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**Capitalism, The State and Things: The Port of London, *circa*
1730-1800.**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the activities of the Bowood Set, a group of merchants, intellectuals and radicals centred on Lord Shelburne, and their struggle with the late-eighteenth-century port of London. Having read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, they were awakened to his idea of markets and, more pointedly, the existence of the mercantilist institutions that were inhibiting them. Their response was to use technologies like the Docks, pensions, policeman and insurance companies to physically reorder the Thames and break the monopoly of London's trading companies on political and economic power. The Bowood Set were not always successful. However, their belief that technology and infrastructure could shift political and economic culture simultaneously opens up a series of questions about the type of 'things' underpinning both mercantilism and liberalism.

Drawing on actor network theorists like Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, the notion that the economy and state are simply networks held together by artefacts is here used to suggest that political economy is a material culture and, moreover, one that shifted in the late-eighteenth century from something resembling mercantilism towards something that increasingly recognisable as liberalism. Examining the Shelburnite Sir William Musgrave's attempt to fight corruption in the Customs in London and the role of the West India Merchants lobby in coordinating London's Quays shows clearly that the bureaucratic structures they mobilised were effective in altering the information that fiscal and commercial decisions were based on. Networks which were previously held together by close-knit cultural ties of friendship, patronage or customary agreements became increasingly contractual and monetised around the port. However, this was not always the case. Two investigations of London's micro-economies suggests that Smith's faceless markets were retarded by the cultures of consumption across London, and warehousing in the City, which were both sectors that accustomed communities to certain commercial practices that were not easily dislodged.

What Michel Callon calls 'calculative agency', or the capacity to make economic decisions, was unevenly distributed across London because of material, political or social considerations, and the market was not understood by contemporaries as detached from them. As a result, the political economy advocated by Adam Smith progressed slowly across different social groups, geographies and networks. Examining how his discourse progressed in tandem with bureaucratic and material 'things' shows markets to have been multifaceted and socially embedded but not incapable of being redirected. Conversely, it shows that technologies designed to break open mercantilist monopolies, like the Docks, could become entangled in the social and political institutions they were designed to overpower. Examining the Dock campaign through the lense of material and bureaucratic culture in the City, this dissertation concludes that Vaughan and his associates surely did have some impact on shifting mercantilist commercial practices, though their's was far from an outright victory.

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Abbreviations

- **APS**, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
- **Beinecke**, Beinecke Library, Yale
- **BL, Add. Mss**, British Library, Additional Manuscripts
- **CUST**, Customs, National Records Office
- **GH**, Guildhall Library
- **ICS**, Institute of Commonwealth Studies
- **IOR**, India Office Records, British Library
- **L&M**, *Lascelles and Maxwell Letter Books*, S.D. Smith ed., (Wakefield: Microform Academic Publishers, 2003).
- **LMA**, London Metropolitan Archive
- **MHS**, Massachusetts Historical Society
- **ML**, Museum of London
- **MLD**, Museum of London Docklands
- **NRO**, Northamptonshire Records Office
- **PP**, Parliamentary Papers (Online)
- **RIBA**, Royal Institute of British Architects
- **SM**, Sir John Soane Museum
- **T**, Treasury, National Records Office
- **TNA**, The National Archive, Kew
- **V&A**, Victoria and Albert Museum
- **WIDCo**, West India Dock Company Minutes, Museum of London Docklands
- **WIM**, West India Merchants Committee Minutes, Microfilm, Institute of Commonwealth Studies
- **WIPM**, West India Planters and Merchants Committee, Microfilm, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

Introduction: Capitalism, the State and Things in the Port of London, 1730-1800

Between 1730 and 1800 City businessmen mobilised forces—from philosophy to fire-engines and from politicians to pensioners—to reorder the Thames-side economy. By looking at the spaces connected by bureaucracies in the port of London, and the relations between them, this dissertation seeks to discover how the City reinvented not only its waterfront but its political economic outlook. My starting point is the figure of William Vaughan (1752-1850), a planter-merchant from Jamaica, who, along with pioneering the Docks that would come to dominate East London, was an acolyte of Adam Smith. Vaughan's unflinching faith in the enlightened economy Smith outlined in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), was rare even among the well-educated merchants of London. He firmly believed that utilities like Docks, which promoted access to markets through impersonal management strategies, remunerated employees through wages rather than fees or perquisites and facilitated commercial interaction regardless of national interests would spell the death-knell for the monopolies retarding economic development. The squabbling that the Docks provoked in the City suggests that his utilitarian economics were by no means the norm. Yet despite being conceived of to challenge the chartered companies in London, Vaughan's Dock was pirated by several mercantilist interest groups, who had formerly advocated economic protectionism.

In accounting for the about face in the position of the chartered companies and lobbies, this dissertation draws on actor network theory to suggest the Docks were active agents in social, political and economic transformation whose effects had not been predetermined by economic discourses of the day or subsequent historical treatments of mercantilism. The Docks were co-producers of a political economy that joined the Thames to the market in new ways, impacting not only on Quayside labour but the mercantile City and politicians in Westminster by restructuring the information economic decisions were based on. These architectural and bureaucratic structures will be set against other City entities like the insurance industry, chartered companies, Customs, mercantilist lobbies and warehousing businesses to show that they formed part of a web of alliances in the City aimed at making commerce more easily predictable. Each network gathered groups together and created patterns of sociability that altered how the market was understood and how it functioned. Further, this dissertation argues that this was no different for politicians and the shift from mercantilism to liberalism was driven by material circumstances that facilitated or prohibited certain exchanges –

practicalities that must be considered alongside any conceptual victory for Smith's reasoning.



Figure 1.1: Anon., 'A Bird's Eye View of London from the Bridge', c. 1780. The 'Legal Quays' ran from the Bridge to the Tower of London on the north (right-hand) bank. Source: British Museum.



Figure 1.2: William Daniell, 'An Elevated View of the West India Docks', 1802: Source: British Museum.

Section 1: The Meanings of Political Economy

The central proposition this dissertation develops is simply that political economy is made and that this is a collaborative effort. Part of this process involves being conversant with ideas, concepts or jargon, which is why much of this introduction

revolves around a discussion of Adam Smith. His *Wealth of Nations* had lots to say about eighteenth-century political economy, most of it critical, which left a clear mark on William Vaughan who understood the London Dock project as antithetical to the 'mercantile system' and beneficial to commerce. However, making political economy also involves being able to use more concrete tools like the stationary, money and architecture that allowed Vaughan replace City's old Legal Quays, illustrated in Figure 1.1, with the walled wet Docks at the Isle of Dogs shown in Figure 1.2. My contention is that both the ideas and the infrastructure built one another and, before getting bogged down in a more technical description of either the Docks or *Wealth of Nations*, it is useful to develop this argument a little more. Smith's thought has often been framed by historians within various competences or skill sets and, whilst this dissertation builds on that tradition by using actor network theory, it will spell out exactly how by recapitulating some important previous examples of this technique.

Modern histories of economic thought have continually awarded Smith an exalted position in the pantheon of economic theorists, although he was not immediately recognised as such in the eighteenth century. Some of the most insightful readings of Smith have therefore built on the more sophisticated Cambridge School method, pioneered by Quentin Skinner, J.G.A Pocock and Richard Tucker that tries to contextualise ideas within the prevalent languages of the day. No longer a history of strictly economic ideas marching towards maturity, works like Smith's are seen as contributing to the more nebulous tropes that structure modern political action, like republicanism or liberalism. This approach has opened up the political, philosophical and sociological undergirding of Smith's thought by putting him in conversation with his contemporaries- Edmund Burke, Josiah Tucker, Thomas Paine, etc. - and drawing attention to their shared values, rhetorical constructs or persistent debates.¹ The *Wealth of Nations* becomes, then, a multifaceted text amongst a constellation of others, generating meaning as ideas and literary tropes are refracted, contested and recapitulated by other well-read ideologues.

The emphasis on printed texts, manuscripts and correspondence has been useful in historicising Smith, but limiting in many regards. The analysis of these

¹ I. Hont & M. Ignatieff eds., *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn To Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Frederick Rosen, *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill* (London: Routledge, 2003).

discourses means there is relatively little need to explain the social factors which might be at play in constructing a text. Indeed, they are largely invisible, bar studious examinations of authors' libraries and reconstructing their reading habits.² Vivienne Brown has taken this indifference to non-literary contexts to posit a post-structuralist conclusion, arguing that there is nothing outside the text, that "Smith" is a critical construct and she provides near hermeneutically sealed readings of his canonical works.³

It should be said that excising the *Wealth of Nations* from its social and historical context is not hard. Smith burnt his surviving manuscripts and letters before he died, as did his close friend David Hume, and though one volume of his correspondence has been uncovered in other collections, alongside some manuscripts and notes made by his students on his Lecture series on Jurisprudence, the Glasgow Edition (1976-83) of his works amount to just a handful of volumes. This has proved hard work for his biographers. R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner's positively skeletal *Adam Smith* (1982) was superseded by Ian Ross' *The Life of Adam Smith* (1995), which was described by one critic as indulging in 'heroic speculation' in dealing with the *philosophe's* experiences.⁴ Evidently not perturbed, Ross, an editor of the Glasgow Edition, expanded and revised the *Life* in 2010, now weighing in at four hundred densely typed pages, easily three times that of the 1982 attempt. Where Campbell and Skinner rarely ventured far beyond the material left by Smith or his contemporaries, Ross is increasingly inclined to entangle Smith in philosophical issues. At one stage, for instance, he considers where on the moral spectrum outlined in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith's own recommendation that Hume's papers be burnt should fit.⁵ Other more pointed analyses have looked at Smith's institutional presence as a lecturer at Glasgow and Customs Commissioner at Edinburgh, also addressing if he put his thought into action.⁶ Brown's warning

² H. Mizuta ed., *Adam Smith's Library, A Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

³ Vivienne Brown, *Adam Smith's Discourse: Canonicity, Commerce and Conscience* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-10.

⁴ R.H. Campbell & A.S. Skinner, *Adam Smith* (Croom Smith: London & Canberra, 1982); I.S. Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Keith Tribe, 'Adam Smith: Critical Theorist?', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 37, 20 (1999), p. 614.

⁵ I.S. Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* (2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 358-60.

⁶ G.M. Anderson, W.F. Shugart & R.D. Tollison, 'Adam Smith in the Customs House', *Journal of Political Economy*, 93, 4 (1985), pp. 740-59; William Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (Glasgow: Jackson & Co., 1937).

that scholars are falsely comparing a real “author”, constructed on slight material, with an infinitely reinterpretable textual corpus cannot be denied.

One way around this has been to suggest that a text is a consciously and carefully crafted adjunct to the author’s identity. ‘Smith’s distinct achievement’ in the *Wealth of Nations*, writes Till Duppe in a recent critique of economics as ‘science’:

was to solve the rhetorical dilemma of doing two things at once: abstracting from particular political interests by means of relying on a theoretical perception of the economy- represented by the system that coordinated the division of labour- and addressing political interest. He managed to argue in a disinterested tone while nonetheless coming down in favour of particular interests...the *Wealth of Nations* is policy orientated but not a pamphlet! He neither had to defend himself against the suspicion of being guided by self-interest (like all merchants), nor did he fall back into the clergy’s moral lament. Beyond the clergy and merchants, there was the scholar.⁷

Duppe suggests here that Smith’s ‘rhetoric’ overcame the problem that merchants were not trusted and draws on Simon Shapin and Steve Schaffer’s elaboration of the gentlemanly markers that underpinned truth in the seventeenth century. Unseen but continually acting markets certainly have parallels with Shapin and Schaffer’s interpretation of the debates between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle over the Royal Society’s air pump.⁸ For Shapin and Schaffer, Boyle and Hobbes’ disagreement was not about the objective properties of air but epistemic, involving a contest about which socio-political arrangements had access to truth in the midst of seventeenth-century constitutional upheaval. Boyle’s victory for empiricism was predicated on a number of battles in the Royal Society and in print where his science was invested with trustworthy qualities by mobilising existing social hierarchies, based on Boyle’s own gentlemanly status, through rhetoric, images and even the genre of the publications he penned. These provided contexts for ‘the great civility [of] granting the conditions in which others can colonise our minds and expecting the conditions which allow us to colonise theirs’.⁹ Appearing apolitical, impartial and theoretically inclined was a social posture. Continuing Duppe’s tack, it is clear that, in Edinburgh, Smith did play an active and immediate role in promoting

⁷ Till Duppe, *The Making of the Economic: A Phenomenology of Economic Science* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), pp.120-1.

⁸ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *The Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (2nd Ed., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁹ Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 36.

his ideas to specific social groups. Smith's friends were hungry for his treatise on political economy in 1776, for which they had been suitably primed through private communications.¹⁰ On reading *The Wealth of Nations*, this coterie of *philosophes*, churchmen, and academics echoed William Robertson's praise: 'You have formed into a regular and consistent system one of the most intricate and important parts of political science, and if the English be capable of extending their ideas beyond the narrow and illiberal arrangements introduced by the mercantile supporters of Revolution principles, and countenanced by Mr. Locke, and some of their favourite writers, I think your book will occasion a total change in several important articles both in police and finance.'¹¹

A related avenue has been to explore how Smith's works have been read and their meaning structured by educational institutions. The rise of economics as a discipline in the late-eighteenth century not only provides the resources to see how the *Wealth of Nations* was interpreted but how those ideas were sustained and managed over time. Here the lectures of Dugald Stewart at Glasgow University, Thomas Malthus' installation as chair of political economy at East India College, J.R. McCulloch's elevation to similar post at University College, and the Political Economy Club in London, built around Malthus, McCulloch and David Ricardo have all been cited as steps towards the diffusion and canonisation of Smithian liberalism.¹² The raft of articles, text-books and treatises these men penned after 1815, McCulloch's heavily edited collections of mercantilist tracts, all expunged of theoretical heresies, and their advice to government surrounding the 'machinery question' of the 1830s and '40s further established the "school" of classical economics.¹³ Liberalism was constructed by texts, teachers and policy-makers.

The weakness of studying Smith's ideas through the *Wealth of Nations*' ability to produce discourse or create a canon is that historians find it hard to look

¹⁰ Adam Smith, *Correspondence of Adam Smith*, eds. E.C. Mossner & I.R. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. John Glassford to Smith 5 Nov. 1765, p. 104; Hume to Smith 8 Feb 1776 p. 185; 'Early draft of the wealth of Nations', Scott, *Smith as Student*, pp. 317-59.

¹¹ Smith, *Correspondence*, Robertson to Smith, 8 Apr. 1776, p. 192; see also Hume to Smith, 1 Apr. 1776; Blair to Smith, 3 Apr. 1776; Ferguson to Smith, 18 Apr. 1776.

¹² Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 pp, 214-94; I.S. Ross ed., *On the Wealth of Nations: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1998).

¹³ Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy, 1815-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 34-40.

beyond a relatively narrow elite or, rather, an elite constituted by literary criteria. Indeed, we know in some detail about what academics, politicians, a smattering of Reverends and, latterly, some economists wrote and how their discourses or speech acts changed the institutions around them. What historians know far less about is whether any of them or the pin-makers, butchers, brewers and merchants who populated Smith's book acted on it in the economic sphere he so painstakingly outlined. This is especially intriguing in light of a series of books considering the relationship between the enlightenment and the economy. Joel Mokyr opens his *Enlightened Economy* with the line 'economic change in all periods depends, more than most economists believe, on what people believe.'¹⁴ Industrial take-off stems from a proliferation of useful knowledge in his account. A slightly different thesis has been put forwards by Jan de Vries and Maxine Berg, who both put considerable weight on the notion that the enlightened discourse of the philosophes played a major role in sparking a shift in consumption patterns Britain in their recent works.¹⁵ Connecting economic theory to economic practice is a necessary recognition that, if former was a construct, it might well be the case for the latter. As such, it seems to embrace the ideas that studies of economic discourse have taken as read for some time, chiefly that reality is altered by language, not only by rational ideas but on a broader terrain of political and cultural nuances. Economic rhetorics shifted, were institutionalised and, moreover, became associated with commodities and practices that spread them socially and geographically further afield than a study of Ricardo's output would register. Mokyr's focus on the workshop and factory, de Vries' on the household and Berg's on consumer culture pay testament the diversity of the economic spheres involved. `

The resolution of the economy and the enlightenment is by no means perfect in these economic histories, which tend to work with a relatively small palette of canonical economic ideas to explain the culture behind British industrialisation and sustained economic growth. Extending the enlightenment to manufacturers and consumers is in many ways a reductive stance that flattens the diverse and challenging literary output catalogued by the Cambridge School and ignores most overseas variants, but opens up the possibility that economic ideas were diffused by

¹⁴ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1850* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 1.

¹⁵ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 40-70; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 21-45

practice and fixed in peoples' minds by familiarity with certain processes or goods. Much like Foucault's description of the panopticon, mental structures were a function of material circumstances as much as belief, albeit spread through the vast territory of the economy as opposed to concentrated in carceral institutions like the prison, factory or school.¹⁶ A Smithian only needs to be surrounded by things that make him or her act like one, though these are very difficult to put in place. As Deborah Valenze has shown through a sociology of early modern money, specie had a politics and discursive tropes directed at government but also local formulations, especially when it was compared to other modes of exchange like barter, gifting or credit.¹⁷ The size, shape, materiality, mobility and market for money was, then, important in establishing its significance in specific places as opposed to powerful places necessarily establishing its meaning.

Clearly Smith's political economy had many associates that have made it historically meaningful, whether they were the other texts and debates that the *Wealth of Nations* was interpreted alongside of, his friends in Edinburgh, his students and subsequent advocates, the advancing material and economic culture of the day, architecture, or post-structuralist criticism, as for Brown. These, in turn, have allowed him and his thought to become part of the tapestry of institutionalisation, liberalisation, industrialisation, the scientific pretensions economics and other stories, which signify modernity. The skills or competences that historians have imbued Smith's readers with are cardinal in determining what narratives he becomes ensconced in, and this dissertation builds on the idea that his market is and has been constructed by drawing closer attention to those skills and the artefacts that supported them using actor network theory. This, in turn, can help us think about liberalism and mercantilism.

Michel Callon argues that the market is made of 'calculating agencies' that make decisions on the basis of the information at hand, calculating tools and concepts accumulated through education or training. In order to calculate, 'a number of entities are moved, arranged and ordered in a single space' like an invoice, trading screen or shopping trolley. Next, the entities are 'associated with one another, subject to manipulations and transformations', such as classification, juxtaposition, applying some mathematical formula or ranking. Finally, a result is

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1979), pp. 198-222.

¹⁷ Deborah Valenze, *The Social Life of Money in the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

extracted and a new entity produced, which corresponds to the previous processes but can 'leave the calculative space and circulate elsewhere' like the decision to ship goods or transfer stock.¹⁸ Markets are designed both in theory and through artefacts that help us count, remember and distinguish between the things at hand.

Calculative agencies appear everywhere but are unevenly distributed throughout the economy due to the scarcity of goods, inequalities in knowledge about what goods are on offer, how to manipulate them, and the agent's ability to formalise links between them.¹⁹ The focus is on the 'things' or technologies that that order, make possible and bound economic decisions. Developing Callon's theory, Alex Preda suggests these technologies or combinations of technologies create the 'temporal structures, visualisation modes, representational and interpretive languages, cognitive tools and categories, and group boundaries' of a market.²⁰ In many respects they are similar to the 'machines' Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have evoked. These machines are a set of interrelated components that are marshaled technically but also form 'social, semiological and axiological avatars'.²¹ Machines create meaning on a subjective and social level because people invest in them financially, intellectually and emotionally, not unlike the concept of economic interest in the eighteenth century. Several machines might interact to create an 'assemblage', 'easily matched with the each type of society - not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating and using them'.²² This is not to suggest economic theory like Smith's is of secondary importance to concrete 'things', as they are both components of the machine and theory may radically alter the calculative procedures people adopt. However, theory should be considered within a skein of economic practices formed by channels of information, learned or embodied skills, and material and institutional resources. In combining the real and theoretical aspects of the economy Callon invites us to explore three connected processes: the material and conceptual

¹⁸ M. Callon and F. Muniesa, 'Economic Market as Calculative Collective Devices', *Ecole des mines*, pp. 5-6 [orig., "Les marchés économiques comme dispositifs collectifs de calcul", *Réseaux*, 21 (2004), pp. 189-233].

¹⁹ Callon and Muniesa, 'Calculative', p. 18.

²⁰ Alex Preda, 'Socio-Technical Agency in Financial Markets: The Case of the Stock Ticker', *Social Studies of Science*, 36, 5 (2006), p. 754.

²¹ Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, trans. Paul Bain and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 35.

²² Giles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 1 (1992), p. 6.

‘algorithms’ that make up the market and connect groups together, how those construct differentials of power within markets, and how economic theory becomes caught up within economic practice.

Certainly, this framework forms a crucial bridge for transferring the insights surrounding the locally constructed yet globally reproducible aspects of scientific culture, already well assimilated by eighteenth-century scholars following Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s *The Leviathan and the Air Pump*, to economics, the City and Vaughan’s Dock project. Vaughan was a reader of Smith and his Docks might also be seen as an attempt to institute Smith’s political economy and abstract markets in London to make Londoners think differently about trade. The key question driving this dissertation is, then, could the things that Vaughan brought into London change the market?

The Docks have a scattered literature, which encompasses the political campaign that precipitated their establishment between 1793 and 1799, their financing by City merchants, architecture and subsequent impact on labour.²³ Typically they have been seen in terms of shipping, and the Docks have been read as a response to the gluts that afflicted the Thames in the 1790s and the criminals that gravitated towards vessels stranded in the river. Docks were a rational solution, especially for merchants invested in overseas trade, because they increased the flow of traffic into London and controlled the flow of goods through it. Peter Linebaugh has presented an influential counter-thesis, claiming that the Docks effected the subordination of peripatetic Thames-side coopers and stevedores to the ideological dictates of the dominant utilitarian political economists, Vaughan and his friend Jeremy Bentham, who favoured factory-style production.²⁴ In this narrative, the Docks become an expression of class interest where political and social capital was aggressively deployed to create docile labour. Following Callon, the suggestion made here is that both the markets Smith proposed and the Docks should be considered together, but no single rationality was in play.

²³ Nick Draper, ‘The City of London and Slavery: Evidence From the First Dock Companies, 1795-1800’, *Economic History Review*, New Series 61, 2 (2008), pp. 433-467; Anthony R. Henderson and Sarah Palmer, ‘The Early Nineteenth-Century Port of London: Management and Labour in Three Dock Companies’, *Research in Maritime History*, 6 (1994), pp. 31-50; W.M. Stern, ‘The First London Dock Boom and the Growth of the West India Dock’, *Economica*, 19, 73 (1952), pp. 59-77; Gareth Steadman Jones, *Outcast London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) pp. 99-127.

²⁴ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed. London & New York: Verso, 2003), chapter 10.

Certainly, Vaughan's docks split opinions, causing huge debate in the City of London about their merits compared to the older Legal Quays and resulting in two major Parliamentary Inquiries in 1796 and 1799. Moreover, Vaughan's ideas were adopted by mercantilist institutions of some pedigree, not least the East India Dock Company and West India Docks run by the West India lobby. The resulting Docks were an unlikely hybrid of liberal intentions, utilitarian technologies and mercantilist management, and it is this mongrel quality that makes them excellent vehicles to probe where and how Smith's thought was established within existing markets and the state through things.

Focusing on the activities of William Vaughan and his colleagues in the port of London, we get a glimpse of how a group of politicians, merchants and *philosophes* used Smith's ideas to interpret the world around them, advance themselves and put Smith's ideas into action before they became canonical. It did not always work. What I want to suggest using the Docks as an example is that constructing a Smithian world relied on a whole series of alliances that were just as capable of obscuring and neglecting his influence as triumphantly recognising him. As we will see later in this introduction, Smith's name did not open doors in London, both because he was fairly rude about the City's merchants companies, and his abstract markets were speculations. Tools designed to alter Londoners' idea of the economy, like books, and their economic choices, like the Docks, were increasingly important to the Bowood Set's endeavour precisely because they could try to shift their opponents' calculative agendas using them. As such, the bigger claim that I want to make is not that the liberalism of the Docks was constructed in Smith's image by his acolytes like Vaughan, but that it significantly changed because of hostility from the commercial community and politicians.

Viewing Smith's political economy not as simply linked or associated with the Docks, but as contested, altered and refined through the practices, relationships and institutions the Docks housed gives this dissertation the chance to step into the controversy surrounding mercantilism. This has a geographical and methodological aspect. As Michael Ball and David Sunderland have put it, analysis of the nineteenth-century capital has tended to revolve around the conceit that, 'Despite all its apparent modernity, the metropolis was a unique throwback to a bygone mercantilist age: with its scale generated by the conspicuous consumption of the wealthy, the world-wide tentacles of the City and Empire, and a terrible exploitation

of a mass of the population'.²⁵ When compared to other industrial towns, London becomes a 'unique jewel encrusted terror' and the site of P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins' gentlemanly capitalists, who used the Bank and Westminster to deny power to the industrial bourgeoisie. More recently it has been contended that provincial manufacturing interests toppled the mercantilist hegemony, or found room in the corridors of power, channelling their free-trading ideas and specific interests into policy.²⁶ What the Docks campaign illustrates is that the City was necessarily not a fortress that needed to be stormed because men like Vaughan were already trying to dynamite the foundations. As such, the next section considers how the Docks can help think through the relationships between groups in the metropolis, London and the provinces, and the capital and empire.

The idea that a merchant like Vaughan might hold strong political convictions based solely on a reading Adam Smith also sits uncomfortably with two methodologically different ways of describing of merchant practice. Students of political economy tend to consider mercantilism a necessary evil to describe a culture fixated on the potential of commerce but far from useful in explaining the economy: 'there is no such thing as mercantilism, but nonetheless this is a book about it' write the editors of a recent collection of essays.²⁷ Historians of merchant culture have also largely dispensed with the term, Perry Gauci pointedly describing a 'mercantile' politics emanating out from the City's institutions rather than some notion of the balance of trade. Yet Vaughan and his circle were convinced that mercantilism or the 'mercantile system', as Smith described it, was choking both trade in London and British culture more generally. His attempt to use infrastructure like the Docks to overcome mercantilism presents the opportunity to consider the problem afresh using Callon's notion of calculative agency, by suggesting that mercantilism was, at least, a distinct way of processing commercial information that was technologically and socially embedded in London. Moreover, Vaughan did manage to redesign some aspects of this culture, materially if not intellectually. This

²⁵ Michael Ball and David Sunderland, *An Economic History of London, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 4

²⁶ Anthony Webster, 'Strategies and Limits of Gentlemanly Capitalism', *Economic History Review*, 59, 4 (2006), pp. 743-63; Huw Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp 16-21; Yukihiisa Kumagi, *Breaking into the Monopoly: Provincial merchants and Manufacturers' Campaigns for Access to the Asian Markets, 1790-1833* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013).

²⁷ Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, 'Introduction', idem. eds., *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p 6.

is a complex argument and the second half of this introduction explains Smith's ideas, Vaughan's actions and the historical arguments over them in more detail.

Section 2: London and the Docks

The Legal Quays and subsequently the Docks were sites that could be found on maps but defining them solely as places does little to reveal their importance in generating and structuring economic information or its varied conduits. Rather, here they are seen as nodes connected to a host of overlapping and sometimes jarring economic zones. London was a juggernaut of an economic entity in the eighteenth century, but the expansion of provincial towns was causing London merchants to question their role in the economy and shaped the Docks campaign. Strengthening and expanding London's commercial reach through the Docks project offered a palliative that played to the capital's mercantile strengths. This section seeks to show how the Docks fit into a long history of merchant dominance in the City and East London centered on shipping, large City companies and financial services.

The eighteenth-century port of London consisted of two distinct zones, both nominally under the auspices of the Customs Commission, established in 1670. At the centre were the Legal ('Lawful') Quays that ran from London Bridge to the Tower on the north bank of the Thames, with the Customs House situated in the middle. Colonial and highly taxed commodities, including tea, coffee, wine, East India goods, sugar and tobacco had to be landed on this 600-yard reach in the Eastern City. On both banks stretching from Battersea in the west to Blackwall in the east were 'sufferance wharfs', where merchants were allowed to land and load any other products on application to the Commission, mostly bulky staples like Baltic fir, iron, and domestically produced goods. Spatially there was a well-established division between long-distance trade and high-value goods landed in the City, and shorter trading networks operating outside. On the Legal Quays, the nineteen abutting wharfs had been rebuilt after the Fire, their dimensions defined and monopoly status enshrined in statute.²⁸ By 1695, however, their managers had formed a 'combination' modeled explicitly on a joint stock company in order to co-ordinate their engrossing of the lightermen's and porters' contracts, causing periodic headaches for merchants when goods were delayed by gluts of goods or

²⁸ 20 Car. II, 22 Car. II cap. 17. Lightermen carried goods on small craft, lighters, on the Thames, watermen carried people.

coordinated action by the wharfingers.²⁹ City merchants had quickly subscribed £500,000 to Vaughan's dock shares in 1796, and when this venture splintered in the face of interest group politics they would go on to finance the subsequent initiatives of the West India (1802), London (1805), East India (1807), Surrey (1808) and St Katherine's (1828) Dock Companies that added some 100 acres of enclosed basins to the Pool of London and employed more than 5,000 labourers daily by 1830.³⁰

The merchants' response was understandable as London's share of British overseas imports had declined from 75% in 1700 to around 66% by 1800, although it clearly remained the largest port in the country in absolute terms. In fact, it was one of only seven or eight ports to take 10,000+ tons of foreign shipping in the 1770s that collectively accounted for around 80% of all foreign tonnage. The remaining 20% was taken by 67 minor ports.³¹ Despite acquiring a small but growing fraction of overseas imports, table 1.1 shows that major port cities in the north were expanding rapidly, as was Bristol, though less quickly. Previously, medium-sized towns in the south and east grew far slower as, primarily expansion occurred in the few ports where newly industrialised hinterlands needed a vent for exportable goods. Industrialisation was dependent on imported raw materials such as cotton and silk, Baltic iron and fir, and oils, chemicals and dyestuffs for the cloth industry, all of which the Customs registered in growing quantities. Generally, the sale of woolen broadcloths to Europe in return for manufactured goods and wines was being superseded by the growth in exports of manufactured goods to colonial markets in return for raw materials and foodstuffs.³² Hence Exeter and Yarmouth remained fairly small whereas Liverpool and Bristol grew on the back of a thriving trade around the Atlantic, dealing in Caribbean sugar, African slaves and American tobacco, and exporting finished goods. Tropical commodities contributed to a growing re-export trade to Europe made up of sugar, rice, coffee, and tea, though this also tended to by-pass older staple towns.

²⁹ Henry Roseveare, "'The Damned Combination': The Port of London and the Wharfingers Cartel of 1695", *London Journal*, 21, 2 (1996), pp. 97-111.

³⁰ See note 6.

³¹ Gordon Jackson, 'The Ports', Derek H. Aldcroft and Michael J. Freeman eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 188-9.

³² Ralph Davis, 'English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 15, 2 (1962), pp. 285-303; P.K. O'Brien and S.L. Engerman, 'Exports and the Growth of the British Economy from the Glorious Revolution to the Peace of Amiens', Barbara Solow ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 177-209.

Table 1.1, Population of port towns, '000s

	1700	1750	1800
London	575	675	865
Bristol	25	45	65
Newcastle/Sunderland	19	39	52
Exeter	14	16	17
Ipswich	8	12	11
King's Lynn	5	9	10
Yarmouth	10	10	15
Hull	6	6	28
Liverpool	6	22	78
London as percentage of these	86.1	80.9	75.9

Source: David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism*, p. 12, Table 1.2

The relocation of the economy certainly challenged London's trading hegemony but did not entirely eclipse it, mainly because the port of London was incredibly diverse by comparison with the 'outports' that took the rest of Britain's shipping. Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow specialised, sending the majority of their shipping into the Atlantic. South-coast ports favoured trade with France and Spain. Hull looked towards the Baltic, Netherlands and Germany for fir, iron and linen. By contrast, as David French has shown, London sent fleets out to America, the West Indies, Ireland, Mediterranean and northern Europe.³³ Additionally it held a monopoly over commodities imported by the East India Company, especially the growing volume of tea Britons were drinking over the course of the century. London shipping was less specialised than other port towns: 'This concentration of exotic goods from India and the Far East, augmented by others from the West Indies, the

³³ Philip J. French, "'Crowded with Traders and a Great Commerce": London's Domination of Overseas Trade, 1700-1775', *London Journal*, 17, 1 (1992), pp. 27-35.

Levant and Africa, was the basis of a great national emporium which secured the lion's share of both foreign and coastal trade.³⁴

In short, the Quays connected global commerce to the most vibrant economy in Britain. Long ago, E.A. Wrigley recognised that London dwarfed provincial and European cities, except Paris, making it the forcing house of pre-industrial England.³⁵ London's growth from 400,000 to 675,000 souls between 1650 and 1750, a relatively slight growth rate compared with other periods, would have required 8,000 immigrants a year to sustain, given the high-mortality rates. Not only did it house 11% of the population at any one time but over one sixth of all Englishmen and -women would have lived there at some point by 1750.³⁶ It stood at the cutting edge of consumer culture, boasting more shops, theatres, coffee houses, pleasure gardens, printing presses, and greater rates of literacy than any other town.³⁷ Not just the cultural arbiter, London was a motor for economic change integrating the agricultural economy, stimulating shipping and transport to feed and heat it, and securing the position of merchants in the political and economic sphere.

In absolute terms, London remained the largest conurbation in England with its population rising to 865,000 in 1800. However, after 1750 it had competitors in the shape of manufacturing towns like Birmingham and Manchester, where urbanisation outpaced national population growth, and spa towns which were making Britain more culturally polycentric.³⁸ Since the mid-seventeenth century, trade, and financial, political and legal services had made London exceptionally important to Britain. As shown in table 1.2, while Londoners made up 40% of the banking community nationally, about 25% of all government employees and other professions and 20% of the nation's 'dealers' in 1851, these occupations combined represented just 20% of the metropolitan population.³⁹ Leonard Schwartz has calculated that while London was made unique by its large trading and services

³⁴ Jackson, 'Ports', p. 192.

³⁵ E.A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy', 1650-1750, *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), p. 44.

³⁶ Wrigley, 'Simple', pp. 46-49.

³⁷ Miles Ogborn, *Space of Modernity: London's Geographies 1680-1780* (London & New York: Guilford Press, 1998); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³⁸ Penny Corfield, *Impact of English Towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 10-15; Table IV, p. 25.

³⁹ L.D. Schwartz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation, 1700-1850* pp. 11-12.

component, this did not preclude it *still* housing England's largest manufacturing population in 1851. However, showing only a limited capacity to adopt the factory form outside of the brewing and shipping industries to the south and east, London remained defined by the image of the merchant into the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

Table 1.2, Occupational make-up of London, 1851

	Londoners as a percentage of the sector nationally	As a percentage of London's population
Banking/insurance	42	1.6
Government	25	1.2
Other professional services	27	6.15
Dealing	22	11.9
Manufacture	13	33.5

Source: L.D. Schwartz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation, 1700-1850*, pp. 11-12.

Between the metropolis and the world of goods lay the merchants, a location which gave them a great amount of leverage when it came to maintaining the City's exulted position. On 'free' Atlantic routes small firms were the primary commercial unit and merchant houses tended to trade with specific geographical zones in certain commodities. David Hancock's superb elaboration of London countinghouses shows they were designed to accumulate data and create hierarchies from it.⁴¹ Architectural barriers dictated the circulation of documents and skills, where clerks were housed in different rooms from partners, but both had access to sophisticated bureaus that ordered correspondence, bills, receipts and

⁴⁰ A.L. Beier, 'Engine of Manufacture: the Trades of London', A.L. Beier and Roger Finlay eds., *London, 1500-1700: The Making of the Metropolis* (London and New York: Longman, 1986), p. 151.

⁴¹ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 99-104.

other documents, while on-site libraries concentrated mercantile knowledge.⁴² This architectural and material rigour was reflected, too, in professional training. Countinghouse juniors were tutored to the point of rote-learnt conservatism on the subject of correspondence, their interaction with customs officials, creditors and superiors.⁴³ Certainly this broke some aspiring merchants, and Beeston Long despaired when his brother 'Charles, whose lively spirit not brooking the sordid manners of a Dutch Comptinghouse, impelled him to take [the] very rash and impudent step' of sailing back to London.⁴⁴ Staff were expected to be literate and highly numerate, with Italian-style book-keeping another prime example of a technology that further grounded a merchant's credibility in a bureaucratic web of books and procedures.⁴⁵ Simple addition was not enough. Jacob Price has noted that the inability to grasp compound interest resulted in the dissolution of the great Perry tobacco house in London. And, as Malachy Postlethwayt's monumental *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (London, 1753) makes plain, paying taxes, brokering insurance, investing in funds and calculating interest rates occupied merchants as much as marketing goods. Print certainly played a role in equipping merchants with skills, as is suggested in Natasha Glaisyer's exploration of the

⁴² We know fairly little about these libraries, although a catalogue of the Vaughan family library survives in the American Philosophical Library, Philadelphia, Benjamin Vaughan Papers II. It was perhaps more extensive than most because of the political activities of the family, and the catalogue does not distinguish between the firm library and their private collection. It was arranged around sub-headings which it included Moral Philosophy, Education (Priestley, Hume, Rousseau), 'General Laws and Government' (Puffendorf, Stewarts' *Political Economy*, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Locke, Milton, Harrington, Price, Priestley, Hobbes, Petty's *Political Arithmetic*), Ancient and Modern History, Travel and Voyages, Belles Lettres, Legal and Reference works on Common Law, Taxation, 'Trade and Commerce', a collection of religious and political tracts, over 250 maps, newspapers, and a number of dictionaries, including Postlethwaite's *Dictionary of Commerce* and Chambers' *Encyclopedia*.

⁴³ Sarah S.M. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters In the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 111-145; Price, 'Directions for the Conduct of a Merchant's Counting House, 1766', *Essays*, pp. 159-60.

⁴⁴ Robert Howard ed., *Records and Letters of the Family of the Longs of Longville, Jamaica, and Hampton Lodge, Surrey*, 2 Vols. (London: Simpkin & Co., 1925), i, pp. 96-7.

⁴⁵ Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 29-66; Phyllis Whitman Hunter, 'Containing the Marvellous: Instructions to Buyers and Sellers', Glaisyer and Pennell eds., *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 178-180; Nathasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 133-43.

didactic literature directed at merchants, and other forms of commercial data that gave firms a common stock of information and gestures.⁴⁶

Specialist skills served to localise flows of national and global news, goods and money. What Tom Devine observes of Glasgow tobacco merchants seems to hold true of their counterparts in London, Bristol and Hull:

In the eighteenth century, transatlantic trade was not a sector in which the arriviste adventurer whose only assets were cool nerves and business skill could easily or quickly prosper. Tobacco commerce, like most other area of colonial trade was dependent on personal relationships developed over several years... often strengthened by marriage or kinship ties...⁴⁷

Trust was absolutely central, and merchants relied on a great deal of interbreeding in order to shore-up their capital.⁴⁸ Albeit with some variations, Londoners, Bristolians and Glaswegians were offering credit to colonial planters, with goods being sent to the metropolis in return for manufactured articles and provisions.⁴⁹ The outlay for such long-term ventures was high, meaning that a few firms tended to dominate the trades within each port, further shutting the door to under-capitalised entrants wishing to enter the sector.⁵⁰ Sheryllynne Haggerty's recent assessment of merchant culture uses Liverpool's trade with America, the West Indies and Africa to assess the role of risk, trust, reputation and obligation amongst the trading networks moving between them. Broadly, she argues that worries about

⁴⁶ Glaisyer, *Culture*, pp. 100-143; and S. Pennell, 'Introduction', Glaisyer and Pennell eds., *Didactic Literature*, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁷ Tom Devine, *Tobacco Lords. A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities, c. 1740-90* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1975), p. 13.

⁴⁸ Gordon Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull* (East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1975), p. 40; Richard Pares, *A West India Fortune* (London & New York: Longmans, 1950), esp. pp. 163-85.

⁴⁹ K.G. Davies, 'The Origins of the Commission System in the West India Trade', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 2 (1952), pp. 89-107; Devine, *Tobacco*, pp. 55-65; Pares, *Fortune*, pp. 186, 240.

⁵⁰ Nuala Zahedieh, 'Making Mercantilism Work: London Merchants and the Atlantic Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 9 (1999), pp. 146; J. Price and P. Clemens, 'A Revolution in Trade', *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (1987), pp. 1-43; Paul Duiguid, 'Networks and Knowledge: the Beginning and End of the Port Commodity Chain, 1703-1860', *The Business History Review*, 79, 3 (2005), pp. 493-526; Jackson, *Hull*, p. 39.

mercantile risk or reputation were not unique to Liverpool and that these were features of an Anglophone Atlantic merchant community.⁵¹

At the interface of private business and the state, however, London, and specifically the City, was unique. Some features of the relationship between state and commerce operated at a national level. Chambers of commerce, merchant associations and more ancient guilds in every town assembled when threatened by taxation or war, and lobbying parliament on local or national issues was commonplace. We find, for example, Bristol's Merchant Venturers co-ordinating with their counterparts in London and Liverpool to combat the renewal of the Royal Africa Company's charter and form the Anti-Abolition lobby.⁵² However, London's proximity to centres of power gave it a special edge. Not only were the courts, monarch and parliament closer to London merchants than their competitors, but major administrative departments were on hand too, including Customs and Excise Commissions, Navy Board, Admiralty, Board of Trade and Treasury. Colonial assemblies did not send their representatives to Exeter or Newcastle but to London, and increasingly worked in tandem with merchants in the City.⁵³ Perry Gauci observes that these institutions were woven into the fabric of merchant practice in the City, providing both services and information to them on a daily basis, as well as acting as lightning rods at times of turmoil.⁵⁴

Alongside the major departments of state, London was also the home of the chartered trading companies, which shaped trade beyond the 'free' Atlantic. There were two types. Joint stock companies like the East India, South Sea, Hudson Bay and Royal Africa Companies were run on behalf of shareholders. Regulated

⁵¹ Sheryllynne Haggerty, *'Merely for Money'? Business Culture in the British Atlantic, 1750-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 235-40. See also Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), intro, esp. p. 7.

⁵² Patrick McGrath, *The Merchant Venturers of Bristol: A History of the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol from its Origin to the Present Day* (Bristol: Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol, 1975), pp. 132, 136-8; James A. Rawley, 'London's Defence of the Slave Trade, 1787-1807', *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 2005), pp. 123-48.

⁵³ See A.G. Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); L.M. Penson, *Colonial Agents of the British West Indies: A Study in Colonial Administration, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of London Press, 1924).

⁵⁴ Perry Gauci, *Emporium of the World. The Merchants of London, 1660-1800* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 64-6 and Idem, *The Politics of Trade. The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 107-37.

companies such as the Levant, Russia ('Muscovy') and Eastlands had no shareholders; instead merchants purchased membership, trading on their own capital. Both types held monopolies that gave them privileged access to certain geographic zones and the commodities produced there. When new taxes fell on their goods, they readily mobilised to present cases to the Treasury or Board of Trade. The triumvirate of trade, politics and finance received a great boost with the establishment of the national debt under the auspices of the City-based Bank of England in 1694. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins have famously argued that around the Bank, Parliament and City there grew up a socially and culturally homogenous elite that simultaneously allied the gentry to the moneyed interest to run the expanding empire.⁵⁵ Prestigious City institutions gave local merchants an advantage in scaling the cultural barriers that disbarred many peripheral actors from political administration.⁵⁶ Nicholas Rogers reiterates the plight of many Londoners in noting the 'alliance of Whiggery and big business' found expression in the Chartered Companies, nullifying 'the efforts of the small merchants and traders formally to question the economic ramifications of high finance'.⁵⁷ At the level of the Common Council and Court of Aldermen, 'ministerial Whigs were the party of high finance and the more established sectors of the overseas trade closely connected to it...Their opponents were more solidly rooted in the middling trades, primarily industrialists of the riverside and the outer wards of the City. They were altogether more heterogeneous'.⁵⁸

A final, though significant, difference between London and provincial merchants lies in the City's proximity to the financial services sector. This dissertation seeks to demonstrate a discussion crucially missing from previous treatments of the subject: that City corporations furnished merchants with rationales beyond politics. Powerful City monopolies like the Bank and East India Company might have garnered the respect (and ire) of factions, but they must also be engaged with alongside far less controversial insurance companies and institutions,

⁵⁵ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-1914* (2nd Ed., Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2002), pp. 66-87.

⁵⁶ H.V. Bowen, *Elites*, pp. 16-21.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities. Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 139. For Augustan London see Gary de Krey, *A Fractured Society: The Politics of London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 121-76.

⁵⁸ Rogers, *Whigs*, pp. 144-5; Gauci, *Politics*, pp. 137-44.

such as Lloyds, which were leaders of the financial services sector throughout the century. London merchants were mainstays of their directorial boards, exerting huge influence over provincial commercial cultures that were dependent on these facilities.⁵⁹ In comparison with the worldly social networks that were cementing the Court-City axis, and the cautious calibrations of personal credit and reputation used privately by Atlantic merchants, the financial services represent a mobile expertise. The larger fire insurance companies were City businesses that looked to national markets and, although they may have had qualms about certain forms of risk, had no compunction about insuring manufacturers, retailers or aristocrats more generally. Lloyd's even underwrote foreign shipping until that was outlawed during the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁰ Within what might be caricatured as an inward-looking and clubbable City elite, these were forces working in the opposite direction. For example, actuarial expertise in the City, though varied and contradictory, served as an essential point of reference for those considering the Docks. In particular, financial institutions furnished merchants with profitable bureaucratic paradigms based on the centralisation of money and information.

The Quays also revealed the tangible differences between commercial institutions, something that was particularly apparent as the sheer number of differently constituted commercial actors actively interested in the port was unique. The monopoly companies provided their members with significant administrative support when it came to clearing goods through the port of London. Foremost, the East India Company maintained a permanent staff on Butolph wharf that transferred goods to a number of company-owned warehouses in the City. The operation was large enough to warrant the Customs and Excise employing a permanent branch to expedite their business, sharing offices near East India House. The Hudson Bay Company also maintained warehousing in the City and a 'husbandman of the waterside' to see goods off the Quays. The far-smaller Russia Company used customs statistics to police the trade, employing a full-time secretary to collate the

⁵⁹ Christopher Kingston, 'Marine Insurance in Britain and America, 1720-1844: A Comparative Institutional Analysis', *Journal of Economic History*, 67, 2 (2007), pp. 379-409; Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution: Fire Insurance in Great Britain, 1700-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 63; L.S. Pressnell, 'Public Monies and the Development of English Banking', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 5, 3 (1953), pp. 378-397.

⁶⁰ Charles Wright and G. Ernest Fayle, *A History of Lloyd's* (London: MacMilland & Co., 1928).

data and plead its members' cause to the Customs Commissioners.⁶¹ Free-traders operating outside the chartered companies rented warehousing from the wharfingers. The situation outside of London was very different and less fragmented: typically a single body administered ports dominated by merchants trafficking between relatively discrete geographies, often on behalf of the leading merchants'. Bristol's Merchant Venturers rented the quays from the city's corporation; Hull's grandees eschewed their corporation's facilities in favour of incorporated and self-administered docks; Liverpool's corporation owned its docks, while Whitehaven was developed almost exclusively by the Lowthers, Cumbria's pre-eminent economic force.⁶² Contrasting with these monocultures, London had no single "Port Authority", relying instead on a series of uneasy alliances between the Customs, wharfingers and merchant bodies, where each trade was on a different legal and economic footing,

When the campaign to reform London's docks emerged in the 1790s, other ports, chiefly Hull and Liverpool, provided architectural and managerial models for Vaughan.⁶³ Alternative managerial strategies for the port were legion and there was no standard, so it is unsurprising that London merchants before him tended not to look elsewhere when thinking about the problems on their doorstep. It is crucial not to forget that a number of strategies had grown up organically in London around the chartered companies, Customs and wharfingers, and diverse measures were in operation to regulate the Quays. Vaughan acted as a mediator, aiming to displace London's commercial structure with other models. We turn to the reasons for his dissatisfaction next.

Section 3: Adam Smith's 'Grand Principles' in London

Smith's thought was taken up by the Bowood Set in London, an intimately connected group including William Vaughan, who were largely responsible for the Docks campaign, as well as several other attempts to render it more attuned to the markets depicted in *The Wealth of Nations*. This section starts with a recapitulation

⁶¹ CLC/B/195/MS11741/007, Russia Company Minute Book, 1756-78, f. 67. See chapter 2 on the East India Company and Hudson Bay Company.

⁶² James Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1963); Jackson, 'Ports', pp. 200-203; J.V. Beckett, *Coal and Tobacco: The Lowthers and the Economic Development of West Cumberland, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 102-119.

⁶³ MLD, William Vaughan Papers, Vol. 4.

of Smith's thought, before moving on to discuss its uptake in by the Bowood Set, emphasising their commercial links in order to establish the peculiar enterprise that banded them together: to sell a critique of the City to the City. Initially they attempted to use Smith's ideas to alter British commercial policy from a position of power at Westminster and through political channels. However, resistance to Smith's conception of markets unfettered by mercantilist barriers from the established and incorporated trading elite appears to have frustrated the Bowood Set and proved Smith's value. Given the counterfactual nature of Smith's abstract markets, his uncharacteristically long, expensive, and theoretical text, the Scottish and academic seat of his supporters and disparaging treatment of the chartered companies, it is small wonder this combination found little immediate purchase in the City. Nevertheless, these initial set-backs were an important reason that the Dock plan took the form it did for Vaughan, and the concluding section describes the group's turn to projects and useful devices as means to overcome their weak position.

Smith introduced the 'mercantile system' in Book IV, Chapter 1 of *The Wealth of Nations*.⁶⁴ Here, Smith critiqued the position of Thomas Mun's *England's Treasure in Foreign Trade* (1664) as the 'fundamental maxim of political oeconomy' in Britain and internationally. This text outlined its defence of the East India Trade in the 1620s, although this remained unpublished until after the Restoration.⁶⁵ Mun's system rested on the misguided assumption that wealth consisted of gold and silver, meaning countries without a natural supply of these resources had to rely on a favourable balance of trade to secure their prosperity. It was a system that discouraged the export of bullion from the country to pay for goods, encouraging states to achieve Mun's aims by restraining imports through prohibitions and high duties and promoting exports by bounties, drawbacks, commercial treaties and colonies.⁶⁶ Smith continued by unpicking the system theoretically and showing the distortions it fostered. He argued that labour created wealth, *ergo* legislative interventions into markets not only disturbed their propensity to reach equilibrium when left at 'liberty', but proved a wasteful use of government resources. Monopolies 'divert [capital] into a direction into which it might not otherwise have

⁶⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, eds. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

⁶⁵ Smith, *Wealth*, i, p. 434.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Wealth*, i, p. 450.

gone; and it is by no means certain that this artificial direction is likely to be more advantageous to society than that into which it would have gone of its own accord.⁶⁷ The accretion of legislation, treaties, monopolies and imperial dominions since the 1660s had egregiously channeled wealth towards ‘merchant and manufacturers [,] the people who derive greatest advantage from monopoly’. Far from promoting the riches of the ‘people and the sovereign’, merchants had ‘remonstrated’ and ‘represented’ to politicians ‘sophistical’, ‘ridiculous’ and ‘absurd’ arguments to produce ‘sanguinary’ restrictions.⁶⁸ Smith was not shy about promoting this view privately, writing to the statesman William Eden that commercial regulation could ‘be demonstrated to be in every case a complete piece of dupery, by which the interests of the state and the nation is constantly sacrificed to that of some particular class of traders’.⁶⁹ Worse still, cultures emerged around protected capitals that made shifting them without violent repercussions problematic, as:

The member of parliament who supports every proposal strengthening [a] monopoly, is sure to acquire not only the reputation of understanding trade, but great popularity and influence with an order of men whose numbers and wealth render them of great importance. If he opposes them...[or is] able to thwart them neither the most acknowledged probity, nor the highest rank, nor the greatest publick service can protect him from the most infamous abuse and detraction, from personal insults, nor sometimes from real danger...⁷⁰

Extraneous social and political forces had been interfering with an economy Smith thought ought to remain pure.

Before the third edition of the *Wealth of Nations* was published in 1784, Smith had refined his distinction between mercantilism and “pure” markets, developing his stance on utility to describe how commerce stabilised to form ‘publick works and institutions’.⁷¹ Here Smith drew from British history and the recent past to show the social mechanics of mercantilist monopolies. He urged that commerce needed the protection of civil institutions, like embassies and forts, when

⁶⁷ Smith, *Wealth*, i, p. 453.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Wealth*, i, pp. 459, 431, 433, 438, 439, 436.

⁶⁹ *Correspondence*, Smith to Eden, 15 Dec. 1783; T.D. Campbell and I.S. Ross, ‘The Utilitarianism of Adam Smith’s Policy Advice’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42, 1 (1981), pp. 73-92.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Wealth*, i, p. 471.

⁷¹ *Correspondence*, Smith to Thomas Cadell, 7 Dec. 1782 and Smith to William Strahan, 22 May 1783.

creating markets.⁷² These were costly, and it seemed sensible that their expense be defrayed by a tax on the trade so protected. However, with ringing predictability merchants intervened: rather than the executive, who collected the tax, going on to erect the forts, ‘companies of merchants have had the address to persuade the legislature to entrust them to the performance of this part of the duty of the sovereign’. Leaving these privileges in the hands of monopoly companies had in the ‘long-run proved, universally, either burdensome or useless and have either mismanaged or confined trade’.⁷³ Recounting the history of the regulated companies, Smith saw them as increasingly wretched barriers to trade, which could easily be carried on without any monopoly privileges on the understanding that the public paid for any ambassadors or protection out of a flat tax. Joint stocks were far more pernicious because their directors traded using capital that was largely not their own: ‘Like the stewards of a rich man, they are apt to give considerable attention to small matters as not for their master’s honour. Negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail’.⁷⁴ Smith poured particular scorn on the East India Company, telling its history in terms of a reliance on legislation, ‘malversation’, Directorial bungling resulting in the 1773 Bengal famine, the ‘plunder’ of India by Company share-holders appointing their kinsmen and growing indebtedness. Its directors, in short, were hampered by too many reciprocities:

To watch over, not only the occasional variations in the demand, but the much greater and more frequent variations in the competition, or in the supply which the demand is likely to get from other people, and to suit with dexterity and judgement both the quality and quantity of each assortment of goods to all these circumstances, is a species of warfare of which the operations are continually changing, and which can scarce ever be conducted successfully without such unremitting vigilance and attention, as cannot long be expected from the directors of a joint stock company.⁷⁵

Smith’s position was that monopolies should be disbanded, having established their markets. There were, however, a few necessary exceptions: some trades could continue to operate as joint stocks, specifically those that could be reduced to a ‘Routine’ and required no exclusive privileges, like banks and insurance companies.

⁷² Smith, *Wealth* ii, pp. 731-3.

⁷³ Smith, *Wealth* ii, pp. 733

⁷⁴ Smith, *Wealth*, ii, p. 741.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Wealth*, ii p. 755.

Although he noted several were incorporated, the Bank England and chartered insurance companies had no private-sector monopoly and could be countenanced in the long-term because it 'appeared, with the clearest evidence, that the undertaking is of greater and of more general utility than the greater part of common trades; and secondly that it required capital greater than can be easily collected by copartnery.'⁷⁶ In these instances, routines and utilities formed connections between capitals, rather than friends, family, political cronies or creditors.

Smith's critique fitted into his broader project of outlining the ideal conditions for innovation, an enterprise containing a strong technical element. Made up of wealth, material resources and skills conditioned by demand, capital flowed along the path of least resistance to connect these elements. Historically, these elements had spatial characteristics, but as the third chapter of the *Wealth of Nations* showed, their determining economic relationship was topological not topographic: oceans and mountain ranges posed a problem to man's 'natural propensity to truck, barter and exchange' only inasmuch as they thwarted the technologies of the day. 'Improvements' in transport and communications technology better connected capital, producers and consumers, creating more nodes in their networks, and were themselves the results of demand. What Smith found especially irksome about monopolies was that they impeded communications between self-interested individuals by misguidedly adding constraints to trade that were not technical but political and social.

William Vaughan came to understand the mercantile system as 'narrow', in that trade did not flow 'liberally', creating corrupt cultures insulated from markets, primarily in commerce but also in the church and universities. Much like the later Political Economy Club, his understanding was structured by the radicals who formed London's Bowood House Set, who formed around William Petty, Lord Shelburne (1737-1805), the Prime Minister in 1782-3. It is worth outlining the composition of the Bowood House Set in some detail to suggest how and why Smith's ideas took root in this particular milieu. Shelburne had thought enough of Smith to engage him as tutor to accompany his son on a tour of the Continent in

⁷⁶ Smith, *Wealth*, ii, p. 757.

1763-4, and stayed in contact with him thereafter.⁷⁷ The dissenting firebrand Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) was Shelburne's librarian between 1772 and 1780, after he left the non-conformist Warrington Academy. At Warrington, Priestley had taught and housed William Vaughan, the Dock campaigner, and his older brother Benjamin (1751-1835), the brilliant heir to the planter-merchant dynasty moved to London in 1769. Both brothers held their time at Warrington in high regard, although Benjamin's vast surviving papers suggest he took on the mantle of *philosophe* more readily than the more practically minded William, who spent his days in their father's countinghouse and served as a director of the Royal Exchange Assurance.

Smith was an object of fascination and frustration to Benjamin, who visited him whilst studying with Dugald Stewart in Edinburgh, complaining that in his new role as Customs Commissioner, Smith 'does not innovate' fast enough.⁷⁸ In 1782, Vaughan became Shelburne's private secretary and was unofficially sent to Paris during the peace negotiations to influence their mutual friend, Benjamin Franklin. Bowood's dissenting connection was reinforced by Richard Price (1723-91), whose actuarial innovations saw him criticise the growing national debt from a mathematical vantage that both Shelburne and Pitt the Younger applied to public business in their tenures at the Treasury.⁷⁹ Shelburne also invited Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) to join them in 1778 after reading his *Fragment on Government* (1776) and he, too, thought highly of Smith's work.⁸⁰

All these figures argued in their different ways for a re-distribution of Britain's political, religious and fiscal resources, and maintained connections with the City Wilkites, the Association Movement, the Society for Constitutional Information and

⁷⁷ On this group and their politics see A. Hamilton, *Trade and Empire in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); John Norris, *Shelburne and Reform* (London, 1963), pp. 82-98; Richard Whatmore, 'Shelburne and Perpetual Peace: Small States, Commerce and International Relations Within the Bowood Circle', Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr eds., *An Enlightened Statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in Context, 1737-1805* (Woodbridge: Boydell Brewer, 2011), pp. 249-75, though the whole volume is useful.

⁷⁸ BL, Add. Mss, Vaughan to Shelburne, 4 Nov. 1782.

⁷⁹ Richard Price, *Observations on Reversionary Payments* (London, 1771), pp. 133-68; D.O. Thomas ed., *Correspondence of Richard Price: Volume II* (Cardiff: University of Wales press, 1991), p. 337.

⁸⁰ See J.H. Burns ed., *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham* (London: Athlone Press, 1968-71), iii, letters 396 and 399-420, Jul.-Oct. 1781.

reformers like Samuel Romilly.⁸¹ Philosophically well-informed, galvanised by political economy and international politics, sharing an interest in natural sciences, and dissatisfied with factional politics, the core had much in common and supported one another intellectually and materially. Their tendency to work from ‘abstract’ principles sparked Burke’s famous condemnation in the *Reflexions*, and both Priestley and Benjamin Vaughan would decamp to America after being tarred with the Jacobin brush.

Perhaps precisely because the Bowood House Set were outsiders, Smith’s adaptation of Hume’s commerce-as-conversation model provided a powerful set of secular resources with which to combat vested interests. Arguing that commerce brought peace, initially the group pinned its hopes on the ‘free-port’ system favoured by Smith, though known in commercial circles since Walpole’s premiership.⁸² Free-port ideologues aimed to abolish the system of drawbacks used to encourage the re-export trade and other state restrictions on commercial activity by streamlining the revenue and setting the Customs on a more utilitarian footing. Rather than have the Customs tax goods entering the port and *then* pay rebates on those re-exported abroad, a system prone to abuse and costly to administer, a free-port would levy a single charge on goods entering the country from dock-side warehouses, leaving those for re-export untouched. During Shelburne’s tenure as prime minister, his secretary Benjamin Vaughan breathlessly reported to his mentor, Franklin, that Shelburne talked seriously of implementing the system so as to cement the Peace of Paris with a commercial union in the Atlantic. Vaughan thought Britain had declined under the weight of vested interest, unlike the uncorrupted Americans, and he hoped Britons would:

...be more or less cured of our fighting and monopolizing notions and look to an American’s friendship. The boldness of [Shelburne’s] conduct therefore has done infinite service to men’s minds, as his conversation has done to the royal mind. You will take pleasure in hearing that he talked of making England a free port, for which he said we were fitted by nature, capital, love of enterprise, marine, connections, and position between the old and new world and the north and south of Europe; and that those who were best circumstanced for trade could not but be gainers by having trade open. Indeed I may now say to you with courage that I

⁸¹ Peter D.G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 112; Verner W. Crane, ‘The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Apr., 1966), pp. 210-233; Norris, *Shelburne*, pp. 58, 165; Samuel Romilly, *Memoirs* (London, 1841), *passim*.

⁸² Smith, *Wealth*, ii pp. 884-6.

have scarcely seen or heard any thing of what has passed already... that I do not approve and applaud, as conducted upon grand principles.⁸³

Echoing Smith's arguments, Benjamin Vaughan despised the 'vulgar politics of wars and counter wars, prohibitions of trade and counter-prohibitions, and checks and counter checks upon each other's happiness; we shall follow the contemptible example of our European neighbours, instead of doing what between us was so very practicable, namely forming ourselves on new principles'.⁸⁴ Benjamin further vented his frustration at Smith's patchy uptake in his *New and Old Principles of Trade Compared* (London, 1788), a commercial treatise critical of 'narrow', 'old' and self-interested commerce.

If a free port could foster trade between countries, it required new administrative forms because concentrating goods in State-run warehouses created new hazards. Smith capitalised on his position as Commissioner of the Scottish Customs to recommend a free-port scheme to Shelburne's Treasury devised by Patrick Colquhoun (1745-1820), a Glasgow tobacco merchant. The chief 'risque' Smith foresaw was to the Revenue's obligation to secure warehoused commodities from 'fire etc.. [A]nd that by this mode of security the officers of the revenue will be put to great additional trouble by the care of warehouses, visitations, delivery of goods, etc. which is so much extraordinary duty'.⁸⁵ Unsure as to whether the Customs were capable of reforming port administration without the help of the Excise, Smith doubtless influenced the Scottish Customs Commission's 1783 report to Shelburne's Treasury explaining that Customs officers' remuneration in fees caused collusion between officers and the merchants that paid them.⁸⁶ To improve the security of the revenue they recommended replacing them with wages, which more surely tied employee to employer in the long run. Shelburne's administration failed to convince Parliament of the wisdom of this move before he was dismissed from office in March 1783.

The Bowood Set also developed Smith's ideas outside of political institutions, but were frustrated by the self-defending secrecy practiced by government administrators. Jeremy Bentham, pursuing Charles Long in an effort to secure funding for his Panopticon, played a month-long game of cat and mouse in

⁸³ Benjamin Franklin Papers, Benjamin Vaughan to Benjamin Franklin, 25 February 1783.

⁸⁴ APS, Benjamin Vaughan to Shelburne, 4 Nov. 1782.

⁸⁵ TNA, T 1/589, Treasury In-letters, f. 171.

⁸⁶ PP, 'Report on Illicit Practices' (1783), p. 285.

the anterooms of the Treasury, the porters' obfuscation driving him to despair at the chicanery of government.⁸⁷ On 30 March 1785 Benjamin Vaughan wrote indignantly to Shelburne that 'The Commissioners of the Customs were shut up on business unknown to me' whilst they took refuge in offices in the Customs House away from public prying.⁸⁸ A month earlier Benjamin had outlined 23 social groups likely to stand in the way of liberal reforms, including the present monopolies, their creditors, those making political capital from rotten boroughs, civic corporations, the court, those 'bigoted' to old ideas and 'decided to remain in a state in which they have thriven', 'weak men who will not encounter present derangement for future gain' and those inured to the navigation acts.⁸⁹

Communication could win the opposition over, and the Vaughans went to great lengths to instill in their kin a respect for the moral and commercial advantages of a good hand and liberal mind working in unison. The imprint of Priestley's materialist educational philosophy and capacity for devising new means to display information is palpable here. Benjamin's son, Henry, practiced his penmanship on musical staves, copying such phrases as: 'Keep such company as you may improve or may improve you', 'Force is repugnant to liberty', 'Grandeur cannot purchase peace', and 'Learning improves human nature'.⁹⁰ Reiterating the link between clarity and communication, Benjamin Vaughan also wrote a major treatise advocating the reform of handwriting in Revolutionary France, claiming penmanship was ill-taught and too gothic to communicate information well enough in a society where 'written intercourse with each other & with foreigners, & circulation of knowledge, of commerce, & of the arts... [will] constitute a change likely to be disseminated among such other nations as shall stand in need of it'.⁹¹ Debate facilitated a 'manly' and energetic 'enlightenment', as in France, where the Tennis Court Oath was interpreted as causing the French 'people' to 'suddenly...know their own minds... [They] have suffered no new grievances but their minds have been opened to the old ones, as to make them operate in some

⁸⁷ Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 219-53.

⁸⁸ BL Add. Mss 88906/01/20, Benjamin Vaughan to Lord Shelburne, 30 Mar. 1785.

⁸⁹ BL Add. Mss 88906/01/20 Benjamin Vaughan to Shelburne, 7 Feb. 1785.

⁹⁰ MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 25, Exercises.

⁹¹ APS, Benjamin Vaughan Papers, II, 'Hints for the Improvements of the Manuscript Art of the French', f. 3.

measure like novelties'.⁹² Faith in the liberating potential of enlightened ideas formed a backdrop to William Vaughan's vision on the eve of the inauguration of London's new Docks in 1805. He saw them as a means of forwarding an agenda in which a 'pacific', rather than factional, politics could be underpinned by commerce:

Friendly to internal improvement, I have always viewed with pleasure the growing objects that promoted them, from their happy tendency to call into activity that industry which contributes by principal means comforts, convenience and happiness of society[.] And nothing tends perhaps to change the face of country, or the manners of its people as the effects produced by canals, good roads and railways, which happily facilitate the means of supplying the wants they create. I hope as all countries advance in countenance [sic], national industry and their internal wants increase, that commerce may cement their union by a pacific system, which may prove happy and beneficial to them all.⁹³

Communication was the market, which could be marshaled to promote interests as well as suppress them.

William Vaughan's genius was to graft 'grand' ideas onto local commercial grudges. London merchants had long objected to the intransigence of the wharfingers' longstanding monopoly over the Quays that caused delays and supposedly mushroomed criminal activity amongst quayside porters as trade grew. By 1793 Vaughan was rallying this constituency in a series of pamphlets that used shipping statistics to show that London's commercial might was being eclipsed by the outports.⁹⁴ He argued that commercial space ought to reflect London's commercial needs, which meant building facilities where goods could be easily taxed and stored in huge quantities for re-export. Part of the problem centered on disciplining pilfering dockside workers, and Vaughan and his West India Committee sponsored Patrick Colquhoun's Thames Police aimed at putting the 'sugar lumpers' on wages rather than remunerating them with perquisites in the late-1790s. The scheme had Smithian credentials, allowing the merchants to better police the Thames, whilst granting the dockers easier access to the markets through cash, but met with resistance from the lumpers initially. Colquhoun worked actively with

⁹² BL Add. Mss 88906/01/20, Benjamin Vaughan to Shelburne, 7 Jul. 1789.

⁹³ APS, Vaughan family papers, II, William Vaughan to James Smirnové, 3 Feb. 1803.

⁹⁴ William Vaughan, *On Wet Docks* (London, 1793).

another Shelburnite, Bentham, in designing the Thames Police force and drafting the bill, which would set it on a legal footing.⁹⁵

For William Vaughan and his associates the efficacy of Smith's thought was clear despite continually provoking hostility from those outside the group. Traces of the intellectual processes Mark Philp identifies in relation to electoral reformers of the same period are evident. Like these reformers, the Bowood set presented their case:

...as a matter of moral truth and political integrity. Similarly, this feature also serves to sanctify personal preferences by representing them as demanded by a higher morality, and this in turn may lead people to ignore instrumental calculation: prudence may speak against demanding reform, but truth has a higher claim. And when the force of law is brought to bear against this morality, it loses its impartial character and becomes seen as progressively more corrupt, both forcing and making legitimate, active measures to challenge authority.⁹⁶

Whilst the docks project was a battle over the conceptual underpinnings of British overseas policy, the form they took embodied a set of proscriptions about types of exchange and commercial authority at home. Locating the docks on the intersection of material, legal and economic forces raises a more complex point about the power of merchant backing for the project and their specific aims and objectives relative to the regulatory orthodoxies of the day. As the next section demonstrates, positioning the docks in terms of mercantilism is fundamental to unravelling how we understand both.

Section 4: 'In every case a complete piece of dupery'? Rethinking Mercantilism

Although sacrosanct to the Vaughans, the argument that trade was being unduly confined by social and political institutions needs to be approached with caution. The 'Mercantile System' outlined above was conceptually loaded, being called into existence to satirically describe the vast tranche of previous economic literature and policy. It has also caused ongoing debate among historians about how best to deploy the concept. Mercantilism has variously been used to describe an 'age', a broadly accepted doctrine, a mode of economic analysis and a party-political trope,

⁹⁵ Linebaugh, *Hanged*, Ch 10; Bentham, *Correspondence* Vols. v-vi, for Bentham's discussions with Colquhoun and Charles Abbot over the Marine Police, 4 Dec. 1796-11 Sept. 1800; see also Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁹⁶ Mark Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', idem ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 74.

categories that are highly questionable due to the difficulties inherent in finding criteria to test the classifications. Two theses are identifiable in the post-war historiography and will be outlined here. The first, very broad strand follows or responds to D.C. Colman's suggestion that despite being an anachronism, mercantilism can be seen as epiphenomenon of economic forces already in place.⁹⁷ Mark Granovetter's work on socially embedded economies heralds a second school, which is far less sure the terms mercantilist or liberalism have any use, preferring to stress the informal strategies which held trade together.⁹⁸ Whilst both points of view are hesitant to take Smith's critique very seriously, the feeling that mercantilism was a more or less unstable, discontinuous, churning and unequal system is persistent.

Chaotic short-sightedness was precisely the quality Vaughan and the Bowood Set aimed to overcome in their activities around London. For them, mercantilism was a relatively loose framework which provided a means for interpreting social phenomena, as it has been for two generations of historians. It described non-market transactions as anachronisms that inhibited traders by investing parochial laws or social relations with erroneous economic weight. By contrast, liberalism validated relatively mobile data, prices and 'things' above legislative conspiracies and local customs. Following the discussion in the last section, mercantilism might be seen as a broad set of exchanges that the Bowood set tried to stamp out using technology. Their turn to infrastructural projects like docks, panopticons or the watchmaking factory Shelburne sponsored in Ireland, in addition to policies and ideas, is important in this respect. Returning to Callon and network theory, the section concludes by setting out a reconciliatory paradigm based around technology like the Docks that mediated between the state and market. The aim is to suggest these mediating technologies can keep the rhetorical and embedded strands of argument regarding mercantilism in play, whilst providing a vantage from which changes to their make-up can be analysed.

The complexity of mercantilism has resulted in historians spending an extraordinary amount of time blaming their colleagues for misusing the concept and attempting to refashion it in their own image. A.V. Judges in 1939 and D.C. Coleman in 1969 and 1980 suggested that mercantilism was a fiction devised by Smith and

⁹⁷ See D.C. Coleman, 'Eli Heckscher and the Idea of Mercantilism', idem ed., *Revisions in Mercantilism* (London: Methuen, 1969).

⁹⁸ Mark Granovetter, 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 3 (1985), pp. 481-510.

that economists and historians are simply repeating counterfactuals. They both wondered whether expositions of mercantilism really offer anything other than ‘the canons of an imaginary system conceived by economists for the purposes of theoretical exposition and mishandled by historians in the service of their political ideas’.⁹⁹ Noting the arbitrary chronology Smith imbued mercantilism with, Coleman urges that the mercantilist writers and their influence on policy must be approached as a pragmatic but disparate set of responses to the social and economic circumstances of their day.

Working in this tradition Patrick O’Brien and S.L. Engerman have written that:

Aristocratic politicians disdainful of trade entertained few doubts about promoting and protecting foreign commerce. Merchants and industrialists lobbied in order to have lower colonial tariffs and to persuade their colonial cousins to buy more and more British manufactured goods. Mercantilists wrote pamphlet after pamphlet extolling the pursuit of power and profit. Was all this expenditure of aristocratic time, bourgeois money, and intellectual energy merely a sufficient, but in no way necessary, force behind British industrialisation from 1688 to 1802?¹⁰⁰

Mercantilists believed markets needed to be captured; what mercantilists

wrote about were associations between trade balances, money supplies, output, and employment. They did not expect automatic adjustment mechanisms to work any more effectively or quickly than they do today. Meanwhile, English mercantilists recommended policies designed to procure export surpluses and inflows of monetary reserves to support an expanding economy and aggressive polity on its way to achieving hegemony at sea.¹⁰¹

However, the historians glumly conclude that the role of exports and empire in facilitating British economic growth will never be fully resolved until ‘general equilibrium models of the international economy and Britain’s place within it are specified and empirically tested for the eighteenth century’.¹⁰² Nevertheless, some Customs statistical measures are available, as in Table 1.3 which displays David Ormrod’s calculation of the differences between the gross and net customs receipts to show that significant payments by the mercantilist state were made in bounties to

⁹⁹ A.V. Judges, ‘The Idea of a Mercantile State’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fourth series, 21 (1939), p. 68; cited in D.C. Coleman, ‘Eli Heckscher and the Idea of Mercantilism’, *idem* ed., *Revisions in Mercantilism* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 100 and *idem*, ‘Mercantilism Revisited’, *Historical Journal* 23, 4 (1980), p. 790.

¹⁰⁰ P.K. O’Brien and S.L. Engerman, ‘Exports’, pp. 209.

¹⁰¹ O’Brien and Engerman, ‘Exports’, p. 190.

