7: The Leeds teazle merchants from the 1880s to 1914

Samuel Lambert's departure from the Leeds teazle supply trade in 1870-72, after a career of around twenty-five years as a teazle dealer, may have been an event in the normal scheme of things, in the shape of age, illness or death. However, the time when Lambert left the teazle trade was a period in which the competition in the Leeds teazle market had suddenly intensified. Up to the 1860s, according to the directories, the local trade in Leeds had usually involved no more than two or three dealers, and in 1863, the number was still only four, two of them recently established, the other two being Cornock and Lambert. By 1866, however, the number had gone up to six, and by 1870, to ten. There was a further rise to fourteen suppliers of every kind by 1872, and in 1876, the total was still at this level. From then onwards, there was a steady reduction in the number of competing firms, to ten in 1881, and then to five by 1886. The trade then remained fairly stable, with only a small number of changes to its composition and character up to World War I.

This great expansion around the 1870s in the amount of interest in Leeds in selling or supplying teazles was not the result of any rise in the level of demand. Instead it was brought about by a number of factors in a consuming market that overall was still in decline. Underlying it was the change in the geographical pattern of demand as the Leeds plain cloth trade contracted, and the use of teazles in Leeds itself went down, leaving the heavy woollen district as the chief surviving area of demand. This geographically more widespread market was, however, inconveniently located on the far side of Leeds for the Barkston Ash dealers, and as the supply trade direct from the growing villages decayed, a new commerce based in Leeds itself, and to a small extent, some of the industrial towns such as Dewsbury and Bradford, began to emerge. The development of this was based on the superior transportation network that served the town. Leeds had water links to east and west by the Aire & Calder Navigation and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, whilst by the later 1860s, railway stations and goods yards lay around the town centre on its east, south and south-west sides, connecting Leeds with the rest of the country, the West Riding manufacturing towns and the Yorkshire ports. In 1869, one particular improvement to the rail services in the town had wide economic and commercial consequences, which amongst others helped to stimulate interest in handling teazles. This was the construction, as a part of other alterations, of a short link across the centre of Leeds from Marsh Lane to New Station, adjacent to what is now City Square.[1] This gave for the first time a through rail line, connecting the heavy woollen towns directly with the ports through Leeds, and producing an expansion of business in the heavy woollen manufacturing area, and strengthening its commercial connections with Leeds. A further significant factor connected with this was the increased availability at the time of foreign teazles, particularly of the cheaper kinds then being grown in greater quantities in the south of France.

The twenty-one different businesses or businessmen that were involved at one time or another in the Leeds teazle commerce between 1866 and 1886 came from a wide range of backgrounds and had a variety of connections with the selling of teazles. One central group consisted of teazle growers who found it necessary to re-position their businesses in Leeds in order to maintain contact with their customers scattered across the woollen-manufacturing districts west of Leeds. Three of these growers were amongst the earlier new arrivals in the Leeds commerce. One was James Bortoft, the South Milford dealer and grower, who between 1864 and 1866 opened premises as a teazle merchant in Leeds at Wormald's Yard, Briggate. Another firm of growers who appeared in Leeds at the same time was the previously unknown Joseph Frederick Ehrenbacher & Co., growers and merchants in both hops and teazles. Their connections as teazle growers are not known, but the fact that the firm had warehousing at the Aire & Calder's, dockside suggests that

they were bringing in their goods, which may have included West of England teazles, by water. One further grower who did come out of the West of England trade was Charles Yendole, who moved from Fivehead, in the Taunton area of Somerset, to establish a business in Leeds as a teazle merchant in 1870-71.

A number of the businesses that came into the teazle supply trade were firms that were already selling raw materials to the mills in the woollen districts, and were able to add teazles, particularly imported French teazles, to their other lines. In Dewsbury itself, already in the later 1860s, a wool merchant, Edward Sterner, was selling imported teazles as a sideline at his warehouse on Wellington Street adjacent to the railway station in Dewsbury. In Leeds in the mid-1870s, William Quarmbusch & Co., who were chiefly involved in the business in wool, and had a connection in Bradford, the main wool market in the West Riding, were similarly acting as merchants in both wool and teazles. Jacob Levy & Co., of Basinghall Street, who had particular connections with the heavy woollen trade as importers and agents for rags, the raw material of the shoddy and mungo industries, and cotton waste, also handled imported teazles in the 1870s. By the early 1880s, Edward Sterner had brought his business to Leeds, dealing in wool, hair, flock and French teazles at the Scarbrough Hotel Buildings on Bishopgate Street in the commercial centre, at the same time continuing his sales in Dewsbury.

