

ART. XIX.—*Cumberland shipping in the eighteenth century.* By RUPERT C. JARVIS, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

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DURING the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when England — and latterly the United Kingdom — developed, under the shelter of the navigation laws, into the leading maritime country in the world, Whitehaven developed into one of her leading ports.

During that brief period of peace between 1783 and 1793, it could be lamented in one of the volumes of official shipping statistics that the

Southern ports of our Island furnish no adequate supply of Mariners for the great Arsenals of Portsmouth and Plymouth. Poole which is accommodating for Portsmouth, has only 1,589 seamen; Dartmouth can furnish 1,994, and Exeter 1,168 to Plymouth.

Furthermore, “these ports are rather in the decreasing state”. Compare them for example, the comment continues, with the north-west, with Whitehaven, with its 450 ships and nearly 3,500 seamen.¹

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century the tonnage of Whitehaven shipping rose from about 4,000 tons to over 9,000, and in the second quarter it doubled itself again. Over the whole century the returns show Whitehaven following very closely behind rapidly rising Liverpool, and in one year, in 1744, her figures actually exceeded those of Liverpool—17,485 tons against Liverpool’s 15,932. From the middle of the eighteenth century until the late sixties, the increase in Whitehaven’s tonnage was consistent and sustained, until in 1769 and 1770 there was a sharp spurt upwards to over 34 thousand

¹ British Museum: Addl. MSS, 38430, 31-2.

tons (Liverpool's figure the year before had been only 33 thousand). By 1790 Whitehaven registered no less than 448 vessels, including 53,159 tons British built,² giving employment to as many as 3,451 mariners; this compared well with Liverpool's 479 vessels, including 55 thousand tons British built.

The position of Whitehaven's shipping in relation to that of other home and plantation ports towards the close of the century, may be seen from the official returns rendered under the law³ relating to the registry of shipping; these figures were prepared by the ports themselves and rendered to the register-general of shipping⁴ on the specific instructions of the privy council.⁵

The returns under the act of 1786, showing the position of the registers at the various outports as at Michaelmas 1789 (for example), show Newcastle leading, with 495 vessels registered at the port, and Whitehaven with 437, followed by Liverpool with 394, Hull with 383, Sunderland with 375, and Yarmouth with 368.⁶ How far England had outpaced Scotland is shown by Greenock with 315, Aberdeen with 166, and Leith with 147. Because of Whitehaven's association with the plantation trade, it is interesting to note that the three principal plantation ports were, Halifax (Nova Scotia) with 157 vessels, St. George (Bermuda) with 131, and Kingston (Jamaica) with 123.

We have been reminded—and with special reference to the north-west—that the history written for a seafaring people seems to know little about merchant vessels. Even our economic history is so full of constitutional progress, factory acts and turnips, that there is no room for such things as ships.⁷ How much—or how little—do we know,

² The word "British" in this context means "not foreign", and hence includes the vessels built, for example, in the plantations, e.g. in Newfoundland, Canada, the West Indies, and the United States before 1776.

³ 26 Geo. III (1786) cap 60, as to which, see below.

⁴ See, P.R.O.: BT6/191.

⁵ Customs Library: Minutes and Orders (Notes and Extracts), V, 348-9.

⁶ P.R.O.: BT6/191 (tonnages would of course alter the order somewhat).

⁷ Northcote Parkinson, *Trade Winds* (1948), 14.

for example, about the shipping of one of the leading maritime counties such as Cumberland?

How much of the shipping of the county was built at Whitehaven or Workington; how much at Harrington or Maryport? Of the vessels built in Cumberland yards, how many were built in Whitehaven by Brocklebank, Bowes, Shepherd, Stockdale, Jackson, and other such noted Whitehaven builders; how many of the Maryport vessels were built by Peat or Curry; how many did the Falcons build at Workington; how many Askew and Ellwood at Harrington, and how many the Woods at Workington and Maryport? How many vessels were built at places like Rockcliffe, Allonby, Bowness, Raven-glass, the Duddon, Milnthorpe and Pennybridge? To what extent did the Cumberland yards fail to keep pace with Cumberland's rising trade; or to express the question in terms of shipping figures, what proportion of Cumberland tonnage had to be bought in from other ports; what proportion had been bought in from other ports on the west coast, what proportion from the east coast, and what proportion from the south; what proportion of the whole was overseas-built, from the plantations, from foreign countries being prize of war, or from foreign countries being purchased and otherwise "made free"? How was Cumberland shipping employed; what percentage was in the coastwise collier trade, what percentage traded to Ireland, what to the Plantations, and what to other foreign countries? How were the tonnage totals made up as to individual vessels; how many of them were under fifty tons, how many under a hundred; how many exceeded 250, and where were the largest ones built? What was the average crew of the local coastwise traders; what was the average crew of the colliers and of the plantation traders, and how did the scale of manning compare with other ports? What was the average age of those ships; how many were more than 25 years old, how many more than 50, and where had the oldest ones

been built — locally or “away”? Were most of the ships in the plantation trade, plantation-built, and if so, were they built on the American continent or in the Islands?

