

The overseas trade of the Isle of Man, 1576–1755

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Most studies of Irish Sea trade in the early modern period before the later seventeenth century make little or no mention of the Isle of Man.¹ Since these works tend to focus on a single port, usually Chester, this is perhaps not so surprising as the relevant port books reveal at best only a handful of entries recording traffic with Manx ports in any one year. Indeed, the Chester port books seem to indicate that trade with the island in the medieval period was intermittent, to say the least.² By contrast, the significance of the Isle of Man in the economy of the Irish Sea region in the late

¹ The most important studies of Irish Sea trade in the early modern period include: A. Longfield, *Anglo-Irish trade in the sixteenth century* (London, 1929); W. B. Stephens, 'The overseas trade of Chester in the early seventeenth century', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (THSLC)*, 120 (1968), pp. 23–34; D. M. Woodward, *The trade of Elizabethan Chester*, University of Hull Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History, 4 (Hull, 1970); D. M. Woodward, 'The overseas trade of Chester, 1600–1650', *THSLC*, 122 (1970), pp. 25–42; D. M. Woodward, 'The Anglo-Irish livestock trade of the seventeenth century', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1972), pp. 489–523; D. M. Woodward, 'Irish Sea trades and shipping from the later Middle Ages to c.1660', in M. McCaughan & J. C. Appleby, eds, *The Irish Sea: Aspects of maritime history* (Belfast, 1989), pp. 35–44; J. Kermode, 'The trade of late medieval Chester, 1500–1550', in R. H. Britnell & J. Hatcher, eds, *Progress and problems in medieval England: Essays in honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 286–307; J. R. Dickinson, *The Lordship of Man under the Stanleys: Government and economy in the Isle of Man, 1580–1704*, Chetham Society, 3rd series, 41 (1996), chap. 5; J. E. Hollinshead, 'Chester, Liverpool and the Basque region in the sixteenth century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 85 (1999), pp. 387–93.

² K. B. Wilson, ed., *Chester customs accounts, 1301–1566*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 111 (1969); J. W. Laughton, 'Economy and society, 1350–1500', in *Victoria history of the county of Chester*, 5 part 1 (Oxford, 2003), p. 69.



MAP 1 The overseas trade of the Isle of Man: The Irish Sea and North Channel.

seventeenth and especially the first half of the eighteenth century is well known.³ Because of its location, almost in the centre of the northern Irish Sea, and the fact that the island was ‘no part of the kingdom of England’ it was able to serve as an *entrepôt* for the running of goods, such as tobacco, brandy and gin, into any of the countries of the Irish Sea littoral.⁴ This running trade, which was regarded as smuggling by the government in London, developed steadily from the late seventeenth century onwards. Stimulated by increased tariffs on imports into England and prohibitions and restrictions on specific goods, the trade reached a peak in c.1750, before the rights to the island were eventually sold by the Duke of Atholl and the Isle of Man was revested in the Crown in 1765.

The scale of this illicit trade and the activities of the smugglers have tended to obscure the facts that, so far as the Lord of Man, his officers and the inhabitants of the island were concerned, no Manx laws were being broken by merchants engaged in this trade and that in any case drawing a distinction between lawful and illicit trade was quite often far from straightforward. Historians have tended to focus on the running trade without considering it in the context of the maritime commerce of the island as a whole. Furthermore, few have made use of the customs records of the Isle of Man itself. Despite the problems inherent in using such sources, these records nevertheless provide a great deal of information about the nature of the island’s trade with the ports of the Irish Sea and beyond throughout the early modern period.

The earliest extant customs accounts in the Isle of Man date from the late sixteenth century. There can be little doubt that customs duty was levied on goods long before this time and very likely long

³ There is a substantial literature on smuggling in this period. See especially: R. C. Jarvis, ‘Illicit trade with the Isle of Man, 1671–1765’, *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 58 (1947), pp. 245–67; L. B. Cullen, *Anglo-Irish trade, 1660–1800* (New York, 1968); L. B. Cullen, ‘The smuggling trade in Ireland in the eighteenth century’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 67, section C, no. 5 (1969), pp. 149–75; L. B. Cullen, ‘Smuggling in the North Channel in the eighteenth century’, *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 7 (1987), pp. 9–26; L. B. Cullen, ‘Smugglers in the Irish Sea in the eighteenth century’, in McCaughan & Appleby, *Irish Sea*, pp. 85–97; E. J. Graham, *A maritime history of Scotland, 1650–1790* (East Linton, 2002), pp. 102–18, 197–99. See also F. Wilkins, *The Isle of Man in smuggling history* (Kidderminster, 1992) and *The smuggling trade revisited* (Kidderminster, 2004).

⁴ E. Coke, *The fourth part of the institutes of the laws of England: Concerning the jurisdiction of courts* (2nd edn, 1648), p. 284.

before Henry IV granted the island to Sir John Stanley in perpetuity in 1406. Nevertheless, this grant explicitly conveyed to the Stanley Lords of Man the right to collect 'free customs' in the ports of the island.⁵ Unfortunately, the records of the earlier part of the Stanley lordship have perished and the customs accounts now only survive from the early years of Henry, fourth Earl of Derby, onwards. Beginning in 1576, these records chiefly comprise the accounts of the waterbailiff, the officer of the Lord of Man responsible for the collection of customs duty, and later variously entitled in addition the 'port customs' or 'books of ingates and outgates'.⁶ With one or two exceptions, such as in 1624 when there was a change of waterbailiff part way through the year, each paper book covers a twelve month period. Before 1700 this period begins at 24 June; thereafter the accounting period commences at Michaelmas (29 September). The series is largely complete down to 1755, a decade before the revestment of the island in the Crown, with accounts missing for only sixteen years, mostly at the end of the sixteenth century.

The waterbailiff's accounts contain much the same range of information about shipments of cargo as is found in the English and Welsh port books.⁷ Written almost entirely in English, the earlier books are divided into ingates and outgates for each of the four principal ports—Douglas, Castletown, Ramsey and Peel—but from the late seventeenth century onwards the books are simply divided into two parts, one section being devoted to ingates and the other recording the outgates. Each entry in the accounts begins with a date, probably the day on which the duty was actually paid to the waterbailiff's deputy in one of the island's ports, whether that was the day on which the vessel arrived there or not; then follows the name of the merchant or factor responsible for the particular shipment listed thereafter in detail. On many occasions, particularly with smaller vessels or those only landing a single cargo, the merchant or factor was identical with the master of the vessel in which the cargo was transported.

⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1405–9, p. 2.

⁶ The earliest extant book covers the year to 24 June 1576; Manx National Heritage Library, Douglas (MNHL), MS 10058, *Accounts of the waterbailiff, 1576–1755*; for a fuller discussion of the waterbailiff's accounts, see Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 232–46.

⁷ The format, content and interpretation of the English and Welsh port books are concisely discussed by D. M. Woodward, 'The port books of England and Wales', *Maritime History*, 3 (1973), pp. 147–65.

