The phrase in a 1619 probate inventory from Stockport, ‘Mr John Warren the lord of the towne’, presents a contradiction for historians. Towns should not have lords. Towns were the antithesis of manorial authority, the places where fleeing serfs had sought their freedom in medieval times. Towns were governed by corporations, in which decisions were reached by voting, not by autocratic lords. In practice, of course, the distinctions between towns and rural society were not so sharp. Many of the six or seven hundred or so English communities which we might recognize as towns early in the sixteenth century were not formally constituted as corporations. They are known as towns because they enjoyed rights akin to those of a corporation with a royal charter, but only by tradition. Other places are called a town because a chartered
market functioned there. Even in those towns which had, or which were to acquire, corporate status, vestiges of manorial power might remain. In Cheshire the mid-Tudor reorganization of palatinate and diocese seems to have had little effect on smaller towns. Stockport at the start of Elizabeth's reign was an ancient town with a chartered market and burgesses who owned burgages and elected a mayor under the lord's charter. There was no royal charter of incorporation. Stockport was a manorial borough, as indeed were another twenty-one of the fifty-one or so towns in this Society's region in our period. The structures of urban government changed in our period, and, in the north-west, the degree of separation from rural, county government which incorporation implied, evolved slowly in, for example, Liverpool and Wigan. In other towns within Stockport's trading area, corporate identity triumphed. Newcastle under Lyme was incorporated in 1590, enhancing its ancient, but only implicit, privileges. Kendal, a market and burgage town like Stockport but without the chief officer, was incorporated in 1575; that body spent much of the early 1630s securing further privileges by royal charter. Wigan, Newcastle, and Kendal were probably all more populous than Stockport, but not all larger manorial boroughs sought incorporation, as the case of Manchester illustrates. In some, incorporation was resisted; for example, after incorporation Kendal found that its parish church lay in the contiguous manor of Kirkland, whose lord had kept it out

2 H. Heginbotham, *Stockport ancient and modern* (2 vols, London, 1882–92), II, pp. 291–3, 297. Only sixteenth- and seventeenth-century copies of the borough charter are known (see note 41 below); one of them is in Stockport Museum. The earliest Elizabethan reference to a copy of the charter that I have found (1562) is P.R.O., CHES 14/35, f. 11r. (Palatinate of Chester entry books).


of the borough.\textsuperscript{7} There is no evidence that Stockport's manorial townsmen coveted incorporation between 1560 and 1714.

Scholars have argued about whether the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period of urban crisis or urban prosperity.\textsuperscript{8} More recently, Jonathan Barry favoured a new direction for research 'to understand what towns were and what made them distinctive'.\textsuperscript{9} It was, he proposed, 'in how the urban community responded to the complexity and fluidity of urban life that its identity lay'.\textsuperscript{10} In Peter Clark's 1995 survey of European small towns, Michael Reed offered a definition and exploration of small-town urban culture, or at least of polite, as opposed to popular culture.\textsuperscript{11} Whether such culture was a response to, a creature of, or in reality nothing to do with what Barry called 'urban complexity and fluidity' is a moot point. In the eighteenth century some towns, including Stockport, began to acquire the characteristics of the factory economy.\textsuperscript{12} But in 1700 Stockport might well have followed the route of its neighbouring market town Knutsford into genteel inconsequence. It is not, however, my purpose to attempt to explain Stockport's industrial fortunes. Rather, I want to look at the dynamics of one of the small towns so characteristic of pre-industrial England, indeed of pre-industrial Europe, but so little studied.\textsuperscript{13}

There is a danger in this town-based study of giving the impression that Stockport was the only place on earth. So far

\textsuperscript{7} Boke off recorde, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{8} Summarized in A. D. Dyer, \textit{Decline and growth in English towns, 1400–1640} (Basingstoke, 1991).
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Tudor and Stuart town}, ed. Barry, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{13} Reed, 'Cultural role of small towns', p. 123, excludes Stockport.
as neighbouring towns are concerned, Henry Prescott's diary often suggests that Stockport was almost a nuisance of a place between Macclesfield and Manchester. Of course, that official had his own agenda on his frequent trips around the diocese, and so his diary may give a skewed impression; however, it seems likely that these two towns were Stockport's major competitors. Henry Bradshaw of Marple visited Stockport at least twenty-six times in 1640, Manchester eleven times, and Macclesfield only twice. Other small market towns in Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire were far enough away from Stockport not to damage its local commercial arena. Enough is published of Manchester for me not to go into detail here. Similarly, with regard to Macclesfield it is perhaps necessary only to emphasize the hundred court, which seems to have been mixed up with the borough courts and which undoubtedly took business away from Stockport in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of course there may have been reasons why Stopfordians used services in other towns: for example, the heavily indebted Sir John Arderne may have wished to conceal his borrowing from Stockport, or may not have been welcome there as a borrower. For more detail on competitors we must wait for an in-depth appreciation of the urban hierarchy in east Cheshire in this period.

However, it does look as though Stockport and its competitors were situated in a region of growing population: estimates for the parish of Stockport more than double between 1563 and 1664. Whether this growth was maintained

17 Sir John was heavily indebted: Ches. R.O., DAR H/17 (Arderne of Alvanley and Harden MSS).
in the later seventeenth century is uncertain, and levels for c. 1720 do not differ much from the 1660s.\textsuperscript{18} There is no reliable figure for change in the township between 1563 and 1664, but from 1619 to 1664 its population appears stagnant at about 1,450. The parish register has nothing to suggest later seventeenth-century growth in the township,\textsuperscript{19} but it may be that a major enclosure from the waste in 1712 signalled the start of an increase to 3,500 by 1754.\textsuperscript{20} Professor Corfield’s suggestion of a minimum population of 2,500 to deserve the epithet ‘urban’ would not have been met in Stockport c. 1700.\textsuperscript{21} What follows is a three-strand study of one small town, and I want to elucidate each strand separately, while pointing out how they intertwine. The first of these strands is the governance of Stockport. The second seeks to determine how rural, or how urban, was the economy of Stockport, by looking at the occupations of Stopfordians. The third strand searches for an urban culture in Stockport. The three come together to point up the identity of Stockport: rural manor or town?

