

The Port
of
Lancaster

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank Mr Lowe and the staff of the Lancaster Public Library for their neverfailing courtesy in making books and material available to me, and for supplying photostat copies of relevant documents.

I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Mr K. H. Docton for allowing me use some of his unpublished material and the valuable help he was able to give me; Mr J. Potts of the Lancaster Guardian staff for making material available; and Mr M. Cummings who took the photographs used in the work.

Contents.

Acknowledgements.

List of Plates and Maps.

Introduction.

One.	Origins of the Port.	Page 1.
Two.	Early Records and Development.	Page 3.
Three.	The beginnings of Prosperity.	Page 5.
Four.	Customs Men some of their Duties. "	8.
Five.	The Golden Years.	Page 11.
Six.	Shipbuilding.	Page 15.
Seven.	Difficulties in Navigation.	Page 17.
Eight.	Decline into Oblivion.	Page 19.

Appendices.

List of plates and maps.

Plates.

Custom's House facing page 3.

St. Georges Quay

Page 7.

River Bank

Page 9.

Moorings.

Page 16.

St. Georges Quay up river.

Page 19

Maps.

Morecambe Bay and Lune Estuary showing
approximate positions of sandbanks formerly
dry land.

Page 1.

Lancaster as geographical focal point.

Page 2.

Legal Limits of Port of Lancaster.

Page 5.

Lancaster 1684 compiled by K.H. Docton from
1684 Directory. Extract.

Page 6.

Jonathon Binns' survey of Lancaster 1821. Extract. Page 15.

INTRODUCTION.

The writing of a complete, detailed history of the Port of Lancaster would, of necessity, involve a fairly comprehensive study of the history of the City of Lancaster, particularly the period from 1750 onwards. The rise and fall of the various industries of the city, the building of the canal, the opening of Glasson Dock, the development of a usable road system; all played an important part in the story of Lancaster's port. But all are subjects of which individual essays could, and indeed in some cases have, be written.

Similarly, histories could be written about the many small ports once under Lancaster's jurisdiction as the headport on the coast of the Lonsdale Hundred; towns as far apart as Morecambe and Barrow-in-Furness, all with fascinating stories of their own.

Although a great deal of documentary evidence has been made available to the ordinary student, by the work done by Mr. K. H. Docton in indexing maps, minute books and papers presented to the Lancaster Library by the Port Commissioners, much is unavailable. One valuable source, the records of the Customs and Excise Board dating from 1650, is locked away in the Headquarters in London; other sources are held privately and are singularly difficult to locate.

Specific periods in the history of the Port of Lancaster have been fully dealt with, particularly the latter part of the eighteenth century, but a full history is yet to be written. This is not it; but it is an attempt to outline briefly the development, rise and decline of the Port of Lancaster.

MORECAMBE
BAY



Lune Estuary showing sandbanks which
were formerly dry land

1917-1921

1922



1923

1924

1925

1926

Chapter 1.

Origins of the Port.

"Britain has always owed her fortunes to the sea, and to the havens and rivers that from the earliest times opened her inland regions to what the sea might bring. Long before she aspired to rule the waves she was herself their subject, for her destiny was continually being decided by the boat crews which they floated to her shores". (1)

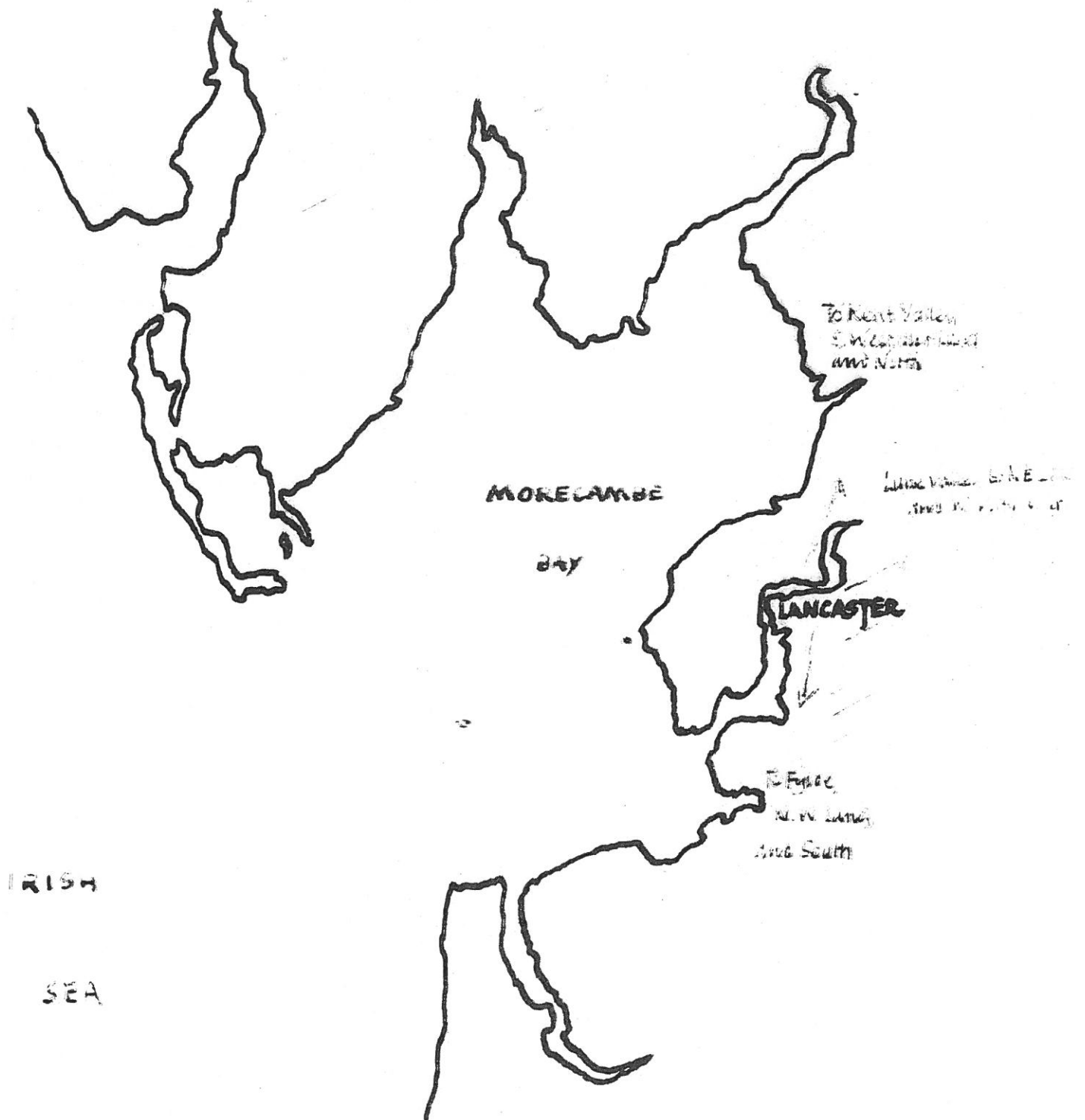
The river Lune, being one of the 'havens and rivers', mentioned in the above quotation, has brought both fortune and misfortune to the town of Lancaster, situated on its banks. The sea has brought prosperity to the town, and has caused depression too. But the prosperity it brought at various intervals enabled Lancaster to play, at times, a large part in the national fortunes.

Lancaster's history begins with the Romans, and it is with these invaders and colonisers that the story of the town as a port must begin. In Agricola's time a garrison of Roman legionnaires was stationed at the first ford on the River Lune. At first they lived in an earthen fort, but as the garrison became permanent and settled a walled fort was built and named Longoridium. A variety of reasons can be produced to explain the choosing of this particular site as a permanent garrison. The fort was built on the crown of a steep, easily defended hill which commanded the North Western coastal plain, which was far more extensive then than now: it overlooked the first ford on the river of which the Roman road northwards to Carlisle passed: it commanded the entrance to the fertile Lune valley and the valley northwards towards Kendal: the ford on the river also marked the tidal limit of the estuary.(2) It is this last point which, in the history of the port of Lancaster, is most significant. The Romans established garrisons at the tidal limits of all the major estuaries of the North West coasts; at Chester on the Dee, Wilderspool on the Mersey, Walton-le-Dale on the Ribble, Lancaster on the Lune and Carlisle on the Solway and Eden; this indicates that as well as being colonial governmental posts, these garrisons were used as ports.

That the Romans used sea transport to maintain contact with the garrisons of the North West we know from the references to Portus Setanorius situated in the area. Its exact location is still a matter of conjecture and speculation, but the most plausible theory seems to be that it was situated at the junction of the rivers Wyre and Lune. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of a Roman road leading from Ribchester, through Kirkham to Fleetwood, and out into the sands known as North Wharf. During the last fifty years, at exceptionally low tides, an ancient quay of massive stone blocks has been seen far out on the North Wharf. This site is known locally as Roman Harbour. (3)

Geographers tell us that in pre-historic times the North West Coast of Lancashire was some sixty feet higher than it is now, and extended much further westwards; they also tell us that in Roman times the sands marked, on the facing map; North Wharf: Preesall Sands: Bernards Wharf: Pilling Sands: Cockerham Sands: Shoulder of Lune: Sunerland Bank and Middleton Sands, were all some fifteen feet higher than at present and were, consequently, dry land through which the rivers Wyre and Lune flowed out into Heysham Lake.

The tradition of Roman Harbour would seem to have more than local legend and fancy to substantiate it, and from this can be made the supposition that



Lancaster's geographical focal position



Sketch of the landscape of the area

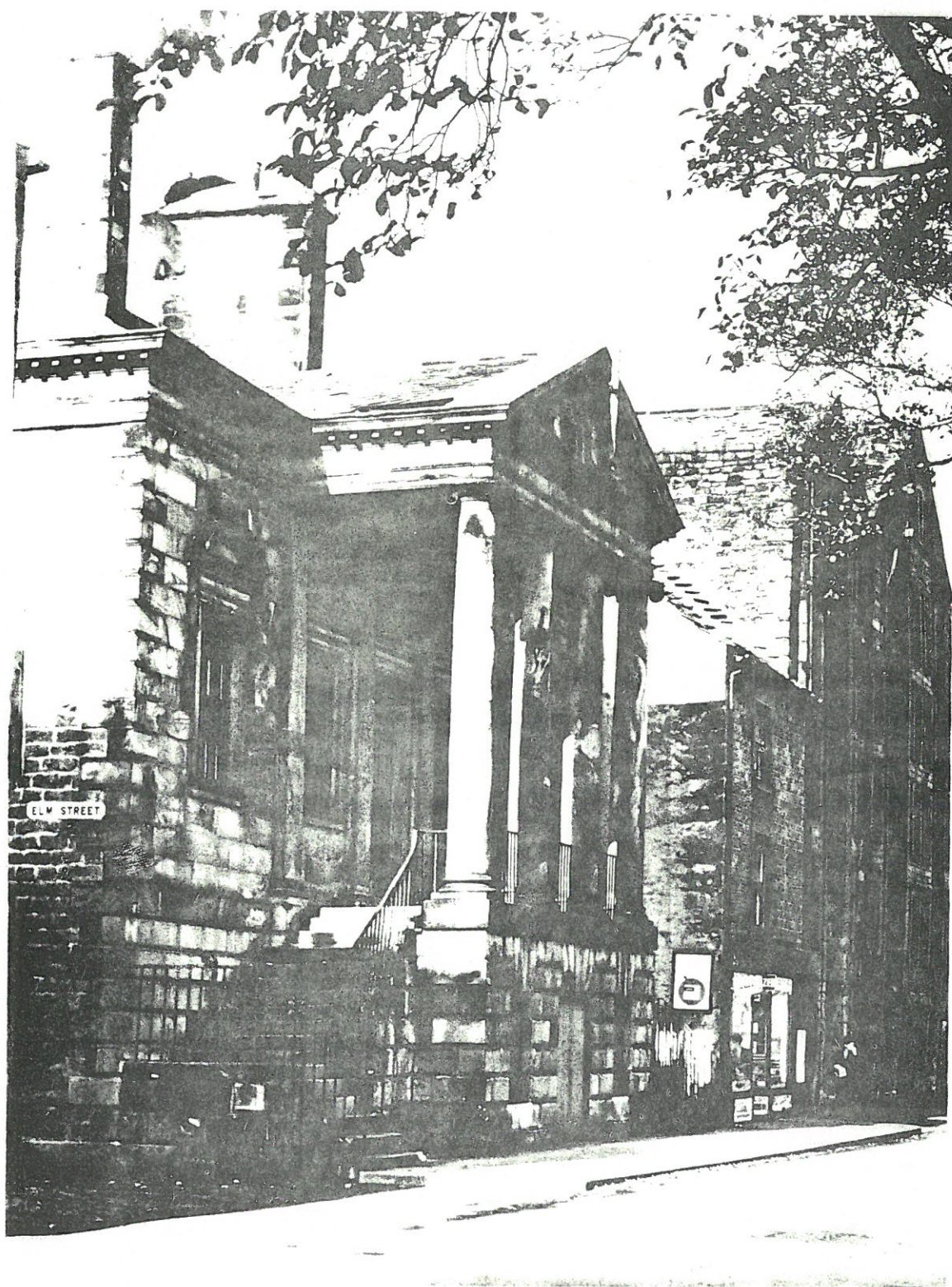
Roman Lancaster was indeed a port. It is reasonable to assume that the Romans, with their systematic, efficient methods and organisation would not maintain their garrison at Lancaster by sending the supplies and replacement troops down the road from the Portus Setantorius to the junction with the Walton-le-Dale to Lancaster road, and from thence north to Lancaster, a journey involving some forty miles of road travel; when they had immediate access to a broad, free-flowing, navigable river which, in some ten miles of easy sea travel took them directly to the garrison at Lancaster. The same reasons of course apply to the shipping of exports from the region. The Romans, in common with most other colonisers throughout history, took more of intrinsic value from the colonised than they gave, and the wealth of the locality, the agricultural produce, the pottery from Quernmore in the hills above Lancaster, the lead, silver and other minerals from the Lakeland mines would all pass through Lancaster on their journey via Portus Setantorius to Rome.

