

SHIPPING AND SHIPBUILDING IN THE PORT OF CHESTER IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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IN a previous paper,⁽¹⁾ some account has been given of the efforts to improve the navigation of the River Dee in the eighteenth century, and some quantitative analysis attempted of the nature and extent of trade to and from the estuary. The present paper is concerned more particularly with the trades in which Chester's own shipping was deployed, since a distinction should be drawn between the total shipping involved in a port's trade and the extent to which local shipping participated in it. (For example, in the coal trade of South Wales, Welsh shipping played a relatively small part until the end of the eighteenth century.) Similarly, much of Chester's trade seems to have been carried on in shipping owned elsewhere, but, on the other hand, Chester-owned shipping may be found participating in the trade of other ports to an extent which was perhaps unusual among ports of similar size. In this paper, first the nature of Chester's own shipping is discussed, and then some brief illustrations are given of how such tonnage was employed in more distant waters. Next there follows a necessarily short account, based on the scanty records available, of some of the shipowners involved, and, finally, attention is drawn to an important element in the mercantile economy of the estuary—the nature and extent of shipbuilding during the period. However, it must be emphasised at the outset that what follows is based almost exclusively upon records available in London, some of which hitherto have been seldom utilised in studies of the maritime history of British ports. Much remains to be done by the local historian familiar with local records, who may expand and modify this account of the shipping of Chester in the eighteenth century.

I CHESTER SHIPPING

A return made in 1701 gives the number of vessels owned at

⁽¹⁾ TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 114 (1963).

Chester as 25, totalling 1,925 tons and employing 196 men.⁽²⁾ For the years between 1702 and 1782 there exists a series of figures showing the total tonnage of shipping owned at each of the outports, but unfortunately it does not give the number of vessels so owned. The figures for Chester are given in Table 1.⁽³⁾ These figures suggest that Chester's shipping showed but little growth during most of the eighteenth century, and that the period of greatest prosperity may well have been during the first two decades, when, presumably, the supremacy of Liverpool had yet to be finally established. The tonnage of shipping owned after these more prosperous decades remained fairly constant at lower levels until the late 1770s, but the revival in foreign trade which occurred at that time was not sustained and the period ends with the shipping industry of Chester in apparent decline. It may be tentatively suggested that an increasing proportion of Chester's shipping was finding employment outside its home waters, in which case such shipping would not be included in the official returns for Chester. The loss of a direct West Indian sugar trade and the elimination of Chester as an importer of American tobacco contributed to the decline after the first few decades of the century. Finally, the American War of Independence struck a blow at a more important element in the prosperity of Chester's shipping industry from which the port never fully recovered.⁽⁴⁾

With the passing of the 1786 Registration Act⁽⁵⁾ reliable details of shipping, with statistics derived therefrom, are available for many British ports. Unfortunately, unlike those

⁽²⁾ P.R.O., CO.388/9, f. 77, which was a return made to the Commissioners of Customs in response to their circular letter of 24 January 1701. A similar return is quoted and discussed by J. H. Andrews, "English Merchant Shipping in 1701", *Mariner's Mirror*, XLI, No. 3, citing P.R.O., Adm. 1/3863. The figures for Chester are identical in both returns, but they differ in respect of certain other ports.

⁽³⁾ Concerning these returns, see G. N. Clark, *Guide to English Commercial Statistics 1696-1782* (1938), pp. 50-1. T. S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750* (1938), Appendix 7, lists the tonnage of vessels owned at the outports employed in the coasting trade between 1709 and 1751. Professor Willan suggests that the "suspicious uniformity" he detects in the figures was the consequence of the returns not having been revised and brought up to date. R. C. Jarvis, "Cumberland Shipping in the Eighteenth Century", *Trans. Cumb. & West. Antiq. & Arch. Soc.*, LIV, N.S., p. 218, fn 16, suggests, on the other hand, that the last of a series of identical figures is correct, the earlier being interpolated and retrospective guesses. In the case of Chester the yearly variations in both the coasting and foreign trades suggest that there was little guesswork: only for a few years of coasting trade towards the end of the series is there any uniformity. Sir George Clark's caveat concerning vessels absent from their home ports for more than a year has to be borne in mind, and may be an important factor in the Chester returns.

⁽⁴⁾ See TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 114, pp. 106-7.

⁽⁵⁾ 26 Geo. III, c. 60.

for the nearby ports of Beaumaris, Liverpool, and Lancaster, no registrar books survive for Chester before 1836.⁽⁶⁾ Some reconstruction of the missing registrations is possible, however, and statistical summaries, which provide a framework within which to check such reconstructions, are available for the years between 1788 and 1808,⁽⁷⁾ making it possible to trace the history of both Chester's shipowning and shipbuilding activity.

Table 1

TONNAGE OF SHIPPING BELONGING TO THE PORT OF
CHESTER WHICH TRADED TO OR FROM FOREIGN
PORTS OR COASTWISE, ACCOUNTING EACH VESSEL
BUT ONCE EACH YEAR, FOR YEARS BETWEEN 1709
AND 1785

Year	Foreign	Coasting	Total	Year	Foreign	Coasting	Total
1709	2,039	590	2,659	1765	606	1,012	1,618
1716	2,824	550	3,374	1766	795	1,024	1,819
1723	1,404	503	1,907	1767	705	746	1,415
1730	937	665	1,602	1768	592	530	1,122
1737	1,091	588	1,679	1769	1,070	655	1,725
1744	904	420	1,324	1770	1,076	1,160	2,236
1751	778	563	1,341	1771	1,058	590	1,648
1752	824	459	1,283	1772	1,119	864	1,983
1753	838	609	1,447	1773	1,161	700	1,861
1754	730	610	1,340	1774	1,264	730	1,976
1755	606	435	1,044	1775	1,349	640	1,909
1756	560	594	1,154	1776	1,449	680	2,129
1757	568	614	1,182	1777	1,799	680	2,479
1758	815	532	1,347	1778	1,689	680	2,369
1759	700	637	1,337	1779	1,480	600	2,080
1760	746	692	1,438	1780	1,080	500	1,580
1761	860	820	1,680	1781	710	400	1,110
1762	750	650	1,400	1782	780	290	1,070
1763	851	719	1,570	1785	700	300	1,000
1764	548	822	1,370				

Sources: B.M., Add. MSS. 11255 and 38389.

Note: The total for 1709 includes 30 tons of shipping engaged in fishing; subsequently, according to this source, Chester had no vessels so employed, despite the considerable quantities of herrings landed in some years during the 1760s and 1770s. See Colin Matheson, *Wales and the Sea Fisheries* (1929), Appendix III.

In 1789 there were 27 vessels of 1,999 tons registered at Chester, and by 1808 registrations had increased modestly to 39 vessels of 2,938 tons, an increase in tonnage of about 46 per cent. During the same period, British shipping as a whole

⁽⁶⁾ Although it is possible to extract full particulars of Chester shipping from 1814 onwards (with the exception of 1816) from the duplicate registration particulars kept with other records of the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen at Ashridge, Herts.

⁽⁷⁾ P.R.O., Customs 17/10-30. The yearly returns of vessels registered at Chester are summarised in Appendix A.

expanded by approximately 62 per cent,⁽⁸⁾ so that Chester's relative position as a shipowning centre, modest as it was, manifested some decline, partially, no doubt, as a consequence of the continuing difficulties in maintaining an adequate channel to the town. Of the 33 vessels registered at Chester from the commencement of registration in August 1786 until the end of 1788, full particulars of 20 vessels have been traced,⁽⁹⁾ and at least some information has been found concerning a further ten vessels, so that a reasonable sample is available from which general conclusions as to the nature of Chester's shipping at this time may be drawn.⁽¹⁰⁾ From our sample, we find that the average tonnage of a Chester vessel was 72 tons, and the average age five years. Whilst the average tonnage is below the national average (102 tons in 1788), the age of Chester shipping seems to have been below that of many other ports: it would appear that Chester had a modern, well-found fleet to rely upon for her needs.⁽¹¹⁾ Of the 22 vessels whose rig is known, eleven were sloops, there were six brigantines, two brigs, and one each of ship, flat or dogger, and galliot. Of the 20 vessels whose place of build is known, twelve were built within the port of Chester, three each at Liverpool and Barmouth, and one each at Carnarvon and Newnham, Gloucestershire. The later registration details available for the years from 1790 to 1805 suggest that Chester was largely self-sufficient in new tonnage and that Chester shipbuilders were able to meet all local demands, since most of the newly-built vessels registered there for the first time appear to have been built within the

⁽⁸⁾ Cf., the corresponding registrations at Liverpool and Beaumaris in 1791 and 1808:

	1791 (Tons)	1808 (Tons)
Liverpool ..	83,696	162,343
Beaumaris ..	13,409	21,291

⁽⁹⁾ For a brief account of some of the methods used in tracing "missing" registrations, see R. Craig, "The Emergence of a Shipowning Community at Llanelly", *Carmarthen Antiquary*, III, Pt. I (1959), Appendix I.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Since only a proportion of the total number of registrations is so far accounted for, it is not possible to subject the data to the detailed analysis suggested by R. C. Jarvis for the port of Liverpool, *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 105.

