

IRISH MARITIME TRADE IN
THE RESTORATION ERA
THE LETTERBOOK OF
WILLIAM HOVELL, 1683–1687

Edited by
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
ABBREVIATIONS	IX
GLOSSARY	XI
INTRODUCTION	XIII
EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS	XVII
THE LETTERBOOK OF WILLIAM HOVELL, 1683–1687	
[1683]–28 DECEMBER 1683, LETTERS 1–58	3
4 JANUARY 1684–29 DECEMBER 1684, LETTERS 59–305	33
2 JANUARY 1685–29 DECEMBER 1685, LETTERS 306–528	139
1 JANUARY 1686–28 DECEMBER 1686, LETTERS 529–736	241
4 JANUARY 1687–7 JANUARY 1687, LETTERS 737–742	328
APPENDIX 1 HOVELL FAMILY TREE	331
APPENDIX 2 EXPORTS AND IMPORTS MANAGED BY HOVELL AS AN AGENT FOR OTHER MERCHANTS	332
APPENDIX 3 EXPORTS AND IMPORTS ORGANISED BY HOVELL FOR HIS OWN ACCOUNT	334
INDEX	337

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I have deposited a copy of this edition, together with various related materials, in the Cork City and County Archives and in the Local History department of the Cork City Library.

GLOSSARY

Ardasse	a fine Persian raw silk
barr	barrel(s)
bay(s)	baize, a fine-spun yarn or cloth
bur, burd	burden, used to describe the carrying capacity of a sailing vessel
canary	a sweet fortified wine produced in the Canary Islands
Colchester	a particular type of baize manufactured at Colchester, Essex
E, Ely <i>etc.</i>	east, easterly, <i>etc.</i> (format of abbreviation used for all points of the compass)
exc, exa	(rate of) exchange
firkin	a small cask of fixed measure equal to a quarter of a barrel
hd	hogshead, the wooden barrel used to contain fish
inst	instant, i.e. the present month
kilderkin	a cask of fixed measure equal to half a barrel
lade, lading	to put a cargo on board a ship
pattern	sample
press, prest	the packing of fish and salt into a barrel for preservation
pn(s)	puncheon(s), a liquid measure, principally for rum and wine
protest	if the payer named on a bill refused or was unable to honour it, the payee returned it with a 'protest'
po	primo (first)
ps	pieces, or pipes (a liquid measure of wine)
staple	woollen fibre, considered as to its length and fineness
st, ster	sterling
sto	stone
terse	tierce, a measure of capacity amounting to a third of a pipe (14 gallons); also used for a cask containing this volume
ulto	ultimo (last)
us, usa	usage, the time at which a bill of exchange became due
val	value (in, of)
Winchester	Winchester bushel, the standard measure of a bushel used in England

INTRODUCTION

Today, businesses from multi-nationals to sole traders keep careful records of all business correspondence. Copies are held electronically, in hard copy, or both. In the early modern period, of course, such records had to be kept manually. Copies of outgoing correspondence were painstakingly entered in ledgers, or 'letterbooks', which are an important primary source for local history, genealogy, biography, social and economic history, and, for the history of business administration and of landed estates. Cork, a major mercantile centre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is fortunate to have several surviving merchant letterbooks from the period 1683–1788.¹ The Hovell letterbook is the earliest to have survived,² and is of particular interest, since it covers the years from 1683 to 1687, when other original sources for trading activities in Cork are scarce.

The Hovell letterbook has already been used by various historians, including T. M. Truxes, David Dickson and T. C. Barnard.³ However, its usefulness has been limited by illegibility in places, the lack of an index, and the absence of a formal edited transcription. This edition should therefore be of interest to both general and specialist readers, as it throws more light on interesting times of growth and dynamism in the city of Cork. For the dominant Protestant mercantile elite the Restoration period was marked by stability and complacency, until the death of Charles II in February 1685 and the succession of his Catholic brother James II induced a growing sense of insecurity. The edition may also rescue from obscurity not only William Hovell, but many other Cork merchants of the seventeenth century.

By the time the letterbook was compiled Cork had recovered from the turmoil arising from the 1641 rebellion, the English civil war and the restoration of Charles II in 1659–60. The city had grown from an estimated population of 3,000 in 1600

¹ A second, the butter accounts of a Cork merchant from 1748 (NLI, MS 342), has been transcribed by the present author and copies are available at CCCA, Cork City Library and NLI. As many of the pages are blank this is of limited interest. A third was published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission (James O'Shea (ed.), *The letterbook of Richard Hare, Cork merchant, 1771–1772* (Dublin, 2013)). See also the letters of James Keating 26 May 1787–1 May 1788 in the Beamish and Crawford Collection (CCCA, U18 Box 71, Bay 1017).

² There is a microfilm copy in NLI (mic. P. 4652) and a microfilm copy of this in CCCA (SM 771).

³ T. M. Truxes, *Irish-American trade, 1660–1783* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 406; David Dickson, *Old world colony: Cork and South Munster, 1630–1830* (Cork, 2005), pp 54, 116–17, 120, 140; T. C. Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649–1770* (New Haven, CT & London, 2003), pp 258–60, 269; idem, 'The political, material and mental culture of the Cork settlers, c. 1650–1700' in *Irish Protestant ascents and descents, 1641–1770* (Dublin, 2004), pp 67, 77–9; idem, *Making the grand figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641–1770* (New Haven, CT & London, 2005), pp 114, 241, 259.

to about 20,000 in 1680.⁴ Successful Protestant merchants and professionals lived within the boundaries of the old walled city, although some had begun moving to reclaimed land to the east. Catholics mainly lived in the teeming slums centred on Mallow Lane in the north. Politically the city was under the firm control of a narrow oligarchy of Protestant merchants, who controlled the borough corporation. Cork played a significant part in the Irish economy, as an export centre for butter and woollen products, and for the Atlantic trade. England's colonies in the West Indies were flourishing and were an important destination for Cork provisions. The English parliament regulated matters of commerce for England's benefit, the established view at Westminster being that there was no problem with the development of Irish trade provided that England's interests were not adversely affected. In 1683 butter accounted for over a quarter of all Irish exports with wool the second mainstay of the economy, accounting for a further 15 per cent. During the period covered by the letterbook Irish customs revenue reached a high of £124,746 in 1684, fell in the less prosperous circumstances of 1685, and rose again to a record £138,880 in 1686. Thereafter the economy stagnated.

