

AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSFORMATIONS IN WEST LANCASHIRE'S ECONOMY  
AND SOCIETY *c*1660-1740, PRINCIPALLY SOURCED FROM PROBATE RECORDS.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents an investigation into economic and social changes which were evolving in the west of Lancashire during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The agriculturally productive sub-region of the Lancashire plains, which lie to the north and south of the estuary of the river Ribble have formerly been somewhat under-represented in regional historiographies. Discussions have tended to focus either on the latter decades of the eighteenth century and/or the economic transformation of Manchester and its neighbouring towns in the centre and east. However, on the western plains the traditionally husbanded landscape of spatially integrated small ports and rural market towns had also been evolving its own gradual metamorphosis from which economic activities accelerated in the second half of the 1600s.

In the following chapters, I have evaluated the compass of this evolution, principally through quantitative analyses of the livestock, crops, goods and activities evinced from male probate inventories. These have been selected as whole sets of extant records from six adjoining townships north and sixteen townships south of the river Ribble, with inventories from Ormskirk and Liverpool similarly transcribed and represented. The principal focus falls upon the decades between *c.*1660-1740, although the period south of the Ribble prior to the mid-century is referenced also. The inventories have been drawn from the depository of probate bundles held at Lancashire Archives. This resource, which otherwise remains largely untapped, contains inventories, wills, and administrators' accounts. Analysis of these documents has been supplemented in the text by additional contemporaneous material in the form of diaries, ships' provisioning ledgers and early town surveys. Each of these primary sources indicate that industrious and commercially focussed economic activities were evolving in rural townships in the seventeenth century to a greater extent than has formerly been acknowledged. This thesis demonstrates that the impetus for these transformative

economic effects were founded upon a sound agrarian base during an extended period of relative economic buoyancy which, when coupled with the commercial opportunities occasioned by the inexorable rise of Liverpool from *c.* 1670s onwards enabled even relatively small rural producers to thrive. Occasioned by the combined dynamics of agrarian rationalisation, trades specialisations, technological progress and the importation of novel goods and commodities through Liverpool, a consumer culture rapidly emerged.

Analysis of whole sets of probate documents has provided opportunities for contextualisation with earlier regional discussions and facilitates engagement with more recent analyses concerning trades specialisations, the nature of rural industrialisation and urban integration. The temporal span also represents the core of an extended period of irreversible transformation, one which immediately preceded the rapid acceleration of industrialisation and urbanisation, which from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, occasioned economic and population expansion in towns across Lancashire. Therefore, evidence is presented herein which suggests that a sub-regional dynamism prevailed and evolved here in the early phases of the pre-industrial dawn. Such evidence suggests that revisions may need to be considered to established texts and that our inherited perceptions of the west of Lancashire during the early modern period require reorientation. Therefore, the activities and motivations of men and women during these decades of transition, before the factories and mills of Lancashire had been built is deserving of renewed analysis.

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## Abbreviations

*AgHR*      *The Agricultural History Review*

*AHEW*, iv    Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, iv, 1500-1640.

*AHEW*, v.i    Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, v.i *Regional Farming Systems 1640-1750*

*AHEW*, v.ii    Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, v.ii *Agrarian Change 1640-1750*

*EcHR*      *The Economic History Review*

*THSLC*      *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*



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## General Introduction

“In any pre-industrial community, agriculture is the dominant form of economic activity and the levels of productivity per head achieved in agriculture necessarily govern the growth opportunities of other industries.”<sup>1</sup>

Historians who have analysed England's economy in the seventeenth century have divided the 1600s into two distinct periods. In agriculture, discussions have focussed on the generally difficult farming conditions which prevailed prior to the Restoration of 1660 and compared them with much improved conditions thereafter. From the later years of Elizabeth 1's reign, to the demise of the Commonwealth, rural communities across England had suffered cyclical periods of dearth and famine. Boulton has argued that when poor harvests followed each other such as in the mid-1590s, 1647-50, “famine was a probable consequence.”<sup>2</sup> Walton has written about conditions in Lancashire specifically, describing the poor cottagers and the labouring poor, whose lives and livelihoods were vulnerable to “a series of subsistence crises,” which commenced in 1623, reappeared in central Lancashire in 1638 and again between 1647-50.<sup>3</sup> Gritt, who analysed “the social and economic contract framed by the lifeleasehold system” in Lancashire, noted with understatement, “South-west Lancashire emerged from the civil war in need of social and economic recovery.”<sup>4</sup> However, in the decades which followed, more favourable economic conditions prevailed in Lancashire and elsewhere in England. Borsay analysed the foundations of provincial urban growth, describing an “Urban Renaissance” of the later Stuart and early Georgian periods. He commented on the economic buoyancy of post-Restoration England, wherein all aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wrigley, ‘Urban growth and Agricultural Change: England in the Early Modern Period,’ *England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period*, in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (London and New York, 1990), pp.39-82, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Boulton, ‘The ‘Meaner Sort’: Labouring People and the Poor,’ in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), p.316.

<sup>3</sup> John K. Walton, *Lancashire a Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> A. J. Gritt, ‘The Operation of Lifeleasehold in south-west Lancashire 1649-97.’ *AgHR*, vol. 53, 1 (2005), p. 3.

the national economy flourished in contrast with the ‘lean years’ of the previous half-century.<sup>5</sup> Muldrew calculated that in the decades after the mid-century, the relatively high March to May mortality rate among labourers, evident before 1650 decreased thereafter. He concluded that after 1650, labourers generally benefited from more comfortable standards of living.<sup>6</sup> Muldrew demonstrated this with several case studies. One of these examined the Lancashire household account book from 1724-67 of Richard Latham, a “smallholding labourer,” from whose purchases Muldrew showed that “a labourer with a small piece of land and some cows could afford to buy meat and sugar as well as luxury items on the market.”<sup>7</sup> Healey analysed poverty and poor relief in Lancashire. He noted that lower demographic pressure after c.1660, coupled with fewer detectable mortality crises enabled the county, “to ride out seriously deficient harvests in 1659-62, 1674-5, and 1698-9.”<sup>8</sup>

It is against this backdrop of comparatively favourable conditions from which the principal discussion areas of this dissertation proceed. Evidence of economic growth was demonstrably apparent in the west of the county from the 1660s to c.1740. As we shall discuss, such evidence is clearly discernible and quantifiable from probate records and other contemporary sources. These have been widely employed throughout. Notably, from c.1670 especially in rural townships south of the Ribble, even those farming families with modest holdings were able to thrive and to turn surpluses into profit, by manufacturing dairy products on a commercial scale. The key contributor and catalyst to commercial opportunity and economic buoyancy in these townships, to borrow Wrigley’s phrase, came in the “extraordinarily rapid growth” of Liverpool, whose population topped 7000 by 1700. Wrigley described Liverpool,

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989, repr. 2002), pp. 199-200.

<sup>6</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness, Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 206.

<sup>7</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp.50-57.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Healey, *The First Century of Welfare Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 41.

Manchester and Birmingham's growth as not formerly being of significance but thereafter became, "A striking portent for the future [which was] later to herald a new age."<sup>9</sup> This dissertation therefore commences with analyses of agricultural conditions, proceeds to discuss commercial engagement and trade specialisations and closes with observations on housing improvements and the emergence of a material culture in west Lancashire.

Commentators of the early modern period have in general, also identified the need for a greater number of analytical studies of regional economies. In 1997 Richard Hoyle and John Walton produced academic reviews which assessed the published history studies of Lancashire and Cheshire to that date. Walton took the review forward from the late eighteenth century, Hoyle, the early modern period. Hoyle lamented the paucity of regional studies both in the historical and archaeological, highlighted the "curiously uneven" focus on Cheshire, and observed that "In the case of Lancashire one almost senses that the history of the county pre-1780 has been written off as uninteresting." He reflected on the representation of Lancashire in the prodigious *Agrarian History* series and concluded "The accounts in both volume IV and VI are relatively poor."<sup>10</sup> In 2005, while analysing lifeleasehold tenure, Gritt referred to south-west Lancashire as a "relatively neglected region."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it has been inevitable that owing to the substantial growth of Lancashire's urban economies from the late eighteenth century, research interest engendered by the period of rapid industrialisation after c.1750 has dictated that academic examination has more commonly fallen on these later decades. A number of these studies have focused on the cusp of the industrial revolution from c.1750 into the 1800s. Muldrew observed, "Inevitably there will be more discussion of the later part of the period because more records exist," and Stobart noted in his introduction to

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<sup>9</sup> Wrigley, 'Urban growth' in Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town*, pp. 46-7, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Hoyle, 'Recent work on the history of Lancashire and Cheshire: The early modern period', *THSLC*, vol. 146 (1997), pp. 133-147, pp. 133, 138-139.

<sup>11</sup> A. J. Gritt, 'Lifeleasehold in south-west Lancashire', p. 4.

*The First Industrial Region*, “Of course professional historians know that ... industrialisation was a long-drawn out process with deep historical roots. It was natural and evolutionary.”<sup>12</sup>

Hoyle extended a plea that for better understanding of rural society prior to c.1780 the greatest requirement was for work which assessed the response of agriculture to industrial activity.

This dissertation intends to provide one such study. In the chapters which follow, our discussions relate to several key areas of British history in the early-modern period. These include agricultural change, urban expansion, connectivity and technological progress in the commercial sphere. I also examine the germination and rapid early growth of a material culture which emerged in the latter decades of the seventeenth century through the manifestation of individual, family and collective industriousness. These subjects were brought to our attention through the path-breaking work of Weatherill and subsequently by De Vries.<sup>13</sup> It is apparent however, that academic assessments of economic activities in the west of Lancashire during the early seventeenth to the mid eighteenth centuries, whether agricultural, industrial or social, whilst not being entirely overlooked have been generally unrepresented. This applies not least to the economically influential though diverse roles generated by the early urban growth of the west Lancashire towns of Ormskirk and the expansive commercial and maritime activities in Liverpool prior to c.1720s. Important early developments in population and economic growth in these towns have been discussed by Duggan, and by Ascott *et al* respectively.<sup>14</sup> Duggan calculated that although Ormskirk’s population in 1680 was less than one thousand the town already served as a centre of trade,

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<sup>12</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness, Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1500-1780* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 3; Jon Stobart, *The First Industrial Region, North-west England c.1700-1760* (Manchester, 2004) p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London and New York, 1988). Jan De Vries, ‘The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,’ *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 54, No. 2 (1994), pp. 249-270.

<sup>14</sup> Mona Duggan, *Ormskirk the Making of a Modern Town* (Stroud, 1988); Diana E. Ascott, Fiona Lewis, Michael Power, *Liverpool 1660-1750 People, Prosperity and Power*, (Liverpool, 2006).

law, accommodation, leisure and professional services, hence “people were constantly visiting it.”<sup>15</sup> Ascott, Lewis and Power described the emergence of Liverpool as a major port as being among the foremost economic developments in pre-industrial England. They highlighted Liverpool’s population growth which reached *c.* 7000 by the end of the seventeenth century, noting by 1750, Liverpool’s growth had exceeded that of Hull, Glasgow and Bristol.<sup>16</sup> From the mid-1600s commercial opportunities for even small-scale agricultural and textile producers emerged in the hinterlands of these economic hubs. Interaction between towns and rural communities has been analysed by Stobart as “spatial integration and urban hierarchy.”<sup>17</sup>

The aim of the extensive and targeted examinations which follow will be to highlight key transitional phases of development of the farming systems on the rural plains of western Lancashire. Individual household probate records provide detailed descriptions and evaluations of livestock, field crops, household and domestic goods. As we shall see, they will reveal compelling evidence that in the townships which lie to the south of the river Ribble in particular (though not exclusively in these locations), high overall levels of arable output and productive livestock breeding regimes allowed a rural-industrial economy to flourish. The fertile southern inland plain evolved more rapidly than its neighbour and will thus command the greater focus throughout this dissertation. This broad sub-region endures today as the most agriculturally diverse and productive zone in Lancashire. Inventoried valuations of cheese presses, brewing equipment, spinning wheels and weaving looms for example, appear here from the early seventeenth century onwards. We will discuss the economies of scale which were practised across this essentially rural society. Crop-type selection was rationalised as the early recognition of the benefits of the potato as an important

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<sup>15</sup> Duggan, *Ormskirk*, introduction, pp. xvii-xix.

<sup>16</sup> Ascott et al, *Liverpool 1650-1750*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, pp. 166-8, 176-85, 211-15.

food source subsequently led to its broad cultivation. This subject is discussed and analysed more fully in chapter 3. We shall also examine how the absences of certain crop-types in later inventories indicate that by *c.* 1680s greater areas of mixed arable land had been turned over to pasture. The tables presented in chapter 1 for example, which quantify livestock holdings and crop types by township, will reveal that the inventoried valuations of grass and hay as a proportion of all crop values rose from 12.9 per cent prior to 1660 to 21.65 per cent by 1740.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, examples of specialisations in rural and urban trades practices and the significance of family-funded investments both in labour time, and in the utilisation of capital goods for commercial outcomes will be presented and discussed in chapter 4. The last chapter will discuss the significant improvements incorporated into rural and urban housing and acknowledge the early adoption of novel and affordable consumer goods which appeared in the urban hubs of Ormskirk and in Liverpool in particular, from *c.* 1680s onwards.

### **Probate inventories**

The following section starts with an historiographical synopsis of the employment of probate inventories, which for historical research, emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and proceeds to present the core dataset used in this dissertation. Probate inventories from this part of the county, as elsewhere in England and Wales, offer up a wealth of detailed data concerning domestic, agricultural and capital possessions of the deceased. Inventories performed subtly differing functions, and their content varied accordingly. Their primary purpose, formalised in an act of 1529, was to protect both creditors and legatees and to prevent church courts from overcharging probate fees.<sup>19</sup> For probate to be granted, the act required the administrator to compile a written appraisal of all live goods, and every movable asset possessed by deceased males, widows and spinsters, at the time of their deaths. Each

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<sup>18</sup> Chapter 3, pp. 152-66; chapter 1. Tables 3 & 5, Livestock and crops, pp. 47, 49.

<sup>19</sup> 21 Hen.VIII.c.5.

valuation was agreed by (usually) three or four impartial men who often described themselves as ‘honest,’ ‘disinterested,’ or ‘sufficient,’ and who were invariably known or related to the deceased. All goods, livestock, and crops both stored and growing were assigned a fair market valuation. These evaluations were intended to be achievable in the event they had subsequently to be offered at a public sale, to settle the debts of the deceased before probate could be granted. Since much of the evidence hereafter relies on information derived from the contents of probate bundles, the majority being from inventories, I therefore outline their historiography as sources of historical research.

The employment of probate bundles, of inventories, wills and administrators’ accounts, to illustrate and substantiate academic discussions evolved as tenable resources for statistical analysis in the 1970s. One of the forerunners in presenting agricultural evidence from inventories was the geographer J. A. Yelling who, in 1970, extracted data to produce a general theoretical study of the relative importance of livestock in comparison with crops, in contrasting areas of east Worcestershire from 1540-1750. His model outlined fourteen physiographic sub-regions with which to analyse agricultural change over the period.<sup>20</sup>

Another, by Susanne Schwarz, whose study of Blackburn hundred discussed the nature of rural industrialisation and occupational change in the late seventeenth century in east Lancashire, has also been influential to this dissertation in its subject material and presentation, not least since the geographical coverage of the latter is a close neighbour to my own focus area.<sup>21</sup> Studies such as these are important examples of the value of defining analytical focal-points within counties, the presentation of which advances our understanding and moves us away from generalised and often enduringly inaccurate impressions of places

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<sup>20</sup> J.A. Yelling, ‘Probate Inventories and the Geography of Livestock Farming: A Study of East Worcestershire, 1540-1750’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, No. 51, (November 1970), pp. 111-126.

<sup>21</sup> Suzanne Schwarz, ‘Economic change in north-east Lancashire, c.1660-1760’, *THSLC*, vol. 144, (1995), pp. 47-94.



in time. Jon Stobart acknowledged the body of work on regional perspectives by Patricia Hudson noting that, “Indeed it is increasingly argued that economies past and present can only be understood at a national or international level through regional analysis.”<sup>22</sup>

Over the ensuing decades, path-breaking historians have tapped into this vast and available stock of documents to exemplify their discussions of wide-ranging economic and social themes. These writers have included Keith Wrightson, Margaret Spufford, Clare Gittings, Lorna Weatherill, Joan Thirsk and Craig Muldrew.<sup>23</sup> Opportunities to compare sets of inventories from different counties with other contemporaneous documents were introduced by Weatherill as ‘new evidence’ in 1988. This evidence, which also included household accounts, personal diaries and artworks portraying domestic themes, was employed by her to flesh out the hitherto indistinct appearance and characteristics of the English ‘middling sort’ of people.<sup>24</sup> Also in the 1980s, Gittings examined wills and probate accounts from Kent, Berkshire and Lincolnshire to portray attitudes to death, from which she examined changes towards its ritualization.<sup>25</sup> When Margaret Spufford examined the social influence of licensed chapmen-pedlars, whom she argued, effectively re-clothed a nation of rural waged labourers and husbandmen in the latter half of the seventeenth century, she published full transcriptions of the inventories of twenty-five such men. Her overriding conclusion was that the elusive pedlar “brought about a minor revolution in domestic comfort amongst the poorest in society for whom inventories were made.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London & New York 1982); Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1984); Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984); Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*; Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. v.i, *Regional Farming Systems* (Cambridge, 1985), vol. ii, *Agrarian Change 1640-1750* (Cambridge, 1985); Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness*.

<sup>24</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 2-5.

<sup>25</sup> Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing* pp. 149-235, p. 146.

Alan Everitt employed a broad sample of inventories to analyse the evolving patterns of peasants' income and of labourers' by-employments in rural industries. He demonstrated the value of inventories as a wide-ranging resource. Everitt also tabulated the number of rooms in labourer's houses and calculated percentage occurrences of room types in contrasting environments in the Midlands, the Vale of York and East Anglia between 1560-1640.<sup>27</sup> In subsequent volumes of *AHEW*, Thirsk, Bowden, and Hey extracted evidence of regional specialisations in agrarian practices from sampled sets of inventories, tabulating medium-term price differentiations for a range of livestock and commodities.<sup>28</sup> In 1992, Riley shifted the focus away from region-specific studies *per se* and proposed "A New Use for Probate Inventories." Riley discussed the shortcomings of using inventories to model specific mechanisms of the social order by examining inventory values from the Fylde coast, comparing his findings with earlier studies. These included those of Brigg for the Forest of Pendle, Marshall's assessments of Cumbria, Wrightson and Levine's for Essex and Spufford's and Weatherill's for Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire respectively.<sup>29</sup> Riley appears to have been the first writer to describe Lancashire as a socially homogeneous region, and to have examined the social status of the appraisers of inventories themselves.<sup>30</sup> By the 1990s, analytical research from probate documents had become mainstream practice in journal articles and longer works. In Tom Arkell's cautionary words, "At first sight probate inventories appear tailor-made for studying social structure and the distribution of wealth."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Alan Everitt, 'Farm Labourers,' in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. iv, *1500-1640*, (Cambridge, 1967), tables 8-11, pp. 421, 428, 442-44.

<sup>28</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW* vol. v.i, *Regional Farming Systems* (Cambridge, 1985), vol. v.ii, *Agrarian Change 1640-1750* (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> D. Riley, 'Wealth and Social Structure in North-western Lancashire: A New Use for Probate Inventories', *THSLC*, vol. 141 (1992), pp. 76-100.

<sup>30</sup> Riley, 'Wealth and Social Structure', p. 88, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Tom Arkell, 'Interpreting Probate Inventories', in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part Understanding and Interpreting the Probate records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), p. 95.

However, for all that they are plentiful, and almost universally formulaic by design, probate inventories are an imperfect and incomplete resource. After c.1740, although extant bundles of wills and letters of administration increase in number, the quantity and descriptive quality of inventories falls away significantly, and quantitative reliability is compromised. An untold number have been lost, and an incalculable proportion of men and women throughout early modern society did not have them drawn up. Where debts had been settled before death, and a will had been published, an inventory was superfluous. Inventories were neither intended, nor do they make any reference to, or assessment of, life cycle fluctuations. Furthermore, the gendered nature of inventories prevents quantitative assessments of specific personal possessions within families. Several writers have highlighted the documents' shortcomings and responded accordingly. Spufford noted that, "Inventories are too useful not to use," but warned against relying on them too heavily when looking for expeditious economic comparisons, for such reliance, "in fact conceals quick sands of a very considerable magnitude."<sup>32</sup> Erickson's tabulated representation of averaged inventory valuations according to status excluded tradesmen and craftsmen as their numbers, from the counties in her broad sample "were small and their wealth too disparate, depending on the trade or craft."<sup>33</sup> However, as we shall discuss in chapter 4, atypically, inventories which represent tradesmen in west Lancashire are plentiful and considerable information may be gleaned from them.

Weatherill selected 3000 inventories from eight areas of England: London, Cambridge, east Kent and Hampshire, north-west Midlands, north-east and north-west England with Cumbria. She noted the diminution in numbers of extant inventories after the 1720s and observed that assessing the true wealth of decedents was hindered by the omission of debts which were

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<sup>32</sup> Spufford, *Great Reclothing*, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London & New York, 1993), p. 41. Her sample analysed inventories from Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and West Sussex.

owed by the deceased and hindered also by the universal absence of real estate. Weatherill noted that inventories were not made on behalf of everyone and there is an absence of testators at the lower end of society. Therefore, she concluded that inventories gave the best results for the middle ranks, from the lesser gentry to the lesser yeomen. Furthermore, Weatherill's frustration in one key area of her research, was the omission, or poor listing of textiles and the unreliable valuation of clothing.<sup>34</sup> However, this is not the case in our dataset, where lowly estates were commonly inventoried and itemised incidences of apparel range from 9 per cent in rural townships, 18 per cent in Ormskirk and 33 per cent in Liverpool. Such differences highlight both the variations in compilation imperatives and the value of focussed studies at regional level.<sup>35</sup>

Riley offered the sharp definition of inventories in general. "Inventories deal with a sub-set of the population, which excludes the vast majority of married women, those adults in poverty and the geographically mobile sectors of the community."<sup>36</sup> Yelling had observed earlier that inventories are far from comprehensive documents. Although they often value livestock and crops in detail, the area under tillage was only irregularly recorded, that of grassland rarely, and the overall area of the holding never. Inventories therefore only form a reasonable basis for statistical generalisation and for useful comparisons when used in bulk, thus offering in his assessment, only a "crude indication of regional economies. Their great merit however is that they cover wide territories and long chronological spans."<sup>37</sup> In 2000, the most comprehensive and approachable nationwide review of probate records was compiled under the joint editorship of Arkell, Evans and Goose. They incorporated their own essays and

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<sup>34</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>35</sup> Chapter 5. Table 28, Frequencies of ownership of selected goods 1660-1740, p. 251.

<sup>36</sup> D. Riley, 'Wealth and Social Structure in North-Western Lancashire in the Later Seventeenth century: A New Use for Probate Inventories', *THSLC*, vol. 141 (1992), pp.76-100, p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> J.A. Yelling, 'Probate Inventories and Geography', pp. 114-115.

those of other leading historians which quantified, explained, and contextualised probate records and the probate process.<sup>38</sup>

Probate records continue to be employed in ever more sophisticated research. Muldrew recently used exhaustive inventory sampling to analyse food production in England in conjunction with identifiable increases in the variation, novelty and quality of labourers' household goods before and after 1650. He compared inventory dates with national statistics of burials recorded by month, which had earlier been compiled and tabulated by Wrigley and Schofield from parish registers. Analysing the living standards and food available to agricultural labourers in England, he argued that better fed labourers produced more, were better-off generally and lived longer. It therefore followed that beneficial economic effects were experienced by all levels of society. Muldrew concluded that between 1660 and 1780, "England was certainly a high-wage economy with much prosperity and a doctrine of 'industriousness' by the eighteenth century."<sup>39</sup>

In 2013, Sebastian Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor re-examined early eighteenth-century inventories from Lancashire and Cheshire as a case study to represent their radical reassessment of a wider issue of probated by-employments across rural England. They postulated that the long-held presumption that most men augmented their primary income source through secondary economic activities is flawed. They proposed that by-employed men were over-represented in the probate record and that simple frequency counts of multiple gainful activities are inherently unreliable. Therefore, owing to the gendered nature of ownership, itemisations of trade and craft tools, production equipment and finished goods found in inventories were all the property of the male decedent, whoever used them. Thus, all

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<sup>38</sup> Tom Arkell et al, *When Death Do Us Part* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness*, p. 2, pp. 163-207, p. 206; p. 323; E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871 A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), pp. 293-8.

such items reflect household by-employments and not the secondary occupation of one individual. They therefore concluded that by-employments were not as ubiquitous as has been assumed.<sup>40</sup> In this dissertation however, our investigations primarily concern the industriousness exhibited within rural farming communities, particularly those families who possessed commercial awareness. Therefore, recorded incidences of spinning wheels, cheese presses, weaving looms and brewing equipment reflect the contribution of by-employments within household economies, whomsoever was involved. These aspects are particularly useful for giving us a view of household economies and for indicating multiple, or subsequent employment beyond the testators' declared occupation.

Jon Stobart has also broadly employed the probate record of Lancashire and Cheshire from 1701-60 to consolidate the gradualist arguments to theories concerning the 'dawn' of the industrial revolution. While acknowledging the lack of occupational specialisation and the existence of multiple occupations in inventories, he recognised that "In all, the probate records form a reliable and consistent source for creating a large database for north-west England."<sup>41</sup> Stobart analysed how progression was regionalised, how there was no single location for its watershed either temporally or physically, and how strongly threaded were the direct connections to earlier proto-industries. Where these had been concentrated, in west Yorkshire, the Midlands, south Wales, and in the north-west of England, he concluded that areas which experienced the most profound transformations were often characterised by existing regional specialisations. Furthermore, he concluded that crucial formative commercial relationships and industrial processes which had commenced in north-west England indicated that by c.1750, the region had already become an economically integrated and dynamic unit. "North-west England is thus seen as an exemplar and instigator of wider

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<sup>40</sup> A. J. Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Early modern rural by-employments: a re-examination of the probate inventory evidence', *AgHR*, vol. 61-2 (2013), pp. 244-281.

<sup>41</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, pp. 229-230.

processes of development.”<sup>42</sup> Probate records, inventories in particular, have therefore provided the foundation for wide-ranging statistical and quantitative analyses, enabling identification and comparison of regional specialisations, social and credit connections and temporal transformations in agricultural and commercial practices. In spite of their variability and weaknesses, inventories are generally recognised as a very useful and reliable source. Regarding the capability of neighbours or relatives of the deceased to accurately assess market valuations of livestock crops and goods, Cox and Cox have concluded that, “the evidence is overwhelming that inventories were usually made carefully and the goods valued appropriately”.<sup>43</sup> Inventories are an inherently useful research tool which, as Jane Whittle noted in 2017, “survive in their thousands for the period c.1560-1750, but have never been studied comprehensively.”<sup>44</sup> That they are more profitably used in quantity if they are to provide any meaningful statistical commentary is universally recognised. Their interpretation has provided fuel for debate concerning social rank, occupations, housing, furnishings, tools, utensils of necessity and items of status and luxury. Therefore, in this dissertation, our dataset of 3030 inventories has formed our primary resource. Notably, I have employed whole sets of documents of male testators from contiguous towns and townships on the Lancashire plains either side of the river Ribble estuary, covering the period from c.1580 to c.1740. I have selected male testators as their inventories and often their wills, enable us to glimpse the nature of household economies. That the goods left would have been used by other household members is demonstrated in the case-studies of the probate records of yeomen Edmond Smoult (1597) and William Marton (1734), which form part of this introduction.<sup>45</sup> The ‘whole set’ approach to analytical discussion carries an inherent, if rarely discussed,

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<sup>42</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Jeff and Nancy Cox, ‘Probate 1500-1800 a System in Transition’, Ch.2, in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose, *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, (Oxford, 2004), pp.25-33.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Whittle, ‘Land and People’, p. 162.

<sup>45</sup> LA WCW, Edmond Smoult, Lathom, yeoman (1597); William Marton, Hutton, yeoman (1734).

advantage over random or partial sampling of inventories. Primarily it offers benefits of considerably more meaningful consistency and connectivity of data over selected time frames and thus, by implication, the achievement of more assured comparisons with prevailing historiographies. Secondly, this approach better facilitates engagements with current debates concerning regional and national trends in agriculture in the early modern period prior to the era of industrialisation. Thirdly, whole set analysis provides a practical and solid foundation for comparative interpretation which can prove particularly useful for understanding the traditional and developing agricultural practices which contributed to the relative prosperity of families and individuals in west Lancashire. Furthermore, by using whole-set, whole-period documentation, rather than partial sampling techniques, benefits of quantitative analysis are enhanced, while the limitations, for example of incomplete population record, status inequalities and end of life estate valuation only become diminished.

Inventories in our core dataset have therefore been studied as whole township sets from sixteen adjoining townships south of the river Ribble estuary and from a further six to the immediate north. Tables 1 & 2 below, represent all extant inventories from these townships and those from Ormskirk and Liverpool. The tables provide periodic totals for each town or township. They will be referred to throughout this dissertation when analysing discernible patterns or quantifying points of discussion. The columns also distinguish between inventories which record agricultural activities of the deceased and those which show none. Self-evidently, this distinction only applies when we quantify and/or compare agricultural matters. Occasionally, inventories from townships which do not appear in the tables are cited for comparative purposes and to expand the scope of our investigation within western Lancashire. These exemplify appropriately related or contrasting circumstances and augment specific discussion points.



**Tables 1 & 2: Inventory records in core dataset**

<b>Totals of all male inventories in core dataset: 1), south of Ribble</b>									
Township	pre-1660			1661-1700			1701-1740		
	tot invs	agr	non-agr	tot invs	agr	non-agr	tot invs	agr	non- agr
Penwortham	12	11	1	59	48	11	43	35	8
Hutton & Howick	17	15	2	41	36	5	43	37	6
Longton	38	32	6	54	45	9	49	45	4
Farington	18	16	2	25	16	9	21	17	4
Much & Little Hoole	35	29	6	60	55	5	37	30	7
North Meols	32	31	1	90	77	13	59	52	7
Formby & Ainsdale	37	37	0	105	96	9	54	49	5
Croston & Bispham	40	33	7	58	49	9	45	34	11
Bretherton	29	25	4	32	28	4	34	29	5
Ulnes Walton	24	22	2	19	16	3	12	10	2
Rufford	12	11	1	31	24	7	27	22	5
Mawdesley	34	33	1	40	34	6	18	16	2
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	22	0	48	40	8	44	31	13
Burscough	43	38	5	31	24	7	34	29	5
Lathom	64	56	8	75	63	12	58	46	12
Scarisbrick & Snape	64	61	3	83	74	9	42	30	12
Totals:	521	472	49	851	725	126	620	512	108
Percentages:	-	90.60%	9.40%	-	85.20%	14.80%	-	82.60%	17.40%

<b>Totals of all male inventories in core dataset: 2), north of Ribble</b>						
Township	1661-1700			1701-20		
	tot invs	agr	non- agr	tot invs	agr	non- agr
Lytham	77	67	10	27	25	2
Bispham & Layton	101	79	22	25	18	7
Poulton & Thornton	158	112	46	31	22	9
Hambleton & Stalmine	114	96	18	23	18	5
Preesall & Pilling	224	154	70	58	46	12
Cockerham & Glasson	175	128	47	25	21	4
Totals:	849	636	213	189	150	39
Percentages:	-	74.90%	25.10%	-	79.40%	20.60%

There are certain inventories which cannot be used. During the collation of the dataset above for example, it became apparent that a small number of inventories, less than 3 per cent, recorded no goods of any kind. Other than a token valuation for apparel, they served to itemise financial assets only, as the interest-bearing bills and bonds ('specialties'), land rents or total cash sums owed to the deceased. These have been discounted from quantitative analysis. It should also be noted that these physical documents are an inherently aged and imperfect source and not all are legible or useable. There are those which although listed and archived, reveal unworkable damage to paper or parchment through dirt staining from water ingress, holes, and complete fading of key sections. Occasionally, where total sums have been lost for example, intelligent estimates have had to be made from the legible itemisations. Overall, the proportion of inventories to township in each periodic grouping generally convey a statistically sound, numerically balanced appearance and a geographical coherence. The exceptions are Farington, where just 21 records exist between 1701 and 1740 and conversely north of the Ribble, the socio-geographic grouping of Preesall, Hackinsall and Pilling, 1661-1700, where 4 records are useable. There are no extant inventories from the ten-year hiatus of the interregnum of 1650-60 during which decade all documents were officially proven at Canterbury. However, five anomalous inventories from Croston, Tarleton and Scarisbrick, and twenty-four from Lytham, the Wyre townships and Cockerham, variously dated 1652-59 were proven within the Archdeaconry of Richmond in 1661 and 1662 following the restoration of Charles II. These have been included in the periodic sets 1661-1700 for quantitative purposes.

As can be seen in tables 1 & 2 above, in townships south of the Ribble, the sets of inventories reflect a small but noticeable rise overall in the number of 'non-agricultural' documents across the period c.1580-1740. Of the 521 inventories available before 1660, only 9.4 per cent recorded no agricultural activity. Thereafter, between 1661 and 1700, from a total of 851

inventories, this proportion had risen to 14.8 per cent and risen again to 17.4 per cent in the 620 extant documents from 1701-40. Conversely, in Table 2, from the available data periods, 1661-1700 and 1701-20, in townships north of the Ribble, the number of inventories with no discernible agricultural content are higher, at 25.1 per cent from 849 inventories, and 20.6 per cent from 189 inventories respectively. In the first chapter, one of our discussion points concerns the contrasting farming methods exhibited by these relatively near neighbours. Therefore, the disparity in the inventory record north and south of the Ribble, for those involved in agricultural production requires an explanation. North of the Ribble, inventories from the Fylde and Wyre coastal area have produced a proportionately high number of surviving documents per township group, and these present a relatively high proportion of inventories which exhibited no agricultural activity. In these coastal townships, numerous incidences of low value inventories have survived, particularly between 1661-1700. These were compiled for decedents at the lower end of the social scale for whom occupation, trade or status was rarely specified. In Pilling and Preesall for example, the survival of 224 inventories reveals that almost one third of males, 31.25 per cent, exhibited no involvement with agricultural activity on their own account, their estates having an average value of just £21.72. The following examples illustrate this point. Other than those decedents who left inventories wherein nothing of a farming nature has been recorded, there is an element of subjectivity in the demarcation between discernible agricultural activity or otherwise. For example, Anthony Martin, a husbandman of Pilling (1673), left an inventory of just £18.2s.10d. However, this included valuations for a cow, a horse, hay, oats, barley, a cart, plough and harrows at £7.15s. Whatever other income Martin derived, these clearly indicate a partial reliance on agricultural production.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, the following examples suggest otherwise. Lawrence Thornton of Pilling (1666) left household goods and ‘geese and hens ...

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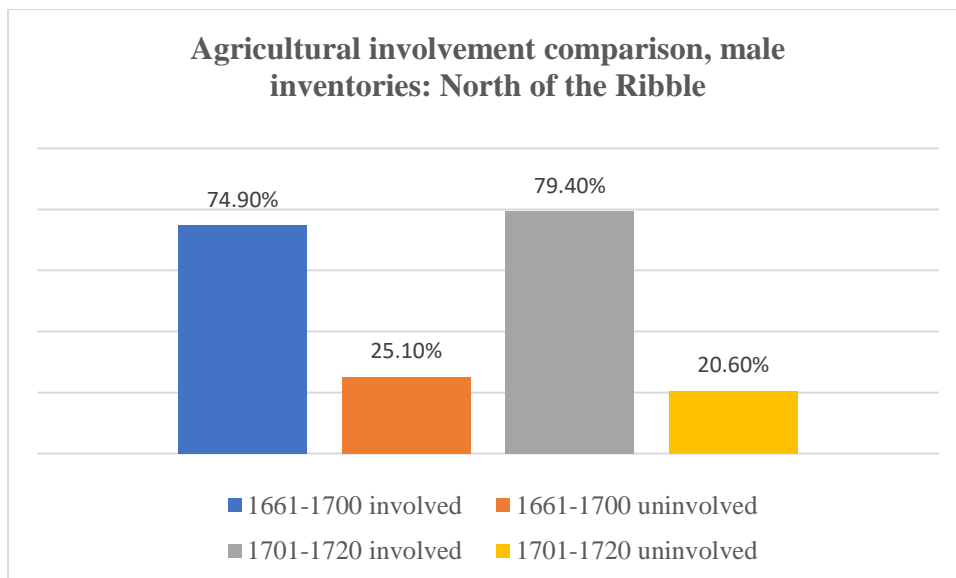
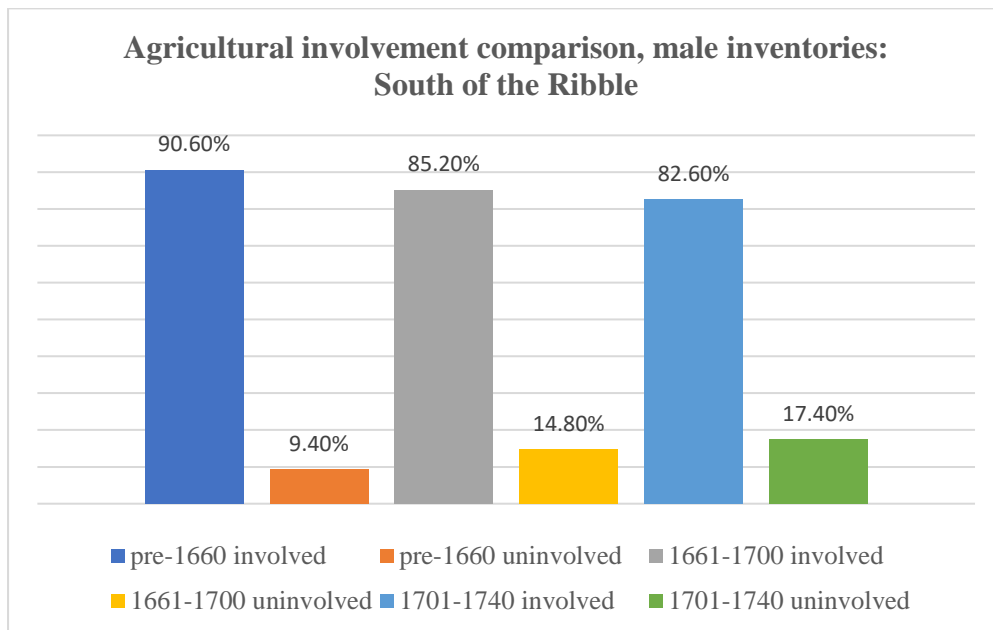
<sup>46</sup> LA WRW/A, Anthony Martin, Pilling, husbandman (1673).

5s.’ in an inventory of £24.6s. John Pratt of Pilling, mercer (1667), left an understocked shop of ribbons, buttons, tobacco, spices and combs. He kept ‘One horse ... £1.’ and ‘haie ... 10s.’ John Thornton of Preesall (1686) left ‘one cow ... £2.19s.’ and ‘house Gardinge and mosse ... 12s.’ with a few household goods totalling in all, £8.4s.10d.<sup>47</sup> These three men of middling to low status left itemised inventories which variously included one horse, one cow or poultry. Yet none were actively involved in agricultural production.

Other observations may be proposed from the tables above and from figures 1 & 2 below, which illustrate agricultural and non-agricultural involvement. Importantly, even by 1740 a high proportion of males in rural locations who had their inventories drawn up had continued to maintain some involvement in agricultural production. Often, it remained the core value of their estates. South of the Ribble, prior to 1660, agricultural activities are evident in the inventories of over 90 per cent of men whose inventories have survived. This proportion dipped to 85.2 per cent by 1700, and then dipped slightly to 82.6 per cent by 1740. North of the Ribble, agricultural involvement was calculated at 74.9 per cent from 1661-1700, rising to 79.4 per cent from 1701-20.

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<sup>47</sup> LA WRW/A, Lawrence Thornton, Pilling (1666); John Pratt, Pilling, mercer (1667); John Thornton, Preesall (1686).

**Figures 1 & 2**

We should now place these results from west Lancashire in a wider, comparative context. We know that not all men who were or were not engaged in agriculture left inventories or wills, or where they did, only an incalculable proportion have survived. Such unevenness is universally acknowledged as a key failing of probate-based analysis. Nevertheless, comparisons may usefully be made between my own calculations represented above, and those made by Nesta Evans concerning the occupations of male will-makers in Ely,

Cambridgeshire, from 1551-1800. For each time frame she made a distinction between farmer and shepherd (at very low percentages) and between husbandman, yeoman and labourer. On my arithmetic from her tabulation, their combined agricultural involvements are 72.3 per cent (1601-50), 63.6 per cent (1651-1700), and 56.8 per cent (1701-50).<sup>48</sup> Jane Whittle recently contributed a different perspective. She calculated that the rural non-agricultural population grew almost as fast as the urban population in England from 1520-1750, which had risen from 18.5 to 33.0 per cent.<sup>49</sup> During this period incidences of increases in employment in common trades, retailing and the rural linen industries had increased significantly. Stobart acknowledged Craft's suggestion that nationally "even if all labourers are assigned to agriculture the proportion of the male population engaged in agriculture fell from 37.1 per cent in 1688 to 29.3 per cent by 1811". Stobart also calculated from probate records that the proportion of males involved in agriculture as a prime occupation in north-west England was 39.0 per cent (1701-20), 40.9 per cent (1721-40), and 30.1 per cent (1741-60).<sup>50</sup>

Analysis of these results suggest several outcomes. Inventories from earlier decades which itemised and evaluated livestock, crops and agricultural husbandry equipment recorded generally higher valuations than later ones with no such records, suggesting that working males and their families whose income relied on, and/or was derived from agriculture, were 'better-off' than their descendants. Also, in the coastal townships on either side of the Ribble, where agricultural land was less productive, average inventory valuations appear to have declined over time. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable along the Fylde coast in Lytham and Bispham parishes, and at Hesketh, Ainsdale, North Meols and Formby. These

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<sup>48</sup> Nesta Evans, Ch. 9, Occupations and Status of Male Testators in Cambridgeshire, 1551-1750, Table 9.3, in Arkell *et al*, *When Death Do Us Part*, p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> Whittle, 'Land and People', p.165.

<sup>50</sup> Jon Stobart, *The first industrial region*, p. 39, citation from Crafts, *British Economic Growth*, p. 14, and Stobart, Table 3.4, Male occupations in north-west England, 1701-60, p. 41.

townships clearly appear from the probate record to have become economically marginalised in comparison with their inland neighbours during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

To summarise these points, it is immediately apparent that there are considerable variations in the comparable proportions cited by other writers, although they have been derived from similar source material. Nevertheless, the common outcome is of a discernible overall decline in primary employment in agriculture in England by the mid to late-eighteenth century.

However, these calculations, when compared with those from west Lancashire, strongly indicate the economic importance of agricultural production on the Lancashire plains. While such activities also gradually diminished as a universal occupation, table 1 above, shows that from 1701-40, 512 inventories in 620 indicate agricultural involvement to have been evident in 82.6 per cent of cases south of the Ribble. These calculations also reinforce the validation for studies of whole-set inventories over sampling in specific, neighbouring localities. The figures I have presented indicate that fewer people were involved in agriculture by 1740 than they were in 1600. They also suggest that more of the males whose inventories have survived became less likely to have relied primarily on agricultural activities as the principal economic factor which determined their sustenance and income. This point is made in the following case-studies, with particular reference to the contents of William Marton's inventory of 1734.<sup>51</sup> Even where agricultural activity is apparent and inventoried, this does not of course confirm that agriculture was a primary occupation during the decedent's lifetime. Conversely, the figures indicate that across the board, from 3030 inventories, 517, or 17 per cent of males in rural townships carried out occupations that did not involve them in agricultural production on their own account, although they may of course have at some stage in their lives derived

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<sup>51</sup> LA WCW, William Marton, Hutton, yeoman (1734).

income from agricultural labouring for someone else. It should also be acknowledged that the description ‘labourer’ to describe an occupation was used very rarely at any time in the inventories from the west of Lancashire. In the south Ribble townships, the designation appears on just 14 of the 3030 inventories between c.1600 and 1740, at 0.46 per cent.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, agricultural activity in western Lancashire townships appears to maintain an atypically high level of male involvement in the early decades of the eighteenth century. It also becomes clear from the evidence that many tradesmen and low estate husbandmen were involved with agricultural activities in the early eighteenth century, by maintaining a few livestock (as opposed to keeping just one cow for domestic utility), and/or growing one or more crop types.<sup>53</sup>

The evidence presented herein suggests that throughout west Lancashire three economic effects may be deduced from the inventoried record. Firstly, the primary reliance on the land for arable production of a broad range of crop-types declined over the course of one hundred and fifty years, although we shall see that diversification allowed for the production of dairy produce intended for market. Secondly, the proportion and diversity of crop-types in relation to livestock, valued as a percentage of the gross valuation of inventories, diminished in every township group, while thirdly, actual livestock numbers appear only to have increased by a modest percentage in certain areas, or sometimes decreased overall. These important and transformative effects are analysed in chapter 1, with reference to the ‘Cattle herd sizes’ tables.<sup>54</sup> Crop diversity is discussed in chapter 3, and in chapter 4, the utilisation of dairy products for commercial gain will be discussed. The evolution of agrarian change is clearly

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<sup>52</sup> Chapter 4. Table 25, Recorded occupations from probate documents p. 189.

<sup>53</sup> LA WCW: Edward Martin, Much Hoole, carpenter (1704), £47.01.09; Richard Thomson, North Meols, housewright (1712), £41.08.02; Evan Wearden, Penwortham, shoemaker (1716), £27.16.10; John Browne, Farington, tailor (1704), £23.07.07; LA WRW/A, John Stirsaker, Preesall, blacksmith (1715), £17.14.02; are several examples amongst many.

<sup>54</sup> Chapter 1. Tables 9-12 Cattle herd sizes and calf numbers, pp. 57-60.



demonstrable from the existing dataset by comparing the pre-1660 inventories, in which are revealed the greatest diversity in arable utilisation, with those from the post-1700 inventories. Therefore, it may be assumed that in no other western coastal parish or inland township could the reverse effect have occurred and that nowhere in the west of Lancashire was there a greater range of crops grown after the mid-seventeenth century than before it. The sole exception is the introduction of the potato which was not grown before c.1660 but was increasingly adopted thereafter.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, when studied, interpreted and quantified as whole sets over an extensive period, a broad range of information may be harvested from inventories drawn from our dataset. Inventories are indeed too useful not to use. They will provide a wealth of data for our commentaries on economic and social evolution in a specific, geographically defined area of study. They enable us to look behind the often-formulaic lists of livestock, crops, goods and credits to evaluate transformations within a society which was leaving behind it the traditionally attended primary reliance on home-husbanded agrarian production in favour of commercial specialisations. They also reflect the early light of a consumer culture which was emerging in west Lancashire south of the Ribble before the turn of the eighteenth century.

### **Temporal case-studies**

When writing his assessments of the quantifiable increase in material possessions which were readily identifiable from inventories, de Vries observed that “the very richness of the inventories, each with scores, often hundreds, of entries, possess methodological challenges that no two investigators have resolved in just the same way.”<sup>56</sup> The case studies which follow, those of two yeomen who lived in rural townships south of the Ribble, but over a

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<sup>55</sup> Chapter 3, pp. 152-66.

<sup>56</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 123-4.

century apart, serve several functions. Primarily, the analysis illustrates what may be read, and therefore rationally read into, probate inventories. Secondly, interpretations of their lives set the scene in exemplifying rural lifestyles in early modern Lancashire. Both men retained agricultural interests and possessed comfortable homes that contained furniture and goods. Both men clearly appear to have been industrious, able, and versatile. They had also been able to build up material and financial surpluses and reserves of cash. Neither man was exceptionally wealthy at their demise, although they were considerably wealthier than some who left inventories. Yet their inventories are broadly representative of men from rural townships who possessed livestock, a variety of working materials and household goods of a kind to which we shall refer in the following five chapters.

Edmond Smoult of Lathom (1597) and William Marton of Hutton (1734) died approximately twelve miles and 137 years apart from each other. Both men left a will, both had an inventory of their entire movable estate drawn up, and they were in either case described by their appraisers as ‘yeoman’. The comparative descriptions of these two inventories serve to convey an evidential snapshot of the subtle changes in the condition of the ‘middling’ elements of Lancashire society at either end of the period under review. The agricultural, domestic, and financial vignettes presented here provide just several illustrations from a variety of diverse subject matter which may be opened for analysis and often uniquely sourced from this resource. The two inventories were chosen from many hundreds as exemplars of tradition and change in the west of Lancashire. Both men were yeoman with similar gross sums in the valuation of their estates. They were not from the same township but close enough to share similarities of geography and soil-types. The interval between their deaths was as far distant as was possible to select from our dataset of transcribed inventories south of the Ribble. From what are effectively two listings of dead men’s goods, these inventories nevertheless provide useful evaluations for a range of resaleable livestock and

commodities and offer comparative insights into social status, income specialisations, financial reserves and credits.

In his will dated 10 October 1597 Edmond Smoult desired, “to be buried within the Parish Church of Ormskirk as neare unto the place where my father and grandfather were buried as Convenientlie may bee permitted.”<sup>57</sup> William Marton, who drew up his will on 9 November 1734, may have known that he had fewer specific preferences in the matter of his burial. Notwithstanding his social status and ancestral connections to the township of Hutton and the parish of Penwortham, by the early eighteenth century English churches and churchyards were becoming overcrowded.<sup>58</sup> Marton therefore left simple instructions which by 1700 had become almost standardised text in the preamble of wills, “... and my body I commit to the Earth to be buried in decent Christian manner at the discretion of my Executors herein after named.”

The gross valuation of Smoult’s goods, drawn up on 4 November 1597 totalled £523.1s.10d. William Marton’s appraisal on 19 November 1734 came to £565.15s.2d. Given any comparison of such valuations taken from anywhere in Lancashire in the early modern period, both men may be regarded as ‘wealthy’ yeomen. From the sums of their inventories, they would find themselves within the upper quartile and higher end range of yeoman inventories sampled elsewhere in England c.1550-1750.<sup>59</sup> Real estate and land, being permanent and immovable in common law, were not subject to the jurisdiction of the church probate courts. All goods within and around built property however, including the value of

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<sup>57</sup> LA WCW, Edmond Smoult, Lathom, yeoman (1597). LA WCW, William Marton, Hutton, yeoman (1734).

<sup>58</sup> Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984), pp. 139-142.

<sup>59</sup> Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (Eds), *When Death do us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), Table 6.10, Total inventory valuations (as recorded by appraisers) in Lincolnshire, p. 139; Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain (1660-1760)*, (Cambridge, 1988), Appendix 2, Occupations and Status in Inventories, Tables A2.1-A2-4, pp. 208-214. For definitions of yeomen see also, Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), pp. 134-136.

unexpired land leases were. Thus, we read that Smoult possessed not only his ancestral home in Lathom, but also a house in the nearby market town of Ormskirk. He was also appraised for goods at a third house at Toxteth. This settlement was then an undeveloped area of fertile farmland, pasture and parkland on the southern edge of Liverpool, a small fishing port town of historic importance which would not commence its urban and port developments for a further seventy-five years. Its trading sphere in the 1590s was confined to Ireland and the Irish Sea ports.<sup>60</sup> Smoult kept an impressive range of wains, wheels, ploughs and harrows at Toxteth, and a comparatively vast store of 420 thraves of barley valued at £140.<sup>61</sup> He had ‘Wheat growing at Burscough ... £8.’ and ‘timber lying at Tarlescough ... £10.’ This was a significant quantity of ‘lying’ timber, which is likely to refer to whole, felled trees of oak, elm or ash. Such trees were generally valued at 5s, to 6s.8d, each.<sup>62</sup> Tarlescough is now an area of productive arable land two miles north of Burscough.<sup>63</sup> In 1597, a full century before Thomas Fleetwood’s ambitious drainage projects, it must have been an area of mature woodland which divided Burscough Moss from the southernmost fringes of Martin Mere.<sup>64</sup> To have felled between thirty and forty of his own trees on this land signifies Smoult’s high status in the locality. Timber prices across England had been relatively low overall until the mid-sixteenth century but increased steadily thereafter.<sup>65</sup> At Lathom he maintained six plough oxen, two maturing bullocks, ‘one fatt oxe’, and a mixed dairy herd of twenty cows and four calves, at a combined valuation of £75.6s.4d. Smoult also kept ‘fyve horses’, although their valuation appraisal of just £10, suggests there were old and utilitarian, and

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<sup>60</sup> Diana E. Ascott, Fiona Lewis, Michael Power, *Liverpool 1660-1750, People, Prosperity and Power* (Liverpool, 2006), p. 1, pp. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Thrave: Two stooks of corn generally containing twelve sheaves each, used as a measure. OED acc: 26.07.24.

<sup>62</sup> LA WCW, Lawrence Rimmer, Formby (1620); James Haughton, Westhead in Lathom, yeoman (1601); John Shaw, Scarisbrick, gentleman (1691). Collective valuations for timber trees are common, individual valuations by exact numbers, less so.

<sup>63</sup> OS Landranger Map, 1:50 000, sheet 108, grid ref: 435 142.

<sup>64</sup> John Virgoe, ‘Thomas Fleetwood and the Draining of Martin Mere’, *THSLC*, vol. 152 (2003), pp. 27-49.

<sup>65</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. iv, Statistical Appendix Table xii, *Price of Agricultural products, timber, and industrial products*, p. 862

‘Thirteen lambes ...£3.5s.’ Unusually, for it was common that most families raised only one or two sows, Smoult left, ‘foure Swyne in feeding ... £2.13s.4d.’, ‘twoe Swyne in the larder ... £1.6s.8d.’ and ‘three Spenings, three pigs & twoe at £1.2s.6d.’

Within the dwellings at Lathom and Ormskirk, were brewing ‘coumbs’ with their attendant vessels, and several barrels and firkins. The house at Ormskirk enjoyed the benefit of its own well. ‘One Windell one half Windell two flaskets one bucket one Cheyne one Rope ... 2s.8d.’ was inventoried. There is evidence of dairy processing at Lathom in ‘six mugs of butter ...16s.’, ‘three metts of salt ...6s.’ and ‘Eight butter prints ...1s.4d.’ The home-grown hemp, and flax, and ‘one stone of woolle ...12s.’ would have been variously processed and spun on the ‘foure spinning wheelles’, in the quotidian requirement for hemp for sack-making and cart ropes, linen and woollen yarns. Ashes, used in the production of laundry soap, were valued at 3s.4d. ‘Sole leather’, ‘Buff leather’, and ‘3 yards of Buffet’, possibly cut from one hide of his own ox awaited further processing, as did an undisclosed yardage of ‘Cambricke ...6s.8d.’ a fine white linen.

Smoult’s wife Katherine or their daughter Grace would have ground oatmeal to flour on the ‘hand milne ...13s.’ and sieved it through a fine ‘haere’, which at seven shillings would have been made from silk. Even in 1597, the ancient quern mill was an item of status, and probably of his wife’s inheritance. The flour would have produced batches of oatcakes cooked on their selection of ‘Two gird irones/one Iron girdle/one brandreth’. Smoult possessed few other recognisably status items or luxuries, however. He was able to heat his house in Lathom with coal, but also held a sizeable reserve ‘in turfes ...35s.’ He also had ‘one Warminge panne ...2s.6d.’ an item which became more commonly found in households in the following century. Most of his kitchen utensils were of pewter and earthenware. The only reference to silver plate is the impressive ‘one silver salt ...£3.0.0.’ which at its universal resale value of 5s. an ounce, thus weighed twelve ounces. Smoult also owned ‘one

gould Ringe ...£2.10s.’ and he dressed well. His apparel was valued at £6.13s.4d. at a time when the broad average value of a trade or husbandman’s clothing was, from our dataset, very approximately £1.10s. It is interesting therefore to note Muldrew’s assessment of 382 inventories from the 1700s, wherein the average value of labourers’ clothing in England was just £1.2s.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout Smoult’s impeccably detailed inventory of 222 lines of itemised entries, we find evidence of a diversity of home production and a thriving domestic economy of self-sufficiency and utility. Smoult would have sold the meat and hides of his male bovine, the butter and barley for brewing malt at Ormskirk market. He also derived an annual income from thirteen sub-tenants, each renting an acre or a roodland ‘on the Milne Field,’ or ‘in the long medowe,’ which brought in £4.7s.4d. These would have represented useful sums to regularly reinvest in the family economies. Additionally, he was owed £17.15s.2d. in 35 small debts, upon which he may or may not have charged the then statutory annual interest rate of ten per cent.<sup>67</sup> After his death, his appraisers also recorded ‘money found in the decedents Chyste ...£14.10s.’ Whatever he lacked in material comforts Smoult seems to have had goods and chattells in reassuring quantities. He clearly possessed the ability to manage resources and to create profitable and sustainable opportunities from broadly based diversification strategies, from land rents, pigs, timber, butter, leather, barley, wheat and beef. Having lived and died at the end of the Tudor period, from his several properties and in his financial arrangements, there would have been little to distinguish him from the minor gentry. The socially problematic term ‘gentleman’ was recently reviewed by Henry French, in whose definitions of income derivation, Smoult would have qualified as a gentleman.<sup>68</sup> Edmond

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<sup>66</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness*, p. 163.

<sup>67</sup> LA WCW, William Smoult, Lathom, yeoman (1597), it is not clear from the document whether these arrears of rent were for a half or a whole year. They ranged from 3s. 6d. per roodland to 7s. and 10s. per acre.

<sup>68</sup> Henry French, ‘Gentlemen’: Remaking the English Ruling Class’, in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 269-289.

Smoult regarded himself as a yeoman and was thus described by his peers. He was clearly a middling man of some ability in the countryside.

William Marton's inventory, compiled on 19 November 1734 bears superficial similarities to Smoult's, though it is shorter on description and with fewer itemisations of household goods. This was a common feature of later period inventories. Marton's dairy herd in Hutton was valued at £54.13s. This was lower than Smoult's, yet in recording fourteen dairy cattle and one maturing calf, was also comfortably above our dataset average of 8.8 head per holding.<sup>69</sup> Unlike Smoult, Marton maintained no oxen. He owned among others, one 'old' horse at £5. and an 'old' mare at £4. However, their valuations even in age indicates they were animals of high quality, when in the 1730s and throughout the preceding century in Lancashire healthy young animals of either sex could be purchased for a half of that amount. Bowden has suggested that an increase in the employment of horses in agriculture, for ploughing and carting, and the concurrent increase in road travel by coach, led to a growing market for horses and an upward percentage change in their price over the course of the period 1640-1749 by 11.1 per cent.<sup>70</sup> The combined valuation of £23.10s. which included a young mare and three colts, infers perhaps that Marton's chosen specialisation was in the breeding of good horses.

Both Marton and Smoult had owned modest flocks of sheep, of which Smoult's thirteen lambs in 1597 were the more valuable at £3.5s. or 5s. apiece. Marton's '20 sheep ...£3.' were 3s. apiece. The lower valuation from the eighteenth-century inventory is in line with the regional trend. Sheep rearing was in a steep general decline in the western townships south of the Ribble. Hutton was an atypical township in its persistence with sheep grazing in the mid-

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<sup>69</sup> Chapter 1, tables 9-12, pp. 57-60.

<sup>70</sup> Peter J. Bowden, 'Long Term Movement of Prices and Wages,' in *AHEW*, vol v.ii, Table13.5, pp. 12-13.

eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup> Marton grew corn, at £8.2s.8d. and had harvested hay at £5. Both were necessary to maintain livestock through the winter, but he clearly appears to have worked the land to a lesser extent than Smoult.<sup>72</sup> Inside his dwelling Marton enjoyed unusually few status items other than ‘A Clock A table & Chaires in ye house ...£1.12s.’ He too heated his house with ‘Turfe Coales and Cannel ...£1.5s.’ and he dressed well at £5. ‘in apparel’. The rooms in his property are not divulged, other than ‘for Goods in ye Red Room ...£1.10s.’ As we shall see in chapter 5, the fashion for internal colour decoration on unpanelled walls appears to have gained in its popularity from the 1680s onwards throughout west Lancashire.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps the most striking comparison between Smoult and Marton’s inventories is reflected in their contrasting use of financial surpluses, a subject we will also visit in chapter 5.<sup>74</sup>

Smoult left £14.10s. in coin. Most of his contemporaries would have had less cash to hand. This sum represented just 2.8 per cent of the appraised value of his estate. His debtors of lent money and the small-acreage rentals together stood for 14.4 per cent of his worth. Marton’s financial proportions in 1734 are noticeably different. In the absence of any form of a savings banks system, Marton held more of his saved worth in ready coin, which amounted to £70. or 12.4 per cent of his gross estate after the payment of his funeral expenses. He also derived an annual income from financial bills and bonds, which at £370. represented 65.4 per cent of his estate. Although there had been a continual drop in legally chargeable interest rates from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, providing he had no unrecoverable, ‘desperate’ debts to write off, Marton could have used the reserve of lent capital as security if necessary while deriving an income at the then legal maximum interest rate of six per cent, an annual gain of

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<sup>71</sup> Chapter 2, p. 113.

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 1. Tables 3-5, Livestock and crops, townships south of the Ribble, pp. 48-50.

<sup>73</sup> Chapter 5, pp. 248-9.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter 5, pp. 258-69.



£22.4s.<sup>75</sup> While this was insufficient for a yeoman and his family to live on in 1734, even this must have represented a useful sum when compared to a husbandman-labourer's total annual income of around £15. per annum, calculated by Wrightson for the Essex village of Terling.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, in regard to William Marton of Hutton's financial affairs, loan interest from financial agreements provided regular income equal or greater to that which a husbandman-labourer could expect from a year of physical toil.

As is common with all inventories, Marton's earlier life endeavours, even his age, are unknown. His inventory from 1734 nevertheless provides a clear indication of the diminution in a reliance on arable husbandry for primary household income. Both men kept dairy herds of above average size, but Marton had no need for plough oxen, or the comprehensive array of wains, barrows, harrows and plough-gear which Smoult had accumulated. Marton had narrowed the extent of his cereal production nearer in value to that of hay, and appears to have favoured financial contracts, the breeding of quality horses and meat production from mutton and fattened dairy beef to provide a rationalised and sustainable annual income stream. Marton's pastorally dependent activities therefore contrast markedly with Edmond Smoult's high yield, broad-based, resource-diverse arable agrarianism in the 1590s and are indicative of the gradual rationalisation of land-use and increase in pasture which evolved across western Lancashire. Contrastingly, although the probate record identifies a great many decedents in the eighteenth century in the upper middling ranks who left a significant portfolio of sustainable income from mixed agricultural activities, other men of means such as William Marton attained security from other income streams and inheritances of financial credits and appear to have withdrawn from arable husbandry because they chose to do so.

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Spufford has provided a description of 'bills', 'bonds' and other 'specialties', with a neat summary of the Usury Acts; Peter Spufford, 'Long-Term Rural Credit in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England: the Evidence of Probate accounts; in, Tom Arkell *et al.*, *When Death Do Us Part*, pp. 219-221.

<sup>76</sup> Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London & New York, 1982), p. 34.

## Synopsis of chapters

To understand more clearly the motivations of the broad strata of western Lancashire society, we must firstly understand society's relationship with agricultural production. The first three chapters therefore proceed to analyse individual trends which are evident in the agricultural practices which evolved across the west Lancashire plains during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These trends will primarily become manifest through quantitative analyses of the inventories in our dataset. The first two chapters will attempt to distil patterns relating to the principal livestock types, and chapter 3 will focus on field crops. Together, these chapters will aim to identify and assess major characteristics of the nature and condition of the agrarian economy as it prevailed in the rural townships of the Lancashire plain during the core period under review, c.1660-1740. This segregated examination is important. It augments the earlier inventory-based agricultural research work presented by Brigg, on The Forest of Pendle, and Ironfield and Dottie's papers on Chipping and on Childwall parishes respectively. Each of these historians discussed the changing relationship over time between livestock and crops, noting the rise of the former and the diminution of the latter, as a general trend in their chosen focus areas in Lancashire. Notably, they are examples of the sporadic yet important contribution of such analyses within the county. Therefore, by describing agricultural conditions across a wider area with a larger dataset we are able to take these studies further and draw more nuanced conclusions.<sup>77</sup>

Chapter 1 will discuss the financial and utilitarian primacy of cattle in the farming communities. Thereafter I analyse the changing attitudes to maintaining oxen and discuss the subtle but distinctive differences in bovine selection utilised by farmers north and south of the

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<sup>77</sup> Mary Brigg, 'The Forest of Pendle in the Seventeenth Century', Part 1, *THSLC*, vol. 113 (1961), pp. 65-96; Part 2, *THSLC*, vol. 115 (1963), pp. 65-90; Christine Ironfield, 'The Parish of Chipping During the Seventeenth Century', *THSLC*, vol. 127 (1978), pp. 25-46; R.G. Dottie, 'Childwall: A Lancashire Township in the Seventeenth Century', *THSLC*, vol. 135 (1986), pp. 15-36.

Ribble. In chapter 2, the multi-function versatility of horses and mares, their owners' status, specialisations of breeds and their evolving utilitarian and leisure roles in rural and in urban settings will be evaluated. In general, horse numbers stabilised in rural locations while their utilitarian capacities for hiring, carting, and conveying goods increased in response to the needs of a mobile population in and between urban centres. The traditionally numerous sheep flocks, identified in inventories prior to the 1660s were much reduced by the early 1700s, outweighed by the economic benefits of dairying as the demand for dairy products grew. Consideration has therefore been given to the subsequent steep decline in the practice of maintaining small flocks of sheep as a staple of rural society, as similarly have the changing economic value to families of raising domesticated livestock as pigs, geese and poultry, and beekeeping.

Chapter 3 analyses the diversity and subsequent rationalisation of crop-types across the Lancashire plain. Evidence from inventories has clearly revealed that agricultural imperatives evolved during the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. However, on the south-western plains, arable production for domestic consumption appears not to have declined to the extent that was reported in the agricultural survey of the county by John Holt in 1795.<sup>78</sup> This influential yet deeply flawed contemporary work, which was critically reviewed by John Virgoe in 2003, has inevitably filtered into subsequent historiographies.<sup>79</sup> A key theme of this chapter will be to highlight the range of edible field crops which had been commonly available earlier in the period, assessing whether rationalisations impacted on home production and diet. This examination engages with the comprehensive work by Thirsk on food diversity and Muldrew's innovative investigation into the calorific intake necessary for

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<sup>78</sup> John Holt, *General View of the County of Lancaster: With Observations on the Means of its Improvement* (London, 1795: reprint Newton Abbot, 1969).