\section*{II}

The first task is to establish how Stockport was governed in our period: how much of the self-government which corporate towns enjoyed existed in Stockport? The borough of Stockport was coterminous with the township of Stockport and the manor of Stockport. The basic morphology of Stockport was established a century ago by two of this Society’s distinguished members, J. P. Earwaker and, especially, 

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} B.L., Harleian MS. 594, f. 100; P.R.O., E 179/86/145 (Exchequer lay subsidy rolls, from microfilm); Phillips and Smith, \textit{Lancashire and Cheshire}, pp. 66–7.
\item \textsuperscript{19} 1620s: Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/15 (Vernon and Warren MSS.); 1660s: \textit{Stockport in the mid seventeenth century}, ed. S. McKenna and C. Nunn (Stockport, 1992), pp. 3, 58–9.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Corfield, \textit{Impact of English towns}, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
Henry Heginbotham. For Heginbotham, the Stockport created by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 was founded on an older existence as a manorial borough; his *Stockport ancient and modern* is typical of the late nineteenth-century ‘civic consciousness’ strand in English urban historiography. However, Heginbotham’s desire for an old foundation to the new borough led him to underemphasize conflict between and within the various elements of the manorial borough.

The lordship of the manorial borough of Stockport was held by the Warren family, and their unlisted family archive is a rich source for the history of the town. The heads of the family were all, confusingly, called Edward or John. Only the minority of Edward Warren between 1621 and 1626 weakened the dynastic strength of the family. The Warrens mostly lived at Poynton until 1687, though from 1670 until his death in 1706 Judge John Warren lived in Stockport. However, his son Edward spent much time on the family’s Lancashire estates. The marriages of Judge John (in 1657) and his son (in 1678) had brought in more central Lancashire property, which may have occasioned a decline in the relative importance of Stockport to the family. Their predecessor’s early thirteenth-century charter granted the burgesses of Stockport burgage tenure but retained suit of mill and of oven to the lord. The burgesses, with the advice of the lord or his bailiff, were to elect one burgess as chief officer or mayor, to serve for a year.


24 Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 86, 1893, 2401, 2509, and 3756; Acc. 3141, 3282, and 3288 do not seem to contain relevant material.

According to a seventeenth-century description:

at the Leete Court the maior is chosen there by the Jury of the Leete comprising the aldermen and burgesses who are all to be persons houldinge lands and burgages of inheritance in the Town. The persons they have to make their election of are four burgesses whose names are given to the said Jury by the Lord of the Barony or his steward of the Court for that tyme.26

Afterwards, '[the previous mayor] is discharged and takes his name and place of Alderman for all his life tyme after . . . The Aldermen take their places according to their Seniority before any other Burgesses who hath not beene in the office of maior.' This late seventeenth-century description of elections claimed that, according to the ancient court records, the aldermen had always been appointed in this way. Nevertheless, it is not clear when the position of alderman emerged. The charter did not make any mention of aldermen, and it seems likely, in common with the government of other towns, that the place of alderman had evolved over time. The earliest date I have found for the use of the term alderman is 1600.27 The charter also provided for civil and criminal
litigation to be managed by the mayor, rather than the lord's bailiff. This structure seems to have worked in our period. The Warrens faced competitors in Stockport. The rector of Stockport kept a court for his tenants on the glebe, which included the residents of Churchgate; in 1644 at least twenty-five individual tenants paid twenty-eight rents to that cleric. The exact relationship of this jurisdiction to the manor of Stockport is unclear. It had been contested in 1555, but witnesses for the Warren family in a lawsuit a century later were clear that Churchgate was part of the town because Churchgate residents served township offices, benefited from freedom of toll as townsmen, and enjoyed rights of common on the manorial waste. Less significantly, inquisitions post mortem show that there were two mesne tenants of the manor, both of gentry rank, whose own tenants were burgage holders.

III

In contemporary litigation the townspeople were categorized into burgesses, tenants, and residents. The court leet rolls contain admissions of two of these: burgesses and tenants. Of

28 Based on extant documents and entries in DVE 1730 abstract. Edward Warren's confirmation of privileges from the Crown in 1632 implies that some of his rights had fallen out of use, but this may refer to the period of his minority: see note 25 above, and P.R.O., C 66/2612, no. 30 (Chancery, patent rolls).

29 Ches. R.O., DVE 1730 abstract, p. 102, listed such a court roll for 1624. For other archives see S.PR. 1578–1619, p. 89; B.L., Harleian MS. 1999, f. 223r.

30 Ches. R.O., WS, Robert Fallows 1662; DVE Acc. 2401/11, depositions dated 20 Sept. 1648, exemplified 1 Dec. 1654; Ches. R.O., DDA 1533/14 (Davenport of Bramhall MSS.). However, in 1559 Churchgate properties were apparently not included in the moss roll for Stockport's wastes: Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 86/8/3/9.

31 Cheshire inquisitions post mortem, 1603–1660, ed. R. Stewart-Brown, 3 vols, R.S.L.C., LXXIV, LXXXVI, XCI (1934–8), I, p. 11, and II, pp. 62, 125, for the socage holdings of the Arderne and Legh of Adlington families respectively (the burgage on p. 62 was a Legh burgage but Sir Urian Legh sold the rents to the Warren family); II, pp. 193, 196, and III, pp. 43, 49, for the Dukinfield and Savage holdings in free burgage.
course, one individual might be a burgess, a tenant, and a resident, depending on the mix of estates held. In our period the rentals of the Warren family divided their property into chief rents for burgages, tenants’ rents, and shop and shamble rents. Those burgages in Warren’s own hand were let on leases for ninety-nine years or three lives, sometimes with a twenty-one year reversion to follow. Other burgage holders sublet on the same terms. The Warrens also built and let new, non-burgage properties on manorial land. They, and their burgage tenants as well, built cottages on the backsides of burgages, but these cottages did not rank independently as burgages: they were part of a burgage. It was all these leaseholders and cottagers, plus, presumably, the rector’s tenants, who were the tenants and residents, to distinguish them from the burgesses. Of these three categories of Stopfordians, the tenants and residents played no part in the borough government, while the burgesses were crucial to the structure of borough government, for from their ranks the court leet jury, and thus the mayor, and so the aldermen, were chosen. It is thus crucial to know how many burgesses there were.

In the charter, burgesses held burgages, that is houses with plots in the fields and rights of common; by our period, however, houses and fields might have become detached. Rolls of 1556 and 1582 listing rights on the common waste suggest

32 Stockport Heritage Library, HX 217, rolls 1661-7, show a few tenants of the same name as a burgess, but most of those admitted tenant do not appear in the court rolls as jurors, who had to be burgesses. Heginbotham (Stockport, II, pp. 258, 265; cf. I, p. x) apparently saw court material for many years in addition to those now extant. In Ches. R.O., DVE 1730 abstract, p. 102, court rolls survived from 1493.

