higher level. These disputes seem to lie very much in the tradition of eighteenth-century craft disputes, and it was not until the early closing movement of the mid-nineteenth century that shopworkers were able to air their grievances. Conditions in shops were doubtless bad, but the small scale of most operations and the survival of apprenticeship meant that labour was neither properly costed nor were problems likely to go beyond a person to person confrontation.

A major characteristic of retailing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the taking and giving of long credit. According to Defoe, 'Credit, next to real stock, is the foundation, the life and soul of business in a private Tradesman; it is his prosperity; 'tis his support in the substance of his whole trade.'[1] A trader's reputation could be one of his most valuable assets and if this was lost and he was refused credit he could be ruined. A retailer also had to make a judgement about the credit-worthiness of his customers, and mistakes here could also be fatal in terms of an unacceptably large proportion of bad debts. In the eighteenth century it was reckoned that a provincial shopkeeper would probably in practice receive about twelve months' credit from London wholesalers. Agreements might be made for six months' credit, but the practice of constantly giving orders and regularly part settling accounts made the real length of credit about twelve months.[2] In some trades

1. D. Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman i 336.
2. The Tradesman's Director, or the London and Country Shopkeeper's Useful Companion (London, 1756) p. 54.

there was a recognised length of credit - three months in the tallow chandlery business with a bill of exchange then given at two months according to one trader in 1809.[1] The length of credit allowed by wholesalers may have been shortening in the nineteenth century and in 1833 it was said that retailers were paying for goods in three or four months instead of in six to nine months as formerly.[2]

Assuring yourself of credit from wholesalers was a necessary first step for new shopkeepers, and Francis Place described in his autobiography how he applied in 1799 for credit from mercers and woollen drapers on the opening of his first shop and was granted it by all but one.[3] Eventually Place was able to manage without credit, paying each month for goods purchased the previous month by 1809.[4] Few shopkeepers, however, could operate entirely without credit. James Bentley, a Manchester grocer of the early nineteenth century, bought tea, sugar, flour, candles and a wide range of other groceries from several suppliers and usually settled by bill or cash one or two months after purchasing.[5] The Stockport leather dealers W. & J. Thornhill usually allowed between three and six months' credit to the shoemakers that they supplied, with payments being made to them every few weeks and accounts fully settled perhaps every six months.[6] John Swanwick, the Macclesfield woollen draper,

1. P.R.O., Court of Bankruptcy, Order Book, 1808-9. Bankruptcy of Joseph Pimblott of Macclesfield, Grocer (B 1/115 p. 267).
2. Report from the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, 1833. Parl. Papers 1833 vi (690) p. 84.
3. The Autobiography of Francis Place, (1771-1854) p. 192.
4. Ibid. p. 219.
5. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Grocers Day Book, 1798-1828 (Misc 258/1).
6. Stockport R.L., Ledger of W. & J. Thornhill, 1815-1884 (S/J 46).

certainly expected credit from the wholesalers who supplied him and he rarely settled bills in full, preferring to leave accounts running. However, he believed in fairly prompt payment, reckoning to obtain some discount and was usually successful in this. On the metal buttons he bought from Thomas Longden of Macclesfield he was normally able to obtain discounts of at least 20%, but other traders probably allowed less. There was one exception to the general rule of discount for prompt payment and this was Welsh cloth bought by one of his suppliers in Shrewsbury and which had originally been paid for with cash. On this Swanwick was charged interest if he delayed payment, though in practice such interest could usually be set against discount due to him on other goods supplied by his Shrewsbury contact.[1]

Credit from wholesaler to retailer was certainly the norm, and it is probable that it was very widespread from retailer to customer. However, since cash sales by retailers are the very types of transactions that are completely unrecorded, it is very difficult to estimate the extent of each form of transaction. Cash sales, according to Dr. Alexander, probably amounted to about 50% of total sales in the nineteenth century, though less in high class shops, and this is as good an estimate as it is possible to make.[2] Cash sales may at times have been more, certainly in the seventeenth century, for William Stout reckoned that in 1689, his first year as a shopkeeper, he had sold £450 worth of goods for cash and £150 worth on credit.[3]

1. Swanwick Business Papers (In private custody).
2. D. Alexander, op.cit. pp. 175-76.
3. The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1665-1752, ed. J.D. Marshall, (Chetham Soc. 3rd Ser., XIV, 1967) p. 96.

Credit sales seem to have been universal to all types of trade, though a few of the very smallest shopkeepers may have avoided them, and such discrimination as there was would have been by customer. In general it was said of shopkeepers that, 'Every Man from a Knowledge of his Customers, forms to himself particular Rules and Maxims in his Business, and manages it according to his Experience of the Persons he deals with.'[1] No generalizations could be made on credit sales by shopkeepers.

Surviving evidence of shopping purchases normally reveals quite long credit, but such evidence nearly always relates to landed families, institutions or major tradesmen and these are the very groups who would be most credit-worthy. The Leghs of Lyme in the 1730's were granted credit by grocers, drapers, mercers, ironmongers, booksellers, tailors and shoemakers in Stockport, Macclesfield and Manchester and often settled bills at the end of each year.[2] Similarly the Ardernes of Harden near Stockport were receiving credit from shopkeepers with whom they dealt in the 1740's and 1750's. Such credit was usually of between six months and a year in length, but one bill for shoes was settled nearly three years after the first item on it was purchased, and a bill for drugs covered nearly as long a period.[3] John Swanwick's bills for household purchases show similar lengths of credit for various types of purchases from Macclesfield shopkeepers.[4] Institutional purchasers would also

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1. The Tradesman's Director..... p. 54.
2. Stockport R.L., Lyme Hall Accounts, 1728-1738 (Deed Box 21A).
3. Cheshire R.O., Arderne Coll., Vouchers for expenditure (DAR/A/81-86).
4. Swanwick Papers.

be frequently granted long credit by shopkeepers, and bills for book and candle purchases by Chester Cathedral in the 1760's and 1810's extend over periods of up to three years.[1] There are no very clear differences in the amount of credit allowed by different types of traders to comparable purchasers, except that apothecaries' bills in general seem to extend over longer periods (up to nine years) than do most others.

Such little evidence as there is of sales to poorer people suggests that credit was not absent there, even in the case of food shops. A Stockport provisions dealer who was in difficulty over debts in 1756 said that she bought cheese, butter, bacon, wheat, flour, potatoes, eggs and other goods on credit and often had to sell them on credit, sometimes being unable to collect the money owed to her before the debts she owed fell due.[2] In 1833 there were said to be several food retailers in Stockport giving credit week by week and charging between 2 shillings and 4 shillings in the £ more than those retailers selling for cash. Such shops it was complained tended to induce people to consume more than their income allowed. They were not, however, patronized by the very poorest since these, needing to make every penny stretch as far as possible, preferred to take advantage of the cheaper prices they could obtain by paying cash.[3] Widespread credit clearly meant high risks, and it was not impossible for up to 50% of the debts owed to a retailer to be bad, although it is never easy to decide just what is a bad debt. Moreover once a number of retailers failed through

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1. Cheshire R.O., Chester Cathedral Archives, Vouchers to Account, 1761-1827 (EC/1768/3).
2. P.R.O., E 112/1089/117.
3. Select Committee on Commerce etc. 1833, Parl. Papers 1833 vi (690) pp. 624-5.

being unable to collect debts owed to them and therefore unable to pay their creditors, the bigger wholesalers could be put at risk and this was said to be happening in Stockport in 1842.[1]

Yet for all the dangers of credit it was a normal part of shop trading, and, except in the Stockport case mentioned above, was not charged for but was presumably reckoned as part of the price of the goods sold. Similarly there is no evidence of discounts for prompt payment being allowed on those bills settled relatively quickly. Credit was not quite universal, and could certainly be refused to a particular customer. Elizabeth Dean, wife of John Dean of Stockport cordwainer, being examined in 1799 as a witness in a case of theft from her husband's shop described how a young woman, having paid cash for a pair of childrens shoes, asked to be allowed to pay weekly for a pair of Spanish leather slippers she wished to buy. Elizabeth Dean told her that she could not be allowed to pay in this manner and the sale was not made.[2] By 1814, in Chester at least, one or two shopkeepers were advertising that they sold for ready money only. Thomas Yearsley in 1814 claimed that at his cheap shoe warehouse he sold goods at reduced rates for ready money,[3] and in 1815 John Jones advertised his linen drapery shop in which he sold for ready money only.[4] The movement away from credit being given to all

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1. Report...into the State of the Population of Stockport, Parl. Papers 1842 XXXV (158), p. 26.
2. Cheshire R.O., Quarter Sessions File, Knutsford, October 1799 (QJF 227/4/127).
3. Chester Courant, 8 Feb. 1814.
4. Ibid. 14 Feb. 1815.

apparently trustworthy customers and the appearance of shops selling only for cash was to be one of the major nineteenth-century developments in retailing.

Retailers were little different from other traders in their heavy reliance on credit. One characteristic of shopkeepers' behaviour, however, which did set them apart from many other groups was the use they made of advertisements, chiefly in the local press. The development of provincial newspapers in the eighteenth century provided people who wanted to call attention to themselves with an excellent means of doing this and retailers were not slow to respond. By the middle of the century most country newspapers probably contained about 1,000 advertisements a year, and while most of these were for property to be let or sold, many had been placed by retailers.[1] Advertisements concerning shop property or advertisements for apprentices or journeymen were common, and some retailers frequently advertised the goods they had in stock. This may have been done as part of an advertisement announcing the opening of their shop or its removal to new premises, but by the end of the century announcements that a shopkeeper had just received new stock were to be found regularly. The earliest advertisement concerning goods for sale from a Cheshire retailer seems to have been placed by Simon Young, confectioner of Chester, in a Manchester newspaper in September 1724 when he announced that he sold sweetmeats, biscuits and other confectionery wholesale and retail at reasonable rates.[2] It was not however until about the middle of the century that such advertisements really became the norm.

1. G.A. Cranfield, The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760, pp. 210-11.
2. The Manchester Weekly Journal, 24 Sept./5 Oct. 1724.

The groups most likely to advertise were of course those with most to gain from calling their goods to the attention of the public. In general these were not shopkeepers dealing in everyday necessities, but those dealing in luxury goods and fashion goods where new and different stock was always being acquired and where there was perhaps a tradition of consumers shopping around and comparing price and quality. In Chester from the 1770's onwards mercers, drapers and milliners were the most regular group of advertisers, particularly in April when there were usually between six and eight of them announcing their return from London with the latest Spring fashions. By the early nineteenth century a few such traders were also advertising in October or November that they had received the winter fashions from London. Of the other clothing dealers, shoemakers probably made the most use of advertisements to give details of their stocks of ready-made shoes, while tailors occasionally advertised their skill. Grocers and wine dealers, chiefly advertising tea, coffee and wines were the food and drink traders who made most use of advertisements, although confectioners occasionally appear as do traders advertising seasonal fruits or fish. Otherwise goldsmiths, ironmongers, glass and china dealers and occasionally booksellers are to be found advertising in most years, with a few infrequent announcements from upholsterers and cabinet makers. Most traders would emphasize the cheapness, newness and high quality of their stock, and tended to leave their advertisements in the newspaper for two or three weeks at a time, inserting advertisements rarely more often than once a year. Retailers continued to

use the local press throughout the period, and were certainly making more use of it in the early nineteenth than in the mid-eighteenth century and it would seem that they found advertising to be worthwhile.[1] It was certainly a good means of announcing the acquisition of new stock and keeping in the public notice, but it can never have represented more than a tiny fraction of the costs of retailing. Equally, while typical of many retailers, advertising was not necessary for success, and there is no evidence that an extremely successful man like John Swanwick ever made use of the press. Retailers' use of the press is of great interest as a characteristic of retailing, but it is hardly of prime importance to an understanding of the retail market.

Risks and Opportunities

Turning from some aspects of the economics of retailing to some of the more general characteristics of retailers, it becomes apparent that retailing was a relatively high risk venture. The threat of failure was never far away, and such books as Defoe's Complete English Tradesman are full of advice to the aspiring shopkeeper on how to avoid financial disaster. Risks, particularly for the general shopkeeper operating in a neighbourhood where demand is low and where he has to give credit, have probably not lessened greatly since the eighteenth

1. The newspapers consulted for evidence on retailers advertisements are, Adam's Weekly Courant (later The Chester Courant) (from 1750), The Chester Chronicle (from 1775), The Macclesfield Courier (1811-15), The Manchester Magazine (1737-1760), The Manchester Mercury (from 1764) and The Stockport Advertiser (1822).

century.[1] The most obvious way to measure the degree of failure among eighteenth-century shopkeepers is through the bankruptcy figures, but it should be remembered that by no means all shopkeepers who ran into difficulties would formally become bankrupt. Many retailers, in difficulties over debts owed by them, found themselves classed as insolvent debtors, while others must simply have given up trading and made what agreement they could with their creditors when bankruptcy threatened.

Certainly the trade directories imply a high turnover of retail traders.[2] It is difficult to be very precise about this because of the need to ensure that directories which are being compared really are comparable and that omissions from one of them do not simply denote a different criterion for inclusion. At the same time a shop can seem to disappear because it has moved its location, or because the owner has died and the business has been taken over by someone else, either another member of the family or an employee. Only the Broster series of directories for Chester are suitable for this sort of comparison, and, even allowing for the difficulties mentioned above, the figures in Table 9:7 do suggest that shops were continually appearing and disappearing. Certainly over a period of 14 years only wine merchants and goldsmiths had a survival rate of over 50% while milliners, butchers, bakers and druggists were all under 35%. Even over the shorter periods of two and

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1. C.f. Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester, 1971) for a description of a corner shop in a slum area of Salford in the early twentieth century, including comments on the perilous nature of shop finances.
2. See Table 9:7.

Table 9:7 Survival Rates of Retail Businesses in Chester, 1783-1797

Trade Group	No. in 1783	% remaining in 1787	% remaining 1797
Bakers, Flour Dealers, Confectioners	26	65	31
Butchers	21	95	24
Grocers, Tea Dealers	32	81	37.5
Wine Merchants	12	83	58
Mercers, Drapers	26	65	42
Milliners	11	55	9
Shoemakers	20	90	40
Furniture Dealers	10	80	50
Gold and Silver Smiths	5	100	60
Druggists and Apothecaries	11	73	9

	No. in 1795	% remaining in 1797
Bakers, Flour Dealers, Confectioners	43	81
Butchers	12	100
Grocers, Tea Dealers	35	86
Wine Merchants	14	86
Mercers, Drapers	18	83
Milliners	9	67
Shoemakers	15	93
Furniture Dealers	13	85
Gold and Silver Smiths	4	75
Druggists and Apothecaries	8	100

Sources: P. Broster, The Chester Guide (Eds. for 1783, 1787, 1795 and 1797).

four years milliners seem to have been very vulnerable and bakers relatively so. Although it is dangerous to infer much from these figures, members of purely shopkeeping trades seem to have been slightly more vulnerable than craftsmen-retailers.

The incidence of retailers among bankrupts in all three

towns is noticeable, especially in Chester.[1] The number of bankrupts in all categories, including retailers, increased sharply after 1790, although there are marked differences between the three towns. Macclesfield appears to have had a highly stable business community with very few bankrupts either among manufacturers or among shopkeepers, while Stockport, not a great deal bigger than Macclesfield, had a very large number of bankrupts among manufacturers and a lesser, though still significant, number among shopkeepers from the 1790's onwards. In Chester retailers almost always made up the largest group of bankrupts, with cloth and clothing retailers particularly noticeable. The main groups of shopkeepers finding their way to the bankruptcy courts were grocers and drapers, together with a number of innkeepers and, in Chester, several wine merchants. Other retailers and craftsmen occasionally appear, including bakers, butchers, ironmongers and, in Stockport and Chester, 11 corn dealers and cheesemongers between 1806 and 1815. As well as showing a general increase in number after 1790, and particularly after 1810, bankrupts tended to bunch in certain years. General years of crisis would certainly see an increase in the numbers of bankrupts, but it is also possible that the failure of one trader in a town might bring down other traders in the same area. In Chester it was not uncommon when two traders went bankrupt in one year for them both to be in the same line of business, and between 1765 and 1771 five of the seven shopkeepers to go bankrupt were grocers.

The prestigious pure shopkeepers like grocers and drapers were in a risky business, but they also had the opportunity of

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1. See Table 9:8.

