



FARMERS' TRADE AND MARKETS

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTERACTION IN THE MEDIEVAL
AND EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE

edited by MARIE ØDEGAARD, KJETIL LOFTSGARDEN & CLAUDIA THEUNE

RURALIA XV

We dedicate this volume to the memory of
Frode Iversen (1967-2022),
National Representative of Norway to the Ruralia association



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THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN
EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE**

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RURALIA XV

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Trade and markets in early modern Orkney (Scotland)

*Sarah Jane Gibbon**, *Jocelyn Rendall***, *Anne Mitchell****

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Abstract

A recent AHRC-DFG-funded historical archaeology research project, ‘*Looking in From the Edge*’ (LIFTE), has focussed on better understanding the impact of early modern commercialisation on two archipelagos off the north coast of Scotland: Orkney and Shetland. This paper presents findings from archival-centred research investigating the mechanisms of trade in Orkney, something which has previously had little attention. Whilst contemporary historical written accounts often list goods exported from Orkney in the early modern period, none provide detailed information on the infrastructure of trade within the archipelago. Orkney had a small burgh town and commentators went no further than to say this, yet archival evidence, place names, written sources and a very few upstanding buildings all indicate trade was taking place in the parishes and islands beyond the main trading centre of Kirkwall. As a means of identifying the places where people were trading and thus enabling a better understanding of trading infrastructure, this paper identifies and maps merchants’ properties, storehouses and the locations of markets/fairs to visualise the mechanisms of trade in a rural archipelago as it became increasingly involved in commercialisation. In doing so, two discrete yet interconnected forms of trade are proposed: laird-based trade centred on estate management, with boats functioning as shops; and booth-based trade, where merchants are found located throughout the archipelago, mostly in the burgh town but also in much smaller nucleated settlements.

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Keywords: *Northern Scotland, towns, merchants, markets/fairs.*

Résumé

Le commerce et les marchés dans les Orcades (l’Écosse) du début des temps modernes

Les deux archipels au large de la côte nord de l’Écosse, les Orcades et les Shetland, sont le sujet d’un récent projet de recherche en archéologie historique. Le projet « *Looking in from the Edge* » (LIFTE) – a été financé par l’AHRC-DFG. Il s’est concentré sur une meilleure compréhension de l’impact de la commercialisation moderne. Cet article présente les résultats d’une recherche centrée sur les archives portant sur les mécanismes du commerce dans les Orcades, un sujet jusqu’alors peu étudié. Si les récits historiques contemporains énumèrent souvent les marchandises exportées des Orcades au début

de la période moderne, aucun ne fournit d'informations détaillées sur l'infrastructure commerciale au sein de l'archipel. Les Orcades avaient une petite ville et les commentateurs se sont contentés de le dire. Mais les archives, les noms de lieux, les sources écrites et un très petit nombre de bâtiments en élévation indiquent que le commerce avait lieu dans les paroisses et les îles au-delà du principal centre commercial de Kirkwall. Cet article identifie et cartographie les propriétés des marchands, les entrepôts et les emplacements des marchés et foires pour visualiser les mécanismes du commerce dans un archipel rural comme elle s'implique de plus en plus dans la commercialisation. Ce faisant, deux formes de commerce discrètes mais interconnectées sont proposées: le commerce seigneurial centré sur la gestion des domaines avec des bateaux faisant office de boutiques et le commerce basé sur les stands les commerçants sont répartis dans tout l'archipel, principalement dans la ville, mais aussi en d'autres agglomérations beaucoup plus petites.

Mots-clés: *Le nord de l'Écosse, villes, marchands, marchés/foires.*

Zusammenfassung

Handel und Märkte auf den frühneuzeitlichen Orkneyinseln (Schottland)

Das von der AHRC und DFG finanzierte, historisch-archäologische Forschungsprojekt „*Looking in from the Edge*“ (LIFTE) hat sich zum Ziel gesetzt, ein besseres Verständnis der Auswirkungen der frühneuzeitlichen Kommerzialisierung auf zwei Inselgruppen vor der

Introduction

Orkney and Shetland were annexed to Scotland in 1472, having previously been skattlands (overseas territories) of Norway (Crawford 1969, 2003, 154, 2014). Orkney is uniquely placed in Scandinavian Scotland and the Norwegian skattlands by having had a town, Kirkwall, from the Middle Ages. The significance of this has seldom been explored, though its impact on society and economy has been acknowledged (Crawford 2014, 156–157). Orkneyinga saga, written c. 1200, describes Kirkwall as a small town with few houses that quickly grew after it became the administrative centre of the earldom and the bishopric in the mid-12th century (Guðmundsson 1965, 125). Based on burial and place-name evidence (Guðmundsson 1965, 121, 163), Pierowall in Westray has been identified as a medieval market/trading place (Cooke 2016). A third form of trading (place and practice) is identifiable in Orkneyinga saga from the account of Sveinn Ásliefarson, who gained access to an estate by