Unfortunately, the name and port of provenance of the vessel itself are often missing from the waterbailiff's accounts before the late seventeenth century, making it very difficult to identify from Manx sources alone those ships which most often plied the waters of the Irish Sea to and from the island before the 1680s. Details of the burthen of the vessel, included in many sixteenth century English and Welsh port books at least, was rarely recorded in the waterbailiff's accounts at all, although at least until the early seventeenth century this information can, in some cases, be gleaned for a few readily identifiable vessels by examination of entries in the records of the port of destination or origin across the Irish Sea. Finally, in the righthand margin of the accounts the total amount of duty, as stipulated by the current Manx Book of Rates, was entered.⁸ Both native and foreign merchants seem to have paid duty at the same rate before the mid-seventeenth century at least, but either in 1648 or in 1677 differential rates were introduced, with the native paying in general half the amount of duty which the foreign merchant was bound to remit. Despite this important change, the rate of Manx duty was low in comparison to that levied in English and Welsh ports, a discrepancy which became greater in the late seventeenth century as the need to finance wars in the 1690s and afterwards increased the fiscal burden in England.⁹

If some care is needed in the interpretation of the basic elements of the entries in the waterbailiff's accounts, a similar approach is required when examining the details of the cargoes shipped to and from the Isle of Man. It has long been recognized that port books scarcely represent the raw material from which to construct wholly accurate commercial statistics for a number of reasons.¹⁰ Firstly and most obviously, there is the possibility of errors made by the clerk compiling the accounts. In the Isle of Man the customers in each

⁸ The earliest extant Manx Book of Rates dates from 1577; J. Gell, ed., *Statutes of the Isle of Man, vol. i, 1417–1824* (1883, repr. Douglas, 1992), pp. 37–39; this book was revised and expanded in 1648, 1677 and 1692; no copy of the 1648 book survives, but it is mentioned in the extant copies of the 1677 book; MNHL, MD 401/1715/18, MD 401/1715/19; Gell, *Statutes*, pp. 225–32.

⁹ MNHL, MD 401/1715/18, MD 401/1715/19; The difference between the duties paid on goods in the Isle of Man and England respectively during Elizabeth's reign can be readily seen by comparing the Manx Book of Rates of 1577 with the English Book of Rates of 1582; Gell, *Statutes*, pp. 37–39; T. S. Willan, ed., *A Tudor book of rates* (Manchester, 1962).

¹⁰ Woodward, 'Port books', pp. 157–61.

port, known as deputy searchers after 1693, appear to have only submitted their working papers and revenue to the waterbailiff '(at soonest) but once [a] year'.¹¹ Whether the clerk wrote up the books from the loose papers presented to him or the details were dictated to him by an assistant, this system not only accounts for the sometimes haphazard chronology and occasional duplication of the entries and the predictably erratic spelling, but also indicates the possibilities for embezzlement of customs duty which could be easily pocketed by unscrupulous officers. Only the customer of Douglas, the busiest of the island's ports, received a separate salary before 1617; thereafter all customers, who normally also served as soldiers, received an additional annual wage for their pains. This did not necessarily preclude the temptation to supplement their income from the Lord still further by diverting customs duty into their own pockets, but cases of the discovery of such peculation were very rare indeed.¹²

Besides, merchants might well be tempted to evade duties even without the connivance of the customers or other officials, although the smuggling of goods into and out of the island was rendered to some extent academic by the low level of duty levied in the Isle of Man. While N. J. Williams was not necessarily exaggerating in an English context when he claimed that 'if a merchant's first concern was the safe arrival of his cargo at its port of discharge, his second was the evasion of duty', there was less incentive for a merchant to avoid payment of Manx duty.¹³ There may be little doubt, therefore, that the waterbailiff's accounts under-record the actual level of the island's trade to some degree, but there is every likelihood that, in general, this under-recording was not particularly significant. At the very least, the accounts do provide a clear indication of a definite minimum and this may not be so very far from the actual level of commercial activity and trading in specific goods.

In the late sixteenth century, the export trade of the Isle of Man was dominated by a handful of commodities. As might be expected, given the central importance of agriculture and fishing in the Manx

¹¹ MNHL, MD 401/1719/65, 'A new Method proposed for the levyng and managing of our honorable Lord's Customes of Outgates and Ingates, etc. within the Isle of Man for the future' (n.d., c.1692?).

¹² Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 229-30, 244-45.

¹³ N. J. Williams, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan port books', *English Historical Review*, 66 (1951), p. 387.

economy, these were all primary products. Cattle, hides, fish, grain and wool were exported to the countries bordering on the Irish Sea and England in particular. This may have been encouraged to an extent by the links between the island and the north-west of England through the Stanleys, but far more important, especially from the late seventeenth century onwards, was the growth of manufacturing in south Lancashire which offered a ready market for Manx produce and served as a source for the manufactured goods for which there was a demand in the island.

The shipment of live cattle or ‘quick beasts’ as well as carcasses from the island had probably been long established by the early days of Earl Henry’s lordship (1572–93). The earliest record of the trade so far discovered, however, dates only from March 1566, when Thomas Lea of Castletown entered at Chester three hogsheads and five barrels of beef as part of a cargo which also included hides and wheat. A month later this was followed by a second and final consignment of five hogsheads and a quarter of beef as part of a mixed cargo landed in the same port from Douglas by three Manx merchants.¹⁴ As these entries suggest, the trade in cattle seems generally to have been conducted on a fairly modest scale, even by the standards of the island. Limited quantities of salted beef were shipped to Chester and occasionally to Beaumaris in the later sixteenth century, but the total number of cattle shipped from the island remained low by comparison with the figures for the period between 1590 and 1660 as a whole (table 1).¹⁵

Shipments such as that made by one William Christian of thirty ‘quick oxen’ in 1575 and licensed specially by Earl Henry, possibly for his personal use, were perhaps then somewhat exceptional in size.¹⁶ Part of the reason for the restricted scale of the export trade in cattle was the fact that the Lord of Man’s tenants were required to pay part of their rent in kind until 1601.¹⁷ A short-lived experiment in commuting this to a money payment in 1593 may have helped to

¹⁴ Wilson, *Chester customs accounts*, pp. 78, 79; National Archives (NA), PRO, E190/1323/1, E190/1323/10.

¹⁵ Woodward, ‘Elizabethan Chester’, p. 35; E. A. Lewis, ed., *The Welsh port books, 1550–1603*, Cymmrodorion Record Series, 12 (1927), pp. 244, 256, 258.

¹⁶ MNHL, MS 10058, Book of licences and entries, 1578 [erroneously dated 1570 on cover].

¹⁷ MNHL, MD 401/1716/4, Articles of agreement between (i) the Crown and its officers and (ii) the inhabitants of the Isle of Man to commute customary payments in kind to a money rent, 3 August, 43 Eliz. (1601).

Table 1. *Export of livestock from the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).*

	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Pigs</i>	<i>Horses</i>
1594	749	515	263	16
1600	405	383	42	67
1605	454	152	66	65
1610	714	8	124	101
1618	895	50	48	14
1630	589	24	30	43
1647	890	—	9	40
1667	18	20	—	—
1685	4	12	5	32
1696	582	8	—	6
1721	—	—	—	—
1738	—	—	—	—
1752	—	—	—	—

Sources: MNHL, MD10058, Customs book, 1594; Waterbailiff's accounts, 1594; Ingates and outgates (Port Customs), 1600; Ingates and outgates, 1605; Ingates and outgates, 1610; Waterbailiff's accounts, 1618; Waterbailiff's accounts, 1630; Waterbailiff's accounts, 1647; Customs book, 1667; Customs book, 1685; Customs book, 1696; Book of customs of ingates and outgates, 1721; Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates, 1738; Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates, 1752.

stimulate the trade, accounting for the shipment of 749 beasts in 1593–94, but the final removal of this burden on the tenants eight years later no doubt had a long-term, positive effect for those wishing to ship cattle and beef to markets across the Irish Sea. The trade, especially in live cattle, appears to have flourished, relatively speaking, and to have remained at approximately the same level for about the next seventy years.

