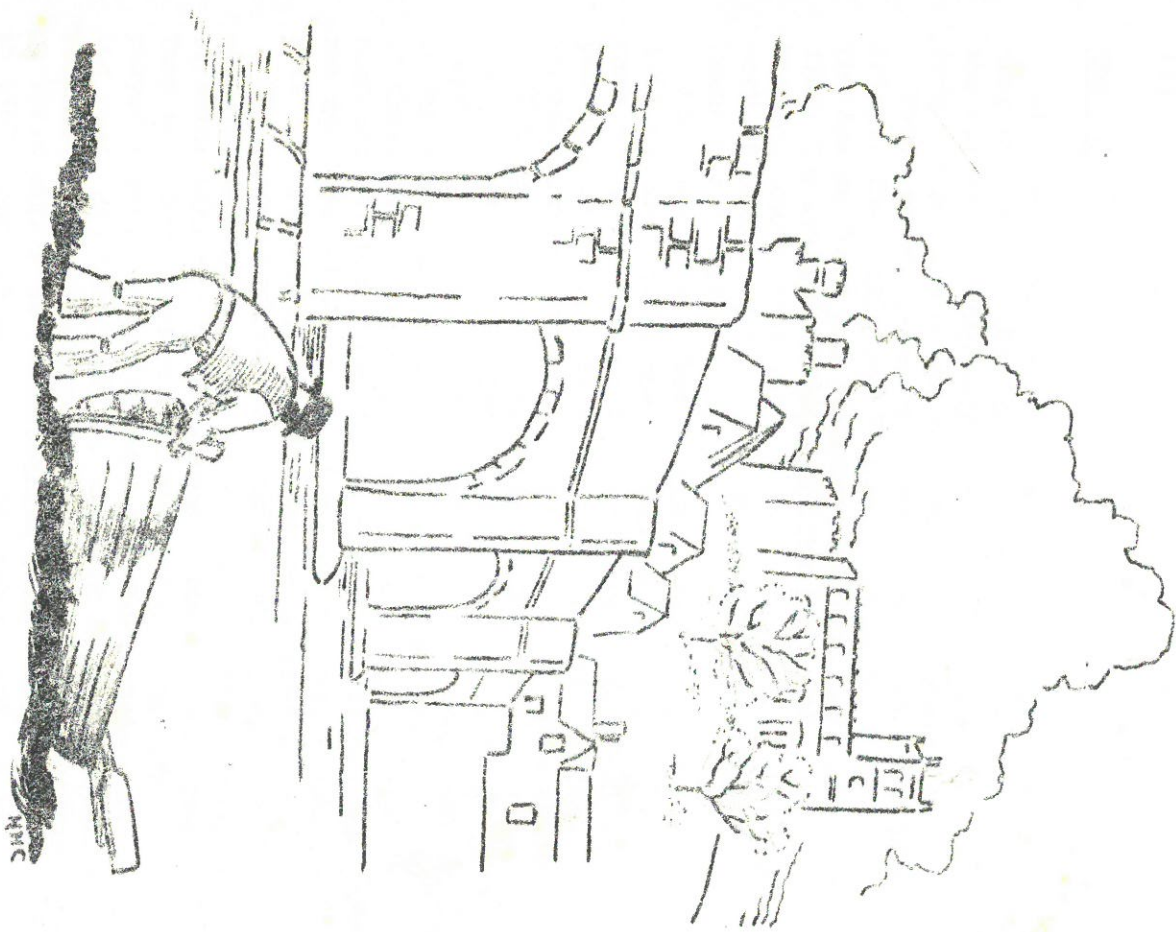


LANCASTER

THE PORT

BY

H.N. CRAWSHAW



WANGSWARD INH

BY

THE PORT

РАТСАДИЯ

(1)

The Golden Age.

When next you visit Lancaster, don't go just to shop but take a good look at the buildings. Get off the bus at Carlisle Bridge - that will save you 1p fare for a start - and walk across the bridge.

Pause as you cross and look at the Castle and the Priory. The Castle was founded perhaps in 1070; but the Assize Court and attendant building were added in 1788. The Priory was founded like the Castle in 1070 - but the church that you look at today was largely the work of Masons in the 1440's. However, the Priory Tower was rebuilt in 1759.

Look now at St. Georges Quay. This was built in 1753 and the tall stone warehouses are of about the same date. The Customs House was opened in 1764. As you walk past it, notice the tall columns and the windows and the steps. You will see their like again.

