4. Sources of supply

(a) English teazles to 1840

Such quantities of teazles as were needed in the Yorkshire woollen industry from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, not only in York and Beverley, but in places in the West Riding like Wakefield, Ripon and Selby, may initially have come from any of three possible sources. Perhaps the least likely possibility is that teazles were grown locally. Although as late as the start of the nineteenth century, some teazles were grown in Britain on a small scale for local use, even in places in Ireland with its wetter climate,[1] Yorkshire was probably at about the northern limit of the crop, and growing there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was only made successful by the very high local demand. In any case, if local growing was undertaken at an early time, it would not have been in the parts of the Vale of York that were later used, as these were still wet and undrained.[2] A further possibility is that from the second quarter of the fourteenth century, when an import trade in teazles began to develop, supplies were shipped across the North Sea from the Low Countries and brought up the Humber and Ouse to, Selby perhaps, or maybe York.[3]

The fact though, that by the late thirteenth century there seems to have been a trade in teazles within the country suggests that perhaps by then there was already a surplus from the climatically more favourable growing places in the south. From an early time, therefore, the West Riding may have been one of a number of smaller regional consuming districts that were supplied from these principal southern growing areas, in a regular, seasonal trade following an established network of routes. This seems to have been the case in the eighteenth century before teazle cultivation was introduced into Yorkshire itself, and the fact that this trade continued through the later eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth helps to make it possible to trace the likely route of an earlier supply line.

Despite the long distances across country between the major English growing districts in Somerset at the start of the eighteenth century, and the West Riding, the greater part of the journey was capable of being undertaken along the waterways, though up to about 1700, these were still mostly unimproved. From Wrington, or one of the other growing villages on the north side of the Mendips, it was no more than ten or a dozen miles by wagon or packhorse to Bristol. At Bristol, the stavs of teazles would have been transferred to the trows (pronounced to rhyme with ‘crows’), the sailing boats which went up and down the Severn, being hauled upstream by men pulling them from the bank, as far as Bewdley, the older bridging and transhipment point, from where packhorse trains went onwards.[4] From Bewdley, one route for consignments of teazles carried in stavs on the backs of packhorses may have gone up the west side of the country, to Lancashire, and further on, to Kendal, where the Kendal ‘greens’ were made, and where the teazle was incorporated into the coat of arms of the borough, and a teazle handle forms part of a carving dated 1659 on almshouses. In the case of teazles intended for the West Riding, these would have crossed to the nearest navigable part of the Trent. Down the Trent, possibly with another change of boat to go up the Humber and Ouse, the teazles would have gone on to Selby, the river port serving the West Riding manufacturing districts. From there it was a further twenty miles by road to Leeds, the principal and perhaps the only place where the teazles were sold.

In 1699, acts of Parliament were obtained which made local improvements at two places along this route. One of those was intended to make the upper Trent navigable to Burton upon Trent, whilst the other authorised the Aire & Calder Navigation. Opened in 1704, this gave access along the Aire to Leeds by water from the Ouse, the docksides being on the banks of the Aire immediately below Leeds bridge at the foot of Briggate, the chief commercial thoroughfare of the town.

It would seem that as demand in the West Riding went up through the first half of the eighteenth century, supplies sent from Somerset, and perhaps also Gloucestershire, continued to keep pace, until at some point before 1770, reliance on this long, and inevitably occasionally uncertain, supply line became unsatisfactory, and teazle cultivation was introduced into Yorkshire.[5] The immediate stimulus for this may have been the sudden expansion in the woollen manufacture following the ending of the Seven Years' War in 1763, when the recorded output of broadcloth in the West Riding almost doubled, rising from around 48,000 pieces a year to 102,400 in 1767, and over 90,000 in the rest of the decade.

The place where teazles were first grown in Yorkshire was the village of Biggin,[6] a few miles on the Leeds side of Selby, on one of the areas of clay soils known locally as 'strong land', on which teazles do well, and of which there are several wide stretches across the Vale of York. The circumstances of the crop being introduced 'from the West of England', in this locality near the river port of Selby, suggest a link with a pre-existing supply trade from the main growing counties. The person responsible, described simply as 'a gentleman', was probably one of the local landowners who, through his commercial connections with Leeds, may have been aware of the demand and of the profits to be made, and who, therefore, may have brought the crop to the notice of his tenantry.