Theory and supposition must be the rules of the next period of Lancaster's maritime history also, and in this stage there is even scantier evidence than there is for the Roman era. There is evidence in plenty of the presence of the next invaders of England's North Western seaboard, the Scandinavians. The abundant place names are proof of their settlements. The 'hog back' stones at Heysham and Bolton-Le-Sands, the rock-cut grave at Heysham, the fragments of wheel-head crosses found at Lancaster, Burton in Kendal and Melling in Lonsdale, the carved pillar at Halton, and the fragments of other pillars found at Lancaster and Melling all seem to indicate a strong incursion, and settlement, of the Lune Valley.

These Scandinavians came chiefly from colonies in Ireland and the Isle of Man, and they must have used the Lune to its tidal limits at Lancaster as their main route into the fertile valley of South Lonsdale. The remains found at Lancaster would seem to indicate settlement by the Scandinavians on the same site, and for the same reason, as the Romans used.

This we can see that Lancaster by reason of its geographical location became the natural focus of activity in North West Lancashire. The river Lune and the facilities it offered played a large part in this dominance of the region and, as we shall see later, was instrumental in maintaining Lancaster in its focal position, until the Industrial Revolution transferred the centres of industry and population to Central and Southern Lancashire, to the benefit of the ports in that area and to the detriment of Lancaster.

- (1) G. M. Trevelyan. History of England.
- (2) See map facing page 2 for this and other references to geographical location of Lancaster.
- (3) Dr. Hogarth. Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Volume LV111. Page. 290.



Chapter Two.

Early Records and Development.

After his conquest of England William 1 parcelled out the estates of the country between his Lords and Knights. To Roger of Poitou he gave the lands, which had formerly belonged to Tostig, brother of the conquered King Harold, these included Lancaster. Here Roger built his castle and in 1094 built and endowed a Priory close by. In 1102 he lost all his lands because of his support for Robert of Normandy against Henry 1, and the same Henry took possession of the Honor of Lancaster. This ultimately descended to Richard 1 in 1189 who immediately bestowed it on his younger brother John, Earl of Mortain. John it was who in 1193, on 12 th June, granted to the burgesses of Lancaster all the liberties of the burgesses of Bristol (1). The charter of Bristol allowed them liberties of toll and passage throughout the Kingdom and in Dublin, and it is significant in the history of the Development of the port of Lancaster, that John granted to the town the same privileges that obtained in one of the principal ports of the country. Reference is made to the town serving King John as a, "doorway to Ireland", and that "great stores of provisions" were sent from Lancaster to Chester (2). Lancaster is recorded with Cartmel, Workington and Ravenglass as a port in 1297 . (3)

In the 1362 Charter of Edward 111 the fact that Lancaster was a port is referred to twice:

+ "Also that no man shall lye, drawe or caste any
deade beaste Carryon dong Ashes or any other
such vile thing afore any mans doore wyndowe
or in any comon streete or Lane within this town
except lanes leading to the haven upon the
Green Aire upon payne of every defalt xijd."

The haven is referred to again:

"Also that no man shall bargain or covenant
any ship come to town, to sell or buy,
until the ship have tarried and been
in sure haven by the space of two days." (4)

Although these documents give evidence that the King recognised the existence of commercial ports in the North West of the Kingdom, there was no regular crown administrative establishment in the region. It should be noted, however, that in the reign of Edward 111 the Kings Butler (5) thought it advisable to appoint a deputy to collect his dues in the port of Lancaster, as there was provision made for the collection of the wine subsidy throughout the country. (6) The fact that the prise of wine (7) of Lancaster was distinguished from other ports in the area, and separately assigned, seems fairly definite evidence of the existence of a continental sea-trade.

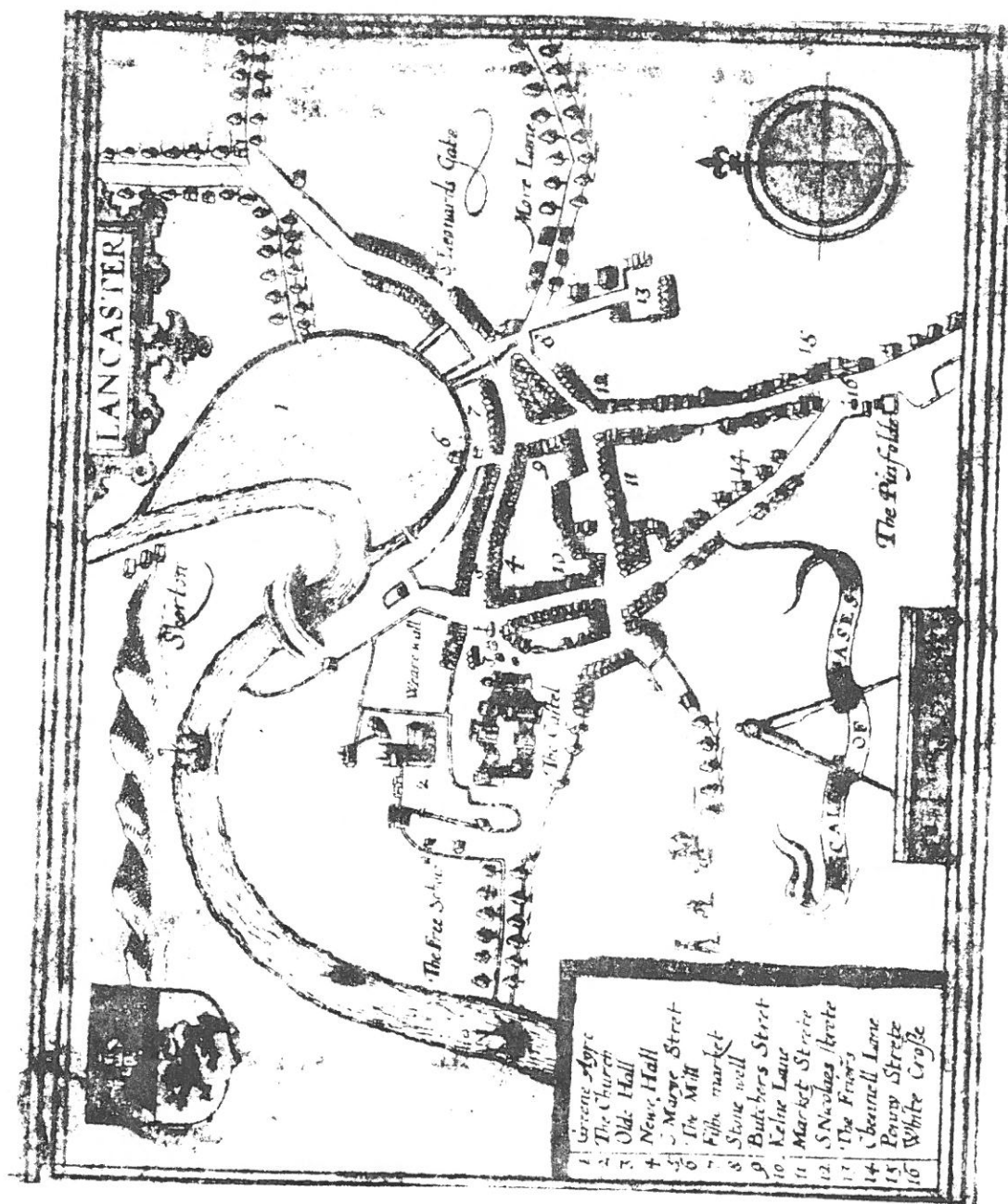
That the port could also accommodate fairly large vessels is evidenced in a Commission of 1401 to:

"John Talbot sergeant at army and Henry
Norreys, to arrest in the port of Bristol
and send from there to Lancaster the ships
and vessels of the burden of twenty to one
hundred and sixty tons,"

these were required to ship to Ireland:

"Thomas Stanley, Knight, and his retinne
with their seven hundred horses, the
ships and horses to be brought to Lancaster
with all speed".

A writ of Quo Warranto was submitted by the mayor, bailiffs and commonalty of Lancaster



Speed's map of Lancaster. 1610.

Lancaster claiming among other liberties:

"and to have a free port at Lancaster
and the water of the Lune; and the
plying of ships and boats on the same
water from Karnmoer, and the fishery
of the same ships and boats and the
toll of all merchandise carried on them".

The claim to their liberties and customs was allowed on production of their charters and supporting documents. (8)

By the sixteenth century then, Lancaster would appear to be a flourishing seaport, amply protected by royal charters, but during the ensuing hundred years the commerce by sea seems to have suffered a great decline. Camden tells us:

"at present the town is not populous,
and the inhabitants thereof are
all husbandmen". (9)

Speeds map, facing, shows us that Lancaster in 1610 was a town built around the market place and the junctions of the roads from the North, South and East. Although ships are shown using the Lune there is no sign of warehouses and the like which one would normally expect to see alongside the riverbanks of an industrious port. Indeed, Henry Chetham, High Sheriff of Lancashire, when faced with the problem of assessing and collecting Ship Money in 1634 wrote

"And if you shall tax men accordinge
to their tradinge and profitt by
Shipping; then Lanc; as I verily
think hath little to do that waise".

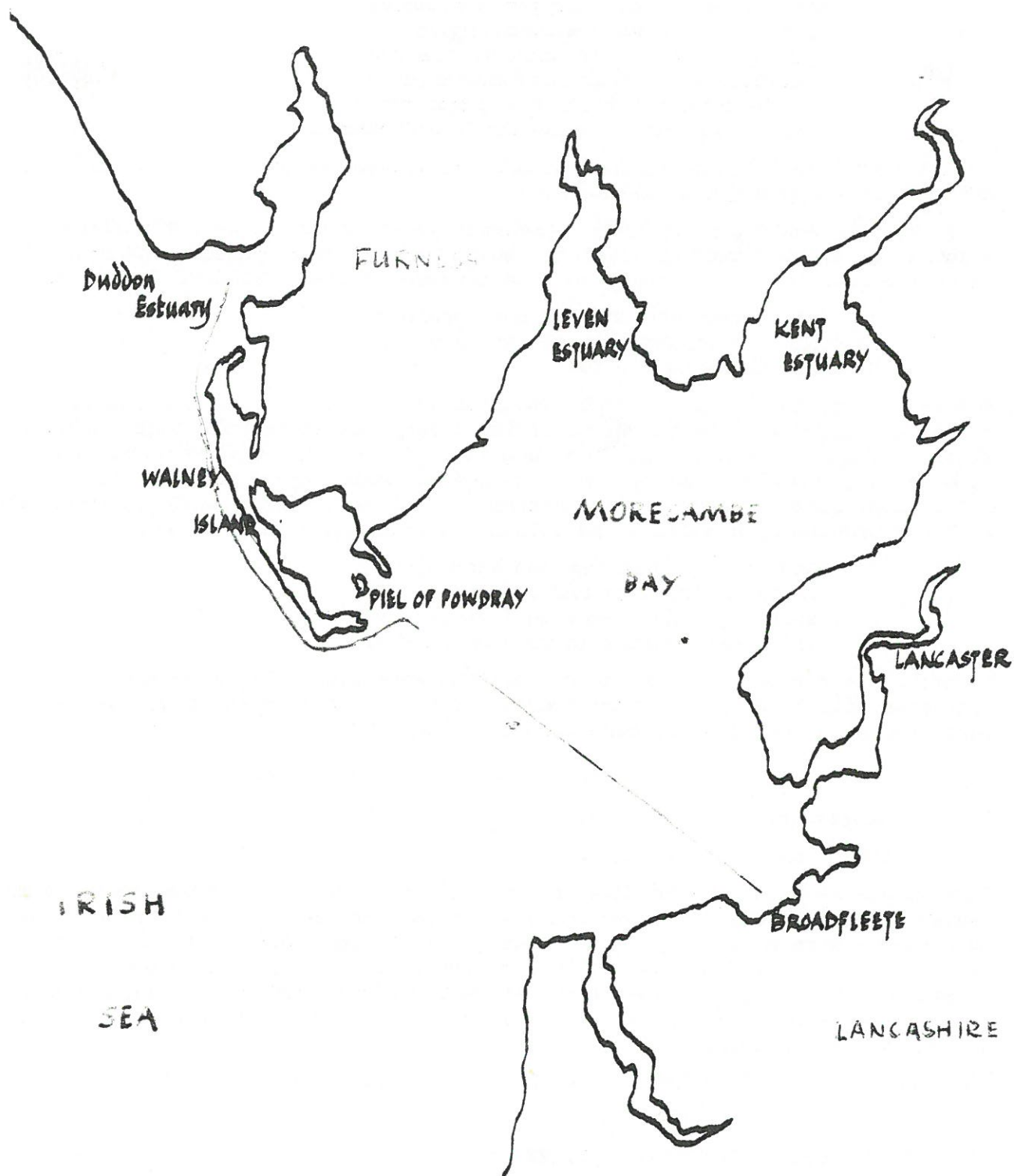
Nevertheless the assessments and collections were eventually made and Lancaster paid £8 compared with Liverpool's £15. From 1635 to 1639, however, Lancaster paid considerably more than Liverpool: (10)

	1634	1635	1636/7	1638	1639
Lancaster.	£8.	30	30	12	30
Liverpool.	£15.	20	25	10	25

This sudden reversal in fortunes was not, however, due to a sudden increase in Lancaster's commercial shipping incomes, it was because from 1635 onwards the assessments were made by the Privy Council who "taxed men accordinge to their Estate" whereas Chetham taxed the towns "accordinge to their tradinge and profitt by shippinge". Obviously therefore Liverpool had more shipping whilst Lancaster men, as befitted the inhabitants of the county town, and a settled agricultural community, were richer.