William Hovell's father was a Cromwellian, who had settled in Kinsale and was elected sovereign (chief magistrate) of the corporation there in 1656.⁵ Shortly afterwards he was one of the signatories to a submission by the corporation of Kinsale to the governor of Charlesfort, in relation to re-opening a path near the fort.⁶ He is almost certainly the William Hovell of Portsmouth, whose will was proved in 1678.⁷

Hovell's son, William, the author of this letterbook, clearly benefited to some degree from a classical education, since his letters not only quote from a range of Roman authors but also include Latin passages of his own construction. In one case he seems to have composed a letter completely in Latin (no. 83). He also claimed to be able to read French although was unable to write it (no. 203). However, he is first mentioned, in 1664, as a cooper aboard the *Edmond* of Kinsale.⁸ Having served his time as a cooper and with experience in trading and shipping, William junior moved from Kinsale to Cork city, where he was elected a freeman (as a merchant) on 10 June 1670 'for the fine of £3'. He subsequently became sheriff of Cork city in 1679.⁹ The letterbook identifies a relationship with a Perrie family in Youghal and also mentions siblings, in-laws, and children (detailed in Appendix 1).

⁴ John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan and Patrick O'Flanagan (eds), *Atlas of Cork city* (Cork, 2005), p. 150.

⁵ Rosemary folliott, *The Pooles of Mayfield* (Cork, 1958), p. 249; F. H. Tuckey, *The county and city of Cork remembrancer* (Cork, 1837), p. 314. Richard Caulfield (ed.), *The council book of the corporation of Youghal ...* (Guildford, 1878), p. 219, states that on 12 Mar. 1641 the lord president of Munster commanded Captain William Howell to 'come to — and remain there in garrison'. This is almost certainly William Hovell, senior. Richard Caulfield (ed.), *The council book of the corporation of Kinsale ...* (Guildford, 1879), p. 20, dates his election to 6 Oct. 1656.

⁶ Included in a presentment of a sworn jury at a court of d'oyer hundred held on 25 Oct. 1658 (Edward McLysaght, 'Manuscripts of the old corporation of Kinsale', *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 15 (1944), p. 175).

⁷ Phillimore & Thrift, ii, 137.

⁸ Caulfield, *Kinsale council book*, p. xlvi.

⁹ Register of freemen 1656–1741 (Cork Museum, 1777.2920). Tuckey, *Cork remembrancer*, p. 309, incorrectly lists him as Howell, which was a common misspelling. Sheriffs usually became mayors within a few years, as Hovell did in 1693, his election being delayed by the succession of the Catholic James II.

The location of Hovell's residence within Cork at the time of the letterbook is unclear. He is not listed in the civil survey of 1663/4 as a resident of Cork city, so may have arrived after that.¹⁰ As a prosperous merchant he would almost certainly have lived within the old walled city. In the letterbook he confided to a correspondent that he was considering acquiring a new house 'not in the country ... but in towne' (no. 590). There are references to cellars and a loft (nos 288, 338, 550, 547) and it would have been normal for a merchant of his stature to also have a counting-house. These facilities may have been attached to his dwelling or partially separated and located outside the walled city, perhaps on the north-east marsh, where land reclamation had begun by this time.

The Hovell letterbook consists of a single brownskin book in good condition, measuring 220 mm x 335 mm x 40 mm. The foliation is original, but the cover and binding is not, as on the cover sheet there is a note stating, 'Hugh Hovell Farmar; this book was new bound in March 1799', and underneath 'and re-bound by his granddaughter Meliora Mynors Blundell in March 1875'. Hugh Hovell Farmar (*d.* 1812), a great-grandson of William Hovell, was called to the Irish bar in 1768 and served as a magistrate in Wexford. He kept many family records and it is due to his interest that the letterbook has survived in such excellent condition.¹¹ It is possible that he acquired the book in Mallow, as the original includes a handwritten note by a John Hennessy of Mallow, dated 13 May 1796 (no. 396), and Hovell's wife had Mallow roots (no. 108). The front cover title of the book reads 'Farmor Records from 1683 to 1689. Willm Hovell', although the last letter in the letterbook is actually dated January 1687, suggesting that letters for the remainder of 1687, 1688 and possibly 1689 may have been omitted either intentionally or in error during rebinding.

The letterbook contains 742 letters, across 450 pages. Occasionally the date order of letters is inverted and where this occurs the original arrangement has been preserved. In two instances pages appear to be missing. The first is between nos 323 and 324, with an apparent gap between 23 Jan. and 10 Feb. 1685. The fact that the king's death occurred during this time may be significant here. The second is between nos 444 and 445, where for some reason two pages seem to have been purposely removed.

While the letters habitually record repetitive financial transactions, the fulfilling of export orders and reports of market prices, they also include details of Hovell's trading on his own account, family matters, comments on the facilities available in Cork, and gossip with correspondents. The death of Charles II occurs midway through the series, and Hovell's comments on the resulting changing political climate in Cork and in Ireland are of particular interest, especially as, like many other Munster Protestants, it led him to consider moving his family to England.

The handwriting in the letterbook, with rare exceptions the work of scribes employed for the purpose, is generally — though not invariably — legible. For the first year the principal scribe was John Perrie, Hovell's cousin and apprentice, but Perrie's involvement ceased on his departure on a trading venture to the West Indies. Thereafter there are a number of different hands. Ironically the least legible writing appears to be

¹⁰ R. C. Simington (ed.), *The civil survey, 1654–1656 ...* (IMC, 10 vols, Dublin, 1931–61), vi, 397–497.

¹¹ Many of these records are still in the possession of the Farmar family.

that of Hovell himself, who in one case blamed his scribble on the weather, his fingers being ‘insensible for cold’ (no. 302). Bearing in mind that at times the letters had to be written in haste, while impatient sea-captains awaited the release of the originals, they are remarkably free of blemishes. The high standard of literacy as well as the use of classical references suggests that Hovell himself was a comparatively well-educated man who insisted on his own high standards being replicated by clerical staff. He was never shy of expressing an opinion, frequently demonstrating a colourful turn of phrase. For example, he was ‘unwilling to nauseat’ a correspondent in commenting on Sir Matthew Deane, whom he abhorred, and viewed Will Vick’s reaction to requests for payment as ‘he minds it no more than a dead man foule weather’ (nos 387, 497). The reason for an inexplicable exchange rate seemed to him ‘as secret as the head of the Nile to the ancients’ (no. 520) and particularly bad weather was such that ‘a dog ... woud cry of cruelty to be turned out into it’ (no. 532).

A feature of the correspondence is the way in which letters served multiple purposes. Rarely was just one topic covered; the state of the market, currency prices, or observations on current political affairs were invariably added to the primary theme. The vast majority of letters were written on Tuesdays (49 per cent) and Fridays (43 per cent), possibly connecting with postal delivery days for internal and external mail. Over the 39 months covered in the letterbook the production per month varied little. The highest average of 24 letters per month was in December, with a low of 15 in April. Letters were written to only 86 different correspondents, two of whom, Thomas Putland of Dublin and James Houblon of London, account for almost half the total (see Table 1). The vast majority of the remaining correspondents were also located either in Dublin or London, demonstrating the dominance exerted by the two capitals on the mercantile life of Cork. Letters to neighbours in Cork, assuming that there were any, are unrecorded.

