

# The One in Newfoundland, the Other in England: Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey, or Gosse, Chancey and Ledgard?

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# The One in Newfoundland, the Other in England: Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey, or Gosse, Chancey and Ledgard?

TERRY McDONALD

## INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY OF POOLE's involvement in the Newfoundland trade during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has tended to concentrate on the major players. These were the great family firms, and it can be argued that the history of the trade is the history of families. From the Lesters and Garlands, with their social aspirations,<sup>1</sup> to the clannish Slades,<sup>2</sup> most of the great firms from the Dorset seaport were based upon family relationships and dynasties. These firms have rarely been praised by historians, particularly those from (or based in) Newfoundland. From Prowse and his highly influential *History of Newfoundland* of 1895<sup>3</sup> to Bannister's recent article on Benjamin Lester,<sup>4</sup> the merchants have been depicted as, at worst, greedy and grasping, or, at best, as maintaining their authority over those living and working in Newfoundland by whatever means "delivered the optimum economic return."<sup>5</sup>

In the century or so between the work of Prowse and Bannister a number of historians have written about the working practices and the role of Poole's merchants within Newfoundland, including Keith Matthews who in 1973<sup>6</sup> pointed out that Poole's merchants saw Newfoundland as primarily a place where they could sell their goods rather than a source of fish. Gordon Handcock has concentrated on one of the greatest of the Poole merchant families, the Lesters, and their activities in Trinity,<sup>7</sup> while Shannon Ryan and Sean T. Cadigan have taken a distinctly economic perspective. Ryan's investigation into the saltfish trade<sup>8</sup> takes the year 1814 as its starting point and provides little detailed information about individual mer-

chant families. As a species, though, they are treated with a degree of objectivity, although he does confirm just how ready they were to seek preferential treatment from the British government whenever they felt that their interests were under threat.<sup>9</sup> Cadigan's work is more merchant orientated and focuses on a particular region of Newfoundland during the period when their activities were at their most intensive and profitable.<sup>10</sup> He reinforces Matthews' comments on the importance of selling the necessities of life to people who had settled in Newfoundland when he notes that the provision of foodstuffs was, to the merchants, "a lucrative part of their business" and they resented and resisted attempts by settlers to find alternative suppliers.<sup>11</sup> There was, of course, an Irish dimension to the trade, not least because Poole ships invariably called into ports such as Cork and Waterford to take on fresh provisions (and, on occasion, crew) before beginning the main part of the Atlantic crossing. The historical geographer John Mannion has written extensively on Newfoundland and Ireland, albeit with an emphasis on the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Relatively few British historians have written about the Newfoundland merchants, and those who have tend to concentrate on the merchant families and their role within the politics and social life of Poole, where the town's long involvement with Newfoundland is seen as the most distinctive feature of its history. An exception is Glanville Davies, whose research concentrated on British government policy towards the Newfoundland fishery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Poole Historical Trust's *Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset*<sup>14</sup> was produced for the popular market but is the only work that looks in any depth at the merchants' domestic circumstances. And their domestic situation is worthy of study for, as Bannister notes in his article on Benjamin Lester, he had "no difficulty in reconciling his life as an outport merchant with his status as an English gentleman."<sup>15</sup> The term "gentleman" is significant for it was, from the seventeenth century, taking on a new meaning. As Daniel Defoe noted in 1726, "trade, in England, makes gentlemen"<sup>16</sup> and involvement in the Newfoundland trade was a way of becoming rich and attaining social status.

The subject of this article, the firm of Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey, seems to fit this hypothesis. Its involvement in the trade was short-lived, and was, it would appear, designed to take advantage of the artificial conditions produced by a war whose end seemed distant. Once the war was over, the partnership upon which the firm was based was dissolved, and one of the principals, George Ledgard, prudently moved a little higher up the social scale and became a banker. There is a neat irony to this decision which will be revealed towards the end of this article.

They were known in Poole as "Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey," but in Carbonear, Newfoundland, they were "Gosse, Chancey and Ledgard." This seemingly pedantic point is actually important, for it reveals an interesting feature of many firms involved in this trade. That they used alternate names was not unusual — others followed the same practice — but their Newfoundland-based operations were conducted by two of the partners, rather than by a salaried agent. Although

other firms appear to have done the same, the Newfoundland-based agents were frequently relatives, sons and nephews who were serving an unofficial apprenticeship. The Lesters, the Kemps, and the Slades all followed this practice. There was no blood or marriage connection between Ledgard, Gosse, and Chancey, and, however their partnership came about, it was one between businessmen.

The use of alternate names, and the need to have a trusted agent or partner in Newfoundland, reveals how difficult it can be when studying the Poole-Newfoundland trade to establish which side of the Atlantic was the centre and which was the periphery.<sup>17</sup> Merchants had to cope with one office being in Newfoundland and one in England, at a time when communication was difficult and rarely face-to-face. This article is based on a particularly valuable primary source, the out-letter book created by George Ledgard's Poole office between 19 March 1807 and 28 April 1810. His letters to his partners, and to 128 other firms and individuals, say much about his thoughts, concerns, and actions during a time when the war was still far from being won, and the trade was at its most profitable, despite many difficulties. It should be remembered, however, that it is only letters written by Ledgard that survive, and his partners' thoughts and actions have to be discerned from his responses to their concerns.

## GEORGE WELCH LEDGARD

The Ledgard family seem originally to have come from Andover in Hampshire. George Welch Ledgard's grandfather, Richard, was born there in 1670 and he married, in 1734, the Poole-born Martha Stacey.<sup>18</sup> Richard was clearly a man who took his time over things — he did not marry until he was 64 and died when he was 99 years, nine months and nine days old.<sup>19</sup> Richard and Martha had a son, also named Richard, who was born in Poole on 13 November 1742.<sup>20</sup> He married twice but it was to his first wife, Ann, daughter of Philip Welch of London, that George Welch Ledgard was born in Gosport, Hampshire, on 3 April 1782.<sup>21</sup> Richard had evidently left Poole for a few years. He appears in the Overseers of the Poor Rates and Accounts between 1775 and 1778 as Capt. Richard Ledgard, owning property in the High Street valued at £200. The 1779 list has "gone" against his name.<sup>22</sup> He returned to the town some years later, and extant directories list the family as owners of a rope-making business. Other trades directories for the period reveal this to be one among a number of enterprises for, in 1798, "Richard Ledgard, Merchant, Ropemaker and Stationer"<sup>23</sup> appears under the heading "traders." Another directory, in 1809, has "Ledgard and Son, Ropemakers"<sup>24</sup> but also lists "Ledgard, Gosse and Co., Merchants."