Who provided the capital to build the Cumberland-built vessels, and who provided the capital to buy in the “stranger” tonnage; who bought in the prizes, and how does the local practice compare with that of other ports and regions? Was the money thus provided “maritime” money, that is to say, money that had been earned in shipbuilding, shipowning, shipchartering, fitting or manning, and now being ploughed back into the maritime business? Was any noteworthy proportion of the money “industrial” or “commercial”; that is to say, was there “big money” being put into shipping, being the profits from coal, or was there a very large number of individually small amounts being invested in ships, having been first earned in small trades and businesses in the ports? Or was it, on the other hand, what we might call “social” money, privately provided in a relatively large number of small amounts by well-to-do yeomen or rising professional men, or other private persons including women? How is the local pattern of the ownership of shipping related to local social questions, the prosperity or otherwise of the shopkeeper or tradesman in the town and the yeoman in the country? In what way is it affected by the lack of the joint-stock-company form of investment, or the absence of the sort of industrialising process in the hinterland that otherwise might have attracted the money that went into shipping? From how wide a field—commercially and geographically — was the money attracted, anyway?

These questions have never been answered, quite possibly because they have never been asked, for surprisingly little work, published or unpublished⁸ has been done

⁸ But see the London Ph.D. thesis by Oliver Wood, “The development of the coal, iron and shipbuilding industries of West Cumberland, 1750-1914” (1953); the Leeds M.A. thesis by J. E. Williams, “The growth and decline of the port of Whitehaven, 1650-1900” (1952); and the London M.A. thesis by W. H. Makey, “The place of Whitehaven in the Irish coal trade, 1600-1750” (1953).

in this field. It is proposed here, therefore, not so much to suggest answers to these questions, but rather to draw attention to, and to bring under some sort of cursory review, the character of the as yet unpublished manuscript sources in official custody, upon which local maritime economic and social historians will have to rely when they start asking themselves that sort of question.

A brief note on the provenance of the principal sources here cited, and their present location and accessibility, is contained at the end of this paper.

The commissioners of Customs instructed their officers at Whitehaven (in common with those at other principal ports) to "draw up and transmit" an account in respect of the year 1709, showing:

the Total number of ships or Vessels that were of or belonged to your Port, their Tonnage and number of Men, that traded to or from foreign parts; also the like Account of Coasting Vessels and of Fishing Vessels, Smacks etc. . . . accounting each Ship the Tonnage and number of Men but once each year.

The account was to be compiled in respect of every seventh year until 1755, and thereafter was to be drawn up and transmitted annually.⁹ Although the Custom House, London, was destroyed by fire in 1814,¹⁰ and a good deal of this body of archive (and that of the register-general of shipping) was lost, an abstract of the returns, port by port, is to be found among the Musgrave MSS.¹¹

These returns distinguish vessels, (a) in the foreign trade, (b) in the coastwise trade, and (c) in fishing, and render separate details (so far as the north-west is concerned), in respect of the ports of Carlisle, Whitehaven, the Pile of Fowdray (i.e. Barrow—later Ulverston), Lancaster, Preston, Poulton, Liverpool and Chester. We quote (by way of example) the tonnage totals in respect of Whitehaven.

⁹ Whitehaven Custom House: Letter Books: Board to Collector, 24 May 1755.

¹⁰ M. S. Guiseppi, *Guide to Manuscripts preserved in the Public Record Office*, (1924) II, 65.

¹¹ British Museum, Addl. MSS. 11255-6.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Tons.</i>	<i>Year.</i>	<i>Tons.</i>
1709 .	4,604	1764 .	23,237
1716 .	7,140	1765 .	23,121
1723 .	7,814	1766 .	23,492
1730 .	9,761	1767 .	23,341
1737 .	11,010	1768 .	24,735
1744 .	17,485	1769 .	30,934
1751 .	18,416	1770 .	34,490
1752 .	18,532	1771 .	31,521
1753 .	19,976	1772 .	28,034
1754 .	20,024	1773 .	28,218
1755 .	20,398	1774 .	28,702
1756 .	20,779	1775 .	28,156
1757 .	31,007	1776 .	28,937
1758 .	21,133	1777 .	28,830
1759 .	20,520	1778 .	31,066
1760 .	22,279	1779 .	29,603
1761 .	23,578	1780 .	26,990
1762 .	23,682	1781 .	28,022
1763 .	23,456	1782 .	27,054

When the little peak in 1769-71 is evened out—six or seven thousand tons of fishing tonnage was included exceptionally in those years—the figures provide a fairly consistent upward curve varied only by the disturbance of war.

Carlisle, which opened the century with only a few odd craft engaged in fishing, soon recorded a few in the coastwise trade, but only three times before the early 60's (in 1744, 1751 and 1753) returned more than a hundred tons, and only twice (in 1744 and 1753) a single vessel in foreign trade.

This, however, is not to say that Carlisle was not trading direct with foreign ports, for it is known from the so-called "port books" that she was trading, for example, direct with Norway, but with vessels of Whitehaven and Workington.¹²

We learn something of the character of Carlisle's coastwise trade in the early part of the eighteenth century by the entries in these so-called "port-books" of the period:

¹² P.R.O.: E 190/1458/1-2, 10-1, 13, 18.

September 1719

In the *Marygold* of Lancaster, William Barrow, Mas[te]r, from Liverpool. One Hundred and Six Barrs, q[uan]ti[ty]: forty one C weight Swed. Iron. One Hundred Barrells Tarr. four Bar¹⁸. Pitch. Two Cart Load Earthen ware, and one hundred Barrel staves p Cocket¹³ from Liverpool the 8 Instant.

