

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

RALEIGH'S COUNTRY AND THE SEA

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Read 6 December 1989

IN a box of unlisted High Court of Admiralty papers there surfaced the unmistakable signature of Sir Francis Drake. He had been consulted by Lord Burghley about a merchant 'of the west parts' who was seeking a licence to pass with a ship called the *Grace* of Topsham to La Rochelle. Drake replied on 16 December 1587 that he would be 'provided of many fitter ships for service . . . and [would] have no want of her'.¹ She will have been one of the many small vessels of twenty to thirty tons burden which sailed between the ports of south Devon and south-west France, of little use for naval purposes except perhaps as a supply ship. Within a few months the Privy Council was inviting all the major seaports of the maritime counties to supply one or more ships of at least sixty tons, fully furnished with men, munitions and victuals, to join Drake's fleet at Plymouth.² The response of the west country was decidedly tepid, the city of Exeter on being asked for three ships and a pinnace replying that there was only one serviceable ship available and she was about to leave for Newfoundland. She was stayed but the city asked that her cost be shared not only by Topsham but by all the other parishes in the Exe estuary, as well as by some on the coast, and by the inland towns of Tiverton, Cullompton and Colyton.³ It was true that, although the city clung tenaciously to its status as a head port for customs purposes, it was itself virtually landlocked, the river being unnavigable above Topsham and the newly-built canal usable only by lighters. Three days before the sighting of the Armada the city drew

¹ P(ublic) R(ecord) O(ffice), High Court of Admiralty, Exemplifications, HCA14/24/9.

² J. R. Dasent (ed.), *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, new series XVI, pp. 9–10.

³ PRO, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth, SP12/209/84.

attention to the success of the Lord Warden of the Stannaries in getting exemption from contribution for all tanners, but the merchants of Exeter never lost an opportunity of impugning Sir Walter Raleigh on account of his cloth patent. The mayor of Barnstaple in north Devon excused the town on account of the interruption of trade with Spain and the fact that, contrary to Westminster's assumptions, there had as yet been no benefit received from the issue of letters of reprisal.⁴

In fact the greatest need in Plymouth in July 1588 was for seamen. So many had been lost through sickness that Burghley wondered why there were continual demands for victuals.⁵ But if the reports of casualties were true the call for volunteers and the resort to impressment must have had some success or the great fleet which had arrived from London could never have put to sea. At least thirty men were shipped over from Dartmouth, over and above the furnishing of its ships, but Plymouth and her immediate neighbours must have borne the brunt of the emergency.⁶ The manpower problem was not a new one: in 1545 at the height of Henry VIII's French war John Lord Russell was informed by the mayor of Saltash in Cornwall that the town was 'unable to set forth any [of] the newly-built ships for lack of mariners', and Russell in his turn reported to the Council that so many fishermen had been taken up for the King's service that their boats were being 'manned' by women.⁷ Nor was the situation any better at the end of the century. In Plymouth in 1597 the earl of Essex discharged many of the seamen taken up by the pressmasters because although they wore mariners' clothing they 'knew not one rope in the ship'.⁸

Is it then a myth that the South West in general and Raleigh's native county of Devon in particular, provided the resources by way of ships and of seamen for the explosion in Elizabethan maritime enterprise?

To answer that question it is necessary to identify those resources with some precision, and in particular to distinguish between

⁴ *Ibid.*, 212/53, 209/77.

⁵ J. K. Laughton (ed.), *State Papers relating to the Defeat of the Armada*, 2 vols, Navy Records Society (1895), Vol. 1, pp. 217-8, 256-8, 268-71, 284-5.

⁶ PRO, SP12/216/74. On 17 July John Hawkins asked Westminster for sufficient cash to impress 1000 replacements: Laughton, *State Papers*, pp. 275-6.

⁷ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 20, pt i, p. 635; Vol. 20, pt ii, p. 84.

⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth, 1595-7* (1869), p. 451.

those who actually sailed the ships and those who only travelled in them, owned them, victualled them, or paid the crews' wages. Like other occupational terms 'seaman' and even 'mariner' were used as loosely by contemporaries as they so often still are by historians. In 1589 all twenty-one members of the crew of Gawen Champernowne's seventy-ton *Phoenix* of Dartmouth were categorized as 'mariners', including besides the ship's officers not only the three gunners but also the surgeon, the purser, the steward, the master cook, the ship's carpenters, and even the 'swabber', but this was in support of a claim for sea wages.⁹ The description 'mariner' was used very differently in the contracts whereby young men in Elizabethan Plymouth committed themselves for seven or eight years to be instructed in the 'art and science of a mariner', with the promise that at the end of the term they would be provided with a sum of money, usually 40s, two suits of clothing suitable to their 'degree', a sea bed, a sea chest, and 'all instruments for the sea as shall be necessary for the use of a mariner', these being often specified as a sea card, that is a chart, and a cross and staff as aids to navigation.¹⁰ These were the élite, the future shipmasters. Under 'officers and other mariners' Champernowne also included the ship's captain, but not the thirty-one other men on board who were presumably soldiers. Only an armed vessel would have a captain and he would be a soldier and play no part in the sailing of the ship, which was the responsibility of the master, a professional mariner. On trading voyages the same exclusion would apply to merchants or their factors, and to all landmen on board until Drake in the 1570s had the novel idea of requiring his gentlemen passengers, when things got rough and all were far from home, to 'haul and draw' with the rest.¹¹ This very elementary point needs to be made before considering the role of some of the Elizabethan maritime heroes, so many of whom came from the westcountry.

John Hawkins and Francis Drake were cousins, but as what we can loosely call 'seafarers' they bore little resemblance. Hawkins's father was a leading merchant, a ship owner, and Mayor of Plymouth in the very year in which his second son was born. If John went to sea as a young man it will have been as his father and elder brother's factor. On his own voyages to West Africa and the

⁹ PRO, SP12/222/30.

¹⁰ W(est) D(evon) R(ecord) O(ffice) (Plymouth), Book W89, Register of Apprenticeship Indentures.

¹¹ D. B. Quinn, *Drake's Circumnavigation of the Globe* (Exeter, 1981), p. 4.