The markets for which the cattle and beef were destined are not certain because of the omission of the relevant information from the waterbailiff's accounts. Chester and Liverpool would seem to have been the most obvious destinations, not least because both were important ports in the rapidly expanding trade in live cattle from Ireland and in any case had existing close links with the island.¹⁸ Owing to the patchy survival and quality of the customs records for

¹⁸ Woodward, 'Overseas trade', pp. 35–40; D. M. Woodward, 'The Anglo-Irish cattle trade of the seventeenth century', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1972), pp. 489–523.

those ports in the early part of the seventeenth century, however, this can not be convincingly demonstrated. Such evidence as does survive seems to indicate the level of exports to the Dee and Mersey was often low. In 1592–93, for example, only twelve cattle were imported at Chester and in 1619–20 the total was a mere twenty-two live animals. The figures for Liverpool seem to reveal a similar story, at least in some years, such as 1603–04, when twenty-one Manx beasts were shipped into the port.¹⁹ However ambiguous this evidence seems to be, the fact remains that the Manx trade was clearly regarded by some as connected with the Irish trade and this suggests that the ports of north-west England were the destination of at least some of the shipments from the island. Cattle may also have been shipped to ports on the Cumberland coast, such as Whitehaven, but it is not possible to verify this in the absence of any extant customs records for those ports in the period in question.

The association of the Manx cattle trade with the very much larger Irish cattle trade had serious implications for the island later in the seventeenth century. It was believed in some quarters that Irish cattle were imported into the island and re-exported thence to English ports. A ban on the importation of Irish cattle was proposed in the Commons in 1621 and an addition to the bill was suggested which would have extended that prohibition to cattle shipped from the Isle of Man.²⁰ The bill was not passed into law, although when concerns about the effect of Irish cattle imports grew once more in the early 1660s the possibility of prohibiting imports of Manx cattle was again seriously considered. The failure of the first Irish Cattle Act to reduce Irish cattle imports significantly led inevitably to a second, more restrictive Act in 1667 and this did extend its strictures to animals shipped to England from the island. There was to be an annual limit of six hundred cattle imported into England and these animals had to be ‘of the Breed of the Isle of Man’. Furthermore, the cattle could only be landed at Chester ‘or some of the Members thereof’.²¹ This appears to have had an almost immediate effect on the island’s cattle exports, although there are suggestions that

¹⁹ Woodward, ‘Elizabethan Chester’, p. 35; NA, PRO, E190/1326/6; PRO, E190/1332/1; PRO, E190/1328/11.

²⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, 1, p. 615.

²¹ 18 Chas. II, c.2; Dickinson, *Lordship*, p. 253; for the background to the Irish Cattle Acts, see C. A. Edie, ‘The Irish Cattle Bills: A study in Restoration politics’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 60, part 2 (1970), pp. 5–58.

restrictions imposed by the earl of Derby or his representatives in the island to preserve cattle stocks and ensure a ready supply of beef for both the Lord himself and the island's garrisons may have helped in this respect. The restrictions on cattle imports into England from the island did not apply to the earl of Derby: in 1686, William, ninth earl, obtained permission to import specified provisions for the island for his household use on an annual basis; these included 200 'bullocks,' although it seems from early eighteenth-century accounts of cattle shipments for the earl's use that this number was exceeded on occasion.²² Despite some years when exports were nearly at the maximum allowed under the second Cattle Act, the Manx cattle trade never recovered and by the early eighteenth century had all but ceased (table 1).

Other livestock, notably sheep, was exported from the island, although this trade was already in decline before 1650, but a more important, associated branch of the export trade was that in hides. As Alan Crosby has recently pointed out, in the early sixteenth century the island was a source of a relatively small number of the hides required by Chester's thriving leather industry.²³ The trade was in all likelihood well established by this date and seems to have prospered throughout the sixteenth century. The waterbailiff's accounts reveal that in the late sixteenth century large quantities of sheepskins and fells, lambskins, goat and kidskins, rabbit skins and raw and tanned ox and cow hides were shipped from the island's ports (table 2). Examination of the English port books shows that a large proportion of this trade was destined for Chester. In the year ending at Michaelmas 1593, for instance, 8,080 sheepskins cleared Manx ports for the Dee. Other markets also attracted shipments from the island, but these tended to be on a rather more modest scale, such as the 150 sheepfells imported into Liverpool in 1603-04.²⁴ The trade in hides appears to have continued at somewhat below late sixteenth-century levels until the 1660s when, perhaps affected by the strictures imposed on Manx cattle exports, it seems to have begun to decline.

In the late sixteenth century, which seems to have been a booming

²² Dickinson, *Lordship*, p. 254; MNHL, MD 401/1718/47; MD 401/1736/12-22.

²³ A. G. Crosby, 'A Chester merchant buys leather from the Isle of Man in 1524', *Cheshire History*, 44 (2004-5), pp. 37-42; D. M. Woodward, 'The Chester leather industry, 1558-1625', *THSLC*, 119 (1967), pp. 65-111.

²⁴ NA, PRO, E190/1326/6; PRO E190/1326/11.

TABLE 2 *Export of skins and hides from the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).*

	Sheep skins* (no.)	Lamb skins (no.)	Calf skins (no.)	Rabbit skins (no.)	Goat skins (no.)	Kid skins (no.)	Mixed skins (no.)	Hides (raw) (dickers)†	Hides (tanned) (dickers)†
1594	5,292	3,356	—	360	126	384	2,580	157.8	—
1600	2,308	4,434	—	240	—	—	2,040	77.7	24.0
1605	2,400	5,076	24	660	—	—	1,353	48.2	—
1610	1,348	3,120	343	540	—	—	2,086	64.8	—
1618	1,886	5,112	126	360	—	—	2,100	66.5	—
1630	528	1,536	60	240	—	—	2,100	54.6	76.0
1647	2,106	3,124	—	600	1	—	1,118	2.0	26.0
1667	900	720	—	480	24	—	900	16.0	2.0
1685	—	1,080	139	708	170	—	750	29.8	25.7
1696	144	3,012	234	1,698	570	—	998	76.8	8.4
1721	—	—	—	100	—	—	—	32.3	—
1738	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1752	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Sources: See table 1.

Notes: * Sheepskins and sheepfells.

† The number of hides to the dicker varied. There were eight ox hides to the dicker, but ten cow hides. Since a distinction is not always drawn, hides of an unspecified nature have been taken to be cow hides.

