

The Maritime Trade of the Smaller Bristol Channel Ports in the Sixteenth Century

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Abstract

Historians of maritime trade in the late medieval and early modern periods have concentrated almost wholly on overseas trade and on the trade of larger ports to understand the commercial and economic trends of this period. This thesis examines trade in a group of smaller regional ports to determine whether such a focus is justified.

In addition to national Exchequer accounts, a range of supplementary sources are employed. These suggest that the national customs records, upon which historians have relied to trace maritime trade, present a substantially misleading picture so far as the smaller Bristol Channel ports are concerned. Both domestic and overseas trade conducted through these ports was much greater than has previously been allowed, both in absolute terms and also relative to Bristol. In particular linking the Bridgwater water bailiff's accounts with Exchequer sources reveals a large scale trade from the southern Welsh ports to England during this period which has not previously been recognised. This has implications for previous assessments of the economic development of this region, but also adds significantly to understanding of the coastal accounts which have hitherto been largely uncritically adopted by historians of this period. The smaller port towns around the Bristol Channel are shown to have had sharply differentiated patterns of trade, both from each other and from Bristol. By the end of the sixteenth century they were emerging as places which were to an extent specialist distributors or niche marketeers in the same way as inland towns. The study of the trade of small ports in this period does not therefore simply reproduce on a lesser scale work which has already been undertaken for the large port of Bristol, but adds to understanding of patterns of trade and domestic economic development in this period.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author:

SIGNED: DATE:

To the memory of Robert Faram Taylor,

and to all men of commerce.

Acknowledgments

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“There are known knowns. There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we now know we don’t know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we don’t know.”

Donald Rumsfeld, February 2002.

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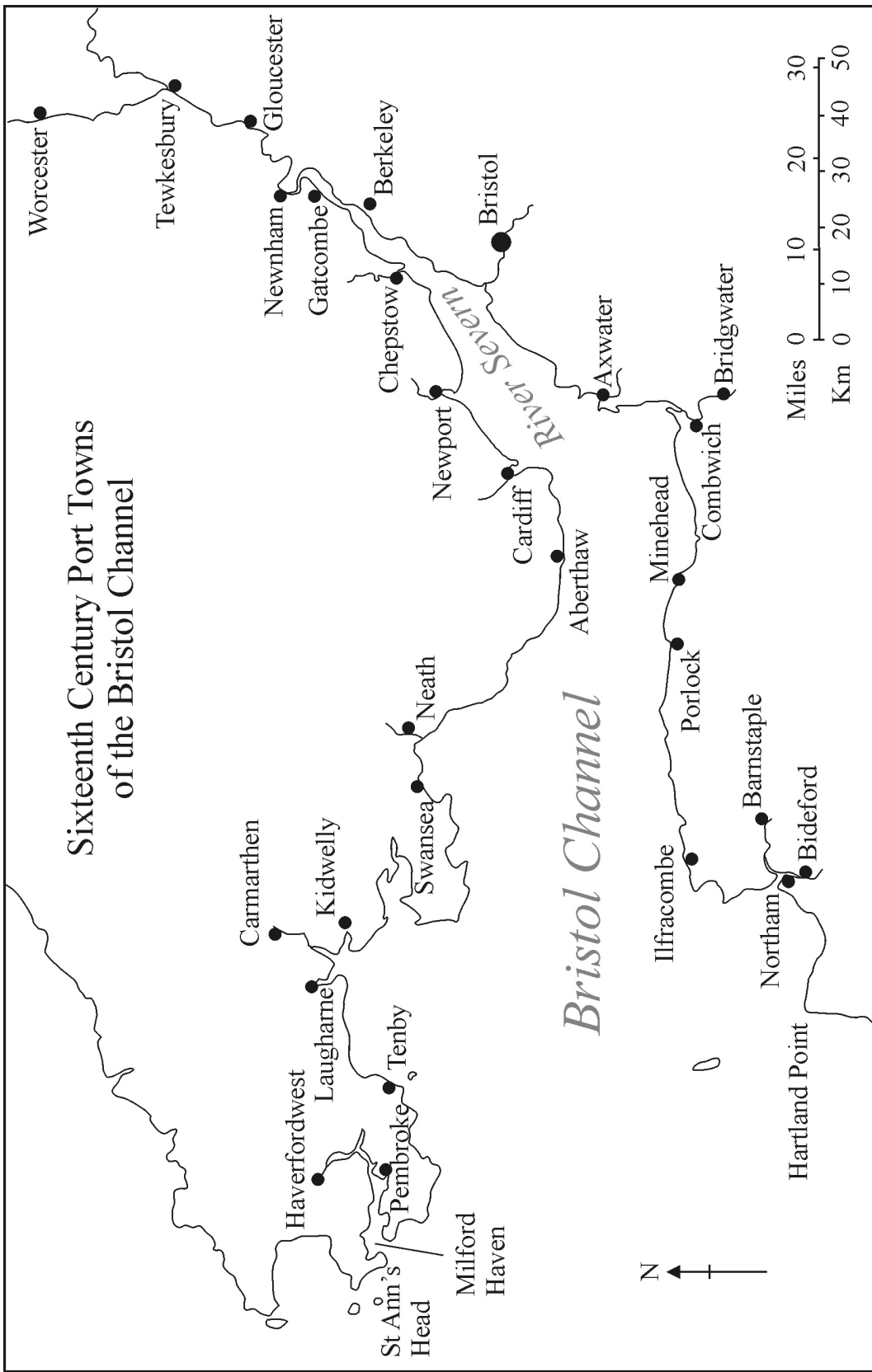
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Abbreviations Used in the Text

Acts PC	Acts of the Privy Council
GRO	Gloucester Record Office
NDRO	North Devon Record Office
SRO	Somerset Record Office
TNA	The National Archives



Chapter 1 : Introduction.

Anyone wishing to understand the maritime trade of the Bristol Channel in the late medieval and early modern periods will have great difficulty proceeding any further than Bristol in their quest. Historians have tended to assume that Bristol's trade, and in particular Bristol's overseas trade, was the only trade that mattered. Although E.M. Carus-Wilson was able to take a wider view when writing of the trade of the East Anglian ports, when she turned her attention westwards she became the first of many who concentrated her attentions wholly on Bristol.¹ Despite studying only Bristol, Jean Vanes nevertheless confidently concluded that by the end of the century Bristol's pre-eminence as the commercial centre for the Severn valley and the whole of the Bristol Channel was unrivalled.² P. McGrath similarly focused only on Bristol, as did David Harris Sacks who made the implicit assumption that it is sufficient to know about Bristol's trade in order to be able to draw conclusions about the wider region, since Bristol was 'typical in that it set the pattern for all who related to it'.³ More recently Evan Jones work on maritime trade is also limited to Bristol and to Bristol's overseas trade.⁴

¹ Eleanora Mary Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1964), 182-201; Eleanora Mary Carus-Wilson, *The Merchant Adventurers of Bristol in the 15th century*, Local history pamphlets (Historical Association, Bristol Branch), 4 (Bristol, 1962); E.M. Carus-Wilson, *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages*, Vol. VII, Bristol Record Society (Bristol, 1937); E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol', in *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Eileen Power and M.M. Postan, (London, 1933), 183-246.

² Jean Vanes, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century' (PhD, University of London, 1975), 85; J. Vanes, *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. XXXI, Bristol Record Society Publications (Kendal, 1979); Jean Vanes, *The Port of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, (Historical Association, Bristol Branch), 39 (Bristol, 1977).

³ Patrick McGrath, 'The Society of Merchant Venturers and the Port of Bristol in the 17th Century', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 72 (1954), 105-28; Patrick McGrath, *The Merchant Venturers of Bristol: a History of the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol from its Origin to the Present Day* (Bristol, 1975); David Harris Sacks, *Trade, Society and Politics in Bristol, 1500-1640*, 2 vols, Vol. 1 (New York, 1985); David

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In contrast to the attention which the sixteenth century maritime trade of Bristol has attracted, the trade of the minor ports in the Channel has been almost wholly ignored by economic historians. There has been no survey at all for instance of the Somerset ports, and study of Gloucester has not extended beyond a transcription of the coastal customs accounts.⁵ In mitigation there have been two studies of the North Devon port of Barnstaple. Alison Grant traced the westward expansion of the interests of the town's merchant elite, but her survey did not begin until 1560 and drew no comparisons with other ports.⁶ Joyce Youings wrote about the port as part of a wider study of Devonian maritime trade published in 1992, but as such the smaller northern port was overshadowed by consideration of the larger south Devon ports of Plymouth and Dartmouth.⁷ More fundamentally this survey was largely descriptive and impressionistic acknowledging that 'it is far easier to describe the overseas trade of the Devon ports in the sixteenth century than it is to quantify it or to determine long term trends'.⁸ It did not include the North Devon port of Ilfracombe, and did not draw any comparison between Barnstaple and other regional ports. Turning to the Welsh ports of the Channel the situation is similarly sparse. E.A. Lewis included tables summarising some branches of trade in the introduction to the volume of Welsh port books which he transcribed in

Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley, CA., 1991), 14.

⁴ Evan T. Jones, 'Illicit Business: Accounting for Smuggling in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Bristol', *The Economic History Review*, LIV (2001), 17-38; Evan T. Jones, 'The Bristol Shipping Industry in the Sixteenth Century' (Phd Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1998); Evan Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy: Reconstructing the Smugglers' Trade of Sixteenth Century Bristol* (draft manuscript, 2008).

⁵ M.D.G. Wanklyn et al., 'The Gloucester Port Book Database, 1575-1765', (Colchester: UK Data Archive, 1996).

⁶ Alison Grant, 'Breaking the Mould: North Devon Maritime Enterprise, 1560-1640', in *Tudor and Stuart Devon: The Common Estate and Government; Essays Presented to Joyce Youings*, ed. by Todd Gray, Margery M. Rowe, and Audrey Erskine, (Exeter, 1992), 119-40.

⁷ Joyce Youings and Peter W. Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade in Sixteenth-Century Devon', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by Michael Duffy, et al., 2 vols, Vol. 1, (Exeter, 1992), 98-107.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

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1927.⁹ Spencer Dimmock has written in detail about the port of Chepstow, and noted in 2003 how the Welsh ports have been 'largely ignored in the study of English commerce and urban networks'.¹⁰ This observation remains true, and apart from Dimmock's study there has been no survey of the trade of any Welsh port to the east of Carmarthen. The one work dealing with Pembrokeshire, written in 1964, was very wide in its scope ranging from the Iron Age to 1900, and was consequently neither very detailed nor comprehensive so far as the sixteenth century is concerned.¹¹ There have been two county based studies of the trade of Carmarthenshire. That of M.I. Williams lacked quantitative data and was essentially a guide to the available sources rather than an analysis of trade.¹² M.C.S. Evans compiled some quantitative data from the port books in 1960, but confined his analysis solely to this source and seemed unaware of the shortcomings of port books; he also failed to set his findings within a wider context or to draw wider conclusions.¹³ There is of course an abundance of local histories of particular ports, but these do not deal in more than a passing manner with commerce and trade in their own right, and few are concerned with the sixteenth century.¹⁴ There has therefore been no systematic study

⁹ E.A. Lewis, *The Welsh Port Books, 1550-1603, with an analysis of the customs revenue accounts of Wales for the same period.*, Vol. XLVII, Cymmrodorion Record Series, 12 (London, 1927).

¹⁰ Spencer Dimmock, 'Urban and Commercial Networks in the Later Middle Ages: Chepstow, Severnside and the Ports of Southern Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (2003), 53-68; Spencer Dimmock, 'The Custom Book of Chepstow, 1535-6', *Studia Celtica* (2004), 131-50.

¹¹ B.J. George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading before 1900', *Field Studies*, 2 (1964), 1-39.

¹² M.I. Williams, 'Carmarthenshire's Maritime Trade in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 14 (1978), 61-70.

¹³ M.C.S. Evans, 'Carmarthen and the Welsh Port Books 1550-1603', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 3 (1960), 72-87.

¹⁴ Jamie Rose Campbell, *Barnstaple: A Selective Bibliography with a short History of the Town* (Barnstaple, 1998); Duncan Fielder, *A History of Bideford* (Chichester, 1985). L. Lamplugh, *Barnstaple: Town on the Taw* (Chichester, 1983). Hilary Binding and Douglas Stevens, *Minehead: A New History* (Minehead, 1977); Edgar L. Chappell, *History of the Port of Cardiff* (Merton Priory, 1994); R.W. Dunning, *Bridgwater: History and Guide* (Stroud, 1992); L. Lamplugh, *A History of Ilfracombe* (Chichester, 1984); A.L. Wedlake, *A History of Watchet* (Dulverton, 1973). J.W. Dawson, *Commerce and Customs: A History of the Ports of Newport and Caerleon* (Newport, 1932); William Henry Jones, *History of the port of Swansea* (Carmarthen, 1922). Eija Kennerley, 'River Trade and Shipping in Caerleon from the 16th to the 19th Century', *Gwent Local History*, 47 (1979); W. H. Morris, 'The Port of Kidwelly', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, XXVI (1990); J.F. Rees, *The Story of Milford* (Cardiff, 1954); W.S.K. Thomas, *The History of Swansea: from Rover Settlement to the Restoration* (Llandysul, 1990); I. Waters, *The Port of Chepstow* (Chepstow, 1977).

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based on the available quantitative data for the smaller ports of the region, nor any thorough analysis made of related source material, and more importantly none which looks beyond the immediate locality of a particular port.

The smaller ports of the Bristol Channel are not alone in this neglect. Historians have tended to assume that minor ports were simply satellites of great ports, reflecting them and serving them in a minor way; that the large ports acted as regional economic hubs and that the smaller ports were peripheral actors around the rim; or put another way that they were acted upon, but were not themselves actors in the wider economic story. Despite their prevalence, little attention has been paid by economic historians to smaller ports. So far as England is concerned the economic histories of minor ports during this period are confined to those of Hull, East Anglia, Blakeney, Rye, Poole and Chester.¹⁵ Boston, Newcastle upon Tyne, and the ports of North East Yorkshire can be added for the medieval period; and Chichester, Faversham, Weymouth, Lyme Regis and the Cornish ports can be added for the seventeenth century.¹⁶ This is an extraordinarily limited list given the length of the British coastline and the span of time involved. Other than N.J. Williams study of the east Anglian ports, there has been no attempt to look at minor ports on anything wider than a county basis, nor any attempt to place them within a wider economic context.

¹⁵ Basil Cozens-Hardy, *The Maritime Trade of the Port of Blakeney which included Cley and Wiveton, 1587-1590*, Vol. 8, Norfolk Record Society Publications (Norwich, 1936), pp. 15-37; R. Davis, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull, 1500-1700*, East Yorkshire Local History Series 17 (York, 1964); Stephen Hipkin, 'The Maritime Economy of Rye, 1560-1640', *Southern History*, 20-21 (1998-99), 108-42; Robert Tittler, 'The Vitality of an Elizabethan Port: The Economy of Poole c.1550-1600', *Southern History*, 7 (1985), 95-118; N.J. Williams, *The Maritime Trade of The East Anglian Ports, 1550-1590* (Oxford, 1988); D.M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, ed. by John Saville, Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History no. 4 (Hull, 1970).

¹⁶ J. H. Andrews, 'The Trade of the Port of Faversham, 1650-1750', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 69 (1956), 125-31; J. H. Andrews, 'The Port of Chichester and the Grain Trade, 1650-1750', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 92 (1954), 93-105; W.I. Haward, 'The Trade of Boston in the Fifteenth Century', *Reports and Papers of the Associated Architectural Societies*, 41 (1935), 169-78; W.B. Stephens, 'The Trade and Fortunes of Poole, Weymouth and Lyme Regis 1600-1640', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 95 (1974), 71-73; J.F. Wade, 'The Overseas Trade of Newcastle upon Tyne in the Late Middle Ages', *Northern History*, 30 (1994), 31-48; Bryan Waites, 'The Medieval Ports and Trade of North-East Yorkshire', *Mariner's Mirror*, 63 (1977), 137-49; J.C.A. Whetter, 'Cornish Trade in the 17th Century: An Analysis of the Port Books', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, n.s 4 (1964), 388-413.

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There has been no comparative study of the trade of smaller ports, nor any which looks to trace their interaction. There has thus been a concentration on the trade of the larger ports, and especially on the overseas trade through these ports, at the expense of consideration of the role played by smaller ports.

Having noted the lack of work that has been done on the region's smaller ports, it nonetheless remains true that the recorded overseas trade of Bristol far exceeded that at any other port in the Bristol Channel. Figures from the mid century overseas customs accounts indicate that Bristol's trade was some twenty times greater than that at neighbouring Bridgwater for example, and even at the end of the century when Gloucester had been hived off from Bristol to form an independent port, its recorded trade still dwarfed that of any other port in the Channel. The evidence from this source indicates that even the combined recorded international trade of all of the other ports in the Channel would not have challenged the pre eminence of Bristol.

However, when consideration is given to factors other than crude totals from overseas customs data, the focus which historians have placed on Bristol begins to look misplaced. The Bristol Channel as defined here has been drawn in a broad sense to include economically significant centres from the westward tip of Pembrokeshire via the lower reaches of the Severn, and along the English coastline as far as Hartland Point in North Devon. By the end of the sixteenth century this region encompassed over 200 recorded landing places through which trade was conducted. Amongst these were the county towns of Worcester with a population of around 6,000, Gloucester with around 4,000, Carmarthen with around 2,250 and Cardiff with perhaps 1,100.¹⁷ Along with the towns of Haverfordwest and Barnstaple (each with an estimated population of around 2,000), Minehead, Bridgwater, Chepstow, Tenby and Pembroke, these

¹⁷ W. G. Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1956), 1-19, 5; W.S.K. Thomas, 'Tudor and Jacobean Swansea: The Social Scene', *Morgannwg*, 5 (1962), 23-48, 25.

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figures represent an immediate market well in excess of the estimated 9,500 plus inhabitants at Bristol.¹⁸ Moreover, waterborne commerce was clearly important to these places where the principal merchants were often synonymous with the mayoralty and council. Men such as Luke Garnons at Gloucester, or John Newport and Richard Godbeare at Bridgwater, or John Delbridge at Barnstaple who became the town's MP, were all at the forefront of both maritime trade and civic life.¹⁹ An example of the importance which such elites attached to maritime trade is outlined in Chapter Four which charts the considerable energy and expense that Gloucester council men expended on securing control of the Exchequer customs in their city. Could it really be the case that the customs accounts reflected true levels of trade when revenue at Gloucester was collected on trade valued at just over £14 in 1597/98, whilst that at Bristol was valued at £32,263 in 1594/95?²⁰ If this was really the underlying commercial reality then why had the city's authorities fought so hard to secure independent port status, or their counterparts at Bristol mounted so vigorous a defence to retain their jurisdiction over the city? Is it feasible that the difference would be of this order of magnitude when the population of Bristol was less than that of the combined populations of Gloucester and Worcester, (which was served by traffic passing through the port of Gloucester up the Severn)? Moreover the term 'Bristol Channel' is anachronistic so far as the sixteenth century is concerned when the waterway described above was referred to as either the Severn Sea or simply the Severn.²¹ If contemporaries did not perceive the waterway as being simply a conduit to and from Bristol,

¹⁸ Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns', 5; Philip Jenkins, 'Wales', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1540-1840*, ed. by Peter Clark, 3 vols, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 2000), 133-50, 134; John M. Wasson, *Records of Early English Drama: Devon* (London, 1986), xii.

¹⁹ Alison Grant, 'John Delbridge, Barnstaple Merchant, 1564-1639', in *Innovation in Trade and Shipping: Exeter Maritime Studies, 6*, ed. by Stephen Fisher, (Exeter, 1989), 91-109, 96.

²⁰ TNA E190/1241/8 cf. E190/1131/10. 'Ireland-Bristol Trade in the Sixteenth Century', University of Bristol, (2008) <<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/research.htm>> [January 2009].

²¹ For example preparations for the defence against the armada at Milford Haven referred to the enemy entering the 'Severn's mouth' ('Queen Elizabeth - Volume 254: November 1595', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869) 121-138 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [03 December 2008]); or see the map of the Somerset and north Devon coasts, Cotton MSS Aug. Vol. 1 Temp HVIII, 'The Coast of England upon Severne'.

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then why should historians make this assumption? Despite acknowledging the deficiencies of overseas customs accounts as a source for understanding true levels of trade, have Carus-Wilson, Vanes, Sacks and others perhaps fallen into the very trap which they describe, and might the customs accounts at the smaller ports be hiding more than they reveal? This thesis aims to address this question by focusing on the 'Channel' part of the Bristol Channel, rather than on its better known and more extensively studied precursor.

In this respect it picks up the baton passed on by Christopher and Alan Dyer, Peter Clark, Paul Slack, and others who have shifted the attention which urban historians had previously placed upon large towns and cities at the expense of smaller communities.²² Whilst it is now recognised that study of such places considerably shapes and amends previous interpretations which had been made concerning urban hierarchies, and around issues such as specialisation in marketing and production, there has been no similar reassessment of smaller port towns in relation to large port towns. This thesis will therefore examine the role of minor ports in the regional economy of the Bristol Channel during the sixteenth century. It will establish whether the port towns around the periphery of the Channel had their own dynamic, or whether they were simply mini versions of Bristol, essentially trading in the same goods to the same places but on a smaller scale. It will establish the extent to which the trade of the minor ports differed from that of Bristol, and chart changes in trading relationships over the course of the century.

The concentration of historians on larger ports described above is a reflection of their focus on overseas customs accounts as a source for understanding

²² Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700* (London, 1976); Christopher Dyer, 'Small Places with Large Consequences: the Importance of Small Towns in England, 1000-1540', *Historical Research*, 75 (2002), 1-24; Alan Dyer, 'Small Market Towns, 1540-1700', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1540-1840*, ed. by Peter Clark, 3 vols, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 2000), 425-50; Alan Dyer, 'Small Towns in England, 1600-1800', in *Provincial Towns in Early Modern England and Ireland: Change, Convergence and Divergence* ed. by Peter Borsay and Lindsay J. Proudfoot, (Oxford, 2002), 53-67.

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maritime trade. This is understandable given that these records exist in far greater numbers for the major ports such as London and Bristol than they do for smaller ports where far fewer records were kept, and those that survive are often fragmentary. Although it is recognised that there are limitations to what the overseas customs accounts can tell us about true levels of trade, they nevertheless remain the bedrock for any work in this area.²³ This thesis is no exception and the compilation of a database containing 124 customs accounts underpins the following study.²⁴ Whilst it was not possible to include every surviving account, in common with similar studies for the period, as representative a sample as possible was taken to discern trends of trade over the century.²⁵ The overseas customs accounts do not represent the totality of maritime trade however, even if allowance is made for evasion and under reporting. This thesis therefore adopts a multi source approach to supplement the data which they contain, and so provides a more complete picture of the waterborne trade of the Bristol Channel and its tributaries.

As well as overseas accounts, coastal customs accounts are also used here to assess flows of trade within the Channel, and to determine the relationship between different ports. Comparatively little work has been done using this source. Since Willan's overview of the coasting trade published in 1938 the only substantive work on the subject has been the Gloucester Port Book Database

²³ J.H. Andrews, 'Two Problems in the Interpretation of the Port Books', *The Economic History Review*, 9 (1956), 119-22; Sven Erik Astrom, 'The Reliability of the English Port Books', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, XVI (1968), 125-36; E. Carson, 'Customs Records as a Source of Historical Research', *Archives*, 13 (1977), 74-80; G.D Ramsay, 'The Smuggler's Trade: A Neglected Aspect of English Commercial Development', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, New series*, 2 (1952), 131-57; N.J. Williams, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan Port Books', *English Historical Review*, 66 (1951), 387-95; Neville Williams, *Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling* (London, 1959).

²⁴ A full list is given in Appendix A.

²⁵ See for instance 'Ireland-Bristol Trade in the Sixteenth Century', University of Bristol, (2006) <<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/index.htm>> [March 2008]; P. Wakelin, 'Pre-Industrial Trade on the River Severn: a Computer-Aided Study of the Gloucester Port Books, c.1640-c.1770' (PhD, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 1991).

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compiled in 1995.²⁶ Even this extensive resource however has resulted in only one monograph on the data which it contains - and this incorporates coastal accounts from more than one port jurisdiction only for the limited period of 1695-1704.²⁷ This thesis will therefore make a significant contribution to this neglected topic.

Local port records have also been employed as a further quantitative source. The advantage of these is that they supply information about trade in a range of goods which were actually traded but which were not liable to customs, and which do not therefore appear in the customs accounts; they have the added advantage of providing a means of verifying the information in the customs accounts in relation to those goods which were liable. N.J. Williams used the Yarmouth and Lynn water bailiffs' accounts in this manner for the sixteenth century, and a similar comparative exercise was conducted by D.M. Woodward for Elizabethan Chester, by J.L. Wiggs for Southampton in the sixteenth century, by H.S. Cobb for Southampton in the fifteenth century, and by Maryanne Kowaleski for the port of Exeter in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.²⁸ The Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts however have not been used in this way before, and indeed have not previously been recognised other than by local historians.²⁹ They therefore make a distinctive contribution of this thesis.

²⁶ T.S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade, 1600-1750* (Frome, 1938). Armstrong acknowledges the paucity of work in this field and his reliance on secondary works in his study of coastal shipping (John Armstrong, 'The Importance of Coastal Shipping in British Domestic Transport, 1550-1830', *International Journal of Maritime History* III (1991), 63-94); Wanklyn et al., 'Gloucester Port Book Database'.

²⁷ David Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade in Pre-Industrial England: Bristol and its Region, 1680-1730* (Exeter, 2000), 18.

²⁸ Henry S. Cobb, *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*, Vol. V, Southampton Record Series (Southampton, 1961); Maryanne Kowaleski, *Local Customs Accounts of the Port of Exeter, 1266-1321*, Vol. 36, Devon and Cornwall Record Society (Exeter, 1993); J.L. Wiggs, 'The Seaborne Trade of Southampton in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century' (MA, University of Southampton, 1955); Williams, *East Anglian Ports*; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*.

²⁹ Cobb does not mention them in his survey of local port records, (Henry Stephen Cobb, 'Local Port Customs Accounts prior to 1550', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 1 (1958), 213-24).

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Additionally a range of qualitative sources have been used to supplement this data. Local corporation and borough records, contemporary descriptions of trade, Exchequer commissions of enquiry, cases brought in Chancery, and State papers have been used to either substantiate or to modify assessment of the quantitative data described above.

The coastline of England and Wales was divided into a series of 'ports' for customs purposes. Port in this sense refers to a jurisdiction over a defined stretch of coastline, rather than to a harbour with ships. These jurisdictions took their name from the head port of the area. Thus the port of Bridgwater ran from Porlock bay in the west to the mouth of the River Axe in the east. As well as the head port, there were also member ports subordinate to and smaller than the head port, and creeks which were smaller still. The construction of the chapters adopts the pattern of Exchequer ports and follows a simple geographical progression around the Channel starting in North Devon, which lay within the port of Exeter, and then proceeding via the ports of Bridgwater, Gloucester, Cardiff and finally Milford. Consideration will be made of the basic patterns and trends of trade in the major commodities recorded in the port books over the course of the century. The extent to which these records are a full reflection of trade subject to duty will be examined, with particular reference to differences in compliance between different ports, and by implication differences in the extent of Crown authority in these places. The coastal accounts will be used to supplement this information and to illustrate that any consideration of overseas trade must also take account of this source. A major theme of this thesis however is the uncovering of trade which was not recorded in the Exchequer sources, not because it was being illicitly conducted, but because it fell outside the scope of customs control. Based on a multi sourced approach it will be argued that Exchequer customs accounts are a necessary but not sufficient source for understanding maritime trade in the period, and more importantly for drawing conclusions about economic activity in the ports' hinterlands. Patterns of trading relationships between different ports will also be considered to determine how open the market structure was, and the degree of

specialisation, if any, that existed at different ports towns. The conclusion draws on these chapters to assess the extent to which the smaller regional ports had their own dynamic and considers the wider implications of this.

Exchequer customs

Before this metaphorical journey around the Bristol Channel can begin it will be helpful to lay some groundwork regarding the operation of Exchequer customs during the sixteenth century, and the means of measurement employed in the following pages.

There were three principal customs officials stationed at each head port with deputies at the member ports: the customer, controller and searcher. The customer was responsible for determining and collecting duties, and for accounting for this revenue to the Exchequer. Accordingly he kept a ledger of all ships which sailed overseas either to or from the port with goods which were liable to customs. As well as the ship's name and the date of the ledger entry, he was required to list the 'home port' of the vessel, details of its manifest, of the merchant or merchants freighting particular goods, of the notional value of these goods, and of the duty consequently payable.³⁰ When a ship had cleared customs the customer was responsible for issuing a written cocket for outbound cargoes to the master or purser of the vessel. The controller was required to draw up an independent set of less detailed records which could be used to corroborate the information compiled by the customer. The searcher, as the name suggests, was responsible for physically checking cargo to ensure that it matched to the cocket. In addition he had the power to seize any vessels which were unloading before they had cleared customs, or which were sailing outbound with goods which he suspected had not cleared customs.

³⁰ N.S. Gras, *The Early English Customs System* (Cambridge, MA., 1918), 94-100; R.W.K. Hinton, *The Port Books of Boston, 1601-1640*, Vol. 50, Lincoln Record Society (Hereford, 1956), xiv-xv; T.S. Willan, ed., *A Tudor Book of Rates* (Manchester, 1962).

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Turning to the coastal accounts, there is very little surviving documentary evidence for controls on the coastal movement of goods prior to 1549.³¹ After this date records began to be kept more consistently, but a comprehensive national system of recording and control was not introduced until 1565 when separate port books for domestic coastal trade began to be routinely kept at all ports.³² No duty was payable for goods shipped coastally, the intention being not to raise revenue from domestic trade but to bolster the controls in place to prevent overseas customs evasion. To this end merchants were required to lodge a bond with the customs authority at the port of despatch for goods which would normally have been liable to customs if they were shipped overseas. They were then issued with a cocket or certificate to authorise their passage. The bond was subsequently cancelled on presentation of a signed certificate from another domestic port verifying that the cargo had indeed reached its destination and had not been spirited overseas. Additionally certificates were usually issued for goods which had been imported from overseas and which had paid duty but were then being shipped elsewhere domestically. This certificate therefore proved to the inbound port that the goods had cleared customs.³³ The coastal customs accounts during this period are thus essentially a record of the issuing of outbound certificates and of the presentation of these certificates at inbound ports. Like their overseas counterparts the coastal accounts list the names of ships, and the details of their manifest, the names of the masters, and usually the merchants concerned, often with their location. However, because no duty was paid the coastal accounts do not detail the value of the goods entered for customs. Whilst it is possible to infer the notional value of many of the goods listed by cross referencing to the values contained in the overseas accounts for the same

³¹ Gras, *Early English Customs*, 145.

³² 'Port Books 1565-1799', The National Archives Research Guides: Domestic Records Information 9

< <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/RdLeaflet.asp?sLeafletID=83&j=1> > [June 2009].

³³ Gras, *Early English Customs*, 144-46,770; Willan, *English Coasting Trade*, 1-4; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 18-20.

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commodities, this is not always possible as many goods shipped coastwise cannot be traced as having been traded overseas. Additionally the coastal accounts can sometimes contain inexact volume indicators, such as a barrel or a bundle, which would have been sufficient for the purposes of checking the load at the quayside but are not adequate for comparative valuation purposes.

The value of trade recorded in the overseas customs accounts was not the real or market value of the goods which were subject to customs, but a notional value used to calculate the duty payable. The majority of types of goods subject to customs paid an *ad valorem* tax known as poundage which was levied at five percent of their notional value. These values were recorded in books of rates issued by the Exchequer to customs officers.³⁴ The disadvantage of these figures is that they do not reflect the true commercial values of underlying trade, but their advantage for historians is that they provide a consistent basis on which comparisons can be made between different ports and across different years. Two potential difficulties with this data present themselves however. Firstly, wine and some types of cloth paid a specific duty based on the quantity of goods, rather than the *ad valorem* tax. These goods were not therefore valued in the customs accounts but were simply recorded with the amount of the duty which had been levied against them. Secondly, the notional rates drawn up by the Exchequer were subject to periodic revaluation, and meaningful direct comparisons can therefore only be made within periods subject to the same rating.

The method for valuing customs data adopted in this thesis incorporates the same principals as those for the database compiled as part of the Economic and Social Science Research Council funded research into 'Ireland-Bristol Trade in

³⁴ The first national rate was established in 1536 prior to which 'the evidence rather suggests that [provincial] ports used the same valuations as those in the [London] Book of Rates, at least for some goods'. The first surviving national Book of Rates is from 1558. (Willan, ed., *Book of Rates*, xxi).

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the sixteenth Century' by Dr. Jones at Bristol University.³⁵ This dealt with the problem of valuing goods which incurred different rates of duty by ascribing a reconstructed value to goods which were liable for specific duties. With respect to wine this was estimated at £4 per tun in line with its likely commercial value at the time that the customs rates were drawn up. This was raised to £8 for the period after 1558 when there was a revision of the Book of Rates used to calculate dutiable values which approximately doubled the value of most goods paying the *ad valorem* tax. With respect to cloth, the situation is less straightforward as the customs duties varied according to the type being exported. Some cloths, known as 'country cloths', were liable for the *ad valorem tax* called poundage and calculated at five percent of their notional value. Other cloths however, paid specific duty based on their size. The size of the fixed rate cloth, known as broadcloth or cloth of assize, was set by statute at 24 yards long by 2 yards wide, but in practice many cloths were smaller than this prescribed size, and were therefore charged proportionally less: Bridgwaters for instance paid half the standard cloth rate, and Dunsters paid one quarter.³⁶ Since the cloths exported were of different types and sizes, and were valued by different methods, it is no easy matter to determine overall changes in value or volume over the century. The approach adopted by Wendy Childs, and subsequently by other historians of the period, has been to value cloth of assize at a fixed rate of £2 for the period before 1558 in line with their likely commercial value.³⁷ The problem of valuation over a wider time frame is that the revision of the Book of Rates used to calculate dutiable value in 1558, which doubled the value of most goods paying poundage, increased the fixed rate for cloth of assize nearly six fold.³⁸ This level of increase did not reflect the rise in the commercial value of cloth in the intervening period, but was an

³⁵ A full explanation of this can be found at
<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm>>

³⁶ 1 RIC3 C8.

³⁷ Wendy Childs, 'Ireland's Trade with England in the Later Middle Ages', *Irish Economic and Social History*, IX (1982), 5-33, 18.

³⁸ G.D. Ramsay, *The English Woollen Industry, 1500-1750* (London, 1982), 59.

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ambitious attempt by the Crown to maximise revenue from taxation of this leading export. Cloth of assize and its derivatives have therefore been valued at £4 each or pro rata for the period after 1558.

In order to avoid the difficulties inherent with using the valuations contained in the Exchequer accounts over extended periods, wherever possible this thesis adopts volume rather than value measurements for comparative purposes. Where necessary any clarifications concerning the particular method used to make volume comparisons are detailed in the accompanying notes. Sum totals of the value of trade, commodities traded, calculations concerning merchants' market share and so forth are based on the sample of Exchequer customs accounts (TNA E122) and Exchequer port books (TNA E190) detailed in Appendix A and valued as described above. Details of these sources will not be repeated unless the source is unclear.

Chapter 2 : North Devon.

This chapter will seek to establish that the profile of the trade of the North Devon ports, and in particular that of Barnstaple, was significantly different to that of Bristol, and that this difference became more pronounced as the century progressed. Although Barnstaple, like Bristol, experienced a broadening of its commercial horizons, it also developed illicit channels of trade which appear to have exceeded in proportionate terms similar activities at Bristol. Consequently the overseas Exchequer accounts, which describe only legal trade, are a misleading guide for comparative purposes.

The north coast of Devon was divided into two member ports for customs purposes, both of which were subordinate to the head port of Exeter. The port of Barnstaple was the larger of the two accounting for sixteen percent of Devon's recorded overseas trade in 1584, compared to 84 percent for ports in the south of the county.¹ Ilfracombe was considerably smaller, both in terms of trade and population, and comprised the harbour of Ilfracombe itself along with creeks at Combe Martin and Lynmouth.² The port of Barnstaple encompassed the adjacent harbours at Northam and Bideford which were sometimes, but not always, distinguished in the customs records.³ In terms of population Barnstaple was a mid ranking port in the Bristol Channel with an estimated mid-century population of 2,000, and was a thriving port town which had invested heavily in extending and improving its quay in 1550, and had acquired borough status by 1565.⁴

¹ Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', 104.

² Alison Grant, 'Port Books as a Source for the Maritime History of Devon', in *Sources for the New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by David Starkey, (Exeter, 1987), 57-69, 57-58; Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', 100.

³ T.S. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester, 1959), 79-80.

⁴ Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 119; Wasson, *Records of Early English Drama: Devon*, xii.

In common with all the ports studied, Barnstaple's overseas accounts are punctuated by the arrival of expensive commodities such as aniseed, liquorice, pepper and other spices, and dried fruits, particularly raisins. As well as these consumer items, products used in the cloth industry were also frequently imported: oil for processing wool; dyes such as woad, madder, orchil and Brazilwood; soap for cleaning fleeces; and alum which was used as a mordant to fix dyes as well as for bleaching leather. Although these items were important and were profitable for those trading in them, they were also smaller, infrequently shipped, and the quantities imported could be erratic. The focus of this and subsequent chapters will therefore largely rest with more basic commodities which were freighted more frequently, in larger volumes, and are more indicative of underlying broad trends of trade. It is principally by focussing on these that differences between the ports will be made apparent.

Cloth

The maritime role of Barnstaple in the affairs of Elizabethan England has attracted much attention. Long associated with the likes of Sir Francis Drake and Sir Richard Grenville, the port and its mariners were at the forefront of westward mercantile and colonial expansion in the later sixteenth century.⁵ In the earlier decades of the century however, Barnstaple's prosperity was more prosaically founded on the export of locally manufactured woollen cloth. Along with the South Devon ports it acted as a conduit for the important cloth producing towns of South Molton and Tiverton, the latter ranked among the largest in England.⁶ The port books show that it relied on this trade to an extraordinary degree, and that compared to other ports in the Bristol Channel its hinterland had a comparatively restricted economy. In the 1509/10 accounts for instance, cloth was the only commodity recorded outbound; in 1517/18 it

⁵ Fielder, *History of Bideford*; Grant, 'John Delbridge'; Grant, 'Breaking the Mould'; M. Oppenheim, *The Maritime History of Devon* (Exeter, 1968); Ronald Pollitt, 'Devon and the French and Spanish Wars', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by Michael Duffy, et al., 2 vols, Vol. 1, (Exeter, 1992), 108-14; Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade'.

⁶ Jonathan Barry, 'The South West', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1540-1840*, ed. by Peter Clark, 3 vols, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 2000), 67-92, 70.

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comprised 95 percent of the value of recorded exports; in 1544/45 the figure was even higher at 99 percent, as it was again in 1565; in 1595/96 it still accounted for 86 percent of the port's export trade.

Before 1565 these cargoes were almost all recorded as standard broadcloth or cloth of assize, or as variants of this such as 'short white cloth'. Broadcloth type cloths formed the mainstay of cloth production on a national basis throughout the century, but substantial mid century changes in market conditions led to modifications in long established methods of production and distribution. There were several factors driving this: currency revaluations made exports more expensive for overseas buyers; war with France cut off England's major overseas market at Antwerp which resulted in a mid century collapse in the cloth industry after many years of boom; and consumer demand changed gradually both in Europe and domestically, leading to a falling off in demand for heavy broadcloths and a slow rise in demand for lighter fabrics - the so called 'new draperies'.⁷ So far as the outports were concerned, a perhaps more significant factor was the increasing role played by London which took a growing share of the cloth trade so that by the mid century it handled over 90 percent of all exports.⁸ At Bristol for instance, whereas around 7,000 cloths per annum had been exported at the end of the fifteenth century, only around 2,500 were exported by the 1540s and a few hundred at the end of the century.⁹ These developments were to have a profound impact on the merchants and communities around the Bristol Channel which had formerly relied heavily on the production of broadcloths.

⁷ C.G.A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change, England 1500-1700: Industry, Trade and Government*, 2 vols, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1984), 15-17, 110-18; Eric Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1985), 25; David Loades, *England's Maritime Empire: Seapower, Commerce and Policy, 1490-1690* (Harlow, 2000), 11; Ramsay, *English Woollen Industry*, 14.

⁸ E.M. Carus-Wilson and Olive Coleman, eds., *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (Oxford, 1963), 143; Clay, *Industry, Trade and Government*, 111-12.

⁹ Carus-Wilson and Coleman, eds., *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547*, 143; Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 396.

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Table 2.1 expresses notional values of trade derived from customs data based on an index of 100 in 1517/18.¹⁰

Table 2.1 Port of Barnstaple: index of cloth exports.

Year	Index
1517/18	100
1543/44	166
1554/55	168
1570/71	130
1581/82	61
1595/96	118

It can be seen that cloth exports peaked in mid century as would be expected. However in sharp contrast to cloth exports recorded from ports elsewhere in the Bristol Channel, including Bristol itself, Barnstaple ended the century exporting more not less cloth. By 1597/98 for instance the port of Bridgwater exported just five percent on a like for like basis of the cloth which it had shipped in 1506/7, a similar rate of decline to that at Bristol described above.¹¹

The resilience of Barnstaple's cloth trade in the face of the later century commercial challenges can perhaps be attributed to the alacrity with which producers in the Devonian hinterland of the port adapted to changing market conditions. A distinctive type of cloth known as a Devonshire kersey had begun to be produced from the early sixteenth century and was recorded in the customs records from 1565, by which time it had supplanted standard type broadcloths to be the main type of cloth exported.¹² Kerses were a finely spun, lighter cloth more in tune with the new demand, and were described by

¹⁰ Underlying values have been derived adopting the methodology outlined in Chapter One with values rebased to those obtaining prior to the 1558 re rating. An index has been used in this instance both for clarity and to avoid any confusion with market or customs values which might otherwise be inferred. The nominal values on which Table 2.1 is based are £517, £857, £868, £674, £317 and £612 respectively.

¹¹ Table 3.2.

¹² TNA E190/925/3; N. Cox and K. Dannehl, Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1820 (2007) < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>>[July 2008]; Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 25.

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Youings as a precursor of the new draperies proper, the bays and says which came to predominate at the end of the century.¹³ Youings also noted that Barnstaple was one of the first ports to recover from the mid century commercial crisis, and it has been observed that Barnstaple had established a position as one of the leading centres for the manufacture of single bays by the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁴ The indications are therefore that Devonian producers built on the advantage which they already enjoyed in producing these cloths, and rapidly stepped up production to meet changing demand in a way that their counterparts elsewhere either failed or were unable to do. Barnstaple was not alone in experiencing an increase in cloth exports over this period: so too did the ports of Poole, Sandwich, Hull and Newcastle.¹⁵ It is significant nonetheless that Barnstaple's trade in this respect differed from other ports both within the Bristol Channel, and in the wider South West.

Wine

Cloth exports from the port were directed to the continental western seaboard including Lisbon, Bilbao, St Jean de Luz and La Rochelle. The port's imports reflected these destinations and had a more varied profile than its exports. Chief amongst these imports was wine, with Bordeaux being the origin of most of the wine shipped to the Bristol Channel, and northern France and Iberia as secondary sources. Wine was usually shipped following the autumn grape harvest and arrived into port during the early winter months. At Bristol prior to 1558 wine formed by far the most important part of the city's trade accounting for as much as half of all imports by value.¹⁶ Comparative figures for many of the Bristol Channel ports are not available for this earlier period as Gloucester was not recorded separately in the Exchequer accounts before 1575, whilst the

¹³ Joyce Alice Youings, 'The Economic History of Devon, 1300-1700', in *Exeter and its Regions*, ed. by F. Barlow, (Exeter, 1969), 164-74, 168; Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 25.

¹⁴ P.J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962), 50; Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', 104.

¹⁵ Clay, *Industry, Trade and Government*, 114.

¹⁶ Eg. 49% in 1516/17, and 45% 1542/43: TNA E122/199/1 & 4

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm>>[March 2009]

earliest Exchequer account for the port of Milford is dated 1559/60, and for the port of Cardiff not until 1579.¹⁷ The figures for the ports of Barnstaple and Bridgwater however indicate that the wine trade did not comprise such a large share of the inbound trade: at Barnstaple customs record wine accounting for 31 percent of the overall value of imports in 1517/18, and 41 percent in 1554/55; at Bridgwater the figures were 35 percent in 1510/11, and 18 percent in 1544/45. These nonetheless still represent significant amounts and the trade was an important one.

The customs duties levied on wine differed from those for other commodities. A specific duty called tunnage calculated at three shillings per tun was levied, and after 1558 an additional surcharge or imposte was imposed on French wines which raised the effective duty to 53s 4d per tun.¹⁸ Additionally cargoes of ten to nineteen tuns were liable to pay a tax known as prisage deducted at the rate of one tun in kind or cash equivalent; and cargoes of twenty tuns and above were liable to pay prisage at two tuns. The calculation of the cash equivalent of prisage was left to the discretion of local officials and this was used to their advantage by the authorities at Ilfracombe. In 1585 the farmer of the customs of wine at Bristol wrote to Lord Burghley, the lord treasurer, complaining that though Ilfracombe was so small a place that it could not provide a market for more than four tuns of wine a year, yet 'vii ships within one moneth of late have made their entries, of neere iiiii c tons'.¹⁹ Their reason for so doing was that prisage was levied at Ilfracombe at around half the rate at Bristol, so merchants could save money by declaring their wine at Ilfracombe and then sending it coastwise to Bristol or other ports.²⁰

The rates at which customs were levied impacted on trading practices therefore, and a consequence of the impost introduced in 1558 was an equally

¹⁷ TNA E190/1129/8, E190/1270/3, E190/1270/4, E122/104/2.

¹⁸ Vanes, *Documents*, 9.

¹⁹ TNA SP 12 176/2.

²⁰ Vanes, *Documents*, 46.

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large rise in evasion of customs and a consequent drop in the volumes recorded in the Exchequer records. At Bristol this fall was as much as 58 percent in the ten year period following the introduction of the imposition on French wine.²¹

Table 2.2 appears to reflect the same causation in the port of Barnstaple. The data also bears out the Bristol farmer's contention about the amounts that Ilfracombe would normally consume.

Table 2.2 Barnstaple & Ilfracombe: imports of wine (tuns).

Year	Barnstaple	Ilfracombe
1509/10 (quarters 1&2)	83	-
1517/18	101	-
1523/24	-	5
1536/37	-	3
1543/44	9	3
1554/55	68	-
1581/82	28	-
1595/96	53	-

A potential problem with this and other data collected from the smaller ports is that figures can show considerable fluctuations between different years. Nevertheless, despite this, longer term trends are still discernable, as are the effect of specific events such as the 1544-46 war with France which disrupted wine supplies as illustrated above.

In some respects Barnstaple mimicked the role played by Bristol where large ships entered from overseas with continental cargoes which were then broken down into smaller shipments for despatch to other ports. Barnstaple was a relatively small port with a limited inland market. Although a good haven for shipping, the town is located on the Taw which was navigable for only a few miles upstream, and its immediate hinterland included Exmoor which was both comparatively sparsely populated and inaccessible. The location of Barnstaple

²¹ Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 240.

made it akin to the port towns under the jurisdiction of Milford on the opposite shores of the Bristol Channel. These too were encumbered by difficult land communications and long distances to other urban centres. However unlike the Milford port towns, the port books record that Barnstaple acted as an entreport for the onward marketing of goods received from overseas. In relation to wine for instance, in the accounts sampled between 1561 and 1600 the port of Barnstaple recorded 110 tuns inward from overseas and 76 tuns outwards coastally, whilst the port of Bridgwater recorded 256 tuns inwards but only nine outwards.²² Although the sampling used here has necessarily involved different years for the two locations, and for the overseas and coastal accounts, the relationship is nevertheless clear.

Iron

Imports of iron from the northern Spanish ports of Bilbao and San Sebastian had a similar profile. Using the same dataset as for wine, Barnstaple imported 379 tons of iron from overseas and dispatched 102 tons coastally, compared to 399 tons inward and four tons outward at Bridgwater. Bristol was the main market for the iron sent from Barnstaple, receiving just under half of all shipments, with the balance evenly distributed amongst multiple landing places around the Bristol Channel and Cornish coasts.

²² Appendix A.

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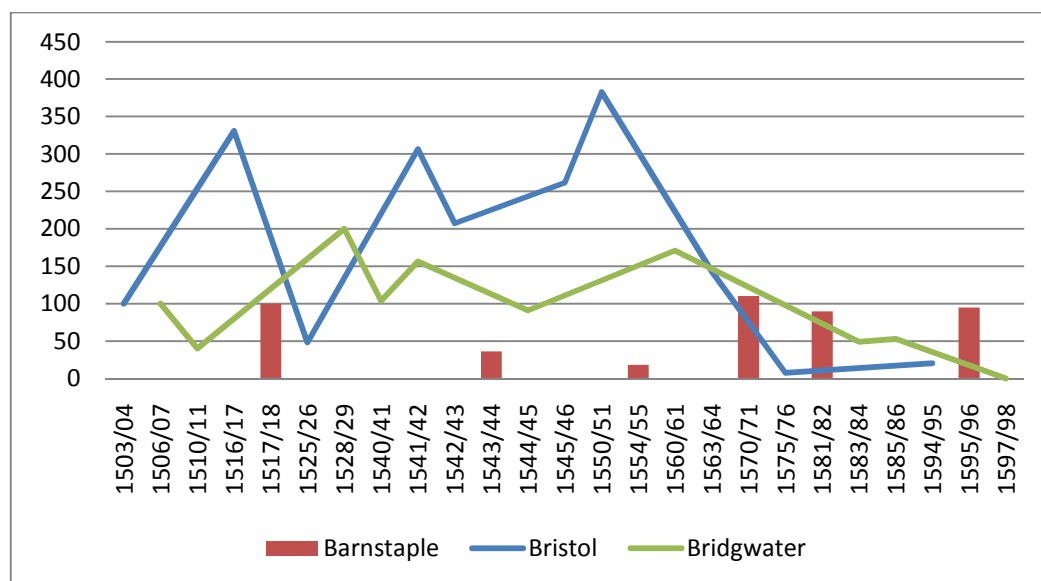
Table 2.3 Barnstaple & Ilfracombe: imports of iron (tons).

Year	Barnstaple	Ilfracombe
1517/18	77	-
1523/24	-	3
1534 (Quarter 1&2)	43	15
1536/37	-	1
1543/44	28	15
1554/55	14	-
1565 (Quarter 3&4)	105	8
1570/71	85	-
1581/82	69	-
1595/96	73	-

The figures in table 2.3 illustrate that Barnstaple's imports of iron held at a fairly consistent level over the century. Figure 2.1 illustrates that this was in stark contrast to Bristol where such imports fell by 94 percent between the nearest comparable years of 1516/17 and 1594/95. At Bridgwater although the fall was not so dramatic, overseas iron imports nevertheless tailed off and none at all were recorded in 1597/98. Indeed Barnstaple appears to have imported even more iron than Bristol by the end of the century: Bristol recorded approximately 55 tons inwards during 1594/95 compared to 73 tons at Barnstaple in the following financial year.

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Figure 2.1 Comparative imports of iron: Bristol, Bridgwater and Barnstaple (base year index of 100)²³



The reasons for this decline at Bristol and Bridgwater will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, but the salient point here is that Barnstaple's merchants continued to trade in goods of Spanish origin until the end of the century. This is significant as this trade appears to have continued undiminished by the adverse political situation which affected trade with Spain in the later decades of the century. Although an absolute ban on trade with Spain was not ordered by the English government, an embargo on trade in ordnance and grain with Spain was imposed during the war from 1585-1603.²⁴ An absolute ban on English ships using Spanish ports was imposed by the Spanish crown however, although in practice this proved impossible to enforce and English ships continued to use Spanish ports, particularly in the north.²⁵ Equally, trade was conducted through third party ports such as Bayonne and St Jean de Luz as a politically expedient tactic to circumvent direct trading with Spain in

²³ The underlying volumes are given in Table 2.1 and for Bridgwater in 3.7. For Bristol the relevant figures are: 1503/4, 268 tons; 1516/17, 888; 1525/26, 129; 1541/42, 822; 1542/43, 556; 1545/46, 701; 1550/51, 1026; 1563/64, 384; 1575/76, 21; 1594/95, 55.

²⁴ P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Later Tudors, 1558-1603*, 3 vols, Vol. 3 (Yale, 1969), 83-86.

²⁵ P. Croft, 'Trading with the Enemy, 1585-1604', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), 281-302, 282.

contravention of the Spanish government embargo.²⁶ These ports began to be listed in Barnstaple's customs records as the origin of iron shipments from 1590 onwards.

Salt

Long term trends in the importation of continental salt to the port also stand in stark contrast to those found at other English Bristol Channel ports. Salt was an important commodity in the sixteenth century which was used for preserving foodstuffs such as meat and fish, and in the manufacture of butter and cheese, as well as being a key ingredient in a number of industrial processes including tanning. The Barnstaple overseas customs accounts record the importation of salt from the Bay of Bourgenouf and from Iberia as a staple commodity throughout the century.

Table 2.4 Port of Barnstaple: imports of salt (tons).²⁷

Year	Barnstaple	Ilfracombe
1517/18	58	-
1543/44	160	-
1554/55	140	55
1570/71	137	-
1576/77	-	34
1579/80	-	76
1581/82	133	-
1595/96	275	4

The trend in salt imports described in Table 2.4 again distinguishes Barnstaple from both the ports of Bridgwater and Bristol.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Imports of salt at Barnstaple and other ports were recorded in tons, pipes, hogsheads, weys and bushels. The ton and the wey were valued at the same rate for customs purposes and have therefore been taken as equivalent measures eg. TNA E122/29/3, E190/930/21. The other measures have been equated to the ton on the same basis.

North Devon

Figure 2.2 Comparative imports of salt: Bristol, Bridgwater and Barnstaple (base year index of 100)²⁸

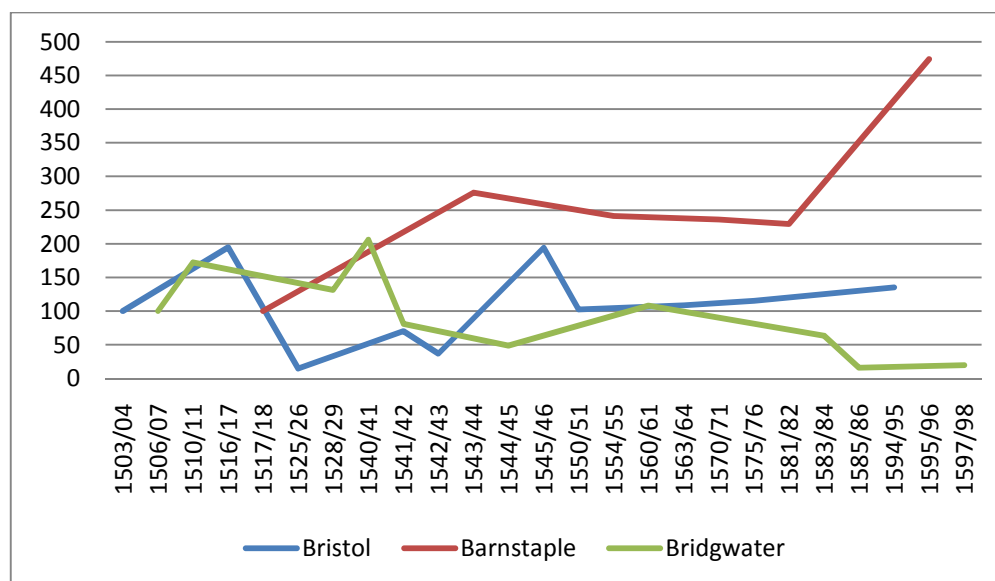


Figure 2.2 indicates that imports of salt to Bridgwater declined by 80 percent over the course of the century, and at Bristol were around a third higher by 1594/95 compared to 1503/04 but had never risen by more than twofold from this basis year. At Barnstaple however, imports of salt appear to have risen sharply towards the end of the century and were some four and a half times greater in 1595/96 than they had been in 1517/18. In particular Barnstaple's merchants developed a close link with La Rochelle in the salt trade which was recorded as the origin of all thirteen ships freighting salt in 1595/96 for instance. La Rochelle was an entreport for Spanish goods so it is possible that the port was being used for importing salt which had previously been recorded inbound from Cadiz and Lisbon; although equally, and perhaps more probably, there is no reason why it should not have been of French origin of course.²⁹ A further reason for the close relationship with La Rochelle can possibly be located in the religious complexion of the two ports. La Rochelle was a

²⁸ The underlying volumes are given in table 2.2 and for Bridgwater in Table 3.5. For Bristol the relevant figures are: 1503/4, 458 tons; 1516/17, 892; 1525/26, 67; 1541/42, 321; 1542/43, 168; 1545/56, 890; 1550/51, 470; 1563/64, 498; 1575/76, 528; 1594/95, 619.

²⁹ Croft, 'Trading with the Enemy', 1; Grant, 'John Delbridge', 93.

protestant outpost in France and may therefore have been favoured by the leading merchants and burgesses at Barnstaple during this period who displayed an increasingly radical Protestantism.³⁰ La Rochelle certainly came to play a greater role in Barnstaple's trade in the final decade of the century. From representing nine percent of overall trade by value in 1570/71 and 1581/82, it rose to have 38 percent in 1595/96. A further sign of close relations is indicated by one of Barnstaple's leading merchants, John Peard, who arranged for his son to be a factor in La Rochelle at this time.³¹

Unlike its imports of iron and wine, very little salt was subsequently recorded outbound from the port. For instance only fourteen tons were recorded outbound coastally over six months in 1570 compared to 133 tons recorded inward during 1570/71. None at all was recorded outbound in the surviving records for 1565 or for 1591/92. The absence of outbound shipments of salt recorded in the port's coastal customs accounts suggests that Barnstaple required this salt for its own processing industries. The likelihood is that this was required for food processing as although the parish register lists a wide range of crafts in the town, there are none such as tanning which were particularly associated with the use of salt.³² The imported salt may therefore have been used for salting fish, either ashore in Devon, or in the Newfoundland fisheries in which Barnstaple men played an increasingly prominent role.³³

Fish

Fish were an important part of people's diet in the medieval and early modern periods and port towns with their easy access to the sea were self evidently bound up with this branch of commerce. Thomas Beale was no doubt but one

³⁰ Todd Gray, ed., *The Lost Chronicle of Barnstaple, 1586-1611*, Vol. XIV, Devonshire Association (Exeter, 1998), 40-42.

³¹ Alison Grant, 'Devon Shipping, Trade, and Ports, 1600-1689', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by Michael Duffy, et al., 2 vols, Vol. 1, (Exeter, 1992), 130-38, 131.

³² Gray, ed., *Lost Chronicle*, 21.

