The Merchant Fleet and Maritime Communities of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset, c.1565–c.1630[1]

Gary P. Baker, Lucy Huggins, Craig Lambert, and John McAleer

In 1565 Elizabeth I's government surveyed sixteen English ports, including several in Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset. Commissioners were told to examine the trade of each place, investigate the customs officials' ability to collect taxes, how much the farming of customs charges cost, and whether these places were used for illicit trading.[2] In Kent, Sandwich was described as decayed due to 'certeyn mershes adioyninge to the said haven'. Dover was described as 'muche decayed by the working of the sea which is not in manns power to helpe without greate charges'.[3] Southampton, they stated, was an active trading centre but had recently declined because Italian ships no longer docked there. Poole was 'the moste & best frequented of anye place within the Shere of Dors[et]' and is 'well & syfficiently mayntayned'.[4] Weymouth, however, was described as needing repair. Such narratives of decline are quite common amongst English officials and are often repeated by historians.[5] This article questions these pessimistic narratives through

1 The research underpinning this article is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/W004011/1: 'English Merchant Shipping, Trade and Maritime Communities' based at the University of Southampton, see www.maritimebritain.org).

2 For a discussion of the 1565 survey and a transcription of the surveyor's report for Southampton, see L. T. Parker, 'Southampton's Sixteenth-Century Illicit Trade: An Examination of the 1565 Port Survey', *International Journal of Maritime History* 27 (2015), pp. 268–84.

3 The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA] E 159/350, ff. 349r-v.

4 TNA, E 159/350, f. 341.

5 For a detailed discussion of the literature which argues for a late medieval decline in Kent's shipping, and a challenge to these narratives, see C. Lambert, 'Naval Service and the Cinque Ports, 1322–1453', in G. P. Baker, C. Lambert and D. Simpkin (eds)

an investigation of the merchant fleet and maritime communities of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset over a key period when England was emerging as an important maritime trading nation.

The sources which underpin our investigation are customs accounts, ship-surveys, and musters. Customs accounts record the taxes charged on maritime trade. In England customs had been collected locally since at least the early thirteenth century, and nationally from the 1270s.[6] However, in 1565 the government improved the system by implementing the port books.[7] Each head-port stationed a controller, a customer, and a searcher. The customer was responsible for recording the levied customs. To reduce fraudulent practices the controller would check the accuracy of the customer's records, while the searcher examined the cargoes.[8] Importantly, from Easter 1565 coastal trade, although untaxed, was also recorded. The port books record the date each ship left or entered port, its name, and that of its master in addition to its tonnage and journey details. That coastal trade is recorded is important because at least three-quarters of voyages by English ships sailed coastwise. Therefore, from 1565 we can examine the size of England's merchant fleet in much greater detail than for earlier periods. The government would also occasionally undertake surveys of shipping, usually to ascertain how many merchant vessels were available for requisition in wartime. While these surveys are useful, they often omit information. The nationwide survey of 1571–2, for example, does not record information relating to 64 ports.[9] Sometimes surveys also included the numbers of mariners living within each port.

Military Communities in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Andrew Ayton (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 211–36. The decline narrative for Kent during the Tudor and Stuart period will be discussed and challenged in a forthcoming publication: G. P. Baker, R. Blackmore, C. Lambert, and S. Sweetinburgh (eds), *Kent and Europe, 1450–1640: Merchants, Mariners, Shipping, and Defence* (Woodbridge, forthcoming, 2025).

6 N. Karn, 'England's Trade with the Continent in the Early Thirteenth Century: Customs and the Port of Dover', *Journal of Medieval History* 46 (2020), pp. 306–34.

7 On the Elizabethan port books, see G. P. Baker, 'Domestic Maritime Trade in Late Tudor England c.1565–85: A Case Study of King's Lynn and Plymouth', in C. Jowitt, C. Lambert, and S. Mentz (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400–1800* (London, 2020), pp. 95–124.

8 On customs administration, see N. J. Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports, 1550–1590* (Oxford, 1988), Chapter 1.

9 C. Lambert and G. P. Baker, 'An Investigation of the Size and Geographical Distribution of the English, Welsh, and Channel Islands Merchant Fleet: A Case Study of 1571–72', in R. J. Blakemore and J. Davey (eds), *The Maritime World of Early Modern Britain* (Amsterdam, 2020), pp. 79–102.

Again, while useful, such information can be misleading because it is unclear whether the entire maritime community is captured (the definition of which is explored below). The evidence from the surveys and port books can be enriched by comparing them with musters taken in coastal towns.