¹⁰² O’Brien and Engerman, ‘Exports’, p. 190.

encourage exports prior to 1770. Kenneth Morgan also sees campaigns by merchants as having had a decisive role in shaping British fiscal and colonial policy in the period, stressing that the ideology stood firm after Smith's criticisms until the 1830s, though making fewer claims for their politics facilitating industrialisation.¹⁰³

Historians of political thought have contested the idea that mercantilism was a homogenous and continuous set of arguments easily attributed to the propertied. According to Terrence Hutchinson, Smith tarred with a single brush a diverse and vigorous economic literature published between 1660 and 1776 for polemical reasons, before the classical economists of the nineteenth century, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill and J.R. McCulloch, thoroughly infantilised mercantilist thought in their economic histories and heavily edited anthologies. 'For it was with the publication of the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 that the rise to dominance can be traced of the first major, modern theoretical orthodoxy, which in Britain, largely excluded or obliterated some of the most significant ideas regarding utility and value, aggregate demand and employment, expectation and uncertainty, which had emerged in the preceding century of theoretical pluralism.'¹⁰⁴

Table 1.3, British Customs Receipts

Year	Gross (£m)	Net (£m)
1720	2.8	1.7
1730	3.0	1.6
1740	2.9	1.4
1750	3.7	1.7
1760	3.9	1.9
1770	-	2.6

Source: David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism*, p. 24.

¹⁰³ Kenneth Morgan, 'Mercantilism and the British Empire', Donald Winch and Patrick O'Brien, *The Political Economy of British Historical experience, 1688-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 165-191; Anthony Howe, 'Restoring Free Trade: The British Experience, 1776-1873', in the same volume, pp. 193-213.

¹⁰⁴ Terence Hutchinson, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1988), p. 3.

To be sure, many English mercantilists can be linked to the chartered trading companies, but this does not, as Smith implied, preclude them from making theoretical contributions alongside advancing their own interests. Although rather more cautious in their teleology, others have built on Hutchinson's focus on arguments. Lars Magnusson, for instance, sees mercantilist 'discourse' as a series of important self-referential texts, but by no means doctrinaire.¹⁰⁵ As such, state intervention or lobbying is seen as a reaction to economic 'reality' and removes from the field of analysis any of the organising concepts that linked them to a wider and historically constituted culture, emphasising, instead, that mercantilist discourse was limited, coherent and paradigmatic.¹⁰⁶

However, Julian Hoppit's tentative analysis of the circulation of economic literature suggests that the focus on economic theory is somewhat misguided.¹⁰⁷ Not only did mercantilist writers operate in an intellectual terrain in which there was little disciplinary structure before Stewart in Edinburgh, 'oeconomy' did not fit well into eighteenth-century schemes of knowledge, generally being seen as branch of household management. Hoppit's bibliographic examination of collections of economic literature from the century after 1660 suggests four key features. First, more works were produced after the lapse of the Licensing Act (1695) with peaks in publication occurring around political crises, and this literature was therefore tied to the growth of parliamentary legislation. Second, most works were between one and a dozen pages. Third, they were increasingly published anonymously. And finally, most works engaged with the tertiary sector of trade, finance, and exchange, where the executive could make the biggest impact.¹⁰⁸ All of this shows that economic literary boundaries were fluid, multifarious, hard to classify for contemporaries and much scrappier than scholars who exclusively focus on the mercantilist canon, which often circulated in manuscript, are likely to recognise.

¹⁰⁵ Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism, The Shaping of an Economic Language* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 3-4, 14-15; See also A. Finkelstein, *Harmony and Balance: An Intellectual History of Seventeenth-Century English Economic Thought* (Ann Arbor: 2000).

¹⁰⁶ Magnusson, *Shaping*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ Julian Hoppit, 'The Contexts and Contours of British Economic Literature, 1660-1760', *Historical Journal*, 49, 1 (2006), pp. 79-110.

¹⁰⁸ Hoppit, 'Contexts', pp. 95-6.

More recently, Steve Pincus's intervention in mercantilist studies aims at rethinking metropole-periphery debates from an Atlantic perspective.¹⁰⁹ Quoting approvingly from Judges and Coleman, Pincus sees mercantilism as an explanatory tool embedded in the discipline of history, and falsely assumed to have several inter-related fundamentals. First, mercantilism is taken by historians to have provided a broadly accepted framework for British imperialism, guiding legislators, politicians and polemicists from the late-Elizabethans until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and, as an uncontested set of principles, has been seen to deny empire a party-political dimension. Next, the defining feature of mercantilist thought is assumed to be that economic resources were finite, and that the gain of one nation or empire came at the expense of another; attaining wealth was, thus, a 'zero-sum game' supported by the balance of trade theory and encouraging interventionist strategies. Rejecting these ideas, Pincus argues that we ought to see no formal consensus over mercantilism, but should, instead, acknowledge from 1660 onwards a party-political dimension to discussions, identifying a Tory camp committed to a landed and finite view in dialogue with a Whig camp prone to see labour as the fount of prosperity. While the Whigs may have won key battles over empire around the time of the Glorious Revolution,¹¹⁰ this did not dampen or foreclose debate in the metropole or colonies:

partisan politics, which became increasingly multifaceted over the course of the eighteenth century, served to structure the reception and deployment of new economic information and policy recommendations. The reactions to those policies in the colonies and dependencies and in England were always deeply informed by partisan perceptions.¹¹¹

Pincus argues that his formulation narrows the distance between imperial centre and periphery, while also recognising the vibrant dynamics of colonial policy. This, he suggests, means that we do not need to resort to 'cultural earthquakes' brought about by extraneous forces to explain away the collapse of the mercantilist system after 1760. The published commentary on Pincus's intervention points to some problems in his reasoning, not least that historians have been rather more

¹⁰⁹ Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 69, 1 (2012), 3–34.

¹¹⁰ Steve Pincus, *1688. The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale, 2009), Chs. 3, 11 and 12.

¹¹¹ Steve Pincus, 'Refiguring the British Empire', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 69, 1 (2012), pp. 68–9.

circumspect than he allows in deploying mercantilism as a doctrinaire or organising principle.¹¹²

Several prominent historians have gone so far as to completely jettison the label of 'mercantilist' from their analyses of mercantile politics, arguing that it is decidedly unclear whether economic life generates a normative politics. Business records show that early modern men and women bought from known suppliers, sold to repeat customers, employed kin or relatives and favoured political factions. Much work has been devoted to examining the ties of obligation, credit and reciprocity that facilitated such exchanges.¹¹³ As economic theorist Mark Granovetter has argued, market relations are 'embedded' within social frameworks and develop their own conventions, which gives them context. Writing in 1985, in riposte to neo-classical economists, Granovetter objected to their view that commerce was socially 'atomised', but equally rejected Marxist and other explanations of commerce that retreated into over-socialised dyads like workers and bosses. Firms have weak but friendly contacts with other firms, he argued, with the corollary that firms have imperfect operational information about themselves, opening the door to malfeasance within them. That is, firms can be altered from the inside and potentially impressed by the activities of other firms, either of which may change their strategies.¹¹⁴

Historians of the eighteenth century, such as David Hancock and Sheryllynne Haggerty, have put Granovetter's ideas and other economic network theories to good use, reconstructing the cultural milieu of merchants and showing

¹¹² See Cathy Matson, 'Imperial Political Economy: Ideological Debate and Shifting Practice', pp. 35-40, Trevor Burnard, 'Making a Whig Empire Work: Transatlantic Politics and the Imperial Economy in Britain and British America', pp. 51-56 and Susan D. Amussen, 'Political Economy and Imperial Practice' p. 50 all in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 69, 1 (2012).

¹¹³ Barry Carruthers, *City of Capital: Politics and the Markets in the English Financial Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Craig Muldrew, *Culture of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London: St Martin's, 1998); Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century. Household, Patronage and Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family, and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture 1740-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving. Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); for titles focused on merchants see below.

¹¹⁴ Mark Granovetter, 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 3 (1985), pp. 481-510.

them to have negotiated diverse layers of trust and obligation.¹¹⁵ They have suggested that merchants formed robust mechanisms to monitor one another, assess risk and formulate long-term commercial bonds, leaving the way open for interaction between competitive firms and the development of markets abroad. Situated in a longer tradition of anthropological studies of merchant practice, focus on ‘embeddedness’ has been illuminating insofar as it links together mercantile business strategies with the preoccupations found in the correspondence, genetic capital and other artefacts left behind by merchants.¹¹⁶ The stress on caution, context and stability amongst inter- and intra-firm networks in this literature makes identifying changes relatively difficult, and certainly the state is largely discounted as a motor for change. As Haggerty argues, the British state was relatively well trusted by merchants, paying back loans, encouraging re-exports and maintaining convoys during conflicts. Consequently, efficient ‘private order’ cultures embedded merchants in social relations across the United Kingdom that meant their recourse to politics was a last resort rather than natural right.¹¹⁷ Gauci’s extensive surveys of London merchant politics found economic pragmatism, shifting administrations and internal fractures to have concealed the traces of a balance of trade argument. Attending to the full variety of economic behaviours historians of consumption, empire and credit have unearthed recently, Gauci explicitly argues that narratives of growing liberalisation in the eighteenth century look less convincing than ever before, and that ‘regulation’ might prove a less teleologically charged framework.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Hancock, *Citizens*, idem., “A Revolution in Trade”: Wine Distribution and the Development of the Infrastructure of the Atlantic Economy, 1703-1807’, J.J. McKusker & K. Morgan eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 105-153; Sherrilynne Haggerty, *The British Atlantic Trading Community, 1760-1810: Men, Women and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), idem., “Merely for Money”? *Business Culture in the British Atlantic, 1750-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁶ Zahedieh, *Capital*; S.D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jacob M. Price, *Perry of London: A Family and a Firm on the Seaborne Frontier, 1615-1753* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), idem., *Overseas Trade and Traders: Essays on Some Commercial, Financial and Political Challenges Facing British Atlantic Merchants, 1660-1775* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996); Richard Pares, ‘A London West India Merchant House, 1740-1769’, R. Pares and A.J.P. Taylor eds., *Essays Presented to Lewis Namier* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1956) pp. 75-108 and idem., *A West India Fortune* (London & New York: Longman, 1950).

¹¹⁷ Haggerty, *Merely*, pp. 235-40. See also Zahedieh, *Capital*, intro, esp. p. 7.

¹¹⁸ Perry Gauci, ‘Introduction’, idem. ed., *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 10, 17.

Researching commerce from the vantage of ‘embedded’ markets makes mercantilism seem a blunt analytical instrument. Smith certainly did favour some forms of exchange over others but why should firms of any description take heed of economic theories? Despite his pioneering work on embedded relationships, Granovetter was similarly dismissive of the notion that arguments constitute markets, noting Smith had written in *The Wealth of Nations* that ‘people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.’ Granovetter explains that Smith inaugurated *laissez faire* by suggesting formal regulations be repealed in favour of publicly accessible trade directories (similar in function to the *Yellow Pages*) that might ‘connect individuals who might never otherwise be known to one another’. ‘Noteworthy here’, Granovetter states, ‘is not the rather lame policy prescription but the recognition that *social atomisation is prerequisite to perfect competition*’, suggesting that the counterfactuals of economists are best ignored.¹¹⁹

Certainly one must be cautious in applying economic models to complex historical situations, where success and failure had potentially disastrous consequences. Yet given the directory was explicitly envisaged to make ‘connections between people who might not otherwise know one another’, one could argue that Smith was not ‘atomising’ society but, theoretically, adding a new ‘policy’ to the mix. As Michel Callon observes, economic actors may well become more distant but the gap between them is closed by things, sometimes endorsed by economists, especially the objects that constitute ‘markets’, such as data from directories, market-places and commodities, that connect them differently.¹²⁰ Trade directories were relatively sophisticated by the standards of the day. Remuneration in perquisites, annual rents and the use of credit and tokens in the eighteenth century meant cash exchanges might not be daily practices or remain relatively customary.¹²¹ Valenze tentatively suggests that by the mid-eighteenth century attitudes towards acquiring and spending money were losing their immoral

¹¹⁹ Granovetter, p. 484. His italics.

¹²⁰ Michel Callon, ‘Actor Network Theory- The Market Test’, John Law and John Hassard eds., *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford and Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 181-195, esp. 191.

¹²¹ Valenze, *Social*, passim. Aashish Velkar makes a similar point about mensuration in *Markets and Measurement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 7, 28-39

character, and the fungibility, alienability and mobility of sovereign currency was seen as giving its users independence compared to other remunerative practices.¹²² Vaughan and Bentham certainly saw money as a potentially liberating technology and both advocated the use of saving banks to buttress the 'industry and frugality' of the poor.¹²³ Certainly this was 'regulation' in the sense that Gauci uses the term, but it relied on calculative agencies being uneven and malleable at a local level.

The Dock project was similarly an attempt to force, in a material sense, new systems of exchange or calculative frameworks on the chartered companies. Evidently Smith and his coterie favoured the 'routine' economic technologies that spread the 'calculative agency' of economic actors by being mobile, predictable, comparable and enmeshed in formal systems of knowledge. Uninformed East India Directors, politicians with 'popular' agendas, scheming trade associations and even indebted dependents all had the potential to disrupt exchanges. Smith's abstract markets were not really so abstract in practice just more regular, open to scrutiny and objective: 'To abstract', notes Callon in a jointly written essay, is 'to transport [data] into formal calculative space'.¹²⁴ If Vaughan was trying to realise Smith's unseen markets amongst a resistant merchant community, disrupting or 'improving' the flow of information and goods which mercantilist sociability was based on in the chartered companies was a natural ploy. Not only does this strategy explain Bowood Set's turn to projects after Shelburne's fall from power but also the outcry in the City, who fully recognised what was being attempted.

Callon's idea of networked competences to account for the market draws on Bruno Latour's notion of calculative agencies, which is of further analytical value. Latour has been concerned to show how knowledge circulates and creates specialist 'centres of calculation', like laboratories, universities or banks.¹²⁵ The 'centres' establish 'networks', gather material and information and lay down

¹²² Valenze, *Social*, pp. 268-71.

¹²³ William Vaughan, *Memoirs* (London, 1839), pp. 17, 105-7; Beverly Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 142-6.

¹²⁴ Fabian Muniesa, Yuvall Millo and Michel Callon, 'Introduction', idem. eds., *Market Devices* (London: Blackwell, 2007) p. 4.

¹²⁵ Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 225-7.

protocols as to how to change the form of knowledge.¹²⁶ These engines of change can be highly resistant to change themselves, not least because objects can be unruly, making innovation difficult without specialist equipment, skills and technologies ('things'), but also because even rational scientific communities require 'nature' to be represented and socialised in specific scholarly ways. However, inertia is relative, and less strongly socialised networks may move faster or in different directions. The stress here is on connections between actors or institutions that erect more or less effective barriers and, moreover, the material and conceptual 'things' that need to be in place to make lasting relationships. It is in this sense that we might consider Vaughan's Docks and the whole campaign surrounding them as 'things' aimed at building a new political economy, i.e. Smith's. Nevertheless, it also entails recognising that the various networks attached to the Docks experienced Smith's political economy differently and even Vaughan's understanding was by no means pure, but socialised by his associates.

This multiplication of meaning stems from Latour's refusal to let 'modernity' become an explanatory category for the success of projects like the Docks. To explain how Vaughan succeeded, one 'is not allowed to use external reality to explain society' by drawing on notions like class, science, rationality or the market because these imply some meta-principles are at play, which cannot be sustained if one examines past or different cultures.¹²⁷ Rather, success and failure must be judged by the highly individuated networks on hand to actors, each with its own conceptual, physical and "thingy" potentials and limitations. It is from these that social life and theoretical reductions are 'constructed.' 'Without the countless objects that ensured their durability as well as their solidity, the traditional objects of social theory - empire, classes, professions, organisations, States- become so many mysteries.'¹²⁸ Consequently, the most contentious claim made by these theorists is that agency is distributed across networks, using different strategies depending on the local circumstances. For instance, Callon has argued that whilst many actors like fishermen, meteorologists, supermarkets and boat-builders are enrolled in the fishing industry in response to complex socio-economic and scientific rationales, the

¹²⁶ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans Catherine Porter (London: Pearson Education, 1992), idem., 'Where are the Missing Masses?', Wiebe Bijker and John Law eds., *Shaping Technology-Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 225-259.

¹²⁷ Latour, *We*, p. 96.

¹²⁸ Latour, *We*, p. 120

fish enroll for more instinctive reasons. Although the fish are easy targets given the sophisticated technologies mobilised to catch them, they still exert pressure on humans because without them the fishing industry evaporates.¹²⁹ Equally, all the strategies historians have used to give Adam Smith meaning, from the Cambridge School's rhetorics to Foucault's panopticon, might be in play in a single network, just at different points.

'Things' provide a median point to overcome some of the problems intrinsic to mercantilism. On the one hand, whilst following networks is never going to give O'Brien a satisfactory answer to the effect mercantilism had on British competitiveness, they can be used to measure the expansion or contraction of the agencies involved in regulating the market. On the other hand, shifts in the technologies used to underpin merchant life reveal not only different regulatory patterns but processes of disembedding as well. Such shifts might well have been slow and utilitarian such as the adoption of practices like bookkeeping, as economic network theorists imply, but they might also have been responses to intellectual currents, such as reading Adam Smith and turning to politics. Insofar as policies do shape the market, preeminently through taxation, it seems churlish to discount any activity as economically invalid, though erecting new networks may be difficult. Indeed, network theory suggests any two cultures might be brought together by actors, political or commercial, because they are simply socialised by things. The key question is how lasting the connection and how radical the change.

Section 5: The Structure of the Thesis

Vaughan's Dock project and the work of the Bowood Set on the Quays serve as a series of case studies in 'enrolling' people into a liberal consensus, in the sense that Latour and Callon use the word, to mean the erecting of sustainable networks that displaced mercantilist sociabilities. Each of the case studies that form the subsequent chapters is considered through the lense of different networks. To an extent this has been driven by the availability of sources, though the extensive Vaughan family have left private papers in London and America and, like most of the characters explored here, were well connected men who lead lives within the

¹²⁹ Michel Callon, 'Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: The Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', J. Law ed., *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* (Routledge: London, 1986), pp.196-223. See more recently Juliette Bennett, *Vibrant Matter, The Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 20-38.

confines of well documented institutions, like the Customs, insurance, colonial lobbies and chartered companies. Nevertheless, the aim in each case has been to explore how the things involved in the Docks campaign contributed to ‘embedding’ Smithian political economy in London or can help problematise historical understandings of how markets were constructed and functioned during the eighteenth century. Consequently, chapter one explores the capacity of Vaughan’s Dock campaign to enrage Londoners in order to unpick the relationship between the enlightenment and local economies in light of the enlightened economy theses associated with Berg and Mokyr. The next chapter examines how Smith’s ideas took root in the Customs under Shelburne in an attempt to combat corruption on the Quays. Chapter three turns to the Bowood Set’s relationship with the insurance industry to question the role of routine utilities in promoting improvements in London. Finally, the fourth chapter examines the role of the West India Merchants lobby in establishing the Vaughan’s Docks as well as pirating his ideas wholesale in a rival scheme.

Although this choice of topics may sound bewildering, Latour admits one of the difficulties in ‘using’ ‘ANT [actor network theory] is not to be intimidated by the type of figuration’ or language used to describe a network, which may be statistical, discursive, geographical or pictorial. Instead, he argues all registers are valid in that ‘*ideo-*, or *techno-* or *bio-*morphisms are all just “morphisms”, or ways of representing interaction between networks.¹³⁰ Let actors provide ‘their own metaphysics’ and generate your own expertise as a researcher, he says. Whether this descriptive strategy creates value for historians relative to more critical and predetermined theories of modernisation is left for fuller discussion in my conclusion. However, within each body of evidence moments of acceleration, new connections between institutions and discourses have been inventoried to capture the dynamism of the economy and the radicalisation of specific elements under the Bowood Set.

Chapter one situates the City within a spectrum of different of calculating agencies in London through insurance records, emphasising that this agency had an intellectual as well as economic dimension. Despite Vaughan’s enlightened credentials, the 1796 campaign for the Docks saw petitions flood Parliament from Thames-side parishes objecting to the scheme, although residents of Westminster were simply indifferent to them. These very different reactions to Vaughan’s proposals speak of a capital where various interests were active and that the

¹³⁰ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 54-55.

‘enlightened economy’ Joel Mokyr and Maxine Berg have heralded needs refining. In systematically sampling insurance records from the silk and iron trades, it is possible to read this theory through changes in the built environment and choices available to consumers. Using 1,400 policies it is possible to build up a crude but essentially static picture of a capital divided into several distinct economic zones from 1710 to 1814. The policies show that highly nuanced and geographically specific architectural forms underpinned the business strategies in each area, cutting across both trades. Whether it took the form of the West End classicism that was essential for mercers, or the City coaching inns used by wholesalers, the built environment profoundly shaped the flow of business information in and around the capital, and with it the calculative agency of the native populations. Parochialism abounded and changes in consumption patterns were slow and highly uneven, causing a pronounced east-west divide in the capital. This birds-eye view suggests that several enlightenments were possible in London, and that both the politics and economic aims merchants like Vaughan pursued should be examined through the information networks operating in the City, which were distinctive.

Chapter two investigates officers of London’s Customs House in order to ascertain how City merchants interacted with the state, and how the projected Docks merged with fiscal policy. The Excise has been hailed by John Brewer and others as characterising a modern bureaucracy, but these traits arrived relatively late in the port of London, which was largely administered by the Customs.¹³¹ A prosopographical analysis of all 230 landwaiters, the middle-ranking officers in daily contact with merchants on the Legal Quays, between 1738 and 1785, shows the Customs to have been a pasture for Treasury appointees and a classic instance of Georgian corruption. By 1776 the link between political patronage and fiscal inefficiency was clear to Customs Commissioner Sir William Musgrave, and attempts to discipline officers through wages and pensions were underway from 1783. This chapter nevertheless argues against any simple model of bureaucratic evolution, suggesting that political corruption only got worse in the period immediately prior to the ‘age of reform’, as instigated by administrators like Musgrave and extra-parliamentary political campaigners. Not only was corruption political, it was biological, manifest in the aging bodies of the officers and causing a

¹³¹ Patrick O’Brien, ‘Political Economy of Taxation, 1660-1815’ *Economic History Review*, New Series, 41, 1 (1989), pp. 1-31; John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War Money and the English State, 1688-1789* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Ashworth, *Customs and Excise Trade Production and Consumption, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), part II; See also Ogborn, *Spaces*, pp. 158-201.

breakdown in the relationships with London's merchants as they became increasingly reliant on merchant fees to build up retirement funds. Although London merchants frequently bribed officers, their growing appreciation of a regularly remunerated Customs service suggests that close, reciprocal and corrupt relationships with them were becoming unworkable after the extreme mismanagement of the 1770s.

Chapter three explores the limits of Musgrave's methods by examining the insurance industry in the City, one of the 'routine' utilities applauded by Smith for its unflinching administration of money and things, as opposed to people. Vaughan himself was a director of the Royal Exchange Assurance, and the City's insurance industry has been associated with many shifts in the calculative agency of policyholders as a result of the future-orientated and predictive capabilities of actuarial science. However, Robin Pearson's work suggests that while fire was a particular threat to the City's mercantile warehouses, in no way did this translate into investment in fire-proof buildings in that sector or in the later Docks.¹³² Examining the career of East India Company warehouse builder and insurance surveyor, Richard Jupp, it becomes clear that although the insurance companies collected a lot of data about their policy holders this knowledge was hard to process or formalise. Jupp continued to use traditional, highly flammable material in his warehouses. Explaining this, a further investigation of the warehousing economy suggests that the sector was heavily dependent on high-levels of continuity and trust, which focused on investment into human capital rather than plant. It is argued that warehouses were themselves well articulated calculative spaces that used the signs frequently carried by people, like badges, licenses and tickets, to assess the risk they posed to buildings

Chapter four outlines the role of Legal Quays and Docks in creating commercial writing. Drawing on ideas used by Miles Ogborn in *Indian Ink*, it suggests that the Quays were a crucial site in generating knowledge about trade, which contributed to the political, economic and cultural values deployed by merchants like Vaughan.¹³³ Exploring several genres of writing about the Quays emanating from the Customs, merchant lobbies and the 1796 Inquiry into the Port of London, the

¹³² Robin Pearson, 'The Impact of Fire and Fire Insurance on Eighteenth-Century English Town Buildings and Their Populations', Carol Shammas ed., *Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment* (London: Brill, 2012) pp. 67-93.

¹³³ Miles Ogborn: *Script and Print in the Making of the East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

chapter suggests that the volume and reach of commercial information grew considerably over the eighteenth century. Each of these genres of writing described or formed networks aimed at making members of the commercial community more compliant, whilst also spreading that information more widely. Commercial information made both new ideas about political economy and labour processes on the Quays more accessible as well as making commercial networks more bureaucratic. It served, therefore, to reshape mercantilist sensibilities by reaching beyond merchants to politicians and other members of the commercial community. Further it is suggested that Vaughan's Docks were another iteration of this process, creating better commercial information with which to press down on Quayside labour but also altering the calculative agency of City merchants. Combined with shares, these disrupted the colonial lobbies still further, and suggesting that the top-down analyses of the Docks by Linebaugh, following Marx, and Ashworth, following Foucault, are obscuring the interactions between knowledge, sociability and property that made the Docks capable of forming elite sensibilities as opposed to only offending them.¹³⁴

Focusing on the port of London in depth, this dissertation shows that Vaughan and his associates not only tried to fight mercantilism but that they had some success in materially changing how it operated. In doing so they contributed to a shift towards more Smithian markets. However, the Bowood Set were by no means entirely successful, and their plans were both resisted and highjacked; saw many objectors bought-off rather than convinced; and gentlemanly standards amongst themselves and at the upper echelons of the large bureaucracies that they courted, or ran, were never questioned. Enrolling people into a Smithian consensus took many 'things' but the networks got larger, more complicated, and more regularly bureaucratic in most cases.

¹³⁴ See Foucault, *Discipline*; Linebaugh, *London*; Ashworth, *Customs*.

Chapter 1: Calculative Agency in London

This chapter aims to do two related things. First it will consider London in the eighteenth century, giving a sense of its breadth and growth, as well as distinguishing between the business cultures prevalent in each district. In doing so it aims explore Michel Callon's notion of calculative agency and how historians might use it as an analytical tool. In particular, it will add to the debate surrounding the role of consumption in crafting 'enlightened' economies and novel identities in Britain. Through a study of around 1,400 insurance policies this chapter shows that the economic identities of different parts of London were peculiar. Relationships sustained through trade in silk and ironware were unevenly spread throughout London, occurring in different social contexts and spaces. The research suggests that communities saw and experienced commodities in relatively unchanging economic settings like the shop or warehouse. Radical changes in either sector were rare, which rendered the break promised by the Docks campaign particularly disconcerting for those in the distribution sector. It is the furore surrounding William's Vaughan Docks campaign that prompts the second claim made here, chiefly that these materially embedded economic identities had a political element, which meant his Smithian agenda was understood variously across the capital. Politeness has been used to explore how ideas, sociability and political agency were structured in certain cultural milieu in the eighteenth century, and it is suggested that similar canons existed in less affluent communities as well. These milieux were preeminently experienced through geography in such a way as to create several fairly intractable calculative frameworks around London that, far from rendering new ideas like Vaughan's inadmissible to certain communities, did limit their uptake. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the idea of an economic enlightenment was by no means broadly accepted as rational because it was one of many ways of understanding an economy where local cultures had very different ideas about how economic activity should be sustained culturally, politically and materially.

Section 1: Calculative Agency

Callon's concept of calculative agency foregrounds information of any kind, the ability to process it and the ability to act on it in making economic decisions.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Michel Callon and F. Muniesa, 'Economic Market as Calculative Collective Devices', Trans. Ecole des Mines [orig., "Les marchés économiques comme dispositifs collectifs de calcul", *Réseaux* 21 (2004), pp. 189-233], pp. 6-7.

Everybody is potentially an economic agent but there are barriers to how that agency is deployed. In Callon's argument, data occupy real spaces, with a definition of 'space' that stretches from the supermarket shelf to the computer screen. Whilst processing these data requires education, vocational training or experience, "computing" also happens in space, where the data can be arranged, compared or mathematically manipulated. The ability to realise an outcome from a calculation further requires that one has the opportunity to go through the formal channels appropriate to that kind of transaction, such as selling ('objectifying') a share or choosing ('singularising') a particular product. None of these steps is evenly distributed across society at any one time, though communication technologies are important at all three stages. For instance, portable digital technologies make comparisons of price and quality with other retail outlets possible, even when one is immediately confronted with the limited stock of an individual store.¹³⁶ 'A new way of conceiving of the relations of domination running through and structuring markets thus emerges, by considering that they are inscribed in relations of calculation.'¹³⁷

In the eighteenth century pronounced inequalities in education, wealth and the distribution of products and services, compounded by slow communications, resulted in sharp differentials in calculative agency across the economy. Contemporaries perceived the City as the heart of the moneyed interests. It was underpinned by an accumulation of agencies that processed and circulated uncommon information-rich objects like bills of exchange quickly by virtue of their social and geographical proximity. For example, the urban-rural divide, issues around literacy and the simple fact of poverty meant it was highly unlikely that a Cumberland spinster could acquire shares, let alone play the stock market. Markets were not even and Callon's concept asks one to distinguish the 'algorithmic configurations' that 'circumscribe calculative agencies', 'organise their encounter' and 'establish rules and conventions'.¹³⁸

The same applies when looking at the more quotidian commodities passing through the port of London, like sugar, lead or East India goods. Although transported around the United Kingdom and re-exported, these commodities existed within networks of marketing agencies of differing scales, geographical penetration and social constitution, as Sheryllyne Haggerty has shown for the ports of

¹³⁶ Callon and Muniesa, p. 21.

¹³⁷ Callon and Muniesa, p. 23.

¹³⁸ Callon and Muniesa, p. 27.

Liverpool and Philadelphia.¹³⁹ Agricultural and primary products could have highly uncertain qualities, putting wholesalers, who had a greater choice of goods and more information about sellers, at an advantage. Retail shoppers also had limited ranges of goods to choose from in terms of quality, although the number of shops in a particular area had the potential to extend this spectrum. Alternative materials might also be a factor, as in the cloth trade, where woolens, linens, cottons and silks of various grades and mixtures had to compete at varying prices.¹⁴⁰ Fashionable designs in anything from porcelain to shoe-buckles further distinguished the calculative potential of consumers, both in their ability to afford premium goods and respond to information about the tastes of others. Things themselves constituted information in use, when seen in combination with other similar things, and seen in certain spatial contexts like the pleasure garden, street market or warehouse.

Putting to one side momentarily the challenges inherent in undertaking a mass inventory of calculation, it is useful to elaborate why this approach matters and the historical debates the research speaks to. From the perspective of historians of the last 15 years or so, it has become orthodox to argue that consumption needs to be integrated with production in any explanation of the British economy. This tack argues that an examination of consumers results in better understanding of the diverse range of products, design practices and production processes that preceded, accompanied and eased large-scale factory output. Not only does this make sense from the point of view of classical economics but it is at the heart of the 'consumer revolution' thesis floated in the early 1980s. As John Plumb, John Brewer and Neil McKendrick forcefully pointed out, marketing worked in tandem with productive forces.¹⁴¹ Jan de Vries also influentially re-modeled the concept in his 'industrious revolution' paradigm, locating in the seventeenth-century household a turn away from traditional self-sufficiency and home-produced goods

¹³⁹ Sheryllyne Haggerty, *The British Atlantic Trading Community, 1760-1810: Men, Women and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 183-211.

¹⁴⁰ See D.C. Coleman, 'An Innovation and Its Diffusion: The New Draperies', S.D. Chapman ed., *The Textile Industries, Vol. 2* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 613-27.

¹⁴¹ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, Routledge, 1993); Michael Snodin and John Styles eds., *Design and the Decorative Arts in Britain 1500-1900* (London: V&A, 2001). For a markedly different chronology see Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

towards novel services and products acquired on the market.¹⁴² Purchasing rather than producing commodities required cash and, as such, an income necessarily derived from the market as a specialist supplier of goods or services. De Vries' theory refigured the place of men and, importantly, women in the economy across social strata, imbuing them with a rational and self-interested outlook, and providing them with an agency in the economic landscape that was to take shape slowly in the eighteenth century.

In perhaps the most sophisticated synthesis of this scholarship, Maxine Berg has stridently put the case for changing attitudes toward 'Luxury and Pleasure' amongst middle-class consumers as prompting and hastening the exploitation of a range of novel products, materials and styles. Berg finds in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century economic discourse of Bernard Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith and others the idea that identities could be crafted through the acquisition of goods rather than schooling or church.¹⁴³ Their thought shifted consumption of luxuries from a morally-charged problem to a socially useful and economically desirable phenomenon that spurred on the manufacture of endless consumer novelties. Berg simultaneously reveals the luxury and semi-luxury commodities capable of firing middling imaginations and opening their purses. Such goods came from the Far East, were dispatched to America and were imitated, pirated and redeveloped in new materials to suit middling Britons. Though global in scale and conducive in some instances to factory-style production, the palette of processes, markets and materials was one prone to elaboration rather than standardisation, profoundly diverse and innovative.

Berg's work provides an excellent model, showcasing the insights gained by connecting producers with consumers through material culture. Her approach is doubly important for this study because she poses the question of how London fits into this system. London had an extensive middling population throughout the eighteenth century, and it exerted a significant cultural pull. However, Berg points to the more noticeably expanding, confident and upwardly mobile industrial towns like Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Sheffield that 'carried forward the

¹⁴² Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52, 4 (1994), pp. 249-270; idem., 'Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods', Brewer and Porter eds., *World of Goods*, pp. 85-132; Cf. Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in the English Household* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 173-4.

¹⁴³ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 21-46.

great dynamic of modernity based on provincial and industrial enlightenment. They were not poor copies of London, but distinctive centers of intellectual ferment, industrial and scientific innovation and provincial and regional pride.¹⁴⁴ Here, Berg echoes Ferdinand Braudel and T.S. Ashton in foregrounding the role of the provinces in galvanising British economic activity by joining taste with productive forces.¹⁴⁵ The argument also rubs shoulders with Joel Mokyr's vision of an Enlightened Economy in Britain, slightly different to Berg's, where a free market in 'useful knowledge' allowed industrial savants and fabricants to develop the productive processes which led to sustained economic growth.¹⁴⁶ Evangelists of Mokyr's thesis have also given Birmingham a central role, but have questioned whether Berg's notion of changing consumer demand and expectations 'belong in any causal sense to the history of the Industrial Revolution'.¹⁴⁷

Chris Evans has used the example of plantation hoes to argue that any association of enlightenment and consumption must be highly qualified, and provides another cogent reasons to probe the "production-consumption" model. Evans suggests that the mass-produced hoe was redesigned continually in eighteenth-century Britain, adapted to different climates and crops, branded and became a signifier for colonial agricultural politics. However, this process had a disjointed relationship with its primary market, slaves, who had little choice in their tools or location as consumers. He goes on to argue that, in terms of hoe-design,

It is the masters whose voices appear in the written record, and they who wrote the script, but the instructions issued by planters must have stemmed from observation of their enslaved workers and consultation with them...Yet even here, slave consumers remain inscrutable, rendered so by their servitude and kept so by the accumulated contempt that surrounds the implement with which they labored.¹⁴⁸

He continues, 'The case of the hoe suggests that some goods were in themselves protean; the intrusion of psychocultural variables—"desire" and the like— was not

¹⁴⁴ Berg, *Luxury*, p. 211.

¹⁴⁵ Ferdinand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life* (London: 1974), p. 440; T.S. Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 40.

¹⁴⁶ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1850* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁴⁷ Peter M. Jones, *Industrial Enlightenment: Science, Technology and Culture in Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Chris Evans, 'The Plantation Hoe: The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Commodity, 1650-1850', *William and Mary Quarterly* 69, 1 (2012), pp. 100, 71-100.

required. (And if psycho-cultural factors explain so little in the case of the hoe, how much are they really explaining with regard to other goods?).' Evans makes the case that some products exist in a milieu removed from the processes of identity crafting elaborated by consumer theorists, occupying a place that actually rendered their users invisible.

As John Styles has further explained, plebeian expenditure in Britain represents an important social category that should cause historians to pause when assessing the impact and depth of consumerism in the period preceding industrialisation. His work suggests the acquisition of fashionable clothes and accessories could be achieved on credit, but thrift often prevailed, especially when young families were setting up home.¹⁴⁹ Studies of second-hand markets, from auctions to pawn shops, have also suggested the persistence of strategies of appropriation and adaptation in the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁰ Army and navy provisions, uniforms and ordnance contracts suggest that a further dislocation between consumers and those who realised use-value was not uncommon in the period.¹⁵¹ Various forms of what Styles calls 'involuntary consumption' meant that the enlightening potential of consumer choice was blocked, circumscribed or highly mediated for large swathes of the population.¹⁵²

Given Smith and, subsequently, the Bowood House Set's concern with the proper method for achieving material wealth, as described in the introduction, debates over the enlightening capabilities of the economy are of no small moment to this thesis. Berg and Mokyr are no doubt correct in suggesting that some towns or sections of the economy did grow spectacularly, Birmingham being the prime example, and this could lead to new found confidence and radical ideas. It could

¹⁴⁹ John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2007), pp. 228, 229-47 and idem., 'Custom of Consumption? Plebeian Fashion in Eighteenth Century England', Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 103-15.

¹⁵⁰ Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme, 'Introduction: Modernity and the Second Hand Trade: Themes, Topics and Debates', Stobart and Van Damme eds., *Modernity and The Second Hand Trades: European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 3; Beverley Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life, 1600-1900* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 86-93.

¹⁵¹ Beverley Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan/Palgrave, 1997), pp. 9-43; N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649 – 1815* (London: W.W. Norton, 2004), pp. 368-380.

¹⁵² Styles, *Dress*, pp. 247-8.

also lead to profound discontent heaped with moral and political implications, as Patrick O'Brien and Giorgio Riello have illustrated using foreign travellers' accounts of the British industrial revolution.¹⁵³ Ironically, Berg also begins her book by recounting the sacking of Joseph Priestley's house in Birmingham in 1791, though does not interrogate the 'Church and King' riots further. Likewise, Mandeville, the often quoted arch-priest of consumerism, saw his scandalous *Fable* burnt by the public hangman in London. The enlightenments presented by economic historians do little to assuage the criticism that they are too limited to account for the range of social groups that engaged with the world of goods at differing intensities and their varied reactions to the thoughts of philosophers and critics.

What Lawrence Klein wrote of the British capacity for 'politeness' applies equally to the term 'enlightenment' in its current formulation:

Cultural capacity is like linguistic ability in a polyglot setting, which can be activated by different individuals to different extents, depending on their abilities, needs and interests...It follows that stable and fixed relations do not exist between cultural traits and groups of people: clearly cultural traits are patterned but the patterns are fluid and unpredictable. The sort of cultural interpretation that is called for here is not therefore a correlation of cultural traits with a level of social hierarchy but rather an account of what people think they are doing and expressing when they perform social actions.¹⁵⁴

Politeness has, of course, been a particularly productive way of examining middling British culture, but the research questions Klein outlines can be generalised through Callon's calculative agency quite easily. Klein from a historical vantage and Callon from a Deleuzean one are pursuing a similar tack in asking what material, economic and cultural factors need to be in place to "activate" agents in relation to exchange, how it is conceptualised, discussed and reiterated socially. The advantage of Callon's more abstract model is that it does not rely on antimonies (polite-impolite) but can allow for a more nuanced analysis that might range the enlightened, the polite, the thrifty and the enslaved together. Nor should it exclude the political connotations of the market.

Like Mandeville, Vaughan's Docks equally caused Londoners to question the wisdom of his ideas despite his promises that they would enhance London's

¹⁵³ Patrick K. O'Brien and Giorgio Riello, 'The Future Is Another Country: Offshore Views of the British Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 22, 1 (2009), pp. 1-29.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 45, 4 (2002), p. 873.

prosperity. The Dock campaign of 1796 saw 39 petitions reach Parliament and clear distinctions can be drawn between, on the one hand, chartered and overseas merchant groups 'for' the docks and, on the other, petitioners grouped along parochial, ward or district lines 'against' them.¹⁵⁵ Apart from the opposition that came from the Corporation of London and the wharfingers, who were directly interested in maintaining their monopoly, petitions originated from three Southwark parishes, Rotherhithe, the Thames-side wards of Billingsgate, Tower, Queenhithe and Vintry, and Candlewick and Aldersgate. All these communities predictably complained that established networks linking the docks to the wider economy would be rendered redundant by removing the protected Legal Quays from their current location. By contrast, Westminster residents made no petitions.

Statistics generated in the nineteenth century continually suggest to historians that the maritime East End and industrial suburbs on the northern fringes of the City suffered endemic poverty when compared with the City and West End.¹⁵⁶ Yet poverty itself does not explain the political form or content of the opposition to improving programmes put forward by the merchant groups promoting the Docks. As the residents of St John, Southwark, stated, 3,000 feet of wharfs and considerable investment in warehousing meant,

That full Four Parts in Five of the Housekeepers of the said parish consist of lightermen, warehousemen, watermen and persons who are led to reside in the said parish on accounts of the local benefits arising to them therein from its advantageous situation immediately at the seat of commerce [i.e. the Legal Quays] and, who, in consequence of any removal of trade therefrom will either be totally deprived of their connection and livelihood or otherwise compelled to move therefrom under great uncertainty of obtaining a living elsewhere¹⁵⁷

They envisaged getting poorer if the goods that they housed, transported and administered were removed. And so would the other 'shopkeepers' and tradesmen of the parish, alongside those dependent on the poor rates they produced, which

¹⁵⁵ PP, *Journal of the House of Commons*, LI (1796), pp. 424-519.

¹⁵⁶ L.D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions in the Capital, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and idem, 'Social Class and Social Geography: The Middle Classes in London at the End of the Eighteenth Century', *Social History*, 7, 2 (1982), pp. 169-70; David R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp. 52-79; Michael Ball and David Sunderland, *An Economic History of London, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 113-114.

¹⁵⁷ PP, *Journal of the House of Commons*, LI, pp. 464-5.

had been propped up by sophisticated annuities schemes. The petitioners were far from plebeian in the sense used by E.P. Thompson.¹⁵⁸

The Docks suggest debates over the location and nature of economic activity were as much about preserving communities as wholesale endorsements of enlightened political economy that promised progress. *Expectations* formed around persisting types of economic activity, and not just production or consumption but lumpen and mercantile activity too, shaped the reception of ideas or *projections* of economic futures, as the Docks were at the time. Whilst the well-educated and theoretically informed Vaughan can be seen as an exponent of an enlightened view of the economy, Callon's notion of calculative agency is very useful for exploring the structures which meant several conflicting interpretations of his ideas emerged in response, i.e., the merchants' backing, the bankside parishioners' discontent and the West End's indifference. What Callon understands as information, education and access (and Klein as 'polyglot...abilities, needs and interest') had material supports which can be measured, compared and localised in time and space. The quantifiable nature of these 'things' also reveals patterns and variations in economic practice that add to rather than detract from Berg's central proposition, that material culture matters, albeit not to the exclusion of related forms of expression.

The next section elaborates how to uncover these populations of economic artefacts, in London at least, with the aim of producing a dynamic analysis of difference and continuities of economic practice by looking at the location, material culture and capitalisation of firms engaged in the silk and iron trades there. Subsequent sections will outline the resulting findings in aggregate and through detailed case-studies of specific business configurations revealed in the sample. As a whole this chapter is not an attempt to assess the economic viability of the Docks, so much as explore of a methodology designed to reveal why they, as an enlightened idea, could generate different meanings.

Section 2: Modelling Agency

This section looks at the London economy in order to think about how we might begin using calculative agency to probe claims about the coincidence of economic practices and ideas concerning the market. In particular, it draws attention to a phenomenon known as 'clustering', prevalent in the literature on industrialisation, the work of Alfred Marshall and historically minded economic network theorists like

¹⁵⁸ See also my discussions of the West India Dock Compensation scheme in Chapter 3 and 4.

Mark Casson. Clusters form a platform to interpret data harvested from insurance records, which are seen as markers of growing economy agency and as spatially bounded. Even within London, regional specialisation did create benefits for manufacturers and retailers. However, it is argued that certain firms were often fairly limited in their business outlook, albeit for different reasons. While this left City merchants to play an intermediary role between regions, it also created pockets of radically different calculating agencies, which can be crudely compared using the insurance policies. As we will see, economic growth was not necessarily matched by a decline in parochialism because economic calculations had more or less fixed material constituents.

Leonard Schwarz's analysis of the capital during the period of industrialisation provides an excellent description of London's economic structures. London's two 'heroic' periods of demographic expansion occurred in the centuries before 1660 and after 1850.¹⁵⁹ The thrusting dynamism of the provinces evoked by Berg is rather lacking and the picture is murkier: 'Under the apparently stable surface, however, change was constant.'¹⁶⁰ Trade, trafficking, finance and legal and government services made London distinctive and were highly lucrative.¹⁶¹ However, as Schwartz stresses, London also remained the biggest manufacturing centre in Britain, its strength lying in extensively integrating traditional workshop manufacture. Industries requiring larger plant simply found London too expensive to undergo expansions in scale, except on the peripheries. Instead, London comprised sets of interlocking businesses, where production, finishing and marketing were undertaken by a series of sub-contractors, as in Clerkenwell watchmaking or Fleet Street engraving, publishing and printing.¹⁶² The standing and wealth of retailers and wholesalers grew into to 'a shopocracy' as a result of the productive gains caused by linking highly specialised craft processes with the 'Court' in the West End taking finer goods and the port in the City servicing the export trade.¹⁶³

David Barnett has re-iterated this analysis in his exhaustive study of London's economy using insurance records from between 1770 and 1825. In his view, London supported an extraordinary and increasing variety of businesses, with

¹⁵⁹ Schwarz, *London*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁰ Schwarz, *London*, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Schwarz, *London*, pp. 11-14; Ball and Davidson, *London, 1800-1914*, pp. 74-5.

¹⁶² See Schwarz, *London*, pp. 32-3; Ball and Sunderland, *London, 1800-1914*, pp. 166, 179.

¹⁶³ Schwarz, *London*, pp. 29-30, 60-73.

the capital's strength founded on diversity and finishing trades but not necessarily on large-scale works. He, too, points towards the retailers and wholesalers who made up a culturally significant and wealthy portion of his sample.¹⁶⁴ Again, this proliferation in the diversity and size of firms was based on existing structures rather than the creation of an ostensibly new one built on extensive coal-powered machinery. Even by the seventeenth century, London dwarfed provincial towns, but it was not 'homogenous', consisting of 'distinct but interdependent economic districts'.¹⁶⁵

The emphasis on specialisation evident in all the secondary literature concerned with industrialisation can be clarified by reference to Alfred Marshall's concept of industrial 'clusters'. His *Industry and Trade* suggested that while heavy industries need to be located near sources of power and material, and whereas plant cannot be economically accommodated in towns, smaller workshop-style production could still flourish. 'An industry which does not use massive material, and needs skill that cannot be quickly acquired remains as of yore loth to quit a good market for its labour.'¹⁶⁶ Drawing an example from cutlery, precisely the consumer durables Berg sees as constitutive of enlightened production, Marshall wrote: 'Sheffield and Solingen have acquired industrial atmospheres of their own; which yield gratis to manufacturers great advantages, that are not easily to be had elsewhere: and an atmosphere cannot be moved.' Clusters of firms need not be provincial towns *per se*, but simply bunched in areas that allowed them to exploit relative advantages they had over other neighbourhoods, regions or nations. Their capabilities are also well suited to flexible production, in that,

their industrial specialities are mainly of two kinds. They do nearly the whole of the finest manual work, and especially the artistic element; while of course they use subtle mechanical appliances, where these are serviceable. They also make goods of all kinds, and especially clothes to the order of rich customers, that are conveyed to the producers through a special class of shopkeeper; who themselves do much of

¹⁶⁴ David Barnett, *London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution. A Revisionary History, 1775-1825* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), Ch. 6, esp. pp. 131-9

¹⁶⁵ Charles Harvey, Edmund Green and P.J. Corfield, 'Continuity, Change, and Specialization Within Metropolitan London: The Economy of Westminster, 1750-1820', *Economic History Review*, 52, 3, (1999), p. 490.

¹⁶⁶ Alfred Marshall, *Industry and Trade: A Study of Industrial Technique and Business Organisation; and Their Influence on the Conditions and Various Classes and Nations* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1919), pp. 284-5.

the constructive work in designing; pay very highly for the work they put out; and at the same time make extraordinarily high profits and turnover.¹⁶⁷

The emphasis on materiality underpinning craft skills prompts Marshall's opinion that 'a man can generally pass easily from one machine to another; but that the manual handling of a material often requires fine skill that is not easily acquired in middle-age: for that is the characteristic of an industrial atmosphere.'¹⁶⁸ Firms concentrating, thus, in a small area gain from more efficient marketing, competition between small firms, pooling of information and the relatively easy transmission of design practices.

Clustering creates benefits for those close by, especially in marketing. Marketing is the type of information about goods available to consumers, and necessarily these forms have a spatial aspect. A sign or shop front requires people to walk past it; a newspaper advert is mobile but limited by the distribution network; lists of prices are adequate when contracts are relatively secure across distances. Physical or cultural distance are registered by the forms of information economic agents choose to pursue or generate and, as Mark Casson argues with Marshall in mind, the quality of this information implies access to specific networks.¹⁶⁹ The further up the supply chain one is, the greater the likely investment in impersonal marketing, like branding, in order to benefit from economies of scale, as opposed to cultivating trusted patrons or clients through direct contact.¹⁷⁰

How, then, might clusters in eighteenth-century London be mapped? First, one might look in trade directories like *Kent's*, published throughout the century, which list the names of firms, the trades they pursued and their addresses in order to build up a picture of where different industries gathered. Second, one might examine insurance policies and follow roughly the same procedure. The Sun Policies, running continuously from 1710 onwards, provide an excellent resource. Typically fire insurance policies contained a date, the name and address of the

¹⁶⁷ Marshall, *Industry*, p. 284.

¹⁶⁸ Marshal, *Industry*, p. 285-7.

¹⁶⁹ Marshall, *Industry*, pp. 7-13; M.C. Casson, 'An Economic Approach to Regional Business Networks', Wilson and Popp eds., *Industrial Clusters*, pp. 19-43; Walter W. Powell and Laurel Smith-Doerr, 'Networks and Economic Life', Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg eds., *Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 370. For a discussion of clustering from an ahistorical vantage see Michael E. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (London & Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), pp. 131-175.

¹⁷⁰ Mark Casson, *Enterprise and Leadership* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000), 'Marshall on Marketing', pp. 107-33.

policyholder, their occupation and the sum covered. This last feature is of signal importance in that it gives a gauge of how much capital each business insured. Thus, richer clusters can be distinguished from poorer ones. Moreover, later policies even break down the capitals insured into the categories of real estate, household goods, stock and utensils, books, plate, apparel and china and glass, which gives unrivalled insights into the priorities of policyholders. Buildings or pieces of industrial equipment that were considered outlandish or rare like mills were also noted on the policies.¹⁷¹

The policies permit an insight into the relative calculative agency of the policyholder. This is especially apparent in terms of retail and marketing. Whereas in productive sectors a large policy might signify a high investment in fixed plant, in sales-orientated sectors this implies consumers had a large choice of products and a wider knowledge of the market. It also suggests whether they were able to sell expensive goods in that district or not. Clearly overlaps existed between wholesaling and retailing, and it is not suggested here that wholesalers strictly abstained from shopkeeping or *vice versa*.¹⁷² Nevertheless, given that stock in trade represented 70-90% of the total capital insured by the firms studied here, focusing on shops gives us at least some measure of how “the market” was territorialised in different districts of London, in terms of the density of retail or wholesale outlets and the abundance of goods in them.

Insurance policies are not without their problems as a source, as the detailed technical discussion in Appendix 1 shows. However, they do offer the opportunity to start thinking about the choices facing businesses and their customers in a manner different to those suggested by other kinds of business records, like account books or journals. Their combination of location with the sums covered highlights the existence of clusters in London and helps us to identify relatively affluent ones, thereby signalling areas with distinct cultures of production and consumption. In doing so, insurance records can be used to corroborate insights found in the extensive secondary literature on London trade, but also draw our attention to what made particular environments lucrative or not. This pushes further a preoccupation of this thesis, where close attention to insurance strategies over time, the use of

¹⁷¹ D.T. Jenkins, ‘The Practice of Insurance Against Fire, 1750-1840, and Historical Research’, Oliver M. Westall ed., *The Historian and the Business of Insurance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 28-34.

¹⁷² Hoh Cheung Mui and Lorna Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), *passim*.

buildings and the information provided by sources including advertisements, criminal depositions and business records have been used to explore business models that are largely absent from existing secondary literatures, especially with reference to the wholesaling and distribution sectors. It is these patterns which made the Docks so highly contested.

Section 3: The Silk and Iron Trades in London

The next two sections outline the statistical case for the argument that Londoners enjoyed different levels of access to commodities depending on their location. In this context, the selection of silk and iron for these studies invites elaboration.

Silk was the choicest textile in early modern Britain due to its exotic origin and consequent expense. Importing silks, other than raw bails, was subject to a high degree of mercantilist interference, as cloths processed by aliens were seen as robbing British weavers of work. London's Legal Quays were the focus for these imports, not only because it was the largest single market for silks but also because it was the seat of the Customs Commission, who worked with the Weavers Company and City merchant houses to police the trade.¹⁷³ Domestic silk weaving centered on Spitalfields, though many processes, especially dying and throwing, were completed outside of London, where labour was less fractious and water was more accessible. Coventry ribbons and Macclesfield handkerchiefs were amongst the standardised products sent back to London from the provinces, though Norwich and Essex also produced broad cloths of mixed fibres, crepes and gauzes.¹⁷⁴

Rioting weavers caused the 1765 prohibition of foreign silk imports into Britain, protecting Spitalfields weavers from French competitors. The latter produced cheaper goods as the fibres used in the production of French silk were acquired domestically.¹⁷⁵ More legislation arrived in the Spitalfields Act of 1773 that empowered City Aldermen to fix the wages of weavers in order to dampen industrial

¹⁷³ See N.K.A Rothstein, *The Silk Industry in London, 1702-1766* (Unpublished PhD, University of London, 1961); Schwarz, *London*, 33-8; D.C. Coleman, *The Courtaulds, An Economic and Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I, pp. 13-23.

¹⁷⁴ Rothstein, *Silk*, passim and M.D. George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 182-3; S.H.R. Jones, 'Technology, Transaction Costs, and the Transition to Factory Production in the British Silk Industry, 1700-1870', *Journal of Economic History*, 47, 1 (1987), pp. 75-80.

¹⁷⁵ 5.Geo III.cap.28.

unrest.¹⁷⁶ Silk production in London was increasingly uncompetitive, and wares produced in the provinces were cheaper, although in 1822 provincial manufacturers were said to ‘have had not the taste’ of Londoners.¹⁷⁷ Catering for the fashionable London market, however, Spitalfields could capitalise on the industrial atmosphere and circuits of knowledge generated by London’s retailing mercers. Vaunted designers of seasonal ‘flowered’ silks, such as Anne Maria Garthwaite, emerged as professional taste-makers. Geographical fixity in combination with an abundance of existing secondary studies makes processing the policies generated by Spitalfields weaving a somewhat fruitless enterprise. Instead, this study will focus on those policies associated with the more mobile throwsters to represent the productive part of the trade, alongside those of mercantile silkmen and retailing mercers, which are less well known.

Richard Cambell’s *London Tradesman* provides a concise description of what these terms meant, though he understates the complexity of the interaction between them and their customers. Silkmen bought raw silk, which they acquired through City merchants importing from the Levant and Italy, like John and Thomas March whose letterbooks survive, the East India Company or on their own account. Campbell saw them as straddling overseas and inland distribution, though his description speaks of the exalted status overseas merchants enjoyed despite the fact they probably shared plenty of skills: ‘If we consider him as a warehouse-keeper and retailer, he requires no great genius...if as a merchant, we refer him to that chapter where his qualifications are comprehended under the description of a general merchant’.¹⁷⁸ Silkmen sold raw silk to throwsters who converted the ‘skein’ into yarn in sheds, employing both drawing mills and a large number of hands in the winding stage, ‘mostly women’.¹⁷⁹ In turn, the throwsters sold to dyers and weavers both in London and elsewhere. Mercers retailed finished silk cloths bought from them, though, as we shall see, this was not straightforward.

Iron was subjected to far less formal regulation than silk, despite the fact that domestic production was substantially supplemented by higher quality imports from

¹⁷⁶ J.H. Clapham, ‘The Spitalfields Acts, 1773-1824’, *Economic Journal*, 26, 104 (1916), pp. 459-471.

¹⁷⁷ *House of Lords Sessional Papers*, 1823, 13, p. 113.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Campbell, *London Tradesman* (London, 1747), p. 261.

¹⁷⁹ Campbell, *London*, p. 261.

the Baltic.¹⁸⁰ By the end of the seventeenth century, London's Ironmongers Company was a dining club that administered charitable bequests not the trade.¹⁸¹ Finished iron goods came to London from the Midlands overland or by river via Oxford, while the Sussex Weald supplied ordnance to the Navy Board and London Merchants until the 1770s.¹⁸² After 1770, large-scale ironworks in Wales, the north and Scotland began to dominate the process of casting goods, although outworking remained the dominant mode of organisation in the Midland trades.¹⁸³ However, large volumes of Baltic bar-iron were landed in London and even if most was shipped to regional centres of production, the policies sampled in this study reveal some founding was carried on in London, as well as detailed working and finishing. Fashionable ironwork ranged alongside staple products, especially hand-tools, locks and nails, meaning the imperatives of ironmongers and iron-founders differed materially from fashionable mercers in scope.

Insuring as an ironmonger or mercer did not necessarily mean that the policyholder was confined to selling iron or silk. At the retail end of both trades, the necessity of offering customers a large range of products doubtless meant that goods other than silk and iron would be stocked.¹⁸⁴ Mercer Richard Perkin insured the King's Arms, Henrietta Street, and Covent Garden in 1720. On his death in April 1722, his shop was inventoried: in addition to silks it included cottons, woolens, and shagreens.¹⁸⁵ Similarly Campbell asserted that 'the brazier and ironmongers shops are generally united, and in them you find Grates, and Stoves of all fashions,

¹⁸⁰ K-G. Hildebrand, 'Foreign Markets for Swedish Iron in the Eighteenth Century', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 6, 1 (1958), p. 3 and J.R. Harris, *The British Iron Industry, 1700-1850. Studies in Economic and Social History* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1988), p. 50.

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Glover, *A History of the Ironmongers' Company* (London: Ironmongers' Company, 1991), p. 94. Cf. Robert Plumsted, *Letterbook, 1756-58, In the University Library, Cambridge*, Ralph Davis intro. (Wakefield: Micro Methods), to the 'Ironmongers Clubb', ff. 436-7.

¹⁸² Marie B. Rowlands, *Masters and Men in the West Midland Metalware Trades Before the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 99-106 and Henry Cleere and David Crossley, *The Iron Industry of the Weald* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), pp. 205-11.

¹⁸³ William G. Staples and Clifford L. Staples, *Power, Profits and Patriarchy: The Social Organisation of Work at a British Metal Trade Firm, 1791-1922* (Oxford and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 17-19.

¹⁸⁴ Mathew Craske, 'Plan and Control: Design and the Competitive Spirit in Early- and Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain', *Journal of Design History*, 12, 3 (1999), p. 193.

¹⁸⁵ V&A Sun, Mercer, Richard Perkin, 1720. TNA, PROB 3 21/80.

Pokers, Fire Shovels, [etc.].¹⁸⁶ Likewise, a trade card for the Ironmongers Edward and William Martin of Foster Lane from 1776 advertised a dizzying range of products, including

all sorts of files and tools for goldsmiths, jewelers, engravers, clock and watchmakers; also for blacksmiths, gunmakers, braziers, tin-men, upholsterers, carpenters, joiners, carvers [etc.], Curriers knives and implements for gardening, all sorts of nails, locks, hinges, brass works for cabinets &c., furniture for coffins; all sorts of brass and iron wire, spinnet and harpsichord ditto, watch keys, glasses springs [etc.]. Melting pots of all sorts, Houghs [hoes], bills, axes and other iron work for ye plantations.¹⁸⁷

Given the diversity of materials and the forms they were worked into, it is likely several suppliers would be engaged, although it is impossible to be sure which goods constituted the primary source of income for an individual trader. A good number of policy-holders insured with dual occupations, usually in cognate sectors: for example ironmonger-braziers, or, mercer-drapers. The wide range of contacts fostered in amassing these inventories still helps explain the lateral movement of, say, mercers to woolen drapers.

The aggregated insurance policies reflect the buoyancy of the silk and iron trades across the eighteenth century. Outlining the key movements briefly serves to provide a basis for a more detailed discussion of the trends and strategies considered later in the chapter.

For the silk trades, the chronology delineated by table 2.1 is relatively straightforward and conforms to the narrative drawn by earlier historians of the industry.¹⁸⁸ The early eighteenth century was a golden period, the mid-century saw a dip in activity, which was arrested in the 1770s, before declining again towards the end of the century. Before the early-1710s most of the policies state that £300 had been covered by the policyholder, reflecting the cap that applied in these early years for the Sun Office, hence their omission from this table and others. However, in terms of numbers of policies taken out, the 1710s and 1720s were positively hectic for the mercers, with a quarter of total policies falling in these years for all occupations. After that, sums covered were variable, and on the whole tended to rise in real terms until the 1760s, though the volume of policies declined after 1724.

¹⁸⁶ Campbell, *Tradesman*, p. 177.

¹⁸⁷ GL, Trade Cards.

¹⁸⁸ Rothstein, *Silk*; Coleman, *Courtaulds*, i; George, *London*, pp. 182-3; Jones, 'Technology'.

As Natalie Rothstein has suggested, the capture of French overseas colonies in the Seven Years War led to an unsustainable boom in British silk production for the export market, followed by a spectacular collapse immediately after the Peace of Paris, and the statutory intervention to protect the industry after the Parliamentary Inquiry of 1764-5.¹⁸⁹

Table 2.1: London Sun Policies, Silk trades

	Mercers		Silkmen		Throwsters	
	Number of Policies	Average deflated Policy (£)	Number of Policies	Average deflated Policy (£)	Number of Policies	Average deflated Policy (£)
1710-14	79		10		8	
1720-24	88	637	4	546	9	603
1730-34	44	1405	5	1916	10	720
1740-44	31	1519	1	309	8	1037
1750-54	22	1638	3	1804	2	722
1760-64	37	2077	6	598	18	1712
1770-74	52	2161	15	823	19	859
1780-84	38	2243	11	1899	4	712
1790-94	59	1564	4	1842	3	1624
1800-1804	20	1630	2	1862		
1810-14	29	1438	5	5257	2	286
Total	499		66		83	

Sources: V&A Sun Index (V&A Sun). Values deflated using the Schumpeter-Gilboy price index, industrial products (B).

These strains were felt unevenly in the industry: the period 1760-3 saw a high number of policies taken out by mercers and throwsters, who exploited favourable conditions before a near complete cessation in 1764. By comparison, although few silkmen insured before the war, and silkmen completely ceased insuring between 1756 and 1759, activity in this sector also rose after 1760. By the 1770s, the number of policies had risen, though it must be noted that inflation also decreased the real values of the capitals insured by throwsters and mercers. Silkmen insured slightly more in real terms when compared with the 1760s. However, they were also most affected by the dangers wartime posed to shipping and cargos; the early 1760s meant both unforeseen risks and a buoyant demand for

¹⁸⁹ Rothstein, *Silk*, p. 100.

their product at home. Overseas conflicts raged during all the sample periods after 1774 and made themselves felt across all the silk-related occupations assessed here, as did inflation. By this point, the industry was in terminal decline measured by both the volume of policies and real values. The rate of decline was not the same across the industry, happening comparatively slowly for mercers and much more dramatically for throwsters and silkmen, as silk processing increasingly moved away from London.

Table 2.2: London Sun Policies, Iron trades

	Ironmongers		Iron founders	
	Number of Policies	Average deflated Policy (£)	Number of Policies	Average deflated Policy (£)
1710-14	28			
1720-24	30	460		
1730-34	22	953		
1740-44	28	710		
1750-54	19	942	2	941
1760-64	53	894	2	821
1770-74	58	1176	3	1100
1780-84	28	975	4	1856
1790-94	84	1046	4	992
1800-1804	41	867	1	268
1810-14	67	1149	5	1054
Total	458		21	

Sources: Museum of London Library Sun Index (ML Sun). Values deflated using the Schumpeter-Gilboy price index, industrial products (B).

The historical narrative for London's iron trade is not so clearly defined. And yet, proper attention to insurance records reveals that its trajectory stands in stark contrast to that of silk. Illustrated in table 2.2, its story was one of slow, hard-fought growth. For ironmongers, the real values covered by policies rose on average from £460 in 1720-24 to £1,149 in 1810-14, with twice as many policies being taken out at the end of the period. Given the domestic origin of iron and its use in ordnance and shot production, it comes as no surprise that wars did not have the same adverse effect on the trade as they did for silk, though locating a pattern for the growth of the trade is tricky. Seemingly, war did check growth in the 1740s when there was a fall in average real-coverage, although this was without a

corresponding decline in the numbers of policies filed. In the latter periods, this changed: a notable period of regression occurred in the 1780s, when policy numbers *and* real-coverage dropped during the American Revolutionary Wars. Colonial exports represented a major component of British hardware, and problems in this sector filtered through to the London trade, indicating the extent to which global, in addition to local markets, were significant.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the London trade had rebounded by the 1790s, before a similar cycle occurred between 1800 and 1815. By this time, ironmongers had overtaken mercers in terms of coverage by volume and average policy value. The resilience of the industry in straitened circumstances was, perhaps, sustained by advances in forging, puddling and casting in the Midlands and Wales, which resulted in lowered production costs. Equally, the increasing number of policies also suggests ironmongers adapted to increasingly variegated markets in London.

Section 4: Location

Insurance policies were assiduous in noting the addresses and locations of the goods they concerned. However, there was no generic form of street address in the eighteenth century, which complicates any attempt to map this information. The addresses given in the policy documents testify to the layered nature of place, usually combining one or more of the following signifiers: a shop-sign or, after 1767, house number; a street name; a parish or district (Wapping); or a local landmark (Monument). Contemporary maps allow street names to be traced with reasonable accuracy, but rarely do they allow, say, the precise location of the King's Head, Paternoster Street, as insured by Charles South, mercer, in 1742, which on long shopping streets could make a considerable difference to the character of the area.¹⁹¹ Moreover, major thoroughfares like Cheapside crossed several knots of parish boundaries, making the omission of the nearest parish by the Sun clerks especially irksome. Addresses outside central London were noted with little attention to detail, with Joseph Cook, mercer, insuring a business at 'Uxbridge' in 1743.¹⁹² Presumably this indifference to detail reflects the scarcity of mercers there, and therefore the relative ease with which he could be located at the time. Consequently, the following attempt to locate these trades is at best a splicing of

¹⁹⁰ Chris Evans, 'Plantation Hoe', p. 78 and n. 12.

¹⁹¹ V&A Sun, Mercer, Charles South, 1743.

¹⁹² V&A Sun, Mercer, Joseph Cook, 1743.

often-imperfect information taken from the policies with cartographic sources that are inevitably silent on some points.

With this caveat in mind, this section proceeds by utilising an anachronistic analysis concerned with broad geographical trends. To outline general trends, the policies were assigned a geographical district within London, shown in Figure 2.1. From west to east these are Westminster, Covent Garden, Western City Suburbs, West City, East City, Eastern City Suburbs, South London and Other Suburbs. The district boundaries are consonant with that of the modern day post-coding of central London (WC1, EC1, etc.), though these have been modified in order to retain a sense of the City of London's integrity relative to the rest of the capital. The City has been broken into two large sectors, west and east on a line running from London Bridge to Bishopsgate Street. The Eastern City includes the Legal Quays and primary overseas mercantile district. Each of these City sectors has been assigned a suburban component, roughly equating with areas 'without' the traditional City walls and radiating outward. The West Suburbs include Holborn, Clerkenwell and Hoxton; the East Suburbs include Spitalfields, Whitechapel and Shadwell. The Covent Garden district stretches down to the Thames, bounded by Clare Market on the East and Leicester Square in the West. Anything further west is assumed to be Westminster. Urban south London is counted as one district, though areas like Greenwich are included in a zone designated Other, made up of outlying villages including Chelsea and Uxbridge.



Figure 2.1: Districts used for the study: Source: Motco.co.uk

In terms of the geographical distribution of policyholders, Table 2.3 shows a clear distinction can be made between the iron and silk trades. Divisions of labour

were reiterated by location in the silk trades. For the throwsters, the Eastern Suburbs of Spitalfield and Whitechapel were the focus of most policies. Considering the concentration of the weavers here, this is hardly surprising. Despite a more varied distribution in the 1720s, most silkmen operated from the West City with some activity appearing in neighbouring districts in the East City and Western Suburbs from the 1730s. Given the silkmen's mercantile function, their City location also seems sensible. The mercers generated the largest volume of policies, at 499. In combination, these suggest a trade that was similarly concentrated geographically, while also presenting a picture that was more complex than either the silkmen or throwsters. Two districts, Covent Garden and the West City around Cheapside, generated 157 and 109 policies respectively, comprising over half the sample. Westminster and the East City generated a quarter more, meaning the remaining four districts in the East, South and Suburbs supported under a fifth of the mercers between them. Such a disparity between north-west and south-east suggests wealth and fashionability were decisive factors in the location of mercers' shops. Reiterating this relationship, ironmongers were far more evenly distributed around London. Despite a tilt towards Westminster and the West City, no single district dominated as lopsidedly as did Covent Garden's mercers. The aggregate figures suggest two patterns: one shaped by occupational networks and the fairly static concentrations of silkmen and throwsters in particular areas of London; the other, prominent in the retailing trades, points to a relationship between markets, fashionability and goods, to which the mercers were particularly sensitive.

Table 2.3: Sun policy activity by district

Throwsters	Westminster	Covent Garden	West suburbs	West City	East City	East Suburbs	South	Other
1710-14						8		
1720-24						7		
1730-34						6		
1740-44				1		7		
1750-54					1	1		
1760-64						16		
1770-74			1	1		5		
1780-84						2		
1790-94	1							
1800-1804								
1810-14						2		
Total	1		1	2	1	54		

Silkmen	Westminster	Covent Garden	West suburbs	West City	East City	East Suburb	South	Other
1710-14	2	1	2	4				
1720-24				1	1	1		
1730-34				3		1		
1740-44				1				
1750-54				3				
1760-64				5		1		
1770-74				8	4	1		
1780-84			2	7		1		
1790-94				3	1			
1800-18 04				2				
1810-14				2	2			
Total	2	1	4	39	8	5		

Mercers	Westminster	Covent Garden	West suburbs	West City	East City	East Suburb	South	Other
1710-14	6	31	2	26	7	1	2	1
1720-24	8	30	4	16	8		7	4
1730-34	1	15	1	13	4		2	1
1740-44		9	2	10	6			1
1750-54	1	7	2	5	1	1	1	1
1760-64	1	17	2	8	2		1	3
1770-74	1	14	8	16	6	1		
1780-84	5	13	2	3	6	1	1	
1790-94	15	12	7	6	8	3	4	
1800-180 4	6	5	3	3	1			2
1810-14	13	4	3	3	1	2	1	
Total	57	157	36	109	50	9	19	13

Ironmongers	Westmins ter	Covent Garden	West suburbs	West City	East City	East Suburbs	South	Other
1710-14	8	6	2	2	2	2	1	
1720-24	6		4	8	1	2	2	1
1730-34	6	1	3	6	1	1	1	1
1740-44	2	2	6	6	1	1	5	1
1750-54	4	4	3	4	1		1	1
1760-64	14	5	5	3	5	6		2
1770-74	14	3	7	9	2	8	3	3
1780-84	4	2	4	4		7	4	
1790-94	13	3	13	12	5	11	8	6
1800-1804	8	1	6	11		6	1	1
1810-14	8	5	10	11	7	10	6	2
Total	87	32	63	76	25	54	32	18

Sources: V&A Sun and ML Sun.

Viewed historically, a pronounced shift in the districts inhabited by mercers is identifiable in table 2.3. Again, this is far less noticeable amongst the ironmongers. Indeed, Covent Garden and the West City tailed off significantly as desirable locations for the silk trade after the industry's partial recovery in the 1770s. The 1790s is a particularly interesting period, showing how these two traditional heartlands of mercery lost ground to competitors in Westminster, the Western Suburbs and even the East City. Measured by the volume of policies in each district, Westminster seems to have become increasingly attractive during this later period, taking up a growing proportion of the declining trade. With the iron trade tending to be more active, and insuring larger capitals, no narrative of decline can be fixed to it, with no one district emerging as dominant at the end of the period. Westminster and the Eastern Suburbs engrossed a large proportion of the trade in the 1760s and 1770s as the trade expanded as a whole, but only the latter managed to retain this share into the 1800s. Other than a very slight long-term increase in the share of the trade operating from the East City, little changed in the ironmongers' geography, which remained fairly evenly spread across the entire period considered.

In both trades, South and East London, and London's outlying villages remained undesirable locations. Mercers and ironmongers, on average, covered markedly less valuable goods in these areas. Further, activity in these districts tended to coincide with peaks in the trade, falling off to nothing or negligible levels when the trades were doing badly elsewhere. For example, of 32 mercers' policies taken out in South London and the Other suburbs, 24 came between 1710 and

1764 when the trade was in rude health. Similarly, 50 ironmongers insured in these districts, 34 of them after 1770 when the trade was doing well. Undoubtedly the lack of sufficiently wealthy markets deterred mercers. Suburban East London expanded in population by 213,809 between 1801 and 1841, but generated just 5 mercers between 1790 and 1814 compared with 27 ironmongers.¹⁹³ The built environment also played its part, with mercers John Turner, John Barry and William Jones & Thomas Richard all expanding into the East City Minories in the 1770s and 1780s, only after George Dance's square and crescent had gentrified the area.¹⁹⁴

Assessing the liveliness of a trade by the number of policies taken out in each area can be a blunt tool, indicating enterprise without suggesting its scale. To further uncover levels of activity, it is necessary to make an assessment of the average value of assets insured by ironmongers and mercers in each of the districts. Doing so echoes the story outlined above, although Appendix 2 complicates the matter somewhat by providing a detailed discussion of the problem posed by real property in the sample.¹⁹⁵ Table 2.4 shows mercers preferred Covent Garden, which remained the area where they were keenest to locate until the 1770s, whereupon Westminster, the Western Suburbs and West City began to take up a larger proportion of their capital. In 1760-4, Covent Garden accounted for £39,646 of £70,905 of capital insured by the mercers, and 17 of 34 policies. After 1790, assets in Covent Garden were quite insignificant, signifying the area's general decline. By contrast, mercer investment in the Western City remained heavy in the later sample periods, although with only small numbers of policyholders covering large sums. A comparison of the average policy taken out in each district makes the same point more directly. In 1790-4, 12 mercers insured in Covent Garden had an average policy value of only £786, whereas 6 were insured in the West City at an average of £1,756. In the same period, however, both districts lagged well behind the 15 Westminster policies, which covered an average of £2,148, and the 7 Western Suburbs' policies, which covered an average of £2,458. By 1810-14, Westminster saw 13 policies taken out, covering £1,423 on average; the West City, 3 policies at £1,764, and the West Suburbs, 3 policies at a high average of £3,029. By any measure, Covent Garden, had gone from being the most buoyant of

¹⁹³ David R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), Table 2.1, p. 52.

