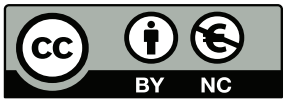
Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Atlas of Scottish History to 1707

Peter G B McNeill and Hector L MacQueen

ISBN: 978-1-908332-40-0

McNeill P G B and MacQueen, H L, initial(s) 1996 *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Medievalists and Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh.
https://doi.org/10.9750/9781908332400

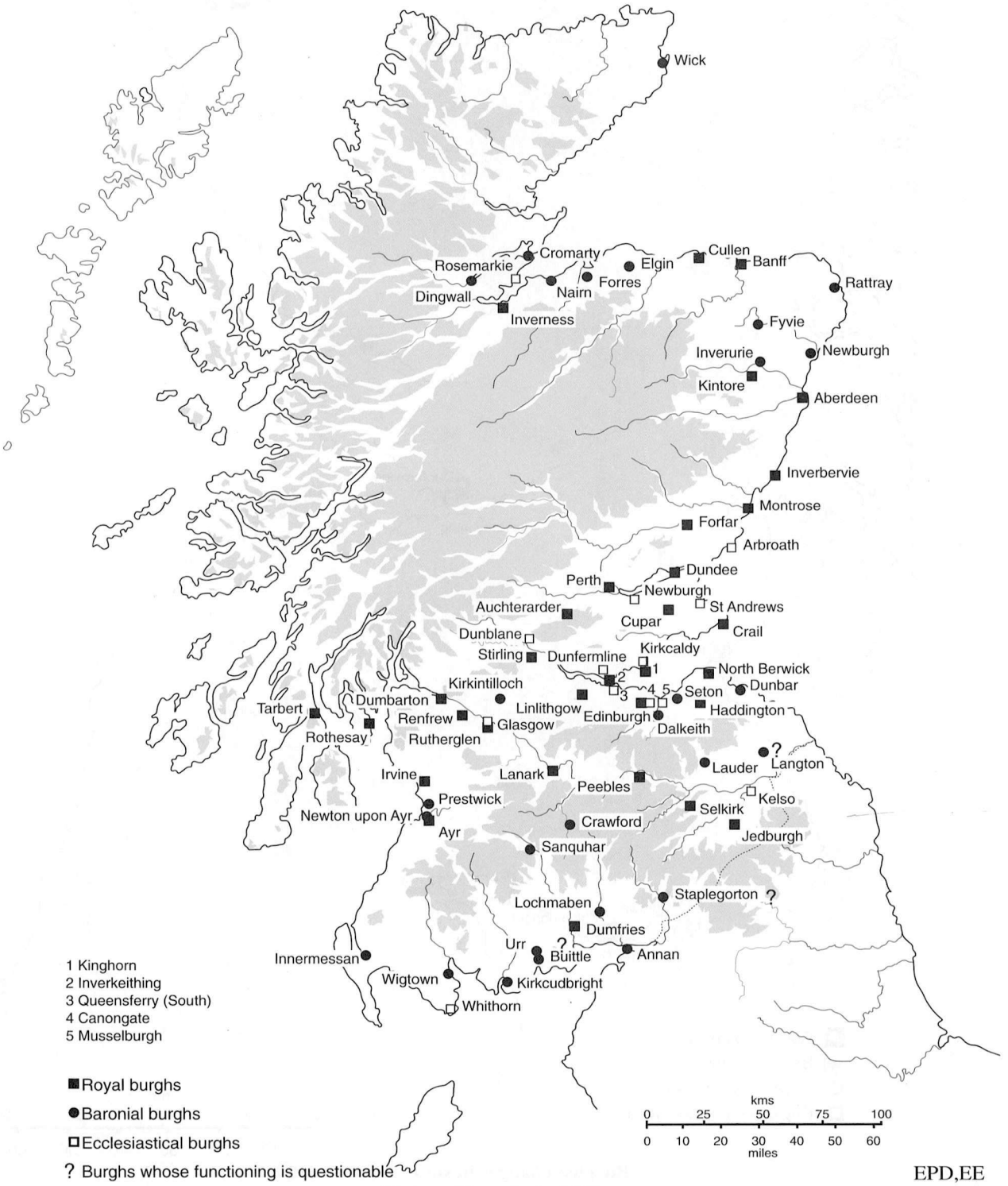


Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is a registered Scottish charity number SC 010440. Visit our website at www.socantscot.org or find us on Bluesky @socantscot.bsky.social.

Economic development

Burghs

Scottish burghal status was divided into three types: royal, ecclesiastical and baronial, depending on whether the overlord was the king, an abbot or bishop or a magnate. The earliest burghs were founded by the king, but soon the Crown allowed others to found their own burghs. The first ecclesiastical burghs of which we have records are St Andrews (1140 x 1153) and Canongate (1143 x 1147). Prestwick (1165 x 1173) was the first to be founded as a baronial burgh. Between 1430 and 1530 there was an escalation in the number of burgh foundations compared with earlier centuries. Perhaps more significant was the increasing number of burghs of barony, whether ecclesiastical or secular. Such 'unfree' burghs were not granted rural hinterlands where they might monopolise or control trade; they had no inherent right to be represented in parliament, but consequently were not liable for cess (except in so far as they contributed as part of a shrieval levy), and they might not, officially, participate in overseas trade. These burghs might be raised to royal status, as was Pittenweem (founded in 1525), in 1541. The five greater ecclesiastical burghs - St Andrews, Glasgow, Brechin, Arbroath and Dunfermline - not only enjoyed the same trading privileges as royal burghs, but also paid taxation and were represented in the Convention of Royal Burghs.



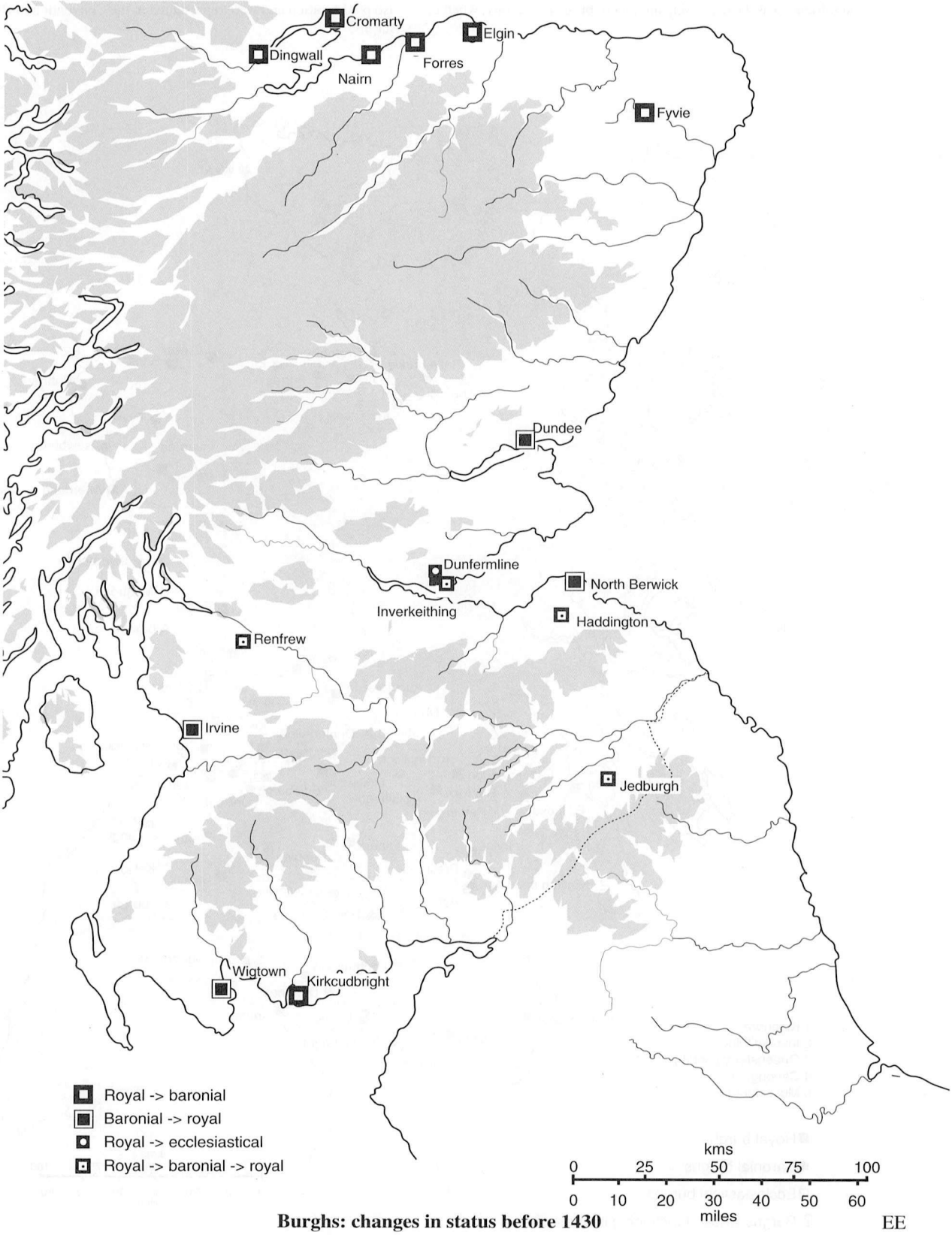
EPD,EE

Status of burghs in 1430

Burghs

Some burghs changed their status over time. Royal burghs, such as Jedburgh and Wigtown, were granted by the king to baronial overlords. Burghs might also change status with a change in status of their overlord. Irvine, a baronial burgh, became royal when its Stewart overlord succeeded to the crown in 1371.

Until the fifteenth century, status was not an issue of vital importance for burghs, as rights and privileges were based on the antiquity of the burgh's charters. Several non-royal burghs, such as St Andrews, North Berwick and Dunbar, participated in trade and were taxed by the Crown in the fourteenth century along with the royal burghs. The first hint of a differentiation probably developed in the later fourteenth century with the regular representation of some burghs, mostly royal, in parliament. The first reference to a 'royal burgh' came in the foundation charter of Rothesay in 1401. In the same year, the charter for Dalkeith referred to it as 'baronial'. By the early fifteenth century, non-royal began to outnumber royal burghs, and status had become a more important issue.

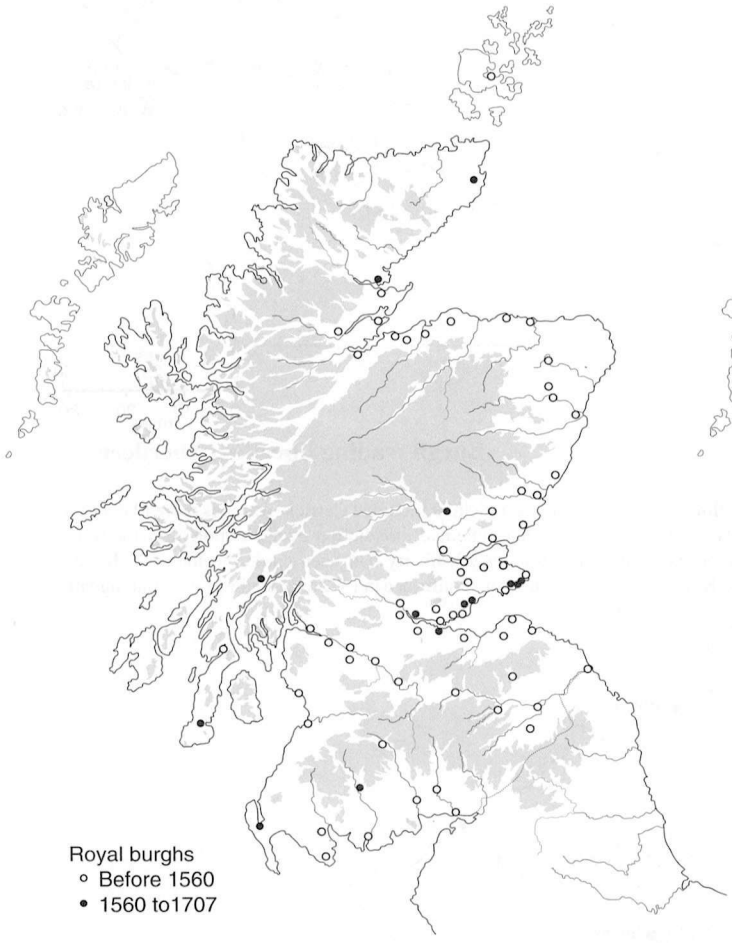


Burghs: changes in status before 1430 EE

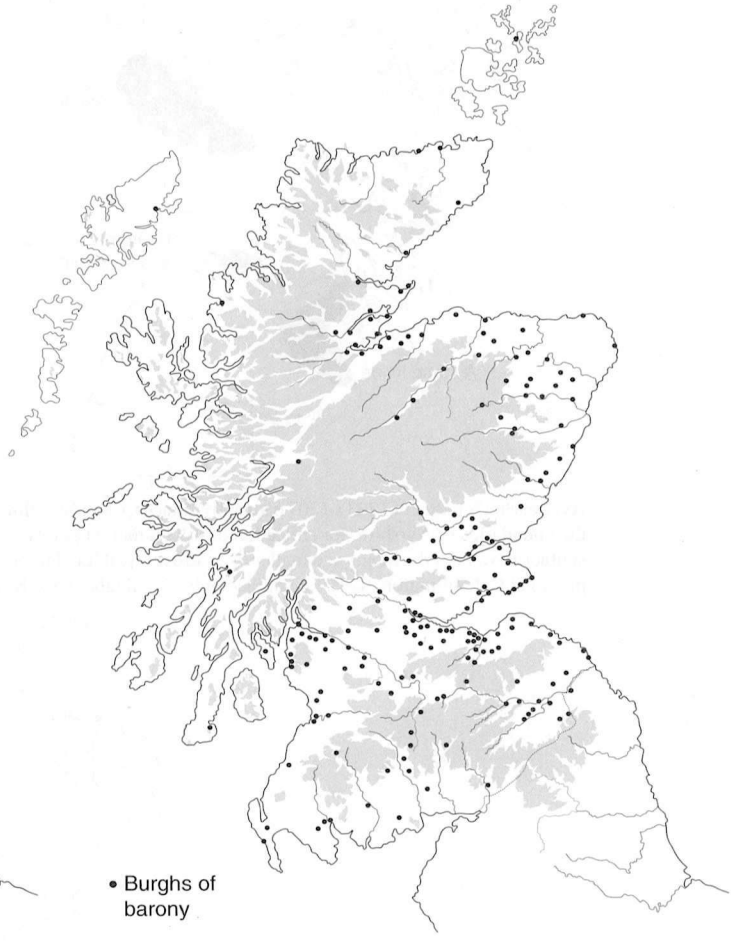
Royal burghs and burghs of barony

There were comparatively few royal burghs founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - a total of 21 between 1560 and 1707 but only two of these came after 1650. The period 1450-1707 saw, however, the erection of 350 burghs of barony and regality; 121 of them were founded 1561-1660 and a further 110 between 1661-1707. It has been suggested that as many as 140 of these, including many of the post-1660 foundations, were non-viable.

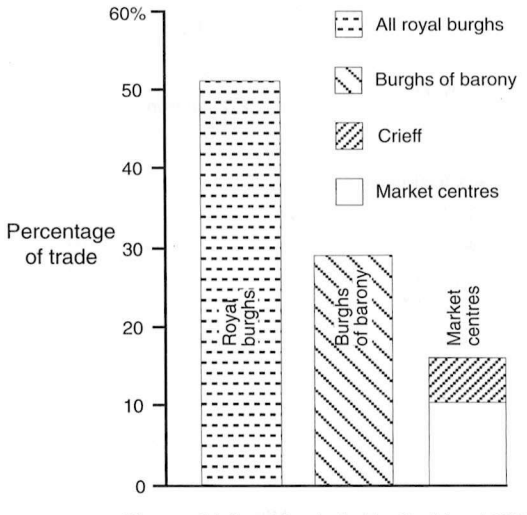
The case of Perthshire is a useful example. In 1692, the pre-1560 foundations (both royal and baronial) accounted for 51% of inland trade; those founded between 1600 and 1660 accounted for 29% more; the large number of post-1660 foundations, including licensed market centres outside burghs, handled only 16% and nearly half of this was accounted for by Crieff.



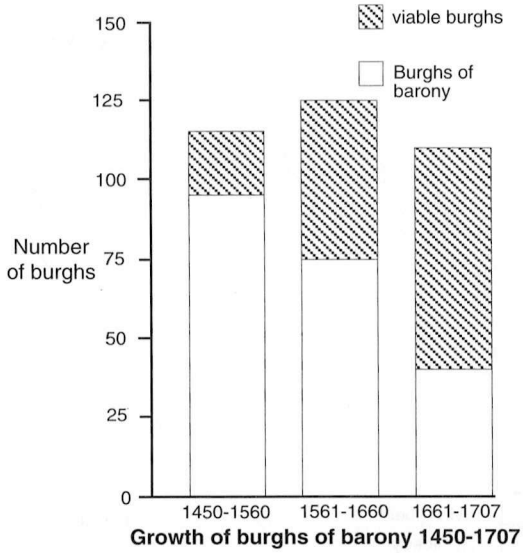
Royal burghs



New burghs of barony 1660-1707



Share of inland trade in Perthshire 1692

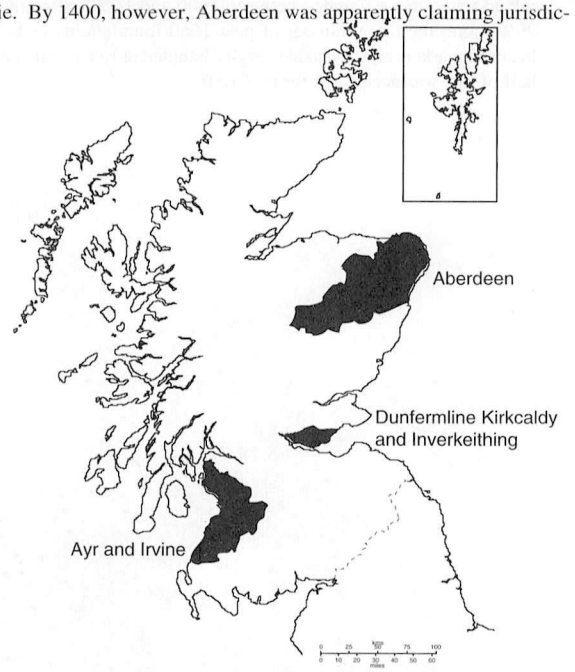


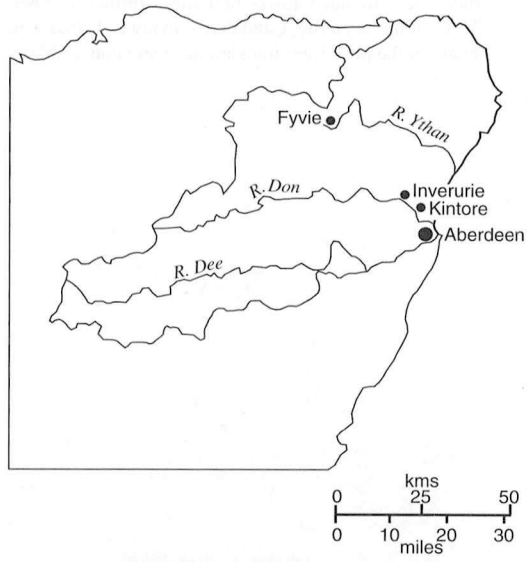
Growth of burghs of barony 1450-1707

Royal burghs and burghs of barony to 1707 ML

Burgh trading liberties

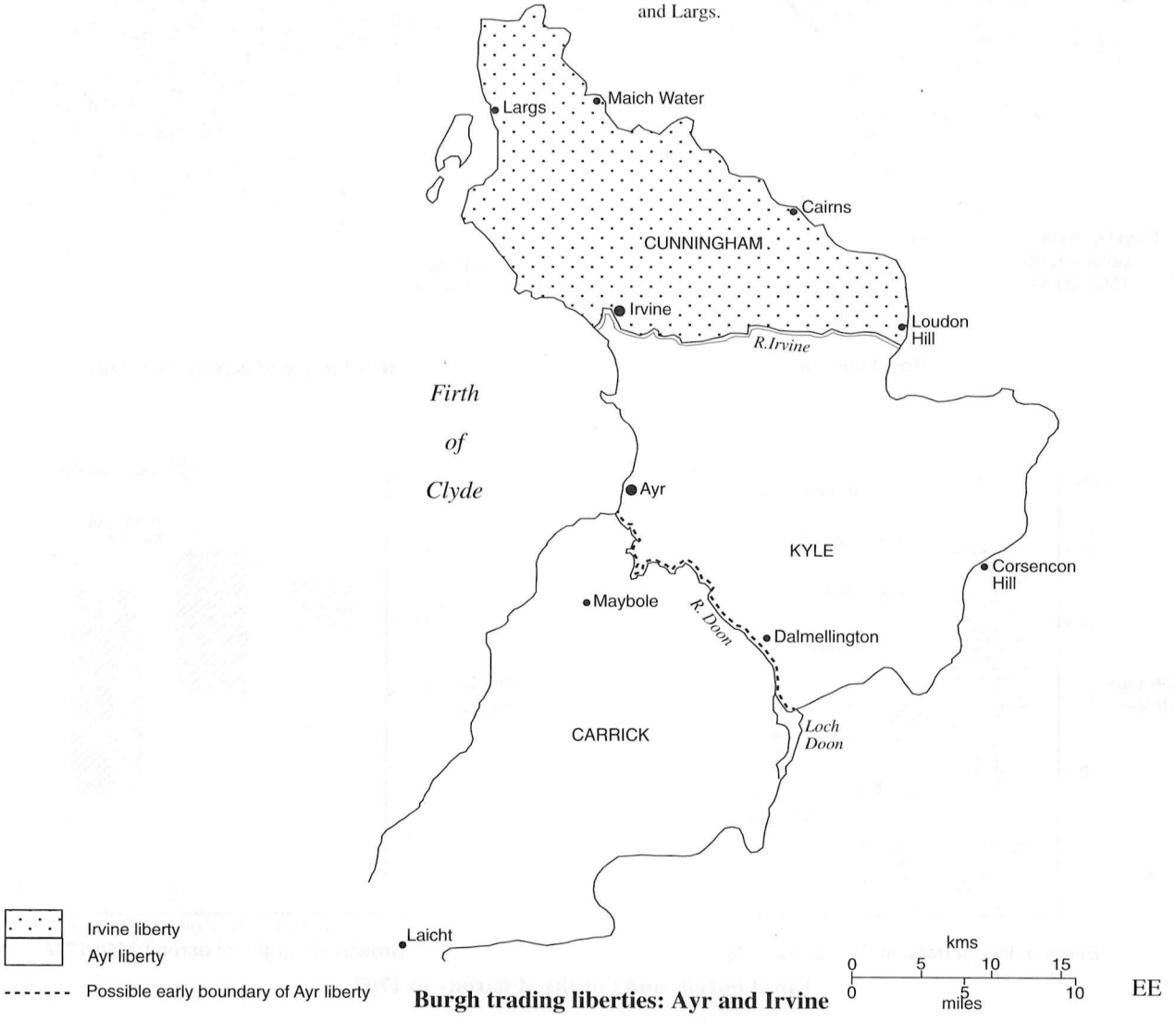
Aberdeen was granted the sheriffdom as its trading liberty by Alexander II without prejudice to the rights of other burghs such as Kintore and Fyvie. By 1400, however, Aberdeen was apparently claiming jurisdiction over baronial burghs like Fyvie and similarly over tanners at Inverurie, although inhabitants of Kintore were still customarily sent to the sheriff.





Burgh trading liberties: Aberdeen

Ayr's earliest charter of 1203 x 1207 named five places, roughly outlining the boundaries of Ayrshire, for collection of toll on market goods. The southern extent of the liberty is a matter of controversy: if 'Lochtalpin' is placed at Dalmellington, the area included only Cunningham and Kyle; if identified at Laicht, it included Carrick, which is more likely as it is Ayr that later claimed jurisdiction over Maybole. By the fourteenth century, Ayr's liberty had been eroded to the north by the privileges of Irvine, confirmed in 1372 as extending over Cunningham and Largs.



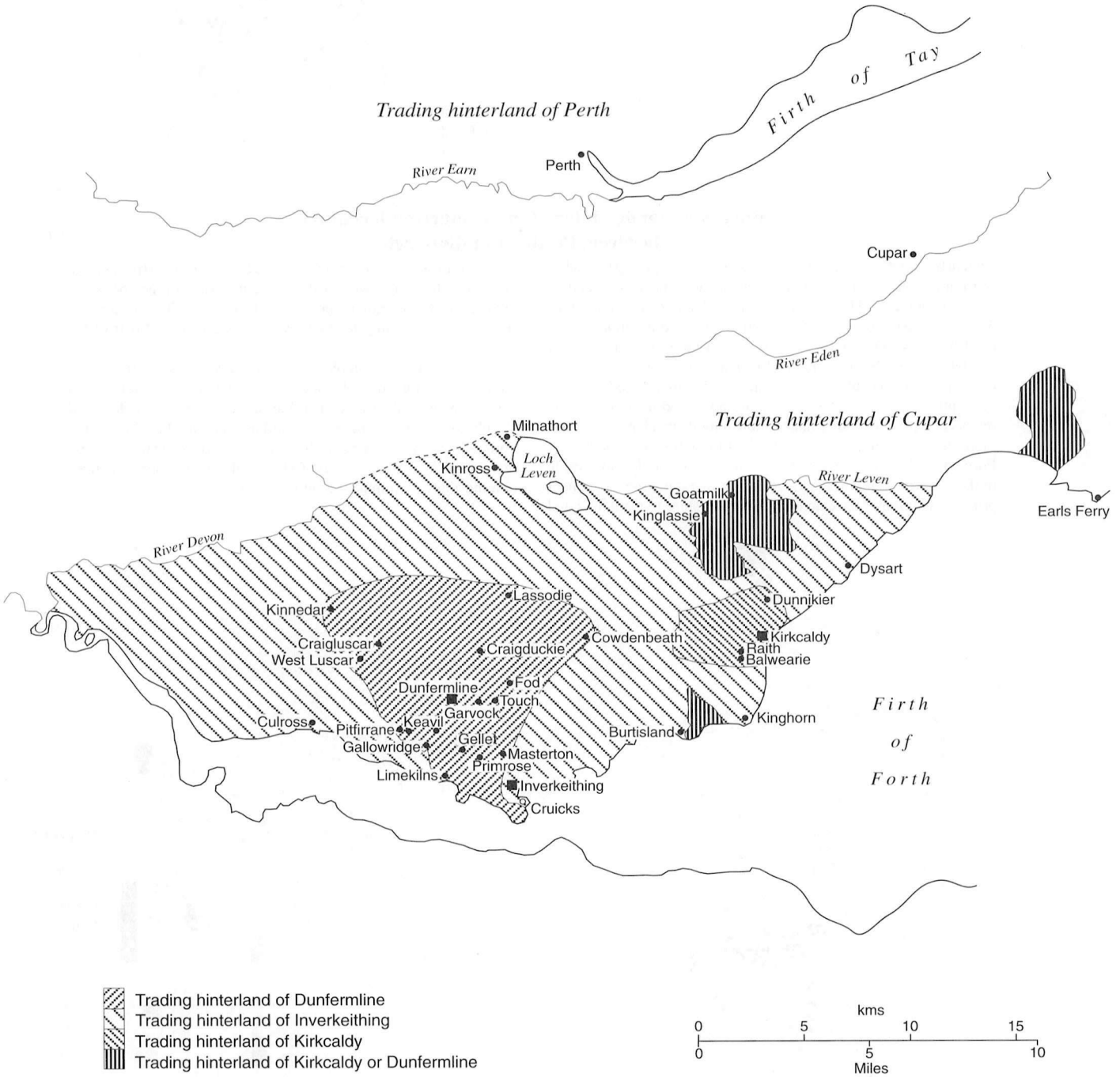
Burgh trading liberties: Ayr and Irvine

EE

Burgh trading liberties

In 1363, David II confirmed to the four regality burghs of Dunfermline - Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Musselburgh and Queensferry - the sole right to trade within the regality. Although this did not make clear whether the regality was made up into four separate areas of monopoly, the burgh records of Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy indicate that their commercial hinterlands lay to the north of the Forth and were distinct. The grant of 1363 affected the liberty of Inverkeithing, which had been defined as early as the reign of William the Lion as between the waters of the Devon and Leven, and further confirmed in 1399 as such and lying to the south of 'the large standing stone beyond the mill of Ellhorth' (Milnathort); its north-east boundary marked that of Cupar.

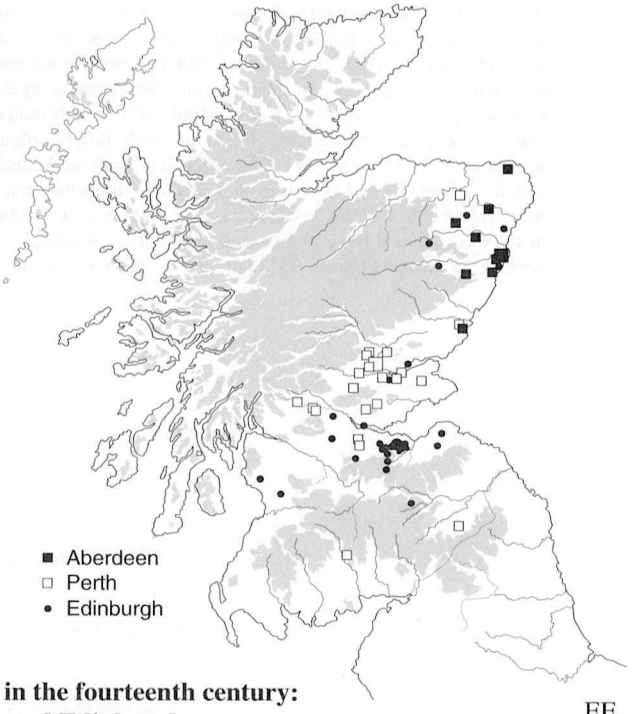
Enforcement of trading boundaries in such a patchwork of jurisdictions was never wholly effective. In 1488, Dunfermline rebuffed Kirkcaldy's claim to sole right to trade in Goatmilk by appealing to the feudal superior, the abbot of Dunfermline; yet by 1583 Kirkcaldy claimed both it and Kinglassie from Dunfermline. By the sixteenth century, Inverkeithing's rights over Culross, the extent of the parish of Kinghorn, the petty customs at Dysart and the customs of the St Luke's fair at Kinross were all disputed; the erection of Burntisland and Culross into royal burghs in 1586 and 1592 further threatened Inverkeithing's liberty.



Burgh trading liberties: Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Inverkeithing about 1500 EPD

Burgesses' landed interest

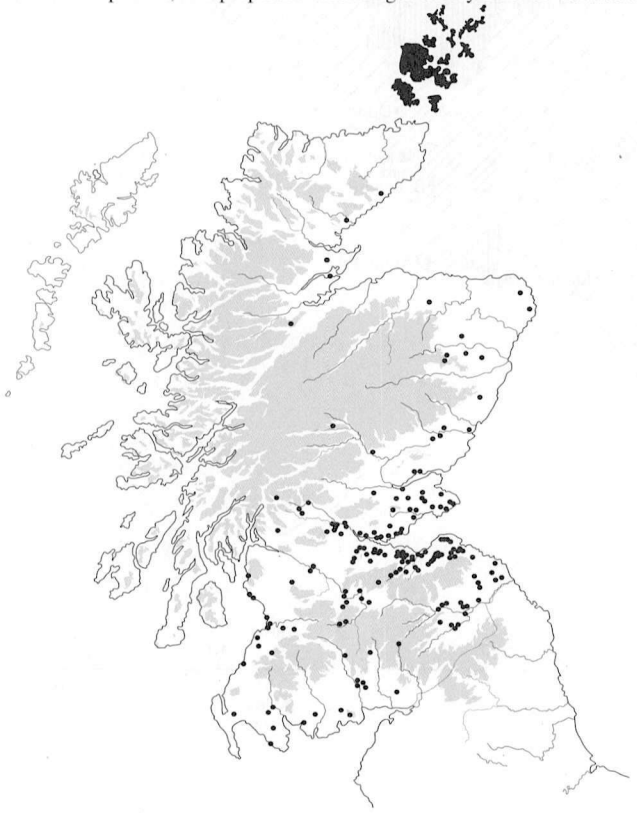
During the fourteenth century it became increasingly common for wealthier burgesses - like Adam Forrester of Edinburgh, who was prominent in crown service, or the Perth families of Mercer and Spens, who acquired lands along Loch Lomond through marriage to a Campbell heiress - to acquire lands outwith their burghs. Country estates provided produce, rents and status. They could be acquired through marriage or as a reward for service to church, Crown or a magnate as well as being a means to invest surplus capital. Some families severed their connections with their burgh of origin but this generally took a number of generations; most continued to participate in burgh life. This practice was made easier by the fact that most country estates belonging to burgesses were situated relatively close to their burghs.



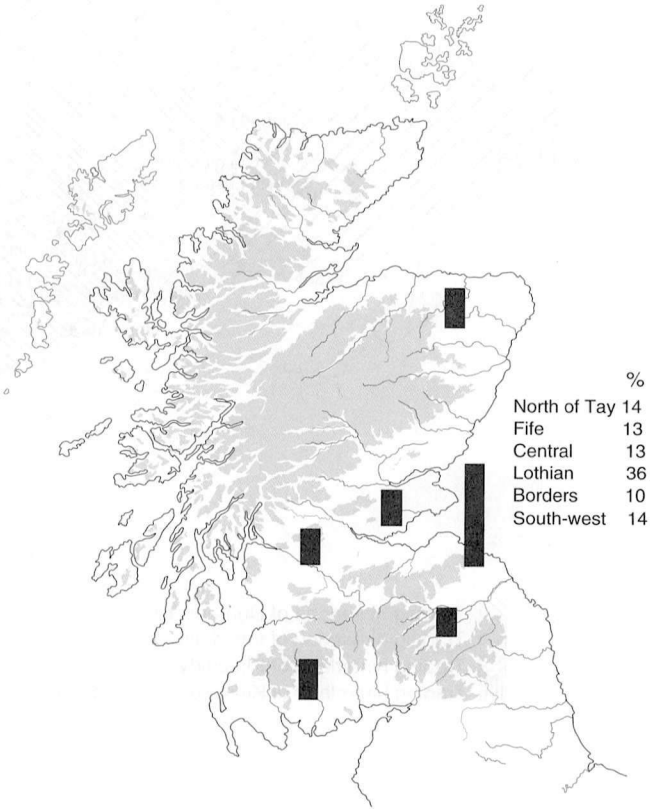
Burgesses' landed interest in the fourteenth century: Aberdeen, Perth and Edinburgh EE

The early seventeenth century saw a boom in the acquiring by wadset of rural property by Edinburgh merchants as collateral for lending money to nobles and lairds throughout Scotland. Almost half of the 300 wealthiest merchants of the capital accepted the mortgage of rural property, under terms of reversion usually of two, seven or nineteen years. None abandoned mercantile activities to become either property speculators or country lairds. In a period of rising grain prices, the wadsetters were more interested in collecting the rentals and produce rather than establishing themselves on estates, more than 40% of which were beyond the immediate vicinity of Edinburgh. Yet the areas involved included some of the most fertile in the country. William Dick, wealthiest of Edinburgh's merchant princes, had properties extending from Ayrshire to Caithness and purchased a six-year tack of Orkney in 1636 for £35,730 per annum. But many, like Dick, were badly hit by the crises of the 1640s and 1650s; the Edinburgh money market, as a result, was far less interested in investing in rural property in the second half of the century.

Amongst the nobles and lairds involved were the Kerrs, Homes and Maitlands in the Borders; the Erskines and Hamiltons in central Scotland; the Bruces and Wardlaws in Fife; the Sinclairs and Urquharts, as well as the earl of Caithness and the Earl Marischal, north of the Tay; the earl of Eglinton, Lord Herries and the Stewarts in the south-west; and the earl of Morton along with representatives of almost every prominent family in Lothian.



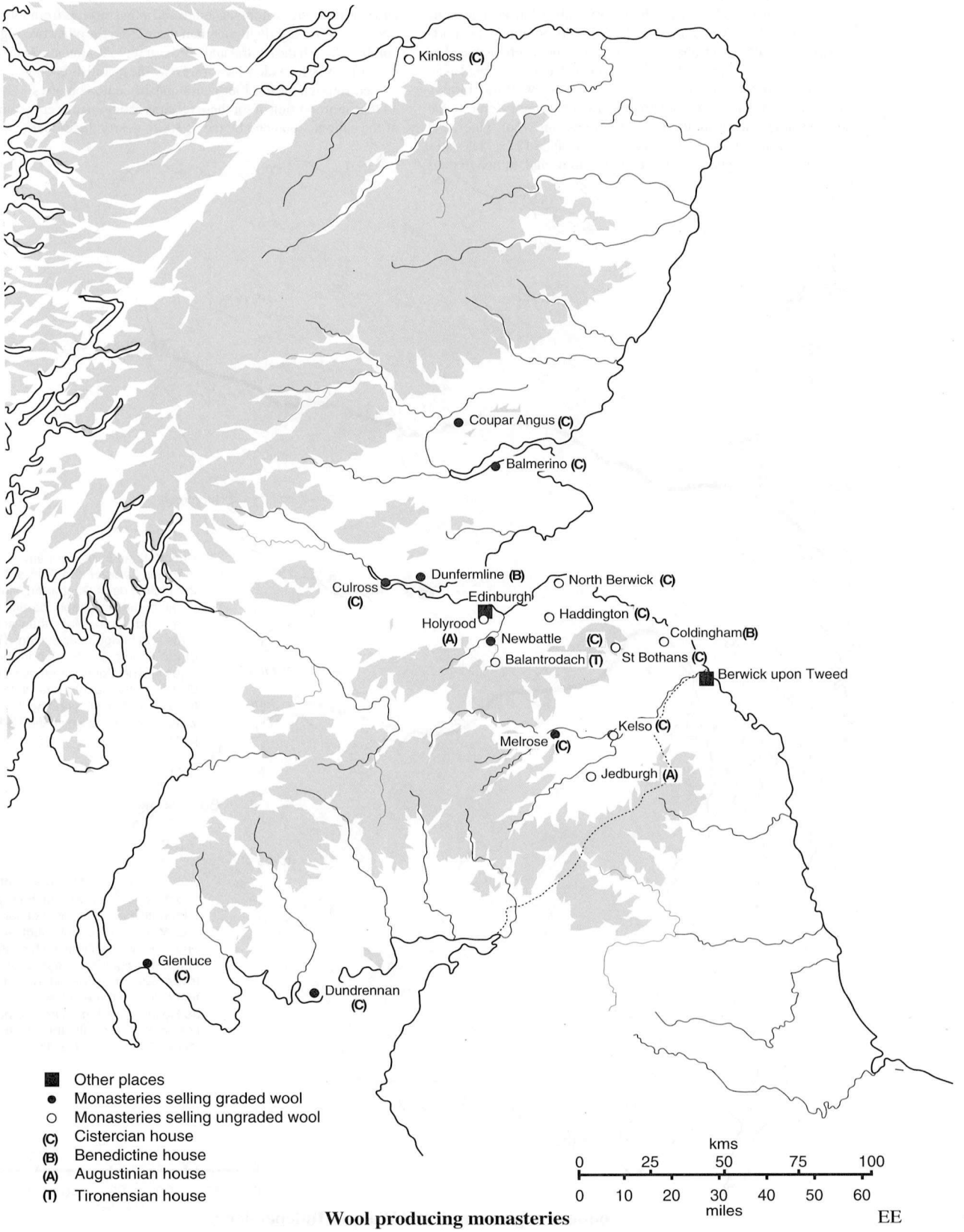
Distribution of Edinburgh burgesses' landed interest in the seventeenth century



Percentage distribution of Edinburgh burgesses' landed interest in the seventeenth century, by region JB

Trade: wool producing monasteries

The handbook of the Italian merchant, Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, which was composed about 1400, contains two lists of prices of wool from various Scottish monasteries: the first list gives prices of three types of graded wool from eight monasteries (all of which except Dunfermline were Cistercian); the second gives seven houses which sold unsorted wool at an average of 9-10.5 merks a sack. The concentration of these wool producing monasteries (based on Professor Duncan's identification of them) in the east and the south-east is striking. It underlines the predominance of east coast burghs in overseas trade. Berwick, and by the fourteenth century, Edinburgh were well placed to export wool which went mostly to Flanders; the ungraded wool came from their hinterlands. Although Glenluce and Dundrennan may have sent wool to Ireland, Pegolotti's prices suggest that their wool was of the best quality and perhaps worth transporting to the east.



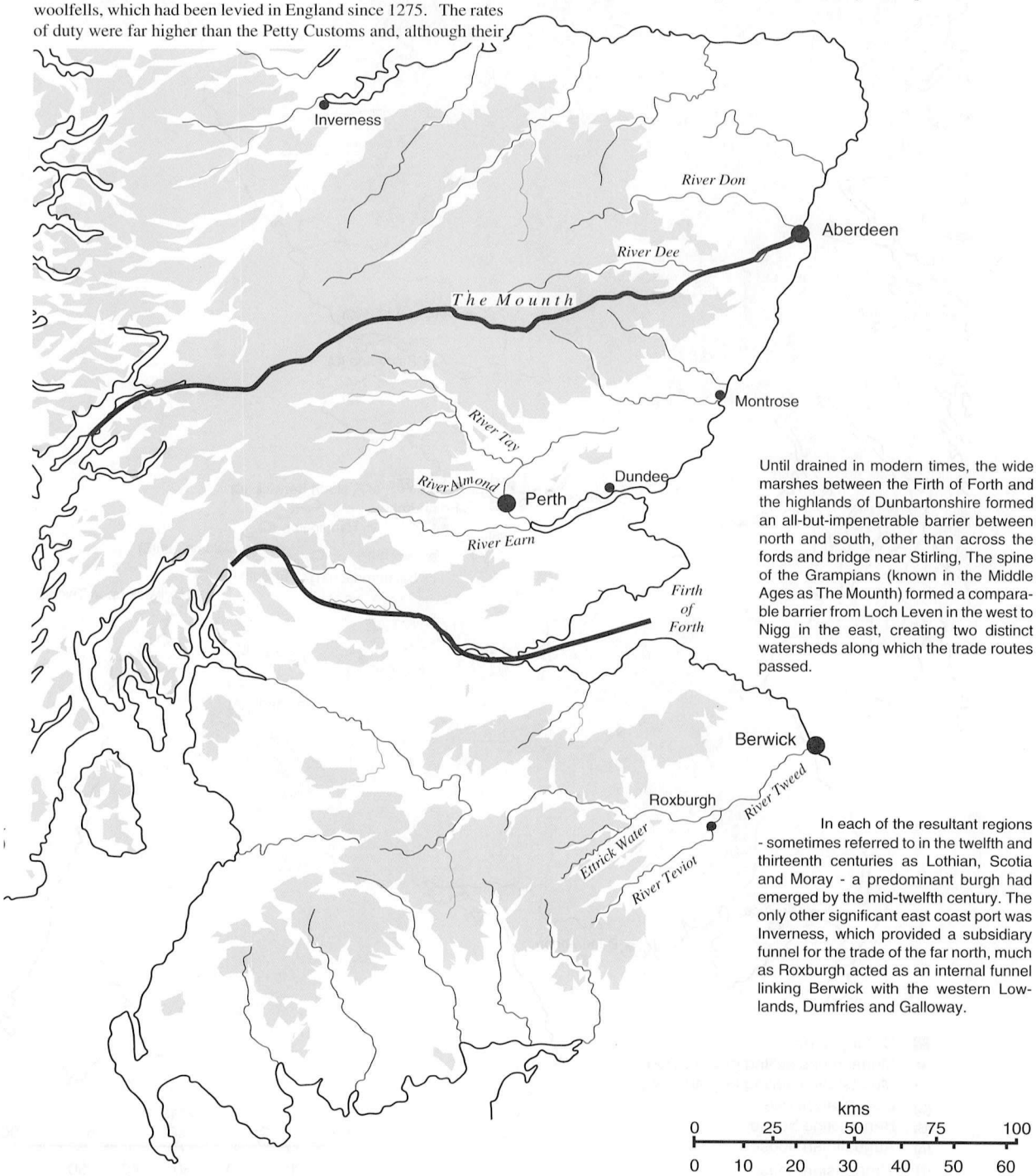
Wool producing monasteries EE

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Scottish economy was transformed by an unprecedented upsurge in economic activity that occurred throughout western Europe. The rapid expansion of international trade brought a great influx of foreign traders into Scotland, mainly in search of wool, skins (cowhides, sheepskins, wild animal pelts) and fish. The creation of burghs was a spin-off from this, geared to the regulation of trading activity and to the collection of tolls on commercial traffic. Scotland became, after England, the most important wool producer in Europe and this wool was mainly exported to Flanders and Artois. The herring and cod fisheries were remarkably prolific and the trade in woolfells and cowhides was also important.

Until the late thirteenth century only what later became known as the Petty Customs were levied: tolls on imports, exports and internal traffic. But, apart from tariff rates, no record of these has survived. By the fourteenth century they had become accepted as an integral part of the burghs' own revenues(see below, Burgh farms). This change was probably precipitated by the introduction of what later became known as the Great Customs: on wool, hides and woolfells, which had been levied in England since 1275. The rates of duty were far higher than the Petty Customs and, although their extent was limited, they immediately became a most valuable source of royal revenue. The earliest surviving series are for the period between 1327 and 1333. There are a few stray returns for the 1340s, and a more or less continuous run from 1361 until 1599.

Until the Wars of Independence there was an almost continuous expansion of the Scottish economy and it seems likely that by the 1290s Scotland was, relative to England, substantially more prosperous, more so than it has been ever since (see below, Taxation in medieval Scotland). The country was divided into three economic regions, each with a major entrepot: Berwick south of the Forth, Perth in central Scotland and Aberdeen beyond the Mounth. Southern Scotland was always the richest part of the country. The earliest surviving customs accounts show that receipts from southern Scotland were slightly higher than those from the other two regions combined, with the central and northern regions almost equal. This disparity was to widen inexorably as the Scottish economy contracted throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the 1420s the proportion of southern receipts had risen to over two-thirds of the national total and by the 1530s to nearly three-quarters.



Until drained in modern times, the wide marshes between the Firth of Forth and the highlands of Dunbartonshire formed an all-but-impenetrable barrier between north and south, other than across the fords and bridge near Stirling, The spine of the Grampians (known in the Middle Ages as The Mounth) formed a comparable barrier from Loch Leven in the west to Nigg in the east, creating two distinct watersheds along which the trade routes passed.

In each of the resultant regions - sometimes referred to in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as Lothian, Scotia and Moray - a predominant burgh had emerged by the mid-twelfth century. The only other significant east coast port was Inverness, which provided a subsidiary funnel for the trade of the far north, much as Roxburgh acted as an internal funnel linking Berwick with the western Lowlands, Dumfries and Galloway.

Economic regions until the Wars of Independence ML, ASt

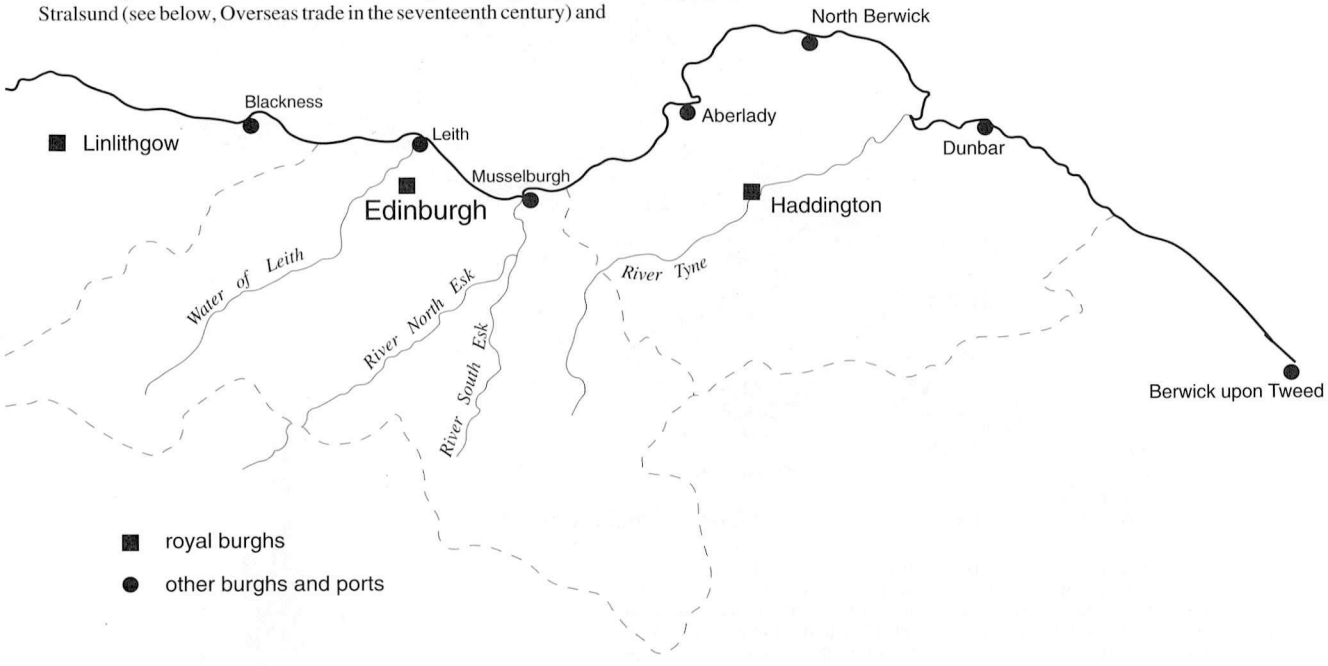
Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

The Wars of Independence transformed both the economic situation of the country and the relative ranking of the Scottish burghs. Perth lost its precedence in central Scotland and thereafter had to share power with Dundee, whose coastal position was better suited to the larger ships of the late Middle Ages. By the acquisition of subservient ports (at Leith, Blackness and Aberlady), Edinburgh, Linlithgow and Haddington each secured part of Berwick's former trade; as did other, smaller burghs. By the 1320s Edinburgh had already taken part of Berwick's trade. It was therefore well placed to take the largest share of the remainder when Berwick fell to the English in 1333. In the course of the fifteenth century Edinburgh pushed aside all its rivals and by the 1470s controlled over half the Scottish export trade; by the 1530s it controlled two thirds and was the only port of consequence south of the Forth (see below, Burghs' shares of customs). By then the former regional structure of the country had effectively been transformed and Edinburgh had become an economic centre for the entire country (see below, Taxation of burghs 1535 to 1705). It was this economic power base that made Edinburgh the natural capital of Scotland .

Before the Wars of Independence Scotland had developed a diverse international trade, attracting merchants from Norway, England, Western Germany, the Low Countries, northern France, Brittany, Gascony, Spain and Italy. In the fourteenth century links with most of these became tenuous. Few foreign merchants visited Scotland and Scottish traffic was mainly directed to Flanders. By the 1290s Bruges was already the principal centre of Scottish overseas trade. Probably in the reign of Robert I (1306-29) the primacy of trade links with Bruges was formally recognised by establishing it as the Scottish Staple - to which all wool, hides and woolfells exported by Scottish merchants had to be sent (unless special dispensation had been given). With a few short intervals, the Scottish Staple remained there until 1477. Since wool, hides and woolfells were directed by law to Bruges, and the Scottish sea fisheries had almost disappeared during the fourteenth century, the wherewithal for trade with other lands was greatly diminished. Cheap cloth, salmon, (other) skins and salt were the main exports to other countries. Much of the salmon was exported to England in times of peace, and by the late fourteenth century there was a flourishing east coast trade with the Baltic ports of Danzig and Stralsund (see below, Overseas trade in the seventeenth century) and with Normandy. On the west coast there was a modest trade with Ireland, Brittany and the Biscay ports.

There was a serious trade deficit from the fourteenth century onwards. The Scots became dependent on the importation of manufactures and many raw materials, mainly via Bruges, and often on grain from the Baltic, Normandy and, occasionally, from England. The price of wool declined throughout the fourteenth century and demand dropped catastrophically at its end. The trade in hides and woolfells also declined. In order to boost customs revenues James I (1406-37) greatly expanded the list of exports subject to duty, a process completed by James III (1460-88). The customs accounts from then on give a fuller picture of the extent of Scottish exports. They confirm a downward spiral of Scottish trade until the 1470s, when the sea fisheries were revived on a limited scale. It was not until the last quarter of the sixteenth century that there was a marked and prolonged expansion of Scottish trade.

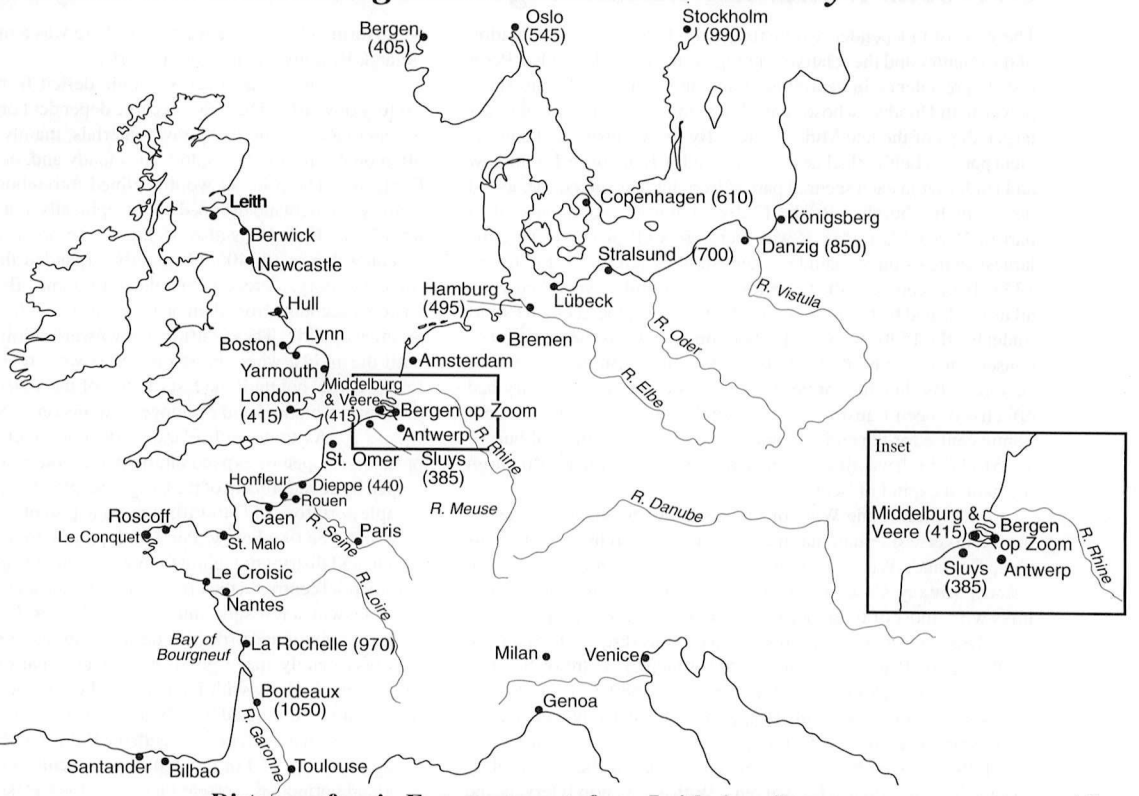
As trade with Flanders declined there was increasing pressure to open or expand alternative markets, a process greatly helped by abandonment of the Bruges Staple. After a period without a staple port from 1477 to 1508, the small port of Veere on the island of Walcheren (see below, Ports of departure to Veere) became the designated distribution point (a looser form of staple) for the major commercial centres in the Low Countries and nominally maintained this role, with a few short intervals, until 1799. Trade with the Low Countries continued to decline until the late sixteenth century. This loss was mainly made good by a great expansion in trade with France, particularly with Dieppe (see below, Destination of ships from Leith), stimulated by privileged access to the French market; and, to a lesser extent, in trade with the Baltic (see below,Trade with northern Europe). For much of the sixteenth century France was Scotland's principal overseas market. In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the main growth areas were the Baltic and Scandinavia (see below, Overseas trade in the seventeenth century). Each market had different demands and the changing pattern of Scottish exports is a reflection of this. The trade in wool became insignificant in the sixteenth century, while the trade in cloth, fish and possibly skins greatly expanded; and with the rapid expansion of Baltic trade late in the sixteenth century salt and coal exports also burgeoned.



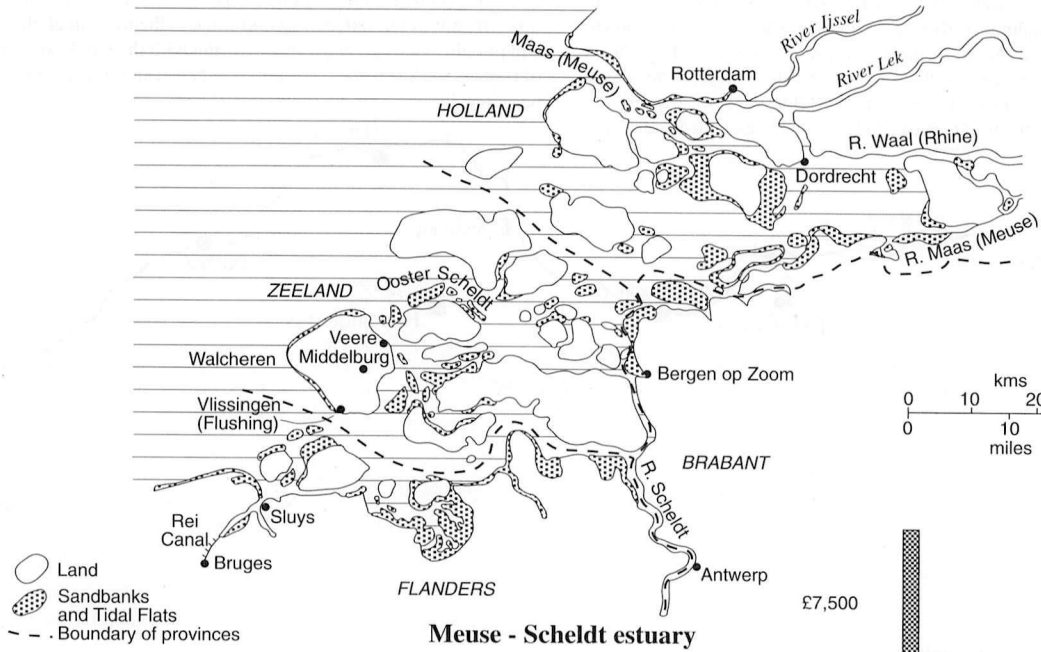
Before the Wars of Independence almost all of southern Scotland's international trade had passed through Berwick. Its loss, from 1296 to 1318 and again from 1333 onwards, necessitated the development of alternative ports. Several minor harbours had long existed in the Lothians, which had acted as transit points for inter-regional trade and for the shipment of goods to and from Berwick; but, Berwick apart, there was no major coastal burgh south of the Firth of Forth. The inland burghs of Edinburgh, Linlithgow and Haddington jealously guarded their privileges as the administrative centres of the sheriffdom of Edinburgh and its subsidiary constabularies (later Midlothian, West Lothian and East Lothian). Each effectively seized control of their nearest harbours. Leith became the out-port for Edinburgh. Linlithgow secured the small harbour at Blackness, 4 miles to the northeast. Haddington secured a less satisfactory tidal harbour, 5 miles to the north-west, at Aberlady.

Position of Edinburgh after the Wars of Independence ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century



Distance of main European ports from Leith, in miles ASt

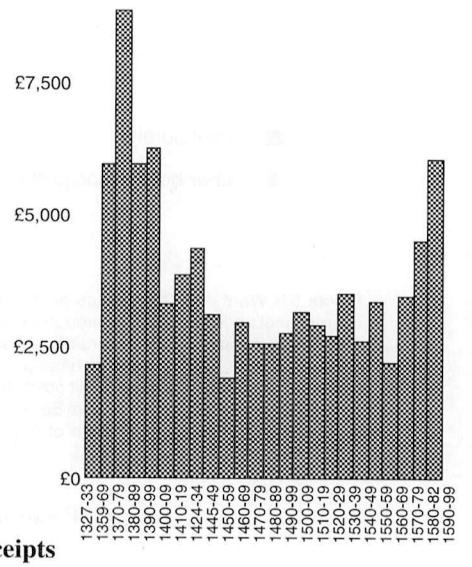


ASt

Meuse - Scheldt estuary

The basic pattern of overseas exports can be gauged from the average receipts which accrued to the Crown from customs. There were, however, various changes in rates of duty which partly mask some of the real underlying patterns: between 1357 and 1368 rates on wool, hides and fells were quadrupled, so that on the exports in the 1360s was in real terms 30 per cent lower than in the period 1327-33. There were, however, minor surges in the 1370s and 1420s and again in the last years of the reign of James V (1513-42), although it was not until the last quarter of the sixteenth century that real recovery from the prolonged slump which had lasted since the 1290s took place. The number of taxable commodities increased from three (wool, woolfells and hides) to ten in 1424, although regular returns from some of the new commodities were not made until later. Various increases were also subsequently made in the rates on some commodities, such as salmon and coal. All rates were substantially raised in 1597 as the Crown's response to the new boom in overseas trade.

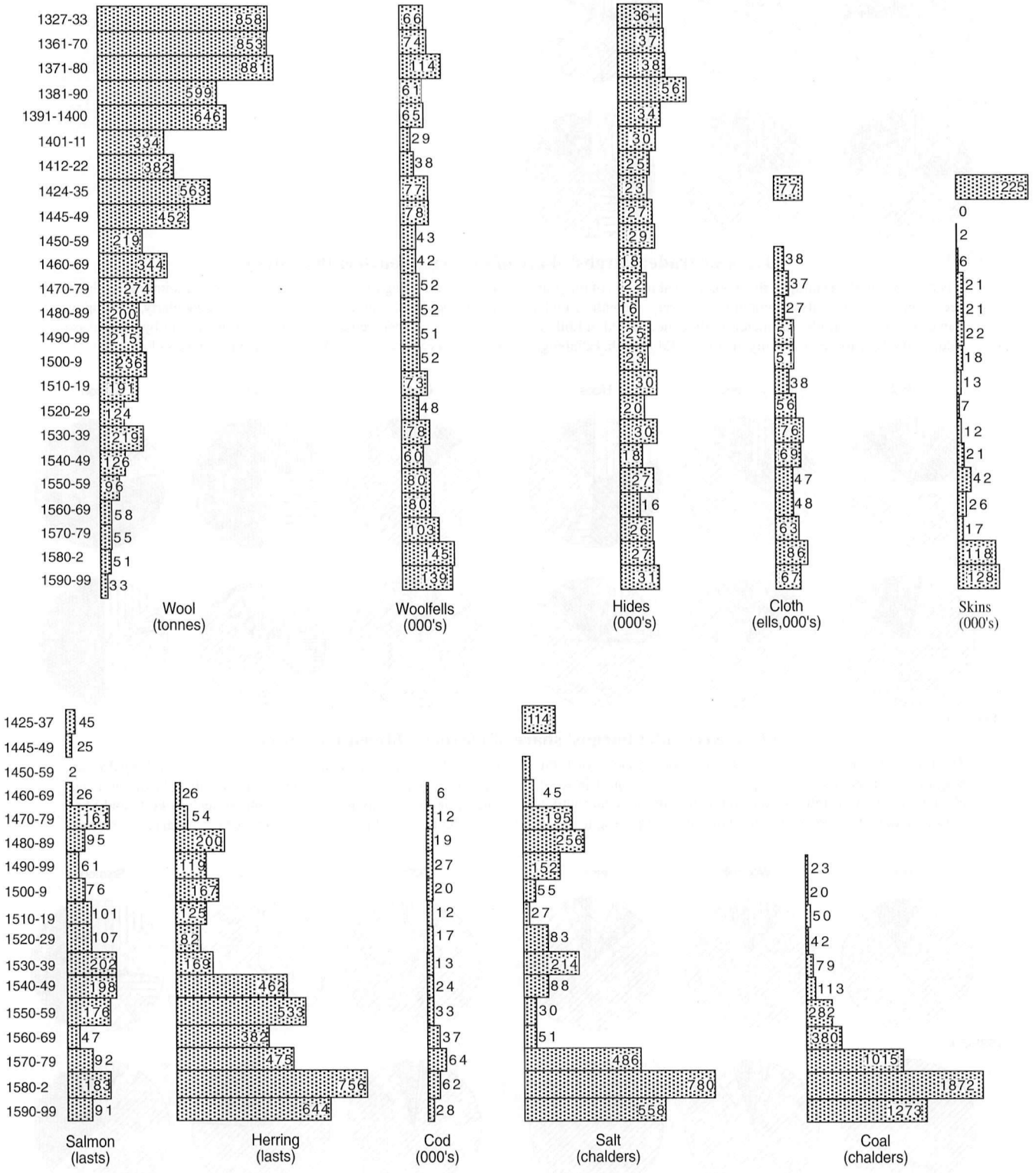
ML



Overseas trade: annual average customs receipts

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

The long slump in Scotland's overseas trade,which began with the Wars of Independence and continued until the last quarter of the sixteenth century, with short-lived upswings in the 1360s and 1370s, 1420s and 1430s, and the late 1530s, is revealed by the receipts for those exported commodities which paid custom to the crown. The steepest and irrecoverable decline lay in what was Scotland's most important export for much of the medieval period - raw wool. The recovery after the 1570s lay in a revival of the fisheries and the finding of new markets for cloth, sheep and lamb skins, salt and coal. Custom was levied only on three commodities until the 1420s, when James I extended it to a further sixteen. Many of the newly taxed commodities never produced significant customs returns; but the returns on others were spectacular, providing a first indication of what may long have been major exports. Most of the new duties temporarily lapsed after the death of James I. The later maps showing customs on exports from 1327 to 1599 explain the various weights and measures.