- (1) John, Count of Mortain. Foundation Charter. 12 June 1193. V
- (2) LanCS. Pipe Rolls 416 X11
- (3) Cal. Close Rolls. 1296-1302. X11
- (4) King Edward 111. Charter requested by John of Gaunt.
Granted 13 November 1362. V
- (5) Kings Butler - a high official at court, Chamberlain or Chancellor,
who had charge of wine at the King's table and charge
of all imports of wine into the realm. Oxford Dictionary.
- (6) Cal. Pat. Rolls. 1367 - 70 X11.
- (7) The Prise of Wine - the King's custom, that is, the portion taken by
him from goods brought into the realm or duties levied
in lieu thereof. Oxford Dictionary.
- (8) Queen Elizabeth - Confirmation Charter. 12 Feb. 1563 V.
- (9) Camden - Britannia, page 795.
- (10) Schofield - An Economic History of Lancaster.

N.B. The references marked with Roman numerals are taken from books which are numbered thus in the bibliography.



COMMISSION OF 1679

legal limits of the Port of Lancaster (pages 9 & 10).
 All the coastline contained within the red line
 from Broadfleete to Duddon came under
 Lancaster's jurisdiction.

Chapter Three.

The beginnings of Prosperity.

The second half of the seventeenth century marked the beginnings of the rise in importance, as a port, of the town of Lancaster. A rise which accelerated to its crescendo in the second half of the eighteenth century. The years between 1650 and 1700 also saw the introduction of a properly organised Crown administration of the ports of Britain.

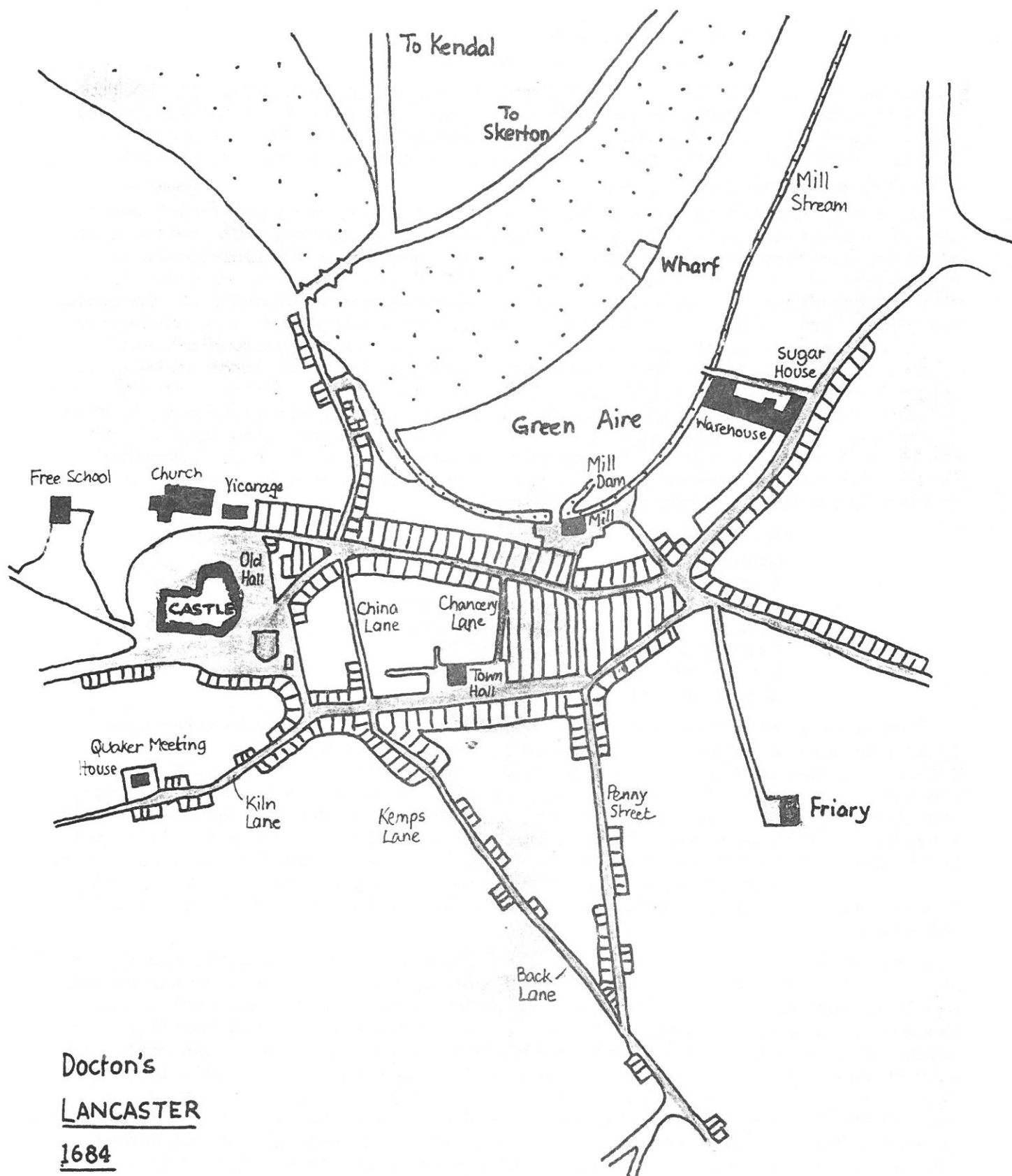
Apart from a brief period during the Long Parliament, when an attempt was made to collect excise duties under a Parliamentary Committee, (1) the accepted procedure had been for the customs dues to be 'farmed' out to individuals or syndicates, who paid the King a fixed rent for the right to collect them. In 1671 the management of the customs, and in some measure the control of the ports, was placed under a permanent Board of Commissioners, (2) Under this new system an effort was made to divide the whole coastline of England between ancient headports, and to appoint so-called members ports at which it would be legal to transact foreign trade. These member ports had under their control 'creeks' at which foreign trade would be permitted only in special circumstances. By this division of the coastline, the whole of the North West coast from Barmouth to the river Duddon was laid to the headport of Chester, the coast of Lancashire was divided between Liverpool, Poulton and Lancaster. Lancaster covered the Hundred of Lonsdale and the commission read:

"The Boundy and Limits of the Port of Lancaster extend from the Foot of the River Broadfleete Easterly to twelve fathoms of water seawards from the harbour of Peele and so to twelve fathoms of water seawards along the Island of Walney to the foot of the River Duddon". See map facing and (3)

From the map it can be seen that a considerable stretch of coastline came under Lancaster's jurisdiction, even though the port at Lancaster was in itself probably no larger than some of the 'creeks' it governed. (4) In 1679, however, the Lancaster Corporation (5) gave permission to John Lawson to erect a bridge, over the Mill race. This was to be called Merchants Bridge (6) and was presumably intended to facilitate the passage of merchandise unloaded from ships lying off Green Aire. That this would appear to be so is evident from the fact that in 1690 he was granted permission to build a wharf 20 yds long on the river bank, and Freemen were to have use of it on payment of 4d per ton on goods loaded and unloaded. +

John Lawson was a Quaker merchant who owned the sugarhouse, still and Warehouse marked on Docton's map. An idea of the rapidity with which the fortunes of both Lancaster and its merchants grew can be gained from the knowledge that it was the son of John Lawson, Robert Lawson, who owned the five hundred ton ship from which, in 1715, Sir Henry de Houghton attempted to purchase cannon and small army with which to repel the Jacobite invaders. Lawson demanded a £10,000 indemnity to cover any damage the Jacobites might do to his ship in retaliation, this was refused and the arms were seized under a warrant (12). But this rapid accumulation of wealth seems to have affected the solemn, steady Quakers of the eighteenth century, in a somewhat similar fashion to the way that the winning of the football pools affects some twentieth century citizens. In 1728 Robert Lawson was declared bankrupt for £14,000. Stout tells us that Robt. Lawson:

"had done as much in merchandise here as all the rest, and had good success in trade, but employed the profit in superfluity of buying land at great prices, and building chargeable and unnecessary houses, barns, gardens and other fancies and costly furniture; so that he overshot himself". (7)



Docton's
LANCASTER
1684

In 1679 on 2nd January permission was also given by the Corporation to Samuel Yeats to:

"Build a Key or Wharf fit for loading
and unloading of goods on the waste ground
on the water side...t". Docton's map refers.

and on 1 September 1683 John Yates was given similar permission +.

We now have, therefore, the nucleus of the permanent port installations and facilities established on the water side at Lancaster. Reference to William Stout's diary give an overall impression of how these installations were becoming increasingly necessary. In 1688 he went to London to buy stocks for his own commercial ventures and shipped:

"£200 of heaviest goods home by sea. The
journey took seven days".

Although the attacks on commerce by French privateers during the Wars of the League of Augsburg and the Spanish Succession wars made shipping ventures extremely hazardous there were good, solid reasons for the merchants of the North West continuing to use the sea as their main avenue of trade. Stout gives us one:

"Although at that time the ships taken
by the French seemed to be a great loss to
the nation, it was computed that if a
merchant here made an adventure in
three ships, if but one came in safe he
was no loser, and if two came safe a
good gainer, and if all much more, and in
the main it could not be computed
that one in five miscarried".

The clue to the second; and perhaps more important reason, for this also accounts in some measure for Lancaster's continued shipping prosperity when navigation difficulties in later years made it logically uneconomical; is contained in Stout's reference to the fact that the journey from London to Lancaster took seven days. The roads

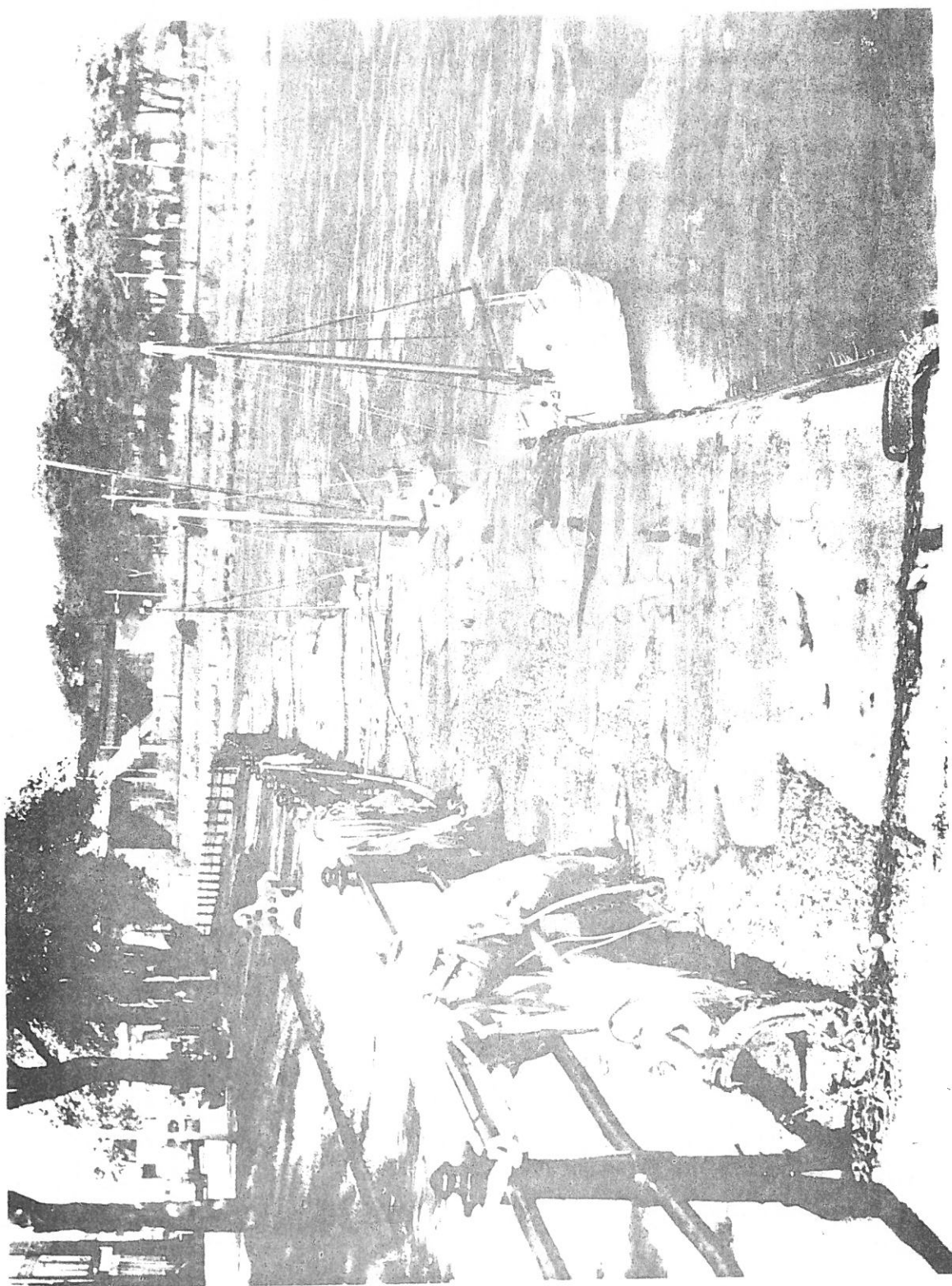
"prejudicial to the Commonwealth, that free
commerce is so impeded and hindered by the
narrowness and neglect of repairs of the
highways in and through the County". (8)

in 1698 a travelling parson entered in his diary:

"I am safely arrived at ye place (Garstang)
from Lancaster today where I lodged
last night at ye maremaid. I came
safe to Lancaster about 8 o'clock
having passed Heversham at 1 and Burton at 2, but
but can say nothing of ye goodness of
ye ways, in places they being rotten,
other wheres yet filled with snow and
everywhere dirty and mostly stoney and uneven". (9)

An account of 1791 shows no improvement:

"... for many ages on the highway
between Preston, Lancaster and Burton,
a causeway of about 2 feet broad
paved with round pebbles was all
that man or horse could travel on,
through both Lancashire and Cheshire
this causeway was guarded by posts
at proper intervals to keep carts
off it". (10)



The roads in fact were so bad that it was much easier, and in fact cheaper to bring foreign goods by sea to Lancaster and other North Western ports than to bring English goods from Wigan, Manchester or Birmingham.