TABLE 3 *Export of wool and herring from the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).*

	Wool		Herring		
	stones	tons	hogsheads	barrels	maze
1594	1,665	1	—	—	—
1600	439	—	1	1	—
1605	435	—	8	—	—
1610	113	—	—	—	—
1618	614	54.5	—	71	3
1630	684	2	—	139	1
1647	175	—	—	60	—
1667	39	54.5	—	485	339
1685	335	—	—	388	1
1696	395	—	—	—	—
1721	54	—	—	—	—
1738	—	—	—	—	—
1752	—	—	—	—	—

Sources: see table 1.

period for the island's maritime trade, the Isle of Man also exported large quantities of wool in addition to the fleeces shipped along with skins in the form of sheepfells (table 3). In 1579–80, 1,770 stones were shipped from Manx ports and 1,655 stones in 1593–94.²⁵ Some, if not the larger part, of this wool was destined for the looms of south Lancashire where the weavers' demand for wool was already drawing in raw materials from all over England and from Ireland. Although Liverpool was more important than Chester in the Irish wool trade it does not seem to have attracted many wool shipments from the Isle of Man.²⁶ From about 1600, however, exports of Manx wool fell dramatically and continued throughout the rest of the seventeenth century at a relatively low level. The reasons for this slump are not clear, but the Manx wool trade never returned to the peak of the 1590s and, in fact, seems to have ended altogether by the 1730s.

²⁵ MNHL, MS 10058, 'Port Customes of the Isle [of] Man,' 1580; 'Customes book,' 1594.

²⁶ N. G. Lowe, *The Lancashire textile industry in the sixteenth century*, Chetham Society, 3rd series, 20 (1972), pp. 10–19.

Together with agriculture, fishing, and the herring fishery in particular, was the cornerstone of the Manx economy. Throughout this period and beyond, the annual herring fishery between approximately July and November was as crucial to the welfare of the island as the harvest. In spite of its importance, however, herring is scarcely mentioned in the waterbailiff's accounts before the late seventeenth century. This was due in part to the fact that a large part of the catch was caught by Manx fishermen for consumption within the island and a reluctance on the part of foreigners before 1613 to engage officially in the fishery because of the demands in kind and later in money for the Lord for the privilege. The regulations were then relaxed somewhat, but in any case it was only likely that herring would be exported after a good catch. Even so, exports of herring only appear in a surprisingly small number of waterbailiff's accounts before 1700.²⁷

In addition to the commodities already mentioned, the Isle of Man exported quantities of grain and cloth. The export, or possibly re-export, of wheat reached a peak between c.1610 and c.1640 and only continued at a very low level thereafter. Barley and oats, which were much more suited to the island's climate, were also exported, but in much larger quantities before 1640. The trade in oats then appears to have all but ceased, with only occasional shipments leaving the island's ports thereafter. Barley exports continued, but at a level only slightly higher than that of the wheat trade.²⁸ Exports of raw cloth were declining at the end of the sixteenth century and effectively ended by 1640. By contrast, exports of woollen cloth increased greatly in the last two decades of the seventeenth century, with 2,127 yards alone being shipped in 1696. Linen cloth, apparently produced by the island's own nascent manufactory, also became a significant export in the 1690s, with 2,602 yards exported in 1696.²⁹ Another product of the projects initiated in the late seventeenth century was the renewed efforts to exploit the island's limited mineral deposits. Iron, copper and lead were all exported in small quantities of less than about 250 tons in the years around 1700 but, as had happened on several previous occasions, the mining endeavours proved to be uneconomic and were short-

²⁷ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 110–19, 265–66.

²⁸ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 266–68.

²⁹ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 176–82, 268–69; MNHL, MS 10058, 'Book of the Customes of Outgates, Ingates etc.', 1696.

lived.³⁰ As a result, the island had to depend on imports to fulfil its needs for such raw materials.

The import trade of the Isle of Man in the sixteenth century was largely determined by the needs of the inhabitants for the raw materials in which the island was lacking and by the demand for manufactured goods. Iron, lead, timber, salt and coal were among the most important raw materials imported in quantity. The small scale nature of metal working in the island meant that there was only ever a quite limited demand for iron, which was nevertheless imported on a regular basis, and lead, only tiny amounts of which ever arrived in Manx ports (table 4). The situation with timber was quite different. Wood was in considerable demand, principally for use in construction, largely, though not exclusively, in the towns. It was also required on a regular basis for coopering and repairing boats. Imports of timber therefore took a variety of forms, from planks and boards to poles and barrel staves, and duty was quite regularly paid in kind. Hundreds, often thousands of pieces of wood arrived in Manx ports every year, the greater part very likely from Ireland; Ireland was also the source of large quantities of timber imported into England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³¹

Whereas the majority of the population, particularly outside the towns, relied on peat for domestic fuel, many town dwellers, more affluent farmers and the lord's officers and garrisons used coal instead. It was also required by those involved in the small-scale manufacturing activity in the island. Since there are no deposits in the Isle of Man, all this coal had to be imported. Allowing for problems in interpreting the measures employed and fluctuations in imports, the amount of coal being unloaded on Manx quays as measured in tons increased in the seventeenth century, especially after c.1660. Before that date imports had been below 100 tons, but afterwards seem to have remained above this mark, reaching 514 tons in 1737–38 and 1,035 tons in 1751–52.³² The origins of most shipments of coal before 1700 are not known for certain, although at least three cargoes of coal arrived in Douglas in 1593–94 from

³⁰ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 184–88.

³¹ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 275–76; Longfield, *Anglo-Irish trade*, pp. 118–24; E. McCracken, *The Irish woods since Tudor times* (Newton Abbot, 1971), chap. 4.

³² MNHL, MD 10058, 'Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates,' 1738; 'Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates,' 1752.

TABLE 4 *Import of coal and iron into the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).*

	Coal			Iron	
	tons	'loads'*	part loads	barrels	tons
1594	—	11	—	—	9.35
1600	26	2	—	20	4.35
1605	38	5	—	—	1.2
1610	74	7	—	—	6.25
1618	46	5	—	2	6.8
1630	49	8	—	—	4.5
1647	86	19	6	—	5.6
1667	110	10	5	—	7.65
1685	—	12	—	—	6.1
1696	119	—	—	5	9.25
1721	161	—	—	—	9.75
1738	514	—	—	—	7.5
1752	1,035	—	—	—	77.8

Sources: see table 1.

Notes: * Vessels are sometimes entered in the Waterbailiff's accounts as 'laden with coals'. Such a 'load' may have been a variable amount, depending on the size of the ship or, perhaps more likely, it may have referred to a 'keel load', a measure of twenty chaldrons or forty tons before 1676, when it was changed to sixteen chaldrons or thirty-two tons. R. Zupko, *British weights and measures: A history from antiquity to the seventeenth century* (Madison, 1977), appendix B, p. 151.

Parton in Cumberland. In the eighteenth century, there is rather more certainty about the sources for the island's coal imports. In 1737-38, for instance, out of thirty-three cargoes, ten shipments came from Whitehaven, three from Workington and a single consignment from Liverpool. The evidence from 1751-52 offers a much more detailed picture of Manx coal imports, showing that more than half (53.8%) of all the shipments arriving in the island's ports cleared from Whitehaven. The next most important sources were South Lancashire, the coal being shipped from Liverpool, and North Wales. In the latter case, shipments were made from Mostyn or Bagillt and through Chester (table 5).