⁽¹¹⁾ From the writer's considerable records of British shipping, the following calculations of the age of vessels registered at various ports may serve as a comparison:

	Average Age (Years)
Liverpool (random sample of 100 registrations, 1786-7)	8½
Exeter (first 100 registrations)	8½
London (Coast Trade register, first 100 registrations)	24
Lancaster (first 100 registrations)	7
Whitehaven (first 100 registrations)	15

However, Chepstow had a younger fleet than Chester, the shipping registered there between 1786 and 1788 averaging just under four years. See G. E. Farr, *Chepstow Ships* (1954), *passim*.

port. A few vessels built elsewhere were admitted to the Chester registers, but these were mostly vessels acquired secondhand from the shipowners of other ports. During this period Chester shipyards were making considerable contributions to the fleets of other ports, and this activity is discussed in Section IV, below.

II CHESTER SHIPPING IN THE DEEP SEA TRADES

Some assessment of the Irish trade has been attempted in a previous paper⁽¹²⁾ and further consideration of this important activity, together with an account of the coastwise and Baltic trades, must await more thorough examination of the material in the Port Books which survive. Here, some examples have been chosen to illustrate the activity of Chester-owned vessels in more distant waters, since it is perhaps in this respect that Chester shipowners showed more enterprise than the owners in many ports of similar size. Very few such ports could boast of engaging in privateering, slaving, the Newfoundland, Baltic, Mediterranean and American trades, besides marked activity in carrying lead and cheese in home waters, and a prosperous Irish trade. Whether deep-sea enterprise earned its just reward is to be doubted, except possibly in the Newfoundland trade, since participation in oceanic commerce was at best spasmodic rather than continuous, suggesting that Chester shipowners did not find very profitable competition with, for example, the big Liverpool merchant houses. In an age when so much maritime activity was undertaken by a merchant community having widespread commercial links with the colonial territories, the explanation of Chester's inability to sustain long-standing overseas trade may lie in the apparent absence of such close links, coupled with the fact that Chester's port was not supported by a hinterland manifesting any considerable economic growth. However, there were at least two links of some importance; a long-standing Newfoundland trade, and a less enduring link with America.

There had been early commercial relationships between Chester and Newfoundland, and Chester shipping was employed in this trade as early as 1530.⁽¹³⁾ One Chester vessel was in the trade in 1700, carrying her stock-fish cargo to Cadiz for discharge;⁽¹⁴⁾ and later in the eighteenth century, perhaps as a consequence of John Rogers establishing a Newfoundland

⁽¹²⁾ TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 114.

⁽¹³⁾ H. A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries* (1954), p. 34.

⁽¹⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Company in the 1770s,⁽¹⁵⁾ trade was intensified. Most vessels sailed on a triangular route, as, for example, did the *Nimrod*, William Ash master, which arrived at Chester in 1774 from Barcelona, Alicante and Malaga, laden with raisins, nuts, olive-oil, corkwood, Spanish wine, olives, almonds and anchovies. She had previously left Chester for Newfoundland, and from thence had sailed to Barcelona with fish "British taken and cured". After discharging her fish cargo at Barcelona she took on board her appetising freight, consigned to John Rogers, the Chester merchant who had organised the Newfoundland Company.⁽¹⁶⁾ While an official return suggests that only one or two vessels fitted out from the River Dee for Newfoundland annually between 1769 and 1774, and between 1787 and 1792,⁽¹⁷⁾ the number of Admiralty passes issued for such voyages by Chester vessels suggests that Chester's participation was somewhat more substantial, since between three and five vessels have been found engaging in the trade during those years; in addition to which, some Chester vessels were to be found loading for Newfoundland from Liverpool or London. For example the *Betsey*, of Chester, a British-built vessel of 150 tons and carrying a crew of ten, was issued with a pass dated 1 June 1770 for a voyage to Newfoundland and the "Streights" from London,⁽¹⁸⁾ and the *Ann*, of Chester, a foreign-built prize made free, a brigantine of 110 tons with a crew of ten and Thomas Pierce as master, was granted a pass at Liverpool in 1785 for a similar Newfoundland voyage.⁽¹⁹⁾ The *Thomas*, of Chester, of which first John Harvey and later Samuel Gillion were masters, made many Newfoundland voyages between 1776 and 1780.⁽²⁰⁾ She was a plantation-built ship of 200 tons, armed with between two and ten guns, and she carried a crew which varied between 12 and 15 men. Other Chester vessels which participated in the trade were the *Adventure* (John Smallwood), of 120 tons, between 1775 and 1778; the *Britannia* (William Huntingdon), of 150 tons, in 1778; and the *Charlotte* (William Price), of 80 tons, in the same year.⁽²¹⁾

⁽¹⁵⁾ C. Armour, "The Trade of Chester and the State of the Dee Navigation, 1600-1800" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1957), p. 31.

⁽¹⁶⁾ P.R.O., E.190/1442/1.

⁽¹⁷⁾ *First Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the State of the Trade to Newfoundland*, XII (1793), Appendix 6 (A).

⁽¹⁸⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/96, Pass No. 724.

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 7/104, No. 1171.

⁽²⁰⁾ Adm. 7/100, Nos. 823 and 1,773 (1775-6); 7/102, No. 270 (1777); 7/103, No. 2,759 (1780).

⁽²¹⁾ *Adventure*, Adm. 7/100, Nos. 959 and 2,706 (1775-6); 7/102, No. 1,147 (1778); *Britannia*, 7/102, No. 1,281 (1778); *Charlotte*, *ibid.*, No. 1,476.

Not all the vessels in the trade to Newfoundland, however, were exclusively owned in Chester, nor was it invariably the custom to register vessels at the British port. The *Dee*, although described as "of Chester", was officially registered at St. Johns, Newfoundland in October 1782, and was owned jointly by Robert Roberts of St. Johns and William Thomas, a Chester merchant.⁽²²⁾ Again, after the 1786 Registration Act we find the *Thomas and Mary* registered at St. Johns, although this 45 ton vessel was described as "of Chester" when she entered inwards at Liverpool in February 1798.⁽²³⁾ In September of the same year a pass was issued for her voyage from Liverpool to Gibraltar under the command of Charles Cameron with a crew of seven and mounting four guns: she was owned by George Elliot, a Chester merchant.⁽²⁴⁾ Despite this late eighteenth-century illustration of the Newfoundland trade and its connections with Chester, references to commercial links grow more scattered, and it would seem that little activity continued into the following century. Perhaps the trade had reached its peak in the 1770s, when Chester's share of the commerce was officially recognised.⁽²⁵⁾

A few Chester vessels engaged in the slave trade. Gomer Williams quotes the reports of two slave-ship masters who, in 1757, witnessed the destruction of the *Black Prince*, of Chester, commanded by Captain William Creevey, putative father of the celebrated diarist.⁽²⁶⁾ The *Black Prince*, together with some Liverpool slavers, was attacked by two French men-of-war whilst at anchor at Melimba Roads, off the coast of Africa, in

⁽²²⁾ Liverpool Custom House, *Liverpool Plantation Register*, Vol. 4, entry dated Liverpool 5 May 1784: I am indebted to M. M. Schofield for drawing my attention to this entry.

⁽²³⁾ Liverpool Custom House, "*Subsidiary, Other Ports*" Register Book, Vol. 3, entry dated 12 February 1798. She was registered at St. Johns on 11 December 1797, No. 50.

⁽²⁴⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/116, No. 9,613, where she is also described as "of Chester"

⁽²⁵⁾ Under 16 Geo. III, c. 37, which permitted biscuits and "pease" to be exported to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Bay Chaleur and Labrador, under a quota system for a limited period to give relief to those colonies whose food supplies had suffered dislocation by war. The quotas for Newfoundland were:

Biscuits		Peas		Biscuits		Peas	
	(Tons)	(Qrs)			(Tons)	(Qrs)	
London ..	250	300	Exeter ..	400	600		
Bristol ..	200	250	Liverpool ..	150	130		
Poole ..	300	300	Chester ..	100	120		
Dartmouth..	350	350	Weymouth ..	60	120		

It seems likely that these quotas correspond to the relative share in the Newfoundland trade of the ports named.

⁽²⁶⁾ Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers* (1906), pp. 482-6. About William and Thomas Creevey, see John Gore (Ed.) *The Creevey Papers* (1963), p. 2 and Appendix 1.

March 1757. Creevey, in the *Black Prince*, appears to have offered spirited resistance to the French attack, but was forced to run his vessel ashore, and on the following day the French burnt her. Creevey, helped by the Africans, was able to make his way home by way of Rotterdam. This had not been the first Chester venture into the slave trade. The snow *Saint George* was commissioned for a slaving voyage when, in 1750, an Admiralty pass was obtained for her voyage from Chester to Africa and America: she carried eight guns, had a crew of 29, measured 90 tons burthen, and was commanded by Joseph Seaman.⁽²⁷⁾ Another vessel employed in slaving in the 1770s was the *Juno*, of Chester, a ship of 120 tons, having four guns and 25 men in 1773 (but carrying eight guns and 30 men in 1775), commanded by Thomas Eagles.⁽²⁸⁾ A third vessel was the *True Blue*, of Chester, a snow of 90 tons, six guns and 25 men, commanded by Thomas Pountney, fitted out to sail from the River Dee in March 1773.⁽²⁹⁾ But Chester's participation in slaving was negligible compared with the activity at Liverpool and Bristol: similarly, there were few Chester privateers, although the *Empress of Russia* is perhaps worthy of note, since she must have been one of the largest vessels fitted out in the River Dee. Her letter of marque, granted in August 1779, gave as her master William Briggs, her crew as 100 (although her Admiralty pass issued in July recorded the number of crew as 120), and she was armed with 24 guns and two swivels; she was of 300 tons burthen.⁽³⁰⁾

⁽²⁷⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/86 No. 2,067. She was probably the Chester vessel mentioned in *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade & Plantations 1749/50-1753*, pp. 15, 22, 25. It seems likely also that she was the vessel which was noted as having cleared from Chester in 1753 by E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, Vol. III (1931), p. 507. P.R.O., T.64/276A/273 shows that there were only three clearances from Chester to Africa between 1735 and 1754. One vessel of 90 tons is shown as having cleared in the trade in the years 1750, 1752 and 1753. From her tonnage it seems probable that she was the *Saint George*.