Although Stout's first venture as a shipowner was in 1698 when he took a sixth share, value £100, in a new ship, the 'Employment' then being built at Warton near Carnforth, his references to shipping prior to this date indicate that a group of merchants existed in Lancaster who were enterprising enough to take part in the new trade springing up with the West Indies and Americas. They imported cargoes of tobacco, sugar, cotton and such exotic items as muscovado sugars, black ginger and indigo. Stout's venture in the 'Employment' of £61. 8. 0. value made up of dry groceries, cheese, candles and the like, give some indication of the type of goods exported.

William Stout did not have a great deal of success with his shipping ventures, he invariably lost money in them. So much so that by 1715 he had decided that his only interest in shipping would be in the coastal trade. But Stout is an excellent example of the type of merchant responsible for the growth of the port of Lancaster, and indeed all other ports where, as Defoe says:

"almost all the shopkeepers and inland traders in seaport towns and even on the waterside part of London itself, are necessarily brought in to be owners of ships, and are concerned at least in the vessel, if not in the voyage." (11)

- (1) Ordinance of 21 January 1642. V
- (2) P.R.O. Patent Roll 23: Car 11. 27 September 1671. X11.
- (3) P.R.O. Exchr: Kings Remembrancer: Special Commissions 32 Car 11 (1680) Michaelmas Term. X11
For limits of legal quays see Appendix A.
- (4) Appendix A refers. Only one legal quay in Lancaster.
- (5) December 1604. King James 1's charter of Incorporation. V
- (6) See Docton's 1684 map facing page --
- (7) William Stout's diary - 1665 - 1752 p.114
- (8) Justices report on the state of the roads in Lancashire. XV11
- (9) Diary of the Rev. T. Brockbank. XV11.
- (10) Observations of Adam Watkins in 1791. XV11
- (11) Defoe - Tour through the whole island of Great Britain. 1726. 1.
+ Minutes of the Corporation of Lancaster contained in article by K.H. Docton prepared for Port Commissioners. XV11.
- (12) Chetham Soc. Publications. Vol. 61. History of Lancaster. W. Roper.

Chapter Four.

Customs Men and some of their Duties.

The Legal quays of the port of Lancaster were defined when the limits of the port were fixed by the Board of Commissioners in 1671, the administration of these quays, the collection of customs dues, and in some measure the control of the port itself was placed in the hands of the Boards employees. Under this system a Collector was appointed for each port and the appointed Waiters and Searchers at the various legal quays under his jurisdiction. Thus Francis Metcalfe was appointed Collector at Lancaster and he appointed Waiters and Searchers at Peale, Grange and Broadfleete. (1)

Their salaries were meagre, and they supplemented them by other means, either by extracting illegal fees from merchants, or by concurrently following another profession. The Deputy Comptroller of Lancaster in 1730 was also a publican. This was one of the professions absolutely forbidden to customs officials, and when the Board of Commissioners found out they informed his superior officer, the Collector:

"Being informed that the Deputy
Comptroller keeps a Publick House, you
are to acquaint him that he must
quit the same forthwith, or his
Employment". (2)

The Deputy Comptroller quickly made over the Public House to his daughter in order to avoid giving up his extra income and, despite various letters between the Board and the Collector, he was allowed to stay on in his public house.

The duties of the Customs officers were many and varied and included the enforcement of quarantine laws. An act was passed in 1710, in consequence of an outbreak of plague in Copenhagen and Baltic ports, introducing certain quarantine precautions in ports for, although there had been no outbreak in any part of England since 1665, the memory of the ravages wrought by that and previous epidemics was too recent to be ignored. In 1720 an outbreak of plague in Marseilles brought the realisation the 1710 Act was completely inadequate in the stringency of its precautions, and a further Act was passed. This laid down that any person refusing to observe quarantine, or escaping therefrom, should suffer death as a felon. The instruction to Lancaster read:

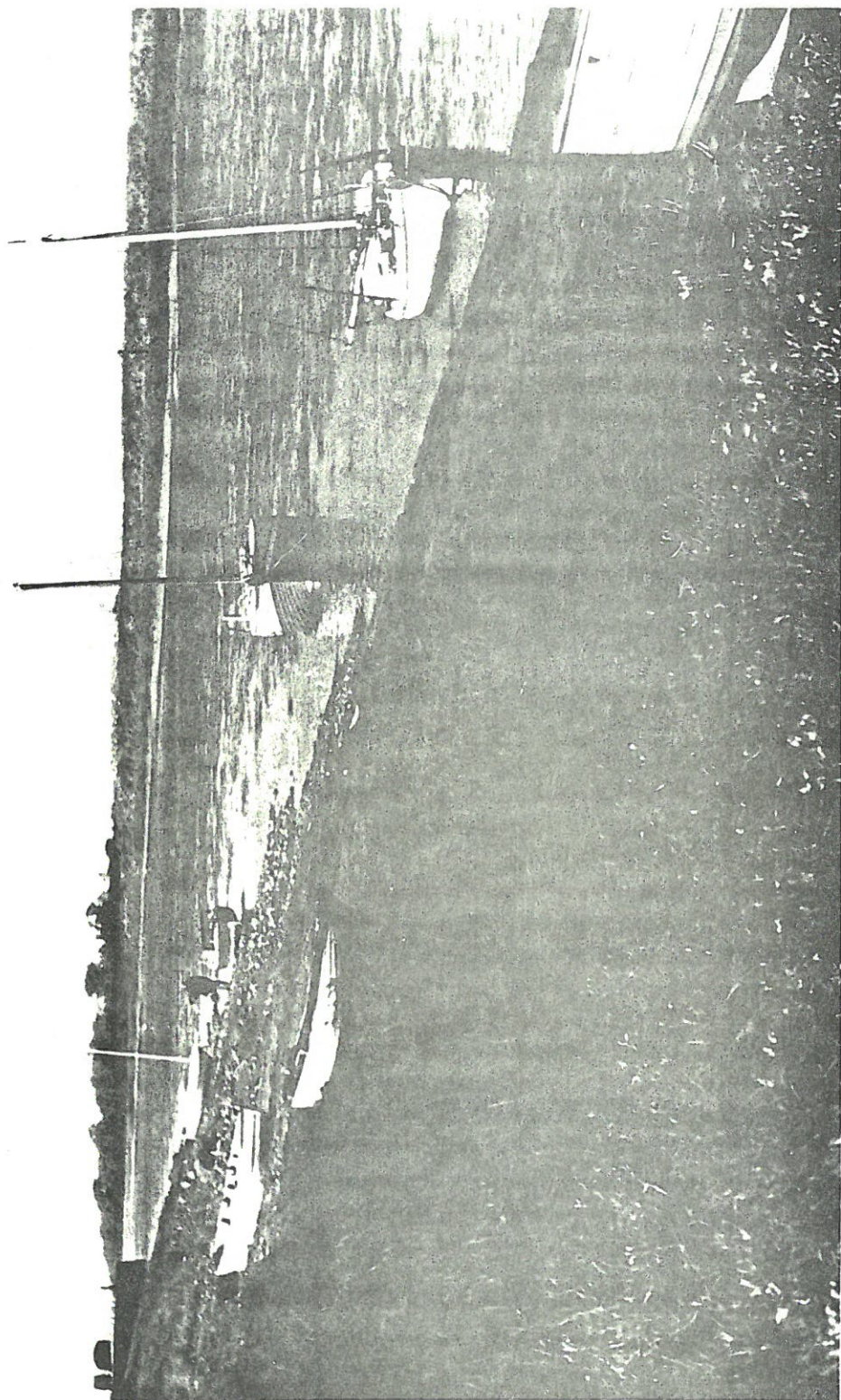
"From the time of the Ships first arrival to the
end of their Quarantine the Officers appointed
to see the same performed are dayly to come
to the Windward of them either in a boat or
on land, wch shall be most convenient, and
call up and muster, all ye Mariners,
passengers and others upon deck, and inquire
into the state and condition of their
Health". (3)

The outbreak of plague in Marseilles spread and eventually the quarantine restrictions were extended to cover all vessels:

"... from Bordeaux or any of the Ports or
places on the Coast of France or ye Bay
of Biscay". (4)

The collector at Lancaster was well aware, however, that these debarred vessels could quite legally land at the Isle of Man and bring the plague there. This indeed happened and a most determined effort was made to keep it from spreading to the mainland. Ships from the Isle of Man were not to be placed in quarantine but driven back to sea:

"No ships vessels nor boats coming from
ye said Island to be suffer'd to come to any
port of England, but to be drove out and
forced back to sea". (5)



The Customs officials soon found they were in need of advice and help:

"We are sir, Sr, in ye utmost confusion being occasioned by the plague being in ye Isle of Man and ye people of that Island flocking to all parts of this coast in flat boats. We are ordered by ye Commrs. above to keep watch strictly, by the late post, that none should land that came from thence, but notwithstanding abt 12 o'clock last night ten men got ashore at Bolton (Le-Sands) three miles from hence, four sick and six in health. They tell us we must expect boats every hour and more particularly one this night abt 8 o'clock with forty men, the Gentry of that Island, who have been beat of from Whitehaven and are resolved to flight their way thro here. The Country has continued to flock in upon us all this day for assistance to keep them off our Town. Arms are sent in Carts and our Collr. has prevailed with ye officers to send two troops of Dragoony...." (6)

The combination of the assistance from the country and the two troops of dragoons must have prevailed **for there** is no record of plague in Lancaster in 1720. No record either of what happened to the unfortunate 'Gentry of that Island'.

Ever since the first introduction of the tax levying duty on certain goods imported into England it has been the Englishman's right, privilege and duty to evolve methods of evading the payment of the tax. A continuous battle of wits between the preventive officers and the smugglers. At Lancaster for instance:

"On Saturday 23rd November Mr. Tho.*Gill. Mr. Thos Winter and Mr Wm. Rivers, officers in this port, together with myself seized on board the supply, Thos. Turner Master, fifteen casks, each about sixty gallons, of Brandy, which we conveyed into the House and Custody of the said Wm. Rivers. The same day in the evening the said Wm. Rivers was prevailed upon by the said Thos. Turner and others to go to an alehouse some distance from his house and in the meanwhile, all the said fifteen casks was taken away and by any means I can use neither any of the Brandy nor persons concerned in conveying the same can be found...." (7)

The letter goes on to ask that Wm. Rivers be transferred to a quieter section of the port as he is, "grown very much in years", and seems to have too much to do,

The methods of smuggling employed by the more widely known 'gentry' in the South and South West of England, and indeed by the above master criminal Thos. Turner, were, in comparizon with the stratagem employed by the smugglers of the North West Coast, clumsy and amateurish to say the least. Ingenuity and refinement were brought to the trade. The system, for such it was, depended on the proximity of the Isle of Man, and on the eighteenth century customs procedure and documentation. The Isle of Man was not under the English Board of Commissioners jurisdiction and therefore a 'free' landing place, and by a very involved documentation procedure, culminating in the forging of copies of Legally issued Landing dockets, the smuggler was more or less able to ship in unlimited quantities of dutiable goods at greatly reduced excise levies. In 1722, a well known smuggler had gone over to the Isle of Man:

"taking no less than twelve thousand gallon of Brandy".

This shipment was watched and eventually an officer of the customs was implicated in the scandal and the details of a considerable, systematic fraud were uncovered.

The system however, continued until the Isle of Man came under the Commissioners jurisdiction, when it was stamped out. While it lasted however, it was an ingenious and very highly profitable smuggling technique.

The Officers appointed by the Board of Commissioners had much more to do than merely keep an eye on the legal quays in their port. Indeed, they were probably the busiest men in the town.

- (1) An Establishment of the Officers of the Customs belonging to the Outports. 1679. X11
- (2) Lancaster letter Book (hereafter referred to as LLB) 31st July 1720. X11
- (3) LLB 27th August 1720 X11
- (4) LLB 13th September 1720 X11
- (5) LLB 24th October 1720 X11
- (6) LLB 29th November 1720 X11
- (7) LLB 13th December 1723 X11
- (8) LLB 14th October 1724 X11

Chapter Five.