Caribbean in the 1560s he went as a merchant, though with aggressive intent. In the 1570s he commanded a private navy in the service of the French Protestants before devoting himself at home to naval administration. He had already moved to London where he married, twice, both times into the establishment. Without doubt he knew a good deal about ships and how they handled, but there is no evidence that he was ever in any real sense a practical mariner.¹² Drake's family were farmers, though his own father, a younger son, was some sort of artisan. There are still problems to be solved about Francis's early life but there seems no reason to doubt his own story that he learned his seamanship in the Thames estuary before returning to Plymouth to work for the Hawkinses. He was already a mature mariner of twenty-seven when he was sent up to the Court in January 1569 to report on the near disaster at St Juan, but he was not thereby transformed overnight into the swashbuckling sea captain. Stopping only to marry, in July, the daughter of a shipmate, he returned almost immediately to the merchant service. The port book of Dartmouth for 1569–70 records the departure in November of the fifty-ton *Brave* of Totnes for Guinea, her cargo comprising largely woollen cloths and her master being one Francis Drake of Plymouth. This fills in what has until now been a blank in Drake's career and suggests that he resisted any temptation to join Hawkins and others operating in a warlike manner in the Channel.¹³ In 1570 he became a freeman of Plymouth, presumably with a view to trading on his own account, and one of his passengers on his first independent Caribbean voyage later that year was a merchant of Exeter. In a list of Plymouth merchantmen operating in 1571–2 Drake is named as master, not captain, of the forty-ton *Pascho*, the Hawkins' vessel in which he was about to lead what has come to be regarded as the most daring of his early excursions to the Caribbean. By general consensus he was now a pirate, but it must be remembered that most of what is known of his exploits in the early 1570s derives

¹² J. A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 6–7, 9–11, 63, 78ff. Williamson (p. 65) describes Hawkins as a 'consummate seaman' and a 'good navigator', but offers no supporting evidence of his skills.

¹³ PRO, Queen's Remembrancer, Port Books, E190/927/4; K. R. Andrews, *Drake's Voyages* (1967), pp. 42–3. For the most up-to-date treatment of his early life see *Sir Francis Drake* (The British Library, 1977), pp. 32–9 and also John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (1990), pp. 1–7, which was published after this paper was completed.

from an account only published in 1626.¹⁴ What is for sure is that as the *Pascho* lay waiting for a wind in Plymouth Sound on 24 May 1572 a member of her crew, John Crockhay, occupied himself making a will. He left everything to his wife Avice and to any child she should be bearing, including the £40 he had ventured in the voyage. One of his witnesses was Drake's younger brother, and twelve months later, on the other side of the Atlantic, John Drake, late of Plymouth, mariner, being 'suddenly stricken with a gun shot and near his death', was persuaded by his shipmates that he too should set his affairs in order. In his case his investment was in the *Pascho* and was £30, which he left to his young wife Alice, calling on Francis, as his executor, to see her well looked after. Both wills were proved in London in February 1574.¹⁵ Small beer perhaps (two rich young widows notwithstanding), but an indication that not all the financing of Drake's early ventures came from those shadowy figures the 'westcountry merchants' or from the Court circle. That Drake himself, although he later married a lady, remained essentially a professional mariner all his life cannot, I think, be denied.

What he had become by 1572, if not before, a fighting man and fortune hunter, three of his slightly younger Devon contemporaries, each of them a gentleman by birth, had been since boyhood. The young Richard Grenville read a little law before going off to Hungary to fight the Turks. It is true that in 1574 he planned a great voyage to the South Seas but his first real sea venture, apart from crossing to Ireland where he saw most of his active soldiering, was in 1585, aged forty-three, in command of the small fleet which carried Raleigh's first intended colonists to North America. During his many years at home in the South West, and especially during the months before the arrival of the Spanish Armada, he was occupied entirely in civil and military duties ashore. In the course of his naval engagement of 1591 he is said to have ignored the advice of the master of the *Revenge*, and not even Raleigh's literary talent describing his last fight in heroic terms can make a sailor of him.¹⁶ Much the same, too, can be said of Humphrey Gilbert. Though he was born on the banks of the Dart he too, faced with the challenge of being a younger son, took the first opportunity to go soldiering. He did have an informed

¹⁴ WDRO, Book W46, Black Book, sub 1570-71; PRO, State Papers Elizabeth, Addenda, SP15/22 (see below, p. 282) fo. 21d; K. R. Andrews, *Drake's Voyages*, pp. 43-51.

¹⁵ PRO, Wills, Prob 11/56/2, 56/7.

¹⁶ A. L. Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville* (1937), pp. 53, 59, 89-100, 203, 306.

interest in navigation, and some very advanced ideas about the provision of formal instruction, but his few active maritime ventures were a means only to his real end, the acquisition of a landed empire in North America. Even his interest in the Newfoundland fisheries, as his Dartmouth neighbours were almost certainly well aware, was in the rents to be obtained from the fishing stations. Most of his funding, other than what he could provide himself or obtain from his own family, seems to have been found in London or Southampton, and it was from the latter that he sailed in 1583, calling in at Cawsand in Plymouth Sound only for water supplies.¹⁷ The expedition itself was an organizational shambles and Gilbert only escaped reproach at home by his careless courting of death at sea.

Walter Raleigh is not so easily dismissed. He grew up on a farm within easy walking distance of the Exe estuary where his father and elder half-brothers were deeply involved in seafaring, but with an apparent determination to live up to his gentle birth he too opted for a military career, first in France but principally in Ireland where lay his real hopes of becoming a man of property. From 1585 he was vice-Admiral of Devon, but that was just a shore job, exercised by deputies.¹⁸ His role in 1587–8 was essentially a military one, concerned with home defence, and as late as 1595 he was still contemplating the South West with the eyes of a soldier.¹⁹ If he had a power base there it was as Lord Warden of the Stannaries. He had a good theoretical knowledge of ships, and at one time or another owned a good many, though he rarely sailed in them. His many enemies poked fun at his ignorance of the sea, but he showed in his promoting of the Roanoke voyages a far greater appreciation than had Gilbert of the ocean's potential as a two-way passage between the old and the new worlds.²⁰

The great failing, as it seems to me, of nearly all the westcountry

¹⁷ D. B. Quinn (ed.), *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 2 vols, Hakluyt Society, Series 2, 83 (1940), pp. 1–4; Henry Ellis (ed.), 'Copy of a Plan ... for instituting a London Academy', *Archaeologia*, 21 (1827), 506–20; Quinn, *ibid.*, 55–90; PRO, E190/1014/25, 1015/7, 23; Quinn, *ibid.*, p. 396.

¹⁸ M. J. G. Stanford, 'The Raleghs take to the Sea', *Mariner's Mirror*, 48 (1962), 18–35; D. B. Quinn, *Raleigh and the British Empire* (1947), pp. 1, 7–8, 32–9.

¹⁹ E. Edwards (ed.), *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 2 vols (1868), Vol. 2, pp. 36–9, 112–17.

