

# The Macclesfield horse fair toll book, 1619–1675

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Macclesfield in the early modern period was a significant town, and centre of the English silk button industry.<sup>1</sup> The town was also the host of a horse fair which may have had medieval origins. The aim of this article is to examine the nature of Macclesfield's horse fair for the first time, to shed light onto the town which hosted it and to highlight aspects of internal trade in early modern England. The period covered by the horse fair toll book allows the depressed conditions of the early seventeenth century to be compared with the generally better economic conditions of the late seventeenth century. This will show how these national changes were reflected at a local level.

Critical to our understanding of late seventeenth-century English economy are expansions of both agricultural and industrial output, and in particular the agricultural sector's ability to produce more food with less labour. This was achieved by replacing human muscle for animal muscle (increasingly horses) and fertilizer for land, so that by the early nineteenth century, and probably much earlier, a major distinction between English agriculture and that practiced on large parts of the Continent was the animal-intensive nature of English practices.<sup>2</sup> Around 1500, English and French agricultural

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Davies, *A history of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), pp. 122–24; P. Knight, 'Early modern Macclesfield: Market town to proto-industrial hub, 1600–1740' (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2003), ch. 6; P. Knight, 'The Macclesfield silk button industry: The probate evidence', *Textile History*, 35 (2004).

<sup>2</sup> P. O'Brien, 'Agriculture and the home market for English industry, 1660–1820', *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985), p. 779; N. F. R. Crafts, 'Income elasticities of demand and the release of labour by agriculture during the British industrial revolution', *Journal of European Economic History*, 9 (1980), pp. 166–68;

productivity was roughly equal, but between 1600 and 1800 English productivity rose by 75 per cent compared to a rise of just 17 per cent in France. A considerable amount of this improvement occurred pre-1700 and so cannot be attributed to the traditional explanation for improvement in English agriculture, enclosure.<sup>3</sup> In practical terms, this has been identified by a relative stability in agricultural prices between 1650 and 1750: grain exports were encouraged, with bounties were paid to exporters from 1673, in order to maintain the domestic price of grain.<sup>4</sup>

This situation contrasts markedly with the early seventeenth century when there were serious concerns about the grain harvests in 1620–24, 1630–32 and the late 1640s. At the same time, economic dislocation of export markets due to the Thirty Years War reduced purchasing power amongst a workforce that adopted a mixed agricultural/industrial employment pattern to avoid the worst fluctuations of climate and markets.<sup>5</sup> It should not be considered that the late seventeenth century was without poor harvests, but that the improvements in productivity which permitted grain exports in good years alleviated the extreme consequences of the earlier decades. My own research into Macclesfield's parish register has identified a mortality spike in the winter of 1698–99, the cause of which is unclear but probably resulted from poor harvests coupled with economic dislocation caused by the Nine Years War.<sup>6</sup>

There were, of course, other factors to explain increased agricultural productivity. In Cheshire, the enclosure of fields and engrossment of farms were largely completed by 1700, at least on freehold lands: for those farms leased for the traditional three lives, the process lasted into the mid-1750s. New crops were introduced. Some of these were aimed at maintaining or increasing soil fertility,

P. O'Brien & D. Heath, 'Agricultural efficiency in Britain and France, 1780–1914', *Journal of European Economic History*, 2 (1977), pp. 339–91; J. A. Chartres, *Internal trade in England, 1500–1700* (London, 1977), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the continent in the early modern period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985) pp. 683–728; J. V. Beckett, *The agricultural revolution* (Oxford, 1990), p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> O'Brien, 'Agriculture and the home market', p. 781; J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture and social change', in J. Chartres, ed., *Pre-industrial Britain* (Oxford, 1994), p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture', p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Knight, 'Early modern Macclesfield', pp. 182, 193, 197, chart 5.14.

or providing winter fodder to maintain animal stocks. Others were part of schemes aimed at import replacement, while others were advocated as labour intensive crops which would provide employment for the rural labourers. There were also larger scale projects, such as drainage or flooding of watermeadows. In the case of Cheshire, the impetus for enclosure and engrossment was to operate dairy farms with herds of ten cows or more (the minimum to keep a dairywoman fully employed) at ten acres per cow. Together with the increased use of horsepower, these are just a few of the factors which accounted for the improvements in English agriculture in the early modern period.<sup>7</sup>

The results from these agricultural improvements were threefold: increased productivity led to increased incomes in the agricultural sector, which raised purchasing power and so demand for manufactured goods. The labour 'released' from agriculture could find higher paid employment in the urban economy that spent more on industrial commodities. Finally, 'shifts in the intersectoral terms of trade also altered levels of expenditure on manufactured goods'.<sup>8</sup> The smaller agricultural work force relative to the national population, through various improvements of which horses are our prime concern here, raised efficiency and productivity. This in turn stabilised food prices against growing demand and raised incomes that in turn generated demand for manufactured goods. The surplus rural population, hitherto underemployed in proto-industrial activities to supplement their incomes, was forced to find urban employment, and fuelled the massive growth of England's towns.<sup>9</sup> These workers powered the industrial and commercial growth that characterised post-Restoration England, but by dislocating themselves from the food sources they once produced, raised demands on both the producers and the haulers.

The nature of England's internal distribution networks will be

<sup>7</sup> C. Foster, 'Cheshire cheese: Farming in the North-West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 144 (1995), pp. 13–17; J. Thirsk, *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (Cambridge, 1984), vol. V pt. 1, pp. 60, 65–66, 144–50; Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture', pp. 68–97.

<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, 'Agriculture and the home market', p. 780.

<sup>9</sup> J. Stobart, 'An eighteenth century revolution? Investigating urban growth in North-West England, 1664–1801', *Urban History*, 23 (1996), table 3 for net and percentage growth: Macclesfield grew an estimated 128%, 1664–1778 and Liverpool a phenomenal 1,278% over the same period.

examined in the following section in the context of an acute shortage in historical material from which to draw conclusions about patterns, practices and changes. Spufford has shown the importance of a horse to itinerant pedlar-chapmen, who were the lowest link in the national distribution chain, in expanding the variety and quantity of goods they could carry and so extended the time they could spend on the road. Pedlar-chapmen enabled the manufactured goods of the growing towns to find markets in the most isolated parts of the country, and so linked the manufacturer and the consumer.<sup>10</sup> Horses were also vital to the increasing number of stagecoach routes emanating out of London. Weekly coach services to and from London rose from a handful in 1637 to over 900 by 1715: in 1680 322 distinct carrier services were operating from London's inns to as far afield as Preston. This process was assisted by the growth of turnpikes and bridge improvements: the first parliamentary bill to turnpike a road as a means of funding its maintenance was introduced in 1622, and interest grew from the 1660s.<sup>11</sup>

Horses can be bred almost anywhere, but different parts of England and Wales developed reputations for certain types of horse. Richard Carew, for example, described Cornwall as 'being wet moors in some parts, and for the most very dry heath grounds' producing horses which were 'hardy bred, coarsely fed, low stature, quick in travell and (after their growth and strength) able enough for continuance, which sort prove most serviceable for a rough and hill country'.<sup>12</sup> At Northampton, Daniel Defoe described very different types of horse, bred in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire for the London market 'for the saddle as for the coach and cart, but chiefly for the two latter'.<sup>13</sup> Key to meeting the increased demand for horses and regional horse production were the horse fairs. Some fairs, like

<sup>10</sup> P. Edwards, *The horse trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 1, 2, 4-7; D. G. Hey, *Packmen, carriers and packhorse roads* (Leicester, 1980), pp. 86-102; M. Spufford, *The great re-clothing of rural England: Petty chapmen and their wares in the seventeenth century* (London, 1984), pp. 45, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Edwards, *Horse trade*, pp. 10-11; T. S. Willan, *The inland trade* (Manchester, 1976), pp. 12-13; Chartres, *Internal trade*, p. 24-24, 40, 55; J. Chartres, *Agricultural markets and trade, 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 217; P. S. Bagwell, *The transport revolution* (London 1988), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Carew, *The survey of Cornwall*, ed. F. E. Halliday (New York, 1969), p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> D. Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (London, 1971), p. 406.

