Business leaders and town gentry in early industrial Britain: specialist occupations and shared urbanism

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ABSTRACT: Three major conclusions are derived from close study of Britain's pioneering directories in the 1770s and 1780s. First, they show that over 30,000 leading townsmen and women were enmeshed into the burgeoning knowledge grid through the public listings of their addresses, status and occupations. Secondly, a close examination of that information reveals a notable extent of occupational specialization – among both men and women, and among individuals and the nascent firms – thus confirming one of Adam Smith's key observations about the nature of Britain's increasingly commercialized, if still largely pre-mechanized, economy. Thirdly, aggregative analysis highlights systematic differences in the socio-economic characteristics of different towns: from manufacturing, commercial and professional centres to the great capital cities to the specialist leisure towns and resorts – all interlocking in an inter-dependent urban network. Hence this evidence suggests that a generic re-interpretation of all large towns as 'residential leisure towns' on the strength of their flourishing cultural life (as recently proposed by Stobart and Schwarz) is misleading, as it obscures significant systemic differences between different types of towns. At the same time, however, the interlinked urban network was generating a confidently shared urbanism, bridging between aristocratic and middle-class society. That link was exemplified by the listing of numerous titled and gentlemanly 'town gentry' alongside the business leaders – as the directories in effect flourished their collective calling cards.

What did James, 3rd duke of Chandos (1731–89) and premier peer of the realm, have in common with Sarah Harman and Sarah Stephens, two Bristol grutt-makers in 1775, following a distinctly obscure occupation? Outwardly, not much. Yet Harman and Stephens were sufficiently

prominent businesswomen to appear in Bristol's first trade directory, whilst 'His Grace James Duke of Chandos' was not too grand to appear in Winchester's listing for 1784, where he featured as one of the city's five aldermen – and, interestingly, not in first place.[1] In other words, these three were publicly known as urban 'persons of consequence'. It was a distinction which they shared with thousands of their fellow townsmen and townswomen.

This article analyses these listings to explore further what they can tell historians. Evidence has been extracted from 16 different British town directories in the 1770s and 1780s, drawn from all urban centres which had at least one local directory in these decades. Most of the early issues were one-offs, since annual updatings were as yet uncommon. But London and Birmingham both had more than one compilation, so for this survey the earliest substantial volume was chosen.

Table 1 documents the chosen directories from: three capital cities (Dublin, Edinburgh, London); four international ports (Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne); four manufacturing centres (Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Norwich); two small county capitals (Shrewsbury, Winchester); one large resort (Bath); one small port-cum-resort (Southampton); and one dockyard town (Portsmouth).[2] The thoroughness of the sources was notably variable. In particular, the Bath entries in Bailey's *Bristol and Bath Directory* (1787) noted only *c*. 400 names (from a city of some 20,000 residents). They were probably included simply as a marketing ploy to assist sales of what was basically a Bristol publication. Similarly sparse were the Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester listings, which appeared within a general directory for Hampshire. So these relatively restricted sources have been used for their informative details rather than for an aggregative overview.

Collectively, the 16 directories identified almost 32,000 town residents and firms. They included 26,277 men and a much smaller total of 2,466 women, the remainder (found mainly in the Shrewsbury listing) being gender-anonymized without a specified first name. Between them, these people shared 9,039 family surnames, ranging from the rarest Nightingales (1) to the commonest Smiths (335; including no fewer than 58 John Smiths). Next in popularity came the Browns (186) and the Joneses (184). Other local concentrations included numerous Kellys in Dublin, many Buchanans and Campbells in Glasgow and a subsidiary cluster of Scottish surnames in Newcastle upon Tyne.

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[1] *The Hampshire Directory* (Winchester, 1784), 28. For James Brydges, 3rd duke of Chandos (1731–89), MP for Winchester 1754–61, see L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754–90*, vol. II: *Members A–J* (London, 1964), 125–7, where his modest Aldermanic title goes unmentioned.

[2] But dockyard towns, being dominated by one large and easily identifiable employer, were slow to produce directories: see P.J. Corfield with S. Kelly, 'The early town directories', *Urban History Yearbook 1984* (1984), 28–9, 31.

Table 1: *Identifying 16 early town directories 1772–87*

Date	Place	Entries	Source
1772	Manchester	1,505	E. Raffald, *The Manchester Directory for 1772* (London and Manchester, 1772)
1773	Edinburgh	3,011	*Williamson's Directory for the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1773)
1774	Liverpool	2,535	*Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1774* (Liverpool, 1774)
1774	London (City, Westminster, Southwark)	5,548	*Kent's Directory for the Year 1774 [for] the Cities of London and Westminster and the Borough of Southwark*, 42nd edn (London, 1774)
1775	Bristol	4,075	J. Sketchley, *Sketchley's Bristol Directory: 1775* (Bristol, 1775; repr. ed. B. Little (Bath, 1971)
1778	Newcastle upon Tyne	1,413	*Whitehead's Newcastle Directory for 1778* (Newcastle, 1778); repr. ed. J.R. Boyle, as *The First Newcastle Directory* (1869)
1780	Birmingham	2,088	Pearson and Rollason, *The Birmingham . . . Directory* (Birmingham, 1780; re-issued 1781)
1783	Norwich	1,594	W. Chase, *The Norwich Directory: Or, Gentleman and Tradesman's Assistant* (Norwich, 1783)
1784	Dublin	5,315	*Wilson's Dublin Directory for the Year 1784* (Dublin, 1784)
1784	Glasgow	1,702	*Tait's Directory for the City of Glasgow 1783–84* (Glasgow, 1784)
1784	Portsmouth	336	From J. Sadler, *The Hampshire Directory* (Winchester, 1784), 99–113
1784	Southampton	253	From J. Sadler, *The Hampshire Directory* (Winchester, 1784), 144–54
1784	Winchester	308	From J. Sadler, *The Hampshire Directory* (Winchester, 1784), 28–42
1786	Shrewsbury	589	T. Minshull, *The Shrewsbury Guide and Salopian Directory* (Shrewsbury, 1786)
1787	Bath	393	From W. Bailey, *The Bristol and Bath Directory* (Bristol, 1787)
1787	Sheffield	1,103	[Gales and Martin], *A Directory of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1787; repr. ed. S.O. Addy, 1889)

Sources: For locations, see C.W.F. Goss (ed.), *The London Directories 1677–1855* (London, 1932), and J. Norton (ed.), *Guide to the National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales, Excluding London, Published before 1856* (London, 1950).

These 'persons of consequence' were drawn from the urban business leadership, broadly defined, plus a number of leisured families, constituting the 'town gentry'. The directory population thus ranged from a few aristocrats, plutocrats and rentiers to many middling traders, manufacturers and professional men. Together, they were urban 'notables', being noteworthy enough to appear in these listings. By the nineteenth century, such town leaders were often taken to represent a 'middle-class', non-agrarian interest group, in contrast to the traditional landed aristocracy.[3] However, the actual urban notables had varied social backgrounds, about which the directories provide rich information.[4]

Viewed closely, these sources highlight three interlinked themes. The first marks the collective role of the directories as an urban resource within the burgeoning 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge culture'. The second theme relates to the overwhelming practice of identifying individuals (and the nascent firms) in terms of one single occupation, many of those being highly specialized.

Thirdly, the data within these sources also permit some interesting aggregate analysis. By classifying the directory occupations, the range of economic specialisms among the business leadership can be reviewed. There were significant differences between the manufacturing centres, the ports and the capital cities, as presented below. Of course, there were some common features as well. All towns generated some basic employment in 'maintenance' occupations, to feed, house and clothe their local populations. But they also had different specialist roles, attracting congregated groups of specialist workers. Indeed, it was the variant fortunes of these different trades, industries and services which accounted for the differential patterns of growth between one town and another.

Following that logic, the argument here rejects the revisionist proposal from Jon Stobart and Leonard Schwarz, that Britain's provincial towns should be re-envisaged, not primarily within a specialist economic typology, but instead as 'residential leisure towns'.[5] Stobart and Schwarz rightly draw attention to the growth of cultural 'overhead investment' in urban entertainment facilities and improvement societies, as well as the urban location of numerous affluent consumers. And they reject the

[3] See discussion in S. Gunn, 'Class, identity and the urban: the middle class in England c. 1790–1950', *Urban History*, 31 (2004), 29–47, esp. 29–35. For the changing social vocabulary, see also P.J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number in eighteenth-century England', in *idem* (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), 121–3.

[4] For criticisms and assessments of this source, see M.R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680–1780* (Berkeley, 1996), 129–32, 185–8; and H. Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development 1760–1830* (Oxford, 2006), 47–54.

[5] J. Stobart and L. Schwarz, 'Leisure, luxury and urban society in the eighteenth century', *Urban History*, 35 (2008), 216–36, esp. 220, 235: their emphasis within this article varies between 'tempering' and 'challenging' established socio-economic classifications. Their case builds upon *idem*, 'Residential leisure towns in England towards the end of the eighteenth century', *Urban History*, 27 (2000), 51–61.

old aristocratic prejudice that Britain's provincial towns were culturally blighted.[6] Such contemporary criticisms tended to come from non-townees, who preferred an idealized 'country' alternative.[7]

However, Stobart and Schwarz take revisionism too far. Genuine socio-economic distinctions, as shown in the directories, are blurred if all large towns are merged into one 'hold-all' category. It is perverse not to acknowledge, as contemporaries would, the differences between (say) Manchester as a textile centre and regional hub; Liverpool as an international port; Birmingham as the capital of the Black Country metalware region; and Bath as a spa and resort city. All these towns were 'residential' in the most obvious sense, as having a resident population; but not all were equally attractive to visitors seeking leisure and entertainments. Yet it was true, at the same time, that the urban network was generating a shared urbanism. By listing aristocrats and gentlemen alongside the business leaders, the directories endorsed the towns' ecumenical appeal – which was built upon world of specialist work.