<sup>79</sup> John Virgoe, 'John Holt and *The general view of the agriculture of the county of Lancaster*: An appraisal' *THSLC*, vol. 154 (2003), pp.93-116.

labourers to function productively in an industrialised society.<sup>80</sup> The introduction of the potato is comprehensively analysed and contrasted with a gradual but noticeable decrease in the growing of pulses and the industrial crops, hemp and flax. Our inventories reveal evidence which enables us to highlight the dietary and economic importance of onions, pumpkins, fruit orchards and kitchen gardens, subjects rarely engaged with elsewhere. Furthermore, I will examine contributions not only to the diet available for home consumption but also to seafaring men involved in long distance voyages out of Liverpool. The unique archive explored here, are the provisioning ledgers of two Liverpool sailing vessels, 'Pearl' and 'Dilligence,' between 1684-1694.<sup>81</sup>

Chapter 4 will focus on industrial and commercial expansion, which in turn contributed to the overall profiles of growth in rural and urban locations. In rural townships south of the Ribble it enabled relatively modest husbandmen and yeomen farmers and their families to increase significantly levels of dairy and/or brewing production by raising domestic expertise to a commercial level. Rural producers continued to satisfy domestic consumption and supply their local markets, but by c.1680s, even those with small dairy herds had taken account of wider demand opportunities to increase significantly their output in response to expanding urban growth. Other commercial opportunities were being occasioned by the nascent renaissance of Ormskirk and in the fabrication of pewter and brass in Wigan, an established manufacturing town which had also become a conduit for frequent road conveyances of goods to and from London. More significantly, the trajectory of overseas import/export trade through Liverpool continued to grow unabated. Inventories from these towns reveal insightful evidence of technological advances in large scale urban brewing and in tobacco processing

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<sup>80</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London and New York, 2007); Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy, and Industriousness, Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>81</sup> LA DDBB 8/3 William Trenow cash book; Blundell collection.

through descriptions and high evaluations of new equipment. They further indicate that consolidation, reorganisation and greatly increased economies of scale evolved in glassmaking, metal-working and foundry processes, each of which became organised on rational foundations.

Chapter 5 will explore transformations in housing quality and the emergence of a consumer culture. The external materials of buildings are reviewed, as also are the progressive re-utilisation, transformation and redecoration of internal domestic spaces. Such analysis allows for comparisons with rural and urban experiences and exemplifies the general themes of significant social change and innovation in west Lancashire. For example, as we shall see, the localised manufacture and increase in use of clay bricks south of the Ribble in particular from the late 1500s onwards, and their use under slates in preference to timber and clay infill under thatch, is worthy of comparison with contemporaneous building practices in other regions.<sup>82</sup> Our understanding of the built environment of towns is further enhanced by the existence of two building surveys of Ormskirk which were commissioned by the earl of Derby in 1702 and again in 1713. In addition to providing the names and the street locations of his tenants, the latter survey in particular registers brief but invaluable descriptions of the external construction materials of individual dwelling houses, barns and outbuildings.<sup>83</sup>

Concerning the interiors of dwellings, the wealth of documented evidence in the probate record signals the manifestation of an emerging material and consumer culture. This subject has received much attention since Weatherill's wide-ranging study in the 1980s.<sup>84</sup> In west

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<sup>82</sup> M. W. Barley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (London, 1961); R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (London, 1971); Brunskill, *Brick Building in Britain* (London, 1990); Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses* (HMSO, 1971); Richard C. Watson, & Marian E. Maclintock, *Traditional Houses of the Fylde* (Lancaster, 1979); W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640, *Past and Present*, No. 4 (November, 1953), pp. 44-59.

<sup>83</sup> LA DDK/1541/41 (1713), Earl of Derby, Ormskirk survey.

<sup>84</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London and New York, 1988).

Lancashire, the type of books found in inventories evolved and there were technical and stylistic advances in clocks, furniture and silver items. Incidences of goods perceived as luxuries increase as do affordable, non-essential decorative pieces. Utilitarian items designed for home improvements and increasingly comfortable items of household furniture and bedding appear with increasing regularity in inventories from the 1670s. As the choice and availability of new goods increased, there is clear evidence that the inhabitants of Liverpool and Ormskirk in particular, were at the forefront of an early demand for both high-end items and more universally accessible household items. The wealth of such evidence enables us to engage with notions of industriousness within the family economy as formulated by de Vries and to consider interaction between market economy and the family-based household.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, evidence from inventories also suggests that more cash was available to make such purchases than has formerly been supposed. I have therefore discussed the contemporary importance and utility of items of silver and of coin holdings in a society which relied upon the availability of both cash and credit.<sup>86</sup>

Earlier in this introduction, I referred to Hoyle's frustration regarding the few regional studies which have specifically related to Lancashire pre-1780 and Gritt's description of south-west Lancashire as a relatively neglected region.<sup>87</sup> It is intended that discussions and analysis in the chapters which follow will address this imbalance and augment our knowledge of the county in the early modern period. Each chapter of course has its own focus. In each however, I will demonstrate that, as exemplified in the case-studies of Smoult and Marton, in the rural townships and farming communities and in the urban hubs of Ormskirk and

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<sup>85</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 9-11, 40-58. Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 54 No. 2 (June 1994), pp. 249-70.

<sup>86</sup> Craig Muldrew, 'Hard Food for Midas': Cash and its Social Value in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, No. 170 (Feb 2001) pp. 78-120; Adrian Green, 'Consumption and Material Culture', in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 244-266.

<sup>87</sup> Hoyle, 'Recent work' pp. 133, 138-9; Gritt, 'Operation of lifeleasehold' p.3.

Liverpool, a dynamism and industriousness prevailed throughout west-Lancashire society in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries which was atypical of the country as a whole and which changed again after *c.*1760.

**Chapter 1** Changes in agricultural practices: male and female cattle, evidence from inventories from selected adjoining townships in west Lancashire, c.1580-1740.

“No matter what the financial standing of the farmer, the greatest wealth was almost always in the cattle.”<sup>1</sup>

The social and economic importance of cattle and the benefits of their ownership in early modern England cannot be overstated. Of all species of livestock, cattle were without doubt the principal, financial and economic drivetrain of agrarian Lancashire during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The domestic utility of heifers, providing milk and producing calves, the ploughing capabilities of oxen and bullocks and the carcass value of meat and hides from beasts of both sexes made a significant financial and dietary contribution to the livelihoods of farming families. The contemporary understanding of the practical and social value of dairy cattle as heifers and calves for example, may be observed in their appearance in wills, as bequests to family members and servants.

Notwithstanding the self-evident principle that healthy, productive cattle were valued highly, neither in Lancashire, nor elsewhere in England was the raising of cattle breed-specific. Joan Thirsk identified three principal English regional breeds of cattle. In addition to several distinctive and traditional county breeds, the most commonly recognised types in the seventeenth century were the large-bodied white from Lincolnshire and the Fenland counties, the tall red small-horned cows of Somerset and Gloucestershire, and the long-horned, black-haired cattle of all the northern counties, which included Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.<sup>2</sup> Among the traditional county breeds were also the black and brown longhorns bred in Durham, Cumberland and Furness. These were specifically referred to as ‘black beasts’ and occur in a concentration of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Ironfield, ‘The parish of Chipping During the Seventeenth Century’, *THSLC*, vol. 127 (1978), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘Farming Techniques, Grassland and Stock’, in *AHEW*, vol. iv, pp. 186-7.



inventories from the fertile lowlands of the small coastal townships along the Furness peninsula.<sup>3</sup> Thirsk also observed that “Despite the existence of these local breeds, the fields in every shire were liable to hold a motley collection of cattle, for the trade in livestock reached every corner of the kingdom.”<sup>4</sup> Early inventories in our dataset south of the Ribble make scant references to the colour of female cattle, only to their various stages of development. Exceptionally, in 1606, William Sharples of Mawdesley had ‘one redd Heffer ... £2.10s.’ among his herd. In 1627, Roger Ormishaw of Burscough, yeoman, left ‘the beste Blacke Cow ... £3.’, ‘one red Cowe ... £2.13.4d.’ and ‘one oud Black Cow ... £2.6s.8d.’<sup>5</sup> Prior to c.1660, only four other inventories (of 472) refer to cattle as black or red, but there may be no doubt they were all horned and were mostly black. Richard Walton of Longton, yeoman (1649) left ‘in horned bease eliven in number ... £32.’<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, it became common practice when providing an overall herd valuation to record ‘In horned beasts [or] Cattell.’ In Penwortham for example between 1660 and 1700, of the 42 inventories which valued cattle, 23, or 55 per cent were thus described, in Hutton 41 per cent and in Longton 29.5 per cent. It also gradually became a more common occurrence after the mid-century to refer to cows by the colour of their coats as well as their age and function. Perhaps this was a sign of their growing individual importance. Peter Martindale of Much Hoole, husbandman (1684) owned, among his other beasts, ‘One great Black oxe ... £4.10s.’, ‘one black milk cow at Ellin Hesketh ... £3.12s.’, ‘One browne milk cow ... £3.9s.’, ‘Two great red bullocks ... £7.’, ‘One red Heffer ... £1.16s. 8d.’, also several black heifers and young black stirkes.<sup>7</sup> John Hawkshaw of Scarisbrick, gentleman (1727), kept, ‘in ye fields’, ‘six scoch Cows at £1.15s

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<sup>3</sup> LA WRW/F, Richard Simpson, Rampside (1683); John Cowper, Bardsey, husbandman (1695); James Mount, Aldingham, husbandman (1706); John Marr, Scales, husbandman (1711); Richard Poulton, Newbiggin, husbandman (1714); among other decedents who possessed specifically, ‘black beasts.’

<sup>4</sup> Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. iv, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> LA WCW, William Sharples, Mawdesley (1606); Roger Ormishaw, Burscough, yeoman (1627).

<sup>6</sup> LA WCW, Richard Walton, Longton, yeoman (1649).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Stirke’, a young bull or heifer, usually between one and two years old. OED online, acc, 02.07.24. See also footnote, page 81, which defines contemporary dialect for describing cattle.

p' piece.'<sup>8</sup> In whatever eclectic mix of breeds, from the inventories north and south of the Ribble, holdings of any number of male bovines and dairy cattle were recorded in over 90 per cent of extant inventories in which agricultural activity was evident.

Our attention in this chapter focusses on several key issues. The following discussions augment the inventory-based observations of Brigg and subsequently Ironfield, that cattle were the most valuable of all assets to those who were involved in agricultural production.<sup>9</sup> Computations of cattle valuations in west Lancashire have been drawn from inventories in six adjoining townships north and sixteen adjoining townships south of the River Ribble. We will see that these confirm beyond question the financial primacy of all bovine livestock when compared with that of arable production. Following this assessment, average cattle herd sizes are calculated and compared with those in neighbouring counties in the north-west of England. Oxen are then highlighted. The relative decline in their numbers north of the Ribble and their notable decline on the southern plain from c.1600 to 1720 is analysed compared with the relative merits of bulls, bullocks and male calves. Thereafter we discuss female cattle and the component mix of male and female bovines and their calves to assess the subtle but economically important difference between farming systems as they relate to cattle utilities north and south of the Ribble. In so doing, we will expand upon Hey's argument that beef rearing was the primary agrarian consideration for all Lancashire farmers in the early modern period, whose economic benefits outweighed dairying and arable cultivation.<sup>10</sup> To illustrate these discussion points, several sets of tables have been compiled to present and examine the data recorded in the inventories. The first of these, a set of five tables, present the total valuations of all agricultural production as livestock and crop-types which enable

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<sup>8</sup> LA WCW, Peter Martindale, Much Hoole, husbandman (1684); John Hawkshaw, Scarisbrick, gentleman (1727).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Brigg, 'The Forest of Pendle in the Seventeenth Century, part 1, *THSLC*, vol. 113 (1961). Ironfield, 'Chipping', p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> David Hey, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 62-3.

value comparisons to be made north and south of the Ribble. A further set of four tables calculate overall cattle numbers and average herd sizes pre-1660 and thereafter to 1740 south of the Ribble, and from 1660 to 1720 north of the Ribble. When we discuss oxen and other male bovines, another table calculates their incidences from 1660 to 1720. This highlights the comparative variations in their numbers in neighbouring townships.

In this and the following two chapters, we are concerned only with those inventories which reveal a determinable element of agricultural involvement. The numbers of inventories employed therefore match those cited in the inventory records tables which appears in the general introduction and accounts for inventory numbers in our dataset.<sup>11</sup> However, owing to the descriptive inconsistencies by which livestock was evaluated by different appraisers, quantitative information must perforce be presented differently. While compiling tables of the inventoried valuations of decedents' livestock for example, an obstacle to accuracy was encountered. Livestock evaluations in Lancashire inventories sometimes appear as a joint evaluation. This owes to the appraisers' obligation (as indeed it was in law), only to record reasonably accurate potential resale values of a decedent's livestock, not necessarily to provide a headcount. The men who compiled inventories were not required to value the deceased's possessions as individual items, although many did, only to provide accurate valuations overall. In assessing inventories from western Lancashire to determine cattle values, the phrase, 'all the cattle/beasts and horses' was sometimes used collectively. For example, husbandman John Southworth of Penwortham (1666) left 'In Horses & Cowes old & young ... £18.', Thomas Moss of Longton, butcher, similarly left 'in horned beasts & horses ... £42.2s.'<sup>12</sup> The occasional hurdle joining cattle and horses in a single valuation, was resolved as follows. In an endeavour to use the 54 inventories so described when preparing

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<sup>11</sup> General Introduction. Tables 1 & 2, Inventory records in core dataset 1 & 2, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> LA WCW, John Southworth, Penwortham, husbandman (1666); Thomas Moss, Longton, butcher (1716).

the data for the livestock and crops tables, I took 28 individually itemised entries from Hutton & Houghwick, and 20 from North Meols townships between 1661 and 1700. These clean samples produced test value proportions of almost exactly 66 per cent for cattle, and 34 per cent for horses. This calculation has therefore been employed to determine apportioned valuations whenever inventories recorded cattle and horses together. For example, John Copeland of Crossens, North Meols, husbandman (1671) left 'bease & horses ... £16.10s.' The apportioned valuations give us £11. for cattle and £5.10s. [£5.50p] for horses. Similarly, Thomas Moss of Longton, butcher (1716), left 'in horned beasts & horses ... £42.2s.' This apportions £28.2s. [£28.10p] for cattle and £14. for horses. Similarly, Matthew Tunstall, Penwortham, yeoman (1729) left, 'in Bease and Horses ... £133.5s.2d.' which apportions to £88.16s.8d. [£88.84p] and £44.9s.4d. [£44.42] respectively.<sup>13</sup>

As we discussed in the general introduction, over the past seventy-five years, inventories have provided the most accessible source of data for agricultural research in the early modern period. Although they do not value buildings or indicate the acreage of a tenement, they are particularly useful in facilitating quantitative assessments of regional trends through descriptions and evaluations of livestock holdings and crops. In an early inventories-based study, J. A. Yelling analysed the development of agriculture in east Worcestershire across four periods between 1540 and 1750. He acknowledged the pioneering work on sixteenth century Leicestershire inventories by Hoskins and subsequently Thirsk's innovative method of dividing Lincolnshire into four agricultural regions, sampling inventories within each between 1530 and 1700. Yelling's research referred specifically to Havinden's paper on Oxfordshire which had proposed that the median number of cattle and sheep recorded in inventories increased considerably from the periods 1580-1640 and again from 1660-1730.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> LA WCW, John Copeland, Crossens, North Meols, husbandman (1671); Thomas Moss, Longton, butcher, (1716); Matthew Tunstall, Penwortham, yeoman (1729).

<sup>14</sup> M. A. Havinden, 'Agricultural Progress in Open Field Oxfordshire', *AgHR*, 9, (1961), pp. 73-83.

Yelling's conclusions from east Worcestershire, however, suggested that results from inventories varied broadly according to soil type across the county, and that, "There seems little doubt that there was a general and significant fall in the relative importance of livestock, and that this fall was particularly concentrated in the most pastoral areas ... crops had become much more important throughout the woodland zone except in the lower Severn valley..."<sup>15</sup>

Agricultural studies for Lancashire which employ inventories have subsequently been sporadic and the key papers stand out. Mary Brigg analysed inventories from the Forest of Pendle, an upland area which stretches from the north-east corner of Blackburn hundred further eastwards to the Pennine borders with Yorkshire. She concluded "All the farms with the larger valuations of corn had oxen as well as horses... In all cases the cattle were the most important of the farm stock... The herd of cattle, whether small or large was the mainstay of the farm".<sup>16</sup> Christine Ironfield focussed her attention on the neighbouring upland parish of Chipping in the seventeenth century. Chipping parish extends from an area ten miles north-east of Preston over hilly terrain on the southern reaches of the Forest of Bowland. Ironfield acknowledged Brigg's work and drew several similar conclusions from her set of ninety wills and inventories between 1650 and 1700. In Pendle, as indeed it appears from the inventories for the similar period in our dataset, no Chipping inventories suggest any extremes of wealth. However, farmers in Chipping parish with higher corn valuations tended to have larger numbers of oxen and horses. Conversely, some of the decedents with lower corn valuations had no oxen at all, therefore, "those farmers with the highest valuations of grain generally had the largest herds of cattle." Ironfield stated most definitely, "No matter what the financial standing of the farmer, the greatest wealth was almost always in the cattle."<sup>17</sup> These hilly,

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<sup>15</sup> Yelling, 'Inventories and Geography' p. 117.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Brigg, 'The Forest of Pendle' p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Ironfield, 'Chipping', p. 37.

pastoral eastern landscapes are of course geographically very different from the mixed farming regimes of the lowland plains to the west. Closer to our own townships south of the Ribble, Roy Dottie's observations of Childwall parish in the second half of the seventeenth century highlighted strikingly different circumstances. He concluded that all agricultural activities in the west of Lancashire were in decline as the seventeenth century progressed, "a small number of relevant inventories leave the overall impression that the number and value of animals kept at Childwall declined as the century progressed, and that there was a withdrawal from the richly varied agriculture evident before 1653."<sup>18</sup> In the townships south of the Ribble, evidence from our inventories indicate different outcomes concerning livestock types and crop diversity which are discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Whereas arable farming gradually contracted from c.1660-1740 through the transformational increase in demand for meat and dairy products, the necessity for good quality pasture occasioned an evolving rationalisation of diversity of crop-types, rather than an overall decline in agricultural production.

### **Cattle and crop valuations**

These few, if somewhat diverse conclusions, raise questions which invite comparisons with the inventories in our dataset. Were cattle valuations always greater than the production of cereals and other crops? Was there a general diminution or growth of cattle herds between the late sixteenth century and c.1740? What is precisely meant by the term 'cattle', a catch-all term which requires clearer definition, and which type, or sex of bovines prevailed on the plains of west Lancashire? Several options were available to farmers according to their means and requirements. Oxen, steers and bullocks could be employed for seasonal draught work, for meat and hides, cows for calving, milking and meat. To answer these questions, I have

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<sup>18</sup> R. G. Dottie, 'Childwall: A Lancashire Township in the Seventeenth Century', *THSLC*, vol. 135 (1986) p. 24.

addressed the conclusions of Brigg and Ironfield that cattle herds containing beasts of both sexes were the greatest utility and financial value to the farming community. Therefore, the following tables record the total valuations, by township, of all the inventories in which agricultural activity was apparent.

**Livestock and Crops from male inventory valuations: west Lancashire townships  
south of the Ribble, pre-1660, in £s**

**Table 3:**

Townships	Inventories	Male Cattle	Female Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Pigs	Cereals	Legumes	Grass and Hay	Flax and Hemp	Potatoes	Inventory Totals
Penwortham	11	13.00	106.12	48.93	24.9	1.07	79.52	7.72	10.41	6.49	0	817.03
Hutton & Howick	15	0	201.76	84.00	37.85	2.33	136.67	0	30.42	2.60	0	1063.40
Longton	32	5.00	470.52	297.2	102.57	11.97	368.51	54.48	77.91	17.78	0	4032.21
Farington	16	57.67	316.21	142.82	61.06	15.18	189.56	7.44	22.38	26.15	0	2326.97
Much & Little Hoole	29	13.80	591.52	350.3	73.35	13.09	398.77	70.41	57.85	6.02	0	3696.82
North Meols	31	23.84	488.18	178.99	153.28	15.00	351.08	0.50	70.28	8.10	0	2851.10
Formby & Ainsdale	37	31.67	500.06	211.02	99.50	16.02	306.5	14.42	56.20	11.66	0	3492.40
Croston & Bispham	33	17.84	680.69	398.24	37.46	31.16	476.35	31.28	64.30	9.44	0	3669.79
Bretherton	25	9.17	341.48	202.96	15.07	11.32	297.29	54.69	38.82	8.31	0	2876.11
Ulnes Walton	22	9.00	338.26	149.33	26.89	16.83	236.8	15.96	46.38	10.10	0	1947.59
Rufford	11	20.50	150.67	53.78	11.69	5.57	116.91	11.60	23.14	5.60	0	795.96
Mawdesley	33	118.48	532.58	260.79	39.87	21.38	345.73	40.14	86.81	4.95	0	4104.37
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	34.49	317.78	150.66	14.79	8.39	248.5	32.82	44.76	8.64	0	1926.41
Burscough	38	133.02	554.51	168.84	49.56	23.33	388.72	17.57	65.31	29.06	0	4069.93
Lathom	56	384.27	909.36	315.24	115.99	46.29	684.3	34.09	95.71	24.70	0	6539.50
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	399.04	1026.24	337.13	110.95	42.48	904.65	62.52	130.68	80.52	0	7713.75
Totals	472	1270.79	7525.84	3350.23	974.78	281.41	5529.86	455.64	921.36	260.12	0	45383.85
Percentages		2.80	16.58	7.38	2.15	0.62	all crops 7166.98, 15.79% of inventories total					



**Table 4:**
**Livestock and Crops from male inventory valuations: West Lancashire townships  
south of the Ribble, 1661-1700, in £s**

Townships	Inventories	Male Cattle	Female Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Pigs	Cereals	Legumes	Grass and Hay	Flax and Hemp	Potatoes	Inventory Totals
Penwortham	48	9.00	674.15	277.97	15.00	18.56	414.6	12.57	91.53	17.04	0.65	5183.23
Hutton & Howick	36	0	442.69	209.43	90.99	4.24	184.78	10.66	59.20	6.00	0	2623.90
Longton	45	0	755.32	314.70	112.23	5.24	282.89	18.55	68.15	4.23	0	5451.62
Farington	16	34.00	403.16	133.72	14.60	9.45	203.18	11.81	37.64	6.33	0	3400.99
Much & Little Hoole	55	42.06	963.90	446.10	100.65	25.34	572.27	29.77	113.66	15.39	0.25	5866.61
North Meols	77	32.75	1276.36	546.21	268.50	48.95	592.3	25.58	164.45	13.79	11.82	7700.11
Formby & Ainsdale	96	12.50	801.67	331.89	136.27	31.93	561.91	5.81	124.14	36.25	17.86	5189.14
Croston & Bispham	49	37.94	738.12	298.28	5.05	21.81	297.02	17.05	69.00	7.68	2.75	4703.13
Bretherton	28	17.84	289.91	142.23	9.85	8.39	156.38	10.20	34.56	3.10	0.50	1474.90
Ulnes Walton	16	11.00	243.10	126.48	1.34	6.20	101.77	1.69	19.37	1.25	0	1263.48
Rufford	24	13.60	255.84	125.63	0	12.90	158.00	7.60	18.09	16.6	11.62	1537.15
Mawdesley	34	77.59	526.48	252.26	32.62	19.87	275.00	10.86	80.52	9.57	9.59	2552.16
Tarleton & Hesketh	40	35.10	696.04	319.51	30.38	13.78	396.92	14.74	46.86	9.55	2.18	4591.49
Burscough	24	59.88	373.72	162.90	6.05	10.21	194.86	5.47	28.46	8.59	5.48	2124.59
Lathom	63	41.70	751.47	310.38	35.02	25.10	424.02	16.35	67.36	24.63	15.65	4597.29
Scarisbrick & Snape	74	187.69	1188.75	505.09	92.58	43.94	733.56	19.92	101.04	29.01	2.38	7954.30
Totals	725	612.65	10380.7	4502.8	951.13	305.91	5549.16	218.63	1124.03	209.01	80.73	66214.09
Percentages		0.925	15.68	6.80	1.40	0.46	all crops 7181.56, 10.85% of inventories total					

**Livestock and Crops from male inventory valuations: West Lancashire townships  
south of the Ribble, 1701-1740, in £s**

**Table 5:**

Townships	Inventories	Male Cattle	Female Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Pigs	Cereals	Legumes	Grass and Hay	Flax and Hemp	Potatoes	Inventory Totals
Penwortham	35	17.00	619.35	188.55	17.43	7.72	240.99	0	100.71	11.60	0	3397.96
Hutton & Howick	37	0	643.77	256.75	128.90	15.80	173.19	0	70.57	3.90	0	4178.76
Longton	45	5.75	733.67	307.95	151.39	10.46	365.42	2.29	77.66	16.00	8.48	5554.92
Farington	17	3.50	406.00	110.51	5.78	7.50	133.67	1.18	24.11	0.25	0	2088.96
Much & Little Hoole	30	13.00	664.63	230.41	13.42	13.09	222.30	0.15	63.30	4.44	9.51	3930.05
North Meols	52	0	625.02	303.27	74.69	19.98	311.31	1.85	69.41	13.51	12.06	3762.72
Formby & Ainsdale	49	3.00	367.28	161.21	46.78	10.87	246.79	2.13	63.31	8.73	16.79	1924.73
Croston & Bispham	34	17.85	686.35	178.78	0	27.35	155.23	3.25	75.03	0.10	1.60	4633.49
Bretherton	29	14.67	633.41	256.75	35.04	14.04	255.14	4.10	97.27	0.93	5.14	3548.48
Ulnes Walton	10	5.00	233.42	67.00	0	4.45	80.54	0.75	32.40	0.30	1.00	1124.01
Rufford	22	14.00	320.11	131.26	0	13.00	187.54	3.82	65.56	12.23	40.12	2348.86
Mawdesley	16	4.00	364.35	114.18	7.50	13.24	104.83	7.36	37.87	1.75	2.31	2100.45
Tarleton & Hesketh	31	6.00	544.39	248.28	3.20	17.40	203.03	0	58.73	6.88	8.49	1811.92
Burscough	29	18.38	354.00	105.17	5.88	5.54	128.07	1.05	38.68	4.35	14.83	1815.30
Lathom	46	25.50	452.48	163.40	7.00	13.28	147.10	5.70	73.98	3.13	18.52	2570.26
Scarisbrick & Snape	30	62.75	518.78	180.98	10.70	24.50	310.27	15.87	62.32	7.77	8.53	2324.22
Totals	512	210.4	8167.01	3004.45	507.71	218.22	3265.42	149.50	1010.91	95.87	147.38	47115.1
Percentages		0.45	17.33	6.37	1.08	0.46	all crops 4669.08, 9.91% of inventories total					

**Table 6:**
**Livestock and Crops from male inventory valuations: West Lancashire townships  
north of the Ribble, 1660-1700, in £s**

Townships	Inventories	Male Cattle	Female Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Pigs	Cereals	Legumes	Grass and Hay	Flax and Hemp	Potatoes	Inventory Totals
Lytham	67	35.67	722.37	352.18	125.89	21.83	290.54	3.67	68.50	6.14	0	3917.47
Bispham & Layton	79	90.17	928.95	446.24	151.26	31.39	792.37	43.27	100.79	3.28	0.20	4935.32
Poulton & Thornton	112	335.16	1143.38	562.96	51.96	47.63	977.13	69.00	126.97	15.95	0	9149.87
Hambleton & Stalmine	96	252.99	1006.23	493.68	16.04	32.03	784.10	48.28	85.95	7.25	1.19	6757.57
Preesall & Pilling	154	600.67	1682.64	883.6	17.44	37.44	939.11	21.48	129.05	10.55	3.09	10581.35
Cockerham	128	1019.68	1755.00	780.05	152.04	45.30	1464.51	63.63	223.24	15.57	2.19	15809.77
Totals	636	2334.34	7338.57	3586.03	514.63	215.62	5247.76	249.33	734.50	58.74	6.67	51151.35
Percentages		4.56	14.35	7.00	1.00	0.42	all crops 6297.0, 12.31% of inventories total					

**Table 7:**
**Livestock and Crops from male inventory valuations: West Lancashire townships  
north of the Ribble, 1701-1720, in £s**

Townships	Inventories	Male Cattle	Female Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Pigs	Cereals	Legumes	Grass and Hay	Flax and Hemp	Potatoes	Inventory Totals
Lytham	25	27.50	222.84	104.77	35.56	7.74	86.19	0	24.07	3.50	1.08	1132.36
Bispham & Layton	18	16.50	187.02	95.92	13.61	7.33	115.49	4.36	20.10	0	0	1021.79
Poulton & Thornton	22	52.70	254.50	149.08	6.15	9.30	242.72	22.10	38.10	0.70	0.20	2328.41
Hambleton & Stalmine	18	25.89	148.50	81.35	0	0.95	102.33	1.35	14.21	0.97	0	1409.40
Preesall & Pilling	46	117.72	669.66	400.67	5.75	11.15	252.60	6.88	60.17	0.72	17.40	3538.59
Cockerham	21	96.09	256.86	111.15	19.56	3.60	168.06	0	27.38	1.50	0.50	1904.11
Totals	150	3376.40	1739.38	942.94	80.63	40.07	967.39	34.69	184.03	7.39	19.18	11334.66
Percentages		2.96	15.35	8.32	0.71	0.35	all crops 1212.68, 10.70% of inventories total					

A further table below presents the information as percentages of the total recorded inventory valuations. The comparative sums make it clear that across twenty-two townships north and south of the Ribble, from 2495 inventories spanning c.150 years, cattle were indeed the financial mainstay of the farming community.

**Table 8:**

**A comparison of cattle, other livestock and arable valuations as percentages of inventory totals, west Lancashire townships**

<b>South of Ribble</b>	Inventories	Cattle	Other Livestock	Crops	%age of Inventories
pre-1660	472	19.38	10.15	15.79	45.32
1661-1700	725	16.60	8.70	10.85	36.15
1701-1740	512	17.78	7.92	9.91	35.61
<b>North of Ribble</b>					
1660-1700	636	18.91	8.44	12.30	39.65
1701-1720	150	18.80	9.38	10.70	38.88
Total inventories	2495				

The sum valuations of cattle in each township grouping on either side of the Ribble, when extracted from other livestock types, invariably result in higher inventoried totals than when the sums of all crops are combined. A few exceptions occurred only in the earlier period. In the decades before 1660, two of the sixteen township groupings south of the Ribble exhibited totalled crop valuations higher than that of cattle. They are Longton and Bretherton, where for example, only nine male cattle were valued between 45 inventories. These townships are notable for the contribution of legumes and grass/hay to overall arable production, at 25.5 per cent and 23.4 per cent respectively. Other townships which exhibited overall valuations in which cattle closely prevailed, are Penwortham, Ulmes Walton, Rufford, and Tarleton & Hesketh. These examples are thus generally indicative of the greater comparative emphasis on arable production prior to the mid-seventeenth century south of the Ribble and the gradual

rationalisation in favour of pasturing thereafter. A few individual exceptions were noted in the second half of the seventeenth century. Evan Procter of Penwortham, yeoman (1669), left an inventory valued at £250. His herd was evaluated collectively, 'In horned Cattell ... £30.' In addition to quantities of 'flax and hemp dressed & undressed ... £2.', 'wheat growing on the ground ... £1.' and 'hay at sev'rall places ... £5.' Procter left 'Corne of all sorts ... £80.' Similarly, a year later and with a lesser inventory of £45, John Parke of Penwortham (1670), kept 'In Horned bease ... £8.' However, his 'Corne graine', hay hemp and flax, totalled £14. A third example, Thomas Robinson of Longton, husbandman, left an inventory of £30. He left two cows and two calves at £6, and crops at £9.13s.<sup>19</sup> The few other extant examples also occur in lower valued inventories. Where cattle, other livestock and acreages of mixed arable are in evidence, cattle otherwise command a higher overall valuation. Therefore, whereas in upland pastoral regions, where it may be expected that cattle values exceed those of crops, across the fertile western plains, where the emphasis lay in mixed farming, cattle were nevertheless always more highly valued.

### **Cattle herd sizes**

Average cattle herd sizes based on inventory analyses from 1500-1750 have been cited for most counties throughout the *Agrarian History* series volumes *IV* and *V.i*. However, a plain fact must be acknowledged. There are no fully satisfactory methods for easily calculating exact herd sizes from groups of inventories. Furthermore, when calculating average herd sizes, we are not only concerned with documents in which cattle are recorded but those which clearly itemise cattle. or as a single species, 'all the horned cattle', (or) 'beasts young and old', and similar. Thus, the various forms of grouped livestock recorded in inventories as a collective sum are helpful to us as valuations, but numerically impossible to determine with

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<sup>19</sup> LA WCW, Evan Procter, Penwortham, yeoman (1669); John Parke, Penwortham (1670); Thomas Robinson, Longton, husbandman (1668).

certainty. Therefore, to illustrate oxen and male cattle comparisons and assess average herd sizes, only clearly itemised records have been employed. For this analysis, the periods prior to 1660, 1661-1700, and from 1701-1740 south of the Ribble, and c.1660-1720 north of the river produced an overall count of 13295 bovines, in 1752 inventories in which cattle were itemised, from 2395 which refer to cattle, at just over 73 per cent.

Hey's synopsis for *AHEW*, sampled 224 inventories in which cattle appeared between 1640 and the 1740s, leading him to conclude that on the Lancashire plains inland of the dunes, "Whatever the size of their holdings, Lancashire people of all classes seem to have placed most emphasis upon the rearing of beef and the keeping of small dairies... Most farmers had a few milkers among their cattle."<sup>20</sup> Hey also calculated that a median average herd size of 9 per holding between 1640 and 1699 declined to an average of 7 from a further sample of 84 inventories between 1700 and 1709 and the 1740s. With a larger dataset of inventories in which cattle are recorded, from c.1600 to 1740, it is possible to discuss a more nuanced picture as it pertains to agrarian conditions in western Lancashire.<sup>21</sup> As we shall see, alongside dairy herds, rearing of male beasts was important for seasonal land-tillage and for home and market consumption in the coastal townships north and south of the Ribble estuary. However, in the southern townships, there evolved a specific emphasis on dairy production. This became especially noticeable in response to the growth of trade through Liverpool from c.1680s and is discussed further in chapter 4. Evidence here will suggest that home-based commercial manufacture of dairy products became a compelling and sustainable opportunity available to domestic producers large and small. This commercial element is particularly evident in the extensive production of cheese and butter intended for overseas markets.

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<sup>20</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 62-3.

<sup>21</sup> 449 inventories pre-1660 south of Ribble, 1187 south of Ribble 1661-1740, 759 north of Ribble 1660-1720.

We have seen that Ironfield's earlier analysis of the upland parish of Chipping concluded that farmers with the highest inventoried grain valuations generally maintained the largest herds of cattle. Hey, assumed that this correlation was attributable to the whole of Lancashire during the early modern period and through his research for *AHEW* in 1985, appears to be the only other writer to have analysed Lancashire cattle herd sizes. He observed that in Lancashire, a median average of 9 beasts per holding, "is not very large when compared with neighbouring counties."<sup>22</sup> and his calculations presumably included animals of both sexes. Discussing the four neighbouring counties of the north-west Midlands, Hey calculated average cattle herd sizes within each. He described the region encompassing Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire as essentially pastoral, noting the rich meadowlands of the Dove and Trent valleys and the Cheshire plain as "some of the finest grazing in the country."<sup>23</sup> Throughout the area between Chesterfield and Duffield, on the eastern edge of the Pennines, Longhorn dairy cattle were the mainstay of the farming communities. Hey sampled 115 inventories between 1640 and 1750 and calculated a median herd average of 13 head per farm, noting that south of Alfreton, by the eighteenth-century, most farmers "made various quantities of cheese."<sup>24</sup> A few miles to the west, in the limestone pastures around Wirksworth, Hey's sample of 166 inventories revealed comparatively little arable land and a higher median average of 16 cattle, which by the 1740s had risen to 18-19 head per farm. Further west, in the woodlands and pastures of Staffordshire, between Uttoxeter, Stone and Burslem, Hey sampled 197 inventories. Here also, cattle formed the farmers' main financial interest. These inventories produced a median average of 17 per farm "rising from 15 or 16 in the 1640s to 21 a hundred years later." He reported examples of herds above fifty beasts here and that "Cheese was recorded in 129 of 197 inventories."<sup>25</sup> Westwards again, examination

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<sup>22</sup> Ironfield, 'Parish of Chipping', p. 37; David Hey, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p.63.

<sup>23</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 133.

<sup>25</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p.146.



of 270 Shropshire inventories produced averages of 15-16 head, rising to 23 by 1740 in the north of the county and 19, rising to 23 in the 1740s in south Shropshire around Stanton Lacy and Ludlow. In these areas, bullocks and heifers were sold in local markets then driven southwards to the fattening grounds in central England.

Average herd sizes of 16 were similarly recorded in Hey's sample of 306 Cheshire inventories, where five in six inventories evaluated cheeses.<sup>26</sup> The Cheshire plain became famous for its dairy products as did the Lancashire plains south of the Ribble. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, in Cheshire, the county's dairy produce was taken by land and sea to London and the naval ports. In west Lancashire, cheese and butter travelled less distance to Liverpool intended for merchant voyages across the Atlantic. Hey, highlighted the negative and financially ruinous consequences of such a broad dependence upon cattle in north-west England, when severe weather caused poor hay harvests, for example in 1682-3, or when cattle plague devastated entire herds in 1733 and in 1750.<sup>27</sup> Interpretations of the inventoried evidence from our dataset reveal several discussion points regarding the diverse utilities of cattle of both sexes north and south of the Ribble. We will see in the following section that by the eighteenth century, ox numbers had fallen in the west and particularly in the south-west of Lancashire, as Hey had also reported they had done so in Lancashire's neighbouring counties.<sup>28</sup> The following four tables below illustrate overall herd size comparisons over time and to enable comparisons with other counties.

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<sup>26</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 149-157.

<sup>27</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 63-4, 154.

<sup>28</sup> Hey, 'The North-West Midlands: Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire', *AHEW, 1640-1750 Regional Farming Systems*, vol. v.i, pp. 138, 143.

**Table 9:**
**Cattle herd sizes and calf numbers, from itemised inventories only:  
west Lancashire townships south of the Ribble, pre-1660**

Townships	Agricultural Inventories	Inventories that include Cattle	Inventories that itemise Cattle	Itemised Cattle numbers	Average Herd Size	Calves	%age of Herds
Penwortham	11	10	10	56	5.6	8	14.30
Hutton & Howick	15	15	10	50	5.00	5	10.00
Longton	32	30	24	150	6.25	23	15.30
Farington	16	16	14	189	13.5	23	12.17
Much & Little Hoole	29	27	20	185	9.25	44	23.78
North Meols	31	31	18	141	7.83	16	11.35
Formby & Ainsdale	37	36	19	125	6.58	22	17.60
Croston & Bispham	33	32	24	238	9.92	50	21.00
Bretherton	25	21	16	123	7.68	24	19.5
Ulnes Walton	22	22	16	117	7.31	29	24.79
Rufford	11	11	7	42	6	4	9.52
Mawdesley	33	30	28	259	9.25	48	18.53
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	21	14	115	8.21	26	22.60
Burscough	38	38	35	281	8.03	43	15.30
Lathom	56	51	49	512	10.45	82	16.20
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	58	55	585	10.64	86	14.70
Totals	472	449	359	3168	8.80	533	16.82
Percentages		95.13	79.95				

**Table 10:**
**Cattle herd sizes and calf numbers, from itemised inventories only:  
west Lancashire townships south of the Ribble, 1661-1700**

Townships	Agricultural Inventories	Inventories that include Cattle	Inventories that itemise Cattle	Itemised Cattle numbers	Average Herd Size	Calves	%age of Herds
Penwortham	48	42	19	105	5.52	21	20.00
Hutton & Howick	36	34	15	69	4.60	13	18.80
Longton	45	44	12	82	6.83	23	36.40
Farington	16	14	13	161	12.38	48	29.80
Much & Little Hoole	55	50	38	336	8.83	59	17.60
North Meols	77	75	23	116	5.04	15	12.90
Formby & Ainsdale	96	94	33	140	4.24	23	16.40
Croston & Bispham	49	47	41	340	8.29	70	20.60
Bretherton	28	25	22	131	5.95	38	29.0
Ulmes Walton	16	15	11	84	7.64	12	14.30
Rufford	24	21	17	108	6.35	26	24.10
Mawdesley	34	32	30	259	8.63	59	22.80
Tarleton & Hesketh	40	38	16	139	8.65	26	18.80
Burscough	24	23	21	189	9.00	55	28.80
Lathom	63	61	54	323	5.98	82	25.40
Scarisbrick & Snape	74	72	61	576	9.43	137	23.70
Totals	725	687	426	3158	7.41	707	22.40
Percentages		94.75	62.0				

**Table 11:**
**Cattle herd sizes and calf numbers, from itemised inventories only:  
west Lancashire townships south of the Ribble, 1701-1740**

Townships	Agricultural Inventories	Inventories that include Cattle	Inventories that itemise Cattle	Itemised Cattle numbers	Average Herd Size	Calves	%age of Herds
Penwortham	35	35	31	170	5.48	35	20.60
Hutton & Howick	37	36	17	91	5.35	17	18.70
Longton	45	43	19	123	6.47	35	28.50
Farington	17	16	15	143	9.50	26	18.20
Much & Little Hoole	30	30	22	185	8.40	31	16.80
North Meols	52	50	15	49	3.30	4	8.20
Formby & Ainsdale	49	48	19	47	2.50	5	10.60
Croston & Bispham	34	33	31	292	9.40	64	21.90
Bretherton	29	29	27	214	7.90	34	15.90
Ulnes Walton	10	10	10	65	6.50	22	33.80
Rufford	22	21	13	90	6.90	14	15.50
Mawdesley	16	16	11	84	7.60	15	17.90
Tarleton & Hesketh	31	31	20	139	7.00	30	21.60
Burscough	29	28	26	178	6.80	40	22.50
Lathom	46	45	39	216	5.50	58	26.90
Scarisbrick & Snape	30	29	29	304	10.50	54	17.80
Totals	512	500	344	2390	6.90	484	20.25
Percentages		97.65	68.8				

**Table 12:**
**Cattle herd sizes and calf numbers, from itemised inventories only:  
west Lancashire townships north of the Ribble, 1660-1720**

Townships	Agricultural Inventories	Inventories that include Cattle	Inventories that itemise Cattle	Itemised Cattle numbers	Average Herd Size	Calves	% age of Herds
Lytham	92	83	57	312	5.47	54	17.30
Bispham	97	94	54	308	5.70	71	23.00
Poulton & Thornton	134	128	107	692	6.90	69	18.80
Hambleton & Stalmine	114	113	94	592	6.50	139	23.40
Preesall & Pilling	200	194	174	1290	7.40	282	21.90
Cockerham	149	142	137	1385	10.11	299	21.60
Totals	786	759	623	4579	7.35	914	19.96
Percentages		96.6	82.1				

These tables may be interpreted as follows. The first three columns refer to the inventories available for analysis. Almost all rural farmers kept cattle. On both sides of the Ribble, around 96 per cent did so. Put another way, they are absent from only 100 inventories.

Itemisation of bovines equates to just under 65 per cent in southern townships and just over 82 per cent in the north. This provides a combined, itemised dataset of 1393 inventories north and south, with a further 359 inventories in the southern townships pre-1660. We can see that in that early period, average cattle herds averaged 8.8 male and female bovines and their calves. From 1661-1700 average herds slipped to 7.41 bovines and slipped a further half of a percent to 6.9 by 1740. North of the Ribble, between 1660 and 1720, average herds contained 7.35 bovines. One note of caution that should be acknowledged is the potential under-estimation of overall herd sizes. In the inventories which provided a blanket valuation, ‘all the horned beasts,’ may include some of the larger herds which would raise these averages. It is after all, easier to count two or three cows than twenty-three. However, these calculations

suggest that throughout the townships in the west of Lancashire, from c.1660-1720/1740, average herds of 7.27 cattle of both sexes prevailed. These calculations are broadly in line with Hey's samples of 224 Lancashire inventories from 1640-1699, which suggested a median average of 9 cattle and his second sample of 84 inventories from 1700-1709/1740s wherein the average herd size slipped to 7 head per holding. Hey also noted these herds were consistently small in comparison with those of neighbouring counties. However, he described these neighbouring counties *en masse* as "essentially a pastoral region."<sup>29</sup> whereas the Lancashire plain was clearly suited to mixed systems of land-use, which over many decades had balanced arable and livestock farming. Hey's own calculations from sampled inventories from 1660-1740 suggest that median average herd sizes across Derbyshire were 12, Cheshire 16-17, Staffordshire 17 and 16-19 across Shropshire.<sup>30</sup> My figures also appear to indicate a slight diminution in herd sizes from the late 1500s to the 1740s. As we discuss below, this circumstance may be accounted for in the decrease in the ownership of male bovines by c.1700, the diminution in numbers of large herds and the greater occurrence of owners with domestic herds of one to three beasts. However, such a gradual transition perhaps indicates a long-term stability in the maintenance of herd sizes within the means of their owners. It is noteworthy that the highest (itemised) herd of all records was that owned by John Charnock of Farington. He had 12 oxen, 1 bullock, 50 female cattle and 4 calves valued at £80. His was also our earliest document from 1574. The herd with the highest valuation was also from the late sixteenth century. In 1599, Edward Scaresbrick of Scarisbrick, esq, left 60 bovines valued at £185. In the seventeenth century, in 1673, James Scaresbrick, esquire, left 63 at £145, and Richard Whittle of Longton, butcher, (1668), 'All manner of horned cattell ... £141.' North of the Ribble, Gualter Frost of Cockerham, esquire (1670) left 53 bovines at

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<sup>29</sup> Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> Hey in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 129-158.

£123.10s. His son Gualter Frost (described as ‘gentleman’ in 1700) had 49 at £139. at his demise and Thomas Jackson, also of Cockerham (1694) 38 at £120.16s.8d.<sup>31</sup> Between 1661 and 1740 south of the Ribble, in 1187 inventories which evaluate cattle, only one other herd was valued higher than £100. Roger Pearson of Farington, gentleman (1676) left 2 bulls, 21 milk/breeding cows and 16 calves valued at £101. Similarly, there is just one other from 759 inventories north of the Ribble, between 1660 and 1720, again in Cockerham. In 1664, John Bradshaw, yeoman, left 32 bovines at £109.16s.8d.<sup>32</sup> In the southern townships, including the above examples, just twenty-three men left herds over fifty pounds, at 1.9 per cent, and twenty-three on the north side of the Ribble, at 3.0 per cent of all inventories where cattle were recorded.

One reason for the profitability and the motivation for focussing resources on dairying and meat production was that cows were generally fertile, and calves were plentiful, appearing from their high numbers to have enjoyed a high survival rate. Therefore, cattle rearing offered the domestic and commercial farmers in west Lancashire a high level of sustainability with seasonal increase and a good return on investment. Some herd inventories included no calves, while in others which did, the appraisers noted the stages of calf development up to one year old whereafter they became young, adult heifers. Until that stage, calves were described as ‘sucking’, ‘drinking’ or ‘weaning.’ Calf numbers represented a significant proportion of herd sizes on both sides of the Ribble. Referring to the tables above, these proportions are as follows. In the northern townships between c.1660 and 1720, of 4579 cattle of both sexes, 914 were calves which equated to an average of almost 20 per cent of all herd sizes.

Similarly, to the south, calf proportions rose from 16.82 per cent before 1660, to 22.4 per cent

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<sup>31</sup> LA WCW, John Charnock, Farington, gentleman, (1574); Edward Scaresbrick, Scarisbrick, esq (1599); James Scaresbrick, Scarisbrick, esq (1673); Richard Whittle, Longton, butcher (1668); Gualter Frost, Cockerham, esq (1670); Gualter Frost, Cockerham, gent (1700); Thomas Jackson, Cockerham, yeoman (1694).

<sup>32</sup> LA WCW, Roger Pearson, Farington, gent (1676); John Bradshaw, Cockerham, yeoman (1664).

by 1700, with a slight drop to 20.25 per cent by 1740. If we focus on the overall recorded numbers between 1660 and 1740, of 10127 cattle, 2105 were calves at an average of 20.8 per cent. Where this proportion of roughly two calves in every ten cattle is notable, is not in the larger herds of the gentry and upper yeomanry - as in the citation above for example, where Roger Pearson of Farington, gentleman had sixteen calves - but in the farming strategies of the husbandmen and lower trades. Small herds were becoming more common over time. In the southern townships by 1700, 19.7 per cent of all cattle owners kept two cows or less. By 1740, this proportion had risen slightly to 22.7 per cent. North of the Ribble, between *c.* 1660 and 1720, 16.4 per cent owned two or less. Of these two cows, and as was frequently also observed in a small herd of three females, one would be a calf.

Sub-regional differences provide the opportunity to evaluate these nuanced results and are perhaps the real value of studies such as this. Evidently, average cattle herd sizes were broadly similar across the western plains. However, it appears from the itemised content of inventories that subtly different farming systems were in operation, north and south of the Ribble. These evolved after the mid-seventeenth century and while average herd sizes were similar, the male and female bovine proportions of the herds differed. It is to these differences and the reasons for them to which we now turn, discussing first male bovines and then females.

### **Primary livestock: Oxen and male bovines**

Oxen are the largest of all domestic farm animals and throughout the north of England, these males were reared for draught and plough work, for meat and for their tough leather hides. In this section we focus on oxen and male beasts, examining their utility, value and status in a transforming agrarian economy. In Northumberland and Durham for example, from the turn of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries oxen proliferated. The increase in



demand for meat and for cereals from the region's coal-mining districts meant that more land was turned under the plough. Brassley calculated, "Most farmers kept oxen, four being the usual number [and] draught animals, both oxen and horses, often accounted for nearly one half of the total value of livestock on the average farm." A consequence of the regular increase in the number of male beasts was the ready availability and accessibility of their hides. Tanning became the principal trade in Alnwick for example, twenty-two tanneries were listed there in 1646.<sup>33</sup> However, in north-western counties a different scene had evolved. In western Lancashire, oxen numbers had declined as the seventeenth century progressed as they had in neighbouring counties, as Hey had also observed.<sup>34</sup>

In 2010, Collins analysed the subsequent demographic collapse of the draught ox throughout England during the nineteenth century to its ultimate demise in the twentieth, when the horse, which had almost universally replaced the ox, was itself replaced by the tractor. Collins highlighted the resurgence of the ox in the chalky uplands of southern England owing (principally) to the shortage of horses after the Napoleonic wars. While thus not discussing conditions in the north of England, Collins nevertheless offered several valuable insights which are relevant to the subject overall. He observed that, "Already by the sixteenth century, horses comprised more than half of the national draught herd ... even in the bovine strongholds of the south and west." Also, while making a specific reference to Oxfordshire in the 1760s, Collins added that, "Oxen [were now] largely restricted to gentleman's farms."<sup>35</sup> Oxen, other male bovines and dairy cattle (self-evidently), perform separate functions with specifically different economic benefits which justify the long-term cost of their upkeep and

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<sup>33</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England: The Northern Province', in *AHEW*, vol. iv, p. 27; Paul Brassley, 'Northumberland and Durham', in *AHEW*, vol. v.1, pp. 35-39, 40.

<sup>34</sup> David Hey, 'The North-West Midlands: Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire,' *AHEW*, 1640-1750 Regional Farming Systems, vol. i, pp. 138, 143.

<sup>35</sup> E.J.T. Collins, The latter-day history of the draught ox in England, 1770-1964, *AgHR*, vol. 58.2, (2010), p. 192, p.197.

maintenance. Dairy farming in England and Wales is unsurprisingly afforded far greater descriptive explanation and comparative interpretation in the *Agrarian History* series than oxen, bulls and bullocks. In the early modern period, even the poorest husbandman-labourer families kept at least one dairy cow if they were able to. Few if any maintained a single male bovine. Notwithstanding that horses were gradually replacing oxen elsewhere in England between 1640 and 1750, in the northern counties they were considered a sufficiently important asset to merit being subjected to rational improvement in accordance with the new husbandry techniques promulgated in the eighteenth century. John Nowell, steward to the earl of Carlisle, who experimented with turnips and clover crops with which to develop and improve livestock, sold oxen in 1739 which were advertised as having been fed specifically on turnips.<sup>36</sup> In their respective studies of Chipping and Pendle, on the fringes of upland Lancashire, Brigg and subsequently Ironfield described a clear inventoried link between cattle herds which included oxen, and high corn and grain valuations. Considerations for keeping, or not keeping oxen or bullocks were therefore economic and geographic and rested primarily on the availability of fodder on the farm. Thirsk made the pertinent observation that while horses could be tethered overnight on the common fields, or left to graze on relatively poor pasture, oxen could not. Rather, they had to be put to lush grass in a sheltered close if they were to be fit to work the following day. Collins added that, “A pre-requisite for employing oxen was a substantial area – upwards of four acres per head – of rough pasture for their summer keep ... when working and in order to maintain condition, oxen needed to be given at least three sheaves of oats per week.”<sup>37</sup> Thirsk concluded succinctly, “the mixed farmer with sufficient pasture in severalty and the pasture farmer could keep oxen. The common-field farmer in the lowlands was more likely to use horses. The rich men used

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<sup>36</sup> Peter J. Bowden, ‘Agricultural prices, wages, farm profits and rents’, in *AHEW*, vol. v. ii, p. 7; Eric J. Evans, ‘Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness’, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘Farming techniques: Arable Husbandry’, in *AHEW*, vol iv, p. 165; Collins, history of the draught ox, p. 203.

both.”<sup>38</sup> Winchester was equally succinct regarding the geographical considerations of the higher uplands of the Cumbrian Fells, and the central Pennines. “There is a clear correlation in inventories from northern England between oxen and tillage, the numbers of oxen increasing as one moves from the hills into the lowlands, most upland inventories recording no oxen at all.”<sup>39</sup> It appears from the historiography and from our inventories, that the ownership of oxen was becoming an indicator both of status and of specialisation rather than one of general utility, although we will see that such a conclusion is not an inevitable one.

The evidence presented hereafter analyses the ownership of male bovines as it appears in the inventoried record across the western Lancashire plain from townships north and south of the Ribble. As a guide to comparative evaluations in west Lancashire, oxen were generally valued more highly than bullocks or steers, which in turn were rated at about 25 per cent more highly than productive heifers. Oxen had a value comparable to good horses and mares at approximately £4 to £5 each. These evaluations for inventory purposes, specifically their potential resale values, appear to have changed little over the course of more than a century. Fluctuations in the numbers of male bovines compared with dairy cattle are a valuable indicator, but an indicator only, of decedent status. They also enable comparisons in husbandry practices and sub-regional variations in land use over time. Incidence counts are reproduced in the following table, Oxen & male bovines.

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘Farming Techniques: Arable Husbandry’, in *AHEW*, vol. iv, p. 165.

<sup>39</sup> Angus J.L. Winchester, *The Harvest of the Hills, 1400-1700* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 19.

**Table 13: Incidences of itemised male cattle from inventories, west Lancs. 1660-1720**

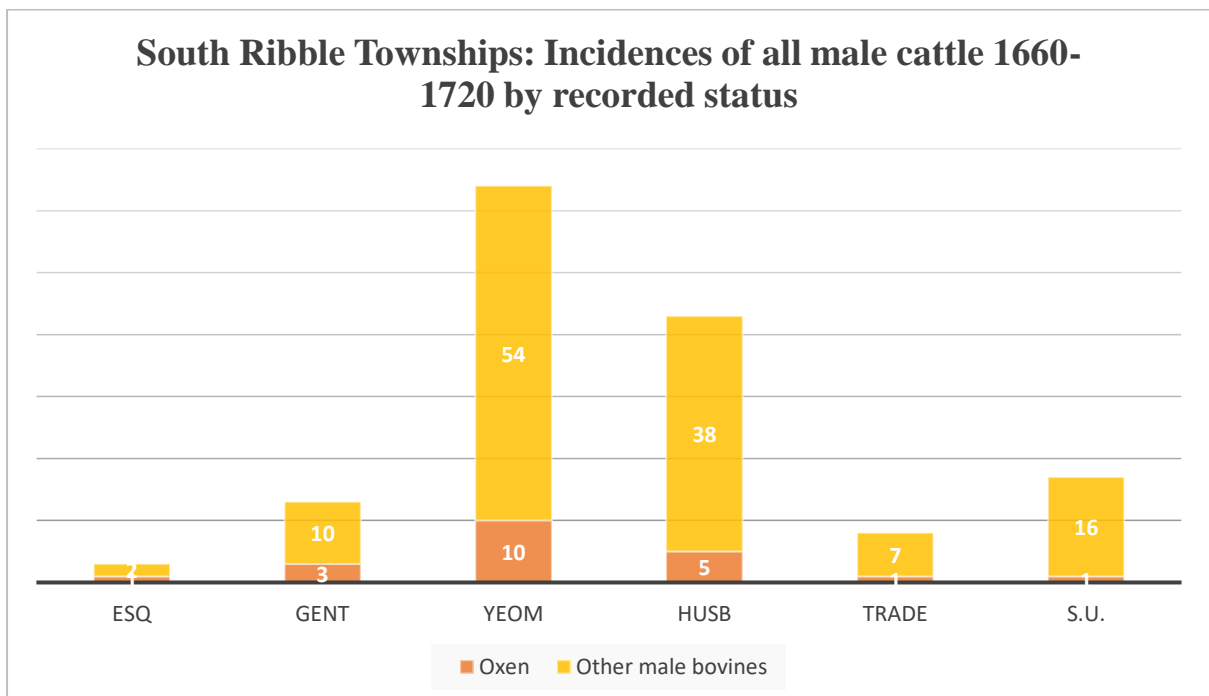
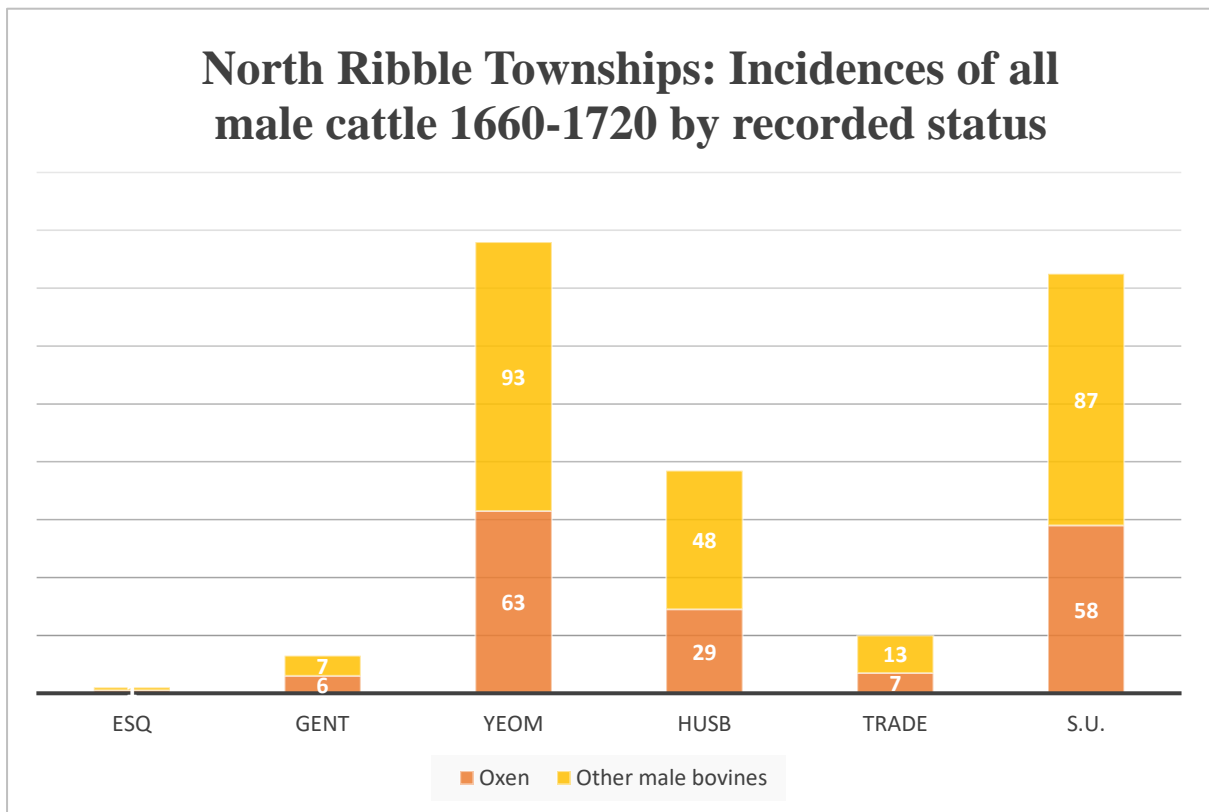
Townships north of Ribble	Cattle invs	Oxen & male beasts	oxen	%age	oxen %age
Cockerham	137	74	68	54.00	49.63
Preesall & Pilling	174	71	42	40.80	24.13
Hambleton, Staynall, Stalmine	94	39	16	41.49	17.02
Poulton, Thornton, Skippool	107	39	31	36.45	28.97
Bispham, Norbreck, Warbreck & Blackpool	54	14	5	25.92	9.26
Lytham	57	12	2	21.05	3.51
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>39.96</b>	<b>26.32</b>
Townships south of Ribble					
Penwortham	34	8	2	29.41	5.88
Hutton & Houghwick	20	0	0	0	0
Longton	25	3	0	12.00	0
Farrington	21	5	0	23.81	0
Much & Little Hoole	60	11	3	18.33	5.00
North Meols	28	2	0	7.14	0
Formby & Ainsdale	43	4	0	9.30	0
Croston & Bispham	53	8	2	15.09	3.77
Bretherton	34	11	0	32.35	0
Ulnes Walton	15	5	1	25.00	5.00
Rufford	23	7	1	30.43	4.35
Mawdesley	38	8	2	21.05	5.26
Tarleton	21	9	0	42.86	0
Burscough	31	7	1	22.58	3.23
Lathom	75	11	1	14.67	1.33
Scarisbrick & Snape	72	28	8	38.89	11.11
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21.42</b>	<b>3.54</b>

This table presents incidences of ownership of all male bovines from the inventories which itemise cattle holdings in our dataset from *c.* 1660-1720. Inventory records south of the Ribble prior to 1660 and those after 1720 have been omitted to draw parity with townships north of the Ribble, for which inventories prior to 1660 and those after 1720 await transcription.<sup>40</sup> A count of inventories which recorded male bovines has been totalled and divided into columns,

<sup>40</sup> General Introduction. Tables 1 & 2, Inventory records, p. 16.

the third of which records incidences of oxen/steers extracted from other male bovine holdings. This table records incidences of itemised male bovines of all types, at all stages of their lives. The percentage columns may be interpreted as follows. In Hambleton & Stalmine on the Wyre estuary for example, of 94 inventories which itemise cattle from 1660-1720, 39 describe all male cattle at 41.49 per cent, of which 16, at 17.02 per cent also include oxen, ox-stirkes, steers and ox-calves. This compares, for example, with the southern township of Lathom, where of 75 inventories which itemise bovine herds, 11 identify males at 14.67 per cent, but just 1 ox, at 1.33 per cent over the same period. Therefore, overall, during the period 1660-1720, from 623 inventories north of the Ribble, 249 include incidences of male cattle, at just under 40 per cent, of which 164, at 26.32 per cent recorded oxen/steers. In contrast, in the townships south of the Ribble, from 593 inventories, 127, or 21.42 per cent record male cattle, while just 21, or 3.54 per cent record the presence of oxen/steers.

When the figures in the table above are accounted for by owner status and represented as bar charts, (figures 3 & 4 below), it may therefore be seen more clearly that while the ownership of male bovines was evident in either location, the keeping of oxen was notably more commonplace in the coastal and estuarial townships north of the Ribble. These variations in recorded incidences between neighbouring southern and northern township groups are significant to our understanding of agricultural conditions in west Lancashire during this period. Analysis of these figures suggest several interpretations regarding status and ownership. Furthermore, as we shall see later in this chapter, a close analysis of the component types of all cattle which made up herds, allows for evidential discussions regarding sub-regional variations and highlights the subtle differences in farming systems north and south of the Ribble.

**Figure 3: Male cattle ownership by status, north of the Ribble, 1660-1720****Figure 4: Male cattle ownership by status, south of the Ribble, 1660-1720**

Reading the first three columns of table 13, comparisons between groups of adjoining townships on either side of the river Ribble are immediately apparent. To understand the comparison between the ownership of oxen/steers and the keeping of bulls/bullocks better, the following discussion explains the distinction. South of the Ribble, rearing oxen/steers had become an uncommon practice even at gentry and upper-yeomanry level during the seventeenth century. Specific incidences of steers, the young bulls which had been castrated, appear in 11 inventories, oxen in 21. Robert Hesketh of Rufford, esquire (1697) had none, whereas James Scaresbrick of Scarisbrick, esquire (1673) was perhaps the last man of high status who maintained '4 drawn oxen', and twenty-six other bullocks and calves, in addition to his dairy herd.<sup>41</sup> However, a few decedents who had died possessed of dairy herds between c.1660-1720 nevertheless chose to invest in rearing modest combinations of male bovines. Peter Martindale, husbandman of Much Hoole (1684) for example possessed 'one great black oxe ... £4.10s.' and 'two great red bullocks ... £7.' in addition to his dairy herd of eight cows and one calf.<sup>42</sup> Notably, Martindale, whose inventory totalled £95.19.8d. also owned three mares of quality. The best grey was valued at £5.10s.

In the townships immediately north of the Ribble, on the Fylde coast in Lytham and the Bispham parish townships which included Layton, Blackpool, Warbreck and Norbreck, low incidences of oxen/steers were broadly comparable with coastal townships across the estuary. Those farming sandy and peaty soils on the coastal and inland plains in general, kept very few oxen/steers. Few were recorded in the years around the mid-seventeenth century, while none appear by the early eighteenth century. Ownership of male bovines in other townships beyond the Fylde was however, considerably and consistently higher than were recorded south of the Ribble. Descending the easterly slopes of Warbreck hill and crossing into

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<sup>41</sup> LA WCW, Robert Hesketh, Rufford, esquire (1697); LA WCW, James Scaresbrick, Scarisbrick, esquire (1673).

<sup>42</sup> LA WCW, Peter Martindale, Much Hoole, husbandman (1684).

Poulton parish was, in agricultural terms at least, a noticeable step back into the past.