³³ Todd Gray, 'Devon's Fisheries and Early-Stuart Northern New England', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by Michael Duffy, et al., 2 vols, Vol. 1, (Exeter, 1992), 139-44, 141.

of many who combined fishing with other merchant activities. He was recorded amongst those forming part of a large fleet fishing for herring off Dovey in North Wales in 1567, but also appears in the Exchequer accounts sending kerseys to Lisbon and St Jean de Luz, and soap and wool to Bristol.³⁴ Beaple's catch is not recorded in these documents however, and like much of the fish trade during this period remains invisible to historians. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, fresh fish were never subject to customs since they were neither exported nor imported as such. Secondly, a law enacted in 1563 aimed to increase the English merchant fleet by suspending certain duties on both imports of fish caught by Englishmen in English vessels, and also on exports of sea fish.³⁵ A note written by Walsingham indicates that the application of this law was interpreted widely enough to have also applied to imports of fish from Ireland, which had all previously been subject to duty.³⁶ Consequently all fish imports effectively disappeared from the customs accounts until 1591 when some types were again recorded.³⁷ Fish from the Newfoundland fisheries remained exempt after 1591, although there are instances where such cargoes were recorded in the port books but with no duty levied.³⁸ Fish from Ireland however were both recorded and paid duty after 1591.³⁹ Having noted this, a further qualification must be made as an exemption allowing fishermen to exempt fish from customs which they had caught themselves seems to have been widely applied. At Gloucester where the customs clerk was particularly meticulous in noting details of fish cargoes for instance, less than one third of the volumes imported from Ireland were liable to duty.⁴⁰ The customs accounts from the first six decades of the century are therefore the most reliable and consistent record of the fish trade insofar as

³⁴ TNA E190/925/9, 927/15; John C. Appleby, ed., *A Calendar of Material relating to Ireland from the High Court of Admiralty Examinations 1536-1641* (Dublin, 1992), 28.

³⁵ Act 5 Eliz. C. II.

³⁶ TNA SP/46/35/10 f.120.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Eg. TNA E190/1083/20.

³⁹ TNA SP/46/35/10 f.120; TNA E190/1243/3.

⁴⁰ TNA E190/1243/3.

that trade concerned imports of preserved fish. As such they are largely a reflection of fish imports from Ireland which was the dominant source of supply in this period.

Fish have been described as the most important product of sixteenth century Ireland which was notable for the large quantities of preserved fish it exported to both Europe and England.⁴¹ Pickled ('white') herring, and smoked ('red') herring formed the largest part of this trade, with hake as a secondary but substantial catch, and various other fish including salmon comprising the rest. The notable thing about Barnstaple's trade in this respect is how sporadic such Irish imports were, and how little was imported from Ireland compared to other English ports in the Channel. This point will be explored further in Chapter Three, but whereas Bristol, Bridgwater and Minehead recorded a regular inbound fish trade from Ireland, Barnstaple recorded no Irish fish imports at all in 1543/44 for instance; and in 1554/55 only three Irish vessels were recorded inbound with cargoes of fish valued for customs at just over £18 compared to a total value of trade through the port that year of £1,472.

In contrast this trade was marginally greater at the much smaller port of Ilfracombe: although there is no directly comparable data for the member port of Barnstaple in 1536/37, the Ilfracombe accounts show Irish activity at the port with four inbound ships; in 1543/44 whilst no Irish ships called at Barnstaple, three did at Ilfracombe; and in 1554/55 seven Irish ships were entered at Ilfracombe compared to three at Barnstaple. This is a small sample and it would be unwise to come to too firm a conclusion based upon it, but it is notable that 40 percent of Ilfracombe's recorded fish imports came from the Irish port of Youghal compared to only two percent at Barnstaple in the accounts sampled. Youghal similarly represented an insignificant trading partner at other ports studied, and so may have enjoyed particularly close relations with Ilfracombe.

⁴¹ Ada Kathleen Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade in The Sixteenth Century* (London, 1929), 41; Timothy O'Neill, *Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1987), 32.

Wendy Childs in her study of fifteenth century shipping also noticed the prevalence of Irish vessels and of the Irish fish trade at Ilfracombe compared to Barnstaple, so the Irish connection with Ilfracombe, if not the Youghal connection, was apparently of long standing.⁴²

The relatively low imports of Irish fish into Barnstaple may perhaps be explained by the port having had a fishing fleet which was sufficiently developed to meet local demand, and so reduce or remove the demand for imports. Indeed Barnstaple's fishermen may have supplied other Bristol Channel ports with home preserved fish. Although these would not be apparent from the Exchequer records themselves, testimony given in 1582 at Gloucester described how between 20 and 30 boats laden with fish came yearly from Cornwall, Devonshire, Ireland and Wales.⁴³ Thomas Beaple fishing with a fleet off the north Welsh coast has already been described, and Barnstaple local port regulations which refer to tolls on the landing of fish, and restrictions on certain methods of fishing confirm that fishing was sufficiently developed for it to be regulated.⁴⁴ Without further evidence the extent of such a fleet must remain conjectural, but its existence would explain why Barnstaple men and ships were at the forefront of the English exploitation of western Atlantic fisheries later in the century.⁴⁵ Alison Grant has provided a detailed and convincing analysis of the port books which demonstrates that Barnstaple merchants were engaged in this trade from at least 1579.⁴⁶ Seven vessels were recorded inbound from Newfoundland in 1588/89 with a cargo of codfish oil, and in 1594 nine North Devon ships were given permission to sail to Newfoundland.⁴⁷ Grant suggests that trade in cod must have been conducted both directly from Newfoundland

⁴² Wendy Childs, 'The Commercial Shipping of South West England in the Later Fifteenth Century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 83 (1997), 272-92, 275.

⁴³ TNA E134/25Eliz/East14.

⁴⁴ NDRO 3416M/E3.

⁴⁵ A.R. Michell, 'The European Fisheries in Early Modern History', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, ed. by E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson, 8 vols, Vol. 5, (Cambridge, 1977), 134-84, 160.

⁴⁶ Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 122-27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

to continental ports, and also coastwise from Barnstaple to other domestic ports. Grant and others have argued that this far flung trade attracted and required larger, better capitalised merchants who could underwrite the costs of prolonged voyages which required large provision and substantial vessels.⁴⁸ Men such as William Leigh for example, who was the principal importer of salt to Barnstaple, as well as a merchant partner who was recorded importing from Newfoundland.⁴⁹

Leather

Calf skins and other types of leather were in high demand and were a profitable export, but restrictions had been in place since 1538 whereby it was illegal to sell these overseas without a license.⁵⁰ Licenses were issued by the Crown as a form of political patronage and were subsequently divided and sold on by those who were the beneficiaries.⁵¹ As such they were neither cheap nor easy to obtain, and the incentive to trade without one was strong. That the restrictions were not wholly effective is indicated by a series of further measures taken by the Crown and parliament over the century to curb exports, including making the unlicensed export of leather a capital offence.⁵²

Although the customs accounts do not record that volumes of leather shipped from the North Devon ports were as sizeable as those which emanated from the ports of Milford or Gloucester, it was nevertheless an important strand of the port's trade. Unlike Milford or Gloucester however, North Devon was not renowned for the production of leather, and the Exchequer accounts recorded frequent and sizeable shipments inwards to the port from places as diverse as

⁴⁸ Ibid., 122; Oppenheim, *Devon*, 36-37.

⁴⁹ TNA E190/936/13; Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 122-23.

⁵⁰ P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Early Tudors, 1485-1553*, 3 vols, Vol. 1 (Yale, 1964), 268-69.

⁵¹ Cozens-Hardy, *Port of Blakeney*, 19; Jones, 'Illicit Business', 26; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics', in *Elizabethan government and society: essays presented to Sir John Neale*, ed. by S.T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield, and C.H. Williams, (London, 1961), 95-126, 120.

⁵² Jones, 'Illicit Business', 34-35.

Cardiff, Carmarthen, Swansea, Tenby, Bristol, Wexford, Dublin and Cork.⁵³ Doubtless there was a domestic demand for this in North Devon which needed to be satisfied, but a disproportionate share of this trade appears to have been directed to the smaller port of Ilfracombe rather than the larger port of Barnstaple which suggests a different marketing dynamic. The discontinuous survival of corresponding coastal accounts for Barnstaple and Ilfracombe makes definitive analysis difficult, but in 1569/70 for instance over 6,000 animal skins (tanned hides and calf skins) were shipped coastwise to Ilfracombe, compared to something over 1,100 skins to Barnstaple for the nearest comparable period (six months of the following financial year).⁵⁴ In the last two quarters of 1575/76 Ilfracombe received approximately 1,200 skins, or approximately half the amount that the far larger port of Bristol imported coastally over the equivalent period. The significance of this is that evidence which will be considered more fully in Chapter Six indicates that the ports of Barnstaple, and in particular Ilfracombe, were being used as routing points for the illegal shipment of leather overseas. A coastal certificate was issued at Carmarthen for 41 dickers of tanned leather to be transported to Barnstaple, but it was subsequently learned that the leather had been taken to Ilfracombe where it was transhipped aboard the *Angel* of Bideford and taken to Brest.⁵⁵ Further evidence points to the association of the North Devon ports and an illicit trade in leather. In 1570 a case was brought against the deputy customer and searcher at Barnstaple alleging that they had conspired with merchants in the illegal export of calf skins.⁵⁶ In 1572 the searcher seized leather bound overseas at Ilfracombe, and nineteen dickers of leather were alleged to have been loaded aboard the *Jesus* of Northam once she had passed over the harbour bar.⁵⁷ In 1585 the *Eagle* of Bideford was seized whilst still in harbour at Barnstaple, and

⁵³ TNA E190/927/6, E190/927/12, E190/927/14, E190/930/20, E190/930/21, E190/932/3, E190/935/14.

⁵⁴ The calculation is based on 10 hides to a dicker and 120 calf skins to a dicker.

⁵⁵ TNA E178/3345, fol. 6r.

⁵⁶ TNA E133/1/110.

⁵⁷ TNA E134/15&15Eliz/Mich14.

her illegal cargo of hides and calf skins destined for Bilbao and Bordeaux was forfeit to the crown.⁵⁸ This was not the first occasion that the *Eagle* had been implicated in illicit trading: in 1575 an investigation attempted to establish whether she had freighted bell metal to Biscay under colour of a coastal cocket from Bristol.⁵⁹ There is therefore good reason for believing that much of the leather sent coastwise to the North Devon ports may have been intended for illicit export.

Lead

This was not the only branch of trade in which Barnstaple appears to have conducted an illicit trade. Lead was mined in Derbyshire and in the Mendips during the sixteenth century and was used along with tin in the manufacture of pewter, and in very large quantities for roofing and pipework.⁶⁰ It was also used for the manufacture of ammunition, and Mendip lead, which was of lower quality, was especially suitable for this purpose.⁶¹ Lead was not a prohibited ware and so could be exported legally, but an embargo on trade in ordnance and grain with Spain was imposed during the war from 1585-1603.⁶² Despite (or because of) the embargo and restrictions imposed by both the English and Spanish governments, Spain represented a lucrative market for west country merchants who freighted Mendip lead in the century's later years.

In this context a rise in coastal shipments of lead into the port of Barnstaple through the 1580s and 90s is therefore notable. During the last two quarters of 1565 three tons were received coastally; for the same period in 1570 and 1583 seven tons, and thirteen and a half tons respectively; and for the first two

⁵⁸ TNA E134/27eliz/Hil28.

⁵⁹ TNA E133/2/299.

⁶⁰ Clay, *Industry, Trade and Government*, 57; J. W. Gough, *The Mines of Mendip* (Oxford, 1930).

⁶¹ Peter Ellis, 'Revenue from Rocks', in *England's Landscape: The West*, ed. by Barry Cunliffe, (London, 2006), 135-52, 144.

⁶² Hughes and Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Later Tudors, 1558-1603*, 83-86.

quarters in 1591/92 eleven tons.⁶³ This came mainly from Bristol, although it was imported by Barnstaple merchants. This could have been required for domestic building purposes, or alternatively it may have been required for munitions aboard the reprising ships sailing from the port. But the customs accounts indicate that similar quantities were being exported so it would seem that lead was being sourced domestically for transshipment and export overseas. In 1581/82 sixteen tons were exported to Bilbao, Cadiz and Nantes principally by Richard Dodderidge. This was legal at this date as it occurred prior to the embargo, but that Dodderidge's trade was not entirely innocent is suggested by an order made by the court of Exchequer in 1582 concerning charges brought against him and another Barnstaple merchant by the searcher at Bristol in connection with the transporting of lead.⁶⁴ The details of the charge and case are lost, and no subsequent exports of lead from Barnstaple were recorded so the trail runs cold on Richard Dodderidge at this point. Significantly however, coastwise shipments continued to arrive into the port after the 1585 embargo on exports of ordnance, although exports were no longer recorded in the Exchequer accounts for obvious reasons. Bristol merchants during this period were said to be pay large sums to the customs officers at Bristol to allow them to export lead to Spain in contravention of the embargo, and the possibility, even probability, is that Dodderidge continued to conduct a similar trade.⁶⁵ That Barnstaple ships continued to trade with Spain despite the trade restrictions is confirmed by the town clerk's chronicle in 1603 which recorded that 'merchants and shippes belonging to this towne go and traffick into Spain and Portugal as usual'.⁶⁶

⁶³ TNA E190/925/9, E190/927/13, E190/934/12, E190/936/6. The fodder has been taken as equivalent to the ton on the basis of the same rate being used for customs valuations. Eg. E190/1083/5 fodder at £8 cf. E122/29/31 at £8/ton.

⁶⁴ TNA E123/9.

⁶⁵ Croft, 'Trading with the Enemy', 294.

⁶⁶ Gray, ed., *Lost Chronicle*, 90.

Grain

Whilst the evidence for the illicit export of lead is tenuous and remains conjectural, that relating to the export of grain is much firmer. The export of grain along with dairy products and meat was prohibited by royal proclamation in 1531.⁶⁷ In practice an absolute ban did not result from this as merchants were allowed to export these foodstuffs legally provided they had obtained a license, and providing that certain conditions were met with regard to the prevailing market price of grain.⁶⁸ However given the difficulty and cost of obtaining licenses, and the increasingly high customs duty that was levied on such exports, the incentive to smuggle foodstuffs increased progressively from 1531 onwards. Grain has been found to have been one of the main commodities illicitly traded from the port of Bristol during the sixteenth century with the majority of this bound for Spain; a trade which continued even during the Anglo-Spanish wars.⁶⁹

There is a considerable body of evidence which points to the illegal shipping of grain, both by Barnstaple's merchants and by the customs officers of the port. In 1576 the *George* was seized at Ilfracombe when it was found to be attempting to ship corn to Spain with the full knowledge of some of the customs officers.⁷⁰ The same year eleven merchants petitioned the lord treasurer over the illegal export of grain and their failure to answer subpoenas in that respect.⁷¹ An Exchequer commission of enquiry conducted in 1570-71 heard that despite it being illegal for customs officers to conduct overseas trade, the searcher was a major purchaser of grain which he stored in barn near Hartland Point ready to load aboard ships once they had crossed over the bar at the mouth of Barnstaple harbour.⁷² It was also claimed that leather was openly

⁶⁷ Hughes and Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Early Tudors, 1485-1553*, 201-03.

⁶⁸ Statutes of the Realm, IV, 243-4; Jones, 'Illicit Business', 26.

⁶⁹ Ibid; Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 209-22.

⁷⁰ TNA SP 46/30 fol. 185.

⁷¹ TNA SP 46/30 fol. 200, 201.

⁷² Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 52.

loaded at the quayside for passage overseas, and that so far as its overseas trade was concerned the port handled nothing but prohibited wares.⁷³

A potential difficulty with accepting some of this evidence at face value is that it was made by merchants whose own commercial dealings were frustrated by the customs officers, and who may therefore have wished to cast the officers in as bad a light as possible to the Crown investigators. In these circumstances the evidence offered by informers can hardly be taken as a disinterested account of events. Elton demonstrated that those making accusations of smuggling often did so for personal financial gain as they stood to receive either half of the proceeds, or alternatively, and more usually, could be paid to drop the allegation by those accused.⁷⁴ Proceedings could be lodged under a writ of *qui tam* whereby those who instigated a successful case before a court were rewarded by the granting of a share of the fine imposed.⁷⁵ The majority of these types of case were heard in the court of Exchequer and most concerned allegations of customs fraud.⁷⁶ Not all Exchequer proceedings are so tainted however. The evidence provided by Exchequer commissions of enquiry such as that presented above, rather than by cases brought under a writ of *qui tam*, is of a different weight. Those which were concerned with abuses in customs, and which are frequently cited in this thesis, were conducted by a panel of independent commissioners appointed by the Crown. The clerk recorded in great detail the testimony given which was often made by a large number of witnesses, who represented a wide range of people - from the customer down to the humblest stevedore for example. The often corroborative nature of this, along with some obvious falsehoods from the accused, can build a compelling case. For instance an enquiry was conducted into the deputy customer at Barnstaple who was accused of making a single entry in his ledger but of issuing

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ G.R. Elton, 'Informing for Profit: A Sidelight on Tudor Methods of Law-Enforcement', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 2 (1954), 149-67.

⁷⁵ M.W. Beresford, 'The Common Informer, The Penal Statutes and Economic Regulation', *The Economic History Review*, 10 (1957), 221-38, 225.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 228.

multiple cockets against that entry which he then sold to merchants so allowing them free passage with their goods.⁷⁷ The unlikely explanation from one of the ship's masters concerned was that he had put to sea but belatedly realised that the cockets he had were 'skant leagible' and so had returned to port to have several copies made to be on the safe side.⁷⁸ Despite the possibility that some of the statements made to them might have been coloured, the findings of the commissioners at Barnstaple regarding the smuggling of grain are therefore credible, and are also consistent with practices elsewhere, both in the Bristol Channel and nationally at this time.⁷⁹

Smuggling

The observation that smuggling was endemic in the sixteenth century is not new.⁸⁰ The argument which this thesis seeks to advance however is that unrecorded trade as a proportion of total trade may have been greater at the smaller Channel ports than it was at Bristol itself. For this to be true there would have to have been a greater degree of smuggled goods relative to total trade passing through these ports than was the case at Bristol. In other words that smuggling was relatively more extensive in ports such as Barnstaple than it was in the port of Bristol. Attempting to quantify this unrecorded and illegal trade is obviously difficult, and often simply impossible. That this might have been the case at Barnstaple however is suggested by the fact that as well as smuggling prohibited wares such as leather and grain, a trade which was being widely conducted elsewhere, Barnstaple merchants were also smuggling cloth from the port. Evan Jones found no evidence of the illegal export of cloth by the Bristol merchant John Smythe in mid-century, and although he argues that there may have been a strong incentive to smuggle in the immediate aftermath of the

⁷⁷ TNA E133/1/127.

⁷⁸ *Ibid* fol. 2v.

⁷⁹ Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 113; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, Ch. 2.

⁸⁰ John U. Nef, 'Richard Camarden's "A Caveat for the Quene" (1570)', *Journal of Political Economy*, 41 (1933), 33-41; Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade'; Williams, 'Francis Shaxton'; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, Ch. 2.

1558 increase in duty he has found no evidence to substantiate this.⁸¹ Indeed Jones argues that the volume of illicit shipments of cloth is likely to have fallen in the last decades of the century and that 'most of the recorded fall in Bristol's exports of broadcloth during the period 1558-1600 was real'.⁸² Similarly Jean Vanes found that only seven percent of informations brought to the Court of Exchequer in the period 1559-1603 concerned cloth exports which also suggests that the problem was not extensive.⁸³

The evidence from the port of Barnstaple however suggests that considerable quantities of cloth were smuggled overseas, and that this was done with the cooperation of the customs officers. A case brought by the Crown in 1570-71 heard testimony that the *Julyan* bound for St John de Luz entered for customs for 38 kerseys but actually freighting 122; and that the *Jacket* which had no cloths entered in customs had 25 aboard according to the purser's records.⁸⁴ A further incident was recorded in which more than 90 kerseys had been loaded aboard a boat at night to be conveyed to a ship lying near the mouth of the Taw at Appledore.⁸⁵ On this occasion the customer did enter the cloth into the customs book, but not until two days after the ship had sailed, and then only because bad weather had forced the ship to return to Ilfracombe where a customs officer who was not part of the cabal at Barnstaple had attempted to board it to inspect its cargo. Four ships were identified freighting a total of 199 kerseys which had not been declared to customs over a two month period, compared to 38 which had been declared. In other words only around 20 percent of the actual cargoes were said to be recorded in the port books. Later testimony concerning a ship called the *Katherine* of Fremington provides further allegations of under declaration with a list of named merchants, their lading and their declarations to customs.

⁸¹ Jones, 'Illicit Business', 23; Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 248-49.

⁸² Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 260.

⁸³ Vanes, *Documents*, 165.

⁸⁴ TNA E133/1/110 fols. 1r.v.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* fol. 4r.

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John Waldron had ten packes and entred unto the custom boke but xxxvi clothes
John West had ffowre packes and he entred but xii clothes in the custome boke
John Waldron the younger had one pack and entered three clothes Hartnall had
one pack and entred three clothes John Barret had lxxviii kerseys and entred sixe
clothes John Saunder had two packettes and entred three clothes Rychard
Doderydge had eight packettes or there aboutes and entred into the custome
boke but x clothes or there aboutes.⁸⁶

A pack contained ten cloths and so it can be seen that on this occasion the merchants were said to be declaring around a third of their actual ladings. The interesting thing about this list however is not only the level of under declaration described, but the fact that these were all relatively small merchants, and that many of them were not natives of Barnstaple but came from Tiverton and South Molton. The significance of this is that access to illicit trade at the port appears to have been widespread, both from a geographical perspective and also in the range of merchants who were engaged in it. It does not seem to have been confined only to a small, well connected, rich merchant elite, but appears to have been routine even for those less immediately associated with the town. This in turn suggests that illicit trading must have been relatively greater in the smaller North Devon ports than it was at Bristol where smuggling was conducted more clandestinely and largely confined to a small group of elite merchants.⁸⁷

Commercial Development

By the end of the century the horizons of Barnstaple's merchants extended well beyond the western coast of France and northern Spain which had characterised the extent of trade at the opening of the century. As well as extending their trading enterprises to the coast of Africa and America, Barnstaple's merchants had developed a strong association with the island of St Michael's in the Azores.⁸⁸ Thus by 1600 the size of vessels, the range of their trading, and the value of their cargoes had all increased. The commodities imported were correspondingly more exotic, more luxurious and of higher

⁸⁶ Ibid fol. 3v.

⁸⁷ Eg. Jones, 'Illicit Business', 33; Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 141 & 257; Vanes, *Documents*, 46 & 49.

⁸⁸ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 371.

value. Sugar, ivory and madder all made their appearance in the customs accounts after mid century. This far flung trade conducted in high value products aboard large ocean going vessels required a different profile of merchant. The century thus witnessed a consolidation of the principal branches of trade towards fewer, but better capitalised merchants, who consequently held a progressively larger market share: the top three wine merchants in Barnstaple accounted for 64 percent of the wine trade by volume in 1517/18 for example, but in 1595/96 the top three merchants had 91 percent of this market; for iron imports the comparable figures are 41 percent in 1517/18 compared to 58 percent in 1595/96; and for cloth exports on a value basis 35 percent and 51 percent respectively.

An important source of the increased capital which facilitated this commercial trajectory was provided through the capture of foreign ships and their cargoes.⁸⁹ Although piracy and privateering were by no means new activities so far as Devon merchants were concerned, the scale of armed raiding of this sort increased dramatically once war with Spain was declared in 1585.⁹⁰ The same men who were at the forefront of the town's maritime trade, and who often held the major civic offices, were also the main sponsors of ships seeking to take Spanish prizes. Richard Dodderidge for example, a prominent trader in cloth and iron with Spain, who financed the building of the 100 ton *Prudence* which took four prizes including one worth £10,000 and another £16,000; or James and Nicholas Downe who were his partners in one of these voyages, and were also merchants who specialised in the Spanish trade; or John Norris who shipped cloth to Cadiz in 1582 and subsequently sponsored the *Falcon's Flight* on a reprisal voyage in 1590.⁹¹ The fabulous wealth which capturing the right

⁸⁹ Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 137; Oppenheim, *Devon*, 37.

⁹⁰ John C. Appleby, 'Devon Privateering from Early Times to 1668', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. by Michael Duffy, et al., 2 vols, Vol. 1, (Exeter, 1992), 90-97, 90-92.

⁹¹ TNA E190/925/10, E190/927/12, E190/927/15, E190/936/13, E190/923/3, E190/933/1, E190/935/14, E190/934/9; K.R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge, 1964), 256; Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 126-27; Lamplugh, *Barnstaple: Town on the Taw*, 51.

ship could bring to the financiers and crew of such voyages was not lost on contemporaries: in 1590 the town clerk recorded the arrival of the *Prudence* 'with prize portugall ship of about 80 tons which had been at castellmayne upon the coast of guinea having in her 4 chests of gold to the value of 16000 pounds and diverse chains of gold with civet, ambergreece and other things of great price, with much graynes, elephant tooth etc and such a value as the liek price hath not before this time been brought into this port'.⁹² Such voyages were by no means incidental to normal trade at the port. The town clerk makes clear that they were major and frequent undertakings, crewed in one instance with 80 men, and it has been estimated that more than half of Devon's shipping was engaged in privateering during this period.⁹³

The effect on the recorded customs revenues of these activities was therefore considerable, although it is unlikely that the entire cargoes of such ships was declared. One estimate suggests that only one fifth of prize cargoes bought into Devon ports was officially recorded, and whilst the Barnstaple town clerk described the cargo of the *Spiritu Sanctu* at £16,000 it was entered for customs at £10,000.⁹⁴ The fact that these goods were entered into customs at all however, serves to emphasise that this trade was legal. As such it may be considered a successful exploitation by Barnstaple merchants of a new market opportunity in the closing decades of the century. One which they were well placed to exploit in view of their previous knowledge of Spanish shipping routes, and their extensive maritime fleet. Although merchants at other minor Bristol Channel ports also financed reprisal voyages, none did so to the extent of Barnstaple which remains a place associated in the popular historical imagination with patriotic, buccaneering sea dogs.

⁹² Gray, ed., *Lost Chronicle*, 68.

⁹³ Appleby, 'Devon Privateering from Early Times to 1668', 93; Gray, ed., *Lost Chronicle*.

⁹⁴ Grant, 'Port Books', Appendix; Oppenheim, *Devon*, 50.

The buccaneering spirit displayed by members of the merchant community extended beyond reprisal voyages however, and patriotic spirit was distinctly absent in another parallel branch of Barnstaple's maritime activities. Pauline Croft has highlighted the irony of west country ports having been the principal base for anti Spanish privateers as well as the main centres for illicit trade with the enemy.⁹⁵ The evidence from Barnstaple supports this contention. Evidence from the coastal accounts indicates that Barnstaple acted as a centre from which Spanish and Portuguese sourced goods were distributed around the Bristol Channel ports, and that it continued in this role even during the 1580s and 90s. Imports of Spanish iron did not fall as they did at other English Bristol Channel ports, and imports of continental salt, possibly of Spanish origin, increased markedly in the last decades of the century. Furthermore coastal imports of lead and leather into the port increased towards the end of the century from destinations around the Channel including Bristol. These appear to have then been rerouted to Spanish destinations suggesting that Devonian merchants built on the contacts they already enjoyed in the Spanish trade and began to specialise in running contraband cargoes to Spanish customers in a way that distinguished them from merchants in other Bristol Channel ports.

Conclusion

In many respects the port of Barnstaple fits the description of having been a 'mini Bristol': like Bristol the focus of its overseas trade was primarily with Iberia; like Bristol it acted as an entreport for the onward shipping of continental goods; like Bristol its merchants expanded the bounds of their trading westwards and southwards as the century progressed. Barnstaple also shared close relations with Bristol which was the origin or destination for much, although not most, of its coastal trade. Yet on the other hand it followed a different trajectory. Firstly, and surprisingly, Ireland was never a significant trading partner at the port of Barnstaple: whereas Ireland accounted for

⁹⁵ Croft, 'Trading with the Enemy', 296.

fourteen percent of Bristol's recorded imports in 1516/17, and twenty percent in 1544/45 for instance, Irish derived imports represented just four percent of all imports to Barnstaple in 1517/18, and none at all were recorded in 1543/44. Conversely the relationship with Ireland was an important one for the smaller port of Ilfracombe. Secondly, in contrast to Bristol, cloth exports remained a significant part of the North Devon ports' trade, and even if they were not its only export trade in the way that the port books sometimes indicate, they were nevertheless important, and rose rather than fell over time. Thirdly, also in contrast to Bristol, the level of Iberian imports of iron increased over the course of the century. Similarly continental imports of salt grew markedly in this period. Fourthly, Barnstaple was seen to have developed a niche trading relationship with the port of La Rochelle which accounted for over a third of its declared trade in 1595/96 compared to only ten percent at Bristol in the preceding financial year. Finally, privateering was an important activity involving a much greater degree of overall resources at Barnstaple than was the case at any other minor Bristol Channel port.

It seems clear that by the final decades of the century far more than just cloth was being exported from Barnstaple and Ilfracombe in the way that the Exchequer accounts indicate, and that this source alone does not fully reflect all strands of the region's trade. A parallel covert export trade in leather, grain and probably also lead operated in a semi clandestine manner, with the connivance or participation of the customs officers. The evidence presented to the 1570-71 commission of enquiry suggests that the illicit trade was on a considerable scale, and according to one witness may even have been greater than the legitimate trade recorded in the port books.⁹⁶ The export trade in cloth also appears to have been understated by a factor of between three and five based on the above evidence. The assessment by Grant that at Barnstaple 'large scale and sustained evasion of duties was probably only occasional' is therefore

⁹⁶ Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 52.

North Devon

surely too optimistic.⁹⁷ Joyce Youings noticed that tax records indicate that North Devon's economy grew to a much greater extent after 1550 than is apparent from a reading of the customs records and posed the question, 'Were official suspicions about customs revenue perhaps well founded in north Devon?'.⁹⁸ The answer must surely be yes.

⁹⁷ Grant, 'Port Books', 61.

⁹⁸ Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', 104.

Chapter 3 : Bridgwater.

Customs data for the port of Bridgwater records that the region was heavily dependent on the manufacturing and export of cloth in the early decades of the century. There was subsequently a steep decline in this as well as other aspects of overseas trade in the second half of the sixteenth century, particularly in the years leading up to 1600. However, a substantially different picture is presented by the data in local port records, and this chapter will draw on these and other sources to suggest that Somerset's marine trade was not only greater than that described in the customs accounts, but that the port's prosperity may have actually increased rather than diminished over the course of the century.

Bridgwater was the head port for a jurisdiction which extended from Porlock Bay in the west to the River Axe in the east, covering what is effectively the coastline of present day Somerset. Customs accounts were compiled in two parts: for the port of Bridgwater itself, and for the member port of Minehead in the west of the county. Additionally, the Bridgwater part of the port's accounts sometimes specified two creeks through which trade was conducted: Combwich downstream of the town of Bridgwater; and Axwater adjacent to Uphill on the river Axe. 'Bridgwater' thus confusingly referred to the whole customs jurisdiction, to the coastal area encompassing the two creeks in the vicinity of Bridgwater, and to the town itself. In order to distinguish these three meanings 'port' will be used here to describe the geographical jurisdiction of the head port including the member port of Minehead; the 'head port' of Bridgwater will describe the geographical area proximate to the town of Bridgwater including the creeks of Combwich and Axwater; and the 'harbour' of Bridgwater will refer to the moorings and quay immediate to the town.

The Water Bailiffs' Accounts

As well as the customs accounts, local port records survive for the harbour at Bridgwater which were compiled by the town's water bailiffs. Similar records survive for Chester, Exeter, Southampton and Yarmouth, and it has been suggested that these provide a more accurate record of trade than the Exchequer customs returns.¹ Maryanne Kowaleski argued that as local tolls flowed directly to the local community and were used for the maintenance of local facilities, it was unlikely that there would have been any tolerance of an office holder responsible for collecting such tolls who abused his position by accepting bribes to allow merchants to forego them. By contrast the customs officers had little to lose and much to gain by accepting bribes, and the revenue which they collected was sent to the Exchequer in London with no direct benefit to their local community.² Furthermore local tolls were levied for relatively small amounts which made the incentive to avoid them much lower. This line of reasoning would seem to be even more true for the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts as these were not local taxes as such, but largely relate to charges levied for physically handling merchandise. Furthermore, unlike the Chester, Southampton and Exeter local port records, there is no indication that exemption was granted to certain groups of people, or at certain times of the year.³ The prime candidates for such an exemption would have been the burgesses and mayor, but they were shown as having paid the same charges as others listed in the accounts.⁴ The church or local nobility are other possible candidates but charges were listed against merchants in connection with these parties, such as the four tuns of wine sent to 'my Lord of Glastonbury' in 1530,

¹ Cobb, *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*; Tom Beaumont James, ed., *The Port Book of Southampton, 1509-1510: 2 vols.*, Southampton Records Series, 32-33 (Southampton, 1990); Kowaleski, *Local Customs Accounts*, 40-42; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 43; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 138-40.

² Kowaleski, *Local Customs Accounts*, 40-42; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 43.

³ Cobb, *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*, xxiv; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Port Towns: England and Wales, 1300-1540', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 600-1540*, ed. by D Palliser, 3 vols, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2000), 471; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 3.

⁴ Eg. SRO/D/B/bw/1441 to Mr. Hammond; SRO/D/B/bw/1438 to Mr. Newport.

or the charge made to the Prior of Taunton the same year, or a charge to 'my lord justys' or the 'Bishop of Bath' in 1550.⁵ Nor was there any interruption in the sequence of charges made for goods during the time of the Lent or St James' Fairs: the 1587 accounts specifically record a charge made during 'the fayer week'.⁶

There are a number of potential difficulties which must be acknowledged when comparing these different sets of financial records. The Exchequer accounts do not necessarily record the date a ship entered port, but the date that the cargo was declared to the customs officer, and although these were sometimes the same thing, this was not necessarily always the case. Likewise the water bailiffs' accounts principally comprise a record of cash receipts which do not therefore always closely follow the actual arrival or departure of ships. Although both sets of accounts had the same financial year from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, there was not necessarily a common cut off method, and goods might appear in one financial year in one set of records which were not entered in the same year in the other therefore. A further problem is that the water bailiffs' accounts were not compiled in a consistent manner, and the information which the earlier accounts contain often lacks sufficient detail or precision to enable them to be linked directly to the customs accounts. There are also a very limited number of instances when the two sets of accounts survive for the same year: there are two water bailiff accounts, for 1540/41 and 1544/45, which correspond to the same full years as the overseas customs accounts; one year 1599/1600 which corresponds to the coastal account; and one year, 1597/98, for which the complete trio survives of overseas customs, coastal customs and water bailiffs accounts.⁷ These problems are not insuperable however. As will be made clear below there are instances when ships, their masters or the goods freighted can be definitely identified as matching in both sets of accounts. Turning to the

⁵ SRO DD/B/bw/1441, DD/B/bw/1535, DD/SAS/C/795.

⁶ SRO DD/B/bw/1579.

⁷ TNA E190/1083/20, E190 1083/17, E190 1083/15, E190 1083/19, E190/1083/25; SRO D/B/bw/1441, D/B/bw/1438, D/B/bw/1483, DD/SAS/C/795.

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wider picture of total volumes recorded in the two series of documents, whilst an exact tally should not be expected, for some goods the level of difference is so large that it cannot be due to differences in year-end accounting procedures or other technical reasons. Alternative explanations will therefore be offered.

Agricultural Commodities.

Somerset was primarily an agricultural and cloth producing region, and its exports reflected this. The most frequently occurring and consistent entry in the accounts was for the export of beans, for which Bridgwater was renowned. Leland observed in his journey through the southwest made between 1535 and 1543 that,

There is a great plenty of benes in this quarter and inward to the landes. And of these benes there is yn a manner a staple at Bridgwater when corne is dere in the partes beyond the sea.⁸

Other agricultural commodities exported were wheat, barley, malt and hops.

Table 3.1 Port of Bridgwater: exports of agricultural commodities (weys).

	Beans	Wheat	Barley / Malt
1506/7	438	-	13
1510/11	730	5	7
1528/29	132	-	-
1541/42	242	28	21
1560/61	352	-	15
1583/84	145	15	1
1585/86	21	-	1
1597/98	4	-	15

Table 3.1 indicates that recorded foodstuff exports for 1528/29 were considerably lower than those for 1510/11, but this may be explained by an exceptionally bad harvest in that year rather than a lack of demand. Conversely

⁸ John Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 vols, Vol. 2 (London, 1906-1910), 168.

exports for 1541/42 were higher due to the requirement to provision English troops campaigning in Ireland; many entries in the account make specific reference to these shipments being for the lord lieutenant of Ireland to this end.⁹ The high figure for 1583/84 is explained both by a year of good harvest, and also by the revival of overseas trade following the lifting of a Spanish embargo of English trade. Both 1586 and 1597 again suffered poor harvests, but also hostilities with Spain were renewed in 1585. Despite these fluctuations the customs accounts nevertheless demonstrate a clear and dramatic fall in agricultural exports between the opening and close of the century.

This information must however, be considered in the light of the customs duties levied, which were doubled in 1558, and subsequently increased again for some products including beans.¹⁰ Moreover, as Chapter Two outlined a license was required to export a range of products including most foodstuffs. Licenses were granted to Sir Edward Baynton in 1531 for instance, to buy beans in Brentmarsh and export them through Bridgwater, and to three men in 1557 to supply the inhabitants of Waterford with wheat, malt and rye.¹¹ But the incentive to export goods without resource to a license was strong, and raising the customs tariff also raised the incentive to evade duty. It is known that such evasion was widespread elsewhere in the country, and there is evidence that the practice was rife in Somerset as well.¹² A study of John Smythe, a leading Bristol merchant who began his trading career in Bridgwater, and is described in Chancery cases of the period as 'late of Bridgwater', has found that all of his exports of grain from Bristol were illegitimate to some extent, with as little as one fifth of the actual cargo being declared.¹³ In 1547 Smythe arranged to load a delivery of butter 'at Wyngod's pill by Rooksbridge in Bryntmarche' on the Axe, a cargo for which he neither had a license nor made a declaration to

⁹ TNA E122/27/18.

¹⁰ TNA E122/26/25, E122/29/3, E122/29/27.

¹¹ *Letters & Papers Foreign and Domestic Henry VIII Addenda, 1509-1537* (London, 1929), 729; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary 1557-8* (London, 1936-39), 309.

¹² Williams, 'Francis Shaxton'; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*.

¹³ TNA C 1/673/15; Jones, 'Illicit Business', 28.

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customs.¹⁴ Similarly, a case brought in 1549 against John Newport, a leading Bridgwater merchant, alleged that he conspired with the controller of customs in the accepting of bribes to allow the export of unlicensed beans and wheat to Spain and Ireland.¹⁵ The existence of this case does not in itself prove that John Newport was engaged in customs evasion, since it was made under a writ of *qui tam*. However, such an allegation must have been made against a background that would allow it some credibility and it cannot have been totally implausible.

The customs records show that beans were exported through Axwater, which accounted for half of the declared loadings for this product in the half year returns for 1589/90, although usually considerably less than this. Axwater lacked a permanent customs official, and a comment attached to a list of expenses incurred by the customs clerk in 1590 makes clear that the customer's authority was far from established there,

My charges 8 days at Exwater with my hors amongst unrewly men which hav almost cost me my lyff as it is well known that no man willingly will deale there but Jonne in person, for that no man else will do it.¹⁶

It seems highly unlikely therefore that Axwater's returns would have been a full and fair reflection of trade from the creek, and the likelihood is that this was a major centre for illicit trade in beans and other agricultural commodities.

The association of beans with Axwater may be a reason for their relative absence from the Bridgwater water bailiff's accounts along with other agricultural exports. However there is one instance in March 1598 when the bailiffs' accounts recorded the loading of four and a half weys of malt 'to the Irish boats', which can be matched with the overseas customs accounts where they are entered as three weys aboard two Wexford craft: 50 percent more was

¹⁴ J. Vanes, ed., *The Ledger of John Smythe, 1538-1550* (London, 1974), 292.

¹⁵ TNA E111/38.

¹⁶ TNA E122/29/24.

loaded than was declared to customs therefore.¹⁷ This is the only definite corroboration of evasion of customs for agricultural goods, but it makes clear that such evasion took place even at the officially sanctioned quay where the customs officials were resident.

Cloth

It was cloth, not beans, however which was Somerset's biggest declared export in terms of value, and the customs accounts reflect the rich variety of this manufacture: Dunsters, Bridgwaters, Tavistock Blues, White Moltons, Taunton Reds, Bristol Frieze and Devonshire Dozens, as well as the standard broadcloth are amongst the types listed. Table 3.2 expresses customs data for cloth exports using the methodology described in Chapter Two and based on an index of 100 in 1506/07.

Table 3.2 Port of Bridgwater: index of cloth exports.¹⁸

Year	Index
1506/07	100
1510/11	74
1528/29	252
1540/41	93
1541/42	191
1544/45	150
1560/61	69
1583/84	31
1585/86	18
1597/98	5

The decline in Somerset's cloth trade through the local ports is less exceptional when considered in the national context for the reasons set out in Chapter Two. The Somerset exports recorded in the customs accounts examined here differ

¹⁷ TNA E190/1083/20; SRO D/B/bw/1482.

¹⁸ The nominal values on which Table 3.2 is based are £273, £203, £688, £255, £521, £409, £190, £86, £49 and £15 respectively.

from the national picture however in that national cloth exports peaked in 1551, rather than in the late 1520s.¹⁹ These figures are not necessarily representative of the region's overall cloth exports however, as Somerset clothiers also exported through south coast ports, such as Lyme. Neither should a decline in exports be interpreted as a straightforward indicator of regional economic decline. Towards the end of the century Somerset clothiers, like their counterparts in Devon, adopted new manufacturing techniques in response to changing market conditions and switched to making lighter cloths for which there was greater demand. The end of the century shows shipments of these 'new draperies' such as that made in 1588 by the Taunton merchants, Thomas Gybons, Thomas Davey and Thomas Fysher who shipped 24 pieces of bayes and 30 pieces of sayes to La Rochelle, or by James Quirke who shipped Manchester Cottons from Minehead to Bayonne in 1597.²⁰ The new draperies were considerably more labour intensive to produce and were reported as needing the employment of three times the number of those required to produce the equivalent amount of the old broadcloths.²¹ This added value product was also more profitable, and the declining volume of cloth exported through the Somerset ports, whilst detrimental to the economy of the ports themselves, was not therefore necessarily detrimental to the economy of the wider county. An allied later sixteenth century development was the creation of a new industry in the manufacture of felt hats made apparent by the importation of 'hat wool' from Spain starting in the 1580s, and a small export of hat felt to Wexford in 1592.²²

Thirty four separate merchants were listed trading cloth in 1506/7, and 58 in the busiest year 1528/29. Even more were involved in other branches of trade, and a marked characteristic of the customs accounts is the sheer number of

¹⁹ Loades, *Maritime Empire*, 54-64. Lawrence Stone, 'Elizabethan Overseas Trade', *The Economic History Review*, 2 (1949), 30-58, 39.

²⁰ TNA E122/29/30, E190/1083/17.

²¹ Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 239.

²² TNA E190/1083/5, E122/29/39; Stone, 'Elizabethan Overseas Trade', 49.

individuals engaged in commerce, often for a small amount, and many appearing only once. Some of these were undoubtedly crew members such as 'the pursser off the same ship' charged by the water bailiffs in 1505/6 for use of the crane to offload Gascon wine, for which he was charged separately from the main cargo.²³ The occupation of other small traders is indicated in the later customs accounts and included bakers, masons, glaziers, yeomen and clothiers.²⁴ Although many were involved, the cloth trade was however dominated by a small group of powerful and wealthy men: the top three merchants accounted for nearly one third of all cloth exported in 1528/29, and nearly half in 1540/41. Since cloth was being exported in exchange for foreign goods, it follows that these men also dominated the import trade. Thus John Newport, several times mayor of Bridgwater, was alone responsible for twelve percent of all trade entered in the customs accounts for 1540/41. Likewise Richard Godbeare, who was a bailiff in 1588 and mayor in 1592, accounted for fourteen percent of all declared trade in 1583/84. The focus of these rich merchants' trade was overwhelmingly with continental Europe, to which they shipped cloth and grain, and from which they imported high value commodities such as wine, iron and oil, and luxury items including spices and other exotic products. War with Spain, and changes in the overseas demand for cloth in the later decades of the century, were thus to present major challenges to the financial position of this echelon of society.

Fish

A variety of types of preserved fish from Ireland formed the biggest single import category by value, and were the most frequently occurring entry in the customs records during the first half of the century. Prior to 1550, all overseas fish imports without exception were from Ireland, and many small craft, often with a cargo comprising only fish, are a defining feature of the pre 1558 accounts. Hake, red and white herring, and generically recorded 'salt fish'

²³ SRO D/B/bw/1432.

²⁴ TNA E190/1083/8.

predominated until mid century after which cod from the far Atlantic became increasingly apparent.

Maryanne Kowaleski identified that Minehead imported more fish than any other port in the south west at the end of the fifteenth century.²⁵ This strong association of the Somerset ports with importing Irish sourced fish continued into the sixteenth century when, in proportionate terms, Minehead and Bridgwater imported far more fish than either the North Devon ports or Bristol. Taking comparable years during the 1540s for example, fish imports represented four percent of the total value of imports at Barnstaple, eight percent at Bristol, but 33 percent into the Somerset ports.²⁶ In absolute terms, whilst the value of overall imports at Bristol was approximately eighteen times greater than in the port of Bridgwater in the two years 1541/42 and 1545/56, the value of Bristol's fish imports was only four times greater than that of the port of Bridgwater.

This pattern of trade may perhaps be explained by the presence of Irish communities along the Somerset coast. The association of Minehead with Ireland was evidently of long standing and it would continue to enjoy close relations into the following century. In 1497 Robert Basher from Minehead was involved in a dispute concerning a boat which he had hired to go fishing off the Irish coast, and in 1498 some fishermen had been fined for bringing Irish vagrants from Ireland against the orders of the court.²⁷ Minehead was alone amongst English towns in being distinguished by John Leland as one which 'is exceeding ful of Irisch menne', and there are several instances of the Wexford

²⁵ Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Expansion of the South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 53 (2000), 429-54, 437.

²⁶ TNA E122/27/18, E122/27/21, E122/27/24, E122/43/15, E122/21/10, E122/199/4, E122/21/15.

²⁷ TNA REQ 2/4/399; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Fishing and Fisheries in the Middle Ages: The Western Fisheries', in *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, ed. by D.J. Starkey, C. Reid, and N. Ashcroft, (London, 2000), 23-28, 28.

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based name 'Roche' in the parish records which support this.²⁸ In the 1620s the overwhelming number of Irish immigrants in the port were again a concern to the town's authorities, and in 1633 it was described as a place 'much frequented by such as pass to and from Ireland'.²⁹ Minehead was not the only place on the Somerset coast which was associated with the Irish however. It is notable that virtually all the craft entered in customs at Axwater were from Irish 'home' ports, and in 1587 a separate section was drawn up in the customs accounts for 'The Irish in Exwater'.³⁰ In 1589 separate returns were again prepared for the English and the Irish in the head port of Bridgwater.³¹

Such communities would also explain an anomalous situation with regard to the origin of carriers associated with particular ports. Minehead was the only English port in the Bristol Channel that had the majority of its Irish trade freighted aboard English ships rather than Irish ships. English carriers, represented by Minehead ships, accounted for as much as 97 percent of all fish imports from Ireland in 1544/45. By contrast just few miles along the coast at Bridgwater there were no English ships recorded trading to Ireland. This anomaly can perhaps best be explained by the supposition that although recorded as having a home port of Minehead, ships sailing from there were effectively owned and operated by the indigenous Irish population. This would also seem to offer the best explanation for the disproportionate amount of trade which the Somerset ports conducted with Ireland compared to their English counterparts in the Channel. This relationship is expressed graphically in Figure 3.1 using data from the customs accounts.

²⁸ Irish Ancestors, Irishtimes.com

<<http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/surname/index.cfm?Surname=roche&fuseaction=Go.>>

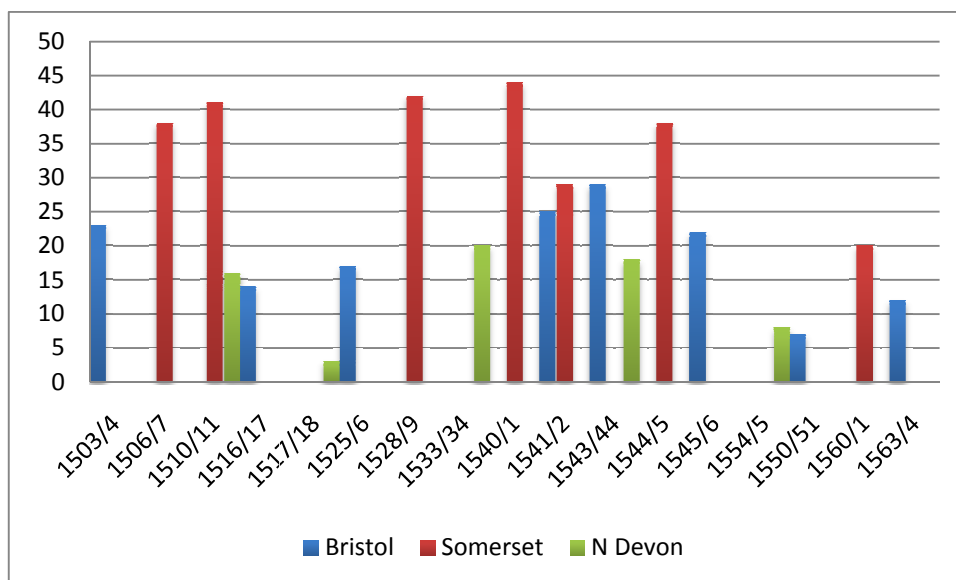
[March 2009]; SRO T\PH\lanc/10; Leland, *Itinerary of John Leland 2*, 167.

²⁹ Peter Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2007), 17,26.

³⁰ TNA E122/29/27.

³¹ TNA E122/29/34.

Figure 3.1 Bristol, Somerset and North Devon: Irish imports as a percentage of all imports.

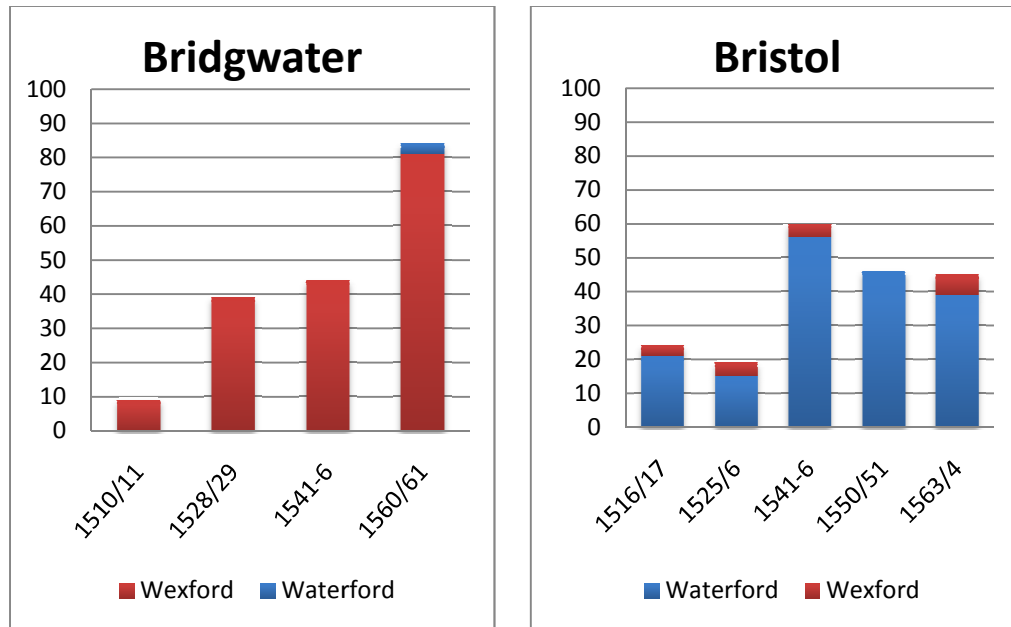


It can be seen that Somerset’s recorded imports from Ireland never fell below twenty percent of the value of all imports, whilst in the North Devon ports of Barnstaple and Ilfracombe they never rose above twenty percent, and even fell as low as three percent in 1517/18. Irish imports represented an average of 36 percent of the value of all imports in the Somerset ports compared to only nineteen percent at Bristol. In other words the trading relationship with Ireland was twice as important to the merchants and burgesses in Somerset as it was to their counterparts at Bristol.

An interesting facet to the commercial relationship between the Somerset and Irish port towns is that it did not simply replicate that pertaining at Bristol. Figure 3.2 shows that whilst Wexford ships had a growing and eventually dominant market share in the freighting of Irish goods to the head port of Bridgwater, they were very poorly represented at Bristol. By contrast Waterford ships held an analogous position at Bristol, and there was only one occasion on which a Waterford ship was found in the Bridgwater accounts represented here.

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Figure 3.2 Ports of Bridgwater & Bristol: percentage share of Irish imports freighted by Waterford and Wexford ships.



There does not therefore appear to have been a competitive trading relationship between Bristol and Bridgwater/Minehead or between Waterford and Wexford merchants. Rather it has the characteristic of a market in which there was a degree of tacit cooperation or understanding at some level, resulting in a mutually exclusive commercial relationship between particular Irish and English port towns.

The second half of the century saw major supply side changes in the fish industry which impacted upon both the Minehead and Irish carriers. As far as Minehead was concerned it led to a substantial reduction in the town's merchant fleet and to the amount of trade conducted through the member port. Andrew Teage and William Donnel, (said to be aged 80 and nearly 100), could remember details of the 32 craft which had used the quay before 1559 in contrast to the two ships and one bark belonging to the town later in the

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century.³² From the Irish perspective the changing pattern of trade resulted in the consolidation of the lead which Wexford had begun to gain over other Irish ports: Wexford craft accounted for approximately a quarter of the declared trade freighted to Somerset aboard Irish vessels in 1510/11, over a half in 1541/42, and by 1585 these were the only Irish ships trading to Somerset.

Table 3.3 expresses overall trade by value using the customs rates valuations, but in order to make a meaningful comparison post-1558 values have been rebased in line with those prior to the 1558 re-rating.

Table 3.3 Port of Bridgwater: imports of fish (£ rebased to 1506/7)

Year	Cod	Hake/Herring/Salmon/Salt Fish
1506/07	-	491
1510/11	-	672
1528/29	-	774
1540/41	-	318
1541/42	-	271
1544/45	-	312
1560/61	11	172
1583/84	-	-
1585/86	-	-
1597/98	130	76

The changes in the method of recording outlined in the previous chapter account for the striking absence of fish imports in these figures between 1560/61 and 1597/98. Confirmation that the lack of fish represents an administrative rather than a real phenomenon is provided by the water bailiffs' accounts which recorded quantities of herring continuing to arrive in the intervening period.³³ By 1597/98 however, fish imports were again recorded from Ireland and elsewhere. Table 3.3 illustrates that by 1597/98 imports of herring and similar Irish sourced fish were only around a fifth of those at the

³² SRO DD/L/1/55/1.

³³ SRO D/B/bw/1579, 1478.

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beginning of the century, and well below their peak. In contrast to earlier in the century when dozens of Irish ships arrived for the Lenten fair at Bridgwater, the customs account for 1597/98 lists only two ships, both called *Sunday* and both arriving from Wexford.³⁴ Despite changes in recording from 1563 to 1591, the overarching theme described in table 3.3 therefore is one of a shift from the long established pattern of maritime trade which had been centred around the importation of Irish preserved fish.

This can be attributed to two factors which from the mid 1560s onwards challenged the dominance of Irish sourced fish and of the Irish merchant-carriers engaged in this trade. Firstly, new sources of supply are apparent with the increasing exploitation of the West Atlantic cod fisheries. The first record of fish from the New World occurred in 1550 when six hundredweight of 'newlande' fish were recorded at Minehead arriving aboard the *Andrew* from Swansea.³⁵ In 1560/61 23 hundredweight of fish '*de nova terra*' were recorded inbound at Bridgwater; in 1585/86 85 hundredweight from Bristol; and by 1597/98 imports had risen to 358 hundredweight.³⁶ The first evidence of direct engagement by Somerset ships in the far Atlantic trade occurred in 1597/98 when the Bridgwater ship *Advantage* returned from Newfoundland with 300 hundredweight of dried fish.³⁷

A second factor which mitigated against Irish fish imports was the development of a domestic fish-salting industry during the latter half of the century, which would have reduced the demand for overseas imports. Growth in the domestic fish industry was driven by climatically induced changes in the migratory patterns of herring which began to appear off the North Devon coast from the 1580s, and were noted as being in great abundance off the coast of

³⁴ TNA E190/1083/20.

³⁵ TNA E122/28/5.

³⁶ TNA E122/29/3; E122/ 29/24; E190/0183/17.

³⁷ TNA E190/1083/20.

Pembrokeshire in the final years of the century.³⁸ By the beginning of the seventeenth century smoke houses were established at Lynmouth in North Devon, which was the centre for a substantial fish industry, and which attracted seasonal workers from Minehead amongst other places.³⁹ These developments are borne out by data in the coastal accounts. Although two discrete sets of data cannot be taken to represent a trend, it is notable that there were no herring recorded in the coastal customs accounts for 1550/51, but ten years later there were several inward shipments recorded from Ilfracombe, Bristol and Milford.⁴⁰

Wine

The continental European import with the highest overall value was wine. Shipments of Iberian and French wine were substantial and regular imports throughout the century. The water bailiffs' accounts give an indication of the ultimate destination of some of these: to towns such as Bruton, Axbridge, Milverton, Stowey, Cannington, and Petherton; and to 'my lord of Glastonbury', 'my lord justys', and the abbot of Neath.⁴¹

The profile of the merchants engaged in the wine trade was substantially the same as that of those engaged in the cloth trade, where a few wealthy merchants dominated the business. This became increasingly the case as the century progressed: in 1506/7 the top three merchants accounted for one third of the tunnage of declared wine imports; by 1528 this had risen to two thirds; by 1541 nearly three quarters; and by 1560 over nine tenths.

³⁸ Gray, 'Devon's Fisheries', 140; H. Owen, ed., *G. Owen (1603) The Description of Pembrokeshire*, Vol. 1, Cymmrodorion Record Series (London, 1892), 57,121.

³⁹ Gray, 'Devon's Fisheries', 140.

⁴⁰ TNA E122/28/5; E122/9/4.

⁴¹ SRO D/B/bw/1435, D/B/bw/1438, D/B/bw/1441, D/B/bw1482.