Investigating the size and geographical distribution of the merchant fleets of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset requires us to link together the evidence from port books and government surveys, and apply a series of methodological approaches. Crucially, we need to develop methods that reduce the instances of double counting (failure to link references to the same ship) and 'conflation' (erroneous linkage of references to separate ships). There are three principal ways of doing this.[10] The first method is the three-identifier, where the ship's name is linked with its master and its home port. Within a specified timeframe, records of ships that are identical according to these three 'identifiers' are deemed to be referring to the same vessel. The second method is to use the ship's name and home port but discount the master and tonnage. Therefore, all ships with the same name from the same port within a specified time are counted only once. The third way of measuring the English merchant fleet is to mould the best attributes of the above methods and apply a more nuanced approach to the data. This involves scrutiny of the numbers of ships produced by the methods above, and eliminating any ship from the inquiry that is double counted or conflated.

Each method has limitations with tonnages, for instance, not precisely recorded such as in 1580 when the *Grace of God* of Faversham, commanded by Thomas Chartham, was recorded at 30 tons (July) and 16 tons (September).[11] The ship-name method also creates problems. The ship-survey of 1572 reveals two ships in Southampton called the *John*, one at 60 tons, the other eight tons.[12] The ship-name method would thus conflate these two ships. Linking the master's name with a ship and a port (the three-identifier method) can also produce unreliable figures. Over 1566–9, the *Leonard* of Charmouth was commanded multiple times by Thomas, Roger, and John Lymbery.[13] The three-identifier methodology would count this vessel more than once (though the ship-name method would correctly identify this as

10 For a more detailed analysis of these methods, see C. Lambert and G. P. Baker, 'The Merchant Fleet and Shipboard Community of Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 140 (2019), pp. 89–110; Lambert, Baker, 'An Investigation'.

11 TNA, E 190/6/8, f. 73r; E 190/6/8, f. 74v.

12 TNA, SP 15/22, f. 17v.

13 TNA, E 190/864/5, f. 6r; E 190/1010/17, f. 1r; E 190/1010/20, f. 3r; E 190/1011/12, f. 13v.

a single vessel). In short, the three-identifier method overestimates and the ship-name method underestimates the numbers of ships. The nuanced method allows us to compensate for the problems outlined above with the ship-name and three-identifier methods. The key problem of the nuanced method is scalability. Applying this method to a nationwide study of the merchant fleet is extremely time-consuming, but it is suitable for the kind of county-based analyses set out in the remainder of this article.

The Merchant Fleets of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset

To minimise the risks of double counting and conflation the following analysis uses the nuanced method and takes a series of short 'snap-shot' year samples, mitigating against issues such as ships changing names or being sold. We have chosen three important sample years: 1566–7, 1572–3, 1581–2. In these years the government undertook a series of surveys into the shipping and maritime community of England, and these survive for Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset. Linking these surveys with evidence from the port books enables us to scrutinise the merchant fleet of the three counties.

Table 1: Kent's Merchant Fleet[14]

Year (no. of ports)	Number of Ships	Tonnage	Average Tonnage
1566–7 (31)	279	3899	14
1572–3 (35)	256	5868	23
1581–2 (39)	372	6327	17

Table 1 shows that in the period 1566–73 the number of ships in Kent's merchant fleet remained stable, while the tonnage grew from 3,899 to

14 TNA, E 190/3/1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 12 E 190/4/1, 4–5; E 190/5/2–6; E 190/6/1–8; E 190/185/6, 10; E 190/186/2, 3; E 190/304/2, 4, 9, 10, 12; E 190/305/4, 5, 12; E 190/306/1, 4, 8–17; E 190/307/, 2, 3, 9, 10, 12, 18, 19; E 190/388/1, 7, 12; E 190/389/4; E190/387/, 2, 4, 7, 10; E 190/388/1, 7, 12; E 190/425/1–6; E 190/426/1–4; E 190/427/1–9; E 190/428/2–5; E 190/471/1–2; E 190/472/4; E 190/473/3, 7, 10; E 190/587/1–12; E 190/589/4–6; E 190/590/8, 14; E 190/591/4, 7, 13, 18; E 190/592/10, 12; E 190/1010/12, 13, 14, 23; E 190/638/1, 2, 5, 6, 13; E 190/639/1; E 190/639/2–11; E 190/736/5–6; E 190/737/3, 5 11, 18; E 190/738/2, 5, 6, 7, 10; E 190/739/9, 2,13, 14, 10, 21–25; E 190/740/1–29; E 190/741/17–26; E 190/814/2–10; E 190/927/7–16; E 190/928/4; E 190/930/9, 16, 26; E 190/931/3 ; E 190/1011/4, 8, 12, 19, 21, 23; E 190/1128/9, 12, 15; E 190/1132/11; SP 15/22; SP 12/156