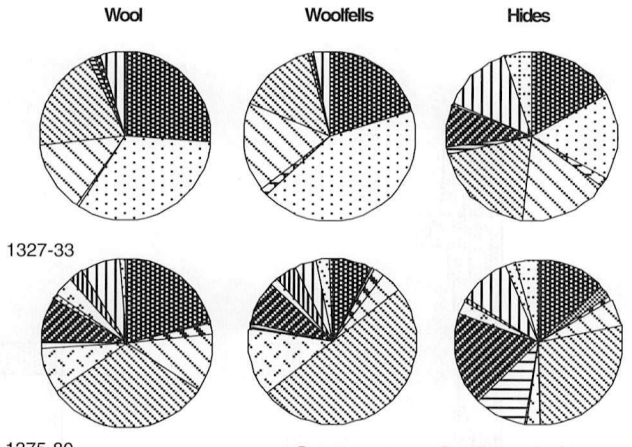


Annual average exports, all Scotland 1327 to 1599

ML, ASt

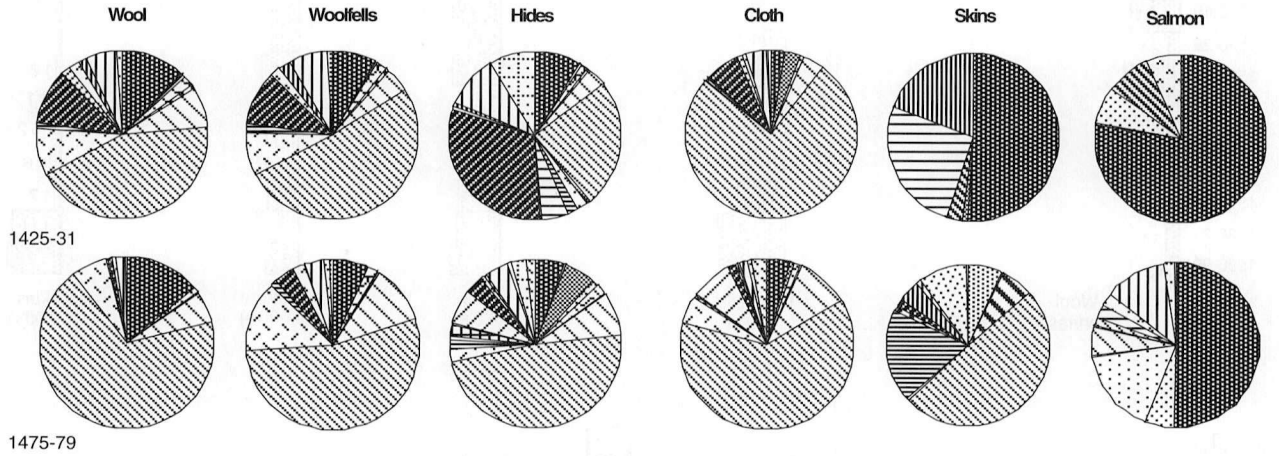
Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

By the time of the earliest surviving customs data the Scottish economy was already in a state of transition, precipitated by the Wars of Independence. Berwick, Aberdeen and Perth (in that order) had earlier been the major exporting burghs. Until 1333 it seemed probable that Berwick and Aberdeen would remain pre-eminent, although Dundee had overtaken Perth and Edinburgh had become an irritating rival to Berwick. The second Wars of Independence transformed the situation by eliminating Berwick, providing new opportunities for numerous minor burghs, notably Linlithgow and Haddington, but Edinburgh was the main beneficiary. Wool was much the most important export throughout the period, but in those burghs funnelling the trade of the Highlands and the west cowhides were also an important factor.



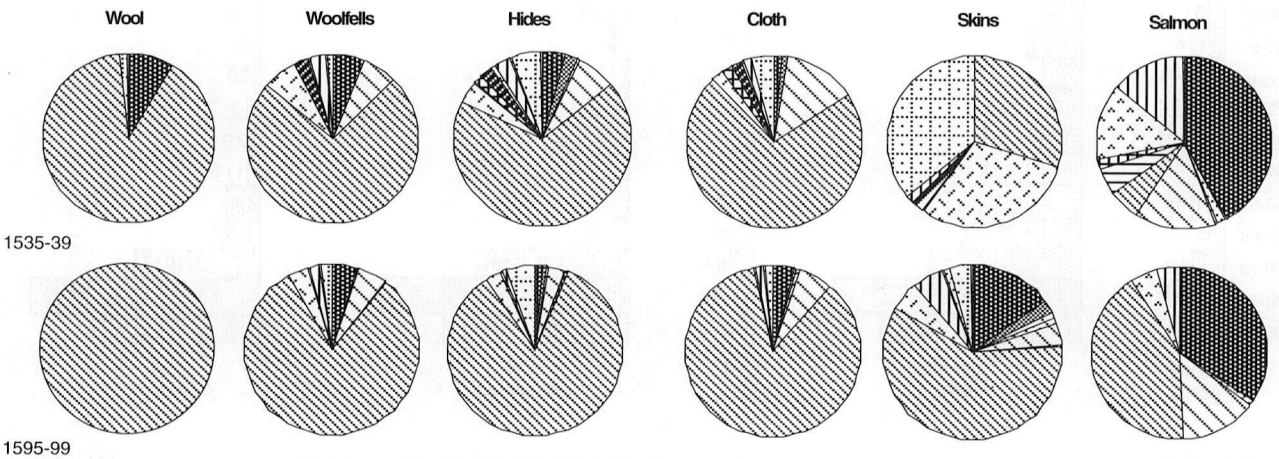
Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: fourteenth century

There was a marked slump in the wool trade at the end of the fourteenth century and only a temporary recovery thereafter, under James I. The wool trade was increasingly concentrated in Lothian and, by the later fifteenth century, mainly in Edinburgh. Edinburgh was consolidating its position as the economic capital of Scotland; while Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and, most spectacularly, Linlithgow all declined. Aberdeen compensated to some extent by an increase in salmon exporting, and Dundee by developing its cloth trade.



Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: fifteenth century

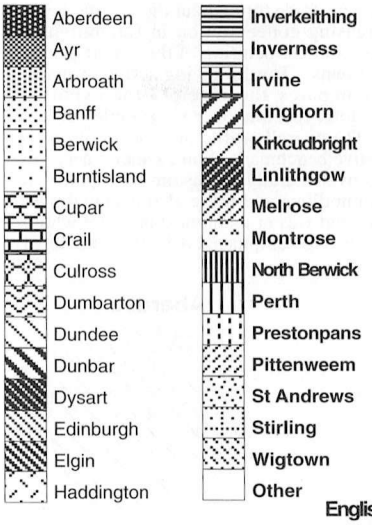
The sixteenth century saw the continuing consolidation of Edinburgh in most sectors of the export trade, at its greatest in wool, cloth, hides and woolfells. As a result both of this and the continuing stagnation of overseas trade until the late 1570s (despite a brief surge in the last years of James V's reign), there was a sharp decline in the trading activities of a number of towns, like Haddington and Linlithgow, and decay in the case of others such as Perth and Stirling. The increase in overseas markets for the fisheries , however,

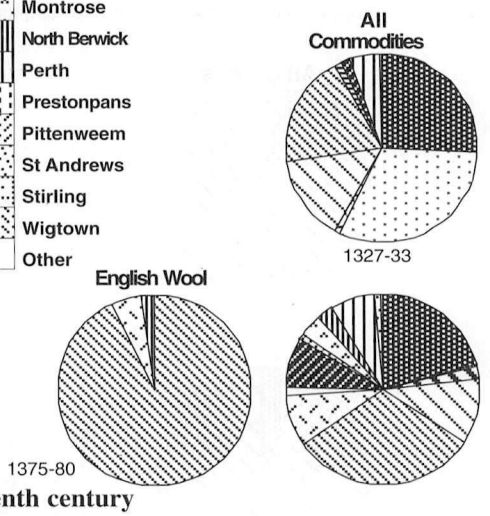


Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: sixteenth century

ML, ASt

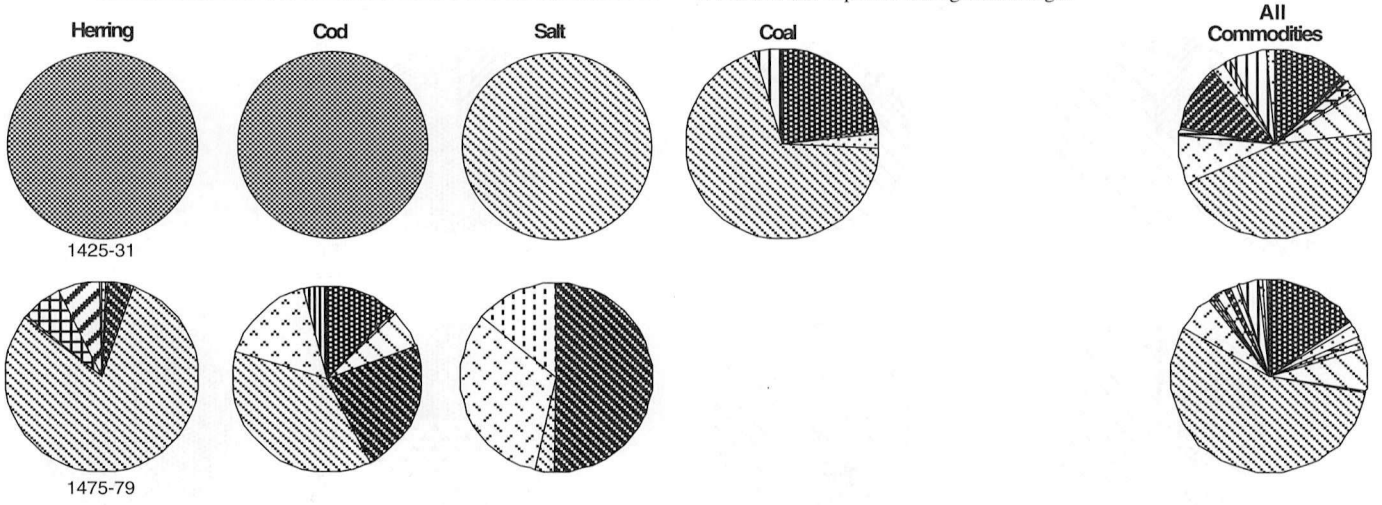
Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century





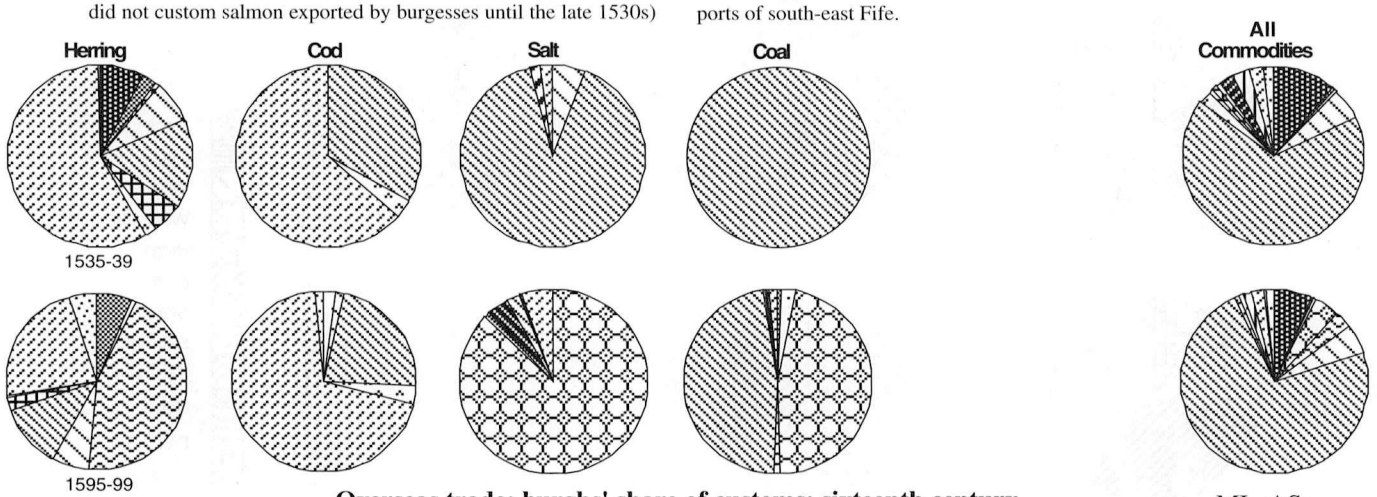
Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: fourteenth century

Many further commodities were subjected to duty by James I, of which cloth, shorn sheepskins, salmon and lambskins (in that order) were initially the most important - the duty on shorn sheepskins and lambskin was introduced in the 1430s but after James I's death was levied only on aliens. The sea fisheries remained insignificant until the 1470s but thereafter the Forth and Clyde ports took on a new lease of life, although on the east coast a high proportion of catches was exported through Edinburgh.



Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: fifteenth century

did stimulate exports from ports like Dundee, Perth and Montrose; this rise, especially in salmon exports, benefited Aberdeen (which did not custom salmon exported by burgesses until the late 1530s) and Inverness (where returns for the 1590s are not extant) more than is suggested here, but the most dramatic increase was in the ports of south-east Fife.



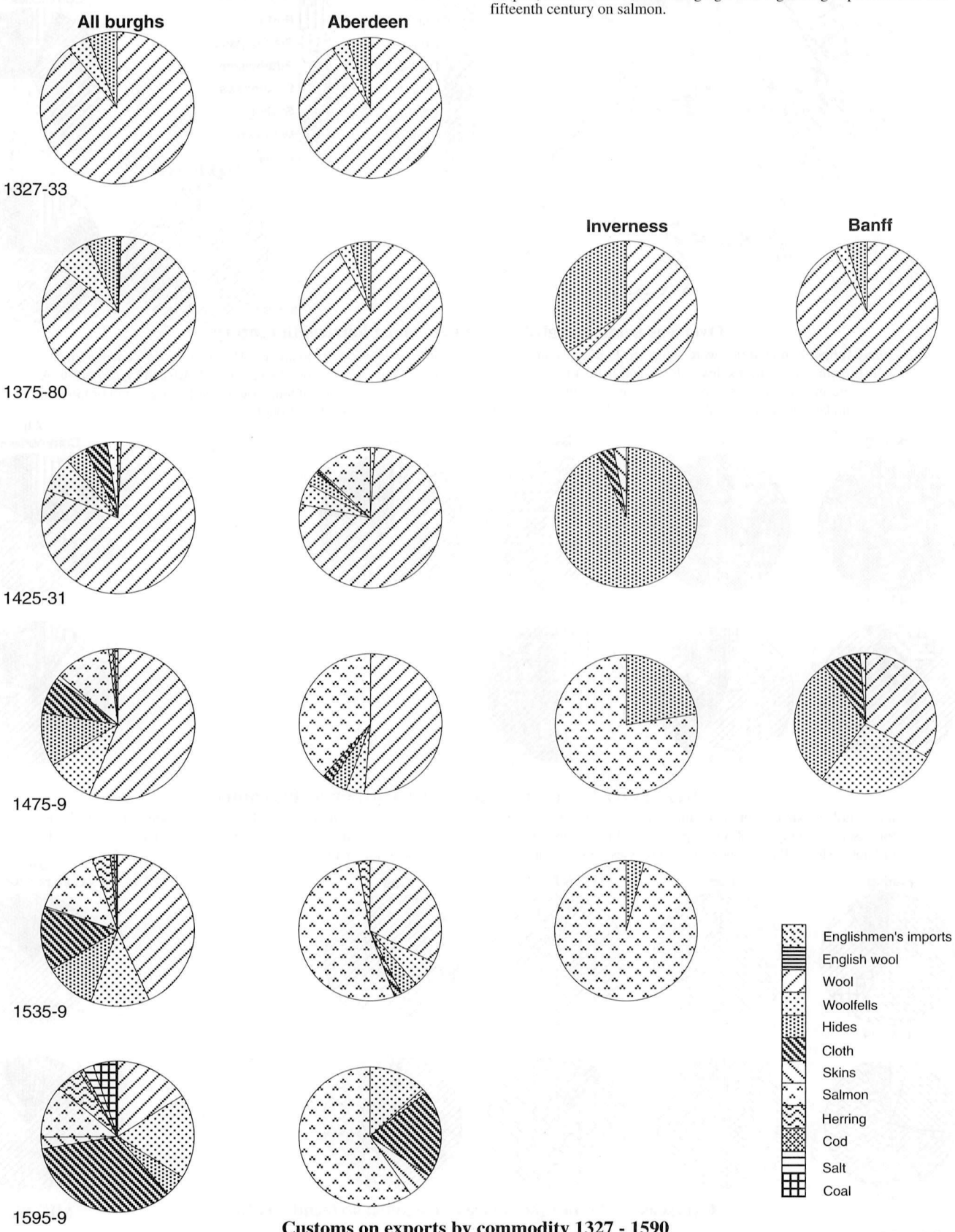
Overseas trade: burghs' share of customs: sixteenth century

ML, ASt

Restructuring urban economies in the later Middle Ages

The long slump in Scottish overseas trade throughout the late medieval period, together with the increasing concentration in Edinburgh of sectors of that trade, forced a certain restructuring of the export geared area of the economy of many towns. The following series of maps, drawn from customs data, compares the receipts for exported commodities as percentages of total receipts over six sample periods between the 1320s and 1590s. The overall profile of Scottish overseas trade is also given as a comparative benchmark. Some caution needs to be exercised in using the results over-literally, as custom was applied at different rates on different commodities and these also changed over time - custom for most of the period was at its highest on wool whose importance will thus tend to be over-emphasized in the profile of individual towns and at its lowest on fish (except for salmon), salt and coal.

Aberdeen, the one major burgh to hold on to a significant share of the wool trade throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was nevertheless increasingly dependent on the salmon trade from the 1470s, and to a greater extent than the graph suggests because Aberdeen burgesses escaped paying duty on salmon until the late fifteenth century. The sixteenth century saw a sharp increase in its export of woollen cloth and, to a lesser extent, of fells. The complete collapse of Inverness's wool trade by the 1420s had, by contrast, left it reliant on hides but a sharp decline by the 1470s in that sector had encouraged a large dependence on the salmon trade. In Banff the pattern was apparently simpler, the decline in wool bringing about a growing dependence in the fifteenth century on salmon.

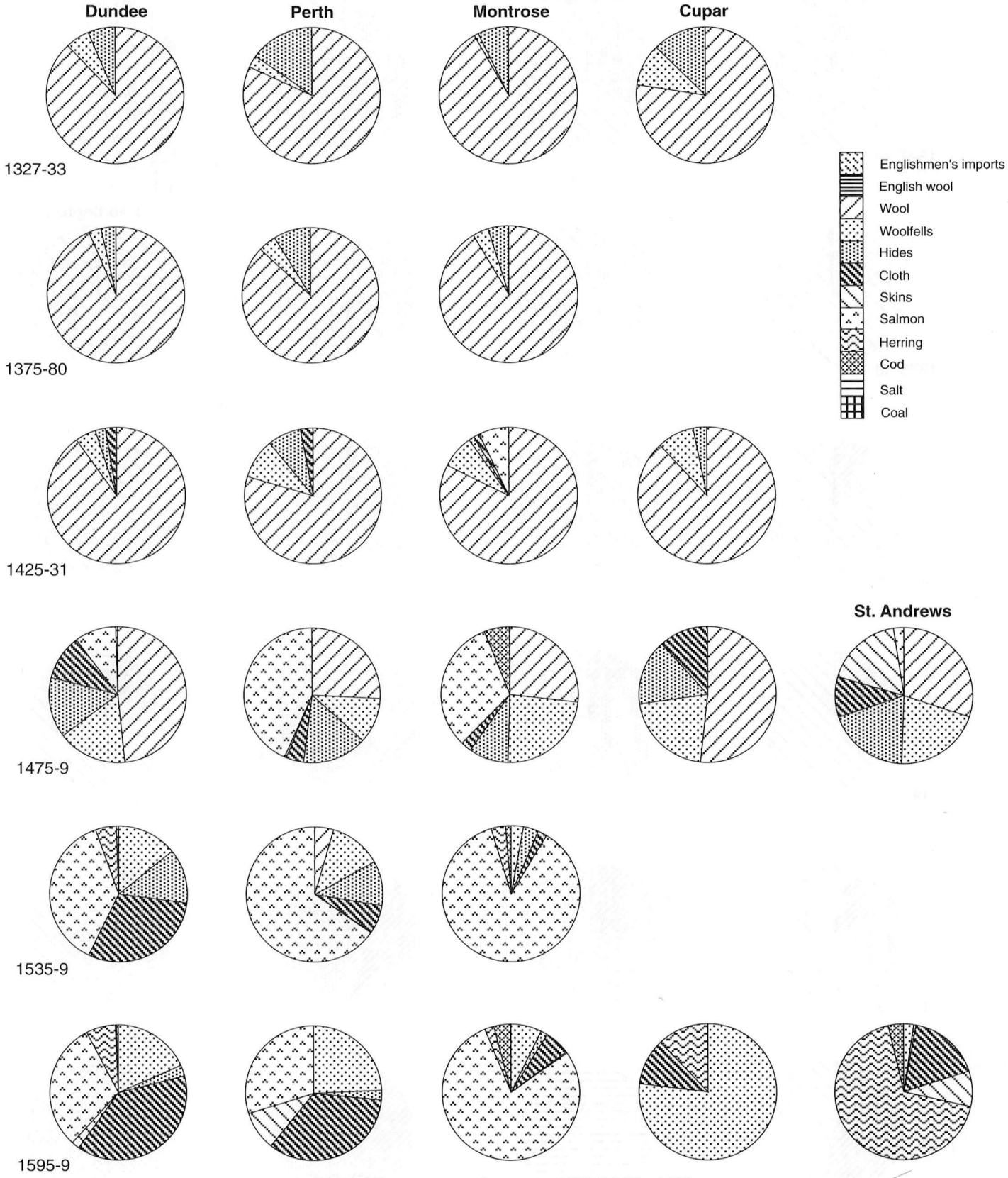


Customs on exports by commodity 1327 - 1590

ML, ASt

Restructuring urban economies in the later Middle Ages

The volatile effects of the shifts in overseas trade markets is well demonstrated by the shifts in the economy of Perth, which by the 1550s claimed to be a 'craft town'. Its development in wool, though delayed until well into the fifteenth century, was matched by growing dependence on fells and hides; but the severe slippage in its share of the growing market in hides in the sixteenth century was compensated only by an increasing dependence on fisheries and cloth manufacture. The port of Dundee had a similar, shifting profile, though the difference, not revealed here, was that it managed to hold on to its levels of exports whereas in Perth, whose share of overseas trade halved between the 1420s and 1470s, decay accompanied restructuring. In the port of Montrose, diversification first out of wool and latterly out of fells and hides into salmon, brought new prosperity in the sixteenth century; Montrose pioneered the re-establishment of cod fisheries in the fifteenth century, but by the sixteenth century it had here given way to the Forth ports. There seems also to have been wholesale restructuring in both Cupar and St Andrews but, unlike the other Tay towns, their stake in the salmon trade was small and their overall share of overseas trade much more modest.

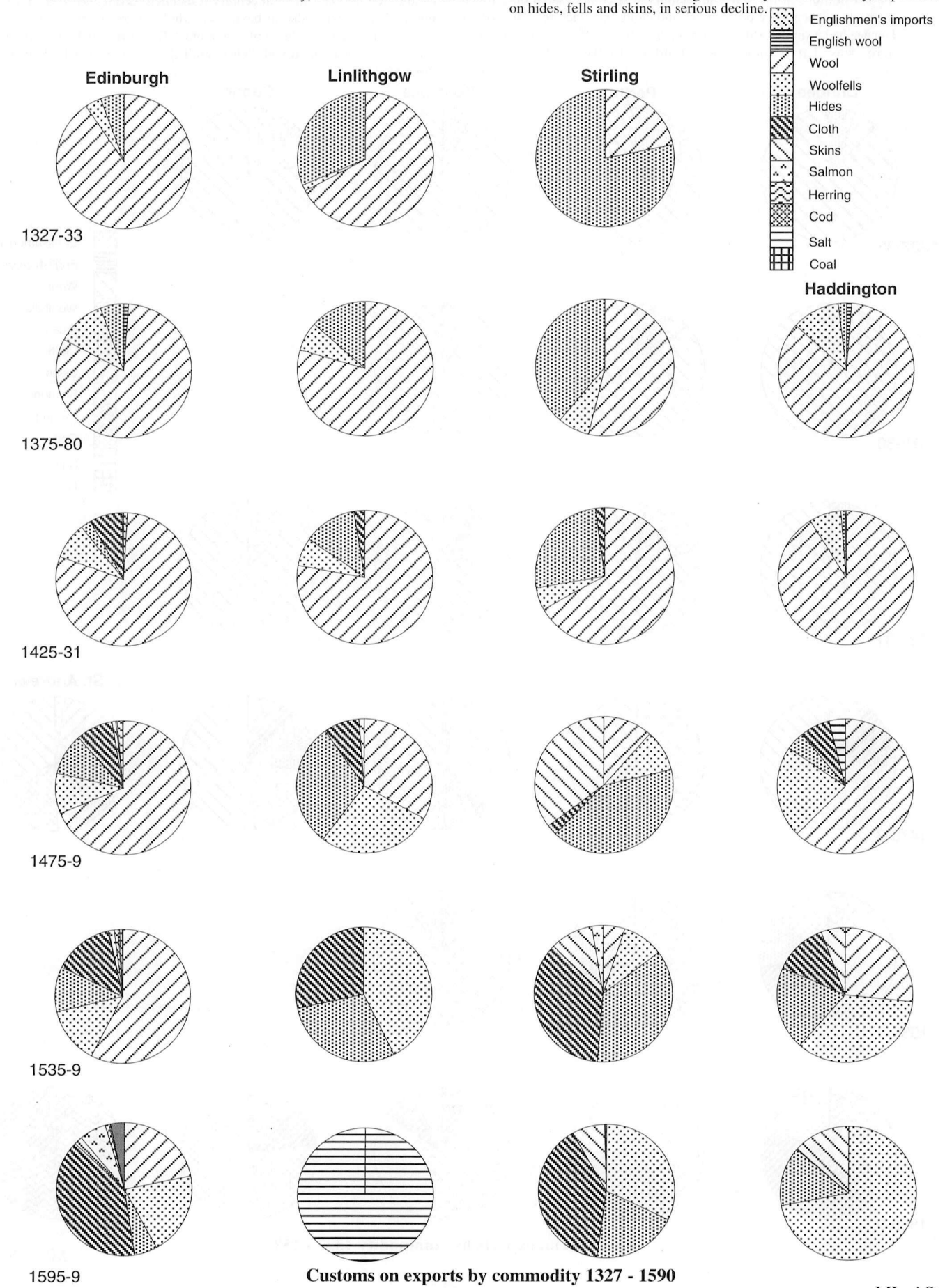


Customs on exports by commodity 1327 - 1590

ML, ASt

Restructuring urban economies in the later Middle Ages

Edinburgh's gradual consolidation of a majority share of the major exported commodities, though clear from these figures, is understated; the capital had by the sixteenth century a uniquely wide industrial and trading base which affected the structure of towns both in the Forth basin and much further afield. The dependence of Linlithgow on the trade in hides and fells, when combined with the data showing the steep decline of these sectors in the fifteenth century, reveals a town in serious decay, unable to diversify into more lucrative areas and increasingly reliant on its position as a royal centre. Stirling, with a similarly shaped economy but a more modest exporting base in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, survived into the sixteenth century better. Haddington, an important wool centre until the end of the fifteenth century, saw its nascent cloth industry collapse during the English invasions of the 1540s, leaving a narrowly based economy, dependent on hides, fells and skins, in serious decline.



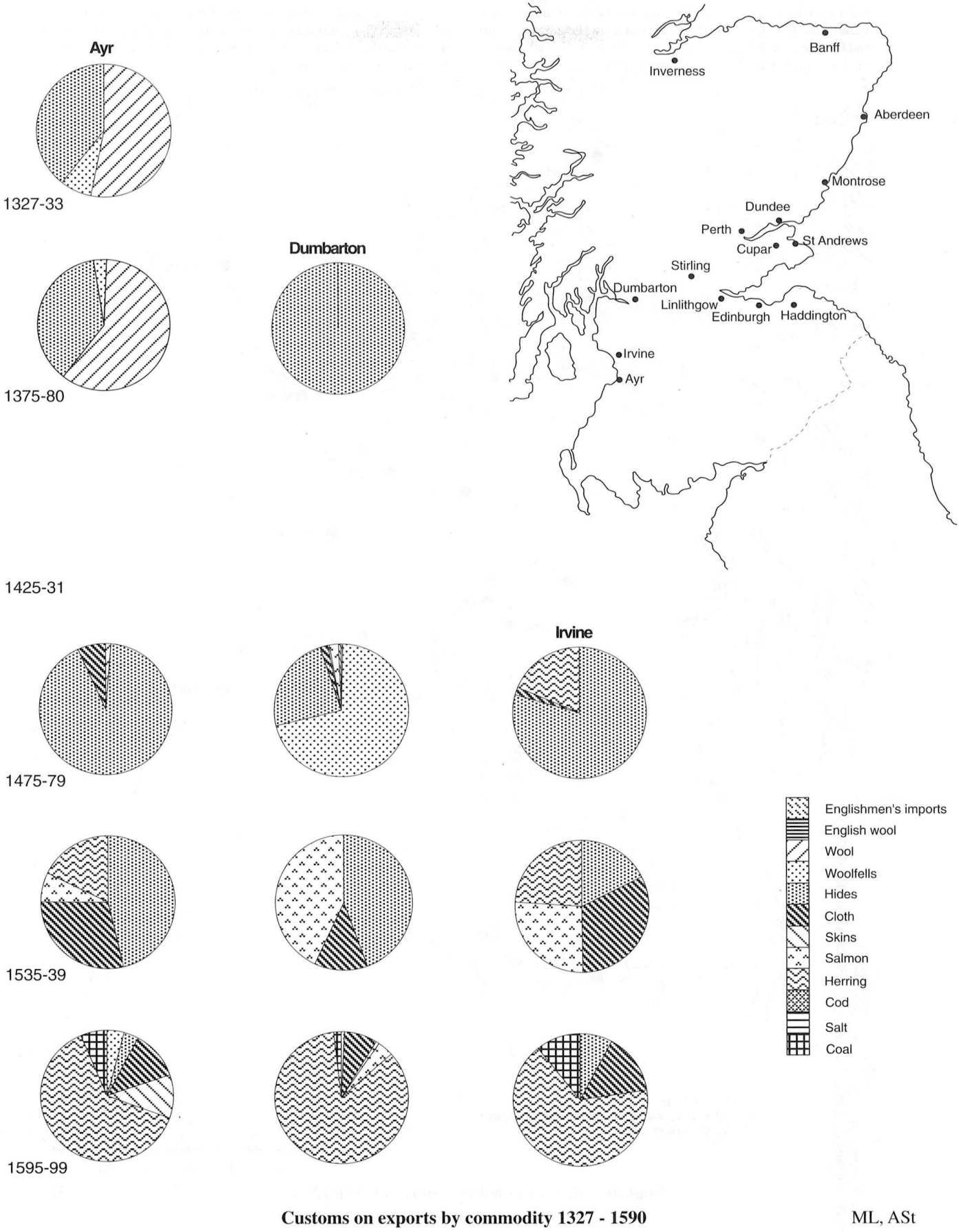
Customs on exports by commodity 1327 - 1590

ML, ASt

Restructuring urban economies in the later Middle Ages

The dependence of west-coast ports on wool seems always to have been much slighter, but a significant cloth industry, with its markets in Brittany, Bordeaux and La Rochelle, is evident in Ayr and Dumbarton in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and Irvine in the sixteenth, as well as in Kirkcudbright and Wigtown, which are not shown, in the fifteenth.

All three of the ports shown developed an interest in the export of hides which fell away sharply - after 1470 in the case of Ayr and Irvine, but not until the late 1550s in the case of Dumbarton. By the second half of the sixteenth century, all three were largely dependent on the herring industry, which had been revived in the 1480s.

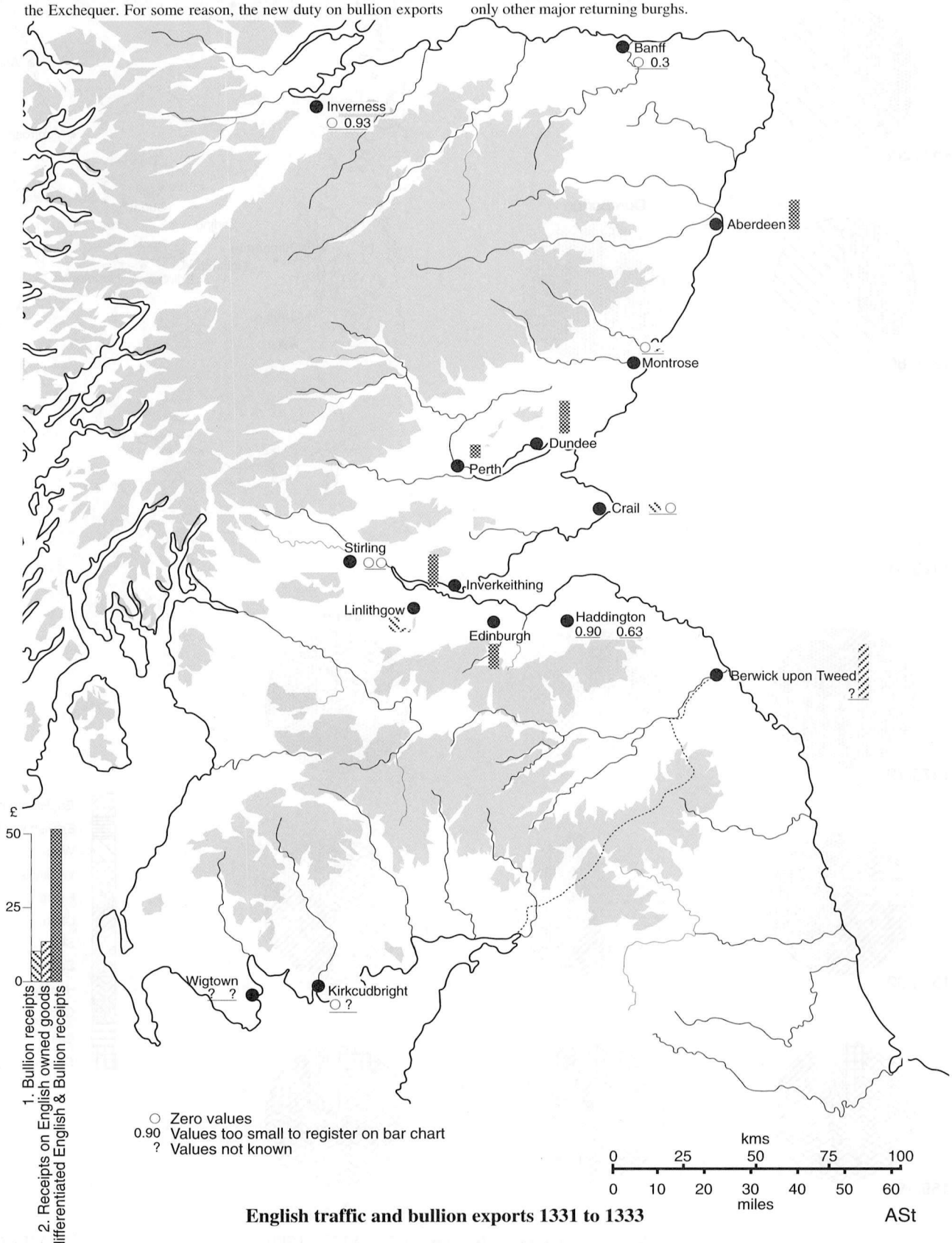


Customs on exports by commodity 1327 - 1590 ML, ASt

Foreign traffic and bullion exports 1331 to 1333

In 1330 duty was introduced on English-owned goods at a rate of 4d in the £ (1.67), perhaps as a belated reaction to the £20,000 indemnity paid to England between 1328 and 1330 as a 'contribution for peace'. In 1331 duty was also introduced on bullion exports, at a rate of 12d in the £ (5%), because of an adverse trade balance and fears about a loss of coinage. Both of these new duties were initially levied along with the Petty Customs and returns were made by the burgh authorities rather than by customs officials (see below, Burgh farms). Returns for 1331 have therefore survived from Haddington, Banff and Inverness, which did not at that time submit customs accounts to the Exchequer. For some reason, the new duty on bullion exports seems not to have been levied at Scotland's principal port, Berwick. Collection practices also seemed to have varied at other burghs.

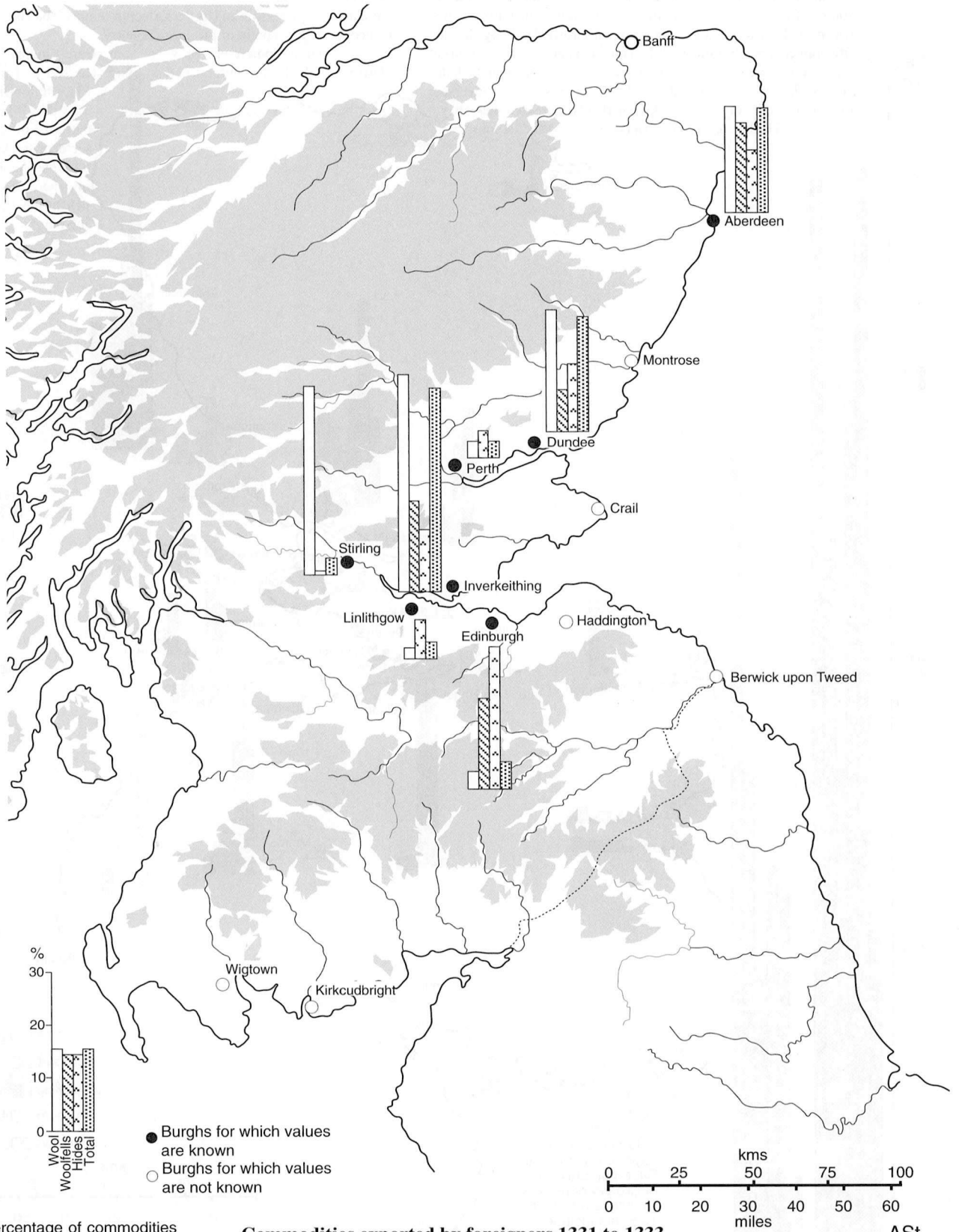
Berwick had much the largest volume of English traffic, but a total value of £1,270 over two years is perhaps lower than might have been expected. There seem to have been little English trade and few bullion exports through Perth; most such traffic passed through Dundee. Surprisingly, as important in the central region was Inverkeithing, which seems have focused almost exclusively on English trade and may almost have acted as an English factory. The returns from Inverkeithing were higher than those from either Edinburgh or Aberdeen, which were the only other major returning burghs.



English traffic and bullion exports 1331 to 1333 AStt

Foreign traffic and bullion exports 1331 to 1333

Double duty was levied at most Scottish ports between 1331 and 1333 on wool, hides and woolfells exported by aliens (although, sadly, not at Berwick). At burghs other than Berwick, foreign merchants accounted for only about 15% of wool exported and 14% of woolfells and hides. As the maps indicate, the spread of alien activity was very uneven. Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverkeithing were the main centres of alien merchants' activity. For some reason, Inverkeithing seems to have been a focal point for English trade and an amazing 93 % of its customs receipts came from the new duties (the double duty on aliens' exports and the duties on English-owned goods and bullion exports).



Percentage of commodities exported by foreigners (to nearest whole number)

Commodities exported by foreigners 1331 to 1333

ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

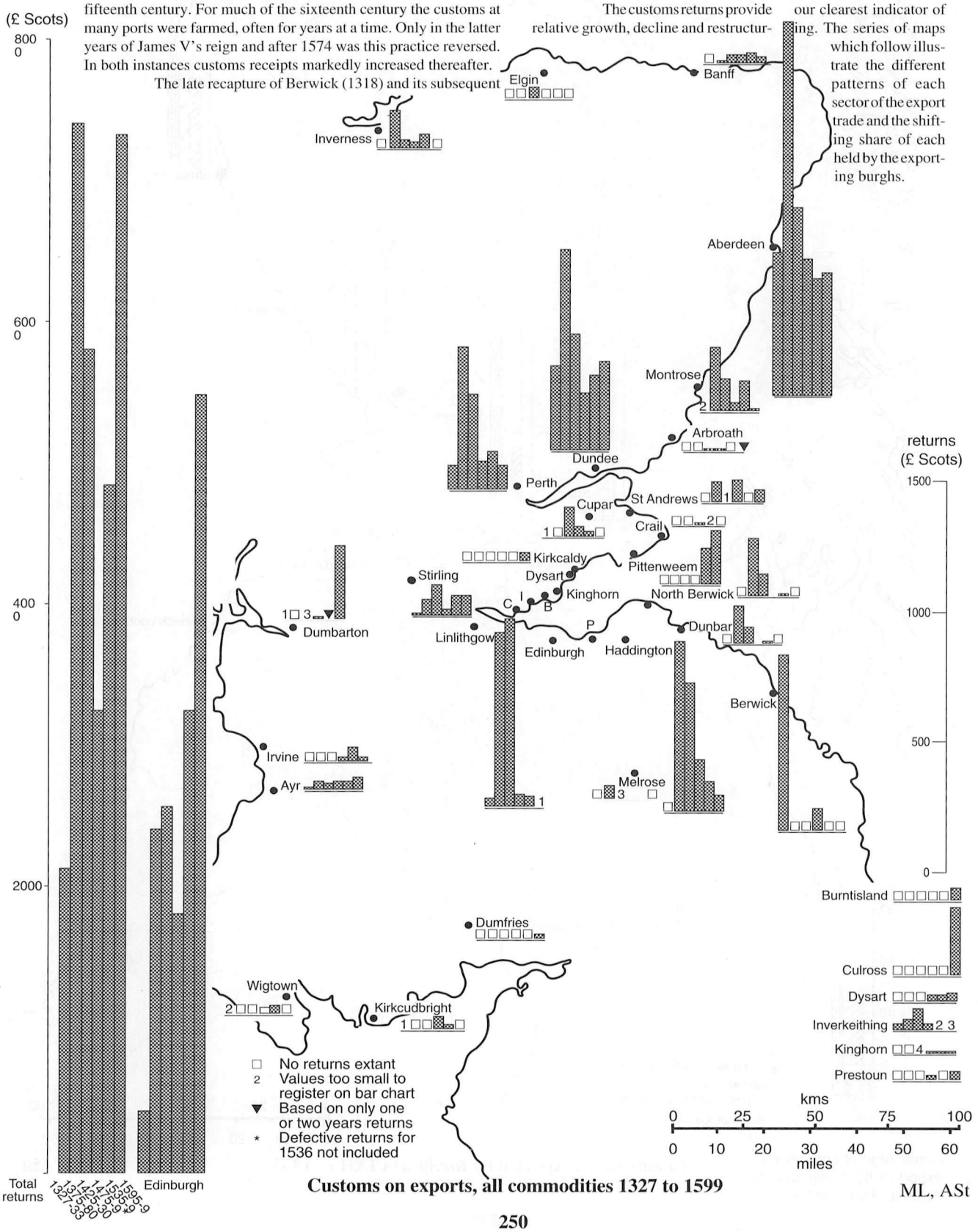
The exchequer returns only give a partial picture of Scotland's export trade in the fourteenth century because the "Great Custom" was levied only on wool, hides and woolfells. Rates of duty were initially fairly low, but were quadrupled between 1358 and 1368 to help pay the ransom of David II. James I added cloth, fish, salt and skins to the list of dutiable exports: while reducing the duty on wool by 19%, James III completed the process by making all exports subject to duty, although he failed to dislodge certain exemptions after the death of James I.

Despite these later additions total customs receipts drifted down, and their value was further eroded by inflation. The principal source of royal income in the fourteenth century, customs revenue had been far exceeded by income from Crown lands by the late fifteenth century. For much of the sixteenth century the customs at many ports were farmed, often for years at a time. Only in the latter years of James V's reign and after 1574 was this practice reversed. In both instances customs receipts markedly increased thereafter.

The late recapture of Berwick (1318) and its subsequent loss in 1333 transformed the economic map of southern Scotland. The most important Scottish burgh of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Berwick's former trade was divided between various burghs: principally Edinburgh, Linlithgow and Haddington % of customs in the 1320s, 32% in the 1370s, 45% in the 1420s, 55% in the 1470s, 67% in the 1530s and 75% in the 1590s.

The other regional centres of thirteenth-century Scotland had been Aberdeen and Perth. Aberdeen retained its place but Perth fell behind Dundee. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth were regarded on the continent as the 'four great towns' of Scotland. But Edinburgh's pre-eminence was increasing and by the sixteenth century it had become the economic focal point of the entire country.

The customs returns provide our clearest indicator of relative growth, decline and restructuring. The series of maps which follow illustrate the different patterns of each sector of the export trade and the shifting share of each held by the exporting burghs.



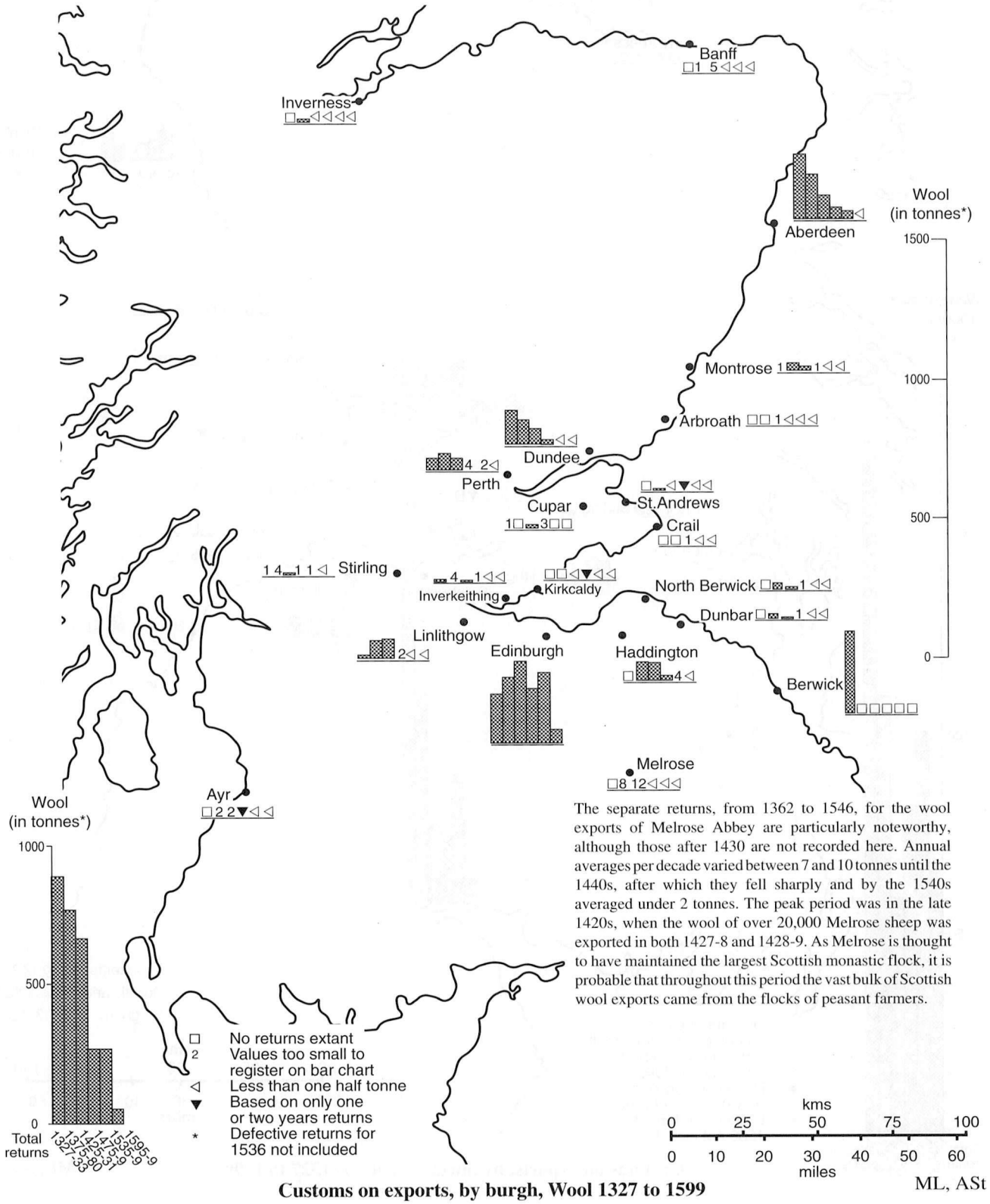
Customs on exports, all commodities 1327 to 1599

ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Rapid expansion of the wool trade had played a vital part in the economic revolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Even after the introduction of duty on many other commodities, the duty on wool continued to account for over two-thirds of customs receipts until the late fifteenth century - this despite a worsening slump in wool exports from the end of the fourteenth century onwards. But the wool trade was increasingly concentrated upon Edinburgh, to the detriment of the other Scottish burghs. Edinburgh accounted for 70 % of wool exports by the 1470s and 90 % by the 1530s.

The market for Scottish wool was in Flanders and northern France, with Bruges acting as the Scottish staple for most of the period between the 1320s and the 1470s, much as Calais acted as the English wool staple. Prices fell sharply from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards and demand contracted along with the Flemish cloth industry. An alternative market was established in Normandy in the late fifteenth century but this did not adequately compensate. To encourage cloth manufacture, wool exports were restricted in the sixteenth century and periodically banned under James VI.



The separate returns, from 1362 to 1546, for the wool exports of Melrose Abbey are particularly noteworthy, although those after 1430 are not recorded here. Annual averages per decade varied between 7 and 10 tonnes until the 1440s, after which they fell sharply and by the 1540s averaged under 2 tonnes. The peak period was in the late 1420s, when the wool of over 20,000 Melrose sheep was exported in both 1427-8 and 1428-9. As Melrose is thought to have maintained the largest Scottish monastic flock, it is probable that throughout this period the vast bulk of Scottish wool exports came from the flocks of peasant farmers.

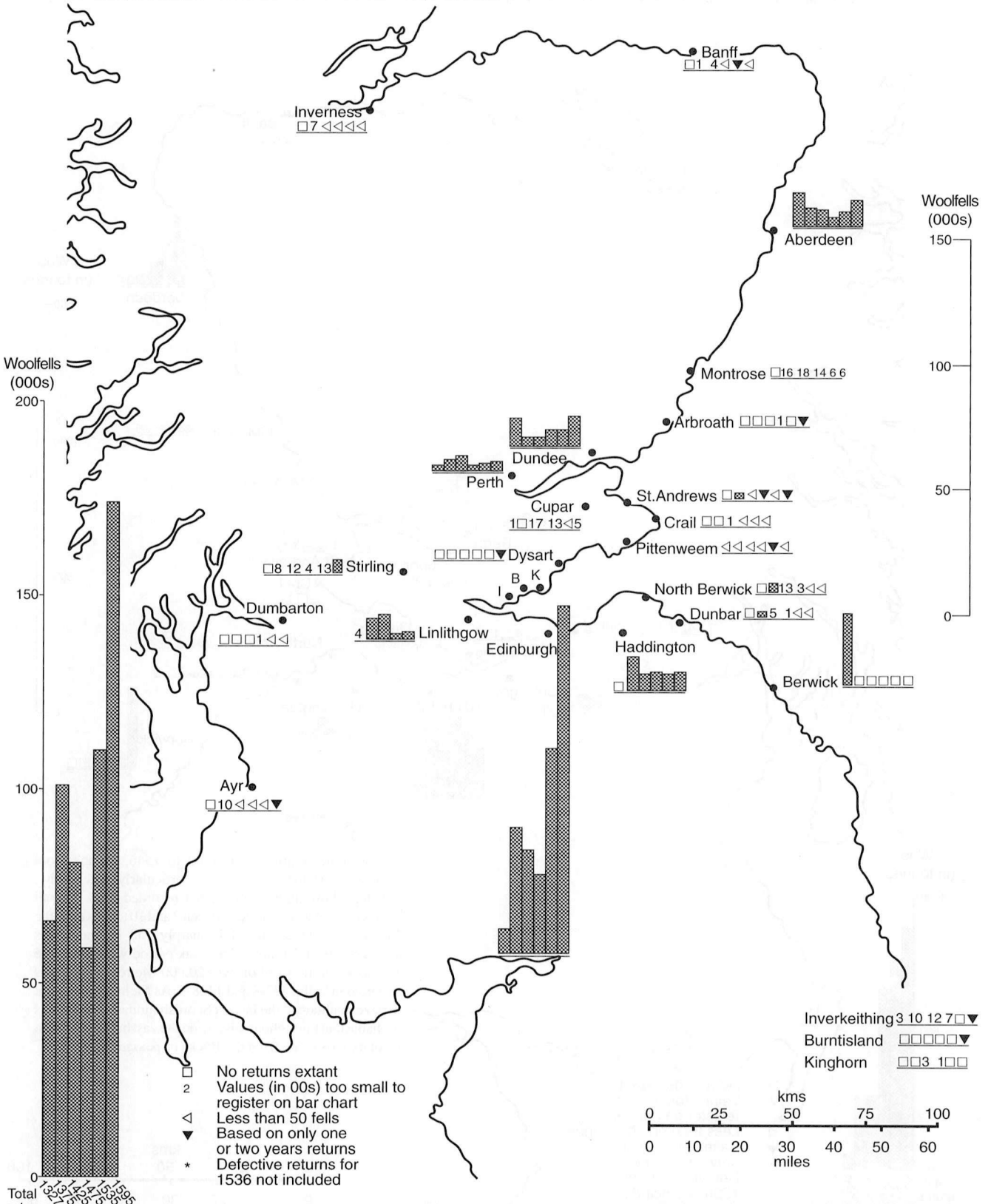
Customs on exports, by burgh, Wool 1327 to 1599

ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Woolfells, like wool, were exported mainly to Flanders and often together, as shown by the *The Ledger of Andrew Halyburton*, a Scottish merchant and factor based in the Netherlands in the late fifteenth century. Yet the patterns, both of general export levels and of levels for individual towns, often varied significantly from those in the wool trade. Southern Scotland traditionally dominated the trade in woolfells even more than in wool, with over 70% of the trade in all but a couple of decades between the mid-fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Central Scotland had about 20% of the trade in woolfells, and northern Scotland under 10%. As in wool, northern Scotland's trade in woolfells was always monopolised by Aberdeen.

Unlike wool, the volume of fells increased markedly in sixteenth century, reaching 18% of all customs receipts by the 1590s; and the capital largely benefited, holding 80% of the trade by the 1590s. With Linlithgow, the drop in fells came at much the same time as with wool; Haddington and Aberdeen compensated a little for their loss of wool exports with a reasonably steady share of the market in fells. In the cases of Dundee and Stirling, volume was actually rising quite sharply by the late sixteenth century.



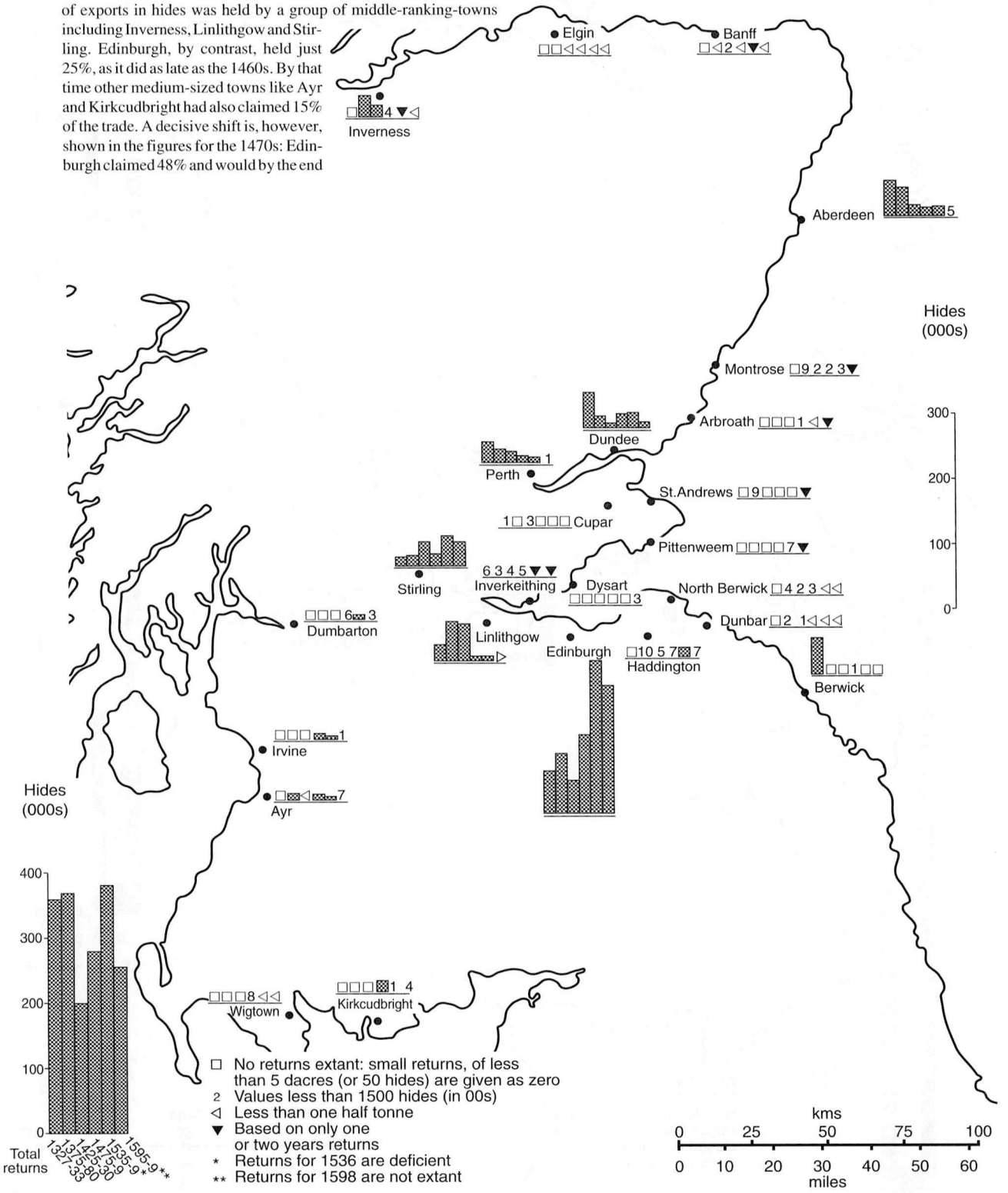
Customs on exports, by burgh, Woolfells 1327 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Until the introduction of hardy sheep breeds in the late eighteenth century, it was cattle rather than sheep that were to be found in the poorer upland regions. The main cowhide exporting burghs were those that provided market centres for the Highlands and the more westerly districts of the southern uplands. The main overseas markets for hides were in the Low Countries, northern France and latterly the Baltic, so there was surprisingly little trade in hides through the west-coast ports.

If the battleground amongst the Scottish burghs had been for wool in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, it lay in hides and woolfells in the mid-fifteenth century. In the 1420s, 45% of exports in hides was held by a group of middle-ranking-towns including Inverness, Linlithgow and Stirling. Edinburgh, by contrast, held just 25%, as it did as late as the 1460s. By that time other medium-sized towns like Ayr and Kirkcudbright had also claimed 15% of the trade. A decisive shift is, however, shown in the figures for the 1470s: Edinburgh claimed 48% and would by the end of the century have 66%, and 85% by the 1590s. The share of the five middle-ranking towns dropped to 20% in the 1470s and fell still further thereafter. But evidence from Inverness is thin from the late fifteenth century onwards, because its customs were usually farmed. Also, no returns made were before 1358 because the earldom of Moray was exempted.

By 1500, when hides had become second only to wool in terms of receipts to the Crown, the main market for the trade lay in France rather than the Low Countries. By the 1570s, when about 3,000 dacres (or 30,000 hides) were exported each year, the Baltic was probably the major market for both hides and skins.

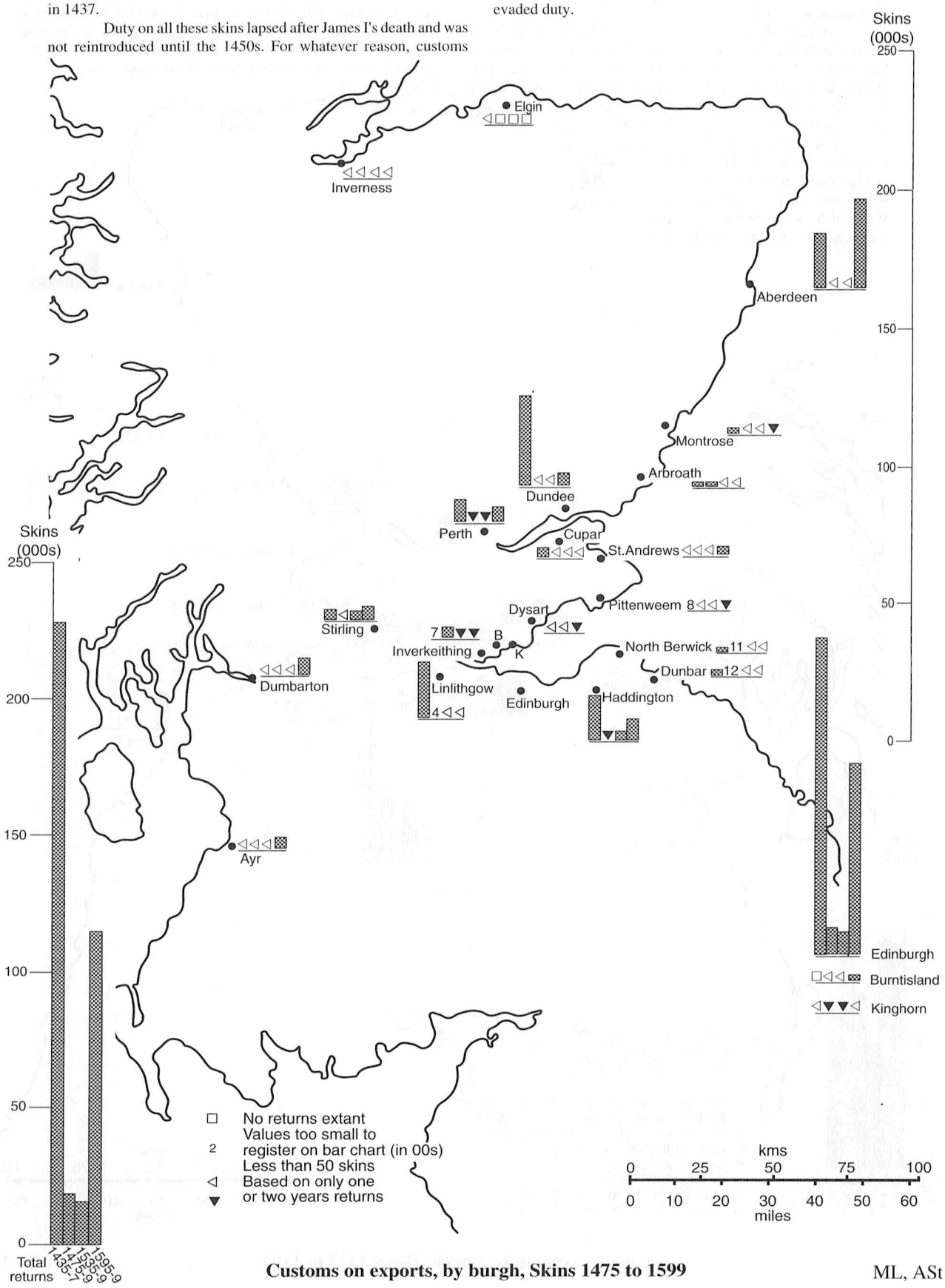


Customs on exports, by burgh, Hides 1327 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

A huge variety of animal skins was exported, ranging from rabbit to goat and otter, but the main groups were lambskins and shorn sheepskins. Duty was introduced on wild animal pelts in 1424 and on lambskins and shorn sheepskins in 1434. The recorded volume of wild animal pelts exported was always low, but huge quantities of lambskins and shorn sheepskins were exported in the short period between the introduction of the new duties and the death of James I in 1437.