Despite the fact that, as in the West of England, landowners often came to regard the teazle as a crop that impoverished the soil,[7] from Biggin, the cultivation spread across the clay districts of the Vale of York, reaching across the Ouse into the East Riding by 1770, when Arthur Young published his observations of teazle growing at Stillingfleet. By at least 1800, teazle growing had spread into the North Riding.[8] The principal growing area, however, was always in the eastern part of the West Riding on the clay soils of the Barkston Ash wapentake, with Sherburn in Elmet and South Milford as its two main centres. From these places, Leeds, the main consuming market, was no more than a dozen miles away in an uninterrupted line by road. There was also a good deal of growing south of the Aire around Purston Jaglin, Darrington and Carleton, which were equally close to Leeds. In the East Riding most of the growing was carried out not far off across the Ouse, at, apart from Stillingfleet, places such as North Duffield and Cliffe. The North Riding, farther away from Leeds, was the least important area of teazle cultivation. At its greatest known extent growing reached from Tollerton, about nine miles above York, to Fishlake and Thorne in the south, and from Bubwith and Gilberdyke in the East Riding, to Wetherby and Collingham, Aberford and Purston Jaglin in the West Riding. Altogether, the names of at least forty different places connected with the Yorkshire teazle cultivation are known.[9]

So rapid was the expansion of this local growing trade that by at least 1810, the local production of teazles appears to have taken up the larger share of the West Riding market, the Yorkshire growers' pack of 13,500 having replaced the West pack of 20,000 as the unit of count in the Leeds woollen trade.[10] However, supplies also continued to arrive in an uninterrupted flow from the West of England, undoubtedly aided by further improvements along the route to the point where the whole journey from Bristol to Leeds could be undertaken by water, and more speedily, though not without changes of boat at certain places. The completion of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal in 1772 gave a new route from the Severn at Stourport, which by the end of the 1770s went through via the Trent & Mersey to the upper Trent. In the 1790s, further connections were made across the Midlands between Severn and Trent. At the Yorkshire end, the Selby Canal of 1778 gave improved direct access from the Ouse to Leeds, with boats of 200 tons able to come up to Selby, followed by boats of 60 tons to Leeds. The opening of the Goole Canal in 1826 gave Leeds improved access to deep water on the Ouse. In the 1820s, haulage by heavy horses replaced haulage by men on the Severn, and the opening of the Gloucester & Berkeley Ship Canal in 1827 cut out the meanders on the lower course of the river. Improvements were made during the period to the line of the Aire & Calder Navigation,

and in 1831, the company introduced steam tugging for its own boats. New facilities in Leeds itself matched all these improvements. In the 1770s, warehousing was built alongside the waterway just below Leeds bridge on the south bank at Simpson's Fold. In 1818 a basin or dock, the Leeds Terminus, was opened, also on the south side of the Aire.[11] In 1827-28, an imposing seven storey warehouse was built on the north bank.[12] Although a further dock, the New Dock, Clarence Dock, was opened in 1843 downstream on the Hunslet side, this never seems to have been used for teazles. There is evidence, however, that as late as the mid-1870s, West of England teazles were still being sent to Leeds by water by way of the Aire & Calder.

The chief source of these West of England teazles was Somerset, where by the end of the eighteenth century, the main growing parishes included not only Wrington, but Blagdon, Ubley, Compton Martin, and West and East Harptree.[13] Locally, the Somerset growing trade supplied not only the mills of the county, but the Wiltshire woollen industry, the Wiltshire mill town of Trowbridge being the chief mart in the West of England for the Somerset growers well into the nineteenth century.[14] However, it was noted in 1795 that 'large quantities' of Somerset teazles were being sent along the water route from Bristol to Yorkshire.[15] Teazles were also sent, presumably along part of the same route, from Gloucestershire, despite the fact that for an unknown reason, by the early years of the nineteenth century, growing in the middle Vale of Gloucester had declined, so that in 1809, it was said that no more than 100 acres of teazles were grown in the county. Some of the remaining growing was carried out around the 1820s at places such as Eastington, below the mill town of Stroud, where about 1820, thirty-six acres of teazles were grown, and Westbury-on-Severn. However, the teazles that were sent from Gloucestershire to Yorkshire consisted only of the kings, the largest teazles, one of which grows at the top of the main stalk of each plant, and which, although too heavy and coarse for the fine cloth trade of the West of England, were needed for the coarser cloths manufactured in the West Riding.[16] In 1830 too, Worcestershire teazles were arriving in Leeds.[17] The only growing county in the West of England which was apparently not affected by the requirements of the Yorkshire market was Wiltshire, where according to a single known reference of 1832, teazles were also cultivated.[18] This was probably specifically for local consumption, in Trowbridge and the other nearby manufacturing towns.