Directories as an urban resource

Of course, it was not new in the 1770s and 1780s for the spotlight to fall upon the urban grandees. In traditionally incorporated towns in earlier periods, there were regular displays of civic power in the form of public processions of municipal rulers and trade guilds. One magnificent example is seen in Denis van Alsloot's *Procession of the Guild Masters through Brussels* (1616), reproduced in Figure 1. The serried ranks of master traders and craftsmen conveyed instant information about their identity, whilst simultaneously underlining their cohesion. By the eighteenth century, however, the old guilds, with their system of trade regulation, had disappeared almost everywhere.[8]

Residents and visitors, however, still needed information. Gradually, printed directories emerged to complement the traditional sources of information by direct witness and word-of-mouth report. The first solitary resource of this kind appeared in 1677, serving merchants in the City of

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[6] For such views, see Stobart and Schwarz, 'Leisure, luxury and urban society', 234; H. Barker, '"Smoke cities": northern industrial towns in later Georgian England', *Urban History*, 31 (2004), 175–90; and K. Layton-Jones, 'The synthesis of town and trade: visualising provincial urban identity 1800–58', *Urban History*, 35 (2008), 72–95.

[7] A still effective survey of long-running pro- and anti-town attitudes can be found in R. Williams, *The City and the Country* (London, 1973; 1985).

[8] The Preston Guild parade every twenty years – from the fourteenth century onwards, with a regular sequence between 1542 and 1922, and with some breaks thereafter – stands out as an exception: see A. Crosby, *The History of Preston Guild: 800 Years of England's Greatest Carnival* (Preston, 1991). For broader context, see: J.R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of guild and corporation control over the handicraft and retail trade in London', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 10 (1957/58), 381–94; and contextual essays in S.R. Epstein and M. Prak (eds.), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy 1400–1800* (Cambridge, 2008).
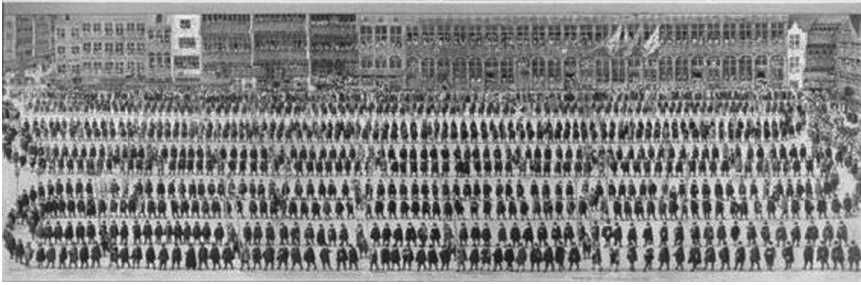
Figure 1: Denis van Alsloot's *Procession of the Guild Masters through Brussels* (1616), showing confident economic leadership in public view for all to see. Prado Museum, Madrid, c/o Bridgeman Art Library.

London.[9] And 100 years later, trade directories were becoming standard in all places with urban pretensions. Thus in 1786 the publisher Thomas Minshull 'almost blushed' to admit that Shrewsbury – then a modest commercial capital with some 12,000 inhabitants – lacked such a resource, before himself hastening to fill the market gap.[10]

Individuals were listed alphabetically, accompanied by information about their occupations and their personal and professional titles (if any). Some directories further grouped their listings under the headings of different trades, as in the case of the 1787 *Directory of Sheffield*.[11] One or two handbooks also provided further information about their urban context. For instance, Sketchley's 1775 *Bristol Directory* supplied a short history of the city and corporation, as well as comparative town populations, so that attentive readers could rank Bristol against sundry European capitals.[12] Another example came from Norwich. There, Chase's 1783 *Directory* offered 'Hints for Public Improvements' of the urban environment. His suggestions included removing the city's ancient but crumbling flint-stone

[9] Corfield, 'Early town directories', 28: table 1. Essential bibliographical guides are: C.W.F. Goss (ed.), *The London Directories 1677–1855* (London, 1932); J. Norton (ed.), *Guide to the National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales, Excluding London, Published before 1856* (London, 1950); and G. Shaw and A. Tipper (eds.), *British Directories: A Bibliography and Guide to Directories Published in England and Wales 1850–1950 and Scotland 1773–1950* (Leicester, 1989).

[10] T. Minshull, *The Shrewsbury Guide and Salopian Directory* (Shrewsbury, 1786), preface. For context, see A. McInnes, 'The emergence of a leisure town: Shrewsbury 1660–1760', *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), 53–87; and B.S. Trinder, *Victorian Shrewsbury: Studies in the History of a County Town* (Shrewsbury, 1984).

[11] [Gales and Martin], *A Directory of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1787; repr. ed. S.O. Addy, London, 1889).

[12] J. Sketchley, *Sketchley's Bristol Directory: 1775* (Bristol, 1775; repr. Bath, 1971).

walls – a policy that was adopted in the following decades to the long-term detriment of Norwich's tourist trade.[13]

In general, however, these publications stuck to their core business. Their lists of serried names were undoubtedly dull to view, as indicated in Figure 2. They lacked the striking immediacy and colour of a pageant. Yet the town directories, eschewing passion and partisanship, were available year-round as accessible, checkable, durable, portable, lendable and (tolerably) authoritative guides to the urban 'persons of consequence'. And these social and business leaders in turn meshed into other networks, as they interacted with their fellow townsmen and women, who were, of course, far from simply the 'led'.[14]

Frequently, the directory compilers were local publishers or booksellers, seeking popular works for secure sales. Many conducted or commissioned their own surveys. For example, the compiler Elizabeth Raffald advertised in Manchester her intention of sending 'proper and intelligent Persons round the Town, to take down the Name, Business, and place of Abode of every Gentleman, Tradesman, and Shop-keeper, as well as others whose Business or Employment has any tendency to public Notice'.[15] The job of collecting such information, albeit not well paid, thus began 'on the doorstep'.[16] Of course, there was always the problem of obsolescence, as people moved home or changed businesses or died. Hence compilers often solicited corrections and updates.

Imperfect as were the details, the combined data provided 'snapshot' research leads. With their aid, enquirers could find people quickly and/or launch further enquiries by consulting others who had similar occupations or who lived in the same neighbourhoods or who shared the same family name. The commercial expansion of the genre thus indicated that there was sufficient contemporary demand, even though readers rarely commented upon their use of these volumes.[17]

Charlotte Matthews was, however, an exception. She was a London businesswoman, who was asked in 1794 to assess a fellow trader's credit-worthiness. Her tactic was to check the relevant directory, before reporting critically of the individual in question that he was 'not in the directory

[13] See W. Chase, *The Norwich Directory: Or, Gentleman and Tradesman's Assistant* (Norwich, 1783), iii–vi; and P.J. Corfield, 'From second city to regional capital', in C. Rawcliffe and R.G. Wilson (eds.), *Norwich since 1500* (London, 2004), 162.

[14] For activism from below, as pertinent reminders of the interactivity of urban society, see, amongst a huge literature, T. Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2004); and R. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2004).

[15] *Manchester Mercury*, 6 May 1773, as quoted in Barker, *Business of Women*, 49.

[16] A rare personal account from one involved, based on his labours first in Manchester and later in Guildford, appeared in J.D. Burn, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy* (London, 1855), 174–5.

[17] For the rarity of evidence for spontaneous reader responses, see D. Allan, 'Some methods and problems in the history of reading: Georgian England and the Scottish Enlightenment', *Journal of the Historical Society*, 3 (2003), 91–124.

... and only *lodges'*.[18] She had found enough to reach a verdict about his public persona. In her case, her search was systematic and intentional but others might also use directories fleetingly and casually.

Economically, socially and geographically, the towns' leading individuals were 'on the map' within the grid of print culture, for all to see or to trace, if further research was required. The directory compilers were certainly confident in the usefulness of their product as points of first guidance, as expressed with lofty satisfaction by the *Plymouth, Stonehouse, and Devonport Directory* in 1830:

Of the utility of a general Directory to Towns of magnitude and vast Populations, it is presumed, there can be no dissent. By its light, the community at large are made known in their various avocations, while the stranger and the visitor can readily find, by its guidance, the residences of all; thereby obviating that unpleasantness so often arising from irksome enquiries, and erroneous directions.[19]

All publications like these fell into the category of what the contemporary bibliophile Charles Lamb defined as '*biblia-a-biblia*': books that were not books.[20] The new directories, like the growing shelves of encyclopaedias, almanacs, atlases, dictionaries, guide-books and town histories,[21] were not designed to be read consecutively. They offered instead access to the consolidated stock of knowledge in print. Such resources together formed the basis of what Joel Mokyr has dubbed the expanding 'knowledge economy'.[22] As Britain was developing, with the nearby Dutch Republic, into Europe's most densely urbanized region,[23] as well as becoming one of the world's greatest imperial powers with an unrivalled spread of international trading networks,[24] it was no surprise to find that the increasingly literate and urbanized Britons needed ready

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[18] C. Wiskin, 'Women, finance and credit in England, c. 1780–1826', unpublished University of Warwick Ph.D. thesis, 2000, 40, quoted in Barker, *Business of Women*, 53.

[19] R. Brindley (ed.), *Plymouth, Stonehouse, and Devonport Directory* (1830), p. v.

[20] C. Lamb, 'Detached thoughts on books and reading', in *Last Essays of Elia* (London, 1833; re-issued 1875), 18: 'In this catalogue of books which are no books – *biblia a-biblia* – I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Almanacks, . . . Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without".'

[21] For urban histories and guides, see esp. R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997).

[22] For context, see J. Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, 2002), 28–77; and *idem*, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (Oxford, 1992).

[23] See P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700–1800* (Oxford, 1982), 6–16; J. De Vries, *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (London, 1984), 62, 64, 271–2; and R. Sweet, *The English Town 1680–1840: Government, Society, and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), 7–25.

[24] Detailed discussions are available in P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. II: *The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998); and A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. III: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999); as well as a short overview in J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009).

access to data about their own town communities. It then took alert users to absorb such information and turn it into living knowledge.

Occupational identity

Accompanying the lists of names and addresses, the main point of the directories was to identify people in terms of their occupations and status. And, overwhelmingly, it was the first of these that was used. Thus, within these 16 directories, there were 31,768 separate entries, of which as many as 93.6 per cent (29,733 individuals and firms) were identified by one main line of business. That factor, and the range of specialist occupations thereby revealed, constitutes the second big theme for analysis.