Duty on all these skins lapsed after James I's death and was not reintroduced until the 1450s. For whatever reason, customs duties on lambskins and shorn sheepskins seem to have been successfully resisted until the late 1570s; whereupon lambskins in particular reappear as major exports. In the intervening period, while duty was apparently levied on wild animal pelts, duty on lambskins and shorn sheepskins seems only to have been collected from foreign merchants. Even so, the customs returns on these skins were far greater than on wild animal pelts, most of which may simply have evaded duty.



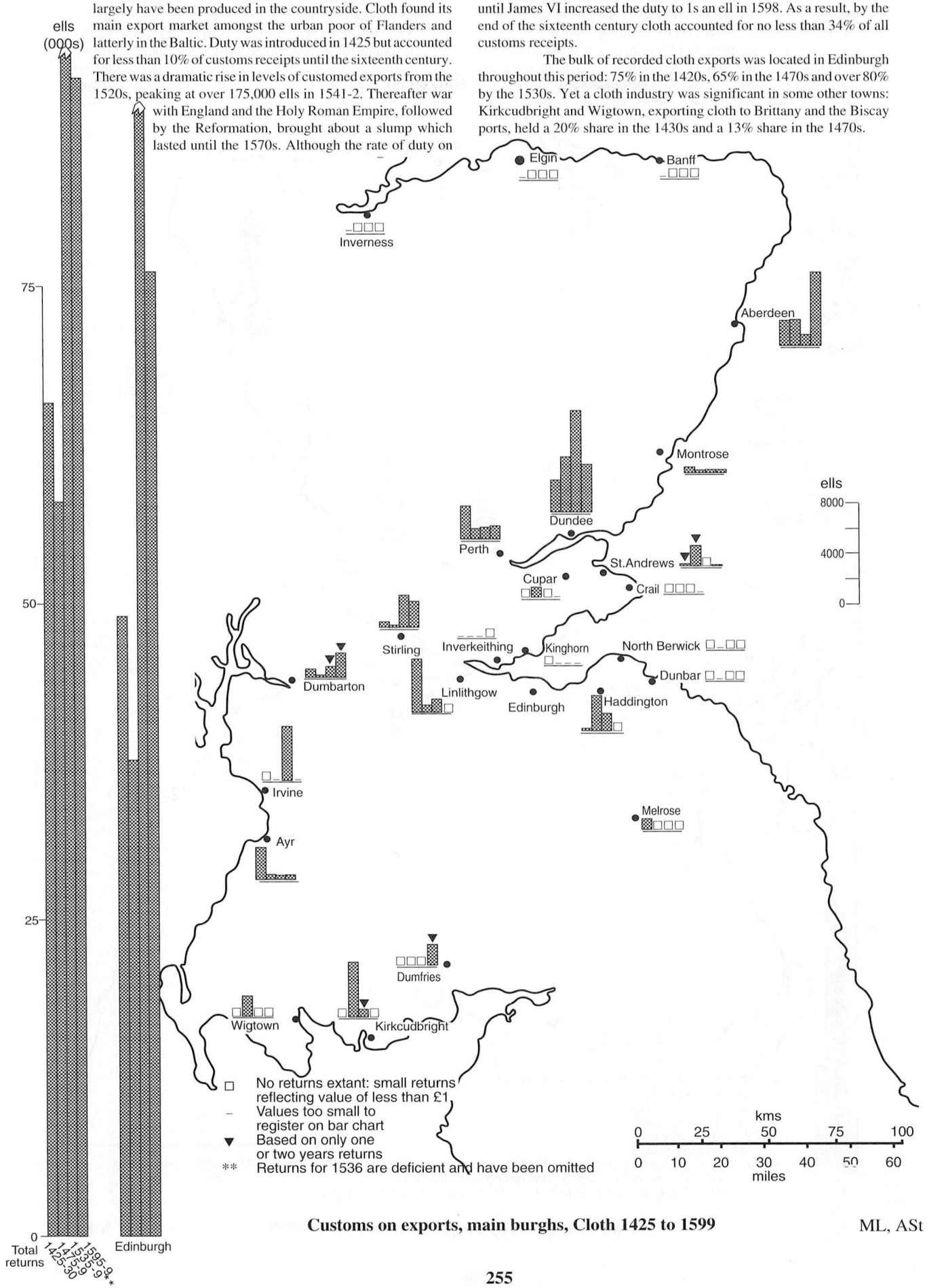
Customs on exports, by burgh, Skins 1475 to 1599

ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Woollen cloth had been a major constituent of Berwick's booming economy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but the extent of exports is unknown. The manufacture of cloth ceased to be significant in burgh affairs. In the fourteenth century it may largely have been produced in the countryside. Cloth found its main export market amongst the urban poor of Flanders and latterly in the Baltic. Duty was introduced in 1425 but accounted for less than 10% of customs receipts until the sixteenth century. There was a dramatic rise in levels of customed exports from the 1520s, peaking at over 175,000 ells in 1541-2. Thereafter war with England and the Holy Roman Empire, followed by the Reformation, brought about a slump which lasted until the 1570s. Although the rate of duty on cloth was nominally 2s in £ Scots, in practice it became fossilised in most burghs at a rate of 1d an ell until well into the sixteenth century, Before the death of James V it had been increased to $2^1/_4$d, which probably was then a tenth of the average value. That in turn became the fossilised rate until James VI increased the duty to 1s an ell in 1598. As a result, by the end of the sixteenth century cloth accounted for no less than 34% of all customs receipts.

The bulk of recorded cloth exports was located in Edinburgh throughout this period: 75% in the 1420s, 65% in the 1470s and over 80% by the 1530s. Yet a cloth industry was significant in some other towns: Kirkcudbright and Wigtown, exporting cloth to Brittany and the Biscay ports, held a 20% share in the 1430s and a 13% share in the 1470s.

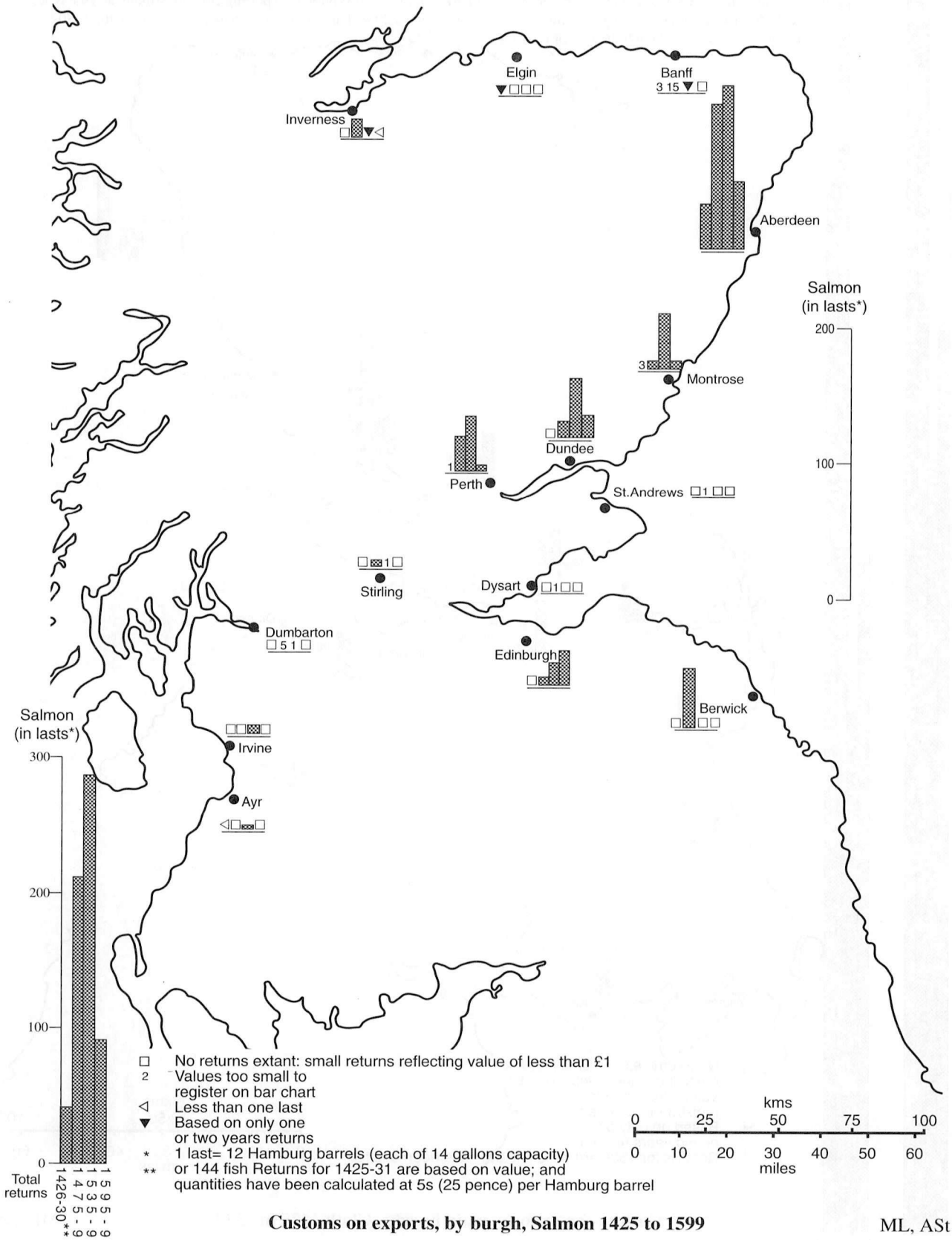


Customs on exports, main burghs, Cloth 1425 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Evidence on salmon exports before duty was introduced in the 1425 is slight. The market for salmon in Flanders was never strong and under James I most seems to have been exported to England. Salmon long remained Scotland's main export to England, although in the later fifteenth century and the sixteenth century most was exported to France. Aberdeen was always the main exporting port.

Salmon exports rapidly increased as direct trade links with France expanded from the 1470s onwards. Salmon accounted for less than 3% of customs receipts in the 1420s but rose to over 10% in the 1470s and stood at nearly 14% by the 1530s. Exports peaked at over 500 lasts p.a. in the last years of James V. But diminishing trade with France and a vast increase in the rate of duty, from 4s or 5s per barrel under James V to 37s 6d by 1597, greatly reduced the size of the market (if not the rate of return to the crown which collected £1,923 from salmon, almost 17% of total receipts, in 1598). For much of the period, although not the years in this series, the total volume of salmon exports cannot be accurately assessed because Aberdeen burgesses were exempted from paying duty and the customs at certain burghs, especially along the Moray firth, were usually farmed after 1485.

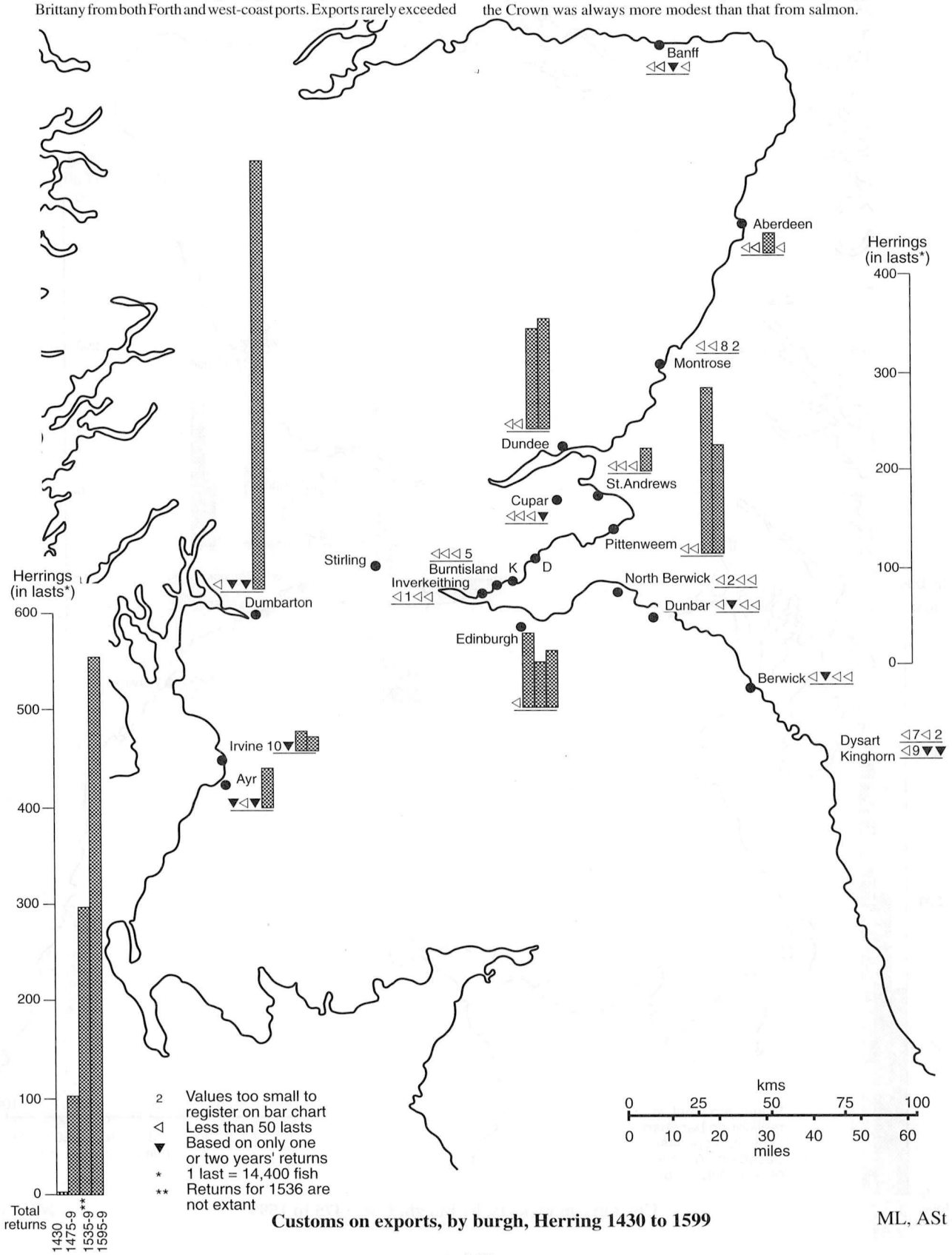


Customs on exports, by burgh, Salmon 1425 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Herring had been fished in great quantities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but during the Wars of Independence the sea fisheries seem to have collapsed. One theory is that the herring shoals migrated in the fourteenth century to the mouth of the Baltic; another possibility is that the Scots were forced to abandon the fisheries because of frequent English attacks. The Dutch revived the North Sea fisheries in the mid-fifteenth century but, although duty was levied from the 1420s, Scottish customs returns are insignificant until the 1470s. Duty was, however, doubled from 6d to 12d a barrel early in the 1480s; by then herring had become the main growth area of the export trade with large cargoes being sent to France and Brittany from both Forth and west-coast ports. Exports rarely exceeded 200 lasts a year, however, until 1535; by the end of the sixteenth century they were often over 800 lasts. By then the main ports were Dumbarton (for which returns however exist only for three of the years 1595-9) and those around Pittenweem.

Markets for herring lay mainly in France and, after 1590, in the Baltic, which by the 1620s was receiving over 600 lasts (or 7 million fish) a year from Scotland. The herring industry was the only one of the three fisheries to sustain its growth throughout the sixteenth century and its net value probably exceeded that of salmon (in 1611-14 their annual yields were estimated at £100,000 and £50,000 (but see below Customs receipts 1595 to 1599); its profit to the Crown was always more modest than that from salmon.

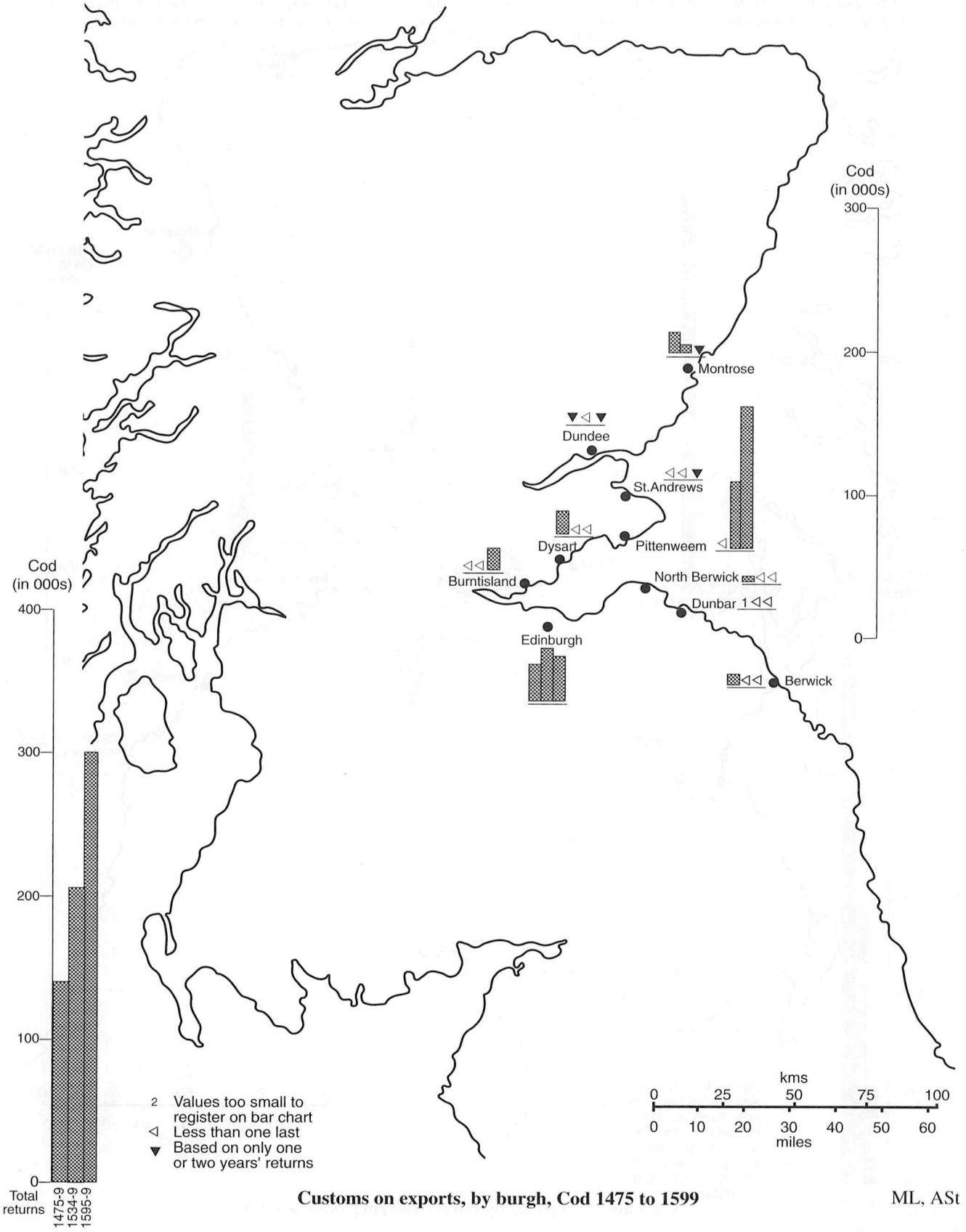


Customs on exports, by burgh, Herring 1430 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Cod, like herring, had been fished in large quantities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Such was the reputation of Aberdeen as a producer that cod was known as Aberdaan in its main market in Flanders. Aberdeens seem also to have been common in England. The revival of the fisheries after a long period of slump came only in the late 1460s (there is only one entry, of 25 dozen fish out of Ayr, for the whole of the period 1425-31). The revival was, however, much more modest than that in herring or salmon: it peaked in the 1570s when 55,000 fish a year were exported. The profit to the Crown from cod exports, despite a rise in the rate levied from 20d to 40d per thousand over the period surveyed, was small: 0.7% in 1504-5 and only 0.4% even in its peak year of 1574.

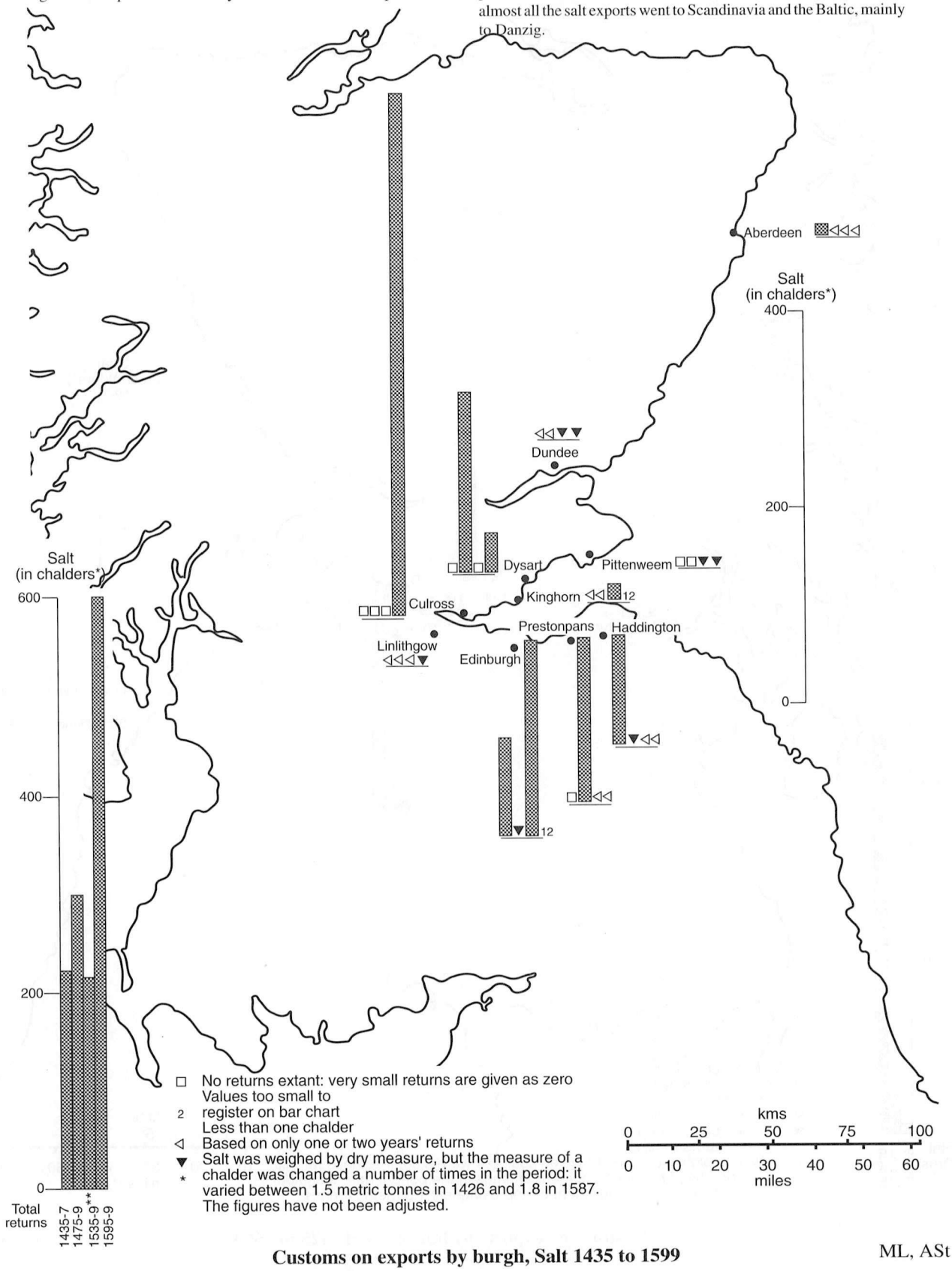
The main ports by the 1530s were the group around Pittenweem, Anstruther, St Monance and Crail, which paid over 50% of customs; by the 1570s they paid 90%. Other major exporters were Edinburgh and Montrose, as shown on the map, but also Banff, which is not shown, as its brief 25% share of the trade came in the 1540s. A curious absentee from this list was Aberdeen, which preferred by this period to concentrate on the more lucrative trade in salmon.



Customs on exports, by burgh, Cod 1475 to 1599 ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Coastal salt-pans are recorded in Scottish charters from the twelfth century onwards. Most were linked with coal-mines, salt being produced by boiling sea-water in large metal vessels. Customs duty on salt was introduced in 1429. Almost all the salt exported seems to have come from salt-pans owned by collieries. The salt from Edinburgh and Haddington came from the pans at Prestoun (hence Prestonpans), which were linked to the colliery at Tranent; similarly, the salt from Dysart and Culross was produced there at pans owned by adjacent collieries. Customs returns for salt, unlike those for coal, begin from the point at which they were devised but salt exports were volatile, peaking at 448 chalders in 1479 and 627 in 1486 but falling below 100 chalders in all but two of the thirty years after 1497. Here, however, the returns may be misleading for Dysart, which held a 73% share of exports in the 1490s, and ceased to send returns between 1506 and 1541 when its customs were farmed. Exports, as with coal, increased dramatically from 1574, coinciding with a rise in the price of salt from the Bay of Biscay; the bulk of exports in the 1570s were funnelled through Prestonpans, which held a 70% share. Returns for Culross do not begin until 1580 but by the 1590s it produced 89% of all Scottish salt exported. Throughout the period, almost all the salt exports went to Scandinavia and the Baltic, mainly to Danzig.

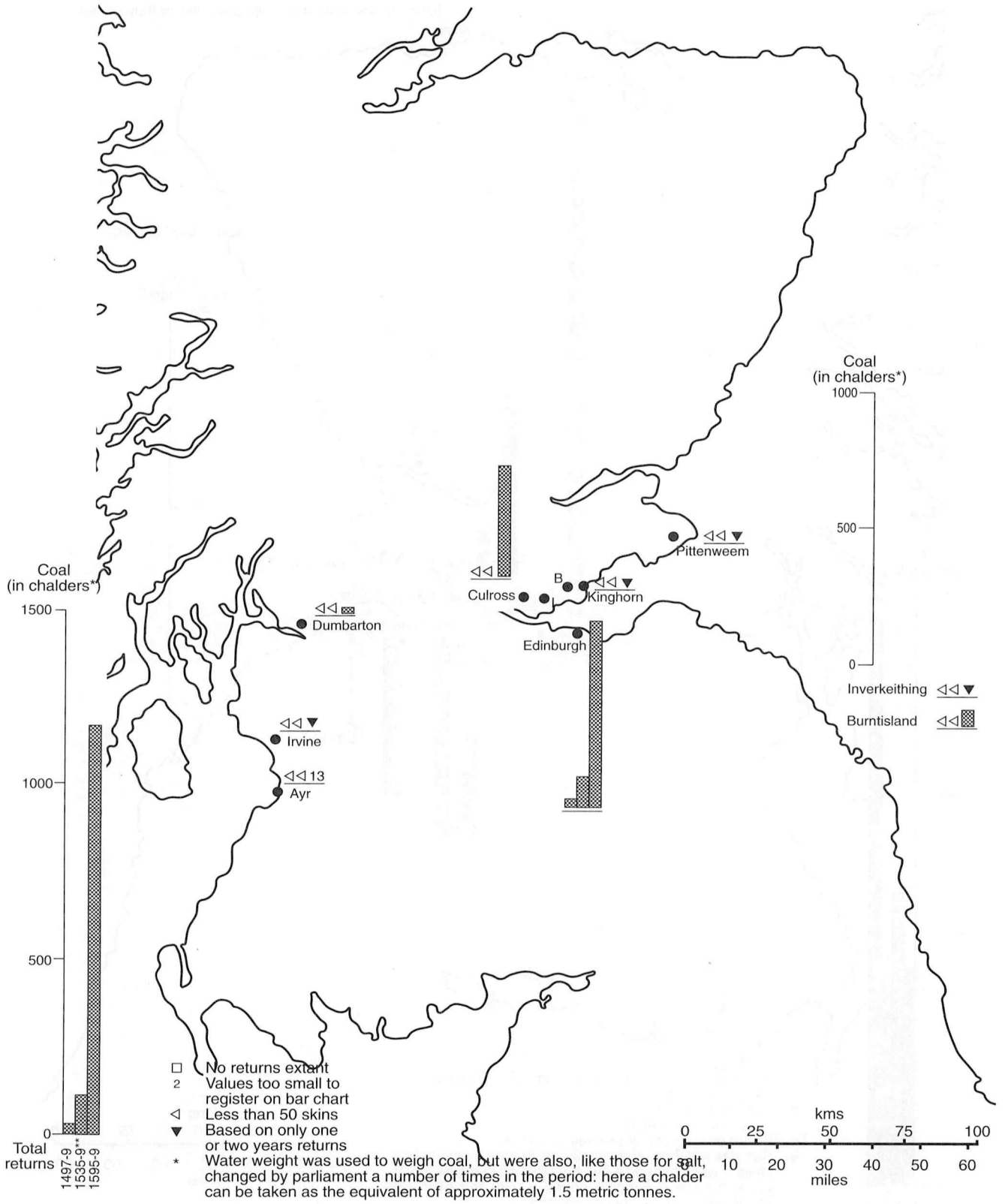


Customs on exports by burgh, Salt 1435 to 1599

ML, ASt

Overseas trade: the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century

Customs returns for coal are recorded only from 1488, at a rate of 16d per chalder, but were insignificant in terms of revenue until the 1530s. Rates were raised in 1575 to 35d or 37d and were raised a further seven times between then and 1599, when they stood at 56d; this reflected a dramatic rise in output and a fourfold increase in exports in the thirty years after 1565-9, when they stood at an average of 282 chalders per year. Much of the coal mined at Culross must have gone into the manufacture of salt, but its coal exports (whose returns begin only in 1580) were by the 1590s equal in value though less in tonnage to those exported out of Leith, Edinburgh; uniquely, Culross coal was customed at various rates between 51d and 117d, reflecting its high quality. The main customers for coal were Dutch, although much of it was taken, in Dutch ships, to the Baltic as well as to the Netherlands. Exports from west-coast ports reached 20% of the total exports in 1576 but were generally more modest.



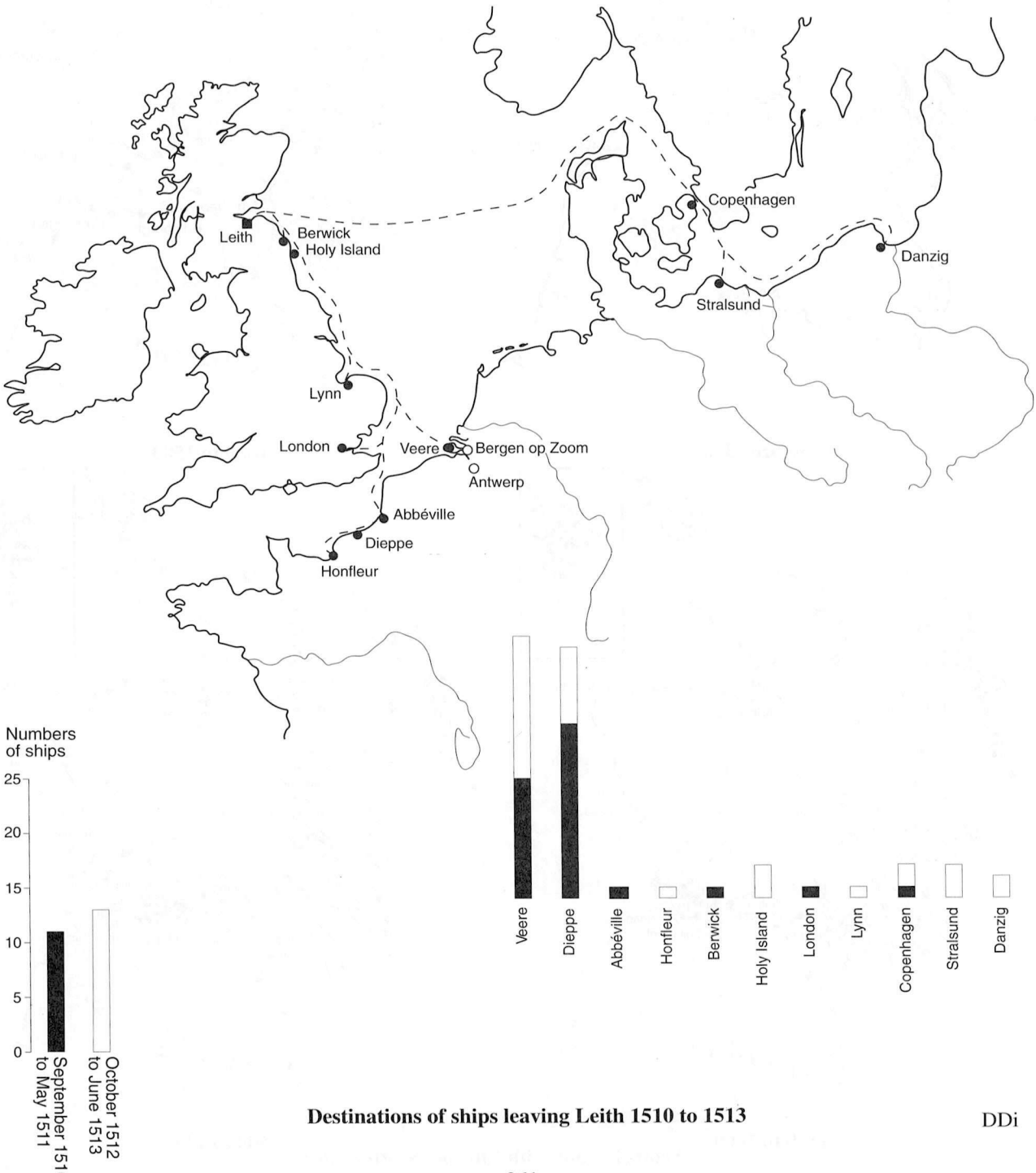
Customs on exports by burgh, Coal 1425 to 1599 ML, ASt

Destinations of shipping from Leith, 1510 to 1513

The Leith port books for 1510-11 and 1512-13 are among the earliest surviving Scottish port books. Unlike the customs accounts, the port books include the particulars of the cargoes sent by named merchants on each ship leaving Leith for foreign destinations. From 1508 Veere was the compulsory entry port (or staple) for Scottish shipping visiting the Low Countries; cargoes were mainly of wool, woolfells and cloth, though some hides, skins and miscellaneous other goods were also sent. Most were probably destined for sale in the growing commercial centres of Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom

The cargoes for French ports were similar though the proportion of hides was somewhat larger. In addition, large amounts of salmon, cod and herring were also sent to Normandy. An expatriate Scottish community had lived in Dieppe since the later fifteenth century and, although there was no official Scottish staple in France, Dieppe clearly attracted the bulk of Leith's French trade, at least between 1510 and 1513.

Despite growing political tension after 1509 and piracy committed by both sides, a few ships continued to trade with England. Their cargoes, however, in which salmon predominated, were small. The low level of Baltic-bound vessels perhaps also reflects the dangerous political situation in the Baltic. The Scots were allied to the Danes in their war against Sweden and several Hanseatic towns, led by Lübeck, though Danzig endeavoured to remain neutral. The Danzig-bound vessels were laden primarily with lambskins. Cloth and coal were sent to Copenhagen, but the three Stralsund-bound ships were virtually empty.

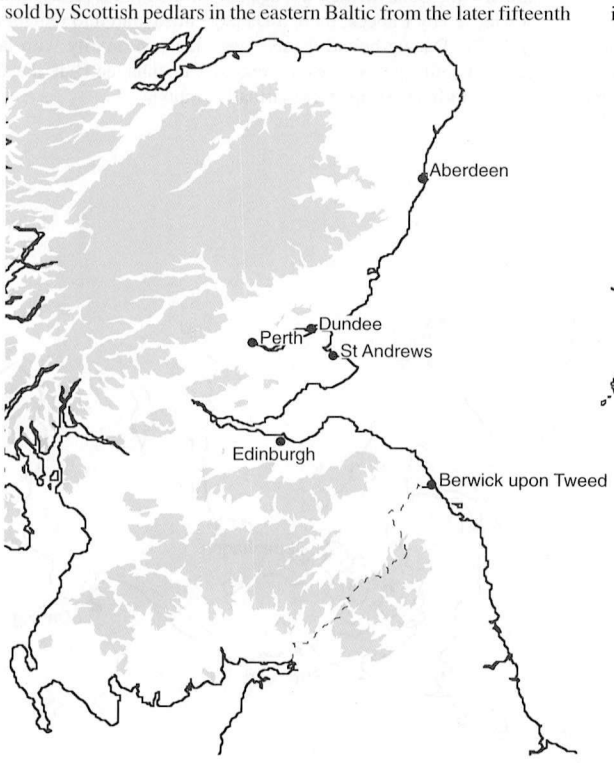


Destinations of ships leaving Leith 1510 to 1513

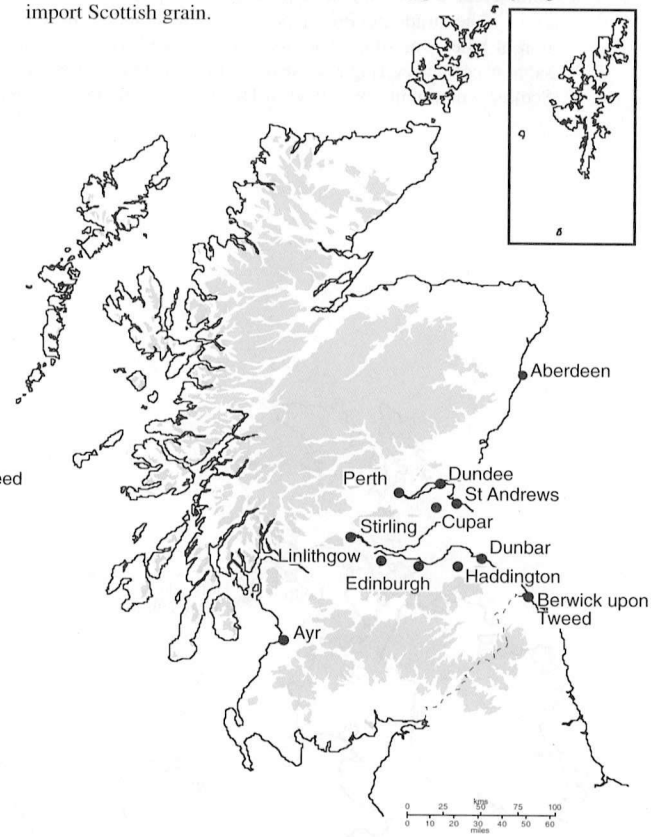
DDi

Trade with northern Europe: Scottish ports

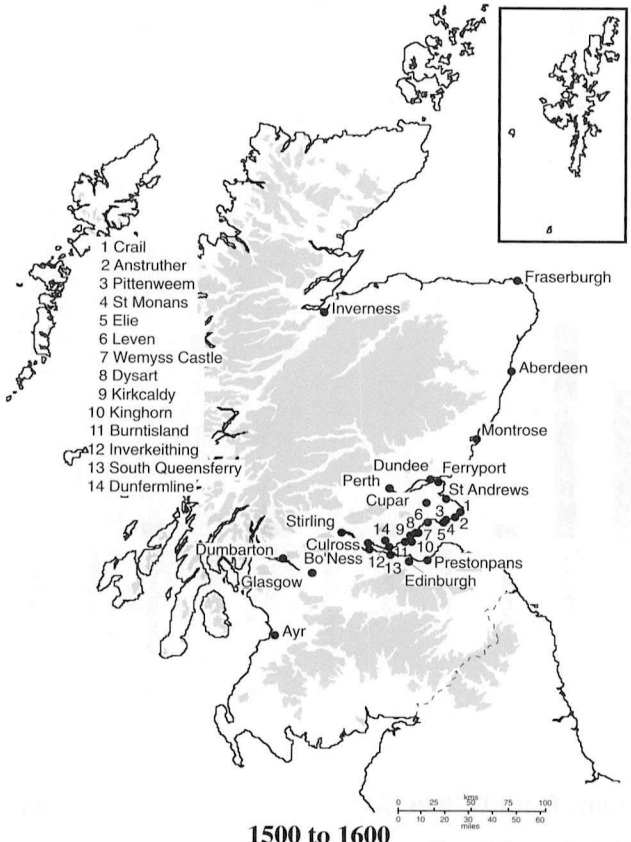
By the later thirteenth century merchants from western Germany were visiting Scotland. Little is known about their trade, though they probably shipped wool, woolfleeces and hides to the Low Countries. Although Germans traded in Scotland throughout the Wars of Independence, they appear to have been displaced by Scottish merchants from the 1330s. With the opening of the Sound to shipping in the 1380s, direct contact between Scotland and the Baltic became possible. Skins, hides, cheap cloth and salt were exported to the Baltic and became the principal ingredients of the Krämerwaren sold by Scottish pedlars in the eastern Baltic from the later fifteenth century. By then, Bremen and Hamburg merchants were visiting Shetland in search of fish, in contravention of ordinances made by the kings of Norway which also applied to Orkney. As trade expanded in the sixteenth century, skins continued to dominate exports to the Baltic, though herring, coal and salt, sent from the Forth burghs, increased in importance. Some cloth was still exported and, from the 1580s, wool was sent to Sweden. Despite periodic slumps in their relative importance, all these commodities were shipped to the Baltic in the seventeenth century. In addition, Norway particularly began to import Scottish grain.



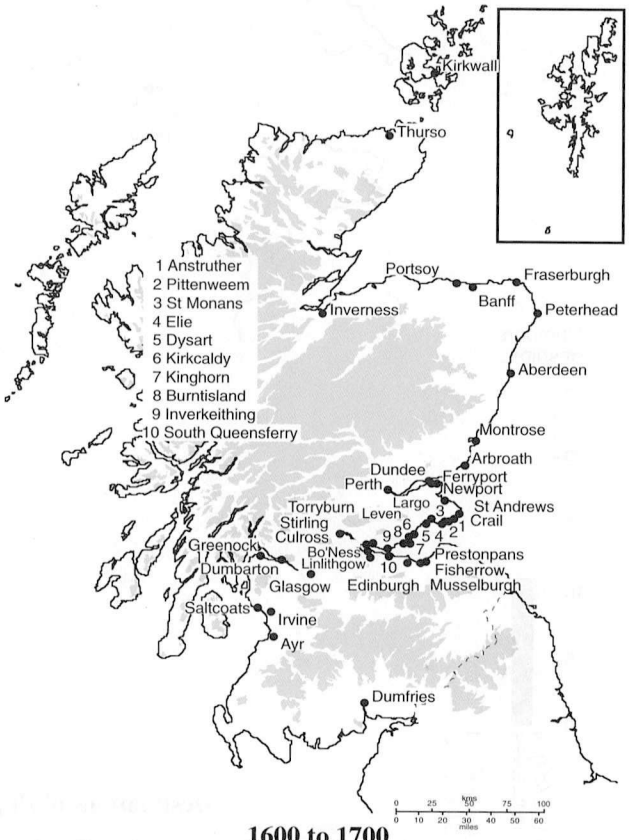
Before 1350



1350 to 1500



1500 to 1600

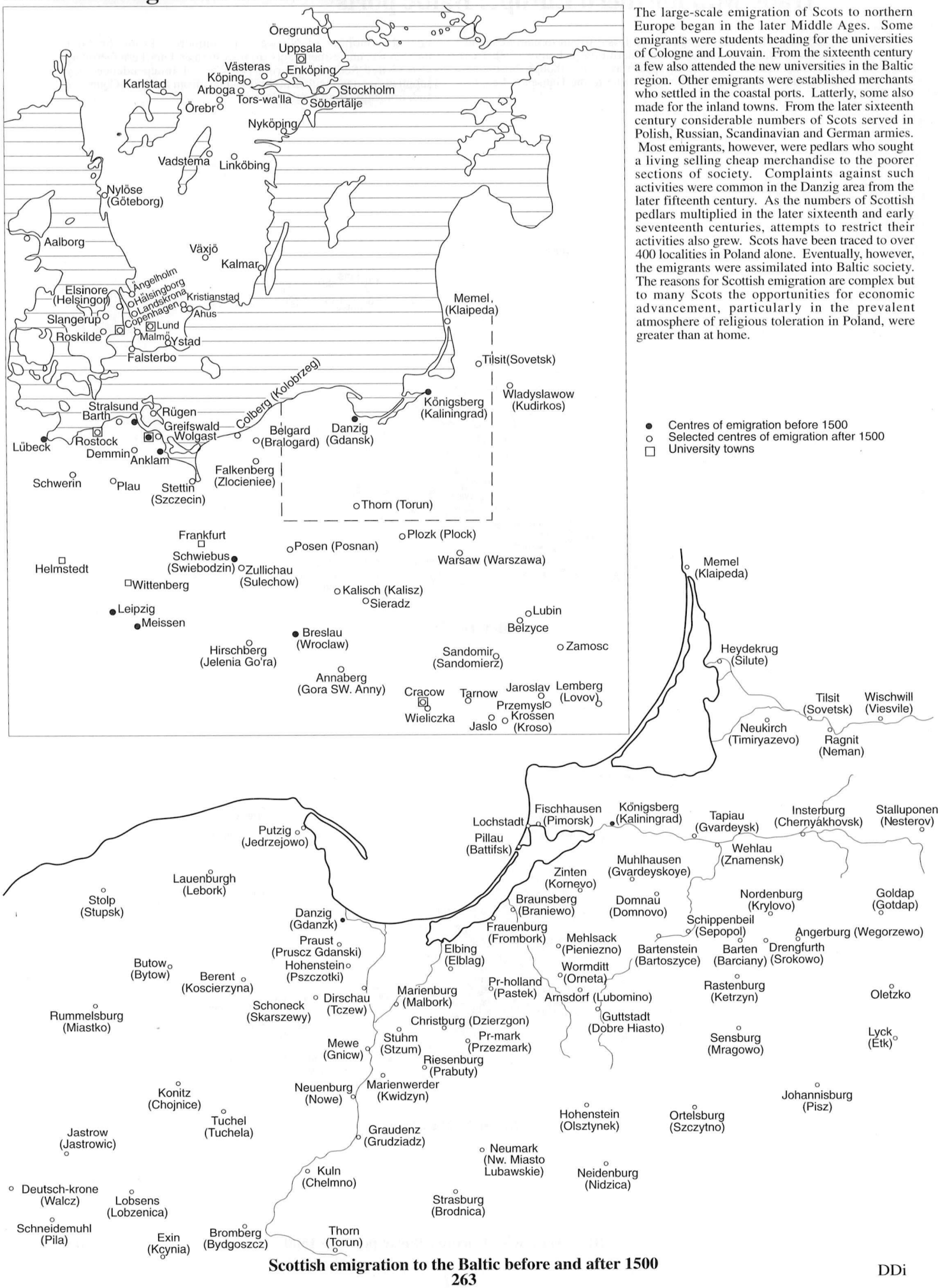


1600 to 1700

Scottish trade with Europe: Scottish ports

DDi

Scottish emigration to the Baltic



The large-scale emigration of Scots to northern Europe began in the later Middle Ages. Some emigrants were students heading for the universities of Cologne and Louvain. From the sixteenth century a few also attended the new universities in the Baltic region. Other emigrants were established merchants who settled in the coastal ports. Latterly, some also made for the inland towns. From the later sixteenth century considerable numbers of Scots served in Polish, Russian, Scandinavian and German armies. Most emigrants, however, were pedlars who sought a living selling cheap merchandise to the poorer sections of society. Complaints against such activities were common in the Danzig area from the later fifteenth century. As the numbers of Scottish pedlars multiplied in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, attempts to restrict their activities also grew. Scots have been traced to over 400 localities in Poland alone. Eventually, however, the emigrants were assimilated into Baltic society. The reasons for Scottish emigration are complex but to many Scots the opportunities for economic advancement, particularly in the prevalent atmosphere of religious toleration in Poland, were greater than at home.

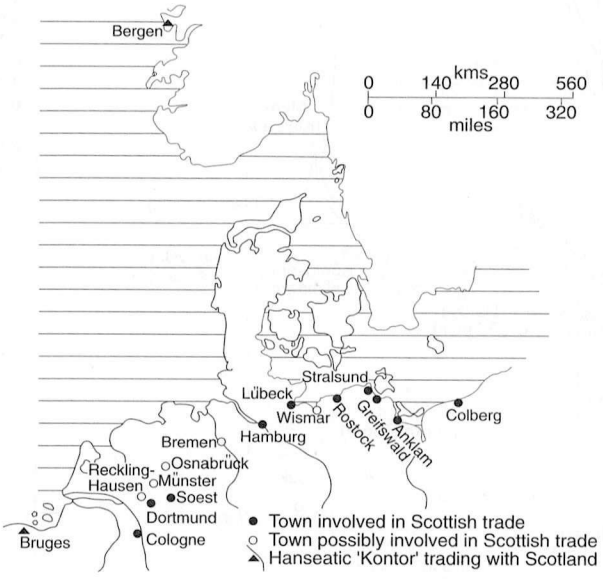
- ● Centres of emigration before 1500
- ○ Selected centres of emigration after 1500
- □ University towns

Scottish emigration to the Baltic before and after 1500

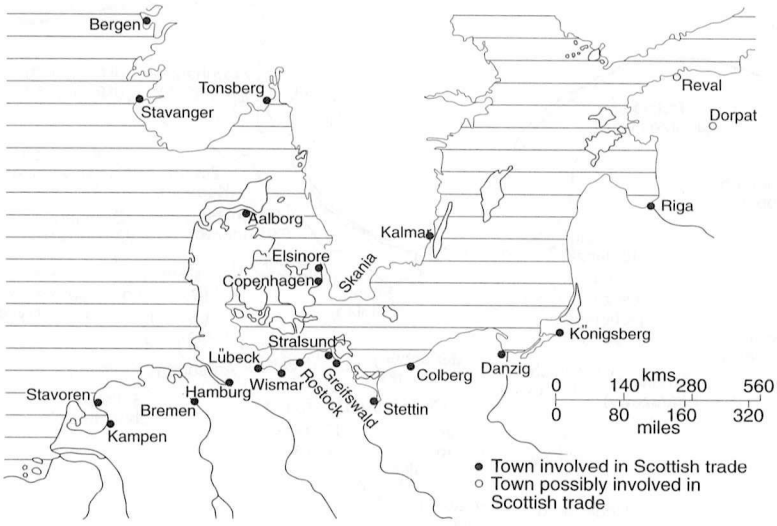
DDi

Trade with northern Europe: Baltic ports

Because of the paucity of records, it is difficult to map Scotland's commercial connections with northern Europe before 1350. There was some trade with Norway, probably in fish, though this perhaps declined in the fourteenth century due to the Hanseatic League's virtual monopoly of Norwegian commerce. From the later thirteenth century, merchants from western and northern Germany also visited Scotland. During the Wars of Independence they supplied Scotland with arms and victuals from the Low Countries and, ironically, from England also.



Before 1350

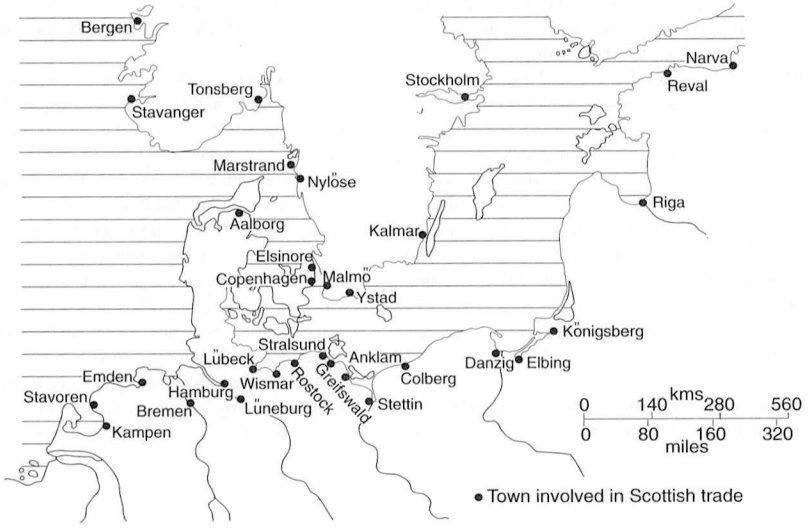


From 1350 to 1500

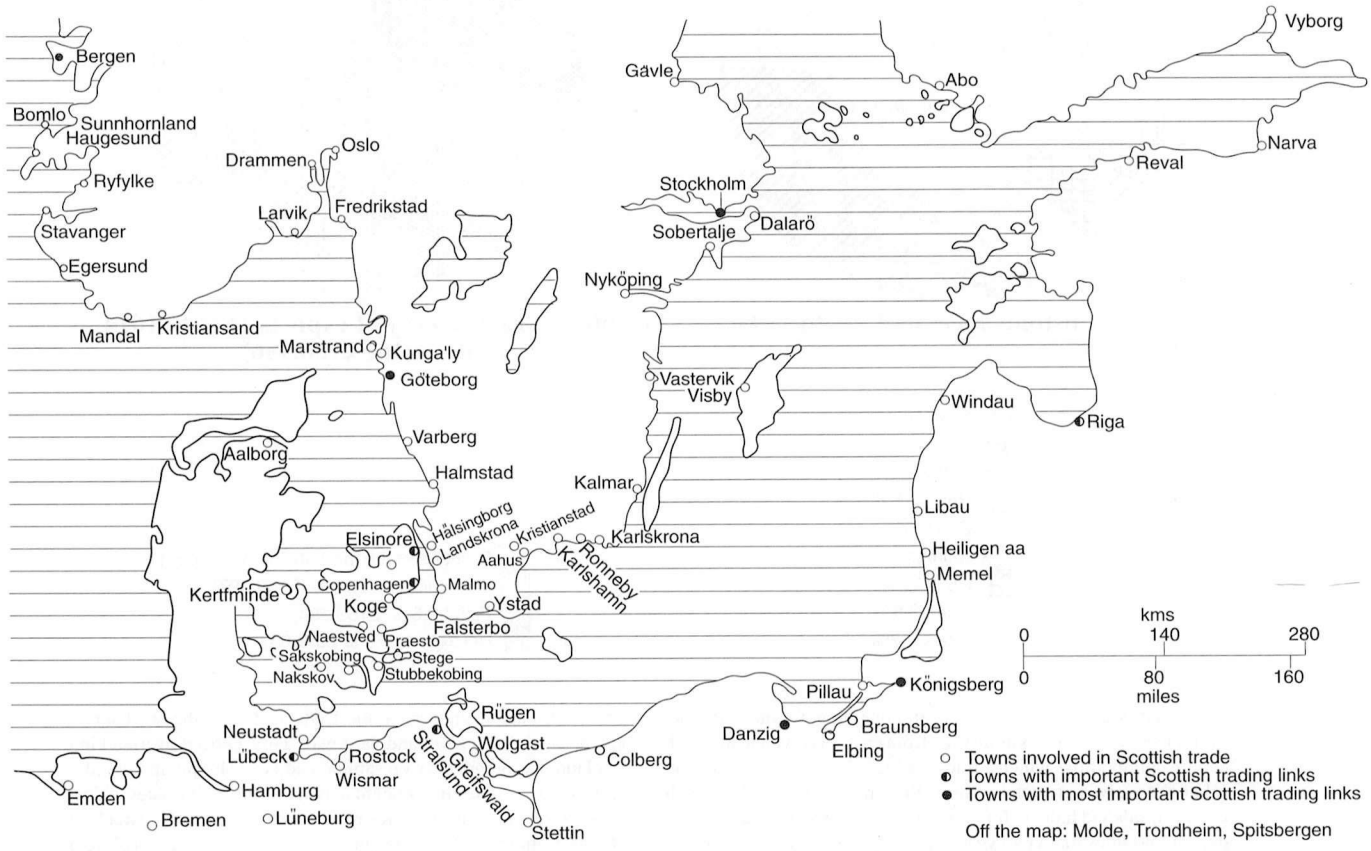
Scottish trade with Europe: Baltic ports to 1500 DDi

Trade with northern Europe: Baltic ports

Soon afterwards, direct trade with western Germany ceased, although Rhenish wine continued to be imported via the Low Countries. Contacts with northern Germany continued, but remained generally limited. Beer was probable the most important import from this region. Scots also began to visit the Skaian herring fairs. By the later fourteenth century, merchants from the eastern Baltic were trading in Scotland, bringing flax, hemp, sylvan products and grain. This trade remained important throughout the period, although grain shipments declined from the mid-seventeenth century. Norwegian trade revived from the later fifteenth century, but timber and tar were now the principal commodities sent westward. From the later sixteenth century, these products were also imported from Sweden, although metals (particularly iron) were the chief Swedish exports to Scotland. Trade with Denmark developed before that with Sweden, but was generally less significant.



From 1500 to 1600



Scottish trade with Europe: Baltic ports 1500 to1700 DDi

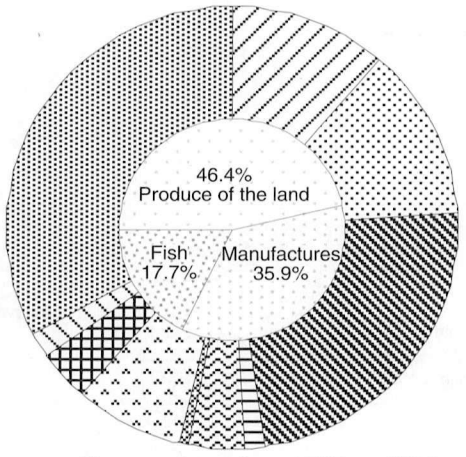
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

By the 1590s, the components making up the Scottish export trade were little different from a century earlier but their relative importance had altered markedly, as the statistics for customs receipts for 1595-9 clearly show. Wool, once the mainstay and most lucrative part of the trade, had shrunk to less than 16 per cent of customs revenue, whereas cloth, a modest component in the 1460s and even in the 1530s, now accounted for a third and the duty on it was sharply increased in the revision of customs dues made in 1597. The recovery of the fisheries, which had begun in the 1470s, continued until the 1650s or 1660s with duty on salmon, the most lucrative sector, also increased in 1597. The export of hides, skins and woolfells to their traditional markets in the Baltic and Netherlands, continued at healthy levels, at least until the 1640s. Salt and coal, although they had still a relatively low duty, begi n to figure prominently in the returns, but would by the 1620s reach far greater heights.

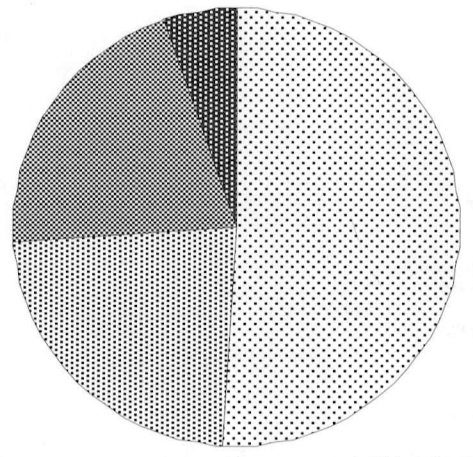
The regular *Exchequer Rolls* series, which permits a systematic analysis of Scotland's exports from the 1370s, ends in 1599. There are only a few port books or local shipping lists for the early seventeenth century, and a Report drawn up by the Cromwellian administration in 1656 until more systematic evidence for both exports and imports becomes available in the 1680s. There is, however, a remarkable survey drawn up in 1614, which largely confirms the patterns of the customs receipts of the 1590s. Entitled 'The wirris and commodities that are shipped and transported further of this kingdom yearly by sea', it estimated the total annual value of all goods shipped out of Scotland between 1611 and 1614 as £736,986 Scots.

By 1700, hides and skins which accounted for a quarter of the 1590s customs revenue and a third of the 1614 survey, would have shrunk drastically; fish, especially herring, worth a fifth of visible exports in 1614, would expand until the 1680s but then contract sharply. Exports of coal, worth 3% by the reckoning of 1614, when about 16,000 tons were produced a year, doubled by the 1680s but then fell away; the fall of the overseas markets for salt, worth appreciably more than coal in 1614, was earlier, in the 1650s and 1660s, and more spectacular. Grain, brought by sea from the north and north-east to the Forth in increasing quantities, began to be exported from 1610 onwards but its overseas markets began to dry up from the 1690s. The two major growth sectors of the export trade in the seventeenth century were in linen and cattle, but both, unlike traditional Scottish exports, were focused on a single market - in England, and much linen followed cattle overland on the drove roads rather than by sea.

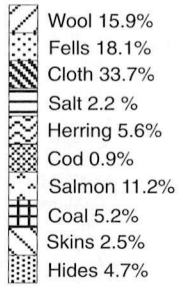
Along with the shift in the balance of commodities exported went a drastic change in the directions taken by foreign trade. The 1620s and 1630s saw record levels of traditional exports like hides and skins, mostly still sent to traditional markets such as the Netherlands and the Baltic. But already trade was spreading outwards, from the Dutch staple port of Veere: grain and coal were largely sent to Rotterdam and the widening range of imports came from a series of Dutch ports, including Amsterdam. Increasing numbers of ships came laden with timber and iron, from Norway and Sweden. The beginnings of a new trade with Spain and America, mostly out of west-coast ports, can be seen after 1660. The means of tracing these changes are diverse and a single indicator - whether numbers of ships or custom paid on commodities - may be misleading if used in isolation; the size of ships varied greatly, as did the amount of duty levied on different commodities.

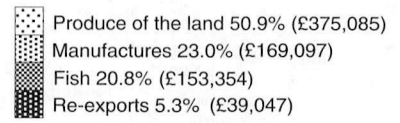


Customs receipts 1595 to 1599



Contemporary survey of exports 1611 to 1614 (Total value £736,986)

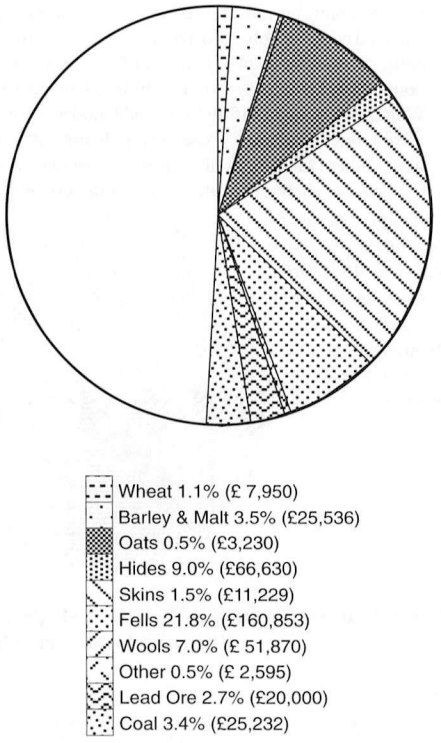




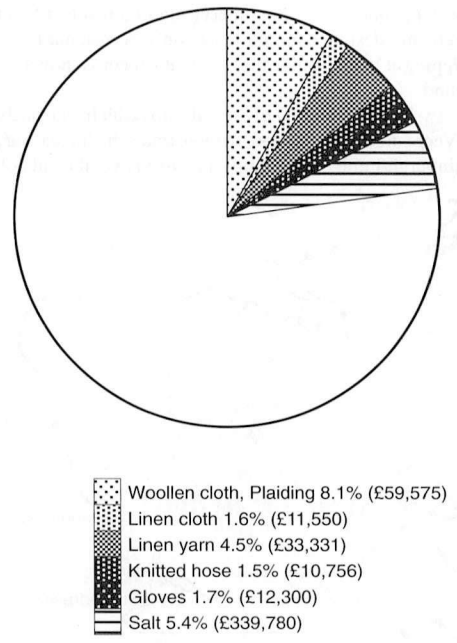
The survey of 1611-14 is useful in giving, for the first time, the real values of exports as distinct from customs revenue in which certain commodities which attracted a high duty (such as wool and salmon) are given greater weighting than those with low duty (such a as coal, salt and hides). It fell into four parts: most valuable were the commodities that yield yearly, ranging from wheat, barley and malt to wool, hides, skins and coal. Next most valuable were manufactures, and the discrepancy between their value given here and in the customs returns of the 1590s is that, as the 1614 survey noted, much linen cloth and yarn was 'daily' carried overland into England. Although duty on salmon had been sharply increased in 1597, exports of herring brought in twice as much; but sales of deep sea fish were insignificant. Re-exports were as yet largely made up of wax from the Baltic and some timber from Norway; dealing in English cloth and wool, which would figure controversially in Anglo-Scots relations by 1700, was still modest.

ML

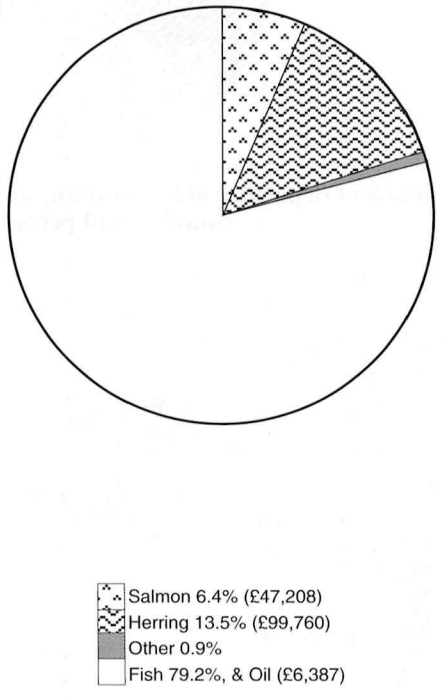
The make-up of the four categories is shown in the following pie-charts.



