

THE ENGLISH LEATHER INDUSTRY IN  
THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.  
(1563-1700)

by

LESLIE A. CLARKSON, B.A.

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in the University of Nottingham, July 1960.





## **ETHOS**

Boston Spa, Wetherby  
West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ  
[www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

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PREFACE

Since there is very little in print about the leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was thought best to attempt as wide a study as possible. Some restriction, however, was dictated by the limited resources available to me as a research student. Thus a good deal of the material relates to London: this can be justified on the grounds that the leather crafts were most numerous in the capital and it was largely London conditions the government had in mind when enacting legislation for the industry. Also no detailed examination has been made of overseas markets for leather except to show the extent of overseas trade and to try to evaluate its importance to the industry. The chronological limits of this study have been fixed approximately by the leather act of 1563 and the leather duty of 1697 although I have drawn on material outside this period, particularly in the sixteenth century.

This thesis is a greatly revised version of an earlier draft. Additional primary and secondary material has been incorporated and the subject matter has been re-organized. The bulk of the new primary material has been drawn from the courts of Chancery, Exchequer and Star Chamber and from the Records of the London companies of cordwainers and carriers. I have also made much more use of the House of Lords manuscripts published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, as well as other documents contained in the Commission's volumes. It

was more difficult to obtain new provincial material but much more use has been made of published municipal records and records of courts of quarter sessions. The additional secondary material relates both to particular localities and to the wider economic background of the period under discussion.

The major re-organization of presentation has been in connection with the chapters in location and trade, industrial structure, and government policy. In order to study the location of the leather crafts in various parts of the country (Chapter 3) England has been divided into a number of regions which have been examined separately. In Chapters 5 and 6 dealing with industrial structure, the heavy and light leather crafts have been examined separately. The examination of government policy has also been divided analytically rather than chronologically. Chapter 7 deals with technical regulations and Chapter 8 with the control of the internal and external trade. A new introductory chapter has been written attempting to survey the uses of leather and changes in demand and supply during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Four new appendices have been included and the presentation of inventories in Appendix 7 has been changed. The inventories have been analysed in greater detail and it is hoped that their usefulness is thereby increased.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help I have received

from many people, particularly my supervisor Dr. R. Ashton, Professor F. J. Fisher, and my colleagues in the Department of Economic History, Melbourne University. Miss M. Franklin searched out some documents in London for me after I came to Australia; and I received technical advice from Dr. Spiers of the Leathersellers' Technical College, Bermondsey, and Mr. J. J. Williamson of St. Mildred's Tannery, Canterbury. I am grateful to Miss Joyce Wood of the Department of Economic Geography, Melbourne University, for her assistance with the map.

CHAPTER I: LEATHER AND THE ENGLISH ECONOMY.

The leather industry is one of the forgotten occupations in English industrial history. It has been ignored by most historians although one or two have acknowledged its existence. In 1921 Professor A. P. Usher expressed the opinion that the leather industry was more important than the metal crafts in England, France, and even Germany before the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>; and a little earlier Professor N.S.B.Gras had commented, with particular reference to the leather crafts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that "it is these minor industries that we should like to know more about"<sup>2</sup>. Historians of guilds such as Professor Unwin and Miss Kramer have written of guilds of leather workers - sometimes at length<sup>3</sup> - but without attempting to assess the importance of the leather industry. In general, the industry - its techniques, its organisation and its place in the economy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - has remained neglected.

1. A.P. Usher, Introduction to the Industrial History of England (1921), p.254.
2. N.S.B.Gras, The Early English Customs System (Harvard, 1918), p. 118.
3. G.Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, 1904); S.Kramer, The English Craft Guilds (Columbia, 1927).

This neglect is plainly undeserved. Writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Macpherson in his Annals of Commerce reckoned that the value of leather manufactured in England in 1785 was second only to that of woollen cloth although it was then being displaced by the metallurgical industry<sup>1</sup>. Much the same had been implied by Henry Belasyse writing in 1657:

"As for the comodities of England, and its cheife richyes looked after by strangers, the cheife and first is cloth, which maketh all Europe almost Englands servant, and weare our liveray. The next is our tinn or pewter, which is so excellent in Cornewall that its only not sylver. Leather is excellent in England, and of great asteeme abroad in so much that whole shippfull of old bootes brought out of England....."2

The importance of the industry to the nation had been stressed earlier in a petition presented to Parliament in 1629:

"How many millions within the bounds of this little island, of men, women and children, eat their bread by the sweat of their labour; who deal only, in this leathern commodity? There is no City in England..., but have their hands working in this Tan Vat. The Kingdom by their industry is generally furnished..."3

The language was extravagant but it was not entirely divorced from reality.

1. D. Macpherson, Annals of Commerce, vol. IV (1805), p. 15.
2. H. B(elasyse), An English Traveller's First Curiosity ... (1657, in Hist. Mss. Comm., Various Collections, vol. II, p. 200.
3. LEATHER: A Discourse tendered to the High Court of Parliament (1629, reprinted in E. Arber, An English Garner vol. IV (1897), p. 215-6.

In the sixteenth century the importance of the leather industry was amply demonstrated by the numerous statutes made for its regulation. Not only did these acts explicitly refer to the importance of leather - "Where before tyme diverse good estatutes have bene made for the true tannyng of leather, wherein consisteth a greate comon wealth and comoditie to all men, for that everie sort of people of necessitie must vse and have leather for divers and sondrie purposes"<sup>1</sup> - but their very existence demonstrated that the leather industry was a matter of national concern. The leather acts stood beside the regulations governing the manufacture of cloth as one of the two examples of the government's trying to control industrial techniques and organization. Together with the cloth acts and the Statute of Artificers, the leather acts formed the basis of industrial regulation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>2</sup>.

The industry was important in the economy because leather had many valuable and varied uses, and because the manufacture of leather and leather goods provided employment for large numbers of people. The industry had an additional importance since it used hides and skins which were by-products of agriculture.

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1. 2 & 3 Ed. VI, cap. 11, preamble.

2. See Chapters 7 and 8, passim.

We need not say a great deal here about the industry as a source of employment; this point is discussed in a subsequent chapter<sup>1</sup>. It is worth noting at this stage, however, that the leather crafts were scattered throughout the country. In some places they formed the most important single group of industrial occupations; and one or two towns - Northampton for example - tended to specialize in the manufacture of leather and leather goods with the result that the local economy rested heavily on these crafts.

Leather was used for many difference<sup>t</sup> purposes. In the 1620s there were said to be twenty occupations working entirely or partly with leather<sup>2</sup> not including tanners and leather dressers who actually made leather. The most common use of leather was for boots and shoes and leather clothing of several kinds. The manufacture of saddles and harnesses, buckets, and other goods, absorbed large quantities of leather and other occupations such as upholstering, coach building and trunkmaking used leather together with other materials.

1. See Chapter 3, passim.

2. They were shoemaking, currying, bookbinding, saddlemaking, upholstering, budgetmaking, trunkmaking, casemaking, woolcard making, sheathmaking, and the manufacture of sheaths, hawks' hoods, scabbards, boxes, cabinets, bottles and jacks, girdles, gloves, coaches, and coach harnesses (Discourse on Leather, in Arber, op.cit.p.216)

The reason why leather served for so many purposes was that there were several kinds of leather possessing different characteristics. First, there was tanned leather made by treating hides and skins with oak bark<sup>1</sup>. Cattle hides tanned in this way made tough, supple, and waterproof leather particularly suitable for footwear. The strongest leather was tanned from the backs of cow and steer hides and was the best for soles of boots and shoes; the bellies of the hides produced thinner leather suitable for the uppers and linings of footwear<sup>2</sup>. Poorer quality leather could be made from bull and horse hides and this was suitable for harnesses, saddles and other goods<sup>3</sup>. Tanned sheepskins - known as bazels - were used for the linings of other goods. "Tann'd Bazelles are made to indure no stress but to lyne skirtes of saddles Insides of Girdles, and to paste in Trunckes, And onely for stiffennings to be added to other substances<sup>4n</sup>.

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1. See Chapter 2, pp. 50 et seq.

2. See 5 Eliz. cap. 8, sect. 19, also Chapter 2, p. 60

3. B.M., Lans. Mss. 5, no. 58; 74, fos. 140-1. In July 1607 the House of Commons rejected a bill sent from the Lords designed to prevent shoemakers using horse hides and hog skins. Robert Bowyer noted in his diary: "nota the reason the bill was yelded to (by the Lords) be because such skynnes being put into shoes or boots will sucke in wett schich is against the health of the wearer. Tfulie quoth one it sheweth an honourable care in the Lords of the health of us meaner persons, but if the act passe another commoditie will ensue, viz harneis for coach horses which great men use wilbe the cheaper". (D.H. Willson (ed.), The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer, 1606-1607 (1931), pp. 363, 365).

4. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38 (1637)

Secondly there were several kinds of dressed leather made by treating skins with alum or oil<sup>1</sup>. A list compiled in 1593 mentioned eight different varieties of alum dressed (i.e. tawed) leather made from sheep, lamb, kid or fawn, horse, dog, buck and doe, or calf skins; and thirteen types of oil dressed leather manufactured from the same skins or from buff, chamois, stag, or seal skins<sup>2</sup>. Oil dressed leather was soft and spongy (e.g. chamois leather) and was used mainly for better quality clothing. Tawed leather was cheaper, thicker and tougher. It had many uses but was particularly fitted for tough hard wearing clothing for the "poor artificier, husbandman & labourer"<sup>3</sup>.

Leather was therefore one of the more important commodities produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In an age before the introduction of rubber and plastics, it had practically no substitute whenever a hardwearing, flexible and waterproof material was required. Its durability and warmth made it a satisfactory substitute for woollen cloth<sup>4</sup> for some items of clothing such as gloves, jackets, breeches and even stockings. It was used during this period to make things for which there are now more

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1. See Chapter 2, pp.57 et seq.

2. B.M. Lans.Ms. 74, fo. 160.

3. B.M. Lans Ms. 74, fo.s. 140-1. See also J.W. Waterer, *Leather in Life, Art and Industry* (London, 1944), p.141.

4. *Infra*, p.17

satisfactory materials, notably buckets<sup>1</sup> and bottles. And some kinds of leather were suitable for luxury or semi-luxury goods<sup>2</sup>.

There is no reliable way of measuring the production of leather or assessing the consumption of leather by different occupations. Still less is there any possibility of measuring changes in production and consumption over a period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Between June 1697 and June 1698 a 15 per cent ad valorem duty on leather manufactured in England yielded £86,000 which means that the total value of the leather charged was more than £573,000<sup>3</sup>. This was probably too low for it is not likely that the excise commissioners covered every leather manufacturer in the country (particularly in the first year of the duty) and probably

1. There was a considerable demand for leather fire buckets. In June 1566, for example, the corporation of Lincoln~~shire~~ bought four dozen leather buckets from London, costing £5.12.6. More buckets were ordered in 1582. In 1614 four Lincoln towns decided to hang 12 leather fire buckets in their parish churches, and the inhabitants were ordered to keep buckets in their houses (Hist. Mss. Comm. Report 14, Appendix 8, pp.62, 68, 91).
2. *Infra*, pp. 19-20, 22
3. P.R.O., E. 351/1339/372. See also Appendix 6.

manufacturers under-valued their output in order to reduce the amount of duty they had to pay. Macpherson estimated the value of leather produced in England in 1785 at £10,500,000<sup>1</sup>. Such a growth in the value of output from 1697/8 is hardly credible; either the later figure was much too low or the 1785 figure was much too high. Certainly we cannot rest any arguments on estimates of output obtained from the excise returns in the late seventeenth century; and even if we could there are no estimates for the earlier period with which they might be compared.

Among the Harleian manuscripts there exists a statement of the annual production of leather and leather goods. There is no indication of the author, nor of the purpose of the document and it is not dated, although it seems to relate to the late seventeenth century<sup>2</sup>. It was calculated that 300,000 calfskins and 500,000 cattle hides were made into leather yearly, producing 19,800,000 lbs. of leather valued at £540,000 (a figure similar to the calculation from the excise duty). There was no estimate of the quantity of leather made from other kinds of skins.

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1. Macpherson, op.cit. p.15.

2. B.M. Harleian Ms.6867, fo.266. The document is bound with other mss. dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The figures of population contained in it appear to owe something to Gregory King; and the way in which the calculations are presented is also reminiscent of King's work. The document is reproduced in Appendix 2.

The estimates of consumption are more interesting. The total population was taken as 5,400,000, of which 100,000 either went bare-footed or wore brogues (shoes made of raw hides). The remaining 5,300,000 demanded two pairs of shoes a year, which absorbed over 10,000,000 lbs. of leather. The production of 100,000 boots a year accounted for another 700,000 lbs. of leather, and other kinds of footwear (including clogs made partly of leather) also used 700,000 lbs. of leather. The total production of all kinds of footwear absorbed 11,540 lbs of leather or about 58 per cent of the total estimated production. Coach harnesses accounted for a further 130,000 lbs. of leather leaving just over 8,000,000 lbs. a year for other purposes.

It is difficult to know how much reliance to put on these estimates. The total production figures for leather and leather goods were guesses which may or may not have approximated to the truth. Regarding the relative consumption of leather by shoemakers and other leather users, the estimate was probably correct in showing that the former used the largest proportion of leather. This was also implied in 1593 when it was stated that "Shoe lether and woollen cloth is the onely cheefe ware of this land both for transportacions and ordenary wearing of all sortes of p(er)sons And...ther is a hundreth tymes more Cloth and shoe leather woorne in a yeare than is of

thes kindes of Lethers (i.e. dressed leather)"<sup>1</sup>.

Although there is no direct evidence to show whether the leather industry expanded or not during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can make an indirect approach to the question by examining the nature of the demand for leather and leather goods and the factors likely to affect demand. To do this it is convenient to break up total demand into several sections and examine each one in turn. We shall consider, therefore, the demand for footwear, leather clothing and goods associated with transport. The demand for these products was a function of population and income. We shall also examine the demand for leather arising from agricultural and industrial occupations. The demand for leather goods for military purposes, and overseas demand requires special consideration.

The manufacturers of footwear were the most important group using leather. Every one needed boots and shoes. The demand "reaches from the King downwards to his meanest vassal; and ascends from the Common subject up to the Prince and Nobleman"...There was no good substitute for leather for this purpose. "Suppose we had no leather.... and that then necessity compelled us to travail hard for some new invention to preserve our feet from the ground: what could the brain of man find out for

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1. B.M. Lans.Ms. 74, fo. 148.

the foot or leg, so fit, so pliant, so comely to the eye, so curious in the wearing, so lasting, and so contemning of all sorts of weather, as this treasure of the Shoemaker?"<sup>1</sup>. There were a few substitutes such as wooden clogs and raw hides but there is no evidence that they were generally worn in England<sup>2</sup>.

We are probably right in assuming that practically everybody wore some kind of leather footwear - in the English climate it was a necessity. Probably, too, the income-elasticity of demand for footwear intended to keep out the cold and damp was low. Only in cases of extreme hardship would men do without boots or shoes; on the other hand, once a man were adequately shod he was not likely to continue buying hard wearing footwear as his income rose. Thus the total demand for this kind of footwear must certainly have increased as the population doubled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; however, changes in the level of personal incomes did not lead to much change in per capita demand.

In addition to this essential footwear, there was also a demand for luxury and semi-luxury footwear which was certainly responsive to changes in the levels of incomes.

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1. LEATHER: A Discourse, in Arber, op. cit., p. 215.

2. The estimate of production referred to above (p. 8) included an annual production of 800,000 clogs and patterns worn by "1/7 of ye women and children". Each pair of clogs contained  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of leather.

Changes in income during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are hard to measure. It is difficult to escape the impression that national income - and more significantly national income per head of population - was higher at the end of the seventeenth century than it had been in the early sixteenth century. The evidence of growing agricultural and industrial production and of increasing internal trade points in this direction<sup>1</sup>. The curve was not smoothly upwards throughout the period, and not all sections of the community were affected in the same way. In particular, it has recently been estimated that a significant proportion of the population - a third or more which got its income mainly from wages - suffered a considerable fall in their real incomes between the early sixteenth century and about 1630<sup>2</sup>. The extent of the fall in real incomes and the proportion of the population which suffered in this way can both be questioned, but they cannot be denied. However it is doubtful whether this decline in purchasing power had a serious depressing effect on the

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1. For a summary of the evidence see F.J. Fisher, "The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Dark Ages in English Economic History?", Economica, new series, vol. XXIV (1957), pp. 6-15.
  2. E.H. Phelps Brown & S.V. Hopkins, "Wage-rates and Prices: Evidence for population Pressure in the Sixteenth Century", Economica, new series, vol. XXIV (1957), pp.289, 299. See also idem, "Seven Centuries of the Price of Consumables", Economica, new series, vol. XXXIII (1956), pp. 306, 312-3.

demand for boots and shoes. Even if a wage earner restricted his demand for new shoes, his demand for leather to mend his old shoes might well increase, or he might buy leather to make his own shoes instead of buying footwear from the shoemakers.

Other sections of the population on the whole fared better than the wage earner. Professor Fisher, for example, has drawn attention to the increased spending in London by the gentry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>1</sup>; and Dr Hoskins has provided evidence of improved living standards of "yeoman families" reflected in better housing and furnishings<sup>2</sup>. Both examples point to rising incomes for these sections of the community.

This growth in incomes was reflected by changes in fashions of footwear worn by the upper classes during the seventeenth century. There were times when it was fashionable to wear certain types of boots and shoes whether they were practical or not. Such goods possessed a high income-elasticity of demand and the evidence suggests that demand per capita increased considerably in some periods of the seventeenth century.

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1. F.J.Fisher, "The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth And Seventeenth Centuries", Trans. Royal Hist. Society, 4th series, vol. XXX (1948), p. 40.
  2. Referred to by J.D.Chambers, The Vale of Trent, 1676-1800 (Economic History Review Supplement, no. 3), p. 36.

The practice of wearing boots of extravagant proportions became fashionable during the reign of James I and persisted for more than half a century. There were some modifications in the fashion from one year to another for no very obvious reasons. In some years the tops of boots ended below the knee, at other times above; sometimes the tops were made to fit closely to the leg of the wearer and sometimes they stood out like great buckets. It was also fashionable to wear huge spur leathers with the boots, whether or not the wearer ever intended to sit astride a horse<sup>1</sup>. "Ye unmoderate vse of boots more then formerly" was condemned by the London Court of Aldermen in 1627. It was claimed that one reason for the high prices of leather at the time<sup>2</sup> was the "wearing of bootes of late yearly more then in former wch thing wee conceave proveth a great hinderance to many thousands of ye poore people

1. F.M.Kelly & R.Schwabe, *Historic Costume, 1490-1790* (2nd ed., London, 1929), pp. 128-30. ✓

2. In 1627 the Navy had to pay 44s. for leather backs compared with 34s. in the two previous years. See Appendix I.

of this kingdom, who were wonted to have full  
 ymploym<sup>t</sup> by knitting of stockings wch employm<sup>t</sup> is  
 greatly abated and in effect wholely taken awaie. . ."1.  
 The discourse on Leather presented to Parliament in  
 1629 also attacked "the generality of wearing, and the  
 manner of cutting boots out with huge, sloverly,  
 unmannerly, and immoderate tops. For the general  
 walking in Boots, is a pride taken up by the  
 Courtier, and is descended down to the clown". Merchants,  
 mechanics, the clergy, scholars, lawyers, serving men,  
 "all sorts of men" were accused of delighting in "this  
 wasteful wantonness", and it was reckoned that "one pair  
 of boots eats up the leather of six pairs of reasonable  
 men's shoes"2.

This particular fashion in footwear certainly  
 increased the total demand for leather and production  
 probably increased in response, although the statements  
 quoted above suggest that the manufacture of these  
 kinds of boots to some extent took leather away from the  
 manufacture of "reasonable men's shoes". It is possible  
 too that the demand for fashionable walking boots  
 increased the demand for the lighter and more attractive  
 dressed leather more than the demand for tanned leather.

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1. Repertories 41, fo. 80.

2. LEATHER: A Discourse, in Arber, op.cit. pp.218-9.

In the account books of a Kentish gentleman James Masters, for example, which he kept between 1646 and 1676, there were many entries of purchases of boots with tops tawed or oil-dressed leather<sup>1</sup>. Light leather and even cloth was being used for shoes as well as boots in the later seventeenth century<sup>2</sup> - although not presumably for those which saw hard service in the fields or city streets. However, the fashion for walking boots waned in the later seventeenth century<sup>3</sup> and in 1675 Parliament was told that a third part less leather (was) spent by the disuse of walking boots"<sup>4</sup>.

In short, the demand for footwear and hence for leather certainly increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the population increased, and the demand for semi-luxury boots and shoes also increased in some periods as a result of rising incomes and changing fashions. Much the same can be said about the demand for leather clothing other than boots and shoes. Leather clothing such as breeches and jerkins was hard wearing and particularly suitable for working clothes. According to London leathersellers in 1594, labourers, butchers, husbandmen, masons, marblers, bricklayers,

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1. "Expense Book of James Masters, 1646-1676", Archaeologia Cantiana, vols. XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, *passim*.

2. Cal. SP.D., 1675, pp. 369-70.

3. Kelly & Schwabe, *op.cit.* p. 166.

4. Cal.SP.D., p. 166.

carpenters, braziers, pewterers, plumbers, ironmongers, brewers, plasterers, and also soldiers, yeomen and gentlemen, were "for the most part clad in leather"<sup>1</sup>. The demand for leather from these sources must have increased as population grew.

When used for clothing leather was to some extent a substitute for woollen cloth. For hardwearing, durable, working clothing, leather had some advantages over wool. It did not wear out as quickly and it was more resistant to cold and wet. Possibly the initial cost of leather clothing was higher than the cost of similar items of woollen clothing<sup>2</sup> but this was compensated by the fact

1. Remembrancia II, no. 84.

2. There are no comparable figures for the prices of similar items of leather and woollen clothing. Probably leather was more expensive than a piece of cloth of similar size. For example, Winchester College bought cloth at 78s. a piece (of 24 yards) in 1576. By 1600 the price paid was 120s. Leather backs bought by the Navy in these two years cost 23.33s. and 23.00s. each. (Sir William Beveridge, Wages and Prices in England (1939), pp. 87, 677). Since a leather back was probably no more than about 1/12 of the area of a piece of cloth (assuming the back was about six feet long), leather was - piece for piece - dearer than cloth. Probably cheaper leather than tanned backs would be used for clothing. Even so the price advantage was probably still in favour of woollen cloth.

that leather clothing lasted longer.

It seems that after allowing for the greater durability of leather clothing ~~was~~ the relative costs of woollen and leather clothing were sufficiently close for changes in the price of one commodity to influence the demand for the other. For example, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century it appears from the unsatisfactory price indices available that the price of leather and leather goods was more or less stable but that the price of cloth was rising. In such

1. Price relatives for leather compiled by Beveridge, op. cit., pp. 737-9 are:

1576	1579	1590	1600	
51.9	46.7	51.7	51.1	(see Appendix I)

For cloth: (pp. 705, 712)

1570	1580	1590	1600	) Bought by Winchester
61.1	68.3	69.2	90.0	) College
1575	1581	1590	1600	) Bought by Westminster
62.5	66.7	68.8	71.9	) School

The price of shoes purchased by the Lord Chamberlain's department fell between 1576 and 1600 (ibid, p. 457). On the other hand Thorold Rogers shows that the price of cattle hides (which contributed to the bulk of the cost of tanned leather) bought by Eton College rose between 1566/70 and 1591/1600 (J.E.T. Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices Vol. V (Oxford, 1887), p. 411.

conditions some substitution of leather clothing for woollen might be expected. There is at least one piece of evidence to suggest that this happened. In 1591 it was proposed that the manufacture of dressed leather should be regulated by a patent. The intention of the patentee who proposed the scheme was personal gain,<sup>1</sup> but one of the government ministers commended the idea of regulating the production of dressed leather as "a thing of more proffitt to poore subiectes ... then can be estimated, now so many vse leather for thrift and saving in apparell ..."<sup>2</sup>. Conversely it is possible that the 15 per cent duty placed on leather in 1697 led to a fall in the demand for leather for clothing although there is no evidence.

Apart from working clothing there was a demand for other items such as gloves, belts, and fine quality jerkins, about which it is not possible to say very much. Fine leather clothing was worn from time to time in fashionable society<sup>3</sup>, and demand probably increased as incomes rose. But comparatively little leather can have

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1. See Chapter 7, pp.265-271.

2. B.M., Lans. M.S. 67, Fo. 206 (my italics).

3. Kelly & Schwabe, op.cit., pp.57,124. For examples of fine leather clothing dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see plates in Waterer, Leather in Life, etc.

been used for such garments. Far more important was the manufacture of gloves. A great many were made and glovers were among the most numerous of the leather craftsmen<sup>1</sup>. Yet we know little of the domestic demand for gloves<sup>2</sup>. There was a luxury demand for perfumed gloves<sup>3</sup> and one reason advanced for the reputation of the Woodstock district as a glovemaking centre was the frequent visits of the royal Court to the district and the consequent demand for fine gloves<sup>4</sup>. The bulk of the demand for gloves, however, must have come from more mundane sources. Probably all but the very poor wore gloves and no doubt total demand increased with population growth.

In an age when land carriage was by horse back or horse and cart, the demand for leather saddles and harnesses was large and it probably expanded with the increase in population and trade. There was in addition in the early seventeenth century a new demand for leather

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1. See Chapter 3, passim.
  2. Considerable quantities of gloves were exported. See below, p. 31
  3. Some were imported from Spain (See T. Willan, Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade (Manchester, U.P., 1939) p.76) although others were made in England. In the early seventeenth century a Spanish recipe book containing instructions for perfuming gloves was translated into English. One method included soaking leather gloves in a mixture of oil of balm, violets, roses and perfumed kid's suet, wrapping them in paper "And lett them lye see three nights layd under the firste Quilt of the Bedd you lye on" (B.M., Harleian Ms. 1882).
  4. See Chapter 3, p.113

for coaches and coach harnesses. "Ye common and frequent vse of Coaches"<sup>1</sup> was becoming more common in London in the first half of the seventeenth century<sup>2</sup>, so much so that in 1634 the privy Council appointed a Committee to inquire into the matter<sup>3</sup>. Leather was used both for upholstering coaches and for coach harnesses. "What prodigal spending of leather is there made in covering but one coach, and cutting out the harness for it; and this leather not the meanest sort or worst; but the principal and strongest, which might, otherwise, serve for Sooling Leather and Upper Leather". In the London area alone in the 1620s there were about 5,000 coaches embodying 5,000 hides of tanned leather and the practice of riding in coaches had spread in the suburbs "...Pride leaps into her chariot in every shire, Town and City. Every private Gentleman is now a PHEATON, and must hurry with his thundering caroch along the streets, as that proud boy"<sup>4</sup>. It was alleged in 1675 that the increasing use of coaches reduced the demand for leather for harnesses and saddles: "...riding furniture for horse and man, by reason of the great use of stage

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1. Repertories 41. fo. 80

2. Fisher, "London as a Centre of Sonspicious Consumption" p. 46.

3. P.R.O., P.C. 2/43. p.606

4. Discouse on Leather. in Arber, op.cit., p.218.

coaches, makes nothing the consumption of leather it did formerly..."<sup>1</sup>. It is difficult to either prove or to disprove this statement. It was made by persons who were interested in exporting leather and it was part of their case that home demand was falling and that exports should therefore be allowed. On the other hand, the London shoemakers, who wanted home produced leather kept in the country for the use of leather craftsmen<sup>2</sup>, denied that the home consumption of leather was falling, although they made no reference to the particular charge about coaches<sup>3</sup>. On balance it is difficult to believe that the increasing use of coaches led to a fall in the demand for leather.

So far we have considered the demand for leather arising from personal needs for footwear, clothing and means of transport. The demand from these sources increased. Almost certainly the demand for leather for various household uses such as upholstery and wall hangings also increased as living standards

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, pp. 368-70

2. For the controversy over the export of leather see Chapter 8, pp.339-343.

3. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, pp.370-1.

improved<sup>1</sup>. There can be little doubt, too, that the demand for leather for agricultural and industrial uses grew in this period.

Farmers had many uses for leather "what for boots and shoes for himselfe and family and calfskins to cloathe himselfe and children, and leather for saddles, cart saddles, horse collars and other occommodations about husbandry..."<sup>2</sup>. The use farmers made of leather can be seen from their inventories<sup>3</sup>. We have no direct evidence that demand from this source increased but it seems likely in view of the general economic expansion of the time. In the case

1. For the use of leather for various domestic purposes (leather chairs, bottles, trunks, etc.) see F.W. Steer, Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635-1749 (Essex Records Office, 1950), pp.14, 19, 30; and inventories nos. 46, 79, 93, 97, 101, 119, 135, 151, etc., etc. Many other references will be found in the index. The use of gilded leather for bed and wall hangings developed in the later seventeenth century; see P. Maquoid & R. Edwards, The Dictionary of English Furniture (2nd.ed., London, 1954), vol 2, articles under "Leather", "Gilding" and "Hangings". The manufacture of gilded leather in England was apparently introduced from Holland in the mid-seventeenth century; see Chapter 2, p.63.
2. B.M., Thomason Tracts, E. 168 (4), p.3 (about 1641).
3. See for example the inventories in Steer, op.cit. passim, and introduction, p.60.

of industry we can be a little more definite. We have already seen that many craftsmen used leather clothing in their occupations<sup>1</sup>. In addition, two industries - both expanding in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - made considerable use of leather. These were the iron and the coal industries.

Iron smelters used leather bellows to provide the blast for the furnaces. There is no way of knowing how much leather was demanded in this way but it was large. Bellows received hard use and the leather parts needed replacing fairly often as the bellows became "defective in the leathers"<sup>2</sup>. The iron industry expanded considerably between the early sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, partly by making use of larger furnaces which needed stronger blasts and hence larger bellows. Following a pause in the middle years of the seventeenth century, output probably increased again from about 1660<sup>3</sup>.

The expansion of the coal industry was greater than the iron industry. Production increased fourteen-fold between the mid-sixteenth and late seventeenth

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1. *Supra*, P.16.

2. H.R. Schubert, History of the British Iron and Steel Industry (London, 1957), pp.409-412.

3. Schubert, *op.cit.*, p.335; M.W. Flinn, "The Growth of the English Iron Industry, 1660-1760", Economic History Review, 2nd Series, vol. XI (1958), pp. 146-8.

centuries, an expansion associated with more extensive and deeper mining<sup>1</sup>. Miners made considerable use of leather, especially for drainage purposes. One common method of drainage in use in the seventeenth century was an endless chain worked by a winch at the pit head, to which was attached buckets made of wood or leather. Another method in use in the Midlands was a suction pump consisting of a cylinder and a piston bordered with leather<sup>2</sup>. In addition leather bands were used in the shafts for raising and lowering men and coal. Although it is impossible to estimate the level of demand it must have been considerable and increasing as coal production expanded<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the demand for leather from domestic, agricultural and industrial sources, there was also a demand for military purposes that reached

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1. J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry (London, 1932), vol. 1, pp. 19-22, 23-77, passim.
  2. Ibid, vol.II, p.450.
  3. One colliery in the early nineteenth century absorbed supplies of three tanneries for the manufacture of leather working bands and buckets. This was an exceptional case even for the nineteenth century and the scale of operations in sixteenth and seventeenth century coal mines was very much smaller. However the example indicates the kind of demand for leather that came from coal mines (J.H. Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain, vol. 1 (C.U.P., 2nd ed., 1930), p. 343).

large proportions on some occasions in the seventeenth century. The struggle with Spain in the 1620s and later the campaigns in Ireland and Scotland, created a large demand for boots and shoes, harnesses and saddles, belts and sword scabbards, and other leather goods. A few examples may be given to indicate the extent of military demands.

In 1626 the Privy Council instructed the Lord Deputy of Ireland to see that the clothing allowance for the army included two pairs of shoes for every soldier<sup>1</sup>. In the following year the government was busily equipping an army to serve with the King of Denmark. In March the Master of Ordinance was ordered to provide swords together with the girdles, hangers, and belts for 3,000 men and in August a further 2,800 were ordered together with 300 shooting gloves<sup>2</sup>. In the meantime the Privy Council arranged with Philip Burlamachi that he should engage a ship to take men and supplies to Denmark and also to supply 1,000 pairs of shoes to men embarking at St. Katherine's Wharf in London. He later received a contract for £1,200 to supply 3,000 soldiers waiting at Portsmouth with shoes, stockings and shirts<sup>3</sup>. At the end of the

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1. Acts of the Privy Council, March, 1626, p. 403.

2. *Ibid*, 1627, pp. 163, 404, 474, 489, 499.

3. *Ibid*, 1627, pp. 244, 253.

year the government was still engaged on raising military supplies. In October the Lord Treasurer made contracts for 10,000 pairs of shoes for the army and navy. In November and December the Lords Lieutenant of Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire were instructed to raise supplies including shoes for the army waiting embarkation at Plymouth. They were given £1,000 for the purposes and were empowered to levy further sums if necessary<sup>1</sup>.

During the various military campaigns of the 1640s and 1650s the demand for military equipment of leather probably reached a peak. One of the earliest orders in this period was made in 1639 when an unspecified number of saddles was ordered from the London Company of Saddlers, to be delivered monthly to the army in the North<sup>2</sup>. In 1643 large quantities of shoes and other equipment were received by the regiments in Ireland<sup>3</sup>. During 1649 and 1650 a group of four London shoemakers was given a contract to supply 2,000 pairs of boots and 8,000 pairs of shoes to the armies in Scotland and Ireland. The order for the boots was worth about £1,500 and for the shoes in the region of £1,000. The Company of Cordwainers and the Company

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1. Ibid, 1627-8, pp.64, 74, 125, 148, 162, 171.

2. Cal. S.P.D., 1639-40, p. 369.

3. "Marquis of Ormonde's Mss.", Hist.Mss.Comm., Report 14, Appendix 7, pp.147-8.

of Carriers were asked to inspect the goods as they were delivered<sup>1</sup>. Even larger orders for leather equipment were placed in 1651. In the first eight months of the year the government authorised payments amounting to more than £10,600 to leather manufacturers for 7,680 pairs of boots, 17,400 pairs of shoes, 4,130 saddles and bridles, 2,000 pairs of stirrups, 2,000 girths, and 30 pistol holsters. All this equipment was for the armies of Ireland and Scotland. Most of the footwear was bought from the four shoemakers who had supplied equipment in the previous year<sup>2</sup>. Later in the century there were further large orders. For example in 1689 the government bought 4,000 pairs of shoes at Northampton and Oxford for the Irish army<sup>3</sup>.

It is difficult to assess the effect of these large but irregular purchases on the leather industry. In the short run they were likely to lead to high prices and scarcities<sup>4</sup> although such price series as

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1. *Cal.S.P.D.*, 1648-50, p.412, 561, 525-6, 587, 591, 593-4, 603, 607.

2. *Ibid*, 1651, pp.537, 548-9, 550, 552-4, 556-7, 559, 576, 570-1, 576, 581-2.

3. *Ibid*, 1689, pp.276, 300.

4. In 1641 there were allegations of high prices and that the army in the North was bare-footed because of the shortage of shoes (*B.M. Thomason Tracts*, E. 168(4), p.5.

exist are contradictory. The Beveridge series for tanned leather shows a persistent fall in prices during the 1640s and 1650s when military demand was high; the price of shoes, on the other hand, rose<sup>1</sup>. According to Thorold Rogers the price of shoes before the Civil War was 2 shillings, rising to 5 shillings at the end of the war. The price of boots moved from 8s.10d. to 15s. 5d. during the same period<sup>2</sup>. In the long run military demands might provide a stimulus to increased production as long as manufacturers could rely on this source of demand continuing. However military demand was intermittent. It seems likely that production increased temporarily as manufacturers fulfilled specific orders, but it is questionable whether military requirements brought about a permanent expansion of output.

More important because it was more enduring was the demand for leather and leather goods from overseas. There is clear evidence that in the last forty years of the seventeenth century the overseas demand for English leather and leather goods increased considerably.

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1. See Appendix I.

2. Rogers, op.cit., vol.V, pp.733-4.

It is not part of this present study to make a detailed examination of the overseas trade in leather and leather goods<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless the main trends can be briefly outlined, at least in regard to the trade conducted from London. The export of hides, skins and leather was prohibited except under licence until the 1660s when the trade was temporarily thrown open; restrictions were finally removed in 1685<sup>2</sup>. Until the 1660s most of the leather leaving London legally was manufactured from calfskins. Rather less than 1,500 dozen dressed skins left London in 1606/7, 4,400 in 1630/1 and 3,100 in 1640/1. Thereafter the numbers declined<sup>3</sup>, possibly because in 1641 and again in 1654 the government restricted the size of skin which could legally be regarded as a calfskin by the holders of export licences<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the exports<sup>from</sup> London, the merchants of Chester had the right to export 6,000 dozen skins a year for much of the first half of the seventeenth century<sup>5</sup>. Most of the shipments went to Southern Europe. After the Restoration of the position

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1. The detailed study of the records relating to overseas trade requires much more time than could be afforded during the preparation of this work.
  2. See Chapter 8, pp. 342-3
  3. The statistics and sources are presented in Appendix 4.
  4. See Chapter 8, pp. 328-9
  5. See Chapter 8, pp. 323-6.

was slightly different. Greatly increased quantities of calfskins left London although it is not clear how many were dressed and how many were raw. The export of tanned leather also increased. Negligible amounts left London legally before 1660. In 1663/4 a minimum of 2,700 cwt. was exported; by the end of the century the figure had risen to over 11,000 cwt., most of it going to European markets.

The same sort of story can be seen with leather goods. Before 1660 there was a regular export of leather gloves, mainly to Europe. These continued after 1660 but in addition large quantities were sent to the American colonies. There was also an export trade in footwear, saddles and other items, and particularly in "wrought" leather<sup>1</sup> during the last forty years of the seventeenth century. In 1663/4 the port books record 44 cwt. of wrought leather leaving London (this figure is probably too low); in 1699/1700 1,300 cwt. was exported<sup>2</sup>. Practically all exports went to the rapidly expanding markets of the West Indian and American colonies<sup>3</sup>.

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1. "Wrought" leather seems sometimes to refer to uncut leather and sometimes to leather goods. For a discussion of the term see Appendix 4.

2. See Appendix 4.

3. See R. Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1660-1700", Economic History Review, 2nd Series, vol. III (1954), p. 154.

Whether the increased foreign and colonial demand resulted in increased production in the leather industry is another matter. There were some suggestions in the 1640s and 1650s that exports of dressed calfskins were made at the expense of the home market<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand it is likely that in the Chester region the production of dressed leather would have languished had exports not been allowed under licence<sup>2</sup>. During the discussions on proposals to allow the unregulated export of leather which took place between 1675 and 1685, it was claimed by some groups that export was necessary in order to compensate for a fall in the home demand for leather although this claim was challenged by others who opposed the policy of free exports<sup>3</sup>. There seems little doubt that overseas markets were an additional rather than an alternative source of demand for leather and leather goods.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, therefore, the demand for leather increased. In part the increase was the result of an increasing population, but the demand per head of population also increased as a result of expansion in agriculture, industry and trade and personal incomes. Probably the demand for some types of light leather increased more than the demand for tanned leather.

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1. B.M. Thomason Tracts, E.168 (4), preamble; P.R.O., S.P.18/123 no. 2.

2. See Chapter 3 pp. 97.

3. See Chapter 8, pp. 339-341.

There is some direct evidence of an expansion in the production of light leather during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1592 Edward Darcy, who was trying to obtain a patent to control the manufacture of dressed leather, claimed that leatherdressing was "being newly put in practise"<sup>1</sup>. This was obviously not true - there were leatherdressers in England long before the sixteenth century - but Darcy may have been attracted by an expansion in output, perhaps associated with an increased demand for leather clothing<sup>2</sup>. In 1610 two separate witnesses told a commission of enquiry appointed by the Exchequer Court that the manufacture of oil-dressed, gilded and coloured leather had much increased and was used for leather stockings and other goods<sup>3</sup>. Some time in the early seventeenth century leatherdressers and dyers petitioned Parliament that the import of small quantities of logwood be allowed into the country for dyeing leather, notwithstanding an act of 1597 prohibiting its import<sup>4</sup>. Later in the century the author of England's Great Happiness remarked on the increase in the production of various luxury and semi-luxury goods including gilded leather<sup>5</sup>.

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1. B.M. Lans. Ms. 74, fo.218-9.

2. Supra, p.16

3. P.R.O. Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/4105.

4. "House of Lords Mss., 1625-41", Hist. Mss. Comm., 4th Report, Appendix, p.124. (The petition is undated.)

5. England's Great Happiness (London, 1677, reprinted in H.R. McCulloch, Early English Tracts on Commerce, Cambridge edition, 1954), pp. 260-1.

There are no similar direct pointers to an increasing production of tanned leather. However, we can examine the factors governing the production of tanned leather in order to see whether this branch of the leather industry was in a position to respond to an increase in demand.

One factor we can exclude at once. The methods of tanning - save for one or two unimportant experiments - remained unchanged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>1</sup>. Thus any increase in production had to come from traditional methods. Here two factors were particularly important: the supply of hides for tanning, and the supply of oak bark which was the most important tanning material.

Leather manufacturers had no direct influence over the supplies of hides and skins. These were in joint production with meat, dairy-products, or wool, and supplies became available in response to the demand for those items and not as the result of the demand of leather manufacturers<sup>2</sup>. One or two writers have suggested that the demand of the leather industry had an influence on the development of cattle raising and even on enclosure for pasture<sup>3</sup> but there

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1. See Chapter 2, p. 63

2. For a theoretical discussion of this point see R.T. McKinnell "Price Determination in the Leather Industry: A Theoretical Analysis" South African Journal of Economics, vol 26(1958) pp. 41-3.

3. T.S. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution (Home University Library, 1948), p.24; W.G. Hoskins, "Provincial Towns in the Sixteenth Century", Trans. Royal Historical Society, 5th series, vol.6 (1956), p.15.

is a good deal of evidence against this view. In the first place the price of beef carcasses was perhaps ten times the price of cattle hides in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>1</sup>. Secondly in the 1660s and 70s there were signs of over-production of hides as a result of increased meat consumption. In 1665 the Privy Council was told that "the continuall killing of Cattle both in England and Ireland" had made the "Marketts ... so full of Hides" that prices had fallen<sup>2</sup>. Ten years later it was claimed that an increase in cattle rearing following the draining of the Fens had so depressed the price of hides that they were being buried instead of being manufactured into leather<sup>3</sup>. Such statements suggest that graziers did not pay much attention to the price of the by-products. The only influence the price of hides and skins had on supplies was that if prices were low and did not repay the cost of careful flaying, hides and skins were likely to be ripped carelessly from the carcasses and so be unsuitable for tanning and dressing<sup>4</sup>.

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1. Rogers, op.cit., volV, p.411, quotes decennial average prices of hides ranging from 7s.8½d. in 1566/70 to 16s.1½d. in 1631/40 (see Appendix I). The following prices of beef carcasses have been calculated from Beveridge, op.cit., pp. 30, 32, 81, 83; 1550 - 60. 78s; 1567 - 62.84s.; 1612 - 99.66s.; 1618 - 116.9s.; 1627 - 126.9s.; 1665 - 172.42s. Although these prices are not strictly comparable, they are adequate to show the much greater value of carcasses.
  2. P.R.O., P.C. 2/58, p. 71.
  3. Cal.S.P.D., 1675, pp.369-70.
  4. M. A. Watson, The Economics of Cattle Hide Tanning (Chicago) 1950), p.38.

Despite these supply conditions there is no evidence that hides were ever in short supply and supplies probably increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was because the demand for the joint products - meat, wool and dairy products - increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the population grew. There were increased supplies of agricultural products including hides and skins in the expanding urban areas<sup>1</sup>. We have already seen that some contemporaries thought that the land reclamation work in the Fens increased the supply of hides for tanning. Enclosure for pastoral purposes had the same result and in some parts of Midland England there may have been some development of the leather industry as the result of enclosure in the sixteenth century<sup>2</sup>.

It is possible that enclosure and minor improvements in animal husbandry had some effect on the quality as well as the quantity of hides. It has been argued that improvements in grazing conditions increase the size of the fleece of the sheep<sup>3</sup> and it is possible that hides and skins also became rather larger. In 1627 Irish hides weighing between 30 and 40 lbs. were on sale at Liverpool<sup>4</sup>.

1. See for example, F.J.Fisher, "The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640", Economic History Review, vol.V, no.2 (1935), pp.46-64. The relationship between the urban consuming centres and the location of tanning is discussed in Chapter 3.

2. See Chapter 3, pp. 108, 111.

3. P.J.Bowden, "Wool Supply and the Woollen Industry" Economic History Review, 2nd series, vol.IX (1956), pp. 45-51.

4. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E. 134/5 Car.I, Mich.14.

About the middle of the century the Navy Office was buying tanned leather backs weighing between 40 and 50 lbs.<sup>1</sup> The whole hide, untanned, would be considerably heavier. At the end of the century Houghton calculated that a good hide, complete with horns and tail might weigh as much as 100 lbs.<sup>2</sup> Thus some increase in the size of hides is indicated<sup>3</sup>. This is not necessarily the same as an improvement in quality. According to a Parliamentary committee meeting in 1813, the development of heavier meat producing cattle during the eighteenth century had resulted in thinner and poorer quality hides<sup>4</sup>. But any tendency in this direction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must have been very small and more than offset by the reduced risk in enclosed fields of hide damage from accident and disease. Other practices such as castration improved the quality of cattle hides<sup>5</sup>. This was well known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>6</sup>

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1. Beveridge, op.cit., p. 640.

2. J. Houghton, A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade (ed. R. Bradley, London, 1727), vol. I, p. 319.

3. This corresponds with an increase in the weight of carcasses; in 1584/9 the average weight of carcasses bought by Winchester College was 523 lbs.; in 1606/16 it was 533 lbs. (calculation from Beveridge, op.cit., p. 32)

4. Quoted by R.J. Hartridge, The Development of Industries in London South of the Thames, 1750-1850 (London University M.Sc. (Econ.) Thesis, 1955), p. 39.

5. J.A. Wilson, Modern Practice in Leather Manufacture (New York, 1941), p. 16.

6. It was well known for example that bull hides were far inferior to steer hides.

although it is impossible to say whether the practice was becoming more common.

Domestic supplies of hides and skins were sometimes augmented by imported supplies. These were not important in the case of heavy hides for tanning<sup>1</sup>, but the light leather manufacturers used imported skins more often. In western England, leathersdressers relied a good deal on sheep and lamb skins imported from Ireland<sup>2</sup>. Large quantities of goat and kid skins were also imported into London and during the seventeenth century there was a considerable expansion in this trade. In 1621 over 2,000 goat and 57,000 kid skins came from France, Spain and the Baltic<sup>3</sup>. By the end of the seventeenth century about the same number of goat skins and over 456,000 kid skins were imported, most of them from Germany, Holland, Italy and Portugal<sup>4</sup>. This increase probably reflects the increasing demand for light leather in

1. During the first forty years of the seventeenth century only very small quantities of hides were imported into London (I am grateful to Mrs. A.M. Millard for giving me this information from her work on the London import trade). In 1621 2,430 Barbary hides came from the Levant, 1,200 cow hides from Russia, and 4,000 hides from North Africa (P.R.O., E 190/244/4.) At the end of the seventeenth century imports of hides were still very small (P.R.O., Inspector General's Accounts, Customs 2/6, 2/7). For imports of Irish hides into western ports see Chapter 3, pp. 97-8.

2. See Chapter 3, p. 97

3. P.R.O., E. 190/24/4.

4. P.R.O. Customs 2/6d. Imports did not increase to all ports. In the case of Exeter, for example, imports of kid skins during the seventeenth century were as follows (all from Spain): 1624 - 1350; 1636 - nil; 1638 - 30 cwt.; 1647 - nil; 1666 - 1606; 1676 - nil; 1680 - nil; 1683 - nil; (W.B. Stephens, Seventeenth Century Exeter (University of Exeter, 1958), pp. 173, 176.

London during the seventeenth century. On the whole, the English leather industry, and particularly the tanners, did not depend on foreign sources of supplies. Domestic supplies seem to have been sufficient in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and there is no sign that the industry ever had difficulties in obtaining sufficient quantities of hides and skins.

Turning to supplies of tanning materials, there is no evidence of any general shortage of oak bark although from time to time there were local shortages in particular areas<sup>1</sup>. The difficulty with bark was that it was in joint-supply with firewood and building timber. The supply of oak bark, therefore, depended to some extent on the general level of supply of and demand for wood for domestic and industrial purposes. The prevalent view that supplies of timber - and hence of bark - diminished during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must be modified. There were local difficulties certainly, but there is no evidence of a general shortage<sup>2</sup>. The best

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1. See Chapter 3, pp. 92-3.

2. G. Hammersley, "The Crown Lands and their Exploitation in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XXX, no.82 (1957) pp. 136 - 61.

bark for tanning came from coppice oaks about twenty years old<sup>1</sup>; and the cultivation of this kind of timber for the iron industry became more common during the seventeenth century<sup>2</sup>. In the later seventeenth century a number of persons within the leather industry thought that there was a glut rather than a shortage of bark for tanning<sup>3</sup> and this view is supported by - the admitted unsatisfactory - price statistics for the period<sup>4</sup>. There were in the later seventeenth century a few attempts made to tan leather without oak bark<sup>5</sup> which may be interpreted as evidence of a shortage. However it seems more likely that these experiments were aimed at reducing the time necessary for tanning and not at conserving bark supplies.

In conclusion, there is evidence for believing that the leather industry experienced some real expansion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the side of demand, there were signs of an increase associated with

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1. See Chapter 2, p.50.

2. Flinn, "The Iron Industry", 1660-1760", pp.148-9.

3. Cal., S.P.D., 1675, pp.369-70, 370-1.

4. Roger, op.cit., vol. V, p. 414, gives the following prices per load of oak bark bought by Eton College:  
 1625 - 40s; 1636 - 60s; 1645/52 - 56.s8d; 1653/62 - 84s.8d; 1663/72 - 103s.4d; 1673/82 - 90s. 9d; 1683/92 - 84s.10d; 1693/1702 - 82s. 6d.

5. See Chapter 2, pp. 62-3.

population growth, increasing incomes, industrial and agricultural expansion, the development of overseas markets, and also increasing military demand. On the side of supply, it appears that supply conditions were able to keep pace with the increase in demand for leather because of the accompanying increase in demand for meat, wool, and dairy products. It is unlikely that all sections of the leather industry expanded at the same rate. Those crafts manufacturing boots and shoes or cheap leather clothing, for example, probably expanded at a different rate than those manufacturing fine quality clothing, upholstery, or coach harnesses or wall hangings, because of differences in demand elasticities. No doubt, too, developments in the leather industry could not match the contemporary growth of the coal, metallurgical, or even the cloth industries. Certainly the leather industry was not marked by any significant changes in techniques of organization; neither were there any important developments of new products - although the manufacture of certain kinds of dressed leather and some leather goods such as coach harnesses became more common. The importance of the leather industry lay not in the degree of change it displayed but in its position in a pre-industrial economy as a consumer of agricultural by-products, as a source of employment and as the supplier of a commodity which was

used for many different purposes. This importance remained unchanged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

CHAPTER 2: THE MANUFACTURE OF LEATHER, AND LEATHER GOODS.

The manufacture of leather is one of the oldest arts known to man. Articles made of leather have been found in Germany dating from about 10,000 B.C., and there is ample evidence that leather was used for many purposes in pre-historic Britain.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to say when man first conceived the idea of preserving animal skins by soaking them in solutions of bark or leaves and water, or by treating them with alum or with oil, but it is certain that the methods of making leather to be described here were old long before the sixteenth century. Indeed, they remained in common use until the middle years of the nineteenth century, when the marriage of chemistry and industry gave to the leather manufacturers new and speedier ways of making leather.<sup>2</sup>

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"Leather is animal hide so treated chemically as to make it permanently more resistant to decomposition, particularly when wet".<sup>3</sup> There were many kinds of leather made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, depending on the kind of hides or skins used and the methods employed in turning

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1. J.A. Wilson, Modern Practice in Leather Manufacture (New York 1941) p.272; J.W. Waterer, Leather in Life, Art and Industry, (London 1944), P.p. 22 -6.
  2. Wilson, op.cit., p. 363.
  3. Ibid, p.15.

them into leather; but all leather fell into two categories.

Tanned leather was made by treating heavy cattle hides and sometimes lighter skins with some vegetable tanning agent such as oak bark. Light skins such as calf skins, goat skins, sheep skins or practically any other kind of skins could be treated in one of two ways. Either they could be soaked in fish oil, or they could be "tawed" with alum. The production of light leather, whether with oil or alum, was known as leathersdressing and was carried on quite separately from tanning, and the division of the leather industry into light and heavy leather producing sections has remained a distinctive feature of its organization until the present century.

Any kind of animal hide or skin can be made into leather. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, cattle hides, calf skins, and the skins of sheep, deer, and goats, were most commonly used. There is no difference between a hide and a skin, save in size. A skin is smaller than a hide, but no clear cut distinction was made in the sixteenth century, and it probably depended on local practice, or the whim of the tanners<sup>1</sup>. In a modern tannery a cattle skin

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1. For a consideration of this point, see Chapter 6, pp 75-6. The distinction became important when the crown granted licences to merchants to export calf skins. There were then many complaints that cattle hides were being exported under cover of the licences. For convenience in administering these licences, a calf skin was usually regarded as under 2 or 3 lbs. in weight. See Chapter 8, pp 329-329.

weighing less than 15 lbs. is called a calf skin; between 15 and 30 lbs. it is known as a kip, and over 30 lbs. as a hide<sup>1</sup>.

Hides and skins are made up of three layers, only one of which is used to make leather. The outer layer, or epidermis, consists of hair and of a thin layer of tissues which are constantly being worn away and replaced by fresh growth. The middle layer is known as the corium. This is much thicker than the epidermis, and is a complex structure of fibres, nerves and blood vessels. The upper surface of the corium contains hair follicles which form a natural pattern - known as the grain - or the finished leather. On the inside of hides and skins is a layer of fatty tissues and muscles, known to tanners simply as the flesh. Leather is made from the corium, or middle layer, and the two outer layers have to be removed before tanning or dressing<sup>2</sup>.

In the sixteenth century the process of removing the outer layers was known as working the hide, and the operation was described in a memorandum on tanning presented to Lord Burghley about 1573. "Now ther is a difference in the science betwixte tanninge and workinge of Leather, for the workinge is to take of the heare, and to open the hyde that it maye receive liccor. The Tanninge is to lay the hyde in wooses by changeinge and renewinge till it become Leather"<sup>3</sup>:

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1. Wilson, Leather Manufacture. P.16.
  2. Ibid, pp. 19, 20 - 58 passim.
  3. B.M., Lans, Ms. 5, no. 58. (Reproduced at length in Appendix 5.)

The usual method of working hides and skins was to work them in a solution of lime and water. They were immersed in a series of lime solutions of increasing strength that destroyed the epidermal layer and loosened the hair. The lime also separated the fibres of the corium, which allowed the tanning or dressing agent to permeate throughout the skin. Liming took from a few days to several weeks, depending on the kind of hide or skin being treated, on the strength of the lime, and on local practice<sup>1</sup>, and it was important neither to under-lime nor to over-lime hides. As the unknown author of the memorandum already referred to explained, "the Laying of the Hyde in the Lyme one daye, tene or twentye, after that the heare is taken away ... is one of the best poyntes of workemanship ... Yf they do not Lyme the hyde enough, they can make no leather of yt. But if it ly no longer then the heare maye fall of it is not lymed enough"<sup>2</sup>. Liming was done in a series of pits or vats. The first solutions were old ones that had been used several times, but the final solutions were strong and freshly made. As the solutions became weaker they were used for earlier immersions of the hides<sup>3</sup>.

After liming the hides or skins were scudded to remove loose hairs. The skins were placed hair side uppermost on a

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1. In Ireland in the early eighteenth century, liming took several months, but this contrasted with the more usual English practice, which was shorter. (Dublin Society, The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather (London, 1774) pp. II, 15.

2. B.M., Lans, Ms. 5 no. 58.

3. Waterer, Leather in Life. p. 137.

wooden beam, about six feet long, with a convex upper surface (rather like part of a tree trunk split down the middle). One end of the beam rested on the ground, and the other was propped up about waist high. In this position the hides or skins were scraped with a curved, double-handled knife, which removed the hairs and also forced dirt and particles of lime from the hair follicles. Beams and scudding knives appear frequently among inventories of tanners' possessions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and hand scudding on the beam is still employed today for high quality work, although for most purposes it has been superseded by a mechanised process. But the part of a modern tannery where the initial operations are carried out, is still called the beamhouse<sup>1</sup>.

An alternative method of removing hair from skins was to suspend them in wood smoke until the hair was loose enough to be pulled away. The heat caused the epidermis to putrify and so loosened the hair, but the danger with this method was that the corium might also be damaged to the detriment of the leather that could be made from it. The process was generally used for sheep skins to avoid spoiling valuable wool by soaking it in lime<sup>2</sup>. At the end of the seventeenth century the process took "from a day to a week, according to the heat of the weather", during which time the skins were occasionally

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1. Waterer, op.cit. p.137 and Plate XXXIII.

2. Wilson, Leather Manufacture. pp.231 - 4.

strewn with hot ashes. The hair or wool was then removed by scraping the skins "with an iron pin (a great piece of iron four square, two inches thick, and a foot and a half long)"<sup>1</sup>.

The next operation in preparing hides and skins for tanning and dressing was the removal of the fleshy layer. This was simply done by soaking them in water, and then placing the hides on the beam and scraping off the flesh in the way as scudding<sup>2</sup>.

Hides and skins were usually bated prior to tanning or dressing. Bating consisted of soaking the skins in a warm infusion of dog dung or bird droppings until they became soft and porous. Bird droppings were used for the heavy cattle hides; and dog manure, which had a milder action, was used for the lighter skins. Farmyard droppings from pigeons and hens were commonly used for bating in the latter part of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It is not clear whether bating was a process carried out by all tanners and leatherdressers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries;<sup>4</sup> it was probably more common in tanning than leatherdressing.<sup>5</sup>

1. J. Houghton, A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade (ed. R. Bradley, 1727) vol. I, p.319
2. Ibid.
3. B.M., Lans, Ms. 5, no. 58; 5 Eliz., cap. 8, Sect. V.
4. Bating is not mentioned in an eighteenth century account of tanning in Ireland, although the author refers to the process being carried on in England in the 1660's. (Dublin Society, op.cit., p.15.)
5. It is not usually mentioned in any contemporary accounts of leather dressing.

Bating greatly improved the final appearance of the leather, but it was a dangerous as well as an offensive operation because over bating could easily ruin the hides. The bate was mixed in vats and the hides were soaked in it until the tanner judged that they were sufficiently treated. The older the bate, the more effective and unsavoury it became.<sup>1</sup>

When these preliminary operations had been completed hides and skins were ready for tanning or dressing. As vegetable tanning was so completely different from alum or oil dressing, it will be necessary to describe these processes separately.

The contemporary accounts of tanning are not numerous nor always very informative. Apart from the memorandum on the leather act of 1563 there are a number of documents dating from the 1570's among the papers of Lord Burghley. These are mainly letters relating to the statute regulating the leather industry passed in 1563<sup>2</sup>. Some were written by tanners, and others by William Fleetwood, the Recorder of London, who claimed that "for these xiii yeres I haue giuen my mynde that weyes to vnderstand of that facultie (of tanning)"<sup>3</sup>. In the later decades of the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth century there appeared the first of the treatises on tanning, usually describing tanning methods

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1. Wilson, op.cit., pp.237 - 8.

2. 5 Eliz. cap. 8.

3. B.M., Lans, Ms. 20, fo. 10.

employed in the late seventeenth century<sup>1</sup>.

Basically tanning involved soaking hides in solutions of oak bark and water for any period of time between about six months and about two years until the hides were turned into leather. Oak bark was the most widely used of the vegetable tanning agents; it produced excellent leather (and is still used today for the manufacture of the highest quality leather) and was available in most parts of the country. Oak bark was the only tanning agent permitted by the leather act of 1563<sup>2</sup>, and was still the main tanning material used in the eighteenth century<sup>3</sup>. Tanners gathered their bark in the spring of each year<sup>4</sup>. The best bark came from young trees about twenty or thirty years old, although bark from older trees was also used<sup>5</sup>. It is difficult to say with certainty how much bark was needed to tan a hide. Houghton reckoned 2 bushels for a vat of fresh solution, but in addition tanners sprinkled bark between piles of hides<sup>6</sup>.

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1. Houghton, op.cit., vol. I, pp.319-21; W. Maple, A Complete and Effectual Method of Tanning without Bark (London, 1729); Dublin Society, op.cit.; M.Postlethwaite, Universal Dictionary of Trade & Commerce Vol.2. (4th edition, 1774), article under LEATHER. A modern writer, J.A. Wilson, Leather Manufacture is very useful in interpreting some of the obscurities of the sixteenth and seventeenth century descriptions of tanning.
  2. 5. Eliz. cap. 8, sect.5.
  3. Postlethwait, Dictionary.
  4. W. Harrison, Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth (ed. F.J. Furnival, London 1877) Book 2, p.340. See also, 5 Eliz. Cap. 8, sect. 1X.
  5. Dublin Society, op. cit. p.21: Postlethwait, op.cit.
  6. Houghton, op.cit., p321.

The tanning solutions were made by leaching crushed bark with cold water, which extracted the tannin together with some other substances known to the modern tanner as non-tans that could affect the properties of the leather<sup>1</sup>. Leaching was done in vats or pits set in the tanyard near to a stream or river. The pits were dug in the ground and lined with wood or stone. They were large enough to accommodate a hide in a horizontal position, which meant they were roughly nearly six feet long and slightly narrower<sup>2</sup>. There is little evidence to show how the pits were supplied with water but they must have been connected with the river by a system of ditches through which the flow of water could be controlled. There are occasional references to "soes" (sewers) and cisterns in tanners' inventories.

The process of tanning varied in different parts of the country in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, according to local conditions and customs. "...Ev'ie Contrye in Tanning of Lether doth varie one from another. And yet they make or if they list can make verie good Lether...And

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1. Waterer, Leather in Life, p.142.
  2. Hides varied in size, but a document dating from the 1630s gives dimensions of hides varying between seven and eight feet long, and slightly less in breadth. (P.R.O., S.P. 16/431 no. 57). The hides would be trimmed before tanning.

surely one forme of Tannyng can not be vsed in all places"<sup>1</sup>. The kind of bark available, the quality of the hides being tanned, and even the chemical content of the water used in tanning, caused tanners to use their own recipes<sup>2</sup>. It is not possible, therefore, to give other than a composite picture of tanning methods used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Before tanning the bellies and necks were trimmed from the backs of the hides so that they would not take up room in the tan pits. Also different parts of the hide required different treatment. The back was the thickest part of the hide and needed more tanning than the thinner belly pieces<sup>3</sup>. The hides were suspended vertically in a weak tan solution for about a month. They were then taken to another pit containing a stronger solution. Here they were moved about or "handled" with poles, and from time to time they were pulled out of the tan and allowed to dry by the side of the pit. This operation was repeated in two or three other pits with still stronger solutions for a total period of several weeks.

During the handling stage one of the infusions was generally made of ash bark, barley, or rye meal and hot water, which had the effect of swelling the hides and

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1. Lans. Ms. 20 fo. 10.
  2. It is not suggested that tanners consciously altered their methods in response to these factors, but that by experience tanners developed methods most suited to local conditions.
  3. B.M., Lans, Ms. 20, fos. 15 - 18.

making thicker leather. This practice was forbidden by the act of 1563 although tanners claimed that it was a necessary part of the process<sup>1</sup>. William Harrison, however, writing at the end of the sixteenth century thought that ash bark made poor leather. "I grant that it (leather treated with ash bark) seemeth outwardlye to be verie thicke and well doone," he wrote, "so if you respect the sadness (i.e. thickness) thereof, it dooeth prooue in the end to be verie hollow and not hable to hold out water"<sup>2</sup>.

When the handling stage had been completed the partially tanned hides were moved to new tan solutions and laid horizontally in the pits with layers of ground bark between them. The hides were left undisturbed for several weeks, and sometimes months, before being moved to another pit containing fresh tan. There they remained for several weeks more. At the end of this period the tanner tested the hide by cutting through one corner. If he judged it properly tanned, the leather was taken from the pit to be washed and dried; otherwise it was placed in a fresh tanning solution for a short time until the tanning was complete.

The time needed for tanning hides depended on a number of factors, especially on the type and thickness of the hide, and the strength of the tanning solutions<sup>3</sup>. The

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fos. 10, 14.

2. Harrison, op.cit., p. 340.

3. B.M., Lans. Ms, 5, no. 58.

government, however, attempted to impose minimum periods of time for tanning different kinds of leather. The act of 1563 required that leather intended for the outer soles of shoes should be tanned for at least a year, and leather for shoe uppers for at least nine months<sup>1</sup>. Although it was not practicable for tanners to be bound to such precise limitations<sup>2</sup>, the provisions of the statute did recognise that tanning was a process that could not be hurried. Good leather could be made only by tanning hides slowly and gradually in a series of tanning solutions of gradually increasing strength so that the hides were tanned throughout their thickness<sup>3</sup>; and a tanner needed skill and experience to make good leather. As the Recorder of London wrote to Burghley in 1576, "The time of the changing of the Lether from on Owe to an other must be timed at proscribed howres or els the lether wilbe vtterlie spoiled". He concluded with

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1. 5 Eliz. cap. 8, sect. V.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58.
  3. Writing about a century after the act of 1563, Fuller related how a cobbler demonstrated to Lord Burghley how leather should be tanned slowly. Taking a piece of bread the cobbler slowly toasted it by a fire, until it was crisp throughout its thickness. In the same way leather should be slowly tanned so that it was not raw in the middle. P.A. Nuttall (ed.) Fullers Worthies of England, vol. II (1840) p.312. London.

the warning that, "there be an infinite number of rules to be observed in Tanning, the wch few Tanners did ev(er) conceyve much less the p(ar)liam(en) t"<sup>1</sup>.

Tanning removed most of the natural oils from the hides, and newly tanned leather - generally known as crust leather - became hard when dried. It was the task of the currier to replace the natural oil by thoroughly impregnating the leather with grease which made it supple and waterproof. More than 30% of the weight of tanned leather made today consists of grease added during currying.<sup>2</sup>

When the leather came to the currier it was soaked in water or urine<sup>3</sup> which helped the grease to be spread throughout the leather, so that every fibre was thoroughly impregnated<sup>4</sup>. After soaking the leather was scraped on the hair or grain side to clean the grain. Then with a curved knife the currier shaved the leather on the flesh side until it was pared down to the required thickness. Following these operations the leather was rubbed with tallow or with a mixture of tallow and train oil until it was completely saturated with grease. This

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1. B.M., Lans, Ms.20, fo.10. Apart from references cited, the account of tanning given above is based upon Houghton, op.cit., pp.319-21, Postlethwait, op.cit., Dublin Society, op.cit., pp.42-3 (Wilson, op.cit. Ch.11), passim.

2. Waterer, op.cit., p.148.

3. The use of urine was forbidden by the statutes of 1563 and 1603 (5Eliz. cap. 8, 1 Jac. 1, cap.22) but it is not clear why, nor why tanners used it.

4. Waterer, Leather in Life. p.148.

operation was known as stuffing the leather. Finally the leather was beaten on the grain side and hung up to dry. The action of the air on the grease caused some oxidization, which had an additional tanning effect on the leather.

As with tanning, currying was modified according to the use for which the leather was intended. The statute of 1563, for example, required curriers to use only good hard tallow for sole leather; and it was probably as a result of this regulation that the London company of Curriers negotiated with the tallow chandlers in July 1564, to be provided with ten "weighes" of rough tallow every week, as well as with some waste grease<sup>1</sup>.