Signalling an occupation was an established form of public styling that had emerged over many centuries. Indeed, a number of family surnames began by borrowing from core work designators. Obvious examples included Baker, Miller, Smith, Thatcher or Turner, alongside less obvious ones like Backhouse (Bakehouse) and Malthus (Malthouse). By the eighteenth century, a reliance upon occupation as an identifier was well established. It was used, whether an individual was actually in work or not, as a short-hand guide to socio-economic standing. Thus, when parliamentary electors voted at the open polls, they publicly called out their names and occupations.[25] Moreover, the growth of these trade directories further strengthened the practice, as did the collection of data for the nineteenth-century occupational censuses from 1841 onwards.

Actual working practices, meanwhile, were often variegated. Some merchants, for example, acted as financiers for their clients, which was how Norwich's Gurney's Bank evolved, the family switching from one specialism to another.[26] Or smaller shopkeepers and alehouse-keepers acted as *de facto* pawnbrokers for needy customers.[27] And a number of urban craftsmen hosted drinking rooms, which operated as informal employment exchanges or 'houses of call', where people went to seek work in the same trade.[28]

Nonetheless, in most cases, a single job label sufficed, as Table 2 clearly demonstrates. Among the almost 30,000 individuals and firms within these 16 directories, 88 per cent simply recorded one central occupation.

'Merchant' was the most frequently recurrent business label (8.4 per cent of all entries). That generic term referred to wholesale traders, whether

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[25] For the procedures of open polling, see C. Harvey, E.M. Green and P.J. Corfield, *The Westminster Historical Database: Voters, Social Structure and Electoral Behaviour, with CD-ROM* (Bristol, 1998), 8–14.

[26] W.H. Bidwell, *Annals of an East Anglian Bank: Gurney and Co.* (Norwich, 1900), 9–12.

[27] See B. Lemire, 'Petty pawns and informal lending: gender and the transformation of small-scale credit in England c. 1600–1800', in K. Bruland and P. O'Brien (eds.), *From Family Firms to Capitalism: Essays in Business and Industrial History* (Oxford, 1998), 112–38; and for details of c. 11,000 pledges taken by an eighteenth-century York pawnbroker, see A. Backhouse, *The Worm-Eaten Waistcoat* (York, 2003).

[28] P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200–1830* (London, 1983), 229–31.

Table 2: *Single and multiple occupations in 16 early town directories 1772–87*

Directory entries with stated occupation	Total	%	Stock of declared occupations
Identified by single occupation	26,177	88.0	26,177
Identified by two occupations	3,377	11.4	6,754
Indentified by three or more occupations	179	0.6	537
Total individuals and firms	29,733	100.0	33,468

Source: Occupations within all directories listed in Table 1.

dealing locally, nationally or internationally. After them came the urban inn-keepers (aggregated with alehouse-keepers and publicans), followed by grocers, lawyers, shoemakers, tailors and drapers. Between them, these seven most frequently found categories accounted for 27 per cent of all occupations – over one quarter – within these sources.

Most occupational labels came from a nationally recognizable vocabulary of work, incorporating all legally accepted ways of making a living. (The black economy remained excluded, as it did from the later censuses.) There were some regional variants. The Bristol 'grutt-makers', Sarah Harman and Sarah Stephens, have already been mentioned for their apparently obscure calling.[29] Their occupation featured neither in the eighteenth-century dictionaries nor the nineteenth-century censuses. However, these businesswoman were oatmeal makers (grutt = groats), as described locally. Another linguistic variant, found in Newcastle upon Tyne, was the Geordie term 'raff' meaning timber, as in the 'raff-fitter' and 'raff-yard keeper'. Scotland too had some traditional Scotticisms, such as the baxter (baker), flesher (butcher), grieve (bailiff) and room-setter (lodgings-keeper).

Yet the directories generally deployed a standard terminology. Hence, their plethora of specialist terms reflected the eighteenth-century's growing sub-division of labour and business rather than a reliance upon regional vocabularies.[30]

At the same time, a small but not insignificant minority of these directory notables recorded a greater diversity. Almost 3,400 individuals (11.4 per cent of the total) listed two occupations, as shown in Table 2. Most were closely linked roles: 'grocer and tea dealer'; 'tailor and stay-maker'; 'carpenter and joiner'; 'painter and glazier'; or 'surgeon and man-midwife'. Another example was the 'clock- and watch-maker', following two similar

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[29] *Sketchley's Bristol Directory*, 42, 91 ('grutt' also appeared as 'grut').

[30] A century later, the 1861 census office issued to its clerks a regularly updated and standardized dictionary of occupational titles: see W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation: prefatory note', in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (London, 1972), 194–5.

tasks within an expanding craft industry.[31] But there were unlikely combinations too. London in 1774 had four hatters who were sword cutlers. Elsewhere, two hair-dressers doubled as keepers of circulating libraries. One jeweller was simultaneously a clothier. And an Edinburgh room-setter was a grave-cloth-maker. In such unusual combinations, the individual probably had one main business, whilst supervising another as a sideline, quite possibly as a family concern.

Meanwhile, it was really rare to list three or more occupations. As Table 2 indicates, no more than 179 people (0.6 per cent of the directory listings) were attributed with so many. When multiple businesses appeared, they were usually linked, such as the 19 'plumbers, painters and glaziers' in Norwich in 1783. Only very few showed extreme versatility. A jeweller in Liverpool in 1774 was simultaneously a miniature-painter and a hair-worker. In Norwich, again in 1783, two wine- and brandy-merchants had a third occupation, one as a dentist, the other as an attorney-at-law – both well primed with alcohol to soothe nervous clients.

Easily leading the occupational pluralists, however, was the Bristol glover, James Bazley, who lived near the Avon dockside. The 1775 directory listed him as a glover, hosier, parchment-maker, orange-merchant *and* undertaker (business broker).[32] He was, however, the intriguing exception to the overwhelmingly general rule.

Many of these directory notables, like James Bazley, headed their single or multiple occupations on their own account. A significant minority, however, heralded a new trend towards business corporatism. Among those with listed occupations, 3,134 entries (10.5 per cent of the total) were marked as firms. They were specified either by two or more names yoked together or by designations such as '& Company' or '& Sons'. Two examples came from metropolitan London in 1774, which hosted just over half (50.2 per cent) of all these directory firms. One was Golightly & Hill, distillers; and the other was Ann Coward '& Comp.', running a wholesale glass-and-china warehouse.[33]

Typical businesses to adopt this formula were those with large-scale commitments, requiring the attention and often the capital of more than one individual. Thus wholesale merchants accounted for 30.7 per cent of the total of all firms. They were followed by sundry grocers, mercers, haberdashers and milliners. In addition, there were also plenty of firms in manufacturing, across a wide spectrum of industries (see Table 3); and a few in the professions, such as joint legal practices.

Throughout this period, the contractual obligations of such business associations still remained highly flexible. Often but not invariably they

[31] P. Glennie and N. Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300–1800* (Oxford, 2009), 329–406.
[32] *Sketchley's Bristol Directory*, 6.
[33] *Kent's Directory for the Year 1774 [for] the Cities of London and Westminster and the Borough of Southwark*, 42nd edn (London, 1774), 45, 73.

Table 3: *Occupations undertaken by firms of two or more individuals in 16 early town directories 1772–87*

Occupations undertaken by firms of two or more individuals in association	Number of entries	%
Merchants (all kinds)	963	30.7
Drapers (all kinds)	191	6.1
Warehousemen (all kinds)	146	4.6
Brokers, agents, factors (all kinds)	134	4.3
Grocers	101	3.2
Mercers	51	1.6
Haberdashers	51	1.6
Milliners	41	1.4
Chemists/druggists	41	1.4
Sub-total	1,719	54.8
Miscellaneous others, mainly manufacturing (no special concentrations)	1,395	44.5
Not stated	20	0.6
Total	3,134	99.9

Source: Aggregated occupations from all directories listed in Table 1.

were family concerns, relying upon goodwill. Any resultant disputes were tested by case-law rather than by a national regulatory framework.[34] Nonetheless, these firms' presence indicated that structural changes were preceding legal ones. Concentrated occupations were thus being matched by an intensification and eventual formalization of business organization.

The range of specialist occupations

Another key dimension of the occupational theme was the impressive range of specialisms that were revealed by the directories. Such evidence corroborated a key insight from a famous contemporary witness. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith dwelt upon the apparently 'trifling manufacture' of pins in the Black Country. Each tiny end-product was the fruit of as many as 18 separate but interdependent production stages. 'In some manufactories', Smith explained, '[these operations] are all performed by distinct hands, though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them.'[35]

[34] For the legal framework, see A.B. DuBois, *The English Business Company after the Bubble Act 1720–1800* (New York, 1938). See also M. Dietrich, 'The nature of the firm revisited', in *idem* (ed.), *Economics of the Firm: Analysis, Evolution, History* (London, 2007), 19–42.

[35] A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London, 1776), ed. E.R.A. Seligman (London, 1910; repr. London, 1966), vol. I, 5.

Birmingham's gun industry was accordingly shown as being organized by separate gun-barrel-makers, gun-lock-makers, gun-rod-makers and gun-stock-makers, as well as by all-purpose gunsmiths. In Sheffield, meanwhile, there were silver-casters, silver-cutlers, silver-button-makers, silver-refiners, silver-platers, silver-rollers and silver-turners, not to mention silverers of looking-glasses. Such experts heightened Sheffield's reputation for skilled craft labour, which brought more business to town.[36]

Other specialists were button-makers who worked in (variously) gilt, glass, enamel, horn, metal, pearl, plate, steel, silver, tin, twist or Vigo wool. And there were real rarities, including one artificial tooth-maker, located in Edinburgh in 1773; one maker of black-lead sliding-pencils, working in Dublin in 1784; and one water-closet manufacturer, also in Dublin – one of the unsung pioneers in an industry with a great future.[37]

Commerce as well as manufacturing also generated numerous intricate specialisms. For example, many traders concentrated upon one core commodity apiece. Thus there were different dealers in oil-stones, mill-stones and grinding-stones respectively, while yet more merchants traded (variously) in pearl ash; blistered steel; faggot steel; Newcastle glass; copperas (copper sulphates used in dyeing and tanning); Flanders-thread; indigo (blue powdered dye); oranges; ostrich feathers; rabbit-fur; whalebone; diamonds; 'old Hock and Rhenish wine'; 'foreign spirits' (indicating brandy); or, for the patriotic drinker, 'British spirits' (gin).