¹⁹⁴ V&A Sun, Mercers, John Turner, 1772; William Jones & Thomas Richard, 1774; John Barry, 1791.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix 2 for a discussion of property.

mercery districts in the early-eighteenth century to being reduced to competing with small fry in the East End by the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Trade drifted westwards into Westminster, which was preeminent in terms of insurance activity and the large average values for policies. Towards the City something different happened: although the West City saw a decline in the number of mercers insuring, significant businesses remained there and in Western Suburbs, which housed a few, highly capitalised outlets. This was a significantly different wholesaling model making its presence felt.

Until 1760 the ironmongers' investments remained far steadier across the districts, when the Eastern Suburbs around the Thames became homes to high levels of capital, circumstances that might be related to the war. By the 1790s, Westminster, the West City and Western Suburbs accounted for the majority of capital insured. Like the mercers, Westminster saw much activity, with large average policies evident in the 1790s. Nevertheless, the West City and Western Suburbs were not left behind: 13 Ironmongers were insured in Westminster at an average of £1,569; 12 in the West City at £1,582; and 13 in the West Suburbs at £1,175. These districts continued to be home to bustling markets through to 1810-14, and trade in the South, Eastern districts and Covent Garden also expanded, albeit with lower than average policies. Unlike the mercers, who formed a ring of fairly well capitalised outlets on the City's eastern boundaries, ironmongers eschewed the district. Rather, the Eastern Suburbs supported a number small of ironmongers. By comparison with the mercers, ironmonger investment in specific districts did not experience dramatic fluctuations; nor did one district dominate the trade at the expense of others, while average capitals tended to be more proximal. This equality of distribution must be attributed to the ubiquity of iron goods in the household during the period, which made a local retailing ironmonger indispensable. That said, from 1770 a gradual acceleration of activity with expanding capitals in Westminster, Covent Garden, the Western Suburbs and West City saw the classic poor East-rich West division take shape.

Table 2.4: Relative activity of mercers and ironmongers by district, selected years

Mercers	Westmins ter	Covent Garden	West City	West suburbs	East City	East Suburbs	South	Other
1720-24: average (£) number	775 8	685 30	632 16	486 4	798 8	0	695 7	471 4
1760-64: average (£) number	543 1	2332 17	2418 8	662 2	2583 2	0	2174 1	902 3
1790-94: average (£) number	2148 15	786 12	1756 6	2458 7	166 8	626 3	633 4	0
1810-14: average (£) number	1423 13	833 4	1764 3	3029 3	1772 1	1136 2	1421 1	0

Ironmongers	Westminst er	Covent Garden	West City	West Suburbs	East City	East Suburbs	South	Other
1720-24: average (£) number	520 6	0	457 8	424 4	300 1	427 2	718 2	500 1
1760-64: average (£) number	644 14	1026 5	1216 3	1073 5	990 5	1459 6	0	696 2
1790-94: average (£) number	1569 13	966 3	1582 12	1175 13	1194 5	389 11	596 8	319 6
1810-14: average (£) number	1225 8	1160 5	1487 11	1130 10	867 7	875 10	1002 6	351 2

Sources: V&A Sun, and ML Sun. Values deflated using the Schumpeter-Gilboy price index, industrial products (B).

Dividing London into anachronistic districts is less than ideal. Clearly these districts fail to do analytical justice to the ironmongers in the same way they do the mercers, as the equivalent calculations tend to be much flatter in the former case. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw conclusions from the available evidence. Firstly, the distribution of the iron and silk trades differed considerably in London. Secondly, it is clear that, even if mercers were contracting and ironmongers expanding, in a

large city like London these general trends were not evenly spread. Some clusters could expand against the run of the trade, showing that their primary customers were substantially different despite similarities in occupation. Thirdly, in highlighting variations in the patterns of insurance across the districts, it is also clear that a degree of occupational variety existed within each trade, which also had spatial characteristics. Each of these points suggests that the calculative agency of Londoners differed considerably from place to place, though changed relatively slowly over time.

In order to highlight how these different economic cultures map onto the tripartite division the Docks campaign provoked, three case studies will be examined: first, what permitted mercers in Westminster to usurp the once fashionable Covent Garden; second, the structure of West City mercery and, third, the East-West division in ironmongery. In these next sections the stress is on how information systems built around polite culture and what I will term wholesaling and maritime culture actively framed the economic decisions of the policyholders in the sample set. It is not that these markets were rivals but constructed from different material and subsequently “activated” by different concerns. Accordingly, commodities, wealth, spaces, communications and the accessibility of goods were managed differently, combining the social, economic and material into one ‘machine’, which, as Giles Deleuze reminds us, should not be seen as determining but adapted to the agents capable of using it.¹⁹⁶

Section 5: Covent Garden and Westminster Mercery

Claire Walsh, Linda Levy Peck, Maxine Berg and Nancy Cox have reinvigorated scholarly appreciations of early modern retail in the last twenty years or so. These writers have emphasised the breadth and sophistication of eighteenth-century marketing techniques as precursors to the department stores that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and which still prevail in Covent Garden and Westminster’s Oxford Street. Preeminently they have been at pains to describe how the location, design, layout and displays deployed by retailers could manipulate consumer expectations and define their markets in the higher ends of the trades they have considered.

Claire Walsh, for instance, has explained how retailers put great effort into adapting shops to attract customers through ornament, decoration and well-glazed

¹⁹⁶ Giles Deleuze, ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’, *October*, 1 (1992), p. 6.

windows, allowing them time and space to browse, providing quasi-private back-rooms and arranging commodities within shops to set off their material qualities to best effect.¹⁹⁷ This had implications, too, for salesmanship and the concept of shopping for leisure and pleasure. The interplay between retailer, customer, space and goods mattered in securing a sale or constructing a memorable experience for the shopper, which might be capitalised on later. These encounters were often dependent on gendered performances. As Linda Levy Peck has shown in her account of the novelty of the seventeenth-century Exchanges, these were not new to the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁸ Trade cards and newspaper advertisements, as conduits for this kind of nuanced cultural information or branding, have also received attention. This scholarship has emphasised the role of both in the construction of consumers and legitimisation of consumption practices through image and text.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Kate Smith has stressed the haptic skills shoppers required, and the embodied information needed to participate successfully in luxury marketing of this type.²⁰⁰ Intimate retail strategies, elaborately differentiated goods and the consumers' search for wares at the right price contributed to the expansion of retailing districts, where individual trades or wealthier retailers gathered on certain streets to bewilder buyers through *copia*.

Sadly, the rigidly generic Sun policies tell us relatively little about the adoption of these design practices by individuals, though it is very likely mercers in this district were at the forefront of these marketing tactics. Contemporary commentators like Campbell saw mercers as somewhat suspect characters: a gendered and xenophobic discourse that pervaded discussions of silk in the mid-eighteenth century. Male mercers were 'nimble, dancing [and] talkative', furnished with 'intelligence from the fashion office at Paris': 'The mercer who intends to

¹⁹⁷ Claire Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8, 3 (1995), pp. 157-176 and idem., 'Social Meaning and Social Space in the Shopping Galleries of Early Modern London', John Benson and Laura Ugolini eds., *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Five Centuries of British Retailing* (London & New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), pp. 52-79; Nancy Cox, *The Complete Tradesman. A Study of Retailing, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), esp. chapter 3 with Claire Walsh, pp. 90-8.

¹⁹⁸ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour. Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 57-62.

¹⁹⁹ Jon Stobart, 'Selling (through) Politeness: Advertising Provincial Shops in Eighteenth Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 5, 3 (2008), pp. 309-328; Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 67-96; Berg, *Luxury*, pp. 247-79.

²⁰⁰ Kate Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship: The Haptic Skills of Shoppers in Eighteenth Century London', *Journal of Design History* (2012), pp. 1-10.

succeed in his business ought to humour the ladies, accommodate himself to their taste and understanding, as much as a rational creature can.'²⁰¹ Likewise Mandeville's anatomy of cupidity, *The Fable of the Bees*, pointedly detailed a young woman's trip to a mercers, who 'By precept, example, and great application, he has learned unobserved to slide into the inmost recesses of the soul, sound the capacity of his customers, and find out their blindside unknown to them: by all which he is instructed in fifty other stratagems to make her over-value her own judgment as well as the commodity she would purchase.'²⁰² William Hinchcliffe insured his shop on Henrietta Street for £625 in 1774, which his will, proved a year later, stated contained his stock 'and all the fixtures, utensils and other things in, about or belonging to the warehouse, shops, comptinghouse where my trade and business is now carried on for the best part', suggesting a generous outlay on strategically used premises.²⁰³ Certainly many other mercers in Covent Garden, Westminster and parts of the City had sufficient capital and inclination to create the sumptuous sky-lit interiors represented in print by the end of the century, as in Figure 2.2.



Figure 2.2: 'Harding Howell & Co.', Pall Mall, 1807. Source: britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk

²⁰¹ Campbell, *Tradesman*, 197-8.

²⁰² Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, Irwin Primer ed./intro (Capricorn Books: New York, 1962), pp. 164-6.

²⁰³ V&A Sun, Mercers, William Hinchcliffe, 1774; PROB 11/1013/40, 1775.

The policies are far better at giving teeth to the argument that place mattered, and demonstrate how much benefit high-end retailers derived from prime locations. Jon Stobbar, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan have collectively put a great emphasis on 'polite' spaces of consumption, arguing that decorum in dress, manners, and built environment eased interactions between commercial and gentlemanly actors.²⁰⁴ The dream of orderly spaces populated by well-mannered people persisted throughout the century, with a strong emphasis on the exchange of goods as well as ideas. Theatres, assembly rooms, coffee houses, pleasure gardens and the spaces associated with polite sociability not only attracted shops but positively required them. Indeed, politeness needed to be 'earned, demonstrated and defended', not least through the acquisition of tasteful bundles of goods like tea and the equipment to serve it, which were novel, fashionable, exotic and expensive.²⁰⁵ Crucially, politeness was socially inclusive and economically exclusive, a double edge that meant it was continually contested, fretting and agitating. Politeness and consumption went hand in hand, and the policies generated in Covent Garden and Westminster suggest that policing through consumption underpinned the atmosphere in this district. As will be demonstrated, the hunt for fashionable consumers was not static and involved mercers disavowing older Covent Garden for novel locales despite courting a similarly affluent market with characteristically expensive wares.

The policies advise us that Covent Garden became increasingly undesirable to mercers, whereas Oxford Street and Bond Street's stock rose in the minds of contemporaries. By 1813, John Nash's flamboyant Regent Street was underway with fanfare, separating out the districts around Soho and Piccadilly from the opulently classicised streets to the north and west. In 1812, the story a few hundred yards east was very different: the vestry of St Paul's, Covent Garden, complained to the Bedford estate that the central market was occupied by 'China and other Crockery Ware, Poultry, Old Iron, and a variety of articles not enumerated in the Grant', and that in consequence even the roadways round the Piazza were 'occupied by the Stalls and Baskets of those who cannot find Room within the Rails'.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Jon Stobbar, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1660-1830* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 4-8.

²⁰⁵ Stobbar et al, *Spaces*, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ *Survey of London: Vol. 36- Covent Garden*, pp. 129-150.

By the time of these complaints, Covent Garden was nearing 180 years old. It had been a fashionable suburb designed by Inigo Jones in the 1630s with impeccable Palladian dignity. Robert Cecil had seen the potential of the area in 1608, building the New Exchange on the nearby Strand, which housed retail concessions on two galleried stories surrounding a courtyard, in imitation of the City's Royal Exchange. Classicism *per se* was not the problem, rather the area's social standing had dropped. Throughout the seventeenth century it had been a hub for female seamstresses and milliners, and John Strype described it in 1720 as 'a great resort of the nobility and gentry'.²⁰⁷ However, Strype's confidence in the vigour of the Exchange, and its ability to attract the gentry, appears to have been misplaced, as it was demolished and built over in 1737. By the time of Hogarth, Covent Garden had a demotic, sleazy reputation, best encapsulated by *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1757-95), an annual trade directory and puff for the sex industry, and none too polite.

From the 1760s, it was the northern parts of Westminster and the new suburbs emerging around Oxford Street that began to vie for attention, a process that accelerated from the 1790s. Like Covent Garden, King's, St James', Grosvenor and other Squares in Westminster all had pretensions to rectilinear planning, albeit around grand residential piazzas as opposed to markets. Side streets were turned over to tradesmen and shop fronts installed in the ground floors in a manner equivalent to those found in King and Chandos Street and the thoroughfares around Covent Garden, with the building typology being similar throughout. In terms of the insurance policies, those of Westminster and Covent Garden silently articulate the desirability of classicised Georgian shops in their unwillingness to offer detailed descriptions of the properties covered. Where City or East End policies might include notes on odd out buildings, warehouses or describe where two properties were 'knocked into one', those for the West End are notably mute. Quite apart from the homogenous nature of West End town planning, the Covent Garden and Westminster abutted one another, with a corridor of mercers present throughout the century in Panton Street, Cranbourne Passage and the streets around the early eighteenth-century developments of Charing Cross and Piccadilly. Development of the de Walden-Cavendish-Portland and Bedford estates in the early 1750s and again after 1770 provided the impetus, and a suitably wealthy clientele for these mercers, as well as some of the bigger ironmongers. Busy thoroughfares and

²⁰⁷ Peck, *Consuming*, p. 57-62.

distinct shopping streets like New Bond Street and Oxford Street stand out as popular locations. A polite district was defined less by radical architectural forms than fresh locations, which were singularly important to mercers, as they withdrew from older hubs into newer streets. As a result mercers moved, caterpillar-like, from the Strand and Covent Garden to ever-greener pastures.

Covent Garden remained associated with the fashion trades for at least another generation after the New Exchange shut. In the eighteenth century it was unique in some respects. We know the area was famed for retailing fashionable products intricately involved with the labour-intensive needle trades, like tailoring and millinery, allowing for disproportionate number of female entrepreneurs to set up.²⁰⁸ David Barnett has calculated that about 8% of all London policyholders were women without noting any geographic bunching in their distribution.²⁰⁹ Of 23 women taking out policies as mercers, 14 were Covent Garden residents, with other districts supporting just one woman each. Women were, therefore, under represented amongst mercers, but also far more likely to become properly established in Covent Garden than anywhere else. Clearly the industrial atmosphere was conducive to skills deemed female. Nevertheless, female mercers were clearly vulnerable, tending to insure lower than average capitals, and their number fell off markedly after 1760, when the trade began to experience difficulties: 12 insured before that date, 2 afterwards. Women were finding it increasingly difficult to enter into the trade even in this district and quickly became confined to under-average businesses between 1770 and 1820.²¹⁰

The move away from Covent Garden towards Westminster was not immediate. In real values, some of the biggest mercers insured in Covent Garden in the 1770s and 1780s. Thomas King, William King, Thomas Thompson & William Padget insured £14,000 of stock there in March 1770, with an additional £6,000 of assets covered by the Union Fire Office.²¹¹ Another partnership made of William Barlow, William Ashburne, Richard Ellison & George Nelthorpe covered £10,000 in

²⁰⁸ Nicola Philips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 135-6.; Harvey et al, 'Occupations'; Peter Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries' *Economic History Review*, 42, 3, (1989), pp. 340-1.

²⁰⁹ Barnett, *Hub* p. 208; See also Phillips, *Women*, p 144.

²¹⁰ Barnett, *Hub*, pp. 208-10

²¹¹ V&A Sun, Mercers, Thomas King, William, Thomas Thompson & William Padget, 1770

King Street in November of the same year.²¹² By 1781, however, the partnership had been pared down to Barlow & Nelthorpe, and £4,000 of goods.²¹³ Such partnerships speak of the massive outlays on stock needed to set up as a mercer, which were exacerbated by late-century inflation and doubtless put an additional bar on women, already socially and legally disadvantaged, as independent economic actors.

The coincidence of well-financed firms with an area's peak affluence reiterates the centrality of economic exclusion in constructions of politeness. Poll books show that Westminster and Covent Garden were hubs for fashionable consumption throughout the century, with about two-thirds of the voters present involved in making or retailing luxury and semi-luxury goods.²¹⁴ Westminster engaged in an extraordinary and burgeoning range of high-end manufacturing, finishing and retailing services, from coach and furniture making to professional 'bug-killers' and actors. A significant body of legal and political professionals, alongside their genteel families, funded this diversity, drawn to the area from around the country by the courts, the Royal Court and Commons. Compared to the rest of London, Westminster was wealthy: the 1798 income tax assessment shows Westminster (including Covent Garden) could boast as large a proportion of highest-income residents earning over £128 per annum as the City, both significantly greater than the poorer eastern parishes, where the majority of those eligible for the tax earned less than £79 per annum. Retail contributed more to acquisition of wealth in Westminster than the City or the East: for every 100 shops in Westminster there were only 100 residential houses, whereas the City had 245 and the Tower Division 187.²¹⁵ Given their wealth, mercers could exploit the opportunities presented by polite consumption better than competing tradesmen.

However, manufacturing the allure of fashionable shopping was a cumulative endeavour. In Westminster, few streets were deemed suitably well heeled, further underlining the point that polite consumption relied on accepted canons as much as change. Mercers gained strength not by being outliers but by banding together with other high-end retailers. Sophie Von La Roche's breathless descriptions of the glittering streets in the West End pay testament to the spectacle in 1788:

²¹² V&A Sun, Mercers William Barlow, Richard Ellison & George Nelthorpe, 1770.

²¹³ V&A Sun, Mercers, William Barlow & John Nelthorpe, 1781,

²¹⁴ Harvey et al., 'Occupations', pp. 478-9.

²¹⁵ L.D. Schwarz, 'Social Class', pp. 169-70.

First one passes a watchmaker, then a silk or fan shop, now a silversmiths, a china or glass shop. The spirit booths are particularly tempting...crystal flasks of every shape and form are exhibited: each one has a light just behind it which makes all the different colours sparkle. Just as alluring are the confectioners and fruiterers, where, behind handsome glass windows, pyramids of pineapples, figs, grapes, oranges and all manner of fruit are on show.²¹⁶

For the cloth trades, touch had particular importance for making comparisons of quality and denier. By bunching together mercers were making a further play on the immediate, unrepresentable quality of their goods to distinguish this form of shopping. Comparisons between products by consumers were *de rigueur* and part of the excitement: 'whether they are silks, chintzes or muslins, they hang down in folds behind fine high windows so that the effect of this or that material, as it would be in the ordinary folds of a woman's dress, can be studied...Behind great glass windows absolutely everything one can think is neatly and attractively displayed, and in such an abundance of choice as to make one greedy.'²¹⁷

That mercers were concentrated in particular locales suggests that retailers and consumers had an understanding, fostering a symbiosis of taste, market and place that was self-reinforcing. In continually gravitating towards- or creating- fashionable shopping streets, mercers were not static, but moved slowly and conservatively. Judging by the average policy valuation in Covent Garden and latterly in Westminster, this aura of exclusivity appears to have been a relatively effective means of ensnaring the most affluent patrons throughout the century. What needs to be stressed, however is that this form of polite consumption was highly contingent on the forms of novelty engineered with a specific socio-economic group in mind. In this respect, the focus of the business strategy, while undeniably successful, was shortsighted marketing ambitions, which remained squarely focused on using visual and material culture to lure in leisured shoppers. The modulations of consumer expectations, purchasing power and calculative spaces were highly specialised, and contrasting them with the mercers of the West City shows very different consumer-cultures could be carved out of the urban environment.

²¹⁶ Sophie Von la Roche, *Sophie in London, 1786, being the Diary of Sophie v. la Roche*, trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p. 87.

²¹⁷ Von la Roche, *Sophie*, p. 67.

Section 5: City Silk

The western fringes of the City of London around Wood Street, the Barbican and West Smithfield show that the saturation of sensory information which West London mercers used to entice customers was not the only route to a sale. According to the income tax assessment, the City's wealth was on a par with Westminster's, but it was acquired differently. For a start, there were fewer shops in the City. Where the Sun Policies demonstrate that the West End mercers followed novelty, City clothiers stayed put or moved into decidedly insalubrious neighbouring areas on the outskirts of the City walls. As described above, the community of mercers found in the vicinity of Cheapside in the beginning of the century contracted into increasingly large firms. From the 1770s, a small number of similarly well-capitalised firms emerged in the extramural parishes. Both these shifts seem counter intuitive given the hunt for genteel markets undertaken by the West End mercers: the City, though wealthy, was depopulating throughout the eighteenth century, whereas its outer-suburbs were increasingly populous but poor.

Stanley Chapman has noted the importance of Wood Street in the cloth trade, remarking that the growth of provincial textile manufacturers makes the resilience of London as a marketing hub 'one of the apparent anomalies of economic history'.²¹⁸ In explaining the situation he put great weight on the warehouse system in cementing and transforming London's relationship with provincial producers. Eighteenth-century Wood Street dominated the outward distribution of yarns and the inwards reception of finished cloths. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, low-profit-high-turnover warehousing firms gave Londoners in this region the upper-hand, taking advantage of wars, overproduction and tumbling prices. Without discounting the importance of retailing in these districts, the policies indicate that the presence of wholesaling and mercantile concerns was much stronger here than elsewhere, broadly in line with Chapman's thesis. Focusing on West City mercery shows that their customer were geographically distant and relied on different marketing information, not the forms specific to Covent Garden.

Cheapside was the City's most dazzling shopping route and well known for its luxury traders by 1600.²¹⁹ The buildings surrounding Cheapside also housed the

²¹⁸ Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain from the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 167, 167-190.

²¹⁹ Hazel Forsythe, *The Cheapside Horde: London's Lost Jewels* (London: Museum of London, 2013), pp. 20-49.

most influential institutions in the City, and bounded its most affluent quarters, according to a 1695 tax assessments.²²⁰ At one end was the Royal Exchange, whose upper galleries were well stocked with ribbon and toy sellers. Probably past its fashionable prime even by the time Pepys frequented it, the Exchange's cellars were let to the East India Company as a bonded silk and calicos warehouse in 1767. The Bank of England and Mansion House were also located at this junction in the 1730s, clearing away Stock's market and raising the profile of the area considerably. Halfway down Cheapside was King Street, leading to the Guildhall and neighbouring Blackwell Hall, home to the factor-merchants that supervised the Wool trade. At Cheapside's west end was St Paul's and the slope down towards Ludgate, the Fleet and West End, which constituted London's primary east-west axis. Foster Lane, Wood Street, Milk Street and Aldermanbury to the north-west of Cheapside also boasted significant concentrations of mercers, although none were major shopping streets. Other City gates, Aldgate and Bishopsgate in the East City, produced similar concentrations around arterial roads.

Tracking the movement of silk from the Legal Quays and out of London shows that supply chains were long, convoluted and reliant on different kinds of information from those used by West End retailers. Bales of Italian and Levant silk came off the Quays into merchants' houses or, in the case of Chinese silks, the East India Sale-room.²²¹ From here, the silk was thrown into yarn. It is clear from the Sun policies, shown in table 2.5, that many throwsters operated out of Spitalfields and in adjacent districts. Much silk was also going to the provinces, especially to the Norwich weavers and a number of highly capitalised firms in Derby, where mills had been in use since the 1720s. Dying, finishing and weaving were undertaken in the provinces too, with yarns or ribbons returning to the capital from Coventry. For both silkmen and throwsters, London's dominance was far from absolute and the interplay between different productive processes and competing regions was of great importance to their trades. The variety of fibres and finishes certainly put these occupations into contact and, sometimes, partnership in London. Throwster Samuel Spragg went into partnership with silkman Thomas Hopkins, insuring £3,000 worth of stock in a warehouse on Billiter Lane, advertising 'Raw and Dy'd Belladine Silks;

²²⁰ D.V. Glass ed., *London Inhabitants Within the Walls, 1695* (London: London Record Society, 1966), pp. xx-xxi and Map 2.

²²¹ See LMA, CLC/B/227/MS8724, John and Thomas March, Turkey Merchants, Out-letter book, 1768-88.

China Cord; Blond & Lace Silks; Silver Silks, Stay, Watch and Purse Twist; Naples Floss; Legee; Bologna; Spun, Knitting and Sleeve.²²²

Table 2.5, Locations of Throwsters and Silkmen insuring with Sun, 1777-1786

Throwsters			Silkmen		
London	Clerkenwell	2	London	Covent Garden	1
	Spitalfields, Whitechapel	11		Spitalfields, Whitechapel	3
Derby		6		West City	1
Dorset		2		Unspecified	1
Essex		1	Bristol		1
Hants.		1	Coventry		1
Herts.		3	Derby		2
Norwich		16	Kendal		1
Notts.		1	Staffs.		1
Southampton		2	Surrey		1
Worcs.		3			

Source: Sun and Royal Exchange Policies, *LondonLives* (Online).

The West City mercery policies attest to the existence of a higher number of partnerships. Of 109 West City policies, 25 firms covered joint liabilities, comprising 36 policies in total. This is rather higher than the 157 Covent Garden mercers for whom a similar breakdown reads 22 firms taking out 25 policies. That is, around 23% of West City business entered into partnerships, as opposed to 14% of Covent Garden. In short, partnerships were 50% more likely in West City than in Covent Garden. While insuring jointly did not necessarily mean a pooling of capital, as

²²² V&A Sun, Throwsters, Samuel Spragg & Thomas Hopkins, Nov. 1761; Trade-card, 1760, illustrated in Sheila O'Connell ed., *London, 1753* (London: British Museum Press, 2003), p. 96.

opposed to other resources like shared facilities, these partnerships are indicative of a distinctive business environment.

Moreover, only one woman, Susannah Cottle from 1792, was insured in the West City, albeit at well above the average value for that period at £4,000.²²³ Accumulating capital was harder for women trading in the City *femme sole* but it is also apparent in the contrast to Covent Garden that the City inculcated different expectations of women's role in the trade. Long-distance marketing, wholesaling and overseas merchant enterprise, which required extensive capital and credit, were far less accessible to female entrepreneurs, who found retail more amenable as a result.²²⁴ An important addition to West City retailing mercery, this mercantile aspect does much to explain quirks in the sample, not least the lack of female traders there.

The surviving letter-books of Joseph Symson, a Westmorland mercer, provide further insight into the structure of the City cloth trade in the 1710s and 1720s. These suggest that the transfer of funds and credit made a relatively tightly knit cloth trade convenient. Symson sent 'linseys', a local textile comprised of a wool and linen mix, to eight London cloth dealers by packhorse, purchasing stock in return from only two. Symson's trade was not, therefore, bilateral, relying instead on his metropolitan correspondents transferring funds between one another. Of the eight, seven traded from the Wood Street area, and one from Hoxton ensuring this arrangement had a straightforwardly face-to-face aspect.²²⁵ One of the merchants Symson bought from, John Barwick of Fryday Street, is very likely one of the 'mercers' insuring goods at the Saracens Head Inn in 1742 and 1753.²²⁶

Adequate transport was crucial in making City credit profitable, and the West City was a terminal for incoming City coaches. Symson regularly sent his goods by packhorse to the Castle in Wood Street and bought a range of household goods, including a bed, from a dozen other merchants trading from inns in the City. As John Chartres has shown, London's post-Fire coaching inns provided a whole range of services from refreshments, lodgings and stabling, to concessions for wholesalers

²²³ V&A Sun, Mercers, Susannah Cottle, 1791.

²²⁴ Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 145; Haggerty, *British*, pp. 71-4; Barnett, *Hub*, pp. 208-10.

²²⁵ S.D. Smith ed./intro., *'An Exact and Industrious Tradesman': The Letter Book of Joseph Symson of Kendal, 1711-1720* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. lxxi, cxxiii-iv.

²²⁶ V&A Sun, Mercers, John Barwick & Thomas Barwick, 1742 and 1753.

and warehousing, through subtenancy and subcontracting.²²⁷ Akin to coffee houses, they were crucial in facilitating the flow of people, information and goods between London and the provinces, with coaches from the North and Midlands terminating at inns like the Saracens Head in the streets around Cheapside, Aldersgate and Holborn. Dispatching goods from inns was relatively routine, though it created security problems, as the Old Bailey Depositions from porters and warehouse-keepers attest. Wood Street mercer William Everitt had 70lb of raw silk stolen from a coach to Glasgow; alongside the Inn's warehouse-keeper, his dyer vouched for his claim that he had marked his products with specially tied knots to identify them.²²⁸ Long distance traders communicating through knots were a very different breed to West End mercers chattering with their clients.

The majority of stock in the West City sample was still housed with their owners, with some addresses being obviously substantial. For example, William Neale's 1772 policy outlined his dwelling, comprising five wainscotted stories to the front, three to the back, a garret, leaded lights and a marble chimney piece.²²⁹ However, many policies suggest arrangements that were more haphazard, with goods located outside the policy holder's address: Thomas & John Barwick housed their stock in the Saracen's Head Taphouse in 1753; Jabez Willet & Co. stored goods under his house and in another communicating house in 1762; and Robert Nettleton & Thomas Railes insured deliveries of hemp and flax, one in a warehouse near Symmonds Wharf and one at Crosses Brewhouse worth £4,400.²³⁰ John Everett and Thompson Wayne insured £3,000 of goods in Everett's dwelling at the Kings Arms, Cheapside, and a further £1,000 in May Lloyd's warehouse in Star Court, Cheapside, in 1726, before simply insuring the 'Red Lyon Inn' in 1734.²³¹ The

²²⁷ J.A. Chartres, 'The Capital's Provincial Eyes: London's Inns in the Eighteenth Century', *London Journal*, 3,1 (1977), pp. 24-39.

²²⁸ Old Bailey Online, 1778, t17781209-54.

²²⁹ V&A Sun, Mercers, William Neale, 1772

²³⁰ V&A Sun, Mercers, Jabez Willett, Edward Wakefield, Wilmer Willett, Thomas Pratt, 1760 and 1762; Robert Nettleton and Timothy Railes, 1755.

²³¹ V&A Sun, Mercers, John Everett & Wayne Thompson, 1726; John Everett, 1734.

fondness for mercers to house goods at inns complemented that of provincial cloth-merchants, who similarly had interests in coaching centres in market towns.²³²

The improving state of British inland communication due to turn-piking put pressure on London's road-traffic capacity by the mid-century, focused on the City's rim. A raft of infrastructural alterations to ease congestion came in the mid-century, including the piloting of the New Road to bypass Westminster (1750), demolition of the City's Gates (1761), widening of London Bridge (1758-62) and the building of Blackfriars Bridge (1760-9), alongside a number of minor street alterations outlined by George Dance the Younger to eradicate bottlenecks in 1769.²³³ Such moves simultaneously facilitated the movement of bulk goods and communication between producers and marketing-men; developments that were particularly significant for dealers in perishable or fashionable produce.²³⁴ Faster, cheaper and more regular deliveries in or out of London meant less capital needed to be tied up in stock, and that Spitalfield silks could be marketed to the provinces with less risk of peddling last season's patterns. Jon Stobbart has shown how provincial mercers and drapers advertised goods originating in London with increasing frequency in the late-eighteenth century, suggesting the extent to which London signified quality materials and workmanship.²³⁵ Cloth warehouses around Wood Street exploited Spitalfields' status as a luxury producer, creating a business model that was workable precisely because of better transport links.

Changes directed by local government only went so far. The extramural parishes grew unchecked, a benign neglect that was seized upon by West Suburban mercers. Busy Fleet Street had always been home to an enclave of mercers, but the rate of investment in the area from the 1770s was astonishing. The pattern followed the West City merchants, with few policy-holders insuring valuable assets. This phenomenon is particularly interesting because of the disheveled state of some of the neighbourhoods in this comparatively poor district. Clothfair, next to St Bartholomew's Hospital, with its longstanding association with the cloth trade,

²³² S.D. Chapman, 'Industrial Capital before the Industrial "Revolution": An Analysis of the Assets of a Thousand Textile Entrepreneurs, c. 1730-50', N.B. Harte and K.G. Ponting eds., *Textile history and Economic History. Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), pp. 131-2.

²³³ LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/193.

²³⁴ Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 82.

²³⁵ Jon Stobbart, 'Selling', p. 318 and Table 1. See also Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions*, pp. 109-11 on the importance of London brands to fashion and food retailers.

had managed to avoid the Great Fire in 1666 and, as a result, had retained its increasingly antiquated wooden-framed housing stock. Contemporaries were not shy in linking these buildings with the plagues and fire that blighted the seventeenth-century, and Smithfield's live cattle market and attendant butchers nearby were perennially seen as the cause of dirt and disorder that spilled out around the metropolis. Mercer Michael Buxton's address, 'above the passage into Clothfair', distinguishes the insalubrious district, still without numbered doors, from retailing on the West End model.²³⁶ And yet, a string of policies taken out by Thomas Divett illustrate the unmistakable presence of expansion despite testing times late in the century. Divett's firm fits Chapman's model, where Morrison and Co. led a wholesaling vanguard in London during the Napoleonic Wars, described in 1834 as

breaking down the manufacturers owing to changes in the value of money. When the manufacturers' property began to diminish they made very ready use of the credit being offered them to obtain their raw materials. They could maintain themselves for years vending their goods under prime costs at the low priced warehouses of London.²³⁷

Divett covered 58-9 Clothfair, plus stock, for £2,000 in 1786. By 1794, the two houses knocked together were valued at £1,000 and the stock £7,800; and by 1814 the business had grown to occupy three houses and had acquired goods worth £12,000, which despite vicious inflation figured as a slight gain.²³⁸ Divett & Co.'s successes, while pronounced, were not isolated. Other firms in the district also measuring their assets in thousands of pounds, when Fleet Street and even Covent Garden traders were pegged back in the hundreds.

The West End-residing Elizabeth Montagu wrote to fellow Blustocking, Sarah Scott, in 1790 in the midst of fitting out her country residence: 'I am going to the city end of Town this morning to bespeak 280 yards of white satin for the window curtains of my great house, and about 200 for the hanging.'²³⁹ Unlike La Roche it was not the experience of shopping that excited Montague, or the prospect of coming across some novel commodity, so much as the wholesale bargains to be found in the West City.

²³⁶ V&A Sun, Mercers, Michael Buxton, 1773.

²³⁷ *Circular to Bankers* (1834), cited in Chapman, *Merchant*, p. 176.

²³⁸ V&A Sun, Mercers, Thomas Divett & Co., 1786, 1794, 1802, 1807, 1814.

²³⁹ Cited in Berg, *Luxury*, p 40.

With a bi-weekly influx of cattle, drovers, farmers and agricultural dealers, Smithfield was well placed in terms of broader distribution networks. Whether Smithfield's mercers cultivated the same client and credit relationships as the City mercers in Symson's day is moot, yet they certainly maintained large stocks in an area whose key feature was mobility. In this they must be considered an offshoot of the country-orientated trade found earlier about Cheapside. All of this suggests the operation in West City of a business model based on mobile forms and coded forms of information, vehicular accessibility and economies of scale, standing in stark contrast to the fashionable gentility of Westminster. Despite both nominally being mercers two very different calculating frameworks were at play, which set them in contrasting social networks. Both these models, however, are again different to the ironmongery business where haulage and the requirements of the maritime markets shaped the calculations of producers and consumers involved with the trade.

Section 6: Ironmongery, East and West

The geography of ironmongery was dependent on the Thames. However, it must be stressed that this relationship with the River did not result in a contiguous settlement of ironmongers along the Thames. Rather, the policies suggest that few ironmongers operated in the East City around the Legal Quays or in Westminster, both of which were costly. On an educational trip down the Thames, Sir Thomas Pennant framed these areas in terms of genteel trade where West End consumption fueled City industry:

I never regretted the want of gardens or ornamental embankments when I saw the various docks and wharfs covered with the great objects of commerce, the subsistence of millions the support of our empire - I no longer wished for an extension of the former. Let them be confined to the Western part of the metropolis. It is the duty of our opulent nobility to honour their country by a display of taste: of our industrious merchants to increase the busy scene, casting every now and then an eye to the west.²⁴⁰

Yet the East End, home to a transport-manufacturing community, was absent from Pennant's and many other elite reckonings of London. Parochialism certainly played its part: Horace Walpole of St James' claimed never to have seen the Southwark side of Blackfriars Bridge.²⁴¹ As Justice John Fielding explained, Rotherhithe and Wapping, dominated by shipping, were rendered culturally alien, being 'chiefly

²⁴⁰ MLD, Thomas Pennant MS, 'From London to Dover' (1787), f. 4.

²⁴¹ Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, Vol. 11 (Yale Online), 5 Mar. 1791.

inhabited by sailors, [where] a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country. Their manner of living, speaking, acting, dressing and behaving, are so very peculiar to themselves.²⁴² Consequently, the opportunities that existed in the East End, South London and those parts of the West City attached to the River were rather different for the ironmongers who concentrated there.

From the policies, centres for the distribution of iron around the capital can be identified in three key areas, all of which were within the riparian zone set aside for sufferance wharfs. Farthest east, Gun and Bell Docks in Wapping and East Lane Stairs in Rotherhithe had a continual presence of ironmongers after the 1760s. In amongst the shipbuilding and shipbreaking yards, several described themselves as Anchorsmiths, chandlers or dealers in old rope and were evidently latching on to the needs of the maritime community.²⁴³ Dockhead, Bermondsey, the more urbanised Southwark and Horsleydown could all boast ironmongers, and were areas known for timber yards, coal dealers and other bulk trades. The north bank of the river saw a concentration in the City on Upper Thames Street and Dowgate Hill. Adjacent to the Legal Quays, this was the site of the Steelyard, a concession to the defunct Hanse Merchants, where Customs Officers recorded large quantities of bar-iron landed in London from the Baltic region.

Access to water transport had obvious advantages for dealers in heavy bar-iron or bulk cargos, as well as the Navy and Thames shipbuilders who were a major market for guns and anchors. Indeed, Thomas Westernne, who acquired Wiggin's Quay, came from a background in forging and ordnance in the Weald.²⁴⁴ Other ironmonger-merchants with interests in Sussex ordnance, like the Fullers, contracted sufferance wharfs, *ad hoc*.²⁴⁵ David Fuller dined with John Legas, the London agent of a third Wealdean ordnance firm, Harrison & Legas, owners of Stone Wharf in Southwark.²⁴⁶ Robert Plumsted shipped iron goods to the North

²⁴² Cited in Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650–1775* (London: Methuen, 1998), p. 4.

²⁴³ ML Sun, Ironmongers, William Jones & George Clempson, 1764; William Jones & Dryden, 1781; James Grice, 1771; William & Arthur French, 1793 and 1802; John Hodges Stroud & William Hedley, 1794 and 1814; Michael Browne, 1772.

²⁴⁴ R.R. Brown, 'Thomas Westernne, The Great Ironmonger', *Journal of the Ordnance Society*, 13 (2001), pp. 39-54.

²⁴⁵ David Crossley and Richard Saville eds., *The Fuller Letters, 1728-1755: Guns, Slaves and Finance* (Sussex Record Society, 1991), *passim*.

²⁴⁶ LMA, CLC/B/111/MS06482, Harrison and Legas letterbook, f. 9, 4 Sep. 1745, Legas to Samuel Remnant.

Atlantic from his countinghouse at the Minories, using nearby Irongate Wharf, because it was less expensive than incurring lighterage costs to busy Legal Quays.²⁴⁷

Metal working in the Midlands and northeast of England was well established by the beginning of the eighteenth century. It would develop from the production of stock products, like locks and nails, to the creation of semi-luxury buckles, toys and polished steel jewelry by the nineteenth century.²⁴⁸ Clues present in the insurance policies suggest that, as with silk, the West City and Western Suburbs formed something of an *entrepôt* for the inland trade. John Dunn & Jonathan Lees described themselves as ironmonger-warehousemen in 1734, as did Norman Mabbank in 1791, while Henry Atkinson insured as a wholesaling ironmonger there in 1801.²⁴⁹ Pellatt Apsley covered a complex of sheds, warehousing, stables and a countinghouse on St John Street, Clerkenwell, in 1791 worth £1,750 with £3,720 of goods, which would seem characteristic of the type of outlet in question.²⁵⁰ William Scales & Henry Weatherfield quickly filled a house and warehouse near the gateway to the Saracens Head, Snow Hill, with £1,300 of goods in 1772.²⁵¹ Identifying wholesaling ironmongers in this district easily fits the pattern established by Marie B. Rowlands, where provincial dealers formed alliances with London wholesalers in order to access other national and colonial markets.²⁵²

Bankside parishes in the East and South were favoured by ironfounders, alongside a number in Clerkenwell. Within the periods sampled, founders took out 27 policies in London. Just 20 businesses are represented by the policies, the result of a succession of partners prolonging a firm or, as in the case of Edward and Alexander Raby, a continuing family interest. It may well have been that adequate facilities were rare, or that the premium cost of insuring such hazardous pieces of equipment deterred others from insuring. However, while it is clear there was some production, no doubt bolstered by those ironmonger-anchorsmiths on the eastern

²⁴⁷ Plumsted, *Letterbook*, f. 111, Plumsted to John Gringo, 28 Aug. 1756.

²⁴⁸ Berg, *Luxury*, Ch 5; Rowlands, *Masters*, pp. 125-37.

²⁴⁹ ML Sun, Ironmongers, John Dunn & William Lees, 1734; Norman Mabbank, 1791; Henry Atkinson, 1802.

²⁵⁰ ML Sun, Ironmongers, Pellatt Apsley, 1791.

²⁵¹ William Scales & Henry Weatherfield, Jul. 1772, Aug. 1772, 1773.

²⁵² Rowlands, *Masters*, pp. 94-96.

reaches of the Thames, it is improbable that these operations were capable of consuming the quantity of raw material landed on London's wharfs. Much, if not most, of the 8,360 tons of Baltic iron recorded by the Customs as landed at the Steelyard between July and October 1762 must have been destined for other towns in the United Kingdom.²⁵³

Table 2.6, Locations of London Gunsmiths' and Mathematical Instrument Makers' firms insuring with Sun 1777-1786.

Gunsmiths' firms		Median Policy
Covent Garden	5	700
East Suburb	16	200
South London	1	1000
West City	4	1000
Westminster	5	700
Mathematical instrument makers' firms		Median Policy
Covent Garden	2	100
East City	4	300
East Suburbs	18	300
South London	6	100
West City	1	500
West Suburbs	23	200
Westminster	6	300

Source: Sun Registers, *London Lives*. One policy per firm.

In spite of the strength of the Midlands manufactories, some metalworking continued to be carried out in the capital. Robert Plumsted defended ironware sent to an overseas correspondent in 1757, claiming he only bought 'London Work at

²⁵³ Rowlands, *Masters*, p. 141.

ready money', though this might have simply meant Londoners were finishing or assembling goods.²⁵⁴ Specialist metalworking continued to be located in the metropolis: gunsmiths and mathematical instrument makers are two examples of manufacturers who had yet to succumb to competition from the Midlands in the 1780s. Table 2.6 shows how both trades exhibited clear signs of clustering. Many large instrument makers-cum-chandlers were insured in maritime Wapping, with another distinct cluster appearing around Fetter Lane, near Clerkenwell's watchmakers. Small-time gunmakers congregated around the Minories where the Ordnance Office, located in the nearby Tower, bought fire-arms parts from the midlands and had local subcontractors make them up for military use.²⁵⁵ By contrast, bespoke gunmakers, like Durs Egg, were located in the better-appointed West End. Again, whereas west London was angled towards retail and fashionable consumption, the poorer east London makers were dependent on maritime outlets. Small subcontractors appear to have serviced big bureaucracies, like the navy and ship-yards, allowing a few large consumers to dictate terms, control the flow of goods and even fix wages, leaving little room for those producers to market their goods or diversify their stock.

Analysis of the iron trade in London shows that physical geographies, chiefly the Thames and sea, played a much more important role in defining the industry than in the silk trade. The merchant and naval marine provided a vent for goods alongside polite consumers. William Brittle's conversion of two houses in aristocratic Mount Street, Mayfair, contained £2,500 of stock in 1772, twice the average for that period.²⁵⁶ Compared to Francis Willson, trading from the thickly developed Ratcliffe area, Brittle's was a world away. Presumably a small-time Chandler, Willson insured only £200 of stock and £100 of clothes and housing in 1773.²⁵⁷ The far smaller capitals insured in the East suggest that elaboration and choice were less important in design terms than they were for West End traders. Further, the propensity of traders in the East to insure clothes as well as hardware suggests convenience was a more marked factor for consumers who needed to gather together relatively

²⁵⁴ Plumsted, *Letter-Book*, Plumsted to Collier & Pettyjohn, 8 Nov. 1757.

²⁵⁵ PP 'Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners of Military Inquiry' (1810-11), p. 375.

²⁵⁶ ML Sun, *Ironmongers*, William Brittle, 1772, two policies.

²⁵⁷ ML Sun, *Ironmongers*, Francis Willson, 1773.

standard products in some haste.²⁵⁸ Seemingly, these ironmongers-cum-chandlers were selling to the East End mariners, whose calculative agency was limited by penury, uncertain working lives and the futility of display onboard vessels that could be at sea for years.

Iron was re-fashionable and we get the occasional glimpse of the secondhand economy of iron in the East London policies, which reinforces the notion that markets took very different forms. In 1791, Barnett Cohen described himself as a 'broker of household goods', with Robert Lucas of Rosemary Lane dealing in 'old iron and rags'.²⁵⁹ No less than 27 ironmongers insured 'workshops', which makes plausible the suggestion that efforts were made to preserve and repair goods. Little is known about dealers in used iron in London or the capacity of ironmongers to undertake repairs, as these activities tend to fall in the zone between the economically necessary poles of production and consumption.²⁶⁰

Durability, thrift and repair seem to characterise the economy of the East End more noticeably than the West, where abundance and immediacy reigned. These were different temporal registers through which to understand designed products, conditioned by long-standing continuities in the spatial elaboration of consumption. Commercial vernaculars that set architectural styles, products and the wealth of the local population into algorithms operated across London, fixing both inequalities of economic agency across broad networks of people and things but also localising how the market was understood and approached.

Conclusions

The Sun insurance policies show clear signs of economic clustering in both the silk and iron trades. Considering both over extended time periods highlights that the pace of change was glacial, which would support Schwarz's careful analysis based on a series of snapshots drawn from different sources. London was not unproductive, but was sustained through the better integration of workshops and retailers that had taken hold in the seventeenth century or earlier. However, as

²⁵⁸ Clothes consistently made up a far greater proportions of the ironmongers' policies than the mercers. They made up about £1,900 or 5% the total capital insured by ironmonger in 1760-4 compared to £1,105 or 1.6% for the mercers. Moreover, of the total amount of apparel covered by the ironmongers across all periods, £3,200 of £10,077 was insured in the East Suburbs alone.

²⁵⁹ ML Sun, *Ironmongers*, Barnett Cohen, 1810; Robert Lucas, 1792.

²⁶⁰ Stobart and Van Damme, 'Introduction', *idem. eds., Modernity*, p. 3; Lemire, *Business*, pp. 86-93.

Schwarz predicted, each trade had its idiosyncrasies, exhibiting signs of change, pulling in opposite directions and frequently deploying markedly different business strategies.

The West End mercers snaked into newly fashionable areas as they were created north and west of the Strand, whereas the West City mercers concentrated on wholesaling. Throwsters and silkmen stayed fairly well rooted in the East and West City respectively, before fleeing the expensive capital. For the iron trades the distinction needs to be made between wholesaling towards the north-west of the City, retailing in the West End and a group either exporting to the colonies or providing for the shipping industry in the East. Each trade responded to different communities, some of which were near at hand, as in the West End, and some of which were national or international, as for the Holborn wholesalers and those located in East London, who targeted the merchant marine and Navy. Consumers in the West End seem to have had access to a greater choice of shops and goods, especially at the higher end of the quality spectrum, where mercers showed a distinct preference for genteel streets with classical facades. In other parts of London fewer shops existed, and those that did usually carried less of a range. Moreover, there was a greater likelihood that goods would be encountered in the course of production or transportation from wholesaling warehouses and wharfs as alienable unfinished products. Necessarily, "the market" looked very different from these perspectives. Indeed, the insurance policies are descriptors of the market on one hand but, on the other, wholly different cultures, from the polite to the pragmatic wholesalers to the pinched maritime east end.

The capacity of things and spaces to ground commercial strategies and economic expectations sheds new light on the panic caused by the Docks campaign. The polite consumption of luxury and fashionable goods which typified the West End was not a factor here, as Berg might suggest, but material culture and the rhythms of commercial life were important in contextualising Vaughan's plans. There is no doubt the uses of the urban environment were changing, with some flexibility possible in the City and warehouse districts on its fringes, but the Docks promised massive upheaval. From this perspective, the petitions to parliament for a political settlement reflect that livelihoods that had evolved over time and largely in private were threatened with thoroughgoing change. Expectations based on previous commercial strategies shaped how Vaughan's utilitarian project was understood. Both the merchants and parishes recognised that trade was essential to their survival but quibbled about where and how it was to take material form.

Conceptualising change was as much a question of linking “the market” to broader, material networks of information, each with their own complex patterns of circulation, as being enlightened.

Callon’s notion of calculative agency is helpful in unpicking the idea of an enlightened economy, not because merchants, manufacturers and even weavers were uninterested in Hume or Smith, but because economic theory had to contend with other embedded factors. Far more so than Casson or Marshall, this forces historians to recognise that, while books of enlightened theory were hugely powerful tools that created an economic literati, their ideas were not universally understood or recognised simply through contact with the world of goods. To be sure, new types of consumption do signal change in some sense but, if asked to articulate its meaning, economists are likely to describe something very different to shoppers, who will differ again from shopkeepers with a detailed knowledge of the supply chain. Calculative agency is not solely material, however we need to recognise that enlightened theory was bounded by books that operated in different networks. The intersection of both “theory” and “practice” was not straightforward but certainly important in understanding the shifting the contours of economic life because it allowed agents to envision new connections between people and things.

This point raises a further question about the interpolation of Smithian ideas with the calculative practices of City merchants. Clearly the merchants that supported the Docks differed from other Londoners, both the warehousing sector who protested and the silent shopkeepers of Covent Garden. Indeed, if Smithian theory encouraged people to think more globally about economic relationships, and the Docks embodied that ideal, it is frankly unsurprising that merchant practice buoyed their interest in Vaughan’s project. The great weakness of single or aggregate insurance policies is that they give few insights into the links between firms or their correspondence with provincial hubs and other institutions. It is the essentially bureaucratic and mobile information like customs bills, insurance policies or colonial correspondence that countinghouses based their calculations on that the next chapters investigate in further detail.

Chapter 2: The Age of Corruption

This chapter examines the corruption of Customs officers on London's Legal Quays to question the role of the Treasury in underpinning utilitarianism in Britain. In the decade after 1777, Customs Commissioner Sir William Musgrave (1735-1800) spearheaded the fight against corruption by producing a number of reports critical of the service's bureaucratic inconsistency, reliance on fees *and* the Treasury's mismanagement of it. I argue that recent sociological models provide some valuable insights into corruption better at explaining the timing and resonance of Musgrave's intervention. These prove more effective than orthodox historical approaches, which focus on languages of corruption or administrative evolution. In this discussion, greater attention is given to contextualising bureaucratic culture within conflicting notions of exchange that were found not only in the market but also in the family, politics and patronage. Charting the shifting age profiles of middling Customs officers, 'Landwaiters', provides a means to assess the relative weight each form of exchange had in the service. A prosopographical analysis of these 230 officers between 1738 and 1787 confirms that Treasury interference with the appointment of officers changed after the coronation of George III, causing shifts in the economic and political expectations of its Customs personnel. By 1780 the practice of officers taking fees from merchants on the Legal Quays no longer being seen as question of their avariciousness but a function of the Treasury's patronage, causing Musgrave to institute an alternative disciplinary and administrative structure aimed at regularising his officers' interaction with merchants and the Treasury's appointment strategy.

In terms of the broader dissertation, this chapter looks at the exchange of the goods, services and ideas involved in mercantile taxation. Regular taxation was a necessary criterion for the City's investment in the Docks. The Excise crisis of 1733 shows a real shift in how the proper relationships between the state and merchants were constituted. At this time, Sir Robert Walpole had attempted to extend the bonding system used for tea to wine and tobacco, commissioning a report from the Customs Commissioners to explain that the current regulations encouraged abuses and frauds by merchants and Customs officers.²⁶¹ Walpole argued that putting the system in the hands of the incorruptible Excise would

²⁶¹ PP, 'Report from the Committee Appointed to enquire into the Frauds and abuses in the Customs' (1733); Paul Langford, *The Excise Crisis: Politics and Society in the Age of Walpole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) is the classic study; See Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Ch. 2 for the City.

improve the revenue. However, the threat of increasing the ambit of the much-hated Excise caused such animosity in Parliament, in the country and amongst the usually pro-Walpole City merchants that Walpole was forced to drop the bill. Noteworthy here is Walpole's attempt to institute a free port, a position echoed by Musgrave and London's Dock advocates from the 1780s. London merchants also aped Musgrave in moving away from irregular appointments and towards salaried Officers in their dealings with labourers on the Quays. I suggest that Customs officers mediated between the market and state, and thereby caused both to change, ultimately engendering a shift toward liberal policies. This was not due to their inherent rationality but because of the difficulties faced when maintaining the social niceties that underpinned corrupt transactions. While this marked an alteration in attitudes to bureaucracy, the issue of who taxed commerce and for what reward were vexed questions, providing valuable insight into how political economy was embedded in institutions, modes of sociability and, as we shall see, in the bodies of revenue officers themselves.

Section 1: Musgrave and Reform

This study follows in the tradition of institutional history and aims to develop a new approach to corruption using the career of Customs Commissioner Sir William Musgrave. Corruption has proved a relatively easy phenomena for historians to identify in the eighteenth century, but they have struggled to understand how its definitions shifted from the classically inspired model used to chastise Sir Robert Walpole and other politicians in the political sphere to the utilitarian model adopted by Musgrave and the reformers who took their cues from the Association Movement. Following the Cambridge School, some have looked to historicise charges of corruption and located the problem on the plane of language and discourse.²⁶² The fiscal military state thesis has adopted a more functionalist model,

²⁶² J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 103-23 and idem., 'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, 1 (1972), pp. 128-30; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume II Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 344-68; Philip Woodfine, 'Tempters of Tempted? The Rhetoric and Practice of Corruption in Walpolean Politics' Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan eds., *Corrupt Histories* (New York and Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 2004), pp. 169-74; Joanna Innes, "'Reform'" in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word', Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform, Britain, 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 79-85; Lisa Hill, 'Adam Smith on the Theme of Corruption', *Review of Politics*, 68, 4 (2006), p. 650.

focused on the increasing separation of private commerce from the public good at the behest of the Treasury.²⁶³ Despite the subtlety of the former and the analytical value of the latter, Musgrave's career presents a problem for both, in that he quickly redefined the problem for the Customs after years of neglect from his notional superiors at the Treasury. As this introduction will argue, the models of corruption emerging from political theory and economic sociology offer helpful ways of navigating between the virtues of older historiographies, because they see bureaucracies as socially constituted, interdependent and open to new language. Like Callon's notion of calculative agency, they aim to describe how "cultural frames" and "logics of action" come into existence...wielded by skilled social actors [like Musgrave], sometimes called "institutional entrepreneurs", who come to innovate, propagate and organize strategic fields of action' at times of dramatic change.²⁶⁴

As ever, constructing historical research around the relativist criteria advocated by this school presents some difficulty, leading this chapter to maintain an uncommon methodological concern with age. Documents shedding light on patterns of experience and promotion in the Customs are readily available and present fertile ground for exploring corruption. By considering the age and expectations of Musgrave's officers, it is possible to imbue the decisions surrounding their posts with a more pointed sense of strategy, either developed by the officers themselves or emanating from the Customs hierarchy. Put simply, an officer leaving a lucrative post aged 45, an officer promoted aged 28 and an officer dying in their post aged 85 tell us very different stories about corruption. Analysing one class of officer systematically between 1738 and 1788 shows that Musgrave faced very different managerial challenges at the beginning and end of his career, and that corruption changed as well as his definition of it. In exploring these ideas further, this introduction will spell out some of the essentials of Musgrave's career and his importance in terms of British state formation. Next, his work will be placed in the context of recent historiographies of corruption to suggest some of their limitations. Finally, the more recent theoretical models used to guide this research are outlined with a view to showing how the rest of the chapter is structured.

²⁶³ See esp. Patrick K. O'Brien, 'The Political Economy of Taxation, 1660-1815', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 41, 1 (1988), pp. 1-31; John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1789* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

²⁶⁴ Doug McAdam and Neil Fligstein, *A Theory of Fields* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

Musgrave was appointed to the London Customs Commission in 1763 aged 28, following the Earl of Bute's rise to office.²⁶⁵ Customs Commissioners including Musgrave regularly 'waited' on the Treasury and in 1777, after fourteen undistinguished years of service, he passed them a memorandum that showcased his dissatisfaction with the cumbersome Customs procedures.²⁶⁶ The document outlined a plan to consolidate the Book of Rates and, thus, the methods used by the Customs to collect duties from merchants and pay them to the Exchequer. Since the introduction of the relatively comprehensible Tonnage and Poundage Act in 1660, the piecemeal addition of 'clashing and interfering' duties had increased the number of charges commodities were liable for. This meant the difficulty of calculating duties had 'also [been] enhanced, till now it is really become a perfect science, not always well understood by the officers, and much less by the merchants'.²⁶⁷ The Treasury well knew that wartime loans had been underwritten by additional 'imposts' to customs duties, but Musgrave highlighted additional examples, like wine and paper, where *ad valorem* charges combined with charges on quantity to produce hard sums and hideous fractions. He drily noted that the confusion engendered concealed frauds and caused officers to act as merchants' agents. By contrast, Musgrave's system favoured clarity, proposing that duties on each article could be reduced to a single figure that would allow 'officers in computing or the merchants in paying [to] detect errors'; in addition he argued for the reproduction of the whole scheme 'in some authenticated book'.²⁶⁸ The consolidation act introduced by Pitt in 1787 touched on no less than 3,000 resolutions of the House of Commons, amply illustrating the complexity of Musgrave's task. Sir Grey Cooper, secretary to the Treasury in 1777, publicly acknowledged the contribution to reform made by this 'very intelligent commissioner of the Customs'.²⁶⁹ Despite the extensive complications involved in decoupling imposts from loans, 'consolidating' the Book of Rates was not only beneficial to the Treasury, in allowing funds to move around the exchequer more freely, but as Musgrave argued, it would make commerce more

²⁶⁵ C.J. Wright, 'Sir William Musgrave (1735-1800) and the British Museum Library', G. Mandelbrote & B. Taylor eds., *Libraries Within Libraries: The Origins of the British Libraries Printed Collections* (London: British Library, 2009), pp. 203-9.

²⁶⁶ T 1/530, Treasury In-letters, Customs Board to Treasury, 29 Apr. 1777, ff. 250-263.

²⁶⁷ T 1/530 f. 251.

²⁶⁸ T 1/530 f. 252.

²⁶⁹ 27 Geo. III Cap. 13; Cobbett, *Parl. Hist.*, Vol. 26 (London, 1816) p. 623.

certain, allowing merchants to act 'boldly' and make it easier to enter the profession. From the outset, the plan was to encourage markets by reducing Custom officers' work to routines.

Musgrave's memorandum was the first salvo in an extensive body of reports, audits and commissions from 1780 onwards that were aimed at streamlining government spending and increasing revenue. In December 1782, he framed the 'Bill for Vacating Various Places in the Customs'. Its preamble asserted that wilful absenteeism and 'Useless' patentee sinecures were just as detrimental to the Revenue as incomprehension; that diligent Officers should be rewarded by promotion; that residence should be a qualification for service; and that fees should be replaced by higher salaries.²⁷⁰ Musgrave's concerns were taken up by the Commission for Stating the Public Accounts, whose painstaking reconstruction of the administrative hierarchies and lacunae of the major departments of state were intended to reduce government expenditure from 1782. Its 1785 Reports on the Customs wholly endorsed the reformation of cash handling, quoting Musgrave's 1777 conclusions on clashing duties.²⁷¹ The Commission revisited the question of fees, unequivocally seconding Musgrave's attack on sinecurists, which argued that: the tenure of offices should foster accountability; every office was to perform a 'useful duty'; every officer ought to execute his duty in person; and duplicate offices should be amalgamated.²⁷² The report made clear that, in reducing the burden of Customs collection, 'the public' had no interest in supporting unproductive offices within the service, and that many useful officers were corrupted by conditions of service which rendered them unaccountable.²⁷³ No doubt because the National Debt had doubled in pursuit of imperial claims in America, office-holding was increasingly presented as a duty undertaken on behalf of a tax-paying public facing national bankruptcy. The Public Accounts Commission recommended that 'Everyman may dedicate a portion of his income... according to his faculties to this great national object', namely the National Debt.²⁷⁴ Like Musgrave, the Commission

²⁷⁰ PP, *Sessional Papers of the House of Commons*, xxxv, p. 93; PRO 30/8/285, Chatham Papers: Musgrave to Pitt, 10 Dec. 1782, ff. 1-7.

²⁷¹ PP, 'Thirteenth Report of the Commission for Stating the Public Accounts' (1785), p. 46.

²⁷² PP 'Fourteenth Report', p. 29.

²⁷³ PP, 'Fourteenth Report', p. 46.

²⁷⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, cited in John Torrance, 'Social Class and Bureaucratic Innovation: The Commissioners for Examining Public Accounts', *Past & Present*, 78 (Feb. 1978), p. 72.

advocated a system of 'oeconomy', where bureaucratic rationalisation and frugality could render public business cheap, uniform, regular and impersonal. This series of Reports formed the blueprint for attacks on bribery, sinecurism and 'Old corruption' from Parliamentary Commissions throughout the Napoleonic era.²⁷⁵

Approached from the perspective of the nineteenth century Musgrave was a paragon of administrative virtue, but from that of the eighteenth his career embodies a paradox. Corruption is a well-established trope in eighteenth-century historiography, with the image of venal aristocratic dynasties, like Musgrave's own, profiteering from office and borough-mongering a staple of the work of Sir Lewis Namier and E.P. Thompson.²⁷⁶ More recently, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos has explored the reciprocity of elite 'protection', where jobs or offices were exchanged for political and social subservience amongst their clients. This constituted

...a vast infrastructure of personal [contacts]... bringing benefits to those who managed to acquire access to it, and linking individuals from different social milieu in bonds of loyalties, services and dependencies that spread beyond the immediate locality and place of abode. The system was fluid and rife with tension and rivalries, for patronage, especially at the upper echelons, [and] involved men of equal social standing who exchanged favours...[Whereas] in the lower ranks, patronage implied that clients remained indebted to their patrons for many years, offering them not only personal loyalty and but also gratitude and deference and remaining dependent on them for support well after they were materially secure in their positions.²⁷⁷

Ben-Amos argues that corruption was not confined to the elite but was a broadly based social system, which, though 'grossly unequal' and alien to modern eyes, was fairly unremarkable. And yet, as Rosemary Sweet objects, once understood as a norm corruption can be

...reinterpreted as the links in the chains of deference and obligation which held early modern societies together. However, we are left with the problem of identifying when and why society's tacit acceptance of such practices, punctuated by periodic

²⁷⁵ Torrance, 'Bureaucratic innovation', pp. 56-81; Philip Harling *The Waning of the 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 2-20; J.E.D. Binney, *British Public Finance and Administration, 1774-1792* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), pp. 7-14, 282; Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the American War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 237-8.

²⁷⁶ Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (2nd ed., London: MacMillan & Co., 1965) and idem., *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (2nd ed., London: MacMillan & Co., 1963); E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1993), pp. 25-35.

²⁷⁷ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving. Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 72.

outbursts against venality or bribery, was transformed into a system of values which was based on ideals of probity, accountability and impartiality.²⁷⁸

Musgrave's work helps unpick this knot by highlighting the ever-changing cast involved in utilitarian reform during the 1780s.

Defining Corruption

We start with the problem of definitions of, and discourses around, corruption. For historians of the Cambridge School, early modern political discourse illuminates the ideological underpinnings of the state, a stance developed in reaction to the Namierite view that Georgian politics was simply the management of places. J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner have argued that the Excise Crisis marks the high point of the neo-republican critique of corrupt government, which focused on Walpole's erosion of Legislative independence by manipulations of the patronage afforded by the Treasury, army and established church.²⁷⁹ This saw bills aimed at removing placemen and contractors from parliament, circumscribing the civil list, reducing the army by strengthening civic militias and re-introducing triennial Parliaments become staples of the republican-inspired 'Country' opposition. In tandem, periodicals like Lord Bolingbroke's *Craftsmen* denounced Walpole's grip over the King, his clients in the House, the foreign, immoral culture of luxury and Italian masques he supposedly ushered in and his use of office to enrich himself and his family.²⁸⁰ Ultimately, that critique was backward looking, aimed at rescuing a past or endangered socio-political order from the credit relations enshrined in the National Debt, which was seen to erode the independence of the citizenry.

After Walpole's fall in 1742, republican language was still used to harass government, but began to look increasingly ragged as opposition groups failed to dislodge the Pelhams. Joanna Innes stresses that in both Machiavellian and Christian discourses magistrates created virtuous institutions from which morality flowed, with the image of the secular reformer underdeveloped.²⁸¹ Bolingbroke's *Patriot King* gave Pitt the Elder's opposition and imperial vision credibility, although

²⁷⁸ Rosemary Sweet, 'Corrupt and Corporate Bodies: Attitudes to Corruption in Eighteenth-Century Towns', James Moore and John Smith eds., *Corruption in Urban Politics and Society, Britain 1780-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 41.

²⁷⁹ Pocock, *Virtue*, pp. 103-23 and idem., 'Virtue and Commerce', pp. 128-30; Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 344-68.

²⁸⁰ Woodfine, 'Tempters', pp. 169-74.

²⁸¹ Innes, "'Reform'", pp. 79-85.

in 1774 James Burgh pointedly lamented the cyclical quality of opposition, where ‘In this blessed country of ours, the men in power have pursued one uniform trick of taxing and corrupting the people, and increasing court influence in parliament, while the pretended patriots have exclaimed against those measures, at least until they have got themselves into power.’²⁸²

The language of republican virtue signalled the supposedly novel intrusion of mercantile immorality into the realm of politics. However, traders rarely singled out other traders as corrupt, using, instead, the labels of ‘sharp’ or ‘dishonest’ when picking faults with one another. The *philosophes* increasingly saw men as shaped by civil institutions, including potentially luxurious trade, coming to see corruption in somewhat similar terms as the merchants, as the willful mismanagement or misallocation of resources that might be more equitably distributed. Accordingly, the ‘enlightened sociology’ of Adam Smith and David Hume replace ‘virtue’ with ‘utility’ as the antonym to corruption.²⁸³ The historical focus on linguistic semantics can be unconvincing in explaining why, given the many counter-arguments political thought elicited, Smith’s distinction between private enterprise and public office constitutes a ‘modern’ success story. Indeed, for sociologist Susan Rose-Ackerman, locating corruption is still a question of distinguishing Smithian markets from the state, and she makes relatively few concessions to local or historical contingencies in forwarding her neoliberal argument.²⁸⁴ However, the host of reformers that exploded onto the political scene after 1780, like the Clapham Sect, Christopher Wyvill’s Association Movement, Samuel Romilly, Jeremy Bentham, the Vaughans and Musgrave, confronted ‘markets’ in an industrialising and often war-torn economy that had not yet become an explanatory category in their own right. They were not solely playing a ‘language game’ but actively grappling with an embedded market and state that had developed considerably since Walpole.²⁸⁵

Entering into this institutional problem, advocates of the fiscal-military-state thesis have seriously questioned whether fluid extra-parliamentary politics and

²⁸² James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions* (London, 1774), p. iii.

²⁸³ Hill, ‘Adam Smith’, pp. 79-85.

²⁸⁴ Susan Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 39.

²⁸⁵ Eckhart Hellmuth, ‘Why Does Corruption Matter? Reforms and Reform Movements in Britain and Germany in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century’, T.W.C. Blanning & Peter Wende eds., *Reform in Great Britain and Germany, 1750-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 6.

critiques of corruption could impact on a Treasury burdened with long-term commitments. Patrick O'Brien and John Brewer have both stressed that the funded National Debt necessitated the extension of the popularly despised Excise and diminished the impact of popular politics on state building.²⁸⁶ Brewer especially turned the orthodoxy of a small and amateur State on its head, showing that the scale of the wars Britain fought forced a major expansion and ruthless professionalisation of the revenue in order to tax Britons sufficiently. As a department, the Excise was the Treasury's favoured tool because its entrance exams, marriage qualifications, salaries, pensions, policy of having officers patrol in areas where they were not natives and service ethos met Weberian standards of incorruptibility. Such 'Foucauldian' technologies underpinned the startling modernity of the Excise compared to other departments of state, insulating Excisemen from the communities they taxed by disbarring them from the corrupting sociability of friendship, kinship and marriage.²⁸⁷

Building on Gerald Aymler's studies of office-holding, Brewer extended these insights to a bureaucratic corps in the upper strata of several major departments, who melded patronage with active work in public offices, implying that malfeasance and peculation did not characterise the State entirely. He points to a series of career administrators, including Musgrave, who were keen to reform the Navy Board, Customs and Excise Office from within and claims that a well-developed notion of 'public duty' pervaded their schemes.²⁸⁸ Such plans were the result of experienced professionals taking the reins and, while fortuitous compromise played its part, following any series of departmental records after the Glorious Revolution conveys:

...the overwhelming impression...of growing institutional definition. The roles of officials are more precisely drawn, the procedures they are obliged to follow become set in tablets of stone, the public and other departments are kept at arms length and

²⁸⁶ O'Brien, 'The Political', pp. 1-31; Brewer, *Sinews*.

²⁸⁷ John Brewer, 'Servants of the Public-Servants of the Crown: Officialdom of Eighteenth-Century Government', John Brewer and Echart Hellmuth eds., *Rethinking Leviathan, The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 127-47. See also W.J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), Part II; M.J. Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (Guilford Press: New York, 1998), pp. 158-201.

²⁸⁸ Brewer, *Sinews*, pp. 79-85; Gerald Aymler, 'From Office-Holding to Civil Service: The Genesis of Modern Bureaucracy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth series, 30 (1980), p. 92.

their actions are treated as regrettable and ill-informed intrusions upon the orderly workings of office.²⁸⁹

In short, fiscal commitments were deemed to structure an essentially modern, utilitarian attitude to office holding.

Musgrave's reforms in the 1780s mirrored well-established practices in Excise, which might have formed a blueprint for the Customs when it was removed from Customs farmers in the 1680s if it had not been for Charles II's need for a revenue stream outside of Parliamentary influence. Even after the Treasury and, subsequently, the Commons began demanding more of the Customs during the War of Spanish Succession, evidence for any evolutionary strategy co-ordinated by Whitehall to regularise the Customs is weak.²⁹⁰ In fact, the principles of irregular office holding, as outlined by Aymler, were still a feature the Customs in 1780:

- 1) Entry to office by means of patronage, patrimony, purchase or some combination of these
- 2) Tenure for life or during pleasure
- 3) Entry often through acquisition of a reversionary interest; venality
- 4) The employment of deputies by part-time or wholly absentee office-holders, and the de facto acceptance of sinecurism
- 5) Remuneration of officials by fees, gratuities and perquisites, as much as by salaries, stipends or wages from the Crown or State
- 6) Regarding office as a private right or interest, rather than as a public service²⁹¹

As scholars synthesising the language and institutional view of corruption have recently argued, early modern bureaucratic efficiency was often the result of office-holders responding to upsurges of opposition pressure in Parliament or bullying Treasury masters, rather than practices internalised by the departments themselves.²⁹² Hence, after Country success in using Parliamentary Commissions to audit the revenue during the reign of Queen Anne, Walpole found the same tactics incendiary after the Excise crisis cursed attempts at Courtly innovation. Mid-century Treasuries were scarcely held to account or, likewise, saw fit to interfere

²⁸⁹ Brewer, *Sinews*, p. 85.

²⁹⁰ See E.E. Hoon, *The Organisation of the English Customs, 1696-1786* (2nd ed. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1968), *passim*.

²⁹¹ Aymler, 'Office-Holding', p. 92.

²⁹² Aaron Graham, 'Auditing Leviathan: Corruption and State Formation in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain', *English Historical Review*, 73 (2013), pp. 806-39; Harling, *Waning*, pp. 20-22; Patrick Walsh, "The Sin of Withholding Tribute": Contemporary Pamphlets and the Professionalisation of the Revenue Service in the Early-Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 21 (2006), pp. 48-65.

with other departments.²⁹³ Internal reports on aspects of public finance appeared intermittently but were short term in their *modus operandi* and rarely built on one another. James Postlethwayt, Charles Whitworth and Timothy Cunningham each produced *Histories* of the revenue after the Seven Years War, signaling a nervous extra-parliamentary interest in taxation and suggesting the possibility of national bankruptcy. Disregarding the politics of office-holding *per se*, these publications filled the void created by inertia within the Treasury, where between 1740 and Lord Shelburne's call for a review of spending in 1780, no attempts were made to coordinate revenue departments. And yet, significantly, Musgrave's 1777 memorandum challenges the accepted historiography of the Customs and Treasury by prefiguring the 'political will' attributed to the economical reformers of the 1780s and, more importantly, by emerging from an inefficient service that had been coasting for a generation.

Alternative Approaches to Corruption

Given the timing of Musgrave's intervention historians need to think more carefully about the penetration of languages and ideas into the corridors of power outlined by Brewer and their ability to rapidly reform their regulations. The preoccupation with the Treasury's relations with other departments of state has not been helpful here, and has caused other voices to fall out of ear shot. In the case of the Customs that means the officers themselves. The Public Accounts Commission reported that Musgrave and the other Customs commissioners linked the Treasury to some 1,600 officers in London and a similar number in the provinces in 1784. In turn, these men formed relationships with politicians, merchants, friends and kin who inevitably had their own ideas about the proper modes of interaction between the state and themselves.²⁹⁴ These are important in light of Mark Philp's argument that to legitimately resolve disputes, the 'political sphere' must establish norms regulating other forms of exchange, namely the community or family, the market or patron-client relations. Charges of corruption register the instability of political culture

²⁹³ Henry Roseveare, *The Treasury, 1660-1870: The Foundations of Control* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp. 56-62; Julian Hoppit, 'Checking the Leviathan, 1688-1832', Donald Winch and Patrick O'Brien eds., *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 273-79.

