

The structure of the trading community in Liverpool, 1760–1810

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In 1804, Liverpool was considered 'the second sea-port in the realm'.¹ It was centrally placed to engage in a market that stretched from Nova Scotia to the West Indies, to Guinea, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. The port was an entrepôt for an increasingly wide range of consumer goods, both manufactures and food, from around the world. It is therefore a good laboratory for examining how diversification of trade was reflected in its trading community. To understand fully how these goods were distributed at a local, regional and international level, it is necessary to use a wide definition of the trading community, one that includes both men and women, and traders at all levels. This wider trading community demonstrates how diversifying trade affected the fortunes of entrepreneurs in Liverpool.

Liverpool and eighteenth-century Atlantic trade

There was a proliferation of goods in the eighteenth century, in what has become known as the 'Consumer Revolution'. In the past it has been argued that this was driven by emulation and class competition.² A rise in income for the lower classes was provided by the

¹ J. Montefiore, *The trader's and manufacturer's compendium*, 2 vols (London, 1804), p. 476; see also S. Marriner, *The economic and social development of Merseyside, 1750–1960* (London, 1982), pp. 30–43; T. Troughton, *The history of Liverpool . . . illustrated with views of the principal buildings* (Liverpool, 1810), pp. 277–85.

² N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: The commercialisation of eighteenth century England*, (London, 1982), p. 11; J. Brewer & R. Porter, eds, *Consumption and the world of goods* (London, 1993); M. Douglas &

earnings of women and children working outside the home, if not by the male wage earner.³ This meant that people at all levels of society could engage in purchasing new 'consumer' goods. This analysis is not sufficient, however. Other studies have demonstrated that there was in fact a growing inequality in wealth during the latter half of the eighteenth century and that income for the lower classes did not rise until after 1820.⁴ The importance of the culture of respectability, it is also argued, meant that the mass consumption of new foods and manufactures occurred before the 'Industrial Revolution', and 'was as much its cause as its effect'.⁵ Goods such as Manchester textiles, Sheffield cutlery, Staffordshire (and Liverpool) pottery and Leeds woollens were in demand around the Atlantic, but also desired were China tea, Indian spices, Arabian coffee, Virginia tobacco, West Indian sugar and Mexican chocolate. These goods, and less spectacular commodities such as coal, salt, barrel staves, turpentine and tar, shoes and sealing wax, were both demanded and supplied throughout the Atlantic world.⁶

In fact this mass consumption of new goods, both food and manufactures, was encouraged by urbanisation, where self-sufficiency was not realistic and urban inhabitants were dependant on the market. This was certainly true in a place such as Liverpool, which was experiencing massive in- and through- migration. In 1708, the population of Liverpool had been around 6,500. In 1773 it was 34,407, and by the time of the first census in 1801 it was 77,653.⁷ Exotic foods may have 'caught the eye, tickled the fancy,

B. Isherwood, *The world of goods: Towards an anthropology of consumption* (2nd edn, New York, 1996).

³ N. McKendrick, 'Home demand and economic growth: A new view of the role of women and children in the Industrial Revolution', in N. McKendrick, ed., *Historical perspectives: Studies in English thought and society in honour of J. H. Plumb* (London, 1974), pp. 152–210.

⁴ P. H. Lindert, 'Unequal living standards', in R. Floud & D. N. McCloskey, eds, *An economic history of Britain since 1700* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1994), I, pp. 357–86; P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 29–32.

⁵ R. A. Austen & W. D. Smith, 'Private tooth decay as public economic virtue', in J. E. Inikori & S. Engerman, eds, *The Atlantic slave trade* (Durham, N.C., 1992), pp. 183–203; J. Goodman et al., eds, *Consuming habits: Drugs in history and anthropology*, (London, 1995).

⁶ J. Walvin, *Fruits of empire: Exotic produce and British taste, 1660–1800* (Basingstoke, 1997); M. M. Schofield, 'Shoes and ships and sealing wax; Eighteenth-century Lancashire exports to the colonies', *THSLC*, 135 (1986), pp. 61–82.

⁷ R. Lawton, 'Genesis of population', in W. Smith, ed., *A scientific survey of*

flattered the rich', but for the Liverpool poor, as elsewhere, hot tea with sugar and bread was a quick and easy breakfast.⁸ What happened in fact was that people were not necessarily buying more, but they were purchasing different items. With regard to food, shifts in demand did not change between categories but within them.⁹ Despite tiny living spaces, many people purchased 'consumer' durables such as crockery in which to prepare these drinks, as well as linen, chairs and tables, producing demand for manufactures as well as grocery products.¹⁰ Although the poor were criticised for buying tea, sugar and white bread rather than cereals and potatoes, many of these items were part of the workhouse diet in Liverpool by 1795. The demand for these goods was not therefore only trans-Atlantic, but came from all levels of society.¹¹ This had important implications for the way in which these goods were distributed, both across the sea, and within urban areas.

Liverpool's trading community was vital in facilitating this 'Empire of Goods', making the link between supply and demand. The proliferation of goods traded around the Atlantic was reflected in the amount and types of goods being distributed through, and within, the port. Shipping using the port amounted to only 14,600 tons in 1709, but had grown to 450,000 tons by 1800.¹² Imports consisted of sugar, cotton, coffee, cocoa, dyewood, rum and tobacco, flour and timber; and whilst the predominant exports were salt and coal; earthenware, textiles, metal products, glass, hops and leather goods were also shipped out.¹³ The amount of goods flowing through the port was impressive. Imports of tobacco grew from

Merseyside, (Liverpool, 1953), pp. 120–31; W. Enfield, *An essay towards the history of Liverpool*, (Warrington, 1773), p. 25; P. Laxton, 'Liverpool in 1801', *THSLC*, 130 (1981), pp. 73–113.

⁸ Walvin, *Fruits of empire*, p. 4.

⁹ C. Shammas, *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America* (New York, 1990).

¹⁰ T. H. Breen, 'An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of colonial America, 1690–1776', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 467–99; L. Weatherill, 'The business of middleman in the English pottery trade before 1780', *Business History*, 28 (1986), pp. 51–76.

¹¹ The Philadelphia workhouse provided these goods for the poor as early as 1769. Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp. 142–43; E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming subjects: Women, shopping, and business in the eighteenth century* (New York, 1997).

¹² Marriner, *Economic and social development*, p. 31.

¹³ F. E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: An economic history of a port 1700–1970* (Newton Abbott, 1971), pp. 32, 26, 12.

600 tons in 1704 to 8,400 tons in 1810, and imports of sugar from 760 tons to 46,000 tons in the same period. Exports of coal also grew, from 14,000 tons in 1752 to 186,000 tons in 1820.¹⁴ International and regional trade encouraged transport networks which increased demand and facilitated growth. Liverpool's involvement in the slave trade provided access to sugar and other plantation products, promoted trade routes in Africa, and boosted the Lancashire cotton industry; profits from the slave trade were sometimes exceptionally good, but also erratic, and often exaggerated.¹⁵ At a more regional level, the salt and coal trades encouraged transport networks, consisting of a triangle of Liverpool, the salt fields to the South, and the coal fields to the North. Other trades, such as glass, soap boiling, sugar baking and copper, as well as agricultural produce, also meant that good transport links were required. Good links were also forged between people, spreading knowledge and assistance, and reducing uncertainty and risk.¹⁶

These hinterland connections were vital in facilitating the growth of Liverpool's regional trade, in exporting items such as pottery, textiles and ironware, and distributing imported items such as raw materials and groceries. This success in trade allowed Liverpool to survive when its own manufacturing industry declined as a result of regional specialisation. The supply of, and demand for, these goods therefore existed; the trading community of the port of Liverpool provided the distribution.