Table 9:8 Bankrupts in Macclesfield, Stockport and Chester, 1731-1815

Town	Years	Food	Cloth Retailers	Other	Other Traders
Macclesfield	1731-35	0	1	0	0
	1736-40	0	2	0	1
	1741-45	0	0	0	0
	1746-50	0	0	0	0
	1751-55	0	1	0	1
	1756-60	0	0	0	1
	1761-65	0	1	0	0
	1766-70	0	0	0	1
	1771-75	3	0	0	5
	1776-80	0	0	0	0
	1781-85	2	0	0	2
	1786-90	0	1	0	2
	1791-95	2	0	0	7
	1796-1800	0	0	0	2
	1801-05	2	1	0	4
	1806-10	5	0	0	3
	1811-15	2	1	2	8
Stockport	1731-35	1	0	0	0
	1736-40	0	1	0	0
	1741-45	1	3	0	0
	1746-50	0	0	0	1
	1751-55	0	1	0	1
	1756-60	0	0	0	7
	1761-65	0	0	0	0
	1766-70	0	0	0	1
	1771-75	0	0	0	5
	1776-80	0	1	0	4
	1781-85	1	0	0	2
	1786-90	2	3	0	5
	1791-95	4	5	0	12
	1796-1800	3	4	0	23
	1801-05	6	1	1	20
	1806-10	6	3	3	25
	1811-15	19	3	3	19
Chester	1731-35	3	4	1	2
	1736-40	5	1	1	0
	1741-45	0	2	0	3
	1746-50	1	1	0	0
	1751-55	3	2	0	2
	1756-60	0	0	0	1
	1761-65	1	0	0	1
	1766-70	4	1	0	5
	1771-75	1	1	0	0
	1776-80	1	2	3	6
	1781-85	2	2	2	4
	1786-90	2	4	0	1
	1791-95	4	1	4	9
	1796-1800	4	1	3	3
	1801-05	4	1	2	0
	1806-10	3	9	2	6
	1811-15	9	8	1	7

Sources: London Gazette 1731-34, 1737-41; Gentleman's Magazine 1735-37, 1742-85; William Smith and Co., A List of Bankrupts.....from Jan. 1, 1786 to June 24, 1806, Inclusive (London, 1806) with continuations to 1815.

making a great deal of money. It is of course impossible to tell whether a rich trader has made his money in trade or has inherited it, but it is certainly possible to associate certain trades with wealthy men in general. In seventeenth-century London the same mixture of high risks and great wealth seems to have prevailed among merchants[1] as it did on a lesser scale among eighteenth-century provincial retailers. Personal wealth in London with £5,000 to £10,000 only putting a man among the substantial merchants and £1,000 to £5,000 among middling merchants while prosperous traders had between £500 and £1,000 was not only greater than in the provinces at the same period[2] but was almost certainly greater than in a town like Chester much later. Eighteenth-century retailers were, however, generally much wealthier than their counterparts in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Worcester where only mercers generally had inventories assessed at over £100, while many traders were worth less than £50.[3] By the late eighteenth century the wealth of shopkeepers was regarded by their opponents as a good argument in favour of the shop tax and their prosperity was bitterly described by one writer:

> 'Do not...a considerable portion of them live in a style of opulence and even of splendour? Do they not keep their horses, their whiskies, and their phaetons? Have they not their country lodgings, and their country villas? Have they not their clubs where they regale at ease and leisure? Their private entertainments, and their public dinners; where luxury if not riot predominates? Do they not, in general, enjoy a much greater share of the

1. Richard Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth Century England', Economic History Review, 2nd Ser. XXIII (1970) pp. 223-4.
2. Ibid. pp. 228-30.
3. Alan D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the sixteenth century, pp. 85-92; 120-142.

> conveniences and superfluities of life, than land-holders of far superior property?'[1]

The evidence shown in Tables 9:9 and 9:10, drawn from probate sources, attempts to give an impression of the personal wealth of retailers.[2] Probate sources have defects in that they omit real estate and in that the poorest are frequently not represented at all while the very richest may not be traceable as shopkeepers, since they frequently styled themselves gentlemen when they came to make their wills. Nevertheless the evidence of inventories, wills and probate valuations is the best available. In general Chester retailers seem to have been more wealthy than similar traders in the other towns, and while this is not always apparent from the tables, the evidence of legacies in other wills shows more Chester retailers leaving over £1,000 than retailers elsewhere. The most striking point, however, is the vast spread of wealth, even in a single trade group. However, using the valuations given and the legacies mentioned in wills, some form of wealth hierarchy can be suggested. Mercers and drapers come at the top of this with one Stockport draper leaving over £1,400[3] in specific legacies in 1736 and one Chester mercer £3,600[4] in 1760 and another over £1,750[5] in 1738 as well as the valuations shown in Table 9:10. By the early nineteenth century corn and cheese dealers were clearly

1. A Vindication of the Shop-Tax, p. 42.
2. It should be stressed that many traders included as 'retailers' would have had important manufacturing and wholesaling functions and that their wealth may have been derived from these as much as from pure retailing. This may particularly apply to brewers and corn dealers. See cap. 10 below on the structure of individual trades.
3. John Sidebotham, linen draper. Cheshire R.O., will 1736 (WS).
4. Robert Davies, mercer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1760 (WS).
5. John Parker, mercer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1738 (WS).

Table 9:9 Personal Wealth of Retailers 1720-60 (from Inventories)

Trade Group	Inventory Total £	s.	d.
Bakers			
Uriah Bingley, Chester 1721	36	6	10
John Chapman, Chester 1728	329	3	8
Samuel Bingley, Chester 1731	159	10	8
William Palin, Chester 1757	143	2	11
Butchers			
George Holt, Stockport 1725	43	13	8
Charles Walmsley, Stockport 1742	71	8	2
John Dutton, Chester 1752	143	4	5
Grocers			
James Royle, Stockport 1744	96	4	0
Mercers and Drapers			
Samuel Dean, Stockport 1726	181	17	4
William Brazegirdle, Stockport 1749	254	17	4
Tailors			
Josiah Barnes, Macclesfield 1755	13	11	10
Edward Orme, Stockport 1721	103	12	10
William Wood, Stockport 1726	20	7	6
Others			
Francis Slate, Heaton Norris (Cordwainer) 1739	50	2	6
John Kelsall, Stockport (Ironmonger) 1744	535	9	1½
John Shepley, Stockport (Clockmaker) 1750	39	17	6
Abner Scholes, Chester (Upholsterer) 1736	1,675	4	4½

N.B. Debts owed to deceased usually included.

Source: Cheshire R.O., Probate Records.

Table 9:10 Personal Wealth of Retailers 1811-1815 (from Probate)

Trade Group	Wealth not exceeding £
Corn Dealers and Cheesemongers	
Samuel Pickering, Macclesfield 1811	3,500
Samuel Haslehurst, Stockport 1811	1,500
Bradford Norbury, Stockport 1813	17,500
Edward Griffiths, Chester 1813	2,000
Bakers	
Samuel Clowes, Macclesfield 1814	200
John Davies the younger, Chester 1812	20
Butchers	
Hugh Rowe, Chester 1812	1,500
Albin Minshull, Chester 1812	100
Lloyd Price, Chester 1814	100
Grocers	
Samuel Bradbury, Macclesfield 1811	450
James Taylor, Stockport 1814	600
Ralph Perns, Stockport 1814	3,500
Samuel Downs, Stockport 1815	600
Benjamin Clubbe, Chester 1812	3,500
Thomas Williams, Chester 1813	800
William Catherall, Chester 1815	200
Shopkeepers	
Henry Orme, Macclesfield 1814	450
Joseph Leigh, Chester 1811	40
Thomas Posnett, Chester 1812	20
Mercers and Drapers	
Thomas Wood, Macclesfield 1811	450
Samuel Hayes, Macclesfield 1814	300
James Royle, Stockport 1813	300
John Brown, Chester 1811	12,500
John Dutton, Chester 1814	2,000
Samuel Brittain, Chester 1814	3,500
Samuel Reece, Chester 1815	450
Furniture Dealers	
John Astle, Macclesfield, 1813	200
Samuel Burgess, Stockport 1811	500
Others	
Thomas Bibby, Stockport (Tailor) 1815	450
John Slack, Macclesfield (Clock Maker) 1815	100
William Lancaster, Chester (Glass Dealer) 1813	1,000

Source: Cheshire R.O., Probate Records.

Date is year of probate.

a very wealthy group; few of these left wills earlier and this may in itself be an indication of an increase in wealth by the 1800's in consequence of developments in the grain trade to growing towns. Many grocers were wealthy, one in Chester leaving £3,200[1] in specific legacies in 1751, though none in Stockport in the mid-eighteenth century seem to have been worth over a few hundred pounds. Brewers were not infrequently worth over £1,000 and in Chester ironmongers and, by the end of the eighteenth century, druggists made bequests of £1,000 and more. One Chester upholsterer was valued at £1,675 on his death in 1736[2] but most other trades had few members worth over £500. Occasionally a butcher or baker would reach this figure, but tailors, shoemakers and other craftsmen were, along with provisions dealers, in the £100 or under category in most cases, in the eighteenth century. Wealth of between £100 and £500 was not uncommon for any tradesman by 1815.

A certain amount of wealth was of course held as property. Perhaps about half the wills of traders make references to property, often simply a house and shop in the town where they lived but not infrequently other houses in the town or land outside it. One Stockport grocer had land in Prestbury and Bramhall[3] while another had land in Warrington[4] and several Chester retailers had land in Wales.[5] Some shopkeepers may

1. William Goodwin, grocer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1751 (WS).
2. Abner Scholes, upholsterer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1736 (WS).
3. Ralph Brock, grocer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1746 (WS).
4. Henry Arderne, grocer. Cheshire R.O., Will 1747 (WS).
5. Thomas Dannald, baker; James Briscoe, linen draper; Thomas Jones, goldsmith. Cheshire R.O., Wills, 1731, 1752, 1738 (WS).

have bought land with the money they made in trade, and John Swanwick retired in 1812 from his Macclesfield business[1] to live the life of a county gentleman at Erereton in south Cheshire. Other retailers invested money in public undertakings, particularly transport improvements, although never to a very great extent. A linen draper and a baker from Chester were among the undertakers of the river Dee navigation in 1733,[2] and several grocers and drapers, along with a few other retailers including druggists and upholsterers subscribed to the Chester Canal project in 1772.[3] Investment in roads was less popular, but Bradford Norbury, cornfactor, and John Brown, grocer, both of Stockport had money invested in the Manchester and Wilmslow turnpike trust.[4] Such investments were presumably made out of a desire to earn a fairly steady income on capital, and perhaps out of local feeling, rather than out of specific hopes of benefits from improved communications.

Chester shopkeepers were not only wealthy but played a major role in the government of the city. Without a great deal of work on the composition of the local administration it would be impossible to assess the role of retailers in the other towns, and in Chester only the sheriffs, who were probably the second most important officials, can be analysed. Between 1730 and 1815 there were 176 persons holding the office of sheriff and of these 19 were gentlemen or of no stated occupation, 109

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1. Macclesfield Courier 4 Apr. 1812.
2. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions File, 1732-36, Names of Undertakers (QSF/96).
3. Eaton Estate Office, Grosvenor Family Papers 1731-1802, Printed list of Subscribers to Chester Canal Navigation, 1 July 1772. Seen at Chester City R.O.
4. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Manchester and Wilmslow Turnpike Trust, Mortgages of Tolls (M 124/4/1/1-43).

were retailers and 48 from other occupations. Within this large proportion of retailers, 19 were mercers or drapers, 18 grocers, 17 druggists or apothecaries, 10 wine merchants and 8 hatters. Other trades were of very limited importance, and at this level of city government the major retail trades had a very strong position.[1] In Chester the big shopkeepers, along with the urban gentry and to a lesser extent the merchants, must have dominated town life. They were wealthy, they were organized through the gilds which were not yet extinct as social bodies and they had a firm grip on the local administration. While drapers, grocers and corn dealers, and perhaps occasionally other traders, may have been influential in the other towns, they were unlikely to have rivalled the power of the textile manufacturers.

It is difficult to determine just how far retailers felt themselves to be a separate class and were able to form a single interest group in any town. To the extent that this was possible, Chester was certainly the most favourable place for it, since there was no challenge to the shopkeepers from manufacturers and trading, including retail trading, was the basis of the city's prosperity. In business terms retailers, particularly those involved simply in selling and operating in durable goods trades, had quite a lot in common, particularly in their need to call attention to themselves by having a good location and by advertising. Along with other traders they were involved in credit and the maintaining of sufficient working capital to keep them in business. The lesser shopkeepers had more in

1. Details of sheriff's occupations taken from I.M.B. Pigott, History of the City of Chester (Chester, 1815) pp. 250-59.

common with small craftsmen and the providers of services, and were similarly involved in running small workshops. While all retailers were concerned in dealing directly with the demands of consumers their methods of business, their particular skills and their need to have skills beyond buying and selling depended on the sort of goods they were dealing in. A full picture of retailing can only be seen after something has been said about the activities of each of the main types of shop-keeper, and this the following chapter will attempt to do.

CHAPTER 10

THE SHOPKEEPERS OF THE THREE TOWNS

Food and Drink Trades

Food and drink were clearly the most important items bought by a very large section of the population, and may have been virtually the only items bought by some people. Similarly food and drink retailers represented a large proportion of the total number of retailers in many towns, although they cannot be thought of as a homogeneous group. The traders that can be included in this category ranged from producer-sellers operating in markets and disposing of a small amount of surplus produce, to men engaged solely in buying and selling and perhaps operating on a substantial scale from town centre premises. In general the division between items sold in markets and those sold in shops was that between perishable and non-perishable foods, though when town premises were required for production as in the case of bakers there was every likelihood of these also being used for sale. This section will be concerned with fixed shop traders,[1] including both producers like bakers and pure retailers like grocers. Innkeepers, alehousekeepers and victuallers will, however, be omitted from the discussion since, while they were both numerous and important, an examination of their activities would add little to an understanding of shopkeepers. It would also take the discussion into realms of socio-cultural history beyond the bounds of this thesis.

1. See cap. 5 above for an examination of market traders.

Brewers, who were occasionally involved in making retail sales direct to the public, will be considered briefly, and the other main groups to be discussed will be bakers, butchers, provisions dealers, grocers and wine merchants.

Bakers and Corn and Flour Dealers

Traditionally the baker was seen as the servant of the public, performing an essential public function for which he deserved payment in accordance with the criteria laid down in the assize of bread. Although the assize of bread was increasingly disused in the eighteenth century, years of scarcity could lead to calls for its being put into operation[1] and it was certainly in use in Chester in 1767 and 1768.[2] The assize was seen by some as an important safeguard for the public against profiteering, and it was also argued that bakers should be compelled to bake loaves brought to them by their customers in preference to baking their own bread for sale.[3] By the early nineteenth century such attitudes were becoming increasingly archaic, and the restrictions which continued to be imposed on bakers while the rest of the grain and flour trade was essentially free provoked some hostility. Bakers complained that the assize was often set so low that they could get no profit, and in Derby the bakers threatened to strike in support of their claim for a more just price.[4] Although the assize of bread was not abolished in the provinces until 1836, it had

1. Sidney & Beatrice Webb, 'The Assize of Bread' Economic Journal XIV (1904) 196-218.
2. Chester City R.O., Assize of Bread 1767-68 (MBB/1).
3. J.S. Girdler, Observations on Forestalling, pp. 108-114.
4. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on....the Price and Assize of Bread, Parl. Papers 1812-13 iii (259), pp. 36-37.

almost certainly fallen into widespread disuse a decade or so earlier.[1]

Although there is no evidence of the survival of the assize of bread in eighteenth-century Macclesfield or Stockport, bakers in both towns operated under some restrictions. In Macclesfield it was claimed that all bread should be baked in the King's bakehouse and in 1765 action was taken against Edward Shaw for setting up a large oven and bakehouse in Macclesfield and baking bread and pastry there for the inhabitants of the town and taking toll. A similar private bakehouse was said to have been suppressed twenty years previously, and the Clulows who baked bread for sale in Macclesfield paid an acknowledgement to the owners of the town bakehouse and agreed not to bake on behalf of the town's inhabitants.[2] Increases in population must have made such customs hard to defend and when Sir George Warren in Stockport attempted to defend his bakehouse monopoly against bakers who were baking for the townspeople and taking dues, the increase in the town's population was mentioned. Warren claimed that he had erected two new bakehouses which were sufficient for the needs of the town,[3] but the numbers of bakers operating in both Macclesfield and Stockport by the early nineteenth century implies that restrictions had had to be abandoned. Bakers were still however not merely baking bread for sale but were also baking bread, pies, cakes and even meat in their ovens on behalf of the townspeople of Macclesfield in

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1. Sidney & Beatrice Webb, loc.cit..
2. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Case on Macclesfield Bakehouse (CR 63/2/341).
3. Stockport Museum, Case of Sir George Warren respecting the Bakehouse, 1767 (HX 181).

1836 when they announced price increases.[1] Home baking also probably remained of importance well into the nineteenth century, and in 1814 it was said that, 'Nearly one half of the Bread used in Manchester is prepared and kneaded by each separate family at home, and baked at public ovens.'[2] The position was not likely to be very different in Stockport and the other towns of east Cheshire.