Nordküste Schottlands – Orkney und Shetland – zu bekommen. In diesem Artikel werden Ergebnisse aus Untersuchungen an archivalischen Quellen über die Mechanismen des Handels auf den Orkney-Inseln vorgestellt, die bisher wenig Beachtung gefunden haben. Obwohl zeitgenössische schriftliche Berichte häufig Waren aufführen, die in der frühen Neuzeit von Orkney exportiert wurden, bieten diese keine detaillierte Informationen über die Handelsinfrastruktur innerhalb der Inselgruppe. Die Berichte erwähnen meistens nur die kleine Handelsstadt Kirkwall, aber Ortsnamen, schriftliche Quellen und einige wenige erhaltene Gebäude deuten darauf hin, dass auch in den Orten und Inseln außerhalb des Haupthandelszentrums von Orkney Handel getrieben wurde. Um diese Orte zu identifizieren, an denen Menschen Handel trieben, und so ein besseres Verständnis der Handelsinfrastruktur zu ermöglichen, werden in dieser Studie die Grundstücke von Kaufleuten, Lagerhäuser und Standorte von Märkten identifiziert und kartiert und somit die Handelsmechanismen einer ländlichen Inselgruppe visualisiert, die sich zunehmend kommerzialisierte. Dabei werden zwei separate, aber miteinander verbundene Handelsformen identifiziert: der Handel der Grundherren (Lairds), der sich auf die Verwaltung des Landbesitzes konzentrierte, wobei Boote als Läden fungierten, und der Handel von Kaufleuten in Buden, die im gesamten Archipel zu finden waren, hauptsächlich in der Stadt, aber auch in anderen viel kleineren Siedlungen.

Schlagwörter: *Nordschottland, Städte, Kaufleute, Märkte/Messen.*

travelling in a merchant ship and disguising himself as a trader (Guðmundsson 1965, 168). Thus, three aspects of medieval trade can be distinguished: a small trading town, a shore-side market and ship-based trade at estates.

This paper presents LIFTE project-led archival research indicating that these aspects of medieval trade continued beyond the Norse period. We will demonstrate that 17th-century traders developed and maintained long-held connections with their closest neighbours, Shetland and the north coast of Scotland (the former extent of the medieval earldoms of Orkney and Caithness) as well as with Norway and Scotland and to a lesser degree England and Ireland, whilst also extending their trade to European trading centres as they became integrated into nascent global commercialisation. Drawing primarily on information from a single collection of family papers, we will present examples of merchants, their family connections, trading locations and aspects of the infrastructure of trade within the archipelago.

The data

The dataset underpinning this paper are from archival, palaeographic and historical research conducted as part of the LIFTE project. Our intended face-to-face outreach programme for historical research was impacted by COVID 19 restrictions, which were mitigated by running an 8-week online volunteer programme, open to anyone with internet access, that supported the deep reading of digitally available historical written documents relating to Orkney. A total of 146 volunteers from 10 countries participated, including archaeologists, historians, archivists and palaeographers. They extracted data from upwards of 200 sources that now form a searchable dataset of mercantile references. In addition, an online LIFTE palaeography group ran for 2 years and has since merged with the Orkney Library and Archive's Palaeography Group. To date they have transcribed 155 archive documents selected by LIFTE Orkney archive researcher Anne Mitchell.

Most of these transcribed documents are from the Traill Dennison Papers, a collection amassed by Walter Traill Dennison in the later 19th century that comprises family papers and other documents relating to Orkney's past for the period 1592–1885. Eighteenth-century papers from this collection were published in the 1930s, and so to maximise a continuity and development of research and analysis selected 17th-century papers form the core of the LIFTE data. The choice to focus on family papers held in Orkney Archive was deliberate because knowledge of their existence and content was limited and they have been neglected in other studies of Orkney trade, where the emphasis has been on documents held in the national archive in Edinburgh and other city archives.

The quantity of documents identified necessitated applying a selective approach. Most of the documents transcribed date to the latter half of the 17th century and relate to 2 document-rich merchants based in Kirkwall: Peter Winchester and David Traill. These data have been considered alongside published early modern documents, unpublished document summaries recently collected by historians and additional archival sources to add further detail and context.

'The cheef products off this country'

The staple goods produced in Orkney influenced with whom the merchants could trade, where they would find ready markets and what storage was required. J. Harland deals with this in her paper (this volume), so it is sufficient to note here that Orkney's main export commodities were mixed agricultural products augmented with various other locally sourced/produced items. A late 17th-century list by Kirkwall's minister, James Wallace, gives a flavour of the produce regularly exported: 'The cheef products off this country and which

are exported be the merchant yearlie are, bear, meal, fish, tallow, hydes, stockens, butter, selchskins, otterskins, rabbetskins, lambskins, white salt, stuffs, wreeting pens, downs, feathers hams wool' (*Wallace 1684*, 10). Orkney's trade, therefore, was driven by exporting agricultural products, mainly bere barley (bear), to markets and administrations lacking these supplies.

Documentary evidence shows this trade took place from the 12th century onwards. Sagas and earldom, bishopric and merchant accounts show Orkney's victual (rental payments and surplus) being sold in Shetland, Leith/Edinburgh and Bergen, where grain demand outweighed production. In the case of Bergen, this can be seen as early as 1186 when King Sverre welcomed merchants from England, Orkney, Shetland, Faroe and Iceland to trade in Bergen because they brought essential commodities (*Sverris saga* 54r). Orkney and Shetland merchants continued to trade with Bergen into the 18th century as, unlike the other skattlands who after 1200 became reliant on Norwegian ships for transporting goods, they had their own seagoing boats (*Helle 2019*, 44). Evidence of Orkney's trade with Scotland also predates the annexation, as seen in David II's 1358 prohibition on anyone entering Orkney except for pilgrimage or commerce (*Webster 1982*, 203). Scottish trade increased after annexation, with many Orkney merchants having Scottish connections (Clouston 1932, 283). Trade with England was implied in Orkneyinga saga when men from Norway, Orkney, Scotland and the Hebrides gathered in the market town of Grimsby in the early 12th century (*Guðmundson 1965*, 130). A regulated trading operation is indicated in the mid-15th century, when Henry VI granted safe conduct to 4 Orkney merchants and crew in the ship Magnus of Orkney, Denmark to trade in England for 5 years (*DN20*, 849).