¹⁴ M. J. Power, 'The growth of Liverpool', in J. Belchem, ed., *Popular politics, riot and labour: Essays in Liverpool history*, (Liverpool, 1992), pp. 21–37.

¹⁵ J. E. Inikori, 'Slavery and the revolution in cotton textile production in England', in Inikori & Engerman, *The Atlantic slave trade*, pp. 145–82; F. E. Hyde et al., 'The nature and profitability of the Liverpool slave trade', *Economic History Review*, 5 (1952–3), pp. 368–77; D. Richardson, 'Profits in the Liverpool slave trade: The accounts of William Davenport, 1757–1784', in R. Anstey & P. E. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the African slave trade, and abolition* (Liverpool, 1976), pp. 60–90.

¹⁶ T. C. Barker, 'Lancashire coal, Cheshire salt and the rise of Liverpool', *THSLC*, 103 (1951), pp. 83–101; S. Haggerty, 'Trade and the trans-shipment of knowledge in the late eighteenth century', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 14 (2002); K. Morgan, 'Business networks in the British export trade to North America, 1750–1800', in J. J. McCusker & K. Morgan, eds, *The early modern Atlantic economy* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 36–62.

The Liverpool trading community

In the existing historiography, the term 'merchant' is often used with reference to the elite overseas trader, one at the top of the status scale. In the eighteenth century merchants were highly regarded, one contemporary calling them 'the Life, Spring, and Motion of the Trading World'.¹⁷ Many major works on merchants assume them to be of primary importance.¹⁸ Some discuss merchants as if they worked in a vacuum, the only people involved in distributing goods around the Atlantic communities. Indeed, the term 'trader' has been taken to be synonymous with the elite of the merchant class.¹⁹ In this study however, these two words are used differently. Merchant is taken to mean anyone who called themselves by that term, regardless of the scale or success of their business, and trader is taken to be anyone involved in distribution as opposed to production. For example, perhaps those revered as 'merchants' by contemporaries were those who dealt at the trans-Atlantic level, in actually getting the goods transported across the sea lanes; but they were certainly not the only traders involved in the distribution and sale of trans-Atlantic goods around the ports and their hinterlands. A whole host of lesser merchants, factors, brokers, dealers, wholesalers, shopkeepers, grocers and itinerant dealers helped distribute goods from manufacturer or farmer to consumer.²⁰ That network of distribution may have included a major merchant or shipper in order to get that merchandise across the Atlantic, but they were only a small link in the chain. At a local or regional level, merchants, especially shipping merchants, may not have been involved in the distribution of goods at all. It was not necessary for a shipper of goods from Liverpool to the Americas to be involved in the distribution of Staffordshire ware from Burslem or printed textiles from Manchester for sale direct to the consumer in Liverpool. Conversely, there was also a wide range wholesale establishments selling goods not meant for export, and

¹⁷ R. Campbell, *The London tradesman*, (3rd edn, London, 1757), pp. 284–94.

¹⁸ T. M. Doerflinger, *A vigorous spirit of enterprise* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), pp. 5, 15, 17–20; D. Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic community, 1735–1785*, (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁹ Hancock, *Citizens*, pp. 122–26, 3–9; C. Matson, *Merchants and empire: Trading in colonial New York*, (Baltimore, 1998), p. 3; P. Cleary, *Elizabeth Murray, a woman's pursuit of independence in eighteenth century early America*, (Amherst, 2000), ch. 2.

²⁰ S. Haggerty, 'Trade and trading communities in the late eighteenth century Atlantic: Liverpool and Philadelphia' (PhD thesis, Univ. of Liverpool, 2002), ch. 2.

indeed a plethora of purely retail establishments aimed at customers throughout the social scale. Sheridan's dictionary gives a definition of trader as 'One engaged in merchandize or commerce' which is much wider and more useful. In fact, contemporary dictionaries still described commerce as the 'exchange of one thing for another; interchange of any thing; trade; traffick'.²¹ These definitions are helpful because they produce a generic group of anyone buying and selling—at any level. This facilitates a demonstration of how goods were distributed not only across the Atlantic, but also to the consumer. It also allows a detailed analysis of the role of the wider trading community, and importantly, the contribution of women.

Discussing the role of women is important because much of the historiography about women in England has aimed to put them 'back' in history rather than to integrate them into the mainstream. Where they have been put into an economic context it has often been in relation to the 'Industrial Revolution'; as part of the agricultural or manufacturing workforce; or within the context of changing gender roles, rather than as part of a trading or mercantile community.²² There is also very little written specifically about women in eighteenth-century Liverpool, despite the fact that the port economy provided them with particular opportunities and problems.²³ For example, Liverpool had a distinctive occupational structure; figures from earlier in the eighteenth century indicate that 20–30% of the workforce were mariners of one sort or another.²⁴ Furthermore, a considerable number of these might be absent at any given time, leaving a reduced number of available adult males for other work. This had an enormous effect on the lives of the absent mariners' families, and especially on the women, as they often had to fend for themselves.

²¹ T. Sheridan, *A general dictionary of the English language*, vol. II (1780, rep. Menston, 1967).

²² A. Clark, *The working life of women in the seventeenth century* (London, 1919); I. Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1930); B. Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth century England*, (Oxford, 1989); P. Sharpe, *Adapting to capitalism; Working women in the English economy 1700–1850* (London, 1996); D. Valenze, *The first industrial woman* (New York, 1995).

²³ S. Haggerty, 'Women, work, and the Consumer Revolution: Liverpool in the late eighteenth century', in J. Benson & L. Ugolini, eds, *A nation of shopkeepers* (Taurus, 2002).

²⁴ F. Lewis, 'The demographic and occupational structure of Liverpool: A study of the parish registers, 1660–1750' (PhD thesis, Univ. of Liverpool, 1993), p. 66, fig. 3.4.

Despite the fact that women were numerically superior, they found that the legal system and social norms put them at a disadvantage.²⁵ By law, married women were considered *feme covert*, which meant that they had no legal identity of their own. They could not contract with anyone as their husband spoke for them. Husband and wife were unified as one person.²⁶ In reality this was not always the case and some married women traded on their own account. This was dependant on local custom, and there being general knowledge that she was trading as such. She could then contract with other persons. Here she was acting as *feme sole*—an unmarried woman, at least in the course of her trade.²⁷ It is quite possible that married women, as well as single or widowed women, were allowed to trade independently in Liverpool, but because there was no guild system in the town there is a lack of definite evidence for this.²⁸ There are however, many adverts in the contemporary newspapers for women traders, designated as 'Mrs'. Some such as Mrs Maskew, a confectioner in Castle Street had obviously taken over from her husband, John, but many others such as Mrs Bradley, Linen Draper, may have been acting on their own account.²⁹ The Liverpool town books for an earlier period often mention women as being prosecuted for illegal trading. The books are not consistent in using titles, but it is quite possible that many of these were married women trading in their own right, as widows were usually denoted as such. The fact that they were not prosecuted for trading *per se* would suggest that it was permitted for them to trade independently. This is confirmed by the case of Mrs Dobson, who was charged rent of twelve shillings for six months rent for her corner shop.³⁰ Therefore, women could and often did trade on their own account.

²⁵ A. L. Erickson, *Women and property in early modern England* (London, 1993); E. F. Crane, *Ebb tide in New England: Women, seaports, and social change, 1630–1800* (Boston, 1998).

²⁶ W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (15th edn, London, 1809), vol 1, pp. 441–42. They became a legal fiction of one person.

²⁷ Erickson, *Women and property*, p. 30; Hill, *Women, work, and sexual politics*, pp. 201–2, 211–13.

²⁸ D. E. Ascott, 'Wealth and community: Liverpool 1660–1760' (PhD thesis, Univ. of Liverpool, 1996), p. 302.