That both father and son are cited as being merchants strongly suggests that, in Poole usage, they were involved in the Newfoundland trade<sup>25</sup> and were therefore shipowners. This was indeed the case, for Richard Ledgard appears in Lloyd's Reg-

ister of Shipping in 1793 as the owner of the *Fortitude*, a 203-ton ship built in 1787, in Poole. She was 88 feet in length, with a draught of 13 feet, and, by Poole-Newfoundland standards, was quite a large vessel.<sup>26</sup> The register for 1802 lists five vessels owned by someone named Ledgard, presumably Richard, as George would only have been 20 years old at the time.

Just when George Welch Ledgard became involved in the Newfoundland trade is difficult to establish. It was not an easy business to enter (and contained inherent difficulties) for as one Poole merchant, John Jeffrey, told the 1793 Parliamentary Committee on Trade to Newfoundland,

to embark on it, a very great capital is necessary; the risque [*sic*] is increased by its being conducted at so great a distance from home; the plantations and utensils for the Fishery, which are purchased at great expense are only valuable for the immediate purpose of carrying on the Fishery.<sup>27</sup>

Jeffrey, though, was giving evidence before the impact of the Anglo-French wars was really felt. The war period is usually regarded as the Poole-Newfoundland trade's "golden age," for example by John Sydenham, the first person to write a detailed history of the town. He wrote that the merchants

supplied them [the Newfoundland-based fishermen] with what they required in food, clothing, fishing implements, &c and took their fish and oil in payment, which they in their turn sold advantageously in the markets of Europe, particularly during the late wars, and large fortunes were gained.<sup>28</sup>

He was not, of course, writing specifically about Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey, but this comment is an apposite description of their activities. Sydenham also maintained that 1813 was "the most flourishing time for the trade," and it was he who made the point that gives this article its title when he noted that St. John's merchants

certainly appear to have advantages in the trade, inasmuch as they have the expense of but one establishment, whilst the Poole merchants, carrying on the trade at the out-ports, are necessarily subject to two, the one in England the other in Newfoundland.<sup>29</sup>

George Ledgard, as a young man, therefore entered a trade that needed considerable sums of capital at the outset, and which was beset by the difficulties inherent in conducting business on both sides of the Atlantic. Presumably the first of these was overcome by access to his father's money, but the other was to irritate and frustrate him for most of his involvement in the trade. Yet he chose to enter it during the war, presumably well aware of the profits to be made, and with two Newfoundland-based partners.

## THOMAS CHANCEY

George's two partners, Thomas Chancey and John Gosse, were based in Carbonear, in Conception Bay, and both were Englishmen. Thomas Chancey had arrived in Newfoundland with his brother Lionel, from Cullompton in Devon, apparently "before 1780."<sup>30</sup> Just how old they were is uncertain, but the circumstantial evidence<sup>31</sup> suggests that Lionel was then an adult and that Thomas was much younger, perhaps in his early teens. Lionel remained in Newfoundland all his life and held a number of administrative posts. Thomas found employment as a bookkeeper with one of the wealthiest of the Poole firms, G. & J. Kemp, and then went into business on his own. In his will<sup>32</sup> (he died in 1808) he stated that he had carried on "business in Harbour Grace on my own account before the commencement of the above Partnership." He had in fact been involved in two partnerships, the first with John Gosse, and the second with Gosse and George Ledgard. In 1797, one George Rees, a shipwright, of Lance Cove, Bell Island, wrote to a Mr. Chancey of Mosquito, saying that "I can let you have a stem for a schooner,"<sup>33</sup> thus suggesting that Thomas was involved in shipping some years before the creation of Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey.

## JOHN GOSSE

John Gosse was from the margins of the West Country, being born in 1767 at Ringwood, Hampshire. This New Forest market town is about fifteen miles to the east of Poole, and had a long history of involvement in the Newfoundland trade through investment, the provisioning of ships, and the supply of manpower. In 1789, at the age of 22, Gosse went to Newfoundland to work as a clerk for Kemps in Carbonear, but his case was different from that of Thomas Chancey in that he was employed by his brother-in-law.<sup>34</sup> He later went into partnership with Thomas Chancey, creating (obviously) the firm of Gosse and Chancey.<sup>35</sup> According to one source:

a misunderstanding occurred between the Messrs Kemp and Mr Gosse. Mr George Kemp had promised Mr Gosse a share of the trade to which Mr James Kemp objected & would not consent; this led to a rupture. Mr Gosse relinquished the agency ...<sup>36</sup>

This "rupture" probably occurred around 1801, as it was said to have occurred "some five years" after a nephew of Gosse, Henry Corbin Watts, came from Poole to Carbonear in 1796 to work as a clerk for Kemps.<sup>37</sup>

Just when George Ledgard became their partner is difficult to establish with certainty, but it seems to have been around 1803 or 1804. Ledgard would have become 21 in 1803 so he was a few years the junior of his two Newfoundland partners. He certainly met one (or both) of them personally when the partnership was being

set up (there is no evidence to suggest that Ledgard ever visited Newfoundland) for, as he wrote in September 1808 to John Gosse, "I remember the conversation that happened between us at Poole."<sup>38</sup> Whenever it was, Gosse and Chancey now had a partner in Poole whose role was to find vessels, insure them and their cargoes for both the outward and inward passages, suggest where they should be off-loaded, market the produce that was landed in England, and deal with the bureaucracy created by government. To these typical functions of a counting house manager were added worries about the dangers and threats caused by the war, and acting as the main conduit for information that his partners needed about market conditions, and the political and military situation in Europe.

## NEW CONFLICTS?

The firm of Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey was formed to profit from the conditions produced by the war, despite the risks. Ledgard, though, was continually fretting over the possibility of the war spreading from Europe into new areas, especially the North Atlantic. Through most of the three years of the out-letter book, he was particularly concerned about the possibility of war between Britain and the United States. This threat arose early in 1807 when a British vessel stopped and searched an American frigate, seeking deserters from the Royal Navy. As Ledgard explained to his partners, "The Americans refused till by force compelled to submit."<sup>39</sup> The American reaction to what was probably seen by the British as a trivial but necessary incident was one of intense anger; there were popular disturbances, and even calls for war. To merchants such as Ledgard this was a serious threat, and he kept his partners informed about events, telling them in August 1807 that

A deputation from the merchants trading to America have waited upon Mr Canning, the Secretary at War and on the American Ambassador in London from whom they were told that it is hoped that good understanding between America and England would not be disturbed by the unfortunate event.<sup>40</sup>

Ledgard's own opinion was that the Americans had more to lose than the British if war should break out, and advised his partners that "we should be right to send the *Triumvirate* to Boston as before intended." He offset any fears they may have had by telling them that he had "insured £3500 at 1 guinea."<sup>41</sup> A few days later he felt obliged to tell Gosse and Chancey:

I forgot to mention that there has been a very large Expedition nearly 30 Sail of Men of War sailed a few days ago up the Baltic supposed to take the Swedish and Russian Navy.<sup>42</sup>

Such information, seemingly of little relevance to two men in Carbonear, was in reality vital to them. The wider European conflict could always escalate in such a way that the trans-Atlantic trade might be distorted or even thrown into chaos. They needed to know where to send their ships and cargoes, which ones were coming their way and what they were carrying, and, most importantly, that their ships' destinations were still available to them. Thus Ledgard's mention of the expedition to the Baltic was more than just gossip; rather it let them know that the French would not be able to strengthen their own fleet by seizing ships of the Russian and Swedish navies.