Curriers also modified the process to give the finished leather a different appearance. By using lampblack and oil or copperas solution leather could be stained black. The leather could also be beaten after currying with a ribbed graining board which impressed a series of ridges on the surface of the leather, or it could be folded and beaten to produce a pattern of criss-cross lines on the surface of the leather. But these finishing operations do not seem to have been in general use before the mid-seventeenth century, and, apart from the staining, were not commonly performed on shoe leather<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Repertories 21, fos. 90 - 91 (b).

2. The account of currying is based upon Waterer, Leather in Life, etc.

Currying was a skilled operation calling for a considerable degree of care for it was easy to gash the leather while shaving it to the required thickness and to burn it by applying the grease to vigorously<sup>1</sup>. It was also an unpleasant occupation, for the processes involving the use of train oil gave off objectionable odours. The ordinances of the London Company of Curriers, made in 1587, forbade curriers to use workshops that had windows opening onto the street, "for the avoydyng of noysome savours and evell Ayers, wch by the vse of the crafte is in work howses". Curriers were also required to stop work at mid-day on Saturdays so that they could "cleanse and make cleane themselves and theyre howses"<sup>2</sup>.

In some respects currying was similar to dressing light skins with oil. The oil applied to tanned leather during currying as well as making the leather waterproof had an additional tanning effect. The similarity of the two processes was probably the reason why, in 1584, the London company of Curriers and a group of leatherdressers from Southwark made an agreement defining the limits of their respective crafts.<sup>3</sup>

Skins that were to be dressed with oil were first prepared by removing the hair or wool in one of the ways described above. They were then placed in a trough and

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1. Curriers were forbidden by law to damage hides in either of these ways (5 Eliz. cap. 8, sect. xiii.)  
 2. Repertories 21, fos. 375 - 379 (b)  
 3. Repertories 21, fos. 90 - 91 (b). See Chapter 5, p.156.

soaked with train oil. After this they were beaten, usually by hand, but occasionally with mechanically operated hammers, rather like the fullers' stocks. The soakings and beating were repeated several times and then the skins were piled up together; considerable heat was generated in the pile causing oxidization which tanned the leather. The pile was turned over from time to time so that it did not become too hot and damage the leather. After dressing the surface of the leather was often roughened with a pumice stone, or it might be dyed or grained in the same way as tanned leather<sup>1</sup>.

It is difficult to say with certainty how long it took to make leather with train oil, but the time involved was a matter of weeks rather than of months. In 1593 the Privy Council was told by some London leathersellers that a poor leatherdresser could not turn his stock of skins into leather in under six months<sup>2</sup>, but this was probably an exaggeration for the leathersellers were trying to prove that the small producers could not stand the cost of having their leather searched and sealed under a licence granted to a certain Edward Darcy<sup>3</sup>. According to Postlethwait, the manufacture of Hungary leather (made by dressing skins with

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1. Waterer, Leather in Life etc. pp.145 - 6; Postlethwait, Dictionary B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 127, 140-1.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo.143.
  3. See Chapter 7. pp 265-270.

animal fat instead of fish oil) took three or four weeks<sup>1</sup>, and probably normal oil dressing took about the same time once the skins had been unhaired.

The simplest way of making dressed leather was to treat skins with alum. A paste was made with alum, common salt, flour, egg yolks and hot water, and this was spread on the flesh side of the skins. When this had dried another application was made. After the operation had been repeated a number of times the alum mixture combined with the fibres of the skins and converted them into leather. The finished leather was white but it was often stained with ochre. A nap was also usually raised on the leather with a toothed comb<sup>2</sup>.

The leather using crafts were for the most part manual operations requiring very little equipment beyond cutting knives and boards, lasts, and sewing needles. The manufacture of gloves and other leather clothing, apart from boots and shoes, was often done by the leatherdressers themselves<sup>3</sup>, and these occupations demanded little skill. There are no contemporary accounts of these processes for operations such as gloving were unchanging, and attracted no attention. There were two simple stages involved, cutting and sewing,

1. Postlethwait, op.cit.

2. Wilson, Leather Manufacture p.418; Waterer, Leather in Life, p.144; Postlethwait, Dictionary, B.M., Lans. Ms74, fos. 127, 140 -1.

3. See Chapter 6, pp. 208 et seq.

and it is possible, although there is no proof, that the former operation was performed by one craftsman, and that the cut out parts were given out to casual labour to be stitched.

The most skilful of the leather using crafts was shoemaking, and detailed regulations for the conduct of the craft were contained in the leather act of 1563. From these it is evident that boots and shoes were carefully constructed with outer and inner soles and sewn uppers. Heavy cattle leather was used for the outer soles, and tanned calf skins or cow hides for the uppers. According to the statute different kinds of leather were not to be mixed in a pair of shoes, although this was sometimes done. Shoes were sewn together with well waxed thread<sup>1</sup>.

Boots and shoes were built up of several parts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>2</sup>. Writing in 1694, Houghton described the various stages of shoemaking. The uppers and quarters of shoes were cut from the shoulders or buttocks of a well tanned hide, and the soles and heels from the back. The inner soles and inside pieces of the heel were taken from the neck or cheeks of the hide. The various parts were sewn together with well greased hemp thread, and the

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1. 5 Eliz. cap. 8, sect. xix.

2. e.g. P.R.O., S.P. 16/89, no. 13.

heels were fastened with wooden pegs. In Houghton's day these pegs in London, were made by prisoners in the King's Bench prison, and sold for 2½d. to 5d. a dozen. Sometimes the heels were made completely of wood except for a thin covering of leather. The shoes were built up on lasts, which were usually made of beech riveted onto an iron base<sup>1</sup>. Until the early part of the seventeenth century boots and shoes were generally shaped to fit left and right feet, but with the increasing use of heavy riding boots, constructed with a heavy welt that made shaping difficult, boots were made to fit either foot<sup>2</sup>.

Another important leather using craft was the manufacture of harnesses and saddles, but there is no information how they were made. For the most part simple cutting and stitching was all that was required, but it may have been necessary to mould leather into shape to make saddles. This could be done by soaking the leather and holding it to the required shape under pressure until it dried.

Although the methods of making leather and leather goods varied in detail from time to time and place to place, there was no important technical change in any of the leather crafts in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The only other

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1. Houghton, op. cit., pp. 323 - 4.

2. J.H. Thornton, "Left-Right-Left" Journal of the British Boot & Shoe Institution. (Vol.7, no. 4, Aug.1956) PP.167-8.

method of making leather of any importance during the period, was by using sumac leaves which were imported from southern Europe. Goat skins were sometimes treated in this way by the leatherdressers, to make "Spanish" leather and the process was essentially a variation of vegetable tanning<sup>1</sup>.

There were a number of attempts to develop new processes and particularly to shorten the time taken for oak bark tanning. This could be done by using hot tanning solutions, but the heat was liable to damage the fibres of the hides, and the practice was forbidden by the government in 1563 and 1604<sup>2</sup>. One of the earliest proposals for a new method of tanning came from Thomas Duckett in 1655, who claimed that he could make leather without oak bark more durable than ordinary tanned leather. He claimed that he had testimonials from a hundred master tanners, but no details of the nature of the new techniques have survived<sup>3</sup>. A few years later Charles Howard obtained a patent for his "tanning inventions", but again there are no details to be found<sup>4</sup>. In the early part of 1697, a number of Irish tanners claimed to have developed a method tanning using a plant that was grown

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1. B.M., Lans, Ms. 74, fo. 151.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fos. 15 - 18; 5 Eliz. cap. 8; 1 Jac.1, cap. 22.
  3. Cal.S.P.D., Aug.1655, p.308; Nov.1655, p.39.
  4. Cal. S.P.D., Oct.1661, p.113, P.R.O., P.C.2/66, P.362.

in Ireland<sup>1</sup>. This may have been either cinque foil of tormentil, both of which were recommended by William Maple, writing in 1729<sup>2</sup>. There were also some inventions designed to improve the appearance of leather including a way of making leather "more bright than gold", brought by High Robinson from Amsterdam in 1660<sup>3</sup>; and "German Balls" invented by George Sylvanus in 1693 "for beautifying and preserving any sort of leather"<sup>4</sup>.

For the majority of leather craftsmen these inventions were no more than curiosities. There were no important technical changes in the industry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this respect the leather crafts were much more representative of technical development in this period than the more spectacular "heavy" industries such as mining, metallurgy, or the embryonic chemical industry. Much of the industrial history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been written in terms of change and it is easy to forget that the basic structure of the economy remained unaltered and that occupations such as agriculture, cloth making or the manufacture of leather and leather goods saw little technical development. Advances

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1. Cal.S.P.D., March 1697, p.125, April 1697, p.65.
  2. Maple, *op.cit.* passim, Maple was writing of Irish conditions.
  3. Cal. S.P.D., 1660, p.388.
  4. *Ibid*, 1693, pp.90. 98.

in the manufacture of leather were ultimately made in two directions: in the mechanical handling of hides and skins and the mechanisation of such processes as scudding and shaving leather; and in the understanding of the chemistry of tanning and dressing which changed the manufacture of leather from an empirical craft into a closely controlled science. Neither of these developments was possible with the low level of technology and science prevailing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

CHAPTER 3: THE LOCATION OF THE LEATHER INDUSTRY AND  
THE TRADE IN HIDES, LEATHER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS.

The location of the crafts comprising the leather industry was influenced by the supply of hides and skins, by the supply of tanning and leathers dressing materials, by water supplies, and by the presence of markets. Since these factors were present in most parts of the country the leather crafts were widespread. "In most villages of the realme there is some one dresser or worker of leather, and for the supplies of such as have not there are in most of the market townes iii, iiii or v, and manie great townes and cities x or xx<sup>te</sup>l. There were some areas where the manufacture of leather or leather goods tended to be concentrated but these do not stand out clearly from the production of leather in the same way as some regions specialised in the production of woollen cloth.

Because production was widespread much of the trade in leather and leather goods was local. Tanners and leather-dressers obtained their raw hides and skins from local butchers and farmers, and sold their leather to local leather using craftsmen or to local consumers. There was a national trade in hides and skins, leather and leather products, although it probably accounted for only a small proportion of the output of these

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 154.

goods. Although we shall attempt to identify the more important producing districts and the national trade in leather etc., we shall also be concerned with assessing the importance of the leather crafts to the local economies.

A study of the petitions presented to Parliament by leather craftsmen in 1697 and 1698 in protest against an excise duty placed on English manufactured leather<sup>1</sup>, provides a starting point in examining the location of the leather crafts. Petitions came from leather manufacturers in more than a hundred towns and villages in various parts of the country. These places have been marked on the map which will be found at the end of this volume. The map demonstrates the widespread location of the leather crafts. However a distinct concentration on the western side of the country can be seen and there is a second area of concentration in the West Riding of Yorkshire. In two other regions - the upper Thames Valley and the Eden Valley in Westmorland - some concentration also seems apparent.

The petitions, however, provide only a partial picture. They do not, for example, bring out clearly the importance of London as a leather manufacturing centre, nor does the importance of parts of Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Sussex and Kent as leather producing districts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, emerge clearly. In order to assess the importance of the leather crafts in

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1. See Appendix 6.

various parts of the country a number of regions of England will be examined separately.

### The London District.

Any regional study must start with London which was "the place of greatest concourse for tradesmen dealing in Leather"<sup>1</sup>. A statement presented to Parliament in 1629 on the importance of the leather industry to the nation commented, "how London thrives by them (i.e. leather workers), witness our fairs by the cartloads of leather brought into Leadenhall, Smithfield, and other places; and all bought up within three days at the most"<sup>2</sup>. The London company of Curriers calculated that 14,859 leather backs passed through Leadenhall market between August 1630 and August 1631<sup>3</sup>. This was by no means the total amount of leather produced in or passing through, London; tanned leather was also bought and sold at Smithfield and Southwark markets and many transactions did not take place in the appointed markets at all<sup>4</sup>. There was also a large volume of dressed leather which did not concern the curriers.

Large numbers of people were employed in the leather industry in London. According to the London shoemakers in the early seventeenth century there were "Shoemakers aboute

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1. Minutes Book of the Company of Curriers, 1628-1656 (Gildhall Ms. 6112/1), p.77.
  2. LEATHER: A Discourse tendered to the High Court of Parliament (printed 1629; reprinted in E.Arber, An English Garner, vol. vi (1897)), p.215
  3. Curriers' Minute Book, p. 71.
  4. See chapter 3, p121.

this Citie very nere three thowsande, besydes all Sadlers, Bodgett makers, Cotchemakers and other Cutters of leather", but only 124 curriers<sup>1</sup>. A little later it was estimated that there were about three thousand light leather workers in the city and suburbs<sup>2</sup>. There was no estimate of the number of tanners in the London district although at the end of the seventeenth century there were eighty tan yards - not all of them at work - in Bermondsey and Southwark alone<sup>3</sup>.

When we look at the location of the leather industry in London more closely we find a difference between the location of the leather making crafts and some of the leather using crafts. Tanners and leatherdressers were usually not found within the city itself but on the outskirts. The reason was that manufacturers needed well watered sites with sufficient space for their pits, troughs and sheds. These considerations led them to settle on the outer fringes of the capital, partly because the London authorities would not allow them to pollute the water supplies in the densely populated areas, and partly "through the dearness of the city rentes (manufacturers) hauinge an easie residence in the out-p(ar)tes"<sup>4</sup>. The greatest concentration of tanners

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 14/7, no.88. It is possible that the shoe-makers exaggerated their own numbers and under-estimated the number of curriers.
  2. B.M., Add. Ms. 12504, fo. 112.
  3. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p. 18.
  4. B.M., Add. Ms. 12504, fo. 112; Unwin, Industrial Organisation p. 128.

was in the riverside district of Bermondsey<sup>1</sup>. This region was bounded by the Thames and through it ran several small streams providing water for the tanneries<sup>2</sup>. Supplies of bark could be obtained fairly easily from Kent and Surrey. The area had a reputation for tanning as early as the fourteenth century<sup>3</sup>, and in the late eighteenth century Lysons wrote of Bermondsey that "the Tanners ::: are very numerous, and carry on that business to a greater extent than is known in any other part of the kingdom. From a natural connection between the several trades, there are also many woolstaplers, fellmongers, curriers and leathersdressers, and parchment makers"<sup>4</sup>. To the north of London, Enfield was another tanning centre of note. Its development was probably connected with the growing practice of London butchers' buying cattle at the market towns standing at the northern approaches to the city<sup>5</sup>. In 1660 Fuller commented that "London is the staple place of slaughter, and

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1. It is likely that some contemporary references to tanners, etc., in Southwark (which was a thickly populated area) in fact meant Bermondsey, for the distinction between the two places was not often made (see for example. Camden, *Brittania*, p. 322).
  2. For the topography of the district see "London South of the Thames", *Surrey Archeological Collections*, no. 28.
  3. Chaucer refers to the "tan yeardes of Bermondsie"
  4. D. Lysons, *The Environs of London*, vol. I (London, 1792) p.547.
  5. Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-3.

the hides of beasts there bought are generally tanned about Enfield"<sup>1</sup>. The leatherdressers, like the tanners, also worked in the outer metropolitan area beyond the "City & lib(er)ties"<sup>2</sup>.

By contrast, the shoemakers were situated within the city itself and in the densely populated inner suburbs. Shoemakers in the sixteenth century were located in the city of London, in Westminster, St. Martin's, Holborn, Chancery Lane, Southwark, the Strand, and elsewhere<sup>3</sup>. The shoemakers, in fact, lived and worked in close contact with their markets rather than in close contact with the tanners. There were two reasons for this. In the first place shoemakers probably did a good deal of bespoke work and it was necessary that they should be conveniently situated for their customers. Secondly the difference between the costs of transporting leather and footwear probably explains why shoemakers did not work alongside the tanners. By comparison with the leather from which they were made, boots and shoes were bulky and hence more expensive to transport. Therefore shoemakers

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1. Fuller's Worthies of England (ed. B.A. Nuttall, 1840), vol. II, p. 312.
  2. B.M. Add. Ms. 12504, Fo. 122; P.R.O, S/P 16/386, no. 90.
  3. G. Unwin, The Gilds and Companies of London (3rd ed., 1938) p. 250. In Westminster there were enough shoemakers to form a company of their own and challenge the right of supervision claimed over them by the London company of Cordwainers (see Chapter 5, pp. 197-199). In 1612 the company of Cordwainers divided the city and suburbs into four districts for the purpose of supervising the work of shoemakers (The Act and Ordinance of the Co. of Cordwainers, 1572-1668. (Gildhall Ms. 8033.)

tended to have their workshops among their customers in order to save transport costs. Carriers tended to be located near the shoemakers since currying added to the weight of leather and hence to freight charges. It was probably for this reason that carriers were tolerated in the city area by the authorities even though currying could be a danger to public health<sup>1</sup>. The situation regarding glovers and other light leather workers was rather different. Some, indeed, worked in the inner London area, but most were located with the leatherdressers in the suburbs - in fact the occupations were often combined in one man<sup>2</sup> - away from the main body of customers. They sold their goods through the shops of retail traders such as haberdashers<sup>3</sup>. The probable reason why glovers did not normally work in the same districts as the shoemakers was that there was little difference between the cost of transporting gloves and similar goods - which could be packed flat - and the cost of transporting leather. Also glovers probably did very little bespoke work and it was

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1. See Repertories 21, fos. 375-9(b) for regulations requiring carriers in the city to keep their premises clean.

2. See Chapter 6, pp 208 et seq.

3. B.M., Add. Ms. 13504, fo. 112; P.R.O., S.P. 14/31, no 90; S.P. 16/386, no. 90.

The London company of Leathersellers, in fact, would not allow glovers to keep shops in the city (see Chapter 4, pp145-146) but it is possible that this ban could not have been maintained had there been good economic reasons against it.

not important that they should have direct access to their customers. On the other hand the lower rents of the suburbs encouraged glovers to settle in those districts.

The most important reason for the concentration of tanning and leatherdressing in London was the supply of hides and skins which became available as by-products of the city's meat consumption. An ever increasing stream of sheep and cattle flowed into London from many parts of the country to satisfy its appetite for mutton and beef<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the seventeenth century Houghton estimated that about 88,000 cattle were killed yearly for the London market. This figure can be accepted, although Houghton's calculation of 600,000 sheep killed for mutton is probably an exaggeration<sup>2</sup>.

So large were the supplies of hides coming into London on the backs of animals, in relation to supplies of tanning materials, that the capital was able to supply raw hides to other parts of the country. In 1566/7, for example, nearly 1,200 raw hides were taken by coastal shipping from London to other ports. About 90 per cent of the total went to Hull and most of the remaining shipments went to the north Kent port of Faversham. In 1605/6 over 2,300 hides were

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1. See C. Skeel, "The Cattle Trade Between Wales and England from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries", Trans. Royal Historical Society, 4th series, vol. IX (1926), pp. 135-158.; V.C.H., Leicester, vol. II, p. 220; F.J. Fisher, "The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640", Economic History Review, vol. V, no. 2 (1935), pp. 61-3.
  2. G.E. Fussell & C. Goodman, "Eighteenth Century Traffic in Live-stock", Economic History, vol. III, no. II (1936), p. 214.

shipped from London, of which some 86 per cent were taken to Hull. By 1661/2 the total had risen to more than 5,000 hides with about 84 per cent going to Hull<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the coastal trade, hides were bought in London by tanners from Essex, Hertfordshire and other counties near the capital<sup>2</sup>.

In the case of the trade with Hull and Faversham, hides were being taken to areas rich in oak bark<sup>3</sup>. London, it seems did not have sufficient supplies of bark to enable tanners to use all the raw hides that were available. This view is supported by the fact that supplies of leather manufactured in London were supplemented by tanned leather "imported" from other districts<sup>4</sup>. At one time the supply of bark for tanning probably caused no problem for London tanners could draw on supplies from the oak woods close to the city; the oaks of Bermondsey and Southwark for example had supplied tanners south of the Thames<sup>5</sup>. In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries however there were signs that local supplies were inadequate. The reason was partly that more cattle were slaughtered for meat as the population grew and hence there were more hides for tanning and also because urban development - particularly in the main tanning

1. Calculations from the London Port Books. See Appendix 3.
2. e.g., P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C 1/1248/8; Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/126/26.
3. *Infra*, pp. 82, 86.
4. *Infra*, pp. 77-79.
5. V.C.H., Surrey, vol. II, p. 336.

districts of Bermondsey and Southwark<sup>1</sup> - cut into the nearby woodland which had previously supplied the London tanners with the bark they needed. As a result tanners went further afield for their bark. At the end of the seventeenth century Richard Jones, a Southwark tanner - he was also described as a "barkman" - had a flourishing and well organised business bringing bark from the region of Guildford in Surrey where he had "bark shearers" and carters working for him<sup>2</sup>. Some bark was also brought around the coast into London<sup>3</sup>, and possibly some also came by river from the upper Thames valley. However, it often seems to have been cheaper to take hides to the bark rather than the other way round despite the fact that hides were liable to decay. Probably the cost of transporting oak bark long distances from often inaccessible woodlands was generally prohibitive<sup>4</sup>.

Although supplies of cattle hides in London were greater than local tanners could use, the supply of sheepskins, calf-skins and other light skins from local sources appears to

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1. See William Camden, Britannia (first published 1586; republished with additions by E.Gibson, 1695), p.160; D. Defoe, A Tour Through England and Wales (1724-6, Everyman ed., 1928), Vol. 1, p. 315.
  2. P.R.O., Chancery Masters' Exhibits, C 107/110.
  3. T.S. Willan, The English Coasting Trade (Manchester, 1938) p. 137; P.R.O. E 190/45/4.
  4. In the late eighteenth century Southwark tanners sometimes sent hides to Sussex for tanning and then brought them back (V.C.H., Surrey, vol.II, p. 337).

have been inadequate to meet the demands of the leather manufacturers. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries calfskins were regularly imported from the dairying regions of Suffolk and by the later seventeenth century supplies were also coming from north-east England. It is sometimes difficult to know whether these skins were arriving in a raw or dressed condition, but some of them at least, were raw<sup>1</sup>. London was also supplied with light skins by land routes. In the mid-sixteenth century, for example, sheepskins were obtained from Northamptonshire<sup>2</sup>, and in the 1660s raw goatskins were brought from Ireland and Chester<sup>3</sup>.

This movement of raw skins into London poses the question of why the supplies of skins coming to London attached to the live animals were insufficient when supplies of cattle hides were - as we have seen - more than adequate for the local leather manufacturers. To take the case of calf skins first, it is not likely that fewer calves were driven to London for slaughter than beef cattle<sup>4</sup>. The answer to the question perhaps really turns on the definition of a calfskin. In the 1640s a calfskin was officially reckoned to be for the purpose of export, a cattle skin weighing less than three pounds - and the limit was later reduced to two

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1. For references, statistics and the problems of interpretation see Appendix 3.
  2. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C I/980/7 and C I/980/8.
  3. Cal. S.P.D., 1666, p. 509.
  4. Houghton estimated that as many calves as beef cattle were killed in London and an eighteenth century estimate puts the number of calves at double the number of cattle (Fussell, Goodman. loc. cit, pp. 214-5)

pounds<sup>1</sup>. If this definition bore any relation to the practice in the leather industry, it is not surprising that few calfskins came to London on the back of the animal. A calf which produced a skin weighing two or three pounds could hardly have been in a fit state to walk to market. In other words an animal at the London meat markets, which in the opinion of butchers produced veal, may, in the opinion of tanners and leatherdressers, produced a hide suitable for heavy leather rather than a skin suitable for lighter work. In the case of sheep and goat skins, these were naturally more numerous in grazing areas than in London.

A related question is why some skins came to London in their raw state instead of being turned into leather in their district of origin for skins were bulkier than the leather that could be made from them and liable to decay. Possibly the presence of leather dressing materials in London may be an explanation although there is no evidence of this. More likely it seems that the general importance of London as a trading centre made it a convenient clearing house for skins of all types and from all parts of the country. In the early seventeenth century London had the reputation for being the best market for sheepskins in the country<sup>2</sup>; it was used not only by the London leatherdressers but also by leather manufacturers from other parts of the country<sup>3</sup>.

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1. See Chapter 7, p328.

2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commission, E 178/4105.

3. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/45 Eliz., Hill.II

Closely linked with the supplies of hides and skins which originated in London as by-products of meat consumption, was the fact that the metropolis was an important market for all kinds of leather and leather goods. The population that demanded meat also demanded footwear, leather clothing, saddles and harnesses, and many other kinds of leather goods. The tanners and leatherdressers of London and the suburbs supplied leather using craftsmen with much of the leather they needed but, in addition, leather was brought for sale into London from all parts of the country, far and near. Leadenhall was the market for many tanners living in the counties adjoining London. These workmen made regular weekly journeys, occupying a day or more, to sell leather in London and to buy hides. It is significant that the city authorities placed no restriction on country leather manufacturers trading in the London markets - providing they kept to the publically appointed markets - similar to those imposed by some provincial towns or "foreign" tanners and leatherdressers<sup>1</sup>. In fact the country manufacturers were regarded very favorably. The leather market was held on Monday in the early seventeenth century and tanners from outlying districts had to travel on Sunday to be at the market on time. In order to avoid endangering their chance of salvation the country tanners asked the city to alter the market day to Tuesday or

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1. See Chapter 4, pp.122-123.

Wednesday. They pointed out that leather prices at Leadenhall would fall if tanners who declined to travel on Sunday could attend the market. The Court of Aldermen was impressed by the arguments of the country tanners and in March 1626 a bill was promoted in Parliament to change the market day for leather to Tuesday<sup>1</sup>. This particular measure was unsuccessful, but thirty years later the change was made<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile the area from which London was drawing for leather was **extending**. Dressed leather and leather goods were brought regularly overland from the west of England during the seventeenth century<sup>3</sup>; and in 1687 tanners from Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire traded at Leadenhall<sup>4</sup>. Midland England, too, supplied London with tanned leather. This particular trade was of long standing and it can be traced back at least to the late fourteenth century<sup>5</sup>.

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1. Repertories 29, fo. 191(b); 35, fo. 165; 40, fo. 109(b); B.M., Add. Ms., 34218, fo. 99(B); Commons' Journals, vol. ii, p. 830
  2. Repertories 65, fo. 14(b)
  3. Infra, pp. 103-104.
  4. P.R.O., P.C.2/72, p. 453.
  5. As early as 1378 a tanner from Northamptonshire was selling leather in London (G. Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, 1904), p. 19). The trade was still continuing in the late sixteenth century. In 1570 a tanner from Northampton was prosecuted in the Exchequer for an offence concerned with the illegal sale of leather in London (P.R.O., Exchequer Memoranda Rolls, E 159/360, membrane 6). In 1600 a Coventry tanner was prosecuted for a similar offence at Islington. (P.R.O., E 159/418, membrane 97).

It is impossible to know how much leather came into London by overland routes but it is possible to form some estimate of the quantity of leather coming into London around the coast. During the last forty years of the sixteenth century shipments of leather reaching London - as recorded in the port books - varied widely from year to year. In 1579/80 nearly 2,500 tanned hides came round the coast; at the beginning of the seventeenth century only 100. The figures continued to fluctuate throughout the seventeenth century. There was also some tanned leather moving out of London to other English ports, especially towards the end of the seventeenth century, but throughout the century London continued to be a considerable net importer of leather<sup>1</sup>. Most of the leather came from the eastern ports of Ipswich and Woodbridge - the same ports that supply London with raw and dressed calfskins. The only other important port supplying the capital with leather was Faversham in Kent.

To sum up, London was an important centre of the leather industry because of the supplies of hides and skins available and because of the existence of a large market for leather and leather goods. For the same reasons London was the centre of a trade that touched most parts of the country.

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1. The figures will be found in Appendix 3.

There is some evidence for believing that London did not possess abundant supplies of bark and that therefore some hides were sent to areas where bark was more plentiful, while tanned leather was brought into the city. The details of location were influenced by water supplies, rents, and the concentrations of population.

Yorkshire, and Kent and Sussex.

These two regions, although geographically distinct, had certain features in common as leather producing districts. In both areas supplies of oak bark were probably the most important reason explaining the presence of tanning. Both areas obtained raw hides from London, and in both the leather crafts were scattered in certain districts rather than concentrated in one or two towns. In both, too, the leather industry was of more than local importance. Of the two regions, Yorkshire was much more important.

It can be seen from the map that most of the Yorkshire petitions came from the West Riding, an area well watered by the river systems converging on the Humber. The region drew regularly on London for supplies of raw hides. After they arrived at Hull, the hides were carried "vpp Humber and the fresh Rivers there to Turnbridge and Bawtrej, and thence by land to our seuerall dwellings within the said West Riding of Yorkshire"<sup>1</sup>. In 1626 about a sixth of the

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/65, no. 45.

total number of hides passing through Hull were taken to Sheffield<sup>1</sup> - using the same route as that employed for the import of Swedish iron<sup>2</sup>. In the late seventeenth century leather workers in the town were only less numerous than metal, cloth, and agricultural workers<sup>3</sup>. At the end of 1626 Yorkshire tanners had their supplies of hides from London cut off by a proclamation prohibiting the coastal trade in hide and leather on the grounds that "under color of a libertie ... for conveying of hydes and leather from this port of London unto Hull, for service of the Northerne parts, there are very great quantities carryed away which never arrive at the said port of Hull, but are directly carryed into Scotland or other forraigne parts"<sup>4</sup>. The Yorkshire tanners protested against the prohibition, which they claimed was made because that had shipped nearly 5,000 hides from London during 1626 which "did much exceed the number wch we bought in former yeares". "The reason thereof was the great Visitacon wch was in London the next yeare before wch hindred vs from buying hides there and so made a great scarcity thereof, and deereness of leather amongst vs . . . and so inforced vs to buy more the last yeare for

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1. Ibid.

2. See T.S. Ashton, Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution (Manchester, 2nd ed., 1951), p. 245. The River Don was not navigable in its upper reaches - hence goods went via the rivers Trent and Idle to Bawtrey and then by land.

3. E.J. Buckatzsch, "Occupations in the Parish Registers of Sheffield, 1655-1719", Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series., vol. 1, nos. 2 & 3 (1949), p. 145.

4. Acts of the Privy Council, Dec. 1626, part 1, pp. 401-2.

storing and replenishing of our tan pittes and better serving of our Neighbours with Leather"<sup>1</sup>. About three years after the proclamation the Yorkshire tanners were successful in persuading the Privy Council to allow them to transport 4,000 hides a year from London to Hull. In the meantime the tanners had been bringing approximately that number from London by land routes<sup>2</sup>.

The importance of the West Riding as a tanning district depended primarily on the availability of bark from oaks felled for the iron masters in the area<sup>3</sup>. Bark could be removed only from felled timber (to strip growing trees killed them) and the iron masters were a valuable source of supply.<sup>4</sup>

The connection between the leather and the iron industries extended beyond the matter of bark supplies. The iron industry itself needed leather for the bellows of furnaces and must have used considerable quantities of leather<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, iron smelting was only one of a number of industries in the West Riding that made it one of the most heavily industrialised and densely populated areas in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>6</sup>.

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/35, no.45.

2. P.R.O., P.C. 2/39, fos. 705, 717-9.

3. For the importance of the iron industry in the district see H.R.Schubert, History of the British Iron and Steel Industry (London, 1957), pp. 181-183.

4. See Ashton, *op. cit.*, p.p. 16, 117. No direct evidence has been found of tanners buying bark from Yorkshire Iron masters. There is such evidence for the Forest of Dean (*Infra*, p.101.).

5. See Chapter I. p24.

6. See for example Defoe's description of the West Riding (*op.cit.*, II, pp. 181, 183, 185-7, 193 et seq., especially 199.

In other words there was a ready market for leather for both agricultural and industrial purposes as well as for personal wear. Some leather was exported from Hull<sup>1</sup>, but probably most of the leather produced in the West Riding was used in the district.

In other parts of Yorkshire the leather crafts were located in market towns and were associated with agrarian rather than with industrial pursuits. Beverley in the East Riding was a case in point. The importance of the leather crafts in the town was noticed by Edmund Gibson who added to Camden's topographical work in 1695. "The principal trade of the town is making Malt, Oatmeal, and Tann'd Leather"<sup>2</sup>. The remark was repeated by Defoe thirty years later who added, "(Beverley) is a large and populous town, though I find no considerable manufacture carried on there."<sup>3</sup> This gives us a clue to the place of the leather crafts in the economy of the town. The one-time source of Beverley's prosperity, the cloth industry, had declined during the fifteenth century<sup>4</sup> leaving it with no dominant occupation. However, the town was located in a rich agricultural region,

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1. See B. Hall, The Trade of Newcastle and the North-East Ports, 1600-1640 (London University M.Sc. (Econ) thesis, 1933), pp. 283-9.
  2. Camden, Britannia, p. 745.
  3. Defoe, op. cit., II, pp. 236, 238.
  4. H. Heaton, Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industry (Oxford, 1920), p. 49.

well populated, and carrying a large number of cattle and sheep. It was also a trading centre of some importance and several fairs were held in the town, one of which was attended by London tradesmen<sup>1</sup>. The economy of the town was based on the exchange of the products of the town with the produce of the countryside, and on the processing of agricultural produce - for example barley, oats, and hides. Possibly the Beverley tanners obtained some hides from London, via Hull a few miles to the south, but basically the leather crafts in the town were related to the regional economy of East Yorkshire.

Similarly with York. Like Beverley, York had lost its medieval prosperity based upon wool and cloth but in the mid-sixteenth century it was still a considerable city with a population of perhaps 8,000<sup>2</sup>. In the later sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries the leather craftsmen formed an important part of the city's industrial population, accounting for roughly 20 per cent of new admissions to the freedom of the city throughout the period<sup>3</sup>. This was a

1. Defoe, op.cit., II, p. 238.

2. J.N.Bartlett, "The Expansion and Decline of York in the Late Middle Ages", Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol. XII, no. 1 (1959), pp. 17-33.

3. The leather crafts comprised the tanners, curriers, shoemakers, saddlers, glovers, girdlers. The occasional bottle maker and cardmakers has also been classified as a leather craftsman. The actual proportions were-

1549/50-'58	'59	'70/'80	'99/1600	'19/'20	'40/'61	'80/1
20%	21%	20%	24%	15%	17%/20%	27%

(Calculated from the Freemen of York, I (1272-1558), II (1559-1759), Surtees Society, vols. 96, 102).

distinctly higher proportion than that attained by the textile crafts during the period when they were the most important group of industrial occupations in York<sup>1</sup>, and it seems that the importance of the leather crafts had increased from the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1517, for example, there was a change in the methods of electing the Common Council of York. The most important crafts each elected two representatives, a group of lesser occupations chose one each, and a third group of crafts had no representatives. There were no leather workers in the first category, the glovers and saddlers were in the second group, while the tanners, curriers, shoemakers, cobblers and girdlers were among the unrepresented<sup>2</sup>. However, with the passing of York's former glories the leather crafts became more important.

The leather crafts at York used local materials and<sup>3</sup> supplied local markets. Hides came from the local butchers, there was plenty of water from the Fosse and Ouse<sup>4</sup>, and the market for leather and leather goods was found in the city

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1. Bartlett, loc.cit., p.25.
  2. M. Sellers, "The City of York in the Sixteenth Century", English Historical Review, vol.IX (1894), p.280.
  3. York City Records, vol.III (Yorks, Arch.Soc., 1953), p.7.
  4. In the sixteenth century there was a "Tanners' Moat" running into the Ouse to the N.W. of the city and a "Tanners' Garden" bounded by the moat and the river (Sellers, loc.cit., p.276). In 1576 the leather workers were prohibited from using the Fosse where drinking water was taken and were compelled to work outside the walls of the city (A. Raine. Medieval York (London 1955) p.282).

and the surrounding countryside. There is no evidence of a widespread trade in leather or leather goods, and the York leather manufacturers could well have joined with their neighbours at Knaresborough in 1698 in saying that "they chiefly deal with poor Country people for small pieces at home . . . ." <sup>1</sup>.

Turning to Sussex and Kent we find conditions similar to those in the West Riding although the evidence is rather sparse. The importance of the region as a leather producing district was derived from its proximity to London and its supplies of oak bark. As we have seen, hides moved from London to Faversham and other Kentish ports <sup>2</sup> and then possibly by land into the iron working districts of Kent and east Sussex <sup>3</sup>. The Sussex oak bark was especially suitable for tanning as it had a higher tannin content than usual <sup>4</sup>, although this fact can hardly have been known by sixteenth and seventeenth century tanners. The industry has left little record in the area. In no particular place were the leather crafts especially numerous - except possibly in

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1. Commons Journals, vol. XII, pp. 21-2.
  2. Supra, pp. 72-73, and Appendix 3.
  3. See Schubert, op. cit., p. 166. In 1548-9 Sussex tanners became concerned about a possible shortage of tan bark resulting from iron masters felling oaks out of season (Hist. Mss. Comm. Hatfield Mss., vol. XIII, p. 24).
  4. F.N. Howes, Vegetable Tanning Materials (London, 1953), p.p. 85-6.

Canterbury<sup>1</sup>. Rather, they were widely scattered throughout the region<sup>2</sup>. In East Sussex the industry was important enough to cause the various craftsmen to combine together in 1698 to present a joint petition to Parliament protesting against the damage being done to their occupations by the leather duty<sup>3</sup>.

The market for the leather of Kent and Sussex was not predominantly local. Regular shipments of leather left the Kentish ports of London during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Leather was also carried overland. In 1632 a Kentish tanner left his home near Rye and set off with a horse load of leather on a long cross country journey to Reading. By the time he arrived the horse had - not surprisingly - become lame. So the tanner called at the local blacksmith's shop "to cure his horse" and at the local inn to quench his thirst. There his journey became recorded for posterity for he was arrested for "idling in alehouses". The tanner claimed that he sold his leather at "Twitnam" (Twining in Sussex?) and from there went to Fareham, Winchester and finally to Reading.<sup>4</sup> This seems a remarkably

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1. Register of the Freemen of Canterbury (Canterbury, 1903-), passm.
  2. V.C.H., Sussex, vol. II, p. 259; V.C.H., Kent, vol. II, p. 375.
  3. Common's Journals, vol. XII, P. 96
  4. Records of the Borough of Reading, VOL. III, p. 105.

circuitous journey and possibly it was not along a regular trade route, but at least shows that bulky commodities such as leather could be moved over land routes perhaps to a greater extent than is sometimes believed. Some leather from the Sussex-Kent district was also exported - mostly illegally it seems. The port of Rye and a number of other east Sussex ports obtained a considerable reputation for smuggling leather to France and elsewhere during the seventeenth century<sup>1</sup>. Rye also had a varied export trade in leather goods in the late sixteenth century<sup>2</sup> which suggests that the leather crafts were numerous in the hinterland.

#### Eastern England.

In the region of England lying between the Humber and the Thames, at least one district - High Suffolk - possessed a leather industry of more than local importance.

The Suffolk leather industry was ancillary to the county's dairying industry<sup>3</sup>. The butter and cheese which left the East Anglian ports for London<sup>4</sup> were accompanied by large quantities of raw and dressed calfskins and tanned leather<sup>5</sup>. In 1594 the bailiffs and customs officials of Ipswich claimed that Suffolk leather was better and stronger than any other leather and was preferred by

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1. See Chapter 7, pp.332.

2. T.S. Willan, Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade (Manchester U.P. 1959), p. 77.

3. See R. Trow-Smith, A History of British Livestock Husbandry to 1700 (London, 1957), pp.196-7; Defoe, op.cit.I, p.53.

4. Fisher, "Food Market", pp.48,56

5. Supra, p 79 and appendix 3.

the London shoemakers<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the importance of the industry in the county it is difficult to pick upon particular places as centres of production. The pattern of location seems to have been mainly rural. The only petition from Suffolk to reach Parliament in 1697/8 came from Bury St. Edmunds "and other country Towns"<sup>2</sup>. Earlier in 1636, an enterprising character named Nicholas Manning had been selling bogus licences to tanners which purported to allow them to dispense with the tanning regulations of 1563 and 1604. He operated in the northeast corner of the county and tanners from several villages - Frostenden, Sibton, Wenhaston, Middleton, Halesworth and Walpole - complained about him<sup>3</sup>. Of the towns Ipswich was a leather market of some importance. It was attended by tanners and butchers from the surrounding countryside<sup>4</sup> and, with Woodbridge, it handled most of the leather destined for London.

Outside Suffolk the leather industry was a useful - although subsidiary - part of the economy based on local materials and meeting local demands. In Norwich, the second city in the country, the cloth industry was the basis of the town's prosperity, but the leather crafts employed a

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1. Cal. S.P.D., Eliz., CCL, p. 561.

2. Commons' Journals, Vol. Xii, p.119.

3. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/ II Car. I, Trinity II.

4. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/ 43 Eliz., Hil. 18.

considerable number of workmen. Between 1548 and 1719, 1,079 leather workers were made freemen of the city - that is little over 10 per cent of the total new enrolments. The leather craftsmen and the worsted weavers between them formed about 40 per cent of the industrial and commercial population of Norwich<sup>1</sup>. Of the leather workers, 641 were shoemakers, 96 were cobblers, and 107 were tanners. There were 151 glovers and leathersdressers. The rest were carriers and leather using craftsmen of one sort or another. Judging from the ratio of leather manufacturers to leather using crafts most of the leather produced in the city went to meet the demands of the local population. The concentration of the leather crafts in Norwich was - as in the case of London - the result of the large population which formed the market for leather goods and provided the hides as a by-product of meat consumption<sup>2</sup>.

There is little information about the other parts of Eastern England. In Lincolnshire the leather crafts - especially tanning - were widely scattered throughout the country<sup>3</sup> although no estimate can be made of their relative importance. The crafts were doubtless linked with the business of fattening cattle in many parts of the country<sup>4</sup>.

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1. Calculation from P. Millican (ed.), Register of the Freemen of Norwich, 1548-1713, passim.

2. There was no shortage of hides. Defoe commented on the "prodigious number of black cattle" fattened in the meadows between the Yare and the Waveney for the Norwich and London markets (Defoe, op.cit., II, pp.64-5).

3. See the evidence of location from the inventories presented in Appendix 7.

4. Defoe, op.cit., II, pp. 94-5.

In Essex leather manufacturers felt the influence of the London market<sup>1</sup> but the industry does not appear to have been very important in the county as a whole. Only in Colchester was there any sign that the leather crafts were at all numerous. A fairly high proportion of the aliens in the town during the 1570s were shoemakers and other leather workers<sup>2</sup>; in 1698 the light leather craftsmen in Colchester complained that "great numbers of poor people" would be impoverished by the duty placed upon leather<sup>3</sup>.

#### Northern England.

The northern counties of England - Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Westmorland - were not a major leather manufacturing region of England. In the words of the leather craftsmen of Alnwick in Northumberland it was "the remotest part of the Kingdom"<sup>4</sup> and apart from Newcastle and its hinterland the region did not figure in a national leather trade. The leather crafts were generally of local importance only.

In the town of Newcastle leather craftsmen were a significant proportion<sup>5</sup> of the working population<sup>5</sup>. As in

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1. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C I/I248/8.
  2. "List of Strangers at Colchester, 1571", printed in R.H. Tawney & E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents (1924), vol. I, pp. 310-314.
  3. Commons' Journals, vol. xiii, p. 36.
  4. Ibid, vol. xii, p. 48.
  5. See Register of Freemen of Newcastle-on-Tyne (Record Series, III), passim.

the cases of Norwich and York, a large population<sup>1</sup> provided the market for all kinds of leather goods. In fact the demand for leather seems to have outrun the local supplies of hides and bark. At the end of 1626 the shoemakers of Newcastle sent a petition to the Privy Council protesting against the ban that had been placed on coastal shipments of leather<sup>2</sup>. They complained that they did not have "good and sufficient Hydes & leather in those p(ar)tes (and) have been inforced and for many yeres past vsed to supply themselves wth tanned & curried leather from the Citty of London and other Coast Townes and have from thence conveyed the same by sea vnto the said towne of New Castle.."3 The London coastal books indicate that the shipments did not start before the end of the sixteenth century and they appear to have petered out by the end of the seventeenth century, although this may merely reflect a deficiency in the records<sup>4</sup>. However it is possible that local supplies of hides had been inadequate for leather manufacturers from quite early in the sixteenth century. As early as 1532 the Newcastle tanner's gild ordered that its members should buy

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1. See W.G. Hoskins, "Elizabethan provincial Towns in the early Sixteenth Century", Trans. Royal Hist. Soc., 5th series, vol. 6 (1956), pp. 3-4 for newcastles position among English Towns.

2. *Supra*, p.81.

3. P.R.O., S.P. 16/52, no. 38.

4. See Appendix 3.

hides from only one butcher each. This sounds very much like some kind of rationing arrangement. The supply of oak bark also caused difficulty at the same time and tanners were instructed to buy no more than eight loads or forty trees of bark (presumably in one season); they were **also required** to supply one another with bark<sup>1</sup>. It appears, in fact, that the Newcastle district did not possess many natural advantages for tanning and the allied leather crafts, but that the existence of a large population requiring leather goods provided the main reason for the presence of the industry.

To the south of Newcastle, the leather crafts were an important group of occupations in the city of Durham<sup>2</sup>. The city possessed twelve industrial guilds in the early seventeenth century and four of them - the tanners, the cordwainers, the saddlers and the glovers and skinners - represented groups of leather craftsmen<sup>3</sup>. There was no single reason explaining the location of the leather crafts in Durham but a combination of several factors - local markets and local supplies of hides and skins, and adequate supplies of water and tanning and dressing materials. At one

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1. E. Mackenzie, A Descriptive and Historical Account of Newcastle-on-Tyne (Newcastle, 1827), p. 674.
  2. According to the V.C.H. Durham, vol. II, p. 276, Durham leather had a "world-wide reputation" at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
  3. Durham Civic Memorials (ed. C.E. Whiting, Surtees Society, 1945), pp. xiv-xv.

time the country around Durham had been well wooded, oaks has been plentiful and tanners had no difficulties in obtaining the bark they needed. By the early seventeenth century, however, serious inroads had been made upon the supply of oak timber<sup>1</sup> and the Durham tanners found some difficulty in getting supplies. The Durham Company of Tanners was continually occupied with the problem of bark supplies during the first half of the seventeenth century and made a number of regulations in an attempt to allocate available supplies fairly among all the tanners of the city<sup>2</sup>.

In other parts of Northumberland and County Durham the leather crafts were related to other economic activities. Defoe noted the presence of tanning at Barnard Castle in county Durham, where there was a double connection with the horse breeding carried on in the district for the tanners worked with horse hides and much of the leather was manufactured into horse harnesses<sup>3</sup>. At Hexham, in Northumberland, tanning glovemaking, and other crafts grew up in the seventeenth century and a leather market was established in 1662, apparently because enclosure for pasture - which had been taking place in the surrounding countryside in the preceding

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1. V.C.H., Durham, vol. II, pp. 374, 380. See also J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry (London, 1932), vol. 1, p. 194.
  2. Book of the Tanners' Company, Durham, 1612-1655 (Surtees Society, 1945), Passim, and especially pp.77-8, 87-8
  3. Defoe, op. cit., II, pp. 223-4.
  4. A.B. Hinds "Hexhamshire", part 1, in A History of Northumberland, vol.III (1896), pp. 268-70.

century - had increased the supply of hides<sup>1</sup>.

Moving to the north-west of England, it will be observed from the map that there was a knot of small towns in Westmorland standing at the southern end of the Eden Valley where the leather crafts were of sufficient importance to protest against the leather duty of 1697<sup>2</sup>. Nothing is known of the crafts in these places but they were doubtless based upon the supplies of skins and hides from the neighbouring pastures and hill sides, and fulfilled only local needs. To the south of the county, Kendal was a leather manufacturing centre of some importance. The leather craft possibly vied with the cloth trade in importance to the town economy<sup>3</sup>. Of the twelve companies in Kendal in the late sixteenth century, six of them were directly connected with the leather crafts<sup>4</sup>. The town was an important local market for hides, skins and leather and was attended by craftsmen from the surrounding countryside<sup>5</sup>. In Cumberland, to the north, Carlisle was in a similar position. Three of the eight gilds of the town represented leather workers; hides, calf, sheep and goat skins came from the

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1. A.B. Hinds "Hexhamshire", part i, in A History of Northumberland, vol. III (1896), pp. 268-70.
  2. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p. 132.
  3. See Camden, Britannia, p. 805, and Defoe, op.cit, II, p.270 for the cloth industry in Kendal.
  4. Hist. Mss. Comm., 10th Report, Appendix 4, p. 312.
  5. "A Boke of Recorde of the Burgh of Kirkby Kendal", Cumb. & Westmorland Antiq. & Arch. Society, Extra series 7 (1892), pp. 145, 148.

surrounding countryside; and the leather craftsmen supplied footwear and other goods to the local population, not only in Carlisle but in the neighbouring towns and villages. The shoemakers, for example, had a regular trade with Brampton about nine miles away and at the end of the sixteenth century the Carlisle shoemakers were divided into two groups, each group going to Brampton on alternate weeks to sell shoes<sup>1</sup>.

#### Western England.

In Western England between the Mersey and the Bristol Channel the various leather crafts were probably more numerous in relation to other occupations than in any other part of the country. The majority of the petitions received by Parliament in 1697 and 1698 came from this part of the country and this was a reasonably accurate reflection of the relative importance of the region. A number of factors explain this importance but in the main the concentration of the leather crafts in the western side of the country was connected with the grazing of sheep and cattle, although in some districts - notably Shropshire - there was also a connection with the iron industry.

One of the most important centres of leather manufacture - particularly of light leather made from calf skins and

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1. "Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle", Cumb. & Westmorland Antiq. Arch. Soc., vol. 4, pp. 82, 85, 177-8, 180

sheepskins - was Chester. From the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth centuries about a fifth of the new admissions to the freedom of the city every year were leather workers<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the direct employment afforded by the manufacture of leather, the industry also provided an important commodity for export, "the countrey adjoyneinge not affordinge anie other comodities transportable"<sup>2</sup>.

The basis of the Chester leather industry was the supply of skins coming from the surrounding countryside where cattle were grazed in large numbers. But the industry was given further impetus by supplies of sheepskins and lambskins imported from Ireland<sup>3</sup>. Large quantities of Irish skins were also imported into Bristol<sup>4</sup> and other western

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1. The proportions were:

<u>1550/I-59/60</u>	<u>70/I-79/80</u>	<u>90/I-99/1600</u>	<u>1610/I-19/20</u>	<u>34/5-43/4</u>
22.4%	22.6%	20.6%	20.4%	20.3%
<u>60/I-69/70</u>	<u>80/I-89/90</u>	<u>90/I-99/1700</u>		
19.4%	16.0%	11.1%		

(Calculations from the Rolls of the Freemen of the City of Chester, Part I, 1392-1700 (Lancs. & Cheshire Records Society, vol. LI, 1906) ).

2. Acts of the Privy Council, 1616, vol. II, p.651
3. In 1558/9 106,000 Irish sheepskins and lambskins were imported to Chester (A.K. Longfield, Anglo-Irish Trade in Sixteenth Century (1929), p.222). In 1576/7 the figure was about 105,000, and in 1619/20 about 64,000 (P.R.O., E 190/1324/17, E 190/1332/1).
4. e.g., 1612/3 400 skins; 1654/5 19,300 skins; 1685/6 11,900 skins (P. McGrath (ed.), Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth Century Bristol (Bristol Records Society Publications, vol. XIX, 1955), pp.282-5, 286-7, 289-90.

ports<sup>1</sup>. Both the Chester and the Bristol leatherdressers claimed they could not do without them. The whit~~ew~~appers of Bristol<sup>2</sup> told Parliament in 1698 that Irish skins were "more fit for gloves than those of England"<sup>3</sup>. A similar story was told by the Chester leather workers who added that the excise duty imposed on leather in 1697 would result in Irish skins being sent to other countries<sup>4</sup>.

The superior quality of Irish sheepskins and lambskins for the manufacture of gloves can hardly be a complete explanation of their import since other towns in England using native skins were well known as glovemaking centres<sup>5</sup>. We should therefore like to know why it was necessary to import sheepskins into a grazing area of England, and also why the skins were not dressed in Ireland. The second point is really beyond the scope of this study<sup>6</sup>; but to the

1. Willan, Elizabethan Foreign Trade, pp. 83, 86.
2. Leather workers formed a fairly large group in sixteenth century Bristol. Early in the century 17 per cent of the city's apprentices were leather workers (Calendar of the Bristol Apprenticeship Book, part I, 1532-42 (B.R.S.P., vol. XIV, 1949), pp. 199-200).
3. Common's Journals, vol. XII, p. 37.
4. Ibid, p. II.
5. Infra, p. —
6. A possible explanation is that raw skins paid customs of 5 shillings a hundred but dressed skins 20 s. a hundred (B.M., Harleian Ms. 9996, fo. 245).

first question we can suggest at least a partial answer.

Chester was situated in a rich grazing area, but the district was particularly well suited to cattle and relatively few sheep were kept<sup>1</sup>. Hence leather manufacturers had to import sheep skins from Ireland to supplement local supplies. However this explanation can hardly apply to Bristol with the sheep country of the Cotswolds to the north-east. Possibly in that district leathers dressing was carried out on such a scale that the demand for sheepskins and lambskins exceeded local supplies.

There was also some import of hides and calfskins into Chester, Bristol and other western ports<sup>2</sup>. On at least one occasion, in 1627, a tanner sent especially to Ireland for the hides he needed rather than buy them in the local English markets<sup>3</sup>. Whether Irish hides were of a different quality to English hides or whether they were needed merely to augment native supplies is not clear. Without knowing the proportion of imports to domestic supplies it is not possible to assess the importance of Irish hides to the tanners of western England.

1. Trow-Smith, Livestock Husbandry, p. 211.

2. e.g. Chester, 1558/9 - calfskins 7,800; hides 175, (Longfield op.cit., p. 222). 1576/7 - calfskins 1050, hides 639; 1619/20 - calfskins 1,600, hides 1620 (P.R.O., E 190/1324/17, E 190/1332/1). Bristol, 1612/3 - hides 390; 1654/5, hides 550; 1685/6 - hides 685 (Bristol Merchants, pp. 284-5, 286-7, 289-90). Also Willan, Elizabethan Trade, pp. 86 - 7.

3. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Car. 1, Mich. 14.

Away from the ports the leather crafts, especially leathersdressers and glovers, were prominent in many towns. In 1697 the glovers of Leominster claimed that "many thousands" of people were employed on glovemaking<sup>1</sup>; at Hereford there were "many hundred families"<sup>2</sup> supported by the same occupation; at Kington, Weobley and Pembridge in Herefordshire "the Gloving trade employed (an) abundance of poor people"<sup>3</sup>, while the glovers of ~~Nant~~Northwich in Cheshire stated "that the Trade of Making Gloves (is) a manufacture of the English Nation and maintains a great number of poor"<sup>4</sup>. It was in the interests of the glovers of the places mentioned to exaggerate their own importance when complaining about government action that affected their occupations. Nevertheless there is no need to doubt that the light leather crafts were very important in these towns where leathersdressing was based upon local supplies of skins and possibly also on local salt supplies<sup>5</sup>.

The heavy leather crafts, also used <sup>local</sup> supplies of hides. Tanners and curriers from the ~~Worcestershire~~ towns of Bewdley, Tenbury, Kidderminster and Stourbridge protested that the leather duty would damage their trades "and be a

1. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p. 18.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., xii, p. 20.
4. Ibid., xi, pp. 766-7.
5. There were a number of complaints from towns in western England about the duty on salt as well as the one on leather (Ibid., xii, pp. 16, 441, 463).

great disadvantage to the Country Tanners and Farmers who often have great quantities of skins and leather lying dead in their Hands"<sup>1</sup>. For Worcestershire, the detailed influences at work on the location of the leather crafts have been examined by Mr. K. Mc.P. Buchanan<sup>2</sup>. Buchanan found that in the seventeenth century there was a concentration of tanning in riverside parishes along the Avon and Severn (including the town of Worcester where part of the Severn was reserved for tanners), but the streams of the south-east of the county were too hard for tanning. There was also some correlation between the location of tanning and woodlands. The location of shoemaking was influenced mainly by the distribution of population. These findings conform to the conclusions reached in other sections of the present chapter.

In some parts of western England the connection between the leather and the iron industries was evident. Tanners from Bristol and Gloucester bought oak bark from iron masters in the Forest of Dean<sup>3</sup>. There were sixty-two leather workers in the city of Gloucester in 1607, or about 11 per cent of the total working population. In the county the

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1. Ibid, xi, pp. 758-9.

2. K. Mc. P. Buchanan, "Studies in the Localisation of Seventeenth Century Worcestershire Industries, 1600-1650", Trans. Worcs. Arch. Society, vol. 17, pp. 42-8.

3. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/929, E 178/5304. I owe these references to Mr. G. Hammersley of Queen's University, Belfast.

proportion was lower<sup>1</sup>. In the west Midlands there was a two-fold connection between the leather industry and the iron industry. Not only was there a joint supply of coppice oak and bark for the iron furnaces and tanneries but there was a joint demand for leather and metal parts for saddles and harnesses. In the Birmingham - Walsall - Wolverhampton district the manufacture of small metal goods was widespread and it was probably encouraged by the presence of the leather crafts in the district. In the sixteenth century tanning was one of the leading occupations in Birmingham although its importance diminished in the seventeenth century with the continued growth of the metal trades. However the relationship between the leather and the metal crafts in the West Midlands continued; and Walsall today is still the main centre of production of harnesses and saddles in England<sup>2</sup>. A connection between the leather industry and the iron industry may also be suspected in the region of Shropshire bounded by the rivers Severn and Teme. Both occupations were present in the area<sup>3</sup> but there is no proof

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1. A.J. & R.H. Tawney, "An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century", Economic History Review, vol. V (1934-5), pp36-8, 59-62. The authors do not classify shoemakers and glovers as leather workers. According to their definition 4.8 per cent of the male population of Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cirencester were leather workers; and 1.2 per cent in the rest of the county. If glovers and shoemakers are included in the classification, however, the proportions rise to 11 per cent (for Gloucester only) and 4.3 per cent for the county.
  2. W.H.B. Court, The Rise of the Midland Industries (Oxford, 1938), pp.31-2, 34-5; C.Gill, History of Birmingham, vol.1 (1952), p. 45; Ashton, Iron and Steel, p. 19.
  3. See map at end of volume and Schubert, British Iron and Steel pp. 179-180.

of a definite relationship between the two.

The leather trade of western England was both local and national. Most towns had hide and leather markets which acted as trading centres for the district. A good deal of dressed leather was sent to Chester for export under licences held by merchants of the city. Leather for export came from as far distant as Derbyshire<sup>1</sup>. There was also an inter-regional trade. Tanners from Shrewsbury, for example, bought hides at Chester and Liverpool<sup>2</sup>; shoemakers from Monmouth and Cardiff crossed St. George's Channel to buy leather at Bristol<sup>3</sup>. But the eyes of many leather craftsmen were turned towards London in search of markets.

Large quantities of light leather and light leather goods moved to London during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by overland routes. For this reason it is not possible to give an estimate of quantity. Leather was bought in Bristol and Chester by the London Leathersellers "in the crust . . . that is hard dried as it comes from the weather", and was packed into bundles and taken to London<sup>4</sup>. Towns such as Rosse-on-Wye, Hereford, and others had a "wholesale trade to London" in gloves in the late

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1. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commission, E 178/7224.
  2. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Car. I, Mich.14.
  3. E.A. Lewis, Welsh Port Books. 1550-1603 (Cymmrodorion Record Series, no. XII) p. 30.
  4. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38; S.P. 14/31.

seventeenth century<sup>1</sup> and there is no reason to believe that it was a recent development. There does not seem to have been such a vigorous trade in heavy tanned leather. It may have taken place unrecorded, but it is more likely that western England, with its abundant supplies of sheep and calf skins, tended to specialise in the production of light leather for the London market, and that the heavy tanned leather manufactured in the area was mainly for local use.

#### Midland England.

A number of Midland towns were prominent in the sixteenth centuries as leather manufacturing centres. In this section the leather industry in three towns, Northampton, Leicester, and Nottingham, will be examined.

During the early sixteenth century in Northampton - a town of perhaps three or four thousand people - nearly a quarter of the working population was employed in the leather industry, and shoemaking was the leading occupation.<sup>2</sup> More than a century later Fuller remarked that "the town of Northampton may be said to stand chiefly on other men's legs; where (if not the best) the most and **cheapest** boots and stockings are bought in England"<sup>3</sup>. This specialisation in shoemaking is not easy to explain. The supply of leather

1. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, pp. 20, 482, 547.

2. Hoskins, "Provincial Towns", pp. 13-14.

3. Fuller's Worthies, vol. 11, p. 498.

itself was no problem. The "mani notable sheep pastures (and) rich feedings for cattle . . ." <sup>1</sup> supplied the materials for tanning and dressing, oak bark was available from the surrounding countryside <sup>2</sup> and the region was well-watered. But Northampton was not the only town to possess these advantages and they do not altogether explain the predominance of shoemaking. Fuller's remarks suggest a connection with the manufacture of stockings; but if this were the case we might wonder why shoemaking did not develop to the same extent in Nottinghamshire, for example, where the manufacture of knitted stockings was much more important <sup>3</sup>. Fuller also suggests that the Northampton footwear was not of the highest quality which leads us to wonder whether the Northampton craftsmen had developed the manufacture of a cheap standardised product at a time when shoemakers in other places were content to make shoes to meet local orders. If so, why? It cannot be because Northampton shoemakers received large military orders for footwear in the second half of the seventeenth century, since specialisation had developed before then. <sup>4</sup>

Leather manufacturers were sufficiently numerous in

1. Diary of Rev. J. Ward, 1648-79, quoted by G.E. Fussell, "Farming Methods in the early Stuart Period", Journal of Modern History, vol. VII, no. I, p.15.
2. V.C.H., Northamptonshire, vol. II, p. 310.
3. See J.D. Chambers, Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century (London. 1932), pp. 89-90.
4. See Chapter I, p 28. . In any case other towns-especially London-also received military orders. Probably the production of footwear in London was greater than Northampton's but because of the diversity of economic activity in London, it did not seem remarkable to contemporaries.

Northampton to constitute a threat to the health of the town and on a number of occasions the civic authorities were forced to take action against tanners and leatherdressers. Thus in 1566 the tanners and whittawers (i.e. leatherdressers) were instructed to remove all animal carcasses and bones from the town once a year and not to kill diseased animals in the town. On another occasion tanners and whittawers were ordered not to slaughter animals in the streets of the town<sup>1</sup>. Action was also taken to prevent leather manufacturers polluting water supplies. An attempt was made to keep the tanners and leatherdressers away from the river Nene where it flowed through the meadows to the south and south-west of the town, and from the wells in the same vicinity. In 1550 it was ordered that "no glover washe noe skynes in the hyghe Ryver nor without the west brydge nor drye any woll upon the grasse in the Fote medow, but shall washe ther Skynnes in the pyt under the brydge next unto Dalington (i.e. outside the north-west walls of the town)". In 1619 leather manufacturers who left leather and hides in the Cow Meadow or the river running through it south of Northampton were threatened with prosecution and ten years later the glovers were told not to have skins or leather by a well outside the south-east wall<sup>2</sup>.

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1. J.C. Cox (ed.), The Records of the Borough of Northampton, vol. 2, 1550-1835 (Northampton, 1898), pp. 264, 297-8.
  2. Ibid, pp. 217, 262, 289.

Northampton had a weekly hide and leather market which was attended by the town and country craftsmen, and one part of the central market - the glovery - was reserved for the light leather workers<sup>1</sup>. However, Northampton leather crafts produced for other than merely local needs. We have already seen when discussing London, that skins and leather from Northampton were sold in the capital<sup>2</sup>. Possibly boots and shoes were also sold there. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the hosiers - with whom Fuller later associated the shoemakers - sold their products in London<sup>3</sup> and it is tempting to think that footwear accompanied the stockings. Later in the seventeenth century - Northampton shoemakers sent boots and shoes to Ireland for the armies<sup>4</sup>. However nothing is known of the more normal outlets of the Northampton boot and shoe industry during the seventeenth century. Possibly the shoemakers disposed of some of their products at Stourbridge fair at Cambridge where the Northampton tanners also traded<sup>5</sup>.

In many ways the town of Leicester was rather similar to Northampton. The population - 3,000 in the early sixteenth

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1. Ibid, pp. 293, 296-7, 298.

2. Supra, p 15.

3. Cox, Northampton Records, pp. 289-90

4. Ibid, pp. 294-5; See Chapter 1, p

5. V.C.H., Northants., vol. II, p. 310.

century, rising to 5,000 by the later seventeenth century<sup>1</sup> - was roughly the same. Like Northampton, Leicester was a market rather than an industrial town. Nevertheless the leather crafts were the largest single group of occupations. They formed 19 per cent of the working population in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century although thereafter the proportion declined<sup>2</sup>. One difference between Northampton and Leicester, however, was that shoe-making was less important in the latter. By the end of the sixteenth century the tanners of Leicester had become, if not the most numerous, at least among the wealthiest of the town craftsmen and had almost a monopoly of the mayoral chair<sup>3</sup>.

The Leicester leather workers used hides from local pastures and bark from local woodlands. The importance of tanning and the related crafts in the Leicester economy in the sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth century was probably connected with the progress of enclosure for cattle pastures in the neighbouring countryside<sup>4</sup>. The large number of butchers in the town<sup>5</sup> meant that there was

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1. V.C.H., Leicestershire, vol. IV, p. 76.
  2. Ibid, pp. 76, 78, 158; Hoskins, "Provincial Towns", pp. 13, 14, D. Charman, Wealth and Trade in Leicester in the early Sixteenth Century (Leics. Arch. Soc., no. 25), passim; H. Hartopp (ed). Register of Freemen of the Borough of Leicester, 1196-1739 (Leics, 1927), passim.
  3. H. Hartopp, (ed), Rolls of the Mayors and Lord Mayors of Leicester, 1209-1935, Passim.
  4. W.G. Hoskins, "An Elizabethan Butcher of Leicester", Essays in Leicestershire History, (Liverpool, 1950), p. 114.
  5. Idem, "Provincial Towns", p. 13.

no shortage of hides for tanners. Indeed Dr. Hoskins has suggested that butchers and graziers produced mainly for the tanners and not primarily for the meat market. This suggestion was made because the local demand for meat hardly justified so many butchers and there is no evidence to show that butchers were trading with London or some other distant market<sup>1</sup>. However this merely pushes the problem one stage further, for it implies that the tanners themselves were conducting a trade sufficiently large to encourage butchers to kill animals for hides rather than meat. In the light of the usual carcase - hide price ratio<sup>2</sup> this seems most unlikely. Further there is no evidence that Leicester tanners had an extensive trade with London or any other distant area. Like the leather craftsmen in many parts of the country, the tanners of Leicester were probably producing mainly for the local market - providing the citizens of Leicester with the leather they needed for footwear, clothing, harnesses and saddles, and the farmers of the surrounding countryside with the leather they required for agricultural purposes. The Leicester leather industry, in fact, was very much linked with the local agrarian economy; the farmers and butchers provided the hides, the

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1. Ibid, p. 15.

2. See Chapter 1, p35

tanners made it into leather and leather using craftsmen made it into leather goods which were sold to the farmers.

Moving north from Leicester to Nottingham we find a town a shade larger than Leicester<sup>1</sup> with an economy based upon a general trade between town and country, mining, and - by the later seventeenth century - framework knitting.

Tanning was one of the "minor" industries of the town<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless tanning and the related leather crafts seem to have been a valuable part of the economy of the town up to the late seventeenth century. Writing in 1790 John Throsby stated that "The Tanning business was carried on here formerly, also, with great advantage to the place; but now in a comparative point of view, that business is of little importance"<sup>3</sup>. In 1667 there were 47 tanneries situated by the river Leen (compared with eighty in Bermondsey and Southwark at the end of the century<sup>4</sup>) but in 1707 there were only 21<sup>5</sup>. A decline in the number of tanners in the town between 1641 and 1739 was also shown by Deering<sup>6</sup>.