⁽²⁸⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/98, No. 1,677 (1773); 7/100 No. 958 (1775). *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade & Plantations 1768-1775*, p. 439 records the "Order of the Lords of the Privy Council, dated October 9, 1775, referring to this Board, for their consideration and report, the petition of Thomas Cotgreave & Co., of Chester, merchants, praying leave to take on board and export certain military stores therein specified for the use and defence of the ship *Juno*, bound for Africa." C. Armour, *op. cit.*, p. 214, cites *Adam's Courant Weekly*, 5 December 1769, which records the sailing of the *Juno*, Captain Eagles, to Africa in that year. Armed with nine guns, she may well have been embarked upon a slaving voyage, from which it would seem possible that she was engaged continuously in slaving between 1769 and 1775, an exceptionally long time for a Chester vessel to be so employed.

⁽²⁹⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/98, No. 1,070.

⁽³⁰⁾ Adm. 7/318. Her owners are shown as Thomas Griffies, John Troughton, Robert Whitwell, John Dutton, Henry Flegg, Thomas Barnes and Nathaniel Dewsbury. For her pass, see Adm. 7/102, No. 2,294.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Chester vessels played some part in the tobacco trade from Virginia and Maryland, but the considerable variety of shipping employed in the Maryland trade noted by M. S. Morriss in her study⁽³¹⁾ had almost disappeared by mid-century, and Chester shipping, along with the shipping of such ports as Barnstaple, Lyme, Weymouth, Exeter and Dumfries, was largely excluded from the tobacco trade by the third decade of the century, and replaced by the shipping of ports such as Whitehaven and Glasgow. The elimination of the shipping of many minor outports was accompanied by the decay of a number of the lesser tobacco-importing centres, as for example, Dumfries, Beaumaris, Bideford and Weymouth.⁽³²⁾ Chester was one of the ports which ceased to have any direct interest in tobacco, but early in the eighteenth century some local vessels had been active, notably the *Providence*, 100 tons, built at Wexford in 1696, which took European goods from Chester to Rappahannock in 1701, returning to Chester with 196 hogsheads of tobacco.⁽³³⁾ The *Exchange*, of 90 tons, built at Parkgate in 1701, which made two voyages to James River in 1702 and 1703, was another, but she discharged her cargo of tobacco at London, and sailed on her return to James River in ballast.⁽³⁴⁾ Another vessel, the *Griffin's Head*, of Chester, of 100 tons, built at Chester in 1700, took European goods from Chester to James River in 1702, and returned to Chester in the same year with 256 hogsheads and one chest of tobacco.⁽³⁵⁾

A more lasting American link was that with South Carolina, which was only severed with the outbreak of the American War of Independence. Vessels engaged in this trade included the British-built snow *Diligence*, of Chester, eight guns and 14 crew, which went out to South Carolina in 1740. Bond for the return of the pass issued on this occasion was given by Robert Rose, a mariner of Chester.⁽³⁶⁾ The snow *Goodwin*, registered at Chester in September 1758, was another South Carolina trader, under the command of John Lasley. She had been built in Maryland in 1744, measured 120 tons, and carried ten guns and a crew of 14.⁽³⁷⁾ The *Goodwin* was still sailing under the

⁽³¹⁾ *Colonial Trade of Maryland 1689-1715* (1914), p. 88. See also J. H. Andrews "Anglo-American Trade in the Early Eighteenth Century", *The Geographical Review*, XLV, No. 1, pp. 99-110.

⁽³²⁾ The reasons for this decline are briefly described by T. C. Barker, "The Failure of Sir Thomas Johnson", *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 105, pp. 203-4.

⁽³³⁾ P.R.O., CO. 5/1441, Part 2.

⁽³⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, Parts 1, 2, 3.

⁽³⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, Parts 2, 3.

⁽³⁶⁾ Adm. 7/83, No. 1,471.

⁽³⁷⁾ Adm. 7/90, No. 792.

same master in December 1760, when she arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, on another voyage from England.⁽³⁸⁾ In 1768 we find another vessel in the South Carolina trade, the brig *Nancy* of Chester, which sailed from Liverpool under the command of George Minshall: she was plantation-built, a prize from the French, of 60 tons.⁽³⁹⁾ A year later, Minshall was master of the *Polly*, of Chester, of 90 tons, also bound from Liverpool for South Carolina.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The plantation-built ship *Chester*, of Chester, commanded by William Rogers, of 200 tons, arrived at Aberdeen in September 1772 from Maryland, with a cargo of tobacco, pipe and barrel staves, according to the report of the Collector of Customs at the Scottish port.⁽⁴¹⁾ In the same year this vessel cleared Aberdeen for Maryland with a freight of wine and coals, and in the year following she was employed in a voyage from Liverpool to Newfoundland and from thence to Leghorn.⁽⁴²⁾

As a final example of Chester's participation in the American trade, the ship *Fair American* is worthy of mention. Built in South Carolina in 1762, she was registered at Chester in October of that year, as measuring 200 tons. In December 1763 she arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, from Liverpool, under the command of John Minshall, and cleared again for Cowes (presumably for orders) in the following April.⁽⁴³⁾ In 1765 a pass was obtained for her voyage from the River Dee to South Carolina under the same master.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In June 1767 she arrived at Chester from South Carolina and Lisbon, having shipped from the American port 837 barrels and 91 half-barrels of rice (total weight 212 tons, 16 cwt. 2 qrs. 10 lbs.) "12 December last, to be carried to Lisbon by virtue of a licence from the Hon. Commissioners of Customs, dated 3 July 1765, which appears to have been landed as per certificate of the British Consul there, dated February 1767".⁽⁴⁵⁾ In September 1767, she again sailed from Liverpool for South Carolina.⁽⁴⁶⁾

⁽³⁸⁾ CO. 5/510.

⁽³⁹⁾ Adm. 7/90, No. 428.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Adm. 7/94, No. 2,476.

⁽⁴¹⁾ See the typescript extracts from the Collector to Board letter books (Scottish Ports) in the Library of H.M. Customs & Excise, London, E.C.3.

⁽⁴²⁾ Adm. 7/98, No. 1,284.

⁽⁴³⁾ CO.5/510.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Adm. 7/91, No. 1,973.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ E.190/1439/3. Rice was permitted to be shipped from Carolina to any part of Europe south of Finisterre under 3 Geo. II, c. 28 and 27 Geo. II, c. 18.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Adm. 7/94, No. 304. About this vessel, see also Roger Fisher, *Heart of Oak, the British Bulwark* (1771), pp. 120-3, where Fisher, a Liverpool shipwright, prints a letter he had written to the Navy Board in London in 1771, in which he praises the excellent preservation of her American oak timbers. At that time Fisher was engaged in lengthening her.

Just as Chester vessels were eliminated from the tobacco trade by the middle of the eighteenth century, so too Chester's small share in the West Indies trade declined, and comparatively little direct commerce between Chester and the Caribbean has been found after the turn of the century. The *Friendship*, of Chester, of 50 tons, took a cargo of sugar and logwood from Jamaica to Chester in 1700,⁽⁴⁷⁾ but commercial contacts, formerly fairly common, had by this time all but disappeared. Between 1710 and 1717 only one vessel, of 60 tons, sailed from Chester to the West Indies,⁽⁴⁸⁾ and between 1721 and 1730 there were only five arrivals of vessels at Chester from the sugar colonies: one of 60 tons in 1721 and 1722, two of 120 tons in 1725, and one of 70 tons in 1726.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Thereafter, the few Chester vessels sailing to the West Indies are most often to be found voyaging thence from London or Liverpool, since Chester merchants appear to have maintained but few West Indian connections. The small number of Chester vessels which visited the Caribbean later in the century included the *Mentor*, registered at Chester in September 1778, of 215 tons, 28 guns, and carrying 50 crew under the command of John Whiteside, which arrived at Kingston, Jamaica, in May 1782 from Liverpool, and which cleared for Liverpool again in June;⁽⁵⁰⁾ from the number of guns and crew carried it seems possible that she was engaged in privateering. Other Chester vessels sometimes to be found in the West Indies included the *Mary*, 60 tons and eight crew, Hugh Ball master, which arrived at London from Saint Christopher's in 1727,⁽⁵¹⁾ and another *Mary*, a brigantine of 70 tons, James Hunter master, which sailed from Liverpool to Barbados in 1764.⁽⁵²⁾

A much more significant proportion of Chester's shipping was engaged in trade to Spain and Portugal, where it is noticeable that vessels were much more consistently employed year in and year out. Furthermore, in these trades the cargoes tended to be more firmly based upon Chester's own commercial interests. The nature of the cargoes carried has already been suggested—lead and coal outwards, and fruit and wine home.⁽⁵³⁾ Some Chester craft were almost exclusively engaged in this trade, the only variation being when they were chartered to carry pig lead to one or other of the Northern Mediterranean

(47) P.R.O., CO.142/13.