Bakers were essentially involved in the purchase of grain or flour, its conversion into bread and its sale. They were likely to participate in the open market as purchasers, at least insofar as grain still passed through the open market, and were likely to sell from fixed shops. Some bakers were not content to rely on either the market or grain dealers for purchasing their corn and made direct contact with farmers. In a dispute of 1731, William Pemberton of Brimstage, yeoman, told how he had sold a little wheat to John Denson, a baker in Chester, and agreed to supply him with 31 more measures which he delivered to him in Chester. Denson agreed that he had made the purchases but disputed the agreement, claimed that he had not been to Benson to examine his main stock of wheat and that the wheat he had bought was too musty to use.[3] In the 1760's there were complaints of bakers buying corn out of market direct from farmers, and allegations of its being delivered to their bake-houses in Chester without passing through the market.[4] Other

1. Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll., Macclesfield (CR 63/2/341).
2. Report from the Committee on Laws relating to the Manufacture, Sale, and Assize of Bread, Parl. Papers 1814-15 v(186), Appdx. 8, p. 147.
3. P.R.O., Chester 16/124.
4. Chester City R.O., Chester Corporation Lawsuits, Legal Papers re Toll of Corn (C/LP/120).

bakers involved themselves in large-scale grain purchases from merchants and in 1728 two Chester bakers, William Briscoe and William Holland, formed a partnership with Thomas Bingley, a Chester ironmonger to buy and sell wheat, rye, barley, oats, flour, malt, butter and other goods. They bought corn from merchants in Liverpool and elsewhere and in 1729 they bought a ship of their own to transport the corn in. When the partnership was dissolved about 1730 Briscoe and Bingley claimed that they had paid out over £385 for the partnership to Holland and were owed over £109 in profits.[1]

Such inventories as survive of bakers suggest that in towns they did not, at least in the early and mid-eighteenth century, extend their operations beyond bread and flour. They might possess kneading troughs, weights, scales, tins, flour and grain[2] but few other trade goods. Customers were likely to be drawn from only a small area and sales to each customer would probably be small and frequent. John Chapman in the late 1730's in Chester seems to have been trying to extend his sales area by selling brown bread to hucksters living in Handbridge across the Dee where he claimed to have a good market among the poor labouring people who bought bread from the hucksters he supplied. He ran into opposition from the Bakers' Company over this practice since it was claimed that it harmed the trade of other bakers.[3] At about the same time Chester bakers were complaining that most of the principal inhabitants of the City baked their own bread and that they were no longer able, because of rising

1. P.R.O., Chester 16/125.
2. Corn and flour amounted to £31 10s 0d out of a total inventory of £143 2s 11d in the case of William Palin of Chester (Cheshire R.O., WS 1757).
3. P.R.O., Chester 16/130.

costs, to undertake a quarter's baking for anyone for a low charge.[1] The number of bakers operating in Chester was between 20 and 25 in the 1730's and 1740's, dropped to below 15 until the late 1770's, then fluctuated around 20 until the 1810's when it soared to 30 or more.[2]

Bakers would presumably trade in flour when there was a demand for this, but by the end of the eighteenth century a number of retail grain and flour dealers, not doing any baking, were appearing. Some of these were large-scale grain merchants trading wholesale and retail and Bradford Norbury in Stockport was a man of this type. Norbury was listed as a licensed badger in Stockport in 1770,[3] and was trading as a cheesemonger and corn factor at least from 1784. In 1788 he was accused of mixing 500 bushels of putrid, rotten, unsound, pasty and unwholesome wheat containing grubs and vermin with 500 bushels of other wheat, having this ground into flour and selling the result as good flour.[4] He was fined £50[5] and in the 1795 riots in Stockport he was a major target of the mob's anger. Nevertheless his business appears to have prospered and when he died in 1813 his personal estate was valued at up to £17,500, he was a man of some importance in town affairs and owned property in Stockport and Marple including two warehouses.[6] Other flour dealers were simple retailers operating on a less grand scale. Thomas

1. Chester City R.O., Assembly Files, 1732-40 (AF 52).
2. Chester City R.O., Mayor's Books, 1731-1835 (MB/47-53).
3. Cheshire R.O., Register of Badgers Licences 1759-1772 (QDL/7).
4. P.R.O., Palat. of Chester, Gaol File 29 Geo. III, Spring (Chester 24/175/3).
5. P.R.O., Palat. of Chester, Crown Book 31 Geo. II - 34 Geo. III (Chester 21/7).
6. Cheshire R.O., Will of Bradford Norbury of Stockport, Gentleman 1813 (WS Series).

Shawcross, in prison for debt in 1801, was owed £146 4s 8½d by 90 customers chiefly living in the streets around his shop in Hillgate. There were some debts of over £5, but the majority were of under £1.[1] In Chester James Wharton the younger, at his bankruptcy examination, stated that he had set up in business as a retail flour dealer in 1807, having obtained goods to the value of £60 on credit from his brother. In the next year he began trading as a corn dealer in partnership with Richard Young, each partner bringing about £400 capital into the concern. The partnership was dissolved after two years and Wharton traded on his own, buying wheat, having it ground and selling the flour. Among his suppliers were Liverpool and Rochdale corn merchants.[2]

It was no great step from dealing in flour to dealing in general provisions,[3] and in some towns by the early nineteenth century it was said that many bakers kept chandlers' shops.[4] Making and selling confectionery was also an obvious line of development for bakers, though the trade of confectioner could be carried on in its own right. Simon Young in Chester was supplying various forms of sweets, cakes, pastry and gingerbread in the 1720's, and almost a century later another Chester confectioner was advertising:

> 'Thomas Gibbons...recommends his bride cake as being of a superior quality, and will keep mellow and good in any climate twelve months. Fancy biscuits, rusks, and a variety of cakes, with macaroons, Ratife's rout cakes, survine biscuits, and best plain and wafer, and hunting gingerbread....' 5.

1. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/2.
2. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/1.
3. See below for discussion of provisions dealers, pp. 342-4.
4. Committee on Assize of Bread, Parl. Papers 1812-13 iii, (259) p. 37.
5. Chester Courant 21 Mar. 1815.

Confectioners also frequently dealt in the more exotic fruits, and Gibbons was no exception. A few months later he announced that he sold raisins, figs, olives, prunes, oranges and lemons among other items.[1] Speciality shops of this sort were, however, much more to be looked for in Chester than in the other towns where baker, flour dealer and provisions dealer were the basic shop retailers dealing in food.

Butchers

Along with bakers butchers were of great importance as processers and retailers of food, although many of them probably sold through the market rather than from fixed shops. In Chester the number of butchers operating rose from around 30 in the 1740's and 1750's to between 40 and 50 in the 1810's.[2] Numbers recorded in directories for the 1780's and 1790's are about half the numbers recorded as taking the oath to trade in Chester, and the difference is probably made up by the market traders who lived outside Chester and only traded in the city on market days. By 1834 there were 101 butchers trading in Chester of whom 70 attended the market only.[3] Several Chester butchers had slaughterhouses in Cow Lane, including Robert Fearnall the elder who owed £6 in 1779 for rent on several such slaughter-houses.[4] In Macclesfield all butchers were expected to trade from the shambles, but in Stockport at least some butchers had their own shops and slaughterhouses for premises of this type formerly occupied by Robert Walmesley were advertised for

1. Ibid. 2 May 1815.
2. Chester City R.O., Mayor's Books 1731-1835 (MB/47-53).
3. J. Pigot & Co., National Commercial Directory.
4. Chester City R.O., Portmote and Pentice Court Affidavit File 1778-83 (MSAF/12).

letting in 1813.[1] In all cases the supply of meat from town butchers would be supplemented by that from country butchers trading in the market.[2]

In provincial towns the demarcation of functions represented by cattle jobbers, carcase butchers and cutting butchers in London probably did not exist. Butchers bought, or fattened, live cattle and sheep, slaughtered them, prepared and sold the meat. There is evidence of some Chester butchers owning live-stock, at least in the mid-eighteenth century, and some nineteenth-century butchers owned land. The inventory of John Dutton of Chester, drawn up in 1752, recorded that he owned three steers, three heifers, three calves, twenty-four wethers and twenty-one ewes and tups,[3] and two Chester butchers in 1738 rented some land in Christleton so that they could pasture their twenty-five ewes.[4] Beef, veal, mutton and to a lesser extent pork were sold by butchers, as was brawn by a number of Chester butchers. In November 1733, Michael Bromley of Eastgate Street advertised that he, 'Selleth extraordinary good Brawn'[5] and throughout the eighteenth century one or more butchers would advertise their brawn at the end of each year. One such butcher, John Palin in 1785, was apparently not making his own brawn for he announced that he had brawn, prepared by a person from Shrewsbury, for sale.[6]

If butchers operated to a large extent through public

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1. Macclesfield Courier, 6 Feb. 1813.
2. See cap. 4 above for references to this aspect of Manchester market. (pp. 131-33)
3. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of John Dutton, 1752 (WC Series).
4. P.R.O., Chester 16/128.
5. Adam's Weekly Courant, 7 - 14 Nov. 1733.
6. Adam's Weekly Courant, 29 Nov. 1785.

markets, other similar traders dealing in fish and poultry did so to an even greater extent. Chester had one or two fishmongers listed in eighteenth-century directories, but most fish must have passed through the fish market. There was one poulterer in the city in 1834, but none are mentioned earlier or elsewhere in the county, and any poultry purchased presumably came from farmers or their wives selling in the market. Specialities, particularly oysters, may have been more likely to pass through shops. In Macclesfield, William Wrigg, describing himself as a fruiterer and oyster dealer, advertised oysters for sale in barrels or smaller quantities in 1811 and 1812[1] and in 1814 another fruiterer in the town, A. Johnson, announced that she sold London oysters.[2] Trade of this nature, largely confined to the wealthy, must have been very limited.

Brewers

The brewer was producer, wholesaler and, to some extent, retailer. Provincial brewers were usually men of capital, able to operate on a relatively large scale. The inventory of John Ireland of Chester who died in 1786 showed that he was worth over £2,500 at his death,[3] while a partnership formed in 1790 between two Chester and two Flintshire men to be known as the Chester Brewing Company had an initial capital of £1,600.[4] Ireland seems to have been involved in both malting and brewing for there are references to a kiln he rented and to purchases

1. Macclesfield Courier, 9 Nov. 1811, 18 Jan. 1812, 3 Oct. 1812.
2. Ibid. 19 Nov. 1814.
3. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of John Ireland, 1790 (WC Series).
4. P.R.O., E 112/1383/131.

of malt, and another Chester brewer, Arthur Mercer who died in 1745, also possessed a kiln.[1] Retail sales by Ireland in the mid 1780's included many frequent small items, as well as full barrels of ale and beer.[2] Distillers, certainly in Chester, also seem to have been involved in retailing, and in 1733 one of these, Peter Leadbeter advertised that he had four year old beer for sale at 14d per gallon.[3] Allen Jopson of Chester, distiller, had brandy, punch, cider, wines and other spirits in his shop when his goods were appraised in 1732.[4] One distiller was operating in Stockport in the early nineteenth century, George Garside, and he was supplying Thomas Wood of Didsbury with spirits.[5]

Most beer that was consumed would have been bought from an innkeeper or alehousekeeper rather than direct from the brewer, and the brewers' main customers presumably were retailers. In seventeenth-century Chester the Brewers' Company claimed that their members had a monopoly on beer brewing,[6] but this was probably never enforced and some publicans were certainly buying malt and doing their own brewing in the city in the eighteenth century. Tied houses, which were developing in eighteenth-century London,[7] were also to be found in Chester and in 1744 Peter Leadbeter of Chester, beer brewer, agreed to let the Blossoms Inn to William Adgett with a provision that Adgett was to buy all the ale and beer he sold in the Inn from Leadbeter.[8]

1. Cheshire R.O., Will of Arthur Mercer 1745 (WS Series).
2. John Ireland Inventory.
3. The Chester Weekly Journal, 30 May/10 June 1733.
4. P.R.O., Chester 16/129.
5. M.P.L. Archives Dept., Wood Ledgers (M 62/1/3); No other rectifying distillers in Cheshire are listed in Parl. Papers 1802-3 III, 1037.
6. Chester City R.O., Brewer's Company, Miscellaneous Papers (G 3/5).
7. P. Mathias, The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830 pp. 117-8.
8. P.R.O., Chester 16/132.

Not all the beer on sale in Cheshire was brewed locally, and though the penetration of the London brewers into the provincial market was very patchy in the eighteenth century,[1] it existed to some limited extent by the early nineteenth century. Thomas Molineux, a porter dealer in Macclesfield, advertised in 1813 that he sold Barclay's best brown stout,[2] and two years later T. & Z. Zachary, porter merchants of Stockport, announced that they also sold Barclay, Perkins & Co.'s best porter.[3] Home brewing was, however, probably almost non-existent except in some of the wealthier town families by the nineteenth century. In 1833 a former Stockport spinner reported that not one operative family in fifty brewed beer in their own cottage.[4] The average man was probably more dependent on the market for drink than for any other frequently consumed item.

Provisions Dealers

Included in this group are retailers of a wide range of foodstuffs who were not involved in processing and who are to be found in directories variously categorized as shopkeepers, hucksters, cheesemongers, and in some cases included with flour dealers or grocers if they are to be found at all. Some of these were trades of long standing and retail cheesemongers dealing in cheese, butter, eggs, bacon and hams are described in The London Tradesman.[5] However, they seem in general to have been a trade group which expanded rapidly in the nineteenth

1. P. Mathias, op.cit. pp. 142-49.
2. Macclesfield Courier, 13 Oct. 1813.
3. Ibid. 29 Apr. 1815.
4. Report from the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, Parl. Papers 1833 VI (690), p. 626.
5. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, p. 281.

century, catering for the growing urban masses who needed to buy foods that could be rapidly prepared and who wanted to shop near their homes. By the middle of the century general shops could account for up to 46% (in Bolton) of all shops in towns, and the ratio of shops of this type to population seems to have been improving while there was little growth in the numbers of better class shops.[1] Shops of this nature tended to be small, to rely heavily on the wholesale grocers to obtain supplies at frequent intervals and to be located in back streets.[2] James Bentley, a flour dealer of Minshull Street, Manchester, was a trader of this sort in the early nineteenth century, selling flour, bread, salt, potatoes, eggs, butter, cheese, tea, sugar and coffee and other such goods together with some household stores like candles and paper. He was buying from a large number of wholesalers in small amounts at very frequent intervals and selling small quantities very regularly. If the general accounts accompanying his record of sales and purchases really relate to him, his sales rose from £1,700 in 1803 to over £3,000 in the early 1810's and then dropped steadily to below £1,000 a year in the mid 1820's, but his profits rarely exceeded £50 a year and he frequently made a loss.[3]

Although shops of this type are normally associated with the nineteenth century, they were to be found in the Cheshire towns in the eighteenth century. They are not easy to identify from directories, and were the very sort of shop most likely to be omitted, but the 28 hucksters listed in Stockport in the

1. D. Alexander, op.cit. pp. 98-101.
2. Ibid. p. 119; c.f. J. Blackman, 'The Development of the Retail Grocery Trade in the 19th Century', Business History IX (1967), pp. 110-117.
3. M.P.L., Archives Dept. Day Book of James Bentley, 1798-1828 (Misc 258/1).

Universal British Directory were almost certainly general provisions dealers. Sarah Brown in the 1750's in Stockport kept a shop selling cheese, butter, bacon, wheat, flour, oatmeal, potatoes, eggs, mugs, soap, candles, sugar and other goods. She was purchasing from corndealers and other traders in Cheshire and in 1759 had £100 worth of goods in the shop.[1] A huckster, Stephen Pearson, was robbed of butter in 1799 from his shop in Stockport[2] and in 1802 Samuel Maddocks of Chester, huckster, was robbed of bacon by a man who had bought some eggs from him and asked to buy some hung beef, an article Maddocks did not stock.[3] Richard Marsden, selling flour, meal and cheese in Macclesfield between 1812 and 1814 was probably a general provisions dealer[4] although grouped with bakers and flour dealers in trade directories, and a bill of 1829 to the Stockport Sunday School from a similar dealer in Stockport includes flour, butter, fish and cheese.[5] Goods of this sort, frequently wanted by a large section of the population, were apparently retailed from fixed shops in towns at a very early date and huckster's shops were probably the first true shops widely used by all people.

Grocers and Wine Merchants

The Grocer, 'Deals in Tea, Sugar, Coffee, Chocolate, Raisins, Currants, Prunes, Figs, Almonds, Soap, Starch, Blues of all sorts,

1. P.R.O., E 112/1089/117.
2. Cheshire R.O., Sessions File, Chester, January 1799 (QJF 227/1/109).
3. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations, 1802 (QSE/17/24).
4. P.R.O., E 112/1386/235.
5. Stockport R.L., Stockport Sunday School, Receipted Bills, 1806-1831 (B/S/2/1). Bill from S. Walker & Son.

etc. Some of them deal in Rums and Brandy, Oil, Pickles, and several other Articles fit for the Kitchen and the Tea-Table.'[1] This description of the grocer's business holds good for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sugar was perhaps the most characteristic item that grocers traded in and they were said to sell this at a loss.[2] Otherwise spices, dried fruits, household goods and stationery were typical and the 1744 inventory of James Royle of Stockport shows him stocking all these goods, along with tobacco, rice and hops, in a total stock valued at £53 3s 6d.[3] Abraham Dent stocked a similar range of goods, but also traded in a range of cloths and in wine and spirits.[4] Coffee seems to have been sold by many grocers by the early nineteenth century and in 1812 Joshua Thorley of Macclesfield was advertising 'London Patent Roasted Coffee. Sold only by Appointment of the Proprietor.'[5] Grocers not infrequently traded in wines and spirits, candles and drugs although specialist retailers existed in all these fields, and there were also, at least in Chester, specialist tea dealers. In 1785 Pierce Davies in Chester advertised a long list of teas bought at the East India Company's Sale which he offered to the public, ranging in price from Middling Bohea at 1s 11d to Superfine Gunpowder at 13s 0d.[6] Grocers' bills from the 1790's to 1820's continue to show sugar, tea, dried fruits, rice, spices, coffee and in one case butter as the predominant items sold.[7]

1. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, p. 188.
2. Ibid.
3. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of James Royle, 1744 (WS Series).
4. T.S. Willan, An Eighteenth-Century Shopkeeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen (Manchester, 1970), pp. 9-17.
5. Macclesfield Courier, 17 Oct. 1812.
6. Adam's Weekly Courant, 5 July 1785.
7. Bills of George Frost, Macclesfield (Swanwick Papers); Jonathan Robinson, Stockport (Arderne Papers); James Moore, Stockport (Sunday School Bills).

