

LINCOLNSHIRE COASTAL VILLAGES AND  
THE SEA c.1300 - c.1600: ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

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\* \* \* \* \*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.A.A.S.R.P.</u>	<u>Associated Architectural and Archaeological Societies Reports and Papers</u>
B.L.	British Library
<u>Cal. Fine Rolls</u>	<u>Calendars of Fine Rolls</u>
<u>Cal. Inq. Misc.</u>	<u>Calendars of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</u>
<u>Cal. Inq. P.M.</u>	<u>Calendars of Inquisitions Post-Mortem</u>
<u>Cal. Pat. Rolls</u>	<u>Calendars of Patent Rolls</u>
<u>Cal. S.P.D.</u>	<u>Calendars of State Papers Domestic</u>
<u>Econ. H.R.</u>	<u>Economic History Review</u>
ed.	editor/edition
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<u>L.A.A.S.R.P.</u>	<u>Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society Reports and Papers</u>
L.A.O.	Lincolnshire Archives Office
n.p.	No pagination
O.E.	Old English
P.C.C.	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
P.C.Y.	Prerogative Court of York
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
S.H.A.R.O.	South Humberside Area Record Office
<u>T.H.R.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History</u>

## ABBREVIATIONS (Cont'd)

### List of Conventions used in Family Trees (Chapter 8)

- b. = born/baptised
- c. = circa
- d. = died
- d.y. = died young
- m. = married
- ? = doubtful

A broken line indicates conjectural relationship.

Known fishermen and mariners are shown in italics.

Children are not listed in order of age. A vertical arrow indicates known descendants (not shown). Infants who died perinatally are not listed, nor are spouses whose entire name is unknown.

In dates extracted from parish registers, the year is taken to begin on January 1st.

Spelling of place names and surnames has been standardized, except in direct quotations from specific documents.

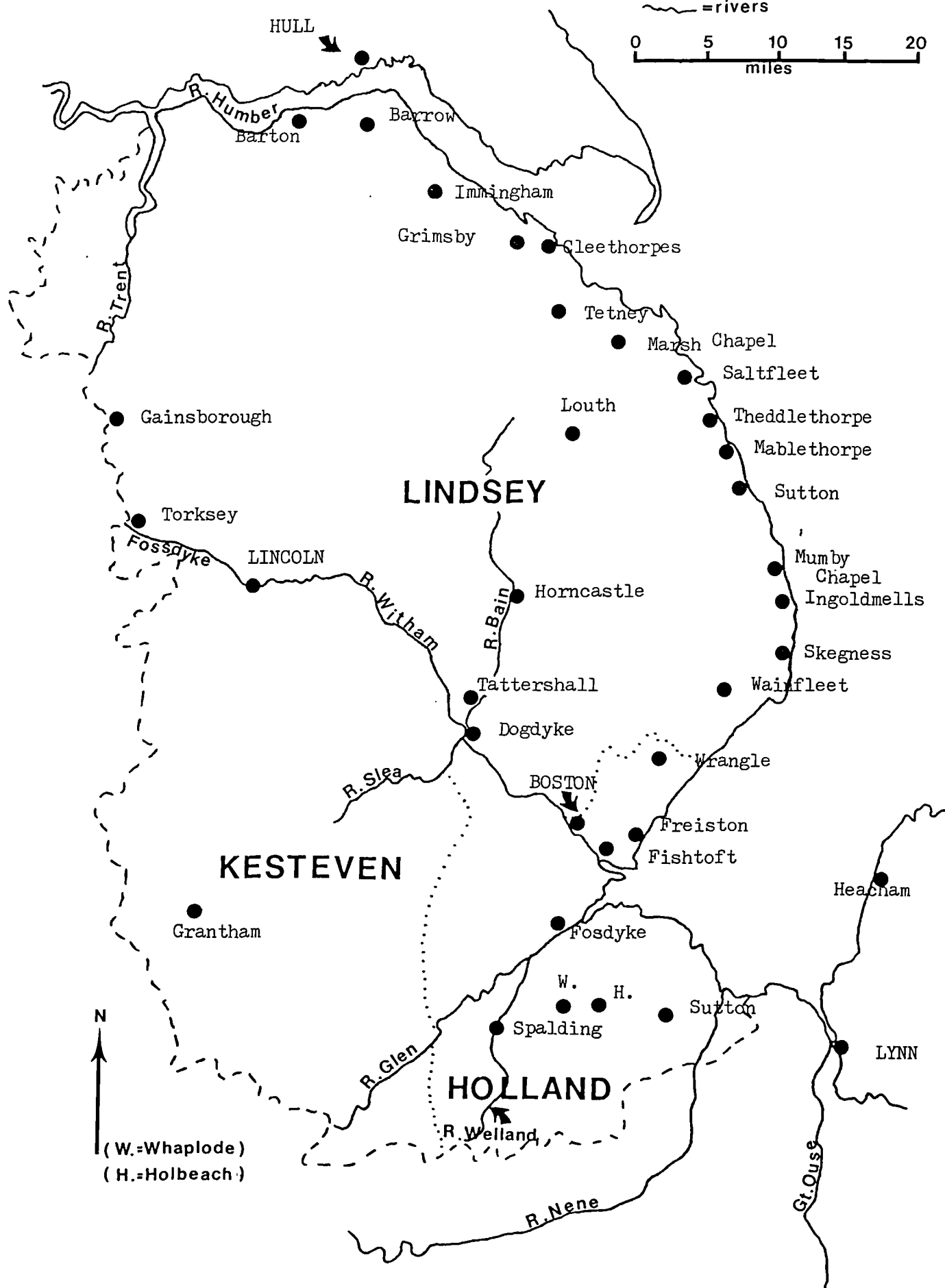
KEY:

--- = boundary of County

..... = boundary of Part

~~~~~ = rivers

0 5 10 15 20  
miles



## INTRODUCTION

The idea that mariners have a distinctive tradition, generated by a view of the world not open to other men, is an old one. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; they see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the Deep", says one of the Psalms; emphasizing not only the sense of separation which went with the occupation of seafarer, but a unique proximity to God, which made the sea in general, and fishermen in particular, important images for the medieval church. Even at sea, as the story of Jonah reminded men, nobody could flee from God; while fishing, as James I<sup>1</sup> is said to have pointed out, was "the Apostles' own calling". Educated nineteenth century commentators, less concerned with the dignity this gave to mariners, often regarded them as similar to the primitive societies contemporary explorers encountered overseas. Ebenezer Mather, an Anglican missionary, took the gospel to fishermen at sea, after discovering them to be "the wildest men I had ever<sup>2</sup> encountered". The naturalist, J G Bertram, who was principally interested in the classification and habits of fish, wrote of the marriage customs and superstitions of the "fisher folk" he encountered on the Scottish coast, as curious anecdotes, and at times almost seems to have relegated the majority of fishermen to the status of uneducated savages: "I have examined every intelligent fishermen I have met within the last ten years," he complained, "numbering above one hundred,

1. Psalm 107, v.v. 23-24; A.M. Samuel, The Herring, 1918, p.68; R.F. Wright, 'The High Seas and the Church in the Middle Ages: Part II', Mariner's Mirror, 53, 1967, p.115 sqq.
2. J. Dyson, Business in Great Waters: The Story of British Fishermen, 1977, p.128 sqq.

and few have any real knowledge regarding the habits of the  
fish which it is their business to capture."<sup>3</sup>

If disdain has given way to more sensitive interest,  
the curious socio-economic difference between seafarers and  
other men has remained an oft-repeated, but little studied  
belief. A recent anthropological evaluation of a modern  
Yorkshire fishing village sought to examine a late twentieth  
century group of fishermen and their families in the belief  
that their religious distinctness was still tangible enough to  
warrant the use of techniques of analysis, more often employed<sup>4</sup>  
in relation to African or South American tribal societies.  
Conventional understanding sees a close huddle of houses on the  
shore, a tight network of kinship, a peculiar superstitious and  
religious frame of reference and a deep distrust of outsiders  
as the natural consequence of this peculiar maritime world-  
view, preserving it relatively unchanged down the generations.<sup>5</sup>

For the local historian, interested in understanding  
the maritime tradition in the late medieval period, such places  
might therefore seem the natural starting point. Economic  
historians have become accustomed to considering rural  
communities in terms of the relationship between their  
geographical location and their social and economic structures:  
highland and lowland; champaign arable, pasture and woodland;

3. J.G. Bertram, The Harvest of the Sea, 1869, pp.30, 418-432;  
cf. K. Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 1983, pp.81, 88-89.
4. D. Clark, Between Pulpit and Pew: Folk Religion in a North  
Yorkshire Fishing Village, 1982. I am indebted to Dr. Harold Fox  
for a reference to this.
5. A. Storm, 'Robin Hood's Bay', (unpublished Leicester University  
Dept. of English Local History M.A. dissertation), 1978, pp.14-18,  
33-34.

and so on. Yet, if the "fishing village" is to be understood in the terms expressed above, an uncomfortably large area of the English coastline must remain outside the definition. On particular parts of the east coast of England - certain areas in Cleveland, North Yorkshire, Norfolk and possibly Suffolk - we might regard them as the typical coastal settlement form; but what of the very considerable stretches of shoreline in between? If Staithes in North Yorkshire or Burnham Overy in Norfolk are "fishing villages", why would nobody think of attaching such an epithet to Skipsea in Yorkshire or Saltfleet in Lincolnshire? And if the socio-economic forces which produced "classical" fishing villages were not present in such areas, was there no rural maritime "mentalité collective" in them, in the later Middle Ages? The main themes and central preoccupations of this thesis grew out of an attempt to answer these questions.

Certain assumptions which circumscribe this study should be made clear at the outset. Given the nature of the initial questions, it was inevitable that the area chosen for study should be one, like Lincolnshire, whose rural maritime background had been very little explored, even by its own local historians - despite its position on the central eastern seaboard, the length of its coastline, and the medieval importance of Boston. Only Joan Thirsk and Arthur Owen have studied any aspects of its seaborne trade or coastal history, although the historical geographer D. N. Robinson has considered

6. J. Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales: IV, 1500-1640, 1967, pp.54, 111-112, 127-128 and passim; W.G. Hoskins, 'The Highland Zone in Domesday Book', in his Provincial England, 1963, pp.15-52.

the topographical complexities in some detail. This thesis is concerned only with rural areas, and the omission of Boston and Grimsby (except in so far as they impinge upon its subject matter) is deliberate, reflecting the much fuller discussion which both towns have recently received from their historians.<sup>7</sup>

The date range has been dictated by the nature of the historical changes perceived to have taken place in the area, which appeared to lend some unity to the three centuries between 1300 and 1600. At the start of the fourteenth century Boston was entering its period of economic decline, major hydrographical and geographical changes in the county's seaside regions had only recently ended, and many of the smaller creeks and havens were still developing. By the end of the sixteenth century, the decline in the wool trade and the salting industry had worked its way through, and the medieval economies of the county's havens had been completely transformed. A long time-scale has nevertheless involved some necessary sacrifices in matters of detail, and has raised problems over the nature, extent and continuity of the documentary evidence on a number of occasions, (especially where the fifteenth century is involved).

A similar point may perhaps be made about the general method of approach employed, which has been dictated by the

7. J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming, 1957, *passim*; A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', L.A.A.S.R.P., 5, 1954, pp.87-100; *idem*, 'Records of the Commissioners of Sewers', History, LII, 1967, pp.35-38; *idem*, 'Wilgrip Haven and Theddlethorpe', Lincolnshire Historian, II (3), 1955-6, pp.37-41; D.N. Robinson, The Book of the Lincolnshire Seaside, 1981; E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970; S. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages', (unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis) 1983. Rigby (*ibid.* p.253), however, argues that Grimsby, despite being a royal borough, had very few genuinely urban features in the later Middle Ages.

interpretation offered of events, but which has involed beginning the study in a relatively broad context in both space and time, and later narrowing down to a more circumscribed one. The crucial questions were: first, whether a distinctive maritime tradition could be identified in the county and, if so, in what form; secondly, why this did not produce the anticipated settlement form of the "fishing village", whether understood morphologically or economically; and thirdly how, in that case, this tradition fitted into the pattern of conventional rural life in the area. Accordingly, at the risk of some loss of detail, the thesis has been sub-divided into three sections. In the first, the approach has been to view maritime affairs from an administrative perspective, seeking to identify how they were regulated in the county and thus bringing sharply into focus important aspects of this way of life which rendered it different from others. From this the discussion moves in Part II to a more detailed exploration of the peculiarities of topography and economy in the county's coastal areas. In Lincolnshire, these factors had the effect of combining to prevent the development of villages with any continuous or exclusive specialization in maritime trade or fishing. Because of this, the topographical attributes which might have accompanied such an economy remained largely absent. Part III then looks at one rural coastal village - Saltfleet - in the light of these findings, and asks how the seafaring tradition identified in Part I fitted into the society, economy and popular culture of a marshland agricultural village.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PART ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTORY

Local historians have become accustomed to describing the areas with which they are concerned in terms of broad settlement typologies, incorporating certain generalized (but still valid) statements about topography and socio-economic structure. We may speak, for example, of a "Midland open-field village" and contrast it with a highland "infield-outfield" hamlet, in terms of physical geography, settlement morphology, the deployment of labour in relation to available resources, agricultural practices, or the structure of society. Research into topographical forms has advanced sufficiently to allow a considerable refinement of these definitions: a village may be linear or agglomerated, planned or unplanned, focused on street or green, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, the classification of coastal settlement forms is still in its infancy. Not surprisingly, therefore, historians of these areas have often been forced to employ a vocabulary which owes less to considered historical judgement than to tourist guidebooks. Expressions like "small medieval harbour" or "fishing village" have little more refinement as definitions than the "chocolate-box portrait" of the inland village with church, thatched cottages and pub all clustered around the green: what Peter Laslett calls "a picture of England which the Englishman goes to make sure about when his holidays come round".<sup>2</sup> The transformation of many coastal settlements, in Lincolnshire as elsewhere, into "seaside resort

1. T. Rowley, Villages in the Landscape, 1978, pp.15-25.

2. P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost, second edition, 1971, p.55.

towns" within the last century, has helped to obscure their  
original features still further.<sup>3</sup>

Understandably, stereotypes, culled from the popular perception of how rural maritime villages ought to have been, leave many places undefined. In Lincolnshire, the hiatus is almost total and in the terms just outlined the county does not have (and never did have) a single "fishing village". As a result, these impressionistic ideas about settlement typology have had to be reconsidered in more analytical terms from the outset, by breaking down the possible influences which proximity to the sea might be supposed to have exerted on villages. Later sections of this thesis will consider how physical contiguity affected topography, how a combination of topography and maritime resources affected the local economy, and how all three factors interconnected with social structure. But stereotypes of coastal settlement forms obliquely pose a further question, which none of these approaches entirely answers: that of historical identity. Before we can proceed to more detailed analyses, we need to be satisfied that some sort of genuine maritime tradition existed in Lincolnshire's coastal environs, and that local men (or a substratum of them) were not only living alongside the sea but using its resources to obtain some or all of their livelihood, in a way which might be expected to set them apart from landmen. The objective of this first section is to define and explore in what form and to what extent such a "mentalité" can be discerned in surviving records

3. D.N. Robinson, The Book Of The Lincolnshire Seaside, 1981, pp.52-115.

of the period 1300-1600, and to consider the changes and the developments it underwent during the course of these three centuries.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2. MARITIME SUBCULTURE AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

What attributes of their values or world-view might have distinguished seafarers from others in this period? To landsmen, the most obvious would probably have been their dress, their vocabulary - both technical terms and slang - and their folklore and songs: the sea-shanty, for example, is recorded as far back as the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Such manifestations of separate identity were only the outward attributes of their unusual way of life. Ships' crews were altogether atypical groupings. The average-sized fourteenth century ship from one of the smaller Lincolnshire havens carried between ten and twelve hands: a transient association of people, all male, living and working together in a confined area for days or weeks on end. For most landsmen, in contrast,<sup>2</sup> the nuclear family was the normal unit of social relationships.

In urban environments, the separation of mariners was sometimes institutionalized by the existence of mariners' or seamen's guilds. These are known to have existed not just in the largest ports like Hull, Bristol and Lynn but in comparatively small ones, sometimes on navigable rivers. York had a guild with rival factions of fishermen and mariners, which was responsible for producing the Noah play at the annual Corpus Christi pageant.<sup>3</sup> Corpus Christi Guild in Lincoln was a

1. Of these, distinctive maritime costume was probably the latest to develop: until the sixteenth century, it differed very little from that of landsmen - P. Cunnington and C. Lucas, Occupational Costume in England, 1967, pp.54-55; P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1978, pp.43-46; M. Baker, Folklore of the Sea, 1979, pp.100-125, 165-185.
2. P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost, 1971 edn., pp.9-10.
3. D. Burwash, English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540, 1947, pp.66-67, 71; R.F. Wright, 'The High Seas and the Church in the Middle Ages: Part II', Mariner's Mirror, 53, 1967, pp.121-123.

seaman's fraternity, which kept a light burning before the image of "St. John de Dalderby, sometime Bishop of Lincoln" and acted as a mediator in quarrels. Holy Trinity mariners' guild at Grimsby (which survived the Reformation in the secularized form of the "Brothers of the Ship") wheeled a votive ship round the town on Plough Mondays and held its annual supper on the same day.<sup>4</sup> It was deeply concerned with the protection of local maritime interests, helping to raise money and provide labour for repairing the borough's haven, and doing its best to keep Grimsby mariners and Grimsby ships firmly together. No Grimsby seaman was to take a purchase aboard "foreign" vessels unless he was unable to find one with a local master, while all strangers who got a place on a Grimsby ship had to pay a fine of 1d. to the guild and were closely monitored: "everie one that taketh charge as M[aster] vnder god shall answer for all foren marrin[er]s that sayleth w[i]th him."<sup>5</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that mariners tended to gravitate towards towns, because in them not only the economic but the social conditions of life were more suited to their situation. Their group solidarity had much to do with their position outside the ideological structures of medieval society into which those who fought, those who prayed or those who worked the land could more easily be fitted. Mobility was a fundamental fact of their lives, and meant that the normal lord - man relationship was almost impossible to sustain. At a

4. H.F. Westlake, The Parish Gilds of Medieval England, 1919, p.174; Sir J.W.F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln, 1965, p.327; L.R. Simon, 'Grimsby Mariners' Guild in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', Lincolnshire Historian, II(2), 1955, pp.27-30. John de Dalderby was Bishop of Lincoln 1300-1320 and after his death a number of miracles were ascribed to him.

5. S.H.A.R.O., 261/1, fo. B6v, C15v.

later point in this thesis it will be important to address the problem of how mariners and fishermen fitted into the more conservative pattern of social and economic organization in the countryside. For the moment, however, our objective of discovering the social and cultural values of the mariners themselves is better served by approaching it from the perspective of central, rather than local, authority. Political, administrative and judicial power all rested on concepts of jurisdictional boundaries which could be clearly defined and within which men could be located relatively easily. All itinerants were destabilizing factors in this system - what Christopher Hill has called "potential dissolvents of society" - and were regarded with great distrust (as the Tudor attitude to vagrancy, for example, amply<sup>6</sup> illustrates).

Mariners moved not simply between different territorial jurisdictions but outside them, at sea, where even the theoretical foundations of legal authority were very uncertain and where there was no practical administrative machinery at all. Yet their crucial role in the economy and defence determined that the crown would seek to exert some positive control over their activities, which meant that the maximum effort was exerted in the ports and havens which marked the physical "frontier" of supervision. By tracing the development of the interactions between governmental authority and the rural creeks and havens of Lincolnshire, the present chapter will seek both to demonstrate the existence of a strong counteracting value system among the inhabitants of the area,

6. C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, Pelican edn., 1975, p.40.

and to suggest a significant change in its nature and orientation which occurred between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

### Medieval Authority and its Limitations

In discussing medieval authority, the surviving records allow us to consider four manifestations of these interactions between the centre and the local "maritime frontier": the establishment and efficacy of the customs system, (which was financially the most vital so far as the crown was concerned); the procedures in the event of wrecks off the Lincolnshire coast; the incidence of piracy at sea; and the response of mariners to military demands on their time and resources. The first can be regarded primarily as a fiscal problem, the second and third as matters of legal and jurisdictional boundaries, and the fourth as a problem of administrative control and reactions to it. In all of them, however, the central issue was whether control could be imposed from the centre when it relied upon certain cultural assumptions about local responses which were sometimes questionable.

#### (1) Customs and Smuggling

Just how inappropriate the traditional feudal and manorial devices were for regulating maritime affairs is reflected in the minimal level of financial control which they allowed the crown over the seagoing and commercial activities of ports and havens. Local harbours were regarded simply as parts of a lord's demesne. His rights to levy tolls and local customs seem to have derived from that fact and there is very

little evidence to suggest that such privileges ever originated with the monarch, although kings later presumed a right to charter specific sorts of toll (such as anchorage, keelage or murage) at them. In the twelfth century, while attempting to substantiate a claim to local customs at Sandwich, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, said that they had a charter of King Cnut granting them rights there; but both document and tradition may have been spurious, and certainly no similar examples have ever been discovered.<sup>7</sup>

The Lincolnshire Domesday reveals that, in the eleventh century, local lords in Lindsey were imposing tolls at ports without the consent of anybody:

"In Saltfleet and in Mare and in Swine a new toll has been established, and Ansgar of Skidbrooke has taken it, and Reynald and Humfrey and Geoffrey also; and the Wapentake of Louthesk says, and the whole South Riding (of Lindsey) also, that this toll did not exist T.R.E. .... In Saltfleet, Hugh the serjeant ('seruiens') takes the custom of ships which come there, whether it is admitted or not ('gratis at ingratis') which custom did not exist there T.R.E.; and these men began this as a new practice."<sup>8</sup>

It is true that the local men were disputing these new tolls, but their criterion for doing so was clearly that a custom of the manor had been broken, and not that local customs were a matter for royal grants or prerogatives. When Edward I tried, in 1281, to put forward such a claim, he was unable to establish it. According to the king, the bailiffs of Peter Galle, the lord, had made distraints at the "royal port" of Saltfleet during the year 1273 - 4 amounting to half a mark.

7. H.S. Cobb, 'Local Port Customs Accounts Prior To 1550', Journal of the Society of Archivists, 1958, pp.213-214 (and note 9).
8. C.W. Foster and T. Longley, eds., The Lincolnshire Domesday and the Lindsey Survey, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol, 19), 1924, pp.214-215; "Mare" and "Swine" were medieval harbours near Saltfleet and Grainthorpe.

The port, by his contention, ought to give him a revenue of 2s. a year; but the local jury were unimpressed: "They say that they have never heard and had no knowledge that the Lord King, or any of his ancestors, have had anything in the aforesaid port, or received any rent from thence at any time." An Inquisition Post-Mortem following the death of one of Galle's successors, Robert de Wylughby, in 1327, did accept that he held of the crown "the middle of the water ('filum aque') of Saltfleet in Skidbrooke", an apparent reference to the haven; and for this he paid the King 2s. a year, the sum claimed in 1281. If this identification is correct, the source of the crown's assertion lay in its right to a payment for the haven as parcel of the lord's manorial possessions held, (like his land) in chief. Clearly, the men of the area did not believe that this entitled the king to receive dues or tolls at the haven, or to interfere with the lord's rights to do so, so long as he paid the required sum regularly.<sup>9</sup> At many important ports the king eventually avoided this impediment by acquiring the appropriate manorial rights himself - at Hull, Bristol,<sup>10</sup> Yarmouth and London, for example. But they remained essentially local levies, indiscriminate in matters relating to the provenance or destination of the goods, and exacted across the board on everything entering or leaving one particular town, with a series of specific exemptions for burgesses, some

9. Placita de Quo Warranto, 1818, p.429; A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', L.A.A.S.R.P., 5, 1954, p.89; cf. Cal. Inq. P.M., VI, No. 60, p.46, P.R.O., C134/57/2 (7); L.A.O., HARM 3/2/5. "Aqua" is translated as "river" in the calendar above, but in some contexts could also carry the meaning "tidal creek" (as, for example, "Aqua de Swin", meaning Bicker Haven, infra, Chapter 3, footnote 42). The position of the haven and the size and tidal limits of the North Creek in relation to it have changed considerably since that time - v. Appendix V.

10. Cobb, 'Local Port Customs', loc. cit., pp.220-221.

religious orders, or merchants of certain other localities. They were administered (at least in origin) by the local<sup>11</sup> authorities and for their own specific benefit.

In contrast, the first national duties ordained at the Winchester Assize of Customs in 1203 were on specific types of trade but were to be applied across the whole country, with the profits going to the Exchequer. This effort to harvest directly the fruits of international commerce marked the first (short-lived) involvement of the crown in administrative supervision over all the ports of the country. In this process, it was forced to consider which of the thousands of potential landing-places were best suited to become centres for the collection of tolls on international trade. John's original system inevitably concentrated on the larger ports through which the bulk of this was conducted, and contented itself with removing the task of collection from the sheriffs (whose integrity was distrusted) and placing it in the hands of three theoretically trustworthy men at every designated<sup>12</sup> harbour: a knight, a cleric and the bailiff.

A new set of duties came into effect in 1275 when Edward I established the "Ancient Custom" on wool, later extended to cover all import or export transactions conducted by aliens (the "New Custom" of 1303). As before, the policy turned on the concentration of efforts at the major towns on the coast, where new arrangements were made for the gathering of the revenue and rudimentary constraints established against

11. N.S.B. Gras, The Early English Customs System, 1918, pp.25-26, 153.

12. R.C. Jarvis, 'The Appointment of Ports', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, XI, 1958-9, p.458; J. Bellamy, Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages, 1973, pp.13-14, 91.

wholesale evasion or corruption. The rest of the coastline was divided up into a series of areas appended to these centres. In Lincolnshire, for example, the Customs House was located at Boston. Here the crown appointed a Collector of Customs (or Customer) who received the payments and accounted for them to the Exchequer every Michaelmas. The Controller of Customs, who worked with him, was required to keep and submit a "counter-roll" ("Contrarotulus") to reduce the risk of fraudulent book-keeping, and the Searcher was empowered to board vessels and check their contents against what had been declared. All these were later placed under the scrutiny of a fourth official, the  
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Surveyor of Customs.

It was implicit in this system that the bulk of the overseas trade on which customs and subsidies were charged would automatically pass through these larger ports, whilst in the smaller creeks the majority of the trade would be coastal. John's original Assize held that it was illegal to export or import any goods through a haven which was not one of his "accredited" ports and this principle was maintained, although as time passed it often became the practice for the Customer to appoint a deputy to collect for him at any nearby harbour, where the volume of overseas trade was sufficient to warrant it. From this evolved the three-tier hierarchy into which all havens were being place by the sixteenth century: at "Head Ports" there was a Customs House and the officers of customs were resident; at "Member Ports" there was a bona fide deputy and overseas trade was permitted; at "Creeks" nobody was responsible for collection and it was ipso facto illegal to

13. R.C. Jarvis, 'Sources for the History of Ports', Journal of Transport History, III, 1957-8, pp.77-78; E.M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, England's Export Trade 1275-1547, 1963, pp.1-2; N.J. Williams, Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling, 1959, pp.1-4.

engage in such trade. At Boston, significantly, the intermediate category of 'Member' was never formally recognized<sup>14</sup> as applying to any of the nearby creeks.

A deliberate ambivalence lay behind this machinery. The customs were an increasingly important component of the royal finances in the later Middle Ages, not only quantitatively but by virtue of their reliability: they provided a steady flow of revenue, (extended by Edward III to include other goods, like wine, shipped by all merchants, English or foreign). It was virtually impossible to purchase<sup>15</sup> blanket exemptions. Accounts had to be carefully kept and properly audited, so that it became difficult for any individual official (although not a cartel of them) to act corruptly. They also had to be rendered regularly: Boston and Hull were among 17 major ports to which a stern rebuke was issued on this point in 1342. Customers were warned that "if they neglect to do this the king will punish them in an exemplary manner, as although the king previously ordered them to certify him upon the premises, they have hitherto neglected<sup>16</sup> to do so."

Yet these arrangements were still concerned almost exclusively with the collection of revenues at the designated primary ports. They were not designed to embrace the secondary

14. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, op. cit., p.24; Gras, op. cit., pp.94-99; Jarvis, 'Appointment of Ports', loc. cit., pp.458-459; idem 'Sources for the History of Ports', loc. cit., pp.76-78.

15. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, op. cit., pp.1-3. Some favoured aliens (like the Hansards) did pay lighter rates than usual, but they were not totally exempted.

16. Williams, op. cit., pp.1-5; J.A. Williamson, Maritime Enterprise 1485-1558, 1913, p.36; Cal. C1. Rolls., Edw. III(6). 1341-1343, p.488.

ones, where the whole system deliberately tended to turn a blind eye to the possibility that merchants would attempt to evade the customs. This myopia went against the universal human ability to find and exploit methods for avoiding taxation, and was purely logistic in origin: it was not cost-effective for the crown to spend money in policing (as opposed to collection) at all, and seldom worthwhile for a Customer to pay a deputy to act for him at a haven. A bureaucratic assumption was therefore made, that where no provision to collect the customs existed there were none to collect.

Thus parts of the Welsh coast, for example, were virtually outside the system altogether, because the potential loss of revenue from evasion was held to be less than the cost of providing for its collection. In Lincolnshire, a town like Boston was worth comparatively thorough regulation, because although its wool trade had declined in the fourteenth century, it remained an important provincial port until Henry VII's time. But the nature of Boston's control over the local creeks and havens in the later medieval period was very slight. Like most ports, even the precise extent of its jurisdiction over the surrounding coastline was not firmly fixed until the end of the fourteenth century. At some times, for example, Commissions for customs stated that the officers at Boston should collect the wool customs between Lynn and Grimsby, or "Maidenhouse" and Grimsby. But between 1354 and 1375 the limits were extended as far as Blakeney and included Lynn and a large part of the north-west coast of Norfolk. Grimsby was sometimes held to be within the jurisdiction of Boston, but finally settled into the control of Hull. Nor did the boundaries laid down for the Ancient Custom on wool necessarily

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coincide with those for the levy on cloth.

The frequency of these changes implies not only that the exact boundaries had yet to become fixed, but that they were of no particular consequence, either to those issuing the Commissions or to those receiving them. Taken with the fact that Boston had no official "members", this clearly suggests that no arrangements were being made to gather customs or subsidies at the creeks, even if foreign trade was being openly conducted at them. Wainfleet was described as "an ancient port of the sea for all the friends of our realm of England" in its charter of incorporation in 1457, which the king actually agreed to grant because the town was complaining that this commerce was in decay. Yet none of the contemporary Particulars of Customs Accounts for the Port of Boston mention any trade in and out of the town. Grimsby had no resident customs officers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries even though, as a result, sales of grain to the Scots frequently took place from it in defiance of political bans on such transactions. Saltfleet was trading fish and grain with Zealand throughout the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth, besides engaging in the same illicit Scottish commerce. It also acted as an outlet for English and Hanseatic merchants who wanted to evade the Staple system on their wool exports. All this the Customer at Boston knew, and on a few isolated occasions acknowledged in his Particular Accounts: he

17. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, op. cit., pp.178-188 (Appendix II); ibid, p.175; G.V. Scammell, 'English Merchant Shipping at the end of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, XIII, 1961, pp.329-331; G.A.J. Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, 1975, p.83. "Maidenhouse" is unidentified by Carus-Wilson and Coleman - "Magna Ouse"? or Mildenhall, on the Little Ouse: (v. W.G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 1975, p.195).

recorded one foreign transaction at Saltfleet in 1463, for instance, one in 1467, and one in 1487. They were the tip of an iceberg which was normally disregarded. Skegness was importing wood and other goods from Scandinavia in the fifteenth century, but there is no mention of this in the surviving particulars, either.<sup>18</sup> It is true that the headings of these accounts when rendered to the Exchequer occasionally suggest that this sort of traffic was not always distinguished from Boston itself; but the disparity is too great to reconcile<sup>19</sup> with any effective supervision at the creeks.

It has already been suggested that the principal reason why the crown acquiesced in this state of affairs was because it looked on the enforcement of the customs from a purely pragmatic point of view. Customs and subsidies levied on goods entering and leaving the country were designed to provide a reliable regular income. In this respect, like grants of the Lay Subsidy, there was no particular reason to interfere with the structure, so long as this single criterion was being met: the patent inadequacies of the customs system can be compared, with some justification, to the fossilization of the quotas fixed on the counties for the purposes of the fifteenth. Until the financial difficulties of the Tudor

18. G.H.J. Dutton, Ancient and Modern Skegness and District, 1922, pp.238-241; E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970, pp.26-27; A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.93-94; R. Sillem, ed., Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire 1360-1375 (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.30), 1937, p.35; W.D. Simpson, ed., The Building Accounts of Tattershall Castle 1432-1472 (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.55), 1960, p.70; P.R.O., Particulars Of Customs (Boston), E/122/10/4; E 122/10/8; E 122/11/2.
19. eg., P.R.O. E/122/11/2, "Contrarotulamentum Contr[a] Cust[umos] Et Subs[idios] In Porte Ville Sancto Botulpho Et In Singulis Port[is] Et Loc[is] Eidem Port[o] Adjacent": this, however, includes one of only four Saltfleet entries in the whole corpus of Boston E122's.

monarchs provided an impetus for reforming the administration, the notion of seeking to maximize the yield from customs and subsidies was utterly foreign.

It followed from this that whatever smuggling and illegal trade was taking place, the Exchequer relied on enough merchants working through the legal machinery at the designated head-ports to keep this steady flow of money from drying up. How great a proportion of the total overseas trade this involved has always been a subject of violent disagreement among historians, because it is utterly unquantifiable. Smugglers employed three principal tactics to evade the customs: attempting to pass goods through the recognized ports without declaring them; making false declarations about their ownership or destination; and abandoning the accredited ports altogether in favour of surreptitious landing and collection of goods at remote creeks and inlets. Not surprisingly, none of these activities have left records which can be relied upon to determine their extent. The known level of smuggling is a measurement of the efficacy of the Searchers and Surveyors and cannot be used to answer questions about the ratio of legal to  
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illegal transactions.

Some like Dr. P.H. Ramsey, argue that smuggling has been the subject of much needless exaggeration, and that the rewards for merchants cannot have been sufficient to justify its risks from a commercial point of view: detection could lead to the confiscation of an entire cargo. Professor Carus-Wilson

20. A.R. Bridbury, England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages, 1955, pp.156-157; A.R. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Trade, Politics and Society', (unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis), 1975, pp.94-97.

and Miss Coleman agree that it was unprofitable for regular traders to try to evade the payment of duties. The accounts of merchant families like the Celys show that, whilst they were not above a little sharp practice, in so far as can be discovered they appear to have kept to the legitimate channels for their dealing. The number of recorded cases of smuggling in the Exchequer Courts amount to 0.15% of the total national trade, which these last two historians regard as an insignificant proportion (although the compatibility of the two sources being compared can be questioned). Finally, it is suggested that medieval smugglers were likely to be concerned mainly with goods of small bulk and high value, because these could be smuggled more easily than the commodities like grain, wool and wine, which accounted for the greater part of the national trade.<sup>21</sup>

In reality, however, as Bridbury has pointed out, it was not bulkiness or value in proportion to quantity which determined what was most lucratively smuggled, but the relative levels at which duties were fixed. On wool, for example, the customs were high - up to one third of the total value - and the monopoly of the trade by the Merchants of the Staple made it especially tempting as an item for clandestine export. As for the number of cases brought before the Exchequer Courts, even if this could be measured (as opposed to guessed) as a proportion of the total, it would be an acceptable guide only if the detection arrangements were both thorough and uniform.

21. P.H. Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade in the Reign of Henry VII: The Evidence of Customs Accounts', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, VI, 1954, pp.176-177; Carus-Wilson and Coleman, op. cit., pp.21-31; S.H. Rigby, 'Boston And Grimsby in the Middle Ages' (unpublished London University Ph.D thesis), 1983, p.165.

In view of the weakness of control over large parts of the coastline this cannot be a tenable hypothesis. Parliament clearly did not think so either: one fifteenth century statute claimed that the king was being "daily defrauded ..... as well for lack of good search in the Ports and Creeks within the Realm of England, as by other crafty Imaginations of divers Persons" (1409-1410).<sup>22</sup>

What is important from our point of view, is that the smuggling of goods can never be explained purely in terms of relative profit and potential loss, because the smugglers themselves did not necessarily think that way. "We can understand," wrote Dr. N.J. Williams "the persistent attempts of merchants attempting to evade the higher duties on English wool shipped abroad or foreign wines coming into the country, but it is harder to grasp why some of them went to great lengths to ship, by stealth, a whole variety of goods that were liable to very modest dues of 3d. in the £ ..... . And so we find a merchant of Hull in 1395 going to great trouble to smuggle a small barrel of honey and a crate of 200 oranges on which the poundage due was less than 2½p".<sup>23</sup> The rationale was more complicated than just the desire to make a profit.

The evidence relating to the activities of smugglers in Lincolnshire in the medieval period is far from negligible; nor is it any coincidence that most of it relates to those same creeks and havens over which the customs officials at Hull and

22. Bridbury, op. cit., p.157; Ramsey, 'Overseas Trade', loc. cit., pp.173-174. There is a dearth of detection cases for Lincolnshire in the Exchequer K.R. Memoranda Rolls, which is probably attributable to slack enforcement provisions: v. W.I. Haward, 'The Trade of Boston in the Fifteenth Century', A.A.A.S.R.P., 41, 1932-3, p.176: cf. Rigby, op. cit., pp.166-168.