(48) CO.388/18.

(49) T.64/276A/271.

(50) CO.142/19.

(51) Adm. 6/194.

(52) Adm. 7/91, No. 379.

(53) TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 114, pp. 115-28.

ports, such as Venice or Leghorn, whence they returned with wine, olives and skins. A few Irish traders, however, sometimes left home waters to carry a cargo to more distant Spanish or Italian harbours, as did the occasional vessel more usually employed in the trade between Chester and London, as, for example, the *Earle*, of Chester, a ship of 100 tons, of which Stephen Walters was master. Having been employed on the coastwise route between London and Chester in the 1720s, she sailed from Chester to Cadiz and the "Streights" in April 1732.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The *Bennett*, of Chester, was a regular visitor to Spain and Portugal in the 1730s. Under her master, Peter Ryder of Parkgate, she was sometimes described as a galley and at others as a ship, carried 13 crew and ten guns, and measured 130 tons.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The *Grosvenor*, under George Salisbury, was another Chester vessel which traded regularly to Spain and Portugal during the same decade. On one occasion she sailed from the Thames to Figueira and Oporto, and bond for the return of the pass issued was given by Salisbury (who was sometimes described as "of Chester" and at others as "of Neston") and Matthew Allport, a Southwark baker.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Other vessels which took their departure from the Thames included the British-built *Betty*, of Flint, 40 tons, Nathaniel Thomas master, which sailed for Lisbon in April 1738.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Three years later this vessel was described as belonging to Chester, and she ventured to the West Indies from Liverpool under the command of Thomas Gamon.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Other vessels sailed directly to the Canary Islands from Chester in order to bring home fruit and wine. The Chester snow *Knebworth*, of 40 tons, commanded by Thomas Brock in 1731, by Benjamin Urmston between 1733 and 1734, and by John Price between 1735 and 1738, was one such vessel;⁽⁵⁹⁾ and the *Love's Increase*, of Chester, commanded by Thomas Sefton in 1730, of only 24 tons, was another.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The foregoing examples of the efforts of Chester shipowners in pursuit of deep-sea commerce would have seemed commonplace in the major shipowning centres of London, Liverpool or Bristol. It is because Chester occupied a humble place among the ports of Britain that such enterprise becomes noteworthy. Perhaps the nearness of the rising port of Liverpool led the

⁽⁵⁴⁾ P.R.O., Adm. 7/78, No. 635.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Adm. 7/78, No. 689; 7/80, No. 1,556; 7/82, No. 1,282. For voyages from London to Oporto, see Adm. 68/197 (in 1739 and 1740).

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Adm. 7/77, No. 1,497 (in 1732). She was a 70-ton brig.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Adm. 7/82, No. 2,373.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, No. 2,242.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Adm. 7/77, No. 1,371 (in 1731); Adm. 7/80, No. 486 (in 1734).

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Adm. 7/77, No. 1,694.

merchants of the River Dee to emulate the activities of their richer neighbours. But much of Chester's shipping employed in oceanic commerce set out from, and returned to, the Lancashire port or London: there was little in the resources of Chester's own hinterland to promote or sustain such trade, which was increasingly concentrated upon major centres. With Liverpool's dominance firmly established, the distant trades of Chester slowly withered away, leaving only new activity in the North Atlantic timber trade to develop in the early years of the nineteenth century.

III THE SHIPOWNERS OF CHESTER

It is extremely difficult to form a complete picture of the men who invested in and managed the shipping of Chester, the sources of information being both few and fragmentary. A glimpse of the pattern of the ownership of vessels is provided by the survival of the Liverpool Wool Register Book,⁽⁶¹⁾ but it is by no means certain that the few Chester vessels recorded therein are representative of the whole, although what we know of them does illustrate, perhaps in a typical way, the commercial links between Chester and those ports with which Chester shipping habitually traded. For example, the *Truelove*, although described in 1741 as belonging to Liverpool, was then owned by Thomas Matthews, mariner, of Liverpool; Godfrey Green, a Dublin merchant; Thomas Wrench, salt proprietor, of Middlewich; Samuel Matthews, merchant, of Chester; Robert Johnston, merchant, of Liverpool; and Samuel Williamson, sailmaker, of Parkgate.⁽⁶²⁾ The *Truelove* had been built at Chester in 1730; by 1745 ownership of the vessel had passed entirely to Liverpool and Dublin merchants. The *Ellen and Mary*, a 50-ton brigantine built at Chester in 1743, was owned in 1747 by Thomas Bennison of Chester, and Griffith Griffiths, a Pwllheli merchant.⁽⁶³⁾ The *Active*, a 100-ton brigantine which had been built at Chester in 1784, was described as belonging to Liverpool in the following year, but some of her owners lived in Cheshire. They were Jonathan Whittle, of Chester; John Salisbury, of Parkgate; Thomas Wilkinson, of Heswall; John Washington, of Grayton; and Ann Jeffreys of Bidston. Other owners were Thomas Simmons of Liverpool,⁽⁶⁴⁾

⁽⁶¹⁾ Concerning which, see R. C. Jarvis, "Liverpool Statutory Register of British Merchant Ships", *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 105, Appendix; also the same writer's *Customs Letter-Books of the Port of Liverpool* (1954), p. 55.

⁽⁶²⁾ Liverpool Wool Register, entry dated 20 June 1741.

⁽⁶³⁾ *Ibid.*, entry between 17 September and 7 July 1747.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ A Thomas Simmons was a master in the Dublin trade living at Parkgate, according to *Chester Guide* (1782), p. 141.

and George Sutton of Dublin.⁽⁶⁵⁾ The *Sutton*, of Chester, built at Chester in 1778, of 100 tons, was owned in 1784 by Gwin Brown (who was also master), James Folliott,⁽⁶⁶⁾ Daniel Smith, and Jeffrey Edwards, all of Chester; John Matthews, of Parkgate; and Alexander Kirkpatrick, Thomas Truelock, Charles Tennant and James Campbell, all of Dublin.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Partnerships like these between Cheshire, Irish and Welsh owners suggest the trades in which vessels were employed and show something of the close commercial associations brought about by the main incidence of Chester's trade.

However, such relationships were not limited to home waters. The snow *Goodwin*, registered at Chester in September 1758, was owned by Walter Thomas of Chester and John Edwards of Charleston, South Carolina.⁽⁶⁸⁾ The *Peggy*, a snow of 100 tons, built in New England in 1755 and registered at Chester in September 1761, was also owned by Thomas and Edwards, together with another Chester merchant, Charles Goodwin;⁽⁶⁹⁾ and the Chester-registered *Fair American* was also owned by these three merchants from 1762, her owners being given as Charles Goodwin and Company at the time she was being lengthened by Roger Fisher in 1771.⁽⁷⁰⁾ It seems likely that Goodwin also had an association with John Rogers, whose interest in the Newfoundland trade has been noted, since the *William*, of Chester, built in New England in 1765 and registered at Chester in December 1769, is shown as being owned by "Goodwin and Rogers" in 1774.⁽⁷¹⁾ It is possible that there were other transatlantic partnerships of the kind mentioned above, since such were common among the shipowners and merchants of London and Liverpool.

The 2,000 tons of Chester shipping afloat in 1789 may be valued, in accordance with a national estimate of the time at about £8 a ton,⁽⁷²⁾ so that, on this basis, about £16,000 was

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Liverpool Wool Register, 4 August 1785.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Folliott was a considerable merchant in linens, consignor and consignee of many parcels of linen, lead and beaver wool in the Chester/Dublin trade.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Liverpool Wool Register, November 1784.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ P.R.O., CO.5/510.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ *Ibid.*

⁽⁷⁰⁾ *Ibid.*; also see Roger Fisher, *loc. cit.*

⁽⁷¹⁾ P.R.O., T.64/48. The *William*, of 140 tons, had sailed in John Rogers's trade to Newfoundland in 1769, and in 1770 brought home to Chester from Boston a cargo which included whale and spermaceti oil; see C. Armour, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁽⁷²⁾ Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 383432, wherein the value of British shipping in the 1790s was assessed at eight guineas a ton. I prefer this figure to that suggested by Nathaniel Atcheson who, in *American Encroachment on British Rights* (1808), p. lxxvi, conjectured that British shipping might be worth, at a "low valuation", £12 per ton. This seems to allow insufficiently for depreciation. On the other hand, the Chester fleet was relatively new, but the vessels which comprised it were mostly small. See also Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry* (1962), pp. 372-5.