The above examples are representative in their dearth of detail, as few surviving documents list Orkney merchant cargos prior to the 16th century. One exception is within a complaint of 1425 that recounts a Scottish official taking Orkney merchant Thomas Br[o]wn's laden ship to Scotland and stealing cargo from it. The goods taken included wheatmeal, tar, osmund iron, wax, kettles, pans, basins, hemp, tin cans and red and white wine belonging to Thomas and two other Orkney men to the value of 108 nobles (36 English pounds). This was not the full extent of the cargo as some was lost on the homeward journey (*Imsen 2012*, 30–31). The document does not mention where Thomas obtained his goods, but from the tar and osmund iron it is likely he had been trading in Denmark and Norway. This aligns with other sources where Orkney merchants are found trading grain in Norway for timber, iron and other products that Orkney could not produce (*GB241/D14*; *Irvine 2023*; *Marwick 1939*, 44–48; *Shaw 1980*, 165–172).

Food and Drink	Almonds, aniseed, brandy, candy, caraway seeds, cinnamon, chocolate, cloves, coffee beans, English hops, figs, ginger, gingerbread, Holland cheese, mace, nutmeg, pepper, prunes, raisins, rice, sack, saffron, French salt, spruce beer, sugar, syrup, tea, tobacco, vinegar, French wine
Household items	Beer glasses, books, candlesticks, clay pipes, coffee dishes and cups, damask tablecloths, Dutch teapot, English flagons, ladles, napkins, pots, chairs, scissors, sealing wax, soap, tables, tiles, wax candles, wine bottles, yetlings (baking plate)
Haberdashery, Cloth, Clothes, Dyes etc.	Alum, bonnets, boot tops, buttons, calico, cambric, canvas, coloured thread, copperas (iron sulphate for dyeing/tanning), Dutch and English cloth, French combs, galls, horn combs, gloves, camel hair, hemp, hoes, indigo, laces, linen, lint, madder, needles, pins, ribbons, sail cloth, silk stuff, silk thread, Scots socks, starch, whalebone
Wood	Barrel heads, birch, boats, cork, a variety of timber, hazel, masts, poles, redwood, tar
Metal	Barrel hoops, bridles, gun powder, guns, iron, nails, ploughs, shot, shovels, steel, knives, lead
Other	Brimstone, golf balls and clubs, glass, mill wheels, paper, ropes

Tab. 1: Examples of goods imported to Orkney c.1650–1712 (© S. J. Gibbon, J. Rendall, A. Mitchell, J. Harland).

Comprehensive lists of traded goods between Orkney and Shetland are also rare, but legal and private documents describe Orkney merchants taking meal, malt, cloth and stockings from Orkney to Shetland and obtaining fish, oil, wool and Hansa merchant ware from Shetland in return (Ballantyne 2016, 291, 929, 977; Wallace 1684).

It is well established that Orkney merchants and officials were trading their goods for necessary and everyday items and money. However, the Traill Dennison papers show that exotic and luxury goods were imported for merchant families, their relations and their dependents (examples provided in Tab. 1). This presents a different picture of 17th-century society in Orkney than the established narrative of marginal existence on the fringes of Scotland, and illustrates the disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Periods of local dearth, harvest failures and more-widespread famine were not uncommon in the early modern period. Orkney was badly affected by the pan-European shortages of the final decade of the century (Thomson 2008, 307–311), and as will be demonstrated, merchant wealth was badly affected during that time as well.

'Merchant Lairds'

In Orkney, those who owned or leased the land were at the forefront of trade. In Scotland from early modern times wealthy landowners have been termed 'lairds' (e.g. GB241/D14/11/1), and Historian Hugh Marwick used the term 'Merchant Lairds' to describe Orkney's 18th-century landowners engaged in commerce. 16th- and 17th-century records chart the emergence of these families, and it has recently been suggested that William Irvine of Sabay (c.1535–1614) was amongst them, if not the first. Irvine was a shipowner, salvor, trader, burghess and landowner, and like many of the merchant lairds to follow, he invested his success in purchasing land and money lending (Clouston 1932, 283–284, 341–345; Irvine 2023). The wealthiest landowners' commercial interests were frequently indirect. They engaged in partnerships

with merchants and skippers and made payments in bonds that often passed through several hands before they were realised. Most of our information about merchants derives from the frequent litigations they were involved with and their subsequent legal documentation.

These families were often burghesses and administrative officials as well as landowners, and their successes were not only dependent on their business acumen but also on complex relationships of kin and marriage. The archival evidence about both Peter Winchester and David Traill exemplifies this. Peter was a little-known Orkney merchant of the later 17th century. He was a skipper, merchant, burghess of Kirkwall, privateer, ship owner and provisioner and salvor whose life was cut short in 1677 when he and his crew drowned off Fraserburgh on the east coast of Scotland. A biography based on the extensive archive documents will be published as part of the LIFTE project. For the purposes of this paper, the glimpses of his trading activities provided in personal letters and commercial accounts are evidence that he was away from home a great deal and travelling considerable distances around the United Kingdom and to Norway, France and Ireland. The idea of mapping the trading places of Orkney merchants arose from this evidence (Fig. 1).