Do. 18th

In the *Hopewell* of Annan, William Dagelesh, Mas[te]r, from Dumfries. Two hundred and twenty seven Barrs, q[uan]ti[ty]: four Tons and one half Ton of swedish Iron, as p Cocket¹³ from Dumfries the Tenth Instant.

October 10th

In the *Layton Galley*¹⁴ of & from Whitehaven, John Hird, Master. Two Tons Weight of copperas and four hundred and Twenty three Doz Empty Glass Bottles p Cocket¹³ from Whitehaven the third Instant.¹⁵

After 1762 Carlisle's tonnage, although very small relatively to Whitehaven and Liverpool, rose rapidly, particularly in the coastwise trade, from under 100 tons in 1762 to over 500 tons in 1763, over 2,000 in 1764, and over 5,000 in 1768; but the figures fell just as rapidly to just over 3,000 tons in 1769, to 400 in 1771.¹⁶

By 1790 however, there was a total of 13 ships registered at the port, totalling 605 tons, worked by 43 men.¹⁷ The largest was the *Mary* of 145 tons (9 men),¹⁸ followed by *Charlotte and Ann* (71 tons, 5 men).¹⁹ Of the remaining 11 vessels, 9 were of about 50 tons or under, 6 of them being in the 20's, crewed, with a single exception, by 2 men only. We know, for example, from the Liverpool Papers that only two other ports in England render-

¹³ A form of Customs certificate (from *quo quietus est*).

¹⁴ A vessel propelled by oars.

¹⁵ P.R.O.: E 190/1456/1.

¹⁶ British Museum Addl. MSS 11, 255. Dr T. S. Willan, *English Coasting Trade, 1600-1750*, Appendix 7, opined that in respect of some of the years these returns "were not always revised and brought up to date". My own guess would be the other way round, namely that the later ones are more likely to be the accurate ones, the earlier figures possibly "supplied" from the later.

¹⁷ P.R.O.: BT6/191/103.

¹⁸ Maryport Custom House: Carlisle register book, 1/1788.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9/1786.

ing returns under the new act of registry, Deal and the Isles of Scilly, made returns as low as Carlisle.²⁰

The Pile of Fowdray did not appear in these returns until 1730, when it returned just over a thousand tons. The figures showed a slight but continuous increase—all of it in the coastwise trade—until 1756, when they jumped to the exceptionally high figure of nearly 2,000 tons, with over 500 in addition trading foreign. The figures fell for a decade, and then after a spurt in the 1760's continued the improvement with the 80's, but withdrew entirely from foreign trade. Lancaster did not reach a thousand tons until 1744; but already by 1751 it had reached the 2,000, 3,000 by 1760, and 4,000 by 1775.

The nature of both the overseas and coastwise trade of (shall we say) Whitehaven in the first half of the eighteenth century, can be gathered from the "port-books" already referred to. For example we see from the port-books of 1720 such noted Whitehaven merchants as Thomas and Walter Lutwidge, John and Mathias Gale, Clement Nicholson, John Gilpin, Thos. Patrickson, Peter Howe, William Hicks, and Samuel Bowerbank, being concerned in fairly large quantities of tobacco (10 to 20 and 30 thousand pounds per consignment) imported from Virginia by the vessels *Cockermouth*, *Speedwell*, *Cumberland*, *Carlisle* and *Swan*, to be shipped to Dublin, Belfast and Cork in the vessels *Satisfaction*, *Happy Return*, *Phoenix* and *Lonsdale* and the galley *Betty*.²¹

But such details are about the trade, rather than about the vessels in which the trade was done. It is unfortunate that there is little systematic information about particular vessels available from the central records until we come to the records and returns made under the register act of 1786. Nevertheless quite a deal may be gathered from the more or less chance survivals, either at Whitehaven or other ports. The first such source is the series of port

²⁰ Deal: 4 vessels = 216 tons: 20 men. Scilly: 9 vessels = 196 tons: 22 men (Addl. MSS, 38389).

²¹ P.R.O.: E 190/1456/5.

letter-books at the Custom House, Whitehaven. These provide many varied pictures of the harbour and its ships, sometimes fetching up so densely that they jostled each other to the damage of themselves and the risk of their cargoes. The crew abandon both if there is a hated man-of-war about.

In the middle of the century, for example, the principal officers of Customs in Whitehaven reported to the commissioners in London:

On the 19th Inst[ant] in the evening the *Vernon* of this Port arrived f[ro]m Virg[ini]a and the Tides being low, she run aground in the mouth of the Harbour; in less than half an hour after, the *Brothers* f[ro]m Virg[ini]a arrived and fetched within her, and run up almost close to the man of War, w[hic]h the *Brothers'* Crew perceiving they left work and the ship, and run to hide themselves from pressing, so that she backed astern, turnd out her bowsprit against the *Vernon*, and beat very hard without her. Messrs. Walt[e]r and Tho[ma]s Lutwidge the owners and merch[an]ts applied to us for assistance, upon w[hic]h We granted them a Warrant for 100 H[ogshea]ds to land as soon as the Tide was out, and ordered the proper officers a guard to attend, and put them into a Cellar We took for that purpose.