23. Williams, op. cit., pp.8-9.

Boston maintained so little supervision. From the end of the thirteenth century, we hear of attempts to smuggle out wool from Bawtry, Torksey and small havens on the Humber, a process in which some of the religious houses of the county seem to have had a hand. Abbeys like Louth Park, Kirkstead and Revesby produced large amounts of wool, and according to the Hundred Rolls they were engaged in deals with foreign merchants over such goods illegally outside the staple town of Lincoln.<sup>24</sup>

William de Len of Louth and a number of confederates were accused of having shipped wool to Flanders, in vessels belonging to William, from Saltfleet and Swine, both of which were conveniently situated for the task. This particular operation had been especially audacious, involving 200 sacks of wool worth 100s. a sack. What had been required for its completion was simply a willingness to bribe a number of people into looking the other way: the sheriff, two under-sheriffs and the local lord at Swine haven, Alan de Conisholm, among them.<sup>25</sup>

By the same means, currency and specie were conveyed into and out of the country through these places. Foreign denominations of all types were tendered and accepted in most ports, and importing debased coins from abroad was a comparatively easy matter. Preventing the export of sterling was therefore of some concern to the crown. In 1347, Thomas Hervy and Robert Spenser of Saltfleet haven were commissioned to make a special search there for the export and import of money, "the king having ordered the sheriff of Lincoln to be

24. M.W. Barley, 'Lincolnshire Rivers in the Middle Ages', L.A.A.S.R.P., I, 1936, p.20; E. Venables, ed. Chronicon Abbatie De Parco Lude, 1891, pp.47-48.

25. Rotuli Hundredorum, 1812, I, p.338; Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.92-93.

intendant". Similar orders were issued in 1333 and 1342, and in 1376 Commissions were issued to men of Saltfleet, Barton-on-Humber, Boston and Wrangle to prevent the export of silver,<sup>26</sup> jewels or letters of exchange without a royal licence.

Corn and grain, both important Lincolnshire products, could be lucratively smuggled during those extended periods in the fourteenth century when Scotland was out of bounds to legitimate English merchants, and the king was particularly sensitive to this. In 1357 one merchant of Lincoln was especially commissioned to inspect, from to time, all ships and barges laden with wool and other merchandise in the creeks and havens of Lincolnshire and to arrest any which he found that were not properly customed. He was specifically reminded about the king's prohibitions on the export of any corn or victuals to Scotland.<sup>27</sup> Orders went out periodically in royal Letters Close on this subject, like the one of March 1386 addressed to the Mayor and bailiffs at Hull, Grimsby, Barton and Saltfleethaven "as the king has learned that in times past divers lieges have in contempt of him taken thither divers sorts of corn and victuals contrary to the proclamations". The surviving Peace Rolls for Lincolnshire in the late fourteenth century contain several serious cases of this sort. John Trype of Newcastle and John Whiteheued forestalled 100 quarters of wheat worth 10s. a quarter and 100 quarters of beans worth 6s. 8d. a quarter at Saltfleetby and Somercotes, and took it to Saltfleet Haven with the intention of sending it to Scotland.<sup>28</sup>

26. Williams, *op. cit.*, p.15; Cal. Fine Rolls, Edw. III, 1347-1356, pp.17-18; Cal. Pat Rolls, Edw. III, 1374-1377, pp.312-313.

27. Hill, Medieval Lincoln, p.249.

28. Sillem, ed., *op. cit.*, p.99; Cal. Cl. Rolls, Rich. II(3), 1385-1389, p.136.

Robert Mauncelot was tried in the Court of King's Bench for having, on the Thursday after the Purification of the Virgin, 1375, transported from Saltfleet and Wainfleet 100 quarters of wheat (on this occasion priced at 8s. a quarter) and taken it to the continent and to Scotland. The gravity of the offence lay not so much in it being an act of smuggling but in constituting treachery, because the corn had been shipped "without the licence of the Lord King and to the sustenance and aid of the enemies of the Lord King". How diligent the search for less politically important sorts of smuggling usually was is another matter.<sup>29</sup>

Mauncelot's case is also interesting because it tends to confirm the view propounded by Williams and others that activities of this sort were the work of ordinary merchants and mariners, who on the face of it had much to lose by being detected. Mauncelot for example, whilst hardly of the standing of a Staple merchant, was a trader and ship-owner of some substance. According to his trial, the vessel he used was worth £20 and was owned solely by him. He appears in the local customs account of Great Yarmouth in 1363-4 paying harbour dues and measurage on salt. A Ralph Mauncelot of Wainfleet (possibly his father) was a frequent visitor to Yarmouth during the herring seasons of the 1340s, again paying duties on salt there.<sup>30</sup> He is precisely the sort of man who might be expected, in the Carus-Wilson/Coleman view of matters, not to be found involved in contraband activities of any sort, especially not those carrying such serious penalties.

29. Sillem, ed., op. cit., pp.138-139.

30. Norfolk Record Office, Y/C24/1, m.2d; Y/C24/2, m.3; Y/C4/80, m.12.

That this was not the case serves to emphasize an important consideration which applied to the activities of medieval seamen, and those (merchants and others) who associated with them. Men like Mauncelot were professional mariners, owning or part-owning their vessels and usually acting entirely on behalf of themselves and in their own best interests. Regard for what was legal or illegal seems to have entered very little into their calculations. Robert Mauncelot's experiences at the Court of King's Bench, and his imprisonment and fine as a result, did not prevent him from falling seriously foul of the law again: in 1389 he was pardoned for an outlawry, which had resulted from his failure to answer charges laid against him by one William de Snaynton<sup>31</sup> of Kingston-on-Hull, over a bad debt of £10.

Independent mariner-merchants of this sort were the commercial backbone of small maritime towns and villages in the Middle Ages. Numerically, they far outweighed the greater men who comprised the Staple and Merchant Adventurer companies, whose activities were basically ashore. As entrepreneurs, however, they lacked their stake in the mercantile and legal status quo: as seamen, they had a general disregard for the niceties of land-based law, which pervaded most aspects of their conduct, and was fostered by the realities of their occupation. Whatever the authorities might have supposed to be their rights and jurisdictions, the general understanding of seamen seems to have been that they were under no obligation to take notice of them, at least so long as those who professed sovereignty were unable to enforce it. Mauncelot's outlawry is

31. Cal. Pat Rolls, Rich. II, 1385-1389, p.490.

a case in point: he had simply failed to appear to answer the charge, and seamen were certainly among the more persistent fugitives in such circumstances. At sea, the crown had no machinery comparable to royal courts or Commissions of Assize and Oyer and Terminer, by which to enforce its suzerainty or apply its laws and justice. In the absence of such a superintending authority, mariners were forced to rely on a code of conduct which placed self-reliance and self-interest to the fore.

If ports and havens were, as has been argued, the main interface between two different views of life, with divergent conceptions of social and legal relationships, then the smuggling of apparently inconsequential items becomes more easily comprehensible. What is interesting is the amount of complicity often alleged on the part of local men who were not in themselves mariners, but in whom aspects of this mentality had become transposed by long (and often economically profitable) association. In these areas, as Williams comments, "in the eyes of any representative gathering of twelve good and lawful men, smuggling was not an offence".<sup>32</sup>

## (2) Wrecks

We can trace a further conflict between these two disparate value systems when vessels were wrecked or washed ashore by storms along the physical and psychological "frontier" of the coast. The king had a very precise view of what constituted a "wreck": in his law, "wreck" occurred if no living creature had survived the loss of the ship. If so, the

32. Williams, op. cit., pp.14-15.

goods salvaged belonged either to the local lord, if (like Alan de Conisholm at Swine in 1279) he claimed "rights of wreck", or in default of this, to the crown. But if any of the crew (or even the ship's cat) had survived, the vessel was no wreck and the merchant who owned the goods could reclaim them, if he could prove ownership within a year of the event taking

<sup>33</sup>  
place. The residents of coastal villages, however, - often themselves mariners or imbued with that particular view of the world - seem to have regarded anything washed up along the shore as there for the taking, without regard to the wishes of higher authority.

In Lincolnshire, wrecks were a common event, particularly on the notorious coastline between Wainfleet and the Humber where, as Camden pointed out, there were very few places in which a ship could shelter in the teeth of a sudden storm. Even ships in the mouth of the Humber or anchored off Grimsby could be torn from their moorings by an exceptional

<sup>34</sup>  
gale. Particularly stormy conditions in the fourteenth century increased the incidence of wrecks, and for any merchant or owner attempting to recover their goods after such an event, the obstacles were legion. Just establishing the facts was no easy matter. A commission issued in August 1316 to Nicholas de Bolyngbrok, Gilbert de Toutheby and Robert de Malberthorpe ordered them to inquire into the fate of a ship laden with wood at Doncaster by John de Sandale

33. L.F. Saltzman, English Trade in the Middle Ages, 1931, pp.253-254; Wright, 'High Seas And Church', loc. cit., pp.115-116.

34. Hodgett, op. cit., p.82; T.S. Willan, The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750, 1938, p.23; cf. D. Defoe, A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, Penguin edn., 1971, p.413.

"to take to the town of Boston to build certain houses in his dwelling place there, which ship, after the mariners had, through assaults committed on the sea, left her, was cast away and wrecked, and a great part of the timber having been cast ashore between Saltfleetby and Boston was carried away by divers men of those ports."

The commissioners were given the unenviable task of establishing, if they could, who had taken the wood and what had become of it. Another commission to William de Stayne, Robert Foeler and others held its enquiries in Skidbrooke on the Friday after Ascension, 1346, demanding to know who was in possession of certain goods washed ashore between Saltfleet and Wainfleet. The jury told them; but they conveniently submitted that they did not know to whom the goods belonged, thereby sidestepping the issue of whether those who had acquired them should have turned over possession to anybody else.<sup>35</sup>

Another case at Saltfleet in 1353 can be followed in some detail from the surviving records. Early in that year a ship called "la Marie" of Lescluses, William Brounbek, master, was chartered by a group of 19 Berwick-on-Tweed merchants to transport victuals and other goods, purchased in Flanders, back to Berwick "for the munition and safe-keeping of their town and the castle thereof". On the voyage the ship was driven ashore in a storm at Saltfleethaven, and broke up. The master and crew all escaped alive, but still "some evildoers carried away the said victuals and merchandise contrary to the peace". Supplies for Berwick had the highest priority with the king, and accordingly, in March, a commission of Oyer and Terminer was appointed to deal with the problem. Originally, it consisted of John de Wilughby, William de Skippewith, Philip de

35. Cal. Pat Rolls, Edw. II, 1313-1317, p.585; Cal. Inq. Misc., II, 1307-1349, p.498 (No. 1985).

Nevill and Ralph de Haulay, but it subsequently changed its composition for reasons which are unclear. William de Skippewith was removed on 29th March and replaced by William de Norton, but on 28th April the decision was reversed and de Skippewith was re-appointed. Eleven other people were "associated" with the commission, in a process which caused a long delay. Early in May they were ordered to proceed, and reminded that "if it be found by inquisition that any one of the ship came to land alive, and the goods belong to the said merchants and not to any other as wreck, to deliver the same to them".<sup>36</sup>

On the 4th and 11th May an inquiry finally took place at Saltfleethaven in the presence of Sayer de Rocheford (the sheriff of Lincoln), John de Grimbsy escheator in Holderness and John de Haddon, sergeant at arms. By this time the ship had been lost at least three months ago and possibly more, and no trace was forthcoming of the victuals which made up a significant proportion of the cargo. But most of the equipment of the ship had been picked up by the locals, who obviously found good use for this windfall of valuable sea-gear. William, son of Robert of Northcotes had appropriated one of the ship's boats, William Huk or Uk of Somercotes and William Galey of Grainthorpe two more, and Hugh Pogg and Thomas Brienete a fourth one. A number of anchors, sails, masts, a topcastle, lines and cables were also among the items listed. There can be little doubt that most of these had been taken to be put to use: William Galey, for example, was a mariner and ship's master, who had failed to turn up at one of the king's arrests of shipping in 1343. Those who found no employment for

36. Cal. Pat Rolls, Edw. III, 1350-1354, p.454.

what they had obtained had already disposed of it: William Ton of Grimsby sold off the "great boat" he had found to Robert Thorald of Gainsborough, and most of the perishables had<sup>37</sup> probably gone the same way.

It had become a difficult task to repossess any of these goods by now. What had not disappeared was often regarded by its discoverers as their own property. A month after the inquiry at Saltfleet, on 11th June, Edward III had to write again to the commissioners that

"although it is found by divers inquisitions taken by the justices that all the goods lately in the said ship and cast on shore, which are in the hands of the said tenants (of Queen Philippa) and others, ought to belong to the merchants because the men of the ship escaped alive to land, yet the justices have hitherto delayed to deliver these goods to the merchants, who have besought the king to provide a remedy".<sup>38</sup>

That the merchants were now placing their faith in a personal intervention by the king is significant. So different were the ideas of social and legal responsibility in the "mentalité" of rural mariners that a senior organ of royal justice, a commission of Oyer and Terminer, had apparently been thwarted by them.

### (3) Piracy

The opposition of territorial law and maritime life naturally intensified when it came to royal attempts to intervene beyond "the frontier", at sea. The formulation of the king's legal right to do so was the product of prolonged Anglo-French diplomatic manoeuvring at the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the course of which a number of

37. Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. III (7), 1343-1346, p.133; Cal. Inq. Misc., III, 1348-1377, pp.52-53 (No. 146).

38. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, op. cit., pp.21-31.

established practices were collated and held to be within his rights: he could grant safe-conducts at sea, control movements in and out of ports and adjudge cases of piracy brought before him.<sup>39</sup> By the middle of the century an Admiralty Court, sitting under a Vice-Admiral, was technically responsible for supervising these powers and for applying the "Laws of Oléron", a compilation of maritime practices produced in France in about 1200, and by this time in general use throughout northern Europe.<sup>40</sup>

How far did these provisions bring the mariner at sea "under the rule of law"? Both the rights of the crown and the precepts of the Laws of Oléron were codified by territorial authorities out of a body of existing custom. The latter dealt mainly with the contractual obligations between masters, crews and merchants and may have enjoyed widespread acceptance by seamen. Certainly, they were adopted specifically because the land-based common law could not provide for conditions at sea.<sup>41</sup> The crown and the Admiralty Court, which continued to operate in tandem, were still mainly concerned with wider issues of piracy and disorder. They, too, accepted and sustained practices which would have been unacceptable (and indeed unnecessary) in other areas of the law. Runyan sees Admiralty Courts as an initiative to take the law of the land to the sea, but the Lincolnshire evidence suggests a contrary explanation: they were an attempt to spread a veneer of

39. F.W. Cheyette, 'The Sovereign and the Pirates 1332', Speculum, XLV, 1970, pp.53-56.

40. T.J. Runyan, 'The Rolls of Oléron and the Admiralty Court in Fourteenth Century England', American Journal of Legal History, 19, 1975, pp.103-105; Wright, 'High Seas and Church', loc. cit., pp.129, 132-133.

41. Ibid., p.96.

administrative and political legitimacy across conventions of maritime behaviour, over which sustained land-based control was impossible.<sup>42</sup> To exert real authority, the king and his agents had to identify the offenders and find means of bringing them to account, but in cases of piracy both prerequisites were often unattainable.

As A.T. Hall has pointed out, the very word "pirate" carries misleading overtones, not merely because it suggests a moral stigma which (at least in so far as mariners were concerned) can be misunderstood, but because it tends to suggest that piratical acts were in some way exclusive to small groups of renegades or "pests".<sup>43</sup> In reality, it was not easy to define at all. The men of Grimsby, for example, claimed in 1290 that the people of the town of Ravenserodd, in the mouth of the Humber, were communal pirates:

"[They] have arrested for a long time with a strong hand in the sea the ships with the goods contained in them, which in this way have been accustomed so to harbour in our port aforesaid, and with threatening and force have compelled, and from day to day do compel them to turn aside to the aforesaid new town and remain there".

But the commission which looked into the complaint told a different story. The men of Ravenserodd, they said, had preyed on the fact that the main cargo involved - fish - was perishable, and had haggled with the masters of vessels until they had no choice but to sell to the burgesses of the town. "Piratical behaviour" was all too often in the eye of the

42. Runyan, 'Rolls of Oléron', loc. cit., pp.110-111; cf. Wright, 'High Seas and Church', loc. cit., p.129.

43. A.T. Hall, 'The Employment of Naval Forces in the Reign of Edward III' (unpublished Leeds University M.A. thesis), 1955, p.39; cf. W.G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 1976, p.187.

beholder, and the men of Grimsby sinned as often as they were  
44  
sinned against.

Indeed, the failure of the land-based court structure as an effective means of control is nowhere better illustrated than in the immunity which Grimsby mariners enjoyed from the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Court, by virtue of their borough charter. So when, for instance, in 1387 three Grimsby men boarded a vessel of Wilgrip at Skegness and made off with its contents at night, there was little that the Admiralty Court could do about it. Playing the two jurisdictions off against one another could similarly thwart the borough court when it attempted to regulate their activities. John Selby of Grimsby alleged that Walter Skott of Grimsby had attacked his vessel with arrows off Saltfleethaven in 1365, but Skott simply countered that he was outside the town's jurisdiction when the incident took place, and the borough court could not judge  
45  
it.

Pirates also lurked in many of the smaller townships of the north and south Humber shores: at Patrington, Paull, Outhorne and at the three "Clee thorpes" of Oole, Itterby and Thrunscoe. Here, according to tradition, the villagers had their own method of lighting fires on the cliff top to lure ships aground so that they could plunder their contents. In the mouth of the Humber such men could operate freely against ships entering the estuary, and merge quickly into the background somewhere along the shore, to dispose of the spoils

44. J.R. Boyle, The Lost Towns of the Humber, 1889, pp.13-16.

45. E.G. Kimball, ed., Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire 1381-1396 (Vol. II., Lindsey), (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 56), 1962, p.70; Gillett, op. cit., p.45 (cf. p.102, for sixteenth century examples).

and become legitimate mariners again. One ship, loaded with the goods of Boston merchants, was seized off the mouth of the Witham in 1451-1452 and taken to Barton-on-Humber, where the prize was shared out by the local bailiff. Another vessel, entering the Humber in 1528, was attacked by French pirates, who, having transported it to Whitby, were alleged to have been aided in the disposal of its contents by the Abbot of Whitby.<sup>46</sup> Such connivances reinforce the view that piracy was an accepted fact of maritime life.

For the king, the involvement of aliens in such incidents (whether as aggressors or victims) was the most serious aspect of medieval piracy, for economic and political reasons. Simon Lambricht, an English merchant and shipowner, must have been virtually ruined when a number of his vessels were attacked by pirates of "Estland and Friseland" in the 1330s: the damage was estimated at £3,000 in all. A ship of London, called "La Margarete", laden with the goods of Stephen Aleyn, merchant of the city, came under attack from Zealand pirates on the sea-coast "near Ravenserodd opposite the town of Saltfletby", apparently in 1321, while transporting victuals for the garrison at Berwick-on-Tweed. His losses were said to total £200.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, on 2nd June, 1322, a ship of Godwin de Cosfeld of "Eastland" was lying at anchor off Skegness with a cargo of boards and dried fish aboard, while the crew went ashore in the town to look for a steersman ("de les alower un

46. Boyle, op. cit., p.40; C.E. Watson, A History of Clee and the Thorpes of Clee, 1901, pp.42-43; Saul, op. cit., p.141; Gillett, op. cit., pp.48-50; Haward, 'Trade of Boston', loc. cit., p.177; Barley, 'Lincolnshire Rivers' loc. cit., pp.12-13.

47. Cal. Inq. Misc., III, 1368-1377, p.481 (No. 1916); Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. III, 1327-1330, pp.392-393; Edw. II (3), 1318-1323, p.398.

loderesman") to hire. In the meantime Robert Leveys, Thomas Springet, William Punch and Gervase Alard, all described as mariners of the port, saw an opportunity to board the ship, and make off with her to Blakeney, where "they have done as they wished with her". The same group of seamen had been accused of piracy earlier in that year off Harwich, and Gervase Alard is recorded in yet another incident at Sandwich in the following year.

When this case was brought before the King's Council the king ordered "those named as trespassers in these petitions, by severe letters, to make without delay due restitution of the goods taken, or come before the king at a certain day to answer thereupon and stand trial", adding that "his own [men] should not be spared in this [matter] any more than others. For it seems to him that his own [men] ought to keep the peace better than others". This response is interesting because it displays the ambiguity of the king's position in relation to events which took place at sea. There was no guarantee that the men responsible for the seizure of this ship could be run to ground - indeed Alard's involvement at Sandwich the next year suggests that they were not. Conciliar jurisdiction in these circumstances was even more limited than that available through the common law courts: if the malefactors failed to appear or failed to recompense the victim, they could not even be outlawed. The demand that the merchant should be re-imbursed was therefore likely to go  
48  
unheeded.

48. I.S. Leadam and J.F. Baldwin, eds., Select Cases before the King's Council 1243-1482 (Selden Society, Vol. XXXV), 1918, pp.32-33; J. Bellamy, Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages, 1973, pp.100-103.

On the other hand, as the incident of "La Margarete" in the previous year shows, alien mariners often featured as troublemakers rather than innocent victims; and what the king regarded as an unacceptable instance of piracy at Skegness he could easily sanction as a form of retributive action if one of his own merchants were involved as the aggrieved party. When a merchant like Stephen Aleyn complained to him that alien miscreants had siezed his goods or vessel, the usual course was for a representation to be made to the sovereign under whose authority they were believed to be acting. This, not unnaturally, was usually ignored: the most common offenders - French and Dutch - lived in a state of intermittent hostility, commercially and politically, with England throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since this was so, the crown fell back on the practices of "reprisals" (or "prizes") and "letters of marque", which were the only concrete sanctions at its disposal. The former were orders to sheriffs in particular counties to arrest ships and goods belonging to merchants of the nationality supposed to have been the offenders, and the latter authorized the aggrieved party to seek his own satisfaction in this manner at sea.<sup>49</sup> If they masqueraded as a form of distraint, they were different because the original offender was acknowledged to be undetectable. Instead, under the notion of "joint responsibility" common in medieval law, his countrymen were obliged to provide the distress for him without any hope of restitution.

49. Hall, op. cit., pp.35-36; R.C. Jarvis, 'Sources for the History of Ships and Shipping', Journal of Transport History, III, 1957-8, p.219. Thus, it naturally behoved a man who had been assaulted or robbed on the sea to express the view that aliens (particularly those currently in royal disfavour), were responsible, rather than lay the blame on English pirates.

Reprisals had an obvious advantage from the point of view of the king, because they could make use of the established machinery of royal justice and administration ashore. In the case of Stephen Aleyn, for example, the sheriffs of Norfolk and Suffolk were told to arrest goods and men of the power of William, Count of Hainault, Holland and Zealand, to the value of £100, in part satisfaction of the claim. The sheriffs of London were under similar instructions<sup>50</sup> for the second £100. These seizures took place at the ports and in the towns, on the crown's side of the "maritime frontier" where it could be confident that the instructions would be carried out. At sea, on the other side of that frontier, letters of marque were used as licences by mariners and merchants to wage their own private wars on their<sup>51</sup> enemies. The universal sign of hostile intentions at such times was the flying of red banners or streamers, which all sailors recognized as meaning "death without quarter and war to the knife", - regardless of whether either master had letters<sup>52</sup> of marque in his possession.

#### (4) Warfare

In some respects, therefore, an open war between England and Scotland or France simply meant the continuation of the customary behaviour of mariners by other means. However, it was of considerably greater importance to the king that his wishes with regard to maritime affairs were truly (and not

50. L.F. Saltzman, English Trade in the Middle Ages, 1931, p.260; Bellamy, op. cit., pp.89-90; Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. II (3), 1318-1323, p.398.

51. Cheyette, 'Sovereign and the Pirates', loc. cit., pp.54-58.

52. Ibid., p.57.

merely notionally) obeyed at such times. It is no coincidence that most of the examples of crown and mariners coming into conflict, which have been cited above, are drawn from the reigns of the first three Edwards. For all of them, and for Edward III in particular, there were pressing political and military reasons to apply control over mariners, their vessels and their commerce with other countries. The volume of contemporary evidence in the Public Record Office about merchant vessels, their number, size, crew compositions and movements is unmatched until Elizabethan times, and what it displays is an increasing desire on the part of the crown to know what ships and mariners were available and where, so that fleets for the transportation and supply of expeditions to France could be put together when required. The medieval ship was not a specialized item and most vessels were versatile enough to be employed in a number of different capacities, among them a transport for troops or an auxiliary for the supply of expeditionary armies. Their small size and narrow draught was what enabled them to use such comparatively minor inlets as ports and havens and to get so far inland up what are now unnegotiable rivers and tributaries. This meant that in the absence of anything approaching a royal navy, a campaign in France or Scotland could be equally well served by issuing a general warrant for the arrest of shipping, which could be<sup>53</sup> impressed, used so long as required, and then released.

53. T.J. Runyan, 'Ships and Mariners in Later Medieval England', Journal of British Studies, 1977, pp.2-4; J.W. Sherborne, 'The Hundred Years' War, The English Navy, Shipping and Manpower 1369-1389', Past and Present, XXXVII, 1967, pp.166-170; H.J. Hewitt, The Organization of War under Edward III 1338-62, 1966, pp.75-78; Hall, op. cit., p.39.

The success of these kings in marshalling the maritime resources of the country has to be measured against the background of indifference to the authority of royal officials discussed above. Over the period between 1334 and the end of Edward III's reign an approach was developed, which appears to have become remarkably proficient at enabling the crown to obtain the tonnage it required for these expeditions. No vessel owner could hope to keep his ship hidden from view. Two "Admirals" were appointed to co-ordinate the task, one working on the sea-coast north of the Thames estuary, and one in the area to its south and west. Their serjeants-at-arms were sent out to all the ports and havens with instructions to arrest ships, (sometimes over a specific tonnage) and impress mariners and supplies for them. These were ordered to report on a particular date to the ports of departure for France, to sail as one or two large fleets. Orwell and Sandwich were the two places most commonly used for vessels impressed in the north. A total of 250 vessels were employed taking soldiers to Calais in June and September of 1369, of which more than 120 were of 50 tons or less. Theoretically, severe penalties of fines and forfeiture could be exacted from seamen and ships which disobeyed the summons.

An invaluable body of knowledge and experience came to be developed in this way: at its most basic level, an understanding of precisely where the creeks and havens were and what sorts of vessels the crown's agents could expect to find in them. In August 1326, for example, orders went out to the

54. Runyan, 'Ships and Mariners', loc. cit., pp.3-7; Hewitt, op. cit., pp.83-84, 89; Hall, op. cit., pp.176-180 (Appendix I); Sherborne, 'The Hundred Years' War', loc. cit., p.170.

bailiffs at 91 port-towns in the realm. 60 in the west and 31  
 in the north, ordering that all vessels above 50 tons in these  
 places were to be surveyed and sent to join the admirals. All  
 vessels under this size were to be stayed in port. Surveys  
 took place in Lincolnshire at Spalding, Boston, Wainfleet,  
 Saltfleet and Grimsby. The next month a second arrest, this  
 time covering vessels above 30 tons, took place. All the ships  
 in the Admiralty of the North were to report to Orwell on St.  
 Matthew's day next, together with arms, victuals for a month  
 and a double-sized crew, "ready to set out in the king's  
 55  
 service".

These same lists of ports and havens could now be  
 used to issue the barrage of instructions about maritime  
 affairs, which the government began to insist upon: all corn  
 was to be diverted to supply the king's forces in the north  
 (1322); no annoyance or injury was to be done against the men  
 of Flanders, so long as a state of truce existed with them  
 (1325); those attempting to smuggle silver out of the country,  
 (1333 and 1365), or "any letters or other sealed deeds  
 prejudicial to the king and his royal dignity" into it (1338,  
 1342 and 1365) were to be arrested; corn was not to be exported  
 because of famine (1350-1351); no men-at-arms, archers or  
 weapons were to go abroad (1362). The total number of places  
 to which such orders were issued varied according to the nature  
 of the instruction, but when the crown wished to do so it could  
 summon up a list of about 160 places to which these missives  
 might be sent, 19 or 20 of them in Lincolnshire alone. The

55. Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. II, 1324-1327, pp.310-311;  
Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. II, 1324-1327, pp.643-644.

impact of this attempt to strengthen the administrative grip of  
king and Council scarcely needs labouring.<sup>56</sup>

Yet great though these inroads were, they could do no more than apply the maximum available pressures on the interface between maritime life and central control, at the ports and havens: at these, orders were normally sent to mayors and bailiffs, upon whom the king had to rely for seeing that they were carried out. The cost of going on royal service made it a great temptation for mariners to evade it if they could: departures of expeditions were often subject to long delays because of the weather, or (ironically) because shipowners were slow to respond to the summons. The loss of trade and the risk of damage (for which little or no compensation might be forthcoming) must have been considerable. In 1336-1337 surveys had to be conducted at three smaller Norfolk ports, apparently to check up on the vessels liable to serve. A surviving document records a total of over 300 occasions in the Admiralty of the North that year (often in Lincolnshire ports) when an arrested ship had either refused or ignored the summons to go on the king's service. At Boston 17 vessels had defied him in this way, at Barton-on-Humber 17, at Northcotes and Saltfleet 17 and at Wainfleet 2. On the Yorkshire Ouse a further 20 ships which had been called up had taken no notice of their instructions, many belonging to Lincolnshire and Humber ports like Barton, Grimsby, Ravenserodd and Swinefleet.<sup>57</sup> In 1342-

56. Cal. Fine. Rolls, Edw. III, 1327-1337, pp.347-348; Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. II (3), 1318-1323, p.670; ibid., Edw. II (4), 1323-1327, pp.366-367, 376-377; ibid., Edw. III, 1337-1339, p.620; ibid., Edw. III (6), 1341-1343, pp.485-488; ibid., Edw. III (9), 1349-1354, pp.206-207, 402-403; ibid., Edw. III, 1360-1364, pp.405-406; ibid., Edw. III (12), 1364-1368, pp.136-137.

57. M.M. Postan, 'The Costs of the Hundred Years' War', Past and Present, 27, 1964, pp.35-53; Hewitt, op. cit., p.77; Runyan, 'Ships And Mariners', loc. cit., p.11 sqq.

1343, another long list of recalcitrant ships has survived. This time 224 alleged desertions are included in it, and the king ordered action to be taken against 57 others which had not bothered to turn up at all. The majority "withdrew from the ports of Brest and Vanes contrary to his order, leaving him and his army in great peril". Among these were "La Goudale" of Grainthorpe (William Galay, master), "La George" of Grainthorpe (Walter Perman, master) and two ships of Boston. Among those which failed to respond to their original arrest were seven more of Boston, three of Grimsby, one of Saltfleet, one of Barton and another of Grainthorpe. A furious king commanded all of them to be arrested, but most were released the following year. Some of the owners may have had to pay fines, but how many is unclear. The dependence of Edward III on the merchant fleet meant that he could not afford to be unduly severe with them, and no such radical penalties were imposed for desertion in later years.<sup>58</sup>

These episodes show something of the level of competence in the administration (which was able to draw up precise lists of this kind); but they also reveal the limitations of royal power. A very delicate political relationship evolved between crown and mariners, which depended upon the level of pressure exerted by central authority being kept within the limits of tolerance. What happened when it broke down is worth considering in greater detail.

In 1372-1373, Edward ordered a number of towns and cities to provide him with purpose-built warships known as "barges" or "balingers". Such vessels required a lot of

58. Hall, *op. cit.*, pp.134-136; Runyan, 'Ships and Mariners', *loc. cit.*, pp.12-14; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edw. III, 1343-1345, p.92; *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, Edw. III (7), 1343-1346, pp.128-134.

manpower because they were propelled (at least partly) by oars. A balinger was usually in the order of 40-50 tons burden and required perhaps 80 oarsmen; a barge was probably closer to 100 or 150 tons on average, and needed proportionately more. The cost of this had to be borne by the places unlucky enough to be chosen, and they were told to impress whatever workmen,  
59  
craftsmen and sailors they needed for the task.

As the administration studied the candidates to provide these vessels in 1372, it considered the possibility that Boston might furnish 1 barge (of 40 tons) and 50 men; Saltfleet, Grimsby and Barton 1 barge each (of 30 tons) and 40 men, and the city of Lincoln 2 barges of 50 tons. When the plans finally emerged in 1373, Barton and Saltfleet had been spared from the actual building of the ships, and Lincoln, Salisbury, Boston and Hull were asked to make one barge each,  
60  
probably considerably larger than those originally projected. The precise tonnage of the Lincoln barge is not known, but as delivered she had aboard a master, a constable, a crew of 90 mariners, 19 men-at-arms and 20 bowmen. The commissioners appointed to execute the plans faced a formidable logistical task in building and manning such a ship, especially since  
61  
another one was being constructed simultaneously at Boston.

59. Sherborne, 'The Hundred Years' War', loc. cit., p.168; R.W. Unger, The Ship in the Medieval Economy 600-1600, 1980, pp.171-172. A. Moore, 'A Barge of Edward III', Mariners' Mirror, 6, 1920, pp.229-242, estimates the tonnage of London's barge in 1373, by a rather circuitous calculation, as 234 tons, which is considerably greater than Unger's (more recent) work. See also Hall, op. cit., pp.63-64.

60. P.R.O. Chancery Miscellanea C47/2/25 (19); Hill, Medieval Lincoln, pp.255-256.

61. B.L., Add. Mss. 37494, fo. 27v, "Noue Bargee Anno xlvij".

Saltfleet and Wainfleet may have been freed from the direct burden of providing a barge, but it is clear from the names of the men appointed as commissioners, that they were expected to contribute in other ways. Roger de Tirington of Lincoln, Nicholas de Camerynham, William Warde of Saltfleet and Thomas Baxter of Wainfleet were instructed:

"to arrest timber, boards, pitch, and all other things required for the making of a barge, which the king has commanded to be made by the men of the city of Lincoln; also mariners and navigators, cables, cords and other instruments for the barge, as many as shall be necessary for the safe conduct thereof to the place where the king has appointed it to be brought; and to imprison any contrariant or rebellious in this, until the king give orders for their deliverance."<sup>62</sup>

These orders make it clear that trouble was expected and it was not long in coming. On the Thursday before Palm Sunday, 1374, John de Outhorpe arrived at Saltfleet, armed with a warrant from the commission empowering him to attach seamen ("homines maritimos") in the county of Lincoln, to serve on the Lincoln Barge. He proceeded to try and arrest William Gouke (a fisherman) and certain other men; but "there came a certain William de Thoresby of Saltfleethaven and Walter de Lyndeseye of the same place, with force of arms, and assaulted the same John de Outhorpe, and so recovered the aforesaid William Gouke and took him wnerewer they wished". Undeterred, de Outhorpe returned early in May, to try again. This time de Thoresby had been forewarned and lay in wait for him, chasing him into the house of Atheline Spenser "so that he dared not leave for a long time, in fear of death".<sup>63</sup> He was eventually rescued by

62. Sillem, ed., op. cit., pp. lvii; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. III, 1370-1374, pp.247-248.

63. Sillem, ed., op. cit., pp.65-66.

the "good men" of the town, but whether he ever succeeded in impressing any sailors is unclear.

At one level, what had taken place was another example of the social and perceptual gulf which existed between these village mariners and the authorities. John de Outhorpe's warrant was of no interest to them and he was treated simply as a personal enemy, whom they resisted by the same means which they might have employed had they been under attack from an enemy at sea. The king had exceeded the customary threshold. From the tone of his instructions to the commissioners, he knew this quite well and had anticipated the violent reaction.

Yet it was a common feature of the popular "mentalité" (maritime or otherwise) that men related more easily to one another at an individual, local level than at a national or corporate one. A functionary of the crown could be subjected to a violent assault because he constituted a threat, without any rebellion against the king being understood by those who were responsible. Indeed, only because they did not see the menace as emanating from the state but from the man, could they have hoped to gain by driving him away.<sup>64</sup> What undoubtedly concerned William de Thoresby far more was that de Outhorpe was acting on behalf of William Ward, the barge commissioner of Saltfleet, who was a personal enemy; and since Ward, a mariner of some importance, was indicted in the King's Bench the same year for taking a bribe to save a man from serving on the barge, his own hands were not necessarily any

64. cf. Burke, Popular Culture, pp.172-3 (the role of the king in popular songs and stories).

cleaner than de Thoresby's.<sup>65</sup> On the Sunday after Easter (in between de Outhorpe's visits) de Thoresby and a number of his associates held Ward under siege in the parish church "to the great terror of the whole neighbourhood", which is some indication of how savage this vendetta had become.

Such enmities were common among sailors and fishermen, accustomed to "death without quarter and war to the knife" at sea, and the king was obliged to superimpose his own system of administration upon them. No matter how carefully he selected his local officials, they were almost bound to carry their private wars over into this new (and now partly legitimized) dimension of conflict.

. . . . .

It has been stressed that most of our knowledge concerning the interplay between central authority and maritime subculture in the 14th century is the result of the exceptional circumstances which obtained during the reigns of the first three Edwards. After the death of Edward III, there was an increasing tendency to rely upon the larger vessels from the major ports for such impressments as were made. This, combined with a curtailment of the Admiralty Court's powers by Richard II, probably resulted in a greatly reduced level of administrative interest in the rural maritime areas, and certainly in a massive decline in surviving archive material relating to it: it is slight for the country as a whole and

65. Sillem, ed., op. cit., p.43. A further example of this feud was the assault committed on Ward's son by de Thoresby earlier in the same year - ibid., p.67 (No. 279).