Chester and Shrewsbury, specialised in small, sturdy workhorses. This reflected their geographical position near the Welsh mountains, terrain not too dissimilar from the Peak District around Macclesfield, whose fair probably met the demand for packhorses with similar breeds. Northampton, as mentioned above, and Rothwell had a reputation for cart and coach horses while Penkridge specialised in high quality saddle mounts.<sup>14</sup> Through this specialisation, professional horse dealers, or chapmen, were able to travel the country, buying up horses in one locality and moving them to meet demand elsewhere.

We are fortunate with the horse trade that, uniquely amongst internal trade, there was a statutory requirement for all sales to be registered in toll books. Edwards' research has revealed a large number of horse fairs, mainly concentrated in a broad band running from the Welsh borders to the east midlands, and another from there up into Yorkshire.<sup>15</sup> It is now known that there was a horse fair in Macclesfield, and that a toll book covering part of the fair's existence has survived. The survival of these toll books is patchy and this is further exacerbated by the disruption of trade and local government during the Civil War. Toll books for horse fairs were first introduced under Tudor Acts of Parliament in 1555 and 1589.<sup>16</sup> The initial legislation can be seen as part of a wider government policy to regulate certain trades and the supply of labour during the years of the mid-Tudor crisis. Both coincided with years of social unrest and anti-vagrancy measures, for example poor-relief legislation in 1536, 1552 and 1555, and the famous Vagrancy Act of 1547. These Acts can be seen in the context of legislating against property crime in years of depression. The migratory nature of horse traders or chapmen was not dissimilar to the rootless vagrants who were a major cause for concern to Tudor local and national government. The Act of 1589, for example, required a voucher to be provided by the vendor unless the toll gatherer knew the vendor.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, *Horse trade*, pp. 16, 36, 63; P. Edwards, 'The horse trade of the Midlands in the seventeenth century', *Agricultural History Review*, 27 (1979), p. 99; P. Edwards, 'The horse trade of Chester in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 62 (1979), p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> See the map in Edwards, *Horse trade*, p. 61.

<sup>16</sup> 2 & 3 Philip & Mary, c. 7 which was a reissuing of 23 Hen. VIII, c. 16; 31 Eliz. I, c. 12.

### The toll book

The Macclesfield horse fair toll book represents a remarkable find amongst what has been called a source 'unrivalled among the sources for inland trade' and is all the more remarkable because it was found almost entirely by accident.<sup>17</sup> Internal trade in the seventeenth century was largely untaxed by central government, while pontages, tolls and other duties were relatively light in comparison with those experienced in France and Germany. England was almost a free-trade area: the commercial benefits of this system lead directly to a dearth of records that hinder the historical analysis of internal trade.<sup>18</sup> Attempts have been made to analyse the impact of internal trade, for example by Wrigley and Chartres who took the supply of food and other supplies to London, but they can only analyse internal trade to a narrow, albeit important, market.<sup>19</sup> Apart from horse fair toll books, the only other source of internal trade to leave any form of systematic national records was coastal shipping, which is best considered as an extension of river traffic. However, neither the government's Port Books nor the local customs of ports like Chester provide the historian with anything like the amount of data that is available for external trade.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, historians have tended to focus on the changes in England's external trade, for which both the sources, and historical changes are far more visible and accessible. Chartres has identified a rise in the proportion of London's grain supply being transported by coastal shipping from 10–14 per cent in the early seventeenth century to 20 per cent by 1700.<sup>21</sup> This still leaves up to 80 per cent of London's grain supply being transported internally, by horse and cart and by river, especially for the last leg.

Of particular relevance to Cheshire was the sea-borne trade in cheeses to London. Although there is evidence of Cheshire cheeses in

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *Horse trade*, p. 1; Davies, *Macclesfield*, pp. 63–66 mentions the horse fair almost in passing and it was given no further thought until the full extent of the toll book was 'rediscovered'.

<sup>18</sup> Chartres, *Internal trade*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> E. A. Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy, 1650–1750', *Past & Present*, no. 37 (1967), pp. 44–70; J. A. Chartres, 'Food consumption and internal trade', in Chartres, ed., *Pre-industrial Britain*.

<sup>20</sup> Chartres, *Internal trade*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Chartres, 'Food consumption', p. 243.

London in the sixteenth century, large-scale sea-borne shipments began in 1650. The Port Books of Chester record 364 tons being transported in 1664, rising to 1,000 tons in the mid-1670s and 2,000 tons a decade later. In the 1670s, a wharf and cheese warehouse was built at Sutton Weaver, on the River Mersey, which came under the jurisdiction of the Port of Liverpool. In 1679 over 1,000 tons of cheese was exported to London via this location. Cheeses from South West Cheshire were shipped via the River Trent, further increasing the quantities sent to London. Coastal shipping accounted for between a quarter and a third of London's estimated demand for cheese, thus up to 75 per cent of the trade was by unrecorded, internal means.<sup>22</sup> In his paper on Cheshire cheese production, Foster focuses on the transport infrastructure required to move the cheese from ports on the Dee and Mersey to London. As well as driving agrarian change, increased cheese production increased demand for land transport at precisely the same period as the Macclesfield toll books. Extended warfare with France between 1689 and 1713 curtailed coastal shipping and increased demand for inland transport.<sup>23</sup>

Although the toll book does not directly identify the national changes in commerce, communication and agriculture which have been identified above, the trends identified within the book are indicative of the national picture. It was through the supply of horses that London could be fed with grain and cheese (meat was supplied to London 'on the hoof' so did not require transport), Chester shops could be stocked with luxury goods, and Macclesfield chapmen provided with silk.<sup>24</sup>

The Macclesfield horse fairs were recorded chronologically in the toll book between 11 June 1619 and 11 June 1670, with a final entry for a single horse transaction on 18 October 1675. There were three main horse fairs. The first was the St Barnaby Fair on 11 June, the 30 June fair and the Wakes Fair on 30 October. The toll book is bound in the middle of the Macclesfield Corporation Minute Book with the pages of the minute book running concurrently before and after the

<sup>22</sup> In addition, there was an increasing internal demand for cheese, estimated at 40lb per person per annum at Arley Hall in the 1620s, rising to 120lb in the mid-eighteenth century. Chartres, 'Food consumption', pp. 245–46, 251; Chartres, *Agricultural markets and trade*, p. 271; Foster, 'Cheshire cheese', pp. 1, 6–8, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Foster, 'Cheshire cheese', pp. 8, 12–23.