Dealing in teazles in combination with flock, as Sterner did, was a particular part of the trade, and one specialist in it in Leeds from about 1870 to the early 1880s was the flock, waste and teazle merchant Samuel Lowe of Somers and Grace Streets, who also seems to have had warehousing nearby on Kirkstall Road, near to numerous cloth and woollen mills and to the Wellington Street station yards, including that of the Dewsbury line. Flock, one of an immense number of different kinds of mill waste, was a by-product of raising, consisting of the fibres taken off the cloth by the action of the teazles. It ended up lying on the floor around the gigs, or was removed when the teazle rods were cleaned. Although it was ‘waste’, elsewhere it was raw material, and had a value. The dealer, such as Lowe, relieved the mills of their flocks, discounting the cost of the teazles they bought accordingly. It was then up to the dealer to dispose of the flock. One use of it was for filling mattresses and the like, so that bed-making became another related and currently still surviving industry in what used to be the heavy woollen district.

The rest of the teazle suppliers who appeared in Leeds in the 1870s and 1880s included some from a wide range of backgrounds. One firm that had an obvious close interest were Ellis & Taylor of Leeds, noted in 1881, who were manufacturers of the iron rods in which the teazles were set for fixing to the gigs, and who were selling teazles in association with this business. One Leeds agent for French teazles in the 1870s, who seems to have come into the business through other connections, was Bernardo Genesi, the proprietor of a restaurant on King Street, conveniently handy for the railway yards on the other side of Wellington Street. Genesi also had a line of business as a manufacturer of cattle food, with an outlet near the Corn Exchange. Particularly curious in this period, as teazle growers, dealers and merchants were the members of the Wood family, who for around a decade from the earlier 1870s, combined their business in teazles with keeping a public house and running a small farm at Beeston Royds, Gelderd Road, on the Dewsbury side of Leeds, and not far from nearby railway yards. This involved John and Ann Wood, and Edwin Wood, who may have been their son. In what looks like a deliberate and quixotic throwback to an earlier age, their public house was named the Teazle and Pack Horse. Their connection as growers is not known.

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The five merchants who survived this period of intense competition, and who were still in business in 1886, were, in the order in which they became established in Leeds, William North, James Bortoft, Jacob Sloman, North Brothers and Charles Yendole. It was this group that formed the core of the Leeds teazle trade down to 1914, and indeed, beyond.

All had appeared in the business in Leeds by 1871, and had had time to set themselves up in the market before the onset of the main period of competition. It is true that some had other commercial interests at various times. In the 1880s, Charles Yendole also sold wool and cotton waste, which had a connection with his business, but around the same time, Jacob Sloman began an unrelated sideline in cigars, and in the later 1880s, William North & Son embarked on an expansion into flour milling, and then in dealing in cider. Nevertheless, all were essentially teazle merchants, and in due course the other business activities fell away. Most had links with parts of the English supply trade, at various times as growers themselves. James Bortoft of South Milford was directly involved in growing, and the same was pretty certainly true of Charles Yendole at Fivehead in Somerset. Others may have been growers in the sense of having arrangements with individual growers who supplied them. The exception was Jacob Sloman, who always seems to have been mainly concerned with importing. As a result, between them, they covered most of the supply side in English and foreign teazles. In 1886, four of the five were family businesses, and by that time, Jacob Sloman's sons Alfred and Solomon, in their teens, were probably already becoming introduced to the work.