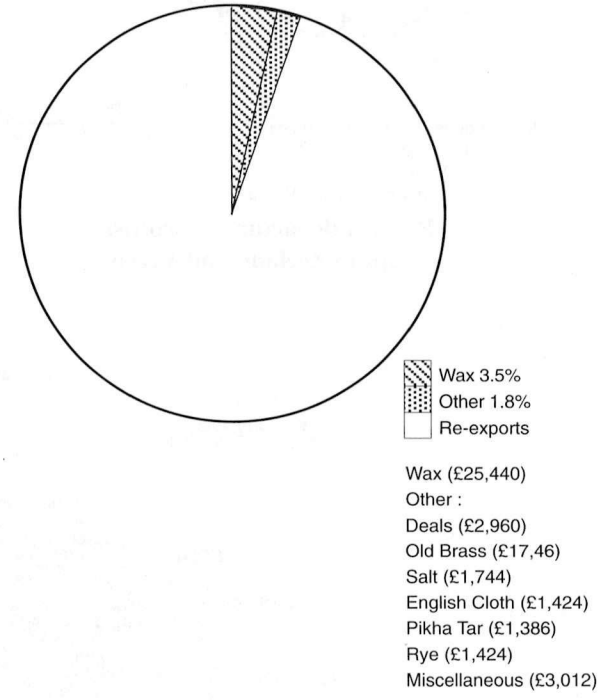
Exports of produce of the land 1611 to 1614
(Total value £375,125)



Export of manufactures 1611 to 1614
(Total value £169,097)



Exports of fish 1611 to 1614
(Total value £153, 355)



Re-exports 1611 to 1614
(Total value £39,047)

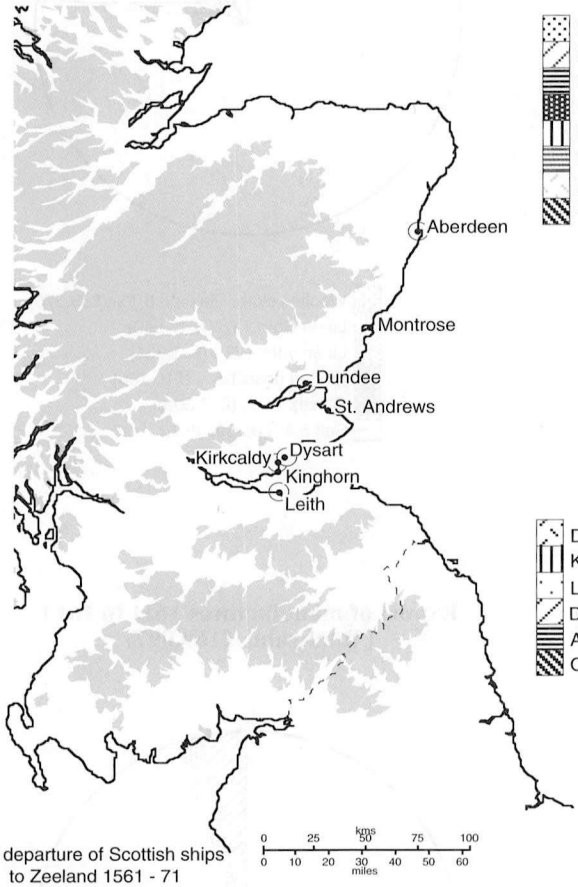
Contemporary survey of exports, 1611 to 1614 ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

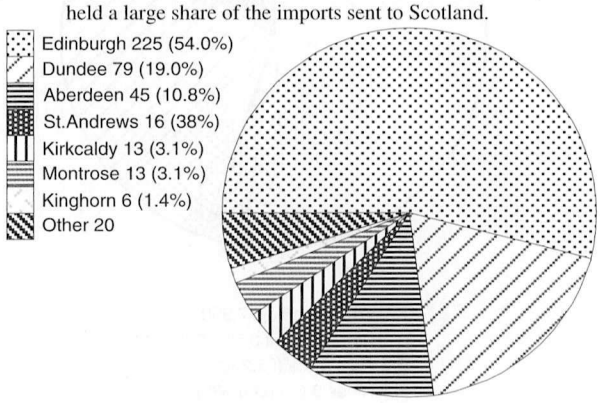
The Scottish staple port in the Low Countries was first established at Bruges in the fourteenth century. It had a complicated subsequent history, alternating between Bruges and the Walcheren town of Middelburg, until it finally settled in the small port of Veere, at the westermost tip of the Scheldt estuary, in 1540. 'Staple' goods - such as wool, hides, skins, and fish - were supposed to be shipped through the staple port, under the supervision of a resident Scottish factor. There are, despite its importance, only occasional lists of Scottish shipping at Veere, unlike the systematic records shown earlier for the Sound.

The list of 1561, giving all ships which paid anchorage dues at Veere during that period, demonstrates the increasing grip which Edinburgh/Leith had built up since 1400 over the bulk of the export trade in staple goods. It is likely that Kinghorn, whose tax assessment was linked to Edinburgh's, was also being used as a base by merchants from the capital. Other east-coast ports probably shipped more goods, to Leith for export from there rather than exported them direct.

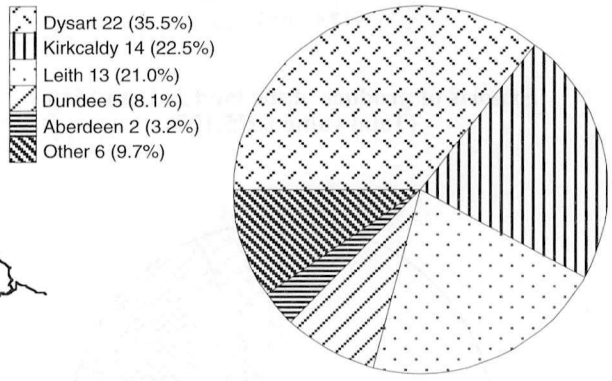
By the 1620s the picture, revealed by payments made over a fifteen-month period in 1626 - 7 to the Scots kirk in Veere, had changed considerably. Most of the vessels from the Forth were small colliers, plying out of Dysart and Kirkcaldy; many of them were bound for Middelburg or Flushing, both also on the island of Walcheren. Cargoes from Leith and Dundee were of staple goods or mixed, including coal. Exports were being shipped in large quantities to other Dutch ports like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, which also held a large share of the imports sent to Scotland.



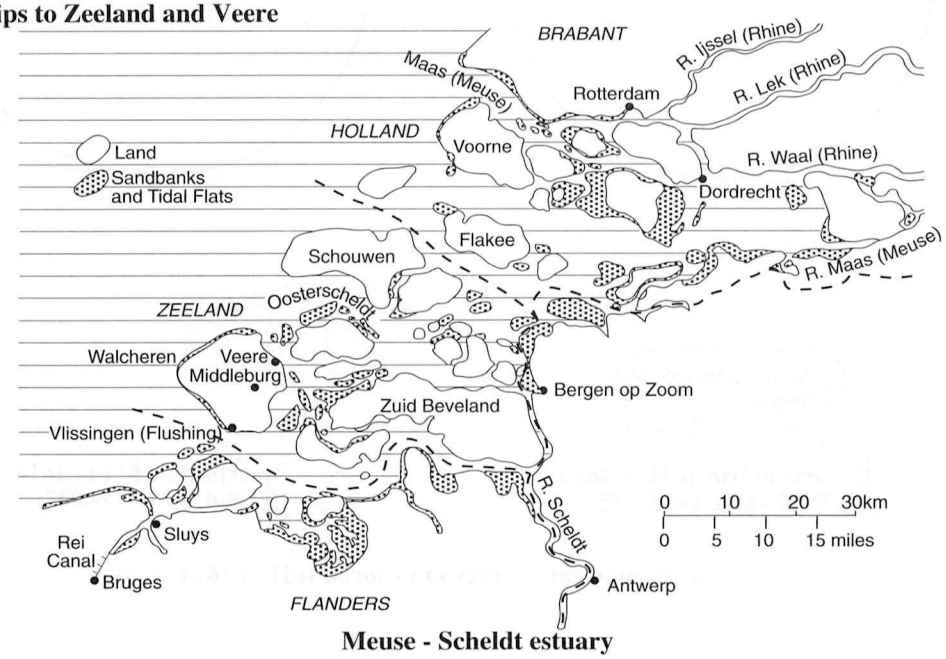
Ports of departure of Scottish ships to Zeeland and Veere



Ports of departure of Scottish ships to Zeeland 15 (number and percentage)



Ports of departure of Scottish ships to Zeeland 16 (number and percentage)



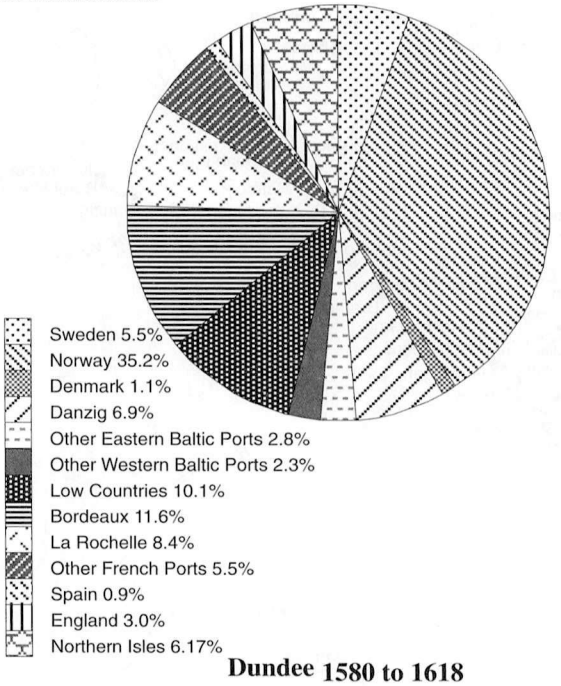
Meuse - Scheldt estuary

ML

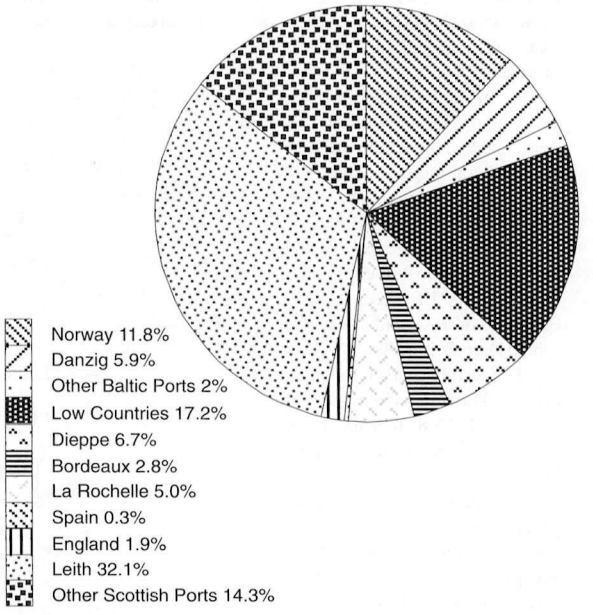
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

These following statistics are based on local Aberdeen shore accounts and Dundee shipping lists. For neither port is there a continuous sequence of accounts. The Dundee lists include only incoming ships; the Aberdeen figures also include outward-bound vessels. The origin of 9.9% of the former and 24.3% of the latter are unknown and have been omitted from the charts. The Dundee lists do not include Scottish arrivals, except from the Northern Isles.

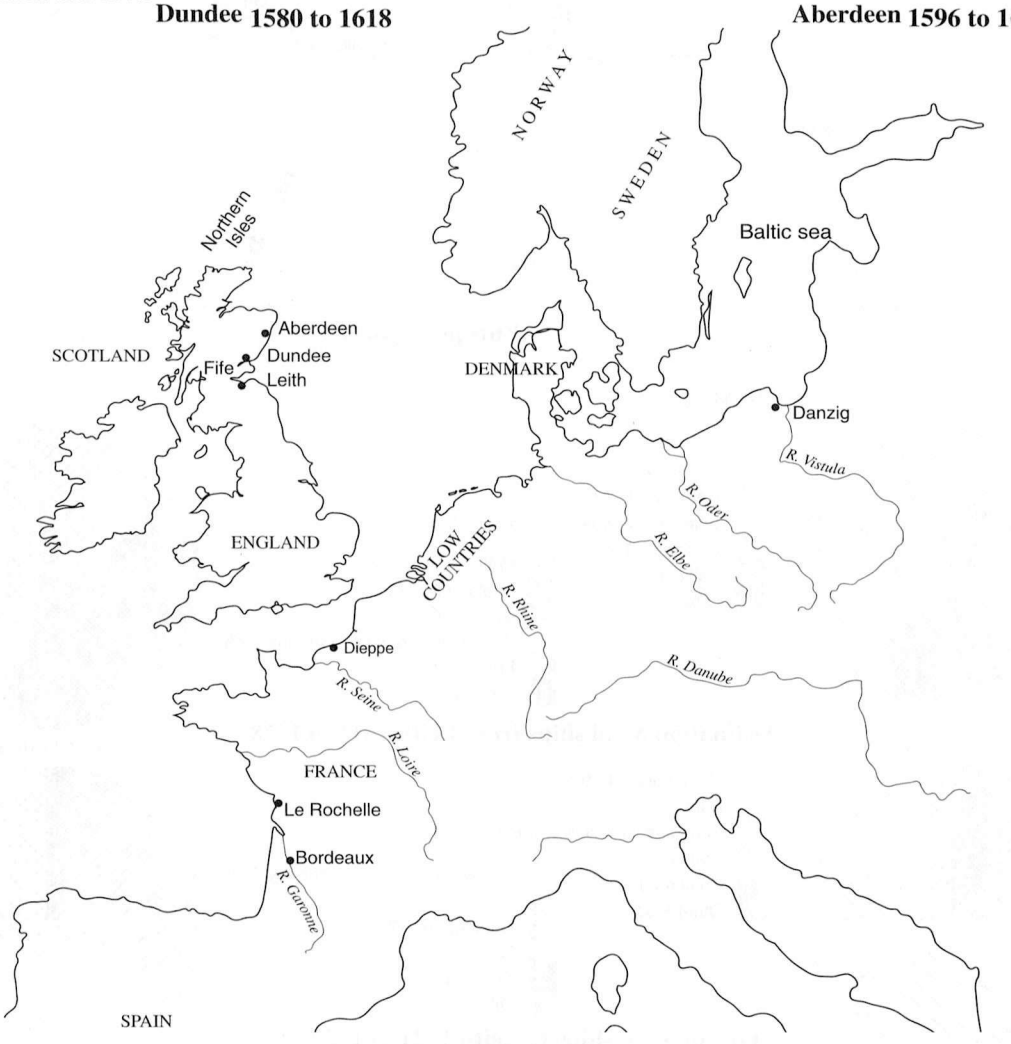
Aberdeen's trade was dominated by shipping from other Scottish ports but much of this, particularly from Leith, carried foreign goods. Salt came from La Rochelle and Fife, wine from Bordeaux, and apples, onions and other miscellaneous goods from northern France and the Low Countries. Beer was imported from England and the Baltic, while Sweden, conspicuously absent from the Aberdeen figures, supplied iron.



Dundee 1580 to 1618



Aberdeen 1596 to 1618



Destination of exports, Dundee and Aberdeen, 1580 to 1618 DDi

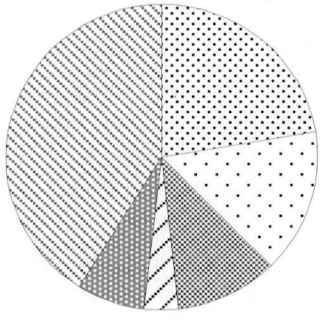
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Although the printed *Exchequer Rolls* series ends in 1599, the continuing dominant role played by Edinburgh, which by the 1590s paid 72% of all customs on exports, is revealed in port books which survive for a few years of the early seventeenth century. Export lists survive for Leith for 1611-12 and 1626-8; imports lists exist for 1621-3 and1636-9. The traditional two-fold pattern of Scottish foreign trade continued, with both parts largely dominated by Edinburgh merchants: hides, fells, skins, coal and fish from all parts of Scotland flowed out, at record levels, and luxury goods and raw materials entered, in increasing volume.

In the trade boom of the 1620s and 1630s, traditional exports reached unprecedented levels. London increased markedly in importance, although the staple port of Veere still figured as the main destination for exports. Cloth and herring were still exported to Baltic ports like Königsberg. Plaiding, herring and fells were sent to Dieppe, but also to Newhaven, La Rochelle and elsewhere in France. The figures for trade with France in 1626-8 are usually low, caused by the hostilities with England.

Dutch and French ports provided a rich variety of luxury goods, ranging from cloth, spices and paper to glassware, but the wine ships from Bordeaux, important enough to be kept in a separate register, are not reflected in the figures given here. In the Baltic, grain, dyes, iron and wax were purchased. Cloth, shipped from London, was the main import from England. Scandinavia, and especially Norway, provided raw materials like timber, pitch and tar, and iron. The map shows all the ports with which Leith traded in the period, both exporting and importing.

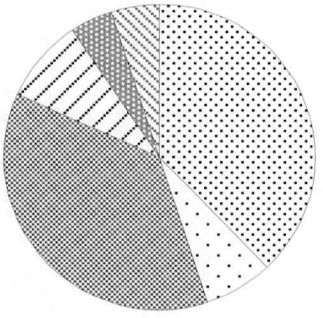
European ports



1611 to 1612

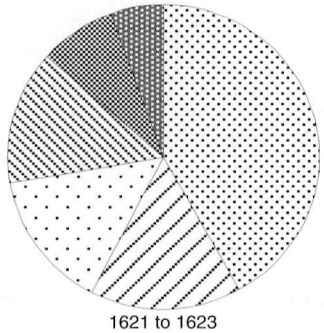
France 41.2%
Netherlands 22.3%
Scandinavia & N.W. Germany 15.3%
England 10.6%
Baltic 3.5%
Other 7.1%

Netherlands 37.8%
England 36.7%
Baltic 8.9%
Scandinavia & N.W. Germany 7.2%
France 5%
Other 4.4%



1626 to 1628

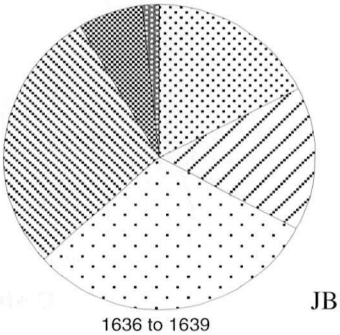
Destination of all ships from Leith 1611 to 1628



1621 to 1623

Netherlands 41.9%
Baltic 15.7%
Scandinavia & N.W. Germany 14.7%
France 14.2%
England 8.0%
Other 5.5%

Scandinavia & N.W. Germany 30.5%
France 28.1%
Netherlands 17.5%
Baltic 15.3%
England 6.8%
Other 1.8%



1636 to 1639

Origin of all ships to Leith 1621 to 1639

JB

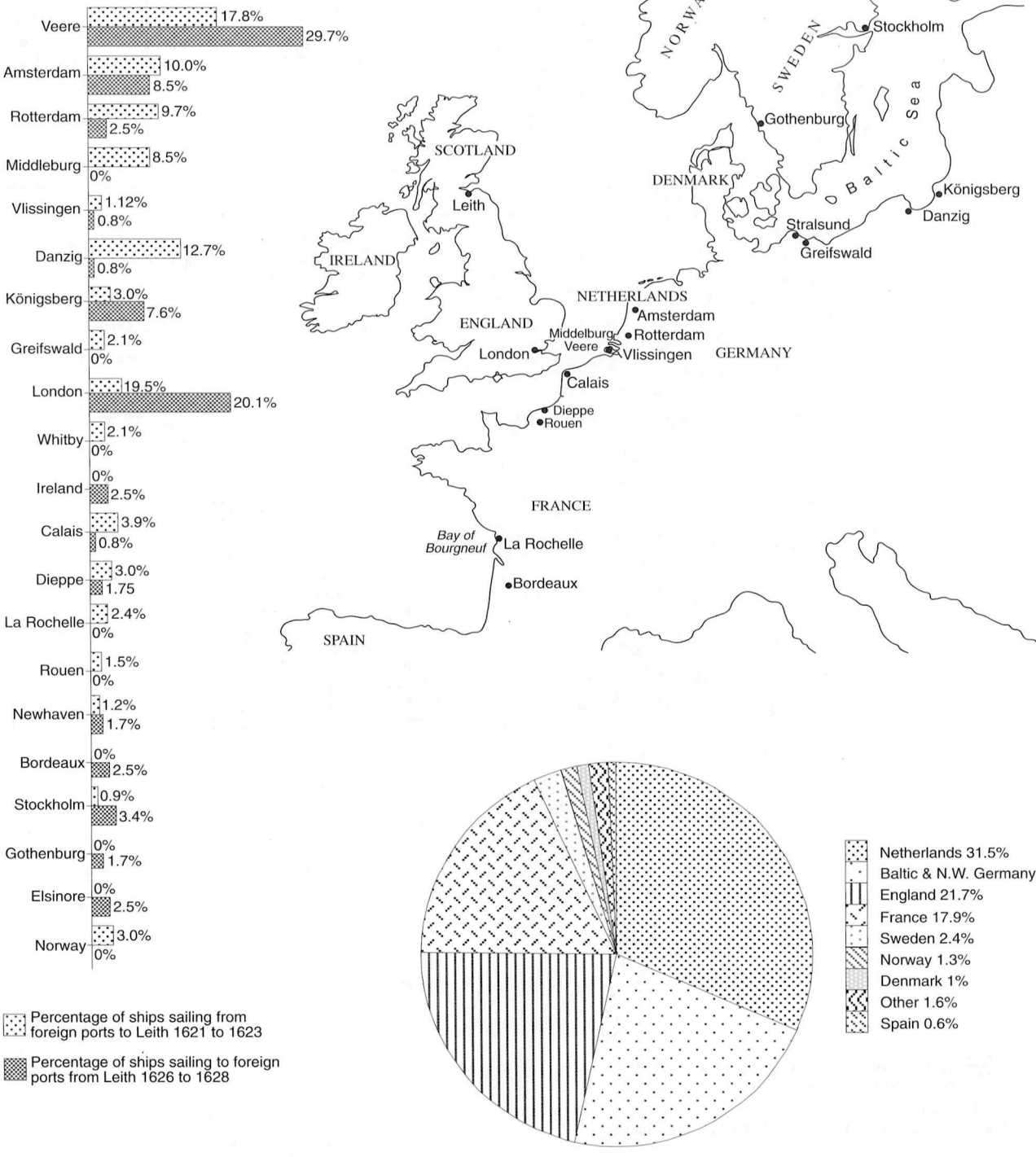
Edinburgh shipping 1611 to 1639

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

The figures represented on the map show the percentage of imports, as measured by custom duties, shipped from the main foreign ports by Edinburgh's 300-strong merchant elite. These merchants paid £8,593 or 30.5% of all Leith customs in the period. The ports or areas shown accounted for over 91% of customs paid on imports. As well as the standard range of luxury manufactures and raw materials from London, the Netherlands and elsewhere, many of the ships from the Baltic during the harvest failures in Scotland of the mid-1620s carried grain. The figures do not, however, include imports of French wine, chiefly from Bordeaux, the most lucrative source of revenue and customed separately.

Levels of customs can also be compared with numbers of ships, as given in the table below. The same ports accounted for 91% of ships entering Leith but there are significant discrepancies between the two sets of figures, caused by the different rates of duty on various imported commodities: only a modest number of ships, for example, arrived from London but they accounted for over 20% of all custom paid because most carried high-duty cloth.

There are differences, too, in the patterns of ships plying to and from Leith. The twin bar charts are based on the 331 ships which left Leith 1621 to 3 carrying cargoes for this group of merchants and the 118 which arrived 1626 to 8. The staple port of Veere, for example, held a greater share of exports from Leith than of imports sent there, which increasingly came from other Dutch ports. Counting all ships, 107 arrived from Amsterdam and Rotterdam in 1621 to 3 and 109 from Veere. But on ships carrying cargoes for Edinburgh's elite merchants, who had begun to specialize in certain commodities, 65 came from Rotterdam or Amsterdam and 59 from Veere, even if those from the staple port did pay more duty.



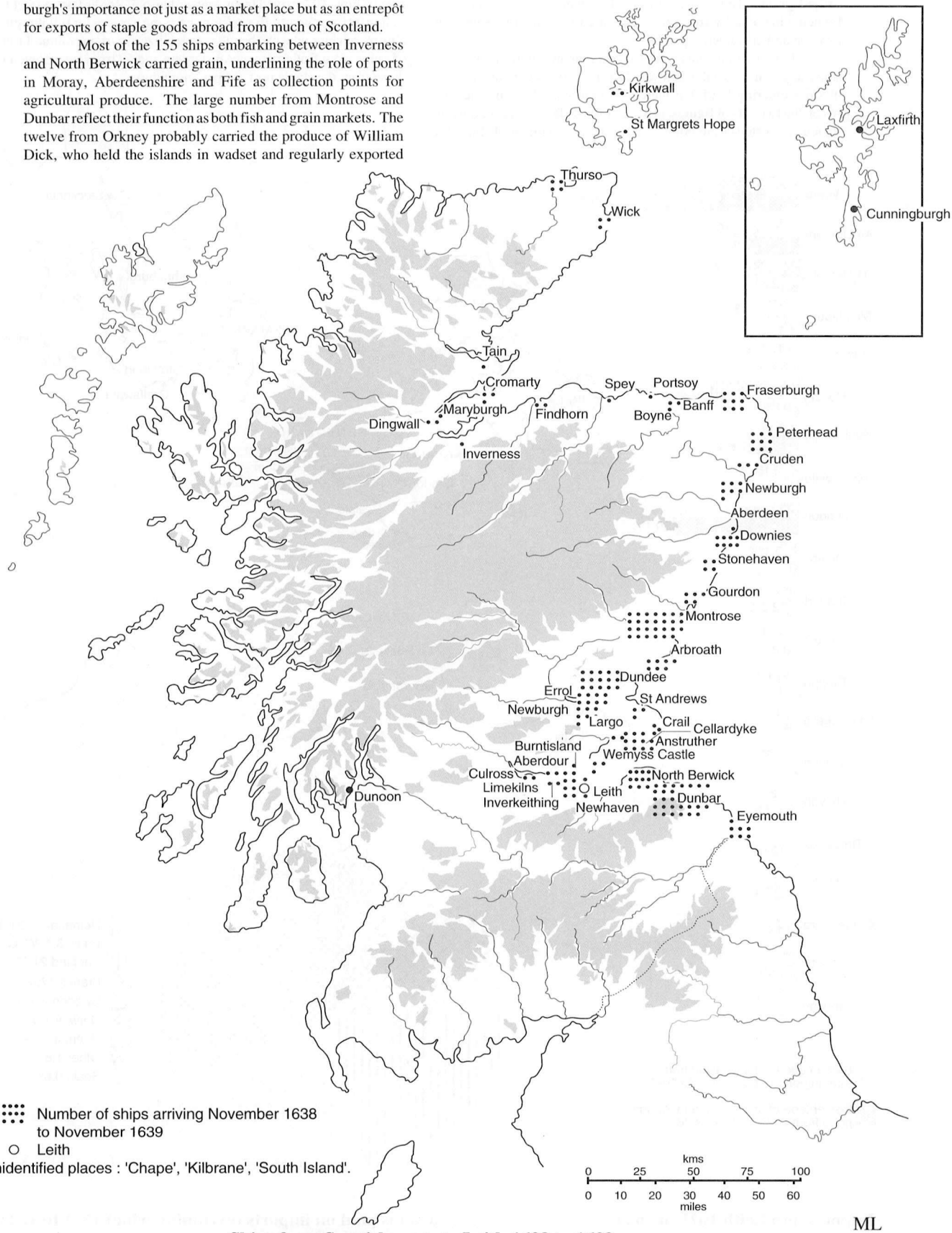
Imports into Leith 1621 to 1623

Customs paid on imports (excluding wine) 1621 to 1623 JB

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

The 'Compt of Edward Little of Shore Dues collected at Leith' (Edinburgh City Archive) is the only early seventeenth-century list detailing coastal shipping arriving at Leith. The list gives only the name of the vessel and its master, its point of embarkation and a brief description of its cargo. A total of 249 ships arrived between November 1638 and November 1639, although 90% docked between March and November. Their cargoes were largely of grain or cured herring, emphasising Edinburgh's importance not just as a market place but as an entrepôt for exports of staple goods abroad from much of Scotland.

Most of the 155 ships embarking between Inverness and North Berwick carried grain, underlining the role of ports in Moray, Aberdeenshire and Fife as collection points for agricultural produce. The large number from Montrose and Dunbar reflect their function as both fish and grain markets. The twelve from Orkney probably carried the produce of William Dick, who held the islands in wadset and regularly exported their produce to Holland. The surprisingly small returns from the important ports of Dundee and Aberdeen are probably explained by a deficiency in the source material. But the smallness of the overall number of coastal vessels arriving at the most important port in Scotland may indicate that trade had already begun to be seriously affected by the political crisis of the Wars of the Covenant.

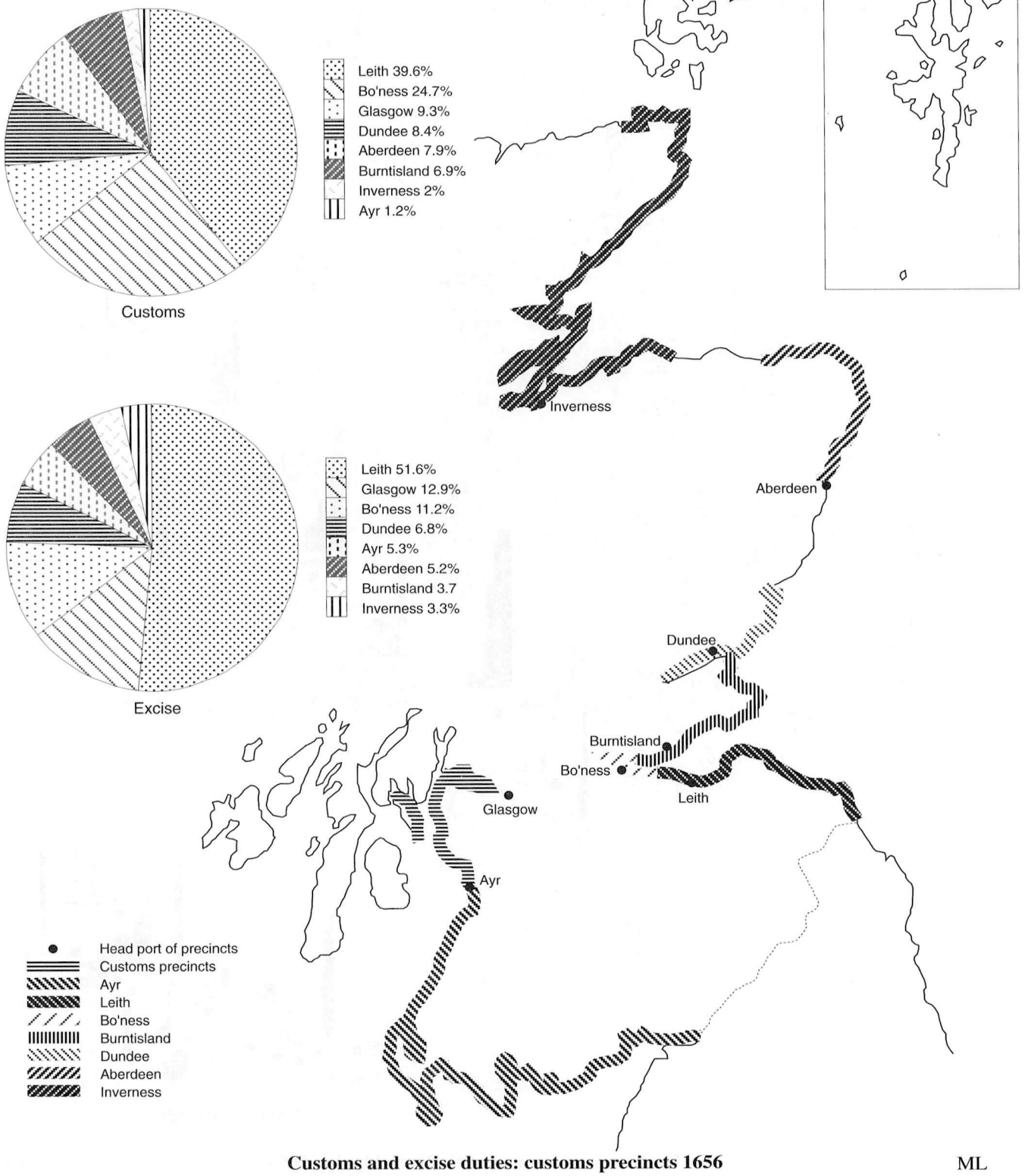


Ships from Scottish ports to Leith 1638 to 1639

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

In 1656 a Cromwellian official, Thomas Tucker, drew up a Report reorganising the collection of customs and excise duties. It envisaged the creation of eight administrative districts or 'precincts', each with its head port where a collector would be based. An excise had already been introduced by the Scottish parliament in 1644, which placed dues on the sale and import (where appropriate) of all ale, beer and whisky, as well as on imported wine, tobacco and textiles; but Tucker's scheme involved harmonization with the English system of tunnage and poundage. The result was complex and over-firm conclusions should not be drawn from the data, which is based on revenue over a three-month period in 1655-6; imports were subject to customs dues and often to excise as well, but levels of dues varied greatly, high for example on wine and foreign salt but low on timber.

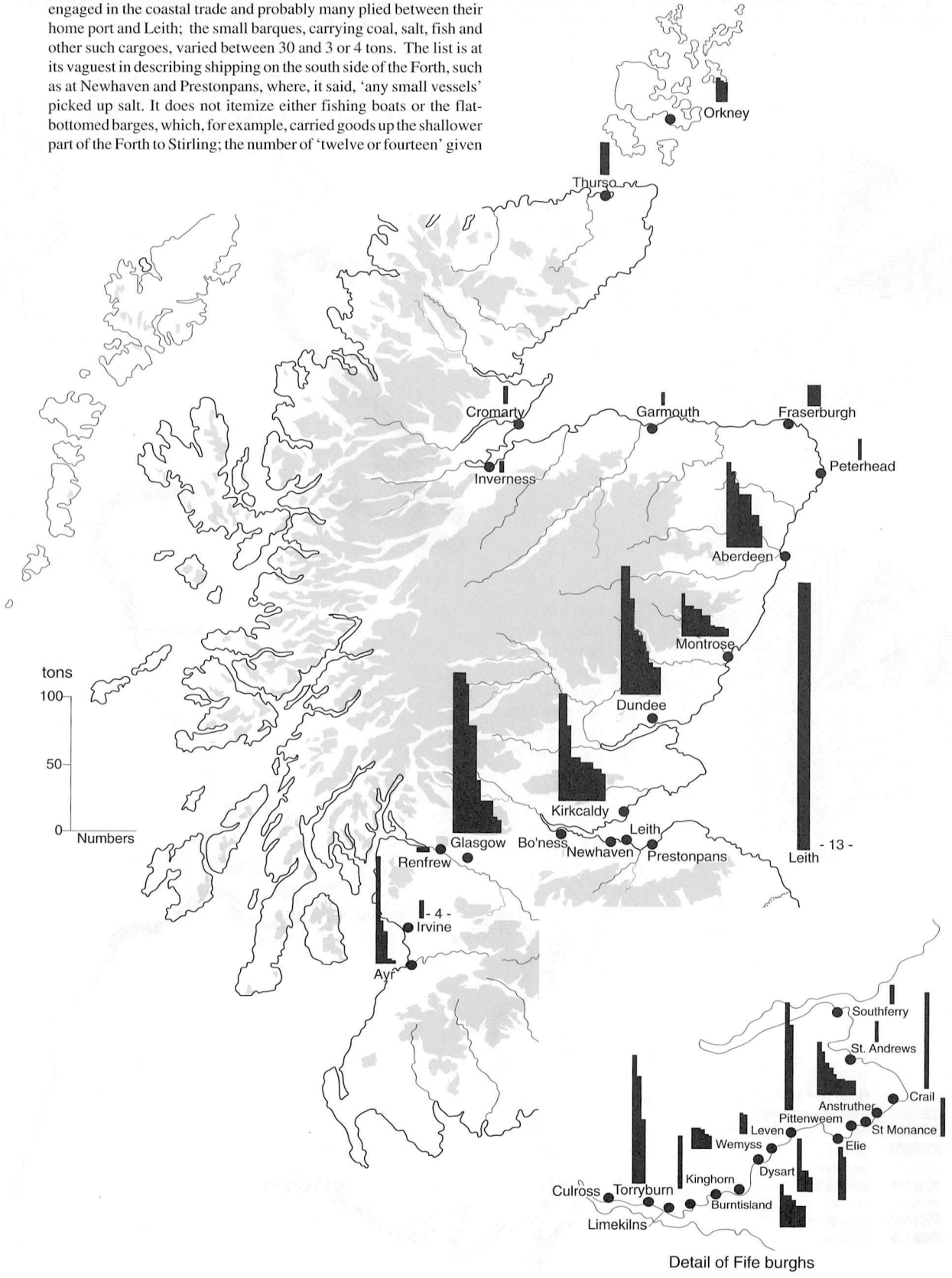
The combined returns, though complicated, do reflect, as do the burgh tax rolls, a marked rise of Glasgow, which had begun to use the road via Kilsyth to Bo'ness, now said to be 'the chief port' after Leith, as an entry to east-coast based overseas trade. Yet the Bo'ness precinct also catered for Stirling's trade, the coal and salt of Culross and Limekilns and some cloth from Perth and its returns should not be claimed wholly or even largely for Glasgow. The most striking difference between the customs for 1655-6 and those for the 1590s is the sharp fall of Leith, from 73% to under 40%. Its dominant postion as an entrepôt had slipped drastically since the 1630s and certain exported commodities, especially coal and salt, were now shipped direct, also helping to lift the Bo'ness returns.



Customs and excise duties: customs precincts 1656 ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

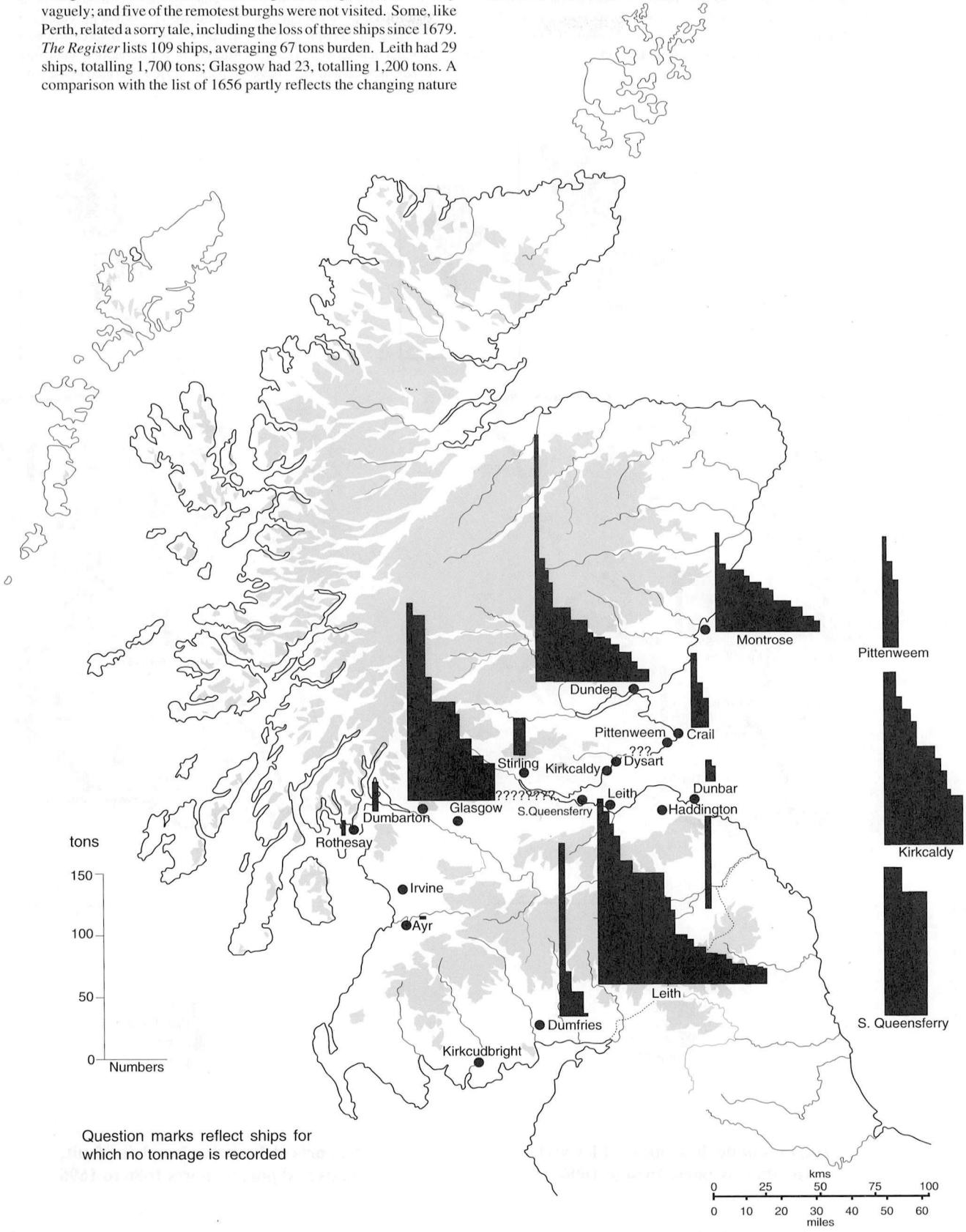
As part of his Report of 1656, the Cromwellian customs official, Thomas Tucker, listed the number of home-owned ships, often together with their tonnages, in Scottish ports. The small number (215 'ships of burden' were counted twelve years later) reflects the losses inflicted by the Wars of the Covenant. The size of sea-going ships ranged from 250 to about 50 tons; although open boats of 6 tons plied between Norway and Orkney, most smaller vessels were engaged in the coastal trade and probably many plied between their home port and Leith; the small barques, carrying coal, salt, fish and other such cargoes, varied between 30 and 3 or 4 tons. The list is at its vaguest in describing shipping on the south side of the Forth, such as at Newhaven and Prestonpans, where, it said, 'any small vessels' picked up salt. It does not itemize either fishing boats or the flat-bottomed barges, which, for example, carried goods up the shallower part of the Forth to Stirling; the number of 'twelve or fourteen' given for Leith seems low for a port in which a tax roll of 1647 recorded over 140 skippers. Only three sea-going vessels at Leith had tonnages recorded - each of 250 tons. The number and size of vessels does, however, give a good indication of the kind of trade carried on in each port for which there are fuller details. It also reflects the shallow or awkward draught of most Scottish harbours - the reason for the construction of Port Glasgow ten years later.



Numbers and tonnage of Scottish shipping 1656 ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

The Register of the State and Condition of Every Burgh within the Kingdom of Scotland of 1692 gives the answers made to various questions posed by the Convention of Royal Burghs about burghs' finances, trade and condition. One question related to the number of 'ships, barques, boats and ferry boats' belonging to them. Not all burghs answered directly; others, like Dysart, South Queensferry or Glasgow (which did not itemize its eight small lighters), did so only vaguely; and five of the remotest burghs were not visited. Some, like Perth, related a sorry tale, including the loss of three ships since 1679. *The Register* lists 109 ships, averaging 67 tons burden. Leith had 29 ships, totalling 1,700 tons; Glasgow had 23, totalling 1,200 tons. A comparison with the list of 1656 partly reflects the changing nature of Scotland's overseas trade and, for example, underscores the sharp drop in activity, (revealed also in the Sound Toll registers and the burgh tax rolls in many of the small Fife ports, like Anstruther which complained of 'no ships, no merchants, no trade'). The report also gives details of ferry boats and fishing boats (usually for herring, like the 17 at Dunbar, 20 at Crail, 19 at Rothesay and 24 belonging to Renfrew) but these have been excluded.

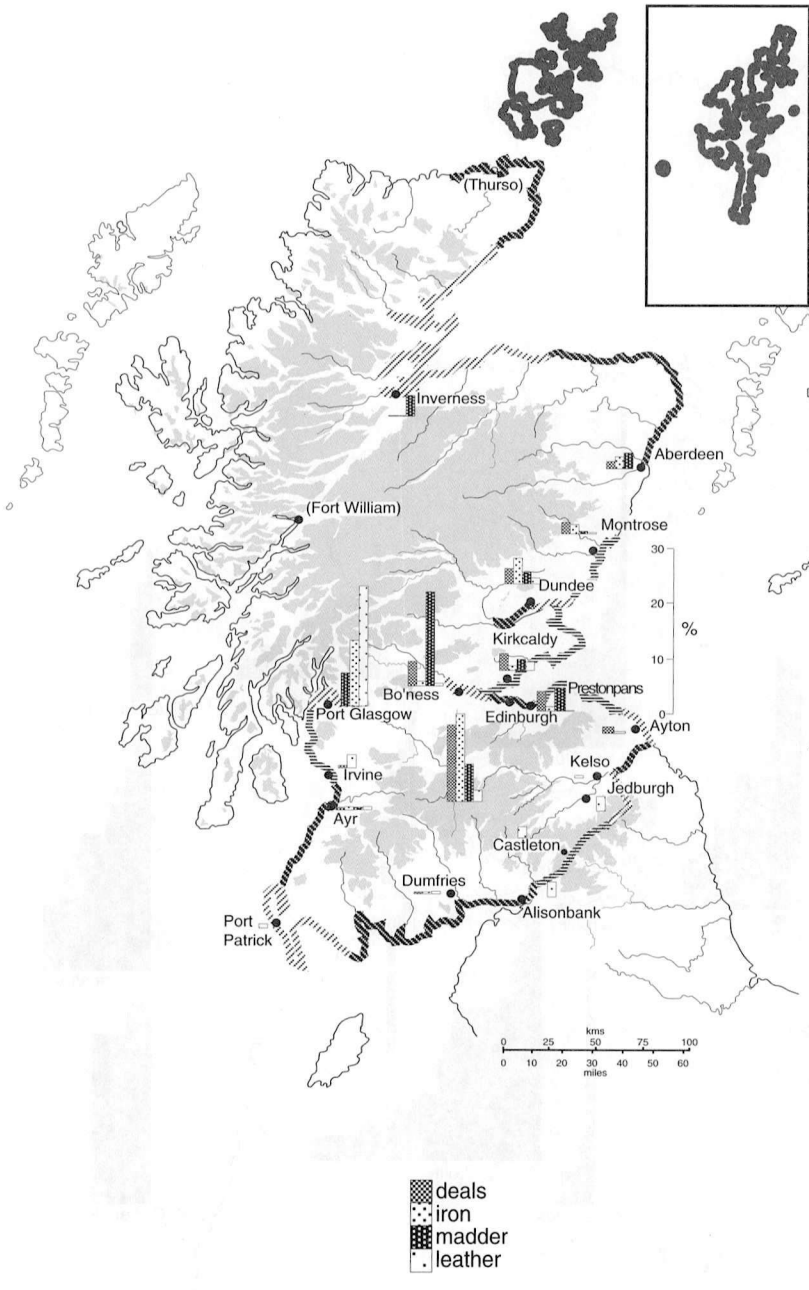


Numbers and tonnage of Scottish shipping 1692 ML

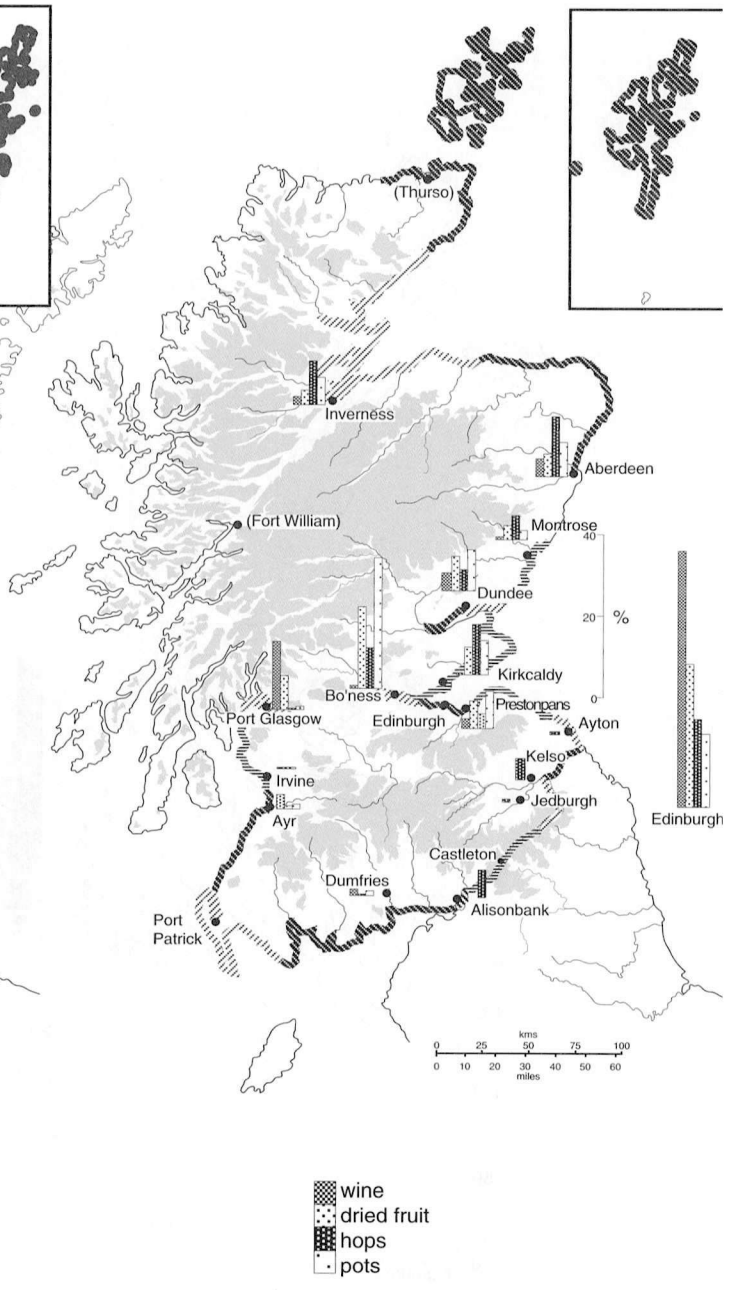
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Thomas Tucker's reorganisation of customs administration in 1656 was continued and extended after the Restoration. By the 1680s there were over twenty 'precincts', each with its head port where customs were collected: their approximate boundaries are given here, with details of imports, drawn from T C. Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union* (1963), for the main ports only. The precincts included five along the Border, made necessary by the re-imposition of an English customs barrier after 1660. Deals (sawn fir planks) and iron came from Norway and Sweden respectively, mostly into east-coast ports; madder, a dyestuff, from the Netherlands; most leather, by contrast, came from England, either by sea into the Clyde or overland.

Wine, by contrast, came largely from France, dried fruit from the wholesale markets of the Netherlands, hops from England or Flanders; cooking pots, brassware kettles and the like from north-west Germany and Sweden as well as from England and the Netherlands. The quantities of luxury consumables coming into Leith confirms it as an entrepôt for other Scottish ports and the capital as a centre of conspicuous consumption; but the disproportionate amount of madder and pots entering Bo'ness was far more than local needs merited and must have been transported overland to the west and south-west .



Imports of deals, iron, madder and leather by ports 1686 to 1696



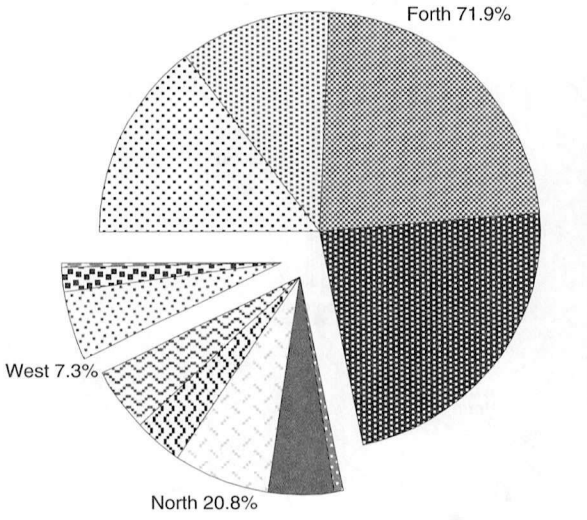
Imports of French wine, dried fruit, hops and pots by ports 1686 to 1696

ML

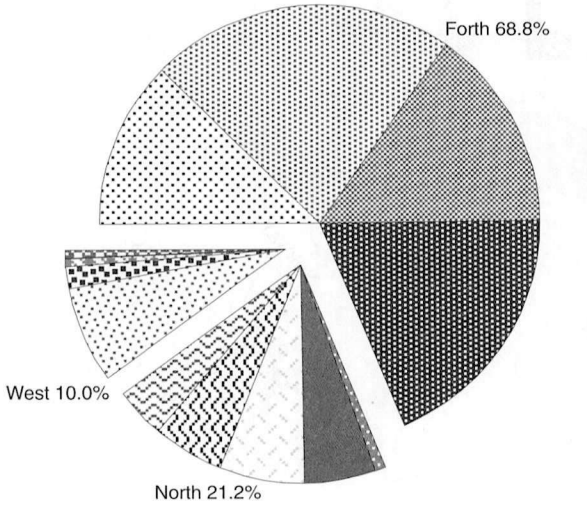
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

The following series of maps, drawn from statistics in T.C. Smout's, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union, 1660-1707 (1963)* are based on the returns of customs books, of arrivals and departures of laden ships, for the various precincts. They do not deal with the considerable, but mostly small-scale trade with Ireland, nor with the exports from the Dumfries precinct, where the books of departures do not survive. They deal in numbers of ships, which could vary considerably in size depending both on distance travelled and commodity carried and do not necessarily reflect the value, especially of imports.

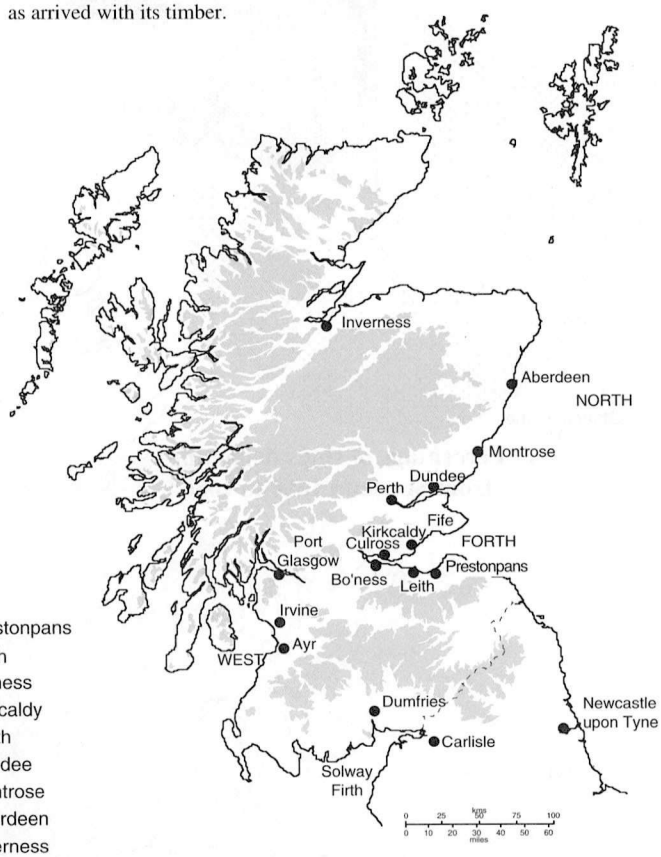
Measured by ships alone, by far the most important ports, both for arrivals and departures, lay in the Forth estuary, though no longer, as earlier in the century, Leith alone. The pattern of trade did, however, vary considerably, not only in terms of geographical point of embarkation or destination, but also between the import and export trades. Twice as many ships arrived carrying imports into Leith as departed from it with exports. Far fewer ships went to Norway than arrived from there; yet as many left Montrose for Norway with grain as arrived with its timber.



Departures of laden ships 1680 to 86



Arrivals of laden ships 1680 to 86



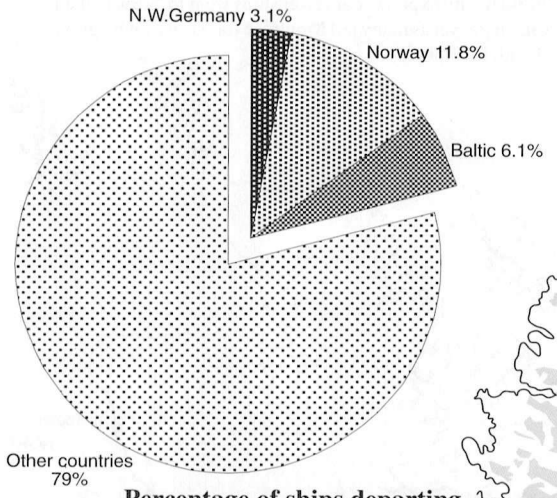
Customs precincts and head courts

Exports and imports 1680 to 1686

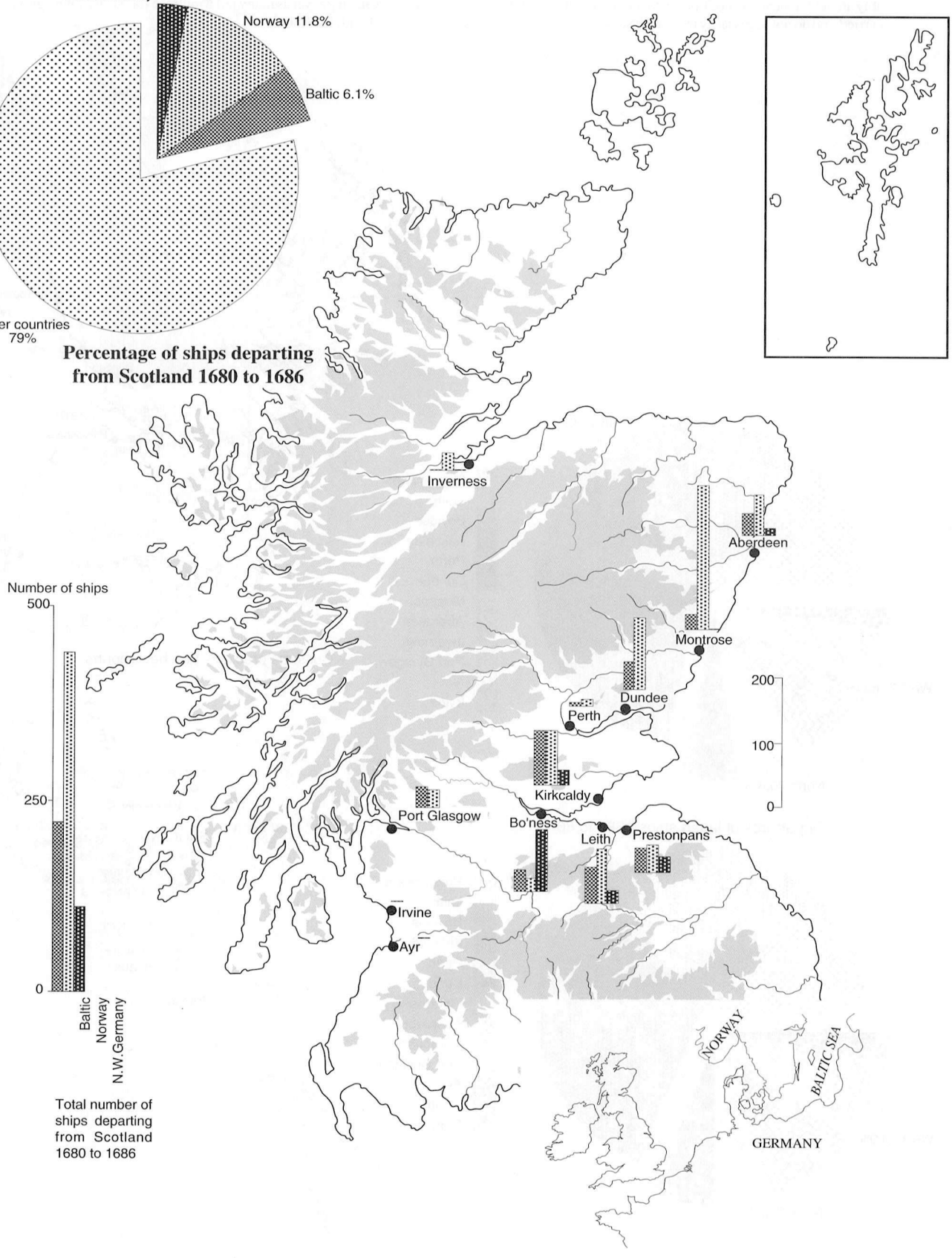
ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Trade with the Baltic, which had long been an importer of cheap cloth, hides and skins from Scotland (taking 200,00 skins a year in the early seventeenth century, some 40% of total exports), declined sharply after 1660, averaging only 93,000 a year. The 1690s would, however, see a revival in the Baltic trade, especially in fish. One of the major shifts in the Scottish economy in the seventeenth century lay in the export of grain and Norway was one of the chief markets for it, explaining why half of all ships bound for there came from the Tay. But the fall in Norway's demand for Scottish salt after 1660 underlines the relatively modest number leaving from the Forth. Most of the cargoes to N.W. Germany were of coal, from the collieries of the Forth.



Percentage of ships departing from Scotland 1680 to 1686



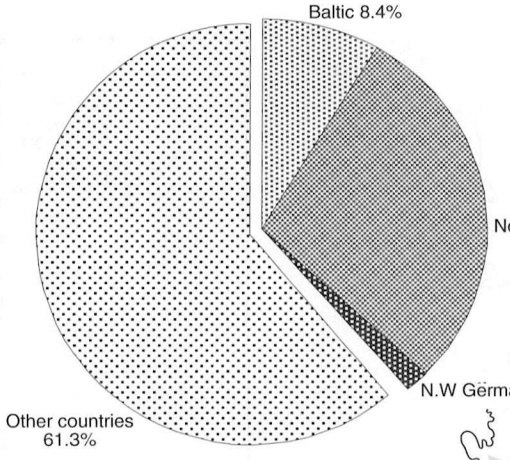
Total number of ships departing from Scotland 1680 to 1686

Number of ships departing from Scotland to the Baltic, Norway and North-West Germany 1680 to 1686, by burgh

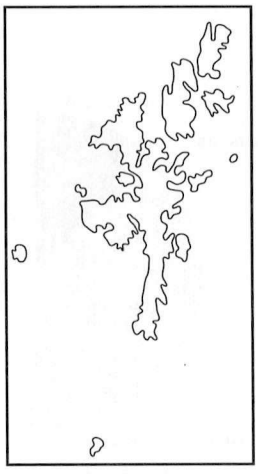
ML

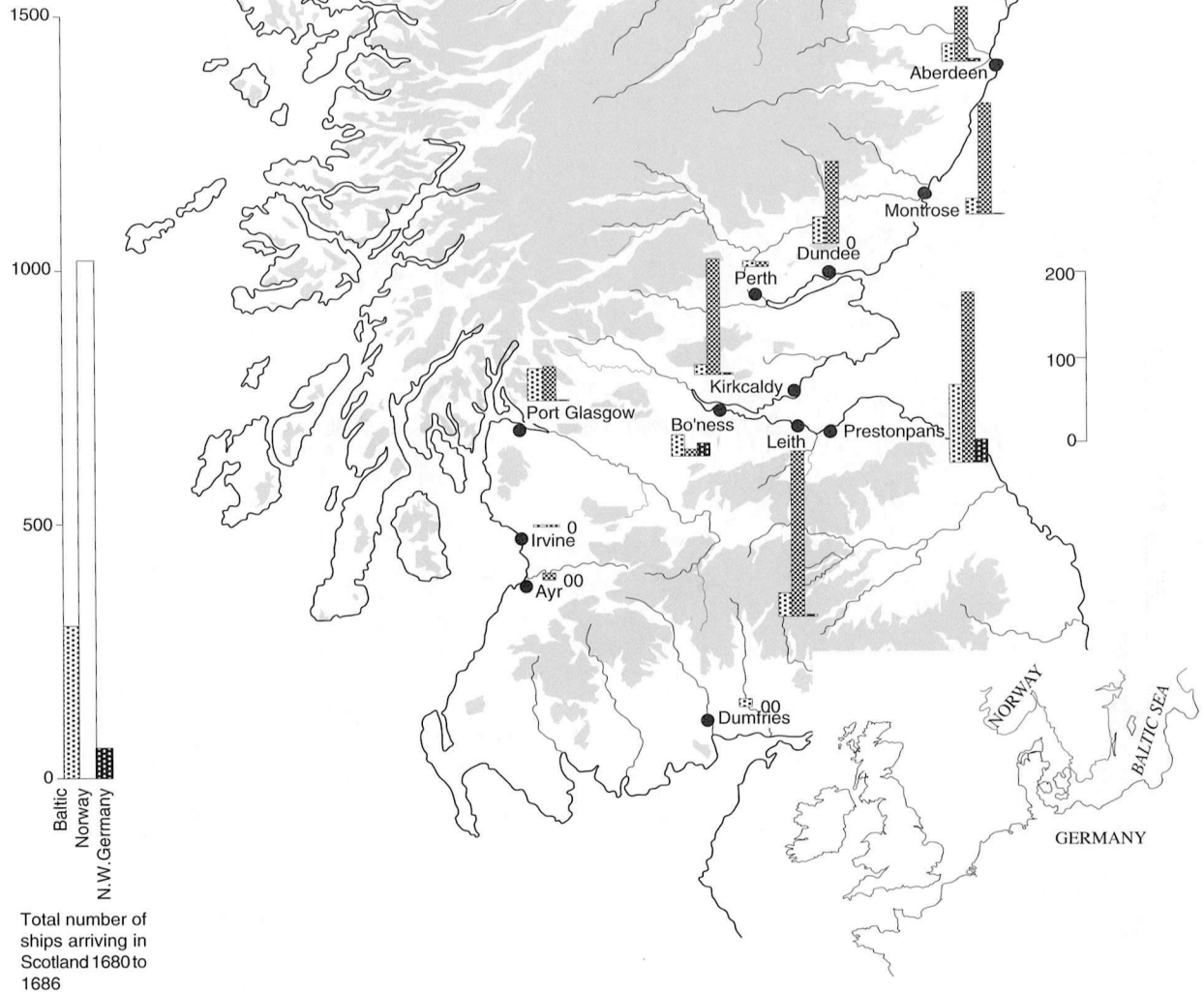
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Exports from the southern Baltic, of flax, hemp, some linseed and miscellaneous goods, like brass, pots, glass and beer (but no longer of grain and rye, as in the 1620s, mostly from Danzig and Königsberg, came largely into east-coast ports. In contrast, about a third of the iron and copper, which made up the bulk of Sweden's exports, came to the Clyde. By far the highest proportion of ships arriving from the north (almost three out of every ten) came from Norway: in some precincts, like Montrose and Prestonpans, they accounted for as many as 50 to 60% of all arrivals. After 1660 timber ships became a commoner sight on the Upper and Lower Clyde. Almost all of them carried timber, usually in the form of deals, which averaged 360,000 pieces a year but attracted a low customs duty; some also had pitch and tar. Imports from Hamburg and Bremen, confined mostly to east-coast ports, were diverse and much slighter, although N.W. Germany did have a Scottish factor in the 1690s.