<sup>24</sup> Chartres, *Internal trade*, p. 37; Knight, 'The Macclesfield silk button industry'.

toll book.<sup>25</sup> Why, or how, this should have occurred is unclear as the toll book is separated from the corporation minute book not only chronologically, but also in its style of handwriting and format. The toll book consists of 401 pages in manuscript form detailing sales of horses, and, to a lesser extent, cattle, with toll receipts from fairs and markets. There are two entries of council affairs which would be better placed in the corporation minute book.<sup>26</sup> Transactions involving 1,534 horses and twenty-five cattle were recorded on 192 different dates.

A complete entry for a fair consists of details of individual transactions followed by receipts of tolls and payments of expenses. A complete record of a transaction would contain the name, occupation and place of abode of the vendor, the purchaser and a voucher for the vendor. The original intention of the legislation introducing toll books was to limit horse stealing. Horse dealers—chapmen—were itinerant, and therefore similar to the wandering vagrant whose very presence threatened Tudor society so much. Other legislation was aimed at other dealers whose produce threatened to disrupt the social fabric, particularly grain, wool and leather. Under the 1555 Act the toll book gather was to ‘write or cause to be written in a Booke to bee kept for that purpose, the names, surnames and dwelling places of all the said parties, and the colour, with one speciall marke at the least of every Horse Mare Gelding or colt’.<sup>27</sup>

Freemen of Macclesfield and certain other towns (depending on the terms of their town’s charter) were exempt from the payment of tolls. It is unclear from the toll book whether such exemptions were practised in Macclesfield, but nationally the norm appears to have been to register the sale and note the non-payment of the fee. Non-registration of a sale would have defeated the whole object of the toll book system, that of protection in case of theft. The horses were described by type (eg mare, colt, horse, nag), colour and any

<sup>25</sup> Macclesfield Corporation Minute Book, Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies (CCALS), LBM 1/1. All evidence not otherwise referenced in the following analysis comes from this source, with individual cases being identified by date.

<sup>26</sup> 3 August 1666, Thomas Chorlton and Henry Greedon were admitted as freemen; on 7 March 1672 a levy was raised for the repair of the waterbank.

<sup>27</sup> 2 & 3 Philip & Mary, c. 7; 31 Elizabeth I, c. 12; Edwards, *Horse trade*, pp. 55–60; P. Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), pp. 91–98, 122–23.



distinguishing marks or faults. In practice, the vendor's details were more thoroughly recorded than those of the purchaser. Occupational descriptors are the least recorded of all details. Vouchers were not always required, or could be provided for the purchaser, and their details are again not uniformly recorded. The description of the horses was primarily to help identify stolen animals and in the earlier period it was not uncommon for the horse's physical state to be recorded as well. 'Trots and ambles' is one phrase used to determine the animal's gait at the point of sale, which determined the work it could undertake. Deficiencies, such as walleye, were noted and in a few cases, the animal was actually lame at the point of sale.

### The fair and Macclesfield

One obvious question, but one which is difficult to answer, is why should there be a horse fair in Macclesfield. In the fourteenth century, Edward the Black Prince had bred horses on his manor of Macclesfield for his war aims, but this was later moved away from Macclesfield. To presume that the connection was maintained over three centuries without any further evidence would be tenuous in the least, and the earliest entries of the toll book are for cattle. Macclesfield's position on the western edge of the Peak District made it a natural location for trans-Pennine packhorse trains to make for, and this would have generated a demand for accommodation, stabling, fodder and the facilities to acquire and dispose of horses. Geographically, there was an opening for a town to hold a horse fair in east Cheshire, and this is now known to have been filled by Macclesfield (although there may be other unidentified fairs in Cheshire). In a study of market towns in south Lancashire and Cheshire, Stobart has estimated Macclesfield's population in 1664 from the Hearth Tax returns and ranked Macclesfield fourth behind Chester, Manchester and Nantwich.<sup>28</sup> Seventeenth-century Macclesfield was a significant town and not an unreasonable location for a horse fair.

Macclesfield's prime involvement in the fair was as the provider of a service sector facility. Although the town undoubtedly benefited from the presence of the fair, such as payments for accommodation, fodder and stabling as well as wages for officers and the receipt of

<sup>28</sup> Stobart, 'An eighteenth century revolution?', tables 2 and 3.

tolls into the borough coffers, the townspeople played only a limited role in the horse trade themselves. Identifying vendors, purchasers and vouchers as being 'of Macclesfield' or of another place within Macclesfield is not an exact science. On 11 June 1666, for example, one Thomas Holland vouched for a sale and is described as being 'of Chestergate'. Most probably this would be Chestergate, Macclesfield, rather than Chestergate in another town, as other locations are often identified by the parish or another recognisable place, such as Thomas Bowden of Coatbank, Buggesworth near Chapel en le Frith who bought a grey mare on 11 June 1632. Individuals identified by a street alone are rare, although they do occasionally occur in conjunction with the town itself, such as Henry Clark who sold a mare and a horse on 31 October 1645 and is recorded as being of Back Street, Macclesfield. At the next fair, on 11 June 1646, Henry Clark and Henry Clarke, both of Barn Street, Macclesfield, vouched for two separate transactions. These names have been treated as one and the same individual. In total, only seventy-nine Macclesfield candidates were identified.

From transactions involving some 1,500 horses, one could expect in the region of 4,500 names if each transaction contained one purchaser, one vendor and one voucher. Not all transactions contained these three individuals and, as will be shown below, certain individuals appear in numerous transactions. Nevertheless, based upon this calculation, Macclesfield's involvement is limited to below 2 per cent of all transactions, a surprisingly small proportion. Throughout the period as a whole, the evidence from the toll book is that the involvement of Macclesfield's townspeople in horse-trading at the fair was occasional. Macclesfield people normally appear only once, like Edward Whilton who, on 11 June 1645, sold a black nag to Myles Willson of Kettlethulme, Cheshire, for £1 10s. Where Macclesfield's townspeople do appear more regularly is vouching for sales. A limited number of individuals, usually an officer linked to the fair, reappear year after year. Edward Blagge, for example, first appears on 11 June 1639 when he vouched for the sale of a horse. Between then and 11 June 1670, he vouched for seventy-two horses at thirty-four different fairs. He also received wages as an officer at forty-seven fairs. Yet he only bought horses twice himself, a bay mare for £5 5s. on 30 June 1659 and a black nag for 11s. on 20 September 1662.

The most prolific vouchers, however, were Henry Grastie and James Oldfield (or Ouldfield). Oldfield often worked alongside

Grastie and they vouched for many transactions together, even though one voucher would have been adequate. When working together, Grastie seems to be the senior partner as his name invariably appears before Oldfield's. Both the origins and occupations of Grastie and Oldfield are unclear. Grastie first appears at the fair of 11 June 1656 where he vouched for thirteen transactions. For the next fourteen years he appears at all of the 11 June fairs and at three of the 30 June fairs. He also vouched at two transactions on 1 November 1669. He is not known ever to have bought a horse himself. Oldfield first appears at the 11 June fair of 1658 and for the next nine years, except in 1666. He occasionally attended the 30 June fairs and in 1665 vouched for two transactions with one James Rabone but without Grastie. Unlike Grastie, Oldfield also served as an officer of the fair on three occasions between 1 November 1658 (when he vouched for another transaction without Grastie) and 11 June 1661. When Oldfield bought a black mare on 31 October 1656, he was described as 'of Macclesfield'. While the two men appeared to work together, they did not always vouch for the same horses: at the fair of 11 June 1661 Grastie vouched for twenty transactions while Oldfield vouched for twenty-two. At the 30 June fair that year the difference was even more pronounced. Grastie vouched for just three transactions while Oldfield vouched for thirteen.