²⁹⁴ See Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*; Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century. Household, Patronage and Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 216-236; Chris Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and its Servant in the Period of Its Decline, 1740-1796* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 151-89.

relative to one or more of these modes of distribution.²⁹⁵ For example, Walpole's trick of appointing his supporters to administrative offices was formally within his Treasury remit, but appeared corrupt to contemporaries outside because of his supposed rapacity. Not only do different social spheres provide the means to identify transactions as an illegitimate or corrupt "other", but they also create their own inertia. As such, Mark Granovetter argues that bureaucratic dictates can often be 'neutralised' by appeals to other modes of distribution on the part of those accused of corrupt behaviour.²⁹⁶ Italy, for example, is often cited as a culture where those in positions of authority are expected to support their families in lieu of other institutions.²⁹⁷

When expectations of the services offered by one group to another become deformed would expect charges of corruption to be formulated. The major challenge historians face when dealing with corruption is how to measure 'expectations' and 'norms' across multiple fields of social activity. As Philp says

...through the use of counterfactual speculation, detailed historical research, and careful theoretical construction, the student of politics can construct a case by identifying the type of imperatives these states really faced, the extent to which the political authority they sought to exercise was (or could have been) directed to resolving these imperatives, and the degree to which the actions of those in power came to be subverted by a range of aspirations and motives which imposed avoidable costs on those subject to them. It is extremely difficult to construct such arguments - not least in an academic culture increasingly dedicated more to publishing than to thinking - but it is in principle possible so to do.²⁹⁸

For the eighteenth-century Customs the conventions surrounding political patronage and office-holding have received little empirical attention. However, as the next section describes, these can be followed through the Customs establishment records and Treasury records of appointment. Looking at types of appointment and tenures of offices reveals whether patronage changed in the Customs. However, exclusively considering these political sources inevitably renders the officers

²⁹⁵ Mark Philp, 'Defining Political Corruption', *Political Studies*, XLV (1997), pp. 445, 448-52.

²⁹⁶ Mark Granovetter, 'Social Construction of Corruption', Victor Nee and Richard Swedberg eds., *On Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 154, 164-66.

²⁹⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset and Gabriel Salman Lenz, 'Corruption, Culture, and Markets', Lawrence Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 112-24.

²⁹⁸ Philp, 'Defining' p. 458.

themselves one-dimensional by failing to engage with the other modes of exchange that were relevant to them and limiting the opportunity to locate extraneous influences.

Age presents itself as one way of nuancing the world of low-ranking officials. Gerontocratic ideals were pervasive in early modern society, but becoming increasingly complex as Britons found themselves attached to multiplying institutions that crossed between social spheres. The guilds, Church, universities and many popular customs showed a preference for the 'wisdom' and 'gravity' signified by old age, erecting explicit age qualifications or barriers of apprenticeship to prevent youths progressing up the ranks too quickly. Figures who crossed into the world of civil and ecclesiastical government – Aldermen, Provosts, Deans – were consistently between 40 and 60 years of age, having accumulated the social and economic capital that made these roles attractive and possible. However, as Keith Thomas has noted, powerful patrons could 'bend normal rules of seniority. The upper class went through life on a fast stream.'²⁹⁹ If youth or inexperience signaled privilege, recent work on old age shows retirement to be another sticking point. The ability to support a family economically could be seriously compromised by old age, forcing a more or less ignominious admission of dependence on those who turned to alms, charity or the poor rates.³⁰⁰ Whether Customs officers married, had children, or suffered from debilitating illnesses must all have altered their uses of office, propensity to accept or solicit bribes, quest for advancement and plans for retirement. Conversely, the officers' shifting use of office, patterns of tenure and demands for rewards consummate with a certain point in their life cycles was likely to start alerting Musgrave to shifts in service.

The records of appointments to Customs places show that the fragile series of alliances that made the Customs workable during Walpole and the Pelhams' hegemony was becoming unstuck during Musgrave's tenure as Commissioner of the Customs. The evidence presented in the third section shows that successive Treasuries exploited patronage differently after the accession of George III, leading to the hierarchy of promotion becoming confused, creating an imbalance between old, long-serving officers and young, quickly advancing officers. Customs officers

²⁹⁹ Keith Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LXII (1976) pp. 12-13.

³⁰⁰ Pat Thane, 'The Age of Old Age', *idem. ed., The Long History of Old Age* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), pp. 9-29; Susan R. Ottway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Ch 1.

became disaffected by venal promotion strategies, Treasury discipline lapsed and perennially overlooked officers clung onto jobs they were simply too old to do. What we discover is that personnel increasingly changed due to the electoral cycle rather than to facilitate the collection of taxes.

The appointment data shows the Customs were becoming more in thrall to the Treasury's political rather than fiscal commitments, causing friction between the Customs Commissions and officers on the ground. The fourth section investigates whether the increasingly erratic appointments disrupted relationships between merchants and officers on the Quays, and whether we can identify deformations in the economic aspect of corruption. Diego Gambetta's careful ontology of economic corruption encourages this reading of the situation. Economic corruption involves three agents, a Truster (T), a Fiduciary (F) and a Corrupter (C) of F.³⁰¹ Corruption is a breach of trust, which implies that T has entrusted F with something, and that F has some 'trust-worthy making property', such as T's payments to F, T's monitoring of F, or F's character. Corruption requires an act of 'mimicry' or 'camouflage', where F takes on the appearance of trustworthiness long enough for C to consume the goods F has delivered him before T finds out. 'A [third] condition for corruption to become a relevant option is that the cost of reaching a permissive domain, where the rules that prevent C from obtaining what C is after do not obtain, must be more expensive for C than corrupting someone in the domain where C resides.' As public servants tend to have a monopoly on the allocation of services, they often become the focus for corrupt practices. Gambetta thus predicts that corruption exists where 'lawlessness', collusion between Fs and Cs and intimidation are great; mistakes and mimicry are hard to detect; and where the belief that corruption is prevalent is greatest, as this encourages parties to attempt circumventing given rules.

If Customs officers fit the role of Fs and Merchants Cs, it is not clear whether Ts were the Treasury, who appointed officers, or the Commission, who managed them, making the system appear more 'lawless' to those who dealt with it on a daily basis. Whilst relatively few descriptions of bribery on the Quays exist, it is clear that providing a social context for corrupt relationships took time and investment on the

³⁰¹ Diego Gambetta, 'Corruption, An Analytical Map', Kreike and Jordan eds., *Corrupt Histories*, pp. 3-28.

behalf of both parties, but was not necessarily an arrangement between equals.³⁰² Looking to information in the Customs records and the sources used by social historians, including parochial, probate and insurance records, it is possible to build up a broad picture of the officers working on the Legal Quays and make some comparisons with London's merchants. These indicate that the disruption caused by war, Treasury promotion strategies and the aging bodies of the officers reduced the store either party might invest in cultivating these contacts. The reliability of officers to make good on corrupt arrangements was not what it had been and by the 1780s the status of officers had declined in the eyes of merchants – a situation that precipitated their lobbying for greater levels of regulation from the Commission.

The merchants' decision to back Musgrave's reforms highlights the problems associated with sustaining corrupt relations with officers, but how did he make himself such a powerful, well-regarded administrator at Westminster where different norms existed? The fifth section takes its lead from actor network theory to think about how Musgrave effected a paradigm shift in the Customs by drawing on local resources to circulate and represent knowledge in new ways, enroll allies and embed alternative conceptual tools in powerful organisations. What is clear from examining Musgrave's efforts between 1777 and 1800 is that his reform of pensions and salaries was intended to shift the criteria both his officers *and* the Treasury used to make decisions. He was quietly critical of his superiors in the Treasury, who prioritised their patronage networks above fiscal interests. His social networking, combined with his administrative innovations, sought to represent his officers to the Treasury as both costs on the public and as economic agents whose self-interest could be structured and channeled. This was novel, and Musgrave's reforms must be viewed in the context of the local and unstable controls that operated in the service before, such as verbal assurances, fees or non-monetary remuneration in the form of food or informal Treasury negotiations. While the outcome was to inculcate classical economic rationalism by stripping the service of practices that could camouflage illicit transactions, his success was contingent on drawing together contemporary resources not conspicuous in the Customs before, including

³⁰² Necessarily, bribery or fraud involve subverting official bureaucratic processes but no diarists in the Customs documented the everyday of minor officialdom like Samuel Pepys or Excise-man John Cannon to provide an alternative view. Nor do such rich description give much of a sense of change over time. Yet it would be impossible to measure the extent of misdocumentation in the Customs without having the goods themselves present as a long-stop. Tellingly, Musgrave never quantified the problem either, though he was sure it was rife despite or because the disciplinary records of his officers were mute on the issue.

his own interest in librarianship, the economic ideas of Shelburne and Pitt, and the declining bodies of his officers.

Section 2: The Customs Archive

Historians have only been brought so far by viewing political corruption as the ubiquitous evil decried by gloomy Country critics or a phenomenon the utilitarianism of the Treasury unconsciously militated against. Producing a satisfactory explanation of Musgrave means understanding the process by which these two 'solids' go 'plastic', to borrow a phrase from physics. In describing the Customs archive, this section outlines how my research into the age profile of its personnel in the 50 years before Musgrave's panic in 1777 was undertaken. Additionally, it provides an administrative and historical context for the discussion in the final section of what Musgrave did differently to convince his Treasury masters of his plans, outlined in the final section.

Although charged with administering the Customs service nationally, the Commission's seat at Customs House on the Legal Quays saw London matters preoccupy Musgrave, and 'the business of the waterside' in London formed a model for the outports in the rest of the country. The Commission and their secretariat formally sat on a raised platform observing the intricate process of merchants paying duties in the 'Longroom', the bureaucratic hub for Customs duties that were generated along the Thames. Ships passing Gravesend would be boarded and 'rummaged' by pairs of 'Tidewaiters', who would draw up inventories of the ship's freight. On arriving at the Legal Quays, the ship's master would make for the Customs House in order to swear an Oath confirming the Ships' manifest to the Deputy Collector Inwards and either a Comptroller, Surveyor or General Surveyor. Subsequently, the importing merchants would present a bill of lading in the Longroom, whereon a 'Bench' officer would make out a warrant detailing any duties on the goods the merchant wished to land. From the warrant, six extracts would be copied up and forwarded to a Clerk of Rates to compute the duties for which the goods might be liable. The warrant and six bills would then be taken by the merchant to the Receiver, who would take payment of the taxes or securities on bonds, return one extract to the merchant and pass the rest to the Computer, Surveyor, Controller, Surveyor-General and Examiners to double check. Examined again by the Clerk of Warrants, details were transcribed into a warrant book, which would be delivered to two 'Landwaiters' on the waterside. On receiving these books, Landwaiters would specify to the on-board Tidewaiters what goods were coming

inwards. Noting all the landed articles, the Landwaiters would then have the quantity of the goods announced by Weighers or Gaugers, making a discretionary deduction for the packaging. The 'Landsurveyors' would assess any damaged goods. Should more dutiable goods be landed than warranted, the merchant would make a post-entry in the Customs House, revising his liability for duties, and collecting a 'cocket', which attested to the fact that all securities had been made, with prompt cash payments receiving discounts. Goods would then be moved into warehouses and all the updated books returned to Customs House to be checked by the 'Jerquers'. 'Searchers' would further assess all goods leaving the warehouses and eligible for a drawback on re-export.

Customs officials drew merchants into an administrative nexus focused on the Longroom. The multiplication of paperwork caused officers to check the work of others along the line, whilst ensuring that those who handled duties did not calculate them. Complementing their salary, officers were entitled to fees for services rendered, transferring much of the up-front expense of the establishment from the state to merchants.³⁰³ Despite the ubiquity of fees, those who stood to gain most from the system were those with the social or financial capital to buy appointments and the privilege of collecting the juiciest 'emoluments'. Clerical Longroom officers profited most, outdoors and 'mechanick' places being less lucrative, less dependent on sinecures and the securities paid on entry to office being less steep.³⁰⁴ A study of Bench officers or the Secretariat in the Customs House would provide rich pickings from archives of England's well-connected political grandees, but a fairly small number of officers from which to get a handle on their ages.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, finding employment histories for the incidental clerks or deputies these absentee sinecurists appointed is challenging, as these arrangements went unrecorded officially. By contrast, a study of the Tidewaiters, of which there were probably 150 operating on the mid-century Thames at any time, would yield a large sample but little material outside of the Customs archive as a result of their low pay and peripatetic lifestyle on the Thames. Finally, Customs records are better for some branches of the establishment than others and the

³⁰³ Rupert C. Jarvis, 'Critical Historical Introduction', Hoon, *Customs*, pp. xiii-xv, xxv-xxvi.

³⁰⁴ Fourteenth Report, Appendix 6.

³⁰⁵ See W.R. Ward, 'Some Eighteenth Century Civil Servants: The English Revenue Commissioners, 1754-1798', *English Historical Review* Vol. 70, No. 274 (1955), pp. 25-54; I.R Christie, *Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform: The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics, 1760-1785* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1962), p. 88.

minute books for some branches are either missing or were not instituted until Musgrave's intervention.

Awareness of these constraints pushed this study towards consideration of the Landwaiters, who worked on the Legal Quays as outdoors staff, but were also clerical officers, rather than performing manual duties like weighing or portering. In addition, the Landwaiters were in daily contact with the merchants as a result of their role in landing goods and the location of this practice. The London establishment was officially composed of 56 Landwaiters throughout the period, with 230 men holding this office between 1738 and 1787, making a workable sample. Landwaiters also constituted the lowliest posts the Treasury took an active interest in appointing at London, meaning the duration of most officers' employment can be calculated by consulting Treasury Warrants.³⁰⁶ Letters of Warrant give information about who was appointed, who they replaced and whether the latter was deceased, retired, superseded or dismissed.

Landwaiters' duties were undertaken by three officer-types: 19 Deputy Kingswaiters, 37 Established Landwaiters and 6 Additional Landwaiters. The most important distinction was between Kingswaiters and Landwaiters, the former being a patent office salaried at £52 *per annum*, the latter being a warrant office receiving £60 or £80. Although their duties and training were the same, the patent Kingswaiters were pure sinecures, the patentee receiving the salary but appointing Deputies to act on the Quays in return for the fees.³⁰⁷ When new Kingswaiters were appointed the patentee was relieved but not necessarily the acting Deputy who featured in their supervisors', the Landsurveyors, Report Books.³⁰⁸ Not only did the Landwaiters' posts confer better remuneration, but promotion to the office of Landsurveyor required time spent as Established Landwaiter, revealing a customary career path for officers: Deputy Kingswaiter to Additional Landwaiter to Established Landwaiter to Landsurveyor. Thus a single officer might receive several warrants for essentially the same job, revealing plenty of information about his outgoing colleagues, rates of promotion and tenure in office.

³⁰⁶ T 11/23-34, Treasury Out-letters cover the period 1745-84 supplemented by William A. Shaw ed., *Calendar of Treasury Book and Papers, 1729-1745*, Vols. I-V, and *Calendar of Treasury Books*, Vols. 20-32 covering 1705-1715.

³⁰⁷ PRO 30/8/231, 'Notes on Treasury procedure' (c. 1783), f. 62.

³⁰⁸ Dates of Deputy King's Waiters' appointments were regularly recorded by the Landsurveyors after 1763, but this convention makes finding information as to when and why they ended their tenure in the Treasury documents far harder. Because of this they have been analysed separately.

The disciplinary records for the Landwaiters include yearly registers of their ‘ages and abilities’ from 1738. These Report Books were used to create a list of the Landwaiters’ names and ages at five-year intervals from 1738 to 1786.³⁰⁹ In 1787 the Report Books went missing for eight years, and ages disappear from all records until 1799, re-emerging in a different series. However, this break should not cause excessive worry as in 1782 the Customs Commissioners established a maximum age of 50 on Landwaiters appointments and Crewe’s Act disenfranchised all revenue officers.³¹⁰ As such, the mid-1780s provide a convenient terminus and show the unreformed service to have experienced fluctuations in the age and experience of their personnel.

Having names and dates of birth for the individuals in the sample provides huge advantages, in that it is possible to go beyond official institutional records and start locating the officers in various private contexts, an important theoretical consideration in choosing this set. Sadly, a statistical analysis of the family lives of the officers in this sample has not been possible due to the sheer mass of parochial records in London, the high mortality rate and its complication of the question of surviving children, and the relatively scarce information we have regarding the officers’ incidental incomes from fees with which to make workable comparisons. Nevertheless, Musgrave does appear to have been haunted by the ‘age and ability’ of his officers. This issue will be returned to repeatedly in this chapter in qualitative discussions of officers’ attitudes to promotion, educations and upbringings, ability to perform their duties, pensions and in their attempts to sidestep Musgrave’s attacks on their fees.

Section 3: Political Corruption in the Customs

Between 1738 and 1786 there were 89 Deputy Kingswaiters and 161 Landwaiters. As there were nominally over two Landwaiters for every Kingswaiter at any time, the former seem to be slightly under-represented. As evident in table 1.1., Landwaiters tended to be marginally older on entering and much older on vacating their posts, and stayed in place longer on average than Deputy Kingswaiters. Correspondingly, Table 1.2 shows the average ages of Landwaiters were consistently higher until the last decade of the period. Even at this basic level, such shifts point to the danger of

³⁰⁹ CUST 102/73-93.

³¹⁰ Raphael, *Pensions*, p. 30; Christie, *Wilkes*, pp. 122

assuming staffing policy stayed constant throughout the period. The rest of this section substantiates and explains this contention.

Table 3.1: Officers' ages and tenures, 1738-1786

	Landwaiters	King's waiters
Mean age when appointed	34.0	30.7
Mean age on vacating	52.1	40.1
Mean tenure	13.3	10.1

Source: Treasury Warrants and Landsurveyors' Report Books

Table 3.2: Officers' ages and tenures in January at 5-year intervals

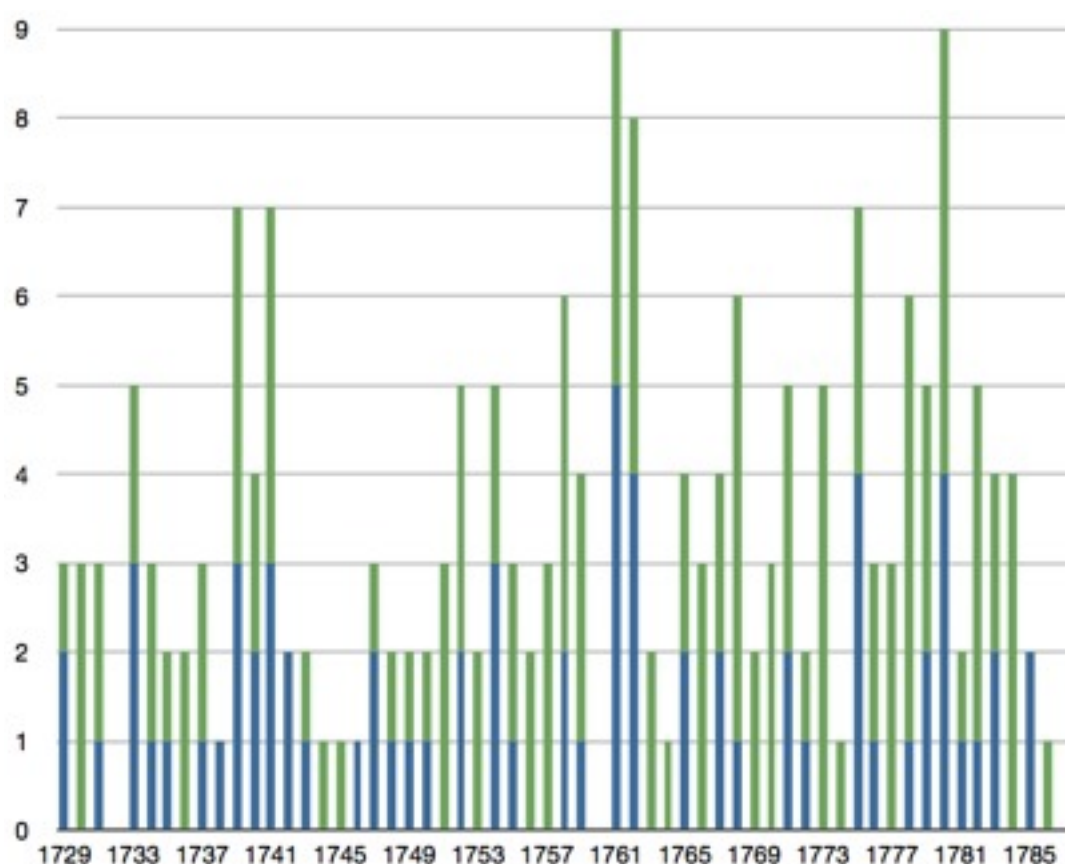
	1738	1743	1748	1753	1758	1763	1768	1773	1778	1783	1786
KW mean Age	38.6	36.4	37.6	39.6	39.2	35.6	41.1	45.0	44.8	46.1	44.4
KW collective experience	110	96	148	115	113	93	185	239	231	255	
Number	16	19	19	18	17	19	19	19	19	18	17
Mean Tenure	6.9	5.1	7.7	6.4	6.6	4.9	9.7	12.6	12.2	14.2	
LW mean Age	41.9	43.9	47.1	45.3	48.3	47.0	45.7	47.3	43.8	43.3	41.4
LW collective experience	209	266	344	425	486	466	482	488	414	429	
Number	37	36	36	36	37	35	37	35	34	36	29
Mean tenure	5.6	7.3	9.6	11.8	13.1	13.3	13.0	13.9	12.2	11.9	

Source: Treasury Warrants and Landsurveyors' Report Books

Figure 3.1 shows the warrants for appointing Land- and Kingswaiters and suggests that entry into the service was dictated by changes in high office. One factor was the accession of George III in 1760. This saw a complete cessation of appointments when his grandfather died, followed by two years of frantic activity trying to fill the places left by vacating officers and establishing new patentees. George's accession also precipitated the 1761 election. Lesser, perhaps purely administrative, peaks occur when new Lord Chancellors took office, as they were responsible for expediting new warrants. Indexes of Writ appointments show

Georgian monarchs were keen to establish men in their gift, and appointments or dispossessions of King's waiters are markedly higher in the first few Regnal years.³¹¹ Courtly influence reached the Customs via high politics: George I ushered in the Whigs, and Stanhope's notes on the establishment of the London Customs ominously marked out five Landwaiters as 'Torys'. George III brought in Bute and purged supporters of the previous administration, the 'massacre of the Pelhamite innocents' coinciding with a high staff turnover in the Customs.³¹²

Figure 3.1: Treasury Warrants to London Officers: Kingswaiters in blue, Landwaiters in Green



Source: Treasury Warrants

That Land- and Kingswaiters rose and fell with their patrons was a consequence of candidates having to be 'presented' to the Treasury, before being nominated by the Treasury to the Customs Commission.³¹³ Begging letters

³¹¹ C 202/267-8, Writ Indexes, 1715-83.

³¹² Namier, *England*, pp. 403-15.

³¹³ Hoon, *Customs*, pp. 196-7.

frequently appear in the correspondence of the political elite regarding Customs places in London. Lord Sunderland received an application from Mr Vincent in support of a Landwaiter's post for Henry Hawkins, 'who is the gentleman I had lately the honour to recommend your Lordships at Hampton Court'. Vincent added, 'I should not be so troublesome but that this gentleman's relations have a great deal of influence on affairs in the County of Cornwall' and was sure that this favour constituted a 'public service'.³¹⁴ Landed grandees were often cited as backing claims or actively promoting their clients; the Earl of Orford, for example, credited Robert Luck as a 'man of business in the County'.³¹⁵ Henry Grenville simply ceded Sir James Lowther appointments in Cumberland in 1764 to gain his political support.³¹⁶ Maintaining the servants of government took some juggling, as Lady Stawell found when her husband, ex-Chancellor Henry Bilson Legge, died in the post of Surveyor of the Petty Customs, leaving it to his son, aged 8. She hoped the Treasury would consider John Sainsbury in the interim.³¹⁷ Horace Walpole had similar rights of reversion (the powers to nominate a successor) on his Collectorship, a mechanism that strengthened the association of government offices with dynastic forms while undermining Treasury influence.³¹⁸ Well-connected merchants, Customs or Treasury officials cultivated empires of influence in the Customs. For example, David Garrick secured an outport place for his brother over dinners with the Devonshires.³¹⁹ The same applied to promotions. After the 1768 election, Charles Broomfield thanked the incoming Lord North for promoting him so speedily from an outport role to the position of superior Landwaiter at London, stating a Land Surveyor or Deputy Searcher's post would be the 'summit of his most sanguine wishes'.³²⁰

³¹⁴ BL, Add. Mss 61603 f. 96, Mr Vincent to Lord Sunderland, n.d., c. 1718.

³¹⁵ BL, Add. Mss 61603 f. 132, Henry Thompson to Sunderland, 19 Jan. 1719, f. 222, Orford to Sunderland, n.d.

³¹⁶ Historic Manuscripts Commission, 13, vii, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Lonsdale* (London: HMSC, 1893), p. 134.

³¹⁷ T 1/451 f. 7, 'Memorial of Lady Stawell', 23 Jul. 1765, .

³¹⁸ BL, Add. Mss. 32885 ff. 308-9, Horace Walpole to Newcastle, 12 Nov. 1758.

³¹⁹ BL, Add. Mss ff. 24-6, 'Outport officers by patent during pleasure', c. 1762; D.M Little and G.M. Kharl eds., *Letters of David Garrick* 3 Vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), I, David Garrick to Marquis of Hartington, 1755, pp. 218, 221, 231.

³²⁰ BL, Add. Mss 61868, f 2. Charles Broomfield, Pimlico to Lord North, 8 Sept. 1769

However, greater attention to the officers' tenures and ages show individual Treasuries to have had very different attitudes to how best to staff the service. As Elizabeth Hoon has noticed, the Treasury took a growing interest in the places available to them in the Customs, asking to be notified of all dismissals in 1757 and of any dangerously ill officers in 1759. By 1765, lists of any vacancies were presented by the Commission to the Treasury on Monday mornings.³²¹ Not only was the Treasury becoming more interventionist, but the factional politics and short administrations that continued from the mid-1750s to the late-1760s stripped it of the experienced staff like Bilson Legge and George Lyttleton who provided a thread of continuity stretching back decades.³²² Knowledge of Treasury business was not being passed through lengthy apprenticeship and nor was it being made public; both Shelburne and his successor Pitt the Younger availed themselves of guides to previous-practice made up by former secretaries before or on entering office there.³²³

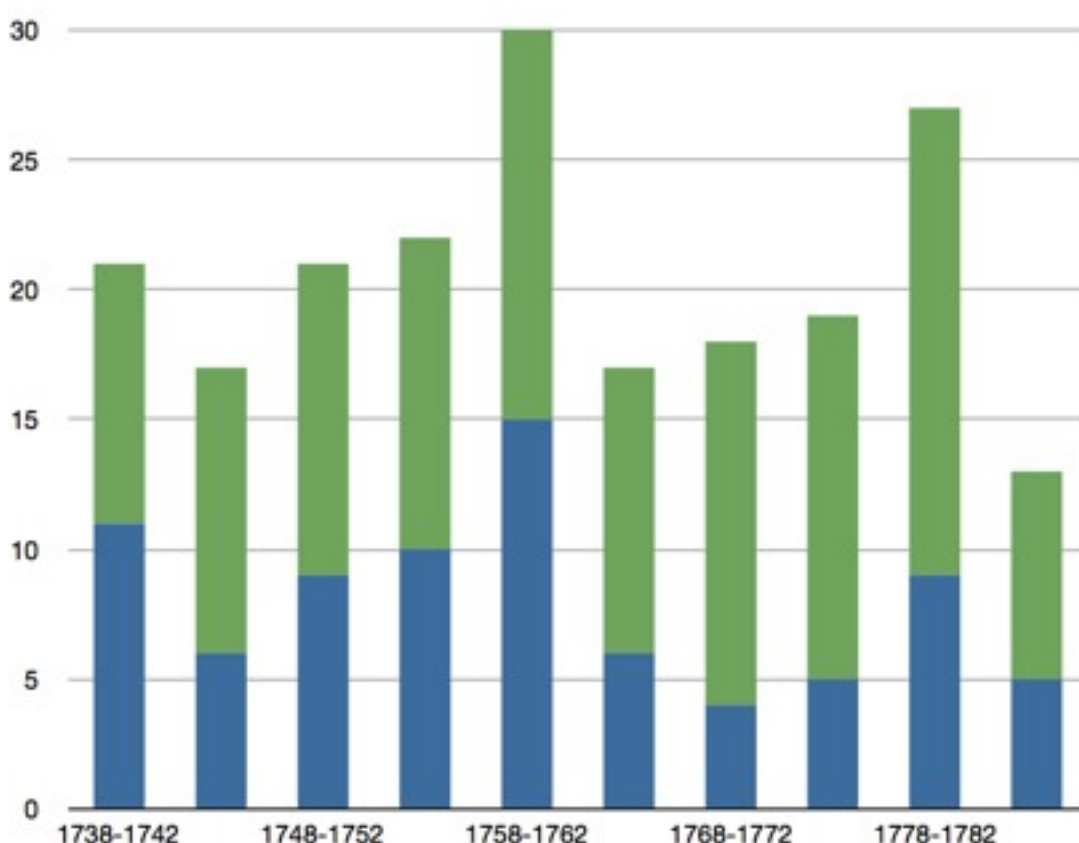
The Treasury's new attitude to the Customs that emerged in the 1760s and continued under North had a profound impact on the age profile of Landwaiters, unremarked upon by Hoon. Officer turnovers derived from the Surveyors Reports illustrated in Figure 3.2 show 4 or 5 appointments per annum were common for the first half of the period. Busy years between 1758 and 1763 were followed by a period of leveling off to settle at around 3.5 per annum before rising again during the American Revolt. Wars saw officers leave the Customs, when downturns in overseas trade drove out those who faced diminishing fees, if they were not pushed by the political instability that accompanied conflicts. Likewise, periods of economic buoyancy and political continuity also had distinctive characteristics. Broadly, the periods 1748-58 and 1763-1778 saw rises in the average age and collective experience of the officers, with younger men being preferred or leaving their posts, whilst older, experienced men clung on.

³²¹ Hoon, *Customs*, pp. 199-201.

³²² J.C. Sainty, *Office-Holders in Modern Britain: Volume 1: Treasury Officials 1660-1870* (London: HMSO, 1972), pp. 16-25.

³²³ PRO 30/8/231, Pitt's 'Note on Treasury procedure'; Norris, *Shelburne*, p. 100.

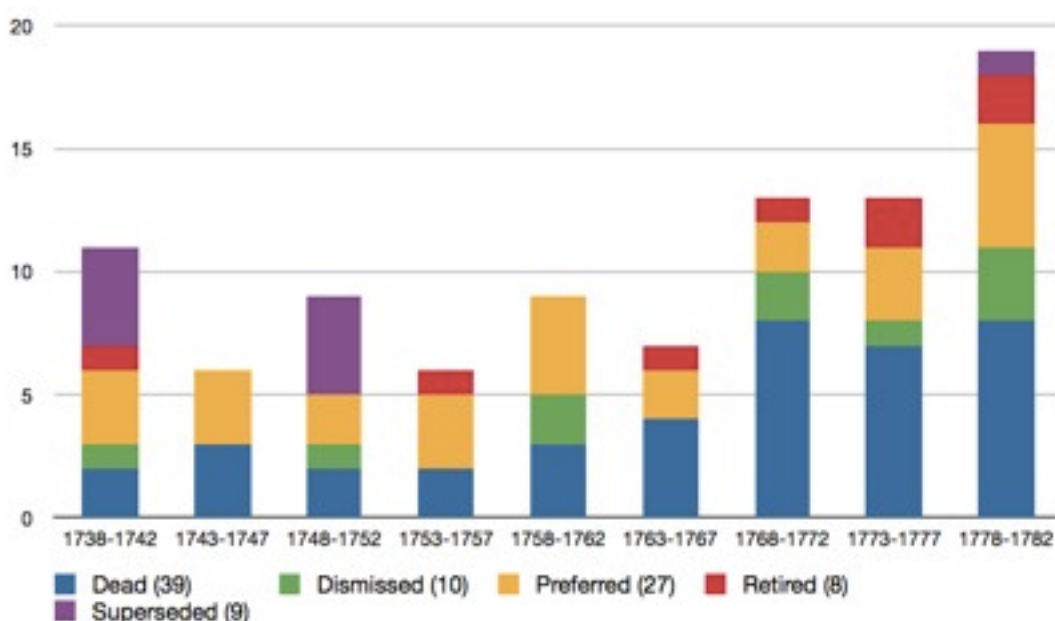
Figure 3.2: Turnover of Officers: Kingswaiters in blue, Landwaiters in Green.



Source: Landsurveyors' Reports

The turnover of Kingswaiters before 1763 was well above the third of appointments we would expect (proportionally to the Landwaiters), whereas after 1763 Kingswaiters' tenures were increasing and their turnover slowed. Measured by time spent collectively on the quayside, the Deputy King's waiters had spent 255 years there in 1783 compared to nearer 115 in 1758. With no change in the number or remuneration of Kings waiters, the sustained changes in their patterns of service must be explained in relation to changing attitudes to patronage in the Treasury after George III's accession. Kingswaiters' mean ages also rose appreciably after the introduction of new blood in 1761-2. Yet, after 1769 those promoted to Landwaiters were far younger than in earlier years, and on average only had two years' experience in their posts. This shows that certain officers were being hurried into more lucrative posts, serving to create a pool of overlooked old timers with few prospects of promotion.

Figure 3.3: Why Landwaiters Vacated their places



Source: Treasury Warrants

Among the Landwaiters the situation was similar, although the effect of political and dynastic interference was less sharply felt in terms of mean and collective experience. The larger population conceals some shifts illustrated by the Treasury Warrants. The reasons for removing Landwaiters are shown in Figure 3.3, which illustrate distinct changes in the patterns of vacation. Most strikingly, the number and proportion of men dying in their posts doubled in the fifteen years after 1763, while those dying after 1769 were about four years older and two years more experienced than previously. From 1773 the ‘capabilities’ of officers began to be noted in the Customs Reports assiduously, with five Landwaiters described as ‘infirm’ in the 1778 sample. Not only did voluntary retirement become more common after 1763, but also the eight who did retire included two 60 year olds and two octogenarians. All of which suggests a problematically old population beginning to attract the attention of their superiors.

Like the Deputy Kingswaiters, Landwaiters may have had fewer incentives to leave their posts during this period, although they were less likely to be driven out. By the mid-century the ability to supersede officers had completely fallen into abeyance. Superseding was a means of forcing recalcitrant or failing officers serving at his majesty’s pleasure out of the service. It was generally applied to officers over fifty and with between ten and twenty years’ experience under their belts. Warrants made ‘for life’ seem to have taken hold after Walpole and could not

be superseded, diminishing the power of the Treasury and Commission to force their will on officers. When superseding was revived in 1779, it included a special clause to superannuate officer James Cunningham, previously described as ‘infirm’ and a veteran officer of 38 years.³²⁴ Leaving officers to vountarily end their careers as public servants (or not) had become the norm by the 1760s and Treasury’s place-juggling appear to have overridden the more utilitarian concerns of the Commission.

The dynamics of preferment also changed dramatically in the 1760s, which were significant in creating a flow of officers through the ranks. Whereas before 1769 it had been common to promote officers to the post of Landsurveyor, following five or more years in the post of Landwaiter, with additional experience if they had been King’s waiters, fast-tracking took hold in earnest after 1770. Indeed, the ten men promoted after 1769 had, on average, half the experience of office of their predecessors, with three officers boasting a single year in the job, the nominal period of qualification for the post. In any case, they also helped exacerbate the plight of long-serving officers, who increasingly found themselves in dead-end jobs with no prospect of promotion.

The years following Walpole’s administration saw officers preferred quickly through the ranks with growing frequency, ignoring conventions of seniority and experience. The process only accelerated with the factional turmoil caused by the Seven Years War and George II’s death, with the waning influence of the Pelhams in the Treasury coinciding with a period of rampant intervention. This culture of rapid preferment created a pool of overlooked, experienced Land and King’s waiters by the late 1750s and, while much new blood was introduced at the accession of George III, by the late 1770s the problem was far worse. Contrasted with conditions earlier in the century, when age and service were more noticeably rewarded, officers came to find frenetic change amongst inexperienced officers and a stagnation for experienced officers the norm. The structural problems facing the Customs had accelerated, demonstrating that Treasury policy was not as consistently rational as Brewer and O’Brien argue. Instead, this discussion has shown that the Customs was a stomping ground for the political cronies that rendered the Treasury unaccountable, thereby sustaining the extension of the Excise in the face of popular hostility, such as that unleashed by Bute’s cider tax proposals in 1763.

³²⁴ T 11/32.

The lack of direct evidence in the Customs and Treasury papers regarding the rationales for appointing individual officers means we do not know whether patronage resulted in venality and nepotism, or whether in some instances it got competent men into positions of authority in the Customs. The next section further examines the matter by turning to the officers' educations, status and relationship with London's merchants.

Section 4: Corruption on the Quays

The following section examines how the officers in this sample exploited their social status to reap financial rewards and how far that strategy was limited by the expectations of London's merchants. It will reiterate points made in the previous section by showing how the calculative agency of the officers was shaped by wars and politics. It will then describe how merchants responded, suggesting that they became increasingly alienated by the officers' lawlessness, despite sharing many social and economic privileges. The section concludes by arguing that while many factors conditioning the officers' erratic behaviour were beyond their direct control, increasing differentials in their perceived statuses meant they became safe targets when merchants wished to critique the Treasury or Customs Commission, during and after Musgrave's tenure.

Musgrave's attempts to cut fees out of the Customs resulted in three surveys of service 'emoluments' that show that Landwaiters' fortunes fluctuated in line with London's merchants. The first survey, aimed to support the 1782-3 Bill for Vacating Places, detailed officers' earnings for the period 1779-81. The second was taken shortly afterwards, when the Landwaiters urged that compensation for fees should be calculated at peacetime levels during the years 1772-4, not the depressed wartime levels represented in the initial survey. The last came in 1784, as a result of the Public Accounts Commission, and detailed the previous year's earnings. All were self-assessments. As the right-hand column of Table 3.3 shows, this class of officer profited when trade was buoyant because the fees paid by merchants were charged on a per-barrel or per-bail basis. The surveys also suggest that officers earned around one third more when shipping was not disrupted, as in 1779-81, or the economy not recovering from the dislocations caused by conflict, as in 1783-4. Even taking into account possible inaccuracies in the first survey, Deputy Kingswaiters must have viewed with trepidation any declaration of international hostilities, as they lacked the salaries that offered some vestige of security during testing times. Wars changed merchants' attitudes as shipping fell away and

bankruptcy thinned the regular merchant herd. Generally, however, the officers commanded high incomes, equivalent to the lesser gentry or large retailers of the period.³²⁵

Table 3.3: Officer Emoluments

Year	Place	Salary (£)	Average yearly fees etc. (£)	Yearly emoluments (£)	Fees to salary ratio
1772-4	Landwaiters	80	275	355	3.4
	Additional LW	60	279	339	4.65
	Dept. KW		292	292	
1779-81	Landwaiters	80	140	220	1.75
	Additional LW	60	140	200	2.33
	Dept. KW		20	20	
1783-4	Landwaiters	80	223	303	3.1
	Additional LW	60	215	275	3.6
	Dept. KW		263	263	

Sources: 1772-4, BL, Add. Mss. 8135, Musgrave papers; 1779-81, BL, Add. Mss. 8135, Musgrave papers; 1783-4, PP, 'Fourteenth Report', Appendix 6.

Collecting fees involved the Land or Kingswaiter being present on the Quayside with the merchant, swapping favours and building up contacts. Comparing the officers' tenures on the Quays with similar occupational groups shows politics to have been a factor in curtailing officer-merchant alliance alongside wars. Table 3.4 illustrates the collective years of experience of East India Company warehouse-keepers, albeit based on a far smaller sample, and shows job tenure was markedly higher than for the Customs in the period after the purges of 1760-2. This would suggest Company warehouse-keepers survived the turmoil unscathed. Both groups had comparable duties, payment in fees and salaries, shared working conditions and won their posts through powerful connections. And yet, in spite of these similarities, Company employees boasted a mean of 18.8 years service in the job in 1763, compared to the Kingswaiters' all-time low of 4.9 and Landwaiters' 11.4. Only with an expansion of Company warehousing, alongside the sudden resignation

³²⁵ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 208.

of several aged warehouse-keepers in 1772, did the tenure of East India servants drop below that of Customs men. Likewise, a sample of 100 licensed porters on the Legal Quays, appointed between 1770-9, shows a mean tenure of about 18 years. This was longer than the officers' despite doing more physically demanding and less well paid work. All of which suggests that Landwaiters experienced much less job security than other proximate occupations, even those jobs that might be considered to have less social status, such as portering. The nature of Landwaiter clientage networks offers some explanation why, with the political cycle seeming to act as a break on acquiring contacts.

Table 3.4, Years of Officer and East India Warehouse-keeper experience

	1738	1743	1748	1753	1758	1763	1768	1773	1778	1783
KW mean experience	7	5	7.8	6.4	6.6	4.9	9.7	13	12.8	14.2
KW collective experience	110	96	148	115	113	93	185	239	231	255
LW mean experience	5.5	6.7	8.8	11.2	11.9	11.4	12.4	12.8	10.9	10.7
LW collective experience	209	266	344	425	486	466	482	488	414	429
EIC warehouse-keepers mean experience						18.8		12.0		10.4
EIC warehouse-keepers collective experience						413 n=22		275 n=22		344 n=33

Source: Landsurveyors' Report Book and *LondonLives* (Online)

The Customs Commissioners also knew fees were dependent on time spent on active service, which gave them some leverage over the officers. Officers dismissed from the service were bullish younger men and the Commission routinely suspended officers acting carelessly or complacently. However, they seemed increasingly uneasy about how fees devolved into more personal alliances. After 1764 the Commissioners decided that merchant-officer relationships should be routinely disrupted by annually 'rotating' officers through the Tobacco, East India,

Woodfarm (Timber) and Sufferance business.³²⁶ Each branch comprised of different geographies, warehouses and principal merchant houses. They hoped 'that the attention of officers may not be drawn to that part of the business only which is most productive of gain, it is most particularly directed and enjoined that equal distribution of these profits arising from [the] business be justly made to all the officers engaged with this service agreeable to the practice on the lawful Quays.'³²⁷ That is, Landwaiters were to be appointed to merchants blindly and not paired repeatedly with individuals.

Obviously, merchant-officer relationships were potentially lucrative because exchanges of fees could veil bribes. The Commission frequently ordered printed list of fees be displayed around the Quays to alert merchants to the correct levels of remuneration for any transaction.³²⁸ Merchant-instigated bribery involved subtly disrupting the Commission's attempts to use the price-mechanism to structure Quayside transactions. Intimate relationships between merchants and officers doubtless stretched the Commission's authority. The youngest brother of the famous merchant-politician William Beckford found a Landwaiters' place in the 1740s. Landwaiters Benjamin and Robert Hayes Bristow were satellites of a creaking City dynasty whose interests had included banking, government remittances, the Portugal trade, South Sea and East India directorships and court and parliamentary positions.³²⁹ Normally, however, merchants had to strike up some kind of friendship with the officers. West India merchant Henry Lascelles made an untimely petition to his acquaintance Walpole in favour of finding Mr Reid a waiters' place in 1743.³³⁰ Sir Randolph Knipe, a 'Turkey' and Russia cloth merchant of standing in the City, serially abused the revenue by targeting the Landwaiters on the quayside, according to his warehouse-keeper, Joseph Shakwell. Shakwell had been ordered

to get Two proper landwaiters appointed to the ship and to acquaint them that it would prove a good ship to them if they would pass the Dantzick linen; where upon [Shakwell] applied himself to George Nodes and Thomas Wilkins, who both got

³²⁶ CUST 29/4, 'Landingwaiters', 12 Jul. 1765.

³²⁷ CUST 29/4, 'Woodfarm', 26 Sep. 1766.

³²⁸ CUST 29/1, 29/3, 'Fees', passim.

³²⁹ D.W. Hayton ed., *History of Parliament: The Commons, 1690-1715* (Online), Members, Robert Bristow I & II; L. Namier and J Brooke eds., *History of Parliament: The Commons, 1754-1790* (Online), Members, John and Robert Bristow.

³³⁰ L&M, L&M to William Gibbons, 19 Sep. 1743

themselves appointed to the ship...[Shakwell] dined several times with them...and the Two landwaiters made up the account over a bottle of wine.³³¹

Wining and dining constituted a courting stage where Nodes and Wilkins were assured that Knipe would be 'honouralbe' to them, but the real pay-off was a bill worth £70. The Commission also interpreted gifts as luring officers into longer-term alliances and in 1754 banned officers from accepting lunches bought by merchants. Bribery may have played with the egalitarian associations gift exchange implies, but the preponderance of cash rewards for the officers does not suggest they were held in particularly high regard by merchants.³³² Indeed, Joshua Johnson described corruption in more business-like terms in 1774, claiming it was easy 'to bribe the weighers to call wrong weights'.³³³

However valuable friends in the Customs were, merchants seem to have held the 'business of the waterside' in low regard. Like Knipe, Lascelles sent a junior to the Quays, describing it as 'nothing more than standing still all day long by the weighing scales'.³³⁴ Learning the dull Customs procedure by rote was the lot of merchants' apprentices and could reveal further tensions: the prominent German merchant Henry Voguell complained to the Commissioners when Landwaiter James Tottingham beat his assistant.³³⁵ Busy, smoky and dark, Joshua Johnson wrote to his firm in Maryland that 'The plagued Customs House frights me; I shall be obliged to employ a broker or a clerk'.³³⁶ By contrast, John Baker, a Caribbean planter-merchant turned solicitor, felt no shame in playing whist with the Commissioners' Secretary, Edward Stanley, until 3 am before staggering home with him.³³⁷

These examples suggest that status differentials distanced Landwaiters from merchants, but how far? The Landsurveyors Reports record the officers' ages,

³³¹ PP, 'Frauds and Abuses in the Customs' (1734), pp. 651-2.

³³² Elena Russo, 'Virtuous Economies: Modernity and Noble Expenditure from Montesquieu to Callois', Daniel Gordon ed., *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 67-92

³³³ Joshua Johnson, *Joshua Johnson's Letterbook, 1771-1774*, J. Price ed. (London: London Record Society, 1979), 18 Jul. 1774; 2 Jul. 1773.

³³⁴ L&M Typescript, L&M to James Bruce, 16 Feb. 1741/2.

³³⁵ CUST 102/75, f 174, 1744.

³³⁶ Johnson, *Letterbook*, 2b, 3 Jul. 1771; CUST 29/3, "Longroom", 30 Sep. 1760.

³³⁷ *The Diary of John Barker*, Philip C. Yorke ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1931), p. 103, 20 Oct. 1757.

meaning that birth years can be easily ascertained and making parochial records a useful tool to probe social backgrounds further. Firm identifications can be made of 57 christenings, showing that officers came from parishes around the country, most of them rural. Few were born in mercantile centres like Bristol, Hull or Liverpool, and only ten were Londoners by birth. A prominent factor in officers finding appointments was elite social contacts but the political utility of this system of dependencies needs qualification. Namier has stressed that revenue officers were expected to support their patrons during election campaigns.³³⁸ London was a plum appointment in terms of fees and the Commissioners reminded the Treasury, 'the knowledge [an officer] will acquire of Customhouse business in [London] will make the execution of his duty the more easy and creditable to him hereafter'.³³⁹ Yet it seems unlikely that metropolitan Customs officers had much impact on London polls, as the electorate of the City, Westminster and Southwark numbered 21,000 and generally sided with the opposition.³⁴⁰ However, Inspector of Prosecutions, Stephen Monteage, reported senior Customs staff traveling to the provinces to vote in 1747.³⁴¹ As Paul Langford has suggested, it seems likely that the London establishment was significantly leavened by regional carpet-baggers, badgering politicians with Treasury connections where their landed holdings were greatest or electoral interests most precarious.³⁴²

As migrants, the officers did not necessarily tax their native communities, a *de facto* gain for the Commissioners, that was, perhaps, negated by the sense of genteel entitlement officers, like Maurice Butler, took from their associations with aristocratic grandees. When suspended from duty in 1750 Butler summarily and publicly appealed to his patrons, the Granvilles, in a short pamphlet.³⁴³ In spite of these friends in high places, Butler was not a gentleman. Appointed in 1743, Butler would not have been able to wear a sword, a mark of status forbidden to

³³⁸ Namier, *Structure*, pp. 117-8, 358-89; Ward, 'Revenue Commissioners'.

³³⁹ BL, Add. Mss 35597 f. 145, Edward Hooper to Lord Hardwicke, 2 Aug. 1762.

³⁴⁰ L. Namier & J. Brook, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 3 Vols. (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1964), I, Constituencies.

³⁴¹ BL, Add. Mss 75506, Diary of Stephen Monteage, 1747.

³⁴² Paul Langford, 'Property and "Virtual Representation" in Eighteenth Century England', *The Historical Journal*, 31,1 (1988) pp. 83-115.

³⁴³ Maurice Butler, *The Case of Maurice Butler, Land-waiter in the Port of London* (London, 1750).

Landwaiters in 1727, who had few of the traditional trappings of gentility.³⁴⁴

Moreover, no officer in my set attended an English University, and no Treasury Warrant used the handle 'gent.' or 'esq.' as they did with patentees. Landwaiters did style themselves 'gentlemen of the customs house' in wills until the end of the century, an affectation common to clerics, book-keepers and scribes.³⁴⁵

Religious denomination provides further indication of who the Landwaiters were, and the picture that emerges is of a confessionally heterodox group. The religious conformity expected of public servants and English gentlemen was seemingly not a priority in London's Customs House, although an anonymous complaint made around 1715 which angrily charged one Customs Commissioner with being a Catholic demonstrates that religious matters could raise hackles, especially during the uncertainty and upheaval of a Jacobite rebellion.³⁴⁶ Yet Moses Gomes Serra, a bench officer in the 1740s, was a scion of a successful merchant family hailing from the Sephardic community that congregated in Bevis Marks Synagogue in the east of the City.³⁴⁷ Landwaiters with Dissenting connections were much more prevalent mid-century: Jean-Jacques Lauzat, Matthew Mead, Frederick Gibson and Hothersal Hutchins were christened in Huguenot, Independent and Presbyterian chapels in the capital, whilst Edward Kenyon was a Presbyterian of Manchester. The five Scotsmen that can be identified in the sample of officers during this period presumably had non-conformist upbringing too.

Most officers did not enter the Customs until in their late twenties or thirties, by which time some had had jobs and acquired contacts elsewhere.³⁴⁸ Incidental references amongst the Warrants suggest five officers had mercantile upbringings, three from London, one from Bristol, with another, Scudamore Lazenby, a Leeds merchant who resurfaced in the London Customs in 1738. Searching for bankrupt officers in the *London Gazette* can again be used to locate commercial backgrounds though the source is weighted toward urban merchants and clothiers,

³⁴⁴ CUST 29/2, 'Officers', 27 Mar. 1723.

³⁴⁵ Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London, 1650-1750* (London: Methuen, 1994), p. 86.

³⁴⁶ BL Add. Mss 18903 ff.40-45, 'Remarks on the Practices of the Commission of ye Customs &c. Examined', c. 1715.

³⁴⁷ PROB 11/1098/330.

³⁴⁸ The middle two quartiles of officers were between 28 and 39 on appointment.

and Julian Hoppit feels it is accurate from 1760.³⁴⁹ Of 120 candidates, only seven were bankrupts: three were from London, with one each from Surrey, Warwickshire, Bristol and Newcastle. Two of the Londoners in this pool were merchants, the second a brewer, with an additional officer, a Bristolian merchant-ironmonger. The remaining officers all issued from the cloth trade, being described as chapmen, an occupation closer to wholesaling than retailing.

Bankruptcy may have eroded an officer's economic independence and made him a target for his former merchant associates, but commercial acumen, familiarity with the mysterious customs bills and book-keeping skills were considered 'trustworthy making qualities' by the Treasury and Commission. An officer 'who had been bred a merchant and had attended his business at the waterside – being reported qualified by the Landsurveyor – was admitted without the usual instruction.'³⁵⁰ Similarly, Benjamin Bristow was dismissed as a Landwaiter in 1781 and immediately became a purser to the East India Company.³⁵¹ The Commissioners put a premium on expertise and occasionally refused posts to officers failing to meet their criteria, like Francis Hammond, who was ordered to continue his training.³⁵² They likewise proceeded 'with utmost severity' on discovering that six Landwaiters were unqualified for the East India business, while James Routh was discontinued from that branch because of his poor eyesight.³⁵³

The importance of commercial "sensibilities" extended into the handling of commodities on the Quays. Small changes in the qualities of goods could have major implications on their liability for duties. Wine-tasters were employed to distinguish between French and Iberian produce; and the misrecognition of caraway and cumin seeds provoked an entire pamphlet from one trader, condemning the Customs' seizures, obfuscation and legalese.³⁵⁴ When Dutch linens were landed as if they were German at Hull it was found necessary to send a London Landwaiter,

³⁴⁹ See Julian Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Ch. 3.

³⁵⁰ CUST 29/1, "Landwaiters", 19 Sept. 1727.

³⁵¹ PROB 11/1078/322.

³⁵² CUST 29/3, "Instructions", 26 Jan 1759.

³⁵³ CUST 29/4, 'Landwaiters', 4 May 1768; CUST 102/84, 5 Jan 1763.

³⁵⁴ A General Merchant, *The Necessity and Expediency of an Association of Merchants and Traders, to Oppose and Get Redress of Many Abuses Arising From the Ambiguity, Misconstruction, Rigour of the Law, and Insidious Practices of Custom-House-Officers* (London, 1779).

‘who had been Surveyor in the Port of Exeter, & is particularly knowing in ye Linen trade, to which he was bred’ to investigate.³⁵⁵ Merchants were often called to arbitrate on disputes with the revenue regarding produce spoiled in transit, as was the case in a ruction over raisins in 1776 when two ‘indifferent merchants experienced in the value of such goods’ reported to the Landsurveyors on the ‘nature and quantum’ of the damage.³⁵⁶

While average life-expectancy for Londoners was in their late forties or younger if poorer, Landwaiters enjoyed a relatively good standard of living as a result of these skills.³⁵⁷ 43 officers died in the service at a median age of 56, while the median age of nine retirees was 63. Property records give us a fuller sense of how assiduously Landwaiters could accumulate capital and thereby sustain their quality of life. The Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills and parochial records suggest officers congregated in certain areas, moving from the commercial parishes bordering the Legal Quays to the shabby gentility of districts like Hackney, Goodman’s Fields and Bermondsey after 1750, while by 1790 an enclave had appeared in buoyant Lambeth. The practice of commuting from the suburbs aped the condition of wealthier City merchants, who also kept second addresses in addition to their counting-houses by this period. However, officers were not purchasing villas for themselves like London’s plutocrats; their wills mention humbler tenements rather than grounds. 11 officers in the sample insured with the Sun Assurance between 1777 and 1784, covering properties and goods worth between £100 and £600, with the median policy worth £300. Few wills recorded any land, hinting at a preponderance of second sons or diehard suburbanites, and the bequests to kin ranged between hundreds of pounds and £5,000. Without inventories it is hard to be any more systematic about the evidence provided by the Prerogative Courts, which also fail to state wealth at death.³⁵⁸ It would seem, however, that officers left behind an upper ‘middling’ leasehold, annuities, plate and

³⁵⁵ BL Add. Mss 18903 f. 68.

³⁵⁶ CUST 29/3, “Damages”, 1 Dec. 1769 and CUST 102/115 f. 27.

³⁵⁷ Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 118-9; Peter Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life In London, 1660-1730* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), figure 11.3, table 4.7, pp. 310, 39.

³⁵⁸ Wealth may also have been supplemented by other incomes from outside the Customs.

a donation to the poor, with lucky Landwaiters scraping the lower end of the £5,000-15,000 wealth-bracket Earle reckons as typical of London merchants.³⁵⁹

The evidence presented here suggests that the relationships Landwaiters forged with London's merchants could be sustained, yet were also socially attenuated. Fees allowed favours to be traded over long periods, permitting a language of honour to develop between these groups, but these activities were markedly professional in character and centered on the Quays. Despite a shared commercial knowledge, merchants occupied a very different social position to Landwaiters and exacerbated this difference by sending juniors to conduct 'waterside business.' Merchants were not only inured to bribery at early stages in their career through this arrangement but, having established themselves in the upper-echelons of a counting house, could rely on the costs of the social networking required to fraudulently pass goods through the Customs to dissuade new entrants to the trade.

The great disadvantage of this compromise was its precarious foundations: aloof merchants commanded little loyalty from Landwaiters and their wealth was an obvious target for extortion. Treasury appointments to the service diminished the power of the Commission, creating an older staff establishing retirement funds and a politically protected cohort, while war corroded established merchant-officer relationships. In this context, one would expect escalating tensions around exchanges between the two groups in the 1770s. Although there is little direct evidence for growing rates of extortion amongst Landwaiters, in 1778 one pamphleteer was urging that merchants form a committee to treat with the Customs collectively in order to ensure that Landwaiters were prevented from using seizures to force their will on merchants.³⁶⁰ Benjamin Vaughan complained to Shelburne of the 'absurd fees of the Customs House', and asked for a consolidation of the book of rates and better attendance from the officers in 1783.³⁶¹

On the related topic of replacing the fees of Treasury clerks with fixed salaries, Vaughan thought that 'it is better not to cut too close. Matters of such immense consequence to individuals come through these officers that it is impossible not to suppose the individuals will bribe. But two or three hundred pounds a year will make the difference of its being a place for a man of credit; low

³⁵⁹ Earle, *Making*, pp. 35-6.

³⁶⁰ General Merchant, *Necessity*, passim.

³⁶¹ BL, Add. Mss. 88906/01/19, Vaughan to Shelburne, 10 Mar. 1783, 12 Mar. 1783.

fellows are likely to make a better bargain for themselves and worse bargains for the country.’³⁶² His associates in the West India Merchants Committee adopted a combative attitude to the Customs by loudly complaining to the Commission of irregular behaviour on the Quays in 1782.³⁶³ By 1792 the Commissioners reported to the Treasury that London merchants were increasingly willing to forego paying fees, registering a crucial change in attitude to the ‘business of the waterside’, though outport merchants were more equivocal on the issue.³⁶⁴ This mercantile push for waged officers points to historically low levels of trust in interpersonal allegiances as a mechanism to regulate the Quays.

Section 5: Corruption and Stability

Complaints from merchants about the regulation of the officers in London were grounded in a commercial agenda, which was not necessarily shared by Musgrave or the politically motivated Treasury. Rather, the evidence presented so far flatly contradicts Brewer’s assertion that Weberian rationality was growing in revenue departments like the Customs, and that we should look to the Treasury for its roots. Unlike the Excise, regulations were not rigid and the will of the Treasury to discipline or dismiss officers abated after 1760. As such, this section aims to explain Musgrave’s success without recourse to the notion that a governing logic sprung from the Treasury. First of all this section outlines how the officers explained away their behaviour in order to build a picture of the challenges Musgrave faced. Next, it describes how his officers’ age provided him with leverage to overcome their moral rhetorics. Finally, we explore how Musgrave created a network of political allies and intellectual resources that allowed him to represent his officers to the Treasury in a manner which emphasised the public costs of their patronage policy.

Elizabeth Hoon’s brilliantly detailed history of the Customs frequently cites the reports Musgrave made to criticise the service after 1777, drawing a stark line between the organisation in his day and the ‘era of Pitt and Adam Smith’.³⁶⁵ Whilst the preceding sections have shed some light onto the causes of Musgrave’s discontent, this section will flesh out Hoon’s offhand but perceptive remark about the changing rationale of the Customs. What this section argues is that the startling

³⁶² BL, Add. Mss. 88906/01/19, Vaughan to Shelburne, 26 Mar. 1783.

³⁶³ CUST 104/91 ff. 1-15.

³⁶⁴ PRO 30/8/285, ff. 1-15.

³⁶⁵ Hoon, *Customs*, p. 6.

'modernity' of Musgrave's work was constructed, in part, by the Reports Hoon cites, and involved three interconnected processes of 'disembedding' after 1777. Musgrave first overturned the Commission's reticence to challenge their officers' justifications for fees and inattentive behaviour. In doing so he developed remunerative forms that cemented the managerial power of the Commission. And he made strenuous efforts to represent the service systematically and displace the Treasury's earlier models of trust, based on political assurances. In resituating the service, Musgrave connected together a broad range of resources, weaving together gentlemanly sociability, librarianship, political economy and his officers' bodies to make his case. His success was not solely theoretical but material insofar as he instituted new practices, new ways of figuring officers in archival and administrative rationales, and created new channels of information that were longer-lasting than the corrupt ones that went before. The term 'longer-lasting' is meant literally, in that paper trails replaced what the semi-formal, ill-documented and fleeting relationships that characterised corruption before. That said, the 'tablets of stone' Brewer evoked to describe the regulation of the revenue would not have allowed Musgrave to process and compare the information he gathered or disseminate it with anything like the speed he did.

A 1743 petition from the Kingswaiters to the Treasury, 'praying that they may succeed according to seniority such Landwaiters, London Port, transferred from the inferior to superior list', supports the notion that promotion by time in office was an expectation of early officers, something that was certainly not the case for later cohorts.³⁶⁶ By 1778, Treasury appointments to the Customs had created a situation where the Customs Commission had little say over the promotion and dismissal of their staff, while merchants, too, called for greater accountability. Only ten Landwaiters were dismissed in the period, indicating the problem Commissioners faced in getting rid of officers shielded by patents, friends at the Treasury and merchant complicity. When cornered, officers attempted to 'neutralise' the Commissioners' concerns by explaining their actions in what they considered morally unimpeachable terms. Examining the officers' answers to charges of corruption is revealing and shows that the categories identified by Philp as constituting forms of social distribution alongside politics, namely the family, community, patrons and the market, formed a distinct repertoire of excuses. No Landwaiter was naive enough to suggest soliciting or extorting bribes from

³⁶⁶ *CBTP IV*, 29 Mar. 1743.

merchants was a right of office, yet the complexity of the service also provided plenty of opportunity for obfuscation. Indeed, it was only in the 1790s that the Commission realised to their horror that, while the fees of London officers were enshrined in statute, those of Outport officers were charged on a customary basis and revised under the purview of local merchant bodies or corporations.³⁶⁷

Local markets also provided a rationale and language for deflecting attention away from illicit transactions in London. As Musgrave noted in 1777, duties had been raised cumulatively, each war bringing another levy or 'head' to the bills merchants were faced with. Such was the bills' complexity, a secondary market of expertise emerged, with established officers writing manuals that explained the Customs laws, which were marketed to both merchants and officers.³⁶⁸ Moreover, officers in the Longroom calculated the "correct" duties for merchants and got 'more by their clients... than by the crown.'³⁶⁹ Edward Saxby's expertise was valued at £700 per annum and on leaving the post his merchant 'clients' would revert to his clerks. Richard Frewin reckoned his income from this service amounted to £1,000 a year in the early 1780s, enough to consider forgoing Musgrave's invitation to join the Customs secretariat.³⁷⁰ Landwaiters were frequently admonished for 'crediting' merchants with too much time in clearing their vessels and occasionally financed them whilst their goods were on the Quays too.³⁷¹ The chief defence used by officers to justify these murky transactions was that fees ensured a quality service or 'dispatch', an argument identical to those used to justify private education today. When threatened with Musgrave's bill abolishing fees, the Landsurveyors petitioned parliament, explaining that duty on the sufferance wharfs that stretched from

³⁶⁷ PRO 30/8/285, ff. 1-15.

³⁶⁸ Henry Crouch, *A Complete View of the British Customs* (1st ed. London, 1728; 5th ed. 1750); B.Y. (An Officer in the Customs), *A Sure Guide to Merchants Customs House Officers or the Practice of the Court of Exchequer in Prosecutions Relating to His Majesty's Customs* (London, 1730); Henry Saxby, *The British Customs: Containing An Historical and Practical Account of Each Branch of the Revenue* (London, 1757); Malachy Postlethway, *Dictionary of Commerce*, I, (London, 1756), pp. 169-179; William Hunter, *The Merchant Clerk: or the Business of the Customs House Made Easy* (London, 1766).

³⁶⁹ T 1/530 ff. 251-2, Sir William Musgrave to the Treasury Commissioners, 29 Apr. 1777; BL Add. Mss 32864 ff. 388-9, Edward Hooper to the Duke of Newcastle, 22 Apr. 1756. On bills BL, Add. Mss 38203 ff. 334-5, Edward Saxby to Lord Liverpool, 24 Jan. 1765.

³⁷⁰ BL, Add. Mss 38278, Richard Frewin to Lord Liverpool, 12 Jul. 1819.

³⁷¹ On withholding books see, CUST 29/3, 'Landingwaiters'; Maurice Butler, *The Case of Maurice Butler, Land-waiter in the Port of London* (London, 1750), p. ivx.

Battersea to Wapping would be impossible without additional compensation.³⁷²

Musgrave's emphasis on streamlining paperwork and creating adequately salaried posts dispossessed officers of this defence by having the Treasury monopolise the criteria on which the service was evaluated.

Such a technocratic strategy was an affront to officers, in that their appointment by the Treasury buttressed a discourse of judgement based on refinement and notions of honour. The correspondence of place seekers cited earlier frequently made assurance of the gentility of prospective officer. Landwaiter Maurice Butler protested his 1750 suspension and eventual dismissal by recounting the lineage of his patrons, the Granvilles, since the Conquest.³⁷³ Butler denied money was a factor informing his values, despite working in a palpably commercial environment. He claimed to remember the days when Landwaiters were 'gentlemen and treated as such by their superiors', evoking a golden age to disparage 'modern' Commissioners: 'A man owes and has the same right to Justice on behalf of himself, to satisfy his friends and the rest of the world, when the interest of his suffering family and (what is more tender) his reputation is concern'd'.³⁷⁴ When Musgrave asked the Duke of Manchester's Longroom deputies to divulge their income from fees, they claimed their remuneration was a matter for them and the Duke alone.³⁷⁵ In essence this was to turn the logic of aristocratic protection commonly found in letters soliciting Customs places against the pretensions of the bureaucrats by imbuing status and clan with a higher value than efficiency. Musgrave was forced to ask Lord Chancellor Thurlow to intervene and threaten Manchester with removal if he did not force his active servants to comply, causing the wisdom of appointments for life and reversionary interests to be seriously questioned by Pitt the Younger.³⁷⁶

Butler's allusion to his family in defending his actions point towards another set of relationships that could be used to justify corruption. Musgrave himself was forced to the Old Bailey when an ex-officer, James Major threatened to kill him,

³⁷² *Journal of the House of Commons*, 21 May 1783, p. 312.

³⁷³ Butler, *Case*, pp iii-xiii

³⁷⁴ Butler, *Case*, pp. xii-xiii.

³⁷⁵ CUST 29/4, "Bench Officers", 28 Jan 1783.

³⁷⁶ Historic Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon* (London: H.M. Stationers, 1894), pp. 512-3, Lord Thurlow to Lloyd Kenyon, 4 Jan. 1783; PRO 30/8/231 ff. 137-40 (1794).

claiming the Commissioner owed him a living in the service. A series of letters Major sent to Musgrave was read in court, each stressing that ‘the loss and sufferings my family have felt, and the trouble I am now in, I should think some redress should be given me’.³⁷⁷ In 1765 Kingswaiter Thomas Butts, 46, sent a fruity letter of resignation to the Treasury that claimed he had never ‘sacrific’d his Duty to his interest’ for which the revenue ‘benefited many thousands of pounds’, but complained the partiality of the Customs Commissioners bore ‘little regard to capacity, diligence or fidelity’ amongst officers. Having contracted ‘rheumatic disorders’ on the chilly waterside, ‘his spirits at last quite broken’ from the indifference of his superiors, he begged the Treasury to ‘move [him] into another employment for the sake of his family’.³⁷⁸

Family proved a serious barrier to change, but old age provided a steppingstone to utilitarian reforms. When considering Musgrave’s bill to eradicate fees, Pitt the Younger was advised caution on this matter, as these monies provided ‘the daily bread to the widows and orphans of their predecessors’.³⁷⁹ This referred to the fact that some Landwaiters’ posts were acquired on the proviso that the incumbent Officer paid his predecessor a portion of his fees. Whole families survived on these “pensions”, as the Customs Commissioners became aware when they assumed the management of the superannuation fund from the Receiver General in 1777. Landwaiters, who were increasingly being recognised as ‘infirm’ were forced on to the fund in 1779, the same year that the ancient John Cunningham was superseded with a pension. Indeed, Cunningham had been a worry for the Commission since Musgrave arrived. In 1762 the Landwaiter had petitioned the Treasury to remind them he had been ‘presented’ for a Landsurveyor’s place, writing, ‘your supplicant being old and in a declining state of proceeding from his constant attendance at the Waterside where he has been exposed to the inclemency of all weathers... he having a large family to maintain and nothing but the continuation of the service for their support’.³⁸⁰ Cunningham would have been 60 then and his plea received the backing of four Commissioners, but the post went to another, resulting in 17 more years of arduous service.

³⁷⁷ Old Bailey Online, t17790404-41, 1779.

³⁷⁸ T 1/440, f. 12, 4 May 1765.

³⁷⁹ PRO 30/8/284, f. 96, Thomas Preston to Pitt, Feb. 1783.

³⁸⁰ BL, Add. Mss. 32937 f. 313, ‘Petition of James Cunningham’, [Apr. 1762].

The availability of pensions made the experience of discharging the growing number of old officers more comfortable for the Commission, who were well aware that the pressure of retirement ‘naturally’ made officers dependent on the fees that supported them and their kin and more likely to solicit bribes. Musgrave personally mobilised this logic, asking Shelburne to excuse ‘my submitting to your consideration whether my labours undertaken at your Lordships command do not deserve some reward so far at least as to give me a chance of a quiet retreat when I shall be worn out with age and infirmities.’ He hoped Shelburne would ‘have the goodness to carry into execution the promise you did me the honour to make... and Grant [me] the Reversion of the Office of Comptrollor General of the Customs to be held during my pleasure’, a reward that entirely contradicted his outwardly principled stance on office-holding.³⁸¹

The discharge of aging officers was formalised with the introduction of an age cap. An age cap of 50 years was placed on officer appointments in 1782 and dropped to 45 in 1786. From then on officers could be superannuated aged 60, and Commissioner Richard Frewin extended their contributions to the scheme by linking it to Landwaiters’ salaries in 1798. Michel Foucault’s notion of ‘populations’ is particularly resonant here, as it positions eighteenth-century utilitarianism between ‘biology’ and ‘the public’, seeing it as the economic shaping of populations through their ‘desires’.³⁸² Populations

were constantly accessible to agents and techniques of transformation, on condition that these agents and techniques are at once enlightened, reflected, analytical, calculated, and calculating. Not only must voluntary changes in the law be considered if the laws are unfavorable to the population, but above all, if one wants to encourage population, or achieve the right relationship between the population and the state’s resources and possibilities, then one must act on a range of factors and elements that seem far removed from the population itself and its immediate behavior, fecundity, and desire to reproduce. One must act on the currency flows that irrigate the country...³⁸³

The irreversibility of his officers’ decline provided the justification for fairly arbitrary age qualifications to replace the older qualities that justified office, like political

³⁸¹ BL, Add Mss 88906/3/17, f. 130, Musgrave to Shelburne, 3 Mar. 1783; See also William Daniel Barker, *A Recital of Intelligence Acquired in the Years 1789, 90, 91, and 92, Chiefly Relating to the Fraudulent Exportation of Debenture Goods* (London, 1795), pp. 71.

³⁸² Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, Trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 98-105

³⁸³ Foucault, *Security*, p 100.

reliability or social standing. Evidently this binary way of representing officers as capable or, conversely, as 60 and incapable, had the advantage that it was easily policed by the Treasury and Commission, regardless of any personal relationships between individual officers and either institution.

Both the Commission and Treasury felt officers and their dependents should be provided for, and the problems of old age and failing bodies provided objective grounds to start disciplining unproductive officers. The material and rhetorical challenges of aging acted as a springboard for Musgrave's increasingly Smithian sociology, based on legal clarity, administrative accuracy and quantifiable measures. Although the idea of streamlining duties was a staple of published Customs manuals, Musgrave's emphasis on economising government, making officers themselves 'useful' and dependable, echoed Smith, whose complaints about the service centred on four heads.³⁸⁴ First, the fees and perquisites Customs officers charged were a burden on the public, as costs charged to merchants devolved onto consumers. By contrast, the Excise was 'less corrupted than the customs', whose 'ignorant' medieval origins made the institution prone to abuse. Second, duties, especially overtly protectionist tariffs, disrupted the 'natural direction of national industry'. Third, high taxes caused smuggling and, as such, social dissent. And fourth and finally, Smith claimed that tax inspectors interfered in private business, which smacked of oppression, raising peoples' hackles. Smith advocated radically dismantling the Customs by lightly taxing a few widely consumed articles *inland*, under the administration of the Excise, thereby doing away with complex 'drawbacks' on re-exported goods.³⁸⁵ Citing Walpole Excise scheme as his model, his plan was politically contentious but must figure as part of the ideological framework that aimed to render government efficient and exercised Westminster politicians after the early successes of the economical reform movement around 1780.

Significantly, Musgrave was reading the *Wealth of Nations* between 1778 and 1784, just as he was getting closer to Shelburne.³⁸⁶ In August 1782, Musgrave advised Shelburne on how to 'strengthen and enlarge the proper influence that

³⁸⁴ Smith, *Wealth*, III pp. 326-330.

³⁸⁵ Smith, *Wealth*, III pp. 303-6.

³⁸⁶ BL, Add. Mss. 25403 f. 28 and 25404 f. 104: Musgrave's Catalogues of Printed Books show he had second, 1778, and third, 1784, editions of the *Wealth of Nations*.

government ought to have' over their officers.³⁸⁷ He advocated that Crown patents 'for life' and fees be abolished from the service, and that officer loyalty could be improved by regular salaries and appointments made 'at pleasure', which meant remiss officers could be superseded. Unaccountable sinecures were deemed to blight the service, officers 'having been of late years appointed from country fox-hunters, bankrupt merchants and officers of the Army and Navy - without the least previous knowledge of the business of the revenue and too late to acquire it.'³⁸⁸ Musgrave's Bill for vacating places in the Customs floundered with Shelburne's administration in early 1783, but similarly aimed to increase the Treasury's power over officers by replacing their fees by wages and formalising their conditions of employment. The jovial correspondence between the two men reveals that gentlemanly gifts and favours cemented their intellectual alliance. Indeed, Musgrave, who decried venality in office, saw no contradiction in petitioning Shelburne for an unpaid but suitably enlightened Trusteeship of the British Museum and was similarly at pains to create an empire of contacts in the Customs and Treasury.³⁸⁹

In 1783, the Committee on Illicit Practices Used for Defrauding the Revenue chaired by William Eden reported to Parliament advice from both Customs and Excise Commissioners on the fiscal cost of frauds and smuggling. Eden provided another friendly link to Smith, who also contributed to the Report as a Scottish Customs Commissioner. They concurred with Musgrave, linking fees and misinformation with frauds

This collusion [with merchants] and corrupt disposition among inferior officers is productive also of improper allowances upon the quays, at the discharge of weight, gauge and measure. In short, the established practice of fees, which is inseparable from a complicated and difficult system of duties [combined] to produce an intimacy and connection between inferior officers and merchants.³⁹⁰

Musgrave had drafted in Frewin and Stiles to form a task force that sought to liberalise Irish duties in 1782. The pair would continue his efforts to insulate officers

³⁸⁷ Musgrave to Shelburne, 20 Nov. 1782, cited in Norris, *Shelburne*, pp. 211-2.