²⁹ *Billinge's Liverpool Advertiser and Marine Intelligencer*, 23 July 1796; *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 12 Mar. 1787.

³⁰ M. J. Power, ed., *Liverpool Town Books 1649–1671*, (Stroud, 2000), pp. 223–25, 21, 259.

In a port, such as Liverpool, it is likely that they also had more opportunity, and more necessity, to do so.

One way in which these lesser traders, both men and women, can be identified is through the contemporary trade directories. These have been used to compile a time series of traders from 1766 to 1805. Town or city directories were first printed in London in the seventeenth century. Their popularity in England increased throughout the eighteenth century, along with the urbanisation of this period. Usually they included a list of names, addresses and occupations of many of the inhabitants, as well as appendices giving information about the town. These might include postal services, banking facilities, tourist attractions, coach services and maps. Their contents were not always comparable because they were drawn up using different standards and rationales.³¹ This has meant that their use as a historical source has been widely debated. Some have found the trade directories to over or under-represent some parts of the community, others have argued that many people, particularly in the professions, had double entries.³² However, by taking due consideration of these problems, the directories can be used as a fruitful analytical source and are effective in illustrating growth and specialisation of certain sectors. Used with care, they can illuminate trends and shifts within the trading community.

The first Liverpool directory, printed in 1766, states that it contains 'An Alphabetical List of the Merchants, Tradesmen, and Principal Inhabitants, of the town of Liverpool'. Printed by J. Gore, a bookseller of the city, it was a representation of whom he thought worthy of entry, as well as anyone else who wanted to be listed. Being the first directory for the city, Gore was quite aware that it was possibly incomplete, stating that 'he must rely on the candour of the Public' in order for the next version to be more correct.³³ Bailey, in 1787, was less apologetic, and apparently considered that he had completed a more correct directory; but it was still his own

³¹ P. Corfield, 'Giving directions to the town: The early town directories', *Urban History Yearbook*, 11 (1984), pp. 22–35.

³² J. Benson, et. al., 'Sources for the study of retailing, 1800–1900, with particular reference to Wolverhampton', *Local Historian*, 29 (1999), pp. 167–82; R. Scola, 'Food markets and shops in Manchester, 1770–1870', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 1 (1975), pp. 153–68; W. K. D. Davies et al., 'Directories, rate books and the commercial structure of towns', *Geography*, 53 (1968), pp. 41–54.

³³ J. Gore, *The Liverpool Directory for 1766* (Liverpool, 1766).

view and work; 'I have taken a regular survey' of Liverpool, he stated.³⁴ The Liverpool directories were therefore compiled in a very personal manner. Persons ranging from cowkeepers to slop-sellers were entered, and there is no reason to think that anyone was rejected for entry. At the same time, many people were not entered; mariners, despite accounting for about one third of the adult male working population were hardly represented, nor were servants.

The popularity of the directories also grew with time. In 1774, the 2,534 persons entered represented around 7.4% of the population: by 1805, the 8,760 persons listed accounted for just over 10%. The proportion of women entered also increased, especially with 'vanity' entries such as 'Mrs' or 'Miss' with no occupation. Women accounted for 5.9% of the entries in 1766, but were still under-represented at just under 17.5% in 1805.³⁵ Of course, many more women than those entered in the directories were working, as were many more men. Besides the servants (and mariners in the case of men), many married women who worked with their husbands in trade may not have been entered. Hunt suggests that many married women worked *feme sole*, as well as alongside their husbands, but hid the fact.³⁶ This means that it is likely that most of the women in the directories, but certainly not all, were spinsters or widows. However, it is important to remember that those women who worked alongside their fathers, husbands, or even brothers and sons, still made a vital contribution to the economy. The trade directories are therefore not an infallible source. However, as we are concerned with trends rather than exact numbers, the figures given below suffice. They are also as robust as the directories allow, being a complete sample of the years under study.

Figure 1 shows that the number of individuals trading, as defined above, grew over the period in order to service the growing population and concomitant trade, although the trading community always remained between 2.5 and 3.5% of the total population. As is

³⁴ W. Bailey, *The Liverpool Directory for 1787* (Liverpool, 1787) p. iv.

³⁵ Women accounted for 66 of the 1,115 entries in 1766, and 1,533 entries in 1805.

³⁶ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, gender, and the family in England, 1680-1780*, (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 128-29; Defoe castigates tradesmen's wives who considered themselves 'beneath' working in the shop, *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726, rep. Gloucester, 1987), ch. 21.

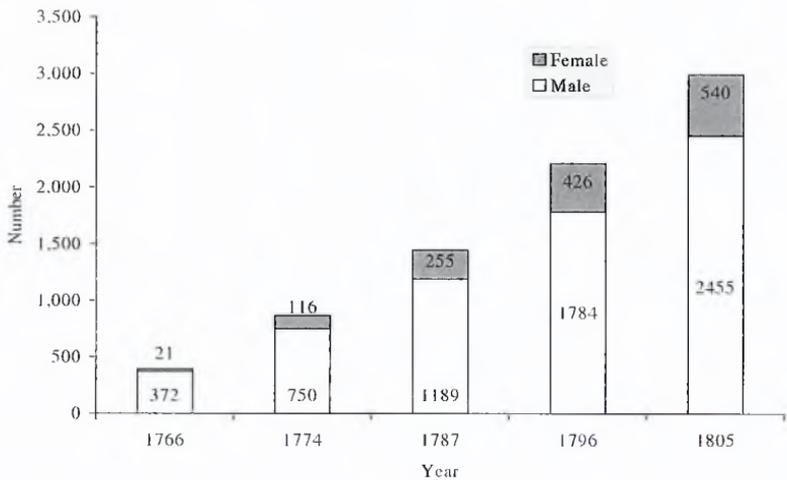


FIGURE 1 *The Liverpool trading community, 1766–1805. Source: Liverpool trade directories.*

well known, of course, low numbers did not reflect any lack of influence over the economy of the town.³⁷ It should also be briefly noted that access to various sectors of the trading community were not equally available to men and women due to the legal, social and economic factors considered above. Women made up 5% of the recorded trading community in 1766, 18% in 1787, and 18% again in 1805.³⁸ As the discussion below will demonstrate, women in Liverpool did not comprise 18% of each of the sectors within the trading community, nor was the rise in the participation of women reflected in all the various sectors.

The percentage of the population acting as traders may not have risen over the period, but it did experience a steady growth in absolute numbers. This was despite the fact there were many problems to overcome in the later eighteenth century. For example, Liverpool had to endure a credit crisis in 1772 and the American War of Independence stopped most, but certainly not all trade with

³⁷ M. J. Power, 'Councillors and commerce in Liverpool, 1650–1750', *Urban History*, 24 (1997), pp. 301–23, and 'Politics and progress: Liverpool 1660–1715', *Northern History*, 35 (1999), pp. 119–38; D. J. Pope, 'Shipping and trade in the port of Liverpool, 1783–1793' (PhD thesis, Univ. of Liverpool, 1970), pp. 450–51.

³⁸ Calculated from the Liverpool trade directories.

that country.³⁹ Later, in 1793, communities around the Atlantic basin experienced a contraction of credit which bankrupted many, and threatened even more.⁴⁰ A Liverpool bank, Charles Caldwell & Co., was one of the most notorious local failures.⁴¹ The wars with France over the period 1793–1815 also caused many problems for merchants trading to the West Indies and America, in addition to those dealing with the European continent. The British government's rising ambivalence towards America's success caused merchants trading with America such as William Rathbone IV distress, whilst the end of the legal slave trade meant that West India merchants also had to diversify.⁴² Britain eventually antagonised the United States by interfering with neutral shipping, causing further problems. The Americans retaliated to the French Decrees and the British Orders in Council with an embargo which closed its ports to foreign commerce from December 1807 to March 1808, and the subsequent Non-Intercourse Act of August 1809 to May 1810 prohibited trade with Britain and her colonies.⁴³ The continuing growth and influence of the trading community despite these many problems points to their tenacity and ability to adapt.