More significantly was the type of person Grastie and Oldfield vouched for. In 1657, Grastie vouched for two transactions by one Christopher Perkin, chapman, of Thornton, Nottinghamshire. Perkin did not return to Macclesfield. The previous year, however, William Baddison, chapman (sometimes yeoman or husbandman), of Eddingley, Nottinghamshire, had used William Bostock and Henry Geeton (or Gearton) to vouch for his transactions. Baddison did return. His impact on the horse fair is discussed below, but from the mid-1650s the sale of horses was increasingly dominated by professional dealers from Nottinghamshire and, to a lesser extent, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. It was to Grastie and Oldfield that Baddison usually turned to vouch for his sales—Oldfield alone vouched for forty-two out of seventy-six sales in thirteen visits to the 11 June fairs over fourteen years.<sup>29</sup> Exactly how Grastie and

<sup>29</sup> Of Baddison's thirteen visits to the fair, Oldfield vouched at seven of them, between 1658 and 1667, missing only 1662, which Baddison did not attend, and 1666. In these fairs, Oldfield vouched for 89% of Baddison's sales.

Oldfield came to vouch for sales of horses that originated in Nottinghamshire is unclear. Perhaps they were middlemen who arranged or advertised sales in advance on behalf of Baddison, or perhaps they arranged or provided accommodation, stabling and fodder for Baddison and his horses.<sup>30</sup>

The presence of Nottingham traders is significant in understanding the nationwide nature of the horse trade that Macclesfield found itself intertwined in. A number of fairs existed on the boundary between mixed farming and pasture, like Derby, Nottingham, Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon. Horses, colts and geldings tended to move south and southeast, while breeding stock (mares, fillies and foals) moved north and northwest. The horses sold at Nottingham were primarily from the Trent Valley and destined for saddle or draught uses. Edwards has identified two groups who bought mares and fillies at Nottingham and sold them in Derbyshire and Shropshire: the Bratt and Pegg families of Mickleover near Derby and a larger group in Nottinghamshire itself.<sup>31</sup> There are common names between this latter group and the Nottinghamshire traders identified in the Macclesfield toll book. The toll book recorded that their sales were predominantly mares and fillies, but not their use. However, saddle horses may well have become pack animals for crossing the Peak District. Macclesfield can now be located in a national framework of the distribution of horses, based upon market needs and the regions which best suit the breeding of horses.

### The 11 June fairs in the 1660s

It is impossible to determine the catchment area for purchasers of a particular horse fair. Several fairs operated on a national scale, of which Penkridge, Staffordshire, was the most famous for quality saddle mounts. The presence of London dealers, from the Smithfield livestock market, at Penkridge was established by 1640, and still evident when Daniel Defoe visited 80 years later. Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire and Northampton and Rothwell in Northamptonshire were similarly noted for draught

<sup>30</sup> A study of Macclesfield's probate files failed to shed any more light on Grastie or Oldfield, although a 'J. Grastie' is recorded in the town's Hearth Tax returns of 1664. National Archives, Kew, E 179/86/145.

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, *Horse trade*, pp. 34, 38.

animals.<sup>32</sup> Smaller fairs catered for the needs of their local communities, while the gentry and nobility were able to operate at both the local fair and either those of national importance.

For the Macclesfield horse fair, the recorded place of abode of vendors and purchasers provides a strong indicator of the extent of Macclesfield's hinterland. Due to the scale of the project, it was decided to concentrate on the 11 June fair, which provided the largest number of transactions and thus attracted vendors and purchasers from the greatest distance. The 1660s were chosen for several reasons. First, there was increased trading activity (see figure 3), which meant that the findings were more statistically robust. The 1660s was one of the few decades for which there was a complete series. Finally, the post-Restoration period displayed the greatest changes through the arrival of significant traders from significant distances. The results from the 1660s were then plotted onto figures 1 and 2.

These maps show the distribution of purchasers of horses at Macclesfield in the 1660s. In figure 1, which shows the local purchasers, the distribution is largely circular with concentrations of purchasers up to twenty miles from Macclesfield to the north (Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire), east (to the eastern edge of the modern Peak District National Park) and south (to Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire). To the west, the hinterland contracts to 16 miles with no purchasers identified to the west of Middlewich, Cheshire. Middlewich, as its name suggests, is located in central Cheshire and equidistant from Macclesfield and Chester, the site of the other known horse fair in Cheshire. Despite easier communications across the Cheshire plain compared with the Peak District and the different dates for the fairs, the presence of the Chester horse fair has had a foreshortening effect on Macclesfield's hinterland.<sup>33</sup> Individual purchasers have been recorded from Blackburn and Adlington in Lancashire in the north, 'Sleeffield' in Yorkshire to the east and Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton to the south.<sup>34</sup> These locations extend the hinterland to a distance of some forty miles.

The fluctuations in both the value and volume of horses recorded in the toll book are important as indicators of the vitality of

<sup>32</sup> Edwards, *Horse trade*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>33</sup> See Edwards, 'Horse trade of Chester' for a study of the Chester fairs.

<sup>34</sup> Sleeffield was probably Sheffield. 11 June 1666.

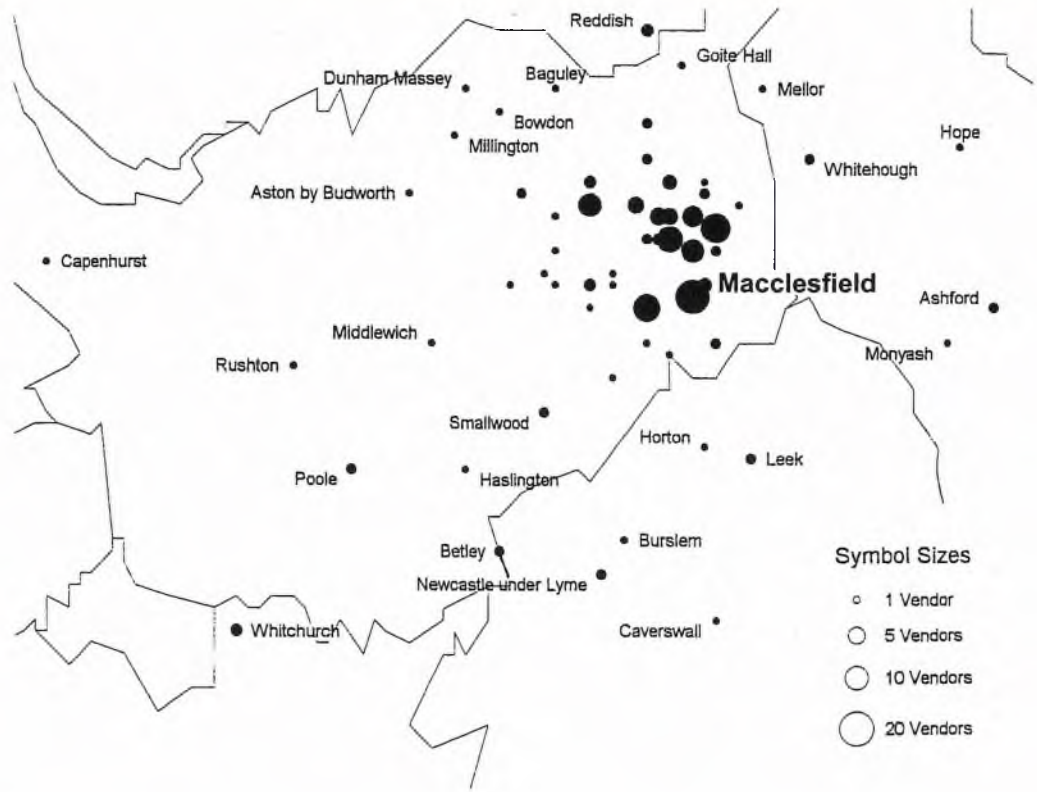


FIGURE 1 *Origins of vendors of horses at Macclesfield horse fair during the 1660s: Regional. Source: Derived from Macclesfield horse fair toll book.*