TABLE 1: LIST OF THE TEN MOST FREQUENT CORRESPONDENTS OF WILLIAM HOVELL.

Correspondent and location	No. of letters	No. of letters as a % of all letters	Main topic of correspondence
Thomas Putland, Dublin	235	32	Financial
James Houblon, London	124	17	Supply of yarns
Stepney and Montage, London	54	7	Miscellaneous trading
Frederick and Herne, London	50	7	Procurement of fish
William Smyth, London	26	4	Minor financial dealing
Richard Munford, London	21	3	Tallow supply to England
John Davis, Dublin	21	3	Collection of tenant rents
Edmund Harrison, London	19	3	Supplying mixed provisions
John Newton and Co., London	13	2	Trading with Tenerife
Thomas Sandes, London	11	1	Beef supply; assistance with authorities

The letters reveal the remarkably extensive range of Hovell's business activities. They show dealings with London and the west country ports of Bristol and Minehead, both of which had a long-standing relationship with Cork; southwards with ports in the Mediterranean, Spain and Portugal, and as far as Tenerife in the Canary Islands; and across the Atlantic, mainly with the Caribbean island of Antigua. He is also seen operating as a factor (agent) on commission for English merchants, including some major figures among the mercantile elite of London, procuring a variety of provisions on their behalf, arranging shipping of these provisions to designated foreign ports, and, to a lesser extent, accepting goods for distribution in the Cork area. Pilchards, bay yarns and beef were his major concerns, with surprisingly little butter (see Appendix 2). Hovell also traded 'on his own account' (see Appendix 3) although his efforts led to frequent losses, a regular outcome for many Cork merchants, which eventually led many of them to concentrate on factoring. Hovell's extensive dealings in the disposal and acquisition of bills of exchange are also illustrated, confirming that many merchants also acted as banking agents.

EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS

In the heading for each letter an identifying number has been inserted. References to letters use this number. The page on which the letter appears in the original is also identified in bold in square brackets. Introductory greetings and valedictions in the letters have been omitted and the names of recipients, and dates, have been standardised. As in the manuscript, dating is in Old Style. However, year-dates in letters between 1 Jan. and 24 Mar. inclusive, which in the original follow contemporary practice and take the year as beginning on 25 Mar., have been extended, so that, for example, 4 Jan. 1683 becomes 4 Jan. 1683/4.

While in general the text reproduces the spelling and syntax of the original, including thorns, capitalisation has been modernised, punctuation simplified, consistent with modern usage (each sentence commencing with a capital), and superior letters lowered. In the interests of fluency some frequently abbreviated words have been silently expanded where the meaning is clear. Paragraphing has also been introduced. Percentages are presented throughout as %, and sums of money are also given in a standardised form. Ships' names are printed in italics. Editorial interpolations appear within square brackets: doubtful readings are marked with a question mark; illegible words by an em-dash.

Throughout the original letterbook the exact content of many bills of exchange are repetitively reproduced. These have been replaced with a note in square brackets, for example [Sets out the above bill ... similar to ...]. The letterbook usually states whether 'Irish' or 'English' pounds are being referred to, and states the applicable conversion rate, which fluctuated considerably, with the English pound generally being the more valuable.

Where possible, individual persons, business contacts, and places are identified in a footnote on their first appearance.

1. [GARRET ROCHE]¹

N.D.

[p. 2]²[...³] that I will do no more so. If you [⁴] Commander, you shall yet have a large sum of me [—] drawn but 900 of about £4000 wch I must [—] I woud draw £12 to £1500 presently & I belive in a months time may draw a great part of the remainder. Coud I get bills enough of others I had rather do it, for that I can have money enough for my owne.

2. THOMAS PUTLAND [DUBLIN]⁵

19 OCT. 1683

[p. 2] I have yours 16 curreant but not your writing 10th I will rather think [—] from your buisness than from any indisposition of your health. Inclosed I remitt yw in John Sealys⁶ bill on John Schoppens⁷ & Samuel Sale [—] £250 ster at 21 days for wch pray credit me [—] 4½% £261.5s. & for Joshua Mitchells bill at 10 days on Sr John Frederick⁸ & compa London for £86 ster at ye same exc, £89.17s.5d. wch is all I can remitt yw this post, but am in hopes soon to find more sums

I am sorry yw cant aford to give ye other halfe % for my [—] I will not part with here (you may be assured) but at more then I offer them to yw for. I leave the 2 last orders lye dormant, & will not stir [—] but as yow direct. Plunkett was here in the assizes wch being a privited time I could not have him arrested. He left me an old bond to keep wch I no more esteem of, than a bit of brown paper. Pray get him arested if yw can for his father also cheated me, as well as he.

3. GEORGE MATHEW [MASTER OF THE *EXPEDITION*]

23 OCT. 1683

[p. 2] I have yours 20th curreant by this pr[?—] and observed what pas'd in the entry your ship. Tis usuall for the Collr to ordr an oficer att Bantry to receive the entry of a ship to be laden there. So be yw have don it & that the owners will enter their goods as they are bound to do & pay the dutty and ship them [?all] aboard according to contract. Pray continue your care in seeing the fish we receive be very good, firme, sound and bright whereof I do not question your skill haveing often laden that com[modit]y & pray see the gage⁹ be as I advised & evry cask have its proper

¹ Possibly identical with the Garret Roche who served as agent for the earl of Burlington (NLI, MS 7,177).

² Page numbers refer to the original letterbook.

³ Beginning of letter missing.

⁴ Extensive tearing to the right-hand side of the page, resulting in substantial missing sections of this and the succeeding letter.

⁵ Thomas Putland (1648–1723), merchant, of Dublin. Like many merchants he also acted as a banker and was Hovell's main banking contact in Dublin and most frequent correspondent (Liam Clare, 'The Putland family of Dublin and Bray' in *Dublin Historical Record*, 54 (2001), pp 183–209).

⁶ John Sealy (d. c. 1720?), mayor of Cork 1699–1700 (*Cork Council Bk*, p. 285; Vicars, p. 418).

⁷ John Sc(h)oppens (c. 1649–1720) of Highgate, Middlesex, a Dutch merchant naturalised by Act of Parliament in 1678 (Percy Lovell and W. M. Marcham (eds), *Survey of London*, xvii: *The parish of St Pancras*, pt 1: *The village of Highgate* (London, 1936), pp 54–62; TNA, PROB 11/574/445).

⁸ Sir John Frederick (1601–85), of Old Jewry, London, a prominent merchant, specialising in the Spanish trade (*Commons 1660–90*, ii, 363–5). Hovell referred to him as 'My kind & fair employer' (no. 346).