Although there was a period of relative outward stability amongst this group of firms in the next three decades, the period was a time of great change within the trade as a whole, and within the individual concerns. Part of the process was generational, with younger family members coming in and eventually taking over. In some of the businesses, this had already happened by 1886, and although at this distance it is not always possible to identify the direct results, there is little doubt that changes in the family management involved reconsiderations of commercial policy. There were three other general influences on the trade as a whole. One was the increasing significance of the widening range of foreign teazles, so that all of the businesses that carried on through most of the period up to 1914, including those that were especially connected with parts of the English growing trade, came to deal to some extent or other in foreign teazles. The second was the greater importance of rail transport, from the ports at which foreign teazles arrived, and also from the various English growing districts. As a result, a desire to be closer to the railway yards in Leeds was clearly a factor in the relocations of their premises by some of the merchants during this period.

Perhaps the most radical changes, though, were those that affected the role and purpose of the merchants themselves. As the use of teazle gigs in many of the woollen mills became more intermittent, the manufacturing and cloth-finishing firms found it necessary to dispense with the men and boys whose job it had been to break out the stavs of English teazles, and then clip them and sort them into various sizes for the setters who set them into the rods for the gigs. In addition, buying English teazles, in stavs, despite the fact that they were already separated, as stavs, into kings, middlings and buttons, inevitably produced a whole range of sizes, some of which were not wanted whilst others were insufficient in quantity. Instead, the mills looked for suppliers from whom they could order teazles that were already trimmed and sorted in any way they wanted, and in whatever quantities, all of a particular size recognised in the trade, that were required. Although it cost more for the mills to buy already accurately sorted teazles, there was a saving in that it enabled the setters who set the teazles for the machines to work more quickly. In the Skaneateles trade in the United States, this change is said to have taken place in the mid-Victorian period.[2] The growers or merchants in France appear to have been geared up to supply either stem or spindle teazles to any specification, though these were more expensive according to the amount of work that had been done on them.[3] For the Yorkshire merchants who needed to import teazles, it was more profitable for them to buy the foreign teazles in the untreated or partly processed state, and then carry out the rest of whatever needed to be done themselves. English teazles were still often sold in stavs, but increasingly, as a result, the Leeds merchants ceased to be solely middlemen, and became, in varying degrees, employers of labour in buildings of a suitable kind and

size, located in the most favourable places for the incoming and outgoing deliveries. The production included both stem and spindle teazles. By 1914, as a result, much of the trade had changed and already assumed the character it was to have into the rest of the twentieth century, with the teazle merchants in their 'mills' and 'teazle works' performing an industrial function that put them on a par, in a way, with the woollen manufacturers they supplied.

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Of the five firms of teazle merchants in Leeds in 1886, the earliest known, that of William North, was founded in 1857,[4] when North was about twenty-six years old, as the partnership of Sutcliffe & North, with Joseph Sutcliffe. Between 1863 and 1866, though, for reasons that are not known, Sutcliffe dropped out, leaving William North to run the business at Great George Street under his own name.

Nothing is known about the background or connections of either man, or about the trading history of the concern at this period. It is clear, however, that by the 1870s, both William North's business and his private life were prospering. In 1872-75, his older son George Edward North, who was in his early twenties at the time, became a partner with his father in what was re-named William North & Son. In the following years, North's are known to have been handling foreign as well as English teazles, and to have been growers, though whether this was through connections in the West of England or in the Yorkshire growing area is not known. William North himself was a Leeds councillor,[5] and later, alderman, and the profits of the firm were sufficient for him in this capacity in 1879, to pay for the erection of an imposing public drinking fountain on Woodhouse Moor, and he also provided the bandstand which was a focal point of the walks in the park. Both of these benefactions have now disappeared, though the site of the bandstand is still easy to locate. In addition, probably in 1875, he moved his family away from the smoke of Leeds, where even by 1838 there were reckoned to have been 100 mills in the town, out to the west, to one of a group of older stone properties at Burley Wood, Kirkstall, given the name of Victoria House. A photograph, which was in Victoria House into modern times, shows a number of people at the front of the building, with its nameplate up on the wall, and their dress, the membership of the group, and their likely ages are consistent with their having been William North and some of his family, perhaps photographed in 1875 itself, maybe to mark the occasion of their moving in. If so, these would have been William North, then about forty-nine years old; Jane North, his second wife, who was about forty in 1875; and his daughters Kate Emily, who would have been about fifteen in 1875, and Clara about twelve. Missing from the photograph would have been George Edward North, who may possibly have been married by then and living elsewhere anyway, and Joseph Percy North, then around seventeen, and who was to become a woollen cloth manufacturer, both of whom were presumably at their businesses. The North's church was the nearby St. Stephen's, Kirkstall, from where Kate Emily North was married in November, 1883. Victoria House is still to be seen, though the carriage turnaround or sweep seen in the photograph is no longer there.

