In 1572, after heightened tensions resulting from the 1569 Northern Rebellion and the 1571 Ridolfi Plot, Elizabeth I’s government ordered a survey of all the ships in England. Thomas Colshill was responsible for producing this survey, which by his own account amounted to a record of ‘the number of ships and vessels and the masters’ names being in all the ports and creeks within the realm of England and trading the wave of merchandise as shown by the customers’ accounts’. This ship survey was not the first of its kind, but it is one of the most important to have survived. There are, however, problems with the survey; most significantly it does not record all English or Welsh ships. Yet, despite its weaknesses, the survey contains a wealth of important information. It records for each vessel its name, tonnage, home port, and the name of the shipmaster who commanded it. Put simply, it offers a snapshot of England’s master-mariners at a crucial moment in England’s growth as a maritime power. Indeed, some masters listed in the 1572 survey were pioneers of English voyages of exploration. In the 1550s, for example, Stephen Borough (master of the 200-ton Black Greyhound in the 1572 survey) and William Borough (master of the 120-ton Margaret in the 1572 survey) had sailed to Russia. The relatives and descend-ants of other masters named in the survey would, no doubt, go on to extend the range of England’s commercial enterprises to cover the Americas and the Indian Ocean.

The ‘Tudor maritime community’

Tudor seafarers were an occupational group of great importance. They provided the manpower to move goods and people, through fishing they nourished the nation, and they were central to the Crown’s wartime needs. However, despite the importance of the maritime community, defining it can be difficult. Vessels of up to 15 tons could sail inland as far as Bedford, and vessels of this size regularly sailed across the Channel and North Sea to France and the Low Countries. Boats and other craft plied the great rivers to provide inland counties with a multitude of products. A large demographic was involved in building, supplying, repairing, loading, and manning these vessels.
Mariners also engaged in farming activities. These ‘fisher-farmers’ played an important economic role in coastal and estuarine communities. Given the diffuse nature of the maritime labour force, maritime communities are in some senses ephemeral, evolving as a multitude of exogenous and endogenous factors shaped them.

Historiography reflects the complex nature of the maritime community. At one end we have the biographies of the great men of Tudor maritime society, and, at the other, works that examine shipboard culture. Scholars have tended to look at specific strands of maritime society by examining the demographics of coastal communities, the social world of sailor towns, naval service, and shipman guilds. Great strides have been made: historians now understand much better how shipboard communities trained, worked together, how they formed a shipboard economy, how they cared for each other’s financial and legal requirements, and how their health and religious well-being was provided for on board ships. Historians have often focused on deep-sea mariners, a perhaps more glamorous sub-group within the maritime labour force.

Geoffrey Scammell did much to lead the way in investigating the English maritime community. He showed how mariners sought work in numerous locations, how they were pressed into naval service, and how they endured arduous voyages. Scammell also drew attention to the commercial world of seafarers, how they were responsible for navigation, and how they were able to move seamlessly from traders to pirates. At the same time, Kenneth Andrews expanded our knowledge of the maritime labour force of Tudor England. Andrews was able to reconstruct the causes and cases that led to privateering and piracy, and drew attention to the entrepreneurial spirit of shipmaster-merchants. Research has also highlighted the important role master-mariners and merchants played in expanding England’s overseas fisheries, their involvement in efforts to colonize North America, and how war with Spain encouraged them to look beyond Europe for trade. More recently, Cheryl Fury’s work on Tudor and Stuart maritime communities has shown that rather than men ‘relegated to the periphery of respectable society’, mariners were an independently minded occupational group, who cared for their families, and who forged shipboard relationships with fellow mariners and, in the case of master-mariners, became socially embedded within their communities.

Given the complex nature of England’s wider maritime community, this chapter will focus on shipmasters over the mid-to-late sixteenth century. It has two central aims. First, it will offer a prosopographical survey of English shipmasters by examining length of careers, service patterns, and levels of geographical mobility. The roles that family groups played in shaping and developing trade links will also be examined. Second, it will examine the socio-economic position of shipmasters within the places they lived and worked. It will show that shipmasters usually occupied a middling socio-economic position within their communities. That masters were an important sub-group within coastal and riverine urban centres owed much to the type of voyages they undertook. Most English masters undertook short-range trips which meant they were frequently at home and, as such, laid down familial roots in the places where they resided.

The source material for such a study is voluminous, but there are two sets of records that provide the bulk of evidence for this chapter. Of greatest importance are
the national customs accounts, especially the port books. Port books were formally implemented at Easter 1565 when each of the 20 designated head ports was required to submit to the central Exchequer for audit a series of books recording customs duties for overseas trade. Coastal trade was also recorded, even though this was not subject to tax. This procedure resulted in the production of a huge corpus of records, of which a large proportion have survived. Port books provide the name of the ship, its master, tonnage, home port, the date it docked in port, and voyage details. This nominal information contained in port books can be supplemented with information recorded on the 1572 ship survey.

The second set of source materials are Tudor tax assessments. There were two types of taxation. The first were subsides and fifteenths granted by parliament; the second were royal prerogative taxes. It is the former with which we are concerned here. Each individual was assessed against scales laid down by statute, and each taxpayer only paid once for their main residence. Due to the voluminous nature of the lay subsidy returns, this chapter will sample documents that were produced between 1571 and 1576. In the lay subsidies, individuals were assessed on land and goods. For land, this meant the rental value of the taxpayer’s holdings; for goods, each taxpayer was assessed on their stock of goods, coin, plate, and all corn and blades that were cut from the land. Those assessed against land therefore paid tax on income generated from land, while those taxed against goods were paying against the capital value of their asset(s). There are, of course, problems with these types of tax returns. It is difficult to know if the assessment of goods or land was a true valuation of what an individual possessed, or how evenly distributed the assessments were within each county or hundred. Nonetheless, used carefully, these records have proved useful in investigating the socio-economic status of shipmasters.

Career patterns of shipmasters

Investigating the careers of shipmasters provides a window into the socio-economic and cultural world of Tudor seafarers. Masters who focused mainly on coastal routes can be said in general to have less experience than those who sailed to Iberia and beyond (although we should not discount the value of local knowledge in and around the English coast). Nevertheless, masters commanding ships to foreign shores can generally be presumed to have been entrusted with assuming greater responsibilities. As well as requiring detailed knowledge of navigating foreign waters and coastlines, they also had to manage a series of complex and often nuanced rules, conventions, and customs when trading overseas. Moreover, they often had to deal first hand with diplomatic and political crises that swept across Europe which could affect the welcome they and their crews received when they entered a foreign port. However, maritime trade in England was highly regionalized. The careers of many shippers working out of the ports from Newcastle to Colchester were undoubtedly shaped by the coal trade. This involved vessels sailing from ports such as King’s Lynn into Newcastle and leaving with coal bound for their home ports, or other large conurbations such as London. In this sense, therefore, the chief maritime economic activity of moving coal ensured that a large number of north-east and east coast masters worked coastal
routes. In ports such as Plymouth and Bristol, trade was focused more on overseas routes, principally to the ports of south-west France and Iberia. Indeed, it is worth remembering that before 1550, earlier generations of shipmasters from Plymouth had expanded their range to the shores of West Africa. In October 1541, for example, the Paul of Plymouth commanded by John Landy (Laudy) entered port carrying 92 tons of ‘brasylls’ and one ton of ‘olyfants tethe’ for William Hawkins. While voyage details are not given, it is likely the Paul entered Plymouth from West Africa, a destination Hawkins had sailed to in the previous decade in the same ship. Masters working from Bristol and Plymouth, therefore, had the opportunity to command larger ships over longer distances, duties that required a greater portfolio of skills in navigation than those possessed by some masters working coastal routes.