³⁸⁸ A.L. Cross ed., *Eighteenth Century Documents From the Manuscripts in the William L. Clements Library* (London: MacMillan, 1929), Musgrave to Shelburne, 1782-3, pp. 250-6, 267, 288-9.

³⁸⁹ BL Add Mss 88906/3/17, f.127, Musgrave to Shelburne, 18 Dec. 1782.

³⁹⁰ PP, 'Reports of the Committee on Illicit Practices used for Defrauding the Revenue', (1783), p. 285.

from merchants as Commissioners under Pitt the Younger by producing another report criticising fees in 1792 and extending the pension scheme to all officers as a mechanism to instil loyalty to the Treasury.³⁹¹

Marshalling and collecting data was important in establishing Musgrave as an impartial and publicly-minded force in the Customs and signals a departure from the otherwise informal (or corrupt) political networking he undertook to achieve his aims. An amateur compiler of biographical material, a bibliophile and collector of engravings, Musgrave's cross-referenced 'methodical' and 'alphabetical' catalogues of the books he donated to the British Library show the powerful influence of archival processes over his thinking. Additionally, he published the volume, *A Collection of All the Statutes Now in Force, Relating to the Revenue and Officers of the Customs in Great Britain and the Plantations* (London, 1780), that formed the basis for the consolidation of the book of rates he had outlined in the 1777 memorandum; a project that remained unfinished until 1787. Around this time he also began an indexed digest of Customs' by-laws from 1694 onwards (CUST 29/1-4). These manuscript tomes exponentially enhanced the navigability of the service for the Commissioners, who continued to update them, and replaced the unwieldy bundles of documents that had formally constituted their archive. The propensity of former Commission's to repeat staffing regulations or lose sight of policies, and the service's unsteady historical trajectory were laid open by these books, which became a valuable asset for a string of reformers hoping to improve the efficiency of the Customs. When another Shelburne brainchild, the Commission for Stating the Public Accounts, came to examine the Customs in 1784, Musgrave and his two protégés in the Customs secretariat, Frewin and Stiles, were on hand to provide a searing and thoroughgoing critique of the service's administrative procedures, dependence on fees and appointment mechanism that actively undermined the accountability of officers.³⁹² Without Musgrave's index, this map of the service could scarcely have been drawn up so quickly, or have made such decisive inroads into the question of policing the service.

The Reports also capitalised on Musgrave's adaptation of tabular forms to display data about his officers, giving these documents a pointed rhetoric.

³⁹¹ BL Add. Mss. 8133C ff. 32-8; PRO 30/8/285: Pitt's papers on the abolition of fees c. 1789-98; John Erham, *Pitt the Younger: The Years of Acclaim* (London: Constable, 1969), pp. 287-92; Marios Raphael, *Pensions*, p. 92.

³⁹² PP, 'Fourteenth Report of the Commission for Stating the Public Accounts' (1785), pp. 7, 12. See above.

Appendixes attached to the fourteenth and fifteenth detailed the position, salary, fees, tax liability and mode of appointment of all London and outport officers, acting as a classificatory schema of the service's archaic offices and split loyalties.

Musgrave had piloted this form in manuscript surveys of the service drawn up to support his 1782-3 bill for Shelburne, when he asked officers to report their fees, specifying the headed columns in which the data should be returned to make it immediately comparable. These "questionnaires" were not unlike those used by the Society of Antiquaries, of which Musgrave was a member, to collect topographical information.³⁹³ Like the Duke of Manchester's deputies, some officers had to be bullied into responding and the outports proved particularly resistant, cloaking their unease at the Commissioners exploration of the realm of fees in obfuscation and tardiness.³⁹⁴ They had good reason to be worried, as Shelburne had used this procedure to calculate the salaries of Treasury clerks once their fees had been abolished.³⁹⁵

Both the Treasury and parliament were regularly passed tabulated 'accounts' by the Customs, for the most part drawn up by Musgrave's Surveyor General, meaning both institutions were familiar with the Appendix's form.³⁹⁶ Comparisons between types of officers were made easy and a running total made clear the expense of the establishment, especially the vast 'net produce' being extracted from offices. Despite not being able to guarantee the officers' self-assessments, information that represented his officers to the Treasury as public costs, rather than as friends or pleading clients, was a means of overcoming the contingency of his authority. Not only did the appendixes open the officers to fiscal scrutiny, which complemented his growing appreciation for quantifiable data, it strengthened Musgrave's contention that extending Treasury authority into the officers' private negotiations by eradicating fees was possible and desirable.

³⁹³ A. Fox, 'Printed Questionnaires, Research Networks and the Discovery of the British Isles, 1650-1800', *Historical Journal*, 53, 3 (2010), pp. 593-621.

³⁹⁴ Compare CUST 102/93, Land Surveyors' Report Book, f. 105 with CUST 59/16, Weymouth Collector to Board 20 Oct. 1783; CUST 59/80, Weymouth Board to Collector, 3 Sept. 1782; CUST 59/16, 9 Sept. 1782; CUST 59/80, 27 Sept. 1782; CUST 64/8, Exeter Collector to Board, 9 Oct & 4 Nov 1782; CUST 59/80, 13 Feb 1783.

³⁹⁵ Sainty, *Office-Holders*, p. 10.

³⁹⁶ BL, Add. Mss 8133B-C, Musgrave Papers; J. Hoppit, 'Political Arithmetick in Eighteenth-Century England', *Economic History Review*, New Series 44, 3 (1996), p. 519; F. de Bruyn, 'From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs: Eighteenth-century Representations of the "State" of British Society', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 17, 1 (2004), pp. 107-139.

Figure 3.4, Musgrave's table of his officers' 'emoluments'.

A P P E N D I X. N ^O . 1.												
		OFFICERS NAMES.	EMPLOYMENTS.	By what Authority appointed.	Salaries and Allowances, when the Officers are in Office.	Expenses in the Office, when the Officers are in Office.	Expenses in the Office, when the Officers are not in Office.	Sum of the Officers' Emoluments.	Sum of the Officers' Emoluments.	Sum of the Officers' Emoluments.	Sum of the Officers' Emoluments.	Sum of the Officers' Emoluments.
III.	In the Office of the Auditor of the Customs.	James Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		William Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
IV.	In the Office of the Auditor of the Customs.	James Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		William Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100
		John Borne	Deputy Clerk of the Customs	Warrent	£100	—	—	£100	—	—	—	£100

Source: PP, 'Fourteenth Report'.

Musgrave left the Customs in 1785 to join the Public Accounts Commission which had just visited the Customs and replaced the Auditor of the Imprest in disciplining the Exchequer. Answering directly to the First Lord of the Treasury (Prime Minister), the Commission further cemented the nexus of policy and administration. Informal connections eased this transition: Musgrave had dealt with the Prime Minister, Pitt the Younger, as Shelburne's Chancellor, with Pitt continuing to implement many of his predecessor's policies.³⁹⁷ Pitt's long administration allowed him to follow economising policies silently, letting many Customs places 'fall in' by refusing to appoint successors when they were vacated. Policing the Customs with utility in mind was a function not just of the intelligence gathered in the reports but also Musgrave's presence. Moreover, detecting abuses on the Quayside was made exponentially simpler by the Consolidation of the book of rates that made duties easier to compute. This monumental administrative endeavour had clear implications for the fiscal policies that the Treasury implemented, and also reveal the power of Musgrave's bureaucratic devices to cement his own position. Eden's 1783 report had echoed Musgrave in expressing displeasure at the mercantilist system of drawbacks, prohibitions and bounties that overly-complicated duties.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ Erham, *Pitt*, pp. 87-93.

³⁹⁸ PP, 'Reports of the Committee on Illicit Practices', pp. 285-6.

Musgrave counselled Pitt on the 1784 Commutation Act, which sought to raise revenue on tea by lowering duties, in order to undercut the price differential that made smuggling so attractive. Duties on wine, spirits and tobacco were lowered as a result of the success with tea. Tobacco warehousing was eventually passed over to the Excise for administration in 1788, succeeding where Walpole had failed. Similarly, Eden benefitted from Musgrave's advice since 1783 and, having joined Pitt's administration, would negotiate the 1786 treaty aimed at dismantling the protectionist barriers that depressed trade and encouraged smuggling with France.³⁹⁹ Again, the recodification of information into standardised and digested forms that could physically move more easily between the Treasury and Customs was central to making policy more Smithian and officers more accountable.

Musgrave was the conspicuous force in shaping the Customs service from 1780, overseeing a shift away from mercantilist policy and introducing utilitarian reforms. Combining with figures like Shelburne, Eden and Pitt, who were sympathetic to the economical reform movement, he sought to curb waste in the Customs and elsewhere by unpicking byzantine procedures, extinguishing defunct offices, sinecures and reversionary interests, by having the Treasury engross all appointments and replace fees with salaries and pensions.

The rationality of his recommendations should not obscure the fact that they were a reaction to the fiscal short-termism of the Treasury, who palpably favoured political clients above longer-term plans. Equally, officers frequently explained that they were just as prone to supposedly universal frailties in order to legitimise their positions or cushion the force of the Commissioner's ire. Self-interest, gentlemanly allegiances and family were presented as factors that could not be eradicated or penalised, establishing an alternative moral schema to those the Commission attempted to promote at the time. Local reciprocities and obligations coloured Musgrave's view of both his officers and the Treasury and in every case he aimed to standardise their dealings with the Customs by establishing regular bureaucratic and remunerative procedures that encouraged accountability. Combatting corruption meant realigning the proper relations between interdependent groups: by having the Commission suppress markets detrimental to the long-term security of the revenue; by making the Treasury acknowledged their obligations to the National Debt by de-politicising the Customs; and ensuring officers relied on the Treasury to support their families.

³⁹⁹ BL, Add. Mss 33419 ff. 120, 138, 202; 33420 f. 24, 208: Musgrave to Eden Mar. 1782-Dec 1785.

Musgrave's attempts to centralise administrative procedures saw paperwork replace more ephemeral alliances. Not only did these archivable bureaucratic forms define corrupt ones with greater clarity but improved the quality and quantity of information, especially numerical information, that connected his officers to the Treasury. Seen as officers on a certain salary and pension, of so many years of age, and solely beholden to the Treasury rather than individual ministers, the calculative framework linking the officers to the Treasury radically altered, becoming invested with numerical precision and greater administrative regularity. To be sure, this system did not fully emerge until fees were abolished in 1802 due to Pitt's non-committal attitude to Treasury reform, Musgrave's death in 1800 and the seemingly permanent crises engendered by the Napoleonic wars. However, Musgrave laid a foundation, both in the reports he made and the material and archivable administrative practices he introduced, which meant that slips backwards into informalities were now defined as corrupt and more visible in the paper-trail that connected officers to commissioner and the Treasury.

Conclusions

This chapter's discussion of Musgrave's utilitarianism was arrived at by a circuitous route, suggesting previous histories of the revenue have under-emphasised the proximity of corruption, in that those decrying it register something unwelcome but contemporary. Enlightened appreciations of corruption in the market and the state in economic discourse, such as Smith's, shifted the horizons of administrators, but the continual evolution of transactions, like bribery or informal patron-client relationships, gave these ideas purchase at particular times and places. Indeed, the Treasury was not an autonomous entity guiding England, then Britain, to great power status on the basis of the inherent rationality of political economy. Certainly, it figured politics differently to other branches of the state and the public because of the national debt but this did not translate directly into a uniform or consistent attitude towards office-holding, as the Landwaiter appointments for London clearly show. Walpole's and the Pelhams' management of Customs appointments were fairly utilitarian and they made some effort to discipline officers for the good of the revenue. By contrast, George III's ministers treated Customs places cynically, awarding places 'for life' in exchange for socio-political favours.

Furthermore, economic corruption was linked to political corruption, via attitudes to office-holding, and was variable too. As a socially coded, if asymmetrical, exchange of services, corrupt transactions forced certain obligations

on actors that needed to be sustained and reproduced. Whether through external shocks like war and elections or the economic requirements of old age, ruptures in the networks required to perform these expectations could deform the trusted norm. London's merchants could be alienated from the Landwaiters because of their apparent arbitrariness, hastening merchant adoption of regular, collective and long-term remunerative strategies.

Finally, seeing corruption as involving a complex set of negotiations between several legitimate forms of distribution, any of which may gain political traction, acknowledges the heterogeneity of the eighteenth-century state. Just as successive Treasuries employed their own staffing strategies, so officers enrolled their own immediate concerns, presenting the Commissioners with seemingly timeless social categories, like family or self-interest, that had explanatory value precisely because they were so hard to police. Musgrave's reforms became an unmistakable endorsement for debt-orientated political economy only after his increasingly infirm officers attempted to justify their inability to comply with existing regulations. An aging population sparked his utilitarian solution, causing him to seek to suppress the lazy ideals of gentility and honour that the Treasury fostered.

From cash fees to pensions to national debt, this chapter has featured various forms of circulation, and Musgrave's Customs reforms were ultimately about shifting the culture of money in the Customs. He advocated that tax-payers buy-out and exclude the claims merchants, political patrons and families had on the Customs through wages and pensions, in return for extending the Treasury's fiscal integrity. It validated the vertical transfer of wealth from merchants to the Treasury by denying the horizontal associations of officers and merchants embodied in the form of fees. And, through wages and pensions, it inculcated long-term rationales in order to increase officer's dependence on the Treasury. For London's merchants, this bureaucratic agenda became attractive on the basis that it promised regular, efficient and lighter taxation, and an alternative to their contested influence of the Quays. Officers were a conduit between the Treasury and counting-house, which changed the calculative agenda of merchants in the lead up to the Docks campaign, by fostering an appreciation for order and regularity at the interface of the state and economy. Extending the power of the Treasury remained contentious. Burke's *Reflections* (London, 1790) stated a credible defense of fiscal inertia on the basis of the ancient social and moral hierarchies, which countenanced change only when 'it is to be effected without a decomposition of the whole civil and political mass for the purpose of originating a new civil order out of the first elements of society.'

Nevertheless, while commentators might find calculating bureaucratic centres politically unsettling, the next chapter will investigate the culture of insurance to demonstrate that these were an increasingly normal and popular part of the City's commercial landscape.

Chapter 3: Mercantile Architecture: Insurance, Warehouses and the Limits of Improvement

As we have seen, the organisation of the Customs was becoming increasingly rigidly defined after 1780, with City merchants welcoming these measures. Indeed, propertied Londoners were far more trusting of bureaucratic institutions and fire insurance was a key means in effecting this shift in the eighteenth century. William Vaughan, who had been a Deputy Director of the London Assurance since 1783, attended the 1796 Parliamentary Inquiry into extending the Port of London, alongside three spokesmen from London insurance companies. In their statements to the Committee these delegates pondered over the insurability against fire of the wooden ships in the proposed Docks' basins, as well as the warehouses around them, as both contained valuable concentrations of goods.⁴⁰⁰

Maximillian Novak suggests that the improvement projects of the later-eighteenth century took their lead from the *philosophes*, who saw change as desirable if not inevitable.⁴⁰¹ The Bowood Set's appreciation of insurance stands out as an obvious example of the coupling of thinkers and practices that Novak has in mind. Richard Price had been working as an actuary in the City since the mid-1760s, published on annuities and been advocating their use to reduce the national debt to Shelburne and Pitt.⁴⁰² Adam Smith used insurance to illustrate how the market had generated its own 'routines' that had *already* proved their worth as it 'appeared, with the clearest evidence, that the undertaking is of greater and of more general utility than the greater part of common trades'.⁴⁰³ The expertise on display at the Inquiry might be interpreted as testament to the pragmatic, enlightened and calculating qualities that Smith praised as latent within the City's 'routine' commercial institutions. However, the insurance delegates present came to little consensus as to what the Docks or better warehousing would do to their premium rates. Digging a little deeper, Robin Pearson has found that evidence for the

⁴⁰⁰ PP, 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London', (1796), pp. 48-50, 90-92, 122-125, 202-209.

⁴⁰¹ Maximillian E. Novak, 'Introduction', idem. ed., *The Age of Projects* (Toronto and London: UCLA Centre, 2008), p. 17.

⁴⁰² Richard Price, *Correspondence of Richard Price: Volume II*, D.O. Thomas ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales press, 1991).

⁴⁰³ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ii, p. 757.

insurance industry sparking technical innovation in architectural circles is scant.⁴⁰⁴ As such, this chapter probes the limitations of bureaucratic strategies and money-orientated technologies to alter commercial practices in London, in contrast to the success Musgrave had with them in Customs House.

Considering the role the insurance industry in providing a platform for market-driven improvement in the built environment requires melding architectural and economic history. Examining the career of Richard Jupp (1727-1799), a surveyor for the Hand in Hand fire office, the East India Company and several other City institutions we can get a sense of the limitations of the architectural expertise the insurance offices relied on. Undoubtedly London's insurance companies number amongst the great bureaucratic feats of the eighteenth century, and they promoted "faceless" Smithian markets through their routine administration of money. By raising the premiums on risky buildings like warehouses the fire offices frequently advised their policyholders that investing in fire-proof building materials would save them money. As such, the insurance companies differentiated between building technologies in their understanding of risk, creating a market for improved architecture. However, refining Pearson's work this chapter suggest that the seemingly modern insurance companies had no monopoly over how levels of risk were conceptualised or made visible within a calculative framework. Insurance principles did not find a public outlet in Jupp's built-work and, through a case study of the warehousing industry, it becomes clear many other mechanisms were in place to offset any risks to buildings in that sector. Investments in forms of training, networking and discipline designed to mitigate the anxieties posed by circulating expensive goods were prevalent in London's warehouses. Moreover, the money and time that had been invested in these qualities were all highly visible, taking physical form in licenses, badges, tickets, keys, tokens, the spaces people occupied within warehouses, and the age of warehouse-keepers. All of these were concentrated on specific warehouse spaces, normally the gates, that made the structures themselves quite adequate centres of calculation. Insurance policies may have fostered a numerically sophisticated understanding of risk but these coexisted with other calculative frameworks that diminished the novelty of the insurance offices' understanding of risk, and, subsequently, their calls to invest in the built environment.

⁴⁰⁴ Robin Pearson, 'The Impact of Fire and Fire Insurance on Eighteenth-Century English Town Buildings and Their Populations', Carole Shammas ed., *Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment* (London: Brill, 2012), pp. 67-93.

Section 1: Architecture and Improvement

Robin Pearson's work has thrown open a series of questions for historians of architecture and commerce by questioning the role of the insurance industry in fostering a 'risk society'. Pearson follows up on Ulrich Beck's proposition that modern society characteristically identifies and neutralises risks of all kinds using technologies, both concrete and conceptual, in a self-reflexive manner.⁴⁰⁵ For Beck, Tools like insurance that combine predictive actuarial science with practical outcomes alter social relations, which, in turn, feed-back to the specialist wielding such instruments and refines their work. As Pearson argues in a recent essay, the expanding eighteenth-century insurance industry grew out of and fostered concerns about the risks fire posed, but relatively little changed in terms of building practices, which continued to use carpentry as a major structural element despite brick facades. 'The transition to a physical environment characterised by durability rather than fragility...made less progress in eighteenth century England than historians have hitherto suggested'.⁴⁰⁶ Pearson also suggests that the insurance industry remained tied to pre-probabilistic statistical techniques that made insurance companies incapable of predicting risks and made the populous at large no more safety-conscious. Despite the growth of the insurance industry, popular attitudes to the risk of fire were relatively unchanging and few technical changes were piloted by the industry. Instead, 'insurance offered a means of rebuilding after fire damage, and thereby realising urban reformers' aspirations to greater public safety and order', coinciding with the 'dominant aesthetic of a polite street-scape'.⁴⁰⁷ What fire insurance companies could do was protect the value of property, abstracting it from its everyday use-value and making it a commodity or asset.⁴⁰⁸ That is, the companies were in the historically unique position of being able to calculate and isolate a value for a property without any view to enjoying or using it.

Pearson opens up a number of lines of enquiry which touch on the Docks both directly and indirectly because he questions the extent to which insurance

⁴⁰⁵ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage, 2011); see also Deborah Lupton, *Risk* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁴⁰⁶ Pearson, 'Impact' pp. 92, 76-7.

⁴⁰⁷ Pearson, 'Impact', p. 85.

⁴⁰⁸ Pearson, 'Impact', p. 89.

companies represented an interface between the rhetoric and practice of improvement. As we have seen, William Vaughan was a director of the Royal Exchange Assurance, a major London-based underwriter, and he was joined in the Parliamentary inquiry into the port of London of 1796 by the three other fire office directors. Furthermore, we know insurance was central to the merchant community in the City, who sat on the boards of the companies and took out policies on goods and ships entering the City. Broadly speaking, it was this community that invested most heavily in the Docks, and Vaughan's own London Dock Company attracted more of London's insurance directors than his rivals in the 1790s.⁴⁰⁹ What, then, was the connection between the body of knowledge shaped by the insurance companies and these City-investors in projects like the docks? What inhibited the understanding of hazard promoted by the insurance companies from manifesting itself as a change in building technologies? And how did merchants use, patronise and conceptualise architecture in the City otherwise?

A mild criticism of Pearson does arise when we consider how he sets up the "problem" of meaningful knowledge-transfers from the fire offices to Londoners at large. The failure of insurance to alter the City's understanding of risk was, as Pearson implies, no failure at all inasmuch that it was under no obligation to do so except to prop up the theoretical agendas of sociologists like Beck. Yet Pearson also describes the 'curious coexistence of extensive insurance against hazards with limited attempts to alleviate their physical threat'.⁴¹⁰ His essay attempts to explain why rational economic agents failed to be spurred into action by pointing to cultural factors like the prevalent 'psychology' and 'ideology of property' of the eighteenth century that prevented probabilistic reasoning to register. My point here is that Pearson is no different from Beck in *expecting* the markets widely advertised by the insurance industry through its bureaucratic practices and calculative sophistication to displace older mechanisms of assessing risk and foster improving invention.

Investigating how the insurance industry interacted with the supposed market for improved architecture suggests that the insurance policy was not the only way people understood risk in London. Rather, the commercial community had developed many ways of representing and suppressing hazard, rooted in an established material culture, which was not invisible but circulated widely in the City.

⁴⁰⁹ Nick Draper, 'The City of London and Slavery: Evidence from the First Dock Companies, 1795-1800', *Economic History Review, New Series*, 61, 2 (2008), pp. 433-467.

⁴¹⁰ Pearson, 'Impact', p. 89.

The next section of this chapter simply describes the activities of Richard Jupp, an insurance surveyor with London's Hand in Hand fire office, between 1754 and his death in 1799. Here, the aim is to explore the kinds of relationships he established with those outside the fire offices and what prevented him fostering a more sophisticated understanding of risk within them. The second part of this chapter looks at the problem of technological stasis from the perspective of potential City investors and explores merchant attitudes to risk in the built environment in London. The lens used to examine risk in this sections is warehouses, which were a special problem for merchants and underwriters in the period, and an obvious built-space where the commercial and actuarial imperatives of the City were reconciled. In mapping out the mundane institutional life of Jupp and recreating London warehouses from business records this chapters develops a practice-led analysis, where two different constellations of objects are, like other chapters, just as important as the people involved. The aim is to discover why neither interacted in a sustained manner.

The chapter outlines two connected arguments. First, while insurance was a popular product and had utilitarian connotations, the rigid methods the industry employed resisted rather than facilitated innovation. In a sense the industry was a victim of its own success, where formulaic prescriptions discouraged well-meaning employees like Jupp from viewing buildings as anything other than a function of financial assets and disinterested in developing a knowledge of fire-safety publicly. Secondly, the merchant market for improved warehousing was confused because, historically, merchant understandings of risk were focused not on the warehouses as objects but the goods within them. This amalgamated fear of fires with concerns over theft and meant that warehouses traditionally relied upon investments in trust, education, networking and qualities thought of as 'human capital' as much as fixed-capital or architecture. Crucially, these qualities were maintained by material and bureaucratic supports not entirely different from insurance policies, like licenses, badges and the spaces people occupied in warehouses that allow more sophisticated calculation of risk to be made by merchants or warehouse-keepers transporting goods. Warehouses were calculative spaces where information about labour and goods was collated, ranked and acted upon, in the precise manner Michel Callon has described in outlining calculative agency.⁴¹¹ Combining these two

⁴¹¹ Michel Callon and F. Muniesa, 'Economic Market as Calculative Collective Devices', *Ecole des Mines*, pp.1-32, [orig., "Les marchés économiques comme dispositifs collectifs de calcul", *Réseaux* 21 (2004), pp. 189-233].

strands of evidence into Callon's framework, the suggestion is that the problems the insurance industry faced in developing ideas about risk should not be explained by examining culture in opposition to economic rationalism but recognising that different business cultures co-existed. The rationality of the insurance industry harboured a distinct type of sociability that this essay will explore through Jupp, and, conversely, the preoccupation with people in warehousing sector made good business sense. Risk was not invisible outside the insurance industry but deeply embedded the fabric of the City in such a manner as to blur the distinctiveness of the reasoning emanating from the fire offices.

In many ways this is a narrative of supposedly modern calculative tools of probabilistic reasoning *not* winning out over traditional methods. With merchants tending to underwrite goods rather than warehouses and the insurance companies being distinctly closed to technical developments in building, the market for improved architecture was nascent at best. Comparing insurance with other improving projects of the period does provide some compelling reasons for suggesting why it failed to connect these actors. This introduction continues by outlining the connections between Jupp, insurance and warehouses briefly, and then places those elements into a number of the frameworks that have been used to interrogate eighteenth-century improvement. What is immediately noticeable is that Jupp and the fire offices had startlingly low-public profiles and the knowledge Jupp acquired through the insurance industry was transmitted and accumulated through private channels rather than public forums. Likewise, warehousing existed outside of popular or learned discourses. Although, this discussion is by no means exhaustive or intended to suggest that all modernising projects are inevitably linked to some notion of publicity, highlighting the importance of published text in thinking about improvement sets into relief the private, corporate and professional *milleux* that bounded both Jupp and warehousing that circulated knowledge far more slowly. As with chapter one, this section suggests the role of enlightened discourse to be vital because it could radically transform existing markets by altering the calculating agencies involved.

Jupp himself is an under-researched character, in that he was very much part of the City's architectural elite but has not received a monographic treatment like his contemporaries, George Dance the Younger, Sir John Soane or Henry Holland, with whom he was professionally associated and who were all comparable architect-surveyors. Part of this stems from the fact his great commission, East India House, was demolished in 1857 and that his career needs to be pieced together

from the traces he left in the archives of the Hand in Hand and his other surveying posts at Guy's Hospital, the Carpenters' Company and the East India Company. His work for the East India Company is important in that his warehouses were the most prominent in the City, if only because of their sheer scale, and made his a name to conjure with by the time of his death.

In following Jupp's career it becomes clear that his work traces several circuits or networks which allow us to examine the insurance industry from multiple vantages. First, he was responsible for surveying properties for the Hand in Hand and therefore acted as mediator between a cross-section propertied Londoners and the board of his office. He was then crucial in the abstraction of value from property that Pearson notes was the great advantage of the industry. City insurance is often labelled an invisible export of the United Kingdom's by economists and it is clear that Jupp was peddling something no less ephemeral to policyholders, a mode of calculation. Consequently, Jupp's practice involved clear displays of mathematical expertise that put him in a position of power whilst interacting with policyholders. Looking at his work for the East India Company, Guy's and the guilds, we see him connecting together a series of institutions into a more affable, second network. Jupp was clearly well respected and his patronage of builders into the offices and contracts his surveyorships afforded him further cemented links between the insurance industry and this corporate community in the City. These trustworthy business connections blended into a third network of professional associations between City builders like himself, Dance and Holland, and took the form of the Architects' Club in 1791. Initially the Club was keen to lay down professional standards for surveyors and this manifested itself in an experiment aimed at testing fire-proofing technologies and publicly announcing the Club's presence to influential Londoners, including George III, Pitt the Younger and the City's companies and liveries. These were three overlapping networks but they figured the relationship between expertise, property and trust differently in each case.

Although the fire offices adamantly presented themselves as providing a service which aimed to support the infrastructure of civic life, looking at the social circles that Jupp moved through it is clear that the meanings of insurance were variegated and diffuse. Evidently there seems to be something of a disconnection between the ability of the insurance companies to marshal private interests and foster any kind of debate about improvement, amongst its policyholders, employees or in the public sphere. The research presented in the next section suggests Jupp was fairly good at drawing the building profession into the world of insurance, albeit

in what Stana Nenadic calls an environment where ‘Forging relationships with fellow architects through a drinking and dining club had a utility in circumstances where market co-operation was necessary’ because ‘co-operative business behaviour was a feature of expertise’.⁴¹² As such, the relatively impersonal business and public aspects of insurance are worth dwelling on for a moment because they suggest why the industry was so constipated.

The inertia of policyholders when it came to fire-safety is understandable as insurance companies developed a technocratic and highly monetised business model. Companies could protect “abstract value” by distributing it over a community of policyholders and retroactively mobilise it to rebuild properties damaged by fire. Significantly, this ‘protection’ only applied to policyholders: if a policyholder’s house burnt to the ground causing damage to a neighbour’s, the latter would not be entitled to compensation. Fire insurance, framed thus, could be seen as an engine of social atomisation, militating against communal values. As Geoffrey Clarke has argued of life insurance, ‘Assurance...entailed a collective embrace of the future’s potentialities; a self-willed conspiracy of faith in the future well-being of family and fortune. Subscribing together helped assure its truth. This really was Good News for the capitalist age.’⁴¹³ That said, large fires frequently saw *ad hoc* charities established to relieve uninsured victims of fires in London and elsewhere, with the donations often being administered by City merchants and bankers.⁴¹⁴ Fire insurance is probably best seen as akin to the kind of utility-maximising commodity Jan de Vries sees as restructuring household economies in early-modern Britain, in that coverage was not only acquired on the market but established primacy of the market as the conduit for goods and services above communal or home-production.⁴¹⁵

At the public end of the spectrum, the relationship between fire, property and civic governance was much debated in the mid-eighteenth century in a manner

⁴¹² Stana Nenadic, ‘Architect-Builders in London and Edinburgh, and the Market for Expertise, 1750-1800’, *Historical Journal*, 55, 3 (2012), pp. 19.

⁴¹³ Geoffrey Clarke, *Betting on Lives: The Culture of Life Insurance in England, 1695-1775* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 201.

⁴¹⁴ See M. Harris, “‘Inky Blots and Rotten Parchment Bonds’: London Charity Briefs and the Guildhall Library”, *Historical Research*, 66 (1993), p. 103.

⁴¹⁵ Jan de Vries, ‘The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution’, *Journal of Economic History*, 52, 4 (1994), pp. 249-270 and idem., ‘Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods’, John Brewer and Roy Porter eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 85-132.

which gave the insurance companies a potentially political cachet. John Gwynn, who republished Wren's celebrated post-fire design for London in 1748, as well as being an early advocate of the Royal Academy drew out the lessons to be learned when these elements were confused with particular virulence. His seminal *London and Westminster Improved* (1766) forcefully made the case for further regulating the Capital's architecture, squarely blaming private interest for the deplorable state of post-fire London, and demonstrating a barely veiled contempt for the mere 'mechanic' tradesmen who cobbled together jobs without reference to their social and intellectual superiors. In his view, pre-Fire London 'was totally inelegant, inconvenient and unhealthy, its misfortunes many melancholy proofs are authenticated in [its] history, and which without doubt proceed from the narrowness of the streets and the unaccountable projections of the buildings.'⁴¹⁶ In his subsequent account of London's inequities, the City's Thames Street was singled out for particular invective on the grounds that it was unsuited to its commercial purposes. The maps that accompanied the text overlaid in red Gwynn's ideal city onto the current layout of the City. This saw the quayside regularised and streets widened in accordance with Wren. Gwynn's text appealed to the enlightened absolutist, advocating that the capital be regularised and classicised wholesale, and not left in the hands of inherently self-interested builders, merchants and tradesmen, trading on the inviolability of 'liberty' and 'property' in England.

Miles Ogborn has been at pains to explain how Gwynn's vision fits within a wider philosophical and aesthetic project aimed at resolving the questions asked of the urban environment by a 'modern' commercial society. His argument draws on Jurgen Habermas' notion of private individuals coming together to create a public that addresses the state. Ogborn argues that the aristocratic Lord Shaftesbury, cynical Bernard Mandeville and studious David Hume had all struggled with the question of how public space could reflect and impose just public values on self-interested individuals. All three arrived at very different solutions: 'the classical city, the filthy city, and the civilised city' respectively. The uniform street-scape created by the Westminster Paving Act, and copied elsewhere in London, realised a Humean notion of public propriety 'built on the foundations of free government and spiced

⁴¹⁶ John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved* (London, 1766), p. 3; Miles Ogborn, 'Designs on the City: John Gwynn's Plans for Georgian London', *The Journal of British Studies*, 43, 1 (2004), pp. 15-39.

with a little innocent luxury' quite unlike Gwynn's.⁴¹⁷ These acts caused homeowners, who had, by custom, tended the streets outside their residences however they saw fit, to turn to paving contractors funded by rates.⁴¹⁸ It was understood that regular pavements and roads hastened communications and facilitated commerce. At least some willingly renounced the upkeep of the paving outside their houses, choosing to delegate responsibilities to publicly appointed paving commissioners for the sake of efficiency. The relationship between residents, commissioners and contractors was decidedly modern (as in non-classical), insofar as it monetised a previously civic duty. The fad for like-minded improvements in the transport sector, whether paving, turnpiking, canals or dock projects, is a marked feature of mid- to late-eighteenth-century Britain.⁴¹⁹ Consumers and taxed citizens were connected by more numerous and different spaces at the expense of communities unable or unwilling to buy in.

Parallels between the Paving Commissions and insurance industry's reorientation of domestic life towards the market are clear, although without local governing bodies, insurance cultivated a far less accountable expertise. Jupp's engagement with the public sphere was very one-sided. His appointment to the East India Company and Hand in Hand surveyorships were noted in the newspapers and the odd architectural review dealt with his built-work, but he was never moved to justify or defend his work from public criticism. Other than East India House (1799-1801), which was completed after his death and attributed to Henry Holland, Jupp's major architectural works in London fell outside the architectural preoccupation with large private residences and public monuments.⁴²⁰ Consequently, he was ignored by the majority of clubs, societies and informal cultures of appreciation that structured tastes up to, and beyond, the establishment

⁴¹⁷ Miles Ogborn, *Space of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (London & New York: Guilford Press, 1998), p. 90.

⁴¹⁸ Ogborn, *Spaces*, pp. 91-104.

⁴¹⁹ Ogborn, *Spaces*, pp. 79-89; Derek H. Aldcroft and Michael J. Freeman eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); G. Laugero, 'Infrastructure of Enlightenment: Road-making, the Public Sphere and the Emergence of Literature', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29 (1995), pp. 45-67.

⁴²⁰ N. Brawer, 'The Anonymous Architect of East India House', *Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. 7 (1997), pp. 26-36.

of the vehemently classical Royal Academy.⁴²¹ Insofar as that this helps explain the lack of technical progress engendered by the insurance industry it is to suggest that surveyors had few forums in which to exchange ideas with outsiders. This speaks to a broader question surrounding a mercantile architectural culture. In turning to this 'market' for Jupp's expertise in the City in the third section it is also clear that what buildings were built, how and by whom, also shaped the channels of information open to the industry there too.

Warehouses do not feature strongly in the architectural history of early-modern London, which has been dominated by studies of the town-house, although the question of materiality permeates this scholarship and has clear implications for how we approach the idea of fire-proofing.⁴²² John Summerson's *Georgian London* (1948, many subsequent editions) argued that the Great Fire saw the Jacobean, walled and wooden City become a speculatively built, brick metropolis designed around the Palladian Square. In particular, Summerson put great weight on the 1667 Building Regulation Act, strengthened in 1707 and 1709, that ruled on the dimensions and materials suitable for domestic architecture, asserting that bricks were the primary architectural unit and seeing legislation as buttressing the classical hegemony.⁴²³ The aristocratic owners of large estates in the West End leased land to developers. They, in turn, sold the leases to builders who quickly put up houses and were spurred by peppercorn rents into using mass produced materials from bricks to bannisters.⁴²⁴ These builders then sold the houses, whose leases would revert to the ground landlord, who were now the happy recipients of higher ground rents. The cycle encouraged increasingly large runs of uniform houses exploiting a market for the ergonomic classicism of Andrea Palladio and Inigo Jones, with the elegant monotony of Bloomsbury becoming the paradigmatic expression of Georgian 'wealth' and 'taste'.

⁴²¹ John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 15-55; Matthew Craske 'From Burlington to Billingsgate: James Ralph's Attempt to Impose Burlingtonian Classicism as a Canon of Taste' in B. Archiszewska & E. McKellar eds. *Articulating Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth Century Architecture* (London, 2004); David Solkin ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House* (New Haven and London: Yale 2001) and idem., *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1993).

⁴²² Cf. The rather cursory treatment by H. Kalman, 'The Architecture of Mercantilism: Commercial Buildings by George Dance the Younger', Paul Fritz and David Williams eds., *The Triumph of Culture: 18th Century Perspectives* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), pp 69-96.

⁴²³ Sumerson, *Georgian London* (London: Penguin, 1968), pp. 52-4, 68-9.

⁴²⁴ John Summerson, *Georgian*, Chs. 2, 3 and 5.

Most subsequent writers on eighteenth-century London would accept that Summerson's Palladian West End was notable, while questioning whether the brick deserves the exalted position he affords it. Linda Clarke's analysis of the late eighteenth-century building trade, *Building Capitalism*, argues from a Marxist perspective that waged labour toppled the artisanal structure of the building trade, dominated by contractors involved in the brick trade, and from 1800 'produced' distinctive working-class environments.⁴²⁵ Elizabeth McKellar, who has devoted much effort to dissecting Summerson, explored *Georgian London's* central propositions in her *Birth of Modern London*, and through an analysis of builders, legislation, financing and architectural literature, found his 'modernist teleology' empirically wanting.⁴²⁶ In doing so, she has also highlighted the many survivals of 'vernacular' non-Palladian and wooden-framed buildings that showcase the importance of materials like timber in creating hierarchies of buildings, which not only looked different to brick-built classical architecture but relied on a completely different set of architectonic principles.

Vernacular architecture in London is a rich seam that has been exhaustively mined by Peter Guillery and his idea of an industrial vernacular is extraordinarily helpful in positioning warehousing as a building type.⁴²⁷ His extensive and sophisticated work, *The Small House in Eighteenth Century London*, catalogues a number of vernacular traditions employed by low capital entries into the building trade, who were often prepared to disregard stylistic and legal injunctions. Guillery departs from other architectural commentators in his willingness to highlight and explain diverse building practices and styles through geographies. For Guillery, artisanal communities or clusters like Southwark tanners, Smithfield Butchers and Clerkenwell watchmakers each had their own building requirements determined by their industrial practices and familiarity. For instance, the Spitalfields' silk industry

⁴²⁵ Linda Clarke, *Building Capitalism: Historical Change and the Labour Process in the Built Environment* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴²⁶ Elizabeth McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 6; idem., 'Popularism Versus Professionalism: John Summerson and the 20th-Century Creation of the 'Georgian'', B. Archiszewska & E. McKellar eds., *Articulating Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth Century Architecture* (London: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 35-56, idem., 'The City and Country: The Urban Vernacular in Late-Seventeenth and Early-Eighteenth Century London', N. Burton ed., *Georgian Vernacular* (London: Georgian Group, 1995), pp. 10-18.

⁴²⁷ Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth Century London* (London & New Haven: Yale, 2004). See also idem., 'Introduction', Guillery ed., *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.1-11.

prompted a specific form of housing, built for multiple occupancies and with large upper-windows to enhance the availability of light and facilitate weaving.⁴²⁸ Guillery, like McKellar, also stresses the persistence of wooden framed and wooden clad buildings in peripheral areas of London, despite the Building Regulations Acts. Quoting John Gwynn, Guillery argues that ‘urban and social improvement, understood as the implementation of the rational and utilitarian ideas of the English Enlightenment’, and its corresponding legislation stacked in favour of larger builders, were detrimental to vernacular building and conducive to a metropolitan geography best understood by class.⁴²⁹ He describes the moves towards standardised production in housing by pointing to new laws that better policed the built environment, like the 1761 Westminster Paving Act and 1774 Building Act, essentially presenting a synthesis of Summerson’s modernism and Clark’s Marxism.⁴³⁰

Fitting the eighteenth-century warehouse into the vernacular architectural landscape further nuances our understanding of the role of publicity in shaping change in building practices. On the one hand, warehouses could be very large and involve a high-quality of structural carpentry that made them the province of large scale contractors and carpenters.⁴³¹ On the other hand, warehouses were vernacular outgrowths of the City’s mercantile community and were not at all features of the architectural manuals that provided builders with models. They were also exempt from the building regulations acts until 1774. Although potentially well capitalised they were, crucially, unregulated by high-style or juridical constraints. Setting warehouses in a vernacular tradition is important in that it cordons the form off from the well-funded and well publicised building works where technical innovation is more noticeable and often came from outside London’s architectural and contracting clique. For instance, the bridge-building and renovation craze that followed the Swiss Charles Labeyrie’s pioneering use of caisson-piers to support Westminster Bridge saw a number of outsiders develop technologies, including

⁴²⁸ Guillery, *Small*, pp. 7-79.

⁴²⁹ Guillery, *Small*, p. 279.

⁴³⁰ Guillery, *Small*, pp. 279-96.

⁴³¹ David Yeoman, ‘Structural Carpentry in Building’, Hermonie Hobhouse and Ann Suanders, *Good and Proper Material: The Fabric of London Since the Great Fire* (London: London Topographical Society, 1989), pp. 38-47.

steel-framing.⁴³² The public controversy over prisons saw Jeremy Bentham's panopticon almost get realised, and his radial form rapidly superseded George Dance's Newgate Gaol, completed in 1782 and built around quadrangles.⁴³³ Artist Robert Barker manipulated perspective in such a way as to make immersive 'panoramas' a possibility in the 1790s and saw proto-cinematic architecture develop in the nineteenth century.⁴³⁴ It is striking that the West India Dock Company drafted in hydraulic engineers from Liverpool to design the basins but left the warehouse designs to local surveyor, John Gwilt.⁴³⁵

London warehouse-builders may not have had been privy to advances in engineering or new materials but they were obviously knowledgeable enough for the merchant community. Few warehouses now survive in the City, although enough plans of them were drawn up by Dance in the capacity of City Surveyor to make a study of their form, alongside records held in private and corporate collections. This material forms the basis for the final section, and it is worth outlining briefly. It would seem that the real art of the warehouse-keeper was not so much in storing goods as keeping track of them and the various workers charged with packing, sampling and transporting them. Doors, locks, keys and various forms of "passport", from porters' licenses to tokens, were all important to their proper functioning. Attitudes towards the hazards posed by fire need to be seen alongside the day to day problem of keeping goods secure. Indeed, warehouses were calculative spaces that worked to modulate cultural capital and outweighed considerations of materiality or investment in plant, rational as they might be.

Again, what is important here is that a network of things was being used to shape how risk was perceived in this sector not treatises or popular debates. Neither warehouses nor the fire offices were caught up in the kinds of discourses

⁴³² Alison F. Byrne, 'Composing Westminster Bridge: Public Improvement and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century London', Novak ed., *Age*, pp. 243-270; R. Woodley, "'A Very Mortifying Situation': Robert Mylne's Struggle to Get Paid for Blackfriars Bridge', *Architectural History*, Vol. 43 (2000), pp. 172-86; Jill Lever, *A Catalogue of the Drawings of George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) and George Dance the Elder (1695-1768)* (London: Soane Museum, 2003), pp. 135-8.

⁴³³ Robin Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁴³⁴ Ralph Hyde, *Panoromania!: The Art and Entertainment of the 'All-Embracing' View* (London: Trefoil Publications/Barbican Art Gallery, 1988).

⁴³⁵ *Survey of London: Vols. 43 and 44- Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs* (British History Online), pp. 284-5.

likely to shift their calculative agency by defining the relationship between them as explicitly economic. Sporadic attempts were made to link the two industries by genteel improvers, but turning to the networks at hand we will see that these interventions were decidedly uncommon.

Section 2: Richard Jupp and Fire

This section will illustrate how the fire insurance companies constructed and disseminated ideas about the hazards of fire in London and how they accrued knowledge about new architectural technologies. The career of the Hand in Hand Assurance's surveyor, Richard Jupp, shows three sets of relationships were important, namely the company's interaction with policyholders, his contacts, friends and patrons in the City, and his professional associates at the Architects' Club. Each of these networks connected together different groups and circulated information about risk and fire using specific media, understandings of the market and modes of sociability. Describing these networks reinforces the points made earlier about the insurance industry existing outside of the public sphere; Jupp found eighteenth-century insurance professionally rewarding and a gateway into other institutions but, struggled to find a public or formal vent for knowledge accrued in the industry until the end of his career. Moreover, this section draws attention to the fact that each network Jupp traversed was itself geographically and culturally limited, exposing him to relatively few new sources of information. Despite the fire offices' capacity to draw data about their customers into bureaucratic centres, his office was a London-based institution, ill-practiced in manipulating information that made Jupp dependent on his equally parochial colleagues when tasked with gathering up new information. His career shows the profound ambivalence of the insurance industry to architectural improvement, which they occasionally applauded but seemingly failed to invest in, was a result of the limited social networks it, in part, helped to underpin by funding them.

Jupp and Insurance

All accounts of the development of fire, marine and life insurance have stressed the centrality of London in providing the initial markets, expertise and capital required to kick-start the industry before it spread to the provinces in the late-eighteenth

century.⁴³⁶ By 1730, six firms had established themselves in London, despite the fleeting emergence of some competitors around the time of the South Sea Bubble: Hand in Hand (est. 1696), the Union (1701), and Westminster Assurance (1719), all of which operated solely within London and Middlesex. These were mutual societies which could levy charges on policyholders in times of crisis and only underwrote buildings and contents. Aiming at national markets were the incorporated Sun Assurance (est. 1710), the Royal Exchange and its sister company London Assurance (1720). These were grander institutions, insuring against fire, marine hazards and lives, run as joint stock companies, which answered to courts of shareholders. At the end of the century two further companies had made an appearance and were competing successfully with their established rivals in London: the Phoenix in 1782 and the British Fire Office in 1799. Fire insurance was a rapidly expanding sector. Pearson estimates that at least 50,500 policyholders populated London's 130,000 buildings in 1740. By 1795, the six offices issued 155,000 policies compared to 141,000 inhabited buildings, prompting the conclusion 'that by the middle of the eighteenth century fire insurance reached well beyond the homes of the upper and middling classes.'⁴³⁷

Like the Westminster Paving Commission, fire insurance offices presented their services as 'public' benefits. Most obviously they funded fire brigades, who were largely staffed by watermen and frequently paraded their brigades to drum up support. Branding was important to the companies; the brightly painted iron fire-marks attached to policyholders' properties, alerting company brigades to the protection to which the household were entitled, were brilliantly utilitarian. Fireproof marks like the one illustrated in Figure 4.1 bore the company's crest and the policyholder's registration number. The companies were assiduous in presenting these same identities in their printed policy documents too. Iconographically the badges were pointedly modern, using logos not armorial bearings and making a virtue of their numerical records.

⁴³⁶ See P.G.M. Dickson, *The Sun Insurance Office, 1710-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Barry Supple, *Royal Exchange Assurance: A History of British Insurance 1720-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); E.A Davies, *An Account of the Formation and Early Years of The Westminster Fire Office* (London, 1952); Clive Trebilcock, *Phoenix Insurance and the Development of British Insurance, 1782-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution: Fire Insurance in Great Britain 1700-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

⁴³⁷ Pearson, *Insuring*, pp. 73-4.



Figure 4.1: Hand in Hand Fire mark in Dulwich, London. Note the wooden mount.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_insurance_mark#mediaviewer/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_insurance_mark#mediaviewer/File:Fire_mark_Dulwich)

File:Fire_mark_Dulwich.

The incorporated fire offices aspired towards the eminent venerability of more established City institutions, like the East India Company and the Bank of England. As Barry Supple shows, the early Royal Exchange Assurance shared its upper-strata of managers with the Bank and the Levant Company especially.⁴³⁸ Hand in Hand could boast strong connections with the merchant and wholesale communities in Holborn, as well as longstanding relationships with the livery Companies and City's hospitals.⁴³⁹ Companies also tended to maintain offices in high-profile locations. Indeed, Jupp designed his company's premises on the approach to London Bridge in the 1790s.⁴⁴⁰ The attraction of insurance to architects is as startling as it is persistent. James Gibbs, Sir William Chambers and Henry Holland were all board members of Westminster Assurance;⁴⁴¹ Richard Jupp occupied the Hand in Hand surveyorship in 1754. Jupp, Soane, Holland and Samuel Pepys Cockerell would all be appointed Honorary Directors to the British Fire Office in 1799. And Soane would also see the Sun surveyorship as worthy of an application, which he failed to secure.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Supple, *Royal*, p. 14.

⁴³⁹ Pearson, *Insuring*, pp. 63-4.

⁴⁴⁰ LMA, MS8666/20, Hand in Hand Minute book, 12 Apr. 1791.

⁴⁴¹ Davies, *Westminster*, Appendix VII.

⁴⁴² Dickson, *Sun*, p. 104.

Hand in Hand might not have had the clout of the great City companies, but it was no small-time operation when Jupp joined in 1754. Pearson calculates that the company had a market share of 26% on sums insured and 36% in terms of premiums in 1755, which was second only to Sun who had captured 34% of the sums and 27% of the premiums that year.⁴⁴³ Hand in Hand's market share would steadily drop as a result of raids on company annuities and its unwillingness to expand outside the capital until 1795, when it would only command 10% of totals insured and 8% of premiums. Nevertheless, the company was competitive when Jupp arrived in 1754 and he fitted the company profile well.

Minute Books give a fuller understanding of Jupp's duties and the Company's structure. Jupp joined the Hand in Hand at the junior role of Assistant Surveyor, playing third fiddle to the Country Surveyor, Mr. Coles, and the senior Town Surveyor, James Steere. Jupp was unsalaried initially, instead receiving commission on surveys made for the company, but he could claim expenses and benefitted from the air of respectable authority Hand in Hand sought to project to prospective policy holders, petitioning the company to pay for new riding boots just after his appointment.⁴⁴⁴ Jupp's family were well established in the guilds and building trade: his father would become the Master of the Carpenters' Company in 1768, as would Richard in 1779, whereon his brother William, also a carpenter-builder, would start rebuilding their hall.⁴⁴⁵ James Steere was also a former Warden of the Carpenters'. His family's livery associations provided Jupp with a reputation and technical education the Hand in Hand found congenial.⁴⁴⁶ Jupp would progress to the role of Town Surveyor and a salary of £120 *per annum* after the death of Steer in early 1760, and would quickly install his brother William as the Country Surveyor until his death in 1788, when the post would be taken by Thomas Poynder, a bricklayer-cum-building contractor with relatives in plumbing and carpentry.

Preferential treatment for carpenters was no coincidence, as they were amongst the most broadly educated members of the building trades, which translated easily into the role of surveyor. Carpenters were involved in the whole of

⁴⁴³ Pearson, *Insuring*, Table 2.1, p. 64.

⁴⁴⁴ LMA, CLC/B/055/MS 8659-03 f. 41, Hand in Hand cash book.

⁴⁴⁵ B.W.E. Alford, *A History of the Carpenters' Company* (George Allen & Unwin: London, 1968), p. 137.

⁴⁴⁶ Both Steere and Jupp's father were Wardens of the Carpenters in 1758; see the Carpenters' Company Court Minutes, *London Lives*, GLCCMC251010028.

the building process as suppliers of scaffolding and cranes, with the structural carpentry common to London buildings involving a geometrical acumen beyond most craftsmen.⁴⁴⁷ Further, costing and measuring irregular timbers by the 'board inch', a cubic measure, had elicited serious mathematical consideration since the seventeenth century, including pocket-sized tables of calculations and ingenious instruments and compasses to measure up planks.⁴⁴⁸ These precision tools were embodiments of specialist knowledge and the Customs' 'woodfarm' division was occasionally brought to a halt because of an insufficient number of Landwaiters skilled in surveying Baltic timbers.⁴⁴⁹ Jupp's own building practice, latterly carried on with Poynder, would have provided him with relatively up-to-date knowledge of other materials and their costs.

Jupp assessed buildings in order to ascertain the nature of the 'hazard' they posed to Hand In Hand, and in this he used the criteria that had become industry standards by the 1720s.⁴⁵⁰ Fire policies might be 'Common' if the building were brick, or 'Hazardous', or 'Doubly Hazardous', depending on the fabric of the building and what trades were carried on inside. For Hand in Hand, two or more wooden exterior walls would see a building rated hazardous, while trades which relied heavily on fire, ovens, kilns or inflammable materials, like oilmen or gunpowder manufacturers, would also be rated higher. Such an assessment would see higher premiums and a maximum value cap on the policy. The ritual of surveying buildings was too routine to be described in any detail by Jupp or any other surveyor of the period, although it contained some room for social niceties. For the most exceptional buildings, like stately homes, commercial structures and corporate entities, managerial sub-committees would join the surveyor during his visit, giving the occasion an enhanced sense of grandeur. Further committees might also be dispatched to visit the scenes of particularly vicious fires where they could publicly express their concern alongside Jupp, who was presumably assessing the damage.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), pp. 160-161.

⁴⁴⁸ David Yeomans, 'Early Carpenters' Manuals, 1592-1820', *Construction History*, 2 (1986), pp. 13-33; Anthony Gerbino and Stephen Johnson, *Compass and Rule: Architecture as Mathematical Practice in England* (New haven & London: Yale) pp. 48-52, 111-31.

⁴⁴⁹ CUST 29/3, 'Woodfarm', passim.

⁴⁵⁰ Pearson, *Insuring*, pp. 79-80; Supple, *Royal*, p. 85; Dickson, *Sun*, p. 84.

⁴⁵¹ LMA, MS8666/017 ff. 13-15.

It mattered, too, that insurance surveyors were mobile, tying together communities through mathematical models. Armed with boots, mathematics and trusted contacts, Jupp played a crucial role in creating new networks, but one that was extremely diffident when it came to channelling ideas to him. Part of this problem revolves around the extent to which he supported the abstraction of value from underwritten commodities. It was, after all, Jupp's surveying of properties that ensured their presence in company calculations matched objective reality. Every fortnight, his reports would convey to the Hand in Hand board the state of the company's activities; the number of new policies issued and any losses. The surveyors would also report the number of properties assessed on the company's behalf.

Few attempts were made to personally involve policyholders in the running of the business, probably because of their geographical dispersal. Their most regular contact with the board was the quarterly reminders to pay their premiums that were delivered by a fleet of runners in London. Having paid a self-imposed tax to the companies, policyholders could claim their capital should calamity strike, notwithstanding a disaster so large it bankrupted the underwriters. The appeal of insurance rested on its routineness, its sedate progress and its utility-maximising potential, all of which promised to smooth violent tears in London's built fabric. Relatively few risks were likely to send the business off course, although some problems did worry the industry.

As Pearson's research into the geography of hazard has shown, major fires were concentrated around wharfs and warehouses on the Thames, downstream of London Bridge, and were particularly prevalent in the City, Southwark, Wapping and Rotherhithe.⁴⁵² In a startling contrast, buildings in districts like Westminster and Covent Garden in the north and west of London were seven times less likely to burn down. Chastening reports frequently graced the newspapers framing the problem in the South and East End in terms of the high number of wooden commercial buildings that characterised the area, as well as the concentrations of hazardous commodities like gunpowder, pitch, tar, rum and naval stores that were kept there:

A... fire broke out at Mr. Laurence Cox's, a breaker-up of ships at Cuckholds Point [near Deptford], which in a few hours destroyed all the materials in his yard, burnt down his warehouse, then spread to an adjacent yard...also [housing] a breaker up of ships... the damage would not have been so great, had it not been for a quantity

⁴⁵² Pearson, *Insuring*, p. 79.

of charged grenades on the premises, which, burning successively, for some time deterred the people from coming near enough to give any assistance.⁴⁵³

City warehouses were not exempt either:

On Monday... a dreadful fire broke out at warehouses on Bulliter lane... consuming the whole range of warehouses, which were chiefly filled with Turkey goods. Some houses were also destroyed [including cloth merchant] Sir Randolph Knipe's. Mr. Moier is said to have lost sixty bales of silk... [Started] by a lighted pipe of tobacco setting fire to bales of cotton... Damage is said to be £100,000... Several persons injured and thieves made off with several things of value.⁴⁵⁴

Even Wren's London Customs House burnt down in 1715 and, again, 1814.

The companies knew wooden buildings were unhealthy assets, hence the high premiums, and they knew certain trades to be hazardous. Typically a policy would show the degree of the hazard awarded by the surveyor, the policyholder's trade and their address. However, contextualising this data was difficult when addresses were given in terms of the signs ('The Blue Boy, Gracechurch Street', for instance), which could not be easily located on contemporary maps. London streets were not numbered until 1767, and then rarely sequentially, but locating a sign was near impossible without first-hand knowledge. Contemporary efforts to rationalise the city did not help the matter. John Rocque's 1746 *Plan of the London* was large and detailed in terms of yards and courts, but shaded-in built blocks so as to obliterate individual properties. A massive fire in Bishopsgate and Cornhill in 1765 was indicative of the problem companies had in analysing the data that Jupp and other surveyors accumulated. This conflagration was so dramatic that it drew out the entire board of the Hand in Hand to inspect the ruins and took Jupp three weeks to properly process the claims.⁴⁵⁵ A printed plan of the damaged area noted the names and trades of the occupants but could only be issued *after* the surveyors of the companies involved could reconnect the ruined properties with their archives. Rocque's opaque *Plan* and the much more detailed plan of the utterly ruined buildings are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

⁴⁵³ *Public Ledger*, 2 Oct. 1761.

⁴⁵⁴ *The London Journal*, 22 Jun. 1723.

⁴⁵⁵ LMA, MS8666/020, Hand in Hand Minutes, Nov. 1765.

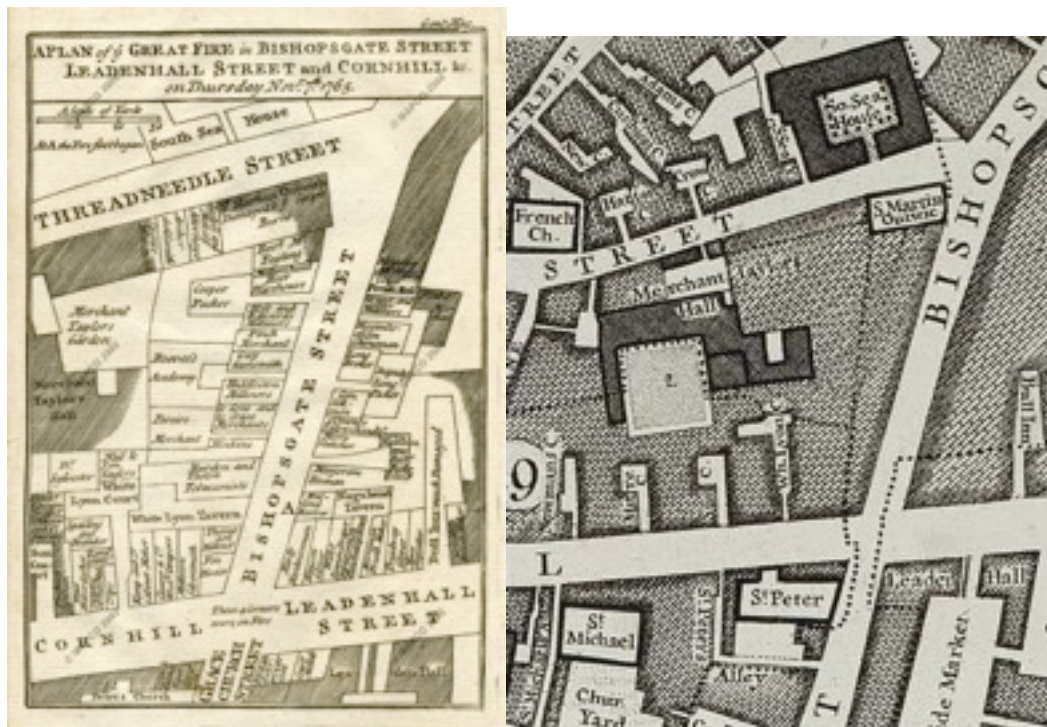


Figure 4.2: A Plan of the Fire in Bishopsgate from the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1765) and the same district depicted on John Rocque's Map (1746). Source: Motco.co.uk.

In a similarly crude and reactive move, Jupp's Hand in Hand formed a standing committee to consider riverside underwriting from 1761. This suspended all policies within 100 yards of the River for several months in 1765 after a series of City fires on the Thames. Again fires shook the insurance industry in 1780, causing Hand in Hand to suspend riverside policies and raise their premiums, alongside the other fire offices.⁴⁵⁶ Jupp coordinated a resurvey of Hand in Hand existing portfolio, noting on each policy the dimensions of the structures covered.⁴⁵⁷ The Hand in Hand board's desire for more detailed geographical data was not unique. It coincided with the establishments of the Phoenix Fire Office in 1782 by City sugar bakers hoping to exploit industrial risk. They surveyed the Thames that year, noting individual buildings on a new map and would sponsor Richard Horwood's 1792 plan of the entire capital, which made visible numbered houses.

Jupp evidently understood the risks posed by fire and had first-hand experience of a wide range of buildings in the capital. Nevertheless, his surveying tools and knowledge of the building trade put him in a distinct position of power

⁴⁵⁶ Pearson, *Insuring*, p. 75.

⁴⁵⁷ LMA, MS8666/26, 18 Jan. 1780.

when it came to interacting with policy holders by facilitating and formalising the abstraction of value. However, in doing so they stymied the means to communicate or record any other ideas or concepts regarding fire prevention that may have been of use in accumulating knowledge about fire prevention. The data he collected was hard to access as it was tied up in the company's ledgers and difficult to project onto maps or otherwise analyse, hence Hand in Hand's reactive policy when it came to the Thames. Moreover, it is worth noting that working for a London-based company Jupp would have visited a relatively traditional building stock made up of houses, stately homes, corporate halls, warehouses and the occasional sugar baker or brewer. He would have had little experience of the factories that national underwriters like the Sun were grappling with, where unique steam-powered machinery was making fixed capital an absolutely vital part of industrial underwriting and making manufacturers a distinctively new type of customer. It should come as no surprise then that his building practice reiterated the relatively unimaginative building techniques already dominant in London, as the next part describe.

Jupp in the City

Jupp's experience in the insurance industry may well have been crucial to his securing the prestigious surveyorship of the East India Company in 1765. Figure 4.3 is a rare surviving plan of Barrington Buggins' 'New warehouse' in Fresh Wharf on the Legal Quays, dated 1764, marked by R. Jupp, and shows a warehouses divided into two 'stacks' or rooms on the left near Thames Street and three connected stacks nearer the Thames to the right. Buggins was a wharfinger, part owner of several East Indiamen, courtier to both the East India and South Sea Companies, and no doubt well aware of the risks fires posed to riparian London.⁴⁵⁸ Jupp's subsequent appointment as Company surveyor followed his acquaintance with Buggins and bears all the hallmarks of City grafting. Certainly this was the office that made Jupp's career, conferring on him not just a salary of £60 *per annum*, gratuities and the award of valuable contracts, but a hand in the unmistakable growth of the Company's architectural presence from 1760 onwards.

⁴⁵⁸ LMA, SC/GL/PR/245/FRE-248/FYE; TNA, PROB 11/1185; Henry Roseavere, 'More Light on Buggin's Turn', *Mariner's Mirror*, 79, 1 (1993), pp. 67-8.



Figure 4.3: A Plan of Fresh Wharf, R. Jupp, 1764. Source: LMA, SC/GL/PR/245/FRE-248/FYE.

Knowledge of the dangers of fire crystallised in the wooden-framed East India Company warehouses. Expertise in fireproofing clearly impressed the Company, whose warehouses were largely situated in the hazardous wooden-framed commercial zone of the Eastern City, which had escaped the Great Fire. Fire engines were maintained on site and the Company bought property to create fire-breaks between buildings. The scale of their operation also caused Jupp to petition for an exemption from the 1774 Buildings Regulation Act, claiming that the Company could not conduct business in the smaller partitioned warehouses that it proscribed. This idiosyncrasy put pressure on his and successor's skills as fire strategists.⁴⁵⁹ Jupp's successor, Henry Holland, took up the baton, developing ceramic pots with which to insulate the Company's otherwise wooden warehouse stairs. However, they had little faith in the technical precautions in place and coordinating labour was deemed an equally necessary measure. Senior porters were 'on no account to permit a lighted candle to be taken into any part of the warehouse otherwise than in a lanthorn fastened with a padlock and only to be allowed even in that state upon absolute necessity.'⁴⁶⁰ Unlike the Hudson Bay Company, which regularly paid for a caldron of coals 'for the use of the warehouse',

⁴⁵⁹ 27 Geo. III cap. 48; Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers: Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800-1858* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), p. 27.

⁴⁶⁰ IOR, E Mss. 283/14, 'General Duty of the Assistant Elder', c. 1820.

East India facilities had no chimneystacks. To further decrease the amount of artificial light required, warehouses typically only opened from 6am until 3pm, a short and uneconomical day, inflating the labour the Company required. Accordingly, the most distinctive feature of the warehouse designs was Jupp's use of courtyards, skylights and studiously fenestrated facades, all of which combined to open the warehouses to optimal natural light.



Figure 4.4: East India Company Warehouses at Bishopsgate and Devonshire Square started by Jupp. The upper floor was added by the East and West India Dock Company in the mid-nineteenth-century and the windows would have been barred. Source: Personal Photograph.

Dwarfing the surrounding buildings, Jupp's warehouses were seemingly designed without any sense of architectural principal beyond that of the rhythm of

his regularly spaced windows. In 1781 the complex shown in Figure 4.4 was awarded a backhanded complement in the *Critical Review*, which noted that the ‘cheerless and unsocial’ Devonshire House was about to be eclipsed by Company warehousing. ‘The Public, however, have nothing to regret in losing sight of Devonshire House. It is spacious, and so are the East India Company’s warehouses; and both are equally deserving of praise.’⁴⁶¹ However, their capacity to stockpile goods piqued the imaginations of later architectural commentators, who increasingly addressed their readers as consumers rather than concerned neighbours or aesthetes

The warehouses of this Company, which are of great size and substantial construction are well worthy of inspection, both from the immense value of their merchandise, and from their excellent internal arrangements. Those between Devonshire Square and New Street are very extensive...The great height of these buildings, the multitude of windows and of cranes for hoisting up goods, combine to create admiration and surprise... In the erection of these buildings several mean streets were removed.⁴⁶²

Another in 1806 wrote,

As a stranger turns from India-house, and casts his eye over the warehouses of the Company (which are daily swallowing up the sites of many hundreds of houses) he enlarges his idea of the commerce that fills them, till he imagines that he has almost exaggerated its bulk.⁴⁶³

With their focus on the planned and instrumental qualities of the warehouses, these descriptions of commerce were a far cry from those of Gwynn. In scale, regularity and materiality, Jupp’s buildings articulated an order that lessened anxieties over wolfishly individualist commercial motives by taking on the appearance of gigantic terraced houses on the outside. Brick and glass moved commercial space out of the gutter, with commentators marveling at the spatial coordination revealed by the intake of goods from high cranes. These buildings prefigured a more perfect warehouse with strong links to the East India Company, Henry Cole’s glass and iron Crystal Palace, which extended the logic of light, repetition and exotic commodities

⁴⁶¹ [James Ralph], *A Critical Review of the Public Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in and about London and Westminster* (London, 1783), p 184.

⁴⁶² John Britton, *The Original Picture of London* (London, 1826), p. 146.

⁴⁶³ John Feltham, *The Picture of London, 1806* (London, 1806), p. 52.

to grander proportions.⁴⁶⁴ That this icon of modern design burnt to the ground too, suggests that the reality of technological improvements in fire-safety lagged well behind the progressive narrative facade.

Jupp promoted and employed a fraternity of building contractors and influential architect-surveyors in the City, who further announced his expertise to his corporate employers. He would design the west wing of Guy's Hospital in 1774, seemingly a direct inheritance from his Hand in Hand colleague James Steer, who had previously maintained the institution.⁴⁶⁵ The development of this project demonstrates the complex network of professional and personal relationships linking the men that built and designed London's built environment in the eighteenth century. The contractors included the bricklayers Thomas Poynder and Edmund Wix, who would also charge the Hospital Governors for Jupp-designed vapour baths in 1779.⁴⁶⁶ Poynder married Wix's daughter, Mary, inheriting his 'eminent' building business in 1787 and contacts in the Bricklayers' Company and City. He would eventually be installed as a surveyor in Hand in Hand in 1788.⁴⁶⁷ Most lucratively, Poynder would continue building Jupp's East India warehouses started by Wix, jobs that were on the scale of St Paul's and worth thousands of pounds a quarter and allowed him to retire a gentleman.⁴⁶⁸

Similarly, the extensive East India contracts afforded Jupp the opportunity to sure up his relationships with other builders in London. Building Company warehouses at Houndsditch was George Wyatt, a carpenter-contractor who left his fortune to his niece, Sir John Soane's wife. He was superseded by carpenter Richard Holland in 1790, also cutting a figure in the building industry by developing the Sloane estate with his brother, the Whig architect Henry Holland. Holland would succeed Jupp as East India surveyor in 1799. Moreover, Jupp's negotiations to purchase deeds around the City on behalf of the East India Company were helped by his family's relationship with the well-endowed guilds. In 1786, Jupp was ordered to 'wait on the Carpenters Company', his own, 'to see what they will treat for

⁴⁶⁴ Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 10-17.

⁴⁶⁵ *Survey of London: Bankside Volume 22, St Saviours & Southwark* (London: HMSC, 1950), pp. 36-42.

⁴⁶⁶ LMA, HO/GY/T/A/3/4/1, Guy's Hospital Minutes, f. 32; HO/GY/T/06/025, Bill, 1779.

⁴⁶⁷ TNA, PROB, 11/1160, Edward Wix's will, 1787; *Public Advertiser*, 4 Dec. 1787, obituary.

⁴⁶⁸ IOR, B/121, EIC Court Minutes, 1795, f. 592.

property on the West side of the entrance to Crutched Friars'.⁴⁶⁹ Leases were also secured from the Ironmongers' Company, whose hall Jupp's brother had built.⁴⁷⁰ Jupp was also friendly with the City's Surveyor, George Dance jnr., which hastened Company expansion there too. In fact, Dance's immediate family numbered amongst the Company's Directors and Captains, and the myriad of minor improvements he made to facilitate the flow of traffic in the City had an uncanny similarity with areas in which the Company were building.⁴⁷¹ No sooner had Dance taken Office in 1768 then plans to redevelop the Minories were forwarded, opening up communication between the Company's holdings in Crutched Friars and Tower Hill, where they built several warehouses in the 1770s and 1780s.⁴⁷² Perhaps these were the benefits of building in a relatively elite client-base where gossip and professionalism were not far removed.⁴⁷³

Jupp's business associates were drawn from a small pool of intimately connected men based in London who usually aspired to gentlemanly status to the point that they sought to classicise warehouses. Using the patronage afforded to him by Hand in Hand and the other City institutions in his care, Jupp created a small empire of contact, which diminished the need to create a formal educational schema for his architectural project by limiting the turnover of talent. Again, these factors insulated him from building and engineering innovations elsewhere.

Jupp, Architects and Experiments

Jupp's practice was underpinned by valuable contacts, which provided him with the jobs, materials, labour and allies that made him a clearinghouse for information. This prestigious and wealthy group received an additional institutional dimension with the formation of the Architects' Club in 1790. Founded as a dining club for prominent London builders who were nominally supposed to have studied in one of the European academies of architecture (many had not), it affected exclusivity, elite patronage and became a forum for shop talk. Dance, the Hollands, Sir William Chambers of the Royal Academy, Soane (Surveyor of the Bank and judge of the

⁴⁶⁹ IOR, B/104 f. 631.

⁴⁷⁰ IOR, B/119 f. 406.

⁴⁷¹ Dorothy Stroud, *George Dance, Architect* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), pp. 119, 200, 250-1.

⁴⁷² LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/193.

⁴⁷³ HoH, 2/10/6 Jupp to Holland, 12 Aug. 1793.

West India Dock Company competition in 1799), Robert Mylne (Surveyor of St Paul's) and Cockerell (Surveyor to the Foundling Hospital, Admiralty and East India Company from 1806) were founding members. Stana Nenadic has noted the Club's implosion, explaining that despite the importance of gentlemanly co-operation in a low-trust economy, too many rivals were competing for too few places. After early squabbling over members interfering with one another's practices, 'the Architects' Club subsided into the least contentious of its three founding purposes, to act as an exclusive drinking and dining club for a small group of mostly middle-aged men who self-styled as architects when it suited them, but were also competing experts in other fields of knowledge and expertise that embraced and transcended the building industry in all its dimensions.'⁴⁷⁴ What is remarkable from the point of view of Jupp's career is the very public stance the Club took on fire-safety on which he was clearly an influence, if not the instigator.

The group's only publication, *Resolutions of the Associated Architects, with a Report of a Committee by them Appointed to Consider the Causes of the Frequent Fires, and the Best Means of Preventing the Like in the Future* (London, 1793) appears to channel years of pent up frustration amongst the surveying community. The Club was keen in its early days to lay down technical building standards and guidelines for fees taken when surveying and auditing accounts. The *Resolutions* recalled a "house-burning" experiment made by the Club that adopted popular form in London, and which saw Jupp drafted in to advise on the project, presumably as he was one of the longest serving and best-connected insurance surveyors in the City. Evidently the Club hoped to lay open the debate about fire-safety and encourage technological advance in the building-trade. However, the text and experiments are shot through with uncertainties that confirm the fact that the move from architectural treatises and aesthetics towards experimental culture did not come easily to them.

Outwardly the Club used the *Resolutions* to distance itself from lesser builders whose 'improper methods of construction' were all too often the reason fires were so hazardous and assert their impartial credentials.⁴⁷⁵ Initially, they suggested that Royal Academy-qualified 'officers' should survey buildings in order to regulate their design and materials, but the idea was soon dropped during a meeting where Jupp was present, in favour of further legislation along the lines of

⁴⁷⁴ Stana Nenadic, 'Architect-Builders', pp. 19.

