

market for woollen textiles. The centre of gravity of international trade shifted southwards as fairs in Geneva and Lyon complemented those of Champagne.

In about 1300 a still more important development had occurred: in 1291 the Genoese, soon followed by the Venetians, opened a new sea route from the Mediterranean to the North Sea via the Straits of Gibraltar. This hastened the decline of the Champagne fairs. It also included Seville and Lisbon, and ended at Bruges. In this way the centre of Europe's trading system was displaced and its network embraced both mainland Europe and the Mediterranean. The new sea route also made trade more rapid and effective, partly as a result of two technological innovations. One was the compass, which made it possible to sail direct, out of sight of land; the other was the Genoese invention of heavy merchant ships. These could carry not only the light luxury goods that had previously been shipped on such long voyages, but also heavy, bulky products such as salt, alum, oil, wine, fish, wool, wood and metal.



3 THE JUNE FAIR (LENDIT) NEAR PARIS

Register of the ceremonies, 14th century. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
The Lendit Fair was held in June between the feast of St Barnabas and that of St John in the Saint-Denis plain. It began with the blessing of trade. The stalls and shops were solidly built and the waggons bore corporate insignia. As can be seen above, the innkeeper's stall was one of the first to open.

4 TRADE ROUTES AND COMMERCIAL CENTRES AT THE END OF THE 13TH CENTURY