The Golden Years.

The volume of shipping using the port facilities available at Lancaster was increasing rapidly. Trade with the West Indies was improving and imports were rising quickly. A survey of 1720 mentions Lancaster as being

"at present populous, and a very thriving Corporation and a convenient port". (1)

In 1723, when the return was being made to the Exchequer Commission regarding Legal quays, (2) the officers at Lancaster desired to have appointed new quays lower down the Lune. This was not only because large vessels could not navigate the Lune without a great deal of difficulty; and in any case could not tie up at the legal quays but had to either be unloaded by lighter, or careened on the river bank and unloaded by horse and cart; but because also the amount of trade was increasing and extra facilities were required. The request was refused and the Port Commissioners were informed that large vessels should be unloaded further down river and cargoes lightered up to Lancaster.

An idea of the amount of trade coming through Lancaster can be gained from the Letters of Henry Esticke, a Bolton cotton merchant who bought and sold raw cotton as well as finished goods. In the letters, written between 1738 and 1741, he makes it clear that Lancaster ranked as high as Liverpool in the lists of cotton importing ports. In August, 1738, he wrote:

"There are above 1000 bags at Liverpool and as much at Lancaster, and they ask full as dear". (3)

Cotton is usually estimated to have made up a quarter of the cargo of a West Indian trading ship. Thus when Stout, in 1742, mentions that 1000 bags of cotton had been imported into Lancaster that year, it is evident that a considerable West Indian trade was being carried on.

Trade was increasing so rapidly that in 1739 the merchants of Lancaster petitioned the Court of Exchequer to allow them to re-organise the port facilities. They offered to pay the expense of taking out and executing a new commission for appointing another legal quay. They pointed out that the cost of transporting goods to the Kings Beam, on the opposite shore of the river, was proving ruinous. A new Commission was returned in 1739 (4) and in 1750 Lancaster was created a separate head-port with powers to regulate and improve the navigation and loading facilities, and to levy tonnage rate on all ships entering the Port of Lancaster to cover expenditure on improvements. (5)

It is from this date that Lancaster's brief Golden Hour commences.

The first action of the newly appointed Commissioners was to inaugurate the building of St. Johns Quay, later St. Georges Quay, on the south bank of the river. This was completed by 1753, but additions were made to it and the final, full quayside was completed by 1770. In 1757 a fine new Customs House was built amidst the tall warehouses lining the quayside. (6),

From 1750 onwards trade began to pour into the port. A Historian of that period wrote:

"It is at present a populous, thriving Corporation trading to the West Indies with Hardware and woollen manufactures, and in return imports Sugars, Rum, Cotton &c". (7)

The Port Commissioners records give some idea of the tremendous surge forward in the amount of shipping using the port installations, their figures for dues charged on vessels are as follows:

Coastal Trade.

	<u>No. of Ships.</u>	<u>Total tonnage.</u>
1750 - 55	132	5,520
1755 - 60	245	8,873
1760 - 65	567	18,940
1765 - 70	589	20,120
1770 - 75	735	28,119

Foreign Trade.

(Divided into 3 sections: Africa, Baltic and Mediterranean,
West Indies and America.)

	<u>Africa.</u>		<u>Balt and Med.</u>		<u>West. I and Amer.</u>	
	<u>Ships.</u>	<u>Tons.</u>	<u>Ships</u>	<u>Tons.</u>	<u>Ships.</u>	<u>Tons.</u>
1750 - 55	2	101	21	2283	42	3274
1755 - 60	9	702	51	4566	79	7184
1760 - 65	14	1558	40	4479	98	10692
1765 - 70	15	1510	83	9516	127	14455
1770 - 75	19	1665	94	11465	124	14649

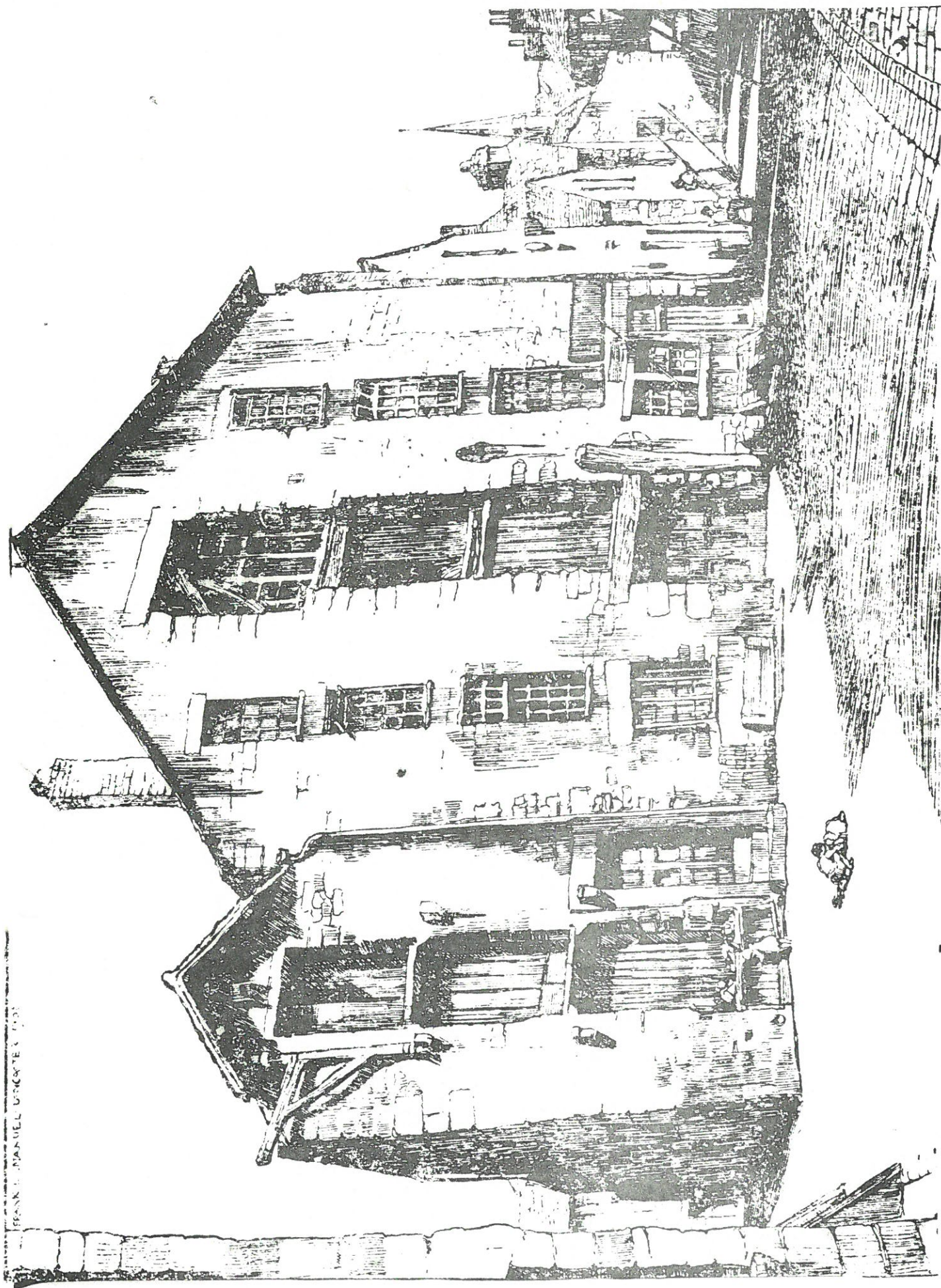
The total figures for foreign trade show a range in ships and tonnage of 65 ships, 5,658 tons in the five year period 1750-55, to 237 ships 27,779 tons between 1770 - 75.

As can be seen the staple trade was with the West Indies and America's. A letter from Richard Radcliffe, a linen draper of Cockermouth to H. Senhouse of Netherhall reads:

"Last week I was a journey as far as Lancaster, has been very prosperous this year, not having lost one ship. Their Leeward Island fleet all got home well, 14 sail of ships at Jamaica during the late hurricane nott the least accident happened to any. Their W. India imports come to the most prosperous markets, particularly coffee and cotton, sell for 4 or 5 hundred per cent profit. They have also been particularly fortunate in underwriting and the town is in a rapid state of improvement." (9)

Cargoes consisted chiefly of sugar, cotton, coffee, with varying quantities of rum, tobacco, ginger, mahogany etc. Records show that on 3rd July 1801:

"Arrived 'Johns' (Captain Nunns) from Martinique (of 242 tons quay measure) with 51 hogsheads of sugar, 198 casks of coffee for John Gumpstey and Co. (part owners of the vessel).
10 hogsheads sugar, 156 casks of coffee, 22 bags of cotton for Worswick, Allman and Co.
20 casks of coffee for Patrick Kenley.
10 casks of coffee for G. Venables.
50 hogsheads of sugar, 40 bags of cotton
170 casks and 62 bags of coffee for Benson



and Moore.

1 pipe of wine for Alexander Worswick.

43 pigs of lead for John Nunny". (10)

It is probable that most of the Lancaster merchants at the end of the eighteenth century were engaged, in varying degree, in the West Indies trade. Certainly most of the shipowners did; out of 36 ships built by John Brockbank in Lancaster between 1792 and 1801, 21 were for Lancaster owners prominent in the West Indies trade. All are mentioned as West Indiamen in their first voyages entered in the Port Commission registers.

Despite the American War of Independence, and the havoc the French and American privateers caused by their depredations amongst British shipping, the trade of Lancaster with the West Indies increased steadily and by 1800 had reached a peak, for that century, of 53 ships totalling 11,562 tons. In spite of local opinion to the contrary, Lancaster was never in a strong enough position to challenge Liverpool's supremacy as the chief port of North West England. A comparison of the numbers of ships using each port clearly shows this. In 1791 Lancaster had 54 ships of 6636 tons total engaged in the West Indies trade, while Liverpool had 185 ships of 38,196 tons total. A vast difference.

Contrary also to local opinion Lancaster had little to do with the slave trade and the 'triangular trade route'. True, odd ships did engage in this lucrative if risky business. In 1750 the brig "Jolly Batchelor" Master, Thomas Hinde, 57 tons, sailed to "Africa and Barbadoes". In 1753 another small ship of 75 tons is entered "to Africa" in the Port Commission registers. As the figures show, between 1770 and 1775 only 19 ships were entered as bound for Africa, indicating that Lancaster's participation in the slave trade was of a minor nature. That the entries in the Port Commission registers "to Africa" to, in fact, refer to the slave trade is made evident by entries in an early nineteenth century diary. (11) this was kept by Miss Ellen Weeton, who wrote that her father, Thomas Weeton, was master of a slaving vessel, and that she was named after the ship. She was born in 1776 and in the registers of that year, Thomas Weeton is entered as Master of the ship "Nelly", and in the column "to or whence" is written "To Africa". Thomas Clarkson, the Abolitionist, visited Lancaster in 1787 in search of evidence to support his case for Abolition, he wrote:

"I found that, although there were slave merchants at Lancaster, they made their outfits at Liverpool, as a more convenient port". (12)

In any case, a regulation of 1799 ruled that slavers would only be allowed to clear from Liverpool, Bristol and London, effectively stopped any further slave ships sailing from Lancaster.

More important than the slave trade was Lancaster's traffic from Northern Europe. William Stout's diary mentions shares in voyages to Bergen in 1701 to bring back tar and deals, and to Riga in 1730 for flax, hemp and iron. These goods were the chief commodities in Lancaster's trade with North Europe later in the century, the timber and tar for shipbuilding, the hemp and flax for sailcloth and cordage. There are many entries in the Port Commission registers of ships from Danzig, Koenigsburg, and Memet, the main timber ports of the Baltic; and from Riga, Narva and St. Petersburg, the flax and hemp exporters.

The trade with Southern European ports was limited, in both quantity and type. The names of Oporto, Malaga, Lisbon and Bordeaux tell their own story of Lancaster's imports from the wine countries; Gibraltar and the Balearic Islands are two more exporters from which ships came to Lancaster, these ships carried wine also but the cargoes were mainly fruits, Limes and oranges in particular.

It must be remembered that although Lancaster was importing considerable quantities of raw materials for manufacturing there was no large industrial hinterland to supply. In the town itself numerous small businesses made a vast variety of goods, ranging from candles, through furniture-making to shipbuilding. None of these was particularly large, and all could not use the amount of material imported through the port. It is here again that Lancaster's geographical position is of significance. It served as the import and export collector for the area surrounding. This role of entrepôt accounts mainly for the volume of coastal traffic using the port., which, as can be seen from the figures above was mainly in very small vessels.