Mapping merchants: 'ane twa moneths voyage traicke and traveise' (GB241/D14/10/3)

Like Peter, David Traill went on trading voyages to seek the best markets for his grain. We can plot his journeys because of the survival of his pocketbooks and a wealth of letters sent between family members (GB241/D14). He visited fewer Scottish ports than Peter because other members of the Traill family were engaged in Scottish trade, so with David we are seeing only one person's role within a merchant family (GB241/D14; Marwick 1936). He, like Peter, travelled to Norway, Shetland, Scottish east coast ports and Ireland but he also went to various coastal towns in and near the Netherlands and travelled the furthest east of any Orkney merchant in the dataset,

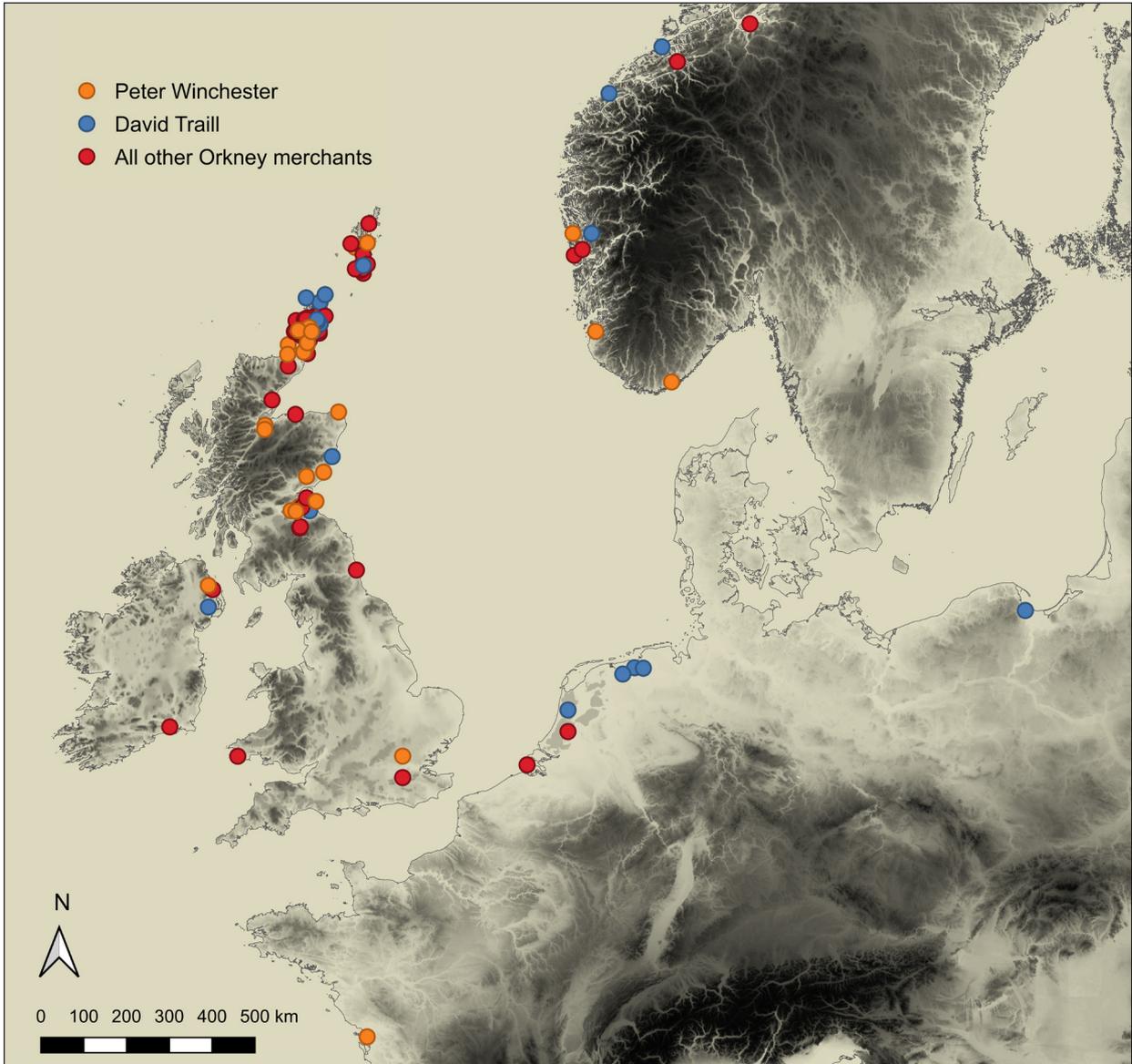


Fig. 1. Places Orkney merchants were travelling to and from on trading voyages from the late 16th to early 18th centuries. Excluding Orkney data, which is detailed in Fig. 2 and Tab. 2, the dots represent 70 instances of merchants travelling to 42 places. Of these, there are 27 instances of 11 merchants travelling to 19 places outside of Scotland. Orange and blue dots indicate the trading places visited by Peter Winchester (1660–1677) and David Traill (1705–1719) (© S.J. Gibbon, J. Rendall, A. Mitchell, J. Harland).

to Danzig. Peter also made some distant voyages: his trip to La Rochelle for salt is the furthest south (*GB241/D14/6/7/29*) in our dataset.