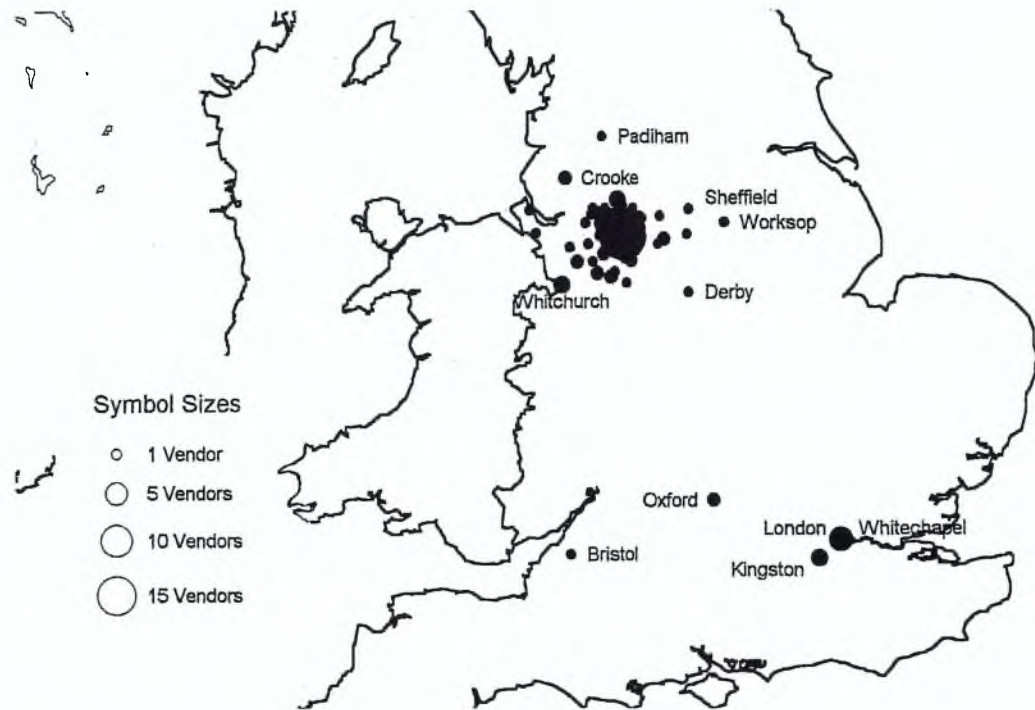


FIGURE 2 *Origins of vendors of horses at Macclesfield horse fair during the 1660s: National. Source: Derived from Macclesfield horse fair toll book.*

Macclesfield's horse fair and of the wider economic conditions within Macclesfield's hinterland for the horse trade. In order to identify a series of transaction dates which are common throughout the toll book, the 11 June fairs were again chosen. These fairs recorded the sales of 1,106 horses, over two thirds of the contents of the whole toll book. Of these, 903 (89 per cent) had a sale price that can be specifically attributed to an individual horse. Of the 11 per cent without a specifically-attributable value, a small number had a value attributed to two horses together, usually a foal and mare. The majority, however, were exchanged for another horse. This does not pose a problem for this study because the average value of the animals is based on the total number of horses sold against the total value transacted at each fair. In all, £3,408 7s. worth of transactions were accountable at the 11 June fairs.

Figure 3 illustrates the fluctuations in horse sales, measured by volume and by value, for the 11 June fairs between 1619 and 1670. The series is disrupted by missing information for the mid-1630s and again in the early-1640s. The series can be divided into three periods for both value and volume: pre-Civil War, late-1640s and after 1650. The period prior to the Civil War is characterised by small values and volumes transacted: the highest points reached were at the level of twenty horses or £50 worth of horses sold. The overall trend for horse sales, however, is upwards with key peaks in 1622, 1627, 1630 and 1632, which are mirrored by peak values in the same years. There is a clearly-defined depression in both volume and value in 1628 and 1629.

The late-1640s saw a significant increase in both volume and value of horses sold. The most likely reason for the increases in 1645 and 1646 would be in the form of a 'peace dividend' as horses were demobilised from military service and returned to agricultural and economic use. Prior to this 'peace dividend', the only horses available on the civilian market would have been those animals too feeble for military needs. The 'peace dividend' however, would have returned to the market fewer animals than it took due to the rigours and dangers of campaign life. The years 1647 and 1648 saw reduced horse sales compared with 1646 although still significantly higher levels than in 1645 and in the pre-Civil War years. These may have been animals bred for the military market but no longer required.

Another peak year was 1649 in both value and volume. However,



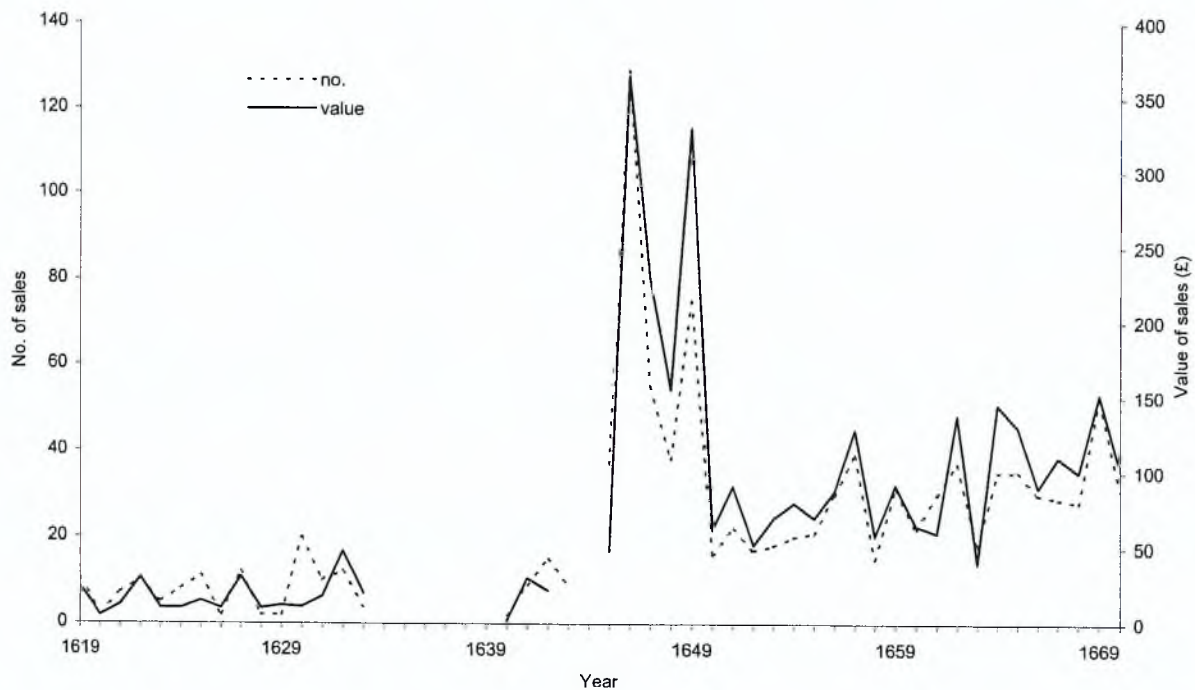


FIGURE 3 Value and volume of horses sold at the 11 June Fairs, 1619–70. Source: Derived from Macclesfield horse fair toll book.