⁹ The capacity of the hogshead. The exact dimensions are set out in no. 209.

mark wth the sale scor'd on, & each head well lined. There will be no need for your going to Crookehaven,¹⁰ there being sufficient to be deliverd att Bantry & that before the 10th Novembr at longest, for after yt I am not engaged to receive any, but lett him not know this, least they take their fish too soon out of press, for if the pilchards be not ready time enough, I can leave them & lade famada¹¹ herrings instead butt lett neither Mr Hutchins¹² or any other know this intent, least they hold them dearer.

I was thinking to lett yw take in about 400 hds att Bantry & yt you proceed to Crookehaven for ¹³wch lyes ready there, but seeing its winter time and that yw may probably as soon be dispatch't from Bantry alone, thought better to continue you there for your complete lading, than to hazard yw this rude winter season to Crookehaven, wch I am sure as tis safer, so must be more grateful to yow. [— —¹⁴] send yw a compute of what fish I expect att Bantry to lade [—] Pray show Mr Hutchins & if any considerable errour advise me of presently. I shall not expect that yw should bind yourself by his lading, that the fish should prove good att markett but yr friends att London being to receive their fish aboard can't object agst it sooner, unless it lye out in the raines, for all are bound to presse, and keep all under cover till shipt, & therefore when it comes aboard you are to view it and see it be very good, else refuse it. I hope to be wth yw a Satterday night butt I can't sooner.

I think I forgott among other noates to send one to Sr Rich Hull¹⁵ for 30 hds he has in Bantry wch now is here. Enclosed for yr dissersion I send yw the 5 last news lettrs

Perticulars of the pilchards to be laden att board ye *Expedition*, Capt Geo Mathew Comandr, in Bantry

	Hds
Mr Hutchins	70
Mr Raddy	100
Mr Henr Good	50 to 55
Sr Richar Hull	30
Wm Hease	55 to 65 fr Kilmare ¹⁶
James Walsh	100 fr Kilmare
Bryan Wade	30
Frances Bernard ¹⁷	50 to 60
John Downing	50 to 60 Beerhaven ¹⁸
	<hr/> 535

¹⁰ Pilchard fisheries had been developed at Crookhaven in the 1620s.

¹¹ Fumado: smoked.

¹² Richard Hutchins of Bere Island, described by Hovell as a 'good friend' (no. 32).

¹³ Blank in manuscript.

¹⁴ Damage to the left-hand side of the page has removed sections of this letter.

¹⁵ Sir Richard Hull (1641–93), of Leamcon, Co. Cork (*HIP*, iv, 448).

¹⁶ Kenmare, Co. Kerry.

¹⁷ Francis Bernard (d. c. 1690) of Castle Mahon, Bandon, Co. Cork (George Bennett, *The history of Bandon* (Cork, 1869), pp 562–3).

¹⁸ Bere Island.

Since wch Hutchins taken more by Mr Raddy	100
& by himself & Wm Hease	100 more
	<hr/>
	735 to 770

4. GARRET ROCHE

23 OCT. 1683

[p. 3] I have yours without date. I can't draw for Londo under 5½% exc so I informed you before & drew nott a penny at less since. What I write yw [—] as realy what I term'd it, viz a preference of my bills to yw at ye currant rate, & altho Mr Bird refused it I am still willing to accommodate you with £1000 or £1200 bills, provided yw presently accept this offer and order in the mony, for I expect exc may rather rise than fall & therefore would be at liberty to make the most return. I assure yw I will not take so little exc from others, butt I desire yr good opinion.

5. [FREDERICK & HERNE, LONDON¹⁹]

23 OCT. 1683

[p. 3] My last was 16th: have since yrs 20 7ber²⁰ (being a duplicate), 6, 9 & 13th current. I then advised yw of ye *Hawks* deptime from Crookehaven & the *Expeditions* arrivall att Bantry where by this time I hope she has more than 400 hds on board, unless these 2 or 3 stormy days has hindred it, butt so many at least were ready on yt place and promised to be shipt as by this day. All diligence possible will be used that weather will permitt to bring the other parcells from ye adjacent places to let me conjecture that by the 10th or 14th at farthest of next month all may be aboard without losing [—] the fish, wch above all great regard must be had that there will be no need of having the *Expedition* go to Crookehaven, seeing my computation of Bantry fish is above 700 hds & wch in all probability may be ready & aboard as soon or sooner than to order her thence (with the hazard of ships) and yt part of her cargo on board this winter time wch falls in very wild & rude to Crookehaven, so that you must look on her as laden all att Bantry for if I want (tho you desire not to press her too deep) I can suply wth prestt herrings of 5000 per hds if Mr Hutchins advice be true. I purpose God willing after 2 days more to begin my journey thether. Now all that remains to be shipt off is 360 to 370 hds pilchard remaining ready at Crookehaven & for them, hope the vessel yow say yw orderd Mr Tillard²¹ to hasten from Plymouth to Bantry, you'l direct to Crookehaven, for from your knowledge that the *Expedition* can carry away [—²²] hds & that so many was at Bantry & that yw received (as yow did finily) notice that she arrived at Bantry, you'l conclude she'l take all there, & leave those att Crookehaven for ye next ship, where I shall expect your next ship.

¹⁹ Sir John Frederick and his partners, the brothers Joseph Herne (1639–99) of Colman Street, London, and Sir Nathaniel Herne (c. 1629–79) of Lothbury, London, each of whom married one of Frederick's daughters (*Commons 1660–90*, iii, 537–9). Although Nathaniel died in 1679 his name was still associated with the partnership until Hovell was instructed to cease using it (no. 59).

²⁰ September.

²¹ Isaac Tillard (d. 1685), a Plymouth merchant (will, 1685 (Plymouth Archives, 553/1)).

²² Number obliterated.

Mr Hicks of Kinsale²³ offered me freight on his ship new there caled the *Bonaventure* for 400 hds, she to carry 8 guns & 16 men to discharge at Carthageana, Allicant, Valincia, Barcelona, Genoa & Legorne,²⁴ butt demanded more than 10/- per tun & would allow but a small time for her discharge. He hath writt to his friend Mr Nat Bridges in London²⁵ to treat wth yw about it, So that if Mr Tillard should not find a ship time enough to send away, your election is enlarged by this vessel as it were on the place. She is reputed a good strong ship tho not famed for a good saylor.

I formerly gave yw an account yt on Mr Mitchell here had bought 200 hds or somewhat more of pilchards & herrings wth designe to send them for Allicant. This ship named *Samariton*, Hanion Master, is now here ready to go hence to Balltimore & take them in. I expect yw'l give me leave to send your 200 hides to Crookehaven, for the reason objected to sending them to Bantry.