invested in the shipping of the River Dee in the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁽⁷³⁾ Of the 36 vessels registered at Chester up to the end of 1789 ownership has been traced for 18. The number of shareholders in each of these vessels varied between one (six vessels being owned by a single individual) and twenty, the 132-ton ship *Princess Royal* having no fewer than twenty part-owners, of whom seven lived in Chester, six elsewhere in the County, two in Flintshire, one in London, and two each in Staffordshire and Dublin.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Of the ninety shares into which the total number of vessels in our sample are divided, 36 were held by owners living in Chester, 13 by residents at Parkgate, and the remaining shares were held by owners living in Flintshire, Anglesey, Denbighshire, Staffordshire, London, Liverpool, Dublin and Londonderry. It is noteworthy that the widely spread distribution of ownership in Chester shipping seen in the examples cited above from the Liverpool Wool, and Chester Plantation, Registers continues to be a feature of Chester shipowning after the 1786 Registration Act, and still reflects the pattern of the trade of the vessels concerned. Furthermore, some of the Cheshire cheesemongers are to be found listed among owners of London registered cheese vessels. But only one Chester shipowner has been traced as having any considerable stake in the shipowning of other ports. This was Thomas Dixon, a Chester merchant who was an important owner of Chester vessels, and who held substantial shareholdings in sixteen Liverpool-owned vessels between 1786 and 1798. Dixon was the sole owner of the *Phoenix*, of Chester, 260 tons, a ship acquired from Whitehaven owners in 1802,⁽⁷⁵⁾ and part-owner, with Thomas Griffiths, of the *Tom*, of Chester, 144 tons,⁽⁷⁶⁾ as well as sharing with Joshua Lace, a Liverpool attorney, and William Waln, a Liverpool merchant, in the ownership of the *Union*, 90 tons,⁽⁷⁷⁾ and *Britannia*, 77 tons,⁽⁷⁸⁾ both of Chester. In the early nineteenth century, Dixon entered the growing British North American timber trade, and employed in it, besides the rebuilt *Tom*, the *Three Brothers*, built at Chester in 1812, measuring 117 tons.⁽⁷⁹⁾ These two vessels were

⁽⁷³⁾ Cf. the value of Liverpool shipping estimated on the same basis—£641,000. The additional stores and equipment for deep sea trading and slaving might increase this figure to nearer £1m.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Chester registration No. 26, 9 August 1787.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, No. 2, 11 June 1802.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Chester registration No. 1, 6 March 1792. This vessel was later rebuilt and her tonnage increased to 227 tons; she was re-registered at Chester No. 4, 28 April 1801.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ Chester registration No. 3, 7 September 1802.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Chester registration No. 4, 11 November 1802.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Chester registration No. 4, 26 May 1812.

to be found carrying timber from Miramichi and Saint John New Brunswick, in 1811 and 1812 respectively.⁽⁸⁰⁾

Other owners of Chester shipping included Christopher Smalley, son of John Smalley, founder of the Flintshire cotton industry,⁽⁸¹⁾ who owned a small vessel named *Mary*,⁽⁸²⁾ and the ubiquitous Thomas Williams of Llanidan, Anglesey, the copper master,⁽⁸³⁾ who had the probably unique distinction of owning vessels under four different ports of registry: Chester, Liverpool, Beaumaris and London. In the case of the vessels Williams had registered at Chester, he was associated in ownership with Rev. Edward Hughes and John Dawes, his partners in the Parys Mine Company.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Chester shipbuilders were prominent as shipowners, but their place in the maritime commerce of the River Dee is more fully described in Section IV, below.

Men in many branches of trade and commerce participated in the ownership of Chester shipping. Socially, too, there were wide variations of status, from Sir Roger Mostyn, Baronet, of Mostyn, who held shares in the *Princess Royal*, mentioned above, to the humble mariner and husbandman of Flintshire who, between them, owned the *Viales*, of Chester, a sloop of twenty tons.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Among the trades and professions given in surviving Chester registrations of the period are grocers, druggists, innkeepers, ropers, carriers, tobacconists, as well as a banker, a brewer, several merchants, a flour dealer, a tallow chandler, a corn merchant, a liquor merchant and a corn cutter. More maritime occupations frequently occur, such as wharfinger, shipbuilder, anchormsmith, and those who were content to be described as shipowners. Mariners, too, are often found participating, including a number of shipmasters who held shares in the vessels they commanded. Ownership of vessels at the outports, of which Chester was in this respect typical, tended at this time to differ markedly from the pattern of ownership revealed in the shipping registers of major centres of shipping and trade, such as Liverpool and London, where it would seem that shipping was predominantly owned by members of the merchant community.⁽⁸⁶⁾

⁽⁸⁰⁾ P.R.O., CO.193/2.

⁽⁸¹⁾ About whom, see A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (1951), pp. 283-8.

⁽⁸²⁾ Chester registration No. 2, 25 November 1795.

⁽⁸³⁾ Concerning whom, see J. R. Harris, *The Copper King* (1963).

⁽⁸⁴⁾ The two vessels were both of 38 tons and employed in the copper ore trade; one was named *Nancy* (Chester registration No. 2, 28 September 1786), the other *Venus* (Chester registration No. 7, 17 October 1786).

⁽⁸⁵⁾ Chester registration No. 2, 18 September 1798.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ See R. Craig and R. C. Jarvis, *The Liverpool Registry of Merchant Ships* (forthcoming), for an analysis of Liverpool shipowning.

IV SHIPBUILDING IN THE PORT OF CHESTER

Shipbuilding was an industry of some importance to the economy of the River Dee in the eighteenth century. The estuary of the Dee and the river at Chester had two advantages as a shipbuilding centre. Firstly, there were plentiful supplies of oak timber, at least in the early years of the eighteenth century; and, secondly, there were sheltered beaches and creeks with easy communications thereto, which enabled shipbuilding to be carried on cheaply. Other advantages became apparent later, and included a nearby iron industry (capable of supplying iron bolts, knees, anchors and chains) and rope- and sail-making concerns. Timber supplies became a problem later in the century,⁽⁸⁷⁾ since a good deal of local timber was sent to the shipyards of London and the outports. Whitehaven shipbuilders, for example, customarily obtained timber from Flintshire and Cheshire, but fears were being expressed in the 1760s that supplies would soon become exhausted.⁽⁸⁸⁾ In 1763, Alexander Martin, an Irvine shipbuilder, was purchasing timber in Cheshire, and complained that timber was then "much scarcer, and greatly advanced in price".⁽⁸⁹⁾ Despite such shortages, Chester seems to have developed its shipbuilding activities not only for local shipowners, but for the shipowners of other ports, relying perhaps upon increasing supplies of foreign timber, obtained at first from the Baltic⁽⁹⁰⁾ and later from British North America, in the importation of which Thomas Dixon of Chester may have played an important part. It would seem likely that the shipbuilding activity of the River Dee was, to a considerable extent, dependent upon the demand for new tonnage from other shipping centres: London, Whitehaven, Greenock, and, most important of all, Liverpool, were the principal sources of such demand.

Unfortunately, records of shipbuilding are so scattered and discontinuous that it is difficult to form an accurate and detailed picture of such activity at British ports before 1786, and even after the Registration Act of that year certain problems remain to be solved, as will be shown. Whilst it would be possible to make some very rough estimates of Chester shipbuilding from the Plantation and Wool Registers, supplemented by references in the Colonial Naval Lists, it is felt that such statistical exercises might well be misleading, for two reasons.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ R. G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power* (1926), pp. 133-4, suggests a crisis in timber supplies following the Seven Years' War.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Roger Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ See TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 114, p. 118.

Firstly, vessels could (and sometimes did) change their names prior to the 1786 Registration Act without any permanent record of the change being preserved, and it would be difficult, therefore, to ensure that the same vessel was not included twice under different names in the list of vessels built in any one year. Secondly, tonnage measurement was very imprecise and often differed widely from entry to entry, depending on the source utilised.⁽⁹¹⁾ Thus any calculations of the output of Chester shipyards would have a high degree of error, both in the number of vessels built and in their tonnage. Much work remains to be done before the output of British shipyards before 1786 can be accurately assessed. Accordingly, reference will be omitted to all Chester-built vessels which did not survive to be registered under the provisions of the 1786 Act. What follows is based upon the registers of shipping in or after that year, which records become progressively less complete as one seeks to extend references backward in time: clearly, vessels on the register in or after 1786 which had been built before, say, 1760, were the exception rather than the rule.⁽⁹²⁾

Again, there are certain difficulties in interpreting the various compilations of shipbuilding statistics in the period immediately following the 1786 Registration Act. The most generally used source is the series of manuscript volumes preserved in the Public Record Office, which cover the years from 1787 to 1808 and which provide a breakdown of the number and tonnage of vessels built each year at each port in divisions of twenty tons.⁽⁹³⁾ This breakdown is particularly valuable, as it enables many individual vessels to be positively identified. A manuscript volume of trade and navigation accounts is preserved in the Library of H.M. Customs and Excise which provides another series of port-by-port shipbuilding figures for the years between 1786 and 1813, showing the number and tonnage of vessels built at each port, but without providing a breakdown

⁽⁹¹⁾ For example, comparison of the later Port Books with other records of shipping, such as the post-1786 Registers, suggests that the tonnage of vessels in the former source needs to be increased by at least one-third in order to approximate to the tonnage measurement standardised by the 1786 Registration Act, which effected universal tonnage measurement on a standard formula.

⁽⁹²⁾ Ralph Davis, *op. cit.*, Appendix A, in a masterly discussion of English shipping statistics between 1686 and 1788, calculates the total tonnage of shipping in the period before the 1786 Registration Act, but, understandably, does not attempt the complex task of determining the annual wastage of shipping as a consequence of war or natural hazard, nor the annual accession of new shipping through shipbuilding or the taking of prizes. As for the "life" of a vessel, Professor Davis, p. 376, suggests an annual depreciation rate of 4 per cent, which implies an average life of 25 years. I would prefer to assume a twenty year average, which is also that suggested by a nineteenth-century writer, W. Keer Brown, in his printed statistical survey of the Navigation Laws in P.R.O., BT.3/469.