Percentage of ships arriving in Scotland 1680 to 1686



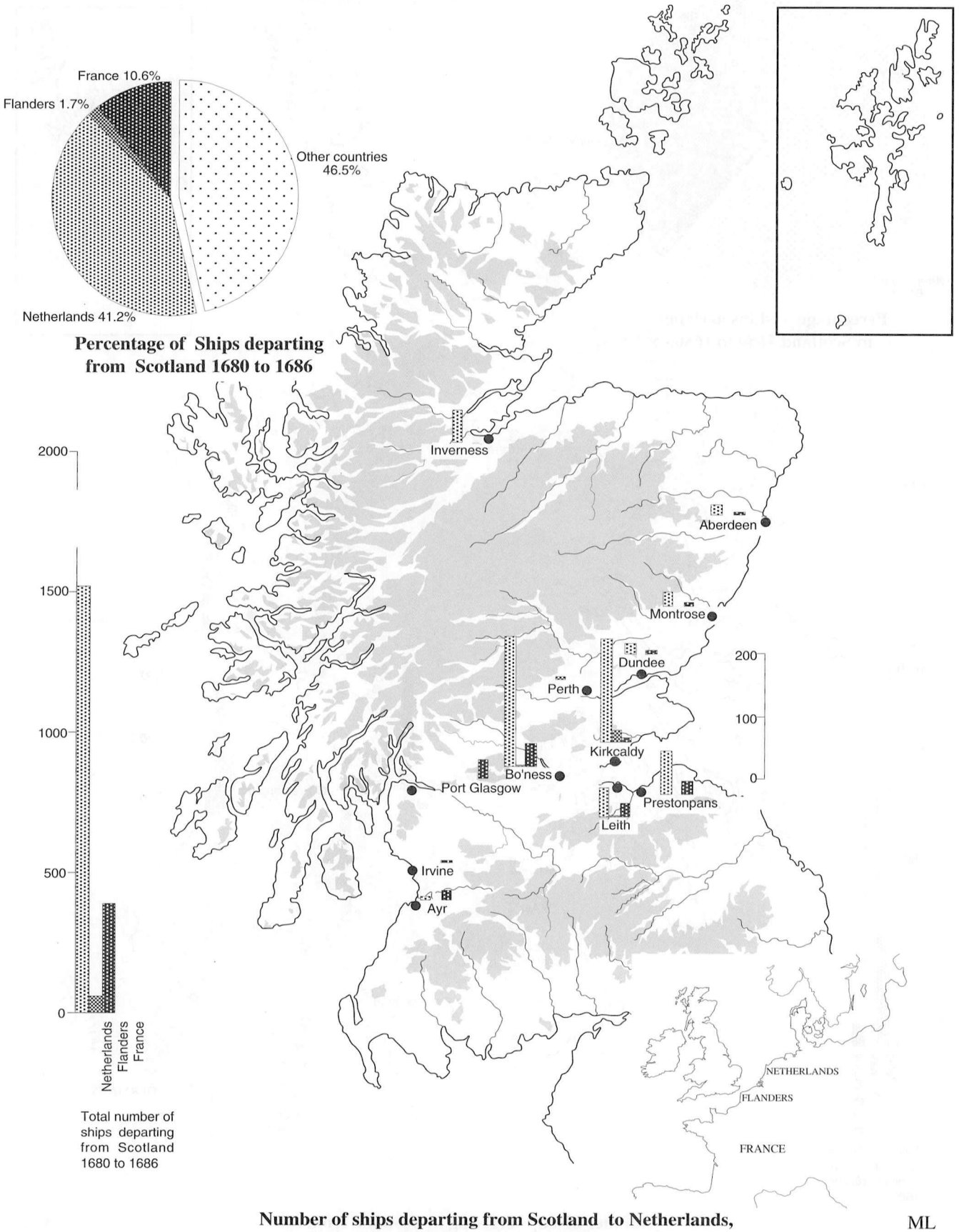


Number of ships arriving in Scotland from the Baltic, Norway and North-West Germany 1680 to 1686, by burgh

ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Most of the staple exports to the Netherlands - hides, cloth, wool, and plaiding - continued to go from traditional east-coast ports like Leith, but their volume fell sharply, especially after 1685. Coal, from the ports of Bo'ness, Culross and Kirkcaldy, mostly went to Rotterdam until demand for it there collapsed in the 1670s and 1680s; the still large number of cargoes shown here were probably trans-shipped from there to Flanders. Some coal also went to Normandy, but the bulk of exports to France was made up of fish from the Clyde and the Forth and woollen and linen cloth from the west country - until 1689-90 when a ban on imports of herring and cloth and punitive tariffs on coal imposed by the French government sharply reduced trade, with severe consequences, especially for the Forth ports.



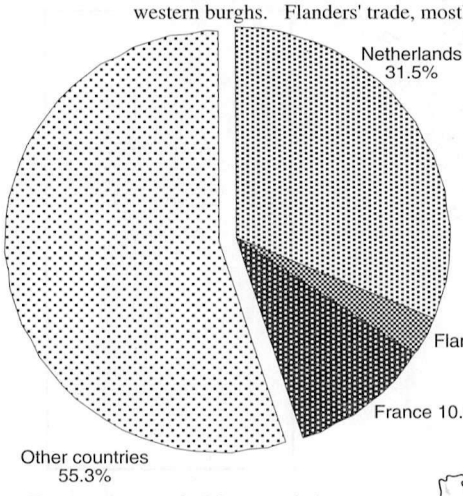
Number of ships departing from Scotland to Netherlands, Flanders and France 1680 to 1686, by burgh

ML

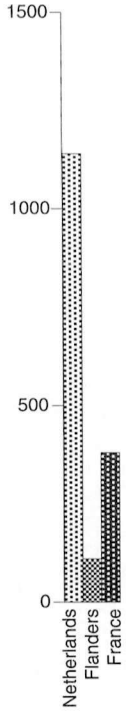
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

The pattern of trade with the Netherlands had been changing since at least the 1620s with a drift, especially of imports, away from the staple port of Veere; by the 1680s it sent only 7% of the ships from the Netherlands to Scotland, and Rotterdam 85%. But over 80% of these imports still arrived in the Forth and almost all the rest between there and Aberdeen. Dutch imports were huge in their variety - textiles, fancy foodstuffs, dyestuffs, seeds, manufactures - and mostly easily transported overland, from Bo'ness to Glasgow and western burghs. Flanders' trade, mostly from Bruges or Ostend to Fife, was very modest by comparison although it prospered during the DutchWars of 1665-7 and 1672-4.

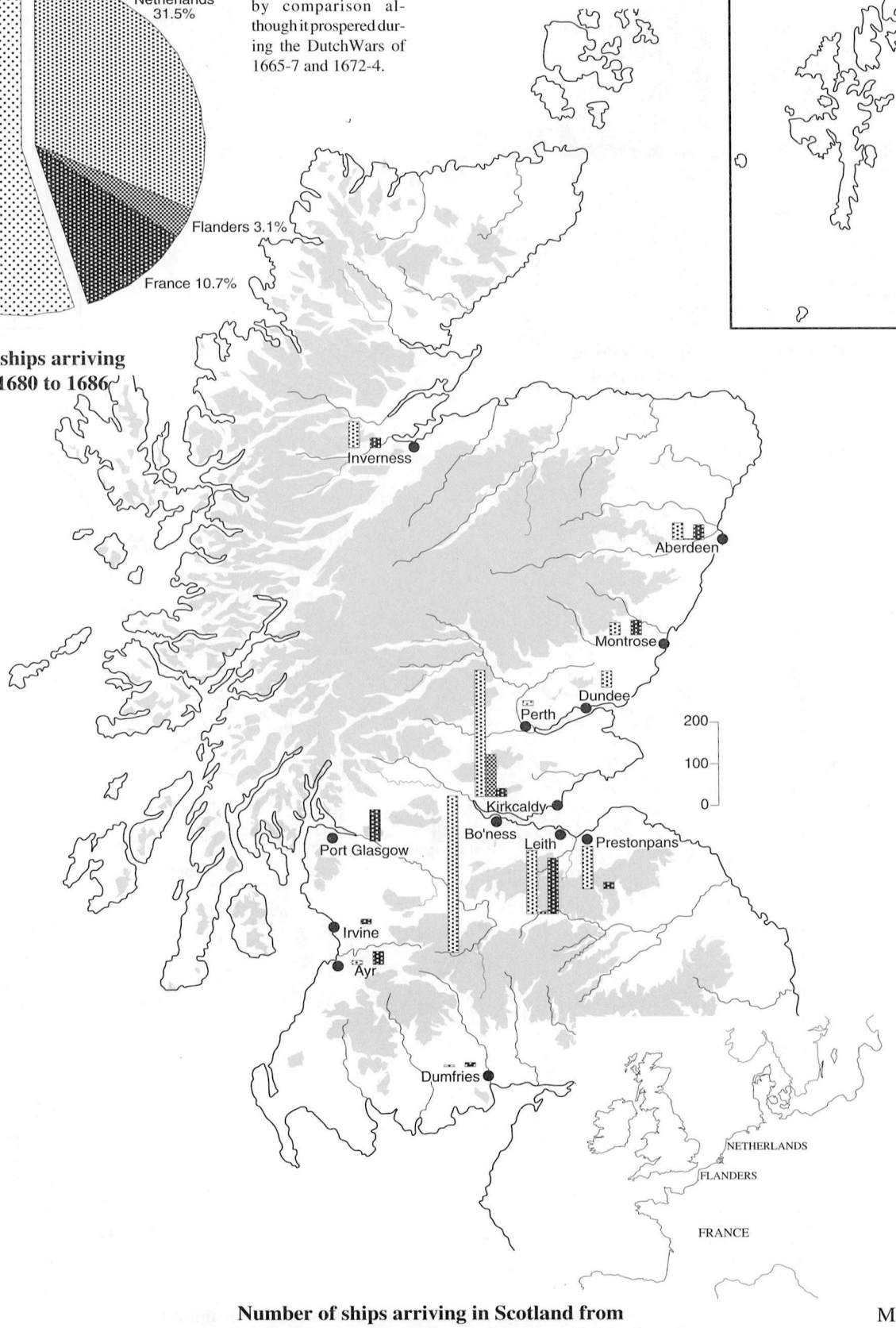
French imports - of wine and brandy from Bordeaux, salt from La Rochelle and manufactured goods from Normandy ports like Dieppe and Rouen - were of high value in relation to their bulk and the figure of 10% of ships carrying them may understate their significance. 35% of French cargoes went to Leith and 20% to Glasgow - a quite different pattern from Dutch imports, explained both by the southerly position of their ports of departure and local needs. 63% of wine went to Leith and 17% to Glasgow; French salt was more important to the Clyde, which had far fewer native salt pans than the Forth.



Percentage of ships arriving in Scotland 1680 to 1686



Total number of ships arriving in Scotland 1680 to 1686



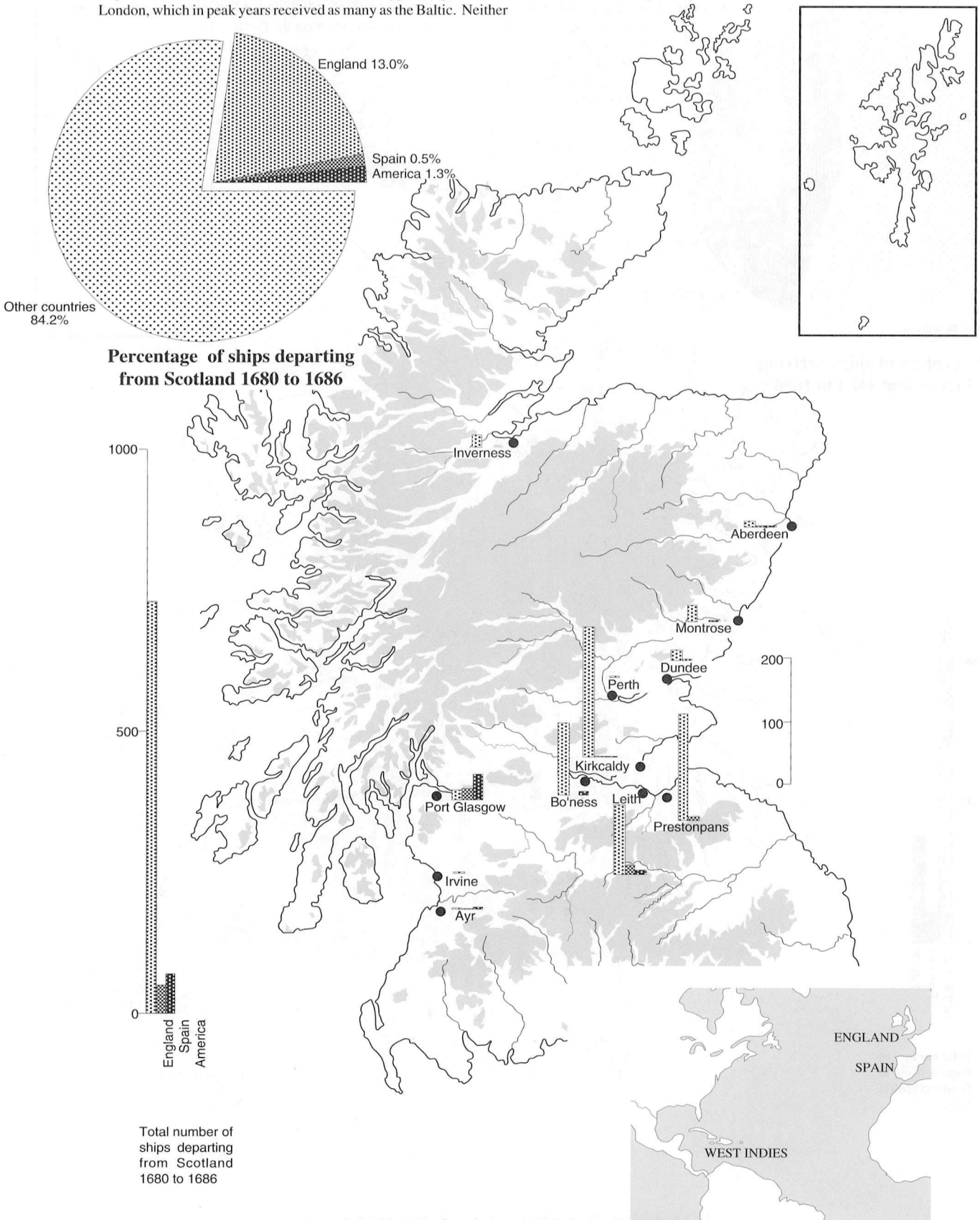
Number of ships arriving in Scotland from Netherlands, Flanders and France 1680 to 1686, by burgh

ML

Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

Linen cloth accounted for at least a third and, at times, two-thirds of the value of all exports to England. But cattle, driven overland mostly through Carlisle (and not shown here), was probably the most consistently valuable single export to England and must have seriously reduced the amount of hides exported there and elsewhere by sea. The map does not, however, reflect the large number of small, open boats plying southwards across the Solway with hides and other staple wares. Other skins continued to be shipped, especially to London, which in peak years received as many as the Baltic. Neither herring nor salmon figured greatly amongst exports to England and barriers were successfully raised against cheaper Scottish grain, salt and coal after the Restoration, although the large number of ships leaving Prestonpans and Bo'ness were small colliers.

Exports to Spain were slight and those to America, confined largely to west-coast ports, were mixed - including indentured servants as well as coal, linen and woollen cloth - but as yet modest in both value and quantitiy



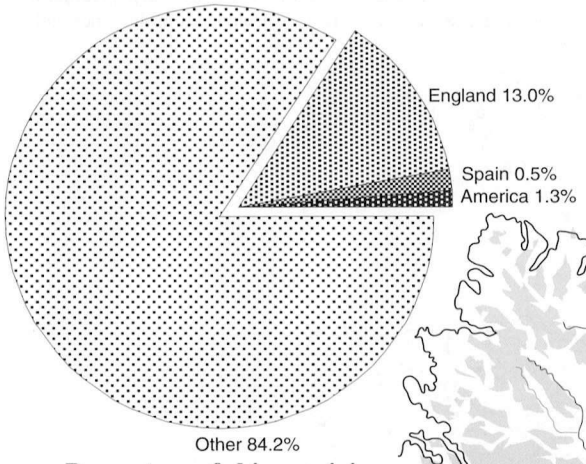
Number of ships departing from Scotland to England, Spain and America 1680 to 1686, by burgh

ML

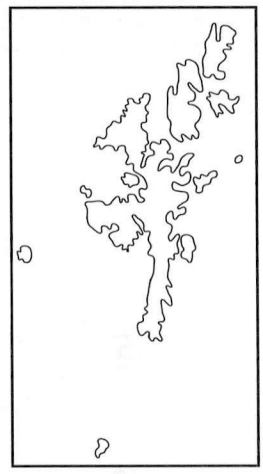
Scottish trade in the seventeenth century

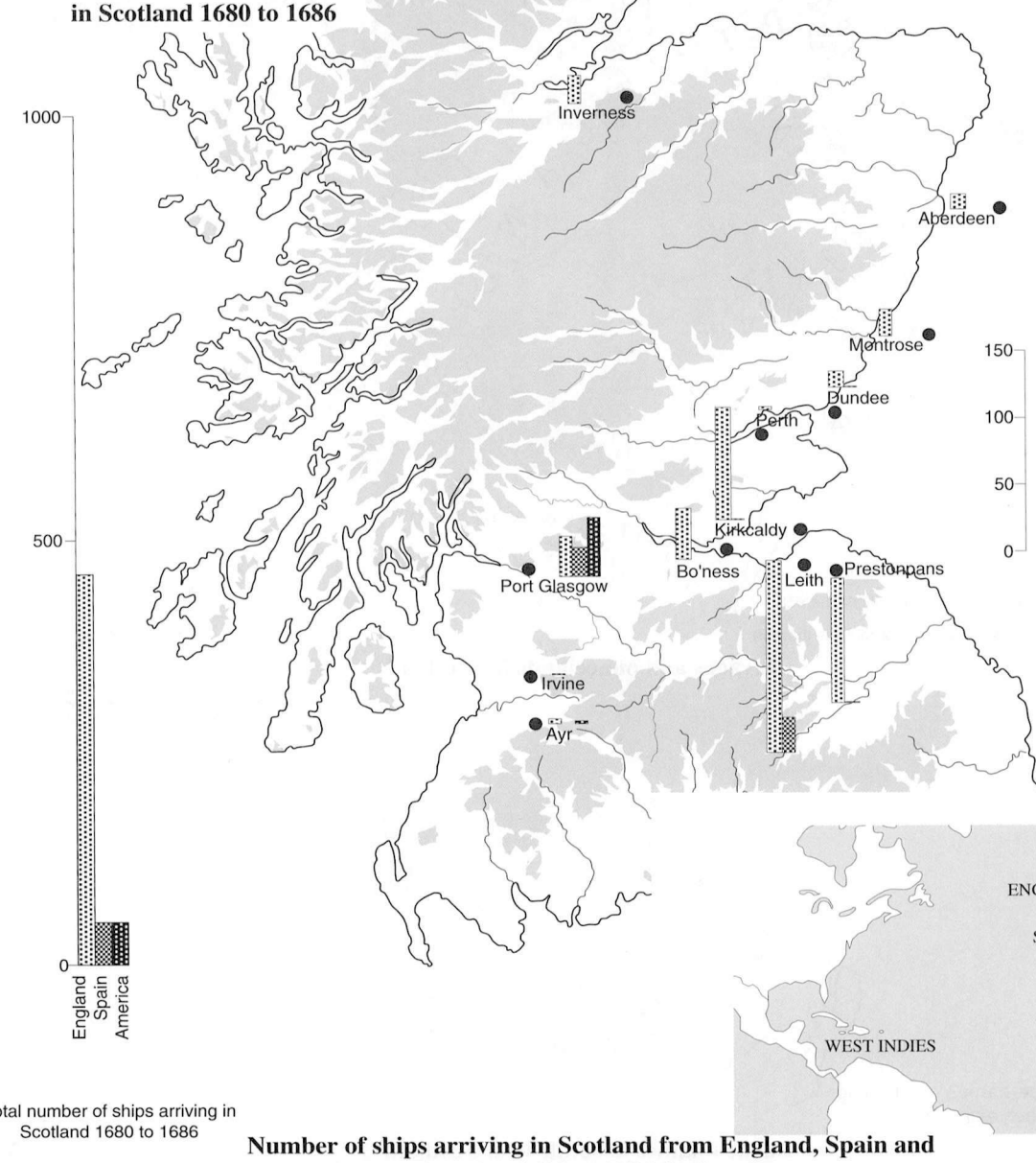
Imports from England came overland by drove roads; in small, open boats over the Solway (which have not been reflected here in the returns for Dumfries); and by coasters, which made up 13% of all foreign arrivals. 78% of the sea-borne imports went to the Forth. Most - over 60% by value - came from London, and the bulk of the rest from east-coast ports from Newcastle southwards. English imports resembled Dutch in variety and nature: almost a half were manufactured goods, especially textiles, despite heavy duties and outrights bans imposed on them.

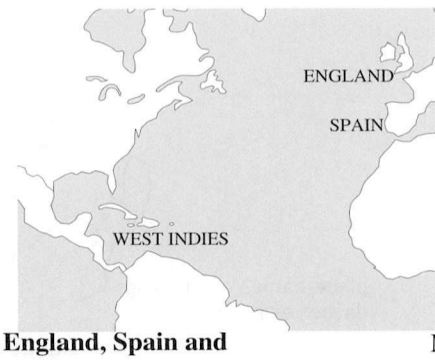
Trade with Spain dated only from the later sixteenth century but imports - of both wine and salt - would increase sharply during the 1690s as a result of England's war with France. By the 1690s ships from Madeira and the Canaries came regularly to the Clyde. Imports from America - mostly either sugar from the West Indies or tobacco from Virginia and Maryland - came exclusively to the west coast and mostly to Glasgow, which by the 1680s saw six or seven cargoes a year. Some tobacco also came from entrepot ports like Bristol, Lisbon and Bilbao.



Percentage of ships arriving in Scotland 1680 to 1686







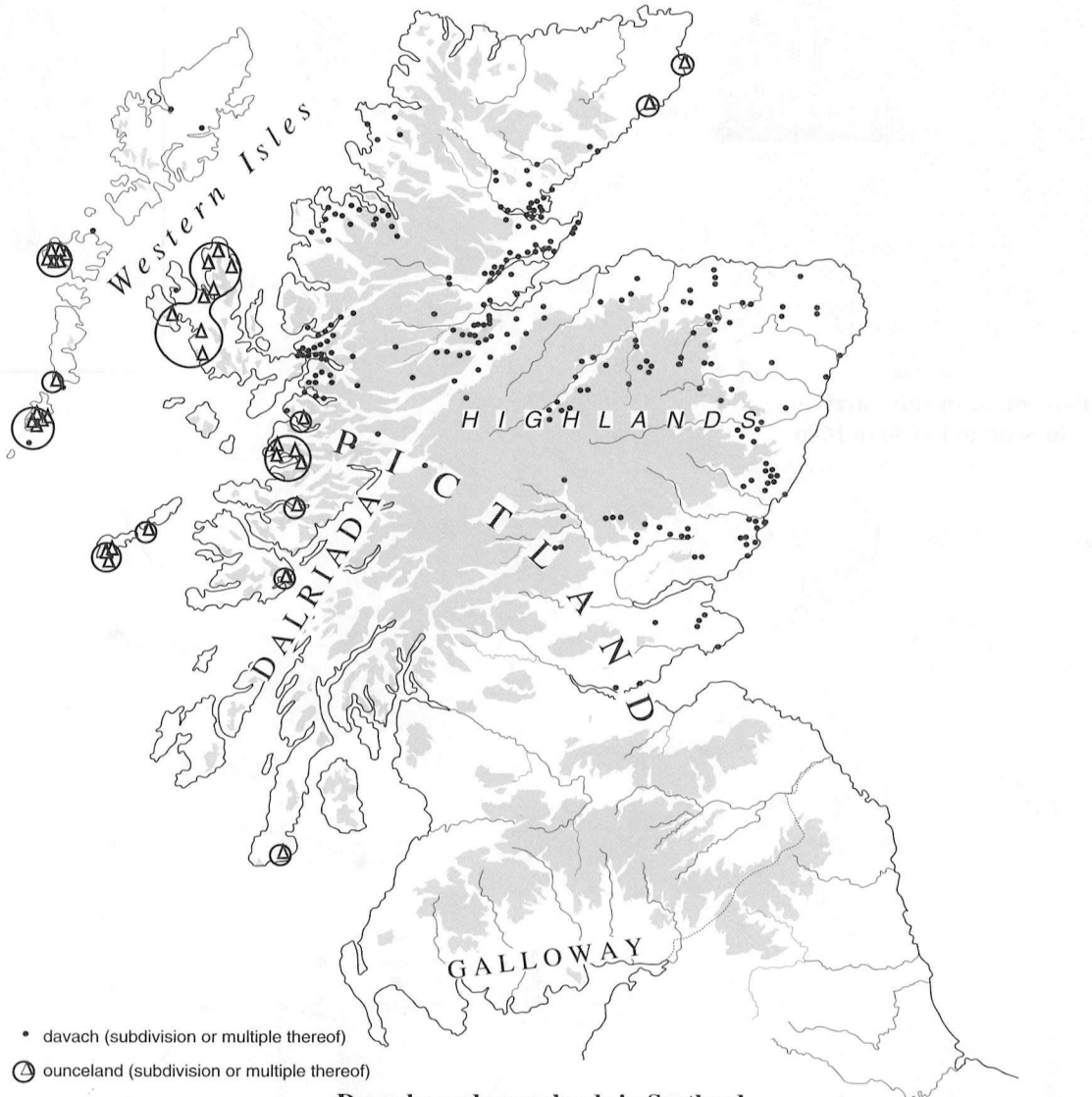
Total number of ships arriving in Scotland 1680 to 1686

Number of ships arriving in Scotland from England, Spain and America 1680 to 1686, by burgh

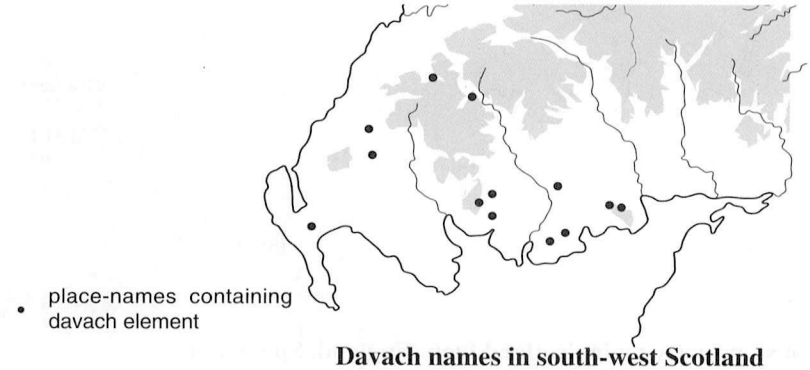
ML

Medieval land assessment

There were various units of land assessment in early medieval Scotland; the principal were the davach, ounceland, pennyland and ploughgate. Davach is derived from the Gaelic *dabhach* 'a large tub or vat'; it probably represents the amount of land in respect of which a large vat of grain was paid as a render. Strictly a measure of arable land, probably in the region of 200 acres, davachs were situated in the most fertile locations of those parts of the country where they are found. It was commonly named and was a tangible, permanent unit whose shape was largely determined by natural boundaries. There was no significant difference between the davach in the north-east and the west. The ounceland was simply the davach by another name and was presumably the term applied to a unit of land which paid a tax in money or produce to the value of one ounce of silver. The pennyland also belonged to the davach/ounceland system of land assessment. It represented the amount of land which paid tax to the value of one silver penny In the west Highlands and Islands the ounceland or davach comprised twenty pennylands. Pennylands were also grouped in twenties in the south-west, where place-name evidence indicates that the davach was once in use. In the Northern Isles and Caithness, there were eighteen pennylands in one ounceland.



Davachs and ouncelands in Scotland

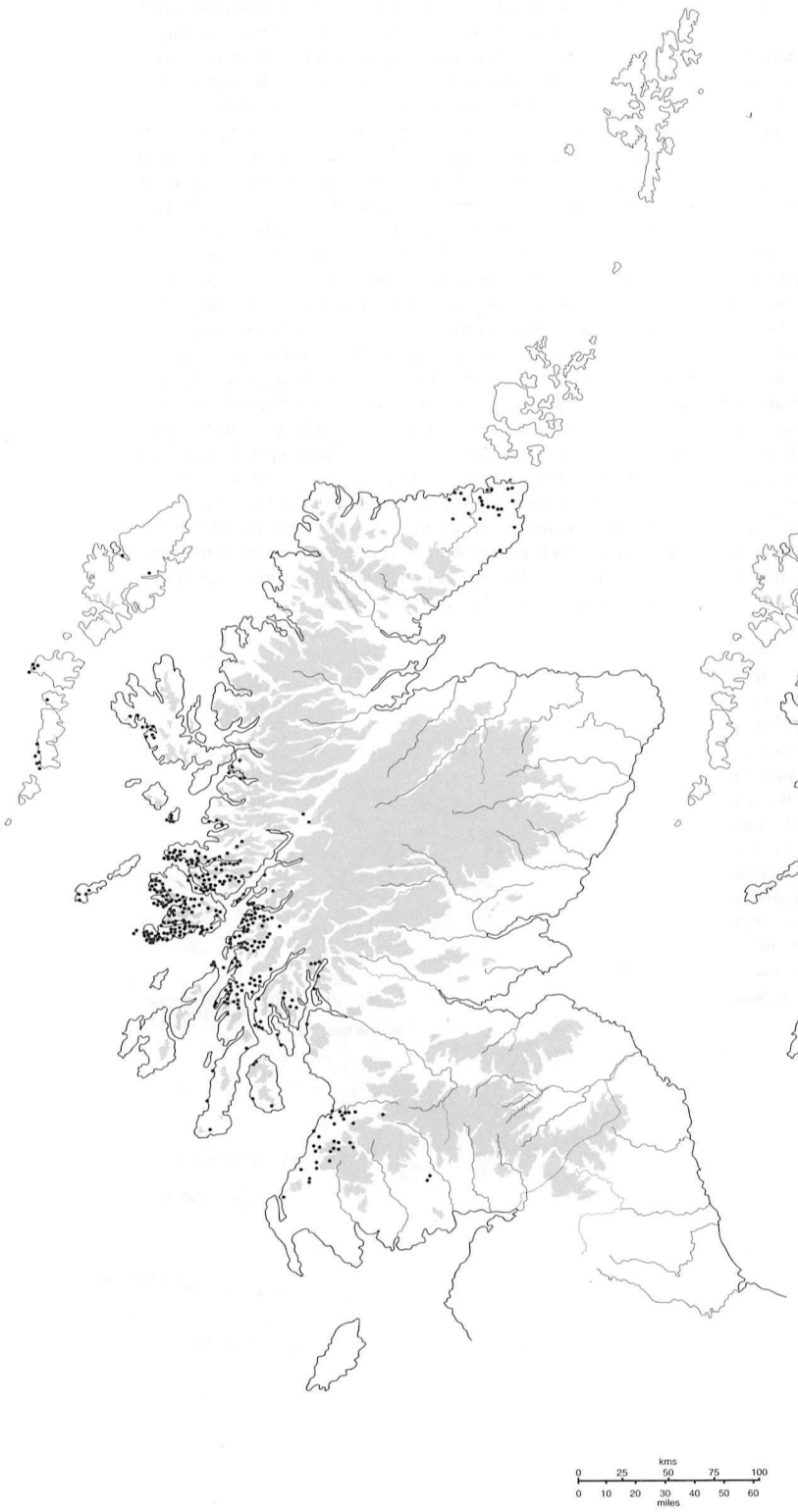


Davach names in south-west Scotland

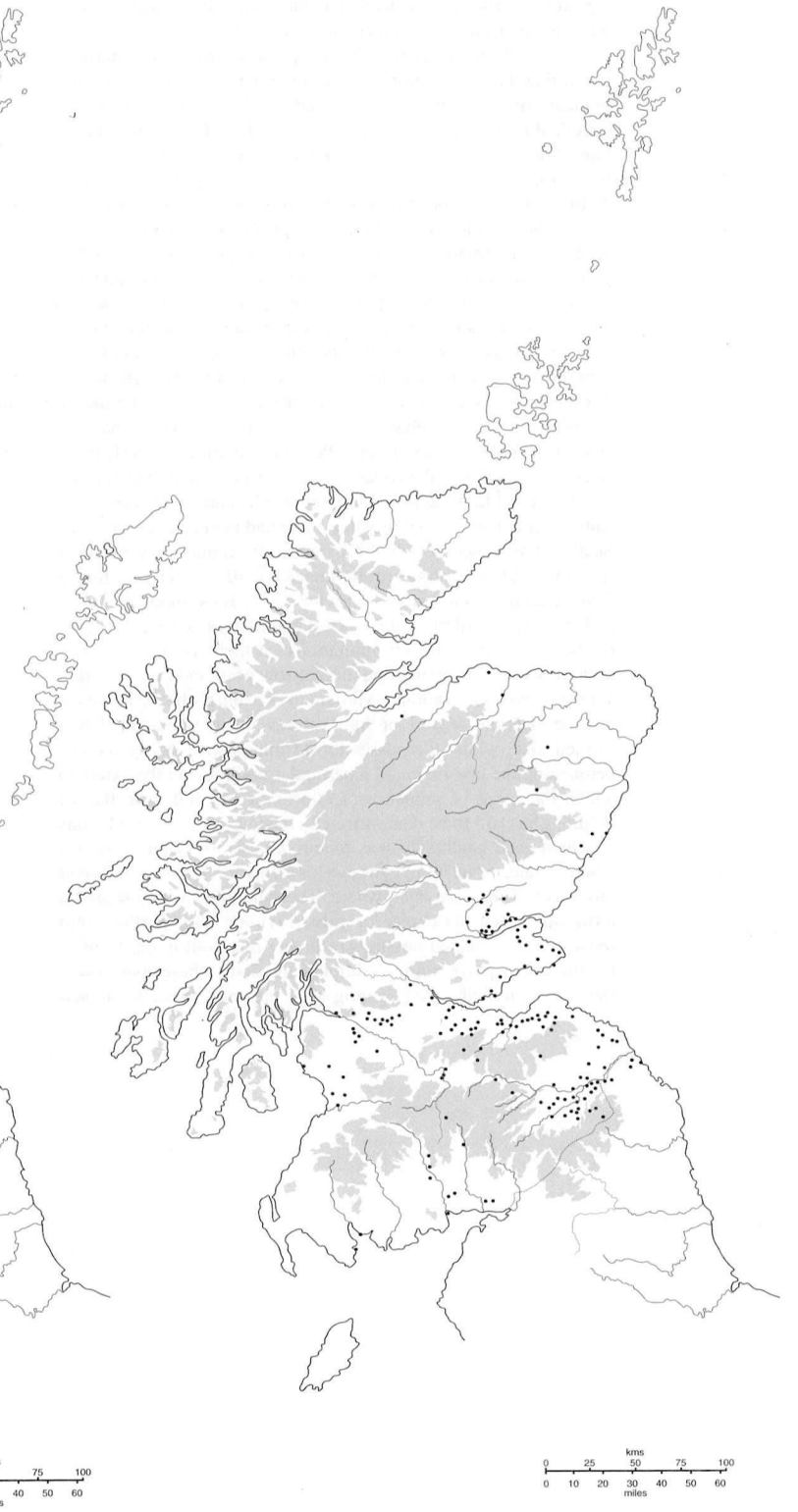
AE

Medieval land assessment

These units served an important fiscal role as the basis on which military service (*forinsecum servitium*) and taxes were assessed. The origins of the system may be traced back to the house system of seventh-century Dalriada as recorded in *Senchus fer nAlban*. The geographical distribution of the units is explicable in terms of population movements and settlement patterns during the Dark Ages - of Scots to Pictland, Scandinavians to the Western Isles, Northern Isles and Caithness, and Gallgaidhil to Galloway. Not part of the same system but fulfilling a similar function was the ploughgate, normally what a plough-team could handle in one year - usually about 104 acres of arable land.



Pennylands in Scotland before 1600



Ploughgates in Scotland before 1600

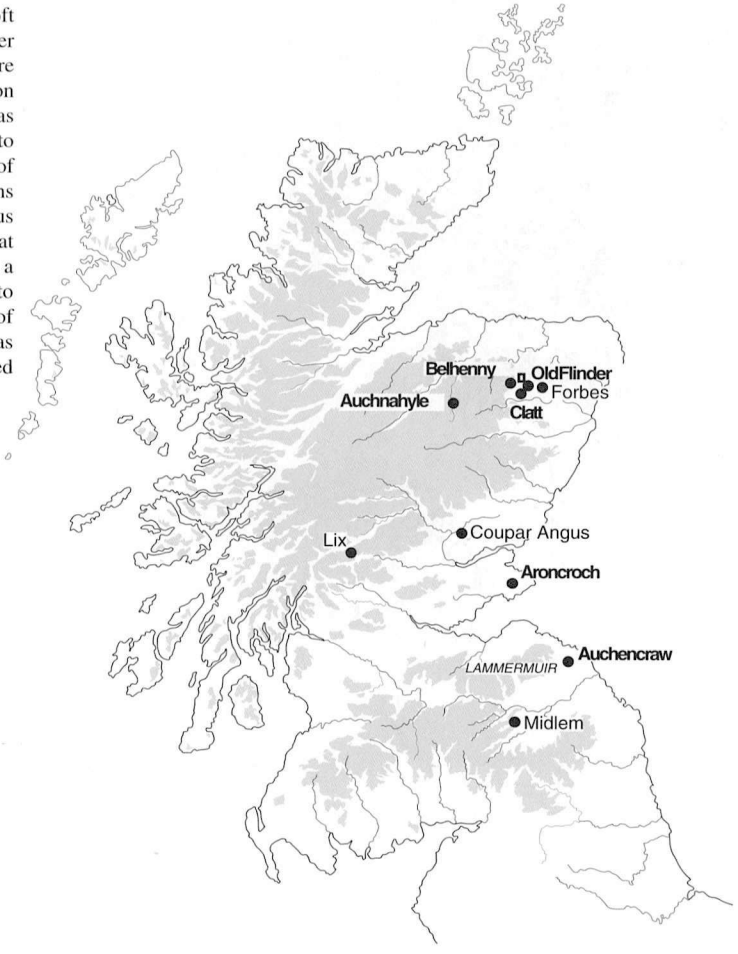
AE

Medieval rural settlement

The documentary evidence for medieval rural settlement tends to be vague or allusive. As yet, field work has not made good this deficiency. A growing number of possible medieval sites have been surveyed, but few have been excavated or dated accurately. Moreover, where sites have been excavated, as at Lix (Perthshire), it has emphasised rather than resolved the problems involved. To a degree, pre-improvement estate plans drawn up during the eighteenth century support some inferences about earlier forms, but their facile use can attach a false stability to settlement morphology. Such difficulties must make any generalisations provisional.

With this proviso firmly in mind, we may tentatively assert that the commonest form of settlement was the small ferm-toun, an irregular cluster of farmsteads, outbuildings and kailyards occupied by the co- or joint-tenants who shared possession of the toun. The small scale of such settlement (generally 2 to 6 tenants) can be ascribed to the fragmented nature of good-quality, undrained arable soil and to a process whereby growing ferm-touns tended to fission into smaller units. Its random plan can be attributed to the absence of a formally-designated area for the farmsteads and to their part construction out of perishable raw materials like wattle and turf. As in medieval England, the ordinary peasant dwelling needed regular replacement and, over time, shifted between different positions and alignments. Although the most widespread form of rural settlement, small, irregular touns were not the only one. The layout of some pre-improvement estate plans discloses a greater semblance of order, perhaps by being arranged on a one- or two-row basis or around a simple, open courtyard. Possibly these more orderly plans were associated with the wider adoption of stone-built housing and more efficient farming over the seventeenth century. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that some had medieval antecedents. Scattered references to tofts from the twelfth century onwards bear this out. In theory, tofts were allotments specifically set aside for the farmsteads of a toun, an area of private space. They imposed a stable and, usually, an orderly framework of bounds around the farmsteads of the toun and *ipso facto* limitations on their movement. Toft systems were laid out on a one- or two-row basis and even on either side of a green (for example Midlem in Roxburghshire). There are also descriptions of 'full' or 'half' tofts as if there was a calculation to their size, whilst the possession of others was clearly seen as betokening the possession of a particular holding, but the extent to which their size or sequence of allocation was linked to that of holdings has still to be demonstrated. Indeed, whilst we find touns in which each landholder was required, as on the Coupar Angus Abbey estate, to 'set his bygyn apon his awin toft', there are hints that this was not the case everywhere. The landholders who shared a ferm-toun faced the choice of either dividing their portions into separate, consolidated holdings or laying them out in the form of intermixed strips (or runrig). Although the first of these options was used to a limited extent, runrig was the more widely-adopted strategy, illustrated here at Auchencraw and one that invariably forced tenants into a degree of cooperation over husbandry.

Prior to the improving movement, the toun economy was organised around areas of intensive cropping or infield, of alternate grass and arable husbandry or outfield and common grazings. The precise cropping of infield and outfield varied from one region to another. Generally speaking, infields in the more fertile east and south-east might carry a crop of wheat as well as the staple grains of oats and bere plus a crop of peas or beans, whereas those of the north and west were subjected to a monotonous cycle of oats and barley. The main differences in outfield cropping practice lay in the proportion cropped and the duration of each cropping cycle, with touns to the north and north-west developing the more exploitive system. Rights of access to common grazing were contingent on possession of a holding, with the amount of stock grazed by each landholder being carefully stented. Where pasture was abundant, the more distant grazings were exploited through a shieling system. There is ample evidence that shieling systems were initially developed in areas like Lammermuir as well as throughout the Highlands. However, with the development of the monastic economy, hill pasture in the southern uplands was used to support a more independent pastoral economy. Outwardly, infield, outfield and common grazing represent different sectors of farm activity. However, they possess a further dimension of meaning. *Ab origine*, infield formed that part of the medieval township which was assessed as arable and measured in terms of standard tenemental units such as merklands or husbandlands, whilst outfield represented a later expansion, perhaps as late as the fifteenth or sixteenth century, into the surrounding waste. The temporary cropping of outfield can be attributed to the fact that the only manure which it received was that provided by the tathing of livestock during the summer prior to its cultivation, so that its limited reserves of fertility declined until, after three or four years of cropping, it was abandoned to grass again.

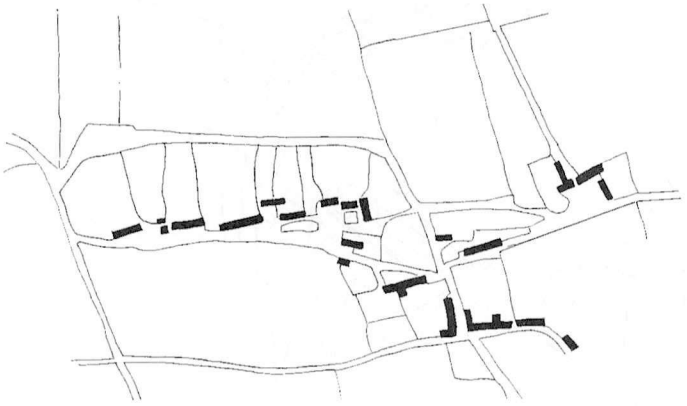


Location Map

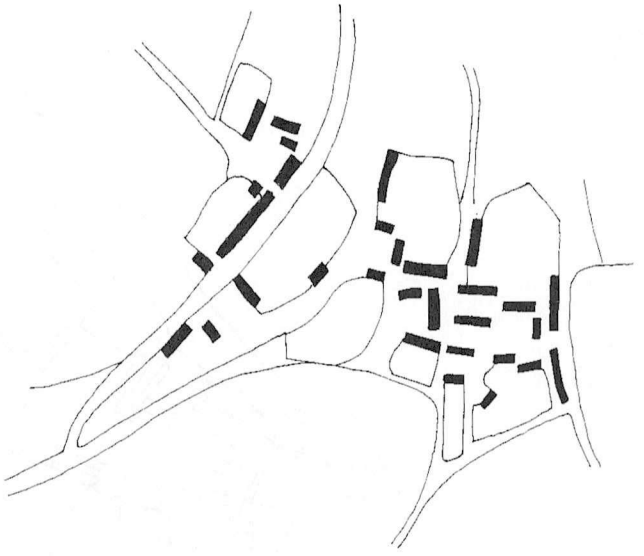
RAD

Medieval rural settlement

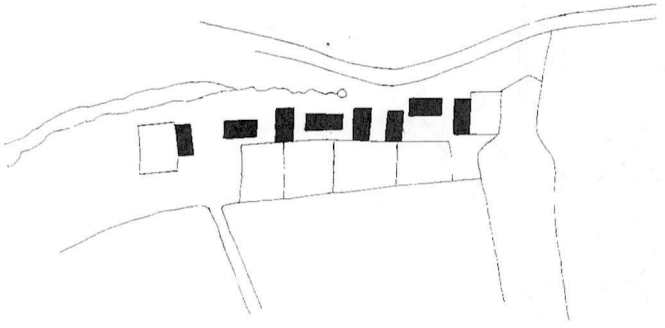
These and the following maps are all based on eighteenth-century estate plans held in the Scottish Record Office.



Aroncroch, Fife, 1786

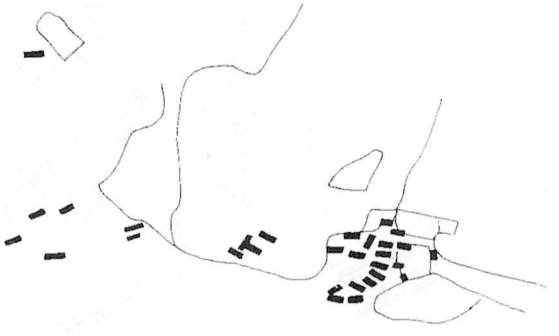


Belhenny, Aberdeenshire, 1776



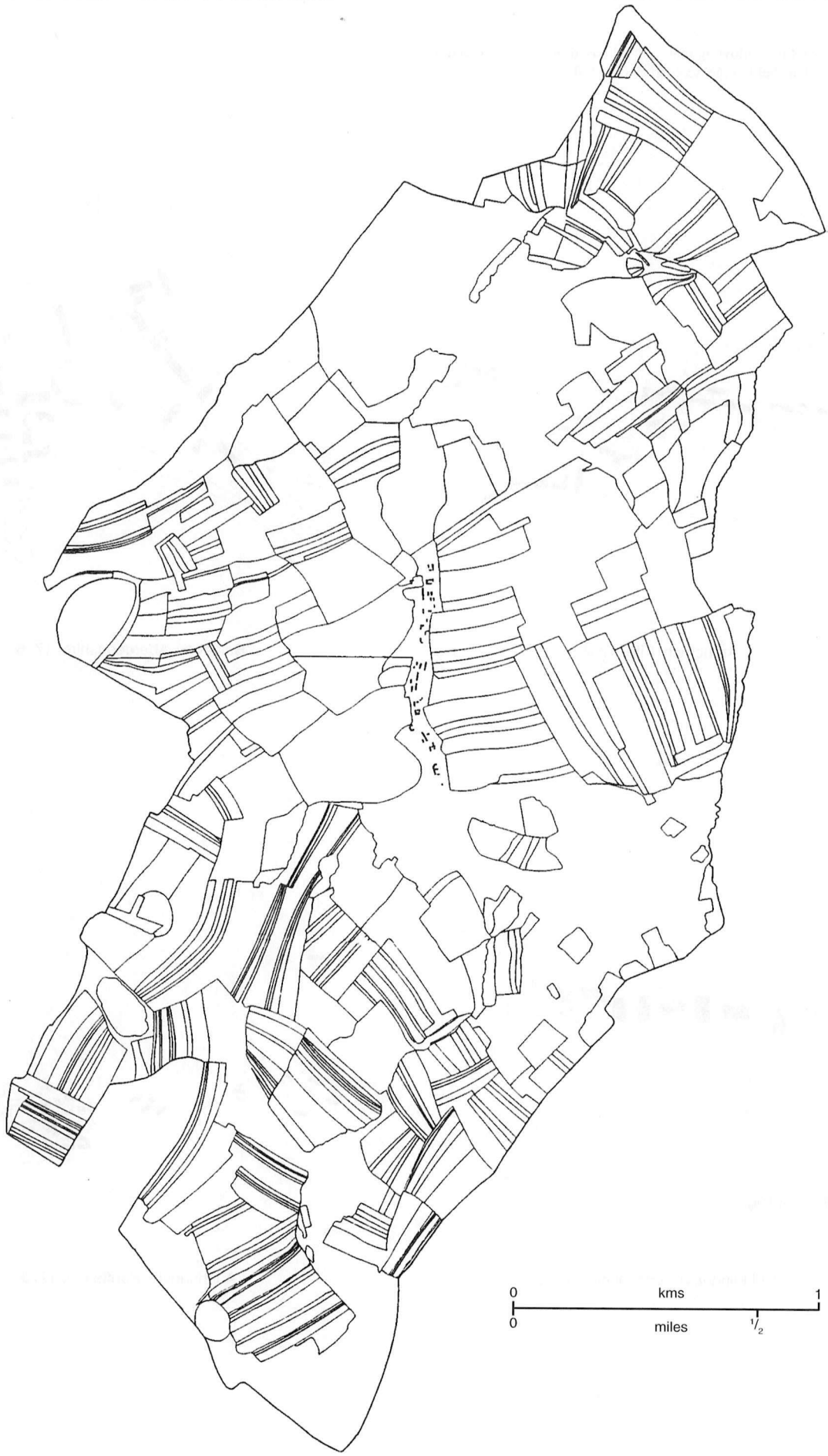
Buildings

Old Flinder, Aberdeenshire, 1762



Auchnahyle, Banffshire, 1773

Medieval rural settlement from later estate plans RAD



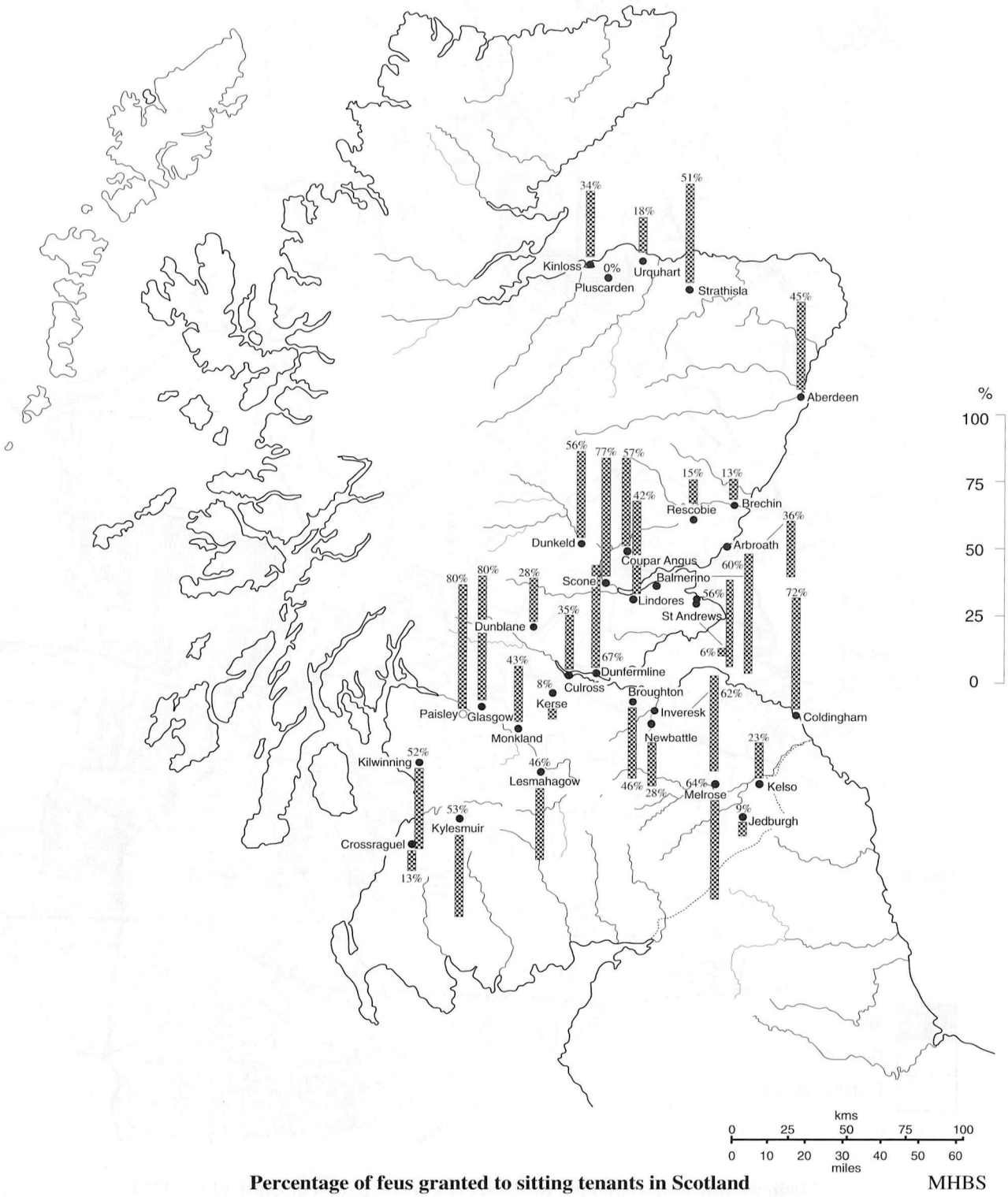
Runrig lands of Auchencraw, Berwickshire, about 1713 RAD

Medieval township economy: the lands of Forbes, parish of Clatt, about 1771 RAD

Feuing of Church lands in the sixteenth century

The feuing of church lands - whereby bishops, abbots, commendators and other benefice holders, instead of leasing their lands for a year or years (or for life or lives) in return for a rent, granted a feu in perpetuity in return for a single lump sum (or grassum) and a perpetual but fixed annual feu duty - can be traced from the fifteenth century. But the granting of feus reached a peak in the years 1550 to 1570. The great volume of feus in these years had a far-reaching effect in turning many tenants into owner-occupiers - particularly since church lands were generally the most fertile.

At first glance, these transactions did not offend against the rule that they must not diminish the patrimony of the church; but with the rapid depreciation of the coinage, the real value of the fixed feu-duty also fell, benefiting the feuars. The map and charts shows the extent to which feus of church lands were granted to sitting tenants.

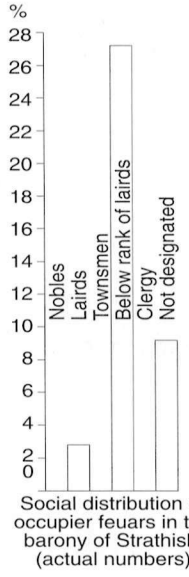


Percentage of feus granted to sitting tenants in Scotland MHBS

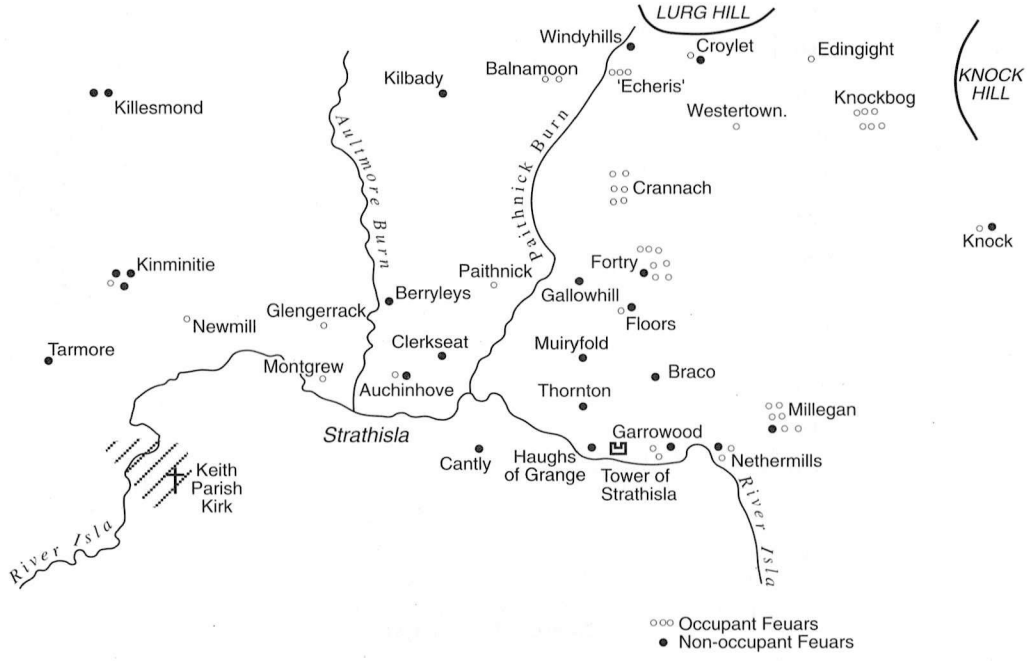
Feuing of Church lands in the sixteenth century

The map illustrates the pattern of feuing in a particular barony, that of Strathisla in Banffshire belonging to the abbey of Kinloss which was itself situated in Morayshire. Strathisla lay in the fertile valley of the river Isla and its tributaries the Aultmore and Paithnick burns, even the lower slopes of Knock and Lurg Hill being under cultivation. The land was cultivated by numerous tenants on the fixed runrig pattern. At the centre of the barony stood the tower of Strathisla, the administrative headquarters, and the parish church of Keith, a mensal kirk of the bishop of Moray.

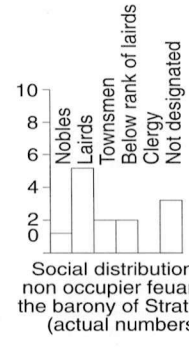
The feu charters of Kinloss abbey as a whole span the period from the paternalist government of Abbot Thomas Chrystal to the commendatorship of Edward Bruce.The abbey was erected into a temporal lordship in favour of Edward Bruce, by charters of 1601 and 1608. One hundred out of the 104 extant charters were granted by Walter Reid, who was abbot in 1553-83. By the mid-seventeenth century, the area was peppered with the small tower houses of the bonnet lairds of Strathisla.



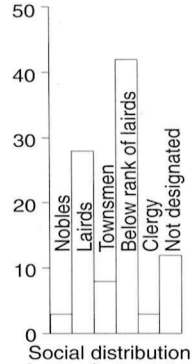
Social distribution of occupier feuars in the barony of Strathisla (actual numbers)



Distribution of feuars

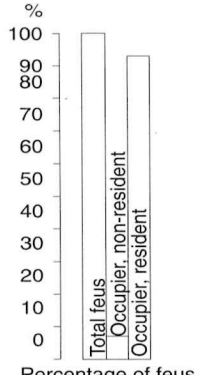


Social distribution of non occupier feuars in the barony of Strathisla (actual numbers)



Social distribution of feuars (percentages)

Location map



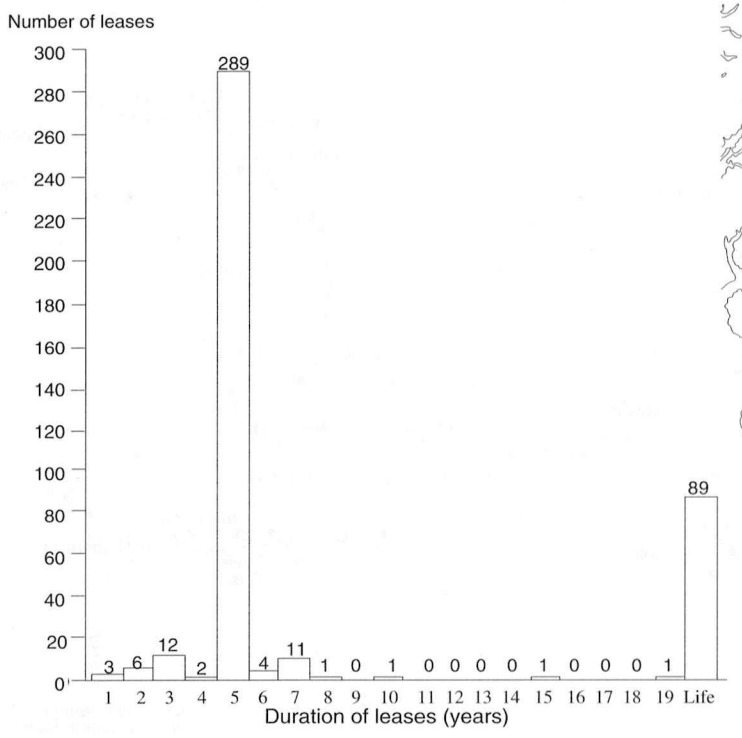
Percentage of feus granted to occupiers

Feuing of lands in the barony of Strathisla

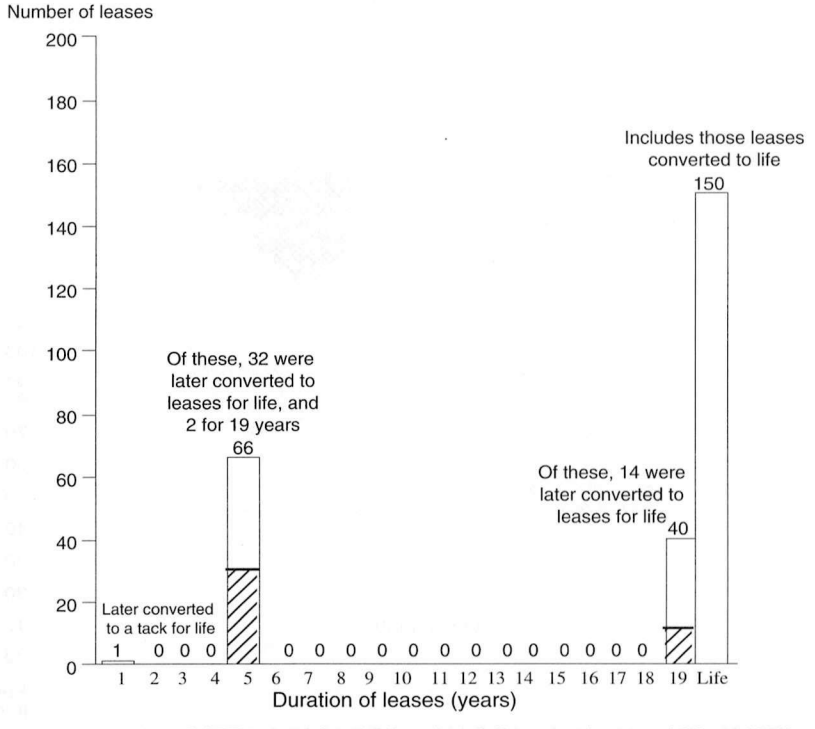
MHBS

Customary succession in leases

The surviving rentals of Coupar Angus Abbey cover the years from 1464 to 1516 and from 1539 to about 1560. The gap is an unfortunate one because since there was clearly a move towards longer leases in the intervening period; this was the policy of Abbot Donald Campbell who feued the lands in the 1550s, thus making permanent the trend towards stability of possession. The use of patronymics on the abbey lands during the earlier period makes it impossible to give round figures in connection with customary inheritance, but it is safe to say that on most of the farmtouns several families are found in possession for two to three generations, and in some cases more.