33 One of the ‘tenants’ in a Warren rental of c. 1660 (Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 86/8/3/8) was Richard Garnett, whose father Edward was granted a ninety-nine year lease for three lives on 12 Mar. 5 Chas I (1630) by Edward Warren (Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401, bdl e 58, Stockport box). Other examples: DVE Acc. 2509/410/171, Ryle to Bowerhouse, 20 Aug. 2 & 3 Phil. & Mary (1555); S.P.R. 1620-1650, pp. 174, 212, 249; B.L., Harleian MS. 2130, f. 25; Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 86/8/3/2, abstract of leases 1735, pp. 39-42, for leases from 1691 onwards.
TABLE 1 Burgages and burgesses on the moss rolls of 1556 and 1582

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burgages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Names of Burgesses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>1582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hands of lord</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hands of five major gentry families</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hands of ten/ twelve other owners</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hands of individuals</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership uncertain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>?5</td>
<td>?4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: see note 34

a total of ninety burgages (Table 1). The 1556 and 1582 burgages can be traced in rentals of 1579, c. 1642, c. 1660, and c. 1700 with some confidence. These rentals do not suggest that the number of burgages had increased by the end of our period. However, the uneven distribution of ownership, whereby in 1556, for example, fifteen families owned fifty-nine burgages, had changed. There were similar accumulations of burgages in Kendal, while in Salford concentration of ownership resulted in a reduction in the number of burgesses.

34 Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 86/8/3/7 (moss roll 1556); Chester City R.O., CR 63/2/585 (moss roll 1582).
36 In 1613 John Arderne had eight burgages (R.S.I.C. LXXXIV, p. 11), rather than the four of 1556. Arderne rentals of 1677 and 1703 suggest sixteen burgages (Ches. R.O., DAR D/18/4; H/52; Chester City R.O., CR 63/2/586). I assume that more were acquired after 1556; the 1703 rental seems to include a non-burgage rent payable by Robert Newton. W. Farrer, Records of Kendale, ed. J. F. Curwen (C.W.A.A.S. record ser. IV, 1923), p. 335; ‘The court leet or portmote records of Salford 1735–1738’, ed. J. Tait, in Chetham miscellanies, VI, C.S. new ser. XCIV (1935), p. 4.
I have found no reference to subdivision into half or quarter burgages, which might have led to an increase in those claiming the rights of a burgess.\textsuperscript{37} According to the seventeenth-century description of elections, burgesses 'were all to be persons houldinge lands and burgages of inheritance in the town'. A burgess held one or more burgages, as Table 1 shows; there were some forty-two burgesses in 1556. A burgess's legal estate in a burgage could be divided, but in practice rarely was. However, they did create some complicated legal estates.\textsuperscript{38} If a ninety-nine year lease, plus the reversion, of a burgage was counted as an estate of inheritance, such leases of entire burgages would not have increased the number of burgesses unless both the lessor and lessee were counted as burgesses.

Another way of examining the number of burgesses is to look at court rolls, for the jurymen were always burgesses. The rolls also list any burgesses who were absent, and give the names of burgesses admitted, whether by inheritance or by purchase. The Warren rental of 1660 and the surviving court rolls indicate that, omitting great landowners and absentees, there were some seventy-two male burgesses at any one point in the 1660s. There were 243 male heads of household in the 1664 hearth-tax listing for Stockport, so that some 31 per cent of male householders were eligible for election as mayor, and then to become an alderman. This is toward the lower end of the range of proportions of adult males who were freemen of corporate towns, where males could obtain the freedom by apprenticeship or purchase as well as by inheritance. In Stockport, burgages could be inherited or purchased, but the low proportion of householders eligible for election suggests that the structure of government in Stockport operated to restrict participation. Although Heginbotham was of the opinion that the court leet made as many people burgesses as it could, only 26 per cent of the male heads of household, that is sixty-three burgesses, were active in the court leet in the

\textsuperscript{37} But there is a reference to a life estate in a half part of a burgage in 1661: Stockport Heritage Library, HX 217, May 1661.

\textsuperscript{38} e.g. J.R.U.L.M., Rylands Charters 252–7.
1660s. However, whereas in Salford a reduction in the number of burgesses by mid-century led to inhabitants as well as burgesses forming the Salford jury, there is no suggestion of this in Stockport in the 1660s. Furthermore, it is clear that the aldermen had a disproportionate presence in the autumn jury which elected the mayor. Just 11 men filled nearly half, fifty-four, of the 120 jury places in the 1660s rolls, while thirty-four men filled the remaining sixty-six places. Even if my estimates of the numbers of burgages and burgesses are on the low side, it was a small group who were the manorial governors of Stockport. There was some external influence on town affairs because, as in some Lancashire towns, absentee burgesses, including the greater gentry, played a role. In the 1660s two non-resident burgesses were mayor.

Households headed by tenants or residents were more numerous than those headed by burgesses, at least by 1619, if not earlier, as Table 2 shows. The nature of some of the tenants’ properties in the Warren rental of 1700 is not clear, but most were domestic quarters, as surviving leases demonstrate, while a few ‘chambers’ were probably merely warehouses. Some of the development which Judge Warren brought about in the later seventeenth century can be followed in leases of burgages and other land in the lord’s hand, including property on the moors, which read like beneficial building leases and involved building craftsmen.

These occupiers, like other tenants or residents, had no access to the privileges of the burgesses. The late seventeenth-century expansion of housing in the town both isolated and fossilized the burgesses as there was no commensurate increase in the number of burgage properties.

40 Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/58, Stockport box, deeds: Warren to Hudson, 1 May 1665; Warren to Hunter 11 Nov. 1689, with sales of reversionary rights in 1694 and 1699; Warren to Brown, 4 Feb. 1691/2; Warren to Sidebothome 8 Aug. 1693; Warren to Dickenson 16 June 1696.
41 Whatever the market for burgage property, the burgesses of Stockport were toll-free in Cheshire, except in the wiches, a valuable commercial privilege. In this context, in Warburton & Grafton v. Sherwyn in 1628, Alexander Elcock recognized a copy of the charter he had had made when mayor about 1608: P.R.O., CHES 14/11, f. 167r.; parchment pleadings: CHES 16/38, pt 2. See Heginbotham, *Stockport*, I, p. 139.
IV

The relationship between the lord, the burgesses, the tenants and residents, and the borough changed over time. Such change was complicated because individual burgesses, and tenants, and residents, had differing but interwoven aspirations. Four points need emphasis in the following paragraphs. First, some burgesses asserted their privileges and extended their role in the government of the town through helping to fund the grammar school and by administering poor relief. Second, attempts by the lord to minimize the role of the mayor and burgesses in government were diluted in the first three quarters of the seventeenth century by the lord's need to defend the custom of the town against attempts to overturn his lucrative right to suit of mill. Third, the rise of the parish administration of the poor law, apparent after 1660, duplicated the efforts of the aldermen in poor relief. Fourth, paradoxically, from about 1660 onwards some burgesses showed an increasing determination to withdraw from town government.