More obviously relevant was Ledgard's news about events in the Iberian Peninsula. In early September Ledgard warned his partners:

The papers say that great fears are in respecting Portugal, that the French have demanded that all commerce with G. Britain shall be excluded but letters from Lisbon yesterday make no mention of any such apprehensions.<sup>43</sup>

A few days later he was more optimistic: "I question whether Bonaparte will invade that country," adding, "I think there is no fear of war with America."<sup>44</sup> He was correct in the latter belief (for a few more years, at least) but not on the threat to Portugal. As one of the main markets for salt cod, the Iberian Peninsula was extremely important to Poole's Newfoundland merchants and they were aware of its vulnerability to French attack. Ledgard, always conscious of the need to be well insured, had written to the firm's insurers:

we remark that in the Critical Situation of Portugal we think it prudent to guard against that quarter. I have therefore effected in getting insured from N<sup>o</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> land to Portugal. We do not think the *Mercury* will sail without convoy.<sup>45</sup>

The merchants' concerns about a French invasion of Portugal were based upon one central issue. Cargoes despatched from Newfoundland consisted mainly of salt fish, salmon, seal skins, seal oil, and cod oil. The skins and oils were mainly marketed in Poole, but salt cod and salmon were destined for southern Europe, particularly Portugal and Spain. Gosse and Chancey needed to tell their captains which ports to head for when leaving Newfoundland, and their decisions were heavily dependent on the information contained in Ledgard's frequent letters from Poole. In August 1807, for example, he mentioned that he has heard by letter from Lisbon that

the Market gets up a little about a thousand qtl New fish arrived which has sold at 5600. I think therefore that Oporto will be the best market for the second and third cargoes.<sup>46</sup>



In October he wrote to Gosse and Chancey:

I find you had concluded to send the *Triumvirate* to Portugal. I hope she will arrive safe and that war with Portugal will not have taken place anterior to her arrival which is feared will be the case. The French have demanded their navy which is but trifling and have also required them to shut their ports against this country.... If war should not happen for a few months it will be very fortunate for the Newfoundland trade.

Ledgard was concerned that his partners had acted independently, and remonstrated with them:

Dear Sirs, I wish you had listened to me from the beginning. It is nearly impossible to do anything to advantage in the present precarious state of Europe. Let me beg you to resolve to listen considerably and pray send me your sentiments at large.<sup>47</sup>

## THE PARTNERS' ROLES

That letter lays bare a problem inherent in this two-centre partnership. Just who should take the decisions and upon what information? Some decisions were clearly within Ledgard's remit, such as what cargo ships leaving for Newfoundland should carry. The first letter in the book is to one of his insurers saying that one of their ships, the 153-ton brig *Success*,<sup>48</sup> Captain William Martin, was "almost ready for sea" and that the next day she would

join the convoy appointed to sail from Spithead ... the *Success* is half full and has on board 50 casks of beer, only a ton and half of butter (there being none to be had).

In the same letter he mentioned that

I have chartered the *Collingwood* (a new vessel belonging to my father) to go to Liverpool to take out a cargo of about two hundred and fifty tons of salt at 25 pence ton. She began loading yesterday.<sup>49</sup>

The following month, he wrote to his partners in Carbonear that "Butter is at a dreadful price, say £114 per ton."<sup>50</sup> He was still concerned about this item in September and informed Gosse and Chancey that there was no butter to be had in Poole but that he had "requested my father to procure a ton and ship at Portsmouth if any can be had there."<sup>51</sup> Ledgard was, on occasion, to provide Carbonear with other basic foods by purchasing them on the North American mainland. In July 1808, when the *Success* was sailing in ballast, her master was ordered to buy bread and flour at Quebec because of its cheapness there.<sup>52</sup> What Gosse and Chancey thought about

his performance can only be guessed. They were far better placed to know what supplies were needed.

All three men, whatever their designated roles, had to be able to react quickly to local conditions. Ledgard was, of course, the first to know that his worst fears about Portugal had been realized, for the French invaded the Iberian Peninsula and reached Lisbon at the end of November 1807. Even before this event, British interests had been badly hit. The outcome was described by the first great historian of the Peninsula War, Sir William Napier:

The prince regent ... at the desire of the French government expelled the British residents, sent the British minister plenipotentiary away from his court, sequestered British property, and shut the ports of Portugal against British merchants ...<sup>53</sup>

To merchants such as Ledgard, this was a disaster. The denial of access not only to Portuguese ports, but also to those of southern Spain, presented them with huge problems. Where were ships to carry their cargoes, especially those that consisted mainly of salt cod? There was little demand for salt cod in England, and other European markets such as those in Italy (with the exception of Sicily) were under French control. Although the British could try to get fish to the traditional markets by using neutral vessels, they sought alternative destinations, especially other regions of the Americas. The United States was never a significant market, particularly as it had its own salt cod industry. However, as Ryan demonstrates, two areas in particular were open to Newfoundland fish, the Caribbean and Brazil.<sup>54</sup> Brazilian ports were opened to foreign trade in 1808, and although Newfoundland took advantage of this, its exports were never huge in the early years. In 1810 6,710 quintals were exported, but in 1812 and 1814 it was well below 3,000 quintals.<sup>55</sup> The Caribbean, or to be precise, the British West Indies, was already an important market for Newfoundland salt fish and exports rose considerably from the early 1800s. By 1808 they passed the 100,000-quintal mark and frequently reached 150,000 quintals before the wars ended.<sup>56</sup>

In Poole, Ledgard was trying to work out ways of delivering their fish to Portugal. In October 1807 he complained to his partners that

from the report of Captain Tullock I hear that the *Triumvirate* was but half loaded although I had reasons to suppose from your last she would be ready to join the convoy, that is to sail the 20th ulto but which did not sail till the 27th.<sup>57</sup>

After telling them again of the difficulties in Portugal, he attempted to salvage something from the situation by adding that he was

encouraged to hope that the *Triumvirate* not being loaded in time to go to Portugal may induce to send her to Boston, we think there will not be war with America.