Sectors of the trading community

Having argued for a wider trading community, and one that managed to survive the fortunes of war, it is now appropriate to closely examine some of the sectors within it. Four groups—merchants, brokers, shopkeepers and itinerant dealers—have been chosen because they highlight the trends encountered in surveying the whole community. This analysis also demonstrates the wide variety in scale and status of the traders within the trading community as a whole, and also the gender bias within it. These men and

³⁹ R. B. Sheridan, 'The British credit crisis of 1772 and the American colonies', *Journal of Economic History*, 20 (1960), pp. 161–86.

⁴⁰ K. Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 29.

⁴¹ F. E. Hyde et al., 'The port of Liverpool and the crisis of 1793', *Economica*, 18 (1951), pp. 363–78.

⁴² S. G. Checkland, 'American versus West Indian traders in Liverpool, 1793–1815', *Journal of Economic History*, 18 (1958), pp. 141–60.

⁴³ D. W. Daniels, 'American cotton trade with Liverpool under the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts', *American Historical Review*, 21 (1916), pp. 276–87.

women were all out to profit from the buying and selling of commodities: some were just more successful than others.

Merchants

Merchants enjoyed a very high reputation. This was partly because in the hundred years or so before 1760, due to the extensive geographical coverage of English trade, capital requirements grew faster for the merchant community than for industrialists. They also extended a lot of credit, helping others further down the social scale in trade.⁴⁴ Most merchants were men, with few women working as such.⁴⁵ By 1755 the term merchant implied someone 'who trafficks to remote countries' rather than one who dealt purely at a local, regional or national level.⁴⁶ This importance was reflected in apprenticeship fees of the time: although not necessarily the highest, they required the substantial sum of £50 to £100.⁴⁷ This was quite a considerable amount of money when a journeyman plaisterer or pavior would only have received 12–15 shillings a week, or about £30 a year if they were lucky enough to work the equivalent of forty weeks.⁴⁸ Some merchants did not serve a formal apprenticeship, but used their previous knowledge: for example, David Tuohy was a captain on slave ships for many years before setting up in business as a merchant in Liverpool.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it could also require between £1,000 and £5,000 to set up your own business or 'house'. The merchant firm of Corrie, Gladstone & Bradshaw, invested a total of £4,000 to set up their partnership in 1787.⁵⁰ The following newspaper advert was placed in 1805; 'a young man who can advance £3,000 wishes to become a partner in an established manufactory or mercantile concern'.⁵¹ Most people needed to join forces with another person in order to have enough capital to start an overseas business.

⁴⁴ R. Davis, *A commercial revolution: English overseas trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1967), p. 14; J. M. Price, 'What did merchants do? Reflections on British overseas trade, 1660–1790', *Journal of Economic History*, 49 (1989), pp. 267–84.

⁴⁵ Cleary, *Elizabeth Murray*.

⁴⁶ S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755, rep. London, 1983).

⁴⁷ Hancock, *Citizens*, p. 244.

⁴⁸ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, pp. 163, 169.

⁴⁹ David Tuohy Correspondence Accounts and Ships' Papers, 380/TUO, Liverpool Record Office (hereafter Liv. RO).

⁵⁰ S. G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: A family biography*, (Cambridge, 1971), p. 16.

⁵¹ *Gore's General Advertiser*, 12 Dec. 1805.

Merchants undertook many tasks. They might be involved in any or all of: buying and selling for themselves or on commission, speculating in time and place on merchandise, dealing in money and credit, and insuring goods and ships in transit.⁵² They might purchase from the producer direct, but were just as likely to have purchased from a factor, dealer or wholesaler in special commodities, or indeed from another merchant, especially when conducting overseas business.⁵³ Following on from the extensive credit given by major merchant houses, and the increased use of financial paper, many were used as prototype banks, and indeed many turned to banking proper later in the period.⁵⁴ Many merchants underwrote insurance for others, and if they did not underwrite themselves they might invest in an insurance company.⁵⁵ The term merchant therefore implied someone dealing in overseas trade, extending significant credit and perhaps providing financial services in addition.

Merchants may have been defined in the contemporary literature as those in large scale overseas trade, but that usage was not always applied consistently by contemporaries, nor indeed, historians. One study considered that in the 1790s, around 330 Liverpool merchants 'were men of substance with extensive overseas connections'.⁵⁶ Yet Figure 2 demonstrates that in 1796, 666 people had listed themselves as merchants. The definitions, and actual number of '*bona fide*' overseas merchants would appear to differ. It is important to stress that merchants, as discussed here, are therefore not just elite overseas traders, but all those traders who listed themselves as merchants in the trade directories, regardless of the scale, type, success and longevity of their business. By noting the language that contemporaries themselves used, the temptation to impose categories on them is also avoided.

The majority of merchants listed themselves in the directories as simply 'merchant': in 1787, 309 of the 418 Liverpool merchants did so. Out of all the merchants in 1805, only three termed themselves commission merchants, despite the fact that undoubtedly there were many more who were. Furthermore, although many merchants may

⁵² R. B. Westerfield, *Middlemen in English business*, (New Haven, 1915), p. 332; Hancock, *Citizens*; J. M. Price, 'Directions for the conduct of a merchant's counting house, 1766', *Business History*, 28 (1986), pp. 134–50.

⁵³ Haggerty, 'Trade and trading communities', ch. 6.

⁵⁴ J. Hughes, *Liverpool banks and bankers* (Liverpool, 1906).

⁵⁵ Hancock, *Citizens*, pp. 259–75.

⁵⁶ Hyde et al, 'The port of Liverpool', p. 366.

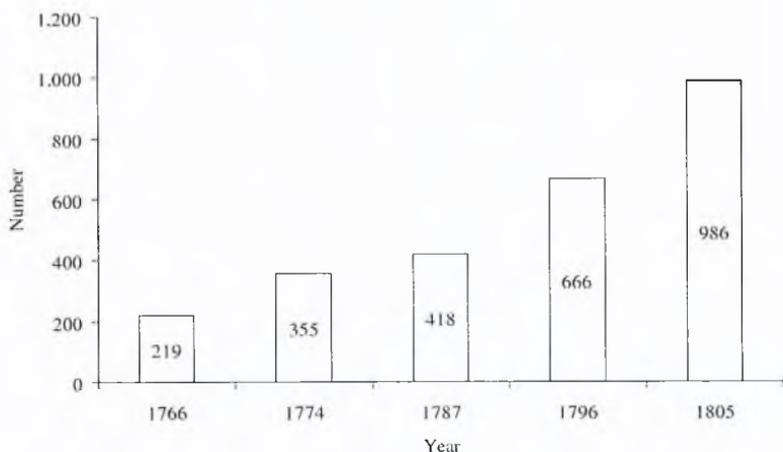


FIGURE 2 *Merchants in Liverpool, 1766–1805.* Source: *Liverpool trade directories.* Note: only 3 female merchants were recorded, all in 1805.

have specialised in some way, very few listed themselves by commodity or geographical area. It is therefore impossible to get a good sense of the split between dry goods (manufactures) or wet goods (groceries), or by region. For example, the merchant house of the Rathbone family was listed simply as ‘merchant’ from 1774 to 1805, and only in 1766 (William Rathbone III) was the listing specifically as a timber merchant.⁵⁷ The newspapers show the house dealing in items such as rice, nuts and timber throughout the period, although the Rathbones did concentrate on trade with the Americas.⁵⁸ Furthermore the Rathbones’ merchant house acted as shipping agents for many ships, including the Philadelphia based *Pennsylvania Packet* in 1774, *Adriana* in 1790 and *Liverpool* in 1805.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ There were six William Rathbones. In 1766 and 1774 the listing would have been for William Rathbone III. His son, William Rathbone IV, took over in 1789 aged thirty-two. He became a sleeping partner to the mercantile business in 1796, whilst still training his son, William Rathbone V. See L. Nottingham, *Rathbone Brothers: From merchant to banker, 1742–1792* (London, 1992), pp. 5–16. S. Marriner, *Rathbones of Liverpool, 1845–75*, (Liverpool, 1961).

