

CORN MEASURES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Contributed by Robert Walker.

IN his *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster*, John Holt writing in 1794 says: "The difference of weights and measures, in this county, [he might with equal truth have written 'country'] are so many, that if they cannot, with propriety, be called obstacles, they may with truth be termed incumbrances." This statement, if we substitute 'country' for 'county', is well illustrated by the letter, appearing below, which was written almost a century earlier. The writer is a corn merchant of Muncaster, near Ravenglass, Cumberland, who is replying to propo a's received from another engaged in the same trade at Newton with Scales, near Preston, Lancashire. Interesting evidence concerning the coasting trade is also contained in the letter, which is printed by kind permission of the Trustees of John Hornby's Charity School, Newton.

" Mr. Robinson,

Yesterday I received a letter from you, whereby I perceive that Capt. Crytchley had showed you the letter I writt to him about your bringing a loading of Corn to Ravenglass. I remember I mett you in the streets in Preston when last there, and then you were proposeing it to me, but I had so much busseyne upon my hands at that time that I could not go and drink a glass with you and talke with you fully about it, which made me give Capt. Crytchley the trouble of that letter, not knowing how to direct one to you. But I find by your letter that Corn bears a far greater pryce in your marketts than it does with us, so that there's no thinkeing any further of it, for by what you write, I perceive you cannot afford to deliver it at Ravenglass at the rates it bears here, for the best oats with us are but about half a Crown our Bushell, which will be but three shillings your Windle, for you know our Bushell contain[s] [t]hree Winchester at least, which is 24 Gallons; and your Windle [I th]inke contains 3 Winchester and a half, which is 28 Gallons, and you vulture that at 5s. 3d., which 3s. is as much as it will [bea]re here. And as for your Barley, you vulture that at 7s. 2d. per [Win]dle; I can buy the best here for about 4s. 6d. [per Bushe]ll, which w[ill] be but 5s. 3d. your Windle. And as for your be[st] White Wheat, you vulture it at 13s. per Windle which is a higher pryce than it yeilds at Lancaster by 2s. or half a Crown

a Windle, but that comes the nearest the pryce of any of them, and if it were right good in it[s] kind I should not stick with you at that pryce. As for Beans, I have no occasion for any, but I am satisfied, if you bring a Loading of Corn hither and bring a parcell of Beans to make up your Loading withall, you may sell them very reddily for the same pryce you do your Barley, or better, and I believe old Beans would go off reddilyer than new ones. So if you can afford to bring in a Loading of Corn to Ravenglass at the pryces I give you an account it bears in our Country, I'll take as I writt in my last of you, 3, or 400 Bushells of oats, 80, or 100 Bushells of Barley, and 20, or 30 Bushells of White Wheat, provided they be all right good in their kind and undempnified. And as soon as ever your ship comes in she shall be clear'd off with all expediccion, and your moneys paid you upon the delivery of the Corn, whereby I am sure you may afford it reasonabler than if you should sell it by parcells and be forced to trust for your money. And if your Loading shoulde containe a greater quantety than what I here propose to take of you, I'll give you all the assistance imagionable for the sale of the remainder, and does not doubt but to procure you good Chapmen to take it of your hands, so I pray you let me have your answer as soon as possible, that I may know whether to depend upon you for this quantety of Corn, or see to furnish myself elsewhere; and if you'll bring in a Loading at these rates, let me know wh[en] you thinke to be in with her, desireing you'll give my service to Capt. Crytchley when you see him, I rest

Your fr[ie]nd to serve you,

WM. PENNINGTON.

Muncaster, 23 Dec. 1704."

Endorsed: "To Mr. Peter Robinson at Newton, Lancashire. Leave this at the George in Fryer-gate in Preston to be sent as directed."

The measures given in the letter may be tabulated as follows:—

Ravenglass: 1 Bushel = 3 Winchester Bushels = 24 Gallons.

Newton: 1 Windle = $3\frac{1}{2}$ " " = 28 Gallons.

1 Ravenglass Bushel = $\frac{8}{7}$ Newton Windle.

It may be noted that the Ravenglass bushel was equivalent to the Lancaster windle, whereas the windle at Newton was the same as that used at Preston. In transactions between corn merchants trading between Preston and Lancaster, the same unnecessarily complicated calculations must therefore have been involved.