Turn up the bridle path that climbs Castle Hill and look at the buildings that front Castle Park - all eighteenth century. And you will see the same design in Buildings in Church Street (the Conservative Club) in Cable Street (opposite the Bus Station) and in High Street. Poor High Street is much neglected now but two hundred years ago it housed the most fashionable and the wealthiest citizens of Lancaster.

The Labour Exchange in King Street was once the Assembly Rooms, built in 1759. This was the centre of entertainment in old Lancaster for the well-to-do. They held dances there, and musical evenings and played Whist. Can you imagine the sedan chairs arriving there and the coach and the link boys with flaring torches and the ladies with powdered hair and holding up their skirts to avoid soiling them - no pavements in 1760 - and all watched by the twelve old men of

William Penny's Alms Houses next door? Those Alms Houses incidentally were founded in 1720.

Dr. Marton's private theatre, now hidden behind Margees was built in 1770 and public Theatre in Leonardsgate went up in 1781. The old Town Hall, now the Museum, was erected in the same year.

Look at Lancaster's Churches. The Congregational Church in High Street was opened in 1772; St. John's Church at the corner of North Road and Chapel Street, was built in 1757, and it once had a sister-church St. Ann's and now turned into the Duke's Playhouse. St. Ann's was built in 1796. The first Roman Catholic Church in Lancaster is now a dilapidated empty building making hideous a corner of Dalton Square; that was built in 1798. Finally walk up to the canal, opened in 1797, and don't overlook Skerton Bridge, built in 1788.

You cannot fail to have noticed that almost every date mentioned here belonged to the eighteenth century (1700-1800). In that, one Century so much building was done in Lancaster that it has been called by some local historians, Lancaster's "Golden Age". But why was so much building done in that time?

The purpose of this booklet is to give you an answer. I will tell you some things in a straight forward way - as with the account of the doings of John Lawson and William Stout; and something you can try to find out for yourselves.

For example: on a street plan of modern Lancaster you can mark on the 18th Century Buildings and their dates, and by using the maps of old Lancaster that your teacher provides, you can write a couple of paragraphs describing Lancaster's growth between 1600 and 1813.

Find out what is meant by "Classical Architecture" and copy one of the drawings in this booklet; they illustrate buildings, in the classical style.

Now - why did Lancaster grow and build in the 18th Century? Well, very clearly more people came to live here and so more houses had to be built. But many buildings were not built to live in. The assembly Rooms, the Customs House, the Assize Court, the Town Hall - these were put up for leisure, business or prestige. William Penny's Alms Houses were a charity - and so too were Mrs. Gillsons Alms Houses, for eight maiden ladies (originally in Common Garden Street) built in 1790, and the Blue-Coat Schools founded in 1770 (the girl's school door-way is still there in Middle Street.)

If a town and its people build buildings such as these it is not simply that the town is growing but also that the town is rich. It can afford luxuries such as an Assembly Room, a Theatre and a new Town Hall.

Lancaster in the 18th Century was rich little town. It had become a busy port and continued to be so until the 1850's. As a busy port it attracted industries and the industries attracted work people. So it grew.

(2)

The Port - In and Out.

IN

I want to begin with a glance at two men who made Lancaster a busy port. There were others but because of a lack of written records these others are little more than names.

First John Hodgson. - Hodgson was born in Eijel. He served a seven years apprenticeship in Lancaster, then set up as a Shopkeeper. His second wife had a brother who persuaded Hodgson to go halves in buying a ship, fitting her out, putting in a cargo and sending her to Virginia to bring back tobacco. This was in 1676. "She was the first ship that ever came to Lancaster from

Virginia", wrote William Stout, a shopkeeper of Lancaster, who knew John Hodgson very well. -

Very well - for Stout goes on to say, "the customs being then low and slightly looked after, and they (Hodgson and his brother-in-law) being in favour with the officers, they paid little duty." Clearly Hodgson had paid backhanders to the customs official, so that his tobacco paid less duty when it was landed at Lancaster. That would mean that Hodgson's tobacco would be cheaper than other tobacco imported through Liverpool, Bristol or Hull.

For a while he prospered. Other Merchants joined with him sending Ships to America, to France (prunes and wine) to the Baltic (hemp and flax.) Robert and Josiah Lawson, Augustin Greenwood, William Penny - these were the money men of Lancaster. The cost of fitting out a ship was too great for one to bear; so the Merchants clubbed together. Theirs were small ships - for crossing the Atlantic frighteningly small and how much they cost I do not know. When one was captured by the French in 1701, its owner paid ransom of £1100 for the ship and her cargo. Perhaps the ship would cost about £400.