The next Night arrived the *Richmond*, *Olive*, *Happy* and *Brayton* all f[ro]m Virg[ini]a and the above two ships being in their Way, and wanting water they could none of them get into safety, and the last to avoid running foul of them was put to the Northward of the Harbour near the Sugar House Bulwark, where she lay in great Danger; and the master having made oath of her Distress, We immediately granted a sufferance and workd at her all that night till the Tide came in again, and continued so next Day; and the Tides being now risen this morning, she and all the rest of them are got safe into the Key, and We believe with very little damage to their Cargoes, for all that has been landed is in very good order.²²

Although the statutory registers of the property in British merchant ships do not exist either at Whitehaven or Carlisle earlier than the act of 1786,²³ the registers of oaths under earlier acts survive at certain other ports,

²² Customs Library: Output Letter-books: Whitehaven, 26 October 1745.

²³ As to which, see below.

and hence information regarding vessels Cumberland-built or Cumberland-owned can be gathered from such surviving oath-books, for example, in the ports of Liverpool or Campbeltown. There is a record for instance of the *Falcon* of Workington, a square-sterned vessel, burden about 70 tons, rigged as a snow (somewhat after the style of a brig, carrying in addition to a main- and foremast, a supplementary trysail mast close behind the main), built at Milnthorpe in 1731, of which Philip Kellsey was then the master.²⁴ There was the ship *America*, of Whitehaven, burden 70 tons, which had been built in Liverpool in 1751, and the same year was declared to be owned by a Whitehaven syndicate—consisting of George and Timothy Nicholson (the former being the master), Peter How, William Gale, Robert Waters, Richard Dixon, Daniel Stephenson, Wm. Barker, a woman named Eleanor Pearson, and John Kelsick.²⁵ Another vessel, built in Liverpool in 1751 and owned in Whitehaven the same year, was the *Warren*, a hake-sterned snow of 80 tons. She was owned by Robert, Edward and William Loxham, Henry Braithwait, William Hornby and John Kelsick.²⁶

In the opposite direction, the *Margarett*, a pink-sterned brigantine of 30 tons, was built in Whitehaven in 1742, but was acquired and registered in Liverpool by John Grant, a master-mariner and sole owner. Or again, a particular vessel of 120 tons was built in Bangor in 1748, but was in 1749 acquired by a syndicate of 13, named the *Lamplugh* and registered in Whitehaven.²⁷

Again, a square-sterned ship of 50 tons, built at Montrose in Scotland, was later acquired and known as the *Kendal of Milnthorpe* and registered at Whitehaven, and later still purchased by David Thompson of Kendal and known as the *Kendal of Liverpool* and registered at Liverpool in 1752.²⁸

²⁴ Liverpool Custom House: plantation register, 1743-56; 19 June 1750.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17 April 1751.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 July 1751.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1751.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 261

Later registers illustrate the difficulty of identifying particular vessels with absolute certainty. The *Fanny* for example, a 2-decked 2-masted, 75-ft. square-sterned vessel, 168 tons, built with a quarter-deck and lights and rigged as a brig, was known to have been built at Whitehaven. She was however lost to the enemy, and then recaptured as a prize of war, acquired by four merchants and a master-mariner, all of London. Because her papers had been captured and retained by the enemy, the London syndicate could not identify her with certainty so registered her in London in 1787, "but having been taken as prize, cannot ascertain the time of her build".²⁹

The strict requirements of the mercantilist system, as it worked itself out by the eighteenth century, were that all trade with the possessions overseas should be carried exclusively to and from Great Britain in British ships of British ownership and British build, with a British master and a predominantly British crew. As to foreign goods, these (with certain exceptions) were to be imported into Great Britain only in British ships (as defined above), or in ships belonging to the country of the goods' origin (or port of usual shipment). The effect of all this was that trade with Europe in the produce of Asia, Africa or America was prohibited altogether, and that our colonial and coastwise trade was prohibited to all foreign ships. This body of law is known in Britain as the navigation laws, and in America as the acts of trade.³⁰

These provisions in general were not repealed until 1849,³¹ with a reservation as to the coastwise trade, which was however opened to foreign ships in 1854.³² These laws, and the restrictions they imposed, were of great importance to Whitehaven, as being one of the principal ports for plantation trade.

After the recognition of American Independence in

²⁹ National Maritime Museum: London register-book (foreign), 450/1787.

³⁰ The best study of these laws in operation is: L. A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1939.

³¹ 12-13 Vic. cap. 29.

³² 17-18 Vic. cap. 5.

1783, and the consequent complications in plantation and inter-plantation trade, the laws defining (and restricting trade to) British ships had to be redrafted, and Charles Jenkinson,³³ who had taken a prominent part in framing the commercial treaties concluded after the peace of 1783, piloted the necessary bill through parliament. The act³⁴ is more important in British maritime history than is usually realised, for it provides us, perhaps incidentally, with a most informative source about British shipping, at one of the most significant stages in its history.

The act of 1786 required the official registry of every vessel that made good its claim to be regarded as a British ship, and hence to be admitted to the privileged trade. From this particular year onwards, therefore, we have a very valuable record—where the original records have survived of course—of every foreign-going merchant ship at her own home port, her name, dimensions and tonnage, the names, occupations and place of residence of her owner or part-owners, the date and place of building, and such description of the ship as would serve to establish her identity, that is to say, her build and rig (whether square-sterned, lute-sterned and/or, whether brig, sloop, snow, barque, schooner, and so forth, the number of masts and decks, whether built with galleries and figure-head, and if the latter, what sort of figure-head — e.g. woman's bust, man's figure, scroll, angel, sea-serpent).