There are no contemporary assessments of the relative importance of the various growing areas in the Yorkshire market. However, a rough guide is provided for the 1830s by a series of entries in Leeds directories. Published in 1830, 1834 and 1839, these consisted of separate sections giving details of the visiting teazle dealers and growers likely to be found in attendance at a number of inns in the centre of Leeds. As well as giving the names of the dealers and of the inns at which they attended, these lists identified the places of origin of the dealers. In the case of those from the West of England, this was by county, those from Yorkshire being identified more closely by locality or place of origin. The quantities supplied by the various growers and dealers cannot be known, and there is reason to believe, as will be seen, that even by 1830, numbers of Yorkshire dealers especially had given up regular use of the inns, and that, as the lists themselves show, through the rest of the 1830s, this process accelerated. However, the 1830 entry, which is clearly the most representative of the main teazle market at the Leeds inns, shows that out of seventy-seven dealers selling through the inns, forty-seven were from Yorkshire and the other thirty from the West of England. These were made up of twenty-two from Somerset, five from Gloucestershire and three from Worcestershire. Taking the three lists together, out of the 186 attendances at the inns, 102 related to Yorkshire dealers and growers, and eighty-four to West of England dealers. Of the latter, seventy involved dealers from Somerset, eleven those from Gloucestershire and three those from Worcestershire.[19]

(b) English teazles from 1840 to 1914

The turning point in the demand, which took place around the start of the Victorian period, was followed by a general reversal of the stages by which the increasing requirements of the Yorkshire teazle market had stimulated growing in the various English growing districts. This changing pattern of supply was complicated, however, by the fact that the beginnings of the decline in demand coincided with the reduction and then the removal in the 1840s, of the duty on imports of teazles. This exposed the English growers to regular competition from foreign teazles often grown more cheaply under more favourable climatic conditions. This development also occurred at the time when transportation by land and by sea was being opened up by the construction of railways and by improvements in sea-borne trade. The result was that through the period up to 1914, the decline of the English growing trades serving the West Riding market was accelerated by the appearance of a widening range of mostly cheaper foreign teazles during a period of falling demand. These also came to be available increasingly already prepared and sorted ready for immediate use in the mills.

Amongst the English growing trades that supplied the demand in the West Riding, the most vulnerable was the last to come into existence, that in Yorkshire itself. The Yorkshire teazle cultivation was wholly dependent on the consuming trade in the mills of Leeds and the West Riding. In addition, although the Yorkshire teazle, 'when good', was considered to be the finest in the world,[20] this was probably a reflection of the fact that growing in Yorkshire was close to, or at, the northern limit of cultivation in Europe, the more temperate climatic conditions producing the harder, good quality teazles that were most highly regarded in the woollen industry. The drawback was that the growers were more exposed to the sometimes total failure of the crop in the inevitable bad years in a climatically marginal area.

Signs of a contraction in the quantities grown in Yorkshire, even in the main Barkston Ash growing centre, can perhaps be seen by the 1860s,[21] though at that time, growing was still carried out in the more distant North Riding. In 1885, the value of the crop each year around Sherburn and South Milford was put at about £30,000, representing approximately 750 acres,[22] but in 1888, the general decline in the growing in the county was noted,[23] and it was around then that one member of the Bortoft family, the leading South Milford growers, abandoned teazle growing after the disastrous total loss of ten acres in one year,[24] the high prices of the good years that were necessary to compensate for such events, no longer being available. By around 1900, growing in the East Riding on Humberside was being given up, and in the years up to 1914, the cultivation of teazles was restricted to the members of a small number of the more old-fashioned growers around Sherburn and South Milford. The 1914 war brought to an end a trade that would probably not have gone on for much longer anyway.

In the case of the supply trade from the West of England counties, after the 1830s, there are no further references to teazle supplies going from Worcestershire to Yorkshire. Gloucestershire teazles were, however, still being sent to Yorkshire at the end of the 1830s, after which there is again no later direct information about the trade. Some growing, perhaps for local use at least, continued in Gloucestershire, at Eastington, for instance, where in 1845, there was a local teazle dealer. Around 1882, the crop was brought to Uckington, near Cheltenham, by a grower who had moved there from Somerset, and there was a local supply trade in the hands of a teazle merchant at Ebley in the Stroudwater Valley manufacturing district up to 1894, though it is not impossible that the teazles handled by this merchant came to some extent at least, from purchases in Somerset. In the early 1900s, growing was also started at Elmstone Hardwicke. This may have been connected with the introduction of the crop a little earlier at the nearby Uckington, and later information seems to suggest that this small production of teazles was intended for the West Riding market.[25]