⁴⁷⁵ *Resolutions*, p. x.

the 1774 Building Act.⁴⁷⁶ Echoing sentiments expressed by Hand in Hand's directors in 1779, the Club argued that the insurance companies needed further support because

A very considerable, and perhaps the greater part of them [fires] owe there [sic] existence to the destructive hand of the incendiary. And on this subject, the committee has observed, with very serious regret, that the Insurance Offices, though in many instances a very valuable institution for this country, have frequently proved a very fatal one, and have been principally instrumental in producing this evil.⁴⁷⁷

The Club saw the calculative capacity of Londoners as getting the better of them, though the historical context is important in explaining this. Research for the *Resolutions* started after a fire destroyed Albion Flour Mill at Blackfriars in 1791, which was part-owned by a scion of the Wyatt family. The event caused rejoicing amongst those who sympathised with the millers it had put out of work, fanning the suspicion that it had been torched as an 'anti-monopoly' protest.⁴⁷⁸ Jupp had inspected the ruins for Hand in Hand and most of the insurance companies had received claims from Albion's proprietors.⁴⁷⁹

While acting as the principal researcher for the *Resolutions*, Henry Holland actively sought out expertise from beyond the Club by making a collection of press notices mentioning fires and technical literature on the subject.⁴⁸⁰ Emblematic of the unstructured interest in fire prevention and its place in commercial life was the anonymous, polemical and florid pamphlet, *Various Methods to Prevent Fire in Houses and Shipping* (London, 1775) that Holland went to some lengths to attribute. The author's few suggestions ranged from the practical, if not security conscious (keep ladders handy and remove bars from windows), to the frankly wishful (never read in bed with candles), except where the problematic of warehouse architecture was concerned. Here, he offered a concrete and topical solution, prefaced by a Gwynn-esque description of Thames-side topography:

The face of the houses, fronting a narrow dirty street, the hinder part turning out his backside to the river Thames, and even that part choaked [sic] up with a few paltry

⁴⁷⁶ RIBA, HoH 1/2, Architects' Club Minutes, 2 and 23 May 1792.

⁴⁷⁷ *Resolutions*, p. x; LMA, MSS/8670, Hand in Hand Letterbook, Hand in Hand to the Royal Exchange, Sun, Union and Westminster Assurance, 3 Jun. 1779.

⁴⁷⁸ RIBA, HoH 1/3, Henry Holland's catalogue of recent fires ff. 2-3; *Survey of London vol. 22: Bankside*, p. 121; Horace Walpole, *Letters* Vol. VI (London, 1840), p. 407.

⁴⁷⁹ LMA, MS 8666/26, 15 Mar. 1791.

⁴⁸⁰ RIBA, HoH 1/3, 2/10/3, John Harrison to Holland, 3 Aug. 1792.

sheds, called warehouses—per example Thames Street, Wapping etc... Whether these faults lay in the bricklayer or the carpenter or the wealthy citizen that own'd the building... or the fat of their bellies or the bulk of their heads, we leave the learned to determine.⁴⁸¹

In the stead of the bumbling builders and undiscerning merchants currently producing the quayside, the author offered up Robert Adams' Adelphi as a solution. This complex combined elegant West End dwellings at street-level with a subterranean complex of wharfs and vaulted warehouses. It had also caused the near bankruptcy of the Adams brothers' firm, which had forced them to run a very public lottery in order to recoup the costs, garnering huge amounts of publicity for the enterprise.

Pamphlets like *Various Methods* illustrate that there was room for the amateur to make a mark on fire-prevention in the capital, often calling on the public to support his claim through 'experiments'. There was certainly a keen audience for a big blaze, as is amply demonstrated by the descriptions left by newspaper articles, commemorative prints and maps of recent fires, all of which highlight the rather morbid fascination with destruction felt by eighteenth-century Londoners. Horace Walpole described himself 'as constant at a fire as George Selwyn is at an execution' and seemed to enjoy eight houses burning in St. James' in 1761, where 'Half the people of fashion in town were in the streets all night'.⁴⁸² At the other end of town, City sugar merchant Benjamin Boddington recorded in his journal 'a great fire that destroyed many houses' at Lothbury in 1748.⁴⁸³ Given that this spartan journal was generally reserved to document significant "partnerships", like weddings, in his intimately linked business and family life, and the odd bit of chapel news, we can assume the fire made some impression on Boddington. This was of great advantage to raconteurs. Mr. Godfrey displayed to the public his father's 'chymical' method of putting out house fires using a barrel charged with gunpowder, which on exploding would douse the flames with a liquid solution.⁴⁸⁴ The well-advertised experiment took place near Cavendish Square and entailed burning down a three-storey house, giving the display a gritty realism.

⁴⁸¹ Anon., *Various Methods to Prevent Fire in Houses and Shipping* (London, 1775), p. 55.

⁴⁸² *Horace Walpole Correspondence*, Yale Edition Online, Vol. 9, Walpole to George Montagu, 28 Apr. 1761.

⁴⁸³ LMA, CLC/426/MS10823/4, 25 Mar. 1748.

⁴⁸⁴ *Public Ledger*, 10 Mar. 1761.

Charles Stanhope, Lord Mahon, offered a pre-emptive fire-resisting technique in the 1770s, when he demonstrated to the Royal Society a 'plaister' insulation that could be applied to wooden under-floors and stairs and, thus, prevent fires from progressing through houses.⁴⁸⁵ The MP David Hartley continued in a similar vein, publishing a short rival treatise on the use of iron 'fire-plates' that could also be inserted between floors in 1774. The accompanying literature estimated that this would add an extra 4% to the average cost of building, and argued for its application in commercial structures and ships.⁴⁸⁶ 'A single Fire-Plate,' he advised 'might have prevented The Fire of London.'⁴⁸⁷ He too burnt a specially made house in a 1772 experiment in Peckham, with Parliament awarding him £2,500 to cover the costs. The Lord Mayor was so impressed by Hartley that he would cause George Dance to erect an obelisk on the spot: a stone base supported near 25 feet of brick. Dance's choice of material was intended as iconic, but the inscription acknowledged the future obsolescence of brick, arguing for 'the ADVANTAGES likely to accrue to the PUBLIC by his INVENTION of FIRE PLATES'. Here, then, was a monument to the City's faith in markets to contain risk and yet another step away from Gwynn's absolutism. However, located in a field in Peckham, it was a far from accessible reminder of the problem the City faced.

It would appear, however, that actual investment in either Stanhope or Hartley's schemes was negligible and the Club's main aim appears to have been to rekindle interest in their gentlemanly fire-prevention schemes. One of the Club's first moves was to write to the Society for Promoting Arts Commerce and Manufactures to see if they had offered any prizes to encourage invention in the area. That same day they asked the fire offices to contribute to the cost of the experiment.⁴⁸⁸ That no mention was made of any sponsors in the *Resolutions* is indicative of the industry's skepticism when it came to these and other experiments, though Jupp claimed the largest share of the final costs himself.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ *Philosophical Transactions*, 68, II, (1778), read to the Royal Society in 1773.

⁴⁸⁶ [David Hartley], *An Account of the Method of Securing Buildings (and Ships) against Fire. Presented to his Majesty* (London, 1774) p. 4; David Hartley, *An Account of Some Experiments Made with Fire-Plates, Together with a description of the manner of application and an account of the expense* (London, 1776), p 1.

⁴⁸⁷ Hartley, *Experiments*, p. 6.

⁴⁸⁸ HoH 1/2 2 May 1792.

⁴⁸⁹ RIBA, HoH, 1/5/4.

The Architects' Club performed its own house-burning experiment-cum-publicity exercise, torching houses on Henry and Richard Holland's Sloan Estate in 1792. With the Club seeking advice on crowd control from Hartley, it is clear that the event was intended as a spectacle.⁴⁹⁰ Whether an experiment on this scale could produce any particularly new knowledge was debatable and presumably the ferocious, uncontrollable heat would impede close viewing. On the day, the Club tested a liquid treatment that once applied to wood acted as a fire retardant, which was recommended as a measure to complement the work of Stanhope and Hartley.⁴⁹¹ Although the *Resolutions* offered up the familiar apology that their tests were intended for the public good, Sir William Chambers considered the experiments as mere self-promotion, especially as he thought the technology involved was known to be questionable.⁴⁹² Hartley's fire plates had been used at Chambers' Somerset House but had been discontinued after it was found they encouraged rotting in the beams to which they were attached. Holland was still corresponding with Stanhope in 1797 and discovered the plaster had not fared much better. Stanhope's own seat at Chevening had burnt down in the same year and he wanted to send a roof-beam, partially burnt and partially saved by his plaster, to the Royal Society as proof of 'the true principles of fire prevention' despite the overwhelming damage done to his property.⁴⁹³

By torching domestic townhouses, the Club performed a careful, aestheticised reminder to upper-middling householders, politicians and the City that fire was still a great leveler, by tapping into a sense of worry mixed with optimistic faith in technically driven progress engendered by the previous experiments. The *Resolutions* followed this up and was distributed to worthies including George III, William Pitt, the Royal Society, Society for Promoting Arts, Commerce and Manufactures, the City's Chartered Company's, Liveries and great City merchants.⁴⁹⁴ The Club exposed to a West End audience their links to the City, and were evidently attempting to say that the cultures of surveying and architecture could work together in tandem to buttress property. Combining a house-burning experiment, publication and assiduous badgering of the great and the good, the

⁴⁹⁰ RIBA, HoH 2/8/6, Hartley to Holland, 12 Nov. 1792.

⁴⁹¹ RIBA, HoH 1/2, Minutes of the Architects' Club, 1792.

⁴⁹² RIBA, HoH, 2/9/1, William Chambers to Henry Holland, 12 Sep 1797.

⁴⁹³ RIBA, HoH, 2/5/2, Stanhope to Holland, 27 Mar. 1797.

⁴⁹⁴ RIBA, HoH, 2/2/1, 2/9/3, Chambers to Holland, 25 Sep. 1793.

shrillness of the Club's opinions may have been a worry to the insurance companies. Certainly the fire offices had no interest in calling into question the failings of the industry, though, of course, the incendiary bent on defrauding their offices and their inability to adequately marshal the data they harvested from policy holders were tacitly acknowledged. However, the assiduity with which the Clubs' members attached themselves to City institutions, including the newer insurance companies and East India Company, suggests the experiments were not simply empty posturing, but formed a useful addition to their *curriculum vitae*.

The energy of the Club, or Holland at least, devoted to creating a bridge between the City and Westminster may well have been short-lived and be related to the jobs market. However, it serves to put Jupp's previous advocacy of fire safety issues in relief. Despite the ripples that occasionally disturbed the fire-offices, he seems to have made little contribution to the technologies or debates in question. The *Resolutions* may not have offered much more than a cheerful optimism in gentlemanly amateurs coming to the rescue and well-guided legislation, but it did suggest that there was a solution to the problems posed by fire. The Club also entertained the idea of courting relatively public forums for debate like the Royal Society and Society for Promoting Arts and Manufactures as well as the Royal Academy. Jupp and the fire-offices were by-standers for the most part, evidently happy to review innovations when they emerged but hardly zealous in repositioning the industry's public profile. Business for the fire offices was steady, especially those mutuals like Hand in Hand, unflustered by industrialisation in the regions, where coal power was exerting pressure on underwriters to act more dynamically. One must conclude that Jupp was in a cosy office and felt little pressure to change, though the Phoenix's backing by sugar bakers, the Albion Mills episode, and the anxiety around warehouses and docks suggests that this was not completely the case. However, the failure of the Club to ignite any real interest in the technologies they tested also suggests that the supposed mercantile market for improved architecture was optimistically constructed by inventors like Hartley. We turn that market next.

Section 3: Control in Warehouses

As we have seen, flammable buildings around the Thames presented a special problem for underwriters, and were of special interest to the City merchants who sat on the boards of the insurance companies. Yet despite bearing witness to their own and other businesses suffering losses through fire in the City, and the Corporation

erecting monuments to men like Hartley, little actual investment in fire-proof technologies is evident. Warehousing presents the ideal forum to explain the City's blustering but not terribly technical attitude toward fire-safety by giving us a window as to what merchants demanded from commercial space. Few full accounts of warehouses survive, most being jettisoned when the commercial operations of a firm ceased. Moreover, the seasonal nature of overseas commerce meant that employment in warehouses was often casual and unrecorded. Margaret Makepeace's superb elaboration of the surviving East India Company records suggests that Company warehouse-keepers were employed on an *ad hoc* basis at the beginning of the century, before the award of places were engrossed by the Directors in the 1780s.⁴⁹⁵ Consequently, her study uses evidence from the Company's centralised records after 1800, not least nineteenth century pensions, which are uncommon. The sheer scale of the East India warehouses means they are not representative of the constellation of smaller and medium sized business that populated the City, which typically employed a few labourers rather than a few thousand. Whereas it was paperwork that facilitated the expansion of Company warehouses, smaller concerns had to rely on their keepers' personal influence and memory to police them, circumstances that further undermine the available archival base. However, building plans add much to the contention that the basic problem in running a warehouse remained the same irrespective of size: controlling access in order to increase the calculative agency of warehouse owners or operators.

Examining first the geography and architecture of warehouses, then their personnel and modes of remuneration this section argues that warehouses were machines for creating identity. Various circuits of credit and interpersonal connections made warehouses operable by concentrating power on men who commanded written or tacit knowledge about the goods entering the building, their employees and their ability to manage both through modulations of information and money. Mechanisms based on the accumulation of trust, knowledge and experience by a permanent staff, and the layouts of the buildings themselves, were used to protect warehoused goods in London. Guarding primarily against the much-maligned itinerant workers in the transport sector, these concerns also deprived fireproofing of investment. Hartley and the Architects' Club evidently overestimated the mercantile market for improved architecture because risk was made visible in warehouses by badges, tokens and other signifiers or discipline which added to

⁴⁹⁵ Makepeace, *Company's London Workers*, pp. 44-5.

these buildings ability to act as calculative space where commercial data was analysed and acted upon in their own right.

Warehousing: Geography and Architecture

London's wharfs and warehouses existed in a legal landscape which managed to resist architectural legislation until the 1774 Building Act. A composite of intersecting Customs and customary laws governed their form in the eighteenth century. As earlier chapters have described, statutes of 1668 and 1671 defined the Legal Quays and sufferance wharfs on the Thames.⁴⁹⁶ The statutes specified the water-frontage of each of the nineteen quays, the Customs House, as well as the common passages, water-stairs and sewers that connected Thames Street to the River. Commodities were to be loaded and unloaded onto ships or lighters from the Quayside apron by means of cranes that were numbered in the Acts. Though not prescribed by the Acts, each Quay had some warehouse space for storing goods. Leaseholders were expected to keep their Quays in good physical order and the City was largely responsible for managing the various porters operating in the area. Having defined the sites of taxation, it was then up to the Customs Commission to monitor and arbitrate on fiscal activities in the area. Various by-laws, precedents and standing orders are noted in the Customs' minutes, mostly aimed at their officers.⁴⁹⁷

Colonial commodities destined for re-export needed to be landed in London before being sent abroad, creating an important legal distinction between bonded and free warehousing. Bonded warehouses were privately managed and built, like free ones, but were sanctioned by the Customs Commission only after having received a report from their Surveyor of Buildings. In these buildings importing-merchants could house goods on which a fraction of the duties had been paid if they could secure a bond for the remainder on another merchant's credit. Canceling the bond mitigated the need to pay the complete Customs charge and claim it all back when the goods were re-exported. This arrangement had a great influence on the geography and sociability of mercantile life in London. The Commission in London saw the system as a convenient way of rationalising their duties, as bonded warehouses were not allowed to be more than half a mile distant from the Quays.

⁴⁹⁶ 16 Car. II and 19 Car. II cap. 13. Discussed in Henry Crouch, *A Complete View of the British Customs* (London, 1733), pp. 375-8, 388, a standard work for officers and merchants.

⁴⁹⁷ See CUST 29/1-5, Extracts of Minutes of the Board of Customs.

Confining goods to commodity-specific warehouses was also a way of reaffirming and keeping distinct merchant groups, reflecting the discriminatory and patchwork fiscal regimes built into British trade. What gave the bonding system coherence from a legislative point of view was its continuity with the Navigation Acts, which were also administered by the Customs from 1696.⁴⁹⁸ Aimed at channelling colonial trade through Britain in British vessels, the Navigation Acts cemented together the Empire through commercial exchange. Taxation distinguished colonial goods from those that were properly British, with bonded warehouses representing fiscal borders.

Consequently, the spate of Bonding Acts that ratified the system towards the end of Queen Anne's wars specified that goods be stored in a fiscal limbo, known as being under the 'joint locks' of the monarch and the merchant.⁴⁹⁹ Bonded warehouse-keepers were required to keep logs of the dates, amounts and destinations of any goods they stored, with the books kept open to the Customs officers. Further, they were to 'affix one lock to every such warehouse, the key of which shall remain in the custody of proprietors'.⁵⁰⁰ The later Tobacco Act stated that whilst 'the merchant or his servants shall have free access [to the goods] at all seasonable times; and the customs house officers are hereby required to attend, without fee or reward.' As a result, opening warehouse doors was an act charged with bureaucratic and fiscal implications for their key-holding proprietors, merchants and Customs officers. Revisions in tobacco taxes under George I threw into doubt whether a 1711 Act was still in force, provoking a petition by London merchants to the Treasury asking that the provisions be re-reinstated in 1730, thereby suggesting the system was a valued part of the commercial landscape.⁵⁰¹

One of the major challenges to the system was what actually happened inside the warehouses and, in particular, the kinds of work that might be done on commodities. The bonding legislation stated that pepper could be 'sifted or garbled', tobacco plants could have their stems removed and tea could be sampled, with most other goods needing to be broken up into lots before sale. As one petition on

⁴⁹⁸ Lawrence A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws: A Seventeenth-Century Experiment in Social Engineering* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), pp. 60-61, 90-91, 103-108.

⁴⁹⁹ 8 Ann cap. 7 (Pepper), 10 Ann cap. 26 (Tea and coffee), 12 Ann cap. 8 (Tobacco), 10 Geo. I cap. 10 (Tea), 15 Geo. II cap. 25 (Rum).

⁵⁰⁰ 8 Ann cap. 7, ix.

⁵⁰¹ *CTBP* II, 19 Feb. 1730, pp. 18-19.

the subject stated, 'many of the warehouses [were] well calculated for the purpose of making convenient chambers for stripping tobacco', the inference being that warehouses were fitted with specific goods in mind.⁵⁰² Far from inert, a stream of labourers entered warehouses, putting huge pressure on their proprietors, as they aimed to keep goods secure and monitor the myriad of subspaces into which warehouses were broken. Conversely, it is worth noting, too, that commodity specialisation must have limited the people entering warehouses, meaning warehouse-keepers could rely on interpersonal relations within smaller trading communities rather than faceless masses of merchants or labourers. Smuggling goods out of warehouses to play on the price differentials caused by taxation was always problematic and necessitated the employment of watchmen and 'lockers' in the pay of the warehouse-keepers and the Customs.

Even so, processing work of this kind was messy and the bi-products like tobacco stalks or damaged tea had a market, which led to all manner of complications for the Customs as the acts stipulated that warehouses were to be kept clear. The East India Company was asked to burn any unsellable tea.⁵⁰³ More impressive was the burning ground at Rotherithe, instituted to dispose of damaged or stripped tobacco.⁵⁰⁴ The so-called 'King's Pipe' was London's best-policed ashtray, responsible for all the trade's bi-products, and which expanded to include a wharf, warehouses and kilns between 1720 and 1770. Covered boats transported the tobacco there; the scale of the operation and the heightened security it required saw the contracts being farmed out to specialist lightermen. Despite four watchmen being employed to guard the facility, centralising tobacco waste could only defer the problems it caused, and in 1752 further rules to prevent embezzlement were issued. 1762 saw the Customs reissue the rules for guards and the ground alongside the 'King's Pipe' fenced in, adding another layer of protection. As the burning ground nicely illustrates, the bonding system caused endemic security problems and ever more complex administrative subcontracts paid for by the public.

⁵⁰² TNA, T 1/699, ff. 120-24 (1791), T 1/551 ff. 160-64 (1779). See also T 1/161/19B, ff. 66-67.

⁵⁰³ TNA, CUST 29/1, 'East India Company', 14. Apr. 1734.

⁵⁰⁴ TNA, CUST 29/2 and 3 'Tobacco Ground', 1696-1774.

adjoining; also a large stack of warehouses, five stories high and adjoining the above premises, in which are fixed a jib and capstern compleat.⁵⁰⁵ 34 Great Tower Court, built in the 1680s and inhabited by a string of grand merchants in the next century, likewise had warehousing attached.⁵⁰⁶ Joshua Johnson arrived in the capital in 1771; hoping to save money he kept cargoes in his room until finding himself overrun with packages and bales. He moved to Great Tower Court too, writing to his American partners, 'I found that in the manner I lived would not answer. It looked so...mean...I therefore resolved to take a counting house which has made me of the consequence a merchant [of] merits... It has stripped me of the appearance of a transient person.'⁵⁰⁷ Failing to secure space at home could be detrimental to mercantile credit-worthiness as well as inconvenient, which opened up the market for independent warehouse operators.

Johson's anxiety over 'having the appearance of a transient person' pivoted on the ability of property to signify economic muscle and anchor personal identity. Unlike land, movable property and moneyed wealth did not tie its owners to a community and could be stolen. Given that trade relied on the movement of goods this was highly problematic for the vast majority of the commercial community, forcing many to establish guilds to compensate for their incriminating poverty. As the lowly Billingsgate's Fellowship of Porters succinctly acknowledged, their £40 'bonds are of great use to the society, as they are a security to all persons who employ the Fellowship Porters that they shall not be defrauded of their Commodities, security being given for the purpose'.⁵⁰⁸ Ticket porters wore badges with their names attached as they sought employment 'in merchants' cellars, by warehousemen, and shopkeepers of large dealings to carry goods to their customers' and were also said to 'ply amongst the bankers, and are entrusted with large sums of money'.⁵⁰⁹ Licenses bought a cachet of trust which those attached to under-capitalised or itinerant trades found desirable in moving goods around London because they openly proclaimed roots in a community capable of disciplining them.

⁵⁰⁵ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 1 Apr. 1765.

⁵⁰⁶ *Survey of London, Vol. 15 All Hallows, Barking-by the Tower* (London: HMS, 1934), pp. 23-30.

⁵⁰⁷ Jacob M. Price ed., *Joshua Johnson's Letterbook, 1771-1774* (London: London Records Society, 1979), 15a (1771).

⁵⁰⁸ GL, Fellowship of Porters' Minutes, 1756-1803, MS 1702/1, ff. 2-3.

⁵⁰⁹ Campbell, *Tradesman*, p. 320.

From the Port of London Compensation Scheme, established to compensate businesses suffering because of the new docks between 1802 and 1824, we know that workers involved in transportation were numerous but not wealthy.⁵¹⁰ The scheme paid £677,382 to around 800 businesses, resulting in a mean claim of £846. However, the median claim was just £150. The majority of claimants were in the transport sector claiming well under the average, whereas wharfingers and warehousemen representing less than 10% of claimants were routinely awarded considerably above the average. For instance, wharfinger Thomas Coles received £30,250 for his wharf on the Legal Quays, about as much as the payments made to 150 City-administered Ticket Porters (£65-100) and to 150 Carting license owners (£100-200) combined. Yearly rents for the Quays were typically between £700 and £1,500 in the mid-century and the sale of Fresh Wharf brought Sir William Lee 20,000 guineas in 1776, although not only because of its monopoly status.⁵¹¹ The indebted Lee noted that wharfs were costly because of ‘the very heavy charge of repairing the wharffings’, referring to the piles that needed to be driven into the Thames. Wharfs were built to last and another wharf owner spent £6,000 on repairs to his warehouses, detailing heavy-duty structural carpentry such as 12” by 13” girders of ‘best Riga timber’.⁵¹² To be sure there was ground between these poles: two dozen warehouse-keepers and owners received £800-6,200 each in compensation depending on the size of their premises. Most lightermen were awarded around £300, although several masters received thousands of pounds indicating a range of business structures in that sector. These records do not speak of absolute populations tied to the Quays, only those that could prove a claim, and it is likely that many more unlicensed carters and porters were too poor to buy into the guilds and fellowships that regulated transport around the Quays.⁵¹³

Trade relied on the circulation of goods, and warehouses were envisaged as defensible islands amidst more or less suspect modes of distribution. Warehouse operators at the upper end of the trade were comparatively well-capitalised members of the commercial community and it was their task to oversee the comings and goings of those collecting goods or working on them. The most obvious means of securing property was to locate the door to warehouses where they could be

⁵¹⁰ TNA, T 76/1, Port of London Compensation Committee Cash Book; T 76/12, Index.

⁵¹¹ NRO, H (K) f. 558; Beinecke, OSB MS 52, 22.

⁵¹² NRO, H (K) f. 554.

⁵¹³ GL, Tacklehouse Porters, MS 2934 n.p..

easily monitored. Plans in the City Surveyor's office show this typically took a form reminiscent of seventeenth-century coaching inns, whereby carts could enter into courtyards to receive goods; these entrances were flanked by domestic, retail or administrative spaces.⁵¹⁴ Insurance records further make plain that, on the whole, warerooms or workshops were located behind street-frontages.⁵¹⁵ Open-plan rooms were rare compared to nests of stacks and only one surviving plan shows a warehouse without provision for off-street deliveries.⁵¹⁶ Security was achieved by monopolising City courtyards and choking their entrances, with most buildings being similar in plan to the one illustrated in figure 4.6.



Figure 4.6: A late-eighteenth-century survey, not dated, from the City Surveyor's Office illustrating the gate-yard-warehouse plan commonly used in the City on the left and the street elevation on the right. Source: LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/348.

Relatively little seems to have changed in the spatial organisation of those warehouses that we are sure were purely mercantile. A ground plan and elevation of Hudson Bay Company House shows that it was entered from the street through a

⁵¹⁴ LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/348, 449, 538

⁵¹⁵ See chapter 4.

⁵¹⁶ LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/318.

double height door bisecting the façade, its classical facade belying a ramshackle collection of warehouses behind.⁵¹⁷ The East India Company did enough business to require a string of warehouses across the eastern City, outside the Company House on Leadenhall Street.⁵¹⁸ The ‘tea boom’ of the 1770s, alongside the provisions of the Commutation Act, which required they keep a year’s supply of tea in reserve, saw major Company investments in these facilities. Jupp, who supervised these developments, maintained the traditional focus on an internal courtyard.⁵¹⁹

If warehouses effected bottlenecks to control the flow of traffic, wharfs funneled goods from the Thames to checkpoints inland. The Legal Quay-sides were a jumble of crane houses and projected roofs forbidden by the governing Statutes, but which were considered by the Customs as being necessary shelter for the officers and essential to the ‘dispatch’ of business.⁵²⁰ Great pains were taken to stop undesirables approaching the Quayside apron from the public water-stairs, thereby allowing goods to stand on the quayside.⁵²¹ Plans suggest the buildings comprised long thin warehouse complexes reaching from the waterside towards Thames Street and punctuated lengthways by internal cart-ways. The Steelyard sufferance wharf, upstream of London Bridge, was expanded in the later part of the century, as was Dice Quay near the Customs House, muscling out tenements and inns in favour of warehousing.⁵²² The authority derived from controlling street access to the wharfs had a symbolic function not lost on wharfingers’ cartel leader Barrington Buggins jnr., who addressed his correspondence to merchants regarding prices and the handling of their goods from Dice Quay Gate.⁵²³ Focus on gates was not accidental in that they acted as spaces to accumulate information about goods and labour,

⁵¹⁷ LMA, COL/CCS/PL/02/515.

⁵¹⁸ See Makepeace, pp. 17-34; C. Evans, ‘Power and Silt: Towards an Archaeology of the East India Company’, *Antiquity*, 64 (1990), pp. 643-61; Penelope Hunting, *Cutlers Gardens* (London: Private Printing, 1985).

⁵¹⁹ The expansion of EIC warehousing can best be followed through IOR, L/L/2/1, a digest of deeds with references to the no longer extant Committee of Warehouse minutes, and H/763 A-B, surveys from 1806.

⁵²⁰ CUST 102/91 f. 115, 1777.

⁵²¹ Beinecke, Sir William Lee Papers, OSB MS 52, Box 22; NRO, H (K) ff. 538-46, Buggin vs. Cardwell.

⁵²² TNA, RAIL 635/102, ‘Plans of Warehouse and Steelyard Belonging to the Hanse Towns in Germany’.

⁵²³ ICS, West India Merchant Committee Minutes (Microfilm), 30 Oct 1781.

through licenses, letters or privately distributed markers of trust, like the tokens illustrated in figure 4.7 that were issued at Three Cranes Wharf and allowed their holders to pass freely through the complex.



Figure 4.7: Tokens issued by Thomas Ballard at Three Crane Wharfs, 1723. Source: British Museum, object no. MG. 1248.

Piecemeal expansion of East India Company warehouses at Seething Lane and Houndsditch are illustrative of the trade-off between transport and security that chiefly influenced the design of City warehouses. The Company had leased its Seething Lane warehousing from 1722 and acquired an additional freehold at Fenchurch Street in 1733, building a warehouse fronting a yard there in 1736.⁵²⁴ This site underwent major expansion between 1780 and 1786 when the neighbouring French Ordinary Court and Navy Office were bought. The sites were consolidated in the 1790s, with further purchases of property adjacent or nearby.⁵²⁵ Consequently the Company formed a large holding comprising the Navy Office-Seething Lane site and a further complex opposite with gates onto Fenchurch Street, Old Jewry Street and Crutched Friars. The Company effectively colonised this block, beginning at the peripheries and moving inwards by increments. Horwood's 1792 Map, illustrated in Figure 4.8, shows an island of non-Company properties, including St Catherine Coleman Street's workhouse stranded amidst the warehousing, accessible only by Northumberland Alley, the southern end of which

⁵²⁴ IOR, L/L/2/934-5.

⁵²⁵ IOR, L/L/2/778-933.

was now no more than a ground-level tunnel through the complex.⁵²⁶ An equivalent process can be seen in their five-acre Bishopsgate warehouses, which maintained the footprint of jutting, irregular City courtyards, though writ incredibly large. On this site seven freeholds had been bought 'to shut up the alley and open a new street... to perfect the plan of their warehouse' and this security measure is illustrated in Figure 4.9, where empty awaiting building has been carefully enclosed by a wall.⁵²⁷ Jupp's warehouses were unique in being large enough to warrant multiple gates and it was around these features that he embellished the buildings with heavy rustication, giving each an oppressive quality. Nevertheless, even at the impressively bleak Bishopsgate complex the principal entrance was flanked by domestic buildings erected for the chief warehouse-keeper and his assistants.



Figure 4.8: East India Warehouses at Seething Lane, Crutched Friars and the Old Navy Office shaded in on Richard Horwood's Map (London, 1792). The buildings stranded in the middle of the complex included a workhouse. Source: Motco.co.uk

⁵²⁶ IOR, H/763 (B) f. 4.

⁵²⁷ IOR, L/L/2/1 f. 761.



Figure 4.9: East India Warehouses at Bishopsgate and Cutlers Garden on Richard Horwood's Map (London, 1792) showing the ground purchased for future expansion. Source: Motco.co.uk

On entering into any warehouse in the City, not just Jupp's works for the East India Company, further distinctive architectural features would become clear, which were not always apparent from street elevations. Typically warehouses were tall, with 'stacks' being built 3 or 4 stories high and cellars to mitigate expensive City ground rents. These 'stacks' also enabled each cargo to be dealt with on an individual basis, as per the bonding acts. Inside the courts, plans show multiple entrances into the surrounding storage areas, again signifying stacks, sometimes with doors on each story surmounted by hinged cranes. 'Engines' (tread-wheels) for the cranes appear to have been located inside the buildings on the top floor. Especially in wharfs, one also finds internal overhanging 'pesthouses' or covered passages, which would have allowed goods to be dropped into waiting carts without the carman needing to enter the warehouse proper.⁵²⁸

The materiality of the goods also influenced the spatial organisation of warehousing. Bonded warehouses and those owned by merchants exclusively

⁵²⁸ LMA, SC/GL/PR/245/FRE-248/FYE, Fresh wharf, 1764; COL/CCS/PL/02/576, Queenhithe Dock, n.d.

trading in few commodities appear to have been ‘adapted’ for the reception of certain goods.⁵²⁹ Quite what this meant in terms of layout or fittings is unclear, though the customs were unwilling to sanction those they felt improper: warehouse-keeper Andrew Cornish petitioned the Treasury in 1779 claiming he had set out £3,000 on a stack designed for coffee ‘with floors of such a height as adapted to this business and improper for sugar or many other commodities’ but the Customs vetoed his application.⁵³⁰ The East India warehouses at Bishopsgate had been ‘appointed for the reception of indigo, the quality of which is best ascertained by a particular light’ and fitted with skylights.⁵³¹

Since the Restoration the Chartered Companies had had a tendency to broker deals with specific wharfingers on the Legal Quays probably also seeing facilities customised for certain goods.⁵³² Trucks on rails were used to move hogsheads of sugar through the long warehouses on Coxes Quay.⁵³³ We know from a 1796 Customs’ survey of the sufferance wharfs that they were also fitted to receive only some commodities but rarely all.⁵³⁴ Scott’s Wharf on Bankside, for instance, was used for mahogany and dyers’ woods, and had ‘a very powerful crane for landing this article, which is extremely ponderous’. There is not enough evidence from the early part of the century to show whether the tendency to adapt warehousing was increasing as trade in specific commodities or regions became specialised, as Jacob Price has argued for eighteenth-century merchants. Nevertheless, the bonding regulations set down by the Customs and the market function makes finding an “all-purpose” warehouse difficult by the end of the century.

By way of concluding this subsection it is worth noting that many of the spatial configurations outlined above were repeated in the West India and subsequent Docks, albeit on a grander scale. Gwilt’s warehouses, though larger and far more regular in footprint than stacks, were wooden-framed multi-story

⁵²⁹ TNA, CUST 29/3, ‘Warehouses’ shows commodity specific warehouses being sanctioned, 1759-1772. For private warehouse see T 76/4, Port of London Compensation scheme Memorial Book.

⁵³⁰ TNA, T 1/551 ff. 228-32.

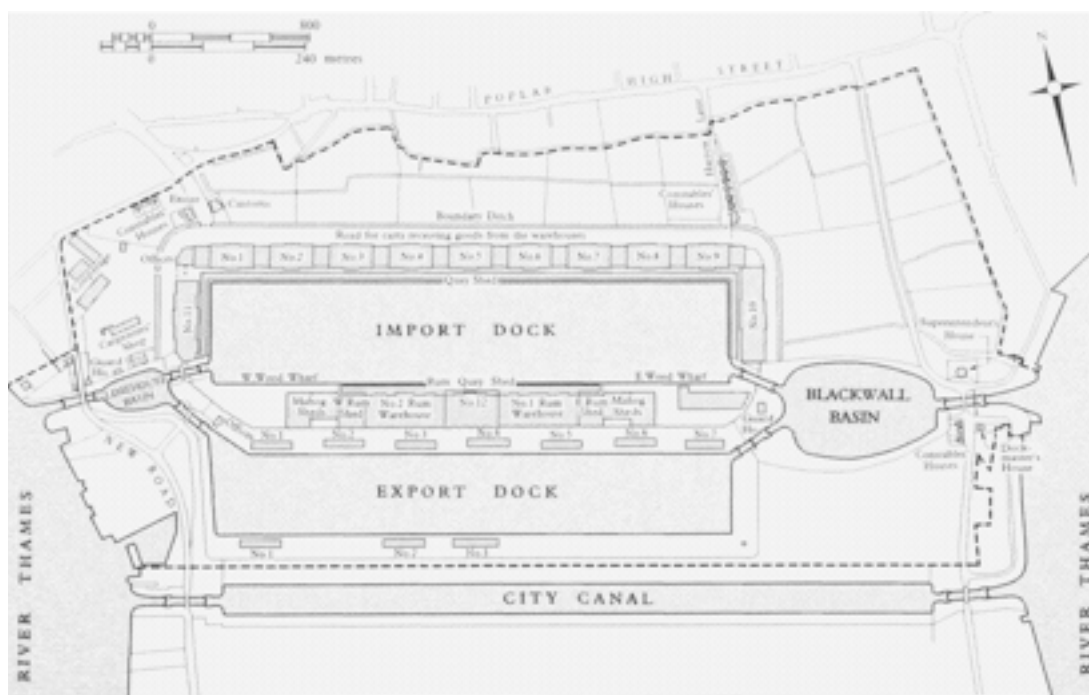
⁵³¹ IOR, H/736 A, ‘Particular Conditions of Sale’, 1836.

⁵³² Gauci, *Emporium*, p. 66; Henry Roseavere, ‘Wiggins Quay Revisited’, *Journal of Transport History* 3rd series 16, 1 (1995), pp. 11-12.

⁵³³ LMA, CLA/041/1Q/02/006, City and Southwark Coroners’ Inquests, 4th Nov. 1793.

⁵³⁴ MLD, Vaughan Papers, II, ff. 4-21, ‘Sufferance Wharfs and Place So-Called’, c. 1796.

buildings with brick exteriors. The initial warehouse design competition for the West India Docks, judged by Soane, saw ingenious crane and loading-bay combinations proposed to facilitate moving goods the warehouses and on to carts, though Gwilt simply used the warehouses to divided quayside operations from the carters who approached from the rear.⁵³⁵ They were enclosed by a perimeter wall that forced labourers and coopers through a gate to the north-west and flanked by the administrative offices. The founding charter compelled all West Indian traffic to use the Docks, ensuring the principles of commodity specialisation grown up around the bonding system was reproduced. Perhaps the most interesting thing about them was that the Docks extended the propensity to differentiate materials to shipping by cutting separate basins for imports and exports, and establishing a superintendent of shipping to monitor this traffic too. The security of goods from people and integration with transport networks were fundamental to these complexes rather than any desire to render the goods or ships safer from through the use of new materials. Indeed, despite the superlative nature of the Dock complexes, the insurance companies refused to insure goods or ships in the West India Docks in such large concentrations, causing the Company's directorate, largely merchants with shipping-interests, to form the Imperial Assurance in 1802.



<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Figure 4.10: A plan of West India Dock, c 1810. The Broken line represents a perimeter Wall. Source: British-HistoryOnline.ac. uk

⁵³⁵ SM, Cases 75-7.

Warehouse Personnel and Management

Surviving evidence regarding the remuneration of warehouse employees suggests that employers cultivated the loyalty of their warehouse-keepers and expected their authority to trickle down to the more menial labourers. Fine gradations in the education and social opportunities of warehouse employees worked in tandem with the architecture and material culture of the buildings to structure the flow of information and resources through warehouses, as well as further limit the access to goods. Understanding how warehouses worked and were managed is, therefore, vital in understanding the social structure of the market for commercial space in London. Moreover, the emphasis on retaining staff supports the notion that investment in safer buildings could be off-set to no small degree by investment in the people that worked in them, as age and familiarity were also clearly valued and part of the calculative framework of warehouse keepers. Again this further suggests why the ‘problem’ of warehouse security was seen less as a technological or architectural one by merchants than a human one.

Prior to the Docks, the most numerous and largest warehouses in the City were East India Company’s, who had developed a sophisticated hierarchy of ‘servants’ to control them. The Company employed a central audit department of inspectors, packers and surveyors of goods that comprised 60 men.⁵³⁶ A pair of surveys from 1779 and 1785 illuminates how this was structured at warehouse level. At the top of each warehouse were the warehouse-keepers, assistants and two to four clerks, who shouldered the chief bureaucratic burden, defined in 1785 as ‘To receive and take account of all the company cargoes - compare them with the invoices and manifests, adjust them with the revenue officers - prepare them for sale - cast the account thereof, and deliver them to the respective buyers on demand, when paid for – state account for the investment homewards and pay the labourers weekly, besides a vast variety of other business.’⁵³⁷ Below them were a group known as Elder Porters who were entirely unrelated City-licensed porters and also salaried by the Company. These were responsible for ensuring that warehouses were opened to ‘punctual’ labourers, relaying daily instructions from the keepers, recording deliveries, lotting goods, drawing samples, admitting Customs officers and being present where packages were opened.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ IOR, H 51.

⁵³⁷ IOR, H 326.

⁵³⁸ IOR, MSS E 283 f. 13.

All these positions were salaried, but also received a yearly gratuity and substantial fees from dealers who removed goods from the buildings after the Company sales. An 1801 report revealed that warehouse-keepers could enjoy a significant income from these incidental payments. For instance, a tea warehouse-keeper received a salary of £100, not changed since the early-eighteenth century, but had earned £2,793 that year through fees, £900 more than the Company Secretary.⁵³⁹ Unsurprisingly, such lucrative positions were not lightly abandoned. Salary records show that in 1763 the Company had employed 20 warehouse-keepers and clerks for a mean of 18.8 years. Robert Day and James Finlay, 'Husbands' or overseers of the Company's wharf on the Legal Quays, had 35 and 33 years' experience respectively. By 1783 the expansion of Company warehousing had seen an introduction of newer blood, although the 32 keepers and clerks active then still had 10.4 years of experience on average, with one Peter Corbett having notched up 33 years' service. In the midst of the Docks campaign in 1800, the average years of experience was 13.5 years, with the same Peter Corbett in Company service for the phenomenal tenure of 50 years.

Waged manual workers were less well documented by the Company. In 1779 there were approximately 900 unnamed labourers across the five surveyed sites, about one in 20 of whom were 'commodores' or foremen. Ancillary to them, each warehouse maintained 10-20 watchmen and approximately 20 men to drive the cranes. The daily wage was 2 s. or 2 s. 6 d., depending on seniority. Table 4.1 illustrates the hierarchies of the Company's typical Tea and Drug warehouse. By the end of the century, the Committee of Warehouse appointed day labourers to work in Company warehouses. It awarded tickets that allowed staff to return to positions after being laid off in slack periods.

The Hudson Bay warehouse records run from 1736/7 until 1790 and between 1794 and 1805. These show that less formal methods could achieve continuities similar to the East India Company, albeit on an intimate and probably more typical scale.⁵⁴⁰ Like the East India Company, their trade was seasonal meaning that permanent porters were unnecessary and every summer they whittled down their staff to a longest serving employee. In the busy autumn and winter before the Company ships put out for Canada, the same eight or nine names

⁵³⁹ IOR, H 67 ff. 161-6; H.M. Boot, 'Real Incomes of the British Middle Class, 1760-1850: the Experience of Clerks at the East India Company', *Economic History Review*, LII, 4 (1999), p. 642.

⁵⁴⁰ TNA, BH 1/494-5, Warehouse account books (Microfilm), 1736-1805.

returned year after year, expecting not just warehouse work at 2s. 6d. or 2s. 8d. *per diem*, but also a guinea gratuity after the Company sale and the opportunity to earn overtime as night-watchmen. John Colson left the Company after the 1766-7 season having laboured in the warehouses for at least 30 years, and tenures of a decade or more were common amongst his workmates.

Table 4.1, Staff at the East India Company's tea and drug warehouse, 1779

Position	Number	Salary/daily wage	Perquisites
Simon Holbroke, Warehouse-keeper		£100	Yes
John Stiles Mordaunt, Assistant warehouse-keeper		£60	Yes
John Skuse, Clerk		£70	Yes
Joseph Wallis, Clerk*		£70	Yes
William Coward, Clerk*		£70	Yes
Ewere Mordaunt, Clerk*		£70	Yes
Elder porters	2	£70	Yes
Elder porters	2	£40	Yes
Elder porters	2	£20	Yes
Assistant elder porter	1	£50	
Labourer ('Commodore')	26	2s. 6d.	No
Labourer	429	2s.	No
Watchmen	20	1 s./1 s. 6d.	No
'Men for exercising the engines'	20	2s. 6d.	No

Source: IOR, H 63 except * from Salaries Paid to EIC Employees, *London Lives*.

Warehouse-keepers had similarly long tenures in the Hudson Bay establishment. Charles Hay drew up the accounts from 1744, before being replaced by William Redknap in 1763, who subsequently worked until 1780. According to their Accounts, they had pursing duties, bought candles and coals, negotiated with customs officers and advertised Company sales at the Royal Exchange. Summer saw the empty warehouses opened to artisans for repair. Again, a permanent administrative staff was supplemented with manual warehouse workers. Nothing in

the records suggest material perquisites formed part of warehouse remuneration, although they confirm that Edith Burley's notion of the paternalistic assumptions of the Hudson Directorate were played out in the warehouses: 'It always expected its employees, regardless of occupation and status, to consider themselves its 'Faithful Servants' whose fidelity and diligence it would reward with the wages and benefits appropriate to their stations.'⁵⁴¹

Similar patterns seem to have emerged on the Legal Quays. The wharfingers' cartel had formed in 1696 to manage the Quays by attempting to exclude independent lightermen from delivering goods there and influencing the appointment of licensed porters ('gangsmen') by the City to their wharfs.⁵⁴² Permanent gangsmen worked on each Quay, supplemented by casual labourers in the warehouses, who, Peter D'Sena observes, feature far more often in criminal proceedings than those with licenses.⁵⁴³ Evidently the regularity of the gangsmen's work, their securities and, consequently, their payment in cash fees as opposed to material perquisites garnered a trustworthiness that itinerant labourers could not match.

Day to day activities on the Quays were overseen by intermediate managers in the pay of the wharfingers, six of whom received payments from the Docks Compensation Committee, ranging from £100-300. The depositions of these men to the Committee illustrate that graduations of culpability and training were important in securing their positions. William Boak had 'served an apprentice as a lighterman and is a free Waterman. In 1785 he enrolled in the employ of Mssrs. Thom and Ogle, the occupiers of Ralph, Youngs and Wiggins Quays as the manager of their lighterage business [at six guineas a month]... That in 1791 he also became manager of [Wiggins Quay]' at twenty guineas salary plus lunches, night-watch payments and fees, worth £150 *per annum*.⁵⁴⁴ Although the wharfingers were not incorporated like a City guild, David Hudson, clerk and manager of Brewers and

⁵⁴¹ Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Oxford & Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 20.

⁵⁴² Henry Roseavere, "'The Damned Combination': The Port of London and the Wharfingers Cartel of 1695", *London Journal*, 21, 2 (1996), pp. 97-111; Walter M. Stern, *The Porters of London* (London: Longman, 1960), p. 63.

⁵⁴³ Peter D'Sena, 'Perquisites and Casual Labour on the London Wharveside in the Eighteenth Century', *London Journal* 14, 2 (1989), p. 133.

⁵⁴⁴ TNA, T 76/9, Compensation Memorial Book, f. 52

Chesters Quays claimed he had 'served an apprenticeship of the to the Company of Wharfingers who occupy the whole Legal Quays' in 1777, thirty years previous.⁵⁴⁵

Surviving warehouse books for the Howland Dock at Rotherithe further illuminate what was required of wharf managers. The bound account books show a sophisticated bureaucratic record with columns for the location of any goods in the warehouse, the tenant, the dates goods were received and cleared, costs owing, who made payments and a cross reference to the ledger and cash books.⁵⁴⁶ Double-entry book-keeping was a revered skill, so we can infer this was a post for the relatively well educated. Warehousing was secondary to refitting ships and 'boiling' South Sea Company whale blubber at Howland, only taking on 68 lets and 29 tenants in nine years. However, they too employed a named staff on day rates of 1s. 8d., with occasional payments made to less established hands, as in '12 Dec. 1752, Paid two men shipping oyl, 3s 4d.⁵⁴⁷ One would expect the Legal Quays to have conducted business at a far more intense rate given their rents, and overseen a larger contingent of regular and irregular labourers. Nevertheless, the key point to be made here is traditional accounting technologies were required only when money changed hands between their managers and the owners of goods. For warehouse-keepers, balancing the books also required that goods be kept safe from warehouse labourers but the signs and tokens they carried were adequate because their buildings operated as a calculative space in their own right.

A picture emerges across the warehousing spectrum of a relatively long serving, trusted and well-paid nucleus of administrative staff coordinating known manual labourers within warehouses, while excluding transient or occasional workers where possible. As warehouses tended to be fairly small business that specialised in a few commodities, this could be achieved on an informal basis, with labourers returning to certain sites year after year. In reducing those legitimately interested in warehouses to those known to the trade, or knowledgeable of certain products, the front door became easier to police, all without having to resort to the bureaucratic practices used by the East India Company. Clerical and literate managers were paid in cash, as were the majority of the preferred, semi-permanent staff. Payments in goods were reserved for ill-trusted and easily criminalised

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, T 76/9, f. 2.

⁵⁴⁶ LMA, E/BER/E10/2/14, Warehouse account book, 1751-60.

⁵⁴⁷ LMA, E/BER/E10/2/17, Warehouse book, 1752. See also T 70/1493, 'Memorandum book for the warehouse' of Mr Tinney [c. 1780?].

transient labour. Warehouses were filters for types of commodities, skills, and for traffic, hence their relationship to roads and the Thames. They were ‘machines’ that concentrated power into the hands of knowledgeable, long-serving and creditable staff who diffused it through warehouses using quotidian technologies such as keys, book-keeping and fees. In theory, warehouse fires should not have been a problem for London’s merchants so long as they trusted their warehouse-keepers

Conclusions

Merchants like William Vaughan stood at the junction of two networks: insurance and warehousing. Their equivocal stance on the problem posed by Pearson’s research, chiefly that the risks facing commercial spaces like warehouses were understood but not bested, has been explored in this chapter by comparing the mediators underpinning each network.

The career of Richard Jupp clearly illustrates that surveyors had been getting their hands dirty in the City for some time but were restricted from publicly formalising their knowledge about its quirks. He seemingly founded his credentials on his reliability, family connections and business contacts, both in acquiring his post at Hand in Hand and his later surveyorships. His work for the Hand in Hand clearly gave him access to a wide range of buildings and a good understanding of the risks caused by fire but little indicates he tried to do anything with that knowledge until he collaborated with Holland. In general, Jupp’s work was carried on through highly socialised transactions, embodied in the personal connections he formed with other contractors and surveyors, and underpinned by highly lucrative contracts. These jobs had little to add to the stock off knowledge about fire safety, though presumably his clients were assured that he knew everything regarding the topic that was worth knowing. His East India warehouses were impressively large and boasted facades that alerted contemporaries to their technocratic virtuosity, but revealed relatively few innovations in terms of fire safety. By the early-nineteenth century commentators saw them as indexes of British overseas trade, overcoming the odium previously heaped on commercial architecture, and traders more generally, by classicists like Gwynn. The discourse surrounding commercial architecture increasingly interpreted consumer desire as driving architectural change in warehousing and innovative improvements. However, surveyors did not, like architects, stand in a tradition of public debate, treatises or even the eccentric experiments performed by the Architects’ Club. Nor did demand for a more technically proficient warehousing architecture reach such a pitch as to see Jupp

exert much effort in outlining questions to be asked of the insurance industry and fire-proofing technology, a task that Holland appears to have relished.

Policing warehouses also created strings of personal contacts and associations. Whereas policyholders principally communicated their satisfaction with the insurance companies by keeping up their quarterly subscriptions, expecting a response only when disaster struck, merchants conducted an intense seasonal dialogue with warehouse-keepers using commodities. The condition of goods delivered from warehouses to merchants was a material index of whether the trust placed in an individual warehouse-keeper was well deserved. Concerns over fire safety melded with fears about theft, smuggling and itinerancy that were intrinsic to long-distance trade and more easily rectified by systems of identification and registration than new technologies. Careless people caused fires, not buildings, resulting in a tradition of graduated investment in human rather than fixed capital that doubtless stymied demand for new architectural products in the warehousing sector. As the next chapter describes, the Legal Quays were a site that periodically vexed London's merchants precisely because stolen, damaged, delayed or lost goods called into question the reliability of wharfingers and porters.

The paradox signalled by growing numbers of policyholders and relatively unambitious investment in material infrastructure raises questions about narratives of improvement and modernisation. This chapter has forwarded a two-pronged explanation of this supposed problem based on close observation of two systems of objects, the first surrounding Jupp the insurance surveyor, and the second surrounding combustible warehousing. Both the insurance industry and Jupp were presences that were felt by merchants in the City and there can be little doubt warehouses were recognised as problematic by them. Nevertheless, the construction of risk around abstract values on policy document could not displace their traditional understanding of warehouses as beset by problems of theft or poor stewardship, and the two models appear to have co-existed. The demand for improved warehousing never really crystallised, though it might be added Jupp and the insurance companies did relatively little to define their product in those terms. While Pearson is right to chastise Beck for assuming technocratic agencies like the insurance companies immediately heralded a risk society, he equally implies that insurance, by creating a financially-driven and numerical language to frame risk, should have noticeably shifted the calculative agency of the City as a result. Yet close examination of the warehouse sector suggests the fire offices had no monopoly on spreading or visualising ideas about hazard, despite the fact their

charges were regular reminders to policyholders that certain buildings were dangerous. Warehouse-keepers used badges, tickets and tokens to ensure the labour entering them could be trusted. The basis of this trust was either personal association and a good disciplinary record or affinity with one or other of the guilds. Indeed, issuing badges, taking securities and regulating their members through bureaucratic conventions, the guilds were not so very different from the insurance companies. Warehouse architecture served to concentrate the information these mobile markers of capability onto specific spaces, staffed by well trained employees. They were, in most respects, very good centres of calculation that did not need improving.

Chapter 4: Designing the Docks

Vaughan required a degree of political literacy to convince various groups of the need for docks in London and this chapter examines that in terms of the lobbying surrounding the numerous failed attempts by merchants to reorganise the Quays in London. Although Vaughan had envisaged the Docks as tools to combat mercantilism on the Quays, the reality was rather different. Far from freeing labour, the Docks and those associated with them, like Jeremy Bentham and Patrick Colquhoun, figure in Peter Linebaugh's influential thesis as maliciously shackling working Londoners to oppressive working conditions.⁵⁴⁸ Moreover, Vaughan's planned Docks suffered a fractious takeover by the West India Merchants Committee, became aped by the East India Company and were constituted as monopolies. The Docks did things that were quite unexpected when they entered the political sphere and when they were built. As such, this chapter probes the contingency of political and commercial knowledge, suggesting that the Quays and later Docks were formative sites in the production of political economy for the merchant community.

Vaughan's achievements in the 1790s had been prefigured by similar campaigns dotted across the century. Each type of merchant campaign is treated separately in this chapter in order to draw attention to how the specific forms of writing about the Quays socialised interested actors differently and produced outcomes for the sites that were not evolutionary. A section is devoted to each of the following: the loose coalitions of merchants discontent with the Legal Quays between 1710 and 1766; the West India Committee's more sustained and concentrated attempts to police the Quays from 1740 to 1790; the plans of Vaughan and his rivals during the 1796 Parliamentary campaign; and, finally, the successfully chartered Dock companies, who approached the Thames with architects and shareholders in tow. As a whole, the chapter argues that the new Docks must be seen as a step away from markets bounded by ties of kinship, friendships or interpersonal trust, and towards a world policed by institutions. As we will see, this course had been precipitated by the increasing presence of the West India Committee on the Quays. War also seriously disrupted the personal networks that

⁵⁴⁸ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed. London & New York: Verso, 2003), pp. 371-443; J. Marriott, *The Other Empire: The Metropolis, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 68-72 and idem., 'Social Inquiry and the Discovery of the Residuum', *Rising East*, 3, 1 (1999), p. 26.

held together shipping and other Quayside workers, forcing the Committee to combine in order to treat with uncompromising agencies, like the Admiralty, and to resist taxation. These coalitions generated the multifaceted knowledge that formed part of the reason why a group of merchants with no experience of building or managing docks felt themselves capable of doing so, and convinced the Treasury and other investors to support the enterprise. Moreover, the increased volume of writing about the Quays and the prevailing anxieties surrounding how that writing did or did not touch upon the market brought into play an extraordinary number of other commercial 'things' that meant elite knowledge of commerce palpably changed. This has major implications for how we understand mercantilist politics, as we shall see.

Section 1: Historiographies of Power

The Legal Quays were the focus of Customs operations in London. According to statute, high-duty imports had to be processed by Customs on the 600 yards of docks that ran along the north bank of the Thames between London Bridge and the Tower. London Bridge proved an effective barrier to large vessels going west, and its supporting piers had disrupted the flow of the water causing silt deposits to form around the Quays immediately down river. Consequently, overseas vessels of large draught moored in the Eastern reaches of the Thames, unloading goods onto smaller lighters, which would journey into the City's Quays. The tidal nature of the Thames meant the breadth and depth of the River shrunk daily, causing congestion; conditions that were exacerbated by adverse winds, frost and ice, the seasonality of trade and the gluts caused by convoys.

The number of bodies that had claim to the Quays further complicated the channelling of goods into the City. Prior to the Docks campaigns, guild-appointed Tackle and Ticket Porters unloading vessels on the Quays had developed into 'gangsmen', or contractors of portorage, attached to particular wharfs.⁵⁴⁹ Individual wharfs were privately owned, in some cases by the guilds, but were leased to the wharfingers. These managed the movement of goods from vessels onto the quays and into warehouses attached to the wharfs or elsewhere. Henry Roseveare has noted that in addition to their legal privileges, the wharfingers established a secondary cartel known to the merchants as the 'combination' at the end of the

⁵⁴⁹ W.M. Stern, *The Porters of London* (London: Longman, 1960), pp. 60-3.

seventeenth century.⁵⁵⁰ Explicitly modelled on a joint stock company, the combination's explicit function was to suspend the extension of long credit to merchants warehousing goods and to exert control over the employment of lighters and porters. Despite a Chancery suit against the cartel by one of their number in the 1710s, they remained collectively active throughout the eighteenth century without reprimand. In fact, the wharfingers were able to sustain their monopoly in spite of merchants lobbying the Treasury in 1711, 1713, 1746 and 1762 to increase the size of the Quays. Reviewing the situation, Roseveare argues that reforms were repeatedly stymied by the wharfingers' cosy relationship with the Customs Commissioners, as well as the exertions made by wharf owners inside Parliament on the behalf of their tenants.⁵⁵¹ In addition, Roseveare cites the dock promoter William Vaughan's assessment of the wharfingers' obstructive stance, stating that the 'landed interest &c. overcame the interests of commerce'.⁵⁵²

The merchant campaign in the City, led by Vaughan and the West India Committee from 1793, eventually led to the establishment of the Docks.⁵⁵³ Initially the merchants had stressed the inability of the old Legal Quays to house incoming cargos under the aegis of the wharfingers. This, in turn, caused delays in unloading ships and rampant criminality as goods were left idling on the quayside. Presented to a series of Parliamentary Commissions, these reasons have formed the backbone of utilitarian explanations of changes in London's infrastructure, which were described as a rationalisation of the 'confusion and laxity shown in the administration of the Port...which brought losses not only to merchants but the public revenue'.⁵⁵⁴

In calling for the removal of the Quays from the City Vaughan caused great offence to the Corporation of London, who licensed and protected the great numbers of incorporated porters, lightermen and car-men they attracted as well as

⁵⁵⁰ Henry Roseveare, "'The Damned Combination': The Port of London and the Wharfingers Cartel", *London Journal*, 21, 1 (1996), p. 103; idem., 'More light on Buggin's Turn', *Mariner's Mirror*, 79, 1 (1993), pp. 67-8, and 'Property Versus Commerce in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Port of London', J.J. McKusker & K. Morgan eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.74.

⁵⁵¹ Roseveare, 'Damned Combination', pp. 97-8, 104.

⁵⁵² Roseveare, 'Damned Combination', p. 99; William Vaughan, *Wet Docks*, p. 26.

⁵⁵³ W.M. Stern, 'The First London Dock Boom and the Growth of the West India Dock', *Economica*, 19, 73 (1952), pp. 59-77.

⁵⁵⁴ J.G. Broodbank, *History of the Port of London* 2 Vols. (London: Daniel O'Connor, 1921) i, p. 82.

deriving benefits for warehousing, processing and mercantile communities located there. By 1798, two dock projects were being considered by the Treasury: the West India Dock Company backed by the West India Committee and Corporation of London, and the London Dock Company led by Vaughan and a broad coalition of City merchants. Both were sanctioned, with the former being granted a monopoly on West India goods in 1799, and the latter a monopoly on wine, rice, brandy and tobacco in 1800. City money poured into both schemes in the late-1790s as shares for both were snapped up quickly.⁵⁵⁵ The West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs opened in 1802, whereas the London Docks, built in congested Wapping and costing more, opened in 1805. These early efforts were followed by the East India, Surrey and St Katherine's Dock Companies. Architecturally, the campaign for the Docks was an unlikely success story. Within a decade, the port of London had gone from being a ramshackle collection of buildings governed by an accretion of authorities, to being merchant-run facilities of the most up-to-date kind.

The relationship between Vaughan's free-trading idea and the newly built Docks complicates the narrative. Advocates of the fiscal-military-state thesis, like William Ashworth, have explained the Docks in terms of economic rationalisation, chiefly the fiscal retrenchment of the Pitt era and the longer history of the national debt.⁵⁵⁶ Such an institutional basis allows Ashworth to see the Docks as revenue-maximising tools for the Treasury. Similarly, the disciplinary culture forced on the Royal Dock Yards' shipwrights by Samuel Bentham in Greenwich facilitated the streamlining of government expenditure during the Napoleonic wars. Ergonomic plant and standardised designs began replacing the shipwrights' craft, while simultaneously reducing their scope to produce 'chips', the valuable perquisites of wood wasted in the ship-building process. Political economy, framed thus, found its expression in moves towards mechanisation, greater divisions of labour and the replacement of fees and perquisites with wages.

Peter Linebaugh's Marxist interpretation of the Royal Docks suggest they were a point of contact between labour and expertise characterised by antagonism. His study of the Docks draws direct links between Samuel Bentham's reforms at the Royal Dock Yards, Vaughan's interest in political economy and the West India

⁵⁵⁵ 'The City of London and Slavery: Evidence from the First Dock Companies, 1795-1800', *Economic History Review*, New Series 61, 2 (2008), pp. 433-467.

⁵⁵⁶ W.J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and idem, "'A System of Terror': Samuel Bentham, Accountability and Dockyard Reform During the Napoleonic Wars', *Social History*, 23, 1 (1998), pp. 63-79.

Committee's sponsorship of Jeremy Bentham and Patrick Colquhoun to police the Thames stevedores.⁵⁵⁷ For Linebaugh, these 'planners and theorists of class struggle' found mechanisms to force wages onto the porters and stevedores unloading ships ('Lumpers') in place of the payments in perquisites they had previously received; it was a trajectory that was no different from that experienced by the shipwrights in Greenwich. In his estimation, economic streamlining was a conspiracy of 'The international drug and slave cartel, or "West India Interest"' who 'became the dominant partner in the Bank of England and a powerful influence on Parliament' to form London's working class in the image of the dominant form of capitalism.⁵⁵⁸ Violent protest resulted.

Readers of Perry Gauci's recreation of the political world of merchants might wince at Linebaugh's easy coupling of the West India Interest with government. As Gauci argues, merchants were persistent and sophisticated Parliamentary lobbyists but their tactics were not guaranteed success, even in London.⁵⁵⁹ This argument is borne out by David Ryden's detailed analysis of the West India Committee's response to the shifting political economy of the Atlantic between 1783 and 1807. These few years saw the United States abandon the navigation acts and unleashed competitively priced American vessels on to the Anglo-Caribbean trade, which was further rocked by the Haitian Revolution and the abolition of slavery.⁵⁶⁰ Complementing an older historiography of colonial lobbies, Ryden and Gauci reiterate that merchants put an extraordinary amount of thought into communicating with government, including pamphleteering, mobilising the chartered companies or guilds, buying boroughs, bribery and a great deal of social networking. The form these interactions took mattered, and the West India Committee's propensity to entertain 'friends' with turtles shows how easily economic regulation bled into

⁵⁵⁷ Linebaugh, *London*, pp. 424-7.

⁵⁵⁸ Linebaugh, *London*, p. 416.

⁵⁵⁹ Perry Gauci, *Emporium of the World. The Merchants of London, 1660-1800* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 64-6 and Idem., *The Politics of Trade. The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 107-37.

⁵⁶⁰ David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and the British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); A.G. Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); L.M. Penson, *Colonial Agents of the British West Indies: A Study in Colonial Administration, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of London Press, 1924).

convivial relationships between merchants and politicians, between merchants themselves and between merchants and their servants.⁵⁶¹

Gathering information unavailable to government was essential to lobbying and provides a way to start rethinking how class impacts on the narratives surrounding the Docks. That the Dock campaign produced much of the evidence we have for the economics of the river, in the shape of the two parliamentary inquiries into the port of London and several pamphlets, is something this chapter hopes to address directly. Linebaugh's framework has won plaudits from East End social historian John Marriott, although other historians have been much more critical.⁵⁶² The tone adopted by Anthony Henderson and Sarah Palmer is far less censorious than Linebaugh. They claim that, although the Docks did reduce the independence of their many employees, so little is known about the hordes of coopers, lumpers and lightermen working on the early modern Thames that the extent of their oppression is hard to judge.⁵⁶³ In a more direct critique, David Armitage has accused Linebaugh of reading 'elite' evidence against the grain to suit his theoretical preoccupations.⁵⁶⁴ He asks whether the Parliamentary Commissions into the port can simultaneously be read as examples of mercantilist conspiracy and an objective description of social relations. The repeated campaigns surrounding the Quays and wharfingers provide a number of illuminating case studies into how elite knowledge was constructed, not because the face-off was between unchanging commercial and landed interests, as Roseveare suggests, but because they did encompass new strategies and rhetorics. Moreover, that Pitt the Younger sanctioned the Docks in contrast to his predecessors at the Treasury suggests that certain languages were becoming more widely recognised and understood. My feeling is that a focus on the administration of property can illuminate the subtle transformations underpinning the emergence of the Quays as a political problem.

⁵⁶¹ Ryden, *West Indian*, p. 69, n. 67.

⁵⁶² John Marriott, *The Other Empire: The Metropolis, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 68-72, idem., 'Social inquiry and the discovery of the residuum', *Rising East*, 3, 1 (1999), p. 26, and idem, *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 70-94

⁵⁶³ Anthony R. Henderson and Sarah Palmer, 'The Early Nineteenth-century Port of London: Management and Labour in Three Dock Companies', *Research in Maritime History*, 6 (June 1994), pp. 31-50.

⁵⁶⁴ David Armitage, 'Review: Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*', *Reviews in American History*, 29, 4 (2001), pp. 482-3.

Linebaugh is not alone in assuming that elite factions represent an unchanging succession of more or less predatory coalitions. Douglass North, John Wallis and Barry Weingast's recent situation of mercantilism relative to modern capitalism is similar and worth reflecting on in order to show how this limits how we interpret innovation. For North et al., there exist two types of society that both tackle the problem of social order, but use different logics: 'natural society' and 'open access society', a condition that emerged after about 1850 in a small number of countries.⁵⁶⁵ In a natural state, which encompasses most historical and current cultures, social order is achieved by political coalitions of the propertied that distribute military power through society, while uniting to eradicate violence: 'The political system of a natural state manipulates the economic system to produce rents that then secure social order.'⁵⁶⁶ At various stages, North et al. point to the chartered companies as exemplifying this in Britain. In an open-access society, by contrast, military power is consolidated and subordinated to political control. Political systems are also constrained by other social institutions, and for a political faction or party to remain in power, it must 'maintain the support of economic and social interests, broadly defined.'⁵⁶⁷ The crucial transition from one society to another occurs when elite groups begin to share their privileges equally amongst themselves, which allows those advantages to be progressively accessible by non-elite groups. For this to happen, three basic conditions need to be met: '1) Rule of Law for elites 2) Perpetually lived forms of public and private elite organisations [i.e. institutions that exist beyond the life of single members] 3) Consolidated political control of the military.'⁵⁶⁸ North et al. clearly state that Britain did not leave the natural state until the 1832 Reform Act was passed and the 1824 Bubble Act was repealed, the latter having blocked the creation of joint-stocks since 1721.⁵⁶⁹

Investigating the campaigns for the Quays does shed light on the 'intra-elite' agreements that weighed heavily in the favour of the chartered companies and the propertied. Both were disinclined to stop using legal and social barriers to maintain

⁵⁶⁵ Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Reinterpreting Human History* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 11-12.

⁵⁶⁶ North et al., *Violence*, p. 18

⁵⁶⁷ North et al., *Violence*, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁸ North et al., *Violence*, p. 26.

⁵⁶⁹ North et al., *Violence*, pp. 22 n. 26, 27, 213-9.

inequalities in wealth. The campaigns also speak to the basic conditions for open-access society, with the increasing visibility of longer lasting coalitions that enforced more wide-ranging contracts.⁵⁷⁰ However, while Vaughan certainly did make strides towards breaking the monopolies on the Quays, arguing that the new shareholder-owned Docks were freely accessible seems to overstate his achievements. Julian Hoppit's recapitulation of the events that followed the South Sea Bubble, The '45 and the abolition of slavery is a salutary reminder that Parliamentary elites were not as squeamish about forcibly redistributing of property rights as North et al. presume.⁵⁷¹ While North et al. might contest that they are explicitly attempting to explain the great divide between rich and poor nations, their opposition of an open society (read: liberal capitalism) with every other type of political settlement offers an impoverished choice of binary interpretive frameworks even on a local level. Firstly, it ignores the more or less institutionalised inequalities of race, class and gender that have persisted within open societies, as well as so-called natural ones. Secondly, and most crucially, the notion of sharp-elbowed elites suddenly becoming 'fair' implies that elevated circles were not entirely isolated from a broader culture that might influence or direct their decisions in some manner, just as the Landwaiters forced Musgrave into action.

North et al. share with Bruno Latour an interest in Hobbes and credit a 'myriad of tiny changes' as being meaningful because both seek to understand creeping institutionalisation. However, Latour's relativism fundamentally questions the great-divide thesis the North et al. hope to explain using a formulaic three step programme based on supposedly universal social categories, not least property.⁵⁷² For Latour, groups held together merely by 'social skills' are usually those whose power has 'great trouble spreading in time and space, that has no inertia and is ceaselessly to be renegotiated'.⁵⁷³ Indeed, 'It's precisely because it's so difficult to maintain asymmetries, to durably entrench power relations, to enforce inequalities' that larger institutions devote so much work to 'shifting the weak, fast decaying ties to other types of links'.⁵⁷⁴ Bureaucracies and institutions held together by 'things'

⁵⁷⁰ See Section 3 below.

⁵⁷¹ Julian Hoppit, 'Compulsion, Compensation and Property Rights in Britain, 1688-1833', *Past and Present*, 210 (Feb. 2011), pp. 93-128.

⁵⁷² North et al., *Violence*, pp. 13, 73.

⁵⁷³ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 66.

⁵⁷⁴ Latour, *Reassembling*, p. 66.

provide the durability that allows power to go global. Thus, technologies ‘allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible [and] forbid’ other associations.⁵⁷⁵ Arguing against the determinism inherent in social theory, Latour points to the countless combinations of things that make up reality, claiming these ‘primitive’ theories are not ‘sufficient to describe the many entanglements of humans and non-humans.’⁵⁷⁶ Most egregiously, sociologists presume that social forces are in play a priori: ‘By putting aside the practical means, that is, the mediators through which inertia, durability, asymmetry, extension, and domination is produced and by conflating all those different means by which the powerless power of social inertia acts, sociologists, when they are not careful in their use of social explanations, are the ones who hide the real cause of social inequalities.’⁵⁷⁷

Miles Ogborn has traced ‘a geography of writing’ to explore the making of empire in India and its attendant colonial knowledge. This represents a parallel problem in that elite knowledge came to be accumulated in East India House whereas Indians became increasingly dispossessed of political and economic authority. For Ogborn colonial transactions of all kinds were freighted by inequalities of power but not, and this is crucial, over-determined by them:

The geography of the written word offers ways of understanding the relationships between space, knowledge and power in the practices of European trade and empire that show those practices in the process of their construction and operation. This can demonstrate the relationships between power and knowledge in the making, rather than simply assuming what they might be. A focus on the material practices of making, disseminating and using documents in both script and print can decipher the many entanglements of both a will to power and the many forms of agency that need to be negotiated for trade and empire to be pursued and realized.⁵⁷⁸

Ogborn illustrates that mercantilist writing was a conduit for ideas about social groups that not only had intellectual dimensions but, at the point of production, social ones as well. The Quays might also be seen as a place continually remade by the writing of privileged actors like the merchants, chartered companies or Customs Commissioners. Simon Schaffer, pursuing a similar argument, suggests

⁵⁷⁵ Latour, *Reassembling*, p. 72.

⁵⁷⁶ Latour, *Reassembling*, p. 84.

⁵⁷⁷ Latour, *Reassembling*, p. 85.

⁵⁷⁸ Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and the Making of the British Empire* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 20.

that co-produced knowledge of the Quays might involve a cast of less well known stevedores and coopers, with potentially radical implications for how labour was conceptualised.⁵⁷⁹ However, his work on the Royal Dock Yards figures expropriation of shipwrights' labour and skills as the basis for the technical and administrative principles that characterised the work of industrialists like Charles Babbage and John Atwood that were put into practice elsewhere. The circulation, form and relationship of writing to other institutions or objects could challenge privileged Londoners and the social and cultural constitution of a mercantilist elite as much as support them.

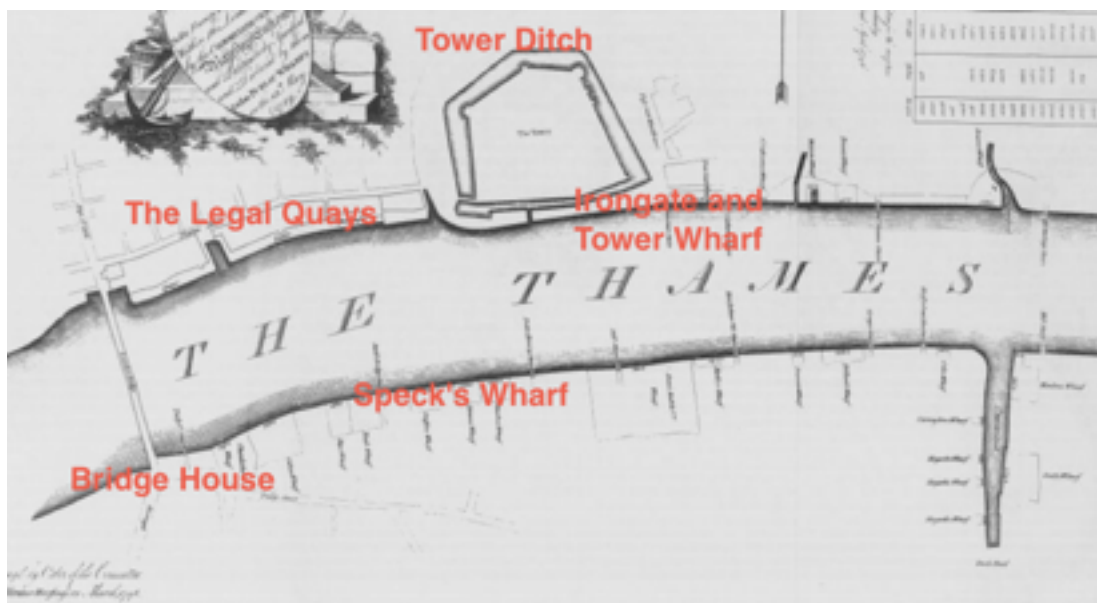
Writing about the Quays encompassed many genres, including government documentation, private agreements between lobbies, pamphlet literature and Parliamentary Inquiries and commercial data generated by the Dock companies. These genres of writing each responded to special problems regarding broader networks engaged in commerce at a local level, usually centred on the Quays, and were designed to enroll other groups interested in those spaces. Not only did the Quays structure elite sociability by forcing them together into new combinations, these genres of writing act cumulatively furnish those circulating and processing that writing with a number of rhetorics that we might think of as political economies. What this chapter shows is that by the end of the century the Quays were being figured in ever more wide-ranging commercial institutions that presaged a far more bureaucratic attitude towards intra-elite compliance, especially in the writing of contracts. Writing had the effect of shifting opinions over the Docks continually, setting privileged and plebeian groups into new but generally larger combinations. Before even a brick of West India Dock had been laid, a crisscrossing, poly-centric but increasingly well integrated web of communications had reformulated elite opinions about them. What is suggested in the closing section then, is that the Docks were a product that not only shaped the lives of working class Londoners but elite ones too, in that they created commercial and political knowledge that gave various interest groups more not less common ground.