5,868, an increase of over 50 per cent. It is worth considering that the survey of 1566 included a significant number of small vessels under three-tons which tend not to be recorded in the 1572 ship-survey. If dozens of smaller boats were included in the 1572 survey the increase in tonnage from 1566–73 would likely be over 60 per cent. From 1573–82 the tonnage of Kent's fleet increased by eight per cent, although the number of ships went from 256 to 372. While the average size of Kent's ships decreased, the table demonstrates there was an increase in trade which encouraged Kent's shippers to invest in more ships.

Table 2: Hampshire's Merchant Fleet[15]

Year (no. of ports)	Number of Ships	Tonnage	Average Tonnage
1566–7 (33)	252	1871	7
1572–3 (21)	129	2712	21
1581–2 (14)	181	4403	24

The data for Hampshire shows a similar trajectory to that of Kent. From 1567–82 the tonnage of Hampshire's merchant fleet increased by 135 per cent. The increase may have been even more. As mentioned, the data from 1566–7 contains numerous small boats used for fishing and oyster dredging that are absent from later surveys. This also explains why in 1567 the average tonnage of Hampshire's ships was seven tons. To see how the 'trading' fleet of Hampshire changed over this period it is better to compare the 1572–3 data with that of 1581–2. Such comparisons reveal that tonnage increased by over 60 per cent. The expansion in shipping and tonnage is also visible in Hampshire's key ports. In 1573, Southampton had 48 ships measuring 1,632 tons; by 1582, the port had 58 ships totalling 3,731 tons, an increase of 128 per cent in tonnage and 20 per cent in the number of ships. The 'decay' that the commissioners described in 1565 was either exaggerated, or, by 1582, Southampton saw significant improvement in its seaborne trade.

15 TNA, E 190/1/5; E 190/3/1; E 190/4/1, 2; E 190/5/5 E 190/305/4; E 190/6/3, 8; E 190/472/4; E 190/473/7; E 190/589/13; E 190/639/3; E 190/737/2–25; E 190/738/2–7; E 190/739/2–24; E 190/740/6–28; E 190/741/1, 21, 48; E 190/742/15, 16; E 190/813/4; E 190/814/1–11; E 190/815/2; E 190/864/6–12; E 190/865/1, 7, 8; E 190/925/, 2, 8, 11; E 190/927/7,16,18; E 190/928/2; E 190/929/6, 10, 18; E 190/930/1, 9, 16, 22; E 190/1010/7–23; E 190/1011/2–4, 7, 8, 21, 23; E 190/1012/5, 19; E 190/1013/19, 21; E 190/1014/11; E 190/1128/9; E 190/1130/2; SP 15/22; SP 12/156.

Table 3: Dorset's Merchant Fleet[16]

Year (number of ports)	Number of Ships	Total Tonnage	Average Tonnage
1566–7 (12)	113	1705	15
1572–3 (15)	110	1937	18
1581–2 (12)	131	3798	29

The data for Dorset is perhaps the most uniform, as the number of ports in each sample year remains largely stable. Moreover, the ports of Bridport, Charmouth, Chideock, Christchurch, Eype, Lyme Regis, Poole, Wareham, and Weymouth and Melcombe appear in each sample period. From 1567–82 Dorset's tonnage increased by 123 per cent, and the number of ships by 16 per cent. There was also an increase in the number of larger ships. These figures suggest that by 1582 Dorset's seaborne trade was vibrant.

There are some differences between the three counties. From 1573–82, Kent's shippers purchased more ships, but, on average, these became smaller. Over the same period Hampshire's ships became slightly larger but in Dorset there is quite a significant jump from an average of 18 to 29 tons. Examining a sample of key ports demonstrates how these changes impacted some of the more important harbours within each county.

Table 4 shows the remarkable growth of Southampton's merchant fleet. From 1573–82 Southampton's tonnage expanded by c.2,000 tons, an increase of 129 per cent. The table also shows that, on average, Southampton's ships doubled in size. The dominance of Southampton can be seen within Hampshire. By 1582, Southampton's merchant fleet accounted for 85 per cent of the entire county's shipping. Similar patterns can be seen in Dorset. In 1573, Poole's merchant fleet measured 935 tons; by 1582, this expanded to 1,508 tons, an increase of 61 per cent. More importantly, Poole's ships had almost doubled in size.