it should be noted that in 1649, although 95 per cent of the value of 1646 was transacted, only 60 per cent of the volume of horses were sold. The delay between the end of the Civil War and the peak of 1649 would suggest that the horses for sale in 1649 were the three-year-old offspring of creatures that had been put to breed at the end of hostilities. This would be the first major input into the market of horses since the 'peace dividend'. The intervening years would have permitted the accumulation of capital necessary for horse purchases or for the economy to recover from the disruption of the Civil War years. In either scenario, the demand for horses had increased at a greater rate than the supply when compared with the situation in 1646. This resulted in higher horse values that helped to maintain the levels of capital accompanying the sales.

From 1650, the demand for horses appears to have been largely satisfied and the values and volumes sold revert to patterns which are similar to, but not as low as, the pre-Civil War years. The main difference is that the twenty horses/£50 figure which was the upper level of the pre-Civil War years became the lower level of the post-1650 period. These years were characterised by a general upwards trend in both value and volume transacted, with peaks followed by periods of slower trade. As in the pre-war years, volumes and values normally moved together.

Figure 4 shows fluctuations in the prices being paid for horses at the 11 June fairs. Values are available for a series to the mid-1630s and then resume after 1645. A small series of data also exists for the four years prior to the disruption caused by the Civil War. It is assumed that the lower horse prices reflect horses bought as work-horses, for example as packhorses. Similarly, the higher horse prices would reflect the upper end of the market such as saddle horses. In this second case, the horse becomes a status symbol, rather than a purely economic asset, and fashion will also become a factor in determining the type of horse chosen. As such, this end of the market will see prices inflated by non-economic factors, but will also see more rapid depreciations when adverse economic conditions make the purchase of luxury items unviable. Throughout the period as a whole, it was normally possible to purchase a horse at or below £2, but the market was nevertheless subject to extreme fluctuations in price. This is most noticeable in the period before the mid-1630s: prices peaked in 1620, 1623 and 1628 with crashes in between of around £2 15s. (1620–21).



FIGURE 4 Combined price fluctuations of horse prices at the 11 June Fairs, 1619–70. Source: Derived from Macclesfield horse fair toll book.

The series of data for the years immediately prior to the Civil War show a steady decline in prices which reflects increased the political instability and resultant effects on commercial confidence. When the data resumes in 1645, the prices closely match the situation in 1643, but the decline in prices is reversed. Post-1645, the swings between peaks and troughs are noticeably less severe: there are peaks in 1626 and 1650 at about £3 5s., but the subsequent collapse is less severe in 1650, down £1 5s. to £2, compared with the collapse following 1626, almost £2 5s. to just above £1. The noticeable exception is 1657 when the price fell to below £1. In explaining the reduction in fluctuations we must look to the activities the activities of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire chapmen who moved horses over larger distances to overcome local shortages and therefore stabilise prices, as discussed above. The highest prices paid for horses were characterised by less fluctuation than the lowest price. This would suggest that overall, the effects of fashion, which implies saddle mounts, were of limited impact.

The post-Civil War series begins with the low of 1643 but rapidly recovers. This could be seen as part of the post-war economic recovery. The late seventeenth century expansion in commercial activity has already been alluded to with regard to Cheshire cheese, but there was also significant growth in global trade. English commercial activity was focused on the entrepôt of London, but required transport, primarily horsepower, to collect and distribute goods across the country. Fluctuations in prices and volumes of horses sold are indicative of England's commercial growth in the late seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> The prices experienced from 1646 to 1649 were the highest ever. This suggests that demand was exceeding supply. An equilibrium was established in around 1650, which coincided with the arrival of Yorkshire chapmen bringing horses to Macclesfield. Thereafter, horse prices remained largely stable at around the £6 10s. level, about £2 higher than the early-1630s series, although collapses in price are noticed in 1656 and 1665.

The mean price displays a pattern that resembles the low price throughout the 1620s until the high price begins to recover after 1630. Thereafter, the mean price displays remarkable similarity with the high price for the remainder of the period, in particular the recovery and collapse in prices immediately prior to the Civil War,

<sup>35</sup> J. A. Sharpe, *Early modern England* (London, 1997), pp. 141–46.

the recovery in the late-1640s and the extreme fluctuations from 1668. This suggests greater influence on prices from the low value horses pre-Civil War, but an increased importance on the higher value horses from 1645. Again, this indicates the importance of the chapmen bringing in higher value, and by implication higher quality, stock than had been previously available.

The information demonstrated in these charts shows that despite the disruption caused by the Civil War and the sharp recovery of the late-1640s there were steadily improving trading conditions across the middle two quarters of the seventeenth century. Trade in horses, both in terms of volume of horses sold and values of cash transacted, was rising. The mean price of horses rose by about £1 between the mid-1630s and after the Civil War. Yet at the upper end of the market, this increase was around £2. This would indicate an overall increase in the quality of horses available. It is more difficult to determine a comparable change in trends for the lower end of the market because of the extreme fluctuations in prices for the years before the mid-1630s. For the post-Civil War era this situation stabilised with prices fluctuating between £1 10s. and £2 in thirteen of the twenty-five years.

Perhaps the most significant change was the increased stability in prices from around 1650, which coincides with the arrival of the Yorkshire chapmen. Their arrival coincided with the stabilisation of the upper market values at a level above the average increase. Were these external traders responsible for bringing in breeding stock of a higher calibre than was to be found locally? The Yorkshire (and later the Nottinghamshire) horse traders originated in areas which were noted for draught horses, although this would not preclude some saddle horses being brought along as well. However, as the price of saddle horses is prone to more fluctuation than draught horses, it is unlikely that saddle horses accounted for many, if any, of the horses brought from these areas. This picture is further complicated as there is no guarantee that the horse traders were selling horses bred in their home area, but could be passing on horses bred further afield. Packhorses in this period generally sold for around £3 or less. The geographical distribution of purchasers in the 1660s shows a strong bias towards the Peak District, an area where many packmen operated. Here, sturdy working horses were required for the carriage trade rather than fine saddle mounts.

This demonstrates that the horse trade was an integrated national

market, on a similar scale as that identified by Wrigley and Chartres with regards to the supply of grain and cheese to London. This should not come as any great surprise. In the fourteenth century there had been experiments at centralised breeding of cattle and horses at Macclesfield by the Black Prince. Successful animals were not for local use: the horses were for war and the cattle probably would have been distributed to other estates. This would have required the nationwide redistribution of animals.

### The horse fair and the professional trader

As the Peak District is an upland pastoral region it is not surprising to find evidence of horse breeding though sales in the toll book. However, individuals selling single horses mainly carried out these sales. From the mid-1650s horse traders appear in Macclesfield who were involved with multiple sales at key fairs, mainly 11 June and, to a lesser extent, 30 June. These horse traders are easily identified by the long distances they travelled which made multiple sales essential if the journey was to be economically viable (this would include visiting several fairs around the country), and they made return trips year after year. The professional horse traders who visited Macclesfield originated from either Nottinghamshire or Yorkshire with one example from Lincolnshire.