Whilst the quantity of detailed information surviving for Peter and David is unusual, their trading endeavours are not, and they are 2 of 11 Orkney merchants we have found travelling beyond Scotland. Fig. 1 provides an indication of the extent of exporting trade from Orkney by Orkney merchants. Most places on the map are mentioned once or twice in the records, such as Thurso (2 merchants), Newcastle (1) and Carrickfergus (1). The most-often-visited places were Bergen, where

there are 6 instances, and Edinburgh, where there are 8. Because the destination was not always intended, the map shows where merchants ended up, rather than where they set out to go to. For instance, in 1664 Peter loaded his ship with 26 chalders of bere barley intending for Holland ‘but by contrary wind put in to Norway’. However, he was able to sell the bere profitably in Stavanger and Bergen (*GB241/D14/3/13*). Likewise, David intended a voyage to Amsterdam, but due to crosswinds ended up near Emden (*GB241/D14/3/2*).

The instances presented are restricted to merchants residing in Orkney and trading elsewhere, and it does

Parish/Island/Burgh	Number of records
Kirkwall	336
Stromness	22
Orkney	21
South Ronaldsay	17
Sanday	11
Stronsay	6
Orphir	5
Birsay	4
Deerness	3
Westray	3
Holm	2
Eday	1
Evie	1
North Ronaldsay	1
Rousay	1
Sandwick	1
Shapinsay	1
Tankerness	1

Tab. 2. Summary of the number of merchants described in documents as being 'in' a particular place within Orkney, grouped where possible by island, mainland parish and burgh (© S.J. Gibbon, J. Rendall, A. Mitchell, J. Harland).

not include the Orcadians who established themselves as merchants in other places and became residents there (Fig. 1), such as the 102 Orkney men registered as burgesses in Bergen from 1574 to 1662 (*Nicolaysen 1878*), nor does it include privateering or piracy ventures. At this preliminary stage, being able to map merchants and trading voyages is valuable to realise that some Orkney merchants travelled long distances to engage in direct trade with foreign markets, whereas others engaged in foreign trade through intermediary towns closer to home. Having presented the geographical scope of Orkney mercantile activities, the remainder of the paper looks at trading within Orkney.

Trading in Orkney: 'travelling from ile to ile about there several business in their litle yoales and boats' (Wallace 1684, 6)

The mapping of where Orkney merchants were found trading in Orkney shows dispersal throughout most of the inhabited islands in the archipelago. This may seem unexpected, given the existence of the burgh, but not once the number of instances of merchants in each place is considered (Tab. 2). A total of 336 records specify that a merchant is in Kirkwall, which is unsurprising as Kirkwall was the centre of trade. Moreover, as the main town, church and administrative records were

kept and have survived rather better in Kirkwall than in the rest of Orkney; this results in considerably more data concerning births, deaths and marriages, etc. for Kirkwall. Nonetheless, even allowing for some skewing of the data, the difference between the number of records of merchants trading in Kirkwall and the rest of Orkney is stark. It is interesting to see how similar the numbers are for instances of merchants in St Margaret's Hope (recorded as South Ronaldsay) and Stromness, showing both villages were comparable foci of trade in this period.

The records hide a complexity of trading in their 'in Kirkwall' designations, as seen in Peter's and David's movements. We can see Peter visiting places within Orkney as part of his trading enterprises. As well as being in the two places where he resided, Tankerness (1658–1663) and Kirkwall (1663–1677), on repeated occasions he was picking up goods and crew in the harbour and developing market town of Stromness, in Shapinsay where one of his business partners lived and on South Ronaldsay where he had business connections. David Traill too was not only based in Kirkwall. Whilst he was found in 3 of the same places as Peter, he was also found trading throughout more of Orkney and particularly certain places in the North Isles. Therefore, whilst some merchants resided mainly in town, their trading ventures took them around the islands, particularly the merchant lairds who did not live in Kirkwall year-round but split their time between their townhouse and their dispersed estate properties.

Given this lifestyle, the importance of family involvement is clear, because family members could be based in trading towns such as Edinburgh and Bergen working as merchants, writes and town officials (*Zickermann 2013*), and in Orkney, the management of estate and merchant businesses and the attainment of positions of authority could be shared out. This can be seen in the data, where several merchants were found sometimes 'in Kirkwall' and sometimes on their estate. One such example is the Traill family. They were prominent in our time frame and epitomise successful merchant lairds. From David's notebooks and accounts we learn that he was not only in Kirkwall but also buying and selling goods in the places shown on Fig. 2. Some of these places are part of his family lands (Sanday, Stronsay and North Ronaldsay) whilst others are trading places (Westray and Stromness). Having seen the potential from this mapping exercise, a fascinating future project would be to map the bases and places visited and journeys made by all members of David's mercantile family. But from mapping David alone, we can see there are two elements to his rural trading infrastructure: trade with other merchants at their premises and estate-based trade centred around gathering locally farmed products, including those used to pay the rents and other fees (see Harland, this volume). This contrasts with the view presented by contemporary commentators that mercantile activity was