²⁰ D. B. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke* (Chapel Hill and London 1985) and *Raleigh and the British Empire*, pp. 78–9.

gentlemen who in any way promoted maritime endeavours was their dependence on London, for funding, for ships and especially for men. When the *Golden Hind*, sole survivor of Humphrey Gilbert's Newfoundland squadron, made for Dartmouth in 1583 to report his loss, her crew refused to take her into port, insisting that she sail at least as far as Weymouth in order to shorten their journey home to Harwich. Her master was William Cox of Limehouse.²¹ Yet there was surely no shortage of local talent. Those shipmasters, and their mates, who took vessels of all sizes in and out of the shipping havens of the South West, possessed intimate knowledge, not only of winds and tides and of coastal topography but also of the sea bed, all the harbour entries of Devon, except that of Dartmouth, being now barred with sandbanks. It is no coincidence that the Borough brothers, Stephen and William, probably to become the finest English navigators of the age, were born in north Devon within sight of the notorious Barnstaple Bar, just outside the confluence of the rivers Taw and Torridge. Who took them to London and into the service of the Muscovy merchants has still to be discovered, but what we do know is that for all their far flung achievements they both remained active shipmasters in the port of London.²²

Slightly more is known of the early career of that other Devon-born navigator, John Davis, though where, if indeed at all, he learned the art and science of a mariner, except at the feet of the learned Dr Dee, has not yet emerged. Born in the parish of Stoke Gabriel on the narrow neck of land which separates the Dart from Torbay, while still a very young man he seems to have been taken to London by the Gilberts.²³ But he did return home from time to time and his patron, Adrian Gilbert, was more successful than either his elder brother Humphrey or his half-brother Walter Raleigh in obtaining financial support from westcountry merchants, not only from the tightfisted men of Exeter but also from a number of inland towns.²⁴ Indeed the North West passage project was essentially a peaceful exploratory and commercial venture, with a subsidiary interest in fishing. Perhaps most important of all, on his first voyage in 1585, Davis had with him as

²¹ Quinn, *Voyages of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, pp. 420–1, 83.

²² PRO, SP12/156/45 (see below, p. 281), fo. 105: Stephen and William Aborough (*sic*), shipmasters in London, 1582.

²³ I am grateful to Professor David Quinn for confirming the absence of more than these bare details of John Davis's early career.

²⁴ A. H. Markham (ed.), *Voyages and Works of John Davis the Navigator*, Hakluyt Society, 59 (1880), p. xx.

master of the *Sunshine*, a fifty- to sixty-ton bark of London, William Easton, a native of Brixham in Torbay, who by all accounts was his right-hand man in Arctic waters.²⁵ Easton had had years of experience conducting ships, first into and out of Dartmouth, then for a short while in Plymouth, and from 1581 to 1583 on the sixty-ton *Mermaid* of Topsham on the wine run to Cadiz and Gibraltar. He proceeded with some of the wine to London and it may even have been there that he met Davis. He seems to have been something of a character: when he made his will in 1590 he declared it to be 'mine own true deed, as true as though all the witnesses in the world were at it'.²⁶ He was exceptional in his mobility, but with William Easton we are getting close to the ordinary sort of westcountry mariner.

To get even closer I have chosen to look in some detail at the two decades preceding the outbreak of the Spanish war in 1585. No period is ever really normal and from 1569 to 1573 there was an embargo on direct trade with Spain, but this was Burghley's 'long peace'. Privateering had not yet entered its late-Elizabethan heyday, and piracy, though rife, was an activity confined to the fringes of the maritime community. There is also the attraction that this period provides two great national surveys of ships and seamen, and also much useful supplementary material.

Sometime after Michaelmas 1572, probably some considerable time later, but it does not affect the result, Thomas Colshill, Surveyor of the Port of London, completed the formidable task of extracting from the Queen's customs returns, called since 1565 port books, for the year Michaelmas 1571 to Michaelmas 1572, the names and tonnage of all ships 'trading by way of merchandise' in all the head ports, with their member creeks, from Newcastle round to Chester. Colshill's findings, of which only the final version seems to have survived, neatly tabulated in two columns and splendidly engrossed (as were all customs records), have the appearance of tablets of stone.²⁷ On the east coast Yarmouth and her nine creeks, with a total of 193 ships, is credited with the numerically largest fleet, closely followed by Ipswich with 179, and London, with far fewer creeks, with 162.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 26.

²⁶ PRO, E190/926/3, 8; SP15/22, fo. 21d; E190/930/7, 933/2, 934/4; Prob 11/82/91.

²⁷ PRO, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth, Addenda, SP15/22.

On the south coast the ports of Sandwich and Chichester, with their creeks, were home base, according to Colshill, to nearly as many vessels as London, but further west he found Southampton and Poole, each with under sixty ships, lagging way behind. Neither the survey as a whole nor the local details have ever been subjected to critical analysis.²⁸

Colshill's grand total for the port of Exeter, 124 vessels, places her sixth in line, but this includes her member port of Dartmouth, all other creeks on the south coast of Devon as far west as Salcombe, and the whole of north Devon. Broken down the figures are: the Exe estuary and Teignmouth, 35 ships; Dartmouth and the southernmost coast of Devon, 45; and north Devon, 24. These correct Colshill's inaccuracy in including with the port of Exeter not only Oreston and Millbrook near Plymouth, but also Mount's Bay in the far west of Cornwall. This error is quite incomprehensible as Plymouth was herself a customs port, also comprehending the whole of Cornwall, making quite separate returns. Colshill's tallies, duly rearranged, give Plymouth and her constellation of neighbouring maritime communities, including Saltash on the Cornish side of the river Tamar, a total of exactly fifty ships, with thirty-nine more in the rest of Cornwall.

Within a manageable local context it is possible to check even further the accuracy of Colshill's figures, although the task would have been easier if he had taken care to return the customs records for 1571–2 which he actually used. Elizabethan port books are the despair of economic historians, surviving only as a very incomplete series, especially those which record details of the goods charged, merchants' names, and the actual customs paid. But there do survive, in rather greater number, the port Searchers' books, together with those of the port Controllers, and each of these provides not only the names of the ships entering or leaving harbour, their home ports, tonnage, previous ports of call, and intended destinations, but also the names of their masters with, in

²⁸ The details are summarized in *Calendar of State Papers Elizabeth, Addenda 1566–79* (1871), p. 441 and used, with the conviction that they represented coastal craft only, by Michael Oppenheim in his many contributions to the *Victoria History of the Counties of England: Cornwall*, Vol. 1 (1906), p. 492, *Dorset*, Vol. 2 (1908), p. 203, *Essex*, Vol. 2 (1907), p. 273, *Kent*, Vol. 2 (1926), p. 299, fn. 380, *Somerset*, Vol. 2 (1911), p. 255, *Suffolk*, Vol. 2 (1907), p. 216, *Sussex*, Vol. 2 (1907), p. 151, and in his *Maritime History of Devon* (Exeter, 1968), pp. 39–40. Oppenheim also has a passing reference to Colshill's Shipping Survey in his *History of the Administration of the Royal Navy* (2 vols, 1896), Vol. 1, p. 173.