Grocers continued to do some final stage processing and preserved some craft skills in the nineteenth century. George Heywood, a Manchester grocer, claimed that in his apprenticeship he had learned a great deal about breaking sugar and turning out butter[1] and a Macclesfield grocer referred to tools for manufacturing and cutting tobacco in his will.[2] In general grocers seem to have purchased their stock from a wide range of wholesalers. Abraham Dent bought flour at Barnard Castle, groceries in Kendal and sugar in Lancaster[3] and a Macclesfield grocer, Peter Holerenshawe owed money to grocers and tobacconists in Warrington, Newcastle (Staffordshire), Manchester, Stockport, Knutsford, and Macclesfield in 1737.[4] Like Dent his customers were drawn from nearer home and he was owed several sums of a few shillings for groceries by people in Macclesfield and such surrounding villages as Sutton, Gawsworth and Wildboarclough. Many grocers counted themselves among the wealthier traders in a town, and it appears to have been a business in which money could be made. George Heywood reckoned his profits between June 1815 and August 1816 to be over £750 and in other years he made over £700. His capital in trade was put at £2,600 in 1820.[5] Although it was rare in any trade for a retailer to operate in more than one town, one tea dealer who went bankrupt in 1817 was described as of Macclesfield and Stockport.[6] The grocery trade seems to have been one in which expansion was possible

1. John Rylands Library, Manchester, Diary of George Heywood, (Eng. Ms. 703).
2. Will of Daniel Eccles, 1754. Cheshire R.O. WS
3. Willan, op.cit. pp. 29-41.
4. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/1.
5. John Rylands Library, Eng. Ms. 703 .
6. Robert Downing & Co. Bankruptcy announced in London Gazette, 10 May 1817.

High class grocers continued to exist well into the nineteenth century, although as the century went on demand for the general grocery store selling most non perishable foods probably increased.[1] The higher class grocers tended to style themselves Italian warehousemen, and a typical grocer of this type was George Dutton of Chester. He opened his first shop in Bridge Street in 1854 but two years later moved into a more central position in Eastgate Street, and began to call himself, 'Family Grocer and Italian Warehouseman'. He stocked a wide range of tea, coffee and chocolate, together with sugar, dried and crystallised fruits, rice, spices, oils, potted meats, wine, biscuits, candles and soap. He expected his customers to want credit and announced that all articles paid for in six months would be charged cash prices while a discount of 2½% would be allowed to customers paying monthly or quarterly. Dutton rapidly expanded his business, establishing branches in Wrexham in 1871 and Oswestry in 1876.[2]

Many grocers, and general dealers like Abraham Dent, also dealt in wines, but specialist wine dealers were important in Chester and also existed in the other Cheshire towns. Brandy, rum, gin and occasionally porter and cider were mentioned by many wine merchants in their advertisements, while in 1807 Richard Edwards of Chester listed 15 varieties of British wines, including raspberry, cowslip, currant and orange, that he could supply.[3] Wine merchants were often a wealthy section of the

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1. J. Blackman, loc. cit.
2. Handbills and trade notices in possession of George Dutton & Sons Ltd., Chester. I would like to thank Mr. Neale Dutton for allowing me to examine this material and for providing me with information on the company.
3. Chester Chronicle, 24 July 1807.

community, and in Chester several city officials and at least one banker came from their ranks. One Chester wine merchant, John Johnson, seems to have extended his operations to Macclesfield and in 1795 announced that he had purchased an extensive stock of rum, brandy, gin, Herefordshire cider, vinegar and stale London porter, which he claimed was suitable for harvest drink, and which were on sale in Chester and Macclesfield.[1] Not all wine merchants were wealthy. John Ellis, at his bankruptcy examination in Chester in 1798, stated that he had begun trading in the city 27 years previously with a capital of £100 which he had borrowed. This he had paid back in a year and his trade had since been successful, until the outbreak of war, though not extraordinarily so. He had stock valued at £93 18s 4d, comprising rum, brandy, gin, port, wine and vinegar, and owed money to suppliers chiefly in London amounting to at least £1,200. His total assets were perhaps a little over £850, and while he might have had some trade difficulties, the real cause of his bankruptcy seems to have been imprudently guaranteeing some of his son's dealings.[2] Men of this sort, some luckier or wiser than others, must have made up the bulk of the retailers in the higher class food and drink trades.

Cloth and Clothing Trades

Dealers in cloth and various articles of clothing and the artisans who made up cloth into clothes for individual consumers made up a second major section of the retail trade, including

1. Chester Courant, 11 Aug. 1795.
2. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/1.

some of the most prosperous shopkeepers of all. Macclesfield and Stockport, as centres of the textile manufacturing industries, contained several companies engaged in manufacturing, wholesaling and occasionally retailing cloth, but this section will only consider dealers primarily concerned with supplying goods or a service to the final consumer. The main general questions to be considered concern the extent to which ready made clothes had made their appearance in the shops and, linked to this, the degree of integration between the supplier of cloth and the makers of clothes. Although ready made clothes were essentially a nineteenth-century development, stockings, gloves, hats and a few other items had long been purchased already made up, even if such items could still be made to order if required. Moreover the first step towards dealing in ready made suits was probably for the dealer supplying the cloth to be able to provide tailoring facilities and this seems to have been happening in a few cases by the early nineteenth century. A further development that can be looked for in this period is the origins of the practice of dealers who made and sold articles of clothing not merely stocking those made by themselves but also those that they had bought wholesale from other manufacturers.[1]

Mercers and Drapers

Although the trades of mercer, woollen draper and linen draper were probably in origin quite different from one another, by the end of the eighteenth century the terms were virtually interchangeable.[2] The mercer no longer dealt exclusively in

1. See A. Adburgham, Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914 (London, 1964) for a lively descriptive account of nineteenth-century fashion shops.
2. See R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, pp. 194-6, 197-8, 282 for descriptions of the conventional functions of woollen drapers, mercers and linen drapers.

silks, but combined his business with that of the draper dealing in all types of cloth together with a few haberdashery items. Woollen drapers perhaps continued to be specially associated with the supply of cloth to tailors for making up mens' clothes, while linen drapers and mercers were particularly interested in supplying fashionable items to women, but distinctions were becoming less rigid and the general term draper frequently replaced all the older forms. Inventories and advertisements provide good evidence of the sorts of goods stocked by these cloth dealers in the eighteenth century. Cloth was of course the major item, including a bewildering variety of muslins, cottons and linens, while woollen drapers frequently advertised fashionable worsteds and waistcoat shapes[1] and linen drapers handkerchieves, stockings and table cloths.[2] The probate inventory of Samuel Dean of Stockport, linen draper, made in 1726 listed shop goods valued at £107 1s 8¾d, including ribbons, buttons, handkerchiefs, gloves, stockings, rugs, blankets and a great deal of linen cloth.[3] Also in Stockport William Brazegirdle, who dealt in groceries as well as cloth but seems principally to have been a linen draper, had shop goods and fittings valued at just under £140 in 1751, including handkerchiefs at £21 0s 7½d, stockings at £9 19s 11d, gloves at £4 1s 3d, hats at £1 5s 3d, and cloaks and a gown at £1 13s 0d.[4] In a town the size of Stockport dealing in cloth had not necessarily separated from general shopkeeping in the middle of the eighteenth century,

1. E.g. advertisement of Thomas Steele, Adam's Weekly Courant 25 May 1784.
2. E.g. advertisement of John Dutton, Ibid, 11 May 1784.
3. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of Samuel Dean 1726 (WS Series).
4. Cheshire R.O., Inventory etc. of William Brazegirdle 1751-59 (WC Series).

while in Chester many dealers were specializing. A 1755 inventory of Robert Stewart of Chester, linen draper, taken in connection with a debt he owed, listed shop goods, chiefly gloves and worsted and cotton stockings, valued at £82 15s 11d and linen drapery goods valued at £88 9s 3d.[1] A Chester haberdasher, Simon Johnson, whose goods were appraised the same year, had a stock of handkerchiefs, table cloths, linen, stockings and thread valued at £58 18s 0½d.[2] Like Brazegirdle in Stockport he also stocked one or two ready made cloaks and gowns, and also a riding coat.

Total stock valued at between £100 and £200 seems to have been quite normal in the mid-eighteenth century if surviving inventories are reasonable typical. Some of the more prosperous traders at the end of the century probably had very considerably more stock, although the stock, machinery and utensils of Peter and William Bowler who were linen manufacturers and drapers in Macclesfield in 1806 and 1807 was only reckoned to be worth £600.[3] Normally mercers and drapers were not involved in manufacturing or processing at all, but simply bought from manufacturers and wholesalers and sold to consumers who were then at liberty to make their own arrangement for the making up of cloth into goods. However, one or two Chester woollen drapers by the early nineteenth century were combining their function with that of the tailor, while George Birkin of Stockport in 1814 was describing himself as tailor and draper

1. Chester City R.O., Sheriff's Files, 1754-55 (SF/186).
2. Ibid., 1755-56 (SF/187).
3. P.R.O., E 112/1383/170.

and appears to have been both buying cloth wholesale in London and employing journeymen tailors.[1] In Chester Richard Orme in 1806 announced that he had received the latest fashions in cloth from London and added, 'Orders executed as usual, whether the articles are purchased of him or not'.[2] In the same year another Chester woollen draper, Robert Brittain, announced that he had just engaged a foreman from a fashionable London tailor to make up orders in the most modern style.[3]

London seems to have been a major centre for purchases by drapers and mercers. In Chester from the 1770's and in Stockport and Macclesfield by the 1810's, the principal cloth dealers were regularly announcing in the local newspapers that they had bought the latest fashions from the London houses. Some details of such a Spring visit to London by Susannah Brown's servant in 1782 survive and provide evidence of early purchases by Brown's of Chester. The servant was given a list of twelve addresses in Cheapside, Moorgate and the surrounding area to call at to pay bills and look at, and occasionally order, gloves, ribbons, and cloth.[4] Although fashion goods no doubt had to be acquired from London, drapers in north-west England naturally took advantage of ordering direct from local firms as well as dealing with London wholesalers. Sykes and Co. of Stockport were supplying P.M. & S. Williams of Chester with cloth in 1813 and 1814,[5] and there appear to have been trade links between Chester mercers and Coventry manufacturers.

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1. Macclesfield Courier, 23 Apr. 1814.
2. Chester Chronicle, 5 Sept. 1806.
3. Ibid., 26 Sept. 1806.
4. H.D. Willcock (Ed.), Brown's and Chester, pp. 24-25.
5. Stockport R.L., Sykes Mss., Banking Ledger, 1813-1824 (D 171/17/2).

Sales were of course much more local, but drapers and mercers must have relied heavily on the carriage trade to dispose of the more expensive and fashionable articles they stocked. Brown's were already supplying the Welsh gentry in 1801 when G. Boscowen, Esq. of Trevalyn Hall bought muslin from them,[1] but in general little is known of the customers of drapers. The schedule of Peter Lowe of Macclesfield, woollen draper, lists 209 debts due to him to the amount of £1,493 11s 7d, chiefly from the east Cheshire area.[2] These ranged from over £525 owed by another Macclesfield draper, to 5 shillings, but the bulk of the debts were between £2 and £5. Twenty-eight percent were for amounts over £5 and it seems that the average value of debts owed to drapers was probably higher than for many other sorts of traders. Drapers in market towns were moreover often involved in supplying, by wholesale, other drapers in smaller towns. Lowe was probably doing this, and Mrs. Bushell, a Chester mercer, announced in 1775 that she would sell by wholesale at reduced rates.[3]

The most striking feature of the trade was, however, the insistence on fashion. This is found both in the regular announcement of Spring fashions for sale and in specific references to fashionable goods as when in 1794 James Williams, woollen draper and mercer of Chester, advertised, 'All kinds and colours of silk, satin, hair, worsted and cotton goods, which are now so much the fashion for waistcoats and breeches'.[4]

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1. Flintshire R.O., Trevalyn Hall Mss., Vouchers 1773-1839 (D/TR/49).
2. P.R.O., Chester 10/1/2.
3. Chester Chronicle, 4 Sept. 1775.
4. Chester Courant, 18 Feb. 1794.

Probably more than any other traders, drapers and mercers had to be aware of the latest fashions and be responsive to changes in consumer demand - as well perhaps as encouraging such changes and leading fashion. Not that price was unimportant. Drapers were only too ready to link fashion and cheapness in their advertisements to attract custom, and in Chester in 1774 John Reader announced that his fresh stock of linen drapery, mercery and haberdashery would be sold at 10% below normal shop prices.[1] In March 1785 the Chester woollen draper Thomas Steele advertised best broad cloth at 17 shillings a yard, other broad cloth at 15 shillings and goods in general 10% cheaper than at any other shop.[2] This provoked an angry response from three other woollen drapers who declared that the price to them of superfine cloth was 17 shillings and that Steele must either be selling inferior goods or that he was heading for bankruptcy.[3] Steele replied that the prices he asked produced 10% profit[4] and remained in business in the centre of Chester for another twenty or more years. Prices could clearly be a sensitive matter, and although drapers were generally high class and wealthy dealers, providing the quality shops of most towns, a keen, competitive spirit was not absent from them.

John Swanwick of Macclesfield[5]

Several of the points made above can be illustrated from

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 19 Apr. 1774.
2. Ibid., 29 Mar. 1785.
3. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1785.
4. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1785.
5. This study is based on a brief examination of a large quantity of invoices and a few other documents relating to the Swanwick business which were discovered in the premises formerly occupied by John Swanwick. They are at present in the custody of Mrs. M. Moss of Prestbury and I would like

a study of John Swanwick of Macclesfield. Swanwick, born in 1760, probably in Market Drayton, was the son of a mercer, draper and grocer[1] and seems to have moved to Macclesfield about the time of his marriage in 1783.[2] He appears in Bailey's 1784 directory as a mercer and draper in Macclesfield, in 1789 is described as a mercer and in subsequent directories as a woollen draper. He occupied a shop at the north-west corner of the market place, just in Jordangate, probably from the 1780's and certainly from 1791 when there is a reference to £800 being paid for it and was said to have expended much money on improving it in a document of 1794.[3] The business was well situated in the heart of the town and remained there throughout its existence.

As a draper and mercer Swanwick dealt chiefly in cloth, but also carried a stock of gloves, stockings, buttons, hats and handkerchiefs. A few more miscellaneous items were also stocked including umbrellas, ladies' hoods and cloaks. Although Swanwick appears to have been able to supply all the items needed to make up clothing there is no evidence that he ever involved himself in the provision of tailoring facilities. Customers were presumably expected, if they did not wish to make up their own clothes, to make arrangements with a tailor or dressmaker themselves. Given that other woollen drapers were employing tailors by the early nineteenth century it seems strange that Swanwick did not develop his business in this

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to express my thanks to Mrs. Moss for generously allowing me access to these papers. Except where stated information is drawn from the invoices.

1. Swanwick Papers, Bill of Thomas Swanwick of Market Drayton.
2. Biographical information chiefly drawn from notes on John Swanwick by J.P. Earwaker, Chester City R.O., Earwaker Coll. (CR 63/1/190).
3. Deeds of Swanwick's shop held by Imperial Tobacco Group.

direction, for the shop had certainly become a tailoring establishment by the 1840's. Cloth and articles of clothing were, however, not the only items supplied by Swanwick for he seems to have dealt in a limited range of household fabrics including carpets which he was occasionally buying from manufacturers.