From 1550 to 1600 we have the records of over 9,500 separate shipmasters operating out of over 500 English ports. Although this not a complete record of all serving masters, it offers a large sample base from which to work. Even if we take account of the regionalization of maritime trade, the port books show that approximately three-quarters of English ship-voyages in this period were coastwise. This means that most master-mariners predominantly worked within strict geographical limits. Typical of a master working in the coal-based coasting trade was Christopher Blaxton of Newcastle. The Blaxton name appears in Newcastle customs records from the mid-1450s. From the mid-to-late fifteenth century, and into the sixteenth century, the Blaxtons operated as merchants and ship-owners, and they continue to play an important role in town administration and politics. When the port books began in 1565, we see Christopher Blaxton acting as a shipmaster-merchant in command of the Elizabeth of 50 tons freighting coal to Hull. From this time until he disappears from the records in 1571, Blaxton undertook 42 voyages: 37 in the Elizabeth and one each in the Samson, Geanet, Anne, James, and Bull. That 37 voyages were undertaken in the Elizabeth suggest that Blaxton owned, or part owned, this vessel. While his trading life was busy, his commercial activity was restricted to the coal trade, and his documented voyage range was limited to Flamborough, Grimsby, Hull, and Scarborough. Nonetheless, he continued the family business, which by 1571 had endured for over a century.

The coastal coal trade dominated Blaxton’s career, but other Newcastle shipmasters had a wider experience. Richard Harrogate was a typical enterprising master mariner, who had purchased from a Newcastle merchant one-quarter of a ship that he subsequently commanded. Harrogate’s appearance in the customs accounts comes in 1553 as commander of the Barbara. In 1571, Harrogate commanded the Christ of 90 tons, for its time a large vessel, sailing from London to Hamburg with a cargo of cloth. Yet the rest of his 16 recorded voyages were spent solely on the coastal route from Newcastle to Boston and Hull; during these coastal voyages, he also acted as a merchant. In 1583, 30 years after first appearing in the port books, Harrogate sailed out of London to Newcastle in command of the Grace Dei of 34 tons, showing he was later active in the London routes. On the 1583 voyage, Harrogate freighted five tons of iron, six barrels of tar, eight barrels of soap, haberdashery wares, four butts of wine, and two pipes of ‘sacke’, a fortified wine usually sourced from Iberia or the Canary Islands.
Bristol's merchants largely focused on overseas trading voyages, so the careers of shipmasters from this port follow somewhat different patterns to those working in Newcastle. Bristol's key trading partners were the Iberian ports and Ireland. Imports into Bristol varied greatly, and included dried fruits, soap, fish, wine, olive oil, woad, and salt; cloth was the most important export. On the 1572 ship survey, Thomas Nayler appears as the commander of the *Ragged Staffe* (240 tons), a ship owned by Andrew Barker and, at the time of the survey, the largest ship in Bristol. Nayler's career can be traced back to 1561 when he appears as commander of the *Jesus*. Over a ten-year period, Nayler undertook 22 voyages: one each in command of the *Jesus, Ragged Staffe*, and *Hare*, two in command of the *Nightingale*, and 11 voyages on the *Flower de Luce* (*Fleur-de-Lis*). His voyages took him to Ayamonte, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Cadiz, Lisbon, Vigo, the Bay of Biscay, Waterford, and ports closer to home such as Carmarthen. In 1569, he commanded the *Helen* (which appears in the accounts at 5–10 tons) from Bristol to Carmarthen and from Waterford to Bristol, shipping foodstuffs such as 'tritin' (a mix of three types of grain), and fish. For the 1569 Carmarthen trip he was also one of the merchants and this suggests he owned (or part owned) the *Helen*. Coastal trade was less risky, and involvement in it required smaller amounts of capital than overseas trade; it made sense for Nayler to use his wages and other gains from overseas voyages and invest them in a small coasting ship (*Helen*) which he could use to supplement his income. Nayler's career also warns us against making generalizations about the skills of masters who appear in port books that record coastal trade.

William Agwilliam, another Bristol shipmaster, had a similar career to Nayler. First recorded in 1559 as commander of the *Faucon Gray*, his career spanned almost 20 years. As coastal trade is not recorded systematically until 1565, we do not know if Agwilliam learned his craft in the coasting trade, but his appearance in 1559 marks his entrance into the elite world of overseas masters. They were men with the necessary skills to command ships in deeper waters and negotiate the risks, both environmental and political, of sailing into foreign ports. Until he disappears from the records in 1576, Agwilliam commanded eight ships. After the *Faucon Gray*, he took command of the *Dragon*, the *Marye Fortune*, and the *Grace of God*, before taking charge in 1565 of the 35-ton *Harte*, a ship that took him to La Rochelle, the Bay of Biscay, and Plymouth. His outward cargoes consisted mainly of cloth, while his inward voyages brought back commodities such as wine and olive oil. In 1569, he switched command to the 85-ton *Tiger*, a vessel that he sailed to Sanlúcar de Barrameda and La Rochelle. In 1571, he sailed the *Swallow* of 80 tons to Galicia, before taking charge of the 120-ton *Minion* for voyages to Lisbon, Andalusia, and Cadiz. The chronology of Agwilliam's voyages reveals the career trajectory of a talented master. After honing his skills in command of a 35-ton ship, he ended his career in command of a large vessel of 120 tons, which took him to some of the major ports in Europe. Agwilliam's career fitted very much in line with Bristol's focus on overseas trade.

As noted above, while Newcastle and Bristol offer good records for shipmasters' careers, these ports differ in their trading outlooks. Bristol was an overseas trading port with trade links stretching from Iceland to southern Spain, while Newcastle
shippers tended to focus on the coasting trade, especially in coal. We can examine the masters working out of Boston in Lincolnshire, which has a good series of both coastal and overseas port books, to see if masters specialized in one branch of trade. In the period 1565–81, 67 separate masters accounted for 633 voyages out of Boston. Of these voyages, the majority were coastal (545). The experience of Boston shippers working out of a relatively small east coast port might not be the same as masters working from larger ports in the same region. In Ipswich, of the 153 masters working from 1565–81, 28 (18%) undertook overseas voyages. In Boston, five (7%) of the 67 masters sailed overseas.

Reginald Bell was one of the few Boston masters who sailed overseas and coastal routes. From 1565–81 Bell undertook a remarkable 102 voyages into and out of Boston, of which 81 were coastwise. Bell’s turnaround time in harbour was sometimes quick, showing that he was a master keen to expand his income. On 11 June 1579, Bell arrived in Boston from Flanders carrying a cargo of damask and other items, but on the following day he sailed into Boston from Newcastle with a cargo of coal, indicating that on unloading his Flanders cargo at Boston he immediately sailed to Newcastle. Coastal trade is not recorded systematically until 1565, so it is not known if Bell progressed from a coastal shipper to a master specializing in both types of service. We do know that on one voyage Bell could be sailing from Boston to Newcastle, only to cross to Bruges, Antwerp, or Hamburg on the next. Neither did the size of the vessels he operated impact on destination. He commanded the William of 50 tons to Bruges, Amsterdam, and Newcastle, and in the Mary Anne of 50 tons he sailed to and from Hamburg, Flanders, Bruges, Rouen, London, Newcastle, and King’s Lynn. As expected from an east coast master, freighting coal dominated Bell’s coasting routes, while wool, cloth, and tar, among other things, were goods that he exported and imported. There were, of course, a small number of specialists in Boston. Robert Comoke worked in the 1570s and 1580s and never sailed beyond East Anglia and, over the same period, William Bateman sailed principally between Newcastle and Boston, with occasional trips to London and Hull.