The manufacture of leather depended upon local supplies of hides. Like Leicester, Nottingham possessed a large number of butchers in proportion to the population. Cattle were grazed on pastures near the town and enclosure during

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1. Chambers, Nottinghamshire p.83, mentions a population of 5,000 to 6,000 for 1674.

2. Ibid, p. 99.

3. Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire (republished with additions by J.Throsby, 1790), vol. II, p. 131.

4. Supra, p.

5. V.C.H., Notts., vol. II, p.328.

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the sixteenth and seventeenth century helped to increase the supply of cattle. There is at least one case of a tanner enclosing land for this purpose<sup>1</sup>. In the nearby town of Newark the development of cattle raising in neighbouring pastures in the later sixteenth century was responsible for the rising importance of tanning in the town and by 1577 the tanners were the only craftsmen to possess a hall of their own.<sup>2</sup>

The decline of tanning ~~in~~ the later seventeenth century in Nottingham is difficult to explain. In part the decline was relative for - as at Leicester - newer occupations were developing in the later seventeenth century<sup>3</sup>. But there was an absolute decline in numbers as well. Could it be connected with the leather duty of 1697? Perhaps the despondent note of the Nottingham tanners' petition of early 1698 - "That it is too tedious to relate the many Calamities their distressed Families are groaning under occasioned by the late Duty upon Leather, which has so reduced their Trades that the Petitioners cannot live thereby"<sup>4</sup> - echoed their true position and was not induced merely to melt the heart of Parliament.

#### The Thames Valley.

There was a string of towns and villages along the

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1. Ibid, pp.152-3. See also, M.W.Beresford, The Lost Villages of England (1954), p. 189.
  2. C.Brown, History of Newark (Newark, 1904), Vol.1, p.190.
  3. Chambers, op.cit., pp. 83-4; V.C.H., Leicester, vol.IV, p.158.
  4. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p.63.

Thames and its tributaries where the leather workers organized petitions protesting against the leather duty of 1697. Information about this region is not plentiful.

However it seems that three factors accounted for the presence of the leather crafts - local hides or skins, local tanning or dressing materials, and water supplies.

There is some evidence from this region to suggest that the quality of water as well as its quantity played some part in the location of the industry.

In the west of the region glovemaking and other light leather crafts flourished. The fellmongers, leatherdressers, and glovers of Whitney in Oxfordshire told Parliament in 1698 that they "have always been famous for dressing Alum Leather and making gloves"<sup>1</sup>, while the glovers and leatherdressers of both Oxford and Bampton told Parliament that their trade of making oil and alum leather would be damaged by the excise of 1697<sup>2</sup>. Oxford and Woodstock were two centres of glove manufacturing. There were ample supplies of skins from the surrounding countryside, but contemporaries were inclined to attribute the existence of the industry to the quality of the water. Anthony Wood writing in the later seventeenth century thought that the river Cherwell "has so great vertue therein that all skins of a more delicate kind

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p. 30.

2. Ibid, xii, 20, 22.

(as it hath bin generally observed) are so well seasoned with it for the making of white leather, that none whiter, softer nor better is hardly found"<sup>1</sup>. At about the same time Thomas Blount compiling his Glossographer wrote in the same way: "(the river Cherwell) is most famous for tawing of dressing of leather", and he explained that the river gave its name to high quality "cheveril" leather<sup>2</sup>.

It is difficult to assess the importance of the quality of water in influencing location; for leather manufacturers were able to modify the basic processes to suit local conditions<sup>3</sup>. Possibly the nature of the water in the Oxford district did play some part in the location of glovemaking, but probably the supplies of skins - and even the presence of a demand for good quality gloves from the University and the Court at Woodstock<sup>4</sup> - were more important.

The heavy leather crafts were not obviously important around Oxford although there seems to have been some concentration of tanning further down-stream with Reading as the main centre<sup>5</sup>. The two major reasons were the ample supplies of oak bark - Berkshire and Oxfordshire were well

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1. A.Wood, Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford (1661-2, ed. A.Clark, Oxford Historical Society, 1889), p. 395.
  2. T.Blount, Glossographer (1656), article under "cheveril". The true derivation was probably from the French word for a goat.
  3. See J.A.Wilson, Modern practice in Leather Manufacture (New York, 1941), p. 187.
  4. T.E.Schulz, "The Woodstock Glove Industry", Oxoniensia, vol. III, p. 142.
  5. V.C.H., Berkshire, vol. 1, p. 397. Between 1623-8 27% of the new freemen of Reading were leather workers; in 1630-7 the proportion was 13% (Records of the Borough of Reading, vol. II, pp. 422-32; vol. III, pp. 372-81).

wooded counties<sup>1</sup> - and possibly the supply of water. In 1575 Fleetwood commented that "The Chalkie waters of Chilton hills hath no fellowe (for tanning)"<sup>2</sup>. Hides came from local farmers although if Robert Loder was a typical Berkshire farmer, cattle raising was a subsidiary part of their business<sup>3</sup>. Reading tanners also bought skins and hides from London<sup>4</sup>. Most of the leather appears to have been made for local use. Reading market was attended by leather workers from the surrounding countryside<sup>5</sup> and - was sometimes visited by craftsmen from further afield.<sup>6</sup> It is possible, too, that the London market, easily accessible by river, absorbed some of the production of this district.

#### Conclusion.

This survey of the location of the leather crafts in England and of the trade in hides, leather and leather goods, can hardly claim to be complete. Some areas - notably the South-west<sup>7</sup> and Wales - have not been examined, and in others a more detailed study would be desirable. Nevertheless it is possible to draw some general conclusions.

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1. V.C.H., Berks, I, p. 397.
  2. B.M., Lans, Ms. 20, fo., 10.
  3. G.E. Fussell (ed.), Robert Loder's Farm Accounts, 1610-20.
  4. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C I/1059/70.
  5. Reading Borough Records, II, pp. 173, 439, III, pp. 35-6.
  6. Supra, p. 87.
  7. Leather workers formed 8 per cent of the admissions to the freedom of Exeter between 1620 and 1640. They were the third most important industrial group (after textiles and building) but wholesale and retail trading was much more important in Exeter than industry (W.T. MacCaffrey, Exeter, 1540-1640 (Harvard U.P., 1958), p. 163).

The leather industry was found in every part of the country and in many places it played an important part in the local economy. Probably the most striking result of this study is that in practically all the towns subjected to statistical examination, the leather crafts accounted for 10 or 20 per cent of the working population, which means that leather working was one of the leading industrial occupations in England.

Broadly speaking supplies of raw materials (including water) had a greater influence on the location of tanning and leatherdressing than the presence of markets, although the fact that the larger towns were themselves sources of hides and skins often brought about an identity of production centres and markets. There were, in fact, three kinds of areas where tanning and leatherdressing were concentrated. First, there were the large towns such as London, York, Norwich, or Newcastle where there were abundant supplies of hides. Water supplies were important in determining the part of the town where the leather manufacturers were found. "...Glouers and lether dressers Inhabitt onely neer to Riu(er)s and in Lowe growndes & Markett towns and common thorowfare townes---where they maye haue water in Brookes and Riu(er)s to dresse ther lether"<sup>1</sup>. Because of the need for water tanners and

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1. B.M., Lans. ms 20, fo. 10.

leatherdressers were usually found on the outskirts of towns. Secondly there were the iron working districts which were rich in bark supplies. Bark was too costly to transport except over short distances. Hence there was a movement of hides to the West Riding, the Weald, and possibly to other iron working regions as well. Thirdly there were certain country regions specialising in pastoral farming for meat, dairying or wool and where there were plentiful supplies of hides and skins, or possibly where the supplies were of a quality particularly fitted for tanning or dressing<sup>1</sup>.

The location of the leather using crafts depended on supplies of tanned and dressed leather, the nearness of markets, and - occasionally - on the presence of some other products needed for the manufacture of leather goods. In shoemaking, the market was the decisive influence for it was cheaper to carry the leather to the shoemaker than it was shoes to the market. Even though there tended to be an identity between leather manufacturing centres and the towns, there was still often a difference between the location of tanning and the location of shoemaking, for the latter usually worked in the town centre and the

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1. Some contemporary opinion suggests that there were regional variations in quality: "The Som(er)settshire hyde being of a red heare will neu(er) make half so good lether as will the Derbeshire hide. The Middlesex hyde is not so good as the Vale hide The wch vale is wthin XX<sup>t</sup><sup>1</sup> miles of Middlesex (the Vale of St.Albans?) B.M. Lans, Ms.20, fo. 10) See also the remarks about the quality of Irish hides and skins (supra, p 98),

former on the outskirts. Glovers were usually situated together with the leathersdressers. Probably the difference between the costs of transporting leather and gloves and similar goods was insignificant, while lower rents attracted manufacturers to country and suburban areas. However, the influence of the market was also marked as can be seen by the presence of glovers on the outskirts of London using skins imported from other districts. Occupations such as saddle and harness making were found in most places, but the concentration in the west Midlands seems to have been connected with the manufacture of small metal goods in the district.

The pattern of trade was determined by the location of the leather crafts. The leather crafts of most towns existed to meet the needs of the urban population and of the surrounding rural population<sup>1</sup>. Movements of commodities over longer distances took place between areas rich in hides, skins or bark, and between these areas and the markets. Thus hides went from London to Yorkshire and the Weald, and leather and leather goods came from Kent, Suffolk, and West to London. No doubt the evidence tends to emphasise the importance of London at the expense of other towns which acted in a similar way as centres of trade in hides and skins, leather and leather goods. It is also possible to exaggerate the total importance of these national movements of goods. Because the leather crafts

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1. See Tawney, "Occupational Census", p.38; W.G. Hoskins, An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester", in Studies in Social History (ed. J.H. Plumb, 1955), pp. 47-48.

were scattered throughout the country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and areas of regional specialisation were not clearly defined, much trade was inevitably local. The leather workers who got a "bare subsistence", "having only a Trade amongst their Neighbours"<sup>1</sup> were probably more common even at the end of the seventeenth century than those who obtained their raw materials from distant sources or who produced for distant markets.

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p. 52.

CHAPTER 4: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNAL TRADE IN HIDES, LEATHER AND LEATHER GOODS.

The trade in hides, leather and leather goods consisted of the movement of hides and skins from butchers and farmers to leather manufacturers, the movement of leather to the leather using craftsmen, and the sale of leather goods to the final consumers. Often these transactions all took place in the same locality but sometimes - as we have seen in the previous chapter - supplies of hides and skins, leather manufacturers and customers were separated by long distances. Sometimes, too one of the stages was omitted; for example tanners might keep their own animals and supply their own raw hides, or one workman might be both leather-dresser and glove maker. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way in which leather manufacturers obtained their raw materials and how the final products were sold to the customers.

The first stage to be examined is the way in which tanners and leatherdressers obtained supplies of hides and skins. There were, in fact, a number of ways. They could keep their own animals and kill them to obtain the hides they required. They could buy their supplies direct from butchers or farmers. Or they could buy hides and skins from a middleman.

Tanners and leatherdressers often kept a few farm animals<sup>1</sup> which must have supplied them with at least some of the hides they needed. However, it is doubtful whether they were an important source of supplies. When tanners kept cattle and sheep, they probably did so for the milk or meat or wool they yielded rather than the skin. They would not kill the animals just to keep the tan pits supplied. Tanners, however, sometimes killed other kinds of animals for their skins. For example, in 1582 tanners and whittawers at Northampton were ordered not to "cast any dead horse, mare, or gelding, or any dog, hog, or other such carrion on the streets, ways, ditches, or any ground of the town save in the Marehold", and once a year they had to clean up and bury the bones in the Marehold (part of the horse market)<sup>2</sup>. The animals mentioned were not those normally killed for meat and consequently their skins could not be brought from the butchers. Probably tanners and leatherdressers bought carcasses of horses and dogs, removed the skins and discarded the rest.

By far the most common way in which leather manufacturers obtained supplies of hides and skins was to buy them from butchers or from middlemen dealing in hides and

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1. See inventories, Appendix 7.

2. J.S. Cox (ed.), The Records of the Borough of Northampton, vol. II (Northampton, 1898), pp. 297-8.

skins. Tanners generally dealt directly with butchers in the public markets or by some private arrangement. Leatherdressers also bought skins from the butchers, but in addition they obtained supplies from middlemen.

Practically every market town possessed a market where leather manufacturers could buy hides and skins and in most towns some attempt was made by the municipal authorities to confine all transactions to the public market. In the city of London the appointed market for hides - and also for leather - was at Leadenhall and there was another market at Southwark. The presence of a market for raw hides in a densely populated area caused the city authorities some anxiety in the seventeenth century. In 1603 the market was removed to a more open site at Aldgate, but the experiment was not a success and within three weeks the market was restored to Leadenhall<sup>1</sup>. Thirty years later persons living near Leadenhall complained that "in this tyme of visitation the stenchs arising from them (the raw hides) must endanger the health of the City".. The Court of Alderman considered transferring the market for hides to Smithfield but no action was taken<sup>2</sup>. Probably the tanners did not wish to lose the convenience of having the hide and leather market at the same place. At

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1. Repertories, 26 (1), fos. 104, III (b)

2. Ibid, 51, fos. 136 (b) et. seq.

Nottingham the butchers had their stalls in the shambles adjacent to the place where tanners sold leather after they bought the hides they needed<sup>1</sup>. In many other places the limits of the hide markets were determined by the municipal authorities<sup>2</sup>.

What proportion of the trade in hides and skins flowed through the public markets it is impossible to know. For many, the markets were no doubt convenient centres of trade and much local trade was done in them. However there was also a number of inconveniences in attending public markets and much trade was done elsewhere. At markets there were regulations to be obeyed and charges to be met. Some towns placed restrictions on non-freemen dealing in the markets. At Northampton, for example, "foreign" tanners were not allowed to buy hides in the town unless "he or they shall bring in quantitie as mucche lether readie tanned into this markett to sell the same daye as he or they shall buye roughe hydes"<sup>3</sup>. At Kendal in the late sixteenth century, non-

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1. Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire (edited J. Throsby, 1790), vol.II, pp.134-5.
  2. e.g. "The Boke of Records of the Burgh of Kirkby Kendal" Cumb. & Westmorland Ant. & Arch.Soc. (extra series 7, 1892), passim; Beverley Borough Records (Yorks.Arch.Soc., Record series 84), pp.76-7 Reading Borough Records, vol. II, p. 168; W. Bazeley "The Guilds of Gloucester", Trans. Bristol and Glouc. Arch. Soc., vol. xiii (1888-9), p.267. Northampton Borough Records, II, pp. 296-7." etc.
  3. Northampton Records, II, p.296

freemen glovers were allowed to buy hides and skins only at certain specified times<sup>1</sup>, and at Oswestry in the late seventeenth century there was an attempt to exclude non-freemen completely<sup>2</sup>. In the small Cornish town of Helstone a charge of one halfpenny was levied on every hide bought by non-freemen in the mid-sixteenth century<sup>3</sup>. At Ipswich in the late sixteenth century tanners and leatherdressers (including apparently freemen) paid a fine of 2d. per hide and 1ld. a dozen for calfskins bought in the market. Freemen butchers traded in the market without charge but non-freemen paid a "forren fyne"<sup>4</sup>. At the end of the seventeenth century, Leadenhall market in London was administered by farmers, who, according to the tanners, levied excessive fees<sup>5</sup>.

Butchers and tanners were not the only groups of craftsmen who suffered various inconveniences when attending markets; they were common to most tradesmen. But there were reasons peculiar to the trade in hides and skins that encouraged extra-market dealings. Unlike many other craftsmen, tanners and leatherdressers had no influence over the supplies of their raw materials.

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1. "Boke of Recorde", p.148

2. "Oswestry Corporation Records", no. XXXVII, Trans.Shrops. Arch. & Nat.Hist.Society, series I, vol. 4, (1880-I) p.52

3. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C 1/1361, nos. 22-5.

4. P.R.O. Exchequer Depositions, E. 134/43 Eliz., Hill, 18.

5. P.R.O., P.C. 2/72, p.453; Repertoires 92, fos. 221, 225 et. seq., 234, 260, et. esq.; 93, fo.12.

Hides and skins were not produced in response to the demands of leather manufacturers but as by-products of meat, dairy and wool production. This point is discussed elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. However supply conditions affected the kind of transactions taking place between leather manufacturers and butchers. There was a tendency on the part of tanners and leatherdressers not to rely on what the market would offer but to make private arrangements with butchers to secure adequate supplies of hides; for the butchers, too, the market might not have much attraction, if, for example, prices were not high enough to cover the cost of careful flaying and transportation.

The kind of arrangement made by tanners to guarantee a regular supply of hides is illustrated by the agreement made between Richard Tebbes a tanner of Hoddeston (Hertfordshire) and Gregory Becke, a Middlesex butcher, in 1558. Tebbes contracted to buy a quantity of hides from Becke who agreed to deliver at the rate of two a week. If Becke "fortuned to kill but only one beste in the weke, so that (he) could deliver only one hide", he was to supply three hides the following week. The agreement was a verbal one and after seventeen hides had been delivered the parties could not agree on the number of hides Tebbes said he would take. After protacted

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1. See Chapter I. pp. 34-36.

arguments the matter went to the Court of Requests <sup>1</sup>. A rather similar arrangement was made between Phyllipp Haleshded a tanner, also of Hertfordshire, and Peter Helthe a London butcher. Haleshede bought 40 cattle hides before the animals had been killed, paying £8 for them but he asked for delivery in so short a time that the butcher did not have time to sell the flesh <sup>2</sup>. Practices such as these were evidently common. In April, 1579, the civic authorities of York ruled that "no bochers shall . . . make any bargayne or put to sale any oxskynnes or cove skynnes before the beast wherapon the saide skynnes were growyng shalbe killed, to any tanner, nor yet that any tanner shall buye any of the said hides or skynnes beforehand of the said bocher, but to buye the same as the oxen or kyne shalbe killed . . ." <sup>3</sup> A similar regulation was made for glovers buying skins at Carlisle in 1665 <sup>4</sup>.

Butchers were very willing to make arrangements to dispose of hides and skins without bringing them to market. On some occasions - perhaps in the Autumn and early winter when animals were killed for lack of fodder - butchers

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1. P.R.O., Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req.2/126/26.
  2. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C 1/1003/28.
  3. York City Records (Yorks.Arch. Soc., vol.iii, 1953), p.7.
  4. "Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle", Cumb. & West. Antiq. & Arch.Soc., vol.4, p. 203.

probably had large supplies of skins on their hands which would glut the market if sold all at once. In such conditions butchers were tempted either to throw the skins away, or else to salt and store them until the market price rose. Salting ("baconing") was specifically forbidden at Carlisle in 1561<sup>1</sup> and there is a good deal of other evidence to show that butchers frequently held back hides and skins for the public markets. At Leicester in 1605 country butchers bringing meat into the town market were ordered to "bringe his hydes, skynnes and fells and ballows with him"<sup>2</sup>. A similar order had been made at Liverpool in 1541/2 where "every bowcher and bowchers that doyth bryng eny oxe cowe or other beffe to the towne shall bring the hydes thereof to the market with the hornes and ears (attached)". It was necessary to repeat the instruction on a number of subsequent occasions<sup>3</sup>. Identical regulations existed in a number of other towns<sup>4</sup>. In an attempt to make butchers bring hides and skins into the public markets the London

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1. "Carlisle Records", p.123.

2. Records of the Borough of Leicester, vol. IV (1924), p.41.

3. J.A. Twemlow (ed.), Liverpool Town Books, vol. I (1918) pp.20 - 1, 145, 194.

4. e.g. Records of the Borough of Nottingham, vol. III, p.133 vol. IV, p.181; Records of the Borough of Oxford, p.133, 144; Kendal, Hist.Mss.Comm., 10th report, Appendix 4, p. 145.

authorities proposed to the Privy Council in 1625 that bonds should be taken from all butchers living within three miles of London compelling them to bring hides to Leadenhall<sup>1</sup>. However there is no evidence to show that local authorities were successful in confining the trade in hides and skins to the public markets.

Tanners usually bought hides directly from butchers and there is little sign that middlemen were very active in the trade in heavy cattle hides. Even when long distances separated tanners and butchers, tanners preferred to travel to buy hides in person. In the Yorkshire - London hide trade, for example<sup>2</sup>, the West Riding tanners came to London for the hides they wanted. The petition of the West Riding tanners complaining against the prohibition of the coastal tradewas signed by forty-two persons who had been buying hides in London<sup>3</sup>. Although their occupations were not given the names of some of them also appeared in the London coastal Port books where they were described as tanners<sup>4</sup>. Possibly not all the master

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1. P.R.O., S.P., 14/31, no. 89.

2. See Chapter 3, pp.72-73, 80-81.

3. P.R.O., S.P. 16/65, no.45. See Chapter 3, p.81.

4. e.g., P.R.O., E 190/25/8; E 190/41/2.

tanners came to London in person but sent an employee or else relied on another tanner to buy the hides they needed; for the round journey might take three months<sup>1</sup>. Hides belonging to several tanners were loaded together on the ships and the master "usually names one man (to the customs officers) for all the rest that have hides on that Shipp"<sup>2</sup>. Possibly the "one man" had bought hides for the other tanners, and if so he was obviously performing some of the functions of a middleman although he could hardly be regarded as such in the normal meaning of the term.

There was no obvious reason for the absence of middlemen in the trade in raw hides. Since the majority of hides were probably bought and sold locally direct contact between tanners and butchers was not difficult and the middlemen therefore was not essential. It is also likely that tanners preferred to buy direct from the butchers' hands in order to see exactly the kind and quality of the hides they were getting. It was no easy business

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1. In 1620-1, seventeenth shipments of hides left London for Hull. Four separate cargoes went in the "Diamond" and three in the "Anne Rose", both of Hull. The round journey from Hull to London and back to Hull took about three months, including time taken loading and unloading. Certain ships plied a regular trade in hides between the two ports. So far as the number of shipments made by individual tanners is concerned Thomas Brooks brought cargoes from London to Hull in February, April, June, September and December 1637, although it is doubtful if he made all the trips in person (P.R.O. E 190/41/2, E. 190/42/5).

2. P.R.O.; S.P., 16.65, no.45.

distinguishing between a cow, ox or bull hide or - in the case of cut hides - between the bellies and the backs - unless it could be seen from which animals hides came<sup>1</sup>.

The purchase of hides was a skilled business not to be trusted to novices. At Durham in the early seventeenth century apprentices were not allowed to buy hides except in special circumstances<sup>2</sup>, while at Maidstone in 1563 the "market man" commanded a higher wage than less skilful tanners<sup>3</sup>. The employment of a skilled man to buy hides was probably fairly common. In Beverley in 1609 tanners were prohibited from having more than one "buyer of hides" unless they were sick or old when they might have two<sup>4</sup>.

Like the tanners, many leatherdressers also dealt directly with the producers of their raw materials. Sometimes they bought sheepskins from graziers and we find glovers possessing stocks of wool which they sold to wool dealers and clothiers<sup>5</sup>. Sometimes leatherdressers travelled long

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1. This was probably an additional reason for tanners making private arrangements with butchers. *Supra*, p.125
  2. Book of Tanners' Company, 1612-1655 (Surtees Society, 1945) p.76.
  3. C.E. Woodruff, "Wages Paid in Maidstone in Queen Elizabeth's reign", Archaeologia Cantiana, vol.22, pp.316-9.
  4. Beverley Borough Records, pp. 76-77. William Thomson, a tanner of York had two employees buying "beastes hydes" for him in 1560 at neighbouring markets (P.O.R., Chancery Proceedings, E. 3/178/77).
  5. B.M., Add. Ms. 36170, fos. 87 (b) - 88. See also Chapter 6, p.219. ; and P.J. Bowden, The Internal Wool Trade in England During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Leed University Ph.D. thesis, 1952), pp.26 et. seq.

distances to get the skins they needed. In 1666, for example, William Jackson a Southwark leatherdresser travelled to the west of England and to Dublin "conversing with men of his own trade, and going about his own business" and eventually bought £100 worth of goat skins at Chester<sup>1</sup>.

However middlemen were active in the trade in skins, at least in the London region and probably elsewhere. London leatherdressers bought skins from "their mediat Chapmen" who were probably general dealers who got their skins from farmers in the countryside. The London leathersellers also dealt in skins and according to the light leather manufacturers "put their griping hands betwixt the Grower & Merchant & any of the said Trades (of leatherdressing)"<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the leather sellers a good many other persons dabbled in the skin trade. In particular, the fellmongers handled sheepskins<sup>3</sup> although according to the London glovers they "neither doe nor knowe how to dresse skinnes into leather, but if they durst would cast the pelt vpon the dung hill hauing before suckt ou theire p(ro)ffit by pulling of, sorting, & selling the wooll"<sup>4</sup>. Fellmongers brought large numbers of skins into London and Southwark where they were sold to leatherdressers and exporting merchants. Others

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1666, p. 509

2. B.M., Add.Ms. 12504, fo.112. For the relationship between the leathersellers, glovers, and leatherdressers, see Chapter 6, pp.224-234

3. Bowden, op.oit., p.126.

4. B?M. Add.Ms. 12504, fo.112.

dealing in skins included inn-keepers. In the mid-sixteenth century an inn-keeper in Southwark sold 4,000 "Bazel" skins (i.e., sheepskins tanned to make thin leather for linings etc.) to a Berkshire tanner for £20<sup>1</sup> and there is no reason to suppose that this was in any way a unique transaction. In 1637 it was claimed that all the goat and kid skins in London passed through the hands of three men - a leatherseller and two stationers - "Buying, sorting, and selling as one man"<sup>2</sup>.

The reasons explaining the presence of middlemen in the light skin trade are the converse of those accounting for their absence in the hide trade. There was not so much close contact between producers and users of sheep and goat skins as there was between butchers and tanners. This does not mean that butchers did not kill sheep for meat and bring their skins to market; but probably only a small proportion of the supply of sheep skins became available in this way. The bulk of sheep skins must have originated from animals dying naturally or by accident in the countryside rather than in the meat markets. The pelts were bought either by glovers in the countryside who were mainly interested in the skin, or by fellmongers who were more interested in the wool, or by the leathersellers and other traders who supplied large

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1. P.R.O. Early Chancery Proceedings, C 1/1059/70.  
2. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38.

consuming areas such as London with raw skins. Goat skins were either imported<sup>1</sup> - in which case their distribution was naturally in the hands of merchants - or they came from country areas often remote from the markets. There is little mention of calfskins being handled by middlemen. Supplies of these skins were available both in the metropolitan markets and in dairying area, and leatherdressers could easily buy calfskins from butchers without having to rely on middlemen.

Once hides and skins had been converted into leather the next set of transactions took place. In general one of three things happened to the finished leather. It might remain in the hands of the leather manufacturer who himself shaped it into leather goods; this was quite common in the case of light leather but unusual with heavy tanned leather. Otherwise leather was sold, either to persons who wanted uncut leather for their own purposes, or to the leather using craftsmen who made various kinds of leather products.

As with hides and skins, many sales of leather took place in municipal markets. Throughout the sixteenth

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1. See Chapter I, p.38.

and seventeenth centuries, in fact, it was illegal to sell tanned leather anywhere but in public markets<sup>1</sup>.

There were no statutory regulations regarding the sale of light leather but local authorities usually tried to keep this trade in the markets, too<sup>2</sup>. The leather markets, however possessed the usual disadvantages common to public markets. They limited the freedom of craftsmen to trade when and how they wished and they added to the costs of distribution. In 1698 for example tanners at Nantwich in Cheshire complained that "carrying their Leather to Market, reckoning with the officer, and Damage by Carriage, is so chargeable and troublesome that they must be brought to great Poverty in a little time ..."<sup>3</sup>. Tanners dealing at public market also had to suffer an inspection of their leather under the leather acts of 1553 and 1604.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the government and municipal authorities fought a losing battle trying to confine the leather trade to public markets<sup>4</sup>. Many tanners and leather users in the countryside

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1. See Chapter 8, pp.300-301.

2. See e.g. Northampton Records, II, p.297; "Carlisle Records", p. 220; etc.

3. Commons' Journals, vol.xii, p.92. The leathersdressers of Southwark in the same year lamented that "the Obligation they lie under of carrying their goods to Market is not only a great grievance . . ., but a damage to their Goods", ( vol xii, p.41.).

found it more convenient to trade directly with one another rather than travel to the market. As early as 1575 when government opinion was generally wedded to the belief that all dealings should take place in public, John Popham, the Solicitor-General, thought that "hyt is very necessary for the Contry People to bye Clout Lether (i.e. shoe leather) at the Tanners handes without to be dreven to go to the market for suche tryffles"<sup>1</sup>. More than a century later leather manufacturers in the town of Towcester in Northamptonshire pointed out to the government that any attempt to restrict the leather trade to public markets would harm the country manufacturers: "...such of the Petitioners as dwell in Villages are debarred of selling ther wares at home; whereby they have lost a great part of their Trades..."<sup>2</sup>.

Many tanners sold leather from market stalls or from their own shops<sup>3</sup>, but sales to leather users direct from the tannery were evidently common. Thus in the early sixteenth century a shoemaker ordered a large quantity of leather

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 14/105, no. 5

2. Commons' Journals, vol. XII, pp.43-4.

3. The tanners of Gloucester decided in 1628 that no tanner could "keepe a shopp and a standing bothe (i.e. booth) in the markt in Gloucester to sell Clowte leather" (Bazeley, The Guilds of Gloucester, p. 267). The tanners and skippers of Rippon complained in 1698 that the government's attempt to confine sales of leather to the markets "hindered them from sales in their shops" (Commons' Journals vol. xii, p. 40).

because insufficient care had been taken during tanning<sup>1</sup>. In 1565 the Exchequer Court was enquiring into allegations that shoemakers at Nantwich (Cheshire) <sup>bought</sup> directly from the tanners' yards<sup>2</sup>. At Carlisle at the end of the sixteenth century shoemakers were specifically prohibited from buying leather while it was still in the tanpits<sup>3</sup>.

A good deal of the trade in leather was in the hands of middlemen. This was true even of the trade in tanned leather where the purchase of leather for re-sale uncut was forbidden by statute until 1689<sup>4</sup>. Middlemen, served two main purposes. As in the trade in raw skins, they linked distant producers and consumers, but their more important function was to supply leather in small quantities to craftsmen who could not afford to buy large supplies to last them from one weekly market to another. "A retailer of leather", Parliament was told in 1675, "as well as one of cloth and other commodities is necessary, especially for supplying the poorer traders and artificers, by furnishing them with leather curried and dressed and proper for their use, who otherwise could not provide for supplies to last till the return of the market and the weeks time that must be spent in currying after the market

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1. P.R.O. Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/12/108.

2. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Eliz., Trin. I.

3. "Carlisle Records", p.174.

4. See Chapter 8, p.314.

day before it be fit for use"<sup>1</sup>. The same point was made more succinctly by several groups of leather craftsmen in 1698 when they stated that they could not "afford to inlay a stock (of leather) for the whole week"<sup>2</sup>.

In the tanned leather trade the two most important groups of middlemen were to be found among the shoemakers and the curriers. Some of these craftsmen found the profits of trade more attractive than the profits of making footwear or of currying leather; and in London the two companies of cordwainers and curriers spent much of their time and money during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries trying to exclude one another from the trade in leather<sup>3</sup>. This in itself was evidence of the interest of these two groups in buying and selling leather. In the 1620s four working shoemakers in London complained that "many Cordwayners in and about this City are factors for Marchants buyinge leather at Leadenhall and elsewhere ... and procureth the same to be carryed and then to deliver it to the Marchantes whoe transporte the same to partes beyonde the

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, p.88. See also Chapter 8, pp.314-6 for arguments justifying the activities of middlemen.

2, Commons' Journal, vol. XII, p. 463.

3. See Chapter 8, pp.302-306.

seas<sup>1</sup>". About the same time two shoemakers, Simon Payne and John Holmes, were questioned by the City authorities about these activities and also about buying leather and re-selling it in small pieces ready cut to be made into shoes. Both denied the charges but had heard of shoemakers who had done so<sup>2</sup>. Another shoemaker, however, who a little earlier had been accused of buying leather and re-selling it contrary to the leather acts, was less reticent about his activities. He freely admitted to them and produced a petition from "sondry poore shoemakers and cobblers" who had bought leather from him and "worke or convert the same into made wares by small quantities and peeces". They stated that they depended on Curry for small supplies of leather - and that without him and others like him, they would not be able to get the small quantities they could afford<sup>3</sup>. The petition convinced the Court of Aldermen, which thought, however that it was not the duty of individuals to act as middlemen

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/89, no.13.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 16/50, no.64.

3. Repertories, 36, fos, 5-6. The lament of the poor shoemakers echoes the cries of the poor cloth workers of Halifax who were "dryven to Beggery" when the government attempted to eliminate the "Wooldryver" on whom the cloth workers relied for small supplies of wool ("An Acte for Thinhabitantes of Halifax touching the Byeing of Woolles", 1555, printed in R.H. Tawney & E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents (1924), pp.187-188.

but that the company of Cordwainers should itself buy up a stock of leather for re-sale in small quantities to poor shoemakers. The company did not act upon the recommendation at the time, but later - in March - 1639 - the master and wardens of the company decided to obtain the Privy Council's approval of an ordinance allowing them to "utter and sell leather by small parcels to poore men, old workers in & about the Citie of London to supplie their wantes & necessities who are not able to buy leather by whole backs and hides at Leadenhall markt..."<sup>1</sup>. The curriers, too, were active as middlemen. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was claimed that twenty-one of the 124 curriers in London "doe vse to buy and sell tanned leather"<sup>2</sup> despite the leather act.

Although the evidence cited relates to London, middlemen in the tanned leather trade were not confined to that part of the country. A Birmingham shoemaker appeared before the Warwickshire Quarter Sessions in 1658 accused of buying and re-selling banned leather<sup>3</sup>. A tanner at Chertsey in Surrey was accused of the same offence in

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1. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers, 1622-53, (Gild Hall, Ms.7353), 9th March, 1638/9.
  2. P.R.O., S.P., 14/7, no.88.
  3. Warwickshire Country Records, vol.IV (ed. S.C. Radcliff & H.C. Johnson, Warwick, 1941), p.128.

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 1662<sup>1</sup>, and in 1675 it was alleged that "rich London shoemakers and curriers" were endeavouring to control the leather trade throughout the whole country<sup>2</sup>. In 1698 the leather manufacturers of Coventry claimed that "two of Three Curriers buy up the Leather (in the market) and sell it, at their own Rates to Sheomakers, etc., who used to buy it of the Petitioners, in small parcels, as they could get the Money"<sup>3</sup>. In the early eighteenth century the shoemakers of Carlisle complained of curriers buying and selling leather, alleging that they completely monopolised the leather trade<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, by then the currier often seems to have been a dealer in leather. Postlethwait described how the currier also became a "cutter" of leather and conducted a wholesale and retail trade in pieces of cut leather<sup>5</sup>.

In the light leather trade the most important group of Middlemen were the London leathersellers. We have already seen that the leathersellers traded in skins, but -

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1. Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 1661-3 (Surrey Records) Society, no. XXXVII), P. 212.

2. Cal.S.P.D., 1675, pp.371-3.

3. Common's Journals, vol XII, p.16.

4. "Carlisle Records", pp.187-191.

5. M. Postlethwait, Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce (4th.ed., 1774), article under "Leather".

as their name implied - they also dealt in dressed leather. "The leathersellers send their factors into all p(ar)tes of this Realme to buy & engrosse vp all the skins and white leather"<sup>1</sup>. They handled much of the light leather produced in the Bristol - Chester region which was sent to London for the use of the suburban glovers<sup>2</sup>. About 1619/20 it was said that "None might buy leather in grosse but Leatherseller" although the leathersellers themselves stated innocently that they "are not ingrossers, but ordinary buyers time out of memory of men"<sup>3</sup>. The glovers who were dependent on the leathersellers for supplies of leather, thought otherwise. To them the leathersellers were "hucksters" and "interposers" who ingrossed "all the leather that is dressed" and sold it to them at excessive prices<sup>4</sup>. According to the glovers, the leathersellers supplied them with leather done up in bundles in which were concealed quantities of inadequately dressed leather<sup>5</sup>. It was this situation that caused the suburban glovers to break away from the Company of Leathersellers and form their own company in

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1. B.M. Lans, Ms. 74, fos. 134-5 (1593)
  2. P.R.O., S.P.: 16/377, no.38.
  3. B.M., Additional Ms., 12504, fo.102.
  4. P.R.O., S.P. 12/386, no.90.
  5. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no.38.

1638 in an attempt to establish a search of leather brought into London<sup>1</sup>. Outside London the leathersellers - and middlemen generally-were less important than in the London trade for the simple reason that leatherdressing and the manufacture of light leather goods were occupations usually combined in one man<sup>2</sup>.

The trade in leather was not the exclusive concern of craftsmen directly engaged in the industry. Supplies of leather were also handled by the general merchants who traded in all kinds of commodities<sup>3</sup>. For example, an upholsterer living in Bristol in the 1630s conducted a profitable business supplying merchants with leather tanned by his brother, a tanner in Cardiff<sup>4</sup>. A London scrivener dealt in imported goat skins in 1638<sup>5</sup> and among the traders in dressed leather in London in the early seventeenth century were a baymaker, a cloth worker, and a stationer<sup>6</sup>.

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1. See Chapter 6, pp.226-233.
  2. See Chapter 6, p.208 *et seq.*
  3. For general dealers in the wool trade see Bowden, Internal Wool Trade, p.120; for general merchants in the export trade see N.S.B. Gras, Evolution of the English Corn Market (Harvard, 1926), 189-193.
  4. P.R.O., Exchequer, E 178/5319, Special Commissions.
  5. Cal. S.P.D., 1638, p.245.
  6. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no.38.

The final set of transactions we are concerned with was the sale of leather goods to the final consumers. The majority of leather using craftsmen sold their goods from their own shops or market stalls direct to their customers. In some cases, however, they sold their wares in bulk to middlemen who in turn supplied the consumers. This system was more common among glovers than shoemakers.

Shops appeared frequently on the inventories of leather craftsmen and in many towns guilds or municipal authorities made regulations to control the trade from shops. For example, a series of regulations were made at Northampton in 1552: "Every shoemaker that is disposed to sete uppe Shoppe within this town and hathe not ben prentys wtyn the same shall paye at his Setting uppe xxx<sup>s</sup>". Shoemakers who had been apprenticed in the town paid 16s. 8d., and craftsmen born in Northampton paid 3s. 4d. for establishing a shop. It was also ordered that "no shoemaker withyn this town at any tyme set forth shall in the market place or before his shope to showe and sell any shoes or botes..."<sup>1</sup>. At Shrewsbury glovers were not permitted to have more than

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<sup>1</sup>. Northampton Records, II, p.293.

one shop and "no freemen shall retail any other mans wares"<sup>1</sup>. The shoemakers at Lincoln were limited to two shops each<sup>2</sup>. At Beverley, by an order made in the late fifteenth century and which apparently survived into the sixteenth century, shoemakers were allowed to keep stalls in Shoemarket Lane, but they could sell shoes nowhere else except in the shops at their own homes<sup>3</sup>. At Nottingham the shoemakers also had booths in the market which they rented from the town authorities<sup>4</sup>, but the booths were used only on market days and were shut for the rest of the week<sup>5</sup>.

For the shoemakers and glovers who found their market among their neighbours, shops and stalls in the market place were the most convenient means of doing business and it is likely that the bulk of the leather goods passed from manufacturers to consumers in this manner. Shoemakers, however, found another way of getting in close contact with their customers - by trading in church doorways on Sundays. This practice was evidently very common. It was restricted by the leather act of 1563<sup>6</sup> and in many towns it was forbidden altogether<sup>7</sup>.

1. W.A. Leighton (ed.) "The Glovers of Shrewsbury" Shrop. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Society, series I, vol.7, p.433.

2. Hist.Mss.Comm., 14th report, Appendix 8 (1895), p.53.

3. Hist.Mss.Comm., Beverley (1900), p.92.

4. Records of the Borough of Nottingham, vol.V, p.132.

5. Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire, vol.II, p.135.

6. 5 Eliz. cap.8.

7. e.g. Hist.Mss.Comm., Beverley, p.93; "Boke of Recorde, Kendal", p.115; Lincoln, Hist.Mss.Comm., 14th report, Appendix 8, p.53; etc.

According to an informer at Guildford in 1566 shoemakers "do make shoes not serched and sell them at Church Dores on the Sondayes and carry them whome to their houses and make them in ther houses which I thinke all the worlde dothe knowe"<sup>1</sup>. Shoemakers also sold their goods in the countryside. At Lincoln shoe-makers were forbidden to carry their wares around the countryside except when going to fairs "or to any gentleman or other honest persons in time of necessity"<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes the wandering shoemakers came along way from home.. For example one was arrested at Reading in 1631 for stealing two shirts and a smock from a hedge. His home was in Dorset but he had been at Southampton before going to Reading<sup>3</sup>. In the early part of the seventeenth century there were two bills promoted unsuccessfully in Parliament designed to stop these wandering shoemakers<sup>4</sup>.

One point on which it is difficult to find any evidence is whether shoemakers made stocks of shoes for sale

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1. Hist.Mss.Comm., 7th Report, Appendix, p.619.
  2. Hist.Mss.Comm., 14th report, Appendix 8, p.53.
  3. Reading Borough Records, vol. 4, p.49.
  4. Commons' Journals, vol.i, pp.207, 952.

to casual customers or whether they made shoes to meet orders. Probably shoemakers did both, but on the whole it appears from a study of inventories that many of them did not carry large stocks of finished footwear<sup>1</sup>. It seems likely that a good deal of production was to meet specific orders of customers although shoemakers in the larger market towns probably also provided for the casual trade. Only in the case of shoemakers manufacturing for a distant market - the Northampton shoemakers for example<sup>2</sup> - was the middleman needed to link producers and consumers. However there is no evidence to show who these middlemen were. Possibly such national trade as there was in footwear - and also in other heavy leather commodities such as saddlery - was handled by the shoemakers and curriers who dealt in tanned leather and by the general dealers. Middlemen were more prominent in the trade in light leather goods, at least in the London district. The London glovers and leatherdressers, were, as we have seen, located in the suburbs and they complained that the Company of Leather-sellers would not allow them to keep shops in the

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1. See Chapter 5, pp. 185-186 , and Appendix 7.

2. See Chapter 3, p. 107

City. Consequently the London light leather workers disposed of their goods in shops owned by the leathersellers, or possibly more frequently through haberdashers shops.<sup>1</sup> The haberdashers probably also sold the produce of the glovers of western England who sent their goods to London. These gloves were bought in the first place by "chapmen" who allowed the manufacturers credit, presumably by making advance payments for the gloves, and carried them to London.<sup>2</sup>

There remains a series of questions concerned with the technical details of trade to be considered. Just how were the hides and leather bought? Were payments made in cash? Did butchers and tanners, or tanners and shoemakers draw up contracts covering conditions of sale of hides and leather?

Until the seventeenth century hides, skins and leather were usually sold by the piece. Hides and tanned leather were reckoned in dickers of ten raw or tanned hides and skins and light leather by dozens, or

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16.377, no.38; B.M., Additional Ms.12504, fo.112.

2. Commons' Journals, vol.xii, p.20.

dickers containing ten dozen skins. The last, containing twenty dickers, which was used as a measurement in the early sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>, was not in common use by the end of the century. Sales by the piece, were sometimes combined with, or replaced by, sales of hides and leather by weight. When, for example, a west of England tanner ordered 240 hides from Ireland in 1627 he specified that 200 of them should be above a certain weight<sup>2</sup>. Obviously this method was useful in preventing calfskins being sold to tanners as hides. Sales by the piece, however, remained the usual way of selling hides. In 1694 Houghton observed that "at market the hide is bought sometimes by weight but oftener by hand"<sup>3</sup>. But sales by weight became increasingly common in the case of tanned leather in the late seventeenth century. According to the London shoemakers this method became more common after the export of tanned leather was permitted. "The reason is because transporters of leather buy in another way than the manufacturer did before the act (allowing the export of leather), for they bought by the score of dicker in the open fair or market...

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1. See G. Schanz, Englische Handelspolitik Gegen Ende DES Mittelalters (Leipzig, 1881), vol.2, table 6.
  2. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Car. I, Mich.14.
  3. J. Houghton, A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade (ed. R. Bradley, 1727), vol.I, p.319.

Now the transporter employs factors...buying leather out of the tanners yards, agreeing for so many hides at so much a pound, and the tanners give them no half the time he ought by the statute because the less tanned the heavier they weigh..."<sup>1</sup>.

Sales of hides, leather and leather goods were often on a credit basis. How extensive credit transactions were may be seen from the many complaints of leather craftsmen in 1697 and 1698 that the leather duty<sup>2</sup> had to be paid when the sale was made, although the money for the goods was often not received until some time later. Leather craftsmen at Bodmin, for example, stated that their "Trades are generally carried on by credit, but the excessive duty on Leather, which is paid with ready money, obstructs the general Credit with which their trade were formerly carried on"<sup>3</sup>. There was no standard time granted for payment. When Ralph Hind, a tanner of Chester, bought fifty dickers of hides at Liverpool for 8s. 3d. a hide he was given "three months daie ffor payment"<sup>4</sup>. This was no doubt a common arrangement although the time allowed for settlement varied according to the financial standing of the parties concerned and also

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, pp.370-1

2. See Appendix 6, p.

3. Commons' Journals, vol. xii, p.61; see also pp.42, 57-8, 450, 520, etc.

4. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Car. I, Mich. 14.

according to the price of the commodity. Tanners at Shafton in Dorset, for example found in 1698 that they had to extend the period of credit they normally gave to purchasers because the excise duty made their leather dearer<sup>1</sup>.

In some cases a written contract was drawn up and the sum owed was secured by bonds. As an example, in February 1593 Francis Capper a London leatherdresser, bought six dozen dressed goat skins from Margaret Gore the widow of a Bristol merchant. The price was £6 which Capper agreed to pay at the end of the month and for which he gave Mrs. Gore a bill of debt. At the end of the month Capper offered to buy another twenty-four dozen skins that were still in Mrs. Gore's possession. She then returned the original bill of debt and Capper offered £30 for all the skins to be paid in six months and produced two sureties for £50. At the end of the six months Capper did not have the money so the sureties were approached. These however proved to be very poor men who were themselves heavily indebted to Capper<sup>2</sup>. Bills of debt

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1. Commons' Journals, ii, p.30.

2. P.R.O. Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/63/43.

and bonds were normal instruments of internal trade generally in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>1</sup> and we may assume that they were used frequently in the leather trade as well although not much evidence of them has been found<sup>2</sup>. In addition to these written contracts there were many verbal agreements for the sale of hides and leather. Naturally enough it was this kind of arrangement which was most likely to result in disputes between the parties involved<sup>3</sup>.

When hides or skins were bought they were baled up and taken to the purchasers' homes or shops. In the majority of cases the purchaser arranged his own transport although one case has been found where the seller of skins also arranged for delivery<sup>4</sup>. Raw hides and skins, if they had to be carried any distance or kept for any length of time, were usually salted to preserve them<sup>5</sup>. Northampton shoemakers supplying

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1. For an account of the operation of bonds see P.J.Bowden, "The Home Market on Wool", Yorkshire Bulletin, vol 7, no.2, (Nov. 1956), pp.143-8.
  2. For another example in the leather trade see P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, Cl/1233/49.
  3. For examples see P.R.O., Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/126/26; Early Chancery Proceedings Cl/1099/20; Cl/1482/68.
  4. P.R.O. Early Chancery Proceedings, Cl/980/7 and 8.
  5. Customs officials at Bristol in 1636 distinguished Irish from English hides by the fact that the former were salted (P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commission, E 178/5319).

footwear for the Irish army packed them in barrels  
for transport<sup>1</sup>. Finally when all details of the sales  
were completed hides, skins, leather and leather  
products were transported by pack horse, wagon, barge  
and ship, joining the miscellaneous collection of  
agricultural and industrial products that entered the  
stream of internal trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth  
centuries.

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1690, p.484.

CHAPTER 5 : THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEATHER INDUSTRY

I. THE HEAVY LEATHER CRAFTSMEN

(1)

The division between the heavy and light leather crafts

The leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was composed of several different occupations concerned with the manufacture of leather or leather products. These occupations can be grouped into two categories. A distinction must be made between craftsmen making or using heavy tanned leather and those making and using light dressed leather. In practice these two groups of occupations were quite independent of one another; in fact there were - not one - but two distinct branches of the leather industry to discuss.

The heavy leather branch of the industry<sup>1</sup> consisted of tanners who made leather, curriers who treated it after tanning, and shoemakers who used tanned leather in the manufacture of footwear. Saddlers used both tanned and dressed leather although they probably tended to use more of the former and we shall follow the contemporary practice and regard them as heavy leather craftsmen.<sup>2</sup> The light leather industry was composed

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1. For the sake of brevity we shall refer to the "heavy leather industry" and the "light leather industry."
  2. The saddlers' guild was one of the companies appointed by the leather act of 1563 (5 Eliz., cap. 8) to administer the search of tanned leather in London.

of the leatherdressers (alternatively known as whittawers or alum-tawers) and glovers. The name glover, in fact, was applied to a craftsman who performed a variety of operations including the manufacture of leather gloves and also many other kinds of goods from light leather.

The division of the leather industry into two distinct parts was implicit in much of the government's regulation of the industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The leather acts of 1563 and 1604 were concerned only with the manufacture and sale of tanned leather and footwear made of tanned leather. Attempts to control the manufacture and sale of dressed leather were made by letters patent and it was clearly recognised that this section of the industry was quite distinct from tanning, currying, and shoemaking.<sup>1</sup> Late in the seventeenth century when legislation relating to the trade in tanned leather was being discussed, and the leathersellers - whose concern was the sale of dressed leather - attempted to intervene, they were told sharply by the London shoemakers that the trade was none of their business.<sup>2</sup> Almost a century before, when the government had been considering granting a patent to control the production of dressed leather, Lord Burghley had been informed of "the two kinds of tanned and tawed Leather." The former, he was told, was used mainly by the shoemakers and was regulated by statute; the latter "partyneth to the leathersellers trade."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Chapter 7, pp. 265 et seq.
  2. See Chapter 8, p. 317
  3. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 140-1.

The probate inventories<sup>1</sup> of leather workers also reflected the division of the industry into two parts. Sometimes tanners and leatherdressers worked the same kind of hides or skins - particularly calf and sheep skins and horse hides<sup>2</sup> - but tanners used mainly cattle hides and leatherdressers mainly lighter skins. But whatever kinds of hides or skins they were working, tanners and leatherdressers did not mix the methods of making leather. As far as can be told from an examination of the inventories, tanners practised only oak-bark tanning and the leatherdressers used either oil or alum and other salts. In the case of the leather using crafts there was a clear distinction between the shoemakers and the rest. Shoemakers used tanned cattle leather and concentrated on the manufacture of footwear. Saddlers used both kinds of leather though they probably tended to use more tanned leather, made from bull and horse hides rather than cow hide. The glovers used dressed skins of various sorts, especially calf and sheepskins.<sup>3</sup> Although glovers made a variety of products the inventories have not shown that glovers made goods such as boots and shoes or saddles and harnesses usually made by heavy leather workers.

The development of gild control of the manufacture and trade in leather and leather goods in London also demonstrated the fact that the industry was split into two separate parts. The heavy leather gilds of shoemakers (known as the Company of Cordwainers), curriers, saddlers, and

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1. For a discussion of these sources, see Appendix 7.

2. e.g. Lincs. A.O., Inv. 76/294; Kent A.O., P.R.C. 10/47, no. 165.

3. The uses of various types of leather are discussed in Chapter 1, *passim*.

girdlers - the tanners had no gild in London<sup>1</sup> - were concerned with the supervision of tanned leather whereas the Company of Leathersellers<sup>2</sup> regulated the light leather trade in the metropolitan area. The respective fields of the two groups had been implicitly defined as early as 1411 when the London authorities ordered that tanned leather brought into the city for sale should be inspected by representatives of the shoemakers, curriers, girdlers, bottlemakers and malemakers. The leathersellers were not included. Some years later, in 1440 the leathersellers obtained a right of search over raw and tawed "fells" sold in the city and over light leather made of calf, lamb and sheepskins. Three years later the rights of the cordwainers, curriers and girdlers (not the bottlemakers or malemakers) to search tanned leather was confirmed.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons why different companies were appointed to inspect different kinds of leather in the fifteenth century were not stated, but they undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that tanned and dressed leather were essentially different materials suitable for different purposes. It is quite clear from the ordinances of their company that in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the leathersellers were mainly manufacturers of points (i.e. laces) made of dressed sheep, calf and deer skins.<sup>4</sup> Heavy tanned leather was hardly suitable for these articles and the leathersellers

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1. For some account of these gilds see below, pp. 193 et seq.

2. See Chapter 6, pp. 224 et seq.

3. W. H. Black, History and Antiquities of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers of the City of London, (London, 1871), pp. 23-25.

4. Ibid., pp. 19-21, 24.

consequently were not interested in it. Had they been, we can be reasonably sure that they would have attempted to obtain some right of search over tanned leather.

In the period covered by this study there were only two instances of the jurisdiction of the light and the heavy leather guilds overlapping and these examples do not indicate any serious conflict between the two groups. The first concerned the curriers and leatherdressers. In October 1584 an agreement was made between the Company of Curriers and nine leatherdressers living in Southwark and one living in the parish of St. Bride near Fleet St., by which the leatherdressers placed themselves under the supervision of the curriers who searched their goods and regulated conditions of apprenticeship. However the limits of the two occupations were defined. It was declared unlawful for leatherdressers "using leather dressed in oil, sumac, gall, to dresse any leather tanned with bark and water; nor shall currier currying tanned leather, curry or dress any leather made with sumac, gall, nor make oiled leather..."<sup>1</sup> It might be expected that this agreement would lead to some dispute between the Company of Curriers and the Company of Leathersellers since the latter claimed the right to search dressed leather.<sup>2</sup> In fact there is no further trace of the matter<sup>3</sup> and it seems to have been an isolated arrangement between the company and the leatherdressers

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1. Repertories, 21, fos. 90-91(b).

2. See Chapter 6, p 231

3. The ordinances of the curriers of January 1588 refer to a search of the premises of "every currier and dresser", but it cannot be accepted that the latter word referred to a leatherdresser (Repertories, 21, fos. 375-379(b)).

concerned. Why the agreement should have been made at all is a mystery. Oil-dressed and curried leather no doubt had certain features in common<sup>1</sup> but it does not follow that the craft of the currying and leatherdressing overlapped. Only ten leatherdressers were involved which suggests the arrangement was not general.

The second occasion on which the paths of the heavy and light leather guilds crossed was more than a century later in 1689. This case has already been mentioned and it will be described more fully in a later chapter. It occurred when the restrictions on middlemen in the tanned leather trade were being lifted and the leathersellers tried unsuccessfully to obtain a part of this trade.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the leathersellers should in the late seventeenth century have attempted to enter the tanned leather trade is itself evidence that this trade was not their usual sphere of enterprise. It also suggests that the government restriction on the trade in tanned leather itself may have been instrumental in keeping the leathersellers away from this branch of trade. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries leathersellers had bought and sold dressed leather virtually without restriction by the central government. Had they attempted to deal in tanned leather they would have come within the scope of the regulations against middlemen in the tanned leather trade and unlike the shoemakers and curriers who dominated this branch of the trade, they could not pose as craftsmen working in tanned leather.

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1. See Chapter 2, p 57.

2. See Chapter 8, p 317.

With these exceptions the two groups of guilds in London existed side by side without much contact or conflict with one another.

There were three reasons for the division between the two sections of the industry. Basically it was the result of the different techniques used by tanners and leatherdressers. Technically there was no reason at all why tanners should also be leatherdressers or vice versa. Secondly tanners and leatherdressers to some extent used different raw materials. The former used oak bark and the latter used alum and oil. Although calfskins, horse hides and other kinds of skins were common to both occupations, tanners used mainly cattle hides and leatherdressers used mainly sheepskins and other light skins. This point was closely connected with the differences in techniques. Thirdly, tanning and leatherdressing produced different kinds of leather suitable for different purposes. The fact that the government treated the two branches of the industry in different ways emphasised the division brought about by technical factors.<sup>1</sup>

(ii)

The separation of the heavy leather crafts

For the rest of this chapter we shall discuss the heavy leather crafts. We shall consider first the relationship between tanners, curriers and leather using craftsmen. We shall then turn to an examination of the size of the manufacturing unit in these occupations. Finally we shall be concerned with some problems of guild control of the industry.

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1. See Chapter 7, *passim*.

The crafts comprising the heavy leather industry were generally separate occupations. Tanners did not normally make leather goods, nor did they curry leather. Shoemakers, saddlers and curriers did not normally engage in one another's occupations,<sup>1</sup> and they did not make leather. The only exception to this statement was that shoemakers sometimes did their own currying. We may note at this stage that the organization of the heavy leather industry was quite different from the organization of the light leather craftsmen. In that branch of the leather industry the occupations were often combined in one man.<sup>2</sup>

The separation of the heavy leather crafts is clear from the probate inventories that will be studied in more detail below. Of all the inventories of tanners examined not one case has been found where a tanner was also carrying out the manufacture of leather goods or who was currying leather. Among the inventories of leather using craftsmen there was no example of shoemakers, curriers or saddlers making tanned leather. This is negative evidence but it cannot be dismissed for that reason. We should expect that if tanners also made leather goods or shoemakers and others

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1. There is some reason to believe that shoemaking and the manufacture of leather jerkins was sometimes combined. The ordinances of the Company of Cordwainers dated 1572 also controlled the activities of jerkin makers who were allowed under licence to make and sell "cordwainers wares" (Act and Ordinance Book of the Company of Cordwainers (Gild Hall Ms. 8033)). A Gateshead jerkin maker who died in 1569 owned a stock of footwear and lasts as well as jerkins ("Wills and Inventories" I, Surtees Society no. 2, 1835, p. 310.) No other evidence of a connection between these occupations has been found.

2. See Chapter 6, pp. 208 et seq.

generally made leather, more than a hundred inventories would reflect the fact. It must also be borne in mind that the inventories of light leather craftsmen do show that those crafts were frequently integrated.<sup>1</sup>

One exception to the separation of the heavy leather crafts was that shoemakers sometimes did their own currying. For example among the trade goods of Edward Hodgkinson in 1588 there was three gallons of oil which was evidently used for currying leather.<sup>2</sup> A Newcastle shoemaker who died in 1593 possessed four tubs, some tallow and two gallons of oil, which seem to be currying equipment.<sup>3</sup> Morgan Borman, a shoemaker of Cranbrook, Kent, also owned oil, tallow and vats in 1620.<sup>4</sup> Other shoemakers who probably did their own currying included Thomas Thompson whose trade goods included a "shoppetub" in 1619<sup>5</sup> and Henry Page of Great Chart in Kent who owned a "carring pane" (currying pan?) in 1616.<sup>6</sup>

From these examples it is not possible to say how general was the practice of shoemakers currying their own leather. It was illegal under the leather acts of 1563 and 1604,<sup>7</sup> but even in the 1660s a currier was prosecuted for currying leather.<sup>8</sup> Possibly the combination of currying and shoemaking was not unusual. Certainly there were good reasons why shoemakers may have

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1. See Chapter 6, pp. 217 et seq.
  2. Lincs. A.O., Inventories, 1588.
  3. "Wills and Inventories," II, Surtees Society, vol. 38 (1860), p. 299.
  4. Kent A.O., P.R.C., 10/47, no. 217.
  5. Lincs. A.O., Inv. 121/44.
  6. Kent A.O., P.R.C., 10/48, no. 201.
  7. See Chapter 7, p 249.
  8. Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 1659-1661 (ed. D.L. Powell & H. Jenkinson, Surrey Records Society, no. XXXV, 1934), p. 134.

wished to curry their own leather. The carriers were not a particularly numerous group of craftsmen especially outside the larger towns and several shoemakers had to rely on one carrier.<sup>1</sup> Shoemakers in urban areas might have to wait for some time before the carrier treated their leather - the provision in the act of 1563 that currying should be done within ten days at the most suggests that delays were common<sup>2</sup> - while in some country areas there might not be a carrier available. The leather acts notwithstanding, therefore, shoemakers may sometimes have been compelled to curry their own leather.

With this exception probate inventories of heavy leather craftsmen suggest that those occupations were usually carried on separately from one another. To some extent this evidence is confirmed by the pattern of gild organization. The evidence is clearest in the case of London where the heavy leather workers each possessed their own gilds. The most important of the gilds concerned with heavy leather in London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Company of Cordwainers and the Company of Carriers. Two other companies - the Saddlers and the Girdlers - were directed by the leather act of 1563 to appoint searchers of tanned leather but they did not take a very active interest in the leather trade or industry during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> The

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1. *Infra*, pp. 174-175

2. See Chapter 7, p. 260.

3. Possibly because their main interests lay elsewhere. The saddlers early developed as a body of traders concerned with the sale of saddlery etc. (Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 74; see also the saddlers' inventories in Appendix 7), and hence were less interested in the manufacture and sale of leather. Similarly the girdlers became associated with the pinners and wiresellers and their interest in leather was probably subsidiary to their interest in the sale of small metal goods (*Ibid.*, p. 168).

tanners had no gild during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries although they were included in a list of companies in 1376<sup>1</sup> and again in 1422.<sup>2</sup> What happened to the tanners' organization is not clear, but probably it collapsed as the tanners gradually settled in the (then) outer suburbs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> During the seventeenth century the "tanners using leadenhall" occasionally combined together in an ad hoc fashion for some specific purpose<sup>4</sup> and in March 1702/3 the tanners in the parish of St. Mary Magdelene, Bermondsey obtained a charter incorporating all the tanners in the parish and for thirty miles around. The main purpose of the new company was to regulate the number of master tanners and to eliminate all persons not qualified to "use and exercise the art and mystery of tanning leather."<sup>5</sup> The emergence of this belated company may have been not unconnected with the depressed state of tanning in the district at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup>

From the activities of the London heavy leather gilds it is clear that the occupations were not integrated. The gilds confined their activities to controlling the affairs of the crafts they represented. The heavy leather gilds in London were organizations of different groups of craftsmen who had no connection with one another except that they worked

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1. Black, Leathersellers Company, p. 17.
  2. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 167.
  3. See Chapter 3, pp. 68-69.
  4. See for example, Repertories 40, fo. 109(b).
  5. Cal. S.P.D., 1702-3, p. 609.
  6. In December 1697 it was claimed that of the 80 tan yards in Bermondsey, only 16 or 17 were at work (Commons' Journals, vol. XII, p. 18).

with tanned leather.<sup>1</sup> The two most important companies, for example - the carriers and cordwainers - made an agreement in 1590 defining the limits of their trades and occupations. The London shoemakers agreed to let the carriers have all the currying work in London providing the carriers did not enter the leather markets to buy leather in competition with the shoemakers.<sup>2</sup> The carriers and cordwainers were also involved in a perpetual battle - fought in Parliament, before the Privy Council and the Court of Aldermen - with one another over the trade in tanned leather. However this was not because the occupations of currying and shoemaking were normally combined in one man or because one guild was trying to dominate the affairs of another, but because the law did not allow carriers to buy leather on the grounds that they were not leather working craftsmen. The carriers wanted this position changed; the shoemakers - who benefited from it - did not.<sup>3</sup>

Away from London separate guilds of heavy leather workers existed in several towns. At Durham, for example, separate guilds of tanners, shoe-

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1. Professor G. Unwin chooses the London heavy leather crafts as "one of the best examples" of the amalgamation of the crafts (Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, 1904), pp. 19-20), and cites a case in the late fourteenth century when a jury of leather using craftsmen condemned a quantity of tanned leather brought from Rothwell to London by a tanner as evidence of amalgamation. We can agree with Unwin that the case shows the crafts possessing "a large degree of independence," but to suggest that it also demonstrates the beginning of the separation of "the trading function and the handicraft function" seems to be straining the evidence. And it certainly cannot be inferred - as Professor Unwin does - that the trading master "tended to become an employer of members of the other crafts."
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 63, fo. 18.
  3. See Chapter 8, pp. 302 - 303

makers and saddlers existed in the seventeenth century,<sup>1</sup> and separate guilds of various heavy leather workers were found at Norwich, Chester, Carlisle and Beverley<sup>2</sup> and elsewhere. It is true that in many places there were amalgamations of heavy leather workers into a single guild,<sup>3</sup> but guild amalgamation cannot - by itself - be taken as evidence that there was economic integration of the crafts involved.

Here it is necessary to digress a little in order to explain this last point. By "amalgamation" we mean the combination of the crafts in a single guild. By "integration" we mean the combination of occupations in one man. The former did not necessarily imply the latter for there were several reasons why crafts might amalgamate in one guild.

Let us, however, discuss first the case where amalgamation of the crafts did reflect economic integration of the occupations represented in the amalgamated guild. Amalgamation of the crafts could take place when the occupations were already integrated or where the processes involved in two or more occupations were so nearly similar that they were to all intents identical. A striking example of this kind occurred among the light leather crafts in London and elsewhere. During the fifteenth and early sixteenth

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1. C.E. Whiting, Durham Civic Memorials (Surtees Society, 1945), p. xv.
  2. F. Blomefield, History of Norfolk, vol. III (1806), p. 206; Hist. Mss. Comm., 8th Report, part 1, pp. 402-3; "Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle," Cumb. & West. Antiq. & Arch. Society, vol. 4, p. 84; W. Bazeley, "The Guilds of Gloucester," Trans. Bristol & Gloucs. Arch. Society, vol. xiii, p. 264; Hist. Mss. Comm., Beverley (1900), pp. 100-106.
  3. See the examples cited by S. Kramer, The English Craft Guilds (New York, 1927), pp. 8-10.

century a number of crafts in London - glovers, pouchmakers, pointmakers and others - combined with the Company of Leathersellers whose members had been concerned with making light leather. Amalgamation came about because the several occupations overlapped to such an extent that it was practically impossible to distinguish between them and there was no economic or technical basis for separate craft organizations.<sup>1</sup> Similar examples can be found among the bowyers and fletchers, among the victualling crafts, among the woodworking occupations, and others.<sup>2</sup>

In other instances, however, amalgamation occurred for different reasons. In the first place, crafts might amalgamate because there were insufficient members to support separate guilds. This, indeed, might be because the occupations were integrated and craftsmen were eligible to join one of a number of guilds with the result that one flourished while others languished for lack of members. This happened among the London light leather crafts.<sup>3</sup> But it could be simply that the industrial population of many areas was small. Thus instead of separate guilds, craftsmen were grouped into larger organizations representing all the workers in related occupations, or sometimes all the industrial workers in the town.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly amalgamation might occur among related occupations in order to protect the interests of the individual craftsmen. For example craftsmen in a town might combine in order to meet the competition of

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1. For a full discussion see Chapter 6, pp.225-6
  2. See Kramer, op. cit., pp. 52-9.
  3. See Chapter 6, pp.225 - 226 .
  4. Kramer, op. cit., pp. 65, 68-9, 74.

foreign traders or craftsmen. Or - to take another example - tanners, curriers and shoemakers might join in one gild in order to prevent complaints of bad workmanship by one group of craftsmen against another. If a shoemaker had a complaint about the standard of the tanning or currying it could be settled easily by a gild representing the interests of all groups of leather craftsmen.<sup>1</sup> It might also be easier for the various leather crafts to collude in order to conceal defective workmanship - which could be to the advantage of all craftsmen<sup>2</sup> - if they were members of a joint gild. It is likely that the clauses in the leather act of 1563 stipulating that tanning, currying and shoemakers should be separate occupations and placing the workmen under the jurisdiction of their respective leather guilds, were designed to prevent this sort of collusion.<sup>3</sup>

According to Miss Kramer many of the amalgamations that took place among the heavy leather crafts, did so "to safeguard the business interests of their members."<sup>4</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the heavy leather crafts were sometimes amalgamated in one gild, not because the occupations were integrated, but for some other reason. As we shall try to show below there were good economic reasons why the heavy leather crafts were not generally combined in one man. The fact that there were far more separate guilds of craftsmen among the heavy leather workers than there were among the light leather crafts - which were often integrated

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1. Ibid., pp. 63-4.