16 TNA, E 190/186/1; E 190/3/1; E 190/4/1–3; E 190/5/3; E 190/6/4, 8; E 190/473/7; E 190/587/13; E 190/588/, 11; E 190/589/4, 11; E 190/591/12–13; E 190/592/10, 12; E 190/737/, 25; E 190/738/2, 5, 7; E 190/739/10, 11, 19, 24; E 190/740/1, 5, 6, 22, 23, 28; E 190/741/1, 15; E 190/742/15; E 190/813/4; E 190/814/1–11; E 190/815/2; E 190/864/1–12; E 190/865/1–8; E 190/925/7–11; E 190/927/7–13; E 190/928/6, 8; E 190/929/6–15; E 190/930/1–26; E 190/932/7, 8; E 190/1010/7–26; E 190/1011/1–27; E 190/1012/4, 14; E 190/1013/6–19; E 190/1014/11, 18, 25; E 190/1081/3, 6, 10; E 190/1128/6, 16, 17; E 190/1129/3, 4; E 190/1130/2; E 190/1298/5; E 190/1323/10, 13; SP 15/22; SP 12/38; SP 12/156.

Table 4: Sample of Key Ports in the Three Counties

Year	Port (County)	No. of Ships	Total Tonnage	Average Tonnage
1572–3	Dover (Kent)	27	867	32
	Sandwich (Kent)	46	997	22
	Faversham (Kent)	35	709	20
	Portsmouth (Hants)	7	131	19
	Southampton (Hants)	48	1632	34
	Lyme Regis (Dorset)	16	313	20
	Poole (Dorset)	41	935	23
	Weymouth & Melcombe (Dorset)	27	350	13
1581–2	Dover	37	868	23
	Sandwich	40	955	24
	Faversham	43	774	18
	Portsmouth	17	388	23
	Southampton	58	3731	64
	Lyme Regis	33	718	22
	Poole	36	1508	42
	Weymouth & Melcombe	35	1323	38

For references to sources see Tables 1–3.

Much like Southampton, therefore, Poole's shippers were investing in bigger ships. Weymouth/Melcombe's maritime economic development was even more impressive. From 1573–83, the tonnage in these ports increased by 278 per cent. The average size of Weymouth/Melcombe's ships also increased.

Changes to Kent's merchant fleet over these two periods is more complex. In Dover, there were more ships by 1582, but the tonnage remained largely the same. In Sandwich, there was a decrease in tonnage and the numbers of ships, while Faversham's fleet expanded a little. Interestingly, a series of surveys taken in 1587 reveal a different picture. By 1587 Dover had 31 ships totalling 1,075 tons, while Sandwich had 49 ships measuring a total of 1,242 tons. If we compare the 1572–3 data with the survey and port books of 1587–8 we see that Dover's tonnage increased by 24 per cent and Sandwich's by over 30

per cent respectively.[17] Broadly, therefore, from the 1570s to the 1580s the merchant fleet for each county increased in tonnage.

The Maritime Communities of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset

Defining the maritime community is challenging. At its broadest, it includes shipowners, shipwrights, carpenters, ropemakers, porters, sailmakers, and merchants. At its narrowest, it might only include those working directly aboard ships: the 'shipboard community'. Where do we set the geographical limits for the maritime community? Are ferry operators who provided vital service across the riverine networks of these counties, for instance, to be included? In many coastal communities there were also 'fisher-farmers': people who fished close to shore or in the river systems, but who also had smallholdings. The complexity of maritime communities is neatly demonstrated by a 1587 survey of the Lydd fishing boats which shows that several of the masters and owners of fishing vessels also worked as bakers, husbandmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, and thatchers.[18] For this analysis, we will take a relatively narrow view of the maritime community, limiting it to its shipboard element. We will, however, include merchants that were using the ships.