The West Indies trade therefore was the predominant factor in Lancaster's commerce, and affected more than merely the volume of shipping using the Lune, it was the basis of the towns prosperity. That the merchants were dependent on the West Indies is shown in their support of the various measures Liverpool proposed to protect the Trade. Lancaster was one of the few towns to stand with Liverpool against Abolition. It joined with Liverpool in petitioning Parliament to grant Exchequer Billys to enable the West Indian Merchants to meet their obligations. The merchants of the Islands faced bankruptcy because the French Wars caused a financial crisis in Europe in 1799, and consequently were left with large quantities of unmarketable produce on their hands. An account of the exports for 1799 shows clearly the magnitude of the Lancaster merchants involvement in West Indian Trade, and, therefore, the serious nature of the crisis:

"It appears from the custom house entries, that in the year 1799, fifty two vessels cleared out of this river, (Lune) for the West Indies, with 11,669 tons of goods in more than 90,000 packages. These cargoes were estimated at a value of two and a half million pounds of sterling". (13)

1. Rev. Thomas Coxe. Magna Brittannia. 1.
2. See Appendix B.
3. A. P. Wadsworth and Julia De Lacy Mann.
Page 261 - The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire 1600 - 1750.
4. See Appendix C.
5. See Appendix D.
6. See photographs pages 3 and 13 and page 11.
7. James Ray of Whitehaven. Compleat History of the Rebellion 1745-46.
8. Registers of the Port Commissioners.
9. Senhouse MSS - The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire 1600-1750
A. P. Wadworth and Julia de Lacy Mann.
10. Lancaster Gazette 3 July 1801.
11. Miss Ellen Weeton. Journal of a Governess 1807-11.
12. Thomas Clarkson. History of the Rise and Progress and
Accomplishment of the Abolition of the
Slave trade. 1808 *
13. John Britton. The Beauties of England and Wales. 1.
See Appendix E.

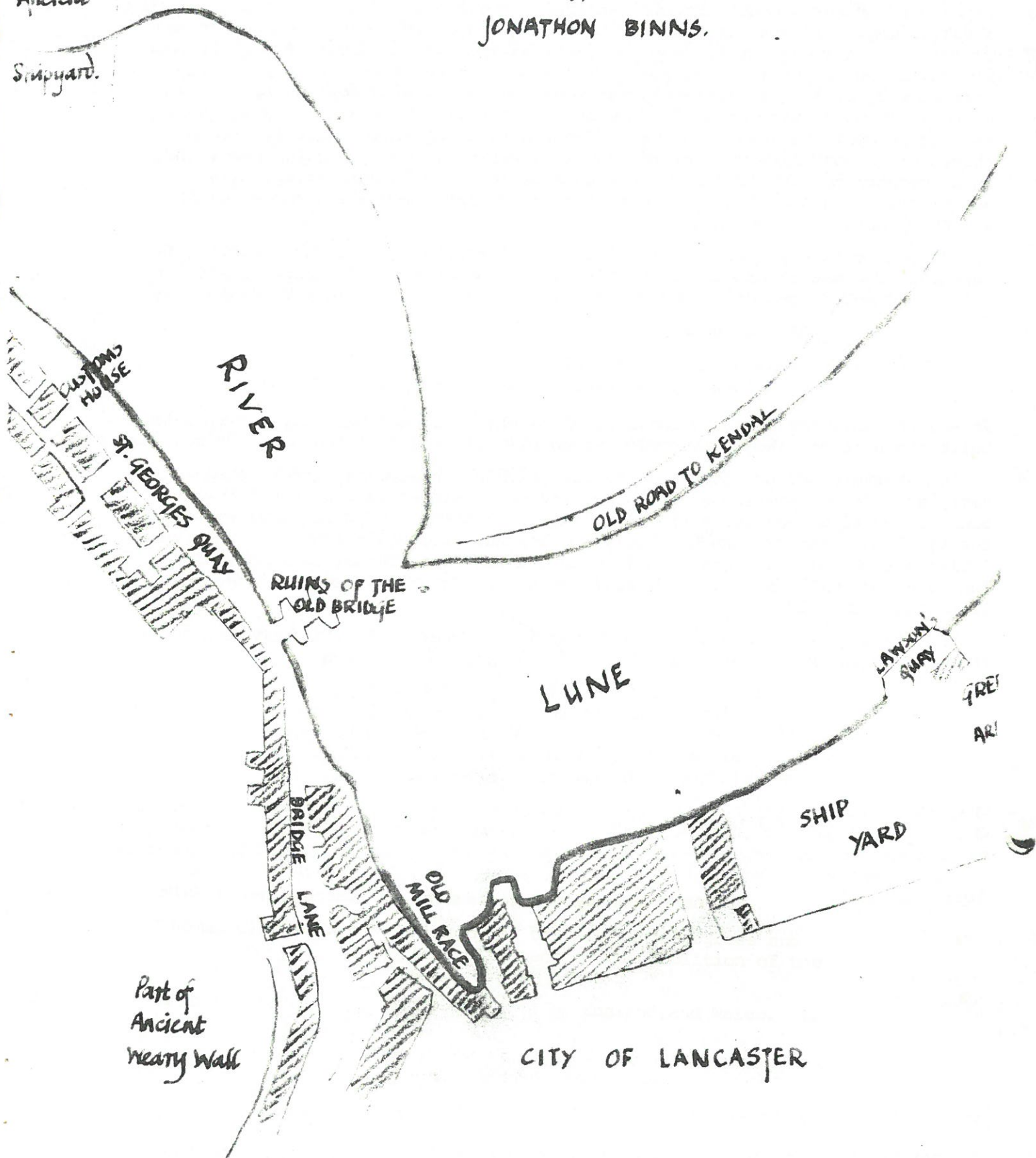
EXTRACT FROM A SURVEY OF LANCASTER

MADE IN THE YEAR 1821

BY

JONATHON BINNS.

Ancient
Shipyard.



Chapter Six.

Shipbuilding.

Wherever a port is established to trade in merchandise carried on the seas, there also arises another industry alongside the importing and exporting business; shipbuilding. All the 'creeks' within the limits of the port of Lancaster had shipyards, small ones it is true but still shipyards. At Grange the first iron boat ever used in England was built, (1) at Milnthorpe ships of up to ninety tons were built in the eighteenth century; (2) at Arncliffe most of the fishing vessels now using Morecambe Bay were built. Warton, where William Stout's ship the 'Employment' was built in 1698, stands near a bay called locally 'Roman shipyard', a road leading from the bay into Warton is named 'Galley Row'; and, in a footnote to Stout's diary, reference is made to the uncovering, by a great storm in 1818, of a large quantity of ancient timbers and stone forming a dock of about an acre in area.

There is some evidence of shipbuilding in Lancaster in the early eighteenth century. The map of Lancaster drawn by Jonathan Binns in 1821 shows a site he calls 'Ancient Shipyard', (see map facing.). In his diary Tyldesley says:

"10. November 1714.

About one post prand Mrs. and her two doug^{rrs}
sett forwards to Lanc. to see the ship lanced". (3)

It was probably the shipyard shown by Binns where Richard Brokell, a carpenter, built the ship for Thomas Tyldesley which his wife and "her two doug^{rrs}" saw "lanced".

The shipyards of Brockbank, Smith and Worthington were not established as early as 1714 but are shown firmly positioned on Binns' map, on the Lancaster bank of the river and above the old bridge. Of these shipyards above the bridge the first was that of John Brockbank and Nephew, from which the first ship the 'Olive Branch' was launched in 1763, and the last the 'Thomas and Nancy' in 1817. The yards of Smith and Worthington, seemed to have opened around the 1780's and closed down in 1827.

The files of the Lancaster Gazette provide a great deal of information about the activities in the Lancaster shipyards. In 1801 on Oct 10th:

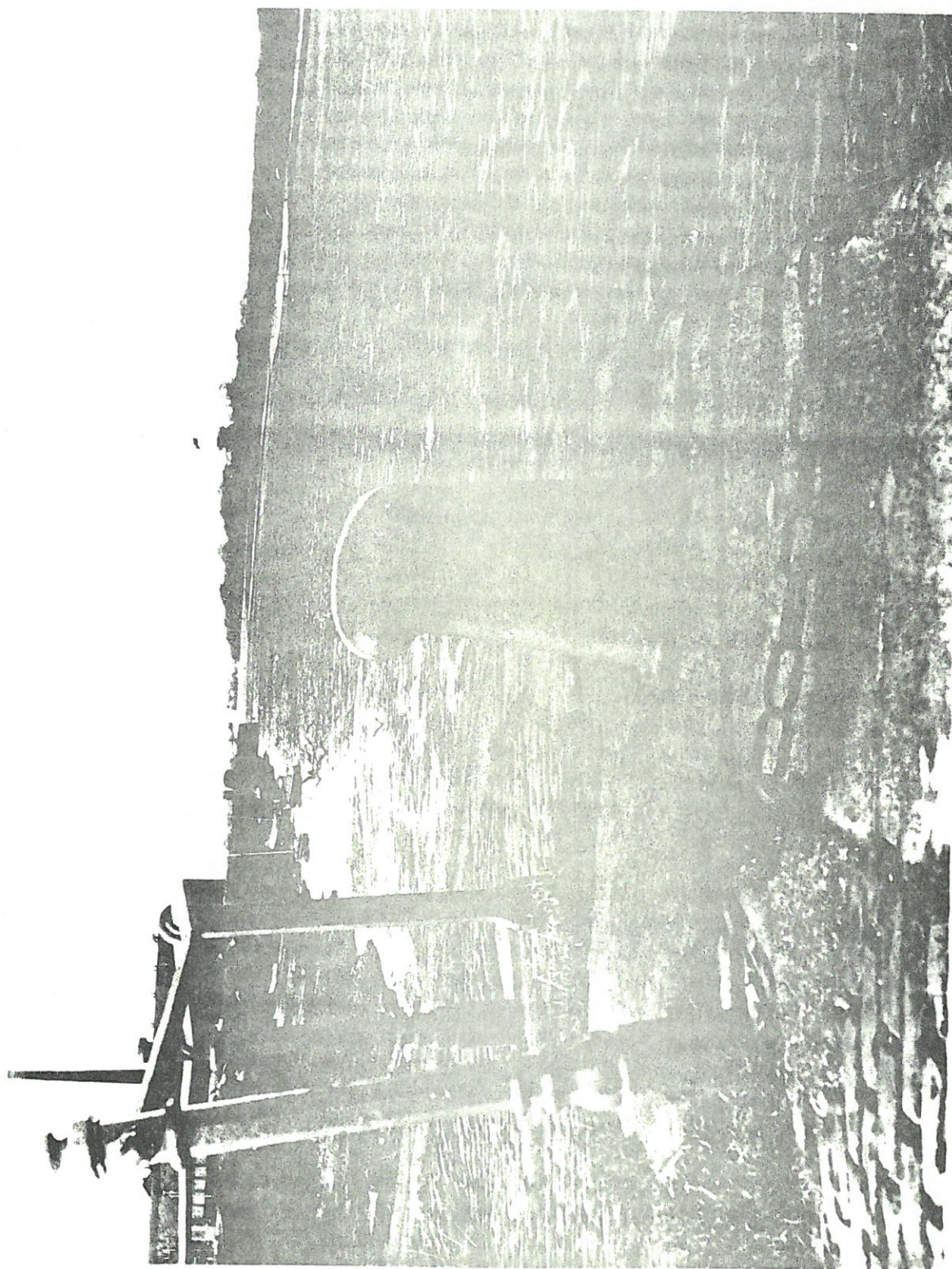
"This day a fine new ship was launched from
the building yard of Mr. J. Brockbank, burthen
295 tons and pierced for 18 guns. She is called
the Paragon and is owned by Ridley and Dodson
of this town, for the West India trade". (4)

This ship, under Captain Hart, was concerned in an action in the West Indies when, with 18 guns and a crew of 30 men and boys, she beat off a French privateer of 12 guns and 100 men. Another ship, the 'Thetis', built and owned by Lancaster merchants was also concerned in an action against far superior odds (5). On Sept 13th 1803,

"A fine new ship was launched from Mr. Brockbank's
yard, She is called the 'Demerara', Captain Luglis.
She is upwards of 409 tons burthen, and being the
largest vessel built above the old bridge, one of
the arches was taken down, and the next day
the sloop 'Dove', Capt. Stephenson sailed through
the aperture, and discharged her cargo of
timber at Green Ayre". (6)

This explains why Binns' map of 1821 shows half the old bridge missing.

Some of the ships built at Lancaster brought martial glory and joy to the inhabitants, as we have seen. Others brought rejoicing of a different sort:



"The Alliance (late Porteous) built at Mr. Smith's yard about 2 hrs ago, burthen 390 tons, owned by Messrs. Simpson, Litt and Co. of Liverpool laden with a full cargoe of West Indian produce from Jamaica, consisting of 544 hogsheads, 25 tierces, 3 bags sugar, 4 hogsheads 139 puncheons rum, 10 casks and 11 bags coffee, 3 tons logwood, 3 casks 3 bags of pimento, 25 pipes 1 butt and 5 hogsheads wine, was on Tuesday the 5th inst. unfortunately driven on Moat Bank nearly opposite Fowley Island in Morecambe Bay and immediately sunk. The vessel has gone to pieces and her cargo lost, except a part of the rum and wine which has been cast up on the coast of Heysham, Poulton and etc., as far as Arnside. 53 puncheons rum, 12 pipes 3 hogsheads wine had been brought to our Customs House yesterday".

A month later:

"The following is the total amount of rum saved from the wreck of Alliance, from Jamaica lately wrecked in Morecambe Bay; 95 puncheons 2 hogsheads rum, 19 pipes 4 hogsheads 1 butt wine. We are sorry to say that some individuals of on the coast tapped several of the puncheons and carried off liquors. Numbers were seen intoxicated, and one man unfortunately lost his life by excessive drinking in the Neighbourhood of Flookburgh". (7)

When it is realised that some 5,285 gallons of rum and 680 gallons of wine were missing, the remarkable thing seems to be that only one man died through excessive drinking.

Between 1805 and 1820, 32 ships were launched from Brockbanks and Smiths yards; these were of all types, brigs, ships, galliots, sloops, snows, schooners etc. After 1820 Brockbanks moved to Liverpool to take advantage of the facilities available there for building larger vessels and although Smith's carried on till 1827, they were forced to close down because of a slump in shipping and Lancaster's brief spell as a shipbuilding town was over.