Teazles continued to be sent to Yorkshire from the main Somerset growing area north

of the Mendips up to at least the mid-1860s,[26] and there was also a supply trade from the growing district in the south of the county, up to and beyond then. During the latter decades of the nineteenth century, however, with the local demand, as well as that from the West Riding diminishing, the growing trade in Somerset underwent an almost complete collapse, prices having fallen from their previous level of £5 10*s*. 0*d*. for a pack of 20,000, to £2, if that. A writer of 1911 could only look back on the disappearance of a great agricultural industry, and commented that, 'Trowbridge used to be the great mart for Somerset-grown teazles, now scarcely any are seen there'.[27] By1913, growing in the main area of teazle cultivation on the north side of the Mendips had come to an end completely, and all that remained were a few dozen growers between Taunton, Chard and Ilminster, at Hatch, Curland and Thurlbear, and also near Langport. All of this production went to Yorkshire.[28] The survival of the trade at all may have been partly due to the fact that the West Riding teazle merchants did not want to lose a source of supply, particularly as Somerset teazles were better in quality than most of the other readily available types, and in the pre-1914 years, they sometimes paid higher prices for Somerset teazles than for foreign teazles of a similar quality.[29]

There was, however, an unusual success story contrary to the main trend in the English growing trade serving the West Riding market in the later nineteenth century. This concerned the revival of teazle growing in Essex. The old teazle cultivation in Essex had at one time supplied the cloth-makers of Colchester, Coggeshall, Braintree and Barking, and later the makers of broadcloths and baize on the Essex-Suffolk border. At the start of the nineteenth century, there was still a reasonably large business done, but as the local woollen trade declined in the face of competition from Yorkshire, and as the fashion for broadcloth also waned, teazle growing disappeared not long after 1855.[30] However, according to the Victoria County History, published in 1907, around 1880, a farmer called Matravers, who had moved from Somerset, where he had grown teazles, reintroduced the crop to Essex for the Leeds market, the key factor being the use of rail transportation. It was said that Matravers himself first grew teazles at Witham, and then at Latney's Farm, where he moved between Witham and Hatfield Peverel. He again removed with some of his sons to Nunty's Farm in Great Coggeshall, while one of his sons settled at Tilkey nearby. All were said to have carried on growing, at Nunty's and Tilkey Farms, Greensted Green and Marks Tey, with as much as one hundred acres between them in some years. However, according to the account of 1907, in the preceding three or four years, the area planted had diminished because of a falling-off in demand, and lower returns. The teazles were made up into stavs and sent to Yorkshire from Kelvedon station, the prices made being from £2 10*s* 0*d*. to £5 per pack.[31]

Two of the Matravers family involved were Fred Matravers, who was born in Ilminster in Somerset about 1869, and his brother-in-law Samuel Shavers, who also came from Ilminster, and was half a dozen years older. In 1881, Fred Matravers was still in Ilminster, but in 1891, he was lodging with Samuel Shavers and his family at Latney's Lane, Witham Road, Hatfield Peverel, where Samuel Shavers was farming and growing teazles, and Fred Matravers was a teazle grower. By 1901, Fred Matravers was farming at Tilkey Road, Great Coggeshall. It was probably he who was the F. Matravers of Coggeshall from whom C. Hemingway & Co. of Batley purchased three packs of buttons along with six stavs of teazles in January 1899. The teazles were bought at a rate of £2 4*s.* 0*d.* a pack, a low rate, perhaps an indication of the falling off of prices mentioned in the Victoria County History.

According to local lore, the business came to an end when at about 9:45 pm one evening a mysterious fire burned down the Matravers barn at Nunty's Farm. According to one eye-witness, who turned up to join a small group of onlookers who were already there, 'the police, i.e. P.C. Lambert, arrived just after me and remarked, "It's more like a garden party than a bloody fire," Mr Matravers dishing out his very strong Devon cider to all and sundry, including the firemen.'[32] Another informant said that beer, bread and cheese were

already waiting for the firemen when they arrived.[33] This event, which was said to have marked the end of the Matravers growing at Nunty's Farm, was recalled as having taken place in or about 1900. However, according to a report of 1913, some teazles were still grown then in Essex.[34]