So far as the north-west was concerned the ports of registry under the 1786 act were Carlisle and Whitehaven, followed by Lancaster, Preston, Liverpool and Chester. Although all the statutory 1786 register-books³⁵ have not survived in all these ports, those in respect of Carlisle, Whitehaven and Lancaster have.³⁶ Those volumes,

³³ Later president of the new Board of Trade, Baron Hawkesbury (1786), 1st earl of Liverpool (1796).

³⁴ 26 Geo. III (1786), cap. 60.

³⁵ The word appears tautologous: but the term is statutory, and is perhaps best retained.

³⁶ I mention this point particularly because their survival has been overlooked in the schedule published in the Appendix to the *Second Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records*, vol. II, part ii (Cd. 7545, 1914) p. 245, see note below.

intelligently studied, can be made to furnish much valuable information about local shipping and trade.

We see the vessels turned out by such noted Cumberland shipbuilders as John Spedding, Bowes & Son, Henry Jackson, Henry Stockdale, J. Shepherd and Daniel Brocklebank, all of Whitehaven; of Michael Falcon and John Ellwood of Workington; of Henry Curry and John Peat of Maryport; of Askew Ellwood & Co. of Harrington; and of the Wood family of Rockcliffe, Workington and Maryport. We find for example Speddings as part-owners not only of the Whitehaven-built brigantines *Industry* (159 tons, 1765), *John Thomas* (176 tons, 1767), the *Fletcher* (181 tons, 1770), and the sloop *Nancy* (23 tons, 1765), and the barque *Wilson* (144 tons, 1767), but also of the Chester-built brigantines *Blake* (130 tons, 1763), and *Beaver* (54 tons, 1759). John Ellwood "Merchant, of Workington" helps to buy in tonnage from Lancaster, Liverpool, Chester, and Greenock. John Sargeant & Co. "Merchants, of Whitehaven" are interested in a wide range of vessels bought in from as far afield as Bristol, Kincardine, Aberystwyth and New York. Isaac Littledale of Whitehaven acquires shares in vessels built in Bridlington, Leith, Yarmouth and Borrowstowness. Such merchants as John Sargeant & Co., Isaac Littledale & Co., and Hartley & Barnes, all of Whitehaven, Askew Ellwood & Co. of Workington, John Ellwood of Workington, William Wood the ship-builder of Maryport, and the Pipers of Whitehaven (who seem to have had holdings in a large number of vessels), all invest in prize.

Not all Cumberland shipping was trading regularly to or from Cumberland ports. Certain of the vessels cleared foreign, mostly to the plantations, and remained there on inter-plantation trade, or traded home to other English ports, to Liverpool for instance. In the middle of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, for example, the official returns noted that a number of the vessels,

after having been legally registered, were "absent" from their home ports: the Whitehaven vessel *Mary*, 137 tons, built at Liverpool in 1781; the *Ann & Elizabeth*, 182 tons, built at Hull in 1767; the *Phoenix*, 236 tons, built at Chester in 1784; the *Britannia*, 207 tons, built at Maryport in 1783; also the Whitehaven vessels, Whitehaven-built, *Carlisle*, 229 tons (1783); the *Kitty*, 137 tons (1765); the *James Increase* of 138 tons (1782); the *John & Bella* of 188 tons (1773); the *Zebuleen* of 178 tons (1787); the *Brayton* of 168 tons (1784); the *Mercury* of 170 tons (1768); and the *Cyrus* of 166 tons (1786).

There was also the *Liberty* of Whitehaven, the largest ship owned in any Cumberland port, 460 tons, built in Archangel, but "made free" as a British ship. She was owned by John Hartley of Whitehaven as a sole owner, and because she was, for purposes of British registry, surveyed and measured at Liverpool,³⁷ and noted as "absent" from Whitehaven,³⁷ she may have been a Cumberland ship that never came near a Cumberland port. The Workington vessels, Workington-built, *Appollo* of 297 tons (1781) and *Juno* of 178 tons (1787) were also "absent" from their home port.³⁸

At the other extreme, it is interesting to note the number of craft navigating local waters with a crew of 2 only, namely a master and a mate, or a crew of three only, a master, a mate and a cook or boy. The *Tryal* of Maryport, 15 tons, built at Lancaster in 1770; the *Nicholas* of Maryport, 17 tons, built at Kirkcudbright in 1778; the *Nancy* of Whitehaven, 23 tons, built at Whitehaven in 1765; the *Molly* of Maryport, 16 tons, built at Maryport in 1777; the *James Grizel* of Maryport, 17 tons, built at Annan in 1770; the *Dolphin* of Maryport, 12 tons, built at Allonby in 1780; the *Argyle* of Whitehaven, 18 tons, built at Greenock in 1782; the *Ferret* of Whitehaven, 9 tons, built in Whitehaven in 1787, were all

³⁷ Custom House, Whitehaven: register-book 119/1787.

³⁸ P.R.O.: BT6/191.

navigated by a crew of two men only, a master and a mate. The *James* of Workington, 38 tons, built at Workington in 1771; the *Swan* of Maryport, 27 tons, built at Beaumaris in 1776; the *Molly* of Workington, 28 tons, built at Dumfries in 1784; the *Joseph* of Whitehaven, 44 tons and 15 part-owners; and *Bellax* of Warrington, 57 tons and 20 part-owners, were all navigated by a crew of three.