- (1) Annafes Caermoclenses page 210. James Stockdale 1870. Appendix G.
- (2) Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archeological Society. Vol. NS XXXV1-1936. The port of Milnthorpe. W, T. McIntyre.
- (3) The Tyldesley Diary - 1712, 1713, 1714.
- (4) The Lancaster Gazette. 10 Oct. 1801. 111
- (5) See Appendix F.
- (6) Lancaster Gazette. 13 Sept. 1803. 111
- (7) Lancaster Gazette. 111.

Chapter Seven.

Difficulties in Navigation.

The hazards that ships captains encountered in navigating the river Lune have been mentioned previously. Even when ships succeeded in reaching the port, until St. Georges Quay was completed in 1753, they had, more often than not, to discharge their cargoes over the Ships side into carts on the muddy river banks.

The chief obstacles in the path of vessels attempting the passage of the Lune were two shoals or fords.

The main one is described by Baines in 1825:

"the foreign commerce of Lancaster is at present very circumscribed: the navigation of the Lune has become liable to considerable obstructions from the accumulation of sand in the channel, and the elevation of the bed of the river called Scale Ford about a quarter of a mile below the Customs House has at all times operated as an impediment to the navigation. At length the authorities of Lancaster have abated this obstruction by lowering the ford two feet, so that vessels of 200 tons burthen are now able to pass at spring tide without being exposed as hitherto, to the danger of running aground". (1)

This shoal had been a danger to navigation for years, Thomas Tyldesley had experience of its nuisance value, on 14 August 1712 he wrote:

"Riss by 3 and rid down to ye Marsh, to meet my boat loden with turffe, but shee was niped in Skall Ffoard". (2)

The fact that Baines explains how the removal of two feet off the shoal enabled vessels of 200 tons burthen to pass at spring tide does not mean that vessels of this tonnage were prevented from using the Lune. In the previous chapter evidence is given that ships of over 400 tons were built and launched from the Lancaster shipyards which lay some half mile above the Scale Ford. Nor does it mean that all West Indiamen were prevented from sailing directly into Lancaster for many of them were cockleshells which even Columbus may have thought twice about using. In an account of the:

"ships or vessels that have arrived in the River Loyne since ye 1st May 1750, measured and charged by William Thornton, Pier Master". (3)

we find that the brig P. Dealer of 44 tons and 14 foot beam, arrived at Lancaster on May 9th 1750 from the Barbadoes, and on Aug 7th the sloop Nancy, 26 tons 11 feet 10 inches beam arrived, also from Barbadoes. What Baines' comment does mean is that ships of 200 tons burthen or more could not readily navigate the Lune, but only on special tides.

The silting of the river, which Baines mentions, had also been a long standing obstacle to the free use of the port. With the survey of the limits of the port and legal quays submitted in 1723 to the Exchequer Commission went also a request that new landing places be appointed down river as silting made navigation difficult. Clark confirms their views in 1807.

"The crooked, sandy, channel of the river between Glasson and the old Quay and the shallowness of the ford near Lancaster, render it difficult for vessels of above 200 or 250 tons burthen to get up the river". (4)

Indeed in 1799 a survey of the coast and rivers of the port of Lancaster was made by a committee of six masters of vessels who came to the conclusion that the channel of the Lune up Heysham Lake was safe and navigable for ships as far as the town of Heysham and no further because of

"sandbanks to the offing, which were then almost a dry land, and appeared to us to be shifting ones". (5)

As the tonnage of commercial vessels increased, so did the disadvantages to the port of Lancaster. Apart from the two feet knocked off the top of Scale Ford the Port Commissioners did nothing to alleviate the difficulties. Various surveys were commissioned, and made, but by 1845 it was obvious nothing could be done even if the authorities has been able to do it. The Scottish engineering firm of Stevensons reported that although they could considerably improve navigation:

"It must, however, be kept in view, that such means of improvement could never render Lancaster accessible at all times of tide". (6)

Similarly Dr. Rendel;

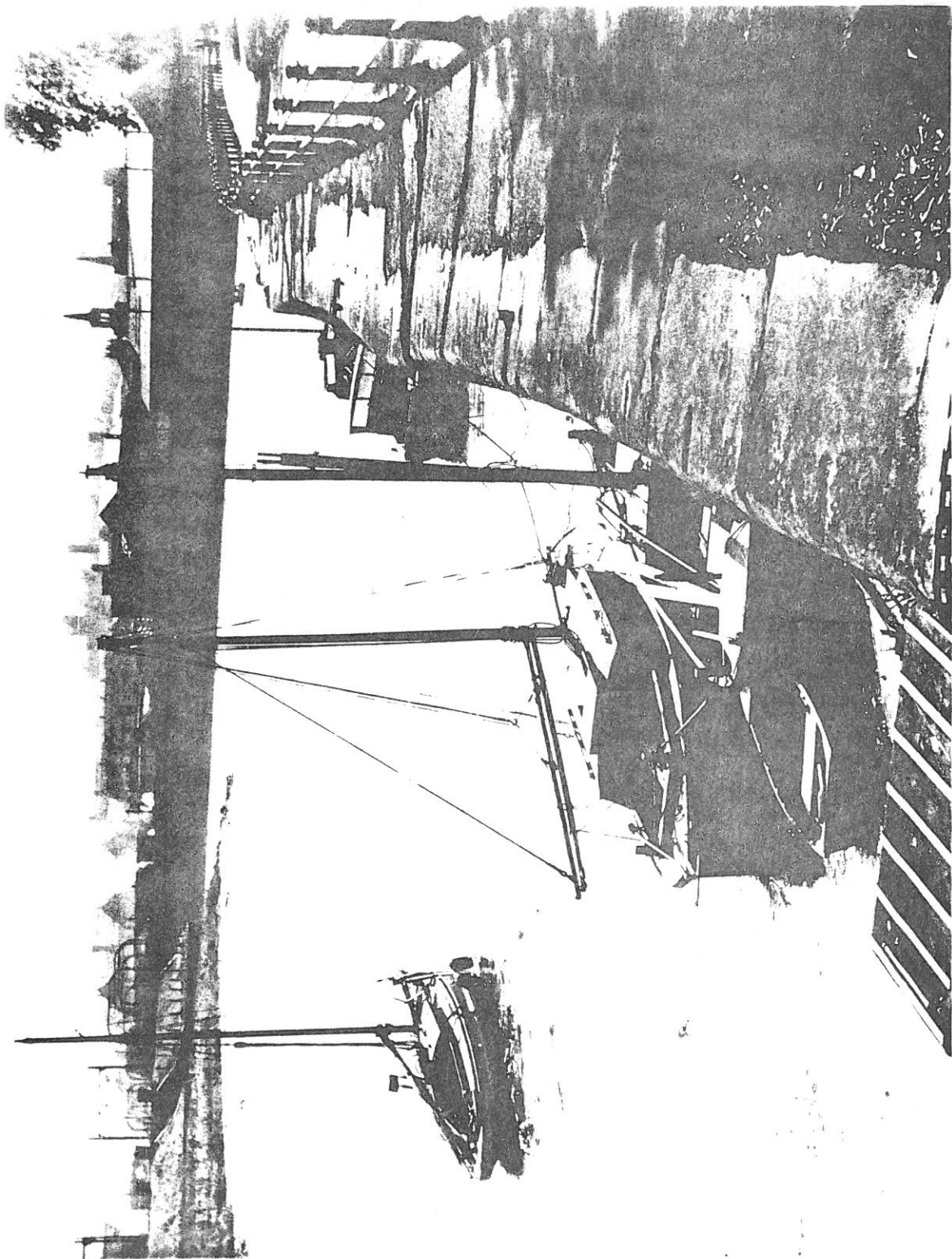
"Dr. Rendel expressed himself as hopeless of any satisfactory improvement of the Lune to any great extent". (7)

The Commissioners, therefore, hopefully relied on the river itself:

"... a great fresh generally removed that sand. The freshes carried away more than they deposited". (8)

Blissfully ignoring all evidence to the contrary, they pinned their faith on nature. The fact is, however, that their money would have been wasted, for no amount of improving the navigation of the River Lune would, as we shall see in the next chapter, have influenced Lancaster's eventual extinction as a port of consequence.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| (1) | Baines. | History, Directory and Gazetteer. | 1825. |
| (2) | The Tuldesley Diary - | 1712, 1713, 1714. | 14 August 1712. |
| (3) | Minute Book. | Lancaster Port Commissioners | 1750. |
| (4) | Clark. | History of Lancaster. | 1807. Page 68. |
| (5) | Lancaster Observer - | 21 November | 1799. |
| (6) | Stevenson's report to Port Commissioners | 1838 | 11. |
| (7) | Rendel's report to Port Commissioners. | 1845. | |
| | | Lancaster Guardian | 21 Oct 1845. |
| (8) | Evidence of John Walker, Clerk and Tonnage Officer to the Port Commission Inquiry - | 13 Oct 1845 | |
| | | Lancaster Guardian | 21 Oct. 1845. |



Decline into Oblivion.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars caused a rapid slump in West Indian trade to this country, and Lancaster, dependent upon this commerce for a great deal of its prosperity, suffered in consequence. From a tonnage, in foreign trade, of 29,564 in 1799 and 28,861 in 1800, there was a sharp fall to 12,171 in 1803. If one calculates the average tons burthen of the ocean going ships at 200, this means a drop, in three years, in the number of such vessels using the port of Lancaster, of some 85. A great reduction indeed, and one likely to cause panic among the merchants of Lancaster.

This reduction in commerce was the first of a number of fluctuations in the prosperity of Lancaster as a port. These variations were numerous, but can be roughly divided into three main phases, the first being the slump mentioned above, the second came with the rise between 1820 and 1840, and the third the decline, which became the decline into oblivion, after 1850.

The first phase represents the end of the eighteenth century pattern of shipping prosperity which had made Lancaster rich. Her merchants enterprise had brought West Indian, Baltic and Mediteranean produce to Lancaster, coastal shipping had distributed these products to outlying ports and collected British manufactured goods to bring to Lancaster for export. These clearing house activities had made the Lancaster merchants rich. The loss of the West Indian trade brought a number of bankruptcies to Lancaster. Those who did not go bankrupt transferred their businesses to Liverpool. Lancaster owned ships began to trade from Liverpool, and because Liverpool had more diverse trading sources their shipping industry did not suffer to the same extent.

This transfer of allegiance was, I feel the main cause of the decline of the shipbuilding industry. True, the shallowness of the river Lune limited the size of vessels built in the Lancaster yards, but the transfer of owners to Liverpool, the immensely greater facilities and depth of water there, brought the inevitable shift of the building industry. Indeed it is generally believed that the shipping firm of Brocklebanks are the descendants of the Lancaster shipbuilding Brockbank family.

Although Lancaster never recovered any of the West Indian trade; by mid-century the number of ships recorded as in from the West Indies was down to one or two per year and by 1880 had disappeared altogether; foreign trade continued to flow into the port, but in diminished quantities. Timber was still imported, but gradually the source of supply changed, until by 1861 Lancaster was importing some 7,000 tons of timber a year from North America instead of from the Baltic. The uses to which this timber was put changed also. Whereas it had previously been mainly for use in or around Lancaster, particularly in shipbuilding, it was, during the last half of the nineteenth century, for use elsewhere and Lancaster was merely the collecting point. By 1890 this trade too had largely disappeared.

The wine trade from the ports of Southern Europe was resumed after the French Wars but after 1850, this disappeared. Despite an everincreasing demand, from the rapidly burgeoning industries of Lancashire, the importing of flax and hemp into Lancaster decreased. The cotton manufacturers too went to other ports for their supplies, Lancaster had made no effort to replace the lost West Indian producers. Internal transport at this period was developing rapidly and the cotton industry found it was easier and quicker to obtain their supplies from Liverpool. The Industrial Revolution had a different effect on Lancaster to that it had on other Lancashire towns, as their prosperity and material wealth rapidly increased, Lancaster's decreased. The Lancaster paper complained:

"Anyone who has been in the habit of reading our shipping report will be struck with the almost total absence of trade to this port While Fleetwood, Morecambe etc., are making vigorous efforts to wrest at least some portion of the coasting and foreign trade from all-grasping Liverpool, we at Lancaster treat the matter with supine indifference". (1)

The second phase of Lancaster's Shipping fortunes in the nineteenth century came with the rise in volume of coastal shipping during the middle part of the century. Despite the comments of the somewhat irate correspondent above, Lancaster was doing a considerable amount of coastal trade. This was particularly due to the imports of large quantities of grain from Scotland and Ireland, made necessary by the rapidly increasing population in East and South Lancashire. But it was a trade which carried little or no profit and was not in any way comparable, in terms of benefit to Lancaster, with the type of trade found during the eighteenth century. The firm of Bibby's controlled this trade, they had a monopoly in grain, milk, fertilizers and the like, and when they moved to Liverpool, the trade moved with them.

Great improvements, were being made to the River Ribble's navigation, and the port of Preston began to blossom. By the 1890's Preston had taken all the timber trade from Lancaster.

The third phase of the nineteenth century shipping industry was the decline of what coastal trade there was. The railways took what little was left of the coastal traffic, and the only shipping using the port facilities at Lancaster at the end of the nineteenth century, was that which brought in bulk supplies of raw materials for the few local industries; thus chemicals from Hamburg for the manufacturing industries in Lancaster and Iron Ore for the works at Carnforth.