(c) Foreign teazles from the 1840s to 1914

In 1793, the import duty on foreign teazles was noted to have been 1*s*. 2*d*. on 1,000, with a drawback of 1*s*. 0*d*., and in 1840, the rate was still 1*s*. 0*d*. on 1,000. This meant, according to information from 1832, that against an average price of £5-£7 for a pack (of 20,000) in this country, though the figures could range from £4 to £22, it only needed a rise to about £8 for it to become worthwhile for teazles to be imported. These were said to have come from Belgium, independent of Holland in 1830, and France. In 1842, however, the duty was reduced to 3*d*. for 1,000, and in the next few years in the decade, was removed altogether.[35] By 1853, as a result, when imports of teazles began to feature in the published trade statistics, a regular import trade had already begun. At first, the quantities, although numerically very large, were relatively modest, as the valuations show. In 1853, the imports amounted to over 14,000,000 and the following year's figure of nearly 23,000,000 was valued at no more than £5,745. The annual quantities reached 28,000,000, worth £7,161 in 1860, and 32,250,000 worth £13,540 in 1867, being generally rather higher during the second half of the 1860s, but in the 1870s, the imports were down to under 20,000,000, with a value of £8,796. After that, no further figures appeared until after World War I. Not all of these imports were necessarily intended for the West Riding. However, foreign teazles were on sale in Yorkshire by at least 1853,[36] and from then on were a regular feature of the supply trade. The great bulk of these, up to 1870 according to the import records, and probably through the rest of the 1870s, were from France, which in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had severe restrictions on the exporting of teazles, but which by the early nineteenth century had considerable sales abroad, as far away, for example, as the United States, in the 1830s.[37]

Teazle growing in France had a long history, going back at least to 1350, when a premium was offered to the growers.[38] By the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the growing trade in France was divided between two main districts, one in the north, the other in the south of the country. In the north, there were two distinct areas where teazles were grown, one in Normandy, the other in Picardy, the Normandy cultivation then being the single most important in the whole of the country. The Normandy growing area lay along the west bank of the Seine above Rouen, one of the medieval cloth centres where teazles were used, around Léry, Louviers, Elbeuf and Pont-de-l'Arche. In Picardy, teazles were grown near Tresnoi. In Languedoc, growing was carried out at Gignac in the valley of the Hérault behind Montpellier, and at other places.[39]

Although the United Kingdom trade reports in respect of French teazles do not, of course, make any distinction between imports from Normandy and from the south of France, the difference was an important one, for the teazles from the north and the south had dissimilar characteristics, and were not the same in quality from the point of view of the cloth finishers. Grown under more temperate conditions, the teazles from the north were the best. In the eighteenth century, the finest were those grown in Picardy, and some of these not used locally were sent each year across country to the fair at Beaucaire, where they were bought for re-sale to the cloth-workers around Lyons. In the nineteenth century, the Picardy cultivation seemingly having disappeared, it was the Normandy teazle that was regarded as the best in quality. Like the best of the English teazles, it was hard, with a strong core, a good shape and well-formed hooks. However, grown under more moderate conditions than the English, the crop as a whole had less waste, and consisted of more of the useable larger sizes of teazles, like those from the south of France. The latter, though, cultivated under the sunny and frost-free natural conditions of the fullers' teazle, tended to be softer and less durable and effective, and sometimes had a less

compact shape with rather straighter hooks, and it also occasionally suffered from other defects. However, as well as producing more of the more useful larger teazles, the crop was almost unfailing, and the teazles were cheap.

Despite the absence of direct information, it seems likely that the main interest in French teazles in the West Riding woollen trade was in the cheaper classes from the south of France. The Normandy teazles were similar in character to the various English teazles that were available, whilst in the heavy woollen district which became the main residual consuming market in Yorkshire, cheaper cloths were made, and there was an incentive to turn to cheaper teazles in order to reduce the production costs. That this may well have been the case is suggested by the fact that after about 1860, there was an extension of the growing trade in the south of France into a new area, which became an important supplier of the British markets. This lay around Avignon in the department of Vaucluse, where as a result of the ruination of the madder cultivation caused by the development and introduction of aniline dyes, the peasant farmers switched to teazle growing, having found the soil, the climate, and the general prospects for the French export business at the time to be favourable.[40]

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Although into the 1870s, the foreign teazles that came into the West Riding were almost exclusively from France, Yorkshire was also conveniently situated to receive German teazles, which, between the 1850s and the early 1880s, are known to have made up a small part of the rest of the imports. The largest identified quantity of these was the 1,906,000 imported in 1856, though, as will be seen, in 1863, the Yorkshire dealer William Bean bought the equivalent of more than seventy packs of 13,500 of German, a total of over 945,000 teazles. The immediate source of these were the Hanse Towns of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck, still an independent political entity up to 1871, the consignments pretty certainly being shipped across the North Sea on the regular route between Hamburg and Goole. Although German teazles were regarded in the woollen trade as inferior in quality, the German teazles that Bean sold were the most highly priced, perhaps over-priced, of all the teazles he sold, the rest being English, and they went slowly. Four years after he bought them he had still not managed to dispose of them all to his customers in the Leeds finishing trade. Some German teazles appear still to have been around at the start of the 1880s, but after that, there are no further references to them.