some but not all cases, the latter's places of residence, if different from the home ports of the ships. Fairly accurate identification of ships, and, equally important, of their masters, if not without problems, is a practical possibility. Such records provide at least a series of snapshots such as Colshill was attempting, and here and there where they survive for a sequence of two or more complete years a moving picture, more than enough to supply the needs of the social historian. There are also Certificate books relating to coastal trade (on which no custom was payable) which provide much the same kind of information. Given a good Searcher's book such as survives for Dartmouth and its neighbours for the year Michaelmas 1570 to Michaelmas 1571, we can, as it were, stand at the door of the Customs House on the Quay and observe the seventy-one incoming and forty-four outgoing English ships, only just over two a week on average over the whole year, on whose cargoes custom was paid. There was also a sprinkling of foreign vessels. The details can be checked in part by reference to a Customer's book for the period Michaelmas to Easter and there is a coastal book for Easter to Michaelmas 1571.²⁹ This is a relatively well-documented year. No doubt the embargo on trade with Spain is reflected in these figures. For 1582–3 the Dartmouth Searcher recorded a total of 364 shipping movements and this was probably a normal year in the period 1565–85, but with an average entry or exit of at most one ship a day into or out of all the havens from Torbay to Salcombe, the mid-Elizabethan shipping lanes of the south of Devon were hardly overcrowded.³⁰

By using all available port books for the five years on either side of 1571–2, a fairly complete picture can be built up of the core, or ongoing, resources of the several ports and their members. There is, of course, the problem of customs evasion, which was undoubtedly rife, but as one reads page after page of the entries and compiles sample itineraries, even to the extent of pursuing certain vessels and their masters between the ports of the South West, one gets the impression that although no doubt quantities of goods were slipped ashore unrecorded, as a record of ships, their masters and their movements, the surviving port books can be used with some confidence. Only regarding ships' tonnage is it necessary to suspend belief, it being customary, for obvious reasons, for masters to minimize the carrying capacity of their vessels, which they did with a fair degree of consistency. Quite

²⁹ PRO, E190/927/22, 927/18, 928/3.

³⁰ PRO, E190/934/5.

startling discrepancies emerge in cases where entries in the port books can be compared with applications for the Queen's bounty of 5s per ton on newly-built ships of over 100 tons.

For the Exe estuary the surviving port books for 1566–71 and 1572–5 can be supplemented by a complete series of records of town customs.³¹ Of the thirty-five ships listed by Colshill only four are entirely unrecorded, two others being identifiable elsewhere. Colshill's fifty-ton *Emanuel* becomes, as indeed she was known when she became part of Martin Frobisher's fleet in 1576, the *Armonell*, but he copies the local spelling of Exeter's port of Topsham as 'Apsam'. As to the *Armonell*'s tonnage, Colshill and the port books are in agreement but when her builder, John Weekes of Exeter, merchant, applied in May 1572 for a bounty he reckoned her to be a more buxom 104 tons.³² The sixty-ton *Swallow* of Topsham appears regularly in the customs records up to and including 1570–1, but not in Colshill, presumably having been lost or sold elsewhere for she never reappears. Apart from ignoring the small vessels, largely fishing boats, which still managed to navigate the choked estuaries of east Devon, Colshill's picture of the shipping of the Exeter area in 1571–2 stands up well to the other evidence available.

For Dartmouth and her neighbours, too, Colshill's returns are authenticated by a very full Searcher's book for 1570–1, and indeed many of his thirty-two vessels can be identified as early as 1567–8, including the fifty- to sixty-ton *Christopher* which was still in service in 1575–6.³³ So too was the *Jesus*, though variously rated from forty to seventy tons but identifiable by her succession of masters, Thomas Tucker, William Yabb, and, from 1572 to 1576, William Easton of Brixham. Colshill describes her as eighty tons and names her master as a John Millen, who could conceivably have had charge of her in between Yabb and Easton. He omitted the *Christopher* of Kingswear which appeared regularly in the port books from 1567 to 1579, perhaps making one entry of her and her Dartmouth namesake. One sympathizes with his difficulties, especially those arising from the shipowners' extraordinarily limited range of ships' names. His attempts to identify the vessels of the smaller havens seem to have been less successful. At

³¹ PRO, E190/925/14, 926/1, 926/9, 927/7, 927/16, 928/8, 929/10, 929/15 and E(ast) D(evon) R(ecord) O(ffice) (Exeter), Exeter Town Customs Rolls, which are complete for the reign of Elizabeth, but concern only incoming cargoes.

³² PRO, High Court of Admiralty, Letters of Marque, etc., HCA25, Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 1.

³³ PRO, E190/926/3, 927/22, 930/7.

Salcombe he omitted at least five vessels which appear regularly in the port books, and in north Devon he missed the forty-ton *Mary John* of Northam and the smaller *Henry* of Torrington, a town some way up the river Torridge, which were regularly making the long haul over the Bar to France carrying out Devonshire kersies and returning with the usual mix of iron, pitch, and quantities of bay salt, with the occasional barrel of soap.³⁴ But, of course, they may have been idle in 1571–2.

For Plymouth there is unfortunately only a Searcher's book for 1570–1 and nothing more until 1579–80.³⁵ The former bears only partial resemblance to Colshill's list for Plymouth itself, which omits the *James* and the *Paul*, each rated in the port books for 1570–1 at 100 tons, and nine other vessels, but seventeen tally and he has seven which are not in the port books. These last may have been newcomers to the port, but all in all such a turnover in one year seems unlikely and casts suspicion on his findings relating to Plymouth. In larger ships Colshill includes only the 100-ton *Christopher*, but the port book for 1571–2 may not have alerted him to the existence of the two other such vessels for they appear in a list of ships being made ready by John Hawkins in 1571 for his naval squadron. No longer the concern of the customs officers the *James* is there rated at 350 tons, no doubt with hiring charges in mind.³⁶ Clearly the Hawkins merchant fleet, which according to the well-known and much-quoted list made in 1570 numbered no less than thirteen ships, nine of them of 100 tons and over,³⁷ was inadequately represented in Colshill's survey simply because it did not appear in his sources. He was, after all, engaged in an entirely clerical exercise. Incidentally the *Christopher* of Plymouth, the largest vessel listed by Colshill in the whole of the South West, the only one of 100 tons or more, was rated in both the 1570 and 1571 lists as of no less than 500 tons burden. How Colshill picked her up at all is a mystery for she does not appear in any of the extant port books. If indeed she was 'trading by way of merchandise' in 1571–2 she was an unusually large merchantman in westcountry waters. On the evidence of the port books Colshill's tally of 154 ships appertaining to the ports of Devon can be increased to at least 190. However, all things considered, including what must have been enormous clerical

³⁴ PRO, E190/925/15, 926/2, 926/10, 927/5, 25, 929/12, 930/5.

³⁵ PRO, E190/1011/23, 1014/25. There are also Searchers' books for 1565–6 (E190/1010/7) and for 1567 (E190/1011/7, 12).

³⁶ Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, p. 289.

³⁷ PRO, SP12/71/75.

problems in reordering his data, Colshill's was a remarkable achievement.