Looking at the career patterns of shippers from Newcastle, Bristol, Boston, and Ipswich, it is clear that geography and birthplace played a significant role in shaping the careers of masters. There were other ‘types’ of masters who forged productive careers based on riverine trade. From 1566–77, there were 32 masters working out of Bewdley in Worcestershire, of which Humphrey Barnsley, Thomas Beal, Hugh Sallenwaye, John Brook, James Chamberlain, and Adam Marshall were the most active. No Bewdley master is recorded sailing beyond Cardiff, showing that these were indeed riverine specialists. The River Severn trade centred on moving luxury imported goods from ports such as Bristol and Cardiff to smaller riverine settlements inland. On 13 February 1570, for example, the 5-ton Magdelane of Frampton-on-Severn in Gloucestershire, commanded by John Dee, freighted Gascon wine and train oil from Bristol to Frampton; the wine clearly came from the Bordeaux region, but the train oil probably originated from whales caught in the Atlantic or Newfoundland Banks. Similarly, in 1576, the 6-ton Cherupin of Awre in Gloucestershire, commanded by Owen Beyman, shipped...
cloth, wool, and train oil from Cardiff to Frampton-on-Severn. In June 1570, the 16-ton Margaret of Bridgnorth in Shropshire, commanded by Thomas Lowe, brought a cargo of wool into Bristol for Thomas Pitte, draper, no doubt for shipment overseas. In the same month Lowe, on behalf of Robert Davyes of Bridgnorth, shipped sack wine and soap from Bristol to Bridgnorth. Bristol shippers needed men like Lowe to bring wool to them so they could send it overseas, and the traders of Bridgnorth needed the luxury wares that flowed into Bristol so they could sell these goods in their home towns. The bond that held this riverine trading system together were the shipmasters who rarely moved beyond the Bristol Channel but who were an essential part of the regional economy. Many such ‘micro-economies’ centred on riverine trade existed across England, all dependent on a large body of shipmasters and mariners that only feature fleetingly (especially before 1565) in the records. The River Thames provided access to several counties, and the rivers of East Anglia supported a thriving riverine shipping industry.

As the port books were not implemented until 1565, an analysis of career lengths needs to draw on the earlier national customs accounts and local port records. The length of a master’s career would depend on a series of factors. Those undertaking coastal trade might have longer careers than masters running the risks of deeper waters might have. Through the study of Agwilliam’s career, we have already seen that overseas masters could work for decades. The potential longevity of a master’s career who worked principally in coastal trade is shown by examining records about John Holford of Hythe in Hampshire. Holford appears in the 1572 ship survey as commander of the Jesus of 5 tons, a vessel he used for fishing (principally for oysters) and coastal trading. By exploring the local port customs of Southampton we can trace his career back to 1552. Once the port books begin, a fuller picture of his career emerges. From 1565–80 he undertook 78 voyages in and out of Southampton Water, mainly shipping wine and other goods to and from Dorset and Sussex ports. In the mid-1580s, he extended his reach and sailed from Southampton to Dieppe and Alderney, shipping train oil and prunes. Like Bell, Holford could quickly turn his ship around in port. On 20 May 1574, he left Southampton Water for Chichester, with a cargo of raisins, currants, alum, steel, and one packet of grocery wares, and on the following day he left Chichester bound for Rouen carrying a cargo of white and russet cloth for John Holland, a London merchant. Holford’s career was far from unblemished and he occasionally flouted local trading laws, such as selling oysters outside of designated markets. He is still visible in the local port customs of Southampton in 1585, but after this date these documents rarely record the names of masters and owners. Using the port books, Holford’s career as a shipmaster can be traced to 1587, and other records show that in the following year he passed away. Holford, therefore, had a recorded career as a shipmaster spanning at least 35 years. During his career at sea, he commanded five ships, but the majority of his voyages were undertaken in command of the Jesus (58 voyages) and the John (20 voyages), which suggests ownership of these vessels. Holford is perhaps an unusual case, but, taken together, the careers of Blaxton, Nayler, Agwilliam, and Bell show that merchant-masters’ careers went beyond the seven years that is sometimes stated.
Family groups

Maritime family groups have been the focus of previous research, but such work has centred on inheritance strategies, marital relationships, and how kinship groups provided the connection between the often absent mariner and land-based society. Here the focus will be on the role family groups played in the formation and expansion of commercial enterprise. Family groups were a fundamental part of shipmaster careers because they offered access into the world of the shipboard community.

Apprenticed boys might have come from outside the immediate family, but often master-mariners and merchants took the opportunity to foist their relatives aboard ships which they either commanded or part owned. This enabled a father to ensure his son learned the trade aboard a family-owned ship, or a merchant placed his son on a vessel well known to him, to learn the skills of trade, cargo handling, and experience foreign shores. As we shall see below, shipowner-masters like Richard Swanley could ensure their relatives became established shipmasters.

The ship survey of 1572 shows approximately 69 family groups totalling 140 individuals. This means that over 12 per cent of the masters named on the survey were associated with members of their family. The true number is likely to be higher, as family groups worked across regions and not just within individual ports, and some family members, such as cousins, might not have shared surnames. Some of these masters had already achieved an important status. As noted above, Stephen and William Borough of London had already proved themselves experienced navigators and explorers. Yet other, perhaps less adventurous, families played an important role in the commercial development of England. The Swanley family, who operated out of Gloucester, Bristol, Ilfracombe, Frampton-on-Severn, Westbury-on-Severn, Broadoak, Carmarthen, Tewkesbury, Comwich, Framilode, and Farleys End, provide a fascinating case study to show the important role family groups played in the creation and expansion of regional coastal trade networks.

Richard Swanley first appears in the records in 1558 in command of the Henry (12 tons) shipping out of Bristol, among other things, hops, card, women’s hose, cinnamon, and cloves. In 1569, he appears as both the commander and merchant of the Henry sailing from Gloucester to Carmarthen. Over the next few years, we can see Richard acting as a merchant on numerous occasions. Assisting Richard in his endeavours were Edward, George, John, Thomas, and William Swanley. We know from the 1592 will of Richard’s wife, Elizabeth, that George, Thomas, and William were Richard’s sons. In total from 1558 to 1595, family members took charge of 15 ships ranging from the Jesus of 4 tons to the Elizabeth and Mary Fortune of 30 tons each. Richard’s career is interesting: although he was taxed in Gloucester, the ship he took charge of the most (the George of 14 tons) was an Ilfracombe vessel, although for 15 of his 17 recorded voyages he either entered or exited Bristol and Gloucester. His last appearance in the shipping records is in 1571. While Richard perhaps retired to the dockside, his sons continued to maintain the business.

For the most part the Swanley trade network remained stable, with activity centred on the River Severn/North Devon/Welsh routes. In June 1570, however, the Swanleys branched out into the Irish trades. Four years later Thomas Swanley sailed the
Bristol/Irish trade routes in command of the 30-ton *Mary Fortune* and 13-ton *Sacre*; on the latter ship he acted as sole merchant bringing into Bristol six tons of salt. It may be that Richard’s voyage out of Bristol in 1558 was destined for Ireland, but the pattern of Richard’s career suggests his most likely destination was a Welsh port. The 1570 foray into the Irish trade does not seem to have borne immediate fruit because not until 1595 did another Swanley (John) sail to Waterford and the family association with this route remained sporadic. Where their activities as master-merchants can be traced, they traded in variety of commodities including black soap, malt, cotton, wine, wool, and wheat. When shipping the goods of other merchants, the Swanleys preferred to work with Gloucestershire or Bristol men such as William Blaste, Edward Long, Ralph Hunte, and Richard Daveys.

The Swanley family worked in a trading system that was well developed by the late sixteenth century. The River Severn area offered a significant opportunity for those shipmaster-merchants who chose to focus on the coasting and inland trade. The Swanleys worked across several ports and were an essential component in the redistribution networks that linked overseas and coastal trades. For instance, Richard Swanley’s reshipment of Castilian black soap and wine from Bristol to Barnstaple in July 1569 is indicative of the way imports fed coastal trade. The Swanleys never fully entered the overseas market, instead focusing mainly on the coastal routes of North Devon and Wales, either shipping their own commodities or freighting goods for a handful of known associates. This re-export of goods coastwise could create a great deal of wealth. The Swanleys might have operated within a well-developed trading network but their recorded 137 voyages from 1558–1601 shows they had a role in shaping and developing that system. There was economic sense in undertaking frequent voyages since this meant they spread their fixed costs over more trips, and thus increased profits.