The interest in the West Riding market in the cheaper teazles was probably particularly reflected in the appearance and popularity of Austrian teazles, which would seem, from a comment in *The Textile Manufacturer*, 15 May 1881, to have then been new to the supply trade. The writer said that from what he had seen of them at that time, they were inferior in quality to all others, his ranking, starting with the best, being teazles from Yorkshire, the West of England, Normandy, the south of France, Germany and Austria. Grown around Linz in Upper Austria, Austrian teazles were a deceptively attractive pea-green colour, the darker shades sometimes denoting a harder better quality teazle. They were on average, cheaper than any others, even the cheapest grown in the south of France, and as a result, the quantities imported rose to make them second in importance only to those from France. In the years leading up to World War I, though, both the amounts imported into Britain, and the cultivation of them were in decline.[41]

By at least 1891, one firm of importers of British origin, and with a Yorkshire outlet, was directly involved in the Avignon-Vaucluse export trade. This was Smith & Co., who by that year, when they won a gold medal at the Avignon fair, were established there as growers, that is merchants at the first tier above the individual peasant-farmers who actually grew the teazles. In their capacity as exporters, they were in a position to supply fully sorted and ready to use stem and spindle teazles through their British agents, of whom before World War I, there were two. One of these, engaged in the business in the West Riding, was located in Bradford, the other handling the Scottish market for teazles, was based in

Paisley.[42]

By that period, Avignon-Vaucluse had become the chief source of French teazles entering the British market. There is evidence, though, of a certain degree of discrimination amongst the West Riding woollen manufacturers in their preferences amongst the cheaper teazles from the south of France, amongst which, despite their common features, there were elements of differences in quality and price based on methods of cultivation, and presumably other local factors as well.

One teazle recommended by a writer in *The Textile Manufacturer*, 15 February 1895, was the Lodève teazle, grown in the valley of a tributary of the Hérault, which he contrasted favourably with the Avignon teazle, a common fault of which was said to have been the rotting of the core. The Lodève teazle was a bit more expensive, but in the experience of the writer, was comparable with the Normandy teazle, being suitable for raising good quality cloths such as broadcloth, satin, buckskin and various coatings. In addition, the West Riding consumers appear in this period largely to have avoided the teazles produced in a further part of the growing trade that developed in the south of France. This was in the department of Bouches-du-Rhone, where great quantities were grown under irrigation. It was said that these could be grown within ten months from the planting of the seed to the cutting of the teazles. These were the cheapest of all the teazles from the south of France, and would seem to have been the lowest in quality grown there.[43] There was also a small importation from Belgium, a survival of the centuries-old trade from the growing areas of the Low Countries.

The last of the foreign teazles to appear regularly in the Yorkshire market came from the farthest away. These were the American teazles which were brought in chiefly by the firm of McLaughlin Brothers, the leading growers and merchants of Skaneateles in New York State, who opened a branch in Leeds at the end of the 1890s.[44] In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, because teazles were having to be imported into America from England and France, there were calls for the crop to be introduced locally, and an article in the *Old Sturbridge Village Visitor* in the Fall, 2001, details the financially disappointing results of an attempt to start the cultivation at Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, in 1830-31. The credit for the successful introduction of teazle growing into America is usually given to John Snook, a migrant from Somerset in 1826, who in 1835 cut his first crop of teazles at Skaneateles in New York State, where he had identified suitable soil, and other favourable local conditions. An area within ten miles of Skaneateles, including the neighbouring Marcellus, became the chief growing district in the United States. A large number of individual growers, 265 in 1875, were involved in the actual production of the teazles. In the United States, most of the sales were to mills in the eastern states, but there was also a considerable export trade in the latter decades of the nineteenth century to many European countries, including Britain, and to numerous other places around the world. However, with the home market and growing in decline, McLaughlin Brothers' opening of a branch in Leeds would appear to have been an attempt to establish an outlet directly in what was still the leading consuming market in the world. American teazles were also handled by at least one other firm of Leeds merchants, but overall in the approach to World War I, the quantities were small compared with the larger imports from France and Austria.