The herring fishery, as well as other fishing carried out throughout the year, created a demand for salt. A 'Certayne Portion' of the

TABLE 5 *Origins of coal imports into the Isle of Man, 1751–52, year ending 29 Sept.*

<i>Port</i>	<i>No. of shipments</i>
Ayr	1
Bagillt	1
Cardiff	1
Chester	6
Dublin	1
Ellenfoot (Maryport)	1
England	1
Ireland	1
Liverpool	13
Milford	1
Mostyn	6
Scotland	1
Wales	2
Whitehaven	49
Workington	1
Not specified	5
Total	91

Source: MNHL, MD 10058, Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates, 1752.

island's requirements was produced by brine evaporation locally, but the rest was imported, chiefly from England, although much of the salt itself originated in France, especially Brittany, and to a lesser extent Portugal and Spain.³³ In May 1594, for example, William Abbey landed a cargo of nine barrels of 'portingall' salt and twelve barrels of 'bretish' salt at Derbyhaven. In April 1630, a Breton merchant named 'Peter John' in the accounts entered 18 tuns of 'French salt,' probably from his home port of Le Croisic.³⁴ Unfortunately, the origins of the majority of the salt imported can not be traced because the waterbailiff's accounts remain silent on the question. Salt imports did vary considerably throughout the period under consideration, no doubt as a result of the success or otherwise of the fisheries, but in general remained below 100 tons

³³ NA, PRO, SP16/539/120, 'A brief description of the Isle of Man' (n.d., 1642?).

³⁴ MNHL, MS 10058, 'Port customs,' 1594; 'Waterbailiff's accounts,' 1630.

TABLE 6 Imports of salt, soap, hops, tobacco and wine into the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).

	Salt		Soap		Tobacco	Hops	Wine
	tons	barrels	firkins	lbs	lbs	lbs	tuns
1594	27	155	10	—	448	1,240	19
1600	5	171	31	—	—	874	29
1605	25	22	11	—	—	304	25
1610	1	368	41	—	112	838	21
1618	15	629	32	—	448	1,086	18
1630	67	204	46	—	104	1,646	21
1647	12	145	59	—	2,354	2,102	18
1667	10	94	13	—	1,046	2,296	2
1685	59	6	3	—	6,613	2,980	25
1696	108	14	—	—	23,870	2,584	—
1721	104	43.5	—	2,744	200,079	3,561	155.9
1738	153	—	—	7,196	22,147	6,961	57.9
1752	305.25	1.5	—	5,625	235,818	14,545	62.6

Sources: see table 1.

per annum until the end of the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the amount of imported salt began to rise, although again the reasons for this are not entirely clear. In 1752 alone, for example, 305.25 tons were landed in the island.³⁵ Increasing demand from a rising population in the early eighteenth century may be part of the explanation but, in the absence of details of the vicissitudes of the herring fishery in the period, it is difficult to say whether this may not have also in part reflected larger catches by the vessels involved (table 6).

Besides these essential raw materials, a perhaps surprisingly wide range of commodities was imported into the island. Foodstuffs represented a less significant proportion of that trade than might be expected, given the size of the island, its dependence in large measure on the harvest and the herring fishery and the fact that the island's population was clearly growing. With a population of perhaps about 11,000 in c.1670, rising to possibly nearly 14,500 by 1726, the market in the island for manufactured goods was certainly

³⁵ MNHL, MS 10058, 'Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates', 1752.

expanding and this is reflected in the growing diversity of the goods brought into Manx ports, predominantly Douglas, by native and foreign merchants.³⁶ Agricultural tools, from sickles and scythes to ploughs and plough beams, clothing, shoes, tools for construction work and a bewildering array of haberdashery formed only part of the merchandise recorded each year in the waterbailiff's accounts. An extensive range of what might be termed luxury goods and commodities in the earlier part of the period under consideration was also imported, although by the eighteenth century many of these items had become less the exclusive province of the most affluent. This included such diverse items as Castile soap, clocks, parrot cages and a secondhand billiard table. Far more important and of vastly greater value were the shipments of commodities originating in the East Indies and America. The growth of the import trade in such items had less to do with demand in the island, however, than with developments in England.

The steady increase in imports of tobacco in the seventeenth century, particularly after c.1680, and the dramatic expansion in inward shipments of brandy, rum, sugar and tea in the early eighteenth century were a product of commercial restrictions imposed by the English government on the plantation trade and as a result of wars and increases in tariffs after 1689 to meet the financial demands of wartime. It was these circumstances, together with the unique constitutional status of the Isle of Man, which provided such a stimulus to the island's import and re-export or running trade. The initial impetus in this process was provided by the Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660 which extended pre-existing restrictions on the conduct of trade between England and the Mediterranean and the Baltic.³⁷ English plantation goods had henceforth to be carried only in English, Welsh, Irish or colonial vessels and after 1660 had to be landed at a port in England, Wales or Ireland. The third Navigation Act (1671) excluded Ireland from direct trade with the colonies and so concentrated this traffic on

³⁶ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 10–11; the 1726 figure is derived from an ecclesiastical census, with the missing total for one parish, Marown, estimated by A. W. Moore; R. Sherwood, ed., *The Constitution of the Isle of Man*, Manx Society, 31 (1882), p. 284; A. W. Moore, *A history of the Isle of Man* (2 vols, 1900, repr. Douglas, 1977), 2, p. 646.

³⁷ J. Thirsk & J. P. Cooper, eds, *Seventeenth-century economic documents* (Oxford 1972), pp. 502–5; 18 Chas. II, c.18.

England and Wales.³⁸ In 1706, further restrictions were placed on trade with the Far East when it was ordered that shipments from the East Indies could only be landed in Great Britain.³⁹

As a response to the rise in English customs duty and these commercial restrictions, merchants developed a procedure which enabled them to land their goods in England or any other country bordering the Irish Sea, if they so desired, without having had to pay the full duty. Firstly, a merchant would land a cargo at an English or Welsh port and pay the relevant duty. The cargo would then be entered for export to a destination which was often outside the British Isles, such as Bergen in Norway, which was a popular choice, and a debenture obtained for claiming a 'draw back' or refund of duty. After the goods had been loaded, the vessel would set sail and make for the Isle of Man, claiming, should it be intercepted by a customs cutter, that it had been forced to put in at the island because of 'distress of weather' or some such excuse. Once in a Manx harbour, the merchant's goods would be unloaded, his agent would pay the low Manx duty on the goods and plans would be made to re-export the goods. Again, the declared destination of many of these shipments in the waterbailiff's accounts was fictitious. The goods would be loaded onto a vessel in the Manx harbour, a licence to export obtained from the waterbailiff or his deputy and then the vessel would make the crossing to the Lancashire or Cumberland coast, the Ribble estuary apparently being particularly favoured target.⁴⁰ The net result of this operation was that the merchant would have his goods where he wanted them, having paid far less in the end than if the goods had simply been imported at an English port and then sold. The profits were such, however, that the inconvenience and delay were but a small price to pay.

Without a crucial development in ship design in the late seventeenth century, however, this procedure might not have developed so rapidly and it was necessary in this particular case because of the direction of the movement of goods eastwards across the Irish Sea. Most smuggling activity before this date seems to have been devoted to exporting goods, such as leather and tin, without paying the duty on them or shipping wool from a non-staple port. As Rupert Jarvis noted nearly sixty years ago, this was comparatively

³⁸ 22 & 23 Chas. II, c.26.

³⁹ 6 Anne, c.3.

⁴⁰ Jarvis, 'Illicit trade', p. 252.

easy because a cargo could be loaded and despatched in short order in the right weather. Import smuggling, however, was more difficult before the late seventeenth century because, having landed the goods, the vessel needed a wind to depart and while waiting it was obviously vulnerable to discovery, if not seizure. The development of the fore and aft rig at this time, however, went a long way towards removing this limitation. It enabled vessels to enter and depart from practically any mooring, almost irrespective of the wind direction.⁴¹ This was vital for those engaged in running goods onto a lee shore, such as the Lancashire coast.