⁽⁹³⁾ P.R.O., Customs 17/10-30.

of the numbers and tonnages in tonnage divisions.⁽⁹⁴⁾ A third source covers the years 1790, 1791, 1804, 1805 and 1806, and specifies the tonnage of each individual vessel built in each British port.⁽⁹⁵⁾ All these returns differ from one another in their account of shipbuilding in Britain. For the first two years for which figures from all three sources are available (1790 and 1791) all give quite different figures; however, the Customs 17 returns and those amongst the Parliamentary Papers agree in respect of the years 1804, 1805 and 1806. The figures in the Custom House volume referred to do not accord with the other two sources in respect of Chester shipbuilding in any year. All efforts to reconcile these differing figures have been frustrated, despite the fact that data are available to ensure the identification of many individual vessels.

It must be supposed that difficulties arose in the interpretation of the phrase "built and registered", perhaps both by the returning officers of individual outports, and by the staff employed centrally in the offices of the Registrar General of Shipping. Clearly, the phrase "built and registered" which was applied to shipbuilding returns, could mean several different things. For example, when a vessel was newly built at port A, for first registration at port B, which of the two ports claimed the vessel as having been built and registered there in that year? Was there any arrangement between outports which precluded the possibility of one vessel's being returned for two ports simultaneously, or of omitting a vessel altogether from the returns of one port under the mistaken impression that the vessel was included in the returns of the other? No straightforward answer has been found to these questions, but enough is known to hazard the view that there was little consistency in the practice of most outports. One anomaly has certainly been found, however, and this occurs where vessels were admitted to the privilege of registration some years after they were built. Most often this occurred at ports with estuarial and inland navigation connections, as for example, Chester, Liverpool or Gloucester. At such ports, vessels formerly employed in inland navigation, often many years old, when first registered were included in the "built and registered" returns for that year, as if they had been newly built.

For all these reasons, it is thought best to give details of all three returns of shipbuilding for the port of Chester, and these are shown in Appendix B, together with a list of vessels known

⁽⁹⁴⁾ Library of H.M. Customs & Excise, London, E.C.3., Customs 36/5.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ British Parliamentary Papers, *Accounts & Papers*, XIII (1806), and IV (1806-7).

to have been built within the port (Appendix C). This last list is, of course, inevitably incomplete, but further research would no doubt enable many of the gaps to be filled.

Enough Chester-built shipping survived to be registered under the 1786 Registration Act to show that at least as much shipping was constructed on Deeside in the years immediately before 1786 as after. Whilst it has not been possible to examine all the registers of all the ports where records survive, it is certain that at least 1,000 tons of shipping was built in 1783, over 1,200 tons in 1784, and nearly 1,400 tons in 1785. Information about shipbuilding in the earlier years of the eighteenth century is more difficult to find, but it has been thought worthwhile to show, in Table 2, the ports of registry of Chester-built vessels which survived to be registered under the 1786 Act.

Table 2.

AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF
VESSELS BUILT AT CHESTER BETWEEN 1775 AND 1786,
SHOWING THEIR PORTS OF REGISTRY AFTER 1786

Port of Registry	Number	Tonnage
Liverpool	22	3,706
London	7	1,109
Whitehaven	6	905
Greenock	3	683
Chester	9	667
Beaumaris	4	246
Cork	2	235
Lancaster	2	163
Londonderry	1	114
Newry	1	80
Saint Ives	1	79
Aberdeen	1	70
Dublin	1	61
Isle of Man	1	26
Total	61	8,144

Note: For reasons discussed in the text, this table probably seriously underestimates the volume of Chester shipbuilding during this period, since it is entirely based upon extensive sampling of post-1786 shipping registers.

The table shows the number and tonnage of all known vessels built on the River Dee between 1775 and 1786 under their respective ports of registry in 1786 or later; but it must be remembered that the ports of registry after 1786 may not necessarily have been the first port of registry, and that the details given here are incomplete. However, any subsequent revision can only increase the total shown.

Table 2 well illustrates one of the main characteristics of Chester shipyards—the extent to which shipbuilders there

constructed vessels for the shipowners of other ports, particularly Liverpool, London, Whitehaven and Greenock, despite the considerable shipbuilding industries that these ports possessed. It suggests that the Dee estuary was a favourable location for shipbuilding in respect of costs, as was another West Coast port which it in some ways resembled, namely Chepstow, which had similar natural advantages and which also turned out much tonnage for the major shipowning centres.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Such ports exemplify the fundamental advantages enjoyed by shipyards located near to the source of oak timber supplies, advantages which were intensified when ancillary trades were established in the immediate neighbourhood, such as ropemaking and sailmaking.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which different trades demanded specialised types of vessel in the eighteenth century, but the prevalence of speculative shipbuilding at Chester and elsewhere suggests that, as in the first half of the following century, most types of vessel were easily transferable from one trade to another. However, it is noteworthy that the two trades most often found employing Chester-built shipping were the coastwise cheese trade and the West India trade. Most ships in the former trade were registered at London, whereas West Indiamen built at Chester were to be found on the registers of many other ports as well, particularly Liverpool, Greenock and Whitehaven. Both types of vessel were somewhat larger than most of the shipping built at Chester on account of local owners, and much was well above the national average tonnage which, in 1788, was 102 tons. Many vessels built at Chester after 1775 were of between 150 and 300 tons, and by the early years of the nineteenth century several vessels of between 400 and 500 tons were being constructed, the largest, up to the year 1808, being the ship *Lord Forbes*, of 556 tons, built for Liverpool owners.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Chester made an increasing contribution to the shipping requirements of Liverpool at a time when the Mersey shipbuilding industry was experiencing difficulties,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and this contribution is shown in Table 3. By

⁽⁹⁶⁾ See G. E. Farr, *Chepstow Ships* (1954), particularly Appendix C.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ Liverpool register No. 163, 31 October 1803.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ Concerning which, see R. Stewart Brown, *Liverpool Ships in the Eighteenth Century* (1932), *passim*. It may here be tentatively suggested that whilst shipbuilding in most ports received stimulus from the French Revolutionary Wars, the success of Liverpool privateers in capturing enemy vessels, which subsequently often went to Liverpool owners and registry, may have actually depressed demand for new tonnage at that port, despite not inconsiderable war-time losses, while at the same time providing much additional work in repair and modification for local shipbuilders. Furthermore, such repair work must have made heavy demands upon shipyard space and upon berthing facilities generally.

1806, Chester's yearly shipbuilding output had surpassed that of her old rival.

Table 3

AN ANALYSIS OF SHIPBUILDING AT CHESTER AND LIVERPOOL SHOWING THE NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS BUILT EACH YEAR, 1787-1808, AND THE NUMBER OF VESSELS BUILT AT CHESTER FOR LIVERPOOL OWNERS

Year	Vessels built at Liverpool		Vessels built at Chester		Vessels built at Chester for owners at Liverpool	
	Number	Tons	Number	Tons	Number	Tons
1787	44	5,731	12	1,271	8	874
1788	40	5,139	8	868	1	82
1789	26	3,166	6	674	4	534
1790	27	4,737	3	594	5	885
1791	18	2,393	10	895	3	180
1792	30	3,509	5	789	2	355
1793	18	2,137	3	532	—	—
1794	18	2,655	3	793	—	—
1795	12	1,463	2	305	—	—
1796	34	5,175	—	—	—	—
1797	20	4,749	3	277	2	150
1798	11	2,201	5	584	2	354
1799	24	5,708	9	1,187	2	247
1800	23	4,430	6	695	—	—
1801	27	4,584	4	387	—	—
1802	18	2,761	7	614	1	51
1803	19	3,122	11	1,510	3	1,258
1804	10	2,165	12	1,195	5	560
1805	25	1,989	7	1,303	2	645
1806	9	1,787	14	2,249	5	1,647
1807	7	771	6	1,830	4	1,510
1808	9	610	9	1,467	2	661

Sources: P.R.O., Customs 17/12-30; Liverpool Registers of shipping.

The principal shipbuilders at Chester in the late eighteenth century were Joseph and John Troughton, and Peter Jackson, who built their vessels on the banks of the River Dee near to the town of Chester. Both these firms built a number of vessels on speculation; that is, they built on their own account to sell on completion, as distinct from what is generally thought to have been the general practice of building to order to the ship-owner's specification. Investigation suggests that shipbuilding on speculation was very much more common in the late eighteenth century and later than has sometimes been

supposed,⁽⁹⁹⁾ and that the practice was convenient alike to the shipbuilder and shipowner, although it often involved the former in assuming the role of shipowner and operator for brief periods until a sale was successfully negotiated, as was often the case with Troughton of Chester. The advantages to the shipbuilder of building on speculation were considerable; it enabled him to ensure continuity of employment in his yard and prevented the loss of skilled labour when trade was slack, and it was helpful in stabilising costs. There were also advantages to the shipowner, since it enabled him to replace tonnage lost by hazard of the sea more quickly than would otherwise have been possible, and thus to minimise his loss of earnings.