6. THOMAS PUTLAND [DUBLIN]

23 OCT. 1683

[p. 5] I have yours 20th current wth (a whole canon I may term it of) an ordr on Coll Cotter²⁶ for £3,400 wch to morrow he says he will discharge together wth the other 2 orders wch I kept so long dormant. I expect the effects will be to threighen a great many of our merchants presently; & to stop succours. I am like to receive a round sume of my Lord of Corke²⁷ stueards for Eng[lish] bills wch will I hope make them render their bills on easy terms & make more to your interest then if I had gave yw my own bill & hope yw will find it so.

Enclosed I remitt you £250 to Londo for wch pray creditt me £260.15s., viz

	£.	s.	d.
John Hicks of Kinsale on Nat Bridges £100 cost	104.	0.	0
Tho Mitchall on John Stone £100 cost	104.	10.	0
Randall Hull on Geo More £50 cost	52.	5.	0
In all	<hr/>		
	260.	15.	0

no industry shall be wanting to procure all good bills to be had at 4½[%] or under.

Pray wt is ye reason you putt not your name in all assignmts sent me, and why only mine. A friend tells me that I am accountable for these orders to the King, but I

²³ John Hicks (no. 6).

²⁴ Leghorn: the former name of the Italian port of Livorno.

²⁵ Nathaniel Bridges of Austin Friars, London (*Cal. Treas. Bks*, v, 617).

²⁶ James Cotter, collector of customs at Cork (no. 105). Almost certainly identical with (Sir) James Cotter (1630–1705), of Ballinsperry, Co. Cork, who is known to have been collector of customs in Cork in 1689 (Brian Ó Cuív, 'James Cotter, a seventeenth-century agent of the crown' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 89 (1959), p. 155).

²⁷ Richard Boyle (1612–98), 1st earl of Burlington and 2nd earl of Cork (*DIB*).

think this can't be, seeing the verry ordr says tis for like value, wch I suppose must be intended as recd by the Recr Generall.²⁸ If it were otherwise who would medle or deale wth them. However I thought good to intimate it to yw what specie I receive shall be kept for your ordr.

7. ROBERT YATE [BRISTOL]²⁹

23 OCT. 1683

[p. 5] Mine ye 28 ulto acquainted you how Mr Frans Plumer in the New England, merchant,³⁰ left the beeffe and small things³¹ provided by your ordr behind, the manner of it, & that I desired your order to lade them on some other vessell wch I still expect. I observe by your 8th current you have agreed 250 barrells beefe to be laden on the *Success*, Vall Trim Comandr, & the price and payment of the mony in London to be 20 Novemr. I shall exactly performe that agreemt on my side and lade very good beefe & give him all desirable comfort in his dispatch etc & what porke he wants he shall also have as cheap of me as of any one. I acquainted yw wth the receipt of the hoops & that placed them to your account credit. Your the 8th current intimatting your agreemt above I wanted your name to it.

8. THOMAS PUTLAND [DUBLIN]

26 OCT. 1683

[p. 6] I have your 23 current. Have been almost these 2 days soly employed in receiving money from Coll Cotter but so much other buisness at Customs house interposes with the clerks, that as yet have don litle more than halfe & among all that none of the desired specie save some few 4s.4½d. ps³² wch I looke on as the meanest & worst sort.

But to help that want I begin to feel our merchts compliance draws near & wonder whats the matter that they cant suply themselves as usually, so hope in a little time to reape the effects of the known good cause.

Inclosed I remit you £470.15s.4d. on London cost £489.19s., viz

²⁸ John Price of Ballinderry, Co. Wicklow, receiver-general for Ireland 1682–5.

²⁹ Robert Yate (1643–1717) of Bristol, merchant and MP for the city 1695–1710 (*Commons 1690–1715*, v, 949–53).

³⁰ Possibly Francis Plumer (b. 1664) of Newbury, Massachusetts (Sidney Perley, *The Plumer genealogy ...* (Salem, MA, 1917), pp 49–50).

³¹ 'Smalls' was a term used by export merchants to describe a mixture of low-cost items which might include a variety of manufactured goods. Some, like candles, would be sourced in Cork while others might be sourced in England.

³² Pieces of eight: Spanish silver coins in general circulation in Europe. In mint condition they were valued at £0.4.9, but lost value if in poor condition.

	£. s. d.
Peter Renew ³³ on Peter Renew ³⁴ £200 cost	208. 0. 0
Rich. Dashwood (per security well endorsed by Richard Cox ³⁵) on Antho Ball London at 21 days £200 cost	208. 0. 0 ³⁶
Ald Newenhams ³⁷ bill on Peter van Sittart ³⁸ at 10 days £70.15.4 cost	73. 19. 0
	489. 19. 0

I say £470.15s.4d. cost wth exc £489.19s.

Pray accordingly credit me in your account for ye same. I hope by denying yow my own bills as I told yw in my last, to do you a kindness, for being also a drawer as well as a remitter, I can catch at all advantageous remittances as well as any other, by wch they loose some mony that else would fall in among them. I am in hopes to find large bills in 2 or 3 days more. I am glad to find the reason why your letter was not of your owne hand & that you are well, God continue it.

Poscript. This day I drew £100 on yw for my owne account to Geo Crofts Esq or ord at 10 days, vallue of his son Mr Geo Crofts Junr, wch pray pay & put to my account.³⁹ The bill possibly may not come to yw this 10 or 15 days, however I chose now to advise it, for fear I should forget.

9. ROBERT YATE [BRISTOL]

30 OCT. 1683

[p. 6] In ye absence of my master Mr Wm Hovell (who is at present gon out of town butt will be back in 3 or 4 days) I have recd yours of the 8th instant (being a duplicate of wt he recd from yw before) and answered ye 23d instant both by post and a duplicate for more certaine conveyance per shipping, wherein he advised yw he had taken notice of yr dealing for 250 bar beefe to be shipt on the ship *Success*, Val Trim Commander, the wch yw may be asured will be performed on his part and yt wth all the dilligence imaginable. By yours of the 18th in sd letter I observe yow

³³ An elder in the Huguenot church at Cork and mayor of the city in 1694 (Alicia St Leger, *Silver, sails and silk: Huguenots in Cork 1685–1850* (Cork, 1991), p. 53).

³⁴ A merchant based at Philpot Lane, London (London merchants 1677).

³⁵ (Sir) Richard Cox (1650–1733), 1st Bt, of Dunmanway, Co. Cork, lord chancellor of Ireland 1703–7.

³⁶ The bill was subsequently protested (for which see no. 25).

³⁷ John Newenham, mayor of Cork in 1671. Hovell considered him one of the greatest drawers of bills in Cork (no. 648).

³⁸ Peter Vansittart (1651–1705), an immensely wealthy London merchant of German origin (Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class: business, society and family life in London 1660–1730* (London, 1989), p. 35).