⁵⁸ *Gore’s General Advertiser*, 18 Apr. 1805; *Williamson’s Liverpool Advertiser*, 2 Sep. 1774, 25 June 1787; *Billinge’s Liverpool Advertiser and Marine Intelligencer*, 4 Jan. 1796, *Gore’s General Advertiser*, 3, 17 Jan. 1805, 14, 28 Feb. 1805.

⁵⁹ *Williamson’s Liverpool Advertiser*, 23 Sep. 1774; Bills of Lading, Folder *Adriana*, Sub-Folder *Adriana*, Clow and Co., Claude W. Unger Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; *Gore’s General Advertiser*, 17 Jan. 1805.

Single traders changed their role over time as well. Thomas Leyland of Liverpool was listed as a merchant between 1787 and 1796, but was listed as a merchant at one address and as a banker at another in 1805.⁶⁰ Many more merchants were less successful and less well known. For example, William Abbot was a timber merchant listed at Cleveland Square in 1766 and 1774, and with his son at Pitt Street in 1787. He was in business for at least 21 years, but is not part of the 'received' Liverpool mercantile history. Many others would have entered and left the sector, having been unsuccessful, or successful only for a short time. For example, William Watson of Liverpool, merchant, dealer and chapman, declared a bankrupt, was requested to surrender himself to the commissioners in 1796.⁶¹

It is clear in Figure 2 that the number of women listed as merchants was minimal. The apprenticeship could be expensive and long term, and was therefore usually denied to women. Women could and did undertake apprenticeships, but they tended to be in so-called 'female' trades such as millinery and mantua-making.⁶² Furthermore, the capital required to set up in business was high. This presented another problem for women, who often did not have access to capital and were also regarded as a bad credit risk. There were other purely social problems which deterred women from entering this sector. Much business was done in coffee-houses and the exchange as well as within institutions such as Chambers of Commerce. All these were effectively, if not legally, denied to women.⁶³ It would appear that very few women were merchants, and perhaps then only as widows, such as Mrs Warbrick of Liverpool who continued as a merchant after her husband's death and is one of those listed in 1805. The other two females acting as merchants in 1805 were Mrs Sarah Brown and Ann Wardall, although it has not been possible to establish whether they were widows or not. However, the top of the merchant status tree, in its various shapes and forms, was effectively restricted to males.

⁶⁰ Thomas Leyland started his banking business in 1807, Leyland and Bullins Bank Archives, *H.S.B.C Archives*, London. For his activities as a merchant see Thomas Leyland Letterbook 1786–1789, Liv. RO.

⁶¹ *Billinge's Liverpool Advertiser*, 26 Sep. 1796; J. Hoppit, *Risk and failure in English business 1700–1800*, (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 58–60, 82–93.

⁶² Hill, *Women, work, and sexual politics*, ch. 6; E. C. Sanderson, *Women and work in eighteenth century Edinburgh* (Basingstoke, 1996).

⁶³ Haggerty, 'Trade and trading communities', pp. 117–24.

Brokers

The broker dealt on behalf of others, brought buyers and sellers together, and had a bad reputation. According to one contemporary, 'Brokers, who, having no stock of their own, set up and trade with that of other men; buying here, and selling there, and commonly abusing both sides, to make out a little paltry gain'.⁶⁴ This reputation may have been because the broker did not always deal exclusively with major merchants, or directly with the consumer or producer. He or she was someone who moved goods or stocks around, often from merchant to merchant without adding any value or process to them. However, the link with the sale of stocks was possibly the main reason that to be called a broker was often a term of reproach.

Some South Sea Broker, from the city,
Will purchase me, the more's the pity;
Lay all my fine plantations waste,
To fit them to his vulgar taste.⁶⁵

Another contemporary backed up this view, saying of stock-jobbing brokers that they 'make their fortunes by bubbling their clients, and have entered into a kind of conspiracy to keep the method of trading in the stocks a mystery'.⁶⁶

However, the term broker in Liverpool denoted a far wider range of activity than these quotes imply: Pope identified general (commission), insurance, ship and cotton brokers as the four main categories during the 1780s.⁶⁷ Liverpool had stock or ship brokers of course, but many more specialised in a particular commodity such as cotton, corn or tobacco, and this trend increased as the eighteenth century progressed. Ship brokers also dealt in buying and selling ships, or procured insurance for them, such as John Coutts, listed as a ship broker in 1787. Other brokers dealt in less prestigious items such as household goods, or doubled up as victuallers or slop shops, which sold second-hand clothes.⁶⁸ Henry Hall was listed as a broker and slop shop at Stanley Street, in

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Dictionary*, quoting Temple.

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Dictionary*, quoting Swift.

⁶⁶ W. Gordon, *The universal accountant and complete merchant*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1763), vol. 1, p. 221.

⁶⁷ Pope, 'Shipping and trade', p. 438.

⁶⁸ B. Lemire, 'Disorderly women and the consumer market: Women's work and the second hand clothing trade', in B. Lemire, ed., *Dress, culture and commerce: The English clothing trade before the factory, 1660–1800*, (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 95–120.

1787, and Mary Starssey as household broker, also at Stanley Street in 1805.⁶⁹ This diversity would certainly have lowered the general image of the trade, and may have meant that brokers in Liverpool had a low reputation anyway, notwithstanding the attitude towards stock brokers.

Brokers were therefore primarily intermediaries, at whatever social level.⁷⁰ Brokers would have undergone some sort of apprenticeship similar to a merchant if they were to understand world markets and commodities, though of course those dealing at the lower end of the market would probably not have required one. The brokers George Green & Son advertised for apprentices in 1796.⁷¹ However, many brokers may simply have served as clerks in a merchant house and gained knowledge that way. It did not always require much capital to set up a brokerage business, because, as contemporaries noted, they dealt with the stock (and capital) of others rather than their own. This meant that knowledge, rather than capital, would have been important.

Figure 3 demonstrates that the number of brokers grew along with the trading community generally during the period under discussion. Like merchants, the majority of brokers listed themselves simply as 'broker': by 1805, 126 of the 196 brokers (64%) were listed by this simple terminology. In 1766 there were only three sub-sectors—broker, broker of the flats and broker of old goods, but by 1805 there were fifteen other sub-sectors besides broker. These included ship broker and insurance broker of course, but also cotton, corn, canvas and household brokers. Therefore, brokers were a very diverse group, which also included a few women. For example, an Isabell Pratt was listed as a broker in the 1774 directory. This could be the same I. Pratt who was advertising a ship loading in London for Liverpool in the same year: no other I. Pratt appears in the directory.⁷² She may have taken over from her husband John Pratt, listed as a broker at the same address in 1766. He died sometime before 1770, leaving a quarter of his wealth to Isabell, who

⁶⁹ Mary may have been the widow of John Starrsey, listed at 5 Stanley Street in 1796, a victualler and whitesmith. Mary was listed at nos 6 and 7.

⁷⁰ A broker is a good example of an 'intermediator'. See M. Casson, 'Institutional economics and business history: A way forward?', *Business History*, 39 (1997), pp. 151–71.