Wholesale trading warehouses were also located in most major urban centres. Interested enquirers could thus locate individual stores for (variously) Birmingham metalwares; Staffordshire china and pottery; 'Scotch lawn' (linen); and textiles from, respectively, Coventry, Manchester, Norwich and Yorkshire. Yet more warehouses stockpiled childbed linen; hooped petticoats; lace; handkerchiefs; burial crape; bunting; Turkish rugs; Kidderminster carpets; turpentine; mineral-water; distilled-water; vinegar; iron hoops; fire-buckets; human hair (for wig-making) and the fashionable new umbrellas. Notable too was the London emporium for Stoughton's Elixir, a popular patent medicine, belonging in 1774 to a female-headed firm, 'Jane Kitteridge and Comp.', which supplied retail outlets in 50 provincial towns.[38]

Wares from all parts of Britain were being traded across the country and internationally, with the towns acting as nodal hubs. European links were revealed by the presence in London of agents for the Hanse towns and for

[36] D. Hey, *The Rural Metalworkers of the Sheffield Region: A Study of Rural Industry before the Industrial Revolution* (Leicester, 1972); and *idem, The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660–1740* (Leicester, 1991).

[37] Consult L. Wright, *Clean and Decent: The Fascinating History of the Bathroom and Water Closet* (London, 1960; repr. London, 2000), 103–10; as well as, for Alexander Cummings' 1775 patent and subsequent refinements, R. Palmer, *The Water Closet: A New History* (Newton Abbot, 1973), 46–66.

[38] *Kent's Directory* (1774), 104; and this firm's business details in R. Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England 1660–1850* (Manchester, 1969), 80–1.

Danzig, while both Dublin (1784) and Liverpool (1774) housed a resident Danish consul. British merchants also concentrated upon specific areas of the world, trading (variously) with Ireland, Africa, the Americas, the West Indies, Spain, Scandinavia, Turkey or Russia.

While markets integrated and expanded, so did the range not only of wholesale traders but also of specialist retailers.[39] Amongst the butchers, the directories listed separate chicken-, hog- and pork-butchers as well as ham-curers, ham-and-tongue merchants, bacon dealers and tripe-dressers. General 'bakers' were distinguished from specialist sugar-bakers, confectioners, pastry cooks, gingerbread-makers and muffin men. Ordinary drink coopers were everywhere plentiful. But so too were oil-coopers, rum-coopers, brandy-coopers, sugar-coopers, white-coopers and the many wine-coopers. Indeed, the drink trades spawned a range of dealers in arrack (fermented coconut), beer, cider, porter, punch and rum, as well as the spirits traders already mentioned.

Numerous interesting specialisms were also found in the service industries. Thus, 'number-sellers' sold serialized books in separate 'numbers', hot from the press. A 'chimney doctor' repaired flues. One medical man was a specialist 'operator for the ears'. Education offered further opportunities for special expertise. Commercial tutors provided instruction in (variously) classics, European languages, music, dancing, writing, natural history, accountancy and book-keeping. Numerous schools featured in the directories as well, not least a Mercantile Academy for young men in Dublin in 1784. That city also boasted a professor (teacher) of stenography, while Edinburgh in 1773 housed a professor of Hebrew. Moreover, among these almost 30,000 urban notables there were nine men with listed occupations as scientists: four living in Dublin, four in Edinburgh and the remaining one in Manchester.[40]

Overall, these 16 directories provided instances of 1,964 separate occupational designations. It was a notably high total. By comparison, a 1747 handbook to metropolitan occupations noted a much smaller number of 367 separate avocations.[41] This source was not directly comparable with the later directories. But the very much higher figure in the 1770s and 1780s does suggest an active process of change. Indeed, the directories' total considerably out-trumped the 877 separate designations recorded by Britain's first national census of occupations in 1841.[42] Again, too much cannot be made of this comparison. The census-takers deliberately

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[39] For context, see H-C. Mui and L.H. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (Kingston, Ont., 1989); and I. Mitchell, 'The development of urban retailing 1700–1815', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600–1800* (London, 1984), 259–83.

[40] See further details in P. Elliott, 'Towards a geography of English scientific culture: provincial identity, and literary and philosophical culture in the English county town 1750–1850', *Urban History*, 32 (2005), 391–412.

[41] R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, both Liberal and Mechanic . . .* (London, 1747), 331–40.

[42] Armstrong, 'Prefatory note', 193.

grouped many specialisms together for ease of aggregative analysis. But the directories' detailed accounting certainly confirmed the work specialization of which Adam Smith wrote. Such sub-division of labour provided a fertile context for continuing change, aiding not only subtle product variations to stimulate consumer demand,[43] but also the continual refining, and eventual mechanization, of production methods.[44]

Urban businesswomen

Before leaving the theme of specialist occupations, it is worth noting too that numerous businesswomen among these urban notables were engaged in a not dissimilar range of specialisms. Quietly, old expectations were being subverted. Traditionally, women were supposed to be economically dependent upon a male patriarchy,[45] or at most confined within low-paid 'female' occupations. Positions that did not shock public opinion were those in millinery or haberdashery, or work as midwives; nurses; inn-keepers; lodging-keepers; or proprietors of schools for young ladies – all found in the directories. Yet even such roles confuted the strictest stress upon complete female subordination. And, by this period, the range of female economic participation was broadening to include employers as well as employees. Thus, the old stereotypes were being quietly subverted, as recent research has shown,[46] even while the old patriarchal rhetoric lingered long in the cultural repertoire.

Among the 2,466 notable women in the directories (7.8 per cent of all entries),[47] those with occupations tended to concentrate in commerce. Accordingly, 40 per cent of them were classified as 'dealers', as shown in Table 4. At the same time, as many as 24.4 per cent (virtually one quarter) had occupations in manufacturing. It should be noted too that of the 3,134

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[43] On this theme, see J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', *Past and Present*, 168 (2000), 124–69.

[44] For technical innovations, see A.E. Musson, *The Growth of British Industry* (London, 1978); H.I. Dutton, *The Patent System and Inventive Activity during the Industrial Revolution 1750–1852* (Manchester, 1984); and C. MacLeod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution: The English Patent System 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1988). And for the wider context of industrialization, see J. Mokyr, *25 Centuries of Technological Change: An Historical Survey* (New York, 1990; 2001); and R.C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2009).

[45] For this concept, expressed as a misleadingly timeless 'given', see S. Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York, 1973); and for international explorations of greater complexities, see M. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London, 1986; 1998); and A.A. Gordon, *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa* (London, 1996).

[46] Key studies are N. Phillips, *Women in Business 1700–1850* (Woodbridge, 2006); H. Barker and K. Harvey, 'Women and urban life in eighteenth-century England', in R. Sweet and P. Lane (eds.), *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century England: 'On the Town'* (Aldershot, 2003), 111–30; and Barker, *Business of Women*.

[47] In a minority of directories, some names were listed in gender-neutral style with surname and initials only; and, unless there is other evidence to the contrary, these are taken to be males because such an austere styling was uncommon for women.

Table 4: *Women in the early town directories 1772–87*

Occupational sector	Number	%
Agriculture + mining	7	0.3
Building	16	0.7
Manufacturing	601	24.4
Transport	8	0.3
Dealing	940	38.1
Industrial services/banking	2	0.1
Public services/professional	112	4.5
Domestic/personal services	15	0.6
No stated occupation	765	31.0
Total	2,466	100.0

Source: Aggregated female occupations from all directories listed in Table 1.

collaborative firms in the directories, 104 (3.3 per cent of all firms) were female-headed, confirming the business visibility of females.

'Unexpected' occupations (in the view of traditionalists) were manifest everywhere. In Southampton, in 1784 there was a woman blacksmith, while Birmingham in 1780 had a woman thumb-latch-maker, a woman tinplate-worker and a woman maker of clock dials. In Bristol in 1775, there was a female trader in ship's ballast; a female saddle- and harness-maker; and a female sexton. Meanwhile, Dublin in 1784 recorded a woman funeral undertaker, as well as other women in business as stampers, wire-workers, brass-makers and cutlers. Edinburgh in 1773 had a female furniture-auctioneer; Liverpool in 1774 a female pilot;[48] Newcastle in 1778 a female hackney-horse keeper; London in 1774 a female coal merchant;[49] and Norwich in 1783 a female butcher: Mrs Poston at 11 Market Place (as shown in Figure 2).

Generally, women 'dealers' in these directories outnumbered women 'makers'. However, in the industrial centres of Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich (although not in Manchester), the reverse was the case. For example, the ruggedly 'male' cutlery trades showed how the old conventions were being flouted. Hence, the 1787 *Sheffield Directory* listed nine women scissor-manufacturers and ten female steel-cutlers. Some had family connections with industry, including widows and women in firms with their sons. But that did not apply in every case. For example,

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[48] See too S. Haggerty, 'Women, work, and the consumer revolution: Liverpool in the late eighteenth century', in J. Benson and L. Ugolini (eds.), *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Five Centuries of British Retailing* (London, 2003), 106–26.

[49] *Kent's Directory* (1774), 39.

two Sheffield scissor-makers, Mary Redfearn (trademark PARIS) and Ann Drabble (trademark a small diamond) appeared as single women, as did a further three women steel-cutters. Needless to say, these leading ladies, like their male counterparts, were industrial owners and managers rather than physical workers at the forges. They were, however, publicly named as the prime movers in their respective businesses.

Tellingly, in terms of female economic activism, one compiler of these 16 directories was Elizabeth Raffald, who was aged 39 when she published the *Manchester Directory* in 1772. Her business career was a testament to versatility. After employment as a housekeeper to various landed gentry families, she moved to Manchester where she traded at different times as a confectioner, inn-keeper, provider of a servant registry and proprietor of a cookery school.[50] In that last role, she also published a best-selling recipe book, *The Experienced English Housekeeper for the Use . . . of Ladies, Housekeepers, [and] Cooks* (1769).