But buying a ship was not enough. She had to be rigged and carry spare tackle in case storms ripped away what she had. She had to be armed with cannon, powder and shot. Then she had to have a cargo to carry; and finally a crew to sail her and the crew expected a part of their pay before they sailed - on the chance that they might never return.

There was late into the night drinking in the grog shops of Skerton and Lancaster, hoarse voices bawling shanties, sudden shrill quarrels, pewter mugs banging on table tops. Then came the ship's bosun, and a couple of tough old sailors to steer or cuff or cudgel drunken men aboard. High tide - and time to cast off; and bleary men pushed the windlass round, raised anchor, shook out the sails. Another voyage had begun.

John Hodgson decided to process, not merely import tobacco. There was no one in Lancaster who knew the business, so he brought in a man from Bristol called Peter Gordin, "an excellent good spinner, roller and cutter of tobacco," said William Stout; and out of manufacturing tobacco Hodgson made a cool hundred pounds a year.

In 1681 he built a sugar refinery and again brought in experts from Bristol. Surprisingly, Hodgson did not import sugar as well as tobacco; he bought his sugar in Liverpool. This venture did not thrive, according to William Stout.

Hodgson was Mayor of Lancaster four times. He began to live beyond his income. He built a house that cost him £1000., he entertained the local gentry expensively and his apprentices and servants made free with his wine cellars and warehouses. In other words, they stole his goods. He went bankrupt, was imprisoned as a debtor in Lancaster Castle, and died in 1711.

Second William Stout - I must tell you about Stout because he was so unlucky. He wrote his autobiography - we have quoted from it once or twice - and to read this autobiography is like opening a window on old Lancaster, with its narrow streets and stone buildings and hump backed bridge.

William Stout was born in 1665 at Bolton Holmes. When William was fifteen he was apprenticed to a Lancaster ironmonger and served his apprenticeship for seven years. In 1687 he set up in business for himself, as an ironmonger and grocer. Combining two very different types of goods in one shop was more common in 1687. And I must explain that groceries did not mean fresh vegetables and fruit because people grew their own vegetables and fruit in those days; but as a grocer Stout sold sugar, pepper, spices candy and cheese, vinegar, cooking oil and tobacco. These were all goods (except the cheese) imported from overseas and so Stout was tempted to venture a little money in sea voyaging. He was a persistent loser.

In 1698 he joined seven other Lancaster Merchants in fitting out and lading a ship called the "Employment." Stout put in goods to the value of £110. When the ship returned Stout's share of the cargo was Virginia tobacco which was selling at three pence a pound brought him in £71. 4s 3d. He had lost over £48., on his first venture.

Then he took shares in a ship called the "Brittania," bound for Philadelphia. He lost £70.

Nothing daunted, Stout stoutly ventured again and on the old "Employment." What a chapter of accidents followed! The ship was returning from Barbados with sugar, black ginger and cotton, when it was captured by a French man-of-war. The Lancaster merchants bought her back for £1100. That took some time for an agent had to be sent to France with the money. The ship bravely sailed up the Irish Sea to be wrecked at the mouth of the River Wyre. Only a part of the cargo was saved - mainly the cotton - and this was sent to Manchester and sold. But William lost £200.