⁷¹ *Billinge's Liverpool Advertiser*, 11 Jan. 1796.

⁷² *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 19 Aug. 1774.

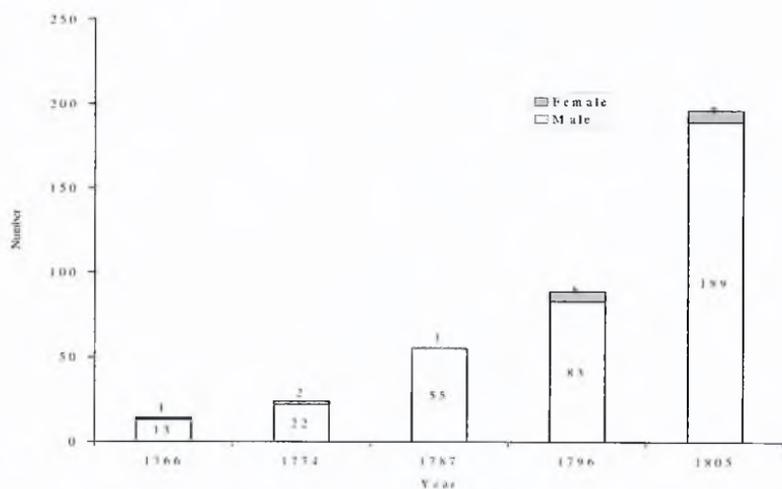


FIGURE 3 *Brokers in Liverpool, 1766–1805. Source: Liverpool trade directories.*

was therefore in business for at least four years.⁷³ It would also appear that she was involved in some sort of long distance domestic trade.

In later years, however, women seem to have been confined to household brokering. This was the only term ascribed to women brokers from 1787 onwards. In the case of both men and women, household brokers were concentrated in one road, Stanley Street. Although this street is not particularly near the docks or in a cheaper 'area', the cluster suggests specialisation in cheap furniture and bric-a-brac for the many migrants. This is confirmed by the fact that the area between Whitechapel and Dale Street, in which Stanley Street was located, was full of cheap cellar housing.⁷⁴ Women were therefore performing a much lower-status role, and one perhaps sanctioned by its connection with homemaking functions. This may suggest that whilst there was increasing diversity, women were allowed certain roles which were judged suitably feminine, but that they still faced male competition.

⁷³ Will of John Pratt, WCW Pratt, 15 June 1770; Will of Isabell Pratt, WCW Isabell Pratt, 24 Sep. 1777, Lancs Record Office.

⁷⁴ I. C. Taylor, 'The court and cellar dwelling: The eighteenth century origin of the Liverpool slum', *THLSC*, 122 (1970), pp. 67–90.

Shopkeepers

The term shopkeeper in this period often meant anyone selling goods in a shop, whether they made those items or not.⁷⁵ However, here it means those who were retailers only. Shopkeepers can be divided into two broad groups; those that sold particular items or groups of items, and those of a far more general nature. In the former we might include fruiterers, cheesemongers, fishmongers, snuff shops, stationers and booksellers, ironmongers, earthenware or china shops, seed shops, or tobacconist shops, all present in Liverpool by 1805. To a certain extent these were only bound together by the fact that they were retailers. However, those that specialised were likely to be thought of as more respectable than the more general retailers. For example, a tobacconist was often thought of as respectable, as was a fruiterer and cheesemonger, although the last two might make a more precarious living due to the perishable nature of their stock. It did require some small capital to set up a business of this sort, depending on the location in the town and the exact nature of the stock. Some of these specialist shopkeepers, as with other traders during this period would have had part of their house, usually the front windowed room, devoted to the business. Others may have had a more prestigious location in the town centre, such as Castle Street, the place to be seen in Liverpool at this time.⁷⁶

The general shopkeeper was almost another species entirely.⁷⁷ They often set up small stalls or shops attached to their house, at the market, traded from a room in their house, or even through a window. Very little capital was required, just some credit from a local grocer or small dealer to buy whatever commodities they could acquire. These might include tea, sugar, flour, treacle, currants, bread, butter, candles, cotton, and soap—anything needed daily.⁷⁸ Their stock was therefore far more general. Shopkeeper as a general

⁷⁵ H.-C. Mui & L. H. Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping in eighteenth century England*, (London, 1989); I. Mitchell, 'The development of urban retailing', in P. Clark, ed., *The transformation of English provincial towns* (London, 1984), pp. 259–83; P. Cleary, 'She will be in the Shop: Women's sphere of trade in eighteenth century Philadelphia and New York', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 119 (1995), pp. 181–202.

⁷⁶ J. Langton & P. Laxton, 'Parish registers and urban structure: The example of late eighteenth century Liverpool', *Urban History Yearbook*, 5 (1978), pp 74–84.

⁷⁷ General shops includes huckster shops where they were listed as such, other hucksters were included in itinerant dealers.

⁷⁸ Mui & Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping*, p. 216.

term is not listed in the contemporary literature, maybe because it was understood to be an artisan who retailed his own produce.⁷⁹ Presumably therefore there was no apprenticeship to be had, and the status attached would be commensurately low. Many women ran huckster shops and to be called a huckster in particular, was a term of abuse: 'There cannot be a more ignominious trade, than the being Hucksters to such vile merchandise'.⁸⁰ The status of the shopkeeper was in fact often dependant on the status of the customers.⁸¹ The fact that many women were shopkeepers in a small way would have further reduced the status of this sector. However, this low status should not detract from the numbers involved and the importance of these small shops to local poor communities. Depending on the goods sold, and their place in the hierarchy, shopkeepers may have bought their goods from merchants, dealers, direct from farmers or producers, fishermen, dealers or wholesalers, or even shopkeepers slightly higher up the social scale. The fact that they would split commodities into very small parcels and extend limited credit provided a life-line for those on a day-to-day existence. They were also a non-threatening environment for the poor and badly-dressed. The many shops on Hurst Street, located behind the Old and Salthouse Docks, in the period 1787 to 1796 probably catered to dockers, mariners and their families.

The diversity of specialist shops towards the end of the period is striking; Staffordshireware shops, hardwaremen, booksellers, druggists, slopshops, stationers and music sellers, all appear consistently in Liverpool in the 1790s. Despite the fact that as a percentage of all shops in Liverpool they were in decline, the actual number of specific shops grew, as shown in Table 1. Demand must have increased substantially for it to be worth having so many special shops for these items (there were 176 in 1805), and suggests the growing importance of Liverpool as a regional shopping centre. However, one effect of increasing urbanisation and the increase in the population of the city generally, was the rise in the lower status, general shops. There were no general shopkeepers listed in 1766, and only one in 1774, but they grew from 35% in 1787 to 60% of all shopkeepers in 1805. The fact that there was room for even more shops is highlighted by the very high ratio of persons to shops in

⁷⁹ The term is not listed by Campbell for example.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Johnson, *Dictionary*.

⁸¹ Sanderson, *Women and work*, p. 101.

TABLE 1 Specific-item shops* in Liverpool, 1766–1805

Year	Number	As % of all shops
1766	45	100.0
1774	78	98.7
1787	104	65.0
1796	160	55.0
1805	176	40.0

* Those that were not listed simply as 'shopkeeper' or 'storekeeper'.

Source: Liverpool trade directories.

Liverpool in 1785—141:1—when the average for the North was 69.7:1.⁸² This means that although there was a rise in these small scale and local shops, they were probably still not meeting the demand from the local population.