virtually non-existent for Lincolnshire in particular, until<sup>66</sup> the middle years of the 16th century. The gap is all the more serious because (as Part II will suggest) a deterioration took place, in the interim, in the economic health of the county's small ports, resulting in far-reaching social and cultural consequences which (for present purposes) we are forced to consider by means of a comparison between the two periods. Frustrating as it may be, this hiatus amply emphasizes the differences which existed, both in the nature of the problems which confronted administrators in the two periods and in the methods they employed to counter them. Superficially, as the new burst of activity under the later Tudor testifies, both the 14th and 16th century monarchs had an abiding concern to regulate and control events at the creeks and isolated landing-places of the kingdom. For the Tudors, however, the impetus was less military than economic in origin; and, in Lincolnshire, the role being played by the local inhabitants had changed considerably.

#### Tudor Authority And Its Limitations

We have seen that in the fourteenth century the crown had achieved a very circumscribed level of control over the activities of mariners and their ships. In many cases, it amounted to the assertion of rights which it did not attempt to pursue systematically and the claiming of sovereign powers which could not easily be enforced. In contrast, Tudor administration was concerned to make a concerted effort to achieve genuine control.

66. Runyan, 'The Rolls of Oléron', loc. cit., pp.109-110.

The drift of policy towards greater central accountability in the processes of local government was at least partly responsible. Henry VII and Henry VIII did away with all systems of local and town customs, and Thomas Cromwell toyed with the idea of reforming the collection of the national ones, with an ordinance in 1536 against the "gret suttill & crafty ynvencions" used to bypass duties.<sup>67</sup> The Henrician Reformation provided some new opportunities for contrabanders: lead stripped off monastic roofs (of which Lincolnshire had ample supply) was smuggled abroad in great quantities; but much more disturbing to government and church were the Lutheran tracts and English translations of the Bible which came in from the continent. The Lincolnshire coast was a favourite area for this because of its proximity to northern Europe and because of its multitude of small inlets. Bishop Longland, no friend of Lutheran unorthodoxy, asked the archdeacon to be vigilant against many "unwholesome and wicked" books being circulated in the county by this means.<sup>68</sup> But the real impetus to tighten up came because of the coincidence of declining customs revenue with growing insolvency in royal finance. The fierce inflation of the mid-century meant that the existing revenue, which had, in any case, been based on traditional and unrealistic valuations, was eroded away. When Mary issued a new Book of Rates in 1558 it led directly to an increased effort on the part of merchants and mariners to avoid paying duties, which

67. F.C. Dietz, 'Elizabethan Customs Administration', E.H.R., 45, 1930, pp.35-37; G.D. Ramsey, 'The Smugglers Trade: A Neglected Aspect of English Commercial Development', T.R.H.S., 5th Series, No.2, 1952, pp.141-142.

68. M. Bowker, The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547, 1981, p.61; L.A.O., Bishops' Registers, Reg 26, fo. 140r.

had, for the first time, begun to bite into their incomes - all the more so at a time of inflation and trade slump.

At the start of Elizabeth's reign Winchester, the Lord Treasurer, turned his attention in earnest to the problem of customs revenue and began to formulate policies to tackle smuggling and piracy, both of which were considered to be depriving the Exchequer of valuable income. In the first Parliament of the reign an Act of Frauds was passed against the evasions of "many greedy and covertous persons", by which it became formally illegal to ship goods at night, or to load or unload except at such places as were designated by a customs official. In 1565, a more concerted drive was made to unify procedures, not just in the primary ports, but in the small creeks and havens where, as it was now recognized, evasion of duties and piratical activity were so easy. The timing of this was probably associated with a sudden drop in total customs revenue in the preceding years, for reasons which seem to have had nothing to do with illegal pursuits, but which prompted  
69  
action against them.

A new Book of Orders, signed by the Queen, was sent down to every "Head-Port" in the country setting out fresh rules for the collection system. From Easter 1565 blank parchment books were provided to each of the customs functionaries and at the end of the year they were required to return these to the Exchequer for auditing. Similar books were also to go to every creek which had recorded any trade

69. Dietz, 'Elizabethan Customs Administration', loc. cit., pp.37-38; N.J. Williams, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan Port Books', E.H.R., 66, 1951, pp.387-388.

ten years before the start of the present reign. They were to include not only the overseas trade, but (for the first time systematically) all coastwise traffic, monitored so that the use of it to disguise overseas transactions could be checked. In principle, the "parchment books" were nothing new and had been in use at head-ports since 1428, but only now was their employment comprehensive. Customs at some ports had previously been farmed out, which led (as it was to do when re-introduced in the seventeenth century) to a deterioration in record-keeping. Winchester refused to continue the farms, and brought<sup>71</sup> all the ports back under government supervision.

A corollary of this was that places which had hitherto evaded all or most of the regulations now came under scrutiny. The first step was a series of Exchequer surveys of the major ports in 1564-1565, of which that taken at Boston was typical. It took stock of the extents and bounds of the port, the number of creeks it possessed, and whether there were customs officers or deputies in them. In the case of "decayed creeks" they were to state how long they had been decayed, why, whether the Queen would benefit from their repair and, if so, what it would cost. If there were places where customs deputies were needed but none existed, this was to be<sup>72</sup> remedied.

70. D.M. Woodward, 'Port Books', History, LV, 1970, pp.207-208; R.W.K. Hinton, The Port Books of Boston 1601-1640 (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.50), 1956, p.xiv; A.P. Newton, 'The Establishment of the Great Farm of English Customs', T.H.R.S., 4th Series, I, 1918, p.133; "B.Y." (Anon), The Modern Practice of the Court of Exchequer, 1731, p.431.
71. R.C. Jarvis, 'Sources for the History of Ports', Journal of Transport History, III, 1957-8, pp.80-81.
72. R.C. Jarvis, 'The Appointment of Ports', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, XI, 1958-9, pp.462-463; P.R.O., Exchequer Special Commission, E178/1273.

Armed with the information this provided, the Privy Council turned its attention to the problem of piracy. An order was issued on 25th November, addressed to various gentlemen in all the counties of England and Wales, of the sort who underpinned Tudor administration in the provinces:

"where dyvers evill disposid persons, as it apperythe, forgettinge the feare of Almightye God and the duetye of good subjectes, have of late in sundry vessells and shippes frequentlyd the seas upon the coast of this our realme, robbinge and spoylinge honest quyett merchauntes and others, both of our own subjectes and of other princes presentlye in legue and good amytye with us, which cometh chiefly to passe by reason the said pyrates, whereof parte are knowen also to be of other nacions, are at the handes of a number of disordered persons, dwellinge within or nere the havens, creeks and landinge places of this our realme, secretly refreshed with victualles, furnyshed with munytion and other necessities, and sundry other wayes by byeing of the stollen wares ayded and relyved, to the manifest contempt of us and our lawes and the grete sclaunder of this our realme."

In Lincolnshire, Sir Edward Dymocke, Sir Robert Tirwhyte, Robert Carre and Adlard Welbye were charged with the task of making an initial survey of 13 listed creeks and landing-places, finding out how many houses there were at them, by whose authority vessels were licensed to lade and unlade there, what number of ships there were at them and how they were occupied, and how many mariners and fishermen there were. When they had done this, they were to draw up a certificate for the Council on their findings. Similar surveys were taken in all the maritime counties in 1565, and were the first thorough inspections of the kind ever made.

The commissioners were then to appoint deputies at each of the landing-places, instructed to prevent piracy by keeping a careful watch over what came in and what left. It

73. Acts of the Privy Council, 1558-1570, pp.278-289; reproduced in part in R.H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., Tudor Economic Documents, 1924, Vol. II, pp.117-122.

was reasoned that by cutting off their lines of supply and preventing the disposal of booty to contacts ashore, it would be possible to put the pirates themselves out of action: another example of indirect pressures having to be applied in the ports and havens, in an effort to counteract a problem which really lay, beyond the Council's reach, at sea. The same deputies were also responsible for preventing the export of grain and victuals from the realm without the Queen's licence, which was regarded as another side of the same problem. The commissions, in the course of their work, were supposed to strengthen the government's general level of competence at places where, in the past, piracy, smuggling and export in defiance of bans had all been occurring with impunity.<sup>74</sup>

The Council felt, (with some justification), that it could trust the commissioners not to succumb to palm-greasing, but the deputies were a more difficult problem. It was decided that

"you shall jointely together, or the most part of you, accordinge to the commodytie of your duellinge places, once every monethe at the leaste, or oftener, repayre to the said havens, creekes and landinge places, and understand by the best meanes you may how your sayd Deputies shall haue performyd the charge comytted unto them."

Dymoke and his associates had produced their certificate of the creeks and havens for the Counsellors within a month of the issue of these commands, adding with evident self-satisfaction that "if owre Styffycatt (now sent) do not in allthy[n]g[es] answeare the artycles anexed owre co[m]myssyon to your honours full co[n]tentacyon We shall gladly the next tyem

74. W.G. Hoskins, Devon, 1972, p.304; Hoskins, Fieldwork in Local History, 1982 edn., pp.62-63; Jarvis, 'Appointment of Ports', loc. cit., p.463.

(apon adver[e]rtisment from your honours) travell further to

<sup>75</sup>  
amend the same". In the following years they extended to 17  
the number of places in the county at which they wished to keep  
a particular watch for the activities of pirates and their  
friends: Barton, Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Somercotes, Saltfleet,  
Ingoldmells, Wainfleet, Winthorpe, Skegness, Leake, Fishtoft,  
Boston, Fosdyke, "Willoughby Drenne" (Mumby Chapel), Northole,  
<sup>76</sup>  
North Cotes and Stallingborough.

The detailed records of the commissioners for piracy  
have survived only in the period 1577-1579, for which a large  
volume in State Papers at the Public Record Office contains  
some of the reports they were supposed, under the orders, to  
send to the Council every month. The Lincolnshire section is  
made up of a report sent up in January 1577, and (regardless of  
the limited period apparently covered) it provides some insight  
into the level of detection and the nature of the offences  
discovered. It also highlights some of the problems. Most of  
it is concerned with the receiving of goods which were, or were  
believed to have been, unlawfully obtained from pirates.

Edward More, alias Winchester, "did fetch vp w[i]th his owne  
crayer Six barrellles of hearing[es] Deliurid by a pirate",  
bought other goods from the pirates, and provided some of them  
with bread, drink and beef. Five men were said to have taken  
goods from pirates on Stallingborough shore: pitch, rye and a  
quantity of tar and stockfish. Others had acquired goods at  
Cotes shore, just north of Grimsby. Altogether over 20 cases

75. P.R.O., SP 12/38/23, (1), (acc. No. LDR A 236). See also  
Cal. S.P.D., I, 1547-1580, p.264.

76. Ibid, SP 12/135, fo. 6v.

of receiving were reported at Boston and Grimsby, and others of  
77  
victualling or supplying pirates.

In contrast, the pirates themselves are less prominent. One man, coming from London, was accused of having rigged and set forth "in warlike manner" a vessel called the "Toade" of Grimsby. Another pirate had used Samuel Barnes to send in a barrel of rye, which was then sold off by the bushel  
78  
to poor people. Occasionally, a whole "company" of men were taken prisoner, suspected of being pirates. One such group, about 12 or 13 strong, had been captured at the time of this report by the Mayor and Corporation of Boston. When that happened, the procedure was for them to be held until the Vice-Admiral and head of the commission - by this time, Henry, Lord Clinton - could take delivery of them. Although the Mayor and Recorder of Boston were both ex-officio members of the commission, the Privy Council had made it clear to them on a previous occasion (in 1575) that they had no jurisdiction in such cases. Clinton was evidently concerned for the security of pirates held pending his arrival, and with good reason. At Grimsby, one Bellingham and his company who had been making a nuisance of themselves, not only on the Lincolnshire coast but also in Norfolk, were "apprehended as Suspected of piracie and Comitted to Richard holmes deputie to the L. Clinton what became of them not knowen". The commissioners had a reasonable idea what had happened, and fined Holmes 30s. Another deputy,

77. Ibid, fo. 49r, 51v, 52r. Winchester was still at large in 1585, when one of Dymoke's agents complained that he was victualling pirates "w[i]th s little flie boate that he hathe [and] will lande vpon the flatt shoare in anie place and come in w[i]th one tyde & go owt at the next"(P.R.O. SP/12/182/33).

78. Ibid., fo. 50r, 51r, 48v.

Thomas Stone, had been furtively co-operating with pirates off the Norfolk coast, and victualling them from Wainfleet and Spilsby. For his pains he had received coals from Gullet and "certain hearing[es] and warropes" from Bellingham.<sup>79</sup>

A curious letter which accompanied this particular certificate to the Council is further evidence that, in Lincolnshire, all was not going as it might have done. The Council had been sent a document, which they assumed had emanated from the commissioners themselves, according to which it appeared that the deputies were being hindered in their work at the creeks, because Clinton and his colleagues had refused to allow them to administer oaths for the purposes of obtaining information. The commissioners insisted that they knew nothing of any such document and strongly denied that they were being antipathetic; "thoughe for avoydinge of parcialytie & favo[u]r or envious factions amongst the meaner sorte, most of vs haue thought it bothe more consenaunte w[i]th the reason, that suche as shuld be sworne, shuld w[i]th more dexterytie & lesse corruption haue theire othes taken afore vs or Anye of vs the com[m]issioner[es], then afore everie pryvate deputie apointed vnder vs". The deputies understood this, and so far as they were concerned there had been no cause for complaint: "We do not alytle mervaile," they continued, "by whom and for what cause yo[u]r honor[es] receyved such vntrue certificat[es] and advertisement[es]". Somebody involved in the commission's work had clearly found it irksome that Clinton took his obligations<sup>80</sup> to prevent extortion so literally.

79. Ibid, fo. 41r, 53r, 58r; P. Thompson, The History and Antiquities of Boston, 1856, pp.71-72.

80. P.R.O., SP 12/122/20.

If there remained gaps in the new system for controlling piracy and illegal grain exports, the same was almost bound to be true of the apparatus set up to counter more general contrabanding in the provinces. The Council might now know where the likely landing-places were, and theoretically had an officer or deputy at every one of them. But ensuring that neither evasion nor speculation were taking place was still far from easy. In the decades after the system was established, Boston and its creeks were the subject of a number of investigations, in which smuggling activities were alleged to have been taking place by one means or another. In 1580 an Exchequer inquiry looked into the matter of coal and other goods being taken in or out of Fosdyke and Fleet Haven, in Holland. Henry Hoode, sometime Mayor of Boston, confirmed that there was no Controller or Searcher of Customs normally resident at Fosdyke and the officers at Boston were supposed to fulfil this function. When he was Mayor, "certen shipps that hath[e] comen to Fosdicke did aske him leave to sell their Coales at Fosdicke And ..... he haith known the same so vused boethe before his tyme and since, but howe it is vused now he knowethe not". Vessels had been taking coal to these places for a long time, and the deponents generally agreed that it was beneficial for the local people, and "more ease for theame to have Coales at Fleete haven and Fodicke than to Fetcche theam at Boston, for that the waye ys Farre & dangerous to passe ou[er] the washes". The trouble was that it was a fairly simple matter to use these havens for less charitable purposes, as some of those questioned hinted darkly. Thomas Winbeche of Boston made a typical insinuation: "about Simmonde and Judes Daye last paste" a keel of Lynn had taken on beans at the

haven, and "whether they weare carried he cannot tell, or bye  
81  
whom they weare laden he knowethe not".

In 1603, another inquiry asked all the customs officials and their deputies whether any raw hides or tanned leather and other prohibited goods had been shipped out of Boston and its creeks, and they replied to a man that the records in their Port Books were accurate and no other  
82  
trafficking had taken place. But in 1634, by which time the customs had admittedly been at farm again for nearly 30 years, a less than healthy state of honesty was revealed in a far more searching inquiry on the subject of butter exports. This time, the corruption was apparently concentrated among the petty functionaries and porters at Boston itself, who were using their positions to help merchants smuggle goods on board vessels anchored in the Deeps or just offshore:

"one John Pauye doth vse to serve the m[e]rchant[es] to Carrie butter downe the riuer in the night w[hi]ch this ex[amin]a[n]t knoweth to be true for that he this ex[amin]a[n]t did about twelue monthes since see the said Pavye take into his boate Sundrie butter firkins in the night from Mr. Thomas Lawes backside on purypale key to be Carried aboard a fleminge w[hi]che did then ride in the Rode downe the riuer about three miles from Boston."

This was confirmed by John Hudehesson, who

"being in his Chamber did see out of his Chamber window one John Pavin together w[i]th one William Greene and one Ann Servant[es] vnto the saide Pavin in a Cock boate or Fisher boate about too of the Clocke in the night time in wh[i]ch boate there was a Certaine quantitie of Butter, and this dep[onen]t saith that he did then call to the said Pavin and told him that he did nott well or honestlie to conveigh Butter at such a time of the night But the said Pavin answered what had this dep[onen]t to doe to meddle w[i]th what he was a dooinge w[hi]ch Butter this ex[amin]an[t] saith was carried to the rode butt knowes nott into what Barke or Shipp it was putt."

Five other petty porters were named by Hudhesson as common

81. P.R.O., Exchequer Depositions, E 134/22 + 23 Eliz., Mich. 14.

82. Ibid., E 178/4049.

offenders in this way, but a handful of Boston merchants seem to have been behind such organized customs dodging, and it is difficult to believe that the Customs house had been totally innocent of any complicity.<sup>83</sup>

It was one of the paradoxes of the Elizabethan system of customs administration that, as it started to plug the loopholes formerly available at obscure creeks and inlets, it seems to have shifted the focus of contraband activity into the larger ports like Boston. If the surviving records are any guide, the majority of smugglers now turned their attention to the opportunities available at these, by virtue of their greater size, which made concealment easier and gave them greater scope for bribing officials into overlooking what was taking place. Customs and Controllers were still free from all but very indirect supervision from the Exchequer, and had only to see that their accounts went in regularly and looked superficially correct. Malpractices at London were common knowledge, but the potential at provincial head-ports was even greater "either by false entryes, colouring of Straungers goods, and corrupting the Customers, and other officers, who, for the most part being needie persons, in those small and remote Portes of the Realme, are more readie to take rewardes". Just how easy it was for merchants to defraud in this manner is clearly evidenced by the deeds of Francis Shaxton of Lynn, who in the 1570s was happily engaged in a large-scale forging business, which embraced cockets, seals and Port Books, all with the active connivance of the Customer, Richard Downes.

83. Ibid., E178/6015. For Pavyn, see also Appendix III (under "Boston").

The dealings of Thomas Lawe and his confederates at Boston were  
84  
modest by comparison.

However, smuggling had not simply ceased at the creeks either. Goods could be brought into these (without the need to engage in too much expensive bribery) because the original precepts of 1565 were soon more honoured in the breach than in the observance. By 1585, it had become the accepted practice to appoint deputies for whole wapentakes rather than individual creeks. Three Theddlethorpe men were deputy officers for all the creeks of Ludborough and Louthesk (Tetney, Marsh Chapel, Grainthorpe with Northolle and Southolle, Somercotes, Saltfleet and Theddlethorpe); another man had supervision in the Wapentake of Calceworth (between Wilgrip and Mumby Chapel). South of this, the notorious "Thieves' Creek" of Ingoldmells was apparently considered the responsibility of the Duchy of Lancaster and so left (in the words of one of Dymoke's functionaries) "to the higher powers". Essentially the same arrangements appear to have been in place when the inquiry into illegal leather exports was held in 1603. The silence of the Hull record suggests that the customer there made no attempts to control the area north of  
85  
Grimsby at all.

Certainly, Winchester's new provisions had failed to  
86  
provide the stable revenue which the crown had hoped for.

84. J. Wheeler, A Treatise of Commerce, 1601: quoted in Williams, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan Port Books', loc. cit., pp.388-395.

85. Williams, op. cit., pp.42-43; P.R.O. SP 12/182/33; ibid., E178/4049.

86. Williams, (op. cit., p.31) calls Winchester "an armchair administrator", more concerned to see that the paperwork tallied than to prevent smuggling. When his achievements are contrasted with what anteceded them, however, this appears to be somewhat unjust.

Experiments with farming the customs, the solution favoured by Burghley, began again as early as 1570 with the farming of the Port of London to Customer Smythe, whose efficiency as a collector became something of a legend. Largely as a result, Sir Francis Walsingham took a lease to farm 19 outports, Boston among them, in August 1585, but he was unable to match Smythe's results and his widow professed to have been left seriously out of pocket by it on his death in 1590. Nevertheless, the attractiveness of a reliable income was such that a more general farm of all the customs took place shortly after Elizabeth died. The large scale inquiry of 1634, which took literally hundreds of depositions from ports on the east coast like Boston and Hull, implies that the farmers may not have been significantly more successful than the crown had been in<sup>87</sup> establishing complete fiscal control.

### Conclusions

The present chapter has been concerned with the various ways in which maritime life and external authority could come into conflict with one another between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. This has necessarily meant an emphasis on those records of illegal activity - smuggling, piracy or wrecker's rights - in which such interactions have been recorded, (mainly from the perspective of the administration). It should be emphasized that the boundary between lawful and unlawful behaviour in the medieval period was not so finely drawn as it

87. A.L. Rowse, The England of Elizabeth, 1950, pp.331-332; Dietz, 'Elizabethan Customs Administration', loc. cit., pp.47-51; Newton, 'Great Farm of Customs', loc. cit., pp.143-155; P.R.O., E 178/6015.

was later to become and men at all social levels were not so easily separated into the law-abiding and the criminal. The same caveat applies to corruption and weakness in the administration of royal justice, which was certainly not  
88  
exclusive to maritime affairs. Conflict was not the inevitable result of contact between rural maritime communities and the agents of authority, and for much of the time their association was neither violent nor confrontational.

Nevertheless, it has been urged that from an examination of such antagonistic encounters, it is possible to discern in many of the Lincolnshire coastal villages a set of beliefs about socio-economic responsibilities, which was coherent and peculiar to mariners or their close associates. Fundamental to this was the distinction between the settled way of life within a village or township, which was experienced by the husbandman, and the itinerant nature of the maritime one. We can recognize important similarities with some other groups of men whose presence within the village was occasional or seasonal: herdsmen and shepherds are an obvious example, especially in those parts of Europe where "draille" or transhumance was still practised. They travelled long distances, and spent extended periods in highland areas where  
89  
administrative or tenurial control was comparatively weak.

In the case of mariners and fishermen, of course, the environment in question was completely alien, and its junction with the land a matter of such absolute contrast that it has already been likened to a "frontier". We may justifiably

88. Bellamy, Crime and Public Order in England, pp.29-36; cf. K. Wrightson, English Society 1580-1680, 1982, pp.155-182.

89. Bellamy, op. cit., pp.31-32; Burke, Popular Culture, pp.32-33; E. Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou, Penguin ed., 1980, pp.69-135.

identify a "subculture" among herdsmen or other similar groups on the cultural or geographical margins of the locality, because although their distinctiveness is self-evident and a product of very strong occupational solidarity, they still functioned within a wider social and cultural context, which they shared with their fellow villagers and countrymen.<sup>90</sup> It may seem that the maritime "mentalité" which has been discussed in this chapter went further than this, and that the seafarer's reaction to the wider social and administrative constraints which were placed upon landsmen was virtually "counter-cultural" - existing, that is, in direct opposition to the prevailing one. However, on a closer examination we must reject this idea. Like shepherds, mariners could not spend their whole lives away from home, and had to find ways of accommodating the values which confronted them in their social and economic contacts ashore. As far as authority was concerned, they did this by failing to associate its agents with its source, as the affair of the Lincoln barge amply demonstrates. They had their own understanding of natural justice, God's justice, which transcended (and might often conflict with) that administered by the agents of the crown. Significantly, this was a popular theme of much medieval balladry, and is reminiscent of the "roughly enforced and crudely conceived idea of justice and morality" found in the Robin Hood legends.<sup>91</sup> Mariners and their associates could ignore the law, evade its provisions, bribe or assault those who administered it, but (like Robin) still remain loyal to the

90. Burke, op. cit., pp.31-32.

91. J.C. Holt, 'The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood', in R.H. Hilton, ed., Peasants, Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History, 1973, p.250.

king. However tortuous this mentality to modern eyes, it is unmistakably a sign of subculture accommodating itself to a wider culture, and not of a totally anomic counter-culture. Similarly, many of those who lived in the coastal areas had absorbed some elements of this subculture and were prepared to become involved in smuggling or other nefarious activities, although not themselves mariners.

What is perhaps most significant of all is that the balance between these two groups of men - the mariners and seafarers on the one hand, and their landmen accomplices on the other - clearly did not remain static in Lincolnshire during the period we have examined. The local functionaries of the later 16th century were almost exclusively concerned with detecting and counteracting collaborators or corrupt officials, and local mariners as such figure very little in their preoccupations. In contrast to the unequivocal evidence that there were numerous seamen and seagoing fishermen in Lincolnshire's rural ports in the 14th century, we are left with the impression that by Elizabeth's reign the inhabitants of the maritime villages were no longer involved to the same extent in the seafaring way of life as their forebears had been; although (importantly) they retained something of their conception of the limited prerogatives of those representing central authority. In Part II, we will move on to consider this re-orientation and its causes more closely, in the light of the available topographical and economic evidence.

\* \* \* \* \*

**PART TWO**

### 3. THE HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE COASTLINE

Having established the peculiar nature of the relationship which existed between the seafarers of rural Lincolnshire and administrative authority, the objective of the second part of this thesis is to examine the economic background against which it must be understood. We have described mariners in the county as "marginal": that is, living within villages where the dominant economic pre-occupations were agriculture or rural industry rather than seafaring. Why was this so? In this section, the failure of the maritime way of life to take hold in the fen and marshland villages of Lincolnshire to the exclusion of others will be considered under three closely related headings: the degree and organization of local seaborne trade; the form and extent of the county's fishing industry; and (in the present chapter) the local geography and topography which strongly influenced the way that the inhabitants of coastal villages related to the sea.

The established groundrules of topographical interpretation are not easy to apply to any coastal area, because (as W.G. Hoskins recognized some years ago) change on the "maritime frontier" is the product of an unusually complicated interplay between familiar human influences and natural forces of climate, hydrography and geology.<sup>1</sup>

Human action on the coastal landscape has been as important as it has been anywhere else and perhaps more so;

1. W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape, 1955, pp.11-13; idem, Fieldwork in Local History, 1982 edn., pp.79-85, 150-159.

land has been reclaimed, sea-banks created, natural barriers of dunes extended or reinforced. Saltworking, practised extensively on the Lincolnshire foreshore, has had a profound impact on the relative positions of land and sea. Salting leaves in its wake large accumulations of debris, known in Lincolnshire as 'maures', and as one sixteenth century cartographer explained in the cartouche of his map of Marsh Chapel in Lindsey "When the maures growe greate the saltmakers remove more este and come nearer the sea and then the former maures become in some fewe yeres goode pastur groundes"<sup>2</sup>. It is easy and in some ways certainly correct to associate this process, which occurred in so many places along the Lincolnshire coast, with the type of wasteland colonization practised, by other means, in inland areas: the salt marsh of the Lincolnshire coast was equivalent to the woodland and marshland of other regions, taken into productive use as population pressures increased the need for land.

But in one significant respect there is a difference, because such salt-marsh reclamation occurred as the accidental by-product of a medieval industry. The salter did not deposit his debris as a deliberate act of altruism; rather, other people made use of changes which had been produced on the shoreline for quite different purposes. Men, in other words, have never been able to establish the sort of direct control over the coastal environment that they have managed to impose

2. E.H. Rudkin and D.M. Owen, 'The Medieval Salt Industry in the Lindsey Marshland', L.A.A.S.R.P., 8, 1959-60, p.82. A photographic copy of William Haiward's map of Marsh Chapel, 1595, is in the British Library map collection, ms. map no. 3365(2). Parts of it have been redrawn and reproduced in M.W. Beresford and J.K.S. St. Joseph, Medieval England: An Aerial Survey, 1979 edn., pp.263-265, and D.N. Robinson, 'The North East Coast of Lincolnshire: A Study in Coastal Evolution', (unpublished M.Sc. thesis, University of Nottingham) 1956, pp.12-13.

on most others. Once woodland has been cut down or wastes tamed or marshland drained they only revert to their previous state if subjected to prolonged and wanton neglect. At the conjunction of land and sea, however, the frontier is not only inherently more difficult to push back, but liable to quite sudden and relatively unprovoked reversals. On a cliff coast, such as that of northern Cornwall or parts of Yorkshire, this is because of the erosive action of tides and weather; (although the loss of land, when measured in historical rather than geological terms, is often comparatively small). On an alluvial coastline like that of Lincolnshire, without the protection of solid rocks, there has always been the threat that the sea will reclaim, perhaps over a few decades, but sometimes in a few hours, land which may have taken centuries to tame and drain. Nearly all the coastal hinterland of Lincolnshire is marsh and fenland below the level of the highest spring tides and has been slowly sinking at the rate of a foot every hundred years, since the end of the Romano-British period. Archaeologists now think that they can detect banks along the conjectured shoreline of that time. In Holland, there are credible grounds for believing that a number of sea defences are of pre-Conquest construction. Artificial sea-banks along the Lindsey coast date back at least to the ninth and tenth centuries. The threat of inundation has been constant throughout the period of human habitation on this

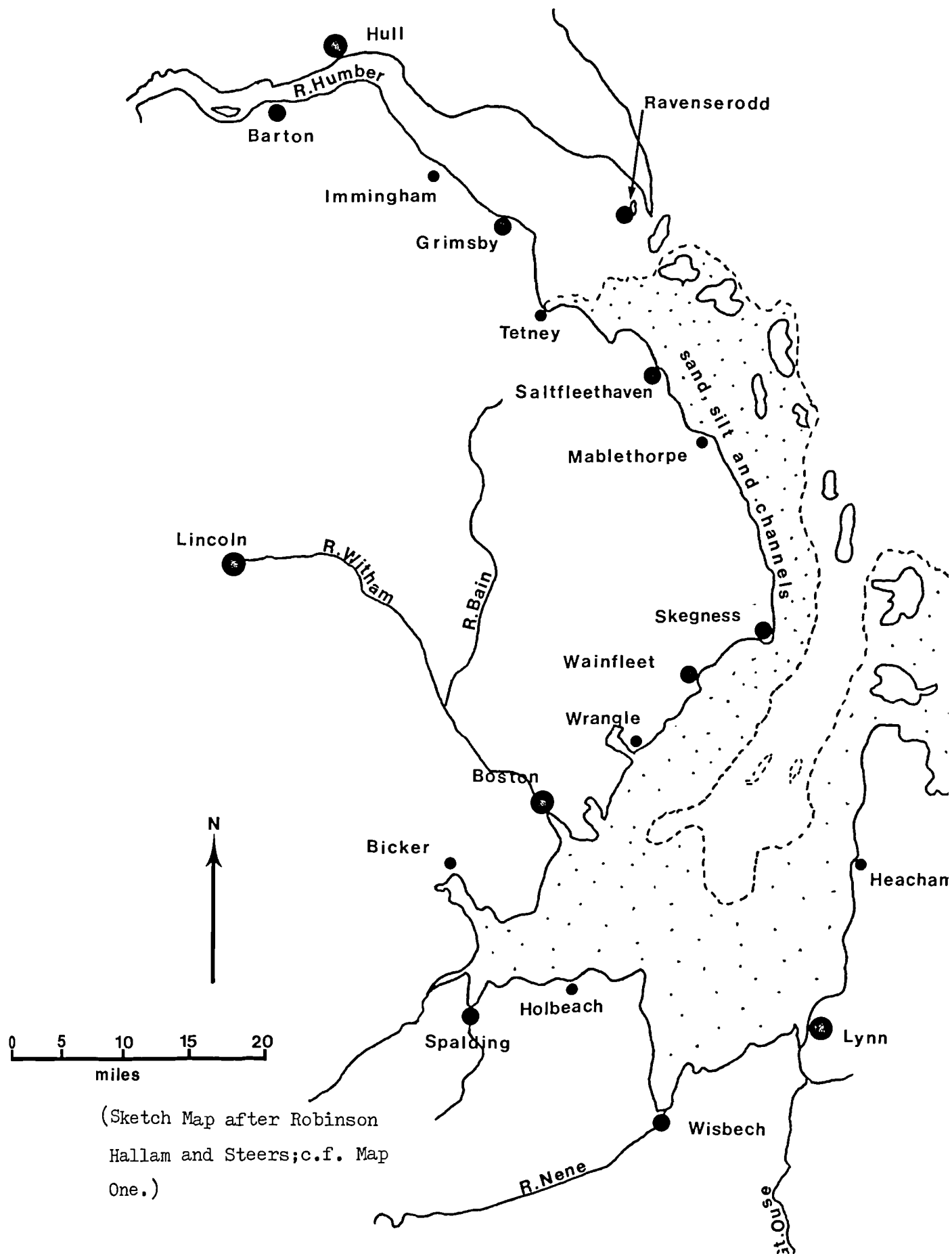
3

coast.

3. J.A. Steers, The Coastline of England and Wales, 1946, p.33; A.E.B. Owen, 'Coastal Erosion in East Lincolnshire', Lincolnshire Historian, 9, 1952, p.235; H.E. Hallam, Settlement and Society: A Study of the Early Agrarian History of South Lincolnshire, 1965, pp.5-8; D.N. Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution in North-East Lincolnshire', East Midlands Geography, 5, 1970, pp.62-63. See also B.B. Simmons, 'Ancient Coastlines around the Wash', South Lincolnshire Archaeology, 1, 1977, pp.6-9.

Enough has already been said to suggest that change, rather than continuity, has been the most important feature in the historical geography of Lincolnshire. John Speed's map of 1576 shows a coastline which is certainly recognizable, but a close comparison with the modern map reveals important differences and intriguing omissions. Many can be attributed to further drainage of the marshes and fens between the seventeenth century and the present. Other peculiarities in his mapping seem to indicate changes in the relative importance of particular rural coastal settlements since that time. Sometimes, it is impossible to be sure if he is correctly recording now vanished topographical features or is guilty of inaccurate cartography.<sup>4</sup> But the unique complexities of the county's coastal geography, which have influenced the interaction between land and sea and the particular vulnerability of Lincolnshire to topographical changes caused by this interaction, have their origins in a period long before the sixteenth century. The coastline which existed prior to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which has been reconstructed by Hallam, Robinson and others differed from that of Speed's day primarily because, until an intensive period of storms and geological disturbances changed the position of the sands and reefs in the North Sea, it was protected within a sheltered lagoon and was under comparatively little threat from even the most violent storms or tides.

4. D.N. Robinson, The Book of the Lincolnshire Seaside: The Story of the Coastline from the Humber to the Wash, 1981, pp.27-28; J. Bygott, Lincolnshire, 1952, p.38; John Speed's map of Lincolnshire, 1576. Speed for example, clearly thought there were important creeks of the sea at Ingoldmells, Mumby Chapel and south of Sutton-in-the-Marsh, where today there are only small drainage channels. This probably reflects less a change in actual size than in local perceptions of their importance.



Coastal geographers are now certain that between the end of the last ice age and the thirteenth century the Lincolnshire seaboard was shielded by a broken line of islands some miles offshore, extending from Spurn Head in the north to the coast of northern Norfolk in the south. They were composed of morain, deposited by the retreating ice and behind them was an area of channels, sand, silt and mud-flats blending closer to the shore with the broad salt-marshes, along which both the Romano-British and the Anglo-Saxons settled and manufactured salt.<sup>5</sup> Because this geography changed so abruptly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it is important to consider briefly the position prior to that time. The initial settlement of the Lincolnshire coastline took place during a period when conditions were very different from those of later centuries.