³⁹ George Crofts (c. 1640–98), of Churchtown, Co. Cork; said to have been ‘a great dealer in cattle with a stock of between £5000 & £6000 on several farms’ (James O’Shea, ‘The Crofts brothers of Churchtown, north Cork’, in *JCHAS*, 124 (2019), pp 81–106).

have recd his advice wth the reasons why he shipt not the 60 barrs beefe on Capt Plumer, as also your orders to ship them on the first ship from your Citty that will be bound for Nevis⁴⁰ here (her name I know not) butt if no ship ofers before her yow may expect they, wth what else, shall be shipt on her. What porke ye commander of ye *Success* will want he shall be supplyd with.

J[ohn] P[errie]⁴¹

10. [FREDERICK & HERNE, LONDON]

30 OCT. 1683

[p. 7] In Mr Wm Hovells absence I have recd yours of the 20th instant intimating that Mr Tillard hath freighted a ship of 130 tuns to go to Bantry and lade ye remaindr of the pilchards. Ere this I hope yw have now his of ye 23rd instant wch advised yw that the *Expedition* will carry away wt fish is att Bantry and wth all advising yw it would be convenient for your next to be orderd to Crookehaven, to wch I refer yow. In the meantime he order'd me (being himselfe gon yesterday to Bantry to dispatch ye *Expedition*, Geo Mathews Comandr) being his servant, to receive what letters of yours comes to hand, and advise yw there will be no care nor diligence wanting either in the looking after the fish or the dispatch of ye *Expedition* and of the other ship when please God she is arrived wch be in what offers att present.

J[ohn] P[errie]

Postscript. I cannot understand that he hath bought the salmon mentioned in yours, therefore can advise nothing of it, only believe he hath not. Exc continues at 4½%.

11. THOMAS PUTLAND [DUBLIN]

29 OCT. 1683

[p. 7] Haveing buisness att Bantry wch required my being there, my cuz John Perrie will procure & send yw all the good remittances to be found here, butt in all ye account recd of Coll Cottr there is scarce £20 of the species yw desired & that wch is, is most 4s.4½d. per ps.⁴² I hope by this day & night to be at home againe, in the meantyme be asured no care will be wanting in him to serve yr intrest carefully.

12. THOMAS PUTLAND [DUBLIN]

30 OCT. 1683

[p. 7] By the inclosed yw will understand that my cuz, Mr Wm Hovell is gone to Bantry. In the meantime have given me orders to send yw all the good bills to be procured, the wch yw need not doubt but I shall carefully observe. Since his

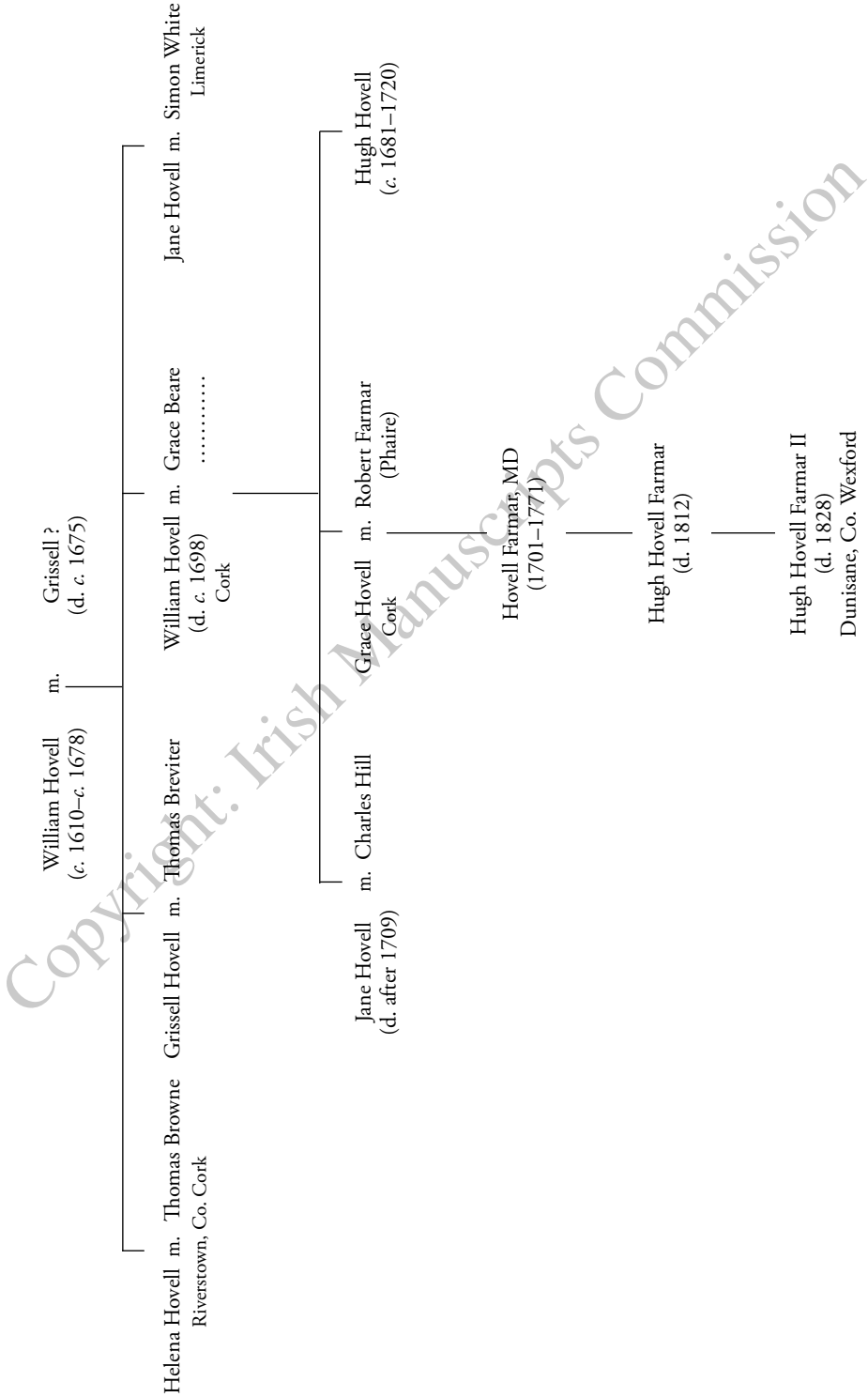
⁴⁰ In the Leeward Islands; a major market for Cork's salted provisions.

⁴¹ John Perrie or Perry (d. 1712) served his apprenticeship with Hovell, who referred to him as my 'cousin'. A son of Edward Perrie, a Youghal merchant, he settled in Antigua, where he became provost-marshal-general of the Leeward Islands, a lucrative post enabling him to purchase estates there and in South Carolina (James O'Shea, 'Home and away: the Perrie family of Youghal and Antigua', in *JCHAS*, 122 (2017), pp 78–90).

⁴² See no. 8.