In 1886-87, perhaps as a result of the increasing influence of George Edward North, the business underwent a two-part reorganisation. In Leeds, the warehousing moved from Great George Street to Whitehall Road, which was a better location both for the railway yards and the roads out of Leeds into the heavy woollen district. At the same time there was a diversification into flour milling, which continued for another dozen or so years. This began at Wetherby Mills, a water mill on the Wharfe, where the operation was in the hands of George Edward North. In the middle 1890s, however, this was given up, and the Leeds teazle warehousing was also moved, so that the teazle business and also the flour milling could both be carried out at a mill in Leeds itself, Aire Street Mill, in the same part of town as before. The milling came to an end around 1900, inland mills of this kind already often having been made unprofitable by the construction of large flour mills at the ports, using

steel roller technology.

It may have been around this time that William North himself died, for the last reference to him at Victoria House, Burley Wood, was in 1899. At any rate, about 1903, in a further, and final relocation, William North & Son moved to Gelderd Road, close to railway yards and the roads towards Dewsbury and the manufacturing towns. Flour and corn were no longer handled, though a new sideline in cider made up for them. However, the fact that the telegraphic address was 'Teazle, Leeds', showed where the main business lay, and the preparation of teazles perhaps also began at this period, the premises on Gelderd Road later being referred to as the 'Teazle Works'.[6] Into the pre-1914 period, a small part of the English teazles that were sent there included some Yorkshire teazles grown in Sherburn.

James Bortoft of South Milford, who opened a store at Wormald's Yard, Briggate, Leeds, in 1864-66 as a teazle merchant, was quite certainly the James Burtoft who was selling teazles at the Spotted Cow in Leeds in 1839, and was a teazle grower and dealer through the middle of the nineteenth century. The Bortofts were a leading local family in teazles, and others involved were George Burtoft, who was present in Leeds at the Spotted Cow in 1834, and Thomas Burtoft, who accompanied James Bortoft in Leeds in 1839. There was also another George Bortoft, the nephew of James Bortoft, who grew teazles around the 1880s, and who was perhaps the son of the earlier George. Although James Bortoft grew and dealt in teazles, he had a small farm, and this was always the underpinning family resource.

The opening of storage in Leeds, the better to operate across or through Leeds into the mill towns of the heavy woollen district, can be seen as a definite effort to remain in the teazle business despite the decline in consumption in Leeds itself. In early 1876, though, James Bortoft died, at the age of sixty-four, and the teazle operation passed into the hands of his family, its name being altered by 1881 to James Bortoft & Sons. Of the sons who were involved, one was James Bortoft's oldest son, Gibson Bortoft, who was born about 1844. Although in 1881, as his father's chief successor, he described himself in one place as the farmer of twenty acres, the family farm, with one man and two boys, ten years earlier, in 1871, he was already working as a teazle dealer alongside his father, the grower, as was another brother, James. In 1877, though, James Bortoft junior had also died, so that by 1881, the 'Sons' who were managing both the farm and the teazle enterprise were Gibson Bortoft and another brother, Robert. However, in 1886, Robert Bortoft also died, so that from then on Gibson Bortoft was running James Bortoft & Sons, teazle growers, dealers and merchants of South Milford and Leeds by himself.