Although still in its early stages, the government in London began to take notice of the growth of running trade in the Irish Sea after the end of the great farm of the English customs in 1671.⁴² Now that the customs revenue was once again paid to the Crown, there was an obvious determination that any evasion of duty or fraudulent claims for debentures should be stopped without delay. In 1673, Thomas, Lord Clifford, the Lord Treasurer, warned that it was 'very necessary' to send an itinerant officer to the Isle of Man as well as to Ireland 'to prevent abuses in the Plantation trade,' although he must have realized the enormity of the task he was proposing.⁴³ For some reason this advice was not acted upon immediately, even allowing for a degree of bureaucratic delay, and it was not until April 1682 that Christopher Eyans alias J'Ans was appointed as surveyor, waiter and searcher in the Isle of Man.⁴⁴ As far as Eyans was concerned, his commission conferred no official status within the island and it is extremely doubtful whether, in strictly legal terms, the Crown had the power to appoint officers to act within the island. Nevertheless, the presence of Eyans and the other officers subsequently appointed for the island was tolerated, but the efforts of these men to carry out what they saw as their duty was an almost constant source of irritation for the Lord's customers or deputy searchers. In 1683, Francis Michelbourne was appointed to act as surveyor for Peel and

⁴¹ Jarvis, 'Illicit trade', pp. 47-48.

⁴² With the exception of the period of civil wars and Interregnum, the collection of customs duty had been the responsibility of farmers since 1604. A. P. Newton, 'The establishment of the great farm of the English customs', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 1 (1918), pp. 129-55; F. C. Dietz, *English public finance, 1558-1641* (London, 1932), chaps 14-16.

⁴³ *Calendar of Treasury Books (CTB)*, 1673-75, p. 144.

⁴⁴ *CTB*, 1681-85, pp. 449, 452.

Ramsey while Eyans was to concentrate on Douglas and Castletown.⁴⁵

Clashes between the Crown officers and the waterbailiff and his deputies were inevitable. In May 1683, for example, Eyans accused Ferdinando Calcott, the waterbailiff, of 'inderect Practises very Injurious to his Majestie in his Customes'. The charge arose, according to Eyans, because Calcott had allowed a ship from the West Indies to discharge its cargo of tobacco at Ramsey without an entry being made in the customs book. The fact that the landing of this vessel's cargo was in breach of the Navigation Acts was serious enough. Worse still, the contraband was then stored in the Lord's warehouse under the supervision of Edward Curghey, the customer, who, Eyans believed, was 'siding with the smucklers'.⁴⁶ Governor Robert Heywood summoned all the parties to Castle Rushen in Castletown for the case to be heard, but Eyans vehemently refused to appear, 'disowning the jurisdiction of this Court' and stated that he would only proceed when he had received orders from the lords of the Treasury in London. As Heywood observed to William, Earl of Derby, the presence of such officers was a 'great hindrance of commerce and trade here . . . to the utter destruction and ruin of the natives and inhabitants as also the great prejudice to your Honor in your customs'.⁴⁷

Once England was at war with France at the end of the decade, there was the added problem of monitoring the embargo on trade with the enemy. Great profits were to be made bringing commodities, such as brandy, across the Channel and in spite of the efforts of the revenue cutters a traffic rapidly developed between France and Scotland.⁴⁸ The king's officers in the Isle of Man were accordingly determined to prevent the island from serving as a base for such trade. Further confrontation between the waterbailiff's deputies and the Crown officers was therefore inevitable and soon flared up after the arrival of a Spanish ship, the *St Stephen* of San Sebastian, with a cargo of brandy and wines in April 1691. According to the

⁴⁵ *CTB*, 1681–85, p. 876.

⁴⁶ *CTB*, 1681–85, p. 568; MNHL, MD 401/1718/24. Christopher Eyans to Robert Heywood, Governor, 16 and 19 May 1683.

⁴⁷ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Ormonde*, vol. 7, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁸ John Gale to Sir John Lowther, 30 Dec. 1694, D. R. Hainsworth, ed., *The correspondence of Sir John Lowther of Whitehaven, 1693–1698*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, 7 (1983), p. 179.

depositions of its crew members, the ship had been en route from its home port to Dublin when it was forced by 'distresse of weather' to take refuge at Derbyhaven, but there were suspicions that this story was a fabrication and that, besides, the brandy and wine were French. Furthermore, the fact that the pilot, who was the true master of the ship, was French, as was the owner of the vessel, though naturalized and living in London, only added to the doubt about the intended destination of the *St Stephen*. In an effort, it seems, to forestall the Crown officers, the Lord's customers seized the vessel. The Crown surveyor, Benjamin Dewey, succeeded in putting his own locks on the ship's hatches and brought the matter to an impasse. The case dragged on until late summer. Depositions were taken from many of the crew and factors involved in the case and aspersions were cast on the earl of Derby for taking a sample of the wine to be tested. The brandy was deemed to be French, but this did not prevent the government ordering the release of a vessel from a country which was allied to the king.⁴⁹ This would seem to have at least avoided prolonging the wrangling about jurisdiction over the vessel.

Crown officers continued to be resident in the island and revenue cutters patrolled the Irish Sea, but neither could in the end do much to stem the expansion of the running trade. Nor could the king's officers expect much cooperation from the inhabitants of the Isle of Man, a large proportion of whom depended on the trade for at least part of their income. Brook Richmond, commander of the yacht *Royal George*, hired by the government to cruise off the coast of the Isle of Man in 1726, reported to the collector of customs at Liverpool that the farmers of the Manx customs from the earl of Derby, Richard McGuire, a Dublin merchant, and one Josiah Poole, 'do exasperate and spirit up the people to make the officers and all persons employed in the service of the [British] government as uneasy as they possibly can to deter them from doing their duty'. Richmond observed that the inhabitants 'gave the like reception to the commander and crew of the vessel till they found their threats and menaces was to no manner of purpose'. This was no doubt because Richmond and his crew felt 'obliged whenever they went

⁴⁹ Lancashire Record Office, DDKe 80, 'An account of the proceedings of the Earl of Derby, Roger Kenyon, Esquire, Governor, and other his Lordships officers of the Isle of Man against the Kings officers and other their Majesties subjects'; cf. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Kenyon*, pp. 252-55, 258-64.

ashoare to goe armed as if in an enemies country'. Understandably Richmond wanted not only additional men for his ship but also requested half a dozen paterarols or swivel guns for protection.⁵⁰

In the early eighteenth century, especially from the 1720s onwards, the scale and scope of the trade increased as never before. Imports of tobacco, brandy, sugar and tea in particular rose substantially and commodities which had seldom if ever appeared in the waterbailiff's accounts began to assume considerable importance. A good example is gin, often termed geneva, a corruption of the Dutch *jenever*, which does not seem to have been imported before the eighteenth century but which became a regular item in cargoes arriving from Rotterdam after about 1730. In 1751–52 alone, 222.2 tuns were landed in Manx ports. Rum, which had scarcely featured in the waterbailiff's accounts before 1720, became another important commodity, with 651.1 tuns imported in 1751–52. Brandy, which had been imported into the island since at least the mid-seventeenth century, only assumed real significance in the import trade after 1700, with imports reaching 858.1 tuns in 1737–38 and 1,588.6 tuns in 1751–52. Sugar had been recorded in the island's customs records at the end of sixteenth century, but it had never been a regular part of the import trade and it was not until about 1700 that imports of loaf, brown and powder sugar began to increase substantially. From below 1,000 lbs a year before the turn of the century, sugar imports rose to 4,336 lbs in 1720–21 and a quite staggering 175,841 lbs in 1751–52. Most dramatic of all perhaps was the growth in tea imports, mainly shipped from Rotterdam, with the remainder of the consignments arriving from Gothenburg. Apparently from nothing in the early eighteenth century, tea imports climbed rapidly to match consumption and falling prices.⁵¹ In 1751–52, 83,635 lbs of tea was landed in the island (table 7).