2. Inferior workmanship to the tanner normally meant under-tanning by shortening the manufacturing process which gave him a faster turnover on capital. The shoemaker could benefit by obtaining his leather cheaper. The currier was probably indifferent whether he curried good or bad leather and currying obscured the defects in tanned leather.

3. See Chapter 7, pp. 249-250.

tends to confirm the belief that separation of the occupations of tanning, currying and shoemaking was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of the guilds - like that of the probate inventories - is negative evidence in the sense that it does not prove that the heavy leather crafts were integrated. It might well be asked whether there was any positive evidence pointing to the separation of these occupations. Certainly no contemporary description of the organization of this branch of the leather industry has been found which states definitely that the crafts were not combined; rather there was an assumption by contemporaries that this was the case. For example when the light leather workers of London were describing the organization of their own branch of the industry, they contrasted the integration of the light leather crafts with the opposite situation which prevailed in tanning and shoemaking.<sup>2</sup> The division between tanning and shoemaking (and to some extent currying) has survived as a feature of the organization of the industry until the present time.

There is however some evidence which seems at first sight to suggest that the heavy leather crafts were not always separate occupations.

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1. The statement that separate guilds of leather craftsmen were more common in heavy than the light leather industry cannot be proved statistically. However the examination of local records and the many examples given in Miss Kramer's study of the English guilds leaves no doubt that this was the case.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 16/386, no. 90.

One of the provisions of the leather acts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was that craftsmen should follow no more than one occupation comprising the leather industry. On the assumption that legislation was made to prevent practices actually in existence, it seems that the heavy leather crafts were integrated. However it will be argued in a later chapter that these provisions were a survival of earlier legislation and that the reason for including them in the legislation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was connected with the gild control of the heavy leather crafts and not with the actual organization of the industry.<sup>1</sup>

However this poses a further problem. The regulations preventing the combination of tanning, currying and shoemaking were first made in the late fourteenth century when evidence is not lacking that the crafts in question were sometimes combined in one man.<sup>2</sup> Thus if we accept that the heavy leather crafts were not integrated in the late sixteenth century we are implying that a change in the organization of this branch of the industry occurred between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries - that is if the evidence of integration in the fourteenth century is typical. Any explanations of the separation of the heavy leather crafts during the period of this study therefore must take account of this change.

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1. See Chapter 7, pp.249-250 . See also above, p.166.
  2. The first act was that of 13 Rich. II, sect. i, cap. 12. The subsequent legislation is listed in Unwin, Industrial Organisation, p. 22, note 1. Examples of integration in the fourteenth century will be found in Kramer, op. cit., pp. 60-1, 65; C.H. Drinkwater, "Petition of the Cordwainers of the Town of Salop, 1323-4," Shrops. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc., Series 2, vol. 6 (1894), p. 289; A.E. Bland, P.A. Brown, R.H. Tawney, English Economic History: Select Documents (London, 1914), p.70.

Of the possible explanations we may consider first the technical. In one respect this is the most plausible. There was a natural break in the manufacturing processes between tanning and the manufacturing of leather goods. At the finish of tanning the leather was in a convenient state to be transported. The manufacture of leather and the manufacture of footwear required different techniques and different equipment and there was no good technical reason why they should be combined. The division between tanning and the leather using crafts was similar to the division between the manufacture of cloth and tailoring, or between the production of iron and the manufacture of iron products - or even between growing grain and making bread. Plausible though this explanation is however, it cannot be accepted alone. We should expect it to apply to the light leather crafts, and also to the heavy leather crafts in the fourteenth century. The natural break in the manufacturing processes certainly provided the conditions for separation of the leather making from the leather using crafts, but other factors must also have played a part.

Secondly there are what might be termed "market" explanations. In its simplest form, we can argue that the widening of the market between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries brought about a division of labour between tanning, currying and shoemaking. In the fourteenth century craftsmen produced to meet the demand of the local town or manor and they tended to make their own leather, curry it, and make it into leather goods. By the sixteenth century, faced with a national market, there was a specialisation of functions. In this form the argument is unacceptable. In the first place, although the widening of the market from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century is advanced by Professor Unwin as the factor which

forced the independent medieval craftsmen into a state of dependence on a trading class,<sup>1</sup> there is no conclusive evidence of the existence of the phenomenon. Discussing the alleged growth of trade and industry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Professor Postan has written that "it is surprising how little it owes to established historical facts and how much it derives from ancient presuppositions of Victorian historiography."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 19.
  2. M. Postan, "Some Economic Evidence of Declining Population in the later Middle Ages," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. II (1950), p. 230. Professor Postan continues: "Medieval trade ... was expected to grow through centuries of history; and the general impression that England had been poor and small in 1086 and became great and famous in the modern era, lent conviction to the doctrine of growth... The course of English trade and industry in the later middle ages may perhaps have been too uneven to be represented by a simple and smooth curve... Yet... a falling curve would fit into facts of English industry between 1350 and 1470 much better than a rising one." It is arguable that Professor Postan overstates his case; but given the absence of population growth one of the major factors in the widening of the market was missing. It is true that the level of incomes could have risen and that an expansion of trade would come about in this way. But the importance of this factor (if it existed) would be minimised in the case of heavy leather if our assumption that the income elasticity of demand was low were true (see Chapter 1, p 11).

It is worth noting that Miss Kramer invokes, by implication, the widening of the market as the factor bringing about separation of tanning and shoemaking. After describing clashes between tanners and shoemakers at Shrewsbury and Bristol in the 1360s, she writes (Craft Guilds, p. 102): "we have... been following division of labour in the making between the crafts of tanning and shoemaking... In all probability the cordwainers of Shrewsbury and Bristol who tanned their own leather as a matter of course established guilds long before the art of tanning had developed sufficiently to justify its being separated from the other branches of the leather business."

Even if a widening of the market were true of industry and trade generally it is doubtful if it was particularly true of the heavy leather crafts. The typical trade in leather and leather goods in the sixteenth and seventeenth century was - as we have seen - local in character. Possibly the national trade in leather had increased but the bulk of trade was still local. Lastly, even if we allow the effect of a widening market in bringing about specialisation of functions, it is just as likely to have taken the form of a division of labour within an enterprise rather than between enterprises. However market factors may have been influential in other ways. It is arguable that sales of leather and footwear in public markets influenced the standard of workmanship. For example, it was explained to the government in 1575 that tanners took care to see that leather was not damaged by frost during tanning, "otherwyse their is spoile and (it is) not saleable at the markt. The shoumakeres all being skillfull to p(er)ceave the same."<sup>1</sup> In other words it might be difficult to sell very poor quality leather or footwear. In addition, there were also certain statutory standards of quality established by the leather acts<sup>2</sup> that leather and footwear had to meet. Since tanning, currying and shoemaking required different kinds of skill the emphasis on "quality" imposed by the market and government regulation might conceivably lead to a separation of functions ~~between~~ these occupations.<sup>3</sup>

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58.

2. See Chapter 7, p 251.

3. See A. Marshall, Principles of Economics (8th ed., 1920), p. 253.

How does this hypothesis fit the facts? In order to explain the move from apparent combination in the fourteenth to separation in the sixteenth centuries, we would have to assume that sales in the market increased over the period. There is no way of testing this assumption.<sup>1</sup> We would also need to assume that purchasers of footwear in particular could afford to be discriminating and refuse to buy inferior footwear. The possibility cannot be discounted, but neither can it be proved.<sup>2</sup> A third assumption that would have to be made is that government supervision of quality was to some degree effective. We shall see in a later chapter that we cannot regard attempts by the Tudor and Stuart governments to regulate the manufacture of tanned leather and footwear as very successful. Yet we cannot deny their success completely; for as long as these commodities were sold in public markets some supervision of quality was possible.<sup>3</sup>

In short the hypothesis remains not proven. However in another direction market factors played a more definite role in bringing about the separation of tanning from the crafts using tanned leather. In Chapter 3

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1. Increased sales in the market are not quite the same as the widening of the market discussed above which implies that producers and consumers are separated by distance. What is being considered here is the possibility of more sales taking place within a given locality as a result - say - of increasing income per head, or increasing population, or both.
  2. The question hinges on the level of incomes and elasticities of demand.
  3. See Chapter 7, pp.273 - 274 .

we saw that the location of tanning was determined mainly by the availability of hides and bark because of the high cost of transporting these materials. Tanners tended to work in rural areas (where there were supplies of hides and/or bark) or on the outskirts of towns (where hides were available from the nearby meat markets, where rents were low, and where water could be obtained without polluting the town's water supplies). Shoemakers on the other hand required close contact with their customers and hence were located in the town centre. Curriers were located near shoemakers rather than tanners because currying added to the weight of leather.<sup>1</sup>

The relative pulls of markets and supplies of raw materials, therefore, caused a geographical separation of the leather using from the leather manufacturing occupations. Even though the distance between tanners and shoemakers must often have been small (the distance between the town centre and the outskirts) it was sufficient to bring about separation of the crafts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly as there was no good technical reason why tanning, currying and shoemaking should be combined.

This explanation does not conflict with the fact that the heavy leather crafts were sometimes integrated in an earlier period - nor is it invalidated by the fact that there may have been some occasional survivals of integration in the sixteenth century. In the first place, Miss Kramer's examples of integration of the heavy leather crafts in the fourteenth century have all come to light because integration was coming to an end,

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1. Chapter 3, passim, and especially pp. 115-7.

with consequent disturbances in gild organization.<sup>1</sup> Secondly it is possible that the geographical separation of the crafts in some urban areas became more marked with urban expansion between later fourteenth and the later sixteenth century. The most obvious case was London<sup>2</sup> but urban growth was not confined to London.

To sum up, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a separation between tanning and the leather using crafts, and also between one craft using tanned leather and another, with the exception that shoemakers sometimes did currying work. The reasons were first, there were no technical advantages to be gained from integration of the crafts and, secondly, there were distinct economic advantages involved in separation.

A question that remains to be discussed is the ratio between tanners, curriers and shoemakers. Shoemakers were generally the most numerous of the heavy leather workers and curriers the least numerous. In Norwich for example, between 1548 and 1713 there were 107 tanners admitted to the freedom of the city, 641 shoemakers and 24 curriers.<sup>3</sup> If we leave out of account the workmen who never took out freedoms and workers in the suburbs, we have six shoemakers at work for every tanner and roughly one currier for every twenty-seven shoemakers. At York in the mid-sixteenth

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1. Kramer, Craft Gilds, pp. 60-1, 101-3. See also Drinkwater, "Salop Cordwainers' Petition," p. 285, 289; R.H. Morris, Chester during Plantagenet and Tudor Times (no date), pp.410-11.
  2. The location of the leather crafts in the London suburbs dated from the fourteenth century (see Chapter 3, pp.68-69 ; Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 128).
  3. Calculated from P. Millican (ed.) Register of the Freemen of Norwich, 1548-1713.

century the ratio between shoemakers and tanners was only about 2:1 and between shoemakers and curriers 5:1.<sup>1</sup> At Leicester, also, the number of tanners to shoemakers was much closer than at Norwich. Between 1560/1 - 1569/70 ten tanners and eleven shoemakers received their freedoms; between 1600/1 - 1609/10 there were actually more tanners (18) admitted than shoemakers (15), but later in the century something nearer a 2:1 relationship existed.<sup>2</sup> Similarly at Chester; between 1559 and 1700 there were on an average 18 tanners a year admitted to the freedom of the city, 28 shoemakers but only one currier.<sup>3</sup> A calculation from the apprentices rolls at Bristol for a single decade, 1532-1541 also suggests a ratio between tanners and shoemakers of the order of 2:1 although the number of curriers to shoemakers (about 1:4) was higher than in other places.<sup>4</sup>

Such calculations must be treated with caution. Figures of freemen and apprenticeships are an inadequate reflection on the actual numbers of craftsmen at work in a given area, and in non-urban districts the proportions might well be different from that in the towns. Nevertheless, as a rough guide, the figures given above may not be misleading.

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1. The Freemen of York, 1272-1558 (Surtees Society, vol. 96, 1897), pp. 270 et seq. For the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the number of tanners admitted was only slightly less than the number of shoemakers (Surtees Soc. vol. 102, passim).
  2. Calculation from H. Hartopp (ed.) Freemen of the Borough of Leicester, 1196-1739 (Leics., 1927), passim.
  3. Calculation from The Rolls of the Freemen of the City of Chester, part 1, 1392-1700 (Lancs. & Cheshire Record Series, vol. LI (1906)).
  4. Calculation from Calendar of Bristol Apprenticeship Book, Part I, 1532-1541 (Bristol Record Society Publications, vol. XIV (1949), pp. 199-200.

We should in fact expect there to be more shoemakers than tanners from our knowledge of the cost structure of the various crafts.<sup>1</sup> Compared with the leather using crafts, tanning required more capital, and tanners, as a group, worked on a larger scale than shoemakers. It is not unreasonable to assume that one tanner could on an average keep a couple of shoemakers, and perhaps a saddler or two, supplied with leather. The small number of carriers in relation to shoemakers can be explained by the limited demand for their services. Their livelihoods as carriers depended on the number of shoemakers and other leather using craftsmen who wanted curried leather and one carrier could supply several shoemakers without difficulty. And - as we have seen - it was not unknown for shoemakers to dispense with the services of carriers and do their own currying.

(iii)

#### The Manufacturing Unit

In this section we shall attempt to analyse the cost structure of the crafts comprising the heavy leather industry. We shall carry out a similar examination into the light leather crafts in the next chapter. For this purpose we shall make use of probate inventories of leather craftsmen, a sample of which will be found analysed in Appendix 7. This class of evidence provides a valuable insight into the businesses of leather workers although there are some problems associated with the use of inventories which must be kept in mind. These problems are discussed in Appendix 7.

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1. *Infra*, pp. 176 *et seq.*

The manufacturing unit in the heavy leather industry - measured in terms of capital invested - was generally small,<sup>1</sup> although larger in tanning than in the leather using crafts. None of the occupations required expensive equipment but tanning could absorb a large amount of circulating capital because of the slow nature of the process. All crafts made use of manual labour and labour costs were an important factor limiting the size of the unit, particularly in the leather using crafts. The incomes that could be obtained from manufacturing leather and leather goods varied according to the size of the business but in general tanners made larger incomes than the leather using craftsmen unless the latter added some trading activity to their manual occupations.

Tables I, II, and III in Appendix 7 summarise the information contained in 137 inventories of tanners and other heavy leather workers. It can be seen from these tables that the value of the stock-in-trade of leather workers was usually small, although noticeably larger in tanning than in the other occupations. One or two cases stand out from the rest. Perhaps the most striking was John Neall a tanner from Lincolnshire who died in 1567.<sup>2</sup> Neall left a total estate of more than £1,300 and had over £770 invested in his tanning business. Such a scale of operations was very unusual in the heavy leather industry, although possibly Neall was not unique. He may have been matched, for example, by William House of

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1. This remark was true of the light leather crafts also; see Chapter 6, pp. 216 et seq.
  2. Detailed references of inventories will not be cited in the body of the chapter. Full references will be found in Appendix 7, where an inventory may be identified by the name of the testator, his occupation, and the date of the inventory.

Buckinghamshire who was described in 1575 as "a man bothe of greate welthe verie wise and most skillfull in his arte and such a one as made the beste lether in the Lande."<sup>1</sup>

Among the leather using craftsmen it will be noticed that there were a number of craftsmen in London in the late seventeenth century who possessed considerable personal wealth or whose inventories were characterised by evidence of other activities. There was for example, John Eastwood a shoemaker who died in 1675 leaving an estate worth £491, with further £117 owing to him. His leather and shoes were worth nearly £22 and he died owing his journeyman £1 9s. for wages. His other business interests were considerable. He owned the leases of three houses valued at £280, received an income from rent, and held £100 worth of shares in several ships. Another shoemaker, Edward White held a stock of footwear worth £31 and leather worth £15 in 1670; he died leaving debts of £139. Of the saddlers, James Burre had £100 worth of harnesses, saddles, stirrups and other articles in his shop in 1673. But the most striking feature of his inventory was the £1,900 owing to him which can hardly represent the credit sales of his saddlery business. Even larger debts were accumulated by another London saddler, John Francis, who died in 1674. He had £913 owing to him and himself owed more than £2,000.

These men cannot be regarded as typical of craftsmen in other parts of the country, nor, indeed, of other leather using craftsmen in London.

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fo. 10.

They were freemen of London companies who died leaving children under age and whose estates were administered by the City of London authorities which made inventories of their possessions.<sup>1</sup> Against these men we should set a poor London shoemaker like Thomas Herne of St. Michael's, Cornhill, who died in 1666 leaving goods worth only £10 5s and whose stock-in-trade was worth only £2. It is doubtful, too, whether these men were master craftsmen actually making leather goods. Rather they appear to be merchant employers, perhaps employing a few journeymen to make saddles or shoes; but who were more interested in retail trade and other business activities not associated with the manufacture of leather goods.

These traders apart, it is possible to make a distinction between the master craftsmen and workmen who had not set up business on their own account but who were employed by other people. Dr. Kerridge, in his study of inventories of Leicester leather workers has pointed out that shoemakers who died owning merely a few tools but no leather probably worked with leather put out to them by master craftsmen.<sup>2</sup> In this class was Matthew Harvey, a shoemaker who died at Holbech (Lincs.) in 1634. His stock-in-trade was composed only of his working tools valued at 13s 4d. Another example was Francis Coulson a shoemaker of Boston, who died in 1595 leaving an estate valued at £5 11s. His "shop" goods were worth only 8s. and there was no leather or footwear among them. Possibly one or two of the

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1. For an account of this source of inventories see A.M.C. Le Mesurier, "The Orphans' Inventories at the London City Guildhall," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. V (1934-5), pp. 98-103.

2. V.C.H.. Leicester, IV, p. 83.

tanners - Robert Robertes of Leicester (died 1614) and Thomas Poore of Essex (died 1667) for example - were also employees rather than master craftsmen. In terms of wealth employees were sometimes indistinguishable from craftsmen who worked on their own account.

It can be seen from Appendix 7 that the heavy leather crafts were sometimes combined with agriculture. Tanning in particular combined well with agriculture. In the first place hides of farm animals could be tanned when they died: "when the Husbandman hath a horse killed by mischaunce or otherwise he tanneth his hyde it easeth his losse..."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, tanning was a slow process; there were long periods when the hides did not require attention and so there were opportunities for tanners to attend to farming work. Thirdly, because of the slow nature of the process, a large investment in hides was necessary if tanning was to return a steady income.<sup>2</sup> Small-scale tanners normally required some by-employment such as agriculture in order to augment the income obtained from tanning.

A closer examination of the probate inventories of heavy leather craftsmen reveals something of the cost structure of these occupations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In common with many other occupations, the heavy leather crafts did not require expensive equipment. The basic equipment of tanners consisted of tan vats and pits, wooden beams, knives, wooden poles for moving

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58.

2. *Infra*, p 184.

the hides about in the pits, odds and ends such as buckets and wheel barrows, and possibly a device for grinding oak bark.<sup>1</sup> The cost of these items - as can be seen from Table V of Appendix 7 - was usually very small especially in relation to the value of hides being tanned.<sup>2</sup> For example five vats, one "sewsterne" and four "handlers in the ground" (i.e. pits used for the handling stage of tanning) belonging to Henry Tampion of Bourne in 1588 were worth less than £2; while in 1616 John Doddington died leaving eight vats, two cisterns, six handlers, three troughs, two beams for scudding hides and a beam knife, a wheel barrow and other items worth £3 13s. 4d. With this equipment he tanned over £40 worth of leather. Possibly about half a dozen to a dozen pits was fairly normal. The amount of equipment owned by John Neall (1567) and Nicholas Lawes (died 1569) was exceptional. "All the vessells belonging to the yard" belonging to Neall were valued at £13 13s. 4d.; but this was less than two per cent of the value of his hides in various stages of tanning. The number of pits Neall possessed was not given on the inventory; but Nicholas Lawes owned forty vats also valued at over £13 and Neall possibly had about the same. Lawes, like Neall, was a large-scale tanner; and although he was tanning no hides at the time of his death he had a stock of finished leather worth £52.

A special word needs to be said about bark mills which were used for crushing oak bark. Dr. Kerridge has suggested that bark mills were

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1. *Infra*,
  2. No doubt the valuation of equipment on inventories was depressed by age and wear and tear; but even allowing for depreciation it is difficult to believe that equipment was very expensive.

expensive and for this reason not many tanners owned them but relied on supplies of crushed bark from other tanners.<sup>1</sup> Professor Nef has also implied that "tanning mills" (by which he must mean bark mills) were expensive pieces of equipment.<sup>2</sup> It is true that many tanners did not possess bark mills, but neither Dr. Kerridge nor Professor Nef supply any evidence of their cost. Only two references have been found to bark mills in the inventories examined. One was the property of Richard Newman who died in 1614. He kept it in his orchard at Staplehurst in Kent and it was valued at 3s. 4d. The other was owned by another Kentish tanner, Samuel Lucas of Elham near Hythe and in 1620 it was valued at 18s. together with a sieve. Even when new such equipment can hardly have been very expensive. These references suggest that bark mills were probably fairly small pieces of equipment worked by hand - perhaps similar to a grindstone for sharpening knives - rather than large mills powered by water or horses. If this is so there must be some reason other than the expense why many tanners did not own bark mills; a reason will be suggested later.<sup>3</sup>

The value of the equipment belonging to leather using craftsmen was, if anything, lower than that of the tanners. This can be seen from Tables VI and VII of Appendix 7. Shoemakers needed lasts, cutting boards and knives; carriers knives and a tub or two; the most expensive equipment of saddlers was probably a press for moulding leather into the shape

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1. Kerridge, in V.C.H. Leicester, vol.IV, pp. 84-5.
  2. J.U. Nef, "Industrial Europe at the Time of the Reformation," Journal of Political Economy, vol. 49 (1941), pp. 20-21.
  3. Infra, pp. 187-188.

required, but these were not dear.<sup>1</sup>

The cost of equipment was only one part of the fixed cost of leather workers who also needed workshops or somewhere to put their tan pits and vats. From the references to leases on many inventories it appears likely that leather craftsmen often rented premises for a modest sum. Tanners, for example, could rent tanneries complete with a dwelling house without great cost;<sup>2</sup> leather users required less space than tanners so their rent charges were probably lower.

Details of leases entered into by one or two tanners have survived. For example John Peake a tanner at Beccles in Suffolk rented a tannery - with all equipment - and a dwelling house in 1587 for £6 a year. The landlord and his wife, however, were "persons of a verie miserable and vnconscionable disposicon" and the tenancy was punctuated by a number of court cases.<sup>3</sup> In 1588 an Essex tanner leased a tannery and house for £3 a year. The landlord also supplied "a stock of fyve poundes in money to be ... employed in the trade of Tanning" and £1 of the rent was "... reserved for the saide Stock and Tannfatts."<sup>4</sup> A rather similar arrangement was made in Cheshire in the mid-sixteenth century where the landlord provided thirty dickers of leather together with the tannery on the understanding that an equivalent amount of leather was returned at the end of the lease.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Three presses belonging to George Rochester of Newcastle who died in 1592 were valued at 6s. 8d.
  2. See Kerridge, loc. cit., p. 84.
  3. P.R.O., Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/90/30.
  4. Req. 2/66/44.
  5. P.R.O., Early Chancery Depositions, C1/999/32.

The practice of landlords contributing towards stocks of hides probably arose from the need for large circulating capital in tanning. The nature of the techniques made a large amount of circulating capital desirable in tanning. Tanning with oak bark took any time between about six months and two years to turn a hide into a piece of leather.<sup>1</sup> The turnover of capital invested in hides was very slow and if tanners wanted a regular income they needed a large stock of hides evenly balanced throughout all stages of production so that there was leather always becoming ready for the market. Furthermore, the long wait that elapsed between the purchase of a hide and its sale as leather made tanners susceptible to fluctuations in prices. There was always the possibility that leather prices would fall during tanning. If this happened tanners would have to be prepared to hold stocks of leather until prices rose again. In short tanners had to have large stocks of hides and partly tanned leather, and they might also have to hold stocks of finished leather. This situation can be seen by an examination of tanners' inventories. The most striking case of course was John Neall with 340 hides and "hothorns"<sup>2</sup> in lime pits, 730 hides and pieces in the tan vats and 355 tanned hides and hothorns. Neall in fact had achieved a balance with roughly the same quantity of hides just starting the process as there was tanned leather ready for sale. Another large-scale tanner was William Dawson of Grantham who died in 1616.

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1. See Chapter 2, p50.

2. I have not been able to identify a hothorn which appears frequently in Lincolnshire inventories. It seems to have been some kind of cattle hide and possibly it was a regional name for a kip.

He was then tanning 350 hides valued at £175 and had 80 tanned hides and some leather pieces awaiting sale worth £80. On a slightly smaller scale was Thomas Clarke of Kimbalton (Huntingtonshire) who died in 1611 leaving hides and leather worth £120 including some raw hides and skins, 40 hides in the lime pits, 30 hides "in the handlers" and 37 hides and 5 kips "in Lare" (i.e. in the layer pits where the hides were placed after being taken from the handlers). Clarke also owned nine tanned hides suitable for sole leather and some oddments of leather.

Although large-scale production was desirable in tanning it was possible for tanners to work with little capital. They could shorten the time taken for tanning although this produced poor quality leather. Tanners could also use cheap low-grade sheepskins and bull and horse hides or decaying hides instead of the more expensive cattle hides. "It is the labor of the poorer sorte of Tanners who mayntayne themselves and their howses by tanning of them, the bigger worke beinge to chargeable for them to Deale wthall."<sup>1</sup> Also, if tanning were combined with farming or some other occupation,<sup>2</sup> the irregular income resulting from a small number of hides being tanned could be supplemented by earnings from by-employment. A number of small-scale tanners can be readily identified from Tables I and V of Appendix 7.

By contrast with tanning, the technical processes in the leather using crafts were quick - five to ten days in currying,<sup>3</sup> a day or two in

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58; see Appendix 5 .

2. *Supra*, p.180.

3. The time fixed by the leather act of 1563.

shoemaking<sup>1</sup> and probably no more in saddlemaking - so there was no need for manufacturers to hold large stocks of goods in production. This can be seen from Tables VI and VII. The leather being worked by saddlers and shoemakers was generally of very small value<sup>2</sup> and where the total stock-in-trade was more than about £5 or £6, the bulk normally consisted of finished goods waiting sale. It is noticeable that the largest stocks of finished goods were owned by the London craftsmen who were faced with a potentially much larger market than craftsmen in smaller towns.

Apart from hides or leather, a further item in the variable costs of the leather craftsmen was the cost of other materials needed for tanning and the manufacture of leather goods. Tanners needed oak bark and lime, curriers oil and tallow, shoemakers and saddlers thread and perhaps a little tallow. The cost of materials used by shoemakers and saddlers was very low and was not usually valued separately on inventories. 8 lbs. of tallow belonging to Hugh Burdit a shoemaker in Grantham cost only 1s. 9d. in 1633, and "1 parcell of Rosin weighing 5 stone" belonging to a shoemaker in Boston was worth 6s. in 1636. Curriers had to meet heavier charges. The "tallow and Stuffe" belonging to Andrew Baggott of London was valued at £10 in 1669 and three barrels of oil, the property of Thomas Bates of Boston, was worth £8 in 1672. However both of these were craftsmen on a fairly large scale and their stocks of currying materials were probably unusually large.

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1. See V.C.H. Northants, vol. II, p. 321.

2. Two exceptions were White (died 1670) and Anderson (died 1700), who were both prosperous London craftsmen and retailers.

Tanners faced higher charges when obtaining supplies of lime and oak bark. Little is known about the cost of lime and means of obtaining it; to judge from the inventories it was not a very significant item.<sup>1</sup> Supplies of bark were more costly. It can be seen from Table V that the amount of bark in the hands of tanners varied greatly and not always in proportion to the quantity of hides being tanned. One reason for this was that bark was collected in the spring and supplies gradually diminished during the rest of the year. Bark gathering was restricted to April, May and June by the leather acts of 1563 and 1604,<sup>2</sup> but even without government regulation tanners would have confined collection to those months; for only then was bark suitable for tanning leather. In the 1540s, for example, Simon Potter a tanner of Great Burstead in Essex, agreed to buy the bark of oaks and ashes, felled by William and Edward Croxton of Ramsden Bellhouse, for £11 10s. But when the bark was delivered Potter refused to pay more than £2 because the Croxtons had "causyd a greate parte of the saide woddes to be fellyd in the wynter at an vnseasonabull tyme of the yere by reason whereof the Barke of the same was vtterly spoilyd lost and distroyed."<sup>3</sup>

The cost of laying in a stock of bark could be high. "All the bark at home & at Bording" belonging to John Neall was worth £40. His

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1. Only two separate references to lime have been found among tanners' inventories. William Jarman owned a load of lime valued at 6s. in 1592; and Samuel Lucas had ten bushels of lime worth 3s. 4d. in 1620.
  2. 5 Eliz., cap. 8; 1 Jac. I, cap. 22.
  3. P.R.O., Early Chancery Proceedings, C1/970/77 and 78.

stocks of bark were very large and even a man of his resources could not find room to store it all on his own premises. The collection of bark could be a costly and time consuming business. First tanners had to find someone who was felling trees (or else they had to buy standing timber and arrange to sell the wood). Then there was the expense of carting the bark from the woods to the tanneries. There were good reasons, therefore, why tanners often preferred to buy their bark from someone who specialised in the collection of oak bark.

In an earlier chapter we met Richard Jones of Bermondsey, a tanner - otherwise known as a "barkman" - whose business at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century consisted of gathering bark around Guildford and bringing it to London.<sup>2</sup> Richard Newnam of Staplehurst, who owned a bark mill but practically no leather in 1616, may have been engaged in a similar activity. Another tanner who seems to fit into this category of a collector and supplier of bark was Nicholas Lawes of Gateshead who owned 80 loads of bark in 1569, valued at £20. Lawes lived in a district where oak bark was in short supply<sup>3</sup> and his stocks suggest that he was cornering supplies. There was a similar shortage at Durham in the early seventeenth century and the tanners' company tried to curb the activities of dealers who bought up all the supplies. Even so, in 1613 a tanner Thomas Heath sold bark to another tanner, Christopher Simpson contrary to the regulations of the gild; a few months later Thomas Hutcheson attempted to sell bark to George Foster "above the

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1. Lincs. A.O., Inv. 85/147.

2. P.R.O., Chancery Masters' Exhibits, C107/110. See Chapter 3, p.74

3. See Chapter 3, p.93

Rate of xxxs a lode." The Hutcheson family were evidently actively engaged in buying up supplies of bark and in the following year two of them, Hugh and William, together with George Herrinson were ordered by the company not to "bringe any more barcke into their howse then they have alredie brought home..."<sup>1</sup> A few years later on the other side of the country William Gilbert a tanner of Lydney in Gloucestershire was buying bark in the Forest of Deam on behalf of other tanners.<sup>2</sup> In Lincoln Thomas Whytwell died in 1537 owing a sum of money for oak bark to another tanner, and in 1541 Robert Wyllerton died at Boston owing a small sum of money to an unspecified person for "making bark."

A third component of the variable costs of the heavy leather craftsmen was the cost of labour. On this point the inventory material is almost entirely unhelpful. Only one tanner - William Parker (died 1588) - was shown as having an employee to whom he owed £4 13s 4d. in wages. The best information on employment comes from the valuable occupational census of Gloucestershire for 1607 compiled by R.H. and A.J. Tawney, who have shown that the one man enterprise was usual in the leather crafts, and that if master craftsmen did employ additional labour they rarely had more than one or two journeymen.<sup>3</sup> Presumably large-scale tanners like Neall (1567),

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1. The Book of the Company of Tanners, Durham, 1612-1655, (Surtees Society, 1945), pp. 84, 87.
  2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/5304.
  3. A.J. & R.H. Tawney, "An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century," Econ. Hist. Rev., Vol. V (1934-5), pp. 54, 59-60. Of 142 tanners in the county, 113 were master craftsmen and 28 were employees. 11 tanners had one employee each, 5 had 2, one had 3 and one had 4. 95 tanners used no labour but their own. The predominance of one man businesses was even greater in the case of other leather using crafts.

Chapman (1634) and Waylett (1689) needed more. And Thomas Dekker in the early seventeenth century drew a picture of a prosperous London shoemaker who employed three journeymen and later employed a fourth.<sup>1</sup>

There is a similar lack of definite evidence about wages. Some wage rates culled from justices' assessments at various times in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are shown in Appendix 8. If these statutory rates reflected the economic wage, it seems that wages of leather craftsmen ranged from about £2 to about £6 a year, varying from time to time and place to place, with possibly tanners' wages tending to be slightly higher than wages of other leather craftsmen.

Despite the uncertainty of our knowledge about labour costs, we can be fairly sure that labour was a higher proportion of total costs in currying and the leather using crafts than in tanning. This follows from what we have said about the larger stocks necessary in tanning than the other occupations. Hence labour was a more important factor limiting the size of the manufacturing unit in the leather using crafts than tanning. In the latter, the number of hides being tanned at any one time could probably often be increased without employing extra labour because tanning was a long process and labour - and equipment - would be left idle unless a fairly large number of hides were tanned. This did not apply to the crafts using tanned leather where output depended largely on the speed with which craftsmen could work and not on the time taken by various

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1. Thomas Dekker, Shoemaker's Holiday, Act 1, Scene 1. The journeymen worked a simple division of labour. When one of them, Ralph, left for the wars he presented his wife with a pair of shoes, "cut out by Hodge, stitched by my fellow Firk, and seamed by myself."

chemical processes. In these occupations, therefore, an increase in production depended on the employment of extra labour and rising labour costs limited the size of the manufacturing unit.

It is likely that production in shoemaking - and possibly in other crafts using heavy leather - was sometimes organised on a putting-out basis. We have already seen that there was a class of shoemakers who probably worked only on leather supplied by other craftsmen.<sup>1</sup> The putting-out system was a means of keeping down labour costs by making use of part-time labour; the master craftsman could expand production, not by engaging additional journeymen who might not be kept fully employed, but by using casual labour as extra output was needed. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the putting-out system was widespread among the heavy leather using crafts. It was not present in tanning where it was technically unfeasible.

It is practically impossible to calculate the profits that could be made from tanning or the other heavy leather crafts. A Shrewsbury tanner in 1627 indicated that he could buy a hide for 10s. and sell the leather made from it for 14s. or 15s.<sup>2</sup> From the difference would have to be met the cost of bark and labour and overheads. Possibly this was not untypical of the situation for many tanners. Judged in terms of personal goods, the tanners appear to have been rather more prosperous than other heavy leather craftsmen,<sup>3</sup> with the exception that some of the London craftsmen in the

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1. Supra, p.179

2. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/5 Car. 1, Mich. 14.

3. See Tables I, II, III, in Appendix 7.

late seventeenth century with their varied business interests, were wealthy men. However, among those who were strictly leather craftsmen only, the tanners were probably the wealthiest group,<sup>1</sup> providing they could afford to make large investments in stocks of hides.

The typical leather craftsman, then, was a man who had only a small amount of capital tied up in his business - although tanners needed more than shoemakers or carriers or saddlers - and who employed no more than one or two journeymen at most. Normally he did not rise to the heights of personal wealth. The cost structure of these crafts was similar to many other occupations in the sixteenth century outside the few cases where expensive capital equipment was necessary. Fixed costs were low and the main need was for circulating capital - particularly in tanning. Labour was an important cost of production in the leather using crafts where output depended very much on the amount of labour employed. In tanning there were greater opportunities for economies of scale with the result that average labour costs were lower.

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1. This may seem only just in view of the unpleasant nature of tanning although a sense of vocation might be sufficient compensation. There is an engaging story of a Puritan minister in the seventeenth century who, going about his Suffolk parish, called upon a tanner, "a very godly man... This man as he was verie busie tawing of a hide with all his might, not so much as turning aside his head in any way; my father coming up accidentally, came behind him and merrily gave him a little clap upon the back; hee started, and looking behind him suddenly blushed. Sir, saith he, I am ashamed you should finde me thus. To whom my father said again, Let Christ when he comes finde me so doing. What, says the man, doing thus? Yes saith my father to him, Faithful in the duties of my Calling." (The Tombstone or a Broken and imperfect Monument of that worthy man Mr. John Carter, by his son J. Carter (London, 1653), p. 15).

(iv)

Gilds and Control

We have already seen that there were gilds of heavy leather craftsmen in many parts of the country; in some places each craft possessed its own gild, whereas in other cases there was an amalgamated gild.<sup>1</sup> The main function of these gilds was to control the particular craft or crafts which they represented; and in the final section of this chapter we shall examine some of the aspects of this control, particularly in relation to the heavy leather gilds in London.

One of the major problems facing gilds in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in their task of supervising industrial activity was that industrial centres were developing in regions outside gild control.<sup>2</sup> The London heavy leather gilds - in common with others experienced this problem. As examples, we may look at the difficulties experienced by the Company of Cordwainers and the Company of Curriers with non-freeman leather workers.

The Company of Cordwainers had considerable trouble with non-freemen shoemakers in the later sixteenth century. By an act of parliament in 1524 - which was clarified by a decree in the Star Chamber in 1528 -

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1. Supra, pp. 161, 163-164.

2. G. Unwin, The Gilds and Companies of London (3rd ed., London, 1938), p. 251.

and a further act in 1529, all alien craftsmen in the suburbs were placed under the supervision of the appropriate city company and were compelled to pay quarterage to the company.<sup>1</sup> In August 1562 the Company of Cordwainers obtained letters patent from the Crown which - inter alia - gave the Company certain rights over non-freemen shoemakers, both English and alien born. "All foren showemakers" were required to make the same payments to the company as the freemen. There was also a clause limiting the number of freemen who could attend markets outside London to buy leather; and certain freemen were to buy leather on behalf of the whole company.<sup>2</sup> This provision seems to have been used to prevent shoemakers who were free of some other company from buying leather. Finally by the leather act of 1563 the Company of Cordwainers were given the right of search of all footwear produced in London and three miles distant.<sup>3</sup>

The non-freemen shoemakers did not submit quietly to supervision. In 1567 the Company of Cordwainers presented a bill of complaint to the Queen on the subject of non-freemen craftsmen which was passed to the Court of Aldermen of the City for consideration. In May the aldermen appointed a committee of six - including a Mr. Roger Martin who was to become Lord Mayor in the following November - to examine the matter. The cordwainers' complaints have not survived, but their general nature is clear from the report of the committee which was presented to the Court

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1. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, pp. 249-50.

2. Acts and Ordinance Book of the Company of Cordwainers, 1572-1688 (Gildhall Ms. 8033), Letters patent, 4 Eliz., fos. 1-7.

3. 5 Eliz., cap. 8.

of Aldermen in October. First, the committee found that alien non-freemen should pay quarterage but that it should be collected at their homes and they should not be forced to attend the Cordwainers' Hall for payment. English non-freemen and shoemakers who were members of other companies of London should not be compelled to pay quarterage. Secondly it was recommended that when the company was inspecting the goods of aliens, searchers should be accompanied by an alien as required by the act of 1524. Similarly when searching the goods of English non-freemen, searchers should be accompanied by two of this group. Thirdly, the company should inflict no penalty for inferior work other than those laid down in the leather act of 1563. Fourthly it was decided that the provision in the cordwainers' letters patent restricting the number of freemen who might attend leather markets outside the city of London was contrary to rights of city freemen to trade where they wished. Fifthly it was recommended that non-freemen should not be compelled to attend the meetings of the company except to take the oath of obedience; and it was unlawful of the company to administer any oath on aliens contrary to that contained in the statute of 1524. Finally the company was to stop levying certain other charges on non-freemen for which there was no justification. However as the wardens of the Company of Cordwainers were liable to a penalty of £5 under the leather act of 1563 for every offence under that act not checked, all non-freemen shoemakers were to lodge a bond of £10 with the city chamberlain that they would not infringe the act.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Repertories 16, fos. 294-5(b).

It is obvious that the cordwainers had been putting excessive burdens on the non-freemen. It is also obvious that the company's complaints mis-fired; for the committee's report was on the whole much more sympathetic to non-freemen, possibly because the claims of the Company of Cordwainers infringed the right of other city freemen. The cordwainers protested about the report<sup>1</sup> and found an ally in Martin who became Lord Mayor soon after the report was made. Martin refused to implement the committee's recommendations with the result that the non-freemen shoemakers appealed to the Court of Requests.<sup>2</sup> For the next five or six months Martin countered every attempt by the Court of Requests to obtain information with flimsy excuses for delay<sup>3</sup> and no satisfactory settlement of the problem was made.

A year later in 1569 the dispute took a new turn when the Company of Cordwainers sued a foreign shoemaker, Peter Peterson - who had been involved in the case in the Court of Requests<sup>4</sup> - in the Exchequer for non-payment of quarterage.<sup>5</sup> The exchequer judgement virtually followed the findings of the aldermanic committee - except that no distinction was made between aliens and English non-freemen - and confirmed the company's right of quarterage.<sup>6</sup> Following this decision the company drew up new

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1. Ibid., fo. 316(b).
  2. P.R.O., Court of Requests, Proceedings, Req. 2/54/56.
  3. Repertories 16, fos. 324, 327, 342, 342(b).
  4. Ibid., fo. 342(b).
  5. B.M., Lans. Ms. 22, fo. 104-7.
  6. Cordwainers' Ordinance Book, fos. 9-19. No record of the case has been found in the Exchequer. A copy of the judgement has been entered in the Ordinance Book of the Cordwainer's Company.

ordinances which were ratified in 1571. All shoemakers in London and the suburbs - freemen and non-freemen - were to pay quarterage of 6d. for a master and 3d. for a journeyman. There were also fees for searching goods, and non-freemen were required to attend the meeting of the company every quarter day to hear the ordinances read.<sup>1</sup>

There was no more trouble between the company and non-freemen for about five years when the dispute broke out again. In 1576 the Westminster shoemakers complained to Burghley that the Company of Cordwainers was taking bonds of £5 from non-freemen to ensure that they paid quarterage. The company was also trying to get an act of parliament to prevent non-freemen buying leather in the city markets.<sup>2</sup> The Company of Cordwainers was itself having difficulty in maintaining the statutory quality of footwear because London shoemakers were using defective leather made under a dispensation granted to Sir Edward Dyer in 1595.<sup>3</sup> In reply to the complaints of the Westminster shoemakers, the company recited the legal grounds for their right of quarterage from non-freemen.<sup>4</sup>

In 1577 the dispute was taken to the Exchequer Court where the Company of Cordwainers commenced a suit against the Westminster shoemakers. At the same time the Westminster men started an action in the Star Chamber

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1. Ordinance Book, fos. 21-43.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 21, fos. 60-1.
  3. *Ibid.*, 24, fo. 182; 26, fo. 189. For Dyer's patent see Chapter 7, pp. 255 et seq.
  4. B.M., Lans. Ms. 22, fos. 104-7.

against the cordwainers. By now feeling was running high. The non-free-men banded together to meet their legal costs and the Company of Cordwainers indicted them before the Middlesex justices for "an unlauffull Rowte & assemblie." The company also had a non-freeman arrested for breach of the peace. Further trouble was to come. "And whereas yo<sup>r</sup> said orateres (i.e. the Westminster shoemakers) said Solioiter was s(er)ving a subpena ad reioin-  
end vppon one John Lench to come to the Star Chamber there came runnyng vppon him one Abraham lench his sonne & beinge behinde him yo<sup>r</sup> said Orateres Solioiter did with a dagar stricke him downe to the grounde And had slayne him had not other p(er)sons sauid him..." The Westminster men also alleged that the free cordwainers were "saieng yt if... my L. highe Treasurer were a showemaker they wold shutt upp his window vnless yt he wold paye quarteredge vnto them."<sup>1</sup>

The next moves are not clear. Professor Unwin thought that the matter was probably settled in 1576; but that the dispute was again before the Star Chamber in 1580.<sup>2</sup> It seems more likely, however, that the same case dragged on from 1576 to 1580. In October 1579 the Court of Star Chamber met to consider the matter between the parties "touching Ryotts extorcon & other mysdomeanors wherewith they severally charged eache other." The court referred the case to a committee composed of Sir Roger Manwood, the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer and two judges of the Court

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 24, fos. 183-184.

2. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 253.

of Common Pleas. The committee reported at the end of November. The most important matter they considered was the question of quarterage; but it was found that none of the appropriate statutes "doe... fullye and clearly determyne the saide (matter)." However on considering the report of the Lord Mayor's committee of 1567, the Exchequer judgement of 1569, and the ordinances of the Company of Cordwainers approved in 1571, the committee concluded that these should be observed. In short the company's right to levy quarterage on non-freemen was confirmed. It was further ordered that all charges between the parties should be "releasd & dyschardgyd And so the p(ar)tyes mutually quyetted."<sup>1</sup> A similar judgement favourable to the Company of Cordwainers appears to have been reached in the Exchequer in 1580.<sup>2</sup> This judgement appears to have settled the matter although the granting of a charter to Westminster in 1585<sup>3</sup> probably prevented further tension between the shoemakers in the two cities. Of the 131 non-freemen on whom quarterage was levied in 1599, only two were living in Westminster.<sup>4</sup>

The shoemakers were not the only group of city leather craftsmen to be troubled by non-freemen working in the suburbs. The carriers had similar troubles. Although of long standing the Company of Curriers had not received a charter of incorporation in the sixteenth century. About

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1. P.R.O., Sta. Cha. 5/C 59/38.
  2. Among the records of the Co. of Cordwainers there is a badly mutilated and almost illegible document dated 18th Dec. 1580, which appears to be a copy of a judgement in the Exchequer confirming the Company's right to charge quarterage (Gildhall Ms. 7368).
  3. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 253.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

1566 an act was drafted which would have brought all the "foreign" carriers in the suburbs together with the members of the existing organization into a new Company of Carriers<sup>1</sup> but the proposal got no further. Some years later, in 1587, the city carriers complained of competition from foreign carriers in the suburbs who worked for suburban shoemakers and for some of the city shoemakers as well. The city carriers also complained without justification that the non-freemen carriers were not bound by the act of 1563 preventing carriers from buying tanned leather.<sup>2</sup> In fact this act was supposed to apply to all carriers and the carriers' gild had a right of search over workmen extending three miles into the London suburbs.<sup>3</sup> In the early seventeenth century the non-freemen carriers alleged that the Company of Carriers was trying to exclude them from currying completely. They claimed that the company "craftily inserted into a long act of 5 rolls of parchment" a clause giving them a monopoly of all currying work around London. However the Attorney-General "found a way" to restore work to the non-freemen carriers.<sup>4</sup> What seems to have happened was that the leather act of 1604 gave the Company of Carriers the right to all currying work in the city and for three miles into the suburbs - a right the company had possessed under the earlier legislation of 1563. The Company then laid informations against shoemakers who had supplied leather to non-freemen carriers, whereupon the latter protested to the Privy Council and

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1. P:R.O., S.P. 12/41, no. 23.

2. Acts of the Privy Council, 1587, pp. 200, 265.

3. See Chapter 8, p.300.

4. Hist. Mss. Comm. Hatfield Mss. XVIII, p. 146.

the Attorney General stopped the informations by an order in the Exchequer dated 20th April, 1607. Seven years later the Company of Curriers complained that the order was damaging their livelihoods. An enquiry was made by Sir Francis Bacon who found in favour of the Company. The Privy Council then agreed that the original clause in the statute of 1604 should stand and that the city curriers should have a monopoly of currying work.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the Company of Curriers had obtained a royal charter of incorporation in 1606 giving it control over freemen and foreign curriers in the city and for three miles into the suburbs.<sup>2</sup>

Disputes between freemen and non-freemen workers were not of course confined to London. In the 1630s, for example, groups of leather workers in several Lancashire and Cheshire towns suffered competition from other leather craftsmen who worked without gild restriction in the country. The country leather workers, for their part, claimed that they were hindered by the leather gilds who attempted to stop them from following their occupations.<sup>3</sup> Similar evidence comes from places as far apart as Reading and Oswestry. In the former town the freemen tanners complained in 1624 of "straungers (that) doe use to sell leather in the markt on markt dayes to the great hurt of the freemen of the towne";<sup>4</sup> in Oswestry in 1689

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1. Acts of the Privy Council, 1614, I, pp. 477, 562-4.

2. Charter and Byelaws of the Company of Curriers (Gild Hall Mss. 6117), fos. 59-100.

3. P.R.O., Privy Council Registers, P.C. 2/41, pp. 373, 377; 2/43, p. 26, 339 - 40; 2/44, p. 292; 2/45, pp. 288-9.

4. Records of the Borough of Reading, vol. II. p. 168.

the Company of Tanners decided to take legal action against "Wm. Rogers, a foreigner to the said Company, who buys hides and skins within the said borough, infringing the company's rights, contrary to the letters patent of Charles II."<sup>1</sup>

Another difficulty that restricted the ability of guilds in London to control the occupations they represented in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was that there was sometimes a differentiation of classes within the guilds. The ruling group was often engaged in trade rather than in manufacture and was out of sympathy with the industrial craftsmen who resented the control they exercised over them.<sup>2</sup> In the light leather industry this situation led to a split in the Company of Leather-sellers in 1638;<sup>3</sup> in the case of the Companies of Curriers and Cordwainers the distinction never became pronounced.

We have seen that many London curriers were traders in tanned leather. Such men tended to govern the company. In 1563 "the holders and welthe men of the saide Company licensid to by lether to sell again" controlled "the pore of the Company" and were extracting excessive sums of money from them as part of the Company's contribution towards equipping an army. The trading curriers were ordered by the Court of Aldermen to

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1. "Oswestry Corporation Records," no. XXXVII, Trans. Shrops. Arch. & Natural History Soc., Series I, vol. 4 (1800-1), p. 52.
  2. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 251.
  3. See Chapter 6, p. 233

"shewe and doo vnto them (the poor members) all the frendship yt they by any wayes or meanes may ... do."<sup>1</sup> Some twenty years later the master and wardens of the company were still imposing heavy financial burdens on the yeomanry by compelling them to attend weddings and burials of members and similar assemblies. The Court of Aldermen ordered that the practice should stop.<sup>2</sup> Both these incidents show that the working curriers were not powerless to resist the wealthier trading members of the company. This can be seen even more clearly from a third incident that took place in 1597. The court of the company tried to change the manner of electing the officers of the yeomanry in order to get greater control over the election, but the body of the company was successful in opposing this move.<sup>3</sup> The company's charter of 1606 with its detailed regulation of the actual process of currying shows that the company was still at that date very much a body of manufacturing craftsmen despite the presence of the trading group.<sup>4</sup> In October 1646 the company made an order that persons "who shall not be of the manuell trade of a Currier and vse the same," could not be elected to any of the official posts of the company.<sup>5</sup> Obviously the commercial element had not become dominant. Late in the century however the latter group had considerable influence on the policy of the company.

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1. Repertories 15, fo. 108(b).

2. Ibid., 20, fos. 190(b)-191.

3. Charter and Byelaws of the Curriers' Co., fo. 19(b), 21.

4. Ibid., fos. 59-100.

5. Curriers' Minutes Book, 1628-1658, p. 226.

In 1688 the company decided to place its whole power in defence of one of its number who had been accused of buying and selling tanned leather.<sup>1</sup> Even so the manufacturing curriers were not neglected. As late as 1699, sixty-nine journeymen curriers petitioned the master and wardens asking that the company might regain the curriers' former right to all the currying work in London; the request was agreed to and it was decided to raise a levy to pay for a bill in Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

There was a similar division of interests within the Company of Cordwainers, although - as with the Company of Curriers - the trading element did not dominate the company. About 1560 a dispute occurred between the "elders and assistants" and the rest of the company regarding the election of officers for the former were attempting to tighten their grip on the control of the company.<sup>3</sup> To judge from the activity of the company in influencing legislation<sup>4</sup> we may safely assume that the rulers of the company were primarily interested in trade. In 1641 there was a further development in the election of officers. Instead of the yeomanry wardens being elected by members of the company as they had been in the past, the court of the company decided to appoint these officers in future from members of the yeomanry. At the end of their term of office the wardens were made members of the livery.<sup>5</sup> In the following year the journeymen

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1. Minutes Book of the Company of Curriers, 1689-1730 (Gildhall Ms. 6113), p. 21.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 146, 147.
  3. Repertories 14, fos. 151(b), 325(b)-326.
  4. See Chapter 8, pp. 302-306
  5. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers, 1622-1653 (Gild Hall 7353/1), 31st August, 1641.

shoemakers combined together "touching thir wages & times of working." The company opposed the journeymen's claims. Yet in spite of the undoubted distinction between the ruling group in the company and the working craftsmen, a major dispute never arose. Throughout the seventeenth century the company remained representative of the shoemakers although admittedly of the trading masters rather than the journeymen.<sup>1</sup> This state continued into the eighteenth century; and in 1756 of the 81 members of the company, 61 were actually shoemakers.<sup>2</sup>

A rather different line of cleavage existed in the Cordwainers' Company between the shoemakers and the cobblers. The latter, repaired old shoes and constituted a threat to shoemakers who therefore attempted to control their numbers and activities. In the early fifteenth century the Company of Cordwainers and the cobblers drew up a detailed schedule defining the limits of the two occupations. In 1476 the number of cobblers in London was limited to 44 who were under the control of the Cordwainers' Company. A new agreement was made in 1504.<sup>3</sup> The Company's letters patent of 1562 said nothing about cobblers but the matter was dealt with by the Exchequer judgement of 1569 which ruled that no-one should set up as a cobbler in London and the suburbs without permission of the master and wardens of the company.<sup>4</sup> In 1616 the company became concerned at the

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1. See Cordwainers' Court Books, 1622-53, 1665-88, 1689-1717, (Gild Hall Mss. 7353/1, 7353/2, 7353/3), passim.
  2. J.R. Kellet, "The Breakdown of Gild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trades in London," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. X (1958), p. 390, note 3.
  3. C.H.W. Mander, A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Cordwainers of the City of London (London, 1931), pp. 55, 59, 60.
  4. Cordwainers Ordinance Book, fo. 16.

increase in the number of cobblers working in London. It was reckoned that there were 351 freemen cobblers in London and also 250 freemen shoemakers who carried out "ould workinge." There were 101 members of other companies who were cobblers, and 109 foreigners. The Court of Aldermen which considered the matter ruled that no person should cobbler unless he had served a seven year apprenticeship with a shoemaker or cobbler and that no more should be admitted to the "number of the Jacobs Dozen" which was the cobblers' organization within the Cordwainers' Company.<sup>1</sup> During the subsequent years the numbers of cobblers in the suburbs apparently increased while the numbers under the control of the company of Cordwainers declined. In 1650 those cobblers belonging to the company complained to the city authorities of the unskilled workers who were setting up as cobblers. An enquiry revealed that the number of cobblers allowed in the Jacobs Dozen was 48 but that only 13 persons were in fact members. Permission was given by the Court of Aldermen for the company to prosecute non-freemen cobblers.<sup>2</sup>

In other towns besides London shoemakers' guilds attempted to regulate the activities of cobblers.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence from towns such as Lincoln, Oxford, Reading and Leicester of regulations intended to control cobblers.<sup>4</sup> The normal practice seems to have been that shoemakers'

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1. Repertories 32, fos. 335(b)-336(b).

2. Repertories, fos. 121(b), 135(b), 205-206.

3. Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 64.

4. Lincoln, Hist. Mss. Comm., Report 14, Appendix 8, p. 53; J. Wilson, "The Guild of the Corvesers of Oxford," Archaeological Journal, vol. VI, (1849), p. 271; Records of the Borough of Reading, vol. II, p. 173; Kramer, Craft Guilds, p. 201.

organizations allowed the cobblers to become members. In this way their numbers could be controlled and their premises could be inspected to see that they did not start manufacturing new shoes. But the line of demarcation between the two crafts was such that it was difficult to keep them separate.

It is well known that during the seventeenth century the power of the guilds in regulating industrial activity waned as industry developed outside the areas of their control and as the guilds became less representative of the occupations they controlled. Yet this was perhaps less true of the London Companies of Cordwainers and Curriers than of some others.<sup>1</sup> Although there were developing groups of workmen outside the jurisdiction of these companies and although both companies tended to become controlled by persons more interested in trade than manufacture, neither of these tendencies completely divorced these companies from the heavy leather industry. This will be seen most clearly as we turn to an examination of government policy towards the industry. In the determination of industrial and commercial regulations for the leather industry the Company of Cordwainers and the Company of Curriers had an influence out of all proportion to the numbers of leather craftsmen they represented.

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1. The tendency was noticeable however even in the case of these two companies viz. the curriers' petition of 1699 that they should once again have the right of all currying work in London (supra, p.204 ), and the decline in the number of cobblers under the control of the Company of Cordwainers (supra, p.206 ).

CHAPTER 6 : THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEATHER INDUSTRY

II. THE LIGHT LEATHER CRAFTS

(i)

The integration of the light leather crafts

The organization of the light leather industry was in some ways similar to the organization of the heavy leather crafts. In both groups of crafts, for example, the unit of production was usually small. However there was a major difference between the two branches of the leather industry. The various light leather crafts of leatherdressing and the manufacture of products of light leather were often combined in one man - that is integration was common in this branch of the leather industry.

The evidence of integration of the light leather crafts is of three kinds. In the first place inventories of leather craftsmen that will be examined below demonstrate clearly that craftsmen described as glovers made leather and many kinds of leather goods besides gloves. Frequently a workman had in his possession skins, dressed leather and finished leather goods.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly amalgamated guilds of light leather workers often provide evidence that the occupations were integrated. It will be remembered from

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1. *Infra*, pp. 216 et seq.

the previous chapter that amalgamation did not necessarily reflect integration. On the other hand amalgamation might come about because the occupations involved were already integrated.<sup>1</sup> This was the case with the light leather crafts. From the regulations made by light leather guilds it is obvious that craftsmen often followed more than one occupation. At Northampton, for example, in the late sixteenth century the joint guild of tanners and whittawers<sup>2</sup> ordered that glovers should not foul the town's water supply with the skins they were dressing.<sup>3</sup> At Kendal in Westmorland the glovers' guild made regulations governing the purchase of sheepskins by glovers.<sup>4</sup> Both examples indicate that the glovers were making leather as well as gloves. Similar regulations were made by the glovers' guild of Carlisle in the mid-seventeenth century where the glovers were instructed not to re-sell skins until they had been made into leather or gloves.<sup>5</sup> The glovers' company of Shrewsbury also regulated the sale of raw skins in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> However the clearest evidence provided by the guilds of integration probably comes from the early history of the London Company of Leathersellers which was an amalgamation of crafts representing several integrated occupations; the Company of

1. See Chapter 5, pp. 164-165
2. This joint guild of heavy and light leather workers seems to have been a convenient arrangement in a fairly small town
3. J.C. Cox, Records of the Borough of Northampton, vol. II (1898), p. 289.
4. "A Boke of Recorde of the Burgh of Kirkby Kendal," Cumb. & Westmorland Antiq. & Arch. Soc., extra series 7, p. 145.
5. "Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle," idem, vol. 4, p. 213.
6. W.A. Leighton, "The Glovers of Shrewsbury," Shrop. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc., series 1, vol. 7, pp. 432, 434.

Leathersellers will be discussed below.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, there were contemporary descriptions of the light leather industry which show that integration was common. In 1593 there was drawn up for the government an account of the organization of the manufacture of dressed leather and leather goods. "All workers of hydes or skynnes into any of the said sortes of lether for the most part live by their hand labors." They were "sett... on worke in the Countrye" by the "glovers being men who retayle the same to artificers labourers & husbandry servantes, & sell in grosse to the lethersellers." The description continued:

"It (leather) passethe in no handes then the poor workmen... : for being wrought in oyle or in Alom, and oker, or whytetawed onely in Allome without oker, it may not be vttered in grosse or by retayle to serve the gentlman, yoman, artificer, or labourers for apparell, or the Sadlers, Girdlers, Cofermakers, Budgetmakers, stationers, poyntmakers, pursmakers or glouers, nor may be converted into wares by the glovers who in the countrie is commonly the worker of all lether y<sup>t</sup> is whyt tawed or wrought wth oker (sic oil?) vntill the seale be affixed."<sup>2</sup>

Later, in 1621, the light leather industry was described in a bill presented in Parliament. It was explained how glovers and leatherdressers bought skins of various kinds "soe manie... as they and there servantes cann dresse into Leather and make uppe into made wares of gloves and other Manufactures and vent in their severall shoppes or places of Residence..."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See pp. 224 et seq.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 138. Italics mine. The seal mentioned in the last sentence refers to the proposed search of dressed leather under a patent granted to Edward Darcy in 1593 (see Chapter 7, pp. 265-270.)
  3. W. Notestein, F.H. Relf, H. Simpson, Commons Debates, 1621 (Yale U.P. 1935), vol. 7, p. 145.

A similar situation was implied in a Kent wage assessment of 1563 in which two categories of journeymen glovers were distinguished.<sup>1</sup> They were the "waterman" and the "shopman." The former was paid more than the latter and was evidently the workman who turned the skins into leather.<sup>2</sup> The shopman was probably the craftsman who actually made leather goods in the glover's shop for sale to the customers.

We are safe in concluding on the basis of the evidence of inventories, guilds and contemporary description that integration of the light leather crafts was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is some other evidence, however, relating mainly to London to show that there was sometimes a separation of leatherdressing from the craftsmen making leather goods. For example in 1615 the glovers of London stated that "the Glouers and Leatherdressers" made leather that was sold in fairs and markets "for garments, saddles, gloves and other necessaryes."<sup>3</sup> This statement - perhaps - does not conflict seriously with the evidence examined earlier that leather manufacture and the manufacture of leather goods were integrated; for we should expect that there was some demand for light leather in its uncut state from consumers and from craftsmen such as saddlers who worked mainly with tanned leather but used a little dressed leather as well.<sup>4</sup> Also it is noticeable that both "Glouers and

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1. B.H. Putman, "A Kent Wage Assessment of 1563," English Historical Review, vol. XLI (1926), p. 271.

2. At Chester the leatherdressers were known as wet glovers. See below, p. 212

3. B.M., Additional Ms. 38170, fos. 87(b)-88.

4. See Chapter 5, p. 152

leatherdressers" were described as making leather which indicates that the former at least also made - or had made - gloves as well. However, some years later, in 1638, the glovers made a more definite statement that "Gloves (are) now not usually made by the dressers," but that instead there was a differentiation of functions between glovers and leatherdressers similar to that which existed between shoemakers and tanners.<sup>1</sup>

This last piece of evidence is supported by the fact that in the seventeenth century dressed leather manufactured in the west of England was transported to London where it was made into leather goods by the suburban glovers.<sup>2</sup> We should therefore expect to find some separation of the light leather crafts in the west of England for there would be leatherdressers manufacturing leather for the London market. In fact such a separation did exist. In Chester the Ancient Company of Glovers was composed of the wet and the dry glovers. The former bought skins - many of them in Ireland - and manufactured them into leather.<sup>3</sup> Some of this leather was sent to London and some was bought by the dry glovers who made leather goods - presumably mostly for local consumption.<sup>4</sup>

The statement of the London glovers referred to above inferred that the separation of leatherdressing and glovemaking was a fairly recent

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/386, no. 90.

2. See Chapter 3, p. 103

3. The evidence does not support Unwin's interpretation (Industrial Organization, p. 72) that the wet glovers were traders in skins which were worked up by the dry glovers. The wet glovers were alternatively described as leatherdressers. They also complained that they could not afford to pay a proposed levy on dressed leather that would hardly have worried them had they been only dealers in skins.

4. B.M., Harleian Ms. 1996, fos. 258-9.

development. Possibly it was of longer standing than the glovers believed. But the fact that they thought that a change in the organization of the crafts had occurred is itself evidence that the integration of the leather crafts was regarded as the normal situation and that separation was a departure from the normal. The fact that leatherdressing and glovemaking were sometimes separate occupations in some areas does not conflict with the view that the light leather crafts were often combined in one man.

We now have to explain the organization of the light leather crafts. In some respects it is easier to explain the separation of leatherdressing from glovemaking than it is to find reasons for the integration of the light leather crafts. As in tanning and shoemaking there was a natural break in the manufacturing processes between the production of dressed leather and the manufacture of gloves and similar articles. There was certainly no technical reason why light leather should quickly be made into leather goods. The division between leatherdressing and glovemaking can then be explained in geographical terms in much the same way as the division between tanning and shoemaking. We saw when discussing trade and location that the leatherdressers of the western districts of England were favoured with ample supplies of skins and possibly also with water particularly suitable for leatherdressing, and that these districts found an outlet for their leather in London. The west of England possessed certain advantages for leatherdressing by virtue

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of its supplies of raw materials and London was the largest single market for leather goods in the country. Since there were no technical or economic reasons for transporting leather goods rather than leather, leatherdressing and glovemaking sometimes became separate occupations.

But as we have seen, integration was probably more common than separation. The explanation for this seems to be that there were no particular reasons why the crafts should not be integrated. In the first place it is easy to understand why craftsmen using light leather made several types of light leather goods. The basic operation of cutting and stitching gloves or purses or other articles were the same; and there were not the same problems of fitting and shaping that occurred in shoemaking. Secondly, although there was a break in the manufacturing processes between the manufacture of leather and light leather goods, this break did not constitute an impassible barrier. Neither leatherdressing nor glovemaking required a high degree of skill as compared with the heavy leather crafts<sup>1</sup> and there seems to have been no great difficulty in one man learning both crafts. More important, the advantages of separating the manufacture of light leather from the manufacture of leather goods were small. In the case of the heavy leather crafts, it was suggested that it was cheaper to transport leather than footwear since the former was less bulky than boots and

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1. See Chapter 2, pp.57-59 . In 1638 it was claimed that women and boys were being employed in glovemaking in the London area (P.R.O., S.P. 16/386, no. 90). In 1697 glovers at Worcester described their employees as "decrepit (and) unfit for any other Employment" (Commons' Journals, vol. xxi, p. 16).

shoes. Hence the heavy branch of the industry split between tanning and the manufacture of tanned leather products. However in the light leather crafts any difference in transport costs between leather and leather goods was slight. Gloves, purses, laces and similar items were scarcely less bulky than an equivalent weight of leather, for they could be packed flat like uncut leather. Possibly it was slightly cheaper to transport leather than an equivalent weight of leather goods, but the saving was not always sufficient to compensate for the disadvantages of manufacturers of leather goods being separated from their supplies of leather. When separation occurred the makers of leather goods had to rely for their supplies on middlemen who added to the cost of leather, who might not make regular deliveries and who might supply bad leather mixed with good. It was precisely complaints of this kind that the London glovers made against leathersellers on whom they depended for supplies of leather.<sup>1</sup>

The relative economic advantages of separation and integration therefore determined whether or not the light leather crafts were combined in one man. It may well be that separation was associated with production for a distant market. For example when it was a choice of transporting leather or leather goods long distances from the west of England to London, the probable saving in transport costs may have been sufficient to favour the former rather than the latter, although not in all cases. When leather-dressers and glovers were producing mainly for local markets, however, the economies of separation were probably outweighed by the economies of

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1. See Chapter 4, p. 140

integration. For these reasons the general pattern of organization of the light leather crafts was one of integration of the crafts, although in certain circumstances separation could occur.

(ii)

The manufacturing unit

By making use of probate inventories of light leather craftsmen it is possible to examine the cost structure of these occupations in the same way as we have done for the heavy leather crafts. The remarks made in Appendix 7 about the shortcomings of probate inventories for this kind of study apply equally to the inventories of light leather craftsmen as well as those of tanners, shoemakers and curriers.