The size of the shipboard community of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset is the first question. In 1566 a series of surveys were undertaken into the maritime communities of several counties. Fortunately, the survey for Kent survives and contains much detail about the size of the county's shipboard community. It reveals that across 20 ports there were 924 shipmasters, mariners, and fishermen working on vessels.[19] As this survey only covers 20 ports, the shipboard community in 1566 would have been larger than the survey reveals. In Hampshire, a series of surveys reveals that from 1565–82 there were 263 members of the shipboard community based in 23 settlements.[20] These surveys do not provide accurate statistics. For example, in Southampton from 1565–82 there were 54 shipowners and shipmasters, but no 'ordinary' mariners or fishers recorded. Given the size of Southampton's fleet in 1582 there must have been more than the 18 shipmasters recorded for that year. For Dorset a series of surveys and musters survive which provide some clues about the size of the shipboard and fishing communities. These reveal

17 TNA SP 12/198, ff. 5r, 14r, 19r, 22r, 53r-54r, 121r; E 190/639/12; E 190/639/13; E 190/639/14; E 190/640/1; E 190/640/4; E 190/643/5.

18 TNA, SP 12/198, f. 51r.

19 J. M. Gibson, 'The 1566 Survey of the Kent Coast', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 112 (1993), pp. 341–53.

20 TNA SP 12/38, ff. 77–99; SP 15/22, ff. 17v-18r; SP 156/45, ff. 101, 134.

that from 1565–82 there were 587 shipowners, shipmasters, mariners, and fishers in 22 places.[21] While important places such as Poole and Lyme Regis are covered, these are undoubtedly underestimates.

Another way of measuring the size of the shipboard communities is to use the tonnage of the ships as an indicator of how much labour was required to operate the vessels within each county. The evidence for how many mariners were required per ton of ships is not uniform. In Poole in 1565 there were 23 ships, measuring 419 tons, manned by 193 masters, mariners, and boys; giving a labour:ton ratio of approximately 1:2.[22] In Hull, however, crew levels seem to be far lower with ratios of 1:7 and even 1:12.[23] For Kent's labour:ton ratios we can use a 1630 Kent muster book.[24] Not all ships have an attached crew, but many do. The 18-ton *William* was operated by seven crew (1:3). Some required fewer mariners. The 22-ton *Ann* of Gillingham had a crew of three (1:7). In Queenborough, the *Charity* of 35 tons had a crew of five (1:7). Taking all the evidence together an average labour:ton ratio of 1:5 seems reasonable for Kent's ships, which can be applied to each county under study here. In 1582 Kent had at least 6,327 tons of shipping, which would have required over 1,200 people to operate. Hampshire's tonnage in 1582 would have needed 880 people to work. The tonnage of Dorset's fleet in 1582 might have employed 760 workers. Even if we accept that mariners and shipmasters worked on multiple vessels the size of the shipboard community in each county must have numbered at least several hundred.

Of course, some places probably focused more on one type of activity. In Dorset, for example, a series of musters and surveys dating from 1543–82 shows that in Lyme Regis and Poole most of the shipboard community consisted of shipowners, shipmasters, and mariners.[25] In 1543, in Kingston, Portland, Purbeck, and Sutton Poyntz there was a mixture of mariners and fishers.[26] In 1570, there were 49 mariners/fishers in Abbotsbury.[27] The musters and surveys also reveal familial links in these settlements. In 1570, in Abbotsbury there are least six family groups recorded in the muster. Dorset shipowners also employed family members. Andrew Bartram owned the 12-ton *Trinity Bartram* of

21 TNA, SP12/38, ff. 44–50; SP 12/72, ff. 129–35; SP 15/22, ff. 18v-19r; SP 156/45, ff. 101, 134.
22 TNA, SP 12/38, ff. 44–50.
23 TNA, SP 12/73, ff. 35v, 36r.
24 TNA, SP 16/132, f. 30.
25 TNA SP 1/178; SP 12/38; SP 12/72; SP 15/22; SP 156/45
26 TNA SP 1/178, ff. 25–7.
27 TNA SP 12/72, ff. 130–31.

Poole, a vessel commanded by Philip Bartram.[28] In 1565, in Dibden in Hampshire there were ten fishers and oyster dredgers and four of these were from two families.[29] In Emsworth, two of the 12 shipowners were Richard Hewet senior and Richard Hewet junior.[30] The ship-survey of 1572 shows that in Faversham six (27 per cent) of the 22 shipmasters were related.[31] We can take the analysis of the shipboard community further by investigating the service patterns of shipmasters and seeing how this differs across our three counties.

Table 5: Service Patterns of Shipmasters, 1565–1580

County (n. of ports)	Total Number of Masters	Only Overseas	Only Coastal	Both
Kent (30)	752	167 (22%)	492 (65%)	93 (12%)
Hampshire (21)	397	81 (20%)	253 (64%)	63 (16%)
Dorset (12)	387	75 (19%)	227 (59%)	85 (22%)

For references to sources see Tables 1–3.