By 1886, James Bortoft & Sons had taken additional storage space in Leeds for teazles, on the South Row of the South Market. This, conveniently located only a couple of minutes' walk across Leeds bridge from Wormald's Yard, expanded the capacity for direct business across the heavy woollen district. In the pre-1914 years, the chief feature of the Bortoft teazle business at South Milford, was the large purpose-built drying and storage shed, an L-shaped structure with large doors at the ends and numerous small windows for ventilation, and which came out into the barn, where locally-grown teazles were made up into stavs and French teazles were also worked on.[7] Deliveries were made from there, some mills in the nearer parts of the woollen districts, at Wakefield for instance, being close enough for a day's round trip by wagon. It is likely that consignments for mills in the towns on the far side of Leeds, at places such as Batley, went by rail.[8]

At South Milford in the years before World War I, the teazle business of James Bortoft & Sons was identified completely with the figure of Gibson Bortoft, widely remembered by many older residents, and always referred to as 'Gib'. Over seventy years later, one relation, the son of one of his cousins, recalled him from before 1900 with the words, 'I can see him walking down t'street now, as straight as a yard o' pump water.' Taking no one's advice but his own, he was a good businessman, and owned his own farm, some fields and a couple of rows of cottages. It was his practice to go from South Milford to his

business in Leeds by train. Having lived on South Street, South Milford, with his mother up to the time of her death in 1895, late in life, he married one of his servants. He played the organ at the parish church, but despite that, there were also apparently one or two things about him that weren't to be repeated.[9]

Jacob Sloman came from a very different background, one in which there was no connection with teazles. He was born around 1840, in London, where his father Solomon Sloman was a chiropodist. Probably in the years 1855-58, the family, or perhaps only some of them, moved to Leeds, where in 1861, Solomon and his wife Mary and their son Jacob were living at 35 Trafalgar Street, north of the centre of the town. Solomon Sloman was again in business as a chiropodist, or surgeon chiropodist, in partnership with Myer Ansell, at the latter's address, 10 Belgrave Street, nearby.

In 1861, Jacob Sloman was working as a clerk-bookkeeper, and it was not until 1867, that he first appeared in the directories as a teazle dealer, using his father's address. It was later said that his business was established in 1850,[10] but the significance of that is now unknown. What does seem to have had some identifiable weight though, was the family belief, current two generations later, that he was the first to bring in French teazles,[11] and whilst that was not actually so, this suggests that right from the start, his main interest was in the French import trade, and this underpins what is known about the later business of the firm and the family.

Solomon Sloman died in 1869, and Jacob Sloman and his own family moved to Hillary Street, and then in the second half of the 1870s to St Alban's Street. It was while there that by 1882, he also began to deal in cigars. It was probably in the succeeding years, by which time he had been a teazle dealer or merchant for about twenty years, that Jacob Sloman began to introduce two of his sons into the business. These were Alfred Sloman, born about 1869, and Solomon Sloman, who was a year younger, and who in 1891 was described as a teazle merchant's assistant. The support of his sons undoubtedly helped the advancement of the business and of the family circumstances over the period. In 1888-90, Jacob Sloman's family, which numbered thirteen, exclusive of Alfred, who about this time married and moved to his own address, went to live out on Roundhay Road, at Cumberland Villa, a modest brick terraced house, with a front garden. In the next few years, by 1892, the teazle and cigar business had also found a different location, in the Royal Exchange Chambers, an imposing and prestigious structure at the end of Boar Lane at the corner with Park Row, commanding one side of City Square, designed by Thomas Healey and opened in 1875. In the mid-1890s, in a further improvement to their domestic life, Jacob Sloman's family moved a little way along Roundhay Road to what was, pretty certainly a larger house with a stone-framed bay window overlooking its front garden.

In this period, at the end of the 1890s, J. Sloman was selling teazles across the heavy woollen district, and had clearly established a reputation, for out of ten purchases of teazles made by one Batley mill between 1897-1900, seven were placed with J. Sloman.[12] These included French and American, and in the period up to 1914, J. Sloman was also handling Austrian and Belgian teazles.[13] These teazles supplied to the Batley mill were cases of sorted teazles in quantities of 28,000 or 30,000, which may have been imported in that form, warehoused, and sold on. At what point J. Sloman became involved in the clipping and sorting of teazles with their own workforce in Leeds, is not clear. It could have begun while the firm was still at the Royal Exchange Chambers, because in 1901, Alfred Sloman was described as a 'manufacturer' of teazles,[14] and the term was used again in 1905 about the business. It is most likely, however, that the main change took place in 1905-06, when J. Sloman moved out of the Royal Exchange Chambers to 106 Skinner Lane, a building much more suitable as a warehouse and workroom. Two indications that the nature of the operation had altered were that the sideline in cigars seems to have come to an end, whilst Solomon Sloman's occupational description, which previously had been the traditional one of 'teazle merchant', changed around 1908 to 'manager', suggesting perhaps that he was supervising a workforce engaged in clipping and sorting

teazles. A third indication is that according to a reference in 1914, the establishment was called the Exchange Teazle Works, which not only denoted its purpose, but preserved the recollection of the former link with the Royal Exchange Chambers, and this name was retained, when later, a further and final change of address took place.