In Table IV of Appendix 7 there will be found a summary of inventories of a number of light leather workers of various kinds.<sup>1</sup> Since the occupations were often combined in one man, the craftsmen have not been separated into glovers, leatherdressers or whittawers. However a number of dealers in leather and leather goods - either leathersellers or haberdashers - have been placed in a separate category for they obviously stand apart from the leather craftsmen proper. The dealers' inventories all date from the later seventeenth century and belonged to London freemen. Like similar inventories of a number of saddlers and other heavy leather workers,<sup>2</sup> they were probably not typical of traders in other places.

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1. The practice adopted in the previous chapter of not giving detailed references to inventories mentioned in the text will be followed here. Full references will be found in Appendix 7.

2. See Chapter 5, pp. 178-179.

In this chapter we are concerned with the manufacturer rather than the trader but it is instructive to examine briefly the businesses of some of these leather dealers in London on whom the light leather workers in the suburbs depended for the sale of their goods. Table IX of Appendix 7 indicates the varied nature of their activities. In this class was Thomas Smith a member of the Haberdashers' Company who died in 1670 leaving an estate valued at £344, excluding the £152 which was owing to him. In his shop he had £115 worth of leather and leather goods. Most of his leather consisted of alum dressed sheep and lamb skins but he also had a considerable quantity of coloured skins and leather goods such as "4 pair of oil lamb drawers at 2/6 a pair." There were no working tools listed on the inventory and Smith was apparently a retailer only and not a manufacturer. Henry Pike, a leatherseller, who died in 1695 was a shop keeper on an even larger scale and carried a stock of £330 worth of leather and leather goods, including alum and oil dressed calf, deer, sheep and hog skins, bags, satchels and spatterdashes. His total estate was worth £454 and after his death debts worth £828 were collected. Whether these were trade debts or the results of some other business was not indicated. Another leatherseller, Thomas Pope, conducted a rather different kind of business in 1672. The bulk of his stock-in-trade valued at £220 consisted of trunks, portmanteaus and buckets - presumably made of leather.

Turning to the inventories of the manufacturing craftsmen, Tables IV and VIII suggest that the manufacturing unit was generally small in the light leather industry. On the whole, light leather craftsmen seem to have required less capital than tanners but rather more than most

of the craftsmen using tanned leather. However the small number of inventories available makes it impossible to be definite on this matter.

Some of the craftsmen represented in Tables IV and VIII were probably employees working on material put out to them by master craftsmen. There was for example Thomas Pigbone, a rather pathetic figure, who died at Wye in Kent in 1610 leaving 54s. in cash, a Bible worth 4s., clothes valued at 13s. 4d. and "a payer of sheares and other smaule toules to woroke with all in the shope" worth one shilling. He owned no leather. Edward Wasshe a glover of Boston who died in 1582, was apparently in the same class. According to his inventory his only possessions were some clothes and the contents of his purse worth 5 shillings; but he had £11 owing to him. A third example was probably William Thompson a Grantham glover whose goods and chattells were worth just over £11 in 1599 and whose stock-in-trade consisted of "an allaming tubbe & a great fatte," a wheelbarrow and other items worth £1. Thompson owned no leather or hides at the time of his death.

These men were employed by master glovers and leatherdressers.

"The worker or dresser of leather is set on work either by the Country Glover who for the most part doth employ his own prentices, or such journeymen as having served in that trade are not hable to occupie any stock of their own... Also the Leatherdresser, Leatherseller, and fellowmonger vse to set men to work for tawing of lether... some being their own meniall servauntes and some hyred by dayworke as iourneymen."<sup>1</sup>

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 162.

The majority of the leather craftsmen shown on Table IV were probably "Country Glovers:" that is master craftsmen who engaged in the manufacture of light leather and leather goods. Most of them were small-scale producers and - as Table VII shows - they made both leather and leather goods. It can be seen that the value of the stock-in-trade of most of these craftsmen was small although in some instances the total value was inflated by the value of stocks of wool. Leonard Gyfforthe of Grantham (died 1599), for example, owned wool worth £14, while Robert Chapman of Kent (1621) had a quantity of wool valued at almost £25. The wool was plucked from sheepskins. "The Glouers & Leatherdressers doe first buy rawe hides and Skinnes either in haire or in wooll as many glovers doe throughout the Realme, then they take of the wooll & the haire the wooll they sorte and sell to Spinsters and Clothiers & the hair they sell to saddlers, plaisterers & such like."<sup>1</sup> The fact that wool and skins were in joint-supply also provided the opportunity for fellmongers - who bought skins for the wool - to engage in the manufacture of light leather and light leather goods. For example Edward Hurst of Hinckley in Leicestershire dressed skins valued at £36 in 1638 and had a stock of finished leather and gloves worth £6. His stock of wool, however, was much larger and was valued at £100. A debt book recorded debts of £1,007 which may have been associated with wool dealing.

Leatherdressing and glovemaking was sometimes combined with farming. However, it is noticable from Table IV that a smaller proportion

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1. B.M., Additional Ms. 38170, fos. 87(b)-88.

of these craftsmen engaged in farming as well as the manufacture of leather than did the tanners. Possibly the number of inventories of light leather workers available was unrepresentative; but it is also possible that leatherdressing combined less easily than tanning with farming. One reason why tanners were also able to be farmers was that the process of tanning was very slow and they had time to fit in other activities.<sup>1</sup> There was less time spent waiting about in leatherdressing and glovemaking and so there was less time to spare for other occupations.

The cost structure of the light leather crafts was basically similar to the crafts concerned with tanned leather. Fixed costs were small and low in relation to the value of work in progress. This may be seen readily by reference to Table VIII. On one or two inventories a distinction was made between equipment used in leatherdressing and that used for the manufacture of gloves. For example the shop tools of Thomas Pouter of Writtle in Essex - cutting boards and knives - were valued at 10s., and the "yeard" equipment - troughs and tubs - were worth 12s.

There is no information about the rents that light leather workers paid but probably - as in the case of heavy leather workers<sup>2</sup> - working premises could be rented together with a dwelling house. It is worth noting that although rents were only a small proportion of total costs, the lower rents in the London suburbs as compared to the city centre

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1. See Chapter 5, p.180

2. See Chapter 5, p.183

was one factor why the light leather workers settled on the outskirts.<sup>1</sup>

The value of stock held by light leather workers varied a good deal. It was low in glovemaking because the turnover on capital was quick. In 1593 it was said that glovers in London could cut 20 dozen dressed skins a week;<sup>2</sup> at Chester glovers bought leather frequently in small quantities and "never had more than 20s. together at one time."<sup>3</sup>

Craftsmen who made leather as well as leather goods carried larger stocks than those who made gloves alone. It can be seen from Table VIII that an investment of £10 or £20 was apparently not unusual in leather-dressing. This was because several weeks elapsed before a skin was dressed into leather and became ready for sale or manufacture into gloves or similar articles. The London leathersellers claimed in 1593 that a leatherdresser who spent £3 on skins had to wait six months before his investment would "yield him £3 more to maintain his family..."<sup>4</sup> Possibly the time stated was an exaggeration;<sup>5</sup> but essentially leatherdressers faced a similar problem to the tanners: that of having a sufficient number of skins balanced throughout the leatherdressing process in order to secure a supply of leather and leather goods regularly becoming available for sale. Some leatherdressers possessed large quantities of skins

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1. See Chapter 3, pp. 68-69
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 143.
  3. B.M., Harleian Ms. 1996, fos. 248-9.
  4. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 144.
  5. Leatherdressing usually took a few weeks; see Chapter 2, p 58

and leather. For example Avery Brougham of Horncastle (1599) had a stock of 1,400 calf leathers and 5,000 sheep leathers in various stages of manufacture; Thomas Hareby in 1638 dressed 200 calfskins and 1,000 sheepskins and had another 250 calfskins and 20 sheepskins already dressed. However leatherdressers usually had less invested in skins than tanners did in hides for two reasons. First, tanning was a much longer process than leatherdressing. Secondly skins were generally much cheaper than cattle hides.

Unlike tanners who sometimes spent large sums on bark, leatherdressers and glovers apparently spent very little on alum and oil. These items were not usually listed separately on inventories, and when they were their value was very low.<sup>1</sup>

Probate inventories provide no information about the labour requirements of light leather craftsmen. Contemporary statements that master glovers employed "iiii, v, vi, viii, or x in work in making gloves, purses, bagges, pointes"<sup>2</sup> may be treated with the scepticism due to most late sixteenth century statistical calculations. There cannot have been many employers on that scale among the light leather craftsmen. According to the study made by A.J. and R.H. Tawney,<sup>3</sup> Gloucestershire glovers conducted mainly one man businesses in the early seventeenth century. Of 133 glovers, six had one employee, and two had two each; the others had none. As we have seen, glovers sometimes had regular employees and sometimes employed

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1. See Table VIII.

2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 162.

3. A.J. & R.H. Tawney, "An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. V (1934-5), p. 54.

labour on a day to day basis.<sup>1</sup> In other words there was a putting-out system whereby the glovers employed outworkers "others then their own servants and apprentizes."<sup>2</sup> The light leather crafts were well suited to this form of production for the manufacturing processes were simple and equipment cheap. This system had the advantage of keeping down labour costs by making use of part-time workers paid by the piece.

When discussing the heavy leather crafts we suggested that labour costs had the effect of limiting the size of the manufacturing unit in shoemaking; but that in tanning it was sometimes possible to employ labour more efficiently by engaging in large-scale production.<sup>3</sup> Leatherdressing was in an intermediate position. Output was less dependent on the amount of labour at work than shoemaking (or of course glovemaking, if that occupation were carried on independently of leatherdressing); but since the technical processes were quicker in leatherdressing than in tanning, labour was less likely to be left idle waiting for chemical processes to be completed. Hence there was less opportunity for lowering average labour costs by increasing the quantity of skins being dressed.

Light leather craftsmen were not likely to grow very rich if they confined their activities to making leather and leather goods; although Table IV suggests that some of them enjoyed modest incomes. In

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1. *Supra*, p.218.

2. Notestein, Relph, Simpson, Commons' Debates, 1621, vol. 7, p. 146.

3. See Chapter 5, pp. 190-191.

the early seventeenth century the wet glovers of Chester lamented that they could not earn more than 4s. a week;<sup>1</sup> but as a class the glovers were not the poorest of the craftsmen of Chester.<sup>2</sup> However the men who amassed considerable personal wealth were not the manufacturing craftsmen but the leathersellers and dealers in leather goods<sup>3</sup> on whom so many craftsmen - in London at least - depended for their raw materials and for the disposal of their products.

Light leather craftsmen, therefore, were in some ways not very different to workmen in the heavy leather branch of the industry. Both groups of craftsmen needed little investment in fixed equipment. In both groups of occupations, too, variable costs accounted for almost all of total costs. The costs of raw materials were particularly important in tanning and to a lesser extent in leatherdressing; in the occupations using tanned leather and glovemaking labour costs were more important in determining the size of the manufacturing unit. The differences in organization between the two branches of the leather industry lay not in the size of the manufacturing unit, but in the relationship between one occupation and another.

(iii)

Gilds, integration and control

When discussing the London heavy leather gilds in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we saw that both the Company of Cordwainers and

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1. B.M., Harleian Ms. 1996, fos. 248-9.  
 2. See Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 72.  
 3. See Table IV.

the Company of Curriers continued to exercise some control over their respective occupations even though they experienced difficulties with workmen in the suburban areas and despite the fact that the ruling bodies of the companies were possibly more interested in the trade in leather than the manufacture of leather goods.<sup>1</sup> The situation was different among the light leather crafts where by the late sixteenth century the controlling gild had become an organization of merchants unrepresentative of craftsmen of whom the gild had once been composed.

There was only one gild in London concerned with light leather during most of the sixteenth and the first four decades of the seventeenth centuries. This was the Company of Leathersellers. The company had a continuous history from at least the fourteenth century but by the early sixteenth century it consisted of an amalgamation of a number of gilds of light leather craftsmen that, during the fifteenth century, had all been concerned with the same kind of commodities. In the early part of the fifteenth century the leathersellers (who were originally manufacturers of points) and the glovers' gilds had clashed over their respective rights of search; since members of both gilds used the same kind of leather and made the same kind of goods. In 1451 the two groups made an agreement to conduct a joint search of their members. Nevertheless in 1479 the records of the Company of Leathersellers contained the statement that

"...in this (year) we had much trouble and labor with the Purserus and also with the Gloverus; ... And also the Craft of Taweyeerus came to us, in the same year, to be of the craft of Lethersellerus, and brought in their Book."

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 193 - 205, *passim*.

It was explained that there were insufficient members in the Whittawers organization to support a separate gild. At the same time the leather-sellers and glovers attempted to come to a new agreement on the problems of search in order "to avoid strifes and dissentions." But by 1498 both the pursers and glovers joined with the leathersellers, because "both the said Fellowships of late be sore decayed." Finally another group - the pouchmakers - amalgamated with the Company of Leathersellers in 1517.<sup>1</sup>

By the early sixteenth century, therefore, the company was an amalgamation of "... Micanicks Glouers, Pursers, and Longe Cutters (that is Pointmakers) And for unities sake called Leather Sellers."<sup>2</sup> The amalgamation had come about because the boundaries between the several occupations were so indistinct that one craftsman might follow a number of occupations and an individual craftsman in the fifteenth century might well belong to one of a number of gilds. In fact most of them seem to have joined the Company of Leathersellers - probably because it was the strongest - with the result that the others were short of members and were eventually absorbed by the leathersellers.

The development of the Company of Leathersellers was a classic example of amalgamation of the crafts being accompanied by the rise of the trading class into a position of dominance over those who remained craftsmen.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Black, Leathersellers' Company, pp. 30, 37-9, 42-3, 47.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38.

3. Unwin, Industrial Organisation, p. 19.

What had happened was that the manufacturing craftsmen for the most part worked in the suburbs beyond the liberties of the city of London, away from the skin and leather markets, and remote from their customers. This meant that the leather workers were dependent on the leathersellers for supplies of raw materials and for the sale of their products; and also that the craftsmen lost control of the company. As the leather workers complained in 1619 the leathersellers have "in p(ro)ces of time wormed them out of thiere freedome allowing none of the breede & posteritie of those workmen to be free ... there not being this daye a Leatherdresso<sup>r</sup> free of the Leathersello<sup>rs</sup> company."<sup>1</sup>

The change that had come about within the Company of Leathersellers after the amalgamations of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were described by the light leather workers of the suburbs in the early seventeenth century:

"... For those that now are of the Leathersello<sup>rs</sup> body by way of trade they are of one of these three sortes (viz) Eyther meere sello<sup>rs</sup> of Leather wch is dressed & made for them by the Leatherdresso<sup>rs</sup>, & those are not aboue 20. Masters whereof about 8 remarkeable, or else men of a poor condicon & and thiere workemen whome they hire & use to die their leather, to withe it, pare it ... Or else Trunkes & Bougett makers such as for their materials vse only one kind of tanned sheepes leather called Basills from whom may be had many testimonies of the Leathersello<sup>rs</sup> oppressions; So as from their ancient united trade whereof they were anciently incorporated being Leathersello<sup>rs</sup>, wch indeed were Pointes & Lace makers Glouers Pursers & White Tawiers, they are become a body of another complexion & nature." 2

1. Unwin, Industrial Organisation, p128; Chapter 4, pp.140, 146; B.M., Additional Ms. 12504, fos. 107-8, 112.

2. B.M., Additional Ms. 12504, fo. 112.

Later, in 1638, the light leather workers claimed that the company no longer represented even the leather traders: "But as the manner of London is, The same being Free by the Fathers Copy, This Company is long since changed to those that know not leather, For generally the Mr & wardens and Body of the said Company are Men of other trades, As Braziers, hosiers, Faulconers, Gruell sellers (?) etc." It was further alleged that there was a small group of three or four merchants that monopolised the trade in certain types of skins. Only one of the group belonged to the Company of Leathersellers, but through him - and his apprentices who took out their freedoms with the leathersellers - the traders used the company to oppose the light leather workers.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that the light leather craftsmen in the London suburbs looked elsewhere than the Company of Leathersellers for the regulation of their occupations.<sup>2</sup> The glovers and leatherdressers had two main complaints against the company. The first was that it was - as we have seen - unrepresentative of the occupations involved in the manufacture and use of dressed leather. Secondly, leather merchants provided them with poor quality raw materials at high prices and refused to allow leather workers to keep shops in London.<sup>3</sup> To remedy these complaints the glovers and leatherdressers first supported a number of projects to place the

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38; S.P. 16/386, no. 90; Unwin, Industrial Organization, pp. 129-30.
  2. It is significant that even the working craftsmen accepted the principle that their occupations should be regulated.
  3. See Chapter 4, p. 40 ; Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 129.

production of light leather under the supervision of a patentee; and later sought to establish their own chartered company.

Professor Unwin has stated that the light leather workers started their agitation against the leathersellers about 1612.<sup>1</sup> In fact it can be dated back to the patent granted to Sir Edward Darcy in 1592. Darcy was empowered to supervise the production of light leather in England. The scheme was supported by the London leatherdressers and bitterly opposed by the Company of Leathersellers and eventually it was dropped. Two further proposals to regulate the production of light leather by means of letters patent - one in 1614 and the other in 1619 - were both supported by the leather workers and opposed by the leathersellers.<sup>2</sup> The leatherdressers and glovers commented on the 1614 proposal that if the government were aware of the abuses in the manufacture of dressed leather, it would regulate the industry by act of parliament in the same way as tanning.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1619 and 1621 the suburban glovers and leatherdressers made determined efforts to obtain incorporation. In 1619 (or possibly early 1620) the glovers and leatherdressers of Westminster and district petitioned the government for incorporation of light leather workers within an area of 5 miles around London. They claimed they had made many similar requests during the previous seven years and that they had the support of

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1. Unwin, Industrial Organisation, p. 130.

2. See Chapter 7, pp. 265 - 273

3. B.M., Additional Ms. 38170, fos. 87(b)-88.

the Lord Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> According to the account of the leather workers the King gave instructions to the Attorney-General "for draweing penning and passinge the said Incorporacions;" and all went well until "by the Interposition of the Lord Mayor of the Cittie of London on the behalfe of the said Cittie and the Company of Leathersellers thereof... the same (incorporation) was hindred and the further consideracion thereof referred to the... Lord Chancelor of England... whoe causing either partie to conceave and sett forth divers reasons and Answers touching the same (incorporation)..."<sup>2</sup>

Several of the "divers reasons and Answers" have survived.<sup>3</sup> The leather workers had two declared motives for incorporations. "The principall ayme of the incorporacion is to see that everie housekeeper or Master keeps but a competent number of Apprentizes and Jorneymenn, that noe man dare to sett uppe his trade that hath not served seaven yeares as an apprentize, that noe man worke privatelie that is not allowed a Master, and manie other restriccions which are evident meanes to repell a multitude, where now through want of such a government and visitacion everie Runnagate and misdeameaning followe posteth hither (i.e. to the London suburbs) to eate uppe the livelyhood of the poore house keepers." Secondly the light leather workers hoped that by obtaining a charter of incorporation they

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 12504, fo. 104.
  2. Notestein, Relf, Simpson, Commons' Debates, 1621, vol. 7, p. 147.
  3. See *ibid*, pp. 153-6; B.M., Additional Ms. 12504, fos. 105-8, 111-2, 114-6. These documents differ mainly in points of detail. The information and quotations that follow are drawn from all these sources.

would be able to inspect supplies of raw materials and perhaps wrest the trade in skins and leather away from the leathersellers, although they were rather vague about how this would be achieved.

The Company of Leathersellers opposed the leather workers claim on several points. First the company argued that leather workers were already included in its membership, which the leather workers denied. Secondly the leathersellers claimed that many leather workers did not want an incorporation. Thirdly the company pointed out that by its own charter it had the right of searching light leather throughout the country. The leather workers did not deny this but retorted that the search could not "correct the disorderlie Multitude in pointe of Jorneymen Apprentizes ... and divers other Materiall Circumstances of their livelihood..." Fourthly the leathersellers thought that incorporation of the leatherdressers and glovers would be an unfortunate precedent for other "manuall trades" in the suburbs. Fifthly, the company claimed the new incorporation would be a monopoly. Lastly, it was argued that the establishment of corporations in the suburbs would lead to "the excessive confluence of all sorts (of workmen) unto the Subberbes of the Cittie..."

The enquiries of the Lord Chancellor did not come to "anie Certaine opinion"<sup>1</sup> and in 1621 the light leather workers attempted to achieve their purpose in parliament. They sponsored a bill which made a double attack on the leathersellers. The first part of the bill would have

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1. Commons Debates, vol. 7, p. 147.

made the buying and selling of skins illegal under an act of 1555 dealing with forestalling and also under an act of 1563 concerning the export of sheep skins and pelts. The second part of the bill sought an incorporation of light leather workers in the suburbs five miles around London but not including the city. The new company would be subject to the control of the Lord Mayor and aldermen of the city and the bill included detailed regulations for the company.<sup>1</sup> The leather workers had little success. Three times the bill was introduced in the Commons and three times it was thrown out without debate.<sup>2</sup> The opposition of the city of London and the Company of Leathersellers was too strong.<sup>3</sup>

The leatherdressers and glovers had to wait another seventeen years before they obtained their new company. In the meantime the Company of Leathersellers made an attempt to regain some control of the light leather crafts that had obviously been slipping from them. In 1631 and again in the following year the Court of Aldermen of the city of London were asked to approve a plan whereby apprentices of non-freemen glovers could be bound to the Company of Leathersellers and returned to their masters at the end of their apprenticeships. The plan was proposed by the small number of glovers who were free of the Company of Leathersellers. It was pointed out that if the plan were approved "in process of time their will be sufficient number of freemen to dispense with foreign glovers."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 144-153.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 206; 4, p. 145; 5, p. 288.

3. In October 1622 two leathersellers claimed £380 from the city for their expenses in opposing the incorporation (Repertories 36, fo. 271(b)).

4. Repertories 45, fo. 277(b); 46, fos. 300(b)-302(b).

Although the Court of Aldermen approved the proposal it did not succeed in re-establishing the control of the company and in 1638 the light leather workers returned to the attack and obtained a charter of incorporation. In a petition to the privy council the leather workers repeated the points made earlier laying particular emphasis on the charge that leathersellers were no more than middlemen who defrauded working craftsmen and that the Company of Leathersellers was completely unrepresentative of manufacturers and even - for the most part - of leather dealers. A corporation was therefore granted to a new Company of Glovers having authority over the light leather crafts in an area three miles around London and with the right to search and seal all light leather coming in to the city.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast with the struggles of 1619-21 the leather workers found their task easy in 1638. Professor Unwin claims that they were able to exercise some influence at court,<sup>2</sup> but it is likely that they merely took advantage of a favourable situation. Several other groups of craftsmen obtained incorporation in the same year. During his period of personal rule Charles I was inclined to view the interests of manufacturing craftsmen sympathetically; and grants of incorporation were also a means of raising money.<sup>3</sup>

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 16/377, no. 38; 16/386, nos. 90, 91.

2. Unwin, Industrial Organisation, p. 130.

3. Ibid., pp. 142-7; E. Lipson, Economic History of England, vol. 3 (6th ed. 1956), pp. 332-3. See Chapters 7 and 8 for a full discussion of the motives of government policy.

The new company did not solve the glovers' difficulties. Many leather workers belonged to other companies and the new incorporation had no power to translate them. More important the Leathersellers' Company continued to claim its right of search over dressed leather in addition to the power of search of the new company. Hence members of the Glovers' Company were subject to a double search.<sup>1</sup> It is also unlikely that the new incorporation remained for very long representative of the working craftsmen. By the middle of the eighteenth century its membership consisted mainly of persons who were not leather workers.<sup>2</sup>

It is instructive to compare the developments in the Leathersellers' Company with the experiences of the heavy leather companies of curriers and cordwainers. In one respect both the light and the heavy leather companies in London had to deal with a similar problem: the establishment of groups of leather workers in suburban areas beyond the jurisdiction of the city companies. However the manner of dealing with the problem differed. The curriers and the cordwainers both endeavoured to regulate the activities of the suburban workmen. The leathersellers made no attempt to control the light leather workers in the suburbs; instead, those workers agitated for a control of their own. The difference in attitudes between the Company of Curriers and the Company of Cordwainers

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1. Repertories 55, fos. 225-6(b); 57, fos. 239-9(b); 59, fos. 104(b)-7(b).
  2. J.R. Kellet, "The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trade in London," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. X (1958), p. 390, note 3.

on the one hand, and the Company of Leathersellers on the other, reflected a difference in the character of the companies. Both the carriers' and the cordwainers' organizations remained representative of working craftsmen even though commercial interests were not absent from the administration of the companies. The Company of Leathersellers, however, passed completely into the hands of traders and not always of traders in leather. Hence it took no interest in the light leather crafts except when leather workers tried to obtain an organization of their own that might have infringed the privileges of the leathersellers.

What accounts for the differences in the development of the heavy and light leather companies? There seem to be two possible reasons. First, the Companies of Cordwainers and Carriers were both required by act of parliament to inspect footwear and curried leather.<sup>1</sup> The leathersellers experienced no similar legal compulsion. In other words the carriers and the cordwainers were both compelled to remain interested in manufacturing. Secondly - and more important - shoemaking and currying were occupations carried on in the city of London as well as in the suburbs. The craftsmen continued to be members of the companies, and to take part in their affairs.<sup>2</sup> The light leather workers, by contrast, were almost entirely outside the city area and beyond the area of control of the Company of Leathersellers. Only the dealers in leather and skins remained in the city and in the course of time the administration of the company passed entirely out of the hands of manufacturing craftsmen.

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1. See Chapter 7, p.274

2. See Chapter 5, pp. 202 - 205

Perhaps the closest analogy to the experience of the Company of Leathersellers from the heavy leather crafts was the history of the London tanners' organization. As we have noted in the previous chapter there was a tanners' gild in London in the fifteenth century that apparently collapsed as tanners settled in the suburbs.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the leathersellers' company, the tanners organization did not survive as a traders' organization, possibly because dealers in tanned leather belonged to the curriers' or cordwainers' gilds.

Without making a detailed examination of light leather gilds in other parts of the country, we cannot claim that the history of the London Company of Leathersellers was typical of developments elsewhere. Amalgamated gilds of light leather craftsmen were common in many towns<sup>2</sup> and the examples mentioned early in this chapter<sup>3</sup> suggest that these gilds exercised a control over leatherselling and the manufacture of light leather products. It is well known that by the early eighteenth century gild authority over trade and industry was on the wane.<sup>4</sup> In one sense the failure of the London Company of Leathersellers to represent and regulate the light leather workers in London in the early seventeenth century - or possibly before - was a particularly early example of the loss of control.

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1. See Chapter 5, p 162.

2. See S. Kramer, English Craft Gilds (New York, 1927), pp. 8-10.

3. *Supra*, p 209.

4. See Kramer, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-7.

(iv)

Conclusion

In these two chapters we have attempted to examine the organization of the leather industry. We have seen how the industry was split into two branches; and how, within the two branches of the industry, there were differences in organization.

Two factors had a direct influence on the way in which the industry was organized. The first was technical. Differences in techniques accounted for the division between the heavy and light leather branches of the industry. Tanning and leatherdressing were two quite different ways of making leather and they produced different kinds of materials. The division between the two branches of the industry was akin to the division between one branch of the textile industry and another.

Technical factors also had an important influence on the size of the manufacturing unit. The cost of fixed equipment virtually set the lower limit to the scale of production. Since none of the leather crafts used expensive fixed equipment very little capital was needed to set up in business. The amount of circulating capital required was also dictated by technical factors. Tanning took a long time, leatherdressing rather less time, and currying and the manufacture of leather goods were quick processes. Hence tanners usually needed a fairly large stock of ~~hides~~ in production in order to achieve a steady flow of leather becoming ready for the market. Leatherdressers needed to hold somewhat smaller stocks of skins in various stages of production. Leather using craftsmen could

work with very small stocks because of the rapid turnover on capital. The actual stock of materials in production held by leather workers depended on the amount of capital they could raise, whether leather working was a by-occupation, and the size of the market they were serving. Hence there were considerable variations in the size of the manufacturing unit in the leather industry although it tended to be largest in tanning and smallest in the occupations producing leather goods.

The relationships existing between the crafts in the two branches of the leather industry were also determined to some extent by technical considerations. Between the manufacture of leather and leather products there was a distinct break in the chain of production. There were no technical reasons why leather should be immediately made into leather goods. This being so, the leather manufacturing and the leather using crafts might or might not be combined in one man according to the influence of other factors.

This brings us to the second influence on the organization of the leather industry - that of markets. The market played a part in determining the size of the manufacturing unit and the relationship between one occupation and another. The first point is obvious; for production would not be undertaken unless the product could be sold. The second point must be considered in relationship with technical influences on organization. As we have seen a geographical separation of the heavy leather crafts came about because of the need of shoemakers to live in close proximity to their markets, whereas tanners were more concerned with the availability of raw materials. Among the light leather crafts, there was less need for manu-

facturers of leather goods to have personal contact with their customers. Hence the manufacture of leather goods was often carried on together with the production of light leather and the occupations were consequently frequently combined in one man.

There is also a possibility that government policy had an influence on the organization of the leather industry, or rather the differences in organization between the two branches of the industry. Among the heavy leather crafts the government insisted on the principle that the various occupations should not be combined in one man; there were no such provisions for the light leather crafts. The effect of legislation on the structure of the industry cannot be properly assessed until we have made a study of government policy.<sup>1</sup> However we may doubt whether the differences in organization between the heavy leather and the light leather crafts can be attributed to government policy. As we have tried to show the government was swimming with the tide when stating that tanning, currying and shoemaking should not be combined. It is doubtful whether government policy would have been successful if there had not been good technical and economic reasons leading to the separation of the heavy leather crafts. This can be seen from the fact that despite government legislation shoemaking and currying were sometimes combined in one man when it was in the interests of craftsmen to do so.

This is not to say that government interference in the leather industry was entirely without effect. The government, for example,

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1. See Chapters 7 and 8, *passim*.

regulated the trade in heavy leather; and we have suggested that this may have been a contributory factor in keeping the dealers in light leather out of the trade in tanned leather. When leathersellers could buy and sell dressed leather without interference from the government there was little incentive for them to move into the tanned leather trade where they might be prosecuted as middlemen. Similarly the fact that the government used the heavy leather companies in London to implement statutory policy may have helped to keep those companies interested in the leather industry. However economic and technical forces were much more potent influences on the structure of the leather industry than government policy and it was these forces that determined the way in which the industry was organized.

## Chapter 7 : The Government and the Leather Industry

### The Technical Regulation of Industry, 1563 - 1700.

(i)

#### Introduction

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the leather industry enjoyed with the textile crafts the doubtful distinction of being one of the most closely regulated activities in the economy. In fact, tanning, currying, and shoemaking were probably subject to a more rigorous control than the manufacture of cloth. The regulation of the industry formed one of the major branches of Tudor and Stuart industrial policy and a study of the motives underlying this regulation provides an interesting insight into the wider aspects of government economic control. In this chapter only the technical regulation of the leather industry will be discussed; consideration of the control of the trade in leather and leather goods is reserved for the next chapter. But it must be remembered that the manufacturing and the trading regulations were essentially part of the same policy and they are separated here only for the purpose of analysis.

Industrial policy in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which the regulation of the leather industry was a part, was an important aspect of the general economic policy of the time that has been labelled "mercantilism." The term is slightly unfortunate since it

implies a consistency that sixteenth and seventeenth century regulation did not possess.<sup>1</sup> The content of economic policy varied so much from time to time that it is doubtful whether it is possible to speak of a policy at all. Tudor and Stuart economic regulations were often little more than a series of expedients thrown up by the pressure of vested interests and events beyond the control of the government. However the aims of economic regulation were usually more stable than the means of achieving them. In general the purpose of the economic policy followed by Elizabethan and Stuart governments was to strengthen the nation politically and economically. The way in which this was done varied from time to time according to changing political and economic conditions, the manouvering of pressure groups and, not infrequently, the Crown's need for money.

A national industrial policy that survived for more than a century was established in the 1550's and '60's. The keystone was the Statute of Artificers of 1563 which contained general regulations for industry and agriculture. The statute was buttressed by other acts passed about the same time providing detailed control of the cloth and leather industries. None of this legislation was completely new, nor was it free from the influences of vested interests; but there can be little doubt that the over-riding motive of the government in framing this legislation was to avoid economic and social disturbances and to

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1. The literature on Mercantilism is extensive. See particularly E. Heckscher, Mercantilism, 2 vols. (2nd ed., London, 1955); E. Lipson, Economic History of England, vol. II, iii (6th ed., 1956), especially vol. II, introduction, passim; A.V. Judges, "The Idea of a Mercantile State," Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc., 4th series, vol. XXI (1939), pp. 41, et seq.; C.H. Wilson, "Mercantilism: Some Vicissitudes of an Idea," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. X, no. 2 (1957), pp. 181-188.

maintain political security. The expansion of the cloth industry - dependent upon foreign markets - during the first half of the sixteenth century, followed by depression and unemployment; enclosure for sheep grazing accompanied by depopulation; rising prices: all these contained the threat of social unrest which the Crown, threatened by enemies from within and without, could not afford to ignore.<sup>1</sup> Over the next century this policy was modified and enforced with varying degrees of vigour, but in general economic regulations looked much the same in the 1660s as they had done in the 1560s. In the last forty years of the seventeenth century economic policy underwent more significant modification although the general framework of sixteenth century regulation was still recognisable.

Before undertaking a detailed examination of the technical control of the leather industry, it will be as well to outline briefly the development of the government's regulation of the industry generally during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> There were three main periods of development, although the boundaries between the periods were not rigid. The first was the formative period of policy commencing with the leather act of 1563, and ending with the modified act of 1604; the second period extended to the 1660s during which there was no further development of policy; finally, the third period extended from the '60s

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1. See G. Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, 1904), pp. 139-140; L. Stone, "State Control in Sixteenth Century England," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. XVII, no. 2 (1947), pp. 110-111, 115; F.J. Fisher, "Commercial Trends and Policy in the Sixteenth Century," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. X (1940), pp. 95-117.

2. No references will be given in this section. For detailed references see the main body of the chapter.

to the end of the seventeenth century and saw considerable modification of earlier regulation, particularly in relation to the leather trade.

The leather act of 1563 provided detailed regulations for tanning, currying, and shoemaking, and for the sale of hides, leather and goods made of leather. It also contained some provisions restricting the export of these commodities and governing employment in the leather crafts. The light leather crafts were not controlled by this statute, and, in fact, were never subjected to detailed statutory regulation. During the forty years after the passage of the leather act there were continual attempts on the part of leather manufacturers to remove certain anomalies in the tanning regulations, but without success until 1604. In these years the control of the leather industry was determined by the vested interests of a number of conflicting groups. The large but inarticulate interests of the mass of consumers who wanted cheap, good quality leather was watched over by the Crown which provided the initiative in regulating the industry as part of a wider economic and social policy. But there was another side to the Crown's interest in the leather industry, as is shown by its refusal to modify the act of 1563, although it knew the tanning regulation to be unworkable. A bad statute was profitable to the Crown, either through the erratic flow of fines inflicted on craftsmen who were unable to make leather according to the law, or via the more steady incomes received from holders of enforcing and dispensing patents. The leather using craftsmen, particularly the shoemakers and curriers, also had a voice in determining the content of economic policy. These craftsmen desired supplies of cheap leather and were successful in preventing the export of hides and leather. They also had a close interest in the

marketing of tanned leather and the Crown's regulation of the leather trade in 1563 and subsequent years was determined by the leather using craftsmen. The interests of the leather manufacturers, on the other hand, seem to have been largely disregarded during the later sixteenth century. They wished to make leather without government interference - or at least without the clumsy meddling that characterised government interference in the late sixteenth century. Presumably - although little is heard of this point before the seventeenth century - they also wished to dispose of their leather wherever they liked, at home or overseas.

During the second period, between 1604 and the Restoration, little attention was given in Parliament to the leather industry. For the most part the history of this period was the story of enforcing the legislation developed in the previous forty years, but the pressure groups evident in the late sixteenth century can still be discerned.

It would probably not be true to say that the wishes of the consumers were entirely neglected; nevertheless in this period it seems as though the Crown regarded the leather legislation more as a source of revenue rather than an industrial code regulating the quality and price of leather. The most active pressure group interested in the control of the industry was the leather using craftsmen led by the London shoemakers. On a number of occasions they were successful in tightening up the restrictions on the export of hides and leather. They were opposed by three groups that wished to transport these commodities overseas; graziers who were seeking outlets for cattle hides and sheep skins, tanners who wanted the widest possible market for their leather and who also acted as

factors for merchants exporting hides and skins, and finally exporting merchants dealing in hides, skins, and leather. Little had been heard of these groups in the late sixteenth century, but they became more vociferous in the seventeenth century. Before the 1660s they were generally unsuccessful in removing the restrictions on the export of hides and leather; but they were more successful in regard to calfskins and large quantities of calfskins were exported under licence. Unlike the period before 1604, there were no developments relating to the purely technical control of the leather industry in the period up to 1660. The evidence suggests that tanners made leather without too much worry by the government.

During the final forty years of the seventeenth century there were marked changes in the government's policy towards the leather industry. The export restrictions were reversed and the export of leather was allowed without restriction; the regulations applying to the sale of leather were modified so that the internal leather trade was virtually unrestricted; and the technical regulation of the leather crafts were quietly forgotten until 1697. These changes are to be explained partly by changed political conditions, but more especially by changing economic conditions. The same vested interests that had influenced policy in the previous hundred years were still at work in the late seventeenth century but their relative positions had changed. Falling agricultural and leather prices, coupled with expanding demand for leather in the colonies, strengthened the arguments of the pro-export groups, and weakened the claim of the consumers and the leather using craftsmen for government action to secure

cheap leather. The government itself still regarded the leather industry as a source of revenue and in 1697 placed an excise duty on leather and revived all the old technical and marketing regulations to aid in its collection. The interests of all sections of the leather industry and the consumers were thereby ignored.

The regulation of the leather industry in the period 1563 - 1700, therefore, is largely the story of conflicting pressure groups manipulating policy for their own ends. Nevertheless, it may still be argued that the government attempted to use economic policy to achieve a strong state politically and economically. Whether or not the proposals of a particular vested interest were successful depended ultimately on whether the government could be convinced that they were in the national interest. Even the Crown's use of economic regulation for financial purposes could be justified on this basis for no doubt the Crown identified its own wellbeing with the best interests of the country as a whole. To this extent there was a certain unity in industrial policy in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the unity was superficial only; beneath the surface was a maze of conflicting interests which gave lie to the idea of a strong central government wisely shaping economic policy.

(ii)

Establishment of regulations for the heavy leather crafts, 1563-1604

With the background of the development of government regulation of the leather industry in mind, we can now study in more detail the technical regulations covering the manufacture of leather and leather goods.

Detailed regulations controlling tanning, currying, and shoe-making were contained in the leather act passed in 1563,<sup>1</sup> the same year as the famous Statute of Artificers. Legislation for the industry had been envisaged by Burghley in his industrial programme of 1559<sup>2</sup> that was largely fulfilled during Elizabeth's second parliament. This programme came at the end of a decade of rising prices and after the depression in the cloth trade. Leather, unlike cloth, was not an important article of export and employment in the industry was not directly affected by the trade depression.<sup>3</sup> The government's interest, instead, resulted from the importance of leather in the internal economy. The price and quality of leather concerned all sections of the community, because, in the words of an earlier Edwardian statute, "everie sort of people of necessitye must use and have leather."<sup>4</sup> The government thought that the price of leather and footwear was rising<sup>5</sup> and in the disturbed social and political conditions of the mid-sixteenth century it could not afford to ignore the mass of people who desired cheap, good, leather. The problem had been present for at least a decade before 1559 and a series of acts between 1548 and 1558 had dealt with various aspects of the leather trade and industry.<sup>6</sup> In 1563 these various pieces of legislation were brought together into a single codifying statute.

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1. 5 Eliz., cap. 8.

2. R.H. Tawney, E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, (1924), vol. I, pp.325-30.

3. The industry may of course have been affected indirectly by a fall in purchasing power in the economy. Also any reduction in the output of cloth was likely to reduce the demand for leather for the backs of wool combs and cards.

4. 2 & 3 Edw. VI, cap. 9, preamble.

5. Tawney & Power, op. cit., p. 329.

6. 2 & 3 Edw. VI, caps. 9, 11; 3 & 4 Edw. VI, caps. 6, 9; 5 & 6 Edw. VI, cap. 15; 1 Mar. st. 3, cap. 8; 1 Eliz., caps. 8, 9, 10.

The technical clauses comprised the greater part of the act of 1563. As a first step in controlling tanning, currying, and shoemaking, the government insisted that these occupations should be carried on separately from one another.<sup>1</sup> This regulation had first been enacted as early as 1389<sup>2</sup> when it was not uncommon for the heavy leather crafts to be combined in one man, and it was afterwards embodied in most subsequent legislation. We have seen in an earlier chapter that by the mid-sixteenth century the heavy leather crafts were in fact usually separate occupations. The presence of clauses in the act of 1563, therefore, demanding the separation of the heavy leather crafts from one another is slightly puzzling.

The leather act did not explain the purpose of the separation clauses but there were a number of possible reasons for them. In the first place, the clauses may have been aimed at the few cases where the occupations were still combined. Secondly, it is possible that the government included the provisions demanding separation of the crafts in the leather act of 1563 without any accurate knowledge of the true conditions existing in the industry. We shall see later that when attempting to regulate tanning the government displayed a faulty knowledge of the techniques of the industry, and there is no good reason why it should have been better informed about its organisation. It was a general principle of economic policy - contained for example in the Statute of Artificers -

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1. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sects. 7, 16.

2. 13 Rich. II, sects. i, cap. 12.

that one man should follow only one craft. The same principle had been embodied in previous legislation for the leather industry dating back to the fourteenth century. It would not be surprising therefore to find the separation clauses included in the leather act of 1563 as a matter of course regardless of the actual organisation of the industry.

However, there is a third possibility which seems to be the most likely explanation of the separation clauses in the act of 1563. The government appears to have desired that tanning, currying and shoemaking should be separate occupations in order to supervise technical standards in each of these crafts. This was the view taken by the London leather crafts more than a century after the act. Explaining the leather act of 1604 (which was substantially the same as the act of 1563) to a committee of the House of Lords in 1689, a representative of the shoemakers pointed out that the act had been designed so that "one trade should be a check on another."<sup>1</sup> This was done in London by giving the leather guilds powers of inspection over leather and leather goods made in London and the suburbs.<sup>2</sup> The separation clauses were intended to assist this check.

The leather act contained separate provisions for tanning, currying and shoemaking. Tanning especially was regulated in great detail. Earlier acts had been concerned with the quality of leather<sup>3</sup> and detailed

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1. Hist. Mss. Comm., 12th report, Appendix VI, "House of Lords Mss, 1689," p. 112. See also Chapter 5, p. 166.
  2. *Infra*, p 274.
  3. 3 Hen. VIII, cap. 10; 24 Hen. VIII, cap. 1; 2 & 3 Edw. VI, cap. 9.

tanning regulations had been enacted in 1548<sup>1</sup>, but many of them had been repealed in 1558<sup>2</sup>, possibly because tanners could not abide by them. In 1563 the government re-adopted the 1548 regulations with a few modifications.

The act laid down rules for all stages of tanning. Hides were to remain in the lime solutions for no longer than was necessary to loosen the hair. Only lime and bird droppings could be used for this operation. Tanning liquors could be made only with oak bark and water and the use of any other "Thinge or Stuffe" (by which was meant ash bark and barley meal) was forbidden. Leather intended for the outer soles of shoes had to be tanned for at least a year and leather for other parts of shoes for at least nine months. During that time the solutions had to be kept fresh, tanners had to take care that the hides were not damaged by frost or the sun and they were forbidden to heat the tan solutions in an attempt to speed up the tanning processes. Hides had to be tanned whole; the bellies were to be cut from the back of the hides after tanning by the leather searchers at the public markets. This regulation was intended to prevent tanners selling upper shoe leather as outer sole leather, but it conflicted with the other clause requiring different kinds of leather to be tanned for different periods of time. The tanning of horse and bull hides, decayed hides, and sheep-skins, all of which produced leather unsuitable for footwear, was forbidden.<sup>3</sup> To ensure that tanners could

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1. 2 & 3 Edw. VI, cap. 11.

2. 1 Eliz. cap. 9, sect. 10.

3. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sects. 5, 8.

obtain supplies of oak bark, it was enacted that trees could be barked only in the months of April, May, and June.<sup>1</sup> There was also a clause designed to prevent butchers gashing hides when removing them from the carcasses of animals.

The act attempted to impose uniform working methods on tanners throughout the country. The manufacture of heavy leather, therefore, was much more rigorously controlled than the manufacture of cloth. Before the great cloth act of 1552, clothiers in some parts of the country had been exempted from the provisions of the various acts establishing technical standards, and the legislation of 1552 contained regulations for the manufacture of several different types of cloth.<sup>2</sup> Tanned leather was a much more uniform commodity than woollen cloth; nevertheless - as the tanners were quick to point out - tanning methods varied according to local conditions.

Apart from difficulties arising from the uniformity of workmanship demanded by the act, tanners found it impossible to abide by the tanning regulations, mainly because of the prohibition on the use of any tanning material other than oak bark and lime. The provisions relating to liming were also unworkable, and the act confused the two stages of liming and tanning, making nonsense of some of the regulations. The prohibition on the tanning of bull and horse hides, decayed hides, and sheep skins was also impracticable for although it was true that leather

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1. Ibid., sect. 11.

2. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen & Worsted Industry, (Oxford, 1920), pp. 133, 135-6.

made from these materials was of poor quality and unsuitable for boots and shoes, it was quite suitable for other purposes. All these criticisms were presented to the government in a detailed memorandum written about 1575.<sup>1</sup> The writer recognised that a few of the provisions of the act were reasonable, but on the whole the act was condemned because it was badly worded and displayed a faulty knowledge of the technique of tanning, while attempting to force all tanners to make leather in the same way.

This memorandum was not the only evidence the government possessed of the shortcomings of its tanning regulations. In March 1567, the Court of Aldermen of the City of London had agreed to ask Lord Burghley to relax the leather act on behalf of the tanners supplying the City, "for that they are not able as they say to obserue and keep the contents of the sayde act."<sup>2</sup> However it was not until 1575 when the Crown was considering the possibility of granting a dispensing licence<sup>3</sup> that there were many complaints from tanners. In that year tanners from several

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1. There are two extant copies of this memorandum, B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58; and P.R.Ø., S.P. 12/90, no. 22. The first has been dated in a later hand, 1562, which is obviously wrong, since it would mean that the document was written before the act was passed. The second is dated 1572(?). This copy also contains a reference to a patent the author had petitioned for, giving him power to dispense with the provisions of the Statute. This suggests the author was Sir Edward Dyer who obtained such a patent in 1575 (infra). According to the Dictionary of National Biography Dyer was out of favour at Court until 1573, and it is unlikely that the memorandum dates before early 1575 when Dyer was negotiating for his grant. There is no need here to recite the detailed criticisms of the memorandum since it would involve a discussion of tanning methods. The B.M. copy is reproduced in Appendix 5.
  2. Repertories 16, fo. 182.
  3. Infra, p.256.

counties wrote to the Privy Council stating that it was impossible to tan according to the act of 1563.<sup>1</sup> Burghley consulted William Fleetwood, the Recorder of London, who claimed some personal knowledge of tanning. Fleetwood thought the government had been badly advised when the statute was drawn up and recommended that "a Tolleracon might be made" because "there be an infinite number of rules to be observed in tannyng, the wch few Tanners did ever conceyve much lesse the Parliament..."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these protests, tanners made more direct efforts to remedy the situation by promoting amending bills in Parliament. In November 1566 a bill was introduced in the House of Commons, probably on behalf of the London tanners; it reached the Lords but got no further.<sup>3</sup> Eight years later the Court of Aldermen again approached the Privy Council on behalf of the London tanners for "a good order for tanning,"<sup>4</sup> but without success. The nearest the tanners came to changing the law was in March 1576 when a bill relaxing many of the regulations in the 1563 act passed successfully through the Commons and reached its first reading in the Lords. Its most important provisions were that it allowed the use of decayed hides and permitted tanners to use barley meal and ash bark in tanning as well as oak bark. In the House of Lords the bill was opposed by Burghley on the grounds that it amended nothing "wch. from the said firste (sic, fifth) yere hathe byn amysse..."<sup>5</sup> In fact the Crown had

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1. B.M., Lans. Mss. 19, fo. 52; 20, fo. 14.

2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fo. 10.

3. Commons' Journals, vol. I, p. 76.

4. Repertories 18, fos. 154(b), 197(b), 214.

5. P.R.O., S.P. 12/107, no. 58; Commons' Journals, vol. I, p.110; Lords' Journals, vol. I, p.473.

already decided that the remedy for defective legislation was not a new statute, but a dispensing patent. Some eight months earlier, on 12th July, 1575, a patent had been granted to Sir Edward Dyer, courtier and minor poet,<sup>1</sup> empowering him to enforce the tanning provisions of the act of 1563 or otherwise to sell dispensations to tanners to make leather contrary to the act.<sup>2</sup>

The system of issuing patents for economic enterprises was used for a variety of purposes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many of those granted by Elizabeth were designed to control and encourage the industrial development of the time which was outgrowing traditional industrial regulations.<sup>3</sup> Such patents were essential antidotes to the statutory controls of industry that were mainly re-enactments of local medieval economic regulations on a national scale.<sup>4</sup> Patents were also useful for relaxing legislation found to be onerous or to have unwanted results in operation. They were useful, too, for granting privileges to a particular person or group, and for filling in gaps in statutory legislation. Above all, letters patent were a convenient means of raising revenue for the Crown. Frequently all these motives were combined in a single grant.

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1. Considering the mercenary nature of Dyer's patent, he must have written the following lines tongue in cheek:

"Some have too much, yet still they crave;

I little have, and seek no more."

(From, "My mind to me a kingdom is...")

2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fo. 19.

3. W.H. Price, English Patents of Monopoly, (Harvard, 1906), p. 6.

4. Heckscher, Mercantilism, I, pp. 226-7.

The patent granted to Sir Edward Dyer is a blatant example of a grant being made for financial motives. There is no other reason for the patent except to provide revenue for the Crown.<sup>1</sup> The government was well aware of the defects in the act of 1563 and had several opportunities to replace it with fresh legislation had it really been concerned with relieving tanners of the burden of unworkable legislation.<sup>2</sup> Instead the Crown chose to keep defective regulations in existence and license a patentee to make dispensations.

Dyer seems to have started negotiations for the patent early in 1575.<sup>3</sup> He submitted his proposals to a privy councillor, John Popham.<sup>4</sup> On 4th July Popham approved of Dyer's plan with some slight modifications and recommended that "hyt ys very necessary that these matters be p(ro)vyded for in tyme for very lytle lether cometh to the m(ar)ket."<sup>5</sup> Sixteen days later the patent was granted, and the Privy Council gave Dyer and his deputies active assistance in enforcing it. On several

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1. There is no record of what the Crown stood to gain by the grant. It is possible that instead of being a revenue producing patent, the grant may have been made in discharge of a debt owed to Dyer, in which case it would be just as much to the Crown's financial advantage. See R. Ashton, "Deficit Finance in the Reign of James I," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. X, no. 1 (1956), p. 15.
  2. W.H. Price (op cit., pp. 13-14) has written with reference to Dyer's patent that "the theory upon which the Crown then acted prevented it from shifting the responsibility (of repealing the act) upon Parliament." because legislation should stem from the executive. But in fact the Crown could use Parliament in the late sixteenth century to enact its own policy through the influence of the Privy Councillors who were also M.Ps. See J.E. Neale, The Elizabethan House of Commons (1949), pp.393-4.
  3. *Supra*, p.253, note 1.
  4. Successively Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, and Lord Chief Justice. He helped to draft bills in the 1576 session of Parliament (D.N.B.).
  5. P.R.O., S.P. 12/105, no. 5.

occasions local leather searchers were instructed to seal leather that had been made under Dyer's dispensations,<sup>1</sup> and in July 1593, when the grant was nearing its end, municipal officers were ordered to take bonds of £40 from all leather searchers and sealers to approve of such leather if requested to do so by Dyer or his deputies.<sup>2</sup> Dyer himself had the power to take bonds from leather searchers and sealers for the same purpose. The reason why these arrangements were necessary was that shoemakers were critical of the quality of the leather being made under the licences and market officers appointed by the act of 1563 were refusing to seal such leather.<sup>3</sup> The London Company of Cordwainers, for example, was confronted by this problem in September 1577. Under the act of 1563 the company was responsible for seeing that all shoemakers in London and the suburbs used only leather tanned according to the regulations in the leather act. However many shoemakers bought leather made under Dyer's dispensations and the company was liable to be fined as long as shoemakers used this kind of leather. The master and wardens, therefore, asked the government - without success - to stop the issue of the dispensations.<sup>4</sup>

The patent was administered in different parts of the country by deputies appointed by Dyer. There is little information about these officers, except for two of them, Thomas Wallis and George Silver, deputies

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1. Acts of the Privy Council, 1576-7, vol. 9, pp. 80, 267.

2. Ibid., 1593, vol. 24, p. 357.

3. Ibid., 1597, vol. 27, p. 260; M.G. Davies, The Enforcement of English Apprenticeship, 1563-1642, (Harvard, 1956), p. 21.

4. B.M., Lans. Ms. 24, fo. 182.

in Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Northumberland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Westmorland. In 1577 a group of tanners in Derbyshire and Staffordshire complained to the Privy Council that the dispensations sold by Wallis and Silver were so expensive that they could not make "anye resonable peneworthes of ther wares." If they did not buy the dispensations the leather searchers would not seal their leather since it was impossible to make leather according to the act; and if they sold leather unsealed they were liable to penalties under the act. Other tanners complained that the two deputies charged between £3 and £5 for the dispensations; John Hawthorn of Litchfield paid £4 4s. 1d. when "for his quietnes sake" he bought a dispensation. At first he protested that he could not afford so much, and instead offered Wallis and Silver one third of his goods and stock, "whiche they refused and saide he should paye **iiii**<sup>li</sup> whether or no he were able or not, And yf he would not agree with them, hyt would cost him twentie nobles."<sup>1</sup>

We do not know whether similar problems arose in other parts of the country or at other times; the complaints received by the Privy Council all centred around Wallis and Silver. However, one thing is certain: Dyer's patent did not solve the basic problem of defective legislation. The tanners made a further unsuccessful attempt to change the law in 1584/5, but it was not until 1604 that they obtained relief from the unsatisfactory tanning regulations. In that year the Elizabethan statute was re-enacted with significant modification of the clauses

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 24, fos. 179, 180, 185, 188-9.

affecting tanners.<sup>1</sup> The new act allowed tanners to use ash bark, tapwort, and barley meal in tanning, in addition to oak bark and line. One of the main grievances of the tanners was thus removed.

The pressure for a change in the law seems to have come from all kinds of leather workers and various leather interests were consulted during the preparation of the bill. After one false start, the bill passed without difficulty through both Houses.<sup>2</sup> It is not altogether clear why the government should have decided to modify the act of 1563 after many years of refusal. The preamble of the new statute stated that the former regulations had "bene too sharpe and rigourous," and "impossible for them (the tanners) to performe," which was what the tanners had been saying for forty years. Dyer's grant had expired some years earlier and possibly the Crown decided that a further patent along the same lines would be unwise in view of the opposition of Parliament to such devices.<sup>3</sup> The revised regulations remained on the statute book for another two centuries and no further complaints were heard about them; presumably they were either satisfactory or ignored. Not until after the Restoration

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1. 1 Jac. I, cap. 22. The act is always cited thus, although the bill was not introduced into Parliament until April 1604 which was in James's second regnal year. However the Parliament had commenced five days before the end of James's first year, and the statutes were enrolled as 1 James I, chapters 1-33 (Statutes of the Realm, vol. 4, p. 1015, n.1.)
  2. Commons' Journals, vol. I, pp. 190, 222, 240-1, 246;  Lords' Journals 24th May, 1st July, 1604.
  3. Elizabeth's proclamation of November 1601 concerning monopolies admitted that a grant for search and sealing leather (probably Dyer's patent) had been "to the hurt and prejudice of her loving subjects." (Price, Patents of Monopoly, p. 157).

was there any new suggestion that new legislation was needed and then no action was taken.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast with the tanning regulations, the clauses in the act of 1563 relating to currying and shoemaking were straightforward and excited little attention. The act stipulated the materials curriers should use and the precautions to be taken to avoid damaging the leather. No currying was to be done on the premises of shoemakers, and curriers were obliged to accept all work that the shoemakers brought them and to curry their leather "wth. as convenient spede as maye bee, not exceeding fyve days in the Somer and Tenne dayes in the winter." The purpose of this regulation was to ensure that the shoemakers could get their leather curried with the minimum of delay.<sup>2</sup> Shoemakers were instructed to choose leather for footwear carefully. Outer sole leather could be cut only from the backs of tanned ox or steer hides and the inner soles from the bellies of hides. It was illegal to mix different kinds of leather in the upper parts of shoes.<sup>3</sup> Most of these regulations could be found scattered among earlier statutes for the leather industry but they were brought together for the first time in 1563 into one comprehensive act. The currying and shoemaking regulations were re-issued in 1604 and remained unchanged on the statute book throughout the seventeenth century.

The technical regulations formed the backbone of the leather act of 1563 and also of the revised version of 1604. In addition, there

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1. *Infra*, p. 291.

2. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sect. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, sect. 19.

were in both statutes, a number of other clauses of varying importance. Both acts contained important regulations concerning the trade in hides, leather and leather goods; these will be discussed in the next chapter. An important group of clauses - to be considered below<sup>1</sup> - dealt with the enforcement of the leather regulations. And there was also a clause dealing with the location of tanneries and with apprenticeship.

This clause in the act of 1563 stated that, in general, tanneries should be located only in "a Citie Bourghe Towne Corporate or Market Towne, where Searchers and Sealers of Leather hath been and shalbe usually appointed..."<sup>2</sup> However, there were so many exceptions to the general rule - for landowners worth more than £40 a year, for existing tanneries, for persons who were apprenticed to, or were going to be apprenticed to, a tanner, for sundry relations of tanners - that the clause was quite meaningless. The same clause - rather less qualified - had appeared in earlier legislation<sup>3</sup> and it calls to mind similar provisions in the legislation for the cloth industry. It poses the question of whether tanning, like the manufacture of cloth, was tending to move away from urban areas. This does not seem to have been the general case, for tanneries were usually located near to towns where hides were available, although possibly there may have been a few cases where tanners were migrating to country areas to be near supplies of oak bark. But there is no evidence that this ever worried the government and the clause

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1. *Infra*, pp. 273-274

2. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sect. 4.

3. e.g., 1 Eliz., cap. 9.

in the act limiting location seems to have been a rather feeble attempt to ensure that the leather searchers appointed by other sections of the act had jurisdiction over all leather manufacturers. Neither is there a scrap of evidence to suggest that the regulation had the slightest effect upon the location of tanning.

The same clause mentioned that there should be a seven year apprenticeship for tanners except for children of tanners brought up in the "Mysterie of Tanning of Leather by the Space of Fowre yerres," but otherwise the question of technical training in the leather industry was left untouched. However apprenticeship in the leather crafts was controlled by the Statute of Artificers passed shortly before the leather act.

Leather workers were subject to the same conditions as other industrial workers except that shoemakers - together with workers in the woollen and clothing trades - were required to employ a journeyman for the first three apprentices kept and thereafter another journeyman for every additional apprentice.<sup>1</sup>

The leather acts of 1563 and 1604 provided the foundation of the government's control of the heavy leather crafts. After 1604 there was no new statute affecting the leather industry for almost sixty years.<sup>2</sup>

Exactly the same situation can be seen in other branches of industrial legislation; the reason was mainly a political one. Parliament met less

1. 5 Eliz., cap. 4, sect. xxvi (Reprinted in Tawney & Power, op cit., vol. I, pp. 338-350).

2. The act of 1604 was slightly modified in 1606 (4 Jac. I, cap. 6) to correct a minor error in the original act, and it was continued in 1623 (21 Jac. I, cap. 28).

frequently in the first half of the seventeenth century than it did in the second half of the sixteenth century and when it did meet its time was devoted mainly to constitutional affairs.<sup>1</sup> Since Parliament was the most important instrument for developing economic policy the Crown was considerably handicapped in the development of new legislation. Thus the sixteenth century legislation for the leather industry survived unchanged through the seventeenth century until after the Restoration.

The leather acts formed the third - and least well known - part of the statutory regulation of industry in the late sixteenth century. The Statute of Artificers provided the basis for the Crown's supervision of industry and agriculture. A series of acts contained detailed regulations for the cloth industry, while the acts of 1563 and 1604 did the same for the leather industry. This statutory framework was supplemented by prerogative grants to establish new industries or to interfere with existing ones; and technical regulations were complemented by legislation controlling the internal and overseas trade in manufactured goods and industrial raw materials. The leather acts were a most important part of this network of industrial control, and any serious study of economic policy during the late sixteenth century should take account of it.

The leather industry figured so largely in industrial policy because of the importance of leather in the economy. In the first place

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1. G.D. Ramsay, "Industrial Laisser-Faire and the Policy of Cromwell," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. XVI (1946), p. 94.

the Crown was interested that the consumer should be able to get good quality leather and footwear at reasonable prices; the technical regulations were concerned with quality, while the marketing regulations were concerned with price.<sup>1</sup> In this respect leather was rather like corn and bread; everybody needed it, therefore the Crown controlled its quality and sale. But the Crown quickly turned its concern for the consumers to its own financial profit. The leather act of 1563 was, as we have seen, badly worded and mis-informed. No doubt the government cannot be blamed entirely for this; on technical matters it was very much dependent upon its advisors, and as far as tanning was concerned these were badly chosen. In 1559 Lord Burghley declared his intention of consulting "the most skilful tanners"<sup>2</sup> to prepare legislation, but according to Fleetwood, "the P(ar)liam(en)t... conceyved theire informacon from whom nowe I do by experience knowe not to be skillfulle."<sup>3</sup> But the Privy Council, if not Parliament, must have been fully aware of the deficiency of the statute by 1575 when Dyer was granted his patent. However the defective legislation was too profitable to be abandoned immediately.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Chapter 8, p.301.

2. Tawney & Power, op cit., vol. I, p. 329.

3. B.M., Lans. Ms. 20, fo. 10.

4. Before Dyer's patent the Clerk of the Signet apparently licensed tanners to ignore the act. This source of revenue was lost when Dyer got his grant, but no doubt the Crown obtained a net gain from the rent paid by Dyer. (See "A note of the decayes of the proffitt of the Synet & privy Seale," (1580), S.P. 12/151, no. 60).

(iii)

Control of the light leather crafts

The leather act of 1563 applied only to leather made by vegetable tanning; it was not concerned with leather produced with oil or alum, despite an ambiguous clause defining leather.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this can only be speculated. Probably the government did not regard dressed leather as very important. Although leatherdressing was by no means a new occupation in the sixteenth century, it is possible that it was only beginning to assume importance as a material widely used by the poor in the middle of the century.<sup>2</sup> This section of the leather industry, therefore, remained outside the scope of statutory control.<sup>3</sup> Before the end of the sixteenth century, however, leatherdressing attracted some attention, notably from Edward Darcy, Esquire, who successfully persuaded the government to grant him a licence to supervise the manufacture of this kind of leather throughout England.

Darcy was a minor official of the Royal Household, and at various times the holder of several industrial patents, including the famous licence for the manufacture of playing cards.<sup>4</sup> To Darcy the light

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1. "... for thavoyding of all Ambyguities and Doubtes woh. may and doo grow upon the Definition and Interpretation of this woorde Leather, it ys enacted... That the Hydes and Skinnes of Oxe Steere Bull Cowe Calfe, Deere Redd and Fallowe, Goates and Sheep, being tanned or tawed, and every Salt Hyde, ys, shalbe and ever hath been reputed and taken for Leather." (5 Eliz., cap. 8, sect. 36).

2. See Chapter I, pp. 16-19, 33.

3. On March 1st 1580/1 a bill was introduced into the Commons concerning the manufacture of Spanish and Buff leather, but it did not proceed beyond the first reading (Commons' Journals, vol. I, p. 130).

4. Price, Patents of Monopoly, p. 148.

leather crafts appeared as an uncontrolled industrial field offering a profitable return to the possessor of a supervisory patent.<sup>1</sup> Possibly he was influenced by the example of the new draperies, for in 1578 the Crown had granted letters patent appointing aulnagers to control this new and expanding - and hitherto uncontrolled - branch of the cloth industry.<sup>2</sup> Darcy's patent controlling the light leather crafts was a somewhat similar case.

Darcy made the first moves for the grant in 1588 when he wrote to Burghley requesting a licence for twenty-one years for, "the making & working of the skinner and peltes of sheepe, Lambe, goate, kyd, deare, bull and horse and other sondrie sortes of leather, as is most vsually and profitablye (thoughe vnlawfully) made of the saide skinner and peltes; viz into Counterfett Buffe, Shamwaies, and other sondrie sortes of coloured Leather of small value." He also asked for a licence to export this kind of leather. Darcy anticipated possible criticism that such a patent would be monopolistic by claiming that leathersdressing was illegal under the Statute of 1563.<sup>3</sup> This was indeed a possible interpretation of the act, but it was not the view of the government.<sup>4</sup> Darcy's proposal was rejected and for a few years the matter rested but Darcy was finally successful with a more modest plan to search and seal all dressed leather made throughout the country.

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1. The London Leathersellers alleged that Darcy would make £80,000 from the grant. He himself estimated that he would make £10,000, but later reduced this to £2,000. (B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 136-7, 145-6, 152).
  2. N.J. Williams, "Two Documents Concerning the New Draperies," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. III (1952), pp. 353-5.
  3. B.M., Lans. Ms. 56, fo. 212.
  4. B.M., Lans. Ms. 65, fo. 141.

Darcy's revised project was before the Privy Council in 1591, and in July of that year Burghley sent a copy of Darcy's plan to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, Peter Osborne, for his opinion. Osborne seems to have been something of an industrial expert and in the same year we find him commenting on the Tyne-side coal industry.<sup>1</sup> Apart from lowering the scale of charges that Darcy intended to levy for searching leather, Osborne approved of the patent because he thought it would assist consumers to distinguish between different types and quality of dressed leather.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that the Crown's original motive in granting the patent was to protect the interests of the consumer although in the subsequent history of the patent this intention became submerged by financial considerations and the conflicting interests of different groups within the industry.

Letters patent were granted to Darcy in January 1592 empowering him to search and seal all leather not regulated by statute. The grant was for twenty-one years, but the Crown - anticipating trouble - included a provision that it could be suspended at any time upon the application of any six privy councillors to the Court of the Exchequer if it could be proved that the grant was inconvenient to Her Majesty's subjects. Distinguishing seals were to be fixed on different kinds of leather, and penalties were laid down for leather workers who forged these seals or who sold leather unsealed. Darcy was empowered to take bonds from light leather workers that they would bring their leather to be sealed and any

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1. See J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, (1932), vol. I, p. 114. See also Dictionary of National Biography.

2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 67, fo. 206.

worker refusing to enter into a bond could be debarred from his trade.<sup>1</sup>

There were no legal standards of workmanship to which dressed leather had to conform and Darcy therefore had a virtual monopoly of the production of this kind of leather since leather that did not meet with his approval could not legally be sold or made into leather goods. No doubt the patent, if properly administered, would have had beneficial results because it was not unknown for cheap alum dressed leather to be passed off as the more expensive oil dressed leather.<sup>2</sup> But the monopolistic nature of the grant caused trouble.