#### Settlement History and the Destruction of the Offshore Shoals

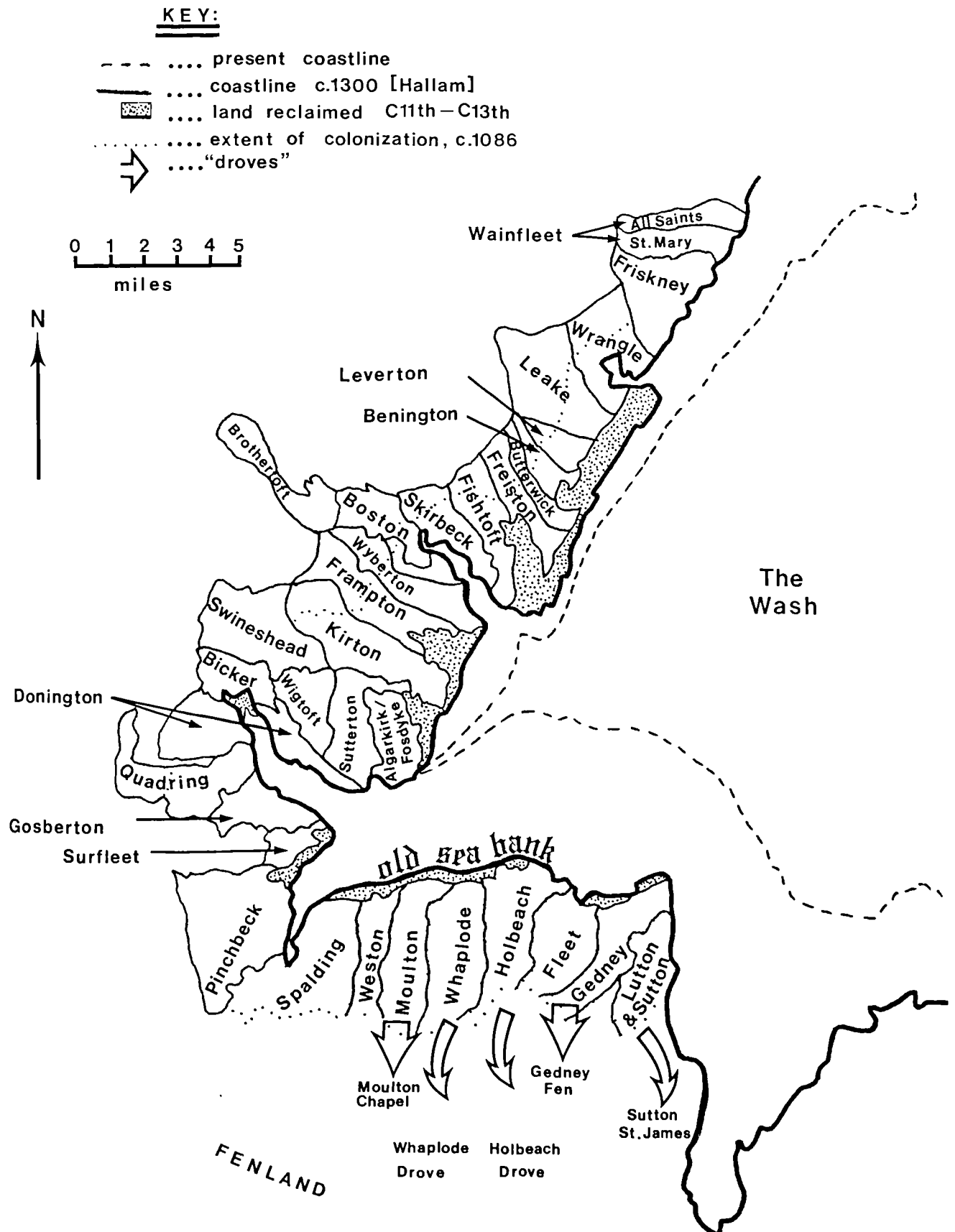
In Holland, the terrain which the initial settlers of the seventh to ninth centuries found can be seen clearly in the place-names they gave to their dwellings: Quadring (= Hraefingas = dwellers in the mud), Spalding (dwellers by the gulf, ie. the River Welland), Whaplode (= the eel stream), Fleet (tidal river), Gedney (Gyddas island), Lutton (= pool tun).<sup>6</sup>

"Holland" means "the high land", higher in comparison to the marsh and fenland behind the settlements and the salt-marsh and

5. Steers, *op. cit.*, pp.420-421; A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', *L.A.A.S.R.P.*, 5, 1954, p.98; Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', *loc. cit.*, p.62; *idem*, *Lincolnshire Seaside*, p.13; H.E. Hallam, 'Salt Making in the Lincolnshire Fenland during the Middle Ages', *L.A.A.S.R.P.*, 8, 1959-60, pp.85-112.

6. Robinson, *Lincolnshire Seaside*, p.14.

# MAP THREE. COASTAL SETTLEMENTS ON THE WASH



flats to their east. Until the twelfth century it was reputed to be one of the poorest parts of the country, but a hundred years later the widespread creation of "new lands" through the drainage both of the fens to the west of the original line of villages and of the retreating salt-marsh to their east, had transformed it from an impoverished backwater "in the midst of a great solitude" into a rich region with an expanding population. According to the 1334 Lay Subsidy, most fenland villages were wealthier than the average southern borough and the area as a whole had a greater accumulation of wealth than could be found anywhere in the country.<sup>7</sup>

The initial line of settlements along the shores of the Wash, at places like Surfleet, Spalding, Whaplode and Holbeach spawned new ones, both on the seaward and the fenward sides. In most cases these hamlets never became independent parishes, but remained dependent economically and ecclesiastically on their parent villages; which accounts for the extreme size and elongated nature of some Holland parishes.<sup>8</sup>

In Lindsey, salt making again provided an impetus for the original settlers, after establishing themselves in the middle marsh, to colonize the areas closer to the sea, but here the similarity ends. The colonization of the outmarsh was largely completed by the time of the Domesday survey - on place-name evidence probably during the ninth and tenth

7. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', Medieval Archaeology, 6-7, 1962-3, pp.183-184; E. Miller and J. Hatcher, Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348, 1978, p.31.

8. This process has been fully described by H.E. Hallam, op. cit., esp. pp.3-35. See also Hallam, The New Lands of Elloe, University (College) of Leicester Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, No. 6, 1954.

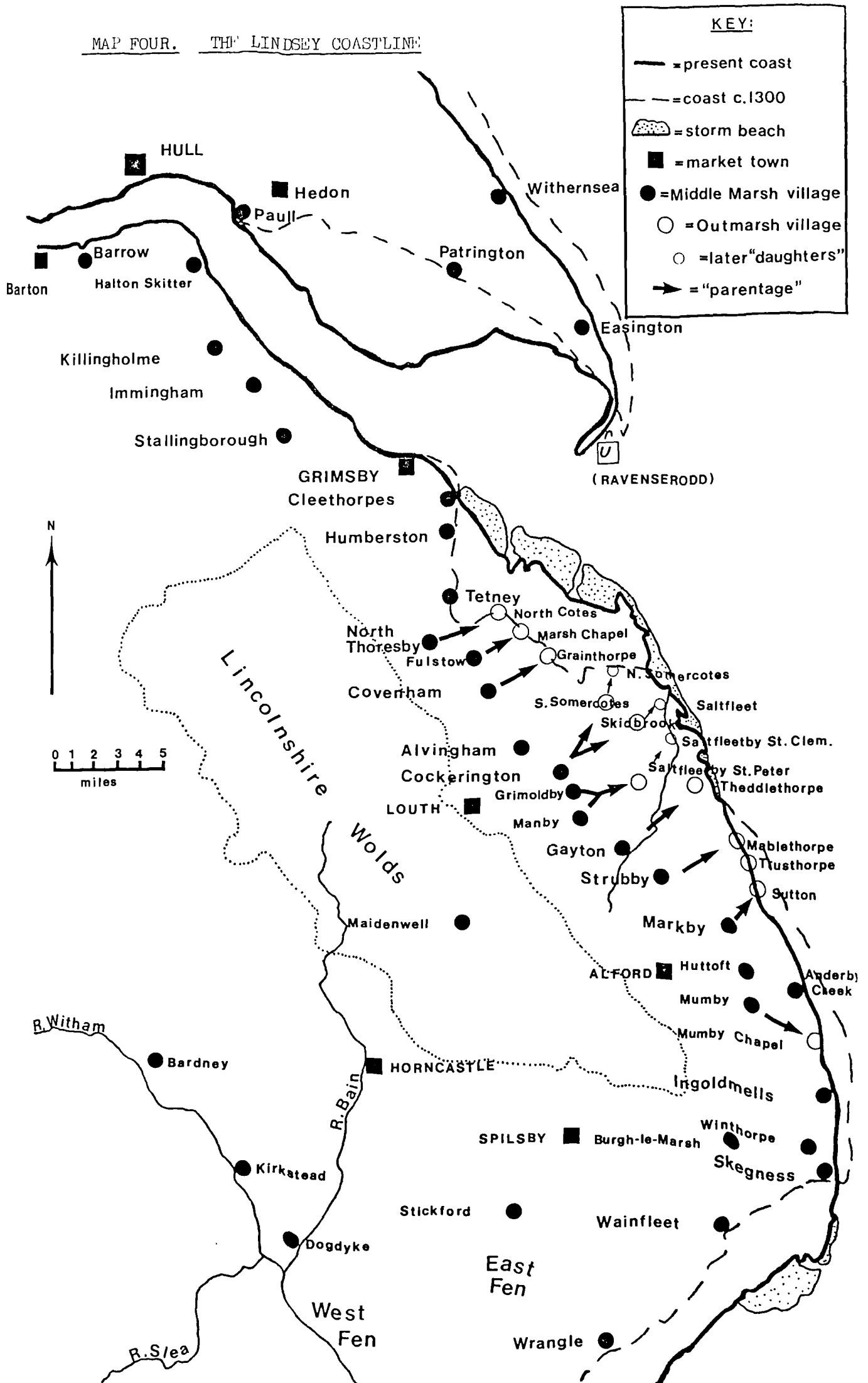
centuries. Functionally, the villages of the outmarsh were equivalent to the later "droves" of the Holland region, and were originally inhabited temporarily in the summer months, as grazing areas. The original settlements between Covenham and Gayton spawned such places as North Cotes (= huts), Marsh Chapel (known until the sixteenth century as Fulstowmarsh) and Somercotes (= "summer huts"). In the same manner, the Saltfleetbys were established from Grimoldby and Manby, the two medieval Mablethorpe parishes from Strubby, the Theddlethorpes from Gayton, Sutton (= "south tun") from Hagnaby and Markby, and Mumby Chapel (now known as Chapel St. Leonards) from Mumby. But unlike the Holland hamlets, these places progressed rapidly from dependent to independent status and most were<sup>9</sup> ecclesiastically separate by the eleventh century.

A few traces of their former economic links remained. Thomas of Scotney's manor at Cockerington, for example, was still drawing a rent of twenty bushels of salt in Somercotes in 1086 and salterns in the outmarsh still belonged to Covenham, Fulstow, North Thoresby and even Maidenwell, 350 feet up in the<sup>10</sup> wolds. But when a combination of salt making and the natural accumulation of silt behind the offshore shoals pushed the saltmarsh further east, the daughter settlements were the beneficiaries in the process and established their own chapelries in the reclaimed land. In 1086 Somercotes was still one parish. North Cotes did not exist as a separate entity and neither did Saltfleethaven, in the parish of Skidbrooke.

9. Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', loc. cit., pp.62-63; idem, North East Coast of Lincolnshire, p.65; idem, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.19.

10. Ibid, pp.38-39; Rudkin and Owen, 'Medieval Salt Industry', loc. cit., p.76 (and footnote 5); H.C. Darby, The Domesday Geography of Eastern England, 1971 edn., pp.69-70.

MAP FOUR. THE LINDSEY COASTLINE



Theddlethorpe was only later split into two parishes: Theddlethorpe All Saints in the west and Theddlethorpe St. Helen in the east. At nearby Saltfleetby the seaward progression is illustrated by the pattern of church dedications - the original Saltfleetby (St. Peter), then Saltfleetby All Saints (often a comparatively late dedication) and Saltfleetby St. Clements (a saint sometimes associated with the Danes, but also particularly important to seafarers). In this process the original Lindsey sea-bank (whose line is preserved by the modern A1031) was left well inland and a new one constructed, where necessary, to protect the new villages to its east. By the fourteenth century the destruction of the offshore shoals had led to the formation of considerable sand-dunes along the Lindsey shore. These offered it some natural protection against the increasing violence and unpredictability of the sea, to which the whole Lincolnshire coast was thenceforth to be subjected.<sup>11</sup>

The thirteenth century saw an unprecedented number of storms and floods, in which the east coast of England is known to have suffered particularly badly. Chronicles recorded numerous tempests and earth movements in the 1240s and the 1250s, which suggest that important changes were taking place at that time in the configuration of land and sea, perhaps because of a sudden fall in land levels. In 1246, according to Matthew Paris, "the sea, instead of flowing in its usual way, during four or five days did not ascend along the length of the

11. Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', *loc. cit.*, p.63; J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming: The Agrarian History of Lincolnshire from Tudor to Recent Times, pp.50-52; D. Kaye, 'Church Dedications in Lincolnshire', (Leicester University Department of English Local History M.A. Dissertation), 1973, pp.48-56; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.19.

beach. Which thing the inhabitants of the shore and the sailors 'that do business in great waters' witness that they have never seen before". The next year, as London experienced its first earthquake for a hundred years, the sea again ebbed and flowed very little over the course of about three months.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by six years of excessively high tides and disastrous sea-floods all around England. North Norfolk and the south coast were badly hit but the Wash suffered most of all. In 1250 the sea flooded an area from Winchelsea to Wisbech "and uttered such a horrible rushing rumble that it resounded to remote distances inland." The freak conditions were being experienced elsewhere in Europe. In 1254, "the King's factors, coming from Boston fair, stated that the Easteners whom we call Esthonians and Jutlanders, had endured the same suffering from the Eastern seas, which had transgressed their usual bounds and had overflowed the beaches for a great distance. And the most singular fact was that where the sea far off from shore used to be vast and deep, the water had retired, and a sort of dry sandy island had appeared, a place, that is, which had never been revealed to the sun's rays".<sup>13</sup> Exceptional tides also occurred later in the century: a flood of 1287-1288 destroyed the Cinque Port town of Old Winchelsea and in Lincolnshire flooded the town of Boston, breached a newly constructed sea-bank at Holbeach and Whaplode,<sup>14</sup> and ruined the church of St. Peter on the Mablethorpe coast.

12. Quoted in Hallam, Settlement and Society, p.127.

13. Ibid., pp.128-129.

14. Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, pp.19-20; Owen, 'Coastal Erosion', loc. cit., p.331; A.J.F. Dulley, 'The Early History of the Rye Fishing Industry', Sussex Archaeological Collections, CVII, 1969, p.41; W.J. Wren, Ports of the Eastern Counties, 1976, p.14.

Even allowing for the tendentious nature of the sources, it seems clear that these exceptional phenomena were directly linked to the sweeping away of the offshore shoals of the county, at some time before the end of the century. The debris which resulted from their destruction was cast up along the shore and helped to produce the large sand-dunes of the Lindsey foreshore; and a coastline sheltered for four and a half millenia and topographically and geologically unprepared for the experience, was now exposed to whatever forces of tide and weather had formerly operated on the line of the barrier islands. More floods and coastal disasters were an inevitable result, especially since the stormy conditions of the thirteenth century continued into the fourteenth. In 1314 the chronicler of Louth Park Abbey was recording "such a flood of water and rain that the fruits of the earth were entirely destroyed, and divers cattle, both sheep and oxen died".<sup>15</sup> In the mid-fourteenth century seas were severe all over the country, with surges on the Norfolk coast (at Cromer and Dunwich for example) and on the Holderness shore of the Humber, where a number of villages were lost in this period and the town of Ravenserodd was drowned. After 1500, severe storms were again frequent, and the catastrophic one of October 1571<sup>16</sup> did vast amounts of damage along the entire east coast.

15. Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', loc. cit., pp.66-67; Steers, op. cit., pp.414-419; E. Venables, ed., Chronicon Abbatie De Parco Lude, 1891, p.24.

16. Steers, op. cit., p.409 sqq; C.E. Watson, A History of Clee and the Thorpes of Clee, 1901, p.5; R. Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1808 edn. Vol. IV, pp.254-256. Alison Littler 'Fish in English Economy and Society down to the Reformation', (unpublished Wales University Ph.D. thesis), 1979, p.98 also links to these occurrences serious disturbances in the habits of pelagic fish, such as herring, in the North Sea.

Alongside such dramatic events slower processes have also been at work. Spectacular storms frequently add only the final strains to weaknesses in sea-defences which have been building up over a long period, as they appear to have done at Skegness in the sixteenth century. Also, considerable quantities of silt have been deposited along the Lincolnshire coast ever since the destruction of the offshore islands. Much has come from the Holderness cliffs, carried south by the prevailing currents, and has been washed up along the coasts of the Wash, north Lindsey and the Humber.<sup>17</sup>

Combined with the effects of salt working and drainage previously discussed, this has meant that the coastal geography of the county has been in a state of continuous transformation since the end of the thirteenth century. Coastal townships, originally established when conditions were more stable and less unpredictable, have had to adapt to frequent changes in their interactions with the sea, depending on the particular effects which erosion or accumulation have had upon them.

#### Erosion on the Lincolnshire Coastline

Dramatic erosion has understandably attracted the attentions of antiquarians and popular historians in all areas. So powerful is the romance of drowned villages and lost churches, that it is probably advisable to approach such stories, especially as retailed in nineteenth century county directories, with some caution.<sup>18</sup>

17. Bygott, op. cit., p.30.

18. eg., J.R. Boyle, The Lost Towns of the Humber, 1889; see also Steers, op. cit., pp.409-410; cf. D.F. Palmer, 'Eccles by the Sea', Norfolk Archaeology, 12, 1895, and (more recently) R. Parker, Men of Dunwich: The Story of a Vanished Town, 1978.

A considerable body of evidence does exist to substantiate the loss of five medieval churches and several townships between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in Lincolnshire; but erosion has always been confined to specific and fairly localised parts of the county. The area around the mouth of the Humber, where considerable losses of land have already been mentioned, is complicated by the action of Spurn Point upon the waters flowing out of the estuary and their confluence with the open sea. Further south, the protrusion of the coastline between Donna Nook and Wainfleet has rendered it, for obvious reasons, especially vulnerable to damage from the high tides of the North Sea.

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In the Humber estuary itself, the growth and decline of the maritime town of Ravenserodd is further testimony to the unpredictable conditions of the sea in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. An inquisition, taken some time between 1280 and 1290, found that it had been founded by William de Fortibus, Earl of Albermarl, on an island of sand and stones cast up by the sea "fifty years ago and more". Because of its convenience of access, it soon grew from a collection of huts to an important town, which severely damaged the trade of both Grimsby and Hedon nearby. By the early fourteenth century it had become one of the most important fish-importing towns in the country, with a borough charter and a thirty-day annual fair, and it sent two representatives to Parliament. It was, said the Meaux Abbey chronicler, "an exceedingly famous

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19. Bygott, op. cit., p.30; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.20; Steers, op. cit., pp.420-423. See also Thirsk, op. cit., p.144.

20. Boyle, op. cit., pp.12-15; Littler, op. cit., pp.75-76; W.G. Hoskins, Local History In England, 1972 edn., pp.86-87. Boyle dates the inquisition as 1284-6; Hoskins says 1290.

borough, devoted to merchandise, as well as many fisheries, most abundantly furnished with ships and burgesses amongst the boroughs of that sea-coast". But, as he put it, "chiefly by wrong-doing on the sea, by its wicked works and piracies, it provoked the wrath of God against itself beyond measure. Wherefore, within the few following years, the said town, by those inundations of the sea and of the Humber, was destroyed to the foundations, so that nothing of value was left". The date of the final destruction is unclear, but sometime between about 1346 and 1356 the bank of sand began to be regularly over-run again by the tides, and the foundations of the chapel there were flooded "so that the corpses and bones of the dead there buried horribly appeared". By 1355 the Abbot of Meaux had been ordered to gather up the bodies still remaining and re-inter them at Easington, in Holderness.<sup>21</sup>

The three hamlets of Oole, Thrunscoe and Itterby (collectively known as Cleethorpes), probably geographically the closest settlements to Ravenserrod, may have suffered extensive loss of land in the same period. White's 1882 Directory linked with the destruction of Ravenserodd 700 acres of land and a church supposedly lost at Thrunscoe "by the encroachments of the Ocean", a claim that needs treating with some wariness but may reflect a genuine tradition to that effect.<sup>22</sup> Similar claims have been made at various times for the catastrophic erosion of Oole and Itterby in the late medieval period. The nearby hamlet of Holme, once the property

21. Boyle, op. cit., p.47.

22. White's Directory of Lincolnshire, 1882, p.241; F. Baker, The Story of Cleethorpes, 1953, p.10; Watson, op. cit., pp.35-36; C.W. Foster, ed., Final Concords of the County of Lincoln 1186-1250, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 17), 1920, pp.111-1111.

of Grimsby Abbey, probably did have most of its houses and fields eaten away by the sea, although even here the date is by no means clear. In all these places, the loss of some land seems to have given rise to exaggerated tales of complete engulfment, but the erosion of the boulder-clay cliff at Cleethorpes is certainly no myth. Abraham de la Pryme, a Yorkshire antiquarian, witnessed it in action in the seventeenth century, as "huge pieces is undermined, and brought down every great tide as bigg as churches together, and the people of the place says that they have by tradition, that there has been several miles length of land wash'd away, and people have been forced to pull down their houses and build them again funder off"<sup>23</sup>. The people of Grimsby told him that they believed these scourings had been responsible for the blocking of their haven over the centuries, although with what justification is not clear.<sup>24</sup>

The erosion on the coasts of south Lindsey, between Skegness and Mablethorpe, is better documented than that on the Humber shore. Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries the villages of Mablethorpe, Trusthorpe, Sutton-in-the-Marsh (now known as Sutton-on-Sea), Mumby Chapel, Ingoldmells and Skegness all suffered major losses of land. Some natural sea-defences in the shape of coastal dunes and salt-marsh had always existed, and from the fourteenth century onwards, artificial sea-banks were maintained, at great cost, to try to halt the inroads the sea was making. But it was clearly a

23. The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme, (Surtees Society, Vol. LIV), 1870, pp.153-155. I am grateful to Mr R.W. Ambler of Hull University Department of Extramural Studies for a reference to this.

24. E. Page, ed., V.C.H. Lincolnshire, vol. 11, 1906, p.390; cf. E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970, pp.21-22.

losing battle, in which the inhabitants of the coastal villages paid a double price. Not only did they risk the loss of their land because of inundations, or because a former sea-bank had to be abandoned in favour of a defensive line further behind it; they also had to accommodate the cost of the repairs frequently necessary to the banks, and the need, on occasions, to construct entirely new ones. This not only involved the levy of an additional rate ("acresilver") on all land thus precariously defended, but diverted local labour for extended periods away from its cultivation. Not surprisingly, the coastal environs of south Lindsey were an impoverished area, in marked contrast to those of Holland.<sup>25</sup>

Ingoldmells and Skegness have always been among the most easterly points on the Lincolnshire coast. At Skegness, as the name implies, settlers had found a promontory or small cape, which until the fourteenth century was sheltered behind the barrier shoals, and a network of dunes and beaches running south from the Ingoldmells shore. This produced a safe haven or harbour and gave Skegness a considerable maritime importance locally. Waincots and wood were imported here for the building of Lord Cromwell's castle at Tattershall in the

<sup>26</sup> 1430s. But the loss of the offshore islands must have put the town under constant attack from the sea, and in 1525 or 1526 the protective dunes gave way, with disastrous results. The ecclesiastical subsidy collected in the diocese of Lincoln

25. A.E.B. Owen, 'The Upkeep of the Lindsey Sea Defences 1550-1650', Lincolnshire Historian, 2, 1963, pp.23-29. Some of the cost was met by villages in the middle marsh, but coastal ones had to pay the bulk. See also Thirsk, op. cit., p.144.

26. Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, pp.20-21; H.M.C. Report on the Manuscripts of the Lord de Lisle and Dudley, Vol.1, 1925, pp.213-215; W.D. Simpson, ed., The Building Accounts of Tattershall Castle 1434-1472, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.55), 1960, p.70.

in 1526 noted "ista ecclesia et magna pars parochiae fuit demersa anno elapso et sic adhuc remanet".<sup>27</sup> If whoever made this note nurtured hopes that the sea would eventually retreat, he was to be disappointed. John Leland's famous account of Skegness makes it clear that by 1543 the whole of the old town had been swept away beyond hope of retrieval. "To Skegness sumtyme a great haven toune ..... Mr. Paynell sayid onto me that he could prove that there was ons an haven and a towne wauillid having also a castelle. The old toune is clene consumid, and eten up with the se, part of a chirch of it stode a late. At low waters appeare yet manifest tokens of old buildinges. For old Skegnes is now buildid a pore new thing".<sup>28</sup> Along with the town in this process had gone the hamlets of East and West Meales (meales = dunes) and the eponymous "ness" (which later re-formed some miles to the south as Gibraltar point).<sup>29</sup>

Between 1543 and the end of the sixteenth century the sea had advanced still further, as the depositions made to an exchequer inquisition of 1637-8 made clear. Henry Bushie of Friskney, aged only about 38, remembered when a house, thorns and trees grew on the old bank called "the meales" at Skegness and also recalled a coney warren there. Most of it had since been overwhelmed by the sea. What he was describing was

27. J.B. Whitwell, Roman Lincolnshire, 1970, p.51; A.E.B. Owen, 'Coastal Erosion in East Lincolnshire', Lincolnshire Historian, 9, 1952, p.340.
28. L. Toulmin Smith, ed., Leland's itinerary in England and Wales, Vol.IV, 1964, p.181. The "towne wauillid having also a castelle" is probably a reference to the Roman shore-fort known to have existed in this area, possibly the terminus of a ferry across the Wash. Leland frequently uses "castle" in this context - see Whitwell, op. cit., pp.51-53.
29. Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.21.

evidently the southern end of a much larger bank recalled by Robert Creswell of Burgh-le-Marsh, which had decayed some years before. Edward Williamson of Winthorpe, supposedly 76 years old, said the sea had been constantly gaining ground at the expense of the meales for as long as he could remember.

The evidence relating to the church which had disappeared is particularly illuminating. In Leland's time it was obviously not far from the low-water mark, a fact borne out by many of the deponents. Robert Hutchinson of Wainfleet said that the church and part of the town "was vtterly lost & swallowed vp by the rage of the Seas, and the place where the towne & church did stand, now remaine about half a myle in the Seas, beyond the low water marke, as he this depon[en]t, when he was a boy heard ould folke saie". Edward Williamson spoke from personal experience, "haueing beene in the foundac[i]on of ye same church in his youth and haue seene the funt that stood therein". Dorothy Dickinson, a 64 year old widow, remembered how her father, "vsing to goe by boate to Lynn hath affirmed that he hath seene p[ar]te of the steeple of the said lost church stand better than two myles w[i]thin the seas". Robert Creswell had not only spoken with old people who had seen the well in the old churchyard at low tide, but knew that a hamlet called West Meales had also disappeared; "and the reason that causeth this depon[en]t to beleue the same is, for that the p[ar]tie that told this depon[en]t thereof said he had herd an ancient book written in parchm[en]t diu[er]s times redd vnto him that did expresse the names of diu[er]s men that lived in the same hamlett, and the quantitie of ground[es] they had

therin, and that diu[er]s of them were of his name &  
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kindred".

Further north, along the same stretch of the south Lindsey coast, churches and land had disappeared in a number of other villages in the course of the sixteenth century. When the sea-banks at Sutton-in-the-Marsh fell into decay in the 1630s, the nervous parishoners wrote to the Privy Council, complaining that a similar state of affairs some eighty years before had cost them dearly: "our ancient parish church, some houses inhabited, and very much of the best grounds in our said town was destroyed by the sea and is now sea".<sup>31</sup> At

Ingoldmells and Addlethorpe, erosion had so impoverished the villages, that by the mid-seventeenth century both places were applying to the bishop for faculty to pull down their chancels. Mablethorpe St. Peter had been under attack over a period of several centuries: the church was seriously damaged in the storms of 1287, and the village was flooded when a sea-bank gave way in 1335. During the sixteenth century it lost its church and a considerable proportion of its land, probably in the same surges which had done so much damage further south. An account of 1602 speaks of both nave and chancel being swallowed up by the sea "above 50 or 60 years past". A tradition (although no more) suggests that another church at nearby Trusthorpe disappeared in the same decade, along with about a quarter of a mile of land.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the coastal

30. P.R.O., E134/12 & 13 Chas I, Hil. 1; E134/13 Chas I, East. 4; E134/12 Chas I, Mich. 16. See also Thirsk, op. cit., pp.144-145.

31. Quoted in Owen, 'Coastal Erosion, loc. cit., p.334. At Sutton, in 1954, a number of building sites were revealed at low water when the sand was washed away by storms.

32. Ibid., pp.331-333; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.21. The present church at Trusthorpe is dated 1606.

hamlet of Mumby Chapel was almost totally levelled in probably the worst storm of the sixteenth century, in 1571. In this particular case a graphic account has survived in Holinshed's chronicles: "Mumbie chappell, the whole towne was lost, except Three houses. A ship was driven vpon an house, the sailors thinking they had beene vpon a rocke, committed themsleues to God: and three of the marriners lept out of the ship, and chanced to take hold on the house top, and so saued themselues ..... Likewise, the church was wholie ouethrowne except the  
33  
steeple".

#### Accumulation and Silting on the Lincolnshire Coastline

Dramatic though the experience of villages like Mablethorpe and Mumby Chapel were, the majority of coastal settlements in Lincolnshire have lived with a gradual retreat of the sea, for one reason or another, over the centuries, rather than persistent advances. This has not made them any safer from flooding: the same tempest which assailed Mumby Chapel in 1571 carried off thousands of sheep and cattle grazing on normally safe marshlands in Holland and Lindsey. But such inundations have only been temporary, and the waters have usually retreated again afterwards. Even in the midst of areas liable to loss of land, some places have escaped comparatively unaffected, as Anderby and Huttoft in south Lindsey appear to have done. Silting and accumulation, the product of both natural processes and salt manufacture, have produced far more significant topographical alteration over a  
34  
wider area since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

33. Holinshed, Chronicles, IV, pp.254-256.

34. Ibid; Owen, 'Coastal Erosion, loc. cit., p.331.

Between Grimsby and Barton-on-Humber, for example, there were a considerable number of creeks and inlets, whose importance by the sixteenth century had clearly declined as a result of such changes. At some of them, slow accumulations of marsh pasture, because of the advances of saltworking, may have had the same effects as further south: salterns are known to have existed, for example, at East Halton and Stallingborough in the earlier Middle Ages. In addition, the Humber shore had to cope with tides which were said in 1356 to be running an average of four feet higher than they had formerly done, carrying onto the shore large quantities of mud and silt. This alluvium could easily clog the mouths of the creeks, through which drained only small becks, with not enough scour to dislodge it.<sup>35</sup>

An important medieval harbour existed at Immingham, where alien merchants were apparently resident in the thirteenth century and tolls were being taken on salt, wood and other goods entering or leaving the haven. Small ports also existed in the fourteenth century at "Skottermuth" (Halton Skitter) at the mouth of Skitter Beck, Barrow-on-Humber and Stallingborough. By the end of the fourteenth century the decline in documentary references to these places suggest that they had decayed, probably under the action of silting. The first complete survey of havens in the area, taken in 1565, confirms this. By then, the only vessels to be found in them were small boats of between half a ton and three tons burden

35. Rudkin and Owen, 'Medieval Salt Industry', loc. cit., pp.76-79; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, pp.30-31; Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., p.98. These becks have been so altered by later drainage work that it is impossible to represent of them on Map Four.

"occupied som[m]e in fishinge & som[m]e as ferry botes in  
36  
car[r]ying men & horses to hull".

The same influences, acting on the shoreline of the Wash area of Lincolnshire, have had far more radical consequences than the blocking up of a few comparatively small creeks. A changing pattern of sands and mud-flats has always characterized the Wash shore and much of this is an accumulation of silt washed southwards by the tides. But left to itself it has always been in a state of virtual balance between the forces of erosion and silting, and the mud flats in front of the salt-marshes have been advancing and retreating  
37  
inconclusively for hundreds of years. But by the eleventh century salt manufacturing in the Wash region was already an important element of the local economy, using turf cut from the fens to provide the fuel, with which to boil off the water. Large concentrations of salterns are revealed by the Domesday survey around Wainfleet, and also on the edges of Bicker Haven in the villages of Donington, Bicker, Swineshead, Quadring and Gosberton. In the ensuing centuries there was probably a greater concentration of saltworking in this area than anywhere else in the country. Consequently the topographical changes produced by the industry were both more widespread and much swifter than those which occurred in Lindsey. Many major havens and estuaries had been all but consumed by the "new

36. A.R. Tailby, Immingham: The Story of a Village, 1970, p.37; M.W. Barley, 'Lincolnshire Rivers in the Middle Ages', L.A.A.S.R.P., 1, 1936, p.37; Pipe Roll 6 John (Pipe Roll Society, Vol.LXI), 1940, pp. xliii-xliv, 218; R. Brown, Notes on the Earlier History of Barton on Humber, Vol.11, 1908, pp.206-207; Littler, op. cit., pp.277-279; P.R.O. SP 12/38/23(1).

37. F.J.T. Kestner, 'The Old Coastline of the Wash: A Contribution to the Understanding of Loose-Boundary Processes', Geographical Journal, CXXVIII, 1962, pp.457 sqq.

lands" between the time of Domesday and the sixteenth  
38  
century.

In the fourteenth century the Nene estuary extended from Wisbech in the south across an area on both sides of the modern county boundary between Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Between Lynn and Sutton-in-Holland (Long Sutton) lay a wide area of marshland, which presented a considerable barrier between the two counties. It was in traversing this that King John's baggage train suffered its famous mishap in 1216, and even in the sixteenth century travellers heading south were escorted by guides from Sutton across the intervening marsh. Sutton itself, now five or six miles from the sea, once had access to it via a number of creeks, all of them now lost. In the early seventeenth century an inquisition into land gained from the sea noted that Hubb Creek, Andrell Creek and Shipbecker Creek had all disappeared in the recent past, and older residents could also remember catching fish in Westmere  
39  
Creek, which was then rapidly sanding up.

The position of the sea in the fourteenth century in this area can be seen from the path of the "old sea bank" still marked on the Ordnance Survey map, but now over four miles from the shoreline, running from a point west of Moulton Sea's End as far as the village of Fleet. Saltworking was taking place on the seaward side of it, but even in the sixteenth century, sizeable creeks of salt water passed very close by and could be

38. Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.38; A.R. Bridbury, England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages, 1955, pp.17-22; Darby, Domesday Geography, p.69; Carus-Wilson, 'Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', loc. cit., pp.187-188; Hallam, 'Salt Making in the Lincolnshire Fenland', loc. cit., pp.85 sqq.

39. Thirsk, op. cit., pp.12-13, 18 (and note).

navigated by fishing boats. The inquests of the early seventeenth century heard from one resident of Holbeach that a creek of the sea at Whaplode once came right up to the bank, and "the wives of the fishermen could stand thereupon and call<sup>40</sup> their husbands home for dinner".

Like the Nene outfall, the estuary of the River Welland had once been much broader and embraced a large tract of marshland liable to flooding. Converging with it was a channel, which joined the village of Surfleet to the sea, and it contributed vessels regularly to the fleets impressed by<sup>41</sup> Edward III.

To the north of this an arm of the sea, still known by its medieval name of Bicker Haven, reached inland some five and a half miles as far as a pre-Conquest sea-bank, and through it drained the rivers Slea and Witham until the drainage pattern changed during the twelfth century. Villages now far inland such as Sutterton, Wigtoft, Quadring and Gosberton once looked out onto this tidal estuary and possible medieval mud-berths have been identified in all of them. New lands were encroaching on the haven before the thirteenth century, but it<sup>42</sup> was not fully drained until the mid-seventeenth century.

Between Boston and Wainfleet there had been at least two large inlets or creeks of the sea in the period prior to the fourteenth century. The first, Toft Haven, extended several miles inland in the neighbourhood of Boston, with the

40. Ibid., p.18.

41. eg., in 1369 (P.R.O. E101/29/31 etc.)

42. Hallam, Settlement and Society, pp.40-50; idem, New Lands of Elloe, p.2; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.28; Wren, op. cit., p.177; W.H. Wheeler, A History of the Fens of South Lincolnshire, 1897, pp.292-294. The haven was also known as "Aqua de Swin" in the thirteenth century (cf. "Swineshead", the village at its northern end).

villages of Fishtoft and Freiston on either side of it. Much land had clearly been reclaimed in the area prior to 1300, but Pishey Thompson, the nineteenth century historian of Boston, claimed that "a creek of considerable magnitude" once flowed from Fishtoft church down to the Witham; "and persons were living within the memory of the present generation who remembered the fishing-boats coming so near the church, that the fishermen used to dry their nets upon the wall of the churchyard". Similarly, at Freiston, both Pishey Thompson and, more recently, Hallam have confirmed that a tidal creek once came very close to the church. The manor court rolls of Freiston record a fine imposed in 1476 on William Rumfare for "coming to anchor on le Schelp (the Scalp)", a sandbank close to which the outlet of the haven probably came.

Wrangle Haven, seven or eight miles north of this, is also well recorded. West, the historian of the village, has suggested that it declined rapidly after about 1200, when salt-working and new lands would certainly have been constricting it. But there is clear evidence that the haven was still open and very active in the middle of the fourteenth century when vessels from Wrangle were taking Lincolnshire salt to help cure herrings at Yarmouth herring fair. Pishey Thompson's comments are again worth quoting: "It is traditionally asserted that vessels formerly sailed up the harbour to within a quarter of a mile of the church; the sea-bank is now two miles from it. In turning up some roads about twenty years since, evident

43. Hallam, Settlement and Society, pp.80-85; P. Thompson, The History and Antiquities of Boston, 1856, pp.478, 520; L.A.O., 2 ANC/5/56.

44. eg. Littler, op. cit., pp.277-279; cf. F. West 'The Social and Economic History of the East Fen Village of Wrangle 1603-1837', (unpublished Leicester University Ph.D. thesis), 1967, p.5.

portions of boats and other vessels, and cannon-balls, and various warlike implements, were found not far from where the market is said to have been held". This is probably the same harbour of which Leland heard tales at nearby Friskney, "wher sum say was ons a havenet, but I have not the certente of it.<sup>45</sup> It is now a mile and a half from the shore".

The Lindsey coast had its own peculiar characteristics. William Camden described it in the early seventeenth century as "chopped all along by little arms of the sea. It has but few towns, because there are but few harbours, and many shelves of land along the shores".<sup>46</sup> The latter were part of a network of dunes, storm beaches and samphire beds which line it; and over them, in the area between Tetney and North Somercotes, five square miles of industrial waste, produced by centuries of salt making has been scattered. Across this a number of marshland becks and artificial drains run out into the sea. Although the shoreline itself has altered less than that of the Wash, the combination of salt-making, enclosure and natural accretion has distorted or<sup>47</sup> destroyed a number of once significant creeks and havens.