In the years immediately prior to the move from the Royal Exchange Chambers, Alfred and Solomon Sloman were at work with their father as teazle merchants, Jacob Sloman presumably handling the cigar trade himself. Around 1903, a third son David Sloman, who was born about 1874, also came in, as a 'teazle merchant', and in the following year, as a 'traveller', perhaps handling some of the sales. Alfred Sloman had also been a traveller, but between 1907 and 1908, his occupation changed from teazle merchant to coal agent, and he did this new job up to 1912, or possibly 1913, before working again as a canvasser by 1914. It may be, therefore, that for some reason around 1907 he decided to leave the family teazle business, only returning to it when his father died in early 1913, and his mother, Jane Sloman, found herself responsible for the concern. If there had been a disagreement over personal or business matters, it may have been a precursor of the one that took place after World War I. Up to 1914, however, Solomon Sloman continued to manage the Exchange Teazle Works at Skinner Lane, whilst Alfred Sloman presumably worked again on the sales side.

The partnership of North Brothers was set up, probably not long before 1870, by Abraham North, who was born in about 1830, and Joseph North, who was born around 1836. Both seem to have come into dealing in teazles by one of the routes already followed by others, both, in 1861, having been handle setters, perhaps working with or for their father, George North, who lived on Meanwood Road, Leeds, and who was also a handle setter.[15] In 1861, Abraham was still living in the parental house, but Joseph had married, and moved out. No family connection with William North has been found

When they established themselves as teazle merchants, they took warehousing at the Black Bull Yard, Lands Lane. Their first directory entry in 1870, also said 'and Bristol',[16] indicating that they were handling West of England teazles, and as growers as well as merchants, they may have had links with individual growers in Somerset. However, nothing is known about the details of their business, their single directory advertisement of 1881, like William North's of 1867, which might have provided some indications, not having survived. They seem, however, to have prospered enough to have taken additional space on Mark Lane, across the Headrow, by 1881.

At one time, at the start of the 1870s, when their joint business venture had not long begun, the two brothers were close enough in feeling perhaps, to have occupied adjacent houses on Newton Terrace, Claypit Lane. However, eventually, for reasons that are not known, around 1886-87, their partnership split up, and both brothers went their separate ways as growers and merchants, Abraham North retaining the use of the premises in the yard of the Black Bull, whilst Joseph North went to Park Cross Street. Abraham North was not heard of again in the directories after 1888, but Joseph North continued in business as a teazle merchant into the 1890s, in 1898, at Stansfield Mills, Kirkstall Road. A year or so later, the name changed to North & Co., English and foreign teazle merchants, and then in 1900 to W. G. North & Co., perhaps a sign that a son of Joseph North's had succeeded him. There were, in any case, no further directory listings.

Charles Yendole, who had established himself as a teazle merchant in Leeds by 1871, was born around 1832 at Muchelney in Somerset, and moved to Fivehead, one of the teazle growing villages in the Taunton area. He presumably grew or dealt in teazles, or both, most likely for the Leeds market, but as Leeds itself became progressively less important as a consuming centre, he evidently found it necessary to transfer his business and his family and home, to Leeds in order the better to keep in the business in the heavy woollen towns.

The circumstances suggest, therefore, that Yendole's business, to start with at any rate, would have been in West of England teazles from his former home locality in Somerset,

and it seems likely that this was the case, and that he was still following the practice of shipping teazles to Leeds by water, because into the 1870s, his storage was near the Aire & Calder dock. In 1872, his address was Dock Street, a street of warehouses and stores next to the former Simpson's Fold, where Samuel Coates had once been based. In 1875, Charles Yendole was using two premises just across Leeds bridge, one in the Golden Lion Yard next to the bottom end of Briggate on the west side near the corner with Swinegate, and the other in the yard of the Malt Shovel on Swinegate itself.[17] A couple of years later, his address was given as Tenter Lane, Bridge End. But around the end of the decade, he moved into the Scarbrough Hotel Yard on Bishopgate Street, remaining there until the second half of the 1880s.