What is odd is the lack of official curiosity about ownership, for one must assume that it was for their potential for naval purposes that intelligence of merchant ships was required. Only the list of 1570 indicates owners and from this it would appear that the Hawkins fleet was unique in the South West, there being otherwise only the three vessels belonging to John Prowse of Kingswear on the Dart. Most of the owners mentioned here and in other records were merchants, but the *Jonas* of 100 tons lying in Saltash was stated to belong to Christopher Coplestone esquire. A resident of Tamerton Foliot near Plymouth he was, incidentally, the great-great-grandson of the heiress of the second John Hawley of Dartmouth.³⁸ A ship of the same name but consistently of only forty tons was trading in and out of Plymouth in 1570–1, but otherwise evidence of gentlemen owning working merchant vessels is scarce. Only in 1582 does an identifiable Gilbert vessel appear in the surviving Dartmouth port books, the thirty-ton *Delight in Truth*, described as 'of Greenway', sailing to the Atlantic Islands carrying goods belonging to Sir John.³⁹ Otherwise there are only fleeting glimpses, especially in the 1560s, of local knights and gentlemen such as Sir Arthur Champernowne owning vessels, and these they used, not for trading but for what they euphemistically called the 'keeping of the seas', ostensibly against pirates. Largely ghost ships they materialize only when their owners were in dispute or claimed expenses. In 1565 Sir Peter Carew submitted to the Crown a claim for the cost of victuals for three ships of 200, 160 and 70 tons respectively carrying a total complement of 246 men. He included no claim for wages, his crews serving for shares in any captures, but apparently they had had little luck.⁴⁰ If there were only half a dozen such ships at sea at any one time they could absorb several hundred mariners and seamen. But the number of large ships was apparently decreasing. A report of 1560 had noted that there were in Devon, including two in Saltash, twenty of 100 tons and more, nearly a quarter of the national total. Two were at Northam in north Devon, one each of Salcombe and at Cockington in Torbay, nine on the Dart, and seven

³⁸ Ibid., and for Coplestone, J. L. Vivian, *The Visitations of the County of Devon* (Exeter, 1895), p. 224 and T. L. Stoate (ed.), *Devon Taxes 1581–1660* (Bristol, 1988), p. 10.

³⁹ PRO, E190/934/5.

⁴⁰ PRO, SP12/36/38–9.

in Plymouth. In 1568 there were seventeen, including eight at Plymouth, and by 1577 out of a national total of 135 Devon was credited with only fifteen, six of these at Plymouth. These last included the *Pelican*, newly-built by Francis Drake and here rated at 110 tons, though declared by her owner in his claim for a bounty to be 150.⁴¹ This decrease may well reflect a lessening interest by the gentry, most of the few bounties applied for after 1572 being in the names of merchants, sometimes in partnership with mariners.⁴²

In 1582 or 1583 another national survey of shipping was commissioned, this time to be compiled from certificates sent up from the maritime counties. In its final form, entitled a 'Brief Report', the previous arrangement by customs ports was replaced by one based on coastal or estuarine parishes.⁴³ Ships of 100 tons and over, 80–100 tons, and under eighty were separately listed. Nationally the first group totalled 177, twice as many as in Colshill. Devon's seven and Cornwall's three look insignificant compared with Norfolk's sixteen and London's sixty-two, and similarly in the second category (Devon three, Cornwall two, Norfolk eight, and London twenty-three). All told the Brief Report lists only twenty-four ships in the South West over sixty tons, which, if correct, would at least be some justification for the poor response in 1588.

But using all available port books for the period 1575–85 it emerges that the Brief Report grossly underestimates the total

⁴¹ PRO, SP12/11/27; B(ritish) L(ibrary), Harl. MS 168/121/fo. 248; PRO, SP12/111/30, P. Williams, 'The Ownership of Drake's *Golden Hind*', *Mariner's Mirror*, 67 (1981), p. 185. See also Oppenheim, *Maritime History of Devon*, pp. 38–9.

⁴² PRO, SP12/136/35.

⁴³ PRO, SP12/156/45, fos 88–104 and (an identical copy) 125–44, fo. 125 being misplaced. The back cover of the manuscript carries the date 1582 in a crude but contemporary hand and this has never been called in question, but two very precise summaries (BL, Harl. MS 4228/45 and Cotton MS Otto IX, 96, fo. 249) are very specific in dating the returns to 1583. A summary table is printed in N. J. Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports* (Oxford, 1988), 220–1 and the returns for Norfolk in greater detail (*ibid.*, 217), but without any attempt at critical analysis. There are even less detailed passing references in *Monson's Naval Tracts* 3, Navy Records Society, 43 (1910), Oppenheim, *History of the Administration of the Royal Navy*, 1, 175, and in various more recent publications, notably but with minimal comment by K. R. Andrews, 'The Elizabethan Seaman', *Mariner's Mirror*, 68 (1982), 253.

number of small- to medium-sized (ten to eighty tons) ships in Devon's ports in 1582/3. For example, Topsham is credited with only twelve compared with a count of twenty-two from the port books, and Exmouth with nine rather than seventeen.⁴⁴ No doubt those making the returns had difficulties in knowing what to do about ships away at sea, but one suspects that they were also persuaded to be economical with the truth, except in ships' tonnage which on the whole was larger than that stated in the port books. It is the same story all over the county, but the chief failing is the total omission from the Brief Report of the important port towns of Dartmouth and Plymouth, defects which seem to have no parallel anywhere else in the country. They are not even noted by the compiler of the final version. However, using the port books it is possible to make good these omissions, adding twenty-four ships in respect of Dartmouth and Kingswear, and twenty-three for Plymouth and its immediate neighbour Stonehouse, more than doubling the number in this south-western corner of the county.⁴⁵ The very full port book for 1583-4 records many new ships, nine in Plymouth itself, the same number in Millbrook, and five in Stonehouse, to say nothing of three more in Saltash, suggesting that even if it had been accurate the Brief Report would soon have been out of date.⁴⁶ Perhaps that is why its two identical and splendidly engrossed copies, having been passed on by Burghley to the Lord Admiral without comment, show no sign of wear and tear. Did they but know, instead of the 119 ships listed under Devon the total was not far short of 200. On the evidence of the port books, however, few of the additions to the Brief Report were sixty tons or over.⁴⁷

Of even greater interest to a social historian, in spite of its identical limitations, is the document which accompanied the Brief Report in 1582/3, an 'Abstract', similarly prepared, of the country's maritime manpower.⁴⁸ Elizabethan parishioners were

⁴⁴ PRO, E190/930/10, 930/13, 931/5, 933/11, 934/4, 935/5.

⁴⁵ For Dartmouth, *ibid.*, 930/7, 930/14, 931/4, 933/13, 934/5, 934/16 and for Plymouth, 1014/25, 1015/7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1015/23.