Somewhere south of the village of Theddlethorpe was located the harbour known until the eighteenth century as Wilgrip Haven. Like many of these lesser creeks it had no settlement directly related to it, although it acted as an outlet for Theddlethorpe and was probably on the boundary of Theddlethorpe and Mablethorpe parishes, where a channel (now

45. Thompson, op. cit., p.609; Leland's Itinerary, IV, p.181.

46. W. Camden, Britannia, 1758 edn., Vol. I, pp.568-569.

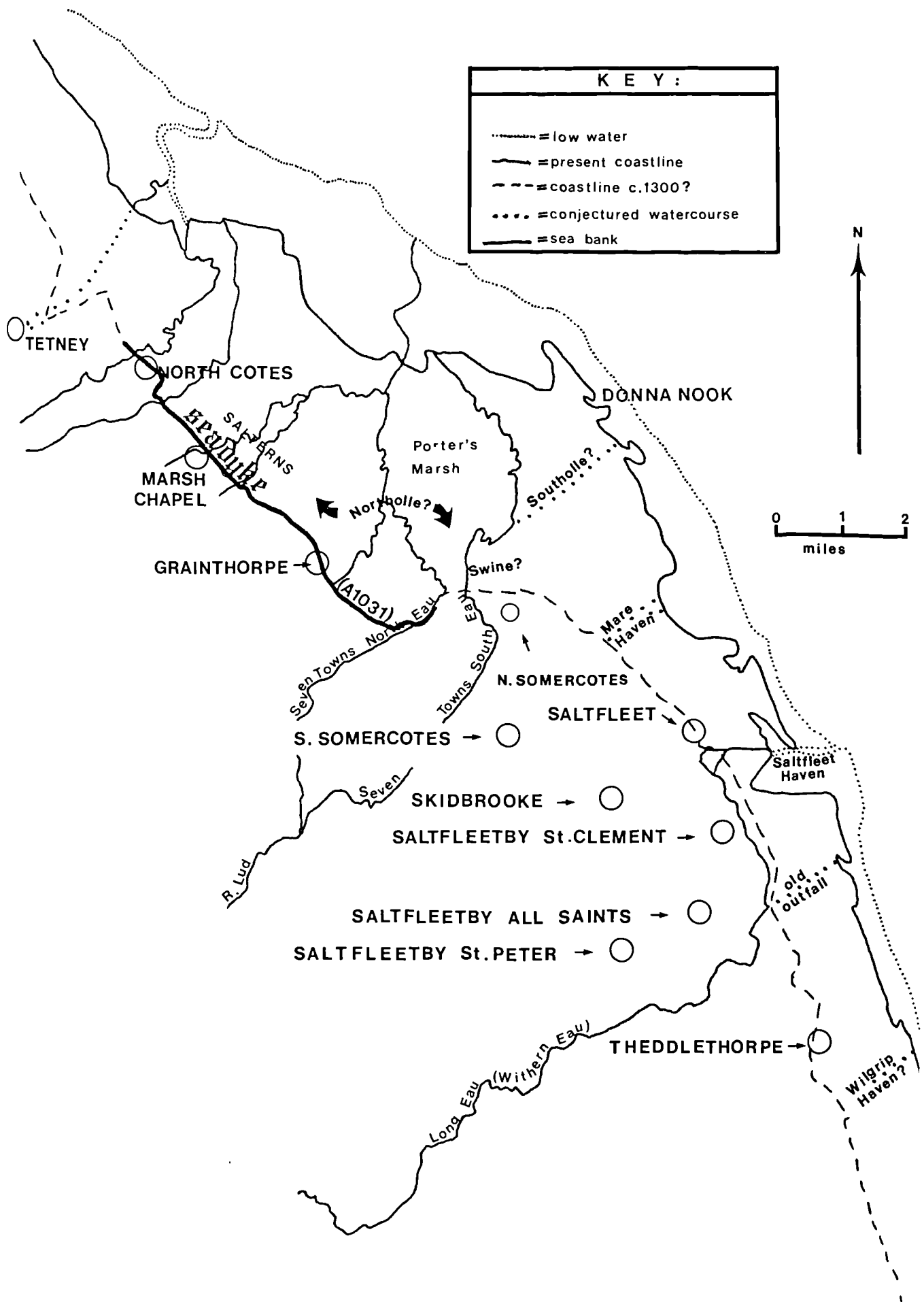
47. Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, pp.20, 38-39; idem, 'Coastal Evolution', loc. cit., pp.66-67; Bygott, op. cit., p.36.

lost by later reclamations) once ran out between the dunes and the sea through "the old Gowt". Although never rivalling Saltfleet or Wainfleet in importance, it had once had some coasting trade and fourteenth century references suggest that its isolation may have made it a favourite haunt of the sort preferred by the pirates and smugglers discussed in Chapter 2. Its complete disappearance from the map over the last 150 years is illustrative of the topographical problems posed by this  
48  
area.

Various stages in the evolution of Saltfleet haven have left documentary evidence. The shape and location of the present creek bears very little resemblance to the inlet which existed in the thirteenth century when quite extensive salt-working seems to have been taking place up to half a mile above  
49  
the head of the present haven. After the erosion of the barrier shoals, however, clogging silt and sand were a perennial problem: so much so that in the fourteenth century the lord appears to have undertaken a formidable engineering project, to divert the Withern Eau (whose original outfall at Saltfleetby is preserved in the parish boundary), along a canal of about two miles in length, into Saltfleet haven. Since then, radical alterations have continued to be made (particularly in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries), changing the shape, line and length of the inlet, not only to keep it open for traffic but to provide essential drainage and

48. A.E.B. Owen, 'Wilgrip Haven and Theddlethorpe', Lincolnshire Historian, II, 1955-6, pp.37-41. The spot is clearly marked on the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey, roughly on the site of the present "Haven Cottage".

49. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.91-92, 98-100.



flood control for the surrounding marshland villages. The prevailing action of tides and longshore drift has always acted as an additional complication: the current outfall is over a mile south-east of that constructed in the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

Just north of Saltfleet, in the same parish of Skidbrooke, there was a harbour once known as "Marr" or "Mare Haven", which was still active in 1279 when the Hundred Rolls demarked Alan de Conisholme's claim to take wreck of the sea between the haven of Saltfleetby (ie. Saltfleet) and the haven of Marr, and between Marr and the haven of Swine. Since Swine haven can be clearly demonstrated to have been in the area of Grainthorpe, Marr must have lain somewhere between the two, and A.E.B. Owen has convincingly shown that it can be identified with a place in the north of Skidbrooke, already known by that time as "the old haven". It was plainly in decay by then, probably because of the loss of the offshore shoals. Its location is now marked by a gap in the dunes at Skidbrooke North End known as "the Warren", in an angle of the boundary between Skidbrooke and North Somercotes (Marr, mere =<sup>51</sup> boundary).

The topographical complexities of this pale into insignificance on consideration of the coastline between North

50. A more detailed reconstruction of the evolving topography of Saltfleet Haven will be found in Appendix V, q.v.
51. C.W. Foster and T. Longley, eds., The Lincolnshire Domesday and the Lindsey Survey (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.19), 1924, pp.214-215; K. Major, ed., The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, Vol. V, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.34), 1940, pp.141. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.88-90; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.20; L.A.O., 2 ANC 1/7/27. Both Owen and Robinson attribute the disappearance of this haven to silting from natural causes, but the presence of a salt-rent in 2 ANC 1/7/27 suggests salt working may also have contributed.

Somercotes and Tetney. Here the network of channels passing out to the sea across Tetney High Sands and the abandoned saltworkings of Marsh Chapel have altered so many times that it renders identification of the various navigable channels which have existed in the region extremely difficult. Salting was still going on at Marsh Chapel into the late sixteenth century, long after it had ceased in most other places. Mare haven was one of a number of former outlets associated with the Seven Towns South Eau, a branch of the River Lud, whose former course can probably be traced along the boundary between South and North Somercotes. The haven formerly known as Swine was another, and its position can be determined only because of the existence of a stream known as Swine dike, once marking the parish boundary between Grainthorpe and North Somercotes, about a mile south of the present Grainthorpe Haven. It is known to have been open until the early sixteenth century, when the twilight of the salt making at Marsh Chapel used coal imported through it, in place of turf, to boil off the sea water. Leland recorded a "dok or creke" at Marsh Chapel which may<sup>52</sup> relate to it, although this is by no means clear. Another branch of the same river found its way to the sea somewhere midway between Donna Nook and the former Mare Haven, although its exact course has been obscured by changes in the local topography brought about by seventeenth century enclosure. This may have been the "Somercotes Haven" mentioned in some of<sup>53</sup> the sixteenth century Exchequer Port Books.

52. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., p.93; Kaye, 'Church Dedications', pp.49-50; Foster and Longley, eds., op. cit., lxiii-lxiv; Brown, op. cit., pp.206-207; Robinson, Lincolnshire Seaside, p.39; Leland's Itinerary, IV, p.181.

53. See, for example, Saxton's map of 1574.

In the same period various records mention the havens of "Northolle" and "Southolle" situated somewhere in this area, but none of them identify their locations with any precision. A survey of 1565 twice refers to "Garnthorpe called the Northolle", indicating that Northolle is to be equated with Grainthorpe; but since several creeks existed at Grainthorpe at that time the information is less helpful than it might appear. William Haiward's highly detailed map of Marsh Chapel in 1595 shows an outlet at Grainthorpe of appropriate magnitude, but slightly north of it, also, a silted channel labelled by him<sup>54</sup> "the old haven". Either one may have been Northolle, and either may have been Leland's "dok or creke". Southolle is equally elusive, although it clearly lay somewhere between Northolle and Somercotes village. It is possible that Southolle was synonymous with Somercotes haven and Northolle with the outlet at Grainthorpe in this period, particularly since the two branches of the River Lud which would, in that case, have drained into them are now known as the "Seven Towns South Eau" and the "Seven Towns North Eau" respectively. Whatever may have been the case, the enclosure of Porter's Marsh in the 1630s disturbed the old layout of the streams and drains and a new Grainthorpe haven was dug. This, in turn, was filled in and replaced by the present one, half a mile further<sup>55</sup> north, in the nineteenth century.

The traces of former havens at Tetney and North Cotes are more clearly identifiable on the modern map. At Tetney,

54. P.R.O., SP12/38/23(1); Beresford and St. Joseph, op. cit., pp.263-265. See also footnote 2, above.

55. Foster and Longley, eds., op. cit., pp.lxiii-lxiv. I am grateful to Mr. C.J. Sturman for discussing the various problems relating to Northolle and Southolle with me.

the marsh was creeping outwards, just as at Marsh Chapel and Grainthorpe, so that the place known as "Shipdok", at which coasting vessels had loaded and unloaded in the sixteenth century, had been abandoned by 1610 in favour of a location half a mile away from it. There had been a port at North Cotes in the early medieval period, although Robinson claims that it was warped up by the late thirteenth century, when mention is made of action taken in an attempt to clear it out.

Nevertheless, Edward III's arrest of shipping in 1336-1337 found at least one and possibly several ships in the harbour there, sizeable enough to be worth staying for duties abroad.<sup>56</sup>

The present chapter has dwelt at some length on the fluctuations and transformations which have characterized the geographical morphology of the Lincolnshire seaboard. Topographical change necessarily underlies any consideration of the maritime economy of the county, because Lincolnshire villages and hamlets in the neighbourhood of the coast have undergone frequent re-orientations in their relationship with it, which have in turn inevitably led to economic and social adaptations. A small town with a safe harbour, such as Skegness, could find itself not only bereft of its haven, but economically devastated, as Leland suggests that it was, by assaults from the sea over a relatively short space of time. Inlets such as those at Bicker Haven or Wrangle could warp up over a period of years, to the point at which seagoing commerce or fishing were severely constrained, and eventually destroyed.

56. Thirsk, op. cit., pp.63-64; Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', loc. cit., p.63; idem., North-East Coast of Lincolnshire, pp.10-11; P.R.O., C47/2/30, m. 2d.

At Wrangle, the manufacture of the very commodity - salt - on which the village built its maritime trade, was responsible for the eventual destruction of that trade. It was not a simple matter of gradual decay over the centuries, because in some areas, as one haven decayed, another replaced it (as in the case of Mare or Swine). Elsewhere, successive periods of decay were followed by action to regain proper access to the sea: this has been the experience, for example, of Saltfleet.

Few coastal villages could hope to sustain and develop prolonged economic reliance on seafaring activities, when the frontier between land and sea was so variable. Most of them had been settled by and for landmen, who were interested in reclaiming land and producing salt. The prevailing topography positively encouraged agriculture and rural industry, whereas it tended to discourage maritime pursuits - a reversal of the position in many of the regions famous for their "fishing villages". As the next chapter will suggest, it was how economic influences worked on this balance that determined the source of Lincolnshire's maritime development.

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#### 4. THE MARITIME TRADE OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE HAVENS

In order to understand the fluctuating economic fortunes of the Lincolnshire creeks in the period under discussion, it is necessary to turn to a number of diverse and sometimes contradictory sources, falling into four main categories: for the fourteenth century, the Exchequer accounts compiled by royal officials in the process of impressing and paying for military and auxiliary fleets during Edward III's reign; for the fifteenth century, the particulars of account of the customers and controllers at Boston; and for the sixteenth century, government surveys produced in the 1560s and 1580s, and Exchequer port-books which give detailed accounts of the local coasting trade. Because there is a loose correspondence between the material and the century under consideration it will be convenient to study this evidence chronologically and separately, before attempting to bring it together for an assessment of what it reveals as the overall pattern of economic relationships between the maritime villages and the sea.

It should be emphasised that these sources do not comprise a consistent or coherent corpus of evidence in the conventional sense, being compiled in different periods and for very different reasons. As a result, they are uneven in quantity, quality and (most importantly) functional aspirations, so that extreme caution is required in interpreting uncritically the data which can be produced from them. Nevertheless, they still merit thorough examination, because (for all their imperfections) theirs is the only testimony to the changing nature of seagoing trade at the

Lincolnshire havens, and the only real chronology of their involvements with the sea which can be produced.

### Maritime Activity In The Fourteenth Century

#### (1) Sources

The periodic impressments of shipping which took place during Edward III's reign have left behind them a large number of accounts concerned with the payment of masters and crews. Whilst on royal service, mariners were paid at a standard 3d. a day, masters and constables at double that rate, and boys or apprentices at somewhat less. After 1350, additional bonuses were sometimes allowed (in common with the general trend of wages in the post-Black Death period). All such disbursements had to be accounted for by Exchequer officials, who were normally sent down to the assembly points of fleets (such as Orwell and Sandwich) at intervals of anything from a week to several months. Their returns now form part of an amorphous body of documents at the Public Record Office known as "Exchequer Various Accounts".<sup>1</sup> Occasionally (especially before the 1350s) the Wardrobe rather than the Exchequer was the organ of these advances to masters and crew, and a smaller quantity of evidence also survives from this source; and sometimes customs officials at Boston were required to make payments and recorded them as an allowance to be offset against their annual revenue. In the case of the fleet

1. P.R.O Class E101. H.J. Hewitt, The Organization of War under Edward III 1338-62, 1966, p.77; A.R. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Trade, Politics and Society' (unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1975), p.135; A.T. Hall, 'The Employment of Naval Forces in the Reign of Edward III' (unpublished Leeds University M.A. thesis, 1955), pp.80-86 passim.

assembled in 1369, for example, William de Spaigne and William de Harecourt were responsible for issuing such payments to Lincolnshire mariners, and Hugh Fastolf for expenditure in connection with local soldiers and sailors "in obsequio reg<sup>2</sup>[is] sup[er] mari".

Before any of this evidence can be examined, certain explanatory points need to be made about its nature. It was per se the product of increased governmental activity at times of war, and its volume and quality is accordingly dependent less on the actual importance of the maritime townships it records than on the vigour with which war was being pursued, and the precise requirements of transportation and logistics which this involved. The majority of the documentation for Lincolnshire is concentrated into two periods during Edward III's reign: between 1336 and the Crécy campaign of 1346, and during the years between 1369 and the death of the king when the French were on the offensive. For nine years after the Treaty of Brétigny (1360-1369) the record is virtually non-existent and during the campaigns of the 1350s the contributions of Lincolnshire to fleets were small and furnished almost entirely by Boston and Grimsby. The exact relationship between the commercial strength, shipping resources and naval obligations of a harbour was therefore far from absolute.

So far as smaller creeks and havens were concerned, the most serious problem is that their strength is bound to be under-represented because an unknown proportion of their vessels were too tiny to be liable for military or supply duties. Reference has already been made to the lower tonnage

2. P.R.O Class C47, Chancery Miscellanea (Army and Navy); P.R.O E122/7/12 (account of de Spaigne and de Harecourt, 1369).

limits sometimes specifically set by the crown for the staying and arrest of vessels: the orders of 1324, for example, specified all vessels "capable of carrying 40 tuns of wine and upwards". The smallest ships recorded in any of the Lincolnshire fleets were 18 tons burden (the "Thomas" of Skegness and the "Peter" of Saltfleet in 1369), but the average<sup>3</sup> was much nearer to 40 or 50 tons. Indeed, in 1383 the king sent orders to several of his agents in East Anglia that they were to release "divers small vessels ... called 'doggers' if they exceed not sixteen tuns burden, and are not sufficient for shipment of horses". Their owners protested adamantly that "they used not heretofore to be arrested for any expedition for<sup>4</sup> that they are not sufficient for shipment of horses". Such criteria undoubtedly protected many of the doggers, crayers and keels which between them must have made up a sizeable proportion of the craft at smaller landing-places. The owners of fishing boats were especially at pains to stress the inadequacies of their smacks: all 10 boats in Scarborough harbour in 1336, for instance, were "insufficient because broken", "small and without tackle" or (most implausibly of all) had no master. Fifteen vessels between 5 and 24 tons were exempted at Heacham in Norfolk in the same year, and even one ship of 40 tons at Hartlepool was "not sufficient to cross beyond the seas because small (sic), old and in bad<sup>5</sup> condition". The Exchequer accounts, therefore, had an inevitable bias towards the larger and more seaworthy ships to found at any haven, and may also have been affected by the

3. v. Appendix I(C).

4. Cal. Cl. Rolls. Rich. II (2), 1381-1385, p.261.

5. Cal. Inq. Misc., II, 1307-1309, pp.365 (no. 1495), 367 (No. 1500); P.R.O C47/2/25 (19).

capacity of owners, masters and fishermen to exploit chinks in the bureaucracy which sought to deprive them of their essential means of making a living.

(ii) Vessels

Table 1 summarizes the number of vessels from Lincolnshire recorded in three fleets of the fourteenth century for which reasonably full listings are extant. Information relating to the period 1337-1339 is partly compiled from an Exchequer account recording payments to mariners by William de Kyngeston, in 1338, for the fleet which was assembled for the initial assault on France. This can conveniently be matched to the detailed (but somewhat confused) list of deserting and recalcitrant vessels made in association with the original

Table 1. Number of Lincolnshire Vessels Recorded in Three Impressed Fleets, 1337-1369.

| PLACE            | 1337-1339 |       | 1346 |       | 1369 |       |
|------------------|-----------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
|                  | No        | %     | No   | %     | No   | %     |
| Barton-on-Humber | 12        | 22.64 | 8    | 19.04 | 6    | 17.64 |
| Grainthorpe      | 6         | 11.32 | 1    | 2.38  | 2    | 5.88  |
| Saltfleet        | 8         | 15.09 | 2    | 4.76  | 7    | 20.58 |
| Wainfleet        | 2         | 3.77  | 2    | 4.76  | 0    | 0     |
| Wrangle          | 3         | 5.66  | 1    | 2.38  | 2    | 5.88  |
| Others           | 8         | 15.09 | 0    | 0     | 6    | 17.64 |
| Total            | 39        | 73.58 | 14   | 33.33 | 23   | 67.62 |
| Boston           | 12        | 22.64 | 17   | 40.47 | 7    | 20.58 |
| Grimsby          | 2         | 3.77  | 11   | 26.19 | 4    | 11.76 |
| Overall Total    | 53        | 99.99 | 42   | 99.99 | 34   | 99.96 |

Notes

Sources: 1337-1339 and 1369 are drawn from the data in Appendix I(A) and (C). For 1346, see Table 3 below.

Percentage totals are imperfect due to rounding.

impressment of this fleet, which survives among the  
<sup>6</sup>  
 miscellaneous records of the Chancery. There is a certain  
 amount of overlap and duplication between the two lists,  
 presumably because some of those who refused to obey orders  
 later complied, and because many who originally reported as  
 instructed drifted away again before the fleet sailed.  
 Some ships are recorded twice or three times on the Chancery  
 list, suggesting that they defied arrest not once but on  
 several occasions, at different harbours. The figures for 1346  
 are drawn from the "Calais Roll", the most famous of  
 Edward III's list of ships, but possibly also the most  
 unreliable. Originally it probably existed in a more detailed  
 form, but all that has survived is a summary of the number of  
 ships and men provided by each English port for the purposes of  
 the Crecy campaign. The original roll is no longer in  
 existence, and the various later copies of it differ slightly  
 in the information they give.  
<sup>7</sup>  
 Finally, the data for 1369 is  
 collated from a number of Exchequer accounts of that year which  
 give some more detailed information about crew sizes and  
 tonnages, not consistently found in the earlier ones. A  
 smaller group of such accounts, covering the period 1373-1378,  
 is summarized in Appendix I(D), but is less homogeneous and  
 comprehensive than that for the earlier fleets.  
<sup>8</sup>

6. P.R.O E101/21/12, C47/2/30.

7. The most commonly cited printed version of this is J. Topham, 'Mr. Topham's Historical Description of a Second Ancient Picture in Windsor Castle', Archaeologia, VI, 1782, pp.213-215 (Appendix II), which derives from a version printed in R. Hakluyt's Voyages, 1589 (printed 1903), Vol. I, pp.297-299. The date is sometimes incorrectly given as 1359 (eg. A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', L.A.A.S.R.P., 5(2), 1954, p.94), following a misunderstanding of Topham's article (cf. Hakluyt, who says "c.1345"). The version used here is taken from a copy (in a 17th century hand) in B.L. Stowe ms. 574, fo. 30v, 31, supplemented by Topham and Hakluyt above.

8. v. Appendix I(C) and (D) for a list of these items.

The discontinuity of the 1346 evidence is clearly illustrated by the table. On that occasion, 2/3 of the vessels from Lincolnshire were taken from Grimsby and Boston, its two main maritime towns, whereas in the impressed fleets preceding and following this they accounted for less than one third of the shipping. The anomaly is also highlighted by the small number of Saltfleet vessels and the absence of any ships from the less important creeks. The general impression produced by the 1346 information is that the fleet gathered in this campaign was unusual. Evidence relating to the number of mariners involved (which will be considered shortly) tends to confirm the speculation that the ships required by the admirals on this occasion were larger, and possibly expected to engage in military as well as auxiliary duties.

For the purposes of analysing how relative shipping strength varied in the period under discussion, the percentage figures on the table are undoubtedly a clearer guide than the absolute ones, which may superficially suggest that the county's maritime strength was declining between 1337-1339 and 1369. This is misleading because of the different criteria on which each survey was produced: that of 1337-1339 included not only those vessels which obeyed the summons but those - considerably greater in number, on this occasion - which did not. In contrast, the only records available for 1369 concern ships which attended for royal service as instructed and were paid for this. If the relative proportions of recorded vessels in the two fleets are compared, it is apparent that there was reasonable continuity in the interim, both overall and in terms of individual places. Grimsby appears to have benefited from a clearing of its haven and new docks constructed in the middle

of the century, and Saltfleet from the "new cut" which diverted the Withern Eau into the creek. Barton and Grainthorpe, on the other hand, may have declined a little, although both these places were amongst the most notorious for deserters in earlier

Table 2. Rural Havens and River-Ports providing Vessels for Royal Fleets, 1337-1339/1369.

| PLACE                       | Number of Vessels |      |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------|
|                             | 1337-1339         | 1369 |
| <u>North Lindsey</u>        |                   |      |
| Barton-on-Humber            | 12                | 6    |
| Ferriby (South)             | 0                 | 1    |
| Fulstowmarsh (Marsh Chapel) | 3                 | 0    |
| Grainthorpe (Swine)         | 6                 | 2    |
| Northcotes                  | 1                 | 0    |
| Saltfleet                   | 8                 | 7    |
| Skottermuth (East Halton)   | 1                 | 0    |
|                             | —                 | —    |
| Total                       | 31                | 16   |
| <u>South Lindsey</u>        |                   |      |
| Skegness                    | 0                 | 1    |
| Wainfleet                   | 2                 | 0    |
|                             | —                 | —    |
| Total                       | 2                 | 1    |
| <u>Holland</u>              |                   |      |
| Fleet Haven                 | 0                 | 1    |
| Surfleet                    | 1                 | 1    |
| Wrangle                     | 3                 | 2    |
|                             | —                 | —    |
| Total                       | 4                 | 4    |
| <u>Inland Rivers</u>        |                   |      |
| Baumber (near Horncastle)   | 0                 | 1    |
| Burton-on-Stather           | 1                 | 0    |
| Kinnard (Owston) Ferry      | 1                 | 0    |
| Walkerith                   | 0                 | 1    |
|                             | —                 | —    |
| Total                       | 2                 | 2    |
|                             | —                 | —    |
| Overall Total               | 39                | 23   |

Note

Source: Appendix I(A) and (C)

periods and not too much should be made of the differential<sup>9</sup> between the two sets of figures. It is evident that those whose task was to arrest ships could generally expect to find about one quarter of the available vessels at Boston, and up to another two fifths at Barton and Saltfleet between them. The rest were taken from Wainfleet, Wrangle and a range of other places at different times.

The geographical bias of recorded craft among the creeks is especially noticeable. In both 1338 and 1369 the majority of the county's rural vessels came from havens located in the area of the Humber and the north Lindsey coast as far south as Saltfleet. In the earlier period, 33 out of 39 recorded ships (84.6%) were from villages in this area, and in 1369 16 out of 23 (69.5%). In 1337-1339 only 6 ships came from places other than these: 3 from Wrangle, 2 from Wainfleet and one from Surfleet.<sup>10</sup> A number of villages which might have been expected to have been liable for ships are missing from the record altogether. One of the vessels provided by Surfleet in 1377-1378 was allegedly of 120 tons burden, which indicates that large ships could negotiate the Welland until late in the fourteenth century; but the town of Spalding is missing from these (and subsequent) surveys. So too are Holbeach and

9. E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970, pp.21, 139. Grainthorpe was also variously known in this period as "Swine" or "Swinehumber" (? - "Swine-on-Humber"), but is hereafter always referred to as Grainthorpe. In a similar way, vessels ascribed (incorrectly) to "Saltfleetby" are read as "Saltfleet" throughout. These identifications are discussed in R. Brown, Notes on the Earlier History of Barton-on-Humber, II, 1154-1377, 1908, p.206 and A.E.B. Owen 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.92-93.
10. The number of Wainfleet vessels listed is suspiciously low; cf. P.R.O. C47/2/23 (15), a partial list of vessels in harbour and at sea north of the Thames in 1334, reproduced (in part) in Appendix I(A), qv.

Wilgrip haven, both of which are known to have been open and<sup>11</sup>  
actively trading during the fourteenth century. For whatever  
reason, although Boston was situated in Holland the main focus  
of rural maritime activity (at least as measured by ships of a  
size liable for arrest) was clearly around the mouth of the  
Humber.

Such an assessment must depend for verification not  
merely on the number of ships supplied but on their cargo-  
carrying capacity. Unfortunately, such information can only  
unequivocally and consistently be obtained for the last of the  
three periods for which there is evidence, when both parameters  
are fully recorded. The crew sizes evinced by the Calais Roll  
(Table 3) are once again at odds with what is known from other  
sources, although in this instance they probably imply that the  
size of ship provided for that fleet was exceptional (especially  
if the reading of 69 Saltfleet mariners in the Stowe manuscript  
is correct). It has already been shown that, in some cases,  
the crew sizes in government records may be artificially  
inflated because masters were instructed at the time of arrest  
(as, for example, in September 1326) to report for duty with<sup>12</sup>  
double the usual number of sailors aboard. Whilst it is not  
clear how frequently such orders were issued, it is unlikely  
that this provision would be required for the purposes of  
normal transportation work (for which the majority of  
fourteenth century vessel impressments were made). It would  
have been counter-productive to over-man ships whose principal

11. cf. W.J. Wren, Ports of the Eastern Counties, 1976, p.177 (who  
says the Welland was silted up by the 13th century and "only  
intermittently" open thereafter). At Holbeach, two officials  
were appointed to prevent the illegal export of specie to the  
continent towards the end of Edward III's reign (P.R.O. E122/190/30).

12. Cal. Cl. Rolls. Edw. II, 4, 1323-1327, pp.643-644.

function was to carry men, horses and supplies to the continent. The 1346 fleet, however, may have been required to do something more than this.

Table 3. The Calais Roll, 1346 (Lincolnshire Section).

| HAVEN            | Number of Vessels | Number of Mariners | Mean Mariners per vessel |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Barton-on-Humber | 8                 | 91                 | 11.37                    |
| Grainthorpe      | 1                 | 32                 | 32                       |
| Saltfleet        | 2                 | 69 (Stowe ms.)     | 34.5 (24.5)              |
| Wainfleet        | 2                 | 49 (Topham)        | 24.5                     |
| Wrangle          | 1                 | 8                  | 8                        |
| Total            | 14                | 249 (229)          | 17.8 (16.35)             |
| Boston           | 17                | 361                | 21.23                    |
| Grimsby          | 11                | 171                | 15.54                    |
| Total            | 28                | 532                | 19                       |
| Overall Total    | 42                | 781 (761)          | 18.6 (18.11)             |

Notes

Sources: Archaeologia, 1783, pp.213-215 ("Topham")  
B.L. Stowe ms. 574, fo. 30v. 31r

Figures in brackets refer to computations according to the reading for Saltfleet mariners found in Topham, above. Others are based on Stowe 574.

The Exchequer accounts suggest that it was probably normal practice to take on an extra couple of seamen (but no more) at times when arrested ships were active (as opposed to waiting or assembling at embarkation ports). A simple regression exercise on crew sizes and tonnages on a sample of 33 Lincolnshire vessels in the 1369 fleet indicates that a ship of 20 tons usually carried between 5 and 8 mariners and that this figure increased by a ratio of around 2 crewmen for every

additional 10 tons of cargo capacity.<sup>13</sup> In all, the smaller havens supplied the king in 1369 with between 209 and 248 mariners (including boys), possibly inclining towards the lower figure, since when crews were at their largest they probably included men who did not hale from Lincolnshire but from the area of the embarkation ports. A minimum of about 230 sailors (including the masters) were hence probably aboard the Lincolnshire craft which set out for Orwell and Sandwich, plus an additional 100 or so from Boston and another 40 from Grimsby.

Table 4. Recorded Creek Vessels, 1369.

| PLACE            | No of Vessels<br>in Royal Pay | Mean Vessel<br>Tonnage | Total<br>Tonnage | No of Mariners/Boys |     |      | Mean Crew<br>Size |
|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----|------|-------------------|
|                  |                               |                        |                  | Max                 | Min | Var  |                   |
| Barton-on-Humber | 6                             | 23.6                   | 142              | 51                  | 41  | (10) | 8.5               |
| Baumber          | 1                             | 50                     | 50               | 11                  | 9   | ( 2) | 10                |
| Ferriby (South)  | 1                             | 20                     | 20               | 7                   | 5   | ( 2) | 6                 |
| Fleet Haven      | 1                             | 20                     | 20               | 8                   | 6   | ( 2) | 7                 |
| Grainthorpe      | 2                             | 33                     | 66               | 18                  | 16  | ( 2) | 8.3               |
| Saltfleet        | 7                             | 59.3                   | 415              | 104                 | 91  | (13) | 13.9              |
| Skegness         | 1                             | 18                     | 18               | (6)                 |     |      | (6)               |
| Surfleet         | 1                             | 40                     | 40               | 11                  | 9   | ( 2) | 10                |
| Walkerith        | 1                             | 50                     | 50               | 14                  | 12  | ( 2) | 13                |
| Wrangle          | 2                             | 31                     | 62               | 18                  | 14  | ( 4) | 8                 |
| Total            | 23                            | 34.49                  | 883              | 248                 | 209 | (39) | 9.07              |

Notes \*

Source: Appendix 1(C)

The number of mariners in royal pay varies from one account to another. The greatest ("Max") and the least ("Min") estimates are tabulated, together with the variation ("Var") thus arising. Mean crew size is computed from all available evidence (V. Appendix I (C)).

The crew size of the Skegness vessel is not recorded; the figure of 6 mariners is interpolated from regression.

13. Based on the data in Appendix I(C). For the purposes of this exercise the smallest recorded crew size was taken as the most representative. Boys (where listed) were included as being essential personnel, but Constables were not. The resulting regression line, crew size =  $1.525 + 0.198$  tons, produces a coefficient of determination of 0.9365 so that 93% of the variations in crew size can be explained in this manner.

Pearson's coefficient = 0.967, Student's  $t = 21.39$ .

The recorded numbers of mariners and vessel tonnages in 1369 tend to confirm the impression already formed that, among rural villages, the north Lincolnshire havens were predominant at this time. On a measurement of tonnage, which is in reality a far more significant guide to maritime and commercial health than crude numbers of ships, 643 out of 883 tons of cargo capacity (72.8%) belonged to this group of creeks, 122 tons (13.8%) to those in Holland. The table also makes it clear that whilst our estimation of the broad geographical distribution of shipping strength is confirmed by considering the problem in terms of tonnage and crew, on this occasion (if not before) an exceptionally large part of this was provided by Saltfleet haven: 46% of all the tonnage from the county's creeks, with 42% of all the seamen. Not only did the township provide the largest number of ships but their average tonnage was far greater than that of Barton-on-Humber. Even if allowance is made for one exceptionally large Saltfleet ship (the "Mariole", 110 tons), the mean size of vessel from Saltfleethaven was still over 50 tons. All but one of the Barton contingent, on the other hand, were in the 20 to 24 ton range. Although it must be re-emphasized that these surveys cannot be taken as censuses of shipping in any true sense, they point unequivocally to a major focus of seaborne trade in the area of the Humber, and particularly at Salfleethaven, in the fourteenth century.

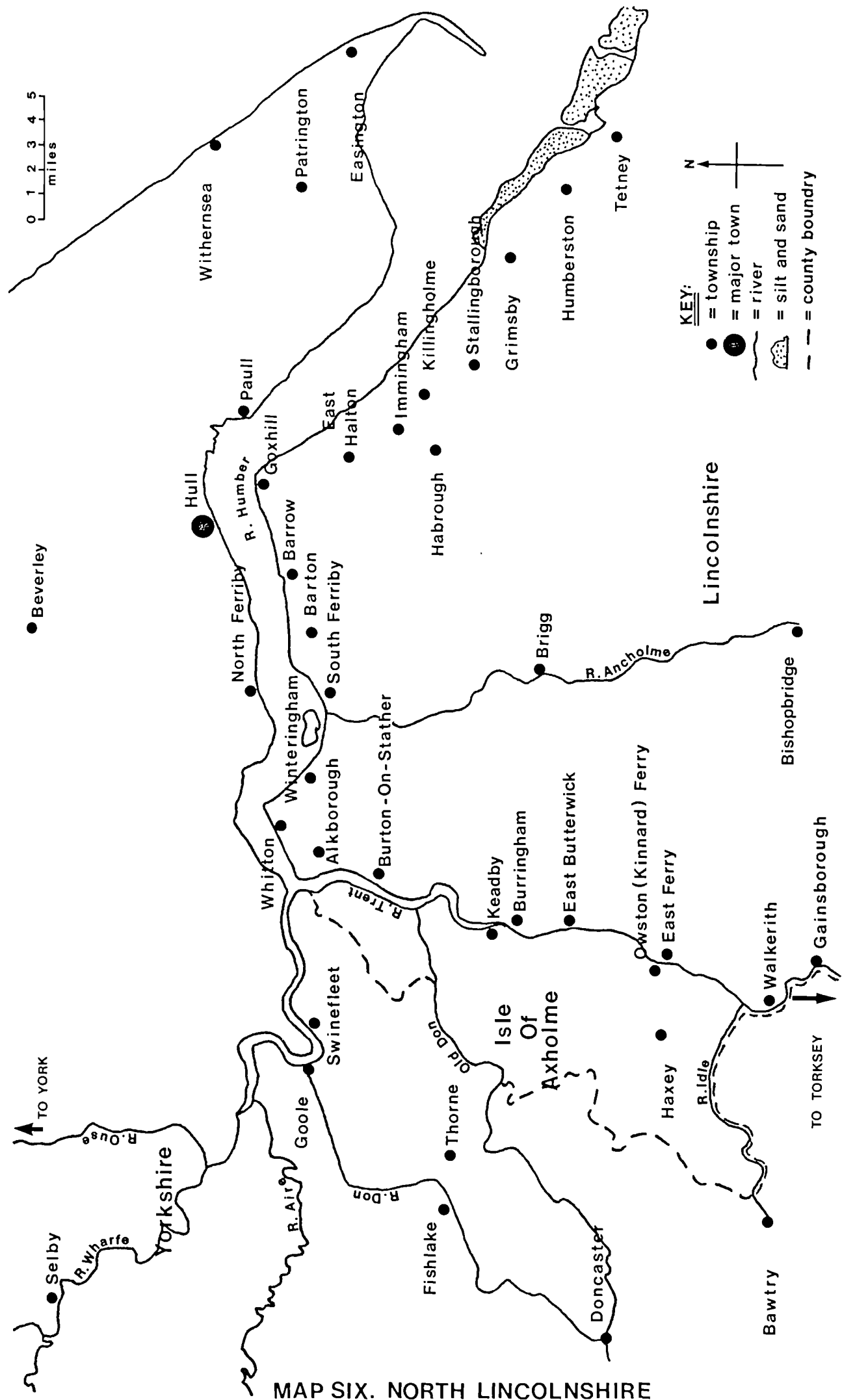
(iii) Patterns of Trade

Some of the problems associated with attempts to assess the overseas trade of the Lincolnshire creeks in the fourteenth century have already been discussed. Until the fifteenth century

very few of the particulars of account of the Boston customers and controllers have survived and (with one exception which will be discussed at a later point) those remaining are not detailed enough to be informative. It is clear that some coastal townships, particularly Saltfleet and Wainfleet were engaging in overseas commerce with Hanseatic, Norwegian and Dutch merchants, selling Lincolnshire wool and corn and apparently buying herrings brought in from the Scandinavian and <sup>14</sup> Baltic fishing grounds.