Equally tellingly, however, Raffald did not include herself in her own directory.[51] Perhaps her name on the titlepage sufficed as publicity. Instead, she listed her husband John Raffald, a confectioner and seedsman, whose 1780 bankruptcy undermined her efforts and may have contributed to her early death, aged 48, in 1781.[52] Yet Elizabeth Raffald demonstrated how a determined woman could seek a livelihood by trying many business stratagems, while also producing 16 daughters (only 3 of whom survived her). And her career signalled too that the fast-expanding Manchester – a regional hub and textile centre that had become (with the contiguous Salford) England's second city by 1801 – offered diverse job opportunities in commerce and services as well as in manufacturing.

Urban specialisms

That point about the variety within all urban economies is an important one. Yet the leading towns and cities also had their own specialist roles, which is the third big theme arising from a study of these directories. A macro-urban analysis of the occupational data has been undertaken to investigate systematically what eighteenth-century readers could glean only impressionistically. But they would not have been surprised at the outcome. The different core specialisms of the different urban centres – some, like the great metropolitan region, had more than one – were well known. Indeed, it was the success or otherwise of such particular roles which accounted for differentials in the patterns of urban growth or, in a relatively few cases, of relative decline.[53]

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[50] *ODNB, sub* Elizabeth Raffald (1733–81); Barker, *Business of Women*, 76–7.

[51] As noted by Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 130, 267 n. 10; and further discussed in Barker, *Business of Women*, 47, 75–6.

[52] Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 132.

[53] Cases of decline in terms of outright population loss were comparatively rare, as generally a ratchet effect sustained towns within their local economies. One striking eighteenth-
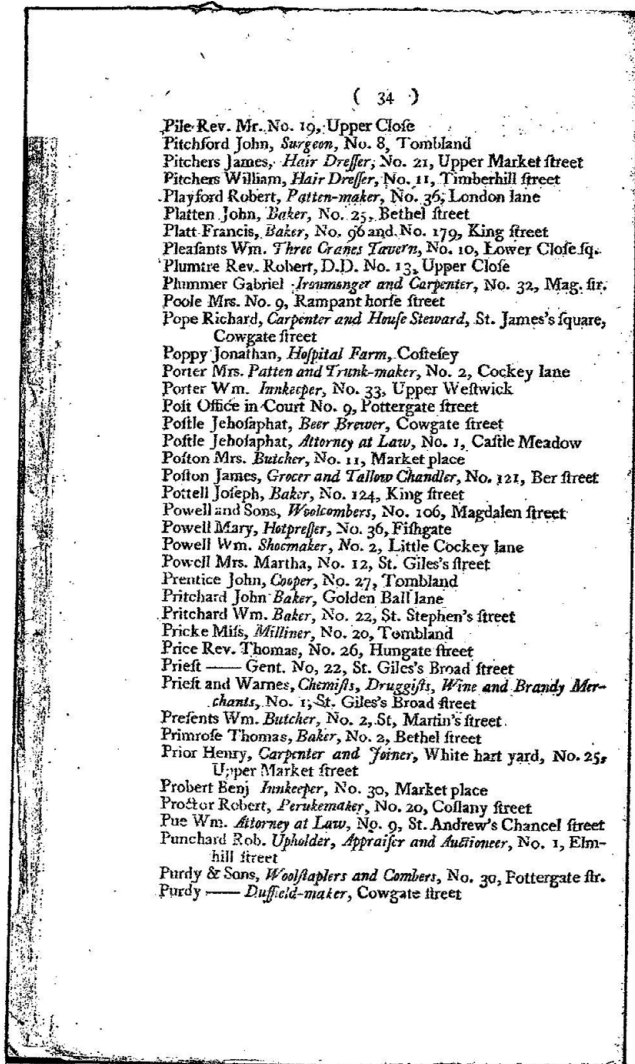
(34)

Pile Rev. Mr. No. 19, Upper Clofe
Pitchford John, *Surgeon*, No. 8, Tombland
Pitchers James, *Hair Dreffer*, No. 21, Upper Market ftreet
Pitchers William, *Hair Dreffer*, No. 11, Timberhill ftreet
Playford Robert, *Patten-maker*, No. 36, London lane
Platten John, *Baker*, No. 25, Bethel ftreet
Platt Francis, *Baker*, No. 96 and No. 179, King ftreet
Pleafants Wm. *Three Cranes Tavern*, No. 10, Lower Clofe fq.
Plumtre Rev. Robert, D.D. No. 13, Upper Clofe
Plummer Gabriel *Ironmonger and Carpenter*, No. 32, Mag. ftr.
Poole Mrs. No. 9, Rampant horfe ftreet
Pope Richard, *Carpenter and Houfe Steward*, St. James's fquare,
    Cowgate ftreet
Poppy Jonathan, *Hofpital Farm*, Coffefey
Porter Mrs. *Patten and Trunk-maker*, No. 2, Cockey lane
Porter Wm. *Innkeeper*, No. 33, Upper Weftwick
Poft Office in Court No. 9, Pottergate ftreet
Poftle Jehofaphat, *Beer Brewer*, Cowgate ftreet
Poftle Jehofaphat, *Attorney at Law*, No. 1, Caftle Meadow
Pofton Mrs. *Butcher*, No. 11, Market place
Pofton James, *Grocer and Tallow Chandler*, No. 121, Ber ftreet
Pottell Jofeph, *Baker*, No. 124, King ftreet
Powell and Sons, *Woolcombers*, No. 106, Magdalen ftreet
Powell Mary, *Hotpreffer*, No. 36, Fifhgate
Powell Wm. *Shoemaker*, No. 2, Little Cockey lane
Powell Mrs. Martha, No. 12, St. Giles's ftreet
Prentice John, *Cooper*, No. 27, Tombland
Pritchard John *Baker*, Golden Ball lane
Pritchard Wm. *Baker*, No. 22, St. Stephen's ftreet
Pricke Mifs, *Milliner*, No. 20, Tombland
Price Rev. Thomas, No. 26, Hungate ftreet
Prieft —— Gent. No, 22, St. Giles's Broad ftreet
Prieft and Warnes, *Chemifts, Druggifts, Wine and Brandy Mer-*
    chants, No. 1, St. Giles's Broad ftreet
Prefents Wm. *Butcher*, No. 2, St. Martin's ftreet
Primrofe Thomas, *Baker*, No. 2, Bethel ftreet
Prior Henry, *Carpenter and Joiner*, White hart yard, No. 25,
    Upper Market ftreet
Probert Benj *Innkeeper*, No. 30, Market place
Proctor Robert, *Perukemaker*, No. 20, Coflany ftreet
Pue Wm. *Attorney at Law*, No. 9, St. Andrew's Chancel ftreet
Punchard Rob. *Upholder, Appraifer and Auctioneer*, No. 1, Elm-
    hill ftreet
Purdy & Sons, *Woolftaplers and Combers*, No. 30, Pottergate ftr.
Purdy —— *Duffield-maker*, Cowgate ftreet

Figure 2: A page from William Chase's *Norwich Directory* (Norwich, 1783), listing the city's social and business leaders on public record for all to contact. British Library C104.dd.20.

century example from the Dutch Republic was the outright decline of Leiden, a weaving centre producing light stuffs: see P. Clark, *European Cities and Towns 400–2000* (Oxford, 2009), 115, 120. Its experience prefigured the relative decline of Norwich, another textile city producing very similar wares – England's second city in 1700 proving vulnerable to new textile competitors from the later eighteenth century onwards: see Corfield, 'From second city to regional capital', 139–66; and R.G. Wilson, 'The textile industry', in Rawcliffe and Wilson (eds.), *Norwich since 1550*, 219–42.

Leading business sectors were established by adopting criteria from the Booth–Armstrong occupational classification (so named in reference to its nineteenth-century devisor and twentieth-century adaptor).[54] The system has potential flaws, as do all sectoral distributions. That is because some occupations overlapped between the secondary (manufacturing) sector and the tertiary (service) sector. A noted example was the craftsman hatter who both made and retailed hats.[55] However, by following contemporary terminology systematically, key occupational groupings can still be identified. Hence all named as 'makers' were classified as manufacturers, while those in commerce were classified as 'dealers'.

Immediately, the central importance of these two big categories became apparent, together constituting well over two-thirds of all entries. Table 5 records the details. Manufacturing occupations engaged 33.0 per cent of all the business leaders, and commercial 'dealing' an even larger 36.2 per cent. The importance of this latter role was noted by no less an observer than Adam Smith, who learned much economic lore from debating with merchants in Glasgow's Political Economy Club.[56] In 1776, he described Britain's expanding global empire of customers as being a project fit for a 'nation of shopkeepers'.[57] Indeed, the dictum gained sufficient currency to be famously recycled by the Emperor Napoleon.[58]

Britain's trading strength, moreover, was encouraged not only by its array of manufactured goods for sale but also for its 'invisibles', such as financial, professional and administrative services. These facilities helped to prime the economy, catering for consumers at home and abroad. Hence, the professional and public service sector engaged another significant contingent (14.3 per cent) of the urban notables. No other occupational groupings, among the business leaders, had anything like the same impact. Mining was not an urban pursuit. Agriculture engaged only a handful of urban market gardeners. In this era, the heterogeneous category, known as 'industrial services' (1.4 per cent) was also small, comprising a few

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[54] The Booth–Armstrong classification sorts occupations into sectors, based upon the nature of the product, work or service, as explained by W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation, part 2', in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Society*, 226–310. For later amplification, see Harvey, Green and Corfield, *The Westminster Historical Database*, 93–111.

[55] *Ibid.*, 72, 84, 91: this was the famous example cited by Booth himself in 1886, when the census-takers created a national classification. In the Booth–Armstrong system, hat-makers and hat-cutters are considered as manufacturers, while hatters and those with other hat-selling occupations are dealers.

[56] I.S. Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford, 1995), 107–8, 139–40.