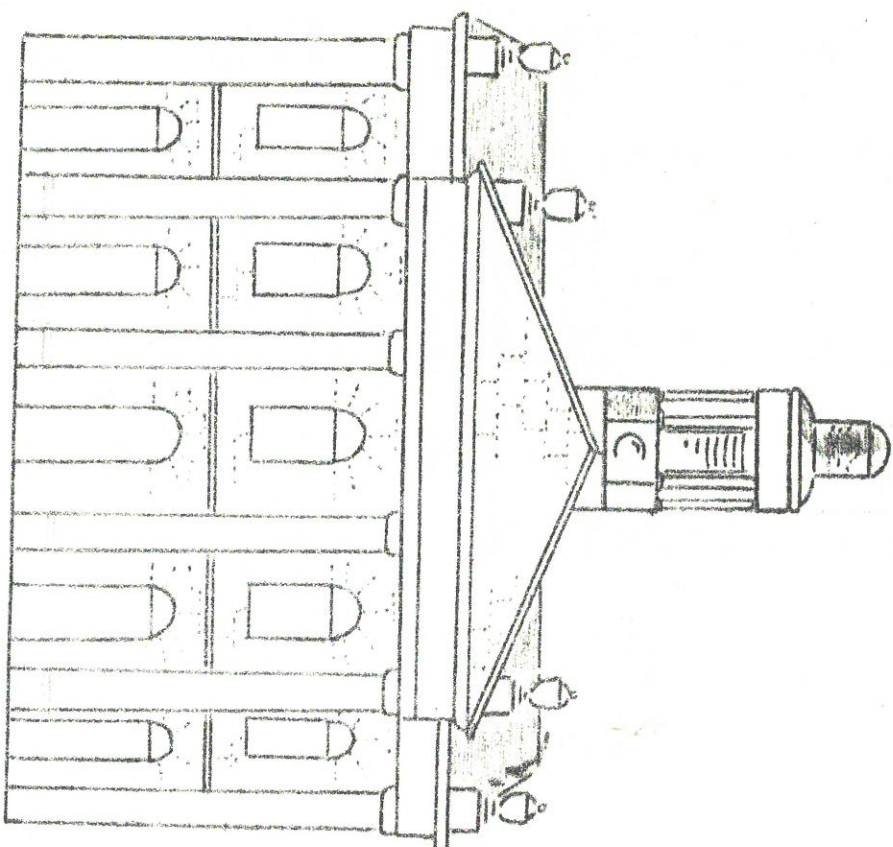
He ventured twice again and on the last voyage made a profit of £10., "which I thought was too little to encourage adventure by sea any further. " Oh wise William Stout.

Happily Stout's shop was a success. When he died in 1752, he was not a poor man.

Now here are some questions, the answers to which you can find out for yourselves.

- (1) Why do we find no one in Lancaster as adventurous as John Hodgson before 1676?

To answer this question, find out about the sailor explorers of 1490 to 1600. Begin with Christopher Columbus and John Cabot. Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan - and include Sir Francis Drake and Jacques Cartia. Make a sketch map to show where they went and what they discovered.



- (2) Find out about the occupation of North and South America by European peoples between 1500 and 1700. What connection was there between Lancaster and Philadelphia?

These are not easy questions to answer. You certainly won't answer them in half an hour, and you will have to use other books not just this booklet. But, if you work at these two questions carefully, you might come to see how Lancaster (and Liverpool and Bristol) became busy ports after 1670.

- (3) What goods came from America into Lancaster - from Virginia, Barbados, France and the Baltic? And, from what might Lancaster fetch cotton, coffee, cocoa pepper and spices?

- (4) What made it so costly to send a ship to sea; and how did shopkeepers like Stout afford the cost? Find out how sailors lived aboard ship, what they ate, what dangers they faced and explain why ships' Captains had a hard job to recruit crews..

OUT

A port must not simply bring goods in; it must as busily send goods out. We have a detailed list of the goods exported from Lancaster to the West Indies in 1785.

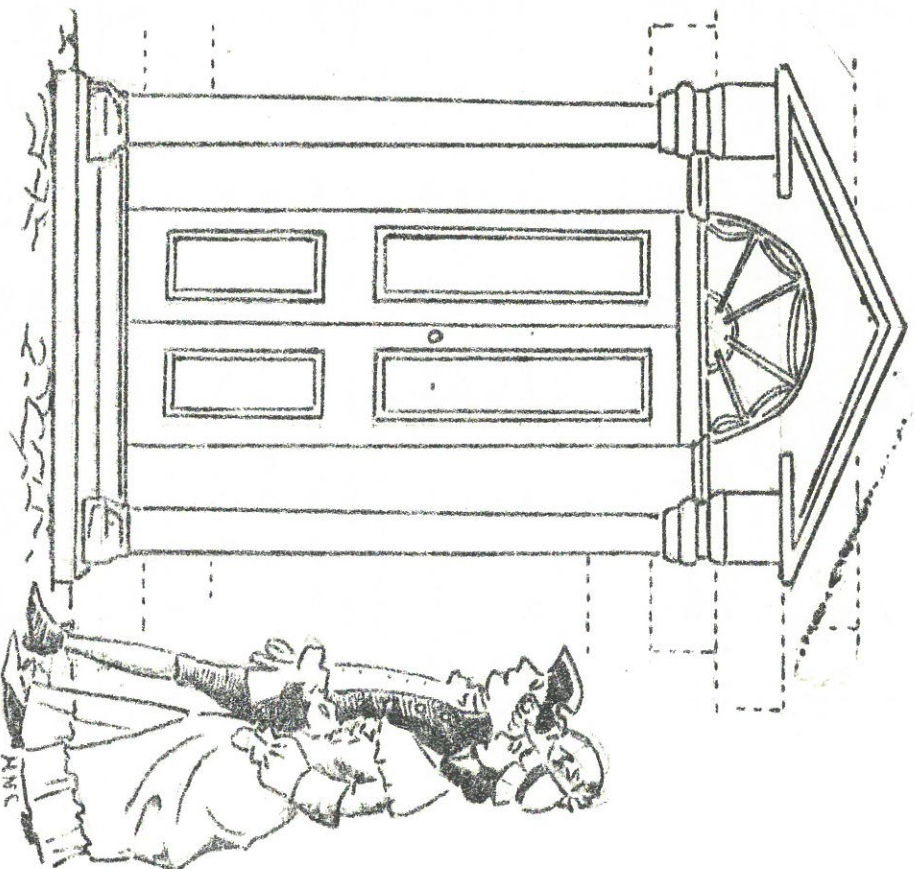
Food and Drink - bottled ale, hams and cheeses - these items made up the greater part of Lancaster's exports. This surprises me. I would have thought that Britons in Jamaica or Barbados would quickly have established their own breweries and that the Islands would have produced enough for their own population. Perhaps they reminded the colonist of the tastes of home. A sip of Lancaster ale and thoughts flew back to the candlelit taproom of the Naked Taylor or the Mare Maid.