Pattern of 418 leases in the lands of Coupar Angus Abbey 1464 - 1516



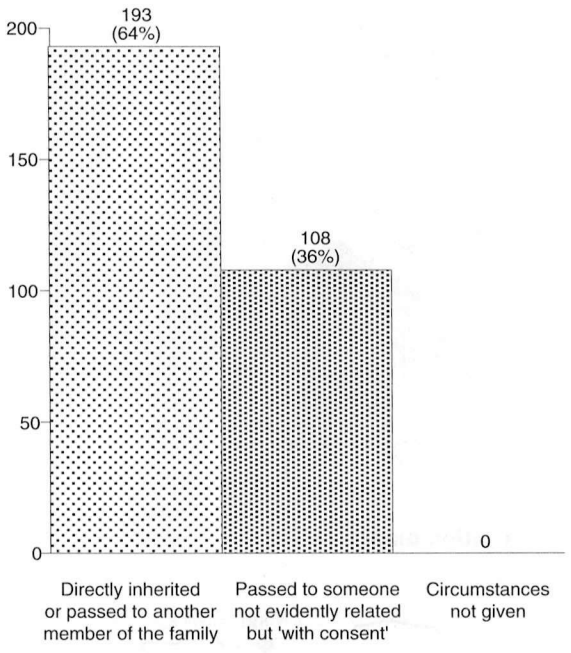
Pattern of 257 leases in the lands of Coupar Angus Abbey 1539 to about 1560 MHBS

Customary succession in leases

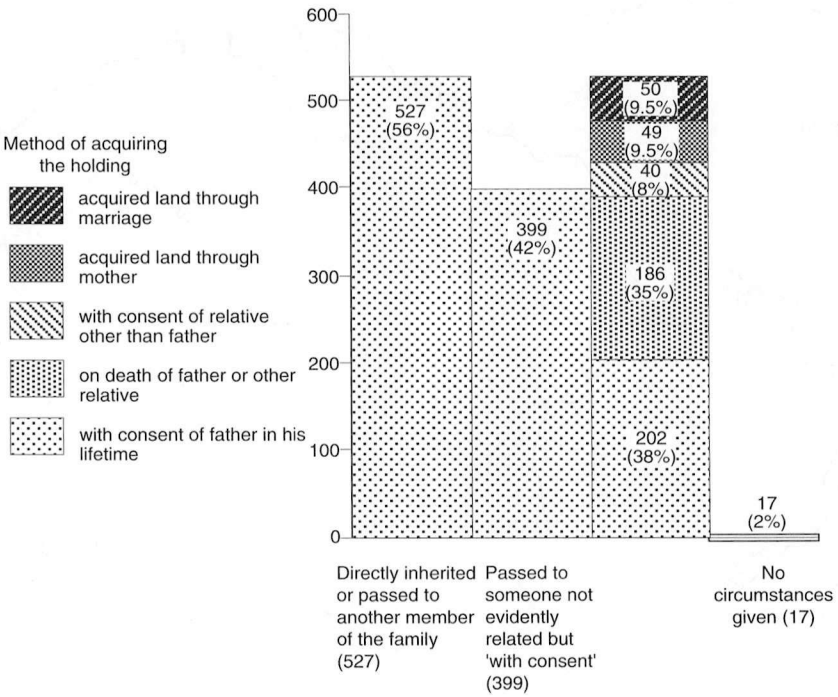
Important though it was, and reaching a peak in the 1540s and 1550s, feuing spread only gradually on church lands: significant feuing did not appear in Glasgow until the early 1580s. Thus, many families remained tenants for much of the sixteenth century.

The most common forms of customary tenure were the lease granted for years or for life and the special case of the rental (life lease) which was renewed on the death of the tenant in favour of his kin. Rentalling was most common in southern Scotland where it had long existed in lands as far apart as Newbattle, Melrose, Glasgow, Paisley and Kilwinning. Even with tacks, including short tacks, it was customary to renew them in favour of the tenant or his family. Continuity of possession, while not universally guaranteed, would seem to be the norm in many parts of the country, in both lay and ecclesiastical lands. In practice these tenants had the right of succession to their holdings but unlike freeholders and feuars they did not have a heritable title. In late medieval Scotland, the claim to customary inheritance by tenants was called the 'kindness' of the holding, the right to succeed because the new tenant was kindly ('kin') to the previous tenant.

When a rentaller died leaving a wife and children, the widow enjoyed the lands for her lifetime only; but the children were entitled to be rentalled; and the widow had no power to put in any person in the rental. Further, in Glasgow, even if the deceased tenant had alone been rentalled, his widow was entitled to the lands for her lifetime by the privilege of St Mungo's widow. The graphs show the breakdown of the customary sucession in leases in the lands of the abbey of Paisley in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire and in the lands of the barony of Glasgow.



Customary inheritance in leases in the lands of Paisley Abbey in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, 1526 to 1555



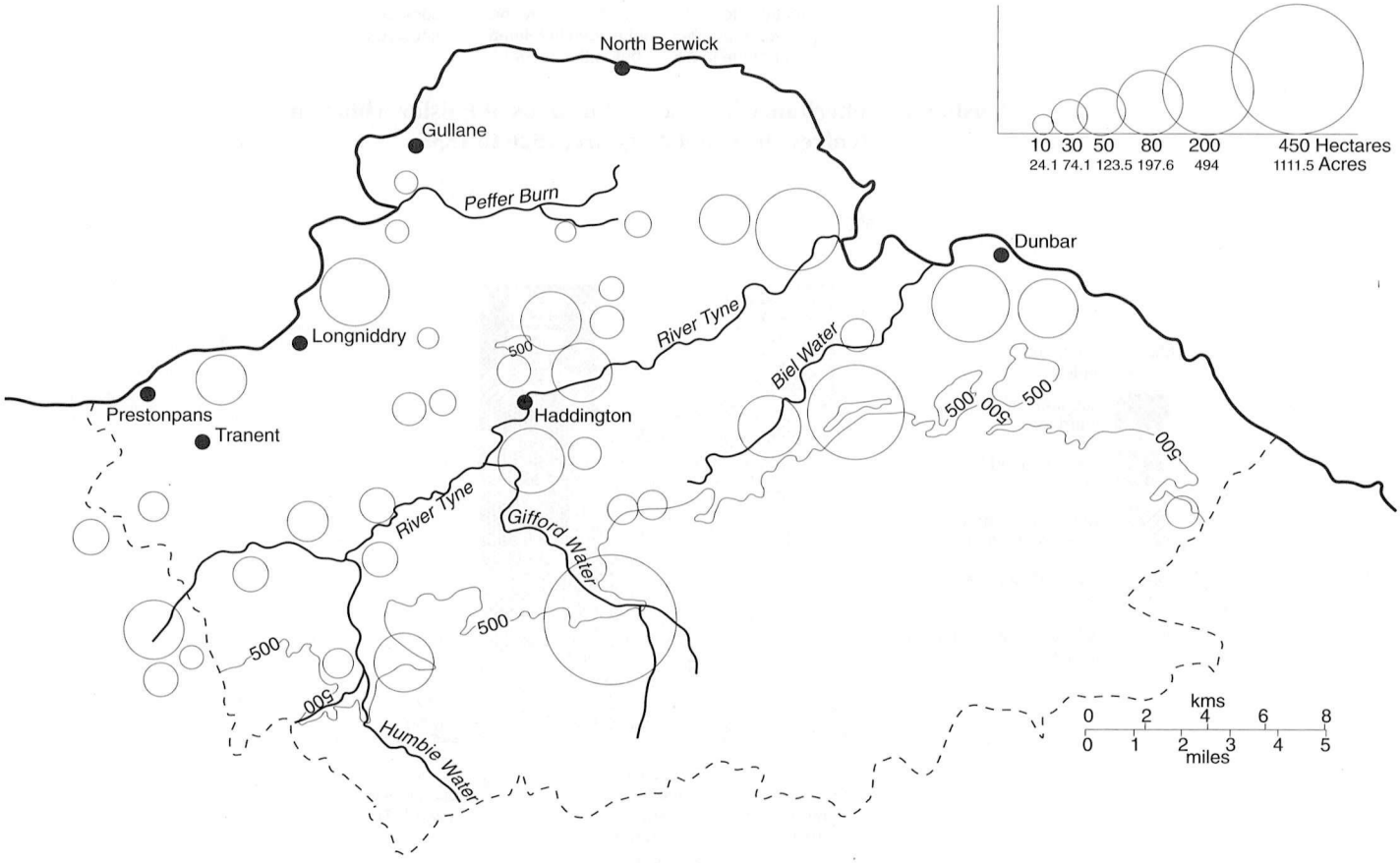
Customary inheritance in leases in the barony of Glasgow, about 1509 to 1570

MHBS

Enclosures

John Adair's maps of the Lothians show that in that area, where enclosure was relatively advanced, few complexes exceeded about 250-300 acres (approximately 101-121 hectares). However, in such an area, where estates were relatively small and closely spaced, enclosure even on this modest scale could have profound impact on the rural landscape. We are fortunate in having Adair's surveys for parts of eastern Scotland for the last decade of the seventeenth century. These surveys are acknowledged to show settlement with reasonable accuracy. Thus they probably represent a fairly good picture of the state of enclosure. The actual extent of the enclosed lands may have been slight in relation to landscape, but when their areas are calculated as accurately as is possible from the scale of the map, which is not entirely precise, they do not seem unduly out of proportion in relation to other evidence. The map represents the distribution and approximate size of the enclosures as shown by Adair.

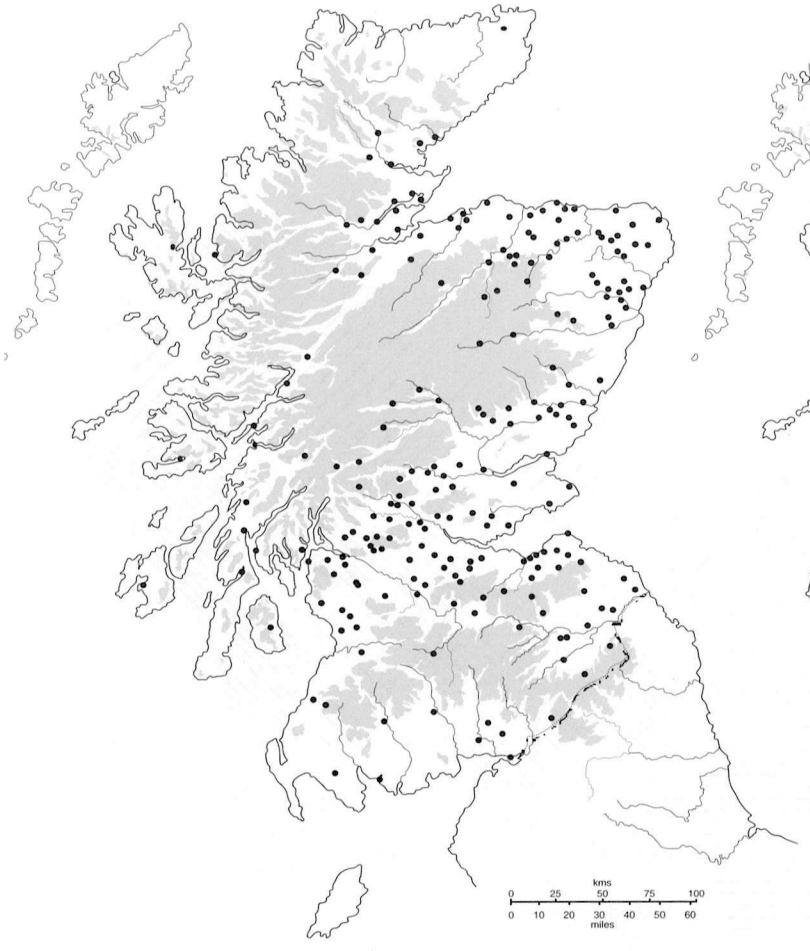
Location map



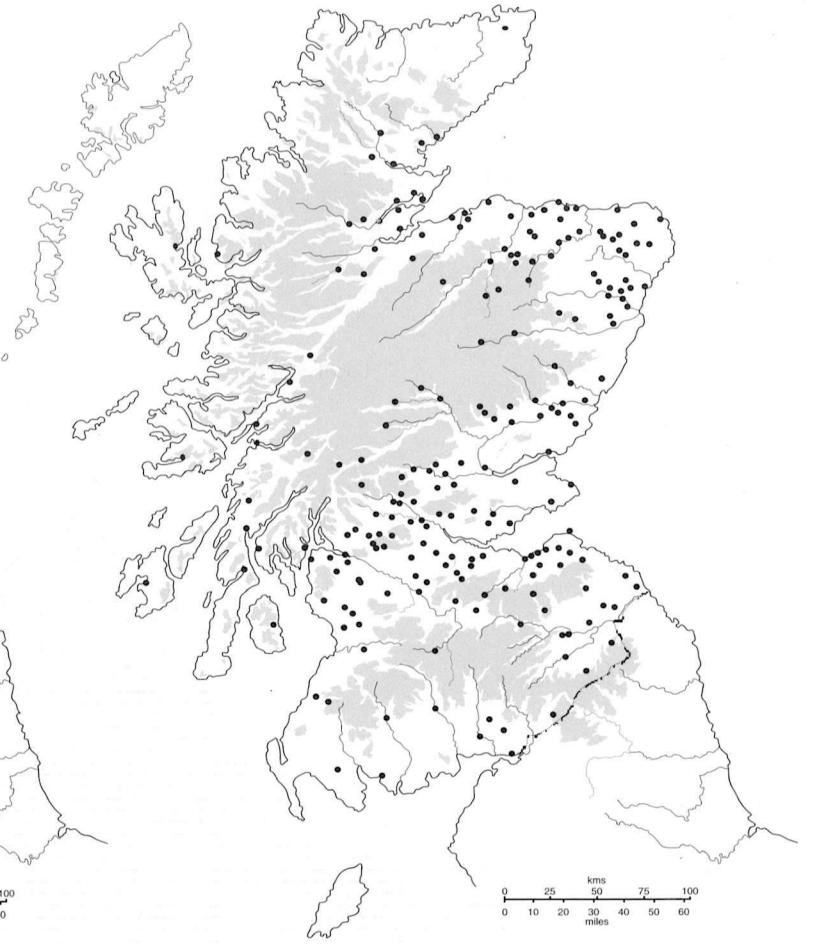
Enclosures in East Lothian in the seventeenth century IDW

Markets and fairs outside burghs

Between 1550 and 1660, 143 market centres were licensed, followed by a further 346 between 1660 and 1707 (see above, Royal burghs and burghs of barony). But the post-Restoration foundations were often different in being granted a licence to hold a regular market or a fair without being given the status of a burgh. There were, it has been estimated, about 50 non-burghal centres before 1660 but a further 136 were authorised by parliament 1660 and 1707, many in areas remote from existing burghs. These post-1660 foundations were also rather different in their distribution, reaching into the Highlands and larger islands of the Inner Hebrides. By 1707, only 18% of the mainland of Scotland was more than fifteen miles from an authorised market centre, whether situated in a burgh or outside.



Markets outside burghs



Fairs outside burghs

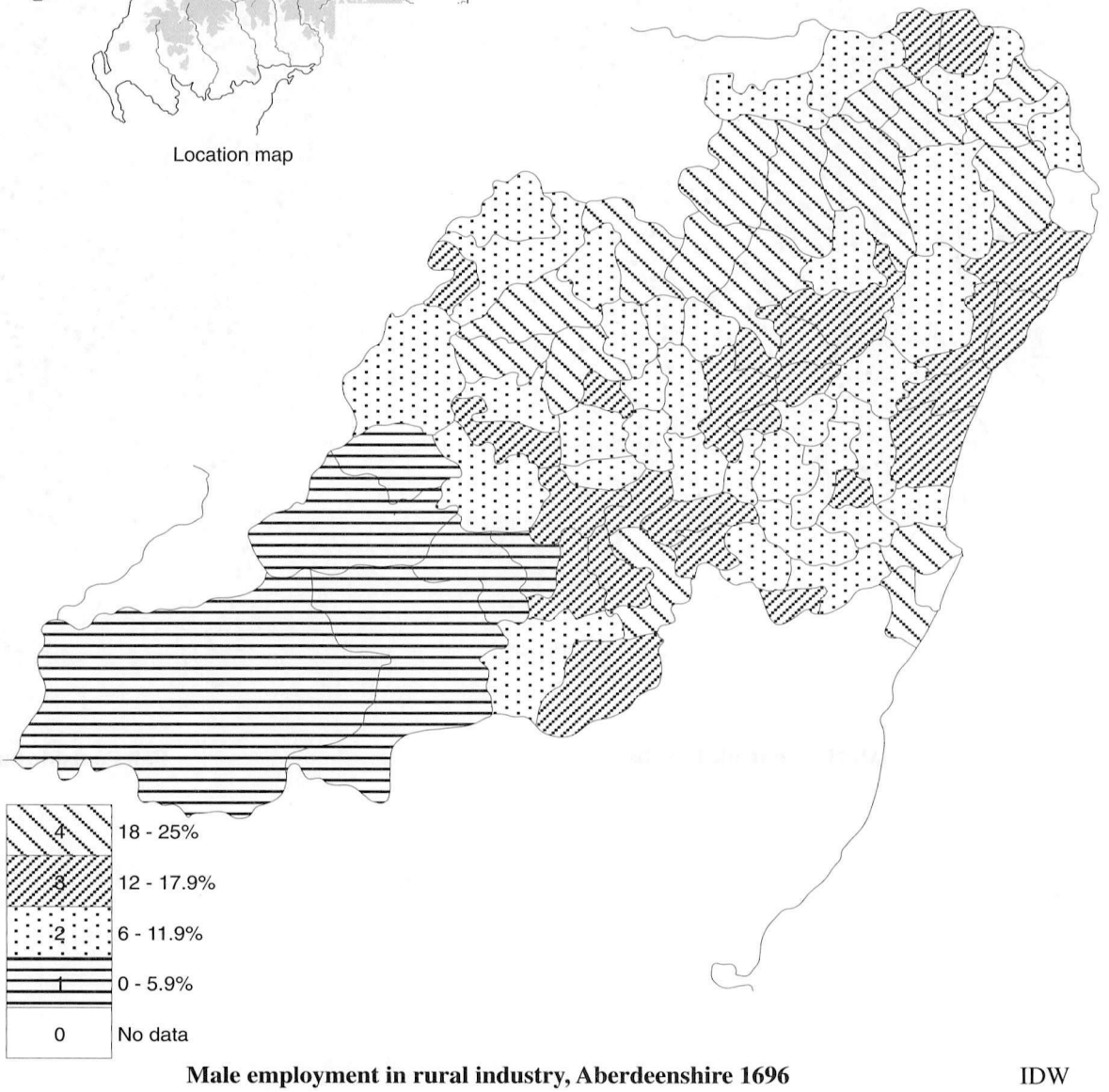
IDW

Employment

The map shows the percentage of recorded industrial workers in Aberdeenshire in 1696. The lower limit of 3-5% of the active male workforce listed as having industrial occupations may represent the basic level of specialist craft production which was required for a dispersed farming community: weavers, tailors, leather workers, smiths and wrights. Percentages above this threshold may indicate an element of specialisation for regional and national rather than local markets.

In Aberdeenshire, recorded industrial workers were fewest in the remote upper Dee and Don valleys. Rural industry was concentrated in the belt extending from Buchan, noted for its sheep rearing, through the pastoral north-eastern interior of the country. Parishes in the predominately arable Garioch had lower levels of recorded industrial employment. A second concentration occurs around Aberdeen. There were many butchers in the parishes surrounding the burgh, few elsewhere in the county, and many specialist metal and clothing workers who were not normally found in rural areas. The distribution of textile workers shows a more marked concentration in the pastoral north. In some Buchan parishes, one man in five or six was recorded as a weaver.

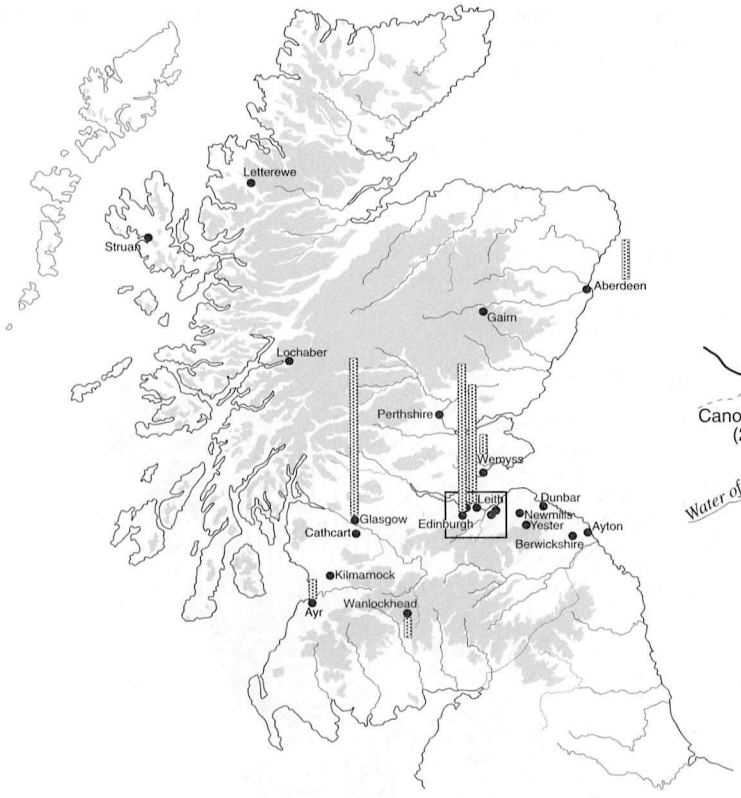
Location map



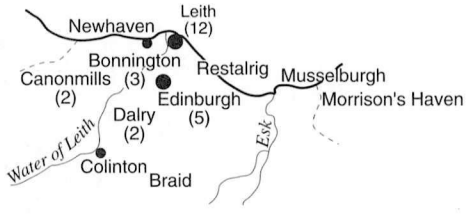
Male employment in rural industry, Aberdeenshire 1696 IDW

Growth of manufactories, 1590 to 1707

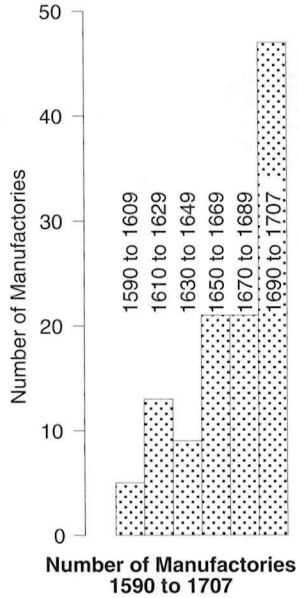
There was an appreciable growth, especially after 1660, of 'manufactories'. The details here, from a convenient list in G. Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits* (1980), which derives from the printed records, mostly of parliament and privy council, almost certainly understates the real number. Yet they hardly amounted to, as was once claimed, ' an industrial revival' . Their growth should be considered along with other developments of the seventeenth-century economy such as the growth of burghs of barony; the flight of some crafts, especially in Edinburgh, to the suburbs to secure cheaper costs and wage rates; the increasing range of merchant investment of capital in non-mercantile areas and the growing sophistication of business partnerships made on joint-stock lines, which dates from the 1620s rather than the 1690s; and the repeated government intervention in the economy, seen in the acts in 1641, 1661 and 1681 to encourage woollen manufactories. The projects in paper, glass, hardware, soap and sugar were new but much of the investment in wool, textiles and leather, unlike the famous cloth manufactory at Newmills near Haddington, was probably only an extension of long-established patterns of putting-out to rural industry. Most manufactories were small-scale and, except for those in sugar, hardly profitable. They did not, as they were intended to, make Scotland self-sufficient in these products. Their concentration around Edinburgh (which had at least nine before 1650) and, after 1660, in Glasgow reflects the predominance of investment by burgesses of these two towns and neighbouring lairds in these ventures.



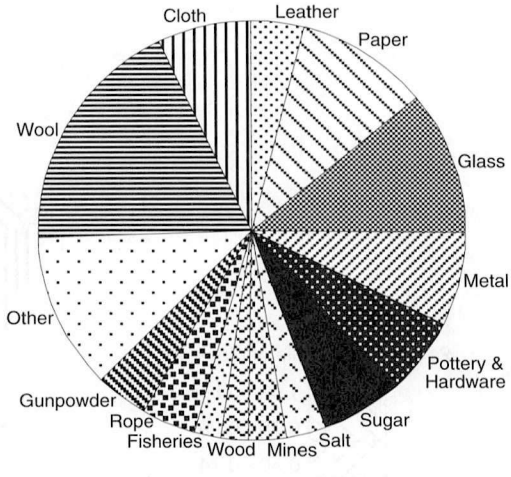
Manufactories 1590 to 1707



Detail of Edinburgh - Leith area



Number of Manufactories 1590 to 1707



Percentage break-down of manufactories

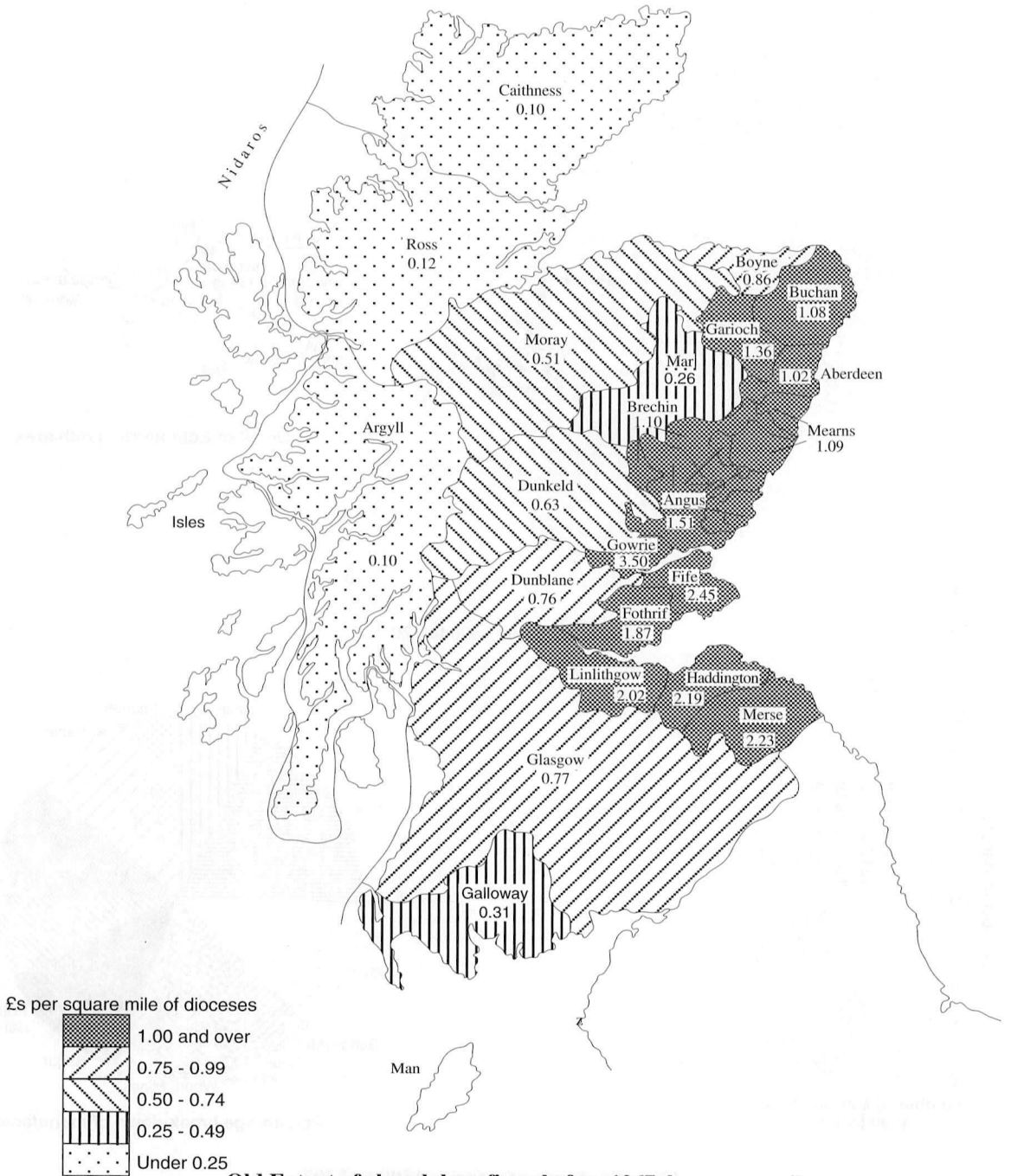
Growth of manufactories 1590 to 1707 IDW

Taxation in medieval Scotland

The Old Extent of benefices (parish revenues, also known as spiritualities) is preserved in a diocesan list presented to the Scottish parliament in 1366. It is also to be found in four ecclesiastical registers, which record both summary totals for all the mainland Scottish dioceses and valuations of individual parishes in the dioceses of St Andrews, Brechin and Aberdeen. All are copies of lost originals that had been drawn up for a tax of 4d in the merk (a fortieth) and subsequently used to calculate taxes of 5d and 6d in the merk. The only recorded tax of a fortieth - of all revenues and saleable goods - was ordered by Pope Innocent III in 1199 for the relief of the Holy Land. It was the first ecclesiastical income tax and was levied in England and France in 1201, the same year that a papal legate is known to have visited Scotland. Taxes of both 5d and 6d in the merk were agreed by the Scottish Church in 1267; over the intervening period papal taxes known to have been collected in Scotland were twentieths. Internal evidence therefore suggests that the Old Extent of benefices may date from 1201 and is certainly earlier than 1267.

As teinds - in theory the tenth part of the produce of land or labour - constituted the main element of benefices, this map provides an invaluable indication of the geographical distribution of wealth and population throughout Scotland. Regrettably, the only detail to have survived is from the wealthy eastern dioceses. The overall value per square mile of Aberdeen (£0.71) was greatly diminished by the poor Highland deanery of Mar. Similar variations would have occurred in most dioceses, particularly Glasgow and Moray. The distortion is reversed in the case of Dunkeld, where the value per square mile of its Highland core is unduly enhanced by a large number of wealthy and distant Lowland parishes (diocesan 'peculiars' in church law). No comparable data survive for the Western or Northern Isles, then in the ecclesiastical province of Nidaros (Norway).

The Old Extent of benefices remained the basis for papal taxation of spiritualities until the 1270s, when a new collector - Baiamondo di Vezza - was instructed to draw up fresh assessments of both spiritualities and temporalities (ecclesiastical estates). Although some accounts and assessments from 'Bagimond's Roll' survive, they are incomplete and cannot readily be mapped. This and the following assessment (see below, Nicholas IV tithe) were intensely unpopular. In the fourteenth century the Old Extent was reintroduced for the taxation of benefices.



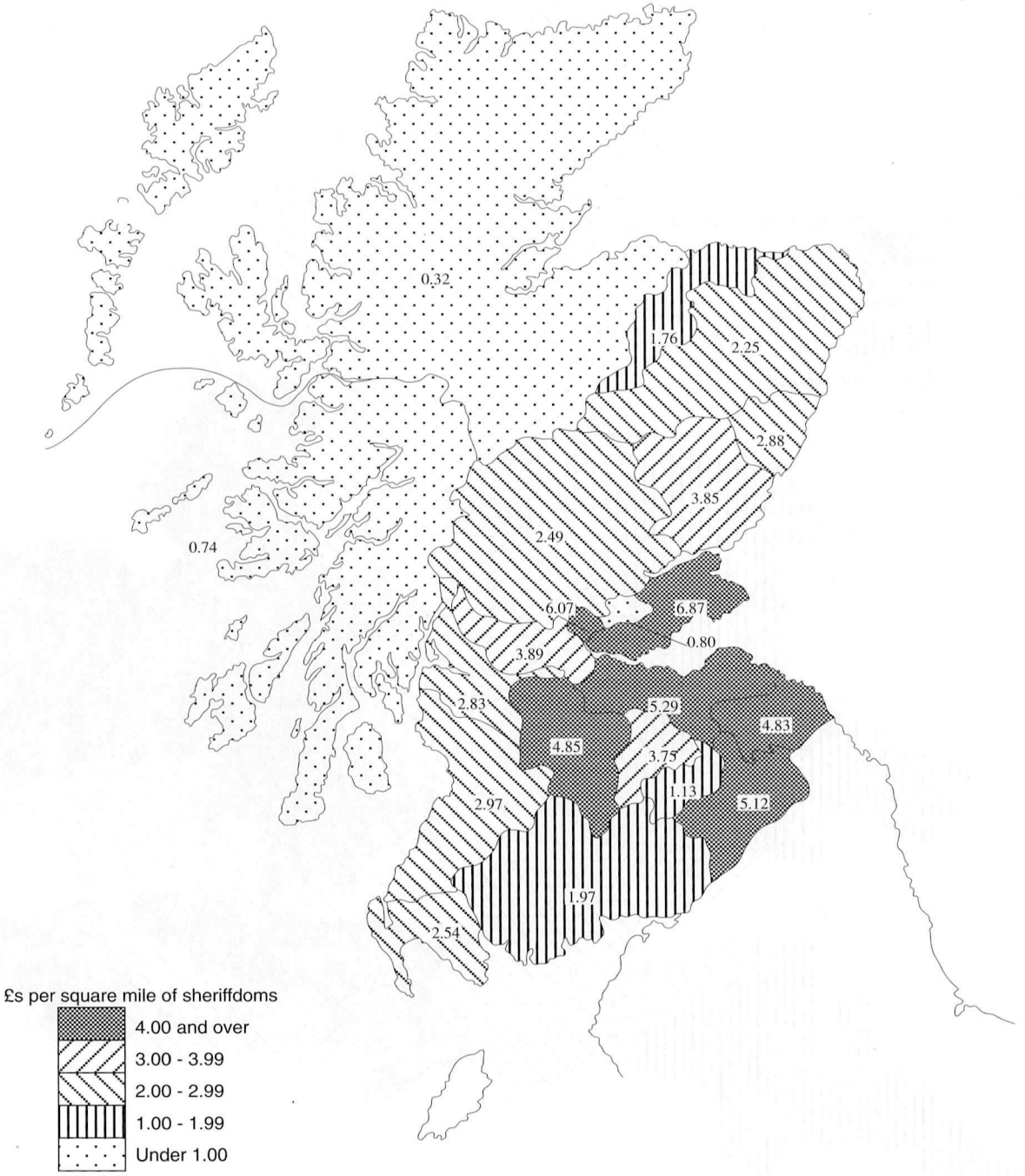
Old Extent of church benefices, before 1267, by square miles ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

Direct taxation was rare in medieval Scotland. In the main the crown was expected to support itself from its own revenues. In the twelfth century occasional taxation was agreed between the king, clergy, barons and burghs on the basis of a lump sum from each estate; each probably divided up by agreement amongst themselves. This was the system readopted on the rare occasions that taxation was levied in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Apart from taxation of the clergy, almost nothing is known about taxation in the thirteenth century. But from fourteenth-century references it is apparent that, as in England, taxes based on the detailed assessment of saleable goods and revenues supplanted the older system of tallage in the thirteenth century. After a period of fossilisation around old assessments, a national system of income assessment was reintroduced to pay for the ransom of David II.

The earliest surviving assessments of lay and ecclesiastical estates are known from summaries by sheriffdom that were presented to the Scottish parliament in 1366, when they were compared with current valuations. Tax legislation of the 1320s states that the assessment of estates then in use dated from the reign of Alexander III (1249-1286). For most areas, surviving summary tax returns of the 1320s are broadly consistent with the old valuations recorded in 1366. But returns from the border sheriffdoms, which by the 1360s were partly occupied by the English, were much higher. These higher valuations are reflected in the map below. Various other changes may also be inferred.

The sheriff of Inverness was responsible for tax collection throughout northern Scotland. His jurisdiction had earlier also extended to the Hebrides, but in 1366 the mainland and Inner Hebridean estates of the Lord of the Isles were separately recorded within Argyll. Argyll seems to have had a very loosely defined status. In 1366 it is recorded as a series of fiefs, which may earlier have been divided between other sheriffdoms. Various estates of the 'Lord Steward of Scotland' were listed separately within Argyll. His principal Lowland estate, the barony of Renfrew, seems to have been included within the sheriffdom of Dunbarton, although previously part of Lanarkshire.



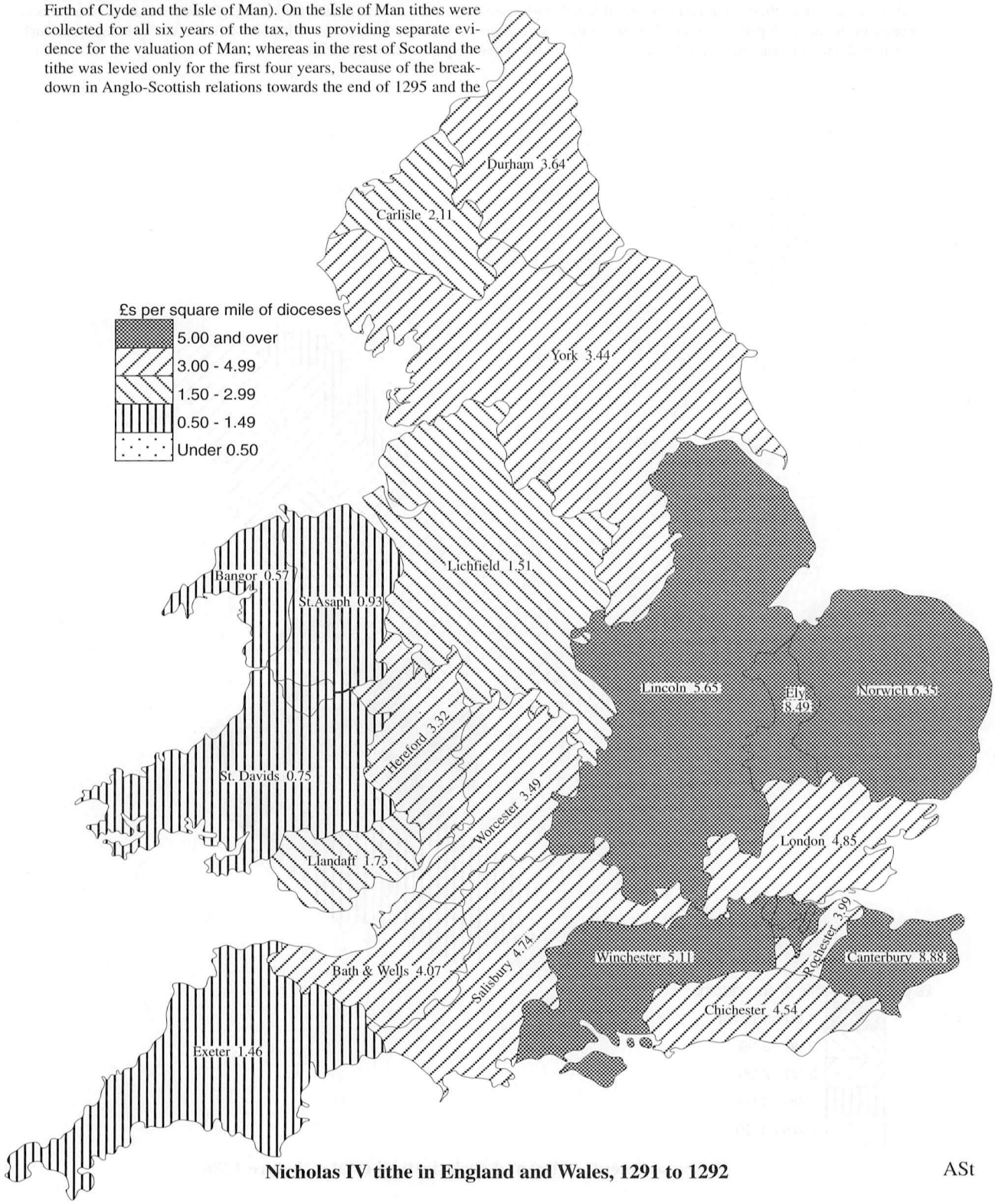
Tax assessments of lay and ecclesiastical estates, before 1286 ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

In 1290 Pope Nicholas IV ordered new assessments of ecclesiastical income to be made throughout western Christendom and tithes to be levied for six years towards the cost of a crusade. The assessments were prepared between the autumn of 1291 and the spring of 1292, on the basis of sworn statements by the clergy of the value of all ecclesiastical revenues and saleable goods. The military orders, leper hospitals and clerical incomes of 6 merks (£4) or less were exempt. The first tithe was levied in 1292.

As an inducement to take up the cross, Pope Nicholas granted all receipts from the British Isles to King Edward I of England. The Scottish record survives, among documents of Bishop Halton of Carlisle, the chief collector for Scotland, in a summary account of diocesan assessments and receipts. Although still part of the ecclesiastical province of Nidaros (Norway), Halton also collected tithes in the diocese of Sodor (the Hebrides, the islands in the Firth of Clyde and the Isle of Man). On the Isle of Man tithes were collected for all six years of the tax, thus providing separate evidence for the valuation of Man; whereas in the rest of Scotland the tithe was levied only for the first four years, because of the breakdown in Anglo-Scottish relations towards the end of 1295 and the subsequent wars.

A detailed assessment of benefices and other ecclesiastical revenues in the archdeaconry of Lothian (excluding the appropriated benefices and estates of the bishop of St Andrews) survives among the records of Coldingham Priory. This provides the one point of reference with the Old Extent of benefices and shows an average increase in the value of Lothian benefices of some 56%: an increase of 65 % in the deanery of Linlithgow, 69% in the deanery of Haddington and 38% in the deanery of Merse. It also provides evidence of the ratio of spiritualities (benefices) to temporalities (ecclesiastical estates) and indicates that in Lothian 64.5% of recorded ecclesiastical income was derived from benefices, almost



Nicholas IV tithe in England and Wales, 1291 to 1292 ASt

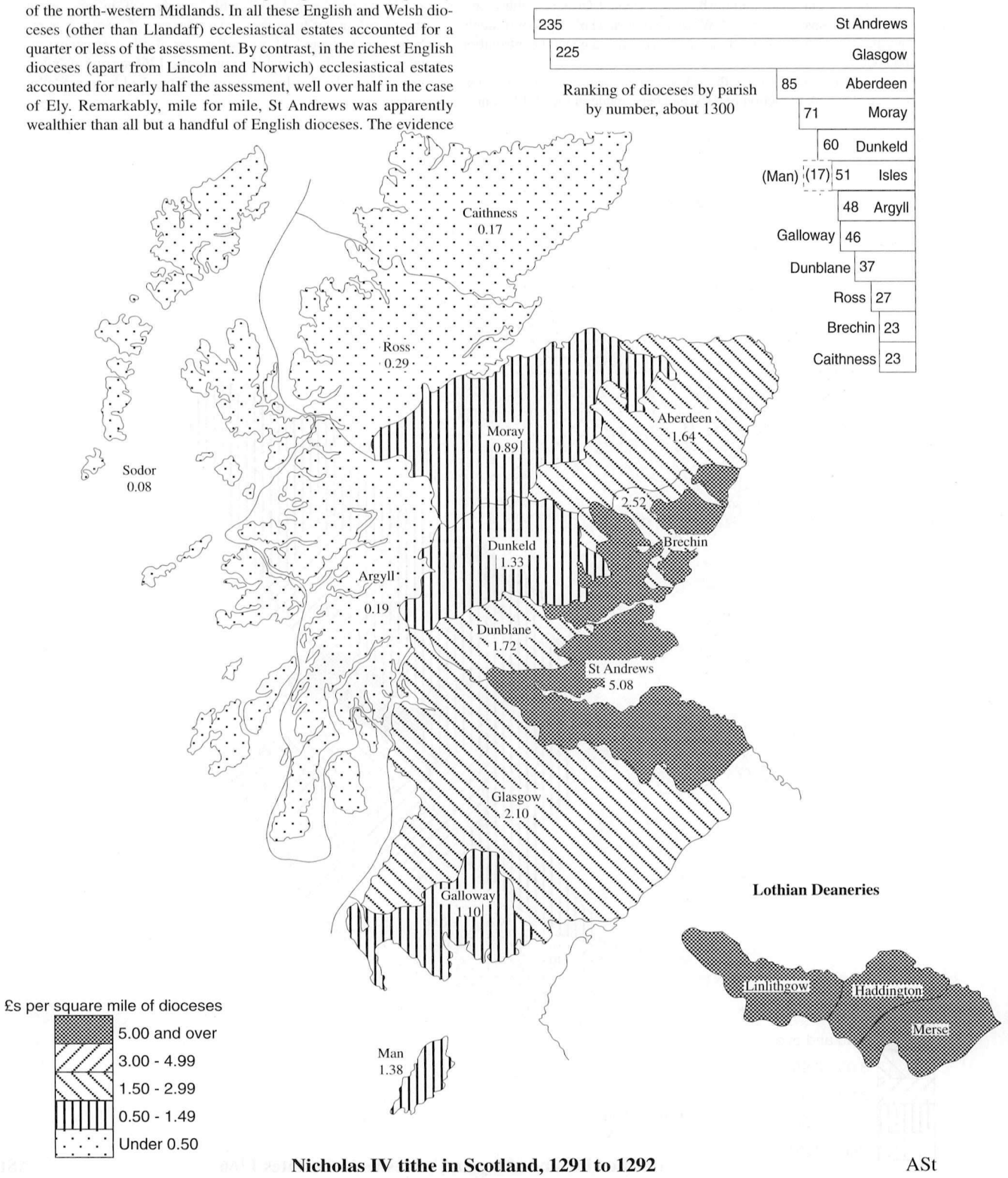
Taxation in medieval Scotland

identical to the English and Welsh average of 64.4%. Compared with most other parts of Scotland, there was a large concentration of religious houses in and around the archdeaconry of Lothian, which suggests that the disproportionate scale of Scottish monastic estates is a myth; unlike the appropriation of benefices, which accounted for almost half the monastic assessment and at least 60% of parishes.

Comparison with the English and Welsh assessments indicates a national average of £4.04 per square mile in England, £1.34 per square mile in Scotland and £0.90 per square mile in Wales. As might be expected, the Western Isles and the north and west Highlands were much the poorest areas recorded in the Nicholas IV assessment, followed by the Welsh dioceses, Galloway, the Isle of Man, Devon and Cornwall. More surprising is the relative poverty of the north-western Midlands. In all these English and Welsh dioceses (other than Llandaff) ecclesiastical estates accounted for a quarter or less of the assessment. By contrast, in the richest English dioceses (apart from Lincoln and Norwich) ecclesiastical estates accounted for nearly half the assessment, well over half in the case of Ely. Remarkably, mile for mile, St Andrews was apparently wealthier than all but a handful of English dioceses. The evidence from Lothian suggests that this was not disproportionately due to temporal revenues, although later evidence indicates that the concentration of ecclesiastical estates was significantly greater in the archdeaconry of St Andrews (see below, Taxed income, 1365 to 1373).

It has often been suggested that in Scotland the Nicholas IV assessment was excessively high. At nearly a fifth of the English total its scale is remarkable - double the ratio of GDP today. But recent numismatic research and analysis of Coldingham estate records tend to support its conclusions.

The 'Taxation of Pope Nicholas' was rapidly abandoned in Scotland but in England and Wales, despite initial protests about its severity, it remained the basis for ecclesiastical taxation until the Reformation.



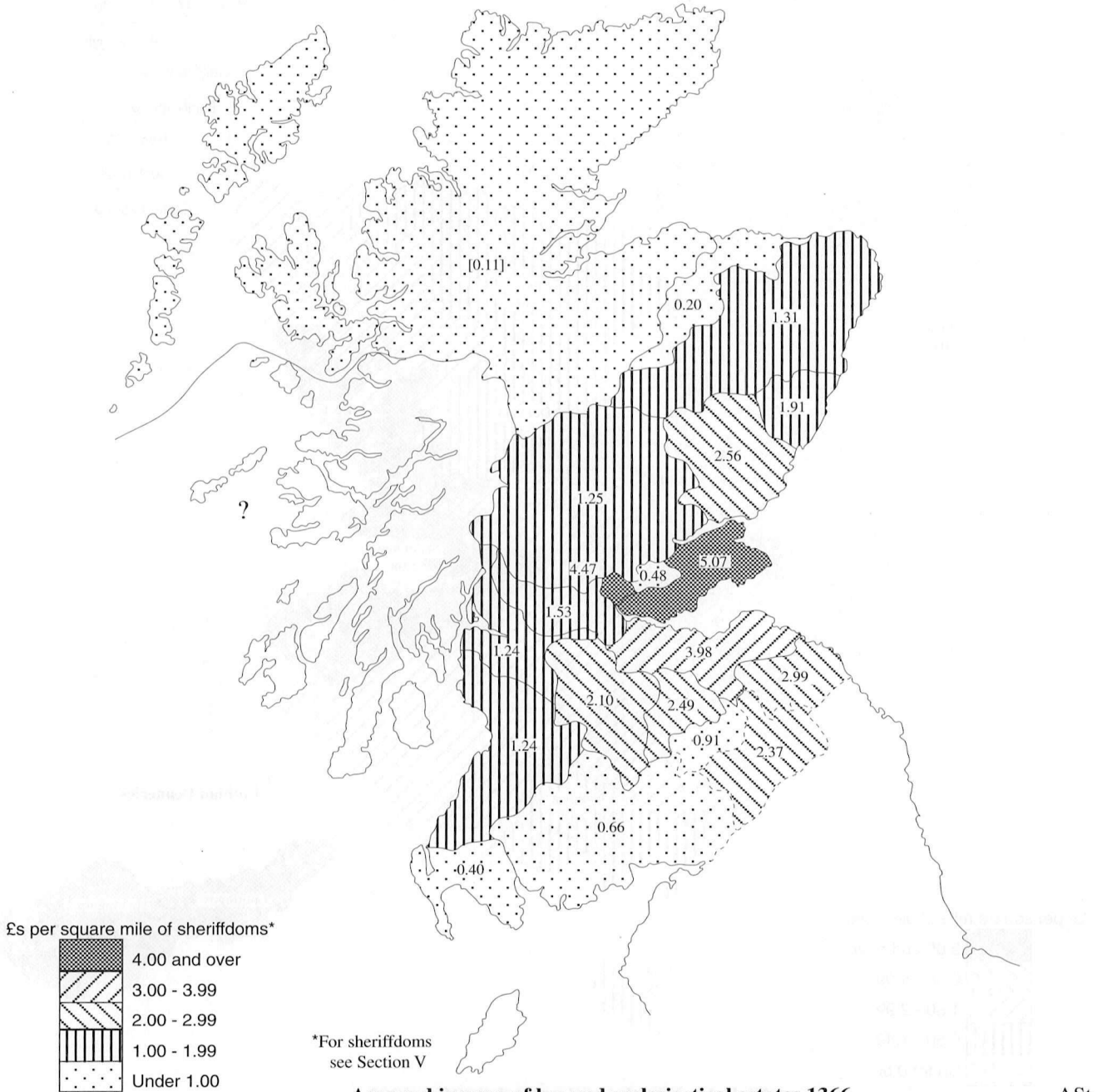
Nicholas IV tithe in Scotland, 1291 to 1292 ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

To help raise the ransom of David II, the Scottish Parliament enacted in 1357 that annual revaluations be made of all revenues: benefices, rents, goods, crops, livestock and all other possessions. All classes were to be assessed and taxed. The only items to be exempted from taxation, but not assessment, were white sheep, domestic horses, oxen and household utensils. Taxes were levied every year from 1358 to 1360. There was then a break until 1365, apart from annual tithes of Church income that had been granted by the Pope.

In 1366, with the English government threatening hostilities if the ransom was not discharged within four years, a major review became necessary. In May 1366, it was ordered that all old and new assessments of lay and ecclesiastical lands and revenues were to be collected and presented to parliament. Parliament met at Scone in July to consider the position and agreed that further assessments be made of the goods of burgesses and husbandmen (tenant farmers) - these later assessments have not survived. When the true value of all goods throughout the kingdom was known, it was enacted that a general contribution be levied.

Full comparison with the Old Extent (see above) was not possible in 1366. A reduction of 21% had been made in the Old Extent of benefices for the diocese of Glasgow, because Annandale and many parishes in the deaneries of Eskdale and Teviotdale were 'subject to the king of England'. For the same reason, in the deanery of Merse many parishes had been revalued by estimate, for comparative purposes, and Berwick had been excluded. Comparison with tax returns of the 1320s indicates that at least 73% (by value) of estates in the sheriffdom of Berwick were under English occupation, 67% of those in both Roxburgh and Selkirk, and 31% in Dumfries. These reductions have been reflected in the valuations per square mile in the remaining maps of this series. A further problem was that in Argyll the Lord of the Isles, the 'Lord Steward of Scotland' and John of Lorn had prevented the making of any assessment of their estates: the old extent of these lands was presented but not their current value. Resistance in Argyll is likely to have been matched in the sheriffdom of Inverness, where the earl of Ross was in rebellion and where the Lord of the Isles also had extensive estates; as there is no qualification in the 1366 record of Inverness, it may be that here too revaluations had been made by estimate.



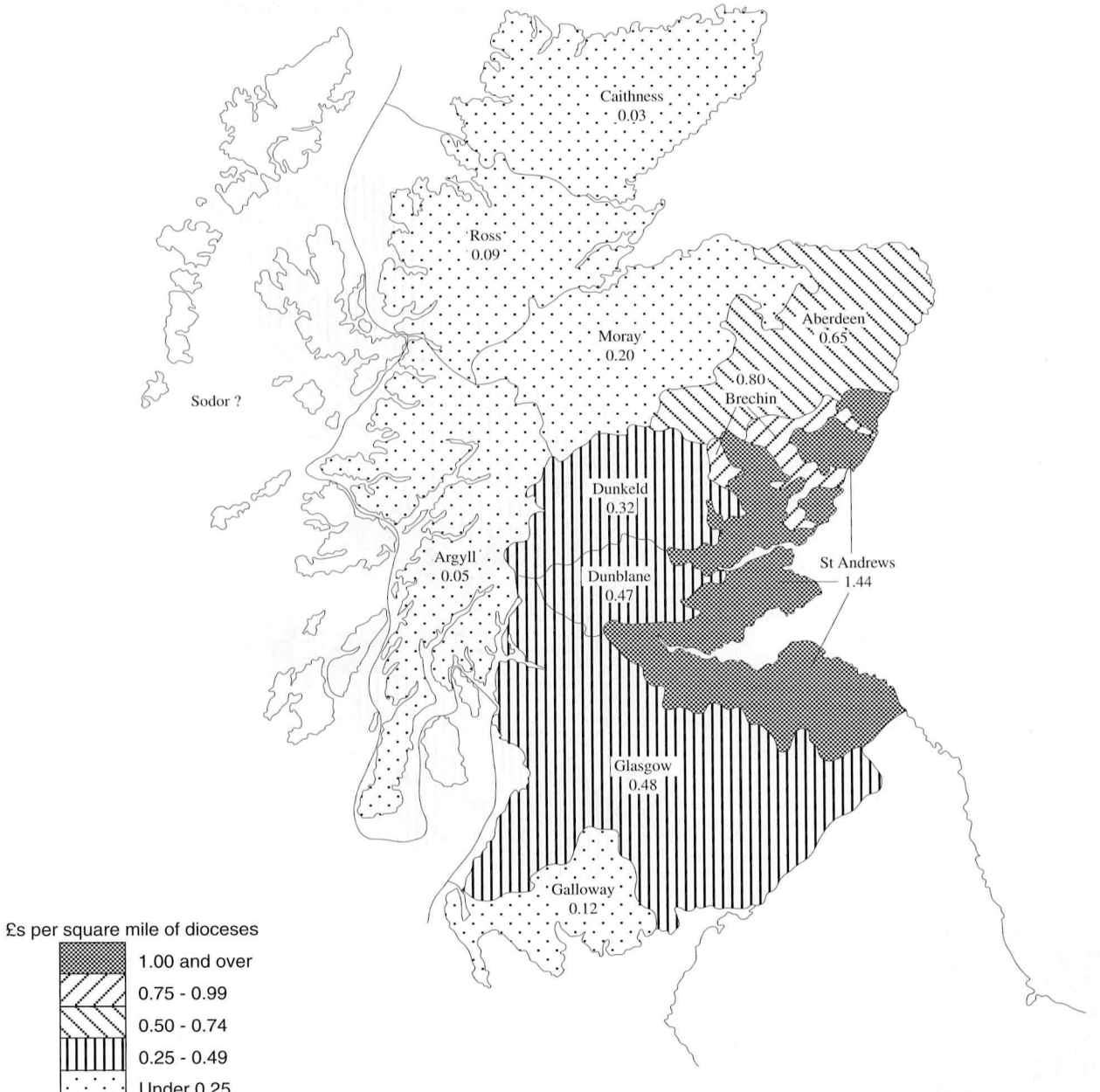
Assessed income of lay and ecclesiastical estates 1366 ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

Taken at face value, average income from lay and ecclesiastical estates had declined by 49% since the reign of Alexander III and income from benefices by 37% since the date of the Old Extent (before 1267, possibly 1201). As there is no discernible reduction in the 1320s, most or all of this decline had occurred later. The principal cause must have been depopulation as a result of the Black Death in 1349-50 and the Grey Death in 1361-2, leading to reductions in rent and the abandonment of marginal land. Climatic deterioration may also have been a significant factor. So too may have been the trebling of export duty on wool, hides and woolfells in 1358. This provided an additional return to the Exchequer of nearly £3,000 in 1365-6, almost 13% of the total recorded value of lay and ecclesiastical estates, although much of the impact would have been borne by the peasantry, which was always a major producer (see below, Taxed income).

There is a pronounced gradient in the reduction of estate values from west to east and from north to south (see above, Tax assessments of lay and ecclesiastical estates, before 1286). The reduction was least in the eastern Lowland sheriffdoms of Edinburgh, Fife, Clackmannan, Peebles, Forfar and Kincardine (down by between 25% and 34%); with Roxburgh, Lanark, Berwick and Stirling, these had been the richest areas in the thirteenth-century assessment. Doubtless, destabilisation exacerbated the reduction in Berwick (40% less), Roxburgh (54% less) and Selkirk (47% less). Lanark and Stirling seem to have been affected by their relative height and more westerly position (down by 57% and 61%). The west-coast Lowland sheriffdoms had declined by between 56% (Dunbarton and Renfrew) and 67% (Dumfries), with Wigtown down by 84%. In the Highlands, the Argyll estates that had been re-assessed were 78% lower, the valuation of Inverness was 65 % lower, and Perth was 50% lower. Banff had declined by 88%, a suspiciously high figure when compared with later tax returns (see below, Taxed income). Aberdeen had declined by 42%.

The pattern of decline in the assessment of benefices has many similarities, although it is less pronounced (see above, Old Extent of church benefices, before 1267). The assessment confirms that the wealthiest, most densely populated part of the country remained the eastern Lowlands, which had declined least; while the Highlands and Galloway had declined most. The reported income of benefices in the diocese of Caithness had declined by 70%, in both Moray and Galloway by 61%, in Argyll by 53% and in Dunkeld by 50%. There is much less variation between Dunblane (38%), Glasgow (37%) and St Andrews (34%). The decline was least in Brechin (27%), Ross (23%) and Aberdeen (9%). The figure for Ross looks surprising but seems to be borne out by later tax returns, which must always have been heavily skewed towards the lowlands of Easter Ross and the Black Isle (see below, Taxed income); whereas £0.65 per square mile for Aberdeen was far higher than can be justified by later returns and may result from a transcriptional error.



Assessed income of church benefices 1366

ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

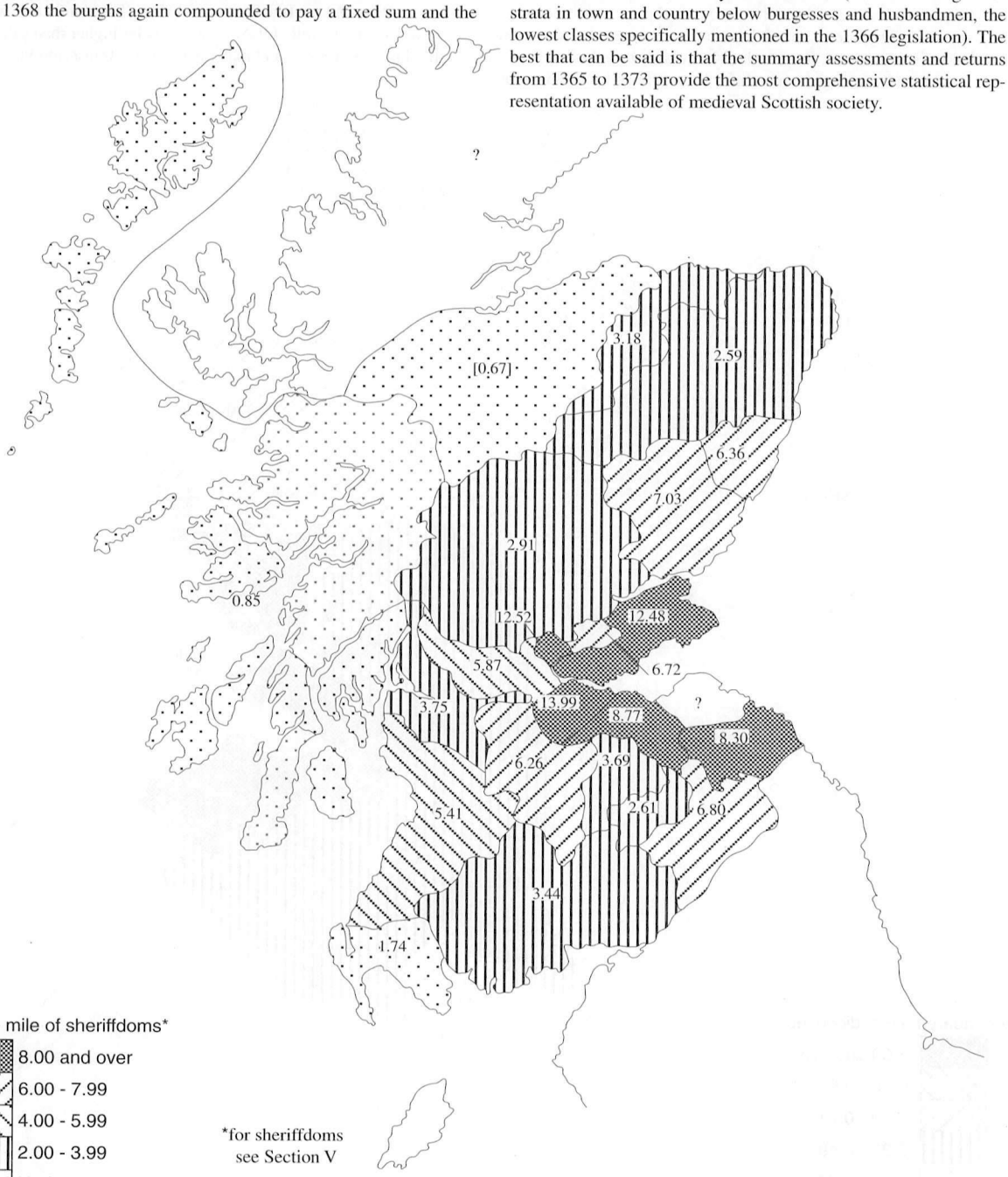
Preserved among the exchequer rolls are summaries of receipts from the taxes levied as contributions towards David II's ransom. The nature of the returns differs significantly from the 1366 assessments in that taxes were collected by the sheriffs from lay freeholders and their tenants and by diocesan officials from the clergy and their tenants.

It is unclear whether the structure of the 1366 assessments had been primarily dictated by the preoccupations of the Scottish parliament or by the nature of the earlier assessments (which had related to aids payable by tenants holding lands in fee from the crown and to dues on spiritualities owed to the papacy). The former seems more probable. The prelates and barons must have been deeply worried about a steep decline in their income. They sought to spread the tax burden and to highlight their predicament to the king by comparing the latest available assessments with the earlier standards.

The figures mapped below are derived from the highest recorded return from each source. The returns cover six years: 1365, 1366, 1368, 1369, 1370 and 1373. In 1365 the burghs compounded to pay a fixed sum and other groups were taxed at a rate of ls in the pound (a twentieth), which was the general rate in 1366 and 1370. In 1368 the burghs again compounded to pay a fixed sum and the tax rate for other groups was set at 6d in the pound (a fortieth). The rate for all groups in 1369 was 3d in the pound (an eightieth). While in 1373 the clergy and their tenants were taxed at a rate of 6d in the pound and other groups at ls in the pound.

Most sheriffdoms and dioceses contributed in all years, but their returns fluctuated greatly in value and contributions from many sources seem to have been forthcoming only in certain years. In lands controlled by the earl of Ross and in the dioceses of Caithness and Sodor no taxes may have been collected in the years from 1365 onwards. In the diocese of Argyll tax returns were made only in 1365 and 1373; modest returns from the sheriffdom of Argyll were made in 1365 and 1369, but the lordship of the Isles submitted no return until 1373 and it is probable that was also the case on the Argyll estates of the Steward (by 1373 King Robert II). In the south, returns from the sheriffdoms of Edinburgh, Berwick, Selkirk and Wigtown were irregular and fluctuated wildly. The fluctuations in Midlothian are particularly surprising, and the few returns from East Lothian are too low to be credible.

Because no detailed accounts have survived, it is impossible to gauge the thoroughness of the tax collectors or to establish whether all classes of society were included (there were large substrata in town and country below burgesses and husbandmen, the lowest classes specifically mentioned in the 1366 legislation). The best that can be said is that the summary assessments and returns from 1365 to 1373 provide the most comprehensive statistical representation available of medieval Scottish society.