Map 10:1 provides some evidence on the distribution of the people supplying Swanwick. The evidence for this is what appears to be the index of a now lost purchase ledger, probably from the mid 1790's, but surviving invoices make it clear that there were actual dealings with manufacturers listed. Later invoices also show dealings with other manufacturers not listed, but the basic distribution is unlikely to be much changed. Swanwick was buying direct from manufacturers in all the major textile producing areas of England as well as from London wholesalers. Indeed out of 168 suppliers listed, only twenty three were in London, although their importance in terms of sales may have been much greater than mere numbers suggest. The types of goods bought from each area were much as would be expected. Woollens were drawn from Yorkshire and the west of England, cotton from Lancashire, hosiery from the east midlands, buttons from Birmingham, ribbons from Leek and coverlets and rugs from Kendal. Welsh cloths came through Shrewsbury, while the Manchester wholesale houses acted as suppliers of a wide range of cloths, including lace and tape which must have been drawn in from manufacturing houses throughout England. Swanwick had an enormous range of trading contacts, many of whom must have been supplying essentially similar goods, and depended

Map 10:1

John Swanwick — Suppliers.



both on manufacturers and wholesale dealers. On occasion he would buy goods from other Macclesfield retailers. These were small purchases probably either of goods he had run out of or goods that he did not normally stock but which a customer had requested. Thus in 1794 the Macclesfield draper John Whitaker supplied him with ribbons, gloves, cloaks, thread, cloth, hose, tapes and buttons to the value of £20 9s 9d and received goods from Swanwick to the value of £10 12s 9d in part payment. Another draper, Thomas Critchley, also supplied Swanwick with occasional goods, and in 1794 acted for him at the Chester October fair either settling a bill or buying on his behalf. Apart from this instance there is no other evidence of Swanwick buying in Chester, or dealing at the fairs there.

How and where Swanwick made contact with his suppliers is unknown. Much business must certainly have been transacted by letter, and samples of cloth could be sent by carrier or post to enable purchasers to choose cloths. One such pattern book containing samples which could be supplied by Charles Dyer of Wooton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire survives among the Swanwick material. Swanwick himself must have had to travel a great deal, though on occasion he was visited by representatives of manufacturers. At the foot of an 1810 invoice from Wood and Cooke of Birmingham who supplied him with buttons is written, 'Our T. Cooke will be at Macclesfield about Tuesday next when we hope to be favour'd with your further Commands'. Continuous contact between manufacturer or wholesaler rather than contact at fairs seems to have been the norm and the improvements in communications in the late eighteenth century must have been of the greatest

importance to men like Swanwick. Similarly payments could be made by bill, preferably after a discount had been claimed and some time had elapsed from receipt of the goods, and accounts were rarely settled in full.[1] Swanwick appears to have been buying many of the bills he was settling his accounts with and a major supplier of bills was Hogg of Macclesfield. As a retailer Swanwick was probably not short of spare cash which Hogg as a manufacturer was glad to take, while Swanwick would have few large credit balances in London and therefore needed to obtain bills from someone who was likely to be owed money in the capital.[2]

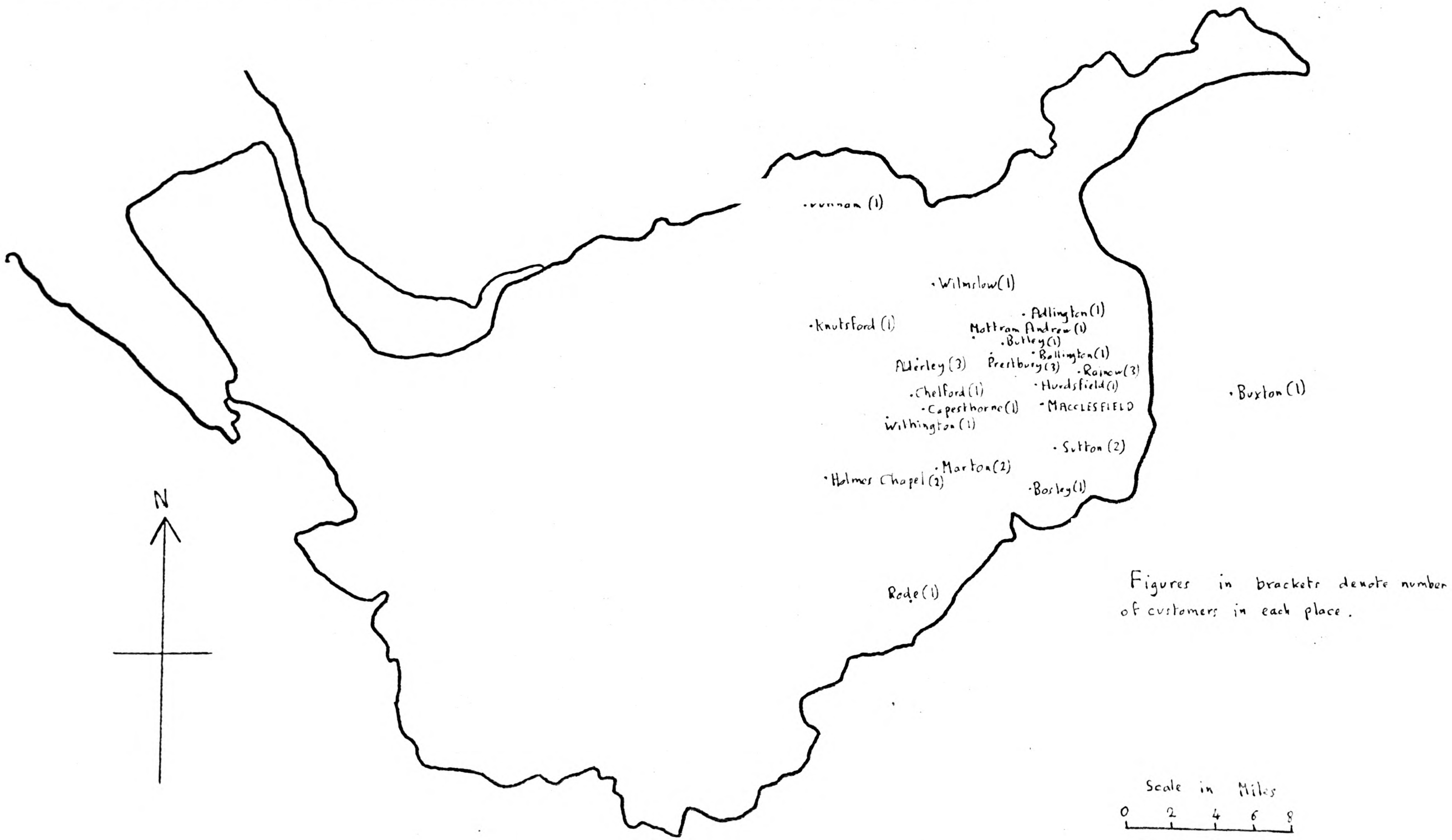
Very little indeed can be said about Swanwick's customers or about the manner in which business was transacted in the shop. The only surviving evidence of retail sales is contained in a fragment of a day book for November and December 1819. By this date John Swanwick himself had retired from the business which was in the hands of his son Thomas Taylor Swanwick. The day book reveals a fairly busy shop with up to thirty or even more customers in a day, drawn not only from Macclesfield but also from much of the surrounding countryside. The busiest day in the shop seems normally to have been Tuesday which was market day in Macclesfield, but it would be unwise to draw many conclusionsfrom this fragmentary evidence. Map 10:2, however, shows the geographical distribution of the non-Macclesfield customers during the weeks covered by the day book, and suggests that customers were drawn from a relatively wide area.

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1. See cap. 9 above for a general discussion of credit and references to Swanwick's practices in this matter. (pp. 310-12)
2. Among the Swanwick papers is a Bill Book for the early nineteenth century which could possibly provide more information on Swanwick's bill dealings.

Map 10:2

John Swanwick - Non Macclesfield Customers, November-December 1819.



Figures in brackets denote number of customers in each place.

Scale in Miles

0 2 4 6 8

These customers included a number of local gentry, particularly the Davenports of Capesthorne and the Greys of Dunham. There is no evidence of the number of persons employed in the shop, but the business was certainly large enough for there to have been several employees.

Although primarily a retailer, John Swanwick did a certain amount of wholesale business. In particular he seems to have supplied drapers in the towns to the south and west of Macclesfield with goods which he had possibly received from the Manchester wholesale houses. Evidence of this aspect of his business comes from a number of letters from the retailers he supplied complaining about the goods they had received or the prices they had been charged. Such letters exist from John Bule of Sandbach, Anthony Titley of Eccleshall, and Thomas Moyle and Samuel Goostry of Newcastle-under-Lyme. One letter from Titley returning blankets stated, 'Am sorry to return the above, but they are charg'd much too high, and can therefore do nothing with them'.[1] Moyle on one occasion ordered 'A sufficient Quantity of tolerable good Drab Flushing (not too light) to make a middle siz'd Man a loose Coat'.[2] The extent of Swanwick's wholesale business is unknowable but there was nothing unusual in a market town draper combining retail and wholesale dealings.

Swanwick was one of the most important and longest surviving drapers in Macclesfield, though of course by no means the only one. As well as the hints about the extent of his business given by the material on customers and suppliers, four stock books provide firm evidence of the size of his stock

1. Letter of 21 Dec. 1805.
2. Letter of 24 Sept. 1798.

holdings. Unfortunately these are undated, but probably belong to the early years of the nineteenth century. Each book lists the stock in the shop in detail and provides a total valuation, less the amount of goods sold during the stock-taking. These net valuations are £2,974 10s 10d, at least £3,264,[1] £3,339 16s 10½d and £4,000 0s 0d. These are strikingly high figures and confirm the impression of a very large scale business. Even in 1788 when Swanwick had only been in business about five years his purchases from manufacturers in the September came to at least £354[2] and Swanwick was operating at a time when expansion was likely. Assuming that he turned his stock over between two and three times a year - by no means unlikely given the need to cater for the fashions of different times of year and the constantly changing fashions - Swanwick's sales could in some years have been in excess of £10,000. Even at a very moderate 20% gross margin this would have provided him with handsome gross profits.

Mention has already been made of Swanwick's role in local government[3] and in his twenty-nine years in business he was no doubt able to make a handsome fortune and position for himself. He gives the impression of having been keen and shrewd, not to say ruthless, in business and was probably well satisfied with his career when in 1812 he announced his retirement to Cranage.[4] At the time of his death in 1832 he was described as a gentleman of Brereton in Cheshire, the Macclesfield business he established being continued by other members of the family.

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1. This may not be a final total as the end of this book appears to be missing.
2. Calculated from surviving invoices. The month seems in no way exceptional.
3. See cap. 9, above, p. 293.
4. Macclesfield Courier, 4 Apr. 1812.

The shop's high reputation was maintained and the Swanwick's of the 1840's, remembered by an old Macclesfield inhabitant in the 1890's, was a worthy successor of John Swanwick's shop:

> 'It was a very aristocratic and first-class tailoring establishment and was called the "top shop" ....All the country gentry round about used to go to Swanwicks' for their clothes. They were also the principal undertakers for the country'. 1

Clothes Makers and Dealers

The main groups of artisan-traders making up and selling clothes were milliners and dressmakers dealing with women and tailors dealing with men. Little can be said about dressmakers and the major expansion of their numbers may have come in the nineteenth century, although in Macclesfield and Stockport a number of milliners were advertising for apprentices to the dressmaking business by the 1810's. Milliners in eighteenth-century London had been involved in providing fashionable clothes of all sorts for ladies and were said to need to be connoisseurs of dress and fashion.[2] Certainly their advertisements by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggest that in Cheshire they were in many respects little different from drapers and mercers. They regularly advertised that they had received Spring and Autumn fashions from London, including furs, trimmings, caps, collars, ribbons and gloves which were advertised by A. Miller and sisters of Macclesfield in 1815.[3] Women like this as well as stocking fashionable ready made hats and other accessories were likely to be expanding

1. T.H. Worrall, Reminiscences of Macclesfield, pp. 14-15.
2. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, p. 207.
3. Macclesfield Courier, 21 Oct. 1815.

towards dressmaking.

Tailors in the early and mid-eighteenth century seem to have been pure artisans working to the specific orders of individual customers. Probate material occasionally contains references to equipment, but not to any stock of goods or cloth and early advertisements stress the skill of a particular tailor rather than his stock of a fashionable selection of cloths. In 1746 Richard Ormes of Chester, tailor, advertised that he, 'Makes Josephs, Jackets, and Ridinghabets of all sorts, after the best and neatest manner, as in London, or elsewhere',[1] and later other tailors stressed their experience in London. One announced that he had established a correspondence with M. Pussenoors, tailor to the Prince of Wales, and would thus be able to supply clothes in accordance with fashions worn at court.[2] By the early nineteenth century fashion seems to have dominated the trade to an even greater extent and tailors were to be found among those clothes dealers making the annual pilgrimage to London to examine the Spring fashions and were advertising the fact to their clients. The business of tailor and woollen draper was increasingly combined and by 1805 there was nothing unusual in Ann Chenney, tailor, announcing that her son had just returned from London with the most fashionable articles of dress.[3]

Fashion was similarly a major concern of dealers in clothes accessories. Such traders - hatters, hosiers, glovers, breeches makers and others - were usually both artisan and retailer.

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 6/17 Dec. 1746.
2. Henry Hancock of Chester. Adam's Weekly Courant, 6 July 1764.
3. Chester Courant, 16 Apr. 1805.

They made many of the goods they sold, some to order and some for speculative sale, but also sold goods not made by themselves. Hosiers like John Pratchitt in Chester were regularly announcing that they had laid in the latest Spring fashions from London, but added, 'He makes Stockings to any Pattern, of his or any one's own Stuff'.[1] A new hosier in Stockport in 1813, John Woollerton, as well as recommending his stock, thought it worth his while to mention his experience in stocking and lace manufacturing at Nottingham.[2] Several advertisements from such traders, including hatters, glovers and breeches makers, make it clear that they held stocks of these goods which must have been available to customers from their shops without prior ordering. Other clothing dealers such as staymakers and mantua-makers probably operated in a similar fashion. The inventory of a Chester staymaker drawn up in 1780 valued his stock at £50 and listed 150 debts amounting to £195 8s 6d which had been received by his executors. Most of these debts were small - none were over £5 and 86% were under £2 - but he had an extensive trade in the area around Chester.[3]

Although many miscellaneous articles of clothing could be bought ready made, there is no evidence of shops selling new suits, dresses and coats off the peg until the nineteenth century. Second hand clothes dealers certainly existed in the later eighteenth century, but information about them is inevitably scrappy. After a theft of cloth from a stallholder at the 1765 Chester fair it was alleged that the stolen goods had found their way to Mrs. Moreton who sold old clothes in

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 26 April 1785.
2. Macclesfield Courier, 10 July 1813.
3. Inventory of William Earle of Chester. Cheshire R.O., disputed wills 1780 (WC Series).

Bridge Street and to Mrs. Burrows, another old clothes dealer.[1] One of Batenham's etchings shows a Bridge Street shop with sign 'Old Clothes bought and sold by Mr. Evan', and in Macclesfield a clothes warehouse with a stock of new and second hand clothes was advertised for sale in 1811.[2] There was probably a ready market for second hand clothes among the poor but it is unlikely that respectable shops were doing much off the peg business until the mid-nineteenth century.

Boot and Shoemakers

Boot and shoemakers were typical of those clothing traders displaying characteristics both of craftsmen and of retailers. They were involved both in the manufacture of shoes and in the sale of shoes, including shoes purchased ready made from other shoemakers. Many shoemakers were simple artisan-retailers buying raw materials, making them up and selling the finished product. In Stockport between 1815 and 1820 six shoemakers were customers of the leather merchants, W. & J. Thornhill, buying hides, skin, cow leather and other essential raw materials. Some were dealing with Thornhill's on a large scale. Samuel Baggeley of Lower Hillgate was buying hide and skins etc. to the value of £80 to £100 a year, Thomas Crookes of Underbank usually spent over £100 a year and George Wild of Lower Hillgate bought over £500 worth of raw materials in 1819 and over £700 worth in 1820.[3] Provincial shoemakers were frequently operating relatively large manufacturing businesses, employing a dozen

1. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations 1766, (QSE/15/106).
2. Macclesfield Courier, 21 Sept. 1811.
3. Stockport R.L., Ledger of W. & J. Thornhill, 1815-1884, Vol. 1, (S/J 46).

or more journeymen.[1] Not all, however, could count on manufacturing everything they sold. Small cobblers must frequently have depended on buying shoes ready made from larger shoemakers, and this practice can be found in mid-eighteenth-century Chester. In 1746 John Tyrer of Chester, shoemaker, complained that another shoemaker in the city, John Ords, owed him £5 11s 9d for shoes and leather sold (or occasionally lent) him between 1738 and 1745.[2] Samuel Davies of Stockport, shoemaker, advertising his goods in 1764 announced that he would supply shoemakers and shopkeepers wholesale with the items he stocked.[3]

Davies seems to have been a traditional shoemaker operating on a fairly large scale. He sold men's, women's and children's boots, shoes and pumps at prices he stated in his advertisement but was also engaged in manufacturing, including tanning and currying his own leather. Although a large assortment of shoes were stocked he was willing to, 'Wait on any Person who chuses to have them Bespoke'. In Chester similar shoemakers making large quantities of shoes for general sale included John Whitebrook who in 1806 advertised that he, 'Has on sale upwards of Two Thousand Pairs of Boots and Shoes, which he sells at very low prices'.[4] Such a stock must have been worth over £500 and was probably not typical even by the nineteenth century. Men like Roger Gills of Chester who had a stock of leather and shoes valued at £7 16s 0d in 1738 may have continued to be more normal throughout the century.[5] Although shoes could be made

1. See advertisements for journeymen shoemakers cited in cap. 9 above, p. 304.
2. P.R.O., Chester 16/132.
3. Manchester Mercury 17 July 1764.
4. Chester Chronicle 11 July 1806.
5. Chester City R.O., Sheriff's Files 1738-39, Inventory of Roger Gills (SF/171).

to order there was nothing to stop a customer entering a shop and asking to buy some shoes already in stock. The examination of Elizabeth Dean of Stockport about a theft from her husband's shop contains a description of how a young woman entered the shop (at 11 o'clock at night!), asked to buy some children's shoes, chose a pair of red ones and paid for them, and then asked to see some slippers.[1] Although the need for shoes to be fashionable was probably not new in the nineteenth century, the possibility of buying fashionable shoes from a London manufacturer in preference to making one's own was probably increasing then. In 1802 Samuel Sproston of Chester announced that he had formed a connection with one of the best London houses from where he would constantly receive the most fashionable shoes,[2] and it was becoming common by the 1810's for shoe dealers to style their premises London shoe warehouses. One such dealer was Whitebrook in Chester, already referred to, who also provides an early example of a shoemaker dealing in more than one town, for at the time of his bankruptcy in 1819 he was described as of Chester and Stafford.