Broadly, Table 5 shows that within each county a fifth of shipmasters specialised in overseas trade, and three-fifths worked as coasters. In Dorset there were slightly more shipmasters who worked in both aspects of trade. Much of this was due to Dorset's proximity to France.[32] The county was also important in the Cornish tin trade which explains why a large proportion of the shipmasters operated as coasters.[33] Southampton's trade is more complicated due to the status of the Channel Islands. Some goods shipped to the Islands, such as cloth, were taxed and recorded as overseas trade. Some commodities, principally foodstuffs, were untaxed and so recorded as coastal trade.[34] For the purposes of this analysis all Channel Islands voyages have

28 TNA, SP 12/38, f. 46r.
29 TNA, SP 12/38, f. 97.
30 TNA, SP 12/38, f. 97
31 TNA, SP 15/22, f. 13v.
32 Unfortunately, many of the Dorset port books are those of the searcher which do not record commodities, but we can see Dorset traders importing salt from La Rochelle in the port books of other places such as Southampton: TNA, E 190/814/3, f. 12v which shows the *George* of Lyme Regis entering with a cargo of 'bay salt'.
33 The coasting trade of the south coast is dealt with in detail in L. T. P. Brinkley, *Coastal Trade and Maritime Communities in Elizabethan England* (Woodbridge, 2024).
34 See, for example, TNA, E 190/814/10, ff. 2v, 4v for beer, butter, bacon, and wood being recorded as coastal trade, and E 190/814/10, ff. 25r, 32v for cloth being charged tax and recorded as overseas trade.

been recorded as coastal. Some master's specialised in Channel Island runs. For example, from 1566–76 there were at least 28 voyages from Southampton to Guernsey undertaken by 17 shipmasters.[35] Ten voyages (34 per cent) of the 29 voyages were made by two masters, Reginald Agenor and John Kennell (Kennett), although these sailed to other places such as London.[36]

Some of these shipmasters were crucial to the economic lifeblood of their respective ports. In the sources used for this article from 1565–80 the shipmasters of Faversham undertook 426 coastal voyages and Robert Rye was responsible for 58 of these.[37] Over the same period the shipmasters of Hythe, Hampshire, undertook 156 voyages and John Holford was responsible for an impressive 88 of these.[38] Those masters working in overseas trade were also important. In the period 1565–80, there were 156 overseas (import and export) voyages from Hythe in Kent, and John Mead made 26 of these.[39] In 1565–77, there were 135 import and export voyages from Weymouth and John Callenwaye (11 voyages) and Roger Gear (ten voyages) were responsible for 16 per cent of Weymouth's overseas voyages.[40]

In addition to reconstructing career patterns from the port books we can turn to a series of musters from 1630 which allow us to examine the ages of people within the maritime communities of Kent and Hampshire.

35 TNA E 190/739/24, f. 2v; E 190/814/1, ff. 12r-17r; E 190/814/2, ff 9r, 34r; E 190/814/3, f. 1r, 24r-26r, 30v; E 190/814/7, ff. 1r, 7v; E 190/814/8, ff. 6v, 38r; E190/814/9, f. 6r, 39r; E 190/814/10, ff. 2v 9v, 10v, 39v, 48r; E 190/814/11, ff. 2v, 4v, 8r; E 190/814/9, f. 7r; E 190/815/2, ff. 4v, 6v.

36 Agenor: TNA, E 190/814/10, f. 2v (Guernsey) f. 6v (London); Kennell: E 190/814/1, f. 11r (London); E 190/814/2 f. 34r (Guernsey).

37 TNA, E 190/3/1, ff. 11r, 16v; E 190/4/1, f. 22v; E 190/6/5, f. 1r; E 190/6/8, ff. 50v, 50-75v; E 190/588/7, ff. 2r-4r; E 190/638/3, f.1r -3r; E 190/639/6, f. 1r-6r; E 190/736/6, f. 1r-2r.

38 TNA, E190/738/5, ff. 1r-5r; E 190/738/7, f. 2r; E 190/739/11, f. 1r; E 190/739/24, f. 4r; E 190/740/28, f.4r-4v; E 190/814/1, ff. 1r-28v; E 190/814/10, ff. 2r-16v; E 190/814/11, ff. 3v, 7r; E 190/814/2, ff. 1v-18r; E 190/814/3, ff. 2r-22v; E 190/814/5, ff. 6r-13r; E 190/814/6, f.4r; E 190/814/7, ff. 1v, 6v; E 190/814/8, ff. 1v-16; E 190/814/9, ff. 2v-12r; E 190/815/2, ff. 2v-7r; E190/864/10, ff. 16v, 21v; E 190/865/8 f.7v.