Nevertheless, it was a step into an agrarian scene which clearly worked and was appropriate to the farming conditions which prevailed here. The underlying geology and the surface geography are largely consistent with field soil conditions found south of the Ribble.

Concentrations of all male bovines were particularly strong in townships along either bank of the estuarial river Wyre however, where itemisations of oxen, steers, bullocks, oxen-stirkes and pairs, expressed as a 'yoke' are frequently recorded. We may calculate from the table of itemised male bovines above, that in Poulton and Thornton, and across the Wyre estuary, throughout the heavy arable landscape west of the moss-lands of Rawcliffe, in Hambleton, Stalmine, Preesall and Pilling, male bovines appear in 149 of 375 inventories between 1660 and 1720, at 39.7 per cent and oxen/steers, in 89 inventories at 23.7 per cent. In neighbouring Cockerham and on the peninsula of Thirnham and Glasson between the Cocker and Lune estuaries, 74 decedents from 137 inventories, at 54 per cent kept male bovines, 68 of these, at 49.6 per cent, also recorded one or more oxen/steers. These are high percentages. Examples from these townships at the northern end of our geographical range, reflect the locally high status of their owners, even if their owner's status went unrecorded. As is evident on the right-hand column on the bar-chart labelled 'SU' for 'status unrecorded' in figures 3 & 4 above, social status was unrecorded in 87 of 249 or 34.9 per cent, of inventories north of the Ribble which itemised male cattle. In 1711, for example, John Bradshaw of Preesall, left a large, mixed herd of twenty-two beasts valued at £53.2s.4d. In addition to heifers and calves, Bradshaw had six bullocks, two oxen and 'two yearling ox calves.'<sup>43</sup> Bradshaw owned a clock at £1.18s. silver plate at £6. a gun at 10s. and apparel valued at £10.9s. His will bequeathed £4. to "ye poor housekeepers of Preesall", and he gave one close of land in Preesall to Stalmine chapel, and one close also to "ye Free school in Preesall forever." His cattle

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<sup>43</sup> LA WCW, John Bradshaw, Preesall (1711).



represented 25.2 per cent of his £210.12s.6d. inventory, the oxen and bullocks 12.8 per cent of his worth. However, on those inventories which recorded status, a sufficiency of resources at yeomanry level and above combined with prevailing geographical conditions, appear to have dictated ownership of male bovines in these townships. Similarly, in Lytham and in Bispham, the few recorded oxen/steers only appear in inventories of those men of relatively high status. In Bispham parish for example, John Anyon of Warbreck, yeoman (1671), kept ‘one payer of oxen ... £7.13s.4d.’ and ‘kine & Yonge bease ... £21.’ which formed just under 20 per cent of his inventory of £143.9s.9d. a sum almost two and one-half times higher than the Bispham parish average of £57.15s. Robert Broadbelt, ‘Clarke’, vicar of Great Bispham (1674) was able to maintain one ox in addition to his dairy herd of nine cows and heifers. In his inventory valued at £212.5s.2d. he was also credited with owning a library of books, ‘Coyne & plate ... £70.’ and an account of several debtors to whom he had lent money. His cattle herd represented just under 13 per cent of his inventory.<sup>44</sup> In the first two decades of the eighteenth century sixteen inventories in the other four townships north of the Ribble value single oxen, steers, or ox-calves. Regarding incidences of oxen in the townships south of the Ribble however, a quite different picture emerges. Such sub-regional variations and the distinction between oxen/steers and other male bovines therefore invite further enquiry.

In townships south of the Ribble, raising and maintaining male bovines of any description became a far less common occupation after 1660 than it had in earlier decades. Oxen, steers and bullocks and could be yoked in pairs for plough work, but only one clear example of this practice was recorded south of the Ribble. Thomas Shaw of Scarisbrick had ‘owne [*sic*] yoacke of steares & one od buloke ... £8.’ His status was recorded as ‘gentleman’, and his inventory was an early one. Though not proven until 1662, it was compiled at his decease in

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<sup>44</sup> LA WCW, John Anyon, Warbreck, yeoman (1671); LA WCW, Robert Broadbelt, Great Bispham, Clarke (1674).

January 1655.<sup>45</sup> Prior to the mid-century ‘yokes’, of oxen, steers or bullocks were evaluated in Mawdesley, Tarleton, Burscough, Lathom and Scarisbrick. Examples of specific references of ‘yokes’ are uncommonly recorded in the northern group, although Robert Hey of Pilling (1662) owned ‘one yoke of oxen ... £9.6s.8d.’ also ‘one yoke of Steares ... £7.10s.’ while John Carter, yeoman of Staynall (1707) kept, ‘One yoke of Bullocks ... £5.13s.4d.’<sup>46</sup> However, whether they were described as ‘yokes’ or not, inventories from the rivers Wyre to the Lune frequently evaluated steers and bullocks in even numbers. This practice suggests a continuation of the tradition over-Wyre of ploughing with oxen and other male bovines which continued into the eighteenth century. Ploughing was a seasonal operation however vital was its activity in the farming year. During the months when they were not thus employed, and other than for occasional tasks requiring ‘a long dead-weight pull’ as Collins defined it,<sup>47</sup> it is apparent that north of the Ribble, steers and bullocks were fattened up for their meat and hides.

Throughout the townships of Penwortham parish, the recorded incidences of any male bovines were perennially low. The four townships of Penwortham, Hutton & Howick, Longton and Farington were not generally over-endowed with oxen or any other male bovines from even the late Tudor period. Only 21 of 158 inventories, 13.3 per cent, which itemised cattle between 1578 and 1739, recorded incidences of male bovines. This is a counter-intuitive outcome given the extensive substrate of dense red Keuper/Manchester Marl clays which can form excellent bricks, but which created extremely heavy plough land.<sup>48</sup> A breakdown of the Penwortham yeoman, John Clayton’s herd in 1713, offers a rare insight into the purpose of his beasts, and exemplifies perhaps the small scale production ideal of

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<sup>45</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Shawe, Scarisbrick, gentleman (1655/1662).

<sup>46</sup> LA WCW, Robert Hey, Pilling (1662); LA WCW, John Carter, Staynall, yeoman (1707).

<sup>47</sup> Collins, ‘Draught ox’, p. 195.

<sup>48</sup> Geological Survey of England and Wales, BGS 1:50,000 New Series, Preston, Sheet 75.

meat, milk, and calves in, 'Three fatt Cowes & one Black Cowe for Calving ... £18.' 'Two Red Milk Cowes ... £5.10s.' 'one young bullock and one Red heifer ... £4.10s.' and 'in one Browne stirk & one Calf ... £2.12s.' Clayton held high status locally. His name and distinctive signature appear on twenty-three extant sets of probate documents, as appraiser of goods and/or as will scribe, from 1682 until his demise in 1713. He also owned an old black mare, and a young bay mare to a valuation of £3.13s.4d. With a total gross inventory of all his movable goods standing at £64.6s. his cattle, at £30.12s. represented 47.6 per cent of his worth, his crops 23.3 per cent.<sup>49</sup> Most notable in the table above for the absence of male bovines is Hutton & Howick. Located broadly in line with its immediate neighbours Penwortham and Longton, it is situated on the elevated ridge which overlooks sloping farmland and the marshy fringes of the Ribble estuary. The general terrain is of good quality pastureland which has traditionally sustained sheep and dairy herds and produced mixed cereals. Ancient ridges of cultivated strips are clearly mapped and remain visible even now in the fields south of Grange Lane by Bottom of Hutton.<sup>50</sup> However, from 80 inventories compiled between 1614 and 1740, of which 42 were itemised, not one ox, bullock or male calf was recorded here. Similarly, in Longton and Farington, only 4 incidences of any males were recorded prior to 1660, and 7 thereafter. Such micro-analysis from these townships contributes to several key points. There were no oxen inventoried here between 1660 and 1720, (excepting two ox-calves), but bulls and bullocks appear in six inventories. Rearing male beasts, and as we will discuss in conjunction with female bovines, fattened cows for meat, was clearly an important component of the annual income-stream at yeoman or capable husbandman level and above.

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<sup>49</sup> LA WCW, John Clayton, Penwortham, yeoman (1713).

<sup>50</sup> OS Explorer map, 1:25,000, Sheet 286, 480 273.

In North Meols, Croston and Bretherton, the rearing of oxen and all male bovines after 1720 had disappeared entirely from the inventories. Prior to this date, 11 of 34 Bretherton inventories for the period 1660 to 1720, or 32.4 per cent, recorded male bovines although none of these were oxen. The evidence appears to suggest that the general long-term decline in the rearing and employment of male bovines in these southern townships was not specifically related to soil conditions. As will become apparent, and extended further in chapters 2 and 4, horses were better suited to ploughing tasks, the commercial profits from dairying and the use of selected dairy cows for meat, meant that large male bovines became almost superfluous. Furthermore, in none of the adjoining townships south of the Ribble was there a recorded increase in any male bovines from pre-1700 levels. The evidence from these townships which overlook the Ribble estuary contrast somewhat with Scarisbrick & Snape, eighteen miles to the south. Scarisbrick, a notably prosperous inland township south of the Ribble, was one of the most agriculturally diverse in Lancashire during the early modern period, recording the third highest inventory average valuation per township in our dataset over this period at £102.19s. Before 1660, ownership of male bovines here was the highest for the southern townships. 33 of 55 inventories which itemised cattle, recorded a variety of male beasts at 60 per cent. 27 of these men kept oxen/steers at 49 per cent, and a further eleven decedents left specifically 'one yoke' or a pair, of oxen/steers or more, reflecting their primary employment as plough animals. However, between 1660 and 1720, farming strategies were changing, as they were in other townships south of the Ribble, towards dairying and meat from bullocks. Male bovines were calculated at 28 incidences from 72 inventories at 39 per cent ownership over this period, with 8 men owning oxen. Further analysis of Scarisbrick & Snape inventories over the following twenty years to 1740 however, reveals that of the 18 men involved in agricultural production who left inventories, only 6 decedents recorded ownership of male bovines. However, these were all mature bulls

or young bullocks and by this period there were no oxen. The six deceased comprised one gentleman, four yeomen and one whose status is unknown. Their combined average inventory value was £123.16s.8d. which perpetuates the link between locally high status and those with sufficient land and fodder to sustain the keeping of male cattle. The composition of their herds were 95 females of varying ages and descriptions, 24 calves and 16 bulls/bullocks, an average herd size of 22.5 cattle. The largest herd was that of Henry Smith, gentleman (1722).<sup>51</sup> Of his inventory valuation of £223.15s.9d. the female cattle and calves were valued at £61. bullocks at £14. which at £75. represented 33.5 per cent of his worth. His extensive holdings of threshed wheat and grains, potatoes and peas were valued at £25. or 11.4 per cent of his worth.

North of the Ribble, the landscape of the Wyre townships of Poulton, Thornton, Stalmine, Pilling and Hambleton, share similarities with the landscape immediately south of the Ribble estuary. Both were formed of drumlin fields, the sculpted conglomerations of clay, sand and gravel, which were deposited by melting glaciers during the long denouement of the last ice age around 9000 years ago.<sup>52</sup> Yet, unlike the farming scene further south, the use of draught oxen for ploughing endured in the Wyre townships and throughout the worked agricultural landscape of Cockerham, Glasson and Thurnham. Reasons for this are not immediately clear until we look more closely at the utilities of female cattle also, and the distinctions between herd utilities on either side of the Ribble. These seemingly paradoxical findings may be reconciled. An (inestimably) high proportion of rural inventories from western Lancashire valued varying quantities of stored 'beef & bacon' and recorded the large salting 'turnells' and implements required for the preserving process. Since they appear not to have been professionally butchered, it must be presumed that male and female cattle were, as with

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<sup>51</sup> LA WCW, Henry Smith, Snape, gentleman (1722).

<sup>52</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England: Cheshire and Lancashire', in *AHEW* Vol. iv, pp. 80-81; TNA, Natural England, Geology of Lancashire, [www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk), accessed, 16.10.18.

swine, slaughtered at home by an experienced servant or family member. To illustrate this assumption, which may not be deduced from inventories, informative contemporary insights into this practice south of the Ribble are provided by the gentleman diarist Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, who noted several occasions when beasts of both sexes in his ownership were slaughtered. “I killed a Fat Little Cow,” (17 November 1704); “Roger Neall killed me a Little Bullock as was unruly in his pasture,” (9 September 1714); “Walter Thelwall [Blundell’s servant], killed a very little bull in my Slaughterhous[e]” (17 November 1714).<sup>53</sup>

South of the Ribble, bulls and bullocks were raised to procreate and to provide meat and hides. North of the Ribble, bullocks were also yoked in pairs for plough-work, as were oxen and steers. Between 1660-1720, specific references to bulls and bullocks appear in 109 inventories south of the Ribble and 122 north of the Ribble. In Much & Little Hoole for example, which recorded the joint second highest incidences of male cattle south of the Ribble, 7 of the 48 itemised inventories which appraised cattle record bulls and bullocks, which represents 15 per cent of all incidences of cattle holdings in those townships. North of the Ribble in Poulton, there are 16 incidences, also at 15 per cent, 17.5 per cent in Lytham, 18.25 per cent in Cockerham, 18.5 per cent in Bispham and Layton and 20 per cent in Preesall and Pilling. The townships of Hambleton and Stalmine on the Wyre estuary return the highest proportion of bulls and bullocks. 28 of the 94 inventories, 29.8 per cent itemise male cattle other than oxen, ox-stirkes or steers.<sup>54</sup>

Comparisons of such holdings are worthy of comment as the findings augment our understanding of the different components and numbers which made up cattle herds in west Lancashire in the early modern period. In Penwortham, the yeoman John Clayton owned just

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Tyrer (trans), *The Great Diurnall of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, (Liverpool, 1968), vol.1, 1702-1711, p. 50; Vol II, 1712-1719, p. 109, p. 116.

<sup>54</sup> A brief glossary of descriptive terms for cattle is provided as a footnote on p. 81 in this chapter.

one bullock for example, as across the southern townships from c.1660-1720, 50 other men were inventoried with one only, or just under 46 per cent of incidences of male bovines. However, of those who chose to raise and maintain males, 37 other men had two bulls/bullocks/calves, at 30 per cent, while 11.5 per cent owned three and 12.5 per cent owned 4 or more. These numbers compare with the six northern township groupings, where we have seen ownership of all male bovines was higher overall. Ownership of bulls and bullocks is apparent in slightly different proportions to the townships south of the Ribble. Here, 48 incidences of single ownership represented 39 per cent, while 39 men owned two, at 32 per cent. Ownership of three male bovines was comparatively closely aligned between 10 to 11.5 per cent north to south. However, a more noticeable divergence occurs with the specific ownership of four or more bulls/bullocks. In the southern townships, 14 such inventories represented 12.5 per cent, while north of the Ribble, 23 inventories accounted for just under 19 per cent.

To summarise this section, the significant difference between the two groupings of coastal and rural townships is that other than oxen, there are greater incidences and therefore higher numbers of steers, bulls and bullocks recorded in cattle herds north of the Ribble. We have just seen that north of the Ribble, proportionately more men owned four or more bulls/bullocks. Additionally, even though numbers of mature oxen declined, more men also owned more steers. Except for Lytham, where none were recorded, incidences of steers for example appear in 82 of 249 itemised records of male bovines between c.1660 and 1720, at 32.9 per cent, as opposed to just 11 of 127, or 8.7 per cent in the south. All the evidence presented thus far points to different emphases north and south of the Ribble. Without oversimplifying complex agrarian systems, farm work and meat were the desired outcome from ownership of males north of the Ribble, while females provided milk for domestic consumption and the next generation of calves. However, as we shall discuss in the following

section which analyses the utility of female cattle, commercial dairying and meat became the greatest focus south of the Ribble.

In Lytham, Layton and Bispham, access to markets at Poulton, Kirkham and Garstang may have incentivised the rearing of male beasts. Similarly, there were significantly higher occurrences of all male bovines in evidence on either side of the Wyre estuary and around the coastal margins to Preesall and Pilling. The highest incidences and numbers of males were found in the multi-settlement parish of Cockerham which is equidistant from Garstang and Lancaster by land, Lancaster being also accessible by sea via the Lune estuary. South of the Ribble, where male bovines were less common, we shall see that more females were sold for their meat. A gentleman such as Nicholas Blundell, for example made recurrent references throughout his diaries (1702-1728), to buying and selling cattle of both sexes, often at Ormskirk market, occasionally in Liverpool. Furthermore, men of more moderate means who also had access to one or more multi-functioning work horses therefore had little need for high maintenance oxen. Nevertheless, they were in some cases prepared also to maintain bullocks from calves to maturity which could be sold on at two or three years old at Ormskirk market or at Liverpool.

The ownership and maintenance of mature male bovines, particularly oxen, appear, *prima facie* to closely correspond with high status. Several instances of gentry, clergy, and upper yeomanry who clearly possessed the financial, land and feed-resource abilities to maintain oxen and/or pairs of mature bullocks have been exemplified on either side of the Ribble.

However, this conclusion will only satisfy to an extent. North of the Ribble, oxen were generally more common. Overall, however, it appears that yeoman and husbandman farmers in the agrarian society of west Lancashire maintained mixed herds appropriate to their individual means and ambitions. Many kept no male bovine at all. Others made calculated choices to maintain male bovines to their maturity according to their ability. Indeed,



throughout the townships north of the Ribble, other than ‘yeoman’, ‘husbandman’, ‘mariner’, or specific trade occupation, many of the inventories carry no indication of status other than may be deduced from the documented evidence therein.

There can be little doubt that the general use of oxen declined in the townships south of the Ribble, their place being occasionally taken by other male bovines and subsequently entirely by horses.<sup>55</sup> Ownership of any male bovine was however neither uniform nor consistent from any one township between c.1660-1720. There are also significant differences in incidences and numbers of male animals per holding between the southern and northern township groupings. This apparent imbalance between types of male bovines and those of female cattle in herds north and south of the Ribble are further explained as we now turn our attention to discussion of the contrasting utility of female cattle. The following findings also suggest clear indications that the pace of economic change was quickening in the southern townships, particularly those with a proximity to Liverpool, while north of the Ribble traditional farming methods appear to have been retained into the eighteenth century.

### **Female cattle**

Inventories offer the clearest regular documentary provision of descriptions and valuations of all bovines. Where itemisations of females occur, it is apparent that inventory compilers took care in appraising female cattle according to their age and stage of fertility as well as stating their intended purposes, in milk, meat or reproductive capability. The high volume of data available has invited analysis of the utilitarian and economic importance of female beasts to the coastal and rural communities on both sides of the Ribble. Raising and maintaining animals into productive maturity in the seventeenth century in Lancashire as elsewhere, was a sophisticated and time-consuming process. Upon the demise of their owners, animals were

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<sup>55</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 95-6.

evaluated within a widely accepted if informal framework of a nuanced structure, based upon age and condition by men from a broad band of social status who could offer competent assessments. It becomes apparent, even from the descriptive elements used by appraisers of inventories that subtly different farming systems operated on either side of the Ribble. The obvious prefix ‘milk’, cow or ‘kine’, although universally phrased south of the Ribble, is not used in the north townships where, other than by size, colour or individual minor deformities, itemised descriptions of all cattle are more functional and less adjectival. Male cattle are therefore: ‘ox, bull, bullock, steer, ox-calf.’ Females are ‘cows, kine’ heifer, twinters, stirkes, yearlings/calves. Conversely, in the south for example, William Hesketh of Croston a shoemaker (1685), owned ‘Two milk Kine and two calves/one Calveing cow/One feeding Cow/ and five Sterks.’ Such descriptive detail would have been less common north of the Ribble.<sup>56</sup> Before analysing these differences it may assist the reader in being clear as to the terminology used to describe bovines in contemporary dialect or parlance.<sup>57</sup> ‘Young beasts’ or ‘stirks’ of one year old became ‘t[wo]winters’ the following year. In their third year of maturity and thereafter female cattle were selected for milk production and breeding, as ‘kyne’ or ‘whyres’, cows or heifers that were occasionally barren or more often ‘in-calf.’

The following paragraphs illustrate the circumstances which determined the fate of certain female cattle destined for the meat market. It is these distinguishing conditions which clarify the utility of cows for their meat and contribute to the explanation of the different farming systems between the two sets of townships. South of the Ribble, many dairy cows were specifically fattened for meat, sometimes being described in early eighteenth-century

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<sup>56</sup> LA WCW, William Hesketh, Croston, shoemaker (1685).

<sup>57</sup> Male bovines: ‘Seg’, an animal which has been castrated fully grown; ‘Stott’, a young, castrated ox, a steer; ‘Bullock’, originally a young bull or bull calf; ‘Stirke’, a young bull or heifer, usually between one and two years old; Female bovines: ‘Heifer’ or ‘Whye’, a young cow, spec. one that is over one year of age but has not yet calved; ‘Twinter’, A two year old cow, ox, horse or sheep; ‘Kine’, archaic plural of cow; ‘Cush’ or ‘Drape’, a cow which has been fattened up for slaughter. OED online, accessed 02.07.24/17.07.24.

inventories as ‘drape’ cows or ‘cush’, to indicate their intended purpose. During the first decades of the eighteenth century, fattening selected ‘drape’ or ‘cush’ cows became more frequently recorded. Between 1701 and 1740, 20 of 344 inventories attest to the practice. Richard Hollinhurst, a yeoman of Penwortham (1729), and Thomas Dalton of Croston (1739) owned drape cows, and John Reynolds, a yeoman of Burscough (1734) had ‘one fatten cush ... £2.’ In the previous year, William Spybie of Croston, yeoman (1733) left ‘Six milk Cows ... £24.’ and ‘Six fatt Cows ... £25.’ Among his herd.<sup>58</sup> In 1722, Evan Caunce of Rufford, yeoman, had ‘one Cowe for the Buttcher ... £7.10s.’ This valuation, incidentally, exceeds any I have seen inventoried for any bovine of either sex.<sup>59</sup>

As we have seen, it would appear from the robust numbers of calves that the fertility of bulls and their heifer dams was highly successful. Barren cows were therefore highlighted individually in inventories as though they were an exception to an otherwise productive norm. Barren cows or heifers were only afforded this distinction in the townships south of the Ribble. There are no inventories from the northern townships, in the 623 which itemise and enumerate cattle numbers from c.1660-1720, which refer to barren females. Notably in the south also, only one individual reference is recorded before the 1660s. Edward Scarisbrick of Scarisbrick esq (1599), left ‘iii barren kye ...’ with other cattle.<sup>60</sup> Thereafter, no other barren females are referred to in 359 inventories which span half a century. However, between 1664 and 1696, nine inventories record them. Henry Walker of Burscough, husbandman (1667), for example, had ‘4 barren kine ... £7.10s.’ although this number was exceptional. Only one example from the eighteenth century survives in our dataset. In 1716, Francis Hill of Longton, husbandman, left ‘One Barren Black heifer ... £3.’<sup>61</sup> These are but a few

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<sup>58</sup> LA WCW, Richard Hollinhurst, yeoman, Penwortham (1729); Thomas Dalton, Croston (1734); John Reynolds, Burscough (1734); William Spybie, Croston, yeoman (1733).

<sup>59</sup> LA WCW, Evan Caunce, Rufford, yeoman (1722).

<sup>60</sup> LA WCW, Edward Scarisbrick, Scarisbrick, esq (1599).

<sup>61</sup> LA WCW, Henry Walker, Burscough, husbandman (1667); Francis Hill, Longton, husbandman (1716).

inventories, but they invite the question as to why there were no barren heifers identified (although there must have been some) north of the Ribble, while in the south, appraisers evaluated them individually. Furthermore, the valuations assigned to barren females was not slight. Henry Sutch of Scarsbrick, yeoman (1665) left ‘the baren Cow ... £2.10s.’; Henry Hunt of Much Hoole, husbandman (1681) ‘One Baren Cow ... £4.3s’; and John Finch of Mawdesley, yeoman (1696), ‘One barran Cow ... £3.10s.’<sup>62</sup> The fate of these beasts seems inevitable. Barren cows south of the Ribble were fattened up for the meat market.

Another descriptive condition which distinguishes inventories in the south from their counterparts across the river was another individually appraised bovine, the ‘fat’ cow. This term refers to those female bovines which were considered as being unsuitable for milk production or calving, instead were also selected for fattening. Such cattle, which included barren heifers were removed from the open fields and penned, a practice which continues today. They were fed good hay and grains. Their higher diet and relative immobility increased their weight prior to slaughter.<sup>63</sup> Only four such descriptions appear above the Ribble. William Salthouse of Mythop, Lytham (1668), left ‘one fatt Cow ... £2.16.8d.’ Three other similar valuations up to £3.13.4d. form a localised cluster between 1661 and 1670 in Cockerham, Glasson and Thurnham.<sup>64</sup> In Scarisbrick, in the southern townships, the earliest record is that of Henry Scarisbrick, esq (1608), who left ‘one fatt Cow ... £3.’<sup>65</sup> Two other fat cows and ‘one fatt Calfe ... 5s.8d.’ were valued as such in inventories before the mid-

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<sup>62</sup> LA WCW, Henry Sutch, Scarsbrick, yeoman (1665); Henry Hunt, Much Hoole, husbandman (1681); John Finch, Mawdesley, yeoman (1696).

<sup>63</sup> [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot); [www.groupe-techna.com](http://www.groupe-techna.com); accessed 19.07.2024.

<sup>64</sup> LA WRW/A, William Salthouse, Mythop, Lytham (1668); John Bell, Glasson (1661); Henry Roe, Thirnam (1668); Matthew Cropper, Cockerham, yeoman (1670).

<sup>65</sup> LA WCW, Henry Scarisbrick, Scarisbrick, esq (1608).

century.<sup>66</sup> Between 1661 and 1700, fat cows appear in eight of the itemised inventories, in Farington, Longton, Croston, Mawdesley and Scarisbrick.

These sub-regional variations indicate different farming systems in operation north and south of the Ribble which became clearly defined during the second half of the seventeenth century. The table relating to male bovines above, reveals significant differences in recorded incidences and hence also in numbers. Even by 1720, inventoried incidences of oxen and bullocks remained at almost 40 per cent in all the adjoining townships north of the Ribble, barring Lytham. South of the Ribble, male cattle as bulls and bullocks were evident at 21.4 per cent. However, increasingly in the south, cattle numbers intended for slaughter were augmented by fattening female bovines for meat, as opposed to the townships from Bispham, Layton, Preesall, Pilling and Cockerham where it appears that only bullocks were raised for meat. These different strategies were clearly effective on both sides, not in the least, given the seasonal utility of oxen and bullocks for plough work in the northern townships, whereas in the south, horses were more commonly employed. Furthermore, in the southern townships, after c.1680, an increased commercial focus on dairying and the need for fresh and salted beef for distant markets consigned bullocks, barren and fattened cows to their inevitable fate.

If maintaining oxen may be linked to positions of relatively high local status and the availability of high-quality grazing land, then the ownership, maintenance and utilisation of at least one dairy cow was a ubiquitous and vital necessity. South of the Ribble, prior to 1660, just 33 inventories at 9.2 per cent were men possessed of just one, or two cows. From 1661-1700, incidences and proportion rose to 84 men at 19.7 per cent, and from 1701-1740, 78 owners at 22.7 per cent. North of the Ribble, the comparison between 1660 and 1720 produced a slightly lower proportion as 102 men at 16.4 per cent owned just one or two cows.

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<sup>66</sup> LA WCW, Humphrey Goulbourne, Scarisbrick, gentleman (1620); Gilbert Sefton, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1626).

I noted in the earlier discussion of calves, and in the tables which record their numbers, that in the early decades of the eighteenth century more men kept small herds of one to three cows, of which one would often have been a calf. In Lathom for example, before the turn of the eighteenth century, of 103 inventories which itemised cattle, 16 inventories only valued one to three female bovines and 4 valued two females of which one in each case was a calf, at 19.4 per cent. Over the following forty years, from 39 itemised inventories, 9 possessed one to three cows, one had one cow and one calf, and 8 had two cows and one calf, at just under 44 per cent. In west Lancashire and throughout England and Wales, the economic importance of dairy cattle was discernible at every level of society during the early modern period. Thirsk observed, “A cow was the most useful possession of the small man, whatever else he lacked, so that he could have milk cheese and butter even if he was too poor to buy meat”.<sup>67</sup> Their economic value could also be attested to in the flexibility of their utility. As a commercial opportunity throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth century cows and other livestock, could be hired out, maintained in shared ownership in half or even third shares, or passed on as bequests. In 1615 Thomas Sutch a yeoman of Burscough possessed, ‘part of one Cowe ... £1.2s.6d.’ and ‘halfe of one heifer ... 17s.6d.’ In 1625, the yeoman Philip Norres of Formby possessed, ‘The one halfe of a Cowe in the Custodie of Edward Norres prayesd to £1.5s.’ also, ‘the one halfe of two Yonge stirkes prayesd to 18s.’ These arrangements, which imply shared pasturage and maintenance costs also a sense of community, continued after the mid-seventeenth century and into the eighteenth although they gradually became less commonly recorded in inventories.

Early in this chapter I referred to the practical and social value in the testamentary bequests of heifers and calves. Often, such gifts were outside the provisions made to the decedent’s

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<sup>67</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘Farming Techniques, Grassland and Stock’, in *AHEW*, Vol. iv, p. 185.

widow or to close blood relatives. Humphrey Bradshaw, husbandman, of Little Hoole (1681), appears to have left no surviving wife or children. He died possessed of, 'Two kyne and two Calves ... £6.6s.8d.' He bequeathed to Robert Dandy of Tarleton (relationship unknown), 'one Melch Kow called the cop headed Kow', 'the other kow to Allice Phillipson my servant', and one calf each to 'Richard Wilding of Little Hoole and his sister Elizabeth'.<sup>68</sup>

Provision of cattle and similarly of ewes and lambs, to young people and servants, are instructive of social relationships as well as broader concepts of 'family' and of kinship ties. Tadmor observed that, "Very often, when English people spoke or wrote about "families", it was not the nuclear unit that they had in mind. "Family" in their language could mean a household, including its diverse dependants, such as servants, apprentices and co-resident relatives".<sup>69</sup> Other than perhaps bequests which guaranteed accommodation for life, or a feather bed and its furniture, there could scarcely have been a more generous gift, in value or utility than that of a cow. It was not uncommon for dying heads of households to make such a gesture to a valued servant, often a female one, as an irrefutable inducement not to leave the household's service. In 1610 the butcher William Clayton, of Farington bequeathed, "...unto Allice Newbie my servant my younger incalfe heffer yf shee Continue with me during my lyffe". It was with similar intentions that in 1629, the miller William Walmsley, also of Farington gave "...unto Allice Walmisley my servant one heffer w'ch haith had a calfe" and in 1667, the yeoman Peter Bradshaw of Preesall gave to his servant Elizabeth Marshall, "1 heffer called Monday ... beinge 3 yeares ould", which carried an inventory valuation of £2.6s.8d.<sup>70</sup> Healey has recently proposed that the prime conditions for survival upon which the able working poor relied, were access to land and the possession of livestock as dairy

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<sup>68</sup> LA WCW, Humphrey Bradshaw, Little Hoole, husbandman (1681).

<sup>69</sup> Naomi Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth Century England', *Past & Present*, No. 151 (1996), p. 112.

<sup>70</sup> LA WCW, William Clayton, Farington, butcher (1610); William Walmsley, Farington, miller (1629); LA WRW/A, Peter Bradshaw, Preesall, yeoman (1667).

cows, and to a lesser extent pigs and chickens. He observed that an absence or loss of either living asset would be likely to tip an unfortunate labouring family or widow into a state of irreversible poverty. Such was the importance of owning cows that when poor or elderly individuals formally applied for relief at the Quarter Sessions hearings, “almost the only livestock mentioned in petitions were cattle [as undoubtedly] cows were the most lucrative of animals”. Even by the late eighteenth century “so long as space could be found to graze them, then, cattle could be a major source of income for the poor.”<sup>71</sup> Healey analysed three thousand petitions for poor relief in Lancashire from c.1620-1800 and noted that in the several cases wherein petitioners were known to have retained possession of a cow, they were unlikely to be granted relief.<sup>72</sup>

Such was the primacy of dairy cattle over all other beasts that their importation from Ireland into the west of England had provoked parliamentary debates during the first half of the seventeenth century. Levels of importation had increased significantly during the reigns of Elizabeth 1 and continued unabated into that of James 1. Thirsk noted that the numbers of cattle entering western counties were such that, “Indeed, it was alleged in the House of Commons in 1621 that 100,000 cheap Irish cattle entered the country each year.” Even during the early 1660s an estimated 61,000 a year continued to be brought in from Ireland.<sup>73</sup> This substantial inflow also provided signs that home production had become increasingly inadequate. The Irish Cattle Act was passed in January 1667.<sup>74</sup> It imposed a total ban on live cattle imports and has seemingly received little attention from historians other than L. M. Cullen, who explains that its primary intention was to protect and benefit landowners in the west of England, but in so doing was politically divisive and failed to achieve its objectives

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<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Healey, *The First Century of Welfare, Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 132-3.

<sup>72</sup> Healey, *Welfare*, p. 133.

<sup>73</sup> Joan Thirsk, *AHEW*, Vol. iv, pp. 78, 187, 226, 540fn.

<sup>74</sup> Cha. 11c. 12.



for the overall improvement of British cattle.<sup>75</sup> The port of Chester which had traditionally maintained a flourishing trade in Irish cattle was immediately hit hard by the embargo.<sup>76</sup> Eight peers in London, three of whom were Irish, protested the bill. Lord Delamer, who held lands in Cheshire, and the Earl of Derby, who had petitioned unsuccessfully for the return of his lands in Lancashire which had been lost during the interregnum, were enthusiastic proponents of it.<sup>77</sup> Regarding overall herd sizes however the act appears to have left little impression. From our dataset, there are no extant inventories which record extraordinarily large herds of dairy cattle. Between 1661 and 1700 south of the Ribble and 1660-1720 on the north side, just 32 herds in 1049 inventories exceeded £50 or, where itemised, an average of 30 beasts.<sup>78</sup> The efficacy of the Irish Cattle Act, which was specifically intended to boost the economy of north-west England from the 1660s onwards, is therefore difficult to quantify. Our figures which calculate average herd sizes appear provide a clear indication that it had little positive effect on cattle numbers in the west of Lancashire, although Healey observed that pasture farming and the rearing of cattle were consolidated, “after the Irish Cattle Act of 1667 wiped out much of the region’s competition.”<sup>79</sup> The figures do however, illustrate that more attention seems to have been generally paid to the procreation and the sustainability of dairy cattle. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, in the townships south of the Ribble, we have seen that herd components had swung again towards raising female beasts for increased dairy production and for their meat. Dairy herd sizes had not increased over time, neither had the resale values of all but the best of beasts risen greatly, but a new commercially oriented focus was developing during this period. Inventories record a significant rise in the number of cheese presses,<sup>80</sup> and in the listings of implements and

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<sup>75</sup> L. M. Cullen, *Anglo-Irish Trade 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1968), p.33.

<sup>76</sup> Cullen, *Anglo- Irish Trade*, p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> [www.historyofparliamentonline.org.uk](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org.uk), acc. 17.12.18.

<sup>78</sup> pp. 61-2.

<sup>79</sup> Healey, *Welfare*, p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> Chapter 4. Table 26, Cheese presses, south of the Ribble, p.199.

utensils needed for dairy production as well as the often-impressive increase in inventoried stocks of hard cheeses, the keeping qualities of which were useful for Liverpool ships' crews on trans-Atlantic voyages. This transformation seems indicative of the market-oriented production undertaken by individual families and households in response to the newly emerging commercial opportunities which emerged in the south and west of Lancashire and which focussed family energies on increasing cheese, butter and meat production. The importance of these changes within the agrarian economy are analysed in chapter 4.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps an outcome of the increased value of bovine ownership is that from the mid-1710s onwards, owners began to designate individual female cattle by name. James Waringe, a yeoman of Mawdesley (1659), who had named his three cows, 'Tagell', 'Blackoe' and 'Broadhead', was atypical.<sup>82</sup> Some cows might have been named after the town from which they were purchased. Hugh Ashton, gentleman, of Bispham near Croston (1717), owned 'Old', and 'Young' 'Wrightington', and Thomas Rodgers of Lathom (1738), had '1 red Cow called Prescott.' Other names were prosaically descriptive of the beast's physical peculiarities; 'Old' and 'Young' Broken horn'; 'Old' and 'Young' short paps'; 'The young brown mouth,' and similar. Others though, were identified with more familiar nicknames such as: 'Brandock', 'Chisnall', 'Cherry', 'Finch', 'Throstle' and 'Grace Cow.' These names were not merely affectations of the upper yeomanry or local gentry. The practice of naming cattle may be noted across the social spectrum but was particularly distinctive among modest testators such as John Johnson, a husbandman of North Meols (1709), who bequeathed "A Calfe by ye name of Howard." Thomas Rodgers was a linen weaver and John Cheshire of Ince Blundell (1735), a carpenter who owned 'Old' and 'Young' Tydey.'<sup>83</sup> By that time,

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<sup>81</sup> Chapter 4, pp. 194-200.

<sup>82</sup> LA WCW, James Waringe, yeoman, Mawdesley (1659).

<sup>83</sup> LA WCW, Hugh Ashton, Bispham in Croston, gentleman (1717); Edward Bridge, Rufford, yeoman (1717); John Leatherbarrow, Lathom, husbandman (1727), Thomas Rodgers, linen weaver, Lathom (1738); Lawrence

even in the western rural townships, more testators had come to own items such as books, clocks, looking glasses and warming pans and perhaps were, in some instances, also giving affectionate names to their cows.

## Conclusion

Hey's assessment of livestock farming across Lancashire during this period has suggested that beef rearing allied to the maintenance of a small dairy herd was of great importance in all levels of society regardless of status and farm size. Ironfield's study of Chipping parish brought cereal crops into the equation and showed that inventoried valuations of corn and grains corresponded with high cattle valuation and herd size of all cattle, including oxen. Brigg's study of inventories from the Forst of Pendle has arrived at a similar conclusion. In contrast, Dottie's discussion of Childwall in south Lancashire pointed to a noticeably early decline in the rearing of all farm animals, and a diminution in agricultural output from the 1650s onwards.<sup>84</sup> This was atypical. The evidence from our dataset from the south-west plain after c.1660 shows that agricultural change and rationalisation can be traced across our region rather than decline.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the evidence found in the inventories which record cattle enables us to conclude that in the pastoral uplands to the east of Lancashire as also in the lowland western plains, in the coastal and rural townships on both sides of the Ribble, the value of cattle exceeded all other livestock and all crop-types in whatever combination. Cattle herd sizes were generally modest at around 7 to 7.5 beasts on average yet were appropriate to the means and the needs of their owners, whether these were domestic or subsequently commercial. Oxen numbers declined in west Lancashire as they had across the north-western

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Sumner, Ulmes Walton (1735); John Cheshire, Ince Blundell, carpenter (1735), were among those who possessed named cattle.

<sup>84</sup> Hey, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 62-3; Ironfield, 'Parish of Chipping', p. 37; Brigg, 'Forest of Pendle', pt.1, p. 83; Dottie, 'Childwall Township, p. 24.

<sup>85</sup> Chapters 2 and 3.

and the north-west Midland counties. Most notably, the herd components shifted over the course of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. North of the Ribble, where oxen and male beasts and were prolific, they continued to be utilised for farm work and meat production. South of the Ribble, a different dynamic prevailed. There, dairying and meat production were more common and held a greater focus as commercial opportunities to provide products to distant markets through Liverpool opened in *c.* 1680s onwards. Therefore, the herd components in these townships increasingly comprised young heifers, milk-kine, bullocks and a selection of dairy cows fattened for market use and unlike the scene north of the Ribble dictated that oxen/steers were superfluous.

**Chapter 2** Changes in agricultural practices: livestock, horses, sheep, pigs, poultry and bees, evidence from selected adjoining townships in west Lancashire, c.1580-1740.

“For want of proof, one can only hazard guesses when exactly the lessons learned from horse breeding influenced other breeders of livestock. The ample choice among many different breeds of cattle, sheep, and pigs satisfied for a long time; farmers plainly exploited the many alternatives available to them.”<sup>1</sup>

Across the social ranks, dairy cattle held the greatest economic importance. Other animals also provided financial and utilitarian value to the agrarian economy of western Lancashire. As we shall see, individual testators and households which were possessed of the broadest portfolio of livestock had more options to benefit from transportation, income diversity and dietary variation. This chapter explores the changing significance of these other livestock, commencing with horses. Horses were second only to cattle in their collective value and individually often greater. Sheep, pigs, poultry and bees were also inventoried and evaluated, and each contributed to the rural domestic economy north and south of the River Ribble. However, their relative populations changed over time. Sheep numbers had declined by the early eighteenth century on the plains of western Lancashire, although flocks primarily continued to be maintained for their meat. Swine numbers, although few per household, appear in almost half of all inventories. Their utility to family economies endured as disposers of household waste, consumers of whey and as providers of fresh and preserved meat. The chapter closes with a discussion of the utility and albeit diminishing local commercial value of geese, poultry and bees.

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Thirsk, in *AHEW*, vol. v. ii, *Agricultural Innovations and their Diffusion*, p. 578. (Cambridge, 1985).

## Horses

Horses, Joan Thirsk observed, were bred for service, for pleasure, and for power. Thirsk's paper from 1977 endures as seemingly the only work which discusses equine history and development and the importance of this indispensable animal through the changing demands of the early modern economy.<sup>2</sup> In the period before the mid-seventeenth century, horses and their offspring represented an average 7.38 per cent of all inventory valuations in the sixteen townships in our core dataset south of the Ribble, and 7.01 per cent in the six to the north. On both sides of the Ribble, the collective value of horses was just under half that of female cattle and their calves, which in that period, averaged 16.58 and 14.35 per cent of all inventories respectively. By c.1740, as we discussed in chapter 1, average values of female cattle had risen slightly to 17.78 per cent in the south, and by 1720, 15.35 per cent north of the Ribble.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, horses slipped to 6.37 per cent of inventoried valuations by c.1740 across the southern townships but in those north of the Ribble, their average collective values had risen slightly to 8.32 per cent of all valuations from c.1660-1720. These are not dramatic shifts over a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years. Nevertheless, they highlight the primacy of cattle, while also demonstrating the enduring financial and utilitarian value of horses in the rural landscape. Therefore, the following discussion examines the different requirements for, and the diverse functions of, horses in towns and countryside. There is an emphasis on horse-ownership south of the Ribble as we discuss horse drawn goods transportation out of Wigan, horse racing in Ormskirk, and the increased need from the c.1680s onwards for horses carting goods between vessels and warehouses in Liverpool.

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<sup>2</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'Horses in early modern England: for Service, for Pleasure, for Power', *The Stenton Lecture*, (University of Reading, 1977); repr. In Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England*, (London, 1984), ch, XXI, pp. 375-403.

<sup>3</sup> Inventories for sixteen adjoining townships south of the Ribble have presently been studied as complete sets from c.1600-1740 and six adjoining townships north of the Ribble from c.1660-1720. Chapter 1. Tables 5 & 7, *Livestock and crops*, p. 49, 51.

Evidence from inventories throughout the west of Lancashire indicates that the rural mix of horses was an eclectic one, and their descriptions indicative of sex and age. Stallions, geldings, mares, colts, fillies, ‘stags’, nags and Galloways (a breed now extinct) populated the fields and stables of many of the families involved in agricultural production throughout the early modern period.<sup>4</sup> It is almost self-evident that their strength, longevity and versatility meant that horses were a vitally important economic resource in every rural township. Nevertheless, excepting the pioneering work undertaken by Thirsk forty years ago, references to their ownership and employment by Swain and more recently Muldrew, the economic and social importance of horses has been under-represented, taking second place to cattle and perhaps even third place to sheep in the historiography of agrarian analyses.<sup>5</sup>

Muldrew analysed developments in the industrial output of labourers in the eighteenth century, examining the relationship between their living standards and the calorific intake required for their work. He referred to Wrigley’s widely accepted argument that industrialisation emerged from an organic economy and that after c.1580, economic and urban growth relied on both human and animal power, augmented by the eighteenth century by coal, water and wind power. Muldrew calculated that the increase in energy which became available from crops, which included those grown to feed horses such as oats and beans, directly correlated to more animal energy being available for work as the eighteenth century advanced. Horses, while not replacing human labour, allowed more things to be carried from place to place more often. Horses, having generally replaced oxen for field work by the mid-eighteenth century, ensured that land was able to be ploughed more frequently thus improving its condition and intensifying its use. Activities such as ploughing and the regular

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Stag’, *Northern and Scottish*. A young horse, especially one ‘unbroken’ OED online, acc. 8.7.24.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed), *AHEW*, vols. iv, v.i, v.ii; John T. Swain., *Industry Before the Industrial Revolution North-East Lancashire c.1500-1640* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 48-9; Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 3, 141-149, 263.

loading and unloading and emptying of carts and wagons, driving horses and maintaining them required a high intake of calories for both horse and handler which could only be supplied by plentiful quantities of food. Taking account of earlier studies which had analysed and quantified the rise in agricultural output across England from the mid-seventeenth century, Muldrew calculated the increase in calorific content resulting from higher gross crop yields of cereals and legumes. During the eighteenth century, the greatest increases “in cereal calories per person” occurred. In northern England this particularly included oats and hay, meaning that this food was widely available to humans and horses, although it was probable that across England “in 1700, 50 per cent of oats were fed to horses.”<sup>6</sup> Muldrew estimated that horse numbers probably increased by 75 per cent from 1600 to 1700. He suggested the potential reason for this increase was that when labourers earned more, they were likely to purchase a horse, allowing them to increase their income from carting.”<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the utilitarian value of horses as plough-teams, I made several references in chapter 1, to the diminution of oxen/steers’ numbers in favour of horses on the west Lancashire plains south of the Ribble.<sup>8</sup> The practicalities of ploughing with horses rather than oxen were subject to a contemporary cost analysis by John Holt in his agricultural survey of Lancashire in 1794. One of his many correspondents was the gentleman farmer Henry Harper of Bank Hall near Liverpool. In response to Holt’s wide ranging questionnaire Harper offered the somewhat contrary opinion that whilst he was “no advocate for horses in preference to oxen”, nevertheless “Three horses, with the allowance of two bushels of oats per week each horse, are able to plough an acre a day in the heaviest and strongest land ... [and]... when a second ploughing is necessary, two horses will be sufficient to plough one acre and a half per day in the spring or summer months and by which there is a spare horse ... eight weeks in the

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<sup>6</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness*, pp. 146-9.

<sup>7</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy and Industriousness*, pp. 147, 252-3.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 1, p. 79.



year out of this team”.<sup>9</sup> Holt’s conclusions are questionable as to their objectivity, and have recently been subjected to critical scrutiny by John Virgoe.<sup>10</sup> Holt’s costing analysis which shows that three horses proved more to purchase and maintain in their first year of ownership than an ‘ox-team’ (of two beasts?), but thereafter provide a more cost-effective return is *prima facie* an instructive one. It is also instructive, though cautionary to learn that Holt, in 1794 costed the purchase of three horses at £25 each, which suggests a significant rise in their value over the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> It would seem however, that Holt considerably over-estimated the purchase cost of three farm horses at £75, attempting to make his point to the Board of Agriculture. In 1846, a statistical account of national agricultural output was compiled which estimated fully grown horses in England and Wales at an average value of £15 each.<sup>12</sup> Holt was presumably seeking to make the point that whereas oxen were traditionally used for plough work in Lancashire, horses are subsequently preferred.<sup>13</sup> It is of interest therefore, that even on the cusp of the nineteenth century a debate rumbled on among Lancashire farmers as to the efficacy of horses over oxen for plough work or *vice versa*. We discussed in the previous chapter, evidence from the inventories has clearly indicated that male bovines were scarcely employed as draft animals in the rural economy south of the Ribble after 1700 in favour of horses, although on the farmland between the rivers Wyre and Cocker, oxen and bullocks continued to perform these tasks.<sup>14</sup>

Importantly, testamentary evidence indicates that in the townships of western Lancashire horse numbers did not increase to anything like those found countrywide. Contrarily,

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<sup>9</sup> John Holt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster* (London, 1795: reprinted 1969), pp. 169-172.

<sup>10</sup> John Virgoe, ‘John Holt and *The general view of the agriculture of the county of Lancaster*: An appraisal’ *THSLC*, vol. 154 (2003), pp. 93-116.

<sup>11</sup> Holt, *General View*, pp. 173-4.

<sup>12</sup> McCulloch, *Statistical Account, 1847*. Table III.2 (b) Estimate of the value of agricultural output for England and Wales, 1846, in *AHEW*, G. E. Mingay (ed.), vol. vi 1750-1850 (Cambridge, 1989) p. 1046.

<sup>13</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 1, pp. 70-3.

incidences of ownership (irrespective of value), from inventories south of the Ribble declined over time, albeit modestly, from 84.32 per cent pre-1660, to 81.66 per cent from 1661-1700, and to 79.49 per cent from 1701-40. From our inventory sets it is apparent that horse numbers were noticeably higher in rural locations than in towns. This would appear to indicate that horses were used principally for farm labour, rather than necessarily for human transport. It has been noted earlier that men of lowly estate in rural husbandry or trade after c. 1660 who could be described as 'labourers' and who left inventories, were more likely to possess a calf or to produce one from their heifer than to invest in a horse.<sup>15</sup> Similarly in urban environments it is evident that even where parcels of grazing or townfield closes could be leased it made more economic sense to maintain a cow rather than a horse.<sup>16</sup>

In Liverpool, Ormskirk and Wigan, from the c. 1680s onwards the employment of men and horses expanded as the population grew and commercial activities increased, although working men in general continued to keep horses only if they had regular employment for them to justify their upkeep. By the 1720s, Liverpool had opened its new wet dock (1717) and had thus commenced its exponential trajectory as a port for international as well as regional mercantile trade. Wigan was approaching its zenith as the principal provincial centre for pewter and brass manufacture and coverlet weaving but was becoming an important transport hub on the London Road. Ormskirk, like Wigan, an historic market town which performed different social functions to the former had seen the development of trade specialisations of its own, particularly in tanning and leather finishing which notably required the hides of both cows and horses. In 1689 for example the saddler Thomas France possessed

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter 1, pp. 84-7.

<sup>16</sup> This observation is founded on data from my original tabulations, plus additional material from Ormskirk to 1740, Wigan and its surrounding townships, and Liverpool from 1660-1720. The sheer volume of extant probate material has presently prohibited the assessment of statistical information from Preston, or for Wigan and Liverpool after 1720.

‘in Cow lether horse lether and some other Small Skins ... £1.4s.6d.’ France owned several feather beds, and apparel at £5. but kept just ‘one little horse Sadle and Bridle ... £1.10s.’<sup>17</sup>

In Wigan, Roger Baron (1673) was a brasier, as were many of his contemporaries. Baron travelled with his finished wares and left ‘Three horses with pack saddles & other furniture ... £9.’ Similarly in Wigan Edward Mollineux, a glazier, kept ‘In ye stable six cases of glasse 4 & i halfe whereof is broad & ye oth’r is cutt ... £7.16s.’ and ‘one gelding, packsaddle, hackney saddle, Bridle & furniture ... £1.13s.4d.’<sup>18</sup> These enterprising individuals were reliant upon the utility of horsepower. Their ability to market their wares abroad reflected the growing economic importance of spatial integration between regional urban centres which Stobart identified in pre-industrial Lancashire as a ‘linkage hierarchy.’<sup>19</sup> Even before the 1727 turnpike linked Preston to Wigan and Warrington and thence the Midlands and London, trade could only have been facilitated with any celerity by horse transport. A busy and well-organised commercial system of ‘carriers’, ‘carters’, and ‘porters’ had therefore evolved during the mid-seventeenth century in Wigan and the neighbouring townships. This circumstance contributes to an explanation why horses were not kept by ordinary people for individual transportation.

It was not until after c.1700 that the compilers of parish registers began to regularly note male occupations. There are no carriers or carters listed in the registers of Penwortham, North Meols, or even Ormskirk parishes for example. However, between 1722 and 1726, entries for six men of that occupation were recorded in Croston parish. Croston’s central location on routes accessible by horse transport to and from the market towns of Preston, Ormskirk, Chorley, Liverpool and Wigan gave it an advantage over townships further west on the meres

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<sup>17</sup> LA WCW, Thomas France, Ormskirk (1689).

<sup>18</sup> LA WCW, Roger Baron, Wigan (1673); Edward Mollineux, Wigan (1681).

<sup>19</sup> Jon Stobart, *The first industrial region North-west England c.1700-60* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 201-4.

and dunes and facilitated its place as a regional centre for cheese production in the early 1700s. In Wigan and its environs, inventories were compiled for ‘carriers’ in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Thomas Ireland, described as ‘carrier’ (1675), left only a nuncupative will, but Charles Banks, another Wigan ‘carrier’ (1684), left ‘Alleaven horses with the app’tenances ... £30.’ and ‘twenty-eight load of hay at ... £25.’ This was a vast amount of hay by any contemporary rural comparison. The following examples attest also to the well-established operation of goods transport in late seventeenth century Wigan. Richard Whalley, carrier of Upholland (1682) kept, ‘2 mares & one old horse with their furniture or harness valued to £5. while George Glover, carrier, of Orrell in Makerfield (1706) is unsurpassed in the surviving inventoried records. In ‘Goods in ye stable & barn,’ he left ‘In Geldings and Mares containeing in number 17 together with the packsadels and other furniture to them Usually belonging for carriage to and from London’. Glover also possessed ‘In Coarne ... £9.’ ‘In Hay ... £10.’ ‘In beans ... “2.10s.’ and ‘in horses Geres for drawing ... 16s.’ In his buttery, the more sobering entries are recorded for ‘one lead & frame ... £1.10s.’ and ‘In Glue & other od things ... £3.’<sup>20</sup> A further twenty carriers or carters were recorded in parish registers between 1690 and 1729. One of whom, Richard Baron (1708) was like his contemporaries the Glovers, described as ‘London carrier’, but rather than occupying an out-of-town site, Baron had established his business in Standishgate in the metal-wares manufacturing heart of Wigan.<sup>21</sup>

Liverpool inventories reveal a similar set of circumstances to those found in Wigan. Once again, individual horse ownership in the town was low, but the business of carting and carrying blossomed towards the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries. On

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<sup>20</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Ireland, carrier, Wigan (1675); Charles Banks, carrier, Wigan (1682); Richard Whalley, carrier, Upholland (1682); George Glover, carrier, Orrell in Makerfield (1706).

<sup>21</sup> Parish Register nos: Penwortham, no. 52 (1608-1753); Croston, vol. ii, no. 20 (1690-1727); North Meols, no. 66 (1594-1731); Ormskirk, no. 170 (1660-1729); Wigan, vol. iii, no. 153 (1676-1710), & vol. iv, no. 175 (1711-40); Liverpool, vol. i, no. 35 (1660-1704), & vol. 11, no. 101 (1705-25); *LRPS*, (1900-2009).

the basis of a comparison with Baron and Glover in Wigan, one might postulate a hypothesis that the carrying trade in Liverpool became consolidated by a few men possessed of numerous horses. However, no documents have survived to substantiate this. In Liverpool, it is more likely that the increasingly frequent operation of loading and unloading ships and the carting of cargoes to and from warehouses in accountable and manageable quantities were better suited to the smaller operator. Examples of small-scale urban tradesmen who kept horses as essential utilities in Liverpool were Thomas Kelly, ‘carter’ (1718) who left, ‘In two horses Cart and Geers ... £8.10s.’ and Timothy Lunt, ‘waterside carter’ (1727) who was evaluated similarly for ‘2 horses, cart & wheels & trease ... £ 10.’<sup>22</sup>

The hiring of horses is a traditional trade. Although the practice was commonplace in town and country, none of the inventories viewed list this as the testator’s main occupation. However, probate accounts and wills provide other evidence that enables us to assess the services they provided. In the rural townships south of the Ribble for example, the administrators of probate, often the sons or widows of the deceased who may not have possessed, or had access to horses, were obliged to hire horses on daily rates to convey documents to the bishop’s surrogates who operated in the regional legal centres of Preston, Ormskirk and Wigan. In 1716, James Rosthorne of Maghull, son-in-law of the late Robert Parke of Ormskirk claimed, ‘in Expenses & hire of 2 Horses and loss of Time going to Wiggin [*sic*] ... 4s.6d.’ Similarly in 1726, Richard Wright, son of Henry a fishmonger of North Meols, claimed ‘for journeys to Ormskirk hire of two Horses & Expenses ... 5s.’ and later ‘for my Expenses to Preston hire of two Horses ... 5s.’<sup>23</sup> Two wills from Liverpool have also survived, wherein the testator described himself as ‘horse-hirer’. Nathaniel Haslome (1738) owned a dwelling house and stable in George Street, a cul-de-sac off Old Hall Street.

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<sup>22</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Kelly, Liverpool (1718); Timothy Lunt, Liverpool (1727).

<sup>23</sup> LA WCW, Henry Pemberton, glover, Ormskirk (1716); Henry Wright, fishmonger, North Meols (1726)

His executor, to whom he bequeathed his apparel, was Richard Briscoe a sadler. Richard Greathead, another horse-hirer in Liverpool who predeceased Haslome by four years appears to have organised a more substantial business. He left the profits of his business to his wife Martha with which she could maintain their two daughters, with home necessities “Schooleing and wareing apparel of All sorts Suiteable to their Degree ... [until]... such time as they shall be able to goe to some service or business to provide for themselves.”<sup>24</sup>

Liverpool’s dramatic commercial growth and the corresponding increase in the requirement for horses further led to the development of a new trade. This was the ‘Horse-courser’, a jobbing dealer in horses, who first appeared in the parish registers during the second decade of the eighteenth century between 1719 and 1722. John Wignall, Thomas Topping and John Fells were described as ‘Horscorcer’. John and Thomas Glover of Dale Street were also thus described and were perhaps related to the ‘London Carriers’ of Orrell.<sup>25</sup> Beyond the particular demands of carriage and trade in and out of towns, in farming and rural townships horses served a variety of purposes. Many of the men who raised horses practised forward-planning regimes, maintaining their old and maturing animals and rearing young to ensure financial asset continuity, working efficiency in ploughing, cart-work and travel capabilities. James Johnson, husbandman of Bretherton (1682), for example, left ‘one horse one mare & two colts ... £16.’ Jackson’s contemporary and near neighbour in Bretherton, James Farrar, yeoman (1683), left ‘two horses 3 mares and one colt ... £17.’<sup>26</sup> The numerous inventoried references to stocks of horses at different age and reproductive stages suggests economic planning and attention to animal husbandry in west Lancashire where coherent strategies of breeding and utility were practised by even the lower middling-ranks of rural society.

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<sup>24</sup> LA WCW, Nathaniel Haslome, horse-hirer, Liverpool (1738); Richard Greathead, horse-hirer, Liverpool (1734).

<sup>25</sup> Parish Register, ‘Our Lady & St. Nicholas’. Liverpool, no. 101, vol. ii (1705-25) *LRPS* (1963).

<sup>26</sup> LA WCW, John Jackson, Bretherton (1682); James Farrar, Bretherton (1683).

Horses generally live much longer than cattle. Geldings and mares would have been ridden into their old age, perhaps for twenty or even thirty years, and like their owners would have worked until they were decrepit or disabled. In Scarisbrick, in Ormskirk parish, inventoried references to old horses and mares were particularly common. Of the 141 inventories which document horse ownership in this township from c.1600-1740, no fewer than 27 records, 19.2 per cent refer to valuations of old animals. Even in maturity, they commanded good prices. James Blundell of Snape (1629) had '2 old mares ... £4.13s.4d.' Evan Heaton, yeoman of Scarisbrick (1730) left 'An old bay mare ... £1.' and in Ormskirk itself, in 1734, the maltster Thomas Barton died in possession of, 'A Broken backs Grey horse ... £1.10s.' and 'A Black horse upwards of twenty years old ... £1.'<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of the utility and longevity of horses is that of the gentleman diarist Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby's favourite breeding mare 'Bess' who was first recorded by Blundell as being 'horsed' on 20 May 1704. She continued to be 'horsed' or 'covered' most years thereafter until 1715. From Blundell's inventory of 21 April 1737, it seems that she died soon after the diarist and before any valuation could be made, '1 Mare very old 'Bess' Dyed in Winter Heys' was recorded. She must have been at least thirty-five years old.<sup>28</sup>

Inventories are useful in revealing the finest healthiest animals and in also evaluating those at the opposite end of the scale. Blindness in horses and mares was not infrequently recorded and appears to have been a particularly common affliction south of the Ribble, in Croston, Bretherton, Tarleton, Lathom and Aughton. Blindness was inevitably ruinous to working capabilities and evaluations. Hugh Smith of Bretherton (1665) had 'one blind mare ... 8s.' and Thomas Jackson of Bretherton (1690) 'one Blinde mare ... 2s.' All live animals held

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<sup>27</sup> LA WCW, James Blundell, Snape (1629); Evan Heaton, Scarisbrick (1730); Thomas Barton, Ormskirk (1734).

<sup>28</sup> Frank Tyrer (transc.), & J. J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, 3 vols, 1702-1728 (Manchester, 1968, 1970, 1972), vol.1 p. 57, vol. 3, p. 240.

some value or utility, however. Henry Leatherbarrow of Lydiate, yeoman, willed various useful bequests to his son John, and left him also “the old Mare which is blinde of ye one eye.”<sup>29</sup> Their condition might have resulted from the disease which has been recognised nowadays as ‘Equine Recurrent Uveitis’ (ERU), a bacterial disease caused by *leptospirosis*. This is spread through the urine of infected animals (including rats) and enters water and soil alike. It is especially contagious in marshy pastures. It was also noted subsequently that land drainage reduced the incidences of the disease.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the extensive drainage and reclamation work at Martin Mere and at Chat Moss for example in the late 1700s may have improved horse health in west and central Lancashire. Another affliction referred to in several inventories (particularly in Croston and Lathom), was lameness. In one inventory, of a Wigan innkeeper and brewer who probably also hired out horses, two of six horses were described as ‘one spavined Bay Mare ... £1.’ and ‘one Spavined Bay Gelding ... 3s.4d.’ naming an arthritic joint condition which often causes hind limb lameness.<sup>31</sup>

However, generally individual valuations of horses and mares were similar to those of dairy cattle and bullocks, with healthy young animals valued at around £1.10s. to £2.10s. and in maturity at £3. to £4.10s. The finest and most reliably fertile mares achieved valuation parity with oxen at around £5. but often exceeded that which, in bovines in the west of Lancashire was near to their price ceiling. John Cooper, gentleman, of Lathom (1639) left ‘1 Gray mare ... £5.10s.’ and ‘1 young whit mare ... £6.13s.4d.’ James Finch, yeoman, of Mawdesley (1727) had a mare at £6.10s.<sup>32</sup> The most valuable equines of all were stallions, the ‘ston’d’ or ‘stont’ horses and colts and an analysis of their place in the hegemony of livestock and their

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<sup>29</sup> LA WCW, Hugh Smith, Bretherton (1665); Thomas Jackson, Bretherton (1690); Henry Leatherbarrow, Lydiate (1670), are three among several examples.

<sup>30</sup> [www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/infection/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/infection/index.html); [www.vet.k-state.edu](http://www.vet.k-state.edu); <https://thehorse.com/127413/moon-blindness>; accessed 15.03.19.

<sup>31</sup> LA WCW, Mathias Turner, Wigan (1718); <https://vcahospitals.com>; acc. 15.03.19.

<sup>32</sup> LA WCW, John Cooper, Lathom (1639); James Finch, Mawdesley (1727).



ownership is instructive. For all their vital procreation work, ‘stoned’ horses and colts were rare in the countryside. Stallions have occurred in just 31 of all inventories studied thus far, or approximately once in every two hundred documents. They were particularly valuable, owned mainly by esquires, gentlemen and yeomen who owned other livestock in considerable numbers. From their inventories it is apparent that most men who owned stallions also possessed livestock and moveable goods relative to their elevated local status. Royal interest and the necessity for improving the quality of English horses had been enacted by Henry VIII during the 1530s and 1540s to counteract the considerable losses occasioned by a succession of costly continental and Scottish wars. The gentry were exhorted to breed swift, strong horses up to fifteen hands on their estates.<sup>33</sup> A century later, in the west of Lancashire, 24 of the 31 owners of stallions who left inventories (at 77.4 per cent), were yeomen, gentlemen and esquires. These were men of local wealth and status such as Henry Bannister of Bank Hall at Bretherton (1641), James Scaresbrick of Scarisbrick (1665) and Robert Hesketh of Rufford (1697). Bannister for example kept ‘one dun Stont horse ... £16.’ and Scaresbrick, ‘one Stond horse ... £13.6s.8d.’ Stallions were also maintained in several of the coastal townships north of the Ribble. In Cockerham both Gualter Frost senior (1670) and junior (1700) kept valuable stallions.<sup>34</sup> Of these 31 men of status, fifteen also kept bulls, while each of the other men kept various male beasts, oxen, steers and bullocks in addition to their substantial dairy herds. Of the remaining seven records, three occupations were unstated. Two others were husbandmen, John Marsh of Ulnes Walton (1648) was a weaver and Robert Fleetwood of Ince Blundell (1687) a house carpenter.<sup>35</sup> The gross average

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<sup>33</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Rural Economy of England*, pp.381-88.

<sup>34</sup> LA WCW, Henry Bannister, esquire, Bretherton (1641); Robert Hesketh, esquire, Rufford (1697), James Scaresbrick, esquire, Scarisbrick (1665); WRW/A, Gualter Frost Snr, esquire, Cockerham (1670); Gualter Frost Jnr, gentleman, Cockerham (1700).

<sup>35</sup> LA WCW, John Marsh, Ulnes Walton (1648); Robert Fleetwood, Ince Blundell (1687).

inventoried valuations of these seven other men nevertheless calculated to £116.06. which places them well above the average estates' valuations in the region.