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Table 3.4 Port of Bridgwater: imports and inbound coastal shipments of wine (tuns)

Year	Overseas	Coastal
1506/07	81	-
1510/11	153	-
1528/29	62	-
1540/41	58	-
1541/42	70	-
1544/45	32	-
1560/61	61	-
1561/62	-	43
1583/84	123	-
1585/86	2	6
1597/98	69	1

Table 3.4 indicates that apart from a peak in 1510/11, wine imports were reasonably stable during the first half of the century. The figure for 1544/45 was adversely affected by war with France which disrupted supply, and the partially complete accounts which survive from 1587 to 1590 suggest that similar problems must have been caused by the outbreak of hostilities with Spain. Likewise, improved trading relations with Spain between 1571 and 1584 following the lifting of its embargo on English trade may account for the high imports in 1583/84, which included an exceptionally large single shipment of 45 tuns from *Andorlory* (Andalusia?), and a further 33 tuns aboard Bridgwater ships bound from Seville.⁴² The two tuns recorded two years later could be the result of further hostilities with Spain again disrupting supply. This low figure is somewhat offset however by six tuns which were recorded in the partially surviving coastal accounts for the same year. Similarly, 43 tuns were shipped coastwise to the port in 1561/62, nearly as much as were entered in the overseas accounts for the preceding fiscal year.

A comparison of the water bailiffs' accounts with the overseas and coastal records for 1597/98 shows that even the combined overseas and coastal

⁴² TNA E190/1083/5.

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customs records may be misleading as to the actual underlying quantities which were landed at Bridgwater.⁴³ These reveal that the wine entered in the customs accounts does not appear to have necessarily been destined for the harbour itself. Of the 70 tuns recorded in the overseas and coastal accounts, only 45¼ tuns appear to have been unloaded at the quayside in Bridgwater.⁴⁴ In particular a substantial cargo of 46½ tuns, which entered inbound from St Lucar aboard the *David* in April 1598, is not reflected in the bailiffs' accounts. The question thus arises as to where the *David's* cargo was unloaded. One possibility could be that having declared for customs at Combrich downriver of Bridgwater itself, it was then freighted elsewhere in the port, perhaps to Minehead. This would not be apparent from either the Exchequer or water bailiffs' records as it fell outside the scope of either account. However, this was a considerable volume of wine for so small a port with relatively restricted marketing opportunities in its hinterland, and would have represented the largest import of wine to the member port for over 80 years based on the custom accounts sampled. This therefore seems unlikely. Another possibility is that ships such as the *David* may have cleared customs at Bridgwater, perhaps at Combrich, before proceeding further up the Bristol Channel. However the relevant coastal account shows that the *David* was not issued with a certificate for onward transport of its cargo, and that it was not recorded outbound. The most likely destination for the *David* would have been Bristol, but the Bristol coastal accounts also did not record the *David* inbound.⁴⁵ Despite this, the lack of an entry in the coastal accounts does not necessarily invalidate the supposition that the *David* offloaded its cargo under another Bristol Channel customs jurisdiction as evidence will be considered in Chapter Four which

⁴³ TNA E190/108320; SRO D/B/bw/1482.

⁴⁴ This figure is the total of the entries listed for landing, crantage and striking in the water bailiffs' accounts. Supporting detail such as names, volumes etc suggests that these are not duplicate charges for the same cargoes. It omits 12 tuns listed under cellerage which was an additional charge for storage for wine which had already been entered under crantage. It also omits 10 tuns listed under lading which appear to have been levied for loading into smaller craft for passage to places such as Stowey, West Newton and Langport further inland.

⁴⁵ TNA E190/1132/3.

indicates that coastal certificates were not necessarily required for coastal shipments of wine in the later years of the century.

The possibility that ships such as the *David* cleared customs and then sailed with their cargo for another domestic port but without a coastal certificate may also offer an explanation for the paradoxical situation whereby some imports of wine which were unloaded at the quayside were *not* declared to customs. Wine was recorded in the bailiffs' accounts arriving from Cardiff in December 1597 for instance, but the earliest entry for wine in the relevant Exchequer coastal customs account was not until February 1598.⁴⁶ Although both shipments were from Cardiff, they were of different quantities and in different ships and so were clearly unrelated. In total sixteen shipments of wine amounting to 30 tuns appear in the bailiffs' accounts which cannot be correlated to the customs accounts for 1597/98.

The underlying commercial reality was therefore considerably more complicated and opaque than the customs records alone suggest. This has important implications for historians who use such records since it appears that some ships arrived from overseas with large cargoes and cleared customs in the head port, but did not necessarily unload their entire cargo, if any at all, at the harbour. On the other hand, some coastal shipments entered the harbour which did not require customs clearance and were consequently not recorded in the coastal port books.

⁴⁶ SRO D/B/bw/1482; TNA E190/1083/20.

Salt

A similar reasoning applies to salt which as previously described was a staple import. The data from the customs accounts is summarised in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Port of Bridgwater: imports and inbound coastal shipments of salt (tons)

Year	Overseas	Coastal
1506/07	243	-
1510/11	419	-
1528/29	319	-
1540/41	501	-
1541/42	197	-
1544/45	119	-
1560/61	263	-
1561/62	-	29
1583/84	154	-
1585/86	39	25
1597/98	48	15

Salt was imported from Brittany, Portugal and Spain, and as such was adversely affected by hostilities with France in 1545/46 and with Spain in 1585/86.

The water bailiffs' accounts contain references to a cellar at Combwich from which salt was collected, and to the shipment of salt from Combwich by lighter to the harbour at Bridgwater.⁴⁷ This may account for the wide difference in the quantities recorded in the bailiffs' and customs accounts, as it appears that salt cleared customs at Combwich, and was unloaded there before being transhipped to smaller boats for passage up the Parrett. Thus in June 1545 two ships from Aveiro, the *Trinity* and the *Rysse Magnor*, were recorded in customs with 50 tons and 30 tons respectively. No more than twelve tons of this is definitely identifiable in the water bailiffs' accounts and it arrived at the harbour

⁴⁷ SRO D/B/bw/1438.

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aboard lighters in several shipments over a period of weeks.⁴⁸ Similarly a Bridgwater ship, the *Vantage*, entered 25 tons in customs on 9 March 1598, of which twelve tons were recorded inbound by the bailiffs over the remainder of the month.⁴⁹ It is not possible to provide a definitive explanation for the unaccounted for thirteen tons in this instance. The *Vantage's* salt could have been called off to Bridgwater from Comwich over a much longer period, perhaps even months, and whilst the later entries in the water bailiffs' accounts do not indicate that the salt was from the *Vantage*, this does not rule out the possibility that it could have been. Likewise, trade could have been conducted from Comwich to places other than just Bridgwater itself of course, and Comwich may have been the base for a wider coastal trade within the head port's jurisdiction. Equally, ships such as the *Trinity* and *Rysse Magnor* may have offloaded only part of their cargo before proceeding further up the channel in the way suggested for wine.

The majority of the water bailiffs' accounts contain several different sub-accounts, and goods entered can appear more than once: for unloading, for weighing, for crantage and for carriage for example. Furthermore, quantities are not always given, or where given are not always exactly described, for example 'a load'. It can therefore be difficult to ascertain precise information, but it appears that approximately only one third of the salt declared to customs for the head port of Bridgwater can be traced as having been unloaded in the town's harbour for 1540/41 and 1544/45. The 1597/98 bailiffs' account contains more definitive information, and the relevant figure of 33 percent can be calculated with a greater degree of confidence. The water bailiffs' accounts therefore show us that only a minority of the salt entered for customs actually reached or passed through the town itself.

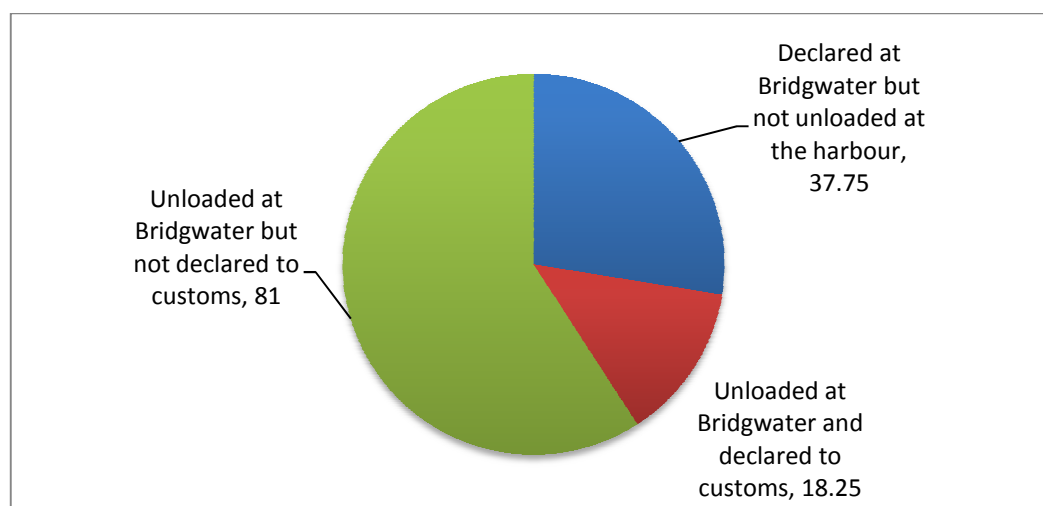
⁴⁸ SRO D/B/bw/1438.

⁴⁹ TNA E122/27/21; SRO D/B/bw/1482.

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Having said this, many shipments of salt were recorded in the bailiffs' accounts which were *not* recorded in customs. In 1598 for example, seven tons from Bristol, three tons from Cardiff and one ton from Newport were recorded as having been unloaded at the harbour but which were absent from the relevant coastal accounts.⁵⁰ Unlike these particular shipments, the majority of entries in the bailiffs' accounts do not identify the originating port. Such shipments were both numerous and small, yet their combined total was significant, and in 1597/98 amounted to substantially more than the total tonnage recorded in the customs accounts: a total of 56 tons was entered in the overseas and coastal customs accounts for the head port, but just over 99 tons in the bailiffs' accounts.⁵¹ In other words, as illustrated in Figure 3.3, during 1597/98 the harbour at Bridgwater received 99¼ tons of which 18 ¼ tons had been cleared through customs, and 81 tons had arrived without custom.

Figure 3.3 Analysis of inbound salt shipments to the head port of Bridgwater 1597/98 (tons)⁵²



⁵⁰ SRO D/B/bw/1482.

⁵¹ The total of the landing charges in the water bailiffs' account.

⁵² The water bailiffs' accounts mainly record salt in tons which is the same measure used in the Exchequer accounts. Occasionally volume measures such as the bushel or hogshead are used and these have been calculated on the basis of 40 bushels to the wey, as per the valuation in the 1582 Exchequer Book of Rates (Willan, ed., *Book of Rates*, 51.). The valuation given for the wey of salt is the same as that used for the ton in the customs accounts so they may be taken as equivalent.

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The most likely explanation for the shipments which were not recorded in customs is that they were of domestically produced salt. These would not necessarily have required customs certification as they had neither paid duty, nor were likely to be exported. Boats were recorded in the water bailiffs' accounts bringing non-dutiable salt from Cardiff, Newport and Aberthaw, and this is consistent with there having been salt works operating along the South Wales coast in the sixteenth century, including one on the Gower peninsula.⁵³ Another possible source of domestic supply would have been from the Cheshire brine pits from whence it was shipped down the Severn.

Table 3.6 expresses data from the customs accounts compared to the water bailiffs' accounts. Whilst the overseas customs accounts record an approximately ten fold fall in imports between 1540/41 and 1597/98, the water bailiffs' record an increase in the order of one third. 1540/41 is however an untypical year for imports and a fairer reflection is perhaps that between 1544/45 and 1597/98 when the overseas Exchequer imports fell by around a third compared to a rise of around a third in the water bailiff's accounts.

⁵³ SRO D/B/bw/1482. P.F. Wilkinson, M. Locock, and S.H. Sell, 'A 16th-century Saltworks at Port Eynon, Gower', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 32 (1998), 3-32.

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Table 3.6 Imports and inbound coastal shipments of salt to the head port of Bridgwater: comparison of Exchequer and water bailiffs' accounts (tons).⁵⁴

Year	Overseas Exchequer	Coastal Exchequer	Water Bailiffs
1506/07	140	-	-
1510/11	197	-	-
1528/29	39	-	-
1540/41	471	-	10
1541/42	74	-	-
1544/45	69	-	75
1560/61	106	-	-
1561/62	-	2	-
1583/84	132	-	-
1585/86	32	25 (half year only)	-
1597/98	44	12	99
1599/1600	-	4	125

It seems therefore that domestic supplies of salt had to some extent been substituted for those from overseas by the end of the century. Domestically produced salt is likely to have been in high demand in Somerset, as salt produced by boiling was cleaner and contained less contaminants than salt produced further south in France and Portugal by open-air evaporation.⁵⁵ Such salt was therefore particularly suitable for use in food preservation, and in the manufacture of butter and cheese which were important local activities. It was also recognised by contemporaries as being 'well adapted for the curing of herrings' which, as already described, had developed as an important industry along the coast of Somerset and North Devon in the later sixteenth century.⁵⁶

Bridgwater is unlikely to have been the only harbour in Somerset, or the Bristol Channel, receiving cross channel shipments of salt in this way, and this pattern

⁵⁴ The data in the water bailiffs' accounts is not consistently recorded across the century. The figures for 1540/41 are extracted from transactions relating to 'bearing', as are those for 1544/45. This category is no longer included in the later 1590 accounts when figures for 'landing' have been used.

⁵⁵ A.R. Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1955), 116-17.

⁵⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth: 1564-1565*, Vol. 7 (1870), 263-77 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

of trade may have been represented more widely therefore. The rise in inbound shipments of salt to Bridgwater in the second half of the century suggests that associated economic activity may have increased rather than declined in the intervening period, contrary to the impression given by the Exchequer accounts.

Iron and Lead

Lead was mined in the Mendips and was recorded being loaded at Axwater. There is only one instance of lead in the water bailiffs' accounts so it does not appear to have been handled through the town's harbour.⁵⁷ Table 3.6 shows that recorded lead exports increased substantially in the 1580s. Comparable full year figures are not available after 1585/86, but exports in the surviving parts of the customs records were as follows: for 1588/89, ten tons; for 1589/90, eleven tons; and for 1591, six tons. A similar pattern of increasing exports towards the end of the century was noted from the North Devon ports, the rationale for which it was suggested was an increased demand from Spanish markets for munitions. It is probable that the increased tonnages exported from Bridgwater in the 1580s, whilst nominally being bound for La Rochelle and St John de Luz, were in fact also bound, either directly or indirectly, for Spain in contravention of a government embargo.

Table 3.7 also indicates that a total of fifteen tons of lead was shipped coastwise to Bristol in 1551 and twelve tons to Barnstaple in December 1585, for transshipment overseas to La Rochelle, indicating that there was a significantly greater export trade than suggested from a reading of the overseas accounts alone.⁵⁸ Lead ultimately intended for export were as much as 60 percent higher than those recorded in the overseas accounts in 1585/86.

⁵⁷ This single instance was in 1540/41 when a charge was made for the storage of lead 'cum frome mochenny' (Muchelney), which had presumably formed part of the fabric of the recently dissolved abbey (SRO/B/b/bw/1441).

⁵⁸ TNA E122/28/5; E190/1083/8.

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Table 3.7 Port of Bridgwater: exports and outbound coastal shipments of lead (tons)

Year	Lead (overseas)	Lead (coastal)
1506/07	6	-
1510/11	2	-
1528/29	2	-
1540/41	1	-
1541/42	2	-
1544/45	-	-
1550/51	-	15
1560/61	-	-
1583/84	18	-
1585/86	19	12

Trade in iron far exceeded that in lead however. During the first half of the century this was sourced from northern Spain, and formed the basis of a small re export trade to southern Ireland. Regular shipments were made, with over two thirds carried aboard Wexford vessels as part of their return cargo. This was never a large trade however, and became insignificant in the second half of the century. Table 3.8 outlines recorded imports of iron from the customs accounts.

Table 3.8 Port of Bridgwater: imports and inbound coastal shipments of iron (tons).

Year	Overseas	Coastal
1506/07	55	
1510/11	22	
1528/29	110	
1540/41	57	
1541/42	86	
1544/45	50	
1560/61	94	
1561/62	-	6
1583/84	27	
1585/86	29	
1597/98	0	6

The water bailiffs' accounts give an indicative sample of the final destinations of this raw material: to the smiths at Yeovil, Long Sutton, Comeytrowe near

Taunton, Petherton, Hemyock, Ilminster, Charlinch and many more regional locations, as well as to 'Hancocke of the forryst' (of Dean) and 'a man of the west country'.⁵⁹ These records again reveal a large licit trade which is not apparent from a reading of the customs records. They also however reveal a substantial illicit trade.

The *Mary* of San Sebastian under Master Degas Delarew was a familiar ship in mid-sixteenth century Bridgwater, and was recorded inbound with iron, wine and woad, and outbound with cloth in 1541/42, 1544/45 and 1560/61. John Newport, several times the town's mayor and its wealthiest and most prominent trader, was often listed as the sole or principal merchant freighting goods aboard this ship, and may therefore have been its owner, or part-owner. In 1545 the *Mary* made three voyages to Spain returning on 17th March, 27th May and 12th August. In total the *Mary* declared 50½ tons of iron to customs during the year, of which 41 tons was attributed to Mr Newport, with the balance to two other prominent burgesses, James Boyse and John Hamond. There were no other imports of iron to the head port in that year. The water bailiffs however recorded 69½ tons 'from the Spanyard' or 'from Degas' charged to Mr Newport and Mr Boyse, and possibly a further twenty tons depending on interpretation of an ambiguity.⁶⁰ In other words only either half or three quarters of the actual load was declared to customs.⁶¹ In contrast, Evan Jones study of imports of iron by the leading Bristol merchant John Smythe into the port of Bristol during 1542 and 1544 found that the tonnages of iron listed in the customs accounts corresponded closely to those listed in Smythe's private ledger.⁶² Jones concluded that 'the goods listed in the customs accounts were

⁵⁹ SRO D/B/bw/1435, D/B/bw/1438, D/B/bw/1441, D/B/bw/1482.

⁶⁰ SRO D/B/bw/1438. The ambiguity is whether reference to 'your own boat' in relation to Mr Newport refers to the *Mary* or to a lighter employed in bringing iron from elsewhere. Given the quantity and the timing the likelihood is that this was from the *Mary* but this cannot be established with certainty.

⁶¹ The water bailiffs' record iron by the ton, pipe and hogshead which are the same measures used in the customs accounts.

⁶² Jones, 'Illicit Business', 21.

the ones the ships were actually carrying and that the quantities in the customs accounts are reasonably accurate'.⁶³

As well as revealing a substantial mid century illicit overseas trade, the later water bailiffs' accounts provide evidence of a flourishing trade in iron from South Wales which was not recorded in the Exchequer accounts. During 1597/98 one of either the *Lyant* of Cardiff, or the *Angell* of Cardiff made a regular monthly run to Bridgwater with five to ten tons of iron each time. This was then transferred into Robert Demond's lighter, and purchased by Alexander Hill who paid a charge for its passage under the town bridge.⁶⁴ The trade described in the water bailiffs' accounts for 1597/98 totalled 162 tons, and far outstripped that in the Exchequer accounts, where only six tons were recorded.⁶⁵ This suggests that Welsh iron had largely replaced Spanish iron by the end of the century, and it is interesting to note that in 1589 the first instance of iron specifically identified as being Welsh was listed as an export to Ireland.⁶⁶ A rise in the production of Welsh iron would therefore seem to account for the decline in exports of iron from Bridgwater to Ireland in the second half of the century, since the likelihood is that these would have been shipped directly from Wales to Ireland rather than through Bridgwater. This is consistent with the supply side difficulties of obtaining supplies of Spanish iron in the later decades of the century, and also with the introduction of blast furnaces to Wales after 1560 with the resulting increase in production using Welsh ore.⁶⁷ Although lacking the high carbon content and strength of Spanish iron, this was nonetheless suitable for the manufacture of agricultural implements and everyday goods, such as those which would have been

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ SRO D/B/bw/1482.

⁶⁵ The water bailiffs' figure is the total of landing charges and of a separate account made to Mr Alexander Hill in connection with shipments of iron he received in lighters for passage under the town bridge. Supplementary details of quantities and names indicate that these are not duplicate charges but relate to different cargoes.

⁶⁶ TNA E122/29/31.

⁶⁷ H.R. Schubert, *History of the British Iron and Steel Industry from c. 450 B.C. to A.D. 1775*. (London, 1957), 161.

produced by the regional smiths appearing in the water bailiffs' accounts. The use of multiple sources in this instance therefore supplies evidence of import substitution in an important industry which has not previously been recognised.

Woad

Woad imported from Toulouse and the Azores, was used to produce a blue dye for the cloth industry, and was one of the most expensively valued items in the customs accounts. Given its high value any evasion of duty would clearly have had a significantly adverse affect on customs revenue, and the water bailiffs' accounts are again illuminating in this respect. The customs accounts recorded the *Mary*, under the mastership of Degas Delarew, arriving in March 1545 with fourteen half bales and six hundredweight of woad, which equates to one and a half tons.⁶⁸ This was entered against two merchants, John Newport and James Hay. The previous customs entry for woad was in January and the next was not to be until November, and no other merchants were shown to be shipping woad aboard the *Mary* on this occasion. The bailiffs' recorded baring two tons, rather than one ton, to Mr Boys 'from Degas', and one ton to Mr Newport in this period.⁶⁹ The woad recorded by them was thus clearly from Degas' ship, the *Mary*. This discrepancy of one and a half tons represents a declaration to customs of half of the actual cargo. Likewise on 28 August 1598 one of the town's burgesses was charged by the water bailiffs for landing two tons of woad.⁷⁰ However, there was only one entry for woad in that year's customs, which was for a coastwise shipment from Barnstaple on 29 August, and this was for half this amount.⁷¹ Furthermore, Mr Godbeare appears in the same set of bailiffs' accounts charged for landing three tons of woad in January 1598, an amount which was not declared in either the overseas or coastal customs accounts. In total for the year 1597/98 therefore five tons were landed at

⁶⁸ The calculation is made by scaling from the values listed against the various measures used for woad in the relevant particular account TNA E122/27/21.

⁶⁹ SRO D/B/bw/1438.

⁷⁰ SRO D/B/bw/1482.

⁷¹ TNA E190/1083/15.

Bridgwater, against the one ton declared to customs. It appears therefore that the leading merchants and town officers routinely evaded paying full duty on their shipments of woad. On the basis of the evidence here it also appears that the level of this evasion increased as the century progressed.

Commercial Development

The trade recorded in the customs accounts had so diminished that in the last decades of the sixteenth century nil returns were entered in customs for several quarters, and in 1588 the customs clerk ended the accounts with the supplication 'God send better'.⁷² The situation was so dire that in 1596 the customer resigned claiming that there was insufficient trade to pay his fees, and Lord Burghley considered abolishing the post of customer at Bridgwater altogether when he learned that this officer had been paid nearly £25 more than he had collected in duty in 1594/95.⁷³ The decline in customs revenue at the head port was confirmed the same year by the mayor, Mr Salmon, and four burgesses who petitioned Lord Burghley to request a replacement for the post of searcher following the death of the incumbent. Their petition emphasised that 'the trade of merchandise and the shipping of the town is for the most part decayed, having but one bark only'.⁷⁴ The post of searcher had no salary, as the holder was usually recompensed by the receipt of half of the value of any illicit goods he discovered, or more usually by the acceptance of bribes to avoid making any such discovery.⁷⁵ There was extensive collusion between local customs officers and a wealthy, ruling oligarchy at Bristol during this period, and given the involvement of Bridgwater's mayor and burgesses in smuggling described above, an ulterior motive for their choice of searcher and for their emphasis on the low level of trade through the head port cannot therefore be

⁷² TNA E122/29/31.

⁷³ 'Queen Elizabeth-Volume 257: May 1596', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 213-23 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [December 2008].

⁷⁴ 'Queen Elizabeth-Volume 261: December 1596', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 313-27 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [December 2008].

⁷⁵ Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade', 138; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 15.

ruled out.⁷⁶ Their testimony should not necessarily be taken at face value as a description of the underlying commercial reality at the port.

There was in any case one expanding area of commerce which occasionally handsomely compensated for the loss of regular trade and customs duties during the later decades of the sixteenth century. The armed seizure of marine cargoes was by no means a new phenomenon, and was one in which Somerset's men had a long and ignoble history. In 1549 a Minehead man, Richard Cole, confessed to piracy, and around the same time Henry Moyle from Uphill was charged for seizing the cargo of a Scottish ship.⁷⁷ The distinction between those who engaged in the armed seizure of cargoes and those who undertook more normal mercantile methods was often not absolute. John Hille and John Capes were two Minehead merchants and shipowners who appear in the customs records trading regularly to Ireland, but in 1546 they were ordered by the Privy Council to make reparation for a Portuguese caravel and her cargo which they had seized.⁷⁸ Moreover, the crown's attitude towards such actions was not always clear cut and depended in large part upon who had been attacked.⁷⁹ Given this background, it was therefore a small step for Somerset's merchants to combine their normal trading activities with the capture of enemy merchant ships when the government extended the system of licensed raiding, or privateering, as part of the maritime response to war with Spain.⁸⁰ The capture of the right ship could be staggeringly rewarding. In 1586, for instance, the *Jonah* from Antwerp was brought into Bridgwater with a cargo of sugar valued

⁷⁶ Oliver Dunn, 'The Petitions of Thomas Watkins against Customer John Dowle 1598 - 1600' (BA Dissertation, University of Bristol, 2006).

⁷⁷ *Calendar State Papers Domestic, Edward VI, 1547-1553* (London, 1992), 413; F. Hancock, *Minehead in the County of Somerset: A History of the Parish, the Manor, and the Port* (Taunton, 1903), 241.

⁷⁸ 'Henry VIII: May 1546, 26-31', *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 21 Part 1: January-August 1546* (1908), 454-89 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [December 2008].

⁷⁹ Loades, *Maritime Empire*, 85-87.

⁸⁰ Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*.

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at £1,105.⁸¹ This one cargo, claimed by Bridgwater aldermen William and Henry Jones, and Henry Michell, was worth more than five times the entire declared trade for the port during that fiscal year. There was clearly a strong incentive for merchants such as Richard Godbeare, mayor in 1592, to seek prizes like the *Conception* of Vila do Conde, which was seized in 1588 by the Bridgwater ship the *Lyon*.⁸² This was loaded with an exceptionally valuable cargo including eighteen tons of Brazilwood, and was altogether valued at £1,678. The complete customs records do not survive for this year, but for comparison the total of all declared overseas trade for 1583/84 was £1,656. Not all prizes were so valuable and at the other end of the scale in 1591 the Bridgwater ship, *Diamond* brought the *Bonasperanto* with a cargo of small goods valued at £50 into Bridgwater.⁸³ In the same year however, although not recorded in the customs accounts, the Bridgwater ship *Mayflower* captured a ship with a cargo of dyewoods, sugar, hides and pearls valued at over £2,000.⁸⁴ The customs clerk's plea 'God send better' made in December 1588 at the end of a quarter in which no customable goods had entered or left the head port, must therefore be set in the context of the arrival in May that same year of the prize ship *Raynebowe*, with a cargo valued at £323, and in February of the *Conception*, described above, with probably the most valuable cargo ever to have entered the port.⁸⁵

Whilst the decline in the trade of the Somerset ports during the century may not have been as desperate as Exchequer records and some contemporary accounts suggest therefore, there had nevertheless been a fundamental shift in the long established patterns of trade over the course of the century. Imports of fish, so long synonymous with the Irish communities at Minehead and Axwater, were increasingly sourced from further west in the far Atlantic. Imports of iron,

⁸¹ TNA E122/29/24.

⁸² TNA E122/29/27.

⁸³ TNA E122/29/41.

⁸⁴ Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, 260.

⁸⁵ TNA E122/29/30.

salt and wine had been disrupted to varying degrees by the wars with Spain, and the corresponding export trades in agricultural products had been similarly affected. Above all, cloth exports, which had been the mainstay of Somerset's maritime trade, had been reduced to a fraction of that pertaining at the opening of the century.

Somerset was not unique in this respect of course, and it has been argued that the commercial challenges of the later century were the spur which prompted English merchants to broaden their horizons, extending their trading voyages to the coasts of Africa and the Americas.⁸⁶ Unlike their Devonian and Bristolian counterparts, Somerset's merchants did not venture as far as the Caribbean, Virginia or Guinea, but neither were they entirely parochial in their outlook. Frobisher's 1578 expedition to northern Canada included the Bridgwater registered ship, *Emmanuel*, and in 1589 the Bridgwater ship *Lyon* returned from the Azores with a cargo of sugar and woad, freighted under the names of William and Richard Godbeare and Thomas Gybbons.⁸⁷ In 1598 *The Advantage* returned from Newfoundland with a substantial cargo of fish under the names of Richard Stradlinge, George Pawle and Philip Redibone.⁸⁸ All of these merchants were at the forefront of society and held the usual town offices, but none of the craft in which they were trading was large even by contemporary standards. *The Emmanuel* was described as a buss, indicating it was a type of fishing vessel, whilst the *Advantage* was only 25 tons, and the *Lyon* 40 tons.⁸⁹ In 1588 in response to a requisition order Bridgwater declared that it had no vessels over 50 tons, adding 'our harbour when we were best traded never, or very seldom, yielded any shipping of any such burden'.⁹⁰ Although the town's

⁸⁶ Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1984), 62-3; Grant, 'Breaking the Mould'; Loades, *Maritime Empire*, Ch. 2 & 3.

⁸⁷ A.H. Powell, *The Ancient Borough of Bridgwater in the County of Somerset* (Bridgwater, 1907), 177. TNA E122/29/31.

⁸⁸ TNA E190/1083/20.

⁸⁹ J.F. Lawrence, *A History of Bridgwater* (Chichester, 2005), 78.

⁹⁰ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol. 4 (London: 1892), 121.

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merchants had good reason for wishing to avoid having their ships requisitioned, their statement is borne out by the tonnages of vessels listed in the customs accounts, and by a survey in 1582 which listed the largest ship at 60 tons.⁹¹ For comparison the *Jesus* of Northam in North Devon was 80 tons, and Bristol recorded ships of up to 350 tons.⁹² This is significant as the development of more distant markets resulted in the building of larger ships which were better suited to trans-oceanic voyages, and as a consequence between 1572 and 1582 the number of English ships of over 100 tons approximately doubled.⁹³ These ships, such as the 100 ton *Prudence* commissioned by Richard Dodderidge of South Molton in Devon for the Guinea trade, required large sums of capital, both for their construction and for the subsequent financing of their voyages.⁹⁴ Somerset's merchants do not seem to have lacked either the capital, or the entrepreneurial initiative, required to participate in this trend as evidenced by the passage of ships such as the *Lyon* to the Azores. What Somerset did lack, and what Devon had in abundance however, were the accessible, deep-water harbours which these larger ships required.

Although Bridgwater was Somerset's principal maritime port, its fleet had never been particularly significant. Even in terms of trade to the head port itself, Bridgwater's ships never freighted more than a quarter of the value of declared trade. Figure 3.5 illustrates that in many years ships from the smaller towns of Minehead and Wexford carried as much, and sometimes more, than those of Somerset's main port.

⁹¹ TNA SP 12, CLVI 45.

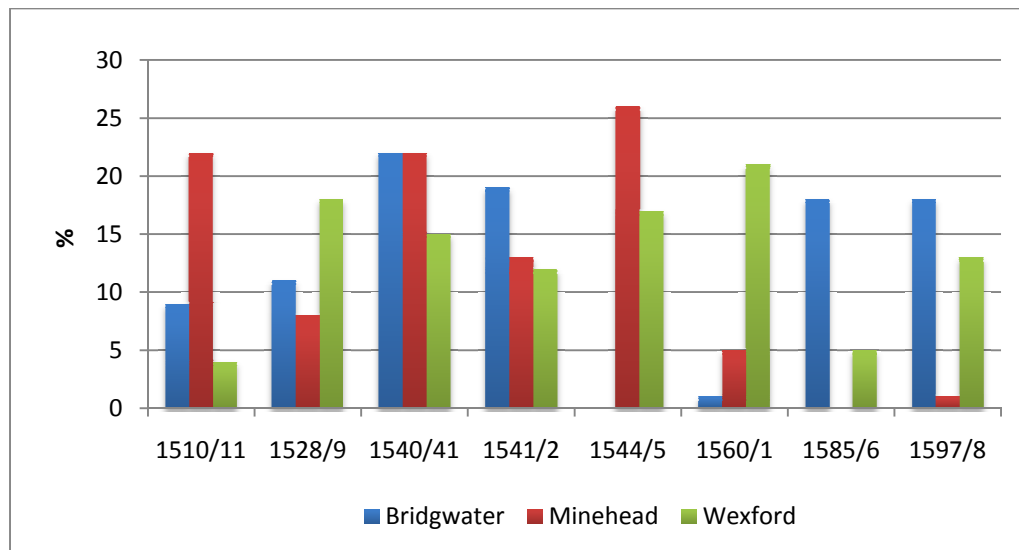
⁹² Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 121. For instance the *Goulden Lyon* at Bristol in 1575 TNA E190/1129/10.

⁹³ Stone, 'Elizabethan Overseas Trade', 52.

⁹⁴ Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', 127.

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Figure 3.4 Port of Bridgwater: percentage share of declared trade freighted by ships' home port.



This can perhaps be explained by the more favourable maritime position of these towns, which have immediate access to the open sea, and perhaps therefore had a more extensive fleet. Bridgwater, in contrast to Minehead and Wexford, lies some ten miles from the coast along a narrow, winding waterway, navigable only at high tide. A survey in 1543 seems to support this as it listed four ships between 60 and 100 tons for the harbour at Minehead along with 77 seamen, but listed only thirteen mariners for Combwich/Bridgwater and concluded that 'there is none other ship nor balinger belonging to Somersetshire'.⁹⁵

Neither was Minehead in a position to take advantage of the change in circumstances occasioned by the shift to larger ships. Both the share of trade passing through Minehead, and the share of trade carried aboard its ships, suffered a sharp downturn from the 1560s onwards. In broad terms the head port of Bridgwater accounted for about two thirds of declared overseas trade by value, and Minehead one third until the middle of the century. There was then a

⁹⁵ 'Henry VIII: May 1543, 11-15', *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Vol. 18 Part 1: January-July 1543* (1901), 307-324 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [December 2008].

sharp gain by Bridgwater which handled over 80 percent of declared trade in 1560/61, and over 90 percent in 1583/84, leaving Minehead with just five percent in 1597/98. This can partly be attributed to the loss of the town's two principal sources of maritime trade, in cloth and Irish sourced fish, but Minehead also encountered problems with the maintenance of its harbour in the later century which restricted the size of ships able to use the port.⁹⁶ The largest vessel listed in a 1572 survey was 30 tons, and the customs do not record craft larger than 25 tons.⁹⁷ Despite the shelter afforded from westerly gales by the bulk of North Hill, Minehead remains in a much more exposed position than many ports along the Bristol Channel, and it did not again develop significant long distance trade until the construction of a new harbour and the development of new markets in the seventeenth century.⁹⁸

The response of the merchant elite in the head port of Bridgwater to the changing economic circumstances which presented themselves was therefore neither to seek new markets, nor to develop new products in the manner of their North Devon counterparts. Rather they resorted to armed raiding and sought to collude with the customs officers in order to increase their margin.

Conclusion

Although the Exchequer records indicate that some areas of overseas trade declined for economic and political reasons, the water bailiffs' accounts demonstrate that maritime trade continued and even increased in some essential commodities, as domestic supplies were substituted for scarce overseas resources. Thus imports of iron from Spain, which fell sharply during the 1580s and 90s, were initially offset and then exceeded by imports of iron from South Wales. By the end of the century the harbour at Bridgwater was importing more iron than ever before, although less than four percent of this

⁹⁶ SRO DD/L/P/29/34; Binding and Stevens, *Minehead*, 55-9.

⁹⁷ SRO DD/FA/11/1; TNA E178/1926.

⁹⁸ Binding and Stevens, *Minehead*, 59-61.

was liable to Exchequer control. Likewise only approximately half of the imports of salt were liable to duty. It was not so much overall maritime trade therefore which had suffered a severe diminution in the later years of the century, but rather that portion of maritime trade which was declared to customs. Although recorded overseas trade had fallen off, this was compensated by an increase in coastal traffic, and in the enormous wealth generated from captured enemy vessels. Contrary to the analysis of Robert Dunning and others, the head port of Bridgwater does not appear to have been in decline at the end of the century, but along with its hinterland was enjoying a period of perhaps unprecedented prosperity.⁹⁹

This interpretation has implications for the wider historiography as well, since it has shown that historians who rely solely on overseas customs accounts to understand the economic fortunes of a port risk gaining a substantially misleading impression. Even if allowance is made for smuggling, this source used in isolation can potentially still represent an incomplete and inadequate guide to overseas trade. Firstly, it has been shown that any assessment of overseas trade also needs to consider trade recorded in the coastal accounts which was initially routed through other domestic ports. Thus 31 tons of lead not the nineteen tons recorded in the overseas accounts was freighted overseas from the port in 1585/86. Similarly, eight tuns, not two tuns of wine arrived inward to the port in 1585/86. Secondly, and conversely, not all goods recorded in the overseas accounts were necessarily destined for the port itself, but may simply have been entered for customs there. This was seen to apply to cargoes of wine in 1597/98 when the *David* did not offload any of its cargo of 46½ tuns . This obviously has implications for using the overseas accounts to determine the level of trade to Bridgwater, but it also has implications for determining the level of trade at the port where the *David* was ultimately bound. The wine trade of the destination port would have been greater than is apparent from a

⁹⁹ Dunning, *Bridgwater*, 35; Lawrence, *History of Bridgwater*, 78.

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reading of the customs accounts since the cargo was not recorded in the coastal accounts. This is a point which will be substantiated in Chapter Four in relation to the wine trade in the port of Gloucester. Thirdly, it was demonstrated that even the combined overseas and coastal Exchequer accounts still represent only a partial record of trade in basic commodities such as iron and salt which were fundamental to economic activity, since the larger part of these were not liable to customs control and recording.

The evidence from the port of Bridgwater also suggests that opportunities for smuggling were greater at smaller ports than at larger ports. The relatively small size of these communities allowed the local merchant elite considerable leverage in local affairs. Alternative or countervailing centres of power were fewer and weaker than in larger conurbations, and the opportunities for coercion or collusion with Crown customs officers were therefore greater at places such as Bridgwater than at Bristol. This was not lost on contemporaries as indicated by the observation made by John Wheeler in his defence of the Merchant Venturers,

the stragler shipping his Cloth and other Coomoditie in couert maner, hugger-mugger, and at obscure Portes, haue more aduanteage, and meanes to defraud her Maiestie of her dueties and rightes, then those which ship at London, and other great port Townes, either by false entryes, colouring of Straungers goods, and corrupting the Customer, and other Officers who, for the most part being needie persons in those small, and remote Portes of the Realme, are more readie to take rewardes, and closelier may doe it, then the Officers of the Customes at the port of London.¹⁰⁰

This theme will be expanded in subsequent chapters but it is sufficient to note here that imports of iron in the 1540s were found to be declared at only between one half and three quarters of the actual lading, in contrast to Bristol where cargoes of iron have been found to be in line with the customs returns.

¹⁰⁰ John Wheeler, *A Treatise of Commerce: Wherein are shewed the commodities arising by a well ordered and ruled trade, such as that of the Societie of Merchants Aduenturers is proued to be: written principally for the better information of those who doubt of the necessarinesse of the said societie in the state of the realme of England. By Iohn Wheeler, seretarie to the said Societie* (London, 2nd edition 1601).

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Imports of woad were similarly found to be declared at only one third of the actual loadings in mid century, and by the end of the century this proportion had reduced to just one fifth. Both iron and woad were unloaded at the quayside in Bridgwater itself as part of the town's normal commercial operations, and this suggests that the practice of smuggling was both more deeply embedded and endemic than in the port of Bristol, where smuggling was conducted in a clandestine manner, often offshore or under cover of darkness.¹⁰¹ Furthermore the Bridgwater customs officer expressed fear of venturing to the creek of Axwater and the returns made from there must be considered as extremely unlikely to reflect the full extent of trade, and probably represent an even smaller proportion of the true volumes passing through the creek.

Finally, the findings relating to the Somerset ports add to our understanding of the trading nexus in an unexpected way. Bilateral trading relationships were uncovered between the port towns of Wexford and Bridgwater, and between Waterford and Bristol. Chapter Two charted a possible similar connection between Youghal and Ilfracombe, and between Barnstaple and La Rochelle.

This chapter has therefore established that study of the trade of smaller ports is not simply a reproduction on a smaller scale of work that has already been more than adequately undertaken for larger ports. The minor Somerset port towns were shown to have had their own dynamic, and the multi sourced approach adopted here has added a new and important dimension to understanding of maritime trade in this period.

¹⁰¹ Vanes, *Documents*, 46,49.

Chapter 4 : Gloucester.

Customs records indicate that Gloucester's waterborne trade was dominated by coastal traffic and that overseas trade was all but insignificant by the end of the century. This chapter will argue that a consideration of administrative and local political considerations suggests that this picture is misplaced. Gloucester's overseas trade appears to have been vigorous but was not recorded in the Exchequer accounts.

Although there is evidence that Gloucester had its own independent overseas trade before 1575, it was not distinguished from that of Bristol itself in customs returns, and this chapter is therefore necessarily confined to the last quarter of the century.¹ Gloucester became a member port of Bristol in 1575, and then a separate port in its own right in 1580.² Independent port status was achieved only after a long and expensive campaign however. The first indication of this appeared in the city's records in 1565 when the town clerk was reimbursed for a trip made to London to 'laboure the custome howse'.³ Ten years later the city had progressed the matter sufficiently to be able to bring a bill before parliament, although this was not successful on the first attempt.⁴ Undeterred, the city then escalated its lobbying by obtaining the patronage and support of Lord Burghley, the lord chancellor. In 1575 the city gave him a gift of 'one standing cupp with a cover doble gylte weyinge xxvi ounces and one quarter'; the following year he received a still more valuable gift, and in 1578 'one dozen of spoones wayinge sixe and thirtie ounces and a haulfe'.⁵ Finally in 1579 the city appointed him lord high steward of the city and granted him an annual

¹ For instance TNA SP46/17 fol. 85r. suggests that prior to 1559 customable goods were handled at Gloucester, Newnham and Gatcombe.

² David Harris Sacks and Michael Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1540-1840*, ed. by Peter Clark, 3 vols, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 2000), 377-424, 380.

³ GRO GBR/F/4/3 fol.107v.

⁴ BRO F/Au/1/11 fol. 87.

⁵ GRO GBR/F/4/3 fols. 104v., 195v., 199r.

pension of £5 in recognition of his services in obtaining letters patent for the custom house.⁶

Bristol responded vigorously to the attempts made by Gloucester to reduce the jurisdiction of its port. The town clerk undertook several journeys to London in connection with the matter, and the council authorised gifts to Lord Leicester who lobbied on their behalf.⁷ These efforts were not entirely unsuccessful. Bristol succeeded in having a commission appointed, which met in 1583 to review the claims and counterclaims of the two parties, but their protests were ultimately unsuccessful.⁸ Although Gloucester therefore faced challenges to its establishment as an independent port authority, it nevertheless managed to achieve this status by 1580, and was subsequently able to maintain this position. The legacy of this was however to affect commercial relations between Gloucester and Bristol for some years.

The jurisdiction of the port extended from 'Chepstowe to Welshrood, a distance of 120 miles' along both banks of the river Severn, or effectively from Beachley to Aust (the present day 'old' Severn Bridge crossing).⁹ Ships much above 30 tons were too large to be able to navigate to the quayside at Gloucester and could do so only at spring tides, and consequently larger ships with cargoes destined for the city offloaded into lighters or trows further downstream.¹⁰ As well as the quay at Gloucester itself, customs officials were permanently stationed at Gatcombe and Newnham, which it was claimed were places which could accommodate ships of between 60 and 100 tons.¹¹ The largest ship in the customs accounts sampled was the 120 ton Bristol ship *Joseph* sailing with wheat to Bayonne in 1592, but the overwhelming majority of craft were less

⁶ GRO GBR/B/3/1 fol. 66v.

⁷ BRO F/Au/1/11 fols. 82-153; John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (Bristol, 1970), 52.

⁸ TNA E134/25Eliz/East14.

⁹ W.H. Stevenson, *Calendar of the Records of the Corporation of Gloucester* (Gloucester, 1893), 29.

¹⁰ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol. 98v.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

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than twenty tons and were engaged in purely local trade plying up and down the Severn and around the coast of the Bristol Channel.¹² Awre, Frampton, Minsterworth, Westbury and Elmore were other downstream landing places lying within the port's jurisdiction which were recorded in the customs accounts.

With regard to the upstream extent of the port's jurisdiction, the letters patent establishing Gloucester as a port listed only Tewkesbury as a creek.¹³ However, since all goods passing up or down the Severn had to pass through Gloucester, the remit of the port was effectively much greater and reached as far as Shrewsbury. Other places recorded in the accounts where vessels had unloaded or loaded were Upton-on-Severn, Worcester, Bewdley and Bridgnorth. The extensive northward geographical reach of the port's hinterland is demonstrated by the details of the merchants listed in some of the accounts: shipments of wine by a Coventry vintner; of hides by a Wolverhampton tanner; and of cloth by a Manchester clothier, all appear more than once. Of 395 vessels entered both inward and outward in the 1575/76, 1576/77, 1592/93 and 1597/98 coastal accounts, just over half were recorded at Gloucester itself; only sixteen were downriver of Gloucester, and the remainder were further up river at Tewkesbury (87), Worcester (18), Bewdley (49), Bridgnorth (4) and Shropshire (1). This accords with testimony given to the commission of enquiry into the establishment of the port that three quarters of outward cockets issued by the port were for places at or above Gloucester bridge.¹⁴

The issuing of cockets does not necessarily equate to the pattern of underlying trade however. It was clearly much easier to police traffic passing along the relatively narrow river north of Gloucester than it was in the open stretches of

¹² TNA E190 1243/3.

¹³ Stevenson, *Calendar*, 29.

¹⁴ TNA E134/25Eliz/East14 fol.6.

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the estuary to the south of the city which afforded many landing places. In 1593 William Ashman described how he

hath traded by seaverne for the space of tenn yeeres last duringe all *which* time he knoweth that the inhabitants in the forrest side and of other places and *parishes* borderinge on seaverne have used to trade and carry from porte to porte wthin the realme ... comodities without any cockett billet or other warrant or payinge any fees for the same and this deponent hath herde several men affierme that they and their fathers before them used and accustomed so to doe without .. let¹⁵

Bristol had argued for the retention of Gloucester within its jurisdiction on the grounds that 'The more ladinge and discharginge places the greater concealmente and stelthe of hir majestes customes and conveyinge awaie of prohibyted warres in smale Barks'; furthermore 'Gloucester's merchants be corne merchants and fermers, and their smale Barkes will slippe awaye corne and goods at everie meane tyde and so maye deceave as muche as they will'.¹⁶ Testimony outlined below indicates that this type of activity was particularly associated with the lower reaches of the Severn below Gloucester where sea going ships could rendezvous with small shore based craft.

Given the topography and location of the port, Gloucester's trade was principally recorded in the coastal rather than overseas customs accounts. Table 4.1 illustrates the scale of the difference by comparing the number of shipping movements in the two sets of accounts for particular years.

¹⁵ TNA E 134/36&37Eliz/Mich14 fol.5.

¹⁶ BL Harleian MS. 368/108

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1584petition.htm>> [January 2009].

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Table 4.1 Port of Gloucester: overseas and coastal shipping movements.

Period	Overseas		Coastal	
	in	out	in	out
1575/76	1	4	64	152
1576/77 (half year)	-	-	62	59
1577 (half year)	3	3	-	-
1581 (half year)	3	11	-	-
1581/82	-	21	-	138
1583 (half year)	2	9	-	-
1592/93	13	5	-	167
1597/98 (half year)	3	0	-	-
1597/98	-	-	4	37
1599/00	0	3	10	73

It can be seen that not only was there a preponderance of coastal over overseas trade, but that there was also a greater outbound trade recorded than inbound, and that there was an overall decline in recorded trade over the last quarter of the century. The reasons for this, and the extent to which these figures reflect the actual pattern of trade will be examined below.

Cloth

The city of Gloucester's once substantial cloth trade was in decline in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, although that of the surrounding countryside was still healthy.¹⁷ In common with other regional ports, this aspect of Gloucester's trade was also affected by the increasing predominance of London in handling cloth exports. Only four overseas cloth shipments were found in the accounts sampled. Two of these were made in 1575/76 to Waterford and Dublin with a combined value of less than £40. The 1575/76 coastal account additionally contained a range of woollen cloth which amounted to a value of

¹⁷ Peter Clark, 'The 'Ramothe-Gilead of the Good': Urban Change and Political Radicalism at Gloucester, 1540-1640', in *The English Commonwealth 1547-1640: Essays in Politics and Society Presented to Joel Hurstfield.*, ed. by Peter Clark, Alan G.R. Smith, and Nicholas Tyacke, (Leicester, 1979), 167-87, 169-70. Nicholas Martin Herbert, ed., *A History of the County of Gloucester: The City of Gloucester*, Vol. IV, The Victoria History of the Counties of England (Oxford, 1988), 74-75.

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approximately £10 under the 1558 book of rates valuations.¹⁸ In other words total cloth exports for 1575/76 for both the coastal and overseas accounts were somewhere in the order of £50. This compares to nearly £5,400 worth of malt exported and makes clear that this aspect of the port's trade was no longer significant.¹⁹

In contrast to exports of woollen cloth, those of linen increased during the period. There were no significant exports recorded prior to 1582 but thereafter they were as outlined in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Port of Gloucester: outbound coastal shipments of linen (fardels and packs).

Period	Fardels	Packs
1581/2	1	0
1592/3	36	65
1597/98	19	114
1599/1600	5	121

A pack is thought to have contained ten cloths, but a fardel remains an unknown quantity, if indeed it was a precise unit.²⁰ Even if we allow that a fardel may have been larger than a pack, there is still a noticeable upward trend, and the trade was well enough established for the city authorities to condemn private trading in linen in 1617.²¹ Linen was produced from flax, and this trend is consistent with the increased acreage of flax grown in the later Tudor period as a result of government policy.²² All of the linen in the Exchequer accounts was shipped to Bristol.

¹⁸ TNA E190/1129/15.

¹⁹ Malt valued at £4 / wey as per the valuation used in Bristol account for 1575/76 TNA E190/1129/12.

²⁰ Wanklyn et al., 'Gloucester Port Book Database'.

²¹ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 77.

²² Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), 7.

Wine

Table 4.3 shows such an extreme decline in imports of wine to the port that it demands an explanation. It is surely not possible that a city the size of Gloucester together with Worcester, Tewkesbury and Shrewsbury would have imported only two tuns of wine in 1599/1600. Gloucester had after all claimed in 1582 that,

there hath benne more wyne bought in one yeare in Glouc and above Glouc bridge than all the whole cometh unto that hathe bene accustomed for at Bristol that yeere²³

Table 4.3 Port of Gloucester: imports and inbound coastal shipments of wine (tuns).

Period	Overseas		Coastal	
	Number of ships freighting wine	Tuns of wine imported	Number of ships freighting wine	Tuns of wine imported
1575/76	0	0	17	101
1576/77 (Michaelmas to Easter)	-	-	50	415
1577 (Easter to Michaelmas)	1	15	-	-
1597/98	2	2	2	4
1599/1600	1	1	1	1

To set this decline in context: Bridgwater imported 43 tuns in 1560/61, 123 tuns in 1583/84 and 69 tuns in 1597/98; and the North Devon ports imported 28 tuns in 1581/82 and 53 tuns in 1595/96. Furthermore, the fall in wine imports at Gloucester was disproportionately greater than the overall decline in the number of vessels recorded inbound to the port outlined in Table 4.1.

Two possible explanations suggest themselves. Firstly, there may have been an enormous increase in the amount of wine which evaded customs. Study into

²³ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol. 99r.

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wine imports at Bristol has found that while such a dramatic increase in smuggling did take place, it occurred much earlier, triggered by the introduction of the impost in 1558.²⁴ Rather than falling, imports to Bristol in the last five years of the century were found to be in line with those of the 1570s and 80s. Moreover, the majority of the Exchequer court records relating to Gloucester for this period relate to the illegal exporting of grain and leather, and only one contains allegations concerning the smuggling of wine.²⁵ An increase in the amount of evasion to the level where virtually all of Gloucester's wine imports were being smuggled would be expected to have generated a considerable amount of litigation and official record.

The second possibility is that an administrative change led to a reduction in recording of wine shipments in the Exchequer accounts. That this was so is borne out by a case brought in the court of Exchequer in 1585 when the controller of the port of Gloucester, Richard Hall, counter-sued John White a deputy port official in a case concerning the alleged fraudulent traffic of wine shipped from Neath in South Wales to Worcester.²⁶ White was alleged to have bribed the deputy searcher at Newnham and officials at Gloucester to allow him to pass with a shipment of ten or twelve tuns of wine which was at that stage ungauged. Testimony in the case records that gaging or gauging was the act of applying a physical mark to the barrels with an iron implement to indicate that duty had been paid. White was alleged to have applied a fraudulent mark to the barrels before they reached Worcester. Learning of this the controller had ordered the wine to be seized at Worcester and had refused to release it to White. The interesting thing about this case is not that wine was alleged to have been smuggled, which is in itself unsurprising, but that both parties recognised that the wine did not need a coastal cocket and that a warrant of transire or letpass was sufficient. A let pass was a written permission for which merchants

²⁴ Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 240.

²⁵ TNA E134/27Eliz/Trin1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

were not required to lodge security, which was used for coastal shipments of goods which had already paid custom, or the nature of which was such that they were not liable for custom.²⁷ The significance of this is that whilst cockets or certificates were recorded in the coastal accounts or certificate books, let passes or warrants of transire were not usually recorded in customs accounts at Gloucester until 1728.²⁸ The owner of the vessel called the *Michel* which freighted the wine from Neath, swore that he 'had a warrant deliverd unto him called by the name of a let passe'.²⁹ This was confirmed by the testimony of John Bright one of the sailors aboard the *Michel*,

This deponent doth thinke that the Queenes *majesties* customes and dueties were duly paied in the towne of neeth as by a warrant called by the name of a lett passe the same customes and duties appere to be discharged and further he saith that he knowth the same to be true for that he was one of the mariners of the same bott and had the lett passe delivered unto him because he could reade.³⁰

White had examined the let pass which purported to show that 'all dueites and customes were discharged', and although he doubted its veracity he did not question that this was the correct procedure for shipping wine.³¹ The case did not turn on the question of whether a bond should have been paid and a cocket secured for the onward shipment of the wine, but whether the gaging mark to show that the duty on it had been paid was the official mark or had been fraudulently applied.

One shipment detailed in one court case does not of itself imply that the practice of shipping wine under let pass was widespread. However there are two reasons for supposing that this was the indeed the case. Firstly, this would explain why Gloucester's wine trade declined so much more precipitously than

²⁷ Andrews, 'Two Problems', 120; Elizabeth Evelynola Hoon, *The Organisation of the English Customs System, 1696-1786* (Newton Abbot, 1968), 265-68; Willan, *English Coasting Trade*, 2-3; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 20.

²⁸ D.P. Hussey et al., *The Gloucester Coastal Port Books 1575-1765: A Summary* (Wolverhampton, 1995), 17.

²⁹ TNA E134/27Eliz/Trin1 fol.5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid fol.8.

that of Bridgwater or the North Devon ports. A change from requiring wine to be shipped coastally under cocket to under cover of a let pass would have had a greater impact on the recorded trade of Gloucester since it received nearly all of its wine imports via the coastal trade. Secondly, the anomalies outlined in Chapter Three between the Bridgwater customs accounts and the water bailiffs' accounts supports the suggestion that let passes were in common use. For instance the bailiffs' accounts showed that small quantities of one or two tuns were regularly received at Bridgwater from the south Welsh coastal ports which were not entered in the coastal customs accounts.³² These shipments therefore may have been freighted under a let pass. Likewise the 46½ tuns which were recorded in the overseas accounts at Bridgwater arriving on the *David* in 1598, but which were not then subsequently unloaded at the quayside, and which did not appear in the coastal account at either Bridgwater or Bristol, may have proceeded up the Channel under let pass.³³ This has important implications for understanding flows of trade within the wider Bristol Channel since later testimony indicates that wine was also freighted under a let pass from Neath to both Barnstaple and Bristol.³⁴

Iron

Gloucester had a long established metal working industry located in the city itself, which has been described as 'the most characteristic Gloucester industry in the late medieval period'.³⁵ Although this was in decline by the end of the sixteenth century, Gloucester's imports of iron still compared reasonably well to other English Bristol Channel ports.³⁶ For instance in the first half of 1576/77 63

³² SRO D/B/bw/1482.

³³ TNA E190/1083/20.

³⁴ TNA E134/27Eliz/Trin1 fol.3.

³⁵ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

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tons were recorded inbound at the port compared to 42 tons received at the North Devon ports in the second half of the 1570/71.³⁷

The range of products manufactured by Gloucester's metal workers was perhaps reflected in the manifest of the *Ellen* sailing to Dublin in 1576 which included iron shoeing horns, bridle bits, iron wire, tin spoons, sword blades, daggers, scissors, small chains, pincers, snuffers, carpenter's compasses and carving tools.

Table 4.4 Port of Gloucester: imports and inbound coastal shipments of iron (tons).

Period	Tons	
	Overseas	Coastal
1575/76	-	34
1576/77 (half year)	6	63
1583 (half year)	2	-
1592/93	0	-
1597/98	0	0
1599/00	0	0

Table 4.4 indicates that Gloucester's dependence on the coastal trade was pronounced with only two shipments arriving directly from overseas. Approximately half of the iron recorded inbound coastwise in 1575-7 came from Bristol, and the other half from the Welsh ports of Cardiff and Newport. Ninety percent of the iron recorded from Wales in these years was described specifically as being Welsh and therefore may be taken as domestic production. The absence of any inbound coastal shipments of iron at all after 1583 is striking, especially since this was a time when domestic production was expanding, and when supplies of Spanish iron were becoming restricted because of political difficulties.

³⁷ TNA E190/1129/20, E190/927/14.

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One explanation for this apparent decline could be that iron was sourced instead from the Forest of Dean. Camden mentions Gloucestershire as producing 'store' of iron, and a letter to William Cecil written in 1566 described the Forest of Dean as having plenty of good iron.³⁸ More immediate local supplies of iron would therefore have been available which would not have been liable to customs control and recording since they would not have been shipped outside the bounds of the port. However Forest production did not begin to rise significantly until the very last years of the century and particularly after 1604 when blast furnaces were introduced.³⁹ It seems unlikely therefore that demand could have been wholly satisfied with increased production from this source.