This suggests that he was attempting to use Boston ships to get the fish to Portugal and Spain. That salt cod was a staple of the Portuguese diet is shown by Ledgard's statement, two days later, when he told Gosse and Chancey that as "Portugal must have fish" they will have to send it by way of America.<sup>58</sup>

By March 1808 the trade was in a parlous condition, and Ledgard told Chancey that "there is in all 30,000 qtls of fish here unsold." This should, of course, have been on its way to Portugal. He thought the best solution would be to ship it back across the Atlantic to the West Indies. He was (as always) fearful of war with the United States, and told Chancey "to hasten the removal of the cargoes of the *Collingwood* and the *Triumvirate* from Boston."<sup>59</sup> He told Gosse that the best policy was to let the ships "go either to Halifax or the West Indies."<sup>60</sup> By early April circumstances had changed. Presumably to his great surprise the *Triumvirate*, which he had believed to be en route for Boston, arrived in Poole. Ledgard was able to write to Gosse telling him that the fish had been sold because of a change in the rules which allowed neutral vessels to take provisions to Portugal:

So you see my dear friend 'tis very fortunate that this ship came into Poole instead of going to Boston and much better to arrive when she did than a week earlier as in all probability I should have accepted less than 13/-.

Ledgard had been able to sell at 17/6d a quintal to "two or three speculators" who had come to Poole from London and bought the entire cargo.<sup>61</sup> Thus, despite Ledgard's forebodings, the fish eventually found a market and the merchants made a handsome profit.

## CHANCEY'S DEATH

Frustration caused by the lack of information from his partners is a major and recurring theme in Ledgard's letters. In April 1808 he told them that a ship from Carbonear had arrived in Poole after a passage of eighteen days, but that he was "exceeding disappointed to see that she has brought no letters from you." Ledgard's assumption at the end of November had been that not only the *Triumvirate* but also the *Collingwood* would leave Carbonear for Boston. He was correct about the *Collingwood*, though unaware that John Chancey was on board. Ledgard wrote to him in Boston:

On Sunday the 10th inst. I rec'd by the *Flora*, Capt. Clements, a letter from Mr Gosse dated at Carbonear the 19th December in which he informs me that you had sailed from Carbonear in the *Collingwood* bound to Boston, at which place I must sincerely pray you may be by this time safely arrived.<sup>62</sup>

In fact the *Collingwood* had an extremely uncomfortable passage. Ledgard described it in a letter to Gosse as “a most severe, trying and nearly fateful voyage” and that Chancey had told him that the vessel had “a hard thumping on the rocks” and had “rec’d such damage as will occupy at least six weeks before she can go from Saco to Boston.”<sup>63</sup>

Chancey did not return to Carbonear. Instead he chose to stay with the *Collingwood* and go to the West Indies, a decision that worried Ledgard.

I trust your determination to proceed with the Fish to the West Indies will be attended with success and as far as I can judge from the state of things; and particularly rising from the embargo in America, there is great growth in encouragement. Much depends on your getting down<sup>64</sup> early as I think it will not be long before the American govt will allow their ships laden with perishable commodities to sail.... I fear our speculation could be materially affected.

He added:

we all join in ardent prayer for your safety. I hope you will trust in him who shields you from both the burning heat and vapour damps and who will, I trust, prosper and preserve you and return you in due time to your family and friends.<sup>65</sup>

The summer of 1808 seemed to be a good one for the firm of Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey. In July Ledgard wrote to Gosse that he was “glad to see you were collecting a good number of seals as the price of seals is advancing considerably.” He was also pleased to tell his partner that “great alteration has taken place in politics — the Whole Kingdom of Spain appears to have revolted against France.” He added that Portugal appeared to have joined the revolt.<sup>66</sup>

However, in mid-September Ledgard wrote a long letter to Gosse, beginning by telling him that a few days ago he had been reading the Bible and that he had been “particularly struck” with the words “and he died.” “My dear friend,” he wrote,

I little thought Death’s arrow had pierced already so close to us. Perhaps you have heard the distressing news, and are purposed for the sequel, but if no intelligence has yet reached you, I wish you to Pause a Moment and ask yourself this Question — Why have I not heard from my worthy friend and Partner, Thomas Chancey? Alas my Dear Sir, Our worthy friend is no more ...<sup>67</sup>

Chancey had become ill three days before leaving Dominica but insisted on transferring to another ship to go on to St. Kitts. He was taken ashore there and died two days later. In his will (in which he described himself as being “of Cullumpton in the County of Devon ... but at present residing and carrying on business at

Carbonear”<sup>68</sup>) he asked for all his business debts to be paid before leaving his share of property in Harbour Grace to his son. He left “one Gould [*sic*] mourning Ring” to his “Esteemed Friend and Partner Mr George Welch Ledgard of Poole.”<sup>69</sup> The will was dated 14 December 1807, five days before Gosse wrote to Ledgard to tell him of Chancey’s departure.

## THE FIRM OF LEDGARD AND GOSSE

Chancey’s death did not mean the end of the firm and for the next eight or nine years it continued as Ledgard and Gosse. Ledgard spelled out to Gosse the terms of the partnership and hoped that “The Bond of Union is become, I trust, additionally firm between you and myself.” It did, and all subsequent correspondence between Poole and Carbonear was naturally between George Ledgard and John Gosse. However, the “tetchy” note that is sometimes discernible in Ledgard’s letters became more open in the rest of the period covered by his out-letter book.