⁵⁷⁹ Simon Schaffer, "The Charter'd Thames": Naval Architecture and Experimental Spaces in Georgian Britain', Lissa Roberts, Simon Schaffer and Peter Dear eds., *The Mindful Hand. Inquiry and Invention From the Late-Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2007), pp. 290-3.

Section 2: Campaigns for the Quays, 1700-1766

Between 1711 and 1766 London's merchants repeatedly tried and failed to extend the Legal Quays to the sites marked in Figure 5.1. Examining these campaigns through the Treasury and Customs papers that recorded the merchants' scraps with the wharingers combination show a surprising number of solutions to the problems facing the port were proffered by the contestants. Not only was experimentation in evidence in the ideas put forth, but also it was present in the means used to bargain with the Treasury and the forms of the merchant campaigns, which varied considerably. Contrasting the merchants with the Customs is instructive, as the latter diligently recorded these wrangles and referred back to previous ones when making decisions. Moreover, the campaigns rarely stemmed from the chartered companies, who seemed to find the port fairly accommodating and could bargain with the Customs and wharingers independently. Fundamentally, the petitions suggest that merchant campaigns separated by many years and with no discernible continuity in terms of membership were highly unstable, and were structured more by extraneous factors, like war, than any sustained or evolving ideology. Writing about the Quays was, in these instances, squeezed out of the merchants in response to outlandish commercial conditions in the port that had halted the usual flow of commerce.

Figure 5.1: Sites in the Early Campaigns to extend the Legal Quays



Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796)

The 'merchants of London' first petitioned about the Quays in July 1711, when they argued 'that the wharves and keys first appointed for the port of London were at that time very sufficient, but by the increase of trade are now become so strait that the merchants suffer great inconveniences thereby; and that the wharves belonging to the Bridge house in Southwark over against the Custom House, if appointed free or lawful wharves, and subject to the Customs Commissioners, would be a great accommodation to the trade of the City of London.'⁵⁸⁰ The timing of their argument was significant, coming towards the end of the War of Spanish Succession. In common with any conflict, we would expect this to be a period when overseas trade was close to stagnant. However, Admiralty coordinated convoys protected what imperial commerce remained by escorting fleets through contested water, grouping them, before sailing at predetermined places and times. This resulted in annual crops, say tobacco, normally shipped over the course of several months arriving in London in a week, glutting the quayside, causing a run on specie in order to pay taxes and creating a headache for dealers hoping to sell early when demand was highest. All the subsequent petitions examined in this chapter occurred during wartime, with adherence to the convoy system partly explaining this complaint.

The suggested extension at London Bridge is also notable. The 1711 merchants urged that existing wharfs be reappointed, moving from sufferance to 'lawful', or Legal Quay, status. No mention was made of a change in the wharf's ownership, and a 1763 Customs report noted that the owner had been a Southwark brewer and MP, Charles Cox.⁵⁸¹ Whether Cox linked the campaign with Parliamentary interest cannot be proven, although it is this kind of detail that illustrates how important administrative acumen was to the Customs. The chosen site was, in fact, strategic, emphasising jurisdictional continuity by referring to the City-administered Bridge House Estates and their proximity to the Customs House. The hope appears to have been that Customs officers would have few problems getting to the new Quay and that the City could retain their right to appoint porters and fix the fees charged by wharfingers.

Although the 1711 petition disappeared from view, in 1713 the merchants put pressure on the Treasury over the same issues of increased trade and insufficient

⁵⁸⁰ *CTB XXV*, 17 Jul. 1711.

⁵⁸¹ *CUST 104/84*, ff. 1-15.

space on the Quays. It referred the matter to the Customs, jointly forming the 'Commission for appointing the quays and wharfs &c. in the port of London', which examined a 'Proposal for enlarging the Tower Ditch in order to receive ships of burthen and to erect warehouses &c.'⁵⁸² Serious consideration went into this more ambitious venture, which was even passed to the Attorney General, before, again, falling out of contention for unknown reasons in 1714. The proposal would have been a major undertaking and making use of the still-flooded Tower moat to extend the Quays contiguously around Tower Hill would have doubled their extent. However, with the Mint located in the Tower and the Admiralty victualing yard in East Smithfield, the plan had drawbacks, not least taking some Quays outside the jurisdiction of the City. Whether these local considerations or the cessation of hostilities with France diminished the pressure convoys put on the Quays cannot be ascertained from extant records. What we do know was that the idea was dropped.

The next dispute came a generation later, during the War of Jenkins' Ear, in February 1746. Again, the length of the Quays was deemed problematic, but the petition was more complex. An initial notice to the Treasury by a group of three merchants, John Forward, William Whitaker and John Philpot, complained of 'the narrow bounds of the [Legal] quays and wharfs'. Shipping congestion had been compounded by the wharfingers' 'combination', which had held the merchants to ransom by controlling the dispatch of lighters to unload ships in the pool, for which it had 'no charter'. Forward, Whitaker and Philpot proposed an extension of the Quays, claiming to have purchased land around Iron Gate on Tower Wharf on which *they* were prepared to build a new wharf. They argued that the site was 'very convenient for the shipping business', and that the 'additional wharf will be of great service and dispatch'.⁵⁸³

The petition essentially outlined a commercial indulgence, and was seconded by a much larger petition of London merchants, comprising 150 signatories, who condemned the 'narrow quays' and the wharfingers' 'advanced rates', describing Forward, Philpot and Whitaker as 'persons of great credit and fortune'. Substantiating their claims, they presented the Customs with wharfingers' bills showing price hikes for the tobacco, Russia, sugar and Hamburg trades.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸² CUST 29/2, 'Quays', 10 Sep. 1713, 28 Jan. 1713, 19 Mar 1714., 13 Jun 1714; *CTB* XXVII, 21 Oct. 1713.

⁵⁸³ CUST 102/76, ff. 99-129.

⁵⁸⁴ CUST 102/76, f. 110.

These sectors were broadly reflective of the signatories' trading activities, which were biased towards Europe, the Levant and North America. Few principally traded with the West Indies, fewer than ten can be linked with either the South Sea or East India companies and although several became MPs, none were in Westminster at the time of signing the petition.⁵⁸⁵

In response, the Customs Commission quashed any idea of increasing the Legal Quays, stating that merchants delayed in landing goods would be granted sufferance on individual petitions.⁵⁸⁶ Notably, the wharfingers had counter-petitioned, arguing that convoys were a problem, but that any extension would see the new facilities managed by individuals who had not proven themselves as capable. They reinforced the notion that the Commission's power would be eroded by casting doubts on the social makeup of the proposed new site, claiming the area was, 'inhabited by alehouse keepers, watermen, coal heavers, porters, lumpers that deliver ships, and very poor people who will have the opportunity of smuggling and carrying off their stocks (as they call them)... into the hundred alleys, passages, yards, courts turnings and private places'.⁵⁸⁷ With regards to the wharfingers' rack renting, the Commissioners were more sympathetic to the merchants, referring the case to the Corporation of London, following a 1674 precedent, when the Mayor fixed the wharfage and lighterage rates at the Quays.⁵⁸⁸

Following a 'public' meeting in late 1762, London merchants again petitioned the Treasury; the latter referred the claims to the Customs Commission.⁵⁸⁹ Again the merchants labelled the Legal Quays insufficiently spacious, but side stepped open confrontation with the wharfingers by refusing to propose a solution. Initially, the Customs rejected the criticism, stating that delays were the result of convoys, and with peace would come a more navigable port. The merchants countered, echoing the arguments used previously by the wharfingers by stressing reasons of state: 'Want of room on the Quays prevents dispatch; delay enhances sea damage, is a temptation to fraud and theft and in all these cases the crown suffers'. The Customs

⁵⁸⁵ Roseveare, 'Property', p. 80.

⁵⁸⁶ CUST 102/76 f. 109.

⁵⁸⁷ CUST 102/76 f. 125.

⁵⁸⁸ CUST 102/76 f. 126.

⁵⁸⁹ CUST 102/84, ff. 1-15.

then formed a committee with 28 merchant delegates under the auspices of the Treasury to consider the Quays.⁵⁹⁰

The merchant delegates were successful City men, largely tied to the Atlantic economy, as opposed to the chartered companies. At least three can be connected to the Newcastle Ministry, one, George Prescott, was an MP, and Robert Dingley was a goldsmith linked to the Russia trade and founder of Magdalen Hospital in 1758, which gave him some celebrity.⁵⁹¹ As discussed in chapter two, the Customs Commission and Treasury were then entering a period where experience was at a premium and quickly adopted a more conciliatory approach than in 1746 to these well-connected City plutocrats. Landsurveyor Richard Frewin, the father of Musgrave's accomplice, reported on the suitability of two of the merchants' suggestions.⁵⁹² The first recommended that Speck's Wharf in Southwark be re-designated to Legal Quay status, though the property was quickly deemed too small, distant and insecure. The second idea revisited opening up the Tower Ditch and Wharf. The Customs surveyors were uneasy about this, except for 'bulky goods such as in a heavy glut of business must retard dispatch', specifically American and Caribbean produce: sugar, tobacco, rice and hemp. They also noted that the area around St Katherine's was populated by smugglers and their captains, drawing attention to the 1746 minute advising the same. Despite their caveats, they accepted that this area was suitable and coolly endorsed the proposal.⁵⁹³

Although the Commission seemed to run out of steam with the fall of the Bute Administration in 1763, evidence presented to the 1796 Commission on the port of London suggests the plans were in fact in consideration until 1766.⁵⁹⁴ Again, this administrative gap suggests that political instability at Whitehall noted in relation to the Customs was confusing the lobbying process as well as its documentary protocols. Jettisoning both the Tower and Southwark schemes in 1765, the revived Commission ordered that sufferance wharfs in Irongate and St. Katherine's be converted to Legal Quays on the proviso that they refitted, expanded and secured

⁵⁹⁰ CUST 102/84, ff. 36-8.

⁵⁹¹ John H. Appleby, 'Robert Dingley, F.R.S. (1710-1781), Merchant, Architect and Pioneering Philanthropist' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 45, 2 (1991), pp. 139-54.

⁵⁹² CUST 102/84, ff. 39-43

⁵⁹³ CUST 102/48 ff. 40-41.

⁵⁹⁴ PP, 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796), Appendix LI.

their premises against the neighbourhood using a twelve-foot wall and gate. Advertisements were planned for the *London Gazette* to announce the change, though none have actually been discovered, but out of the blue the Exchequer deemed the Commission illegal and quashed its orders in January 1766. While the extension to the Quays was relatively small, the merchants were on the verge of marking a significant precedent in 1765. However, the general atmosphere of indecision speaks of the political turbulence of these years, marked by continual change at the Treasury, rather than any attempt to favour the landed elite as Roseveare suggested.⁵⁹⁵

While the convoy-glutted Thames led merchants to form associations to tackle the Quays, the fluidity of their proposals, campaign strategies and personnel do not suggest a well-defined merchant ideology or sense of interest. Moving trade away from the Legal Quays had ramifications because the Customs and Corporation of London regulated them, and breaking the wharfingers' monopoly was bound to raise questions as to their entitlement to protection as property holders. The merchant propositions clearly recognised this and put forth schemes that were intended to suggest geographical continuity and, thereby, present the new facilities as extensions of the existing administrative system. The arguments have a hydraulic quality in that they suggest inflating the regulatory frame work in response to the pressure caused by shipping as opposed to disbanding it. The traces left by each campaign appear in the usually well-archived official documents of the Customs, which gave them considerable advantages in resisting these campaigns because they had access to more historical data that allowed them to be seen as cyclical. However, the Customs' archive was not impregnable for the merchants and the next section considers how their bureaucratic strategies were adopted by the West India Committee.

Section 3: The West India Interest, 1740-1790

Turning to the West India Committee minutes it is clear that unincorporated merchants were far from acquiescent when it came to getting their way on the Legal Quays. The chartered companies had advantages over the largely free trading merchants who brought the early-eighteenth century petitions. Both the East India and Hudson Bay Companies paid rents to individual wharfingers to keep a waterside staff stationed at the Quays to help them 'dispatch' their goods. The

⁵⁹⁵ Roseveare, 'Damned', pp. 97-111.

South Sea Company had a special relationship with the proprietors of Greenland Dock in Bermondsey. The chartered companies also fostered corporate relationships with the Customs, and though this frequently meant reminding the East India Company of their debts, it gave them unique formal channels through which they could broker deals with the revenue. The Customs' obvious concerns over revenue collection meant that quashing the 1762-6 Commission did not render the port utterly inelastic. As chapter three described, bonded warehousing provided a flexible means of recreating fiscal borders inland, and the Customs Commission were happy to appoint them when demand arose and where the facilities were deemed secure. The East India Company's premises were the largest overseen by the Customs, but specialist 'lockers' were appointed by the Customs in 1770 to manage the sugar warehouses, and the Navy's Victualing Yard in Tower Dock was converted into a tobacco warehouse in 1787.⁵⁹⁶ Confining commodities to specific buildings had the effect of preventing different merchant communities from combining to complain about the Quays, but it also offered them a channel to the Customs and fiscal efficiency became a reason to berate them over Quayside facilities.

The evolving fiscal infrastructure of the port provides a background for the West India Committee's adoption of bureaucratic tactics resembling the chartered companies in both their parliamentary politics and their work in London, which is the focus here. Two related procedures stand out in the Committee's minutes. First, their use of private police constables in London was well in advance of their sponsorship by Colquhoun in the 1790s, although it was not unlike the Corporation of London's patchy and experimental use of salaried officers between 1740 and 1800.⁵⁹⁷ Second, the Committee's belief that regulation could be achieved through administration and it persistently drove to formalise contracts and disseminate information. When the Committee usurped contracts that merchant houses had previously arranged themselves, this tended to mean fostering contacts with other large bureaucracies, including the Customs, the guilds, the wharfingers, Admiralty and Lloyds. West Indian commerce had always been global, but increasingly the Committee were combining the networks that ran between the metropolis and

⁵⁹⁶ I. Granger and C. Phillpotts, *The Royal Navy Victualling Yard, East Smithfield, London* (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2010).

⁵⁹⁷ Andrew T. Harris, *Policing the City: Crime and Legal Authority in London, 1780-1840* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), pp. 75-8; J.M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 151-8, 179.

Caribbean to create more impersonal connections. The writing they developed was about tracking flows of goods from centres of power in London.

The West India Committee Minutes evidence uneasy collaboration between these groups. Emerging from the coffeehouses to provide support for Colonial Agents from the West Indies, the Planters Club had been active since at least the 1740s, when the merchant Henry Lascelles wrote to a correspondent that a threatened increase in sugar duties had seen

The Agents and some other deputed and did wait on Mr Pelham with an abstract of the case [against the proposal]... besides sending the case to every Member of both Houses, we go about to visit the Members at the their several places of abode, and divide ourselves (Agents, Planters and Merchants) into little Committees to attend them in different quarters of this great Town.⁵⁹⁸

By 1760, the West India Merchants had formed themselves into a permanent 'Committee', leaving minutes from 1769 and, after some short-lived collaborations, they combined formally with the Planters into a joint body in 1784.⁵⁹⁹

London's West India merchants were a tight-knit group, conspicuous in the capital as absentees, proverbially wealthy and prone to lavish feasting. Their commercial and political 'business' was often conducted with cousins and in-laws, and such were the coercive powers of the Committee that Benjamin Vaughan guiltily admitted to Shelburne that he often felt compelled to 'monopolise' in spite of his liberal convictions.⁶⁰⁰ Political lobbying occupied the joint Planters and Merchant Committee, who met during Parliamentary sessions. The Merchants Committee comprised a core of four to ten committed members, including the Vaughans, who met monthly to discuss business that has been perceived as too quotidian to interest previous historians, especially the matter of the Quays.

Organised around the consignment system, Caribbean planters shipped sugar, rum and molasses to London on their own account, whereon London merchants would market the products and arrange return cargoes of plantation supplies, agricultural implements, and luxury goods for their correspondents. As a highly taxed dry-good that was salable in small lots, sugar was a magnet for thieves on the Thames, and the problem of criminality on the Quays was a perennial issue

⁵⁹⁸ Henry Lascelles to James Bruce, 17 Jan. 1744 cited in Penson, *Colonial*, p. 282.

⁵⁹⁹ See Penson, *Colonial*, pp. 194-214; Ryden, *West Indian*, pp. 41-51; David Hall, *A Brief History of the West India Committee* ([Bridgetown,] Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1971), pp. 1-15.

⁶⁰⁰ BL, Add. Mss 88906/01/19 ff. 53-8, Benjamin Vaughan to Shelburne, 2 Jun. 1785.

for the Committee. Mistakes also happened, and the firm Lascelles & Dalling thought it worthwhile to remind a Barbadian consignee of the virtues of well-designed hogsheads.⁶⁰¹ The loss of sugar in London was alarming enough to cause Samuel Martin of Antigua to write a long and sardonic letter squarely blaming his London factors:

[The current account] may be right for all I know to the contrary for you have put down no weights for the duty and freight which I think a way of accounting that would not please you from a merchant here. If I want to investigate backwards the weight, as witches say their prayers, I should be at a loss for the petty charges which are lumped in the article of duty... for though I esteem you [as] gentlemen of integrity, yet you may possibly commit arithmetical errors as no man is infallible, not even the Pope, and tho' I am no catholick you seem to expect I should take your acct[ount] as his decrees, without examination.

Accounting signified mercantile probity for Martin:

By Acc[oun]ts from my other correspondence I find less sugar sold by some hundredweight for which duty and freights is, which deficiency of weight must be pilferage by coopers and others even after the sugar is put into warehouse. I presume it is the same case with you; and I observe the better the sugar the more loss of weights by pilferage. Are not these points worthy of the Merchants enquiring when the coopers are known to sell many hogsheads of sugar every year tho' they import none?⁶⁰²

'Pilferage amongst your coopers' continued to bedevil Martin and he challenged the London firms directly when he asked, 'Can our friends in London then blame the planters for shipping directly as much as they can to the outports, of which will certainly in time need no supply of London[?] How this will affect the Interest of the Merchants there is easy to determine unless they join in one general combination to put an end to such evil practices[?]'⁶⁰³ He reasoned, 'the Liverpool Market is much preferable to that of London, especially in regard to petty charges & the sale weights (which you will see on acc[ounts] of sales)... for there is no pilferage at Liverpool... For those reasons I intend to ship half my crop to Liverpool.'⁶⁰⁴ Similarly, Simon Taylor opined Bristol was a tolerably good market for sugar and 'in general

⁶⁰¹ L&M, L&D to Samuel Husbands, 9 Aug. 1766.

⁶⁰² BL, Add. Mss 41350, Samuel Martin to [Banister & Hammond], 30 Jun. 1767. See draft dated 22 Jun for addressee.

⁶⁰³ BL, Add. Mss 41350, Samuel Martin to Warner & Johnson, 1 Oct. 1770.

⁶⁰⁴ BL, Add. Mss 41351, Samuel Martin (snr.) to Samuel Martin (jun.), 3 Feb 1775.

much better than London, as there is not near so much pilferage and plunderage there'.⁶⁰⁵ The West India Merchants' credit and future prosperity in London rested on securing the sugar on their books and better control over the port and warehouses was the explicit call from the Caribbean. The Committee's use of writing was, for the most, part aimed at narrowing the gap between the commerce represented in their accounts and books and objective properties of the commodities they were faced with.

As part of the security measures the merchants sought to institute a number of different controls in the Quays. Lascelles wrote of a voluntary penny-per-barrel levy on sugars imported into London in order to provide a merchant-fund to ensure lumpers caught stealing were prosecuted as early as 1744/5.⁶⁰⁶ Coopers drawing samples from barrels were also thought to be pilfering sugar and he hoped that 'trustworthy persons could be stationed at the doors of the warehouses to the waterside to watch their [the coopers'] going and coming, but this has not yet been found practical'.⁶⁰⁷ The Committee employed a special Constable to patrol the quayside from 1745. In 1779 the Committee issued 'new rules' for the prevention of 'plunderage' aimed at lumpers and coopers on quays and warehouses. These new rules combined with a petition to the Mayor asking that public houses on Thames Street be banned on the grounds they 'encouraged pilferers'. Taverns had long been held suspect by the Customs as hubs for information and fenced goods, and victuallers advanced the securities of Gangsmen in disproportionately high numbers in the 1770s, suggesting ongoing links between the Quays and the unregulated street.⁶⁰⁸ At the same time the Committee approached the 'Commandant' of the Tower to crack down on the disorderly quayside antics of his soldiers.⁶⁰⁹ Despite the gap in the West India Committee minutes from 1783 to 1792, we know the Committee petitioned the City for the powers to appoint ten officers on the Quays when the Corporation were taking increasing interest in extra-parochial patrols.⁶¹⁰ Magistrate John Staples claimed to have assisted the magistrates of Shadwell in

⁶⁰⁵ ICS, M965 3A Simon Taylor (Jamaica) to Chaloner Archedckne, 8 Apr. 1781.

⁶⁰⁶ L&M, L&M to John Frere, 22 Feb 1744/5.

⁶⁰⁷ L&M, L&M Dalling to Alexander Stevens, 3 Aug 1745.

⁶⁰⁸ GH, Ms 2934, The Fellowship of Porters' registration book, see the tables for 1770-9.

⁶⁰⁹ ICS, WIM, 21 Dec. 1779.

⁶¹⁰ Harris, *Policing*, p 32.

patrolling the Thames 'to apprehend offenders' with Trinity House, The East India Company, The Russia Company, The Committee of West India Merchants and North America Merchants footing the bill from 1786: 'I left the Shadwell Office the beginning of 1789. There was not a gang of river pirates left.'⁶¹¹ This boastful letter illustrates that prior to their sponsorship of Patrick Colquhoun, the West India Committee had joined with other merchant bodies to fight crime on the Thames, one of many increases in the scale of their operation.

Expediting these cases meant pilferage on the Quays and in the adjacent warehouses was a hardy perennial of the Committee by the time William Vaughan joined the West India Committee. At only his second meeting in 1774, the 'plunderage of sugar on lighters' was taken into consideration and the meeting concluded the difficulty arose 'from the confused state of the lawful quays'.⁶¹² A month later the Customs were sent a letter outlining the Merchants' opinion that the 'insufficient size' of the Quays led to delay, delay to plunder, and a loss to the 'proprietor and the Revenue'.⁶¹³ Despite the petition falling on deaf ears, other more mercenary groups resident on the Quays provided the Committee with further leverage there. As appendix 3 shows, West India Constables brought just four cases to the Old Bailey between 1740 and 1800, suggesting they were more effective as deterrents than detectives. By contrast, the gangsmen brought 44 cases of 'pilferage', 30 of which concerned the theft of sugar and presumably a consequence of the reward scheme founded in Lascelles' time. Moreover, the Merchants had used their weight to broker alliances with well-placed collectives around the City, not just the gangsmen, but the Carmen's Company and, quite illegally, the Landwaiters of the Customs.⁶¹⁴ Each alliance allowed grievances to be redressed and new Quayside protocols to be laid down regarding the transit of sugar, usually adjusting upwards the tariff of fees the West India Merchants paid to these groups.

The most important, persistent and problematic negotiations the merchants attempted were with the wharfingers, who, as warehouse-keepers and lighterage contractors, were obvious targets for the Committee. Thankfully the wharfingers

⁶¹¹ HO 42/20/74, f 164 A-B, John Staples to Home Office, 26 Apr. 1792.

⁶¹² ICS, WIM, 6 Dec. 1774.

⁶¹³ ICS, WIM, 3 Jan. 1775.

⁶¹⁴ ICS, WIM, Carmen, 25 Sep. 1794; Customs, 5 Aug. 1777, 2 Sep 1777, 20 Aug. 1780 and 26 Sep. 1780; Porters, 18 Oct. 1796.

were a small group, with between 4 and 8 managing the whole waterfront in the mid-century. Details were hammered out in person, and both collectives were happy to be represented by committees. The wharfingers' leader-cum-secretary in 1773 was Barrington Buggin, who owned at least nine wharfs and was succeeded by his son, also called Barrington, in 1780. By 1790, Edward Ogle appears to have emerged as pre-eminent.

Like the Committee, the wharfingers kept formal minutes, sadly now lost, styling themselves as the 'Company of Wharfingers'. Written notification was a standard part of the brokerage process and the decisions that specified their respective duties were disseminated via written and dated agreements by both groups.⁶¹⁵ Although failing to honour contracts was deeply problematic, collaboration between the two groups seems to have been the normal state of affairs. In 1773, the wharfingers attended the Merchants' monthly meeting to discuss quayside security and both agreed that it was the 'King's surveyors and watchmen who were remiss in their duty', resulting in a merchant petition to the Customs Commissioners asking them to improve their efforts.⁶¹⁶ Likewise, in 1774, the wharfingers attended a West India Merchants' meeting to discuss a 1d rise in landing fees; although this action resulted in 'debate', the merchants ratified the increase a month later.⁶¹⁷

Tracking the flow of goods was not simply a question of watching them but involved carefully specified duties that made policing and writing contracts an essential part of the west India Committee's work. The wharfingers' less co-operative aspect was on show during a major dispute in 1780 that highlights this nicely. In February 1780, the wharfingers notified the Merchants by letter that they would be increasing the lighterage on hogsheads of sugar by 6d.⁶¹⁸ The rise was exceptionable and a second letter from the wharfingers demanded an answer from the Committee, who had yet to reach a decision. The merchants

Resolved that the merchants consider the price of wharfage and warehouse rent as connected with that of lighterage and that under the monopoly enjoyed by the Wharfingers of the free [Legal] quays in the City of London a price is paid by the

⁶¹⁵ ICS, WIM, 5 Dec. 1775.

⁶¹⁶ ICS, WIM, [?] Jan., 2 Feb, and 3 Mar 1773.

⁶¹⁷ ICS, WIM, 6 Sep. 1774, 4 Oct. 1774.

⁶¹⁸ ICS, WIM, 22 Feb. 1780.

merchants fully adequate to the whole service... therefore the merchants do not think it proper to take lighterage separately into consideration.⁶¹⁹

Agreeing to consider wharfage *in toto* the Merchants copied the minute to the wharfingers. Several months of carefully noted correspondence and meetings followed during which the parties could not agree terms. Finally, a meeting was arranged by the two camps in the plush London Tavern at which the charges of 9d per hogshead of sugar warehoused at the Legal Quays and 12d per hogshead sent elsewhere were proposed by the wharfingers. The West India Merchants stated they would tolerate 6d and 9d respectively, 'Which being sent to the Wharfingers for their consideration in another room they sent out a verbal message that their proposal was an ultimatum – they afterward came in, and the merchant proposal being explained to them, they returned no answer but withdrew.'⁶²⁰ The wharfingers' refusal to commit to anything in writing evidently concerned the Merchants.

When the West Indies convoy arrived on 9 August the Merchants arranged an emergency meeting at which they composed a letter to the Customs Commissioners complaining that the Wharfingers 'had established by ancient custom' a 'monopoly prejudicial to the commerce' of the Port.⁶²¹ They explained the Wharfinger's 'being few in number had lately united in Arbitrary demands of an additional price for their lighterage which is without just foundation' and that their refusal to pay meant the fleet was now moored in the Thames without any lighters to unload them. The merchants hoped the Commission would allow them to land goods on the sufferance wharfs, appealing to the discretionary powers granted to the Commissioners by Parliament in 1670 in order to resolve commercial disputes. On 12 August, the Merchants were notified of a counter-petition by the wharfingers to the Custom Commissioners, stressing their attempts to 'accommodate' the Merchants with 'every assistance and dispatch', but explaining that the rising prices were a consequence of sugar being such a risky and valuable commodity to convey down the Thames.⁶²² In a gesture perversely steeped in contrition, the Wharfingers offered to unload the fleet without charging lighterage on the understanding the prices would be swallowed whole next year. The Customs came down on the side of

⁶¹⁹ ICS, WIM, 21 Mar. 1780.

⁶²⁰ ICS, WIM, 25 Jul. 1780.

⁶²¹ ICS, WIM, 9 Aug. 1780.

⁶²² ICS, WIM, 12 Aug. 1780.

the West India Merchants, granting them sufferance allowances for which thanks were returned 'for removing one of the principal causes of that shameful scene of pilferage'.⁶²³

Regulating the flow of goods by proxy also made the Committee aware of problems caused by the space of the Quayside. Following the wharfingers's failure, the Merchants Committee attempted to use the Customs as leverage on the Quays. In April 1783, the Customs received a long 'representation' from the West India Committee complaining mostly of high taxes, problems in shipping and the misadministration of seizures. It also stated that 'every delay arising from the Forms [bureaucracy] of the Customs House and the limitations of the space in which business is required to be done encreases the opportunities not only of defrauding the revenue by smuggling but robbing the importer, by pilfering commodity on which the duty is payable'.⁶²⁴ They further recommended cutting back the number of Customs holidays, consolidating the drawbacks and duties, and suggested that the Customs should

extend the Publick Quays of London and no longer require the commerce of the Metropolis to be carried on in less space than is allowed in the principal Out Ports, and in so crowded a way, as wholly precludes an effectual care of the commodities, and encourages Villainy of all denominations among the labouring People employed about them. And on all these Topicks the Committee observe that the interests of the Government, and of the Planter and Fair Trader, fully coincide, and no regulation can serve one without protecting the others.⁶²⁵

The Commission turned to the Landsurveyors for advice, and Musgrave's protégé, Frewin, reported that through a judicious use of sufferance laws the 'great publick expense' of extending the Quays could be avoided. Rebutting claims that they were to blame for thefts, he added that pilfering on the Quays was largely due to want of 'spirited execution' by merchants in protecting their goods *after* they have been passed by officers: a 'larger space of transaction can scarcely afford less opportunity of theft'.⁶²⁶

⁶²³ ICS, WIM, 17 Aug. 1780.

⁶²⁴ CUST, 102/92 ff. 55-60.

⁶²⁵ CUST, 102/92 f. 60.

⁶²⁶ CUST 102/92 ff. 61-62.

Ships on the Thames were another battleground where ‘the lumpers and other dishonest people on board plunder as they have opportunity’.⁶²⁷ Here, again, the trend seems to have been for the Committee to usurp contracts brokered by individual countinghouses and for the Committee to represent the merchants to other large bodies. Early modern ship-owners commonly had fractional interests in several vessels with merchants being the most prominent shareholders, alongside those concerned with maritime victualling, port facilities or ship-building.⁶²⁸ This arrangement put merchant-owners in a contradictory position: as traders they wanted to ship their goods at the lowest freight-rates but as ship-owners they wanted to secure the highest freights. Competition in the freight market was high, further dissuading heavy investment in single vessels. Should these fail to find adequate cargo for only a few voyages, they would represent a substantial loss and reinforce the reliance on thinly spread shares. Merchant-owners might not always ship goods in their own hulls, but major Caribbean merchant dynasties, like the Vaughans, Lascelles and Longs, acquired access to wide networks of information through portfolios of shares in ships.

Ships’ captains were powerful figures in reiterating commercial networks. A 200-tonne vessel cost around £5,000 to build in the mid-eighteenth century and their cargos easily exceeded £10,000.⁶²⁹ Caribbean consignees tended to send sugar to London on several vessels as a crude form of insurance. Securing return cargos required captains to build up networks of friends: ‘The social relationships and obligations developed between merchants of different ports helped keep vessels on the same route for many years.’⁶³⁰ Samuel Martin was sure his influence had some bearing on the success of a voyage; he wrote to one factor in London, ‘I solicited and consulted all your friends and mine to assist [Captain Bowes] get lading’.⁶³¹ According to Martin, Bowes lacked sufficient ‘prudence’, and had returned to London without freight. Damages in transit were also a reflection on a captain’s skill in navigating and loading a ship. In 1797 William Vaughan reckoned losses at

⁶²⁷ L&M, L&D to Alexander Stevens, 3 Aug 1765.

⁶²⁸ Ralph Davis, *The Rise of English Shipping* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1972), pp. 81-90.

⁶²⁹ Davis, *Rise*, p. 100.

⁶³⁰ Christopher J. French, ‘Productivity in British Atlantic Shipping: A Quantitative Study’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, 3 (1987), p. 626.

⁶³¹ BL, Add. Mss 41349, Samuel Martin to Slingsby Bethel, 8 May 1756.

sea accounted for 10% of the 141 hogsheads of sugar he received from his Jamaican estates, even though they had been shipped to London in six vessels.⁶³² More sizeable, higher quality or personally valuable cargoes were sent with captains deemed to be particularly trustworthy. Martin frequently specified that goods sent from London go with named captains and patronised the same on the return. Samuel Vaughan was sure to have checked the captain carrying his son to Philadelphia was 'of established good character'.⁶³³

Captains also played a crucial role in disciplining their crew. Benjamin Vaughan supposed sailors were a liability,

You know what sailors are, at least with us where they have no concern with trade and only with the ship. They are bold, they are generous, they are extravagant, when on show they are mad after women, they are active, they have hard labour, they descend to all work, they are honest amongst themselves, they have intervals of labour and long ones of unemployment, they must live hard and watch [sic: want?] much.⁶³⁴

Vaughan rather hopefully advocated that providing entertainment 'as is consistent with innocence and duty', like hymns, rather than 'improper' drinking, singing and dancing. War severely curtailed a Captain's ability to discipline his crew through wages, fear or loyalty, as sailors were frequently pressed into Naval service. 'Hot' presses on the Thames caused sailors to vanish and forced ships unloading on the Thames to resort to 'lumpers' with even less invested in the success of a vessel.⁶³⁵

Captains were also held accountable for thefts, a mechanism that helped to ensure the safe delivery of goods. Henry Lascelles explained losses incurred by a Barbadian planter, writing that 'it is observable that these ships, whose captains attend on board at the time of unloading have seldom much to pay for the plunderage' of the crew and coopers.⁶³⁶ Forty years later, Simon Taylor reckoned that Captain Renwick would be a good choice to command a newly commissioned ship, claiming 'he knows which end of the vessels suits us... and which [goods] can go under the crane at the wharf in London, and by this means avoid all the thefts in

⁶³² MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 11, folder, Jan.-Feb. 1799.

⁶³³ MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 1, Samuel Vaughan to Benjamin Vaughan, 13 Aug. 1795.

⁶³⁴ APS, Benjamin Vaughan Papers, II, Benjamin Vaughan to John Vaughan, 14 Oct. 1773

⁶³⁵ Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650-1775* (London: Methuen, 1998), pp. 76-7.

⁶³⁶ L&M, L&M to John Frere, 22 Feb. 1744, f. 235.

the River'.⁶³⁷ Robert Plumsted told a consignee that 'One hogshead [of] sugar is lost and about twenty pound to pay for plunderage beside - who is to blame for this[?] Capt. Bready must explain when you see him.'⁶³⁸

Nothing signalled a captain's confidence in his abilities to negotiate commercial opportunities, navigate his route and discipline his crew so surely as taking a share in the vessel he commanded.⁶³⁹ In 1774 Martin attempted to sell a share in a boat commanded by Robert Martin (no relation). He wrote to Robert that he had pressed his 'friend and neighbour', Mr Willcocks, to buy but the asking price set by the share's owner, Mr Johnson, was too high.⁶⁴⁰ Samuel advised Captain Robert that it was

a great deal more that be gave by Martin Byan for his share, which is certainly an imposition upon all your friends who become owners... Unless Johnson will abate the price all your friends think it will be for your advantage to quit command of her and except [sic] a new ship which they shall buy or build for you. In that case I shall quit my share in her and hope that you will not let me be the loser by it.⁶⁴¹

Samuel signed off with the uncharacteristically obsequious 'I am with true esteem your faithful friend', underlining the coincidence of fealty, money and personal influence that typified this type of transaction. Martin's emphasis on his 'friendship' with Captain Robert must be seen as a further attempt to localise captains within bonds of trust, none too subtly dovetailing obligations of friendship with mutual interest.

Gifts could also be deployed to sure-up weak ties. Simon Taylor, a plantation manager and lawyer in Jamaica, wrote to his factor in London that he was going to 'make an agreement with all the Captains that get sugar from me to carry home turtles as they are always agreeable presents to make your friends'.⁶⁴² Such non-monetary forms might engender reciprocities that eased more informal and intimate relationships, precisely because they pertained to connotations of honour and

⁶³⁷ ICS, 120/1/B f. 69, Taylor to Robert Taylor, 28 Nov. 1798.

⁶³⁸ Robert Plumsted, *Letterbook, 1756-58, In the University Library, Cambridge* Intro. Ralph Davis. Microfilm (Wakefield: Micro Methods, 1967), Plumsted to Mathews & Curry, 21 Aug. 1756.

⁶³⁹ Davis, *Rise*, p. 159.

⁶⁴⁰ BL, Add. Mss 41350, Martin to Capt. Robert Martin, 29 Jul. 1774.

⁶⁴¹ BL, Add. Mss 41350, Martin to Capt. Robert Martin, 29 Jul. 1774.

⁶⁴² ICS, M965 Vanneck-Arc 3A, Simon Taylor Correspondence, Taylor to Chaloner Arcedeckne, 14 Apr. 1765.

hospitality that were distinct from the contractual market.⁶⁴³ Rebecca Vaughan, William and Benjamin's sister, wrote to her nephew

I think you would have been much delighted to have accompanied your cousins the other day on their visit to Captain Wilson. They were employed all day in looking over the curiosities brought from Pellew, China & the East Indies. He has given your cousins two roots which resemble the head of a ram... he has also given them some very curious shells from thence & a tea cup & saucer of very handsome transparent China [and] Jonathan a very nice bamboo cane. We met him at Uncle William [Manning's countinghouse] the other day...⁶⁴⁴

Wilson certainly succeeded in playing the role of family friend to the wearily didactic Vaughans.

Befriending captains was one mechanism merchants and planters used to keep their valuable cargos safe. Tying captains to shared cultural or personal values lessened anxiety for consignees of goods. Here, regarding a captain as a steward with a sense of duty grounded in piety, affection for one's self and kin, or some other noble motive functioned as a palliative. Quasi-economic alliances between merchants and captains were, of course, precisely the kind of relationships Adam Smith questioned, though it is worth noting that they occurred in markets ostensibly outside of monopoly interference and close to the Vaughans. However, his propensity to govern through the Committee was one of the reasons that such friendships became less economically important. Like with the wharfingers on the Legal Quays, steady bureaucratic procedures rendered personal calibrations of trust between captain and merchants increasingly redundant, replacing their gifting and friendship with contracts that could define duties and could be circulated and compared. Increasingly elite merchants like Vaughan became attached to impersonal institutions like the Committee, insurance companies and Admiralty who could safeguard and monitor goods, as opposed to friends.

The West India Committee took every opportunity to regulate these processes in London more formally. For instance, official arrangements for the employment and regulation of lumpers were distributed to captains in 1789, making

⁶⁴³ Elena Russo, 'Virtuous Economies: Modernity and Noble Expenditure from Montesquieu to Callois', Daniel Gordon ed., *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment. New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 67-92.

⁶⁴⁴ MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 1, 'Aunt' [Rebecca Vaughan] to William Oliver Vaughan, 11 Oct. 1795.

plain the conditions on which both would be judged.⁶⁴⁵ Freight rates were fixed in 1776, the war forcing '[ship]owners in the West India trade' into 'arming their ships, and of putting on board additional numbers of men at advanced wages, with high prices of all articles of outfit, and greatly increased Premiums of insurance'.⁶⁴⁶ Once confirmed, freight rates were printed and distributed at the Jamaica Tavern and Lloyd's, the hubs of Caribbean shipping intelligence.⁶⁴⁷

This chimes with Simon Ville's argument that ships' captains were becoming increasingly deskilled by cartographic, oceanographic and dock technologies, opening the door for specialist shipowners like Henley & Sons to emerge at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴⁸ The embodied or local skills used by captains were supplanted by mobile and reproducible information, meaning London-owners could simply send boats to wherever they were likely to pick up the best freights. The West India Committee's evolving relationships with the Admiralty and insurance industry is illuminating in suggesting why the City continued to be a crucial site in this network. British Naval involvement in the Caribbean and maritime insurance both have histories that stretch back to the mid seventeenth century. However, a shift is identifiable between the 1740s and the Napoleonic era, when these agents appear to act in concert with merchant-owners to co-ordinate shipping in a far more authoritarian manner and, in the process, redefined captaincy.

War had a huge impact on the safety of merchant shipping as European powers licensed privateers to disrupt the enemy, causing premiums for shipping insurance to rise drastically. Henry Lascelles' letterbooks describe premiums going from 3 guineas percent on Caribbean routes to 30 guineas in the early years of the War of Jenkins' Ear when it was felt that French privateers held the advantage in the Channel. By 1744, Lascelles was actively soliciting the Admiralty to arrange convoys 'as there were in Queen Ann's war'.⁶⁴⁹ Convoys through the Channel slashed the rates to 5 guineas percent but necessitated setting departure times to

⁶⁴⁵ ICS, WIM, 11 Jul. 1789.

⁶⁴⁶ ICS, WIM, 1 Oct. 1776.

⁶⁴⁷ Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffeehouses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp. 330.

⁶⁴⁸ Simon Ville, 'The Growth of Specialisation in English Ship Owning, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 46, 4 (1993), pp. 702-22 and idem., *English Ship Owning in the Industrial Revolution: Michael Henley and Sons, London Ship Owners* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

⁶⁴⁹ L&M, L&M to Anthony Lynch 7 Jan. 1743/4 and 17 Jan. 1744/5.

coincide with the Navy's and, thereby, synchronised West India shipping to an unprecedented degree.⁶⁵⁰

The cycle of militarisation, spikes in premiums and merchant petitions to the Admiralty repeated itself at the outset of the Seven Years War, though much quicker as neither the merchants nor admiralty were caught dawdling. By the time of the American Revolution the arrangements previously made by individual merchants with the Admiralty had been taken on by the West India Merchants Committee, who formed a sub-committee to treat with Admiralty over convoys in August 1776 and explicitly acknowledged that convoys kept premiums low.⁶⁵¹ Keen to keep on good terms with the Navy, the Committee arranged a celebratory meal when Admiral Keppel returned with the West Indies convoy in 1779, indicating that new friendships were blossoming.⁶⁵² The Committee were also active in admonishing officers who deserted convoys. Captain Douglas' *HMS Squirrel* [sic] lost the 1776-7 convoy before reaching British waters, causing the London Merchants and their counterparts in Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow to arrange interviews with their Captains.⁶⁵³ The Committee presented their evidence to the Admiralty, and they also threatened to cover the costs incurred by any further West Indian captains giving their testimony at the Court Martial, if necessary. Captains were being mobilised *en masse* in response to Naval captains' mistakes, the one establishment watching the other whilst in convoy.

The Admiralty found dealing with Lloyd's underwriters convenient too. Instruments like Lloyd's Register were an invaluable source of information on the captains and condition of ships sailing from London. It was available to underwriters from at least 1764 and represented a sophisticated bureaucracy that buttressed the private-underwriters' knowledge.⁶⁵⁴ The Admiralty traded shipping information with the Lloyd's Masters from 1794, and individual officers frequently shared news about naval actions with the underwriters. The 1798 Convoy Act, making it illegal to

⁶⁵⁰ L&M, Pares Typescript: H458-H464.

⁶⁵¹ ICS, WIM, 5 Aug. 1776 and onwards for their negotiations for convoys. R.P. Crowhurst, 'The Admiralty and the Convoy System in the Seven Years War', *Mariners Mirror* 52, 7 (1971) pp. 163-73 notes the cordial alliance between merchants and the Admiralty, not least the West Indians.

⁶⁵² ICS, WIM, 23 Feb. 1779.

⁶⁵³ ICS, WIM, 18 Mar. 1777.

⁶⁵⁴ Charles Wright and G. Ernest Fayle, *A History of Lloyd's* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1928) pp. 84-6, 203-4, 232-7.

conduct overseas voyages without an Admiralty convoy, was drafted with the underwriters' approbation and was subsequently administered via Lloyd's. Underwriters had themselves been prepared to discipline Captains and in 1794 resolved to 'bring to immediate justice, any captains of a merchant vessel who have been or may hereafter be represented to them as having wilfully quitted their convoy'.⁶⁵⁵

The trend was for bureaucracies to draw together, appropriate previously personal trusts into ledgers and monitor agents from centres of calculation rather than in person. The West India Committee were a crucial node in this movement, joining the Quays with other centres of calculation. "Commerce" and the means through which it was administered, represented and globally distributed was shifting. The move away from contracts policed by individual firms, presumably in person, and towards collectively brokered and reproducible documentation forms a crucial backdrop to understand Vaughan's strategy regarding the Docks in the 1790s, which we turn to next.

Section 4: The Political Economy of Designers, 1793-1800

1793 witnessed a similar dispute over wharfingers' fees to that of 1780. This precipitated the campaign that finally led to the establishment of the Docks, although it grew into a much larger proposition under the aegis of William Vaughan. Following the pattern that had almost proved successful three decades earlier, Vaughan's campaign started by garnering support from the merchant community at public meetings, before forming a general committee to represent their cause. He also took the unprecedented step of publishing a number of pamphlets detailing the confines of the Legal Quays. Initially he did not presuppose wet docks were the only solution to the problem, but rather preferred that the Customs buy the existing Legal Quays and run them in the national interest.⁶⁵⁶ Vaughan and his nascent Dock Company examined several schemes in 1794-5, before taking the issue to Parliament and causing an Inquiry into the present and future port. The lengthy Report the Committee delivered to Parliament in May 1796 is a key document in the history of the Thames, recording the opinions of spokesmen from the Corporation of London, guilds, Customs, insurance, Trinity House and merchants interested in the

⁶⁵⁵ Cited in Wright, *Lloyd's*, pp. 203.

⁶⁵⁶ Vaughan, *On Wet Docks* (London, 1793), pp. 12-14.

Quays. It was also shaped the outcome of the Dock campaign by creating a highly contentious node in a series of political networks.

The Report took the standard form for Parliamentary Inquiries of the period, comprising a digest written by the Commissioners that referred back to extensive appendices of testimony and supporting information. The Thames economy that had grown up since the Fire was such that alterations to one tradition would cause turbulence across occupational groups that were caught up in an intractable mesh of overlapping regulations, transport technologies, business networks and architectural traditions. Consequently, various configurations of infrastructure and administrative regulations were bandied around between 1794 and the second Parliamentary Inquiry of 1798. Representational forms borrowed from architecture and cartography were used to support the ideas proffered to the Parliamentary Inquiry and should be seen as 'instructions for the construction of sensory content' that was not experienced but had to be built in the heads of the Commissioners, though they were quickly reproduced for public perusal too.⁶⁵⁷ Despite adopting a common representational strategy that did speak to the propertied classes, as a list of proposals and compilation of information, it is very difficult to see in the 1796 Report a coherent expression of the goals of a dominant faction that Linebaugh suggests. He cites them frequently to explain how 'in reaction to plunderage from moored ships, a combination of merchants, engineers and magistrates produced a two pronged counter attack: a river police was created and the enclosure movement was extended in the creation of London wet docks.'⁶⁵⁸ Rather, looking at the competing technologies outlined in the Reports, this section argues various and often conflicting political economies were at play, shaped in no small part by their proponents' immediate interest. This was a polemical and speculative form of writing, quite unlike the two outlined previously, in the freedom it gave the delegates to the Inquiry to think beyond existing commercial frameworks and criticise them. Furthermore, the cacophony of ideas was profoundly unsettling and the Reports document a stalemate not a solution. In conclusion it is suggested that the Reports' most concrete outcome was to realign the competing parties by forcing the West India Merchants into buying out the opposition through a compensation scheme.

⁶⁵⁷ Elizabeth Scarry quoted in Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 61.

⁶⁵⁸ Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, p. 417.

Edward Ogle's submission, illustrated in Figure 5.2, suggested increasing the quayside apron and extending the Quays to the Southwark side of the river.⁶⁵⁹ He thought dredging the river, greater emphasis on policing Thames traffic, provision of moorings and allotment of goods to wharfs by country of origin would ease congestion and order the port. Only a minimal extension of the Quays was proposed, with Ogle leaving their management firmly in the hands of the Customs and wharfingers. This programme of works affected few City interests and required relatively little investment in new warehousing or infrastructure to consolidate and slightly extend the existing Quays. As secretary of the wharfingers' combination and central to galvanising opposition to any alterations, this conservatism was unsurprising.

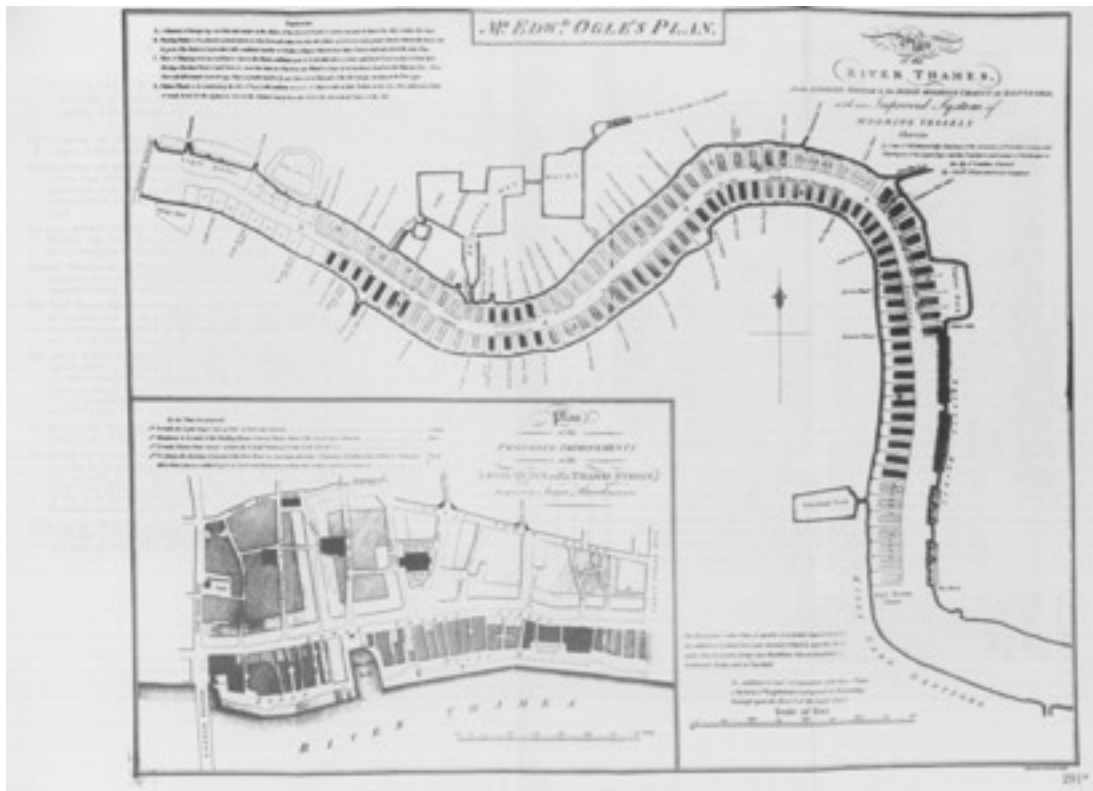


Figure. 5.2: Mr Ogle's Plan. Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796).

The City produced two plans initially in response to the outcry amongst the Liveries and those Thames-side traders likely to be dispossessed by the docks. The first suggested a major extension of the warehouses around the Thames, with the second involving a new harbour at the Isle of Dogs. By 1796, these had fused into

⁶⁵⁹ MLD, Vaughan Papers II, 29, ff. 1-8.

one plan. Figure 5.3 shows the first component to have been a modernising enterprise of Wren-like proportions, where the space between the Thames and Thames Street would be demolished and replaced with vast classical warehouses built around two lighter-docks. A dock for 400 sea-going vessels at the Isle of Dogs would act as a harbour, with no provision for warehousing. This scheme proposed to keep overseas trade in the City, thereby protecting the porters and lightermen attached to the Liveries, although it also required the wharfingers to be dispossessed and the Quays turned over to the Customs and Corporation.

George Dance refined the plan still further, suggesting the demolition of London Bridge and its replacement with two drawbridges that would have allowed overseas shipping right into Westminster. Dance, more than any other contributor, saw London in terms of traffic flows and monuments, and was clearly trying to find an architectural language for commercial grandure in the City.⁶⁶⁰ The Corporation was equally keen to hold onto its monopoly and willing to invest if necessary, as table 5.1 showing the comparative costs of the schemes, illustrates.

Table 5.1: The comparative cost of the first round of Dock schemes

	Estimated Cost (£)
Ogle's Plan for deepening the River, and improving and extending the Legal Quays	565,000
Vaughan's Plan for Docks and a canal	993,132
The City plan for docks, a canal and extending the Legal Quays	1,109,352
Wyatt's plan for docks with floating platforms	880,000
Wilkinson and Revely's plan for a channel and docks	none provided

Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London', p. 18.

⁶⁶⁰ H. Kalman, 'The Architecture of Mercantilism: Commercial Buildings by George Dance the Younger', Paul Fritz and David Williams eds., *The Triumph of Culture: 18th Century Perspectives* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), pp. 69-96; Jill Lever, *Catalogue of the Drawings of George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) and Of George Dance the Elder (1695-1768)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 133-8.

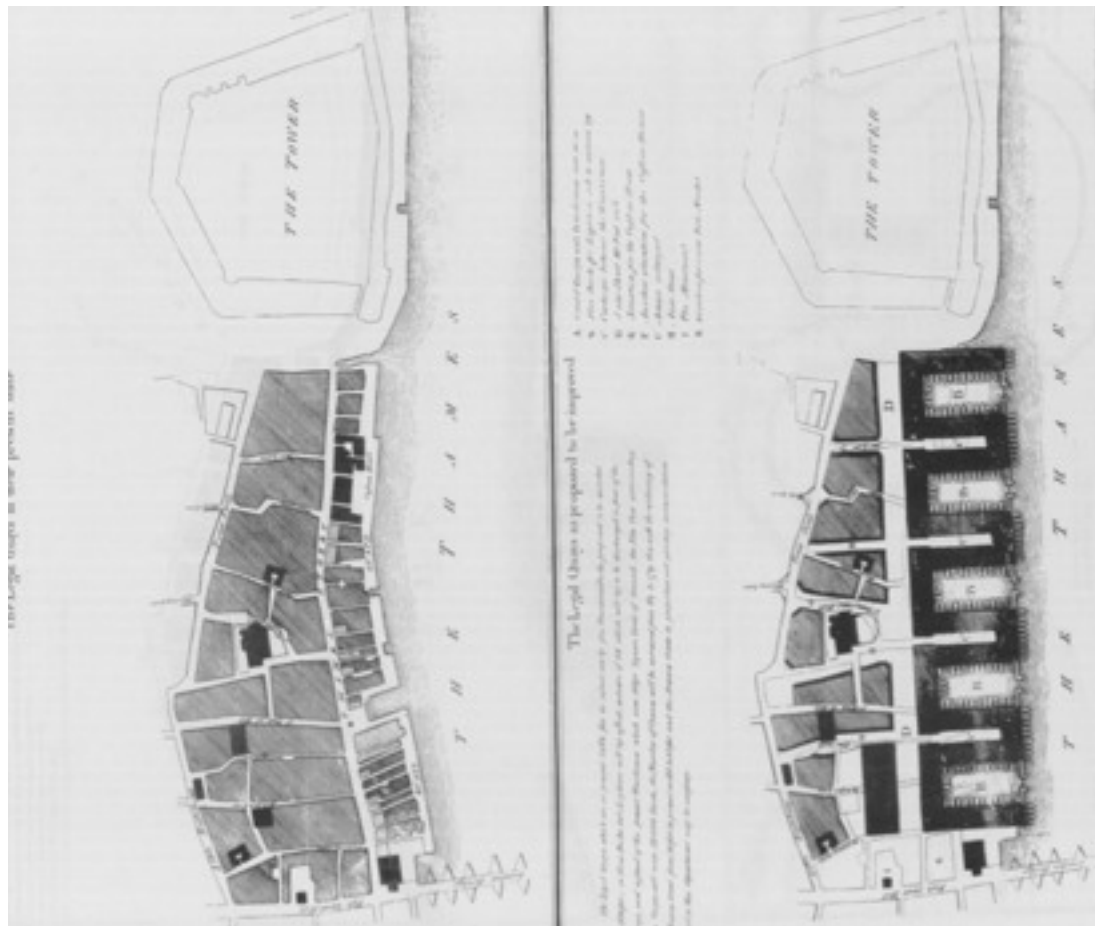


Figure 5.3: The City's plans for warehouses and lighter docks at the Legal Quays. Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796).

The architect, building merchant and miller, Samuel Wyatt forwarded several plans, advocating the removal of the legal-sufferance distinction. He reasoned that being left 'at liberty' would cause proprietors to improve wharf facilities while simultaneously encouraging their extension along the Thames both east and into Westminster.⁶⁶¹ Wyatt finessed his argument, envisaging a holding dock at the Isle of Dogs containing floating platforms equipped with scales, shown in figure 5.4, which could be moored next to ships, and allow the Customs officers to weigh and rate goods as they were passed onto City-bound lighters, bringing the quayside to the goods rather the vice versa.⁶⁶² The Customs objected that the supervision of its officers would be impossible if the market were simply left to provide accommodation and the Customs forced to follow. The previous year Wyatt had

⁶⁶¹ MLD, Vaughan Papers, I, 57, f. 3.

⁶⁶² MLD, Vaughan Papers, II, 65, ff. 8-10.

petitioned the Excise to convert his burnt-out Albion flour mill into a bonded coffee warehouse, so his was a far from disinterested voice.⁶⁶³ Nevertheless, he recognised that Customs regulation was an essentially mobile practice and need not be stationed in the City, thereby deregulating the riverside warehousing and transport markets.

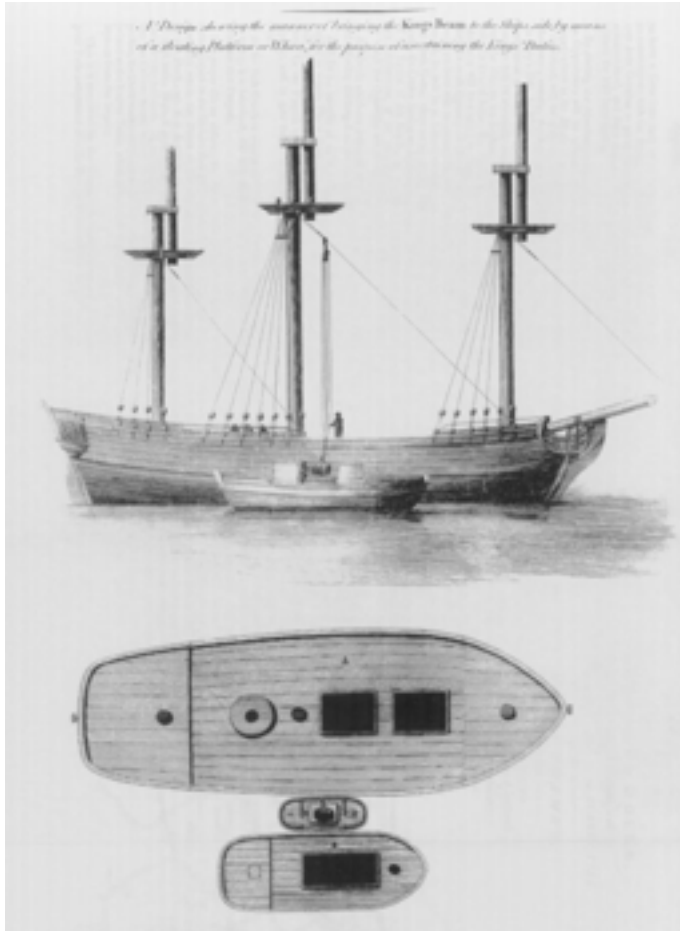


Figure 5.4: Samuel Wyatt's floating Legal Quays. Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796).

John Wilkinson, a fabulously wealthy and eccentric Shropshire iron-founder, and the brother-in-law of Joseph Priestley, suggested turning London into an industrial powerhouse.⁶⁶⁴ As figure 5.5 shows, he planned to cut a channel through the Isle of Dogs and dam the river to form a harbour at Greenwich, arguing that the

⁶⁶³ MLD, Vaughan Papers, II, 63, f. 1; A.W. Skempton, 'Samuel Wyatt and the Albion Mill', *Architectural History*, 14 (1971), pp. 53-73.

⁶⁶⁴ MLD, Vaughan Papers, I, 31, ff. 1-3.

improved flow of the Thames would be an excellent source of power for mills on the Thames, probably calling to mind his own lead-works at Rotherhithe. Ecologically brutal, the plan was put to the 1796 Committee by John Revely who argued that it would diminish mercantile dependence on lighters, which he saw as one of the many hidden costs of the port that depressed trade. He explicitly argued against the use of monopolies to protect occupations.⁶⁶⁵ As these plans were comparatively sensitive to the existing riverside architecture, merely changing the course of traffic, much like a road by-pass, Revely thought free trade would bring about gradual shifts to the socio-economic constituencies using the Thames.



Figure 5.5: John Wilkson and John Revely's 'Channel'. Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796).

Tropes outlined in the first two sections, such as tracking goods and the geographical limits of commercial regulation were in play in all the proposals put to the 1796 Inquiry. However, what we also see in these designs, and this goes back to the points made in the introduction to this dissertation, is the interweaving of political economies with technologies. More pointedly, different social networks or interests were generating markedly different solutions to the same problem. Mercantilist elites were not so much excluding newcomers as responding to concepts generated elsewhere and that were clearly circulating more broadly than the merchants who had usually complained to government about the Quays.

⁶⁶⁵ Report, Aaa.

William Vaughan was no exception to this, however, his first hand knowledge of commerce was clearly an advantage when it came to establishing his ideas.

Vaughan adopted the role of spokesman for the merchants early on, advancing a scheme that sat neatly between the inventive Wyatt and Wilkinson, on the one hand, and the traditional Ogle and Dance, on the other. His plans, illustrated in figure 5.6, linked wet docks with warehousing at Wapping to the Thames via a canal at Blackwall that circumvented the Isle of Dogs. Relatively near to the City, it would not disrupt the merchant community located around the Customs House, nor create too much extra expense in moving goods into more centrally located warehouses. The surveyor assured Vaughan that the land was sparsely populated by ‘small indifferent’ housing on short leases, so the dock could effect a crafty piece of social engineering in an area long known for its dubious inhabitants. In fact, the Customs saw this as a distinct advantage too.⁶⁶⁶ Rather than directly challenge the wharfingers by compelling shipping to use the alternative docks, it was supposed that secure, purpose-built warehouses and the increase in shipping productivity would attract enough high-value overseas custom to be viable, while exposing the wharfingers to market forces. Adopting ‘the principles of free Trade’ would allow ‘commerce to extend its accommodation in proportion to its regular wants’ rather than ‘derange’ the port with ‘a great and sudden revolution’.⁶⁶⁷

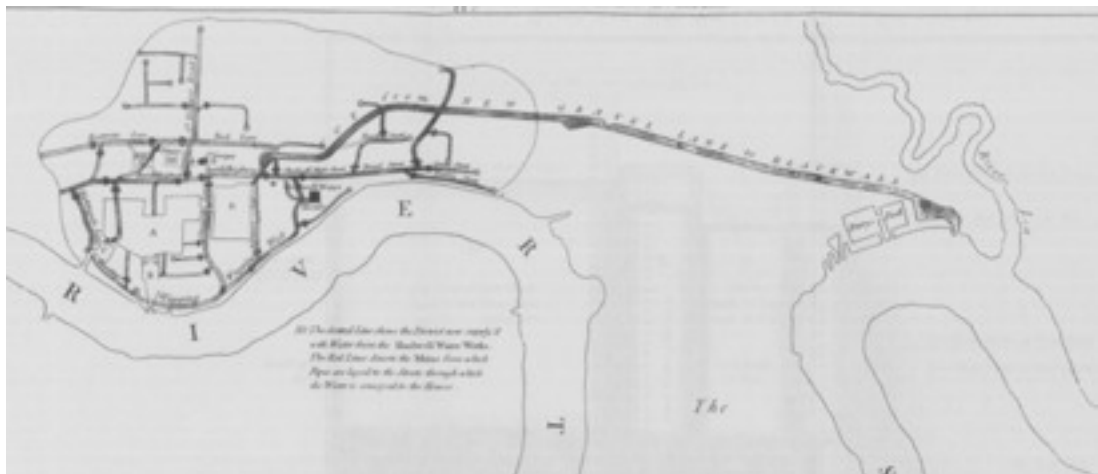


Figure 5.6: William Vaughan's plan Source: Source: 'Report From The Committee Appointed To enquire into the best Mode of providing sufficient Accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London' (1796).

⁶⁶⁶ MLD, Vaughan Papers, II, 65, f. 12.

⁶⁶⁷ PP, 'Report', pp. 206-7.

The adjudicating Commission of 1796 knew they were distinguishing between ‘the cavils and objections of rival schemers’, which revealed little consensus as to how best to remedy the problems of the port and no great certainty that enclosed docks with warehousing were necessarily desirable.⁶⁶⁸ Well stated arguments were not enough to force the issue and much politicking went on behind the scenes that must be further taken into account. We know Vaughan mounted a campaign to lay the groundwork for his ideas, a campaign that was peculiarly rigorous in folding together architectural and commercial networks. His pamphlets were heavy with shipping statistics culled from Customs House showing the decline of London trade relative to the outports.⁶⁶⁹ This publicly confirmed what consignees to London like Samuel Martin had hinted at for some time, namely that the port was badly run and uncompetitive. Moreover, his contacts in Customs House were clearly well placed. Writing to the engineer of Liverpool and Hull’s docks, John Rennie, Vaughan noted that he had given some ‘general objects and outlines’ to the Customs Commissioners responsible for assessing the initial plans.⁶⁷⁰ Subsequently, the Customs stated ‘the self-evident truth that the augmentation of trade...must increase public revenue’ underscoring that the Corporation’s and other interests were secondary to ‘the merchant in the Port of London for the despatch of his business and the security of his property’.⁶⁷¹ Undertaking considerable research into the composition of shipping entering London, the goods carried upon different vessels and their likely draught, Vaughan became something of an expert on maritime architecture. Indeed, at the outset of the campaign he supervised a survey of the Thames, noting the navigable dimensions at high and low tides. Vaughan cemented his position by staying in touch with engineers like Rennie, who gave evidence to the Commission too, and collecting information from merchants in rival ports like Liverpool and from their designers in London. Materialism, statistics and economic projections were crucial in giving his case bite and establishing himself within a network of expertise.

In terms of resources, Vaughan’s only real rival was the Corporation of London. As Conservators of the Thames and nominal custodians of the licensed transport workers attached to the Quays it considered itself as rightfully having a

⁶⁶⁸ PP, ‘Report’, p. xxxiii.

⁶⁶⁹ Vaughan, *Wet Docks*, pp. 3, 12 and Appendixes A-D, F.

⁶⁷⁰ MLD, Vaughan Papers, I, 38, ff. 1-2, William Vaughan to John Rennie, Aug. 1795.

⁶⁷¹ MLD, Vaughan Papers, II, 65, f. 3.

voice in any changes made to location of the Quays. As well as being able to call on the legal machinery intrinsic to local government, they had George Dance campaigning for them in the elevated circles he moved in.⁶⁷² The Corporation was also keen to establish its case with the politicians, sending representatives to Pitt the Younger, who thought its claims were just.⁶⁷³

Parliament concluded that the Legal Quays necessarily needed relief and a second round of plans be submitted.⁶⁷⁴ Here Vaughan's success was confirmed, though probably not as he intended, as his ideas were pirated by West India Merchants linked to the Corporation who were determined to avoid the stalemate the 1796 Report detailed. Indeed, the most immediate effect of the Report was to ensure that the fractious and ambiguous process was not repeated. During a lull in the ongoing rearguard against Wilberforce's Abolitionists, the West India Committee sent Robert Sewell, a planter and Jamaica's attorney-general and London agent, to present Vaughan's London Dock Company to the Commons in February 1797.⁶⁷⁵ However, by April 1797 the West India Planters and Merchants Committee had become apprehensive of further struggles with the Corporation. The West India Committee reneged on Vaughan and threw its support behind a competing proposal piloted by Robert Sewell, the planters Robert Milligan and William Chisholm and the engineer Ralph Walker.⁶⁷⁶ November saw the West India Committee call a public meeting to state that

Your Committee, having obtained Communication at different times with the several parties promoting and opposing the said bill, and perceiving that each of the interested views in some degree [are] irreconcilable with the views of the other, in order therefore to conciliate ... these jarring interests or at all events, to contract the sphere and often violence of the subsisting opposition, your committee formed the resolution of offering some other plan.⁶⁷⁷

The chief difference between what would become the West India Company Docks and Vaughan's London Docks was the former's narrow sectional basis, which was

⁶⁷² Joseph Farrington, *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, eds. K. Garlick and A. Macintyre, 16 Vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978-84), I, 4 May and Jul. 28 1800.

⁶⁷³ Stern, 'Evidence', p. 135.

⁶⁷⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, LIII, p. 153.

⁶⁷⁵ ICS, WIPM, 10 Feb. 1797.

⁶⁷⁶ ICS, WIPM, 25 Apr., 4 May 1797.

⁶⁷⁷ ICS, WIPM, 16 Nov. 1797.

aimed at circumventing the City's opposition. Their proposal involved building a dock at the Isle of Dogs with a canal that would allow Thames traffic to by-pass this great loop in the River. The Corporation of London would manage the canal, using the profits to compensate any trade lost by Londoners as a result, meaning £50,000 of the proposed half-million pounds foundational capital was promised to Corporation investors. As chapter three described, this compensation scheme was successful in buying out the claims of licensees and well capitalised warehousemen attached to the Quays, as well as lining the pockets of the Treasury staff who administered the fund and charged 2.5% commission on all transaction.

The West India Committee did 'not think it necessary to provide for taking out of the river the Whole Trade of the Port... but Part Only', thereby deflecting much of the previous criticism aimed at Vaughan and causing several prominent West India merchants to withdraw their investments from the London Docks.⁶⁷⁸ Sewell and his West India associates successfully piggybacked the London Dock Company's political gains while at the same time cossetting the Corporation. Two dock companies were chartered in 1799 and 1800. One of these was dominated by the West India Merchants and the City. The other, led by Vaughan, Beeston Long and the Russia Company's Edward Forster, was composed of a broader cross section of City interests, boasting the patronage of those associated with the chartered insurance and trading companies. Only 55 investors defected wholesale to the West India from the London Dock scheme, though these included West Indian merchants like George Hibbert, Robert Milligan and others who would lead the West India Dock Company as Directors and Chairmen in its early years.⁶⁷⁹ Data from Nick Draper's analysis of early dock investors illustrated in Table 5.2 shows that West India Merchants backed the breakaway plan, investing more money in it, and forming a comparatively large proportion of total investors in the West India Docks.⁶⁸⁰ The high average subscription by West Indians in the West India Docks further cemented their hold over the Company where rights to vote for directors were limited to those with shares worth £2,000 or more. Consequently, only the directorial posts set aside for the Corporation were occupied by non-West India

⁶⁷⁸ ICS, WIPM, 15 Dec. 1798, 20 Feb. 1798. Draper, 'City', pp. 437-9.

⁶⁷⁹ Draper, 'City', pp. 437-9.

⁶⁸⁰ My thanks to Nick Draper for allowing me access to the data his research for 'City' stemmed from.

Planters and Merchants, though Alderman Hibbert contrived to have himself elected into a Corporation seat.⁶⁸¹

Table 5.2: West Indian Merchant investment in the rival Dock schemes

	Capital Required	Number of Investors	Mean Subscription	Number of West Indian Investors	Total West Indian Capital	Mean West Indian Subscription
West India Dock Company	£500,000	388	£1,288	70	£145,000	£2,101
London Dock Company	£800,000	588	£1,360	53	£66,000	£1,245

Source: Nick Draper, personal communication.

The alacrity with which the West India Committee dominated the West India Docks highlights the peculiarities of the sugar market. From 1793, the Dock campaign was carried on by merchants exponentially increasing the traffic of sugar on the Thames, campaigning to adjust taxes in favour of re-exports and twice having to treat with Customs to allow them sufferance because massive cargos simply could not be landed. Strict enforcement of the Navigation Acts meant that provisions and shipping previously provided by colonists in the north Atlantic were no longer accessible and were inflating prices in the metropolis.⁶⁸² Moreover, the St Domingue Revolution of 1791 prompted the Planters and Merchants meeting to discuss the 'the terrible consequences of the revolt spreading to Jamaica' in November 1791.⁶⁸³ British Planters hurried to exploit the European demand for sugar, culminating in 47,000 slaves being disembarked in the British islands in 1793, accounting for over 80% of all slaves taken to the region. Despite the disastrous British invasion of Haiti in 1794, the occupation of Dutch Guiana and

⁶⁸¹ MLD, WIDCo Minutes, 8 Aug. 1799.

⁶⁸² D.B. Ryden, 'Does Decline Make Sense? The West Indian Economy and the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31, 3 (2001), pp. 367-9. and idem, *West Indian*, pp. 216-53; also S.H.H. Carrington, 'The American Revolution and the British West Indies' Economy', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, 4 (1987), pp. 823-50.

⁶⁸³ WIPM, 3 Nov. 1791.

Trinidad saw plantation acreage rise.⁶⁸⁴ As early as February 1792, the Planters and Merchants Committee had divulged to Pitt that the islands were expected to produce 36,000 more hogsheads of sugar than usual.⁶⁸⁵ Projections of this kind were unprecedented but foreshadowed the entire Docks project as sugar prices jumped by 50% and the re-export market, illustrated in Table 5.3, ballooned. To put the volumes in contexts, London's sugar imports in the 1790s were twice, if not three times, as great as the sugar and tobacco that had brought the Atlantic merchants together in 1746. By 1799, overproduction had glutted European markets, leaving the Thames utterly clogged and the Committee in negotiations with Pitt to find a vent. Again, far from being reactive, elites were hungry for knowledge being produced elsewhere.