The Swanley family were prolific in their shipping activities, but such commercially minded spirit was not the sole preserve of the West Country shippers. The Swetman family from Suffolk were equally entrepreneurial. From 1565–77, three members of the family appear in the port books. Thomas sailed out of Ipswich and Southwold, while Christopher and Robert worked from Aldeburgh, Ipswich, and Leigh-on-Sea. In his will of June 1581, Thomas Swetman senior left a quarter of his ship, called the *Primrose*, to his son Thomas (junior) and a quarter of his vessel, the *Great Mary Anne*, to his son William and his son-in-law John Turner. From the surviving port books, it is possible to identify the *Great Mary Anne* as a vessel recorded between 80 and 100 tons. The *Primrose* is more difficult to identify, as members of the family commanded two vessels of that name: one recorded at 80 tons the other at between 16 and 20 tons. However, because the other male relatives received quarter shares in a large vessel, we can assume that Thomas junior inherited a quarter share of the 80-ton *Primrose*. To his wife and daughter-in-law, Thomas senior left a lighter, which was probably the 16–20-ton *Primrose*. The coastal routes exploited by the Swetman family included voyages to and from Dunwich, Newcastle, London, Southampton, and Great Yarmouth, for which they shipped a variety of cargoes including woad, wine, and various foodstuffs. As can be seen from Table 14.1, the family’s focus on overseas trade was on Bordeaux and Iceland. After Thomas’s death, the family
Table 14.1 The Swanley (1565–1601) and Swetman (1565–77) family trade links shown by ships and voyage destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forename</th>
<th>Name of ship commanded</th>
<th>Voyage details (number of times journey undertaken)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Swanley Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Bristol/Gloucester (2); Gloucester/Carmarthen (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Henry, Trinity; Jesus; Sacre</td>
<td>Bristol/Gloucester (5); Gloucester/Carmarthen (11); Gloucester/Padstow (7); Newnham/Padstow (1); Carmarthen/Bristol (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Henry; Elizabeth; Jesus; Mary Fortune</td>
<td>Bristol/Waterford (6); Bristol/Gloucester (3); Bristol/Cardiff (1); Bristol/Carmarthen (3); Gloucester/Carmarthen (12); Gloucester/Padstow (3); Bristol/Youghul (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>George; Henry; Lawrence; Peter; Trinity</td>
<td>Bristol/Barnstaple (4); Gloucester/Haverfordwest (1); Gloucester/Caernarfon (1); Gloucester/Padstow (1); Gloucester/Barnstaple (2); Gloucester/Bristol (1); Gloucester/Carmarthen (1); Ilfracombe/Aberystwyth (1); Ilfracombe/Bristol (1); Bristol/Waterford (2); Bristol/Aberystwyth (1); unknown (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>George; Henry; Matthew; Peter; Sacre; John; Mary Fortune</td>
<td>Bristol/Gloucester (37); Bristol/Berkeley (1); Gloucester/Barnstaple (1); Gloucester/Gatcombe (1); Gloucester/Carmarthen (4); Gloucester/Padstow (3); Bristol/Malahide (1); Bristol/Padstow (1); Tewkesbury/Gloucester (1); Bristol/Waterford (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Swetman Family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forename</th>
<th>Name of ship commanded</th>
<th>Voyage details (number of times journey undertaken)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Matthew; John; Margaret; Roebuck; Black Swan</td>
<td>Bristol/Waterford (3); Bristol/Cork (1); Gloucester/Bristol (1); Gloucester/Padstow (1); Newnham/Bideford (1); Newnham/Ilfracombe (1);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td>Great Mary Anne</td>
<td>Ipswich/Bordeaux (2); Ipswich/unknown (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Primrose; Robert; Greyhound</td>
<td>London/Aldeburgh (3); Aldeburgh/Southampton (2); Newcastle/Aldeburgh (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas (senior)</td>
<td>Andrew; Lion; Christopher; Grace of God; Mary Katherine; Peter; Primrose</td>
<td>Ipswich/Bordeaux (14); Great Yarmouth/Ipswich (1); Iceland/Ipswich (2); London/Ipswich (3); Newcastle/Ipswich (3); unknown (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Home ports of ships: Swanley: Black Swan (unknown port); Elizabeth (also known as Parvo Elizabeth: Gloucester); George (Gloucester; Combwich; Ilfracombe; Tewkesbury); Henry (Gloucester; Tewkesbury); Jesus (Westbury-on-Severn; Boadoak); John (Gloucester); Lawrence (Ilfracombe); Margaret (Framilode; Farleys End); Mary (also known as Mary Fortune: Gloucester; Ilfracombe); Matthew (Framilode); Peter (Gloucester; Framilode); Roebuck (Bristol; Gatcombe); Sacre (Frampton-on-Severn; Gloucester); Trinity (Gloucester; Carmarthen). Swetman: Andrew (Ipswich); Christopher (Ipswich); Grace of God (Southwold); Greyhound (Aldeburgh); Lion (Ipswich); Great Mary Anne (Ipswich); Mary John (Leigh-on-Sea, appears in 1572 ship survey and may be the Mary Anne); Peter (Ipswich); Primrose (Ipswich and Aldeburgh); Robert (Aldeburgh).*
maintained the Bordeaux connection. In 1590, for example, John Turner arrived into Ipswich from Bordeaux in command of the *Great Mary Anne* freighting a cargo of feathers for John Donnes.93

Family connections played an important role in forming links across the wider shipboard community. The Hampton family of Plymouth provide a good example of how cross-family relationships were created; in this case, how a series of interlinking connections formed through trade partnerships and frequent master service developed between the Hampton and the Hawkins families. In January 1561, James Hampton (as master) and Thomas Hampton (as merchant) sailed into Plymouth aboard the *Peter* with a cargo of, among other things, 4 packs of hops, 1 wey of cheese, 2 barrels of butter, 3 barrels of herrings, 3 kegs of sturgeon, 12 bundles of fletchers wood, 2,000 weight of ropes and cables, 2 Spanish chains, 6 firkins of soap, and 2 barrels of candles.94 Six months later (27 July), James, in command of the *Peter*, sailed into Plymouth from London, but this time John Hawkins was principal merchant with a cargo that included two chests of arrows, two chests of harquebuses, one last of powder, 155 pikes, and 48 black-bills.95 As Plymouth merchants and shipmasters, Thomas and James formed a working relationship with the Hawkins family that culminated in a series of voyages to the West African coast and the Caribbean. In 1562, Thomas Hampton, in command of the *Jonas*, sailed with John Hawkins to Guinea and the Caribbean. Indeed, the arms shipped by Hawkins into Plymouth in the *Peter* in July 1561 were probably procured for the 1562 voyage. In 1566, Thomas and James sailed back to Guinea and the Caribbean with John Lovell, a relative of Hawkins.96

James’ connection with the Hawkins family meant his career overlapped and intersected with that of Francis Drake. The port books show that the ship James took command of most frequently was the *Pasco*, a vessel that Drake also commanded.97 In 1569, James took charge of the *Judith*, the ship that Drake commanded during a slaving voyage in 1568 at San Juan de Ulúa.98 Throughout the 1560s, James sailed to La Rochelle and Bordeaux, but he also made frequent journeys to London and Bristol. In most cases when James took command of the *Pasco* or *Peter* either John or William Hawkins were moving goods on the vessels as the merchants.99 The key difference between masters from the Hampton family and Swetman family was that the Hampton’s associations with the Hawkins family meant that they were involved in long-range English voyages to the New World and West Africa. The Swanley family, on the other hand, chose to focus on trading closer to home, a business that required less capital investment and produced fewer dangers.