[57] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. II, 110: Smith immediately amplified his dictum by explaining that Britain's government was not run by shopkeepers but 'influenced' by them. In these decades, other commentators, such as Josiah Tucker, made similar assessments of the importance of commerce to the British economy.

[58] A. Jay (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* (Oxford, 2006), 285. Napoleon may well have derived the concept from the journalist Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, a Jacobin member of the National Convention and later a Napoleonic agent, who was vocal in the 1790s on the importance of trade and industry to Britain: see L. Gershoy, *Bertrand Barère: A Reluctant Terrorist* (Princeton, 1962), 190–2; and 'England nation of shopkeepers', *Wikipedia on-line*, last consulted 29 Jul. 2010.

Table 5: *Sectoral distribution of occupations in 16 early town directories 1772–87*

Occupational sector	Number of entries	% of total
Agriculture	102	0.3
Mining	17	0.1
Building	1,099	3.5
Manufacturing*	10,480	33.0
Transport	934	2.9
Dealing*	11,501	36.2
Industrial services/banking	460	1.4
Public services/professional	4,532	14.3
Domestic/personal services	608	1.9
Status (no listed occupation)	2,035	6.4
Total	31,768	100.0

* In practice, some craftsmen-vendors straddled the division between makers and dealers. For purposes of classification, the core terminology was followed, with 'makers' being classified within manufacturing and all traders, dealers, merchants and so forth being classified within dealing. In cases such as 'hatters', where the terminology gives no outward clue, a considered decision was taken and then followed systematically: in this particular case, hatting went into manufacturing, unless clearly indicated to the contrary as in 'hat-shop'.
Source: Aggregated occupations from all directories listed in Table 1.

bankers and bankers' clerks. And the three remaining sectors were also modest: these were building (3.5 per cent), transport (2.9 per cent) and the provision of domestic services (1.9 per cent). Of course, these sectors were substantial employers of many relatively unskilled men[59] and women[60] but that was at 'lower' levels among the wider workforce, beyond the remit of the eighteenth-century directories.

[59] See e.g. D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England 1450–1750* (Cambridge, 1995).

[60] Much work on the female workforce focuses upon women as domestic servants, for which see esp. B. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996); the old but invaluable J.J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1956; 1980); and T. Meldrum, 'Domestic service, privacy, and the eighteenth-century metropolitan household', *Urban History*, 26 (1999), 27–39. For wider perspectives, see also N. Goose, *Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* (Hatfield, 2007); P. Earle, 'The female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 42 (1989), 328–53; J. Lown, *Women and Industrialization: Gender and Work in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1990); and an excellent case-study in E.C. Sanderson, *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh* (Basingstoke, 1996).

As this occupational profile of the business leadership indicates, the directory compilers did not provide (or seek to provide) a full census of employment. For any wider survey, other partial sources can be pressed into use, where those survive. For example, insurance records afford information about those businessmen and women who were wealthy or canny enough to take precautions against fire hazards.[61] And poll-books listed occupations of numerous (male) artisan and 'middling' townsmen, in the few urban constituencies pre-1832 which had popular franchises.[62] Those sources, however, move the focus from the business leadership, whose aggregative profiles remain the subject of analysis here.

Turning to the four manufacturing centres in this survey, their industrial specialisms were immediately apparent. Table 6 shows the result. Manufacturers accounted for 57.5 per cent of the business leaders in Birmingham (metalwares);[63] 53.9 per cent in Sheffield (cutlery);[64] 45.2 per cent in Manchester (cotton and related textiles);[65] and 34.3 per cent in Norwich (worsted stuffs).[66] After them came the commercial 'dealers', invariably providing the second largest group. They accounted for another quarter of the listings in Birmingham, Manchester and Norwich, rising to 32.6 per cent in Sheffield.

Indeed, in that celebrated cutlery town, marked with the 'continued smoke of the forges, which are always at work' (as Defoe noted in 1724),[67] the manufacturers and traders together constituted an overwhelming 86.5 per cent of all directory notables. In Sheffield in particular, there were very few 'town gentry' of independent means: no more than 1.5 per cent of the directory notables fell into that category.[68] The concentration of

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[61] See generally D.T. Hawkings, *Fire Insurance Records for Family and Local Historians 1696 to 1920* (London, 2003); and for their use in discovering significant and hitherto unknown information about women traders, see Phillips, *Women in Business*, 147–72.

[62] For a relevant case-study, see P.J. Corfield, C. Harvey and E.M. Green, 'Continuity, change and specialization within metropolitan London: the economy of Westminster 1750–1820', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 52 (1999), 469–93.

[63] Much is relevant in the classic W.H.B. Court, *The Rise of the Midland Industries 1600–1838* (Oxford, 1938; 1965); and see also E. Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1750–1840* (London, 1989).

[64] Details are available in Hey, *Fiery Blades of Hallamshire*; and see also Barker, *Business of Women*, 24–38.

[65] For a justified re-evaluation of the Manchester environment, along with other northern industrial towns, see Barker, *Business of Women*; and *idem*, '"Smoke cities"'. That re-evaluation contrasts with hostile verdicts from travellers such as the acerbic aristocrat John Byng, who wrote in 1792 'Oh! What a dog-hole is Manchester': J. Byng, *Byng's Tours: The Journals of the Hon. John Byng*, ed. D. Souden (London, 1991), 183.

[66] For the Norwich worsted weaving industry, see U. Priestley, *The Fabric of Stuffs: The Norwich Textile Industry from 1565* (Norwich, 1990); and Wilson, 'Textile industry', 219–42.

[67] D. Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, 1724/25; in 1962 Everyman edn), vol. II, 183.

[68] For Sheffield's radical and industrial culture, see J. Stevenson, *Artisans and Democrats: Sheffield and the French Revolution 1787–97* (Sheffield, 1989); D. Price, *Sheffield Troublemakers: Rebels and Radicals in Sheffield History* (Chichester, 2008); and D. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society 1830–1914: A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield* (London, 1982).

Table 6: *Occupational sectors in early directory listings for four manufacturing towns*

	Birmingham 1780 %	Manchester 1772 %	Norwich 1783 %	Sheffield 1787 %
Ag. + mining	0.4	0.4	2.2	0.0
Building	4.7	5.8	6.4	3.3
Manufacturing	57.5	45.2	34.3	53.9
Transport	0.2	4.1	0.6	0.1
Dealing	24.5	25.2	23.1	32.6
Ind. services	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.6
Public services	5.1	6.3	12.0	6.1
Dom. services	2.9	2.3	4.0	2.0
Status (no occ.)	4.2	9.9	17.0	1.5
Total	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.1

Source: Aggregated occupations from four directories listed in Table 1.

special skills in the metal-manufacturing urban regions was, moreover, a matter of note by contemporary observers. Thus Josiah Tucker in 1757 saluted especially Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Sheffield: 'those Parts of England, in which these Things [inventions] are to be seen', he explained, 'exhibit a Specimen of practical Mechanics scarce to be paralleled in any Part of the World'.[69] Hence, it is implausible to label such industrial nodal points as primarily 'residential leisure centres', when their crucial business focus lay elsewhere.

Significantly, however, there was a variant pattern in the case of Norwich. While it was a major textile-producing centre, famed for the worsted 'stuffs' which were named after the city, it was also a traditional county capital. Its industry was not a smoky, noisy one that would discourage polite society. Hence it also functioned as a place of resort and organized sociability.[70] Its dual appeal to status and workday trade appeared in the sub-title of the 1783 *Norwich Directory* as *The Gentleman and Tradesman's Assistant*. And the city's traditional role was demonstrated by its relatively larger proportion of directory notables engaged in public services/professional occupations (12 per cent) and its striking number of 'town gentry' with no stated occupation (17.0 per cent). Thus Norwich was a textile centre which was able to sustain a subsidiary role as a 'residential

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[69] J. Tucker, *Instructions for Travellers* (privately printed, 1757), 21.
[70] For context, see Corfield, 'From second city to regional capital', 139–66; and details in A. Dain, 'An enlightened and polite society', in Rawcliffe and Wilson (eds.), *Norwich since 1550*, 193–218.

Table 7: *Occupational sectors in early directory listings for four international ports*

	Bristol 1775 %	Glasgow 1784 %	Liverpool 1774 %	Newcastle 1778 %
Ag. + mining	0.8	0.2	0.7	0.0
Building	4.6	2.5	5.3	3.0
Manufacturing	28.9	42.0	26.8	33.3
Transport	5.0	2.1	11.9	4.2
Dealing	28.0	41.1	37.1	36.9
Ind. services	2.4	1.9	0.7	0.2
Public services	7.9	4.3	7.5	17.8
Dom. services	2.0	3.8	1.9	3.8
Status (no occ.)	20.4	2.2	8.0	0.8
Total	100	100.1	99.8	100.0

Source: Aggregated occupations from four directories listed in Table 1.

leisure town' – a factor which gave ballast to its long-term survival when its core industry later declined.