The assertiveness of the burgesses was made clear in 1565, when, after a dispute with John Warren, they successfully went to arbitration to continue their involvement in the election of the mayor.42 The mayor continued to exercise a prescriptive judicial function as a royal officer independent of the manorial

42 Heginbotham, Stockport, II, pp. 258–9; and, presumably, Ches. R.O., DVE 1730 abstract, p. 48. I cannot relate this arbitration to an inspeximus of 1563 restating Warren's privileges vis-à-vis the palatinate: P.R.O., CHES 2/222, m. 4 (Chester rolls).
Furthermore, as we have seen, the rise of the burgesses in the government of the town seems to have brought about the creation of the position of alderman. An obvious example of interest by the burgesses in the affairs of the town in the later sixteenth century is Stockport grammar school. The contact between the London Company of Goldsmiths, which administered the school’s endowment, and the townspeople offers a good insight into the increasing importance of the aldermen. In the 1560s the company took notice of gentry and townspeople. In the 1600s when townspeople, rector, and country gentry disagreed, the company began to deal with the mayor and aldermen. It consulted the mayor and aldermen in the 1640s and 1650s, and again in the 1660s. It was the provision of additional funds by townspeople for the salary of the headmaster and usher, and of a school building, which gave the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses influence in the affairs of the school. The townsfolk also began to provide philanthropic funds for the poor, and this too enhanced the position in town affairs of the burgesses, in the persons of the mayor and aldermen. It was they who, with the rector until at least the 1640s, shared the operation of the funds; by the 1680s they appear to be dominant in the administration of a capital sum of £300. The involvement of the mayor and corporation in the government of the town further increased in the 1640s and 1650s, for most Stopfordians—including the important gentry

43 Heginbotham, Stockport, II, pp. 261, 262, 264–5, cites examples from 1607 and 1661. For 1607 see also Ches. R.O., DVE 1730 abstract, p. 48. For 1661, see text at note 56.
44 See text at note 27.
45 For a general comment on the enabling power of schools for townspeople see P. Clark and P. Slack, English towns in transition, 1500–1700 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 22–3.
burgesses, though not Edward Warren—backed parliament in the civil wars. Some of the aldermen—William Barrett, Francis Newton, and Michael Parker—were sequestrators for Macclesfield hundred and acquired unusual prominence in county affairs. Another alderman took over the rector's archives, and the corporation was consulted about recruiting soldiers and about seating in the parish church.

The lord’s efforts to contain the expansion of borough government were unsuccessful. As we have seen, John Warren had to compromise in 1565. In 1634 Edward Warren’s idea to have his steward of Stockport made a county justice of the peace came to nothing. If appointed a justice, the steward would have been superior to the mayor, because the mayor’s judicial powers were only prescriptive. However, the steward’s proposed elevation might have been no more than a disguised attempt by Warren to promote himself above difficult local gentry, who were not then on the bench. In defence of their rights against these troublesome neighbours, who were burgesses of Stockport, the Warrens also supported the mayor and burgesses. In lawsuits between 1612 and 1667 the family successfully defended their lucrative right to suit of mill against the Arderne and Dukinfield gentry families, and against the rector and the rector’s tenants. In 1633


51 P.R.O., SP 16/281/68 (State Papers Domestic, on microfilm). For J.Ps see SP 16/405 (microfilm), and C 193/13/2 (Chancery, Crown Office entry books).

52 B.L., Harleian MS. 1999, f. 154r.

53 Arderne: Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/10, depositions dated 31 Mar. 1612; Dukinfield: DVE Acc. 2401/9, 1 Mar. 1629/30, and same date in P.R.O., CHES 14/12, no foliation; 1666: P.R.O., CHES 14/21, ff. 106, 133v., 148v., 187, 188v., 189v., and CHES 15/74 (Palatinate of Chester, paper pleadings). For the rector and his tenant see Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/11, depositions 20 Sept. 1648, exemplified 1 Dec. 1654; and DVE Acc. 2401/14, 24 Apr. 1658. The tenant had a mill room, or building, in his inventory: Ches. R.O., WS, Robert Fallows 1662.
Edward Warren, pushed by a suit which had begun in 1629, obtained confirmation of his customs from the king. The town charter, where the rights of the mayor and burgesses were enshrined alongside suit of mill, was produced as evidence in the suit which culminated in 1667. Ironically, perhaps the most effective strike at the burgesses and their manorial corporation was carried out not by the Warrens, but by a newcomer, the lawyer Thomas Wasse in 1661. Wasse was punished in the mayor’s court for refusing to acknowledge the mayor’s position as an officer of the Crown. His bill at the county quarter sessions, alleging that the way he had been handled was not a punishment but an assault, was upheld. In the bill the mayor and his officers were charged as individuals and not as office-holders. In essence, Wasse’s victory swept aside the pretensions to corporate borough government that surrounded the mayor of Stockport, and portrayed the mayor as a tool of the lord of the manor.

The elaboration of parish government, apparent after 1660, impacted on both the lord and the borough. The parish church for the fourteen townships which made up the parish of Stockport was sited in the manor, borough, and township of Stockport. For the people of Stockport township the parish was, therefore, a visible and independent institution which stood out alongside the manor and borough.