Notwithstanding additional expense for their upkeep, stallions generated a regular seasonal income for their work. For the consideration of a fee for 'covering' numerous mares, the breeding regime virtually guaranteed high quality equine issue for freeholders and tenants alike. Evidence of the practice may be gleaned from Nicholas Blundell's diarised breeding notes which I have collated into table 14 below. Blundell was a gentleman landowner of a relatively large estate with Little Crosby Hall at its hub. The breeding programme of his mares tells us much about social interactions at local gentry level and provide a window into the mind-set of those at the highest end of local society for whom horses were bred and maintained not only for utilitarian farm work and carting, but also for family transport, pleasure and for profitability. He first records that on 24 May 1704, "My Black Mair Bonny was covered with Iron Sids".<sup>36</sup> 'Ironsides' was his own stallion, but other than making good use of an 'in-house' resource on this early occasion, he thereafter chose an eclectic and evolving selection of partners for his mares over the following quarter century. Through his social connections and frequent travels Blundell would have possessed a broad knowledge of the quality of livestock in his geographical environment. Therefore, in the sixteen (of twenty-three years), when he recorded the 'covering' and subsequent foaling of his six breed mares, the stallions 'used' came from Formby, Great Crosby, Ormskirk and Liverpool. Blundell preferred four supply sources as a breeding resource. Provenance was important to Blundell. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1727, he noted "Muss was cover'd by a Large Bay Hors call'd Jack which is said to be got by Ruflor & under a mare of Mr. Wins."<sup>37</sup> There were several men (of unknown status) in the locality; messrs. Blackburn, Bramwell, Fairclough, Heskin, Loxam and Syer,

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<sup>36</sup> Blundell, *The Great Diurnal* vol. i, (Manchester, 1968), p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> Blundell, *The Great Diurnal* vol. iii, p. 214.

whose stallions were called into service. Between 1706 and 1710, on eight occasions Blundell engaged Isaac Lightbowne of Formby's bay stallion Dogg-Lad, and from 1712-14 the colt Young Dogg-Lad. In 1715 only, on 4 & 15 April, Bess was covered by Lord Molineux's racehorse Darcy, a union which resulted in the colt Favorit the following March.<sup>38</sup> The fourth source connects us again with the Liverpool horse-courser trade. From 1711-14, on the seven occasions Blundell used Thomas Bickarstaff's large bay stallion, Blundell either sent his servant to Liverpool, or Bickerstaff brought his stallion to Little Crosby. On 16 May 1711, during Bickerstaff's first visit with his stallion he also purchased William Ainsworth's mare. On 6 May 1714, "Bess was Horsed at Leverpoole by Thomas Bigarstaffs Large Bay" and the following day, "Thomas Bigarstaff was here with his Hors and tried one of my Mares & some of the neighbours Mares, but none of them were in order. I paid him three half Crownes for 3 Colts as his hors got for me the last year." <sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, Lord Molineux's 'Darcy' ran at Ormskirk, 13 May 1712, vol. ii, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnall*, vol. i, pp. 58, 84, 85, 109, 137, 213, 215, 252, 254, 288-90; vol. ii, pp. 17, 20-22, 58-62, 95, 98, 130, 132, 213; vol. iii, pp. 45, 47, 78, 184, 214.

**Table 14, Horse breeding programme; Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, 1704-27.**

Year	mare	stallion	owner
1704	Bess	n/rec	n/rec
	Bonny Buttocks (24 May & 2 Jun)	a white gray/ironsides	Bramwell/Blundell
1705	Bess	Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
	Bonny Buttocks (24 May & 2 Jun)	a bay	Loxam
1706	Bess	Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
1707	Bess	Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
	Muss	Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
1708	Ginny	a bay	Edw. Fairclough
1709	Bess (18 & 20 May)	blind stln	Thomas Syer
1710	Bess	a bay	Edw. Fairclough
	Ginny	Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
1711	Ginny	a bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
1712	Bess (29 April)	Young Dogg-Lad	Isaac Lightbowne
	Bess (24 May)	a bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
1713	Bess (4 & 18 May)	a large bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
	Brock	a large bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
	Ginny	a large bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
1714	Bess (6 May)	a large bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
	Brock	a large bay	Thomas Bickarstaff
	Bess (15 Oct)	a young bay	Isaac Lightbowne
1715	Bess (4 & 15 Apr)	Darcy	Sir Ric. Molyneux
	Brock	a fine stln	Mr. Blackburn
1716-20	n/rec	n/rec	n/rec
1721	Flea (18 May & 8 Jun)	a bay	Mr. Blackburn
1722	Flea	a bay	from Exton
1723-25	n/rec	n/rec	n/rec
1726	Bess (5 & 12 May)	a black horse	Thurstan Heskin
	Muss	a black horse	Thurstan Heskin
1727	Bess	Dick	Thurstan Heskin
	Muss	Jack	Mr. Wins

The varied and interwoven annual breeding programme employed by Blundell was invariably successful and gives us an insight into early modern husbandry practice. On 27 April 1709, “My Mair Ginny Fowled a Hors Colt betimes in the Morning as I suppose.” 18 November

1712, “I fetched Bess home being she had Cast her Fole either last Night or yesterday as I suppose.”<sup>40</sup>

While the testamentary evidence below gentry level appears to show that horses were bred to assist human labour on the land, in trade, and for hire, the breeding of sporting horses was not insignificant. By 1700, southwest Lancashire boasted no fewer than eight established racecourses. Other than Crosby Marsh, which crossed three miles of Blundell’s and Molineux’s estates, horse races were regularly held at Preston, Ormskirk, Leyton Heys, Aughton Moss, Liverpool Sands, Childwall and Knowsley Park. Wallasey on the Wirral was also accessible. Ownership of racing horses was of course an elitist and costly occupation. Nicholas Blundell, who provided financial sponsorship for numerous race events may well have briefly contemplated engaging in the sport when Richard Mollineux’s black stallion Darcy sired the colt Favorit for him. The Lords Molineux, father and son William and Richard, however, were clearly committed and enthusiastic owners as was Lord Derby. In 1697, the inventory of Robert Hesketh esquire of Rufford, evaluated at £1593.7s.10d. records ‘Three Old Mares, one old Gelding & a little Gallaway ... £11.10s.’ ‘Three Stond Horses ... £20.’ ‘The Coach & Harness and Seven Coach Horses ... £35.’ and in his private closet, in addition to books worth £20. was hung ‘The Picture of Cockin y’Horse & Ryder ... £1.’<sup>41</sup>

Borsay has identified 308 racecourses founded between 1500 and 1770 and described the “immediately intelligible feature” of the “close, almost symbiotic relationship between town and turf” in many English towns including Ormskirk.<sup>42</sup> Following the partial draining of Martin Mere by Thomas Fleetwood of Bank Hall, the dried land north of Ormskirk became

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<sup>40</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnall*, vol. i, p.212; vol. ii, p.41.

<sup>41</sup> Sir William Mollineux, 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount Sefton, d. 1718; Sir Richard Mollineux, 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount Sefton, d. 1738; LA WCW, Robert Hesketh esq, Rufford, (1697).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford, 1989), p. 195, Appendix 7, *Horse-Race Meetings 1500-1770*, pp. 355-367.

the site of the racecourse there. In 1696 an advertisement in the *London Gazette* described this inaugural meeting which announced races also for footmen and for women. “Only gentlemen were to ride” Duggan notes, “No tradesmen - however wealthy - were tolerated as competitors alongside the gentry”.<sup>43</sup> On 9th October 1705 Blundell “went to the Rase on Oughton Moss where Mr. Darcys Kricket beat the famous London Dimple & two others.” The following spring at Liverpool, the ‘little plate’ was won by “a Chestnut Horse belonging to one Robinson in Wales.”<sup>44</sup> It would also appear that a broad social mix was catered for at these events. Men women and children all attended, and horse races were often competed by Galloways, the popular pacing horses, as well as by thoroughbreds. To broaden the sporting entertainment further, on Crosby Marsh in autumn 1725, and again the following August, Blundell recorded that, “five Lads Ran for a hat, a servant of my Lord Molineuxes Keeper wan it”, and “...there were also two Formby Lads ran for a Hat; a Son of James Rice Wan.”<sup>45</sup> Blundell’s diarised notes are similarly instructive as they shine an unique light on the early years in which Ormskirk transformed from a traditional market and assize town into a gentrified centre for leisure and entertainment during the eighteenth century.

Notwithstanding the premium values of racehorses and stallions owned by the elite of local society, valuations of other equine livestock remained relatively stable in the west of Lancashire. Although separated by more than one century, an appropriately illustrative example is that William Johnson of Lathom (1607), who left ‘one horse and one Coult ... £8.’ Similarly, William Hill senior, gentleman, Lathom (1720) left ‘One Bay Horse ... £5.10s.’ and ‘One Black Mare ... £2.10s.’<sup>46</sup> While being consistent with sub-regional valuations in west Lancashire, they also compare favourably with national trends. On my

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<sup>43</sup> Mona Duggan, *Ormskirk, A History* (2007), p.66-7.

<sup>44</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. i, p. 94, p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. iii, p.167, p. 193.

<sup>46</sup> LA WCW, William Johnson, Lathom (1607); William Hill Senior, Lathom (1720).

arithmetic from Bowden's price indices in *AHEW*, between 1670 and 1740, average horse prices were £5.7.6d. [£5.38p]. Bowden also reflected on the subjective nature of horse valuations. Horses provided a service rather than a product and could provide a means of enhancing their owner's status. As a result, the range of prices was greater than was the case with other livestock, "making any attempt at regional comparisons extremely hazardous."<sup>47</sup> Inventories from the fertile agricultural plain to the east and south of Martin Mere and inland from the coast reveal the most valuable animals to have located in Mawdesley, Burscough, Lathom, and Scarisbrick and Snape. Similar values have been recorded north of the Ribble in the fertile lands to the west of the great mosses of Pilling and Cockerham. It surely cannot be a coincidence that the localised phenomenon of high values for horses and mares, overall longevity and an extended age range from the youngest foal to the oldest mare is indicative of breeding expertise in these sub-regions of Lancashire in which, as we shall see in the next chapter, were also supplied the highest quality and quantity of food and food types.<sup>48</sup>

The evidence would therefore suggest that in the rural townships of west Lancashire, contrary to cattle rearing, horse rearing was socially restrictive. Horses were clearly an item of status. However, we have also seen that horses were nevertheless also owned and maintained as a working necessity by men and women at the lower to middling level of society, and that in Wigan and Liverpool their utilitarian value to tradesmen justified the expense of their keep. Overall, the inventoried evidence suggests they were also of an enduringly high quality, versatility and sustainability during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which provides further indication of the economic robustness in agriculture across the Lancashire Plain during this period.

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<sup>47</sup> Peter J. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', Table X, *Price indices of Livestock, AHEW*, vol. v. ii, p.854, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter 3, Diet on land, pp. 166-73.

## Sheep

Over the past fifty years a progression of academic studies has analysed the vicissitudes of the Lancashire woollen industry, from the Mediaeval era to the industrial age. Norman Lowe, and John Swain have discussed the commercial utilisation of home-produced fleece wool, imported wool from Ireland and the changing economic demands in the production of woollen cloth varieties, principally the narrow kerseys, friezes and serges of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. John Walton and subsequently Geoffrey Timmins conducted further analyses of the organisation and marketing of the woollen (and linen) industries in Manchester and in the towns and townships to the north and east of this expanding manufacturing heartland.<sup>49</sup> These latter studies concern the extent to which entrepreneurial investment capitalisation, which reorganised and accelerated the output of the traditional rural industries of spinning, weaving, fulling and dyeing, was an identifiable vanguard of a ‘first’ industrial revolution. The debate centres on the argument as to what extent, or indeed whether, this specifically regional effect, unique to textile manufacturing in north-west England and in central and eastern Lancashire in particular, occurred ahead of and then duly became a part of a fully industrialised society by the late eighteenth century. Therefore, while an entire industry located in the centre of the county has been thoroughly analysed, the question as to why the formerly widespread practice of sheep-rearing and husbandry appears to have declined to a significant degree, though narrowed in focus in the western areas into a specialist trade in meat by the early decades of the eighteenth century, deserves an explanation.

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<sup>49</sup> Norman Lowe, *The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester, 1972); Swain, *Industry* pp. 108-11; John K. Walton, *Lancashire a social history 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 61-2, 65-6; Walton, Proto-industrialisation and the first industrial revolution: the case of Lancashire, in Pat Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries, A perspective on the industrial revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 41-68; Geoffrey Timmins, *Made in Lancashire A History of Regional Industrialisation* (Manchester and New York, 1998), pp. 11-78.



The table below, registers all inventoried incidences of sheep and lamb holdings irrespective of flock sizes or values.

**Table 15.**

	<b>Incidences of ownership of sheep, townships south of the Ribble, c.1600-1740</b>					
	pre-1660 inv'ries	sheep	1661-1700 inv'ries	sheep	1701-40 inv'ries	sheep
Penwortham	11	7	48	2	35	4
Hutton & Howick	15	11	36	21	37	12
Longton	32	22	45	25	45	23
Farington	16	15	16	5	17	4
M & Lt. Hoole	29	16	55	15	30	4
North Meols	31	23	77	52	52	27
Formby	37	23	96	61	49	27
Croston & Bispham	33	8	49	3	34	0
Bretherton	25	7	28	9	29	7
Ulnes Walton	22	11	16	1	10	0
Rufford	11	5	24	0	22	0
Mawdesley	33	19	34	9	16	6
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	6	40	17	31	2
Burscough	38	17	24	3	29	2
Lathom	56	34	63	12	46	1
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	39	74	32	30	5
	472	263	725	247	512	124
percentage		55.70%		34%		24.20%

It is apparent from the sheep incidences identified from the probate record and represented above, that between c.1580s and 1730s sheep rearing south of the Ribble more than halved, from 55.7, through 34, to 24.2 per cent. Flock sizes which were never large and rarely exceeded forty or fifty beasts (butchers excepted) fell from an average 17.1 beasts before 1660 to 12 by 1740. Notably flock sizes appear to have risen between 1661 and 1700 to an average 26.6 animals, but several 'large' flocks have skewed this outcome. Henry Hunt's inventoried flock in Little Hoole, as described in the following pages, is one example, but three months earlier, in December 1680, Hunt's neighbour the yeoman John Leyland died

leaving 103 ‘fatted sheep’, of which 24 were already sold and delivered, with a further 86 ‘keeping sheep in the demain.’<sup>50</sup>

There is a clear indication that over time, an identifiable decrease in sheep rearing occurred in most of the townships in our dataset south of the Ribble. However, as we shall see, the evidence also indicates that sheep rearing primarily for meat, if considerably less so for wool, endured into the eighteenth century. Muldrew observed that, after beef, mutton was considered beneficial to all diets, to those of strong constitutions, to the sick and as meat for the poor. Mutton is a fatty meat, as high in calories as beef at 1000 per pound weight but 144 calories per lb. less than pork.<sup>51</sup>

The observations which follow highlight the benefits once again of whole-set analyses by township, as those which developed and interacted even as adjoining neighbours in similar parishes experienced different trajectories and enabled different economic choices over time. Farington stands out for example, wherein before c.1660, 15 of 16 inventories recorded ownership of sheep. From 1700-40, just 4 in 17 kept sheep, with none recorded after 1720. Sheep also became absent from the inventoried record after 1700 in Croston, Ulnes Walton and Rufford, with negligible occurrences in Tarleton. In two of the townships near to Ormskirk, Burscough and Lathom, there was a decline in sheep rearing even after c.1661, and in Scarisbrick and the Hooles after 1700. However, those with the lowest incidences of ownership, which include Penwortham, Croston, Ulnes Walton, Rufford and Tarleton, rarely concentrated on sheep rearing at all. In Farington for example five of the ten testators after 1720 owned cheese presses which reflects the general decision by many farmers to concentrate their resources on rearing cattle. Conversely, in Hutton & Howick, Longton,

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<sup>50</sup> LA WCW, John Leyland, Little Hoole, (1680).

<sup>51</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 38, 85, 121, calories 118t.

North Meols, Formby and Mawdesley, incidences of sheep flocks recorded in inventories maintain proportions of 32 to 55 per cent even by the 1730s.

Our knowledge of the varieties of sheep breeds which populated the pastures of early modern Lancashire is sparse. The inventoried appraisals in our dataset vary within a considerable range of valuations that is greater pro rata than the parameters for other livestock, and as Thirsk has commented, whilst sheep rearing in mixed British agrarian practice “was a pillar of the farming system,” contemporary farmers believed that environment and feed shaped the breeds, while their characteristics changed only by movement from one place to another. Therefore, farmers attached little or no importance to selective breeding, although the positive results of the haphazard breeding which occurred every autumn “cannot have been negligible.”<sup>52</sup> Moore-Colyer arrived at a similar conclusion, describing breed development as “largely a reflection of unconscious evolution rather than conscious selection.” Thereafter Thirsk and Moore-Colyer in their respective analyses proceeded to discuss principal types of sheep known to have been found in most counties and regions after 1750 but offered no specific assessment of Lancashire or of breed types found therein.<sup>53</sup> King was similarly circumspect. In the end notes of his assessment of livestock trading through the fairs of Blackburn Hundred he concluded that prior to the mid-nineteenth century “No contemporary descriptions of local sheep are available.”<sup>54</sup> Winchester described the ubiquitous Pennine types as being sturdy, horned, black or speckle-faced animals. These were the ancestors of the Swaledale and Rough Fell breeds, the types of white-faced hill sheep where only the rams had horns, and which are identifiable as the Cheviot and the Herdwick breeds. The most common lowland sheep of northern England, “were ‘mugs’, larger white-faced hornless

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<sup>52</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. iv, 1500-1640, pp. 188-91.

<sup>53</sup> R. J. Moore-Colyer in *AHEW* vol. vi, pp. 314, 317-26, 327-329.

<sup>54</sup> W. King, ‘The Public Fairs of Blackburn Hundred, 1580-1700, *HSLC*, vol. 138 (1988), p. 25.

creatures, less hardy than the mountain sheep, and forerunners of the Wensleydale and Teeswater breeds.”<sup>55</sup>

From our inventoried data south of the Ribble from c.1600-1740, 1709 inventories refer to agricultural practices, and 634 record a valuation for sheep. However, only one document hints at contemporary breed knowledge and records a preference for specific types of animals, thus providing a helpful and apparently unique reference to recognisable sheep breeds in lowland early modern Lancashire. Henry Hunt, a relatively wealthy husbandman, died in Little Hoole in 1681 leaving an inventory valued at £152.15s. In addition to ‘nine geld sheep ... £2.9s.6d.’ [castrated ram wethers at 5s.6d. each], Hunt left ‘Ten Couple of haslindale Ews & lambs ... £2.10s.’ and ‘Eleven Couple of Kettlewell Ews and lambs ... £2.13s.4d.’<sup>56</sup> These entries provide us with both a tantalising possibility of formerly unacknowledged breed types and information about the geographical connectivity of rural Lancashire with neighbouring counties in this period. They exemplify the wider importance of trade, credit and personal connections over distance of men, livestock and fairs, the nature of which commonplace events King and Stobart proposed contributed to national development.<sup>57</sup> ‘Haslindale’ refers to Haslingden, the Lancashire market town which lies twenty-three miles due east of Little Hoole. Kettlewell is an upland township in Wharfedale in north Yorkshire, a further forty miles north-east of Haslingden. Kettlewell along with neighbouring upland environments generally abandoned arable cultivation in the second half of the fourteenth century in favour of pastoral farming which continued thereafter.<sup>58</sup>

In his comprehensive study of the economic importance of livestock fairs in the Hundred of Blackburn from 1580 to 1700, King provided evidence of cattle and sheep purchases firstly

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<sup>55</sup> Angus J. L. Winchester, *The Harvest of the Hills* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>56</sup> LA WCW, Henry Hunt, Little Hoole, (1681).

<sup>57</sup> W. King, ‘The public fairs,’ p.23; Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, p. 3, pp. 177-185.

<sup>58</sup> Winchester, *Harvest of the Hills*, pp. 3, 72, 114.

by the Shuttleworth family of Gawthorpe and subsequently by the Walmesleys of Dunkenhagh from Haslingden fair on regular occasions between 1583 and 1700.<sup>59</sup> In 1550 only three fairs, Clitheroe (1203), Burnley (1294) and Harwood (1338), had received royal charters but King suggests that “Haslingden clearly had a market by 1554”, and that the livestock fair and the market may have been founded simultaneously. By the 1630s therefore Haslingden must have served as a conduit between the stock rearing uplands and the fattening lowlands of the south, which enabled it to stand four livestock fairs a year. Although much of its trade was in cattle, it enjoyed a significant trade in sheep. According to King “As this was the only fair [in Blackburn Hundred] to deal in sheep it supports Everitt’s view that sheep fairs were less common than cattle fairs.”<sup>60</sup> Since Haslingden thus enjoyed a monopoly position as the only centre for the sheep trade on the upland/lowland divide, this was a further reason for its enduring success into the eighteenth century where other livestock fairs, Burnley, Colne and Padiham, faded from regional significance.

It is possible that Henry Hunt’s inventory is the first to record specific breeds of sheep. However, neither appellation ‘Haslingdale’ [*sic*] ewes nor ‘Kettlewell’ [*sic*] ewes conclusively define two different breeds. The widely known livestock fair at Haslingden and the reference to Kettlewell should be interpreted or tempered with the prefix ‘from’ in each case. However, King’s notes ruled out any clear breed definition of local sheep before the nineteenth century but reports that “In 1851 this Haslingden or lonk breed was said to have occupied the area for at least one hundred years,” which brings us back at least to an indeterminate period before the mid-eighteenth century. Today the Lonk sheep is one of the black-faced mountain types and that both rams and ewes have horns and long strong legs. The word ‘lonk’ is derived from a traditional Lancashire dialect for ‘lanky’, meaning long and thin. Flocks of these

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<sup>59</sup> King, ‘The public fairs’ pp. 12-14.

<sup>60</sup> King, ‘The public fairs’, pp. 7-8; Everitt, ‘The Market Town’, in *AHEW*, vol. iv, pp. 467-490, p. 501, p. 535.

animals are presently confined to the central and south Pennine hills of Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Described as dual-purpose, domestic sheep of specific United Kingdom breed, they are also known as ‘Improved Haslingden.’<sup>61</sup> Whatever their type they were hardy dale-bred animals that could be fattened up on the lowland pastures on the Lancashire plain.

Regarding their lambs, Hunt’s inventory appraisers have evaluated these sheep as couples, referring to ewes and lambs in combination. That there were ten and eleven ‘couple’ from Haslingden and Kettlewell makes a statement of their health, reliability in breeding and robustness, given the single lambs must all have been alive at the time of the appraisal. Henry Hunt died in March 1681; the first sheep fair of the year was not until the last week in April. Unlike the copious details of male and female calves which we discussed in chapter 1, specific references to quantifiable numbers of young lambs are uncommon.<sup>62</sup> However, a full complement of ewes and lambs was, in general far from assured and losses, conspicuous as absences, are occasionally represented in inventories. Barrenness of ewes and early season lamb mortality would have been high. Henry Haworth of Burscough for example left both ‘11 ewes and their lambs’ and ‘6 barren sheepe’ in 1610, and William Loxam of Hesketh Bank who died in March 1682 ‘in fower sheepe & two lambs’.<sup>63</sup>

To have purchased his twenty-one ewes, Hunt would have journeyed to Haslingden in April 1680. They subsequently walked twenty-three miles or more back to Little Hoole.<sup>64</sup> Ten of the ewes came from an undisclosed location but one presumably not far from Haslingden fair.

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<sup>61</sup> King, ‘The public fairs’, Appendix 1, B) Sheep, p. 25; [www.lonk-sheep.org](http://www.lonk-sheep.org); <https://www.roysfarm.com>lonk-sheep>, both accessed 12.11.19.

<sup>62</sup> Chapter 1, pp. 61-3.

<sup>63</sup> LA WCW, Henry Haworth, Burscough, yeoman/mercator (13 April, 1610); William Loxam, Hesketh Bank, husbandman (17 March, 1682); note also that it is only in very recent times that through selective breeding ewes generally produce twin lambs.

<sup>64</sup> All mileages cited are conservatively estimated as distances on modern roads and motorways. The sheep which were walked from Kettlewell to Little Hoole via Haslingden are likely to have journeyed much farther than 63 miles.

The eleven from Kettlewell however would have had to have been driven down the Wharfe valley passing through Skipton and Clitheroe *en route*. Hunt's outward journey would surely have involved accommodation for at least one night in Haslingden, the sheep being penned overnight in the town's sheepfold. The owner/drover/s moving their flock (of an undisclosed number) more than forty miles south and then south-west from Kettlewell undoubtedly required overnight accommodation for both journeys, in Skipton and/or Clitheroe or both, since we do not know if our seller also bought young sheep at the fair to take back to Kettlewell.<sup>65</sup> However modest may have been the expenditure of these men and their assistants this was a period when money as specie was relatively scarce, a subject which we discuss in detail in chapter 5.<sup>66</sup> Their travel expenses and presumably payment for the sheep themselves may have been on credit, but perhaps it is more likely to have been tendered and received in coin, which thus passed from one hand to another and thence from one county to another. As a costed example of the expenditure involved in buying livestock from a source further than one day's journey from home, all expenses are detailed in Nicholas Blundell's accounts for April 1704. Blundell's steward Walter Thelwall, to whom he allowed extra 'market wages at 6d. per day' for going to Haslingden, and to (two?) droving hands an extra 3d. per day each, purchased 'Small Weather [*sic*] Sheep 24 at Haslingden ... £7.' [nett 5s.10d each].<sup>67</sup> Haslingden's monopoly position at the centre of the sheep trade in central Lancashire left it the only remaining fair capable of collecting a trade toll or business premium. Thus, after paying 'the market toll of 8d.', overnight penning after purchase at 6d. and general travel expenses of 6s.2d. the overall cost of the sheep, once they had arrived in

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of seventeenth century accommodation at inns for drovers and their sheep, Everitt, 'The Development of Private Marketing', in *AHEW*, vol. iv, pp. 559-61.

<sup>66</sup> Chapter 5, pp. 258-69.

<sup>67</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. I, pp. 56.

Little Crosby became £8.6s.10d. [6s.11 ½d. each], thus adding more than one shilling each to their prime cost.<sup>68</sup>

Blundell regularly bought up small flocks in spring to fatten at Little Crosby before selling them on in November and December. There were several occasions when butchers from Liverpool journeyed to Little Crosby primarily to buy live sheep for mutton. On 6 December 1703 an unnamed butcher “came to look at some sheep”. On 16 November 1710 “Tyrer the butcher sent for those few sheep I have left.” On seven other occasions between 1702 and 1713 Edward (Ned) Rycroft, bought mixed livestock which included “ten weathers & one Cow”, “my best Red Heffer, one hogg [swine] & three Fat Oxen” and “three bullocks ... £35.” On 6 May 1713, Blundell also noted, “we washed above 60 sheep as I kept for Ned Rycroft.”<sup>69</sup> Although he maintained small flocks until his death in 1737 Blundell’s focus shifted to raising cattle for the meat market. Likewise, as the demand for beef and dairy products grew it became economically unviable for small mixed farming operators over the long term to make a regular annual profit from keeping sheep for a summer season, even less so to maintain a flock for several years. However, the evidence I have presented suggests a wider picture, that farmers from the west of Lancashire, like Henry Hunt and gentlemen such as Nicholas Blundell, chose to invest in maintaining mixed sheep flocks. Furthermore, these examples illustrate a rational interest in selecting beasts from stock beyond their purchasers’ immediate environs, who were prepared to engage in travel commitments for journeys of two or three days, to and from the eastern central lowland Pennine areas to buy them. These were examples of just such activity which was acknowledged by Moore-Colyer as a regular occurrence in other counties in England and Wales as cumulatively providing “the immensely

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<sup>68</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. I, pp. 56, 232, 307; King, ‘public fairs’, pp. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. I, pp. 47, 126, 271; Vol. II, p.61.



rich genetic pool [of sheep] utilized to such good effect by the improvers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>70</sup>

Attempting to adduce the profitability of sheep rearing among the other small-scale agrarian activities in the seventeenth century is hazardous, as is also their contribution to the economy of each owner household, or collectively to that of the west of Lancashire in general. Of the 634 inventories which record the ownership of sheep from the late sixteenth century to c.1740, only 159 documents, 25.0 per cent, provide itemised information which enables a *per capita* value to be calculated. Several barriers have been encountered which hinder an effective, and far less a definitive analysis of overall sheep values across the period. Although there are small flock assessments which compute to whole number valuations there are many which do not. Much as it is with all ‘quick goods’ sheep were valued by age as much as by condition. Although occasionally differentiated as lambs, ‘hogs’, ‘twinters’, ‘ewes’ or ‘wethers’, often they were simply and collectively numbered and labelled ‘sheep’, which included all age graduations.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, with the similarity to contemporary evaluations of calves, lambs could have been newly born or several months old at the time of their owner’s demise.<sup>72</sup> The term ‘hog’ was often applied to any lamb in its first year that had been weaned but was unshorn as yet. Following the logic of Blundell’s regime in Little Crosby, which we may assume was general farming practice, his sheep would all be washed and then sheared a few days later, wethers preceding the ewes. Since these activities took place between the second week in April and the third in May, late born lambs (‘hogs’), would not have been sheared until the following spring.<sup>73</sup> Thus lambs variously appear to be diversely valued in the probate record as for example, ‘seaven lames’ in Scarisbrick (18 October, 1595)

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<sup>70</sup> Moore-Colyer in *AHEW* vol. vi, ‘Sheep Breeds in 1750’, p. 316.

<sup>71</sup> Lambs: ‘Hog/hogget’, a yearling sheep, a sheep from weaning until its first shearing; ‘twinter’, a two-year old cow, ox, horse or sheep; ‘wether’, a castrated ram. OED online, acc: 05.08.2024.

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 1, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. i, pp. 110, 215, 255, 287-8.

appraised at 16s.4d. [2s.4d. each]; 8 lambs in Croston (16 December, 1606) at £1.6s.8d. [3s.4d. each]; 8 lambs in Mawdesley (15 November, 1675) at £1.6s.8d. [3s.4d. each]; and 6 lambs also in Mawdesley (20 October, 1724) at 15s. [2s.6d. each].<sup>74</sup> One possible explanation is that lamb valuations remained stable over a period of one century and a half, and that allowing for nuances in the appraisers' subjectivity, the valuations of lambs (as with calves), increased month by month as they matured. Recognition of stages of such maturity in combination with the animal's bulk and apparent health was therefore a valuable appraisal skill.

It would appear that there are no comparably feasible or reliably computable methods which may account for the values of adult sheep across the west of Lancashire. Valuations appear to vary more widely than any other livestock type. Therefore, neither may assessments be made of economic fluctuations in their values, nor for potential inflation, nor for quality variations. For example: 14 sheep in Lathom (1583) were appraised at £1.17s.4d. [2s.8d. each], 8 in Much Hoole (1612) at £2.16s. [7s. each], 22 in Longton (1734) at £10.4s. [9s.3 ¼d. each], 16 in Scarisbrick (1737) at £1.10s. [1s.10 ½d. each].<sup>75</sup> Other than selecting chronological examples in each case to emphasise the disparities in valuing lambs and mature sheep over time, there are numerous similar comparisons which could have been offered to illustrate such disparities across the intervening decades. There has been just one other comparable assessment of live sheep values in early modern Lancashire. When Lowe compiled his wide-ranging study of the Lancashire textile industry, he too was frustrated in his search for a workable model with which to calculate sheep numbers and average values in the late sixteenth century. Lowe does not record the extent of his inventory sample, but he was able to

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<sup>74</sup> LA WCW, Robert Shurlacker, Scarisbrick (1595); Robert Whittaker, Croston, vicar (1606); William Eccleston, Mawdesley (1675); Robert Frith, Mawdesley, yeoman (1724).

<sup>75</sup> LA WCW, Peter Speakman, Lathom, yeoman (1583); John Hunt, Much Hoole, husbandman (1612); William Moss, Longton, yeoman (1734); James Leadbetter, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1737).

identify just six inventories from east Lancashire in which both flock sizes and valuations were itemised, the approximate, individual sheep values ranging from 1s.5d to 2s.10d.<sup>76</sup> These are helpful nonetheless as compared with my own calculations they suggest, albeit from a small sample, one of two outcomes. It is probable that the average values of mature animals across Lancashire generally increased from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. However, the sheep from east and central Lancashire identified by Lowe which came from Blackburn, Bury and Colne were hardy but relatively low-cost animals which were purchased primarily for fattening up on the richer pasturelands further west and to which value was added and greater end profit attained on the Lancashire plain.

Regarding the products from the animal itself, King has provided information from the Shuttleworth and Walmsley family accounts. They reveal that between 1583 and 1699, wool from their sheep was sold at market for local use on nineteen occasions at a mean average of 10 ½ d. per lb. Therefore, by further calculating a fleece weight to be 1.85lb their mean value was 1s.9d. He also calculated the skins to a value of 1s, when killed after shearing. This combined value of 2s.9d. led King to propose that (in central and eastern Lancashire) wool and skin was a useful but low-value by-product only and “the main purpose of sheep rearing was probably for mutton.” He concluded that when all factors had been accounted for “the figures provide strong supporting evidence for the idea of the economic importance of mutton in local sheep rearing.” This assessment runs contrary to the views of Moore-Colyer whose foundation for his discussion of all English and Welsh bred sheep was that “Before 1750 the animal was regarded primarily as a source of wool, secondly as a source of manure and thirdly as a supplier of mutton.”<sup>77</sup> It appears however, more probably to be the case in the townships of western Lancashire that the prime commercial motivation for rearing sheep was

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<sup>76</sup> Norman Lowe, *The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester, 1972) Appendix A., *A note about sheep*, p. 101.

<sup>77</sup> King, ‘The public fairs’ pp. 25-6; Moore-Colyer in *AHEW* vol. vi, p. 314.

for mutton. There is inventoried evidence of several decedents who were described by their appraisers in their primary occupation as ‘butcher’. William Scaresbrick of Formby (1680) kept several sheep ‘att his owne house.’ He was also appraised for £4. ‘In sheepe he bought to kill,’ which equates roughly to perhaps twelve or more beasts if they were wethers, or around twenty-five ewes. On a similar level of operation, Thomas Heyes of Ormskirk (1708) owned ‘In Sheep vizt. 25 ... £4.’ [at c. 3s.2 ½d.], and ‘In Sheep Skinns ... £3.07s.10d.’ The latter by-product, even at 1s. each, forms a pile of around 68 skins. There is also evidence of three considerably larger commercial operations. Edward Moorcroft of Liverpool (1685) was also described as ‘butcher’ as his principal occupation. He possessed ‘One hundred & fourty sheepe ... £18.’ The appraisers for James Wigans of Bretherton (1707), recorded his occupation as ‘butcher’, although in his will, he considered himself a ‘farmer.’ Wigans left an inventory of £357.16s.2d. This included ‘Nine fat Cows ... £35.13s.4d.’, with 9 more at Eccleston at £37. In sheep, he had ‘Thirty weathers ... £16.’, ‘thirty-five sheep ... £5.’, ‘Thirty sheep at Eccleston ... £9.15s.’ and 4 more at £1. Thomas Woods of Howick (1732) bequeathed £10. for his nephew, also Thomas, ‘to bind him an Apprentice to a Butcher the remainder of his term.’ In addition to his own livestock Woods was appraised for ‘sheep’ at £74. Few other inventories from our database contain this level of valuation for sheep, which although difficult to enumerate with accuracy must surely have equated to approximately 340-50 animals.<sup>78</sup> These examples infer that the widespread consumption of fresh mutton was commonplace, although as this was not a meat for preserving it was not inventoried. These

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<sup>78</sup> This number is derived from an estimate based on the examples of valuations taken from messrs. Scarisbrick and Heyes above, and simply dividing Wood’s appraised valuation of £74 in two. Hence £37 becomes 111 wethers at 6s.8d each and the other £37 becomes 231 hogs &c at 3s.2 ½ each.

inventories also appear to confirm that in the townships of the west of Lancashire at least, the trade description ‘butcher’, referred generally, though not exclusively, to ‘mutton butcher’.<sup>79</sup>

When Holt compiled his agricultural survey of Lancashire in 1794, he proclaimed that “This is not a sheep district; therefore, they cannot be anywhere numerous in the county. – There are flocks ... it is true of half-starved creatures upon the mountains...” He also observed, “There are but few sheep kept in the southern part of the county except those purchased in distant parts, by the butchers and kept a few weeks on grass for their own convenience...” He noted that these sheep were bred in Scotland, fed by Westmorland farmers at one year old, and thereafter sold to Lancashire grazers to be further conditioned for slaughter. Sheep he declared were only otherwise reared by gentlemen “for the convenience of their families, curiosity, or occasionally to ... eat off their turnips.”<sup>80</sup> Thus if by the 1790s there were feeding districts and the majority of the lamb to mutton process commenced in Scotland then passed through Westmorland to the end-user Lancashire butchers, this sequence of events reveals an evolved picture from that which I have described. Nevertheless, the links to the specialist mutton butchers of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries who are exemplified above and who owned and grazed the sheep they intended for slaughter is a clear one. However, Holt’s observations represent a divergence of purpose from the traditional, well-developed structure of fairs and town markets which, as we saw in the discussions regarding Henry Hunt and Nicholas Blundell, who added new stock in combination with the local breeding processes of a broad class of men fifty or one hundred years earlier. Therefore, it may be concluded that across the western Lancashire plain, although much narrowed in scope, and butchers excepted, sheep rearing had become a farming practice more commonly

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<sup>79</sup> LA WCW, William Scarisbrick, butcher, Formby (1680); Edward Moorcroft, butcher, Liverpool (1685); Thomas Heyes, butcher, Ormskirk (1708); Thomas Woods, butcher, Howick (1732); James Wigans, Bretherton, butcher/farmer (1707).

<sup>80</sup> John Holt, *General View of the Agriculture of the county of Lancaster* (1795, reprint Newton Abbot, 1969) pp. 166-7.

pursued by wealthier husbandmen, yeomen, and gentlemen with broad livestock portfolios. Men such as Robert Farrar of Bretherton, gentleman (1711), who for example, left 13 cows, 2 bullocks, 2 swine and 7 sheep, continued to raise and maintain flocks with which to provide meat and wool for local processing and consumption.

## **Pigs**

If oxen and cattle were the primary ‘quick good’, horses and sheep the second most valuable, pigs and poultry may be regarded as the tertiary class of livestock of economic importance. Mature pigs were generally valued at 5s to 15s. Pigs were fed and fattened up by their owners and were invaluable disposers of household waste. Notably, what appears from the inventories to stand without question, is that the same men who kept pigs also owned cattle. They were slaughtered at home and as with beef, the meat was processed for storage by salting and/or curing. Even if not every household kept a pig, there are relatively few rural inventories which do not itemise either the vital provision of preserved beef and bacon, and/or a deep wooden ‘salting turnell’.

Although as Thirsk states “Pig-keeping was regarded as one of the peasant’s ‘standbys,’” in the west of Lancashire they were raised by families at every level of society. It is not possible from the extant probate record to establish any specific breed types, only to follow Thirsk’s assessment for the innumerable swine of England and Wales that “They might be pink, sandy or white, but very few were black.”<sup>81</sup> Blundell’s diary notes offer a tantalising glimpse of an otherwise unrecorded outcome of local breeding expertise. On 12 January 1703, “Richard Ainsworth brought four Piggs from Prescot, they were about 5 weeks old and of the Great Breed at Eckleston.” Six years later, on 1 December 1709, he visited Eccleston, “where I saw

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<sup>81</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘Grassland and Stock’, *AHEW* vol. iv, 1500-1640 pp.192, 193.

a Swine that was valewed at £4.10s.”<sup>82</sup> In his report to the Board of Agriculture in 1794 however, Holt wrote that “Pork is not an article of great consumption with any class of people in this county,” adding that home-raised swine “seldom amount to above four.”<sup>83</sup> Only the latter observation would have seemed credible fifty years earlier. Most people kept just one or two pigs. It would, however, be accurate to conclude that the keeping of swine in the coastal and rural townships declined from pre-1660 average levels of 62.5 through 46 to 44.3 per cent by 1740. This comparatively moderate decline to what remained a high incidence of ownership is discernible from the figure below, wherein incidence of ownership irrespective of numbers and values have been recorded.

**Table 16.**

**Incidences of ownership of swine, townships south of the Ribble,  
c.1600-1740**

	pre-1600		1661-1700		1701-40	
	Inv'ries	swine	Inv'ries	swine	Inv'ries	swine
Penwortham	11	4	48	16	35	8
Hutton & Howick	15	3	36	6	37	17
Longton	32	14	45	7	45	12
Farington	16	13	16	8	17	10
M. & Lt. Hoole	29	18	55	26	30	14
North Meols	31	18	77	38	52	27
Formby	37	22	96	48	49	18
Croston & Bispham	33	23	49	20	34	22
Bretherton	25	9	28	13	29	14
Ulnes Walton	22	20	16	9	10	5
Rufford	11	5	24	9	22	10
Mawdesley	33	23	34	20	16	11
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	12	40	19	31	15
Burscough	38	24	24	15	29	10
Lathom	56	40	63	36	46	18
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	47	74	44	30	16
	472	295	725	534	512	227
percentages		62.50%		46%		44.30%

<sup>82</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. i, pp. 27, 238.

<sup>83</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 174.

Calculating ownership percentages from these tabulated incidences produces a noteworthy outcome. From the evidence of our township groups south of the Ribble, Penwortham, Formby, Ulnes Walton, Burscough, Lathom and Scarisbrick reveal a gradual decline in home reared swine. Ownership also declined in the Hooles in the mid-1600s but levelled out at *c.*47.0 per cent thereafter. In Hutton, Longton, Farington, North Meols, Croston, Rufford, Mawdesley and Tarleton however incidences of ownership dipped during the latter half of the seventeenth century but then rose again during the eighteenth by ten (or at Croston) by twenty per cent. In Bretherton swine ownership even rose steadily from 36 per cent before 1660 through 46.4 to 48.3 per cent into the 1730s, and in Farington, North Meols, Croston, Ulnes Walton, Mawdesley and Scarisbrick, probated ownership remained at incidences of fifty per cent or higher at this late date. Several writers who discussed the national scene have accounted for high incidences of ownership (though without reference to Lancashire) as consequential of a general increase in dairying. Bowden had noted "... dairymen kept pigs in large numbers to consume whey from the dairy," and as Kerridge succinctly put it, "the pig was 'tied to the cow's tail.'"<sup>84</sup> This profitable relationship, which prevailed in the south of England and the Midlands can also account for the later upturn in swine ownership in western Lancashire, where incidences of dairy cattle ownership stood at 95.4 per cent in our core set, or 1630 incidences in 1709 inventories which recorded agricultural practices. As we discussed in the previous chapter, owning cattle was the highest priority of livestock ownership. In the townships of Croston and Bretherton for example, as attention focussed on increased butter and cheese production, men of diverse status continued to raise at least one pig on their property. Ralph Cross of Bretherton, yeoman (1723), left 19 cows, 2 swine, cheese and a cheese press; William Baxtonden of Croston, husbandman (1720), left 21 cows,

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<sup>84</sup> Joan Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. iv, *1500-1640*, p. 193; Peter J. Bowden, *AHEW*, vol. v. ii, *1640-1750*, p.17; J. A. Chartres, *AHEW*, vol. v. ii, p. 446; Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967), pp. 86, 125.



2 swine, cheese and a cheese press and John Blaxton of Croston, shoemaker (1724), left 5 cows, 1 swine, cheese and a cheese press.<sup>85</sup> James Wigans, the Bretherton butcher/farmer whom I exemplified earlier, not only grazed high numbers of sheep and fattened cows for slaughter. He also involved his family in commercial dairy production and maintained ‘Twelve milk cows ... £37.15s.’, ‘Two cheese pressis ... 13s.4d.’, ‘Cheeses ... £16.’ Notably, he also kept ‘Three swine ... £3.10s.’<sup>86</sup>

### **Geese and Poultry**

Geese and poultry are another traditionally owned species of livestock. As with oxen and sheep, an overall decline in numbers and incidences may be clearly observed throughout the probate record of western Lancashire from the late seventeenth century onwards. Their practical utility as providers of eggs, meat and feathers had formerly been of considerable value to householders at all levels of society. Appraisers generally grouped ‘pullen’ or ‘poultry’ as one item to encompass cockerels, hens, chicks, ducks ‘mallerts’ and ‘turkis’, or included them within a farmyard valuation with coals, turves and swine troughs. The collective inventoried value of geese and poultry in any township, or in any period in our dataset rarely exceeded £5. As often seems apparent from comparisons between western Lancashire and the wider national scene in the later early modern period, the historiography is informative though sometimes contradictory. Holt noted in 1794 only that a surplus stock of poultry was kept on the Fylde, cottagers and farmers brought their flocks to Ormskirk market whence ‘poulterers’ sold the remainder at Liverpool, and that geese congregated on Martin Mere between Michaelmas and Christmas.<sup>87</sup> Thirsk observed that poultry were, as with pigs “another source of food for the modest husbandman”, and that “Outside East

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<sup>85</sup> LA WCW, Ralph Cross, Bretherton, yeoman (1723); William Baxtonden, Croston, husbandman (1720); John Blaxton, Croston, shoemaker (1724).

<sup>86</sup> LA WCW, James Wigans, Bretherton, butcher/farmer (1707).

<sup>87</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 176.

Anglia poultry-keeping as a speciality was the eccentric choice of the individual.”<sup>88</sup> Everitt refined this assessment. “Hens or geese were kept by about one third of the population [before 1640] the proportion being rather higher in several counties including Furness, but lower in lowland Cumberland and Lancashire.” Kerridge referred only to geese kept in great numbers on Sedgemore in Somerset and in the East Anglian fens. There are few other references to geese or poultry on the agricultural scene between 1640 and 1750, although Chartres suggests that in this period owing to the national increase in cereals production “It seems reasonable therefore, to suggest growth of ... 25 per cent in poultry between 1695 and 1750.”<sup>89</sup>

In the townships south of the Ribble however by 1740, the very opposite to Chartres estimate becomes apparent. In Longton for example, the percentages of inventories listing poultry fell from 53 per cent before 1660, to 38 per cent by 1700 and down to just one decedent in 45 inventories thereafter. John Caudrey who, in 1705, was appraised ‘in poultry ... 7s.’<sup>90</sup> Similarly in Much and Little Hoole ownership incidences of 65.5 per cent before 1660 dropped to 52.7 per cent thereafter, although here, the 29 in 55 inventories produce an overall poultry valuation between 1661 and 1700 of £10.9s.1d. which equates to average flock valuations here of 7s. 2 ½d. There were just three records in thirty in the new century, however. Similar results could be gleaned from every other township in our dataset. The decline in geese-rearing is particularly noteworthy. In the Hooles before 1660, fifteen inventories show ownership of geese and ganders, at 51 per cent. There were 13 records thereafter, at 23.6 per cent, and just 2 in 30 after 1700. In Lathom 21 decedents in 56 or 37.5 per cent, dropped to 20.6 and to no geese at all with just two records for poultry after 1700.

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<sup>88</sup> Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. iv, p. 194.

<sup>89</sup> Everitt, *AHEW*, vol. iv, p.146; J. A Chartres, *AHEW*, vol. v, ii, p. 446; Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 122, 139.

<sup>90</sup> LA WCW, John Caudrey, Longton (1705).

The cause of overall decline was almost certainly the conscious transference of focus into dairy cattle pasturing on the same land. Geese require grazing but also grain feed, and as with the decline in small flocks of sheep by the late 1600s, to the small producer balancing pasturing and arable regimes on small parcels of land and to those men balancing profitability from livestock and crops on larger estates, neither form of husbandry had become viable while other means of making a living emerged.

## Bees

When compiling his agricultural report for Lancashire, Holt acknowledged that “These laborious and useful insects have not been hitherto treated with that degree of attention they merit.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed in any discussion concerning livestock it is perhaps inevitable that bees are referred to in passing notes. Thirsk tells us that before the 1640s, beehives constructed from locally sourced materials of hazel wood, long rye straw and wheat straw were found throughout England. Kerridge noted the high level of beekeeping in poor soil areas such as the New Forest. Everitt’s broad analysis of cottage husbandry however led him to conclude conversely that “Only a few cottagers kept ducks and turkeys and scarcely any owned bees.”<sup>92</sup> The most recent historical analysis of beekeeping was published by P. Walker in 2000. Primarily intended to provide a register for all extant English wall-hive sites the text provides a unique discussion on the evolution of hive design, ‘swarm beekeeping’ as was demonstrably practiced in north-west England and elsewhere, and a treatise on the adaptation of vernacular garden architecture to accommodate bees. Walker calculated that “In 167 probate inventories from seventeen English counties (c.1550-1730) the average number of beehives increased with social standing, from 2.0 for a labourer to 3.6 for a husbandman or

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<sup>91</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 176.

<sup>92</sup> Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. iv, p. 194; Everitt, ‘Farm labourers’, in *AHEW*, vol. iv, p.417; Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. v. ii, p.344; Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 83, 113.

yeoman, and to 4.4 hives for a gentleman.”<sup>93</sup> From our core set of inventories such demarcation is not so clearly apparent. Hive numbers were not as regularly appraised numerically as part of a decedent’s estate as were the incidences of swarms, which were variously evaluated between 5s. and 10s. However, Robert Moss, husbandman of Much Hoole (1638) kept ‘four Hyves ... £1.10s.’; Robert Hunter, yeoman of Scarisbrick (1680) ‘three hyfes of bees ... 10s.’ and James Richardson, yeoman also of Scarisbrick (1721) left ‘3 Hives of Bees at ... 6s.’ The available evidence has shown that most men who kept bees in the west of Lancashire were yeomen or husbandmen (or of no discernible status), together totalling 70.8 per cent, while a notable 12.7 per cent were tradesmen of whom nine were weavers.

**Table 17.** Incidences of beekeeping south of the Ribble c.1600-1740

	pre-1660	1661-1700	1701-40	totals	Trades breakdown:	
Esquire	1	0	0	1	weaver	9
gentleman	3	3	1	7	carpenter/joiner	6
yeoman	19	38	8	65	tailor	3
husbandman	23	37	6	66	shoemaker	3
not recorded	15	20	4	39	tanner	1
trades	6	16	4	26	smith	1
	67	114	23	204	grocer	1
inventories:	472	725	512		cook	1
percentages	14.2	15.7	4.5		labourer	1
						26
					percentage trades	12.7

These households seemed to have maintained one to four hives producing honey and wax and in spring and autumn marshalled their swarms of bees as one of the many skills of traditional husbandry. The most prolific beekeeper appears to have been Humphrey Mather of Abram near Wigan. In September 1693 he left an inventory of £140.18s.10d, which included

<sup>93</sup> P. Walker, ‘The History of Beekeeping in English Gardens’, *Garden History*, vol. 28, 2 (2000) pp. 231-61.

‘Twelve hives and bees ... £2.10s’.<sup>94</sup> Such a level of activity at this date suggests that notwithstanding “the introduction and superabundance of sugar” a century earlier which had contributed significantly to a drop in demand for honey, and thus the traditional requirement for families to keep bees, beekeeping continued to remain a reduced but important function in the economy of towns and townships into the eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

The documents analysed in these opening chapters suggest that livestock husbandry and type selection underwent a significant transformation in west Lancashire. Traditional diversification strategies, which were commonly identifiable in late Tudor inventories, contracted during an era of agrarian rationalisation which began around 1660 and continued through the eighteenth century. Reduced incidences of oxen, sheep and geese are particularly notable from their absence in later inventories. None of these creatures disappeared entirely. Instead, these species generally became marginalised to the landed capabilities of wealthier men, while conversely, the economic opportunities occasioned by dairying continued to be exploited by all ranks of rural society. Ownership of horses also contracted somewhat in the countryside to broadly more utilitarian reasons for their keep, perhaps for farm work and carting rather than for family transport. Rationalisation of livestock in general was coterminous with transformations to customary arable practices and the worked landscape of the Lancashire plain passed through an irreversible metamorphosis. This rationalisation process, coupled with the adoption of new crop types are the subjects for analysis in the following chapter.

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<sup>94</sup> LA WCW, Robert Moss, Much Hoole, husbandman (1638); Robert Hunter, Bersker-in-Scarisbrick, yeoman (1680); James Richardson, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1721); Humphrey Mather, Abram (1693).

<sup>95</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 177.

**Chapter 3** Changes in agricultural practices: crop diversities and diet, evidence from inventories from selected adjoining townships in west Lancashire, c.1580-1740.

“Oats were the chief bread corn in Lancashire, and Lancashire people enjoyed as good health and strength of body as those that lived on wheat only.” William Coles, *Adam in Eden* (1656).<sup>1</sup>

The third part of our agricultural trilogy focuses on domestic arable production and the range of food-types available to families in western Lancashire in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. We have seen in chapters 1 and 2, that inventoried evaluations of livestock were always greater than those of crops. Field crops, grains and pulses were nevertheless a vital annually renewable resource to feed humans and animals alike, and in the chief crops of oats and barley, provided flour for bread and oatcakes and malt for brewing ale. This chapter commences by elucidating on the traditional range of crops which flourished throughout the west of Lancashire, discerned in its broadest diversity across the Lancashire plain south of the Ribble. Testamentary evidence is employed to assess the extent to which the scope of such diversity altered during the seventeenth to the early-eighteenth centuries, not least with the introduction of the potato in the mid-1600s. The adoption of this novel resource precipitated a noticeable decline in the customary cultivation of the domestic industrial crops, flax and hemp and appears to have gradually replaced marginal field grains such as rye, ‘French’ (buck) wheat and sowings of blended corn.

The latter portions of this chapter discuss the transformations in land use occasioned by the rationalisation of crop types and increases in pasture for dairying. The economic importance of cattle herds in Lancashire has been discussed in chapter 1 and their commercial potential regarding the development of intensified cheese and butter production is analysed further in chapter 4.<sup>2</sup> Raising male and female bovines for domestic utility and consumption had

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Food in early Modern England Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1700* (London & New York) p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 4, pp. 194-200.

traditionally provided all ranks with fresh and salted beef and milk products. These domestic practices continued but butter and cheese-making also became commercial by-occupations in rural townships by the c.1680s. Fish was also an important dietary supplement on land and on long sea voyages. Fishing equipment and fishing vessels are recorded in numerous inventories from the west Lancashire townships situated coastwise of the dunes south of the Ribble and along the creeks on the Wyre and Cocker estuaries. During the later seventeenth century, a growing number of men and boys from western Lancashire took marine employment. Muldrew has explained that the daily diet of beer, meat and cheese for a working sailor or fisherman was of no lesser importance than that consumed by a husbandman/labourer on land.<sup>3</sup> Dietary analysis is therefore presented from inventoried food types on land and also from the contemporary provisioning ledgers of the Liverpool vessels *Dilligence* and *Pearl* while in port and at sea, between 1684 and 1694.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end this chapter the benefits and availability of orchard fruits, onions and garden produce are also discussed. Therefore, conclusions may be drawn from documentary evidence which indicate that the diet of working families in western Lancashire between c.1600 to c.1740 was varied and food-types were plentiful.

To analyse the information recorded in our inventories, open field and yard-grown crops of all kinds, including grass and hay have been noted in the tables ‘Crop diversity 1’ below. These tables express a simple numerical count of incidences of all varieties of crops which were evaluated in our dataset, illustrating the arable scene north and south of the Ribble in 2337 inventories in which crops were listed. The principal cereal grains have been identified as oats, barley and wheat, while ‘French’ (buck) wheat and rye, which were cultivated to a lesser extent and blended sowings, have been grouped as ‘other grains.’ Legumes include

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 70, 123-5, Table 3.3 *Working diets*.

<sup>4</sup> LA DDBB8/3 Cash book of William Trenow of Liverpool, Blundell Collection.

beans, peas, fitches and vetches. Grass, hay and (insignificant) holdings of straw have been tabulated, as also flax and hemp. There is no probate evidence for potatoes being grown as a field crop in Lancashire (or elsewhere in England), before 1662. Their introduction and adoption are fully analysed and reviewed in this chapter. To make up a single incidence count in each tabulated entry in these tables, cereals and legumes may have been evaluated as seed, or at any growing stage, or in storage as threshed grain or stacked in sheaf or thrave. For clarity however, and to avoid any over-estimation or artificial inflation of results, inventoried entries for ‘meal’, flour, malted oats or barley and groats, where none of the above appear, have not been included.



**Table 18.****Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships south of the Ribble, pre-1660**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Penwortham	11	11	3	9	10	1	0	5	2	0	6	1	5
Hutton & Howick	15	13	12	13	13	2	0	3	0	0	8	1	2
Longton	32	30	12	26	28	3	1	17	2	0	19	4	13
Farington	16	16	4	15	14	8	1	5	1	0	10	1	4
Much & Little Hoole	29	28	11	27	27	10	1	16	2	0	15	5	10
North Meols	31	28	22	26	26	0	1	0	1	0	21	7	10
Formby	37	35	25	31	33	0	4	2	2	0	21	23	10
Croston & Bispham	33	32	15	27	28	4	0	16	1	0	23	3	9
Bretherton	25	25	8	20	23	13	1	17	1	0	17	9	12
Ulnes Walton	22	21	12	19	21	71	1	6	2	0	20	3	12
Rufford	11	11	6	11	11	7	3	6	0	0	8	7	6
Mawdesley	33	31	10	27	27	10	2	14	4	0	23	4	11
Tarleton & Hesketh	22	20	7	18	18	4	3	15	3	0	15	4	11
Burscough	38	36	3	30	35	19	20	18	9	0	32	23	25
Lathom	56	53	8	48	50	21	7	22	16	0	36	31	25
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	59	10	55	57	39	12	24	21	0	45	38	38
Sum totals:	472	449	168	402	421	212	57	186	67	0	316	164	203
Percentages				89.53	93.76	47.22	12.7	41.43	14.92	0	70.38	36.53	45.21

**Table 19.****Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships south of the Ribble, 1661-1700**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Penwortham	48	44	28	40	38	16	0	7	0	2	36	4	13
Hutton & Howick	36	30	20	26	28	3	0	4	2	0	23	0	7
Longton	45	40	26	39	37	12	0	10	0	0	24	0	6
Farington	16	16	8	13	13	5	0	6	0	0	13	1	3
Much & Little Hoole	55	53	25	47	48	21	0	18	3	1	33	1	13
North Meols	77	73	60	71	73	0	4	10	1	23	54	15	13
Formby & Ainsdale	96	94	79	86	90	5	8	6	2	31	62	46	18
Croston & Bispham	49	42	22	36	38	2	3	8	2	1	31	6	9
Bretherton	28	26	15	23	25	9	3	4	0	1	16	4	5
Ulnes Walton	16	16	11	13	13	6	0	2	0	0	14	0	2
Rufford	24	24	6	18	22	7	13	8	6	14	18	11	14
Mawdesley	34	34	14	34	33	13	4	13	2	9	25	3	7
Tarleton & Hesketh	40	38	20	34	37	12	3	13	1	9	21	9	12
Burscough	24	24	16	24	24	15	6	5	2	8	17	6	9
Lathom	63	62	34	54	51	22	22	8	3	13	37	14	16
Scarisbrick & Snape	74	73	32	68	67	43	12	13	13	8	51	21	21
Sum totals:	725	689	416	626	637	191	78	135	37	120	475	141	126
Percentages				90.85	92.45	27.72	11.32	19.59	5.37	17.42	68.94	20.46	18.29

**Table 20. Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships south of the Ribble, 1701-1720**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Penwortham	18	15	11	12	12	4	0	1	0	1	12	0	6
Hutton & Howick	15	13	12	12	12	3	0	0	0	0	12	0	3
Longton	23	20	16	18	17	4	0	1	0	1	12	0	5
Farington	7	5	2	4	4	2	0	1	0	0	4	0	0
Much & Little Hoole	10	9	6	9	8	3	1	0	0	1	4	0	4
North Meols	26	21	18	19	20	1	0	0	0	8	15	1	8
Formby & Ainsdale	20	20	18	19	20	1	1	2	0	11	15	6	6
Croston & Bispham	12	11	9	10	10	2	0	2	0	1	9	0	0
Bretherton	13	12	6	10	11	1	0	3	0	1	11	0	0
Ulnes Walton	4	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Rufford	10	8	4	7	8	3	1	3	0	5	7	2	4
Mawdesley	9	9	6	9	9	1	0	2	0	3	9	0	1
Tarleton & Hesketh	11	11	8	11	11	3	0	0	0	4	8	1	5
Burscough	13	12	7	11	10	3	2	1	0	8	10	2	2
Lathom	24	23	17	22	22	3	3	4	1	11	14	3	4
Scarisbrick & Snape	12	12	0	7	8	10	3	5	4	4	10	2	5
Sum totals:	227	202	143	183	185	47	11	25	5	59	154	18	54
Percentages				90.59	91.58	23.27	5.45	12.38	2.47	29.2	76.24	8.91	26.73

**Table 21. Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships south of the Ribble, 1721-1740**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Penwortham	17	12	7	8	7	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
Hutton & Howick	22	18	15	15	15	2	0	0	0	0	15	0	4
Longton	22	19	8	11	9	8	0	3	0	3	12	0	3
Farington	10	10	7	7	7	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	1
Much & Little Hoole	20	18	15	18	17	2	0	0	0	6	15	0	5
North Meols	26	24	20	22	23	3	0	2	0	10	19	3	6
Formby & Ainsdale	29	28	25	26	27	1	0	0	0	14	21	5	5
Croston & Bispham	22	20	13	14	15	0	0	0	0	4	19	0	1
Bretherton	16	13	9	11	11	2	0	1	0	6	13	1	2
Ulnes Walton	6	4	2	3	3	0	0	2	1	1	4	0	0
Rufford	12	12	4	9	9	3	0	3	0	8	11	2	6
Mawdesley	7	7	4	5	5	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	1
Tarleton & Hesketh	20	17	11	14	17	8	0	0	0	7	13	0	4
Burscough	16	14	5	9	10	5	0	1	1	7	11	1	3
Lathom	22	19	9	13	13	3	0	3	1	8	16	1	2
Scarisbrick & Snape	18	13	4	10	11	10	8	3	2	9	11	1	2
Sum totals:	285	248	158	195	199	47	8	19	5	84	205	14	45
Percentages				78.63	80.24	18.95	3.22	7.66	2.02	33.87	82.66	5.65	18.15

**Table 22. Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships north of the Ribble, 1661-1700**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Lytham	67	58	32	56	56	1	2	1	4	0	47	15	12
Bispham & Layton	79	75	41	70	71	7	1	17	20	1	52	9	5
Poulton & Thornton	112	110	40	96	96	28	3	35	28	0	74	25	17
Hambleton & Stalmine	96	94	15	84	85	31	10	32	16	4	67	17	24
Preesall & Pilling	154	151	39	140	128	17	8	23	5	10	101	32	26
Cockerham & Glasson	128	125	28	116	105	44	9	39	20	7	90	46	18
Sum totals:	636	613	195	562	541	128	33	147	93	22	431	144	102
Percentages				91.68	88.25	20.88	5.38	24.01	15.19	3.59	70.31	23.49	16.66

**Table 23. Incidences of crop types from male inventories, townships north of the Ribble, 1701-1720**

Townships	Inventories	Crops	Corn	Corn + Oats	Corn + Barley	Wheat	Other grains	Beans	Peas & vetches	Potatoes	Grass & hay	Hemp	Flax
Lytham	25	25	20	23	23	0	0	0	0	1	21	2	0
Bispham & Layton	18	16	9	13	13	0	0	4	1	0	9	0	0
Poulton & Thornton	22	19	3	16	16	9	0	8	6	1	15	1	2
Hambleton & Stalmine	18	17	4	15	14	8	2	4	0	0	9	2	1
Preesall & Pilling	46	39	24	37	36	2	1	3	0	8	28	1	2
Cockerham & Glasson	21	20	8	19	14	10	0	0	0	1	15	1	1
Sum totals:	150	136	68	123	116	29	3	19	7	11	97	7	6
Percentages				90.44	85.29	21.32	2.2	13.97	5.14	8.08	71.32	5.14	4.41

These tables reveal evidence of a dynamic and evolving agrarian landscape. To highlight the increased rationalisation in crop diversity south of the Ribble, I have divided the later periods into two tables, 1701-20, with 202 inventories, and 1721-40, with 248 inventories. Several immediate and obvious conclusions become apparent. For example, although the county is noted in popular historiographies for principally producing oats, both oats and barley were almost equal in importance, far outstripping all other crop types in value and occurrences. However, the figures also suggest that cultivation even of these traditional staples was reduced by *c.* 1740. Further observations may be interpreted from these tables and from the principal crop summaries of the west of Lancashire presented in figure ‘Crop diversity 2’, below, a distillation of the results from ‘Crop diversity 1’, wherein incidences of principal crops have been expressed as percentages.

**Table 24. Crop diversity 2**

**Summary of incidence percentages of principal crops from inventories.**

Townships south of Ribble:

	oats	barley	wheat	beans	peas	potatoes	hay	hemp	flax
Pre-1660	89.5	93.7	47.2	41.4	14.9	0	70.4	36.5	45.2
1661-1700	90.9	92.5	27.7	19.6	5.4	17.4	68.9	20.5	18.3
1701-20	90.6	91.6	23.3	12.4	2.5	29.2	76.2	8.9	26.7
1721-40	78.6	80.2	19	7.7	2	33.9	82.7	5.7	18.2

Townships north of Ribble:

	oats	barley	wheat	beans	peas	potatoes	hay	hemp	flax
1661-1700	91.7	88.3	20.9	24	15.2	3.6	70.3	23.5	16.7
1701-20	90.4	85.3	21.3	14	5.1	8.1	71.3	5.1	4.4

From these tables we may observe that oats and barley, recorded either separately or as ‘corn’ were pre-eminent crops. In farmland south of the Ribble, from before 1600 until *c.* 1720 they were recorded in around 90 per cent of all inventories where agriculture was practised. In

incidences of cultivation, barley, albeit by a narrow margin, eclipsed that of oats. Conversely from documents north of the Ribble, in the coastal townships from Lytham to Cockerham, oats narrowly eclipsed barley as the chief crop. The pre-eminence of barley in the south reflected the greater requirement for commercial brewing in areas of denser rural population and in the growing urban centres of Liverpool, Ormskirk and Wigan.<sup>5</sup> A feature apparent in Table, 'Crop diversity 2' above, is that the inventoried incidences of the cultivation of wheat, beans, peas and hemp, exhibit a progressive decline from pre-1660 documents through to c.1740. However, there is a corresponding rise in incidences of potato growing and in the production of hay and grass. There is little deviation from this pattern other than a rise in the incidences of flax cultivation south of the Ribble between 1701 and 1720, and that north of the Ribble the figures available between 1661 and 1720 exhibit a marginal increase in both wheat and hay of one per cent or less. The incidences of potato cultivation between 1701 and 1720 in the northern townships increased to just 8.3 per cent as opposed to 29.2 per cent in the south. It appears that these several factors are indicators of a prevailingly traditional agrarian regime above the Ribble as distinct from the southern plain, which reflects an agricultural scene that was evolving and adapting to changing economic circumstances more rapidly and of an increased differentiation.