Thus in October 1808 he referred to the receipt of Gosse’s “esteem’d, *’tho very short letter by the Success and Elizabeth.*”<sup>70</sup> That Ledgard felt he was not getting enough information from Newfoundland had manifested itself the month before when he was telling Gosse about their rivals, the much larger house of Kemp:

Their Agent seems to write to them very circumstantially for they know our business better than I do. Perhaps it might be as well if you were to write me a few lines more than your last epistle contains. *Excuse this point. I like to read what comes from you.*<sup>71</sup>

In January 1809 he asked that Gosse “write me fully how things go on that I may know how to act.”<sup>72</sup> A fortnight later the pessimistic side to his nature is again revealed when, following the news from Spain and Portugal, and with fish sales difficult, he predicted, “Next year must be a bad, very bad year, I expect.”<sup>73</sup> In August he told Gosse that “Nothing is doing with fish,” and then went on to complain about the quality of a recent consignment:

Ours comes out very damp, *’tho not a ship damaged fish in the vessel — I wish you had done it all, you would be surprised to see how it is thaw’d. I think you ship it with the Frost in it and in this warm climate it thaws. Nobody ever has to Poole Quay fish like what you sent me via *Triumvirate* last year, and the *Collingwood* and if there is any other cargoes at Poole we cannot get an offer. I hope in future you’ll be very particular to dry it before you ship it. Would it not be well to repack your fish in the winter?*<sup>74</sup>

A fortnight later he was still complaining:

The *Collingwood* cargo turned out very damp and began to sweat. I stored it and finding no purchaser, re-shipped it via said vessel for Alicante. She sailed the 30th ultimo direct. We pulled out about 400 qtls very damp and some of it begun to be very slimy and I have no doubt would have been soon spoiled if it had not been moved. I hope the *Collingwood* will have a short passage — or I fear it will be bad.<sup>75</sup>

September was obviously a difficult month for communication between the two men for on the 18th he made yet another barbed comment about Gosse's reluctance to commit pen to paper when he said, "A vessel is just arrived from Trinity, 18 days passage, but not a line from you. I wonder you do not hear when vessels are about to sail from Trinity."<sup>76</sup>

## NATURAL AND MAN-MADE HAZARDS

Despite Ledgard's frustration, he and Gosse continued to run a successful, medium-sized business at a time when, in addition to the natural hazards of any trans-Atlantic venture, they had to contend with those created by war. Their letters contain many references to ships being damaged by storms or Ledgard's fears that one of their vessels may be lost.<sup>77</sup> In October 1809 he began to worry about one of the most frequently mentioned vessels, the *Success*, telling Gosse that she:

is not arrived and I begin to fear something has happened to her, as in your last letter you wrote you should despatch her immediately which was under date of 22 August.<sup>78</sup>

In a letter to a Mr. John Hawker regarding the charter of another vessel, he adds:

We have a vessel call'd the *Success*, Wm Martin, Master. Have the goodness to ask if they [the *Albacore*, just arrived from Newfoundland] have heard anything of her.<sup>79</sup>

She finally arrived at Poole around 19 October "after a safe but tedious passage of thirty days owing to one of the convoy sailing bad."<sup>80</sup> Ledgard did not tell Gosse that she had the embarrassment of running ashore on the "Rocks off Peveril Point" near Swanage, a few miles from home, in the middle of the night, but "with timely assistance was got off."<sup>81</sup>

In addition to these natural hazards, there were the dangers brought about by the war. Although Trafalgar is traditionally regarded as having established absolute British supremacy at sea, the Atlantic was still not completely safe for merchant vessels and the fear of attack and capture was always present for Poole's Newfoundland traders. This threat was usually from privateers rather than French warships. Ledgard's out-letter book and other sources record numerous examples of Poole ships being taken. On 23 March 1809 he informed Gosse that "The *Albion* ...

was captured and burnt by a French frigate bound to the W. Indies." This vessel was not part of the Ledgard and Gosse fleet, but in November of the same year Ledgard was in correspondence with a Mr. Bulley regarding one of the vessels they had recently chartered. This was the *William and Catherine* and she had been captured in "longitude 20" by the 18-gun privateer *Charles*. The French put a crew of seven onto the *William and Catherine* but later allowed her master to be taken off by the *Thomas*, a British vessel heading for Falmouth. Ledgard knew nothing of this until he was told by Bulley, who seems to have been responsible for the *William and Catherine's* insurance. He later provided Bulley with a statement from the master and mate of the *Thomas* which described the circumstances of their involvement, and which ended with the former saying "I left the said vessel to proceed to France."<sup>82</sup>

Sometimes ships were recaptured. In February 1810 Ledgard told Gosse that "Cap'n Pack was captured in the *Maria* ('tho since retaken and now at Poole)."<sup>83</sup> Captain Pack seems to have made a habit of being captured, for in January 1808 Ledgard told his partners that "the *Alfred* [was] captured in the Channel, Pack and crew retaken, but not the ship." He also mentioned that "The *Galliant* captured, recaptured, is at Plymouth."<sup>84</sup>

It was not only the French who were a threat to ships crossing the Atlantic. In September 1813, when Ledgard's fear of war with the United States had been realized, their brig the *John and Mary* en route for Newfoundland was captured by an American privateer, the aptly named *Yankee*. She was eventually recaptured on 29 October and, after running aground in a heavy gale, she managed to reach Halifax where much of her cargo was disposed of by public auction. She left Halifax on 19 December, bound for Newfoundland, but because of appalling weather "and the crew being frost-bitten," she headed for Poole. On arrival, Ledgard and Gosse were allowed to land what was left of her cargo under a distress warrant.<sup>85</sup>

The *John and Mary* had sailed from Portsmouth "with the August convoy" and this method of protecting British merchant vessels was frequently used by firms such as Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey. There are frequent references to it in Ledgard's correspondence and while it was generally seen as prudent, there were drawbacks. Convoys were slow and Ledgard was pleased to be able to tell his partners in August 1807 that "the *Collingwood* got safe here ... and this morning came up to the Quay."

Sailing in convoy, with naval protection, was clearly an irritant to the merchants and they would sometimes try to avoid it. Ledgard wrote to a Mr. Nodin, who was clearly someone of importance in a government department, requesting a licence for the *Success* to sail from Poole to Newfoundland "without convoy."<sup>86</sup>

## ADMINISTRATION

There were other man-made difficulties that affected Newfoundland traders, namely the taxes, duties, and bounties imposed by government on both sides of the Atlantic. An example of how idiosyncratic such taxes could be is provided by events in Harbour Grace in 1807 when, in order to finance the building of a court house, it was decided that "All export merchants pay annually 20 shillings on every 1000 quintals fish shipped out of Conception Bay" although it was also decided that "Each planter can reimburse himself by charging planters 2 shillings per hundred quintals." Among the exporters were "Gosse, Chancey and Ledgard" who were to be charged £16 for their 16,000 quintals of fish. Kemps were charged £45, thus revealing that their exports were almost three times larger.<sup>87</sup> Generally, though, it was Ledgard who had to deal with these financial irritants. Writing to Gosse in September 1808 he noted that

Mr Chancey by his letters to me appears to have forgotten that there is a Bounty on all fish British caught and cured imported from Nfld to the West Indies in British ships ... I think he would do well to write to his correspondent at those places [Dominica and Barbados] and desire them to obtain from the Customs a certificate of the delivery of such quantity as was delivered out of the *Collingwood*.<sup>88</sup>

Once Ledgard was in possession of the certificates, the firm would receive the two shillings bounty per quintal allowed by Act of Parliament.