Further research is needed into the role played by shipmasters in creating, shaping, and developing trade and merchant networks. A survey of the merchants shipping goods on the Swetman family vessels shows a significant level of repeated use, suggesting merchants formed close connections with shipmaster-owners. Over 1571–3, for example, Robert and William Cutler and Edmund Flicke regularly used Swetman family ships.100 The Swanley family also formed comparable links. In 1569, Thomas Peugate, a Gloucester shipmaster, who resided in the same ward as Richard Swanley, shipped 10 weys of malt aboard the *Sacre* under the command of George Swanley.101 In the same year, Henry Horn, who also lived in the same ward in Gloucester as Richard Swanley, shipped nine weys of malt in the *Trenytie* commanded by
Richard.102 William Blaste, too, was a merchant who frequently used Swanley family ships.103

This short survey of the activities of the Swanley, Swetman, and Hampton families shows that kinfolk connections could be important in shaping and developing wider social and commercial links.104 The foundation of these networks, or linkages, was based on the relationships the Swanley, Swetman, and Hampton families had with other masters and merchants. The wealth accumulated through these commercial links allowed shipmaster-owners to pass on their wealth to the next generation. Richard and Elizabeth Swanley gave to their sons George, Thomas, and Andrew £13 6s 8d each, while William was bequeathed a bark called the Harrye which had been built and kept in good repair by John Swanley.105 Similarly, Thomas Swetman bequeathed to his sons and son-in-law shares of large ships that ensured the continued prosperity of the family. Maryanne Kowaleski has argued that in the late medieval period, shipmasters were entrepreneurial, and Andrews offers similar evidence for this in the Tudor era.106 What we see with the Swanley, Swetman, and Hampton families is evidence of that commercial intelligence that links medieval shipmasters with their early modern counterparts. It is precisely this kind of commercial enterprise that led to England’s aspirations for, and ability to achieve, a maritime empire. True, English voyages of exploration and colonization were started by wealthy merchants, or members of the gentry eager to expand their wealth through a mixture of trading, plundering, and colonial endeavour, but we should remember too that future generations of coastal shippers played an important role in facilitating England’s maritime expansion. Indeed, Robert Brenner has argued that as English maritime commerce expanded across the globe, imports became a great stimulus to the economy.107 Imports, however, needed redistributing. Without the next generations of Swanley or Swetman family members – master-shipowners ready to invest in shipping and eager to engage in commerce – wealthy merchants would struggle to distribute their ‘exotica’ beyond the major ports in which they lived and operated. The importance of the coasting and inland trade to England’s wider economy was not lost on Daniel Defoe who, in 1726, wrote that through it ‘all the vast importation from our own colonies is circulated and dispersed to the remotest corner of the Island, whereby consumption is become so great’.108 Put simply, the Tudor shipmasters who chose to focus on coastal or short-range European voyages were essential cogs in England’s history of maritime expansion.

The socio-economic position of Elizabethan shipmasters

Tudor shipmasters have often been portrayed as landless, itinerant drunks.109 As Fury and Andrews have demonstrated, however, the Tudor mariner was a more complex character than the established caricature. We can further explore the life of Tudor shipmasters ashore by examining the socio-economic position they occupied within coastal communities. As noted above, tax records supplemented by evidence from wills permit such a survey. The method is simple: we take the names of the seafarers recorded in the database for whom we know home ports and link this information with the names of taxpayers listed for those same ports. Applying this method to an
earlier period has shown that fourteenth-century English shipmasters held important socio-economic positions within port communities.\textsuperscript{110}

Space dictates that the current investigation is confined to a small number of ports and shipmasters. Given that we have examined the career of Richard Swanley in some detail, it is appropriate to start in Gloucester. In the 1571–2 lay subsidy return for Gloucester Westward, Richard is recorded as possessing £5 in goods.\textsuperscript{111} Only 21 out of 74 assessed residents in Gloucester Westward had more wealth in either goods or land. In addition to Richard Swanley, there are three more identifiable masters on this document.\textsuperscript{112} One was Henry Horn. The Horn family first appear in the customs accounts in 1516 when Roger Horn commanded the \textit{Bata Mare} of Tewkesbury.\textsuperscript{113} By the 1550s, his sons, or other relatives, Roger, William, and Henry were all active as shipmasters or merchants.\textsuperscript{114} Henry is visible in the customs records from the mid-1550s as a merchant and a shipmaster in command of the \textit{Trinity} and the \textit{George}.\textsuperscript{115} As Henry does not appear in the port books as a shipmaster, we should perhaps conclude that by the mid-1560s he had retired from active service at sea. In the 1571–2 lay subsidy, Henry was assessed at £9 in goods, which saw him pay 9s in tax.\textsuperscript{116} Only ten of the 74 people in Gloucester Westward were assessed at the same or higher rate.

Turning the spotlight on Southampton’s masters we find similar results.\textsuperscript{117} Discounting aliens, 152 people were assessed for tax in Southampton in 1571. Six of these can be identified as shipmasters. Nicholas Roche of St Michael’s Ward was assessed at £6 and taxed 10s in goods. Only 12 residents in St Michael’s Ward were assessed at the same or a higher rate. Roche first appears in 1552 and continued working until 1574. His voyages took him to Goes in the Netherlands, and Bordeaux in south-west France. However, his main commercial focus, like many masters, was the coastal trade. Roche sailed to Newcastle, London, and Rye, but his favoured routes were to the south-west ports of Dartmouth, Helford, Falmouth, Plymouth, and Truro.\textsuperscript{118} In Plymouth too, shipmasters were assessed at high to medium rates. In the 1571 lay subsidy returns, William Hawkins was assessed at £20 in goods, the highest amount in the port.\textsuperscript{119} This might not be surprising, for William was more a merchant than a shipman. The connection to Drake and the Hawkins family certainly had benefits for Thomas and James Hampton. In the 1571 lay subsidy for Plymouth, Thomas was assessed at £6 and James at £5.\textsuperscript{120} Only 18 out of 73 people were assessed at the same or higher rate than Thomas, and 30 at the same or higher rate than James. Similar patterns are discernible in Ipswich. In the 1576 lay subsidy return for Ipswich Eastward, Thomas Swetman junior was assessed at 20s in lands (an amount only surpassed by 16 of the 44 people assessed on lands) and Thomas senior was assessed in Ipswich Northward for £5 in goods, an amount surpassed by 11 of the 34 residents in the ward who were also assessed on goods.\textsuperscript{121}

Moving the focus away from major ports to smaller coastal communities such as Southwold in Suffolk, we see places where the shipboard community also held prominent socio-economic positions. Thomas Jentleman was a master who plied the coastal routes to Newcastle, King’s Lynn, Dunwich, and London.\textsuperscript{122} In the 1576 lay subsidy, Thomas was assessed at £5, which placed him within the middle echelons of Southwold society; 21 people were assessed at the same or higher rate.\textsuperscript{123} However, the first name on the tax return is John Jentlman (Jentleman) senior, assessed at £18,
the second highest assessment in Southwold. John cannot be traced in the port books, but his surname suggests a familial link with Thomas. Shipmasters and their families might have held important socio-economic positions within smaller coastal communities because, other than the sea, the inhabitants had fewer options for employment. In large ports such as Southampton, or interconnected and wealthy regional cities like Gloucester, shipmasters were competing with hundreds of traders, craftsmen, merchants, and other guildsmen. Table 14.2 clearly shows that economically shipmasters sat within the middle branches of the communities they lived in.

Wills also provide access to the socio-economic world of Tudor shipmasters. Such documents have been analysed previously, but the largest recent survey concerned the early English voyages to Guinea, while others have looked at narrowly defined geographical areas with only limited focus on the sixteenth century. Wills tell us much about the socio-economic position of master-mariners at the end of their lives. The wills of two Wirral masters who died before 1600 show they bequeathed over £50 each in goods and money. In his will, Thomas Swetman bequeathed a total of £58 and shares in two large ships. Akin to the inter-indebtedness revealed by wills of the sailors who perished on the Guinea voyages, Swetman also bequeathed to his servant John Swetman ‘£5 that John’s father owes him’. As John had the same surname as Thomas we can only assume that he was a relative who was employed in Thomas’ household, showing that wealthy shipmasters could offer opportunities to their less fortunate kin. The 1579 will of Robert Spodell of Dartmouth is illustrative of a master mariner ‘made good’. Robert had a productive career that spanned the 1560s and 1570s and included voyages to Spain and France, mainly shipping cloth. Similar to most mariners discussed here, Robert was probably helped into