The expansion of iron production in South Wales occurred much earlier than in the Forest of Dean however, with the establishment of the first blast furnace there after 1560 as outlined in Chapter Three. Another possible explanation therefore is that a change in recording occurred, rather than a change in the underlying flows of trade. The pre 1577 entries specified that the Welsh iron was travelling under bond with a cocket. Against a background of increasing Welsh production, and assuming that at least some Welsh iron continued to supply the Gloucester market after 1577, it seems likely therefore that after this date the controls on domestically produced iron were downgraded to allow it to be shipped under a warrant of transire or let pass in the same manner as appears to have happened for wine. This explanation would also be consistent with the findings at Bridgwater where iron imports recorded in the port books had fallen to only six tons in 1597/98, but 162 tons were recorded in the water bailiff's accounts coming from South Wales.

³⁸ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 40: June 1566', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 273-75 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009]; William Camden, *The Abridgment of Camden's Britannia with the Maps of the Seuerall Shires of England and Wales* (London, 1626), <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>> [December 2007].

³⁹ Schubert, *British Iron*, 179, 83; Alf Webb, ed., *Tudor Dean: The Forest of Dean and West Gloucestershire, 1485-1642* (Lydney, 2002), 21.

Fish

Data from the Gloucester port books confirms the trends identified in the port of Bridgwater relating to the fish trade. What had apparently been an important import trade conducted by Irishmen had fallen off by the end of the century to be replaced by an increased domestic catch, and by imports from the West Atlantic. Since Irish imports of fish were not recorded between 1563 and 1591 for the reasons set out in Chapter Two, and since Gloucester's port books did not begin until 1575, it is necessary to rely on other evidence to infer the shape of this market prior to 1591. Gloucester's petition to become a port mentioned Irish barks bringing herrings during the winter which were forced to undertake a long and arduous journey to return to Bristol to enter customs.⁴⁰ Bristol's petition against the establishing of the customs house argued that it was to Bristol's detriment that 'Irishe men also with their Barkes have founde A directe trade to Gloucester..'.⁴¹ In 1582 Richard Hyette, a sailor from Minsterworth, gave evidence that between 20 and 30 boats laden with fish came yearly from Cornwall, Devonshire, Ireland and Wales.⁴² So the presence of Irish boats and merchants seems to have been acknowledged by all parties. However, Gloucester subsequently contended that it had not received more than about four Irish boats 'which bringeth fishe for the provision of our country' since it was constituted a port.⁴³ The arrival of fourteen ships from Waterford in time for the January fair was reflected in the 1592/93 accounts but not in the other accounts studied. Furthermore these ships, their masters and the merchants concerned were all recorded as English not Irish, so Gloucester's contention seems right. The Gloucester customs accounts also show that Gloucestershire men themselves had become active in the fishing industry. John Millington from Tewkesbury for example, owner of the bark *Speedwell*, entered for five lasts of

⁴⁰ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol.99r.

⁴¹ TNA SP 46/17 fol.70r.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1582bristolpetition.htm>> [January 2009].

⁴² TNA E134/25Eliz/East14 fol.7.

⁴³ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol. 90v.

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white herring 'of his own taking' in January 1593.⁴⁴ Millington was therefore a fisherman trading on his own account. Also recorded importing white herring 'of their own catch' were a number of men whose occupation was given as sailor, and who came from Bewdley, Gloucester, Elmore, Newnham and Berkeley.⁴⁵ The increased participation of Gloucestershire ships in the fishing industry is perhaps reflected in the claim made in 1582 that 'since Gloucester was made a porte, they have increased smale barkes and boates to the number of xl or thereabouts, which are of burden from xv tonnes to xxx tonnes'.⁴⁶

Pulses

Gloucester shipped significant quantities of pulses. In 1575/76 185 weys were shipped, and 210 weys were recorded in 1581/82, but this had fallen to 62 weys in 1592/93 and only 38 weys in 1599/1600. These were principally peas, which were usually described as white and were presumably dried; some beans were also listed. Whilst the volumes involved did not begin to rival those for grain described below, it is interesting that the main market for these was distinct from that for grain, and lay in the Cornish ports of Padstow and St Ives rather than Carmarthen and Bristol. The direction of Gloucester's trade in this respect also contrasted to that of Bridgwater which despatched far larger quantities of beans, but where none were recorded to the Cornish ports.

Table 4.5 Port of Gloucester: destination of exports and outbound coastal shipments of pulses (volume percentage share).

Destination	1575/76	1581/82	1592/93	1599/00
Bristol	22	17	17	23
Carmarthen	7	17	0	0
Padstow	37	11	-	-
St Ives	4	5	55	0
France	-	-	-	45

⁴⁴TNA E190/1243/3.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶TNA SP 46/17 fol. 69r.

It is not possible to ascertain whether these were intended for domestic consumption or whether they were subsequently shipped overseas. Cornwall was a notorious base for smuggling, and the figures for 1599/1600 suggest that France may have been the ultimate destination for earlier shipments.⁴⁷ A corresponding port book for Padstow does make clear however that the majority of these cargoes do appear to have actually reach the port and were not smuggled directly overseas under colour of a coastal cocket.⁴⁸

Grain

Gloucester was distinguished by the large quantities of malt, barley and wheat which it exported. Indeed Bristol had gone so far as to characterise Gloucester as a place which 'standeth not upon any trade of merchandize but of Corne only'.⁴⁹ This was indignantly denied by Gloucester, but the city had earlier claimed that Gloucester quay was the origin of three quarters of all grains sent to Bristol, Devonshire, Cornwall, Wales and Ireland, and had further acknowledged that 'it is vearie needful that such of the greate plentie of corne in Glouc Shire shoulde be transported to sowthwales northwales Devonshire Cornwall and Irelande to suplie and healpe the greate necessitie and want of these places'.⁵⁰ The scale of recorded trade can be seen by comparison with the customs accounts for other ports in the Channel: 217 weys were exported overseas from Gloucester during 1581/82 compared to three from the North Devon ports for example; similarly, the combined total of coastal and overseas shipments in 1597/98 was 105 weys from Gloucester compared to sixteen from Bridgwater. However, in many years the figures were considerably higher as Table 4.6 illustrates.

⁴⁷ Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade', 150-51; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 51.

⁴⁸ TNA E190/1129/20 cf. E190/1013/5, Michaelmas 1576-Easter 1577.

⁴⁹ TNA SP 46/17 fol. 83r.

⁵⁰ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fols. 98v, 88v.

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Table 4.6 Port of Gloucester: exports and outbound coastal shipments of wheat, barley and malt (weys).

Period	Overseas	Coastal
1575/76	-	1,408
1576/77 (half year)	-	445
1577 (half year)	62	-
1581 (half year)	64	-
1581/82	217	1,139
1583 (half year)	81	-
1592/93 (half year)	66	-
1592/93	-	1,729
1597/98	0	105
1599/00	-	655

Prior to 1583 virtually all of these overseas exports were procured by the army for provisioning garrison towns in Ireland including Limerick and Galway on the west coast. It was not until 1583 that signs of a more normal commercial overseas trade became apparent when 33 weys were sent to San Sebastian aboard two ships from Bristol and Northam; and in 1592 trade to Bordeaux, Bayonne and La Rochelle was freighted aboard ships from Northam, London and Bristol. The virtual collapse in trade in 1597/98 seen in Table 4.6 can be explained by the harvest failure and plague which beset the city in 1594 and subsequent years.⁵¹ Conditions became so severe that the city authorities bought grain for provisioning the markets and relieving the riotous poor during the worst years of the decade.⁵²

It is worth noting that the corn being shipped was not principally wheat, barley or rye for milling and subsequent use as flour for food, but malt for brewing. Over ninety percent of the volumes described in Table 4.6 were malt, and Gloucester maltsters were at the forefront of the city's society comprising the third largest occupational group on the council in the final two decades of the

⁵¹ Clark, "Ramoath-Gilead", 168; Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 77.

⁵² Clark, "Ramoath-Gilead", 175.

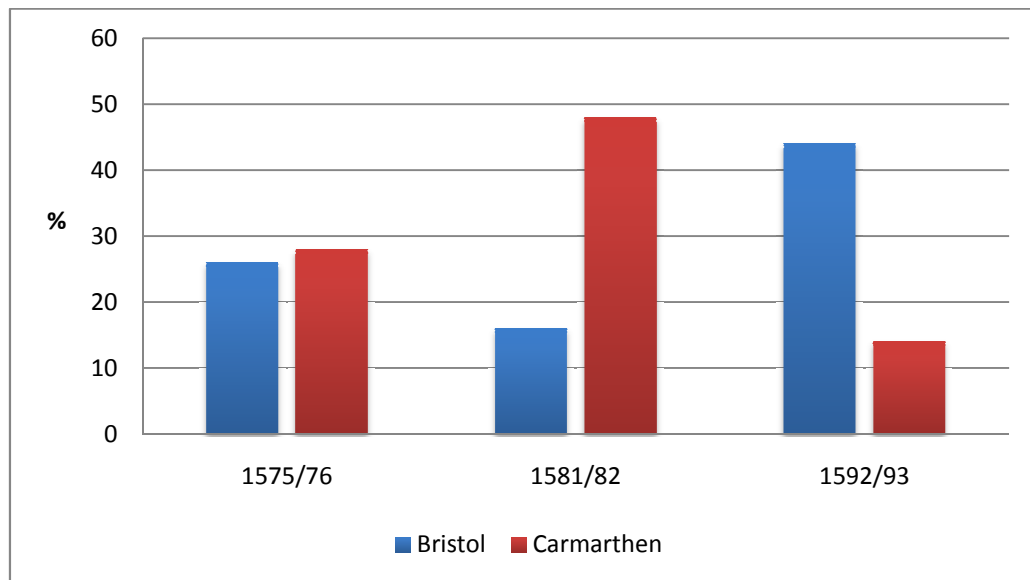
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century.⁵³ The scale of the malting industry attracted the attention of the Privy Council in 1596 which was concerned that this was causing a shortage of food,

Whereas greate complaint hath been made unto us that divers persons of the richer sorte and somme Justices of the Peace within your cite and libertie doe use the trade of maultinge, and by the immoderate quantitie that they make therof cause the scarcitie and dearth of grayne to be the more to be the more (sic) within the cite and other other (sic) markettes abroade in the countie. We do by these our letters straightlie require you to see this abuse speedilie redressed within your libertie, and to suppress the making of mault during the time of this scarcitie by such as are afore mencioned men of good wealth and habilitie, otherwise then for their owne use and provision, and to restraine others unto a moderate and reasonable quantitie.⁵⁴

The commercial effect of the dispute with Bristol over the establishing of the port is illustrated in Figure 4.1. This expresses in percentage terms the principal destinations of grain shipments made from the port for years in which both the coastal and overseas accounts survive between 1575/76 and 1592/93.

Figure 4.1 Port of Gloucester: destination of outbound coastal shipments of grain (volume % share).



⁵³ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 77.

⁵⁴ *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1596-7*, New Series (London, 1902), 154.

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It can be seen that both Bristol and Carmarthen were the main recipients of Gloucester's grain shipments, receiving over half of all that which was recorded outbound. The extent to which trade between Bristol and Gloucester was damaged by their dispute over the status of Gloucester as a port is clear from the figure for 1581/82, the year of their litigation, which show a big shift towards Carmarthen at the expense of Bristol. The complaint of Bristol's bakers that since Gloucester had become a port the volume of wheat which they received from Gloucester had fallen by three quarters is borne out by these figures, and also by Gloucester's coastal accounts which show that in 1575/76 eighteen weys of wheat were sent coastwise, but in 1581/82 only twenty bushels.⁵⁵ The closeness of the relationship between Gloucester and Carmarthen at this time is confirmed by a letter from Lord Burghley to Gloucester council in 1586 in which he partially revoked an earlier order restricting trade in grain, so that Carmarthen 'in this tyme of dearthe ... might be permitted as heretofore they have used to make provision there in theat cittie and partes thereabouts of some quantitie of mault for their relief'.⁵⁶

However, the dispute had a wider resonance than simply that between Gloucester and Bristol as a breakdown of the data in Figure 4.1 shows. The following two figures demonstrate that there was a pronounced difference in the marketing of grain by the merchants of Tewkesbury and Gloucester.

⁵⁵ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol.62. There were 48 bushels to the wey.

⁵⁶ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol. 60.

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Figure 4.2 Port of Gloucester: principal destinations of outbound coastal grain shipments from Gloucester (volume % share).

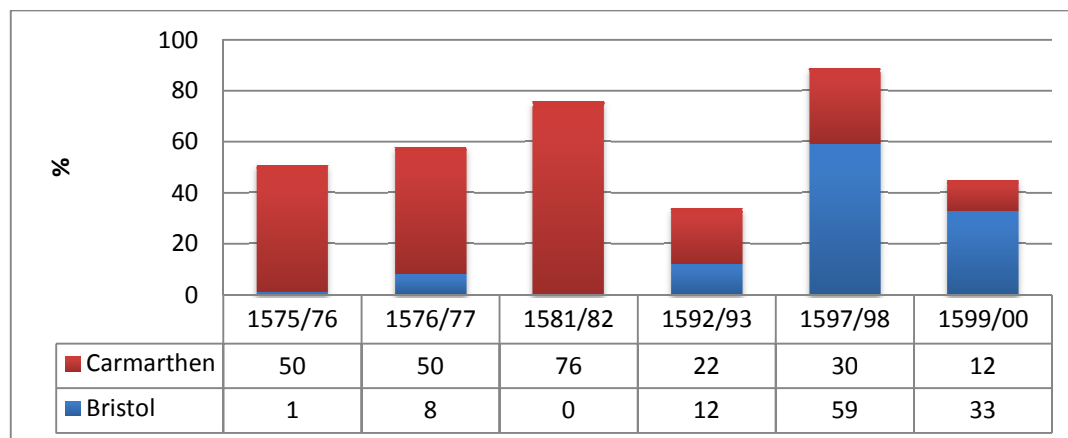
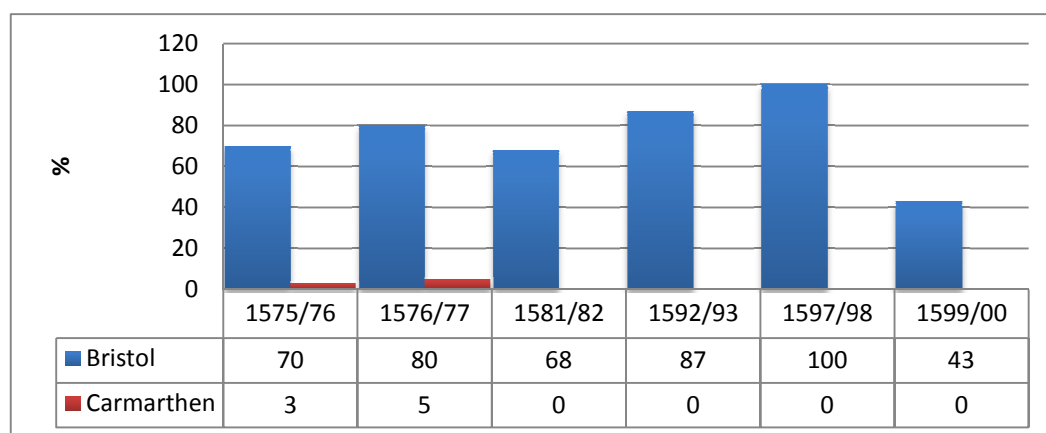


Figure 4.3 Port of Gloucester: principal destinations of outbound coastal grain shipments from Tewkesbury (volume % share).



Figures 4.2 and 4.3 indicate that the merchants of these respective places had sharply different profiles of trade, with Gloucester directing much of its grain trade towards Carmarthen, whilst Tewkesbury directed its trade overwhelmingly towards Bristol. At the height of the dispute between Gloucester and Bristol, there were no Gloucester merchants shipping grain to Bristol at all, and the situation did not recover until the final decade of the century. As well as shipping to Carmarthen, Gloucester's merchants also sought to develop alternative trade routes by shipping to other south Welsh ports including Cardiff and Newport. In contrast, Tewkesbury's merchants remained oblivious to the dispute, had very little trade with Carmarthen and enjoyed

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close relations with Bristol. The extent to which these different trading profiles prefigured Gloucester's dispute with Bristol is not clear. Differences between the authorities at Gloucester and Tewkesbury were evidently of long standing. In 1505 Tewkesbury trowmen had lodged a formal complaint against the attempts by Gloucester to gain exemption from an act declaring the Severn toll free, and Gloucester had tried on several occasions to enforce collections of tolls on the passage of goods down the Severn prior its establishment as an independent port.⁵⁷ What is clear is that the dispute between Gloucester and Bristol exacerbated long standing tensions and prompted Gloucester's merchants to seek alternative markets for their grain.

These circumstances provide the context in which the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester bought a suit in 1593 in the Chancery courts against Edward Barston who was deputy customer of the port.⁵⁸ Barston had been Tewkesbury's principal grain merchant, who alone, for example, was responsible for one fifth of the town's grain exports in 1581/82. As such the action can be seen as an attempt by the city to undermine Tewkesbury's trade with Bristol, and to wrest back control of the customs. It was clearly a source of great annoyance to Gloucester's leaders that the customs jurisdiction for which they had so long fought, was not under their control but that of their rival at Tewkesbury. In the early 1590s they agreed to underwrite the costs of a city official to,

attend the *Lord* Treasurer and the Lords of the Councell and minister the grieffs arisinge uppon the suite now dependenge concerninge the customers office against Mr Barston and the searcher and comptroller concernigne their offices and for constrayingne such as refuse to contribute to taxacons and for sundry and comon services of the Queene for the benefitt of the cittie And that Mr Recordar shall travell for procuringe the Mayor or Recorder to be of the commission.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 43-44.

⁵⁸ TNA E134/36&37Eliz/Mich14.

⁵⁹ GRO GBR/B/3/1 fol. 141.

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Moreover, Edward Barston was subsequently described elsewhere as being a servant to Lord Chandos, whose family seat was at Sudeley castle.⁶⁰ This would have provided a further reason for members of the city's elite to move against Barston, since they were involved in a long running dispute with the local nobility who were resentful of the city's privileges. In 1587/88 Gloucester had disputed Lord Chandos' right as the county's lord lieutenant to muster troops in the city, and again had to call on the support of the city's patron, Lord Burghley, to aid them in resolving the issue.⁶¹ At the same time as Gloucester was pursuing its case against Barston, the city council was also moving to secure the appointment of its own nominee to the post of controller. In January 1593 the mayor and aldermen agreed to 'geve their letter of comondacon to the Lord Treasurer of England in the behalfe of Henry Merrick for the office of comptrollership of the custome howse in Gloucester.'⁶² This in turn met with the objection of the authorities at Tewkesbury who protested to Cecil and advanced their own candidate.⁶³

The deteriorating relationship between Gloucester and Tewkesbury may also explain why the city authorities placed a chain across the river Severn in 1572 at Gloucester quay to control the flow of up and downstream traffic.⁶⁴ In 1585 the water bailiff was charged with 'authoritie to search all boates barks and trowes for the transportinge or passinge of corne and to wayte and keepe the chene now placed over the saide ryver and attende the ryver for stay of passinge of corne.'⁶⁵ The chain was evidently still in place in 1598 when the Privy Council

⁶⁰ 'Journal of the House of Lords: December 1597', *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth* (1682), 530-536 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [December 2007].

⁶¹ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 88.

⁶² GRO GBR/3/1.fol. 151.

⁶³ W. B. Willcox, *Gloucestershire: A Study in Local Government, 1590-1640* (New Haven (CT) and London, 1940), 151.

⁶⁴ GRO GBR/F/4/3 fol. 152v.

⁶⁵ GRO GBR/B/2/1 fol. 101v.

ordered its removal following complaint from Bristol's brewers that it was impeding their malt supplies.⁶⁶

Smuggling

The trade in grain described in the customs accounts was substantial, but it was also mainly domestic and as such it was not liable to pay customs. Goods which were liable for customs if shipped overseas were however required to be recorded, and a bond lodged with the customs officers. This bond or cocket could then be redeemed once a signed certificate was returned to show that the goods which had been shipped had reached another domestic port. The question therefore arises as to how successful the system of coastal customs control was, and of the extent to which the Exchequer records more generally fully reflect the principal arm of Gloucester's trade.

It was certainly the case that not all of the malt nominally shipped coastwise from the port of Gloucester reached its purported destination. At least one merchant found it more lucrative to forfeit redemption of his bond and sell his goods overseas without obtaining a license, and without paying the relevant outbound duty. An entry in the overseas account for 1596 against the *Elizabeth* originally bound for Carmarthen with thirteen weys of malt shipped by the Gloucester merchant John Taylor, records that 'the suttell dealinge of the merchant beinge doubted' the customs officers secured an order for the mayor and aldermen to examine the master of the vessel who 'confessed that they were dryven by fowle wether in to ireland and did depossid that they left much of theyr malt'.⁶⁷ Blaming contrary winds was a fairly standard mariners' excuse and on this occasion the relevant overseas duty was exacted retrospectively with no further sanction applied.⁶⁸ That this was not an isolated incident is suggested by evidence given in a 1585 Exchequer case by Henry Mathew, a

⁶⁶ Willcox, *Gloucestershire*, 139.

⁶⁷ TNA E190/1244/1.

⁶⁸ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 114-5.

bookkeeper who acted for several merchants.⁶⁹ Mathew attested that the searcher of the port, Robert Robinson, and other customs officers were fully aware of the practice of shipping corn overseas under colour of a coastal cocket, but rather than preventing it, used it as a reason to extort bribes. Mathew listed the amounts which were due to each of the customs officers in person for the freighting of wheat, peas, beans and malt to Ireland: four shillings per wey were due to the customer, one shilling to his deputy and three shillings and fourpence to Robinson.⁷⁰ Furthermore,

if it chanced any merchants or owners of shipping to pass over into ireland without having made the said officers first privy therunto, then the said robinson would terrify and threaten the said person so offending with seizure and loss of their shipping and forfeiture of their bond if they would not pay the new exaccon and by this means whether at the going first or the coming home the said robinson would be satisfied.⁷¹

The fact that the merchants were threatened with forfeiture of their bond shows that they must have lodged a bond, and that therefore the shipments had been entered in the coastal rather than overseas accounts. The implication is that as long as merchants had forewarned the customs officers of their intentions, and had paid the necessary sweetener, then they could proceed with impunity. The reason that John Taylor was caught and forced to pay duty in 1596 was unlikely therefore to have been due to the diligence of the customs officers going about their proper business in the expected manner. It is interesting to note that Taylor was involved in private litigation with Robinson over a separate matter, and Robinson may well have been using the powers of his office to intimidate Taylor and to frustrate his commercial undertakings.⁷²

There was undoubtedly a strong financial incentive for merchants to avoid paying overseas customs. The *Mary Edward* carried a cargo of wheat from Gloucester to Bayonne in France in 1592 on which duty was levied at two

⁶⁹ TNA E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17 fol.7.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² TNA C 3/248/41.

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shillings per quarter; additionally money was paid for a licence at four shillings and eight pence per quarter; and fees were also due to the customs officers which were earlier recorded at one shilling and four pence per quarter.⁷³ In total therefore, before shipping costs these levies amounted to eight shillings per quarter, representing perhaps around half the wholesale price.⁷⁴ The merchant's margin would obviously have been substantially enhanced if these costs were reduced or avoided.

Gloucester's merchants would not have been exceptional in illegally shipping grain under colour of a coastal cocket. N.J. Williams found evidence of widespread evasion of customs in shipments of grain from East Anglia during the same period. Williams found that Francis Shaxton, an East Anglian merchant, secured a coastal cocket for only half of the volume of grain which he loaded for shipment to London.⁷⁵ These cargoes were then despatched to the Netherlands, rather than London, with the consequent forfeiture of £523 worth of bonds lodged with the Exchequer over a two year period.⁷⁶ In the summer of 1565 between 1,300 and 2,600 weys of wheat were estimated to have been exported in this way.⁷⁷

Comparison of the coastal accounts of Gloucester, Bristol and Carmarthen reveals similar discrepancies. Not all shipments of grain recorded outbound from Gloucester were subsequently recorded inbound at the destination port as was theoretically required. The *George*, for instance, sailed from Gloucester to Bristol with nine weys of malt and two weys of wheat in early November 1592, but was not subsequently recorded as having arrived in the Bristol coastal

⁷³ TNA E190/1243/3; TNA E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17.

⁷⁴ Based on a price of c. 18 shillings and 8 d. as per P.J. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed. by Joan Thirsk, 7 vols, Vol. 4, (Cambridge, 1967), 815-70, 398.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 45.

⁷⁶ Williams, 'Francis Shaxton', 393.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

accounts.⁷⁸ This was not the only occasion on which the *George* was recorded outbound at Gloucester but not inbound at Bristol; there were a further five occasions during the financial year when this discrepancy arose accounting for one third of the outward voyages made by the vessel.⁷⁹ Nor was the *George* alone in this. In total 256 weys aboard eight different vessels remain unaccounted for in the Bristol coastal records although they were recorded outbound for the port in the corresponding Gloucester accounts. This represents one third of the declared grain shipments made from Gloucester to Bristol during this year, and the inference therefore could be made that these were made under colour of a coastal cocket, but were in reality shipped overseas without license and without paying customs at the correct rate.

This interpretation must be qualified however because on occasion the *George* and other vessels were recorded inbound at Bristol with cargoes of grain from Gloucester when they had not been recorded *outbound* in the Gloucester port books. Furthermore, examples were found of ships which were recorded in the Gloucester port books as being bound for Padstow or Cardiff, but which were subsequently recorded inbound at Carmarthen.⁸⁰ Although vessels may have been entered outbound for Bristol in the Gloucester port books, they may therefore have actually sailed to another domestic port, rather than freighting their cargo overseas. The coastal accounts do not therefore provide an infallible or entirely consistent record of voyages made between different ports. The wider implications of this will be considered further in Chapter Seven, but it will be sufficient here to note that whilst some shipments ostensibly made coastally were smuggled overseas, the practice was not necessarily as widespread as discrepancies in the coastal customs records at first suggest.

⁷⁸ TNA E190/1243/4, E190/1131/7.

⁷⁹ Appendix B.

⁸⁰ Eg. TNA E190/1241/6 *Jesus* leaving outbound for Padstow 8th March cf. E190/1299/2 *Jesus* recorded inbound from Gloucester 23rd March with same cargo and master.

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Sailing under colour of a coastal cocket was not the only way in which grain could be illegally exported overseas however. Perhaps the more normal method was described in a 1565 survey of the port of Bristol which recorded how along the lower reaches of the Severn,

Diverse persons do with the plowes bringe corne grayne lether calfe skynnes victualles & other comodities of this realme to botes barckes & vesselles lyeng at the bankes of the saide river of severne at full sea and doo lade the same in to the saide botes & vessells secretlye in the night & from thense doo transporte the same into diverse ptes beyonde the seas.⁸¹

Further confirmation of this practice was noted in 1588,

After the shipps hath taken in at the Key and Hungrode lawfull merchandice, then the shipps goes into Kingrode and thear rides to take in victuell and prohibited merchandice which comes to them owt of Wales or Glocester in woodbusshis or trowes a tide or two before they make saile⁸²

This was evidently a long established practice. An act of parliament in 1542 had noted that,

divers persones aswell inhabytauntes fermers and dwellers nere unto the streme of severne and unto the crykes and pilles of the same, from Kingrode upwarde towarde the Citie and Towne of Gloucestre, conveyeth and carieth graine and corne out of the Realme of Englande, unto the parties beyonde the Sea, where graines are verye deare, and nowe of late tyme have made picardes and other greate botes with fore mastes of the burden of xv toon and so to xxxvj tonne, and by reasone whereof wheate rye beanes barley malte and other kynde of graines, by stealthe are conveyed into th utter parties beyonde the Sea, so that therby the Kinges Majesie is ... deceyved of his subsidie and custome for the same,

and that,

greate botes and vessells, often tymes divers Shippps, aswell of the parties beyonde the Seas as other of Englishe Shipps lying in Kingrode and Hungrode, ... awayting and taryng there the cooming of the saide greate botes with corne and

⁸¹ TNA E159/350 Hil., no. 348,r,v,seq.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1565bristol.htm>> [January 2009].

⁸² Vanes, *Documents*, 49-50.

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graine downe Severne, who there dischargeth the graine and corne aborde the saide Shippes at Kingrode.⁸³

An idea of the scale of this can be found in an Exchequer commission of enquiry conducted in 1572 into the trading practices of twenty merchants from Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Bristol and Barnstaple trading aboard nineteen ships.⁸⁴

In the light of this, and considering the acrimonious background which coloured relations between Bristol and Gloucester over the establishment of Gloucester as a separate port, it is no surprise that Bristol should have alleged of Gloucester's merchants, 'yf they adventure any thinge to the sea the same is in smale Barks with corne and prohibyted warres where with they make more profitable retornes, then Bristow wythe their great shipping and Lauffull wares canne doe'.⁸⁵ This view was however endorsed by the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester in their action against Barston, the deputy customer of the port. Evidence submitted in this case portrayed the port as one where avoidance of customs was rife and systemic. It was alleged that prior to his appointment Barston was,

one of the most comon and greatest dealers in ladinge and caredge of comodities uppon seaverne;that he comonly passed prohibited wares for himselfe and his partners without answeringe her majesties customs; ...that he was a comon dealer or factor with or for marchants of Bristoll, Barstaple, Bridgwater or other places for furnishinge and providinge for them of corne lether calve skynnes and other prohibited wares and comodites

and that,

... since his beinge deputie customer he hath bin a factor or purveyor of corne and other comodities for other men or traded beyond the seas or by seaverne any comodities to his owne use or as partner wth others or under the names of other men.⁸⁶

⁸³ *The Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. III (London, 1817), 906.

⁸⁴ TNA E134/14&15Eliz/Mich9.

⁸⁵ B.L. Harleian MS. 368/106 fol.107v.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1584petition.htm>> [January 2009].

⁸⁶ TNA E 134/36&37Eliz/Mich14 fol.1.

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Subsequent detail included allegations that Barston had a secret agreement with the late deputy customer to circumvent customs; that he had conspired with another Tewkesbury merchant in concealing twenty quarters more wheat than was declared to customs aboard a trow rendezvousing with a Bristol ship bound overseas; that since becoming deputy customer he had shipped eight weys of rye ostensibly to Dovey in Wales, but actually from there to Ireland; and that he had been complicit in the lading of two weys more wheat than had been declared to customs to a ship riding in or near the port of Bristol.⁸⁷

Edward Barston was not the only customs officer accused of malfeasance. In 1586 Robert Robinson the searcher was accused not only of compounding with merchants to allow the unlicensed passage of grain as described above, but also of dealing in this way on his own account. Richard Edwards a Gloucester vintner was one of many who supported the allegation claiming that within a seven month period over 1,000 quarters of grain (166 weys) had been shipped 'without any license or warrant at all'.⁸⁸

The testimony described above has particularly weight as Barston himself subsequently confessed to these and other allegations made against him. In particular he acknowledged that he had taken bribes in place of issuing cockets for cargoes valued at over £10.⁸⁹ The most valuable and largest arm of the port's trade would therefore have escaped recording in the port books. The combination of the ease with which goods could be despatched without the awareness of customs officers from the Severn below Gloucester, along with the willingness of Barston to overlook customs procedures for goods passing from the upper reaches of the river throws into question the extent to which the Exchequer records can be used as a guide to real levels of trade in the port.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ TNA E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17 fol.5.

⁸⁹ Willcox, *Gloucestershire*, 150.

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It is obviously far from easy to quantify the scale of real trade, as opposed to trade which was declared and was liable to duty. Consideration of the motivations and actions of the customs officers however suggests that it must have been very considerable indeed. Customs officers were remunerated by the payment of a small stipend, and by the levying of charges for the issuing of cockets. Based on the fees outlined in a 1585 case and the number of cockets granted in 1592/93, the income accruing to the customer from fees can generously be calculated as being worth £72 for the year.⁹⁰ This was a gross figure out of which the customer was required to pay his expenses. This was a respectable sum, but it is hardly sufficient to explain the zeal with which Gloucester had pursued the cause of gaining an independent customs jurisdiction, nor the costly gifts and litigation which they had underwritten. Peter Clark identified an increase in corruption and abuses amongst Gloucester aldermen in the later sixteenth century, and described how many aldermen 'endeavoured to compensate themselves for the burdens of office by selling city posts and alehouse licences, taking bribes for securing leases of town lands, and other profiteering.'⁹¹ The attempt by Gloucester to secure its own customs jurisdiction must be seen in this context, and indeed can only be understood from this perspective given the relatively small official revenue streams which accrued from the port's customs. Rather, the motivation of those who sought the customs offices was that the holder was able to supplement his income by wielding the threat of state action to extort payments from those engaged in illicit trade from the port. Thus in 1585 Edward Estuppe described how he had to give the searcher £2 10 shillings immediately, and then a further £2 10 shillings in order to secure a promise that the searcher would not 'molest or trouble him in any way'.⁹² Similarly, William Swanley, a sailor from Newnham, shipping malt for a Gloucester merchant to Carmarthen in contravention of an embargo on the shipping of grain, described how the searcher had stopped his

⁹⁰ TNA E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17.

⁹¹ Peter Clark, 'Civic Leaders of Gloucester, 1580-1800', in *Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800*, ed. by Peter Clark, (London, 1984), 311- 45, 320-21.

⁹² TNA E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17 fol.1.

passage at Gatcombe and had required £4 to allow him to proceed.⁹³ Even normal and legitimate trade was subject to harassment and extortion on the part of the searcher. Thomas Awyntle, a Westbury fisherman, felt it expedient to tip the searcher a barrel of herring 'of his goodwill' when he went fishing to Ireland taking with him two or three weys of malt even though he had a cocket.⁹⁴ In 1593 Arthur Frith, a Gloucester cook, attested that he and his partner had to pay a fee of ten shillings yearly to allow them to have free passage through the port with glass.⁹⁵ It is no wonder that it should have been reported of the searcher that he had 'of late years being grown vearie ritche'.⁹⁶

There was an additional advantage gained by the customs officers at Gloucester in that they were able to use the office to further their own commercial activities. Barston and Robinson had been grain merchants prior to taking up their posts, and in contravention of the law had continued to trade in this way through third parties since their appointment.⁹⁷ Barston's activities in particular were extensive and he was said to have traded aboard his own ships to Spain and Ireland.⁹⁸ These men were not only able to demand payment for the passage of goods through the port, but were additionally able to use their power to frustrate the trading activities of their competitors. A Gloucester merchant recounted how his brother in law had intended to ship twelve weys of peas to Padstow, but the customs officers refused to give him a cocket to facilitate the passage, as a result of which their price fell. The searcher then bought the peas and shipped them to Padstow himself, 'to a greater gayne'.⁹⁹ As well as hindering their competitors, the customs officers were able to facilitate their own illegal trading both by removing the possibility of being caught, and by removing the need to pay protection money to others. By these

⁹³ Ibid.fol.2.

⁹⁴ Ibid fol.8.

⁹⁵ TNA E134/36&37Eliz/Mich14 fol.2.

⁹⁶ TNA E 134/27&28Eliz/Mich17 fol.5.

⁹⁷ Act 5/6 Ed. VI C.16; TNA E134/36&37Eliz/Mich14.

⁹⁸ TNA E134/27Eliz/Hil25, E134/27&28Eliz/Mich17 fol.2.

⁹⁹ TNA E134/27Eliz/Hil25 fol.3.

means the customs officers secured a very strong commercial position and were able to control the marketing of grain and other goods which passed down the Severn. This provides the context and rationale for the dispute between Gloucester and Bristol, and for the subsequent suite bought by Gloucester's aldermen against the port's customs officers. Trade, local politics, and the exercise of customs control were all therefore inextricably linked. In order to fully understand the information contained (and omitted) in the customs accounts it is also necessary to understand the local political context in which the merchants and customs officers operated.

Leather

The port books show that tanned animal skins were the most frequently occurring export item after corn. Eight out of ten entries in the accounts relating to animal skins referred specifically to calf skins, the rest to either tanned skins or to leather. Using the values from the 1582 Book of Rates, exports of calves' skins in 1581/82 can be calculated at £722 compared to a combined value of £3,012 for the exports of grain listed in Table 4.6 for the same year. There is no data for equivalent years to be able to make a direct comparison to other ports, but Gloucester shipped around 23 times more calf skins in 1592/93 than Bridgwater had in the first six months of 1588/89, or eleven times more than the North Devon ports in 1595/96. Unlike these other ports, Gloucester had a regular trade in the product which was an important industry in the city employing twelve percent of the men listed in the 1608 muster roll.¹⁰⁰ Oak bark from the Forest of Dean was used to tan hides sourced from a wide area served by the upper and lower reaches of the Severn.¹⁰¹ Although the customs accounts principally list the export of basic tanned hides and skins, evidence of a

¹⁰⁰ Clark, "Ramothe-Gilead", 171; Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 75.

¹⁰¹ Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 75.

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secondary industry can be found in two shipments made to Dublin in 1576 which included leather girdles and horse girths.¹⁰²

Table 4.7 indicates a rising trend reflecting the vitality of this aspect of the local economy. In contrast to shipments of grain and other products, all but one shipment of animal skins in the accounts sampled were nominally despatched to Bristol which had secured a monopoly licence for the export of leather.¹⁰³

Table 4.7 Port of Gloucester: outbound coastal shipments of calf skins (dozen) .

Period	Dozen
1575/76	180
1581/82	1,444
1592/93	1,408
1597/98	2,107
1599/00	3,280

As with the shipments of grain described above, there were found to be a material number of discrepancies between the outward record of shipments of leather from the port with the corresponding inward records at Bristol. Whereas with shipments of grain it was suggested that such discrepancies may be partly attributed to anomalies of an administrative nature, this explanation is less convincing for leather as the order of magnitude of difference was very much greater. In the first half of 1597/98 for instance Gloucester recorded 1,075 dozen calf skins outward to Bristol, but Bristol recorded only 254 dozen inwards from Gloucester. As with grain, there was a strong incentive to evade customs when exporting leather, and the practice was known to be rife.¹⁰⁴ One vessel at least was recorded as having sailed overseas rather than to Bristol. The

¹⁰² TNA E190/1129/8.

¹⁰³ Latimer, *Annals*, 88-90.

¹⁰⁴ Jones, *Illlicit Economy*, 221.

Mary Slugg had entered for customs from Gloucester for Bristol with a cargo of ten dickers of leather but had actually sailed to Galicia.¹⁰⁵

Much of the evidence relating to smuggling leather from the port has already been referred to in connection with the illicit export of grain. For instance the commission of enquiry investigating the activities of twenty merchants trading grain aboard nineteen named ships mentioned earlier also sought to ascertain how many dickers of calf skins had been shipped illicitly by these men.¹⁰⁶ There are further references however which indicate that the practice was especially prevalent along the northern shore of the part of the Severn estuary which lay within the port. Jean Vanes described relations between Bristol and Lydney as being particularly strong, and identified Gatcombe and Lydney as centres for the illegal export of leather by Bristol merchants, including the prominent Bristol merchants John Smythe and William Tyndall.¹⁰⁷ A further instance of leather being illicitly despatched occurred in July 1587 when a Forest of Dean tanner was set upon by a party of men from Bristol as he loaded a boat with hides and skins for carriage to a ship which was lying in Kingroad off Bristol.¹⁰⁸ Such evidence supports the supposition that the discrepancies in the port books relating to leather are representative of a substantial illicit overseas trade. Indeed the indications are that more leather was shipped illicitly overseas than was shipped licitly and domestically.

Conclusion

There are good grounds for supposing that by the final quarter of the sixteenth century a significant part of Gloucester's overseas export trade, perhaps even the major part, was conducted illegally, and as such was not represented in the overseas customs accounts. Gloucester's overseas trade in leather and grain were not miniscule as these documents would lead us to believe, but were

¹⁰⁵ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 115.

¹⁰⁶ TNA E134/14&15Eliz/Mich9.

¹⁰⁷ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 81,111.

¹⁰⁸ Latimer, *Annals*, 99-100.

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integral to the trading activities of merchants both within the port and within the wider region. There is a compelling body of evidence which shows that the scale of smuggling in corn of one sort or another was very considerable, and that evasion of overseas customs was an entrenched practice, not only by local merchants but by the customs officers themselves. The amount of overseas trade described in Table 4.6 therefore represents only a small portion of that which was actually conducted from the port. Moreover in terms of receipts to the Exchequer, even the quantities recorded as having been shipped overseas in Table 4.6 represent an exaggeration, as of these the majority were not liable for duty as they were for provisioning the army. Consequently in value terms as recorded in the overseas customs accounts the trade from the port appears so small as to be negligible. In the half year from Michaelmas to Easter 1592/93 for example duty was levied on only some £41 worth of goods outbound from Gloucester, compared to £6,653 worth outbound from Bristol in 1594/95. Those that use overseas customs accounts alone to determine the respective size of overseas trade from the ports of Bristol and Gloucester therefore risk gaining a seriously misleading impression.

Bristol's merchants were also engaged in smuggling these commodities of course, and their illicit activities would also not be apparent from customs records.¹⁰⁹ Although Gloucester and Bristol were adjacent ports, and had previously been under common control, the argument made here is that Gloucester's overseas accounts under-represent the true level of overseas trade from the port to a much greater degree than those of Bristol. Although customs officers at Bristol were certainly complicit with an elite group of merchants in facilitating an illegal export trade, they were not themselves merchants or directly engaged in trade.¹¹⁰ At Gloucester however, the position of the customs officers was so interwoven with their own commercial activities that the scope for evasion was considerably higher. Merchants who managed to secure posts

¹⁰⁹ Jones, 'Illicit Business'.

¹¹⁰ Dunn, 'Thomas Watkins'.

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in the customs were able to gain a decisive commercial advantage, and could conduct their trade without making any returns to the Exchequer. At the same time they were able to further enrich themselves by requiring protection money from their rivals. This provides the rationale for the contested nature of the port's jurisdiction, and indicates that the farming of illicit trade from the port was considered to be a significant prize by all parties concerned. It must therefore have been substantial. Additionally, the topography of the lower reaches of the port was particularly suited to the ready shipping of prohibited commodities out to sea-going ships waiting in the Severn estuary; this was especially so for grain and leather carried from the northern shore along the banks of the Forest of Dean.

The profile of Gloucester as a port is raised still further when consideration is given to the data in the coastal customs accounts, rather than just their overseas counterparts. Shipments of grain and pulses made coastwise from the port were seen to have been considerable, and were important for provisioning towns in the Bristol Channel and South West. There were also a notable number of cargoes of wax, and of a mead based beverage called metheglin which were shipped down the Severn to Bristol via the port. Linen was another commodity which became a frequently occurring domestic cargo in the 1590s. Furthermore, a coastal trade which was not recorded in the coastal customs accounts, but which was nonetheless being legitimately conducted, was found to have been taking place in wine and probably iron by the end of the century. In particular the dramatic and substantial fall in recorded wine imports to the port was found to be apparent and not real. Wine and iron were not the only commodities shipped through the port which were unrecorded in the coastal accounts. Hoskins believed that coal was first transported down the Severn in 1520 and became the most important commodity shipped down the river during the reign of Henry VIII.¹¹¹ Salt was produced from brine springs in Cheshire, and Camden

¹¹¹ W.G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: King Henry's England, 1500-1547* (New York, 1976), 196-97.

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records that Worcestershire was similarly supplied with many salt springs, and salt must also therefore have been a frequently occurring downstream cargo.¹¹² This would provide an explanation for the comparatively small amounts of salt which were recorded arriving from overseas in Gloucester's accounts. For instance, only twelve weys were imported from Easter to Michaelmas 1583, compared to 118 weys at Bridgwater for the same period; or twenty weys in 1581/2 compared to 133 at the North Devon ports. Salt was needed for tanning amongst other uses and so these figures are unlikely to have represented the port's total requirements. Another significant trade which escaped the port books was that in fruit. Gloucester was noted for its annual shipments of fruit down the Severn to the Bristol Channel ports. Fruit from the Forest of Dean was specifically mentioned in a contemporary record of trade in Pembrokeshire, and between three and twelve boats from the creeks of Minsterworth, Elmore and Westbury were recorded bringing between 22 and 160 tons of apples to Haverfordwest annually from 1586.¹¹³ Consideration of these branches of trade which were important, but not liable for customs control, counterbalances the impression gained through study of the overseas accounts alone that the upstream Severn ports played an insignificant economic role, or that they were in some way peripheral to the real action which was taking place at Bristol.

The trade of the city of Gloucester itself was also seen to have been independent from Bristol to a surprising extent. Gloucester's trade was no mere appendage of Bristol's, neither were its merchants reliant on Bristol for marketing of their produce, nor for overseas imports. Gloucester's merchants sought to distance themselves from their rivals at Tewkesbury and had established a successful alternative market for their grain at Carmarthen and other Welsh ports. A further bilateral trading relationship which operated without reference to Bristol was found in the shipment of pulses to Cornwall. On the other hand Gloucester's exports of linen were all routed to Bristol, and

¹¹² Camden, *Camden's Britannia*.

¹¹³ George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading', 28.

by the 1590s the earlier aversion to trading with Bristol in grain had begun to break down. Such trading relationships were therefore dynamic and complex, and are perhaps a reflection of the factionalism which has been identified amongst the city's elite.¹¹⁴

It has been argued that Gloucester's response to the decline of the cloth industry had been to retreat from manufacturing and to establish itself as a distributive and marketing centre.¹¹⁵ Clark has characterised the city as having had its overseas commerce 'poached by Bristol', and as one which became increasingly reliant on inland trade, and on shipping grain and malt down the Severn to Bristol and the South West.¹¹⁶ Willan has gone so far as to suggest that Gloucester effectively withdrew from overseas trade in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ More recently Sacks and Lynch characterised the port as one which was 'almost exclusively involved in domestic trade'.¹¹⁸ These interpretations look overstated. Whilst Gloucester's overseas exports of cloth undoubtedly did decline, they appear to have been substituted by an illicit overseas trade in grain and leather. On the import side, direct overseas trade had never played a major role in the city's trade figures because of the navigational difficulties of its location, but there is no reason to suppose that indirect imports were any less in the later century than they had been previously despite evidence to the contrary in the coastal accounts. The city's merchant elite does not seem to have responded to the decline in the cloth and clothing trades simply by retreating to the role of distributors in the way suggested by Clark and Herbert. New branches of commerce and new specialisations were developed. The manufacture of linen and the leather trades were both shown to have expanded after 1575; there were signs of the

¹¹⁴ Clark, 'Civic Leaders', 321; J E Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (London, 1963), 272-81.

¹¹⁵ Clark, 'Civic Leaders', 313-14; Clark, "Ramothe-Gilead", 169-71; Herbert, ed., *City of Gloucester*, 75-78.

¹¹⁶ Clark, 'Civic Leaders', 313-14.

¹¹⁷ Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade*, 83.

¹¹⁸ Sacks and Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700', 380.

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emergence of a domestic fishing fleet; and the preponderance of malt rather than unprocessed grain in outbound shipments needs to be recognised for what it is - a sought after, added-value product, the manufacture of which still requires considerable expertise. To characterise the city as simply a conduit for the freighting of the region's grain is to miss this important point.

Finally, this study of Gloucester's maritime trade has illuminated how the customer was not immune from the political and commercial factional world in which he operated. The civic elite of the city of Gloucester struggled to impose their control over the administration of the local customs, and the ensuing legal disputes make explicit in the written record tensions and agendas which add to our understanding of the information both contained in, and omitted from, the port books. The following two chapters will bear out that recognition of the local political context in which the port books were compiled is essential to a full understanding of the trade which they describe.

Chapter 5 : Cardiff

Wales did not become an integral part of the English state until the Acts of Union from 1535 to 1542. However the imposition of royal authority which these acts sought to impose was contested and negotiated over the ensuing years, rather than being readily and instantaneously accepted by those who were adversely affected by the change. In this context, so far as the operation of customs was concerned, a unitary system of national customs did not begin to be imposed until the 1560s, when rights to impose and collect duty on foreign trade were removed from the marcher lords who had previously held them. Since the Exchequer customs accounts are the primary source for understanding maritime trade in this era, the task of identifying patterns of trade through the Welsh ports of the Bristol Channel during the sixteenth century is therefore constrained by the lack of a comparable body of data to that of the English ports for much of the century; the earliest surviving Exchequer account for the port of Cardiff not being until 1579.¹ Furthermore, the evidence which these accounts do contain is inextricably linked with the advance of royal authority in Wales and the degree to which this was successfully imposed.

Prior to the 1560s national customs were not collected along the coast of South Wales which fell under the jurisdiction of various marcher lords. Until 1563 the collection of customs in the area covered by the port of Cardiff fell under the separate jurisdictions of two lordships: the coast from Chepstow to Newport, and from Neath to Burry, fell under the authority of the earl of Worcester; the intervening area from Newport to Neath fell under the authority of the earl of

¹ TNA E190/1270/4. The situation is partially redressed by the survival of some earlier local tax and toll records for the westerly Welsh ports which will be examined in the following chapter. There is only one similar document for any port to the east of Carmarthen, and this is for a single port in a single year, and so is of limited use (Dimmock, 'Custom Book of Chepstow').

Pembroke.² The officers appointed by these nobles, rather than officers appointed by the Crown, were responsible for making cockets and issuing licenses.³ The lack of royal customs officers along the coastline of Wales provided opportunities for the illegal export of prohibited and restricted goods in the manner which has been described in previous chapters. A mid century report noted that along the coast of Monmouth and Glamorgan 'goeth awaye mouche lether and tallowe to the shippes of Bristoll and so fourthe over seas withoute searche or any controllment, for they receive it in uppon Severne without licence or coquet'.⁴

The distinct arrangements in England and Wales also provided scope however for merchants to develop legal commercial strategies which took advantage of tax differentials between the jurisdictions. This was particularly evident in imports of wine which will be detailed more fully below, but it also applied to other products. A letter from the lord treasurer to secretary of state Burghley in 1561 detailed how,

all merchauntes haunting Bristow for their trade mak ther charter parties & ther cokettes to Chepstow and such oder places wher the quenes majestie hath no custom nor have hadd of long tyme for thos portes be in thandes of my Lord of Pembrok and of my Lord of Wursistour. And as long as those portes shall have this liberty the quenes majeste shall have no custom of any thing ther And all thinges restryned by statute or proclamacion wilbe carried to the said portes wher it shall not be staied which is and wilbe a gret losse to the quenes grace.⁵

The mid century transition to a new system of customs administration in Wales may therefore have been prompted by a desire on the part of the Crown to stem losses which it was suffering from the collection of customs revenue in England due to the anomalous collection of customs in Wales. This would be consistent with other measures which the Crown introduced in mid century in

² W.R.B. Robinson, 'The Establishment of Royal Customs in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire under Elizabeth 1', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XXIII (1970), 347-51, 349-50.

³ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁴ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 495.

⁵ TNA SP 12/19 fol. 20

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1561chepstow.htm>> [January 2009].

an effort to raise the income which it received from the collection of overseas customs.⁶ Increased penalties for the illegal export of corn, timber and livestock were introduced in England from 1554, and the rates at which customs were levied were approximately doubled in 1558.⁷ More stringent controls on the coastwise movement of dutiable goods were introduced as already described, and the Act of Frauds was passed by the first Elizabethan parliament limiting the places at which overseas trade was allowed.⁸ As well as helping to stem losses arising to English customs, the Crown may also have hoped to secure additional income by levying royal customs on Welsh trade, rather than allowing this to flow directly to the marcher lords.

The first sign of a direct interest in the administration of Welsh customs by the Crown occurred in 1545 when it appointed its own officer in the form of a searcher at the port of Cardiff.⁹ Soon afterwards a report was commissioned which surveyed the whole coastline with a view to ascertaining the extent of evasion of Crown customs which resulted from the autonomous collection of duties in Wales.¹⁰ From 1559 onwards the Crown moved to incorporate Welsh customs with English customs and to impose a uniform system of control and collection. To this end South Wales was divided into two customs ports with head ports at Cardiff and Milford. The port of Cardiff had jurisdiction of the coast from Chepstow in the east, to Worm's Head at the tip of the Gower Peninsula in the west, and as such extended through the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan. Cardiff had three member ports at Chepstow, Swansea and Neath. In 1563 the Crown moved to exert its control with the appointment of an independent customer to the port with responsibility for the collection of customs.¹¹ Customer John Leek's appointment was not readily accepted

⁶ Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade', 142.

⁷ Ibid; Willan, ed., *Book of Rates*, xxiii-xxvi.

⁸ Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade', 142.

⁹ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 349.

¹⁰ W.R.B Robinson, 'Dr. Thomas Phaer's Report on the Harbours and Customs Administration of Wales under Edward VI', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 24 (1972), 486-87.

¹¹ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 354.

however, and in 1564 he complained that he had been threatened, assaulted and imprisoned by three men including the justice of the peace for Glamorgan.¹² Moreover, these men were said to have encouraged others to 'withstand' the new customs and to have instructed the officers of the port of Swansea to refuse to accept them.¹³ Leather, bell metal and other prohibited merchandise were said to pass freely from the port.¹⁴ In 1565 the court of Exchequer ordered the earl of Pembroke and his representatives to appear before the court to answer allegations made by Customer Leek 'touching the clame that the *queen's* majestie maketh to the subside of tonnage and pondage within the portes in Wales, whereof the said erle is Lord marcher'.¹⁵ Leek continued to struggle to exert his authority until he himself was dismissed for gross corruption in 1571.¹⁶ In 1567 the Exchequer ordered that the jurisdiction of the port of Cardiff should be made subordinate to the customs authority at Bristol.¹⁷ The extent to which this was driven by political manoeuvring on the part of Bristol to retain control of trade, or of the Crown to secure customs receipts, is not clear cut, and in any case the measure proved ineffective.¹⁸ Evidently the Crown had made further progress by 1573 however when a customs house was first recorded at Chepstow, and in 1578 four deputies were recorded at the port.¹⁹ Nonetheless the Crown's right to collect customs was still disputed in practice if not in law. In 1572 an Exchequer official sought to arrest two men in Chepstow for evading payment of duties on wine imported there. The Steward of Chepstow, who was a brother of the earl of Worcester, lord marcher of the

¹² Emyr Gwynne Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings (Equity) Concerning Wales, Henry VIII-Elizabeth: Abstracts of Bills and Inventory of Further Proceedings* (Cardiff, 1939), 299.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 37.

¹⁵ TNA E123/3, fols. 68 & 81.

¹⁶ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 363.

¹⁷ TNA E123/3, fols. 191-2.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1567welshports.htm>> [January 2009].

¹⁸ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 349.

¹⁹ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 320; Waters, *Port of Chepstow*, 21.

port, called the official 'a false knave', threatened to put him in the pillory with his ears nailed and denied the Queen's authority in the matter.²⁰

Although resistance to the customer became less overt following Leek's dismissal from office in 1571, this does not mean that the post and its powers were any more readily accepted. In 1575/76 George Herbert was alleged to have ignored the Queen's customs every time he freighted goods.²¹ Herbert was a prominent Swansea merchant and owner of a 100 ton ship called the *Green Dragon*; he was also a member of the Herbert family which included the vice admiral for Glamorgan and the Earl of Worcester amongst its members.²² The compliance or otherwise of a figure such as George Herbert with the new customs regime was clearly crucial to the success of the venture and his attitude may be taken as a litmus of this. Robinson, who has been the foremost historian in this field, has argued that Herbert 'was not prepared to contest the Crown's entitlement to customs duties at Swansea'. But he also described him elsewhere as a man who 'flagrantly and persistently abused his authority in the areas of South Wales which came under his control'.²³ Whilst Herbert may not have made a formal protest about the new customs therefore, it is significant that neither can he be said to have complied with it.

A campaign of attrition against the customer appears to have continued in 1585 when Customer Henry Morgan faced an inquisition based upon the testimony of informers concerning his relationship with his brothers, one of whom was described as a traitor, and the other as a priest, 'lately come out of France and was a common seducer in matters of religion'.²⁴ Later still, the controller, John Millon, a man who it was alleged 'coude neither write nor reade', was fined

²⁰ Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings*, 247-48.

²¹ TNA E178/2895 quoted in Geraint Dyfnallt Owen, *Elizabethan Wales: The Social Scene* (Cardiff, 1962), 132. The original is missing from the file at TNA.

²² Dawson, *Commerce and Customs*, 10-12.

²³ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 358; W.R.B. Robinson, 'Sir George Herbert of Swansea (d.1570)', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 27 (1977), 303-09, 304.

²⁴ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1581-90* (1865), 238-243. < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> [January 2009]

£251 and sentenced to appear twice in the pillory for 'sondrie fowle and notorious Misdemeanors and offences against him founde in the Starrchamber'.²⁵ His replacement was 'a mann trained in learninge' called Edward Jurden, who was recommended to the post by the earl of Worcester.²⁶ The authority of the customer was still being challenged at the start of the following century however, even by figures as powerful as the countess of Pembroke who ordered the imprisonment of Jurden over a dispute about a cargo of Barbary hides on which she refused to pay custom.²⁷

The imposition of royal national customs was by no means instantaneous nor readily accepted therefore, and it is important to bear in mind that the returns made to the Exchequer were intimately linked to the encroachment of royal authority and opposition to it. E.A. Lewis considered that by 1580 'the assimilation of the general customs revenue system in Wales with that obtaining in England appears to have been tolerably complete'.²⁸ Instances of opposition such as those outlined here suggest that many found the imposition of national customs far from tolerable however, and that the assimilation was accordingly far from complete. There are good grounds therefore for supposing that the degree to which Exchequer records under-represent trade in the Welsh ports in this period was greater than was the case for English ports. In England the royal writ was established and accepted, even if it was sometimes, perhaps even routinely, circumvented to varying degrees. In Wales however, the establishment of royal authority in the matter of customs in the Welsh ports was not readily accepted, and cases such as that in 1572 concerning the steward of Chepstow imprisoning the Exchequer's officer, or the refusal of the countess of Pembroke to pay duty on hides imported in the early seventeenth century, show that resistance was strong and persistent.

²⁵ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records, Vol. 1* (1898), 347-368 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records, Vol. 1* (1898), 343-346 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

²⁸ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, xvi.

Despite this opposition, by 1573 the Crown had nevertheless advanced in its attempts to supersede the marcher lords' authority, and a regular system for recording the payment of subsidy and tonnage was in place which was analogous to that in England. A uniform system of recording and documentation is not however the same thing as a uniform system of practice underlying such recording. The apparent similarity of the later century English and Welsh port books is seductive and gives the impression that they were recording the same things in the same manner. The argument made here however will be that the Welsh port books were in fact less comprehensive in their scope than their English equivalents, and that for a variety of reasons they do not reflect underlying flows of trade to the same extent as their English counterparts.

Wine

The amalgamation of Welsh and English customs had a particular impact on the port of Chepstow which lies adjacent to the English border and only a few miles across the water from Bristol. In the early decades of the century Chepstow had some of the characteristics of a tax haven and was used by merchants to evade payment of full duties on wine in England.²⁹ For example, in 1502, 1517 and 1526 Bristol merchants arranged for large shipments of Bordeaux wine to be delivered to Chepstow.³⁰ Such shipments were then broken down and transhipped into smaller vessels to Bristol in order to avoid paying prisage, the threshold for which was ten tuns, but which was not levied at all in Wales.³¹ The wine trade of the port was therefore considerably larger than it would otherwise have been but for this tax differential. In 1503/4, 91 tuns were recorded inbound at Bristol from Chepstow, and in 1516/17, 123 tuns.³² Confirmation that this trade was associated with the avoidance of duty is provided by the fact that the largest of these cargoes was nine and a half tuns and so fell just below the rate at which prisage would have been due. Such

²⁹ Dimmock, 'Urban and Commercial Networks', 53.