Next to Ale, hams and cheeses came furniture, eandles and textiles. Sailcloth, rope and thread, coats, hats and shoes, ironmongery and stationery made up the total.

Do you notice that these are all homely and useful goods? No luxury items here - no jewellery, toys, china vases, tapestries. Their emphasis on the useful was typical of English trade, whereas the French tended to export luxury goods - wines, lace, china, tapestries and gloves.

Finally what happened to the goods imported into Lancaster? Every Port has what is called its Hinterland. That is the villages and towns that buy from that port. William Stout tells of "a draper and grocer of Cartmel of great business who frequented our market at Lancaster and, to save the charge of carriage, usually brought one or more horses to carry his goods." The poor fellow was drowned crossing the sands in 1687. Cartmel, then Lancaster's Hinterland.

Lancaster stands on the north-south road linking Warrington and Carlisle. It was less a road than a cart track. Not even that for carts could not use the



road. Travellers went on horseback and goods were carried by trains of pack horses. Kendal was the principal pack horse station between Wigan and Carlisle. So Wigan and Kendal was part of Lancaster's Hinterland too. In fact if you drew a circle of radius 25 miles round Lancaster that circle would be the Hinterland for our port and it would include Cartmel, Kendal, Sedbergh and Kirby Lonsdale, Clitheroe and Preston. And Lancaster merchants like Hodgson and Stout did business even further afield in Liverpool and Sheffield and London. So thanks to men like these, Lancaster became a flourishing port in the last year of the Seventeenth Century.

(3) Industries.

Here is a list of industries established in Lancaster in the eighteenth century: Ship building, candle making, sugar refining rope and twine making, sail cloth weaving, clocks, saddlers, furniture, breweries, tobacco processing and snuff manufacture.

Write the heading 'Lancaster Industries 1700-1800' in your exercise books and copy out this list, but rearrange the items under two sub-headings:

- (1) to do with ships
- (2) to do with trade

Ship building for example, comes under sub-heading (1), but candle making? Candles might be used aboard ship but are intended just as much for sale at home or abroad. So candle making comes under sub-heading (2).

Looking at the past is like looking through a dark glass. We glimpse shapes and we recognise them by their outline but far too often the details are missing. Let me give you an example. We know that John Hodgson established a sugar refinery. William Stout tells us so, gives a date (1681) and thinks

that it lasted about twelve or fourteen years. But a map of Lancaster reconstructed from a survey in 1684 shows only one sugar refinery and it belonged to John Lawson. What's the truth? Were there two sugar refineries in 1684 and is the map wrong? Or did Hodgson sell out to Lawson and has Stout omitted to tell us? Unless the records of a business survive to the present day, we can seldom know more than that the business existed. We know that in 1807 there were "one house for the refining of sugar; two public breweries; several tobacco and snuff manufactories" but by whom these were established and when they were established we are not told.