It was also Ledgard's role to ensure that money owed to the partnership by its customers was paid. In July 1809 he wrote to Messrs Mirrogh and Magniar, seemingly in Corunna, saying (very politely) that:

Gentlemen, We are much surprized that after a lapse of almost five years, we are yet without having received your remittance and account of sales of the cargo of fish you received from on board the *George* ... You must be aware that we are anxious to be paid this money it having been withheld so long from us.<sup>89</sup>

Ledgard was also responsible for sending young men or boys out to Newfoundland to work in the Carbonear premises. In March 1807 he sent two "youngsters" by the *Success* "for shop and counting house duties," apologizing to his partners that they were "both very young and small" but claimed that they were "very quick with their pens and understand accounts very well."<sup>90</sup> Two years later he sent out another four, James Pope, William Michells, William Pope, and Caleb Butler. The first two were "shipp'd for two summers and one winter and are to have twenty five pounds each when that time expires deducting therefrom the clothes they have now and during their servitude"; Pope and Butler were shipped for four years, the former was to have twelve guineas while the latter was to have ten.<sup>91</sup>



Young men such as these did not always complete their “servitude.” The *Royal Gazette* of St. John’s carried an advertisement in 1815 headed “Deserted — from the Service of Gosse and Ledgard of Carbonear, on the 24th Ult., John Connelly, a Youngster, James Cole, and William Whetton.”<sup>92</sup>

## SHIPS

At the other end of the employment scale, it was Ledgard who had to find ships and masters to command them. The brig *Success* featured frequently in Ledgard’s letters and he thought highly of her master, John Martin. As he told Gosse:

Martin, I approve of very much, is a smart fellow and think it likely he may long remain with us, the only fault I found in him is that he is young and apt to follow any maxim that will make the vessel look well not always recollecting that every article costs a great deal of money, and the ship is now well fitted. I hope you’ll hint to him the propriety of being frugal and not condemn anything till worn out.<sup>93</sup>

In March 1810 Ledgard revealed a strong sense of Christian forgiveness when seeking a master for a new vessel, the *Oak*. He wrote to Captain John Manning, saying that they had heard he was out of work and that he had “a failing which we do not wish to mention.” Ledgard went on to say that Mrs. Manning had told him that her husband had expressed “sorrow for the past and a determination to avoid future excess.” He offered Manning command of the *Oak* on condition that he would give her up to Captain Martin and to take over the *Success* “whenever we direct you so to do.”<sup>94</sup>

It says much about the profits being made in the Newfoundland trade during this period that Ledgard and Gosse, a comparatively small firm, could buy new ships. The *Oak* cost the firm £2,600 and was bought in Portsmouth. She was a 160-ton brig, under two years old, and built in Littlehampton. In the letter to Gosse telling him of her purchase, Ledgard added that he had bought another vessel for £1,100. This was the *Admiral Rowley*, 170 tons and American built. She was, he reckoned, about five years old and had the virtue of being “shallow, about the same depth as the *Success* ... and expect she will carry about 3000 qtls fish.”<sup>95</sup> The last entry in the out-letter book is to Gosse, on 28 April 1810, and told him that the *Oak* and the *Admiral Rowley* were ready for sea and would be leaving Poole on 1 May.

## CONCLUSION

George Ledgard’s out-letter book ends in April 1810 with the firm clearly prospering. It continued to trade until the wars were finally over and the partnership was

dissolved in 1817. There is a tantalizing reference to this occurrence in the unpublished journal of Thomas Gosse, John's brother. He refers to John's return to Poole in 1817 after 25 years in Newfoundland, that "On his dissolving partnership with George Ledgard, who declines business altogether, having realised a handsome fortune; he [John] enters into partnership again with a Fryer of Wimborn [sic], who likewise keeps a banking house."<sup>96</sup> In 1822 the firm is listed in the Poor Rates as having premises in West Quay Road and owning eleven ships. Among them were *Triumvirate*, and *Oak*.<sup>97</sup> There is an account of this new partnership in Claudius Watts' Memorandum, albeit with the wrong date for when and why it occurred.<sup>98</sup> Gosse remained in Poole, performing the role that George Ledgard had played in the previous partnership, and died there in 1834.

George Ledgard, after a three- or four-year gap, moved into a new field by entering into partnership with Martin Kemp Welch.<sup>99</sup> In May 1821 they founded the "Poole Town and County Bank," opening in June in premises in the High Street. The bank was a family affair with Ledgard's sons George and Richard later becoming partners. George Welch Ledgard went on to become a prominent figure in Poole politics, serving as mayor in 1820, 1821, 1822, 1826, and 1831. He was a staunch Tory and although originally a nonconformist (as were Gosse and Chancey), he became an Anglican and sponsored the building of Poole's second church, St. Paul's, in 1833. He died in 1838. The bank flourished (it had another branch in Ringwood) until 1861 when, with a curiously ironic twist, it was brought down by the collapse of the Trinity Bay branch of one of the greatest of all the Poole-Newfoundland merchant families, the Slades.<sup>100</sup>

This was such a momentous event for the town of Poole that its weekly newspaper brought out a special, single page, edition. It reported in full on the meeting of the bank's creditors, an event which attracted so many people (more than 200) that it had to be moved to a larger venue. It was revealed that that the bank had liabilities of £92,687.14.11d but assets of only £61,067.10.7d. It was reckoned that another £10,000 could be found from the sale of the Ledgard family's two private estates, creating total assets of £71,000. The newspaper added that "This amount is independent of a sum of nearly £20,000 due to the bank by Messrs Robert and James Slade trading as the Executors of Slade, which firm has suspended payment."<sup>101</sup> Thus not only had a bank collapsed that had been created by a man who had made his fortune through the Newfoundland trade, it was the archetypal Poole-Newfoundland merchant family that had caused it. In the event, the collapse turned out to be less severe than originally feared and eventually the creditors received 17/6d in the pound sterling.

Returning to a question posed earlier: Which side of the Atlantic was the centre and which the periphery? George Ledgard would have had one opinion while John Gosse and Thomas Chancey had another.