39 TNA, E 190/737/3, ff. 1r, 2v; E 190/737/18, f. 8v; E 190/737/19, f. 5v; E 190/737/28, f. 2v E 190/738/10, ff. 1r-4r; E 190/864/9 f. 5v.

40 TNA, E 190/864/9, ff. 1r, 6v; E 190/864/12, ff. 2r, 3r, 4r, 7r-10r; E 190/865/6, ff. 1r, 5r-8r; E 190/929/10, ff. 4r-6v.

Table 6: Occupations and Ages of Maritime Communities of Kent and Hampshire, 1630

County	Occupation	Number	Average Age	Youngest	Oldest
Kent	Boatswain	5	36	24	50
	Fisher	222	29	13	62
	Gunner	5	36	22	56
	King's Servant	4	41	21	56
	Mariner	116	22	15	55
	Quartergunner	1	36	-	-
	Quartermaster	5	32	25	48
	Sailor	1	40	-	-
	Servant (aboard a ship)	5	18	15	20
	Shipmaster	11	38	22	62
	Shipmaster/owner	58	40	24	69
	Shipowner	7	45	26	65
	Trumpeter	2	24	22	26
	Waterman	244	32	17	69
Hampshire (Isle of Wight)	Boatowner	1	48	-	-
	Coaster	3	58	50	63
	Coaster/boatowner	1	55	-	-
	Coaster/shipowner	3	35	42	25
	Fisher	80	41	10	76
	Fisher/boatowner[41]	3	51	50	52
	Gunner	2	46	48	43
	Mariner	1	30	-	-
	Passenger (Ferry)	42	33	15	65
	Passenger/boatowner	28	38	18	70
	Passenger/shipowner	1	40	1	1
	Pilot	1	46	-	-
	Sailor	40	30	16	63
	Sailor/boatowner	1	35	-	-
	Seaman/boatowner	1	63	-	-
	Shipmaster	5	44	30	66
	Shipowner & Mariner	2[42]	46	-	-
	Shipmaster/owner	6	47	62	30
	Shipowner/seaman	2	47	33	60

References: TNA, SP 16/33, f. 5–10; TNA SP 16/132, f. 30; SP 16/135, ff. 51-54r. Data for Dorset is not available.

41 Only two have ages recorded.
42 Only one is given an age.

The table shows that the shipboard community of Kent and Hampshire consisted of people from ten to 76 years of age. In Hampshire the average age of shipowners/masters was 46, whereas in Kent this was 40. The youngest shipowner/master in Hampshire was 30-year-old Rethram Jarratt of Newport on the Isle of Wight. In Kent this was 24-year-old Robert Evans of Queenborough.[43] Broadly, the more skilled the job the older the average age. This is unsurprising. To learn the skills of a gunner or a shipmaster took time. From surveys of shipping in Faversham in 1580, for example, we know that people were apprenticed to shipmasters in their teens before gradually working their way to master and, in the case of Edward Freeman, a shipowner.[44] This pattern was probably followed by fishers. The youngest fisher in Hampshire was ten-year-old Thomas Lucas from Binstead. In the same muster there is also a fifty-year-old Thomas Lucas.[45] Clearly, this is evidence of an older relative teaching the younger generation the art of fishing.

Conclusion

The merchant fleets and maritime communities of Kent, Hampshire, and Dorset were fundamental to the economic prosperity of these counties. Port communities were also resilient. The commissioners in 1565 said Dover was decayed and nothing could be done to alleviate the situation. The surveyors were too pessimistic; over the coming years, Dover began a process of infrastructure development which improved the harbour leading to an increase in seaborne trade.[46] The evidence shows that far from decline, from 1565–80 maritime trade in each of these counties expanded. To meet this growth the shippers of the three counties began to invest in more ships. This created employment opportunities for residents. Indeed, some people were