Direct evidence of the magnitude and commercial horizons of the coasting trade is also extremely scanty. What exists points to corn as the main export, and London and the north as its principal markets. In 1351 (a year of exceptionally bad harvests) Lincolnshire was among a number of counties to which a special instruction was issued that no corn was to be sent abroad; but "The king does not wish the taking of corn to London by water to be impeded by reason of this order". There is record of a number of shipments sent to London from the region in that year to alleviate the dearth: one of 950 quarters, for example, from Hull and one of 134 quarters sent in the "Blithe" of Barton for sale to Londoners. The ubiquitous William Ward of Saltfleet (involved in the Lincoln Barge project of 1373) was briefly incarcerated in the Fleet Prison in London after failing (in the traditional manner) to appear before a Justice to answer for a debt to a

14. For Saltfleet, v. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.93-95. On Wainfleet merchants in Norway, temp. Edw. II, v. R. Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations, Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation, 1589 (reprinted 1903), Vol. I, pp.341-349. The earliest Boston customs particulars, for example, P.R.O. E122/6/7 (1310-1311) are very extensive but give no details of the places of origin of ships. The same applies to most of those of Richard II's time, eg. E122/7/21, 22, 23.



citizen of London, probably in connection with a coasting transaction of some sort. On other occasions, Saltfleet merchants appear as the grantees of licences to send grain to Newcastle, the north and (significantly, as it will appear)  
15  
York.

The 1337-1339 survey of vessels is a crucial source of information for the coastal and riverborne trade of some of the Lincolnshire havens. Unlike the normal Exchequer accounts, this document was concerned to discover the exact amount of desertion which had taken place during the impressments and was therefore drawn up with reference to the harbours in which ships had been arrested, as well as (usually) noting their ports of origin. Accordingly, it provides a unique picture of some of the ships which the king's agents found in particular harbours on the day they arrived to impound suitable vessels. Once again, it cannot be regarded as a complete list but it is nevertheless an invaluable guide to trading patterns for which we would otherwise have no evidence.

The table (Table 5) shows the number and origins of vessels recorded as deserting from the local harbours and from Newcastle and Lynn (at which there were some Lincolnshire ships). Not only does it re-affirm the importance of the north Lincolnshire creeks, but it also gives some indication of why this should have been the case. At Barton the officials found boats from Fishlake, Thorne and Selby besides those of Barton and Grimsby, and at Northcotes shipping belonging to

15. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.93-94; L.F. Saltzman, English Trade in the Middle Ages, 1931, pp.215-217; Brown, op. cit., p.189; Cal. Cl. Rolls, Edw. III, 9, pp.402-403; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. III, 1361-1364, p.121; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. II, 1321-1324, pp.115-116; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. III, 1358-1361, p.572; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Rich. II, 1388-1392, p.406;

Table 5. Vessels Deserting from Various Ports, 1337-1339.

| HOME<br>PORTS            | Barton | Boston | Place of Arrest |           | Northcotes | Y. Ouse |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------|
|                          |        |        | Lynn            | Newcastle |            |         |
| <hr/>                    |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| <u>Humber</u>            |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| Barton                   | 7      | 0      | 0               | 1         | 0          | 3       |
| Fulstowmarsh             | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 3          | 0       |
| Grainthorpe              | 0      | 0      | 2               | 0         | 0          | 2       |
| Grimsby                  | 1      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 1       |
| Northcotes               | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 1          | 0       |
| Ravenserodd              | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 5       |
| Saltfleet                | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 8          | 0       |
| <br><u>South Lincs</u>   |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| Boston                   | 0      | 11     | 0               | 0         | 0          | 0       |
| Surfleet                 | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 0       |
| Wrangle                  | 0      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 1          | 0       |
| <br><u>Inland Rivers</u> |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| Burton Stather           | 0      | 0      | 0               | 1         | 0          | 0       |
| Fishlake                 | 1      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 2       |
| "Kelthorp" (?)           | 1      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 0       |
| Kinnard Ferry            | 0      | 1      | 0               | 0         | 1          | 0       |
| Selby                    | 1      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 1          | 0       |
| Swinefleet               | 0      | 0      | 0               | 1         | 1          | 2       |
| Thorne                   | 1      | 0      | 0               | 2         | 0          | 1       |
| <br><u>Miscellaneous</u> |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| Berwick                  | 1      | 0      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 0       |
| London                   | 0      | 1      | 0               | 0         | 0          | 0       |
| Others/?                 | 4      | 4      | 40              | 41        | 1          | 4       |
| <hr/>                    |        |        |                 |           |            |         |
| Total                    | 17     | 17     | 42              | 46        | 17         | 20      |

Notes

Source: P.R.O. C47/2/30

"Kelthorp" may be Kelfield, above Selby (on the Yorkshire Ouse).

One keel at Northcotes cannot be identified.

Swinefleet, Selby, Kinnard Ferry, Wrangle, Saltfleet and Fulstowmarsh. On "Ousewater" (the Yorkshire Ouse) they attempted to arrest traffic belonging to the sea-ports of Barton, Grainthorpe, Grimsby and Ravenser. Despite the incomplete nature of the evidence, it is clear that the north Lindsey and Humber estuary ports were vital first and last links in a ramified network of navigable rivers, all accessible from the Humber and therefore able to convey trade to and from

conveniently situated sea-ports. Until Tudor times, the Yorkshire Ouse itself was navigable as far north as Boroughbridge and gave access to towns and villages along its tributaries: the Swale, the Ure, the Wharfe and the Derwent. The medieval ship was so small that even the upper reaches of such rivers were easily negotiated and keels could equally well pass along the Don at least as far as Doncaster (which supplied ships for some of the impressed fleets) or down the Trent to Gainsborough, Torksey and the Fossdyke canal to Lincoln, and on the Idle up to Bawtry. The table clearly evidences the trade which took place between Thorne, Fishlake and Barton-on-<sup>16</sup> Humber.

Whereas most of Barton's trade was probably in corn and victuals, (commodities for which it was a major supply centre during the Scottish wars), the number and variety of ships found at Northcotes requires much more careful interpretation. Ships of Fulstowmarsh and Northcotes itself (both major centres of salt manufacture in Lindsey) were at anchor there. So, too, was one from Wrangle (a large-scale salt producer and trader in south Lincolnshire) and so were vessels whose home was in the Isle of Axholme (Swinefleet and Kinnard Ferry) where the turbaries of the region were situated. It is manifest from this that an important part of the medieval coasting trade of this area was related to the manufacture of salt in the surrounding district, and to the supply of turf necessary for the industry's boiling off processes. However,

16. T.S. Willan, River Navigation in England 1600-1750, p.6; D.M. Palliser, 'York under the Tudors: The Trading Life of the Northern Capital', in A. Everitt, ed., Perspectives in English Urban History, 1973, pp.42-43; R. Unwin, 'The Transport Systems of the Vale of York 1660-1775', Journal of Transport History, 3rd Series, 2, 1981, pp.17-18; See also Appendix I.

the volume of traffic at Northcotes is completely at odds with what is known of that harbour's history and topography, according to which it had fallen into almost total disuse before the end of the thirteenth century. Conversely, eight ships from Saltfleet are recorded at Northcotes although no craft were apparently impressed at Saltfleet haven itself. The explanation is almost certainly that in these years the latter harbour was closed for repairs, and most of its trade therefore diverted to Northcotes.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that in normal circumstances Saltfleet would have been far more convenient and accessible to trading vessels like those bringing in turf for the salt works. The same river network could then be used to market the imports (like Scania herrings) in which the port dealt, and to sell some of the extracted salt.<sup>18</sup>

Much Lincolnshire salt is known to have been transported by road to trading centres like Lincoln, Newark and Boston, but little attention has been given to the quantity which must have passed along the east coast to other haven towns where it was in greatest demand of all. Foremost among these was Great Yarmouth and since in the fourteenth century Lincolnshire was the most important domestic producer of salt and Yarmouth among its most voracious consumers, the level of their contacts was bound to be high.<sup>19</sup> Salt supply was

17. Supra, Chapter 3. See also Appendix V.

18. E.H. Rudkin and D.M. Owen, 'The Medieval Salt Industry in the Lindsey Marshland', L.A.A.S.R.P., 8, 1959-1960, pp.77-79; A.R. Bridbury, England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages, 1955, pp.17-20. According to Gillett, no less than seven religious houses had rights of turbary at Swinefleet - Gillett, op. cit., pp.41-42.

19. Rudkin and Owen, 'Medieval Salt Industry', loc. cit., discuss inland distribution of salt but completely neglect this aspect of its marketing; v. also Bridbury, op. cit., pp.20-24; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', Medieval Archaeology, VI-VIII, 1962-3, pp.187-188.

intimately associated with the great autumn fishery, and this aspect can be conveniently set aside until the next chapter. Nevertheless, fishermen were not the only people who took cargoes of salt to Yarmouth. Production of salt mercifully chimed almost perfectly with the months of the herring fishery, at which time a massive rise in demand led to a purely seasonal coastal commerce, in which a number of Lincolnshire creeks are known to have taken an interest. Boston, Spalding, Wainfleet, Saltfleet and Wrangle imported into the town what it needed to cure the herrings and took back to Lincolnshire fresh and preserved fish and some surplus salt. Barton, Grimsby and Saltfleet ships also traded in coals, malt and corn out of season.

Table 6. Lincolnshire Salt and Herring Transactions in Great Yarmouth Local Customs Accounts, 1340-1343

| PLACE             | Import<br>Salt (Ways) | Export      |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
|                   |                       | Salt (Ways) | Herring (lasts) |
| Barton-on-Humber  |                       |             | 8               |
| Boston            | 24                    | 15          | 49              |
| Burton-on-Stather |                       |             | 8               |
| Saltfleet         |                       | 10          | 25              |
| Spalding          | 12                    |             | 26              |
| Surfleet          | 6                     |             | 7               |
| Wainfleet         | 42                    |             | 14              |
| Wrangle           | 217½                  |             | 23              |
| Total             | 301½                  | 25          | 160             |

Notes

Sources: Norfolk Record Office, Y/C4/63, m.3d - m.5; Y/C4/64, m.27 - m.30d. Accounts are missing for the period Michaelmas 1341 to Michaelmas 1342.

20. A. Littler, 'Fish in English Economy and Society down to the Reformation', (unpublished Wales University Ph.D. thesis, 1979), pp.96-97.

Table 7. Lincolnshire Herring Exports in Great Yarmouth  
Local Customs Accounts, 1340-1360

| PLACE            | Herring Exported (lasts) |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Barton-on-Humber | 49                       |
| Boston           | 330                      |
| Grimsby          | 60                       |
| "Humber"         | 9                        |
| Saltfleet        | 61                       |
| Spalding         | 36                       |
| Surfleet         | 32                       |
| Wainfleet        | 28                       |
| Wrangle          | 35                       |
| Total            | 640 lasts                |

Notes

Source: A.R. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century' (unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1975), Appendix VI (M), pp.347-349.

Summaries of some parts of the local customs accounts for the Borough of Yarmouth which record (in varying detail) the entry and departure of vessels at the town, have been produced for the period 1340-1360, and these provide an interesting comparison with the evidence already discussed. In particular, they illustrate the involvement of some of the southern Lincolnshire creeks (like Spalding) which are so little in evidence in the roll of deserters.<sup>21</sup> There are considerable difficulties associated with the use of the accounts to provide accurate annual breakdowns of figures for individual ports and havens. The rolls themselves are not

21. The original accounts are part of the Great Yarmouth Borough Court Rolls, Norfolk Record Office, Y/C4, and run (with some gaps) down to the sixteenth century, although after the fourteenth century references to Lincolnshire are fewer and mainly relate to Boston. It should be noted that for present purposes salt transactions recorded in the separate Murage Accounts (Norfolk Record Office Y/C24/1-2 and B.L. Cart. Add. (14981-14986) are not included since they relate chiefly to fishing (infra, Chapter 5).

always clear about the nature of the transactions on which dues were levied, and the herring exports listed for various years between 1340 and 1360 by Dr. A.R. Saul appear suspiciously erratic in the way that they record trade. Saltfleet ships, for example, appear in only three out of fifteen listed years (1342, 1352, 1354) but in these three years accumulate a considerable volume of trade which makes it difficult to believe that the remaining years saw none at all, especially since Saltfleet ships are recorded in some other transactions in the intervening period. The accounts were also subject to the unquantifiable effects of pirate and enemy attacks on the town and bad fishing seasons (which led to a fall in fish<sup>22</sup> exported and salt imported).

Nevertheless, summary totals for the period (Table 6 and Table 7) indicate something of the character of trade from the Lincolnshire ports, even if too much reliance should not be placed on the exact quantities given. In particular, they show how fundamental this aspect of trade was to Wrangle, a producer and exporter of salt of some importance, and whose merchants are often found in association with those of Boston. Lack of exactly comparable customs accounts for the other major centres of the east coast fishing industry - Scarborough, Blakeney and the Suffolk ports - prevents clear statements about the extent of Lincolnshire's salt coasting, but it seems unlikely that the main exporting havens confined their attentions only to Yarmouth.

22. A.R. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Trade, Politics and Society', (unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1975), pp.202-203, 209.

## Maritime Activity in the Fifteenth Century

### (i) Sources

In comparison with the preceding period, the fifteenth century is unrewarding for records of ships and maritime activities at smaller creeks and havens. The series of Exchequer accounts contains far fewer lists of impressed vessels and those which are extant display a trend towards the arrest of fewer and larger ships, which were inevitably drawn from the main ports rather than from lesser inlets and havens. In the fleet which transported the Duke of Somerset to France in 1443 the three Lincolnshire vessels all came from Boston -  
23  
one of 200 tons, two of 100 tons.

Given this situation, it is necessary to turn for information to the series of Exchequer particulars of customs accounts which begin in the thirteenth century but seldom record enough detail about ships to be of use for present purposes until the fifteenth century. Some of the defects and problems associated with the medieval system of customs administration have already been discussed in detail. The major difficulties are those of incompleteness, either because of an unknown level of deliberate evasion or because of unstructured or inadequate collection provisions. Whilst neither problem need prevent the historian of a head-port from attempting to find adequate techniques of analysis, the difficulties with regard to secondary harbours are more intractable. Unless transactions listed on the rolls and ledgers are specifically stated to have taken place at a haven, it must be assumed that

23. P.R.O. E101/53/29, m.1.

they occurred at the head-port itself, which in the case of all surviving Boston particulars means that 99% of the recorded events relating to haven ships must be considered as having taken place in Boston itself. The only measurement of the maritime activities of any of the Lincolnshire creeks in this period is therefore the number and nature of its contacts with Boston, which can only be regarded as an extremely inadequate index. Although the very early particular accounts of the nearby port of Hull are among the best surviving for the medieval period, those of the fifteenth century are neither so detailed nor so frequent and provide very little help on this subject. Those of Lynn are even less informative.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the customs accounts (unlike the later port-books) do not concern themselves with internal trade but with overseas transactions. This is the very matter over which there is so little direct fourteenth century evidence, and where the smaller havens are concerned it is only to be expected that such commerce as the handling of imports and exports via the nearest head-port will constitute only a small fraction of the total trade, and will involve a quantitatively smaller sample of ships even than that produced by the earlier vessel impressments. Having said so much, the accounts do allow some consideration of an aspect of the activities of the creeks not evidenced in the earlier period, and can occasionally be persuaded to offer some light, however dim, through the otherwise murky picture left by the lack of other national records in the fifteenth century.

24. T.H. Lloyd, The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages, 1977, pp.127-131; P.R.O. Classes E122/55-66 (Hull particulars); E122/97-98 (Lynn); E122/12-15 (Boston). I am indebted for much valuable help on the subject of the Boston E122 series to Dr. S. Rigby of Manchester University.

Maritime historians have detected a general trend towards increased vessel sizes in the century after 1400 because technical advances in rigging and sail arrangement allowed larger ships to be built, which were still both seaworthy and comparatively easy to handle. At the same time, and partly in consequence of the same developments, a greater degree of specialization in vessel types seems to have been emerging, which meant that the number and variety of smaller craft was also increasing over the same period. Because the customs particulars do not record the tonnage of the merchantmen, it is impossible to gauge directly the precise dimensions of the haven ships engaged in overseas trade through Boston in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most important considerations for comparing this period with others. From it could be estimated at least something of the likely state of repair of the creeks and possibly a little of the probable complexion of trade and shipping not<sup>25</sup> comprehended by the customs accounts.

For this reason it is worth considering closely the one account for which some comparative analysis with the Exchequer impressment records is feasible. A single particular account for Boston, giving details of the wool fleets sailing to Calais in 1378, records sufficient detail of the vessel names and home-ports to allow a comparison to be made with the near-contemporary Exchequer pay accounts of 1377. By including

25. D. Burwash, English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540, pp.95-100; A. McGowan, The Ship; Vol. III: Tiller and Whipstaff - The Development of the Sailing Ship 1400-1700, 1981, pp.12-13; R.W. Unger, The Ship in the Medieval Economy 600-1600, 1980, pp.203-205.

all vessels, both of Lincolnshire and elsewhere, it is possible to identify with reasonable certainty 10 ships whose tonnages are known from the pay account and whose wool cargoes are given in the customs particular. For example, the "Eleyne" of Saltfleet, John Rumbold master, is stated to have been 44 tons burden in the former, and to have carried 106 sacks of wool and 99 sacks of wool respectively on two sailings from Boston to Calais the following year.

It is obvious that a vessel's cargo and its tonnage will under all normal circumstances be closely related to one another, since a half-empty hold makes no commercial sense. From all this evidence it is possible to say with some hope of accuracy that a vessel of 40 or 50 tons would normally take on between 90 and 110 sacks of wool (or its equivalent in hides, measured by the standard customs formula of 240 fells to the sack).<sup>27</sup> Out of 27 cargoes (from a probable total of 37) which can be deciphered clearly from this document, 13 (48%) fall into this category and only two were greater than 130 sacks. The implication, although expressed with the inevitable reservations, is that the average vessel in this fleet may have been in the 40 to 60 ton range whatever its port of origin, which accords fairly well with what has already been supposed as the normal size of the Lincolnshire ship in the middle and late fourteenth century.

26. P.R.O. E122/7/13 (in bad condition and requiring ultra-violet light), compared with sundry Exchequer accounts of 1377-1378 (v. Appendix I (D)).

27. This approximation cannot meaningfully be expressed by the use of regression techniques, because the range of variables available is too closely bunched. All the ships which can positively be identified lie in the 30-50 ton range, the wool quantities mainly between 86 and 122 sacks.

Table 8 shows the involvement of the county's creeks in the wool traffic between Boston and Calais in a selection of years between 1378 and 1523 for which good particulars survive.

Table 8. Vessels Conveying Wool from Boston to Calais in Certain Fleets, 1378-1523.

| Vessels of    | 1378        | 1466        | 1467        | No of Sailings |             |             | 1515        | 1523       | TOTAL          |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|----------------|
|               |             |             |             | 1471           | 1472        | 1503        |             |            |                |
| Boston        | 3           | 11          | 12          | 12             | 10          | 5           | 0           | 2          | 55             |
| Grimsby       | 4           | 0           | 0           | 0              | 1           | 0           | 0           | 1          | 6              |
| Hull          | 2           | 0           | 0           | 0              | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 2              |
| Lynn          | 8           | 3           | 0           | 5              | 1           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 17             |
| Total         | 17<br>(46%) | 14<br>(64%) | 12<br>(54%) | 17<br>(48%)    | 12<br>(60%) | 5<br>(16%)  | 0           | 3<br>(43%) | 80<br>(40.8%)  |
| Dogdyke       | 0           | 0           | 2           | 1              | 1           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 4              |
| Fishtoft      | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0              | 0           | 2           | 1           | 0          | 3              |
| Gedney        | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0              | 0           | 0           | 1           | 2          | 3              |
| Saltfleet     | 5           | 0           | 0           | 2              | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 7              |
| Skegness      | 1           | 0           | 0           | 1              | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 2              |
| Skirbeck      | 0           | 1           | 1           | 2              | 1           | 0           | 1           | 0          | 6              |
| Wainfleet     | 1           | 1           | 1           | 2              | 1           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 6              |
| Wilgrip       | 0           | 1           | 0           | 1              | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 2              |
| Wrangle       | 0           | 0           | 0           | 1              | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 1              |
| Wyberton      | 0           | 0           | 0           | 3              | 3           | 3           | 2           | 1          | 12             |
| Total         | 6<br>(17%)  | 31<br>(14%) | 4<br>(18%)  | 13<br>(37%)    | 6<br>(30%)  | 5<br>(16%)  | 5<br>(23%)  | 3<br>(48%) | 46<br>(23.46%) |
| Others        | 13<br>(36%) | 5<br>(22%)  | 6<br>(27%)  | 5<br>(14%)     | 2<br>(10%)  | 22<br>(68%) | 16<br>(76%) | 1<br>(14%) | 70<br>(35.7%)  |
| Overall Total | 37          | 22          | 22          | 35             | 20          | 32          | 21          | 7          | 196            |

Notes

Sources: P.R.O. E122/7/13; E122/10/7; E122/10/8; E122/10/13; E122/10/17  
E122/11/18; E122/12/1; E122/12/3.

In this table, the figures for 1378 are calculated on the basis of all discernible vessels on the account (cf. Table 9, where only those whose cargo particulars can be retrieved are tabulated).

The bulk of the wool sent to the Staple was always shipped in one or two large convoys sailing in the spring or autumn with the previous year's clip aboard. This provided some protection

from piracy and allowed merchants to spread their goods (and consequently their risks) in several different holds. The number of years for which particular accounts are available is very limited, and in some of them ships of the Lincolnshire creeks and havens do not appear at all. During the period of the table the corresponding enrolled customs accounts suggest that the average (mean) number of sacks shipped from Boston in the course of a year was about 1500 and it may be noted that in the majority of the years in which the ships of the local havens are represented, the amount of wool going to Calais was greater than this. However, the same was also the case in periods like 1460-1461 and 1468-1469, when no creek ships are recorded in the fleet.<sup>28</sup>

Comparison with Table 9 suggests a natural relationship between the number of vessels in the fleet and the total quantity of wool exported, but Table 8 also shows that there was no particular relationship between the total size of the fleet and the proportion of it contributed by vessels from the Lincolnshire havens. In exceptional years like 1471 and 1472 the proportion of the fleet contributed by the haven vessels was very high, whereas on other occasions it was only 3 or 4 ships. As a proportion of the total wool exported from Boston, that aboard the haven vessels normally remained fairly constant at between 21% and 25% in the sample years (Table 9), although as a whole both the size of the fleet and the quantity of wool being exported was slowly declining. In 1466, they transported only 9% of the Boston wool to the Staple, but on

28. W.I. Haward, 'The Trade of Boston in the Fifteenth Century', A.A.A.S.R.P., 41, 1932-3, p.171; E.M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, England's Export Trade 1275-1547, 1963, pp.64-72; P.R.O. E122/10/1, E122/10/9, E122/10/10, E122/10/11.

Table 9. Percentage Sacks carried by Lincolnshire Vessels in some Boston Wool Fleets, 1378-1515

| Vessels of    | 1378        |       | 1466        |       | 1471        |       | 1472        |       | 1515        |       |
|---------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|               | Total Sacks | %     | Total Sacks | %     | Total Sacks | %     | Total Sacks | %     | Total Sacks | %     |
| Boston        | 229         | 7.92  | 1203        | 62.63 | 1061        | 47.64 | 732         | 55.75 | 0           | 0     |
| Grimsby       | 354         | 12.25 | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 111         | 8.45  | 0           | 0     |
| Hull          | 187         | 6.47  | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     |
| Lynn          | 760         | 26.31 | 212         | 10.96 | 281         | 12.61 | 15          | 1.14  | 0           | 0     |
| Total         | 1530        | 52.97 | 1415        | 73.20 | 1342        | 60.26 | 858         | 65.34 | 0           | 0     |
| Dogdyke       | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 115         | 5.16  | 85          | 6.47  | 0           | 0     |
| Fishtoft      | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 47          | 3.93  |
| Gedney        | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 44          | 3.68  |
| Saltfleet     | 410         | 14.19 | 0           | 0     | 128         | 5.74  | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     |
| Skegness      | 44          | 1.52  | 0           | 0     | 15          | 0.67  | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     |
| Skirbeck      | 0           | 0     | 74          | 3.82  | 120         | 5.38  | 59          | 4.49  | 55          | 4.60  |
| Wainfleet     | 204         | 7.06  | 61          | 3.15  | 81          | 3.63  | 50          | 3.80  | 0           | 0     |
| Wilgrip       | 0           | 0     | 22          | 1.13  | 14          | 0.62  | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     |
| Wrangle       | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 13          | 0.58  | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     |
| Wyberton      | 0           | 0     | 0           | 0     | 75          | 3.36  | 84          | 6.39  | 146         | 12.21 |
| Total         | 658         | 22.78 | 157         | 8.12  | 561         | 25.19 | 278         | 21.17 | 292         | 24.50 |
| Others        | 700         | 24.25 | 361         | 18.68 | 324         | 14.55 | 177         | 13.49 | 903         | 75.50 |
| Overall Total | 2888        | 100   | 1933        | 100   | 2227        | 100   | 1313        | 100   | 1195        | 100   |

#### Notes

Sources: P.R.O. E122/7/13; E122/10/7; E122/10/13; E122/10/17; E122/12/1.

These figures were compiled from those accounts represented on Table 8 which most consistently record total sacks for vessels.

Wool and hides are tabulated to the nearest whole sack, (using the formula 240 hides = 1 sack), rounded upwards in all cases.

1378 excludes a probable 10 vessels whose cargoes cannot be retrieved; 1466 excludes one Boston ship whose cargo is not totalled.<sup>29</sup>

this occasion the town itself provided an unusually large number of sizeable vessels which between them took 62% of the wool and fells across the channel.

29. Probably about 99 sacks, the number adrift between this estimate and that of the total on the account; cf. E. Power, 'The Wool Trade in the Fifteenth Century', in E. Power and M.M. Postan, eds., Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, 1933, p.45 (where her figures compute at 2032 sacks). Discrepancies often occur between individual amounts and totals on particulars, and between these and the corresponding enrolled accounts.

If the tonnage equivalences suggested by studying the 1378 evidence have any validity at all, it will be obvious from consideration of Tables 8 and 9 that the sizes of the haven vessels engaged in the Calais voyage during the fifteenth century were much smaller than at the end of the previous one. On these estimates, vessels like those of Wilgrip in 1466 and 1471 can hardly have exceeded 20 tons at the most. In order to examine the implications of this deduction it is necessary to take all the available evidence in the particular accounts throughout the period 1460-1520, and to look at all those entries relating to haven vessels, whether as part of the wool fleet, or importing and exporting other goods. It should be stressed that the vast majority of the recorded events on these accounts relate exclusively to merchantmen entering or leaving Boston itself, and it has already been urged that such traffic was probably only a proportion of the total. Care is therefore needed in interpreting the apparent division, which is displayed by the evidence of Table 10, between ships sailing in the wool-fleets and those undertaking other overseas voyages. Out of a total of 34 vessels which can be separately identified in the particular accounts, less than a quarter are ever recorded both in a wool-fleet and in another form of overseas trade. The majority of the haven ships which sailed in Boston's wool-fleets never appear importing or exporting any other goods through the ports of Boston.

It can certainly be argued that this is simply further evidence that the particular accounts are defective so far as the overseas trade of the Lincolnshire creeks is concerned. Since no provision existed to collect customs at, for example, Wainfleet, vessels operating overseas out of

Wainfleet itself would never find their way into the Boston particulars of account. The probable volume of such evasions has already been discussed.

Table 10. Creek Vessels Trading Overseas through the Port of Boston, 1460-1520.

| HOME PORT  | No. of Different Vessels Identified | No. in one or more Wool-Fleet | No. in other Transactions | No. in Both |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Dogdyke    | 1                                   | 1                             | 1                         | 1           |
| Fishtoft   | 2                                   | 2                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Gedney     | 2                                   | 2                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Holbeach   | 1                                   | 1                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Lincoln    | 1                                   | 0                             | 1                         | 0           |
| Saltfleet  | 3                                   | 2                             | 1                         | 0           |
| Skegness   | 1                                   | 1                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Skirbeck   | 4                                   | 4                             | 1                         | 1           |
| Somercotes | 2                                   | 0                             | 2                         | 0           |
| Wainfleet  | 2                                   | 2                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Wilgrip    | 2                                   | 2                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Wrangle    | 1                                   | 1                             | 0                         | 0           |
| Wyberton   | 12                                  | 10                            | 8                         | 6           |
| Total      | 34 (100%)                           | 28 (82%)                      | 14 (41%)                  | 8 (23%)     |

Notes

Sources: P.R.O. E122/10/4; E122/10/5; E122/10/26; E122/10/7; E122/10/13  
E122/10/17; E122/10/20; E122/11/2; E122/12/1; E122/11/4;  
E122/10/24; E122/10/8; E122/11/18; passim.

However, a closer examination of Table 10 must cast doubt upon whether this alone can adequately explain the bias of the evidence. Both Skirbeck and Wyberton were so close to the port of Boston that the bulk of their trade probably passed through it, making use of the superior facilities provided. The disproportionate number of Wyberton ships found in the accounts lends some compulsion to this argument. Their proximity to the town also renders wholesale neglect on the part of the searcher less likely than in more distant places. If the declining cargo capacity of many of the wool ships is also taken into

account, it is not impossible that by this date a great many of them were ordinarily coasters, only going overseas on the few occasions when the demand for ships at Boston made sailing with the wool convoys a worthwhile proposition. Further weight is added to this suggestion by examining the list of havens not recorded in other overseas trade - Fishtoft, Gedney, Holbeach, Skegness, Wilgrip and Wrangle. All of these were comparatively small, and from the fourteenth century evidence already observed might be expected to be concerned mainly with coastal rather than overseas trade. Only Wainfleet seems out of place in this list, but the customs accounts are incomplete and the probable decline in the condition of Wainfleet haven by the mid-fifteenth century also needs to be taken into consideration.

Seen in this light, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the majority of the ships operating from most of the Lincolnshire havens in the fifteenth century were under 40 tons cargo burden and not ordinarily suitable for overseas work at all. For such boats, conveying a few sacks of wool in the Boston wool-fleet would have been an occasional event, determined by the availability of other business and the demand for vessels in that year. The event was calendrically irregular: in some years it took place in October or November, in others May or June. Although there is no discernible pattern associated with the date, much must in practice have depended on the level of other activities at the time the fleet sailed.

It is on the basis of these possibilities that some important speculations on the state of the Lincolnshire havens in this period become possible. If the places listed in

Table 10 represent the main fifteenth century havens of the county, there are some obvious contrasts with the evidence formerly discussed in relation to the fourteenth. Some of this, naturally, is bias connected with the different nature of the documentation: Barton-on-Humber, for example, never had much contact with Boston and by this time had settled into the customs administration of Kingston-on-Hull, whose particular accounts in this period are less full than those of Boston. A few of its overseas transactions are recorded at Boston, but it may well have suffered the same customs neglect as the rest of the north Lincolnshire coast under Hull's jurisdiction. Most notably missing from the locations on Table 10 are Grainthorpe and Surfleet, both of which had evidently declined from their fourteenth century importance. On the other hand, a group of smaller and more southerly creeks had developed some maritime trade: Skirbeck (on the opposite bank of the Witham from Boston), Wyberton (downriver from the town) and Dogdyke (at the extreme tidal limit of the river at this time).

It is also clear, whatever the trend at the major ports, that there is no evidence of local vessels getting larger in the fifteenth century and some to support the proposition that they were getting smaller. In particular, Saltfleet and Wainfleet, which in the fourteenth century had some claim to be regarded as independently important, appear to have slipped back into a status similar to that of their lesser neighbours. From the early 1470s neither town is known to have had ships in the Boston wool-fleet, although Saltfleet and Somercotes sent two to a small Hull convoy at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

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## Maritime Activity in the Sixteenth Century

### (1) Sources

The Exchequer port-books which begin in the mid-sixteenth century provide much more comprehensive data for the study of the trade of the Lincolnshire creeks than the records which preceded them. Parchment books, listing some or all of the coasting trade for the port of Boston and its creeks, are available from 1550 onwards until the farming of the customs in the early seventeenth century and the series for the town is reasonably comprehensive. A limited number of the surviving books are unfit for production, and for occasional years there is no coverage either from the half-yearly books of the Customer and Controller at Boston, or the annual ones of the Searcher.<sup>31</sup> The Searcher's books are in some ways less exhaustive because they do not record the cargo carried (since this was already listed on the coquet against which it was checked); but in other ways they have advantages over the Customer and Controller volumes, which (because they normally run for six months only) often do not cover any one full Exchequer year. Some of the administrative arrangements concerning these books have already been discussed. It was common practice for the trade of a group of havens to be placed under the scrutiny of one customs deputy and it is therefore reasonable to question how fully he recorded all the traffic in the accounts. Another difficulty arising from this practice is that it frequently becomes impossible clearly to distinguish

31. v. Appendix II(A) for a full list of the books for Boston. Those for Hull (P.R.O. Class E190/303-311) do not record entries for its many creeks, and only some books remain for its accredited "members", Grimsby and Scarborough.

the trade of any individual creek from that of the particular group, or to be certain when the smaller havens are not being included in the books.<sup>32</sup>

Like all customs documents, coastal port-books cannot be regarded as accurate commercial statistics and much evidence exists to suggest that they require treating with some reservations. Precise cargoes and transactions, when they can be checked between ports of arrival and departure, sometimes show worrying discrepancies. Nevertheless, since duties as such were not levied on coastal trade, the incentives to defraud were probably less, and more reliance can be placed on coastal port-books than would be prudent in the case of overseas ones.<sup>33</sup>

A second important source of material is the series of surveys taken at the creeks and havens in the later sixteenth century, in order to discover their precise maritime resources. They are a rare example of a set of records almost tailor-made to answer the questions posed by a later historian. Those of 1565 have already been discussed at some length. That

32. It should be noted that the P.R.O. series list produced by N.J. Williams, (Descriptive List of Exchequer Queen's Remembrancer, Port Books, Part I: 1565 to 1700, 1960) is misleading because it implies that the creeks are included in certain specified books and not in others. In fact, this guide refers only to the stated compass of the books found on the front covers. These frequently make no specific mention of creeks when, upon examination, they are found to be present.
33. N.J. Williams, 'The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports, 1550-1590', (unpublished Oxford University D. Phil. thesis, 1952), pp.48-53; D.M. Woodward, 'Port Books', History, LV, 1970, pp.208-210; W.B. Stephens, Seventeenth Century Exeter, 1958, pp.xxv-xxvi, cf. R.W.K. Hinton, The Port Books of Boston 1601-1640, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 50), 1956, pp.xxii-xxiii. The objections of J.H. Andrews ('Two Problems in the Interpretation of the Port Books', Econ. H.R., 2nd series, 9, 1956, pp.119-120) refer mainly to 17th century books: the distinction between "Coquet" and "Transhire"/"Lett Pass" transactions is not found at Boston or its creeks prior to the farming of 1605.

of 1582 was designed to assess the nation's readiness to meet a potential Spanish attack.<sup>34</sup> By assembling all these sources, the state of maritime trade at the creeks in the sixteenth century can be reconstructed.

(11) The State of the Havens

The detailed surveying and listing of the Lincolnshire creeks in 1565 reveals much about their relative importance at that time.<sup>35</sup> The Exchequer survey of that year listed six "creeks" attached to Boston: Northolle, Southolle, Saltfleet, Wilgrip, Wainfleet and Fleet Haven; but the gentlemen appointed to detect piracy mentioned two more places - Fosdyke-with-Spalding, and Somercotes, in their own certificate. Under the jurisdiction of Hull, the former named Grimsby, Stallingborough, Goxhill, Barrow, Barton-on-Humber, Winteringham and Ferriby, and the latter added Marsh Chapel, Tetney, Clee(thorpes), Immingham, Killingholme, Harbrough, East Halton, Whitton, Alkborough and Burton Stather. Even these were not full lists, because the piracy survey added that Frampton, Wyberton, Fishtoft and Freiston were considered to be "adioynyng to the haven of Boston" and were under its direct customs supervision, whilst Dogdyke (about seven miles upriver) was evidently in the same position and its vessels were enumerated alongside those of the town.

34. W.G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 1976, pp.192-193; Cal. S.P.D., I, (1547-1580), p.264 (no.23); Cal. S.P.D., II, (1581-1590), p.81 (no.45).

35. P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1), Piracy Commissioners' Certificate, accession no. LDR A236, (not, as noted in the State Papers volume above, "LDR A238": I am grateful to Dr. J. Post of the Public Record Office staff for re-locating this item for me); P.R.O. E178/1273, (Exchequer Commissioners' Survey).