During the 1870s, Charles Yendole established himself in the West Riding market, selling in Batley, for example, in 1876. Between the 1870s and the 1890s, he was also a grower, most likely in the Fivehead area in Somerset, either directly, or at one stage removed, and he was also selling Yorkshire teazles in the 1870s.By 1881 though, he had also begun to handle imports, covering what were to be described as all kinds of foreign teazles, and for a number of years in the 1880s, when there was a lot of competition in the Leeds trade, he also dealt in wool and in cotton waste. In these extensions of his business, he was probably aided by the participation of his son Simon Yendole, who at the age of twenty-one in 1881, was already working alongside his father as a teazle merchant, and this perhaps accounts for the alteration in the name of the firm to Charles Yendole & Co. around 1881.

Sometime by 1890, however, in recognition of the importance of railway connections for his business in English teazles, and increasingly, foreign teazles, Yendole transferred his operation into the Great Northern Railway Yard at Wellington bridge, where it remained up to World War I. Charles Yendole himself may have died in 1909, and from around then, one of his sons, William John Yendole appears to have directed the business.

During the period from 1886 to 1914, three new firms of merchants are known to have opened in Leeds, all in the years around or after 1900. The earliest of these to be seen was in fact not a new business, but was a branch of an existing one, McLaughlin Brothers, teazle growers, dealers and merchants of Skaneateles in the Unites States.

The extensive McLaughlin family interest in teazles based in Skaneateles was founded by James McLaughlin Sr after his emigration to America in 1848.[18] He, with his sons, headed by the oldest, James McLaughlin Jr, traded as J. McLaughlin & Sons. For a time the family branched out into the woollen trade with the Glenside Woolen Mills at Skaneateles Falls. By 1876, the teazle business employed eighty-five people mainly at the purpose-built warehouse shop where the teazles were clipped, sorted to any of eighteen different sizes, and packed in boxes, the various departments being supervised by the brothers engaged in the firm. Some teazles were bought from other individual growers in the locality, amounting in one year to a purchase of 40,000,000 teazles, to be sold to mills in the United States and abroad, mainly across Europe. In 1882, James McLaughlin Jr bought the original Snook business, one of a number of other dealerships, so that the McLaughlin Brothers date of foundation advertised by their Leeds branch of 1832, may have referred to the activities of Snook sometime after his arrival at Skaneateles in 1826.

James McLaughlin Jr had already visited probably both the United Kingdom and places in Europe on more than one occasion to look for additional business, before in the late 1890s he sent his own son Charles James McLaughlin to establish a branch in Leeds. This had been done by the middle of 1899, when a purchase from McLaughlin Brothers, as the firm had been renamed, in Leeds was recorded by a Batley mill.[19] The Leeds premises were probably from the start at Mabgate Mills, Mabgate, where rented space could be obtained, and where McLaughlin Brothers were based up to 1904-05. Charles James McLaughlin, however, who had married in Leeds during his initial visit there, returned to Skaneateles around 1900-01, not coming back to Leeds, where he and his wife and rapidly expanding family resided at various addresses, until 1903. His role was also to

look for business in Europe, and he made visits as far as Russia, setting up further branches in Copenhagen, Aachen and Lodz, the industrial city in Russian Poland. In Leeds itself, in 1905, the warehousing moved from Mabgate Mills, which may still be seen, to Macaulay Street Mills, one street away. McLaughlin Brothers, who were always keen to stress the fact that they were growers of American, were also merchants in the other usual kinds encountered in the West Riding trade, English, French and Austrian, supplied 'In all Qualities and Standard Sizes to suit any condition of Finish required.'[20] Whether they had workers employed on the teazles themselves in Leeds is not known. They were not the only firm bringing in American teazles, for J. Sloman, as has been noted, was also importing them. However, it was probably McLaughlin Brothers who were the 'well-known firm of American and English agents' who were responsible for bringing the Oregon teazle into this country. Charles James McLaughlin seems to have had a bit of a sense of humour, choosing the telegraphic and cable address of 'Laugh, Leeds' for McLaughlin Brothers.