### **Cereal crops**

The simple inventoried description 'corn' has posed a conundrum to quantitative evaluation. What exactly is meant by 'corn'? Mary Brigg composed two papers which discussed the economy of the Forest of Pendle. She was perhaps the first historian to analyse Lancashire probate inventories in a systematic and modern style.<sup>6</sup> She arrived at the conclusion that, "The comprehensive word *corn* was frequently used. In some inventories oats and barley are

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 4, The brewing industry, pp. 203-212.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Brigg, 'The Forest of Pendle in the Seventeenth Century,' *THSLC*, vol. 113 (1961), pp. 80.

valued together whilst in others corn and barley are linked together as if *corn* were being used synonymously for *oats*.” Seventeen years later, Christine Ironfield, analysing Chipping parish, reached a similar conclusion that, “When the comprehensive term ‘corn’ is used it seems simply to imply ‘oats’”.<sup>7</sup> In the Fylde and Wyre coastal townships and also those further inland in the south and west of Lancashire however, there may be no doubt that the term ‘corn’ referred not only to oats but also to barley. ‘Corn’ was almost always itemised separately to wheat, which was considered by inventory appraisers to be ‘grain’ and invariably occupied a line to itself near the foot of inventories.

Of exceptional note, throughout the seventeenth century, to appraisers south of the Ribble, ‘corn’, would often include bean and pea crops. Chronologically, but not exhaustively, the following descriptions exemplify this custom: ‘in Corne as beans barley & oats with some malt’ (Croston, 1625); ‘In Corn growing on the ground viz: Beanes Barlie and Oatts’ (Croston, 1641); ‘in Corne one acre and a half of beans & barley & halfe an acre of oates’ (Longton, 1661); ‘Corne growing upon the ground (videt) pease and barley’ (Rufford, 1668); ‘in Corne oats barley and pease’ (Preesall, 1670); ‘in Corne as oates Beanes & barley’ (Wrightington, 1680).<sup>8</sup> Such phrasing reflects a tradition of crop diversity which also included the cultivation of rye, and ‘French’ (buck) wheat, and perhaps more importantly suggests freedom of choice on behalf of individual growers. South of the Ribble at least until the end of the seventeenth century, farmers also continued the practice of sowing ‘blendcorn.’ This could be any preferred blending of wheat, rye, ‘corn’ and legume seeds or ‘codware,’ which was sown, grown, harvested and threshed together. Richard Mollineux of Lydiate, yeoman (1671) grew oats, barley and wheat separately and ‘french wheate and barley

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<sup>7</sup> Christine Ironfield, ‘The Parish of Chipping During the Seventeenth Century, *THSLC*, vol. 127 (1978), p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> LA WCW, Robert Rydinge, Croston (1625; Henry Nelson, Bridge End, Croston, (1641); William Hunt, Longton, (1661); William Allerton, Rufford (1668); LA WRW/A, Simon Croft, Preesall, sailor (1670); LA WCW, John Stopforth, Wrightington (1680).



mingled ... £3'; and 'Oats and fitches mingled ... £6.' Robert Hesketh of North Meols, gentleman (1676) had also sown 'in Beane and blending ... £7.'<sup>9</sup> These latter valuations suggest the intended coverage of several acres and though nowhere stated, most of the threshed-together blends were presumably intended for winter horse feed.

For quantifiable accuracy in the preparation of the tables above, a simple rule has been applied throughout. When 'corn' was followed by named, specific crops, each plant type identified was recorded appropriately and the term 'corn' ignored. Conversely when the entry reads (for example), 'all the corn', or 'corn and hay', the term 'corn' has been presumed to refer only to oats and barley. Thus, 'corn' has its own column, the sum of which has been added equally to oats and to barley for an overall total. For example, in Penwortham inventories 1661-1700, 48 exhibited agrarian activities. 44 of these specifically evaluated crops. 28 recorded "corn", but when individual oats and barley entries were included, the incidence totals for each, state 40 for oats and 38 for barley. From the resulting township totals, percentage occurrences (in this case 90.9 per cent of 689 inventories recorded oats and 92.5 per cent barley), may be extracted for comparisons with other townships and time periods. As with my calculations for livestock in the previous chapters, these are inevitably imperfect templates. The recording of 'corn,' may inevitably undercount the cultivation of beans and peas to an unquantifiable degree.

To appreciate more fully the crop selection made by farmers working a patch-work landscape of intermingled parcels in the seventeenth century, we must first understand the generally accepted template of land production and management. The husbandry cycle of raising crops was interwoven, and competed with, the pasturing of livestock. Eric Kerridge whose seminal work on the agricultural revolution identified forty 'farming countries' in England, described

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<sup>9</sup> LA WCW, Richard Mollineux, Lydiate, (1671); Robert Hesketh, North Meols, (1676).

the 'Lancashire Plain' and the 'Cheshire Cheese Country' which adjoined it to the south as productive 'arable or pasture' and 'up and down land' with access to common-field courses called 'town-fields' of permanent tillage and grass. This mixed form of agricultural land use often followed a complex regime which Kerridge suggested was invariably regulated and ordered by a crop of oats following the ploughing over of grassland. Thereafter barley, wheat, peas, beans, rye, flax, hemp, buckwheat and vetches were grown for up to four years whereupon the land reverted to grass again for perhaps six. Such a process would of course depend upon the acreage of land owned or leased, enclosure of commons, soil type and condition, recent intake of former woodland and mossland drainage. Arable production normally followed the convertible field-grass husbandry system whereby "everything hinged on the arable fields, known as 'pastures', being laid to grass for a few years and then ploughed up and tilled for a time."<sup>10</sup> Dottie who suggested a gradual diminution occurred in arable production in Childwall parish reported a similar scene of apportionment of the 463 acres of manorial demesne lands from a survey from 1653.<sup>11</sup>

The traditional regime of allowing cattle and sheep onto fields on a specific date after harvest was observed on common land and in the town fields across northern England. Winchester, writing on these customary practices from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, discoursed on the "critical importance" in the uplands of controlling livestock from seedtime to harvest, and of the management of meadowland. On the lowland plain in the 1720s Nicholas Blundell recorded in his diary, several references to the annual 'turning abroad' of the town field in Little Crosby, an event which usually occurred in early October.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967), pp. 129-31, 144-5, 181.

<sup>11</sup> R. G. Dottie, 'Childwall: A Lancashire Township in the Seventeenth Century', *THSLC*, vol. 135 (1985), pp. 18-24.

<sup>12</sup> Angus Winchester, *The Harvest of the Hills* (Edinburgh, 2000) pp. 66-73; Frank Tyrer (transcr.) & J. J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, vol. iii (1720-1728), pp. 58, 195.

Formby Court Book on 2 May 1727 ordered ‘that no person turne loose their swine before St. Luke’s day [18 October] nor Cows by Night before 1<sup>st</sup> November.’<sup>13</sup> These examples demonstrate a necessary balance between public order, good neighbourliness and the important role that arable and livestock production played in the daily lives of citizens at all levels of society, from the eastern uplands to the lowland western townships of Lancashire well into the eighteenth century.

The cultivation of oats and barley was prevalent throughout the county. When compiling his survey of Lancashire in 1794, Holt noted “The grain principally cultivated is oats, which, when ground to meal ... is made into oat-cakes.” Although Holt claimed the consumption of oatmeal had declined, nevertheless “the growth of oats is in greater proportion than that of any other grain.”<sup>14</sup> Hey’s research for *AHEW* corrected that assessment such that, at least as was evident until the 1750s, both oats and barley were the chief crops. Hey also observed that “wheat was grown more extensively than has often been supposed.”, although his sample reflected occurrences in the 1640s.<sup>15</sup> Wheat was also grown either side of the Ribble, although more prevalently before the 1660s than thereafter. In the silty lowland plains of Furness and on the Pennine slopes a “hardy variety of barley” known as ‘bigge’ was grown.<sup>16</sup> This coarse, hardy strain tolerated wet summers and could endure late season harvesting. ‘Corn’ was therefore grown by almost everyone involved in agriculture, from the eastern valleys of the Pennines to the coastal mosslands on the western margins. Throughout the early modern period virtually every household possessed girdles and bakestones in the firehouse or kitchen hearth and arks and coffers of processed ‘meal’ with which to make batches of oatcakes. Among many inventoried examples, James Stopford of Ulnes Walton

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<sup>13</sup> LA DD1N 49/3, Court Book Formby 1725-33.

<sup>14</sup> Holt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster*, (London, 1795: reprinted 1969), pp. 56-7.

<sup>15</sup> David Hey, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire’, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> OED online; acc. 12.07.2024; *AHEW*, vol v.1, pp. 17-18, 62 and note 12.

(1610) possessed ‘one Girdle to bake on ... 3s.4d’; Joseph Hulgreave of Halewood (1686), ‘Two Backstones at 3s’; and Edward Scarisbrick of Scarisbrick, carpenter (1726) ‘An old Gridell for baking of Cakes...’<sup>17</sup>

### **Legumes and marginal crops**

The reduced occurrences in the cultivation of legumes as a field crop across western Lancashire after c.1700 is noteworthy for being contrary to the national trend. Thirsk discussed the “increased eating of peas and beans by all classes” between c.1700 and the 1750s, whereafter potatoes usurped them in the fields.<sup>18</sup> She referred to their high nutritional value, as has La Poutre who recently analysed the importance of legumes to rural labourers in the southern counties c.1300. He evaluated the mediaeval peasants’ diet at a time when, in an early reflection our own region and period, sustained population growth occasioned changes in land use which included the gradual conversion of arable land into pasture. He concluded that a combination of cereals and legumes “can be calculated to provide sufficient protein to sustain human life when it contains 18 per cent dry legumes.”<sup>19</sup> Muldrew also observed that in the late eighteenth century beans were predominantly grown in the south-east of England where, to sustain human life and livestock at the least expense, “They are used to make pease pudding for labourers and the poor inmates of workhouses, but most were used to feed animals.”<sup>20</sup>

South of the Ribble prior to 1660 beans and peas were significant crops in the farming regime, the table above reveals an incidence count of 41.4 and 14.9 per cent of inventories respectively. These occurrences progressively declined until the 1730s whence they featured

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<sup>17</sup> LA WCW, James Stopford, Ulmes Walton (1610); Joseph Hulgreave, Halewod (1686), Edward Scaresbrick, Scarisbrick, (1726).

<sup>18</sup> Thirsk, *Foods, Fads, Fashions*, p.171.

<sup>19</sup> Hugo J. P. La Poutre, ‘The contribution of legumes to the diet of English peasants and farm servants, c.1300’, *AgHR*, Vol. 63 (2015), pp. 19-38.

<sup>20</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, p.61.

in only 7.7 and 2.0 per cent of inventories. North of the Ribble between 1661 and 1720 the decline in bean crops was less pronounced, falling from 24.0 to 14.0 per cent, but from 15.2 to 5.1 per cent for peas. Thirsk was sure that potato cultivation overtook legumes in open field allocation and dietary acceptance. She is perhaps the only writer to suggest that connection.<sup>21</sup> In the west of Lancashire several traditional crop-types, particularly the marginal cereals, rye, 'French' wheat, also vetches, almost disappeared entirely by the c.1730s, as did the practice of sowing a blend of corn and beans. However, potatoes were adopted as a standard crop in west Lancashire half a century ahead of all other English regions. Therefore, it follows logically that their cultivation replaced that of legumes and these marginals at an earlier date. It further appears from inventoried evidence either side of the Ribble, that the cultivation of beans and peas reverted to the yard or garden from the open field, in which locations they were rarely evaluated but where they continued to form an important part of the domestic diet of rural families. Robert Braithwite of Cockerham (1685) left 'one croft of beans with the garding stuff ... 7s.' Cecily Forshaw, Rufford, widow (1700), left 'Potetas & Bean in ye yard ... 6s.' Thomas Culshaw, Ulmes Walton, yeoman (1724), 'Garden Beans and Peas ... 10s.' These examples, whose valuations were not insignificant, represent a few of several other similar inventoried entries which enable us to trace the gradual shift in growers' choices concerning which crops should be grown in which locations.

### **Flax and hemp, 'industrial' crops**

Flax and hemp serve different end-uses, yet they share similarities of cultivation, harvesting and processing. Neither crop occupied the acreages of land afforded to oats, barley or wheat. Their method for harvesting was to be pulled from the ground rather than being reaped. The

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<sup>21</sup> Thirsk, *Foods, Fads, Fashions*, p. 191.

cultivation of both plant types thus suited the irregular closes, odd parcels of land or enclosed yards adjacent to orchards or gardens. However, although their sowing to harvest cycle and post-cultivation production treatments were similar, which in both cases were a complex and time-consuming procedure, they answered quite different end requirements as ‘industrial’ crops. Flax was grown that its fibres could be spun into yarn for linen weaving. Hemp yarn was spun for rougher cloth, sacking, winnowing cloths and cart-ropes, and for rigging, lines, nets and canvas for sailing vessels. Until the mid-eighteenth century, whereafter the raw materials were largely imported, and the cotton revolution rose to its pre-eminence, both flax and hemp cultivation for domestic use or as a cash-crop had been of considerable economic significance. They therefore deserve to be analysed accordingly.

Both plant-types flourished throughout Lancashire. However, neither flax nor hemp was universally grown throughout the counties of England during the early modern period.

Analysis of farming regions in *AHEW* suggest that to the east of the Pennines, from Northumberland southwards and through the east Midlands until the Lincolnshire fens were reached, neither crop was grown extensively. Similarly, “References to the growing of hemp and flax in the Home Counties are very infrequent ...” and in the south-eastern counties flax was grown on the Wealden clays, and around Chichester, “Some hemp was grown in small plots before the 1670s but no flax.”<sup>22</sup> From the evidence presented in *AHEW*, flax and hemp were grown in a wider and denser geographical spread on the western side of England. Most noticeable from probate inventory sources, cultivation before c.1750 was regularly identified in Lancashire, the north-west midland counties of Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire, in the west Midlands and Warwickshire and in the south-western counties of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Dorset.<sup>23</sup> Flax and hemp were grown also in the southern

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<sup>22</sup> R. C. Richardson; Brian Short, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 256, 287.

<sup>23</sup> David Hey; Joan Thirsk; Giles V. Harrison, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 147, 155; 167, 170; 374.

counties of Wales in central Monmouthshire and mid-Glamorgan where “the range of ancillary crops such as flax, apples, pears, hops and hemp were wider than elsewhere in Wales.”<sup>24</sup>

Allowing for geographical simplification, flax was principally and perhaps inevitably grown in parts of the west of England wherever linen cloth was manufactured. From Lancashire through to Staffordshire flax was widely grown during the seventeenth century, and in Warwickshire and Worcestershire Thirsk remarked on an increase in its cultivation supplying the weaving trade in Kidderminster and Arden in the eighteenth.<sup>25</sup> Hemp on the other hand was more often found in inventories around areas of maritime activity. It was therefore grown in west Lancashire, Somerset and throughout the south-western counties. Less commonly cultivated in the east of England, hemp was grown in east Kent and East Anglia where in concentrations along the Waveney valley in Suffolk the production of canvas for sailcloth from locally grown hemp endured as an important industrial crop until the late nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> In regard to production of both crops in Lancashire, Holt provided a dismissively brief opinion in 1794. However with “its difficult syntax leading to ambiguity” as Virgoe aptly reviewed it, Holt stated nothing more in his appraisal than “the culture, neither of hemp nor flax, was ever carried to any great extent in this county.”<sup>27</sup> Presuming he meant that neither crops were cultivated to any extent in Lancashire, he was, as Virgoe has also pointed out, in error even if his statement was more accurately referring to the latter decades of the 1700s.

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<sup>24</sup> Frank Emery, ‘Wales’, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 393-428, p. 410.

<sup>25</sup> Joan Thirsk, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 184-186.

<sup>26</sup> B. A. Holderness, *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p. 214.

<sup>27</sup> John Virgoe, ‘John Holt and *The general view of the agriculture of the county of Lancaster: An appraisal*’, *THSLC*, vol. 154 (2003), p. 108; John Holt, *General View of the Agriculture of Lancashire*, (1795, reprint: Newton Abbot, 1969), p. 70.

The specific differences in the fortunes of the two species of crop require clarification. Whereas flax cultivation stabilised and even increased in townships south of the Ribble following a general mid-seventeenth century decline, incidences of hemp cultivation continued to fall to just over five per cent of inventories on either side of the Ribble by the 1730s. The question of why localised cultivation of both crops declined during a period of increased weaving and maritime activity is answered simply by the increase in importations of raw materials serving that demand. South of the Ribble prior to c.1660 hemp and flax appeared in 36.5 and 45.2 per cent of inventories respectively. Notably in the period between 1660 and 1700 incidences of hemp exceeded those of flax, but in the decades after 1700 hemp cultivation declined dramatically. Also, whereas flax incidences stabilised south of the Ribble, in the north they fell away to just 4.4 per cent of inventories. Here the reasons lie squarely in the increased importations of the raw commodity. Marshall described the activities of vessels returning to Lancaster from the Russian port of Archangel in 1700 and 1708, as bringing in “much rough hemp and dressed flax and linen yarn.” He also noted that by the 1730s a regular growing trade with the Baltic nations was underway, which region thereafter “supplied western Europe with wrought iron, timber, flax, hemp and tar.”<sup>28</sup> The reason that raw flax was not imported from neighbouring Ireland on shorter voyages was that the organisation of Anglo-Irish trade favoured commodity specialisation. Thus, during the seventeenth century, while Ireland imported flax seed from Holland and North America, only finished linen was exported to England via Dublin.<sup>29</sup> More recently, Graham Evans has published a history of the port of Poulton and its historical relationship with the manufacturing town of Kirkham. He analysed the importations of Baltic sourced commodities. These corresponded with exports of woven Lancashire cloth, which

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<sup>28</sup> J. D. Marshall (ed.), *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester, 1967) pp. 39, 49.

<sup>29</sup> L. M. Cullen, *Anglo-Irish Trade 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 5, 98, 107-110, 188.



necessitated the building of warehouses at Wardley's Pool in the 1740s and facilitated the trade in flax and hemp from Skippool.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding these importations, flax grown in the Fylde was of a high quality and continued to form mixed coastwise cargoes out to Liverpool, Chester, Milnthorpe and Whitehaven into the early nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

To the south of the Ribble a similar scene prevailed, with the continually expanding port of Liverpool also importing flax and raw hemp. Although the localised cultivation of flax prevailed into the eighteenth century, it appears to have been rationalised to larger farms and declined after 1720. Thomas Asborn and William Barrow of Rufford, and John Wareing of Tarlescough near Burscough each died in 1721, and Richard Whittle of Longton in 1723, leaving flax and hemp in values from £1.7s to £4.10s. Each of them was described as a 'yeoman', men who presumably owned sufficient surplus land to persist with such cash-crops. In Longton, the chapman William Walton (1730) left an inventory valued at £336.9s.5d. He possessed 'in yarn & flax ... £6.0.0.' In Little Crosby in the 1720s Nicholas Blundell grew flax which his workers processed and spun. In February 1728 he noted in his diary, "I sent 19 ½ lb of Fine Flaxen Yorne to Timothy Much to be woven by him." and accounted 'Weaving fine Flaxen at 3 ½ d. per yard ... 8s.5d.'<sup>32</sup> Blundell was a gentleman with a considerable acreage available for a broad agrarian portfolio. By the 1720s however, as is explained below, lower status husbandmen, widows and the poorer trades had largely given their hemp-yards over to potatoes.

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<sup>30</sup> Graham Evans, *Poulton Life, Trade & Shipping in a small Lancashire port 1577-1839* (Lancaster, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Evans, *Poulton*, pp. 85-94; I am grateful to Dr. Evans for confirming that locally grown as well as Baltic flax was shipped coastwise from the Wyre even after 1800.

<sup>32</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Asborn, Rufford, (1721); William Barrow, Rufford, (1721); John Wareing, Tarlescough, (1721); Richard Whittle, Longton, (1723); William Walton, Longton, (1730); Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. III, 1720-28, p. 234.

### **The Potato: innovation, cultivation and adoption**

The introduction of the potato into regular cultivation in English fields was unique to the coastal townships in the west of Lancashire. It was a significant innovation with long-term implications. The earliest years of its adoption have formerly been discussed either sketchily or unscientifically while the question of why such a productive, reliable multi-purpose cropper was adopted on the Lancashire Plain yet not more widely cultivated elsewhere has been largely overlooked.

There are two interwoven strands of uncertainty, perhaps of mystery which surround the early history of the adoption of this important food source. The first of these concerns an often-contradictory historiography which stretches over 400 years. Historians have offered different opinions as to where and when potatoes were first grown in England and disagree on what class of person grew it. Was it for example a dietary panacea for the poor or a novelty for the rich man's table? The second and perhaps more complex conundrum, concerns the cultivation and application of the tuber itself. Was it primarily a food source produced to fatten livestock or was it always intended for the consumption and nourishment of the men who, in the mid-seventeenth century ventured to grow them by the acre in their fields rather than merely in a few rows in their gardens? What was their reference for planting and harvesting and storage? Why after its introduction to the north-west coast of England and the apparent reliability of its cultivability in the mixed soil types and mild maritime climate was its eastward dissemination patchy, sporadic and far from universal? The early decades of potato cultivation in England have thus been peculiarly over-looked, misinterpreted as folklore, or discussed only in vague terms in the past half-century. They are deserving of analysis, clarification and definition.

The occasion and circumstances which surround the earliest cultivation of the potato as a field crop anywhere in England is unlikely ever to be located with unimpeachable certainty. The herbalist John Gerard grew potatoes in his garden in Holborn and recorded the first printed references and descriptions of the plant in his *Catalogue* in 1596. Gerard was also the first to unwittingly make the error of claiming the tuber's origin to have been Virginia. However, the forty-eight-chromosome potato *Solanum Tuberosum* originated in South America. The Spanish treasure fleets introduced them to Europe from Columbia in the 1560s. It was thereafter a full century before they were cultivated in England other than by a few gentlemen or royal horticulturalists. From the literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries accurate interpretations of the tuber's introduction are hazardous. Redcliffe Salaman, whose path-breaking and exhaustive analysis of the potato and its history in 1949 remains unparalleled, noted that the term 'Roots', used for potatoes, invariably embraced sweet potatoes (*batata*), yams and Jerusalem Artichokes.<sup>33</sup> There is no clear range of dates even as to when or by whom the potato was introduced to Ireland, only that it was grown successfully in the south of that island before crossing the Irish Sea. Erroneous myths and folklore have long swirled around its introduction to England. Other than a garden novelty we may be certain from the outset only of the following statements. Firstly, the potato was not introduced into England by Sir Walter Raleigh from his estates in Ireland. Secondly, neither on Ireland's nor on England's western coasts did potatoes tumble onto beaches from wrecked Spanish vessels to flourish thereafter on local plots. Thirdly, the newly constituted Royal Society in London debated the efficacy of the potato to feed the parish poor as early as 1662. One Mr. Buckland 'a Somerset gentleman' proposed trials in that county based on the Irish experience. His scheme failed to materialise however and although Thirsk

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<sup>33</sup> Redcliffe Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge, 1949) reprinted with revisions and corrections, J. G. Hawkes (1985), pp. 64, 81-2, 138, 437; Alan Romans, *The Potato Book* (London, 2005) pp. 9-11.

asserted that “Potatoes were clearly available in the London markets in the 1650s and seed potatoes were available from seed merchants,” she also acknowledged that they were not familiar elsewhere in England.<sup>34</sup> In his agricultural survey, Holt asserted in 1794 that “Lancashire was the first county in the kingdom in which the potatoe was grown.”<sup>35</sup> It is interesting but not essential to establish primacy in this matter. The absence of earlier documentary evidence however, suggests that the first named Englishman to leave an inventory upon which potatoes were recorded as a harvested crop worthy of evaluation was the husbandman Thomas Scaresbricke (the elder) of Formby, who on 12 January 1663 left, ‘in potatoes ... 5s’, which crop must have been grown and lifted in the autumn of 1662.<sup>36</sup> The specific location of Formby as the proper birthplace of English potato cultivation is discussed hereafter, while the wider panorama of evidence for its early adoption and progress from the coastal townships of western Lancashire during the following seventy or more years is also discussed. Firstly, I have broken down the areas of controversy and error in a long historiography which have permeated our understanding of its history and dissemination.

Walter Nicol (1769-1811) an Edinburgh horticulturalist writing in the same decade as Holt appears to have been the first writer to convey practical methods and instructions on potato cultivation to his readers which remain relevant to our present era. Nicol specified planting and harvesting times, recommended logical spacing of individual tuber sets in drills with appropriate distances between rows and advocated the practice of ‘haulming-up’ against frosts, which technique is the progressive drawing up of soil around the tender stems and leaves as they break the surface and flourish. Importantly his advice was as pertinent to the cultivation of several garden rows as to field acreages in a pre-mechanised age. Nicol and many who followed, was less certain how to treat the green tomato-like seeds of the potato or

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<sup>34</sup> Salaman, *The Potato*, pp. 447-8, 451; Joan Thirsk, *Food, Fads, Fashions*, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 57.

<sup>36</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Scaresbricke (elder), Formby (1663).

the whole potato ‘sets’ however, and in company with all contemporary agriculturalists, was baffled by the destructive viral disease ‘curl’, which we know today to be defined as ‘leaf roll’ or potato leaf roll virus (PLRV). This and the similarly debilitating condition ‘Severe mosaic virus’ is spread by aphids attacking the leaves but was assumed to be progressive ‘degeneration’ of the ‘ripe’ potato.<sup>37</sup> However, Nicol’s advice regarding the utility of deeply cut ‘scoops’ of the ‘eyes’ and subcutaneous flesh of the mature potato for replanting, while feeding the greater remaining mass to cattle and pigs “in times of scarcity” was both sound in economy and practice. These recommendations also provide a useful insight into general advice for what must be regarded even in 1798 as a relatively novel resource.

Writing just thirty years later in 1828, the prolific horticulturalist Charles McIntosh (1794-1864) compiled an essay on every aspect of the potato in volume I of his *Practical Gardener*, which represented a significant leap forward from his contemporaries. His well-researched history included accurate references to Gerard, also the origin (if not the indigenoussness) of the potato being South America, the Royal Society project, and the well-known reference to the diarist John Evelyn who in 1699 had disparagingly advised “In your worst ground plant potatoes.” Thereafter, McIntosh recorded that their partial and unenthusiastic acceptance in England contrasted with their universal cultivation in Scotland, which commenced in the vicinity of Edinburgh “from about the year 1725” and in just twenty years had spread to the remotest isles and in general “now form the chief support of thousands.”<sup>38</sup>

McIntosh also acknowledged that “The potato appears to have been brought from Ireland to Lancashire, where it has been perhaps more successfully cultivated than in any other part of England.” He also noted on a short list, among the most ‘useful’ garden varieties, ‘Lancashire

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Nicol, *The Forcing, Fruit, and Kitchen Gardener* (Edinburgh, 1798, repr: 1809), pp. 332-8; Romans, *Potato Book*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>38</sup> Charles McIntosh, *The Practical Gardener and Modern Horticulturalist*, 2 vols, (London, 1828), vol I, pp. 294-6, and cultivating regime, pp. 83-4, 102, 129-135, 162, 178, 241.

Pink-eye' and the 'bright red' potato "much esteemed in the vicinity of Manchester." In the revised single-volume *New and Improved Practical Gardener* (1839), McIntosh intriguingly added the suffix 'or Scottish Red' to the 'Lancashire Pink-eye'. He also included a new variety 'Lady's finger' or 'Rufford kidney', which he described as "highly prized in Lancashire as the earliest variety, mealy and of excellent flavour."<sup>39</sup> Both entries are significant. Firstly, the possibility is entertained that the 'Lancashire Pink-eye' was of sufficiently enduring merit to have been removed to and bred in Scotland in the 1830s, although verification of such a migration lies beyond the scope of this essay. The specific reference to Rufford is also notable. The area around the small township of Rufford in the fertile Lancashire plain was, after Formby and North Meols the vanguard and heartland of regular field cultivation from 1670 onwards which position, especially for early crop potatoes it enjoys to this present time.<sup>40</sup>

In the year in which McIntosh died (1864), the widely travelled and self-styled 'Old Norfolk Farmer' Samuel Copland (1784-1876), published a *magnum opus* in two volumes in which he ambitiously sought to encompass the sum of knowledge concerning the historical progress of agriculture across the United Kingdom and Europe.<sup>41</sup> Copland correctly confirmed that the potato was indigenous to the south of the American continent, a confirmation which McIntosh had shied away from thirty years earlier. However, inexplicably in the same sentence, Copland reintroduced the error that the potato "was brought into the United Kingdom by Sir Walter Raleigh who cultivated it in his own garden in Ireland." Copland informed his mid-Victorian readers that Lancashire continued to be the region of greatest cultivation after Ireland. He then contrarily and egregiously reported as fact rather than

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<sup>39</sup> McIntosh, *The New and Improved Practical Gardener and Modern Horticulturalist* (London, 1839), p. 207.

<sup>40</sup> LA WCW, John Hesketh, Rufford, yeoman (1670).

<sup>41</sup> Samuel Copland, *Agriculture Ancient and Modern*: 2 vols, (London, 1864, repr: 1866).

folklore, “It is remarkable that its introduction into that country [*sic*] was accidental, a vessel containing a cargo of potatoes being cast away on its coast...”<sup>42</sup>

It was thereafter not until 1949 that the monumental historical and scientific work on the potato was published by Salaman. Such was its influence that it was revised with corrections by the taxonomist J. G. Hawkes in 1985, whereafter it has remained the only major work of its kind on the subject.<sup>43</sup> Salaman presented a lengthy scientific and practical thesis to explain why although “legend has never ceased to link Raleigh’s name with the introduction of the potato”, he could not have introduced it into Ireland, although he and his tenants grew crops annually on his estates in Youghal. As for its introduction to England, Salaman repeated the shipwreck legend at North Meols and dismissed the alleged date of 1565 as far too early, although perhaps not the event itself. As to his assertion, which derived from notes on Edward Baines evergreen *History of Lancashire* of 23 May 1887 that “Tradition claims ... the district of Formby as the first seat of cultivation of the potato in Lancashire,” and therefore *ipso facto* in England, documentary evidence from a number of inventories now enable us to supplant ‘tradition’ for fact.<sup>44</sup> A further notable occurrence was the existence of a designated potato market established by the Leet Court of Wigan in Michaelmas 1680.<sup>45</sup>

Nothing in the historiography of the potato over the past fifty years has arisen to doubt the location of the plant’s early adoption as being Lancashire, south of the Ribble, between Formby and North Meols. Although every writer has offered his or her version of the date of introduction after the mid-century, it is its early progress which merits our attention. In 1967, Eric Kerridge lent weight to both assertions that after the 1650s it became “the characteristic

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<sup>42</sup> Copland, *Agriculture*, pp. 546-7.

<sup>43</sup> Salaman, *The Potato*, reprinted with revisions and corrections, J. G. Hawkes (1985).

<sup>44</sup> Salaman, *The Potato*, pp. 143-158, 451.

<sup>45</sup> Wigan Archives & Local Studies, WCL Roll, 45, 1678, CL/Wi/45.

moss-land crop ... in the Lancashire Plain, whence all England learnt the practice.”<sup>46</sup> Twenty years later John Walton suggested that in the period leading up to the industrial revolution, in Lancashire at least “Perhaps the most important innovation was potato cultivation ... as a food source for the growing regional textile towns.”<sup>47</sup> Anticipating its cultivation for rural consumption Alan Everitt highlighted the latter end of the seventeenth century when labourers and the poor could grow this new crop to fatten their pigs and nourish themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Hey’s study of Yorkshire and Lancashire provided a faint echo of the North Meols shipwreck myth and suggested that Lancashire inventories revealed only a minority of farmers planted potatoes. Although more commonly grown by the end of the 1600s, they continued to be confined to numerous and relatively small plots. He also noted the existence of the specialised potato market at Wigan in 1680, and the successful prosecution brought by the rector of Croston against thirteen of his Mawdesley parishioners for the tithe on their potatoes in 1684.<sup>49</sup> However these facts alone surely suggest that within twenty years of their inception, field cultivation had grown to a greater acreage than a few small plots. Referring to Robert Hesketh of Rufford esquire, and the gentleman Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby as exemplars, Hey concluded that “The people who grew them in the earliest years were mostly yeomen or gentry.” Hesketh died in 1697, while Blundell recorded his potato regimes in each of the three volumes of his *Great Diurnal* from 1702-28.<sup>50</sup> However it seems clear from numerous inventories throughout western Lancashire that even in the early years men of all occupations, which included weavers, carpenters, fishermen, blacksmiths and their

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<sup>46</sup> Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 277.

<sup>47</sup> John. K. Walton, *Lancashire a social history* (Manchester, 1987), p. 75.

<sup>48</sup> Alan Everitt, ‘Farm labourers’, in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. iv 1500-1640, (Cambridge, 1967) pp. 416, 452.

<sup>49</sup> David Hey, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. v. i, 1640-1750 *Regional Farming Systems* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 64.

<sup>50</sup> LA WCW, Robert Hesketh, Rufford, esquire (1697); Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vols i – iii (1702-28).



widows grew potatoes and that in referring to Hesketh and Blundell, Hey cannot be specifying 'earliest years'.

More recently, Alan Romans has compiled a comprehensive catalogue of all available potato varieties (correct to 2005) and provided a history of the plant from the perspective of a modern biological scientist. In reference to Ireland, he argued that prior to the devastating famine of c.1845, it has been overlooked that potatoes had sustained the population successfully for one and a half centuries. Furthermore, with an assertion that could apply equally to the growing pre-industrial population of Lancashire, "Only the extraordinary productivity and nutrition of the potato could support such a large population."<sup>51</sup> On the theme of long term reliability and sustainability for the poor, in 2014 Jonathan Healey also established the importance of the potato as a significant font of nourishment for ordinary families as well as providing the working labourer of limited means with an additional source of cheap sustenance. The Overseers' Accounts for Formby in 1709 record for example, that potatoes were "Disburst by me James Norris being overseer of the poor", 'For potetoes for [John] Forshe [Forshaw] ... 1s.8d. and 'For potetoes for Eliz: Toby ... 1s.2d.'<sup>52</sup> The potato became a particularly useful alternative to cereals in times of unforeseen dearth followed by costly but necessary importation of grain into Lancashire in the years 1727-29. Both William Stout in Lancaster and Nicholas Blundell in Little Crosby recorded the deleterious effects, and price rises of imported wheat and barley compared with the contrasting benefits of locally grown potatoes in 1728 in their respective diaries.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Romans, *Potato Book*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Healey, *The First century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 43-5, 145, 242; LA, PR3360/4/1, Overseers accounts, Formby (1709).

<sup>53</sup> J. D. Marshall, (ed.), *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester and New York, 1967), p. 201; Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. iii, p. 230n; cited in Hey, *AHEW*, vol. v, i, p. 64; Healey, p.242.

In terms of their nutritional value, potatoes are primarily composed of carbohydrates and to a lesser extent dietary fibre and protein but almost no fat. Potatoes are a good source of vitamins C, B1 and B6. Also iron, magnesium and potassium which in combination with their lack of cholesterol support heart health. Sources vary when citing their calorific content. Muldrew made a conservative estimate for 1 potato = 75 calories while online health sites suggest a range of between 77-87 calories per 100 grams. Although fat free, their starchy carbohydrates are digested rapidly and have a high glycaemic index which causes blood sugar and insulin to surge and dip.<sup>54</sup> As with the nutritional value of legumes, it is almost possible to subsist on potatoes alone. They are, however, deficient in two essential vitamins, A and D. These deficiencies are repairable by drinking milk, a combined diet that then lacks only molybdenum, which is an essential mineral, but that is readily supplied by oatmeal and beans.<sup>55</sup> All of these sources were readily available in abundance in Lancashire, and it is apparent that potatoes were consumed by all social ranks in conjunction with other nourishing food types.

By the 1720s the potato had become established in the west of Lancashire, but its adoption requires clarification. From the available evidence, the small fishing township of Formby is the most likely location of the first regular cultivations in England. We do not of course have all the inventories extant, nor did all men and women require them to be drawn up. From those in our wider data set however, the case for Formby is a compelling one. Between Thomas Scaresbricke's inventory of 12 January 1663 and Henry Formby's of Formby of 2 November 1680, 25 inventories clearly specify a valuation for potatoes, and in almost as many spelling forms, which includes those of five widows. For North Meols, the only other

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<sup>54</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, Table 3.1, *Calorific value of different foods*, p. 118; [www.healthline.com>nutrition>foods>potatoes](http://www.healthline.com>nutrition>foods>potatoes); [www.livescience.com>45838-potato-nutrition](http://www.livescience.com>45838-potato-nutrition); [www.nhs.uk>HealthAtoZ>Vitamins](http://www.nhs.uk>HealthAtoZ>Vitamins) and minerals; acc: 24.02.2020.

<sup>55</sup> Salaman, *The Potato*, p. 124.

candidate referenced in the historiography, there are just seven testators, two of whom were widows who grew potatoes. The earliest record for North Meols is that of Robert Matthew of Crossens in 1670, thereafter that of the widow Elizabeth Moss (1671), who left ‘in pottatos ... 5s.’ Other early-dated coastal inventories are extant from Hesketh Bank (1676) and Sollom in Tarleton (1677). Early adoption on lands in and around Rufford indicates the influence of the extended Hesketh family. John Hesketh of Rufford, yeoman (1670), had ‘in potatoes ... £1.3s.3d.’ Also, on the inland mosses of the Lancashire Plain, they were grown in Scarisbrick (1670), by two widows from Burscough, Elisabeth Spencer and Jane Stopford (both 1671), in Lathom (1676) and in Skelmersdale (1677). Potatoes continued to be grown in these and other inland townships including by the 1680s in Mawdesley, Bickerstaffe, Aughton and Chorley. They are less commonly recorded in inventories in the Penwortham parish townships, Much and Little Hoole, and Croston, even after 1700. It is notable also that they were not grown in the vicinity of Wigan, notwithstanding its designated market status “for Potatoes and other Rootes” granted by the Corporation’s leet court on 5 October 1678, the earliest of its kind in England. The existence of this document lends credence to Salaman’s assertion that “The potatoes which were disposed of at Wigan came from Ormskirk,” although strictly he should have appended the suffix ‘parish.’<sup>56</sup> Potato cultivation appears to have reached its eastern geographic limits in the fields and closes of Skelmersdale and Upholland in the 1690s. Just one inventory, that of the carpenter John Pollett of Barton-upon-Irwell (1701), records ‘Potatoes in the Ground ... 13s.4d.’, yet without further extensive work, David Hey’s research would appear to indicate correctly that cultivation did not extend

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<sup>56</sup> LA WCW, Henry Formby, Formby (1680); Robert Matthew, Crossens, husbandman (1680); Elizabeth Moss, North Meols, widow (1671); John Hesketh, Rufford, yeoman (1670); Elizabeth Spencer, Burscough, widow (1671); Jane Stopford, Burscough, widow (1671); Salaman, *The Potato*, p. 451; WAS, WCL Roll 45, 1678, CL/Wi/45.

eastwards towards the townships on the western fringes of Manchester until (for example) Pendlebury in 1715 and Urmston in 1747.<sup>57</sup>

A contrasting scene is identifiable in the coastal townships twelve miles north of the Ribble. In Lytham parish no potatoes were recorded, either stored or growing, in any of the 92 inventories between 1661 and 1720 in which agricultural activities were apparent. Also, they were recorded only in two instances in Norbreck (1692) and Poulton (1708). However, it was in the farmlands across the Wyre estuary that they found early cultivators in number and continuous adoption as a field crop. By 1670, in 1671 and thereafter, potatoes were being grown on the Cockerham Bankhouses, the shoreline settlement below the ruins of Cockersand Abbey, and a mile inland at Thurnham. In 1676 and 1677 they appear in Pilling inventories, and by the 1680s, at Preesall, Stalmine and Hambleton. Therefore, regarding the opportunity for introducing the potato to these specific locations, the townships of Formby, Cockerham, Pilling and Stalmine were, throughout the seventeenth century, although not the eighteenth, economically important ‘creeks’, or subsidiary trading ports. Ferryboats operated from Hambleton which, in providing the only viable crossing of the Wyre estuary, connected the over-Wyre townships with Thornton and the small port of Poulton-le-Fylde.<sup>58</sup> Formby was the major centre for the herring fishing industry in Lancashire until, by the 1680s the wharves were silting up and its maritime neighbour Liverpool vastly exceeded its trading capabilities. I therefore hypothesise that it must only have been a commercial element of the bustling coasting trade which brought the first potatoes to these townships, and they arrived from the south of Ireland during the trading boom which followed the early years of the restoration of Charles II. Thomas Scaresbricke did not find potatoes on the sands at Formby point in 1662. He surely purchased the tubers and acquired the knowledge for their

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<sup>57</sup> LA WCW, John Pollett, Barton-upon-Irwell, carpenter (1701); Hey, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, p.64.

<sup>58</sup> LA WRW/A, Thomas Gaunt, Hambleton (1674); Robert Parke, Hambleton (1689).

cultivation from any one of the numerous trading barques which had docked at Formby. Whether the vessel in question sailed directly from Ireland, or as is the more likely explanation, had received portions of a larger cargo which decanted into manageable quantities at Liverpool before sailing to Formby shall never be known. Direct sailings to the south of Ireland from Formby and the over-Wyre creeks seem inevitable but cannot be proved. No accounts or port ledgers exist from which to assess this probability. Indeed, there is just one in a thousand inventories which hints at what must have been a regular trade in grain and potatoes. Upon his demise in 1692, Matthew Latewise of Stalmine had, ‘ventered into Irland’[sic] barley at £2.15s. wheat at £1.1s. and oatmeal at £6.<sup>59</sup> However, as the surviving documents appear to suggest, potatoes also arrived in coasting vessels to Cockerham by 1670 and thence to Pilling within six years and to Stalmine and Hambleton within twelve.

The social and religiously cohesive coastal community was quick to incorporate the new crop and transported it in their vessels. The yeomen/husbandmen/mariners of the coastal townships were men who lived and flourished in geographical peripheries on the coast-side of the great mosses. They were accustomed to self-management, self-determination and entrepreneurial innovation. As many were Catholic, they were also accustomed to maintaining a low-profile, paying double taxes and fees, and to forming commercial, credit and social partnerships of mutual benefit and necessity. Walton refers to “The broad acres of Roman Catholic survival” in the west of Lancashire in the early seventeenth century, and that after the Restoration, the social structure changed little at local gentry and upper-yeomanry level. Intermarriage within the north-west counties “made the Catholic families ... practically a society unto themselves.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the Curwens, Deanes and Bradshaws of Cockerham,

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<sup>59</sup> LA WRW/A Matthew Latewise, Stalmine (1692).

<sup>60</sup> John K. Walton, *Lancashire, A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 39, 79-80, 91-3.

the Dickinsons, Dicconsons and Thorntons of Pilling and Stalmine, and the Rymers, and Rimmers of Formby for example, took advantage of their respective locations to invest in the construction and operation of trading barques and fishing vessels. They built saltcoats and manufactured the pre-industrial infrastructure of lead pans, pipes and cisterns to extract sea-salt from saturated sand, which was dried and then exported into Wales and the trading creeks of Lancashire's Furness peninsula.<sup>61</sup> One may only presume that once convinced of the utility to beast and man and the potential annual profitability of potatoes over more common grain crops, hemp or beans, the new crop was rapidly adopted as another useful source of sustenance and income.

Potatoes may possibly have been grown as garden produce prior to the 1660s and certainly were thereafter, but garden produce was rarely afforded a valuation. In constructing my proposals, I have chosen to exclude as examples those inventories which itemise the lowest valuations and sought only to theorise on those crops which appear to have been grown on the decedents' estates. It is unlikely that farmers gambled with their traditional arable resources in the early years by allocating whole acreages to potato cultivation. Kerridge has suggested the potato "graduated from the kitchen garden," while Thirsk was adamant the potato ousted beans and peas from the fields being, "so easily grown, such heavy croppers, and using far less fuel in the cropping."<sup>62</sup> From the evidence in our dataset either or both theories coexist. Incidence and percentage figures in the tables above clearly indicate the overall decline in the cultivation of hemp, French (buck) wheat, rye, 'blendcorn', beans and peas from the 1660s onwards. Their percentage of all crops grown declines from 20.5 to 5.7 per cent for flax, and 5.4 to 2.0 per cent for peas for example. What appears to be evidential is that potatoes, which had a usefully and relatively short growing season from March to

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<sup>61</sup> LA WRW/A, Richard Curwen, Cockerham, (1662); John Bradshaw, Cockerham (1664); John Dickonson, Pilling (1694); William Rymmer, Formby (1677).

<sup>62</sup> Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 277; Thirsk, *Food, Fads, Fashions*, p. 291.

October, initially shared the hemp-yards and closes beyond the kitchen gardens and orchards, but nearer to the house than the main cereal fields or pasture meadows as an extended cross-over period ensued. Inventories from at least nine of our townships from Cockerham to Skelmersdale indicate a ground-sharing scheme was a commonly adopted policy. James Hunter of Tarleton for example left ‘in flax and pottettes on the ground ... 10s’ in July 1679. In 1701 Henry Haile of Scarisbrick left ‘in the yord, Bean, Pease & Potatoes ... 12s.’ as in May 1707 John Barton of Skelmersdale left ‘in flax and potatoes upon the ground at £1.’<sup>63</sup>

Indubitably, from their earliest cultivation in the 1660s and for at least the next eighty years, potatoes remained a speciality of the Lancashire plain. Potatoes were initially something of a niche crop and took different routes to their eventual destination as a high-acreage staple.

Valuations in inventories invariably ranged from 5s to £1, which although not inconsequential to most families, were generally a fraction of that of oats or barley or hay. To numerous enterprising growers with a yard or close in the fertile lowlands, potatoes quickly became a reliable and bounteous cropping alternative to hemp, beans or rye in the pre-industrial era until, as Walton expressed it, “a century later potatoes from south-west Lancashire were making a significant contribution to feeding the swelling population of the south-eastern textile district.”<sup>64</sup> The reasons for the absence of potato crops further eastwards may have straightforward answers. Firstly, greater opportunity for cultivation existed in the west without utilising new land. Secondly, potatoes answered the requirements of labouring by hand in manageable quantities yet cropped in sufficient volume such that as the central and eastern townships became urbanised, it simply made economic sense, as it had done in Wigan, to buy them in from the areas in which they were already being grown.

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<sup>63</sup> LA WCW, John Hunter, Tarleton, husbandman (1679); Henry Haile, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1701); John Barton, Skelmersdale, yeoman (1707).

<sup>64</sup> Walton, *Social History*, p.75.

## Diet on land

Throughout her last major work *Food in Early Modern England* (2007), Joan Thirsk conveyed the simple truth that in the early modern period, and for centuries beforehand people had always been interested in what they ate. Food was supposed to be nourishing and enjoyable. Food was prepared with inherited skills and imagination. By gathering ingredients in season and in cooking meals, people at all levels of society took pride in what food appeared on their table and what it tasted like. Food and drink were regarded as medicine and promoted health. Over time, food types and preferences evolved and changed as society changed. Thirsk paraphrased the diplomat Sir Kenelm Digby (d.1665) in conveying the idea “that basic foods were the same for all classes; it was only the extra adornments and refinements that made the dishes different.”<sup>65</sup> More recently, Muldrew examined the living standards of agricultural labourers in the early modern period. One of his theses focussed on the quality of food available for physical work to be accomplished. “The culture of eating needs to be given more importance, because the calories contained in the food consumed by labourers were the petrol of the early modern economy.”<sup>66</sup> This and the following section which analyses the diet available to mariners on long sea voyages, aims to demonstrate that in west Lancashire, a high quality of food was available.

Inventories do not tell us what meals people ate, but as Lorna Weatherill observed, the listings of household implements and utensils often reveal what types of food and drink they consumed.<sup>67</sup> From the many inventoried references to girdles and bakestones for example we know that oatcakes were consumed almost universally, and from the frequent occurrences of salting ‘turnells’ that beef and pork was widely butchered and preserved for consumption

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<sup>65</sup> Thirsk, *Food, Fads, Fashions*, p. 130.

<sup>66</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London & New York 1988,) pp. 3, 203-6.



over the winter months. Throughout the inventoried record in the west of Lancashire north and south of the Ribble, innumerable entries evaluate household stocks of beef, bacon, butter, cheese and ‘meal’, which referred specifically to oats and flour. Pots, pans and ‘posnetts’ of brass and iron, pewterware and earthenware vessels, and wooden containers or ‘greenware’, were therefore indicators of what food-types were prepared in them. Perhaps most indicative of early modern convenience cooking, albeit with dietary implications for both families and individuals, are the almost universal entries for ‘swine’s grease’ and for frying pans.

Similarly revealing, are the purpose-made household items of convenience such as apple-roasters, cockle-pans, cheese toasters, spice boxes and punch bowls. Less commonly found in inventories, but discussed later in this chapter, are the infrequent occurrences of preservable crops such as apples, onions and pumpkins, all of which illuminate the gaps in our knowledge of domestic behaviour and dietary preferences.

A food source of notable importance to families who lived in the coastal townships of Lancashire was fish. From Biggar in Furness to Bootle near Liverpool, men fished the rivers, estuaries and the Irish Sea. From our dataset for example, north of the Ribble between 1661 and 1720, 29 of 200 inventories, 14.5 per cent, record fishing activities in Pilling and Preesall. Further evidence is apparent in Cockerham and the river Wyre townships of Stalmine, Staynall and Hambleton. South of the Ribble, fishing was concentrated in North Meols and in Formby with Ainsdale. Inventories here, between 1661 and 1740 record fishing activities in 28 of 129 records, at 21.7 per cent in North Meols, and 45 of 145, at 31 per cent of decedents in Formby. Where the appraisers noted occupations, very few stated ‘fisherman.’ Almost all were husbandmen or yeomen, many of whom left low-value inventories of £30 or less. That sea fish was a regular feature of the early-modern diet of an island nation would seem self-evident. However, Muldrew observed that “Fish is mostly absent from any diets or sources mentioning labourers’ food ... it is unsurprising that it was

largely the wealthy who ate fish.”<sup>68</sup> He suggested the high cost of conveying fish inland was prohibitive, and that even in London in the mid-1600s, for one salted fish costing 9d, a labourer could purchase 3lb of beef. Further, that as fish contain fewer calories, they were an expensive way to obtain energy.

For those in west Lancashire who fished, all appear to have done so in tandem with their agricultural activities and/or trade. William Smith of Pilling, weaver (1682), for example, owned ‘two kine and one bullock ... £4.’, ‘one mare ... £2.13s.4d.’, ‘oats with malt and meal ... £1.’, ‘two paire of loomes with one wauping spar and rings ... 10s.’ and ‘yarn and nets to fish withall ... 5s.’ His inventory totalled £28.19s.4d.<sup>69</sup> Inventories on both sides of the Ribble record a wide range of equipment, from low-value nets, lines and stakes for gillnet fishing across tidal rivers, to part-shares in fishing boats. It is apparent that fishing provided an income from a secondary source whilst also providing families with a necessary source of dietary protein. The main quarries appear to have been herring, eels, flatfish and salmon, all of which could be salted in barrels and stored. Perhaps another reason to fish, was that both the fishing equipment and the salted product retained a worthwhile resale value in inventories. Thomas Wignall of Hesketh bank, husbandman (1661), left ‘in fishing nets ... 10s.’ Edward Braide, Pilling, husbandman (1677), ‘netes panyores & steakes ... £2.16.8d.’ In 1716, Thomas Ball of North Meols left, ‘in part of a boat w’t all the sea Gear thereunto belonginge ... £5.10s.6d.’ As salted product, George Jackson, Cockerham (1667) had ‘Beef, bacon & Salmonfish ... 6s8d.’ John Burton, Bankhouses, Cockerham, husbandman (1671), ‘Salt Salmonfish ... £1.10s.’ and among several references to preserved herring, Richard

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<sup>68</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>69</sup> LA WRW/A, William Smith, Pilling, Weaver (1682).

Robinson of Stalmine, yeoman (1668), left ‘two salting tubes [*sic*] w’th beefe & hearings ... £1.12.6d.’<sup>70</sup>

Western Lancashire inhabitants were clearly able to provide food for themselves, neither were they lacking in opportunities to thrive and capitalise on saleable wares. When Celia Fiennes visited Preston in 1698, she noted, “Satterday is their market w’ch day I was there and saw it was provided with all sorts of things – Leather, Corn, coals, butter, Cheese and fruite and garden things.”<sup>71</sup> Market towns from Ulverston to Wigan had mercer/grocers selling spices and comestibles from permanent retail premises. In 1613, Roger Sankey of Ormskirk offered for sale quantities of rice, Jordanian and Valencian almonds; currants, cloves, cumin and caraway seeds; ginger, mace, pepper and turmeric; aniseed and fennel; white candy, sugar, treacle and ‘oyls’. Robert Winstanley of Wigan, in 1682, offered a choice of brown sugar, powdered sugar and ‘In Loafe Sugar ... 11s.’ Sugar is a crucial ingredient in the production of preserved fruit. In Liverpool early in the new century the grocer Robert Rownson (1709), offered all these items, but now also offered coffee, tea, ‘Choculett’, ‘A Box of Orrange/Lemm’s & Almonds ... £1.’ and ‘One Gall: & ha: of Lyme Juce ... 3s.’<sup>72</sup>

Garden produce being mostly perishable, was not considered appropriate to evaluate for probate. Less perishable produce appeared only occasionally in inventories however, especially those compiled during the late autumn when a good growing season had produced a bounteous harvest of ‘fruts and roots in the garden.’<sup>73</sup> Several such inventories evaluate squashes as ‘pumpions’, from Burscough (1618) and Wrightington (1640). Thomas Sheirson of Hillam Lane, Cockerham (1681) had harvested ‘apples, onions, pumpins & pottatees ...

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<sup>70</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Wignall, Hesketh Bank, husbandman (1661), Thomas Ball, North Meols, (1716); LA WRW/A, Edward Braide, Pilling, husbandman (1677), George Jackson, Cockerham, (1667), John Burton, Bankhouses, Cockerham, husbandman (1671), Richard Robinson, Stalmine, yeoman (1668).

<sup>71</sup> [www.visionofbritain.org.uk/travellers/fiennes/22](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/travellers/fiennes/22) acc. 2.11.2017.

<sup>72</sup> LA WCW, Roger Sankey, Ormskirk, yeoman/mercier (1613); Robert Winstanley, Wigan, joiner/mercier (1682); Robert Rownson, Liverpool, grocer (1709); LA WRW/A, George Geldart, Ulverston, mercier (1657).

<sup>73</sup> LA WRW/A, John Dickonson, Pilling, yeoman (1694).

5s.’ Henry Culshaw of Lathom, yeoman (1714) ‘A tresel French beans ... 3s.’ and John Tomlinson, Farington, a plasterer, (1727), left ‘in peays, Beans and Onions and other eatables ... 11s.6d.’<sup>74</sup> These valuable insights are indicative of a wider picture of domestic cultivation which raises a pertinent question. Did everyone grow pumpkins, parsnips, beans, peas and cabbages in their gardens? Thirsk thought so and suggested that “Roots in particular, helped all classes, for it was clear that anyone could grow them.”<sup>75</sup>

Thirsk also observed that a feature of English cookery books of the late Tudor period was the infrequent use of onions either in meat dishes or in pottage. Onions continued to be less popular than cabbages and roots and even in the late 1600s, were thought to be confined commercially to market gardens in north Somerset and the lowlands of north Kent for the Bristol and London markets respectively.<sup>76</sup> It is notable therefore that crops of onions appear in 34 inventories north of the Ribble and 10 in the south. The following evidence suggests that, as with the introduction of the potato, inhabitants of coastal locations where fertile land was at a premium, nevertheless exhibited a tendency towards calculated risk and innovation and that in several inventories, onions as a potentially commercial crop were grown alongside potatoes beans, hemp and flax.

In the latter cluster seven inventories from 1670 to 1727 list onions up to 10s in value grown by yeomen and husbandmen in Rufford. North of the Ribble, for itemisations of onions either growing or stored, it is apparent that every reference is from a coastal location. Further research beyond our core dataset reveals onions to have been grown in Ulverston, Bardsea, Silverdale, Heysham and Bolton-le-Sands, as well as in Cockerham, Pilling and Poulton. In

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<sup>74</sup> LA WCW, Allen Kelsall, Burscough, yeoman (1618); Peter Rigby, Appley in Wrightington, yeoman (1640); Henry Culshaw, Lathom, yeoman (1714); John Tomlinson, Farington, plasterer (1727); LA WRW/A, Thomas Sheirson, Hillam Lane, Cockerham, tailor (1681).

<sup>75</sup> Thirsk, *Food, Fads, Fashions*, pp. 71, 100.

<sup>76</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed.), *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 282, 373.

Poulton, six inventories give valuations of 10s and above. William Gardener (1659) had ‘onions ... £2.’ and John Story (1674) left ‘onions and hempe ... £4.10s.’<sup>77</sup>

The dietary importance of tree fruit, particularly apples and pears in the domestic economy of the early modern period cannot be over-emphasised. Apples were more often cooked than eaten raw and tin apple pans and roasters were commonly itemised in west Lancashire inventories. Apple and pear orchards were often carefully divided between sons and daughters in wills, and portions of annual fruit harvests granted to widows for life. Gentlemen and yeomen with sufficient internal spaces allocated ‘apple rooms/chambers’ and ‘apple lofts’ for storage over the winter months. Occasionally, inventories afford glimpses of apple varieties. Robert Jackson of Melling (1662) had harvested ‘Apples and Crabbs ... 14s.’ John Wearden of Penwortham (1694) bequeathed to his three daughters two lower house chambers whilst they remained unmarried “... & Two Aple Trees That is to say the styre tree & the yoolow [?] tree.’ ‘Styre’ was a type of crab or cider apple. Holt had declared that in Lancashire at the end of the eighteenth century, with the exception of the 64-acre market garden and apple orchard at Barton-on-Irwell which commenced c.1784 and supplied the needs of Manchester, “there are no orchards worthy [of] notice:- There is no cyder made in the county.”<sup>78</sup> However, inventoried evidence from the turn of the eighteenth century, suggests that west Lancashire was indeed a cider producing region. John Ainsworth of Little Crosby (1691) owned ‘a large arke & a Sider press ... £1.8s.’ James Tarleton, Liverpool, nailor (1709) kept ale in his cellar and ‘Eighteen Bott of Cider ... 9s.’ Thomas Vernon a gardener of Kirkdale (1690) had ‘in Sider and Bottles ... 15s.’ and both George Moorcroft of Liverpool (1682) and George Browne of Chorley (1683) sold ale, wine and cider from their inns. Preserving fruit would also have been part of a cook’s repertoire. Ellen Mollineux of

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<sup>77</sup> LA WRW/A, William Gardener, Poulton (1659), John Story, Poulton (1674).

<sup>78</sup> Holt, *General View*, p. 83.

Lydiate, widow, left in store ‘dried pears & Apples, potatoes & spices ... 2s.’<sup>79</sup> Outside the inventoried record, further evidence is found in the diary notes of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, who paid particular attention to his fruit orchards throughout his life, grafting and transplanting trees and experimenting with techniques for over-winter storage. Apples were commonly sold at Ormskirk and Liverpool markets and Blundell often produced a surplus which he accounted for. On 18 February 1703, for example, “I sold two bushels of Apples to Little-Mary for 9s. She took them with her to Liverpool.” On 1 April 1709, “I sent John Bannister to Liverpool to sell Apples.”<sup>80</sup> Whether the latter entry was for local sale or for ship’s provisions is not divulged. However, as the following discussion elucidates, the produce of the Lancashire plain was in demand far beyond the local marketplace.

### **Diet at sea**

Lancashire is a maritime county, therefore an important and rising area of demand in the region which influenced food production was the increasing need for victualling ships’ provisions. These were required for longer voyages and in ever greater amounts, as from the c.1680s onwards, the increase in both the coasting and trans-Atlantic trades generated three transformative effects on the economy of west Lancashire.<sup>81</sup> The town and port of Liverpool continued to expand in size and commercial influence over its hinterland, forever outstripping the capabilities of Lancaster, Poulton, Formby and Chester. Men and women from Scotland and the northern counties journeyed into and emigrated from Liverpool to the West Indies

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<sup>79</sup> LA WCW, Ralph Tyrer, Lathom, yeoman (1692); Peter Parr, Orrell, yeoman (1677); Cuthbert Keaquick, Latham, yeoman (1688); Robert Jackson, Melling, husbandman (1662); John Wearden, Penwortham, yeoman (1694); John Ainsworth, Little Crosby (1691); James Tarleton, Liverpool, nailor (1709); Thomas Vernon, Kirkdale, gardener, (1690); George Moorcroft, Liverpool, innkeeper (1682); George Browne, Chorley, innkeeper (1683); Ellen Mollineux, Lydiate, widow (1682); LA WRW/A, George Bickerstaffe, Hambleton, yeoman (1713).

<sup>80</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnall*, vol. I, pp. 30, 160, 206.

<sup>81</sup> The concentration on dairy production for overseas trade is analysed in chapter 4, pp. 194-203.

and the eastern seaboard of North America.<sup>82</sup> Ships en-route to and from Africa to the Americas also harboured and were provisioned in Liverpool. Investment in shipbuilding to transport greater quantities of goods and people to and from overseas destinations and around the English coast increased the requirement for labour, which in turn provided new and well-paid trades opportunities on land and in sea-faring apprenticeships. In no less than 163 or 39.0 per cent of the 418 probate documents for Liverpool between 1661 and 1700 the recorded occupation was ‘mariner’. Between 1701 and 1720, in a further 474 documents, 222 or 46.8 per cent, describe the decedent’s occupation as mariner, navigator, or commander.

William Trenow was commander and part-owner of the Liverpool vessels *Dilligence* from May 1684 to June 1688 and subsequently *Pearl*, from September 1688 to December 1694. Trenow further acted as accountant to the shareholders. His cashbook is an extremely rare survivor of its kind which over seventy-six pages provides painstakingly itemised details of every repair to the vessels while in Liverpool or overseas locations. Trenow also acquired and accounted for victuals and provisions for tradesmen and labourers, and for himself, and while at sea usually a ship’s mate, carpenter, bosun and two crew, three apprentice boys and two or three paying passengers.<sup>83</sup> *Dilligence* may have been the larger vessel, undertaking voyages to Bergen via Rotterdam, Bordeaux via Dublin (twice), once to Virginia via Jamaica, and in 1687 a return voyage to Jamaica. *Pearl* also sailed to Jamaica in 1689 and to Stavanger via Belfast in 1691. Most of her intermediate sailings however were in the coasting trade, to Belfast, Dublin and Cork, Holyhead, Beaumaris and Caernarfon, and to Bristol, Barnstaple and Padstow. Trenow’s cashbook therefore offers a valuable insight into the on-board diet

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<sup>82</sup> P. Clemens, ‘The Rise of Liverpool 1665-1750’, *EcHR*, Vol. 29, (1976), pp. 211-25; John Elton, ‘Liverpool Lists of Emigrants to America, 1697-1706,’ *THSLC*, vol. xvii (1901).

<sup>83</sup> LA DDBB8/3 Cash book of William Trenow of Liverpool, Blundell Collection.

which could be expected on both trans-Atlantic voyages and those between the English, Welsh and Irish ports.

In many respects, the provisions brought onboard while undertaking repairs and re-fits at Liverpool between voyages, and the victuals consumed while at sea, are scarcely different to those found in the garner and prepared in the kitchen of any husbandman or yeoman on land. Dock-side trades such as carpenters, blacksmiths, and coopers as well as porters and day-labourers expected to receive beer, bread, cheese and tobacco as perquisites to their wages, as would any harvest workers or skilled on-site tradesmen. The dietary requisite for beer of varying strengths was emphasised by Muldrew as an important component of meals and as a regular source of calories at work. On board, the ubiquitous and traditional thick soup or ‘pottage’ referred to by Thirsk as providing a foundation for sustenance of infinite variation, while not referenced specifically would have been served up as regularly at sea as it was on land.<sup>84</sup> Trenow frequently recorded purchases of its constituent ingredients as ‘oatmeall’, ‘carats’, ‘Turnups and Cabadges’, ‘a barell of pease’, and ‘for peces of beefe cabidge and tornips.’ For the longer voyages, particularly from Dublin to Jamaica, ‘10 beere casques of beefe...£6.15s.’, ‘2 barells of Poork ...£2.15s.’, ‘6 hodgsets [hogsheads c.324 gallons total] of beere goeing to sea...£3.15s.’, ‘1100 [11 cwt] of biskett...£7.2s.6d.’, ‘for 100 [1 cwt] bootter and 200 [2 cwt] Cheese goeing to sea...£1.16s.6d.’, ‘2 bushels of pase...’ and ‘2 gals brandy 3 barels small beare & tornapes...£1.7s.6d.’ comprised what must have formed a standard victualling foundation which with variations of scale was multiplied across innumerable sailing vessels for the following two centuries.<sup>85</sup> Only while in Jamaica would the crew have experienced new flavours and unusual food types. In provisioning the homeward leg, Trenow

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<sup>84</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp.70, 123-5; Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 9; For a practical preparation of this dish, Tom Cunliffe, *Boats that Built Britain*, Episode 1, “The Matthew, 1497”, first broadcast on BBC 4 (4<sup>th</sup> May 2010).

<sup>85</sup> Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the British Shipping Industry in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London and New York, 1962), pp. 337, 366.



purchased ‘Rum, Suger & Lime Joyes...£2.10s.’, ‘[sweet] potatoes and yames...15s.’, ‘fresh fish...11s.’ as well as two hundredweight of locally baked bread and on three occasions “the Jamaica speciality” as Davis phrased it, ‘fresh Turtle’, ‘for Toortell £1.15s.’ and ‘pd for fresh Toortell for ye men...£1.8s.’ Following Davis’ example from 1680 this equates to approximately 1 ½ cwt at 2 ½ d per pound.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, the principal aspects of specific relevance to this discussion are the high calorific quality and variety of food overall in the regularity of supplies of fresh bread, meat and vegetables secured for each voyage for both *Dilligence* and *Pearl*, irrespective of their destinations. Ships’ victualling and on-board diet for men who crewed in either the merchant fleet or in the coasting trade during the 1600s appears not to have formerly been analysed. Conversely for those who served in the Royal Navy in the eighteenth-century victualling has been relatively well documented, not least by N. A. M. Rodger whose path-breaking book on life in the Georgian navy dispelled several myths and presumptions. He argued “that another advantage of service in the Navy was the food ... the naval diet was good and plentiful by the standards of the day.”<sup>87</sup> Rodger compared naval expense per man on victuals as higher, and food quality as being generally better than on merchant vessels. In both cases he relied on the contemporary testimony of mariner Edward Barlow who kept journals of his voyages from 1659-1703 and who “denounced bad food in the king’s ships and worse in merchantmen.”<sup>88</sup> Rodger also accepted however that it is much more difficult to find evidence for the provisioning of merchant ships. Allowing that every master chose to budget as they saw fit, Trenow’s *Dilligence* and *Pearl* appear to have been comfortably well-provisioned. To counter the monotony of salt-preserved barrels of beef, pork and herrings, hard bread and

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<sup>86</sup> Davis, *British Shipping*, p. 353.