| Table 14.2 Assessed wealth of denizen shipmasters based on a sample of three settlements, 1571–6 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Nos of denizen taxpayers | Under £3 | £3 to under £5 (no. of shipmasters) | £5 to under £9 (no. of shipmasters) | £9 and over |
| **Gloucester (1571–2)** | | | | |
| Westward | 74 | 4 | 38 (2) | 21 (2) | 11 |
| Northward | 88 | 8 | 44 | 25 | 11 |
| Eastward | 32 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 5 |
| Southward | 32 | 4 | 14 | 9 | 5 |
| **Southampton (1571)** | | | | |
| St Michael’s Ward | 33 | 0 | 17 (3) | 8 (2) | 8 |
| Holy Rood Ward | 46 | 2 | 12 | 15 (1) | 17 |
| St Lawrence Ward | 34 | 0 | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| All Saints Ward | 39 | 1 | 17 | 11 | 10 |
| **Southwold (1576)** | | | | |
| | 51 | 2 | 27 (6) | 16 (6) | 6 |
the world of the shipmaster by earlier generations. In the early 1550s, two ships sailed out of Dartmouth called the *Mare Spodell* and the *Trinite Spodell*, and in 1554 George Spodell commanded the *George of Dartmouth*.130 In his will of 1579, Robert bequeathed lands in Dartmouth and tenements in Prittlewell in Essex to Edward, his eldest son. He also gave Edward 33s 4d per year for life, and to his second son Thomas he gave 25s 8d per year for life. He also left goods valued at over £11, which included tapestries and silver spoons. His investment in lands and tenements outside of his native Dartmouth suggest that Spodell was an enterprising man keen to expand his business activities. Prittlewell had a long association with shipping and its proximity to the River Thames perhaps offered Spodell a way into this important trading centre.131

Thomas Page of Brightlingsea, Essex, was a shipmaster who also had a varied career. He appears in the 1572 ship survey as master of the *Mary Grace* of 50 tons, a vessel we know he owned from his will.132 Similar to many of the masters featured in this chapter, his career was a mixture of overseas and coastal voyages, in the former case mainly shipping salt to Bruges, Hiers-Brouage, and Bordeaux, and in the latter case with the occasional coastal trip to Colchester, Newcastle, and King’s Lynn, usually carrying coal.133 At the end of his career, he was able to leave to his two sons, Thomas and Steven, ‘his crayer called the *Mary Grace*’, and to Steven a boat called the *Helen* named after his wife. He also left 20s to the poor of the parish. Bequeathing lands, tenements, and ship-shares was, perhaps, beyond the means of most ordinary seamen. In 1564, John Stanley, mariner of Prittlewell, was only able to leave £1 14s and a few livestock to his relatives.134 Here then is the stark comparison between the elite of the shipboard community – the shipmaster – and the ‘ordinary’ mariner.

**Conclusion**

Tudor shipmasters were central to the country’s economy and they were rooted firmly in the landed communities in which they dwelt. Their careers show too that while some master-mariners might be seen by some contemporaries as ‘mere coasters’, men such as Nayler, Agwilliam, and Thomas Swetman were experts in their craft.135 Even ‘mere coasters’ like Holford sometimes ventured away from familiar waters, and the fact they remained in command of the same ship for long periods shows they were competent seamen.

The evidence from lay subsidies, while not precise and open to underassessment, shows that master-mariners occupied a middling to high socio-economic position within their resident communities. Shipowner-masters must also have provided a source of local employment. The ships owned by Thomas Swetman, the *Great Mary Anne* and the *Primrose*, had a combined tonnage of approximately 180, and they would have been manned by 15 to 20 men.136 True, the crews of vessels might have contained a number of men serving from outside the home port, but it would be relatively easy for Swetman to find eager crew members from the mariners of Ipswich.137 Masters such as Robert Spodell also chose to invest in land and tenements, and through inheritance strategies passed on their wealth to the next generation. Indeed, some master-mariners might have even provided the means for the
gentrification of future generations. At some point in the early seventeenth century, the Gloucestershire-based Swanley family branched out and took up residence in London. The visitation of 1663 shows that John Swanley, gentleman, bore the coat of arms ‘a fess wavy ermine between three unicorns’ heads erased’.

It is also possible that the Thomas Swanley, gentleman of Eastington, who made his will in 1653, was a scion of the sixteenth-century shipmasters.

As the greatest proportion of masters at this time worked in the coasting trade, these men established a presence within their communities. Indeed, while the masters sailing to Guinea or the Indian Ocean might be away for several months, these men were the exception and not the norm. Even when masters like Thomas Swetman sailed to Bordeaux, the journey times would not have been great, and his sons and wife maintained a presence in the community. Masters like Spodell, who held lands and tenements in two regions, would have often been absent from one, but residence in two areas was a way of expanding commercial reach. There were, of course, masters who sought employment away from their community. Richard White, commander of the Starre of Bristol, lived in Tenby; William Agwilliam, worked out of Bristol but resided in Woolaston; and Hugh Willye of Milford Haven commanded the Clement out of Bristol. Masters working out of Plymouth, too, could dwell outside the port. Yet when the port books identify the place of residence of the master, the majority resided in the port from which they principally worked.

What also emerges from the linkage of nominal data from the port books with the lay subsidies is that, overall, shipmasters concentrated their residence within certain districts of major ports. In Ipswich in 1576, of the 12 identifiable shipmasters, seven lived in Eastward. In Southampton, of the six identifiable masters only one resided outside St Michael’s Ward, and in Gloucester none of the four identified shipmasters lived outside Westward. A nationwide survey is needed before sweeping conclusions are reached, but these clusters of shipmasters within specific districts look like proto-sailor towns, or neighbourhood areas filled with master-mariners. It makes sense for members of a particular occupational group to live close to one another. Business partnerships can be created, it is easier for ships to be bought and sold, and new charter-parties can be written. The link between Richard Swanley and Henry Horn noted above is illustrative of these kinds of commercial and residential links. If ordinary mariners also lived or boarded in these districts, it would make finding work from one voyage to the next easier. These residential clusters should not be seen as ghettos, or as places where the customs of the sea held sway.

That masters sought to settle in the heart of port towns made sense as it was here where they could oil the wheels of commercial enterprise, and nurture existing contacts as well as forge new ones. Indeed, current research is revealing that shipmasters were highly integrated into local economies. Several shipmasters from Southampton, including those that worked in overseas and coastal trade, were also publicans, while other Southampton masters worked in the brewing industry. Like the Swanley and Swetman families, many shipmasters also operated as merchants, suggesting that commanding and owning ships was part of a much larger business portfolio. In the 1550s, Richard Baxter of King’s Lynn imported salt as a merchant, but did so in command of the Mary Jermeyn (a ship he probably owned, or part owned). Indeed, the 1552
lay subsidy listed Baxter’s principal occupation as a merchant. The idea that sailors lived separately from landed society is a trope that this chapter seeks to challenge. Other types of traders and artisans must also have lived in the same space and, as shipmasters worked in other trades and established commercial links with merchants, they became interwoven with urban life just as much as seafaring. As Isaac Land notes ‘the waterfront – as the intersection of maritime and urban space – is obviously a meeting place rather than a self-contained world’. There will, of course, be exceptions, but on the whole master-mariners of this period were equally at home aboard their ship and on land.

Notes

1 I gratefully acknowledge the Arts and Humanities Research Council for supporting my AHRC project: AH/L004062/1, C. Lambert, ‘The Evolution of English Shipping Capacity and Shipboard Communities from the Early Fifteenth Century to Drake’s Circumnavigation (1577)’, 2014–17: http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=AH/L004062/1. The findings from this project form the basis of my analysis here and is referred to as The Medieval and Tudor Ships Project. For the free-to-access database linked to the project see C. Lambert and G. P. Baker, ‘The Merchant Fleet of Late Medieval and Tudor England’, 2017: www.medievalandtudorships.org.


3 The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew (hereafter TNA) SP15/22 f. 1r.


Craig Lambert


16 A number of Scammell’s most important works are collected in G. V. Scammell, *Seafaring, Sailors and Trade*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.


22 Fury, *Tides in the Affairs of Men*, ch. 5. See also Fury, ‘The Elizabethan Maritime Community’.

23 At Easter 1466 Edward IV issued an order for port books to be implemented, but these orders were ignored, see TNA E159/242 m. 27d. In 1565, Elizabeth’s government ordered the port books to be introduced as part of an overhaul of the customs system, see E159/350 mm. 319–28. On sixteenth-century port books, see Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports*, ch. 1. On the implementation and regulation of the customs system with regard to coastal trade, see S. Gadd, ‘Illegal Quays: Elizabethan Customs Reforms and Suppression of the Coastal Trade of Christchurch, Hampshire’, *The Economic History Review* 71/3, 2018, pp. 727–46.