Parish matters were, however, linked to the gentry burgesses because the parish was administered by four hereditary churchwardens (the ‘praeposti’, or ‘posts’) drawn from the

55 Cf. Heginbotham, Stockport, I, p. 139. His suggestion as to the origins of the endorsement is not borne out.
56 Heginbotham, Stockport, II, pp. 264–5. The papers cited by Heginbotham in the corporation’s archives cannot now be found, according to the Stockport Heritage Library and the office of the chief executive (letter to author, 24 Aug. 1997). For Wasse’s case see Ches. R.O., QJF 89/3/40, 78, 79, 84, 85, 203 (quarter sessions records, on microfilm). QJX 3/4 has nothing. The J.P. to whom Wasse turned for help, Sir Peter Leycester, seems to have lost a legal dispute in 1660–1 which was umpired by John Warren: Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 3756/10. Papers about his case were listed in DVE 1730 abstract, p. 48, and may have been listed in 1703: DVE Acc. 3756/10, C78.
chief landowners of the parish. The Arderne family were of the praeposti, and were mesne burgage tenants of the Warrens in Stockport. The posts appointed deputy wardens who, with the overseers of the poor and other parochial officers, served for each township but were appointed at a parish meeting. The township and parish officials were independent of the manor and the burgesses. After the surviving churchwardens’ accounts start in 1683, only once up to 1704 was an alderman named as a parish official, either as a (deputy) churchwarden for the whole parish, or for Stockport township as overseer or supervisor of the highways. Indeed, Stockport township did not even regularly provide one of the four churchwardens: in only six of those years was a Stockport man a warden, though in 1704 two wardens came from the township. The officers of the manorial borough seem to have carried little weight in parish and township affairs, although the court leet in the 1660s continued to require bonds from newcomers to keep the town harmless if they fell into poverty. Alongside the expanding role of the parish in secular government the aldermen themselves were uncertain where the future lay, even in the field of poor relief. After 1660 more aldermen left money to the overseers than to the fund administered by the aldermen.

The first evidence of dissatisfaction with the obligations of borough government by a burgess appeared at the same time

57 Notitia Cestriensis, p. 301.
58 Ches. R.O., Mf. 34/21, unfoliated (Stockport churchwardens’ accounts). Two of the five men from Stockport who served as a churchwarden can be identified: Jonathan Gibson (1697, 1698, 1699) was a tenant of the Warrens, and William Ridgway (1703, 1704) was a burgess.
59 Heginbotham, Stockport, I, p. 167, refers to an order of the court leet in 1674 that the overseers in future give account to the mayor or steward of all newcomers, but I have been unable to verify this piece of assertiveness by the borough.
as the role of the parochial officers becomes apparent (c. 1660), and just before the Wasse incident in 1661, already described. One burgess refused office as mayor, in 1658.\footnote{Heginbotham, \textit{Stockport}, II, pp. 263–4. Ches. R.O., DVE 1730 abstract, p. 102 appears to date this to 1687.} Perhaps not too much significance should be attached to this, as similar refusals were commonplace in corporate towns.

The end of the century witnessed three heavy blows against the manorial borough from burgesses. In 1692 Arthur Ashton refused to serve as mayor. Heginbotham, using papers which cannot now be found,\footnote{Heginbotham, \textit{Stockport}, II, p. 264; see Varley, \textit{Stockport grammar school}, p. 49, and note 56 above. Papers about this case were in the Warren archive c. 1703 (Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 3756/10, schedule of deeds, C78, C81, C107) and in DVE 1730 abstract, pp. 48, 102.} portrayed Ashton as an elderly man who lived in Clitheroe, an out-burgess who did not wish to be involved with Stockport, and who compromised once the lord of the manor sued him for failure to honour his tenurial obligations as a burgess. Reports of Ashton’s case cited in the 1706 dispute tell a different story, one confirmed by the court records. Ashton’s argument that under the Restoration land settlement his burgage was held in common socage and owed suit to the lord, but that otherwise it was not liable to pretended customs of the town, prevailed in 1696. Judge Warren had to pay costs, but was allowed to examine witnesses. This was simply a delaying tactic to keep alive a suit which Warren had lost.\footnote{Chester City R.O., CR 63/2/691/246, Henry Arderne to Richard Arderne, 19 Mar. 1708/9. Henry seems to have read P.R.O., E 127/19, p. 456 (Exchequer K.R., order books), and also Ashton’s demurrer. I have not been able to find the demurrer. Warren’s bill (by the Attorney-General) is P.R.O., E 112/626/99 (Exchequer K.R., bills and answers), which looks to have been among the documents seen by Heginbotham.} Nine years later, in 1705, John and Edward Warren, the rector, the mayor and aldermen, and various gentlemen and inhabitants agreed to a scheme which ended the role of the mayor and aldermen in the management of school and poor-relief funds. Capital had been lost, it was reported, and what was left was to go to the
overseers, who were also to raise an annual tax to support the school. The mayor who agreed to the removal of funds from corporation control was a gentry burgess, Charles Dukinfield of Dukinfield, and the following year, 1706, another such burgess, Richard Arderne, esquire, of Harden, was elected mayor. He reopened the issue of the Ashton case and refused to serve, with—according to Heginbotham—the support of a number of other burgesses. Although that wider support withered, Arderne, who as a mesne tenant had always held at least some of his burgages in socage, kept his campaign going until 1711 when he agreed to serve, again after litigation had begun. It is clear that in 1692, 1705, and 1706 a number of burgesses, by their choice of mayor, resented the obligations to the manorial borough which their tenure involved. These disputes did not mean the end of the manorial borough, which survived in form at least until 1835.

Let me now move to my second test of Stockport’s identity, and compare its economy with that of the countryside. The difference between activity in the surrounding area and activity in Stockport would be a measure of how distinctively urban Stockport was. Of course, even by 1700 our expectations of the degree of urbanization in a small town should not be too great, especially for a town in which population growth cannot be clearly demonstrated. To a degree, the expansion of the Warren rental (Table 2) might result from population increase, but it may equally reflect more and better houses for a similar level of population. One insight into economic activity in Stockport and its surrounds is

64 Ches. R.O., DFI 39.
65 Heginbotham, Stockport, II, p. 264. Henry Arderne’s letter (cited in note 63) is my only record of this lawsuit.
66 One late seventeenth-century aldermen called himself neither alderman nor burgess in his will, but, revealingly, yeoman: Ches. R.O., WI, James Hobson 1694.
the 1619 Easter book.67 This was written up by one person, whose perception of economic activity over the whole parish is likely to have been uniform. It would appear that many of those assessed heads of household were too poor to pay, or avoided payment of their Easter offerings. The probate records of those tithed on ‘trade’ reveal a linen draper, a woollen draper, and two mercers, callings well described by the word ‘trade’.68 Most householders were given no occupation, and I have followed the probate occupations of four of them and assumed that these were agricultural households.69 There is no need for me to restate here the problems which arise when trying to deduce an occupational structure from the evidence of Table 3 (for instance, how many shoemakers were also farmers, and how many farmers had subsidiary textile interests), for such considerations are of minimal relevance for the moment.70 My point here is that the 1619 Easter book gives a picture of the economy of the parish of Stockport through one man’s eyes, and so permits comparison of the borough with some of its surrounding townships.