Some indication of the extent of speculative shipbuilding at the port of Chester may be obtained by reference to Appendix A, where it is readily apparent that much of the shipping of over 140 tons was registered at the port for remarkably brief periods. The only really prolonged registration of a vessel of over that tonnage is seen in the vessel of 144 tons registered between 1792 and 1800, which was in fact the *Tom*, of Chester, owned by Thomas Dixon. In 1801, as has been noted, she was lengthened; thereafter she measured 227 tons and features in the returns from 1801 to 1808. Besides this vessel, there was one of 190 tons⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ owned at Chester from 1803 possibly to the end of the series of returns, and a vessel of 260 tons registered between 1802 and 1806; this latter was the *Phoenix*, acquired secondhand from Whitehaven owners.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Most of the other vessels of over 140 tons shown in the returns were built on speculation and registered briefly at Chester for a voyage or two before they were sold by their builders to other ports.

A distinctive feature of Troughtons' building activity was the curious policy they adopted in naming the vessels which they constructed. They built no less than five vessels named *Active* between 1793 and 1803, and it seems likely that they may have built several of the other six vessels of that name launched from Chester shipyards between 1787 and 1803.⁽¹⁰²⁾ Probably they were so named in the expectation that they would be sold away from their port of build at the first opportunity. Although there was no law against a number of vessels of the same name

⁽⁹⁹⁾ Which is one reason why it may be difficult to correlate shipbuilding statistics with other data in historical studies of the trade cycle: but see R. Davis, "Seamen's Sixpences: An Index of Commercial Activity, 1697-1828", *Economica*, XXIII, No. 2.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Unidentified.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Chester registration No. 2, 11 June 1802.

⁽¹⁰²⁾ See Appendix C.

being registered at one port, it cannot be supposed that the local Customs officials would have taken kindly to the task of identifying no less than eleven identically named vessels within so brief a period, had they all been destined to maintain registry at the port of Chester.

Other shipbuilders at Chester included Peter Jackson, who built the ship *Jackson* in 1792, which vessel was registered *de novo* at Lancaster in 1794,⁽¹⁰³⁾ and the firm of John Bruce and John Gunson who built the brigantine *Charlotte* for London owners in 1793.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ The output of these yards is difficult to determine, since a number of ports at which Chester-built shipping was registered failed to record the names of the builders.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

Shipbuilding was not confined to Chester itself, however, and Parkgate was one of a number of dependent creeks of the port where the industry was carried on. The *Exchange*, of Chester, was recorded as having been built at Parkgate in 1701,⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ and there are later references to shipbuilding there, although these become fewer by mid-century. There was a revival between 1787 and 1791, when at least nine vessels were built at Parkgate, ranging in size from 11 to 168 tons. Thomas Makin seems to have been Parkgate's principal shipbuilder during this period. Earlier there were references to shipbuilding at Dawpool, as for example the *Experiment*, of Liverpool, whose plantation register describes her as having been built at "Dawpool by the river Chester", without giving the date of build; her register was dated 14 July 1699.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Shipbuilding probably diminished in importance at such places as Dawpool once work had begun on the diversion of the channel of the River Dee in the early eighteenth century.

The reasons for Chester's failure to expand her port in the eighteenth century so as to share more positively in the growth of trade and shipping which, for many ports, heralded a new industrial age, are not far to seek. Firstly, the navigation of the River Dee, despite many schemes for its improvement, failed to provide the kind of seaway necessary to sustain an expansion of foreign trade. Although coastwise shipping displayed some increased activity at the turn of the nineteenth century, this

⁽¹⁰³⁾ Chester registration No. 2, 8 March 1792; Lancaster registration No. 3, 23 February 1794.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ London registration No. 53, 10 June 1793 (Coast Trade).

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ For example, London registers generally noted the names of the builders whereas the Liverpool registers did not.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ P.R.O., CO.5/1441, Part 2.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, Part 1.

was more than offset by the decline of oceanic commerce. Secondly, the hinterland never possessed those staple industries which were to become the life blood of ports such as Liverpool. Once the salt industry had found a convenient outlet at Liverpool, with the development of the Weaver Navigation, it contributed nothing to Chester's trade, and, apart from the produce of the Flintshire coalfield, there was little traffic in similar bulk commodities which alone could provide the backbone of an expanding port economy. The Irish trade, important at Parkgate for centuries, did not long survive the establishment of Holyhead as an important Irish packet station, and, in any case, by the beginning of the nineteenth century Parkgate was becoming isolated by the gradual silting up of its deepwater anchorage. Whilst Chester shipowners and merchants showed some enterprise in extending their shipping in oceanic commerce during the early period, the rise of new ports, backed by both capital and natural resources, soon led local owners, in common with those of a number of other lesser outports, to abandon most distant trades. Early railway developments in Cheshire at one time promised to link the port of Chester with prosperous manufacturing centres and to provide new outlets to the sea, but the continued and irresistible growth of Liverpool presented a challenge that the Dee estuary could not meet.

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APPENDIX A

NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS REMAINING ON
THE REGISTER AT THE PORT OF CHESTER ON 30 SEP-
TEMBER OF EACH YEAR BETWEEN 1787 AND 1808

Year	Number and Tons									Totals
	0-100	100-140	140-160	160-180	180-200	200-220	220-240	240-260	Over 260	
1787										26-1,787
1788	21-1,026	8- 924	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29-1,950
1789	18- 920	8- 924	1-155	—	—	—	—	—	—	27-1,999
1790	20-1,026	9-1,054	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29-2,080
1791	23-1,140	9-1,054	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	32-2,194
1792	22-1,055	8- 924	1-144	—	—	—	1-246	—	—	32-2,369
1793	24-1,130	7- 795	2-293	—	—	—	1-246	—	—	34-2,469
1794	18- 760	7- 795	2-293	—	—	—	—	—	—	27-1,848
1795	19- 826	7- 795	2-293	—	—	—	—	—	—	28-1,919
1796	18- 746	7- 795	1-144	—	—	—	1-231	—	—	27-1,920
1797	18- 823	6- 645	1-144	1-170	—	—	—	—	—	26-1,787
1798	17- 765	4- 439	1-144	1-170	1-197	—	—	—	—	24-1,720
1799	20- 831	3- 336	1-144	—	—	—	—	—	—	24-1,318
1800	20- 885	4- 448	1-144	—	—	—	—	1-249	—	26-1,734
1801	24- 964	3- 346	—	—	—	—	1-227	—	1-289	29-1,834
1802	25-1,210	2- 234	—	—	—	—	1-227	1-260	1-289	30-2,228
1803	30-1,605	3- 343	—	—	1-190	—	1-227	1-260	1-302	37-2,935
1804	34-1,764	2- 234	—	1-162	1-190	—	1-227	1-260	—	40-2,846
1805	31-1,525	3- 350	—	—	1-190	—	1-227	1-260	—	37-2,561
1806	30-1,532	4- 469	—	—	2-375	—	1-227	1-260	—	38-2,874
1807	31-1,606	4- 469	—	—	2-389	—	1-227	—	—	38-2,699
1808	31-1,686	5- 610	—	—	1-199	1-207	1-227	—	—	39-2,929

Sources: Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 38429, 38376; P.R.O., Customs 17/11-30.

Note: No breakdown into tonnage divisions is available for the year 1787. The small discrepancies in the total tonnage figures in some years is probably due to rounding of the fractional parts of a ton for some individual vessels.

APPENDIX B

1. NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS BUILT AND REGISTERED IN THE PORT OF CHESTER EACH YEAR ENDING 5 JANUARY

[illegible]

1803	8-545	1-103	—	—	—	1-306	—	—	1-556	11-1,510
1804	8-531	1-156	3-508	—	—	—	—	—	—	12-1,195
1805	3-214	1-116	—	1-234	—	1-328	1-411	—	—	7-1,303
1806	6-396	2-227	2-367	1-237	—	1-313	2-709	—	—	14-2,249
1807	2-107	—	—	—	—	—	1-343	3-1,380	—	6-1,830
1808	2-122	5-619	—	1-207	—	—	—	1- 519	—	9-1,467

Source: P.R.O., Customs 17/12-30; there is no breakdown into tonnage divisions for the years 1787 to 1789.

2. NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS BUILT AND REGISTERED IN THE PORT OF CHESTER EACH YEAR ENDING 5 JANUARY 1786 TO 1813

Year	Number	Tons	Year	Number	Tons
1786	11	1,009	1800	3	537
1787	14	1,559	1801	2	273
1788	9	824	1802	2	241
1789	6	696	1803	9	1,889
1790	6	1,081	1804	9	1,078
1791	4	230	1805	5	900
1792	5	799	1806	9	1,808
1793	4	899	1807	3	1,378
1794	7	830	1808	4	498
1795	1	79	1809	4	1,564
1796	2	309	1810	7	1,040
1797	4	845	1811	6	1,282
1798	3	369	1812	6	780
1799	6	655	1813	11	1,759

Source: Library of H.M. Customs & Excise, London, Customs 36/5.