26 On the importance of the east coast coal trade, see J. R. Blake, *The Medieval Coal Trade of North East England: Some Fifteenth Century Evidence*, *Northern History* 11, 1967,

27 See Chapter 5 by Gary Paul Baker in this present volume, pp. 95–124.

28 TNA E122/116/13 f. 1r. Brazilwood was an Asiatic timber that was used to dye cloth. Hawkins might have picked this up in Africa or in Iberia, see E. T. Jones and M. M. Condon, *Cabot and Bristol’s Age of Discovery*, Bristol: Cabot Project Publications, 2016, p. 13.

29 R. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any Time within the Compass of these 1600 Yerees*, vol. 11, Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904, pp. 23–4.

30 Merchants would usually send factors on long-distance voyages who would manage the cargo. However, masters still held some responsibilities, not least for the safety of the ship they commanded, while also negotiating sometimes difficult trading conditions brought about by diplomatic and political problems.


32 Wade, ‘The Overseas Trade of Newcastle upon Tyne’, p. 34; C. M. Fraser (ed.), *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1508–1511*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Athenaenum Press, 1987, pp. 27, 41, 67, 86, 235. In the 1470s, William Blaxton was collector of customs and, in the first decade of the sixteenth century, John Blaxton was Chamberlain.

33 TNA E190/303/2 f. 2r.

34 As Blaxton is absent from the 1572 ship survey we can be confident that his career had ended by 1571.

35 TNA E190/303/2, ff. 2r, 3r, 8v; E190/304/2 ff. 15v–23r.

36 Andrews, ‘The Elizabethan Seaman’, p. 257. Andrews does not name the ship but in the 1560s and 1570s, all Harrogate’s voyages were in command of the *Christe* (sometimes called the *Christopher*), suggesting that he part-owned this vessel.

37 TNA SP15/22 f. 1r; E122/110/11 m. 3.

38 TNA E190/5/6 f. 3r. He is recorded as the commander of this vessel in the 1572 ship survey, but the survey records the ship at 100 tons; SP12/22 f. 1r.

39 TNA E190/304/5 f. 10v.

40 TNA E190/7/5 f. 4v.

41 On Bristol’s overseas trade, see S. Flavin and E. T. Jones (ed.), *Bristol’s Trade with Ireland and the Continent: The Evidence of the Exchequer Customs Accounts*, Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 2009.

42 TNA SP15/22 f. 23r.

43 TNA E122/24/11A m. 1.

44 TNA E190/1128/4 ff. 1r, 2r; E190/1128/15 f. 5v; E190/1128/8 f. 3r; E190/1128/4 f. 2r; E190/1129/5 f. 12v; E190/1129/16 f. 7v; E190/1129/12 f. 6v.

45 TNA E190/1128/12 f. 6v; E190/1128/11 f. 19r.


47 TNA E190/22/3 f. 13v.

48 TNA E122/199/10 f. 2r; E122/24/12; E190/1128/7 f. 3r; E190/1010/18 f. 13r; Flavin and Jones, *Bristol’s Trade*, pp. 643, 656, 701, 703, 706, 708, 709, 718, 730.

49 TNA E190/1129/4 f. 2r; E190/1129/6 f. 9r; E190/1129/5 f. 1; E190/1129/21 f. 9v; E190/1129/14 f. 6v.

50 TNA E190/389/1 f. 15r; E190/389/5 f. 3r.

51 TNA E190/388/6 f. 8v; E190/387/6 f. 2r; E190/387/3 f. 9v; E190/5/5 f. 22r; E190/389/9 f. 9v; E190/387/4 f. 1r; E190/387/1 f. 1r, 4r–5r.

52 TNA E190/307/17 f. 1v; E190/388/12 f. 2v; E190/389/4 f. 9r; E190/389/5 ff. 1v, 5v; E190/389/6 ff. 1r, 2r; E190/389/7 ff. 2r, 5v, 7v; E190/389/10 f. 6r; E190/389/12 f. 5v; E190/427/8 f. 23v; E190/428/1 f. 7v; E190/428/2 f. 2r; E190/428/3 f. 7r; E190/428/4
53 TNA E190/1128/11 ff. 2r–14r; E190/1128/13 ff. 3r, 12v–15v; E190/1128/14 ff. 2v–10v; E190/1129/22 ff. 6r, 9r; E190/1129/15 ff. 4r–7r.
54 TNA E190/1128/11 f. 11v.
55 TNA E190/1129/15 f. 6v.
56 TNA E190/1128/14 ff. 8v, 9r.
61 For wine, see LPS SC/5/4/66 f. 13r.
62 TNA E190/817/1 f. 2r; E190/817/2 f. 2v.
63 TNA E190/814/9 f. 7v; E190/740/19 f. 2r.
64 Details on Hollord’s misdemeanours can be found on Tudor Revels (www.tudorrevels.co.uk, accessed 21 September 2018).
65 LPS SC/5/4/78 f. 1r.
66 TNA E190/816/11 f. 6r; E190/817/1 f. 2r. Tudor Revels (www.tudorrevels.co.uk, accessed 21 September 2018).
69 Fury, Tides in the Affairs of Men, pp. 9–11.
70 Andrews, ‘The Elizabethan Seaman’, p. 257. This practice, however, was long established. In the fourteenth century, the survival of a number of crew lists show that family groups were present aboard some requisitioned merchant ships. In 1337 and 1340 two King’s Lynn ships (the Gracedieu and the Godbefor) contained several clusters of family groups, as did two ships of Dover in 1372 (the Mighel of Dover and the Marie), see TNA E101/20/28; E101/22/30; E101/31/32.
71 For example, William and Leonard Clay from Walberswick and Southwold are likely to be related, TNA SP15/22 f. 6r.
72 TNA E122/199/6 f. 9r.
73 TNA E190/1128/12 ff. 8r, 9v, 10r; E190/1128/14 f. 3r, 4r, 8r; E190/1128/13 ff. 3r, 7r, 10r, 14v; E190/1129/1 f. 9r; E190/1129/20 f. 3r.
74 TNA PROB11/83 f. 210r. Andrew is also named as a son, but he does not appear in the surviving records as a shipmaster.
75 TNA E190/1128/11 f. 13r; E190/1129/3 f. 11r; Flavin and Jones, Bristol’s Trade, p. 744.
76 TNA E190/1128/13 f. 3r, 8v; E190/928/12 ff. 1v, 9v, 10r; E122/199/6 f. 9r; E190/1128/14 ff. 4r, 9v; E190/1128/13 ff. 10r, 15r; E190/1128/14 f. 3r; E190/1010/11B f. 2r; E190/928/5 f. 1r; E190/1128/1 f. 5v; E190/1128/17 ff. 4r–5r. The recording of a ship’s home port could be imprecise; especially in areas where several ports lay close to one another.
77 TNA E190/1129/3 ff. 11r–11v.
78 TNA E122/199/6 f. 9r.
Tudor shipmasters and maritime communities