43 TNA, SP 16/33, ff. 5–10; SP 16/132, f. 30.

44 Kent History and Library Centre [here after KHLC] FA/CPM/24; KHLC FA/CPM/33.

45 TNA, SP 16/33, ff. 5–10.

46 As noted the Kent aspect to this will be discussed in more detail in a forthcoming publication, *Kent and Europe*. Also see the following: A. Margetts, G. Dawkes, D. Goodburn with contributions by L. Allott, S. Adams and A. Dowsett, 'What 'incomparable Jewells Havens, and sure harbours are': the remains of late 16th century Dover harbour and their wider significance', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 57 (2023), pp. 117–98; E. H. Ash, 'A perfect and an Absolute Work: Expertise, Authority, and the Rebuilding of Dover Harbour', *Technology and Culture*, 41, n. 2 (2000), pp. 239–68; M. Dixon, 'Economy and Society in Dover 1509–1640', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kent (1992), Chapter 2.

gradually pulled towards port towns for employment. Robert Peers, from Marlborough, Wiltshire, moved to Southampton and worked as a labourer. In 1570 Peers enrolled as a soldier aboard the *Bark Bowes*, a privateer operating under licence from the Prince of Condé.[47] Others must have found similar opportunities for employment and thus joined the shipboard community. In port towns some members of the maritime community also played important civic roles. John Crook of Southampton was a merchant engaging in coastal and overseas trade, as well as privateering. He also participated in office holding and owned properties such as the Dolphin inn. Unfortunately, his career ended in disgrace and bankruptcy.[48] In Poole some shipmasters were among the town's wealthiest people. In the 1571 lay subsidy assessment Peter Cox was valued at holding £18 in goods, Thomas Lambert £14, and John Rogers £10.[49] Cox commanded ships both overseas and coastwise. In 1566, he commanded the *Primrose* from the Azores to Southampton carrying over 500 quintels of green woad for John Crook. On the same day Thomas Lambert arrived in Southampton in command of the *Angel* of Poole also carrying a cargo of green woad for Richard Goddard, another important figure in Southampton.[50] John Rogers was also a busy shipmaster making voyages to Bordeaux with trips coastwise to London.[51] In 1571 only three people out of the seventy assessed in Poole were wealthier than Rogers. Only four people, including Rogers, had more wealth than Lambert. Rogers, with three others, was the fifth wealthiest by assessment. Similar findings have been found in Southampton where in the 1570s shipmasters sat comfortably in what might be termed the middle class.[52] Shipmasters from smaller places also accrued wealth. In 1593 Roger Lymberry, a prolific shipmaster from

47 TNA, HCA 13/17, f. 136r. At this time maritime employment was not effectively regulated and there was no formal guild controlling apprenticeships. This meant it offered opportunities for people to move in and out of maritime service as they pleased, see C. A. Fury, 'Training and Education in the Elizabethan Maritime Community, 1585–1603', *The Mariner's Mirror* 85 (1999), pp. 147–61.

48 Crook's career is examined in Brinkley, *Coastal Trade*, pp. 89–91.

49 TNA, E 179/105/223.

50 TNA, E 190/814/3, f. 17v. Both ships arrived 5 July 1566. On the roles they played in local government, see *The Remembrance Book of Richard Goddard 1583, John Crook 1584, Andrew Studeley 1586*, ed. C. Butler (Southampton Record Series, 50, 2022).

51 TNA, E 190/864/8 ff. 6v, 10v.

52 C. Lambert, 'Tudor Shipmasters and Maritime Communities', in C. Jowitt, C. Lambert, and S. Mentz (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400–1800* (London, 2020), pp. 323–48. See also, Brinkley, *Coastal Trade*, Chapter 5.

Charmouth, lay dying at Millbrook, Cornwall. In his will he left £88 in cash to three daughters, a shop but no money to another daughter, a plot of land to one son and property to another, and 12*d* each to his grandchildren.[53] This demonstrates the entrepreneurial spirit of the shipboard community who through strategies of inheritance ensured future generations would benefit from their work at sea. While we rely on the survival of wills and other documentary evidence to access the specific biographies of individual seafarers and merchants, the analysis of port books – as shown in this article allows us to survey the broader picture of the maritime community in three southern English counties in the period.

53 TNA, PROB 11/82/439, f. 333. Roger was part of the Lymbery family which can be traced back as shipmasters from the 1520s. The family worked out of Charmouth, Chideock, Eype, Melcombe Regis, and Lyme Regis. See, TNA, E 122/207/2, f. 15v for a voyage from Lyme Regis made by John Lymbery in 1526. Roger's career is recorded through the following port books: TNA, E 190/814/9, f. 30r; E 190/815/2; E 190/929/6; E 190/929/10; E 190/1010/12–18; E 190/1014/25; E 190/1014/18.