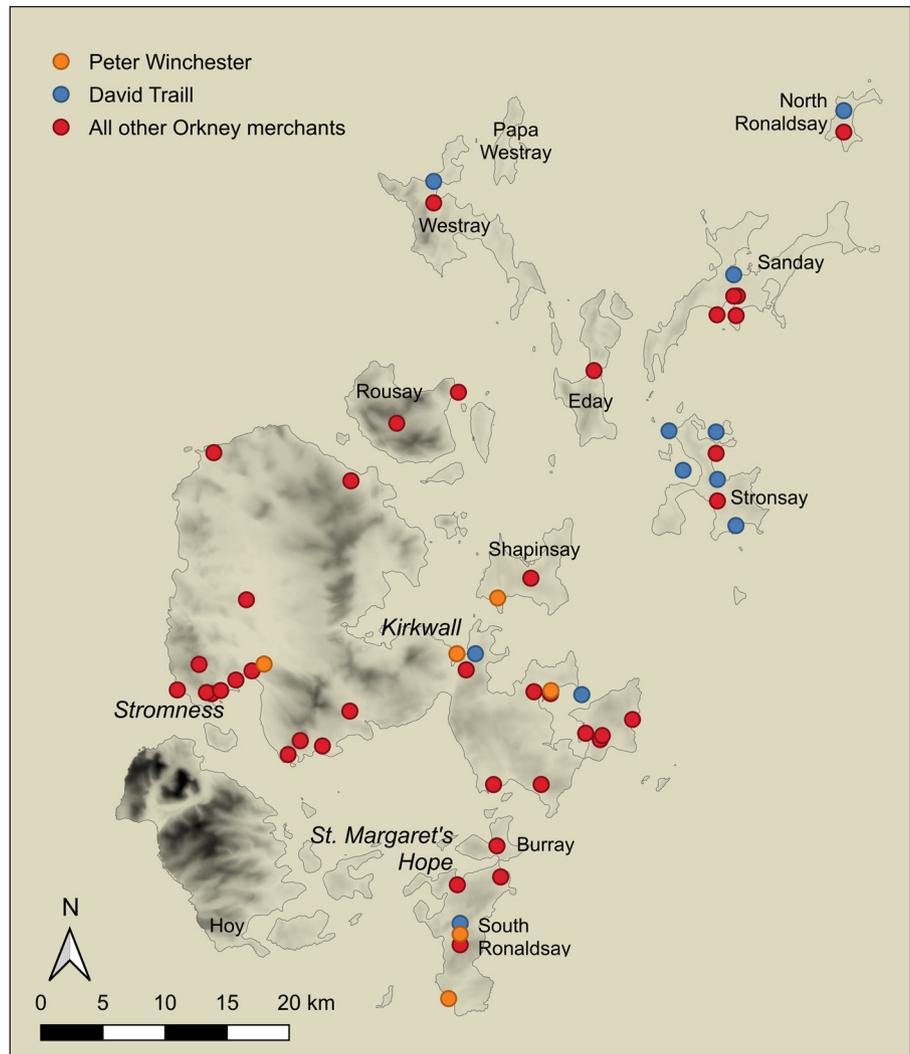


Fig. 2. Trading places in Orkney. The data represented are 437 records of Orkney merchants in places in Orkney (detailed in Tab. 2) (© S.J. Gibbon, J. Rendall, A. Mitchell, J. Harland).

conducted primarily in Kirkwall while in Shetland trade was based in harbours and small ports (Crawford 2014, 157; Gardiner, this volume; Rosie 2023; Wallace 1684). The archival documents add another layer, showing that while trade did focus on Kirkwall, it was thoroughly connected to the whole archipelago through networks of merchants and estates.

So how did local trade operate? The town of Kirkwall was the centre of trade. ‘Ane ancient Burgh long possessed be the Danes’ (Wallace 1684, 36), it was granted Scottish Royal Burgh status in 1486 by James III, giving it exclusive rights to foreign trade as a Scottish town. This charter importantly confirmed and renewed Kirkwall’s town status, giving it a new legal framework that replaced its previous Danish-Norwegian town status, which had ceased to apply from annexation in 1472 (Rosie 2023, 51). Whilst there are no surviving documents detailing Kirkwall’s pre-1486 privileges and monopoly, it was shown above that Orkney had merchants and a town by the 13th century. Surviving

documents from the mid-14th century onwards provide more-specific evidence, including for foreign commerce, defining burgesses as ‘of Kirkwall’, referring to Kirkwall as a ‘Burgh’, as a location for local and foreign (Scottish and English) markets and for infringements on trading rights. These lines of evidence all suggest Kirkwall’s status as a Nordic trading town with a formal merchant ‘class’ then developed into a Scottish burgh town (Clouston 1914, 34, 329; Crawford 2014, 156; Imsen 2012, 15, 28; Johnston – Johnston 1913, 246; Webster 1982, 233).