APPENDIX 1

HOVELL FAMILY TREE



APPENDIX 2

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS MANAGED BY HOVELL AS AN AGENT FOR OTHER MERCHANTS

Exports and imports organised by Hovell on a commission basis, acting as a factor (agent) for English and other principals.

EXPORTS

Month	Customer	Commodities	To	Value £
1683				
Oct	Frederick & Herne, London	pilchards	?	?
Nov	Frederick & Herne, London	748 hogsheads (hds) pilchards	Alicante	2,184
Dec	Robert Yate, Bristol	60 barrels beef	Nevis	47
Dec	Frederick & Herne, London	285 hds pilchards 43 hds herrings 200 hides	Alicante	1,024
Dec	Robert Yate, Bristol	300 barrels beef miscellaneous	Nevis	345
1684				
Feb	Robert Yate, Bristol	tripe tongues	Nevis	3
May	Edward Harrison, London	a variety of ships provisions	For crew use	149
July	Frederick & Herne, London	3 packs of butter	London?	?
Oct	James Houblon, London	150 Colchester bay yarns	Genoa	512
Oct	Thomas Sandes, London	600 barrels beef	Barbados	492
Dec	James Houblon, London	120 barrels barley 100 bay yarns 52 doz calf-skins	Lisbon	708
1685				
May	Stepney & Monteage, London	tallow	London	271
Sep	James Houblon, London	100 white broad bay yarns	Cadiz	325
Sep	Samuel Allen, London	hides beef tallow butter	Not stated	300
Nov	John Newton, London	240 hides 100 boxes candles 80 barrels beef 40 barrels pork 12 bay yarns	Tenerife	475
Nov	James Houblon, London	124 bay yarns	Lisbon	602

Month	Customer	Commodities	To	Value £
1686				
Feb	James Houblon, London	161 bays 104 hides 132 bags wheat 1543 leathers 80 quarters beans	Genoa	797
Feb	James Houblon, London	a variety of ships provisions	For crew use	42
Feb	Richard Munford, London	29 hds tallow	London	259
Sep	Joseph Taylor, Tenerife	herrings beef pork butter candles hides	Tenerife	219
Sep	Thornbull & Sanderson, Tenerife	beef pork fish tongues possibly tallow	Tenerife	254
Sep	Francis & Trevisa, Tenerife	12 bays	Tenerife	48

IMPORTS

Month	Customer	Commodities	From	Value £
1684				
Jul	Shipman & Francis, Tenerife	wine	Tenerife	?
Aug	Isaac Tillard, Plymouth	fishing nets	Plymouth	22
1685				
Sep	John Newton, London	6 pipes of wine	Tenerife	240

INDEX

References are to document number. Where information is contained in a footnote the note number is indicated in parentheses after the document number, for example, 21 (n 68) indicates footnote no. 68 associated with document no. 21. Where possible, modern forms of personal and place names have been used and manuscript variants included in parentheses. Titled persons are indexed under their family name with a cross-reference from the title.

- Aberdeen, 630
Aberdin, Alex (Aberdeen), 630
account books, 85, 92, 196, 310, 332, 351,
357, 361, 599, 663, 692, 694, 711, 715
blot or waste-book, 60
Act of Settlement 1662, 87 (n 138), 460,
606, 623
administration of estates, 59, 126, 139, 151,
554, 559; *see also* Danter, George
legacies, *see* Mid(d)leton, Thomas
letters of administration, 126, 127, 136,
140
admiralty judges, 563 (n 487)
Adventure, 114, 130, 146; *see also* Evans,
Thomas
Alcock (Allcock), Maskelyne (Mascalyne,
Masculyn), 57, 346
Aleppo oak galls, 344
Algerians (Algierens), 176
Alicante (Allicant), 5, 22, 27, 32, 215, 218,
222, 240, 246, 281, 314, 323, 414,
428, 471
Allen, Edward, master of the *Bonaventure*,
450
Allen, Michael, 438, 439, 440, 450, 499,
583, 599
Allen, Samuel (London), 438, 439, 440,
450, 499, 583, 599
Allen, Simon (Symon), 362
Allison, Mr, 37, 38
Allison, Robert, 663, 668
Alloway, William (Minehead), 12, 108,
300
Alworth, William (London), 639
America, 7, 385, 425, 653; *see also* Boston;
South Carolina; Pennsylvania; Virginia
Amsterdam, 381, 483
Andaluzia, 88, 110, 126, 160
animal products, *see* cheese; meat; milk
animals, *see* cattle and oxen; horses; sheep
Ann (London ship), 89, 171
Antigua, 9 (n 41), 57, 87, 294, 294 (n 291),
296, 297, 346, 422, 429, 440, 495,
640, 644, 676, 734
merchant at, *see* Ash, Richard
ships from, 423, 440, 448
surveyor general of, *see* Perrie, Edward
tobacco trade, 641, 648
apostasy, 617, 639
apothecaries, 95
Ardasse silk, *see* silk
Argyll, earl of, *see* Campbell, Archibald
Armagh, archbishop of, *see* Boyle, Michael
armed men, 493, 611; *see also* soldiers
arms, 493, 496; *see also* guns
army, 588; *see also* French army; Jacobite
army; soldiers
Catholic officers and soldiers, 457, 585,
588, 615
purge of 'disaffected' officers, 588
regiments, 437, 572, 631, 637
Arthur, Sir Daniel (banker), 403