The patent aroused great opposition in London where the Company of Leathersellers claimed that they already possessed the right to search dressed leather dating from the reign of Henry VII. The Crown's law officers confirmed this claim, but thought the right had become void by long neglect. Darcy was advised to obtain a writ of scire facias to revoke the leathersellers' powers of search, which he did, "by law at great expence."<sup>3</sup> The leathersellers kept up their opposition for a year supported by the City authorities and early in 1593 the patent was suspended by the Exchequer. Burghley then appointed a commission of enquiry to examine the matter.<sup>4</sup>

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1. P.R.O., C 66/1384. There is an undated copy of the patent in Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 167-9.
  2. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 114.
  3. Remembrancia, I, nos. 647, 649, 652; B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 145-6; J. Stow, Survey of London, (ed. J. Strype, 1720), vol. 2, book V, p. 207. P.R.O. Chancery Court, Register Books (A series) C 33/85, fos. 176, 183.
  4. Remembrancia, I, no. 651; Journals of the Court of Common Council, 23, fo. 17(b); B.M., Lans. Mss. 73, fo. 55; 74, fo. 124; Acts of the Privy Council, vol. 24, p. 123.

The commission was composed of representatives of the Privy Council, Parliament, and the City of London, and it took evidence from all interested parties. The London leathersellers claimed that the patent was unnecessary, that the fees Darcy charged for searching were too high; and that he was not qualified to carry out an inspection of dressed leather. On the other hand many working leatherdressers and glovers were in favour of the grant because they thought it might prevent the leathersellers supplying them with poor quality leather. The commission found in favour of Darcy, except that it recommended that the fees for searching leather should be lowered. Accordingly Darcy was given a new patent in March 1594.<sup>1</sup>

The Company of Leathersellers immediately renewed its opposition to the patent and eventually the masters and wardens were committed to prison for opposing the Crown's prerogative.<sup>2</sup> This failed to silence them and they sent a defiant petition to Burghley attacking the "Idle Drones" who supported Darcy.<sup>3</sup> They remained in prison for well over a year despite the efforts of the city authorities to obtain their release.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, in December 1595, the officials of the leathersellers' were told that they would be released providing they would accept Darcy's patent, but that they could then commence an action at law against Darcy to test

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1. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fos. 127, 129-131, 132, 134-5, 136-7, 138, 140-1, 143, 151, 154, 158, 165; P.R.O., Patent Rolls, C 66/1418.
  2. Remembrancia, I, no. 643; II, nos. 14, 70; Stow, op cit., p. 207.
  3. B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 118. The major part of this petition is reprinted in G. Unwin, Gilds and Companies of London, (1908), pp. 257-8. The original has been dated in a later hand, "23 July 1593." This is too early as at that date the commission had not presented its report. A more likely date is after the issue of the new patent in March 1594.
  4. Remembrancia, II, nos. 82-3, 126. Unwin, Gilds and Companies, p. 258 is wrong when he states that the leathersellers were released within a year.

the validity of the grant.<sup>1</sup> In fact the government was tiring of the whole business; probably the grant was not proving so financially rewarding as had been hoped. In January 1596 the Privy Council offered to revoke the patent on the payment of £4,000 by the city and the Company of Leathersellers. Despite protests from the city authorities some money was probably paid - although there is no record of the payment - and the grant withdrawn for all information on the subject comes to an end.<sup>2</sup>

The opposition to Darcy's patent was part of the wider protest against prerogative grants that had come to a head in the Parliament of 1601. Robert Cecil listed twenty-three industrial monopolies granted between 1592 and November 1593<sup>3</sup> and many of these affected the City craftsmen in some way. In the case of Darcy's leather patent opposition was particularly violent because of the strained relationships existing between the London leathersellers who opposed the grant, and the suburban leatherdressers and glovers who, for the most, supported it.<sup>4</sup>

It is at this point that the mixed motives of the Crown in making the original grant can be clearly seen. The financial aspect of the patent was apparent in the Crown's offer to withdraw it. But in the early stages of the grant the Crown had probably also been concerned to give some assistance to the light leather workers living around London who relied on the leathersellers for supplies of raw materials. One of

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1. Acts of the Privy Council, 1595, p. 106.

2. Ibid., 1595, p. 142; B.M., Harleian Ms. 8650, fo. 272.

3. Price, Patents of Monopoly, p. 149.

4. Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 142.

the problems of industrial development in the later sixteenth century was the growth of a class of small producers dependent on merchant capitalists for their materials and for marketing their finished products.<sup>1</sup> In such situations the Crown was inclined to protect the interests of the dependent craftsmen in order to achieve economic and social stability. However, the Crown chose an unfortunate way of trying to protect the suburban light leather craftsmen. The leathersellers and the city authorities were able to claim that Darcy's grant was monopolistic. Their alliance, taking advantage of the prevailing hostility towards this kind of grant, forced the government to capitulate.

It is convenient at this stage to follow the history of the government's concern with the light leather crafts into the seventeenth century. Although Darcy's patent had caused so much trouble the Crown did not abandon the idea of a supervisory patent. Some years later, in 1614, Lord Aubigny commenced negotiations for a grant similar to Darcy's and, like Darcy, he received support from the suburban leathersellers and glovers. In fact it was not intended that Aubigny's authority should extend to the London area - probably because it was realized that the leathersellers and the city would again oppose such a grant. However the proposed patent came to nothing although the Crown considered it favourably.<sup>2</sup> In 1619 a similar patent was granted to the Earl of March. The patentee was empowered to supervise the manufacture of dressed leather but only with the permission of the London leathersellers. Despite this sop and

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1. For the relationship between the London leathersellers and leatherdressers, see Chapter 6, pp. 224 *et seq.*

2. B.M., Additional Ms. 38170, fos. 87(b)-88, 142-3.

in spite of the fact that the Earl had no authority in London, the leathersellers opposed the patent because it "Implicitle contenethe" an incorporation of the light leather workers. In the following year part of the patent was abandoned, no doubt, because without the support of the leathersellers it was impossible to enforce.<sup>1</sup>

The leathersellers' allegations that the Crown was trying to incorporate the light leather workers was not without foundation. We have seen that the Crown was concerned with assisting the light leather craftsmen, partly because of their economic dependence on the leathersellers, and also because of the financial gain to be derived from the interference with the industry. Both these aims could be achieved with a patent that successfully supervised the manufacture of dressed leather: the Crown would enjoy the rent from the patentee, while the leather users would have some guarantee of the quality of the leather they were buying. Because of the opposition to patents of monopoly in the early seventeenth century the Crown was frustrated in its aims. The early Stuart government therefore turned to an alternative means of interfering with industry and considered giving to the London light leather workers a charter of incorporation. A charter could give the leatherdressers and glovers the protection they needed in their dealings with the London leathersellers. Charters had the added advantage that they were not so unpopular as patents of monopoly in the city of London and in Parliament - they were

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1. B.M., Additional Ms. 12504, fo. 102; Repertories 34, fos. 258(b), 266(b), 297(b) -298, 427, 466, 492(b)-493; Index Remembrancia, p.101.

specifically excluded from the strictures of the Statute of Monopolies of 1624 - and they were thus an alternative means of raising revenue. In 1638 the leatherdressers and glovers of London were incorporated following earlier unsuccessful attempts on their part to obtain incorporation by charter in 1619 and by act of parliament in 1621. The history of the new company has been traced elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The incorporation marked the virtual end of the government's attempt to interfere with the manufacture of dressed leather.

(iv)

#### The enforcement of technical regulation

So far we have traced the establishment of a body of regulations controlling the manufacture of tanned leather and footwear; and we have seen how the Crown attempted unsuccessfully to control the production of light leather by means of a licence. We must now turn to an examination of the way in which the leather acts were enforced throughout the country in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The leather acts of 1563 and 1604 contained provisions for the enforcement of the technical and trading regulations they contained. All municipal authorities were obliged to appoint annually searchers and sealers of tanned and curried leather and footwear. These officers - who

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1. See Chapter 6, pp. 233-234.

were usually chosen from the nominees of the leather guilds - inspected leather and footwear brought for sale in public markets.<sup>1</sup> The leather act of 1563 gave to the London heavy leather guilds the right to supervise the quality of work produced by heavy leather workers in and within three miles of London, whether or not the craftsmen were members of guilds.<sup>2</sup> It was unusual in English industrial policy for the guilds to be used to implement economic regulations<sup>3</sup> and it seems likely that this particular clause was obtained by the London guilds, especially the cordwainers and the curriers, as a means of extending their influence over all leather craftsmen. Finally, under the leather act local justices were instructed to seek out persons who contravened the regulations. This was in accordance with the usual practice of the time for the justices played an important part in administering many aspects of economic regulation.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the justices and the regularly appointed officers, the leather acts were also enforced by informers or private individuals acting under the authority of an enforcing patent.<sup>5</sup>

The Privy Council was the essential part of this mechanism of enforcement and the implementation of regulations on a local level depended very much on the drive it supplied. There were two ways in which the Council supervised the activities of the local officials: by instructions

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1. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sects. xx, xxi, xxii.
  2. Ibid., sect. xxxvii.
  3. See Heckscher, Mercantilism I, pp. 233-4, 241-3.
  4. Heckscher, op. cit., I, pp. 248-9.
  5. Infra, pp. 277-281.

given to assize judges going on circuit, and by letters and direct instructions to local officials.<sup>1</sup> According to Mrs. Davies's valuable study of the enforcement of apprenticeship regulations, instructions given to assize judges did not usually include orders to enforce industrial legislation.<sup>2</sup> However, such orders were occasionally given. In February 1590, for example, the Council wrote to the judges of the county of Norfolk "... signifying that there hath bene... a complaint inclosed against the abuse of tanners... for the deceptfull making and working of leather" and requiring the judges to "take order for suffiecient inquirye to be made of the saide abuses, and to see the same reformed according to the lawes..."<sup>3</sup> However the main channels through which the Privy Council supervised local administration were letters written to local officials.

Throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the intervention of the Privy Council in the enforcement of the leather acts was sporadic rather than systematic; in general the Council intervened only when some specific matter came to its notice. In the 1570s - before Dyer was given his dispensing patent - the privy Council instructed municipal officers on several occasions to take bonds from tanners to ensure that they abided by the statutory regulations for making leather.<sup>4</sup> Once Dyer had his patent the Council saw that he was aided in its enforce-

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1. Davies, Apprenticeship, p. 230.

2. Ibid., pp. 235-6.

3. Acts of the Privy Council, 1598-90, p. 378.

4. Acts of the Privy Council, 1574-5, pp. 235, 251, 314, 337, 356, 360, 367, 372, 388.

ment by municipal searchers and sealers of leather.<sup>1</sup> During the seventeenth century there were only a few occasions when Privy Council concerned itself with implementing the technical regulations for the industry. And even then it did not always insist that the letter of the law be kept. In May 1627, for example, the Council became involved in a dispute regarding currying in the London suburbs. A number of workmen who were not freemen of the London Company of Curriers had been currying leather for shoemakers and other leather craftsmen, whereas by law only freemen of the company could do this work. Some of the leather craftsmen who had been providing the non-freemen curriers with work were therefore presented to the Middlesex Justices by the freemen curriers. Following a petition by the non-freemen, the Privy Council wrote to the justices recommending that "that branch of the law (be) forborne..." because the non-freemen had been currying "for the space of manie yeares... without anye trouble or impeachment..."<sup>2</sup> The Privy Council took much the same attitude a few years later when freemen and unapprenticed leather workers were in conflict in a number of Lancashire and Cheshire towns. At first the Privy Council instructed the local justices to support the freemen leather workers, but later, when it had heard the case of the non-freemen, it ordered some compromise to be arranged on the grounds that the non-freemen had followed their crafts for a long time.<sup>3</sup> In both these cases the Privy Council

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1. *Supra*, p 257.

2. Acts of the Privy Council, May 1627, p. 269. See also Chapter 5, pp ~~191~~-201.

3. P.R.O., P.C. 2/41, pp. 373, 377; 2/43, pp. 26, 339-400; 2/44, p. 292; 2/45, pp. 288-9. See also Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-8.

seems to have been anxious not to cause hardship to a considerable group of industrial workers by insisting that the law be rigorously applied.

Apart from reprimanding the London authorities in 1630 about the laxity of the leather searchers in the city,<sup>1</sup> the cases just mentioned comprised all the Privy Council's direct intervention in the enforcement of technical regulations in the period before the Civil War. There were in addition a few cases where the Privy Council intervened in the enforcement of the trading regulations but these were not many.<sup>2</sup> It seems, therefore that Mrs. Davies' comment regarding the enforcement of apprenticeship regulations in the same period - "the lack of effort by the central government to chart a consistent policy"<sup>3</sup> - was equally valid in the case of the leather regulations. The potential threat to local officials that the Privy Council might intervene was no doubt considerable, but the threat only infrequently became embodied in concrete action.

It was left to private enterprise to enforce the leather acts. Private agencies were responsible for 95 per cent. of the presentments in apprenticeship cases before the Civil War;<sup>4</sup> it is not possible to make a similar calculation for offences under the leather acts but it is certain that informers and individuals acting under the authority of enforcing patents were very important in administering both the technical and trading regulations regarding leather.

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1. P.R.O., P.C. 2/39, p. 725.

2. See Chapter 8, p. 332.

3. Davies, *op cit.*, p. 239.

4. *Ibid*, p. 17.

Enforcing patents were common throughout the whole field of economic regulation and the leather industry was no exception.<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Dyer's grant was in one sense an enforcing patent since any tanner who made leather illegally and who had not bought a dispensation was prosecuted; but Dyer's main function was to condone breaches of the law.<sup>2</sup> There were, however, other patents relating to the leather regulations. In the late sixteenth century a grant was made to William Smith to enforce certain of the technical regulations.<sup>3</sup> The leather act was also included in a dispensing patent granted in the 1560s or '70s covering many different aspects of economic regulation; this grant was revoked in 1575.<sup>4</sup> It is quite possible that there were similar patents granted which have not come to light.

In the first half of the seventeenth century enforcing patents were bunched in the 1630s. Earlier, in 1618 Sir William Bronker had asked the Privy Council for a grant to prevent breaches of regulations in the leather industry, "whereby God (no doubt) is offended,"<sup>5</sup> but there was too much opposition at the time to this kind of grant<sup>6</sup> and the pious request was unsuccessful. But later in July 1637 a group of men were empowered to prosecute butchers who damaged hides by bad flaying<sup>7</sup> and less than two

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1. See *ibid*, pp. 31 et seq. Also M.W. Beresford, "The Common Informer, the Penal Statutes, and Economic Regulation," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. X, no. 2 (1957), p. 233.

2. *Supra*, pp. 255-258

3. Cal. S.P.D., Dec. 1594, p. 569.

4. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 32, n. 34.

5. P.R.O., S.P. 15/add. 41, no. 77.

6. Beresford, *loc. cit.*, pp. 234-5.

7. Cal. S.P.D., 1637, p. 325.

years later four men were given letters patent to search out all offences concerned with the sale of tanned leather in twelve counties and eight cities of England.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1638 the London Company of Cordwainers was granted a patent to enforce the regulations relating to the sale of tanned leather. The grant was bitterly opposed by the curriers and it was one of the many patents revoked by the Crown in April 1639 as a sop to Parliament.<sup>2</sup> These last two patents were concerned with the enforcement of the marketing and not the technical regulations, but the distinction becomes a little unreal at this stage because one reason why a tanner might sell his leather outside the public market was that he knew it would not satisfy the technical requirements of the leather acts. It is possible that there were other more strictly technical patents in existence at this time. Certainly tanners in Berkshire and Suffolk were familiar enough with this kind of grant in the 1630s to be deceived into buying bogus dispensations from enterprising persons who pretended that they held patents to enforce the leather act.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for this burst of government activity in the 1630s is not clear but it may be surmised. There is no particular evidence that leather workers suddenly took to breaking the law in the 1630s. Neither is there reason to believe that the Crown suddenly became more concerned with the price and quality of leather. It is more likely that the patents relating to the leather industry were simply part of the Crown's

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1. Ibid., 1639, p. 624.

2. See Chapter 8, pp. 307-310.

3. P.R.O., P.C. 2/50, pp. 578, 605, 650; Exchequer Depositions, E 134/11 Car. I, Trinity II. For the Suffolk case, see Chapter 3, p. 89

attempt to raise money from any possible source to meet its increasing expenditure.

Of greater importance than patentees were informers. They were a valuable, though despised, part of the machinery for enforcing economic regulations. In the leather industry they were especially valuable since the regularly appointed inspectors could only supervise leather brought to the public markets in the towns. Outside these areas the enforcement of the leather acts was very much the responsibility of private individuals activated by the prospect of receiving a proportion of the penalty. Little is known of the leather informers as a class although one may suspect that they were men themselves connected with the leather industry and familiar with the techniques of leather manufacture.<sup>1</sup>

To examine in detail the activities of informers in the leather industry would require a separate study in itself; however the following table indicates the trend of their activities in a number of selected counties:

Table I

The Number of Informations laid by informers in the Court of the Exchequer at Westminster of alleged offences concerning the manufacture and sale of leather and leather goods in selected areas<sup>2</sup>

1570 <sup>3</sup>	1580 <sup>4</sup>	1600 <sup>5</sup>	1610 <sup>6</sup>	1620 <sup>7</sup>	1630/1 <sup>8</sup>	1640/1 <sup>9</sup>
21	18	21	13	1	0	0

1. On the origins of informers generally, see Davies, English Apprenticeship, pp. 40-62, passim. The one informer in the leather industry mentioned by Mrs. Davies was Thomas Lugg of Barnstable, Devon, a shoemaker, "experienced in the working and tanning of leather." (Ibid., p. 21, note 6).
2. London, Middlesex, Surrey, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Chester, Bristol.
3. P.R.O., Exchequer Memoranda Rolls, E 159/359. 4. P.R.O., Index, 17057.
5. P.R.O., E 159/418; 419. 6. P.R.O., E 159/438,439. 7. P.R.O. E159/458,459.
8. P.R.O. E 159/470. 9. P.R.O. E 159/480.

There were no recorded presentments for offences of the type in the Exchequer for any subsequent years in the seventeenth century.

Although the figures presented here are only a sample of the total offences under the leather act the trend is much the same as that shown by Mr. Beresford in his detailed study of the enforcement of general economic regulations by informers.<sup>1</sup> To the prosecutions of craftsmen under the leather acts must be added apprenticeship prosecutions under the Statute of Artificers; according to Mrs Davies' study of this subject the number in this category was small in the period before the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the enforcement of the leather acts in the Exchequer Court declined sharply in the early seventeenth century. However, this decline reflected an administrative change rather than any change in the attitude towards industrial legislation. In 1589, and more effectively in 1624, Parliament enacted legislation to keep informers out of the courts at Westminster. In part this was to ease the pressure of work on the central courts, but Parliament was also inspired by a strong hostility to informers arising from the unfriendly nature of their work and the illegal practices in which they often indulged. Informers after 1624 were restricted to the local courts of quarter sessions and to assess whether there was any decline in the enforcement of the leather acts, we need to examine the activities of the local courts.

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1. Beresford, loc. cit., pp. 233-4.

2. Davies, op. cit., pp. 83-4, 265. Mrs. Davies' suggestion that there were few apprenticeship prosecutions under the Statute of Artificers because they may have been dealt with under the leather acts, is unlikely since the leather acts were not really concerned with apprenticeship.

A full-scale examination of local quarter sessions records is beyond the scope of this study<sup>1</sup> and even if such an examination were feasible it is doubtful whether the nature of the records would allow any firm conclusion about the trend in the enforcement of the leather acts to be reached.<sup>2</sup> However two points can be made which, it is suggested, can be accepted even on the slender basis of evidence examined here.

In the first place, it seems likely that the exclusion of informers from the Westminster courts resulted in a growing laxity in the enforcement of industrial legislation because local courts were less efficient than the central courts. The weakness of local justice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is well known. Unpaid justices, unpaid constables, unpaid juries, needed for the efficient administration of law, a sense of duty that was perhaps rare. On these voluntary shoulders rested a huge burden of administration and justice - from bastardy to recusancy, from poor relief to maintenance of roads, from prevention of riots to the inspection of weights and measures, as well as the administration of the criminal code and the enforcement of industrial legislation of which the leather acts were only a part. The fact that local officials were identified with local affairs and were therefore not disinterested parties, and that the machinery of the courts was cumbersome and sometimes ineffect-

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1. Such a study would involve the examination of sessions rolls kept in all parts of the country. All that has been possible here is an examination of a number of printed sessions rolls (and since most of this part of the work has been done in Australia the number of such sources available is limited). Areas examined include Surrey, Warwick, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, Kesteven, Lancashire, Hampshire, Chester, Middlesex, Carmarvon, Leicestershire. For full references see bibliography.
  2. For the defects of the sources see Davies, English Apprenticeship, pp. 82-3.

ive also lessened the ability of local courts to administer justice.<sup>1</sup> The situation was even worse after the Restoration when the local justices lacked the guidance - or goad - of the Privy Council.<sup>2</sup> For all these reasons the local courts do not appear as very efficient agents in administering economic policy.

In the second place, it is clear that - despite their inefficiency - the local sessions did sometimes deal with legislation concerned with the leather industry and that the leather acts were not dead even in the later part of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Thus after presentments ceased in the central courts, transgressors of the leather legislation were still occasionally presented before the lower courts either by constables or leather searchers, or more usually by informers.<sup>4</sup>

The answers to two related questions are more doubtful. First we do not know how common presentments at quarter sessions were. And secondly, there is no way of knowing whether such cases became less common during the seventeenth century.

On the first of these doubtful points it seems fairly reasonable to assume that the enforcement of the industrial code in general and the

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1. Ibid., pp. 244-251; see also E. Heckscher, Mercantilism (2nd ed., 1955), vol. I, pp. 246-253.
  2. See, for example, E.G. Dowdell, A Hundred Years of Quarter Sessions, (C.U.P., 1932), p. 190.
  3. Davies, op cit., pp. 83-4, Tables 1 & 2, provide some evidence of presentments relating to the manufacture of leather in the quarter sessions of a number of counties between 1563 and 1642. For the later seventeenth century, the Surrey quarter sessions were dealing with leather craftsmen in the 1660s (Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 1659-1666 (Surrey Records Society, nos. XXXV, XXXVI, XXXIX, 1934-8), no. XXXV, pp.105-6, 134; no. XXXVI, p.212, 216; no. XXXIX, pp. 82, 125, 170.)
  4. In the 1660s one informer working in the Middlesex sessions specialised in leather cases (Dowdell, op cit., p. 174).

leather acts in particular was never more than a minor part of the activities of the local sessions. The hard-pressed justices were too busy with local matters to give much time to the administration of national legislation unless some case was forced before them by an informer. The works of Mrs. Davies and Dr. Dowdell support this view.<sup>1</sup> An examination of the frequency of cases concerned with the leather industry occurring in certain areas points in the same direction. In this respect the Surrey sessions records are probably the most instructive for the jurisdiction of the Surrey courts covered such important leather manufacturing areas as Southwark, Bermondsey and Guildford. Yet in the eight years 1659-1666, the Surrey justices dealt with only fourteen cases related to the leather trade or crafts. Of these, eight were apprenticeship offences arising from the Statute of Artificers and not from the leather acts. There were three offences concerned with the sale of hides or leather and two cases of leather searchers not carrying out their duties properly. The remaining case arose, not under the leather acts, but concerned a tanner polluting water supplies contrary to local health regulations. There was no case of leather or footwear being made contrary to the statutory provisions.<sup>2</sup> For another county, Warwickshire, that included the leather manufacturing area of Birmingham and the surrounding district, there is an unbroken series of quarter sessions records running from 1625 to 1690. During this period the justices dealt with ten apprenticeship cases involving leather workers (mostly breaches of indentures), one case of an illegal sale of

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1. Dowdell, *op. cit.*, Chapter VI, *passim*; Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-6.
  2. Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, no. XXXV, pp. 105-6, 124; no. XXXVI, pp. 212, 216, 256; no. XXXIX, pp. 82, 125, 170, 213-4, 232.

leather, and two cases of pollution of water supplies by leather manufacturers. The manufacturing clauses of the leather acts never concerned the justices.<sup>1</sup> In other regions including Lancashire between 1590 and 1606, and Kesteven (Lincolnshire) between 1674 and 1695 - both areas where the leather crafts were fairly numerous - the sessions records contain no mention of offences arising from the leather acts.<sup>2</sup> Thus we may not be far wrong in thinking that cases under the leather acts never appeared very frequently in the local courts during the seventeenth centuries.

The other doubtful matter was the trend of presentments during the seventeenth century. Dr. Dowdell in his study of the work of the Middlesex quarter sessions observed the justices in that county withdrawing from many fields of administration after 1660 and particularly in the case of the enforcement of economic regulations.<sup>3</sup> This accords with the general view of the fate of Tudor and Stuart economic regulation in the later seventeenth century,<sup>4</sup> and it may well be that - if the evidence were at hand - the enforcement of the leather acts at a local level would show the

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1. Warwick County Records, 1625-1690 (8 vols., ed. S.C. Radcliffe, & H.C. Johnson, Warwick, 1935-1953), vol. I, p. 157; vol. III, pp. 297, 309, 330; vol. IV, pp. 21, 121, 222; vol. VI, pp. 61, 128, 133; vol. VII, pp. 127, 251, 256; vol. VIII, pp. 64, 165, 191, 201.

2. J. Tait (ed.), Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records, vol. I (Chetham Society, n.s., vol. 77, 1917), passim; S.A. Peyton (ed.), Minutes of proceedings in Quarter Sessions... Kesteven, 1674-1695 (Lincs. Record Society, vols. 25-6, 1931), passim.

3. Dowdell, op. cit., p. 191.

4. See for example, Heckscher, Mercantilism, pp. 294, 310.

same trend. However, it may be thought that since presentments were never very frequent this trend was not very significant.

It appears, therefore, that the removal of informers from Westminster in 1624 meant a decline in the enforcement of the leather acts because, although informers did use the local courts, the quarter sessions were not an efficient means of implementing economic regulations. On the basis of the available evidence we can say that at a local level, the regulations governing the manufacture of leather were no more than an occasional nuisance during much of the seventeenth century. The absence of regular guidance to local authorities from the Privy Council, the inefficiency of the local system of administration, and the mounting hostility towards informers all brought about a loosening of the restrictions on the leather industry.

There were, in addition, a number of other reasons leading to a decline in enforcement of the leather acts during the seventeenth century. In the first place a good deal depended on the efficiency and honesty of local leather searchers and sealers. In the London area there were complaints throughout the century that these officers were both inefficient and dishonest. For example in 1605 John Bromley a leather searcher at the Southwark leather market was charged before the pie-powder court with having tried to get £12 from Peter Pattison a tanner in return for sealing his leather. Bromley was convicted of the offence but he claimed in the Star Chamber that Pattison's charge was false and was made maliciously when Bromley had refused to seal Pattison's leather which was not properly

tanned.<sup>1</sup> Later, in the 1620s and 1630s, the city authorities were concerned with the inefficiency of the leather searchers which the Company of Curriers attributed to the "often exchangeing" of these officials.<sup>2</sup> In 1676 the Court of Aldermen dealt with complaints that leather searchers were not confiscating badly tanned leather and that the Company of Cordwainers was not inspecting the quality of footwear made in the city.<sup>3</sup> A similar problem occurred again in 1681.<sup>4</sup> Finally in 1698 - after the leather regulations had been revived in connection with an excise duty imposed on leather<sup>5</sup> - it was necessary to print and publish copies of the leather act of 1604 to remind the searchers and sealers of their duty. The Court of Aldermen also set up a committee to inquire into abuses committed by leather searchers and the city authorities took bonds of £100 from the searchers that they would carry out their duties properly.<sup>6</sup> London was not the only place where the inspecting officials were causing difficulty: in Reading, for example, the leather searchers and sealers were dismissed in 1647 for having "abused themselves in their office by sealing greene leather"<sup>7</sup> and at Farnham in Surrey, two leather searchers were charged in 1662 with fraudulent dealings.<sup>8</sup>

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1. P.R.O., Star Chamber, S.C. 8/61/48.
  2. Repertories 41, fos. 140(b)-141, 299-299(b), 312(b)-313; 48, fo. 338(b); Index Remembrancia, p. 183; Curriers' Minute Book, p. 77.
  3. Repertories 81, fo. 62(b) et seq., 80(b) et seq.
  4. *Ibid.*, 86, fo. 220.
  5. *Infra*, p. 245.
  6. Repertories 102, fos. 446(b), 447, 429.
  7. Records of the Borough of Reading, vol. IV, p. 239.
  8. Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 1659-61, p. 212.

Closely connected with the imperfections of the leather searchers and sealers was the gradual decline of the power of the guilds during the seventeenth century. The leather searchers were normally appointed from the ranks of the guilds and in London the leather guilds had been given considerable powers of supervision over the leather workers. However the power of the guilds was weakened during the seventeenth century by the development of industries in areas beyond guild control and by common law judgements limiting the powers of guilds over non-freemen.<sup>1</sup>

The weakening of guild control was part of a wider philosophy developing from the end of the sixteenth century which stressed the importance of individual rights and liberties. It was manifest in the parliamentary attacks on monopolies and in the tendency on the part of lawyers to interpret restrictive legislation as liberally as possible<sup>2</sup> as well as in the changing attitude towards guilds.<sup>3</sup> On at least one occasion the implementation of the leather acts was affected by this growing individualism.<sup>4</sup>

The changing attitude towards restrictions on economic activity

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1. See Heckscher, Mercantilism I, pp. 305-7; J.R. Kellett, "The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicrafts and Retail Trade in London," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., vol. X, no. 3 (1958), pp. 383-4; see Chapter 5, pp. 193 et seq.
  2. See J.U. Nef, Industry and Government in France and England, 1540-1640 (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 58; Price, Patents of Monopoly, pp. 20-22; Heckscher, Mercantilism, vol. I, pp. 282-293; D.O. Wagner, "Coke and the Rise of Economic Liberalism," Econ. Hist. Rev., vol. VII (1935-6), pp. 30, 31-2. But for a somewhat different view see Davies, English Apprenticeship, pp. 239-243.
  3. See Unwin, Industrial Organization, pp. 212-3; Lipson, Econ. Hist., vol. III, pp. 347-8.
  4. See Chapter 8, p. 309.

was itself the result of changing economic conditions. During the seventeenth century the development of new techniques in old industries and new occupations outside the framework of existing government regulations tended to make much of the industrial code irrelevant or inadequate.<sup>1</sup> Although the leather industry was not greatly affected by such developments it is likely that the weakening of general economic legislation tended to undermine the leather acts. More important, the leather acts had been developed in the later sixteenth century in an atmosphere of rising prices and social tension. Both problems gradually eased in the seventeenth century: in particular the long rise in prices petered out by the 1630s. Thus there was less urgency to control the manufacture of leather as part of a policy of social security.

Thus there are a number of reasons which indicate that the enforcement of the leather acts was declining from quite early in the seventeenth century. Contemporary opinion believed the leather acts were falling into disuse. As early as 1608 the government was told of several ways in which the law was being broken.<sup>2</sup> In 1618 Sir William Bronker asked for his enforcing patent on the grounds that many regulations were being disregarded.<sup>3</sup> In 1627 the Privy Council was told that shoemakers in London were ignoring the statutory regulations for the manufacture of footwear<sup>4</sup> and a year later

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1. See Nef, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Ramsay, "Industrial Laisser-faire," pp. 94-5.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 14/31, no. 89.

3. *Supra*, p. 278.

4. Cal. S.P.D., 1627, p. 493.

the Court of Aldermen appointed a committee to examine the leather statutes following allegations that they were not being enforced.<sup>1</sup> The regulations continued to be ignored however and in 1634 the London Company of Curriers complained to the Lord Mayor that the tanning provisions of the statute of 1604 "seemith altogether to be forgotten and very much neglected."<sup>2</sup>

The extent to which the leather acts fell into disuse must not be exaggerated. There was no change in the attitude of the early Stuart governments towards the leather industry, nor during the Protectorate.<sup>3</sup> At the Restoration the leather legislation was still in existence, the machinery of enforcement remained, and the regulations were still enforced from time to time. The first sixty years of the seventeenth century had certainly seen a slackening of control as compared with the last forty years of the sixteenth century, but the virtual abandonment of the technical regulations of the leather industry did not take place until late in the seventeenth century.

(v)

#### Government policy after 1660

In the last four decades of the seventeenth century there were a number of modifications in existing government policy towards the leather industry. These changes were more noticable in the government's attitude

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1. Repertories, 43, fo. 31.
  2. Minute Book of the Company of Cordwainers, 1628-1658 (Gild Hall Ms. 6112/1), p. 77.
  3. See Ramsay, loc. cit., pp. 96-107, passim.

towards the sale and export of leather than towards its manufacture. Nevertheless it is probably true to say that in this period until the end of the seventeenth century the government had no interest in regulating the manufacture of leather. The old laws remained on the statute book expiring quietly until in 1697 they were given a new lease of life for a purpose rather different from those in the minds of the persons who had originally framed them.

After the Restoration, Parliament was again an agent for enacting economic legislation, yet no new legislation was forthcoming to control the manufacture of leather and footwear. In 1661 Parliament considered a bill "for the more speedy way for Tanning, Tawing and Dressing all sorts of Leather," but it was rejected by the House of Commons. The bill was promoted by Charles Howard, a son of the Earl of Arundel, who claimed that he had a new method of tanning without bark which was much quicker than the old ways and the bill would have given him sole use of the process for fourteen years.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the monopolistic nature of the project led to its failure.

The absence of fresh legislation<sup>2</sup> for the manufacture of leather

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. VIII, pp. 262, 277, 289; Lords' Journals, vol. XI, 26th Nov., 1st Dec. 1660; Hist. Mss. Comm., 7th Report, Appendix, "House of Lords Mss, 1641-1665," p. 135.
  2. In 1662 a bill concerned with the leather trade was extended - as an afterthought - to cover abuses in tanning and leatherdressing, but this amounted to no more than insisting that leather be sold in public markets where it could be inspected (see Chapter 8, p. 344). In 1689 and 1693 there were two unsuccessful attempts on the part of London leather workers to obtain an act against bad flaying (Minute Book of the Company of Curriers (Gild Hall Ms. 6113,) p. 71.

and leather goods contrasted sharply with the government's regulation of the textile industry. In the late sixteenth century the manufacture of both woollen cloth and leather had been closely controlled by the government - cloth because it was an important export commodity and also because it was needed by English consumers; and leather because it was an essential material for clothing and for agricultural and industrial purposes. In a period of rising prices it had been important to give the domestic consumer some protection by attempting to regulate the quality and price of the product. But in the late seventeenth century the government showed little interest in the technical regulation of the leather industry. True the regulations of 1604 still remained, local authorities continued to appoint leather searchers and sealers,<sup>1</sup> and some cases under the leather acts were still dealt with by local quarter sessions,<sup>2</sup> but there was no attempt to bring the leather acts up to date. By contrast, in 1662 the government introduced new legislation for the textile industry that established new technical standards for the manufacture of cloth.

The continued interest shown by the government in the quality of cloth was explained by the importance of cloth in the export

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1. e.g. in London. The records of the Court of Aldermen contain regular entries noting the appointment of the leather officers throughout the later seventeenth century. (Repertories, passim). A similar situation can be found in many provincial centres.
  2. *Supra*, p. 283. As late as 1710 an unapprenticed tanners were prosecuted before the Lancashire sessions (*Davies, Apprenticeship*, p. 21, note 5).
  3. Heckscher, Mercantilism, I, p. 297; H. Heaton, History of the Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industry, (1920), pp. 405-411, passim.

trade.<sup>1</sup> The depression in the cloth trade in the later seventeenth century<sup>2</sup> drove government and manufacturers alike to pay attention to the quality of cloth sent overseas. Leather, on the other hand, was not important as an export although the exports of leather and leather goods did increase considerably after 1663.<sup>3</sup> But there was no need to supervise the quality of leather to retain export markets. Neither did the government feel bound to act in the interests of the home consumer. From the mid-1660s leather prices fell steadily<sup>4</sup> bringing about a reversal of the old policy of banning exports and the removal of the restrictions on middlemen.<sup>5</sup> Also, following the Restoration settlement the government of Charles II was much more secure than the government of Elizabeth and there was less need to supervise the quality of leather and footwear as part of a policy of avoiding social unrest.

Changing economic conditions in the years after the Restoration therefore removed the raison d'etre of the technical control of the leather industry. The constitutional changes, too, undermined the old technical legislation. Although the local machinery for the enforcement of the regulations for the leather industry remained, the power of the central

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1. Although the importance of cloth in the export trade had declined relatively in the second half of the seventeenth century, it still accounted for about 40 per cent. of total exports at the end of the century. (R. Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1660-1600," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., vol. VII, no 2 (1954), p. 150.
  2. Heaton, op. cit., p. 251.
  3. See Chapter 1, pp. 30-31.
  4. See Appendix I
  5. See Chapter 8, pp. 314, 336, et seq.

administration was considerably weakened after 1660. With its prerogative power limited and its right to meddle in financial affairs challenged by the rising power of Parliament, the Privy Council was no longer in a position to see that local authorities were administering legislation properly.<sup>1</sup> Since Parliament did not develop administrative functions in place of the Privy Council the ability of the central government to enforce legislation at a local level was restricted.<sup>2</sup>

Changing economic conditions in the late seventeenth century and decaying institutions for enforcing the leather acts turned the sixteenth century regulations into archaic survivals in which the government had little or no interest. In one respect, however, the government did not lose interest in the manufacture of leather - the industry continued to be regarded as a possible source of revenue. Before the Civil War the government continually turned the technical regulations to good account although the intention of using the industry as a source of revenue was never openly declared. After the Restoration the purse strings passed from the Crown to Parliament and the use of the industry for money raising purposes became more open - or blatant. By 1697 the government was sorely pressed for money. The wars of William III were a serious drain on revenue and the existing sources of income - especially the salt duty - did not come up to expectations. Therefore in 1697 the government placed a 15 per cent. excise duty on all home manufactured leather for an

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1. E.R. Turner, The Privy Council of England, 1607-1784, vol. I (Baltimore, 1927), pp. 153-4; 380-1; Heckscher, Mercantilism, pp. 394-5.

2. Heckscher, Mercantilism, I, pp. 295-6.

initial period of three years.<sup>1</sup>

To administer the duty the excise commissioners appointed a small army of collectors some of whom were leather craftsmen.<sup>2</sup> The statute imposing the duty also contained a clause insisting that the leather act of 1604 should be observed. The main purpose of this provision was to confine the leather trade to public markets where leather could be valued and the duty charged but it also meant that attention was once again focussed on the technical regulations for manufacturing leather. Two hundred copies of the leather act were printed and distributed throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> Whether the revival of the technical regulations had any effect on the leather industry is hard to say; most of the complaints about the new duty were concerned with the leather trade and the problems of collecting the duty, rather than with its effects upon the technical state of the industry. However, it is worth noting that as late as 1824 leather manufacturers attributed the continued separation of the heavy leather crafts to the continuation of the leather duty with the accompanying technical regulations.<sup>4</sup>

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1. 8 & 9 Will. III, cap. 21. The duty was later extended and survived into the nineteenth century. The leather duty is part of the financial history of the period, and rather out of the scope of this present study. The financial background of the duty and its administration is summarised in Appendix 6.
  2. Cal. of Treasury Books, vol. XII, pp. 136-7, 292.
  3. Cal. of Treasury Books, vol. XII, p. 125.
  4. Select Committee on the Leather Duties (1824), p. 25; quoted by J.H. Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain, vol. I, (2nd ed., C.U.P., 1930), p. 324.

Thus at the end of the seventeenth century regulations for the manufacture of leather and leather goods were substantially the same as those enacted in 1563. But there the similarity ends. The first purpose of the Elizabethan regulations was to provide the consumer with good quality leather and leather goods. The leather act was part of Elizabethan social policy. This is not to say that Elizabeth and her ministers acted from strong altruistic motives; rather they realised that the stability of the throne depended upon a firm foundation of social peace. But - as the early Stuarts learnt - the stability of the throne equally depended upon sound finance. Thus from 1563 until the Civil War we find industrial policy being used to raise revenue. At the same time various groups within the leather industry attempted to press their own interests and shape policy for their own ends. Even before the Civil War gradually changing economic and political conditions brought about a decline in the enforcement of the technical regulations of the leather industry; and after the Restoration the old legislation became largely neglected except in a few local cases. When the leather act was again revived in 1697, the sole reason was to assist in raising revenue.

## Chapter 8 : The Government and the Leather Industry

### II: Trading Regulations, 1563 - 1700

(i)

#### Introduction

The regulation of technical standards in the leather industry by the government was complemented by an equally comprehensive body of regulations governing the internal and external trade in hides and skins, leather and leather products. In most cases both technical and commercial clauses were contained in the same statutes. We have separated them merely for convenience of analysis but it should be remembered that they were integral parts of a single body of legislation.

The foundations of commercial policy were laid in the mid-sixteenth century. In the internal trade, the sale of hides, leather and leather goods was generally confined to public markets and middlemen were excluded from dealing in these products. In the external trade, the export of hides and skins, leather and footwear was prohibited except under licence. This policy continued unchanged in essentials until the last forty years of the seventeenth century. Then, in the external trade, first the restrictions on the export of calf skins and later the restrictions on the export of leather were removed while the prohibition on the export of footwear lapsed. In the internal trade, the ban on middlemen was lifted and the restrictions limiting trade to public

markets were forgotten.

The same sectional interests that shaped the technical control of the leather industry were responsible for the trading regulations. To the Crown in the sixteenth century the regulations were a means of price control; for middlemen were held to raise prices and export led to dearth in the home market. Hence middlemen should be prohibited and exports banned. The regulations were also a useful source of revenue which came from fines or from grants permitting a breach of statutory legislation.

The leather industry itself was by no means a united pressure group. Little was heard of the leather manufacturers in the sixteenth century. We saw in the previous chapter that the interests of the tanners were ignored between 1563 and 1604 when the tanning regulations were under discussion. Much the same was true in the case of the commercial regulations. Tanners - in general - wished to sell their leather in whatever market they pleased; the restrictions on exports were not in their interests. Possibly because there was no tanners' guild in London to push the interests of leather manufacturers, their views were not heard until after the Restoration when - in different economic conditions - the tanners in alliance with graziers and exporting merchants were successful in obtaining a change in the law. The leatherdressers, like the tanners, were presumably interested in exporting leather if they wished to. However they were able to do so, despite statutory prohibition, under the terms of a number of licences granted to merchants in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries permitting the export of large quantities of raw and dressed calfskins.

The most influential of all the pressure groups before the Restoration was the London Company of Cordwainers. Its influence may be suspected in the development of the technical control of tanning and currying (it was certainly in the interests of shoemakers to try to control the quality of their raw material), but it was in the field of commercial regulation that the company played a decisive part. It was responsible for the restrictions against middlemen and for the government's refusal to recognise carriers as leather using craftsmen. In this way the company endeavoured to keep the trade in tanned leather in London in its own hands. The Company of Cordwainers was also largely responsible for the ban on the export of leather, although in this it was supported by other leather using craftsmen.

After the Restoration the position of the Company of Cordwainers waned. On the matter of exports it lost a hard battle with the tanners, graziers and exporters. The company also eventually lost the control of the tanned leather trade. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the London Company of Curriers had tried to secure a revision of the law relating to middlemen and particularly obtain the right for carriers to buy leather from tanners; the Company of Cordwainers had always been able to block these moves. In the different economic conditions after the Restoration the curriers were able to obtain a modification of the law that allowed middlemen to deal in leather.

The regulation of the internal trade in leather and leather goods was essential to the enforcement of manufacturing regulations. The

only practical way of trying to maintain technical standards was to inspect the quality of leather and leather goods when they were bought and sold. To this extent the trading regulations were merely another aspect of the manufacturing regulations. However, both the control of the internal trade and the overseas trade had purposes other than the maintenance of technical standards. It is to a detailed study of the trading regulations that we now turn.

(ii)

Regulation of the internal trade in hides, leather, and leather goods

The basis of the regulation of the internal trade was established by the comprehensive leather act of 1563 although its compilers drew on earlier regulations for the details of their policy.<sup>1</sup> The act of 1563 endeavoured to confine the leather trade to public markets and tried to stop middlemen from dealing in hides and leather. Only tanners were allowed to buy raw hides (nothing was said about the purchase of skins for dressing) although there was no provision about where purchases should take place. Tanned leather could be bought only by leather using craftsmen. This was a particularly important clause for it was aimed at middlemen in the leather trade. It was so interpreted that curriers were not regarded as craftsmen using leather and they were therefore prevented from buying leather and had to rely on the shoemakers for work.<sup>2</sup> This remained a point of controversy for more than a century. Sales of leather and leather goods were to take

1. *Infra*, p.302.

2. Curriers prepared leather for the shoemakers after it had been tanned; see Chapter 2, p.55 ; and Chapter 5 ,pp.174-175

place in public markets where leather searchers and sealers could inspect the quality of the goods. It was illegal to sell leather before it had been sealed and the details of all sales were to be entered in a register.<sup>1</sup> A scale of charges was laid down for searching and sealing leather. That the act was primarily concerned with London can be seen from the clauses appointing the leather markets in London.<sup>2</sup>

These regulations embodied all the sixteenth century hostility towards middlemen. It seemed clear to contemporaries that these "Merchants of mychyeffe" raised the price of any commodity passing through their hands.<sup>3</sup> The case was well put by some London shoemakers in 1607 when they told the government that "The oftener that leather is bought and soulded the dearer it muste needs be when it cometh to be employed to any vse for ev'rye one that buyethe and selleth the same will make a ganie thereby whch must neddes enhance the price thereof."<sup>4</sup> The legislation against middlemen - and indeed the regulations restricting trade to public markets where middlemen could be watched - was, as far as the Crown was concerned, a form of price control. It was much easier than direct price-fixing since this required a knowledge of what the correct price level should be and needed an army of local officials to implement it. Labour was the only

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1. Unfortunately none of these registers seem to have survived.
  2. 5 Eliz., cap. 8, sects. 6, 9, 10, 23, 27-30, 32. Most local authorities supplemented national regulations in some way, e.g. by defining the limits of the leather markets or by restricting the persons who could deal in the market. For example, see Chapter 4, pp.
  3. For the contemporary attitude towards middlemen, see e.g., H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industry (Oxford, 1920), pp. 119-20.
  4. P.R.O., S.P. 14/26, no. 82.

commodity the price of which was regularly fixed, and in this case it was impossible to do anything else. The prices of corn and bread were also directly fixed from time to time, but generally by the second half of the sixteenth century the prices of these commodities were regulated indirectly by supervising the activities of middlemen.<sup>1</sup>

However the Tudor government was in a difficulty; for the usefulness of middlemen in linking producers with consumers was frequently as obvious as their wickedness in raising prices. In both the cloth and the corn trades the government was obliged to allow middlemen to function under strict supervision.<sup>2</sup> The government was in a similar equivocal position over the leather trade and it is not surprising that the Crown's treatment of middlemen was largely determined by the influence of vested interests. Between 1548 and 1558 there were five acts alternately prohibiting and allowing middlemen in the leather trade. They were banned on the grounds that they raised the price of leather; and allowed on the grounds that they supplied leather in small quantities to shoemakers who could not afford to buy in bulk from tanners.<sup>3</sup> The fluctuation in policy was the result of pressure brought to bear on the government by the two London companies of shoemakers and curriers.<sup>4</sup> The former were intent on excluding middlemen (especially curriers) so that they could have direct access to supplies of leather. The company also wished to deal in leather without

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1. N.S.B. Gras, The Evolution of the English Corn Market (Harvard, 1926), pp. 132-3.
  2. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-6; Heaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-3.
  3. 2 & 3 Edw. VI, cap. 9; 3 & 4 Edw. VI, cap. 6; 5 & 6 Edw. VI, cap. 15; 1 Mar. St. 3, cap. 8; 1 Eliz., cap. 8.
  4. G. Unwin, The Guilds and Companies of London, (1908), p. 252.

competition from any other body. Carriers on the other hand by virtue of their position in the manufacturing process were well placed to act as middlemen and they resented any attempt on the part of the shoemakers to stop them buying leather.<sup>1</sup> By the act of 1563 the cordwainers obtained, for the time being, the upper hand and the carriers were prevented from buying leather.

The vacillation on the part of the government in its treatment of middlemen is illustrative of the difficulties that faced the government in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As we have seen in the previous chapter the Crown lacked the necessary knowledge to frame technical legislation - perhaps it would be more true to say that it lacked the disinterested qualified advisers - and so was open to suggestion from all sorts of interested parties. On economic matters the London companies frequently took the lead in promoting bills in Parliament and they engaged in vigorous lobbying to see that their bills were passed.<sup>2</sup> Providing the companies could persuade the government that their proposals coincided with the interests of the Crown, they stood some chance of success. In the late sixteenth century the cordwainers - playing on the general hostility towards middlemen - were more successful in their parliamentary activities than the carriers.

The London carriers made determined efforts to modify the 1563 act so that they could legally buy tanned leather. Four years after the

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1. For the trading activities of the shoemakers and carriers, see Chapter 4, pp. 136-139
  2. See J.E. Neale, The Elizabethan House of Commons, (London, 1949), pp. 384 et seq.

passing of the act leading members of the company obtained a licence from the Queen allowing them to buy leather, but the majority of carriers did not benefit from it.<sup>1</sup> In January 1576 the Court of Aldermen gave permission for the carriers to present a petition to Parliament on the matter,<sup>2</sup> but nothing was achieved. Some years later, in 1585, the carriers and the shoemakers both had bills before Parliament. The cordwainers, by dint of better management, won the day and obtained an act which tightened up the existing regulations. By the act of 1563 only the illegal buyers of unwrought leather were penalised. The shoemakers alleged that the carriers had been selling leather without penalty; the new act, therefore placed penalties on the sellers as well as the buyers. The carriers were understandably irritated by the success of their opponents' bill. One carrier complained that it had been passed early in the morning when the carriers' supporters were absent from the House and rashly remarked that "the carriers could have no justice in this house," for which words he was admonished at the Bar of the House.<sup>3</sup>

Lacking success in Parliament, the carriers turned to the Privy Council for relief from "such Statutes as have been heretofore made concerning the lymyttacion of their trade," and also complaining of competition from suburban and country carriers. The Privy Council referred the matter to the Lord Mayor for examination, "whereof being enformed their

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1. Gild Hall Ms. 6195.

2. Repertories 19, fo. 35.

3. 27 Eliz., cap. 16; P.R.O., S.P. 12/177, no. 16; Hist. Mss. Comm. 3rd report, Appendix, "House of Lords Mss, 1450-1625," pp. 5-6; Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

Lordships intended to take such further order as to them should seeme most convenient in that behalfe."<sup>1</sup> Although the City authorities discussed the problem several times during the next year or two<sup>2</sup> they did nothing definite. However, the matter did not rest there and in June 1590 the Privy Council wrote to the Attorney-General, who had apparently been making enquiries about the carriers grievances, ordering him to prepare a dispensation for the carriers from the statute of 1585 on the ground that the shoemakers had abused their right of buying and selling leather.<sup>3</sup> This dispensation was never made.

In 1601 the carriers sponsored another bill in Parliament that would have recognised carrying as an occupation "working or Converting of Lether into made wares," so enabling carriers to buy tanned leather on equal terms with other leather craftsmen. The bill was rejected at its second reading, probably because of opposition from the shoemakers.<sup>4</sup> The carriers received no relief from the re-enactment of the leather act in 1604 which was perhaps the reason why a carrier abused a member of the committee which drafted the act in "slanderous and unseemly terms."<sup>5</sup> The carriers made a final attempt to modify the law in 1607 but the bill was again blocked by the shoemakers and their friends in Parliament.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter the

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1. Acts of the Privy Council, 1587, pp. 200, 265. For matters between the City and suburban carriers, see Chapter 5, pp. 305
  2. Repertories 21, fos. 425(b), 465(b), 512; 22, fo. 10(b).
  3. Acts of the Privy Council, 1590, p. 282.
  4. P.R.O., S.P., 12/298, no. 25.
  5. Commons' Journals, vol. 1, p. 240.
  6. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 352, 365, 373-4; Lords' Journals, vol. II, 16th May 1607, et seq.

curriers appear to have given up and, according to Professor Unwin, the two groups came to a tacit agreement in 1616 to ignore the regulations.<sup>1</sup> Probably neither company could afford the expense of continually promoting bills in Parliament. However the matter did not end there entirely,<sup>2</sup> and much later in the seventeenth century the curriers returned to the attack with greater success.<sup>3</sup>

In the years between 1563 and 1604 therefore, the statutory control of the internal leather trade was determined by the interests of the London Company of Cordwainers. The Crown was concerned with the price of leather and footwear but it did not really know whether middlemen raised the price of leather or kept it down. It was the result of the superior ability of the shoemakers over the curriers to manage their case in Parliament that middlemen were prohibited in the leather trade even though they were allowed under licence in some other branches of trade. There were no new developments in the government's control of the internal leather trade between 1604 and 1660 although neither the curriers nor the shoemakers lost interest in the regulation of the trade.

### (iii)

#### Enforcement of internal trading regulations

Much of what was said in the previous chapter regarding the

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1. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford, 1904), p.22, note 1. Prof. Unwin gives no supporting reference for his statement.
  2. The question flared up again in 1638-9 (infra, pp.307-310) and in 1651 the shoemakers and the curriers both sent petitions on the subject to the Council for Trade (Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers (Gild Hall Ms. 7353, vol. I), 24th April 1651).
  3. Infra, pp. 314-316.

enforcement of the technical regulations<sup>1</sup> also applies to the restrictions on the leather trade and need not be repeated. The means of enforcement were identical and in fact it is difficult and unrealistic to separate the manufacturing and the marketing regulations in this context. All that is necessary here is to enlarge on one or two points especially related to the enforcement of the trade restrictions.

There were a few patents granted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries empowering individuals or groups to enforce the trading regulations. Only one has been noted in the later sixteenth century - although there may have been others. This was a patent granted to John Field, a currier, to enforce the trading regulations of the acts that preceded the statute of 1563 in the counties of Devon and Cornwall.<sup>2</sup> In the seventeenth century there were two enforcing patents granted in 1638.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest was the grant made to the Company of Cordwainers, for it highlights again the way in which economic policy was influenced by pressure groups.

The company negotiated with the Crown in the summer of 1638 for a patent to enforce the market regulation of the act of 1604 and the grant was obtained in December of the same year.<sup>4</sup> Under the terms of the grant the company was empowered to seize any leather sold contrary to regulation:

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1. See Chapter 7, pp. 273-290.

2. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1560-1563, p. 266; P.R.O., Patent Rolls, C 66/978.

3. See Chapter 7, p. 279.

4. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers (Gild Hall Ms. 7353, vol. 1), 28th August 1638; Company of Cordwainers, Wardens Account Book (Gild Hall Ms. 7351/2), 7th June, 15th August, 8th October, 7th December, 1638; P.R.O., S.P. 16/404, no. 9.

that is outside public markets, or bought and sold by persons who were not leather workers. Following the seizure of the leather the offenders were to be prosecuted in the Exchequer Court and a proportion of the penalty was to go to the company. There is no doubt that the grant was a device of the Company of Cordwainers to attack their rivals the curriers and some prosecutions were actually commenced both in the Westminster courts and in local sessions.<sup>1</sup>

The Company of Curriers was not slow in opposing the cordwainers grant. It prepared a memorandum which was sent to the Privy Council, outlining the terms of the offending grant and stating its objections to it. The chief complaint was that it was unlawful for the Company of Cordwainers to act as an informer and that it was unjust for leather to be seized before it had been proved that an offence had been committed. The curriers also alleged that the shoemakers used the leather they seized for their own purposes. And - taking a stand on an act of 1624 relating to informers - the curriers claimed that it was illegal for the Company of Cordwainers to commence prosecutions in the Exchequer. Finally, the curriers complained that the Company of Cordwainers was not liable for the costs of the defendents if cases brought under the grant were not proved.<sup>2</sup>

The Privy Council passed the dispute over to the city of London authorities. On March 26th the Court of Aldermen instructed the Company

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1. Cordwainer's Court Book, 13th March, 1638/9; 6th June, 1639.
  2. P.R.O., S.P. 16/404, no. 9. There is no direct indication on the document of the authorship of the memorandum but there is no doubt that it was composed on behalf of the curriers.

of Cordwainers to prosecute a carrier on the charge of illegally buying leather. The carrier was told to admit the charge but "to stand upon the poynte of Right whether he might by the Lawe, do the same." In the meantime the Company of Cordwainers were ordered to return the leather which had been confiscated.<sup>1</sup> In making this order the Court of Aldermen appears to have been sympathetic to the carriers. This was not surprising considering the long-standing opposition of the city to prerogative grants; even the fact that in this particular case the grant was held by one of the city's own companies was not likely to make it more acceptable. It also seems that the London authorities thought that there was at least a possibility that the courts would decide that carriers were leather workers within the meaning of the acts of 1563 and 1604. They may well have been encouraged in this belief by the prevailing tendency for the Courts to interpret restrictive legislation as liberally as possible.<sup>2</sup>

What finally happened to the shoemakers' patent is a little puzzling. The Company of Cordwainers was still prosecuting carriers under the grant in July 1639<sup>3</sup> and in October the company noted that the matter between it and the carriers would "have trial at law this term."<sup>4</sup> But there was no further mention of the matter in the Company's records after that date (the carriers records were completely silent about the whole affair)

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1. Repertory 53, fos. 151-151(b).
  2. See Chapter 7, p. 288.
  3. Wardens' Account Book, 16th July 1639.
  4. Cordwainers' Court Book, 10th October 1639; see also Account Book, September 1639.

and no trace of the case can be found in the law courts. It is indeed possible that the patent came under the terms of the royal proclamation of April 1639 revoking many prerogative grants and that the legal proceedings then petered out. There was no specific mention of the shoemakers' patent in the proclamation but it was covered by the clause revoking "All grants of fines, penalties, and forfeitures before judgment granted, or mentioned to be granted, by letters patent, privy seals, signet, sign manual, or otherwise."<sup>1</sup>

It is not known what prompted the Company of Cordwainers to obtain the patent. The company was certainly aware that market regulations were being broken and early in 1638 it had employed an informer to prosecute offenders.<sup>2</sup> We have seen in the previous chapter that the number of offences under the leather acts concerned with the manufacture and sale of leather dwindled in the Exchequer Court from the 1620s. After that time the extent to which the marketing regulations were enforced can be gauged only by a close study of the records of local courts. The evidence on this point is inconclusive,<sup>3</sup> but it appears unlikely that local courts of justice became more concerned with the administration of the legislation relating to the sale of leather as the seventeenth century progressed.

There is, in fact, evidence to suggest that the internal leather trade was being conducted more and more outside the statutory framework

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1. The proclamation is printed in W.H. Price, English Patents of Monopoly (Harvard, 1913), pp. 173-5. The clause quoted is on p. 175.
  2. Company of Cordwainers, Wardens Account Book, 20th April, 7th June 1638.
  3. See Chapter 7, pp. 282-286

simply because tanners, shoemakers and others found extra-market dealings much more convenient and because middlemen were virtually indispensable.<sup>1</sup> Within a few years of the enactment of the leather act in 1563 there were complaints that the marketing regulations were being ignored. In the late summer of 1566 an informer named Marten alleged that in the previous five years only fifteen leather backs had been sold at Guildford market in Surrey, and that leather manufacturers usually sold leather to middlemen in their own homes to avoid the search at the market.<sup>2</sup> Two years later the Court of Aldermen became so concerned at the shortage of leather in the London markets that it appointed a commission to enquire into the leather trade. The commission found that the tanners were bringing "theyr sayd lether in the nyght season in baskettes and by other secrete meanes into diverse of the Cordwayners howses," instead of selling the leather at Leadenhall market. The wardens of the Company of Cordwainers were ordered to stop this illegal trade and a few months later the city aldermen told "innholders wthin. their wards, and other persons suspected not to harbour tanned leather in their houses, but shall cause bringers and carriers of leather to bring the same to Leadenhall."<sup>3</sup> The problem was a chronic one. A century later leather craftsmen were being prosecuted in several parts of the country for illegal dealings in leather,<sup>4</sup> and right at the end of the seventeenth century sales of leather outside the appointed markets were

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1. For the reasons for the development of trade outside the public markets and the functions performed by middlemen, see Chapter 4, *passim*.
  2. Hist. Mss. Comm., 7th Report, Appendix, "Mss. of W.M.Molyneux," p.619.
  3. Repertories, 16, fos. 359(b), 439.
  4. e.g., Warwick County Records, vol. V (ed. S.C. Ratcliff & H.C. Johnson, Warwick, 1939), p. 128; Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 1661-3 (Surrey Records Society, Number XXXVI, 1935), p. 212.

described as an "ancient practice,"<sup>1</sup> even though the marketing regulations were still in existence.

(iv)

Modification in policy for internal trade after 1660

In the decades after the Restoration, there was a marked change in policy. The reasons for the change is to be found in changing economic conditions but it is interesting to note that the same pressure groups that shaped economic policy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries continued to do so after the Restoration. It should be noticed, too, that the changes in the regulation of the internal leather market in the late seventeenth century had their counterpart in the even more marked changes in the policy relating to the export trade in the same period.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate Restoration policy was an extension of the traditional Elizabethan regulations. In 1662 in an act dealing mainly with the export of leather, it was stipulated that sales of leather should take place only in public markets. The only new provision in the act was a clause compelling any person buying leather in and within three miles of London to inform the Company of Curriers so that the leather "may be curried tallowed or otherwise, as is directed and appointed" by the statute of 1604.<sup>3</sup> This was a considerable extension of the curriers' power.

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1697, p.74.

2. Infra, pp. 334-344

3. 14 Car. II, cap. 7; Commons' Journals, vol. VIII, pp. 358, 362-3, 401, 406, 432; Lords' Journals, vol. XI, 15th April, 19th May 1662. For the export regulations in the act, see below, pp. 334-335.

Under previous legislation the London curriers had the right of all currying work in London and of supervision of all currying done in the London area; the new act gave the curriers the right to search the premises of any leather workers. The background of this piece of legislation is obscure, but it seems clear that this clause was the work of the curriers themselves and it gave them the means of preventing currying work being given to non-freemen. But the new act did nothing to change the legal position of the curriers and they were still forbidden to buy and sell tanned leather. What is really significant about the new act is that it represented the first real success of the London curriers in Parliament for more than a century. What the shoemakers thought about the extension of the curriers' rights of search is not recorded but it is hardly likely that they allowed the clause to go through Parliament unopposed. It is a feature of the development of policy in the later seventeenth century, however, that the London Company of Cordwainers was unable to dominate legislation in the same way as it had done earlier in the century.

In the following year the act of 1662 was strongly criticised by a committee appointed by the House of Commons. The bulk of the criticisms were related to the clauses concerned with the export of leather but one clause dealt with the sale of leather. The committee had heard complaints "that several Persons buy and sell leather again without working it; to the great prejudice of the Manufacture." It was therefore agreed that the penalty for the offence should be raised from the existing confiscation of the leather, to a fine of £500 to be divided between the Crown and the informer. But following representations from the shoemakers

"That the Way of Information was not so effectual," it was recommended instead that the Crown should licence individuals to search out offences in addition to the regular searching officers appointed by statute.<sup>1</sup> The report was never implemented, but the heavy penalty suggested testifies to the continued existence of a strong antipathy towards middlemen. There was, however, probably a stronger feeling at the time that the restrictions on dealers in the leather trade were no longer of any practical use. In 1675, for example, certain leather interests - probably the curriers and perhaps others - asked the government to allow an unrestricted internal trade in leather so that poor leather workers could buy tanned leather in small quantities without having to attend the markets for it.<sup>2</sup> Eventually there was passed in 1689 an "Act explaining part of an act made in the first year of King James...",<sup>3</sup> which defined curried leather as a made ware within the meaning of the act of 1604 and permitted the sale of leather not worked into leather goods. The new act was to all intents and purposes a middlemen's charter.

This act was important for several reasons. In the first place the clash of interests of several groups within the leather industry can be clearly seen. Secondly, the arguments which surrounded the bill as it passed through Parliament throw light on the leather trade and upon the operation of the leather acts. And, thirdly, these arguments show a

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. VIII, pp. 495, 529-30.

2. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, p. 88.

3. 1 Will. & Mar., cap. 33.

changing attitude towards the problem of middlemen.<sup>1</sup>

The act was inspired by the London curriers. Its true intention is best revealed by a clause in the original draft but which was finally omitted from the act: "And to intent that the Currier may have due encouragement, and be no further nor more strictly bound than other artificers, ... , be it enacted ... That it shall and may be lawful ... , for any Currier to buy in open fair or market leather tanned, and, after he hath curried the same, to sell it to any person whatsoever that shall work the same leather, and make it into wares or transport the same ...". It was later thought that this clause would confine the trade in tanned leather entirely into the curriers' hands, and it was therefore excluded in favour of a more general clause permitting all leather dealers and workers to buy and sell leather.

In support of the bill the curriers advanced three arguments. First, they claimed that if they were allowed to buy and sell leather the technical regulations of the statute of 1604 would be enforced. As the law stood tanners and shoemakers - who both had an interest in working poorly tanned leather - would not supply the curriers with tanned leather if the Company of Curriers seized imperfect leather as it was supposed to do. Therefore the Company did not usually seize leather because the craftsmen wanted currying work. The point was not a strong one and the

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1. The paragraphs that follow are based on the report of the proceedings of the committee of the House of Lords set up to examine the bill. See Hist. Mss. Comm., Report 12, Appendix 6, "House of Lords Mss, 1689-90," pp. 111-4.

shoemakers claimed that the curriers never had bothered to supervise the quality of leather properly, not even of curried leather; the wardens of the company simply passed the company seal around to individual curriers to seal their own leather. Secondly the curriers claimed that "no artificer ought to be prohibited selling anything he manufactures." The argument was not elaborated but it was an important point for it appealed to the current opinion that English manufacturers should be given encouragement. Thirdly, the curriers argued that middlemen performed a valuable service. "The more buyers and sellers the better for the public." It is doubtful whether such a justification of middlemen could have been made successfully earlier in the century, but in 1689 the old hostility was dissolving. Even the shoemakers who opposed the curriers bill admitted that "they sell (leather) to their poor bretheren..., but there is no law for it."

The opposition to the bill was mixed; the London shoemakers led the opposition but they were supported by the tanners and by the exporting merchants. The basis of their objections was that the new act would give the curriers a monopoly of the leather trade. The shoemakers also claimed - without much justification - that the act would mean that the London curriers would have the right of search of all leather, even that curried outside London.<sup>1</sup>

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1. It was to meet this objection that the act contained a clause restricting the right of the Company of Curriers to inspect curried leather to members of the company and curriers within three miles of London.

The shoemakers had a strange ally in the London Leathersellers' Company, which demanded that if the carriers could buy and sell tanned leather, it wanted the same right for leathersellers. As the counsel for the carriers remarked "The Leatherseller is a useless person in this matter ... a mere intruder into this trade." The leathersellers were traditionally dealers in skins and light leather - not tanned leather<sup>1</sup> - but they seem to have thought that if the trade in tanned leather became unrestricted the carriers might encroach on their own trade. The leathersellers were unsuccessful in getting a clause in the new act protecting their own interests.

The removal of the restrictions on middlemen in the heavy leather trade - the act of 1689 marked a change in the legal rather than the actual position of middlemen - was only a part of the general policy of removing restrictions on internal trade. The control of middlemen in the corn trade, for example, was relaxed in 1656<sup>2</sup> and earlier in the century restrictions on middlemen in the trades in wool, yarn, and fuel had been removed or relaxed.<sup>3</sup> Legislation against middlemen was medieval in origin although it had been renewed in the second half of the sixteenth century. When trade was localised and consumers and producers were in direct contact the restrictions may have had some point. But with the growth of

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1. See Chapter 4, pp. 131-132, 139-140.

2. Gras, Corn Market, pp. 155-6, 204, 252.

3. E. Heckscher, Mercantilism (2nd ed., 1955), I, pp. 268-9.

a national market in England - which middlemen made possible<sup>1</sup> - they became meaningless.