Comparatively little is known about the other two teazle merchants who appeared in Leeds. Samuel Bumby was born around 1866. In 1897, he was working as a book keeper, and in 1901, described himself as a cashier and teazle merchant, though the circumstances are unclear, as it was to be another few years before his name appeared in the directories as a teazle merchant. This happened in 1908, in which year he was in business at Old Lane, Beeston, Leeds. During the years up to World War I, according to his advertising, he built up a trade in English and foreign teazles, in stems and spindles, for ordinary cloth gigs, Moser teazle gigs for blankets and flannels, and for Pegg's, Harrison's, Blackburn's and Foster's hosiery brushing machines.

E. C. Hartley seems to have started, probably in a small way, as a teazle merchant around 1904, at Hardwick's Yard, Briggate, and by 1907, had moved into part of Marshall's Mills, Marshall Street, Holbeck. The last known reference was in 1912, and no other details are known.

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During the decades up to World War I, this group of up to half a dozen teazle merchants in Leeds dominated the West Riding teazle market. In Huddersfield, the only other centre where, through the Victorian period, teazle merchants were to be found continuously, after the middle 1890s, there was only a single competing teazle merchant. A certain amount of business in teazles was also done in Dewsbury, the chief town of the heavy woollen district, and in Bradford, but this appears to have been at a lower level, and some of it appears to have involved the supplying of French teazles already prepared to specification. At Dewsbury, where from the late 1860s to the earlier 1880s, Edward Sterner had sold French teazles as an ancillary to his main business, around the late 1890s, a further teazle dealer and merchant, J. R. Stoney of Low Street, was engaged in the local teazle market. In Bradford in the years prior to 1914, teazles were being handled by Adolphus Singleton Junr. & Co., teazle merchants, and also by the Yorkshire agent for the Avignon firm of growers, Smith & Co., who supplied stem and spindle teazles in a fully prepared and sorted form from France.

The influence of the merchants extended deeply into the English growing trade. In the Yorkshire growing area, the process of direct involvement had begun as early as 1857-61, when William Cornock & Son had a depot at Sherburn. During the later Victorian period, there were, however, still a number of local growers and dealers in the growing area, whilst into the early 1900s, there was a merchant, Thomas Perfect, at Whitley Bridge below Pontefract, so that a certain amount of independent trading with the mills, at least in the nearer parts of the manufacturing districts, probably went on. Up to 1914, however, much of the remaining production around Sherburn and South Milford was in, or went into, the hands of James Bortoft & Sons, and to a lesser degree, William North & Son in Leeds.

In the West of England, by the earlier twentieth century, the Yorkshire merchants

exercised almost total commercial control over the remaining growers in the south of Somerset between Taunton, Chard and Ilminster. This was reflected in the reversal that had taken place in the way the trade operated since the high point of demand around the 1830s. Instead of the West of England dealers congregating in Leeds each year with their teazles, to make the maximum profit by selling direct to the consumers, it was the partners in the firms of merchants who went down to the West of England around September, to tour the growers and inspect the standing crop, and then make offers based on what they saw, and on their own expectations of demand in the forthcoming year. Every so often, an individual grower would attempt to make a better price for his teazles by selling direct to the mill. This, however, was not looked on favourably by the merchants, when in future years, the grower again needed to sell to the merchants. Apart from the fact that the growers had to do business with the merchants through the inevitable years when the crop was poor, as well as in the good years, teazles were more profitable than other crops, particularly as in the years around 1910, prices had risen again from their rock bottom of about £2 a pack to £3 12*s.* 6*d.* in 1909, and £7 in 1912, for best teazles.[21]

There was, however, one small corner of the English growing trade, which seems to have remained outside the orbit of the Leeds merchants. A note in a Batley mill ledger in 1899 of the purchase of three packs of buttons and six stavs of teazles from 'F. Matravers' of Coggeshall, suggests that the Matravers family of growers in Essex were able to market their own teazles in the West Riding independently of the merchants.[22]