³⁰ Vanes, *Documents*, 79-82.

³¹ Dimmock, 'Custom Book of Chepstow', 135-36.

³² TNA E122/21/2, E122/21/5.

practice was clearly irritating to the English authorities and subsequently the deputy butler of Bridgwater, John White, levied the prise of two tuns of wine on a merchant called Thomas Pope, even though Pope was shipping wine in lighters from Chepstow below the volume at which such prise was due.³³ The legality of this was challenged by Pope and the case was pursued in various courts and between various parties even after the death of White.³⁴ Equally this practice was rewarding for the authorities in Chepstow so long as they enjoyed autonomy in the collection of customs duties as it attracted trade to their port which would otherwise have been conducted directly to England. That the authorities at Chepstow did not readily relinquish their stake in the wine trade when the customs were amalgamated is illustrated by the incident described above when in 1572 the steward of Chepstow threatened a customs official who sought to arrest two men in Chepstow for evading payment of duties on wine imported there. The scale of the wine trade passing through the port of Chepstow was evidently still considerable through to the early 1570s. Testimony taken in 1572 records that William Webbe had been charged with levying a toll of one penny for every ton of merchandise unloaded at Chepstow quay, the funds from which were to be used for its repair. In a three year period between 1569 and 1572 he had recorded 449 tuns of wine.³⁵ Yet the Exchequer accounts recorded no imports of wine at all from 1573 until 1579, and in 1579/80 only 38¼ tuns. Ivor Waters noting that no trade at all was recorded in the Chepstow port books from 1573 to 1579 suggested that local merchants under the protection of the earl of Worcester may have simply refused to cooperate with the local customs officials during this period.³⁶ This does not seem improbable given the altercation described above between the earl's brother and royal customs officials.

³³ TNA E321/43/10.

³⁴ TNA C/1/1457/20-2, C/1/1509/36, C/4/58/110.

³⁵ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 364-65.

³⁶ Waters, *Port of Chepstow*, 27.

Whilst the port of Chepstow was preeminent amongst Welsh ports in its role as an entreport for the wine trade, it was not the only port operating in this way. The Bristol customs accounts show imports of fourteen and a half tuns from Cardiff in 1503/4, and 31½ tuns in 1517/18. Later in the century the coastal accounts show wine arriving from Cardiff into Gloucester, Bridgwater and Bristol.³⁷ An indication that opposition to the new customs regime was also strong at Welsh ports other than Chepstow is provided in 1572 when the controller bought a suit against eight men including the portreeve of Neath, and a member of the leading local family of Herbert for wrongfully importing and refusing to pay duty on wine and other goods valued at over £1,300.³⁸

The evidence from the few extant Exchequer accounts from 1579/80 onwards indicates that the port of Cardiff's wine trade had shrunk to a fraction of that of the earlier part of the century. In 1579/80 only 63 tuns was recorded for the whole port, and in 1594/95 only nine tuns into Swansea, Cardiff and Aberthaw. The 1599/1600 coastal accounts show only just under four tuns shipped outward from the port. The indications from this source therefore suggest that the English authorities had been largely successful in their attempts to curtail the routing of wine via Welsh ports. However there is some evidence to suggest that illicit trade continued to emanate from the Welsh ports during this period. As described in Chapter Three the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts show many small shipments arriving into Bridgwater from Wales which do not appear in the corresponding customs accounts. In total sixteen shipments cannot be correlated with the customs records for 1597/98, of which three can be positively identified as coming from the port of Cardiff.³⁹ The fact that these were not entered in the coastal customs does not of itself necessarily imply that they were illegal as they could have been freighted under a letpass in the manner described in the previous chapter. However the indications are that in

³⁷ TNA E190/1129/15, E190/1129/20, E190/1083/20, E190/1129/18.

³⁸ Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings*, 253.

³⁹ SRO D/B/bw/1482.

this instance these shipments were illegal. At this particular time wine which was shipped directly from overseas into Wales, although required to pay royal customs, did not fall due for an impost which applied only to imports into England.⁴⁰ If and when such wine was subsequently shipped from Wales to an English port it was however required to pay the impost (although not tonnage which had already been paid in Wales at the port of first landing). All shipments of wine from Wales into the English port of Bridgwater should therefore have paid the impost and should appear accordingly in the Exchequer accounts. Some entries in the Bridgwater coastal accounts for 1597/98 do indeed detail cargoes of wine from Wales with a note that tonnage had been paid in Wales but that impost was now due. But the three shipments referred to above are absent from the Exchequer accounts although recorded in the water bailiffs' accounts. It appears therefore that even as late as 1597/98 merchants were continuing to take advantage of different rates of duty in the two ports by routing large ships into Cardiff and then breaking bulk and transhipping small cargoes illegally across the Channel so as take advantage of lower rates of duty. The coastal wine trade emanating from the port of Cardiff was therefore greater than that which is apparent from the Exchequer accounts.

In summary, the imposition of royal authority appears to have had a negative impact on overall levels of wine imports to the port of Cardiff, particularly into Chepstow, with a corresponding decrease in the amount of coastal traffic outbound from the port to England. It is likely however, that some outbound coastal traffic in wine continued but was not recorded in coastal customs.

Salt

Wine was the principal commodity which was shipped via Chepstow to English ports, but evidence from Bristol's Exchequer accounts indicates that other continental imports such as salt, woad, fruit and oil were also being shipped to Bristol from Chepstow in the early part of the century, which had presumably

⁴⁰ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 327.

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arrived directly into Chepstow from overseas before being freighted to Bristol.⁴¹ Harder evidence for a direct import trade to Chepstow is provided by a local customs account for the town in 1535/36 which recorded imports of substantial quantities of woad.⁴²

The volumes of salt recorded inbound to Bristol from the Cardiff ports in the early century were not especially significant however, with only 38 tons for instance shipped from Chepstow to Bristol in 1503/4.⁴³ Further small shipments were recorded inbound at Bristol from Swansea, Cardiff and Chepstow in 1516/17.⁴⁴ The later Exchequer overseas accounts for the port of Cardiff show greater volumes which were imported from the French ports of La Rochelle, Le Conquet and Marennes, and from the Portuguese ports of Aveiro and Lisbon, and also via Jersey. The limited data available which is outlined in Table 5.1 suggests that salt imports may have declined at Cardiff in the same way as they were found to have done at Bridgwater.

5.1 Port of Cardiff : imports of salt (tons)⁴⁵

Year	Tons
1579/80	132
1594/95	128
1595/96	48
1598/99	58

In contrast to the overseas accounts, the Cardiff costal accounts record only two small shipments of salt: one in from Milford, and the other out to Tewkesbury.⁴⁶ However as with other commodities considered in this chapter there is

⁴¹ TNA E122/199/1, E122/21/2.

⁴² Dimmock, 'Custom Book of Chepstow', 147.

⁴³ TNA E122/199/1.

⁴⁴ TNA E122/21/2.

⁴⁵ Source as per Appendix A for 1579/80 and 1595/95; for later years TNA E122/30/4a & E190/1270/13 as per Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 22-24.

⁴⁶ TNA E122/104/6, E190/1271/3.

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evidence for a larger domestic trade which was taking place outside the scope of customs control and which was not represented in the coastal customs accounts. As previously described, from the 1560s onwards domestic production of salt manufactured by boiling sea-water was encouraged by the Crown, and there is evidence for at least one salt works in South Wales at Port Eynon on the Gower peninsula.⁴⁷

As outlined in Chapter Three, the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts show significant discrepancies between the amount of salt which was unloaded at the port and the amount which was recorded in both the coastal and overseas customs accounts. The combined figures for imports of salt at Bridgwater from the 1597/98 and 1599/1600 customs accounts amounted to 60 tons, but the water bailiffs recorded 224 tons.⁴⁸ The origin of shipments in the water bailiffs' accounts is not generally given, and the salt recorded there could have come from a wide variety of places including down the Severn from brine producing regions. However, several shipments have appended comments such as 'out of the bote of Cardiff', or 'from the bote of Newport', or 'out of the bark abartha' (Aberthaw) which indicates a more immediate origin.⁴⁹ Of the 224 tons of salt landed by the Bridgwater water bailiffs in 1597/98 and 1599/1600 only ten tons can be positively identified as having been imported aboard south Welsh craft, compared to the remaining 214 tons for which no relevant information is given. The possibility nevertheless remains that the port of Cardiff may have been a net exporter rather than importer of this important commodity by the end of the century.

⁴⁷ Edward Hughes, *Studies in Administration and Finance, 1558-1825* (Manchester, 1934), 44; Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, 55; Wilkinson, Locoock, and Sell, '16th-century Saltworks'.

⁴⁸ Table 3.6.

⁴⁹ SRO D/B/bw/1482 & 1483.

Fish

The lack of earlier customs accounts imposes an obvious constraint on what can be known about trade earlier in the century. For example, whilst a great deal was determined about the fish trade in the English ports of the Bristol Channel, the fact that fish ceased to be recorded in the customs accounts between 1564 and 1591, and that none are found in the surviving customs accounts for Cardiff after this date leaves very little evidence to work with. Information from coastal customs accounts elsewhere in the Channel in this respect is also limited with only one relevant entry found in the accounts sampled.⁵⁰ The only other piece of evidence for a trade in fish at the port is supplied in a case in 1578 when three thousand fish were alleged to have been procured from pirates.⁵¹ Consumption patterns in Cardiff cannot have been so very different from elsewhere, and whilst we can assume that there was a trade in fish, the size of this, and whether the port was a net importer or exporter must remain unknown.

Foodstuff

The hinterland of the port of Cardiff was famous to contemporaries for the fertility and abundance of its agriculture. John Leland journeying through the region in the 1530s wrote of 'meetly good corn ground...and very good fruit for orchards'.⁵² Rice Merrick writing in 1578 described the area as 'always renowned . . . for the fertility of the soil and the abundance of all things serving to the necessity or pleasure of man, as also for the temperature and wholesomeness of the air', and noted the 'pleasant meadows and . . . pastures, the plains fruitful and apt for tillage, bearing abundance of all kinds of grain'.⁵³ Likewise Camden writing in the early seventeenth century described the soil as,

⁵⁰ In 1550 6c of Atlantic cod entered into Minehead from Cardiff, TNA E122/28/5.

⁵¹ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records*: volume 1 (1898), pp. 347-368 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

⁵² Quoted in Glanmor Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History: Early Modern Glamorgan*, 6 vols, Vol. IV (Cardiff, 1974), 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

'plaine, euen and fruitful, yeelding to the inhabitants good store of corne and cattell'.⁵⁴

This abundance is reflected only to a limited extent in the recorded outbound maritime traffic from the port. Grain features prominently in these descriptions but the first recorded cargoes in the Cardiff accounts were not until the final year of the century when just under 69 weys of wheat, barley, oats and oatmeal left for Bristol and Gloucester. Of these 30 weys were exempt from duty as they were for provisioning the army in Ireland. Only fourteen of the 21 weys despatched to Gloucester were subsequently recorded inbound in the Gloucester port books, with three out of the eight ships recorded leaving Cardiff for Gloucester being absent from Gloucester's records.⁵⁵ Sidrake Brooke, listed as a Cardiff brewer, was the merchant responsible for these missing shipments and it is possible that he had arranged to ship these cargoes elsewhere, possibly illegally overseas in the manner described in the previous chapter. The illicit trading of grain was within the remit of a 1584 commission of enquiry which heard testimony that the *Jonas* of Cardiff had freighted a cargo of wheat overseas, and that 'certen corne' was concealed about the port, and that a witness had 'seene corne sold by Edward Vaughan of Landogh to John Harding his shipp'.⁵⁶ The illicit activities of the Welsh in this respect apparently extended beyond their own borders to the other side of the Bristol Channel as in 1585 the Bridgwater water bailiffs recorded a payment to Thomas Alexander, 'to go to the pylle beyonde hybridge by nyght too staye sartyng [certain] walshe men ladyng in corne & spuy [spy] at hunspill a pon them'.⁵⁷

It was butter however, rather than grain which was the most frequently recorded foodstuff in the Cardiff Exchequer accounts. The Cardiff coastal

⁵⁴ Camden, *Camden's Britannia*.

⁵⁵ TNA E190/1271/3 cf. E190/1245/1. The *Margaret* leaving Cardiff on 1st July, 15th July and 21st July is not entered inbound at Gloucester.

⁵⁶ 'Records of the Exchequer: 1571-1611', *Cardiff Records*: Vol.1 (1898), 393-422 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

⁵⁷ SRO D/B/bw/1576.

accounts show five vessels shipped in excess of 42 kilderkins coastwise to Bristol, Gloucester and Minehead during July and September 1586.⁵⁸ The Bridgwater accounts for 1585/86 show the import of 120 kilderkins from Cardiff, and similarly the Gloucester port books show 23 kilderkins inbound in 1575/76.⁵⁹ There are no overseas exports listed in the Exchequer records before early 1599 when 145 kilderkins of butter were shipped from Cardiff to La Rochelle and Le Croisic in Brittany.⁶⁰ Earlier shipments to these places are apparent from other sources however: in 1593 Roger Sydenham was noted to have shipped 70 kilderkins from Cardiff to La Rochelle as part of a licence granted to him; and a letter of the same year refers to a London merchant having shipped 300 kilderkins of butter from Cardiff, to La Rochelle or Bordeaux, on behalf of the French ambassador, for the King of France's use.⁶¹ The trade therefore seems to have been fairly regular and relatively even.

In 1599/1600 however the coastal accounts show a substantial and sudden increase to 2,535 kilderkins shipped from the port. Although virtually all of these were despatched to Bristol, they were not intended for domestic consumption as 80 percent were noted as being free from custom as they were for provisioning the army in Ireland. Such a large increase in the volumes recorded leaving the port suggests three possible reasons: either there must have been an equally large increase in production; or that trade was switched from overland to marine transport; or that a hitherto unrecorded trade became temporarily apparent in the customs returns because of the requirement to note that the cargoes bound for Ireland were exempt from duty. There are ample indications to support the latter of these suppositions. In 1584 an Exchequer commission was established to enquire into customs abuses in Glamorgan which sought to establish, amongst other things, whether,

⁵⁸ TNA E122/104/6. A kilderkin was 16-18 gallons.

⁵⁹ Although butter is usually listed using the volume measure of a kilderkin, one entry uses a measure of weight of c. 600lbs which cannot be equated with this.

⁶⁰ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 23-24.

⁶¹ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 262: March 1597', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 365-78. < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> > [January 2009].

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that there was loaden in the moneth of August was twelvemonth, being the yere of or lorde 1583, from the backside of one Jenkyn thomas house, abouts 200 kilterkyns of butter of michaell Pepwells of Bristoll; w~~w~~hichch (sic) was laden into the Margaret of cardif.⁶²

Testimony submitted to the enquiry included that of Robert Levell that,

Butter goeth daily to sea, and he hath caried diuerse tymes butter to Bristoll; and there hath landed within theis five yeares xx kilterkyns of butter on the backe there in the boate of John tanner the younger, called the Trinitie, and now the boate of Hugh Richard of Penarth.⁶³

Or of John Rawling who,

Caried with one michell thomas twentie kilterkyns of butter to the kaye of cardif, to the vse of will'm wickham of Bristoll.⁶⁴

The defence of the customs officer to these charges is interesting,

Thomas Moate, of cardif, searcher. Knoweth no butter, leather, corne or tallowe conuaied awaie to the sea, saving butter, which he suffred to passe to Bristoll knowing hit to be but for their provision; & all other wares to be forfeited he seased on, and hath accompted for the same.⁶⁵

Moate did not deny that the traffic in butter took place, only that it was illegal. His defence centred on the fact that goods were only subject to customs duty if they were traded 'by way of merchandise', and that goods intended for 'provision' were exempt. Provision shipments were distinct from those travelling under a letpass. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter a letpass was a written document which demonstrated that the relevant cargo was exempt from the requirement to lodge a bond and obtain a coastal certificate because customs had already been paid. Provision shipments did not require any document and are therefore generally invisible to historians.

⁶² 'Records of the Exchequer: 1571-1611', *Cardiff Records: volume 1* (1898), 393-422. <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [March 2009].

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

'Provision' covered goods loaded aboard ship for consumption by the crew during the voyage, but also covered small amounts of goods which the mariners wished to trade on their own account. The definition and exemption could be drawn quite widely however. For instance if a ships' crew called into a port and sold part of their cargo in order to secure provisions for themselves then the cargo sold was not liable for duty.⁶⁶ 'Provision' also covered goods which were imported but which were not intended for resale, such as those destined for great households which were imported directly for their own use; and as has already been described, also covered shipments made to supply the army stationed in Ireland.⁶⁷ Moate seems here to have extended the meaning of 'provision' to cover domestic trade which was intended for domestic consumption, as distinct from shipments made to another domestic port which were then due for transport overseas. The significance of this is that butter was a prohibited ware which was subject to strict regulation in English ports, but seems to have been treated more leniently by the Cardiff customs officers. Although this is the single piece of evidence to support this supposition, it is nevertheless consistent with patterns of the trade in salt described above, and in iron and coal from the port which will be considered further below. Goods which were subject to Exchequer control and which were recorded in the coastal customs accounts in English ports were not always treated in the same way in Welsh ports where they appear to have frequently been freighted under letpass or provision. Despite their common appearance, the English and Welsh coastal accounts do not seem to have been drawn up on the same basis and are not necessarily analogous.

⁶⁶ Sir Matthew Hale, 'A treatise relative to the maritime law of England, in three parts. "Pars prima. "De jure maris et brachiorum ejusdem. "Pars secunda. "De portibus maris. "Pars tertia. "Concerning the customs of goods imported and exported. "From a manuscript of Lord Chief-Justice Hale. Based on information from English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale Group', in *A Collection of Tracts relative to the Law of England, from manuscripts, now first edited by F. H. vol. 1.*, ed. by Frances Hargrave, (London, 1787), 212-16.

⁶⁷ Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 46.

Iron

It seems likely that the full extent of the trade in iron from the port of Cardiff was similarly not fully represented in the Exchequer records, both for legitimate and illegitimate reasons.

The development of blast furnaces in Wales led to increased production of iron from 1564 onwards, and substantial quantities were evidently being produced by 1568 when Sir Henry Sidney freighted 186 tons from Glamorgan to Dublin.⁶⁸ In the same year the Taff furnace near Cardiff was reported to be producing 205 tons annually, and further evidence for the scale of production is found in a case concerning the preservation of woodland near an iron works at Pontymoile north of Newport, in which it was said that 150 tons of iron had been produced during 1587/88.⁶⁹ Output at this plant had previously been recorded as between 110 and 200 tons in 1582/83.⁷⁰ These were just two of ten furnaces operating in the sixteenth century in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.⁷¹ Not all of this production would necessarily have been transported by sea, and some of it no doubt would have been used locally. It does seem likely however, that the major part of output would have been freighted aboard ships from the nearby ports for traffic to English markets where demand was greater. This was the most cost effective means of bulk transport, and was the favoured method of moving iron which was brittle and susceptible to damage.⁷²

Compared to the scale of production indicated here, outbound shipments of iron recorded in the customs accounts were very limited, amounting to slightly over eighteen tons spread over four shipments in the eleven relevant customs

⁶⁸ D. J. Davies, *The Economic History of South Wales prior to 1800* (Cardiff, 1933), 78; Schubert, *British Iron*, 161.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings*, 256-157; Schubert, *British Iron*, 347.

⁷⁰ Schubert, *British Iron*, 347.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, map 176.

⁷² Armstrong, 'Importance of Coastal Shipping', 65 & 70. Armstrong details that pig iron destined for Chester and manufactured in Shropshire only 50 miles away was sent down the Severn and around the coast of Wales to avoid breakage

accounts covering the period from 1579 to 1600 which were sampled.⁷³ Examination of the coastal accounts for ports elsewhere in the Bristol Channel reveals a slightly more extensive trade: for instance Gloucester recorded receipt of eighteen tons of 'Welsh iron' during 1575/76 coming in from Cardiff and Newport, and a further 30 tons in the first six months of the following year; likewise the Bridgwater coastal account for 1599/1600 recorded 21 tons of 'Welsh iron' inbound from Cardiff. Examination of the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts however shows that shipments of iron considerably in excess of this were arriving from the Welsh coast: in 1597/98 the water bailiffs charged for the landing of 162 tons of iron compared to the six tons in the customs accounts; in 1599/1600 they charged for landing 88½ tons compared to the 21 inbound in the customs accounts.⁷⁴ The provenance of this iron is occasionally made explicit such as in 1579 when a charge was made to 'a Welshman for landing of iiii ton of iron'; there was a similar entry made in 1591.⁷⁵ The 1591 account also detailed money owing for the handling of 10 tons of iron *which* came from Cardiff to the key'.⁷⁶ The 1597/98 account is more detailed and shows that one of either the *Lyant* of Cardiff or the *Angell* of Cardiff made a regularly monthly run into Bridgwater with five to ten tons of iron each time.⁷⁷ Shipments of iron from the port of Cardiff to Bridgwater appear to have been as much as twenty-seven times greater by the end of the century than is apparent from the Bridgwater Exchequer records. In other words it appears that iron shipments from the port of Cardiff were also being exempted from entry into the coastal accounts either under the exemption of provision, or because they were travelling under a letpass.

Bridgwater is not the only port likely to have been receiving shipments of Welsh iron in this way. It was suggested in Chapter Four that changes in recording may

⁷³ Appendix A, for Cardiff, Swansea and Neath.

⁷⁴ SRO D/B/bw/1482, D/B/bw/1483, TNA E190/1083/20, E190/1083/14, E190/1083/25, E190/1271/3.

⁷⁵ SRO D/B/bw/1579 & 1477.

⁷⁶ SRO D/B/bw/1478.

⁷⁷ SRO D/B/bw/1482.

account for the absence of Welsh iron apparent in the later Gloucester port books compared to those compiled before 1583. Similarly, although there is no evidence in the Cardiff port books for any shipments of iron from Wales to Bristol, there were nevertheless a number of legal disputes which indicate that there was traffic in this direction. A Glamorgan debtor borrowed funds from Bristol merchants to establish an iron works, the repayment of which was contracted to be made in iron.⁷⁸ Similarly a Bristol merchant sued for the loss consequent on the non-delivery of iron manufactured in Monmouth which had been prevented from crossing the Bristol Channel because of supposedly adverse weather.⁷⁹ Whilst these cases concern contracts which were not honoured, other testimony records iron shipped to Bristol from 1578, and regular monthly shipments there from 1589 onwards.⁸⁰ The overall size of this trade must remain unknown, but it is pertinent to note that none at all was recorded in the surviving Welsh customs accounts, and only eight tons in the Bristol coastal accounts examined.⁸¹ The observation was made in Chapter Two that imports of overseas iron to Bristol fell by 94 percent over the course of the century, and in Chapter Four that production from the Forest of Dean did not escalate significantly until the seventeenth century as blast furnaces were established there later than in South Wales. The implication therefore is that the market for iron in Bristol, whilst being partially met by Spanish imports routed through Barnstaple as described in Chapter Two, was largely being supplied by domestic Welsh production in the later decades of the century.

As well as these legitimate domestic flows of trade which were not recorded in the Exchequer accounts, there is also evidence to suggest that there were illegitimate overseas shipments of iron production. The Crown certainly had concerns about the illegitimate export of ordnance which were expressed in a Privy Council order of 1602,

⁷⁸ Owen, *Elizabethan Wales*, 159.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 159-60.

⁸⁰ Schubert, *British Iron*, 179.

⁸¹ TNA E190/1129/18, 1128/14, 1131/17, 1132/3.

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That all Masters of Iron ffurnaces (that Iron Ordnance maie be caste) maie before some Justices of the Peace in those contries enter into bonde not to suffer any Ordnance to be cast at their ffurnaces. And that especiall care be had to put downe Edmond Mathewes esquier for casting any Ordnance at his ffurnace neere Cardiff in Wales because from that place very easilie they may be caried into Spayne. And if a due accompte maie be taken for ve or vj yeares laste past, all or the moste parte of Thordnance *which* he hath made with in that tyme shall be fownde to haue ben stolne beyonde Seaes, and the officers of that Porte are very poore men, and such as dare not displease him. And therefore, for the respects aforesaid, that place very vnfitt to be permitted for the casting of Ordnance.⁸²

Mathews had also been accused of this evasion in 1574.⁸³ The Exchequer accounts do nonetheless contain three references to the legal shipping of ordnance: the 1599/1600 coastal accounts have 48 tons of 'iron ordnances called sakers and mynions' being despatched to London; and a further two shipments of sakers, minions and carriages for minions being sent to both London and Bristol.⁸⁴

Coal

Coal became an increasingly important source of fuel as the sixteenth century progressed and as timber supplies diminished.⁸⁵ As well as being used for domestic heating, coal was increasingly required by an expanding range of industrial processes including smelting, iron-working, lime-burning, soap-boiling, salt-distillation, brewing, and in the manufacture of glass, bricks and pottery.⁸⁶ The coal fields in the hinterland of the port of Cardiff, particularly in the area around Swansea and Neath, were well placed to meet this demand as they lay close to the sea and therefore readily accessible transport. Moreover the type of coal mined in the region was of high quality and burned readily in contrast to coal found further to the west in the port of Milford.⁸⁷ The trade of

⁸² 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records*, Vol. 1 (1898), 347-368 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

⁸³ Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History*, 53.

⁸⁴ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 32-35.

⁸⁵ J. Hatcher, *The History of the British Coal Industry: Before 1700*, 5 vols, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1993), 31-40.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸⁷ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 37-41.

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the ports of Swansea and Neath was consequently dominated by the export of coal as summarised in Table 5.2.

5.2 Port of Cardiff: exports of coal (tons) ⁸⁸

	Newport	Barry	Cardiff	Neath	Aberthaw	Swansea
1579/80	0	0	0	268	0	636
1585 quarter 1	0	0	0	0	0	304
1587 quarter 1	-	-	-	0	0	202
1587/88 quarter 2 & 3	-	-	-	52	0	556
1588 quarter 4	0	0	0	0	0	536
1594/95	24	56	200	92	40	2,524
1599/00 (coastal)	0	0	1	1,752	0	2,388

Although data for full years does not always survive, a like-for-like comparison can be made between 1579/80 and 1594/95 which shows an approximately threefold increase in overseas exports. There is a noticeable upward trend in exports from Swansea, whilst the area around Cardiff can be seen to be a later entrant to this market. The greater number of ports featured in 1594/95 may be a reflection of a greater exactitude in the recording of the actual place of lading.

Unfortunately the overseas accounts do not give a destination for over half of these tonnages, but a strong and definite connection is apparent with the Channel Islands and northern French ports which comprise the destination for virtually all of the remaining volume shipped. The trade was characterised by

⁸⁸ The principal measures used to record coal in both the customs and water bailiffs' accounts were the wey, chaldron and ton. The wey has been taken as 4 tons and the chaldron as 1.3 tons as per J.U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*, 2 vols, Vol. 2 (London, 1932), Appendix D, ii a.; likewise a chaldron has been calculated at 1.3 tons. Zupko however listed a Swansea wey of coal at 8 tons 2 cwt (Ronald E. Zupko, *A Dictionary of Weights and Measures for the British Isles: The Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1965), 434 <<http://www.books.google.co.uk>> [January 2009]. Hatcher believed 'There are good reasons for believing that the seventeenth-century Glamorgan wey contained approximately five tons.' (Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 571). The calculation that has been used here errs on the side of caution by using the lower figure provided by Nef. For a comprehensive guide to the difficulties of reconciling volume and weight measures in this context see Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, Appendix A.

frequent and small shipments with the average being twelve weys, and the largest 36 weys. This was freighted aboard ships from a wide range of over 40 different ports, but English and Welsh ships accounted for only a fifth of the volumes shipped. Notable amongst the domestic carriers were ships from Cornwall, which accounted for nearly a third of the domestic carriers' market share. The profile of this commerce was that of a calling trade where many small ships from diverse locations arrived specifically to load with this one cargo. The limited nature of reciprocal trade is illustrated by the fact that 286 ships were recorded outbound in the accounts sampled, but only 74 were recorded inbound. Confirmation that ships arrived carrying ballast is provided by a series of ordinances issued by the town authorities at Swansea against the dumping of stones in the port roadway.⁸⁹

The figures from the coastal accounts for 1599/1600 show that 1,752 tons shipped from Neath and 2,388 tons from Swansea. Given that the comparable figures for overseas shipments in 1594/95 were 92 tons from Neath and 2,524 tons from Swansea this would seem to suggest that the trade of Neath was much more domestically focussed than that of Cardiff. However, this was not necessarily the case as some overseas destinations began to be recorded in the coastal accounts in the last years of the century.

Destinations are not given in the coastal account for this domestic trade, but analysis of the 'home' ports of the vessels is instructive. Table 5.3 shows little indication that these domestic coastal shipments were bound for more immediate destinations within the Bristol Channel: there were no ships recorded from Bridgwater, Gloucester or Bristol for instance. Whilst there is no hard evidence for the domestic destinations of the coal shipped from Swansea and Neath, the apparent focus of the major part of this trade outside the Bristol Channel is striking and seems odd during a period when Welsh coal production was increasing and English domestic consumption was also increasing

⁸⁹ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 57-58.

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markedly.⁹⁰ Moreover the coastal accounts for the other Bristol Channel ports sampled record very few instances of the arrival of coal: Bridgwater was the only port listed receiving coal with one shipment from Bristol in 1561/62, one from Cardiff in 1585/86 and a further three from Cardiff in 1599/1600.⁹¹ The obvious explanation for this disparity would be that Bristol, Gloucester and Bridgwater were supplied with coal from the nearby, inland, English coalfields. It is no surprise that Table 5.3 shows coal being exported principally aboard ships from regions which had no nearby coalfields, and not in those which did.

Table 5.3 Home port of vessels shipping coal from Neath and Swansea 1599/1600 (volume % share of trade).

Region	Ports	% Share of Trade
Channel Islands	Jersey, Guernsey	20
Cornwall	Falmouth, Fowey, Looe, Helford, Padstow, Penzance, Plymouth	17
South Devon	Dartmouth, Topsham, Salcombe	26
North Devon	Barnstaple, Bideford, Braunton, Combe (Martin), Lynton, Northam.	14
Wales	Cardiff, Mumbles	7
Other within Bristol Channel	Minehead, Taunton, Stonehouse	4
Unknown and other destinations ex Bristol Channel		12

However, the coastal accounts are not the only surviving documents which record this trade, and the local port records for Bridgwater show that coal was shipped to Bridgwater from South Wales even though this was not recorded in the coastal Exchequer accounts. In 1505/6, 128 tons were recorded against the combined bearing and measuring account by the Bridgwater water bailiffs, and

⁹⁰ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 54.

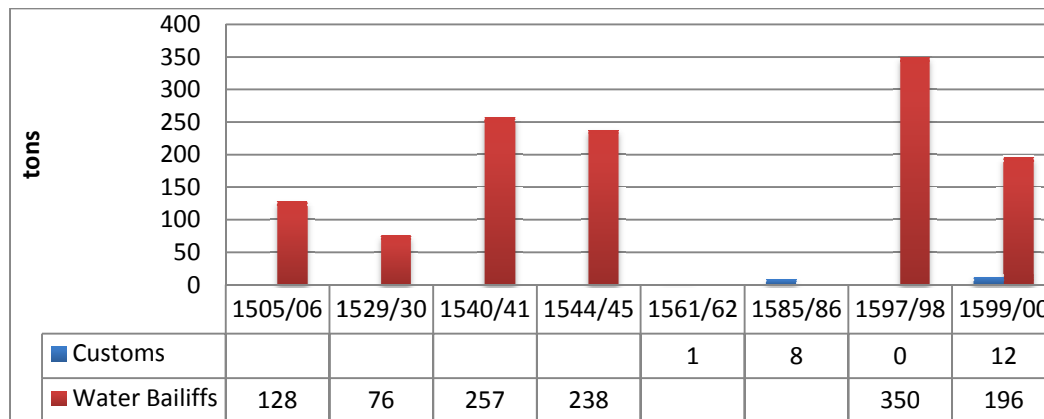
⁹¹ TNA E122/29/4, E190/1083/8, E190/1083/25.

in 1529/30, 76 tons.⁹² The 1540/41 accounts separate these two categories which total 257 tons.⁹³ The 1597/98 accounts record neither baring nor measuring as charges but list coal under 'landing' which accounts for 350 tons, or approximately three times the tonnage compared to that at the beginning of the century. Figure 5.1 illustrates that coal imports recorded in the coastal accounts represent a fraction of the actual trade with just one ton recorded inbound in 1561/62, eight tons in the half year accounts for 1585/86, none at all in 1597/98, and 12 tons in 1599/1600. The provenance of the coal is indicated by its carriage in ships listed principally from Newport and Aberthaw. It appears that coal was also therefore being shipped under provision or letpass by the later century, and was largely excluded from coastal customs control and recording. Again therefore the coastal accounts fail to record more than a fraction of this important trade. Indeed given that the vast majority of coal was clearly transported domestically under letpass or provision, the anomalous coal shipments appear to have been those which were declared rather than those which were not recorded in customs.

⁹² SRO D/B/bw/1432, D/B/bw/1435.

⁹³ SRO D/B/bw/1441. The 1540s accounts include a number of charges to individuals which may or may not be duplicate charges to those already described; these have been omitted but their inclusion would have the effect of increasing the 1540/41 figure by 126 tons, and the 1544/45 figure by 334 tons.

Figure 5.1 Head port of Bridgwater: comparison of inbound coastal shipments of coal between the water bailiffs and Exchequer accounts (tons).



It is not clear how extensive any similar trade in coal which was not described in the coastal accounts may have been in the wider Bristol Channel, particularly to the large market of Bristol itself. On the one hand there are reasons for supposing that it must have been very small, and perhaps even insignificant. Bristol, Gloucester and places upstream of Gloucester were located more immediately adjacent to coalfields than was the case for Bridgwater, and demand was most likely fully met using local supplies. Indeed Bristol was said to have coal mines only four miles from the city walls in 1566.⁹⁴ It is estimated that the Somerset coalfields were yielding 10,000 tons annually by mid century, and that Bristol had a surplus of coal is strongly suggested by overseas exports from the port listed throughout the century which were as high as 429 tons in 1594/95.⁹⁵ Likewise coastal shipments from Bristol of 38 tons were recorded bound for south Devon in 1576.⁹⁶

On the other hand Bridgwater itself exported 70 tons to La Rochelle and Oleron in 1584, so exports alone do not rule out the possibility that local production was supplemented by supplies from South Wales. Furthermore south Welsh

⁹⁴ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 179.

⁹⁵ TNA E190/1131/10; C.G. Down and A.J. Warrington, *The History of the Somerset Coalfield* (Newton Abbot, 1971), 17.

⁹⁶ TNA E190/1129/18.

coal may have been cheaper at Bristol than that mined in Somerset since according to C.G.A. Clay 'even a three mile journey by road could add as much as 60 percent to the selling price of coal, so that production for distant markets could only be undertaken by collieries with immediate access to navigable water'.⁹⁷ John Hatcher has also calculated that even as little as a six mile land journey could double the pithead price of coal.⁹⁸ Historians of the Somerset coalfields also believe that the majority of production was used within a twenty mile radius of the mines during this period reaching no further than Wells, Glastonbury and Bath.⁹⁹ By contrast coal was mined in the immediate environs of Swansea and Newport within easy reach of the port, and merchants may therefore have been able to benefit from the cost advantage which water transport enjoyed over land transport for heavy goods.¹⁰⁰

The evidence is therefore evenly balanced, but in any case the relationship need not have been exclusive. It seems more likely that local supplies were supplemented with supplies from South Wales to some extent, as well as with those from Shropshire travelling down the Severn.¹⁰¹ Local demand for coal was high and increasing, and local mines alone may have been insufficient to meet this. Furthermore, demand for certain types of Welsh coal may have been driven by factors other than price. Coal is a generic term and different types have different uses. Anthracitic 'stone coal' was particularly suitable for domestic use for instance, but bituminous 'smith's coal' was more suitable for a range of industrial processes.¹⁰² In 1570 the corporation of Bristol ordered supplies of stone coal to augment local supplies, and in 1615 it was reported that poorer households burned stone coal which came from Kingswood on the

⁹⁷ Clay, *Industry, Trade and Government*, 48.

⁹⁸ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 13.

⁹⁹ Down and Warrington, *Somerset Coalfield*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, 'Importance of Coastal Shipping', 70; Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 38.

¹⁰¹ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 179; Hoskins, *Age of Plunder*, 196-97.

¹⁰² Trefor M. Owen, 'Historical Aspects of Peat Cutting in Wales', in *Studies in Folk Life: Essays in Honour of Iorwerth C. Peate*, ed. by I.C. Peate and J.G. Jenkins, (London, 1969), 123-56, 135.

outskirts of the city.¹⁰³ But coal mined in the east of Wales, particularly around Newport was bitumous and therefore more likely to be employed in the city's burgeoning industries. On balance therefore it does seem as though Bristol would have received some supplies of coal from the south Welsh coal fields in the same manner as Bridgwater. Although there is no equivalent of the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts for the port of Bristol which can corroborate the extent of any trade which was not recorded in the Exchequer coastal accounts, there are nevertheless good grounds for supposing that this did take place at least to some extent.

An explanation as to why some coal was recorded in the coastal customs accounts and some not in the way indicated in figure 5.1, may have been connected with the destination of the outbound shipment, or perhaps the type of craft employed. A 1636 Exchequer commission of enquiry recorded that coal was being shipped to Bridgwater without port bonds having been lodged, in trows which lacked masts, sails or tackling.¹⁰⁴ Even the most committed smuggler was unlikely to have attempted the passage overseas in such a vessel, and so the customs officers may have simply allowed cargoes aboard these vessels to proceed under a let pass or provision exemption. Westbound cargoes by contrast, aboard more substantial and seaworthy ships were perhaps considered more likely to be subsequently exported, and so were required to lodge a bond and be issued with a certificate. This would explain the preponderance of Bristol Channel ships with a North Devon home port in Table 5.3 almost to the exclusion of ships from all other ports in the Bristol Channel. It would also offer an explanation for the high proportion of coal listed for Cornish and South Devon ports.

¹⁰³ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 179; Latimer, *Annals*, 55.

¹⁰⁴ 'R.O. Exchequer Special Commission. 11 Car. I. 1636. 5850, Glam. & Soms. Customs. Records of the Exchequer: 1571-1611', *Cardiff Records: Volume 1* (1898), 393-422 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009]. D.G. Bennet has written of flat bottomed trow type vessels which undertook limited coastal voyages as well as plying river and estuarine trade (D.G. Bennet, 'The Flat', *Mariner's Mirror*, LVIII (1972), 251-68 & 403-19).

There were good grounds for supposing that coal destined for more westerly ports might be bound either directly or indirectly overseas. A number of entries in the Swansea and Neath returns for ships from Looe, Salcombe, Padstow and Topsham have a margin note that their bond has been forfeited because no certificate has been returned.¹⁰⁵ In other words the merchants concerned were unable to supply certification that the coal had reached the domestic port to which it was ostensibly bound. The financial incentive to do this may have been a new imposition on overseas exports of coal which was described as so onerous 'that the custome was neere as much as the price of the coale'.¹⁰⁶

Since domestic coastwise shipments were not subject to this impost, this may also explain why Jersey and Guernsey began to be recorded in the domestic coastal account from 1599/00, whereas they had previously appeared in the overseas accounts.¹⁰⁷ This switch in recording has implications for comparisons between domestic and overseas trade, since the fall in overseas exports is not as great as the overseas port books indicate, nor was the domestic trade recorded by the Exchequer as buoyant as appears in the coastal account. W.S.K. Thomas for example was mistaken in identifying a sharp drop in coal exports from Swansea between 1559 and 1602.¹⁰⁸ This also implies that although no destinations were given for coastal shipments from Neath in 1599/1600, its trade was not necessarily more domestically focussed in the way that Table 5.2 seemed to indicate. The overlap between the overseas accounts and the coastal accounts was therefore considerable, and the distinction between them is not as clear cut as the separate administrative documents would suggest. A more accurate figure for overseas exports in 1599/1600 would probably need to include most, if not all, of the shipments recorded in the coastal account.

¹⁰⁵ TNA E190/1271/1.

¹⁰⁶ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 91.

¹⁰⁷ TNA E190/1270/7 cf. E190/1271/1.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 61.

By the end of the century therefore, neither the overseas nor the coastal customs accounts fully or accurately represent the trade in the main commodity associated with the port, and which was to become so important to the development of the Welsh economy. In contrast to earlier years, the overseas account had ceased to include shipments to the important Channel Island markets; whilst the coastal accounts recorded only a fraction of the domestic trade which was conducted with England.

Leather

Tanning and leather-working were preeminent economic activities in the towns of Cardiff, and especially Swansea where apprenticeships to glove makers and shoemakers far exceeded those of other trades, and the town church had a chapel endowed by the guild of glovers.¹⁰⁹ The requirements of these trades may explain the import of fifteen dickers of tanned leather and nineteen and a half dozen calf skins from Bristol to Cardiff in 1576; and of over 41 dickers of leather to Cardiff in 1599/1600 from Bristol. Outbound shipments however were more frequent and were regularly featured to various destinations within the Bristol Channel: a small quantity of leather was shipped from Cardiff to Bridgwater in 1561; thirteen dickers were shipped from Swansea to Ilfracombe in 1569/70; 24 from Cardiff to Bristol in 1576; 27 dickers from Cardiff to Bridgwater in 1585/86; and nine dickers to Bristol in July 1586. However, neither shoes nor gloves were listed as separate items in the customs accounts for this or any other port studied, and the importance of the leather industry to the local economy is therefore perhaps not fully reflected in the port books. Whilst the Exchequer accounts provide a guide to the basic primary industry they are arguably a poor guide to the value-added secondary sector in this instance.

The quantities listed in the customs accounts are dwarfed however by the amounts which it was alleged were being smuggled away to Spain. In the early

¹⁰⁹ Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History*, 47-48; Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 49.

1590s the high constable of the hundred of Swansea was charged with conniving with a party who had laded a ship with merchandise which included 200 dickers of leather which they intended to secretly transport to Spain. The charge against the constable was that after he had arrested the merchants involved on the instruction of the justice of the peace, he had deliberately allowed them to escape and sail away.¹¹⁰

Cloth

Declared exports of cloth from the port were not great. Of the seven outbound shipments of cloth recorded in the accounts sampled, only two included locally produced Welsh frieze – a type of coarse woollen cloth. The remainder freighted Bridgwaters but the total of these was only equivalent to fifteen broadcloths. Evidence for the paucity of the local cloth industry is also found in the complete absence of any imports of soap, alum or dyestuffs which were required for the finishing stages of production. These findings are commensurate with the decline in demand for heavy cloths during this period noted elsewhere. The low volumes of cloth exports from the port are also consistent with the increasing market share of London merchants; in 1581 Lord Burghley noted,

and as it is trew that manny wastarn touns ar decayed as bristoll and such lyke so it is not to be forgotten whyther london hath not engrossed all ther trades not so muc for wynes but even for the welsh frezees that come over the severn not farr from Bristow.¹¹¹

Having said this, the local cloth trade had not completely expired as signified by an Exchequer case of 1594/95 in which an extended group of merchants, was charged with exporting a large quantity of woollen goods which had not been inspected and sealed as required by statute. The extent of this traffic can be seen from the long list of defendants which includes seven merchants from

¹¹⁰ Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings*, 216-17.

¹¹¹ R.H Tawney and E. Power, eds., *Tudor Economic Documents*, 3 vols, Vol. 2 (London, 1924), 127.

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Bristol, four from Usk, as well as others from Caerleon and elsewhere. The scale of it is evident from the charge that they had forcibly retrieved 500 pieces of cloth which had been impounded by the customs officer.¹¹² The indications from this single piece of evidence therefore is that a similar situation may have pertained in the port of Cardiff to that which was identified in the North Devon ports where the majority of cloth exports were found to have been shipped illegally without declaration.

The destination of the outbound cargoes of cloth recorded in the customs accounts reflected the same close links exhibited in its coal trade with particular French and Channel Island ports: from Swansea to Brittany and Jersey; and from Cardiff, Barry and Newport to La Rochelle.

Further evidence of the geographical segmentation of markets is provided in a petition from Minehead seeking Crown aid for the restoration of its town quay which listed,

daylly passage from the *partys* of the contrie of Glamorgan in walles to your sayd pyer by myan of whyche passage the fayrs and *markettes* of your cowntrey forsayd hath byn *isschyd with* no small number of cattel scheep wooll yarne clothe butter stone cooles oysters saman and other sundry kinds of fysche and flesch..¹¹³

Doubtless there was a degree of embellishment here, but it is interesting to note the passage of livestock. Corroboration of this is provided by a list of weir duties or charges for use of the harbour at Minehead drawn up in 1594-5, but said to have been in place 'tyme out of mynde', which includes charges for 'bote laden of cattle' and 'xx sheep', suggesting that the quantities must have been significant.¹¹⁴ The Taff in Glamorgan was said to be abundant in salmon, but oysters may have been sourced from further west in the port of Milford.¹¹⁵ This list is also interesting as it specifies a lower rate of duty for 'every bote of

¹¹² Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings*, 262-63.

¹¹³ SRO DD/L/P/29/34.

¹¹⁴ SRO DD/L/P/29/41.

¹¹⁵ Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History*, 57.

Aberthar' (Aberthaw) compared to other ships. Dr. Phaer had described Aberthaw as 'a drie haven for small vesselles and daily passage to Mynet and Donster', and John Leland had similarly noted that the river Thaw afforded 'the next passage to Minheved'.¹¹⁶ The close connection between the two regions is borne out by the coastal accounts for Minehead for 1550 and for 1561/62 which list ten out of fourteen ships outbound sailing to the port of Cardiff, with three of these being for Aberthaw. There was no reciprocal traffic recorded from the Cardiff ports however, presumably as it involved freight such as that described above which was not liable for coastal customs certification.

Merchants and Customs

Unlike in the ports of Barnstaple, Bridgwater, Bristol, and to a lesser extent Gloucester, there was no connection apparent between the merchants listed in the Exchequer accounts and the local civic or merchant elite. The merchants listed in the Cardiff customs accounts were generally minor figures, often the masters of the vessels listed, and rarely entered for substantial amounts. In stark contrast to their English counterparts, none of the merchants listed were found to have held civic office in Cardiff during this period, nor had any built up a commanding position in any particular branch of trade. The largest market share of any merchant in the coal trade, which was the principal export commodity from the port, was only two and a half percent. There were no figures for instance of the commercial magnitude of John Newport, sometime mayor of Bridgwater, or Gloucester alderman and grain merchant Luke Garnons, or Edward Barston, who attained the office of deputy customer at Gloucester, or Richard Dodderidge, leading merchant and mayor of Barnstaple.

The dispute between Gloucester and Bristol over the establishment of the Exchequer port authority of Gloucester shows that the civic elites of these places were extremely concerned to ensure that their local customs officers fell under their sphere of influence. Gloucester's dismay when Edward Barston, a

¹¹⁶ Leland, *Itinerary of John Leland 2*, 22; Robinson, 'Dr. Thomas Phaer's Report', 495.

rival Tewkesbury merchant, was appointed deputy customer was evident in subsequent suits that the town bought against him. Likewise there was extensive collusion between local customs officers and a wealthy, ruling oligarchy at Bristol during this period.¹¹⁷ Similarly, at Bridgwater the town's mayor and four burgesses petitioned Lord Burghley in 1595 to secure their preferred searcher in the port.¹¹⁸ In contrast some key customs officers in the port of Cardiff operated without the support of the commanding echelons of local society, and on the fringes of the commercial world which they were policing. John Leek was from London with no local connections, as was John Middleton, the deputy at Swansea in 1565, and as was John Erely, the deputy at Cardiff in 1569.¹¹⁹ Little is known about the background of subsequent customs officers in the port, but the rapid turnover in officeholders, the dismissal of John Million, and the imprisonment of Controller Edward Jurden indicate that they often lacked local support and occasionally incurred the enmity of important sections of local society.¹²⁰ By implication therefore the control which they were able to exercise in the performance of their duties must have been severely constrained.

Although the legal challenge to the customs officers' authority had by and large subsided by 1580, *de facto* resistance persisted. Much of this opposition focussed around the powerful local family of Herbert. As described above Customer Morgan had bought a case against George Herbert in 1573 for the illegal importation of goods into various creeks and ports within his jurisdiction. In 1578 Nicholas Herbert, Sherriff of Glamorgan, was fined for receiving pirates' goods, and William Herbert was found to be a relative of the notorious pirate John Callis, 'whom he hath favore apparentd and lodged and vsed ofte his

¹¹⁷ Dunn, 'Thomas Watkins'.

¹¹⁸ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 261: December 1596', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 313-327 < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> > [January 2009].

¹¹⁹ Robinson, 'Establishment of Royal Customs', 362-63.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

company'.¹²¹ Elements of the Herbert family had good reason to resent royal authority as in 1569/70 the Crown had sought to recover debts off Nicholas' grandfather, Sir George Herbert of Swansea, and in 1585 the Exchequer moved to recover lands from his father Sir William Herbert.¹²² Members of the Herbert family appear in the port books only in 1579/80 when they imported wine, sugar, salt and Spanish iron, and exported lead, cloth and coal. They are notable however for their total absence from subsequent port books. Given their close association with Swansea, the absence of any trade associated with them from this port is especially striking. Indeed the fact that the Swansea and Neath port books are dominated by the export of coal almost to the exclusion of all else gives the impression that only minor traders from outside the area were subject to customs. The allegation that George Herbert ignored royal customs every time he shipped goods has already been noted and perhaps explains the lack of any major merchants in the Cardiff customs accounts, and the predominance of what were essentially small fry on whom it was easy to levy duty.

The possibility that major flows of trade were escaping the Exchequer records is given added weight by a consideration of the size of ships recorded in customs compared to other evidence. The smallest vessel 'of' the port of Cardiff listed in the port books sampled was the five ton *Peter*, and the largest was the 70 *Charity* of Chepstow which was entered only once.¹²³ The average size was 31 tons and these ships were therefore relatively small. There were however larger ships associated with the port, although none of these appear in the surviving Exchequer records. A 1577 survey listed Newport with two ships of over 100 tons, out of only three in the whole of Wales.¹²⁴ Additionally Newport

¹²¹ Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History*, 71. 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 122: January 1578', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 580-582 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

¹²² TNA E 134/28Eliz/Hil9; E178/3437.

¹²³ TNA E122/104/6, E190/1270/2.

¹²⁴ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 59. The tonnages of ships in the customs accounts were estimates based on their freight capacity, whilst those employed in naval surveys were based on displacement and were approximately a third higher than the Exchequer measure. Neither

was recorded as having six ships which were substantial, but below 100 tons, known as topmen. Swansea was listed for a further six topmen, Cardiff for two, and Chepstow for three. The port therefore had a total of seventeen topmen which represents a substantial fleet when compared to the eight recorded at the much larger port of Bristol.

Similarly the port books indicate that the orbit of the legitimate and declared trade of the ports' ships was fairly circumscribed, with only one ship found to have ventured further than the northern coast of France.¹²⁵ Even a small port such as Bridgwater was found to have conducted a regular trade aboard its ships to northern Spain and the Azores. The scope of illegitimate activities conducted through the port was apparently much wider however, and reportedly involved the export of leather to Spain as described above, voyages to the Canaries, and the capture of ships off Portugal and even as far away as Newfoundland.¹²⁶

Piracy

Not only does resistance to the payment of royal customs appear to have been stronger in Wales than it was in England, the level of lawlessness in the port was also apparently greater as well. Piracy was endemic in the period and many merchant ships were heavily armed against such eventuality. The *Green Dragon* for instance was bequeathed by George Herbert with 'all her ffurnytur and tackynge and ordinannce shott and powdr armes and munition'.¹²⁷ Such armaments could also be used offensively of course, and the port of Cardiff was notorious as a base for pirates. In one year alone John Callice, an infamous pirate who was born at Tintern, brought a captured Spanish ship into Cardiff, a

measure was very accurate however. Regardless of the actual ships' tonnages the naval survey reveals a more extensive and substantial fleet than is apparent from the Exchequer records.

¹²⁵ The *Charity* into Chepstow from Bordeaux in 1580, TNA E190/1270/2.

¹²⁶ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 122: January 1578', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 580-582 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>>[January 2009]; Edward Roland Williams, *Some Studies of Elizabethan Wales* (Newtown, 1924), 113.

¹²⁷ Dawson, *Commerce and Customs*, 10.

Breton ship into Penarth and another ship into Newport.¹²⁸ In 1576 it was reported that many 'pyrattes (as it is comonly Reported) are furnyshed, vittled, ayded, Receaved and succored' at Cardiff, and in 1577 the town was described as 'the general resort of pirates, where they are sheltered and protected'.¹²⁹ Although the most notorious, Callice was not alone in his operations in the port. A 1576 a commission of enquiry identified 'a greate number of names of Pyratts discovered that have been receyved and lodged in thys Towne'.¹³⁰ The commission led to the trial of six men for piracy in 1581, and the eventual execution of one, but this by no means bought a resolution to the problem. In the same year the *Primrose* lying off the Mumbles was investigated on suspicion of carrying pirated goods.¹³¹ The commissioners accepted that the *Primrose* herself was not acting as a pirate vessel, but that she was freighting goods which had been purchased from pirates off the coast of Devon. The close association of this ship and cargo with the customs officers is of particular interest. The cargo, which included brazilwood and pepper, was not entered in the customs accounts, and the customer reported that the crew 'came daily to Swansea town and there made merry in sundry places of the town and behaved themselves very civilly and honestly'. In fact the customer's warm opinion of the crew was such that he invited the purser and others 'to dinner and supper with him at his house being in the Christmas holidays' where he accepted a gift of two parrots.¹³² Later still, in 1586 a pirate bought a captured Scottish ship into Penarth and was assisted in escape by Cardiff's bailiffs. Sir Edward Stradling, the commissioner charged with suppressing piracy, reported that so

¹²⁸ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 112-13.

¹²⁹ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records*: Vol. 1 (1898), 347-368 < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> [January 2009]; 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 111: January 1577', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 536-538 < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> [January 2009].

¹³⁰ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records*: Vol. 1 (1898), 347-368 < <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> [January 2009].

¹³¹ Thomas, *History of Swansea*, 74.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 74-75.

far as the bailiffs were concerned, 'we never learned of any pirate arrived in this road wherein they have not showed their inclination'.¹³³

Piracy itself was relatively unexceptional during this period, but the distinguishing feature of Cardiff as a port compared to English ports in the Bristol Channel, was the extent to which pirates were integrated into the local economy and were associated with the authorities. It was not only the Cardiff bailiffs and customs officials who were intimate with pirates. A sergeant of the admiralty was also found to visit John Callice aboard his ship and to give him lodgings in his house, and one of those accused of trading with pirates in 1577 accepted that 'he kept company *with* pirates in the Town of Cardif, as generally all men there did'.¹³⁴ The effectiveness of this cabal can be seen from the reticence of witnesses to testify against those involved; the commissioners sent to investigate and restrain piracy in the port reported to the Privy Council in 1577 that the inhabitants ,

.. haue taken a generall rule, that they wooll neyther accuse one another, nor yet answer to any matter that toucheth them selves vpon theyr othes, Althoughe they all confesse that the most *parte* of the Inhabytants by this theyr harboring and receyving of the Pyrats, haue felt such smart, and susteine therby such discredit, with forren nac'ons and countries, that they that travaill to other places to maynteigne theyr lyving by trade of merchandize, dare not well be knowen or to avowe the place of theyr dwelling at cardif. This we fynde *partlie* to growe by the greate feare they haue of some of note *which* as is supposed are to be touched, and for that cause (as yt seemeth chieflie) they dare not disclose theyr knowledg's..¹³⁵

The commissioners difficulty was compounded by the controller 'and other chief Offendors in receyving the Pyrats and theyr spoyles haue and do absent them selfs from theyr dwelling places sythens or comyng to Townte, and cannot be founde'.¹³⁶ Another commission eight years later also reported that they

¹³³ Williams, ed., *Glamorgan County History*, 71.

¹³⁴'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records*: Vol. 1 (1898), 347-368 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

were unable to find sufficient witnesses 'notwithstanding open proclamation by them made as well in the countie courte as in seuerall *parishe* churches'.¹³⁷

There therefore seems to have been a residual culture of non-cooperation or outright opposition to royal authority in the policing of affairs of maritime trade which extended even amongst certain of the crown officers appointed to the ports, and in bodies charged with policing maritime affairs.

Conclusion

The system of customs control has been seen to be far from wholly effective in the English ports studied, but the effectiveness of the customs officers in the port of Cardiff must have been greatly circumscribed when compared to their English counterparts. Whilst some senior customs officers faced hostility and opposition from local elites, including even from amongst the families of the marcher lords, others were so intimately linked with pirates and the marketing of their contraband that their returns cannot be considered reliable. Against this background the Welsh Exchequer records are unlikely to have been as full or as accurate as their English equivalents, even given the many shortcomings of those documents themselves.

The greater difference between the volumes of trade recorded in the Welsh port books and actual volumes of trade however may have been in the scope of legitimate trade which they covered. It appears that only a small percentage of the salt, coal, butter and iron sent coastwise were sent under a coastal cocket and so recorded in the coastal customs accounts. Rather, large and significant flows of trade across the Bristol Channel were not recorded in the port books outbound from Wales, nor inbound in England. This was certainly true for Bridgwater, probably true for Bristol, and most likely to have been the case for ports elsewhere in the region, particularly Gloucester. Outbound shipments of

¹³⁷ 'Records of the Exchequer: 1571-1611', *Cardiff Records*: Vol. 1 (1898), pp. 393-422 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [January 2009].

salt, iron, coal and probably butter were all found to have been considerably in excess of those subject to certification. There is concrete evidence for this practice in an earlier undated Bridgwater coastal certificate book which unusually also listed Welsh goods which were not subject to certification. Goods which were inbound from Barnstaple and Bristol were recorded as 'per certificate', whilst those from Tenby, Milford, Dovey and Newport had no note of a certificate and were recorded 'ffrome Wales'.¹³⁸ The probable date of this document is from the reign of Henry VIII and was therefore before the amalgamation of English and Welsh customs. It seems therefore that to some degree this anomalous treatment of the *coastal* shipment of outbound Welsh goods may have continued in the aftermath of the amalgamation of customs, with perhaps the greater part of Welsh production being freighted domestically under letpass or provision. As was made clear above, the application of this exemption was not absolute, and for reasons which remain uncertain the later coastal accounts did record some trade from South Wales. This has implications for interpretation of the coastal accounts at other ports including Bristol, as it implies that they too had a larger trade arriving from Wales than that made apparent in the coastal port books. In the 1575/76 Bristol coastal account for the last two quarters of the year it is notable for instance that of 103 ships recorded inbound, only eleven were from the port of Cardiff. This figure seems low given the proximity of the port, and the large amounts of iron, salt, butter, cheese, leather goods and other agricultural products which were being produced in the region, and the demand for this which existed at Bristol.