<sup>87</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986) pp. 86, 90-1, 101-3; Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London, 2004).

<sup>88</sup> Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p.132, *Wooden World*, pp. 116-7.

‘biskett’ by the hundredweight, a high incidence of fresh meat, vegetables and soft bread were received on board and accounted for throughout the cashbook entries. This may in part be due to the operational benefit of decanting freight and two paying passengers in Dublin where for example, on 19 October 1687 Trenow bought ‘Corne fowles & Tornops ... 11s.2d.’ and additional ‘fresh beefe ... £2.17s.’ Exactly one year later in Dublin, while provisioning for the onward voyage to Jamaica, he purchased ‘6 quarters of fres beefe ... £1.14s.6d.’, ‘soft bread and freash beefe ... 11s.’ and ‘for potatas and fresh fish ... 4s.6d.’ It is also apparent that on each voyage to Dublin, Trenow and the younger crew ate on shore, albeit charged to the owners. Dublin 8 December 1684: ‘beere for ye meen and boys diet on shore ... 9s.4d.’ and ‘for my own diet Ashore ... 8s.’ Davis, who lamented that less than thirty extant account books such as Trenow’s describe the provisioning, victualling and ship repairs for similar voyages, offers just one other example of a master’s account from *Cadiz Merchant*, which cleared Gravesend for Smyrna on 25 September 1678. The following January, while at Leghorn, Captain Johnson paid in ‘pieces of eight reals’ value 4s.6d each, ‘fresh meate ... 5r.’ and ‘Cabidges, sallets and greene herbes ... 1r.’<sup>89</sup>

Several areas for consideration arise from these discussions. It may be significant that Liverpool was not a Royal Naval dockyard. Of the 385 inventories which identified mariners, just 9, or 2.4 per cent were navy men. As the study of William Trenow’s account book suggests, shareholders of merchant and coasting vessels of all tonnages great and small, were consortia of owner-mariners, local merchants, yeomen and widows who were not subject to huge naval demands and industrial scale contracts. Trenow owned a partial share in both *Dilligence* and *Pearl*. Other shareholders included an alderman, a local gentleman, a mariner, a widow, a spinster and two other men whose status was unrecorded by Trenow.<sup>90</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>89</sup> Davis, *English Shipping*, p. 352.

<sup>90</sup> LA DDBB8/3, Trenow, cash book.

they made innumerable transactions with local suppliers for fresh meat, vegetables and fruit. I noted earlier for example, that Nicholas Blundell sold apples to a local woman to sell in Liverpool and subsequently sent one of his servants to do the same. Holt also observed, that “It is generally believed, that there is not a town in the kingdom, London excepted, better provided with vegetables, roots &c, than the town of Liverpool.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore we may conjecture that food aboard trading vessels was generally healthy and plentiful and we will discuss in the chapter which follows, how the farmers of the Lancashire plain adapted to increase their production of meat and dairy products to the meet the demands of the growing port and town.

## Conclusions

This chapter has traced key continuities in the production of staples, particularly in the cultivation of barley and oats. Several points may be concluded from the collective evidence derived from inventories in our dataset. As seen from the crop diversity tables above, incidences of cultivation were evident in 85.3 per cent to 92.5 per cent of all agricultural inventories from c.1660 until the 1720s. Thereafter, over the following twenty years, a slight diminution in the cultivation of these core staples was apparent, more so south of the Ribble. Similarly, incidences of wheat cultivation on the southern plains fell from 27.7 per cent after c.1660 to 19 per cent of inventories until c.1740, whereas production north of the Ribble was evident at around 21 per cent from c.1660-1720. There was also significant diversification and sub-regional specialisation in those areas which responded to nascent urbanisation and catered for the coastal trade. Potatoes were introduced to the coastal townships in the early 1660s. Within forty years they were to be found in just under 30 per cent of all inventories south of the Ribble. Production of grass and hay increased progressively from 68.9 per cent

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<sup>91</sup> Holt, *General View*, p.79.

to 82.7 per cent of inventories in the south, as gradually, more land was turned over to pasture. However, the traditional crops, blended corn, rye, peas and vetches, became marginalised. North of the Ribble, cultivation of the industrial crops, hemp and flax also declined, to 5.1 per cent and 4.4 per cent of inventories respectively by c.1720s, as imports through Poulton increased.<sup>92</sup>

Although inventories record only non-perishable food, as for example, ‘meal’ (flour), salted preserved pork, beef and fish, stored cheese, fruit and potatoes, in west Lancashire the relationship between “standards of living to the nature of work,” to borrow Muldrew’s phrase, appears to have been positive.<sup>93</sup> Inventories, even those of low value, suggest that in general, from the late sixteenth into the eighteenth centuries, excepting periods of adverse weather events, food was invariably plentiful in supply and in variety, both for home consumption as well as for local markets and ships’ provisions. Regarding livestock and crop diversity, the produce of the Lancashire plains on both sides of the Ribble provided a balanced range of dietary nourishment which provided sufficient calories to enable work to be done and industriousness to be sustained and accomplished. Farming strategies evolved during the second half of the seventeenth century. Oxen were gradually replaced by horses as we discussed in chapters 1 & 2, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, increasing the cultivation of grass and hay enabled modest-sized herds of dairy cows to facilitate a greater production of butter and cheese. Regarding arable strategies, whether calculated risks in planting out a field of potatoes outweighed the safer options of sowing blended seed, rye or hemp, such choices appear to have made the most of the knowledge available to capitalise on emerging market demands.

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<sup>92</sup> Evans, *Poulton*, p. 39.

<sup>93</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, p. 3.

## Chapter 4 Developments in rural commerce and urban manufacturing trades.

“These were not people who depended upon the gentry for their living. They had to look after themselves and make their own livelihood. It is surprising that the most substantial achievements in the early stages of the industrial revolution were financed by these small men, building up their savings slowly...”<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter our discussions focus on two key areas of economic growth, both of which germinated in the Lancashire plain south of the Ribble in the second half of the seventeenth century. The first concerns the development of commercial activities by rural families. This emanated from existing agricultural production (discussed in the preceding chapters) and was enhanced in response to commercial opportunities occasioned by the sustained growth of Liverpool and Ormskirk. From c.1680s, ascending demands for comestibles and provisions took dairy farming and brewing to formerly unprecedented levels of market-oriented production. The second key area of growth occurred in the towns themselves and was manifested in diversification and specialisations in trades which occurred in urban manufacturing. In the centre and east of the county, a seismic and much-studied transformation took place as the traditional woollen-fustian output of Bolton, Rochdale and Manchester developed by the 1760s into cotton-textile manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> Industrial activity in the west of the county and its contribution to the transformation of the economy and development of Lancashire overall in the period prior to c.1720 has been less well explored. We will see from probate evidence that manufacturing and production activities in the towns and townships of the Lancashire Plain, though not the crucible of early industrialisation,

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England Collected Essays* (London, 1984), p. 181. This is a reference to the pastoral farmers in Staffordshire who supplemented their income with part-time rural industrial enterprises.

<sup>2</sup> John T. Swain, *Industry Before the Industrial Revolution North-east Lancashire c.1500-1640* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 108-162; John K. Walton, *Lancashire a social history 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 60-83; Walton, ‘Proto-industrialisation and the first industrial revolution: the case of Lancashire’, in Pat Hudson (Ed.), *Regions and industries A perspective on the industrial revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 41-68; Geoffrey Timmins, *Made in Lancashire A History of Regional Industrialisation* (Manchester and New York, 1998); Jon Stobart, *The First Industrial Region North-west England c.1700-60* (Manchester, 2004).

nevertheless contributed much to its early phases by partaking in different processes of change at a similar time.

Inventories are uniquely illuminating documents with which to enhance our understanding of prevailing rural and town economies during this earlier period. Testamentary evidence provides abundant examples of the rapidly developing commercial enterprises of an economically active rural and urban society which invested in industrial activities during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is clearly apparent from the diverse array of tools, apparatus and capital assets evaluated in the probate record that many ordinary individuals who had ability and resources, attempted some involvement with a secondary activity or supplementary source of income at some stage in their lives. Indeed, the idea that whole families across the social spectrum worked towards achieving additional and satisfactory economic objectives from diverse sources is irrefutable. This is a key factor in our understanding the motivations of rural and urban society in west Lancashire prior to the industrial revolution. Even if not ‘industrial’ *per se*, both the urban and rural working population appears to have been broadly, diversely and inherently ‘industrious.’ The concept of an ‘industrious revolution’ on an English stage, which preceded the industrial revolution and placed it in a wider historical setting, has been coined by Jan de Vries. He proposed that the reallocation of household-based resources created “a supply-side phenomenon” which increased supplies of marketed commodities, labour and the demand for market-supplied goods.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a collective, goal-oriented industriousness was perceived to have germinated in early-modern society. Changing economic functions were performed in a domestic rural environment after the mid-seventeenth century. There is abundant evidence of (for example) spinning wheels, weaving looms, cheese presses and brewing equipment in

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<sup>3</sup> Jan de Vries, ‘The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution’, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 54 no. 2, (June 1994), p. 249; de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, (Cambridge, 2008).

addition to the ubiquitous agricultural equipment itemised in west Lancashire inventories. This evidence is persuasive in upholding theories of industriousness within the ‘family economy’ proposed by de Vries, and the contribution, in time and labour, made by countless women and children who were involved in spinning “the millions of yards of woollen yarn that went into making English cloth” analysed by Muldrew.<sup>4</sup>

A broad base of essential manufacturing trades which included carpenters, coopers, shoemakers, smiths, tanners and wrights had traditionally practised to serve their local markets and continued to do so. The traditional manufacturing methods of many small-scale rural craft producers were little affected by the early industrial age. As we shall discuss however, other trades developed in new and specialised trajectories as developments in manufacturing processes, technologies and operational scale expanded in west Lancashire towns during the pre-industrial period. In the third quarter of the seventeenth century the larger urban wholesale metal-smithies, rope-makers, breweries and tobacco houses, increased production as importations of raw materials and commodities increased. This chapter explores several key strands of these economic developments, in the rural townships of west Lancashire, in the urban settings of Ormskirk and Wigan, and as Stobart observed for the period 1701-60, the “important long-term trend [for specialist trades] was their increasing orientation towards Liverpool.”<sup>5</sup>

Even in the early decades of the eighteenth century, manufacturing on an industrial scale in the west of Lancashire remained in the hands of relatively small-scale family producers, and yet cumulatively as Thirsk has observed, their achievements were substantial.<sup>6</sup> Many

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<sup>4</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution* pp. 6-10, 96. Craig Muldrew, ‘Th’ancient Distaff and ‘Whirling Spindle’: measuring the contribution of spinning to household earnings and the national economy in England, 1550-1770.’ *ECHR*, 65, 2 (2012), pp.498-526, p.498.

<sup>5</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Thirsk, *Rural Economy*, p.181.

decedents in the rural probate record were nominated by their appraisers as ‘husbandman’ or ‘yeoman’ according to their local status and irrespective of their income sources. It was these men, as well as the local gentry, who adapted their traditional patterns of production and who invested their surpluses and the labour time of their families, from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, in response to the ‘urban renaissance’ of Ormskirk and the progressive commercial development of Liverpool.<sup>7</sup> This was apparent in the provision of cheese and beer for those who, as we have exemplified in our discussions of the ships *Dilligence* and *Pearl*, worked the Atlantic, Baltic and coastal trade routes.<sup>8</sup>

Stobart presented the emerging economic region of Lancashire to Cheshire from 1700 to 1760 as an exemplar of instigation and development. He observed that until the 1770s Liverpool’s urban growth was greater than Manchester’s and that the port formed the principal external link between coal and salt in the mineral based economy which was centred on Wigan, Warrington, Northwich and Chester.<sup>9</sup> Regarding trades activities in the service sector, he offered these clear foundation points. Probate evidence suggested that the overall economic importance of service industries in this region increased during the eighteenth century. He observed that the service sector has been better represented in the probate record than that of manufacturing. Also, notably, that by 1760 almost three-quarters of all service sector tradesmen listed in the probate records in Lancashire and Cheshire dwelt and worked in the towns. This would not have been the case even fifty years earlier. Stobart concluded that “demand from rural hinterlands stimulates the provision of services in a centre,” which promoted a “territorial rural-urban relationship,” whereby the sustained growth of towns become symbiotically linked to population expansion, an increase in demand for central

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* Oxford, 1989, reprint, 2002),

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 3, pp. 173-6.

<sup>9</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, pp. 58, 130-31, 140; fn15, p. 171; appendix 2, ‘Probate Records as sources of occupational information’, pp. 229-33.



placed services, and an expansion in rural production and/or localised economic specialisations.<sup>10</sup> It is evident however, that a high proportion of rural decedents of all social ranks, tradesmen included, continued to be involved in agricultural production to a greater or lesser extent in the early eighteenth century. Agricultural activity is represented in 82.6 per cent of the 620 township inventories south of the Ribble between 1700 - c.1740.<sup>11</sup> Walton observed that, notwithstanding the labour pressures occasioned by competition from manufacturing and mining in parts of the county, “Agriculture still dominated the economy of most of Lancashire in 1770.” Whittle subsequently offered a similar observation that throughout the early modern period, England generally “remained a rural society. 95 per cent of the population lived outside large urban centres in 1520 and 79 per cent in 1750.”<sup>12</sup> It is also apparent from the inventories in our dataset, that manufacturing was often represented alongside agricultural activities, particularly south of the Ribble. The definition and frequency of by-employments was visited by Keibek and Shaw-Taylor. They concluded “that inventories vastly exaggerate by-employment incidence [and therefore] by-employments were not nearly as ubiquitous as has been assumed.”<sup>13</sup> For our purposes, the increased evidence for rural industries overrides the strict requirement for quantification. Perhaps it may also be observed that inventories *per se* are incapable of vastly exaggerating anything. Only our subjective interpretation is capable of such assessments.

Healey observed that “In seventeenth century England, there was an ingrained culture of ‘making shift’.” “Not only the poor, but middling households drew income from multiple

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<sup>10</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, pp. 139-40, p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> General Introduction. Tables 1 & 2, Inventory records, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p. 76; Jane Whittle, ‘Land and People’, in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> Sebastian A.J. Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, ‘Early modern rural by-employments: a re-examination of the probate inventory evidence’ *AgHR*, vol. 61 (2013) pp. 244-281.

sources.”<sup>14</sup> One of these key sources lay in the purchase of land itself. Myriad purchases of additional closes or small parcels of land are documented in west Lancashire wills on either side of the Ribble, throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These often apparently minor land acquisitions nevertheless augmented an individual’s stock and status. Heads of households were able to finance loans, extend local credits and in Thirsk’s phrase by “building up their savings slowly,” take up commercial opportunities of their own free will and application which presented themselves. At death, they were usefully bequeathed to younger sons, unmarried daughters, grandchildren or nephews. In 1682 for example, Richard Marsden, yeoman of Croston, bequeathed to his nephew Richard “an absolute estate of Inheritance in fee Simple of Certain smale pingotts Quillets or parcels of land in Croston w<sup>ch</sup> I lately purchased of Richard Nelson of Croston, Gent.’ In 1703, Roger Higham, husbandman of Eccleston-juxta-Croston gave a dwelling house to his daughter Mary “& a p<sup>cell</sup> of land thereunto belonging which I lately purchased of Richard Crichlow.”<sup>15</sup> Often, these additional pieces of land were detached from the home estate. In 1703, Henry Jackson, yeoman of Much Hoole referred in his will to “messuages, burgages tenements and lands of inheritance scituate ... in Preston, Freckleton, Hoole, Longton or elsewhere.” These disparate lands were also a hedge against debts in death. John Gardner, yeoman of Bankhouses, Cockerham (1698), willed “that tenem<sup>t</sup> called Preston Mosses which I bought of Thomas Gardner of Harestones to be sold if necessary.”<sup>16</sup> These examples represent a few among many. Creating and augmenting savings over several years in the early modern period was not straightforward, however. It was often done by investing in goods and equipment, spinning wheels, weaving looms and their accoutrements, brewing vessels and their utensils

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<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Healey, *The First Century of Welfare, Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 113, 127-8.

<sup>15</sup> LA WCW, Richard Marsden, yeoman, Croston (1682); Roger Higham, husbandman, Eccleston-juxta-Croston (1703).

<sup>16</sup> LA WCW, Henry Jackson, yeoman, Much Hoole (1703); LA WRW/A, John Gardner, yeoman, Bankhouses, Cockerham (1698).

for example, and spreading household occupations and risk. Whittle recently observed that “In the era before formal banking, land was the most secure means of investing and storing wealth. Land generated wealth through farming, through tenancy rents and through resources such as timber and pasture.”<sup>17</sup> It is just such income diversity in land use have that I have exemplified in the case study of Edmond Smoult of Lathom in the general introduction.<sup>18</sup>

Such industriousness was only possible given that perhaps the most economically beneficial circumstances underpinning rural society in west Lancashire during the early modern period were the sureness of tenancy arrangements. The widespread practice of issuing renewable long-term leases contracted over three lives enabled entrepreneurial activities to remain in the hands of agricultural producers.<sup>19</sup> This secure form of heritable tenure, under which most families held their land and to which new lives could be appended, encouraged investment in and improvement of even moderate estates. Improvements and extensions to dwellings and investment in good quality farm buildings are discussed in the following chapter.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, opportunities to acquire and lease additional parcels of land with which to augment land holdings ensured that “rural industry was most likely to emerge where freeholds and tenants had strong property rights or where partible inheritance produced fragmented landholdings.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Whittle, ‘Land and People’ p.154.

<sup>18</sup> LA WCW, Edmond Smoult, Lathom, yeoman (1597) General Introduction, pp. 24-33.

<sup>19</sup> A. J. Gritt, ‘The Operation of Lifeleasehold in south-west Lancashire, 1649-97’, *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 53 (2005) pp. 1-23.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter 5, pp. 235-48.

<sup>21</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, p. 11.

## **Rural trades and commercial enterprises**

To provide a sub-regional overview of comparative trade numbers and diversity of occupations in the extant probate record an analysis has been undertaken of the occurrences of tradesmen and men of rank from the rural and coastal townships south of the Ribble. In the table ‘Occupations’ below, for clear periodic comparisons the columns have been divided between 1660 and 1700, and 1701-40. To encompass a broad geographical range, and to highlight the increasing importance of rural trade connections with towns and with Liverpool in particular the scope of the core dataset has been extended to include documentary evidence from a further sixteen townships which lie between Ormskirk and the fringes of Liverpool, and to Skelmersdale and Parbold in the east.<sup>22</sup> The documents number 3026, and in this extended dataset include all extant inventories, and wills and letters of administration without inventories which nevertheless state the rank or occupation of individual males. In all cases rank and/or trade has been credited as that recorded on the document and I have throughout this dissertation recorded only that which is relevant to the named individual subject of each document or set of documents. The table of occupations below reveals that in numerical order of frequency in the probate record south of the Ribble between 1660 and 1740, by far the most common record is that of yeomen at 862, husbandmen 846 and gentlemen/bachelors 109.<sup>23</sup> There are 23 vicar/clerks and 20 esquires. The most common rural tradesmen to feature in the probate record were 71 linen weavers, 52 house carpenters/joiners, 47 tailors, 41 blacksmiths, 31 shoemakers, 16 butchers, 15 tanners and 14 millers. Of the sea trades, there are records for 31 mariner/navigators. These results are broadly comparable to Evans’ study of Cambridgeshire which in similarity with Lancashire

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<sup>22</sup> These include: Altcar, Aughton, Bickerstaff, Downholland, Eccleston & Heskin, Gt. & Lt. Crosby, Halsall, Ince Blundell, Litherland, Lydiate, Maghull, Melling, Parbold, Skelmersdale, and Wroughton.

<sup>23</sup> The term ‘bachelor’ refers to unmarried younger sons of gentlemen or the lesser nobility.

during the early-modern period could be described as “a mainly agricultural county.”<sup>24</sup>

However whereas Cambridgeshire was unable to develop an industrial or manufacturing infrastructure, the following examples show that in the western plain of Lancashire, in the expanding hinterlands of Ormskirk and Liverpool, commercial specialisations in agriculture, particularly in processing dairy products and in brewing, contributed to and augmented economic growth.

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<sup>24</sup> Nesta Evans, ‘The Occupations and Status of Male Testators in Cambridgeshire, 1551-1800, in Arkell *et al*, *When Death do us Part* pp. 176-188.

**Table 25. Coastal & rural townships, south of the Ribble, recorded occupations from probate documents.**

Social rank or trade description:	1660-1700	1701-40	Total	% age of total		1660-1700	1701-40	Total	% age of total
1: High rank, professional, medical.					7: Leather trades.				
esquire	10	10	20		skinner	0	1	1	
gentleman	44	39	83		tanner	9	6	15	
batchelor	17	9	26		dyer	0	0	0	
clerk/vicar	9	14	23		shoemaker	12	19	31	
			152	5.09				51	1.68
2: Agricultural & fishing.					8: Service trades.				
yeoman	332	530	862	28.49	tailor	21	26	47	
husbandman	438	408	846	27.96	apothecary/surgeon	0	2	2	
labourer	3	11	14		maltster	0	1	1	
fisherman	3	5	8		millar	5	9	14	
			1730	57.5	flaxman	1	2	3	
3: Construction trades.					school master	3	1	4	
house carpenter	22	23	45		gardener	1	1	2	
bricklayer/maker	3	5	8		collier	3	1	4	
free mason	5	4	9		musician	0	2	2	
joiner/plasterer/glazer	8	7	15					79	2.55
			77	2.55	9: Retail trades.				
4: Skilled metal trades.					mercator/grocer/victualer	3	5	8	
blacksmith	25	16	41		innkeeper/brewer	1	10	11	
nailsmith/hookmaker	6	2	8		butcher	8	8	16	

clock/watchmaker	1	1	2		chapman	1	3	4	
gunsmith	0	1	1		bookseller	0	1	1	
			52	1.72				40	1.32
5: Textile trades.					10: Sea trades				
linen webster	38	33	71	2.35	mariner	10	11	21	
other weaver	4	1	5		sailor/seaman	2	3	5	
felt maker	1	0	1		navigator	2	3	5	
whitener	1	0	1					31	1.02
			78	2.58	miscellaneous	6	4	10	0.33
6: Wood trades.					not recorded.	413	297	700	23.13
wheel/miln/wright	6	3	9			1483	1543	3026	100
cooper	4	3	7						
			16	0.53					

In trade numbers there are 76 principal occupation weavers and a further 23 decedents who possessed one or more pairs of looms who were described as yeomen or husbandmen or were not ascribed an occupation or trade. This circumstance invites investigation. Within my extended dataset of occupations south of the Ribble there are 38 linen weavers as defined by their trade from 1661-1700 and 33 from 1701-1740. However, there are also a further 23 decedents who are described as yeomen or husbandmen, or whose prime occupation was left unrecorded by their appraisers, who nevertheless possessed weaving looms and associated gear such as reeds and warping troughs. Eight of these inventories are concentrated in Lathom and Scarisbrick but occupational dualities of yeoman/husbandman/ weaver occur in inventories across western Lancashire. Henry Such of Scarisbrick, yeoman (1665), for example left an inventory valued at £81.18s. His mixed bovine herd, horses, swine and his arable crops amounted to £19.15s.4d. and £16.18s.7d. respectively, or 44.8 per cent of his wealth. Such was also evaluated for ‘two spinning wheils ... 3s.’ ‘in hemp ... 17s.’ and ‘Two paire of loumes with reeds / and all other things belonging to the / webstars traid ... £1.’ Such was described as ‘yeoman’, yet his commercial interest is only revealed through sight of the document itself.<sup>25</sup> Were he to have possessed but one pair of looms, we could account for weaving as his secondary occupation to agriculture, his daughters or maidservants like so many others, employed in spinning the hemp into yarn on the two wheels. On this point, Muldrew has shown that “by 1750 spinning was undoubtedly the most common paid female work ... Only agricultural labour could possibly have employed more people.”<sup>26</sup> Yet Henry Such owned two pairs of looms. This capability for cloth production suggests market-oriented manufacturing activity, whether sold locally or send overseas through Liverpool which may have involved Such’s son or an apprentice weaver. However, it also leaves an

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<sup>25</sup> LA WCW, Henry Such, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1665).

<sup>26</sup> Muldrew, ‘Th’ancient Distaff’ pp.498-526.



unanswerable question as to how much time Such apportioned between agricultural production and weaving, and even perhaps whether Henry Such wove at all? Nevertheless, the activities of the Such household exemplify Thirsk's observations on part-time rural industrial enterprises and those of de Vries, who linked these market-oriented activities with new forms of domestic comfort and consumer aspirations.<sup>27</sup> These details from one household suggest a broader picture of widespread rural industriousness which would appear to have pre-existed and characterised the middling-levels of society in west Lancashire.<sup>28</sup> The consumer supply opportunities occasioned by the growth of international trade in Liverpool, the coal-based metal working industries in Wigan and seeds of the specialisation of urban leisure and services trades in Ormskirk, provided further impetus for an already industrious rural mind-set to blossom during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Many of the rural trades' inventories, and those of yeoman/husbandman from west Lancashire evaluate movable manufacturing equipment such as cheese presses, forge and forming tools, moulds, unused fuel, stocks of unprocessed raw materials, part-manufactured and finished goods, which have often been itemised in scrupulous detail. As Arkell explains, "the quality of detail is usually as important as the quantity because the relatively few inventories that list and value the equipment and materials of a particular trade can often illuminate it with great clarity."<sup>29</sup> Inventories also reveal evidence of the utilisation of internal spaces and out-buildings. They indicate that rural farmsteads were adapted and extended to accommodate commercial cheese-making and brewing capabilities for example. Correspondingly, large urban industrial sites came into being which must have employed many skilled journeymen, labourers and apprentices. We discussed in the general

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<sup>27</sup> Thirsk, *Rural Economy*, p. 181; Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 54 no. 2 (June 1994), p.249, de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 122-33.

<sup>28</sup> General Introduction, pp. 24-33, LA WCW, Edmond Smoult, Lathom, yeoman (1597).

<sup>29</sup> Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, (Oxford, 2004) p. 79.

introduction that it was not the purpose of inventories to record occupations, nor was it their function to note servant or labour numbers in domestic households or commercial premises. Probate accounts however, though rarely retained in testamentary bundles in Lancashire, recorded the debts of the deceased and, in rare instances, the wage arrears of servants and employed workers.<sup>30</sup> These provide insights into employment numbers at specific locations. One such is revealed in the probate account of Timothy Mutch, the administrator for the ‘milner’ Thomas Cooks alias Garrett of Liverpool in 1702.

Cooks part-owned a horse-driven grain mill in Sefton ‘of two blind horses [and] a two third part of a little miln.’ Cooks left a modest estate valued at £38.12s.4d.<sup>31</sup> As his ‘Accomptant’, Mutch was obliged to pay for Cook’s funeral, church dues at Sefton and Liverpool and to settle the final quarterly arrears ‘For Mens Wages’. These itemised sums were owed to four full-time and one part-time or apprentice worker employed by Cooks. The record is informative in three ways. Firstly, it shows that even this relatively small but productive enterprise required 5.5 men to be operational, if one assumes Cooks actively managed his mill. Secondly the account informs us that Robert Hindley, the highest paid worker was owed £2.10s. for three months and thus earned £10. per annum. Thirdly, although we have Cook’s inventory, will and account his employees, Robert and John Hindley, Peter Elton, Thomas Rigby and Edmond Henshall are subsequently absent from the probate record. However, in the discussions which follow, in which neither employment numbers nor wage costs are known in either rural or urban settings, Cooks’ mill may be considered as a general indicator, albeit a crude one with which to envisage the comparative operational scale of other commercial premises. Wage comparisons particularly urban ones are fraught with

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<sup>30</sup> Survival of probate accounts vary from county to county. Very few have survived from Lancashire for example, although 13,000 have survived from Kent. Jeff and Nancy Cox, ‘Probate 1500-1800: a System in Transition,’ in Arkell *et al*, *When Death*, pp. 34-6.

<sup>31</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Cooks alias Garrett, Liverpool (1702).

inconsistencies and most studies reflect farm and seasonal wages. Robert Hindley's three month wage arrears appear to fall on the low side if compared with the studies undertaken by Phelps Brown & Hopkins in 1981 and more recently by Clark in 2007 which were cited by Muldrew.<sup>32</sup> Hindley's earnings were around 8-10d. per day compared with 10.2-15d. but we cannot know whether his wages were augmented by food and drink, particularly in beer, in accommodation or other perquisites or, if co-worker John Hindley was Robert's son or nephew, his arrears of £2.6s. would have bolstered the family income considerably. Nevertheless, food prices were falling at the turn of the eighteenth century. Wheat, barley and rye prices fluctuated around 20 per cent lower than a century earlier. Thirsk described the "relentlessly falling prices of grain" which had contributed to agricultural hardship in the early seventeenth-century, although as Wrightson more recently observed "While wage *rates* grew only slowly in the course of the period, the *real incomes* of wage earners rose substantially for the first time in more than a century ... for wage earners the struggle to provide for a family had been massively eased by the turn of the eighteenth century."<sup>33</sup>

### **Cheese and Butter:**

Butter and cheese making rose to commercial prominence south of the Ribble in the second half of the seventeenth century and as I hinted in chapter 1, when we discussed the average size of cattle herds, demand for dairy products continued to increase during the early eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Manufacture of these specific comestibles became a speciality of rural inland farmsteads and, from pasture to product, developed into an industrial process at a domestic level. Thirsk observed that in the north of England, in Cheshire and Lancashire in particular, "A strong commercial spirit swamped the dairying scene by the end of the

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<sup>32</sup> Henry Phelps Brown, Sheila V. Hopkins, Gregory Clark, in Muldrew, *Food Energy*, pp. 208-10.

<sup>33</sup> Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain*, (London 2000) p.230.

<sup>34</sup> Chapter 1, p. 89.

seventeenth century.”<sup>35</sup> In the townships of the Lancashire plain, the springboard for increased output of either product was not initially driven by demand from a larger population *per se* but from the increase in overseas export-import trade which flowed in ever-increasing volumes through Liverpool. Comparably, elsewhere in England at this time it was only where the pull of the London market had also shaped regional agricultural output, from Cambridge, the upper Stour valley of Suffolk and the estuarial marshland fringes of Essex, that specialist dairy production eclipsed that in the northwest. Holderness estimated that East Anglia probably supplied about one third of the capital’s dairy produce in the early eighteenth century. Borsay also noted the port centres which served rich agricultural regions. These included Kings Lynn, Wells and Yarmouth in East Anglia, also Chichester and Portsmouth on the south coast.<sup>36</sup> No other processed comestible had formerly been the subject of this level of increased production. Butter and cheese continued to be made as a specialty for home and local market consumption in Derbyshire, Warwickshire, The Forest of Dean, Herefordshire’s Golden Valley and Northeast Wiltshire.<sup>37</sup> However in west Lancashire production diverged onto trajectories which were unthinkable before the 1670s. Manufacturing procedures required specialised equipment, purpose-made utensils, cleanliness and connoisseurship to create products of a consistently high standard and merchantable quality. In farming environments, it was yeomen, husbandmen, tradesmen, and their wives, daughters and servants who, with relatively small herds, risked their financial surpluses and invested their time to develop new skills in becoming specialists in butter and cheese-making.

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<sup>35</sup> Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England, Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1700* (London, 2007) p. 281.

<sup>36</sup> B. A. Holderness, ‘East Anglia and the Fens’, in *AHEW*, vol. v.i, *Regional Farming Systems 1640-1750*, pp. 231-3; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p.24.

<sup>37</sup> *AHEW*, vol. v.i, pp. 142, 165, 292-3, 324.

Butter and cheese consumption were comparatively rare in England until the late 1500s.

Thirsk has suggested that even until the 1650s, other than in country areas, wherein “all market towns had a stall for cheese sellers, who were often countrywomen coming in for the day to sell from their small home dairies,” it was not until 1656 “when Parliamentary armies relied heavily on cheese ... to feed the soldiery going to Ireland,” that cheese production and dairying in general was encouraged, and accepted by social ranks above that of the labourer.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in the north-west of England traditional pasture-farming for dairying became concentrated in the south and west of Cheshire, and in Lancashire it was located south-west of the county between Preston and Liverpool and eastwards in the Forest of Bowland.<sup>39</sup> Both the evolution and the consumption of Cheshire and Lancashire cheeses are however diverse, different and unique to their respective sub-regions. It is particularly notable that they served two quite distinct markets. Foster explained that “The principal cheese eaten in London in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Cheshire.” Formerly cheeses to the capital had been supplied by farmers in Suffolk, but the increase in demand for butter after c.1660, which necessitated skimming the milk, had reduced its quality and flavour. Therefore, Cheshire cheese which had hitherto arrived in modest quantities by land carriage enjoyed a premium and, during 1664, 364 tons had arrived by sea out of Chester. By 1670, a designated wharf and warehousing complex had been built on the River Weaver at Frodsham to receive the product from farmers in Cheshire, Flint, and Denbigh, and from the borders of Shropshire. During 1729, 5766 tons of Cheshire cheese was shipped to London, and after 1739, the victuallers to the Royal Navy bought Cheshire cheese exclusively.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, cheese made on the Lancashire plain was principally destined for Liverpool and the merchant shipping fleets. As early as 1676 for example, when Roger Pearson of Farington left cheeses valued at

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Food*, pp. 16, 148, 270-71.

<sup>39</sup> Joan Thirsk, ‘The Farming Regions of England,’ *AHEW*, Vol. IV, pp. 83-6.

<sup>40</sup> C. Foster, ‘Cheshire Cheese: Farming in the North-West in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,’ *THSLC*, Vol. 144 (1994), pp. 1-9.

£8. such a quantity, which at c.2d. per pound represents over 8.5 cwt, [234 kg] would have far exceeded his household requirements. Westward of the traditional market stalls of Chorley, Preston and Ormskirk, there was one terminus at which the demand for cheese outstripped all local markets. Cheshire cheese was sent to London and the Royal Navy. Cheese made on the Lancashire Plain made a shorter journey to Liverpool and onto the ships of the rapidly expanding merchant fleets engaged in the Atlantic trade which, “in the period after the Restoration witnessed a revolution.”<sup>41</sup>

The traditional Lancashire cheese of eight pounds weight, produced in the mediaeval vaccaries of Bowland and Rossendale had evolved by the end of the sixteenth century into a larger, hard ‘keeping’ type made on individual farms. To consolidate the cheese, the curds were packed into a cloth-lined vat or mould, and topped with a wooden lid insert which was pressed under a five hundredweight [c.250 kilo] stone set in a sturdy oak frame. The action caused the curds to compact while the residual whey was squeezed out. Pressure on the cheese was gradually increased by lever or screw action from above. Turning, re-wrapping and pressing took up to three days.<sup>42</sup> The cheeses were then placed on shelves or ‘cheese ladders’ to mature and dry. Cheese presses were relatively uncommon anywhere in England until the second half of the seventeenth century. Pannikar reported an early reference to the purchase of a cheese press screw in the Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe household accounts for July 1587.<sup>43</sup> Within my own core dataset of inventories south of the Ribble, only twenty cheese presses were inventoried before 1640. The earliest of these was owned by Thomas Walton, a yeoman of Longton in 1604.<sup>44</sup> There are just three other records before 1610, two

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<sup>41</sup> Diana E. Ascott, Fiona Lewis, Michael Power, *Liverpool 1660-1750 People, Prosperity and Power* (Liverpool, 2006), pp. 15-20; LA WCW, Roger Pearson, Farington (1676).

<sup>42</sup> Margaret Pannikar, *Pressing the Cheese – Original research into the history of cheese making in Lancashire prior to 1840*, (Preston, 2010), pp. 4-8.

<sup>43</sup> Pannikar, *Pressing the Cheese*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Walton, Longton, (1604).

to 1620, six during the 1620s and eight from 1631-40. These early presses were items which reflected owner status albeit they were valued at just 1s. to 4s. Those prior to 1640 appeared in the inventories of 1 esquire, 2 gentlemen, 1 clerk, 8 yeomen, 2 husbandmen, 1 flax-man, whose specific occupation is unknown, and 1 butcher. The occupations of the other four men were not recorded but each of the decedents left inventories above £50.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, domestic dairy production was beginning to develop its own nascent purpose. In 1607 flax-man John Clayton of Penwortham possessed six dairy cows, a cheese press, ‘vij stone of butter and xij cheeses ... £1.8s.’ and ‘salt ... 2s.’ In the same township in 1639, Richard Sherdley, yeoman, died possessed of five cows, twelve other young beasts and two calves, which being valued at £57. was the highest recorded valuation in the township before 1650. Notably in addition to the ‘house’ in which the cheese press stood, which appears to be a room separate to his ‘firehouse’ or living area, Sherdley also had a kitchen, ‘butterie’ and a milkhouse in which were stored cheeses and butter at £1.11s.6d. and ‘Salt and Salt Chest ... 5s.’<sup>45</sup>

North of the Ribble estuary, cheese presses were comparatively rare items in all our selected townships except in Cockerham, where between 1661 and 1700 in 12 of the 97 inventories, 12.37 per cent, recorded them. In the following two decades however, of 21 extant inventories, only one, the husbandman Peter Corles of Bankhouses left, “Horse geere, Cheese presse &c ... 6s.8d.”<sup>46</sup> Production of butter and cheese in western Lancashire appears to have been concentrated in the Penwortham parish townships, in Croston parish, Much and Little Hoole, and in Lathom and Scarisbrick in Ormskirk parish. In Bretherton, Lathom and Scarisbrick townships for example, where the highest number of cheese presses was recorded in each period division, the figure below shows that between 1701 and c.1740 a count of 53

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<sup>45</sup> LA WCW, John Clayton, Farington (1607); Richard Sherdley, Penwortham (1639).

<sup>46</sup> LA WRW/A, Peter Corles, Bankhouses, Cockerham (1702).

were present in 105 inventories, at 50.5 per cent. This was a significant increase from just 2.1 per cent before 1660, and 21.8 per cent by 1700. Percentage ownership of cheese presses rose overall in almost all the townships throughout our core dataset south of the Ribble, from just 4.2 per cent before 1660, through 15.4 per cent, to 29.5 per cent by c1740. The exceptions were the townships of North Meols & Birkdale, and in Formby and Ainsdale, both on the coastal side of the dunes where, over one and a half centuries, just nine cheese presses were recorded in 342 inventories, or 2.6 per cent.

**Table 26. Cheese presses inventoried in sample townships.**

	pre-1660		1661-1700		1701-40	
	inv'ries	chs press	inv'ries	chs press	inv'ries	chs press
Bretherton	25	0	28	13	29	17
Lathom	56	3	63	10	46	23
Scarisbrick & Snape	61	0	74	13	30	13
	142	3	165	36	105	53
percentages		2.10%		21.80%		50.50%

To facilitate the installation of a cheese press and utilise processing equipment efficiently rural households reorganised internal spaces by allocating ground floor rooms and outhouse chambers for production purposes. Inventories from our core dataset reveal that many decedents left manifold utensils, shelves, 'cheese-fats' [moulds], wooden containers and earthenware basins which specifically pertained to cheese and butter production. Richard Gardner of Farington, gentleman (1663), had a 'larder and milke house'; Roger Pearson, a gentleman also of Farington (1676), left 'in Cheeses ... in the Deyrie Chamber ... £8.' Henry Walton, yeoman, of Much Hoole (1669), kept 'foure milke cows ... £14.' as well as six heifers and four calves. He had 'one cheese press & one grindle-stone ... 7s.' Walton kept 'one shelve & Cheeses standing on it ... 8s' in the 'brewhouse chamber', 'Cheeses ... £1.' 'in the mault loft', and 'two shelves w'th cheeses & one lanthorne ... 7s.' 'in the house.' As



domestic cheese production increased in volume in the eighteenth century, upper accommodation rooms were re-purposed for storage. Robert Baldwin of Burscough (1728), kept bedding and two spinning wheels ‘in the cheese chamber’; John Watkinson of Croston, husbandman (1727), stored ‘in the little room’, ‘cheeses & bedding in that room ... £16.5s.’ and Evan Caunce of Rufford, yeoman (1722), kept ‘one bed and stockes in the Cheese roome ... £1.10s.’<sup>47</sup>

Butter also appears more frequently in later inventories although manufactured quantities are difficult to determine. Butter and cheese were often evaluated together but butter is perishable and not strictly an inventoried good. Butter churns with staff and lid were generally valued at around 5s, equivalent to the valuation of a good cheese press frame, stone and screw. They also appear less commonly in inventories until c.1700. In 1715, Richard Harrison of Formby, yeoman, had ‘one charn & charn stafe ... 3s.’ and in 1721, James Richardson of Scarisbrick, yeoman, had several milk containers ‘in the lower chamber’ and ‘An nue Charne ... 6s.’<sup>48</sup>

One inventory survives to illuminate the development of spatial integration between rural producer and the Liverpool export market. William Fisher of Croston (1720) was described as a ‘victualler’ by his appraisers. He kept a dairy herd, horses and swine but grew no crops. Fisher died in possession of hay £10. malt £4. ale & beer £9. coals and cannel £7. He owned a malt mill and a cheese press and ‘Cheeses ... £5.10s.’ Notably, he also had goods valued at £2.15s. ‘In the Gauger’s Room.’ Gaugers were minor salaried customs officers in the complex hierarchy of waiters, surveyors and inspectors of all imported and exported goods. “Gaugers gauged all commodities capable of liquid measure and, like the weighers [of dry

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<sup>47</sup> LA WCW, Richard Gardner, Farington (1663); Henry Walton, Much Hoole (1669); Robert Baldwin, Burscough (1728); John Watkinson, Croston (1727); Evan Caunce, Rufford (1722).

<sup>48</sup> LA WCW, Richard Harrison, Formby (1715); James Richardson, Scarisbrick (1721).

goods], gave their figures to the land-waiter after the measurement had been made.”<sup>49</sup> These men generally operated on the ‘legal quays’ and the warehouses in Liverpool. That Fisher kept a designated room at his premises in Croston for such an officer to periodically visit is therefore instructive.

Cheese increasingly supplemented, although it never replaced, beef as a source of protein for victualling long voyages. Whilst this is not discernible from probate records there are early indications of a gradual transition towards the keeping and nutritional benefits of cheese which are clearly costed and itemised in William Trenow’s cashbook for the two sailing vessels which he successively captained and part-owned *Dilligence* from May 1684 to June 1688, and ‘*Pearl*’ from September 1688 to December 1694. In March 1685 *Dilligence* prepared for her voyage to Dublin and Bordeaux with ‘2 barels of beefe ... £2.2s.6d.’ ‘2 poattes of bootter ... 15s.’ and ‘2 cheeses ... 8s.9d.’ For her last voyage, to Virginia via Dublin which commenced October 1687, in addition to the ‘bread butter & Cheese ... 7s.’ intended for immediate consumption on board, *Dilligence* conveyed ‘2 [hundred] watt of butter ... £2.5s.’ and ‘3 [hundred] watt of Cheese ... £2.5s.’ In October 1688 ‘*Pearl*’ was similarly victualled with ‘100 [1 cwt] bootter and 200 [2 cwt.] Cheese for ye viedg ... £2.15s.9d.’ while bound for Jamaica.<sup>50</sup> It would scarcely afford exaggeration to multiply such quantities of Lancashire cheeses as many larger ships than Trenow’s left Liverpool on trans-Atlantic voyages in the eighteenth century.

In response to the increasing demand from Liverpool in the eighteenth-century rural manufacturers increased their production of cheese and butter. As diverse home-production sources inevitably varied in quality, inventoried evaluations offer a range of untidy

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<sup>49</sup> LA WCW, William Fisher, Croston (1720); Elizabeth Evelynola Hoon, *The Organization of the English Custom System 1696-1786* (New Haven & London, 1968), pp. 144-146.

<sup>50</sup> LA DDBB8/3, Cashbook of William Trenow of Liverpool, Blundell Collection, p.12.

calculations when determining cheese sizes and wholesale prices per pound. In the decades which preceded standardised measures, as with other commodities, producers in Lancashire invariably traded with the ‘long hundredweight’ of 120lb. Should we assume this interpretation, the ‘500 weight of cheeses ... £5.’ left by the tanner John Farrer of Bretherton in 1714, and the ‘60lb weight chees ... 10s.’ of the yeoman Thomas Asborn of Rufford in 1721 make arithmetical sense at a neat 2d per pound.<sup>51</sup>

Of the 52 rural producers who left cheeses and/or butter at 1cwt/£1. or more there were 2 gentlemen, 25 yeomen, 14 husbandmen, 6 trades and 5 whose occupations were unrecorded. 8 men had £10/10cwt. or greater quantities in storage, while 23 men had £5/5 cwt. or more. In addition to an increase in scale, this appears to reflect diversification and clear evidence of by-employment. Concerning the greatest inventoried quantities, Thomas Moss of Longton, yeoman (1729), and Robert Bank of Croston, yeoman (1713), each left cheeses valued at £15. while in 1720, William Baxtonden of Croston, husbandman had left ‘Ten Milk Cows ... £28.’, ‘A Cheese Press at 6s.8d.’ and ‘Cheeses at ... £23.’ This latter amount, 2760lb at 2d. per lb [1252 kg], represents one and one quarter tons of cheese produced by a ‘husbandman’, while the most important factor to highlight is that in the case of each of these producers, indeed in every case, irrespective of social rank, no-one kept vast dairy herds. Bank owned eleven milk cows and Baxtonden ten for example. As we discussed in chapter 1,<sup>52</sup> herd sizes had not generally increased over time and an average female bovine complement of around seven beasts in each herd prevailed. Swain offered a useful calculation based upon documents from Arley Hall in Cheshire in 1626 that to produce 1430lb/12 hundredweight of skim, cream, and full milk cheeses “would represent the annual output of about six cows.”<sup>53</sup> While this does not quite equate to the larger quantity produced by Baxtonden from ten milk cows,

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<sup>51</sup> LA WCW, John Farrer, Bretherton (1714); Thomas Asborn, Rufford (1721).

<sup>52</sup> Chapter 1, pp. 53-76, also tables 9-12 ‘Cattle herd sizes’, pp.57-60.

<sup>53</sup> Foster, ‘Cheshire Cheese’, p.4.

almost one century after the Arley Hall accounts it is probable that richer pasturage may have been available after c.1700 which produced higher milk yields from better conditioned cattle. Above all it is the recognition of, and the adaptability to economic opportunities in west Lancashire which remains the focus of this discussion. The incentives which drove the dairying industry was not led by the gentry only, but from economic supply possibilities adopted by the fluid and generationally progressive social ranks of yeomen, husbandmen and tradesmen and their families who operated from relatively modest resources, balanced with secure land tenures in the rural townships.

### **The brewing industry:**

Brewing ale and subsequently hopped beer had enjoyed a long tradition in many parts of England. Thirsk has expressed the simple fact “the main uses of barley were for beer”<sup>54</sup> and incidences of barley cultivation south of the Ribble narrowly but consistently exceeded that of oats in inventories from 1600 to the 1730s.<sup>55</sup> As with cheese and butter-making brewing was a commonplace rural craft in the semi-autarkic households of the gentry and middle ranks and brewing equipment was frequently inventoried. In 1613 for example, James Hey of Much Hoole kept ‘one Brewinge pane in the kitchen ... 10s.’ In 1681, Richard Wignall of Hesketh Bank, husbandman, was evaluated for ‘all the bruinge vessel w’th barrels & all other wooden vessells great & small ... £1.6s.6d.’<sup>56</sup> Production of these comestibles increased significantly in the late seventeenth century, but unlike the focus on dairying, which transformed the rural economy, industrial-scale brewing was a product of the urban environment which reached maturity in Ormskirk and Liverpool.

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<sup>54</sup> Thirsk, ‘Farming Techniques’, in *AHEW*, Vol. iv, 1500-1640, p. 170.

<sup>55</sup> Chapter 3. Table 24, ‘Crop diversity 2’ p. 141.

<sup>56</sup> LA WCW, James Hey, Much Hoole (1613); Richard Wignall, Hesketh Bank (1681).

It was in Liverpool that commercial brewing rose to its fullest potential and where from the late seventeenth century new materials and technologies appeared in the probate record. Stobart noted that brewing was a specifically urban trade and that “Liverpool ... overshadowed output from other centres.”<sup>57</sup> Much of that which applied to the brewing trade in Ormskirk may be transferred to our understanding of Liverpool, only with differences in scale and clientele. Innkeepers, which included William Eccleston of *The White Lyon* in Dale Street (1667), Thomas Holland of *The Kings Head*, (1671), George Moorcroft of *ye Golden Talbott* (1682), and many others brewed their own product. Maltsters such as William Simson (1694) provided the vital ingredients while in 1693 Joseph Cornall exemplified a key transitional stage in the industry in his principal occupation as ‘Beer Brewer.’ Both Liverpool and Ormskirk were thriving centres of commerce and hospitality. However, in Liverpool a broader social ranking other than yeomen and maltsters undertook commercial brewing. As a beneficial symbiosis within the maritime trade, ship-owning mariners brewed not only for their crews but also for the army of carpenters, wrights, and waterside labourers who loaded and unloaded vessels. Workmen and seafarers alike, in Lancashire and elsewhere, expected to take part of their wages in beer. Muldrew has questioned existing estimates and deduced that “beer formed a much higher percentage of labourers’ diets” than had formerly been calculated, and “there is much evidence that the provision of beer and cider at work was a normal part of wages.” William Trenow regularly accounted for just such provisioning; ‘for beare for ye Carpenters in Liverpoll ... 1s.8d.’ (5 May 1684); ‘for bear for ye men aboard ... 1s.6d.’ (1 Sept 1686); ‘for beear in Loading the ship ... 3s.10d.’ (2 May 1691), and many other similar entries.<sup>58</sup> Aware of the unquenchable demand, a variety of men whose principal occupations ranged from butcher, skinner, block-maker, rope-maker and linen draper also

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<sup>57</sup> Jon Stobart, *First Industrial*, p. 121.

<sup>58</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 210-11, 228-9; Trenow, ‘cash book’, pp. 4, 18, 50.

took to brewing in quantities beyond the needs of their households and in significantly more expensive equipment.

In the period after the Restoration Ormskirk commenced its journey towards becoming an eighteenth-century destination for law and leisure, which economic trajectory has been described by Duggan and the ‘gentry’ town and ‘second order centre [with] high order functions’ designated by Stobart. The town had received royal confirmation of its market charter in 1670 and situated south of the river Douglas it continued to enjoy its own commercial development unaffected by competition from Preston. “Ormskirk was able to dominate the trade of the Mosslands.”<sup>59</sup> The town offered specialist legal services, the provision of medical services including ‘chirurgeons’, barber/peruquiers and apothecaries, inns for accommodation and skilled manufacturing and fixed retail trades which appear in the probate record here after 1700. These include clock and watch makers, a milliner, book seller, confectioner, silk weaver, gardener and cabinet maker. As Duggan explained “Customers were prepared to travel further to a market supplying unique goods of high value,” and furthermore, in her extensive survey of trades and occupations in the town between 1600 and 1800, “By far the largest employer was the food and drink trade, with innkeepers and victuallers constituting 54.7% of those employed.”<sup>60</sup>

It is observable from inventories throughout our dataset that gentlemen and the upper ranks owned houses capacious enough to have a room designated a ‘brew house.’ In Ormskirk in 1663 Richard Duckinfield, gentleman left, ‘one brasse boyl’r ... £2.10s.’, ‘one lead £3 & two Coumbes £3.’ as well as ‘4 barrells ... 12s.’ In 1730, Richard Calvard, yeoman, possessed a brew-house with brewing equipment at £2.13s.6d.’ as did also a further twelve upper rank

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<sup>59</sup> Mona Duggan, *Ormskirk, The making of a Modern Town* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 1, 162-183; Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, pp. 44, 163-6.

<sup>60</sup> Duggan, *Ormskirk*, pp. 2, 22-24.

decedents from Ormskirk who left inventories between these dates. These men brewed for household consumption, for family and servants, male and female. Notably, several established retail tradesmen also owned brewing equipment. In 1659, blacksmith Thomas Smith left ‘In the Seller one brewing Coumbe & Barrells ... 5s.2d.’ He enjoyed the benefit of a kilne and access to his own well. In 1671, William Watkinson, shoemaker had a brew-house, brewing lead and malt shovel. In 1696 and 1697 respectively, David Robinson, tailor brewed in his kitchen, and Henry Oliverson, barber/peruquier owned a ‘bruehouse & seller.’ In 1721, Thomas Hodson, skinner left ‘two stillages, one brew of Malt Drink ... £1.1s,’ ‘in the Drink house’, and the prominent retail draper Henry Helsby (1727) also maintained a brew-house for his own use.<sup>61</sup>

Innkeepers were also brewers. Thomas Tatlock of *The White Bull*, (1683), Thomas Heyes of *Ye Roebuck*, (1685), Henry Barton of *The Eagle & Child*, (1685), and James Bastwell of *The Cock* (1694), each operated from properties with brew-houses and cellars. They left inventories in which the paraphernalia for brewing and the storage of ale and beer in firkins, barrels and hogsheads were clearly itemised. They were supplied with the vital processed material malted barley, by a succession of maltsters, including the aptly named John Windle who upon his demise in 1673, had ‘malt in the making ...£2.’ ‘in the Killne’, and ‘30 bushells of dryed malt at 2s. per ... £3’. Other Ormskirk brewers were entrepreneurial individuals who were not necessarily innkeepers but yeomen/maltsters who developed their principal occupations to include brewing the barley they had malted. Yeoman such as Christopher Livesey of Ormskirk (1682), whose cellar held ‘8 barrels, 2 ferkins, 1 hogshead & 2 beere frames ...£1.7s.2d.’ and whose kitchen was equipped with ‘One brewing lead, Copp[er] with Coumbes & other brewing vessels ... £6.10s.’ and ‘100 bushells of Malt ... £20.’ all of which

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<sup>61</sup> LA WCW, all Ormskirk; Richard Duckinfield, (1663); Richard Calvard, (1730); Thomas Smith, (1659); William Watkinson, (1671); David Robinson, (1696); Henry Oliverson (1697); Thomas Hodson (1721); Henry Helsby (1727).

was greatly in excess of household requirements. In similar circumstances, Henry Webster, yeoman (1708), had a cellar holding ‘Eleaven Barr[ells]’ and other brewing equipment ‘in ye Brewhouse ... £5.6s.’, and ‘In the Killne Ten sacks & half a Bushell in Malt ... £45.’<sup>62</sup>

In the 1730s in anticipation of the continuing demand for brewed products, the maltster Thomas Barton appeared to have been undertaking the modernisation of his premises before he died in 1734. He had ten old barrels in the cellar at 1s. each and ‘An old useless lead ... 10s.’ However, his inventory reveals he had ‘Barley and sacks ... £5.’ in the granary and ‘In a new Brewhouse not finished ... an Iron brewing pan and Cover and grate ... £1.10s.’ In his Malthouse as if suspended in a stasis of mid-production, Barton had left ‘barley in the cisterns ... £3.’ ‘Barley o’th Cuming floor ... £2.’ ‘On another floor ... £3.’ and ‘malt o’th Kilne and dried ... £60.’ Three years later the yeoman turned brewer James Crane had clearly invested in the most modern brew-house equipment including ‘1 brass pann ... 15s’ and ‘1 brewing Led with a Coper bottom ... £3’ and had a stock of ‘60 measures of Moalt ... £9’ in the garner. In his will of 3 July 1737, he desired that his wife Elizabeth remained at their house and “continue with such utensils or household goods as are usefull or necessary to follow Publick Business with ... if she thinks it proper to continue in publick business.”

Many Liverpool women, typically wives and widows of seafarers, also involved themselves in brewing on a commercial level, as well as other ‘publick business’, their role is discussed by Ascot *et al.*<sup>63</sup>

Few inventories or wills exemplify the early emergence of a new social rank of entrepreneur-mariner with greater potency than that of William Bushell of Liverpool in 1677. Bushell’s estate was evaluated at £2075.16s.4d. He owned a house in Castle Street in which were

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<sup>62</sup> LA WCW, all from Ormskirk, John Windle (1673); Christopher Livesey (1682); Henry Webster (1708).

<sup>63</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Barton, Ormskirk (1734); James Crane (1737); Ascot *et al.*, ‘Women in the Port Town Economy’, *Liverpool (1660-1750)*, pp. 88-90.



recorded ‘Sixteene feather beds ...,’ a ‘little warehouse’ in Phoenix Street, and a property portfolio of six tenanted houses. He held fractioned shares ‘in parts of Eight Shippes and a lighter ... £1115.8s.4d.’ Bushell owned stocks of ‘Tobacco Leafe watt 3 cwt ... £6.’ and in an extraordinary quantity, ‘in Hemp and Spunyearne ... £200.10s.’ Bushell’s brewing operation was no less impressive. Whereas rural household brewing pans and attendant vessels were usually evaluated to around £2-£3. and commercial inn-keeping brewing equipment in Ormskirk at £6-£10. Bushell left ‘one brewing pann and furnesse ... £15.’ ‘in brewing vessels, Caske and Stillidges ... £15.’ ‘one Lead Sisterne ... £4.’ and ‘one Iron boyler and brass Cover to it ... 10s.’ as well as ‘in Malte 7C. [cwt.] measures ... £70.’ and ‘in Hops 2[cwt.] ... £5.’ Bushell was an early economic proponent of ‘vertical integration’ and a high-end multi-occupation operator/producer in a vanguard of many such ‘mariners’ whose principal and generic occupational listings encompassed all seafaring men. Notably, for the remaining ten years of her widowhood, Anne Bushell successfully maintained her late husband’s shipping business.<sup>64</sup>

The period after *c.* 1690 saw the emergence of the dedicated brewer as a principal occupation and in the decades which followed at least ten other mariners brewed on a similarly unprecedented scale After Joseph Cornall (1693), the probate record reveals six more ‘beer brewers’ in Liverpool between 1702 and 1715. These included John Crompton (1707), who had brewing equipment valued at £42.18s.1d.’ and John Scasbrick (1712), who left equipment at £23.15s. malt and hops at £33.15s.<sup>65</sup> William Denton (1714), had brewing equipment and casks to £52.9.6d while William Stockton (1702), had equipment at £29.10s.’ ‘in the Brewhouse’, and ‘Malt ... £135.’ This last measure has been the largest quantity I have encountered anywhere in the extant record, and whilst any calculation of early modern

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<sup>64</sup> Ascot *et al*, Liverpool, 1660-1750, p. 90.

<sup>65</sup> LA WCW, (Liverpool), William Bushell (1677); John Crompton (1707); John Scasbrick (1712).

period quantities is hazardous with regards to accuracy, I estimate Stockton to have left approximately 9.6 imperial tons of malt at 4s per bushel.<sup>66</sup>

Increased commercial output was assisted by advancing technologies in this period. Denton had made substantial investments in ‘a large Copper pann ... £17.10s.’ in his Brewhouse, and ‘three Coolers ... £6.’ Both items made significant and innovative improvements to commercial brewing techniques. Coolers or heat exchangers are used in industrial processes to transfer heat between two fluids which are kept separate by metal walls in the form of pipes, plates or chambers. The brewing industry uses heat exchangers to quickly cool the wort after it has been hopped and boiled in the pan or kettle, and before yeast is added to start the fermentation process. No descriptions of early heat exchangers appear to have been recorded.<sup>67</sup> The rapid cooling of hot wort may have been achieved by cold water fed from a lead or stone cistern being passed through lead pipes in the opposite direction to the wort and returned to the cistern. Although copper brewing pans or kettles were financially prohibitive to most brewers, their great benefit over lead pans was in the quick and even transference of heat when boiling the wort. The overall effect of boiling in coppers and then cooling the wort quickly was to reduce production times, which in combination with the widespread use of hops, created a product across a range of strengths and flavours which was an improvement on traditional ale and could remain in condition during long sea voyages.

Copper had been in use since ancient times but in the 1680s, as Slack informs us, “the expansion of sugar production in the West Indies was transforming the English copper industry, where output rose rapidly and required new technologies in metal smelting ... to meet demand for copper cauldrons.”<sup>68</sup> In 1681, William Gardner, one of the mariner-brewers

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<sup>66</sup> LA WCW, Joseph Cornall, Liverpool (1693); William Stockton (1702); William Denton (1714).

<sup>67</sup> Modern breweries generally use plate exchangers, but these were an invention of the early twentieth century.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement Information & Material Progress in Seventeenth-century England*, (Oxford, 2015), p. 238.

had ‘one Copper still, Cock, worme, grate & Casque ...£10.’ and in 1682, Robert Amery the Liverpool rope-maker and brewer had ‘one Copper pan ... £1.10s.’ In 1719 a copper smelter was established in Warrington using local coal and copper ore from mines at Alderley Edge, Coniston, and Anglesey. Stobart suggested that this development created closer economic ties between Warrington and the Wigan coal, brass, and pewter industries and by the mid-eighteenth century, “The Anglesey copper reserves, coupled with the growing demand in Liverpool, made the Mersey the obvious location for the copper industry.” Large copper vessels came at a price, however. Whereas antimony, the elemental hardening agent for lead and copper, cost around 24s. a hundredweight, copper cost ten times as much at approximately £12/cwt. Therefore, we should consider that the valuations for Jeremiah Hunt’s ‘one Copper Brewing Pann ... £16.1s.9 ½ d.’ in 1690 and Denton’s in 1714 reflect the higher valuation for metal as much as their size. In any event beer was now being brewed in quantities and of a quality capable of providing liquid calories to fuel an expanding and industrious urban workforce.<sup>69</sup>

The expansion of the sugar trade makes an interesting and contemporaneous technological link between the sugar and brewing industries. Muldrew has noted that “Cheap sugar was a very recent phenomenon in 1740, as it depended on the development of the slave trade and the use of slave labour on Caribbean sugar plantations to supply the English market.”<sup>70</sup>

Although our investigation ends c.1720s it is possible to trace the evidence of sugar production. As Stobart explains, it was this commodity in which Liverpool “continued to dominate throughout the eighteenth century and beyond” also that imports “grew rapidly from 35 tons per annum in the late 1660s to 580 tons at the turn of the century, about 5000

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<sup>69</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial Region*, p.118; John Hatcher and T. C. Barker., *A History of British Pewter*, (London & New York, 1974), p. 228; LA WCW, William Gardener, Liverpool (1681); Robert Amery (1682); Jeremiah Hunt, (1690).

<sup>70</sup> Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, p. 113.

tons in the 1740s to 8250 by 1770.”<sup>71</sup> Early evidence for such exponential increases in importation, availability and processing technologies is indicated in the probate record. George Bennet, a Liverpool mercer (1676), left shop goods “in sugar and brown candy, 325lb ... £8.3s.6d.”, and “in molasses watt 2 cwt 3qr 12 lb ... £3.13s.3d.” Similarly, Thomas Shaw, grocer (1680) held partially refined stock of “Sugar and brown candy ... £22.10s.11d.” whereas by 1699, Richard Shaw, grocer, offered “whole lofe sugar” indicating the product had been refined in Barbados. In 1712, Liverpool merchant Richard Houghton, whose inventory totalled £21,685.12s.7 1/4d. and whose vessel *Clayton Gally* was in Barbados at his decease died in possession of “hogsheads & casks of sugar valued at £762.18s.”<sup>72</sup> Sugar refining in Liverpool appears to have been highly profitable. No inventories for this period have survived but the wills of ‘Sugar bakers’ Richard Cleaveland (1683), and Samuel Danvers (1720), reveal generous financial bequests in sums up to £500. in each testament to family members, servants and the poor.<sup>73</sup>

The increasingly highly evaluated inventories of stock and consumer goods of many of these merchants, mariners, mercers and aldermen, who invested in ship-shares in the Atlantic trade and capital equipment in Liverpool for beer-brewing and sugar-processing, is abundantly evident from the late 1670s and onwards. In what is perhaps the earliest inventoried record of human bondage, without which Liverpool’s trajectory of wealth from sugar, tobacco and cotton would not have been possible, are three lines on an inventory from 1680 which should not be overlooked. The deceased, Thomas Knowling, was a ship’s commander. His vessel ‘Lyon of Mossam’ was lying at anchor in Barbados with the remnants of Knowling’s outward cargo of shoes, linen, calico and Irish serge. Among Knowling’s possessions, ‘One Man

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<sup>71</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, pp. 120-21, p. 148.

<sup>72</sup> LA WCW, (Liverpool decedents), George Bennet (1676), Thomas Shaw (1680), Richard Shaw (1699), Richard Houghton (1712).

<sup>73</sup> LA WCW, Richard Cleaveland (1683), Samuel Danvers (1720).

Servant valued at ... £4.8s.' Among his debtors, a no less sobering entry, 'oweing by Thomas Watson for a woman serv't sold him by the s'd decedent, ... £8.'<sup>74</sup> Knowling was therefore, *inter alia*, a slave owner and a slave trader. Ascot informs us that the first recorded voyage in the Liverpool slave trade was in 1700. Also, that even by 1728-32, Liverpool ships delivered less than 3000 slaves a year. However, by the mid-1740s and "for the rest of the century Liverpool remained the dominant slave port."<sup>75</sup>

### **Urban manufacturers and selected processing trades: The nail-smith, pewter founder, rope-winder and glass maker**

In an earlier chapter I discussed the organised horse transport in Wigan and Liverpool which facilitated arterial trade connections with the London markets.<sup>76</sup> To provide further examples of increased urban trade specialisation, commercial development, economies of scale and the productive output of manufacturing activities in the west of Lancashire during the early phases of the pre-industrial dawn I have also analysed the inventories of the blacksmith/nail-smith, glazier, rope-maker, pewter-founder, brewer and tobacconist.

Few fabricating trades in either a rural or an urban setting offered greater opportunities for economic specialisation than that of the blacksmith. For centuries their work had been indispensable to local and regional economies. The essential composition of a smithy had not evolved significantly since the mediaeval era and many smiths' inventories from early modern Lancashire simply record 'tools in the smithy'. John Couldocke of Bickerstaffe (1677), possessed the essential equipment common to all 'in Bellies [bellows], Stiddies [anvils], vices, hammers, pincers, saues, punches, steele, new iron and ould, and all ... ye

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<sup>74</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Knowling, Liverpool (1680)

<sup>75</sup> Ascot *et al*, *Liverpool 1660-1750*, pp. 19, 24, 26.

<sup>76</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 97-100.

toolles belonging to ye Smith's trade ... £7.'<sup>77</sup> Notably, even in areas of west Lancashire such as coastal Furness and the Fylde and Wyre townships where turf was the predominant domestic fuel source, blacksmiths invariably held stocks of coal or charcoal.

Blacksmiths could make whatever they could forge in iron and steel. They were central trade figures within every township community of whom all social ranks had needs and access.