⁴⁷ The inclusion of Dartmouth and Plymouth places Devon, in terms of the number of ships over twenty tons, ahead of all other counties, including Norfolk, but the figures in the Brief Report for other counties may also be in need of revision.

⁴⁸ PRO, SP12/156/45, fos 105-17 and (an identical copy) 144d-58, fos 118-24 being missing.

accustomed to being listed for taxation, for musters, and so on, but occupational listings were rare. This seems to have been the only national attempt in the sixteenth century to enumerate what were here described as 'mariners and seamen', and in commissioning the Abstract the government did not push its luck too far: only shipmasters were listed by name, the rest only by numbers for each parish in which they were to be found. Colshill, some ten years earlier, had supplied the name of a master for every one of his ships, although it must have been evident to him from the port books that many ships sailed under more than one master in the course of a single year. Using the port books as before it can be shown that the number active in Devon even then had been, not 154, the total number of ships listed, but well over 200.

The number of masters actually named in the Abstract of 1582/3 is 169 (even more than the 150 as totalled at the foot of the Devon entry), and this is without Dartmouth and Plymouth. There are returns for sixty-five out of some 430 parishes in Devon, all of them on or very near the coasts, north and south. The largest number, twenty-four, was located in the parish of Kenton in the Exe estuary, followed by twenty in both Northam in north Devon and Millbrook near Plymouth, and fifteen in the parish of Malborough near the tip of south Devon which contained the port of Salcombe. Of the twenty-four masters listed as resident in Kenton only four cannot be identified there, or anywhere else, in the port books, and the few who are missing from the Abstract, here as elsewhere in the Exe estuary, were mostly those whose names occurred in the port books only once. For Malborough, however, those appearing regularly in the port books suggest that the fifteen masters in the Abstract should be increased to at least twenty-five. For Dartmouth and Kingswear there can be added from the port books the names of some sixty-three masters who were active at some time in the years 1581-3, more than twice as many as the number of ships, and incidentally more than in the whole of the Exe estuary. About one third of these appear only occasionally. For Plymouth the port books for 1579-81 and 1583-4 add only about twenty names, Millbrook and Saltash being confirmed at about twenty and nine respectively. With the additions for Dartmouth and Plymouth it would appear that there were in Devon in 1582/3 at least 250 active masters, nearly fifty per cent more than the arithmetically-corrected total in the Abstract, and some twenty-five per cent more than the postulated number of merchant ships. (The parish clergy of Devon, when assessed for militia contributions in 1588, numbered

313, but of course they were spread throughout the county and not merely in the maritime parishes.⁴⁹) The national total of masters was given in the Brief Report as 1488, but, quite apart from the likelihood of arithmetical errors, that total will almost certainly need amending.

Compared with those of the shipmasters the parochial tallies of other seafarers are not so easily checked. Those who prepared the certificates were not very precisely briefed, or it may have been that counties interpreted the instructions differently. It was clearly intended that fishermen should be counted separately from mariners and seamen, but as the authors of the final redaction admitted, six counties, including Cornwall, had lumped them all together. Indeed Cornwall did not even name its masters or locate the rest by parish. In Devon fishermen were only separately enumerated for the north coast: the total given as 101 should on the parochial evidence be only forty-six, but the zero numbers for both Clovelly and Hartland must be a mistake. It seems likely too that the fifty-eight 'mariners and seamen' at Sidmouth in east Devon, compared with only forty-five at Topsham, must include many fishermen. Kenton, with no less than 104 resident mariners, probably including some fishermen, was clearly a dormitory for the rest of the Exe estuary, as in the case of masters. There were very considerable numbers of mariners and seamen reported in all the coastal parishes west of the Exe, especially in the Teign estuary and in Cockington and Paignton in Torbay, all of these well placed to seek employment to the east or the west, there being no real havens for shipping locally. Beyond Dartmouth the three coastal but entirely rural parishes of Stokenham, Slapton, and Blackawton, again with nothing between them which could be called a haven for shipping, and no ships located thereabouts, were together home, according to the Abstract, to over 250 mariners and seamen. Again one suspects a large proportion of fishermen. By comparison the numbers of 106 in the large sea-girt parish of Malborough and 115 in Northam in north Devon seem almost credible. To plug the Dartmouth and Plymouth gap there is a survey of Devon mariners made in 1570, which incidentally goes a long way towards confirming the parochial location of the seafarers in 1582/3, which provides a figure of no less than 246 mariners (which may include masters) for Dartmouth and its adjoining parishes, but only eighty-six for

⁴⁹ PRO, SP₁₂/215/16.

Plymouth and Stonehouse, and thirty-six for Saltash.⁵⁰ Unfortunately Millbrook, in Devon but on the far side of the Tamar, which was almost certainly, in relation to Plymouth, what Kenton was to Topsham, escaped both the 1570 and 1582 mariner surveys. In proportion to its twenty resident masters it will almost certainly have had at least 100 mariners and seamen, to say nothing of a considerable number of fishermen. Richard Carew, writing in about 1600, described it as a village of some eighty houses, much employed in fishing, and furnishing 'more able mariners at every prest ... than many others of far greater blaze'.⁵¹ All told, however, there cannot have been more than about 300 experienced mariners in and around Plymouth in the early 1580s, and it is therefore very likely that many of those on board the English fleet in 1588 'knew not one rope in the ship'. But, of course, Drake's needs were unprecedented.

With the inclusion of fishermen, many of whom could be recruited in an emergency (and no doubt were in 1588) to make up the crews of merchant ships, there must have been in Devon in 1582/3, not 1965 (the arithmetically-corrected total in the Abstract) but not far short of 3000 of what, to avoid being too specific, we may call seafarers. That this is not an unreasonable computation is confirmed by the results of a survey made in 1619 for south Devon only which contains the names of 3653 mariners (including a miscellany of masters, 'sailors' and fishermen).⁵² For Norfolk the Abstract of 1582/3 gives a figure of 1438 mariners, seamen, and fishermen, and even if this figure can be improved upon it seems unlikely that it will exceed that suggested for Devon. The Thames, from London Bridge to Gravesend, was said to have 991 mariners, and 195 fishermen.⁵³

No-one would wish to exclude from any further consideration of Devon's professional seafaring men those who sailed as far as the coasts of north-east England to catch fish, and even less those, not perhaps as yet very many by 1582, who crossed the Atlantic to bring back cod from Newfoundland for the European and home markets. For them and their work patterns we must await the completion of work now well in hand on the fisheries and

⁵⁰ PRO, SP12/71/75.

⁵¹ F. E. Halliday (ed.), *Richard Carew of Anthony: the Survey of Cornwall* (1953), p. 167.

⁵² Todd Gray (ed.), *Early-Stuart Mariners and Shipping: The Maritime Surveys of Devon and Cornwall*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series 33 (1990), forthcoming.