The dawn of the twentieth century shed no fresh light on the shipping industry in Lancaster. In the early 1900's the shipments of iron ore for Carnforth continued, raw materials for Lancaster factories, cork, chemicals linseed oil and whiting, but nothing else. The increasing speed and efficiency of road and rail transport have now taken most of these shipments away; the only products to be brought by sea are linseed oil and whiting to the linoleum factory of Nairn-Williamson and these are carried in four shipments each year.

From a busy, boisterous, bustling port in the 1760's; with the quaysides echoing to the shouts of the carters and dockworkers, with ocean going vessels being built and launched from the towns shipyards and a river full of shipping; to a dismally, deserted port in the 1960's; with the only sounds on the quaysides the noise of motor vehicles carrying to the factories the goods once unloaded there, with warehouses used as garages, paper stores or derelict, with the only Lancaster owned vessels a few fishing boats and pleasure craft, and a river visited by four cargo ships each year. Such is the decline of the Port of Lancaster.

The reasons are numerous and varied. Ill-luck played a large part in that the time when the port might have expanded into something like its old prosperity came when the town was in the depths of the depression caused by the loss of the West Indian trade. Those merchants who had not been bankrupted had taken their business to Liverpool and capital was not available to improve navigation of the river, always a stumbling block in the path of improving facilities. The Lancaster Canal was not completed in time to materially help the port. The railways opened up and improved communications with other, better equipped and sited ports. But chiefly there was no large, industrial, heavily populated hinterland to create a demand for vast imports of raw materials. The areas of Lancashire where these conditions did arise were nearer to, and better served by, Preston and Liverpool. To join with this there is no readily available source of industrial power near Lancaster, no coal or iron field, and no supply of any important raw material.

Lancaster, as a port, has declined into oblivion, but not as a city. The developing University and Training College, bring hope that, despite the cannibalistic attitude and methods of the city fathers, the following description will once more have meaning:

"The parish of Lancaster, though inferior in wealth and population to several of the southern parishes, is superior to them all in the dignity of its ancient family, and in the station it holds as the capital of the county". (2)

- (1) Correspondent. Lancaster Guardian. 15 January 1853.
- (2) Baines. History of the County Palatine. 1836.

Appendix A.

Limits of the Port and Legal Quays. 1681.

P. R. O: Kings Remembrancer: Comm. 32 Car 11 (1680) Mich. Term.

LEGAL QUAYS.

That open place, about two hundred and fifty yards below Lancaster Bridge, along the Shore North West to a little brook called Shipperans.

That open place called the Ashmidden, lying opposite to William Garners House extending a hundred yards along the shore above the said house Northerly, and a hundred yards below the said House southerly and bounded by the River Lune Easterly, and the shore Westerly....

The Commission goes on to define legal quays, under Lancaster's jurisdiction, at Batehaven, Grande and Peel.

Appendix B.

Limits of the Port of Lancaster 1723.

P.R.O. Kings Remembrancer. Comm.6914.

From Broadfleete along the Sea Coast North East to Batehaven and from thence by the Sea Coast to Thornbush and from thence by the South side of the River Loyne to Lancaster and from thence to the North East of Lancaster Bridge and from thence North West to Shiprans Brook and from thence Westwards to Oxcliffe and from thence Southward on the Coast of the River Loyne to Sunderland Point and from thence Eastward to Poulton and from thence by the Sea Coast East to Bolton and from thence North to Warton and from thence West to Silverdale Point and thence to New Barns North and thence across over the River Kent westwards to Grange and from thence to the Southermost point of Cartmell and from thence Northward to Cartle Beck and from thence North to Pennybridge and from thence South to Connishead Bank and from thence South to Beane Well and from thence South West to Rampside and from thence South to the pile of Fowdry and from thence North wards along the western coasts, of the Isle of Walney to Dudden Foot and from thence on the west side of the River Dudden to Kirkby.

The Legal Quays are defined as in the survey of 1680 with a reminder that the Commission:

"...utterly prohibit disannul make void and determine and debarr all other places within the said Port of Lancaster from the privilege right and benefit of a place for the landing or discharging lading or shipping of Goods Wares and Merchandises as aforesaid....".

Appendix C.

Limits of the Port of Lancaster 1739.

P.R.O: Kings Remembrancer Comm. 6928.

The limits of the Port are as in the Commission of 1723.

The legal quays at Lancaster are defined as follows:

And all that open place at Lancaster on the East side of Lancaster Bridge extending along the side of the said River Loyne Eastwards and Northeastwards to a certain place on the Green Area in Lancaster called the Old Crane being in length along the said River side 482 yards or thereabouts and bounded on the North and North East by the said River Loyne and on the South and Southwest by the Green Area aforesaid and that part of the said town of Lancaster adjoining to the said river Loyne called the Bridge Lane.

And also all that other open place or Yard or Key in Lancaster aforesaid on the West side and adjoining to the said Bridge commonly called the weighhouse Key together with all that open place extending Westwards from the said Yard or Key to a certain post on the Southerly shoar side being in length from the west side of the Bridge 369 yards or thereabouts and bounded on the North side by the River Loyne and on the Southside by the opposite shoar.

Appendix D.

Establishment of Port Commission.

Whereas the Town of Lancaster in the County Palatine of Lancashire, from its great and extensive commerce to the West Indies and other foreign ports is now become a considerable port, and has for some time past employed and maintained great numbers of ships, mariners and seamen to the great advancement of the Revenue.

And whereas the navigation of the River Loyne, otherwise called Lune, is become difficult and dangerous, and the only place near the said town where ships can be moored or discharged is by reason of the shoals and other obstructions in the soil of the said River become very unfit and unsafe for that purpose; insomuch that many ships and vessels stationed there have been overset and damaged to the great loss of the owners and freighters thereof respectively:

And whereas it is conceived to be highly necessary for the benefit and improvement of the said navigation that a key or wharf, with other conveniences should be built and erected on the S.W. side of the river, and that buoys should be placed at the entrance into the said river and other parts thereof, and landmarks erected for guiding and directing ships and vessels to and from the said town; and that a place of safety should be made for the harbouring and protection of shipping at or near the mouth of the river.....etc.

Appendix E.

A years trade - July 5 1798 to July 5 1799 (imports).

	Tons.	Cwts.	qrs.	lbs.
Cocoa.	107	10		
Coffee.	1028	12		
Sugar.	2310	4	1	5
Wood.	257	1	1	19
Hemp.	144	15	0	5
Flax.	112	15	2	1
Elephants teeth.	1	3	2	10
Ginger.	39	14	3	6
Shruff copper.	11			
butter.	189	0	2	11
Deals.		6	2	23
	<u>Loads.</u>	<u>lbs.</u>	<u>galls.</u>	
Rum.				477.95
Cotton.		2,149,046		
Gum Copul.		587		
Castor Oil.				175
Pimento.		789		
Indigo.		36		
Lime Juice.				28
Succades.		88		
Tortoise Shell.		687		
Madeira Wine.				452
Port Wine.				20647
Fir Timber.	455.			
Wainscot Logs.	16			
Pine Timber.	89			
Tobacco.		7198		
		<u>Barrels.</u>		
Beef.		243		
Pork.		142		
Tongues.		32		
Imports to the town of Lancaster also included:	8375		hides.	
	102		goatskins.	
	60		oars	
	10		masts	
	916		qtrs. oats.	
	7500		lemons & oranges.	

Appendix F.

Extract from Lancaster Gazette, 22nd December 1804.

"Gallant action. Account received of the gallant action of Barbadoes on the 27th November by the Thetis, Captain Charnley, of this port, by beating off the Bonaparte, privateer, mounting 18 guns and 200 men. The Thetis had 2 men killed and five wounded.

The following is a copy of a letter from Captain Charnley to his owners at Lancaster".

Barbadoes 10 November 1804.

Messrs. Suart, Houseman and Co.

Gentlemen,

I arrived here in company with the Cares and Penelope last evening on the 8th instant. At 7 a.m. seeing a strange sail and a suspicious one (being commodore) I made a signal for an enemy, and to haul our wind on the starboard tack to meet her. At nine o'clock we met. She kept English colours flying until she fired two broadsides. On seeing him attempt to lay us alongside to leeward I thought it better to have him to windward, so wore ship on the other tack. He was then on our quarter and lashed himself to our mizzen chains. The contest then became desperate for one hour. They set us on fire twice on our quarter deck with stinkpots and other combustibles, and four very daring attempts to board with us at least 80 men out of their rigging, foretop and bowsprit, but were most boldly repulsed by every man and boy in the ship.

At the conclusion a double headed shot from our aftermost gun carried away his foremast by the board, that took away his bowsprit and main topgallant mast. He then thought it was time to cast us off. Not less than 50 men fell with the wreck. We then hauled our wind as well as we could to knot, splice and repair our rigging for the time, which gave the other ships an opportunity to play upon the enemy, but being a little to leeward had not a good effect. A short time afterwards wore ship for him again, with the other ships, and engaged him for about an hour more, but finding it impossible to take him owing to his number of men and having no surgeon on board to dress our wounded, I thought it best to steer our course for this island.

Her name is the Bonaparte of twenty nine pounders and upwards of two hundred men. I had eighteen six-pounders and forty five men, nineteen of whom had never been to sea before, boys and landymen.....

We are shattered in our hull, gally and rigging, it will take us two days before we can be ready for sea."

For this action the ship was presented with £240 sterling, raised by subscription on the island of Barbadoes, and divided as follows:

To Mr. Frear, chief mate..... £12.

To R. Lambert, second mate.... £ 8.

To the relatives of each of
the two men killed in action. £12.

To each of the nine men
wounded..... £ 8.

To the remaining 31 men
each..... £ 4.

The captain received a piece of plate valued at £60 sterling.

"Isaac Wilkinson and his son John owned and worked an iron furnace and forge at Backbarrow where they produced 'flat smoothing irons'. About 1748 they built or purchased the iron furnace and forge at Wilson House near Lindale, intending to smelt there the haematite iron ore of Furness with turbarry or peat moss, large tracts of which surrounded the furnace, up to which the river Winster was then navigable for vessels of light burthen. They cut a canal into the middle of this large tract of burbarry, sufficiently wide for the passage of a small boat, to be used in conveying the peat moss to the furnace, which boat, tradition says, was constructed not of wood but of iron; and there are people still living (amongst others Mr. Nicholas Atkinson Of Cart Lane) who remember having seen it about seventy years ago.

John Wilkinson moved to Bilston, where, amongst other things, he succeeded in using ordinary mineral coal in place of wood charcoal for smelting purposes. In 1785 he went to France to erect one of James Watts' steam engines at Creuzot. Before he went to France he had been experimenting, presumably enlarging on the previous boat, with an iron boat at the canal at Bradley. On his return in 1786 he recommenced these experiments, and a letter dated 1787 to the authors grandfather gives the following information:

James Stockdale, Esq., Carke.

Dear Sir,

- Yesterday week my iron boat was launched. It answers all my expectations, and has convinced the unbelievers, who were 999 in 1,000. It will be a nine days wonder, and then be like Columbus's egg.

John Wilkinson.

This iron boat was launched at Willey Wharf, she floated very lightly on the water, was of about seventy tons burthen and was called the Trial.

In another letter he says:

"There have been launched two iron vessels in my service since September 1st: one is a canal boat for Bradley navigation, the other a barge of forty tons for the Severn".

Though there can be little doubt that the vessels launched at Bradley were the first to be built for purely commercial ventures, there can be equally little doubt that the original for these "Iron Vessels", which eventually revolutionised all water-borne transport, was the little iron boat used to haul peat moss to the furnace at Lindale in the parish of Cartmel, situate in the bounds of the Port of Lancaster.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- | | | |
|-------|--|---|
| i | An Economic History of Lancaster. | M. M. Schofield. |
| ii | A History of the Port of Lancaster 2750-1800 | Dr. J. Thompson. |
| iii | A history of Lancaster's greatness as a Port. | Articles by
published in Lancaster Gazette 1926. J. E. Shaw. |
| iv | A History of Lancaster. | Clark 1807 |
| v | The Charters of the City of Lancaster. | T. E. Pape. |
| vi | Time Honoured Lancaster. | Cross Fleury. |
| vii | Annales Caermoelenses. | James Stockdale 1857 |
| viii | Victoria County History. | |
| ix | History, Directory and Gazetteer. | Baines 1825. |
| x | History of the County Palatine. | Baines 1836 |
| xi | Britannia. | Camden. |
| xii | Transactions of the Lancs and Chesh. Antiq. Soc. Vo. 58.
'Some Records of the Port of Lancaster' | R. Jarvis. |
| xiii | Transactions of the Hist. Soc. of Lancs. and Chesh. 1948.
'The Rise of Morecambe' | R. G. Armstrong. |
| xiv | Chetham Soc. Publications Vol. 61.
'History of Lancaster' | W. Roper. |
| xv | Transactions of the Cumb. and West. Antiq and Arch. Soc. Vol NSXXXV1.1936.
'The Port of Milnthorpe' | W. J. McIntyre. |
| xvi | Charts, Documents, Minute Books of Port Commissioners. | |
| xvii | Private papers. | Mr. K. H. Docton. |
| xviii | The Diary of William Stout 1665 - 1725. | |
| xix | The Tyldesley Diary 1712 - 1714. | |
| xx | The Cotton Trade and Industrial Life in Lancs. 1600 - 1750. | A.P. Wadsworth and
Julia de Lacy Mann. |
| xxi | North Country Life in the 18th Century. | Edward Hughes. |
| xxii | Past numbers files of Lancaster Observer and Lancaster Guardian. | |
| xxiii | Oxford Dictionary. | |