Stockport had proportionately much more involvement in occupations loosely called trade, in food occupations, in building, and in textile manufacture than the rural townships. It might be dangerous to treat all the townships as homogeneous:

67 Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/15; S. J. Wright, ‘Easter books and parish rate books: a new source for the urban historian’, Urban History Yearbook (1985), pp. 30–45, esp. 31, 32, 36, 37. In practice those who were given an occupation in the Easter book were liable on the profits of trade and handicrafts, and the others on things ‘nourished from the ground’, such as eggs, milk, and livestock. The suits on Stockport tithes in 1658 (P.R.O., E 112/291/44 and 45) do not elucidate this.

68 Other householders were attributed handicraft occupations such as shoemaker or webster. Where given in the Easter book, occupations agree with probate records (S.P.R. 1578–1619, p. 130; S.P.R. 1620–1650, pp. 159, 220, 243). However, the book might understate the number and range of occupations as it does not give Godfrey Heron the occupation of tanner, indicated in his will, nor does it call George Jennings a glazier (wills made 1621): see S.P.R. 1620–1650, pp. 157, 191.

69 S.P.R. 1620–1650, pp. 153, 159, 178, 189 (for deaths up to 1624).

70 See, e.g., John Robinson in note 74.
TABLE 3 Stockport’s economy in 1619 from the Easter book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Out-townships</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodenwares</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth-making</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Trade’</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.56</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.77</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>80.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>292</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>471</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/15 (1619–29). Only the 1619 entries cover the major part of the parish (excluding the chapelry of Disley), and give occupations. The listing is much amended, and for the present purpose I have counted only entries in the original hand. Study of the whole of the book for the period 1619–29 shows that, in most cases, the names are those of heads of households. Where a widow and her son were named consecutively I have counted them as living in the same household, and construed other entries which might list consecutively people living in the same household in a similar way. The figures in Table 3 might therefore understated the number of households.

no occupations were given for one, and for the others the proportion of non-agricultural households ranges up to 26.3 per cent. However, these occupations include only two described as trade, for given occupations in the out-townships were almost exclusively handicrafts. Seen through the eyes of the Easter book for 1619, the borough township of Stockport looks very different from the rest of the parish.

A second insight into the economy comes from probate records. Table 4 (p. 48) makes use of given occupations in documents for Stockport township, and occupations for most of the out-townships of the parish in the Cheshire Record Office’s computerized index. Occupations derived in this way,

71 For their selection see S.P.R. 1620–1650, pp. xvi–xvii.
TABLE 4 Given occupations of males from probate records, 1580–1709

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations of male decedents</th>
<th>Stockport no.</th>
<th>Stockport %</th>
<th>Out-townships no.</th>
<th>Out-townships %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributive</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman/esquire</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeoman/husbandman</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alderman</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>135</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Ches. R.O., WS, WI, and WC.

For reasons of spelling, or because township names may be confused, I have omitted Dukinfield, Etchells, and Norbury, plus Disley because it is not in the Easter book. Ninety-five decedents’ names in the indexes for the remaining townships did not give an occupation.

and over this time span, are a very simplistic and crude indicator of male economic activity, and are subject to the caveats made above for the Easter book. Nevertheless, as Table 4 shows, they reinforce the conclusions to be drawn from Table 3, that the economic character of Stockport was different from that of the other townships. The distributive, service, professional, and manufacturing functions all distinguish Stockport township from the rest of the parish, though the rise of the rural chapman, especially after 1690, is noticeable.72 With mercers, grocers, and drapers to act as shopkeepers, Stockport clearly had a range of well-stocked shops throughout the period.73 Distribution was not, however, limited to the retailing and wholesaling of finished goods, or luxury foodstuffs and recreational products such as tobacco.


Flaxmen, for example, distributed raw materials and yarn no doubt in the town, and certainly in the country.\textsuperscript{74} In the 1660s John Clarkson, who does not appear in Table 4 for he has no given occupation, looks to have been a distributor of treen ware and other domestic utensils, with premises not only in Stockport and in the market-place, but also at Warrington and at Manchester.\textsuperscript{75} The presence of someone like him would go some way to explain the number of throwers who appeared in the out-townships in the 1619 Easter book, and would both connect and differentiate town and country. There was a coterie of resident professionals: thus in the 1650s Francis Harpur of Stockport drew on the services of two physicians and a lawyer (John Warren, later Judge Warren). A dame school and a writing master provided elementary learning, while the grammar school attracted boarders from the surrounding counties.\textsuperscript{76} Title deeds add to our knowledge of services available in Stockport: there were at least two gardeners c. 1700.\textsuperscript{77} Table 4 does not include females, but in the 1660s half a dozen women were important in the service sector in inns and alehouses, as the court leet rolls show. Anne Ridiall, for example, appears frequently and operated a business on some scale, as her inventory of 1667 demonstrates, though it gives no occupation.\textsuperscript{78} There were roughly thirty alesellers active at any one time in the 1660s, assuming that, as elsewhere, leet presentations were a form of taxation rather

\textsuperscript{74} e.g. \textit{S.P.R.} 1578–1619, pp. 103–14 (John Robinson, yeoman, 1617); Ches. R.O., WS, Thomas Dickinson 1668; Richard Jackson of Brinnington, weaver, 1709. However, Dr J. H. Smith points to flax dealers based in the countryside, such as Ewan Hollingworth of Matley, in Mottram in Longdendale, and his son William: Ches. R.O., WS, 1618, 1638 (reference to Ewan courtesy of Mrs Joyce Powell). William's debts indicate trade as far away as Leicestershire and London, but not close to Stockport town. Robinson traded north and east of Stockport, including in Longdendale, as well as to the south and west of the town.

\textsuperscript{75} Ches. R.O., WS, 1668.


\textsuperscript{77} Ches. R.O., DVE Acc. 2401/38, Stockport box, Ashton to Hall, 23 June 1698; Acc. 2401/58, Warren to King, 1703.