- Ash, Richard (Antigua), 57, 87, 269, 312, 317, 465, 514, 543, 546, 551, 575, 576, 587, 588, 591, 613, 628, 721, 730, 742
- Ashgrove, Co. Cork, 21 (n 68)
- Ashmore, Richard, 301
- assizes (at Cork), 2, 80, 93, 100, 151, 185, 351, 352, 435, 551, 581, 638
- Atkins, Mrs, 502
- Atkins, Robert, 531, 540
- Aughrim, battle of, 572 (n 494)
- Austin Friars, London, 5 (n 25)
- Aylworth, William (London), 622
- Azores, 417 (n 378)
- Babe, Bartho, 335, 340
- Babe, Fra, 335, 340
- Babe, Mr, 128, 611
- Baily (Bayly), John (La Rochelle), 637, 654
- Balding, Lt John (Lisnagat), 528
- Ball, Abraham, 487
- Ball, Anthony (London), 8, 22, 45, 115, 118, 129, 267, 302, 426, 427, 435, 437, 472, 622, 630, 645
- Ballard, William (Dublin), 682, 699, 710, 711, 715, 725, 730
- Ball & Croker, 435, 437, 455, 456, 483, 493, 544, 586
- Balle, Robert (Leghorn), 242 (n 251); *see also* Balle & Burrows
- Balle & Burrows (Genoa), 243, 416, 549, 555, 561, 612, 616, 621
- Ballinderry, Co. Wicklow, 6 (n 28)
- Ballinsperry, Co. Cork, 6 (n 26)
- Ballintober, Co. Cork, 170 (n 200)
- Ballyannan, Co. Cork, 53 (n 101), 657 (n 565)
- Ballybricken, Co. Limerick, 437 (n 392)
- Ballycrenane, Co. Cork, 702 (n 586)
- Ballydullea, Co. Cork, 657 (n 566)
- Ballyloughran, Co. Kerry, 21 (n 67)
- Ballylough, Co. Cork, 229 (n 233)
- Ballymodan, Co. Cork, 95 (n 149)
- Baltimore, Co. Cork, 5, 80, 106 (n 159), 146, 222, 240, 243, 245, 246, 251, 258, 261, 266, 273, 478
- Baltimore, Co. Cork *contd*
- collector of customs at, *see* Dodsworth, Mr
- Mr
- Bandon, Co. Cork, 149, 156, 164, 276, 291, 298, 309, 333 (n 323), 356, 391, 418, 487, 494, 505, 507, 582, 637, 645
- merchants of, *see* Dashwood, Richard, jnr; Jackson, James; Langton, Thomas; Vick, William; Watkins, John
- millman at, 419
- provost of, 58; *see also* Watkins, John
- woollen industry, 18 (n 54)
- Bandon Bridge, Co. Cork, 528
- bankers, 2 (n 5), 22 (n 71), 90, 403 (n 371), 506 (n 446), 509 (n 449), 517, 698 (n 584); *see also* Hoare, Edward; Putland, Thomas
- failure, 516 (n 452), 517
- Bank of England, 88 (n 140)
- bankruptcy, 28 (n 80), 170
- Bantry, Co. Cork, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 39, 40, 42, 47, 49, 50, 72, 73, 80, 120, 143, 157, 158, 183, 184, 185, 204, 209, 222, 224, 226, 228, 231, 246, 279, 281, 285, 291, 295, 314, 398, 656, 686
- collector of customs at, *see* Dodsworth, Mr
- Barbados, 122, 216, 227, 240, 241, 252, 272, 294, 296, 297, 338, 495, 556, 557, 588, 591, 718, 734
- negroes, trade in, 734
- Barcelona, 5
- barley, *see* corn
- Barnes, William (London), 86, 730
- Barntick, Co. Clare, 676 (n 574)
- Barraida wine, 443
- Barrett, Barbara (*née* St Ledger), 381 (n 356)
- Barrett, Capt, 715
- Barrett, John (Cork), 381, 710, 711, 730
- Barrett, Sir William (Castlemore), 381 (n 356)
- Barrone, Ralph, 141
- Barry, Laurence, 3rd earl of Barrymore, Lord Buttevant, 586, 590

- Barry, Redmond (Rathcormack), 206, 390, 432, 461, 590, 592
- Barry, Richard, 2nd earl of Barrymore, 300, 631
- Barrymore, Lord, *see* Barry, Laurence; Barry, Richard
- Barton, Edward, 66, 75, 86, 138, 422
- Berwick (Barwick), 243
- Baskerville, Henry, 553, 557, 560
- Bassett, Anthony, 31, 36
- Batchelour*, *see* *Pink Batchelour*
- Bateman, Richard, 76
- Bateman, Rowland (Killeen), 79
- Bawden, John, 389; *see also* Bawden & Gardner
- Bawden & Gardner (London), 335, 389, 391, 460
- Bayly, John, *see* Baily, John
- baymakers, 58, 287, 457, 527, 620, 695
- bays, 44, 52, 58, 71, 85, 89, 94, 106, 112, 132, 149, 156, 160, 161, 164, 167, 169, 178, 191, 193, 199, 209, 215, 218, 219, 224, 234, 239, 242, 243, 251, 254, 258, 263, 266, 268, 273, 275, 277, 278, 285, 287, 302, 314, 323, 332, 337, 339, 344, 349, 353, 356, 359, 363, 365, 371, 372, 381, 387, 392, 397, 403, 413, 414, 419, 424, 428, 434, 435, 436, 443, 445, 447, 451, 457, 462, 466, 468, 471, 476, 478, 481, 482, 485, 488, 490, 505, 543, 546, 547, 548, 555, 560, 562, 571, 600, 603, 610, 643, 653, 659, 683, 686, 689, 695, 701, 724, 738
- Colchesters, 85, 106, 112, 132, 137, 149, 178, 191, 199, 209, 218, 224, 234, 236, 239, 240, 242, 245, 258, 268, 320, 359, 365, 384, 392, 722
- dyeing of, *see* dyeing; dyers
- mill bracks, 392
- prices, 309, 381, 457, 582, 659, 710, 722
- beans and peas
- beans, 224, 425, 443, 447, 482, 494, 505, 516, 519, 525, 532, 538, 541, 543, 546, 547, 550, 556, 560, 561, 562, 603, 610, 612; horse beans (broad beans), 419; prices, 527, 530
- beans and peas *contd*
- peas, 90, 175, 224, 354, 358, 363, 372, 374, 385, 565
- Bear(e), John (Hovell's brother-in-law), 116, 117, 163
- Beare, Roger (Hovell's brother-in-law), 492
- Beecher, Mr, 59, 73
- Beecher, Thomas, 183, 185, 192, 204, 208, 212, 213, 222, 555
- beef, *see* meat
- beer, 90
- Belfast, 153, 414, 419, 434, 435, 440, 445, 447, 451, 455, 457, 462, 464, 471, 478
- butter from, 414
- ships from, 467, 468, 476, 477
- Bell, Abraham, 22, 487
- Bellamy, Adam & Humphrey (London), 637
- Benger, Mr, 265
- Bennet, Capt George, 575 (n 497), 587, 588
- Bennett, [Mr], 118
- Berehaven, Co. Cork, 3, 13, 17, 22, 23, 686
- Bermingham, Mr, 87, 269, 551
- Bernard, Fra, 88, 140
- Bernard, Francis (Castle Mahon), 3, 18 (n 57), 22, 88, 140
- Bernard, Mr, 183, 204
- Berry, Richard (dyer), 178, 302, 344, 419
- Bettesworth, Richard, 657
- biblical references, 103
- Bilbao, 52, 60, 71, 218, 414
- bills of exchange
- foreign bills, 310 (n 307), 611, 622, 650, 673, 688, 694, 696, 699, 716
- protests for non-acceptance/non-payment, *see* protests on bills
- usage, 310
- bills of lading, 23, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 43, 47, 49, 54, 72, 88, 236, 240, 242, 243, 245, 248, 249, 269, 273, 275, 277, 278, 287, 294, 307, 375, 397, 443, 450, 478, 479, 481, 482, 485, 488, 489, 492, 495, 500, 501, 505, 530, 546, 555, 556, 560, 561, 562, 573, 587, 615, 633, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 689, 690, 705, 706, 734