By contrast, the four international ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and Newcastle generated a different picture (as shown in Table 7). As might be expected, commercial occupations in the 'dealing' sector constituted a substantial bloc. Thus in Bristol, the merchants, traders and shopkeepers accounted for 28 per cent of the directory notables; in Newcastle 36.9 per cent; in Liverpool 37.1 per cent; and in Glasgow a substantial 41.1 per cent. But these places were also locations for the industrial processing of imported raw materials. Examples were sugar refineries at Bristol and tobacco-curing in Glasgow. So the manufacturing leaders in those two places were level-pegging with the commercial sector: 28.9 per cent in Bristol (compared with 28.0 per cent in dealing) and 42 per cent in Glasgow (compared with 41.1 per cent in dealing). Liverpool too had over one fourth of all entries (26.8 per cent) in associated manufacturing, whilst its core commercial specialism triggered substantial employment in shipping/transport (another 11.9 per cent).[71]

Special features were also revealed within each urban centre. For example, Newcastle, like the other great ports, had a considerable bloc of manufacturers (33.3 per cent). But its traditional role as a regional capital was acknowledged by a robust 17.8 per cent engaged in public services and professional occupations. The contrast with Glasgow was

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[71] See S. Haggerty, 'The structure of the trading community in Liverpool 1760–1810', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire,* 151 (2002), 97–125; and *idem, The British Atlantic Trading Community 1760–1810: Men, Women and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden, 2006), 67–105.

particularly striking. There, the professional and public service sector among the directory notables was tiny (4.3 per cent).[72] Instead, it was Glasgow's urban 'pair' and rival, Edinburgh, which specialized in such services.[73]

Bristol too had a historic importance as a regional resort and social capital, being the unofficial 'metropolis of the West'.[74] And it too had a high proportion of directory notables who lacked any stated occupations. These Bristolians may indeed have included retired businesspeople as well as others of landed gentry status.[75] Together, they constituted just over one in 5 (20.4 per cent) within its local directory in 1775, recording the highest proportion in any of these 16 directories. The closest comparison was with the city of Norwich, 'the Athens of East Anglia', with 17 per cent of its notables being 'town gentry' (as already noted), and with Shrewsbury, a much smaller but still traditional country town. Its modest directory had no more than 589 entries but they included fully 15.6 per cent as 'town gentry'. That feature is worth especial emphasis, because Shrewsbury was the county capital which first generated the descriptive accolade from its historian Alan McInnes as a 'residential leisure town'.[76]

Visitors to Bath, by contrast, were still in these decades dependent upon word-of-mouth recommendations to learn about the majestic new amenities of Britain's premier resort.[77] The very sparse details within the 1787 *Bristol Directory* were far too exiguous for systematic analysis, as already noted above. Nonetheless, when Bath's first detailed listing did follow in 1801, it predictably incorporated, alongside 'every person in business' (many being doctors), an appendix naming all its aristocratic and landed gentry visitors.[78] This snobbish flag-flying had a real rationale, boosting recruitment for the resort's specialist economy as Britain's 'residential leisure town' *par excellence*. On that basis, its rapid growth was indeed propelling it up the urban rankings to become England's tenth largest provincial town, with almost 35,000 inhabitants in 1801.[79]

Capital cities within the three British kingdoms, meanwhile, had their own distinct roles and their own requirements from the directories. London in 1774, Edinburgh in 1773 and Dublin in 1784 all revealed a

[72] See variously A. Gibb, *Glasgow: The Making of a City* (Beckenham, 1983); A. Hook and R.B. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1995); and, chattily, J. Strang, *Glasgow and its Clubs* (Glasgow, 1864).

[73] See R. Houston, 'Literacy, education and the culture of print in Enlightenment Edinburgh', *History*, 78 (1993), 373–92; and J. Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World* (London, 2003).

[74] W. Minchinton, 'Bristol – metropolis of the west in the eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 4 (1954), 69–89. See also M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton, 1996).

[75] See discussion below, pp. 46–7.

[76] McInnes, 'Emergence of a leisure town'.

[77] R.S. Neale, *Bath 1680–1850: A Social History* (London, 1981), 12–94, 264–79.

[78] *Robbins's Bath Directory . . . with an Appendix Containing the Titles of the Nobility and the Names of the Gentry . . .* (Bath, 1801).

[79] Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, 55–9.

Table 8: *Occupational sectors in early directory listings for three capital cities*

	Dublin 1784 %	Edinburgh 1773 %	London 1774 %
Ag. + mining	0.1	0.1	0.0
Building	3.8	2.7	0.1
Manufacturing	29.4	26.8	25.5
Transport	0.3	2.7	2.5
Dealing	31.1	25.6	62.5
Ind. services	0.3	1.5	3.7
Public services	34.0	31.2	4.3
Dom. services	0.7	3.2	0.0
Status (no occ.)	0.4	6.4	1.5
Total	100.1	100.2	100.1

Source: Aggregated occupations from three directories listed in Table 1.

solid phalanx of notables engaged in manufacturing (see Table 8): 25.5 per cent in London; 26.8 per cent in Edinburgh; and 29.4 per cent in Dublin. Commercial 'dealing' was also significant. That sector accounted for another 25.6 per cent in Edinburgh, 31.1 per cent in Dublin and a massive 62.5 per cent in London. Indeed, the directories in the national capital began specifically as City commercial listings, with Lee's 1677 *Names of the Merchants*.[80] By contrast, the London listing virtually ignored the glittering social life of the metropolis. Its directory allocated only 1.5 per cent of all entries to the 'town gentry'. Such was the market gap that, within a few years, smart society gained its own resource, in the form of Boyle's *Fashionable Court Guide: Or, Town Visiting Directory* (first published in 1792 and annually thereafter until 1924).[81]

Elsewhere, in the semi-independent, semi-dependent capital cities of Dublin[82] and Edinburgh,[83] the professional and public sector featured strongly. Government and law were especially important. So in Dublin, 34.0 per cent of the directory notables were engaged in public services; and in Edinburgh, 31.2 per cent, including many experts in the distinctive 'Scots law'. There were also 105 medical men in the Scottish capital, reflecting its

[80] S. Lee, A *Collection of the Names of the Merchants, Living in and about the City of London, Very Useful and Necessary* (London, 1677).
[81] P. Boyle, *The Fashionable Court Guide: Or, Town Visiting Directory* (London, 1792).
[82] See F. O'Brien and F. O'Kane (eds.), *Georgian Dublin* (Dublin, 2008); and instructive comparisons within P. Clark and R. Gillespie (eds.), *Two Capitals: London and Dublin 1500–1840* (Oxford, 2001).
[83] See Buchan, *Capital of the Mind*; and for its architectural development, A. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh 1750–1840* (London, 1966).

growing pull as a medical training centre[84] – a good number in comparison with 46 doctors among the Liverpool notables and 24 in Manchester. It was in this period, moreover, that the developing professions began to publish their own directories, complementing the all-purpose urban handbooks. Thus, Browne's *General Law List* was pioneered in 1777,[85] followed in 1779 by the *Medical Register*,[86] and emulated in 1817, less hastily but durably, by the *Clerical Guide* to Anglican clergy, later renamed as the classic *Crockford's*.[87]

Differentiations between one type of occupation and another, as in the case of similar differentiations between rival urban economies, were all signals of specialization. And one result was the need for information as to where and how to find each set of services. Here, the directories came into their own, by providing research leads. Their evidence showed that the clustering of specialist occupations were not random but made economic sense, within an interlocking and internationalizing economy.

Nothing, of course, prevented an urban centre from developing and sustaining more than one main socio-economic function. The metropolitan region of London was a case in point, with different areas specializing in commerce, the professions (notably law and medicine), government and, in the famous West End, leisure services and entertainment. Another example was the city of Norwich, as a textile centre which retained its subsidiary role as a regional county hub.

Returning therefore to definitions of urban roles, it remains helpful to retain a typology that can explain the varied rise and relative decline of different urban centres. Birmingham, which had overtaken Bristol to become England's second city by the 1770s, did not grow through any function as a 'leisure town'. It was a metalware centre, dependent upon a favourable context that enabled that role to flourish. Hence William Hutton, one of its ardent sons, exclaimed sapiently in 1781: 'It is easy to see, without the spirit of prophecy, that Birmingham has not yet arrived at her zenith . . . Her increase will depend upon her manufactures; her manufactures will depend upon the national commerce; national

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[84] See variously M. Kaufman, *Medical Teaching in Edinburgh during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 2003); and L.S. Jacyna, *Philosophic Whigs: Medicine, Science and Citizenship in Edinburgh 1789–1848* (London, 1994).

[85] See Browne's *General Law List*, 12 vols. (London, 1777 *et seq.*); and J. Hughes, *The New Law List*, 5 vols. (London, 1798; 1802); subsequently the *Law List* (annually from 1841).

[86] The *Medical Register* was published in 1779, 1780 and 1783; Bath also had lists of medical men in the 1770s, some 20 years before its first *Directory*: see Norton (ed.), *Guide*, p. 10. Later, the *London and Provincial Medical Directory*, which subsequently became the long-running *Medical Directory and General Medical Register*, appeared in 1848, as a conflation of existing London and provincial lists.

[87] Anon., *The Clerical Guide* (London, 1817), later transmuted into the *Clerical Directory*, known as *Crockford's* (London, 1858 – present day). In 1917, it also absorbed the rival *Clergy List* (London, 1841–1917).

commerce will, also, depend upon a superiority at sea; and this superiority may be extended to a long futurity.'[88]

The nomenclature of 'residential leisure town' is thus best applied to places with significant socio-economic functions as 'resorts'. Such a usage has the advantage of compatibility with eighteenth-century practice. It also means that small and developing seaside resorts like Weymouth and Scarborough can be recognized as leisure towns, whereas Stobart and Schwarz confusingly allocate them, for analytical purposes, into a 'non-leisure control group'.[89] When revisionism leads to such anomalies, it suggests that the revisionist terminology is itself the cause of confusion.

Having said that, it can be agreed that Britain's growing town populations were collectively generating and diffusing a shared and confident urbanism. The greater the occupational and urban specialization, the greater the concomitant commercial – and hence cultural – networks needed to sustain them. Successful towns and cities were increasingly drawing traditional landed society into the orbit of an urbane and competitive town culture – as witnessed by the urban assemblies, concerts, clubs, societies, libraries and other social amenities which Stobert and Schwarz have stressed.[90] Hence, a Birmingham patriot like William Hutton could write without irony that: 'When the word Birmingham occurs, a superb picture immediately expands in the mind, which is best explained by the other words grand, populous, extensive, active, commercial and humane.'[91] Nothing 'direful' here. Instead, a bounding confidence in urban benefits and a readiness either to gloss or to overcome urban problems.[92]

Town gentry

Hence, mingling with the business leaders was another category of directory notables: the 3,768 people defined by some indicator of personal status. In these 16 sources, they comprised 1,272 women and 2,496 men, constituting together just under 12 per cent of all entries. As already noted, the directories were not uniformly consistent in recording such individuals. But those who were included merit attention.