\textsuperscript{78} Ches. R.O., WS, 1667
than a penalty for poor quality ale. The court leet rolls also include presentations for gambling, and no doubt a variety of services and games were available in the town. Not everyone regarded such games as nefarious: Alderman John Heawood bequeathed a shovelboard to one of his daughters.\textsuperscript{79} Henry Bradshaw in 1640 seems to have patronized a barber, and used inns. Later in the decade sequestrators used Cotterell’s inn for their meetings.\textsuperscript{80} Clergymen dined at inns after preaching.\textsuperscript{81} The county gentry celebrated the accession of James II in 1685 with a dinner at Robinson’s in Stockport.\textsuperscript{82}

The importance of inns and such services in Stockport was no doubt in part due to its position at a bridging point across the Mersey on the main route east from Manchester to the south and to London, and also on a route from Chester east to Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{83} Stockport may have been too close to Manchester to make the most of this geography. Henry Prescott’s diary shows a regular visitor to Stockport who often pushed on to Manchester, sometimes to arrive there in the dark.\textsuperscript{84} In short, Stockport seems throughout the seventeenth century to have offered a range of specialist economic functions and connections with its hinterland which warrant us calling it an urban, rather than a rural settlement.

VI

Stockport’s economic functions contributed to a range of polite, as opposed to popular, cultural activities, my third test of a distinctive urban identity for the town. This was the world

\textsuperscript{79} Ches. R.O., WS, John Heawood 1682.
\textsuperscript{80} T.H.S.L.C. XV, pp. 78, 83–92; B.L., Harleian MS. 2130, f. 92; Ches. R.O., DCB 1179/30.
\textsuperscript{82} E. Newton, Lyme letters 1660–1760 (London, 1925), p. 128; for other Legh involvement with Stockport see pp. 103–4, 117, 171.
\textsuperscript{83} In the 1650s Francis Harpur of Stockport used two carriers to London: S.P.R. 1620–1650, pp. 283, 287, 289, 290, 291, 293, 294; Historical Manuscripts Commission, Various collections, VIII, pp. 227–8.
\textsuperscript{84} Diary of Henry Prescott, pp. 9, 120, 875, and perhaps 23, 74.
of the more wealthy traders and artisans and the professional men, the middling sort as Keith Wrightson has termed them, whose culture was literacy-based. Stockport traders could supply luxury goods. The middle sort in Stockport c. 1600 were open to a number of influences: through their literacy skills and professional knowledge and contacts, through their commercial contacts, and through journeys outside Stockport, they were a way in which new ideas and fashions could reach the town. In the late sixteenth century, Stockport had a small nucleus of professional men: schoolmaster, rector and curates, and a lawyer or two.\textsuperscript{85} The town houses of the neighbouring gentry, and their sons who lived in the town, were an addition to urban society. The Elcocks of Whitepool in south-east Cheshire had been Stockport merchants who retained land in the town; Alexander Elcock of Whitepool served as mayor in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{86} A less substantial connection is indicated by the furniture which Ralph Arderne of Crokeley, a minor gentleman, had in Stockport in 1633.\textsuperscript{87} It was not only land which connected the gentry to the middling sort of Stockport. The rector from 1577 to 1614, Richard Gerard, was married to Ursula Arderne of Harden.\textsuperscript{88} From 1637 to his sequestration in 1644 Edmund Shalcrosse, a younger son of the family of Shalcrosse of Shalcrosse, Derbyshire, held the living.\textsuperscript{89} Robert Dukinfield, esquire, of Dukinfield appointed in 1630 Godfrey Heron of Stockport as one of the advisers to help his wife to bring up their children. Sir Peter Legh of Lyme remembered Thomas Normansell, a curate of Stockport, in his will of 1635.\textsuperscript{90}

An example of the connections amongst this middling group so important to the cultural life of the town is provided by Stockport grammar school. The mercer Alexander Lowe,
who had been mayor first in 1587, left property which became the schoolhouse. The rector was also involved with school affairs, and Lowe made the resident and long-serving rector Richard Gerard a trustee of charitable uses under his will. Alexander Torkinton, a tanner, also remembered the school in his will. Elcocks were amongst those who had direct contact at Goldsmiths’ Hall over the appointment of the schoolmaster. It is therefore no surprise that the parish church has communion silver from London dated 1580.

Intellectually the clergy and some teachers were men of learning. The grammar school master does not appear to have served as a curate, but a number of the masters were university graduates. Richard Gerard, the resident rector from 1577 to 1614, had proceeded B.D. A number of the known curates and lecturers, including Arthur Storer, M.A., were graduates. His long years of service meant that in most of the period between 1614 and 1637, when the rectors changed frequently and/or were absentees, there was at least one graduate clergyman in the town. Some preached their own sermons: detail of one by Mr Storer from 1608 survives in the notes made by a member of the Elcock family. The curate Thomas Normansell was asked to preach at funeral sermons of the Stockport elite. It is not clear that Normansell, who was also rural dean of Macclesfield, was a graduate. His fellow cleric, the Revd Thomas Burdsell, B.A., left his library in 1641 to be used by future ministers of Stockport. However many volumes made up the collection, it warranted setting aside one room of his house, with a new door to the

91 S.P.R. 1578–1619, pp. 41, 59–60.
93 [C. Brocklehurst], A catalogue of the Festival exhibition of ecclesiastical and secular silver (Cheshire Standing Joint Committee [Chester, 1951]), p. 8.
street. When he was sequestered in 1644 the rector’s library comprised 588 books in his study and more books in the parlour. How far literacy extended outside the professional circle is unclear. Wills offer some estimate of the reputation attached to books: two substantial yeomen of Stockport referred to their ‘books’, but the owner of probably the largest lay collection of books was Henry Wright, a gentry younger son. The earliest owner of a map, in 1613, in Stockport probate records was a gentry widow, but a tradesman, Alderman William Dickenson, had one at his death in 1619.

Gentry residents and neighbours helped to stimulate demand for a variety of goods in the town and spread knowledge of new fashions. The widows Dorothy Elcock and Marie Arderne, in 1613 and 1619 respectively, are the first Stockfordians known to have used window curtains, a new fashion according to historians of consumption, and one which, it is argued, characterized and promoted urban self-consciousness reflected in a need for privacy. Stockport rectory had window curtains in 1644. The gentry had musical instruments in the 1640s. The first inventories of Stockport’s middling sort to boast such luxuries as window curtains and musical instruments appear in the 1660s, and a shoemaker had such curtains by 1709.