80 TNA E190/1128/14 ff. 3r, 4r; E190/1128/13 ff. 3r, 7r.
83 TNA E190/1128/12 f. 10r.
85 See for example, Taylor, ‘The Maritime Trade’.
87 TNA PROB11/63 ff. 268v–269r.
88 TNA E190/589/13 f. 4r; E190/593/23 f. 2r.
89 TNA E190/589/13 f. 16r; E190/473/5 ff. 1r, 3r.
90 Lighters were usually small vessels that were used to freight cargo from large ships to the quayside. D. Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping, 1460–1540*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1947, p. 140, suggests that some lighters could carry up to 21 tons of cargo. Thomas’s wife received two-thirds of a flyboat, which could have been the 80-ton *Primrose*; in effect Thomas senior shared the vessel between his son and wife.
91 TNA E190/473/5 f. 2v; E190/814/6 f. 6r; E190/588/5 f. 4v; E190/587/4 f. 8v.
92 TNA E190/589/10 f. 9v; E190/589/13 f. 25v. It could be Ireland, since the MS is not clear; however, the ship returned to Ipswich with a cargo of stockfish, suggesting an Icelandic run.
93 TNA E190/593/23 f. 2r.
94 TNA E122/118/3 f. 2r. James is referred to as Jacob Hampton (Jacob being the Latin form of James).
95 TNA E122/118/3 f. 10r.
97 TNA SP15/22 f. 21v. For Hampton’s connection with this vessel see E190/1010/7 f. 7v; E190/1128/4 f. 5v; Drake, with his brother John, may have owned the *Pasco* by this time, see Kelsey, *Drake*, p. 50.
98 TNA E190/1011/12, f. 4r; Kelsey, *Drake*, pp. 38–9.
99 TNA E190/1011/12 f. 4r; E190/1010/7 f. 7v; E190/1011/7 f. 13v; E190/1128/1 f. 5r; E122/118/3 f. 10r.
100 TNA E190/589/6 f. 2r; E190/589/10 f. 2v, 4r, 4v, 9v, 11r; E190/589/13 f. 16r.
101 TNA E190/1228/12 f. 1v. Peugate appears in the 1563–4 lay subsidy (assessed at £6) for Gloucester West Ward, E179/115/367 r. 1. Peugate was active in the Gloucester, Welsh, Cornish, Bristol, and Irish trades: E122/24/6 f. 5r; E190/1128/6 ff. 2r, 4r, 8r; E190/1128/11 ff. 3r, 5v, 6v; E190/1129/1 f. 7r; E190/1129/5 f. 5r; E190/1129/6 f. 2r; E190/1129/7 f. 4v.
102 TNA E190/1128/12 f. 1v.
103 TNA E190/1128/12 f. 1v, 3v.
105 TNA PROB11/83 f. 210r.
Craig Lambert


TNA E179/115/385 m. 1. The subsidy was granted in 1571, but the resulting document was not returned to the exchequer until 1572.

Henry Horn of Gloucester (£9: taxed 9s on goods; TNA E179/115/385 m. 1); John Cowley (£3: taxed 3s on goods E179/115/385 m. 1); William Lightfoot (20s: taxed 18d on land E179/115/385 m. 1); John Horn commanded the Clement in 1512; John Horn (£3: taxed 3s on goods: E179/115/385 m.1).

Flavin and Jones, Bristol’s Trade, p. 103.

Flavin and Jones, Bristol’s Trade, pp. 548, 581, 612.

TNA E122/199/5 f. 3v; E122/199/6 f. 9r; E122/23/20 f. 3r; Flavin and Jones, Bristol’s Trade, p. 548.

TNA E179/115/385 m. 1.

LIPS SC/5/4/49 f. 6v; SC/5/4/57 f. 8r; TNA E190/814/3 f. 7r; E190/814/5 f. 2r; E190/814/8 f. 44v; E190/1010/14 f. 5r; E190/814/7 f. 3v; E190/1010/18 f. 16r; E190/814/9 f. 6r; E190/929/8 f. 2r; E190/1010/12 f. 4r; E190/1010/23 f. 1r; E190/1011/4 f. 8r; E190/1011/19 f. 5v; E190/814/2 f. 12v; E190/814/1 f. 3r; E190/814/6 f. 1v.

TNA E179/100/368 m. 7.

TNA E179/100/368 m. 7.

TNA E179/182/370 mm. 35, 36.

TNA E190/185/6 f. 12v; 44v; E190/425/1 f. 10r; E190/425/2 f. 10v; E190/473/6 f. 4r; E190/473/11 f. 2v.

TNA E179/182/370 m. 14.


Woodward, ‘Ships, Masters and Shipowners of the Wirral’, p. 246. The one recorded mariner who died before 1600 (William Guile) left £23 19s 4d in various goods and money. In contrast, Thomas Wilford, master of the Moon on the 1554 Guinea voyage, left £4 in money and various items including maps and clothes (Hair and Alsop, English Seamen and Traders, pp. 214–15).

TNA PROB11/63 ff. 268v–268r

For issues surrounding debt, see Alsop, ‘Tudor Merchant Seafarers’.

TNA PROB11/63 ff. 409r–409v.

TNA E190/928/9 f. 6r; E190/929/11 ff. 4r, 19r. In 1576, a Robert Spoddle commanded the Julian of Bristol to Ireland, but as the Robert in this chapter worked out of Dartmouth this might be a different master with the same name: Flavin and Jones, Bristol’s Trade, p. 693.

TNA E122/44/4 m. 12; E122/44/6 m. 10d; E122/201/14 f. 7r.


TNA SP15/22 f. 8r; PROB11/59 ff. 32v–33r.

TNA E190/387/1 f. 5r; E190/589/7 f. 20v; E190/387/1 f. 5r; E190/589/12 f. 8r; E190/425/1 f. 9v; E190/425/2 f. 10v.

TNA PROB11/47 f. 109v. Hair and Alsop, English Seamen and Traders, provide more evidence from wills on the socio-economic position of ordinary mariners. However, these are exceptional voyages and most mariners were young men who had not yet lived long enough to accrue wealth.

Tudor shipmasters and maritime communities

136 Scammell, ‘Manning the English Merchant Service’, pp. 131–2, notes that English ships were undermanned in this period, but a good estimate would be one man per 8 to ten tons.
137 A survey dated to 1559 shows 415 mariners in Suffolk and 565 in neighbouring Essex, see TNA SP12/11 f. 64.
138 W. Ryley and H. Dethick, The Visitation of Middlesex Began in the Year 1663, J. Foster (ed.), London: Privately Printed for Joseph Foster, 1887, p. 68. The Swanley family of Poplar were descended from John, Richard, and William Swanley of Framilode. According to the visitation, William of Framilode named his son John, and John named his son William and his daughter Elizabeth (names used by the Gloucestershire branch). Richard and William Swanley of Poplar were shipmasters for the East India Company, suggesting the ‘family trade’ was carried on. The William of Framilode recorded in the visitation may have been the son named in the 1592 will of Elizabeth who was left the bark called Harry. There is still some confusion surrounding the London branch. In 1601, Richard Swanley (the East India Company master) married, but the 1592 will of Elizabeth Swanley of Gloucester does not mention a son called Richard. The only conclusion to reach is that either Richard of Poplar was illegitimate and ignored by Elizabeth in her will, or he was from a cadet branch of the family, see M. L. Baumber, ‘An East India Captain: The Early Career of Captain Richard Swanley’, The Mariner’s Mirror 57/3, 1967, pp. 265–79.
139 TNA PROB11/235/189. Eastington is close to Gloucester.
141 TNA E190/1128/7 ff. 3v, 7r; E190/1128/3 ff. 3v, 6r; E190/1128/5 f. 2v. Andrews had noted this previously; see Andrews, ‘The Elizabethan Seaman’, p. 249.
142 TNA E190/1010/7 f. 2r
143 TNA E179/182/37 mm. 34–7.
144 For arguments that when on land sailors were somehow separate from the wider community, see M. Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, ch. 1.
146 TNA E122/100/3 f. 3v.
147 TNA E179/152/383 r. 10.
150 For the exceptions, see Fury, Tides in the Affairs of Men, ch. 5.

Bibliography

Manuscript sources

The National Archives of the United Kingdom, (TNA) Kew

Exchequer: King’s/Queen’s Remembrancer: Accounts Various (E101).
Exchequer: King’s/Queen’s Remembrancer: Particulars of Customs Accounts (E122).
State Papers: Domestic, Elizabeth I (SP12).
State Papers: Domestic, Addenda, Edward VI to James I (SP15).
PROB: Wills and Letters of Administration, Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
Craig Lambert

**Southampton Archives, Southampton**

Local Port Books of Southampton (LPS).

**Secondary and printed sources**


Tudor shipmasters and maritime communities


Hakluyt, R. (1904) The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time within the Compass of These 1600 Yeares, vol. 11, Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons.


Craig Lambert