It was intended that the registers kept at the ports under the act of 1786 should be registers of the property in the ships of the port, as distinct from particulars of the vessels actually arriving and departing the port. In certain ports, however, for example in Liverpool, Bideford and Chepstow, both forms of record were kept. In the case of Liverpool these unnecessary and redundant register-books were kept, apparently systematically, from 1788 until 1818, when a closing entry declares them to be "useless and not required to be kept". The fortunate accident of these registers provides us with an immense amount of presumably representative information about shipping in general, as distinct from the vessels registered at any one given port. Various details may be statistically analysed and used as "control samples".* For example, an analysis of 500 ships, other than Liverpool ships, using the port of Liverpool in 1788, shows that what we might call the pattern of Cumberland ownership differs in a pronounced respect from "average" ownership. In the "average sample", a quarter of all ships were each owned by a single owner; half of all ships were each owned by either one or two owners only; over three-quarters of them were each owned by four or fewer owners; and less than a tenth were owned by eight owners or more. All this is to say that already by the middle of the last quarter of the eighteenth century ship-ownership in general was becoming fairly concentrated. But it is, I suggest, a matter of some economic and social significance that would well repay further enquiry and

research, that the pattern of ship-ownership in Cumberland was in so great contrast. I have analysed the ownership of a representative sample of about the same number of Cumberland ships at about the same period, and find that only about 7 *per cent.* had a single owner, and only as low as three *per cent.* had two part-owners. Only about one-eighth were each owned by four owners or less (against the "average" three-quarters); over one quarter of all Cumberland ships were owned by as many as between 17 and 20 owners, and over one half by between 13 and 20. Three-quarters of all Cumberland ships were owned by as many as between 9 and 22 part-owners. All this is to say that ship-ownership in Cumberland was very widely dispersed.

Let us take, for example, the 66 ft. square-sterned brigantine *William* of Whitehaven, 117 tons. She was built at Liverpool in 1764, but John Christian of Workington joined to buy her with a shoemaker and a tailor, 3 mariners and a widow of Maryport, another widow of Ellenborough, a widow and 3 gentlemen of Workington, another gentleman from Hensingham, 6 mariners from Flimby, Maryport, Workington and Ellenborough, a joiner from Ellenborough, a mason of Eaglesfield, a ship's carpenter of Lancaster, and five merchants of Carlisle, Whitehaven, London and Dublin.³⁹

Or again, the *Good Intent* of Maryport, a 63 ft. vessel of 107 tons: she too was built in Liverpool, in 1763; she had however been purchased by John Harrison of Maryport, her master, and Jacob Harrison (possibly a relative), a Maryport grocer; these joined with two Whitehaven merchants, a cooper, a blacksmith, 3 gentlemen, a ship-carpenter and a sailmaker, a widow of Wigton, and 15 yeomen from Southfield, Broomsfield,⁴⁰ Weary Hall, Roundhill, Blencogo, Dunderhall and Abbey.⁴¹

Or to give one more example; there was the *Appollo*,

³⁹ Custom House, Whitehaven: Register-book 3/1787.

⁴⁰ Bromfield.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16/1786.

a 96 ft. Workington-built square-sterned ship of 297 tons, built in 1781. She was part-owned by Walton Wood (1756-1803), of the noted family of Cumberland ship-builders, son of John Wood (1717-1789) who had earlier built in Rockcliffe and Workington, brother of Thomas Wood (1757-1804) who joined his uncle, William Wood (1725-1804) Maryport's first shipbuilder, and brother of Kelsick Wood (1771-1840) the greatest of the Wood ship-builders, whose note-books provide us with so much information of Cumberland ships. In the *Appollo*, Walton Wood was joined by 11 gentlemen, 5 mariners, a blacksmith, a mercer and a widow, all of Whitehaven, a gentleman and a merchant of Harrington, and another widow and 2 tanners of Cockermouth.⁴² Incidentally, the entry in the Whitehaven register-book contained an affidavit sworn at the Custom House, New Providence in the Bahamas, that the *Appollo* was wrecked and totally lost in the gulf of Florida on a voyage from London to Jamaica.

All these details about ownership paint an altogether different picture of the port from that provided for us by Professor Ford.⁴³ He sees the port facilities as provided in response to the Irish coal trade, these facilities attracting the colonial tobacco trade, the latter coming in the course of time to be monopolised by "a few considerable merchants", and the profits thus arising being "turned back into the coal trade and industry".

"Thus Whitehaven is an example of the way in which wealth gained in the old Colonial trade was used to aid the development of modern industry."⁴⁴

I have analysed a representative sample of between a thousand and fifteen hundred holdings in Cumberland ships in a random year within this particular period (1786), and find that about 40 *per cent.* of all part-owners

⁴² *Ibid.*, 236/1786.

⁴³ P. Ford: "Tobacco and Coal: A note on the Economic History of Whitehaven", *Economica* IX (1929), 192-6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-3 and 196.

came from the maritime classes; about 30 *per cent.* from the commercial, and the other 30 *per cent.* from what we might call the social classes. By the maritime classes I mean ships' captains, other mariners and fishermen, ship-builders, ship-carpenters, sailmakers, anchor-smiths, blockmakers (i.e. pulley- and tackle-makers), and so on. What I have described as "commercial" holdings were about equally spread among merchants and those in various trades; in what I have called the "social" holdings I have included those owners and part-owners who described themselves as "gentleman", "yeoman", "widow" or "spinster", or were in one of the professions of law, medicine, the church or so forth.