3. AN ACCOUNT OF THE NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS BUILT AND REGISTERED IN THE PORT OF CHESTER IN THE YEARS 1790, 1791, 1804, 1805 AND 1806, DISTINGUISHING THE TONNAGE OF EACH VESSEL

1790	1791	1804	1805	1806
73	127	156	116	108
19	20	163	80	52
335	19	55	76	75
13	11	47	234	237
49	87	96	411	71
73	92	78	58	58
147	82	77	328	313
144	197	72	—	53
—	—	78	—	352
—	—	28	—	357
—	—	174	—	181
—	—	171	—	186
—	—	—	—	119
—	—	—	—	87
8 of 953	8 of 635	12 of 1,195	7 of 1,303	14 of 2,249

Source: British Parliamentary Papers, *Accounts & Papers* XIII (1806); IV (1806-7). The totals are not shown in the original returns.

Note: The above three tables differ, as explained in the text, but the reason for the discrepancies has yet to be established.

APPENDIX C

A LIST OF VESSELS TRACED AS HAVING BEEN BUILT
IN THE PORT OF CHESTER BETWEEN 1787 AND 1808,
GIVING THE NAME, TONNAGE, RIG, PLACE AND YEAR
OF REGISTRY, AS FAR AS CAN BE ASCERTAINED

Year	Name	Tonnage	Rig	Registry	Year
1787	<i>Active</i>	83	Sloop	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Atlantic</i>	216	Brigantine	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Diana</i>	193	Ship	London	1787
	<i>Dublin</i>	66	Brigantine	Chester	1787
	<i>Dublin</i>	124	Brigantine	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Ferret</i>	24	Schooner	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Friends</i>	66	Galliot	Liverpool	1788
	<i>Liver</i>	93	Galliot	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Mersey</i>	75	Flat	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Mersey</i>	193	Ship	Liverpool	1787
	<i>Peggy</i>	66	Brigantine	Chester	1787
	<i>Princes Royal</i>	134	Ship	Chester	1787
	<i>Sally</i>	28	Sloop	Chester	1787
	<i>Union</i>	279	Ship	Greenock	1787
(Total: 14 vessels of 1,640 tons)					
1788	<i>Active</i>	101	Galliot	Chester	1788
	<i>Alert</i>	82	Sloop	Liverpool	1788
	<i>Charlotte</i>	168	Brigantine L	London	1788
	<i>James</i>	74	Sloop	Falmouth	1788
	<i>Maria</i>	79	Flat or Dogger	Chester	1788
	<i>Royal Tar</i>	116	Brig	Belfast	1788
	<i>Scipio</i>	232	Ship	Greenock	1788
	<i>Tom</i>	31	Sloop	Chester	1788
	<i>Mary</i>	71	Sloop	Wexford	1788
(Total: 9 vessels of 954 tons)					
1789	<i>Active</i>	130	Brigantine	Liverpool	1789
	<i>Canada</i>	205	Ship	Greenock	1791
	<i>Catherine & Mary</i>	38	Sloop	Milford	1789
	<i>Chester</i>	141	Brigantine	London	1789
	<i>Globe</i>	155	Brigantine	Chester	1789
	<i>Irish Miner</i>	90	Schooner	Liverpool	1789
	<i>Sisters</i>	158	Ship	Liverpool	1789
(Total: 7 vessels of 917 tons)					
1790	<i>Barrett</i>	335	Ship	Liverpool	1790
	<i>Fame</i>	144	Brigantine	Liverpool	1790
	<i>Friends</i>	13	Sloop	Liverpool	1790
	<i>Golden Grove</i>	246	Ship	Liverpool	1790
	<i>Oporto</i>	147	Brigantine	Liverpool	1790
(Total: 5 vessels of 885 tons)					
1791	<i>Dreadnought</i>	11	Cutter	Liverpool	1791
	<i>Elizabeth</i>	127	Brigantine	London	1791
	<i>Good Intent</i>	61	Sloop	Wicklow	1791
	<i>Jean</i>	197	Brigantine	Greenock	1791
	<i>Jeanie</i>	87	Sloop	Liverpool	1791
	<i>John</i>	82	Flat	Liverpool	1791
(Total: 6 vessels of 565 tons)					
1792	<i>Ann</i>	224	Ship	Liverpool	1792
	<i>Barbados Friends</i>	250	Ship	London	1792
	<i>Bristol</i>	59	Sloop	Bristol	1810
	<i>Ceres</i>	210	Ship	London	1792
	<i>Clarence Yacht</i>	132	Brigantine	Liverpool	1792

Year	Name	Tonnage	Rig	Registry	Year
	<i>Conquest</i>	131	Brigantine	London	1792
	<i>Jackson</i>	246	Ship	Chester	1793
	<i>Tom</i>	144	Brigantine	Chester	1792
	(Total: 8 vessels of 1,396 tons)				
1793	<i>Active</i>	150	Brigantine	Chester	1793
	<i>Aurora</i>	278	Ship	London	1793
	<i>Charlotte</i>	104	Brigantine	London	1793
	(Total: 3 vessels of 532 tons)				
1794	<i>Brothers</i>	60	Sloop	Chester	1794
	<i>Dick</i>	62	Sloop	Chester	1794
	<i>George</i>	255	?	?	?
	<i>Hope</i>	217	Ship	Greenock	1794
	<i>Orpheus</i>	413	Ship	London	1802
	<i>Perseverance</i>	138	Brigantine	London	1794
	(Total: 6 vessels of 1,145 tons)				
1796	<i>Active</i>	231	Ship	Chester	1796
	<i>Minerva</i>	92	Dogger	Lancaster	1797
	(Total: 2 vessels of 323 tons)				
1797	<i>Eurydice</i>	444	Ship	London	1797
	<i>Evander</i>	88	Sloop	Liverpool	1797
	<i>Hopewell</i>	62	Flat	Liverpool	1807
	<i>Resolution</i>	144	Brigantine	London	1797
	<i>Six Sisters</i>	170	Brigantine	Chester	1797
	(Total: 5 vessels of 908 tons)				
1798	<i>Active</i>	153	Brigantine	Liverpool	1798
	<i>Active</i>	201	Ship	Liverpool	1799
	<i>Active</i>	197	Ship	Chester	1798
	<i>Viales</i>	20	Sloop	Chester	1798
	(Total: 4 vessels of 571 tons)				
1799	<i>Ann</i>	94	Sloop	Liverpool	1799
	<i>Fortune</i>	284	Ship	Greenock	1800
	<i>Signal</i>	153	Brigantine	Liverpool	1799
	(Total: 3 vessels of 531 tons)				
1800	<i>Active</i>	289	Ship	Chester	1800
	<i>Pomona</i>	113	Brigantine	Chester	1800
	(Total: 2 vessels of 402 tons)				
1801	<i>Mary</i>	59	Flat	Chester	1801
	<i>Union</i>	214	Ship	London	1801
	(Total: 2 vessels of 273 tons)				
1802	<i>John</i>	51	Flat	Liverpool	1803
	<i>Union</i>	90	Galliot	Chester	1802
	(Total: 2 vessels of 141 tons)				
1803	<i>Active</i>	303	Ship	Chester	1803
	<i>Chester</i>	76	Sloop	Chester	1803
	<i>Chesterfield</i>	396	Ship	Liverpool	1803
	<i>Isabella</i>	306	Ship	Liverpool	1803
	<i>Lord Forbes</i>	556	Ship	Liverpool	1803
	(Total: 5 vessels of 1,637 tons)				
1804	<i>Active</i>	160	Brigantine	Liverpool	1804
	<i>Fanny</i>	171	Brigantine	Liverpool	1804
	<i>Harriet</i>	28	Sloop	Liverpool	1804
	<i>Inquisitive</i>	27(?)	?	Liverpool	?
	<i>Mary Ann</i>	174	Ship	Liverpool	1804
	(Total: 5 vessels of 560 tons)				
1805	<i>Ann</i>	109	Brig	Chester	1805
	<i>Bostock</i>	411	Ship	Liverpool	1805
	<i>Fame</i>	327	Ship	Greenock	1805
	<i>George</i>	234	Ship	Liverpool	1805
	<i>Johns</i>	80	Galliot	Lancaster	1805
	(Total: 5 vessels of 1,161 tons)				

Year	Name	Tonnage	Rig	Registry	Year
1806	<i>Betsey</i>	181	Brigantine	Liverpool	1806
	<i>Friends</i>	352	Ship	Liverpool	1806
	<i>Heywood</i>	444	Ship	Liverpool	1807
	<i>Mary</i>	108	Galliot	Lancaster	1806
	<i>Mary Ann</i>	313	Ship	Liverpool	1806
	<i>Mersey</i>	357	Ship	Liverpool	1806
(Total: 6 vessels of 1,755 tons)					
1807	<i>Caledonia</i>	446	Ship	Liverpool	1807
	<i>Hope</i>	342	Ship	Greenock	1807
	<i>Little Venus</i>	131	Schooner	Liverpool	1807
	<i>Phoenix</i>	490	Ship	Liverpool	1807
	(Total: 4 vessels of 1,409 tons)				
1808	<i>Ann</i>	226	Ship	Whitehaven	1811
	<i>Fanny</i>	206	Snow	London	1814
	<i>Nevis Planter</i>	519	Ship	Liverpool	1808
	<i>Spanish Patriot</i>	142	Brig	Liverpool	1808
	(Total: 4 vessels of 1,093 tons)				

Source: The foregoing list is derived from the writer's extensive transcripts of the shipping registers of a number of ports, including the "Subsidiary Registers, Other Ports" of Liverpool, wherein may be found copy registrations of all the vessels which entered the port of Liverpool from 1788 to 1818.