The act of 1689 said nothing about markets and in this respect the law was unchanged. But the leather trade had long spilled out of the traditional channels to which it was legally confined.<sup>2</sup> In 1697 the government tried to push the leather trade back into public markets to make easier the collection of an excise duty on leather levied in that year.<sup>3</sup> There was a storm of protest from the leather dealers and leather workers. Some Yorkshire tanners protested that they sold most of their leather in small pieces direct to poor workers who could not afford to go to public markets. Others complained of the inconvenience of the markets and the delays occurring at them. The complaints fill many pages of the Journals of the House of Commons in 1697 and 1698.<sup>4</sup> The general tenor of all the complaints was that leather craftsmen had long been in the habit of buying and selling leather wherever they pleased and that to force the leather trade back into the public markets could cause considerable hardship. Although the regulation was renewed in 1718, and although it caused a good deal of irritation to leather craftsmen there is no evidence to suggest that the government ever succeeded in its purpose.<sup>5</sup> By the end

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1. See Unwin, Industrial Organization, pp. 188-190.

2. On this point see Chapter 4, *passim*.

3. See Appendix 6. Some London tanners claimed that the clause was an attempt on the part of a number of other tanners to monopolise the leather trade (Cal.S.P.D., 1697, p.74) but there is no clear evidence of this.

4. Particularly vol. XI, pp. 710 et seq., *passim*; vol. XII, *passim*.

5. There is on the other hand, evidence to suggest that the government found it difficult to implement the revived regulations (See Appendix 6).

of the seventeenth century the internal trade in leather and leather goods was virtually unrestricted by any statutory regulation.

(v)

Regulation of the export trade before 1660

We turn now to a study of the government control of the export trade in hides and skins, leather, and leather products during the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Until the 1660s the export of hides, skins and leather was prohibited, although large quantities of calfskins were exported under licence. The calfskin trade was freed in 1662 and in 1666 the trade in leather was thrown open until 1675. Then followed a decade of controversy between the supporters and opponents of an unrestricted trade in leather until, in 1685 the unrestricted exports of leather and leather goods was again allowed. In the development of this policy the government was again much influenced by sectional interests.

The leather act of 1563 was only incidently concerned with overseas trade but under two earlier acts the export of hides, leather and footwear was prohibited. The export of boots and shoes was made illegal by an act of 1551<sup>1</sup>; the act was repealed in 1555 but was revived in the first year of Elizabeth's reign<sup>2</sup> and continued unaffected by the act of 1563. The export of hides and leather was forbidden by an act of 1558 which made the transportation of these commodities an offence

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1. 5 & 6 Edw. VI, cap. 15.

2. 1 Mary St. 3, cap. 8; 1 Eliz., cap 8.

punishable by death.<sup>1</sup> The statute of 1563 did no more than impose a fine of £100 on customs officers who permitted illegal exports.

In 1572 the statute of 1558 was renewed,<sup>2</sup> but four years later new regulations were introduced because in the former statute "no Forfeiture ys geven to him or them that will sease or sue for the same." The new act, therefore, abolished the death penalty for exporting hides and leather and instead offered rewards to informers who would bring offenders to court.<sup>3</sup> The acts prohibiting the export of hides and leather were supplemented by two others - one passed in 1563 and the other in 1566 - forbidding the export of sheep, goat and deer skins, and leather made from these skins.<sup>4</sup>

The acts regulating the export trade all mentioned that the price of leather and leather goods had been rising; and the prohibition on exports was made in order to save these commodities for the domestic market. Those most interested in cheap leather and footwear were, first, the consumers and secondly the craftsmen using leather for the manufacture of all kinds of leather goods. During much of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the leather using craftsmen - particularly the London shoemakers - took the lead in obtaining legislation prohibiting the export of hides and leather.

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1. 1 Eliz., cap. 10.

2. 14 Eliz., cap. 4.

3. 18 Eliz., cap. 9.

4. 5 Eliz., cap. 22; 8 Eliz., cap 14.

This can be seen more clearly in the early seventeenth century rather than the late sixteenth century. In 1604, for example, the London Company of Cordwainers complained of the high price of leather which it was alleged was caused by the illegal export of hides and leather under cover of certain licences granted to export calf skins.<sup>1</sup> The company suggested that it should have power to supervise these grants.<sup>2</sup> Four years later in 1608 it was again suggested - probably by the London shoemakers - that the export of skins should take place only from certain specified ports and that two shoemakers should be appointed at every port to see that no hides were exported as calf skins.<sup>3</sup> In the same year all outstanding licences for the export of hides or leather - as distinct from calf skins<sup>4</sup> - were revoked by proclamation because of the high price of shoe leather.<sup>5</sup> It is almost certain that the London shoemakers were behind this proclamation although there is no definite evidence. But the Company of Cordwainers was definitely the prime mover in obtaining another proclamation in December 1626 prohibiting the coastal trade in hides and leather because, it was alleged, illegal exports were taking place under the cover of coastal trade.<sup>6</sup> The company's minutes book recorded a payment of £19. 4s. 2d. towards obtaining the proclamation.<sup>7</sup> The Company was also the leading opponent of proposals allowing a free trade in leather after the Restoration.<sup>8</sup>

1. For these licences see below, pp. 223-226.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 14/9a, no. 21.

3. S.P. 14/31, no. 89.

4. See below, pp. 322, for these licences.

5. Tudor and Stuart Proclamations (ed. R. Steele, 1910), vol. I, pp. 1056; Cal. S.P.D., March 1608, p. 420.

6. Acts of the Privy Council, Dec. 1626, pp. 401-2; Cal. S.P.D., Dec. 1626, p. 497.

7. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers (Gild Hall Ms. 7353), vol. I.

9th January 1626/7.

8. Infra, pp. 339-343.

Little was heard of the parties interested in the free export of hides and leather in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. However, we may assume, on the basis of later evidence, that there were three groups favouring a policy of allowing unrestricted export. First there were the graziers who desired a market for hides and skins which were a by-product of cattle and sheep raising. Secondly, there were the tanners and leatherdressers. If the domestic leather users could absorb all the leather they produced leather manufacturers were not worried about the export of leather, but later in the seventeenth century when the price of leather was falling they were looking overseas for additional markets. Thirdly exporting merchants favoured a free trade in leather.

Although these groups were not successful in shaping statutory legislation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they did, nevertheless, receive the benefits of prerogative grants made to relax the general prohibition on the export of hides, skins and leather. These grants fell into two groups. The first group consisted of licences allowing the export of hides or tanned leather; for the most part these were unimportant. They were made to isolated individuals - perhaps for services rendered to the Crown - and generally only relatively small quantities of hides or leather were involved.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the licence granted for the export of white cloth or - as we shall see - calf skins, there was nothing regular or systematic about the grant of licence to export hides or leather.

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1. For examples of these grants see Cal. S.P.D., Dec. 1559, p. 493; July, 1568, p. 311; Sept. 1574, p. 487; Aug. 1603, p. 32.

The second group of licences was for the export of calf skins either dressed or undressed. These were very important both because of the quantities of skins involved and also because they were granted regularly to the same person or group of persons.

Throughout the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century these licences were associated with merchants exporting principally from the western ports of England. One of the earliest grants was drawn up about 1560 empowering an unknown person to export 4,000 dickers of leather, or in lieu of the leather, 480,000 calf skins from London, Chester, and Bristol, but it does not seem as though this particular grant was ever completed.<sup>1</sup> Some years later, in 1583, a licence was granted to the merchants of Chester to export twelve thousand dickers of tanned calf-skins (= 1,440,000 skins<sup>2</sup>) over a period of twelve years. 10,000 dickers were to be exported by merchants of Chester<sup>3</sup> and the remaining 2,000 by a certain Peter Newell. Newell, however, sold his share to some Bristol merchants to pay his debts.<sup>4</sup>

The Chester licence was apparently renewed in or about 1598;<sup>5</sup> and

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1. P.R.O., S.P. 12/158, no. 2. There is no trace of the grant in the patent rolls of the period.
  2. The usual practice of the time was to count ten dozen skins to the dicker. See Chapter 4, pp. 146-147
  3. P.R.O., S.P. 12/158, no. 2.
  4. P.R.O., S.D. 12/185, no. 71. This transaction caused Newell some embarrassment. For technical reasons the original grant had to be recalled and a new one issued. However the authority which Newell assigned to the Bristol merchants bore the date of the original grant. The Bristol customs officers therefore refused to allow the merchants to ship the skins.
  5. I have found no official record of this renewal. However in a document dating from about 1630 relating to the Chester licences, there is a reference to a grant made on 12th September, 40 Elizabeth (B.M., Harleian Ms. 2004, fos. 129-132).

in 1605 it was again extended. This time it was to run from the expiry of the existing licence in 1607 and provided for the export of 12,600 dickers of skins at the rate of 600 dickers a year for twenty-one years.<sup>1</sup> In 1629 the grant was again renewed. On this occasion the mayor of Chester authorised William Gamull the master of the Company of Merchants to go to London to negotiate a renewal of the licence for all Chester merchants. Gamull, however, obtained two licences - one for the export of 600 dickets of skins a year for seven years, and the other for the same number of skins for twenty-one years - both for himself and a few associates. Following protests from the other merchants at Chester the Privy Council ordered Gamull to surrender his licences and instructed that a fresh grant be made for the whole company. Gamull attempted to defend himself by claiming that not all merchants were willing to bear the expense of the grants. Also, he had been told to negotiate with the Crown; but, in fact, he found that he had to get the licences from the King's sole patentee. This, Gamull argued, freed him from any obligation to the company of merchants.<sup>2</sup>

The patentee referred to by Gamull was James Maxwell, a minor official at the Court who obtained a patent in 1616. The practice of appointing a sole patentee had been emerging from the end of the sixteenth century. In 1598 a licence had been granted to a group of five Italian merchants to export 6,000 dickers of calfskins over a period of seven years

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1. P.R.O., S.P., Docket, March 11th 1604/5.

2. B.M., Harleian Mss. 2004, fos. 5-6, 129-132; P.R.O., P.C. 2/39, p.543.

commencing in August 1600 and paying five shillings for every dicker exported. In 1604 the grant was extended for a further seven years starting from the expiry of the first grant in 1607; and in 1610 a further extension of seven years was made to date from 1614. This meant that the licence was to run until 1621, although the final renewal contained a clause providing for the licence to be suspended by a warrant from the King or any six members of the Privy Council should it prove prejudicial to the state.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Maxwell had entered the picture in 1616 when he obtained a licence to export 18,000 dickers of calfskins over a period of twenty-one years, starting from the expiry of the other licences in 1621. From that date Maxwell was to have a monopoly of exporting calfskins "except only that the existing licences from Chester and Liverpool are not disturbed."<sup>2</sup> Some years later, however, when the licence granted to the Chester merchants in 1605 had expired, Maxwell's grant was confirmed and he then held the only patent. Further, he was given a new grant for twenty-one years to commence in 1642 when his first patent expired.<sup>3</sup>

Thus from the end of the sixteenth century until the 1620s there were two grants for exporting calfskins in existence. One, which had continued from the sixteenth century, was held by the Chester merchants as a body; the other was enjoyed at first by a small group of merchants,

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1. B.M., Cotton Ms., Titus, B IV, fo. 301.

2. B.M., Harleian Ms. 2004, fos. 7 - 10.

3. B.M., Harleian Ms. 2004, fos. 76-128.

and then, from 1621 by James Maxwell. By the end of the 1620s Maxwell held the only licence although he assigned large parts of it away, particularly to the merchants of Chester and Bristol. There was in addition to these grants licence granted to Gilbert Lee in 1604 empowering him to export 2,000 calf, sheep or lambskins;<sup>1</sup> in fact Lee normally dealt in sheep and lambskins.<sup>2</sup> In 1618 he obtained a new licence to export 200,000 sheep and lambskins over a period of thirty years.<sup>3</sup> This licence was revoked by royal proclamation in April 1639 along with many other "prejudicial and inconvenient" grants.<sup>4</sup>

The reasons for these grants to export large quantities of skins are clear. As W. H. Price has pointed out, the prohibition on the export of raw materials such as wool, undressed cloth, skins, and patts, was made in the interests of English manufacturers. The manufacturers, however, were not in a position to use all the raw materials coming on the market. Hence licences were granted for the export of such surplus materials. They were a kind of safety valve through which producers of raw materials could send their products and so avoid glutting the market.<sup>5</sup> This point was made explicitly - if inelegantly - in a petition presented to Parliament about 1640, which stated that if calfskins were not exported they

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1604, p. 65.

2. See P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/4105. This was an enquiry into the conduct of Lee's patent.

3. Cal. S.P.D., 1618, p. 591; Ibid., 1619, p. 1.

4. Price, Patents of Monopoly, pp. 172, 174.

5. Ibid., pp. 10 - 11.

would be thrown on the dung heap.<sup>1</sup>

The licences also permitted a useful export trade which was particularly valuable to such ports as Chester situated in a region where calfskins were "the most important exportable commodity."<sup>2</sup> A petition to Parliament in 1654 - from a group of men who wanted a patent enabling them to prosecute transgressors of the export regulations - advanced six reasons justifying the export of calfskins. First, there were too many calfskins in the country. Secondly, the export of calfskins would pay for valuable imports, encourage merchants and shipping and add to the customs revenue. Thirdly the export of calfskins was important to the economy of such ports as Bristol and Chester and ports in Devon and Wales where there were no commodities for export except skins and lead. Fourthly, it was as necessary to export calfskins as it was to export white cloth to the East Indies. Fifthly, export licences would prevent illegal exports of leather. Lastly, if the export of calfskins was not allowed under licence, the trade would be conducted illegally.<sup>3</sup>

There were thus good reasons for allowing the export of dressed or undressed calfskins. It is significant that licences to export calfskins did not arouse opposition in Parliament. During the debate in 1621 on the unsuccessful bill against monopolies it was argued that the proposed act need not contain any special provision for licences to ship

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1. B.M., Thomason Tracts 168 (4), p. 11.
  2. B.M., Harleian Ms. 2004, fos. 129-132.
  3. P.R.O., S.P. 18/73, no. 39(1).

calfskins since the bill did "not reach to restreyne the trust which is left to the Kinge to dispense with perticular persons or corporations."<sup>1</sup> Later, Maxwell's licence was specifically excluded from the provisions of the Statute of Monopolies in 1624.<sup>2</sup> The Long Parliament suspended all licences allowing the export of calfskins in 1641 following complaints that hides were exported as skins, but eventually shipments were permitted providing the skins did not weigh more than 36 lbs. a dozen.<sup>3</sup> Monopolistic grants were normally unpopular in Parliament; the fact that the calfskin grants were accepted without protest is evidence of their value to leatherdressers, merchants and graziers.

(vi)

Enforcement of export regulations

Valuable though export licences were in relaxing otherwise onerous legislation they made more difficult the enforcement of the general prohibition on the export of hides and leather. The claim that export licences would prevent the illegal export of leather<sup>4</sup> was not true. Customs officials had the task of finding out whether merchants exporting skins were actually licenced to do so, and also of distinguishing between a hide and a skin, which was no easy task. During the Protectorate this problem was brought to the notice of the government on a number of occasions. The Committee for Petitions tackled the matter in July 1654. It elaborated

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1. W. Notestein, E. Relf, H. Simpson, Commons' Debates, 1621 (1935), vol. 4, p. 197.
  2. Price, Patents of Monopoly, p. 141.
  3. Commons' Journals, vol. II, pp. 207, 215, 220, 224, 260, 265, 276, 283.
  4. *Supra*, p 327

the earlier ruling made in 1641 - on the size of calfskins. The committee decided that a dressed skin should weigh no more than 22 lbs. a dozen and no single skin more than 2 lbs. The limit for undressed skins was fixed at 36 lbs. a dozen and 4 lbs. for a single skin. The committee did not think that many hides were exported in the guise of calfskins, and it rejected a petition for a grant to supervise the trade in calfskins on the grounds that its promoters were "trying to establish a kind of monopoly for their own gain..."<sup>1</sup> Two years later the same problem was considered by a naval committee which reached a different conclusion. The committee reported to Cromwell that it "Is plain that hides of greater growth have been exported under colour of the licence which may lead to a great dearth of leather if care be not taken."<sup>2</sup>

One reason why the government was concerned with the abuse of the calfskin licences in the 1650s was that a case had arisen at Bristol. In 1652 Michael Measy an informer, with the assistance of the Bristol customs officials, had prosecuted the Merchant Adventurers of Bristol for illegally exporting calfskins. The case was stopped and costs were awarded against Measy. However, three years later he started a new action in the Exchequer Court. Measy alleged that merchants exported whatever leather they liked under cover of a share of the licence to export calfskins, and he claimed that the merchants openly bragged "of the power of their purses, saying no man can afford to go to law with them." According to Measy he

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1654, pp. 258-9; P.R.O., S.P. 18/73, nos. 39, 40.

2. P.R.O., S.P. 18/123, no. 2.

had spent £1,000 on the case and was likely to spend £20,000 before it was done. He therefore asked Parliament for help, arguing that if the government did not support informers the customs would be defrauded. Measy's statement of his expenses were so preposterous - if true it indicated a degree of public service beyond the bounds of sanity - that it is not surprising that the government rejected his claims in 1656 and again ordered that the prosecution be stopped. The government thought that the Bristol merchants were not committing any offence, although it was admitted that there was a danger that licences for the export of calfskins could be used to cover illegal shipments of hides and leather.<sup>1</sup>

Quite apart from the problems caused by export licences, it was difficult to enforce regulations concerned with the overseas trade in hides, skins and leather. The system of unpaid justices, underpaid - and not always honest - customs officers, and irregularly paid informers<sup>2</sup> was hardly adequate to police all sections of the English coast and prevent smuggling. This apparatus for enforcing the law was supplemented by one or two enforcing patents,<sup>3</sup> but even so it could not prevent more than a small proportion of the smuggling taking place from many small ports and creeks.

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1. Cal. S.P.D., 1655-6, pp. 26, 43, 88-9, P.R.O., S.P. 18/123, nos. 1, 2.
  2. It is worth noting that the act of 1576 removed the death penalty for illegal export and substituted instead a fine and confiscation, so that informers could share the proceeds (Supra, p.320 ).
  3. In 1622 Sir Thomas Glover obtained a patent for twenty-one years to search out leather intended for export. He later found that this right was included in a patent obtained by the Earl of March a year or two earlier. Glover then made his interest over to the Earl at a charge of £300 a year (Cal. S.P.D., 1622, p.433; 1624, p.429; Hist.Mss.Comm., 3rd Report, Appendix, "House of Lords Mss., 1450-1625," p.27. For the Earl of March's patent see Chapter 7, pp.271-272).

Smugglers were often determined men and the life of a customs officer was not always free from occupational hazards. There was for example an unfortunate incident which took place at Appledore in Devon in the 1580s. Thomas Clerke the deputy searcher of the customs at Torrington boarded the "Eagle" and found it loaded with 200 tanned hides that were being exported without licence. Clerke attempted to seize the leather although he was offered bribes to keep quiet. When it was obvious that Clerke would try to stop the leather from being transported the master of the "Eagle" threatened to sail with him to Spain and "hoysted ypp their seayles and carryed (Clerke) with them a little way." Clerke then decided "for savegarde of himselfe to dep(ar)te out of the sayd Barke..." without the leather.<sup>1</sup> A more violent incident occurred at Chester about the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Robert Browne, a searcher of the customs was on his way to investigate information that leather was being loaded onto a ship when he was attacked by a mob raised by the owner of the leather. The mob "made an Assult and affraie ... and smot him and oried out vpon on another to kill and slay (him) and to knock out his braines..."<sup>2</sup> Brown retreated without the leather. In another case at Chester some years earlier a customs officer was rowing out to a ship which he suspected contained a cargo of leather when he was greeted with gunfire. It is unlikely that he believed the excuse offered later that the gun was fired "to intent ... to scoure the gonne."<sup>3</sup>

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1. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/27 Eliz., Hill. 28.
  2. B.M., Harleian Ms. 1596, fo. 3.
  3. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/498.

The fact that merchants and seamen would so blatantly flout the law is some indication of the value put on the smuggling trade in hides, skins, and leather. A good deal of illicit trading was done with the connivance of the officers who were supposed to administer the law. In 1575 at Barnstable in Devon Anthony Honey a customs officer stood quietly on the quay watching leather being laden onto a ship. "One George Parchard ... went to (him) and required hym to seasour in the same leather and the said Honey demaunded where it was and the saide Parchard saide here it is blinde knave and doo thie office..."<sup>1</sup> During 1593 and 1594 Lord Burghley received a continual stream of reports from an agent in Dieppe that large quantities of leather and other goods were arriving there from East Sussex ports. The leather was exported with the knowledge of the customs officials who made a living by condoning smuggling and even helped to load the cargoes.<sup>2</sup> The Sussex coast seems to have been a centre of smuggling leather. In 1606 a commission of the Exchequer examined a case of smuggling hides and leather from Fairlight, and in 1630 the Privy Council itself interrogated a number of Sussex tanners who had been smuggling leather. The tanners were ordered to be prosecuted and the Privy Council stated that part of the penalty should be paid to the customs officials in Sussex as an encouragement to them to do their duty.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from the examples given that the enforcement of the export regulations remained a live issue during the first half of the

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1. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/656.
  2. Cal. S.P.D., 1593-4; pp. 372, 385, 388, 393, 490, 491.
  3. P.R.O., P.C. 2/40, fos. 243, 542, 551.

seventeenth century. What is less clear is whether enforcement became more lax during this period. The impression gained from the activities of the government is that it remained more interested in the enforcement of the export regulations than the regulations dealing with the manufacture of leather or the internal leather market.<sup>1</sup> It may be that the manufacturers who opposed the export of hides and leather and the merchants who possessed export licences kept the government alive to the problem of implementing the exporting regulations. Possibly, too, the loss of revenue to the customs resulting from smuggling kept the Crown interested in the problem of regulating overseas trade. On the other hand when the customs revenue was farmed some laxity in administering the law may have arisen. For example, a deputy searcher of the customs at Bristol complained in 1638 that "... the Searcher of the saide Porte of Bristoll & other Kinges officers theire are now more disheartened then heretofore in making of seizures (of leather) for that the ffarmers deputies are willing to put downe & suppress the saide Search<sup>r</sup> & for that as he thinketh the m(er)chantes doe joyne together in the Charge in p(ro)secucion of such cases against the said searcher."<sup>2</sup>

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1. An examination of the Exchequer Memoranda Rolls shows that presentments of offenders against the export regulations did not decline in the same way as presentments for other offences. The figures for the same areas examined in Table I, Chapter 7, p.280. , were: 1570 - 14; 1580 - 8; 1600 - 16; 1610 - 6; 1620 - 6; 1630 - 1; 1640 - 2; 1650 - 9. (See Table I for references).
  2. P.R.O., Exchequer, Special Commissions, E 178/5319. It was also alleged that when the customs officers wanted to hire boats and men to seize illegal shipments of leather, they had to pay "Boatmen, Hawkers, porters & labourers aboue twice as much as the m(er)chaunts do vsuallie pay..." The boatmen, etc., demanded the extra money as compensation; for by working for the customs "they did thereby goe against their masters the m(er)chautes & they should thereby loose their vsuall employment..."

On the whole, however, the government remained aware of the export regulations and remained interested in enforcing them. This was as true of the Protectorate as the government of the first two Stuarts.<sup>1</sup>

(vii)

Modification of Export Policy after 1660

In the hundred years before the Restoration, the export of hides and skins, leather, and footwear<sup>2</sup> was - as we have seen - prohibited except under licence. The purpose of this prohibition was to encourage native manufacturers by reserving for them home produced raw materials; and also to keep down the price of leather and footwear in the interests of the consumer. In the last forty years of the seventeenth century the export regulations were reversed largely because of changing supply conditions in the production of hides and skins. First the export of calfskins was allowed without licence. Then the prohibition on the export of leather was removed - tentatively at first and in the face of considerable opposition. By the end of the century, however, the policy of a free trade in leather had been generally accepted.

In 1662 an act was passed dealing with the export of hides, skins, and leather, the first for almost sixty years.<sup>3</sup> Its objects were

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1. See for example the concern of Parliament during the Protectorate with the problem of the licences for the export of calfskins and the abuse of these grants (supra, pp 327-330).
  2. The Elizabethan act prohibiting the export of footwear enjoyed a quiet existence and seems to have been forgotten by the mid-seventeenth century - if not before.
  3. 14 Car. II, cap. 7.

plainly stated in the preamble: "... There are such quantities of leather daily exported to foreign parts that the price of leather is grown to those excessive rates that many Artificers working leather cannot furnish themselves with sufficient store thereof for the carrying on of their Trades and the poor sort of people are not able to buy those things made of leather which of necessity they must make use of ..." The penalty on exporting hides and leather was raised to £500, and the London companies of cordwainers, curriers, saddlers and girdlers, and the municipal officers appointed in provincial towns, were empowered to search and seize all leather intended for export. This part of the act echoed a century of previous legislation. However the act also allowed the export of calfskins without licence. This was the sensible development of the earlier policy of allowing large quantities of skins to be shipped under licence. Maxwell's monopoly expired in 1663<sup>1</sup> and the government saw no sense in continuing this kind of grant when so many people shared in it. This section of the act was significant for it was the first breach in the statutory prohibition of the export trade.

About a year after the passage of the act a parliamentary committee criticised the power given to the London companies to search out illegal exports because they could not exercise it properly. The committee thought that the Crown should appoint its own officers to undertake this duty. The clause permitting the export of calfskins was also causing

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1. Supra, p.325.

difficulty because merchants were transporting hides in the guise of skins. The act had used the definition of 1654 that undressed calfskins should weigh not more than 36 lbs. a dozen, and merchants were shaving hides down to these dimensions. It was recommended, therefore, that the upper weight limit should be reduced to 24 lbs. per dozen for undressed skins and that no single skin should weigh more than two pounds. The committee thought that a new bill should be introduced in Parliament containing these recommendations, but the suggestion was never implemented.<sup>1</sup>

On May 11th, 1666 the government published a proclamation permitting the export of hides, leather, corn, butter and cheese, "the present war having reduced the price very low." The proclamation was intended as a temporary expedient lasting only "during this present war,"<sup>2</sup> but in 1668 the unrestricted export of all kinds of tanned and dressed leather - although not raw hides - was allowed because of the fall in the price of hides and leather, "to the great discouragement of the Breeding and Feeding of Cattel and fall of Rents and Value of Land..."<sup>3</sup>

To understand the reason for this reversal of policy it must be remembered that the raw materials of the leather industry were agricultural products and although hides and skins were never of more than secondary importance to farmers they nevertheless provided a useful income. Hide and leather prices fell during the 1660s together with the prices of other

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. VIII, pp. 529-30.

2. Cal. S.P.D., May 1666, p. 391; P.R.O., P.C. 2/58, p. 401.

3. 19 & 20 Car. II, cap. 11.

agricultural products.<sup>1</sup> In part the fall in hide and skin prices was caused by the generally depressed state of the economy brought about by the stagnation in the cloth industry during the 1660s, the Plague, the fire of London and the Dutch war.<sup>2</sup> But the fall in prices may also have been caused by an over-production of hides and skins.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the reasons, the government was induced to act in the interest of the farmer by allowing the export of leather. This was an attempt to help both agriculture and a section of the leather industry. The export of hides was not allowed in order that leather producers could still obtain their raw materials without foreign competition; but hides could be exported in the form of leather. The government seems to have thought that by permitting exports leather producers could absorb more hides and so bring relief to the farmers. Exactly the same policy had been pursued in the

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1. For leather prices, see Appendix I. The following are prices paid by Winchester College for certain agricultural produce:

	<u>Wheat</u> (sh. per qr.)	<u>Malt</u> (sh. per qr)	<u>Beef and Mutton</u> (sh. per stone)
1660	43.25	20.54	2.0
1661	53.33	24.89	2.0
1662	33.53	24.49	2.0
1663	34.52	18.29	2.03
1664	31.78	18.37	2.0
1665	30.73	20.37	(2.33)
1666	22.36	15.44	2.0
1667	24.00	15.59	1.89
1668	33.99	18.30	1.65
1669	27.25	18.26	1.59

(W. Beveridge, Prices and Wages in England, vol. I (1939) pp. 81, 83).

2. R. Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1660-1700," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd series, vol. VII, no. 2 (1954), p.161; G.N. Clark, The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714 (1934), pp. 63-4.
3. See Chapter 1, p. 35

case of wool. The export of wool had been restricted and finally prohibited in the early seventeenth century in the interests of the cloth manufacturers. Yet this prohibition was not entirely against the interests of the wool producers for wool exported in the form of cloth benefitted industry and agriculture alike.<sup>1</sup>

It is instructive to compare the change in the government's attitude to the leather trade with its treatment of the external corn trade. During the latter half of the sixteenth century and the first sixty years of the seventeenth century, the export of corn had been allowed except when the domestic prices rose above certain limits. At the same time the import of corn was virtually unrestricted. The general purpose of the corn laws was to give moderate encouragement to grain producers providing the consumer did not have to pay excessive prices for his grain. After the Restoration there was a change in policy and in the last forty years of the seventeenth century the price ceiling on exports was removed, a bounty was given for the export of grain when the home price fell below certain levels, and high duties were placed upon imported corn.<sup>2</sup> These changes were brought about mainly by the downward trend of agricultural prices. But a further factor was the development of a national corn market by the later seventeenth century which reduced the likelihood of local grain shortages and lessened the need to hold large stocks of grain

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1. See Thomas Mun, England's Treasure by Forraign Trade (1664, Blackwell edition, 1933), p. 21.
  2. For an outline of the corn laws see N.S.B. Gras, The Evolution of the English Corn Market (Harvard, 1926), pp. 139-150.

to guard against such shortages.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that a similar situation had developed in the hide and leather trade and that the relatively low prices of the 16602 and subsequent years were in part the result of a decrease in stocks and hence an increase in the supply of hides on the market. This might explain why the temporary removal of the restrictions on exports in 1666 became a permanent feature of government policy in the late seventeenth century.

The act of 1668 expired in 1675 and for the next ten years it was again illegal to export leather.<sup>2</sup> But this decade was marked by a strenuous struggle between graziers and conflicting interests in the leather industry to obtain fresh legislation allowing the export of leather. The government itself was quite undecided in the matter and its policy was very much determined by the respective abilities of the various groups interested in the subject to press their views in Parliament and elsewhere.

Two bills to renew the legislation allowing the export of leather were introduced into the House of Commons in 1675 but Parliament was prorogued before they were passed.<sup>3</sup> The main support for the bills came from the tanners who had enjoyed a much wider choice of markets when the export of leather was allowed. They argued that the act of 1668 had

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1. Ibid., pp. 255-6. On this point generally, see W.A. Lewis, The Theory of Economic Growth (London, 1955), p. 70.
  2. In fact large quantities of leather continued to be exported. See Appendix 4.
  3. Commons' Journals, vol. IX, pp. 318, 320, 334-5, 355-6, 360-1, 364, 375. Lords' Journals, vol. XII, 8th June 1675, P.R.O., P.C. 2/64, p. 461.

achieved its purpose: it had raised the price of hides and skins to the encouragement of cattle breeders. At the same time, they claimed, the price of leather had remained stable because the home demand for leather had fallen.<sup>1</sup> The tanners also pointed out that leather was a manufactured commodity employing many persons and that an export trade would encourage employment. The main opponents of the bills were shoemakers and curriers who complained that the overseas trade in leather goods<sup>2</sup> would fall if the export of leather were allowed. The basis of their opposition was the fear of foreign competition.<sup>3</sup>

Following the failure of parliamentary measures the tanners who favoured an unrestricted export trade turned to the Privy Council for help and asked for a licence to export leather. In July 1675 the Council decided that a licence should be prepared but this was not done, and a few months later the tanners asked that the export of leather be allowed by proclamation as it had been in 1666.<sup>4</sup> Most of the opposition to these proposals came from the London Company of Cordwainers which also led the opposition to subsequent attempts to remove the restrictions on the leather trade. In March 1677, for example, the company spent £10 "in hindering (the) Act for Transport (of) leather from being passed," and a year later the company borrowed another £10 for the same purpose.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The price indices for the period do not suggest that the act of 1668 succeeded in reversing the downward trend in hide prices. As Appendix I shows the price of leather continued to fall. There are no figures for hides but it is unlikely the price of hides rose as leather prices fell.
  2. The Elizabethan prohibition on the export of boots and shoes had long since been forgotten and it was never revived.
  3. Cal. S.P.D., 1675, pp. 369-70, 370-1, 371-3.
  4. P.R.O., P.C. 2, 2/64, pp. 459, 461, 466, 470; P.C. 2/65, p. 61.
  5. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers (Gild Hall Ms., 7353), 31st March, 1677; 11th June, 1678.

The particular act mentioned was introduced into Parliament in February 1677; it successfully negotiated the Commons but failed to get through the Lords.<sup>1</sup> In the following year a similar bill suffered the same fate,<sup>2</sup> and in 1679 yet another bill providing for the export of leather commenced its journey through the Commons. By May of that year the bill was being considered by their Lordships who heard the now familiar arguments on both sides. Those who desired an unrestricted export trade in leather - tanners, graziers, merchants - claimed that the opening of the export trade would lead to a rise in the price of hides, bark, and leather; that there would be a revival of tanning and dressing; and that there would be an increase in customs revenue to the great benefit of the King and his subjects. On the other side the Lords received a petition from the London shoemakers prophesising great hardships to leather users if the export of leather were allowed and claiming that the act was wanted only by "some few of London, French, and Bristol merchants who have been its continual promoters." While the arguments ebbed back and forth the session came to an end and the bill was dropped.<sup>3</sup> In 1680 another bill was started in the House of Commons but this did not get beyond the second reading.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. IX, pp. 389, 398, 401, 404, 405.
  2. Ibid., IX, pp. 482, 483, 491, 494, 495, 496, 511.
  3. Ibid., IX, pp. 585, 590, 601, 621, 625; Hist. Mss. Comm., Appendix, Part II, "House of Lords Mss.," 1678-1688, pp. 143-4, 151.
  4. Commons' Journals, vol. IX, pp. 646, 674.

Thus between 1675 and 1680 six bills were introduced into Parliament and not one of them was successful. None of them appears to have been formally rejected; rather they were just talked out of the sessions. This suggests either bad management on the part of the promoters of the bills, or expert delaying tactics on the parts of the opponents - probably both. The promoters of the bills were a rather heterogeneous collection of merchants, tanners and graziers who do not appear to have been well organised. The opposition to the bills was led by the London Company of Cordwainers, which, although not one of the most powerful of the London companies, was an experienced campaigner in the parliamentary lobbies.<sup>1</sup> The organised opposition of the company was undoubtedly responsible for frustrating the supporters of an unrestricted export trade.

For a few years after 1680 the matter seems to have dropped. However it was revived again in 1685 when the pro-export group was at last successful in obtaining a revival of the act of 1668 for a period of three years.<sup>2</sup> This success was not achieved without a fight. The opposition was again led by the London shoemakers supported by the curriers and other leather using crafts. The arguments they used were those that had been aired on several earlier occasions. A group of tanners also opposed the act maintaining that only twelve of the seventy tanners in Southwark wanted to export leather. Other tanners and the graziers supporting the bill again complained of the low price of hides and leather and pointed to the

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1. *Supra*, pp. 302-6, 314-7.

2. 1 Jac. II, cap. 13.

advantages of export. The Lords were a little doubtful and they shortened the duration of the act from the seven years proposed in the bill to three years.<sup>1</sup> However, in 1689 the act was renewed for a further seven years.<sup>2</sup> For the last time Parliament listened to the familiar arguments on both sides. This time the London shoemakers were ably supported by their fellow craftsmen from Northampton who complained that the export of leather was ruining their own export trade in boots and shoes. For the supporters of export only fresh argument advanced was an analogy with the cloth industry. As with cloth, so with leather: the export of both commodities was of great benefit to manufacturers.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1690s the London shoemakers dropped their opposition to the export of leather, no doubt realising the futility of continuing. When the act for the export of leather was again due for renewal in 1696 the company decided not to oppose it but instead to press for higher customs duties on exported leather.<sup>4</sup> By this time the principle of exporting leather had gained general acceptance.

When the government imposed an excise duty on home manufactured leather in 1697,<sup>5</sup> it gave special consideration to exporters by reducing

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1. Commons' Journals, vol. IX, pp. 719, 720, 724, 726, 740; Hist. Mss. Comm., Report II, Appendix part II, "House of Lords Mss.", pp. 312-314.
  2. 1 Will. & Mary, cap. 23.
  3. Commons' Journals, vol. X, pp. 83, 93, 95, 137, 139, 179, 193; Hist. Mss. Comm., 12th Report, Appendix, VI, "House of Lords Mss." pp. 115-6.
  4. Court Book of the Company of Cordwainers, 22nd March 1696.
  5. See Appendix 6.

the duty on leather intended for export by two-thirds. This "drawback" was bitterly attacked by the leather using craftsmen who pointed out that its effect was to raise the price of leather in England by a greater amount than the price of leather exported.<sup>1</sup> If the leather using craftsmen had feared foreign competition in 1675, they feared it even more in 1697. However the government did not give way. How complete was the victory of the pro-export group may be seen by a glance into the eighteenth century. In 1692 the act allowing the export of leather was extended for seven years<sup>2</sup> and in 1710 for a further thirty-two years.<sup>3</sup> Another act in the same year revived the duty on home produced leather - together with the drawback on exports - for the same period.<sup>4</sup>

(viii)

### Conclusion

In conclusion it will be as well to draw together the main threads of this chapter and the one that preceded it. The basis of the government's regulation of the leather industry, it will be remembered, was the leather act of 1563 that contained detailed regulations for the manufacture and sale of tanned leather and tanned leather products.

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1. See the petitions relating to the excise in Commons' Journals, vols. XI, XII, passim; particularly vol. XI, pp. 758-9.
  2. 1 Anne, st. 2, cap. 13.
  3. 9 Anne, cap. 6, sect. 4.
  4. 9 Anne, cap. 2.

The same act, supplemented by other legislation, prohibited the export of skins, hides, all kinds of leather, and footwear. This body of legislation was continued practically unaltered - except for some small but important modifications to the tanning regulations in 1604 - and unchanged until the late seventeenth century. In addition to this statutory legislation there were a number of prerogative grants which either supplemented or modified the acts of parliament. The most important of these were Dyer's patent dispensing with the tanning regulations, Darcy's abortive patent regulating the manufacture of light leather, and a number of licences allowing the export of calfskins.

In the last four decades of the seventeenth century this body of regulations was modified in several ways. The manufacturing regulations, although remaining on the statute book, fell into disuse. The marketing regulations were amended to allow middlemen in the leather trade. And the export restrictions were removed to allow the export of calfskins and leather. The export of leather goods was also undertaken without restriction, the Tudor restriction on the export of footwear having been forgotten rather than repealed. It is true that at the very end of the seventeenth century the manufacturing and marketing regulations for tanned leather were revived in order to facilitate the collection of an excise levied on leather in 1697; but the old regulations were being used for a purpose contrary to their original aim. As long as the excise was collected the government was not greatly concerned how leather was made or where it was sold.

The motives behind this legislation were confused. In general Tudor and Stuart governments were concerned with the political and economic security of the nation and the control of the leather industry was directed towards this end. However this left a great deal of scope for vested interests to influence policy for their own ends. The details of policy and the changes that occurred were the work of these vested interests. The pressure groups shaping regulation were, first, the craftsmen involved in the leather industry itself. They did not form a homogeneous group. Tanners, curriers, shoemakers, leathersdressers, leathersellers, all had ideas of what government policy should be and what it should try to do. Some of these groups were more successful than others in advancing their interests, and some were successful at one time but not at another. Secondly there were graziers who supplied the raw materials for the leather industry. They, too, had their own views to advance. Thirdly the merchants who exported leather and hides also had an influence on government policy. The Crown itself was not a disinterested party; quite apart from considering the national interest, the Crown also had its own purse to think about and not a little of the regulation of the leather industry was inspired by financial motives. Finally, hovering on the periphery of the industry waiting for the financial pickings, were the patentees, courtiers like Dyer, Darcy and Maxwell who had no interest in the industry or the leather trade except insofar as it offered a profitable field of investment in the form of a patent or licence.

The leather acts were part of the economic code created by the Elizabethan government to cope with the social and economic problems of the time. They were an important section of industrial legislation which was composed of the Statute of Artificers and the cloth acts as well as the legislation for the leather industry. This economic legislation possessed a certain unity. Underlying all legislation there was the largely unchallenged assumption that the government should manipulate economic affairs for political ends. There were also similarities in the details of policy. The technical regulation in the leather industry was matched by similar control of the manufacture of cloth; the internal market regulations were similar for cloth and leather and also for other commodities such as corn; technical training, wage regulation, and the principle of "one man, one craft" were common to many occupations; restrictions on the export of raw materials in the interests of native manufacturers were common in both the cloth and the leather industries. There were differences, of course, between parts of the industrial code, notably in the treatment of the cloth and leather industries in the later seventeenth century, but the basic similarities are obvious.

The question therefore arises: did this apparent unity in economic policy occur because of the existence of a consciously accepted body of economic doctrine that determined the kind of policy to be followed and indicated the aims to be pursued; or was it the result of some other reason? In short, was there a policy of "mercantilism" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Several historians - from Professor Unwin to more recent writers such as Dr. D.C. Coleman and

Dr. B.E. Supple<sup>1</sup> - have challenged the idea of mercantilism on general grounds - such as the lack of any systematic literature - and by reference to specific pieces of legislation. It is quite clear from a study of the government's dealings with the leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the government followed no consistent policy. Legislation was determined not by some blue-print of economic planning but by the pressure of vested interests pursuing their own particular ends. This statement must be qualified to the extent that the Crown in the late sixteenth century did possess some notion of relieving social distress in order to remove the grounds for political disturbances, but it is doubtful whether this object was followed consistently, especially in the second half of the seventeenth century, and in any case it was usually submerged by the Crown's own financial needs and the sectional interests of groups associated with the leather industry.

The similarities that can be seen in different branches of economic legislation arose from two causes. In the first place similar problems occurred in different parts of the economy and prompted similar sorts of legislation. For example, the question whether middlemen raised prices or performed an essential service of distribution arose in the

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1. Unwin, Industrial Organisation, pp.172-195, *passim*; D.C. Coleman, "Eli Heckscher and the Idea of Mercantilism," Scandinavian Economic History Review, vol. V (1957), pp. 3-25; B.E. Supple, Commercial Crisis and Change in England, 1600 - 1642 (C.U.P., 1959), especially Chapter 10. For other references see Chapter 7, p.242, note 1 .

trade in cloth, leather and grain. In every case identical arguments for and against middlemen were advanced by groups of producers and consumers and similar kinds of regulations were produced to deal with the problem. In the second place, the institutional paraphernalia of economic control - the Privy Council, the local justices, the paid searchers and sealers, the unpaid informers, and the rest - were common in the enforcement of all branches of economic legislation. The similarities were not the result of a systematic policy. If a study of the legislation applying to the leather industry has any contribution to make to the discussion of mercantilism, it is that mercantilism did not exist as a practical policy.

## CHAPTER 9 : CONCLUSION

In this study we have been concerned with three aspects of the leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; its importance to the English economy; the economics of the industry including its location, structure and markets; and the regulation of the industry by the state. In conclusion we can consider these points in turn.

The importance of the leather industry in the economy has often been overlooked by historians but it cannot be denied. Possibly the industry was second only to the manufacture of woollen cloth in terms of employment and the value of its production. Unlike woollen cloth, however, leather was not important in the export trade. Instead leather manufacturers produced mainly for the home market where leather was demanded by all classes of society for many different purposes. Most important, it was used to make footwear worn by rich and poor alike. It was also made into clothing - sometimes instead of woollen cloth - harnesses, saddles, bridles, bags, belts, bottles, buckets and many other commodities used in the home, in agriculture and in industry.

The value of leather in the home market was recognised by the state which tried to control the manufacture and sale of tanned leather and footwear. It is significant that - apart from woollen textiles - the government did not try to regulate other occupations by specific legislation.

Tanning, currying and shoemaking were selected for special treatment because these crafts produced commodities used by everybody and for which there were no satisfactory substitutes.

A clear indication of the importance of the industry in the economy was the large number of leather workers found in many towns. In some places tanners, leatherdressers, shoemakers, glovers and the rest formed the largest single group of industrial occupations. We cannot say how many were employed compared with those engaged in the cloth industry; but outside the major cloth producing areas it is likely that as many people gained a living making leather and leather goods as were employed in making cloth; and since leather workers were producing for the home market, employment was not subject to sudden interruptions that were such a problem in the cloth industry.

The production of leather and leather goods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries increased as the population grew and - to a lesser extent - as the general level of incomes rose. But the industry experienced no remarkable changes in the period. Manufacturing techniques remained unaltered, the home market continued to be the most important despite the development of a trade with the colonies in the later seventeenth century, and few substitutes - if any - were developed to take the place of leather. No doubt the relative importance of the leather crafts in the economy declined as new industries expanded more rapidly; but even on the eve of the Industrial Revolution the production of leather and leather goods was one of the more important industries in the economy.

No study of the location and organization of the leather crafts is possible without knowing something of the techniques involved in making leather. Broadly, there were two ways of making leather - tanning and leatherdressing - although there were considerable variations in detail.

Tanners worked mainly with heavy cattle and horse hides which were first prepared with lime and were then soaked in solutions of oak bark and water for several months or even a year or more. The leather produced was hard and tough and before it could be made into leather goods it was curried with oil and tallow to make it supple and waterproof. Tanned leather made from good quality cattle hides was most suitable for footwear; leather made from bull and horse hides was used mainly for the manufacture of saddles and harnesses and other products.

Leatherdressers used mainly lighter sheep and calf skins. After removing the wool or hair, the skins were treated either with a solution of alum and other salts or with train oil. The former produced a durable white leather suitable for cheap clothing; the latter made a soft and supple leather (like chamois) which had a more attractive appearance than alum dressed leather and was used for better quality clothing and other goods. Leatherdressing took much less time than tanning.

In the absence of other considerations leather manufacturers worked close to the sources of their supplies of hides and skins since these commodities were bulky and perishable and did not travel well.

There was a concentration of tanning and leatherdressing at the main towns where cattle were slaughtered for meat; and in grazing regions where skins were available as by-products of meat, milk or wool production. The fact that towns were also markets for leather goods gave them an added importance as leather manufacturing centres and the largest towns in the sixteenth century - for example, London, Norwich, York, Newcastle, etc. - all possessed considerable numbers of leather workers.

Other factors affected the location of leather manufacturing in urban areas apart from the supply of raw materials. Tanners and leatherdressers needed plenty of water and also sufficient space for their vats, pits and sheds. Municipal authorities would often not allow these occupations in the centres of towns where they would pollute supplies of drinking water. Also rent charges were high in town centres; for these two reasons manufacturers were located on the outskirts of urban concentrations and also in villages a few miles distant, but still with reasonable access to supplies of hides and skins.

The supply of oak bark had some influence on the location of tanning. In iron manufacturing districts bark was easily obtainable from iron masters who felled oaks for their furnaces. But bark was bulky and expensive to transport. Consequently tanning tended to develop in these districts, particularly if tanners could also obtain hides and get their leather to market fairly easily. For example the West Riding became an important leather producing region; bark was bought from iron masters, hides were shipped from London and a ready market was available among the

industrial and agricultural workers in the district. Similarly tanners in the Weald of Kent and Sussex got their bark from local iron smelters, bought their hides in London, where they also sold a large quantity of leather.

In short, the location of tanning and leatherdressing was determined mainly by supplies of raw materials (including water) although access to markets also exercised some influence. The location of the crafts using tanned leather - particularly currying and shoemaking - on the other hand, was influenced chiefly by the presence of markets. It was more important that shoemakers should work close to their customers than near to tanners because it was more expensive to transport footwear than leather. Boots and shoes were bulkier than the leather from which they were made; furthermore leather had to be carried before it could be made into boots and shoes and currying added considerably to the weight of leather. Similar considerations probably applied to saddle and harness making, although there was a concentration of these occupations in the West Midlands where the small metal crafts manufacturing buckles and other metal parts were situated.

In the case of glovemaking and similar occupations using light leather the influence of the market was possibly weaker and the manufacture of light leather goods was generally combined with the production of dressed leather. There was very little difference between the cost of carrying leather or leather goods to market because articles such as gloves could be packed flat like uncut leather and there was no need to

curry dressed leather - and so add to its weight - before making it into various kinds of products. The market was not without some influence, however, at least in the case of London where there were large concentrations of glovers in the suburbs working on leather made in the west of England and elsewhere.

The trade in hides, leather and leather goods was determined by the location of the leather crafts in relation to their markets. Much trade was inevitably local since there were leather craftsmen in all parts of the country working with local materials and supplying local demands. There was also some inter-regional trade. For example hides were taken from London to districts where there was oak bark; skins and tanned leather came from the dairying region of Suffolk to the London market; and from the west of England there came to London dressed leather and gloves. Possibly the national trade increased in volume during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but the bulk of the trade remained local for the raw materials of the leather industry were available in most parts of the country and regional specialization - although discernable - was not strongly developed.

Just as techniques in the leather industry affected its location, so they also had an important influence on its organization. Strictly speaking there was not one leather industry but two: the heavy leather industry composed of tanning, currying, shoemaking, etc; and the light leather industry consisting of leatherdressing and glovemaking. The division between the two groups of crafts was caused by the different ways of making tanned and dressed leather and the different uses to which the

two kinds of leather were put.

The two groups of leather crafts were organized in different ways.

The heavy leather crafts were generally separate occupations whereas the light leather crafts were often - but not always - combined in one man. The reasons for this difference were - as we have seen - connected with the relative pulls of supplies of raw materials and access to markets. Tanners were located near the sources of their raw materials; shoemakers were situated among their customers. Hence there was a geographical separation of these occupations. Among the light leather crafts integration was feasible because there were no strong reasons why light leather goods should be made only in the towns.

The typical unit of production in both branches of the industry was small. Leather craftsmen could establish themselves with very little capital for equipment was simple and inexpensive. Leather manufacturers, however, had to be prepared to wait some time for a return on the capital they invested in hides and skins because of the time it took to make leather. Tanning in particular was a slow process and the income it yielded was irregular unless a large number of hides involving considerable capital outlay were tanned to provide a regular supply of leather becoming ready for the market. Thus we find that tanners generally had more capital tied up in their businesses than other leather craftsmen; even so there were many small-scale tanners, especially those who combined tanning with farming or some other occupation that provided an alternative income.

The one man business with a small output was common in the leather industry and a craftsman employing half a dozen workmen was rare. Glovers and leatherdressers seem to have employed labour on a putting-out basis and possibly some shoemakers did also, although the system was not widespread. In tanning it was technically impossible to employ labour in this way; there was also little need to do so. The putting-out system was a means of keeping down labour costs by employing part-time labour as it was needed. Labour costs were less important in tanning than in some other occupations because the cost of labour could be spread over a large number of hides being tanned and average labour costs kept low.

There were relatively few opportunities for large-scale production in the leather industry except in tanning. For many leather craftsmen the market served was limited and increased production meant rising production costs. If a leather craftsman wished to expand his business it was often easier to develop his trading activities rather than the manufacturing side of his business. Shoemakers and curriers for example sometimes became middlemen in the tanned leather trade linking tanners and leather using craftsmen and buying up leather in bulk to supply in small quantities to craftsmen with very little capital. In the light leather trade the leatherseller traded in skins and dressed leather and also in light leather goods. There is little evidence that tanners emerged as middlemen in the leather trade; possibly the greater opportunities for large-scale production in tanning absorbed all their capital resources.

A study of the structure of the leather industry in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries emphasises the importance of the influence of techniques and markets upon industrial organization. This is self-evident; but there is sometimes a tendency for discussions of this subject to consist of the application of labels such as "handicraft", "domestic" or "factory" to industry without a great deal of thought given to the reasons for these forms of organization. Any attempt to fit the leather crafts into one of these categories is not very enlightening. A putting-out - or "domestic" - form of production was certainly present in some occupations but it was by no means general. Factory production hardly existed in the usual sense of the term. Possibly the leather crafts fit best into the category labelled "handicraft" system but even here the description does not really tell us much about the industry. The typical leather worker was a man of modest capital resources producing mainly to meet local demands but perhaps also supplying a more distant market. His raw materials, too, were probably bought locally although he might have to go further afield for some of them. A craftsman working with heavy leather was a tanner, currier, or shoemaker. He was not likely to be all three and he certainly did not combine tanning and the manufacture of leather goods. If he were a light leather worker, on the other hand, he probably made both leather and leather goods. None of these features is indicated by applying a label to the industry; they become apparent only by closely examining its structure.

We have already pointed out that the government showed a keen interest in the leather industry because of its importance in the domestic economy. The regulation of the leather industry was an essential part of

industrial policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries although compared with other legislation it has received scant attention from economic historians.

The government tried to control the manufacture and sale of tanned and curried leather and footwear throughout the country. This it did by means of a statute passed in the same year as the Statute of Artificers; and which was re-enacted in 1604 and remained unaltered until late in the seventeenth century. The leather acts were not new in content but drew together into one comprehensive body of legislation earlier legislation passed piecemeal for certain sections of the industry. Detailed technical standards were laid down for tanning, currying and shoemaking. Sales of leather and leather goods were restricted to the public markets and middlemen were forbidden to deal in hides and leather. The export of hides and skins, leather and leather goods was illegal under the leather acts and supporting legislation.

This body of regulation was formulated in the second half of the sixteenth century. It did not apply to dressed leather and late in the sixteenth century an abortive attempt was made to control this branch of the industry by means of a patent. After 1604 there was no further legislation for sixty years; but in the last four decades of the seventeenth century there were some significant changes in policy. The prohibition on the export of calfskins and leather (although not hides) was removed and the restrictions on middlemen in the internal trade were lifted. Meanwhile, the manufacturing regulations were largely neglected.

The formation of this policy must be seen against the economic and social background of the time. The leather act of 1563 came at an unsettled time in the English economy. Prices, which had been rising gradually earlier in the century, moved up more sharply following the debasements of the '40s and showed no signs of falling despite attempts to restore the currency. Also in the first half of the sixteenth century there had been a great expansion in the overseas cloth trade and resources had moved out of the production of food into the production of wool and cloth. The boom came to an end in the 1550s creating pockets of unemployment in various parts of the country. There were other problems too. The rapid growth of London brought home forcibly to the government the problem of feeding a large population not engaged in food production; it also promoted fears that London's growth was at the expense of other parts of the realm. In agriculture changes in land ownership and tenure, rack-renting and enclosures, all added to the general feeling of instability. And quite apart from economic matters there were religious and political problems that could threaten the safety of the realm.

To tackle the economic problems the government enacted some important pieces of legislation including the cloth acts of the 1550s and the Statute of Artificers and the "act towching leather" in 1563. The government was genuinely alarmed at the prospect of social unrest arising from economic dislocation. It attempted to curb the growth of industry and direct resources back into food production. The intention behind the leather act was quite simple: to provide good quality leather and footwear

at reasonable prices because everybody needed these commodities. If this could be achieved the social - and possibly political - unrest that the government feared might be lessened.

It would be naive to think of the leather acts emanating solely from the government's laudable intention of providing everyone with good, cheap leather. The desire to avoid social disturbances certainly explains why the government was prepared to shackle the industry with statutory controls but the actual details of policy and also its development in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries owed more to other influences including the government's own need for money and the pressure of vested interests associated with the industry.

The financial motives behind government policy can be seen at several points but perhaps most clearly in the treatment of tanning where the government kept in force technical regulations which it knew to be unworkable, preferring to sell dispensations to tanners through a patentee rather than enact new legislation. The desire for money was also present in the grant of Darcy's patent for leatherdressing and its revocation for £4,000 in the 1590s, in the calfskin licences of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - although there were good economic reasons for these - and in the tax placed on leather in 1697. The use of the industry as a source of revenue was hardly consistent with a policy of protecting the consumer.

The most influential of the pressure groups associated with the

leather industry was the London Company of Cordwainers. It was this company that was responsible for the restrictions on middlemen and their interpretation in such a way as to brand carriers as middlemen. The company was also behind the ban on exports of hides and leather; and was possibly the force behind the technical regulations for tanning as well. Its success in influencing government policy in the later sixteenth and much of the seventeenth century arose partly from the fact that it possessed the skill and resources to lobby successfully in Parliament and elsewhere; and partly because it represented the interests of manufacturing craftsmen and was therefore able to play on the popular hostility towards middlemen and the belief that native craftsmen should enjoy government protection.

The cordwainers did not represent all the industry. Carriers strenuously opposed the restrictions on middlemen; tanners disliked technical control and the restrictions on exports. These groups had little positive influence until after the Restoration. Then in conditions of falling agricultural prices and expanding colonial markets tanners, in alliance with graziers and exporting merchants, were able to secure a change in the law relating to export. Carriers, too, in different economic conditions from those prevailing a century earlier, were able to modify the internal trading regulations.

Government policy, therefore, can hardly be regarded as a conscious piece of economic planning. And even if it had been, it hardly achieved protection for consumers or assisted the development of the industry. Had

the leather legislation been strictly implemented the industry would have been under a serious disability hampered by rigid - and sometimes impractical - technical and trading regulations. In fact it was very difficult to enforce the leather acts even though in London the government made use of the leather guilds. But the guilds themselves had considerable difficulty in controlling the occupations they represented. There is ample evidence to show that during the seventeenth century the enforcement of the leather acts and the associated regulations became less and less systematic. It seems an inescapable conclusion that the government's control of the leather industry consisted of largely unsuccessful attempts to deal with problems that it did not fully understand; and insofar as its policy had any real purposes, they were the furthering of sectional interests rather than guiding the development of the industry in the national good.

Finally, what does a study of the leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contribute to our wider knowledge of the economic history of the period? The leather industry was one of the minor industries - to use a phrase of Professor Gras - in the economy; but it sometimes is forgotten how important these lesser occupations were. We know a good deal about the English cloth industry; and something about such industries as coal mining, iron smelting, glass-making, paper-making and others, which - it may be suggested - were not greatly important in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries no matter how important they became in later periods. But we know very little about numerous occupations that supplied the population with many of the commodities essential to daily life. The leather industry was one such group of crafts and its study helps to fill

one of the gaps in our knowledge of sixteenth and seventeenth century economic conditions. Apart from this, an examination of the leather crafts adds to our knowledge of industrial structure, warning us against accepting an over-simplified, generalised, picture and revealing the forces shaping the way in which industry was organized. Lastly, any thorough examination of economic policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and any evaluation of "mercantilism" must take into account the regulation of the leather industry and trade by the state, which demonstrates the many conflicting interests lying behind government policy.

APPENDIX 1PRICES OF HIDES, LEATHER, ETC.

## Note

- A. The Price of Leather, 1576-1700.
- B. Prices of Leather, 16th and 17th Centuries.
- C. Prices of Hides.
- D. The Size and Price of Leather, 1639.
- E. Prices of Boots and Shoes.

NOTE

Although many individual prices of hides, leather and leather goods were gathered when compiling the evidence for this study, they proved too fragmentary to construct price series for the various types and qualities of product. For long term trends in the price of leather use has been made of the price series compiled by Sir William Beveridge from contracts made by the Navy. It should be noted that the Navy bought tanned leather backs which were the most expensive kind of leather. Also it is unlikely that the series reflects short-term price fluctuations (i.e. less than a year) since contract prices tended to be fixed in the short-run. However the Beveridge price series does demonstrate the major trends in prices. For example, the fall in prices in the later 1660s, shown by the series was commented on by contemporaries; and the series also shows the effect of the imposition of the excise duty on leather in 1697. Similarly the upward movement in prices in the early 1660s shown by the series is supported by other evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Some other information on prices is given in addition to the Beveridge figures.

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1. See Chapter 8, pp.335,337

A. PRICE OF LEATHER BACKS PURCHASED BY NAVY<sup>1</sup>

Date	Price	P.R. <sup>2</sup>	Date	Price	P.R. <sup>2</sup>
	sh. each			sh. each	
1576	23.33	51.9	1616	-	-
77	-	-	17	29.67	66.0
78	-	-	18	30.48	67.8
79	21.00	46.7	19	30.11	67.0
1580	-	-	1620	30.00	66.7
81	-	-	21	33.33	74.2
82	16.33	36.3	22	28.46	63.3
83	-	-	23	29.00	64.5
84	26.00	57.8	24	30.93	68.8
85	23.00	51.1	25	34.00	75.6
86	-	-	26	34.00	75.6
87	22.20	49.4	27	44.00	97.9
88	22.89	50.9	28	34.50	76.7
89	22.25	49.5	29	31.94	71.0
1590	23.25	51.7	1630	32.01	71.2
91	24.33	54.1	31	34.00	75.6
92	-	-	32	27.40	60.9
93	24.17	53.7	33	34.00	75.6
94	24.50	54.5	34	39.47	87.8
95	24.89	55.4	35	-	-
96	25.78	57.3	36	-	-
97	23.00	51.1	37	-	-
98	22.50	50.0	38	-	-
99	24.50	54.5	39	45.00	100.1
1600	23.00	51.1	1640	-	-
01	22.75	50.6	41	45.00	100.1
02	23.00	51.1	42	44.50	98.7
03	24.00	53.4	43	43.50	96.7
04	-	-	44	43.40	96.7
05	24.00	53.4	45	42.00	93.4
06	24.00	53.4	46	40.17	89.3
07	25.89	57.6	47	43.00	95.6
08	-	-	48	42.33	94.2
09	-	-	49	43.00	95.6
1610	28.50	63.4	1650	41.67	92.6
11	27.50	61.2	51	41.00	91.2
12	29.50	65.6	52	39.00	86.7
13	28.50	63.4	53	38.67	86.0
14	30.00	66.7	54	39.00	86.7
15	30.00	66.7			

1. W. Beveridge, Wages and Prices in England, vol. I (1939), Prices pp. 677-8; Price Relatives, pp. 737-9.

2. Price Relative, 10.95s per doz. lb. = 100.

Date	Price	P.R.	Date	Price	P.R.
1655	9.36 <sup>3</sup>	86.7	1678	9.60	89.9
56	8.00	74.1	79	9.67	89.9
57	8.00	74.1	1680	10.00	92.7
58	8.08	74.1	81	10.00	92.7
59	10.00	92.7	82	10.00	92.7
1660	10.82	100.3	83	10.00	92.7
61	12.00	111.2	84	10.00	92.7
62	12.00	111.2	85	10.00	92.7
63	11.17	103.5	86	8.50	78.8
64	11.00	101.9	87	8.50	78.8
65	11.00	101.9	88	9.00	83.4
66	11.00	101.9	89	10.00	92.7
67	11.00	101.9	1690	10.00	92.7
68	10.00	92.7	91	10.00	92.7
69	10.00	92.7	92	10.00	92.7
1670	10.00	92.7	93	10.00	92.7
71	10.00	92.7	94	10.00	92.7
72	10.00	92.7	95	10.00	92.7
73	10.00	92.7	96	10.33	95.7
74	10.00	92.7	97	11.00	101.9
75	10.00	92.7	98	11.00	101.9
76	10.00	92.7	99	11.00	101.9
77	9.60	89.9	1700	11.00	101.9

3. Shillings per dozen pounds.

B. AVERAGE PRICE OF LEATHER

(Source - Probate Inventories in Appendix 7)

Date	No. of Inventories	No. of Leather Pieces	Average Prices
1565-9	7	910	10s. 9d.
1588-1600	11	464	8s. 9d.
1611-20	8	220	15s. 7d.
1633-4	3	750	9s. 3d.
1666	1	240	11s. 7d.

C. AVERAGE PRICE OF HIDES(Source - J.E.T. Rogers, History of Agriculture and Prices in England, vol. V (1888), p. 411)

Decennial Averages of Better Quality Hides bought by Eton College

1566-70	7s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	1601-10	12s. 0d.
1571-80	9s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	1611-20	14s. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
1591-1600	12s. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	1621-30	15s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
		1631-40	16s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

D. THE SIZE AND PRICE OF LEATHER, 1639

(Source - P.R.O., S.P. 16/451, no. 57)

"Tandhides"	Price (shillings each)		Feet	Inches
1	15	Length "from the cheek to the end of the Buttocke"	7	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
		"Breadth from shanke to shanke"	6	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
2	21	Length	8	0
		Breadth	7	0
3	21	Length	7	10
		Breadth	6	11
4	21	Length	8	0
		Breadth	6	11
5	20	Length	7	7
		Breadth	6	5
6	16	Length	7	4
		Breadth	6	0
7	23	Length	8	0
		Breadth	6	8
8	20	Length	7	4
		Breadth	6	8
9	20	Length	7	5
		Breadth	6	11
10	23	Length	7	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
		Breadth	6	10
11	16	Length	6	11
		Breadth	6	2
12	19	Length	7	5
		Breadth	6	0

E. PRICES OF BOOTS AND SHOES

- (i) The average price of shoes bought by Lord Chamberlain's Department for distribution by the monarch on Maundy Thursday.  
(Source - Beveridge, Prices and Wages, 1, p. 457).

Year	Price (sh. per pair)	Year	Price (sh. per pair)
1556	1.0	1639	2.67
1566	1.7	1660	3.5
1576	2.5	1668/9	2.83
1580/6	2.5	1672	3.17
1592/1601	2.0	1680	3.5
1606/8	2.5	1689/92	3.5
1613/4	2.67	1695/6	4.0
1621/3	2.5	1697	3.5
1630	2.67	1700	3.5

- (ii) Average price of boots and shoes.  
(Source - Rogers, History of Agriculture and Prices, V, pp. 733-4).

	<u>Shoes</u>	<u>Boots</u>
"Before the Civil War"	Average of 1s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. 20 entries	Average of 8s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. 12 entries
"After the Civil War"	Average of 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. 18 entries	Average of 15s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 11 entries

APPENDIX 2 : PRODUCTION OF LEATHER AND LEATHER GOODS

(Source: B.M., Harleian Ms. 6867, fo. 266. Undated, but probably late seventeenth or early eighteenth century).

Note: No attempt has been made to correct the arithmetic.

"Touching Leather"

"The Annual Consumption (sic. production) of Black Grasts (i.e. crust leather) is:

300,000 Calves of the 800,000 annually bred  
and 500,000 Beeves  
800,000 Hides

"The Weight when drest into leather:

300,000 Calves at 6 lbs. and 12d. per lb.	90,000 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> li. ster.
<u>500,000</u> Beeves at 36 lbs. and 6d. per lb.	<u>450,000</u> <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> li. ster.
800,000 at 25 lbs. fere <sup>1</sup> 7d.	540,000 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> li. ster.

"The whole weight of ye

Calves 300,000 at 6 lbs.,	1,800,000 lbs. at 12d.	£90,000
Beeves <u>500,000</u> at 36 lbs.,	18,000,000 lbs. at 6d.	£450,000
<u>800,000</u> 25lbs. fere	19,800,000 lbs. at 6 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> d.	£540,000

"Shoos Boots (Clogs Patterns) Shassoons Spurleathers Spatterdashes Gambadoes.

"Shoos 5,400,000 souls whereof:

	Broags or bare foot	rest	pairs per yr.	Wt. lb.	Total weight	ad a 6th	
men above 16	1,400,000	10,000	1,390,000	2	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	4,170,000	4,870
boys under 16	1,200,000	30,000	1,670,000	2	<sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1,750,000	2,040
women above 16	1,500,000	20,000	1,480,000	2	1	2,960,000	3,450
girls under 16	1,300,000	40,000	1,260,000	2	<sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1,260,000	1,960
	<u>5,400,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>	<u>5,300,000</u>			<u>10,140,000</u>	<u>11,820</u>

1. "fere" = together.

"Boots new one half of ye men:

600,000 1 pair in 6 y. 100,000 pr. per an. at 7 lbs. 700,000 lbs.

"Spatterdahes and spring boots & Gambadoes:

200,000 1 pair in 4 y. 50,000 pr. per an. at 4 lbs. 200,000 lbs.

"Shassoons and spur leather:

500,000 1 pair in 5 y. 100,000 pr. per an. at 1 lb. 100,000 lbs.

"Clogs and patterns 1/7 of ye women and children:

400,000 2 pr. per an. 800,000 at  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. 400,000 lbs.

(TOTAL FOOTWEAR)

11,540,000 lbs.