These figures can be further analysed to provide additional information. For example, of all the mariners holding shares in ships, at least one-fifth of them were the masters of the ships in question. In the "commercial" division, the merchants formed a fairly large bulk, but the trades were very widely spread. They ranged from such shopkeepers as the baker, butcher, draper, grocer, milliner and hosier, to the innkeeper, pawnbroker, goldsmith and silversmith. The trades included brewers, coopers, masons and millers. There were those in such domesticated occupations as gardeners, house-painters, house-carpenters, slaters, plumbers and shoemakers. There were such callings as weaver, dyer, mercer, bleacher, flax-dresser, leather-dresser and leather-seller. There were also blacksmiths, nailers, turners, braziers, ironmongers and gunsmiths. In the social class it is noteworthy that more than 10 *per cent.* of all owners of shares in Cumberland ships were described either as "widows" or "spinsters".

Because the law of 1786 required in effect the re-registry, more or less forthwith, of all foreign-going merchant ships then afloat (being decked and more than 15 tons), the register-books at this date provide us with a great deal of valuable and fully representative informa-

tion, which cannot be got, in that convenient form, at any other date. A statistical analysis of all Cumberland vessels registered at the time shows that half of them (or over 55 *per cent.* by tonnage) were built in local yards, mostly of course Whitehaven, Workington, Maryport, Harrington, Milnthorpe and Ulverston, in that order. A further fifth of them (or 19 *per cent.* by tonnage) were built in other north-western ports, principally Liverpool, Chester and Lancaster. 4 *per cent.* by number (3 *per cent.* by tonnage) were built in Wales, principally Conway and Barmouth; 4 *per cent.* by number (3½ by tonnage) were built in the south-western ports, principally Chepstow; 2 *per cent.* (1 *per cent.*) on the south coast; 7 *per cent.* (7½ *per cent.*) on the east coast, principally Sunderland, Newcastle and Yarmouth; 6 *per cent.* (3 *per cent.*) in Scotland, principally Leith, Dumfries, Dumbarton and Greenock; 2 *per cent.* (1 *per cent.*) in Ireland, at Strangford, Waterford, Belfast and so on; and only a negligible portion in the Isle of Man. Only the remaining 5 *per cent.* (6½ *per cent.* by tonnage) were built overseas, only 2 *per cent.* being plantation-built, 3 *per cent.* prize of war, and 2 vessels only, the 460-ton *Liberty* from Archangel and the 118-ton brigantine *Maria*, were foreign-built "made free". The *Maria* had, as a matter of fact, been wrecked off the coast of Ireland, and had been repaired and reconditioned, presumably by Henry Stockdale shipbuilder, and Lancelot Fisher ship-carpenter, both of Whitehaven.

It may seem absurd to average the tonnage of the Solway and Isle of Man traders with the vessels voyaging to the plantations, but for what the information is worth the average tonnage of a Cumberland ship at the end of the eighteenth century was 118 tons. The average vessel built at Whitehaven was 142 tons, Harrington 140, Workington 130, and Maryport 125. The average size of the vessel bought in from Chester was 130 tons, 113 from Liverpool, and 110 from Lancaster. Vessels bought

in from the east coast were of about average size, but those from all other home ports, including Scotland, Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man, catered only for smaller requirements. Plantation-built vessels and prizes of war were rather larger than the average, and foreign-built vessels "made free" the largest of all, but too few to be of any real influence on the final figures.

An analysis of the age of ships, at the same period, shows that Whitehaven had on the average a much older fleet than a number of other representative ports examined, and much older for example than Liverpool. Over 20 *per cent.* of Cumberland ships (by number) were built before 1760 (compared with Liverpool's 3 *per cent.*); 28 *per cent.* were built in the 1760's (Liverpool, 10 *per cent.*); 21 *per cent.* in the 1770's (Liverpool, 27 *per cent.*); and only 30 *per cent.* in the 1780's (compared with Liverpool's 60 *per cent.*).

Almost all the eighteenth century register-books I have worked upon, in a fairly large number of ports, provide sufficient details to make an analysis of the shipping of the port in terms of sloops, brigs, brigantines, schooners, cutters, barques, snows, ships, and so forth. Such an analysis compared with other ports is sometimes very illuminating. I much regret that the manner in which the Whitehaven books were kept would make the analysis valueless in the case of Cumberland, and would therefore provide no basis for comparative study.

It remains to comment upon the provenance, location and accessibility of the various manuscript sources cited in this paper. The so-called "port-books" are vellum books which were returned half-yearly, by the Customs officers in the ports, direct into the Exchequer. They are now contained in bundles averaging about 8 to 12 books per bundle, of somewhat variable quality and condition. The surviving books for Carlisle (including Whitehaven) are not so numerous as those for Chester (including Liverpool, Poulton, and Lancaster). Where

¹⁵ Chester has 125 bundles between 1565-1789,⁴⁵ Carlisle has only 14 bundles between 1611 and 1743.⁴⁶ They are now in the Public Record Office, and are readily accessible.⁴⁷

The substantive register-books under the registry act of 1786, which have been so much relied upon in this paper, are large vellum-bound volumes, about 15 inches by 20. The Carlisle volume is now located at the Custom House, Maryport; the Whitehaven register-books are at the Custom House, Whitehaven; and the Lancaster register-book is at the Custom House, Heysham.⁴⁸ The port of Workington did not become a port of registry until 1850. That port therefore falls outside my present period. The later register-books, however, are at the Custom House, Workington, from the date cited. The earlier registries, together with the Maryport and Harrington ones, are included in Whitehaven. The Customs letter-books, to and from the Board of Commissioners in London, survive in the Custom House, Whitehaven, from 1703. There are other manuscripts relating to the port, or to shipping generally at the ports, in the central archive located at the Customs Library in London. Access to these register-books, letter-books and other material, whether located in London or in the outports, is granted to authenticated researchers upon application to the Secretary, H.M. Customs and Excise, King's Beam House, London, E.C.3.