98 B.L., Harleian MS. 1999, f. 163r., 164r.
99 I conclude that Stockport wills are not reliable evidence of the ability or inability to write: S.P.R. 1620–1650, p. xvi.
100 S.P.R. 1578–1619, pp. 83, 132; 1620–1650, pp. 190, 209, 228.
101 S.P.R. 1578–1619, pp. 81, 82, 125, 126.
102 C. Shammas, The pre-industrial consumer in England and America (Oxford, 1990), has a general perspective on consumer goods in Stockport; see also L. Weatherill, Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1660–1760 (London, 1988), pp. 8, 83; and for town/country distribution see pp. 76, 77, 177.
103 B.L., Harleian MS. 1999, f. 163r.
105 Ches. R.O., WS, Jane Siddal 1667; Alderman Skelhorne and his widow 1668 and 1669; Thomas Dickenson 1669; Thomas Woodburne 1710; WI, Edward Brock 1667. The joiner Richard Wright (1669) had virginals. Weatherill, Consumer behaviour, p. 207, thought musical instruments to be unevenly listed after 1660.
The sort of consumption habits implied by such furnishings were at first fed by mercers or haberdashers, but in the 1680s and 1690s Stockport had men whose occupation was described as shopkeeper, a much more modern term. They may have got some new ideas via the clothes which Peter Legh of Lyme had made in London in the last decade of the century. It was not only inside that new consumption habits and fashions were spreading: one would like to know for whom the two gardeners known to have been in Stockport in 1700 worked.

The professional group in Stockport widened in expertise as the seventeenth century progressed. William Simkin is the first known apothecary in the town in 1623, and by 1618 men calling themselves physician and surgeon were resident there or near by. By 1700 John Foley, M.D., was a Stockport physician. The rector who died in 1693 was a D.D., and at least one of the dissenting clerics at the end of the century was a graduate and had been to an academy, keeping up the educational standards of the clergy. The new rector, William Nicols, fancied himself as a poet; while the lawyers Thomas Swettenham and Richard Gosden, and William Dickens the schoolmaster, were the leading lights of lay professional society c. 1700 in Stockport. They, however, still mixed with the aldermen and commercial men.

109 E. W. Bulkeley, The parish register of St. Mary, Stockport, 1584–1620 (Stockport, 1889), 9 Aug. 1618; Ches. R.O., WS, Nicholas Wynn 1660; Ches. R.O., Stockport parish register (on microfilm), 16 Feb. 1700/1; 16 Jan. 1710/11; Ches. R.O., WS, John Foley 1709 (he may later have lived at Cheadle Hulme).
111 Diary of Henry Prescott, pp. 185, 940; Earwaker, East Cheshire, I, p. 395.
112 Ches. R.O., Stockport parish register, 26 Mar. 1699; 26 July 1701; Diary of Henry Prescott, p. 184.
Amongst gentry residents were Judge Warren himself, the widows Bridget Halliewell and Ellen Malken, and William Davenport, esquire, of Bramhall, who lived in Stockport until the death of his father in 1696. Other gentry apparently living in the town were a younger brother of the Tattons of Wythenshawe, and members of the Davenport, Radcliffe, and Byrne families. John Shalcrosse, esquire, entertained the deputy registrar of the diocese in 1696, along with members of the Arderne and Swettenham families, at the bowling green. They were playing or watching a game which seems to have been available in Stockport for over a century.

Stockport stood out from the surrounding townships because of its ancient borough status, and in the second half of the sixteenth century burgesses defended their role in the borough against their lord. It was not only in the presence of a market that the town's economy differed from the surrounding countryside; in the first quarter of the seventeenth century Stockport had a number of substantial retail and wholesale traders, and inns, a bowling green, and other services to accommodate travellers and visitors. Closely interacting with this urban economy was a small group of professionals, that is lawyers, clerics, and schoolteachers, and even an apothecary. The clergy and schoolmasters made an impact in the town, even setting up a library for clerics in 1642. It was from the traders, rather than the professionals, that the mayors, and so the aldermen, were chosen.

114 Ches. R.O., WS, Bridget Halliewell 1683; Ellen Malken 1685; William Davenport 1706.
standing of those officers in the community increased as administrators of poor relief and educational philanthropy, especially in relation to the grammar school. Into this distinctively urban community reached a strong gentry presence as a number of landowning families kept houses in the town. Periodically, the gentry lord of the town had to support the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses under the customs of the borough to fend off challenges to his valuable rights of multure.

There is no evidence as to whether or not there were factions within this urban community before the mid-seventeenth century. The religious freedoms associated with the Civil War meant there were at least two churches in Stockport in the 1650s. These give us ready evidence of division. Later, there were at least two dissenting denominations with premises licensed in the town in 1672. They continued after the Act of Toleration with, in addition, a small Quaker meeting which seems to have had its own meeting house by 1700. Anxiety about the spread of dissent was evident amongst Church of England people in the town at the end of the century. These religious differences penetrated to the heart of the town’s economy: dissenting Stopfordians certainly included three substantial traders, one an alderman, in the 1690s. Also with effect from around the middle of the seventeenth century, the rise of the statutory poor law within the parish administration created an alternative, or at least a parallel administrative structure to that of the borough. Because the parish was not dominated by Stockport township, burgage tenure was not a prerequisite for involvement in either poor law or parish. The effect of these changes was to make the distinctions between the burgesses, tenants, and residents of the manorial custom irrelevant. The continuing presence of the country

gentry in the town ensured that there were ordinary townsmen throughout our period who looked to individuals outside the town for social and political standing. The gentry, apart from the Warren lords of the borough, played a prominent role in the affairs of the parish, and of the school, while families in most of the out-townships continued to regard Stockport church as their parish church, which was galleried to seat more in 1699. As the secular arm of the parish was becoming more apparent, burgage holders, who were a minority of householders, began trying to shed their obligations to the borough. The government of Stockport had come a full circle since the 1560s, and the Warrens were now defending a manorial borough against burgesses who wanted out of it. Stockport’s government was urban but ill-regarded, ‘An ancient Corporation consisting of Mayor and Aldermen but no authority’, as Bishop Gastrell noted c. 1720. Neither of the most effective opponents of customary obligations of burgage holders to the borough were tradespeople, but some tradesmen evidently gave support. It is not necessarily the case that religious and administrative divides weakened the urban nature of Stockport society. Three or four churches and two administrative structures can be seen as multiplying the interests in which Stopfordians could become involved. Stockport’s economy gave the town an urban diversity and complexity of function, and marked it out from the countryside. The range of economic activity, the scale of individual businesses, and the presence of resident and visiting gentry ensured a spread of ideas, artefacts, and fashions which marked out the middling sort of townspeople from the rural yeomen and craftsmen. It was more this growing diversity, rather than burgage tenure and an ancient borough structure, which made Stockport a town.

119 Notitia Cestriensis, p. 300.
120 See The middling sort of people, ed. J. Barry and C. Brooks (Basingstoke, 1994), chap. 3.
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