Although much of their daily work was dependent upon a quick turnover rather than stock creation several types of manufactured good repeatedly appear in inventories to indicate that key manufacturing specialisations were horseshoes, hand-tools, field implements and nails. In 1625 Robert Norres of Bretherton left a stock of 'newe horse shoes ... 13s.4d.', 'one boxe horse shoos nailes and Clippings of brass ... 4s.8d.', 'one naile toole and one peece of iron to point nailes on and one vyce ... 6s.8d.' and 'four spade shafts ... two axletree pinnes.'<sup>78</sup> In a region which relied upon agricultural production, blacksmiths including Richard Mayer of Hutton (1681), Richard Haddock of Penwortham (1686), and John Couldocke maintained a stock of spade-heads and shafts. As our records show, these men and their fellows also worked to satisfy the quotidian demand for replacement horseshoes and 'horse nails.' The inventory of Edward Baldwin of Rufford (1673), for example hints at both fabrication and the widespread recycling of 'ould Iron & horseshoe stumpes ... 19s.' as well as 'Newe Iron and Nailes ... 14.4d.' and 'newe horse- shoes and other Iron ... 11s.9d.'<sup>79</sup>

Other inventories hint at broadening horizons which are indicative of economic growth in west Lancashire in the second half of the seventeenth century. Thomas Haddock of Farington (1660), left an inventory valued at £490.13s.' His stock of bar iron and smithy tools was evaluated at £26.4s.10d.' He had 'in ould iron and a few Spade Shafts ... 10s.' and 'in Sythes

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<sup>77</sup> LA WCW, John Couldocke, Bickerstaffe (1677).

<sup>78</sup> LA WCW, Robert Norres, Bretherton (1625).

<sup>79</sup> LA WCW, Richard Mayer, Hutton (1681); Richard Haddock, Penwortham (1686); Edward Baldwin, Rufford (1673).

hookes & Sickles at hoame ... £1.14s.’ Notably he was also possessed ‘of all sortes of Iron ware at Preston ... £18.4s.3d.’ and had debtors ‘oweing for Iron and Smithie work due / by his Booke of a count [*sic*] ... £85.6s.’ The sum overall of £131.9s.1d. represented 26.8 per cent of his estate. Whether the goods in Preston were displayed in his retail premises or in those of a general ironmonger is not known yet it clearly indicates the realisation of a retail presence in an urban centre which was separate to the source of manufacture.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the demand for field and garden tools the particular specialisation of nail-making evolved from the panoply of creative metal-working skills after c.1660. Thurstan Waterworth of Heskin (1669) was the first of six men from the extant rural probate record to be described by his appraisers in the specific appellation ‘nailer’ as a principal occupation. From his smithy at Heskin, Waterworth had expanded his commercial operation such that he had ‘one ark at Preston, a board & forme / with a chayre ... 3s.6d. / five hamers & fower studys ... 7s.’ He had ‘Nayles at Preston ... £2.10s.6d’, ‘Nayles at Lancaster ... 7s.6d.’ and ‘in Sythes ... 5s.’ Notably, Waterworth also left ‘one horse, pack saddle, horse-cloth & oveley £3.8s.’<sup>81</sup> From this evidence it seems highly probable that Waterworth made regular deliveries of nails and tools to Preston and Lancaster and employed several journeymen smiths and apprentices at Heskin to work on the four anvils. Stobart has identified the emergence of an organised putting-out system in the early 1700s similar to that of the Yorkshire woollen industries and Manchester linen-drapers whereby “Iron was also put-out by master nailers with their own (semi-) dependant workforce [to] other nailers in the village ... but probably supplied nailers in the surrounding villages as well.” Our nail-makers might well have participated in such networks. Nail-making in Lancashire was not confined to Liverpool and nearby townships. Stobart noted that as other specialised ironworking trades

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<sup>80</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Hadocke, Farington (1600).

<sup>81</sup> LA WCW, Thurstan Waterworth, Heskin (1669).

developed as Manchester grew after 1700, “Bury formed a minor centre in nail-making”, and a concentration of nailers were concentrated around Wigan, in Chowbent and Upholland.<sup>82</sup>

Until 1711 when the Cartmell furnaces were fired at Backbarrow, the slender iron bars required to work into nails could not be sourced locally. Awty informs us that “The equipment of the industry during this period [c.1650] was furnace, forge and slitting mill, which Lancashire was the last of the ancient centres to adopt.”<sup>83</sup> The traditional bloomery smelters or ‘Lancashire hearths’ produced iron corrupted with carbon impurities which was unsuitable for supple, pliant work. As William Stout observed in 1709, “There was none made but in the bloomery way – which would be noe nayles.”<sup>84</sup> As early as 1590 Lancashire nailers journeyed to Staffordshire to obtain iron bars produced from the coal-measure ironstones which had been furnace smelted, then re-melted at 700 degrees Celsius and decarburized in fining forges. By the 1690s Cheshire furnaces had been established in Vale Royal, Lawton, Street and Disley.<sup>85</sup> In 1688 the merchant, William Stout of Lancaster had purchased nails in ‘Shefeild’ [*sic*] to sell from Lancaster and in 1709 noted the high quality of Swedish iron for nail making, and that “great quantity of the[se] pigs sent to Bristole and Wales, there to be drawn into barrs and slit into nayle rods.”<sup>86</sup> Therefore in the examples which follow, it is probable that the nail iron worked by blacksmiths in Liverpool and throughout western Lancashire was, in the seventeenth century, sourced in Cheshire, Staffordshire, Sheffield, and imported from Sweden.

Horseshoes, hinges, and tools were always in demand. Some smiths chose exclusively to make nails. The task of hammering out wire of a consistent diameter from a heated bar such

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<sup>82</sup> Stobart, *First Industrial*, (pp. 113, 115, 127).

<sup>83</sup> B. G. Awty, ‘Charcoal ironmasters of Cheshire and Lancashire’, *THSLC*, vol. 109, (1957), pp. 71-72.

<sup>84</sup> J. D. Marshall (ed), *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester and New York, 1967), p.161.

<sup>85</sup> Awty, ‘Charcoal ironmasters’, p. 89.

<sup>86</sup> Stout, *Autobiography* p. 90, p. 161.



that different sized nails could be manufactured was immensely time consuming and the eponymously ‘long drawn-out process.’ Urban expansion occasioned the need for new houses. The coterminous expansion in overseas trade increased the growth in shipbuilding and the attendant requirement for remedial maintenance which further increased the demand for nails in west Lancashire. From a practical perspective, in capital equipment and materials, nail-making was an inexpensive way to make a living. Ralph Bickerstaffe of Longton, ‘nailer’ (1681), appears to have been a sole operator who built up a stock ‘in nails by Estimacon ... £4.17.10.’ over many long hours from ‘Worke Loomes & Odde Ireon’, ‘some odde Impl’m’ts ... and one paire of Bellies’, valued at £2.2s. In Liverpool, Peter Allen (1686), who was described as a ‘blacksmith,’ kept a stock ‘In the Smithy in new and old iron ... £4.4s.8d.’ and had worked with ‘Two Stiddys, hammers, Tongs, Vices, ffiles / Scrues and Naile Tooles ... £5.3s.9d.’<sup>87</sup> In 1664 the ‘naylor’ Henry Tarbock of Liverpool had worked with ‘In the Smithy or naylers Shopp, one p’re bellies ... 12s.’, ‘26. Nayle Tooles broaken and whole 8s.’, ‘4. Nayle hamers and one fore [forge] hamer ... 3s.4d.’, ‘3. Nayle Stiddies & halfe a dozen shotblockes with a Small p’cell of old Iron ... 6s.8d.’ and ‘in Coales & Turfe w’th some old ship Timb’r to the value of ... 10s.’ Tarbock also possessed a vessel share as ‘one third pte of a sm [*document holed*] called the Mathewe of Lev’poole ... £9.’ An early example of a single product manufacturing specialist, Tarbock maintained the vestiges of an interest in agriculture with ‘Seaven sheepe and three lambs ... £1.2., and ‘one Sow and five pigs ... £1.6s.6d.’<sup>88</sup>

What was the feasibility of profitability from such a relatively low-cost specialisation which, for a few pounds invested in capital equipment, scrap-iron and inexpensive firing materials, men like Bickerstaffe, Allen and Tarbock made a living from nails? Contemporary evidence

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<sup>87</sup> LA WCW, Ralph Bickerstaffe, Longton (1681) Peter Allen, Liverpool (1686).

<sup>88</sup> LA WCW, Henry Tarbock, Liverpool (1664).

is scarce from which to calculate wholesale nail prices, either by weight or in number, and the following analysis must perforce be offered speculatively.<sup>89</sup> In practical terms, having first drawn-out sufficient wire from iron bars, nail-smiths could feasibly furnace, point, head and quench a nail a minute. A three-inch nail weighs approximately 7.69 grams/.27oz. a four-inch nail weighs 11.36gms/.4oz. Therefore, 1lb at 16 ounces equates to roughly 120 x 3" or 80 x 4" nails, at 1 and 0.7 hours work in each case. Working with an apprentice drawing the bars into 162.5'/49.5m, and 212.6'/64.8m lengths of wire a smith could manufacture 10lb of 3" nails or 15lb of 4" nails per day.

William Price, a Liverpool ironmonger (1672), left an intricately itemised inventory of £546.6s.2d. in which is revealed valuable information of raw material wholesale valuations. Price kept a stock of 'thirty-five hundred three quarters weight in iron ... £34.12s.11d.' Calculating the Lancashire 'long hundredweight' at 120lb. the iron was valued at 1.94d. per pound. Price also stocked 'Two hundred one quarter and twenty / four pounds weight of English steele ... £4.' and 'more steele containing 0:3:20lb. at ... £1.10s.', both stocks at 3.27d per pound. Price also kept in stock '[iron] Nailes Containing in weight 9:1:16 at ... £16.8s.5d.', or 1126lb. at 3.5d. per pound. A glimpse into the cost of ships' nails was recorded in William Trenow's accounts while refitting the vessel *Dilligence* in Liverpool during July 1685. He paid his regular supplier Henry Byrom 'for two pound of nails ... 8d.' and later 'pd Henery Byram for 123 po'nd of nayles ... £2.2s.2d.', or 4.1d per pound. It is likely that these would have been 4-inch ship nails long enough to pass through two-inch planking.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> The case study which follows is founded upon the number and weight of nails in two packs of modern bright oval wire nails at 13 x 3"/100 gms and 22 x 4"/250gms, which most closely resemble traditionally headed nails.

<sup>90</sup> LA WCW, William Price, Liverpool (1672); LA DDBB8/3, Cash book of William Trenow of Liverpool, Blundell Collection, p. 13.

In answering the motivation behind this particular specialisation, it is apparent that as new iron cost less than 2d. and old iron, which was plentiful, 1d per pound or less, once iron had been processed and coal/cannel had been consumed, the specialist nail-smith's nett profit of 1d. or 2d. per pound of nails or around one shilling a day returned an income of £15.12s. a year at 312 working days. This was comparatively modest fare, but more than a labourer, ploughman or servant could have earned in Lancashire. More also, as we saw earlier than mill-worker Robert Hindley earned working for Thomas Cooks.<sup>91</sup> Regularity of employment and its remuneration has been analysed by Keith Wrightson who calculated that "In the Essex village of Terling in the late seventeenth century an annual income of about £15 was probably the maximum for a labouring family."<sup>92</sup> Nail-smiths would have been required to make nails of every size, but in the micro-economies of scale, 4" ship nails would (for example) have consumed more iron but took less time *pro rata* to make, thus effectively creating more profit the larger the nails.

During the post-Restoration decades, glass-manufacturing became concentrated in Liverpool, Prescott and Thatto Heath. One of the 'furnace industries' as Stobart has described it, glass-manufacturing subsequently became a prominent industry in St. Helens in the late 1700s, but a century earlier was already "located at points of raw material extraction and at waterside markets."<sup>93</sup> William Fleetwood (1679), a glass manufacturer left a stock of 16 bars of lead weighing 6 cwt at £4. 'Two Melting Ladles and three Melting pans ... 8s.' smithy tools; vices, moulds, shears, cutting boards and 'One Bowe of Diamonds ... £1.11s.' 'In the [work] Shopp'. Stacked separately there were '20 paines of new Glasse ... £2.14s.' and 'five halfe Cases of Broade Glass ... £3.15s.' 'in the Scrivening Roome' and also 'three quarter Cribs of Cutt Glasse ... £4.10s.' 'in the Ware house.' Glass is self-evidently a dangerous material to

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<sup>91</sup> LA WCW, probate account for Thomas Cooks, alias Garrett, Liverpool, mill-owner (1702).

<sup>92</sup> Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London & New York), p. 42.

<sup>93</sup> Stobart, *first industrial*, pp. 104, 118-9.

mould and process. Fleetwood stored his finished products on shelves, in wooden cases and ‘cribs’ and, in the workshop only, two cribs valued at 2s.6d. each, which had been filled with ‘waste glass’. Other than an incongruous ‘68lb of Tinn at 7 ½.d. p’ pound ... £2.2s.6d.’ found in his dwelling house, Fleetwood’s glazing manufactory was attached to, but intentionally separate from his domestic environment with work areas appropriately apportioned to the requirements of the manufacturing process.<sup>94</sup>

With regard to this rational organisation of manufacturing, processing and storage space, another clear illustration of an early eighteenth century ‘proto-factory’, a description coined by Coleman to convey the idea of an early or original form of a concentration of workers in a plant,<sup>95</sup> is revealed in the vast inventory of another proprietor of a ‘furnace industry’, that of Thomas Ford, brasier and pewterer in 1719. It is not clear whether Ford’s prodigious stocks of homewares and utensils of brass, copper, pewter and tin ‘In the Shopp’ refer to a retail premises and workshop or manufactured wholesale goods only. Nevertheless, attached to his eleven-roomed dwelling house complete with cellars, brew-house and a stable, was a yard full of old iron at £2.14.8d. coal at £1. and 8 cwt 16lbs. of pewter moulds of all descriptions valued at £43. Adjacent to the shop, as we follow his appraisers’ progress, was ‘the heavy ware workhouse’ wherein was ‘A Sadware [flatware] wheel and Stock ... £1.7s.’ as well as ladles, moulds and casting stocks for plates, basins and dishes. In the next room, ‘the hollow workhouse’, were the wheels, spindles, poppits and over fifty lathe mandrels for the more complex ‘hollow ware’ manufacture of flagons, tankards, deep bowls and chamber pots. There was a beating anvil, a ‘Spoon Stiddy’ and ‘ten pair of bullet moulds ... 5s.’ as well as files, rasps and hammers for the use of an unknown number of workmen. Next again was ‘the founders’ workhouse’ in which were bellows, wooden patterns, a casting frame and eleven

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<sup>94</sup> LA WCW, William Fleetwood, Liverpool, glazier (1679).

<sup>95</sup> D. C. Coleman, ‘Proto-industrialisation: A Concept Too Many,’ *EcHR*, New Series, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1983) p. 448.

casting pots. Above this a room for general storage of lumber, chalk, turf and ‘A parcel of Charcoal ... 10s.’<sup>96</sup>

In the rapidly expanding maritime town of Liverpool, wherein the construction, maintenance and repair of ships provided an ever-increasing demand for long lines, anchor cables and rigging, ropemaking had become a vital supply industry. By 1682 Robert Amery had constructed the iron wheels, bolts, hooks ‘one iron turne, tops, frame & Windglasse’ necessary for a ropewalk valued at £4.10s. He held stocks of over three and one-half tons of yarn, hemp, and cording at £108.8s.10d, and ‘In Tarr Sixteene Barrells ... £11.4s.’ Ralph Birch (1693), left similar quantities of raw materials. ‘In the Spinning Place’ he kept ‘Barr’ls of Tar thirty ... £22.10s.’ ‘Pilled [peeled] Hemp four packs ... £10.16s.’, ‘Cordage in Cellar att £26.12s.21/4d.’ and ‘Att the Heath’, ‘One Cable Seaven hund’d weight ...£12.5s.’ To emphasise the extent of their ropewalks, both he and subsequently his inventory appraiser and successor Henry Jobson (1697), had constructed windlasses, frames and iron machinery ‘Att the Heath’/ ‘Upon ye Heath’ and ‘in ye Field of John Parks’s.’ Jobson kept tar barrels at these locations valued at £5.5s. packs of hemp at £11. and ‘In Ropes in the ware house 13 cwt 1 qu ... £26.10s.’ His will instructed that all his materials and rope-making instruments be sold “and my apprentices and their remaining times of service be assigned and transferred.” Other than the sheer volume of raw materials stocks, which clearly reflect the inexorable demand for ships’ lines in Liverpool, it is notable that each of their inventories itemised brewing equipment and cooperage sufficient to nourish sizeable employment numbers.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Ford, Liverpool (1719).

<sup>97</sup> LA WCW, Liverpool rope-makers, Robert Amery (1682); Ralph Birch (1693); Henry Jobson (1697).

## Tobacco manufacturing and the ‘tobacconist’

The economic and internationally political importance of the tobacco trade in the eighteenth century has received considerable attention from historians. Shammass observed, that in analysing the mass-consumption of imported groceries, tobacco, sugar, tea and coffee, “The best place to begin is with tobacco, because chronologically it was the first of the new mass-consumed groceries.”<sup>98</sup> The vicissitudes of the English and Scottish mercantile infrastructures and the cultivation and importation of the plant from the North American territories have been well described.<sup>99</sup> From the mid-1680s until 1742, Liverpool was ranked annually as the fourth principal port of importation of tobacco behind Bristol, Glasgow and London, after which until the 1760s, the Cumberland port of Whitehaven overtook it. In the ten years from 1722 to 1731 for example an average importation of 1070 tons a year was shipped into Liverpool.<sup>100</sup>

The origin of the nomenclature ‘tobacconist’ to describe the specific trade occupation of processing and manufacturing the imported leaf and the art and practice of transforming it into a variety of wholesale/retail products awaits a more detailed study. The term itself does not for example appear in Weatherill’s otherwise compendiously tabulated review of the 125 separate occupations and ranks of status listed in her sample of 2902 English inventories analysed between 1675-1725.<sup>101</sup> Even the suffix ‘-ist’ was unique in a world where trade

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<sup>98</sup> Carole Shammass, ‘Changes in English and Anglo-American consumption from 1550 to 1800.’ In Roy Porter and John Brewer (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London & New York, 1993) p. 179.

<sup>99</sup> Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly 1674-1791, and of its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, 2 volumes (Michigan, 1973); Frank Broeze, ‘The Navigation Acts and the Continental Tobacco Market 1770-90’, *EcHR* new series, vol. 26, no. 4 (1973) pp. 668-678; Robert C. Nash, ‘The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade’, *EcHR* new series, vol. 35, no. 3 (1982) pp. 354-372; Larry Sawyers, ‘The Navigation Acts Revisited’, *EcHR* new series, vol. 45, no. 2 (1992) pp. 262-284; Paul Clemens, ‘The Rise of Liverpool, 1665-1750’, *EcHR* new series, vol. 29, no. 2 (1976) pp. 211-225.

<sup>100</sup> Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, Table II, ‘Tobacco Imports at the Six Principal Centers, 1721-73’, p. 590.

<sup>101</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London & New York, 1988), Appendix 2, Table A2.1, ‘Occupations and status in the sample of inventories’, pp. 208-211.

suffixes other than ‘wright’ or ‘smith’ invariably ended ‘-er’. Only in a later age did occupational descriptions such as ‘typist’, ‘machinist’, ‘stockist’ and ‘scientist’ appear. It is not possible to determine the first manufacturing tobacconist to have traded as such, nor to deduce from which town or precisely when the term originated. In the Liverpool Town Books to 1671 none are referenced, although the growing popularity of smoking tobacco is attested by the admission as a Freeman of Liverpool, ‘Richard Atherton, tobacco pipe maker, admitted and sworn ... 50s.’ on 11 August 1654.<sup>102</sup>

Unlike nail-making for example which had pre-existed and evolved out of a core blacksmithing skill, the manufacturing tobacconist was an entirely new trade and is another example of a pre-industrial specialisation in west Lancashire. The specific trade and occupation of ‘tobacconist’ emerged in the mid-seventeenth century as a separate entity to that of the mercer grocers who had traditionally stocked and sold tobacco in a partly processed state, and who in provincial towns long continued to do so. In Ormskirk the grocer James Berey (1686), left a total of 1409lb. of ‘best’, ‘cut’, ‘ordinary’, ‘roll’ and leaf tobacco valued at £49.2s.’ Similarly in Wigan the mercer Roger Winstanley (1682), held in stock ‘In Cutt tobacco ... 4s.’ In 1708, James Ford, mercer/grocer stocked ‘Leaf Tobacco ... £7.’, ‘short tobacco ... £2.’ and ‘In tobacco stalk ... 5s.’ In the following year William Hodgkinson, mercer, left ‘five dozen of Candles, Tobacco and several sorts of Grocery ware ... £5.10s.’ in his shop in the Standishgate. His inventory also records the debt for £26. ‘to Mr. Parr of Liverpool Merchant’ indicating the source of Hodgkinson’s goods.<sup>103</sup>

Tobacco leaves were air-dried after harvesting and packed tightly into 54-gallon hogsheads for shipping. Adversely affected by humidity between decks they often arrived from

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<sup>102</sup> Michael Parker (ed.), *Liverpool Town Books 1649-1671* (Stroud, 1999), p. 57.

<sup>103</sup> LA WCW, James Berey, Ormskirk (1686); Roger Winstanley, Wigan (1682); James Ford, Wigan (1708); William Hodgkinson, Wigan (1709).

Maryland and Virginia in a state of decay. Usable tobacco leaves had to be carefully separated, stripped from their stalks and dried in lofts. Thereafter the leaves were shredded, compressed in layers and cut into ‘plugs’, or alternatively spun into ‘ropes’ and ‘twists.’ The stalks were also dried thoroughly before being milled into fine powder and sold as snuff.

The earliest inventory for a tobacconist in the probate record for west Lancashire is that of Gilbert Lowe of Liverpool (1677). He had more than two tons of tobacco stored as leaf, rolls, stalks and scraps valued at £35.7s.4d.’ To process it, ‘1 Engine Presse Cooler Sives & boxes ... £3.15s.’ and ‘1 presse & 1 dryer & 1 engine to turn off / with 1 Box for cutting small scrues ... £1.19s.8d.’ Perhaps initiating a trend for product packaging, Lowe also stocked ‘5 Rheame whit pap[er] 1 Rheame & halfe brown ... 17s.6d.’ Another Liverpool tobacconist, Robert Clarke (1686), held approximately eight tons of tobacco and 40lb. of stalks at £129.0.8d.’ which awaited processing on ‘1 tobacco Engine ... £4.13s.’ He too stocked ‘In paper and pack thread £1.1s.’ In 1695 Abel Owen left a similar tonnage ‘In Severall Sorts of Tobacco ... £126.6s.3d.’ and as an indication of the diversification of product lines which had evolved by this time, ‘One Tobacco Skrew Iron Croe & Tobacco Iron ... £1.10.3d.’ ‘One Tobacco presse and Stalk Milne ... £2.10s.’ and ‘One Tobacco Ingin & Three Wheels for Rowle £1.1s.’ and to present it for sale after manufacture ‘In Paper and Twine ... “2.11s.”<sup>104</sup>

From the detailed descriptions in inventories, which evaluate the machinery and processing equipment required for tobacco manufacturing in the late 1600s, it appears that existing machinery from prevailing technologies have been re-engineered and adapted to fit the demand requirements of large-scale tobacco manufacture. Tobacco ‘engines’ and snuff grinders would have been adaptations of fulling and milling machinery. Screw presses had already been in use for centuries for cheese, cider and papermaking. Scaled down indoor

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<sup>104</sup> LA WCW, Liverpool tobacconists, Gilbert Lowe (1677), Robert Clarke (1686), Abel Owen (1695).



versions of rope walks with hooks, plates and windlasses spun the processed leaves into tobacco ropes. After manufacture, these were cut into saleable coils and thereafter sliced thinly into ‘coins’ for pipe-smoking. It is notable that the last two remaining snuff manufacturers in Europe, J & H Wilson of Sheffield and Samuel Gawith of Kendal continue to grind snuff using milling machinery from the eighteenth century. Wilsons’ snuff mill machinery of 1763 is powered by the wheel of their watermill, registered in 1604; Gawith’s iron snuff grinders, in use since 1792, were originally constructed c.1750 to grind gunpowder.<sup>105</sup>

Additional capacity was only possible to maintain on a regular basis in organised, structured ‘proto-factory’ premises which had invested in technologically advanced equipment, and which took account of task demarcation or a combination of both. Whilst these discussions have not focussed on the size of these production centres, it is apparent in the inventoried evaluations from Liverpool in particular, that some early modern manufacturing and processing sites were extensive. We have seen from the examples above of glass manufacturer William Fleetwood (1679), brewer William Denton (1714) and brasier/pewterer Thomas Ford (1719) that several inventories provide unambiguous indications that many commercial sites were being designed and equipped with the foresight of rational planning rather than merely organic expansion in response to demand.

Regarding proprietor status and the material rewards for industrious trade entrepreneurship, in Liverpool in particular, individual producers were making their fortunes. The glass manufacturer William Fleetwood is exemplary of the newly emerging rank or class of respectable tradesmen in Liverpool. Fleetwood left an inventory valued at £299.4s.3d. in 1679. He owned a vessel share as ‘A fowerte part of the Mercy ... £90.’ kept ‘Money in the

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<sup>105</sup> [www.sharrowmills.com](http://www.sharrowmills.com); [www.lancashirelife.co.uk](http://www.lancashirelife.co.uk) Martin Pilkington, ‘Kendal Brown House, continuing the art of snuff production’ 23 March 2012 updated 23 October 2015. Accessed 30.12.2020.

house ... £40' and was attired like a gentleman in 'The Decedents Apparrell A Silver watch And a Sword ... £10.'<sup>106</sup> Rope-maker Robert Amery left an inventory of £346.13s.4d. in 1682. He also had a ship-share as 'one Eight part of a Pink Called Roebuck ... £38.15s.' In his dwelling house he kept 'gold, moneys and plate ... £12.18.2d.' and he dressed well 'in the decedents Apparrell ... £6.' In 1693, fellow rope-maker Ralph Birch left 'one study'd case watch att ... "2.10s.' and 'Deceas'ds Apparrell ... £10.' The tobacconist Gilbert Lowe (1677) owned '1 horse saddle and bridle ... £3.10s.' and 'Wearing Apparrell ... £7.' and Robert Clarke, tobacconist who left an inventory of £310.0s.11d. in 1686, left '1 Mare sadle and Bridle ... £4.' apparel at £5. and '1/4 of ye Ship Reserve ... £48.' also '1/4 of ye Ship Unicorn sold ... £60.'<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

Throughout the Lancashire plain, secondary occupational activities in dairying and brewing became organised on a commercial basis. We have seen how these activities featured in the inventory record in rural townships as examples of regional specialisations based upon pre-existing agricultural production strategies. Upscaling of output from relatively small dairy herds was possible with an overall increase in yields of grass and hay which provided improved feed quality, local availability of fresh milk, and alterations made by producers to their places of domesticity and employment. Such alterations allocated new spaces for milking parlours, butter churns, cheese-presses, and 'cheese-rooms.'<sup>108</sup> Inventories record the prodigious production of cheese and butter, which was stored at home and intended for distant and overseas markets, and marketing through west Lancashire towns. Walton had observed that these early forms of industrialisation had "migrated from county to town."

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<sup>106</sup> LA WCW, William Fleetwood, Liverpool (1679).

<sup>107</sup> LA WCW, all Liverpool; Robert Amery, rope-maker (1682); Ralph Birch, rope-maker (1693); Gilbert Lowe, tobacconist (1677); Robert Clarke, tobacconist (1686).

<sup>108</sup> Chapter 3. Table 24, p. 141.

Stobart exemplified such activities in Chester and Ormskirk as being “vital in integrating town and country at local or sub-regional level, and Ascott *et al*, discussed skilled labour migration into Liverpool and employment mobility within trade specialisations”<sup>109</sup> We have also discussed the physical scaling-up of brewing facilities and cellaring capabilities in Ormskirk and Liverpool. This also required the physical organisation of storing and processing raw materials and was aided by novel technological advances in brewing and cooling techniques. These advances improved quality and extended storage times on board ship. Liverpool’s growing numbers of traditional trades, which included tallow chandlers, coopers, and blacksmiths, and the emerging specialised trades in anchor forging, sugar-boiling, glassmaking and tobacco manufacturing each required the spatial organisation of capital equipment, tools, men and storage of unprecedented raw materials stocks. In discussing pewter manufacture in Liverpool, I have demonstrated that output became structured along rationally organised ‘factory’ lines. In both rural and urban settings south of the Ribble, the transformations in organisational, technological and manufacturing processes which emerged in c.1680s are no less valuable in divining the early tributaries of the industrial revolution in the west of Lancashire than those found elsewhere in the north-west of England.

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<sup>109</sup> John K. Walton, in Pat Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries, A perspective on the industrial revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989) p. 41; Stobart, *First Industrial*, pp. 178-9; Ascott et al, *Liverpool 1660-1750*, pp. 57-8, 93.

## Chapter 5 The built environment, money and a consumer culture.

“The material culture of domestic life was closely associated with the social and practical lives of households, and it was in their everyday activities and experiences that the meaning of consumption can be found.”<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation began with cattle and crops and closes with consumer comforts. In this final chapter, I examine the material culture which emerged in west Lancashire in the latter decades of the seventeenth century and which gained momentum thereafter. Probate records reveal abundant evidence in towns and townships from c.1680s onwards, not only of conspicuous items of high-status furniture and silver plate and the use of colour decoration of interior spaces, but also of novel and inexpensive utilitarian implements. To borrow Weatherill’s neat phrases, these were “front stage” and “backstage” goods.<sup>2</sup> Imported timbers, American walnut and Caribbean hardwoods were employed to refashion traditional furniture including clock-cases, tables, chairs and close-stool cases. Alongside traditional treenware bowls, earthenware and pewter tableware, from the mid-1670s, dishes and plates in white earthenware and in blue and polychromatic delftware appear in inventories, albeit almost exclusively in Liverpool and Ormskirk households. Regarding the stylistic influence of delftware, de Vries described the international output of Delft as, “The most successful seventeenth century response to the new market opportunities ... In 1650 fourteen workshops were active in Delft, by 1670 there were thirty much larger.”<sup>3</sup> In Ormskirk and Liverpool, if less so in rural townships, an increased prevalence of looking glasses, close stools and warming pans appear, as also in town inventories the emergence of items of furniture

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<sup>1</sup> Lorna Weatherill, ‘The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England,’ in John Brewer & Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London & New York), p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London & New York, 1988), pp. 9-11, 145.

<sup>3</sup> Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 131.

designed specifically for children. By the turn of the eighteenth century, Liverpool braziers were refashioning copper, steel and tin to produce innovative and affordable household items. Roasting tins, saucepans, coffee pots and kettles appear, also flowerpots and watering cans. Our inventories also offer evidence of the early mass-production of inexpensive mantelpiece ornaments and popular printed images of dogs, maps, ships, contemporary religious and political figures and those from classical antiquity. These latter items are noteworthy. They commonly appear in inventories of relatively low value for Liverpool mariners and tradesmen alongside those for the middle and upper ranks, thus indicating that the emerging material culture involved almost every level of society.

Discussions which focus on material consumption have proliferated in the past forty years. Modern historiographies were led by Lorna Weatherill who noted that “it has long been recognised that increasing demand for a wide range of goods and clothing was as important in industrialisation as the invention of new methods of production.” Weatherill’s findings led her to conclude that, as early as the 1670s, “this was already a society in which people expected to have a selection of domestic goods.” Furthermore, “The middle ranks were economically, socially and politically important. Even in the seventeenth century the largest market for new and imported goods was among these consumers.”<sup>4</sup> More recently, Jon Stobart discussed “the broadening and deepening of consumption ... in the eighteenth century as market exchange became increasingly important in the everyday lives of individual households.”<sup>5</sup> De Vries similarly suggested that “consumer demand developed through an interaction of market and household productive systems” which gathered pace from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. However, he also proposed that comfort was the origin and primary desideratum of consumer demand which involved household expenditure. He

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<sup>4</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 2, 14, 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Jon Stobart, *The First Industrial Region North-west England c. 1700-60* (Manchester & New York 2004) pp. 138-40.

suggested that demand for improvements in domestic comfort had commenced earlier with “the reorganization of space within homes [which] unfolded in the century after the 1650s.” This objective required households to devote more of their labour to market-oriented activities and that above all else, “this new industriousness was substantially motivated by new consumer aspirations.”<sup>6</sup>

Carole Shammas extended the scope for discussion beyond England to the emerging import/export trade in commodities, utility goods and textiles with the American colonies. She argued that “There seems to have been a sharp rise in the real amount of wealth put into consumer goods between the end of the sixteenth century and the later seventeenth century ... Sugar products, caffeine drinks and tobacco became objects of mass consumption long before 1800,” and that “for a good to be considered a mass-consumed commodity in any given place, two things must happen. It must be bought by people of varied income levels, and they must be buying it on a more or less regular basis.”<sup>7</sup> Keith Wrightson also discussed “the enhancement of the potential purchasing power of a substantial proportion of households.” [Such that] “Sugar, tobacco, calico cloth and spices, sold in small quantities, were within the reach of ordinary consumers, and they were swiftly consumed.”<sup>8</sup>

More recently, Paul Slack offered another perspective, noting “the ideological baggage which consumer goods carried with them, not only of status and wealth but of political and moral worth, or lack of them.”<sup>9</sup> Slack drew our attention to the polemical contemporary commentators, Charles Davenport, John Houghton and Nicholas Barbon who, in the 1670s debated the conflicting facets of material culture. Each identified consumer satisfaction with

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<sup>6</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 122, 126-30.

<sup>7</sup> Carole Shammas, ‘Changes in English and Anglo-American consumption from 1550-1800’, in Roy Porter & John Brewer (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London & New York, 1993), pp. 178-9, 200.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities, Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven & London, 2000), pp. 231, 238.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Slack, ‘The Politics of Consumption and England’s Happiness in the Later Seventeenth Century,’ *English Historical Review*, vol. CXXII, no. 497 (2007), p. 609.

national well-being, “the pursuit of consumer self-interest and national aggrandisement” and contrasted those sentiments with excessive consumption and “the contest between luxury and morality.”<sup>10</sup> Slack concluded, “There is little doubt that England’s wealth was increasing across the century and increasing in per capita terms after 1650.”<sup>11</sup> However, Muldrew’s findings support rising consumption even among labourers. His research of extant inventories belonging to labouring people enabled him to conclude that “labourers were indeed spending more on consumer items ... after the Restoration when inflation ceased, and the earning power of households increased for the first time in a century.” Furthermore, “Instead of buying more things, labourers were instead buying better quality items ... More labourers also possessed pewter-cases to keep their pewter in.”<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly, economic and political transformations in London society received particular attention. Discussions in this chapter demonstrate and exemplify a concomitant theme. The “transformation of consumer desire”<sup>13</sup> to borrow from De Vries’, was also evident in the towns and townships of west Lancashire, largely led by the accommodation and servicing capabilities of Ormskirk and the meteoric rise in goods passing through the port of Liverpool. Whether in the design and (re)construction of domestic housing, bodily apparel and adornment, utensils of convenience, the expenditure of cash and retailer credit to acquire these things, all appear in Slack’s telling phrases as “the various kinds of consumer revolution documented in probate inventories” and notably that, “People were behaving as if they had more purchasing power.”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, it is the rapidity with which a material culture germinated early and flourished energetically in west Lancashire towns which merit examination. To exemplify these

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<sup>10</sup> Slack, ‘Politics of Consumption’, pp. 628-9.

<sup>11</sup> Slack, ‘Material progress and the challenge of affluence in seventeenth-century England’ *EcHR*, new series, vol. 62.3 (2009), pp. 576-603, 577.

<sup>12</sup> Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 192, 200.

<sup>13</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 1-39.

<sup>14</sup> Slack, ‘Material progress’, pp. 578.

discussions, I have compared rural evidence with that of Ormskirk and Liverpool and drawn comparisons with existing studies. Commencing with an analysis of the materials used to build and remodel farmhouses, barns and townhouses in a time of transition, I have also highlighted features of external decoration and noted trends in internal room colours. This leads into an overview of the material things people bought or had made, bringing utility and comfort and sentimentality, also status and intellectual value to their homes. These include clocks, books, furniture and purely decorative items. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the monetary value and social importance of wrought silver items and the practical availability of coins and credit, resources which enabled the processes of a consumer culture to unfold.

#### **‘Timber for buyldinge of his house’<sup>15</sup>**

In 1953 Hoskins suggested that sustainability of a robust and progressive regional economy and perhaps national population growth and personal health relied primarily on there being good quality housing across the social ranks. He proposed that in the rural districts of England between c.1570 and 1640 a housing revolution unfolded which in his oft-repeated phrase became nothing short of the ‘Great Rebuilding’ of domestic housing across England and Wales.<sup>16</sup> This transformation principally involved the widespread refurbishment and modernisation of existing mediaeval houses. Accommodation became progressively more comfortable, and the remodelling of interior spaces provided improvements in warmth, light, space, ventilation and privacy. Although a vast historiography has been afforded to large country houses, domestic and agricultural buildings in manifold ‘vernacular’ regional variations eventually attracted their own fields of research.<sup>17</sup> In 1977 Machin published a

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<sup>15</sup> LA WCW, William Clayton, Farington, linen weaver (1630).

<sup>16</sup> W. G. Hoskins, ‘The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640’, *Past and Present* No. 4 (1953) pp. 55-7.

<sup>17</sup> M. W. Barley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (London, 1961); Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses A study of traditional farmhouses and cottages* (HMSO, London, 1975); R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook*



reassessment of Hoskins' conclusions and his time framing of 1570-1640. Through an extensive compilation of dated house inscriptions from surviving properties in seventeen counties in England and Wales, Machin revealed that the outstanding decade for dated houses (with 348 properties), was the 1690s. He duly concluded "that the Great Rebuilding should be located *circa* 1700 rather than *circa* 1600 ... but this interpretation is too simple and the term Great Rebuilding misleading."<sup>18</sup> Hoskins' path-breaking work has more recently been accepted as revealing the first period of major rebuilding while Machin and subsequently Platt have recognised that, particularly in the northern counties between 1660 and 1720, there occurred not only a second period of rebuilding but also of entirely new building, which assertion is confirmed by the numerous incidences of dated houses. "The second half of the sixteenth and the whole of the seventeenth century was a period of tremendous growth disturbed only by the famine decade of the 1590s and the Civil Wars."<sup>19</sup> Evidence suggests that in Lancashire from west to east vernacular housing of a generally high quality prevailed throughout this period. We have been informed by the contemporary if subjective observations recorded by the traveller Celia Fiennes that her impressions of the west Lancashire towns which she visited in 1696 appear warmly appreciative. For example, Prescott was to her eyes "a very pretty neate market town." Wigan "is another pretty market town built of stone and brick" and Preston seemed "a very good market town ... the generality of the buildings ... were very handsome better than in most country towns." Notably, Liverpool left the strongest impression. Fiennes tellingly, described Liverpool as

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of *Vernacular Architecture* (London, 1971); *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain* (London, 1982); *Brick Building in Britain* (London, 1990); Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> R. Machin, 'The Great Rebuilding: A Reassessment', *Past and Present*, no. 77 (1977), pp. 33-56: Table 1, 'Sample of Dated Houses in England & Wales', p. 36, pp. 33, 37, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Machin, 'Reassessment', p. 37; Platt, *Rebuildings*, pp. 1-3, 133-62.

“mostly new built houses of brick and stone built high and even ... it’s London in miniature as much as ever I saw any-thing.”<sup>20</sup>

Between c.1600 and c.1740, in rural townships as well as in urban centres throughout western Lancashire, the rebuilding and remodelling of domestic, agricultural and commercial properties appears a constant phenomenon. Commonly recorded in inventories south of the Ribble in particular, from pre-1660 to c.1740 are evaluations of building materials of every description. New building materials in brick, stone and slate were increasingly employed alongside, or instead of, elm, ash and thatch in building construction. Machin had identified the first of two “spurts of activity” for building occurring between 1620-39 although “Quantitatively the period from 1660-1739 was far more important.”<sup>21</sup> In either period, inventories in our dataset reveal frequent evaluations of whole trees, oak boards, ash planks and doors; limestones, flags, slates, coving stones, corner stones, ashlar, scaffold boards, long ladders, lime mortar, tiles and bricks. It is highly probable that an unknown proportion of these materials were intended for repairs and renewals of farm buildings, the shippens, cart-houses, granaries, mills, stables and barns which may have been attached to the main house or stood independently. Barns and granaries were of sufficient significance and expense to their owners that they too were often dated. Machin included them in his analysis arguing that “Barns were included as expensive alternative investments.”<sup>22</sup>

Considerable inventoried and testamentary evidence from the western towns and rural townships indicates that men who possessed sufficient financial means improved existing properties and extended their occupational options and range of activities by building from new, either on their existing estates or on land purchased subsequently for that purpose.

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher Morris (ed.), *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685-1712* (London, 1982), pp. 160-3.

<sup>21</sup> Machin, ‘Reassessment’, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Machin, ‘Reassessment’, p. 35.

Construction materials were bought on credit or paid for outright. Carpentry, joinery, ‘plaistering’, slating or thatching work was agreed on daily rates and required cash payments on completion. For example, in 1637 the administrator for Henry Meade of Eccleston paid twelve shillings ‘to one John Rigby a thatcher for worke by him done ... and of xxvjs [26s]. paid to John Barton for timber & other thinges.’ Similarly in 1708 the administrator for Edward Dale of Down Litherland paid William Making 1s.5d. for thatching and 4s. ‘for straw for thatching & leading it.’ He paid John Houghton 2s. for thatching and 2s. ‘for serving the thatcher leading and getting of bricks.’ Making was also paid 5s. ‘for ditching & daubing ye barn end.’ As no other names are recorded it is probable that Messrs. Making and Houghton carried out these additional tasks, further suggesting in microcosm, a multi-skilled labour force and an example of occupational fluidity.<sup>23</sup>

The detailed personal diaries of the gentleman landowner Nicholas Blundell are illuminating. Blundell recorded numerous entries in his accounts for repairs and refurbishments to Little Crosby Hall including the creation of a new parlour completed between August and December 1706 at a cost of £58.5s.6d.<sup>24</sup> Labourers’ work was always accounted for and paid in cash. Blundell became particularly energetic in improving his estate and encouraged his tenants to build their own dwellings, often with bricks and timber from Little Crosby. “Farrer, Edward has Anno Domini 1717 ... erected a Cottage built with Stone containing two good Bays by the consent of me Nich: Blundell upon the waist [*sic*].” In May 1727 John Blancherd’s house was completed, and in June, Robert Blancherd’s barn. In May 1728 following the death of Ann Rothwell, “Thomas Marsor began to pull down part of the End of the Four-Lain-End Hous in order to rebuild it.”<sup>25</sup> Such improvements were not the sole

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<sup>23</sup> LA WCW, Henry Meade, Eccleston (1637); Edward Dale, Down Litherland (1708).

<sup>24</sup> Frank Tyrer (transc.), & J. J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nichols Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, 3 vols, 1702-1728 (Manchester, 1968, 1970, 1972), vol. I, Appendix F December 11, 1706, Expenses in Making a Parlour at Crosby Hall, p.125, pp. 320-21.

<sup>25</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. II fn p. 228; vol. III pp. 214, 216, 236.

province of the local gentry. Probate records divulge examples of new build enterprises at various levels of west Lancashire society. In 1630 Robert Clayton, a linen weaver of Farington died before the ‘Timber for buyldinge of his house ... £3.’ could be utilised. In the appended will, directions are given for their disposal or for the desired outcome for newly built dwellings. In 1641 James Pilkington, a tanner from Ecclestone instructed his executors, using the materials which were valued at £34. to “erecte & sett up a new house upon the p’msses w’ch is already framed of wood & stones, w’th slate & other materials,” for his son to inhabit when completed. In 1688 Cuthbert Keaquick of Lathom, yeoman, had “purchased the broad hey ... and have since erected a new brick house thereupon,” which he bequeathed to his grandson, and in a similar bequest in 1726 John Rymmer of North Meols, gave “unto my son John Rymer the Brick House to be in possession immediately after my decease.”<sup>26</sup>

**‘W’th some few Breeks.’<sup>27</sup>**

The partial or whole use of brick as a building material in transforming the quality and durability of all buildings in which it was employed cannot be over-stated. De Vries highlighted comfort as the primary desire of industrious and aspirational early modern households, observing that in Holland, England and France, in the century after 1650, functional domestic spaces became better defined, once “Brick construction replaced wood and lime.”<sup>28</sup> Borsay described urban expansion and prosperity after c.1760 owing much to the beneficial adoption of non-flammable building materials such as brick and slate which contributed to the diminution in occurrences of major town fire disasters.<sup>29</sup> Brickmaking was a pre-industrial speciality of west and central Lancashire in the early modern period. South of

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<sup>26</sup> LA WCW, Robert Clayton, Farington (1630); James Pilkington, Ecclestone (1641); Cuthbert Keaquick, Lathom (1688); John Rymmer, North Meols (1726).

<sup>27</sup> LA WCW, Robert Maudsley, Melling, husbandman (1666).

<sup>28</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>29</sup> Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance, Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989, reprinted 2002). p. 18.

the Ribble the underlying geology is naturally suited to their manufacture as the prevalence of Mercian mudstone, Keuper marl/Manchester clays provide a broad and accessible substrate west of the lower Pennine coalfields.<sup>30</sup> Probate evidence indicates that localised areas of repeat manufacture of bricks were widespread. In the late 1500s bricks were being made in Longton, Farington, Croston, Bretherton, Much Hoole and Tarleton. By the 1630s, kilns and brick stocks were evaluated in Ulnes Walton, Lathom and Scarisbrick and from the early eighteenth century, in Little Crosby, Ince Blundell and thereafter in the environs of Liverpool. The earliest probate reference to bricks appeared in 1594, appended to the will of Henry Bannister of Heskin, recording “Debts w’ch I doe Awe to John Sudlawe for bricke ... xxxij s. [32s.]” A further sixteen inventoried references to brick holdings south of the Ribble are evident prior to 1620.

Throughout the early modern era bricks were invariably made and fired on or as near as possible to their building sites.<sup>31</sup> The workmen who performed both operations were, until the mid-eighteenth century the same men whose skills also extended to laying them. In 1671 John Vause of Ormskirk was referred to by his appraisers as ‘Bricklayer’. His inventory valued his brick stocks at £8. which quantity represents *c.*22880 at 7s. per thousand. This general valuation average has been calculated from a sample of other itemised holdings. Unusually, his moulding tools, boards, and wright’s tools were also evaluated, at 10s.6d. providing a clear indication of his involvement in both activities.<sup>32</sup> We cannot always know for certain whether other decedents made their own bricks or purchased them. However, in 1665 William Gobin of Snape had constructed ‘one bricke Cill [kilne]... £5.’ Nicholas

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<sup>30</sup> BGS 1:50000 series, Preston Solid and Drift Edition, sheet 075.

<sup>31</sup> R. W. Brunskill, *Brick Building in Britain* (London, 1990), pp. 21, 130.

<sup>32</sup> LA WCW, John Vause, Ormskirk (1671).

Bimson, of Heskin, yeoman, left ‘Six Conduits & more of Brick ... £7.10s.’ in 1692 and in 1705, Anthony Wetherby of Halsall was evaluated ‘for Brick killnes ... £5.’<sup>33</sup>

Detailed accounts of the complex process by which bricks were manufactured are scarce. Nicholas Blundell, who possessed comparatively extensive lands around Little Crosby Hall and had access to local labour, first diarised the extraction of brick-clay on his estate on 8 December 1702 when “The Brick-Men began to Cast for Brick in the Moss Hey.”<sup>34</sup> Over the course of twenty-five years brickmaking here became a regular occurrence to the scale of a minor industry. Clay was dug from several locations, most notably ‘The Moss-Hey’, ‘The Great More-Hey’ and ‘The Ackers’ [Acres], a large field west of Crosby village. By 1720 this latter site had evolved into a semi-permanent place of manufacture. Blundell’s diary entries account for the progress of the 200,000 bricks he had made in 1719, providing a unique insight into the complex procedures, forward planning and patience required to manufacture bricks by hand in a pre-mechanised age. From 16 January 1719 when he surveyed and prospected the deepest deposits of clay in ‘The Ackers’, until 1st September when “My Brick-men set the first of my Brick-Kilns on fier in the Ackers”, his diary chronicles 228 days of digging, weathering, moulding and stacking. Blundell noted “I was with them whilst they were fiering it.” A second large kiln was fired successfully on 7 September 1719 and another in 1722.<sup>35</sup> Blundell’s enterprise was exceptional, as were brick-built dwellings. To test whether the possession of brick stocks changed by social rank over time I have tabulated below, all inventoried incidences of brick holdings where evaluations were given above seven shillings/c.1000 bricks.

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<sup>33</sup> LA WCW, William Gobin, Snape (1665); Nicholas Bimson, Heskin (1692); Anthony Wetherby, Halsall (1705).

<sup>34</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, vol. II, pp. 249, 269.

**Table 27. Brick stocks above 7 shillings, inventories south of Ribble, by status.**

	pre-1660	%age	1661-1700	%age	1701-40	%age
esquire	3		2		1	
gent/bachelor	3		4		3	
clerke/rector	1		1		0	
yeoman	10		23		11	
sub-total:	17	53.125	30	42.86	15	44.12
husbandman	7		14		7	
labourer	0		1		0	
tradesman	4		12		3	
not recorded	4		13		9	
sub-total:	15	46.875	40	57.14	19	55.88
total:	32		70		34	

To provide evidence from the widest geographic sample I have broadened the core dataset to include 11 incidences from Altcar, Chorley, Ormskirk, Standish and Wigan from 1661-1700, and 8 from Liverpool, Everton and Aintree and a further 6 from Downholland, Ince Blundell and Wigan 1701-40. The figure reveals that by dividing the upper social ranks of esquire to yeoman from those of husbandman and trades, a subtle pattern of change emerges. From the percentages of status of those who left stocks of bricks a 9 per cent shift each way indicates that before c.1660 brick making and the use of the product in construction tended towards a preserve of the upper ranks, but this slightly altered thereafter. For example, of the eight inventoried records from Liverpool, Everton and Aintree, from 1668 to 1722, brick manufacture and stocks were left by: 2 yeomen 2 husbandmen, 2 iron-mongers, 1 freemason and 1 mariner. Of these, William Price, a Liverpool ironmonger (1672), was evaluated for ‘ten thousand of bricks on the heath iuxta Liverpool ... £7.’ and forty years later, James Brooks, a Liverpool free mason left ‘a parcell of brick ... £1.10s.’ and ‘Bricks by the new Key £30.’<sup>36</sup> These occasional evaluations nevertheless reflect a wider need for locally sourced bricks in an expanding port town. Notably after c.1660, beyond Liverpool, husbandmen whose inventories invariably reveal them to have been primarily involved in agricultural husbandry, were making bricks, as were tradesmen. It is also clear that in 44

<sup>36</sup> LA WCW, William Price, Liverpool, ironmonger (1672); James Brooks, Liverpool, free mason (1711).

incidences, the highest overall, possessors of brick were yeomen, which suggests that by improving their homes, they also strengthened their social position.

Complete houses which were built of brick, or of a combination of brick, timber and stone required a level of brick manufacture of the scale undertaken by Nicholas Blundell. However, much of the evidence which accounted for quantities of bricks amounted to valuations of £5 or less. This equates to a maximum stock of c.15000 bricks in each case, which is insufficient for the construction of an entire building. In 1672, Henry Oatey of Rufford, husbandman left “in Bricke and lime ... £1.”; John Dandy of Croston, joiner, left ‘two parcells of brick & one of stone ... £2.10s.’ and Thomas Haydock of Farington, yeoman, ‘Eighteen Thous’d of bricks ... £6.10s.’ in 1720.<sup>37</sup> These quantities suggest that the intended use of the bricks were for specific alterations to existing houses, notably, the construction of brick chimneys to improve existing dwellings. This significant feature, as also suggested by Machin, commenced during the period of Hoskin’s first phase of ‘Great Rebuilding’ and continued into the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup> Other than in the enclosure of high open internal spaces to create parlours, ceiled chambers and lofts, arguably the greatest improvement in comfort to any dwelling in the early modern period was the ability to encourage smoke upwards and away from inhabited rooms via a brick chimney with a deep pyramidal hood and narrow flue. Borsay observed that “During the great rebuilding there was a marked growth in [brick] use, particularly in the erection of chimneys.”<sup>39</sup> Brunskill explained that both fireplaces and chimney breasts could be incorporated in the construction of brick walls which stood proud of or alternatively could, “be inserted into the heart of timber-frame buildings, making permanent and fireproof what had previously been vulnerable and insubstantial inglenooks

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<sup>37</sup> LA WCW, Henry Oatey, Rufford, husbandman (1672), John Dandy, Croston, joiner (1692), Thomas Haydock, Farington (1720).

<sup>38</sup> Machin, ‘Reassessment’, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 54.



and smoke-bays of timber and daub.’<sup>40</sup> The great benefit of the latter arrangement is that a hearth on either side would serve both firehouse and adjoining kitchen. If this was indeed their intended purpose and it is not easy to conceive what other there could have been, then what we are seeing from the inventoried record in both the coastal and rural townships of western Lancashire is an ongoing process of re-modelling and improving traditional houses. The increase in diversity of pans and cooking utensils found in inventories after c.1680s, which was first discussed by Weatherill, indicates that more interiors were being altered to reflect their owners’ tastes and preferences for better cooking methods and techniques.<sup>41</sup> These required draught efficiency and improved air quality, and this could only be achieved with remodelled fireplaces and chimneys built in brick, or brick and stone, secured with lime mortar.

#### **‘In wood bricke & stone’<sup>42</sup>**

This section explores how in both rural and urban locations, a variety of traditional building materials prevailed into the eighteenth century. Notwithstanding the proliferation in local brickmaking, even in the 1700s brick remained an exceptional construction material in rural townships. Much of the housing stock north and south of the Ribble continued to be frame-built in timber with a lathe and plaster ‘clat and clay’ infill. In 1668 for example William Blanchard, yeoman of Ince Blundell left ‘In framed timber for buildeinge ... £1.12s.’<sup>43</sup> There is evidence also of a most traditional and ancient form of house and/or barn building. In 1669 Richard Thompson of Croston, carpenter, owned ‘A pair of Crookes [crucks] ... 6s.’ and similarly in 1670, Geoffrey Woods of Much Hoole, husbandman left ‘one paire of boughs &

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<sup>40</sup> Brunskill, *Brick Building*, p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 79, 205.

<sup>42</sup> LA WCW, Robert Dalton, Croston (1668).

<sup>43</sup> LA WCW, William Blanchard, Ince Blundell (1668).

sawn boards ... 6s.’ These would also have been sourced locally.<sup>44</sup> I referred earlier to the ‘lyinge timber’ at Burscough, owned by the yeoman Edmond Smoult in 1597 and felled at maturity.<sup>45</sup> Valued at £10. this timber, from thirty or forty oak, ash and elm trees, would have been purchased on credit and stored by carpenters, joiners, coopers and cart, wheel and shipwrights until required. Later inventories provide manifold insights into the trade in mature trees. They illuminate a rarely discussed aspect of the commercial relationship between the upper ranks of Lancashire society and the construction trades who relied upon them for supplies of these most essential raw materials. William Carter of Mawdesley, gentleman (1688), left ‘wood on ye Hillside ... 13s.4d.’ and possessed ‘a Boulster for leading timber ... 4s.’ John Shaw of Scarisbrick, gentleman (1691), left ‘Three Ash trees and one Elm unbroken ... £1.’ In 1706 the appraisers for Thomas Lydiate of Lydiate, gentleman recorded ‘In moneys Due from severall Persons for Ashwood ... £13.4s.6d.’ On the trade’s side, in 1687 Robert Fleetwood of Ince Blundell, house carpenter had ‘Timber att Mr. Mossockes wood not yet fetcht home ... £1.’ In 1731 Andrew Rutter, a Tarleton carpenter kept wood in eight locations valued at £7.10s. In addition to stocks on his property, he had timber lying at Sollom, Croston and ‘at the Parson’s.’ In 1702 William Byron of the Goorehouses, Altcar, a yeoman, bequeathed to his son Laurence, “the wood and timber at Edge which I formerly purchased from the Lord Mollineux.”<sup>46</sup> During the later seventeenth century, the decedents whose inventories fill our dataset, and their families, appear to have become increasingly industrious, commercially adept, market-oriented and moulded the “socially homogenous region” phrased by Riley. Although wealth and perceived status continued to form “a key element in mediating social relations,” the wealth between different

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<sup>44</sup> LA WCW, Richard Thompson, Croston (1669); Geoffrey Woods, Much Hoole (1670).

<sup>45</sup> General Introduction, pp. 27.

<sup>46</sup> LA WCW, William Carter, Mawdesley, gentleman (1688); John Shaw, Scarisbrick (1691); Thomas Lydiate, Lydiate (1706); Robert Fleetwood, Ince Blundell, carpenter (1687); Andrew Rutter, Tarleton (1731); William Byron, Altcar (1702).

ranks in west Lancashire was “not as significant as in other parts of the country.”<sup>47</sup> The above-mentioned carpenter Robert Fleetwood for example left an inventory valued to £146.7s.4d.’ in 1687, and the gentleman William Carter of Maudesley, £158.10s.4.’ in 1688.

Inventoried evidence offers further indications of an apparently robust quality of rural and urban dwellings across the Lancashire plain and of a broad social homogeneity in their general construction and interior layouts. In the seventeenth century houses with up to seven rooms, “conformed almost invariably to a fixed plan,” which in general, reflect Brunskill’s themes of ‘Plan Form Family’ dwellings.<sup>48</sup> As Arkell observed, “Greater diversity appeared only among houses with seven rooms or more.”<sup>49</sup> Prior to any remodelling, most habitations generally included a ‘firehouse’ for family living and social reception, a relatively private parlour and a kitchen/buttery downstairs. The staircase rose either between the two principal or the two subsidiary rooms with two or three sleeping and/or storage chambers above. In smaller, older dwellings, the staircase usually rose by the main fireplace.<sup>50</sup> One exceptional external feature of rural dwellings which reflected the aspirations of the middle ranks, and which has been highlighted in south-west and central Lancashire primarily by virtue of the inventoried record is the multi-storey porch entrance. House entrances are important features. Notwithstanding social homogeneity, they convey a perception of rank and status even before the threshold has been crossed. Garry Miller, who studied historic houses in the valley of the River Douglas, which flows through central and south-west Lancashire from the Pennine moors to the Ribble estuary, recorded examples of full-height porches in homes of the rural gentry which first appeared at Birchley and Winstanley near Wigan in the late 1500s. This new and impressive style was emulated in houses in Wrightington, Harrock, Lathom and

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<sup>47</sup> D. Riley, ‘Wealth and Social Structure in North-Western Lancashire in the later Seventeenth Century: A New Use for Probate Inventories.’ *THSLC*, vol. 141 (1992), pp. 81-85, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture*, pp. 100-5; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Arkell, Evans and Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 85-9.

<sup>50</sup> Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture*, pp. 100-5, 110.

Upholland. “Those who could afford it took the doorway a stage further ... Porches dramatically expressed the height of a building at a time when men wanted to affirm their superiority over homes that were merely single-storey.” Miller is in no doubt that their practical benefits, those of draught protection and the provision of a small upper room or porch chamber “were secondary to their principal function as a status symbol [which Miller suggests was] employed by yeomen eager to ‘gentrify’ themselves.”<sup>51</sup> In acknowledgement of Hoskins and Machin, Miller referred to the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries as the period of ‘yeoman rebuilding’ but suggested that refined architectural progress was “hindered ... by a lack of aesthetic awareness in this remote northern county.” However, he also conceded that within this predominantly rural area “The fact that considerable prosperity existed among its communities is indicated by the number of fine manor houses and farmhouses that have survived from their pre-factory era.”<sup>52</sup> It is only from inventoried evaluations of goods retained ‘in the porch chamber’ that we may apprehend the existence of the porched entrance itself. Nineteen inventories reference porches and/or porch chambers and all are clustered in a geographical spread south and west of Preston. These have not been recorded elsewhere as possessing this feature. Six of the inventories clearly indicate generational succession by referring to the same house at different times. For example, Hugh Moss of Little Hoole, yeoman (1676), and John Mosse of Little Hoole, yeoman (1727). Therefore of 16 different houses, 4 are from Much and Little Hoole, 6 from Penwortham parish, 4 from Croston and Bretherton and one each from Hesketh Bank and North Meols. The inventories date from 1669 to 1727 and whilst it is not possible to establish the original build dates, or the materials used in their construction, the houses stood in the areas in which brick production was most prevalent. The nineteen owners include 9 yeomen, 4 husbandmen,

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<sup>51</sup> Garry Miller, *Historic Houses in Lancashire, the Douglas Valley 1300-1700* (Nelson, 2002), pp. 149-52.

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Historic Houses*, pp. 152-3.

3 trades with 3 occupations not recorded. Inventory values range widely from £47.1s.9d. to £994.11s.4d. The houses appear to have had eight to twelve rooms. Although these examples are now lost, porched houses remain extant throughout Lancashire. There is for example a cluster of porched farmhouses within a mile of Bolton-by-Bowland near Clitheroe. The most striking of these is Alder House Farm which has a 1708 date-stone but is of earlier construction in stone with an impressive three-storied full-height jettied porch.<sup>53</sup> South of the Ribble perhaps the best-known extant dwelling of its era is Carr House Farm at Bretherton. Built of brick and dated 1613, it too presents an impressive three-storied porch to all who approach it.<sup>54</sup> Importantly these features represent evidence from the rural townships that those decedents who left substantial inventories and who lived in robust houses with distinctive architectural features, were capable, industrious men from the middle-ranks of society.

To highlight a specifically urban environment, an archived survey of the town for the Earl of Derby in 1713 provides a uniquely detailed record of materials and overall condition of his tenants' houses in Ormskirk.<sup>55</sup> Its contents reflect the evidence we have discussed thus far regarding the range of construction materials available in west Lancashire over the course of the seventeenth, into the eighteenth centuries. The survey was undertaken by one William Taylor and comprises 62 properties of which around a half were situated in four principal central locations at the upper end of the confluence of Aughton, Burscough, Church, and Moor streets. Other properties were surveyed in Cross lane and on Backhouse, Greetby and Scarth Hills. Ten other inhabitants lived in unidentified locations. Taylor recorded the construction materials of the houses in the most prominent locations which were in the vicinity of the church and the market cross. Nine houses were entirely of brick, four of brick

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<sup>53</sup> OS Explorer sheet OL41, grid ref: 766 504.

<sup>54</sup> Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses*, p. 179; VCH Vol. vi, pp. 102-3.

<sup>55</sup> LA DDK/41 (1713), Earl of Derby, Ormskirk survey.

and stone and two of stone. Each of these fifteen houses had been roofed in slates of thin stone flags. Conversely, three others were of traditional 'daube' with one of 'brick and daube', and these were covered in thatch. At the lower ends of Aughton and Moor Street and along Burscough Street a further fifteen houses were referred to simply as 'Cottage'. These would also undoubtedly have been constructed in timber with daub infill and thatched over. As in rural townships, the cottage properties away from the centre of Ormskirk possessed barns, stables and workshops, yards, gardens and orchards irrespective of their lower status. In the centre of town references were also made to a malt-mill, kilne, soap-boiler, smithy, tannery, brewhouse, butchers' and other shops 'under ye Towne Hall' also to Henery Barton's 'Eagle & Childe' inn.' Mrs. Katherine Scance had a new house built near the town hall, while conversely just one house in Aughton Street, James Gleast of Liverpool, tenant, was condemned as being 'in ruinous order.'

The overriding impression of Ormskirk as thus surveyed in 1713 is one of an established market town. Hosting a resident a population c.1100 inhabitants Ormskirk stood on the cusp of evolution into, as Duggan described it, "the birth of an early modern urban community."<sup>56</sup> Without over-simplifying the condition of the built environment across west Lancashire, the townscape in Ormskirk in this period appears to reflect similar domestic and commercial properties in other towns and those in neighbouring rural townships. Men with surplus money who could build anew or improve their homes externally, had over a long period done so using brick and stone and timber. By adding or installing architectural features which included brick chimneys, full-height porches, date-stones, pediments and glazed mullioned windows, elements of improved comfort and light permeated the built environment overall.

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<sup>56</sup> Mona Duggan, *Ormskirk the Making of a Modern Town* (Stroud, 1998), preface and introduction p. xix.

The next section examines similar improvements in interior accommodation and spatial arrangements.

### **‘In the new Chamber’<sup>57</sup>**

Inventories are an imperfect source *en masse*, with which to analyse house-plans and interior design. If there were no goods to evaluate in a room, no purpose was served by recording it. Many inventories in our dataset do not refer to rooms at all. However, a sufficiently useful proportion have recorded each interior space meticulously as though in train with the appraisers’ progress. Inventory appraisers were not house surveyors. Many rooms which were not obvious by their service function were simply described as ‘chambers’; ‘upper,’ ‘lower,’ ‘near’ and ‘further,’ or most commonly by their cardinal positions in relation to the firehouse. Lofts and upper chambers were almost always bedrooms. As such, being warm and dry, they also served as meal-sifting rooms, apple or malt lofts and cheese storage rooms. In 1694 John Barton of Burscough, yeoman, had designated the chamber above his kitchen as a ‘flesh-loft,’ in which was ‘one salting turnell one Beefe tub w’th all other necessities ... 12s.’ By the latter half of the seventeenth century ground-floor rooms were more regularly specified, ‘milk-houses,’ ‘brew-houses,’ ‘oven-houses,’ ‘closets’ and ‘dyneinge’ rooms. Whereas some houses were single storey and most had a chambered second floor, some homes had three storeys. Thomas Thompson of North Meols left goods ‘in the upper roome over the chamber above’ in 1694, and Edward Hollinghurst of Penwortham’s appraisers in 1686 found ‘goods in the furthest room in the highest height.’<sup>58</sup>

Twenty inventories reference ‘new’ rooms. Of these, 6 were new parlours, 3 new kitchens and the remainder comprised new chambers which were usually ‘above’. These alteration

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<sup>57</sup> LA WCW, John Wignall, Hesketh-Cum-Becconsall, yeoman (1720).