In common with other clothing retailers, shoe dealers experienced considerable changes in the nature of their trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was a greater emphasis on fashion, and, linked to and partly caused by this, a development of retail as opposed to artisan functions. Although such traders would still make up goods according to individual orders, their business was increasingly that of stocking goods which they might have made or which they

1. Cheshire R.O., Sessions Files, Knutsford, October 1799 (QJF 227/4/127).
2. Chester Chronicle, 2 Apr. 1802.

may have purchased ready made, especially in London.

Other Retail Trades

Household Goods Trades

The trade in many miscellaneous household goods was shared between a number of different types of retailers. Soap and various items of cleaning equipment seem frequently to have been sold by grocers, as were candles, while druggists also claimed some of the market in candles and oil. There were a number of working chandlers in each of the towns making and selling soap and tallow candles and they occasionally advertised for apprentices to these trades. Little can be said about how these trades were organized, although it is likely that the craft aspects were more important than the retail aspects. Chester Cathedral in the 1760's was buying wax candles and lamp oil from a druggist, although cotton candles were usually purchased from a chandler, and in the 1810's grocers and druggists as well as tallow chandlers were involved in the supply of candles.[1] The tallow chandlers may have had a monopoly in the supply of tallow candles and here they developed close relationships with country farmers and butchers for the supply of their raw material. The sale of tallow in a neighbouring town was often a useful by-product of the keeping and slaughtering of livestock, and a succession of chandlers were buying tallow from Eaton in the mid-eighteenth century, including Charles Bingley of Chester who was certainly also supplying the Eaton household with candles.[2]

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1. Cheshire R.O., Chester Cathedral Archives, Vouchers, 1761-1827 (EC/1768/3).
2. Eaton Estate Office, Account Books of Animals Slaughtered for Sale, 1736-1779 (Estate Books 361-2). Seen at Chester City R.O.

Durable goods, whether furniture, ironmongery or glass and china were more frequently supplied by specialists. The upholsterer and the cabinet maker were the key producer-retailers involved in the supply of furniture, and of these the upholsterer was frequently thought to be the general furnisher, employing craftsmen and making all the arrangements for the furnishing of a house.[1] A man like Abner Scholes of Chester seems to have been of this type. His inventory drawn up in 1736 listed new furniture made up, presumably for delivery to customers, as valued at £175 12s 0d, shop goods at £244 15s 8¾d, book debts at £968 10s 0d and desperate debts at £166 10s 2d.[2] The made up furniture comprised ten lots, each usually including beds and chairs and occasionally looking glasses and pictures. In his shop were cloths of various types, quilts, blankets, rugs, feathers, more chairs and some working tools. Scholes was both supplying private householders and other upholsterers and debts owed to him were frequently large, only 58% being for amounts under £5 and 22% for amounts over £10. He seems to have been either buying from cabinet makers for resale to his customers or to have been employing them, for four cabinet or chair makers were among the persons listed to whom he owed money. Carpets were also listed among the stock of upholsterers and glue and nails figured among their working tools,[3] while the Chester Cathedral bills reveal them making cushions and nailing down mats as well as supplying cloth.[4]

Although many soft furnishings and much furniture were

1. R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, pp. 169-170.
2. Cheshire R.O., Inventory of Abner Scholes 1736 (WS Series).
3. Chester City R.O., Sheriff's Files, 1749-50, Inventory of John Brock (SF 182).
4. Cheshire R.O., Cathedral Vouchers (EC/1768/3).

probably made and fitted to specific orders, ready made goods were to be had by the early nineteenth century. A cabinet maker in Chester was advertising both furniture and timber for sale in 1775 when he announced that he was declining business and so had presumably been making for general sale.[1] Similarly in Macclesfield in 1812 as well as an announcement from John Astle, cabinet maker, that he was leaving off business and that his premises including a workshop were for sale along with modern cabinets and fancy goods,[2] one Hugh Lomas was advertising his cheap chair shop where he sold mahogany, stained and painted chairs.[3] Fashionable paper hangings and carpets were sometimes offered for sale by cabinet makers and upholsterers and the need to follow London fashions was already making itself felt in the early nineteenth century. Samuel Nickson of Chester announced his return from London in 1806 with, 'An entirely new and superb assemblage of printed Furnitures; Moreens, unwatered, with Egyptian Etruscan Borders printed on in the present fashion...Carpets and Hearth-rugs, of the most approved patterns; Dining and Drawing-room Chairs...' and many similar items including tables and beds.[4] Nickson was still employing upholsterers and cabinet makers, but it seems clear that he was willing to stock furniture that he had bought as well as that which he had made.

Suppliers of metal goods were similarly artisan-retailers. The range of goods they could offer depended on the sort of area they were serving and in 1744 the shop goods of John Kelsall of

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 21 Mar. 1775.
2. Macclesfield Courier, 18 July 1812.
3. Ibid. 22 Feb. 1812.
4. Chester Chronicle, 18 Mar. 1806.

Stockport, ironmonger, were chiefly agricultural or garden tools, together with locks and some steel valued at £5 9s 5d in all.[1] Kitchen utensils were also important elements in an ironmonger's stock while ironmongers occasionally branched out towards fancy goods. W. Royston of Macclesfield advertised that he had just acquired a new stock of jewellery in 1811[2] and a year later was recommending improved alarm bells to the security conscious inhabitants of Macclesfield.[3] Metal-working normally complemented the business of selling metal goods and ironmongers occasionally expanded their manufacturing operations as when Glover and Green of Macclesfield announced that they had added the whitesmith business to their ironmongery business and intended to add nail-making.[4] In Chester the trades of ironmonger and grocer were frequently combined - an apparently incongruous combination but in view of the tradition of grocers stocking many small household goods, including probably some made of metal, it probably represented no more than a step towards general household stores dealers.

Items of glass, china and earthenware seem frequently to have been stocked by specialist retailers. Some, such as the dealers in the Chester mug market, probably dealt largely in rougher goods, but others would hold a wide selection of fancy goods. In Macclesfield William Henshall and Henry Verdon were frequently advertising their wares in the 1810's. Henshall dealt in perfumery, glass, china and earthenware and was regularly able to announce new stock, while Verdon, selling jewellery,

1. Cheshire R.O., Will and Inventory of John Kelsall 1744 (MS).
2. Macclesfield Courier, 27 July 1811.
3. Ibid. 25 Jan. 1812.
4. Ibid. 6 Aug. 1814.

glass, cutlery and perfumery announced his return from London with a fashionable stock of such goods in May 1814.[1] As well as tableware, such dealers also stocked a range of trinkets,[2] probably aimed largely at the luxury market.

Luxury Trades

Many of the items supplied by the traders discussed above must have been destined for the luxury market of country gentry and wealthy urban traders. The toy dealers listed in directories of Chester must similarly have been looking to this type of customer to buy the trinkets and miscellaneous metal items that they sold. Naturally this trade was highly susceptible to fashion and in 1750 George French of Chester was advertising his shop, 'Where all Persons may be served with Goods of any Kind whatsoever in the Toyshop Business, interely new, from London!'.[3]

Clocks and watches were probably also only bought by a limited number of people, although clock and watch makers were to be found in each of the towns. Little can be said about them but they must have been primarily craftsmen, selling items of their own making, doing repairs and perhaps working to the specific orders of their customers. The inventory of a Stockport clock maker drawn up in 1750 listed a spring clock and case, a regulating clock and a watch movement together with working tools valued at £10 among his possessions.[4] Skill was perhaps

1. Macclesfield Courier, 14 May 1814.
2. Swanwick Papers, Bill from W. Henshall, January 1810.
3. Adam's Weekly Courant, 17/28 Apr. 1750.
4. Cheshire R.O., Will and Inventory of John Shepley, 1750 (WI Series).

the most vital asset of the watch and clock maker and Thomas Dennion, announcing that he was setting up in the business in Chester, stated not merely that he had been apprenticed to a Chester watchmaker but that he had worked under the best masters in London to improve his skill.[1] Clock and watchmakers were frequently linked with gold and silversmiths and jewellers who were perhaps the most important of the dealers in luxury goods. They were to be found in all the towns, but most noticeably in Chester where there must have been a ready market for their goods from the urban gentry and from the country gentry of Cheshire and Wales who used Chester as a shopping centre. Workers and dealers in precious metals and jewels were to form a relatively important group of traders in nineteenth-century Chester and include some of the city's oldest businesses. The next section will deal with this trade and particularly with the firm of Lowe and Son of Chester.

Some Chester Jewellers and Goldsmiths

Although few in number, the workers and dealers in precious metals and stones in Chester in the eighteenth century were not unimportant. The city was the location of one of the assay offices and in 1773 a jeweller, John Scasebrick, was the assay master. Seventeen goldsmiths, silversmiths and plateworkers were said to have entered their marks at the Chester assay office, including six resident in Chester. Others were from Manchester, Liverpool, Shrewsbury, Birmingham, and Warrington and included the firm of Boulton and Fothergill whose plate was said always to be above standard. Between 1766 and 1772 8,583 ounces of

1. Adam's Weekly Courant, 14 Feb. 1775.

plate were assayed and marked at Chester.[1] The jewellers and goldsmiths in the City were both skilled craftsmen and retailers engaged in buying finished goods from other manufacturers. Their advertisements record their purchases in London and elsewhere of such goods as cutlery, kitchen utensils, rings, pins, lockets, snuff boxes and trinkets and they also frequently engaged in engraving or in clock and watch making.[2]

Typical of such advertisements was that of George Lowe in 1794:

> 'George Lowe, Goldsmith, Jeweller, Cutler, Watch and Clock-Maker, near the Cross...has laid in an extensive assortment of the most fashionable articles for the approaching fair.
> The utmost value given for old gold, silver, foreign coins, gold or silver-lace. Light gold bought.
> Clocks and watches warranted to go well.
> Old plate repaired with neatness and expedition.' 3

Lowe's business seems to have been established in the 1770's as a spectacle maker and gunsmith[4] but there is no clear indication of his activities until the 1790's. In February 1791 George Lowe, silversmith, was admitted to the freedom of Chester and in the Universal British Directory of about the same year he was recorded as a silversmith and jeweller of Watergate Street. By 1794 he was carrying a very large and varied stock, including buckles, cutlery, watches and watch chains, jewellery, snuff boxes, tea urns and a large quantity of gold and silver plate and lace. The total value of such goods listed in his inventory

1. Report from the Committee appointed to enquire into the manner of conducting the several Assay Offices....1773. Commons Reports 1st Ser., Vol. 3, pp. 64-5, 91.
2. E.G., James Dixon, Adam's Weekly Courant, 4 Sept. 1770; Robert Bowers, Ibid. 11 Oct. 1785.
3. Chester Courant, 1 July 1794.
4. M.A. Smith, The Bicentenary of the Family Firm of Lowe and Son, 1770-1970, (Chester, 1970).

of stock was £910 14s 1d of which plate, cutlery and watches each amounted to well over £100.[1] Records of sales in the early day books of Lowes confirm that buckles, rings, watches, knives, spoons and similar items were typical of articles sold, while a certain amount of repair work was done. Buckles, spoons, ladles, ear-rings and spectacles were among articles repaired. By the 1810's individual customers could be found buying a wide variety of jewellery, including brooches, lockets and rings, and perhaps examining them on approval first, while Mr. Kay, attorney, spent £102 0s 6d, chiefly on cutlery, on 10 May 1811.[2]

Lowe bought the goods he was selling from a wide range of companies in London, Sheffield, Birmingham and elsewhere, but there are rarely any details given of the contents of particular parcels of goods received. Messrs. Bateman were major suppliers and in 1796 one item supplied by them was a punch bowl costing £24 14s 3d which was probably sold by Lowe to Chester Corporation for £30.[3] Lowe was able to obtain discount, at least on occasion, and in January 1793 discount of 25% was allowed on a purchase from Samuel Deakin of Sheffield. Although Chester alone probably provided a good market for items in gold and silver and jewellery, customers were also drawn from a much wider area. The Chester fairs must have been a good occasion for making contact with potential customers and jewellers seem frequently to have advertised new stock just before the fairs. By 1810, however, George Lowe was in regular contact with customers

1. Inventory of Stock, January 1794, loose in Lowe's Daybook, 1792-1795.
2. Lowes of Chester, Silversmiths, Day Books 1792-95 and 1810-11. These books are in the possession of the firm (Lowe and Sons, Bridge Street, Chester) and I am most grateful to the manager for allowing me access to them. All subsequent information on Lowes is drawn from the day books except where stated.
3. Chester City R.O., Description of Lowe's Day Book 1795-97.

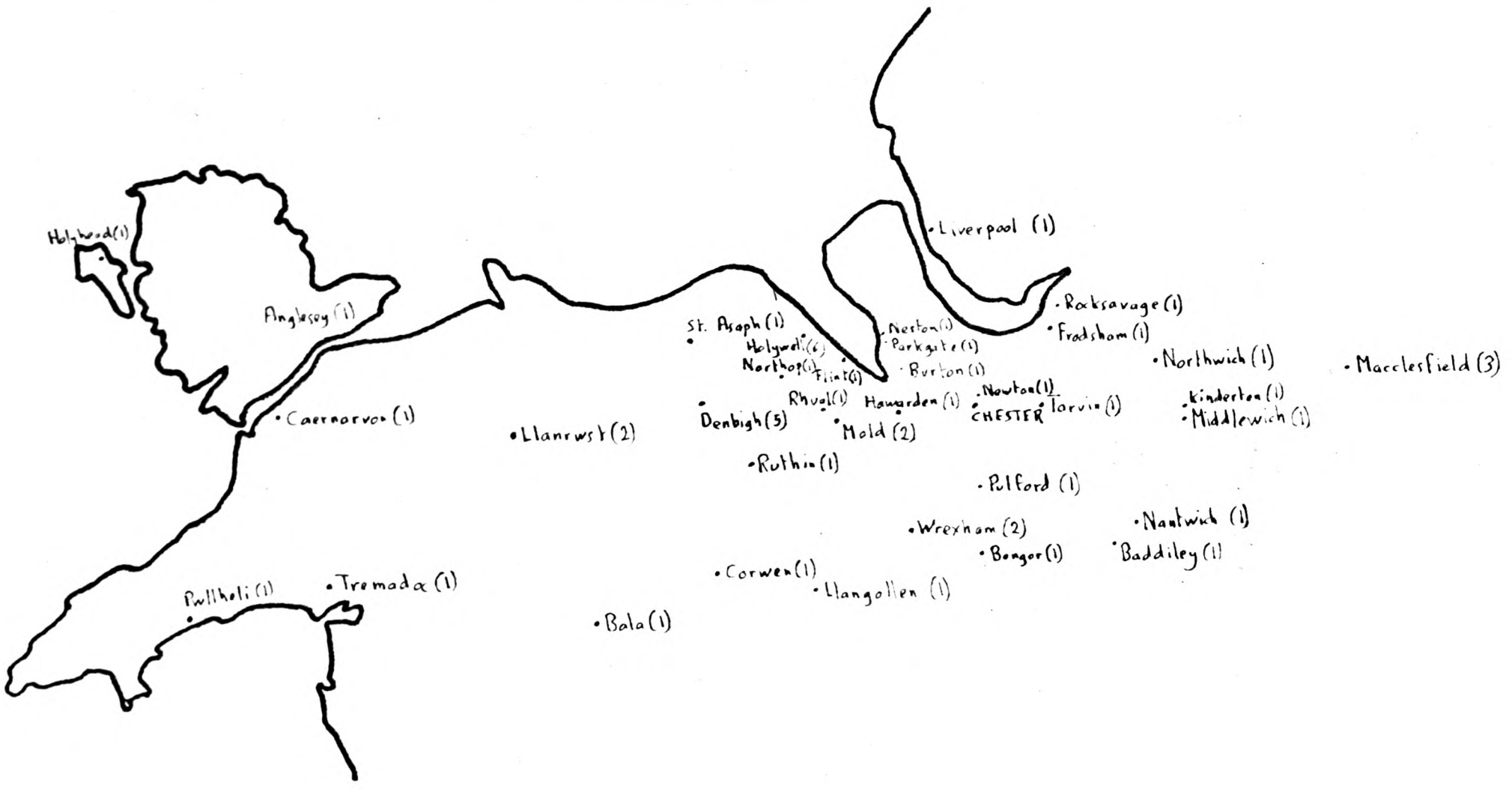
living in most of Cheshire and north Wales, as far distant as Anglesey.[1] Many of these were likely to be local gentry, although a few may have been retailers. In Macclesfield William Royston, ironmonger and jeweller, was buying from Lowe as was the town clerk John Clulow. Among the traders buying from Lowe, Chester watchmakers were particularly important. George Moyle especially was buying watches and watch glasses in the 1790's and Lowe occasionally did repairing or engraving jobs on his behalf.