Looking first at Ledgard's position, he was a young man at the start of his involvement in the trade, probably just 21, and only 35 when he left it. He carried a

great deal of responsibility, yet frequently had to anticipate his partners' decisions and actions. He was also conscious of the difficulties under which they lived and worked, not least their need to receive their basic supplies from outside Newfoundland. In September 1809 he was disturbed to find that one of their ships had been badly damaged and had to turn back and put into Plymouth. As he wrote to the captain, "Our Employ in Carbonear will we fear suffer material inconvenience for the want of your vessel as we have no other on the spot to supply the place."<sup>102</sup> By November he was clearly moved by the situation in Carbonear. As he wrote to Gosse, via the *Success*, "You write so despondingly on the want of bread, that I have been induced to persuade Capt. Martin to make an attempt to get out even at this advanced season of the year."<sup>103</sup>

It is stating the obvious to point out that communication between Poole and Carbonear (or perhaps it should be the other way around, given Ledgard's continual irritation at the length, frequency, and quality of his partners' correspondence) was slow, but it clearly made life difficult for both sides. In February 1810 Ledgard began a letter to Gosse with the words "I hear a vessel is said to be preparing to start in a few days from Bristol, I therefore commence the year's correspondence by her."<sup>104</sup> In fact Ledgard wrote no letters to Gosse between 10 November 1809 and 16 February 1810 because there was no way of getting them to him. A year earlier, in early January 1809, he was surprised that a vessel was about to leave Bristol for Newfoundland but took advantage of its seeming foolhardiness. As he said to Gosse, "I can hardly think she will get out safe if [she] prosecutes her intention of sailing so early yet I embrace the opportunity of writing you ..."<sup>105</sup>

Gosse and Chancey were in a different situation with different pressures upon them. It is again stating the obvious that life in early nineteenth-century Newfoundland was harsh, not just because of the climate and the inhospitable terrain, but also because of rising social tensions. Some of these were religious for, as Patrick O'Flaherty points out, "Almost half the population of the island ... in 1814 ... was now Irish." In Conception Bay they "numbered close to 3,000."<sup>106</sup> Both Chancey and Gosse were dissenters and there was antagonism between the two denominations. Gosse's nephew, Philip Henry Gosse, who worked in Newfoundland from 1827 until 1835 (for Slade, Elson and Co.) maintained that "the Irish and English settlers did not get along well together."<sup>107</sup> There were also the strained relations between merchants such as Gosse and Chancey and those who fished and hunted for them, the "planters."

More significantly the Carbonear partners were dependent on Ledgard for information about markets and prices, news of the war, and instructions as to where they should send their cargoes. Yet, from their point of view, they were at the centre of operations. They had to procure the fish, the oils, and the skins and have them prepared for shipment and they probably found Ledgard's often pessimistic "news" unhelpful. To Gosse and Chancey, Poole was on the periphery of their business, along with other places where their cargoes were sent such as Portugal, Spain, New

England, and the West Indies. In the end, of course, the notion of the Newfoundland fishery being run from England was ending, and Ledgard made a wise decision to leave the trade when he did. John Sydenham had no doubts that the ending of the wars was responsible for the trade's decline, blaming (among others) St. John's merchants who began importing from the cheapest sources they could.<sup>108</sup> Having to operate on both sides of the Atlantic was ceasing to be economical or necessary. Having two "centres" produced tensions and difficulties that were to result in one of them becoming peripheral. That one was Poole.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See Terry McDonald, "I Had Better be Without Him ...': Rivalry, Deception and Social Status within the Poole-Newfoundland Trade," *Newfoundland Studies* 16.2 (2000), 135-150.

<sup>2</sup>See Terry McDonald, "1849 — the Decisive Year for the Slade Family of Poole and their Involvement in the Newfoundland Trade," in D. Pollard and G. Martin, eds., *Canada 1849* (Edinburgh 2001), 151-163.

<sup>3</sup>D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland, from the English, Colonial and Foreign Records* (London 1895).

<sup>4</sup>J. Bannister, "Citizen of the Atlantic: Benjamin Lester's Social World in England, 1768-69," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 96.3 (Fall 2003), 32-37.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>6</sup>K. Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, 1500-1830* (St. John's 1973).

<sup>7</sup>G. Handcock, "The Poole Mercantile Community and the Growth of Trinity, 1700-1839," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 80.3 (Winter 1985), 19-30.

<sup>8</sup>S. Ryan, *Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914* (St. John's 1986).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>10</sup>S.T. Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto 1995).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>12</sup>For example, J. Mannion, "Waterford and the South of England: Spatial Patterns in Shipping Commerce, 1766-1777," *International Journal of Maritime History* 12.1 (1994), 1-55.

<sup>13</sup>J. Glanville Davies, *England and Newfoundland: Policy and Trade, 1660-1783* (PhD thesis, University of Southampton 1980).

<sup>14</sup>D. Beamish, J. Hillier, and H.F.V. Johnstone, *Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset* (Poole 1976).

<sup>15</sup>J. Bannister, "Citizen of the Atlantic," 33.

<sup>16</sup>D. Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* (London 1726), 376.

<sup>17</sup>This article was originally a paper given at the British Association for Canadian Studies' annual conference at Leeds, in April 2003. The conference theme was "Centres and Peripheries."

<sup>18</sup>Curiously, she is described as being “of Honiton” in the information held at the Poole Local History Centre. Her birthplace, though, is given as the Poole “suburb” of Hamworthy.

<sup>19</sup>The source for this curious fact is information recorded, presumably from a primary source, by the former Poole Borough Librarian, H.F.V. Johnstone, and recorded in the files of the Poole Local History Centre.

<sup>20</sup>Op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>He was baptized at the Meeting House in Poole.

<sup>22</sup>Poole: Overseers of the Poor Rates and Accounts, ref. PE/PL OV 1/3.

<sup>23</sup>*The Universal British Directory*, 1798.

<sup>24</sup>*Holden’s Directory*, 1809. According to J. Hillier, in *Ebb-Tide at Poole* (Poole 1985), 202, George Welch Ledgard’s son Richard “Continued the family rope-making business for some years which was situated at the top of the High Street.”

<sup>25</sup>Or other trans-Atlantic destinations. As Adam Smith wrote in *Wealth of Nations*, a merchant was someone who “drew his honest gain from the distant Poles.”

<sup>26</sup>Poole Shipping Index, ref. Mar 387.54, Poole Local History Centre. He also owned the *Association*, 244 tons; the *Dorset*, 194 tons; and the *Elizabeth*, 170 tons.

<sup>27</sup>Parliamentary Committee on Trade to Newfoundland, Last Report (1793), 395 (Colonial Office Papers, CO 194, Vol. 41).

<sup>28</sup>J. Sydenham, *The History of the Town and County of Poole* (Poole 1839), 398.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 399.

<sup>30</sup>Margaret Mullins, *And They Stayed — a Selection of St John’s Family Histories* (St. John’s 1989), 10.