American teazles were high in quality, being better in some respects than the Somerset teazles with which they were generally comparable, but they were more expensive and as a result, there was not direct competition between them. One curiosity of the American import trade in the years before 1914 was the Oregon teazle, grown in the state of that name in the north-western United States, where growing was introduced from Skaneateles in the nineteenth century. Probably as a result of the climate, the Oregon teazle was considered the strongest and hardest teazle in existence, and it was only suitable for certain roles. The experiment of bringing it into the British market does not seem to have been tried again in the years before 1914.[45]

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By then, after a period of more than half a century, foreign teazles were no longer a minor part of the immense consumption of teazles in Yorkshire, but had expanded in importance as the demand for English teazles had declined. The proportions of the market held respectively by the English and foreign suppliers are, however, unknown. Paradoxically, though, following sixty or seventy years of falling demand and falling production, in the years up to World War I the cloth manufacturers and finishers in the mills of the West Riding had at their disposal an unprecedented range of qualities and types, in both stem and spindle teazles, across a wide range of prices. These included, in English stem teazles, larger amounts from Somerset and smaller quantities of Yorkshire, along with a few Gloucestershire and Essex teazles. The French teazles, which made up the single largest part of the foreign supplies, were mainly, in stem teazles and spindle teazles, from the south of France, especially Vaucluse, but including other kinds, along with Normandy stem and spindle teazles. Next came the large, but declining supplies of the cheap, low quality Austrian teazles. The smaller imports of American stem teazles were mainly from Skaneateles, with occasionally, Oregon teazles. Some Belgian teazles were also handled. However, in many of the growing areas from which these English and foreign teazles came, the cultivation was already in decline before World War I. The only exception to this, where there was actually a great increase in the acreage under teazles, was Normandy.[46]

(d) After 1914

The onset of war in 1914 inevitably resulted in interruptions to supplies of both the English and foreign teazles. Certain quantities were still grown in Somerset, where during the war, prices rose to £4 a pack for best and £2 for small, but the Yorkshire teazle cultivation came to an end, as did growing in Essex, if that had not in fact already finished in the years before the war. Supplies from Austria, a wartime enemy, ceased. France, the main foreign supplier, was in the front line of the war, whilst imports in general were subject to the hazards and controls that applied to shipping. Imports of American teazles were probably also reduced, possibly halted.[47] It is possible though, that some of the deficiencies in the normal foreign supplies were made up, during the war itself, with Spanish teazles, which because of their lower, more natural quality had not previously been used.[48]

As consumption in the Yorkshire woollen industry expanded again after the war, the supply trade also revived. Growing in Somerset picked up again, and imports also increased, from a value of £8,725 in 1918, to the high figure of £53,883 in the peak year of 1924. These imports consisted not only of French, as teazles from the south of France were called in the trade, and Normandy teazles, but of renewed smaller supplies of American, though during the 1920s, as an unintended result of an attempt to organise the individual Skaneateles growers against the merchants, production in America declined and imports from there into the West Riding faded out. In fact, in the United States, shortfalls in domestic growing meant that at the end of the 1930s, when business picked up again, America had itself to import some supplies of teazles, in 1939, from France, and in 1942, with French teazles by then being out of reach, from Argentina. In the West Riding, after the end of World War I, some Spanish teazles were also imported, either as a follow-on from wartime supplies, or because they were needed during these immediate post-war years. After 1924, as demand slackened to the low point of 1931, prices for the Somerset teazles fell and imports also came down again generally, dropping to £6,536 in value on 1931. It was not until about 1937 that prices for the Somerset teazles became more encouraging, and in 1937 about £7,000 of foreign teazles were again imported.[49]

The effects of World War II on the supplies were similar to those experienced during the 1914-18 war, with the difference that the range of sources to start off with was smaller. Wartime conditions put pressure on the English crop, the price of which went up to £20 a pack, so that economies had to be made by using all sizes fully, including the small

buttons. All supplies of French and Normandy teazles were cut off, and shipping was again liable to dangers and controls. However, as had probably happened during the First World War, some supplies of Spanish teazles were imported to make up part of the shortages.