The scale on which Lowe was trading is hard to establish since sales to private customers of plate, cutlery, jewellery etc. in the 1790's were much below the level his stock holding would have suggested. On the other hand purchases of old gold, plate and lace from customers were very important and such items were frequently sent to Batemans in London. Also frequently sent to Batemans were guineas, perhaps amounting to several hundred pounds worth in a month. Lowe clearly did considerable business collecting surplus precious metal and light coin in the Chester area and many of the day book entries relating to transactions with Elizabeth Patton, a Chester banker, may concern this aspect of his business. His trade in general seems to have expanded rapidly and by 1810 his sales to private customers were very substantially above the level of the early 1790's. In 1804 a new shop was opened at No. 5, Bridge Street Row and Lowe announced that he had greatly expanded his stock and hoped that it was now comparable to any outside London.[2] In 1806 he announced that he was selling the newest plate, jewellery and watches just purchased in London[3] and by 1810 his customers

1. See Map 10:3.
2. Chester Courant, 24 Apr. 1804.
3. Chester Chronicle, 3 May 1806.

Map 10:3

George Lowe Non-Chester Customers 1810



N

Figures in brackets denote number of customers in each place.

Scale in Miles

0 10 20 30

included many substantial Chester and Cheshire men.

Lowe's continue to trade in Chester to this day, and another old established Chester goldsmith and jeweller, Butts, possess mid-nineteenth-century records which reveal very similar trade to that of Lowe's.[1] Customers in 1843 were drawn from Chester, Cheshire and north Wales while plate, rings, lockets, brooches and other jewellery items feature strongly among the goods sold. Repairs were carried out to a wide range of jewellery and plate and seem to have made up a very high proportion of transactions recorded in the day book. Jewellery was probably more important to Butt's than it had ever been to Lowe's and cutlery and trinkets less important. Unless many transactions escaped the day book, business was not conducted on a very large scale for sales in 1843 were only £415 8s 9d and there is little sign of expansion in the next decade. There was expansion at the end of the century, however, and Chester businesses offering highly specialist goods and services to a very limited range of people seem to have been well able to survive over long periods.

Printers and Book Trades

Printers seem to have first made their appearance in provincial towns in the seventeenth century and booksellers somewhat earlier, but both trades experienced a major development in the eighteenth century. The functions of printer and bookseller, though still frequently combined, were probably increasingly separate and retail booksellers would largely stock books

1. Chester City R.O., Butt & Co., Day Book 1843-1857 (CR 92/31).

bought from London wholesalers.[1] There is a relatively continuous history of printing in Chester from 1711, with newspapers being produced from 1721[2] while printers existed in Macclesfield from 1774 and in Stockport from about 1790.[3] By the end of the century a city like Chester could boast ten or more printers, bookbinders, booksellers and stationers with individuals combining any of these various crafts. Printers were of course engaged not merely in book production but also printed cards, tickets and notices etc. and at its opening the Stockport Sunday School ran up a bill of £19 10s 0d with Northall and Dawson, printers in Stockport.[4] In Chester the booksellers Broster and Son were providing the Cathedral with stationery in the 1810's and undertaking binding jobs, but do not seem to have been doing any printing[5] although Brosters had been printers until 1807. When George Batenham's etchings of Chester streets were published in 1816, Broster received subscriptions and sold copies of the collections, but the printing was undertaken by John Fletcher.[6]

The retail functions of these trades were of course chiefly the sale of books and stationery. Some booksellers held large stocks and the catalogue of John Poole, bookseller of Chester, issued in 1792 listed over 5,000 titles in such categories as histories, poetry, plays, novels, philosophy, mathematics,

1. C.f. Marjorie Plant, The English Book Trade (2nd edn., London, 1965).
2. D. Nuttall, A History of Printing in Chester from 1688-1965 (Chester, 1969), pp. 15-17.
3. J.P. Earwaker (Ed.), Local Gleanings Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1879) i, 120, 137.
4. Stockport R.L., Stockport Sunday School, Receipted Bills, 1806-1831 (B/S/2/1).
5. Cheshire R.O., Chester Cathedral Vouchers, 1761-1827 (EC/1768/3).
6. George Batenham, Panoramic Delineations...of Chester, (Chester, 1816).

trade, law books, divinity, sermons, classics, French and Italian books and music. In all there were said to be over 20,000 volumes, many from libraries recently purchased by Poole.[1] As well as second hand books, booksellers were ready to purchase new books from London for their customers. In 1806 Broster and Son advertised a new stock of modern publications and announced that they transmitted their orders of London every Wednesday and Saturday.[2] Although Chester was particularly well supplied with booksellers and circulating libraries they were not absent from the other towns. In 1822 a Stockport bookseller, John Lomax advertised that he could obtain magazines from London the second day after publication and that books in all languages were procured from London in four days at the publishers' prices.[3] Although miscellaneous stationery articles were often sold by grocers, booksellers were the main specialists in this field while in Chester a law stationer or two could be found. Also in Chester was a specialist music and musical instrument seller who in 1789 advertised that he could obtain every musical publication, English or foreign, at the shortest notice, particularly the works for harpsichord of Handel or Haydn and a number of other, now forgotten, composers.[4]

George Batenham's etchings have already been mentioned and some use has been made of them to illustrate the appearance of Chester streets in the early nineteenth century so perhaps a few words could be said about the etcher and his descendants.[5]

1. Poole's Catalogue for 1792 (Chester, 1792).
2. Chester Chronicle, 18 Apr. 1806.
3. Stockport Advertiser, 17 May 1822.
4. Chester Chronicle, 6 Mar. 1789.
5. I would like to thank Mrs. Dorothy Gooch of Chester, a descendant of George Batenham, for providing me with information on Batenham and on the Mountford busines and for allowing me to see some family papers.

Batenham seems to have been a Londoner and to have arrived in Chester about 1800 where he followed his trade of house painter, being listed as such in the directories of 1814-15 and 1816-17. However, he increasingly devoted himself to print selling and engraving and in 1816 produced three slender volumes of etchings of Chester streets which he had executed over a number of years and which each depicted about 1,000 feet of street.[1] In 1825 he apprenticed his son Edward to a bookseller and bookbinder in Chester and the trade of bookbinder and stationer had become the family trade by the mid-nineteenth century.[2] Edward Batenham traded from a shop in Northgate Street where an insurance policy of 1866 valued his bookbinding equipment at £80 and his stationery, a few printed books and some other items at £120.[3] Excise licences of similar date show that Batenham was also selling tobacco and snuff and playing cards while he seems to have been developing a trade in magazines. His daughter Ann, who managed the business in the 1880's, was supplying about ten magazines a week to a Mr. Sumner of Barrow near Chester, possibly a village retailer, and also magazines to what is described as the Reading Room in Barrow.[4] Under Ann Batenham, who was to become Ann Mountford in 1882, and her descendants the business developed into the general newsagency, selling newspapers, magazines, sweets and tobacco, which it is today and the specialist binding functions together

1. An original edition of Batenham's Panoramic Delineations is in the British Museum. A reprint, Ancient Chester, ed. Thomas Hughes (London, 1880), includes all but one of the etchings together with some information on Batenham.
2. Mountford Papers, Apprenticeship Indenture.
3. Ibid., Insurance Policy with Salop Fire Office.
4. Ibid., Notebooks of Ann Mountford.

with the sale of printers' stationery were dropped.

Druggists and Apothecaries

Drugs in the eighteenth century seem to have been sold by a wide variety of traders including grocers and especially printers and booksellers. As late as 1822 J. Lomax of Stockport, bookseller, listed forty-five patent medicines that he had on sale[1] although by then the druggist was much more in control of the market than he had been earlier. Druggists themselves were involved in the sale of teas, wines, spices, other imported foods, oils, candles and similar materials as well as drugs and chemicals. Their advertisements refer to such items and to extensive assortments of drugs which they sold and made up according to physicians' prescriptions[2] and occasionally to surgical instruments and garments.[3] Although essentially retailers, some druggists were not without scientific and particularly chemical knowledge. Letters written to Luke Howard by his father while he was apprenticed to Olive Sims, druggist , in Stockport refer to lectures he attended and to experiments he wished to undertake as well as to shop business. His father seems to have regarded such knowledge as useful if his son were to become a druggist and added that in any case, 'Chemistry is a noble science and becomes useful in many sorts of business'.[4] Howard's master, Sims, was both supplying drugs and spices to individual customers and also some chemicals for

1. Stockport Advertiser, 17 May 1822.
2. W. Massey of Chester, Chester Courant, 30 Sept. 1794.
3. B. Whittell of Chester, Chester Courant, 20 Sept. 1814.
4. Greater London R.O., Middlesex Records, Eliot and Howard Families Mss., Letters of Robert Howard to his son Luke in Stockport, 1788-92 (Acc. 1017/1372-87).

industrial use to the Heaton Mersey bleach works by the 1810's.[1]

Early and mid-eighteenth-century apothecaries probably filled many of the roles of the later druggists. They were certainly retailers and the advertisement of Richard Ollerhead of Chester in 1751 listed tea, coffee, fruits, pickles, colours for painting and oils as well as drugs and patent medicines.[2] They also acted as doctors, however, visiting patients and prescribing and supplying remedies. In a number of cases they may well have been professionally trained and such men would probably style themselves physicians by the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The name apothecary is much less common in 1815 than in 1730 and it may well be that the medical and related trades were increasingly divided into the professionally trained men and the druggists with fewer persons, at least officially, assuming all roles. Some aspects of the role of the apothecary can be illustrated by looking at the career of Job Harrison of Chester.

Harrison, born about 1754, came from a yeoman family of Aldford which was acquainted with Joseph Crewe of Chester as their apothecary, supplying laudanum and hemlock pills regularly during the 1760's among other items.[3] In 1768 he was apprenticed to Crewe for a term of seven years and for a consideration of £105 and was to be allowed to go abroad after six years to improve himself.[4] In 1774 he went to Edinburgh where he remained

1. Cheshire R.O., Arderne Coll., Vouchers, 1793-4 (DAR/A/94); Stockport R.L., Letter, Memorandum and Account Book of Samuel Stocks Jun., 1813-34 (S/J 42).
2. Adam's Weekly Courant, 24 Sept./5 Oct. 1751.
3. Chester City R.O., Hornby-Steer Coll., Bill of Joseph Crewe, (G/HS/86).
4. Ibid. (G/HS/90).

for two years, attending lectures at the University. Some letters survive from Job to his father, chiefly requesting money to pay for his education and maintenance as in October 1775 when he wrote asking for £30, £17 of which was needed to pay his professors immediately. A letter of April 1776 records his imminent departure from Edinburgh, and one of 15 April 1777 that he is in London and in need of £20.[1]

After craft apprenticeship and professional training, Job Harrison had to establish himself in business and this he did with his former master Joseph Crewe. Articles of co-partnership dated 5 July 1777 established a twelve year partnership beginning 1 June 1777 to be carried on at Crewe's shop on the east side of Northgate Street. For the first five years Crewe would be entitled to ⅞ of all the gains of the partnership and would bear ⅞ of the costs, but for the remaining seven years expenses and profits would be shared equally. Crewe seems to have envisaged a slow retirement from the business since he provided in the agreement for his being exempt from its cares when he wished and that he need not visit patients outside Chester at all or within Chester between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m..[2] Finally in May 1785 Crewe leased his house and shop in Northgate Street to Harrison for twelve years at a yearly rent of £40[3] and on 1 November announced his retirement, recommending Harrison as his successor.[4]

There are no details of the goods or services provided by Harrison, but there is some evidence about his patients in

1. Ibid. (G/HS/96-102).
2. Ibid. (G/HS/91).
3. Ibid. (G/HS/93).
4. Adam's Weekly Courant, 1 Nov. 1785.

accounts of debts owing both to the partnership and to Job alone. Accounts were sent out in June 1788 to 55 persons of whom nine are recorded as living outside Chester, usually within a radius of a few miles, while most of the others can be identified as Chester inhabitants, often seeming to be the middling sort of tradesmen or merchants. Payment was not always easy to exact and doubtful debts of the partnership were 24 in number amounting to £83 19s 10d while there were 26 debts (£39 12s 1d) described as bad. Many of the debts, especially the bad debts, were amounts of under a pound, but a few were over £10.[1]

Job Harrison died in 1789 after a very short career as an apothecary and received a fulsome obituary in the Chester Courant which concluded that, 'It behoves such of his Profession who may attempt to walk in his Steps to endeavour to adopt his Manner - his moderate Use of Medicine and moderate Bills - as near as they are able to attain'.[2] His will reveals a man of moderate wealth, able to dispose of £500 in the event of his being childless and on the death of his wife, with a journeyman and a servant. Interestingly it contains a reference to Doctors Currie and Haygarth, the two chief medical men in Chester, to whom he bequeathed 25 guineas each as a token of his esteem and requested that they would advise his wife on making out and collecting his book debts.[3] Harrison, although an apothecary by name, was very much a professional man of

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1. Chester City R.O., Hornby-Steer Coll., Bill of Joseph Crewe (G/HS/103-105).
2. Ibid. (G/HS/106).
3. Ibid. (G/HS/94).

medicine and his links were with others of this type rather than with druggists or chemists.

Conclusions

The above essentially descriptive treatment of the different trade groups was rendered necessary by the fragmentary and piecemeal nature of much of the evidence which precludes the systematic analysis of the organization of shops. However, certain themes recur in looking at the various trades and some comparisons can be suggested. The retail trades show definite tendencies to group themselves into those requiring substantial initial capital, considerable stockholding, wide trade contacts and the provision of extended credit and those which could be conducted on a more hand-to-mouth basis. A further distinction can be made between those trades where craft skills were of continuing importance and where the retailer would have a substantial workshop behind his shop and those where commercial skills had become the key attribute of the retailer, involved essentially in buying and selling and only minimally in processing.

Trades requiring initial capital of over £500 and where an established retailer might expect to carry over £1,000 worth of stocks can be regarded as large scale. Mercers and drapers would probably often reach this level by the end of the eighteenth century, and some grocers and dealers in precious and fancy goods probably also did so. Similarly those traders like brewers and corn dealers to whom retailing was only a side-line and manufacturing or wholesaling their main function needed substantial capital to establish themselves. In the mid-eighteenth

century upholsterers with stock of around £400, drapers with around £200 and later shoemakers with £500 or more were all in a respectable way of business. Many retailers managed with much less. Even a wine merchant could set himself up for £100 and only carry stocks to about the same value, while grocers, ironmongers, provisions dealers, many shoemakers and some craftsmen-retailers would value their stock in tens rather than hundreds of pounds. In general it was the pure shop trades where large stocks had to be held and substantial premises rented that demanded heavy inputs of capital.

Similar groupings emerge when suppliers and customers are considered. The fashionable cloth trades were heavily dependent on London suppliers and perhaps even on trade links with manufacturers from throughout the country, while by the end of the eighteenth century fancy goods dealers and higher class furnishers also bought in London. London contacts were probably also necessary for wine merchants and perhaps for grocers, but most other retailers could rely on buying in their own locality. The provisions dealer and small grocer would probably buy from larger grocers in his own town or in the nearest large town, and country drapers could also probably expect to procure stocks in the local market town, or perhaps in Manchester. Bakers and butchers could frequently draw directly on the local countryside, and make use of urban wholesale markets. However, if it is not unusual for suppliers to be drawn from 150 or 200 miles distance, customers rarely came from above ten or fifteen miles.[1] The larger and more fashionable drapers might draw

1. See cap. 7 above for an examination of the areas from which customers were drawn by a number of shops in the three towns. (pp. 219–229)

some custom from beyond this limit, and some specialist Chester shopkeepers had customers living fifty or more miles away throughout north Wales. At the other end of the scale from jewellers, drapers and furnishers, bakers and provisions dealers must have drawn almost all their custom from within five miles of their shop, and much from within about a mile. The provision of credit probably followed similar patterns with the higher class and more substantial shopkeepers attracting more credit customers than the dealers in essential goods. Credit was, however, virtually universal[1] and few shopkeepers probably avoided it completely until the emergence of cash only, fixed price stores in the nineteenth century. Developments of this nature, together with increased use of advertisements and the introduction of special sales seem to have been pioneered by the drapers and mercers and their successors.