The general body of the returns made (under the eighteenth-century acts as to ships' registry) to the London Custom House was lost in a disastrous fire of 1814. Certain of them however, including certain

⁴⁵ P.R.O.: E 190/1323-1447.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, E 190/1448-1461.

⁴⁷ As to these port-books, see (Sir) G. N. Clark, *Guide to English Commercial Statistics, 1696-1782* (Royal Historical Society, 1938), pp. 32-6; and *First Report, Royal Commission on Public Records, Appendix*, Vol. I part i, (Cd. 6395/1912) pp. 45-7 and Vol. I part iii, (Cd. 6396/1912) pp. 160-1.

⁴⁸ This information is not in agreement with that at the Appendix to the *Second Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records*, Vol. II part ii, (bd. 7545/1914) p. 245, but the above is correct.

very useful folio tables, and some quarto tables prepared by an official named J. Dally, remained in the hands of Sir William Musgrave, 6th baronet (1735-1800), son of Sir Richard Musgrave of Hayton Castle, the 4th baronet. Sir William succeeded to the title, but not the estate, in 1755; he became F.R.S. in 1774, F.S.A. in 1778, and was both a commissioner of Customs and a trustee of the British Museum. Certain books, presumably official, were apparently among his private papers at his death in 1820, and hence escaped the fire of 1814. They made their way to the British Museum, where they are now contained among the Additional Manuscripts.⁴⁹

Among the manuscripts of Charles Jenkinson, referred to above, the first president of the Board of Trade, are four small quarto volumes, bound and inlaid in tooled red morocco, of abstracts of ships registered in 1797, 1789, 1790 and 1792.⁵⁰ Those and other valuable volumes are now among the Liverpool papers in the British Museum, and contain much information about eighteenth-century shipping, including for example petitions and other communications from the merchants⁵¹ and the Fishing Chamber of Whitehaven.⁵¹

In the main, the general body of statistical returns rendered in the eighteenth century by the ports to the central authorities in London, was made to the register-general, an official of the Customs service until transferred in 1854⁵³ to the Board of Trade. Part of the central archive of the register-general was permitted to be destroyed in 1780,⁵⁴ and part was lost by fire in 1814. That part which survived, passed through the Board of Trade to the present Ministry of Transport, and is now located at that Ministry's repository in Hayes, Middlesex.

⁴⁹ Addl. MSS 11255-6.

⁵⁰ Addl. MSS 38429-32.

⁵¹ Addl. MSS 38200, 161 f.; 38202, 236 f. and 38393, 7 f.

⁵² Addl. MSS 38462, 31 f.

⁵³ 16-17 Vic. cap. 107.

⁵⁴ Customs Library: Minutes and Orders (Note and Extracts) V, 347 (20 September, 1780).

It includes a transcript of every transaction relating to the *property* of the ships, but not to their movements or trade. These however survive only from about 1810. Until 1854 they are collected and bound into volumes, alphabetically by ports. Thereafter, they are bound into volumes in a chronological sequence by reference to a serial number, without regard to port sequence. At the same repository are certain volumes of muster-rolls, showing in particular the crews of vessels; those, for example, in respect of Liverpool, contain references to Cumberland vessels, and during the period of the slave-trade, the Greenland trade and the fisheries, and privateering, are of particular interest. Access to all these is granted upon request to the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen, Llandaff, Cardiff.

One of the (London) register-books is cited as being in the National Maritime Museum. This is because when the Customs handed over certain of their non-revenue functions to the Board of Trade in 1854, they handed over also the relative archives. These descended to the Ministry of Transport, who lodged a portion, but a small portion only (but including certain register-books and muster-rolls), on loan to the National Maritime Museum.

Interesting items occasionally appear among the Treasury Board papers: for example, lists of vessels in the American trade, reporting and clearing in the home ports in 1775-6.⁵⁵ These have been fully calendared until 1745, and Andrew's *Guide*, although limited, is useful thereafter.⁵⁶

Certain contemporary compilations made from the eighteenth-century returns from the ports,⁵⁷ are among the Board of Trade archives, together with volumes of correspondence, petitions and other informative material,⁵⁸

⁵⁵ P.R.O.: T1/448.

⁵⁶ *Guide to the Material for American History to 1783, in the Public Record Office* (Washington, 1914).

⁵⁷ BT6/191 (1786-9).

⁵⁸ BT6/96, 189, 192-3 (= 1786-93).

and other volumes of minutes,⁵⁹ out-letters⁶⁰ and "papers".⁶¹ These have been passed by the Board of Trade to the Public Record Office, where they are readily accessible, subject to the usual conditions.

⁵⁹ BT5/1-11 (= 1784-1820).

⁶⁰ BT3/1-6 (= 1786-1820).

⁶¹ BT1/1-18 (= 1791-1820).