To trade, a merchant was required to buy a licence and these varied according to the type of trade undertaken and the means of the merchant. By the early 18th century, the most modest was a ‘chapman’ licence granted to those trading only to Inverness and Shetland, whilst the double Guild Brother and Burgess ticket was for those ‘who pack and peill in foreign commodities to Leith or further’ (Hossack 1900, 101). There is no comprehensive list of Kirkwall burgesses before 1812 (Irvine 2009, 44), but the 51 burgesses of Kirkwall in our dataset match closely

with the 50 burgesses eligible to vote on burgh matters in 1670 (*Rosie 2023*, 99). At the close of the 17th century, Kirkwall was one of 48 small Scottish burghs with a conservative approximate population of c. 1000–1300 (*Rosie 2023*, 98–99). This had dropped considerably from the number in a 1660 petition citing a population of nearly 3000 (*Thomson 2008*, 311). This was likely a generous estimate to overemphasise the importance of the town (*Rosie 2023*, 99) but even so it shows the marked decline in Kirkwall's size in the 1690s due to a succession of poor harvests, which resulted in outward trade almost ceasing between 1696 and 1702 (*Thomson 2008*, 309–311). Peter's trading occurred prior to these difficult years and David's began afterwards.

Markets and fairs: 'mercats to draw merchants' (GB241/SC5/11/1663/27)

The burgh charters confirm that Kirkwall was entitled to 2 weekly markets and 3 annual fairs (on Palm Sunday, St Olav's Day and Martinmas). The St Olaf's Fair or Lammas Fair was the largest, survived the longest and is the only fair for which we have details. It started as a 2-week event but was reduced by law to no more than 3 days by the end of the 17th century (*Hossack 1900*, 344–347; *Rosie 2023*). The fair comprised 4 separate marketplaces. The horse and cattle markets were on the outskirts of the town, the cloth market in front of the Bishop's Palace, and stalls selling other wares filled the Broad Street and Market Green in front of St Magnus Cathedral.

Evidence of other fairs and markets in early modern Orkney is sparse. Later sources mention a few early fairs and markets such as a monthly cattle fair in Firth, an annual fair in Sandwick in June and in Stromness in September and 3 annually in Dounby and Tankerness plus 3 in the island of Eday (*Banks 1946*, 3; *Heddle – Mainland 1910*, 97–99). This is very patchy information though and can only be used as an indication that there were local markets and fairs held in other parts of Orkney. The sparsity of evidence suggests they were nothing to compare to the Lammas Fair in Kirkwall, which was the 'great market' of the islands and the one that attracted the most people from the furthest reaches.

The twice-weekly Kirkwall markets were similar to other town markets, where victual products were sold by ecclesiastical and royal officials and wealthy landowners to make a profit (*Gundersen 2015*, 59; *Hossack 1900*). We have already established that most of those at the forefront of trade in Orkney were connected to agricultural production. To give an idea of the extent to which merchants were integrated into Orkney's landscape, almost all landed proprietors in Orkney were merchants. That is not to say however that all merchants were landowners, as other merchants were skippers, such as the Pottinger family, and some were only merchants.

Locating rural merchants: booths and storehouses

The lack of evidence for merchants means their trading premises are often difficult to locate more precisely than at district level. However, on occasion terms such as 'booth' and 'chop' either preserved in documents such as sasines (detailing land or building ownership), testament and legal disputes or place-names allows for more accurate mapping (Fig. 3). Sometimes the written sources provide the exact location of the booth and its condition, as with an example from Kirkwall from 1585–1586: 'the Croce House has two forebooths upon the gate... ruinous and in need of repairing' (*GB241/D23/1/9*). Outside Kirkwall, documentary evidence is limited though a mid-16th century ban on the unsolicited building of trading booths 'throughout the hale country' implies they were in existence (*Mooney 1952*, 80). A few 'booth' place names indicate possible locations (Fig. 3) where they may have once stood.

Turning to estate-based trade, we know from the Traill records that the family's merchants collected goods from their estates and the estates of others and at the same time were selling items and taking orders. From this we can say that trade occurred in connection with estate storehouses – the places where the in-kind rental products were gathered for shipment. Finding these buildings is tricky, because even when there are 17th-century records of stores, most have been replaced or rebuilt in later centuries, whilst others have been removed.

Fig. 3 shows the locations of stores in the 17th century based on the records in the dataset, which in turn indicate the potential trading locations linked with estates. The records are partial but show a distribution throughout Orkney that is distinctive from the booths. However, there were definitely more early modern estate stores, based on the fact all large estates would have had a store, but we have not found evidence of them existing in the 17th century so they are not shown here. Mark Gardiner has surveyed two of the surviving storehouses (Holm and Burray) and will further discuss their role and operation in forthcoming LIFTE publications. We can see that these storehouses were usually near to good anchorages and close to the shore for ease of loading. Interestingly the distribution of booths and stores shows little overlap, so perhaps the two distinct forms of dispersed rural trading together were meeting the needs of the population.

Finding these places archaeologically is challenging. The settlements (Kirkwall, Stromness, St Margaret's Hope) have all increased in size since the 17th century with much of the earlier buildings and infrastructure having been removed and developed. However some townhouses and stores remain, albeit renovated. This subject has seen little archaeological investigation and the archival information presented identifies a useful inroad into where to look for examples of storehouses and booths that date to