<sup>58</sup> LA WCW, John Barton, Burscough (1694); Thomas Thompson, North Meols (1694); Edward Hollinghurst, Penwortham (1686).

works were extensions as much as they were replacements. Goods were also evaluated in the ‘old’ rooms and of the twenty decedents by social rank, 12 were yeomen and 4 gentlemen, with the remainder comprising 2 tradesmen and 2 who were not recorded by occupation. This modest data adds substance to Miller’s assertion for ‘yeoman rebuilding’ in central and west Lancashire although caution is required in the interpretation of ‘new.’ Firstly, only a low percentage, which can only be estimated at around 20 per cent of all inventories mention rooms of any description. Secondly, the description ‘new’ could mean just that, or conversely refer to a much earlier alteration which had nevertheless been referred to as (say) ‘the new parlour’ by successive generations.

Our discussions thus far have highlighted upgrades to external fabric, remodelling of chimneys and new or repurposed rooms. Nevertheless, as one inventory alerts us to change, another roots us in tradition. Therefore, we should not overlook evidence for enduring traditional elements which describe the internal arrangements of a great many unaltered older houses. In North Meols in 1689, the yeoman John Watkinson’s appraisers evaluated goods ‘in the chamber without,’ and similarly in Hutton in 1698 Richard Forrest’s appraisers found goods ‘in ye out chamber’. Out-chambers or ‘out-shuts’ were originally service rooms attached to earlier open-hall houses which often ran the length of the building under an extended lean-to or ‘cat-slide’ roof.<sup>59</sup> Other inventories reveal the enduring provision of additional ground floor sleeping accommodation in nooks by the fireplace, which had been retained from an earlier period. In 1696 Richard Wareing of Scarisbrick, yeoman kept ‘Goods in a little bed chamber near fire’; William Mawdesley of Hutton was similarly appraised for bedding items ‘in the Chamber att the back of the fyre’ in 1700, and as late as 1733, the

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<sup>59</sup> LA WCW, John Watkinson, North Meols (1689); Richard Forrest, Hutton (1698); Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses*, pp. 70-71; Miller, *Historic Houses*, p.44.



yeoman James Hunt of North Meols retained a 'Bed and furniture in the nook.'<sup>60</sup> Perhaps a 'Great Rebuilding' occurred nationally. Perhaps there was one or more specific periods during which this widespread phenomenon of improvement was clearly identifiable. It is therefore possible to suggest that, in the towns and townships of the Lancashire Plain the probate record offers plentiful descriptive and detailed evidence that from the c.1580s through to the 1730s a 'Continual Rebuilding' appears to have been in progress.

Whatever their age, size and construction houses are also family homes. They are decorated and furnished meanly or lavishly. Weatherill analysed the relationship between material and social life and discussed "the interrelated approaches that are suggestive of the social meanings of physical surroundings ... buildings and interiors were constructed to convey social meanings as well as for practical purposes."<sup>61</sup> In comparing house interiors and material possessions of the early modern period with those of the late twentieth century she was at pains to emphasise the general sparseness of furnishings, the bareness of floors, walls and interior spaces in early eighteenth century homes, even in those of the middle ranks of society. However, Weatherill also discussed ownership of new goods, noting the wide regional variations in their introduction and the difficulty in pinpointing chronologies of change, comparing rural with urban experiences between 1675 and 1725.<sup>62</sup> In west Lancashire, internal painted surfaces of walled chambers were evident in rural dwellings and more commonly in town houses after c.1660. Inventories south of the Ribble between 1660 and 1740 reveal that of the 39 decedents who had colour painted walls in (usually) their bedchambers, 35 of them, 89.75 per cent, were of the higher social ranks which included 3 esquires, 9 gentlemen, 2 clerk/rectors and 21 yeomen. Others were 2 trades and 2 with

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<sup>60</sup> LA WCW, Richard Wareing, Scarisbrick (1696); William Mawdesley, Hutton (1700); James Hunt, North Meols (1733).

<sup>61</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 6-14.

<sup>62</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 3, 30-32, 77.

occupations not recorded. Fifteen of these decedents left homes in which two rooms had been painted. In 1687 the home of William Smith of Snape, gentleman, had ‘ye Redd Chamber’ and ‘ye Green Chamber’, which were shades chosen by seven other decedents. Where rooms had been painted it was usual that carpets, rugs, bed-hangings and coverlets complimented the wall colour. Of 54 rooms painted in colour, red or ‘clay’ was the most popular choice at 23 incidences. 12 were in green, 12 in ‘blew’, 3 white, 1 yellow and 3 more in grey or ‘dark.’ Curiously there are no inventory references to painted interiors in Liverpool, but of the five in Ormskirk, 3 were red, 1 blue, 1 ‘dark’, while the yeoman/innkeeper Thomas Moorcroft (1692), whose property contained nineteen rooms had two new chambers, one painted in red and one in grey.<sup>63</sup>

Painted interiors and the use of tinted paint was not a common feature of domestic dwellings in this period. Early red house paints were derived from a blend of natural red and calcined yellow ochre pigments, carmine dyes and manufactured red lead. References to the use of red interior paints occur from the seventeenth century, although Friedman commented that these tones were lighter and pinker than the intensive deep reds of the Regency period. This muted shade would perhaps explain appraisers’ descriptions of ‘the clay chamber’ in several inventories. Prior to the appearance of Prussian blue in the eighteenth century which was a bright, stable pigment, greens, blues and grey paints were created from vegetable leaf dyes such as indigo. These produced only muted olive or drab finishes which, when mixed with oil of turpentine and built up with several applications left a ‘flatted’ but shiny, ‘ropey’ effect on plaster or wood panelling.<sup>64</sup> Although they were almost exclusively the preserve of those of a relatively high status, painted rooms were invariably first floor bedchambers. Therefore, their effect cannot have been simply to impress visitors to the main reception rooms, the firehouse

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<sup>63</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Moorcroft, Ormskirk, yeoman/innkeeper (1692).

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Friedman, (Farrow & Ball eds.), *Paint and Colour in Decoration* (London, 2003), pp. 9-15, 77, 145, 171.

and parlour, in what Weatherill termed ‘frontstage’ presentation of the self to others.<sup>65</sup>

However, first-floor private sleeping chambers were in themselves a reflection of privacy and implied status. It is also notable that these painted rooms were not reserved for the master or mistress, whose private rooms usually contained the best feather beds, hangings, curtains and linen. Painted rooms were presumably designed to impress resident visitors as well as providing pleasure to the owners for its own sake.

### **“Fortie two pictures & a Candlestick”<sup>66</sup>**

Hoskins proposed that higher ownership of household goods coincided with the first period of the countrywide rebuilding of houses in the late sixteenth century. Weatherill subsequently identified trends of ownership of a variety of household goods and novel utensils which increased after c.1670 in the homes of the middle ranks of society. They increased again after c.1725, when affordable containers for preparing and consuming hot drinks, glassware, white earthenware and kitchen utensils expanded into the reach of a wider social group of consumers.<sup>67</sup> The table below details incidences of selected domestic goods from inventories south of the Ribble between 1660 and 1740. Comparisons between towns and townships are immediately discernible from the totals and bear interesting comparisons with Weatherill’s table of selected goods.<sup>68</sup> Almost all forms of material goods were inventoried in proportionally greater variety and quantity in Ormskirk and Liverpool than in rural and coastal townships. The few exceptions are in incidences of ownership of swords and virginals, which rarely appeared in Liverpool inventories, and in clocks, which had their highest occurrences in Ormskirk.

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<sup>65</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> LA WCW, John Rymer, mariner, Liverpool (1679).

<sup>67</sup> Hoskins, *Great Rebuilding*, p. 44; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 28-32, Appendix 1, pp. 201-14.

<sup>68</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, Table 4.1 Ownership of Selected Goods in Sample Inventories, 1675-1725, p. 77.

**Table 28. Frequencies of ownership of selected goods from male inventories, south of Ribble, 1660-1740**

NB: Liverpool figures taken from 1660 to 1720

	all invs	books	clocks	watches	apparel	silver	guns	swords	pictures & maps	looking glasses	warming pans	close stools	white ware	virginals	totals
Penwortham	102	17	25	1	13	6	2	0	1	4	0	1	0	0	70
Hutton & Howick	84	8	14	0	6	7	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	41
Longton	103	11	21	0	10	3	11	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	61
Farington	46	2	10	0	10	5	2	2	2	4	1	2	1	0	41
Much & Little Hoole	97	13	10	1	17	7	5	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	57
North Meols & Birkdale	149	17	25	2	9	27	7	1	1	4	1	1	3	0	98
Formby & Ainsdale	159	11	19	3	4	4	5	0	2	12	1	1	1	0	63
Croston & Bispham	103	11	16	2	6	4	3	0	1	4	2	0	0	1	50
Bretherton	66	10	11	1	2	1	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	32
Ulnes Walton	31	4	1	0	4	3	4	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	20
Rufford	58	4	11	1	2	1	2	3	2	4	1	0	0	0	31
Mawdesley	58	9	15	2	6	3	7	3	0	2	2	1	1	0	51
Tarleton & Hesketh	92	12	17	2	10	4	4	2	0	5	1	0	0	0	57
Burscough	65	14	20	2	6	6	5	2	1	4	2	3	1	3	69
Lathom	133	19	24	5	16	6	7	3	2	6	5	3	2	1	99
Scarisbrick & Snape	125	33	31	2	13	26	19	5	3	14	3	2	1	0	152
Sum total	1471	195	270	24	134	113	89	25	15	68	26	16	10	7	992
percentage invs		13.3	18.4	1.6	9.1	7.7	6.1	1.7	1	4.6	1.8	1.1	0.7	0.5	
Ormskirk	120	38	33	9	22	39	18	10	26	46	26	16	5	10	299
percentage invs		31.6	27.5	7.5	18.3	32.5	15	8.3	21.7	38.3	21.7	13.3	4.2	8.3	
Liverpool	477	164	113	53	157	212	72	17	182	304	147	112	122	18	1673
percentage invs		34.4	23.7	11.1	32.9	44.4	15.1	3.6	38.2	63.7	30.8	23.5	25.6	3.8	

The table reveals that of all the selected household goods in rural townships, ownership of clocks was, at 18.4 per cent of inventories, the most commonly owned. Ownership of watches even in Liverpool, at just 11.1 per cent was far less common. This may be accounted for in that both Ormskirk and Liverpool have a history of clock-making. For example, in 1715, James Barton of Ormskirk, clockmaker bequeathed, “3 clocks, vices, string & tools” to his apprentice and nephew James. The trade prospered in the town, although Duggan noted that it was not until the 1780s, “The excellence of Ormskirk’s long-case clocks was acknowledged nationwide.”<sup>69</sup> In comparison, Aughton, in describing a longcase clock by Thomas Bulman of Liverpool, c.1700 noted, “Even at this period the clock-making industry was highly organised, and the clockmaker could purchase gears, spindles and clock-cases from specialised manufacturers.”<sup>70</sup> Given that both towns made clocks, it is therefore unsurprising that ownership in the nearby coastal and rural townships was relatively high. Our figures therefore bear a similarity to Weatherill’s assessments (taken between 1675 and 1725), of 2075 village and rural inventories wherein 17 per cent owned clocks. There are also similarities in comparison with her findings for towns/major towns at 18 and 20 per cent, and for London at 29 per cent, compared with Liverpool at 23.7 per cent and Ormskirk occurrences at 27.5 per cent. De Vries observed that “Timepieces of all kinds, mentioned in less than 10 percent of English probate inventories around 1675 were recorded in over a third of all inventories by the 1720s”, adding that “Clocks as opposed to watches, may have diffused faster in commercialized rural areas than in towns.” In Friesland, few relatively large farmers with at least ten cows left clocks as late as 1677-86. However, “by 1711-50, 86 percent ... recorded the presence of a clock in the house.”<sup>71</sup> Irrespective of status and the many valuations for cased clocks at £1.10s. to £2. or higher, they were primarily a functional

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<sup>69</sup> LA WCW, James Barton, Ormskirk, (1715). Mona Duggan, *Ormskirk*, p. 40.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Aughton, *Liverpool A People’s History*, (Lancaster, 1990, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn 2008), pp. 46-7.

<sup>71</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, Table 4.1 Ownership of Selected Goods, p.77; De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 1-3.

item, or after failure simply a decorative one, which by the late seventeenth century would have cost new between 10s. and 15s. in brass or simply cased. In 1688, Cuthbert Keaquicke of Lathom, yeoman, left ‘an olde clocke ... 2s.6d.’ and in 1729 George Wright a fisherman of North Meols left ‘a house Clocke a very Cours one ... £1.1s.’<sup>72</sup>

Occurrences of book ownership exhibit a similar pattern to clock ownership. Weatherill noted that while town-dwellers have been considered the more time-conscious and more literate than their rural neighbours, “there were no significant differences between rural and provincial towns in ownership of clocks and books.” Citing ownership in Lancashire and the northwest, she concluded that book ownership was relatively high, and “may have been associated with the high value ... placed on reading the scriptures resulting in higher general literacy.”<sup>73</sup> The table above shows book ownership in coastal and rural townships to have been 13.3 per cent, which compares closely with Weatherill’s 17 per cent for her similar category. In Ormskirk, ownership occurred in 38 of 120 inventories. At 31.6 per cent, this also compares favourably with Weatherill’s ‘other town’ category at 23 per cent. Notably, of Liverpool’s 477 inventories, 164 occurrences equate to 34.4 per cent ownership. This just exceeds Weatherill’s London figures of 31 per cent from 319 inventories between 1675-1725.<sup>74</sup> Regarding book types, Weatherill excluded Bibles from her tabulations, having found them in only five per cent of inventories, whereas I have included them, as a great many books in inventories and in will bequests were frequently and enduringly, bibles, sermons, and copies of Dent’s *Practice of Piety*. Weatherill rightly noted that with books, “The titles are almost never given” and many of our inventories simply value ‘in books.’ Or ‘all his books.’<sup>75</sup> One advantage of studying the contents of probate bundles, as opposed to

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<sup>72</sup> LA WCW, Cuthbert Keaquicke, Lathom (1688), George Wright, North Meols (1729).

<sup>73</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 55, 77.

<sup>74</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, Table 4.1, p. 77.

<sup>75</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 207.

inventories only, is the frequent inclusion of wills. It is in these, that bald evaluations of books become broken down into considered bequests to specific people. Therefore, the following examples of books of secular material, from both document types across west Lancashire in the second half of the seventeenth century are illuminating. In addition to the variations of ‘bookes and instrum’ts for navigation’ in numerous Liverpool mariners’ documents, rural sources reveal, ‘one historie book ... 6d.’, ‘the Retmetick Booke’, ‘my physick book’, and ‘in books of all sort of Law and Trinity ... £3.’ In 1661, John Foxe of Toxteth Park left ‘In Bookes fourty five pounds.’ They included, ‘my book of Observacons & Speeds great maps ... my Books of poetry over the Parlour doore ... my ffrench Mercator & Speeds small maps ... my French Bible with Hackluyts voyages 2 volumes ... the History of the Iron Age 1<sup>st</sup> Edition ... 2 bookes in Dollflow & Woodall of Surgery.’<sup>76</sup> While these examples reflect, or at least imply, a literate and enquiring society among the middle and higher ranks in town and township, there are of course many other valuations at that social level for just one small bible or a few books valued at just one or two shillings. Rounding off the ownership of clocks and books, Weatherill concluded there was little to distinguish craft tradesmen from the yeomanry or husbandmen and that “The lesser tradesmen tended to have more varied domestic possessions than did the husbandmen or even the yeomen... although ownership of ... clocks and books was indistinguishable.” The high ownership of clocks and books by upper ranks however also reflected their need to co-ordinate time with other members of their community with whom they exchanged ideas and information, and it was notable that these men conversely, “did not have the highest proportion of the new and decorative goods.”<sup>77</sup> These conclusions would also appear to be reflected in the inventoried

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<sup>76</sup> LA WCW, Robert Ashbrook, Liverpool, mariner (1692); James Moss, Little Hoole, yeoman (1669); George Lealand, Much Crosby, husbandman (1691); Richard Such, Ormskirk, gentleman (1691); John Foxe, Toxteth Park (1661).

<sup>77</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior*, pp. 54-6, 177, 189.

possessions of husbandmen and trades, as well as yeomen and higher-ranking decedents in the townships south of the Ribble.

It was in Liverpool however that the burgeoning consumer revolution took a trajectory which in terms of a popular material culture accelerated beyond anything that could be found elsewhere in England outside of London. From our table of selected goods, 38.2 per cent of Liverpool decedents owned pictures and maps; 63.7 per cent owned looking glasses, as opposed to 38.3 per cent in Ormskirk and just 4.6 per cent in rural townships; over 30 per cent owned warming pans and 23.5 per cent owned close stools. The table above clearly suggests whiteware to have been an urban phenomenon. In the rural townships, a mere 0.7 per cent of decedents left examples. In Ormskirk, 4.2 per cent, but in Liverpool, even by 1720, no less than 25.6 per cent owned 'china.' These results again reflect similarities with Weatherill's study. 1 per cent of villages, 4 per cent of 'other towns' and in London 13 per cent. Notably however, over a similar period, occurrences in London were half that of Liverpool.

In 1719 John Gamond a Liverpool cooper, died possessed of numerous domestic items which would have not been available to an earlier generation or similar trade occupation. These included '1 tin dripping pan ... 2s.', '1 Spectacle Case ... 1 ½ d.', '1 Book Case ... 2 ½ d.', '1 set of knives and forks ... 2s.6d.', '1 Teapott ... 2d.', 'Whiteware ... 1s.' and '1 holland jug & Glass ... 8d.' Gamond also left '1 Clock and Case ... £2.5s.' and several items of wrought silver to £8.11.10 ½ d.'<sup>78</sup> The variety of new and exotic goods in Liverpool inventories is almost overwhelming in its volume and detail. These new goods were bought by merchants, mariners, tradesmen and their families. Several items highlight innovatory references in the Lancashire probate record. In 1690 Henry Smith, a woollen draper had

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<sup>78</sup> LA WCW, John Gamond, Liverpool (1719).



‘Whiteware and Tinn vessels for Coffey ... 2s.’ In 1706 merchant Mathias Gibson’s inventory discloses that in the parlour there was ‘paper over the wainscott ... 5s.’ and in the back kitchen ‘one teapot.’ In 1699, John Molyneux, merchant, owned a selection of ‘Chenaware.’ By 1720 the description had been simplified, Thomas Murgatroyd had “2 Sets of China ... £1.’<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps the most striking general observation of Liverpool’s inventories record is the apparent celerity with which newly introduced items became available and affordable to the men and women who had cash to spare or were sufficiently creditworthy. Weatherill observed that goods have many social functions. Ownership of consumer goods were influenced by diverse factors, “notably the economy and trade in the particular areas of the country in which particular individuals lived.”<sup>80</sup> Satisfying the demand for items of domestic comfort, novelty and expedience may be exemplified in the vast inventory of the Liverpool pewterer/brazier Thomas Ford (1719). In his manufacturing workshops, moulded, pressed and soldered from tin, brass and copper, were all manner of utensils available for furnishing early Georgian kitchens, butteries and parlours. ‘Twenty one Cheese-Toasters at 3s.6d. p’ Doz’, ‘Twelve Egg-slices ... 2s.’ and ‘five pint Coffee potts ... 2s.’ were offered for sale, alongside ‘Seven brass flower boxes at 7d.’ and ‘18 tin at 3s p’ doz.’ five ‘watering pots’ [from 1s.8d. to 3s.6d.], ‘Seven painted Warming pan handles ... 2s.11d.’ [and four plain ones], ‘Three dozen and four Tin milk pans ... £2.3s.4d.’ and ‘2 brass knobs for a grate.’<sup>81</sup> It is as much in these small inexpensive items and homely utensils as in silver salvers and walnut dressers that contemporary tastes and comforts are revealed. With these inexpensive solid items, the motivations of consumption which reference daily life and reflect the little

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<sup>79</sup> LA WCW, all Liverpool. Henry Smith, woollen draper (1690); Mathias Gibson, merchant (1706); John Molyneux, merchant (1699); Thomas Murgatroyd (1720).

<sup>80</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 194-6.

<sup>81</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Ford, Liverpool (1719).

rewards for industriousness are encapsulated. Twelve decedents had bird cages for example. Three had flowerpots and three more had sets of forks as well as knives. A taste developed for wall-mounted buck's horns, and in imitation of the original, Robert Whittle, yeoman (1708), possessed 'One Pot Stags head & horn ... 8s.' Notably, in Liverpool more so than elsewhere in west Lancashire and excepting a few examples in Ormskirk and Wigan, babies and children became specifically catered for. Cradles, chairs, nursing chairs and rugs appear in inventories. In 1680 the Liverpool grocer Thomas Shaw offered for sale 'Childrens Bawbles and Spectacles ... 5s.4d.' In 1715 the painter Edward Clifton kept 'a parcel of Children's Toys ... 10s.' in his shop. In 1697 William Lloyd, a linen draper had 'One Cradle rug and bed, five little stooles for children ... 5s.' and Mathias Gibson (1706), had 'one Alphabet of Deale ... 4s.'<sup>82</sup>

Another form of motivation in Liverpool was that which looked to expansive horizons overseas and to material and intellectual growth. This was reflected in a variety of furnishings and images in the homes of merchants, mariners, and aspirational tradesmen. As Ascott, Lewis and Power observed, "While maritime trade was not the only source of growth and prosperity in early modern Liverpool, it was nonetheless central, directly or indirectly, to the assumptions and strategies of a broad spectrum of the population."<sup>83</sup> Therefore, from the cornucopian wealth of possible examples from Liverpool inventories, I have selected the following examples which quintessentially reflect Liverpool society's geographically expansive, intellectually inquisitive and consumer acquisitive condition at the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1698, William Chantrell, mariner, displayed in his several chambers, '1 mapp of the Land of Canaan ... 2s.', '1 mapp of the world ... 12s.', '2 mapps of the house of Lords and Comons ... 1s.', 'Sea books and instr'mnts for navigacon ... £3.' In 1703

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<sup>82</sup> LA WCW, (Liverpool), Thomas Shaw (1680); Edward Clifton (1715); William Lloyd (1697); Robert Whittle (1700).

<sup>83</sup> Ascott et al, *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 27.

another mariner, Joseph Baynes kept in his parlour ‘twelve small pictures ... 12s.’, ‘One large picture of a Spaniell Dogg &c ... 3s.’, ‘One Chimney piece two landskipps & another picture ... £2.’ and Robert Eccles, cooper in 1712, ‘In the Kitchen, bookshelf and books’, ‘In the parlour ... a Landskipp 4s. a picture of Herodias 4s. Three small pictures 6d.’ and ‘Two Childrens pictures 5s.’ James Tarleton, a successful nailor who died in 1709 with an impressive inventory valued at £345.14s.10d. left behind him, ‘in the great parlor ... One large Mapp ... 3s. one mapp of Great Britaine ... 2s. [and] 12 Emperors Colored ... 10s.’<sup>84</sup>

**‘In Ready Moneys Gold & things of silver.’<sup>85</sup>**

In the remaining two sections of this chapter, we discuss money. Money as specie, as hard currency of silver and gold, cash held in reserve, and money retained in solid form as silver plate. In so doing, I acknowledge that throughout England the early modern economy revolved around the extension and settlement of credits. Most commercial exchanges were initially transacted by credit agreements, thereafter termly interest payments, trade and retail ‘book-debts’ were customarily settled in cash. Holderness observed that credit was not merely a function of commercial development, but “had before 1700 become routine in English life.”<sup>86</sup> However, across the nation, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, coins were perennially scarce. The wider significance of the credit culture in England in comparison with the vicissitudes of circulating currency prior to the ‘great recoinage of 1696’ has more notably been analysed and interpreted by Muldrew. Studying localised financial transactions to national and international market trading, he has concluded that “What existed was a credit economy in which everything was measured by monetary

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<sup>84</sup> LA WCW, (All Liverpool); William Chantrell, mariner (1698); Joseph Baynes, mariner (1703); Robert Eccles, cooper (1712); James Tarleton, nailor (1709).

<sup>85</sup> LA WCW, William Carter, Mawdesley, gentleman (1688), detail from inventory.

<sup>86</sup> B. A. Holderness, ‘Credit in English Rural Society before the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Period 1650-1720’, *AgHR*, vol. 24 (1976), pp. 97-109.

prices, but where money was not the primary means of exchange.”<sup>87</sup> Muldrew exemplified the concerns of the political arithmetician William Petty. In 1691 Petty had attempted to calculate the overall amount of money needed to fuel English trade. His concerns for a significant shortfall were shared by contemporary economists Gregory King and Charles Davenant that the circulation of hard currency had progressively declined in both quantity and quality since the Restoration thirty years previously. In the 1680s Davenant had calculated the circulation of silver money to £8 million, of which he estimated £5 million to have been clipped and devalued. In which case, Muldrew proposed, tradesmen of the ‘middling-sort’ paid wages in clipped coins and hoarded good ones as a form of security.<sup>88</sup>

Coins nevertheless remained a vital means of exchange in an era before savings banks. The accumulation and availability of domestic gold and silver coin reserves satisfied innumerable economic outcomes. Cash provided immediate liquidity with which to pay wages, although goods were often bought on credit and reckoned quarterly. The necessary payments of cash for services and facilities far from home was exemplified in an earlier discussion of the journeying for sheep purchases into east Lancashire and Yorkshire made both by Henry Hunt of Little Hoole in 1681 and Nicholas Blundell’s servants in 1704.<sup>89</sup> That ‘ready money’ was a frequently used expression to describe inventoried holdings of cash suggests its social worth and facility. That inventories in west Lancashire appear to portray a comparatively plentiful supply of coins in circulation is analysed hereafter. At the end of a life, reserves of saved coins paid for legacies, services rendered by creditors, servants wage arrears, land rents, church dues as ‘leyes,’ taxes, probate and funeral fees. As we discussed earlier, cash

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<sup>87</sup> Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London, 1998); Muldrew, ‘Interpreting the market: the ethics of credit and community relations in early modern England’, *Social History*, vol. 18, no. 2, (1993), pp.163-183; ‘Hard Food for Midas: Cash and Its Social Value in Early Modern England’, *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001), pp. 78-120, p. 84.

<sup>88</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp. 90-98.

<sup>89</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 117-19.

settlements for wage arrears are for example clearly evidenced in the probate account of Thomas Cooks the Liverpool mill proprietor in 1702.<sup>90</sup> Almost daily cash transactions are evident in the fastidious household accounts, from 1702-28, of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby Hall.<sup>91</sup> Regular settlements of cash payments to victuallers and maritime supply and repair trades for provisioning the Liverpool vessels *Dilligence* and *Pearl*, 1684-8 and 1688-94 are equally painstakingly accounted for by the share-holder/commander William Trenow.<sup>92</sup> Individual holdings of cash were ultimately divided between widow-hood annuities – and later divided again at a widow’s demise - to children under twenty-one, grandchildren, Godchildren, close friends, executors and as gifts to the parish poor. Cash combined with credit, supported local economic stability and maintained commercial enterprises. The disposal of ‘spare’ cash was also vital in facilitating the early embraces of a domestic consumer culture. The term ‘cash’ itself refers to coin, rather than to ‘moneys’, which traditional expression could imply coin and/or paper credits. Cash seems to have made an appearance as a universal expression in the 1690s. Perhaps a colloquial or semantic connection may be linked to the transactions of the Bank of England which commenced operations in 1694.

Evidence from our dataset leaves little room for doubt that across all social ranks, everyone lent money to, and borrowed money and goods from, everybody else. Healey commented that “Credit was another way to raise cash. Studies of probate records have highlighted the constant stream of borrowing between neighbours: cash swirled around villages and communities as the desire to buy and sell outstripped the supply of coin.”<sup>93</sup> De Vries

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<sup>90</sup> LA WCW, Thomas Cooks als Garrett, Liverpool (1702) probate account, ch. 4, pp 193-4.

<sup>91</sup> Frank Tyrer (transc.), & J.J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnall of Nichols Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, 3 vols, 1702-1728 (Manchester, 1968, 1970, 1972).

<sup>92</sup> LA DDBB8/3 Cash book of William Trenow of Liverpool, Blundell Collection.

<sup>93</sup> Jonathan Healey, *The First Century of Welfare Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 143.

observed similarly, “few participants in the early modern market economy were *only* debtors or *only* creditors. People of every income level were enmeshed in extensive networks of lending and borrowing, their total debts tending to rise with their assets.”<sup>94</sup> Paper credits as bills, bonds and ‘specialties’ and coin holdings are itemised in the humblest inventories to those of the highest value. Wills itemise cash legacies in intricate detail. Cumulatively they indicate an abundance of significant cash reserves of decedents in the towns and townships of the Lancashire Plain. This was atypical in its social breadth and magnitude and the social and economic implications bear comparative investigation. Three main points have hereafter been considered for discussion. The overall national shortage and condition of specie, individuals’ holdings of old and foreign coins, and the introduction and dissemination of new coins c.1662 following the Restoration of Charles II.

The monetary reforms of Henry VII, which introduced the gold ‘Angel’ at 6s.8d in 1489, and the silver shilling piece in 1505, ensured English coins had to be minted exclusively in gold or silver. Their value was thus based on their scarcity and the prevailing values of the metals themselves. During the reigns of succeeding monarchs, coins continued in short supply and were often insufficient in the national economy to make significant capital payments or facilitate the crown’s ability to raise large amounts of tax. Muldrew noted, “The simple fact that there was a continual shortage of cash throughout the period and ... the quality of much of the existing coinage was poor had a tremendous effect on the way in which money was used by contemporaries and on the way in which wealth was constructed.”<sup>95</sup> In another perspective on scarcity, Kerridge constructed a sample study of inventories from which he deduced that two thirds of those from Ipswich, Liverpool, Frampton Cotterell and one quarter from Yorkshire between 1560 and 1660 “failed to mention coins or money at all ... We are

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<sup>94</sup> De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 174.

<sup>95</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp.78-9.

invited to believe that all these people died penniless.” Kerridge conceded however “The fact remains that the absence of money from an inventory does not prove the deceased had none.”<sup>96</sup> His evidence combined with various studies from Devon, Chesterfield and Durham that offered similar results persuaded Muldrew to conclude that not only were all coins scarce but that “The small amounts of ready money listed in probate inventories show just how few coins there were in circulation. When money was listed separately, the amounts were usually small.”<sup>97</sup>

It is of course impossible to assess the proportion of clipped or damaged coins transacted in the execution of myriad financial bequests from probate documents, or in the final settlement of innumerable local creditor and debtor accounts, or in a poor tradesman’s purse, or in a wealthy yeoman’s coffer. However, diverse sums of socially acceptable money were returned into active circulation by widows, executors and administrators of all ranks and trades alike. Importantly, in almost every will in which cash sums of money were bequeathed, references were specifically made to ‘lawful’ or ‘current’ ‘money of England’, and after 1707, of ‘Great Britain.’ Wills in west Lancashire across all ranks often include an unexpectedly high level of financial generosity in educational, charitable and poor bequests, which behaviour was noted by Healey as being ‘customary’ or as ‘funeral doles.’<sup>98</sup> In either form of charity, considerable cumulative sums of coin would have had to have been available for distribution in whatsoever condition. Healey’s example of Sir Daniel Fleming’s ‘threepenny dole’ in 1698 which totalled £9.13.6d. self-evidently and yet notably, required 2322 pennies or 774 silver threepenny pieces to have been available for distribution.

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<sup>96</sup> Eric Kerridge, *Trade & Banking in Early Modern England*, (Manchester, 1988) p. 95.

<sup>97</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp. 90-98.

<sup>98</sup> Healey, *Welfare*, pp. 156-60.

Muldrew reported evidence of a widespread retention of both old and foreign gold coins which remained in circulation in England during the early seventeenth century.<sup>99</sup> For example, gold ‘angels’ which were minted from 1489 until 1643 and retained the valuation of 6s.8d. frequently appear as will bequests in our dataset. In 1613, Robert Rutter of Burscough, ‘linnenman’ left for William Alcar “one angell of gold as a remembrance w’ch was in my purse.” In 1627, John Wearden of Farington, husbandman bequeathed eight individual gifts of ‘angels in gould.’<sup>100</sup> Following the Restoration various ancient silver and gold coins continued in circulation. In 1671 Henry Mawdesley of Burscough left ‘four Rich dollars ... £1.’ which Spanish silver ‘pieces of eight reales’ pre-date 1642. John Runshawe of Barton-in-Downholland, yeoman (1682), had ‘one broad peece of Gold ... £1.3s.’ and in 1700 Thomas Eccleston of Bickerstaff, clerk, made five bequests of ‘broad pieces’ to his nephews and nieces. ‘Broad’ or ‘unite’ coins were originally valued at twenty shillings and introduced by James I in 1604 to acknowledge the union of the crowns of England and Scotland. They frequently appear as bequests into the 1730s. However, the ‘One peece of Gold called a Spurr Royall’ given by William Fazackerley of Maghull, gentleman in 1669 which carried an issue valuation of fifteen shillings had officially been discontinued fifty years earlier. Almost certainly the oldest coins to remain in circulation were the silver shillings issued by Edward VI between 1551 and 1553. Peter Sumner of Ulnes Walton left twenty-one ‘Edwarde shillings’ in 1622, and remarkably, in 1688, Robert Guy of Aughton gave “unto my two sons Henry and Peter Twenty shillings of the Coine of King Edward the sixth now in my Custody to be equally devided betwixt them.” These high-quality silver coins would by this date have been at least 135 years old, their value by weight being greater than their face value.

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<sup>99</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp. 89-90.

<sup>100</sup> LA WCW, Robert Rutter, Burscough (1613); John Wearden, Farington (1627).



Such was the prevalence of illegal clipping, all hammered minting ceased in 1662. Thereafter only machine pressed coins with a milled edge were issued, although hammered coins remained legal tender until 1696.<sup>101</sup> In 1700 Thomas Eccleston left £74.16s. in broad pieces, guineas and ‘In Silver Coyn Currant,’ and was also credited for ‘ould hammered moneys by Count ... £12.’ and ‘In more hammered moneys sold by weight ... £15.’ Similarly, the following year Richard Barton of Melling, gentleman, left 51 guineas, broad gold, current gold and silver to £113.11s.3d. and retained ‘In silver hammered money ... £2.12s.6d.’ and ‘In more Silver hammered moneys Exchanged ... £61.’ These were significant sums of money which must have been accumulated over time through income and/or inheritance. These are just several documented examples among many others. Although this evidence may substantiate Muldrew’s concern that large hoards of coin could be regarded “as unsociable miserliness which kept a scarce commodity out of circulation,” the examples I have cited would appear to suggest that even allowing there was insufficient specie circulating in the wider economy, the scarcity of coins of any denominations was, in west Lancashire, far less severe than was evident elsewhere.<sup>102</sup>

Kerridge has suggested that cash disappeared before it could be inventoried, either to settle immediate household expenses, or through improper removal by close relatives.<sup>103</sup> In rural townships throughout the west of Lancashire however most appraisers invariably itemised cash either in exact amounts or in the commonly combined valuation ‘in purse and apparel.’ Shammas and subsequently Muldrew considered that “the clothing was worth much more than the cash” and “the amounts held consisted only of loose change.”<sup>104</sup> Evidence suggests that appraisers of inventories appear generally to have located and scrupulously recorded

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<sup>101</sup> [www.gmcoins.co.uk](http://www.gmcoins.co.uk) accessed 23.01.2021.

<sup>102</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, p. 98.

<sup>103</sup> Kerridge, *Trade & Banking*, p. 94; Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’ p. 91.

<sup>104</sup> Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990), in Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp. 91-2.

every penny however, whether in the purse of the deceased's person, or on his premises. Such diligent attention reflects both an honest execution of an important social duty and the universal need for men of all ranks to settle their debtor commitments with every available resource from their estates. Itemisations of coins appear more frequently from the end of the reign of James I, principally from the estates of yeomen or local gentry. Miles Hughson of Scarisbrick, yeoman/webster (1622), left 'money found in the house at the decedents death ... £11.' Robert Modisley, Burscough, yeoman (1633), 'found in his Chist in moni & Gould ... £19.10s.' Thomas Hill, Scarisbrick, yeoman (1641), 'in readie Gould in the house ... £30.2s.' Minor denominations were rarely itemised, although Andrew Caunce of Rufford, yeoman, left 'in readie money ... £4.10.8d.' and 'in single pennies ... 6s.7d.'<sup>105</sup> In the decades after the Restoration, cash holdings at every social level become more common. The appraisers for reverend Nathaniell Brownell, rector of Halsall (1719), who left an impressive inventory of £1144.10s.9 ½ d. 'found in the deceased purse ... £36.1s.6d.' and for James Wainwright of Lathom, yeoman (1710), 'in purse ... £32.1s.6d.' Lower in the social ranking the slater James Hampson of Winstanley's (1666), appraisers found 12s.2d. in his pocket; and William Whalley, a wheelwright in Thornton (1687), 'money in the deeadents pocket ... 6s.' In 1673 the Penwortham tailor John Charnley's appraisers found 4d. in his pocket and Thomas Askew of Cockerham, a carpenter (1706), whose appraisers totalled his worldly estate to £5.4s.2d. discovered 'in his purse tupens.'<sup>106</sup>

A noticeable shift towards an increase in cash holdings by a broader social stratum becomes apparent from our dataset almost immediately after the Restoration of Charles II. In 1663 the gold guinea was introduced in four denominations, as 5gn, 2, 1, and ½ guinea pieces. The

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<sup>105</sup> LA WCW, Miles Hughson, Scarisbrick (1622); Robert Modisley, Burscough (1633); Thomas Hill, Scarisbrick (1641); Andrew Caunce, Rufford (1623).

<sup>106</sup> LA WCW, Nathaniell Brownell, Halsall (1719); James Wainwright, Lathom (1710); James Hampson, Winstanley (1666); William Whalley, Thornton (1687), John Charnley, Penwortham (1673); LA WRW/A, Thomas Askew, Cockerham (1706).

guinea became an immensely useful coin having social, intrinsic and investment value and, in each of its denominations duly featured in numerous bequests in west Lancashire wills.

Although invariably in limited supply nationally, guineas gradually became the main form of gold currency effectively replacing, though not entirely so, the old broad piece of James I.

Guineas circulated slowly everywhere owing to their value, gold generally being worth up to fifteen times that of silver. In 1717, the official exchange value of one guinea was fixed at

21s.<sup>107</sup> Prior to this date, its value and convenience in large quantities appear to have been adopted by those of wealth and high status. William Bispham, a Liverpool merchant (1694)

left 100 gns. "To Mr. Silvest'r Richmond of Liverpool merchant"; William Porter, also a

Liverpool merchant (1700), left 20 gns. towards the building of the new church. Joseph

Clayton of Liverpool, mariner (1718), was inventoried for 'thirty-one guineas ... in the hands of Mr. John Latham' and Roger Hesketh of North Meols, esquire (1720), left 70 gns. to close

relatives "to buy then mourning for my funeral."<sup>108</sup> No less useful in smaller quantities, in

1691, Anthony Carr, a Liverpool mariner, gifted to each of his executors "a ginnea in gold, yt is twenty-one shillings six pence apiece." Evan Marsh of Liverpool, yeoman/ropemaker

(1699), left to "Cuthbert Sharples ... merchant, one peece of English coined gold called a

Guinea" and Thomas Marsh, a skinner of Garston near Liverpool (1712), left legacies of 9

half guineas to the children of five friends and other relatives.<sup>109</sup> A further observation, which

may be inferred from the probate record but requires wider research, is that while

(inventoried) holdings of silver plate declined in the late seventeenth century, quantities of

gold as guineas, half guineas and 'broad pieces of gold' in the form of bequests appear to rise significantly thereafter.

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<sup>107</sup> Muldrew, 'Hard Food', p. 97.

<sup>108</sup> LA WCW, William Bispham, Liverpool, merchant (1694); William Porter, Liverpool, merchant (1700); LA WRW/A, Roger Hesketh, North Meols, Esquire (1720).

<sup>109</sup> LA WCW, Anthony Carr, Liverpool, mariner (1691); Evan Marsh, Liverpool, yeoman/ropemaker (1699); Thomas Marsh, Garston, skinner (1712).

It therefore becomes evident that men of all ranks in western Lancashire had cash to hand after c.1660. North of the Ribble, where guineas were rarely recorded for example, 20 inventories from Cockerham between 1649 and 1709 nevertheless itemise clear holdings of 'ready money' aside from other documents wherein cash was grouped with plate, bills and apparel. The amounts range from the 'tupens' found in carpenter Thomas Askew's purse to the considerable sum of £165. 'in Redy Moneys' which the husbandman Nicholas Borrow left in 1687.<sup>110</sup> This impressive hoard represented 95 per cent of his estate. Inventory totals extend from Askew's £5.4s.2d. to £539.3s.4d. for the clerk/vicar of Cockerham Lawrence Shaw in 1696. The total in cash from these documents stands at £415.0s.2d. the inventories total £3711.10s.11d. The proportion in cash thus held is 11.2 per cent of estates' valuations. In social ranking the twenty decedents were: 2 clerks/vicars, 7 yeomen, 5 husbandmen, 2 tradesmen and 1 status unknown. In a similar example south of the Ribble in Much and Little Hoole, 24 inventories between 1658 and 1709 itemise clear holdings of ready money. Amounts of cash retained at death range from 7s. to £41.0.9d. Inventory valuations range from £34.8s.4d. to £508.14s.6d. Total cash stands at £253.18s.10d. while inventories total £2767.13s.2d. Thus, the proportion of the estates valuation in cash here is 9.2 per cent. In social rank, the twenty-four decedents were: 7 yeomen, 10 husbandman, 3 trades, with 4 of an unknown status. From even these modest samples, it seems evident that many decedents who appear in the probate record held cash. While it is noticeable that the average individual holding of coins is £20.15s. in Cockerham and £10.11s.7d. in the Hooles they are not intended for regional comparison. Nevertheless, they are both considerably higher than the similarly derived averages from the samples selected from Devon inventories at £4. Darlington £3.8s. and Chesterfield 12s sampled by Muldrew.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> LA WCW, Nicholas Borrow, Boonreed, Cockerham (1687).

<sup>111</sup> Muldrew, 'Hard Food', p. 92.

Many of the inventories from the townships on either side of the Ribble reveal atypically high reserves of coins, often over £20. from middle-ranking as well as high ranking decedents.

The principal points to emphasise are that there appears to have proportionately existed here a great deal more money in physical coinage than was in circulation in many other parts of England. Cash holdings were apparent at all levels of west Lancashire society who were represented in the probate record. Evidence also indicates that cash holdings increased in proportion to inventory value over time. In the General Introduction, I contrasted the inventories of Edmond Smoult of Lathom (1597) and William Marton of Hutton (1734).

Smoult's cash holdings represented 2.8 per cent of his worth in 1597, Marton's 12.4 per cent in 1734. Physical coinage was available to be received, spent and passed on, often written out in intricate detail to relatives and friends in wills as legacies and/or authorised by the legator for distribution to poor inhabitants as a funeral dole. Credit transactions were ubiquitous and vital to the economy, but of no lesser social importance cash appears to have been used and circulated widely and not just hoarded or saved. Although Muldrew's concerns regarding hoarding by wealthy ranks may be justified to an extent, it was often the local gentry who acted as bankers and financial intermediaries, which social condition justifies the need for reserves greater than for short-term domestic or personal use. On 21 April 1721 for example, Nicholas Blundell diarised that "I let John Rose have sixty Pound upon interest, he and Robert Bootle Junior gave Bond for it [and] Yeomon of the Gorehouses payed me twenty guineys in part of what I had lent him."<sup>112</sup> Inventoried incidences of cash reserves over £20. gradually decreased among lower ranks after 1700 but remained high at yeoman and gentry level. Inventories in the rural and coastal townships between 1701 and 1740 produced the lowest reserves. These circumstances accord with the general trend towards lower estate values at husbandman/trades level generally in the rural and coastal townships after 1700.

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<sup>112</sup> Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, Vol. III, p. 48.

Particularly where, with exceptions, agricultural activity was no longer a principal occupation, and its operational stock therefore became absent from valuations.<sup>113</sup> This may also suggest that a nascent consumer culture further augmented the existing credit culture. Nevertheless, quantities of coin retained by decedents, or in circulation for myriad outcomes appear to have been greater in this sub-region of the north-west than in others in England for which studies presently exist.

#### **‘All sorts of Plate’<sup>114</sup>**

In addition to individuals’ cash holdings and interest-bearing paper credits another financial option was available to consumers. Silver plate was a commodity that maintained its capital value and provided a reliable financial backstop. Hallmarking was both an assurance and an official guarantee of purity and quality. Silver items were fashionable, practical, redeemable and heritable. Wrought silver plate, as salvers, bowls, tankards, dram cups and salt sellers were a visible indicator of wealth, status and ‘sufficiency’. In its aesthetic presentation alone, silver was a perfect material for an emerging material culture. The economic and social value of silver plate in domestic usage has however, attracted only a limited historiography. Using extensive inventory sampling, Weatherill noted that plate was more common in London than elsewhere in the late seventeenth century and more frequently possessed by upper ranks. She observed however, that middle-ranking households “usually had a few pieces of useful silver,” and as “the only household item ... that might be representative of ‘conspicuous consumption’ ... among the middle ranks, it does not seem to have been used in a conspicuous way.”<sup>115</sup> Muldrew offered similar observations, that higher incidences and quantities of plate occurred in inventories of wealthy merchants and tradesmen in large towns

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<sup>113</sup> General Introduction. Tables 1 & 2, Inventory records in core dataset, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> LA WCW, John Finch, Wrightington (1691).

<sup>115</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 66. See also BBC4, Dan Cruikshank *et al*, *Metalworks*, Episode 1, ‘The Golden Age of Silver’, first broadcast 2 May 2012.

than elsewhere and “many wealthy households had more silver and gilt plate than ready money.” An underlying theme of Muldrew’s *Hard Food for Midas* argues that while money as a “totalising universal function” pushed society towards modernity, it did so at the expense of interpersonal credit agreements which intrinsically took “honesty, chastity, lineage, charity and hospitality” into account.<sup>116</sup> He proposed that social capital directly connecting the possession and display of silver plate “was more important than the ability to make fairly immediate, impersonal monetary exchanges,” and the reason wealthy householders displayed wrought and fashioned silver was “to communicate their hospitality and success and thus avoid the stigma of covetousness.” Muldrew discussed the views of contemporary polemical commentators such as Davenant, who claimed that if a nation had to melt down plate in time of war, it would be “a signal of a nation’s poverty”, as similarly, it would be a sign of dubious credit if it became known a merchant had to melt down plate to stay afloat financially.<sup>117</sup>

Weatherill and Muldrew offer valuable perspectives. There are of course no clear lines to distinguish between middle-rank utility holdings of silver items, (Weatherill cited tankards, spoons and porringers as examples), and upper rank displays of opulence, other than sheer quantity.<sup>118</sup> As the following discussion will demonstrate, in west Lancashire, over a timespan of c.150 years, the value of silver plate remained relatively unchanged. The type of people who owned it evolved however, as holdings of the wrought commodity became less common in rural townships and exclusively an urban financial reserve and ‘front stage’ material item of status and increasingly, of new wealth.

In analysing silver plate ownership, we must start with spoons. Hollinshead observed that in south-west Lancashire in the sixteenth century, gentry inventories rarely exceeded £200. As ongoing investment in livestock and agricultural accoutrements took precedence over

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<sup>116</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, p. 80.

<sup>117</sup> Muldrew, ‘Hard Food’, pp. 111-113.

<sup>118</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p.66.

household goods, “luxury lay in the collection of half a dozen silver spoons.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed many of our earliest inventories prior to c.1660 reveal that for all social ranks, silver spoons rather than silver coins were more commonly recorded. Other wrought items were rare. A notable exception, Andrew Huddleston of Farington esquire (1601), had wrought silver items valued at £13.17s. and in his will returned “unto the sayd Marye my wyffe one sylver Cupp w’th a cover beinge guylte w’ch was geven her by Quene Marye.”<sup>120</sup> As discussed in the previous section regarding the circulation of coinage, this dimension altered in favour of silver and gold coins as the century advanced. In the townships south of the Ribble before 1660, from 521 coastal and rural township inventories in our core dataset, the 146, or 28 per cent of these in which silver as plate was evaluated, no less than 142, or 97.3 per cent, refer to silver spoons and 72 per cent referred to silver only in the form of spoons. These appear in almost every number up to the ‘Sixteene silver spoones ... £3.’ left by William Mawdesley of Mawdesley, gentleman in 1626. Prior to the adoption of table forks, small metal ball-ended spoons were useful, collectively divisible and heritable items which acquired value as potent items symbolically conveying family history and provenance. For example, in 1639 Henry Wright, rector of North Meols willed that “I geive to my son John my Silver spoune that I used to eat with my selfe houpinge hee will keepe it for my sake.”<sup>121</sup> Following the Restoration, the requirement and demand for wrought items of silver of all dimensions underwent a rapid transition in west Lancashire, as novel items were introduced in addition to traditional tableware of salt cellars, spoons, bowls and tankards. Buckles, buttons, belt-tips, chains, spurs, thimbles, sword and razor handles, ornamental hinges and bible clasps had become fashionable, and wine, dram and ‘scallop’ cups appeared, anticipating an era of increased sociability. By the 1680s watch cases, tobacco boxes, sugar dishes and larger

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<sup>119</sup> J. E. Hollinshead, ‘The Gentry of South-West Lancashire in the Later Sixteenth Century’, *Northern History*, Vol. xxvi (1990), p. 88.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Hesketh, Rufford (1620); Andrew Huddleston of Farington (1601).

<sup>121</sup> LA WCW, William Mawdesley, Mawdesley (1626); Henry Wright, North Meols (1639).



wrought items such as jugs and salvers became more common items in wealthy households. In 1699 the first silver forks and a teapot were inventoried in Liverpool.<sup>122</sup> In the first decade of the 1700s tumblers, cawdle cups, punch cups, two handle cups, dishes, and teaspoons became manifest and in 1715 a Liverpool widow Ann Prescott willed “my large Silver Coffee pot.”<sup>123</sup>

Regarding value, and as a financial reserve, inventoried evidence throughout western Lancashire indicates that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, all items of silver plate were evaluated variously between 3s.4d. and 5s.6d. per ounce. Post Restoration valuations, with few exceptions, stabilised at 5s. which convenient arithmetic endured here at least until the 1720s. Silver plate was not evaluated on its aesthetic appeal. Small spoons to large salvers were evaluated only by weight. In 1662 for example, the appraisers for Ralph Brownlowe of Ormskirk, gentleman, exemplified the point by valuing his ‘Several vessells of plate 58 ounces at 5s. p’ oz ... £14.10s.’<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, these valuations are lower than the standard offered by Hatcher & Barker that, “From the late sixteenth century to 1700 the price of an ounce of silver plate averaged 5s.6d to 6s.”<sup>125</sup> Such a disparity is cumulatively significant, if for example we consider Liverpool silversmith Edward Lewis (1690), who left ‘In plate watt: 592 ounces. 2.20d. watt ... £148.0.6.’ and merchant Richard Houghton (1712), “A p’cell of plate [397 ozs.] ... £99.5s.’ both at 5s. an ounce. To test whether five shillings was a regionally accepted valuation in Lancashire only, I examined a sample of 111 inventory transcriptions from the City of Bristol between 1657 and 1689.<sup>126</sup> 43 recorded holdings of silver plate. At 38.7 per cent, this is less than Weatherill’s calculation for London

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<sup>122</sup> LA WCW, John Molyneux, Liverpool, merchant (1699).

<sup>123</sup> LA WCW, Ann Prescott, Liverpool, widow (1715).

<sup>124</sup> LA WCW, Ralph Brownlowe, Ormskirk (1662).

<sup>125</sup> John Hatcher, T.C. Barker, *A History of British Pewter* (London, 1974), p.107, n 3.

<sup>126</sup> Edwin and Stella George (eds.), *Bristol Probate Inventories 1657-1689* (Bristol Record Society vol. 57, 2005).

inventories at 46 per cent 1675-1725 and 44 per cent for a major town.<sup>127</sup> However, in Bristol, 22 appraised plate at a determinable sum per ounce as follows. 2 @ 4s. / 1 @ 4s.2d. / 4 @ 4s.6d. and 17 @ 5s. Only one offered a higher valuation at 5s.2d. and three appraisals made a distinction or graded the plate at 4s.6d. and 5s. It would appear from one valuation of ‘untoucht plate’ at 4s.6d. that in Bristol, wrought plate attracted the higher and more frequently recorded valuation at 5s.<sup>128</sup>

In Ormskirk and Liverpool, individual holdings of silver plate increased markedly in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in comparison with their rural and/or coastal township neighbours in which, as the table below indicates, holdings declined. Seven of the townships, Penwortham, Hutton & Howick, Bretherton, Ulnes Walton, Rufford, Mawdesley and Burscough recorded no plate at all after 1700. However, Richard Sharples of Penwortham, husbandman (1717), left ‘in Specialties and ready money ... £48.’ and willed a guinea each to his nephews in Freckleton. Several other decedents in Penwortham and Rufford held cash, bonds, bills and ‘specialties’ up to the £398. Left by Henry Martin of Penwortham, husbandman (1721).<sup>129</sup> Quantities of plate also became consistently more determinable within the upper ranks of society. Other than rural gentry, where for example, in Scarisbrick James Scaresbrick esquire (1673), died possessed of 380 ounces and Robert Hesketh esquire (1697), 252.5 ounces, it was the town aldermen, gentlemen, clerk/rectors, merchants and, from the 1660s onwards, the successful trades who owned the commodity in any notable quantities.

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<sup>127</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 76.

<sup>128</sup> Francis Little, *City of Bristol*, sadler (1681).

<sup>129</sup> LA WCW, Richard Sharples, Penwortham, husbandman (1717); Henry Martin, Penwortham, husbandman (1721).

**Table 29. Inventoried holdings of silver plate by weight in ounces, south of the Ribble**

	Pre-1660		1661-1700		1701-1740	
	incidences	wt/ozs	incidences	wt/ozs	incidences	wt/ozs
Penwortham	4	3.5	2	7	0	0
Hutton & Howick	1	1	1	10.5	0	0
Longton	6	13	2	13	1	1
Farington	7	206.5	4	56	1	10
Much & Little Hoole	11	48	5	39	2	12
North Meols	6	39	17	129.5	1	7
Formby & Ainsdale	8	41	3	7.5	1	7.5
Croston & Bispham	12	38	3	33	1	30
Bretherton	10	265	1	7.5	0	0
Ulnes Walton	6	30.5	2	21	0	0
Rufford	4	583	1	252.5	0	0
Mawdesley	10	110	2	36	0	0
Tarleton & Hesketh	6	20	2	2	1	12
Burscough	14	50	6	45	0	0
Lathom	24	248	3	10	3	92.5
Scarisbrick & Snape	17	313	15	540.5	3	59.5
	146	2009	69	1210	14	231.5
Ormskirk	n/a	n/a	25	482	14	292
Liverpool	n/a	n/a	150	6053.5	47	2521.25

Only in Ormskirk, where several gentlemen owned the greatest individual amounts, did yeomen, innkeepers and grocers such as Thomas Crosby (1690), with 50 ounces ‘In the Buttery In Several sorts of plate ... £12.10s.’ register with holdings of items other than silver tankards, bowl and spoons.<sup>130</sup> It is principally in Liverpool that we may establish a considerable diversity of social ranking pertaining to ownership. In Liverpool between 1661 and 1720, 63 decedents left inventories which included plate of 40 ozs/£10. value or greater. Of these, 13 were gentlemen, merchants and/or aldermen. Only 2 were yeomen, but this

<sup>130</sup> LA WCW, Robert Hesketh, Rufford (1697); James Scaresbrick, Scarisbrick, esquire (1673); Robert Hesketh, Rufford, esquire (1697); Thomas Crosby, Ormskirk (1690).

description of rank was not commonly used in Liverpool. 28 men were mariners, although ‘mariner’ would often infer captaincy and/or partial ownership of one or more sailing vessels. After c.1661, 22 decedents were described as tradesmen in their principal occupations. These men were ship carpenters, coopers, iron mongers, innkeeper/brewers, mercer/drapers, tallow chandlers and tobacconists who left substantial collections of wrought silverware. 39 other mariners and tradesmen from the inventoried record also owned plate in quantities of between 20 and 39 ounces. Four Liverpool men died in possession of particularly significant amounts. The greatest of these was the 592 ounces of silver possessed by Edward Lewis, silversmith (1690). Thereafter John Molyneux, merchant, had 346.5 ounces (1699); Thomas Johnson, gentleman/alderman, 452 ounces (1700); and Richard Houghton, the immensely wealthy merchant ship-owner, who left 397 ounces in 1712. To emphasise the comparative wealth in silver plate which accrued in Liverpool, possession of plate by these four men represents not only 20.8 per cent of all the silver inventoried in Liverpool between 1661 and 1720, but notably, 16.6 per cent of all the silver plate inventoried elsewhere in our dataset between 1661 and 1740.<sup>131</sup>

This analysis has shown that unlike the holdings of silver coins and gold guineas, possession of silver plate in the west of Lancashire generally conformed to type, being marginalised in locally significant quantities by esquires, clergymen and the relatively few established local gentlemen who expressed a portion of their wealth and status with this ‘staple and traditional material’ as it was defined by Weatherill.<sup>132</sup> Liverpool’s circumstances were clearly atypical. The town’s wealth was being transformed by an increasingly thriving maritime economy wherein a combination of wrought plate, silver and gold coins, particularly in guineas acted as both bank and visible assets to a broad occupational spectrum which included merchants,

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<sup>131</sup> LA WCW, Edward Lewis (1690); John Molyneux (1699); Thomas Johnson (1700); Richard Houghton (1712).

<sup>132</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 66.

mariners and the tradesmen who furnished, supplied and repaired increasingly energetic, high-volume maritime requirements. Wrought silver items, salt cellars, wine-cups, bowls and tankards rarely weighed more than 8-12 ounces or £2-3. when valued individually. Silver plate, for all it embodied aesthetic, psychological and financial value was in its own fashion, simply another piece of the material jigsaw.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has offered an analysis of certain key possessions which contributed to a rapidly emerging material culture as it pertained to western Lancashire, specifically in towns south of the Ribble. We have discussed the external fabric of domestic buildings as more permanent materials, brick, stone and slate appeared alongside wooden framed, clay infill, thatch-roofed dwellings. To augment these improvements, inventoried evidence of local brickmaking has suggested chimney stacks were rebuilt with wider flues to improve the air quality within. Inventories and wills have also revealed that atypical levels of cash were available to buy affordable items of home-comforts, labour conveniences and decoration and enabling generous bequests in specie. In towns, particularly in Liverpool, while wrought silver plate items were almost exclusive to upper-level gentry, merchants and the most successful trades, good furniture, good clothes, clocks, books, white tableware, ornaments, wall-hung pictures and maps, were also available and financially attainable to mariners, tradesmen, middle-ranking men and their families.

## Conclusions

Walton described mid-Tudor Lancashire as “an obscure, remote, insular and backward corner of England.”<sup>1</sup> However, in the one hundred and fifty years which followed, the county evidently extensively transformed the fortunes of its rural and urban economies. Mineral extraction, manufacturing and textile industries in the centre and east of the county which emerged in the late sixteenth-century were analysed by Timmins. He concluded that growth of these industries resulted in positive change in the west of the county to the point that after c.1700, “much of the county lying to the south of the Ribble ... showed a marked degree of industrialisation long before the classic industrial revolution period.”<sup>2</sup> Phenomena identified by Keibek and Shaw-Taylor as “the transition from a predominantly agricultural society of semi-autarkic rural households to a modern market economy,”<sup>3</sup> in early-modern England, and specifically in western Lancashire have also been discussed here. If the north-west counties evolved into the first industrial region in England, as convincingly argued by Stobart,<sup>4</sup> this thesis has shown that the hitherto unacknowledged, early contributions of the western flank of Lancashire to that process also deserves analysis. Yet, as has been emphasised in this thesis, it is important to understand that these nascent contributions, which appeared in the second half of the seventeenth century and were at an advanced stage by the 1720s, developed in a stable and industrious society operating from generation to generation within a largely self-sufficient agrarian foundation. As we have seen, the changes taking place here included distinct market-oriented rural production from modest resources, technological advances and rational production processes in towns, the rapid growth and

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<sup>1</sup> John K. Walton, *Lancashire, a Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Timmins, *Made in Lancashire A History of regional Industrialisation* (Manchester and New York, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Sebastian A. J. Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, ‘Early modern rural by-employments: a re-examination of the probate inventory evidence’, *AgHR*, vol. 61, p. 2 (2013), pp. 244-281, p.245.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Stobart, *The First Industrial Region North-West England c.1700-60*, (Manchester and New York, 2004).

advancement of overseas maritime trade through Liverpool and re-orientation to cater to it, the early phases of the renaissance of Ormskirk and the emergence and rapid adoption of a consumer culture.

Our discussions have placed particular emphasis on the agricultural, commercial and industrial developments which germinated in earlier decades, and have provided quantitative evidence that in the period prior to the mid-eighteenth century innate and rising levels of industriousness and self-determination prevailed in the coastal and rural dwelling society of western Lancashire. This perception has been derived from a number of factors which have been observable through competent agricultural practices, investment of savings and surpluses in market-oriented opportunities and through the security of heritable land tenures, relative freedom of self-determination, occupational fluidity and income diversity. These conditions, exemplified principally through the analysis of whole sets of probate documents, permitted and encouraged a special set of beneficial circumstances to prevail and endure in the towns and townships in the west of Lancashire throughout the early modern period. For example, we have seen in chapter 4, how these findings which our dataset enables us to identify and understand, have indicated that the dairying and brewing industry offered good financial returns even for modest producers, which may explain the survival of small farming in this part of Lancashire.

Much of that which has been analysed, quantified and discussed herein would not have been accessible without first studying the copious number of probate records, particularly inventories, which remain extant and available. Several key points have emerged regarding the records from west Lancashire. The inventories themselves which make up our dataset, for all their formulaic composition, are often atypical of their kind, describing the livestock, crops and goods of an atypical sub-region. As has been apparent throughout, inventories from townships north and south of the River Ribble, when studied as whole-sets, often display

atypical characteristics in comparison with the observations of other writers working with similar source material.<sup>5</sup> They are great in number and periodically consistent across the “extended seventeenth century (c.1580-1720),” in comparison with other counties.<sup>6</sup> They atypically evaluate low-value estates below those of middling-rank and frequently record credits owing to testators. They numerously evaluate tradesmen’s tools and equipment, often describe apparel in detail, and itemise personal reserves of coins in atypically high levels.

We also discussed earlier the benefits of whole-set analysis for groups of neighbouring townships, compared with partial sampling techniques.<sup>7</sup> Only through studies of all available inventories for example was I able to quantify the comparable selection of male and female cattle in similar herd sizes north and south of the Ribble, and thus identify subtly contrasting farming systems. Whole sets also enable relationship connections to be made in and between townships and to highlight key figures in local communities. The Penwortham yeoman John Clayton (1713) who appraised numerous inventories and drafted wills was highlighted, although others could have been discussed.<sup>8</sup> Studying whole sets has also reduced the potential misfortune of missing key entries of social and historical importance. Our discussions have thus been illuminated by a range of vanguard descriptions in our dataset. The early definition of sheep breeds for example, the Haslingdens and Kettlewells, purchased by Henry Hunt in 1686, and the identification of Thomas Scaresbrick of Formby (1663) as the first named grower of potatoes are notable. So too is the early evaluation for wallpaper ‘over the wainscott ... 5s.’ in the parlour of Liverpool merchant Mathias Gibson (1706). Also, in 1680 the inventory of ship Commander Thomas Knowling is the first to record

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<sup>5</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London and New York, 1988), pp. 2-4; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London & New York, 1993), p.41. Craig Muldrew, ‘Hard Food for Midas: Cash and Its Social Value in Early Modern England,’ *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001), pp. 78-120.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Arkell, *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 26-7, 73.

<sup>7</sup> General Introduction, pp. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> LA WCW, John Clayton, Penwortham, yeoman (1713).



evidence of male slave ownership and the sale of ‘a woman servant ... £8,’ which sobering evaluation occurred twenty years prior to the first recognised slave-trade voyage out of Liverpool.<sup>9</sup>

However, much additional work awaits investigation. For example, Muldrew’s influential discussions regarding the universal lack of coins in England appear not to be recognisable when discussing the volume of specie evident in west Lancashire. Numerous inventory valuations and will bequests reveal frequent, generous and significant amounts of cash gifted to family members, directed towards the township poor, and as instructions for specific charitable bequests for school foundations and for the salaries of preachers, often in perpetuity. These require further quantifying and assessment. The evolution of apparel, clearly itemised in inventories, testamentary bequests and probate accounts await analysis, as also the often painstakingly recorded shop-stock inventories of mercer-drapers. Widows and spinster’s inventories, though also plentiful throughout western Lancashire, are nevertheless under-represented and should be studied separately. A further feature of the inventories in our dataset is the remarkable quantities of household weaponry, which from the late sixteenth century occur as pikes, knives, armour and muskets, thereafter, evolving into numerous ‘fowling-pieces’ and small hand-guns post-Civil War, and cases of flintlock pistols in the early 1700s. As Arkell observed in 2000, “so far no regional study of such weapons over time has been undertaken.”<sup>10</sup> Lastly, whilst the main focus has inevitably fallen on the south side of the Ribble, our understanding of the economy of the coastal townships from the Ribble northwards to the Lune has also benefited, although additional research into the probate records for this area would be productive. For example, whilst we discussed the agrarian economy in relation to cattle in chapter 1, coastal-dwellers from the Rivers Wyre to the Lune

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<sup>9</sup> LA WCW, Henry Hunt, Little Hoole (1686); Thomas Scaresbrick, Formby (1663); Mathias Gibson, Liverpool, merchant (1706), Thomas Knowling, Liverpool, Commander (1680).

<sup>10</sup> Arkell, *When Death Do Us Part*, pp. 93-4.

maintained notable levels of commercial interests, particularly in salt-production and the coastwise shipping of salt, goods and corn in the early-modern period.

The combination of these factors suggests that far from being distant from the early mainstream of English industry, progress and modernity, the sub-region of the west Lancashire plains was at the forefront of a nation on the cusp of irreversible change. Indeed, the social and economic circumstances described in this dissertation are remarkable, both in their own right and for the continuity and sustainability of this type of farming which endured into the nineteenth century. Gritt has observed that in south-west Lancashire by the late eighteenth-century, “most farms were under fifty acres, and even though they were not subsistence farmers, family labour was sufficient to maintain a mixed or dairy farm of this size.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this dissertation has argued that this atypical sub-region of western Lancashire south of the river Ribble was of no lesser economic importance in the pre-industrial era than any other in north-west England, or in the country as a whole.

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<sup>11</sup> A. J.Gritt, ‘Aspects of Agrarian Change in south-west Lancashire c.1650-1850’ (unpub. PhD thesis, 2001), pp. 302.

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