Taxed income of lay freeholders and their tenants 1365 to 1373

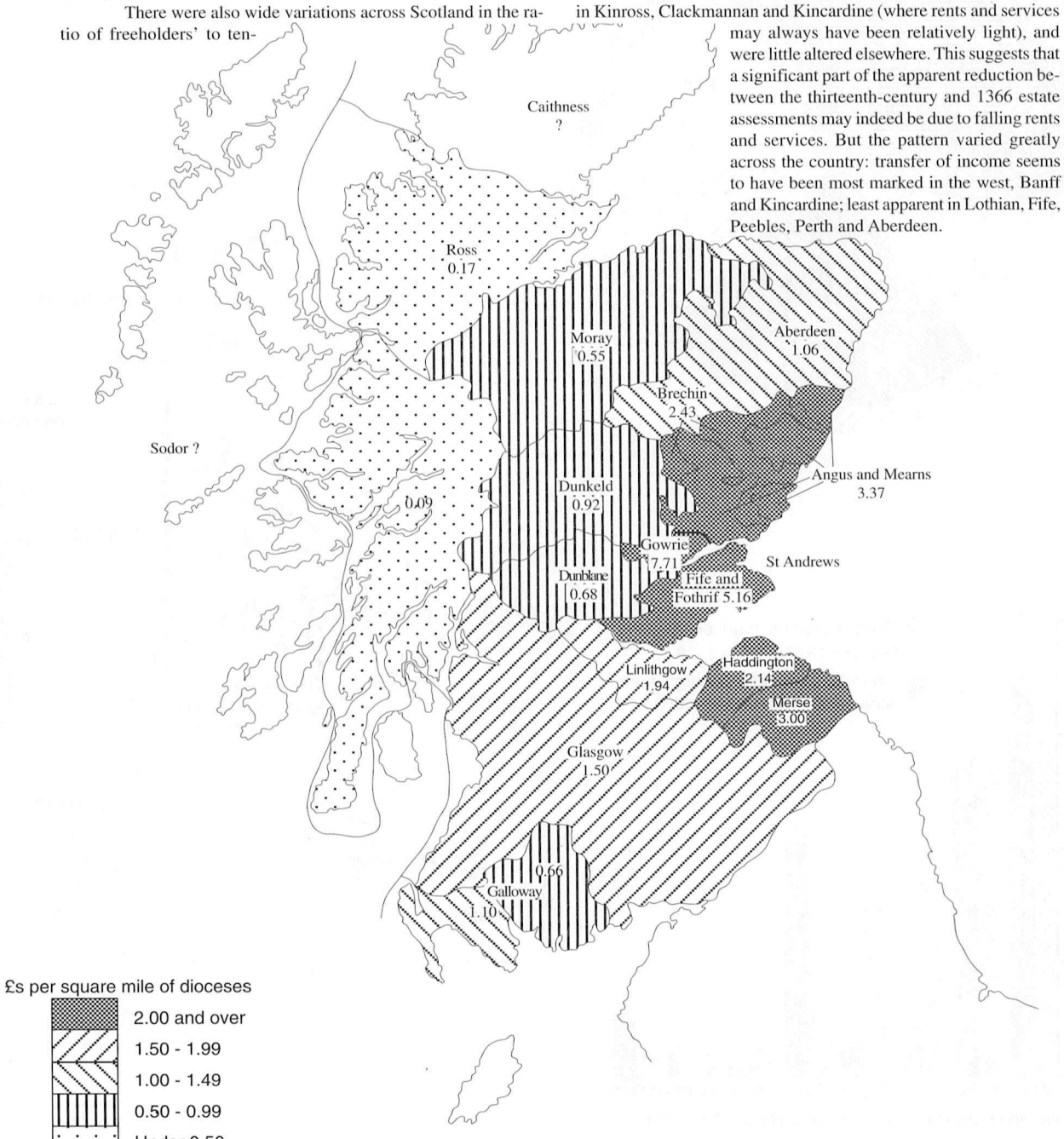
ASt

Taxation in medieval Scotland

As the assessments of 1366 and the tax returns of 1365 to 1373 were constructed on different bases, the value of church income from benefices (spiritualities) can be directly gauged, but not church income from ecclesiastical estates (temporalities). Similarly, it is impossible to gauge directly the relative values of lay and ecclesiastical estates. But a rough estimate may be made of the relative scale of ecclesiastical benefices to temporalities in each diocese. The average division across Scotland, on the basis of the highest tax returns, was 43% spiritualities to 57% temporalities (the combined income of the church and its tenants from ecclesiastical estates - unlike the Nicholas IV data, which related only to church income). The largest land holdings seem to have been in Galloway (86% of taxed income - where the church accounted for nearly 40% of the highest combined clerical and lay returns from Wigtownshire), Glasgow (68%), Brechin (67%), Dunkeld (65%) and Moray (64%). St Andrews was closer to the national average, at 58%, than any other diocese - probably well below average in the archdeaconry of Lothian, where many of the large ecclesiastical estates were under English occupation, and well above average in the archdeaconry of St Andrews. In relative terms, the smallest land holdings seem to have been in Dunblane (31%), Aberdeen (39%), Argyll (44%) and Ross (47%).

There were also wide variations across Scotland in the ratio of freeholders' to tenants' income. The position is distorted by the inclusion of church income in the 1366 assessment of estates but its exclusion from the sheriffs' tax returns. Yet the general trends are clear. In the west (and probably the north) landowners' income formed a much smaller proportion of the total returns than in the east. Excluding Argyll and Inverness, where the comparative coverage is unclear, the sum of the highest returns from the sheriffdoms was 67% greater than the 1366 assessment of lay and ecclesiastical estates. At one extreme were Banff and Kinross, where the highest sheriffdom returns were 94% greater than the estates' assessment; at the other was Peebles, where they were only 33% greater. More typical of a regional trend are: in the south-west and west-central, Dumfries (81%), Ayr and Wigtown (both 77%), Stirling (74%), Dunbarton and Renfrew (67%), Lanark (66%) and Clackmannan (65%); in the borders, Berwick, Roxburgh and Selkirk (all about 65%); in the east and east-central, Edinburgh (c.60%), Fife (59%), Perth (57%), Forfar (64%), Kincardine (an atypical 70%) and Aberdeen (49%).

Comparison of the highest returns with the thirteenth-century estate assessments suggests that proportionate values per square mile had fallen most in the sheriffdoms of Wigtown, Peebles, Lanark, Roxburgh, Perth, Aberdeen, Dunbarton and Renfrew (all areas with much high and marginal land); that they had appreciated most in Kinross, Clackmannan and Kincardine (where rents and services may always have been relatively light), and were little altered elsewhere. This suggests that a significant part of the apparent reduction between the thirteenth-century and 1366 estate assessments may indeed be due to falling rents and services. But the pattern varied greatly across the country: transfer of income seems to have been most marked in the west, Banff and Kincardine; least apparent in Lothian, Fife, Peebles, Perth and Aberdeen.



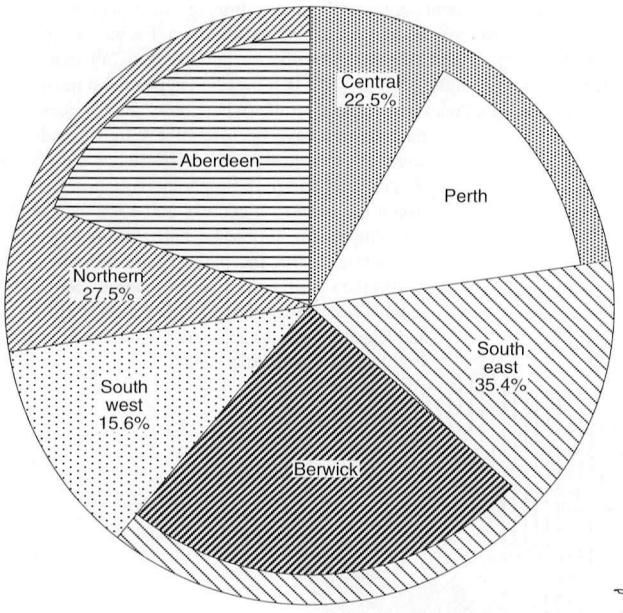
Taxed income of the church and its tenants 1365 to 1373 ASt

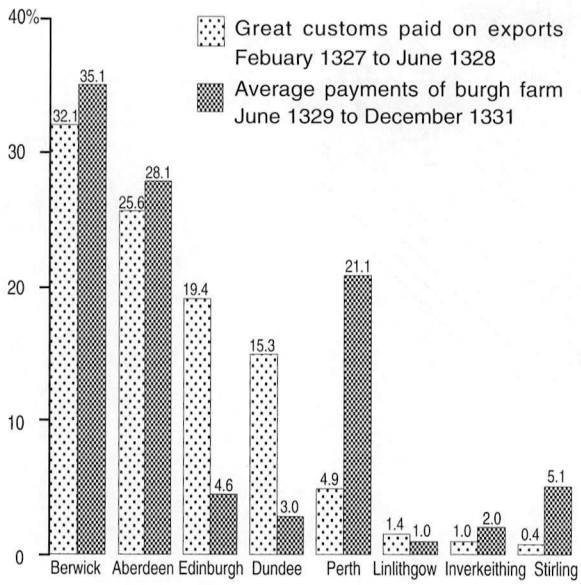
Burgh farms

A major factor in the creation of the burghs was their potential as a source of monetary revenue. This derived from rents on burgh properties, petty customs levied on goods entering and leaving the burgh, charges on stalls set up in the burgh market, and fines on those breaking the burgh laws. But these revenues were expensive and difficult to administer, so it became common practice for the crown to lease or farm (also spelled ferm) the collection of some or all of a burgh's revenues for a fixed sum agreed in advance. Often the lease would be only for a year but sometimes it was for several years.

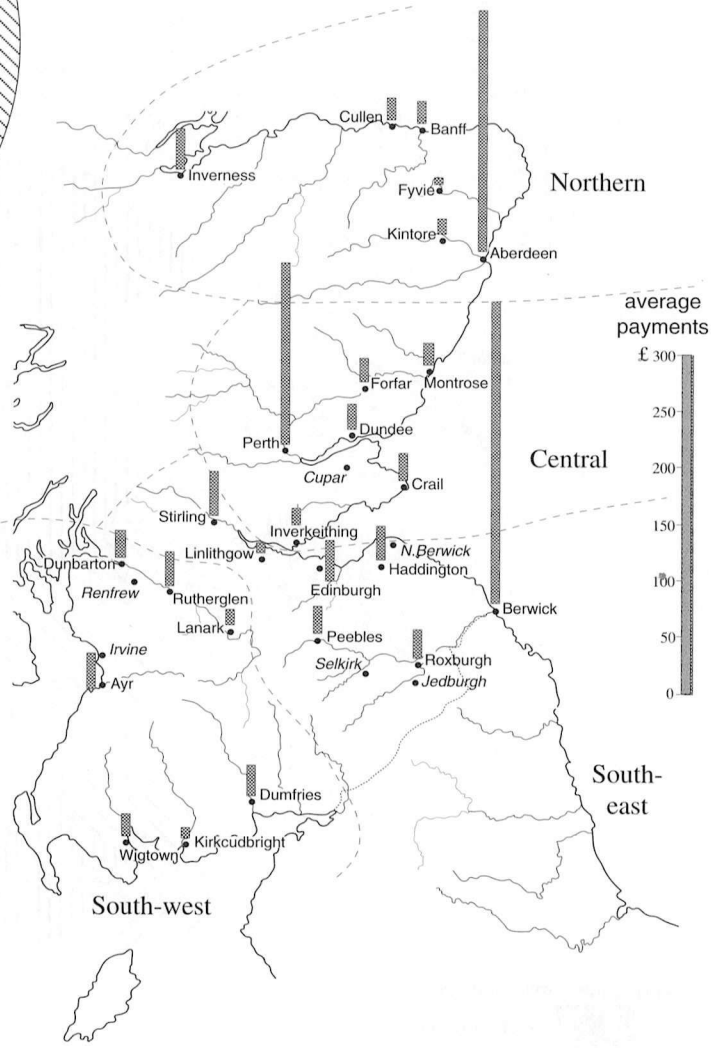
Berwick was the first burgh, perhaps by 1231, to obtain an agreement from the crown to farm its revenues in perpetuity or feu for the sum of 500 marks a year. Whether other burghs did so in the thirteenth century is unknown. The Wars of Independence wrought terrible damage on the Scottish burghs - the charters of most were destroyed - and it is likely that the value of many burgh farms was sharply reduced. The value of Berwick's farm was reassessed at 400 marks in 1320, two years after its recapture from the English. Aberdeen obtained its feufarm from the crown in 1319, at an annual rate of 320 marks. Edinburgh followed in 1329 with a feufarm fixed at 52 marks. From the perspective of Edinburgh's later development, this seems extraordinarily low, but Edinburgh's prosperity grew out of Berwick's loss.

In thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century Scotland there was one major urban centre in each of the three economic regions into which the country was divided: Berwick in southern Scotland south of the Forth, Perth in central Scotland, and Aberdeen north of the Grampians (beyond the Mounth). These had acted both as the principal craft centres of their regions (hence the scale of their burgh farms), and as entrepôts for inter-regional and international trade. By the 1320s the old order was breaking down. As the disparity between their export trade and burgh farms indicates, both Edinburgh and Dundee had become important entrepôts without a corresponding growth as craft centres.





Average burgh farms and export traffic 1327 to 1331

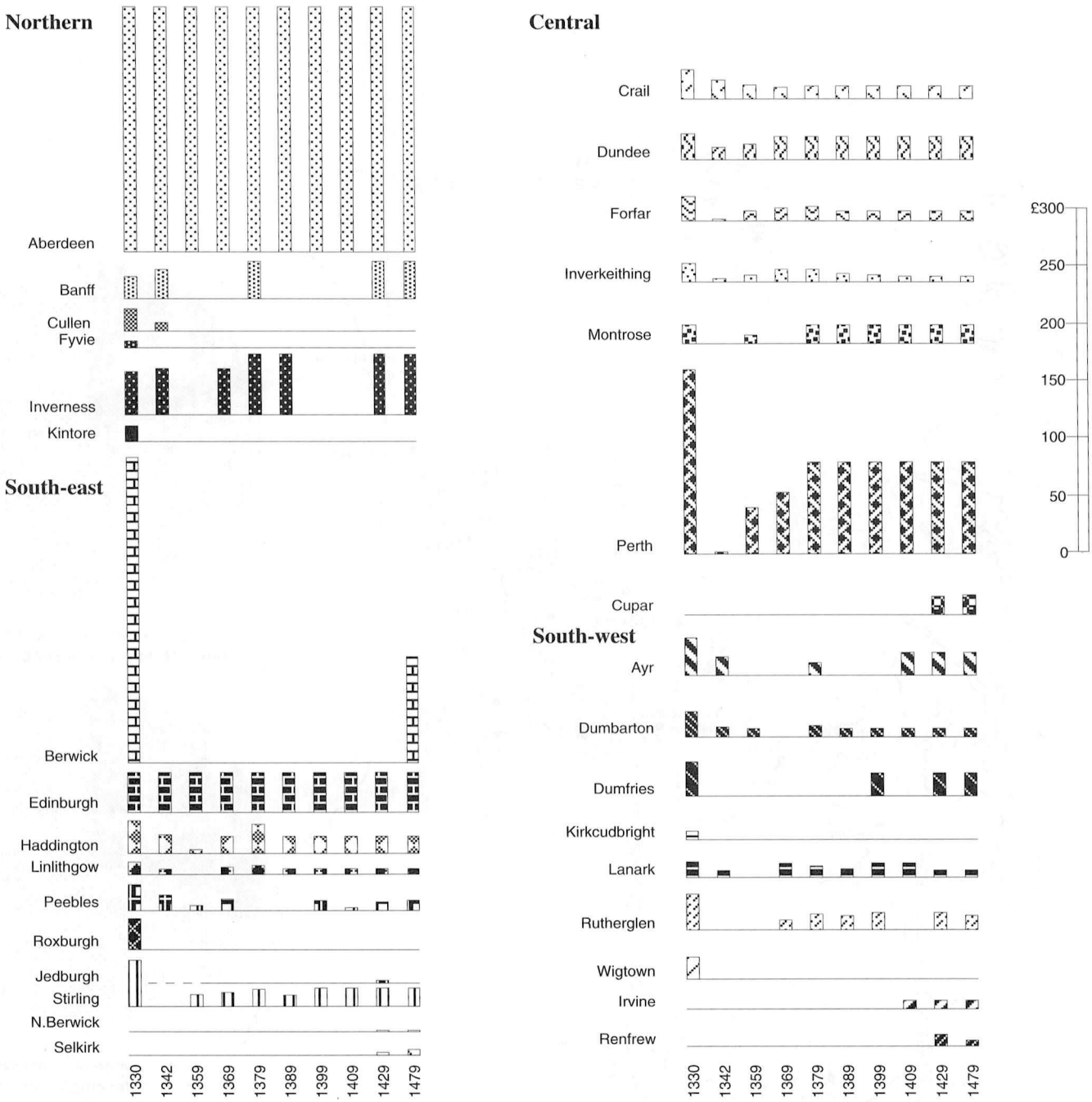


Average payments of burgh farms 1327 to 1331 ASt

Burgh farms

Perth possibly had a feufarm of 240 marks under Robert I, but its prosperity was wrecked by the English occupation of the 1330s, which, in lesser degree, so damaged most of the Scottish burghs. Perth did not farm its revenues again until 1375, and then for a feu of only 120 marks. Apart from the already established feufarms of Aberdeen and Edinburgh, the farms of all burghs other than Banff and Inverness tumbled and never recovered to their earliest recorded levels. This is as clear an indication as it is possible to find of an absolute decline in both size and prosperity.

War and plague combined to produce a long period of stagnation. Feufarms became increasingly common. Dundee's was fixed in 1365. Inverness and Montrose followed in 1370. By the end of the fourteenth century almost all the burghs making regular returns to the Exchequer were operating feufarms.

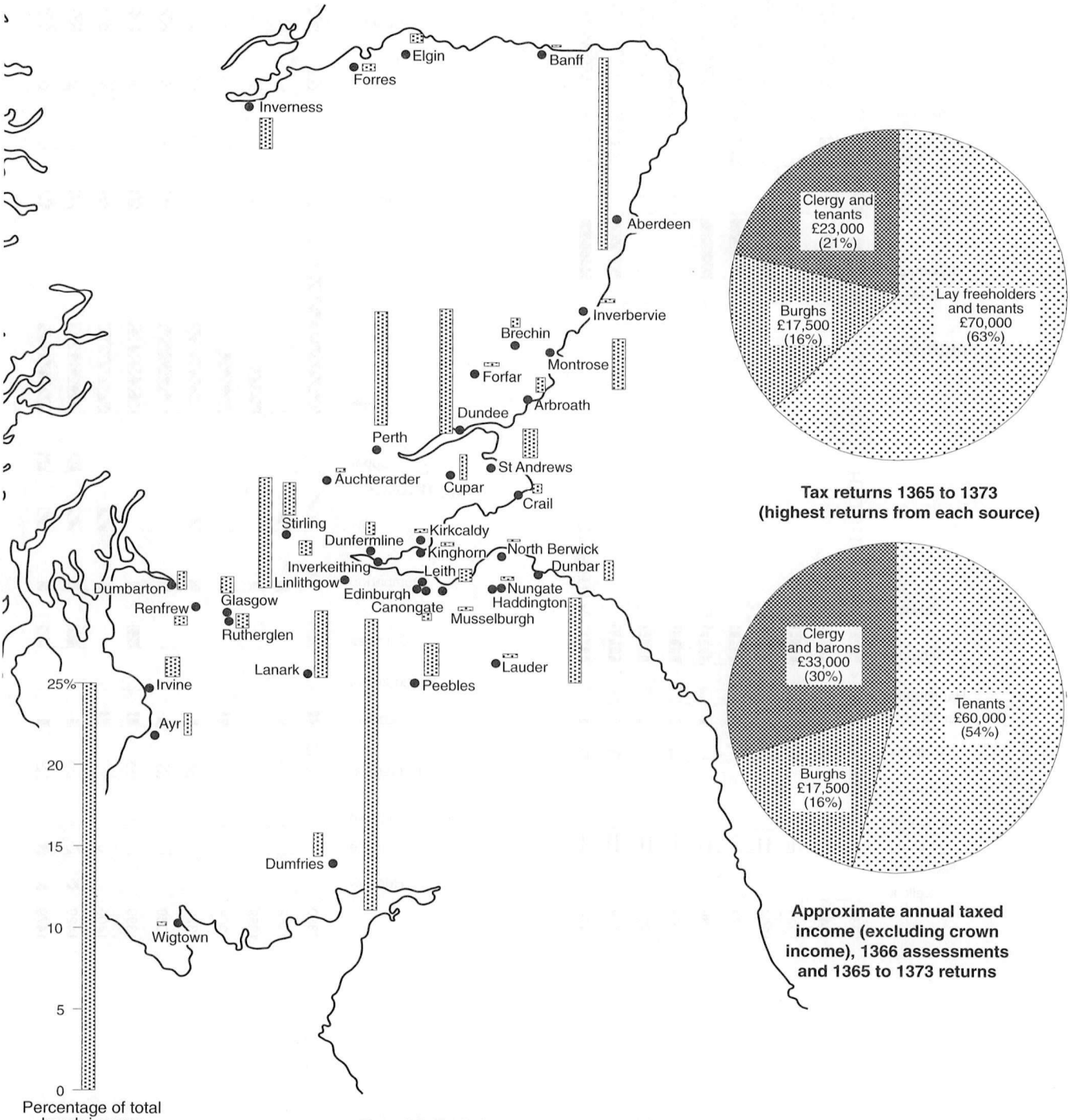


Burgh farms for ten separate years between 1330 and 1479 ASt

Taxation of burghs

Unlike the sheriffdoms and dioceses, the changing circumstances of the burghs cannot be gauged from the taxation record (but see above, Burgh farms). The tax returns of the 1360s and 1370s therefore provide a unique insight into the relative wealth and size of the burghs. They confirm the overwhelming predominance and number of the east-coast burghs. Other evidence may indicate that even the greatest burghs were very small, but they were nonetheless powerful. The townsfolk of Edinburgh were as wealthy as all the barons, clergy and peasantry of Midlothian combined; while those of Aberdeen possessed about a third of the income of their rural hinterland. But these were exceptions: most of the burghs were very poor and were, presumably, minute; many contributed only in 1366 and may have been included in the sheriffdom and diocesan returns in other years. Apart from Lanark, which had inherited Roxburgh's fair as a result of the English occupation, only those burghs with substantial overseas trade were of much consequence.

Comparison between the tax returns and the 1366 assessments provides a rough indication of the distribution of income throughout Scottish society, as shown in the two pie charts below. The peasantry contributed 54% of the total and the burghs 16% . The division between the clergy and lay freeholders is less clear. Assuming that the average division of income between freeholders and tenants was the same, the clergy contributed about 12% of the total (8.5% from benefices) and lay freeholders about 18%.

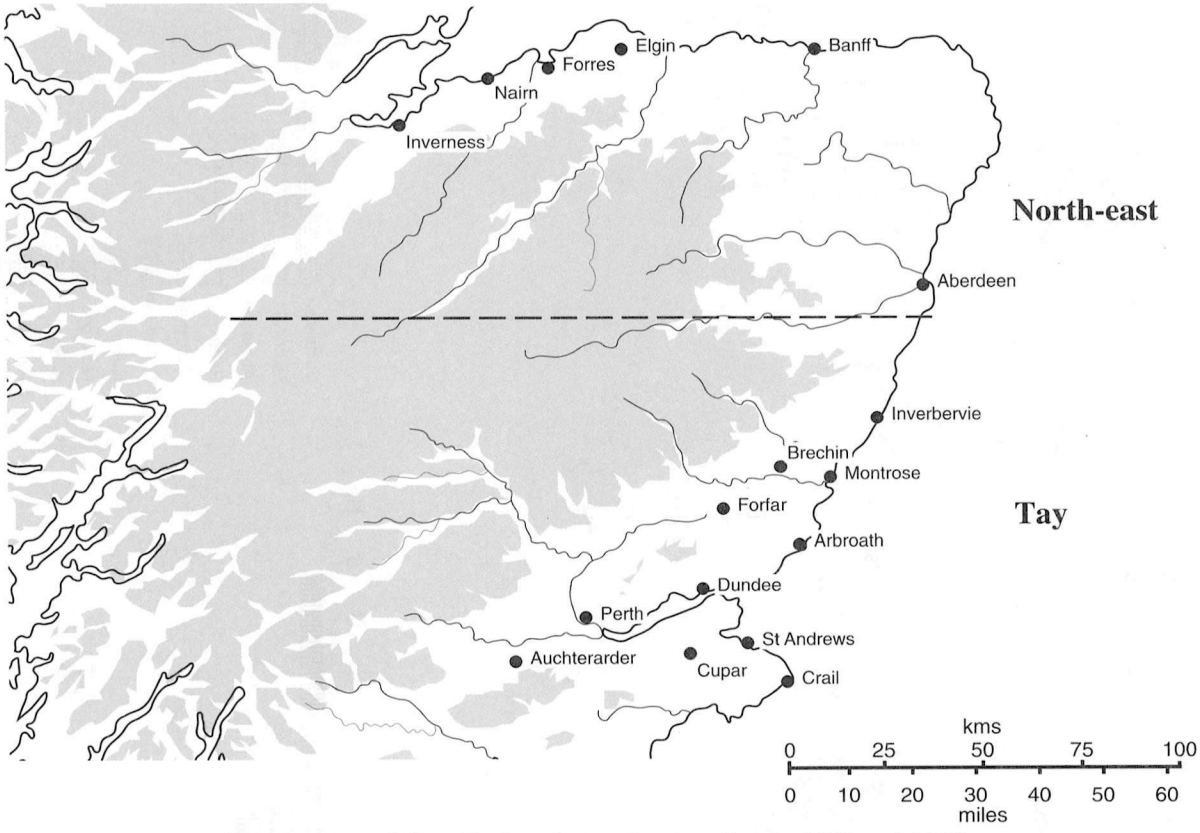


Taxed burgh income 1366 to 1373

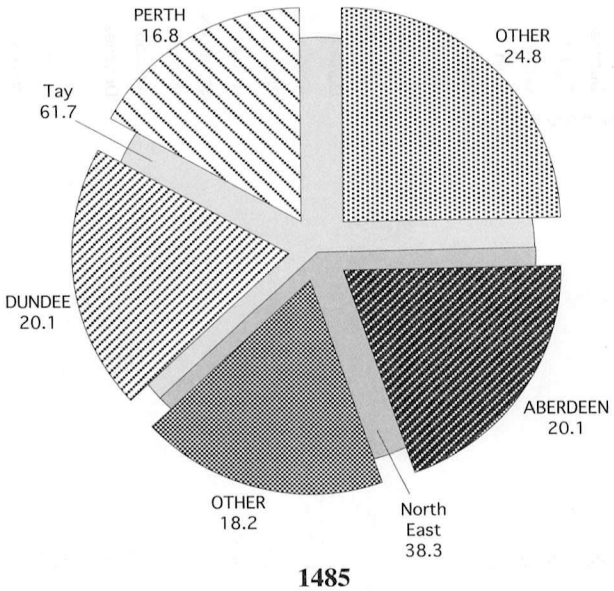
ASt

Taxation of burghs

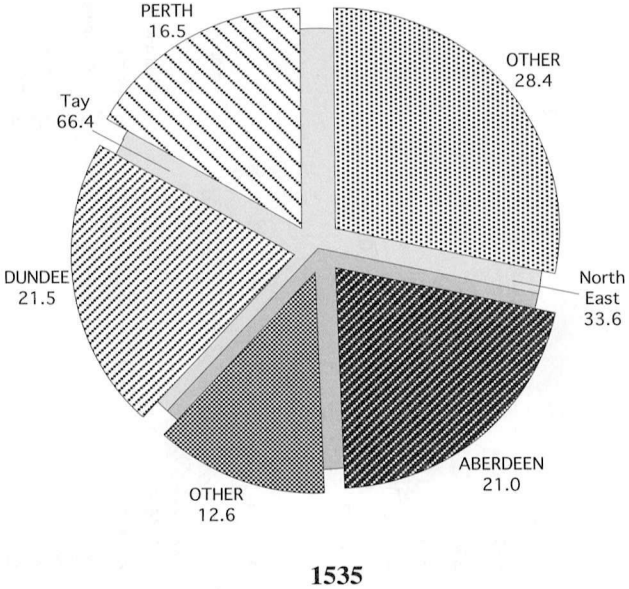
One fractional return of a tax on the burghs exists before 1535 - for 'the burghs beyond Forth' in 1485. This map shows the percentage assessments on these northern towns in 1485 and 1535. There are significant differences, which reflect the volatile economic fortunes of late medieval towns and the contrasting structure of the two regions encompassed: two burghs disappeared from the list of Tay towns in 1535 and two were added to those in the north-east, but the overall assessment saw a movement of 5% in favour of the Tay towns. Assessments on the ports of Montrose and Arbroath increased sharply, while that on St Andrews fell. The sharpest falls, however, lay along the Moray Firth, where only Elgin had its assessment raised.



North-east and Tayside burghs paying taxation in 1485 and 1535



1485

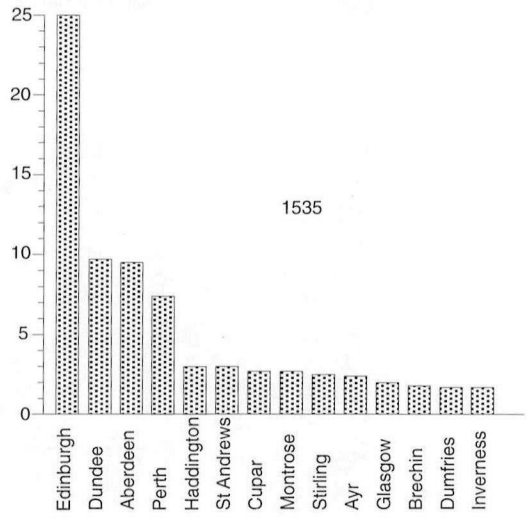


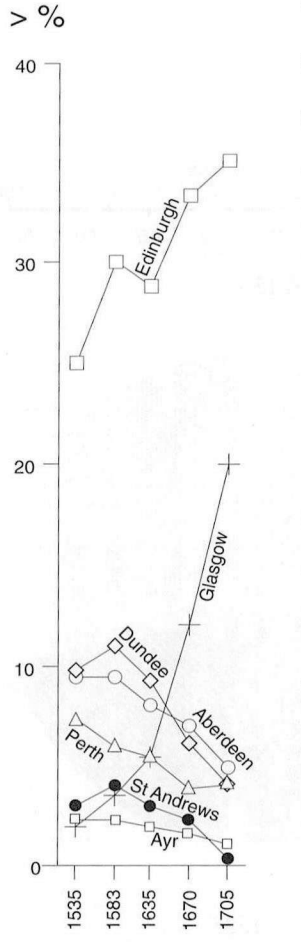
1535

Tax assessments on north-east and Tayside regions in 1485 and 1535 ML

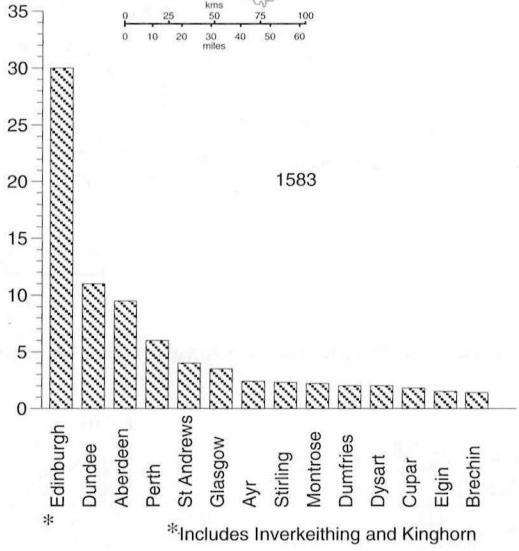
Taxation of burghs

The regular series of tax rolls levied on the royal burghs begins only in 1535. Assessments took account of a number of different factors, reflecting burgh income and the extent of burgh lands as well as shares of overseas and inland trade. These percentage assessments can usefully be compared with those based on customs, which give a measurement of overseas trade alone.

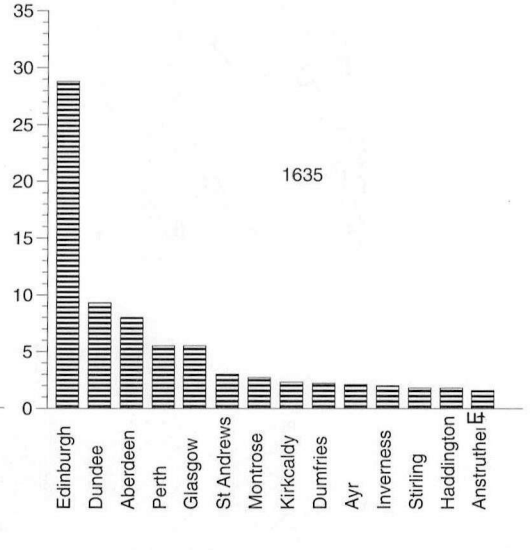


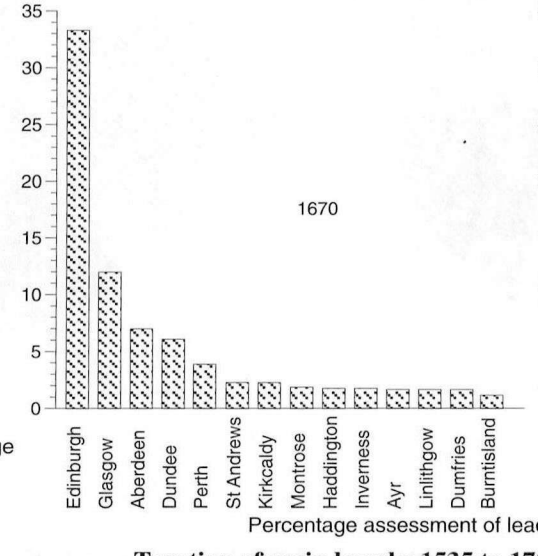


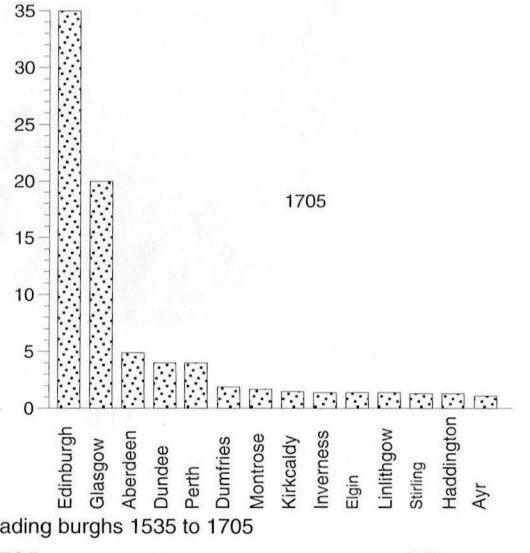
Burghs with highest percentage assessment



*Includes Inverkeithing and Kinghorn



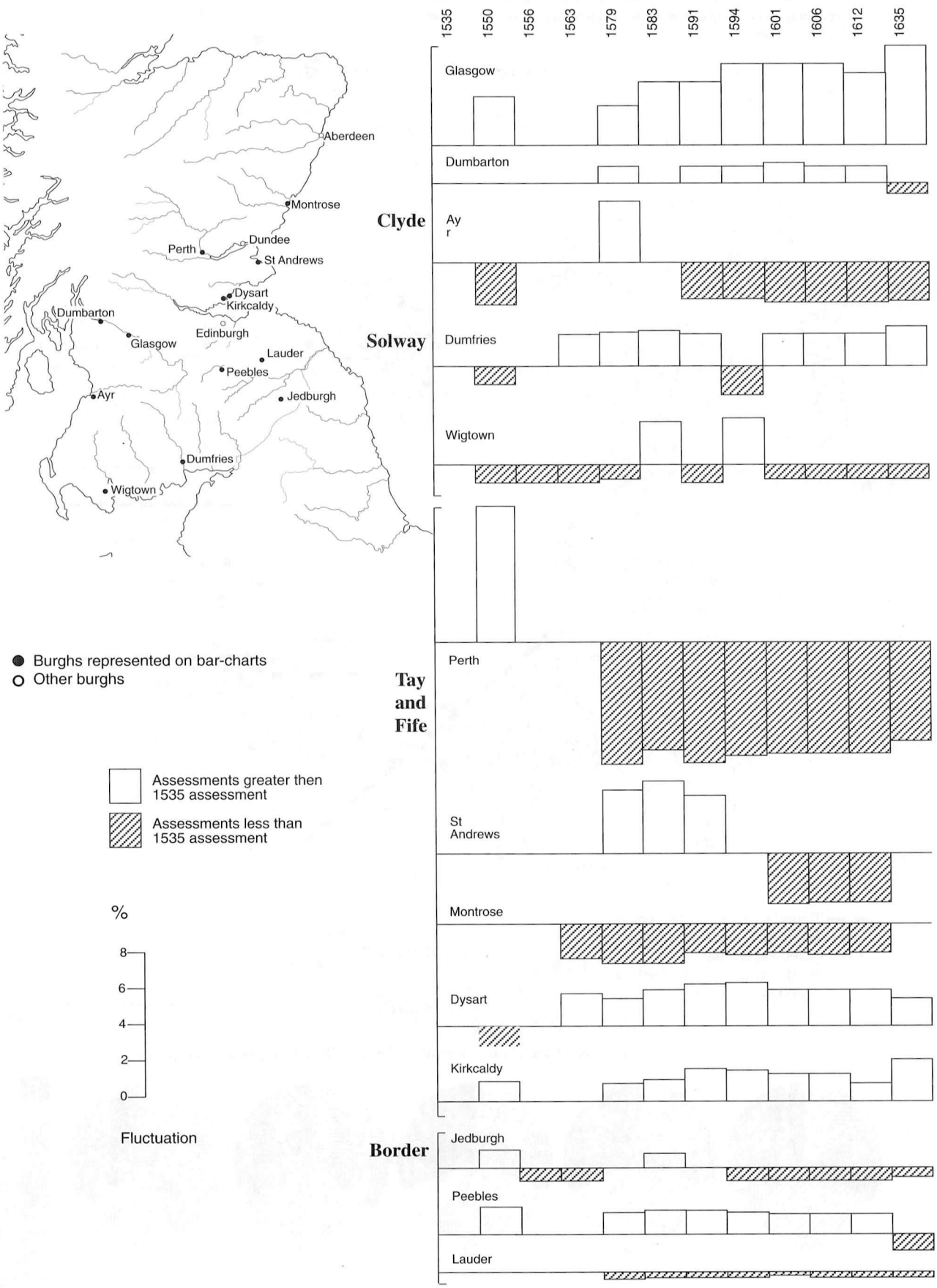




Percentage assessment of leading burghs 1535 to 1705

Taxation of main burghs 1535 to 1705 ML

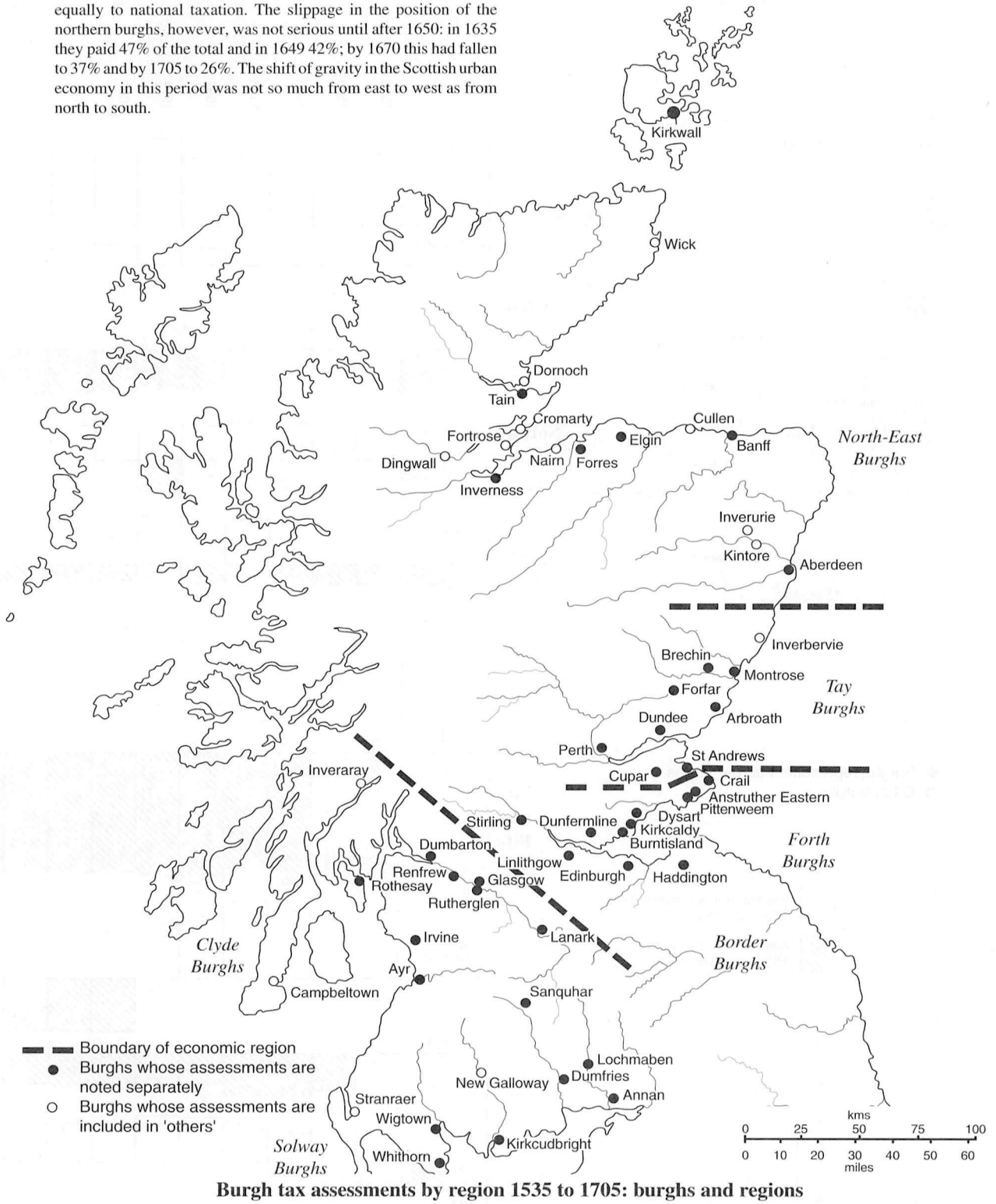
Taxation of burghs



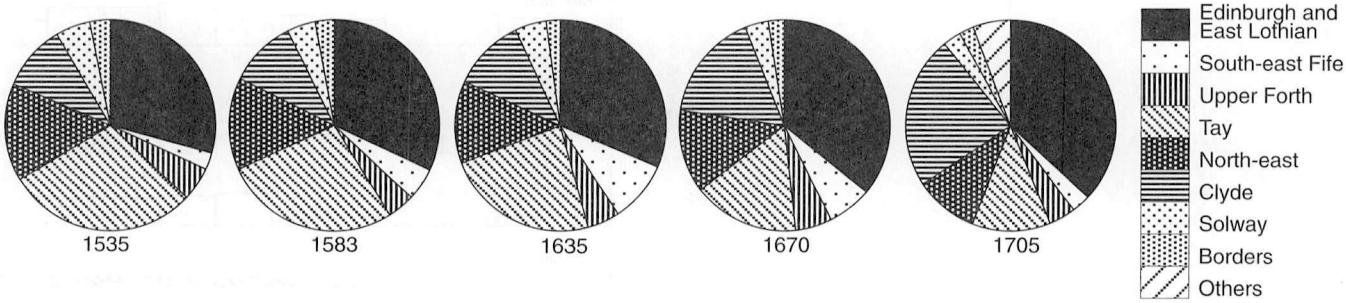
Fluctuations in burgh tax assessments 1535 to 1635 ML

Taxation of burghs

Until the 1560s the burghs north and south of Forth contributed equally to national taxation. The slippage in the position of the northern burghs, however, was not serious until after 1650: in 1635 they paid 47% of the total and in 1649 42%; by 1670 this had fallen to 37% and by 1705 to 26%. The shift of gravity in the Scottish urban economy in this period was not so much from east to west as from north to south.



Burgh tax assessments by region 1535 to 1705: burghs and regions

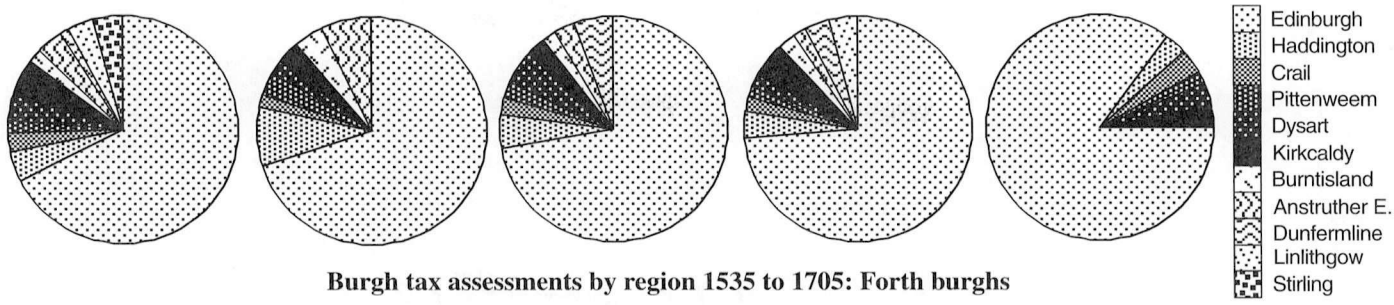


Burgh tax assessments by region 1535 to 1705: all regions

ML

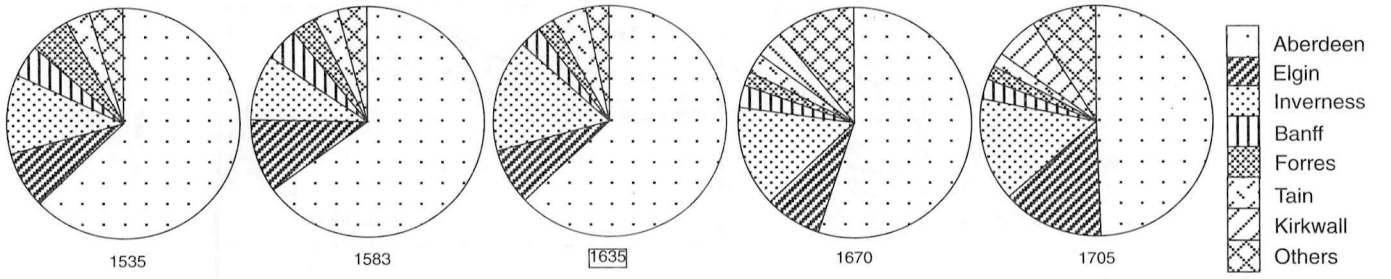
Taxation of burghs

Edinburgh dominated the Forth Basin, with all the old, established burghs like Haddington, Linlithgow and Stirling progressively slipping against it. The rise, particularly between 1590 and 1650, of a number of small Fife ports, whose size belied the level of their trading activity, is one of the most notable features of the tax rolls; but their sharp fall after 1680 was equally spectacular.



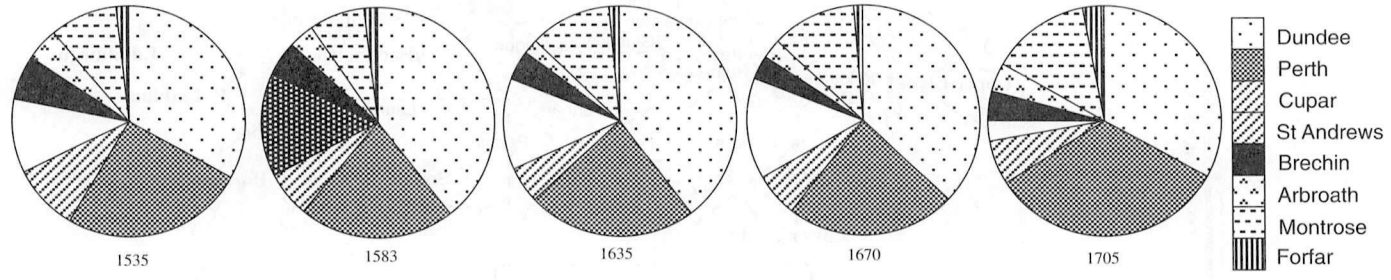
Burgh tax assessments by region 1535 to 1705: Forth burghs

A different perspective on the fortunes of provincial centres - like Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and Glasgow- emerges when they are considered, within their own regions. Although Aberdeen was slipping in terms of both real and percentage share of Scotland's overseas trade in the later sixteenth century, its tax assessments were relatively stable because it was consolidating its position as the unrivalled market centre for the whole of the north-east. No other burgh ever accounted for more than 15% of the region's taxation.



Burgh tax assessment by region 1535 to 1705: North-east burghs

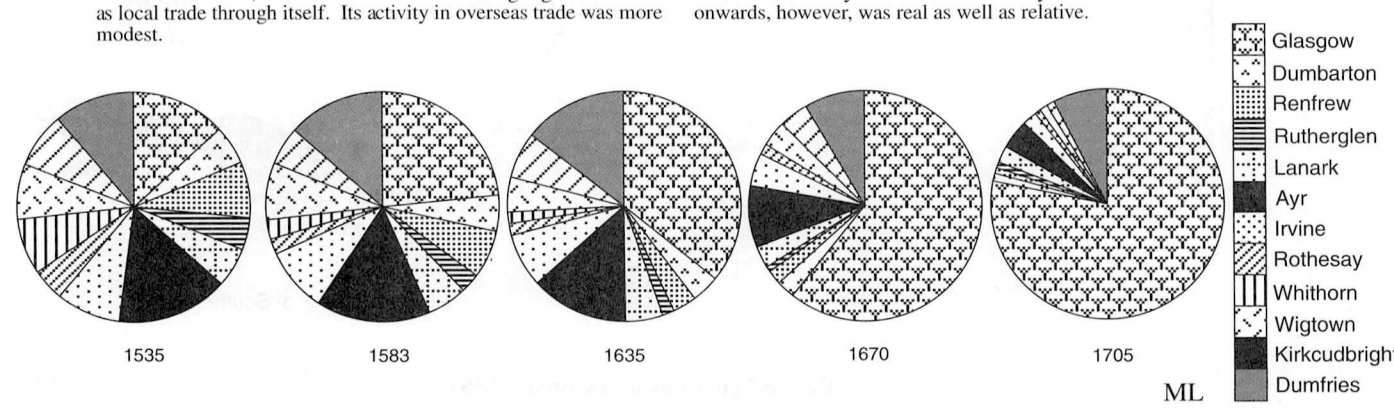
Amongst the Tay burghs, Dundee and Perth stood out as rival regional centres, together accounting for between 58% and 66% of taxation in the period. Their progress over the period, however, was sharply divergent, as was that of what were otherwise the two largest ports, St Andrews and Montrose.



Burgh tax assessments by region 1535 to 1705: Tay burghs

The marked rise of Glasgow, described as the most spectacular of the patterns in the seventeenth-century tax rolls, stemmed largely, at least until 1635, from its success in funnelling regional as well as local trade through itself. Its activity in overseas trade was more modest.

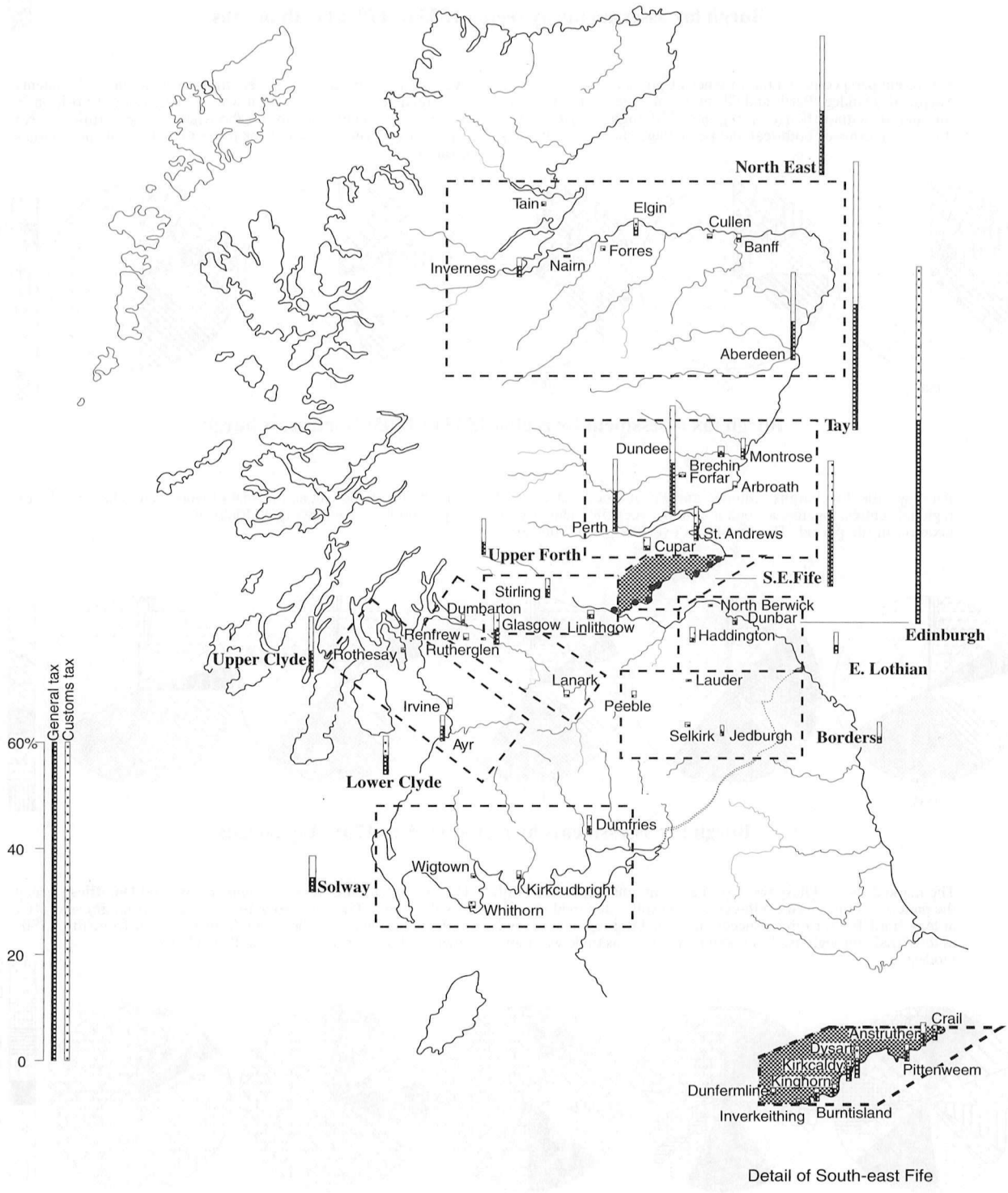
The two other major regional centres - Ayr and Dumfries - began to slip against Glasgow after the 1580s; both languished after 1650. The decay of the other Solway towns from the 1580s onwards, however, was real as well as relative.



ML

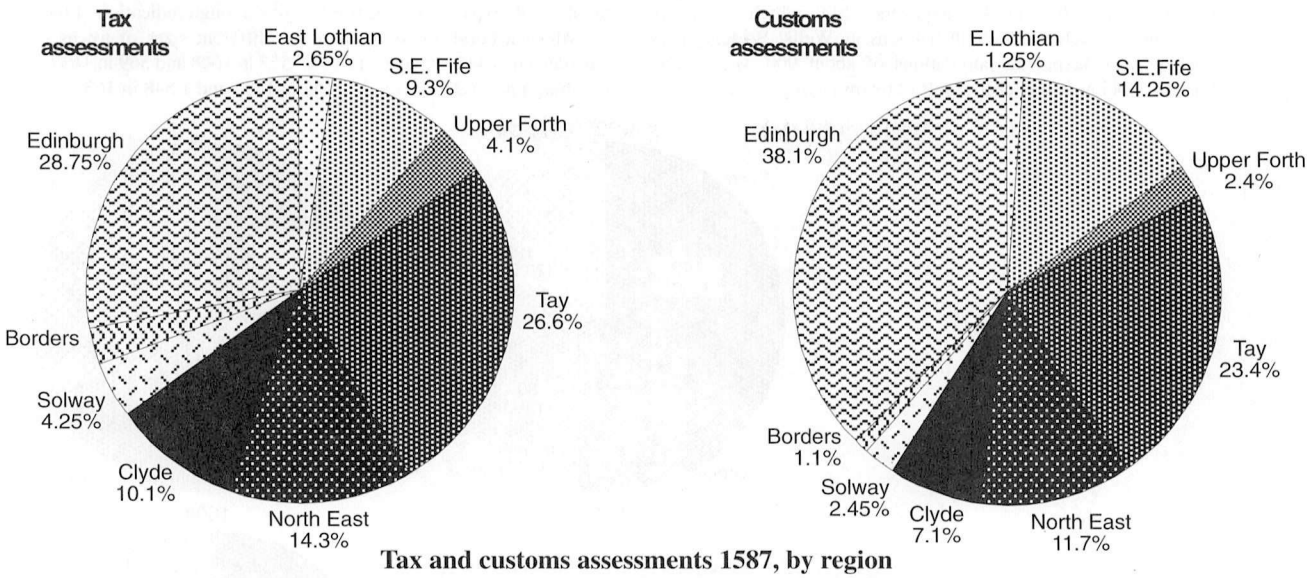
Assessments on burghs 1587

In 1587 the crown levied an unusual tax on the burghs, to make up for the loss it had sustained by farming out the customs since 1583; it reflected the income made by each burgh from trade. This customs tax can be compared with the assessments made in a conventional tax levied a month earlier, which reflected a broader set of criteria, including burgh income and lands, and inland trade as well as exports overseas.



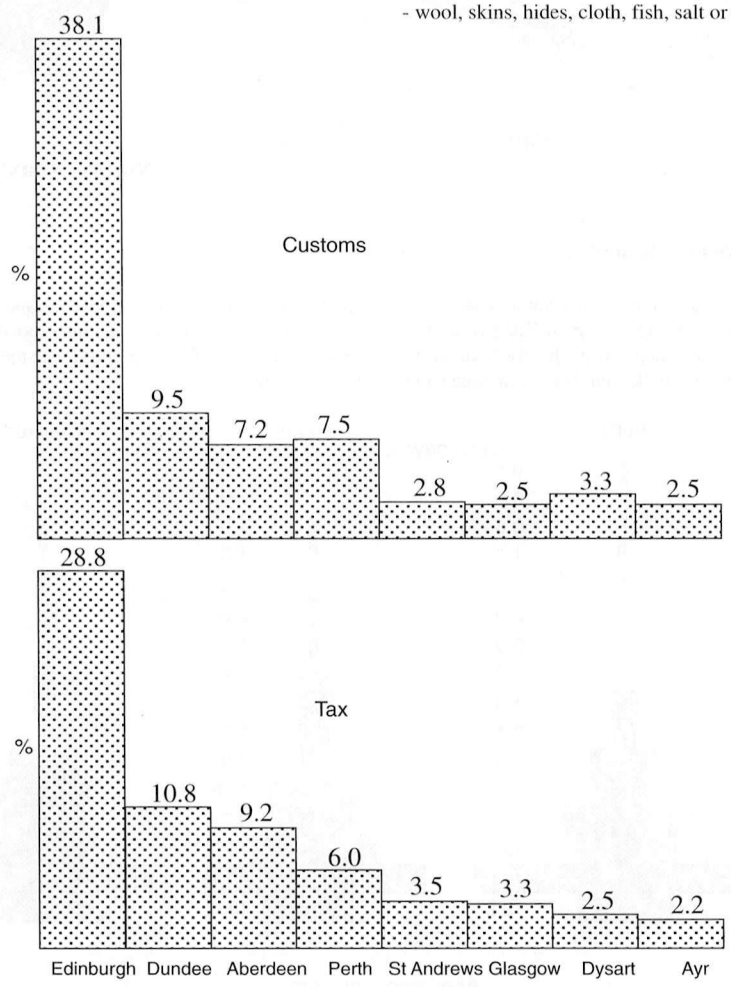
Tax and customs assessments 1587 ML

Assessments on burghs 1587



Tax and customs assessments 1587, by region

Every region paid less in customs tax, except for Edinburgh, which had alone accounted for 61% of custom paid 1581-3, and south-east Fife, where every port paid more. All the towns or ports of the Borders, Solway, Upper Clyde (including Glasgow) and the Upper Forth (except for Inverkeithing) paid less. Ayr was the only west-coast port with a large enough stake in the export trade for its assessment to rise. Of the Tay towns, only Perth and Montrose paid more; and in the north-east a trio of Inverness, Elgin and Banff, which probably stemmed from their trade in salmon. Some entries for ports - like North Berwick, Nairn, Irvine, Whithorn and Wigtown - are markedly lower in the customs tax and they may have relied on coastal rather than overseas trade. Yet no burgh was rendered exempt in the customs tax, even if some, like Tain and Forfar, had their assessments cut to a nominal fraction: every royal burgh, whether port or inland town, provincial or local market centre, depended to some extent on the export trade in staple commodities - wool, skins, hides, cloth, fish, salt or coal.

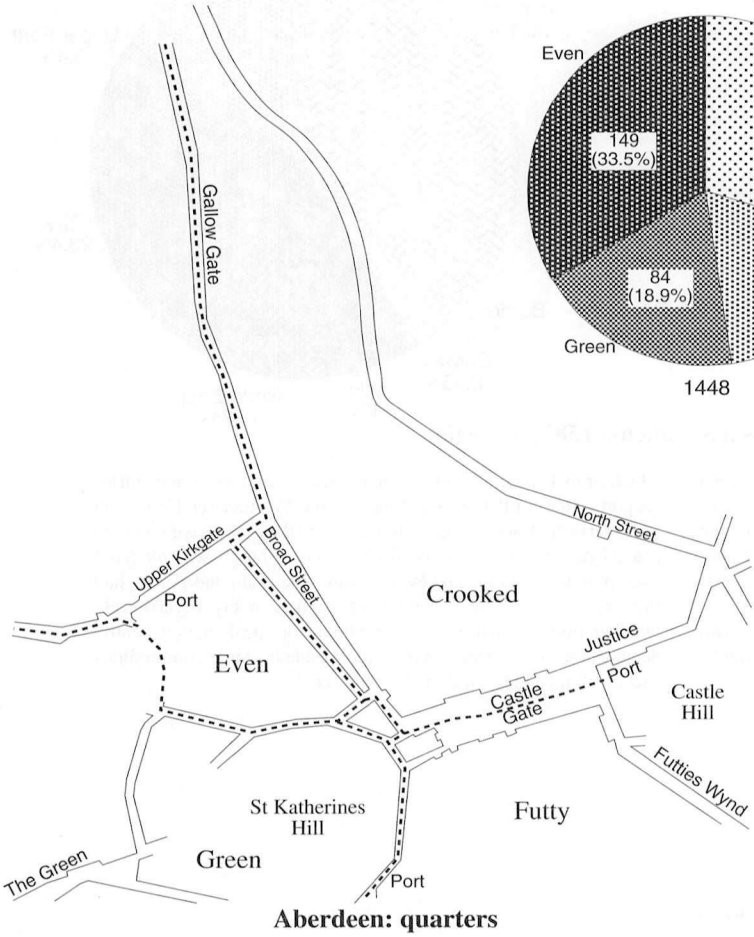


Tax and Customs assessments on leading burghs 1587, as a percentage of total assessments on all burghs

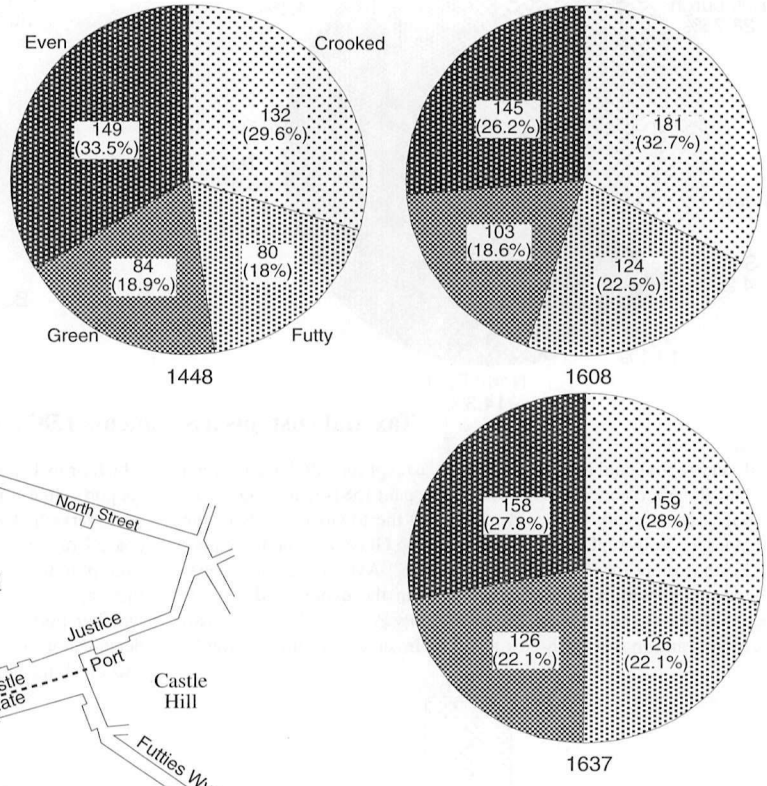
ML

Burgh tax assessments: Aberdeen and Edinburgh

Tax rolls are, at best, only a crude indicator of the overall size of urban populations. Scottish burghs were lightly taxed by comparison with their English counterparts: Aberdeen, the second or third largest town in Scotland, had only 445 taxpayers in 1448, which would have put it below such small English towns as Wells, Bridgnorth or Barking with taxpaying populations of about 900, yet coming fortieth or below in the league table of towns paying the lay subsidy of 1377. So comparisons with English towns on this basis are unsound, as are attempts to use English multipliers to produce an overall population figure for Scottish towns. But comparisons of numbers of taxpayers can be used to give a rough indication of the growth of a burgh or to compare the different sizes of towns - Aberdeen had 445 taxpayers in 1448, 553 in 1608 and 569 in 1637; Edinburgh had 1,245 in 1583, 1,152 in 1605 and 1,548 in 1637.