Liverpool women were seen in diverse shopkeeping roles such as shoe-seller (Rachel Smith in 1796), druggist (Jane Hemmingway in 1774), and running toy shops (Mrs Elizabeth Brown in 1796). However, as a percentage of all women shopkeepers, those working as general shopkeepers far outnumbered those working in other areas. Far more typical was Sarah Tyson, running a general shop in Lancelot's Hey in 1787. By 1805, 92% of women shopkeepers were working as lower-status general shopkeepers. Therefore, although the numbers for women involved in shopkeeping in Figure 4 look relatively impressive, they were in fact only active within a limited area. It should also be noted that men were also working in general shopkeeping. Women accounted for around half of all general shopkeepers in the period, varying from 36% in 1787 to 53% in 1796: the figure for 1804 was 44%.⁸³

However, the higher status shops were effectively monopolised by men. This could be due either to credit availability or because general shopkeeping was more easily accessible work for women. It could also be a reflection of the fact that most of the women entered with an occupation in the directories were probably spinsters and widows. They were therefore more likely to be poor as a conse-

⁸² Based on tax assessments. Mui & Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping*, p. 89.

⁸³ Calculated from Liverpool trade directories.

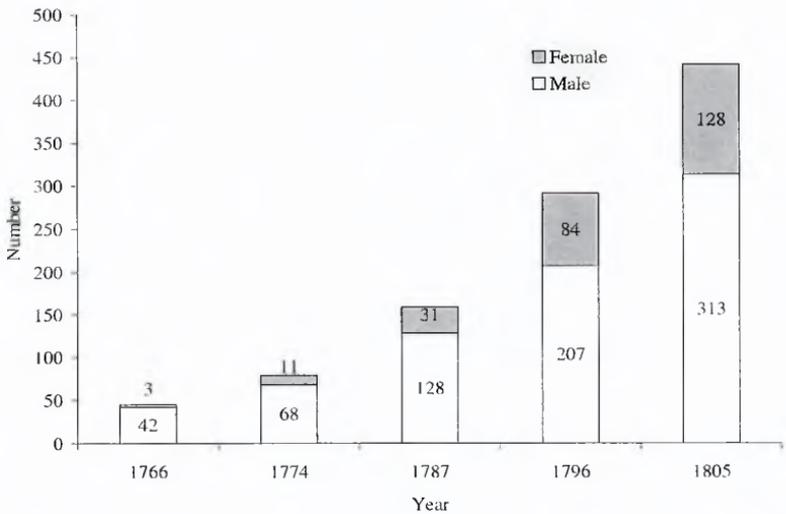


FIGURE 4 *Shopkeepers in Liverpool, 1766–1805. Source: Liverpool trade directories.*

quence, and have little or no capital with which to start up a specialist business. However, we should not negate the importance of small shops to the economy as a whole. Small general shops of this kind were very important in distributing the new consumer items, both food and manufactures to the poor; ‘such shops performed indispensable services’.⁸⁴

Itinerant dealers

Even further down the chain were the itinerant dealers. They bought their goods from wholesalers or tradesmen in cities, and in the case of textiles, from the so-called ‘Manchester Men’.⁸⁵ Itinerant dealers travelled on horse back, or on foot, with packs on their backs. There being no apprenticeship, they could start business as long as they could get enough cash or credit to purchase their initial stock.⁸⁶ To be a pedlar, or itinerant dealer of any consequence, meant buying stock on credit, and therefore having security on which to base it.

⁸⁴ Mui & Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping*, p. 6.

⁸⁵ Westerfield, *Middlemen*, p. 315.

⁸⁶ In mainland Europe, pedlars did undertake apprenticeships to be pedlars in small shops. Fontaine, *History of pedlars*, pp. 74–76.

They were not therefore always completely destitute. Many established fixed-shop retailers were jealous of the fact that itinerants had very small running costs, no rent, no contribution to Pitt's short lived Shop Tax (1785–1789), and no status to uphold in living conditions or clothing. They also often only took cash whilst the shopkeepers extended credit, although there is evidence from the seventeenth century of chapmen selling large quantities on credit.⁸⁷ Pressure from the shopkeepers led to the license for hawkers being charged at £8 'per beast' in 1785, in addition to the 'on-foot' licence, a cost far heavier than that sustained by the fixed shopkeepers. There were many other restrictions on itinerant dealers such as not selling within two miles of a city except on market day. The monetary burden was repealed along with the Shop Tax in 1789, but the other restrictions were not removed until 1795.⁸⁸

One type of itinerant dealer was a higgler, who sold country provisions such as eggs and cheese in the town.⁸⁹ They (and to some extent hucksters without a shop), were subject to less control, and mostly sold from carts, baskets or bundles around the town and country. They were often thought to be major perpetrators of crimes such as regrating, defined as buying commodities in order to sell them at the same or a neighbouring market. To be a higgler did not require an apprenticeship, just a small amount of cash or credit. They must have dealt almost on a day by day existence, and were among the poorest members of the trading community. However, it must be remembered that, as with chapmen and others, these various itinerant dealers were often the only access that many rural dwellers had to the wider consumer economy. With regard to provisions, although they may have dealt in the poorest quality items, they were perhaps all that poor folk could afford. Itinerant dealers were retailers on a very small scale, and often sold dreams and entertainment as much as commodities; they were part of the wider fabric of rural life.⁹⁰ People such as Robert Jennish of Chapel

⁸⁷ M. Spufford, *The great reclothing of England: Petty chapmen and their wares in the seventeenth century*, (London, 1984), p. 69.

⁸⁸ Mui & Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping*, pp. 80–81.

⁸⁹ *OED* describes hucksters as retailers in small goods, in a petty shop, booth or stall and gives examples including apples; higgles as someone who supplies/buys produce, especially dairy or poultry, in exchange for petty goods from the town.

⁹⁰ Fontaine allows for a very wide definition of pedlar, but many were destitute and living on the margin. Fontaine, *History of pedlars*, pp. 79–81.

Street in 1766, were not just selling mugs, but would have taken news, gossip, and tales of city life into the countryside.

The fact that not many itinerant dealers were listed in the directories does not mean that we should ignore them. They were vital links in the distribution chain. Of course they were, by their very nature, less likely to be entered in the trade directories, and this is reflected in Figure 5. Many were resident in rural areas and went peddling after the harvest was in. Others set up shop in a town, but were prepared to go back on the road if their business failed.⁹¹ Many would come into town for a short while, collect some goods, most likely on credit, and then go into the hinterland again to sell their wares. Others, urban hawkers, may have been itinerant only within the city. Perhaps Henry Dixon, newsman of Cook Street, was one such person. Ellen Otty, huckster, living in Hackins Hey, may have provided cheap vegetables to the poor in 1796. Mitchell notes that many itinerant dealers sold food that could no longer be sold by shops, and may have provided an 'essential link in rapidly growing areas' where cheap food was in demand.⁹²

However, there were very few itinerants listed in the directories (although the numbers listed were increasing over the period). This could be due to the fact that many pedlars were in fact destitute, and/or rural dwellers, as itinerant dealers were still very important as late as the 1770s in distributing to rural areas.⁹³ This could be true of pottery for example, which was still quite a large business in Liverpool.⁹⁴ Another factor could be that as all itinerant dealers relied on personal contacts to a greater extent, they did not find entry in the directories worthwhile.⁹⁵ The very fact that they were mobile would also reduce the usefulness of an entry. Therefore, although the figures presented here are small, we should not forget that itinerant traders no doubt existed in far larger numbers, some never paying for a licence. Many of them may therefore have been on the margins of legality and economic viability, but they were important to the distribution process as a whole.

⁹¹ Fontaine, *History of pedlars*, pp. 79–92.

⁹² Mitchell, 'Development of urban retailing', p. 269.

⁹³ Weatherill, 'Business of middleman', p. 67.

⁹⁴ One man was listed as a 'mug man' in 1766 in Liverpool, but all the others were newsmen. Huckster shops were included in shopkeepers. The term chapman was not used in Liverpool, except occasionally in the newspapers.