The arrival of these professionals from the mid-1650s was not without precedent, nor did Nottinghamshire's trading connections with Macclesfield begin in the 1650s. At the first recorded fair in 1619, Richard Rye of Cossall, Nottinghamshire, vouched at a sale. Eight years later, Reginald Slack, also from Cossall, sold two mares for a total of £7 6s. 8d. These sales may have been the embryonic moves to establish a trading connection with Macclesfield, but lacked the favourable economic conditions of the Interregnum and Restoration to succeed. Eighteen Nottinghamshire horse traders have been identified as trading at the horse fair from from the mid-1650s to the end of the toll book. They range from William Baddison, chapman (sometimes yeoman) of Edingley, Nottinghamshire, who sold eight horses at his first appearance in 1656 and thereafter was a regular attender of the 11 June fairs, to Edward Willson of Stoke, Nottinghamshire, who made a single appearance and sale on 11 June 1657.

As a whole, the Nottinghamshire traders appear to have come to

Macclesfield for each 11 June fair as a collective body. The impression given from the toll book is that the Nottinghamshire traders targeted this particular horse fair. The only non-11 June transactions occurred on 1 November 1669 when William Mosse of Newark, Nottinghamshire, chapman, exchanged one dun nag for one bay mare and 20s., and Christopher Parkinson of Farneton, Notts., sold a bay filly. Both were vouched by Henry Gerton indicating a knowledge of pre-existing trade arrangement. Parkinson and a possible kinsman, John Parkinson, sold horses at the 11 June 1670 fair but the three men do not appear again after these two fairs. The exact nature of the relationship between individual traders is unknown, so it is not possible to say whether they were acting individually or as a formally organised body, or indeed as combination of both.

The nature of their relationship and the nature of the horse trade in Nottinghamshire are beyond the scope of this paper and beyond the scope of the sources used, but it is clear that some of the horse traders travelling to Macclesfield did co-operate. John Hall of Edingley, Nottinghamshire, sold one horse on 12 June 1654 but vouched for four sales, two of which are positively identified as being by Nottinghamshire traders. William Baddison also vouched for a number of sales, as did the partnership of John Oldfield and Henry Grastie/Gerton.<sup>36</sup> The traders came from a small number of places; Edingley, Thoroton, East Stoke, Farnsfield, Sibthorpe, Farneton, Hallam and Newark on Trent. All of these locations fall within a ten-mile radius to the south and west of Newark that suggests a horse breeding area in Nottinghamshire. Two-thirds of the traders (twelve) appear at only one fair, although they could make multiple sales at that fair. Whether these Nottinghamshire traders represent junior partners or employees of a larger concern, or if they were trading in their own right is unclear.

It is clear from the compact geographical origin of these Nottinghamshire traders that they established a trade route in the mid-1650s which still flourished in 1670. As has been shown above, the fair at Macclesfield acted as an entrepôt through which the horses were disbursed around Macclesfield's hinterland, rather than being for use in Macclesfield itself. Macclesfield's horse-supplying hinterland extended sixty-seven miles to the southeast into the heart

<sup>36</sup> I have treated these as one individual.

of England, following a modern route from Newark through Mansfield, Chesterfield, Bakewell and Buxton to Macclesfield.

As with the Nottinghamshire traders, those from Yorkshire also appear before the 1650s in small numbers. On 1 July 1622, John Bowland of Doncaster, haberdasher, sold a black mare for 8s. This is the sole record of a horse sale on that date, although there is reference to a market having been held on that day, 'Tolls, all charges discharged 53s. 1d.' The presence of a market coupled with the lowest price for any horse would suggest that Bowland had taken a train of packhorses to Macclesfield for the market and had been forced to dispose of a horse which was surplus to requirement or incapable of making the return journey. Other Yorkshiremen are recorded from Wakefield, Kirkheaton, Sheffield and Huddersfield. The proximity of these towns to the northern and eastern edge of the Peak District suggests that these men were involved in the packhorse trade and the presence of a horse fair in Macclesfield provided a convenient place to acquire or dispose of horses according to demand.

Twenty-four traders have been identified from Yorkshire. Fifteen of the traders only accounted for one transaction. Large traders are to be found but they are smaller in scale than the likes of William Baddison. Two horse traders, William Duffin and William Lugger (or Logger) account for almost half of the sixty-five horses sold.<sup>37</sup> Duffin is the only horse trader to make repeated transactions at the horse fair, on 11 June fairs in 1664, 1665, 1667 and 1669. Lugger's transactions were made on 11 June and 30 June 1664.

The Yorkshire horse traders came from seventeen places of abode, although one of these, Sleafeld, may be the result of a misrendering of Sheffield.<sup>38</sup> The most common was Fouldbey as the home of five dealers and accounting for over half of the transactions: thirty-four out of sixty-five. Unfortunately, attempts to identify the location of these sixteen or seventeen places have been less successful than for the Nottinghamshire locations. Warmfeld, the home of two traders, has been identified as Warmfield between Wakefield and Pontfract. Nearby are Woodhouse, which may be Handserseth Woodhouse, and Crofton which may be Croston. These are in the vicinity of the more readily identifiable towns: Sheffield, Leeds, Huddersfield and Don-

<sup>37</sup> William Duffin of Wamefield and of Crosten, both Yorks, chapman and yeoman made twenty-five transactions; William Lugger/Logger of Purstall, Yorks, chapman and yeoman made six transactions.

<sup>38</sup> 11 June 1666.



caster. As with Nottinghamshire, it has been possible to identify the location of a horse-producing region, 'Fouldbey'.

Charles Day, chapman, of 'Barson', Lincolnshire, made one visit to the horse fair, on 11 June 1662.<sup>39</sup> There he sold ten horses in individual sales for a total price of £41 5s. All of his sales were vouched for by the partnership of Henry Grastie and James Oldfield. The toll book records a total of thirty-six transactions at that fair, which includes three exchanges making a total of thirty-nine horses in all. Excluding those horses exchanged, one sale for which no price is recorded and Day's ten sales, the remaining twenty-two horses sold for £87 8s. 4d. and 38 nobles (£100 1s. 8d.). Day's contribution to the fair was that he provided 25 per cent of all horses transacted and accounted for 40 per cent of all payments. That Grastie and Oldfield provided their services to him would suggest a professional operation with prior planning. This fair is unusual in that there are no other identifiable professional horse traders in action there. If Day was operating in his own right, it is curious that he did not return to Macclesfield. He clearly dominated the day's trading, both in terms of stock traded and capital received.

### The horse fair and women

In the early modern period, an estimated 10 to 20 per cent of the English population never married, the highest recorded rate, while remarriage rates were declining. Women were less likely to remarry, and it is possible that women were less likely than men to marry in the first place. Single or widowed women were three times more likely than single or widowed men to live alone or head their own household. This undermines the traditional view of the early modern woman as being subservient to male economic power and social pressure to marry and bear children. The personal freedom of remaining single (assuming the woman had a choice) was offset by financial difficulties. The death of a husband, with higher earning potential, had a greater impact on the surviving family than the loss of a wife. Death of a husband also removed dramatically reduced the value of their estate, and this situation could be worse if the husband

<sup>39</sup> Also spelled Bartson and Barneston in different entries for the same fair, and presumably by the same clerk.