The picture produced by these surveys is one of decay and neglect. By the middle of the sixteenth century, few (if any) of the Lincolnshire havens were in an acceptable state of repair and even fewer showed any signs of commercial prosperity. Saltfleet and Wilgrip were both in decay "& hath bene this xx<sup>ti</sup> years or thereabout[es]". The Exchequer Commissioners formed the impression that neither place really merited keeping open for merchantmen, but both were important for the supply of fuel and victuals which passed through them to the surrounding region: "& the repairinge of the same Cryke[es] to bringe them to there former goodnes will coste C li at the leaste And Salflett [th]e moste desservest & easiest to be repaired". Wainfleet's long, sinuous haven had been in a condition of more or less dilapidation since the middle of the fifteenth century and by about 1560 required major works to keep it open for traffic and allow drainage for the surrounding fenlands. A new sluice had to be installed, and at the same time a new haven was "cutt streight into the sea from the Scole house at Wainfleet as now it ronnyth", which eliminated one and three-quarter miles of serpentine bends and replaced them with half a mile of embanked channel between there and "Salholme bridge", "W[hi]ch will be more proffyttable and Easier comyng to the said bridg & swyfter from the Sea". This sentiment said more for the naive optimism of the local men (who were obliged to foot part of the bill, and laboured long hours to complete it) than for the sophistication of their engineering skills, because only six or seven years later it had caved in and needed to be re-dug and shored-up again. Even then, as the Exchequer Commissioners stolidly put it, Wainfleet itself was "a pore beggarlie markett towne and wherein doeth inhabit no

march[a]unt or other p[er]son that useth any trafique of  
36  
m[er]ch[a]undise".

At the majority of the county's havens there were not even any houses nearby and the villages with which they had links were distant "som[m]e by a myle, some by 11 miles"; although the picture of desertion this particular detail produces was in reality a condition of the local topography rather than a manifestation of total neglect. Many of the havens (like those at Grainthorpe and Fleet) had crept away from their parent villages gradually, with the expansion of the salt-marsh and the accumulation of silt on the shore. Naturally enough, however, such places had very limited facilities to offer potential outside traders or their ships.

The fortuitous survival of a near-contemporary diocesan survey of 1563, which also counted numbers of households in the county, allows a check on the figures provided by the piracy commissioners and also corrects some of the discrepancies arising out of such geographical quirks (Table 11). In the majority of cases where there can be no doubt about the precise population unit being counted, the two surveys are remarkably close in their assessment of the households in particular towns and villages. The Commissioner's figures for Somercotes and Cleethorpes reveal enigmatic variations, and those for Saltfleet omit the North End (or Meales) hamlet, which is probably best regarded as associated with the haven village. When dealing with the creek

36. L. Toulmin Smith, ed., Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales in or about 1535-1543, 1964, vol. IV, p.181; D.N. Robinson, The Book of the Lincolnshire Seaside, 1981, p.27; E. Oldfield, A Topographical and Historical Account of Wainfleet, 1829, pp.53-55, 61-62; J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming, 1957, pp.145-146; P.R.O. DL/44/119, DL42/119, fo. 259.

"Fosdyke-cum-Spalding", the Commissioners seem to have counted only the number of houses at Fosdyke and did not include Spalding (154 households, according to the survey of Archdeacon Aylmer).

Table 11. Number of Households at the Lincolnshire Havens, c. 1565.

| PLACE                   | No. Households<br>(1565 Piracy<br>Commissioner) | No. Households<br>(1563 Diocesan<br>Survey)      |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Alkborough              | 0                                               | (n.f.)                                           |
| Barrow                  | 152                                             | 106                                              |
| Barton-on-Humber        | 212                                             | 207                                              |
| Boston                  | 458                                             | 471                                              |
| Burton-on-Stather       | 7                                               | (n.f.)                                           |
| Clee(thorpes)           | 0                                               | Itterby:18 Oole:14<br>Thrunscoe:16 (=48)         |
| Dogdyke                 | (n.f.)                                          | 23                                               |
| East Halton             | 0                                               | 96                                               |
| (South) Ferriby         | 0                                               | 56                                               |
| Fleethaven              | 0                                               | Fleet:50 Fen End:9 (=59)                         |
| Fosdyke                 | 84                                              | 80                                               |
| Goxhill                 | 0                                               | 90                                               |
| Grainthorpe (Northolle) | 0                                               | 24                                               |
| Grimsby                 | 150                                             | 145                                              |
| Habrough                | 0                                               | 51                                               |
| Immingham               | 0                                               | 66                                               |
| Killingholme            | 0                                               | 75                                               |
| Marsh Chapel            | 0                                               | 55                                               |
| Saltfleet               | 30                                              | Skidbrooke:18 Haven:29<br>N.End:10 (=57)         |
| (North) Somercotes      | 40                                              | 60 Northorpe:26 (=86)                            |
| Southolle               | 0                                               | (n.f.)                                           |
| Stallingborough         | 0                                               | 150                                              |
| Tetney                  | 0                                               | 90                                               |
| Wainfleet               | 112                                             | St. Mary:38 All Sts: (n.f.)                      |
| Whitton                 | 0                                               | (n.f.)                                           |
| Wilgrip                 | 0                                               | (Theddlethorpe) St. Helen:45<br>All Sts:44 (=89) |
| Winteringham            | 77                                              | (n.f.)                                           |
| Total                   | 1322                                            | 2162                                             |

#### Notes

Sources: (i) P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1) (Piracy Commissioner's Certificate)  
(ii) Diocesan Survey of 1563 (B.L. Harl. Ms. 618), reproduced in  
G.A.J. Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, 1975, Appendix I, pp.189-199.  
(n.f.) = no figures available

The Diocesan Survey of 1563 does not include the Archdeaconry of  
Stow (north-west Lincolnshire).

It is when the maritime resources - the ships and the mariners - to be found at each haven are taken into account that the true nature of the change which had taken place since the fifteenth century can be appreciated. A survey of all vessels of 100 tons or more in England, made in 1560, revealed that there was only one ship of that size in the whole county, the "Roberte" of Grimsby (100 tons).<sup>37</sup> The largest ones on the 1565 certificate were still at Grimsby: two of 80 tons and one of 60 tons. At Boston, there was still (nominally) one 100 ton ship, owned by William Kydde of the town, but the circumstances were such that it may never have visited its home-port. It was, said the certificate, "vsed with no trade but to yslande & hath her maryners out of Norf[olk]", the last remnant of the small fifteenth century Iceland fishing-fleet which the port had once possessed.<sup>38</sup> The rest of the vessels of Boston were nowhere near its size: two sail of 40 tons and one of 30 tons "Are somtyme traded to [th]e staple with wolles & somtyme to Newcastle for coles"; one keel of 20 tons, one of 16, one of 12 and one of 10 "Are traded from porte to porte w[i]th corne, coles, victuall[es] and m[er]chandisez & somtymes to [th]e fayres at Sturbridge, Elee, Cambridge, Lynne & Spalding, &c.". Four keels of Dogdyke were employed in the same sort of work. Fifteen fishing boats belonging to the places adjoining Boston - Wyberton, Frampton, Fishtoft and Freiston - and to Ingoldmells and Friskney, completed the resources of Boston's creeks.

37. P.R.O. SP12/11/27.

38. Burwash, op. cit., p.152; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol', in E. Power and M.M. Postan, eds., op. cit., p.188. For the meaning of "home-ports", v. Appendix II, note (iii).

In the north of the county, there were numerically more vessels among the landing places in the area of Hull's jurisdiction. Grimsby itself had 8 ships, mostly crayers, employed in the coasting trade, one 24 ton fishing-crayer which doubled as a ferry to Hull, and one 4 ton boat regularly occupied in fishing. There were also some small ferry-boats operating across the Humber estuary from Grimsby and East Halton, and some craft of a couple of tons at Immingham, Barrow, Winteringham and elsewhere, often "the ownors thereof yet not knowe[n]". Altogether, the Commissioners reckoned there might be between 30 or 40 such vessels at the landing places "having no names, som[m]e of dj ton[n], som[m]e one ton[n], som[m]e of ij ton and som[m]e of iij ton[n]"; probably mostly small fishing boats, although their owners may have been using them to fetch and carry for the local pirates as well. In respect of coasting traffic as such, the picture was similar to what had been found further south. Boats at Alkborough and East Halton were occupied carrying turf and wood to Hull and York, or "in the weste contrye" (Axholme) on similar business. None of this found its way into the port-books at Hull. The general implication of the evidence is that, in the sixteenth century, places with a considerable population, bespeaking at least a sufficient supply of labour for agricultural purposes, were supporting their people and providing employment and activity for them without recourse, on any significant scale, to the sea or to the possibilities of maritime trade, which had played so vital a part in the medieval economies of many of them.

The people of Barton, Saltfleet and Wainfleet, once the leading Lincolnshire havens, were often allowing their

harbours to become decayed and inactive and were content to allow such trade as took place at them to be monopolized by outsiders. At many of the north Lincolnshire havens, there was just a handful of tiny inshore fishing and ferry boats, and maritime activities had otherwise largely ceased. When a commission looked into the warped-up condition of Barton haven in 1578 the main complaint was, significantly, that neither the ferries nor other craft "can bring[e] in thing[e]s necessarie and comodyous to the countrie as vsuallie hertofore they haue done to the great hyndoraunce and lacke of the said countrie". This echoes the reasoning of the 1565 commission that Saltfleet and Wilgrip needed to be repaired, because they took in fuel and victuals for the surrounding area. Importing had become the vital function of the creeks, a mainly passive role, which demanded very little participation on the part of the inhabitants.<sup>39</sup>

(iii) Vessels and Mariners

Although the general ethos of the Lincolnshire havens had undergone this radical change by the middle of the sixteenth century, the total decay portrayed by the surveys above is slightly modified by other available evidence of later date. It seems clear that in 1565 maritime involvement at the havens was at a particularly low point, and that the situation had altered from this nadir by the time that the 1582 surveys<sup>40</sup> were taken.

39. P.R.O. E178/1295.

40. P.R.O. SP12/156/45 (duplicated as SP12/156/46). Unlike that of 1565, this survey excluded vessels of less than 10 tons burden.

On this occasion, the distribution of vessels in the county was far more evenly spread between Boston and Grimsby on the one hand, and the creeks on the other.

There were no vessels listed greater than 100 tons, and only one (the "Christopher" of Grimsby) between 80 and 100 tons. However, of the 20 ships in the range below 80 tons only half were now to be found in the towns of Boston or Grimsby. The remainder were distributed fairly evenly among the creeks and havens, although, this time, the balance was in favour of those places under the control of Boston. It is possible that repairs had been carried out at Saltfleet haven, where two vessels were now based, one of 60 tons and one of 70 tons. At Boston, on the other hand, the decline in shipping had continued. Of the 4 vessels there, one was 70 tons, one 38<sup>41</sup> tons, one 35 tons and one 25 tons.

Table 12. Vessels Recorded in Lincolnshire, 1582.

| PLACE            | No. of Vessels | Total Tonnage | Mean Tonnage |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Barton-on-Humber | 1 "pinke"      | 20            | 20           |
| Boston           | 4              | 168           | 42           |
| Croft            | 1              | 16            | 16           |
| Foskdyke         | 1              | 36            | 36           |
| Grimsby          | 5              | 211           | 42.2         |
| Ingoldmells      | 1 "crayer"     | 30            | 30           |
| Keadby           | 3              | 131           | 43.6         |
| Marsh Chapel     | 1              | 70            | 70           |
| Northcotes       | 1              | 50            | 50           |
| Saltfleet        | 2              | 130           | 65           |
| Totals           | 20             | 862           | 43           |

Notes

Source: P.R.O. SP12/156/45-6

Where they can be checked against Port Books, the tonnages in this survey generally appear to have been over-estimated, (v. Appendix II).

41. Repairs were carried out on the jetty at Saltfleet haven in November/December, 1571 - L.A.O. Alford Sewers Dykereeves Accounts, Louthesk, bundles 10/6 and 10/7.

The three surveys of 1560, 1565 and 1582 all give estimates of the number of men employed at sea within the county, although each one calculates this in a slightly different manner. In 1582, the survey gives a partial breakdown of these numbers at the individual havens, although a frustratingly large number of them are simply added together, under the formula "Other villages and places" (Table 13). In 1560, the survey recorded a total of 229 mariners in Lincolnshire, although how this was arrived at is not stated and its usefulness as a comparison with the others is therefore considerably diminished. In 1565, Dymoke and the piracy commissioners reported that the number of men "vsuallye occupied & gettinge there lyvinges with the shippes keeles and botes" in the Boston section of their survey was 87, of whom 35 were mariners and 52 fishermen. In the northern area, there were said to be 127, composed of 66 mariners and 61 fishermen. The totals for the county were therefore 101 mariners and 113 fishermen, or 214 men in all. Taking the summary figures for

Table 13. Number of Masters and Mariners in Lincolnshire, 1582.

| PLACE          | No. of Masters | No. of Mariners | Total |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Boston         | 8              | 17              | 25    |
| Burringham     | 0              | 30              | 30    |
| Cleethorpes    | 2              | 0               | 2     |
| East Ferry     | 0              | 2               | 2     |
| Freiston       | 1              | 0               | 1     |
| Grimsby        | 8              | 28              | 36    |
| Lincoln        | 0              | 5               | 5     |
| Marsh Chapel   | 1              | 9               | 10    |
| "Other Places" | 0              | 104             | 104   |
| Totals         | 20             | 195             | 215   |

Note

Source: P.R.O. SP12/156/45-6

1582 shown in Table 13 it will be evident that, even allowing for some differences in how these were calculated, there were perhaps 215 masters and mariners in the county. The number of fishermen reported in the same document was 234. This shows a doubling of the numbers in 1565 in both cases. Moreover, in view of the small number of vessels at the creeks in 1565, it is probable that the majority of mariners at that date were to be found in the towns of Boston and Grimsby, whereas by 1582 there were more ships, and presumably more sailors, in the rural areas. Even before turning to the port-books for a more detailed chronology, it is apparent that the creeks had<sup>42</sup> recovered a little in the two decades after 1565.

Table 14 shows more detailed figures for the number of vessels belonging to the creeks and river-ports in the county in each decade between 1550 and 1612, drawn from the Boston port-books. It should be noted that the number of vessels belonging to Barton-on-Humber and Barrow would probably be increased if the Hull port-books had separate entries for the creeks, but since this is not the case, they would not be directly comparable with the Boston ones.

The table confirms the hypothesis that the 1560s was a decade of depressed maritime involvement among the sea creeks, and that in the period following this some of them, particularly in the area around Saltfleet and Theddlethorpe, enjoyed a temporary revival. However, although the Boston coastal port-books after 1601-1602 do not form a continuous series, the available evidence also suggests that this was short-lived and that by the early part of the seventeenth

42. P.R.O. SP12/11/27, SP12/38/23(1), SP12/156/45.

century, they had again fallen into some disrepair. The table also shows a decline, over a corresponding time, in the number

Table 14. Shipping Strength of the Lincolnshire Creeks and River Ports  
(In Decades), 1550-1612.

| PLACE              | Number of Different Vessels Recorded Per Decade |         |         |         |           |         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
|                    | 1550-60                                         | 1561-70 | 1571-80 | 1581-90 | 1591-1600 | 1601-12 |
| <u>Creeks</u>      |                                                 |         |         |         |           |         |
| Barrow             | 2                                               | 1       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Barton-on-Humber   | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 1         | 0       |
| Croft              | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 1       | 0         | 0       |
| Fosdyke            | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 1       | 0         | 1       |
| Frampton           | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 1         | 0       |
| Ingoldmells        | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 2       | 0         | 0       |
| Marsh Chapel       | 0                                               | 0       | 2       | 2       | 2         | 0       |
| Northcotes         | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 1       | 0         | 1       |
| Saltfleet          | 1                                               | 2       | 7       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Skegness           | 1                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Somerootes         | 1                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Southolle          | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 1         | 0       |
| Sutton-in-Holland  | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 2       |
| Theddlethorpe      | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 3       | 0         | 0       |
| Wainfleet          | 1                                               | 0       | 1       | 0       | 0         | 1       |
| Total              | 6                                               | 3       | 10      | 10      | 5         | 5       |
| <u>River Ports</u> |                                                 |         |         |         |           |         |
| Bardney            | 1                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Burringham         | 0                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 2       |
| Dogdyke            | 8                                               | 7       | 9       | 3       | 2         | 0       |
| Keadby             | 0                                               | 2       | 4       | 6       | 5         | 4       |
| Kirkstead          | 4                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Lincoln            | 6                                               | 1       | 9       | 2       | 0         | 2       |
| Pinchbeck          | 2                                               | 2       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Spalding           | 1                                               | 0       | 3       | 2       | 6         | 1       |
| Tattershall        | 2                                               | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0         | 0       |
| Total              | 24                                              | 12      | 25      | 13      | 13        | 9       |
| Overall Total      | 30                                              | 15      | 35      | 23      | 18        | 14      |

Notes

Source: Appendix II(B), q.v.

Data between 1601 and 1612 is influenced by the scarcity of Port-Books for that period (v. Appendix II(A)).

If individual vessels are recorded over a period spanning two or more of the decades above, they are counted separately in each relevant column of the table.

of craft belonging to the landing-places along the Witham -  
Dogdyke, Bardney, Kirkstead and Lincoln itself.<sup>43</sup>

(iv) Patterns of Trade

It might at first appear that more definite conclusions about the relative state of the creeks could be obtained by looking at the number and tonnages of all vessels entering them, regardless of their home-port. The Boston port-books can certainly be made to yield such information, but it is in reality a less reliable guide to the condition of the creeks than the number of vessels which actually belonged to them at this time. Coasters did not necessarily require a harbour or inlet of any sort to deliver goods. In the early seventeenth century they were still unloading off Frampton although they were unable to get within a mile of the shore. Given reasonable weather (and most coasters only operated between the north and Lincolnshire in the summer and early autumn months) a collier could remain at anchor some distance out to discharge or load cargoes, particularly given the wide shallow beaches characteristic of much of the Lincolnshire coastline. Skegness certainly had no harbour in this period,

43. For a list of Boston port-books, v. Appendix II(A). The headings of these books when listing creeks are very inconsistent, especially with regard to Saltfleet and Theddlethorpe. The latter appears, completely distinct from Wilgrip (for which there are also some entries) from 1582 onwards (P.R.O. E190/390/7), and from then until the end of the century is usually (but not invariably) grouped with Saltfleet. From 1601, however, Saltfleet no longer occurs as a separate regular entry, and the date appears coincident with other evidence of decay: from the mid-1590s the customs deputy in the area was a Theddlethorpe man, not (as in 1565) a Saltfleet one, (P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1), cf. E178/4049); and a complaint to the Privy Council in 1600 suggests that the Withern Eau, an essential scour for the haven, was blocked up (Acts of the Privy Council of England, 31, 1600-1601, pp.46-47).

nor yet did Huttoft or Ingoldmells, but coasters were still<sup>44</sup>  
loading and unloading there in the later sixteenth century.

So whereas lack of safe harbourage might have had a considerable effect on the number and size of vessels belonging to a creek, the volume of coasting trade was not necessarily linked to such requirements. The bulk of it was in the hands of outsiders, supplying basic commodities (mainly coal) and exporting some beans and grain. Thus, between Michaelmas 1579 and Michaelmas 1580, during a period when Saltfleet possessed several vessels of its own, seven out of 15 recorded entries into the haven were by vessels other than these, belonging to home-ports as far apart as Newcastle, Ipswich and Emden (in the northern Netherlands). What all 15 entries had in common was their cargo and its provenance: coal brought from Newcastle. At Wainfleet, in the same year, there were 18 recorded entries of vessels, only one from Wainfleet itself. In this case, the home-port of the majority of them was Keadby or Selby; but all, once again, bore a cargo of Newcastle coals. In the period Michaelmas 1566 - Michaelmas 1567, when Saltfleet possessed no recorded coasters of its own, 17 entries into the haven were<sup>45</sup> recorded, of which only one was not a consignment of coal. Out of the hundreds of transactions recorded at the Lincolnshire havens up to 1600, the overwhelming majority were coasters, delivering this essential fuel for sale to the rural hinterlands of the creeks. How vital the importation of coal was has already been suggested by the fact that the 1565

44. McGowan, *op. cit.*, p.34; Thirsk, *op. cit.*, p.18; T.S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750*, 1938, p.xii; P.R.O. E190/394/11, E190/392/4, E190/391/11.

45. P.R.O. E190/387/7, E190/387/3.

Commission of the Exchequer thought it essential to keep at least one of the north Lindsey havens open for its delivery. In the winter, nearby towns and villages had no ready supply of fuel and the bulkiness of the commodity, in relation to its price, meant that delivery by water was the only economic means of supply. The majority of the coasters did not take on fresh cargoes at the creeks, often passing on instead to Boston or Lynn to load up grain, fish or imported salt before returning to Newcastle (and, at a slightly later date, Sunderland) to begin the process again. Those which did re-load went mainly to Saltfleet for beans, and occasionally butter or fish.<sup>46</sup> Wainfleet exported virtually nothing in an average year.

Among the Lincolnshire river-ports which traded along the coast (Maps 6-7), only Keadby had any real stake in the coal business, transporting a large proportion of the total delivered, at Wainfleet in particular. In 1566-1567, 5 out of 8 cargoes unloaded there were from Keadby bottoms, in 1579-1580<sup>47</sup> 6 out of 18. The majority of the riverside townships listed in Table 14 above, however, were situated on the Witham or the Welland and engaged in a totally different trade, with its focus on Lynn and the Great Ouse river system. The earliest coastal contrallments, dating from the 1550s, record their keels passing down the Witham, negotiating Boston and Lynn Deeps, and passing down the Great Ouse into the labyrinth of

46. J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, 1932, Vol. I, pp.78-79; *ibid*, Vol. II, pp.197-198; N.J. Williams, 'Maritime Trade of East Anglian Ports', pp.161-173.

47. P.R.O. E190/387/3, E190/387/7. In the early 17th century, Burringham also had a couple of coasters involved in this trade, and it was not unknown (although certainly rare), for one of the Witham keels to make a Newcastle trip - eg. the "James" of Dogdyke, 9th February 1573 out of Boston (E190/388/4).

inland waterways to which it gave access. Such vessels were usually less than 20 tons burden and never ventured into open waters at all, using the sea as part of "a river round England", essential in enabling them to trade effectively from the riverside villages like Dogdyke, Kirkstead and Bardney where their owners were resident. It is possible that a number of them, like the four Dogdyke keels in the 1565 survey, were more or less always moored up at Boston, but they could quite easily pass along the Witham as far as Lincoln, until the end of the seventeenth century and beyond. Dogdyke was a focal point on the river, at the confluence of the Witham, the Slea and the Bain, all of which were at least partially navigable in the sixteenth century. Stone for the repair of Louth church, for example, was being sent down the Slea for storage at Dogdyke between 1500 and 1524 (Map 4). It also marked the limit to which the Witham was tidal until at least 1500, and on the eastern side of the river there was a shallow haven in which keels could moor up to load and discharge goods.<sup>48</sup> Brayford pool, in the city of Lincoln, provided a similar facility further upriver.

The trade of these boats was mainly in salt and stockfish, which they bought at Lynn and took back to Boston. They also supplied miscellaneous Scandanavian goods, groceries and hardware items, which they acquired by passing down the Great Ouse to the fairs at Ely and Stourbridge. Other frequently declared destinations for their journeys were

48. Sir J.W.F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln, 1965, pp.215-216; V.C.H. Lincolnshire, Vol. II, 1906, p.384; W.H. Wheeler, A History of the Fens of South Lincolnshire, 1897, pp.139-141; ibid, Appendix I, p.11; R.C. Dudding, The First Churchwarden's Book of Louth 1500-1524, 1941, p.xviii. For a shipwright at Dogdyke in the late 15th century, v. L.A.O., F.L. St. Marks Deeds, 6/1. The "Haven Bank" is still marked on the modern 2½" Ordnance Survey map.

Brandon Ferry, on the Little Ouse (which linked up with the "Pilgrim's Way" between London and Walsingham) or Mildenhall, on the Lark due south of this. In exchange they took some of the wool which in an earlier century would have gone abroad in its raw state, but which was now sent (in much reduced quantities) to the cloth manufacturing towns and villages of Suffolk.<sup>49</sup>

The trade of Spalding, Pinchbeck and other places along the Welland seems to be less fully documented in the Boston port-books. By the 1540s the navigation west of Market Deeping was probably blocked, and was not cleared until the early seventeenth century (after which time Spalding's river trade so increased that it became a virtual "member" of Boston,<sup>50</sup> keeping its own separate port-book). Most of the Spalding boats recorded in the sixteenth century port-books were only a few tons in size, and how thoroughly such tiny transactions were checked is doubtful. The majority of its commerce with Boston was in miscellaneous local agricultural goods, but occasionally a vessel made the trip to Brandon with wool, and there was a little contact between Spalding and Lincoln, and much more (although hardly recorded at Boston until the<sup>51</sup> seventeenth century) between Spalding and Lynn.

49. Hoskins, Age of Plunder, pp.151-152, 194-196; Williams, 'Maritime Trade of East Anglian Ports', pp.61-62, 70; P.R.O. E190/388/9, E190/389/5, E190/390/4. Less common destinations included Grimbsy, Blakeney, Yaxley (Hunts) or "Turnbridge" (on the Aire, at Snaith).

50. Hoskins, op. cit., p.196. Most of the separate books have not survived, but v. P.R.O. E190/396/13 (1666-1667), E190/397/4 (1672-1673), both stitched into the back of Boston's books, and E122/230/19 (separate volume).

51. Williams, 'Maritime Trade of East Anglian Ports', pp.68-69.

## Change in the Lincolnshire Maritime Economy

Despite the shortcomings of the evidence and its occasional unsuitability for comparative purposes, certain conclusions present themselves as a result of the foregoing analysis. On the one hand, a constantly changing pattern of maritime fortunes and activity, at the level of specific villages and districts, has been anticipated by the discussion of topographical considerations, and it is confirmed by comparison of the variety of places listed at different times in the tables of this chapter. Skegness, Wrangle and Surfleet appear commonly in the fourteenth century shipping lists but very seldom thereafter. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards Wyberton and Dogdyke emerge as places engaged in waterborne trade; and while in the sixteenth century Fosdyke begins to be found in the records, Wyberton again recedes from view. On the other hand, a relentless transformation in maritime trade underlies these fluctuations (especially at major havens like Saltfleet and Wainfleet), involving several distinct periods of development. During the fourteenth century maritime trade was varied and important, founded partly on the proximity of the Lincolnshire coastline to the continent, partly on the trade in wool which predominated at Boston, and partly on the salt manufacturing capacity of the Wash and Lindsey shores. Barton, Saltfleet and Wainfleet were significant and expanding small ports, all with some pretensions or aspirations to urban status. As far as the evidence permits judgement, it was in the fifteenth century that this original economic framework broke up and the trade declined in both volume and importance, until by the mid-sixteenth century (at the latest) it was insignificant either nationally or locally. A new form of

coasting trade developed which nominally replaced it, but which, both in its extent and in its opportunities for local involvement, was radically different from what had gone before.

What caused the disintegration of the medieval economic structure? In some senses, the interdependence of small and large havens is self evident. When Saltfleet was at the height of its commercial importance there was a correspondingly high level of involvement among the neighbouring villages of Fulstow, Grainthorpe and Northcotes; and when Wainfleet was an important port, Skegness was also thriving. Both havens depended on the continuing prosperity of Boston as a major outpost which drew traffic along the east coast and the continent towards them. From a simple (and not totally invalid) point of view, if Boston lost its volume of wool exports, there was bound to be a domino-like repercussion elsewhere. Equally important, however, were the trends which underlay both declines and were part of a long national re-orientation of trade away from the once vital east coast towards London (and, in later centuries, Bristol and the west).<sup>52</sup>

The principal impetus in Lincolnshire medieval seafaring activity was the wool exporting trade. It is true that the fully developed staple policy dictated that it should pass only through Boston itself, but the health of this commerce was equally essential to the nearby creeks. Not only is it probable that large quantities of wool found their way

52. G.V. Scammell, 'English Merchant Shipping at the End of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence', *Econ. H.R.*, 2nd series, XIII, 1961, pp.329-331; V.C.H. Lincolnshire, Vol. II, pp.319-321.

out of them illegally, but the wealth generated by the large wool-producing religious houses of the county brought with it other markets, in which the havens could share. Louth Park Abbey, among the wealthiest of the county's foundations, is known to have used Saltfleet as the most convenient place to buy victuals and provisions and owned much property in the township. When the importance of wool exportation began to decline, this accompanying trade would, inevitably, have  
<sup>53</sup>  
 decreased.

Wool was one half of the equation which produced the economic prosperity of the county, and was the side from which its main urban centres - Boston and Lincoln - amassed most direct profit because of government regulations. However, there was no staple policy on salt, the other part of the equation; and although, by virtue of its size, Boston was a natural focus for salt exports, the havens could legally and legitimately compete in this trade, and in many respects  
<sup>54</sup>  
 enjoyed advantages over the larger towns. Salt was usually produced in rural areas adjacent to the sea and had its most powerful market in other coastal regions, where it could be used to preserve fish after catching or other perishables prior to transportation. Something of the network of commercial links involved in this process has been discussed above, as coastal villages manufactured salt and shipped it to centres of

53. S.H. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages', (unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis), 1983, pp.173-229; Carus-Wilson, 'Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', loc. cit., pp.185-186; L.V.D. Owen, 'Lincolnshire and the Wool Trade in the Middle Ages', A.A.A.S.R.P., 39, 1928-9, pp.262-263; D.M. Owen, Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire (History of Lincolnshire, Vol.V), 1971, pp.66-68; B.L. Cart. Harl. 45 M 19.

54. A.R. Bridbury, England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages, 1955, p.21.

demand such as Yarmouth. In Lindsey, they also imported the  
55  
fuels needed to produce the preservative.

The proximity of Wainfleet, Saltfleet, Wrangle and Surfleet to the main salt-making parts of the county is no coincidence, and direct exportation from the point of manufacture was clearly more cost effective than sending it by road to Boston or some other urban market. What most firmly impresses itself on the very limited evidence of maritime trade at the havens, in their medieval heyday, is the multi-faceted relationship between salt and other aspects of the economy. It was the point of contact between maritime trade and fishing, and fishermen took salt to Yarmouth for the herring fair. It was a vital ingredient in the river transportation network for imported foreign goods; these could be landed, for example, at Saltfleet and marketed along the Humber, the Trent or the Yorkshire Ouse and exchanged for turf cut on the Isle of Axholme and shipped back for use as fuel. It was the link between the sea, the local industry and agriculture (which profited from the outward expansion of the saltmarshes); and it was another manifestation of the ever present influence of the Lincolnshire religious houses on the coastal areas, because the salterns at which it was made and the turbaries at which the fuel was dug were often owned by the same institutions, whose  
56  
involvement in the wool trade underlay the whole process.

By the end of the fourteenth century, however, foreign competition had severely curtailed the production of salt in Lincolnshire at exactly same time that Boston's wool

55. In the Wash area, turbaries were close at hand in the fens; ibid., pp.18, 22; H.C. Darby, The Medieval Fenland, 1940, pp.41 sqq.

56. Robinson, op. cit., p.40; Owen, op. cit., pp.68-70.

exports were on the wane. Although salting continued until the late sixteenth century in some areas, some of the economic links in the chain were diminished and others destroyed altogether. Scarborough's fisheries were apparently being chiefly supplied by Spanish, Portugese and French salt at the beginning of the fourteenth century. By its end, inferior but cheaper salt from Bourgneuf Bay was accounting for between two thirds and three quarters of all imported salt, shipped directly into Yarmouth, Lynn and Boston (which changed from being a net exporter to a net importer of the product). The Yarmouth herring fair, which had played an important role in the economies of Wainfleet and Wrangle and a not insignificant one in that of Salftleet, was probably of declining importance anyway, and there may have been a falling off in demand for salt and salted fish in the period after the Black Death. Under this influence, trade along the Humber probably ceased to be as important to the Lindsey havens, because less turf was now needed. When, in the early sixteenth century, the religious houses were dissolved and their landed possessions passed over to laymen, the final stage of the transformation had taken place. It has been suggested that some of the coal imported at Grainthorpe and Marsh Chapel in the sixteenth century may have been used as a substitute for turf in the boiling-off of brine, but it is clear, from what has already been said, that its main use was simply as domestic winter fuel, and that it was the main component of the new maritime economy more than any part of the old one. There appears to

57. Ibid., p.39; Littler, 'Fish in Medieval Economy and Society', pp.96-97; Bridbury, *op. cit.*, pp.52-108, 114; Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century', pp.3-6; V. Parker, The Making of King's Lynn, 1971, pp.11-12.

be some measure of agreement among historians that the sixteenth century saw a general rise in the level of coastal trade and that this directly compensated for much of the lost overseas trade of many east coast ports.<sup>58</sup> However, it will be clear that as far as the creeks and havens were concerned, this traffic was in no way comparable to the sort of maritime economy they had enjoyed in previous centuries. Although in some periods Saltfleet, in particular, did engage in the coal trade with a limited number of its own vessels, this was a one-sided commerce of essential supply, which the colliers exploited whether local ships participated or not.

Thriving involvement in sea-going trade required something suitable to export in exchange: a non-perishable (or locally preservable) commodity which could be supplied in bulk and was in heavy demand. Extraction industry was ideal, but once salting declined, the county had nothing similar to replace it. The agricultural system of the Lindsey marshland in the sixteenth century placed a heavy emphasis on livestock at the expense of corn, so that grain could not supply a staple export around which the havens could build their trade. Cattle bred inland were sent to the coastal villages to fatten on the outmarsh, and sheep were depastured on the salt marshes to the east of the dunes and sea-banks. Salted marshland meat could certainly be exported coastwise, to London: in 1513, for

58. Hoskins, op. cit., p.193; Nef, op. cit., Vol.I, pp.78-79; Bridbury ('English Provincial Towns in the Later Middle Ages', Econ. H.R. XXXIV, 1981, pp.20-21) argues that Boston's lost overseas trade with the continent was compensated for by a rise in coastal contacts with London. In 16th century Boston, however, links of this sort were comparatively unimportant. See also Rigby, op. cit., pp.382-385.

example, an army victualler ordered "253 fat winter fed oxen bought in Lincolnshire and Holland, killed and salted at Saltfleet, £290 6s 8d. Salt and vessels for the same £58 19s 8d". But the salt seems to have been imported to the village especially for the purpose, rather than produced locally; and for most regular small-scale commerce it was obviously both more economical and easier to market pelts, hides, or meat "on the hoof" at nearby inland markets - Louth, Alford or Spilsby.<sup>59</sup>

Nor surprisingly, in this climate it was all too easy for havens to fall into dilapidation, unless the government was willing to pay for their upkeep, in order to facilitate the supply of fuel to the neighbourhood. The only other people who had a stake in keeping them open were sea-fishermen, who used them for their vessels. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to this group of men, and examine how closely their economic fortunes were related to those of the maritime traders and why, by the middle of the sixteenth century, they too had little incentive to prevent the warping up of harbours from which they had once operated in comparatively large numbers.

\* \* \* \* \*

59. Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Vol.I, (part 2), 1513-1514, p.1118 (no. 2514); Thirsk, op. cit., pp.66-73.

## 5. FISHING IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Many of those who have written about fishermen in the past have been concerned to emphasize how much they were "a race apart", distinguished socially and economically from all other men by the peculiar skills and unique perils of their occupation.<sup>1</sup> We have seen that this description is broadly applicable to all medieval seafarers because much of their lives were spent outside the framework of the authority structures which were taken for granted ashore. The main justification for considering fishermen separately lies rather in the heterogeneous nature of the different groups who come into the category. Many of these had no association with the sub-cultural milieu of mariners; some, although they went to sea in boats, had additional employments on the land in which they took an equal, if not greater, interest; and others still formed a distinctive sub-set of seafarers, with special knowledge and interests but nevertheless involved in many aspects of their way of life. Without clearly defining these diversities, it is meaningless to look for similarities or differences between fishermen and other occupational groups, and without understanding the tendency of these strata to merge into one another it is impossible to know how fishermen fit into the patterns of maritime life which have already been discussed.

1. Exponents of the "race apart" theory include P. Sébillot, Le Folk-Lore des Pêcheurs, 1901, pp.iv-vii; A. Storm, 'Robin Hood's Bay', (unpublished Leicester University Dept. of English Local History M.A. dissertation), 1978, pp.33-34; and (most recently) J. Dyson, Business in Great Waters: The Story of British Fishermen, 1977, passim, esp. pp.15-24. For a critique (from the perspective of an oral historian), cf. P. Thompson, Living the Fishing, 1983, pp.1-7. See also P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1978, pp.42-46.

A simple yardstick which can be employed is to divide fishermen into "trappers" and "hunters", depending on the mobility involved in their fishing activities. "Trappers" erected ensnaring devices in rivers and estuaries and waited for the fish to come to them, while "hunters" set out in boats with nets and lines in active pursuit. Several sorts of hunter can be identified, from subsistence fishermen" (a group not found on the central east coast of England) who consumed most of what they caught, to "coastal fishermen" who probably sold most of their catch but were usually only part-time fishermen, and "seasonal fishermen" who followed the fish from coastline to coastline and season to season, searching for particular species at different times of the year. Some of these confined themselves to English waters, while some were prepared to go as far afield as Iceland.<sup>2</sup>

In Lincolnshire, the prevalence of each category requires particularly careful study because it has been suggested that there was a complete concentration of the East Anglian fisheries in Norfolk and Suffolk and of the regional salt-manufacturies in Lincolnshire, which came about because the two industries would have been conflicting interests in any individual coastal environment. Lincolnshire, according to this interpretation, had virtually no fishing industry and no "fishing villages" because its economic specialization was salt. It will become apparent that focusing on places which

2. A.R. Mitchell, 'The European Fisheries in Early Modern History', in E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol.V.: The Economic Organization of Early Modern Europe, 1977, pp.139-142; L.F. Saltzman, English Industries of the Middle Ages, 1923, pp.258-259; A. Littler, 'Fish in English Economy and Society down to the Reformation', (unpublished Wales University Ph.D. thesis), 1979, p.179.