<sup>31</sup>Lionel’s first child was born in 1782. Thomas married for the first time on 20 January 1798. One source has Thomas dying at the age of 39 in 1810 (this is actually two years after his actual death) but suggests he was born around 1770 (therefore a child when he arrived in Newfoundland). Lionel apparently died in 1822, at the age of 74, thus giving him a birth year of 1748. It may be that Lionel and Thomas were father and son rather than brothers, but this has not been established.

<sup>32</sup>The will of Thomas Chancey of Carbonear, 1807. <http://ngb.chebucto.org/Wills/chancey-thomas.html>.

<sup>33</sup>This information is from [www.geocities.com/lancecovesettlement/page7.html](http://www.geocities.com/lancecovesettlement/page7.html), a website created in December 2001. Its author, Lloyd C. Rees of Manuels, Newfoundland, says that “This little paper was put together around thirty five years ago,” but it seems never to have appeared in print. He acknowledges the help of respected archivists and academics in creating it. He was, in 2005, unwilling to discuss its origins.

<sup>34</sup>His sister Sarah (b.1762) had married George Kemp. (See *The Evening Telegram*, 8 March 1968.)

<sup>35</sup>This original partnership is referred to in Chancey’s will.

<sup>36</sup>Archives and Manuscripts Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland [A&MD], Claudius Watts’ Memorandum, 2.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 1-2. Corbin, then aged 20, replaced Gosse as Kemp’s agent in Carbonear.

<sup>38</sup>Letter Book of Messrs Ledgard, Gosse, and Chancey, 1807-1810, Doc. Ref D522/1, Dorset County Record Office [henceforth LGC].

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 8 August 1807.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 10 March 1807.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 9 September 1807.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 20 September 1807.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 21 August 1807, to William Mortimer & Co., of Bishopsteignton, Devon.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 8 August 1807.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 6 October 1807.

<sup>48</sup>She was built in 1793 in Nova Scotia.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 19 March 1807.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 27 April 1807.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 9 September 1807.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 25 July 1808.

<sup>53</sup>William Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula* (1826; rpt. London 1973), 21.

<sup>54</sup>S. Ryan, *Fish Out of Water*.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 205-207. It rose substantially after the wars, reaching 84,713 quintals in 1829.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 226-228.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 17 October 1807.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 21 October 1807.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 26 March 1808. At the time of writing, Ledgard assumed that the *Triumvirate* had also gone to Boston.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 17 March 1808.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 6 April 1808.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 12 January 1808.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 17 March 1808.

<sup>64</sup>This could be “quitting Saco” rather than “getting down.” The meaning remains the same.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 1 June 1808.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 2 July 1808.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 15 September 1808.

<sup>68</sup>Suggesting that, like Gosse and many others, he saw his presence in Newfoundland as a temporary phenomenon.

<sup>69</sup>Chancey’s will, see n. 32.

<sup>70</sup>LGC, 24 October 1808. This demonstrates that the same letter was often sent on different vessels to ensure its arrival.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 9 September 1808.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 7 January 1809.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 25 January 1809. His pessimism was misplaced, for it was to be one of the most profitable years for the Poole-Newfoundland trade.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 16 August 1809.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 1 September 1809.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 4 September, but the comment referred to is dated 18 September.

<sup>77</sup>January 1808, September 1809, for example.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 6 October 1809.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 9 October 1809.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 19 October 1809.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 20 October 1809.

<sup>82</sup>Out-letter book of Ledgard, Gosse and Chancey, 17 November 1809.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 16 February 1810.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 12 January 1808.

<sup>85</sup>Poole Customs' House Letter Book, 22 February 1814.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 21 October 1809.

<sup>87</sup>A&MD, MF-155, Gosse Family Papers. The information is in a clipping from a St. John's newspaper (probably the *Evening Telegram*) entitled "Harbour Grace News: History of Old Buildings."

<sup>88</sup>LGC, 9 September 1808.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 15 July 1809.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 20 March 1807.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 23 March 1809.

<sup>92</sup>St. John's *Royal Gazette*, 2 August 1815.

<sup>93</sup>LGC, 23 March 1809.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 23 March 1810.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 6 April 1810.

<sup>96</sup>Cited in a letter dated 24 November 1964 to N.C. Crewe of the Newfoundland Archives, from Mrs. Jock Gosse (Fayette Gosse) who lived in Australia. She mentions the journal as being in the possession of Mr. Johnstone of Poole Central Library and this certainly makes sense to the author of this article. H.F.V. Johnstone died some years ago and the whereabouts of much of his large collection of Poole material is uncertain. Mrs. Gosse's letter is part of the Gosse family papers (A&MD, MF-155).

<sup>97</sup>Poole: Overseers of the Poor Rates and Accounts, PE/PL: OV1/1/4.

<sup>98</sup>According to the Watts Memorandum, "Shortly after the death of Mr. Chancey in the W. Indies, John Gosse went to Poole and there entered into partnership with William Fryer, a wealthy banker, of Poole. Fryer says to Mr Gosse: - 'I have no knowledge of ships, Newfoundland trade &c. You will have to reside in Poole and have the chief management of the business, there, who will you place in charge of the Carbonear trade?'" He chose Robert Pack "who was brought up under me in the business of the Kemps in Carbonear." All other sources have this happening in 1817, when Gosse did indeed return to Poole. The "Watts Memorandum" was originally a manuscript document written by Claudius Watts (1811-1908) entitled "A short account of our family history and genealogy with some other matters in connection with Trade affairs, &c between Poole and Carbonear." It was lent to N.C. Crewe in 1964 and a typewritten copy was made. The reference to Gosse returning to Poole after Chancey's death would appear to be a case of an old man's memory playing tricks, although, as Crewe notes, "There is no clue to the date of compilation." He does mention that "I would say that Claudius wrote it in old age" (A&MD, MF-155).

<sup>99</sup>Born Martin Kemp, youngest brother of the Newfoundland merchants George and James Kemp, he took the surname "Welch" to inherit his father-in-law's wealth (Hillier, *Ebb-Tide at Poole*, 210).

<sup>100</sup>Curiously, *The Slade Monograph*, created by N.C. Crewe in 1961, mentions that one of the firms existing in Carbonear in the 1820s or early 1830s was styled "Ledgard and Slade" (4). More work needs to be done on this aspect of George Ledgard's interests.

<sup>101</sup>*Poole and South Western Herald*, 18 February 1861.

<sup>102</sup>LGC, 21 September 1809.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 10 November 1809.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 16 February 1810.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 7 January 1809.

<sup>106</sup>P. O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History to 1843* (St. John's 1999), 123.

<sup>107</sup>Cited in Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay*, 24.

<sup>108</sup>Sydenham, *History of the Town and County of Poole*, 389-390.