<sup>40</sup> A. Clark, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century* (3rd edn, London, 1992), p. xxxv; E. A. Wrigley & R. Schofield, *The population history of England*,

died intestate. An estimated quarter of men left their widows in debt.<sup>40</sup>

The sole woman was still capable of running a household for her children, and caring for the family, although the increased economic difficulties meant that they were more likely to have to resort to poor relief. Using probate documents, Erickson has identified women who were heads of apparently comfortable households, having responsibility for livestock, leases of land and the associated farming activities, as well as the domestic duties. Similar examples exist for Macclesfield, like Hester Endon, widow and chapwoman (silk button manufacturer), who had 'work in the making in the Country' worth £2 16s. recorded in her inventory on her death in 1682. Women could, and did carry on the trade of their deceased husbands.<sup>41</sup>

However, despite the evidence that the early modern woman was perfectly capable, and indeed, willing to remain single and take charge of her own affairs, cases of women being involved in, or referred to during, toll book transactions are few and far between. Only twenty-two are named, 0.5 per cent of a possible 4,500 individuals. This is not to suggest however, that women were not involved in the horse trade or did not make use of horses. A husband or father may have made a purchase on behalf of a female relative who cannot be identified as the purpose of the animal is not recorded. The marital status of a man is never recorded, but can occasionally be inferred by the presence in the same transaction of his son or wife.

Of the twenty-two transactions, widows are predominant (eleven) followed by those without any descriptor, thus presumably 'sole' (six), four wives and a single 'Mrs' without a named husband. All of the transactions were for individual animals except for that engaged in by Martha Mottershead of Macclesfield, widow, who, on 11 April

*1541-1871: A reconstruction* (London, 1981), pp. 258-59, 260; P. Laslett, 'Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century', in P. Laslett & R. Wall, eds, *Household and family in past time* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 147; P. Laslett, *The world we have lost: Further explored* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 115; A. L. Erickson, *Women and property in early modern England* (London, 1993), pp. 188, 195, 201.

<sup>41</sup> Erickson, *Women and property*, pp. 187-89; Laslett, *World we have lost*, p. 8; Knight, 'Early modern Macclesfield', p. 238; CCALS WS 1682.

<sup>42</sup> Probably the same Martha Mottershead whose estate was proved in 1686. See Martha Mottershead of Macclesfield, WS 1686, in CCALS list of Cheshire probate files. There is no probate record for a Mottershead dying around 1660; another

1661, sold three horses totalling £13 to Raphe and John Finney of Alderly Edge.<sup>42</sup> By changing the criteria of this sample from transactions to individual horses, the predominance of widows increases from eleven out of twenty-two transactions (50 per cent) to thirteen out of twenty-four horses (54 per cent). Sales (twelve, or 55 per cent) predominate over purchases (nine) with one unclear transaction. Again, if the horses were counted rather than transactions, fourteen out of twenty-four are sold (58 per cent) which only increases the predominance of sales. No women occur as vouchers. The place of residence of eighteen women was recorded. Macclesfield predominates with four likely entries: Martha Mottershead (11 April 1661) and Elizabeth Dale (30 June 1651) were both 'of Macclesfield'; Katherine Hough, wife of John, of Ludgate (20 Nov 1626) has been assumed to be of Ludgate, Macclesfield; and Katherine Day, widow (11 August 1626) bought a mare jointly with John Higginbotham of Macclesfield, tailor—such a purchase was unlikely unless she was able to make use of the horse which would suggest living in Macclesfield. Another five cases came from close by, one each from Gawsorth, Mobberley, Bollington, Prestbury and Wildboardclough.

Almost all purchases were made by widows or sole women. The predominance of widows selling horses, and in particular some expensive animals, may indicate that they were recently widowed and were selling horses in order to settle debts, or perhaps to rationalise their possessions in the light of their new situation. For example, on 31 June 1653 Anne Brown of Prestbury, widow, sold a bay filly for £5 6s. 8d., while on 11 June 1653 Anne Orme, widow, sold a bay mare for £4 13s. 4d. On 11 April 1661 Martha Mottershead sold three horses including one bay horse for £7.

Although this is a small sample from which to draw definitive conclusions, this trend is in contrast to that shown by Macclesfield men who played a minor role in the purchase and sale of horses. Most of the remaining females lived within Cheshire. The two transactions indicating the greatest distance travelled are also the last two transactions, both on 11 June 1669, which may be indicative of the fair's growing hinterland. On that day, Mary Chantler of Sutton, Warwickshire, bought a bay mare for £4 12s. 2d. At that

multiple transaction was by Katherine Hough, wife of John Hough, of Ludgate who sold one cow and one colt for £3 2s. 6d. on 20 Nov 1626. For the purposes of this paper, horses are considered in isolation.

price, the mare was of above average value, which may reflect Chantler's social status. The purpose of the horse can only be guessed at, but the value would suggest a saddle horse, rather than a packhorse, perhaps to continue a journey to or from Warwickshire. The other transaction that day was by Katherine Snellson of Rushton Snellson, Staffordshire, widow, who sold a black mare to Robert Snellson of Rushton James, Staffordshire, yeoman for 53s. A journey of some twenty or thirty miles to sell a relatively inexpensive horse between two parties who are neighbours and possibly in-laws, and therefore presumably prearranged the sale might seem excessive, but it may be indicative of the desire to establish security of ownership of such an essential economic asset.

### Conclusion

The economy in early modern England underwent massive change. In the late seventeenth century, the agricultural sector's ability to meet the population's demands while simultaneously releasing underemployed labour for employment in the new and growing commercial and manufacturing sectors was crucial. The need to distribute to market the fruits of these industries and the increasing array of exotic produce brought to the British Isles by mercantile endeavours abroad was essential not only for continued economic and mercantile viability, but also to sustain the growing urban communities. From the lowly chapman who carried all his goods upon his back, and aimed to purchase a horse to expand the quantity and variety of goods he could offer in the smallest hamlet, to the Cheshire-based factors of the London cheesemongers who dispatched cartloads of cheeses, the horse was vital. However, the internal free market that fostered these long-distance transactions leaves the historian with few details to work with.

The toll book itself does not provide many answers to the questions of agricultural improvement or developments in internal English trade. From Macclesfield's geographical position, it is suspected that the main purpose of the horse fair was to supply packhorses for the trans-Pennine routes. The arrival of Nottinghamshire horse traders from the 1650s brought into the market horses specifically bred for harness and saddle, that is the very horses that were powering the agricultural changes and cart haulage. These Nottingham horse traders also stabilised sale prices in Macclesfield,

in a manner that mirrored the stability of grain prices over the same period because of efficient production and distribution to suitable markets to help prevent price crashes. Macclesfield was part of a national distribution system that brought stability and encouraged economic growth. This image should be contrasted with the grain shortages and horse price fluctuations of the early seventeenth century.

As well as the national economic changes, the toll book is able to shed light on micro-economic changes, in particular the 'peace dividend', which showed demand for horses outstripping supply. What is less easy to explain is the near absence of Macclesfield inhabitants and women in the horse market, given their proximity and Erickson's image of women perfectly capable of managing their own affairs and estates. Overall, this toll book has added another piece to the jigsaw of the national horse distribution network while at the same time adding further evidence of the significant changes occurring in late seventeenth century England. It also illustrates that Macclesfield was part of an integrated national network to meet supply and demand, of which, despite the relative scarcity of information regarding internal trade, a coherent picture is slowly emerging.