The evidence presented here indicates that it is highly probable that there was a much more frequent and larger trade from the southern Welsh ports than was officially recorded or has previously been recognised. The testimony to the commissions to investigate piracy, in cases given to the court of Exchequer, and from the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts gives a convincing picture of

¹³⁸ TNA E122/27/28.

substantial illicit and licit trade passing through the Cardiff ports which fell outside Exchequer control. This has important implications for previous interpretations of the vitality and extent of Welsh trade, and of Welsh industrial development during this period. For instance assessments of the development of the Welsh coal industry have relied heavily on data from the Exchequer customs accounts. J.U. Nef based his estimate of production at the end of the sixteenth century on this source which he considered to be a 'fairly complete record of the shipment of coal by sea', and concluded that in contrast to the north east of England, Welsh coal production did not begin to accelerate until the later seventeenth century.¹³⁹ It lies outside the scope of this thesis to consider levels of coal production in the north east of England, and it is pertinent that N.J. Williams noted that the levels of coal recorded by the Great Yarmouth water bailiffs inbound from Newcastle upon Tyne were also consistently higher than those in the Exchequer accounts.¹⁴⁰ It nevertheless remains the case that much of the difference which Nef identified between the two regions could have been the result of differences in recording, since the larger part of Welsh coal output appears not to have been recorded in these documents. Moreover a reassessment is in order of his interpretation of Welsh coal production having only begun to accelerate in the late seventeenth century, since a much larger trade was being conducted from a much earlier period than can be traced in the coastal Exchequer accounts. Although he considered Nef's estimates were probably too low, C.G.A. Clay echoed his views on the geographical trends of coal production, and considering the wider national picture in this context, concluded that the substitution of coal for wood did not become significant until the last third of the sixteenth century.¹⁴¹ This chapter has demonstrated however that an important part of the domestic coal industry was not apparent to Clay, and the data in Figure 5.1 suggests that this may have been happening from an earlier date. The more recent work on this

¹³⁹ J.U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*, 2 vols, Vol. 1 (London, 1932), 52, 19-24, 52-55.

¹⁴⁰ Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 376.

¹⁴¹ Clay, *Industry, Trade and Government*, 46-50.

subject by John Hatcher is alive to the discrepancy between recorded shipments of coal from the region compared to contemporary descriptions of the trade by those such as Owen and Leland.¹⁴² However, as with Clay, the scale of this discrepancy remained unknown to Hatcher, and his overall assessment of the development of the coal trade still left south Welsh production lagging far behind that of the North East, with a substantial increase in production not recognised until after the Civil War.¹⁴³

So far as the iron industry is concerned, Schubert recognised that Welsh production was increasing in this period, but he, like Nef, based this assessment on data derived from the coastal accounts.¹⁴⁴ Whilst his conclusion is not incorrect, the scale of this appears to have been considerably greater than he was able to infer from this source, and underlines the claim that Welsh industrial development was more advanced and at an earlier stage than hitherto recognised. Even as recently as 2000, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* characterised the Welsh ports' trade in this period as being mainly concerned with the domestic traffic of agricultural produce, and as having no overseas dimension at all in many years.¹⁴⁵ The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that this interpretation is misplaced. When consideration is given to domestic trade which was absent from the port books for legitimate reasons, the port of Cardiff appears rather to have conducted a predominantly industrial trade. When consideration is given to the number and size of the ships associated with the ports, and to the evidence for illicit overseas trade, the port appears to have had a significant international reach. It was indeed perhaps not dissimilar to the other southern Welsh port authority of Milford,

¹⁴² Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 138-39.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 68,140.

¹⁴⁴ Schubert, *British Iron*, 179.

¹⁴⁵ Sacks and Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700', 402.

which was described by George Owen at the end of the century as 'especiallye of late years, is fallen much to trade to sea'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in {Owen, 1962 #664@128}

Chapter 6 : Milford

The argument made in these chapters has centred around the relationship between real levels of marine trade and those recorded in the Exchequer accounts. It has been argued that customs control was not enforced in a consistent manner, and that it was less effective in the smaller ports of the Bristol Channel than it was in the larger port of Bristol. By implication the trade of these smaller ports is under-recorded in customs records to a greater extent than is the case for Bristol. The port of Milford represents the apotheosis of this argument. Royal authority was found to be particularly weak in this part of Wales which was dominated by powerful local magnates and their followers who appear largely to have chosen to ignore the new customs regime introduced in mid-century. The evidence presented in this chapter draws on sources other than the Exchequer accounts to demonstrate that Milford's customs records consequently contain omissions on a considerable scale, possibly to a greater extent than any other Bristol Channel port.

Milford forms the westernmost reach of the Bristol Channel, with several deep water ports which are less dependent on tidal conditions than those located further to the east. Located closer to Ireland than other ports in the Channel, and on the sea routes passing north and south through the Irish Sea, the ports of Milford were well placed to engage in the maritime trade of the wider region. The jurisdiction of the port of Milford extended from Worm's Head at the tip of the Gower peninsula to Barmouth in North Wales.¹ The extent of the port therefore reached beyond the Bristol Channel, which for the purposes of this thesis ends at St Ann's Head at the northern entrance to Milford Haven. The southern part of the port however lay within the Bristol Channel and encompassed the southerly coastlines of Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.

¹ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, ix.

Unlike other customs jurisdictions, Milford did not take its name from a particular port town, but from the extensive haven of Milford which reaches towards Pembroke and provides access to Haverfordwest at its head.² Unlike the customs administration in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, which fell under the jurisdiction of the earls of Pembroke and Worcester, Milford was under Crown control throughout the century. A collector of customs was appointed to the ports of Tenby and Pembroke in 1537 for instance.³ Revenue returns were not made directly to the Exchequer in England however, and the administration of customs did not fall under the English Exchequer nor operate to the same rules until 1559. At this point the customs administration in Wales was amalgamated with that in England, and uniform systems of tax and reporting were introduced whereby the tax of tonnage was introduced on wine, and poundage on other goods.⁴ Expenses were claimed that year for riding to all the ports and creeks between Worm's Head and Barmouth to proclaim and notify the new arrangements.⁵ Whilst the mid-century amalgamation of English and Welsh customs precludes the existence of national customs records for the port from earlier in the century, they do nevertheless survive from an earlier date than for the port of Cardiff, with the earliest being the overseas account for Milford from 1559/60.⁶

Separate Exchequer returns were submitted within the port for Milford and for Carmarthen, within which further ports were sometimes distinguished: Fishguard, Dovey, Haverfordwest, Newport, Tenby and Pembroke within the

² The present town of Milford Haven was not established until the late eighteenth century; both E.A.Lewis and Brian Howells identified the location of the customs house for the port during the sixteenth century at the quayside in Pembroke (Brian Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History: Early Modern Pembrokeshire, 1536-1815*, ed. by Elwyn Davies and Brian Howells, 4 vols, Vol. 3 Pembrokeshire County History (Haverfordwest, 1987), 87); Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, ix. However the title of the port books themselves confusingly include the description 'the town of Milford' (eg. Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 78).

³ H. Owen, *A Calendar of the Public Records relating to Pembrokeshire: The Earldom of Pembroke and its Members*, Vol. 3, Cymmrodorion Record Series, 7 (London, 1918), 254.

⁴ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, xiv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁶ TNA E122/104/2.

Milford accounts; and Laugharne, Llanelli, and Burry within the Carmarthen accounts.⁷ There is thus scope for confusion as Milford was used in a multiplicity of senses. It referred to the jurisdiction of the whole port; to the part which included Tenby and ports within the haven (but excluded Carmarthen and nearby creeks); and, when Tenby was listed separately, to those ports which lay within Milford Haven only (i.e. principally Pembroke and Haverfordwest). The 'port of Milford' or simply Milford will here refer to the whole customs authority; 'Pembrokeshire ports' will refer to Tenby along with ports lying within the haven; and 'Milford Haven ports' will refer solely to those ports which lay within the haven.

Haverfordwest was a substantial town which acted as the judicial centre for the county of Pembroke, and had a population estimated between two and three thousand by the end of the century.⁸ George Owen, who wrote a detailed description of many aspects of Pembrokeshire life at the end of the sixteenth century, described it as the most prosperous in Pembrokeshire, and as having a market which 'is thought to be one of the greatest and plentifullest marketes (all thinges compared) that is within the Marches of Wales'.⁹ Pembroke by contrast had suffered a considerable decline over the course of the century, particularly following the loss of its status as an administrative centre following the Act of Union.¹⁰ The waning state of trade is confirmed by local customs returns in mid century which frequently recorded 'nil because no such ships

⁷ It is not clear how consistently these distinctions were maintained or expressed which presents some potential problems in identifying trade which related to the Bristol Channel ports rather than those further north in the port authority. For instance Fishguard and Aberdovey were not listed as ports until 1588/89 and it seems likely therefore that the earlier 1559/60 account, which just listed Milford, had incorporated them under Milford defined in a wider sense (TNA E190/1299/8, E190/1299/13, E122/104/2). Having said this the amount of trade recorded in the customs accounts to these two places, along with Newport and St David's, was so small as to be almost insignificant – amounting to just 7 out of 672 shipping movements sampled - the difference is not therefore material to the analysis presented in this chapter.

⁸ Quoted in George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading', 3; Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 86.

⁹ Quoted in George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading', 3. Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 85.

¹⁰ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 85.

called'.¹¹ The town's fortunes had evidently not revived in the final decades of the century as early in the reign of James I it was described as having more empty houses than any other town in the kingdom.¹² Lying outside Milford Haven on the southern coast of the county, Tenby was described in the 1530s by John Leland as being 'very welthe by marchaundyce', and by George Owen as 'a good town, wealthy and well governed'.¹³ It was identified in a 1566 survey as the principal port in the county, and was reported to be able to accommodate ships of 300 tons at all tides.¹⁴ Further to the east, Carmarthen was described in 1549 as being 'a fayre market towne having a fair haven, and the ffairest towne in all south Wales and of most scevillyte', and in 1602 as being the largest town in the whole of Wales and 'fair and good in state'.¹⁵ With an estimated mid-century population of 2,250 it was a substantial settlement and twice the size of Cardiff.¹⁶ Strategically located at the head of a deep tidal inlet, and at the mouth of a long valley with a rich agricultural hinterland, it served as the administrative centre for west Wales.¹⁷

Turning to the smaller ports, Kidwelly was also in decline, although the reason in this instance was physical, caused by the encroachment of a sandbar across the harbour mouth.¹⁸ It was described by Leland as 'sore decayed', and in 1566 as 'late a port and nowe skant a landing place'; those licensed to load and unload ships were described as 'the mayor and bayllyffes yf ther were any shippes or vesselles'.¹⁹ On the opposite side of the Towy estuary, Laugharne had a more established maritime trade, but it was not a large settlement being described in

¹¹ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 328.

¹² Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 87.

¹³ *Ibid*; Leland, *Itinerary of John Leland 2*, 61.

¹⁴ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 86; Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 312.

¹⁵ Sir John E. Lloyd, ed., *A History of Carmarthenshire: From the Act of Union (1536) to 1900*, 2 vols, Vol. 2 (Cardiff, 1939), 13.

¹⁶ Thomas, 'Tudor and Jacobean Swansea', 25.

¹⁷ Lloyd, ed., *Carmarthenshire*, 282.

¹⁸ Morris, 'Port of Kidwelly'. <<http://www.kidwellyhistory.co.uk/Articles/Port/Port.htm>>[March 2008].

¹⁹ *Ibid*. Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 316.

1566 as 'a vyllage' with ninety houses.²⁰ In the extreme east of the port, Burry and the adjacent village of Llanelli were even smaller, but their share of trade was more significant than their size would suggest as, like nearby Swansea, they were centres for the export of coal.

The heavily indented nature of the coastline of west Wales afforded a multitude of smaller creeks and landing places. Marros in Carmarthenshire was listed as a landing place in the 1566 survey but had 'no licenser for lack of shyppes and vessels'.²¹ Milford Haven itself contained an additional nineteen landing places to those already described, at least two of which were recorded as having ships of eight tons which engaged in overseas trade.²² Lying outside the haven, Caldey Island and Stackpole were also listed, bringing the total number of potential landing places in the Bristol Channel part of the port to twenty seven.²³ The difficulties which this presented to the effective operation of customs control were recorded by Dr. Phaer in his mid century survey referred to in the previous chapter,

Here be grete transporting to Irelande of corne and money and many other things to other places wythowte comptrollment, for men may do what they will ere they be spied by th'officer and passe when they please by reason of the haven being so large and secrett.²⁴

Phaer was writing in the period before the introduction of the new customs regime, but as will be made apparent below, the customs officers subsequently appointed cannot be said to have reduced the possibilities for evasion to any great extent.

²⁰ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 316.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 312-13.

²³ That this was not a definitive list however is shown by the omission of Haverfordwest itself which may have been excluded on the grounds that it was a county in its own right, and not therefore part of Pembrokeshire for the purposes of this particular survey. Testimony to an Exchequer commission of enquiry in the 1570s also detailed trade through Llansteffan (TNA E178/3345).

²⁴ Robinson, 'Dr. Thomas Phaer's Report', 498.

The Exchequer customs accounts are not the only customs records relating to the port of Milford. As well as transcribing the post 1559 national Exchequer accounts series, 'the Welsh port books', Lewis also collated information from other sources collectively known as Ministers' accounts.²⁵ Prior to 1559 different methods of customs collection and recording pertained in different parts of Wales. To paraphrase Lewis, for the coastlines of Cardigan and Carmarthenshire import and export dues were nominally returned to the Exchequer at Carmarthen where the local chamberlain enrolled the yearly profit on his annual return.²⁶ Occasionally the subsidiary, underlying detailed documents survive. The situation in Pembrokeshire and Haverford was different in that the customs dues were included in the local manorial accounts of their respective lordships. Some detailed underlying accounts in this respect survive up until 1544. Both the Cardigan / Carmarthen series and the Haverford / Pembrokeshire series include details of the prisage and butlerage of wine, duties which had been in place since the reign of Edward I. In 1559 a new system was gradually introduced whereby the Welsh customs administration was brought into line with that in England. Also included in the Minister's accounts tabulated by Lewis are a series of accounts from 1547-1603 which 'have been derived mainly from the enrolments of the Customer and Collector accounts of the General Receiver of the Crown Revenues in the counties of Glamorgan and Pembroke.'²⁷ These then were the equivalent to the English enrolled accounts which were returned directly to the Exchequer. Although these are expressed as monetary totals they do sometimes include qualifying or additional material relating to volumes for some commodities in particular years. None of the accounts described here are as comprehensive as the port books themselves. They do not usually include details of ships, ports, master, merchants, dates, or manifest, nor was the scope of goods on which customs was levied as wide ranging in the earlier series as it was to be after 1559. With

²⁵ Details of these are in E.A. Lewis, 'A Contribution to the Commercial History of Medieval Wales', *Y Cymmrodor*, XXIV (1913), 86-188, 107-87; Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 328-36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, xvii.

these caveats in mind the Minister's accounts do nevertheless provide the only data for trade from the period prior to the amalgamation with the English system of customs control and accounting, and are extant for years in which the particular accounts do not survive, and may therefore be used to supplement that information.

Grain

Camden's *Brittania*, first published in 1588, described Carmarthenshire as 'more fertile than in some adjoining shires', and Pembrokeshire as having 'soile fair, fertile and fell of marle, yeelding plentie of corne'.²⁸ George Owen described corn as 'the cheeffest and greatest commoditie that this sheere uttereth', and as the commodity which was the 'cheeffest that bringeth in money to the countrey'.²⁹ This was traded 'partlie in the marketts of the countreye but principallye by sea to fraunce, spaine, irelande, northwales and other places'.³⁰ This picture of plenty is supported by licenses granted for the export of grain from the port such as that for 800 bushels of wheat made in 1597, or for 600 quarters of wheat and 300 quarters of oats in the same decade.³¹

Owen was writing from the perspective of the final years of the century and Table 6.1 indicates that there was indeed a rise in outbound shipments during this period. This is reflected only to a limited extent in the overseas Exchequer accounts, but is represented more strongly in the Ministers' accounts. However, the evidence is not overwhelming and apart from 1592/93 does not really support Owen's strong and specific statement. There is no indication of destination in the Ministers' accounts, but the Exchequer accounts show no shipments to Spain or Ireland during the 1590s in the manner suggested by Owen. Shipments of grain to Spain during this period were in any case illegal

²⁸ Camden, *Camden's Britania*.

²⁹ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 54-55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

³¹ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1591-94* (1867), 152-163 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008]; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 378-404 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

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and should not therefore be expected in the Exchequer accounts; but neither was the small cargo of wheat recorded to Ireland in 1585/86 normal commercial traffic as it was for provision of the English garrison there. The figures for 1593/94 represent 88 quarters, or approximately fifteen weys, of wheat which were shipped over a six month period from Milford to France before imposition of a parliamentary ban on the export of corn.³² For comparison Gloucester shipped out 168 weys of barley and wheat in 1592/93, and Bridgwater shipped out 48 weys of grain during 1599/1600.³³ The situation in Milford was therefore certainly not exceptional when placed within the wider context of Bristol Channel trade.

Table 6.1 Port of Milford: exports and outbound coastal shipments of grain (weys).³⁴

	Exchequer Accounts		Ministers' Accounts
	Overseas	Coastal	
1559/60	0	-	0
1563/64	0	-	0
1565/66	-	33	0
1571/72	3 (France)	-	0
1585/86	4 (Ireland)	73	0
1586/87	-	71	0
1591/92	-	-	27
1592/93	-	89	72
1593/94	15 (France)	-	17
1598/99	0	-	0

Outbound coastal trade from the port was diverse and spasmodic with no distinguishable established or regular pattern. There does not appear to have been any enduring connections with particular ports, nor was the port characterised by the shipping of any particular type of grain. Coastal shipments

³² Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 168.

³³ TNA E190/1243/3, E190/1243/4, E190/1243/7, E190/1083/25.

³⁴ Figures for the Ministers' accounts are taken from Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 330-36. For the Exchequer accounts *ibid.* 54-182. Tables 6.1-6.3 employ various measurements converted to the wey to facilitate comparison, based on six quarters or 48 bushels to the wey.

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made in 1585/86 were principally of wheat and barley to Bristol, Ilfracombe and Barnstaple; those made in 1586/87 represent rye shipped from Tenby in the first quarter of 1587 to locations in Gloucestershire and Monmouth; and in 1592/93 were a mixture of wheat, barley and rye to Bristol, Barnstaple and locations in North Wales. A shipment of ten quarters of wheat was made aboard the *Elizabeth* from Tenby to Bristol in October 1592.³⁵ The coastal books examined for ports elsewhere in the Bristol Channel also show only a very small and sporadic trade in corn from Milford with the largest shipment amounting to just over three weys.³⁶

As well as shipping out grain, the port also received it inbound as shown in Table 6.2. This reflects both the exceptionally bad harvest of 1586, and the very good harvests of 1592 and 1593. The great bulk of the 81 weys imported to Carmarthen in 1586 was a single shipment of wheat from the east coast port of Lyn.

Table 6.2 Port of Milford: inbound coastal shipments of wheat, barley and rye (weys)

	1565/66	1585/86	1592/93
Carmarthen	0	81	0
Tenby	0	5	0
Milford Haven	10	19	0

Carmarthen is notable in the historical record for the frequency of complaints made by the town concerning the shortage of grain. Dr. Phaer described the adjoining shire as 'very bare of corne' as a consequence of which the population 'be not able to lyve of their owne provision, for the most parte of their tillage is otes, and are served of wheate and malte out of the Foreste of Deane and other parties.'³⁷ In 1550 the Privy Council ordered the authorities at Bridgwater

³⁵ TNA E190/1299/1.

³⁶ From Milford to Barnstaple in April 1570, TNA E190/927/14.

³⁷ Robinson, 'Dr. Thomas Phaer's Report', 497.

and Gloucester to 'permitt thinhabitantes of Carmarthen in South Wales to transport thither sufficient grayne for them from tyme to tyme'.³⁸ In 1573 the Council overruled a stay on the movement of corn to allow three men 'to buye as myche as might be spared for the relief of the countie of Carmarden in Wales'.³⁹ In 1586 the town lobbied the Privy Council to authorise their nominated agent to purchase 'some convenient quanties of mault' in Gloucestershire.⁴⁰ The Council subsequently extended this permission to include purchases at Southampton, Hampshire and London, authorising Richard Nashe to 'buy, provide and convaye by water or otherwise unto Carmarthen so muche of that kinde of graine as maie well be spared without danger of greater dearthe and inhansement of prices'.⁴¹ Likewise in 1586 Lord Burghley was prevailed upon by the town to press Gloucester to supply Carmarthen with 'some quantitie of mault for their relief'.⁴²

The Exchequer accounts show that the dearth of which Carmarthen complained appears to have been very specific. It was not a dearth of grain for baking, but a shortage of malt for brewing which was the cause of concern to the town's authorities. Table 6.3 makes clear that imports of malt were far in excess of the imports of grain outlined in Table 6.2. Moreover Table 6.3 shows that the dearth of which Carmarthen complained was specific to the town and did not extend to other port towns in the area. Sir John Lloyd in his *History of Carmarthenshire* considered it 'hardly credible that they should have found it necessary to import such considerable quantities of foodstuffs as those recorded in the customs returns', yet concluded that 'the reason was that the shire suffered from periodic visitations of famine, and that the amount of crops raised in the countryside was not sufficient to meet the exigencies of a

³⁸ *Acts of the Privy Council 1550-1552*, New Series (London, 1891), 245.

³⁹ *Acts of the Privy Council 1571-75*, New Series (London, 1894), 116.

⁴⁰ *Acts of the Privy Council 1586-87*, New Series (London, 1897), 110.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁴² GRO GBR/B/2/1/f.62.

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temporary scarcity of corn'.⁴³ The analysis made here suggests that he was right to doubt the need for Carmarthen to import so much grain, but wrong in his ascribing this to periodic dearth. Breakdown of the data shows that Carmarthen was not importing unusual quantities of wheat or barley, but of malt.

Table 6.3 Port of Milford: inbound coastal shipments of malt (weys)

	1565/66	1585/86	1592/93
Carmarthen	337	396	278
Tenby	0	0	0
Milford Haven	0	0	0

Malt was of course a key ingredient for the brewing trade, and concern about the number of alehouses in parts of Wales had been expressed by the Council of the Marches in Wales in 1573. This had led to a situation where,

thieves, murderers and women of light conversation are harboured, rogues and vagabonds maintained, whoredom, filthy and detestable life much frequented, unlawful games as Tables, Dice, Cards, Bowls, Kayles, Quoits, and such like commonly exercised...⁴⁴

More direct concerns about the situation in Carmarthen were expressed in 1596 by the Privy Council which wrote to the mayor condemning him for allowing an 'excessive and nedeles number' of alehouses in the town which served 'only to mayntaine disorder and unnecessary consumpcion'.⁴⁵ The Privy Council's concerns seems justified given that there were a startling 80 alehouses in the

⁴³ Lloyd, ed., *Carmarthenshire*, 283.

⁴⁴ Ralph Flenley, *A Calendar of the Register of the Queen's Majesty's Council in the Dominion and Principality of Wales and the Marches of the same [1535] 1569-1591*, Cymmrodorion Record Series, 7 (London, 1916), 102.

⁴⁵ *Acts PC 1596-97*, 390.

town which had previously been recorded as having only 328 households altogether.⁴⁶

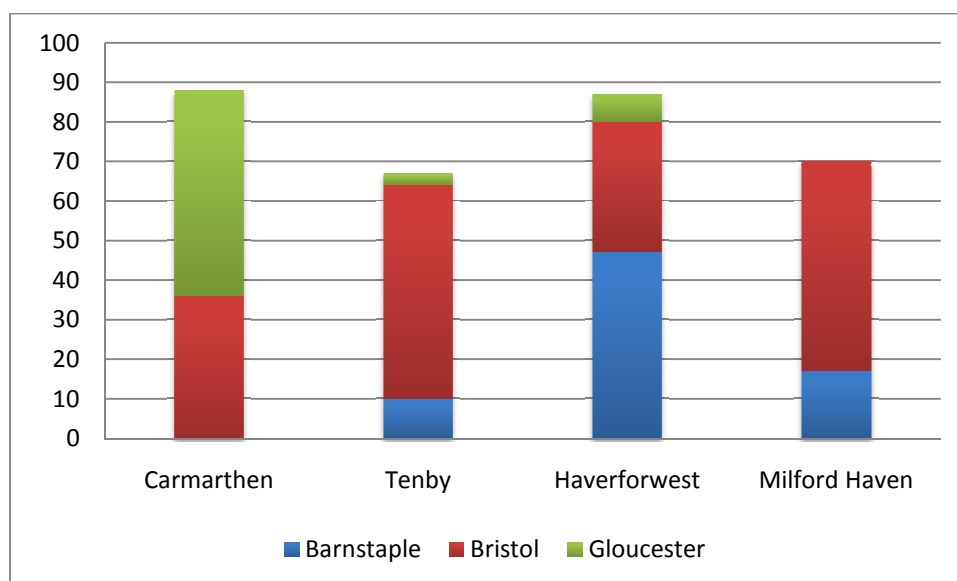
Chapter Four demonstrated that there was a strong trading relationship between Gloucester and Carmarthen, and that this had increased during the period when Gloucester and Bristol were engaged in litigation. Carmarthen's port books confirm that 91 percent of imported malt described in Table 6.3 came from Gloucester. It is also interesting to note that Carmarthen's ships accounted for only four percent of this trade, with 95 percent being freighted aboard ships from the port of Gloucester. Figure 6.1 expresses this relationship graphically by representing the number of ships sailing to or from three major regional ports as a percentage of all ship movements entered in Milford's coastal port books.⁴⁷ It can be seen that whilst both the Milford Haven ports and Tenby enjoyed a close relationship with Bristol, Carmarthen had a significantly greater trade with Gloucester than either of these places. It can also be seen that Barnstaple conducted a proportionately greater trade with Haverfordwest than with either the Milford Haven ports or with Tenby. In contrast there was no traffic at all recorded between Carmarthen and Barnstaple. This therefore provides further evidence of bilateral type trading links operating within the Bristol Channel.

⁴⁶ *Acts PC 1596-7*, 389-91.; Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 316.

⁴⁷ Appendix A.

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Figure 6.1 Port of Milford: destination and origin coastal shipping movements (%).



Although ale was brewed without using hops, hops are necessary to brew beer; they impart flavour but more importantly prolong its shelf life. Table 6.4 shows that inbound coastal shipments of hops were more evenly distributed across the region's ports with the Milford Haven ports having a similar profile to Carmarthen, in contrast to the situation with malt where Milford Haven was seen to import none at all.

Table 6.4 Port of Milford: inbound coastal shipments of hops (c)

	1565/66	1585/86	1592/93
Carmarthen	21	21	8
Haverfordwest	-	8	21
Milford Haven	25	21	22
Tenby	6	-	6

Hops are not known to have been grown in South Wales in this period and Table 6.4 therefore suggests that Milford must have had a brewing industry of a similar size to that at Carmarthen. A licence for the export of 50 tons of beer from Milford or Bristol in 1571 also indicates that Milford Haven's brewing

industry was well established.⁴⁸ Tables 6.3 and 6.4 therefore suggest that unlike Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire's malt requirements appear to have been met from local production.

The reason for the deficit in malt at Carmarthen may partly be explained by the apparent willingness of local merchants to sell it elsewhere rather than to deal in it locally. That this was the eventual opinion of the Privy Council is made clear by a further extract from their letter to the mayor in 1596,

Whereas wee are informed that you do ingrosse great store of corne and make more quantity of barley mault then all the rest of the shere, wherby the prices of grayne are inhaused and the corne bestowed there is solde to suche as transporte the same out of the shere, to the great offence of the inhabitantes..⁴⁹

In order to maximise profits local merchants appear to have been using regional supplies of grain to manufacture malt, as well as to service a wider trade in malt and grain in which they acted as middlemen. The concern of the national government with engrossing corn was not limited to Carmarthen, but there is other evidence which supports the Council's concerns and indicates that the traffic in malt and corn from the ports of Milford was considerable despite the evidence to the contrary in the Exchequer accounts. Indeed the Privy Council seem to have been alive to the possibility that the grain which Carmarthen purported to require for its own needs may have been directed elsewhere, adding the rider to their orders to allow the passage of grain that bonds were to be taken to ensure 'the deliverie of it there onlie'.⁵⁰ In 1577 the Exchequer bought a case against George Clarke, a customs officer of the port, who it was alleged had 'let passe over the seas...grete store of graynes into Spayne and Irelande without licence in respecte of somes of monye corruptly received by him and his deputtes'.⁵¹ During the same period in testimony to a separate Exchequer commission of enquiry, a merchant from Barnstaple was alleged to

⁴⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Elizabeth I, 1569-72*, Volume 5 (London, 1966), 254.

⁴⁹ *Acts PC 1596-7*, 390.

⁵⁰ *Acts PC 1550-52*, 245.

⁵¹ TNA E134/19&20Eliz/Mich14, fol. 2r.

have had 'a barke laden with a thousande wealshe boushells of wheat and barlie *which* he transported from there to france and paid no custome in Millford at his departure for the same'.⁵² Clarke, who was no doubt keen to point to the diligence with which he undertook his duties, himself testified to the commission that,

at another tyme about iii yeres past one Albane Stepneth hadde certaine wheat to the number of sixe skore quarters lofted at Carmarthen And did lade the same in a barke called The Grace of God at the key of Carmarthen to transporte the same over the seas. And this deponet fyndinge the said barke hauled down to the greene castell withowt either entrie made in the custome howse or cocket hadde in that behaulf made seasure of the same....⁵³

Other testimony to the commission related how corn ostensibly bound for Carmarthen was shipped to Ireland; that 4,000 bushels of wheat had been seized and sold privately by the customs officer; and that a bribe had been accepted by Clarke to allow the passage of 2,000 bushels of wheat to Spain without licence.⁵⁴ These are far larger quantities than appear in the customs accounts, and the sheer amount of instances cited, along with the spread of evidence taken, suggests that the trade which is described did occur. The alleged scale of it is less certain however since the testimony given forms part of a series of mutually recriminatory allegations made between the customer and searcher, each being keen to emphasise, and no doubt exaggerate, the extent of malpractice of the other.

To fully understand the nature of the trade described in the port it is also necessary therefore to understand the context of these enquiries and the dispute which had arisen between the customer and searcher in the port. The reason why this dispute arose is unclear but at heart it was essentially about commercial rivalry between the two parties. John Vaughan, customer of the port of Milford, sought to gain control of the evidently lucrative source of

⁵² TNA E178/3345, fol. 4v.

⁵³ Ibid, fol. 5v.

⁵⁴ Ibid, fols. 17r, 17v, 18r.

income that attached to the post of searcher held by George Clarke. Vaughan was the principal mover behind the Exchequer case against Clarke described above, to which his testimony was quite straightforward: that during two and a half years Clarke had not kept his hours at the customs house; that no entries had been made either inwards or outwards in the customs book; and that he had 'hearde pyrattes have taken meate and drinke of hyme as yt was reported'.⁵⁵ Vaughan may have been less motivated by a desire for propriety in the execution of the office however than by the bribes which were garnered by the customs officers in the port of Tenby and Carmarthen, such as the £3 reported as given by George Deepe 'for a brybe to suffer a certen veshell or bote of the said George to passe over the sease to spayne with prohibited wares', or the £10 received 'to suffer a shipe called the *Societe* of Tenby to passe over the sease from Tynbye to Spayne'.⁵⁶ Clarke's alleged mode of operation seems to have been to seize vessels which were laden and ready to sail, and then either accept a sum to let them proceed, or else sell the vessel and its content for his own gain. Only rarely did he advance half the sum gained to the central Exchequer as the law required. Clarke claimed to have been 'brused and threatened to be cast over boarde', and his servant 'sore wounded in three places on the headd' when he tried to stop the freighting of unlicensed leather which had been sanctioned by Vaughan.⁵⁷ Rivalry between Vaughan and Clarke became particularly acute when Vaughan boarded the *Charitie* of Bristol, a vessel which had already been allowed to proceed to sea by Clarke. The incensed master and crew 'carried the said customer into the said sea and putt him on land on an iland called caldey'.⁵⁸ Vaughan further angered a group of Tenby merchants when he seized the 120 ton Tenby ship *Garyth*, laden with wheat and leather bound for Spain. One of the merchants concerned expressed the opinion that any merchant who did not deceive the customs should be slain,

⁵⁵ TNA E134/19&20Eliz/Mich14 fol. 3.

⁵⁶ TNA E178/3345, fol. 18r.

⁵⁷ Ibid fol. 6r.

⁵⁸ Ibid fol. 11r.

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another expressed the opinion that the customer should have been thrown overboard, and the third openly called him a traitor.⁵⁹ Two of these merchants then proceeded to attack Vaughan and his deputy as they returned along the highway from Tenby to Milford 'usyenge these words as vyllens rogues and vacabondes'.⁶⁰

The course of events is somewhat complicated by the death of John Vaughan by 1572 and the appointment of his successor in 1575 who was also called John Vaughan and who occupied the office through to 1596.⁶¹ It is not always entirely clear which John Vaughan is being referred to in the series of questions and responses described in the Exchequer files. That the dispute continued under John Vaughan II is clear however, but it also appears that a resolution of sorts was eventually brokered when John Vaughan II agreed not to testify against Clarke in exchange for Clarke selling his letters patent to the searchership to Vaughan's own nominee.⁶² Vaughan crucially appears to have secured the backing of Lord Burghley (the lord treasurer) in this protracted dispute. In 1577 he wrote an effusive letter of thanks to Burghley, on behalf of himself and his brothers, for saving him from malicious people and from his otherwise having been 'utterly over throwne by injurious dealinge'.⁶³

Vaughan appears to have had an extraordinary stranglehold on civic office in the port. He simultaneously held the post not only of customer, but also justice of the peace for Carmarthen, the mayoralty and town clerkship of Carmarthen, was bailiff of the liberty of Kidwelly, and held the stewardship of Kilgarren.⁶⁴ His commercial interests were said to be no less extensive. As well as having three or four coal mines, he owned a tan house adjacent to his country home, and a

⁵⁹ TNA E178/2245, fol. 17v.

⁶⁰ Ibid fol. 18v.

⁶¹ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 333.

⁶² TNA E134/19&20Eliz/Mich14, fol. 3.

⁶³ TNA SP 12 Vol. 154, 7.

⁶⁴ TNA E178/2245, fols. 3r seq., 9v.

store house at the waterside at Llanstephan.⁶⁵ Along with his son Walter, and another partner, he was also said to be owner of three ships, *The Lyon*, *The Grace of God* and *The Wheel of Fortune*.⁶⁶ The *Grace* was the larger vessel at 24 tons and was alleged to have sailed to France on more than one occasion freighting leather. The *Wheel* was also said to have shipped leather overseas, as well as being used for transporting coal and cloth to Barnstaple; she was eventually sold as payment for debts which Walter had incurred with a man who was subsequently gaoled at Exeter for piracy.⁶⁷ The holding of offices in addition to the post of customer was illegal, as was the owning of ships and private trading by customs officers either on their own account or via a proxy, yet Vaughan seems to have been able to conduct such activities with impunity.

John Vaughan's dealings with pirates were sometimes of a more immediate nature. In 1588 he was ordered to pay over £166 as restitution for a Scottish ship, *Elizabeth*, and her cargo which had been sold to him and others in the full knowledge that they were receiving pirated goods.⁶⁸ Vaughan's dealings with pirates were not unusual in the port. George Clarke was known to keep a victualling house where he supplied 'both for dyvers sea faringe men and for pirattes' including the notorious Callis and his crew.⁶⁹ Callice was of particular concern to the Privy Council, which on learning that he had been allowed to pass through Haverfordwest wrote to the local authorities expressing the opinion that 'their Lordships do not a little marvel at the negligence of such as are Justices in those parts that knowing the said Callice to be so notable an offender would suffer him to depart'.⁷⁰ They considered that 'for a show and colour of justice' the authorities had 'apprehended some of the poorest and

⁶⁵ TNA E178/3345, fols. 5r, 6r, 6v, 9r.

⁶⁶ Ibid, fols. 3r, 3v, 5v.

⁶⁷ Ibid, fols. 5v, 7v.

⁶⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Vol. 9: 1586-88* (1915), 509-31,642-64 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁶⁹ TNA E134/19&20Eliz/Mich14.

⁷⁰ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 114.

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permitted the chiefest pirates to depart'.⁷¹ The mayor of Haverfordwest acknowledged that Callis had been in the town but defended himself against the accusation that he had allowed that 'so notorious a pirate should be openly lodged & socoured amongst us',

I leaste knowe of his leving here and have of all other in this towne as lyttell cause to favor hym or any of his sorte ffor when my neighbors goodes and myne .. to the value of nere a thousand pounds were by englishe pirates taken from us and parte thereof brought to Cardiff (where they saye the said calys dothe openly & comenly resorte) I sawe there a bale of madder of my owne prised & sold for xxii nowes which cost me xxli in bristowe I knew not of his leaving here and yett as I have sithence learned it is true that he the said calys a lyttell before xristmas last laye in this towne one night in the house of Roger morcrofft & of hym bought a horse & the next morowe affter very early departed toward Cardiff very fewe here knewe hym ffor I never hard that he was ever in this towne beffore.⁷²

Although the Mayor seems to have had good grounds for grievance on this occasion, his attempt to direct the admiralty's attention to Cardiff was disingenuous as there was a widespread and long established interchange with pirates in the port of Milford itself which was alleged to be sanctioned at the highest levels. Dr. Phaer in his examination into customs administration in South Wales had described Milford as 'the great resort and succour of all pirates and enemies in stormes, whom the country cannot resist to lie at their pleasure'.⁷³ In 1552 Sir John Perrot was ordered by the Privy Council to send to trial in London Philip ap Rees, a pirate 'whom he and others in that countrie supporteth'.⁷⁴ Perrot was the most important figure in the region, widely believed to be the bastard son of Henry VIII, he rose to become vice-admiral of South Wales (1562), member of parliament for Pembrokeshire (1563), mayor of Haverfordwest (1570), president of Munster (1572), a member of the Council of the Marches in Wales (1574) and finally lord president of Ireland in 1584.⁷⁵ His local influence was understandably immense. Owen wrote of him that he had,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records: Vol. 1* (1898), 347-68 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁷³ Quoted in Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 91.

⁷⁴ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 103.

⁷⁵ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 139.

'by reason of the rigours that he useth and the heap of retainers that do many times attend him, the most part of the gentlemen and freeholders of the county of Pembroke at his commandment'.⁷⁶ In 1564 he was again implicated in matters of piracy when the Privy Council expressed bewilderment at the 'marvelous insufficiencye' of his deputy and relation who had allowed a party of pirates to escape for a second time, advising him to appoint 'some more skilful and discreet man'.⁷⁷ In 1576 he was equally uncooperative when he failed to attend in his capacity as a commissioner of enquiry into piracy in South Wales, due to 'reason of infirmities as yt seemeth by his *letteres of excuse*'.⁷⁸ This was no impediment however to his being charged with seeking out pirates when he was admiral of a squadron off Ireland in 1579.⁷⁹

Sir John Wogan was another senior figure who trafficked with pirates. Sir John was one of the commissioners for the suppressing of piracy in the port and was instructed by the Privy Council to secure payment from the various parties who were implicated in the purchasing of goods illegally taken from the *Elizabeth* described above.⁸⁰ This task was no doubt made easier by the fact that Sir John was himself listed as one of those having received the stolen goods. He was in any case well placed to be knowledgeable about the activities of piratical traders as he had previously been ordered to repay the owner of a Breton ship which had been seized by pirates and subsequently sold by Sir John himself.⁸¹ Also implicated were members of the Devereux family, powerful and rich landowners in the counties of South Wales, who included the Earl of Essex

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 105.

⁷⁸ 'State Papers Domestic: 1565-1666', *Cardiff Records: Vol. 1* (1898), 347-68 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁷⁹ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 131: August 1579', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 628-632. <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁸⁰ *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Vol. 9, 1586-88* (1915), 642-664 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁸¹ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 91. Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 106.

amongst their members.⁸² In 1577 a pirate called Hicks captured the *Jonas* of Konigsberg and sold her cargo of timber, wheat and rye whilst anchored off Pembroke to purchasers who included Sir George Devereux, James Perrot, and the mayor of Pembroke.⁸³ A servant of Sir John Perrot boarded the ship and acted as purser for the sale. The mayor then despatched part of his share of the spoils aboard his ship *Maudlen* to Galicia.⁸⁴ Senior ecclesiastical figures also placed the law secondary to their commercial interests. No less a person than the bishop of St David's was reported to have 'hindered' the issuing of cockets and warrants within the creek of St David's.⁸⁵ This then is the context in which the returns made to the Exchequer from the port must be understood. The customs officers were operating against a background in which the divide between legal and illegal commercial activities was regularly breached by all members of society, and within an environment dominated by the powerful figures of Perrot and Devereux with their extensive network of retainers and followers.

There are indications that the dispute between Vaughan and Clarke was part of wider disputes between followers of Sir John Perrot and Robert Devereux, and by extension between Tenby and Carmarthen. Tenby lies in Pembrokeshire which was within the orbit of Sir John's influence, whilst Carmarthen lies in the adjoining county which was more influenced by the Devereux.⁸⁶ Perrot was involved in a long running struggle with John Vaughan's namesake Richard who was deputy vice admiral for South Wales. In this capacity Richard Vaughan endeavoured to obstruct and capture pirates, but was frequently obstructed by the sometimes overt actions of Perrot.⁸⁷ Richard Vaughan went so far as to press charges against Perrot accusing him of tyrannical conduct, trafficking with

⁸² Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 139-40.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 92; Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 126.

⁸⁴ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 126.

⁸⁵ TNA E178/3345, fol. 18 v.

⁸⁶ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 138-40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 92. Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 122-32.

pirates and subversion of justice.⁸⁸ It may simply have been a coincidence that Richard and John shared the same surname, which is after all not uncommon, but it is interesting to note that whilst John Vaughan held the post of bailiff of Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire, on the opposite side of the estuary, Laugharne was associated with Perrot who was recorded as 'lorde of the soile' there.⁸⁹ Laugharne was a particularly active centre of opposition to Richard Vaughan. In 1577 the crew of a ship lying off Laugharne, and laden with cargo belonging to Sir John Perrot, denied Vaughan's authority and repulsed him with arms.⁹⁰ In contrast, George Clarke, searcher at Tenby in Pembrokeshire, seems to have enjoyed the support of Perrot's faction. His testimony to the Exchequer commission of enquiry is notable for the way in which it implicates at least some of Sir John's enemies and associates them with the Carmarthen / Vaughan faction. For instance Clarke alleged that Albane Stepney had loaded wheat aboard *The Grace of God*, Vaughan's ship, without cocket or licence. Stepney, a lawyer and receiver general of the diocese, was also one of Perrot's most tenacious opponents.⁹¹

Contemporaries recognised these networks of clientage and patronage. One observer complained to Robert Devereux that 'most of them that wears Your Honour's cloth in this country is to have Your Honour's confidence and to be made sheriffs, lieutenants, stewards, subsidy-men, searchers, sergeants on the sea, muster men – everything is fish that comes to their net'.⁹² The inclusion of the post of searcher in this list is of particular relevance in this context. Historians seeking to understand the trading practices of the port, and the information contained in its customs returns, must also therefore recognise the local political context in which these were being undertaken.

⁸⁸ 'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 124: May 1578', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547-80* (1856), 589-90 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008].

⁸⁹ Williams, 'Carmarthenshire's Maritime Trade', 63.

⁹⁰ Williams, *Elizabethan Wales*, 124-25.

⁹¹ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 140.

⁹² Susan Morgan of Whitland quoted in *Ibid.*, 148.

Corrupt practices amongst customs officials were not of course unique to Milford, but they do appear to have been more extensive here than elsewhere. Effective operation of customs control was certainly compromised by the close relationship which existed between the customer and controller, office holders who it was intended would act independently of each other to ensure that neither was corrupt. Yet Customer John Vaughan and Controller John Parrie were brothers in law 'so linked together in ffrendeshippe and of long tyme retained in one house together and agreeable eache to the other in anie thinge that they woulde doe directlie or touching thear said severall offices wherby the *Queens majistie* hath been greatlie and continuallie endeangered' according to one witness.⁹³ It is recognised, both by contemporaries and historians, that customs posts were sought after chiefly because of the opportunities they afforded the holder to enrich himself through the taking of bribes, and through dealing in contraband goods.⁹⁴ At the same time the officer needed to ensure that a sufficient stream of revenue was returned to the Exchequer to avoid provoking the intervention of central authority. The successful customer can thus be seen as one who was able to maximise his own income by reducing to a minimum that which was returned to the Crown. Although the officers at Milford were in many respects operating in a similar way to their counterparts at ports elsewhere in the Bristol Channel, and indeed nationally, what distinguished Milford is that the application of this maxim seems to have been successfully achieved to a greater degree than in any other port in the Bristol Channel during this period. Both the scale and the extent of disregard for royal authority displayed not only by customs officers, but by all echelons of society, appears to have been greater here than elsewhere. At the very least the customs officers at Milford can be said to have enjoyed a vigorous degree of independence from the English authorities. This was exemplified for instance

⁹³ TNA E178/3345, fol. 6r.

⁹⁴ BL Lansd. 110, no. 40, fol 121 r.

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1572articles.htm>> [March 2009]; Nef, 'Richard Camarden's "A Caveat for the Quene" (1570)', 36; Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade', 138; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 15.

when in 1571 commissioners sent to Tenby found that those ordered to attend them 'most obstinately did not only omit to appear accordingly but also being further sought by orders conveyed by officers did absent themselves and could not be founde'.⁹⁵ It is this context which perhaps therefore explains the discrepancies between the picture of Milford's trade in grain described in contemporary narratives and that presented by the evidence in the Exchequer accounts.

Dairy Products

Owen listed butter and cheese as being the fourth commodity in order of importance produced in Pembrokeshire at the end of the century. He noted that cheese was shipped to the neighbouring counties, sometimes by sea, and sometimes 'to Ireland for provision of the Queenes garrison there'.⁹⁶ He may have been referring to the approximately 1,500 stones shipped to Galway in May 1599 under license by a London merchant.⁹⁷ There was only one other outward shipment of cheese noted in the accounts sampled, apart from sailors' own provision, which was for 80 stones in December 1565 to Silly.⁹⁸ Additionally there were no inbound shipments of cheese or butter from Milford found in any of the other Bristol Channel coastal port books studied. There were however instances of cheese being shipped *into* Milford from other ports in the Bristol Channel, principally from Barnstaple - such as the 100 stones brought aboard the *Trynitie* by Richard Bennet from Northam in November 1585.⁹⁹

Owen noted that more butter was produced in the shire than in former times and that it 'especiallie' was shipped by sea, but added the rather elliptical qualification, 'but this may not be knowne'.¹⁰⁰ It certainly would not be known from a reading of the Exchequer accounts sampled which featured only one

⁹⁵ TNA E178/3345, fol. 15r.

⁹⁶ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 57.

⁹⁷ TNA E190/1299/8.

⁹⁸ TNA E190/1298/2.

⁹⁹ TNA E122/204/7.

¹⁰⁰ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 57.

outward cargo, of twenty barrels in December 1585 (along with the cheese to Silly). Rather than Milford being an exporter of butter, the Exchequer accounts show frequent shipments into the port. This surfeit of inbound shipments over exports is perhaps explained by an order issued by the Privy Council in 1591 forbidding the export of butter from Pembrokeshire to Spain.¹⁰¹ There is only one reference to butter in the extensive testimony referred to above taken during the 1570s so the problem of illegal export would not seem to have been as pronounced as it was with other commodities.¹⁰² Nevertheless, given that all of the merchants recorded shipping butter coastwise were local men, and that sixteen of the twenty ships freighting it were also local, there must be a strong possibility that they were then reloading the goods into seagoing ships and exporting it; effectively exporting the butter under colour of a coastal cocket. This would seem to offer the best explanation for Owen's comment, as well as explain why frequent imports of butter were required to so rich a pastoral region. The customs accounts therefore appear to omit virtually all of an overseas trade in butter which was regarded as being amongst the most important of the period in this region.

Leather

Outward shipments of white leather were a notable feature of Milford's trade. Shipments to Bristol from Carmarthen, Tenby and Milford were recorded in all of the coastal accounts sampled. Haverfordwest was not recorded exporting this particular item, but nevertheless had a strong association with leather trades which comprised the town's foremost industry.¹⁰³ The range of skins exported from the port was wide including those of goat, sheep, lamb, calf, fox, coney, black coney, otter, marten and stoat. These were shipped in an unworked state and, as was found in the port of Cardiff, there is no indication of

¹⁰¹ Acts PC 1591, 434.

¹⁰² TNA E178 /3345, fol. 9r.

¹⁰³ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 86.

the export of the products of the guilds of glovers, saddlers or shoemakers which existed at Carmarthen and Haverfordwest.¹⁰⁴

Milford was unusual compared to the other Bristol Channel ports in that calf skins were not the foremost item of leather recorded outbound. For instance in 1585/86 48 dozen calf skins were shipped out compared to a much greater 21,000 lamb skins.¹⁰⁵ Moreover Milford was the only Bristol Channel port which shipped lambskins, all the others shown to have been importing them from Ireland. This is consistent with Owen's description of the area immediately to the north of Tenby as one which 'utterth store of hides, tallow and sheepe skinnes and lamb skinns'.¹⁰⁶ Owen then added one of his allusive qualifications, 'this last commoditie little regarded but such as the trade therof hath enriched divers men, neither will I here laye downe what somes of money as I have hard hath been paied in these sheeres for lambeskinns in one maie by londoners'.¹⁰⁷ One of the Londoners to whom Owen referred may have been John Mylward, a London skinner, who was recorded shipping eight packs of lamb skins to Bristol in June 1593.¹⁰⁸ This shipment was also recorded inbound in the Bristol coastal account and so there is no indication that anything underhand was taking place in this instance despite the tone of Owen's comment.

As well as furnishing sheep and lambskins, the pastoral economy of the port's hinterland also provided the basis for a wider trade in leather. Owen listed cattle as the second greatest commodity produced in Pembrokeshire, and noted that along with sheep these had increased greatly in number in recent years.¹⁰⁹ Even so, local herds and flocks were by no means sufficient to meet the totality of local demand for leather, as in addition to exports, the port books also show

¹⁰⁴ B. G. Charles, ed., *Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest, 1539-1660*, History and Law Series, 24 (Cardiff, 1967), 5,30; Lloyd, ed., *Carmarthenshire*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ TNA E122/30/5a, E122/104/7.

¹⁰⁶ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 57-58.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ TNA E190/1299/1.

¹⁰⁹ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 56.

considerable coastal inbound shipments and some overseas imports of leather and animal skins. In 1598/99 these included several dickers of tanned leather from Ireland, along with some unprocessed hides and substandard sheep skins from disease afflicted flocks.¹¹⁰ In 1586 and 1593 coastal imports of Spanish derived leather known as fernando buck were recorded inbound via Barnstaple and Bristol.¹¹¹ The importation of supplementary supplies of leather from overseas, and the import of leather of a particular quality unobtainable locally, are not inconsistent with the established and successful leather trades described above. It is however incongruous that leather was also being received from Bristol, which was ostensibly also the destination for the majority of outbound shipments. These inbound shipments were substantial and regular: in 1565/66 they were in excess of 30 dickers, and in 1598/99 they amounted to 69 dickers.

The reason for the need to import tanned leather even though it was also being shipped from the port is perhaps explained by the understandable refusal of some local tanners to sell their wares to local leatherworkers when they could sell it for higher prices elsewhere. Griffith Jankings, a Carmarthen shoemaker, complained that he was offered 32 dickers of leather at £4 per dicker but 'was not of habilitie to buy so muche and to make payment for the same'.¹¹² The seller then explained that 'the showmakers in Englende that doth buye from him and other marchauntes leather and therby do gaine xxs or xxxs in a diaie'.¹¹³ The vendor in this particular instance was a Frenchman, Peter Parrie, who was acting in concert with John Vaughan, customer of the port and reputed owner of a tan house. According to the testimony offered to the Exchequer commission of enquiry in this regard, the principal and most profitable market for Parrie and Vaughan's leather was not in England however, but overseas. Geoffrey David, a bargeman from Carmarthen explained how he 'accorde to

¹¹⁰ TNA E190/1299/8.

¹¹¹ TNA E122/104/7, E190/1299/1

¹¹² TNA E178/3345, fol. 8v

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

his accustomed manner repaired abowte tyde tyme to the key of carmarthen' where he observed people loading leather into a lighter.¹¹⁴ David was then approached by a man who,

asked of him whither he woulde take hyre for to goe with one Morris barker mariner in the said lighter to the longe poole and this deponent asked what he shoulde doe there. The said Thomas said to healpe the said lighter and leather theirin being to the Brittonnes shippe that roade at the said longe poole and then this deponente said the same Thomas that he would not meadle in carrienge downe of leather and the said Thomas said to this deponent that there was no danger therin and that he woulde warrant this deponent And therupon the said Thomas agreed wth this deponent to give him for his paines iis whereof the said Thomas paide them partlie to this deponent xiid and tolde him that he shoulde receive the other xiid of Richard pherthen this deponente repaired to the said lighter wherin the said leather was and this deponent with the said moris baker the same lighter being manned wth v other personnes whoe hadd swords bucklers and forest billsWhoe together with the said bardge and leather being carred to the longe poole where the said Britoons shippe roade being vii myles distance from Carmarthen the said personnes did lade the said leather owt of the said bardge or lighter and layed yt a boarde the Britoon beinge a barke of I tie tonnes *which* barke a little before had been at Carmarthen.¹¹⁵

On his return David was directed to Carmarthen castle to receive the balance of payment for his labour that night. There he found Richard Pher at dinner. Pher, who was brother in law to Customer John Vaughan, duly gave him the 12d owing. Other testimony described how Vaughan rented Parrie a storehouse located at the waterside at Llanstephan, south of Carmarthen.¹¹⁶ Parrie, who was 'vearie familiar' with Vaughan, kept the only key to the store himself and used the building to store leather prior to its despatch to sea. Another witness described how,

The customer doth permitte and hath suffered all waies at Carmarthen to bee laden caulves skynnes and goate skynnes in the *harbour* without anie cocket granted, custome or anie other dueties paide to the queen's majestie.¹¹⁷

The shoemakers of Haverfordwest were particularly incensed by this traffic as some of them had tried to buy the leather which had been shipped overseas,

¹¹⁴ TNA E178/3345, fol. 6v.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, fols. 6v,7r.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, fol. 5r.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, fol. 8r.

but their offer had been refused by Parrie. They consequently gathered at the quayside at Carmarthen and,

did there endeavour to enter into the said pinishe to staye the same and the leather therein but the said Walter Vaughan and Ffrances Lloide accompanied with Phes ap Ry of Carmarthen and others to the number of x or xii personnes with weapons there being carried did with stand and reskewe them with their weapons dryvng them from the said pinishe in *which* reskewe they harted and wounded the said john ap john in the side..¹¹⁸

It was 'no marvail that leather waxed deare ffor that the same was conveighed beyond the seas owt of thies partes', and one witness had seen 'howse loads of leather sondrie tymes goinge towards the sea..' ¹¹⁹

The testimony recorded was all taken after the death of Vaughan so his defence to the allegations remains unknown. However, that of his brother in law, who was controller of the port, and notably also called Parrie, stands in its place. John Parrie challenged the commissioners contention that it was illegal to issue cockets for the transport of leather, saying that 'he knoweth no lawe to the contrarie to forbidde the officers so to doe', and testified that he and Vaughan 'used to grannte cockettes to all persons seekinge the same from port to port within the realm'.¹²⁰ He denied that any deceitful or false cockets had been issued and maintained that the commissioners only had to consult the port books to find a true and accurate record of trade. Whether the issuing of coastal cockets was illegal or not, it does not seem to have always acted as an impediment to the subsequent illegal shipment of cargoes of leather overseas under colour of a coastal cocket. William Blackehurst, deputy customer at Carmarthen, took a bond of £200 from a Frenchman and issued a certificate to allow the transport of 41 dickers of tanned leather to Barnstaple, which he subsequently learned, had been transported to France.¹²¹ Another witness related how this had been taken to Ilfracombe where it was transhipped aboard

¹¹⁸ Ibid, fol. 7r.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, fol. 6v.

¹²⁰ Ibid, fol. 9v.

¹²¹ Ibid, fol. 6r.

the *Angel* of Bideford and taken to Brest.¹²² That leather continued to be shipped illegally from the port after the date of these testimonies is indicated by a list of seizures made by the searcher in 1593/94 which included 28 dozen small Welsh calf skins and 2,000 Irish skins.¹²³

There is abundant evidence therefore that one of the foremost regional industries conducted certainly a large part, and possibly the greater part of its commercial transactions with scant regard to the controls which were theoretically in place to regulate this trade. Leather was smuggled from all of the Bristol Channel ports in this period, including from Bristol itself, and this was often undertaken with the connivance of the customs officers. In the port of Milford however, the customs officers appear to have been themselves amongst the principal merchants engaged in the trade and to have enjoyed such strong political connections that they were apparently able to act with impunity.

Fish

The existence of a substantial fishing fleet is made clear from a survey of ships undertaken in 1566.¹²⁴ Sixteen ships ranging from six to sixteen tons were listed in the port which sailed 'upp Severne afishinge' or 'to Ireland afishinge'. It is therefore quite surprising to find that Milford imported fish, but a small and irregular inward trade was apparent throughout the period for which Exchequer customs accounts are available.¹²⁵ The importation of herring from Ireland appears to have ceased by the very end of the century however, the reason for which is eloquently provided by George Owen,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 169.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 311-13.

¹²⁵ Imports of red and white herring were received from Wexford in both 1564 and 1586 (Ibid., 58,125). Although imports of fish were generally not recorded during this period for the reasons set out in earlier chapters, these appear to have been recorded and customs levied as the merchants concerned were regarded as alien and not subjects of the realm.