⁵³ PRO, SP12/156/45, fos 108-9, 106.

fishermen of Devon and Cornwall in the early modern period.⁵⁴ Meanwhile merchant shipmasters, and even merchant mariners, form a much more easily identifiable group, about whose working life much can be learned from the port books alone. There were, for example, great differences in the degree of permanence with which masters attached themselves to certain ships. In April and May 1580 Patrick Dalton of Plymouth took the eight-ton *Jennet* of Stonehouse to Roscoff, after which he transferred to the fourteen-ton *Greyhound* of Plymouth which he sailed to Morlaix in June and July. In August and September he took the twelve-ton *Trinity*, also of Plymouth, to Conquet in Brittany. Brendan Owen on the other hand served throughout the years 1579–84 as master of the twenty- to thirty-ton *Marie* of Plymouth. It seems likely that he was her owner while Dalton was an employee. If so then about one in four of the area's masters owned the ships they sailed.⁵⁵ Of how many other such humble people in Tudor England can we know so much about their working lives? To a social historian used to relatively stable farming and industrial households the discovery that many ships' companies had such a short life comes as something of a novelty.

It cannot have escaped notice that, except for the bare data in Colshill's survey, the number of masters in both 1572 and 1582 considerably exceeded the number of ships. This in itself suggests underemployment, but if the ships themselves can be shown to have been underemployed then the situation is compounded. By far the most frequented overseas routes were those between the south coast ports of Devon and south-west France, with considerable but less-frequent traffic with the ports of Spain and Portugal. Fully-employed a ship could apparently make three or four such voyages a year—that at any rate being as many as any of them made. But the port books suggest that many rarely made the round trip more than twice a year and some only once. There were also long periods, up to a year or more in some cases, when certain masters disappear from the port books altogether. Using the Plymouth Searcher's books for the two years 1579–81 it is possible, for instance, to plot the appearance in the Customs

⁵⁴ Todd Gray, 'Devon's Coastal and Overseas Fishing and Emigration to northern New England', in M. Duffy, S. Fisher, B. Greenhill, D. J. Starkey & J. Youings (eds), *New Maritime History of Devon*, forthcoming.

⁵⁵ PRO, E190/1014/25, 1015/7, 23.

House of William Anthony, master throughout the period of the twenty- to thirty-ton *Mayflower*. He and his ship arrived from London on 9 December 1579 and went to La Rochelle and back in March and April 1580. After this they do not reappear until the following winter when a voyage to La Rochelle lasted from 4 November to 10 January. At the end of April they left for London and had not reappeared when the record comes to an end at Michaelmas.⁵⁶ Mathew Hore of Oreston near Plymouth made two cross-Channel trips early in 1579, one to Bordeaux on the little *Marie* and one to Brittany on the *Katherine*, the second taking just eleven days. In 1580–1 he was in Baltimore in Ireland selling pilchards and doing business with pirates, but after that he disappears completely (except that he was in Baltimore in January 1582 when he made his will) until the records recommence in 1583 when he turns up in charge of the eighteen-ton *Trinity*, again bound for France.⁵⁷ Such examples can be multiplied, not only in Plymouth but in all the Devon ports. They are not conclusive proof in individual cases of maritime inactivity but taken all together dozens of itineraries provide pretty convincing demonstration that Devon's early Elizabethan shipmasters, and by implication also her mariners and seamen, were very considerably underemployed. This was recognized by Professor Kenneth Andrews as a national phenomenon, but interpreted by him as an explanation for the resort to piracy.⁵⁸ But its causes, and also its effects, go even deeper into local society and the economy of the county than that. This is suggested by certain documentary sources which, at their face value, have nothing to do with the sea.

In 1581 the more well-to-do and settled residents of every parish in England were assessed for the payment of a parliamentary subsidy. A scanning of the names of those listed for the coastal parishes of Devon reveals many who are known to have been shipmasters. There may be ordinary mariners too but they are not so easily identified. What is surely significant is that a fair sprinkling of the masters were assessed on their notional income from land. For instance, of the seven masters listed in the Abstract of 1582/3 for the parish of Tormohun bordering on Torbay, six were subsidy men, five paying on their goods and Roger Cock,

⁵⁶ PRO, E190/1014/25, 1015/7. It is, of course, possible, but on the evidence of the port books unlikely, that they were operating in the intervals between

Erratum

Proceedings, Volume LXXV, 1989, pp. 286–7

In Joyce Youngs' Raleigh Lecture 'Raleigh's Country and the Sea' (pp. 267–90), three lines were omitted from the footnotes on pp. 286–7.

The footnotes on p. 286 should read as follows:

⁵⁶ PRO, E190/1014/25, 1015/7. It is, of course, possible, but on the evidence of the port books unlikely, that they were operating in the intervals between foreign ports, or even elsewhere in the British Isles, or had gone fishing.

⁵⁷ PRO, E190/1014/11, 1015/7, 1015/23, and Prob 11/66/33.

⁵⁸ Andrews, 'The Elizabethan Seaman', pp. 251, 254.

The footnotes on p. 287 should read as follows:

⁵⁹ Stoate, *Devon Taxes*, *passim*; PRO, SP12/156/fo. 111; Stoate, pp. 65, 72, 95; PRO, E190/933/11.

⁶⁰ PRO SP12/156/45, fo. 111d.; Stoate, *Devon Taxes*, p. 20; PRO, E190/933/6.

⁶¹ For evidence that the situation was similar in the later middle ages see Wendy Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade in the Late Middle Ages', in M. Duffy *et al.*, *New Maritime History of Devon*, forthcoming.

⁶² PRO, Prob 11/56/27.

⁶³ PRO, Prob 11/59/2.

currently master of the forty-ton *Nicholas* of Brixham, on his land. At Stokeinteignhead three of the eight masters resident were taxed, all of them on land. At Littleham, the parish at the mouth of the Exe which contained the maritime community of Exmouth, William Meare, master of the forty-ton *Mayflower*, was among the wealthiest of the residents.⁵⁹ Finally, at Northam in north Devon the seven masters who appear in the subsidy list made up one quarter of the total. John Upcott, with an assessment on land, was in that very year serving as master of the twenty-ton *John* of Barnstaple in which he made two journeys to Biscay with Devonshire kersies, bringing back Spanish iron, none of this, incidentally, his own.⁶⁰ In fact, although we can never know what was smuggled ashore, the evidence of the port books suggests only a very marginal involvement of Devon masters in trade on their own account.⁶¹

Masters' wills show, too, that the land which in so many cases formed the basis of their tax assessments was not just an investment for what it would produce by way of rent but involved them as occupiers, that is in active farming. In 1574 Thomas Lux of Cosford in Kenton, formerly master of many vessels trading in and out of the Exe estuary, left his wife Maud all his cattle, sheep, pigs, and his grain, both that in store and in the field, and to his two daughters a close of barley, four ridges of beans, and two of peas.⁶² Many other wills testify to the possession by mariners of quite large sums of cash and of plate and other valuables. Thomas Birch who had been master of the *Armonell* of Topsham left cash legacies totalling £88, including 10s towards the building of a 'house for prospect' at John More's door. He left his brother an astrolabe and a sea card, and his friend Robert Langford of Kenton his silver whistle.⁶³

These pointers to alternative, or even primary, occupations followed by mariners can be substantiated from yet other sources. Kenton in the Exe estuary, to which attention has already been drawn as a dormitory for masters and mariners, was a large parish extending from the river bank, on which there was a landing

⁵⁹ Stoate, *Devon Taxes*, *passim*; PRO, SP12/156/fo. 111; Stoate, pp. 65, 72, 95; PRO, E190/933/11.