With the ending of the war, there was a return to more normal conditions in the growing and supply trades serving the West Riding, which with its consumption of stem teazles for the gigs of the heavy woollen district especially, was still the main British market. Into the later 1950s, there were still up to forty growers in Somerset, and one in Gloucestershire, with up to 300 acres between them.[50] Imports also revived, reaching a value of £15,158 by 1952, and rising to £24,278 in 1957.[51] After the war, Spanish teazles were no longer needed and these foreign supplies came, as before, mainly from the south of France, where there were still a number of growers, or exporting merchants, supplying teazles from departments such as Vaucluse, Bouches-du-Rhone and Aude. There were also four or five growers in Normandy, where growing was still carried out in the historic growing district along the Seine at small places such as St Étienne-du-Vauvray and St Pierre-du-Vauvray.[52]

The textile slump of 1957-58 and its consequences had the effect not simply of reducing the supply trade, but of turning it askew. The demand for stem teazles for the gigs of the heavy woollen industry, which was in decline, had been met mainly from the English crop. However, the smaller English teazles were not big enough to be cut into spindle teazles for the spindle teazle trade, which in general remained more buoyant through the 1960s. The result was that around the middle 1960s the number of growers in Somerset was reduced by the main firm of teazle merchants, Edmund Taylor (Teazle) Ltd. of Huddersfield, from around twenty-five to about five, made up of those considered likely to grow better quality teazles. One of those who were no longer kept on near the end of the 1960s was the last grower in Gloucestershire, whose 50 acre patch had been over-cropped, it requiring a gap of seven years for the ground to recover before teazles were planted again in the same place. In 1973, the Somerset growing business had almost disappeared, only two growers cutting teazles in that year.[53] It was not only in England that the traditional growing trades were in danger. Across the Atlantic at Skaneateles, in New York State, the last crop was planted in 1956, but was not harvested, and in 1960, the Charles J. McLaughlin Company of growers and merchants closed down. In Oregon, there were still eighty acres under teazles in 1957, but by 1973, growing in that state too, was at an end.[54] In France in the earlier 1960s, partly, it has been suggested, as a result of the measures connected with the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Normandy cultivation, which supplied high quality teazles for stem and spindle teazle purposes, also finished.

By the early 1970s, the West Riding was no longer the chief consumer of teazles in Britain, the Scottish market, particularly for spindle teazles, being the foremost part of the reduced business. In order to meet this demand, in the 1960s, as the English stem teazle production was reduced, imports of larger teazles for the making of spindle teazles were increased. These were mainly from the south of France, with occasional, and then more regular orders for Spanish teazles, as growing in the south of France also contracted. By 1972, there was only one grower, or merchant, left in France. Growing in Spain was also in decline, but in the early 1970s, there were still four merchants in the Spanish export trade in the growing districts along the Mediterranean coastline, at Sabadell near Barcelona, Alicante and Sax inland from Alicante, with whom Edmund Taylor (Teazle) Ltd. were dealing.[55] However, so unsatisfactory was the supply of good quality English stem teazles by then, and so erratic the supply situation, that in 1974, Henry Wheatley & Sons of Mirfield, who used 3,000,000 stem teazles a year, were reported to have planted a trial plot to see whether they could grow their own. Despite the increasing difficulties on the supply side in the 1960s and 1970s, Italian teazles, which were seemingly still grown, possibly as a cultivation going back to classical times, and which were imported by the United States in 1962, for instance, seem never to have made an appearance, as far as is known, in the West Riding, or anywhere else in Britain.

Through the rest of the 1970s, and into the 1980s, the numbers of growers producing teazles in Somerset for Edmund Taylor (Teazle) Ltd., who from the middle of the 1970s were the last firm of merchants, remained low, rising from two in 1973 to half a dozen in 1976, and dropping to three or four up to the middle 1980s. Appeals were made in the 1970s, and again in the earlier 1980s, for growers anywhere in the country to take up the offer of free seed and advice, and the purchase of the crop, but generally, the conditions at the time of cutting forestalled a great deal of success, though some useable teazles were produced in Essex, for instance, in the middle 1980s. Compared with the period around 1950, when this one firm had handled 15,000,000 or more teazles a year, 95 per cent of them English, in 1980, they handled 6,000,000, and in 1983 and 1985 8,000,000, of which 90-95 per cent were foreign.

In 1985, however, as a result of changes in the European agricultural commodities pricing regime, farmers and growers in Somerset were once again beginning to take a renewed interest in teazles, so that by 1987, the number involved had risen to twenty, opening up the prospect of a balance in English and foreign supplies.[56] In 1987 itself, Edmund Taylor (Teazle) Ltd. handled 5,000,000 teazles.

In the succeeding period, however, as an ultimate consequence of the further slide in demand, apart from some very specialised purposes, and because of the labour of growing and processing teazles, English teazle cultivation appears to have come to an end completely, and French have also disappeared from the scene. In 2011, the small supply trade left in Yorkshire involves Spanish teazles from a firm in the northern province of Navarra, supplied already sorted and prepared as stem and spindle teazles.