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These kinde of fishe is taken on the shores of this countrey in great abondance, especiallye for the viii t yeares past, more then in former yeeeres, the places of their takeing in this shire most usuallie was in Fishgard, Newport and Dinas, where for manie yeares, and even from the beginninge there hath some quantitie beene yearly taken, of later yeares they haue resorted to Broade havon, Galtop roade, Martin havon, Hoppain and St Brides, ad haue beene plentifullie taken to the great Comoditie of the Countrey, and now in the yeare 1602 they haue been taken wthin Milford havon, and in the Roades of Tenby and Caldey, and neere St Davids, and generallie in everye parte of the sea shoare about this shire from the fall of Tyvy to Earewere; so that it seemed they had laied siede by sea about the Countrey; so greatlie hath god bestowed his blessings that waie upon this poore Countrey, the Lord make vs thankefull therefore.¹²⁶

This abundance may explain the only instance of fish being exported overseas in the Bristol Channel accounts studied: in 1571 sixteen lasts and eight barrels of white herring were shipped to France aboard the *Francis* of Le Conquet.¹²⁷ A reading of Owen however suggests that this sole entry may be unrepresentative of the wider picture as he recorded that the abundance of herring along the coast 'being in great store and sold to partes beyonde sea procureth alsoe some store of money'.¹²⁸

Turning to the wider Atlantic, the first imports of Newfoundland fish were not recorded until March 1566 when a small shipment arrived at Carmarthen from Bristol.¹²⁹ In December of that year a more substantial and direct cargo arrived at Milford from Newfoundland when Sir John Perrot and David Wogan entered for 19,000 fish aboard the 50 ton bark *Perote*.¹³⁰ Although this was the only direct shipment recorded in the Milford accounts, it cannot have been the only one as in September 1566 an outward shipment of 5,000 'newland fish' was made from the port to Bristol, and in 1598 2,000 fish 'de terra nova' were recorded inbound at Bristol from Milford.¹³¹ This suggests that Atlantic cod

¹²⁶ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 121-22.

¹²⁷ TNA E122/30/5.

¹²⁸ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 57.

¹²⁹ TNA E190/1298/1. As has been outlined in previous chapters, although imports of Atlantic cod were exempt from paying duty, some customs clerks did nevertheless record their arrival on some occasions in the customs ledgers, but with a note that they were 'custom free' or some such equivalent.

¹³⁰ TNA E190/1298/6.

¹³¹ TNA E190/1298/10, E190/1132/3.

were arriving into Milford and then being shipped out on the regular coastal trade to Bristol to meet demand there. On the other hand shipments of Atlantic cod continued to arrive *into* the port from Bristol, and on one occasion from Barnstaple, so the traffic was not all one way.¹³² Similarly, small and regular quantities of the fish by-product trayne oil were received from Bristol, Barnstaple and the Cornish ports of Mountsbay and Plymouth.¹³³ If Milford did on occasion have a surplus of cod, it would have to be concluded that this was not always the case therefore.

Although larger than that recorded overseas, the outward coastal trade recorded in the coastal accounts was not especially significant. Herring along with hake were recorded arriving at Bristol from Milford aboard five ships in February 1504; a further two ships with very small cargoes made the journey in 1517; and a further two with one last of herring and ten c of hake in 1565/66.¹³⁴ Elsewhere in the Channel only two imports of fish from Milford were found: one at Bridgwater in 1561/62, and one at Gloucester in 1571.¹³⁵ However a consideration of the recording of trade in oysters suggests that the coastal accounts may not have described all of the coastal trade in fish as well as shellfish. Oysters appear in the coastal accounts only once: in March 1593 when 20,000 were shipped from Milford to Barnstaple.¹³⁶ Although this is the solitary example in the customs accounts, it was evidently far from being an unusual traffic. Owen is again forthcoming on the subject,

Nowe for shell fishe, this sea is allso noe niggard both for plentye and severall kindes. Emonge whome before all I will give place to the Oyster, *which* Mylford havon yeeldeth, most delicate and of severall sortes, and in great aboundance, and is a comoditie much uttered in manie shires, for by water they are transported to Bristoll, and to the Forest of Deane, from whence by lande they are sent to Somersetshire,

¹³² TNA E190/1298/1, E122/30/5a, E122/104/7.

¹³³ TNA E190/1298/5, E190/1298/10, E122/30/5a, E122/104/7, E190/1299/2.

¹³⁴ TNA E122/199/1, E122/21/2, E190/1298/2.

¹³⁵ TNA E122/29/4, E190/1128/14.

¹³⁶ TNA E190/1299/1.

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Gloucestershire, and some partes of Wiltshire, and oftentimes vp the river as afarre as Worcester and Salop...¹³⁷

Further evidence that there was a long established trade is confirmed by the Bridgwater certificate book previously described which dated from the reign of Henry VIII and lists two entries for 30,000 and for 50,000 oysters respectively 'from Wales' along with the Dovey herring.¹³⁸ The relevance of this to the fish trade is that the certificate book also listed one barrel of 'Dovey' herring, (presumably from the Dovey in the north of the port of Milford's jurisdiction).¹³⁹ Although this was only one barrel recorded on one occasion it does nevertheless indicate that there may well have been a wider trade in fish from the port akin to that in oysters which were traded without a coastal certificate and so not usually recorded in the coastal port books. The evidence therefore suggests that the domestic trade in fish and shellfish from the port was substantial, and by the end of the century may even have been a principal branch of trade, but that only a small proportion of it was recorded in the coastal and overseas accounts.

Fruit

A similar unrecorded although substantial trade in fruit is revealed in the Haverfordwest borough accounts.¹⁴⁰ Between three and twelve boats were recorded bringing between 22 and 160 tons of apples annually to Haverfordwest from 1586, and Owen writes of the 'the aple men of the Forest who come hither yerely with many barckes laden with Aples and peares, sell the same here at their pleasure, which carieth away as much money as the dredgers of Myllford receave for their oisters'.¹⁴¹ In common with other ports studied large volumes of more exotic dried fruit were imported on a regular basis. Apart

¹³⁷ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 124.

¹³⁸ TNA E122/27/28.

¹³⁹ TNA E122/27/28.

¹⁴⁰ Charles, ed., *Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest*.

¹⁴¹ George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading', 28; Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 57.

from one exception in 1586 however, these shipments were all received coastally, principally from Bristol.¹⁴²

It is surprising to find that Milford was apparently so dependent on the coastal trade emanating from Bristol for trayne oil and dried fruits. These products were associated with trade to Iberia and the far Atlantic, and the absence of direct inward traffic suggests that Milford's merchants and ships were not as developed as those found elsewhere in the Bristol Channel. At Barnstaple, similarly situated but on the opposing shore of the Channel, the opposite situation prevailed. There was no *inward* coastal traffic for these products, but a frequent *outbound* coastal trade with dried fruit that had arrived in directly from overseas, and usually on Barnstable ships. This reflected the fact that by the end of the century Barnstable's merchants and fleet had become established as significant players in the developing wider oceanic trade. With the exception of the bark *Perote* mentioned above, the port books seem to suggest that Milford's trade remained much more regionally focussed.

Wine

Although 'particular' Exchequer accounts were not compiled in the port prior to 1559, some earlier information relating to wine imports is available from the Ministers' accounts which were summarised by E.A. Lewis. The earliest of these are records of a tax on wine payable only by alien merchants, known as butlerage, which run through to 1544.¹⁴³ These more restricted records are not directly comparable to the later port books therefore, but the information which they contain is nonetheless valuable as it reveals a large number of Portuguese ships trafficking wine and other commodities to the port until the 1560s. In 1516/17 for instance in excess of 147 tuns were imported aboard the *James*, the *Mary*, the *Sancte Spyrite* and the *Sancta Maria* all from Aveiro into Tenby; and the *Petur*, the *John*, the *Margarete*, and the *Michel* also all from

¹⁴² The exception was from Barnstaple TNA E190/1298/2.

¹⁴³ Lewis, 'Medieval Wales', 164-66.

Aveiro into Haverfordwest.¹⁴⁴ In 1543/44 a further three ships from Aveiro and another Portuguese ship were again recorded inbound at Tenby with 106 tuns; and in June 1558 three Aveiro ships were recorded into Tenby and one to Milford.¹⁴⁵ These and other ships recorded from Portugal represent an exceptionally strong trading link in this direction. By contrast, a combined total of only ten entries for ships from Aveiro were found in all of the customs accounts sampled for all of the other ports in the Bristol Channel (including Bristol) during the whole of the century.¹⁴⁶ This traffic into Milford persisted until 1566. After this date, although some trade with Portugal continued until the end of the century, no Portuguese ships, nor any Portuguese merchants were recorded in the Exchequer accounts. The sudden halt to a long established pattern of trade may perhaps be attributed to disruptions caused by disputes over rights to trade in west Africa, which resulted in a series of mutual seizures of English and Portuguese ships by their respective governments.¹⁴⁷ Alternatively it may have been triggered by the introduction of customs rates on alien merchants in line with those pertaining in England. A warrant issued in 1565 ordered that from Easter 1566 'you charge in the accomptes of the Customers of the said porte and Creekes for the Custome of all straungers goodes to be brought into or carried furth of the same according to such rates as in case lieke is used in England'.¹⁴⁸

The Ministers' accounts compiled by Lewis additionally provide some figures relating to wine imports which supplement those described in the later series of Exchequer port books.¹⁴⁹ It is apparent from Figure 6.2 that there are

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 164-65.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 166; Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 52-53.

¹⁴⁶ TNA E190/930/21, E190/1270/3, E190/923/3.

¹⁴⁷ Sacks, *Trade, Society and Politics*, 311-12.

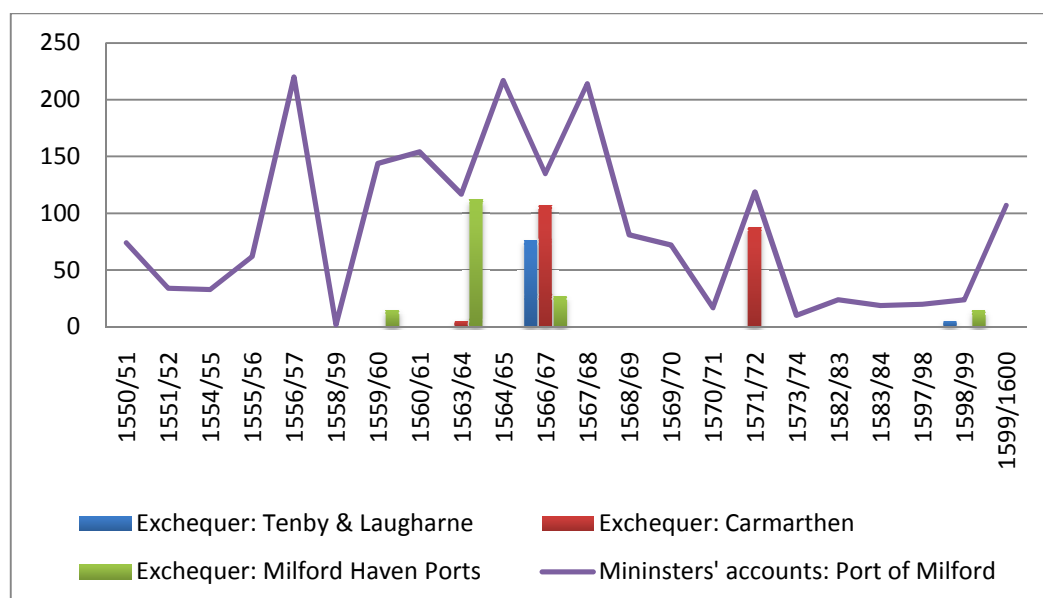
¹⁴⁸ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 327.

¹⁴⁹ From 1550 to 1560 these comprise particulars of the customs accounts for the whole port of Milford which were compiled on the same basis as the port books, although were not as detailed (Ibid., 49-53). From 1560 until the end of the century these comprise details of the tonnage due in the port of Milford taken from the enrolled accounts (Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 329-36). Although Lewis states that tonnage was collected in the port of Milford from 1565, the figures which he transcribed show it collected from 1559 (Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, xvi cf. 330).

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discrepancies in the volumes recorded between the Ministers' accounts and port books, and it should be borne in mind that these are fiscal records of tax revenues rather than calendars of actual commercial events. Despite discrepancies however, the figures are of a comparable order of magnitude, and whilst they do not necessarily match in the particular years for which both sources survive, the Ministers' accounts do provide some corroboration of the port book figures, and provide data for years in which the port books do not survive.

Figure 6.2 Port of Milford: imports of wine (tuns).¹⁵⁰



The volumes recorded in both sources seem to have been unaffected by changes to the method of levying customs introduced in 1559, and by the 1565 warrant which confirmed that tonnage was to be levied in the port. The success of this may be partly attributed to the decision taken by the Crown to exempt Wales from the new impost on French wine which had been introduced in England,

¹⁵⁰ Figures for the Ministers' accounts have been extracted as per note 51. For the Exchequer accounts as follows: TNA E122/104/2, E122/205/7, E122/30/5, E190/1298/8, E190/1298/7, E190/1299/8, E190/1299/13. Quantities have been rounded.

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...in consideracion of the longe and dangerous traveile of such as bringe wyne into those parties and of these newe paymente of subsidie of Tonnage and Pondage it hath not hitherunto bene nor yet is thought convenient to chardge any parte of the newe impost as in thother partes of England lest by overburdeninge of the marchauntes there the Quene shoulde be greatilie hindred of her subsidie the Countrey should be utterlie destitute of wines which were greatlie to their hindraunce by reason of the greate scarcetie of mault there.¹⁵¹

The figures in Figure 6.2 suggest that the Crown was initially largely successful in its strategy of maximising revenue by not overburdening the affected merchants. This contrasts sharply to the situation at Bristol where wine imports fell by an average of 58 percent between 1559 and 1569 following the introduction of the impost.¹⁵² Indeed the sharp and sustained rise in imports described in Figure 6.2 may even indicate that wine was consequently routed into Milford rather than other ports where the impost would have been due. There is no indication from the coastal accounts of a corresponding rise in outward shipments of wine from the port to other domestic destinations, but there would have been no advantage to be gained in making such shipments legally as the impost would have fallen due once they reached England. Any such shipments may therefore have been freighted illegally to England in small consignments as appeared to have been the case from the port of Cardiff. A further incentive for merchants to import wine via Milford would have been the *de facto* suspension of the duties of butlerage and prisage on wine in the port from 1565.¹⁵³ A customs officer at Tenby attested in 1577 that he 'knowth of prisage and buttlerage but none suche executed', and the customer himself said that 'touchinge the office of *prisage* and butlerage for the execution of the same in due order he knoweth non used excersised by any maner of person or persons'.¹⁵⁴ It would therefore have served merchants to import wine in large ships to Milford and then break bulk and tranship into smaller vessels which

¹⁵¹ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, 327. Lewis describes the impost on French wines as being levied only infrequently in the port of Milford, but more regularly in the port of Cardiff from 1580 (*Ibid*, xvi).

¹⁵² Jones, *Illicit Economy*, 240.

¹⁵³ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*, xvi.

¹⁵⁴ TNA E178/3345, fol.17v.

could operate across the Channel so avoiding the prisage which would have been due in England.

The profile of ships and merchants recorded importing wine into Milford is incongruous when compared to English ports in the Bristol Channel in that the customs accounts list only petty coastal traders, or large shipments imported by occasional merchants with no local connections. There was no individual merchant or group of merchants who had a commanding market share. This contrasts to the English Bristol Channel ports where a small group of wealthy merchants, usually those who held high civic offices, were seen to have gained an increasingly large market share. There were only two instances found of local ships importing wine directly from overseas, both of which occurred in 1599 when the *Phoenix* brought three tuns from La Rochelle to Tenby, and the *Mathew* brought two tuns to Milford.¹⁵⁵ These were hardly significant amounts therefore. Milford is also notable in the Exchequer records for a number of Scottish and Irish ships freighting wine compared to other Bristol Channel ports. Three Scottish ships imported 64 tuns of wine in 1564, and in 1598/99 six ships from Wexford and Waterford imported just over eleven tuns. Whilst this is a reflection of Milford's geographical position, located close to Ireland and on the sea route to the north, it could be interpreted as reflecting a relative commercial weakness on the part of the port's merchants and mariners who the port books show do not appear to have conducted this trade themselves. The largest single cargo recorded in the accounts sampled was 35 tuns, which was freighted aboard a Scottish ship by Thomas Forrest, an alien merchant in 1563/64.¹⁵⁶ This represented slightly less than a third of all wine declared in the accounts in that year, but this particular merchant did not appear subsequently. The situation was very similar in 1571/72 when a French vessel arrived at Carmarthen with 32 tuns representing just over one third of that year's declared imports, but the merchant responsible, Peter Brevell from Le Conquet, was not

¹⁵⁵ TNA E190/1299/8.

¹⁵⁶ TNA E122/205/7.

recorded again.¹⁵⁷ Coastwise shipments of wine into the port were recorded fairly frequently, but wine was never the main item of cargo in these coastal vessels, with the average shipment amounting to slightly over one tun. The Exchequer accounts therefore indicate that the involvement of Milford's merchants and ships in the wine trade was minimal.

The Exchequer accounts may present a misleading picture in this respect however. The volumes of wine imported from 1572 through to 1599/1600 do seem extraordinarily low given the size of the port's constituent towns and the volumes recorded earlier in the century. In contrast to the one to two hundred tuns recorded annually in the first half of the century the Exchequer accounts do not record volumes of greater than 24 tuns after 1573/74 until the final year of the century. For comparison, despite the commercial difficulties posed by war with Spain in the later century, Bridgwater imported 123 tuns in 1583/84 and 69 tuns in 1596/98, whilst Barnstaple imported 53 tuns in 1595/96. Wine was one of the most important and valuable commodities imported into all ports of the Bristol Channel, including Bristol, during this period and it is difficult to believe that the wine trade to Milford did not involve greater volumes and prominent local figures and merchants in the way in which the customs accounts seem to indicate. In view of the very low volumes of wine recorded in the customs and Ministers' accounts in the last quarter of the century, and the close relationship between the customs officers and the local political and merchant elite, it seems likely that a significant part of Milford's wine imports were simply not entered for customs. They may even have been imported under the exemption of provision on the grounds that they were for consumption by the large households and retinues of Sir John Perrot and the Deveruex families, rather than for trading by way of merchandise.¹⁵⁸ Again

¹⁵⁷ TNA E122/30/5.

¹⁵⁸ Williams notes that the Duke of Norfolk 'never paid a penny on goods he imported for his vast household' (Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 46).

therefore by the end of the century the customs accounts may have under represented this branch of trade by a significant margin.

Salt

The greater part of the trade from Portugal was in salt rather than wine, and Milford was found to be unusual amongst Bristol Channel ports in the large quantities of salt which it imported from this source. Three hundred and fifteen tons were imported from Portugal in 1500/01, 203 tons in 1516/17, 325 tons in 1517/18, and 154 tons in 1543/44.¹⁵⁹ In contrast no other Bristol Channel port was found to have imported more than 80 tons in any one year from Portugal.¹⁶⁰ The Ministers' accounts indicate that in excess of 90 percent of salt shipped to the port by foreign merchants was sourced from Portugal rather than France in the period from 1516 to 1518.¹⁶¹ Origin of shipments was not recorded in the Exchequer overseas accounts for this period so no comparable figure can be given for English ports. In 1565/66 however the port books indicate that Milford received 58 percent of its salt imports from Portugal compared to fourteen percent recorded in the nearest comparable fiscal period for Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.¹⁶²

The overall volumes of salt imports remained robust throughout the century with 428 tons recorded in 1559/60, 261 tons in 1563/64 and 386 tons in 1598/99. By the end of the century however the later Exchequer accounts indicate that imports of salt from France, particularly from La Rochelle, had largely replaced those from Portugal. In 1598/99 Portuguese sourced imports of salt had fallen to 25 percent of the overall total for this commodity. As with imports of wine, ships from outside the port carried the vast bulk of the overseas import trade recorded in the Exchequer accounts after 1559, with only sixteen percent freighted aboard ships recorded with a local home port. The

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, 'Medieval Wales', 163-66.

¹⁶⁰ TNA E122/27/21.

¹⁶¹ Lewis, 'Medieval Wales', 164.

¹⁶² TNA E190/1298/6 cf. E190/925/10, E190/925/3.

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majority of trade described in customs was freighted aboard ships from outside the port therefore, confirming the observations already made about the apparent profile of Milford's fleet and merchants.

The profile of Milford's salt trade accorded more closely with that of Barnstaple than with Bridgwater. Whilst at Bridgwater imports of salt were seen to have fallen substantially over the century, at Barnstaple they rose, and it was suggested that this increase may have been the result of increased demand from the expanding fish processing industries both in North Devon and in Newfoundland. Given the very extensive expansion in the fish catch outlined by George Owen, and the involvement of at least one of Milford's ships in the Atlantic fish trade, a similar development may have occurred at Milford.

Iron

The scope of Milford's recorded trade in iron was relatively restricted. Table 6.5 indicates that iron was almost entirely sourced indirectly via the coastal trade, rather than by direct overseas import. Bristol was the main source of this coastal trade followed by Barnstaple.

Table 6.5 Port of Milford: imports and inbound coastal shipments of iron (tons).

	Overseas	Coastal
1559/60	0	-
1565/66	-	91
1585/86	2	46
1592/93	-	19
1598/99	18	-

Bristol also shipped lead, pewter, tin, brass, and on one occasion steel, to Milford.¹⁶³ Amongst the worked items listed were pins, wire, board and lathe nails, brass and pewter pots, and spurs. Brass pans were recorded inbound from

¹⁶³ TNA E190/1299/8, E190/1299/13.

Dartmouth, and horse shoes and worked tin from Barnstaple.¹⁶⁴ There was however also an outbound trade in some of these products. Brass and pewter were shipped to Barnstaple and Bristol in 1560, 1566, 1586 and 1593.¹⁶⁵ This regular trade suggests an established craft such as that found at Carmarthen where a company of hammer men was incorporated in 1569.¹⁶⁶

As with coastal shipments of wine, iron formed a small part of many inward mixed cargoes, and as a consequence no one merchant had a significant market share or was particularly associated with trade in this product. For instance thirteen merchants accounted for the 45 tons shipped into Carmarthen in 1565/66, or eight for the seventeen tons shipped into the Milford Haven ports in 1585/86. There is less reason for scepticism in interpretation of the information in the Exchequer accounts in relation to inbound shipments of iron compared to other commodities. Overseas iron imports were seen to have fallen dramatically in other Bristol Channel ports towards the end of the century, and these were largely replaced with domestic production shipped coastwise. The trade described here therefore accords with the wider end of century pattern of trade.

Cloth and Wool

Milford shared some of the characteristics of the Irish economy in the decline and eventual eclipse of its once thriving woollen cloth manufacture.¹⁶⁷ The decline is well documented. In 1557 the concerns of the Mayor and town council at Haverfordwest were expressed in an ordinance issued to revive the industry,

Before this time the making of friezes and 'fullclothes' within the town has been not only a great commodity to the common wealth of the town but also the inhabitants in times past have had their living thereby which now is utterly almost decayed. The cause of the decay is that burgesses and inhabitants convey and sell

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ TNA E122/104/2, E122/104/7, E190/1298/5, E190/1299/1.

¹⁶⁶ Lloyd, ed., *Carmarthenshire*, 18.

¹⁶⁷ Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade*, 82-85.

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wool and woollen yarn out of the town to strangers and foreigners. For remedy therof it is ordered that no burgesses or inhabitants shall sell or convey out of the town to any stranger or foreigner any kind of wool or wollen yarn except it be first made in cloth.¹⁶⁸

George Owen's end of century observation on the wool trade confirmed that this particular ordinance had been ineffective: twice the amount of wool was produced in Pembrokeshire as forty years ago, he wrote, but then 'all occupied and wrought within the sheere, and sold in frises and now all sold unwrought'; great 'want and inconvenience' had resulted from 'the not workinge of our owne countrys wooll by our owne people, but sell the same unwrought to other countries..'.¹⁶⁹ By 1607 the Privy Council was informed that 'the decay of the said town of Tenby as of other towns in these parts hath chiefly grown by loss and discontinuance of the trade of clothing'.¹⁷⁰ The coastal accounts chart this decline: in 1565/66 there were 34 instances of frieze recorded outbound; nineteen in 1585/85; and just seven in 1592/93. Trying to determine this decrease in volume terms is a necessarily inaccurate exercise as in practice the cloths were unlikely to have been produced to a standard size. Moreover they were recorded by the piece, pack, fardel and yard. An approximate measure based on 30 yards to the piece, and ten pieces to a pack, with five allowed for a fardel, would suggest a decline of over 80 percent in the volumes shipped from 1565/66 to 1592/93.¹⁷¹ The underlying cause of the decline is widely recognised to have been due to falling demand for this type of cloth as a result of new more attractive products being introduced.¹⁷²

Milford was not alone in experiencing these challenging market conditions, and the response of Barnstaple and its Devonian hinterland has already been

¹⁶⁸ Charles, ed., *Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Davies, *Economic History*, 66.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 87.

¹⁷¹ The piece is valued at £1 in 1564 and 1570 (TNA E122/205/7, E190/927/15). The yard was not found to be valued after the approximate doubling in rates made in 1558 but prior to this was valued at 4d (e.g. TNA E122/27/21). On a like for like basis therefore the piece seems to have contained 30 yards for customs purposes. A pack of cloth has been valued in line with the Gloucester Port Books database at 10 pieces: Wanklyn et al., 'Gloucester Port Book Database'.

¹⁷² Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 89-90.

described. The response of Milford's merchants took a different path. As Figure 6.3 shows, merchants increasingly fell back to shipping out wool: 1,057 stones were recorded outbound in the 1565/66 coastal accounts; 6,170 in 1585/86; and 8,130 in 1592/93. As indicated above, Owen estimated that sheep flocks had doubled to meet this demand and he detailed how 'the lower part of the shire ven and sell their wool to Bristowe men, Barstable and Somersetsheere which comm twice every yeare to the countye to buy the wooll'.¹⁷³ The port books bear out that Bristol accounted for 56 percent of the volume shipped out, followed by Minehead with the nearby Dunster receiving 36 percent, and Barnstaple and other North Devon ports seven percent. June and October were the peak months for this traffic, but activity was by no means confined only to this period. There is however an anomaly in the coastal accounts in respect to the wool trade. Of the sixteen ships recorded outbound freighting wool from Milford to Bristol in 1592/93 only eleven were subsequently recorded inbound in the Bristol coastal account.¹⁷⁴ Whilst 4,540 stones of wool were despatched from Milford, only 2,800 stones were recorded as received at Bristol. There are no indications that this was being freighted overseas under colour of a coastal cocket, or that it was being shipped elsewhere domestically. The implications of this and other discrepancies will be considered in the final chapter.

¹⁷³ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 57.

¹⁷⁴ TNA E190/1131/7 cf. E190/1299/1 & E190/1299/2.

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Figure 6.3 Port of Milford: outbound coastal shipments of frieze and wool.



In one sense the increasing reliance of the local economy on the export of a primary product, whilst experiencing a decline in the export of a value-added secondary product, can be seen to be economically regressive. On the other hand however, it can be interpreted as an opportunistic exploitation of new market opportunities. Although demand for locally produced cloth was declining, locally produced sheep had a number of advantages. Their wool was coarser and had a longer staple than that of many breeds of English sheep, and was therefore particularly suitable for carding and in the manufacture of new types of cloth.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, as Owen argued, sheep 'yealdeth great profitt with litle chardge: for in this countrie they feede not their sheepe with haye in winter as is used in divers partes of England, but let them gett their livinge out them selves... for fodder they never bestowe on them, for in this countrie the snowe never coverth the grounde for any longe tyme and therefore they are sure always of feedinge'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 142; Carla Rahn Phillips, 'The Spanish Wool Trade, 1500-1780', *Journal of Economic History*, 42 (1982), 775-96, 791; Youings, 'Economic History', 168.

¹⁷⁶ Owen, ed., *Description of Penbrokeshire*, 56.

Coal

In the 1530s Leland had noted that Pembrokeshire 'is sumwbat baren of wood', and in the later century a national shortage of timber began to be acutely felt, with Pembrokeshire reported as one of the shires most affected.¹⁷⁷ This shortage was reflected in the imports of wood, planks and boards from Ireland to Milford and Tenby, and from Bristol to Carmarthen in the accounts sampled from 1563 onwards. Owen described how sea coal was traded from the south of the county to Ireland and France, and that in view of its increasing price, there was some resistance to this trade from 'the countrie people' who feared that it might run out.¹⁷⁸ Mining of coal was not a new phenomenon however and had been noted by Leland around Llanelli and Carmarthen in the 1530s. Leland had drawn a distinction between stone coal near Kidwelly and ring coal near Llanelli.¹⁷⁹ The customs accounts list ring coal, run coal, great coal, stone coal, small coal, coal, and culm. Ring and run coal were bitumous types which were suitable for use by smiths.¹⁸⁰ Their disadvantage for domestic use was that they tended to clump when burned, or as Owen described it 'melteth and runneth as wax and groweth into one clod'.¹⁸¹ The coal from the west of the port was anthracite, which was superior for domestic use as it 'burneth apart and never clingeth together,' and 'beinge once kindled geaveth a greater heate than light, and deliteth to burn in darke places'.¹⁸² Culm was valued at one sixth the price of coal by Owen and described by him as 'in deed but vearie dust which serveth for lyme burninge'.¹⁸³

The quantities which were declared of these various grades of coal were never as considerable as those from Swansea and Neath in the port of Cardiff. There

¹⁷⁷ Hatcher, *Coal Industry*, 50; Leland, *Itinerary of John Leland 2*, 115.

¹⁷⁸ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 57.

¹⁷⁹ Leland, *Itinerary of John Leland 2*, 60.

¹⁸⁰ Owen, 'Historical Aspects of Peat Cutting', 135.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Owen, ed., *Description of Pembrokeshire*, 90.

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was however a trade of some significance which shows some interesting regional variations.

Table 6.6 Port of Milford: exports of coal (tons).¹⁸⁴

	Burry	Carmarthen	Tenby	Milford Haven ports	Port of Milford
1559/60	-	-	-	-	226
1563/64	-	16	-	29	-
1566/67	-	103	-	180	-
1571/72	6	15	-	-	-
1585/86	5	42	10	504	-
1598/99	74	144	21	619	-

Table 6.6 charts a clear upward trend with greater exports from Milford than Carmarthen, and very low levels of overseas exports from the coal producing regions around Burry until the end of the century. The latter can perhaps be explained by this being the location of the coal mines owned by Customer Vaughan who it was claimed gave license to all boats under twelve tons ‘to bee free from painge anie custome for cocket and from painge of any entrie’; ‘many small boates reported to lade cole by reson of the libertie aforesaid and their boughte of the said Vaughan their laddinge of cole free from painge of custome either for cocket or entrie to the greate gaine of the said Vaughan and the greate inconvenience and discommoditie of the *Queen’s majeste*’.¹⁸⁵ It will be remembered that Vaughan ceased to hold the office of customer in 1596, and the low levels recorded in the customs accounts prior to this date, which contrasted to contemporary descriptions of this region, indicate that this allegation must have been substantially true. The claim that Vaughan allowed vessels which were specifically under twelve tons to proceed without entry in customs, rather than all ships, suggests that an exemption may have been in

¹⁸⁴ The ton has been calculated at 0.8 of a wey, with 10 weys to the c as per Nef, *British Coal Industry*, 373.

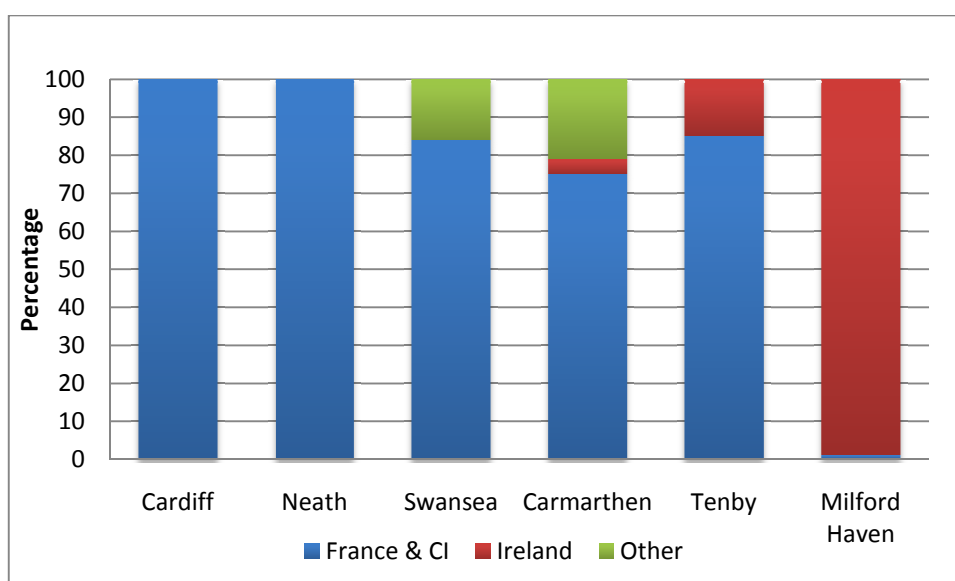
¹⁸⁵ TNA E178/3345, fol.6v.

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place in the port which was analogous to that in the port of Cardiff where trows passing to Bridgwater were found to be allowed to pass without lodging a bond or being subject to coastal customs control.

The earliest available Exchequer accounts show the export of 226 tons from the port of Milford in 1559/60, and whilst the destination is not given, the home port of the ships indicates that this was bound overwhelmingly for Wexford. Subsequent accounts usually detail the destination and confirm that almost all shipments from ports within the Haven were bound for Ireland: of 74 ships listed with a destination in the accounts sampled in Table 6.6, only one was recorded bound elsewhere. In complete contrast, Carmarthen's trade showed only one ship bound for Ireland, with the rest recorded outward to France. Burry and Tenby had a similar profile to Carmarthen, although with far less volume as indicated in Table 6.6. As such the ports of Burry, Carmarthen and Tenby had a focus of trade which bore more similarity to that of Swansea and Neath than with the ports within Milford Haven. This relationship is represented graphically in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 Ports of Cardiff and Milford: overseas exports of coal by destination (volume % share)



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The difference is striking and is partly explained with reference to the different types of coal described above. Figure 6.5 shows that 65 percent of the volume freighted to Ireland from ports within Milford Haven comprised culm, and that Tenby, which was the second largest exporter to Ireland, was also the second largest shipper of culm.

Figure 6.5 Ports of Cardiff and Milford: exports of coal by port and type (volume % share)

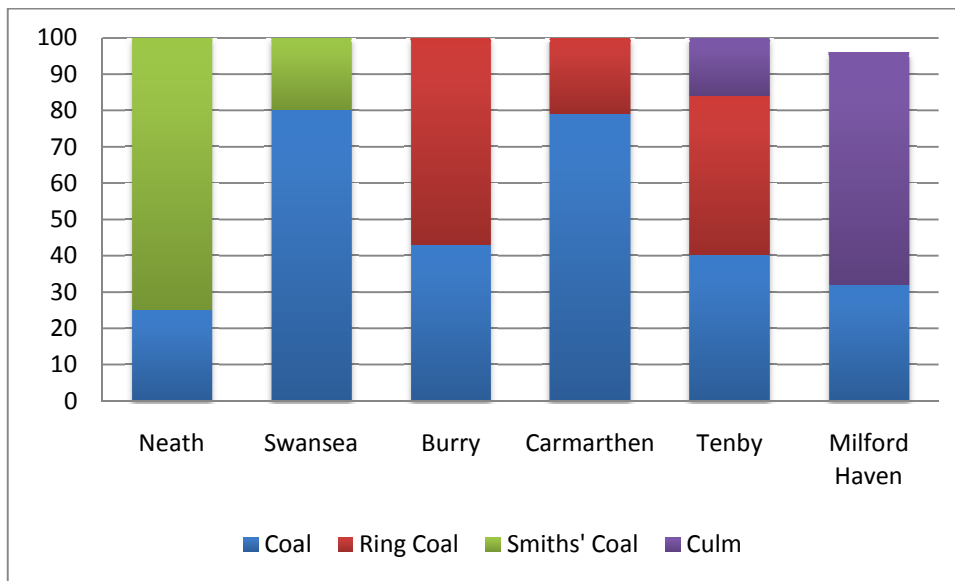


Table 6.5 also corroborates Leland's description of the different types of coal found around Burry and Llanelli.

The trade recorded in the coastal accounts was a great deal smaller than that in their overseas counterparts. In 1565/66 just one shipment was declared, which was of only two tons shipped from Llanelli to Bideford.¹⁸⁶ In 1585/86 the figure was substantially higher at 118 tons but this included an exceptional shipment of 62 tons to London.¹⁸⁷ Other destinations that year were to Dartmouth and Plymouth. In 1592/93 a solitary shipment was again made - of four tons from Carmarthen to Fowey.¹⁸⁸ Apart from one small cargo to Bideford there was a

¹⁸⁶ TNA E190/1298/1.

¹⁸⁷ TNA E122/30/5a, E122/104/7.

¹⁸⁸ TNA E190/1299/2.

complete absence of recorded trade within the Bristol Channel.¹⁸⁹ The customs accounts indicate that Milford was unusual amongst the Bristol Channel ports for its apparent reliance on coastal trade which formed the main conduit for both the import and export of a range of basic commodities. The trade in coal was an exception to this pattern however, and was one in which overseas exports almost wholly eclipsed the coastal trade.

The question arises therefore as to whether the coastal accounts fully describe this trade from the port of Milford, not only because Milford apparently shipped virtually no coal coastally within the Bristol Channel, but also as it was previously shown that Cardiff had a much greater cross channel trade than is apparent from the Exchequer accounts. Whilst Bristol Channel ports located closer to the coalfields of Cardiff and Bristol may have had no need of coal from Milford, it is difficult to believe the same of Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. Both of these ports enjoyed close trading relations with Milford's ports, and had no inland coalfields to supply them, but did not record the import of any coal at all in their customs returns. A note in the Barnstaple town clerk's ledger in 1596 indicates that the town was nevertheless supplied with Welsh coal.¹⁹⁰ The existence of trade in this direction is also confirmed by incidental information made in the submissions to the Exchequer enquiry concerning John Vaughan's malfeasances of the customership, which indicates that coal was freighted to Barnstaple as well as to Bristol despite the lack of evidence for this in the coastal accounts.¹⁹¹ The likelihood would seem to be therefore, that as was the case in the port of Cardiff, a substantial part of domestic trade in coal from the port to destinations within the Bristol Channel may not have been recorded in the coastal accounts but was instead been sent under let pass or provision exemption, perhaps on the grounds that it was being despatched in small vessels that were not considered likely to attempt an overseas voyage.

¹⁸⁹ TNA E190/1298/1.

¹⁹⁰ Gray, ed., *Lost Chronicle*, 84.

¹⁹¹ TNA E174/3345 fols. 183, 184

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As with the trade in the port of Cardiff, the marketing of coal seems to have been a fractured and diverse affair with no dominance of the sector by any particular merchant or merchant grouping. Ships from Milford Haven accounted for the freighting of over half of the coal and culm shipments from there to Ireland, with Wexford vessels accounting for a further quarter of the trade. This market share was reasonably consistently maintained, but at Carmarthen a much more volatile picture emerges. Ships with a Carmarthen home port freighted half of all overseas coal exports in 1563/64, but none at all in 1571/72, and over 90 percent in 1598/99. Around half of the trade was shipped aboard ships with a French home port in 1563/64 and 1571/72, but ships from London and Orkney accounted for 75 percent of the trade in 1585/86. In the light of this it is unsurprising to find that no one merchant or group of merchants was represented on a continual basis in the coal trade from Carmarthen. The situation in Milford Haven was not dissimilar despite the frequency and regularity of shipments from there to south eastern Ireland. The largest market share in any one year was 28 percent in 1563/64 held by Thomas Nicholas, but this represented one relatively large shipment and he was not recorded two years later in 1565/66. William Harris was the largest shipper in both 1585/86 and 1598/99 but even so his market share was not above ten percent. It seems likely that the real major figures in this trade are hidden behind the statistics in the port books, and were at one remove from the trade recorded there. Men such as Customer Vaughan, reputed owner of coal mines, who shipped coal on his own account but also sold it to the petty traders listed in the port books.

The trading connections between Milford and Ireland are significant, as this was the one port studied in which trade with Ireland increased rather than decreased in the later century. Table 6.7 expresses this by the number of shipping movements recorded both outbound and inbound.

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Table 6.7 Shipping movements to and from Ireland: comparison of ports.¹⁹²

	Bridgwater	North Devon	Gloucester	Cardiff	Milford
1566/67	-	-	-	-	37
1576/77	-	6	-	-	-
1579/80	-	9	-	0	-
1581/82	-	1	17	-	-
1583/84	15	-	-	-	-
1585/86	11	-	-	-	-
1586/87	-	-	-	-	44
1592/93	-	-	11	-	-
1594/95	-	-	-	0	-
1595/96	-	4	-	-	-
1597/98	8	1	1	-	-
1598/99	-	-	-	-	85

In one sense it is quite surprising to find that there was much trade at all between Milford and Ireland. Although both were geographically close, they were also economically very similar in the range of commodities which they produced. Apart from coal and wood, there would seem to have been little to have been gained from exchange. Both were producers of coarse, woollen cloth, and both experienced a decline in this trade with England; both were pastorally based economies exporting a range of animal skins and wool; and both bordered rich fishing grounds which they were well placed to exploit. Neither produced luxury products, and neither had heavy industries of the type found elsewhere in south Wales. The recorded outward flow of goods to Ireland was comprised almost entirely of culm or coal, with the occasional shipment of foodstuff for provision of the English army. The inward flow however covered a diverse range of products including Irish cloth, tallow, flocks, hoops staves, poles, oar blades, lathes, hides and leather, and fish. There were also instances of the arrival of goods from Ireland to Milford which were sourced from outside Ireland, including wine, salt, and pitch. The quantities were not great however:

¹⁹² For Bridgwater etc see Appendix A; for Milford the relevant accounts are E190/1298/4, E190/1298/7, E122/104/9, E122/104/13, E122/30/3, E190/1299/8, E190/1299/13.

for instance in 1585/86 eight tons of salt arrived aboard two ships; and in 1598/99 just over eleven tuns of wine arrived in four ships. To a limited extent nonetheless, trade from Ireland supplemented that which was being received coastally from Bristol, and directly from overseas in these commodities. In the light of the overwhelming instances of coal and culm shipped from the port to Ireland, it has to be concluded however, that the driver of this increase in end of century trade between Milford and Ireland was demand in Ireland for coal and culm, rather than demand in Milford for Irish goods.

This explanation alone is not sufficient to account for this relationship however, as little or no trade with Ireland was found between the coal producing port towns in the east of the port, nor with the port towns under the jurisdiction of Cardiff. The particularly strong political connections between Milford and Ireland may also therefore go some way to explaining this relationship. Sir John Perrot had extensive land holdings in Pembrokeshire and Munster which perhaps account for some degree of exchange and interaction between the two places. Perhaps more significantly there were large established Irish communities in south west Wales. As early as c.1528 a letter from Carmarthen to Wolsey had complained about the number of Irishmen coming into the area, and George Owen recounted how some parishes were entirely populated with Irish, and believed that in the near future they might outnumber the other inhabitants.¹⁹³ There would therefore have been plenty of cross Irish Sea social and familial links which help to explain the pattern of trade.

The social nature of these links between Milford and Ireland, the frequent traffic between the two places, and the physical geography of the port with its many coves and inlets, make it questionable how fully trade between the two places was reflected in the customs accounts. Dr. Phaer's observation of the

¹⁹³ Edward F. S. A. Owen, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts relating to Wales in the British Museum*, Cymmrodorion Record Series, 4 (London, 1900), 30; Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales, c.1415-1642* (Oxford, 1987), 462.

level of smuggling of money and corn to Ireland has already been noted. That there was some concealment later in the century is revealed by the record of the under searcher at Tenby who enthusiastically harried Vaughan's trade in this respect. On one occasion he seized Vaughan's ship, *The Grace of God*, with 54 yards of Irish linen cloth, and on another occasion was party to the seizure of 94 yards of frieze and thirteen mantles as well as a number of hides in a Wexford ship.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion

A straightforward reading of the port books indicates that the focus of Milford's trade was relatively parochial compared to other ports in the region. The Exchequer accounts suggest that Milford was reliant on coastal trade to an unusual extent compared to other ports within the Channel. Much of its commercial activity was routed through Bristol, and to a lesser extent through Barnstaple. It is not easy to quantify this in total terms as many items in the coastal accounts cannot be valued. As an indication however, in 1585/86 £10 worth of frieze was recorded in the overseas accounts compared to £1,890 in the coastal accounts; or £8 of iron in the overseas accounts compared to £190 in the coastal accounts; or £40 of salt from overseas compared to £65 coastally. The merchant marine of Carmarthen and Milford described in the customs accounts also reflected this focus on short distance trading with only one vessel with a Milford home port recorded sailing further than northern France, and the presence of many larger ships from outside the port authority. This is also reflected in the size of the local fleet. The largest ship in the overseas accounts was the 80 ton *Gifte* of Tenby, but this was exceptional, with the average tonnage of Milford's ships being just eighteen tons. Milford was therefore apparently more dependent on the metropolitan centre of Bristol than other ports in the Bristol Channel. The port's geographical position in the far west, with a long land journey to more major markets perhaps explains the

¹⁹⁴ TNA E178/3345, fol. 17r.

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prevalence of items of grocery ware, haberdashers ware, and consumer goods found in its coastal accounts when compared to other ports studied. In this respect Milford can be seen to have been in an analogous situation to Ireland, exporting basic primary goods to Bristol, and importing a range of secondary consumer items. These included cups, cupboards, bedsteads, stools, glasses, earthenware jugs, treen items, wheelbarrows, lanterns, playing cards and more generally 'diverse goods, 'household stuff' and 'dry ware'. It was not that these and similar goods were not apparent in the wider coastal trade of the Bristol Channel, but the frequency of them in the Milford port books is exceptional.

The corollary of the prevalence of coastal trade is that the port books indicate that Milford's overseas trade was less developed than that of other Bristol Channel ports, particularly Barnstaple. Whilst the merchants of Barnstaple, and to a lesser extent Bridgwater, were seen to have expanded their commercial horizons, and engaged in more far reaching trade across the Atlantic, the scope of Milford's trade seems to have diminished according to the data in these documents. The substitution of coastal traffic for direct overseas trade is a distinctive feature of Milford's recorded maritime commerce across the century. The large cargoes of wine and salt recorded in the Ministers' accounts aboard Portuguese ships in 1500/01, 1517/18 and 1559/60 were not replaced with similar shipments aboard indigenous vessels, but with smaller and more frequent coastal voyages, or with similarly composed manifests from closer ports in Ireland or northern France. The dependence of Milford on Bristol for supplies of iron, dried fruits, trayne oil, and consumer goods, as well as its importance as a market for wool, indicates that this relationship was important.

Yet evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the picture described in the port books is incomplete, and that the relationship with Bristol rather than being the mainstay of the port's trade was just one aspect of it. Consideration of contemporary descriptions of trade, the evidence presented in Exchequer commissions of enquiry, and of the local political context, suggests rather that the customs officers were busy recording coastal traffic which did not incur

duty, whilst levying customs only on petty traders or those with no local connections. There is a substantial body of evidence pointing to an extensive illicit export trade in grain, butter, cheese and leather from the port which seems certain to have been many times higher than the port books indicate. Similarly, it is reasonable to suppose that licit domestic shipments of fish, shellfish and coal were greater than is apparent from a reading of the coastal accounts.

The Exchequer accounts were seen to provide a particularly poor guide to true levels of trade in the port of Milford as it appears that there was an effective indemnity from customs for local magnates, and to some degree for those merchants who were connected with them. It is notable for instance that the only occasion on which the bark *Perote* was entered in customs in the accounts sampled was when it arrived with Atlantic cod entered under the names of Sir John Wogan and David Perrot - a cargo which was in any case exempt from paying duty.¹⁹⁵ Similarly Robert Longhor, 'doctor at law', Erasmus Saunders Esquire and Rice Barret 'gent' amongst others listed as the principal owners and merchants associated with the 120 tons *Garyth* were all absent from the customs accounts, but must have been prominent local figures and merchants of some standing.¹⁹⁶ The port books show that overseas trade through the port fell from a total value for customs purposes of £1,881 in 1563/64 to £463 in 1598/99, and that ships and merchants from the port played only a minor role in key branches of overseas trade. Yet other evidence suggests that trade might actually have increased in the last decades of the century, and that local merchants were not bystanders in this process.

The extent of the gulf which this chapter has argued consequently existed between the level of trade recorded in the port books and that which actually occurred is summed up by two contrasting contemporary descriptions of the

¹⁹⁵ TNA E190/1298/6.

¹⁹⁶ TNA E178/3345, fol. 17v.

port's trade. George Owen characterised it as one which 'especiallye of late years is fallen much to trade to sea'.¹⁹⁷ Thomas Middleton however, who was seeking the approval of Lord Burghley to appoint his brother to the post of controller on the death of Vaughan, characterised it as 'the poorest place in England, not worth 10s. besides the poor fee'.¹⁹⁸ Middleton's rationale was surely akin to that of the Bridgwater burgesses who stressed that the trade of Bridgwater had declined greatly when they petitioned for the post of searcher at their port. His application to Burghley must be read in the context of a desire to secure the post with as little outlay as possible and a need to justify the low returns which were submitted to the Exchequer, rather than being an accurate reflection of the commercial reality.

In common with some other Bristol Channel ports there was found to be a degree of commercial and political rivalry between different port towns within the jurisdiction of the port. Different trading patterns were discernable between the Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire parts of the port. Carmarthen enjoyed much closer trading relations with Gloucester and northern France than the Pembrokeshire ports, which in turn were more focussed on trade with Barnstaple, Ireland, and, in the earlier part of the period, Portugal. There was found to be a political tension between Carmarthen and Tenby which is analogous to that which was found between Bristol and Gloucester, or Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Like those places commercial rivalry was inextricably linked to a political rivalry which focussed on the offices of the Exchequer customs.

Similarly, in common with other Bristol Channel ports there was seen to be political tension between regional and metropolitan centres of power over the control of customs revenues. In the port of Cardiff this was found to be an area

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Owen, *Elizabethan Wales*, 128.

¹⁹⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97* (1869), 313-27<<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [June 2008]; quoted in *Ibid*.

of conflict which in many ways remained unresolved. The Crown had asserted its authority, and the amalgamation of customs control was theoretically in place, although in practice evasion of duty was seen to have been widespread and greater than in English ports. In Milford however, which had enjoyed longer and closer relations with the Tudor regime, it was a conflict which had been largely resolved, and was one in which the regional interests may be said to have decisively won. There was no local centre of authority which could challenge a figure as mighty as Sir John Perrot, or undermine the extensive nexus of commercial and political relationships established and maintained by customer John Vaughan. The effectiveness of central Exchequer control in Milford was thus arguably lower than in any other port of the Bristol Channel.

Those who take national Exchequer figures as a guide to levels of trade in the port during this period risk being seriously misled therefore. Historians who have written about the port's trade are not necessarily incorrect in their descriptions of maritime commercial activities based on the port books, since these are at least a partial description of trade.¹⁹⁹ But on the other hand neither can they be said be entirely correct in their assessments since these sources are not a complete record of trade, and it is also necessary to take account of what seems to have been a much greater volume of both illicit, and licit but unrecorded trade. The exception to the majority of historians who have charted the port's trade is Brian Howells who recognised the limitations of the port books and acknowledged that 'it is clear that through smuggling and the corruption of customs officials many cargoes were never listed'.²⁰⁰ However, since he was writing about only Pembrokeshire, Howells was not in a position to make a judgement about the comparative extent of these omissions and was perhaps therefore unable to appreciate how great their extent may have been when set in a wider context. Such an evaluation is clearly critical if any wider

¹⁹⁹ Evans, 'Carmarthen and the Welsh Port Books'; George, 'Pembrokeshire Sea-Trading'; Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*; Lloyd, ed., *Carmarthenshire*; James Phillips, *The History of Pembrokeshire* (London, 1909); Williams, 'Carmarthenshire's Maritime Trade'.

²⁰⁰ Howells, ed., *Pembrokeshire County History*, 91.

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study of trade in the period is to be attempted, and the evidence presented here suggests that the extent of Milford's export trade has been considerably underestimated.

Carmarthen and Haverfordwest were not small places. Contemporary descriptions of the towns and their maritime trade, and the considerable quantities of consumer items arriving into these ports suggest that they were also wealthy places. The geographical position of Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, with good harbours and easy sea communication, but with difficult and long land journeys to English markets, also suggests that marine based trade must have been the principal means of commercial exchange. It is unlikely that this prosperity can have been based mainly on the shipping of culm to Ireland, and of wool to Bristol in the way in which the port books indicate.

The multi-sourced approach adopted in this study of Milford has therefore underlined the findings of earlier chapters: that the Exchequer accounts appear to under-represent overseas trade to a greater extent in minor ports than in relatively well policed, larger ports such as Bristol; that coastal trade was much more extensive than is apparent from a reading of the coastal accounts; and that bilateral trading relationships were prevalent throughout the region. It has also determined that patronage and power were critical elements in both the operation of customs control and in the merchant activities which they nominally policed.

Chapter 7 : Conclusion.

This thesis has sought to question the prominence and preeminence which has been attributed to the commercial role of Bristol during the sixteenth century by historians such as Carus-Wilson, Vanes and Sacks. Although Bristol remained the single largest and most significant port in the region during the sixteenth century, it was not the only port. The aim of this study has been to redress the balance to show that it was neither as preeminent, nor as critical to the prosperity and trade of other regional ports as has been supposed. This chapter will firstly consider this proposition in relation to the respective volumes of overseas trade conducted through the Bristol Channel ports. It will then turn to the question of the volumes of domestic or coastwise trade conducted through these places. Finally, setting aside overall quantitative considerations it will make a qualitative assessment of flows of trade from the minor ports and consider the implications of these findings.

A central line of enquiry in the preceding chapters has centered on the extent to which the overseas customs accounts provide an accurate or even adequate guide to the relative commercial and economic ranking of ports within the Bristol Channel. As indicated in Chapter One, even the combined total of the value of trade recorded through the smaller ports did not begin to rival the overseas trade recorded in the Bristol customs accounts. However, it is widely acknowledged that overseas customs accounts can only be relied upon to a limited extent, and that due allowance must be made for what has long been recognised as pervasive and extensive smuggling during the period.¹ The argument made here has been that levels of evasion were greater at smaller ports in the Channel than they were at Bristol, and consequently that the levels of *overseas* trade recorded in the Exchequer accounts under represent true

¹ Nef, 'Richard Camarden's "A Caveat for the Quene" (1570)'; Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade'; Williams, 'Francis Shaxton'; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*.

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levels of trade in those ports relative to Bristol. Testimony concerning the port of Barnstaple for instance indicated that volumes of cloth, which were its main export, were understated by between 60 and 80 percent; discrepancies between the trade recorded in the Exchequer accounts and water bailiffs' accounts at Bridgwater indicated that perhaps as much as 75 percent of imports of Spanish iron, and 80 percent of imports of woad were not declared to customs; Axwater was found to have a particularly weak customs regime, and even at the official quay at Bridgwater an instance was found of under declaration of 50 percent of the export of malt. At Gloucester it was found that perhaps the majority of its overseas export trades in grain and leather were conducted illicitly by the end of the century. Trade through the Welsh ports meanwhile was found to bear even less correspondence to that recorded in the Exchequer accounts, and at Milford probably represented only a tiny fraction of exports. These figures are higher than previous assessments made by historians of the period. Hinton thought that perhaps as much as 25 percent of the trade of Boston might not have been declared in the early years of the seventeenth century, and N.J. Williams estimated that at least 50 percent of the trade in grain between England and France in the sixteenth century was not declared.² Jean Vanes estimated that the customs returns at Bristol during the sixteenth century understated trade by between 25 and 50 percent.³ The lack of evidence for smuggling means the estimates of Hinton, Williams and Vanes amount to no more than educated guesses, but the more forensic work subsequently completed by Evan Jones allows for greater precision. Jones found that whilst the leading Bristol merchant John Smythe evaded duty on a portion of his export trade, he did not do so on any of his import trade.⁴ In overall terms, illicit trade probably accounted for about 20 percent of Smyth's trade.⁵ Evidence for trade which was not officially recorded is by its very nature elusive and fragmentary, and that which has been described here in relation to minor ports

² Hinton, *Port Books of Boston*, xxxii; Williams, 'Francis Shaxton', 393.

³ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 10-11.

⁴ Jones, 'Illicit Business'.

⁵ Personal communication, Evan Jones 24/3/09.

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within the Bristol Channel remains limited. On the basis of that which is available it does nevertheless seem reasonable to suggest that the overseas trade of the smaller Channel ports was much greater relative to Bristol than the official figures suggest. In this respect this thesis therefore refines and builds on the work of Ramsay and N.J. Williams who argued that the customs administration was more efficient in London than in the provincial outports, and that the extent of smuggling was consequently greater through the outports than in the capital.⁶ The evidence presented here indicates that in turn the extent of smuggling through smaller ports was greater than in larger outports such as Bristol. As indicated in Chapter Three this hierarchy was recognised by contemporaries such as John Wheeler who described how,

the stragler shipping his Cloth and other Coomoditie in couert maner, huggemugger, and at obscure Portes, haue more aduanteage, and meanes to defraud her Maiestie of her dueties and rightes, then those which ship at London, and other great port Townes, either by false entryes, colouring of Straungers goods, and corrupting the Customer, and other Officers who, for the most part being needie persons in those small, and remote Portes of the Realme, are more readie to take rewardes, and closelier may doe it, then the Officers of the Customes at the port of London.⁷

Jean Vanes noted that Bristol's merchants were not able to monopolise the council or city offices, and whilst they were powerful 'they certainly did not rule all'.⁸ Consequently, although they were engaged in illicit trade, they were necessarily selective and relatively circumspect in their activities, concentrating on a limited range of high value goods.⁹ At smaller port towns however, groups of dominant merchants were able to secure a virtual monopoly of power and town offices and were able to utilise this position to enact large scale evasion of customs duties on a wide range of goods, including at Bridgwater even low value items such as pitch.

⁶ G.D. Ramsay, *English Overseas Trade during the Centuries of Emergence* (London, 1957), 190; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 42.

⁷ Wheeler, *Treatise of Commerce*.

⁸ Vanes, 'Overseas Trade', 164.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

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A second argument made in this thesis has been that focusing on overseas trade in isolation further distorts our understanding of the relative importance of Bristol in relation to other ports within the Channel. Overseas trade was not the only branch of marine trade, nor was it necessarily the largest or most economically significant part. The focus on overseas trade which a previous generation of historians brought to the subject was perhaps a reflection of an implicitly mercantilist perspective. Conscious of the role that Bristol, and indeed Britain, was to achieve in coming centuries at the centre of a maritime empire, historians such as Sacks and Vanes have concentrated on overseas trade at the expense of a more rounded and complete consideration of maritime trade more generally. The undue concentration of historians upon overseas trade during this period was highlighted by Chartres as long ago as 1977, a bias which he thought partly attributable to the chance survival of data relating to overseas trade in the form of overseas customs accounts.¹⁰ Chartres was writing in the context of a consideration of inland trade, but the same assessment could be made with regard to the overseas customs accounts compared to their coastal equivalents. Dyer, Clark and Slack have also emphasised the significance of domestic trade and have attempted to shift the focus onto internal economic developments in the period.¹¹ Likewise, David Hussey has challenged the assumption that 'historical attention should be monopolised by the feats of overseas trade' in the context of a study of Bristol's regional trade at the dawn of the eighteenth century.¹²

The findings outlined in the foregoing chapters support the views of Chartres, Dyer, Clark, Slack and Hussey and go some way to challenge the underlying assumptions of Sacks, Vanes and others. The existence of substantial flows of previously unrecognised coastal or domestic trade suggests that this aspect of the economy was more significant than has been supposed. It is now apparent

¹⁰ J.A. Chartres, *Internal Trade in England, 1500-1700* (London, 1977), 9.