Sailcloth weaving and sail making was an industry set up as soon as Lancaster became a busy port. In 1808 there were at least ten sailcloth makers with their names entered in the Lancaster Directory. At least four work-shops stood on Green Aire; and Green Aire was also the centre for the rope walk where rope and twine were made. Hence the name of Cable Street, the flax and hemp used in the making of rope was imported from the Baltic.

The first tobacco manufactory was established by John Hodgson. By 1807 there were "several tobacco manufactories and the making of snuff was an offshoot of these. Snuff is powdered tobacco. We don't smoke it; we take a pinch between finger and thumb and sniff it up the nose. The result: a hearty sneeze and a clear head. In the eighteenth century snuff was an addiction among men like cigarette smoking today and fingers and shirt fronts were commonly yellow stained from its use.

Candles were manufactured here until 1828, when the trade was ruined by oil lamps and gas lights. And saddle making was for the home market and for export - largely to Barbados. The clock makers and the chair makers and cabinet makers have left us little more than their names - like Joseph Tyson, chairmaker, who departed this life on the 16th day of February 1803 in the 65th year of his age" and

whose grave stone is now part of the pavement in the porch of St. Mary's Priory. Of them all Gillows was the longest lived. It was founded by Robert Gillow in 1728. He soon opened a London branch and his furniture - especially the mahogany furniture, of mahogany imported from the West Indies - was well known throughout Britain.

Finally ship building - and again the records have not survived and a good deal that we should like to know is not known. In 1698 when William Stout and his seven partners wanted a ship built they went to Warton - and got the "Employment" of seventy tons. But between 1715 and 1730 we have the names and tonnage of ten ships built either at Sunderland or at Lancaster. Almost certainly there were others whose names have not been recorded.

The ships were very small: there was the "Content" of 45 tons, the "Ann" of 70 tons and the "Hope" of 70 tons. Columbus' "Santa Maria" was a ship of 100 tons and Drake's "Golden Hind" in which he circled the Earth was of 120 tons. So the "Hope" and the "Ann" were small indeed and yet in such ships our sailors crossed and recrossed the Atlantic.

The first shipyard with a named owner was established on Green Aire in 1783, and the owner was John Brockbank. His first ship was the "Olive Branch" and his last the "Thomas and Nancy", in 1817. His yard built ships of a respectable size. Perhaps the largest was the "Demerara" of 409 tons burden. She was launched in September 1803 from Green Aire. In 1800 Brockbank had bought the old Lancaster Bridge that lay across the river downstream of his yard for £250. To launch the "Demerara" he pulled down one of the arches, and the ship sailed sweetly out between the stone piers. In the Museum in Lancaster you can see the model of another of Brockbank's ships, the "Thetis", and read something of her history.

After 1820, Brockbank moved his business to Liverpool. The Facilities for shipbuilding were better there.

(4)

Quays and Buoys and Sand.

While writing the last two chapters, my mind has been quietly worrying over a problem: where did the ships tie up and unload and load cargo? The first quay built at Lancaster was built by John Lawson in 1680. His sugar refinery - that might have begun as John Hodgson's stood in St.

Leonards Gate and sloped down to a stream that divided it from Green Aire. In 1679 Lawson got the Town Council's permission to put a bridge over this stream, and then he built his wharf - approximately where the Greyhound Bridge starts its curving leap over the river. But the old Lancaster Bridge was downstream of the quay, if ships wanted to come to the quay they would have had to pass UNDER the bridge. Admittedly the ships were small - but not so small!

It is just possible that the bridge had a draw-bridge. We know that the Lancaster bridge of the 1680's was partly of stone and partly of wood. In the bitter winter of 1683-4 the Lune froze hard. With the thaw great quantities of broken ice swept against the bridge "with such violence that it pulled up a greater quantity of the stones, broke up a greater part of the new and old woodworks of the frames of the pillars, and a greater quantity of spiles (piles) and hath very much dampnified (damaged) the said bridge." So runs a report on the "dampnification" made in April 1684. A wooden drawbridge then is not impossible - but the fact that it is not mentioned makes it unlikely.

It is more likely - almost a certainty - that Lawson's quay was not built for ships at all. Lawson and his brother Josiah built a quay and warehouse at Sunderland. Rather than have their ships make the slow careful journey up the Lune to Lancaster, they brought them to mooring at Sunderland, stored the cargoes in the warehouses and, at their leisure brought them to town in broad beamed, shallow draughted lighters that would

have had no difficulty in passing under the old bridge.