⁶⁰ PRO SP12/156/45, fo. 111d.; Stoate, *Devon Taxes*, p. 20; PRO, E190/933/6.

⁶¹ For evidence that the situation was similar in the later middle ages see Wendy Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade in the Late Middle Ages', in M. Duffy *et*

place at Starcross, up to the Haldon hills to the west. The land was rich, well-drained, and partly enclosed, and there was ample waste.⁶⁴ Although entry fines for copyholdings were increasing in the late 1570s there was clearly no real land hunger. A manorial rental of 1578 shows that among the 125 tenants there were at least a dozen identifiable shipmasters or their widows. Matilda Lux held for her life a farm of thirty-two acres. John Lackington, who went twice to sea in 1581–2, first in charge of the sixty-ton *Rose* of Exeter which he sailed to San Lucar, and then the thirty-ton *Mary Elsdon* of Topsham to Biscay, at the age of thirty-two in 1574 had entered into the occupation of a copyhold farm in Staplake near the river. It included a farmhouse with hall and parlour of five bays, a barn and malthouse of three bays, and a stable of the same dimensions. To this substantial messuage appertained an orchard and half a ferling (sixteen acres) of land.⁶⁵ Another master, Baldwin Allen, held two farms and the quarter part of a wood, for all of which he paid the quite considerable rent of 50s. There was little or no shipbuilding in the area but there must have been a ready market for small timber for repairs, and, of course, for house-building. Richard Towmarshe, who occasionally served as master of a Dawlish ship, paid 10s 6¼d for his farm, the rent including 1d for a fish cellar at Starcross. Most of the cellars there brought in 12d a year each to the lord of the manor, including that rented by Christopher Sampson, shipmaster, which was described as a salt cellar. Sampson sailed the twenty-five-ton *Gregory* of Kenton to La Rochelle in 1580–1 and again two years later in 1582–3, carrying out the usual woollen cloths and returning with bay salt belonging to some Exeter merchants. In 1581–2 the *Gregory* was taken over by Richard Woodcock while Sampson disappeared from the port books, presumably devoting himself to his thirty-two acres in the open fields.⁶⁶ Here, at Kenton, occurs a rare opportunity to observe men following dual occupations during their working lives, rather than, as is so often the case, inferring this from their wills and probate inventories.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ H. S. A. Fox, 'Outfield Cultivation in Devon and Cornwall: a reinterpretation', in M. Havinden (ed.), *Husbandry and Marketing in the South West* (Exeter, 1973), pp. 23–8.

⁶⁵ EDRO, 15/8/M/London/Surveys/Kenton 6; PRO, E190/933/11.

⁶⁶ EDRO, Exeter Town Customs Rolls, 1580–3; PRO, E190/933/2, 933/11, 934/4. He was also the tenant of three closes.

⁶⁷ For other evidence of farmer/mariners see D. Woodward, 'Ships, Masters and Shipowners of the Wirral, 1550–1650', *Mariner's Mirror*, 63 (1977), 233–47 and M. Mollat, 'The French Maritime Communities: a slow progress up on the social scale from the middle ages to the sixteenth century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 69 (1983), 115–28.

A survey of the manor made in 1598 enables us to establish the ages of some of the Kenton masters in 1582. Of the nine still alive sixteen years later their average age had been forty-five, and as these were the longest survivors the actual average age then must have been rather higher.⁶⁸ This surely indicates that in Kenton going to sea was not simply a diversion for young men while they waited for dead men's shoes, but a way of augmenting an already reasonable living. Anchored in the land they could afford to be relaxed about the vagaries of the overseas market, and go to sea when it suited them.

Against this background it is probably significant that there do not appear to have been any mariners' guilds in the region, even in such essentially maritime towns as Plymouth and Dartmouth. Presumably, unlike the clothworkers of Exeter, the mariners of Topsham saw no need to unite to protect their interests against the merchant oligarchy upon whose patronage they were in theory so dependent.⁶⁹ Formal apprenticeship, which for most corporate occupations was a means of preventing excessive recruitment or the use of cheap labour, seems only to have been known in Plymouth, and even there it was not extensive. In respect of their lack of organisation the mariners of the South West were in fact in stark contrast to the local tanners, who were also to a large extent part-timers. But tin mining was a sharply declining industry in the later sixteenth century.⁷⁰ Raleigh probably had his priorities right when he strove towards the end of the century to improve the lot of his tanners, reckoning no doubt that mariners could look after themselves. Having mentioned tinworking perhaps one should also mention the industry which occupied, part time, a very much larger number of the region's farming population than tinworking or seafaring, the spinning of wool and the weaving of cloth. Indeed westcountry people were jacks of many trades and there were no doubt many smallholding families in the coastal parishes whose members' nimble fingers were as adept at knitting fishing nets as in passing shuttles across the loom.

During Raleigh's lifetime there were few stresses and strains in the county's very mixed economy. John Hooker of Exeter, writing in the 1590s, claimed with a pride which bordered on arrogance

⁶⁸ EDRO, 1508/M/London/Valuations 4.

⁶⁹ Joyce Youings, *Tuckers Hall Exeter* (Exeter, 1968), Chapters 1–3.

⁷⁰ T. A. P. Greeves, 'The Devon Tin Industry, 1450–1750' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Exeter, 1981), pp. 285, 289.

that such a happy state of affairs obtained in Devon, the county having everything it required material to its well-being, that the rest of the country needed Devon more than Devon needed the rest of England.⁷¹ There is indeed some support for his proud boast in that of the multitude of London mariners examined by the Elizabethan High Court of Admiralty very few gave the South West as their place of birth, suggesting that few felt any call to the metropolis. It was Raleigh's misfortune in the 1580s that, this being so, few of his fellow westcountrymen saw any need to cross the Atlantic except to fish. As they were to demonstrate half a century later, had they taken the real plunge earlier they would have known better how to support themselves than those, probably mostly Londoners and, some say, old soldiers, whom he did transport to the New World.

⁷¹ W. J. Blake (ed.), 'Hooker's Synopsis Chorographical of Devonshire', *Devonshire Association Transactions*, 47 (1915), p. 338. Hooker forebore to mention the New World, for which he had little time.