Known as the 'town gentry', using an eighteenth-century phrase,[93] these people were socially heterogeneous. *De facto*, they bridged across

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[88] W. Hutton, *An History of Birmingham to the End of the Year 1780* (Birmingham, 1781), 48–9.
[89] Stobart and Schwarz, 'Leisure, luxury and urban society', 235–6: Appendix 1.
[90] *Ibid.*, 216–36.
[91] Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, 23.
[92] For nineteenth-century municipal reformism, see D. Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester, 1982), with case histories of Manchester, Leeds and Bradford. See too, for relevant debates about the broader context (although, sadly, ignoring municipal reform), J. Innes and A. Burns (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge, 2003).
[93] See the classic article by A. Everitt, 'Social mobility in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 56–73; his preference for naming the 'town gentry' as 'pseudo-gentry' did not, however, command acceptance from historians, since it implied that the urban variety was somehow fake.

the potential gulf between aristocratic and middle-class society.[94] They embraced not only landowners who had migrated to town but also 'genteel' urbanites, often retired from office or business. Many were rentiers, living off unearned income from rentals and investments. In the nineteenth-century censuses, they were collectively denoted as people of 'independent means',[95] although some did also have occupations, as will be seen. Overall, it was significant that all towns harboured some individuals defined by titles or status. At the same time, it was equally noteworthy that such 'town gentry' were particularly clustered in the traditional county towns which functioned as places of resort – such as Norwich, Bristol and Shrewsbury (as already noted above).

Some of these social leaders held aristocratic titles. Table 9 reveals that 23 'Ladies' (with a capital L), including one countess and two countess dowagers, featured in these 16 directories, as did another 20 male peers. What such august personages thought of their inclusion in these workaday handbooks, alas, remains unknown. They were certainly unusual among their fellow peers in this respect. However, no public comment was made about their dual signalling as aristocratic urbanites. Certainly, the 3rd duke of Chandos, whose first wife brought him a mercantile fortune,[96] lived the lifestyle of a titled town grandee. His time was divided between his elegant London town-house (Chandos House, built by the Adam Brothers in 1769–71) and his family seat at Avington near Winchester, for which he was first MP and then alderman.[97]

Few could match his level of social fame. For example, one Norwich gentleman in 1783 was identified only by surname as Prior, — gent (see Figure 2), which indicated a distinctly muffled celebrity. Nonetheless, the inclusion of such names marked a concern to record local status. Interestingly, quite a few of these 'town gentry' were women, listed in their own right as social presences. Again Norwich in 1783 provides two instances in Mrs Poole and Mrs Martha Powell (see Figure 2). Possibly, they were widows with money to lend, since that was a historic role played by

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[94] See P.J. Corfield, 'The rivals: landed and other gentlemen', in N.B. Harte and R. Quinault (eds.), *Land and Society in Britain 1700–1914* (Manchester, 1996), 18–20; and F. Ruggiù, 'The urban gentry in England 1660–1780: a French approach', *Historical Research*, 74 (2001), 249–70.

[95] Booth classified status individuals without occupation as 'property-owning/independent' but this category was later hidden within 'miscellaneous' by Armstrong: see Armstrong, 'Use of information about occupation', 229, 253. The category deserves to be resurrected but with a proviso that the sources of these people's incomes are unknown in detail: Harvey, Green and Corfield, *Westminster Historical Database*, 92–3.

[96] Chandos' first wife was Margaret Nicholl, daughter of John Nicholl (sometimes Nichol), a London merchant, who brought him a fortune of £150,000 and the Minchenden estate in Southgate (Middlesex), which became for some years the family's dower house; see T.F.T. Baker, R.B. Pugh *et al.* (eds.), *Victoria County History: Middlesex*, vol. V (1976), 159–60.

[97] See variously the websites www.dukesofbuckingham.org.uk (most recently consulted 5 Aug. 2010); and www.chandoshouse.co.uk (most recently consulted 4 Nov. 2011).

Table 9: *Individuals designated by status in the early town directories 1772–87*

Men	No.	Women		Total
Familial (senior/junior)	249	Familial (widow/miss)	583	832
Gentlemen and esquires	1,462	Mrs/gentlewoman	666	2,128
Knights and baronets	76	Lady*	16	92
Noble titled	20	Noble titled	7	27
Misc.	6			6
Titled/social status	*1,813*	*Titled/social status*	*1,272*	*3,085*
Urban officer-holders	59			
Clerical	273			
Military/naval	277			
Law and medicine	74			
Occupational status	*683*			*683*
Total	2,496	Total	1,272	3,768

* The title of Lady was accorded to wives of knights and baronets and has been so classified here. It should be noted, however, that 'Lady' was also an honorific for daughters of the titled peerage; and 'lady' without the capital letter was used as a descriptor for spouses of gentlemen, as in 'ladies and gentlemen'. The classification here is thus indicative rather than conclusive.
Source: Aggregated status designations from all directories listed in Table 1.

wealthy townswomen.[98] No further details were offered, however, their names and addresses being deemed sufficient information.

Implicitly, by such signals, the worlds of status and of work were taken as co-residing. Indeed, some individuals fell into both categories. Thus, while 2,035 urban notables were designated by status alone (see Table 5), there were another 1,733 'town gentry' who also had occupations. Many of these were working 'gentlemen'. This title was an unofficial one, not granted by the monarch. Once 'idleness' and the avoidance of 'dirty' work were considered as qualifications for this personal accolade.[99] But those days were long gone. In fact, almost 6 in 10 of the 1,462 urban gentlemen and esquires in these sources had listed businesses. Their ranks included 582 professional men, including many lawyers and government officials. There were also 180 gentlemen in commerce and banking, plus 7 gentlemen in manufacturing and 5 miscellaneous others. And their

[98] A. Laurence, J. Maltby and J. Rutterford, *Women and their Money 1700–1950: Essays on Women and Finance* (London, 2009).
[99] Corfield, 'The rivals', 5–6 and *passim*.

range was sufficiently eclectic to include George Leonard Barrett, Esquire, manager of Norwich's Theatre Royal.[100]

Aristocrats and commoners were thus appearing as co-urbanites in the town directories. In real life, too, they increasingly shared business associations, family intermarriages and social meetings (all good research themes which merit further exploration). It is true that, in contemporary novels, landed aristocrats were often depicted as being hostile to people 'in trade' and the lower professions.[101] Yet if Jane Austen's Lady Catherine de Burgh remained obdurate to the end, liberal characters were shown as bowing to social realities. For example, the proud Mr Darcy came to accept Elizabeth Bennett's 'low' relatives – and not least her admirable uncle Gardiner, who was a City wholesaler living, as Jane Austen specified, 'by trade and within view of his own warehouses'.[102]

Eventually, the two men respected each other. Moreover, had Mr Darcy taken a town-house, both men might have featured in the same urban directory, without shocking any contemporary readers.

Coda

History, it is argued, has three great intermeshing strands: of continuity, of slow change and, at times, of turbulent upheaval.[103] The directories can thus be tested against those three elemental features. In terms of deep continuity, these urban handbooks might initially seem not to qualify. The directories were 'instant' snapshot sources, made for the moment. Yet they stood testament to a continuing deep need for information. In the quest for understanding, there was no simple shift from oral enquiries to printed records. Instead, the directories complemented and enhanced the old requirement for news-gathering and interpretation – a continuing human need that is continually updated with every change in communications technology.[104]

Slow changes were, nonetheless, visible as well. The growing total of specialist occupations, in comparison with earlier listings dating from the 1740s, was strikingly apparent – confirming the key insight of Adam Smith. Clear differences in the aggregate economic specialisms of Britain's leading

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[100] Chase, *Norwich Directory*, 7; and for his success in reviving the Theatre, see also M. and C. Blackwell, *Norwich Theatre Royal: The First 250 Years* (London, 2007), 34, where he is named as Giles Barrett.

[101] J. Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1750–1800* (Oxford, 1992). And see Mr Dubster in F. Burney's *Camilla: Or a Picture of Youth* (London, 1796), ed. E.A. and L.D. Bloom (Oxford, 1983), 431; or the Bingley sisters and Lady Catherine de Burgh in J. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (London, 1813; 1985), 82–3, 97, 143, 365–6.

[102] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 177.

[103] P.J. Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History* (London, 2007), 17–18, 122–4, 211–16, 231, 248–9.

[104] See the collected essays in J.W. Cortada (ed.), *Rise of the Knowledge Worker* (Boston, MA, 1998), including the editorial introduction: *idem*, 'Where did knowledge workers come from?', 3–14.

towns were also identifiable, the whole interlocking in an inter-dependent grid. This streamlining urban economy was part cause and part effect of Britain's commercial and imperial expansion.[105] It also underpinned and aided the multiplication of professional and other specialist services.[106] And this economic streamlining both promoted and reflected Britain's manufacturing and technological advancement, in a long-span process of industrialization.[107]

Finally, therefore, the complex processes of urbanization, to which the directories attested, were part of a turbulent macro-transformation – eventually occurring on a world-wide scale. Urban populations are now the global majority. In 2009 there were over 470 mega-cities, each housing more than one million inhabitants apiece.[108] Collectively, the urban way of life is becoming ever more hegemonic.[109] So while the early directories did not in themselves mark a revolution, they were portents of the specialist, interlinked, information-dependent urban world to come. All that, as they listed local eminences – from dukes to grutt-makers – and flourished their collective calling cards.

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[105] On this, see D. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism 1650–1770* (Cambridge, 2003); R. Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester, 1979); and M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005).

[106] On this development, see R. O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England 1450–1800: Servants of the Commonweal* (Harlow, 2000); P.J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700–1850* (London, 1995); and H.J. Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (1989).

[107] Mokyr's *Lever of Riches* provides an excellent introduction.

[108] Data from Thomas Brinkhoff, 'The principal agglomerations of the world', www.citypopulation.de (accessed 1 Jun. 2009).

[109] For different approaches to this very big theme, see, classically, L. Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (London, 1938); as well as studies by A. van der Woude, A. Hayami and J. de Vries (eds.), *Urbanisation in History: A Process of Dynamic Interactions* (Oxford, 1990); T. Champion and G. Hugo (eds.), *New Forms of Urbanisation: Beyond the Urban–Rural Dichotomy* (Aldershot, 2003); and [United Nations report], *World Urbanisation Prospects* (New York, 2004).