Drapers and mercers along with glass and china dealers, some grocers and provisions dealers were also the groups least involved in manufacturing and processing. Some craft skills survived among grocers, but much less than among the major groups of producer-retailers such as bakers, brewers, ironmongers, clothing dealers, shoemakers and clock and watch makers. For many of these traders manufacturing could be as important as retailing although there was no need by the early nineteenth century for all manufacturing to be done to order or for such retailers only to sell goods that they had themselves made. Nevertheless it is not to be denied that craft skills remained important for a very wide range of shopkeepers. Yet even in

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1. See cap. 9 above for some discussion of the importance of credit. (pp. 310-16)

those trades where production was long to remain of importance alongside retailing, such as shoemaking and furniture making, there is evidence of retailers by the early nineteenth century buying ready-made goods for resale and having to possess knowledge of fashions and to be in contact with the London wholesalers. Commercial skills of buying and selling seem to have been becoming generally more important over the period, and even at the humblest level hucksters and provisions dealers with few or no processing roles were increasing in numbers particularly in working class areas.

Admittedly much of the growth in shop retailing in urban areas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries must have taken the form of small, under-capitalized outlets, often relying on under-employed and perhaps female labour, and many shops in rural areas were probably part-time enterprises of the same type. However, it seems clear that shops were widespread by the late eighteenth century if not much earlier and were playing an important role in the distribution of basic foodstuffs and a few basic consumer goods in both town and countryside. In the towns they were part of a network of distribution including independent trading by middlemen, trading in the public markets and trading by hawkers. Each of these types of traders filled essentially different and complementary roles and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw expansion in all forms of retail trading. Such expansion was marked by improvements to market places, increases in the numbers of shops and developments in the nature and organization of shop retailing. Although most revolutionary changes in retailing were a post

1850 phenomenon, by 1815 shop retailing was already moving out of the traditional stage and becoming a highly professional and commercially orientated pursuit.

APPENDIX

SHOPPING

In this study of the pattern of retail provision and the activities of the retailer, the attitudes and actions of the consumer have been little dealt with. The consumer clearly is a key figure: unless he is there retailing cannot function. However, it would be difficult to say a great deal about shoppers or shopping for if retailers are not very well represented in surviving records, information about shoppers, excepting a certain amount of literary information and a number of household bills, is even more scanty. The literary evidence has moreover been well worked by Dorothy Davis[1] and little could be added to her study in terms of general descriptions. However, it is possible that consumer behaviour in the eighteenth century was more modern than is sometimes suggested and that while personal relationships with shopkeepers were certainly important,[2] shopping was neither an unusual nor a particularly difficult activity. Indeed the very lack of comments on shopping, except when prices seemed unreasonably high or when special purchases were being made, suggests that the purchase of goods recorded in bills and household accounts was a commonplace activity. Moreover the surviving literary evidence tends to relate to the very classes who could afford to look on shopping as at least as much a leisure activity as a necessity and is likely to be untypical of the consumer

1. Dorothy Davis, A History of Shopping.
2. C.f., D. Davis, op.cit., pp. 224-235.

in general. Bills and accounts similarly relate either to institutions or to wealthy, or very occasionally middling, families and are dangerous evidence on which to build generalizations.

They do however provide some insights into the shopping behaviour of the upper and middle classes. Purchases were made regularly from local traders, accounts were run up with them and credit was expected and it was not uncommon for more than one shopkeeper to be supplying similar goods. Most goods that were required were bought, although in the early eighteenth century, and indeed frequently later, corn or flour rather than bread was often purchased. The Leghs of Lyme had both tailors and upholsterers coming out to the Hall to work, although stockings at least were purchased ready made.[1] By the early nineteenth century the Swanwicks of Macclesfield were buying beer and do not seem to have been brewing, while an account with a baker includes £1 10s 0d charged for a year's baking, entered separately from the flour he supplied. Meat, stationery, ink, groceries, drugs, shoes, hats, oil and ironmongery were naturally bought from local retailers.[2] An enormous range of goods was similarly bought in Chester by the Grosvenor household at Eaton and purchases in a year could easily exceed £3,000. Many of the most prominent Chester traders supplied Eaton and bills with bakers, wine merchants, butchers and upholsterers could amount to £100 a year or more. Traders of all types ranging from fishmongers and fruiterers to drapers, clothiers, tallow chandlers, cabinet makers,

1. Stockport R.L., Lyme Hall Steward's Overseers Accounts, 1728-1738 (Deed Box 21A).
2. Swanwick Papers, Household Vouchers.

druggists, stationers and silversmiths sent in bills and it seems unlikely that there was any difficulty in supplying Eaton with what it required.[1]

Shoppers living in the country and buying in a town like Chester must have made much use of carriers, and although there does not appear to have been the sort of network of carriers servicing villages that can be found around late nineteenth-century market towns,[2] country carriers certainly existed. Some may well have shopped on behalf of families and in 1764 a Chester grocer claimed that he had been defrauded by a person imitating the common carrier between Chester and Mochdre in Denbighshire who took goods from the shop claiming that they had been ordered by Thomas Hughes of Mochdre.[2] Other references to frauds and thefts committed by carriers suggest that men were operating regular routes from Chester in the early eighteenth century.[4] The Lyme Hall accounts also contain occasional payments to carriers for bringing goods from Macclesfield or from Chester, and long distance carriers must sometimes have been important when goods were bought in London. They were also important when goods were not bought but exchanged, and it was not uncommon in the eighteenth century for Cheshire gentlemen to receive oysters from friends in London and to supply local delicacies in return. Such transactions though

1. Eaton Estate Office, Grosvenor Mss., Eaton Household, List of Bills from Chester, 1805-1817 (Estate Books 376). Seen at Chester City R.O..
2. C.f. Alan Everitt, 'Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: The Role of the Village Carrier' in Perspectives in English Urban History, ed. A. Everitt, for a discussion of nineteenth century carriers.
3. Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions Examinations, 1766 (QSE/15/28).
4. Chester City R.O., Portmote and Pentice Court Affidavit Files, 1726-1733 (MSAF/1); 1743-1750 (MSAF/3).

accounted for only a tiny minority of goods obtained; shopping in a local town was the normal way of supplying the needs of families.

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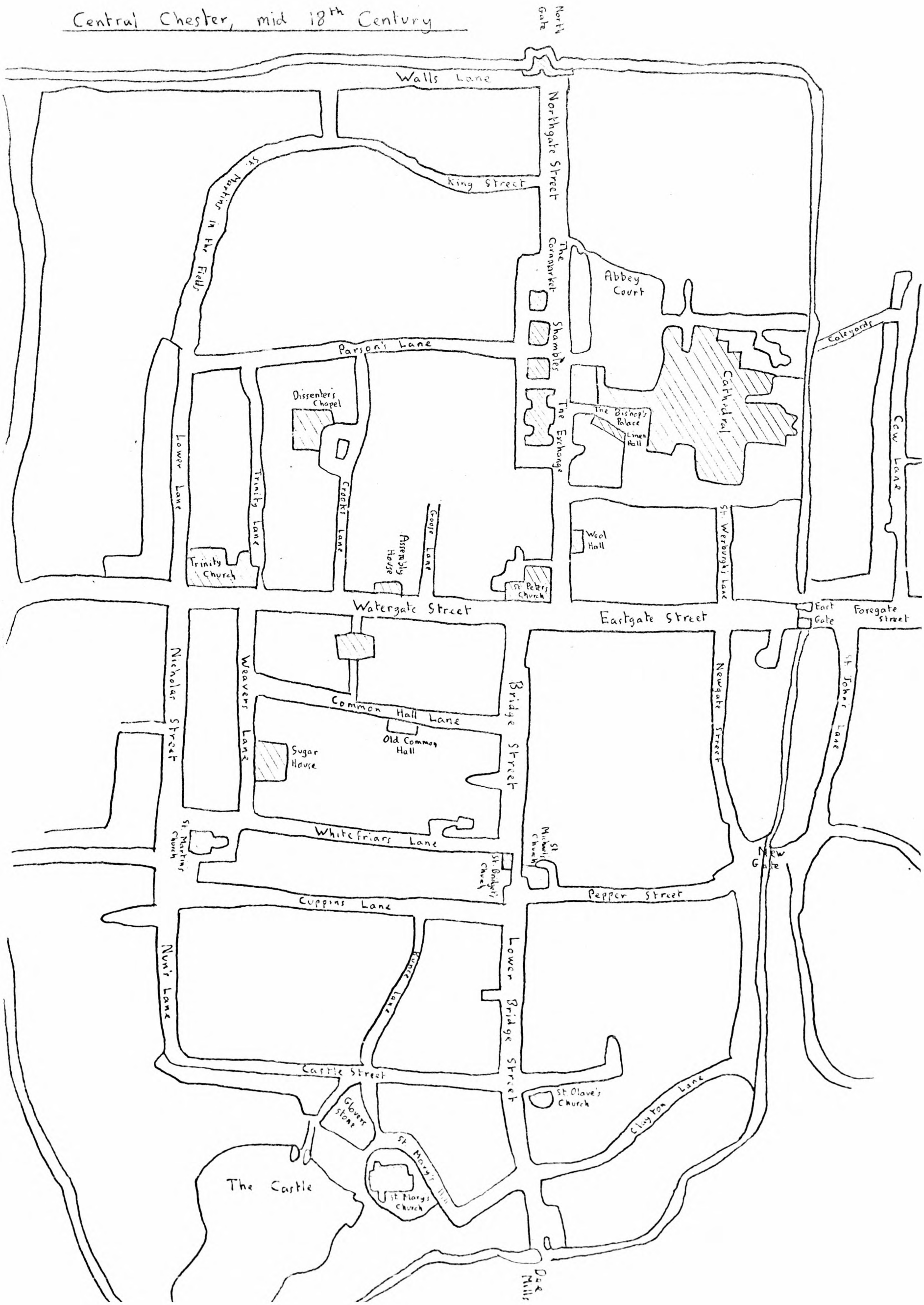
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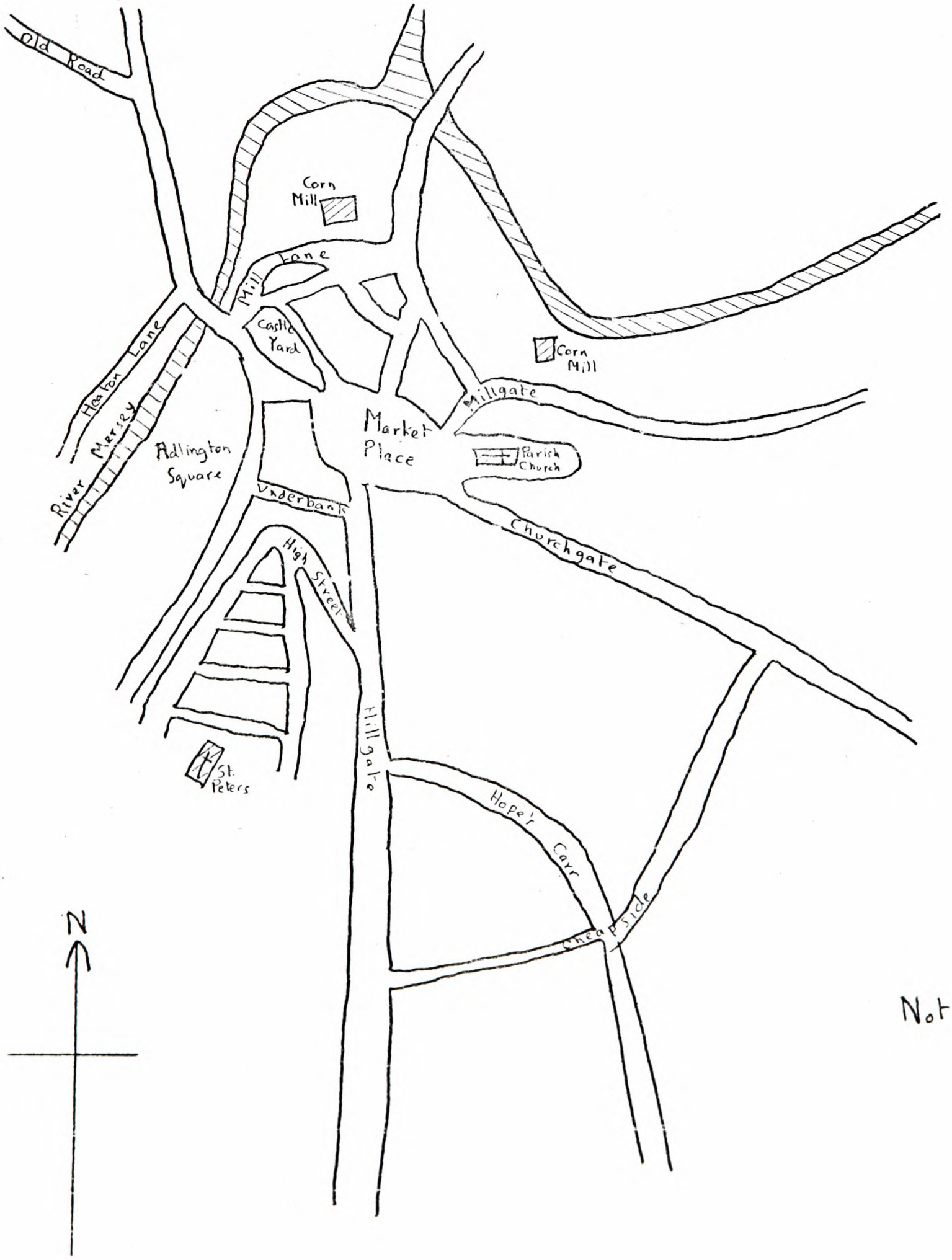
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Central Chester, mid 18th Century

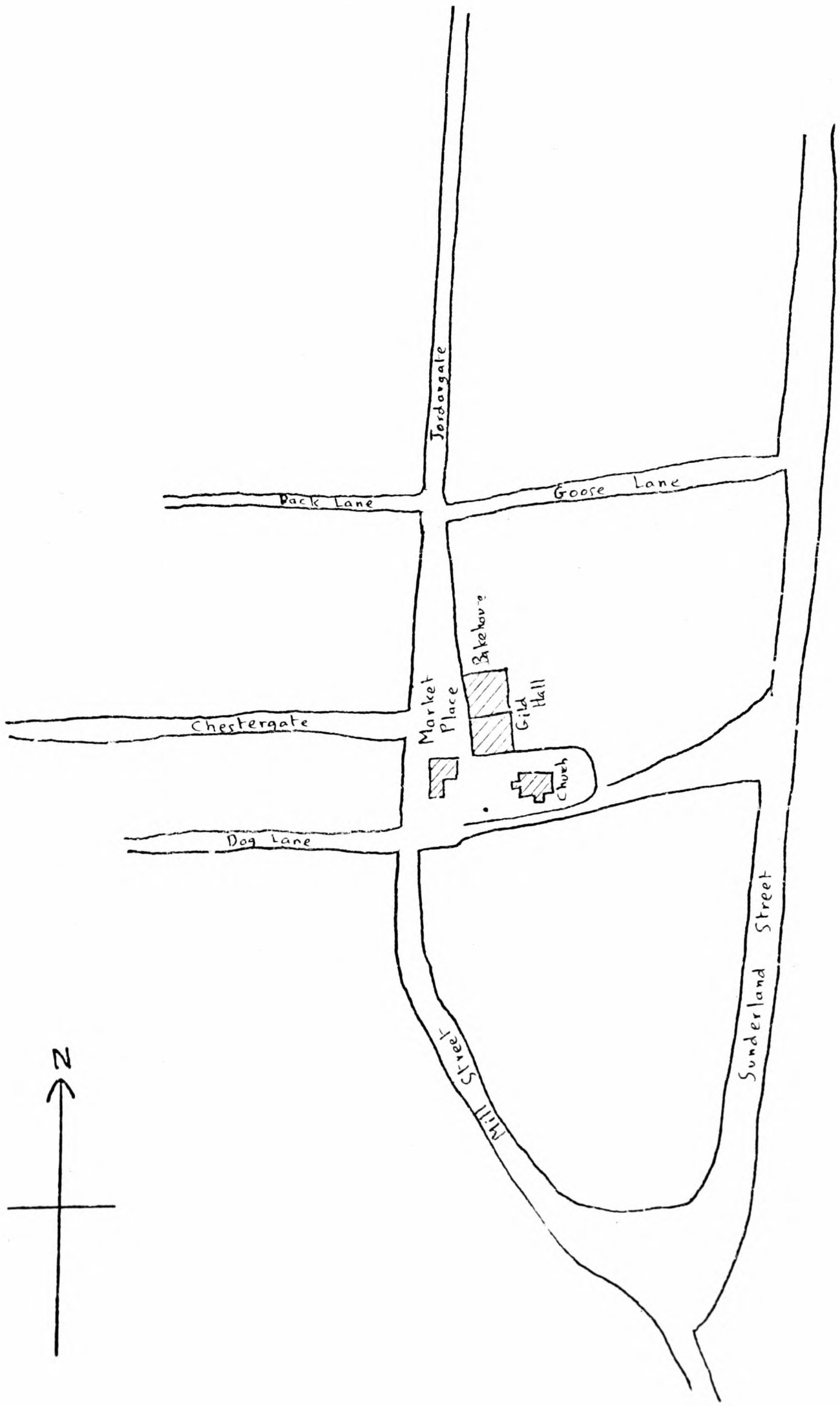


Sketch Map of Central Stockport — late eighteenth century



Not to scale

Sketch Map of Central Macclesfield — mid eighteenth century



Not to scale