Shipments of at least some of these high value commodities arrived in ships directly from North America, France, Spain or the

⁵⁰ R. C. Jarvis, *Customs letter-books of the port of Liverpool, 1711–1813*, Chatham Society, 3rd series, 6 (1954), pp. 28–30.

⁵¹ For an index of wholesale tea prices for domestic consumption, see W. A. Cole, 'Trends in eighteenth-century smuggling', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 10 (1958), repr. in W. E. Minchinton, ed., *The growth of English overseas trade in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London, 1969), p. 143; these imports comprised exclusively tea from China; A. Macfarlane & I. Macfarlane, *Green gold: The empire of tea* (London, 2003), p. 100.

TABLE 7 Imports of brandy, gin, rum, sugar and tea into the Isle of Man: years ending 24 June (before 1701) and 29 Sept. (after 1700).

	Brandy tuns	Gin tuns	Rum tuns	Sugar lbs	Tea lbs
1594	—	—	—	200	—
1600	—	—	—	—	—
1605	—	—	—	—	—
1610	—	—	—	—	—
1618	—	—	—	—	—
1630	—	—	—	—	—
1647	0.64	—	—	78	—
1667	0.25	—	—	—	—
1685	2.87	—	—	956	—
1696	—	—	—	255	—
1721	774.5	—	—	4,336	—
1738	858.1	—	72.2	2,557	12,957
1752	1,588.6	222.2	651.1	175,841	83,635

Sources: see table 1.

West Indies, while others came via the Low Countries and Sweden, but by far the largest proportion of the island's import trade throughout the period was shipped through English ports.⁵² Although it is not always possible to reconstruct a complete picture of the island's trading network from the waterbailiff's accounts, it is clear from those years in which the data are available in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that England was the main source of imported raw materials and manufactured goods (table 8.1). The most important English ports in this trade in the sixteenth century were Chester and Liverpool, but by the late seventeenth century Chester was losing its position, particularly as a source of manufactured goods, and by the early eighteenth century it had been overtaken in importance by Whitehaven, the principal source of the island's coal, which was rapidly developing as an important port.⁵³

Liverpool remained the port with the most frequent contact with the Isle of Man. Its associations with the Stanley family no doubt

⁵² Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 291–307.

⁵³ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 292–301. On the development of Whitehaven, see J. V. Beckett, *Coal and tobacco: The Lowthers and economic development of west Cumberland, 1660–1760* (Cambridge, 1981).

TABLE 8.1 *Direction of the trade of the Isle of Man by numbers of shipments, 1721, 1738, 1752 (years ending 29 Sept.): imports.*

Origin	1721		1738		1752	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
England	1	0.5	187	29.3	635	49.3
Ireland	—		61	9.6	229	17.8
Scotland	—		13	2.0	36	2.8
Wales	—		1	0.1	40	3.1
France	—		27	4.2	22	1.7
Netherlands	—		3	0.5	155	12.0
Norway	—		8	1.2	7	0.5
Portugal	—		—		1	0.1
Spain	—		3	0.5	41	3.2
Sweden	—		—		6	0.5
West Indies	—		10	1.6	31	2.4
Not certain	1	0.5	11	1.7	29	2.2
Not known	197	99	313	49.1	48	3.7
Total	199		637		1,288	

Sources: see table 1.

TABLE 8.2 *Direction of the trade of the Isle of Man by numbers of shipments, 1721, 1738, 1752 (years ending 29 Sept.): exports.*

Destination	1721		1738	1752
	No.	%	No.	No.
Isle of Man (coastal)	105	44.7	—	—
England	21	8.9	4	—
Channel Isles	15	6.3	—	—
Ireland	15	6.3	—	—
Scotland	7	2.9	—	—
Wales	1	0.4	—	—
France	2	0.8	—	—
Netherlands	1	0.4	—	—
Norway	46	19.5	—	—
Portugal	1	0.4	—	—
Spain	1	0.4	—	—
Not certain	1	0.4	—	—
Not known	20	8.5	1	7
Total	236		5	7

Sources: see table 1.

helped to foster this maritime link, but Liverpool was in any case well placed in relation to the manufacturing and mining centres of south Lancashire. The potential profits of this trade were apparently recognized soon after the Restoration when, in 1668, there was an attempt by Isaac Legay and Thomas Puckley, two London merchants, and James Jerome, a Liverpool merchant, to set up some sort of trading company with the 'free licence and liberty, full power and authority to Trafficke and trade' in the Isle of Man.⁵⁴ While this seems to have come to nothing, trade between Liverpool and the island burgeoned. In 1751–52, for example, 468 shipments were made to the island from Liverpool, while 144 cleared from Whitehaven. The island maintained regular trading links with Irish ports, especially those of the east coast, although occasionally ships landed cargoes from more distant ports, such as Cork. Not surprisingly, Dublin was the most important port in trade between Ireland and the Isle of Man. In 1751–52, ninety-three shipments from the city were landed in Manx ports. Rush, in Co. Dublin, which had known connections with smuggling, also played a significant role in the trade, with thirty-eight cargoes originating from that port in 1751–52.⁵⁵

Of far less importance to the island was its trade with south west Scotland, while its links with Wales increased markedly during the first half of the eighteenth century, with cargoes of coal arriving from Mostyn and Bagillt and slate from Caernarfon and Beaumaris. Of the continental ports with Manx trading connections, Rotterdam was by far the most important, with 141 shipments cleared for the island in 1751–52.⁵⁶ As far as the island's export and re-export trade is concerned, the former appears to have almost totally ceased in the eighteenth century and the latter, since not bearing duty, was eventually no longer recorded.

By the mid-1750s, it was all too apparent to the British government that something had to be done about the Isle of Man. The scale of the running trade and the amount of money in lost customs revenue had increased significantly since the late 1730s, after the lordship of the island had been inherited by James, second Duke of Atholl in 1736 (figure 1). Although there was no connection with

⁵⁴ MNHL, MD 401, 1717/16; The Earle of Derby his warrant to trade in Man, 16 April 1668.

⁵⁵ Cullen, 'Smuggling in the North Channel', pp. 11, 18–19.

⁵⁶ MNHL, MS 10058, Charge of the customs of ingates and outgates, 1752.