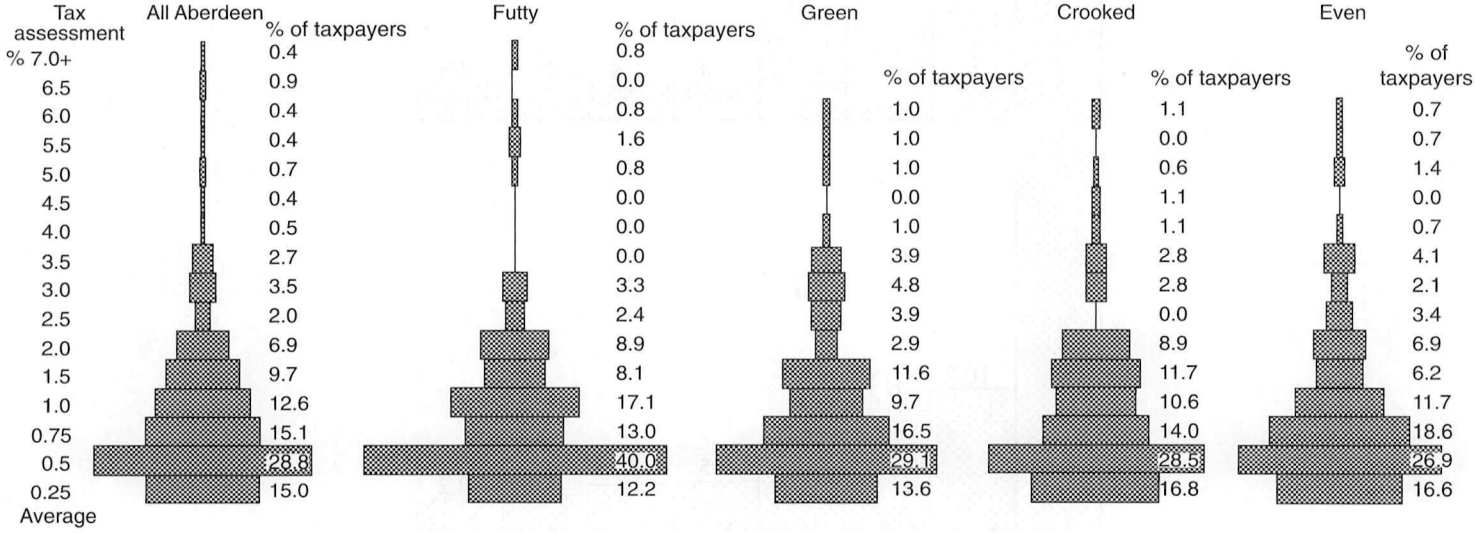


Aberdeen: quarters



Numbers taxed in each quarter

Tax rolls may also be used, as here, to compare the economic structure both of different towns and of different parts of a town. The pyramid of wealth for Aberdeen is quite differently shaped from that for Edinburgh, reflecting Aberdeen's proportionately smaller number of craftsmen and Edinburgh's greater extremes of wealth and poverty. Aberdeen, like most Scottish towns, did not have a genuine poor quarter but there was a greater concentration of craftsmen in the Green; the top 10% of taxpayers owned 38% of wealth.

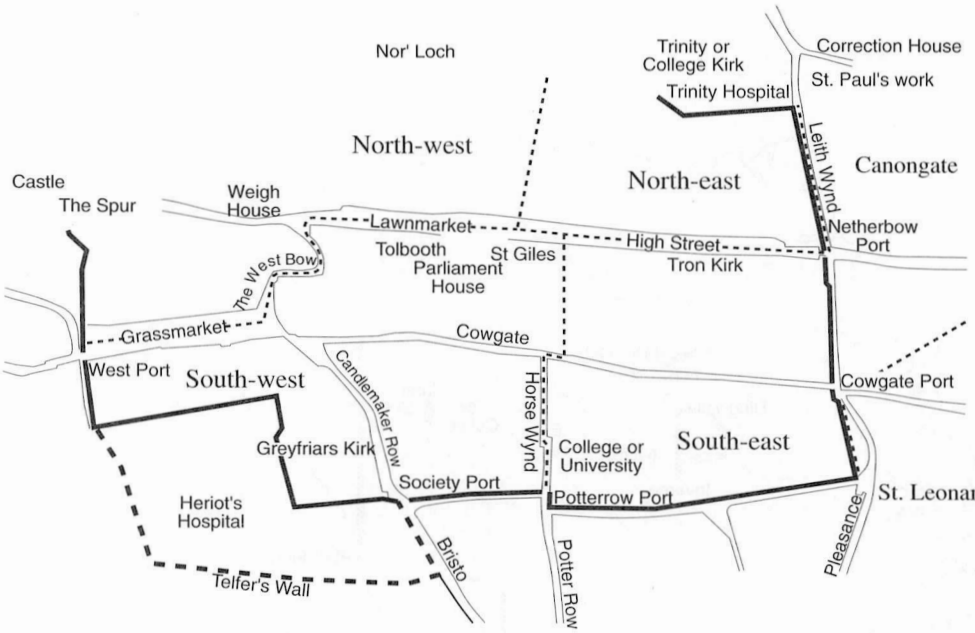


Aberdeen : quarters

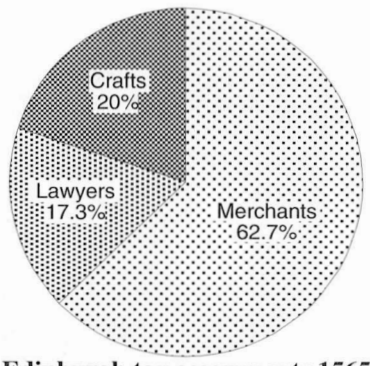
Social structure of burgh tax assessments, Aberdeen 1608 ML

Burgh tax assessments: Aberdeen and Edinburgh

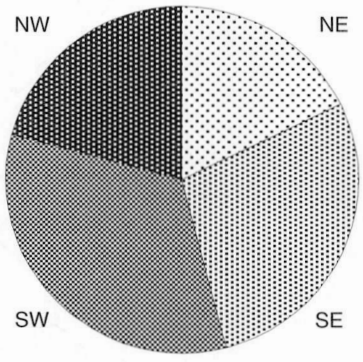
In Edinburgh the crafts until 1583 paid a fixed 20% of taxation and their distinctive structure was not unlike that of the poorest of the burgh's quarters, the south-east. Their own pyramid also reflects the numbers within the new craft aristocracy, of tailors, goldsmiths and the like. Yet for Edinburgh tax statistics are distinctly misleading because lawyers escaped taxation. A measure of their wealth can be gleaned from an unusual contribution list of 1565 which included 31 of them; by the time of the poll tax of 1694 the lawyers paid more than all the burgh's merchants and craftsmen put together.



Edinburgh : quarters

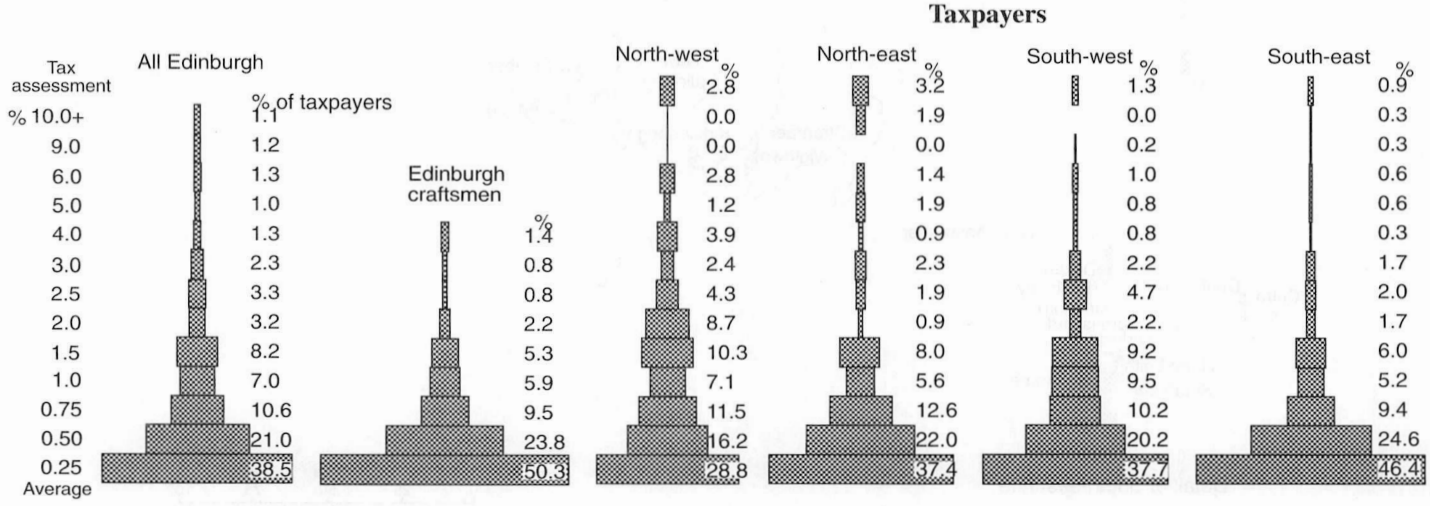


Edinburgh tax assessments 1565



Numbers taxed in each quarter 1583

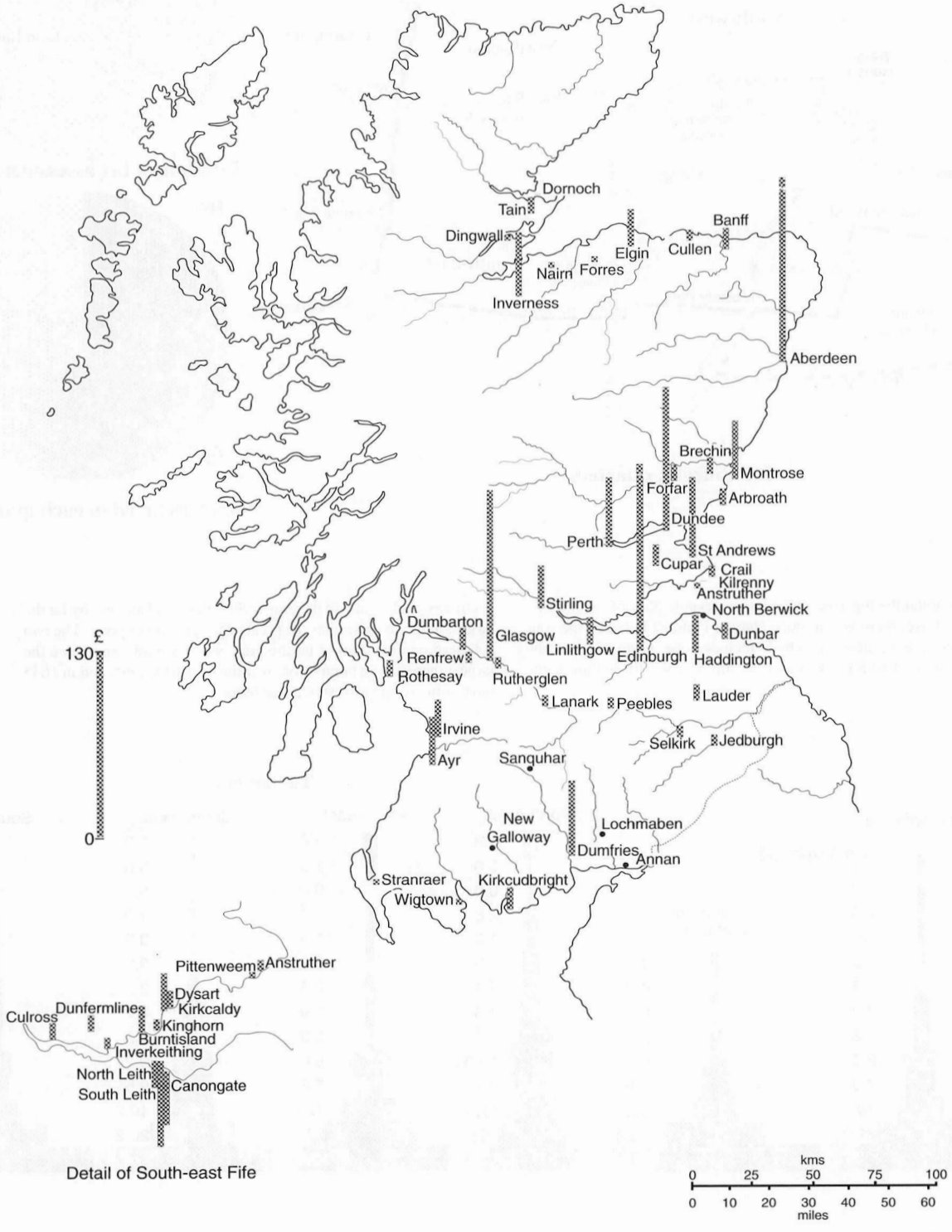
In the capital the top 10% owned a remarkable 56% of the burgh's wealth. Here, there was a much sharper contrast between the four quarters: the north-west, which included the north side of the Lawnmarket, had a marked concentration of wealth within it; the south-east, below and to the east of St. Giles', had already by far the largest numbers as well as the greatest proportion of poor. The two southern quarters would be the area which would experience the largest increases in population over the next fifty years and in 1635 have some of the lowest average rents.



Social structure of burgh tax assessments, Edinburgh 1583 ML

Valued rents of burghs 1639

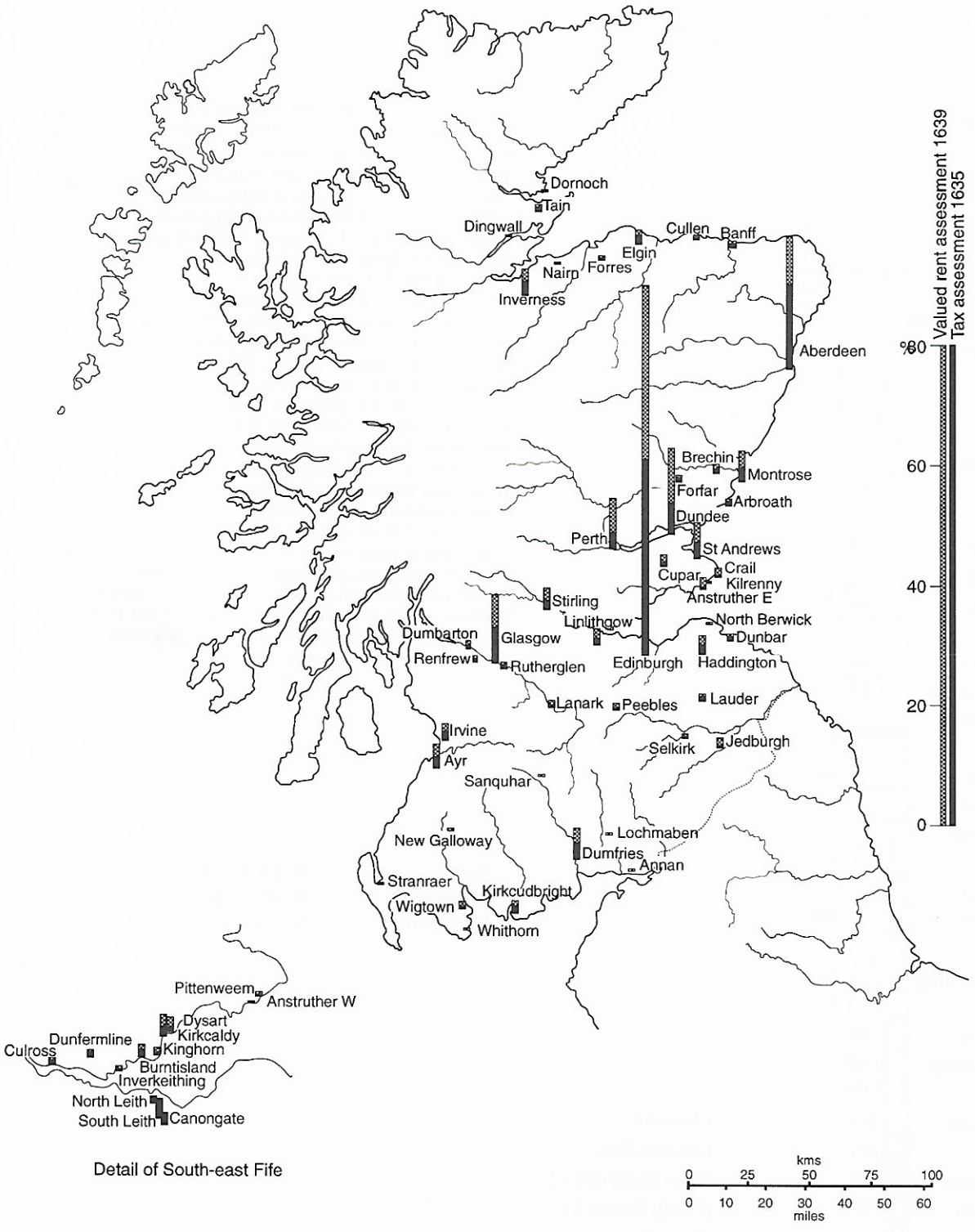
Conventional tax assessments, which reflect a number of different indicators of burgh performance and income, are not an accurate guide to urban populations. A valued rent roll of 1639 is likely to be a better guide to size, at least of medium-sized and smaller towns. It suggests that, for example, Elgin, Inverness, Lauder and Rothesay were all rather larger than their tax assessments suggest. Correspondingly, many ports (as might be expected) were much smaller than their assessments indicate, but (less expectedly) so were local market centres like Banff, Brechin and Lanark. The Glasgow rental figure suggests an earlier and greater rise, at least of population: a total of £23,644 falls in line with the estimate of a visitor of 1636 who thought it had between 6,000 and 7,000 adult communicants, suggesting a population of 10,000-12,000.



Valued rents of individual burghs 1639 ML

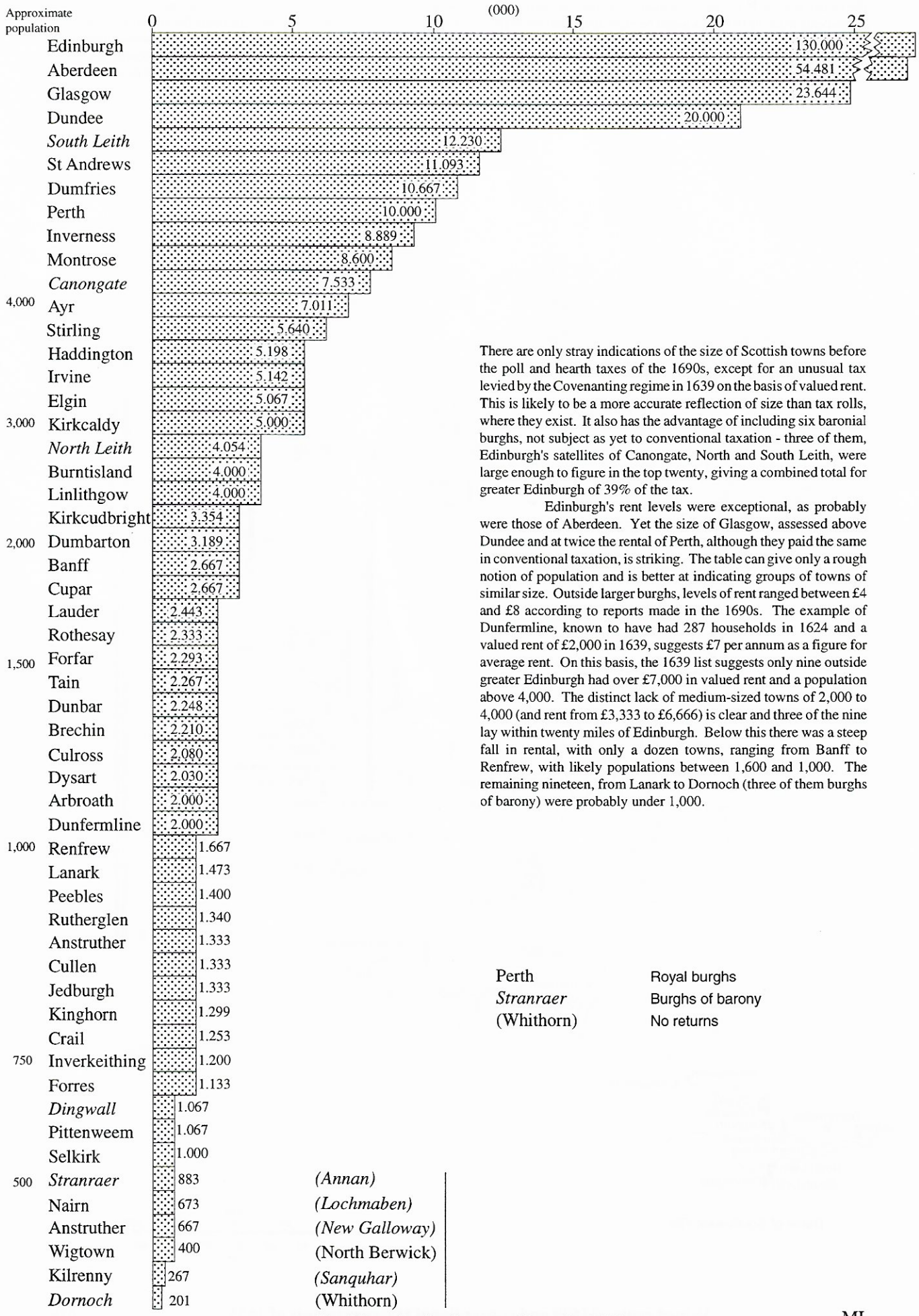
Valued rents of burghs 1639

The valued rents of 1639 can be compared with the conventional tax assessments made in 1635. As might be expected, small but highly active ports, like Wigtown (but not Dunbar) and all those of south-east Fife, were taxed more highly than they were rated for rents. The same was true of small but bustling market towns like Jedburgh, Selkirk, Cupar and Lanark. The most intriguing contrast is for Glasgow, rated well above Dundee and Perth, but still in 1635 only taxed on a par with Perth; this suggests that its rise in the seventeenth century was initially triggered mainly by population growth, which after 1650 would come to be matched by economic expansion on all fronts.



Valued rents of 1639 and conventional tax assessments of 1635 ML

Valued rents of burghs 1639



There are only stray indications of the size of Scottish towns before the poll and hearth taxes of the 1690s, except for an unusual tax levied by the Covenanting regime in 1639 on the basis of valued rent. This is likely to be a more accurate reflection of size than tax rolls, where they exist. It also has the advantage of including six baronial burghs, not subject as yet to conventional taxation - three of them, Edinburgh's satellites of Canongate, North and South Leith, were large enough to figure in the top twenty, giving a combined total for greater Edinburgh of 39% of the tax.

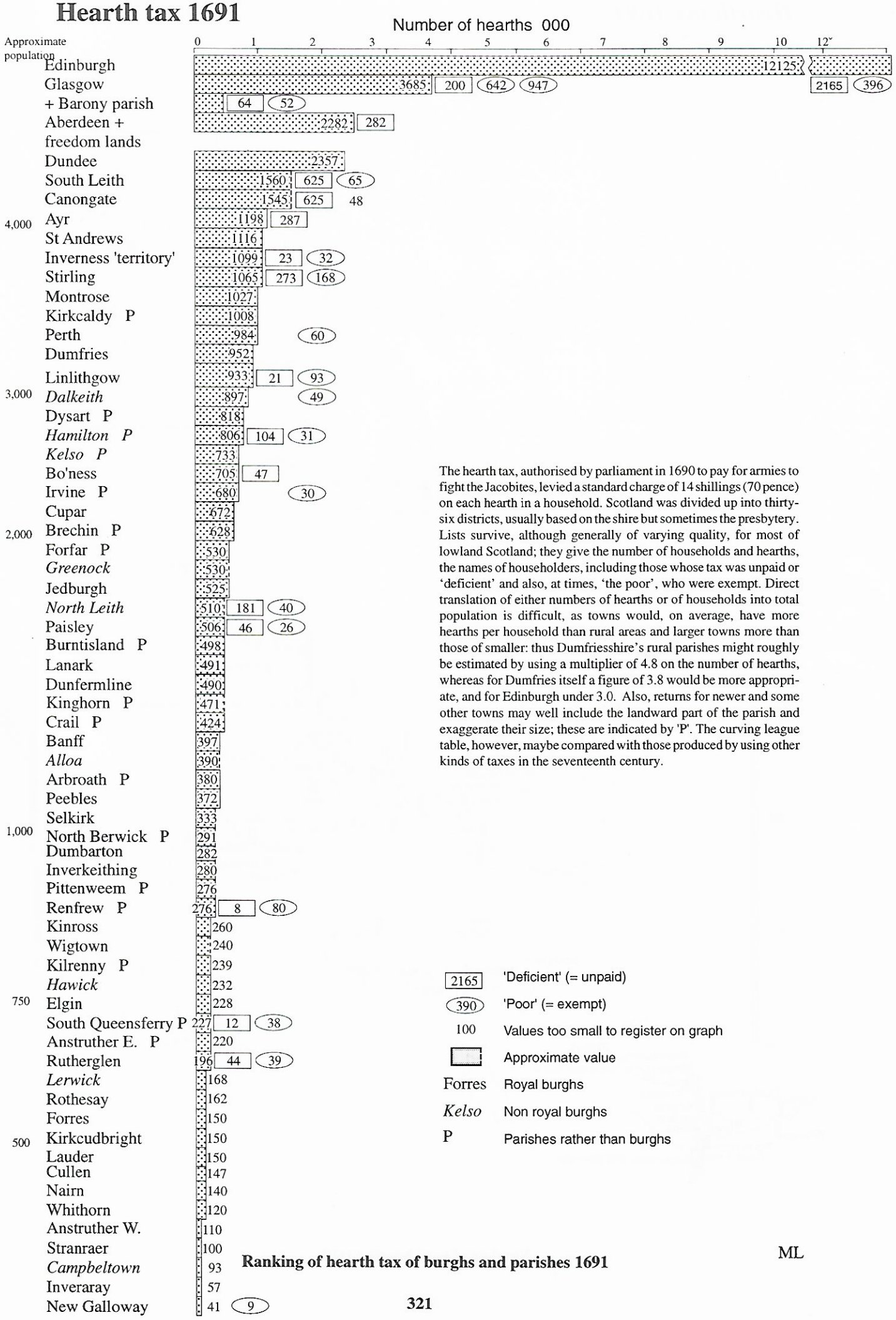
Edinburgh's rent levels were exceptional, as probably were those of Aberdeen. Yet the size of Glasgow, assessed above Dundee and at twice the rental of Perth, although they paid the same in conventional taxation, is striking. The table can give only a rough notion of population and is better at indicating groups of towns of similar size. Outside larger burghs, levels of rent ranged between £4 and £8 according to reports made in the 1690s. The example of Dunfermline, known to have had 287 households in 1624 and a valued rent of £2,000 in 1639, suggests £7 per annum as a figure for average rent. On this basis, the 1639 list suggests only nine outside greater Edinburgh had over £7,000 in valued rent and a population above 4,000. The distinct lack of medium-sized towns of 2,000 to 4,000 (and rent from £3,333 to £6,666) is clear and three of the nine lay within twenty miles of Edinburgh. Below this there was a steep fall in rental, with only a dozen towns, ranging from Banff to Renfrew, with likely populations between 1,600 and 1,000. The remaining nineteen, from Lanark to Dornoch (three of them burghs of barony) were probably under 1,000.

Perth	Royal burghs
Stranraer	Burghs of barony
(Whithorn)	No returns

Ranking of valued rents of burghs 1639

ML

Hearth tax 1691



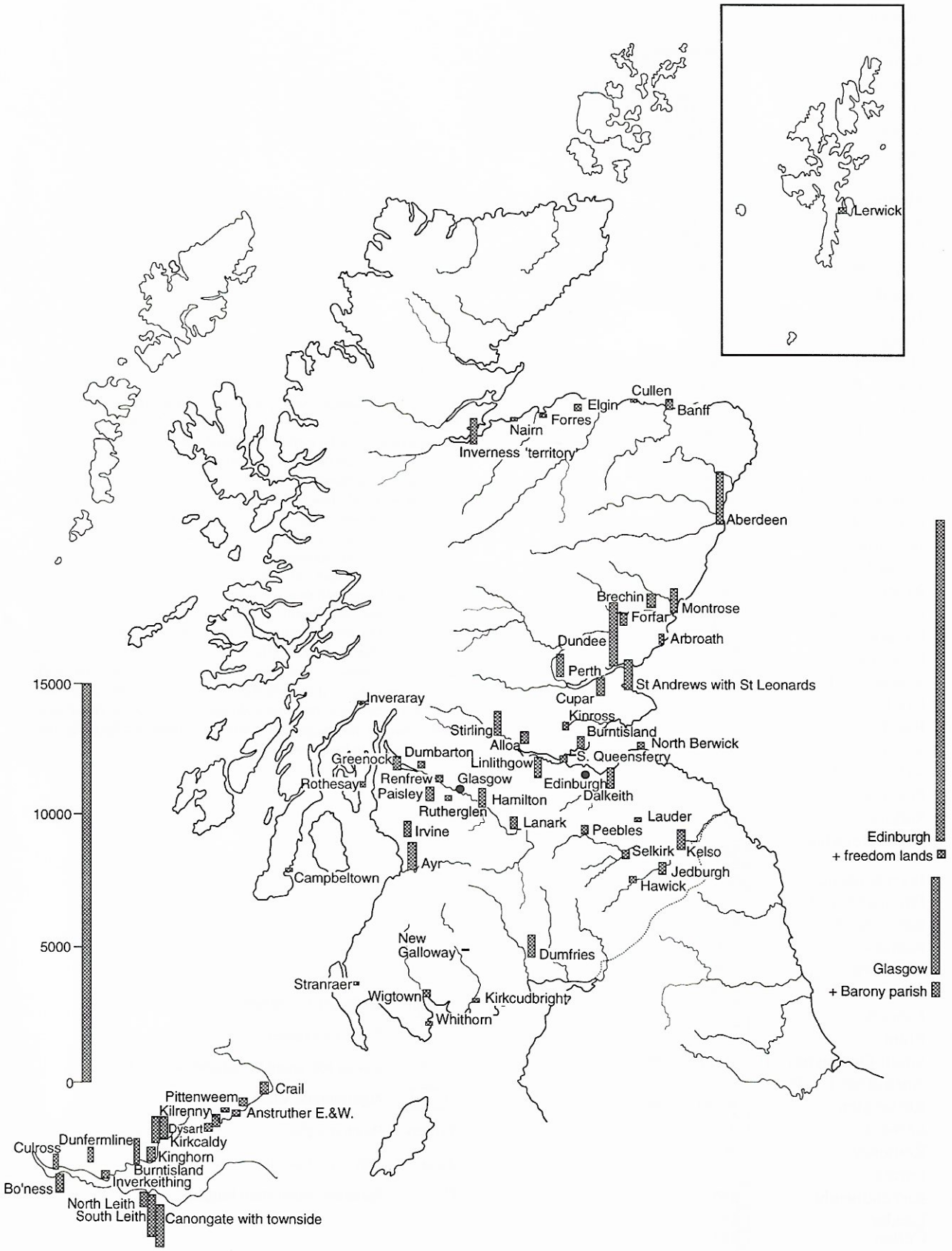
The hearth tax, authorised by parliament in 1690 to pay for armies to fight the Jacobites, levied a standard charge of 14 shillings (70 pence) on each hearth in a household. Scotland was divided up into thirty-six districts, usually based on the shire but sometimes the presbytery. Lists survive, although generally of varying quality, for most of lowland Scotland; they give the number of households and hearths, the names of householders, including those whose tax was unpaid or 'deficient' and also, at times, 'the poor', who were exempt. Direct translation of either numbers of hearths or of households into total population is difficult, as towns would, on average, have more hearths per household than rural areas and larger towns more than those of smaller: thus Dumfriesshire's rural parishes might roughly be estimated by using a multiplier of 4.8 on the number of hearths, whereas for Dumfries itself a figure of 3.8 would be more appropriate, and for Edinburgh under 3.0. Also, returns for newer and some other towns may well include the landward part of the parish and exaggerate their size; these are indicated by 'P'. The curving league table, however, maybe compared with those produced by using other kinds of taxes in the seventeenth century.

2165	'Deficient' (= unpaid)
(390)	'Poor' (= exempt)
100	Values too small to register on graph
▭	Approximate value
Forres	Royal burghs
Kelso	Non royal burghs
P	Parishes rather than burghs

Ranking of hearth tax of burghs and parishes 1691

ML

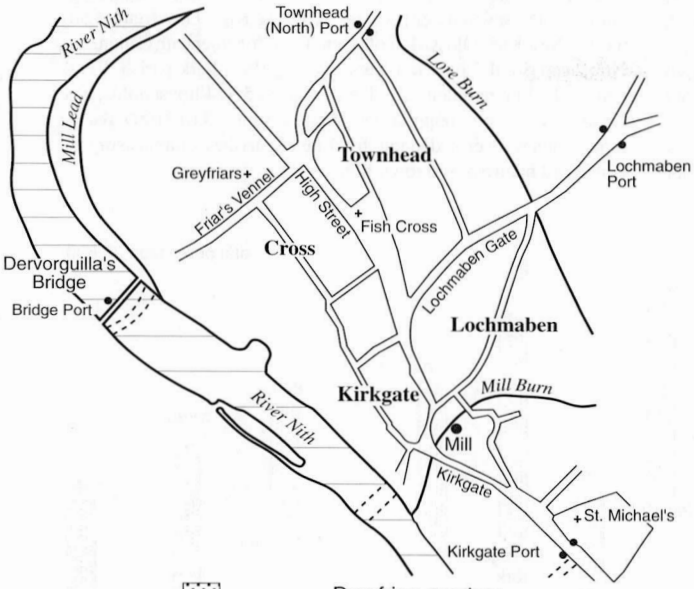
Hearth tax 1691



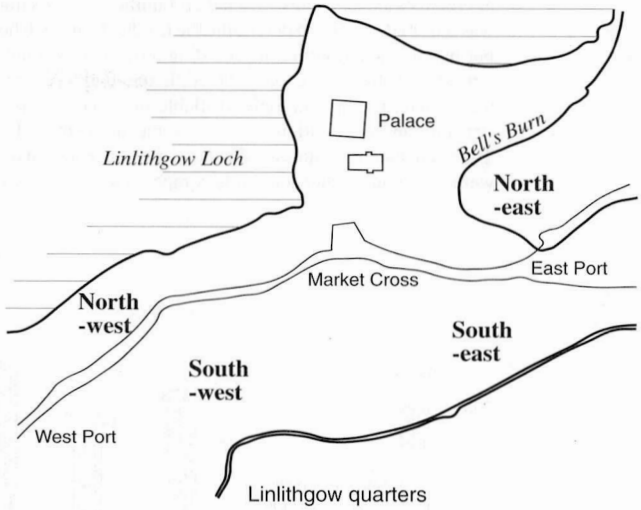
Number of paid hearths 1691 ML

Hearth tax 1691

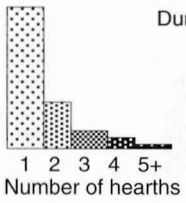
The hearth tax can also be used to analyse the structure of urban society. The proportion of single hearths may be used to compare the numbers living in single-hearth houses in different towns, or between different parts of the same town. The differences in the upper layers of the pyramid of wealth would be indicated by variations in the proportion of multiple hearths.



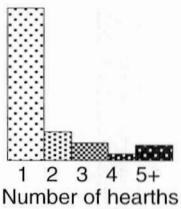
Dumfries quarters



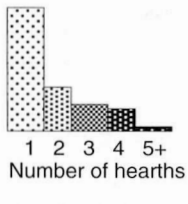
Linlithgow quarters



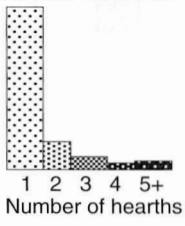
Dumfries



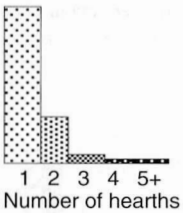
Linlithgow



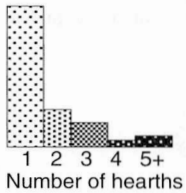
Cross



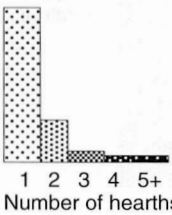
North-east



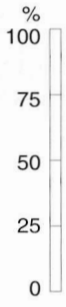
Kirkgate

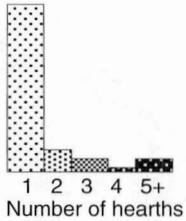


North-west

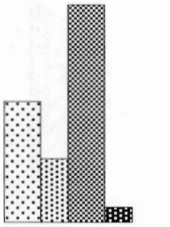


Townhead

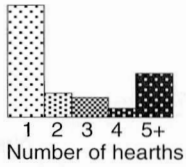




South-west



Lochmaben



South-east

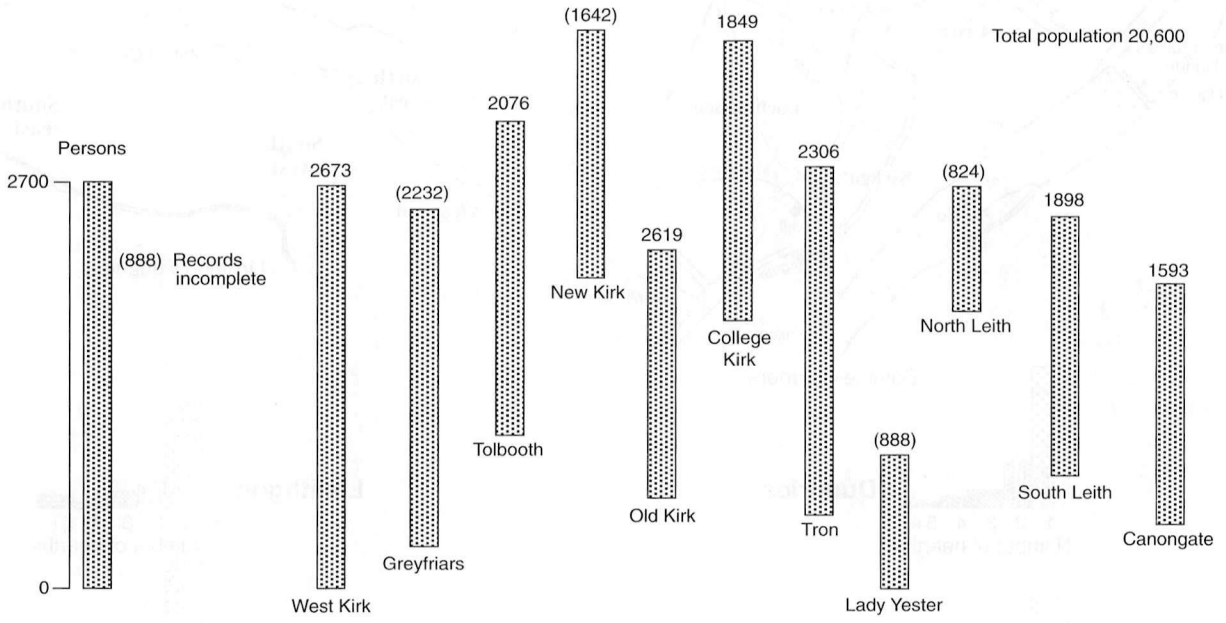
Percentage of single and multiple hearths in Dumfries and Linlithgow 1691

ML

Poll tax 1694

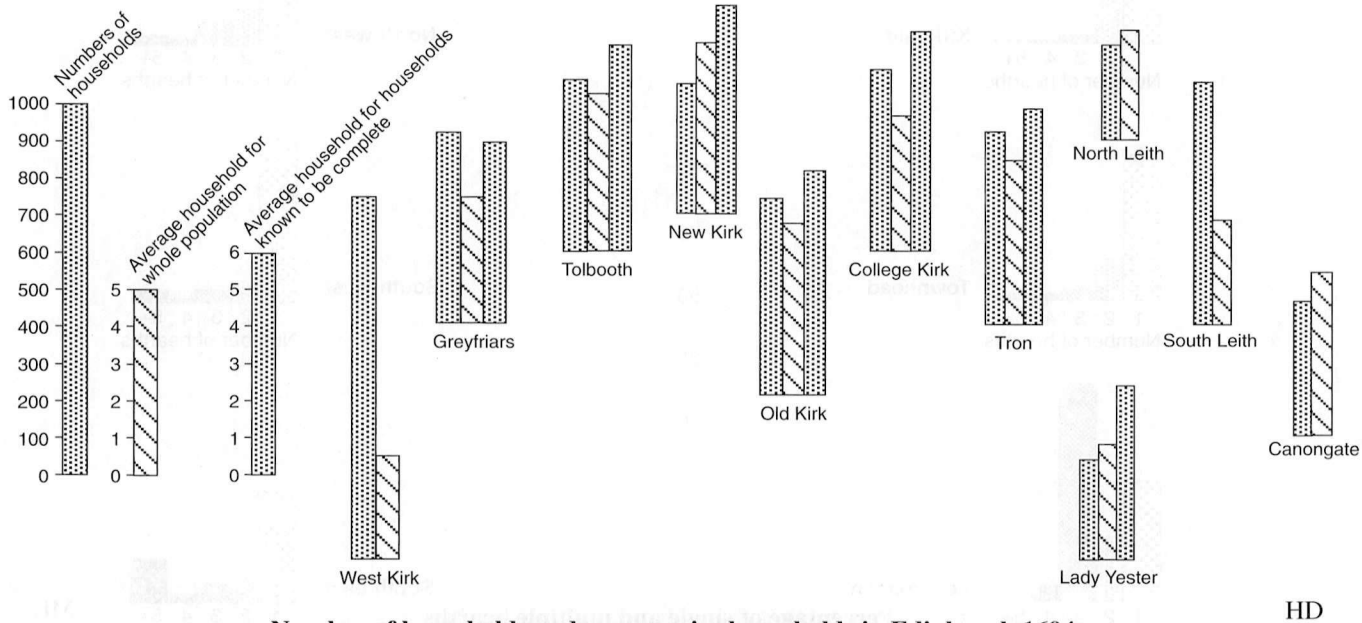
The 1694 poll tax was imposed by act of Parliament on 29 May 1693 in order to raise money for the armed forces and Edinburgh Town Council decreed on 15 August 1694 that all householders were required to 'give up their names, qualities, degrees and value of their estates with a full and true list under their hand of their whole servants apprentices and residents within their families ...'. This information was required in order to determine the tax due from each household, but had the added virtue of providing a detailed account of Edinburgh's taxable households. Overall, the poll tax data, though incomplete, provide the only available information on household structure and distribution in late seventeenth-century Edinburgh. The main features of note are that large multi-generation households were not common, and household composition varied from the inner to the outer areas of the town, notwithstanding the compact geographical nature of pre-New Town Edinburgh.

Although the unknown, but probably large number of 'poor' were exempt and despite the eroded condition of several lists, the poll tax provides a valuable survey of both overall population and individual household structure. The lists for 'greater' Edinburgh comprise the seven inner parishes - College Kirk, Greyfriars, Lady Yester, New Kirk, Old Kirk, Tolbooth, Tron - together with Canongate, North and South Leith and the sprawling West Kirk parish. In all, some 20,600 inhabitants are detailed, from 5,514 households. The Figure below shows population by parish. Some 13,612 (66%) of the inhabitants were crowded into the 7 inner parishes, emphasising the congested nature of old town life.



Population of Edinburgh from poll tax, by parish

The bar-charts below indicates the number of households in each parish and average household size. The average for those households known to be complete is included for the inner parishes (the regulations did not require children in some taxation categories to be listed), although some households were mainly in the central parishes, with fewer in the more rural outskirts.

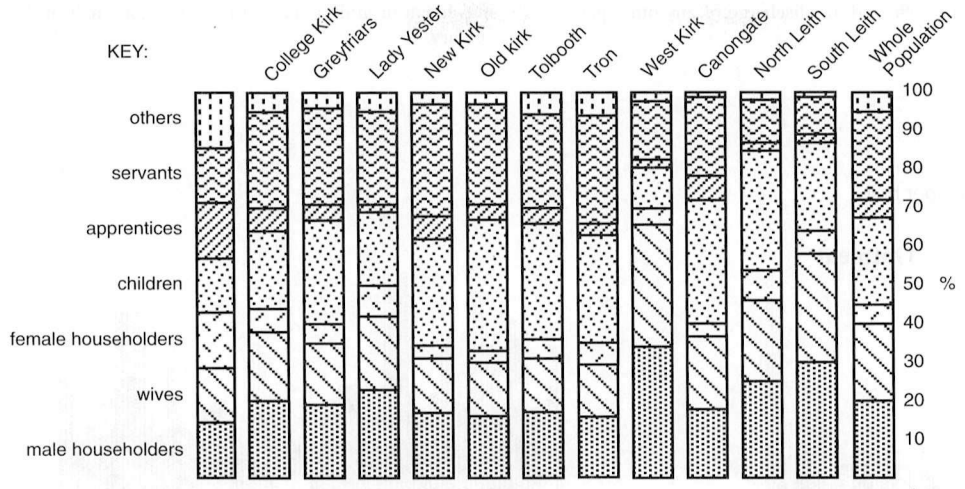


HD

Number of households and average size households in Edinburgh 1694

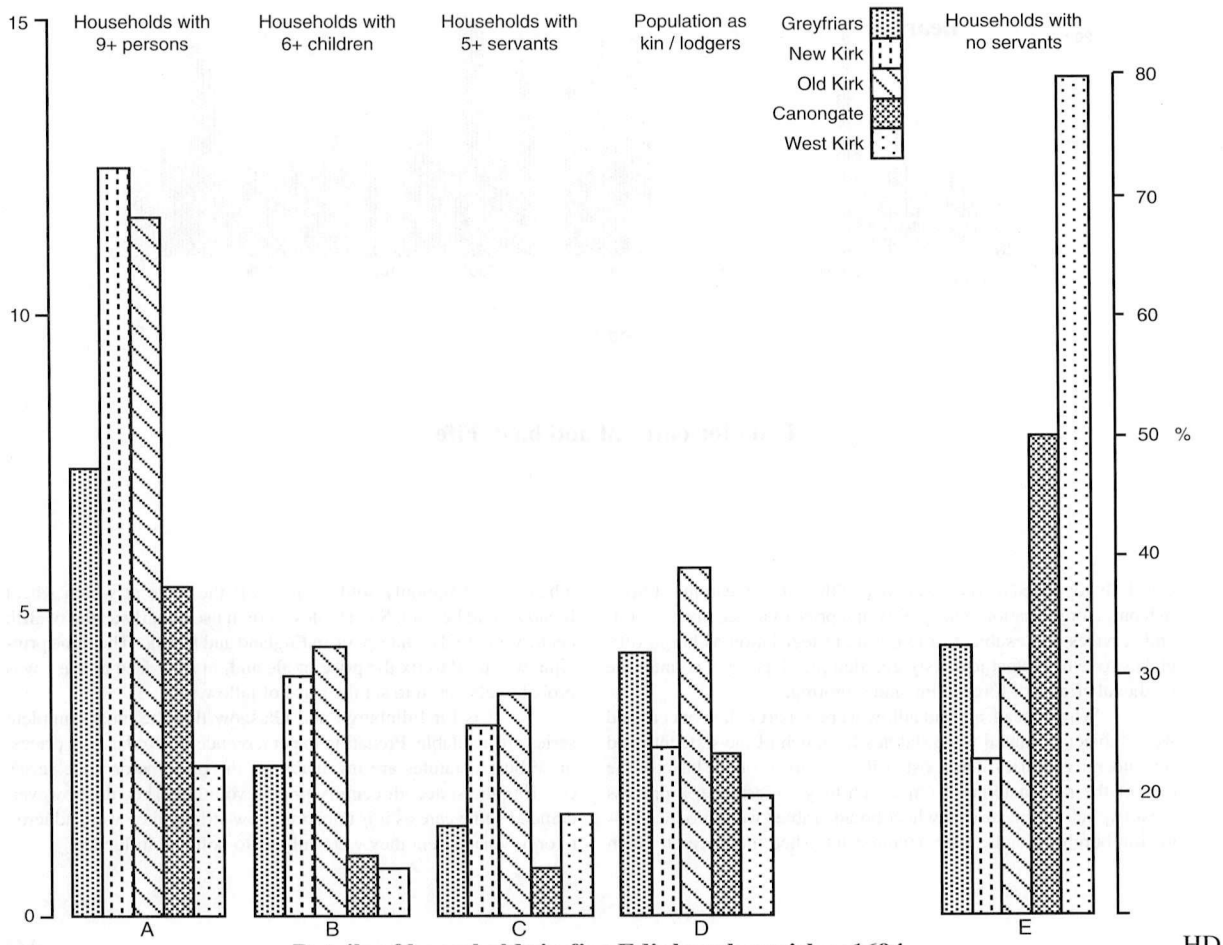
Poll tax 1694

The bar-charts illustrate household structure, which varied markedly in the different parishes. The highest percentages of children and servants were in the central parishes, while over 60% of the West Kirk households consisted of married couples only, compared with 30% in New Kirk and an overall average of 40%. The percentages of 'others', that is, lodgers and resident kin, although small, were also higher in the inner areas.



Distribution of members of households 1694

The bar-charts give household statistics for five parishes, across the urban-rural range. The percentages for A,B,C and D relate to characteristics of larger households, and show a fairly consistent pattern, with the more socially and occupationally diverse New and Old Kirk parishes generally boasting higher numbers. Conversely, section E is a complete reversal, as households without servants were a feature of the outer, poorer areas. Canongate parish displays an intermediate structure, falling between the more complex inner area and the semi-rural West Kirk parish.



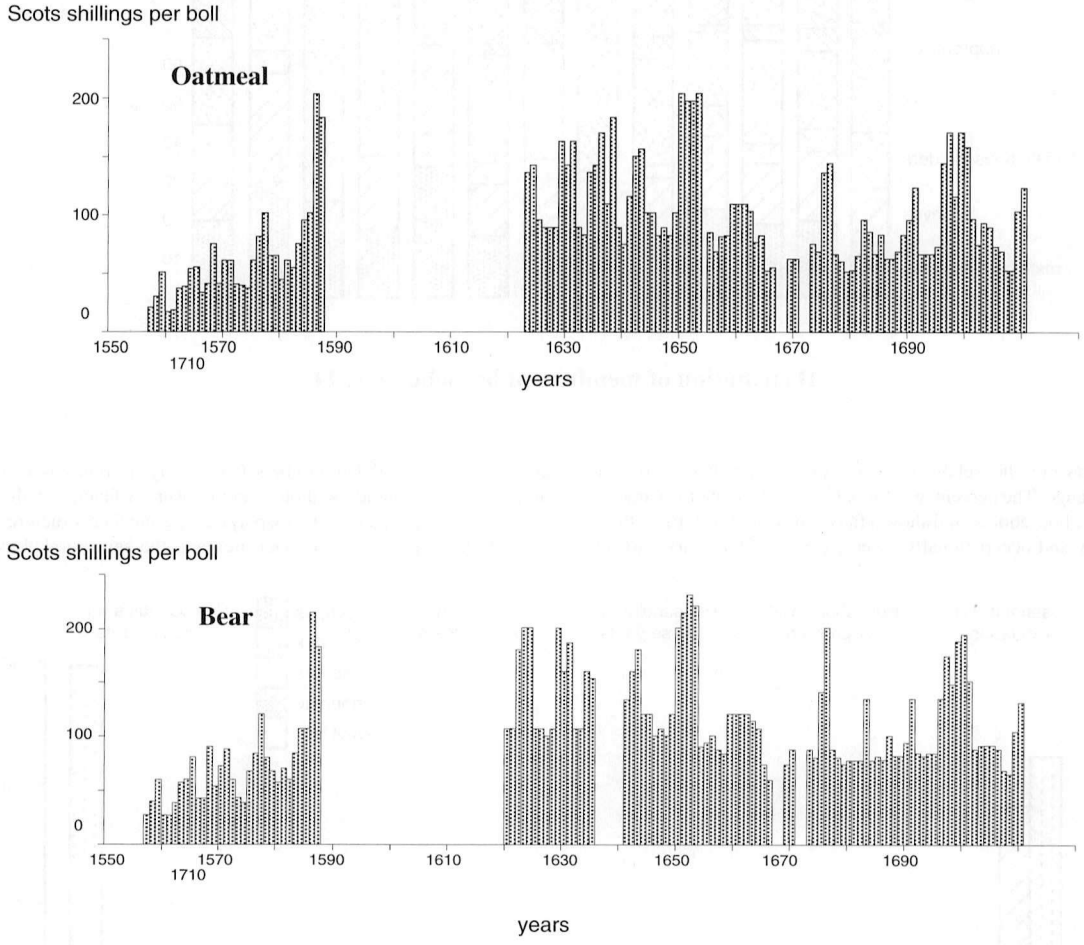
Details of households in five Edinburgh parishes 1694

HD

Prices and wages

The fiars 'struck' each Candlemas by the sheriff courts provide an unparallelled series of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century grain prices. Established by a jury of landowners, farmers and merchants, these referred to, and took the date of, the preceding year's crop. Their purpose was to regulate the settlement of debts, the conversion of rents in kind to cash, and the discharge of any other payments based upon that crop.

Surviving fiars seldom pre-date the 1620s, although isolated examples from a number of counties show that they were being struck as early as the mid-sixteenth century. Only for Fife is there to be found anything approaching an unbroken series charting the movement of grain prices during the second half of the sixteenth century.



Fiars for oatmeal and bear, Fife

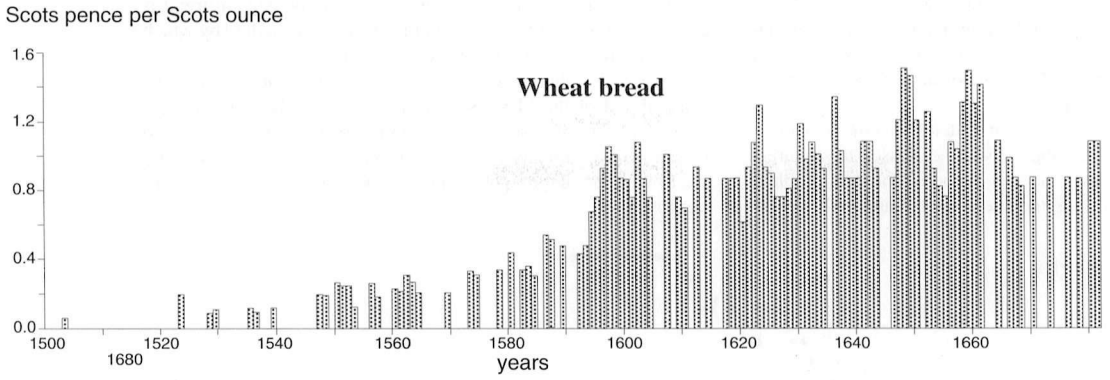
Carefully regulated markets were one of the earliest features of Scottish burgh organisation. The quality and price of a great many goods and services were subject to intermittent legislation as burgh officials strove to protect jealously guarded privileges and counter the medieval crimes of forestalling and regrating.

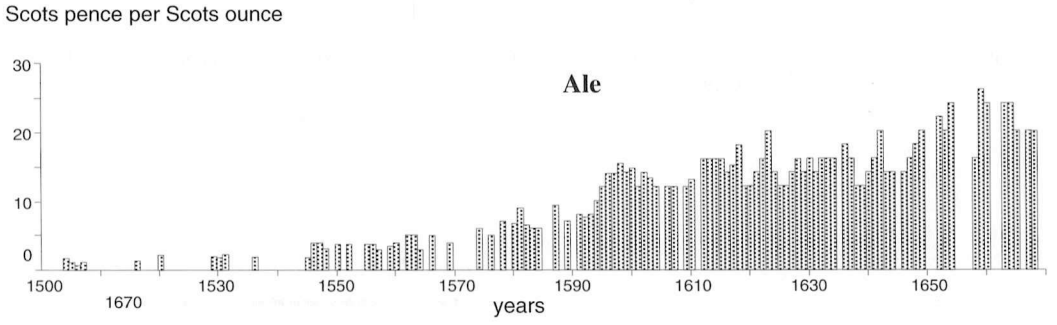
Wheat bread, ale and tallow were of particular concern and were subject to annual price statutes for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These ostensibly set prices on the basis of the cost of the raw materials from which they were made; a process most explicit in the case of wheat bread. Tables were produced allowing burgh officials, after having established the price at which wheat was commonly sold, to read off the price at which wheat bread should be sold. Such tables were in use as early as the twelfth century and find counterparts in England and Ireland. The same principle was used to fix the price of ale and, in Aberdeen at least, was probably also used to set the price of tallow.

It is for Edinburgh and Glasgow that the most complete series are available. Predating the emergence of regular fiars prices, these burgh statutes are invaluable as the only major price series covering the sixteenth-century price revolution. They do, however, demand some care as it is uncertain how strictly they were adhered to or to what extent they were subject to political influence.

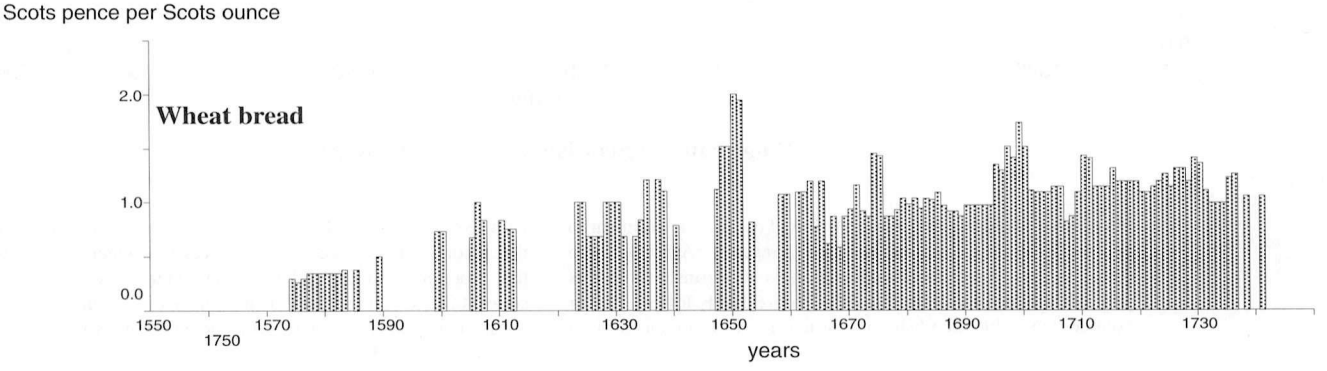
AGi

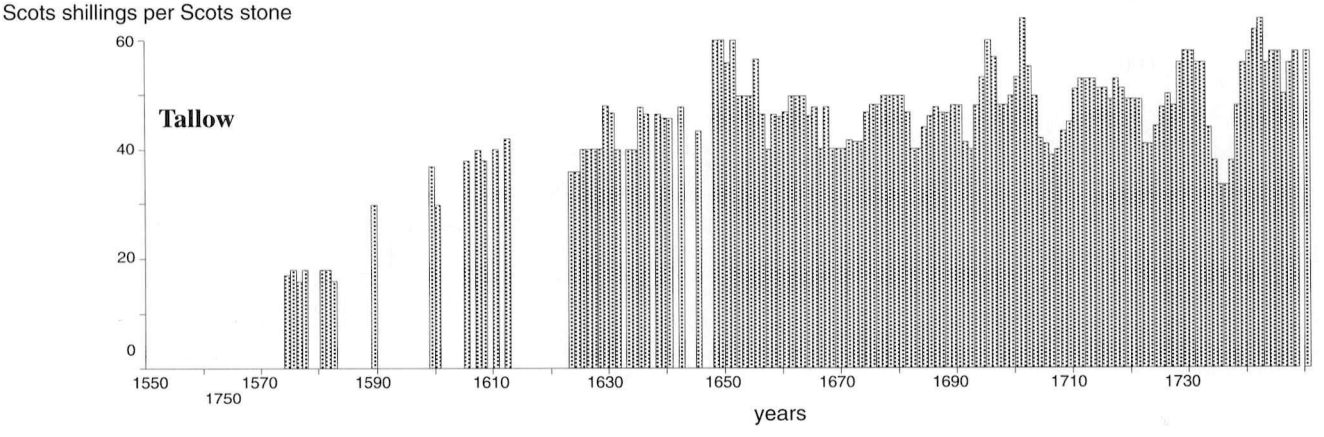
Prices and wages





Statute prices, Edinburgh town council, 1500 to 1700





Statute prices, Glasgow town council, 1550 to 1750

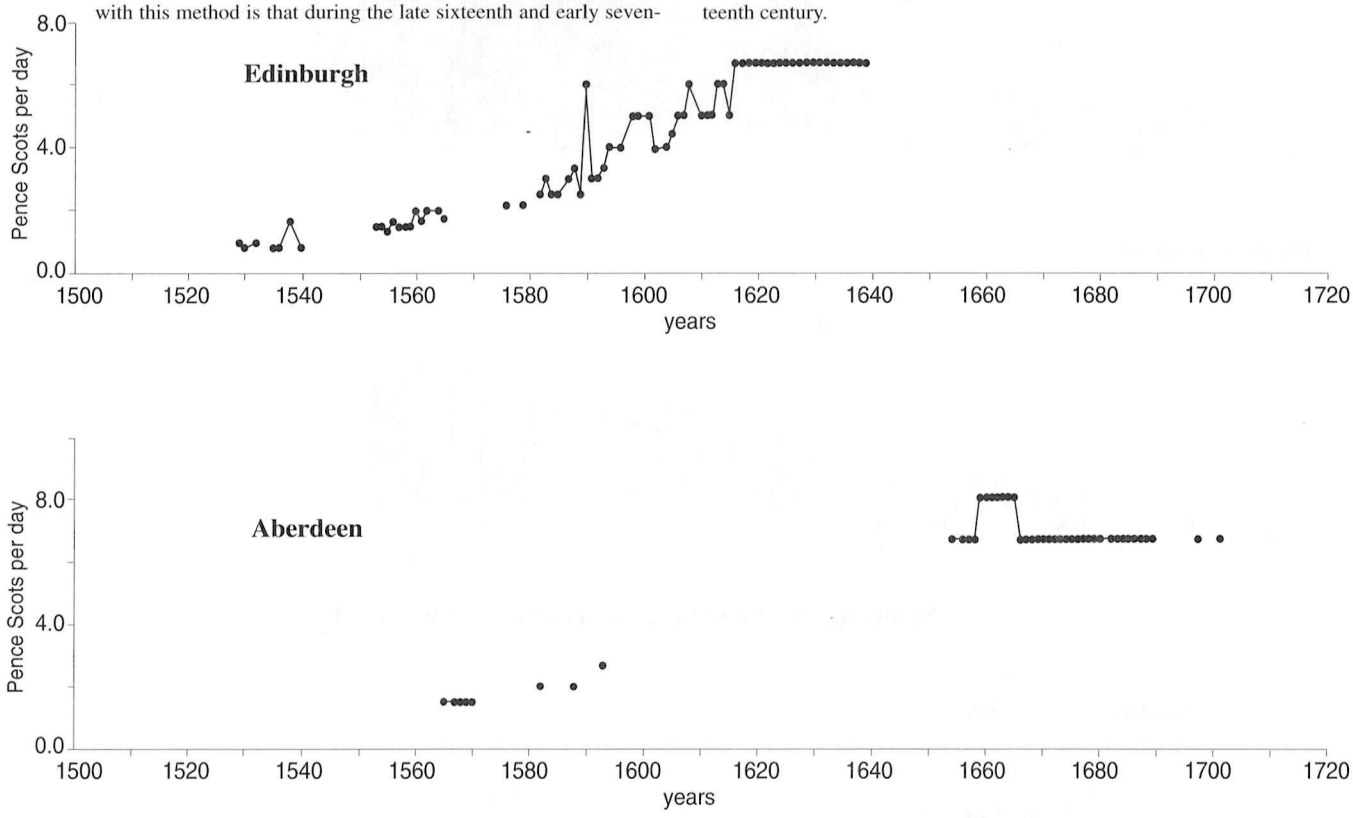
AGi

Prices and wages

As individual building projects were generally of short duration, it is only in accounts of the crown and the principal Scottish burghs that long-term series of labourers' wage-rates are to be found. These accounts vary greatly in quality and attempting to determine an 'annual wage-rate' is fraught with difficulties. Whether or not food and/or drink was provided and the nature of the work being undertaken could both affect level of wages.

The guiding principle has been to determine the maximum wage-rate commonly paid during the summer season to labourers who received nothing extra in the way of food. The only problem with this method is that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries it appears that wages were increased, first by additional payments for drink and for specific tasks and only later as an increase in basic wage-rates. Thus although the general trend is unquestionable, its precise timing may reflect the method by which these annual wage-rates have been determined.

The Edinburgh series is based upon accounts of the Town Council and of the Masters of Work relative to Edinburgh. The Aberdeen series is based upon wage rates recorded in the Kirk and Bridge Work Accounts as well as the annual wage-maxima set by the Town Council throughout much of the second half of the seventeenth century.



Wage rates of Scottish urban day-labourers

Successive Scottish administrations found coinage debasement to be a useful and most profitable source of revenue. A fiscal device enhancing the face value of a coin far above its intrinsic value, this policy led to the issue of coins with a progressively lower silver or gold content. Thus Scottish coins struck in 1601 contained but a fifth of the silver or gold used in coins of the same value issued at the end of the fifteenth century - a depreciation which far outstripped that experienced in England. Concentrated in the second half of the sixteenth century, the debasement of the Scottish coinage coincides with, and is clearly relevant to, the contemporary rise in wages and prices, shown in the preceding charts.

The debasement of the Scottish coinage 1475 to 1600

AGi