¹¹ Dyer, 'Small Market Towns'; Dyer, 'Small Places'; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History* (London, 1972).

¹² Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade*, 196.

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that the domestic shipping of commodities which were previously supposed by some to have been fully described in the coastal accounts, were in fact only partially reflected in these documents. Changes in the method of recording coastal shipments of wine were identified, whereby wine began to be shipped under a letpass rather than under bond towards the end of the century, and was consequently no longer recorded in the coastal ledgers. Furthermore it is now clear that Welsh domestic production of coal, salt and iron was established on a larger scale at an earlier period than historians have allowed. Evidence was found in the Bridgwater water bailiffs' accounts which points to a considerable traffic in these commodities within the Channel, of which only a fraction was recorded in the Exchequer coastal accounts, and which suggests that what some have previously interpreted as a period of economic stagnation and decline, was in fact one of investment, innovation and growth.

This has important implications for those who use coastal accounts to understand patterns and volumes of trade during this period. Although there has been a recognition that some goods were freighted under letpass or transire, the scale and extent of this has not been fully realised. N.J. Williams considered that whilst some goods imported from the continent and then subsequently shipped coastally could have passed under a transire, the majority of such goods did not. He found that transires were more often used for 'small cargoes of little value, or for cargoes taken on a short trip', such as from Lynn to Boston.¹³ Hussey, Milne, Wakelin and Wanklyn inferred that some of Bristol's *upriver* trade to Gloucester must have proceeded under letpass in the period between 1580 and 1637.¹⁴ The extent of this remained unknown to them however for the simple fact that it was not recorded in the port books themselves during this period. David Hussey subsequently calculated that nine percent of Bristol's trade was conducted under letpass for the period 1680-1730

¹³ Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 20.

¹⁴ Hussey et al., *Gloucester Coastal Port Books: Summary*, 40-41.

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but that this mainly comprised single cargoes of glassware.¹⁵ J.H. Andrews similarly found that letpass trade for the ports of post-Restoration Kent was generally confined to items of low value carried short distances.¹⁶ This thesis has established however that the quantities of trade which were freighted under letpass were not necessarily marginal, and that domestic coastwise trade in the Bristol Channel in such basic commodities as coal, iron, salt and wine, was considerably greater than that which is apparent from the coastal customs accounts. Indeed, in some cases, such as the domestic coal and iron trade, it appears that the goods recorded in the coastal books were the exception, with the vast majority of these goods being shipped under letpass or provision exemptions.

This is significant as despite the recognition by J.H. Andrews that administrative considerations can affect interpretation of data in the coastal port books, it remains the case that the majority of historians who have engaged with them during this period have accepted at face value the information which they contain.¹⁷ For instance E.A. Lewis' survey of the Welsh port books, or Youings and Cornford's overview of sixteenth century Devonian maritime trade did not make allowance for letpass trade.¹⁸ A similar omission impacts upon a number of sector specific studies which trace the development of individual industries. As previously described, Nef's analysis of the development of the British coal industry relied heavily on data taken from the coastal accounts.¹⁹ The same is

¹⁵ Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade*, 15.

¹⁶ Andrews, 'Two Problems', 120.

¹⁷ Ibid; Evans, 'Carmarthen and the Welsh Port Books'; Hinton, *Port Books of Boston*; E.A. Lewis, 'The Port Books of Cardigan in Elizabethan and Stuart Times', *Cardigan Antiquary Society*, VII, VIII, XI (1930, 1931, 1936), 21-49, 36-62, 83-114. 1936 #100; Whetter, 'Cornish Trade in the 17th Century: An Analysis of the Port Books'; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*.

¹⁸ Lewis, *Welsh Port Books*; Youings and Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade'.

¹⁹ Nef, *British Coal Industry*, 1.

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true for Schubert's history of the iron industry, and for assessments of the domestic grain trade.²⁰

Given the rigours of analysis to which the overseas accounts have been subjected, and the extensive debate which has surrounded the question of their validity as a source for understanding trade, it is extraordinary that no similar work has been undertaken to assess the validity and utility of the coastal accounts.²¹ The use in this thesis of multiple coastal customs accounts from a range of proximate ports goes some way to redress this omission through the relatively simple exercise of matching corresponding inbound and outbound port records. As indicated in Chapters Four and Six, this revealed considerable discrepancies between outward and inward records for certain commodities which calls into question the confidence placed in this source by Willan, Hussey and others. Theoretically the coastal accounts recorded the departure of all ships issued with a coastal certificate, and the subsequent arrival of those ships at their destination port. Here they were entered in the ledger once the certificates had been endorsed by the customs officers to demonstrate that the goods had arrived. This validation then allowed the redemption of the bond which had been lodged against the possibility of illicit overseas export. However, the arrival could not be corroborated for a large proportion of ships which were shown leaving one port for another. For instance of seventeen vessels recorded outbound freighting malt for Carmarthen in the Gloucester accounts in 1592/93, only nine were shown inbound at Carmarthen in the

²⁰ A. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640*, ed. by Joan Thirsk, 7 vols, Vol. 4, (Cambridge, 1967), 460-589, 546-48; N.S.B. Gras, *The Evolution of the English Corn Market: from the Twelfth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge (MA), 1915), 105-08; Schubert, *British Iron*.

²¹ Astrom, 'Reliability of the English Port Books'; Carus-Wilson and Coleman, eds., *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547*, 21-33; Ramsay, 'Smuggler's Trade'; Peter Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade in the Reign of Henry VII : The Evidence of the Customs Accounts', *The Economic History Review*, 6 (1953), 173-82; Williams, 'Francis Shaxton', 166-206; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 41.

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corresponding Carmarthen account.²² Four possible reasons suggest themselves for this discrepancy.

Firstly some of this difference could have been due to differences in timing between the two sets of accounts – ships could leave port in one financial year and arrive at their destination a few days later but in the following financial year. For instance the *Clement* from Gatcombe which arrived at Carmarthen from Gloucester on 10th October 1592 cannot be traced leaving Gloucester in the 1592/93 Gloucester coastal account.²³ However, it seems likely that it would have been entered in the (no longer extant) 1591/92 account book at Gloucester. This explanation cannot account however for all of the other eight ships which were recorded outbound from Gloucester but not inbound at Carmarthen. The *Ellyn* departing from Gloucester for Carmarthen with 20 weys of wheat and malt in January 1593 for example ‘ought’ to appear in the inbound record at Carmarthen before the end of the financial year.²⁴

A second reason could be that the customs clerks were somewhat tardy in their completion of the ledgers, and that the dates they entered bore little relation to actual patterns of trade. The coastal accounts are not a record of the actual date of departure or arrival of ships after all, but of the date that the clerk either issued or received a certificate. In practice this would be expected to be near enough the same thing but this was not necessarily the case. Thus ships can occasionally be found which were recorded arriving before they were recorded leaving: for instance the *George Tasker* entered in at Bristol on 22nd June 1593 with a cargo mainly comprised of white leather, frieze and lambskins, but not out from Milford, with substantially the same cargo, until 18th July.²⁵ In the same way on some occasions there could be a considerable gap between the dates of departure and arrival amounting to weeks: the *Angel* which was

²² TNA E190/1243/4, E190/1243/7, E190/1299/2. Appendix C.

²³ TNA E190/1299/2.

²⁴ TNA E190/1243/4.

²⁵ TNA E190/1131/7, E190/1299/1.

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recorded outbound from Gloucester on 28th March 1593 was not recorded in at Carmarthen until 7th May.²⁶ Certificates could also occasionally be issued for part of a load and then supplemented with a further certificate at a later date: the *George Tasker* was recorded outbound from Milford on both the 20th June 1593 and the 27th June, but was entered inbound only once at Bristol on 30th June.²⁷ However, despite these administrative exceptions, generally speaking, the great majority of ships that were found in both sets of accounts had entries that were recorded within a few days of each other: there were no instances found of ships which were recorded departing and arriving more than six weeks apart. A more typical journey for instance would be that of the *George* which was recorded leaving Gloucester on 25th November 1592 and was recorded in at Bristol on 30th November; or the *Elizabeth* which was entered outbound from Milford on 19th October 1592 and was entered inbound at Bristol on 7th November.²⁸ It seems unlikely therefore that the absence of all eight ships from Carmarthen's accounts can be due to very lengthy administrative delays in the recording of certificates, or in the drawing up of the ledgers.

A third possible reason for ships leaving one port but not arriving at their destination port might have been that they actually sailed to another domestic port to the one originally declared. Perhaps market or weather conditions dictated a different voyage. For instance some ships which were entered for customs at Gloucester as bound for Padstow were then recorded inbound at Carmarthen.²⁹ Only a handful of these occurrences were found however in the many hundreds of sailings recorded in the coastal accounts studied, so it seems unlikely that all eight unaccounted for ships which were recorded outbound from Gloucester but not inbound at Carmarthen in 1592/93 would have sailed to places other than Carmarthen.

²⁶ TNA E190/1243/4, E190/1299/2.

²⁷ TNA E190/1299/1, E190/1131/7.

²⁸ TNA E190/1243/4, E190/1299/1, E190/1131/7.

²⁹ Eg. *Jesus* 8/3/1593 from Gloucester TNA E190/1243/4 cf. arrival at Carmarthen 23/3/1593 TNA E190/1299/2.

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A fourth reason for ships leaving one port but not arriving at their destination port could be that they were breaching the conditions of their bond or certificate, and were in fact sailing overseas under colour of a coastal cocket. The foregoing chapters have shown that this was the case for at least one ship sailing from Gloucester, for a ship taking leather from Milford to Barnstaple, and for ships freighting coal from Cardiff. These were doubtless but a few definitely identifiable instances of a much more ubiquitous trade. This practice was clearly considered to be a major problem by the authorities, as the whole structure of coastal customs control was instituted in an effort to counter it. The differences between outbound and inbound coastal records could therefore be straightforwardly interpreted as yet more evidence of smuggling.

The difficulty with this explanation, and the reason that it will not suffice, is that there were found to be as many instances of ships recorded in the coastal accounts *arriving into* port which had not been recorded outbound from their purported origin. For instance there were nine occasions during 1592/93 on which a ship, or ships, called the *George* was recorded inbound at Bristol freighting malt from Gloucester, which had not been recorded outbound in the Gloucester accounts.³⁰ The *George* had obviously been issued with a certificate or it would not appear in the inbound coastal account at Bristol at all, since the ledger was a record of certificates presented to the customs officers at the receiving port. Furthermore the *George* would seem to have arrived from the port of Gloucester, since it was frequently entered in Gloucester's accounts on other occasions, and was shipping a typical Gloucester cargo. Instances of ships which appeared in the inbound account but not in the corresponding outbound account were not confined only to the *George*, nor only to this particular customs account, but were apparent to varying degrees in all of the coastal accounts examined which survive for matching years.

³⁰ Appendix B.

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The simplest explanation for this paradox is perhaps also the correct one, which is that the differences outlined above may simply have been due to poor record keeping. It is important to note that the successful enforcement of coastal customs control did not rely on the accurate keeping of the coastal ledgers but on the issuing of certificates, the taking of bonds and the endorsing of certificates at the domestic port of unloading. Once redeemed, the bonds with the attached corresponding endorsed certificates were sent to the Exchequer.³¹ The entering of details of the certificates into the coastal account books was in a way incidental to this process, and may not therefore have been very diligently carried out. As long as certificates were issued, endorsed, and returned, then fraud was being prevented in accordance with the objectives of the coastal customs system. The recording of these certificates in the coastal account was not therefore integral to the successful operation of the control which the coastal customs system sought to impose. Unlike their overseas counterparts, the coastal customs accounts were not a record of revenue which was due to the Exchequer, but rather were a summary of the underlying flow of certificates which had been processed. The keeping of customs ledgers was in practice an often haphazard and unsatisfactory affair.³² Williams characterised the process as one where 'a clerk was probably put on to the task as Easter or Michaelmas was approaching, or someone who was not too fussy about dates or the spelling of names and was in such a hurry that he often duplicated an entry without knowing it, and – we may add – left some out as well'.³³ The prime concern of the customs clerks was not after all the keeping of accurate records for the benefit of future historians, but the production of documents which would pass muster with the Exchequer.

Differences in outbound and inbound recording of ships between corresponding coastal accounts are of more than methodological or arcane interest. Table 7.1

³¹ Gras, *Early English Customs*, 145; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 19.

³² Hinton, *Port Books of Boston*, xiii,xvi; Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade*, 8; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 17-18.

³³ Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, 17-18.

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illustrates that occasions on which ships could not be reconciled in outbound and inbound corresponding accounts were not exceptional, but could comprise as much as a half of all relevant entries in some sets of corresponding coastal customs accounts. Whilst allowance must be made for ships which had either sailed overseas under colour of a coastal cocket, or which sailed to a domestic port other than that which was originally declared, or which departed or arrived in different fiscal periods, it is surprising nonetheless that a majority of ships recorded outbound in one set of accounts did not necessarily appear inbound in the other, or vice-versa. In the accounts sampled an average of only 60 percent of voyages corresponded in the way that might be expected.

Table 7.1 Percentage of relevant entries matching in corresponding coastal accounts

Year	Port	Port	% Match
1592/93	Carmarthen	Gloucester	51
1592/93	Gloucester	Bristol	68
1592/93	Bristol	Milford	62
1597/98	Bristol	Bridgwater	67
1597/98	Bristol	Gloucester	48
1599/00	Gloucester	Cardiff	67

Different pictures can thus emerge of the trade which was conducted between two ports depending on which source is employed. For instance Milford recorded 4,540 stones of wool outbound to Bristol in 1592/93, but Bristol recorded only 2,800 inwards from Milford.³⁴ Based on Kerridge's estimate that a Welsh fleece produced one pound weight of wool, this would represent a difference of the shearing of over twenty four thousand sheep.³⁵ A discrepancy on this scale requires some explanation and suggests that the evaluation made by one of the compilers of the Gloucester Port Books' Database that the coastal accounts are a 'highly reliable source' must be questioned, at least so far as the

³⁴ TNA E190/1299/1, E190/1299/2, E190/1131/7.

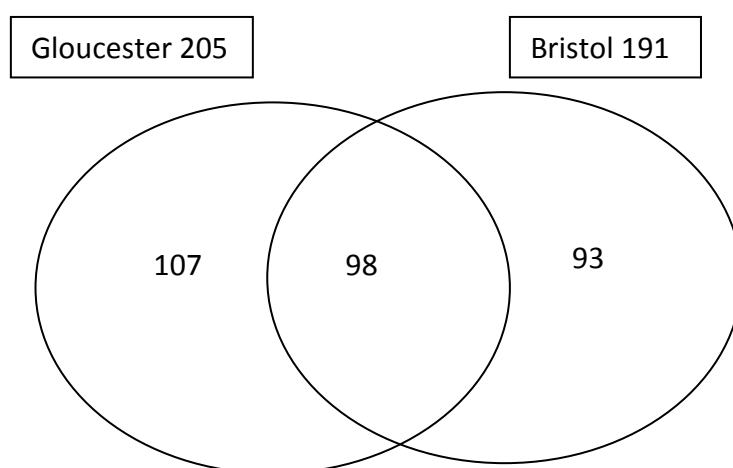
³⁵ Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 3.

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sixteenth century is concerned.³⁶ The coastal accounts for this period do not appear to be any more reliable than their overseas counterparts, and any historian who takes one port's account in isolation risks being misled.

The most significant implication of these administrative discrepancies however, is that the overall volumes of trade described when two accounts are considered together is much greater than *either one* account suggests. The point may be illustrated by returning to the example of the *George* which was recorded for 205 weys of malt out from Gloucester to Bristol, but 191 weys in at Bristol from Gloucester in 1592/93.³⁷ This would suggest that the level of trade carried between the two ports by the *George* was approximately seven percent either less or more than that recorded in either account. This difference is arguably immaterial and could be attributed to any of the reasons outlined above. However as Appendix B details only 98 of these weys could be matched in the two sets of accounts. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Comparison of the volumes of malt recorded shipped by the *George* from Gloucester to Bristol in 1592/93.



³⁶ Nancy C. Cox, David P. Hussey, and Graeme J. Milne, eds., *The Gloucester Port Books Database, 1575-1765, on CD ROM, in association with The University of Wolverhampton: guide and tutorial* (Marlborough, 1998), 10.

³⁷ TNA E190/1243/4, E190/1243/7, E190/1131/7.

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There were therefore 107 extra weys despatched from Gloucester which did not appear in the Bristol account (205 less 98); and an *additional* 93 weys which were recorded as received from Gloucester in the Bristol account which had not been entered in the Gloucester account (191 less 98). The actual total of trade between the two ports freighted aboard the *George* was therefore 298 weys (107 plus 98 plus 93). This was therefore a very considerable 45 percent more than was recorded in the Gloucester account, or 56 percent more than was recorded in the Bristol account.

The implication of this finding is therefore that the coastal trade was much more vigorous and extensive than has been realised, or indeed could be realised from a reading of any one coastal account. To expand the point, Gloucester recorded seventeen instances of ships freighting malt outbound to Carmarthen during 1592/93, and Carmarthen recorded nineteen ships freighting malt from Gloucester during the same year.³⁸ Yet only nine of these can be matched across the two documents. By the same reasoning therefore the actual traffic between the two ports was 27 shipping movements, representing 59 percent more than is apparent from the Gloucester coastal account, or 42 percent more than is apparent from the Carmarthen coastal account. Likewise during 1599/00 Bridgwater recorded twelve shipping movements to or from the port of Cardiff, and Cardiff recorded eight to or from the port of Bridgwater. Only five of these matched however and so the real level of trade between the two ports was fifteen shipping movements representing 25 percent more than is apparent from the Bridgwater account, or 47 percent more than is apparent from the Cardiff account. On the basis of these few accounts from within the Bristol Channel during the 1590s, domestic coastwise trade recorded in the port books appears therefore to have been some 25 to 50 percent higher than the 'face value' of these documents would suggest. Even this may be an underestimate however since the logical extension of these findings is that there must also

³⁸ TNA E190/1247/4, E190/1243/7, E190/1299/2. Appendix C.

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have been shipments which were made under bond which were recorded in the coastal ledger neither outwards *nor* inwards. The true value of cocketed trade may therefore have been well in excess of 50 percent higher than that recorded in any one coastal account.

This point has been developed extensively as it has important repercussions for assessing the relationship between overseas and domestic maritime trade. The Bridgwater water bailiff accounts revealed a substantial licit but unrecorded coastal trade which was not apparent from the coastal accounts. But the evidence considered here has also established an additional layer of coastal trade which has not previously been recognised: coastal trade which was shipped under the coastal cocket system but which was not fully recorded in the coastal accounts submitted to the Exchequer. Domestic maritime trade was therefore considerably greater than has previously been recognised, and by implication overseas trade was relatively less important. This thesis therefore endorses the view of Chartres that undue weight has been given by historians to overseas trade, and to the views of Dyer, Clark, Slack and Hussey who have emphasised the significance of domestic trade.³⁹ It also goes some way to make amends for the lack of work on river and coastal shipping identified by Clark and Slack, and provides pointers to the direction that future research in this area might take.⁴⁰

Turning away from consideration of purely quantitative overall totals, the development of trade conducted through the minor ports traced in these chapters further suggests that they were moving towards more specialised and diversified roles in marketing and manufacture, in the same way as has been recognised for their inland counterparts. Alan Dyer identified that after 1550 towns which had previously relied on cloth manufacture began to diversify and

³⁹ Chartres, *Internal Trade*; Clark and Slack, *Crisis and Order*; Dyer, 'Small Market Towns'; Dyer, 'Small Places'.

⁴⁰ Clark and Slack, *Crisis and Order*, 12-13.

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cater to domestic demand to a much greater extent. For example Wigan became associated with the manufacture and distribution of pewter, or Walsall with the manufacture and marketing of horse harnesses.⁴¹ Yet whilst this specialisation is now recognised as a feature of inland towns during the period, it has not previously been acknowledged to have also been a feature of ports.⁴² So far as domestic trade was concerned, the Bristol Channel ports were well placed to benefit from and reflect this trend. They provided access to relatively cheaper waterborne transport and acted as the conduits for inland towns to reach a large domestic marketing area. Specialisation and the concomitant growth of overall domestic trade operated in their favour as it provided new opportunities for local and regional trade. Thus Gloucester developed new trades and markets in the manufacture of linen, in leather production, and in the development of its fishing fleet; the Bridgwater port books illustrate the development of the manufacture of felt and pottery ware as late century industries; the North Devon ports increasingly specialised in the export of kerseys and lighter cloths; the Pembrokeshire ports switched from shipping out frieze, to a particular type of wool; and the ports within the jurisdiction of Cardiff began to develop the primary and heavy industries which would come to dominate their futures. There was however an additional opportunity to diversify and specialise available to merchants in port towns which was not so readily available to their inland counterparts and which was not therefore identified by Clark and Dyer. A distinctive feature of the merchants in the port towns studied here is that they were well placed to develop illicit commercial strategies to compensate for the loss of trade which resulted from the decline of the cloth export trade. Barnstaple's merchants were certainly prominent Atlantic pioneers in the way suggested by Grant, but they also appear to have developed as specialists in the running of contraband cargoes to Iberia. Evidence was found which suggested that Bridgwater and Gloucester's

⁴¹ Alan Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English towns, 1400-1600* (Basingstoke, 1991), 48.

⁴² The possible exception to this claim is the recognition by Robert Tittler that Poole developed a 'greater economic individuality' in the later years of the sixteenth century (Tittler, 'Economy of Poole', 108).

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merchants increased their illegal trading towards the end of the century, whilst merchants operating from the Welsh ports seem to have relied heavily on their dealings with pirates for their prosperity during the same period. Although these activities were illegal they were nevertheless also an essentially commercial response to changing market conditions, and as such represent a further form of specialisation on the parts of those involved.

A full consideration of domestic coastal trade also impacts upon any assessment of Bristol in relation to other regional ports. Bristol does not appear to have been the dominant hub at the centre of a radial network of marine traffic, nor the conduit through which the smaller regional ports conducted the majority of their trade. Sacks was incorrect to characterise the smaller Bristol Channel ports as simply 'tributaries, supplying [Bristol's] burgeoning population with food and other supplies, and offering its merchants and tradesmen access to their own marketing basins'.⁴³ The foregoing chapters have made clear that whilst Bristol was an important trading partner for all of the ports studied, it was often not the dominant or even the largest trading partner. Table 7.2 provides a measure of this relationship based on the number of shipping movements recorded either to or from Bristol in the sampled coastal accounts for the principal minor Channel port towns.⁴⁴ This has been expressed as a percentage of all coastal shipping movements recorded in the port books for those port towns.

⁴³ Sacks and Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700', 390.

⁴⁴ Appendix A.

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Table 7.2 Coastal shipping movements to and from Bristol as a percentage of all coastal shipping movements.

Port	Percentage
Barnstaple	44
Ilfracombe	41
Minehead	16
Bridgwater	43
Gloucester	36
Tewkesbury	64
Cardiff	63
Carmarthen	36
Tenby	54
Haverfordwest	33
Milford Haven	53

It can be seen that in only a minority of ports did Bristol account for a majority of coastal trade measured by shipping movements. Despite its proximity, Gloucester conducted only 36 percent of its officially recorded coastal traffic with Bristol; Haverfordwest conducted more recorded traffic with Barnstaple than with Bristol; and Carmarthen conducted more recorded traffic with Gloucester than with Bristol. Similarly albeit on a smaller scale, Minehead had as much traffic recorded to and from Milford as it did with Bristol. Contrary to Sacks' assessment, the minor Channel ports often enjoyed their own particular and individual trading relationships which were not contingent on Bristol, and which were conducted independently of the region's premier port. Rather, the trading nexus was characterised to a large extent by a series of both domestic and overseas bilateral relationships. Thus Barnstaple had close reciprocal links with Haverfordwest and with La Rochelle; Bridgwater with Wexford and Cardiff; Gloucester with Carmarthen; Cardiff, Barry and Newport with La Rochelle; Swansea with Brittany and Jersey; Aberthaw with Minehead; the Pembrokeshire ports with Aveiro; and Haverfordwest with Wexford. Such links may perhaps be explained by enduring merchant and familial relationships which were of

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fundamental importance in a society where trade and credit operated on a personal basis.⁴⁵

The multi sourced approach adopted here has thus produced a very different perspective on the maritime trade which was conducted both externally and within the Bristol Channel during the sixteenth century. Study of maritime trade in this period has concentrated heavily on overseas trade, and therefore on ports such as Bristol which apparently dominated this branch of commerce. Historians such as Sacks and Grant have identified a reaching out by ports such as Bristol and Barnstaple to new oceanic horizons and to new market opportunities, and have traced the beginnings of future trends of overseas trade. This thesis has identified a concomitant domestic development whereby coastal trade increased and developed during the period. Although less glamorous, this was arguably no less important to wider and future economic trends, and suggests that domestic markets deserve consideration alongside the overseas considerations which have preoccupied historians.

When the true levels of overseas trade through the smaller ports are taken into account, and when the considerable domestic trade which was conducted through these ports is taken into consideration, then the profile of smaller ports begins to look considerably altered. They emerge as much busier places, handling much greater volumes of trade than has been supposed, but also as places which, regardless of overall quantitative measures of trade, played an important role as specialist distributors or niche marketeers by the end of the century. This study has placed Bristol within the context of a group of interrelated ports which conducted more trade than has formerly been identified, which had their own unique trading profiles, and which were adapting successfully to challenging market conditions. It has provided a reassessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the port towns which

⁴⁵ Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', 530.

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surrounded the Severn Sea, and has revealed a more diversified, complex, developed and healthy economy than has hitherto been apparent.

Appendix A

List of customs accounts (E122 & E190) sampled.

	Barnstaple		Ilfracombe		Minehead		Bridgwater		Bristol	
	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal
1503/04									E122/199/1	
1506/07							E122/26/25			
1509/10	E122/201/4 (1&2)									
1510/11							E122/27/1			
1516/17									E122/21/2	
1517/18	E122/201/6		E122/201/6							
1523/24			E122/42/7							
1525/26			E122/42/8						E122/21/5	
1528/29					E122/27/10		E122/27/10			
1533/34	E122/201/9 (1&2)		E122/201/9 (1&2)							
1536/37			E122/43/11							
1540/41					E122/27/15		E122/27/15			
1541/42					E122/27/18		E122/27/18		E122/21/10	
1542/43									E122/199/4	
1543/44	E122/43/15		E122/43/15							
1544/45					E122/27/21		E122/27/21			
1545/46									E122/21/15	
1550/51						E122/28/5		E122/28/5	E122/22/4	
1554/55	E122/201/14		E122/201/14							

	Barnstaple		Ilfracombe		Minehead		Bridgwater		Bristol	
	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal
1560/61					E122/29/3		E122/29/3			
1561/62						E122/29/4		E122/29/4		
1563/64									E122/24/12 E122/199/9	
1564/65	E190/925/10 (3&4)	E190/925/9 (3&4)	E190/925/3 (3&4)							
1569/70	E190/927/21 (3&4)			E190/927/6 E190/927/12						
1570/71	E190/927/15 (1&2)	E190/927/14 (3&4)								E190/1128/14 (3&4)
1575/76				E190/930/20 (3&4)						E190/1129/18 (3&4)
1576/77			E190/930/21						E190/1129/11 E190/1129/12	
1579/80			E190/932/3			E190/1083/19				
1581/82	E190/933/1 E190/934/9									
1582/83		E190/934/10 E190/934/12								
1583/84					E190/1083/1		E190/1083/5			
1585/86				E190/1083/7 (1&2)				E190/1083/8 (1&2)		
1587/88							E122/29/27 E122/29/30			

	Barnstaple		Ilfracombe		Minehead		Bridgwater		Bristol	
	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal
1588/89							E122/29/31			
1589/90			E190/935/13 (2) E122/46/43 (3&4)				E122/29/34 (1&2)			
1590/91							E122/29/41 (3)			
1591/92		E190/936/6 (1&2)		E190/936/6 (1&2)						
1592/93							E122/29/39 (2)			E190/1131/7
1594/95									E190/1132/10	
1595/96	E190/936/13		E190/936/12 (1&2)							
1597/98			E190/937/1		E190/1083/17	E190/1083/19	E190/1083/20	E190/1083/15		E190/1132/3 (1&2)
1599/00								E190/1083/25		
1600/01									E190/1132/11	

	Gloucester		Chepstow		Cardiff	
	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal
1570/71		E190/1128/14 (3&4)				
1575/76	E190/1129/8 (1&2)	E1129/15				
1576/77	E190/1129/17 (3&4)	E190/1129/20 (1&2)				
1579/80			E190/1270/2		E190/1270/3	
1580/81	E190/1241/3 (3&4)					
1581/82	E190/1241/5 E190/1241/8	E190/1241/6 E190/1241/10				
1582/83	E190/1241/11 (1&2)					
1585/86						E122/104/6 (1)
1592/93	E190/1243/3	E190/1243/4 E190/1243/7				
1594/95					E190/1270/11	
1597/98	E190/1244/9 E190/1244/14	E190/1244/7				
1599/00	E190/1245/6 E190/1245/7	E190/1245/1				E190/1271/3

	Swansea & Neath		Carmarthen		Milford	
	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal	Overseas	Coastal
1563/64			E122/205/7		E122/205/7	
1565/66				E190/1298/1 E190/1298/5	E190/1298/6	E190/1298/2 E190/1298/10
1571/72			E122/30/5			
1579/80	E190/1270/4					
1585/86		E122/104/6 (1)	E122/104/5	E122/30/5a	E122/104/6 (1) E122/104/5	E122/104/6 (1) E122/104/7
1587/88	E122/30/8 E122/147/3 E122/147/4					
1592/93				E190/1299/2		E190/1299/1
1594/95	E190/1270/7					
1598/99			E190/1299/13		E190/1299/8	
1599/00		E190/1271/1				

Appendix B:

Entries relating to the George in the coastal customs accounts for the ports of Gloucester and Bristol in 1592/93.

GLOUCESTER outbound to BRISTOL (TNA E190/1243/4 & E190/1243/7)			BRISTOL inbound from Gloucester (TNA E190/1131/7)	
Date	Cargo	comment	Date	Cargo
		Could be in previous year in Gloucester books	30/9/1592	17 dozen calf skins 3 c wax 1 tun metheglin 2 hogshead wine 9 wey malt
		Could be in previous year in Gloucester books	10/10/1592	300c wax 3 white cloth
21/10/1592	11 wey malt 12 bushel wheat	Match but quantities differ	26/10/1592	6 wey malt 12 bushel wheat
4/11/1592	9 wey malt 2 wey wheat 1.5 c wax	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
25/11/1592	10 wey malt 2 ton metheglin 1 wey wheat 0.5 wey rye	Match	30/11/1592	10 wey malt 2 ton metheglin 1 wey wheat 0.5 wey rye
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	30/11/1592	9 wey malt 2 wey wheat
11/12/1592	10 wey malt 0.5 wey rye	Match	15/12/1592	10 wey malt 0.5 wey rye
4/1/1593	20 wey malt 2 wey wheat	Match	23/1/1593	20 wey malt 2 wey wheat
5/1/1593	10 wey malt 1 wey wheat 1 ton metheglin	Match	10/1/1593	10 wey malt 1 wey wheat 1 ton metheglin
19/1/1593	8 wey malt 2 wey wheat 1 ton metheglin	Match	23/1/1593	8 wey malt 2 wey wheat 1 ton metheglin
21/1/1593	33 dozen calf skins	Match	7/2/1593	33.5 dozen calf skins
3/2/1593	12 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
3/2/1593	16 wey malt 2.5 wey peas 12 bushel peas	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		

		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	30/1/1593	16 wey malt
12/2/1593	2 wey wheat 9 wey malt 3 hogshead metheglin	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	19/2/1593	12 wey malt
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	19/2/1593	16 wey malt 2.5 wey wheat 12 (illeg) peas
3/3/1593	10 wey malt 4 wey peas	Match	28/2/1593	10 wey malt 4 wey peas
3/4/1593	10 wey malt 1 hogshead metheglin	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	1/6/1593	10 wey malt
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	1/6/1593	15 wey malt
		No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	21/6/1593	5 wey wheat 2 wey rye
1/7/1593	20 wey malt	Match	5/7/1593	20 wey malt
17/7/1593	13 fardel wool 1 pack linen 1 pack cloth	Match	20/7/1593	13 fardel wool 2 fardel wool and linen cloth
19/7/1593	50 dozen calf skins 10 wey malt	Match	30/7/1593	50 dozen calf skins 10 wey malt
8/8/1593	20 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
14/8/1593	20 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Bristol account		
13/9/1593	80 dozen calf skins	Match	16/9/1593	80 dozen calf skins

Appendix C:

Comparison of Ships Freighting Malt from Gloucester to Carmarthen in the Coastal Customs Accounts for the Ports of Gloucester and Milford for 1592/93.

GLOUCESTER outbound ships with malt to Carmarthen (TNA E190/1243/4 & E190/1243/7)				Carmarthen inbound ships with malt from Gloucester (TNA E190/1299/2)		
Date	Ship	Cargo	comment	Date	Ship	Cargo
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	6/2/1593	Angel	16 wey malt
28/3/1593	Angel	16 wey malt	Match	7/5/1593	Angel	16 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	25/6/1593	Angel	16 wey malt
16/7/1593	Angel	16 wey malt	Match	24/7/1593	Angel	16 wey malt
5/8/1593	Angel	16 wey malt	Match	27/8/1593	Angel	16 wey malt
			Not in corresponding Gloucester account for 1592/3 but could be in previous year	10/10/1592	Clement	18 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	22/11/1592	Clement	18 wey malt
2/8/1593	Clement	17 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
16/8/1593	Eame	25 wey malt 2 pocket hops	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
3/7/1593	Elizabeth	14 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
19/1/1593	Ellyn	8 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
11/4/1593	George	19 wey malt 0.5 c iron	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	14/9/1593	George	20 wey malt

			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	23/3/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt
2/8/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt	Match	27/8/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt
14/9/1593	Jesus	18 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
9/10/1592	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	15/11/1592	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	24/12/1592	Mary	8 wey malt
6/3/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	26/3/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	22/5/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
17/7/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	28/7/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
28/8/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	8/9/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	6/6/1593	Minikin	28 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	8/2/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt
16/3/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
3/7/1593	Trinity	12 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
15/8/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt	Match	15/8/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	22/11/1592	Clement	18 wey malt
2/8/1593	Clement	17 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
16/8/1593	Eame	25 wey malt 2 pocket hops	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
3/7/1593	Elizabeth	14 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
19/1/1593	Ellyn	8 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
11/4/1593	George	19 wey malt 0.5 c iron	No corresponding entry in Milford account			

			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	14/9/1593	George	20 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	23/3/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt
2/8/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt	Match	27/8/1593	Jesus	10 wey malt
14/9/1593	Jesus	18 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
9/10/1592	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	15/11/1592	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	24/12/1592	Mary	8 wey malt
6/3/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	26/3/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	22/5/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
17/7/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	28/7/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
28/8/1593	Mary	14 wey malt	Match	8/9/1593	Mary	14 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	6/6/1593	Minikin	28 wey malt
			No corresponding entry in Gloucester account	8/2/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt
16/3/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
3/7/1593	Trinity	12 wey malt	No corresponding entry in Milford account			
15/8/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt	Match	15/8/1593	Trinity	16 wey malt

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	Cardiff]: answer. Covering dates 1556 Jan 1 - 1558 Dec 31
C 7/224/56	Pleadings six clerks office
E101/668/24	Miscellaneous: Book of defaulters on port bonds and other debts in cos. Devon and Cornwall. Covering dates 33 Eliz.I-21 Jas. I
E122/22/7	Port: Bristol Certificate book for "necessaries." discharged and exported. Covering dates 5-6 Edw.VI.
E122/22/9	Port: Bristol Certificate Book. 5-6 Edw.VI.
E122/26/23	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of the same. Covering dates 20-21 Hen.VII.
E122/26/25	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of the same. Covering dates 22-23 Hen.VII.
E122/27/1	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of William Boore, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 2-3 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/2	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of Thomas Chauntrell, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 9-10 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/10	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of H. Trotter, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 21-22 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/15	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of the same Covering dates 32-33 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/18	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of J.Person, collector, corresponding to the preceding.Covering dates 33-34 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/21	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of the same. Covering dates 36-37 Hen.VIII.
E122/27/24	Port: Bridgwater Controlment of Customs & Subsidies by J.White. Covering dates 37-38 Hen.VIII. (Sept.-Sept.)
E122/27/27	Port: Bridgwater Coast Book. Covering dates [Hen.VIII?]
E122/27/28	Port: Bridgwater Certificate Book. Covering dates [Hen.VIII or Elizabeth?]
E122/28/5	Port: Bridgwater Two controlments of coasting trade. Covering dates 4-5 Edw.VI & no date
E122/28/6	Port: Bridgwater Controlment of Customs & Subsidies by J.Whyte. Covering dates 4-5 Edw.VI.
E122/28/7	Port: Bridgwater Certificate book of Humphrey Worthe, collector. Covering dates 5 Edw.VI.
E122/28/3	Port: Bridgwater Account of Alice Person, widow & executor of John Person, late collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 1-2 Edw.VI. (Sept.-Aug.)
E122/29/4	Port: Bridgwater Controller's certificate book. Covering dates 3-4 Eliz.

E122/29/24	Port: Bridgwater Ledger with various signatures. Covering dates 27-28 Eliz.
E122/29/27	Port: Bridgwater Book of inward & outward entries unsigned, with note of disbursements. Covering dates 29-30 Eliz. (Sept.-March)
E122/29/30	Port: Bridgwater Quarter-book of entries inwards & outwards. Covering dates 30 Eliz. (March-June)
E122/29/31	Port: Bridgwater Quarter-book signed on the cover by John Burley. Covering dates 30-31 Eliz.
E122/29/39	Port: Bridgwater Ledger of T.Midleton, receiver of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 33-34 Eliz.
E122/29/40	Port: Bridgwater Ledger. Covering dates 33 Eliz. (June- Sept.)
E122/2/41	Port: Bridgwater Ledger. Covering dates 33 Eliz. (March-June)
E122/30/5	Port: Carmarthen Particulars of account. Covering dates 13-14 Eliz.
E122/30/5a	Port: Carmarthen Particulars of account. Covering dates 27-28 Eliz.
E122/30/8	Port: Carmarthen, Cardiff, &c. Ledger 3. Covering dates 29-30 Eliz.
E122/41/25	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth &c. Controlment by Richard Coffyn. Covering dates 18-19 Hen.VII.
E122/42/7	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of John Hull, collector of Customs & Subsidies on imports. Covering dates 15-16 Hen.VIII.
E122/42/8	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of George Jeffren, collector of Customs & Subsidies on exports. Covering dates 15-16 Hen.VIII.
E122/43/11	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of J.Hull, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 28-29 Hen.VIII.
E122/43/14	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of the same. Covering dates 34-35 Hen.VIII.
E122/43/15	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of the same. Covering dates 35-36 Hen.VIII.
E122/44/5	Port: Exeter & Dartmouth Account of J.Petre, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 3-4 Edw.VI.
E122/45/11	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth &c. Ledger of J.Petre, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 4 & 5 - 5 & 6 Philip & Mary
E122/46/9	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Certificate book. Covering dates 4 Eliz.
E122/46/43	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Ledger of T.Midleton, receiver of Customs & Subsidies, with various

	signatures. covering dates 32 Eliz.
E122/104/2	Port: Milford Controlment of a Subsidy of tannage & poundage by John Parry. Covering dates 1-2 Eliz.
E122/104/5	Port: Milford Ledger of the same. Covering dates 27-28 Eliz.
E122/104/6	Port: Milford & Cardiff Ledger & coastwise book of the same, as deputy to Sir F.Walsingham. Covering dates 27-28 Eliz.
E122/104/7	Port: Milford Book of coasting trade signed by John Vaughan & W.Thomas. Covering dates 27-28 Eliz.
E122/147/3	Port: Swansea &c. Particulars of account of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 30 Eliz. (Dec.-June)
E122/201/3	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth &c. Particulars of account of John Symon and John Clyff collectors of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 22-23 Hen.VII.
E122/201/4	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth &c. Particulars of account of John Symond and Nicholas Kyrham, collectors of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 1-2 Hen.VIII.
E122/201/6	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth &c. Particulars of account of Nicholas Fasshun, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 9-10 Hen.VIII.
E122/201/9	Port: Exeter, Dartmouth, &c. Particulars of account of John Hull, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 25-26 Hen.VIII.
E122/201/14	Port: Exeter, &c. Particulars of account of John Petre, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 1 & 2 - 2 & 3 Philip & Mary
E122/205/7	Port: Milford Particulars of account of John Vaghan, collector of Customs & Subsidies. Covering dates 5-6 Eliz.
E122/221/85	Port: Cardiff Certificates of discharge. Covering dates 35 Hen. VIII
E122/221/86	Port: Cardiff Certificate of landing. Covering dates 9 Eliz.
E122/224/65	Port: Ilfracombe Certificate of receipt of pirates' goods. Covering dates 1578
E123/3	Decrees and orders of the Exchequer. Covering dates 6/7 Eliz I Mich-10 Eliz I Trin
E123/6	Orders of the Exchequer Covering dates 14/15 Eliz I Mich-22 Eliz I Trin
E123/7	Decrees and orders of the Exchequer. Includes licences to compound. Covering dates 20 Eliz I Trin-25 Eliz I Hil
E123/9	Orders of the Exchequer. Covering dates 24 Eliz I Trin-27 Eliz I Trin
E123/10	Decrees and orders of the Exchequer. Includes licences to compound. Covering dates 25 Eliz I Hil-27/28 Eliz I

	Mich
E123/11	Orders of the Exchequer. Covering dates 27/28 Eliz I Mich-28/29 Eliz I Mich
E123/12	Decrees and orders of the Exchequer. Includes licences compound. Covering dates 28 Eliz I Hil-29/30 Eliz I Mich
E123/13	Orders of the Exchequer. Covering dates 29 Eliz I Hil-30/31 Eliz I Mich
E123/14	Decrees and orders of the Exchequer. Includes licences to compound. Covering dates 30 Eliz I Hil-31/32 Eliz I Mich
E123/15	Orders of the Exchequer. Covering dates 31 Eliz I Hil-31/32 Eliz I Mich
E 123/16 & 17	Entry Books of Decrees and Orders ³² Eliz I Hil-33/34 Eliz I Mich
E133/1/110	[The queen v. Anthony Hunney, deputy customer of Barnstaple, Thomas Dave, deputy comptroller, and George Gagge, searcher.] The concealment of customs in Barnstaple port. False entries made in the customers' book. Devon. Covering dates 13 Eliz. Easter
E133/1/127	The customs of the port of Barnstable and Ilfordcome. Whether there had been any concealment by the queen's officers? Devon. Covering dates 14 Eliz. Hil.
E133/2/299	Bell-metal shipped by William Colliber, at Barnstaple, for transportation beyond the seas. Devon. Covering dates 18 Eliz. Hil.
E134/14&15Eliz/Mich 9	The Queen v. ?: Transporting grain and leather to parts beyond the seas.: Gloucester Covering dates 14 & 15 Eliz 1572
E134/15&15Eliz/Mich 14	The Queen v. The customers of Exeter and Dartmouth.: Concealment of Her Majesty's customs and subsidies in the ports of Exeter, Dartmouth, and the members of same.: Devon. Covering dates 15 & 15 Eliz 1572
E134/19&20Eliz/Mich 14	The Queen v. Geo. Clarke: Office of searcher filled by Geo. Clarke in the custom house of ().: Pembroke Covering dates 19 & 20 Eliz 1577
E134/25Eliz/East14	The mayor of the city of Bristol. v. The mayor of the city of Gloucester.: River Severn, between Kingrode and the bridge of Gloucester, and the creeks in same river, viz., Gatcombe Barkley, Newneham, and Gloucester. ? v. ?: Survey of same, and the creeks of Bristol, Hungroade, Kingroade, Gatcombe Barkley, Newenham, and Gloucester, and the towns of Tewkesbury, Worcester, Bewdley, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury.: Gloucestershire. Covering dates 25 Eliz 1583
E134/27&28Eliz/Mich 17	The Queen v. Robert Robinson, searcher of the port of H.M.'s city of Gloucester, and others.: Execution of his

- office of searcher of the ports of Gloucester by defendant in a manner "contrary to the restraint of all manner of corn" and grain whatsoever.": Gloucester. Covering dates 27 & 28 Eliz 1585
- E 134/27Eliz/Hil25 ? v. ?: Lading of wheat, malt, &c., in the port of Bristol; and its members, viz., Hungroade and Kingrode, and in the port of Gloucester, for Spain and Ireland, under licences, viz., one granted to the Earl of Ormond, and another to the town of Kelmallock, and another to Mr. Middlemore. Rules and regulations of the port of Bristol; and its members, at Hungrode and Kingrode.: Somerset and Glouster.
- E134/27Eliz/Hil28 The Queen v. John Dennys and others.: Calves' skins and hides taken on board the ship Eagle, of Bideford, bound for Bilbow, in Spain, and Burdeux, in France, &c., at Appledore, within the barr of Barnstaple, and brought from Barnstaple, forfeited to the Crown.: Devon. Covering dates 27 Eliz 1584
- E134/27Eliz/Trin1 Richard Hall v. John White: Gauging and seizing of defendant's wines, coming up the River Severn towards Gloucester, by plaintiffs, "Gascony wines, both white and claret." Touching also the payment of duty on said wines.: Gloucester and Worcester. Covering dates 27 Eliz 1585
- E134/33Eliz/East9 Robert Prowse, merchant, and others. v. John Bostock, captain of H.M.'s ship called "The Crane.": "The taking of certain half-clothes and other merchandizes out of a bark called 'The Merlin of Barstaple,' being in the high seas: Devon. Covering dates 33 Eliz 1591
- E134/36&37Eliz/Mich 14 Mayor and burgesses of Gloucester. v. Edward Barston, Wm. Nurth, Walter Young.: Alleged misdemeanors of defendants as deputy customers of the port of Gloucester, in receiving "extraordinary fees," "private trading," "concealment of customs," &c.,&c. Portdues. Execution of the office. Survey.: Gloucester. Covering dates 36 & 37 Eliz
- E134/39&40Eliz/Mich 33 William Morecombe v. Roger Lee, John Seller.: Grant made by the Queen (Eliz.) to Robt. Earl of Leicester "of the customs, subsidy, and impost" of all Spanish wines brought into England. Touching the payment of custom on Spanish gascon and French wines brought by defendants into the ports of Exeter and Barnstaple (Devon). Covering dates 39 & 40 Eliz
- E134/40Eliz/Hil5 William Morecombe v. Roger Ley, John Seller.: "Impost of Spanish and French wines brought into England, particularly into the port of Barnstaple (Devon),"

E134/42&43Eliz/Mich 11	Richard Scott v. Edwd. Barstow, Robert Robinson, Luke Ingram.: Searchers, customers, and controllers of the port of Gloucester. "Fees for making cocketts for wares or merchandise within the custom house.": Gloucester
E134/43Eliz/East18	Edward Barston v. Amicell Bullock, Wm. Nash, Thos. James, John Grainger, William Verry, John Smith, Christopher Millard, John Leighton, Richd. Oram.: Port of Bristol. Touching the payment of custom for the conveyance of apples and pears from the banks of the river Severn, by the owners of boats in the river, belonging to the city of Gloucester, and the towns of Newnham, Tewkesbury, and Barkley.: Gloucester and Somerset. Covering dates 43 Eliz
E 134/12Jas1/East24	Christopher Bradley v. John Barston: Office of customer of the port of the city of Gloucester. Touching recognizances in the Exchequer for the filling of the office by Edward Barston
E178/1926	SOMERSET: Bridgwater Surveys of the port and creeks. Covering dates 1 & 7 Elizabeth
E178/3345	Port of Milford, Pembroke Depositions as to frauds committed on the customs at Milford, and survey of the custom house at Pembroke. Covering dates 13-19 Elizabeth
E178 3445	GLAMORGANSHIRE: Port of Cardiff Depositions as to the export of butter
E178/7059	SOMERSET: Port of Bridgwater Fiat for a commission to enquire as to the export of corn. Covering dates 15 Elizabeth
E190/932/16	Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1580 - Mich. 1580
E190/933/1	Barnstaple Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1581 - Eas. 1582
E190/933/2	EXETER Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1581 - Eas. 1582
E190/934/2	EXETER Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1582 - Mich. 1582
E190/934/4	EXETER Official: Searcher Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1582 - Mich. 1583
E190/934/7	Port: EXETER Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1582 - Eas. 1583
E190/934/9	Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1582 - Mich. 1582
E190/934/10	Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1582 - Eas. 1583
E190/934/12	Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer and Controller Coastal.

E190/934/15 Covering dates Eas. 1583 - Mich. 1583
Port: EXETER Official: Customer and Controller Coastal.

E190/935/9 Covering dates Eas. 1583 - Mich. 1583
Port: Barnstaple Official: Controller Overseas.

E190/935/14 Covering dates Mich. 1588 - Mich. 1589
Port: Barnstaple Official: Collector of Customs Overseas.

E190/936/3 Covering dates Xmas 1590 - Lady Day 1591
Port: Barnstaple Official: Collector of Customs Overseas.

E190/936/6 Covering dates Xmas 1591 - Lady Day 1592
Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1591 - Eas. 1592

E190/936/12 Port: Ilfracombe Official: Controller Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1595 - Mich. 1596

E190/936/13 Port: Barnstaple Official: Controller Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1595 - Mich. 1596

E190/936/14 Port: Barnstaple Official: Surveyor Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1595 - Mich. 1596

E190/936/15 Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer and Controller Coastal.
Covering dates Mich. 1590 - Eas. 1591

E190/937/1 Port: Ilfracombe Official: Controller Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598

E190/939/8 Port: Barnstaple Official: Customer and Controller Coastal.
Covering dates Eas. 1605 - Xmas 1605

E190/1013/5 Port: Padstow Official: Customer and Controller Coastal.
Covering dates Mich. 1576 - Eas. 1577

E190/1081/2 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Customer Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1571 - Eas. 1572

E190/1081/3 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1567 - Mich. 1568

E190/1082/10 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Searcher Overseas.
Covering dates Mich. 1575 - Mich. 1576

E190/1083/1 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1583 - Mich. 1584

E190/1083/5 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1583 - Mich. 1584

E190/1083/7 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1585n-Eas. 1586

E190/1083/8 Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1585 - Eas.

	1586
E190/1083/10	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1591 - Mich. 1592
E190/1083/13	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1596 - Mich. 1597
E190/1083/15	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598
E190/1083/17	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Surveyor Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598
E190/1083/19	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598
E190/1083/20	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598
E190/1083/21	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1598 - Mich. 1599
E190/1083/22	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1598 - Mich. 1599
E190/1083/25	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Bridgwater Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Mich. 1600
E190/1083/26	Port of Bridgwater. Port: Minehead Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Mich. 1600
E190/1128/14	Port: Bristol Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1570 - Mich. 1570
E190/1129/8	Port of Bristol. Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1575 - Eas. 1576
E190/1129/15	Port: Gloucester Official: Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1575 - Mich. 1576
E190/1129/18	Port: Bristol Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1576 - Mich. 1576
E190/1129/20	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1576 - Eas. 1577
E190/1131/7	Port: Bristol Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1592 - Mich. 1593
E190/1132/3	Port: Bristol Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Eas. 1598
E190/1241/1	Port: Gloucester Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1581 - Mich. 1582
E190/1241/3	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1581 - Mich. 1581
E190/1241/5	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1581 - Eas. 1582
E190/1241/6	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1581 - Eas. 1582
E190/1241/8	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1582 - Mich. 1582

E190/1241/10	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1582 - Mich. 1582
E190/1241/11	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1583 - Mich. 1583
E190/1242/5	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1585 - Eas. 1586
E190/1243/3	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1592 - Mich. 1593
E190/1243/4	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1592 - Eas. 1593
E190/1243/7	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1593 - Mich. 1593
E190/1244/1	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1596 - Mich. 1596
E190/1244/6	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Eas. 1598
E190/1244/7	Port: Gloucester Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Mich. 1598
E190/1244/9	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1597 - Eas. 1598
E190/1244/14	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1598 - Mich. 1598
E190/1245/1	Port: Gloucester Official: Controller Overseas and Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Mich. 1600
E190/1245/6	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Eas. 1600
E190/1245/7	Port: Gloucester Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1600 - Mich. 1600
E190/1270/2	Port Of Cardiff. Port: Chepstow Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1579 - Mich. 1580
E190/1270/3	Port: Cardiff Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1579 - Mich. 1580
E190/1270/4	Port Of Cardiff. Port: Swansea and Neath Official: Customer. Covering dates Mich. 1579 - Mich. 1580
E190/1270/11	Port Of Cardiff. Port: Cardiff Official: Surveyor Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1594 - Mich. 1595
E190/1271/1	Port Of Cardiff. Port: Swansea and Neath Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Mich. 1600
E190/1271/3	Port Of Cardiff. Port: Cardiff Official: Surveyor Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1599 - Mich. 1600

E190/1298/1	Port Of Milford. Port: Carmarthen Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1565 - Eas. 1566
E190/1298/2	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1565 - Eas. 1566
E190/1298/5	Port Of Milford. Port: Carmarthen Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1566 - Mich. 1566
E190/1298/6	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Eas. 1566 - Mich. 1566
E190/1298/8	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1566 - Mich. 1567
E190/1298/10	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Eas. 1566 - Mich. 1566
E190/1299/1	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1592 - Mich. 1593
E190/1299/2	Port Of Milford. Port: Carmarthen Official: Customer and Controller Coastal. Covering dates Mich. 1592 - Mich. 1593
E190/1299/8	Port Of Milford. Port: Milford Official: Controller Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1598 - Mich. 1599
E190/1299/13	Port Of Milford. Port: Carmarthen with Burrey Official: Customer Overseas. Covering dates Mich. 1598 - Mich. 1599
E210/10353	Award by John Voyll, Mayor of the town and county of Haverfordwest, "with the most part of the brethren of the said town and country" in a dispute between Lewis Harrys of Haverfordwest, merchant, and Richard Howell, John Synet, John Davids and John Kewe of Havrfordwest: (Pemb.) Covering dates 1567
E321/43/10	Thomas Pope v. John White Answer, replication and rejoinder [filed together]: prisage of wines at Chepstow, [Mon] and Bridgwater [Som]
PROB 11/31	Will of John Hyll of Minehead
REQ 2/4/399	Robert Bassher v Symond Whyte and others: seizure of the plaintiff's ship and goods at Minehead, Somerset, so that he is unable to refund a ransom paid for him when a prisoner in Scotland. Covering dates Between 1492 and 1547
SP12 176/2	Letters and papers described in the published Calendar of State Papers, Domestic: Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. Covering dates 1585 Jan-Feb

SP 12 156/45 SP 12 181/50	1582 Ships Survey Sir F Walsyngham for the farming of all the customs, subsidy and other duties for all manner of goods within the ports of Plymouth, Exeter, Poole, Bristol, Bridgwater, Gloucester and others
SP 46/30 fol. 200d.,201	Petition to the lord Treasurer of Hugh Brasyer, William and John Collybere and eight Barnstaple men for favourable consideration over the illegal export of grain. Feb 1576.
SP 46/30 fol.185	John Gyffard to the lord Treasurer: seizure of the George of Padstowe at Ilfarcombe, co. Devon, for attempted shipment of corn to Spain; corrupt dealings of William Ley, Anthony Hony and Roger Norwoode; Brightley in Devon; 23 Jan. 1576.
SP 46/32 fol. 250	Letter: Burghley to Fanshawe, re. Port of Gloucester, 11 June 1582
SP 46/35 fol. 120	Walsyngham to the Lord Treasurer re export of fish
STAC 2/1 folio 131	Peter Alves DEFENDANT: Robert Hyre and Griffith Vaughan PLACE OR SUBJECT: Seizure of a vessel and cargo bound for Barnstaple
STAC 7/14/22	Plaintiff: Payne, John. Defendant: Thomas Riche. Place or Subject: Gloucester: Illegal purchase of corn. County: Glos

Somerset Record Office

D/B/bw/1432	Water Bailiffs Accounts 1504-1505
D/B/bw/1434	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1527-1528
D/B/bw/1435	Water Bailiffs Accounts .1528-1529
D/B/bw/1438	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1544
D/B/bw/1441	Water Bailiffs Accounts . 1540-1541
D/B/bw/1464	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1564-1565
D/B/bw/1476	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1589-1590
D/B/bw/1477	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1590-1591
D/B/bw/1478	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1591-1592
D/B/bw/1482	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1597-1598
D/B/bw/1483	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1598-1599
D/B/bw/1484	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1599-1600
D/B/bw/1576	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1585-1586
D/B/bw/1579	Water Bailiffs Accounts. 1587-1588
D/B/bw/368	Apprenticeship Indentures 29 Sep 1479
DD/FA/11/1	Volume of notes on Somerset Maritime History by the depositor.
DD/FA/11/2-4	The Early Bridgwater Ship Registers, by G Farr.
DD/L/P/1/55/1	Minehead : Ships' Survey
DD/L/P/29/34	Petition concerning Minehead Harbour

DD/L/P/29/41	A note of Minehead Harbour Charges
DD/SAS/C/795	Bridgwater Water Bailiffs' Accounts 1550-51
DD/WY/23/11	Sir John Wyndham and Thomas Lutterell, Esq. v Silvester, Bickham (Watchet Harbour; the Lords bushell of salt).1634.
DD/X/SLO/11	Documents relating to a case heard in the High Court of Admiralty between Alexander Fydelli of Venice, Italy, merchant, and Henry Sandyford of Bristow Skinner. (on microfilm). 1541-1554
T\PH\lanc/10 mfilm	Minehead Parish Registers
T\PH\stv/5	Transcripts of Court Rolls for the Manor of Minehead
Q\SPET/1/74	Petition of Nathaniell BULLOCKE

North Devon Record Office

3416M/E3	Barnstaple : copy of orders and articles concerning payment of harbour dues in 1603, c.1700
BI 1713 & 1714	Barnstaple Bailiffs Accounts 1549 & 1594
B1/1991	Translation of charters of Barnstaple 1445-1560

Gloucester Record Office

GBR/B/2/1	Official memoranda book or 'Red Book' 1486-1648
GBR/B/2/2	'Red Book' Date 1518-1628
GBR/B/3/1	Common Council minute book 1565-1632
GBR/F/1/1	Fee-farm and other Exchequer accounts: National Taxation
GBR/F/4/3	Stewards' Accounts 1550/1-1595/6
GBR/H/2/1	Order and letter book 1558-1672
GBR/1/1/31	Letters Patent constituting Gloucester a port 1580

British Library

BL Cott. Augustus, I. VOL. I. 6	A plot of the coasts of Cornwall and Devonshire 1588
BL Lansdowne MS46 f 102	Complaint of imposte on wine by Cardiff ports 1585

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