⁹⁵ Fontaine, *History of pedlars*, pp. 89–90.

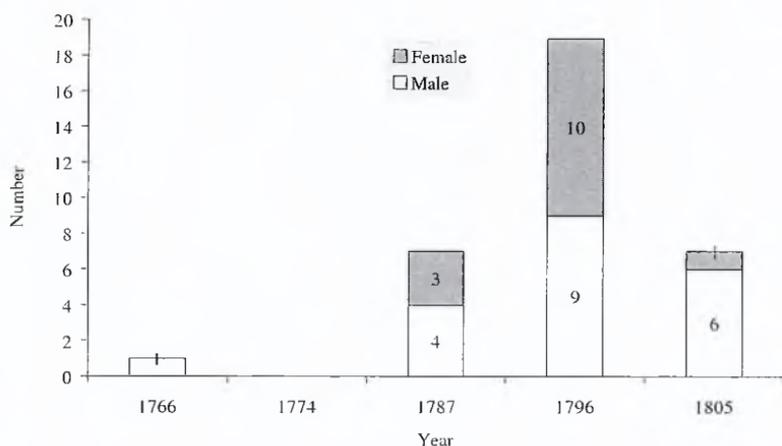


FIGURE 5 *Itinerant dealers in Liverpool, 1766–1805. Source: Liverpool trade directories.*

Conclusion

This discussion has highlighted the diversity of the trading community, and, importantly, the role that women played within it. There were many links in the non-linear chain that facilitated the movement of goods from producer to consumer. Merchants may have been involved in the shipping of goods across the Atlantic, but other traders were required to collect goods for export; break down imports into smaller and smaller quantities; and distribute at the local/regional level in order that both rich and poor could have access to them. It would also appear that the diversification of the economy generally, as both manufactured goods and grocery products increased, was reflected in the trading community. Not only did the actual numbers of traders increase, the roles that people performed also changed. The increasing use of particular nomenclatures in the merchant, broker and shopkeeping sector highlights this.

In some ways this increasing diversity worked to the advantage of women. It has been argued that many women were active in the Liverpool trading community. The further down the status scale, the more women were found trading in those sectors. This was often because these roles required less capital or credit in order to begin

trading, an important factor when female access to capital and credit was so circumscribed. There were also many more roles in which women could take a part as the economy changed. Women may also have found that roles such as shopkeeper fitted in with their family responsibilities. Women generally, and all lesser traders, therefore had lower status than those sectors which required capital and provided lots of onward credit such as merchants. However, in an industrialising and urbanising environment, where self-sufficiency was not an option, these traders were vital in distributing the new consumer goods, both food and manufactures, all around the world and to a growing population, near and far. Without these lesser traders, who split goods up into ever smaller parcels, and extended credit in very small amounts, many of the new urban poor would not have been able to get food and the other small everyday goods they required at all. These may have been for very small amounts, but cumulatively the purchases must have constituted a considerable level of demand. The lesser traders therefore fulfilled a vital distribution role, linking supply and increasing demand.

Much of the existing historiography on traders or merchant communities is useful. It helps to illuminate trans-Atlantic trading networks and illustrates how people entered or left the merchant community. However, these works do not tell the whole story; they do not explain how goods got around the city, from and to the hinterland and to the consumer. It has been argued here that the trading community was in fact much more diverse than the elite (male) merchants. It was a microcosm of the wider one, which included both rich and poor, male and female. Although it is true to say that women were to be found mostly 'in the shop', we should not under-estimate the importance of women, and indeed all lesser traders to the economy of the port. They were part of a growing and diverse trading community fulfilling a vital distribution role, in which itinerant dealers were just as necessary as merchants.

APPENDIX A: TRADE DIRECTORIES

This appendix provides a brief rationale for the construction and sampling of the database on which this paper is based. 100% samples were taken of the trade directories from 1766, 1774,

1787, 1796 and 1805.⁹⁶ The decision to use these years was based on both extant copies of the trade directories and the desire to build a time series analysis. The name of every man and woman who qualified as a trader under the definition discussed earlier in the article was entered. In contrast, milliners were excluded because their role mostly comprised making garments and accessories rather than selling them. Hatters were excluded because it was considered that they made and sold hats. As the period progressed, many hatters may come to have only sold hats rather than making and selling them. This may also have been the case with other trades-people as specialisation increased. However, as is always the case, some compromise is inevitable. The main function of the research was the study of distributors and many more people who might have been included under another definition were excluded. For example, pawnbrokers were excluded because they were considered to be providing a financial rather than a distributive service. The use of a wider definition would have reduced the number of years that could be studied, and the sampling of those years. Furthermore, including an analysis of more sectors would have left less space for detailed analysis on those sectors which are included. It should be remembered the inclusion of all 'traders' as defined in this study has meant a far wider analysis of the distribution process than is normally given, and has facilitated a detailed discussion of the contribution of women to the formal economy.

The directories included many double entries and people who were entered only under partnerships. This was accounted for by a number of processes. First, everyone entered under a partnership was entered separately. For example, Mary and Ann Tuohy, tea dealers, were entered twice, once for each person. This allowed a count of individuals rather than firms involved in each sector, and also allowed a trace to be kept of who worked with whom and the tracing of a particular person should an alphabetical search be performed. This led to the duplication of some names, in addition to those already entered twice in the original directory; for example, as both a banker and a merchant. A solution was found to these various problems by adding an extra column in the table for gender.

⁹⁶ My thanks must be extended to Mr Paul Laxton of the Department of Geography, University of Liverpool, for the use of his computerised versions of the 1796 and 1805 trade directories.

This distinguished between male and female, official or office space and duplicate entries (M = male, F = female, O = official, D = duplicate). Where a person was listed with two occupations, a decision was made as to their primary function, an 'M' or 'F' entered for gender by the primary entry, and a 'D' for duplicate by any others. Where a person was listed with a dual occupation the first listed was taken to be the primary occupation. The total numbers of persons listed for each year, after making for these allowances was as follows: 1,115 (1766); 2,534 (1774); 3,178 (1787); 9,009 (1796); and 8,760 (1805).

APPENDIX B: CATEGORIES INCLUDED IN THE TRADING SECTORS

This appendix contains a list of all sub-categories included in each trading sector included in the whole trading community (including those not discussed in this paper). The sector in which a trader was included was the first or only occupation listed in the directory entries. For a rationale of this process see Appendix A.

Broker: Any commodity broker, broker for the flats, commission broker, exchange broker, household broker, insurance broker, mercantile broker, ship broker, stock broker.

Dealer: Any commodity dealer, corn seller, dry salter, flourman or flourseller, glassman, lime seller, meal man, meal seller, milkman/woman, pork seller, ship dealer, trader, tripe seller, victualler.

Factor: Any commodity factor, commission factor.

Grocer: All grocers and greengrocers except wholesale grocers.

Itinerant Dealer: Huckster (not huckster shop), itinerant dealer, mug man, newsman or carrier, pedlar, ragman, tinker, travelling stationer.

Merchant: Any commodity merchant, commission merchant.

Draper, Habersasher, Hosier and Mercer: Draper, haberdasher, hosier, mercer.

Shopkeeper: Bookseller, Chandler, cheesemonger, corn chandler, druggist, fishmonger, flour shop, fruiterer, hardwareman, ironmonger, music seller, paper seller, printseller, ship chandler, slopseller, stationer, tobacconist, toyman, wine seller. Any store

or shopkeeper including huckster shop was counted as a 'general' shop.

Wholesaler, Warehouse-Keeper and Auctioneer: Appraiser, auctioneer, clothier, repositories, vaults, vendue cryer or holder, warehousemen, warehouses and wholesalers of any commodity.