But ships did come to Lancaster. There was a Customs House and warehouses at the foot of Bridge Lane at the Lancaster end of Lancaster bridge, and there was an official quay where cargoes had to be landed and inspected by the customs officers on the Skerton bank of the river, but was there a stone, or even a wooden quay there? We do not know.

I cannot resist telling you this story. It came from William Stout's Journal.

In October 1720 "we had the greatest sea flood that has been in the memory of any man then living. It was about four foot deep upon the Green Aire, a yard deep in the Bridge Lane where boats passed to get some old people out of their houses. It drove a ship of 90 tons into the corner of the raised way into the King's Meadow, and if that had not been in the way she had floated to above the bridge - it was two foot deep on that causey. The flood came into the warehouses and Customs House where near one hundred hogsgeds of tobacco was all damaged and wine and brandy staved." It had all happened in daylight with a strong west wind blowing. The King's Meadow was where Our Lady's playing field is now and the "ship of 90 tons" was bumping against the raised causeway of Lune Street.

It was in 1720 that a number of Lancaster merchants petitioned the Town Council for a buoy to be placed at the Shoulder of Lune sand bank. The Town Council promised a contribution of £20 if the merchants would work out ways of meeting any further costs themselves. The buoy would need replacing from time to time. So the merchants annually elected three Buoy Masters to levy subscriptions and keep check on the buoy's condition. But their Buoy Masters soon took on other self appointed tasks. They began to survey the river for the site of a pier and inspected the mouth of the river at Glasson. In 1729 the merchants of Lancaster persuaded His Majesty's Customs to shift their quay to the

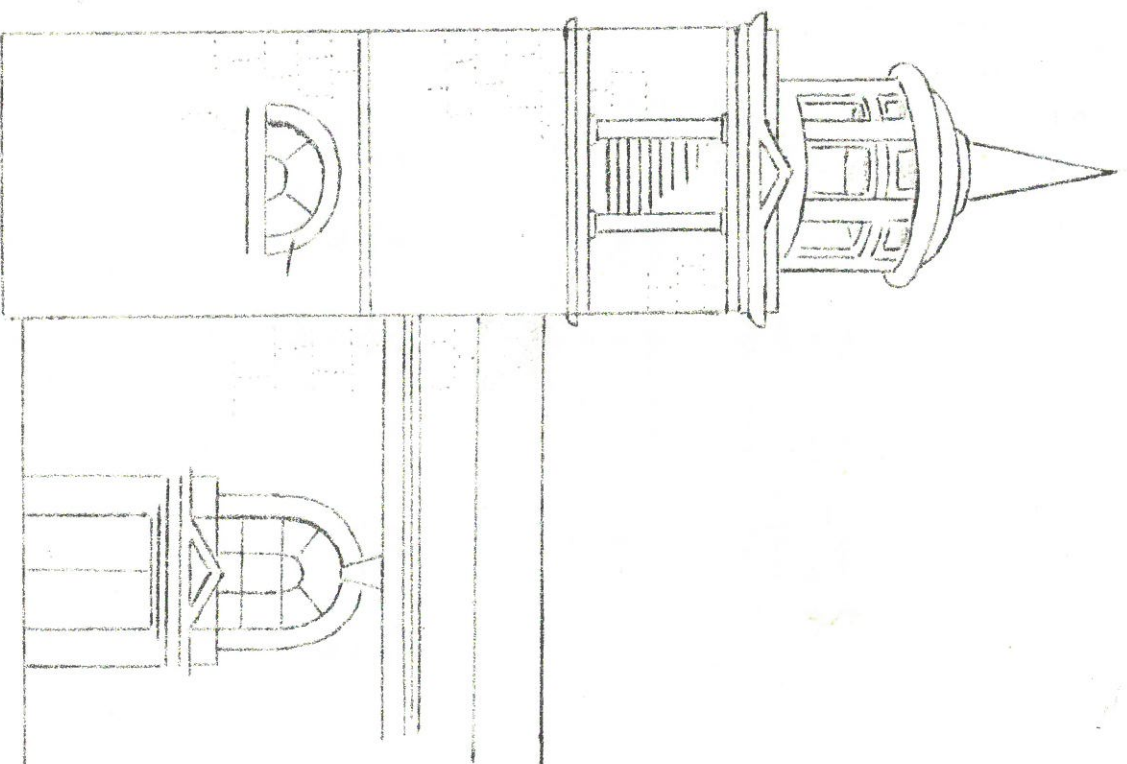
Lancaster bank of the river - to land that was to become St Georges Quay. And one of the last Buoy Masters become piermaster to the new body - the Port Commission - in 1750.