"Harnesses

Gentleman Coaches and Carushes:

3,000 @ 5 Beef & Calf hides each 1,500 hides at 30 lb  
each = 450,000. 1 in 5 years = 90,000 lbs.

Hackney Coaches

1,200 @ 5 hides each 6,000 at 27 lbs.  
each 160,000 lbs. 1 in 4 yrs. 40,000 lbs.

(TOTAL HARNESSSES)

130,000 lbs.

APPENDIX 3COASTAL TRADE IN HIDES, SKINS, LEATHER

Introductory Note

References

A. Tanned Leather

B. Raw Hides

C. Calfskins.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Apart from the well-known difficulties of using the port books as commercial records,<sup>1</sup> there are certain special difficulties in the case of shipments of hides, skins and leather. These arise because customs officials did not use a uniform terminology when dealing with these commodities. In the same book, for example, may be found references to "leather", "tanned leather", and "untanned leather." Calfskins might be referred to as "raw", "dressed" or simply as "calfskins". Similarly hides might be described as "tanned", "untanned", "green", "salted", "in hair", "unhaired", "raw", or without any qualifying adjective. Shipments were usually recorded by the dioker or in dozens, but sometimes by weight and sometimes by such vague terms as "parcels" or "packets".

In compiling the following tables doubtful items have been excluded. The figures therefore tend to understate the quantity of hides and leather entering into trade.

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1. See G.N. Clark, Guide to English Commercial Statistics, 1696-1782, (1938); J.H. Andrews, "Two Problems in the Interpretation of the Port Books," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., vol. IX, no. 1 (1956).

REFERENCESP.R.O. Port Books:

E 190/2/3	Michaelmas	1566/7
E 190/4/3	"	1569/70
E 190/6/2	"	1574/4
E 190/6/5	"	1577/8
E 190/6/6	"	1579/80
E 190/7/4	"	1582/3
E 190/9/1	"	1591/2
E 190/10/6	"	1597/8
E 190/13/2	Christmas	1605/6
E 190/25/8	"	1620/1
E 190/41/2	"	1636/7
E 190/42/5	"	1638/9
E 190/48/1	"	1661/2
E 190/51/5	"	1665/6
E 190/53/2	"	1676/7
E 190/67/1	"	1680/1
E 190/151/8	"	1694/5

East Anglian Ports:

Aldburgh, Colchester, Dunwich, Ipswich, Lynn, Southwold, Walberswick,  
Woodbridge, Yarmouth.  
(Ipswich and Woodbridge the most important).

Kentish Ports:

Canterbury, Dover, Faversham, Folkestone, Maidstone, Margate, Milton,  
Rochester, Rye, Sandwich, Whitstable.  
(Faversham the most important).

A. COASTAL TRADE - TANNED LEATHER (Tanned hides or pieces of leather)

Year	1566/7	1569/70	1573/4	1577/8	1579/80	1582/3	1591/2	1597/8	1605/6	1620/1	1636/7	1638/9	1661/2	1665/6	1671/2	1676/7	1680/1	1694/5	
<u>FROM LONDON TO</u>																			
East Anglian Ports	1334	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57	-	-	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kentish Ports	35	-	170	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	132	177	107	476	44	-
Hull	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	225	-	-	-	273	136	40	113	-	-	-
Newcastle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	11	145	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	43	13	5	10	-	43	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1369</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>-</b>

<u>TO LONDON FROM</u>																			
East Anglian Ports	1349	120	999	26	2177	552	222	-	100	-	-	30	1269	-	155	525	1283	-	-
Kentish Ports	40	110	50	710	237	300	10	340	-	-	152	290	81	429	59	111	29	76	-
Hull	-	-	190	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	-	15	-	-	-	-
Newcastle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	680	-	-	-	138	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	220	-	-	-	-	-	30	20	28	92	69	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1389</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>1239</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>2414</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>1542</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>-</b>

B. COASTAL TRADE - RAW HIDES (No. of hides)

Year	1566/7	1569/70	1573/4	1577/8	1579/80	1582/3	1591/2	1597/8	1605/6	1620/1	1636/7	1638/9	1661/2	1665/6	1671/3	1676/7	1680/1	1694/5	
<u>FROM LONDON TO</u>																			
East Anglian Ports	-	148	72	350	-	209	-	261	14	102	-	-	-	-	-	-	174	-	
Kentish Ports	140	-	-	372	559	824	1239	-	248	350	-	-	592	159	408	767	409	55	
Hull	987	-	-	739	245	273	315	1025	1944	1982	13938	341	4467	1018	2491	1721	1719	1471	
Newcastle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Others	-	43	-	-	-	-	-	75	62	167	-	-	83	-	-	-	757	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1127</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1461</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>1306</b>	<b>1554</b>	<b>1450</b>	<b>2268</b>	<b>2601</b>	<b>3938</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>5142</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>2899</b>	<b>2488</b>	<b>3059</b>	<b>1526</b>	
<u>TO LONDON FROM</u>																			
East Anglian Ports	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	126	30	16	-	-	
Kentish Ports	-	78	-	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Hull	-	-	-	-	80	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	180	-	94	716	-	-	
Newcastle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	70	-	-	
Others	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65	-	482	-	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>1284</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	

C. COASTAL TRADE - CALFSKINS (dozens)

c = calfskins, condition not specified; d = dressed calfskins; r = raw calfskins

Year	1566/7	1564/70	1573/4	1577/8	1579/80	1582/3	1591/2	1597/8	1605/6	1620/1	1636/7	1638/9	1661/2	1665/6	1671/2	1676/7	1680/1	1694/5
<u>FROM LONDON TO</u>																		
East Anglian Ports	100	126	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	64	-
d.	251	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-
r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kentish Ports	c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
d.	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-
r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hull	c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newcastle	C.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	5	6	-	-	-	-	31
d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total (all types)</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>0</b>

Year	1566/7	1569/70	1573/4	1577/8	1579/80	1582/3	1591/2	1597/8	1605/6	1620/1	1636/7	1638/9	1661/2	1665/6	1671/2	1676/7	1680/1	1694/5	
<u>TO LONDON FROM</u>																			
East Anglian Ports	c.	53	117	608	124	418	2	265	144	-	650	116	347	93	258	161	472	230	-
	d.	-	-	-	-	107	136	5	-	5	208	30	-	34	-	6	-	-	-
	r.	-	-	-	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	134	-	116	-	58	-	-
Kentish Ports	c.	-	109	-	14	40	52	8	-	-	80	-	40	50	29	66	98	60	9
	d.	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78	-
	r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
Hull	c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84	69	-
	d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	r.	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Newcastle	lec.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	5	-	21	480	468	-	-
	d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	20	49	6	118	-	-
	r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	126	-	-	-
Others	c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	89	860	201	-	-
	d.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	180	137	-	-
	r.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	15	80	66	-	-
Total (all types)		53	216	608	181	565	190	280	144	5	938	177	407	350	324	557	2269	1627	9

APPENDIX 4.

OVERSEAS TRADE IN LEATHER, ETC.

- A. Exports of hides, skins and leather from London, 1580-1700.
- B. Exports of wrought leather from London, 1663-1700.
- C. Exports of leather goods from London, 1603-1700.

A. EXPORTS OF HIDES, SKINS AND LEATHER FROM LONDON, 1580-1700.

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tanned leather</u>	<u>Tanned calfskins</u>	<u>Raw hides</u>
P.R.O. E 190/6/7	Mich. 1580/1	235 pieces	44 doz.	3182
E 190/14/3	Xmas 1606/7	-	1465 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	250
E 190/16/3	1611/2	-	4588 "	-
E 190/25/4	1621/2	-	4068 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	-
E 190/35/2	1630/1	-	4455 "	-
E 190/41/1	1640/1	-	3102 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	-
E 190/48/5	1660/1	-	1770 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	-
E 190/52/7	1669/70	2733 cwt.	11863 " <sup>1</sup>	-
Customs 2/6	1698/9	10275 "	6579 cwt. <sup>1</sup>	-
Customs 2/7	1699/1700	11455 "	7360 " <sup>1</sup>	-

Notes.

The export of calfskins was illegal except under licence until 1662. Thereafter exports were allowed subject to a limitation on weight. (See Chapter 8, pp. 335 )

The export of tanned leather was prohibited until 1666. The trade was then open to 1675 when exports were again illegal. The trade was finally thrown open in 1685. (See Chapter 8, pp. 336 et seq )

To convert cwts. of calfskins into dozens the former should be multiplied by about 3 (on the assumption that a dozen skins weighed 36 lbs.).

1. Condition not specified.

B. EXPORT OF WROUGHT LEATHER FROM LONDON, 1663 - 1700

Reference	Year	Wrought leather	
		Piece	Cwt.
E 190/50/2	1663/4	1,370	44
E 190/99/1	1680/1	8,794	12 100 lbs.
Customs 2/6	1698/9	-	1001
Customs 2/7	1699/1700	-	1304

Note

It is not clear from the port books what was the nature of wrought leather. The most obvious explanation is that it was leather worked (or "wrought") into leather goods; this explanation is supported by the fact that wrought leather appears in the general overseas books along with other leather goods and not in the special port books that were kept for shipments of hides and leather. However, two facts make it doubtful whether wrought leather at all times referred to leather goods. In the first place it is difficult to see what leather goods could be included in the term since shoes, gloves, saddles, etc., were listed in the same books that contained entries to wrought leather. Secondly in some years wrought leather was entered in the port books by the piece, a term which could hardly have been applied to a miscellaneous collection of leather goods.

There seem to be two possibilities. Either wrought leather was leather treated in some way in addition to tanning - i.e. it was curried, dyed, or grained, etc. Or wrought leather was a term used by exporters to describe tanned leather being exported at a time when exports of leather were

illegal. By describing the leather as "wrought" tanned leather might be passed off as leather goods. This explanation does not apply to years in which exports of leather were permitted (e.g., 1698/9, 1699/1700). In those years the term might apply to actual leather goods such as footwear. It is noticeable, for example, from Table C (below) that practically no shipments of boots and shoes were recorded in 1698/9 and 1699/1700.

C. EXPORTS OF LEATHER GOODS FROM LONDON, 1603-1700

Reference	Year	Plain Leather Gloves doz.	Other Leather Gloves doz.	Footwear	Saddles	Harnesses and Bridles
E 190/12/3	Xmas 1603/4	100	-	-	-	-
E 190/38/7	1633/4	11,159 $\frac{1}{2}$	404 $\frac{1}{2}$	-	-	-
E 190/16/3	1640	19,369	1,480	-	-	-
E 190/50/2	1663/4	3,340	53	12,479 prs. & 25 cwt.	295	-
E 190/99/1	1680/1	8,164	605 $\frac{1}{2}$	33,756 prs.	1,759	3,901
Customs 2/6	1698/9	12,774	153	-	1,081	11,710
Customs 2/7	1699/1700	8,415	59	228 prs.	4,276	7,017

APPENDIX 5

THE MANUFACTURE OF LEATHER

- (i) Tanning: Transcript of a Memorandum on the Leather Act of 1563.
- (ii) Leatherdressing: Documents related to leatherdressing.

(i) Tanning: Transcript of a Memorandum on the Leather Act of 1563.

(Source: B.M., Lans. Ms. 5, no. 58 (1575?)).

"The statute made in Quinto of the Quenes Ma<sup>ties</sup> raigne towchinge the makinge and dressinge of Leather hath his full force vpon theis poyntes, wch are in number XV<sup>tene</sup>, of the wch theis VI<sup>th</sup> are clauses to be kepte, the reste either for theire impossibility, or inconvenience not to be allowed.

1. "Firste that none shall put any Hide, in any Tanne, Wosesse, or Liccor made hott or warmed in any fate, or vessell, to be sett or covered in any Tane hill.
2. "None shall over lyme hydes in Lyme pittes.
- 3 "None shall put any Hydes into Tane vates, or vesselles, before the Lyme be p(er)fectly soken, and wrought oute of them.
- 4 "None shall over dry parch thear Leather, wth the heate of the fyre or wth the Sumer sonne.
- 5 "None shall necligently worke thear hydes in the wosses.
- 6 "None shall insufficiently Tane any hydes.

"Theis Articles insufficiente and not to be allowed and therefore to be disspensed withall by cause of the reasons p(ar)ticularly hereafter followinge to eny of them.

- 1 "Firste it was enacted that the Hyde shulde ly no longer in the Lyme then the heare fallinge of, or may be taken of, nor be putt into the Lymes after the heare maye be taken of.

"To this the Tanners and men of vnderstandinge in this occupacon saye and affirme, that the Layinge of the Hyde in Lyme,

one Daye, tene or twenty, after that the heare is taken away (according as the sines in the hyde appearinge induce the workman to order his worke) is one of the best poyntes of workmanship, soe that it ly not theare to longe and that it be wrought out agayne as by theire science they vse and by the second and third Article they stand bounde to doe. Yf they Do not Lyme the hyde enough, they can make no leather of yt. But if it ly no longer then heare may fall of it it is not lymed enough. Therefore it doth evidently appeare that the statute in the firste pointe is very vnp(er)fitt, And also theare be divers Hydes whose heare falleth of before they come to the Tanners handes, wch if they be not lymed will never make leather but muste be cast awaye, that otherwise would make good leather as the rest for vpper Leather.

- 2 "None shall use any Liccor stuffe or workmanship in or about the tanning of Leather, but only Lyme Culver Dunge or henne Dunge and that colde water only and wooses made of colled water and Oken Barke only without any mixture of any thinge.

"In this seconde Article they haue mistaken the Tanners of the Arte (whereby it appeareth that they weare not skilfull that made the lawe) As to saie that none shall vse aboute tanninge by (sic. but) Lyme etc<sup>ra</sup>: for theis three materialles, Lyme, Culver Dunge, and Henne Donge are vsed is masteringe and workinge of the hyde and never other. Nowe there is a Difference in the science betwixt tanninge and workinge of Leather, for the workinge is to take of the heare and to open the hyde that it may receve Liccor. The tanninge is to laye the hyde in wooses by changinge and renewinge

till it become Leather, so that wheare this seconde article by the expresse wordes thereof doth sime to give Liberty to tanne wth Lyme etc yet goeth thereby agaynst the firste that willeth no hyde to lye in Lyme longer then vntill the Heare falleth of or maybe taken of, wch is the tyme of y<sup>e</sup> workynge of the hide as is aforesaid, Vpon this seconde Article the Xchetor and promotor Do take as forfeit all leather made with Barley meale, wth Ashenge Barke or by order of change beinge both vsed tyme out of mynde, (in) workmanship of principall cominge vsed in diverse places of Englande diversly, accordinge to the comodity of the country the skill of the workman and the groeth of the hyde. Howe be it weare not this worde mixture this article or clause of the statute weare to be baren wthall, because that wthout mixture of asshen Tane and other such stufte as Tanners use their Leather cannott possible be rayed.

- 3 "None shall suffer theare Leather to wett in any froste vntil the same be frosen.

"In this article there is A consideracon to be had for in the tyme of Longe and greate froste lett the Tanner or workman Do what he list, he shall not be able to master the power of Heaven and Earth, byt the Tanne Times wilbe frosen wthout any remedy. To chardge an impossibilitie is against equitie. But the Tanners dooe all that they can to avoyd the frost; otherwyse their is spoile and not saleable at the markett. The shoumakeres all being skillfull to p(er)ceave the same.

- 4 "None shall tanne any putrifified Hyde or skyne being putred rotten or taynted, by longe lying, either before the puttinge into the Lymes or after in water or Liccor.

"Here are two thynges amisse. The one that it chargeth a great incomodity & p(re)venteth none For a putrifified (hide) or skyne doth serue for divers occupacons when it is tanned, namely the Bugetmaker, the Bottellmaker, the Gerdlers, and Collermaker etc and therefore greate waste to caste it awaye, and woulde be cause to bringe Dearth vppon better Leather wch serveth better for other uses. Such a putrifified Hyde by statute may not be sealed, as is knowen to be such as it is, whereby the buyer cannot be Deceyved in the price nor use. The other mistakinge Lyeth in this That after a Hyde be once Lymed (for they be alwayes before they come to be in water or Liccor, and putt in water, and Liccor, it can never after putrify) but the wordes of the statute sime to admitt the contrary. And the putrifyinge is at the Butchers handes or wheare the Tanner buyeth his hydes, But when they be once in the Tanners keeping he saveth them for his owne advauntage.

- 5 "None shall not renewe, and make stronge the wooses as often as shalbe requered.

"This is agayst all reasons, that the wooses shall not be renewed as often as requered. Some man would thinke that two negatives shuld make an affirmative. But yet is not so ment hire..."  
 (The tan solutions are renewed when necessary for it is not possible to make leather without).

- 6 "None shall suffer their Hydes for utter sole and Cloute leather, to lye in Wooses less then Twelve monethes at the least and the hydres for upper leather lesse then Nyne monethes."

(It is not the length of time that is important but the strength of the tan solutions. Although renewal of the solutions requires more labour "a thinge in itselfe to be cherysed" leather tanned in strong solutions is not dearer than that tanned for twelve months in weaker solutions because of the quicker return on capital and the frequency with which the market is served).

- 7 "None shall Tanne any Oxe hide, Cowe hide, or Stere hide otherwise then hole.

"Such Hydres as haue hyn not so good as to haue sole leather in them, the Tanner is ever wonte to tane them whole namely the Bull hyde and Cowe hyde, but of the Ox hide and Steere hyde they weare wont to make sole leather only cutting awaye the back from the wome wch back had a prop(er) kynde of tanninge and curryinge by them selves after another manner then the womes for upper Leather had: So that yo<sup>u</sup> knowe wch was the wome (only fitt for upper leather) by the saughtnes. But now the Shoemaker buyinge the Hyde hole and not Devided, maketh sole Leather of the womes, so some (sic. same?) as of the backe hauinge like workmanship at the Tanners and Curriers handes of this cometh the out cry of y<sup>e</sup> Laborer & comen p(er)son when the wome (wch is y<sup>e</sup> tendrest & holloist(?) p(ar)t of ye hyde) is put to vtter sole and clout leather wch doth nothing serve their turne, as the backes weare wonte

to doe, wch this statute simeth in some p(ar)te to have conceyved but hath not by the wordes thereof p(re)vented as doth appeare.

- 8 "None shall put to sale any Hyde or Skyne, that shalbe raysed in or by Tanninge workemanship or other wayes or by vsinge any other thinge or stuffe or any other sortes they (sic. than) by the statute is Lymytted and appointed.

"In this branch there is forbydden to rayse Leather, A thinge that hath byn used in the occupacon in all kyndes of workemanshipes for sole leather from the begynninge. Nether is it possible to open the Leather so as it may receve the Tallowe of the Curryer, wthout raysinge nether can the spier or horne (wch will cause that the hyde may never be tanned) be taken out without reaysinge, So that in this ther is forbidden all good workmanshipp. Trew it is that to much reaysinge is not convenyente and to litles is much woorse. But here the meane (wch is of necessity) and all raysinge is expresly forbidden.

- 9 "None shall Tanne any Bullshyde, horsehyde or shepes skyne.

"This Article is very conveniente (sic. inconvenient) for the Bullhyde is very necessary for the Sadler because beinge the thickest in the belly there is lesse waste for the Sadler. The horse Hyde is fittest for the Collar maker, for the Carte and Plough. When the Husbandman hath a horse killed by mischaunce or otherwise he tanneth his hyde it easeth his Losse as is better leather for his use when the white tanned leather is. The Shepe skyne serveth for the wolcardmakers and for Bellowmakers, Book-

bynders, and divers other occupacons, Now of theis hydes and skynes are (not) to be used of the Showmakers by expresse wordes in the same statute contayned wherefore they may tane them without that inconveniency besydes it is the labor of the porer sorte of Tanners who mayntayne themselves and their howses by tanning of them, the bigger worke beinge to chargeable for them to Deale wthall."

(ii) Leatherdressing: "A Trew declaracion shewing the difference between Lether Right Dressed and Lether false Dressed."

(Source: extract from B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 127 (1593)).

"The right dressinge are these vidz:

1. Buffe are of Ealke Hides and Loshe hides in oyle and are comonly yellowe, or of any other Culour sauinge white.
2. Shamwayes are of Goat Skinns in oyle & be comonly yellow or of any other cullour sauing white.
3. Spanish lether are of Goates skinns passeerd in shomack made of Diuers Cullours being firste of whyte tanninge.
4. All other Lethers are of all other sortes of Hydes and skinns in allome White Tawed, made good & p(er)fett lether.

"And euery of the said fower right Dressinges, are hindered in the sale by fower sortes of Counterfytt skynns<sup>1</sup> drest... and sett fourth into all Cullours like the other right Dressinge aforesaid vidz;

"Counterfitt Buffes are these thre sortes:

1. The yong Bull or Steer Rough Drest in Oyle or Allame like Buffe be it neuer so softe or faier of Cullour.
2. Ealke hides, Loshe hides, Drumble or India horsse or stagge skinner Dresset in allome like Buffe be they softe or faier of any Cullour.
3. Drumbls or India horsse, stagge or yong bull hides drest in oyle be they softeor faier of any Collour.

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1. These kinds of leather were not "counterfytt" according to any legal standards; but they were false in the opinion of the authors of the document (the London leatherdressers).

"The Counterfitt dressinges of Goetes and of sheep are thes:

1. Goates skinns Drest in allome rough Like Shamwayes
2. Of Does and sores(?) skinns Drest in allome rought like shamwayes.
3. Buckes and hindes Drest in oyle or allome Lyke Shamwayes.
4. Sheepskinns Dreset in allome cullord wth oker like sheep shamwayes or any other cullour are Cownterfeetes.

"Cownterfitt tannidge wrought heer in england

A Goates skin tand in barke or Tagute(?) called the barbery tannidge Drest of like grayne to Spanish lether

A Buck or Does skinne Drest like Spanish graynd Lether

Any skin Drest in Shoocke or otherwise, tand & grayned like Spanish lether (except the goates skinns tand in shoock, that is to saye sheepes skinne, Dogge skinne, Calues skinne, or any other such like skinns) are Cownterfett."

Spanish leather (B.M., Lans. Ms. 74, fo. 151)

"There is an other way of dressing of Goate skynnes tanned and thother skynnes before to sell them for Right Spannish Skynnes as wth the powder of date stones and of Gaule, & wth french shomake that is nothing like to the Spannish Shomake to gyve them a pretie sweete savor but nothing like to the Civile skynne, and the powder of theise is a veary smalle price & the powder of right Spannish shomake... is woarth xxx<sup>s</sup> the C<sup>1b</sup> weight, wch showmake is a kynde of brush shrubbe or heath in Spayne and groweth lowe by the ground... and is cutt twise a yeare and soe dried and grounded into powder by milles and dresseth all the Civile & Spannish Skynnes brought hither."

APPENDIX 6THE LEATHER DUTY, 1697

Although the duty imposed on home manufactured and imported leather in 1697 had an effect on the production of, and the trade in leather, the history of this financial measure stands apart from the main stream of government regulations of the industry. It belongs to the financial rather than the industrial history of the period.

Following the Revolution of 1688 the Crown depended on four main sources of revenue: the customs duties, the excise duties, the poll tax and the land tax. In the last decade of the century the excise was probably the most reliable and efficient source of income for the customs revenue was made uncertain by war, the poll tax was subject to considerable peoulation, and the land tax was still in an experimental state. During the wars of William III the excise bore most of the financial strain for it was on the security of reliable future revenue that loans were raised to meet pressing expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

One aspect of the excise is of concern here. At the end of 1693 and the beginning of 1694 the government decided to raise one million pounds by means of a lottery - the "Million Lottery." The interest of 14 per cent per annum was to be met by an excise duty on home produced and foreign salt which was expected to raise £140,000 to £150,000 a year. As the salt duties

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1. D. Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William III (Oxford, 1955), pp. 400-407; E. Hughes, Studies in Administration and Finance, 1558 - 1825 (Manchester, 1934), pp. 167-171.

were allowed for only four years the duty on beer was used as additional security. However in 1696 when the government was negotiating a loan of £2 $\frac{1}{2}$  million, Parliament doubled the salt duties and made them perpetual but only at the price of removing the tonnage duties and the duties on coal. As the yield on salt and beer was not meeting expectations<sup>1</sup> the government was compelled to seek other sources of revenue. Among other devices it decided on an excise duty upon leather.

The idea of taxing leather was not new in 1697. Early in 1694 the Committee of Ways and Means had recommended a duty on leather and had drawn up a rather complicated schedule of duties to be levied on leather by weight or by the *pièce*.<sup>2</sup> Nothing came of this proposal. A year later the House of Commons again agreed on a leather duty,<sup>3</sup> but again nothing was done. However in February 1697 there was introduced into Parliament "An Act for Laying a Duty upon Leather for the Terme of Three Yeares and making other provision for answering the Deficiencies as well of the late Duties upon Coals & Culme as for paying the Anuities upon the Lottery and for Lives charged on the Tunage of Ships and the Duties upon Salt." The bill was passed and the act took effect from April 1697.<sup>4</sup>

Under the act a 15 per cent ad valorem tax was imposed upon all leather manufactured in, or imported into England and Wales. However two-

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1. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 176, 179-180, 184-5.

2. Commons' Journals, vol. XI, pp. 104-5.

3. Ibid, p. 232.

4. 8 & 9 Will. III, cap. 21.

thirds of the duty was remitted on leather that was exported. In the case of leather goods exported, if it could be shown that the leather used in their manufacture had paid the duty, an allowance of 5 per cent of the value of the goods was made to the exporter. All these provisions applied to leather manufactured from April 1697. If leather manufacturers had stocks of leather on hand which had been made before April, a duty of 10 per cent of the value of the stocks was charged.<sup>1</sup>

After some hesitation the administration of the leather duty was placed in the hands of the Excise Commissioners who appointed a large number of local collectors and supervisors to administer the act in various parts of the country. Some of these local officers were leather craftsmen but others were merely persons looking for any kind of government appointment.<sup>2</sup> To facilitate the collection of the duty, leather manufacturers were compelled to inform the collectors of the location of their premises and to allow the officers reasonable powers of entry to inspect stocks of leather. All sales of leather were to take place in public markets and the details of sales were to be recorded in registers, including a declaration of the true value of the leather. No sales could be completed before the duty had been paid. The leather act of 1604 was to be implemented to prevent transactions outside public markets. The duty on imported leather was to be levied by the customers before the leather was landed.<sup>3</sup> There is little doubt that the

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1. *Ibid*, sects. I, XX, XXIV, XXV, XXVI.

2. Cal. of Treasury Books, vol. XII, pp. 4, 5, 7, 120, 136-7, 180.

3. 8 & 9 Will. III, cap. 21, sects, II, III, IV, VII - XV.

administration of the leather duty put a considerable strain upon the already strained resources of the Excise department and that its collection was not very efficient. In 1697 it was remarked in regard to the duty that its administration "requires the constant application of men of the best judgement, integrity and industry who are not loaded with greater concerns but have times and leisure as well to contrive proper methods, as also for the exact levying thereof."<sup>1</sup>

Only one full account of the Leather Duty has survived for the late seventeenth century. This is for the first period of the duty, 25th April 1697 to 24th June 1698.<sup>2</sup> During this period the duty yielded £92,000 (£86,000 in the full year June 1697 to June 1698). This money was used to pay seventy-three tallies totalling £78,300. £9,300 was paid into the Mint under the recoinage scheme, and £248 was paid to London merchants as the "drawback" on exported leather. This can hardly have been the full sum paid on drawbacks.<sup>3</sup> Nearly £1,000 of the sum collected went in expenses of collectors and salaries of clerks, and a further £1,800 was spent on stationery, offices and other expenses. The Excise Commissioners were left with a surplus of £1,300.

The duty was imposed for three years and in 1700 it expired.

However it was revived again in 1710.<sup>4</sup> The way in which it affected the leather trade and industry and the reaction of the leather craftsmen to the

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1. Quoted by Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

2. P.R.O. E 351/1339/372.

3. Probably most drawbacks were allowed when the duty was levied.

4. 9<sup>th</sup> Anne, cap. 2.

duty is described in the main body of this study. One final question remains for consideration here. In the chapters on government policy we saw how on many occasions government policy developed as the result of the pressure of vested interests. Is it possible that the excise duty on leather was also the work of some interested party within the industry? Certainly a number of duties imposed to swell the revenue in the 1690s were the result of agitation of particular industrial groups but these were duties on imports and not excise duties.<sup>1</sup> It is most unlikely that the leather duty was obtained by any group within the leather industry. There is no evidence suggesting that this might be so, and no one within the industry stood to benefit from the duty.<sup>2</sup> It is true, of course, that the drawback on exported leather favoured particular groups; the clause allowing the drawback was inserted in the act at the request of the London tanners who pointed out the adverse effect the duty would have on the export trade.<sup>3</sup> But drawbacks were common features of excise duties. In the case of the salt duties a drawback was allowed for the fisheries - indeed the payment of these drawbacks was one reason for the deficiency in the expected revenue from the salt duties in 1698-9.<sup>4</sup> Thus the tanners and the merchants exporting leather were asking for nothing more than the normal consideration shown to exporters.

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1. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 175-6.

2. In 1697 John Dawes a leatherdresser and bridle cutter asked for employment in the administration of the duty on the grounds that he was concerned in the proposals for imposing a duty on leather (Cal. of Treasury Books, vol. XII, p. 292). There may have been a number of individuals who helped in the drafting of the act in the hope of being rewarded by some office, but the many complaints about the duty (Commons' Journals, vols. XI, XII, passim) is evidence of the general opposition to the duty.

3. Commons' Journals, vol. XI, p. 740.

4. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 177-8, 185.

It appears therefore that the leather duty emerged entirely as a result of the government's need to find new sources of revenue. Leather - like salt - was a suitable commodity to bear an excise duty. It was widely used and demand tended to be inelastic. Thus consumption was not likely to fall sharply when a duty was imposed and at least some of the duty could be passed on to the consumer.<sup>1</sup> It seems that it was considerations such as these - and not any pressure from any group within the industry - that decided the government to use leather as a source of revenue.

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1. The price paid by the navy for leather back increased by 6.2 per cent between 1696 and 1697. See Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 7

INVENTORIES OF LEATHER WORKERS

## Note on Inventories

Probate inventories were made for the purpose of proving wills - to which they were attached - and they were normally kept by local ecclesiastical authorities. Inventories recorded the value of the household goods of the testator and the goods relating to his business activities. The inventories were made with more or less care by neighbours who listed and valued the items as best they could. These documents provide valuable information about the wealth of craftsmen and their business activities although there are obvious dangers in their use which must be recognised.

First, how representative of sixteenth and seventeenth century craftsmen as a whole were those who made wills? Dr. W.G. Hoskins who has used probate inventories to study farming conditions in Leicestershire in the sixteenth century, has pointed out that inventories surviving in local archives tend to reflect "a wide middle range of people, from the prosperous cottager up to the yeoman and the gentleman, and in the towns from the smaller craftsmen up to the well-to-do merchant". Very poor craftsmen were inclined not to leave wills; while the very rich often owned property in several places within the jurisdiction of several ecclesiastical courts, in which case their wills and inventories were often lodged, not in the local ecclesiastical court, but at Canterbury<sup>1</sup>. It is hard to say whether this

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1. W.G.Hoskins, Essays in Leicestershire History (Liverpool, 1950) pp.124-126. Dr. Hoskins discusses many of the problems relating to inventories.

seriously affects the sample of inventories of leather craftsmen. Inventories of very poor men have been found ~~and also inventories of very poor men have been found~~ and also inventories of craftsmen of considerable wealth.

Secondly, how reliable is the information found on inventories? Much depended upon the honesty and intelligence of the persons making an inventory and the valuations given to goods can have been no more than guesses<sup>1</sup>, especially in the case of items relating to particular crafts. On the other hand, many inventories of leather craftsmen seem to have been made by persons who were themselves engaged in those occupations so perhaps the valuations given to hides, leather, vats and other goods were not too far removed from reality<sup>1</sup>.

There is however a more serious problem. Inventories at best can give an impression of the activities of craftsmen only at one point of time; they provide a snapshot-possibly blurred - and not a moving picture. This momentary impression might not be typical of the normal activities of the testator. If he had been ill for a long time before his death, his business might have run down. And even if business had been normal, there might still have been

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1. There was possibly a tendency to under-value goods. For example, Edward Hankey a tanner, died at Nantwich (Cheshire) about 1690, and his tannery was valued at £24 and his leather at £200. However a person to whom Hankey owed money was prepared to accept the tannery in repayment of a debt of £40; and he claimed that the true value of the leather was nearer £300 (P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E/134/2  
 2. Hankey, Factor 33)

considerable variations over a period of time. To take but a single example. The inventory of a tanner who died just after he had sold the same hides as leather. This problem is particularly serious in the case of tanners who often employed large amounts of circulating capital.

Finally, how representative of the leather craftsmen are the inventories that have been assembled in this study and which are presented in the appendix? The sample is a small one and it does not permit comparisons to be made between the size of the manufacturing unit at different points of time or in different parts of the country. On the other hand, the selection - discovery might be a better word - has been completely random and there is no reason to suppose that the examples which are to hand provide a distorted picture of leather craftsmen in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

#### Note on Tables

1. On Tables I - IV values had been rounded to the nearest 10s. A dash (-) indicates that the information is not given on the document. The letters n.a. indicate that the information is not available because the manuscript is damaged or (in the case of printed inventories) the document has not been transcribed in full.

2. Debts have not been included in the total value of the estates.

3. Tables V - IX analyse the craft goods of leather

craftsmen where the information given on inventories permits such an analysis to be made.

4. The term "household goods" has been interpreted widely to include furniture, clothing etc. and also such items as firewood, and ready cash. Large amounts of cash are indicated in the column of the table containing comments.

TABLE I - Tanners' Inventories

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of Lease	Comments	Reference
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
1.	16th C.	Blake	Lincs.	7	2	4.5	13.5	-	-	-		Lincs.A.O. Inv. 14/129
2.	"	Wallis	Tattersall	73	37	27.5	137.5	-	-	-	Farm goods mainly livestock	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 15/9
3.	"	Buxton	Horncastle	32	7.15	1.5	40.5	-	7	-		Lincs.A.O. Inv. 15/130
4.	1537	Whytwell	Lincoln	25.5	12.5	-	38	8	21.5	-	Debts mainly for leather and bark	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 6/225
5.	1541	Wyllerton	Boston	118.5	-	57.5	176	34	13.5	-	Debts mainly for leather and bark	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 10/147
6.	1546	Halsope	Leicester	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	27.5	-	-	-		V.C.H. Leics. IV p. 85
7.	1547	Cole	Boston	7	-	9.6	16	-	-	-	Seems to have worked cheap, inferior hides	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 16/38
8.	1559	Stanforde	Leicester	44	n.a.	n.a.	72.5	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p. 85
9.	1563	A'Lees	Birmingham	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	100.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Court, Midland Industries, pp. 356
10.	1565	Bayne	Gateshead	22	1.5	5.5	29	-	-	-		"Wills & Inventories", III, p.30.
11.	1567	Neall	Horncastle	770.5	27	516.5	1,314	-	-	-	Tanner on exceptional scale. See Chapter 5.	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 85/147.
12.	1569	Lawes	Gateshead	86	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Possibly a bark dealer, See Chap.5	"Wills & Inventories", I, p.307.
13.	1571	Morris	Leicester	42	n.a.	n.a.	64	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.85.
14.	1572	Massey	"	9.5	n.a.	n.a.	21.5	-	-	n.a.		" " " "
15.	1572	Watson	"	9.5	n.a.	n.a.	18.5	-	-	n.a.		" " " "
16.	1588	Chucking	Stanford	13	1.5	6.5	21	12	8	-	1 dicker of leather "at Wydowe Hesseldynes" (see no.17)	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 74/736

TABLE I (continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	Household Goods £	Total Value of Estate £	Debts owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
17.	1588	Hesseldene	Stanford	n.a.	n.a.	36	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms. defective	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 75/8.
18.	1588	Tampion	Bourne	46.5	55	354	406	-	-	-		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 74/488
19.	1588	Parker	"	51.5	8.5	32	92	1	4.5	-	Debt owed to "Nicholas his Servante".	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 76/294
20.	1588	Tatam	Leicester	n.a.	n.a.	13.5	n.a.	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.85.
21.	1588	Dodds	Newcastle	0.5	n.a.	10.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Inventory incomplete	"Wills & Inventories", III
22.	1591	Osborne	Boston	(14/6)	2	11	13.5	2	-	-		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 82/189
23.	1592	Keysbye	Stamford	n.a.	n.a.	57	83	3	n.a.	n.a.	Ms. defective	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 83/681
24.	1592	Jarman	Grantham	26.5	3	6.5	40.5	4	-	6		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 83/388
25.	1595	Frendes	Holland	70.5	-	19	19	-	-	10		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 83/304
26.	1599	Whiting	Horncastle	61.5	-	15.5	83	1	16	6		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 91/205
27.	1599	Durne	"	20.5	2.5	21.5	24.5	1-	-	-		Linc. A.O. Inv. 91/181
28.	1600	Francis	Bourne	14.5	11	23.5	49	(2/6)	1.5	-	5/4 owed "To the Towne for London Banke"	Linc. A.O. Inv. 93/400
29.	1600	Pockley	Market Rasen	42.5	7	30	79	-	-	-		Linc. Invn. 93/423
30.	1606	Crosby	Leicester	90.5	n.a.	n.a.	198.5	-	80 -	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.85

TABLE I - (continued)

Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of Lease	Comments	Reference
			£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
1608	Grénes	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.a.	134	-120	-	n.a.		VCH.Leics, IV, p. 85
1608	Garnate	"	16.5	n.a.	n.a.	22.5	-	-	n.a.		" " " " "
1611	Clarke	Kimbalton	125.5	6	31.5	171	-	-	8		Lincs.A.O.Inv.108/113
1614	Williamson	Liverpool	32	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Forshaw, <u>Liverpool</u> , p.42
1614	Roberts	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.a.	1	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a Journeyman Tanner	V.C.H.Leics, IV, p. 85
1614	Newman	Staplehurst	1	9	3.5	14	8	-	-	Possibly a bark dealer See Chapter 5	Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/48 no. 234
1616	Doddington	Grantham	50	1	31	82	-	-	-		Linc.A.O.Inv. 118/135
1616	Dawson	"	261	2	29	322	525	228.5	30		" " " " "
1616	Shawcock	Lincoln	69.5	1	103.5	176	8.5	1.5	-	Debts allowed Shawcock by Shoemakers	" " Inventories
1616	Hansler	Grimsby	56	12	17	98	8	-	13		" " Inve. 118/293
1617	Goodknorpe	Lincoln	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	56	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms. defective	" " " 121/394
1618	Watson	St.James Deeping	12	11.5	26	49.5	-	-	-		" " " 121/31
1618	Barton	Bourne	20	49	14	83	-	-	-		" " " 121/282
1620	Lucas	Eleham	55.5	1.5	17.5	75.5	=	-	-		Kent A.O. PRC. 10/47 no.42
1621	-	Kent	154	16.5	79.5	250	30	-	-		Kent A.O. PRC 10/47 no.1
1627	Roberts	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.a.	9.5	-	-	-		V.C.H. Leid. IV, p.85
1627	Blackshaw	"	(3/4)	n.a.	n.a.	31.5	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman	" " " " " "
1632	Hawford	"	106.5	n.a.	n.a.	177	- 10 -	-	n.a.		" " " " " "
1633	Chamberlain	Bourne	80	23.5	23	127	-	-	-		Leic.A.O. Inv. 141/148

TABLE I (continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	Household Goods £	Total Value of Estate £	Debts Owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
50.	1634	Chapman	Market Rosen	3/8	47	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms. defective	Lincs.A.O.Inv.141/339
51.	1648	Haslocke	Leicester	9	n.a.	n.a.	24.5	-	-	n.a.		<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.85</u>
52.	1664	Simpson	"	76	n.a.	n.a.	111.5	-	-	n.a.		" " " " " " "
53.	1665	Spenter	Enfield	65.5	1.5	5.5	73	-	-	-		Gild Hall Ms. 9174, Box 2.
54.	1665	Hall	Writtle	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	25.5	11	19	n.a.		<u>Steer, Farm &amp; Cottage Inventories, no. 48</u>
55.	1666	Empson	Enfield	0.5	-	15	20	-	-	-	Described as a "knacker"	Gild Hall Ms. 9174 Box 2.
56.	1666	Dodd	"	140	29	51	220	12.5	-	-		Gild Hall, Ms.9174 Box 1.
57.	1667	Poore	Waltham Holy Cross	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	Possibly a journeyman tanner	Gild Hall, Ms.9174 Box 2.
58.	1670	Miriam	Southwark	50.5	-	36	106	70.5	46.5	20		<u>Common Sergeant's Book 2. fu.237, Box 7.</u>
59.	1681	Burrill	Market Rosen	365.8	45	39.5	450	93	7	-		Lincs. A.O. Inv.182/514
60.	1689	Waylett	Writtle	479.5	-	62.5	542	15.5	-	-		<u>Steer, Farm &amp; Cottage, Inventories, no.152</u>

TAB I

Shoemaker Inventories

No.	Date	Name	Place	Shoemaker			Inventories			Comments	Reference	
				Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed to			Value of Lease
				£	£		£	£	£			
1.	1538	Johnson	Leicester	-	n.a.		2.5	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman shoemaker or out-worker	V.C.H. Leics. IV, p. 83
2.	1558	Suffolk	"	-	n.a.		5.5	- 0/5 -		n.a.	Possibly a journeyman shoemaker or out-worker	V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83
3.	1558	Darker	"	5	n.a.		7	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83
4.	1564	Cokeson	Gateshead	2	n.a.		n.a.	-	(1/8)	n.a.		"Wills & Inventories, I, p.225
5.	1566	Date	Kenington	1	5		10	-	-	0.5		Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/2 fo.26 (b)
6.	1566	Kempe	Faversham	5	-		10.5	-	-	-		Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/2, fo.73 (b)
7.	1570	Johnson	Leicester	6	n.a.		11	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
8.	1584		"	-	n.a.		5	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman shoemaker or out-worker	V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
9.	1586	Roads	"	25.5	n.a.		105.5	- 40 -		n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
10.	1588	Hodgkinson	Morton	4	14.5		30.5	8	13.5	5		Lincs. A.O. Inventories
11.	1591	ffyllype	Leicester	4	-		11	-	-	-		Leics. R.O. Inventories
12.	1592	Whiting	Horncastle	3.5	-	59	62.5	-	-	-		Lincs A.O. Inv. 83/770
13.	1593	Philipson	Newcastle	2	4		51.5	25	19	-	Owned some currying equipment	"Wills & Inventories" II, p.229

TABLE II

(continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	House hold Goods £	Total Value of Estate £	Debts owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
14.	1595	Coulson	Boston	0.5	-	5	5.5	-	-	-	Possibly a journey or outworker	Lincs.A.O. Inv. 86/303
15.	1595	Duce	Leicester	1	n.a.	n.a.	39.5	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
16.	1614	Mole	"	-	n.a.	n.a.	60	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
17.	1616	Poye	Great Chart	7.5	-	15	22.5	-	-	-	Owned by some currying equipment	Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/48, no. 201
18.	1618	Burnham	Spalding	-	-	4.5	4.5	-	12.5	-	No trade stock of any kind listed	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 121/227
19.	1619	Chittenden	Hawkhurst	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	15.5	1	-	-	Debts due for shoes	Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/47
20.	1619	Thompson	Grantham	(5/-)	n.a.	n.a.	40.5	-	-	-		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 121/44
21.	1619	Hill	Clophill	1.5	n.a.	n.a.	100	-	-	-	Mainly a farmer	Emmison, <u>Jacobean Household Inventories</u> , no. 155
22.	1620	Borman	Cranbrook	11.5	-	31	43	-	5	-	Owned some currying equipment	Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/47, no. 217
23.	1620	Miller	Sandwich	2.5	-	8	10.5	-	-	-		Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/47, no. 29
24.	1621	Brett	"	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3.5	-	5	-	Debt owed to a tanner	Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/47, no. 194
25.	1621	Ball	Leicester	0.5	n.a.	n.a.	10	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
26.	1621	Standforde	"	0.5	n.a.	n.a.	46	-	-	n.a.		V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83
27.	1622	Bond	Kent	11	-	31	82.5	-	-	40		Kent, A.O. P.R.C., 10/47, fo.185

TABLE II (continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of lease	Comments	Reference
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
28.	1626	Jeffrey	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.a.	37.5	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman or outworker	<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83</u>
29.	1631	Pocken	"	-	n.a.	n.a.	4.5	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman or outworker	<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83</u>
30.	1631	Bowyer	"	8.5	n.a.	n.a.	11.5	- 1.5 -	-	n.a.		<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p. 83</u>
31.	1633	Webster	"	2.5	n.a.	n.a.	16	-	-	n.a.		<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83</u>
32.	1633	Burdit	Grantham	6	-	2.5	8.5	15	8.5	-		<u>Lincs. A.O. Inv. 140/73</u>
33.	1634	Harvey	Holbech	0.5	23	5.5	29.5	-	-	-	Craft goods-working tools only. Possibly an outworker	<u>Lincs. A.O. Inv. 141/107</u>
34.	1634	Stokes	Claypole	-	7.5	8.5	16	-	-	-	Possibly an outworker.	<u>Lincs. A.O. Inv. 144/220</u>
35.	1635	Shepherd	Boston	-	-	39.5	39.5	-	-	-	No stock-in-trade	<u>Lincs.A.O. Inv. 141/278</u>
36.	1635	Brothen	Saltfleethaven	(2/6)	-	2.5	2.5	-	2	-	Possibly an outworker	<u>Lincs A.O. Inv. 143/166</u>
37.	1636	Williamson	Boston	9	-	34	44	32	-	0.5	Large stock of finished shoes	<u>Lincs.A.O. Inv. 144/82</u>
38.	1637	Hopkins	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.a.	29.5	-	-	n.a.	£15 in ready money	<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV p. 83</u>
39.	1637	Churchman	"	-	n.a.	n.a.	68	- 30 -	-	n.a.	£6 in ready money	<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV p.83</u>
40.	1637	Jones	"	7.5	n.a.	n.a.	15.6	- 0.5 -	-	n.a.	£1.10. in ready money	<u>Leics.R.O. Inventories Box 703, Bundle 1637</u>
41.	1637	Ponter	Melton Mowbray	-	2	3	5.5	-	-	-		<u>Leics. R.O. Inventories Box 703, Bundle 1637</u>

TABLE II (continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	seeds	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of Lease	Comments	Reference
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
42.	1638	Mowbray	Boston	18	29.5	73	100	120	- 68	-	-		Lincs.A.O. Inv. 146/150
43.	1665	Cooper	Leicester	-	n.a.	n.	a.	9	- 17.5	-	n.a.	£2.1.6 in ready money	V.C.H. Leics. IV, p.83
44.	1665	Browne	"	-	n.a.	n.	a.	23.5	- 13.5	-	n.a.	£19 in ready money	V.C.H. Leics, IV p. 83
45.	1666	Herne	London	2	-	8.5	-	10.5	-	-	-		Gild Hall Ms.9471, Box 1
46.	1666	Clerke	Waltham	6.5	-	28.	.5	35	-	-	-		Gild Hall Ms.9471, Box 1
47.	1670	White	London	47.5	-	6.5	-	94.5	-	139	40	Large retailer of footwear	Common Seroeant's Book 2, fo.219 (b)
48.	1671	Freeman	Leicester	8	n.a.	n.a.	.	17.7	- 7.0	-	n.a.	£1 in ready money	V.C.H. Leics. IV p. 83
49.	1672	Larnes	Spilsby	37.5	-	22.	5	71	- 17	-	11		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 174/208
50.	1673	Loveday	Stamford	3	n.a.	n.a.	.	30.5	-	-	n.a.		Lincs.A.O. Inv. 174/210
51.	1673	Hore	Cunesby	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	.	24.5	-	-	n.a.		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 174/69
52.	1675	Eastwood	London	21	-	37	-	491	117	6.5	280	£63 in ready money; £100 in shipping shares.	Common Sergeant's Book, 2, fo.379 Box 14.
53.	1675	Moore	Leicester	10.5	n.a.	n.a.	.	38	- 50	-	n.a.	£3 in ready money	V.C.H. Leics. IV p, 83.
54.	1675	Stacy	"	2	n.a.	n.a.	.	5.5	-	-	n.a.	£1.6.8 in ready money	V.C.H. Leics. IV p. 83.
55.	1681	Oaldfield	Saltfleet-by-All Saints	2	17	14.	5	33.5	-	-	-		Leics.A.O. Inv. 182/392
56.	1700	Anderson	London	127.5	-	43	-	171	9	15	-	Large retailer of footwear. £6 in ready money.	Common Sergeant's Book 2, fo.56 (b) Box 34.

TABLE 1

Inventories of Heavy Leatherworkers other than Shoemakers

Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	Household Goods £	Total Values of Estate £	Debts owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
<u>SADDLERS</u>											
1592	Rochester	Newcastle	5.5	n.a.	n.a.	162	-	-	n.a.		"Wills & Inventories" III pp.151-2
1599	Choyce	Leicester	(2/2)	n.a.	n.a.	15	-	-	-		Leics.R. O. Inventories, Box 939, no. 67
1621	Alexander	Kent	8	-	11	19	-	-	-		Kent A.O. P.R.C. 10/47, no.241
1636	Spince	Leicester	2	-	6.5	9	-	-	-		Leics. R.O. Inventories, Box 703, bundle 1637
1651	Wedger	London	13	-	82.5	121	219.5	68	25		London R.O. Miscellaneous Inventories, no.9
1666	Taylor	"	-	-	92.5	92.5	-	-	-	No trade goods	Gild Hall Ms.9174 Box 2.
1167	Bland	"	46	-	130	396	736	206.5	120	Also a Coach builder.	Common Sergeant's Book 2, fo.65(b) Box 3.
1669	Taylbury	"	30	-	820	850	2,102.5	813	-	£729 in ready money	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo.378 (b), Box 14.</u>
1673	Burte	"	102.5	-	428	582	1,902	151	52	£405 in ready money	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo.317 (b), Box 11</u>
1674	Francis	"	82.5	-	237.5	490	913	2095.5	170	£64 in ready money	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo.340 (b) Box 12.</u>
1674	Sanderson	"	102	-	300	502	2150	590	100	£165 in ready money	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo.349 (b), Box 13.</u>
1674	Armson	"	329	-	49	481	820.5	52	450	Several Cases	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo.348 (b) Box 13</u>
1701	Broom	"	300	-	143	473	1441.5	880.5	30	£20 in ready money	<u>C.S. Book 5 fo.61 (b), Box 34.</u>

TABLE III (continued)

Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	Household Goods £	Total Values of Estate £	Debts owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
<u>COLLAR MAKERS</u>											
1621	Butcher	Canterbury	5.5	-	18	24	24	-	-		Kent A.O.P.R.C. 10/47 no. 195.
1623	Cook	Eleham	6.5	27	205	154	-	-	-	Annuity valued at £100	Kent A.O., P.R.C. 10/47, no.149
1640	Wraight	Canterbury	5	-	25.5	30	-	-	-		Kent A.O., P.R.C., 11/6
<u>CURRIERS</u>											
1640	Cotterell	Lincoln	n.a.	n.a.	over 54	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms. defective	Lincs.A.O. Inv. 148/81
1669	Baggott	London	230.5	-	47	317.5	921.5	33	40		Common Sargeant's Book 2, fo. 228 (b). Box 7.
1672	Battes	Boston	34	50	122	206	-	-	-		Lincs. A.O. Invn. 174/183.
1696	Biddle	London	34	-	238	272	285.5	21.5	-		Common Sargeant's Book 5, fo.10 (b) Box 31.
<u>JERKIN MAKER</u>											
1569	Johnes	Gateshead	2.5	-	5.5	8	-	-	-	Craft Goods include footwear and lasts.	"Wills & Inventories" I, p.310.

TABLE

## Inventories of Light Leath Workers and Dealers

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods £	Farm Goods £	Household Goods £	Total Value of Estate £	Debts owing to £	Debts owed by £	Value of Lease £	Comments	Reference
<u>GLOVERS, LEATHERDRESSERS, WHITTAWERS</u>												
1.	1535	Leydebdater	Leicester	7	n.a.	n.a.	24.5	-	-	n.a.		<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV</u> p. 86
2.	1538	Brisbane	"	4.5	n.a.	n.a.	64.5	-	-	n.a.	£20 in ready money	" " " "
3.	1559	Moore	"	2.5	n.a.	n.a.	16.5	-	-	n.a.		" " " "
4.	1563	Patchett	Barrow-on-Seare	22	23	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms.defection	Leics. R.O. Inventories, Box 1069, Miscell. bundle.
5.	1582	Wasshe	Boston	-	-	(5/-)	(5/-)	11	-	-	No other information given	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 74/526
6.	1590	Shuter	Leicester	1	-	9	10	-	-	-		Leic. R.O. Inventories Box 939, no.46
7.	1599	Thompson	Grantham	1	-	10	11	-	-	-		Lincs. A.O. Inv. 91/103
8.	1599	Gifforths	"	29.5	28.5	30.5	108.5	-	-	-	Large stock of wool	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 91/110
9.	1599	Brougham	Horncastle	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	282.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ms.defective, craft goods, most of total	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 91/206
10.	1606	Walker	Leicester	8.5	n.a.	n.a.	33	-	-	n.a.	£2 in ready money	<u>V.C.H. Leics. IV, p. 86</u>
11.	1610	Pigbone	Wye	(1/-)	-	3.5	3.5	-	-	-	Possibly an out worker	
12.	1616	Clause	Bourne	-	--- 1760 ---	-	17	-	-	-	Possibly an out worker	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 119/405

TABLE IV. (continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of Lease	Comments	References
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
13.	1616	Burton	Lincoln	36	n.a.	42	89.5	-	-	11	2 Leases, considerable stock of wool	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 119/403
14.	1618	Keples	Milton	4.5	-	53	62.5				Considerable stock of wool	Kent A.O., P.R. C. 10/48 no. 116
15.	1619	Becke	Bedford	5	$\frac{3}{8}$	1.5	21	1	-	-	Small quantity of wool	Emmison, Jacobean Household Inventories
16.	1621	Chapman	Bethersden	41	72.5	25	139	33	-	-	Large quantity of wool	Kent A.O., P.R.C., 10/47 No. 165
17.	1628	Tompkinson	Leicester	0.5	n.a.	n.a.	6	-	-	n.a.	Possibly a journeyman	V.C.H. Leics. IV, p. 86
18.	1636	Fauckner	Holbech	26	635	7.5	97	-	-	-	Dressing over 600 skins	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 144/92
19.	1637	Bramby	Conningsby	-	n.a.	n.a.	82	-	-	-	No stock-in-trade given	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 145/58
20.	1638	Hareby	Browne	22	-	3.5	26	31	-	-	Large quantity of wool	Lincs. A.O. Inv. 147/102
21.	1665	Pouter	Writtle	4.5	5	11	20.5	-	-	-		Steer, Farm Cottage Inventories
22.	1680	Wade	Roxwell	6.5	10	21.5	38	-	-	-	Considerable quantity of wool	Steer, Farm Cottage Inventories No. 116
<u>FELLMONGER</u>												
23.	1638	Hurst	Hinckley	144	116.5	74	334.5	-	1216.5	-	Owned £100 worth of wool	Leics. R.O. Inventories Box 703, Bundle 1637, no. 209

TABLE IV  
(continued)

No.	Date	Name	Place	Craft Goods	Farm Goods	Household Goods	Total Value of Estate	Debts owing to	Debts owed by	Value of Lease	Comments	Reference
				£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
<u>LEATHER DEALERS</u>												
24.	1664	Clements	London	66.5	-	216.5	283	706	215.3	-	Stock-in-trade; leather, girdles, beltd, buckles etc.	<u>Common Sergeant's Book 2, 80.69</u> (b) Box 3.
25.	1666	Strong	"	431	-	286.5	857	1471	29	150	Haberdasher. Owned stock of ribbons worth £332	<u>C.S. Book 2 fo. 262(b)</u> Box 3
26.	1670	Smith	"	115	-	228.5	443.5	153	39.5	-	Haberdasher. Very large stock of leather.	<u>C.S. Book 2, fo. 262 (b)</u> Box 8
27.	1672	Pope	"	220	-	245	627	955	132	161	Stock mainly trunks	<u>C.S. Book 2 fo. 305 (b)</u> Box 10.
28.	1694	Portresse	"	166	-	160	646.8	2222	444	320	Stock-leather, trunks, bottles etc.	<u>C.S. Book 4, fo. 314, Box 30.</u>
29.	1695	Pike	"	330.5	-	123.5	454	828.5	115.5	-	Stock - Miscellaneous leather goods	<u>C.S. Book 5 fo. 56, box 31.</u>
30.	1696	White	"	2	-	174	176.5	140	31.5	-		<u>C.S. Book 5, fo. 12 (b)</u> Box 3
31.	1697	Harris	"	35.5	-	68.5	104	3.5	123.5	-		<u>C.S. Book 5, fo. 17 (b),</u> Box 31.
32.	1699	Wolton	"	n.a.	-	n.a.	126.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		<u>C.S. Book 5, fo. 24 (b)</u> Box 32.

TABLE V

Analysis of Craft Goods of Tanners

Name	Value of Hides and Leather	Value of Bark	Value of Implements
Blake	£ 5. 1. 8	£1. 6. 8	
Buxton	£ 30. 0. 0	£2. 0. 0	
Whytwell	£25. 0. 0		6. 8d.
Cole	£ 5. 11. 8	£1. 0. 0	6. 8d.
Bayne	£ 18. 0. 0	£4. 4. 0	
Neall	£716. 0. 0	£40. 0. 0	£ 13.13. 4
Lawes	£ 52.10. 0	£20. 0. 0	£ 12.16. 8
Tampion	£ 42.10. 0	£ 1.10. 0	£ 1.16. 8
Parker	£ 46. 0. 0	£ 2/ 0. 0	£ 3.13. 4
Osborne	10. 0	4. 6	-
Jarman	£ 23. 0. 0	£ 2.10. 0	10. 0
Friendes	£66.13. 4		£ 3. 6. 8
Whiting	£ 58.15. 0	-	£ 2. 0. 0
Durne	£ 19. 6. 8	13. 4	10. 0
Francis	£ 11. 0. 0	£2. 0. 0	
Pockley	£ 37. 6. 8	£ 3. 6. 8	£ 1.13. 4
Clarke	£120.13. 0	£ 4.10. 0	17. 0
Doddington	£ 47. 0. 0		£ 3. 1. 4
Dawson	£255. 0. 6	£ 6. 0. 0	-
Shawcock	£69. 0. 0		13. 4
Barton	£ 13. 6. 8	£6.13.4	
Lucas	£ 40. 0. 0	£14.6.8	
-	£150. 0. 0 (with implements)	£ 4. 0. 0	

TABLE V (continued)

Name	Value of Hides and Leather	Value of Bark	Value of Implements
Chamberlain	£75.10. 0	£ 4. 0. 0	13. 4
Spenter	£60. 0. 0	£ 5. 0. 0	12. 0
Mirriam	£48. 0. 0	£ 2.12. 0	-

I Refers to number on Table I

TABLE VI

Analysis of Craft Goods of Shoemakers

Name	Value of Shoes	Value of Leather	Value of Implements
Cokeson	2. 8	£ 1.12. 0	10. 0
Kempe	£ 4. 4. 0	4. 4	6. 8
Philipson	16. 6	8. 0	3. 4
Page	£6. 0. 0		£ 1. 6. 4
Thompson	-	-	5. 0
Borman	£ 4. 0. 0	£ 4.13. 4	£ 2. 2. 6
Miller	£ 1.19. 0	-	7. 0
Bond	£ 9.17. 8	10. 0	8. 8
Burdit	£ 4. 8. 0	5. 8	17. 8
Harvey	-	-	13. 4
Williamson	£ 6. 4. 2	£ 1. 7. 0	£ 1. 5. 0
Jones	£ 4. 2. 0	£ 3. 0. 0	10. 0
Mowbray	£10. 6. 0	£ 1.13. 4	£ 1.10. 0
Herne	£ 2. 0. 0	-	-
Clerke (inc. tools)	£ 1.10. 0	£ 5. 0. 0	
Oaldfield	-	-	£1. 5. 0
Anderson	£99.18. 0	£ 27. 7. 0	-

I Refers to number on Table II

TABLE VIIAnalysis of Craft Goods of Heavy Leather Users  
(other than Shoemakers)

Name	Value of Finished Goods	Value of Leather etc.	Implements
<u>SADDLERS</u>			
Rochester	£ 2.10. 9	£ 2. 5.10 <sup>2</sup>	£ 8. 4
Spince	£ 2. 0. 0	-	4. 0
Burre	£ 94. 2. 4	£ 6. 6. 6 <sup>3</sup>	£ 2. 0. 6
Sanderson	£ 96. 13. 6	£ 5. 5. 0 <sup>4</sup>	
<u>COLLARMAKERS</u>			
Cook	£ 3. 6. 6	£ 2. 6. 6	6. 8
Wraight	6. 8	£ 1.19. 0	15. 0
<u>CURRIERS</u>			
Baggott	£216. 0. 0	£ 10. 0. 0	£ 4. 0. 0
Ba ttes	£220. 0. 0	£ 13. 0. 0 <sup>5</sup>	£ 1. 0. 0
Biddle	£ 31.18. 0	-	£ 2. 5. 0

1. Refers to number on Table III.
2. Including buckles and stirrup irons.
3. Including saddle trees.
4. Including parcel of elk hair (for stuffing saddles?) valued at £3.0.0.
5. Including lead cistern.

TABLE VIII

## Analysis of Craft Goods of Leatherdressers etc.

Name	Value of Skins and Leather	Value of Wool	Value of Leather Goods	Value of Imple- ments	Value of Alum. Oil.
Falchett	£19.19. 0 <sup>2</sup>	£ 1.16. 0	7. 6d.	2.0d.	2. 0
Shuter	£ 1. 1. 0	£ -	-	3.4d.	-
Thompson	-	-	-	9.4d. <sup>3</sup>	-
Gyfforthe	£15. 0. 0	£14. 0. 0	-	8.0d. <sup>3</sup>	-
Piggbone	-	-	-	1.0d.	-
Burton	£21.14. 8	£ 3. 2. 0	£6.14. 0	10.0	-
Weples	£ 4. 7. 0	£ 5. 2. 1	£1.4.0	-	7. 0
Becke	£ 3. 0. 0	£ 1.15. 0	-	-	-
Chapman	£11.16. 1	£24.13. 4	£4. 3. 6	-	8. 0
Paucker	£26. 3. 4	-	-	-	-
Hareby	£10. 0. 0	£11.10. 0	-	6. 8	-
Pouter	£ 2.15. 0	-	6. 0	£1.2. 0	-
Hurst	£36. 0. 0	£100.0. 0	£6. 0. 0	£2.0. 0	-

1. Refer to number on Table IV.
2. Includes 300 fells worth £15.
3. Includes some Leather.

TABLE IX

Analysis of stock-in-trade of Leather Dealers

Name	Value of skins and Leather	Value of Leather Goods	Value of Other Goods	Value of Tools
Clements	£13.15. 0	£32. 1.10	£19.15. 6	-
Strong	-	£99. 6. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	£331.18. 4	-
Smith	£114.2. 4	18. 6	-	-
Pope	-	-	£220. 0.3 <sup>3</sup>	-
Pike	£316.17.0	£11.10. 0	-	£2.10. 0
White	-	-	-	£2. 5. 0

1. Refers to number on Table IV.
2. Silks and ribbons.
3. Trunks, etc. partly of leather.

APPENDIX 8 : WAGES OF LEATHER CRAFTSMEN

(Taken from justices wages assessments)

Kent, 1563

Curriers:					
"Drawers and colourer"	£3	6	8d	per year	
Common servant	£2	0	0	" "	
Glovers:					
"Waterman"	£4	0	0	" "	
Shopman	£2	0	0	" "	
Shoemakers:					
Best servants	£3	0	0	" "	
Other servants	£2	6	8	" "	
Tanners:					
"Market" men	£3	0	0	" "	
Other servants	£2	13	4	" "	

(Source: B. H. Putman, "A Kent Wage Assessment of 1563," English Historical Review, vol. XLI (1926), pp. 270-1).

Maidstone, Kent, 1563

As above.

(Source: C. E. Woodruff, "Wages paid in Maidstone in Queen Elizabeth's Reign," Archaeologia Cantiana, vol. 22, pp. 216-9).

London, 1586

Curriers:	£6			a year with	
				meat and drink	
Glovers:	£3	6	8d	" "	" "
Saddlers:	£4			" "	" "
Shoemakers:	£4			" "	" "

(Source: R. H. Tawney & E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents (London, 1924), vol. 1, pp. 367-8).

Chester, 1591-7

	Tanners	Glovers	Shoemakers	Saddlers
1591	£3 15 0 yr.	£3 10 0 yr.	£3 16 0 yr.	£3 10 0 yr.
1593	3 15 0	-	-	-
1594	4 0 0	3 16 0	4 0 0	4 0 0
1596	4 0 0	-	-	-
1597	4 10 0	-	-	-

(Source: J.E.T. Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, vol. VI (1887), pp. 685-6; R.H. Morris, Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns, p. 368).

Lancaster, 1595

Leather craftsmen: 3d a day with meat and drink  
6d a day without meat and drink

(Source: Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, vol. VI, p. 691).

Wiltshire, 1603, 1655

		1603	1655
Curriers, glovers, ) girdlers, saddlers, ) shoemakers (tanners ) not mentioned):	Chief	£2	yr. £3 10 0 yr.
	Common workmen	£1 6 8	£2 10 0

(Source: Hist. Mss. Comm., Various Collections, vol. I, pp. 166, 173).

Norfolk, 1610

	Wages (yearly)	Livery
Curriers:	£2 4 4d.	8s.
Glovers:	1 13 4	8s.
Shoemakers:	2 0 0	8s.
Tanners:	2 6 8	8s.

(Source: J.C. Tingay, "An Assessment of Wages for the County of Norfolk," English Historical Review, vol. XIII (1898), p. 527).

Essex, 1651

	Wages	Livery
Saddlers ) Shoemakers ) Saddlers )	£2 10 0 yr.	10s.

(Source: Rogers, op. cit., VI, p. 696).

Middlesex, 166-

Curriers:		
Best	£10	yr
Second	6	
Glovers:		
Best	£8	
Second	6	
Saddlers:		
Best	£8	
Second	6	
Shoemakers:		
Best	£10	
Second	6	
Tanners:		
Best	£10	
Second	6	

(Source: W. Cunningham, Growth of English Industry and Commerce, vol. II, pt. II (6th ed., 1929), pp. 888-9).

Kent, 1724

Curriers:				
Best	£3	10	0	yr
Common	3	0	0	
Glovers:				
Waterman	£5	0	0	
Shopman	3	0	0	
Saddlers:				
Best	£4	0	0	
Common	3	10	0	
Shoemakers:				
Best	£3	10	0	
Others	3	0	0	
Tanners:				
Market men	£5	10	0	
Others	3	0	0	

(Source: E.L. Waterman, "New Evidence of Wage Assessments," English Historical Review, vol. XLIII (1928), p. 405).

APPENDIX 9

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## (c) Court of Star Chamber, Proceedings (S.C. 5; S.C. 8)

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# THE LOCATION OF THE LEATHER CRAFTS (see Chapter 3)

0 10 20 30 40 50  
Scale of Miles

-  AREAS WHERE LEATHER CRAFTS WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE IRON INDUSTRY
-  AREAS WHERE LEATHER CRAFTS WERE ASSOCIATED WITH CATTLE AND SHEEP RAISING
-  AREA WHERE NATURE OF WATER SUPPLY MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR THE LOCATION OF THE LEATHER CRAFTS
-  CONCENTRATIONS OF LEATHER CRAFTS ASSOCIATED WITH URBAN CENTRES

• TOWNS AND VILLAGES PETITIONING AGAINST THE LEATHER DUTY OF 1697  
*(Commons' Journals, vols. xi, xii)*