Table 5.3: British imports and re-exports of sugar, 1790-1801

Yearly average imports of sugar (million cwt.)		Re-exports of sugar (million cwt.)	
1790-2	1.8	1790	0.2
1793/6	2.2	1795	0.9
1798/1801	3.3	1800	1.6
1802	4.3	1802	2.0

Source: Francois Crouzet, 'America and the Crisis of the British Imperial Economy, 1803-1807', McCusker & Morgan eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, p. 280.

Engrossing European sugar supply not only generated massive personal wealth for the London merchants but created vast revenues for the government, which Hibbert thought deserved recognition. As a fabulously wealthy Jamaican planter-merchant, vocal anti-abolitionist, botanist and West India Committee-man, Hibbert was placed to convey this message to those with an interest in the Caribbean. His ad hominem politics seem to typify the kind of mercantilist backbiting Benjamin Vaughan despaired of and are prevalent in an observation made to Simon

⁶⁸⁴ Francois Crouzet, 'America and the Crisis of the British Imperial Economy, 1803-1807' J.J. McCusker & K. Morgan eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 278-83.

⁶⁸⁵ WIPM, 20 Feb. 1792.

Taylor regarding Treasury Secretary Vansittart's supposed preoccupation with the East Indies:

Vansittart seems to turn his eyes eastwards where some of his family made fortunes and I am convinced in this corrupt age, the great patronage which our extensive possessions in India give, affording provision for younger sons and Bastards of Noblemen and Members of the House of Commons greatly influences in high departments as to the interests of Empire & occasion those deviations from justice and sound policy which we West Indians (having no such sinecure markets open) have had so frequently to lament.⁶⁸⁶

Rather than beat the monopolies, as Vaughan hoped to do, Hibbert appeared far more interested in winning 'sinecure markets' for his own.

This section has elaborated the diversity of 'elite' opinion surrounding the Docks campaign and the difficulty involved in ascribing to Londoners a dominant or even coherent ideology before the Docks were built beyond suggesting the wharfingers' cartel should be broken up. As with the previous merchant campaigns, the number of responses the Dock campaign attracted illustrates that the wealthy bourgeoisie interested in the port had very different ideas about how the market should function. Whether commerce was to be regulated by a fleet of Customs officers on floating Quays, Corporation run warehouses or merchant-administered Docks each had profound political economic resonances. The West India Committee's appropriation of the political gains made by Vaughan's Company, and some of his shareholders, also speaks of fractures in their ideologies. Fundamentally, their takeover suggests that Vaughan's economic and technical ideas were fluid, at least in the paperbound and unusually public 'research and development' phase the Docks underwent. If the Docks were not intrinsically instruments capable of levelling the mercantilist playing field, when did they take hold and become irreversible parts of the commercial landscape?

Section 5: When the Docks Became Objects

The engineering and architectural history of the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs has been brilliantly recounted by the *Survey of London* and does not need repeating, other than to say that they were opened for business only three years

⁶⁸⁶ ICS, 120/17/A/36, George Hibbert to Simon Taylor, 6 Jan 1803.

after receiving Parliamentary assent, in 1802.⁶⁸⁷ This section examines the vexed relationship between buildings and power using these well-documented and much contested structures in order to problematise the point at which a building becomes an instrument of social differentiation and control. As we have seen, previous scholarship on the Docks has been dominated by questions of working-class labour, discipline and criminality, and how the capacity of the new spaces to reproduce or enforce qualities associated with “bourgeois” political economy. Paying greater attention to the day-to-day management of the Docks, this section attempts a corrective to such top-down analyses by imbuing them with some agency in shaping commercial knowledge and the calculative agency of their mercantilist managers. Indeed, their architecture is not as important as their place in various administrative networks that not only concentrated disciplinary power on stevedores and lumpers but bundled together concerns over shipping, fiscal infrastructure and the flow of goods. They were also outside of the City in two senses, geographically and in terms of the networks of regulation that had grown up around the Legal Quays. As such, they created two forms of document which reflected back on the City that this section focuses on: the administrative paper-trail that recorded commercial information and the shares used to identify their owners. These closely related documents made the Dock managers powerful mediators in their own right, who discovered that the new spaces had dynamics that undermined the merchants’ assumptions about their ability to regiment labour. Further, the existence of shares meant that control over the quayside became a relatively easily accessible commodity, which, although designed to break the wharfingers’ monopoly, also had the potential to dilute the coherence of mercantilist institutions, like the West India Committee, which were based on occupational solidarity, geopolitical interests, dining and kinship. Consequently, it is argued that like the other combinations of paper-work and spaces investigated in the chapter, the Docks also produced a distinctive knowledge that shifted mercantilist sensibilities.

The other characters involved in the Docks alongside Vaughan are well known to historians of crime and the law. Leon Radzinowicz gave Colquhoun and Bentham leading roles in his narrative of Enlightenment principles overcoming medieval legal prejudice.⁶⁸⁸ Linebaugh turned that liberal narrative on its head,

⁶⁸⁷ *Survey of London: Volumes 43 and 44: Poplar, Blackwall and Isle of Dogs* (1994: British History Online), pp. 248-62.

⁶⁸⁸ L. Radzinowicz, *A History of Criminal Law and Its Administration from 1750* 4 Vols. (London: Stevens and Sons, 1948) i, pp. 355-96; ii, p. 408; iii, pp. 265-350.

claiming legal rationalisation to be the result of bourgeois socio-economic forces reforming property relations to suit their own ends. He also spotted that Vaughan, Colquhoun and Bentham were friendly, *ergo* the Docks and the Thames Police should be seen as a draconian effort by an elite mercantile group to force ‘lumpers’ onto wages. Explicitly writing to counter Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Linebaugh claims that lives and livelihoods were materially shaped by the disciplinary measures enacted on the Thames.⁶⁸⁹ Adherence to the fiscal-military-state thesis led Ashworth to adopt a middle ground between Linebaugh and Foucault, with his suggestion that utilitarian principles were embedded in the practices of the Excise, and it is their unfolding across different social and economic domains, he argues, that explains the Docks. He concludes they were architectural expressions of Walpole’s political oeconomy, ‘enclosed’ spaces where minimal taxation or pilfering occurred, where labour was productive, and an instrument of ‘modern’ industrial capitalism.⁶⁹⁰

Manifestations of either Enlightened discourses, Treasury protocol or bourgeois political economy are rather hard to pinpoint in the Docks’ design process. In 1799 William Vaughan’s sister-in-law received a letter expressing one middling Londoner’s incredulity at the schemes then in Parliament: ‘There is talk of surprising alterations being projected for the City of London, such as heightening the three arches of London Bridge to a degree capable of admitting ships to sail under; & also of making a passage under the Thames (which I believe is called a Tunnel) for the purpose of a near communication between the counties of Kent & Essex. I can hardly promise myself the satisfaction of seeing these wonders realiz’d’.⁶⁹¹ Sir John Soane remarked to the West India Dock Directors that, although ‘Practicality, Security, Economy and Dispatch’ had been the watchwords of their design-brief, the tendered warehouse designs were ‘uncommonly diffuse’ and seemed ‘more intended to dazzle and surprise than convey useful information’.⁶⁹² Helpfully, the West India Committee’s former antagonist, Edward Ogle, was acting as an intermediary in a dispute between them and the gangsmen on the Quays and would soon be found advising the West India Docks Directors on how best to

⁶⁸⁹ Linebaugh, *London*, pp. 3 and Ch. 10, *passim*.

⁶⁹⁰ Ashworth, *Customs*, p. 302.

⁶⁹¹ MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 1, Margaretta Atkins (Streatham) to Sarah Manning Vaughan (Kennebeck, Maine), 20 Mar 1799.

⁶⁹² SM, Case 77, ‘Warehousing Competition [c. Feb. 1800]’ f. 22.

manage the premises and workforce in July 1800.⁶⁹³ Ogle's conversion to the West Indian cause is probably explained by the fact he was now a West India Docks shareholder. Nevertheless, the warehouses were in hand soon after.

Yet a year after the Docks first opened to vessels, new regulations ordered mariners out of premises immediately after landing, leaving all unloading to warehouse employees. Doubtless this further contributed to the erosion of captains' agency in cementing shipping networks, outlined in the second section. Moreover, in 1803 the Warehousing Act removed the Customs drawbacks on re-exported goods marking a step towards international free trade. It caused the goods inside the Dock to significantly alter in their political economic character, becoming far more precious when smuggled into Britain than back out. The warehouses began looking in the wrong direction from the revenue's point of view as the all-important Dock wall that could prevent goods being spirited away was not complete until 1806. Perhaps it is this that caused the West India Docks to follow the precedent of the East India Company by arranging into regiments to guard the premises during the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁹⁴

Insofar as the completed Docks were buildings with a few easily monitored entrances, they were anticipated by the commercial vernacular described in chapter three, and this form was copied by the other dock companies. In the early days of the Docks the aim was to give the labourers as much work as possible by employing them as watchmen or labourers on building projects associated with the Docks. When the Company could not sustain full employment the increasingly sophisticated web of information was mobilised to the stevedores' advantage: the Dock company would warn them of slack days in advance so that they might find occasional work elsewhere.⁶⁹⁵ However, as Gareth Steadman Jones has described, this system disintegrated when steam rendered shipping less seasonal and the Spitalfields silk industry collapsed in the late 1830s, causing the Dock companies to exploit the glut of cheap labour in the East End.⁶⁹⁶ Consequently dockyard contracts became more casual, eventually devolving into hourly contracts that left the stevedores underemployed and forced to wait outside the Dock gates.

⁶⁹³ MLD, WIDCo Journal, 9 Jul. 1800; ICS, WIPM, 26 Jul., 30 Jul. 9 Aug. 1799.

⁶⁹⁴ *Survey*, p. 312-3; See also William Hart, 'The Autobiography of William Hart, Cooper, 1776-1857: A Respectable Artisan in the Industrial Revolution', Pat Hudson and Lynette Hunter eds., *London Journal*, 7, 2 (1981), pp. 144-160.

⁶⁹⁵ Gareth Steadman Jones, *Outcast London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 113.

⁶⁹⁶ Jones, *Outcast*, pp. 116-22.

Architecturally the Docks had not changed so much as the sequencing of goods and information that was well beyond the control of the London merchants.

Like Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Ashworth's and Linebaugh's explanations of the Docks assume that spaces are determined *a priori*, with architecture dictated by preconceived plans that simply need to be built. What is clear from this very brief catalogue of events in the early years of the West India Docks is that 'things' as simple as walls can lag behind ideas, that proclamations like the Warehousing Act drastically alter a building's character, and that buildings can inadvertently alter social relationships, as with the captains. The utilitarianism described by Ashworth and Linebaugh appears short-lived from this perspective. This is merely to restate Latour's contention that things act variously on people and, in spite of this, become illustrations of theoretical agendas rather than agents explored in their own right. Indeed, all of these instances might be seen as moments where the Docks acted on the imaginative and calculative capacities of elite Londoners by channelling relatively new information at them. What has received far less commentary is the fact that the Docks had accelerated a decoupling of commerce from the Legal Quays, where increasingly the East End dealt with the goods and the City handled the money. This relied on two types of document, accounts and shares, that were well known to the City community in facilitating commerce but drew the West India Committee and Docks into new relationships.

Merchants had, of course, devoted their entire careers to disciplining faraway people, enticing consignees on remote islands to send goods, honour debts and remain loyal to their firms. Mercantile families were kept together by industry, as Sarah Vaughan reminded her thirteen-year-old son,

...you will not surely let anyone of your age excel you in anything that is useful or good. The Grandfather of this child dyed whilst his children were young, the eldest son Samuel Dixon was taken by your Grand papa into the Counting house (when he was young) where he behaved so well as to acquire my father's esteem, he supported his mother and a number of brothers and sisters by his industry, and his good behaviour induced my father to take another brother, James... [into] his house, & and to give them every insistence and encouragement in his power; Samuel is now a rich man & has now had the pleasure of placing several of his brothers in situations to provide for themselves, and of marrying his sisters advantageously. You may see from this how much use a good young man may be, & I hope should you

have the misfortune to lose your parents you would endeavour to qualify yourself to serve your brothers and sisters, & and be a worthy and respectable man.⁶⁹⁷

Family certainly played its role; genetic capital was a perfect conduit for wealth, and kin frequently served to anchor long-distance trade by acting as agents in far flung colonies. However, as scholars of commercial writing have shown, maintaining the 'credit' of a countinghouse overseas relied on letters specially adapted and policed to make reputations visible at a distance.⁶⁹⁸ Mercantile letters and the accounts Samuel Martin upbraided his factors over were terse, clearly written and designed to convey information concisely. Correspondence did not describe the market as much as embodied it, making the regularity, punctuality, diligence and performance of correspondents visible and objective. These commercial virtues were co-produced in two senses: through a reciprocal correspondence between business associates and the supporting cast who transported the letter. Consequently, the West India Committee was frequently to be found badgering the Admiralty and post office about the frequency of Caribbean packet boats.⁶⁹⁹ Even at this level we see the Committee suturing itself to the centres of imperial power in a manner different to the East India Company, who tightly controlled their fleets, but not fundamentally dissimilar.

Writing was central to the work of the West India Committee too, though it took a more corporate form than in countinghouses. The printed material they distributed in the 1790s replicated the form of the minutes kept in the journal, often starting with a declarative 'Resolved, that [etc.]'. The Committee sutured themselves onto other powerful bureaucracies where possible, using written agreements to co-ordinate their membership and shape others. Compliance was not always guaranteed by contracts, as the prosecution of captains or the confrontation with the wharfingers show, but recourse to extraneous bodies like the Customs was a last resort. Indeed, contracts could at least highlight breaches of trust, acting as third parties, but it is in an information gap that the Committee's problems with Quayside discipline needs to be located.

⁶⁹⁷ MHS, Vaughan Family Papers, 1, Sarah Vaughan to William Oliver Vaughan, [?] 1793.

⁶⁹⁸ Sarah S.M. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. pp. 111-45; Ogborn, *Indian*, pp 67-103; David Hancock, "'A World of Business to Attend To': William Freeman and the Foundations of England's Commercial Empire, 1645-1707", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 57, 1 (2000), pp.3-34.

⁶⁹⁹ ICS, WIM, 27 Jul. 1779.

Lumpers and coopers operated outside the guilds or any trade association. They could not be corralled easily by the Committee or tied down to formal agreements, forcing the Merchants to monitor them physically. This was labour-intensive and several very expensive policing initiatives appear in the Committee's minutes in the 1790s. Further, the Merchants had also started to offer rewards for those who secured the conviction of plunderers and receivers, based on a scheme proposed by 'Naylor & Sollory' and supported by the Watermen and Customs.⁷⁰⁰ Rewards were suspended in January 1797, as the legal costs of prosecutions were proving discouragingly expensive. In May, it was noted that their yearly bill for the 'prosecution of plunders' amounted to £1,136 13s, half of which constituted 'disbursements', legal fees and rewards.⁷⁰¹ This was about five times the cost laid out in the 1770s.

Colquhoun approached the West India Merchants with a scheme to regulate the lumpers during this crisis, just a few months after the West India Dock Company's first public meeting. Colquhoun's *Treatise on Policing* (1796) had advertised his interest in riparian crime, citing the complaints made by the West Indians during the 1795-6 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Docks.⁷⁰² Colquhoun advocated licensing as a means of regulating the metropolitan carrying trades, dealers in small goods, pawnbrokers and publicans, who were all parties thought to handle stolen goods. This would 'establish such a system of regulation, inspection and superintendence as will insure the public the benefit of good laws administered with activity, purity and discretion', as opposed to a miscellany of competing statutes policed through *ad hoc* informants.⁷⁰³ Colquhoun hoped to extend this bureaucracy to the lumpers and coopers and, by June 1798, the West India Merchants were preparing to purchase Colquhoun's 'Establishment' an office in Wapping that included a lock-house, Magistrates' private rooms, a cashiers' apartments, warehouses and housekeepers' rooms, uniting the countinghouse with courtroom.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ ICS, WIM, 24 Nov. 1795; 10 Jan. 1797.

⁷⁰¹ ICS, WIM, 24 Mar., 25 May 1797.

⁷⁰² Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* (London, 1796), pp. 56-66.

⁷⁰³ Colquhoun, *Treatise*, pp. 202-206.

⁷⁰⁴ ICS, WIM, 12 Jan. 23 Jan. 30. Jan, 8 Jun. 30 Nov. 1799.

A series of meetings, reports and recommendations chart the evolution of the Marine Police. The Merchants' minutes dwelt primarily on the regulation of Lumpers. They were to be weekly split into gangs of ten, supervised by a foreman and monitored by two Police Constables, who would also attend the lighters transporting sugar to the Legal Quays.⁷⁰⁵ To prevent sugar disappearing from holds, lumpers were to be confined to the vessel they were appointed to unload each day; clothing capable of concealing sugar was forbidden; on quitting a ship they were to be searched by the constables and their wages were to be fixed at 3s 6d per day for lumpers and 5s for constables and foremen. The regulations repeated and refined those delivered to captains in 1789-90 by the Committee, the chief difference being that Colquhoun's office administered a system of registration that ensured that dismissed lumpers would not find themselves in the service of other vessels: diligence had to be performed.⁷⁰⁶

The speed with which Colquhoun and the Merchants joined forces indicates the compatibility of their techniques. The novelty of the enterprise lay in the establishment of a centralised bureaucracy rather than the preventative policing strategy, which the Committee had long since been developing. By July, Colquhoun was acting as Magistrate, overseeing four clerks, a solicitor and 236 constables on lighters, with an additional 'superintendent lumper' and clerk administering the activities of 65 master lumpers and 1,000 registered lumpers.⁷⁰⁷ The system succeeded by fastening mobile labour to a fixed hub, using verifiable documentation and prefiguring how the Docks were envisaged. It evidently functioned fairly smoothly and once it got Parliamentary backing in 1802 the West India Committee awarded Colquhoun £500 worth of plate and ignored the scheme.

The process of planting a bureaucratic colony in the East End before retreating was repeated with the Docks. This is not, however, to suggest the scheme had no impact on the City, as the administrative architecture that surrounded it was far more sustained. The Principal Storekeeper, Philip Simpson, played Colquhoun's role at the Docks. His duties were officially defined as: to inspect all staff, receive reports, ensure the attendance of ships' captains, keep keys to the ships' hatches, shut the outer gates, keep a general cargo book with warehouse 'debits and credits' and expedite deliveries, for which 'punctual and

⁷⁰⁵ ICS, WIM, 19 Jun. 1798.

⁷⁰⁶ ICS, WIM, 30 Mar., 8 Jun., 19 Jun., 13 Jul., 27 Jul. 30 Nov. 1798, 4 Jan. 1799.

⁷⁰⁷ ICS, WIM, 13 Jul. 1798.

constant attendance will be indispensably necessary'.⁷⁰⁸ He stood at the apex of a pyramid of clerks, 'Captains of Warehouses', accountants and collectors of dues who recorded information about the goods and people which came through their warehouses. It was envisaged that these 20 salaried administrators would co-ordinate around 240 day-labourers and 40 coopers.⁷⁰⁹

All personnel were expected to solemnly 'devote their time and attention to the faithful discharge of their duty', but the work involved was not significantly different to that that had taken place on the Quays.⁷¹⁰ What was new was the regularity with which paperwork could flow from the City to the Docks and back. A manuscript 'sketch for the arrangement for business at the W.I. docks, 10th Aug., 1802' recorded the standardised dockets that were going to be used to represent the goods to both the Company Directors and Merchants in the City; these had the look of Customs bills.⁷¹¹ Additional certificates were devised to assess the progress of unloading vessels, for coopers' reports on sea-born damages and for ordering samples of sugar. The West India Dock governors typically met at Hibbert's countinghouse before they graduated to West India Dock House at 108 Fenchurch Street in 1801. The notion that City merchants would actually have to visit the Docks in person was anathema to them and slide-lid boxes to contain the samples were suggested. These would be conveyed to Fenchurch Street in covered wagons to a fixed timetable, where individual merchants could collect them. Warehouse books used to locate goods contained chess-like grid-references, "stack E, floor 2", showing uniform spaces could produce more easily comparable data. Every effort seems to have been made to make the data generated by the Docks more regular, accurate and smaller; that is, better to manipulate within the calculative space of the countinghouse. Having enhanced the calculative agency of the City merchants, the Dock's middle managers were in a position to challenge their assumptions by channelling the information generated by these fundamentally new environments back at the merchants, as hiring policy was tinkered with and drifted towards casual contracts and through-put incentives.⁷¹² Commercial data itself became an increasingly powerful and determining force in the Docks.

⁷⁰⁸ MLD, WIDCo, 13 Jul., 9 Jul. 1802

⁷⁰⁹ MLD, WIDCo, 9 Jul. 1802.

⁷¹⁰ MLD, WIDCo, 9 Jul. 1802.

⁷¹¹ MLD, WIMC, f. 75.

⁷¹² Henderson and Palmer, 'Port', pp. 31-50; Jones, *Outcast*, pp. 112-21.

Moreover, whilst the dream of malleable labour and defensible warehouses might seem the culmination of the West India Committee's aspirations in London, it is important to remember the Docks' constitution far from guaranteed this long-term. Both Hibbert and the London Docks' Beeston Long were proud enough of their premises to have them form a backdrop to portraits they commissioned in the 1810s, and they functioned similarly in William Vaughan's autobiography-cum-collected works, published in 1839. Squabbling between the merchants and the Corporation continued when the West India Docks' charter was renewed in 1824-5. Yet the power of this foundational group of merchants may have been underpinned by a proprietary sense of ownership but there was nothing to prevent shares being purchased or inherited by rentier communities. The amalgamation of the East and West India Docks in 1837 might be seen as a moment when the Docks forced a new rationale on the active shareholders, geared toward consolidating the burgeoning Docklands rather than the old lobbies.⁷¹³ The point is that although the wet dock form was new, it was not miraculously so. Further, it must be reckoned in terms of a relatively unprecedented recalibration of quayside information networks and patterns of ownership. Perhaps less dramatic or visible than the Docks' impact on the East End, these new conjunctions of paperwork and profit took on a life of their own that eventually reframed the mercantile interest too, precisely because the buildings brought together fundamentally new geographical, technological and economic networks.

Conclusions

Histories of the Docks have tended to treat the sites as isolated units, which concentrated bourgeois values on labour. The argument presented here is that they can also be seen as exacerbating already extant divisions sustained by administrative processes. The Docks made the conditions under which Quayside services were performed more stable. The wharfingers and latterly the merchants who most successfully governed the Quays were generally the most adept at maintaining contracts and rendering breaches in them identifiable. Not only did this cause services to become standardised but forced other collectives to comply and expand. For instance, the West India Committee drew individual firms into a single unit to discipline their own trade in order to gain political and bureaucratic traction. Lloyd's similarly saw individual underwriters join together to share information

⁷¹³ Keith Cowlard, 'City Futures', Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster eds., *Global Finance and Urban Living* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 229.

between themselves and with others pursuing the same ends. The politics of overtly market-orientated institutions like the West India Committee or insurance offices and the Corporation or Admiralty were, of course, different, but the scribal and increasingly bureaucratic manner in which they conducted themselves was similar. Tax, war and the movement of goods frequently drew them together. The attempt to force Quayside labourers into the Docks and away from non-monetary remuneration under Colquhoun's Police must be seen against the backdrop of the growing apparatus of compliance in the City.

Evidently the weight put on information, prices, rules and regulation grew. If the mobility, scale and uses of information have relevance in light of the arguments made by North et al., it is to say that elites were privy to what seems to have been growing, global and increasingly sophisticated networks, churning out data that was institutionalised and impersonal. Further, the Docks show that elites had major problems bargaining with one another because of the broader networks their property inveigled them in not despite of it. The lumpers, gangsters, lightermen, mariners, slaves and coopers who made legally secure property profitable were highly visible in sparking disagreements between propertied Londoners. Wars, and the radical redistribution of property that accompanied them, doubtless forced the issue. Local circumstances had global repercussions and illustrate the contingency of elite power.

As Ogborn and others have suggested, the form of commercial information is just as important as the content in connecting groups as well as distinguishing them. Knowledge about the port and overseas commerce was painstakingly accumulated through multiple channels, compared, weighed up and acted upon variously. The difference between the increasingly global connections, formed by those bureaucracies passing around information and writing contracts, and the local ones, formed by those facilitating the movement of sugar, was relative not absolute. Envisaging the Docks as giant filing cabinets is useful because it shows the work there was not of a different type to that undertaken in the City but on a different scale. Both goods and commercial information like freight charges were circulated in material forms. However, commercial information was reproducible given a pen and paper; it was also comparable, interpretable and easier to make calculations with. So, while the channels by which various City bureaucracies communicated were becoming more stable and formal, they were still far more flexible and responsive than the mute goods coopers and lumpers were faced with in the Docks. Indeed, the removal of their work from traditional sources of news, like the taverns

on Thames Street, and their reduced opportunity to fence pilfered goods can only have heightened the step change their work underwent in terms of calculative agency. By contrast, the Docks presented another form of investment for shareholders. Bourgeois Londoners were not exempt from the impact of the Docks because of their class but because they constructed their identities around far more liquid and fungible forms.

Conclusion to the Dissertation

This dissertation has examined the various ways in which historians have thought about Adam Smith and the economy he criticised. My suggestion has been that his ideas were put into practice by the Bowood Set. The Bowood Set not only read the *Wealth of Nations* but tried to use it to interpret the world around them and to apply its ideas to practical situations. By tracing the attempts of the Vaughans, Musgrave, Shelburne and Bentham to shift the 'calculative agency' of Londoners, the dissertation has drawn attention to many more unknown and unknowing accomplices of their set, both people and things. In some cases these other agents have been well described by previous historians, as in the case of commercial correspondence or polite consumers in the West End. Others have proved more surprising, such as the aging bodies of Customs officers and collaboration between Lloyds and naval officers in their attempt to "insitutionalise" the high seas. Still others have been frankly astonishing, not least the fact that the fire offices were so close-minded that they motivated a group of architects to ponder the best methods of fire-prevention.

Focusing on local circumstances does not mean disengaging with the question of modernisation; rather it means being more critical of master-narratives, such as the idea of Smithian markets. To be sure the networks investigated here all had aspects which faced markets in the sense Smith understood them, but their rationality was partly determined by the things that constituted them. Far from suggesting Smith's markets were operative and always had been, the research shows that Vaughan and his associates could materially throw markets off course and set them on new paths in some cases. The Docks are symptomatic of this process in that they seemed to diminish the lumpers' agency as petty thieves, undermine the West India Committee and add to the share-options monied Londoners had open to them. Death by shareholders was not what Vaughan envisaged when he waged war on the wharfingers and chartered companies, and this outcome goes to show how tricky instituting markets or shifting calculative agencies proved to be.

Chapter one explored this contention in more detail, by thinking through the proposition that the Enlightenment was intimately linked to consumption patterns. Although generally supportive of the idea that economic discourse could alter the attitudes of British men and women to the market, it suggested that distinctions had to be made between the act of consuming and the Enlightenment as a source of

written economic information about the effects of consumption. Narratives about the market might make certain commodities or certain modes of consumption attractive, but they were not the equivalent of consumption informed only by the material culture at hand. Rather, this chapter collapsed commercial information into one category in order to find evidence of rapid changes in the iron and silk industries in London using insurance records. Instead of change, the opposite was found to be true, with few alterations in consumption patterns evident over time but several different types of consumer, evolving in and through space. The revelation seemed to be not that some consumers were more 'enlightened' than others but that any potential Enlightenment was likely to be dependent on the places, buildings, stock and information at hand, and which existed in many configurations. A number of economic geographies that seemed fairly fixed emerged around different technologies such as the shop, the warehouse and the Thames. Each was activated by different stimuli, arrangements of spaces, forms of communication and temporalities that had qualities similar to the 'machines' described by Alex Preda,⁷¹⁴ and proto-network theorists Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. That is, assemblages 'easily matched with the type of society - not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating and using them.'⁷¹⁵ The conclusion I drew from this was not that linking the Enlightenment with everyday economic phenomena is unwarranted but that more careful case studies of the interaction between ideas or information and material culture are necessary.

Chapter two sought to follow up on this proposition by positioning the merchant community in the City within the networks of information distinctive to overseas trade, starting with the Customs. Given the war waged by Musgrave on corruption, and his relationship with Shelburne, three questions seem pertinent here. First, how did Musgrave come to recognise that his staff were becoming more dysfunctional when few publicly discussed definitions of corrupt behaviour seemed to have had any purchase within the service? Moreover, following Mark Philp, this chapter considered how to restore the agency of officers and suggested that their "corrupt" use of office was itself fluid, not an immoral constant, but a function of shifting circumstances.⁷¹⁶ Second, in what sense did the officers act as mediators

⁷¹⁴ Alex Preda, 'Socio-Technical Agency in Financial Markets: The Case of the Stock Ticker', *Social Studies of Science*, 36, 5 (2006), p. 753-82.

⁷¹⁵ Giles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 1 (1992), p. 6.

⁷¹⁶ Mark Philp, 'Defining Political Corruption', *Political Studies*, XLV (1997), pp. 436-62.

between the Treasury and City merchants? Thirdly, how did Musgrave turn the service inside-out and begin, but by no means entirely succeed, in persuading the Treasury to accept an essentially Smithian definition of corruption that deeply implicated them? Focusing on the problems surrounding age and pensions that coincided with Musgrave's reforms, a prosopography of the Landwaiters on London's Legal Quays showed that they were indeed increasingly unable to do their jobs. This situation offended London's merchant, who were used to bribable but essentially reliable officers, causing them to begin petitioning the Customs for more regular management strategies. It also implied that at least some classes of officer could undermine faith in the Treasury because the Landwaiters represented the state on a practical level. Further, these officers provided the intellectual resources for Musgrave to imagine an alternative situation and to turn the tables on the Treasury, ushering in more stringent management techniques. His new measures succeeded and took on a recognisably modern form, not because they were intrinsically rational but because they were underpinned by Musgrave's monumental administrative capabilities.⁷¹⁷ An alternative political economy was established using things, in this case paperwork and wages, both responding to the instability on which corruption was based and both being redefined in the process. Contrary to the fiscal-military thesis, the Treasury was not the font of rational management strategies, but often something of hinderance in the case of the Customs.⁷¹⁸

Money and bureaucracy were a winning formula for Musgrave, but Chapter three aimed to show that this was not an intrinsically effective combination, by drawing attention to the failures of the fire insurance industry. Despite being lauded by Smith as a perfectly routine utility, insurance proved to be ineffective when it came to channelling investment into the built environment by alerting City merchants to the dangers of warehouse fires. As Robin Pearson has asked of the industry in this period, why were rational policyholders failing to be rational?⁷¹⁹ Reiterating points made in chapter one, it was important to emphasise that neither

⁷¹⁷ Cf. John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1789* (London: Unwin Hymen, 1989), p 85; Elizabeth E. Hoon, *The Organisation of the English Customs System, 1696-1786* (2nd Ed., Newton Abott: David & Charles, 1968); William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷¹⁸ See especially Brewer, *Sinews* and Patrick K. O'Brien, 'The Political Economy of Taxation, 1660-1815', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 41, 1 (1988), pp. 1-31.

⁷¹⁹ 'The Impact of Fire and Fire Insurance on Eighteenth-Century English Town Buildings and Their Populations', Carol Shammas ed., *Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment* (London: Brill, 2012) pp. 67-93.

the insurance nor the warehousing industry had a tradition of courting the kind of public debate that might problematise their business practices. Thus, relatively few extraneous ideas were added to either industry that might have shifted their calculative frameworks publicly and both relied on vernacular advice when architectural expertise was called for. As the case study of Richard Jupp showed, knowledge gained from the insurance industry was hard to generalise beyond the rather blunt idea of hazard. Surveying in the City was a great money spinner for him and his cronies but did not put him in contact with any particularly new building forms, with the exception, perhaps, of Albion Mill. If anything, Jupp sustained unimaginative building practices, though towards the end of his career he did contribute to the Architects' Club and its attempt to raise awareness of inflammable architecture. The insurance industry was not set-up to "supply" an improved architecture, nor was there much "demand" to do so. The insurance industry appears modern in its mathematical tendencies but it was, at root, simply a way of administering money.

Warehouses modulated the flow of goods and people through the City using a combination of architectural distinctions, remunerative strategies and identificatory procedures. These endowed the dangers to warehouses with a human quality not easily reconciled with the numerical forms generated by the insurance industry, though this quality was perfectly rational insofar as humanising risk was a means to prevent thefts. Ironically, the building considered as being bereft of cultural importance played an important role in tethering and limiting the commercial community in the City, giving it a face, and linking it to the Corporation who licensed the porters. Warehouses represent a fine example of how close attention to mundane things shifts how we understand economic networks and the regulatory regimes distributed throughout the City.

The final chapter explored the politics of Vaughan's Dock campaign in the context of mercantilist traditions in the capital. Intimately linked to the warehousing sector, the Docks were a focal point for labour, goods, shipping, taxation and news. They were active agents in the politicisation of merchant life and, as such, a factor in the shifting mental and social make-up of mercantilist London. Groups like the West India Committee were not only institutions that aimed to maintain or enhance the commercial privileges of their members, but great conduits for knowledge about the empire, which influenced their objectives, and how and to whom they were represented. The Quays played a major part in conditioning and constituting that knowledge, and by channelling the flow of goods were a major influence on the

political economy of the City. Following Miles Ogborn's methodology in *Indian Ink*, the chapter argued that mapping the circulation and production of writing about the port shows Quay-side work was evolving and increasingly integrating larger sections of the commercial community.⁷²⁰ Bureaucracies allied with other bureaucracies, serving to create a network of contracts that altered how the Quays were managed, replacing informal agreements with documents that could highlight infractions and define responsibilities more surely. Wars played a major role in drawing the merchant community into the process of government by causing commercial and military data to elide when tax hikes and convoys necessitated a greater coordination of resources. By the time of Vaughan's Dock campaign many solutions to the problem of the port were tabled, resulting in a series of negotiations. These redrew the battle lines by seeing the consolidation of the Corporation of London and West India interest, a reconciliation that placated the transport and warehouse sector. Patrick Colquhoun added another branch to the bureaucratic web by enrolling the Thames' stevedores. Far more data about the Thames and shipping were being passed around between important centres of power in London prior to the building of the Docks, which not only changed the character of labour but also changed elite sociabilities. Once built, the Docks consolidated these data and redistributed them again, first by reverting back to recruiting labour on short-term contracts and second by channelling information to shareholders. Both processes contributed to the disintegration of the West India Interest. As with warehouses, these forms of writing anchored commercial sensibilities, the difference being that these 'things' were far more mobile and prone to become entangled with other forms of writing.

It is a moot point whether the Bowood Set made Londoners any more Smithian in their thinking. There is, however, plenty of evidence to suggest that they shifted the commercial community which became more bureaucratic and utilitarian in many respects, as centres of calculation joined together to administer money and things, as opposed to people. No doubt this also made greater levels of social stratification apparent, and the elites that sponsored and implemented these shifts had a happy knack of remaining part of a charmed circle held together by gift exchange and political capital, alongside merit. Musgrave's appointment to the British Museum and the West India Committee's award of plate to Colquhoun indicate that carefully graduated material and social rewards still made up the

⁷²⁰ Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007).

economy. Certainly this chimes with the Gentlemanly Capitalism thesis put forward by Cain and Hopkins, though I think the rather more rigidly defined institutions they oversaw meant these were quite different gentlemen to those that had preceded them.⁷²¹ Musgrave's protégé Richard Frewin, died in 1820 a Commissioner of the Customs and life-long servant of government. Frewin was of very different stock and temperament to Thomas Pelham, the absentee Surveyor-General of the Customs between 1773 and 1805 who was appointed because his cousin, the Duke of Newcastle, found him a liability in the Commons.

Smith's ideal was not realised, but it was hardly likely to be. The *Wealth of Nations* described a complex economy that had been thwarted by mercantilist intervention both at the level of legislation and at the level of day-to-day sociabilities around the market. Smith posited a counterfactual and well-functioning economy, built on an amalgamation of study, intuition, rhetorical convenience, political calculus and identification with gentlemanly social groups.⁷²² To be sure scholars of the Cambridge School have been more specific in identifying sources he invoked, carefully interpreting his text through careful examination of his library and the prevalent 'languages' through which concepts were conventionalised in the eighteenth century.⁷²³ Understanding his ideas as the product of other texts, and as intelligible because of them, has been productive, but it rather downplays the social forces at play in the constitution of his work as an author and by his readers. It is certainly the case that recovering a richer context for Smith is not helped by the dearth of biographical material he left behind. Nevertheless, outside his contribution to economic discourse, the uses of his ideas have been dealt with relatively crudely, insofar as the assumption has been that his printed texts became concrete weapons in the hands of the rich. Peter Linebaugh sees Smith's political economy

⁷²¹ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-1914* (2nd Ed., Edinburgh: Pearson, 2002).

⁷²² Till Duppe, *The Making of the Economic: A Phenomenology of Economic Science* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011); Tony Aspoumourgou, *The Science of Wealth: Adam Smith and the Framing of Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009); H. Mizuta ed., *Adam Smith's Library, A Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

⁷²³ D.M. Levy and S.J. Peart, 'Adam Smith and His Sources: The Evil of Independence', V. Brown ed., *Adam Smith Review*, 4 (2008), pp. 57-87; Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); I. Hont & M. Ignatieff eds., *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); I.S. Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

as the ideology of the bourgeoisie, “reified” by projects like the Docks.⁷²⁴ Foucault similarly saw men like Bentham “instrumentalising” the economics of the enlightenment through projects like the panopticon, that not only reshaped productive forces but created docile individuals incapable of resisting the logic of capitalism.⁷²⁵ William Ashworth and John Marriott take a similar view of Samuel Bentham and Patrick Colquhoun.⁷²⁶

Throughout, this dissertation has tried to keep intact the heady mix of possibilities opened up by ideas, ‘languages’ or ‘discourses’. But it also suggests that great attention to the practice of instrumentalisation shows transformations from texts to objects to have been no easy process, where misinterpretation, apathy and palm-greasing all played a part. Smith’s ideas were things as much as anything: a book which could travel to Kingston, Jamaica, as did Vaughan’s copy of the *Wealth of Nations*, or be put on a numbered shelf in St James’, as did Musgrave’s copies; words on a page that could be recited or plagiarised, like Benjamin Vaughan did in *Old and New Principles of Commerce*; or sheaves of paper that could be annotated and, very likely in East London, burnt. As Bruno Latour has suggested, attending to the ‘things’ that constructed social power and economic choices means conceding that many of them had to be in place *already* for the technologies involved to take hold.⁷²⁷ If the Enlightenment did shift the calculative frameworks of Britons it was far from revolutionary: it progressed piecemeal and unevenly through existing networks not instead of them. For instance, merchants were willing to fund docks because they had long experience of the port and business strategies based on mobile information that meant the goods they traded did not necessarily need to be near at hand. Unlike Westminster shopkeepers, only a small nudge was needed to galvanise the merchants, although the consequences may have been great for many Londoners attached to the warehousing and transport trades. Economic enlightenment in London grew out of complex relations between people and things

⁷²⁴ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed. London & New York: Verso, 2003);

⁷²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1979), pp. 195-228.

⁷²⁶ William J. Ashworth, “‘System of Terror’: Samuel Bentham, Accountability and Dockyard Reform During the Napoleonic Wars”, *Social History*, 23, 1 (1998), pp. 63-79; John Marriott, ‘Social Inquiry and the Discovery of the Residuum’, *Rising East*, 3, 1 (1999), pp. 1-27.

⁷²⁷ See Bruno Latour, ‘Where Are the Missing Masses?’, Wiebe Bijker and John Law eds., *Shaping Technology-Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 225-259; *We Have Never Been Modern* trans. Catherine Porter (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1993).

that were by no means universally applicable, and required no end of political and conceptual compromises to embed as a result.

Latour states that actors supply ‘their own metaphysics’, and he provides a methodology that creates an interdisciplinary platform by emphasising complexity.⁷²⁸ Studying the interactions of ideas like Smith’s on economic practitioners like the Vaughans is an interdisciplinary endeavour that should mean more than saying that culture is important to the economy, or that the market structures ideas. Rather than privileging one discipline over the other, it means giving ideas and markets the same weight and trying to discover methods capable revealing both things at the same time. Economic and social history have greatly helped us to explain long-term trends, pointing towards important divides between the ‘west and the rest’ or men and women. Cultural history is very good at nuancing particular situations, transactions, representations or bodies. The position developed in this dissertation has been to suggest that culture needs to be counted more often and economic activity stripped of its supposed rationality. Measures like GDP are useful because they make patterns numerical and therefore manipulable or comparable in a different way to texts or pictures, and they function no differently from prices in that regard. With digital databases and programmes like Excel making data more malleable than ever, any aspect of a source can be counted to good effect, as Phil Withington’s study of the distribution of words and phrases in early modern Britain, rather than texts and discourses, has shown.⁷²⁹ Probing how the qualitative and the quantitative interact and, moreover, combine to throw seemingly fixed institutions wildly off course is important in getting to grips with problems like Musgrave’s work in the Customs. Further, making cultural phenomenon like corruption graphically representable or warehouse plans signifiers of the technological intransigence of the City merchants is as much illustrative of an argument as a strategy developed to locate common ground between economic and cultural history. New historical narratives may not be immediately forthcoming but it is certainly productive of new questions, especially regarding the exploration of historical methods themselves.

Latour’s paradigm offers great insights and freedoms for jumping between historical subdisciplines, but there is room to point out its limitations from this point of view too. As Latour suggests, ‘tracing the networks’ and allowing the archive to

⁷²⁸ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 64.

⁷²⁹ Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

lead the enquiry effectively bypasses historiographical considerations and does not guarantee answering one initial research questions or reaching interesting conclusions. Ever the optimist, Latour would suggest power resides at the end of the network building process, or when all the archives and contemporary narratives have been sewn together. What began, in my case, as a dissertation about the rise of utilitarian architecture became a discussion of the ability of City merchants to react to new information whilst maintaining their political and fiscal status. This is hardly a new tale, although I think Callon's notion of calculative agency provides plenty of insights as why that was achieved at the expense of the broader commercial community actively involved in moving goods around.⁷³⁰ Historical research is a reiterative process, where questions are generated by spending *time* in the archive, secondary reading, seminars and contemplation. Yet, if the aim is to let archives coproduce knowledge that reflects on disciplinary preoccupations, rather than simply apply theories like Callon's, then Latour's methodology is not necessarily well suited to historical research as it is currently structured, where three generous years of PhD funding or the REF cycle still necessarily limit the amount of resources available to locate those game-changing archival nuggets.

Apart from a feeling that network theory should be treated with caution, several elements of the research presented here seem compelling enough to warrant more positive attention. The institutions examined in this dissertation evolved in conversation with one another but each in different directions. For instance, whilst the Customs began to insulate officers from their local merchant community, the West India Committee took on an increasingly mediatory role between the upper echelons of many firms, utility companies like the Docks or insurance, and government departments. To what extent was this re-allocation of resources repeated elsewhere, both in terms of other lobbies in London and around the country? Further, was this a question of new relations between central government and commercial groups or was the pattern followed in local government too? The Corporation of London was a complex and important influence on the City and on the Quays, which has not received its full due in this dissertation, but would

⁷³⁰ M. Pryke, 'An International City Going "Global": Spatial Change in the City of London', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 9 (1991), pp. 197-222; Ronen Palan, *The Offshore World: Sovereign Markets, Virtual Places and Nomad Millionaires* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2006); Larry Neal and Stephen Quin, 'Networks of Information, Markets and Institutions in the Rise of London as a Financial Centre, 1660-1720', Mark Casson and Marina Della Giusta eds., *The Economics of Networks* (Cheltenham & Northampton, MA.: Elgar Reference Collection, 2008), pp. 218-37.

form a fertile ground for this kind of enquiry into the effects of gentlemanly capitalism on local government.

Insofar as this is a dissertation about things as well as the sociability and regulation of the market, several design-related questions present themselves. Bureaucracy has been a key trope in this dissertation and despite mapping out several institutions that based their practices on highly regimented procedures and, in the case of the Customs, radically altered them, a more thoroughgoing investigation of “stationery” seems a necessary corollary. If paperwork did structure state-merchant relations, as this dissertation suggests was increasingly the case, how were printed forms manufactured and managed given their relationship to fraud? Presumably the engraving and dye-stamping technologies used in the production of paper bills and coins were a mechanism for knowledge transfer here too. As such, who designed stationery and did changes in those designs have any correspondence to those produced for other commercial institutions like the Bank of England or mint? How was the “stationery cupboard” at Customs House, East India House or private Banks run and how did forms delineate internal hierarchies within smaller firms? How widespread was the use of stationery outside the giants of the City and how does this scribal culture compare to those described by Miles Ogborn and others? The archives investigated for this dissertation have much more to say about these important tools as would a more concerted effort to investigate the stationers’ trade.

Finally, it seems important to reflect on why the emergence of utilitarian architecture in the City proved such an elusive target. Investigations of networks tend to draw attention away from building types, towards geographies, spaces, connections and flows. Buildings essentially function to accumulate ‘things’ in this view—scientific instruments in laboratories, academic texts in universities or children in an orphanage. Architectural historians have stressed that representing new building types, either through visual or narrative conventions, has a huge effect on how they are subsequently understood. Formalising the jargon that surrounds buildings is, of course, a major part of establishing them amongst the architectural profession, alerting potential consumers to their existence and giving them meaning.⁷³¹ More work remains to be done on the transformation of buildings used in the productive or distributive sectors of the economy, from vernacular outgrowths

⁷³¹ John MacArthur, *Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007); Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London: Routledge, 2007).

to architecturally recognised forms. Warehouses, docks and insurance are part of this story because they provided important points of contact between commercial patrons and expertise in London. It was here that concepts were most likely to be taken on board by teaching institutions like the Royal Academy, the Architects' Club and other professional associations. Yet Jupp's career did not get me far enough. Whilst this is to reiterate the point made earlier about Latour's networks telling you something, but not necessarily what you want to know, a more rounded enquiry would involve casting the net differently. An investigation of surveyors' networks nationally and their relationships to large 'utilities' like insurance and rail and canal companies that put them into contact with factories and other vernacular forms would no doubt yield more results.

City merchants have never been considered philosophers. This gap between commercial theory and practice was not lost on eighteenth-century readers, as James Boswell wrote:

Sir John Pringle had the night before given his opinion that Smith, who had never been in trade, could not be expected to write well on that subject, any more than I upon physic, I stated this to Dr. Johnson. He thought that a man who had never traded himself might write well upon trade, and he said there was nothing that more required to be illustrated by philosophy.⁷³²

What this dissertation has tried to show is that, even when armed with Smith's critical philosophy, City merchants had a hard task realising it, both because property was involved and because propertied interests were networked so as to make it intractable. In that this reflects on the shrill outcries against "bankers" that have been ongoing since I started this PhD, the suggestion is that moral derision and fiscal regulation are unlikely to be effective unless coupled with new trading software. Philosophy is not the problem, making it work is.

⁷³² James Boswell, *The Life of Johnson* ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1970) p 682.

Appendix 1- The Sun Insurance Ledgers

Across the fire insurance industry, how accurately the sums covered reflected policyholders' wealth was open to interpretation.⁷³³ Credit, debt, cash and investments like stocks and bonds were invisible to the insurance companies, only real property. Further, 'Fire Offices' put a maximum cap on policies to limit their liability, though these ceilings were approximately industrial in scale and well above the average coverage in most trades. Customers could insure larger capitals with multiple offices, a factor assiduously noted in the policy documents as an acknowledgement of split liabilities between the companies was necessary. Identifying systematic under- or overvaluation is impossible, yet customers' self-appreciation of their capital was crude, which suggests the insurance offices' surveyors were also guiding them. Values tended to be given to the nearest £50 or £100, and inflation, even sharp wartime hikes, rarely seems to have moved policy holders to revise their coverage. Conversely, by the 1770s individual policies were distinguishing a broad range of items, categorised as real estate, household goods, stock and utensils, books, plate, apparel, and china and glass. Also, items like carriages or sawpits were specified by underwriters, which Company surveyors were unlikely to be able to value accurately. Despite increasing distinctions between goods, an indistinct blanket approach was also operative when insuring movable property. A frequent blending of categories (most often household goods with utensils and stock) makes any statement as to their aggregate importance to a specific trade subject to the qualification that they be understood as minimal constituents of the total amount covered. Nonetheless, policies varied considerably in terms of total coverage and types of goods insured, even within a single occupational group. Accepting that the values of goods stated in the policies were subject to distortions of customary valuations and pragmatic accounting, these were ubiquitous weaknesses on the part of policyholders and do not disqualify the policies as registers of difference in perceived wealth at any given moment. That is, valuations drawn from fire insurance policies, whilst perhaps lagging behind market

⁷³³ For this paragraph see David Barnett, *London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution. A Revisionary History, 1775-1825* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), pp. 6-8; D.T. Jenkins, 'The Practice of Insurance Against Fire, 1750-1840, and Historical Research', Oliver M. Westall ed., *The Historian and the Business of Insurance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 28-34 and Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), *passim*. Assessments of individual companies' practices can be found in their histories, the most relevant being P.G.M. Dickson, *The Sun Insurance Office, 1710-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

values, are internally consistent enough to be comparable and thus convertible to real-values using a price index series.

Relentlessly generic, insurance policies do not make for absorbing reading and are tricky to process en masse without a high boredom threshold, head for numbers or a computer. This is a direct consequence of the Sun bookkeepers running several ledgers at once, each with a different clerk. Thus individual volumes of policies were neither chronological or alphabetically arranged, or indexed. Squeezing information from the ledgers is hugely time consuming as a result, individuals or particular industries being hard to locate. A number of attempts have been made to use them systematically in a way that touches on this study, most of which have compensated for the labour-intensive work of using the ledgers by producing extensive surveys. The earliest comprises an analysis of 300,000 the Sun and Royal Exchange Assurance records from the period 1777-86, pan-occupational and national in scope.⁷³⁴ Published by the Social Sciences Research Council in the early 1980s as computer-tape, it has been subsequently digitised for the *London Lives* project. The second was David Barnett's use of several companies' records for the inelegantly titled but very thorough *London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution. A Revisionary History, 1775-1825*. He contrasted metropolitan Sun policies from 1769 to 1777 with policies from several firms from 1819 to 1825, amounting to around 30,000 datum from 1,300 occupations.⁷³⁵ Barnett has not published his database in full, but did produce an exhaustive set of abstracts for each industry, organised by a modern 'Standard Industrial Classification'. Both resources are excellent in terms of providing an anchoring period for the decade around 1776 from which comparisons can be drawn between trades or districts, as in tables 4.5 and 4.6. However, neither chose to distinguish the categories of underwritten goods, both favour the latter part of the century, and in utilising a wide-angle "snapshot" approach they privilege the synchronic over the diachronic.

The final attempt to employ the ledgers was the most Sisyphean, being heroically labourious, ultimately failing to produce any published content, and was unable to make the ledgers any more accessible. In 1986 a group of volunteers

⁷³⁴ The project is outlined in L.D. Schwarz and L.J Jones, 'Wealth, Occupations, and Insurance in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Policy Registers of the Sun Fire Office', *Economic History Review* 36, 3 (1983), pp. 365-73. See also L.D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions in the Capital, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 245-7 and appendix II.

⁷³⁵ David Barnett, *London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution. A Revisionary History, 1775-1825* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998).

committed to a card index transcriptions of each policy in the Sun registers from 1710 to the 1840s that mentioned any trade. Their coverage was both national and spanned the entire century. Sadly, in the mid-2000s the death of the members saw the project fall into abeyance, causing the collection to be broken up between several institutions- National Maritime Museum, Royal Armouries, Goldsmith's Library, Museum of London, V&A Museum- with a specialist interests in the industries transcribed. If this project had been undertaken in the age of laptops there is a good chance this comprehensive database (over half a million entries by my estimate) would be online presently, rather than split, uncatalogued, between several busy and cramped museums. However, because these transcriptions are indexed by occupation and county, include details of all categories of insured goods, and encompass the entire period, I culled data from the V&A for silk and Museum of London for iron in order to focus on specific London trades across the century. A trip to the Armouries in Leeds would no doubt yield more valuable information on the specialist metalworking trades around London.

In attempting to get an impression of London's changing 'clusters' it seemed pragmatic to process a relatively large sample base with the onus on historical development initially. It also occurred as expedient to study one industry which is fairly well understood historically, and which speaks directly to the evidence deployed by recent retail historians, who have been interested on the convergence of fashionably designed objects, the circulation of information and geography. To this end, the policies of silk related occupations were transcribed, encompassing mercantile, industrial and retail processes: 'silkmen' (merchants), throwsters, and mercers. Iron seemed a suitable second as ironmongery was similarly reliant on shops, though its London geographies are less well understood and it was not so highly capitalised as mercery.⁷³⁶ Founders and ironmongers formed the basis of this sample. Time pressure forced a reduction in the scope of the study, so the database comprises policies taken out in the first five years of any given decade between 1710 and 1814 (1710-4, 1720-4, etc.) with additional notes on policyholders who revised their coverage outside those years. The resulting 1,200 policies provide a statistically sound spine of the development of silk and iron for the whole period with a cartilage 200 of other or unusual policies filling in the gaps between.

Like Nicola Phillips's study of female policy holders across the eighteenth century, the diachronic approach throws up questions over how representative the

⁷³⁶ Richard Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (1747), p. 198, reckoned a mercer required £10,000 to set up.

Sun policies are over time.⁷³⁷ Phillips, who searched for patterns in female entrepreneurship across all trades, noted changes in the business and cost of insurance at the end of the century would significantly reduce the occupational scope and economic depth of her sample because women tended to be relegated to less well-capitalised and vulnerable work, and perhaps rendered unable to insure as a result. Although many of the same caveats apply here, their effect would be less evident in the search for clusters and their relative wealth, because the few occupations examined here all required fixed plant (shops, warehouses, mills) and therefore were more highly capitalised. Sun Insurance grew considerably from its foundation in 1710, underwriting £74 million of a national market of £260 million in 1805. It was well out in front of its nearest rivals, the Phoenix who covered £47 million that year, and the Royal Exchange covering £35 million. Nevertheless, it experienced severe competition in the provinces after this date and, alongside the Phoenix and Royal Exchange, their proportion of national market fell from about 68% in 1806 to 30% in the 1820s.⁷³⁸ Likewise, in London the Sun brand was strong, covering 53% of the market in 1783, its next nearest competitor, the Hand in Hand managing just 16%.⁷³⁹ This probably represents a high-water mark, however, as new London agencies entered the market with increasing rapidity after 1800, when the Sun had been pegged back to 38% of the London market. In addition, from 1782 stamp duty was placed on policies issued by every company that similarly would have dissuaded customers, and this ad valorem tax rose significantly during the Napoleonic Wars hitting policy holders covering low risk shops and houses the hardest.⁷⁴⁰ Exacerbated by the loss of some of the Sun ledgers after 1800, the evidence is best for the earlier period, where the Sun had a near monopoly on Commercial Property. Evidence for the period after 1790 is probably weighted towards the wealthier ends of the occupations under examination and numbers lower than when the Sun had less competitors. Consequently, whilst the figures here suggest a 'decline' in London mercery this may well be an exaggeration caused by these biases. On the other hand, mercers were well capitalised which would have made them less nervous about the growing cost of insurance than

⁷³⁷ Nicola Philips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge, Suff.: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 120-22; See also Peter Earle, *A City Full of People* (London: Methuen, 1994), pp. 147-8.

⁷³⁸ Jenkins, 'Fire', pp. 17-20.

⁷³⁹ Clive Trebilcock, *Phoenix Insurance and The Development of British Insurance, 1782-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 6.

⁷⁴⁰ Pearson, *Insuring*, pp. 140-148.

poorer trades, and numbers of less well-off ironmongers grew rapidly in late eighteenth century London, according to these records. Although counter-intuitive, the expansion of the poorer trade suggests that the occupations forming the sample were both above a threshold of wealth that makes the registers a rather more accurate depiction of the state of these industries than, for example, the more easily impoverished trades Phillips has investigated. Moreover, the timing of the silk industry's contraction as whole coincides with those suggested in histories, suggesting that the records need to be treated cautiously, as indicative rather than absolute, although not discounted after in the late-eighteenth century.

Appendix 2- Real Property Coverage in the Sample

The bald figures drawn from the policies tell a story of two very different industries, one rising and one contracting, which match well enough with what is known about these sectors of the economy themselves. All the policy holders had London addresses but it is moot how essential to a firm the clothes or plate they insured were to their business prospects. The will of mercer William Tresillian suggests a certain fluidity between business and social capital: 'I give and bequeath to my dear wife Elizabeth Tresillian all my household goods and furniture, wearing apparel, linen, plate, jewels, watches and rings (save and except such jewels and other things as shall be in my possession at my decease as a pawn or pledge for serving any sum or sums of money)'.⁷⁴¹ Real estate property stands out as the most easily identifiable category that would skew the average policy as a measure of capitalisation, as property other than the policyholders' address was routinely noted as being outside of London. It is not clear how Barnett or Schwarz dealt with the issue, though it seems they discounted it from their sums, whereas Chapman and Phillips have made extensive use of the types, date and locations of properties covered by tradesmen and -women they investigated in order to explore their business strategies.⁷⁴² The following section will do both, and examine the properties covered within this sample by way of assessing what kind of adjustment might be made to the aggregate figures.

The types of property covered were various, as three properties insured by mercers in the 1760s and 1770s illustrate. Thomas King insured the Turks Head, King Street, Covent Garden for £1,000 in 1763, alongside £500 of stock and household goods and £100 of apparel.⁷⁴³ With no mention of another address in the policy it is likely King had simply insured his shop and goods, representing a straight forward shoring up of his business interests. This we must consider a legitimate components of the mercers' capital for the 1760s. The second example suggests rural roots or reach of many Londoners. Samuel Walker of Spital Square

⁷⁴¹ TNA, PROB 11/884/410, will of William Tresilian, 1763.

⁷⁴² S.D. Chapman, 'Industrial Capital before the Industrial "Revolution" an Analysis of the Assets of a Thousand Textile Entrepreneurs c. 1730-50', N.B. Harte and K.G. Ponting eds., *Textile History and Economic History. Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann* (Manchester: Manchester university Press, 1973) pp. 131-2; Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge, Suff.: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 155-66, presents a more sophisticated breakdown of her sample, and if I had been aware of it whilst compiling the database I would have followed her lead to provide better comparative data.

⁷⁴³ V&A Sun, Mercers, Thomas King, 1763.

simultaneously insured a property there, in Waltham Abbey, Essex, and Beeson, Bedfordshire.⁷⁴⁴ Waltham Abbey was known for its silk and calico printing, so Walker's interests here may well have had an industrial rather than recreational aspect, though the policy does not tell.⁷⁴⁵ Finally, Benjamin Day of Tavistock Street, Covent Garden insured six tenement properties in the local area for £2,700, smacking of property speculation outside of any direct involvement in the silk trade.⁷⁴⁶ Day's policy could probably be excluded from the total capital constituting the mercers in this period. Despite permutations and the unavoidable problems deciphering some policies, it is possible to describe the properties insured as falling into one of three categories:

- 1) working London addresses, in which the property insured appears to be the same as the policyholder's like King's
- 2) non-London properties such as Walker's in Waltham Abbey
- 3) investment properties other than the policy holders' given address, noted in the documentation as 'in tenure' or as large numbers of addresses of the speculative sort like Day's.

The two largest samples, ironmongers and mercers, would suggest certain rhythms to activity in this field. In line with Robin Pearson's findings both groups invested in the building booms of the 1720s -'30s, 1780s-1790s and 1800s, in which years we see spikes in property coverage, mostly made up of type 1 and 3 properties in London.⁷⁴⁷ The trend is particularly marked amongst the throwsters, all of whom insured property in the 1770s, especially around the East End, presumably in search of cheap large sheds. Clearly too, rates of coverage were propelled by London's expansion after 1765, sustaining mercer investment in property despite faltering fortunes in the trade, whilst causing thriving ironmongers exploit opportunities assiduously. Of 499 mercers across the whole period, 99 invested in property, marginally more frequently when the trade was buoyant in the sample

⁷⁴⁴ V&A Sun, Mercers, Samuel Walker, 1763.

⁷⁴⁵ *V.C.H. Essex*, II, p. 405.

⁷⁴⁶ V&A Sun, Mercers, Benjamin Day, 1771.

⁷⁴⁷ Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 73; F.W.H. Sheppard, V. Belcher and P. Cottrell, 'Middlesex and Yorkshire Deed Registries and The Study of Building Fluctuations', *London Journal*, Vol. 5, 2 (1979), pp. 176-217; *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions in the Capital, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 79-90; John Landers, *Death in the Metropolis: Studies in the Demographic History of London, 1670-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 49-61.

periods between 1720 and 1764. Proportionally the ironmongers insured rather more, with 149 out of 458 policies covering real estate, a trend becoming more pronounced in the later periods: 80 of these properties were covered between 1790 and 1814.

Looking more closely at the distribution of the types of properties outlined above within the mercer and ironmonger samples, differences in their prerogatives can clearly be discerned, moving from the smallest subcategory to the largest. One fifth of the mercers insuring property, 21, took out policies type 2 properties, those outside of London, compared to only 9 ironmongers. On occasion an industrial building easily linked to the policy holders' occupation is present, as in mercers Van Sommer, Paul & Paul covering a house and watermill in Taunton in February 1781 or ironmongers and founders Joseph Wright and William Pickett who insured a casting house, granary and stables in Lambhurst, Surrey. A handful more of the policies can be situated within the trades' industrial geographies; Warwickshire and Wolverhampton being notable for the ironmongers, Worcestershire and Essex for the mercers. However, most of these policies comprised of non-descript dwellings or collections of properties in the Home Counties, especially Surrey and Kent representing, one assumes, ancestral holdings, investments or recreational properties. Given the disproportionately small number of this kind of policy taken by ironmongers, the trade certainly seemed less inclined to divert their wealth into non- or low- returning agricultural holdings, and less likely to look into Britain's hinterland than the mercers. This is surprising when we consider that their goods originated in Britain's midlands whereas silk came from abroad.

The type 3 property insured by the sample further suggest the importance of locality in shaping the business ventures both trades embarked on. Whether that meant the investment properties ironmongers and mercers insured predated entry into their respective trades, or that wealth accrued there was diverted into them, these buildings were usually sited close by the policy holder's business address. Mercer John Everett was typical, insuring two properties at Cock Alley for £400 in 1734, both let, and a short stroll from his address on Ludgate Hill. Some properties were clearly speculative ventures, built from scratch, and were noted as 'incomplete' or empty on the policy documents. The coincidence of this kind of policy with the building cycle has already been noted, but the local nature of the capital forwarded to the master-builders is remarkable. The assumption seems to have been that reliable tenants were those close at hand. For the mercers, a tying together of two key areas, Covent Garden and Spitalfields can be discerned in the

1773 and 1774 policies of William Hinchcliffe, who insured a shop in Covent Garden and warehousing in Hoxton but this was exceptional.⁷⁴⁸ Likewise, Cripplegate mercer Elisa Colish insured six dwellings in Bankside, Southwark, for £300 in 1721, a policy which stands out for the distance between the addresses, which even broached London's north-south divide.⁷⁴⁹ Elisa may not have been a practicing trader and therefore could have been sinking capital into property to provide her with an income in a more hard-headed way than was common.⁷⁵⁰ Elisa's economic rationalism is the exception, showing that for the majority of policyholders the attraction of property was that it was a potentially profitable way of shaping their communities.

For both the mercers and ironmongers, just over half of the properties they insured were of type 1, those that appear to be business addresses. More often than not the ironmongers' policies describe some semi-specialist commercial building being underwritten like a warehouse, separate workshop or wharfage. A number of policies point at an obviously specialist pieces of industrial equipment like the complex of coal-sheds, workshops, coach houses and foundry, insured by Edward Berry of St Paul's Churchyard in 1772, or the mill-house at Rotherithe Stairs insured by Alexander French nine years earlier. By contrast mercers were less likely to be involved in underwriting either specialist industrial premises or semi-specialist items like warehouses. The comparative richness of the descriptions in the ironmongers' properties would suggest they inhabited a range of building types and, conversely that the mercers' shop was more common amongst London's building stock, which underwriters could forgo describing.

Differentiation in the type of premises most commonly used by both these trades points towards two themes developed throughout in chapter 1. Foremost, ironmongers appear to have had a far more varied set of roles in their sector, able to exploit retail markets, engage in founding and productive activities, and to facilitate the distribution of iron goods around the county or overseas. These were by no means mutually exclusive occupations but did require a greater range of buildings. West End Mercers, rather, seem to have been focused on retail and less able to integrate backwards or usurp the City silkmen and throwsters who

⁷⁴⁸ V&A Sun, Mercers, William Hinchcliff, 1772, 1773, 1774.

⁷⁴⁹ V&A Sun, Mercers, Elisa Colish, 1720.

⁷⁵⁰ Nicola Philips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge, Suff.: Boydell Press, 2006), p. 161 on property investment strategies for women.

maintained their grip on the mercantile and productive part of the trade. If the division of labour was inflexible in the silk trades, this had a sharp geographic dimension too. Mercery was heavily concentrated in two areas, Cheapside in the City, and Covent Garden father West, just as weaving was confined to Spitalfields.

Broadly, the majority of the properties in London seem to have had some business function directly related to mercery or ironmongery, or that cannot be discounted on the basis of the policy documents alone. Of the type 2 properties, it is less easy to be sure of their relationship to the capitals insured, though they represent the smallest subcategory. The type 3 properties, extraneous to the trade itself might be sensibly excluded from the abstracts for each trade, though often they came tagged on to coverage of the policy holders own address and chattels. Deducting these parts of the policies from the aggregate capitals insured by either the mercers or ironmonger would not, however, do much to change the overall picture of the trades outlined in the aggregate statistics. Table App. 1.1 shows that for the mercers investment properties were smaller than the average policy, so removing them tends to raise the average policy by 1-6% in each sample period. For the ironmongers, however, the change moves us in the other direction: the values of investment properties were larger than the average policy in most periods after 1750-4, thereby lowering the average policy by between 2 and 10%, except in 1770-4 and 1790-4 when there removal causes a small rise of no more that 2%.

As such, these alterations appear to marginally widen the gap between the silk and iron industries if measured in terms of pure capital. This underlines the fact that setting up as a mercer was more expensive than in the iron trade. Property, even if combined with the other underwritten categories like plate, books, and apparel was a relatively peripheral feature when compared to the stock and household goods that represented, in terms of investment in either trade, between 70-90% of the capital covered.

Table App. 1.1, Adjustments for property in the retail sector

Total Police Adjusted covencies Discoverage disclosed aver Adjusted Average (**Mercers**

1710-14	79						
1720-24	88	56016	6	2034	658	637	3.2
1730-34	44	61818			1405	1405	
1740-44	31	47807	2	1028	1613	1519	5.8
1750-54	22	36038			1638	1638	
1760-64	37	78944	1	1277	2157	2077	3.7
1770-74	52	112350	4	8266	2168	2161	0.3
1780-84	38	82984	2	831	2282	2243	1.7
1790-94	59	92260	1	496	1582	1564	1.1
1800-04	20	32610			1631	1630	
1810-14	29	42982	1	437	1519	1438	5.4

Ironmongers

1710-14	28						
1720-24	30	1308	3	979	475	460	3.2
1730-34	22	20976	1	769	962	953	1
1740-44	28	19888	1	233	728	710	2.5
1750-54	19	17897			942	942	
1760-64	53	45579	5	3577	875	894	-2.2
1770-74	58	68192	3	2115	1201	1176	2.1
1780-84	28	27310	3	5278	881	975	10.6
1790-94	84	88931	9	9971	1053	1046	0.6
1800-04	41	34690	4	5640	785	867	-10.4
1810-14	67	76958	1	3146	1118	1149	-2.7

Source: V&A Sun and ML Sun.

Appendix 3

Old Bailey Cases in which gangsters and ticket-porters formed part of the prosecution, 1740-1800

Date	Accused	Crime	Commodity	Sentence
11 Sep. 1745	G James Leppard	Theft	Tobacco	Transportation
17 Oct. 1750	G Edward Evans, George Potts	Theft	Ginger	Transportation
4 Dec. 1755	T John Clayton	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
20 Apr. 1757	T Samuel Bolton	Theft	Spanish Wool	Acquitted
25 Apr. 1759	G William Pope	Theft	Sugar	Acquitted
21 Oct. 1761	G James Adams	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
14 Jan. 1763	G John Cox	Theft	Sugar	Branding
11 Dec. 1765	G James Smith	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
19 Feb. 1766	G William Crawford	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
17 Dec. 1766	G Timothy M'Namara	Theft	Wolf skins	Transportation
9 Sep. 1767	T James Young, Elizabeth Morgan	Theft	Copper bound for Jamaica	Transportation
9 Sep. 1767	G John Edwards, John Row, Peter Smith, Peter Price, James Devereux	Theft	Sugar	Acquitted except Edwards, Transportation
21 Oct. 1767	G Stephen Taylor	Theft	Sugar	Acquitted
6 Jul. 1768	G John Pipson	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
7th Sep 1768	G James Whittaker	Theft	Antiguan Beads	Transportation
18 Oct. 1769	G Samuel Barnton	Theft	Sugar	Whipped
25 Apr. 1770	G Abraham Myer	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
3 Jul. 1771	G Laurence Wallace	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
23 Oct. 1771	G Anthony Watson	Theft	Coffee	Transportation
21 Oct. 1772	G Thomas Apps	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
16 Sep. 1778	T Thomas Crouch	Theft	Sugar	Branding
23 Feb. 1785	G James Thomas	Theft	Aniseed	Whipped
28 Oct. 1789	G James Davis	Theft	Sugar	Whipped

Date	Accused	Crime	Commodity	Sentence
9 Dec. 1789	G John Howarth	Theft	Sugar	Whipped
9 Dec. 1789	G George Barlow	Theft	Sugar	Whipped
8 Jun. 1791	G William Abbott	Theft	Bees Wax	Whipped
15 Jan. 1794	G Thomas Howard	Theft	Sugar	Not guilty
15 Jan. 1794	G James Miller	Theft	Sugar	Not guilty
11 Nov. 1794	G Thomas Ford	Theft	Ginger	Imprisoned 6 months
8 Dec. 1794	G Edmund Oldfield	Theft	Sugar	Whipped
13 Jan. 1796	G Richard Broomfield	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
17 Feb. 1769	G Alexander Casey	Theft	Iron nails	Imprisoned 1 month
22 Jun. 1796	G Peter Warrington	Theft	Linen	Imprisoned 1 month
20 Sep. 1797	G John Smith	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
25 Oct. 1797	G Robert Sparkes	Theft	Sugar	Not guilty
6 Dec. 1797	G Henry Cam	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
18 Apr. 1798	G Matthew Quirk	Theft	Saddle	Death
3 Apr. 1799	G Thomas Connor, Richard Buster	Theft	Sugar	Whipped
30 Apr. 1799	G Jacob Abraham	Theft	Sugar	Transportation
30 Oct. 1799	G James Roberts	Theft	Sugar	
19 Feb. 1800	G William Hall	Theft	Sugar	Imprisoned 1 month
17 Sep. 1800	G Francis Gorman	Theft	Iron chains	Whipped
17 Sep. 1800	G William Cobb	Theft	Yarn	Whipped
17 Sep. 1800	G John Watkins	Theft	Tobacco	Whipped

G= Gangsman, T= Ticket porter

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GH Guildhall Library

Ms 2934, The Fellowship of Porters' registration book

Ms 1702/1, Fellowship of Porters' Minutes, 1756-1803

MHS Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA

Vaughan Family Papers

NRO Northamptonshire Records Office

H (K) Hanbury of Kelmarsh Papers

RIBA Royal Institute of British Architects Manuscripts Library

HoH, Henry Holland Papers

Beinecke Beinecke Library, New Haven, CT

OSB MS 52, Osborne Papers

IOR India Office Records, British Library

IOR, E Mss. 283/13-14 'Duties of an Elder Porter'

IOR, B Court Minutes

IOR, L/L/2/1 Property Deeds

IOR H 763 A-B Warehousing Survey

IOR H 51, H 63, H 67, H 326, Misc. Papers on the London establishment

V&A Victoria and Albert Museum

Sun Insurance Index

ML Museum of London

Sun Insurance Index

NMM National Maritime Museum, London

Sun Insurance Index

LMA London Metropolitan Archive

COL/CCS/PL/02 Surveyor's Office Plans

CLC/B/111/MS06482, Harrison and Legas Letterbook

CLC/426/MS10823/4, Benjamin Boddington Journal

CLC/B/055/MS8666, Hand in Hand Minute Books

HO/GY/T/06/025, Guy's Hospital Minutes

HO/GY/T/A/3/4/1, Guy's Hospital Bills

E/BER/E10/2 Greenland Dock Warehouse Accounts

PP Parliamentary Papers (Online)

APS American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Benjamin Vaughan Papers

BL Add. Mss British Library, Additional Manuscripts

BL, Add. Mss 88906 Bowood Papers

BL, Add Mss 41346-75 Samuel Martin Papers

BL, Add. Mss 32686-32992 Newcastle Correspondence

BL, Add. Mss 25403-4, 8133-5 Sir William Musgrave Papers

BL, Add. Mss 75501-10 Diaries of of Stephen Monteage

BL, Add. Mss 38203, 38278 Lord Liverpool Papers

BL, Add. Mss 61868 Lord North Correspondence

BL, Add. Mss 61603 Blenheim Papers, Letters and Memorials

BL, Add. Mss 33419 William Eden Correspondence

MLD Museum of London Docklands

William Vaughan Papers

Thomas Pennant Ms, 'From London to Dover'

West India Dock Company Minute Books

West India Merchants Committee Mss.

ICS Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Senate House, London

M965 Chaloner-Arcedckne Papers (Microfilm)

M120 Simon Taylor Correspondence

M915 Minutes of the Society of West India Merchants (Microfilm)

SM Sir John Soane Museum

Case 77, 'West India Dock Warehousing Competition'

TNA National Records Office

T 11/23-34, Treasury Out-letters

T 1/440, 1/451, 1/530, 1/550, 1/699 Treasury In-Letters

T 70/1493, 'Memorandum book for the warehouse' of Mr Tinney.

T 76/1-16 Port of London Compensation Committee

C 202/267-8, Writ Indexes, 1715-83

C 113/7, Chancery Depositions, Morley vs. Swas

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CUST 59/16 Weymouth Outletters

CUST 64/8 Exeter Outletters

HO 42/20/74 Home Office In-letters

PRO 30/8/231, 30/8/284, 30/8/285, Chatham Papers

BH 1/494-5, Hudson Bay Company warehouse account books (Microfilm),
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RAIL 635/102, 'Plans of Warehouse and Steelyard Belonging to the Hanse Towns in
Germany'
PROB 11/1098/330, 11/1013/40, 3/21/80 Probate Inventories

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