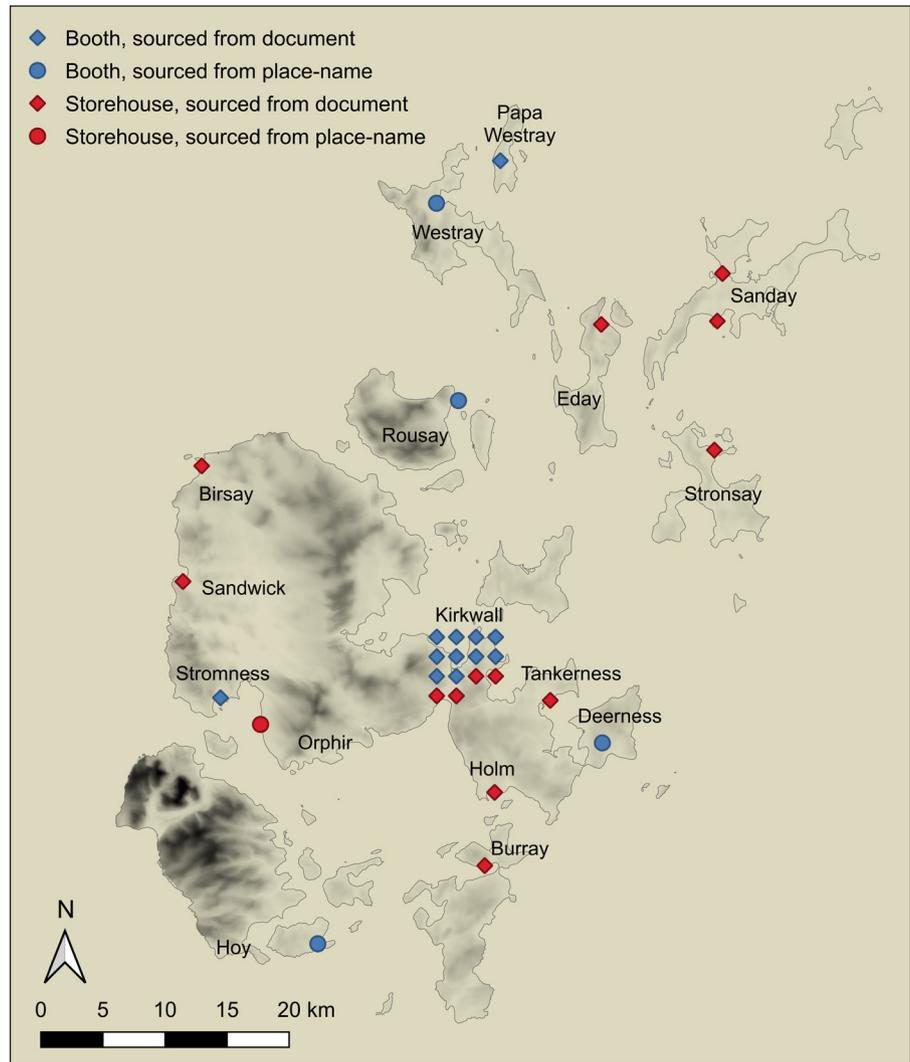


Fig. 3. Locations of early modern booths and storehouses as evidenced in documentary, cartographic and onomastic sources (© S.J. Gibbon, J. Rendall, A. Mitchell, J. Harland).

the 17th century. Moreover, by suggesting other merchant lairds may have been trading as the Traills were, extant storehouses on other estates could be targeted for further investigation. Mapping storehouse and booth information alongside ports, piers and anchorages mentioned in documents and shown on early modern maps would be another worthwhile future project.

Conclusions

This paper has presented initial findings from archival-based research conducted as part of the LIFTE project that identified Orkney trading places and people in the context of nascent global commercialisation in the long 17th century. Orkney's medieval trade with Scotland, England, Ireland and Norway continued, developed and influenced trading patterns and networks in the early modern period. Orkney merchants accessed global products via their nearest large trading towns of Leith

and Bergen, in some instances even travelling themselves, visiting various trading places in north-west Europe.

The ports where Orkney's goods were transported were influenced by centres of ecclesiastical and royal tax collection, first Bergen and then Edinburgh with the annexation of the islands in 1472 (Helle 2019, 48). However, trade with Bergen did not stop. On the contrary, 102 Orcadians registered as burgesses of Bergen between 1574 and 1672 (Nicolaysen 1878) and Orkney merchants were still making repeated trading excursions to Norway beyond the first quarter of the 18th century (Marwick 1939), identifying Norwegian ports as their preferred markets (GB241/D14). Some enterprising Orcadians chose to migrate to Bergen, where established trading networks, shared language and culture and new opportunities awaited them.

Internally, trade was centred on the burgh town of Kirkwall where merchant families dominated. Most of these families were also significant landowners or were closely linked through marriage or kin to them. In Kirkwall there

were twice-weekly markets and 3 annual fairs, with the Lammas Fair being the largest. This had specific horse, cattle and cloth markets within the fair, in addition to booths in the main street, and it attracted large crowds of both Orcadians and non-local traders. There were other smaller-scale markets and fairs throughout the archipelago, mainly dealing in livestock and local product exchange. In addition to Kirkwall, 2 settlements developed around the safe harbours at St Margaret's Hope and Stromness. There were also local merchants based in most islands and parishes. Besides in town and village/market, trade took place on estates where merchant lairds used their boats as their trading 'booths' when collecting rents gathered to their storehouses. This may explain why there are no merchants' booths on the estates.

The findings set out here are preliminary but they demonstrate the value of both archival research and the mapping of data to visualise trading. There is a wealth of further documentary evidence within Orkney Library and Archive to add to the current sum of research, and the work of researchers and palaeographers continues to enrich a little-understood period of Orkney's story both in relation to Orkney itself and its outward-looking connections.

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