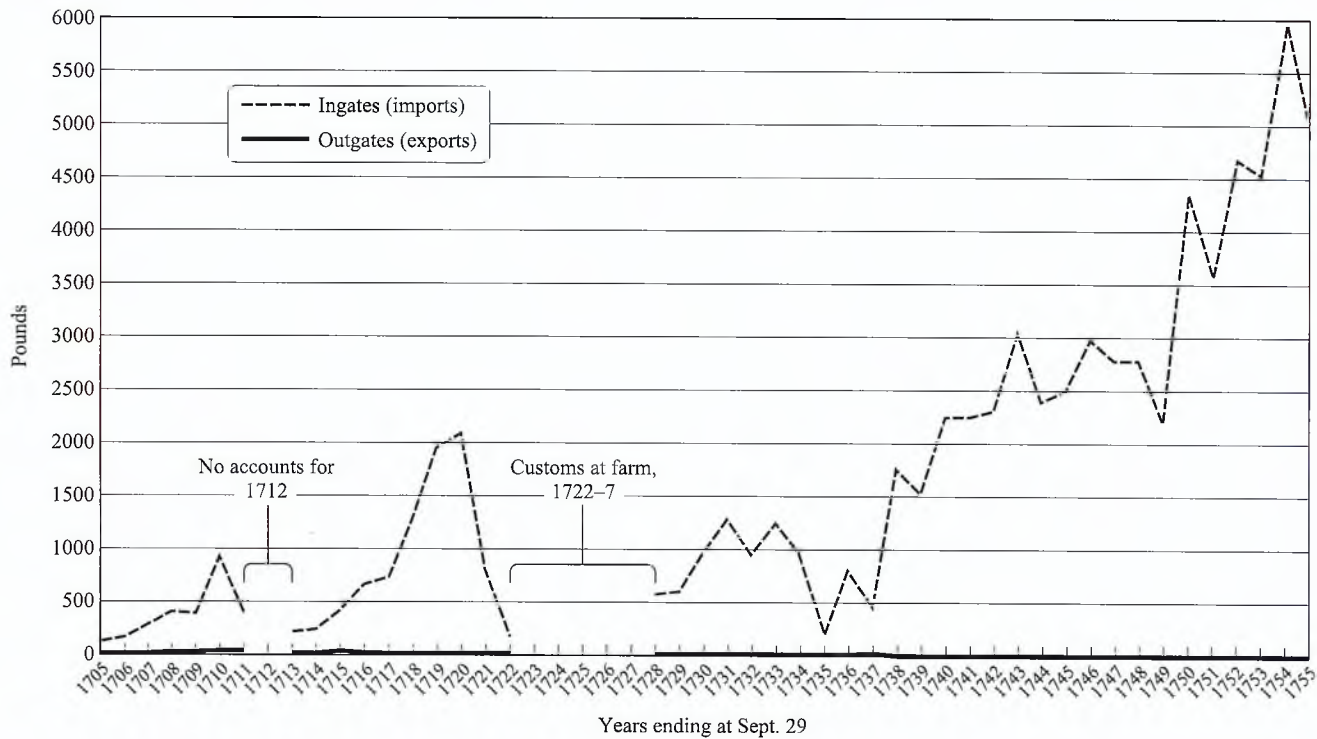


FIG. 1 Customs revenue of the Isle of Man, 1705-55

TABLE 9 *Isle of Man: 'Clear revenue of the Customs for imports', 1754-63, years ending 29 Sept.*

	<i>Total</i>
1754	£5,944 7s 2¼d
1755	£4,968 1s 5¾d
1756	£4,749 1s 10d
1757	£5,233 17s 0½d
1758	£5,180 2s 3¼d
1759	£8,082 18s 0d
1760	£7,093 12s 2½d
1761	£9,544 2s 11¾d
1762	£6,391 6s 10d
1763	£7,029 0s 7¼d

Source: 5 Geo. III, c.26 (schedule).

this event, by the date of the last extant Manx customs accounts in 1755, it was clear from London's perspective that real action was long overdue, with receipts from the island's customs revenue reaching nearly £6,000 in 1753-54 and according to the British government's own figures, peaking at almost £9,550 in 1760-61. (table 9). Efforts had been made by the English government as early as the 1680s to obtain a lease of the customs from the earl of Derby and negotiations were held with Earl William to this end. There was a good deal of resistance from the earl and the project finally collapsed in 1688.⁵⁷

The earl of Derby did eventually make a lease of the island's customs, though not to the Crown. In February 1722, James, tenth Earl of Derby, leased the island's customs revenue to Richard McGuire of Dublin, merchant, and Josiah Poole of Liverpool for a term of twenty-one years, but this rapidly came to an end in 1727 when, it seems, that the farmers failed to make the necessary payments to the earl.⁵⁸ It was not until 1764, however, that the British government went one step further than a mere lease and began the process to purchase the rights of the duke of Atholl 'for preventing that pernicious and illicit trade which is at present carried on between the said Island and other ports of His Majesty's dominions, in violation of the laws, and to the great diminution and

⁵⁷ Dickinson, *Lordship*, pp. 336-37.

⁵⁸ MNHL, MD 401/1726/12.

detriment of the revenues of the kingdom'.⁵⁹ This was finally completed by Act of Parliament in the following year when the Isle of Man was 'revested' in the Crown.⁶⁰ This development dramatically reduced the level of the running trade through the island though it by no means eliminated the traffic, which continued along other sea lanes, using other bases. The increase in shipments of rum across the North Channel from Scotland to Ireland in the 1760s and the rise in importance of the Channel Islands as a base for smuggling activity at the same time have been attributed in large measure to the closure of the Isle of Man to this trade.⁶¹

In the sixteenth century at least, the maritime trade of the Isle of Man was extremely limited by comparison with the scale of the commercial enterprises undertaken by the merchants of Dublin or Chester or Liverpool. The island's maritime trade, focused mainly on England, was based on the export of primary products, notably cattle and hides, and the import of necessary raw materials and manufactured goods. With the changes brought by the restrictions on cattle imports into England from the island in the 1660s and the encouragement to merchants from all Irish Sea ports to take advantage of the island's position to circumvent the increased duties in England from the later seventeenth century onwards, the size and the value of Manx overseas trade rose dramatically, especially after 1700 and most markedly of all once the lordship of the island had passed from the Stanley earls of Derby to the Murray dukes of Atholl in 1736. This was true at least of the import and re-export trade, while exports of Manx cattle, hides and the other commodities which had formed the mainstay of the island's trade before 1600 vanished completely in a very short space of time.

As far as the earl of Derby or the duke of Atholl as Lord of Man was concerned, no laws were being broken by those engaged in the re-export or running trade, but from the other sides of the Irish Sea the commissioners of the customs in England and in Ireland and the

⁵⁹ British Parliamentary Papers, Proceedings of the Privy Council on petition of Duke of Atholl for further compensation for sale of feudal rights of Isle of Man, 1805 vol. X 79, p. 13.

⁶⁰ 5 Geo. III, c.26.

⁶¹ L. E. Cochran, *Scottish trade with Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 85; Cullen, *Anglo-Irish trade*, pp. 147–48; A. G. Jamieson, 'The Channel Isles and smuggling, 1680–1850', in A. G. Jamieson, ed., *A people of the sea: The maritime history of the Channel Islands* (London, 1986), pp. 195–219.

government in London took a distinctly contrary view. Much to the exasperation of the English and subsequently British government, the Lords of Man benefited very considerably from this trade and rejected efforts to obtain a lease of the island's customs revenue for the Crown as well as offers to purchase the rights once and for all. Even the transition to the Murray lordship of the island initially made little difference; in fact, trade boomed and the yields of the island's customs revenue soared to new and dizzying heights in c.1750. When, however, John, third Duke of Atholl, finally agreed to the surrender of his rights at a price of £70,000 and the Isle of Man was revested in the Crown in 1765, the heyday of the running trade in the Irish Sea was over.