Until 1750 the responsibility for quays and piers was the Town Council. They granted permission to build quays to private persons as we have seen and when prompted subscribed £20 to a buoy. But the merchants were not satisfied. In 1749 by Act of Parliament a Port Commission was established. The merchants elected persons from among themselves to act as Commissioners and they became responsible for extensions, improvements, and repairs independent of the Town Council.

The Port Commission promptly set about the building of St. George's Quay. The quay was completed by 1752, then the tall narrow warehouses and in 1764, the new Customs House, Three years later New Quay was built to take ships that could not cross Scale Ford. Trade boomed.

	Foreign trade.	Coastal Trade.
1750 - 55	65	132
1755 - 60	139	245
1760 - 65	152	567
1765 - 70	225	589
1770 - 75	237	735

One problem dogged Lancaster as a port: the depth of the Lune. Even when ships were small, as in John Hodgson's day, they could only cross Scale Ford at high tide. As the size of ships increased so too did the difficulty of sailing them up river. Before 1700 the Lawsons, John and Josiah, were unloading their ships at Sunderland and sending the cargoes on to Lancaster by lighters; and after 1700 Sunderland boomed into a noisy roaring port. It had its own brewery, public houses, a smithy, customs house and pilots' quarters, as well as warehouses. Tall ships moored against the quay, barrels clattered across the cobbles into the warehouses, sailors shouted and brawled in the grog shops - Sunderland flourished in the 18th Century!



ILLUSTRATIONS

- (1) Old Lancaster Bridge as it looked in 1790. In 1800 the Bridge was bought by John Brockbank and then pulled down piece by piece over the next thirty years.
- (2) The Town Hall (now the Museum) was designed by a Major Jarrat in 1781 - 1783. The tower was added later by Thomas Harrison.
- (3) A Doorway
- (4) St. John's Church, the finest example of Classical architecture in Lancaster. The Church was built in 1756 - 7 but the tower was added by Harrison in 1784

This then was the answer to the riddle of Lune sands. In 1751 the Port Commission placed a chain and mooring stone on the opposite shore at Glasson; ships could tie up, unload into lighters, turn about and be off to sea again. It was another thirty years before they set about building a dock at Glasson, opened it in 1787 and completed it in 1791. - an enclosed dock capable of holding twenty five large merchant ships. Overnight Sunderland shrank to a ghost port. Ships, sailors, publicans and customs officials deserted it for Glasson. Only the pilots remained.

I had intended to end this booklet with 1800; but Lancaster continued busy as a port until the 1840's.

Here again is a piece of work that you can do: look at maps of Lancaster and Liverpool and make a list of all the things that they have in common. The similarities are not only geographical. Both towns were insignificant little places in the Middle Ages, and both began to grow into sizeable ports after 1670.

Lancaster was always second to Liverpool in the number of ships that called; even so she held onto her business until the 1840's. After that decade Lancaster's trade shrank to a mere trickle whereas Liverpool's continued to grow and grow. Why?

One answer was the silting up of the Lune. But this is not the whole answer. Liverpool had the same problem and spent money on dredging the river so letting in the big ships.

A second answer then, was the phenomenal growth of industry in that Hinterland served by Liverpool - that part of Lancashire between the Ribble and the Mersey. It included Manchester, Stockport, Bolton, Wigan, St. Helens and Widnes and Runcorn. Lancaster's Hinterland was rural - Westmorland, the Lune valley, the Fylde. The rich Hinterland of Liverpool drew the bulk shipping to that port like a magnet draws a pin. And the merchants of Lancaster felt that pull just as much. The most enterprising transferred more and more of their business to Liverpool.

Sources of Information.

- (1) The Autobiography of William Stout:
J. D. Marshall (e.d.)
This book is basic to any study of 18th Century Lancaster. Not only does it contain the text of Stout's autobiography, but its notes provide a very full account of what is known of Stout's Lancaster.
- (2) Outlines of an Economic History of Lancaster from 1680-1860:
M. M. Schofield. M.A.
On Lancaster : K. H. Docton.
- (3) A collection of essays, it includes information on the Old Bridge, the Town Hall and the Customs House.
Lancaster, 1684: K. H. Docton.
- (4) (In the Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarians Society 1957).
The Port of Lancaster: A. R. Taylor.
- (5) An unpublished thesis, to be recommended as an example of the work of an enthusiastic and able amateur.