are traditionally considered to have been "fishing villages" tends to confuse the issue, since coastal fishing took place along the length of the Lincolnshire coastline whilst the more capital-intensive seasonal fishing was confined to the harbours and havens of certain medieval trading-ports: Boston, Grimsby and Saltfleet in particular.<sup>3</sup>

### Trapping Fishermen

Fish-traps are probably the oldest method of fishing known to man, and the work of Littler and others shows that a larger quantity of fish than has often been supposed was still provided by this means in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. With the exception of some of the herring-renders found in Suffolk coastal manors, the fisheries of the Domesday Book were all fixed structures (or their sites) in rivers or on coastal sandbanks, and (unlike sea fisheries) could be clearly defined within the established tenurial arrangements. They were leased or granted in return for cash or services, just as lands or rights might have been. Domesday valuations speak either of annual cash yields or the number of fish and eels they were worth.<sup>4</sup>

The traps found in rivers were normally composed of a series of V-shaped assemblies ("steddles") across which nets, stakes or baskets could be attached to catch fish as they passed along the river. They were known alternatively as "weirs", "kiddles" or "fishgarths" - the precise distinction

3. A.R. Bridbury, England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages, 1955, pp.253-254.
4. Littler, op. cit., pp.130-133; H.C. Darby, The Domesday Geography of Eastern England, 3rd edition, 1971, pp.66, 258-259.

(if any) is unclear. Similar contraptions were also commonly placed in the mouths of major estuaries, relying on the ebb and flow of the tide to force the fish into them. The entrance to Grimsby haven, for example, was a complex network of kiddles, presenting a great hazard to navigation but tolerated because they were a source of income for the borough. The major difficulty lay in ensuring that they did not extend beyond defined limits or "walk", as they had a tendency to do, to slightly more favourable locations.<sup>5</sup>

From the end of the thirteenth century "Commissions of Kiddles" were set up to monitor the position of the traps and strike a balance between the conflicting requirements of river traffic and fishermen on important rivers. The upper reaches of the Trent were notoriously dangerous sailing, but disputes also centred on the Welland and the Witham. Monastic proprietors were continually indicted for obstructing traffic: the Abbot of Kirkstead, the lay brothers of St. Katherine's in Lincoln, the Abbot of Barlings and the Abbot of Peterborough, for example.<sup>6</sup>

The gently shelving shoreline of the Lincolnshire coast was also ideal for the positioning of stationary "kettle-nets" (also known as "sea-hedges" or "heia maris" in Domesday Book). These were semi-circular arrangements of stakes and nets, accessible from the beach at low tide but fully submerged at high tide, and forming a hedge which cut off the fish as the

5. Saltzman, op. cit., pp.258-260; M.W. Barley, 'Lincolnshire Rivers in the Middle Ages', L.A.A.S.R.P., 1, 1936, p.9 sqq; E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970, pp.36-37; A.J.F. Dulley, 'Four Kent Towns at the end of the Middle Ages', in M. Roake and J. Whyman, eds., Essays in Kentish History, 1973, pp.68-69.

6. W.H. Wheeler, A History of the Fens of South Lincolnshire, 1897, p.295; Sir J.W.F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln, 1965, p.347.

water receded. Sites for several of these were listed in the Duchy of Lancaster's survey of Wrangle in the early seventeenth century, with the rights to fish let out on particular sands: "The Fyshinge at the sea called the forty pence sands", "The Fyshinge ther called the six shillings sands" and "The Fyshing cald the noble sands". The fourteenth century Peace Rolls include presentments for attempting to forestall the fishermen of Leverton and Bennington "vbi retia steterunt", and complaints that in 1375 William Hyry of Surfleet was laying unjust claims to the fishing grounds on the sands ("piscariam super sabulam") between Saltney (in the parish of Whaplode) and the common marsh of Holbeach and Whaplode. In this case, the local fishermen lodged the protest because they said this area was a "common fishery" and Hyry was causing damage to the whole community by interfering with their nets and chasing them away. It is interesting to note that in both the cases quoted above, fishermen from two or more fenland villages were working the same stretches of foreshore together.<sup>7</sup>

#### Hunting Fishermen

The fishermen who worked the inland weirs and coastal sands were mainly farmers who supplemented their incomes by the fortuitous proximity of their homes to freshwater or seaside fisheries. Sets and traps were not a full-time occupation, and merely required emptying once or twice a day, re-baiting, and repairing at intervals. Some of the fishers in larger towns like Lincoln and Spalding maintained several fishgarths and

7. P.R.O. DL42/119, fo. 226r, 232v; R. Sillem, ed., Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire 1360-1375, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.30), 1937, pp.224, 227. "William Hyry" of Surfleet: cf. the shipmaster of that name, Appendix I(C).

probably used their small boats to catch fish at other times, but even these men were part-timers who had at least one more occupation or skill to fall back on. Sargant Newghe, fisher, of Lincoln, had a "schoppe" in which he kept a spinning-wheel and net-manufacturing equipment; John Smyth and Henry Beale of Stickford (in the East Fen) were called "fishers" in their inventories but were principally farmers from the economic standpoint. Above all, whatever the precise balance of their activities, they were men who "resembled farmers, though the<sup>8</sup> acres they harvested were acres of water rather than land".

Most clearly distinct from such people were the "seasonal fishermen" who spent most of their time throughout the year at sea, relying on a willingness to go wherever the fishing was most abundant or profitable to them. Between the two, and merging imperceptibly into them, were those whom Michell calls "coastal fishermen". In many respects, they were similar to trappers because they were largely part-timers for whom the catching of fish was an addition to their incomes rather than the central preoccupation of their lives. Yet, unlike them, they put to sea in boats in active pursuit of their quarry. If seasonal fishermen were mariners with a particular speciality, coastal fishermen kept one foot in their world and (like their riverain counterparts) one in the world<sup>9</sup> of the farmer.

8. L.A.O. LCC Inv 101/104 (Henry Beeles), LCC Inv 106/285 (John Smyth); M. Prior, Fisher Row, 1982, pp.66, 69-75.

9. Michell, 'European Fisheries', in Rich and Wilson, eds., op. cit., p.133.

(1) Coastal Fishermen

Although Lincolnshire lacked "fishing villages", of the sort found in areas of cliff coastline, it is difficult to believe that this was simply the result of a conflict of interest in the uses that salters and fishermen had for the foreshore. The county had one (perhaps more serious) disadvantage: the great herring shoals of the autumn were not easily accessible from most of the Lincolnshire shore, and this meant that there may have been less room in the economy for villages which put all of their manpower and productive energies into fishing; but whilst those fishermen who specifically sought herring were obliged to travel north to Scarborough or Ravenserodd, or south to Great Yarmouth, as the season demanded, there were still plenty of opportunities for the residents of Lincolnshire coastal villages to take white fish, shellfish and small herrings offshore. Although few places developed the topographical or economic peculiarities which might mark them out as "fishing villages", there were ample marketing outlets for every sort of sea fish in the county and plenty of inshore fishermen supplying local needs,<sup>10</sup> whatever some historians have supposed.

The proliferation of religious houses in Lincolnshire must have stimulated demand quite appreciably. Over 100 monasteries, friaries, granges and cells scattered across the county (and particularly prevalent in the coastal districts) all obeyed some form of rule which required the strict observance of fish-days and periods when no meat was permitted.

10. Bridbury, op. cit., pp.20-21; Littler, op. cit., p.31.

Fridays, Saturdays, the Ember days and Lent were the minimum requirements, but in many houses a number of other designated feast days and the whole of Advent were also included, and in very few cases was the eating of meat positively encouraged. A proportion of the consequent requirements was provided from the stew-ponds and fishgarths owned by the monasteries themselves, but the demand for sea fish should not be under-estimated, and a regular supply of stockfish, salt-herrings and white fish was a necessity. At the visitation of Bardney Abbey in 1437-1438, for instance, just one official (the clerk of the sacrist) was said to get a weekly allowance during Lent of 28 herrings "under the name of his livery". At the same Abbey, the stew-ponds had been badly neglected and depleted by an over-charitable cellarer, so that most of the fish being consumed<sup>11</sup> there had to come from outside markets.

For the layman, no matter what his status, fish provided the most abundant and cheapest source of protein readily available. The expenses of most large households, which are our main guide for this period, show fish as a major item of expenditure.<sup>12</sup> The steward's accounts at Tattershall Castle in a typical summer month in 1476 included £1. 0s. 7d. spent on fish for the Lord's table: almost all of it, in this case, sea fish. His primary suppliers were Boston fishmongers, who may have acquired it in one of two ways. Salt herrings and stockfish were one of the town's major imports until the later

11. Ibid, pp.2-7; D. Owen, Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire, (History of Lincolnshire, Vol.V), 1971, pp.76-77, 144-153; A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln, Vol.II: Visitations by William Alnwick, AD1436-AD1449, Part I, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.14), 1918, pp.14, 18-19.

12. Littler, op. cit., pp.4-8.

Table 15. Expenditure on Fish for Sir Robert Ratcliffe's Table,  
July 1476.

|                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Flounders and whelks | 4s. 1d.     |
| Soles                | 4s. 0d.     |
| Salmon               | 3s. 7d.     |
| Eels and "flatfish"  | 3s. 5d.     |
| Turbot               | 2s. 11d.    |
| Herrings             | 1s 11d.     |
| Whittings and crabs  | 8d.         |
| <hr/>                |             |
| Total                | £1. 0s. 7d. |

Notes

Source: E.M. Myatt-Price, 'The Tattershall Household Book',  
L.A.A.S.R.P., 1958, pp.146-148. The account begins in  
March and ends in October, so that the stocking-up  
period for Lent (usually November onwards) is  
unfortunately missing.

fifteenth century, brought in by Hanseatic merchants from  
Norway and Scania. It was this commerce which stimulated the  
links between smaller ports like Wainfleet and Saltfleet and  
the Hansard fish traders. Although the fifteenth century saw  
the end of the Easterling dominance at Boston, it is still  
impossible to say what proportion of its herrings and stockfish  
the town acquired locally, how much from abroad, and how much  
from its coastal contacts with towns like Great Yarmouth. On  
the other hand, most of the shellfish, eels and flatfish which  
seem to have appealed so much to the palates of Sir Robert  
Ratcliffe and his family could not be dried or preserved  
effectively and must have been caught by coastal and foreshore  
fishermen with nets and lines, operating in the Wash area and  
selling at the markets of Lynn, Spalding and Boston. Such

13. E.M. Myatt-Price, 'The Tattershall Household Book 1475-6',  
L.A.A.S.R.P., 7, 1958, pp.146-148; Littler, *op. cit.*,  
pp.201-208, 224-230; P. Dover, The Early Medieval History of  
Boston AD1086-1400, 1970, p.23: cf. A.J.F. Dulley, 'The  
Early History of the Rye Fishing Industry', Sussex  
Archaeological Collections, CVII, 1969, p.53.

men paid rents to the manor of Ingoldmells in the fifteenth century for the right to dry their nets on the beach there, and in the Holland Peace Rolls of 1373-5, coastal sea-fishers were alleged to have indulged in the eternal vice of fishermen - using nets with too fine a mesh, thereby endangering the brood of the fish. In this instance, 24 men from Tydd St. Mary, Holbeach, Gedney, Whaplode, Weston, Multon, Pinchbeck and Surfleet were specifically named, "et sunt multi alij piscatores quorum nomina ignorantur videlicet in Lutton, Sutton<sup>14</sup> et Gedney qui faciunt similiter".

The other major fish market in the county was in the north, at Grimsby. The market itself was in existence by the mid-thirteenth century, but throughout the medieval period it may have acted more as a landing-place for the fishermen of Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire villages than as any kind of centre for coastal fishing fleets belonging to the borough itself. Grimsby burgesses acted as merchants for the catches, arranging for the fish to be cured and sometimes contracting the masters of the vessels - although the borough charter ordered that only one third of any haul landed could be reserved in this manner, while the rest had to be sold on the open market. Once treated, the fish passed along the Humber and its tributaries, or by road to Caister, Lincoln and other nearby towns. The borough court rolls mention fishermen from Yorkshire <sup>places</sup> ~~villages~~ like Scarborough, Bridlington and Filey, and from places on the north Lindsey coast: Clee and Cleethorpes,

14. G.H.J. Dutton, Ancient and Modern Skegness and District, 1922, pp.171-172; Sillem, ed., op. cit., pp.223-224.

Tetney, Saltfleet and Stallingborough.<sup>15</sup>

No comparable records survive for the town of Ravenserodd but it is certain that at its height in the early fourteenth century it eclipsed Grimsby at its own business, with better harbour facilities and greater commercial strength, so that much local fish must have come ashore there. The men of Grimsby, who tended to take retributive action as their trade declined, were particularly sensitive to the amount of fish which began to be landed elsewhere in this period, although it is plain that their difficulties were only partly due to the competition of Ravenserodd (which had ceased to be a threat by the end of the 1360s) and partly to the increasingly bad state of Grimsby haven itself. Fish sold at the borough was also liable to pay tolls which could be avoided if it was landed elsewhere. In 1326, the town got favourable judgement in a long-standing dispute with the coastal fishermen of Oole and Thrunscoc, who had been landing catches on the beach at Cleethorpes to avoid these payments. The men of the hamlets said that they were free tenants of the manor of Thrunscoc and had always enjoyed the right to fish in the sea with their nets and boats, and to land their catch on the beach without hinderance. When the decision went against them, they simply ignored it.<sup>16</sup> The same long-standing resentment probably lay behind the incident of 6th October 1387, when three Grimsby men forestalled a ship of Wilgrip, with 12 lasts of herrings

15. Gillett, *op. cit.*, pp.15-19, 31-35; (but for a conflicting view of the importance of Grimsby fishermen to the town, cf. S.H. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages' (unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis), 1983, pp.234-265); C.L. Cutting, *Fish Saving: A History of Fish Processing from Ancient to Modern Times*, 1955, p.118.

16. C.E. Watson, *A History of Clee and the Thorpes of Clee*, 1901, pp.47-49; *Placitorum In Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi*, 1811, p.354.

aboard, in the harbour at Skegness (which the Peace Rolls pointedly remarked, was "extra libertate euisdem"). The herrings aboard were fresh ("alleg[is] recentis") and were being taken to Skegness to be sold. It was complained that "Robert of Neustead, victualler of the Prior of North Ormesby, and Richard Seriaunt, victualler of Margaret, widow of William Fraunk, knight, and many others in the Lindsey area, could not<sup>17</sup> buy fish for themselves or their masters".

We know that fish could be purchased at a number of other rural landing-places in the fifteenth century, some much less important than Skegness. A single account for the manor of Calthorpe (in Covenham) shows that Stephen Chambirleyn, the lord's household steward, bought his fish in the year Michaelmas 1467 - Michaelmas 1468 mainly at north Lindsey coastal villages. 100 salt-fish came from Northcotes, 100 from Somercotes, 104 from the Borough of Grimsby and 270 from Saltfleethaven. A proportion of the Grimsby fish was probably landed by Cleethorpes fishermen, and that from Northcotes and Somercotes almost certainly by their coastal fishers. Some of that from Saltfleet may have been imported, but much probably came from the port's seasonal fishermen (of whom more will be said later). All four places had ready access to local salt-works, and the account is an interesting indication that the Lincolnshire creeks had not totally failed to match natural<sup>18</sup> supplies of both products.

17. E.G. Kimball, (ed.), Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire 1381-1396, Vol.II: Lindsey, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.56), 1962, p.70.

18. L.A.O., Massingberd - Mundy 1/3/26. Twelve pairs of salt-fish from Saltfleet also found their way onto Sir Robert Ratcliffe's table at Tattershall in 1476, with the Abbot of Markby (near Alford) apparently acting as middle-man in the transaction - v. Myatt-Price, 'Tattershall Household Book', loc. cit., p.153.

Because coastal fishing was so little regulated outside the major markets of the county, it is difficult to assess its extent or importance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but all the evidence is consistent with its continuing to be pursued throughout that period from many of the havens and landing-places of the Wash and north Lindsey coastline. It is notable that, unlike maritime trade and unlike the more adventurous seasonal fishing which will be studied shortly, there is no reason to suppose any decline during the later medieval period despite the generally poor survival of records. Indeed, the same sixteenth century surveys which so graphically confirmed the demise of the medieval economic infrastructure of the Lincolnshire havens, showed that, while coastal fishing was confined to certain specific parts of the county, the smalltime fishermen could be remarkably resilient at creeks where active trading had either never been important or had long since ceased to be significant.<sup>19</sup>

In 1565, the majority of the recorded fishing craft of the county were to be found in the area around and to the north of Grimsby. Unfortunately, the men who performed the census of boats in the area of Hull's customs control failed to distinguish fishing boats from ferries, but in view of their comments that all of them were between half a ton and 3 tons in size, they could probably serve in either capacity and many fishers must have earned additional income rowing men on the uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous journey across the estuary to Hull. However, it is interesting that there were more boats at Clee, Habrough and Immingham, likely centres of

19. P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1).

inshore fishing, than at known ferry points like Barton-on-Humber and Ferriby. There was also a pattern of family ownership of boats at the villages most certainly involved in inshore fishing. Thomas, John and William Hallington were joint owners of vessels at Stallingborough and there were three Westes among the owners at Cleethorpes and three Forsters among

Table 16. Number of Fishing and Ferry Boats at the Lincolnshire Havens, 1565.

| PLACE            | No. of<br>Boats | No. of<br>Owners |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <hr/>            |                 |                  |
| Boston Section   |                 |                  |
| Fishtoft         | 4               | 4                |
| Frampton         | 2               | 3                |
| Freiston         | 2               | 2                |
| Friskney         | 1               | 2                |
| Ingoldmells      | 1               | 2                |
| Wyberton         | 5               | 5                |
| <hr/>            |                 |                  |
| Total            | 15              | 18               |
| Hull Section     |                 |                  |
| Barrow           | 2               | (n.f.)           |
| Barton-on-Humber | 2               | 1                |
| Clee(thorpes)    | 7               | 9                |
| Ferriby (South)  | 1               | 1                |
| Goxhill          | 4               | 4                |
| Habrough         | 4               | 14               |
| Immingham        | 6               | (n.f.)           |
| Killingholme     | 2               | 2                |
| Stallingborough  | 2               | 8                |
| Whitton          | 2               | 2                |
| Winteringham     | 2               | (n.f.)           |
| <hr/>            |                 |                  |
| Total            | 34              | 41               |
| <hr/>            |                 |                  |
| Overall Total    | 49              | 59               |

#### Notes

Source: P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1).  
n.f. = No figures recorded.

those at Habrough. Marwickes owned craft in two villages: William and Thomas at Habrough, Robert and Alexander at

Stallingborough. If we suppose that out of 34 boats listed in this section of the survey between 5 and 10 might usually have been ferries, we arrive at a total of 25-30 fishing boats in the region, supporting (according to the same survey) between 56 and 66 fishermen, averaging about two men per boat, much as<sup>20</sup> their diminutive size would suggest.

The other concentration of coastal fishing boats in the county was around Boston and Wainfleet, and for this area the information is a little more detailed. Out of 15 boats, 5 were owned by partnerships of two men in the same village and the remaining ten were singly owned. John Rabdyke of Fishtoft possessed 2 boats but he is the only example of this in the certificate. The tonnage of most of these craft is not known, because with the exception of the "Anne" of Ingoldmells (5 tons) and the "Marye" of Friskney (6 tons) they were too small to have names. On these 15 boats the commissioners said that 52 fishermen were regularly employed - a little over 3 men per boat, which implies that they were a little larger on average than those in the Hull section, or possibly crewed in a slightly different way. They were still small enough to dispense with the need for a harbour and could be operated from a beach, regardless of changes in the topography of the local coastline. These figures can be compared with a muster of the county's fishermen taken in the early years of the seventeenth<sup>21</sup> century by the local Vice-Admiral, Sir Clement Cottrell. He was instructed by the Privy Council to survey the vessels at Boston and Grimsby for their suitability to carry guns and

20. This calculation makes allowance for one small boat at Grimsby (not included in table 16) used as a fishing-boat.

21. P.R.O. SP12/138/60-61, (reproduced as Appendix III, q.v)

Table 17. Employee Sea Fishermen Mustered in Lincolnshire, 1628

| PLACE                        | No. of Fishermen |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Ancotts                      | 2                |
| Anderby                      | 3                |
| Barrow                       | 2                |
| Barton-on-Humber             | 3                |
| Boston                       | 5                |
| Cleethorpes                  | 5                |
| Croft                        | 3                |
| East Halton                  | 2                |
| Ferriby (South)              | 3                |
| Friskney                     | 10               |
| Gainsborough                 | 7                |
| Goxhill                      | 2                |
| Great Coates                 | 3                |
| Grimsby                      | 4                |
| Habrough                     | 3                |
| Hogsthorpe                   | 4                |
| Humberstone                  | 3                |
| Huttoft                      | 3                |
| Immingham                    | 2                |
| Ingoldmells                  | 4                |
| Killingholme                 | 1                |
| Mablethorpe                  | 3                |
| Mumby Chapel                 | 3                |
| Northcotes                   | 3                |
| Saltfleetby                  | 6                |
| Skidbrooke                   | 5                |
| Somercotes (North)           | 4                |
| Stallingborough              | 2                |
| Sutton-in-the-Marsh          | 2                |
| Tetney                       | 3                |
| Theddlethorpe                | 4                |
| Trusthorpe                   | 3                |
| Wainfleet                    | 6                |
| Wildsworth (near East Ferry) | 1                |
| Winthorpe                    | 4                |
| Wragholme                    | 3                |
| Total                        | 126              |

NoteSource: Appendix III, q.v.

ordinance and to take stock of all the mariners, sailors, seafaring men and fishermen in the port-towns of Lincolnshire. Either he failed to complete his task or the full returns of his work have not survived, because all that remains is a list of ships at Boston and Grimsby and a muster of "Fishermen that

goe to Sea w[it]hout Boates", presumably mainly as the employees of vessel owners like those named in the 1565 survey. Altogether, Cottrell mustered 126 such fishermen living in most of the seaboard villages from Friskney in the south to Gainsborough on the Trent, compared with 113 men (including the masters) in the 1565 assessment. In individual settlements, they were seldom of any numerical importance: there were 10 at Friskney and 7 at Gainsborough, but only a handful at most other places. Many did not reside at the places where they must have laid up the boats which they crewed: those at Wraghome, for example, probably manned craft at Marsh Chapel or Grainthorpe, those at Hogsthorpe craft at Mumby Chapel, those at Croft craft from Skegness or Wainfleet (Table 17).

There is no question of coastal fishermen like these, using boats of a couple of tons burden manned by a maximum of four or five men, venturing far afield in search of particular species of fish. Their quarry were the various sorts of small herrings, shrimps, shellfish and bottom-feeding white fish which could be found all year round close to the shore and were particularly common in the Wash and off the Humber. Economically, they had to be far less specialist than the seasonal fishermen and used a variety of nets and lines to catch anything and everything they could. This versatility was extended by the fact that they almost invariably did not rely exclusively on fishing to obtain a livelihood. Since they worked inshore waters, there was no need for them to be away

22. Cutting, op. cit., p.118; Michell, 'European Fisheries', in Rich and Wilson, eds., op. cit.; E.W.H. Holdsworth, Deep Sea Fishing and Fishing Boats, 1874, pp.249-250; A.R. Tailby, Immingham: The Story of a Village, (privately published), 1970, pp.31-32.

for extended periods and they could afford to combine farming, fowling, ferry work, perhaps a little illicit trade with pirates and smugglers, and various forms of inshore fishing.

Walter Baxter, who died in 1580, owned a small number of kine, pigs and horses in addition to his fishing-gear and "hys fowrth part of hys boote", the latter valued at 13s. 4d. (of which only 3s. 4d. had been paid off). Thomas Bownams of Trusthorpe, "fysherma[n] lately desessed by the casualtye of water in the sea" owned a couple of cows, a calf and nine lambs, and a share of a boat, when he died in 1576. More prosperous men owned even more livestock: Valantyne Bowcer of Fishtoft had his "thirde shaire of a boate" and his fishing tackle but also 42 sheep and an assortment of geese and other fowl. It has often been commented, and rightly so, that shares in boats or personal possession of fishing-gear were expensive, but the inventories of these fishermen show that they still represented a small fraction of their total estates when they died. Bowcer was worth £60. 13s. 8d., of which only 14s. 8d. was accounted for by the share of the boat, his fishing nets and equipment. On the other hand, two milk-kine were valued at £5. Bownam's goods were valued at £11. 4s. 2d., of which stated maritime chattels accounted for 26s. as against his two cattle at £4. This is an impression confirmed by the wills of coastal fishermen, where bequests of their cattle and household goods almost invariably take precedence over their gear and boat shares. William Cooke of Leake, who died in 1567, is typical of those who meticulously listed bedhangings, pots, kettles, bouldsters and livestock to be divided between his son and daughter before adding that his son was to have his boat and that his gear was to be split between him and John Ballard,

the executor. Richard Robinson of Fosdyke went into detail about the new and old herring nets he gave to his younger son only after disposing of his leases and valuables to his wife. It was quite common for a man like Anthony Thacker of Fishtoft to describe himself in his will as a fisherman without ever a reference to gear, boat or seafaring goods occurring in his will or probate inventory. Inventories survive for two of the Cleethorpes fishermen listed in 1565, but in neither case is there mention of any seafaring equipment. In terms of realizable assets, such men were quite clear where their most valuable possessions were to be found: in their household goods, livestock and leases. Inshore fishing was an uncertain occupation, usually demanding an alternative means of support to make it viable. In many of the coastal villages around the Wash (and sometimes further north), it co-existed with a system of partible inheritance of the land, which meant that many men<sup>23</sup> required just such an alternative source of food and income.

(ii) Seasonal Fishermen

There can be no rigid division between the fishermen who worked offshore in small boats and those who were prepared to travel further afield in search of a supply of fish, and in some regions there were always men who did both. Nevertheless, venturing further afield usually meant more sizeable vessels, larger crews, greater capital outlay on provisions and equipment, and more exacting facilities at the home port than

23. L.A.O., LCC Inv 61/191, LCC Inv 112b/458; LCC Will 1568/194, LCC Will 1610/138, LCC Will 1592/86. Cleethorpes information kindly supplied by Mr R. Ambler. For a fuller discussion of partibility and its influence in coastal villages, v. infra, Part 3.

simply a beach on which to pull up the boat. The level of investment was likely to demand the fullest possible use of the vessel and its gear in one capacity or another and this tended to exclude those men whose farming interests required them to spend considerable amounts of their time at home. Seasonal fishermen were much more likely to be virtually full-time mariners.

The right to fish the sea (like the right to navigate it) belonged to everybody, but to exercise it required knowledge and experience of where the fishing grounds were, and what weathers, seasons and times of the day and night were most favourable for casting the nets. In the case of pelagic fish such as herrings the art of detecting the presence of shoals was an essential and rather arcane ability.<sup>24</sup> Handling fishing-gear was a difficult job, particularly hauling the catch - a task which always ran the risk of overturning the vessel as yards of nets or lines heavy with water and fish were pulled in over the side.

It can be argued that in terms of basic behaviour at sea, fishermen and other sorts of seafarer were totally distinct. If nothing else, the ordinary mariner had a basic caution and respect for the peculiarities of weather and tides which led him to take care when and where he sailed, whereas the fisherman (obliged to catch fish or make no money) might be forced to set sail in all waters and in all weathers, no matter how reckless or dangerous it might appear to other sailors.

24. In the nineteenth century, for example, "A skipper would always git a pail o'water and look at it. You know, he'd look at the water and if it was nice and green he'd generally shoot (the nets) ... Gulls would tell yuh as well. And blowers (porpoises), if you see any o'them about". (D. Butcher, The Driftermen, 1979, p.67).

His behaviour has been likened to that of a primitive hunter who sets out (often with a group of others for safety) to seek a prey in a hunting-ground (the sea) subject only to the most rudimentary laws and full of dangers. He did so not by virtue of any tenurial rights but because the exercise of his skills<sup>25</sup> allowed him access.

Useful as this analogy is, the romanticism of the imagery can too easily cloud a more complicated inter-relationship between seasonal or distant-water fishermen and other mariners. All seafarers probably had more in common with one another than with those who made their living entirely ashore. Merchant seamen and fishermen alike shared a disregard for the distinction between night and day as the natural periods of sleep and work, and were deeply concerned with the rhythms of the season, tide and weather, although fishermen (or, more precisely, the masters of fishing vessels) required to know something about how the habits of fish fitted into these patterns. The intense rivalries of fishermen from different ports or different vessels were closely connected to the sort of personal and group enmities between mariners discussed in a previous chapter. Basic risks in the way of life and great financial uncertainties because of it were shared to some extent by both groups. The lack of a capitalist ethic among fishermen, who joined together to equip a boat with nets and gear for a voyage and subsequently split the catch into shares or "doles" on returning to port, had its analogy in the practices of medieval merchant seamen, who were often paid

25. M. Winstanley, Life in Kent at the Turn of the Century, 1978, pp.104-106; Dyson, op. cit., pp.16-17, 35; Michell, 'European Fisheries', in Rich and Wilson, (eds.), op. cit., p.133.

not in cash but in allocations of hold-space or direct shares in the profits (and losses) of the voyage. The economy of the fisherman's dole has merely attracted more attention because it persisted into modern times whilst the money-wage had become prevalent in the remuneration of merchant seamen by the sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Both fishermen and other sailors regarded their environment of work with an understandable trepidation which set them apart from the agricultural labourer: "No one ever died digging potatoes; there is no danger in planting barley".<sup>27</sup>

Contemporary opinion certainly set no absolute distinction between itinerant seagoing fishermen and other sorts of mariners. In "A Speciall Direction for Divers Trades", an anonymous didactic treatise of the middle of Elizabeth's reign, the author advised "those that use the trade of marchandize" to spend some time each year fishing for cod and ling off Scotland and "the Wardhouse".<sup>28</sup> When William Cecil turned his attention to how best to provide for a strong navy, he developed an almost obsessive belief in the need "to increase marrynors by fishyng as a cause most naturall, easy

26. Littler, op. cit., pp.174-175; E.R. Cooper, 'The Dunwich Iceland Ships', Mariner's Mirror, XXV, 1939, pp.170-171; P. Millican, 'Christ's Dole', Norfolk Archaeology, 28, 1945, pp.83-86; D. Burwash, English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540, 1947, pp.42-45.

27. R. Fox, The Tory Islanders, 1981, pp.127-130; Burke, op. cit., p.46.

28. R.H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., Tudor Economic Documents (3 volumes), 1924, Vol.III, p.201, "The Wardhouse" = Vardo, in northern Norway - v. T.W. Fulton, The Sovereignty of the Sea, 1911, p.97.

and perpetuall to brede and mayntene marynors": a view shared  
 29  
 by many other commentators at that time. Not all of them  
 were lawyers or gentry with no practical experience of the sea.  
 Tobias Gentleman, who came from an important Dunwich seafaring  
 family, waxed lyrical on the potential of herring fishermen:  
 "courageous, young, lusty, strong-fed yonkers" who "will be  
 fellows for the nonce; and will shew themselves right English".  
 They were worth, in his estimation, three ordinary sailors  
 aboard a man-of-war. Such fishermen were specialist mariners  
 (just as fishmongers were specialist merchants), but mariners  
 30  
 none the less.

The most distant fishing-ground to which English  
 fishermen ventured in the medieval period was the cod-fishing  
 off Iceland. This was first properly opened by East Anglian  
 fishermen at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and by the  
 early sixteenth century had grown until nearly 150 craft were  
 regularly engaged in it, hailing mainly from the coastal towns  
 of Norfolk and Suffolk. According to statistics compiled by  
 Cecil in the 1550s Boston was once supposed to have sent four  
 or five ships regularly, and a political ban on the grounds

29. 'Arguments to prove that it is necessary for the restoring  
 of the Navye of England to have more fishe eaten ... ',  
 etc., in Tawney and Power, eds., op. cit., Vol.II,  
 pp.104, 107-108; 'Policies to Reduce This Realme of Englande  
 Vntyo Prosperous Wealthe and Estate', (Anon), 1549, ibid.,  
 pp.334-335 sqq; R. Hitchcock, 'A Politique Platt', 1580,  
ibid., pp.239-256.
30. T. Gentleman, 'England's Way to Win Wealth', 1614, reprinted  
 in Harlean Miscellany, III, 1809, p.406. On Gentleman's  
 background, v. Cooper, 'Dunwich Iceland Ships', loc. cit.,  
 p.171. Cottrell's 1628 muster of fishermen was, of course,  
 designed to check how many of them could be impressed to  
 serve as mariners.

The most distant fishing-ground to which English fishermen ventured in the medieval period was the cod-fishing off Iceland. This was first properly opened by East Anglian fishermen at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and by the early sixteenth century had grown until nearly 150 craft were regularly engaged in it, hailing mainly from the coastal towns of Norfolk and Suffolk. According to statistics compiled by Cecil in the 1550s Boston was once supposed to have sent four or five ships regularly, and a political ban on the grounds imposed for a short time in the fifteenth century mentioned  
31  
vessels from Boston and Lynn, Hull and Grimsby.

At the end of the century it became the practice for the crown to "wafter" or pilot the annual fleet to Iceland, partly for its safety and partly to keep a check on its activities. The normal point of assembly for this purpose seems to have been the mouth of the Humber, a location chosen mainly because Hull was one of the major centres for the trade before Bristol became predominant. This left Grimsby ideally  
32  
placed to take advantage of the expedition. Borough court rolls show that the town was actively concerned with the Iceland voyage in the early part of the fifteenth century, when litigation commonly arose out of disputes over the equipping and crewing arrangements. Masters, frequently from Clee and Cleethorpes rather than Grimsby itself, had to acquire experienced steersmen and stock up with salt and victuals for

31. G.J. Marcus, 'The First English Voyages to Iceland', Mariners Mirror, XLII, 1956, pp.313-316; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade', in E. Power and M.M. Postan, eds., Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, 1933, p.160; G.J. Marcus, 'The English Dogger', Mariners Mirror, XL, 1954, p.296.

32. I.D. Thornley, England under the Yorkists 1460-1485, 1920, pp.213-214.

the journey. William Smith was sued by one of the town's burgesses for failing to keep a contract in which £6 worth of salt had been provided for a trip to Iceland, on the understanding that payment would be made on return either in salt-fish or in unused salt - a useful insurance policy against any failure to obtain enough fish to cover the price of the salt. Finance is known to have come from further afield: at least some Boston ships were contracted by inland merchants from Coventry, and another source of capital may have been the London fishmongers.<sup>33</sup>

Iceland was a high-risk venture. The doggers which went fishing there were small - perhaps between 30 and 40 tons burden - and had to negotiate difficult waters when the technology required was still developing. It took about 14 days at sea to reach Iceland from the Wash, the ships usually setting out in March and remaining off Iceland all summer, often against the hostility and non-cooperation of the Danish authorities. In 1419 25 English doggers were lost in storms, and in other years piracy was a constant danger.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of the summer, the fleet returned home, with each vessel bearing 15-16 lasts of stockfish for sale in October and November. Although Littler says that the expedition was "pretty lucrative", her own figures show that the capital value of the dogger was around £40 and the market price for 16 lasts of stockfish £100, which does not take into

33. Gillett, op. cit., pp.35-36; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol', in Power and Postan, eds., op. cit., pp.59-64; Littler, op. cit., p.173; Rigby op. cit., pp.260-265.

34. Ibid., p.162; Cutting, Fish Saving, pp.124-127; P.Heath, 'North Sea Fishing in the Fifteenth Century: The Scarborough Fleet', Northern History, III, 1968, pp.63-64.

account the price of the salt required for curing, wear and tear on the ship and equipment, provisions for the summer or wages for the crew. Going to Iceland meant committing the vessel for about six months, so that if the voyage did not prove profitable there was little opportunity to recoup the loss from other fishing that year. The nervousness of William Smith's salt supplier was therefore quite justified, and it is not surprising that men prepared to put up the money and bear the risks involved in the voyage were normally to be found only at the larger ports.

35

The seasonal nature of the Iceland fishery was a function of its distance from the English coastline: although the cod was there for the taking all year round, the grounds could only be reached in the summer months. Most seasonal fishermen probably preferred to concentrate, in that part of the year, on the great annual herring and mackerel fishery which was conducted along the length of the east coast of Scotland and England between midsummer and Christmas. For this they were still obliged to leave their home ports and go to other parts of the coastline, but the fish were generally not too far offshore - perhaps one or two days per trip - and the vessels could base themselves, with comparative safety, at traditional port towns between expeditions, stocking up with provisions and selling their catch before setting out again.

Pelagic fish like herring return every year in large shoals to their spawning grounds and can be fished there in great abundance for a limited period, using drift-gill nets

35. Littler, op. cit., p.167; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade', in Power and Postan, eds., op. cit., p.172; D. Butcher, The Trawlermen, 1980, pp.9-10.

(and their medieval predecessors, flew) rather than the long-<sup>36</sup>  
lines required for bottom-dwelling species like cod.

Evidence suggests that the medieval pattern of spawning on the east coast differed remarkably little from the modern one, and can conveniently be summarized as follows:

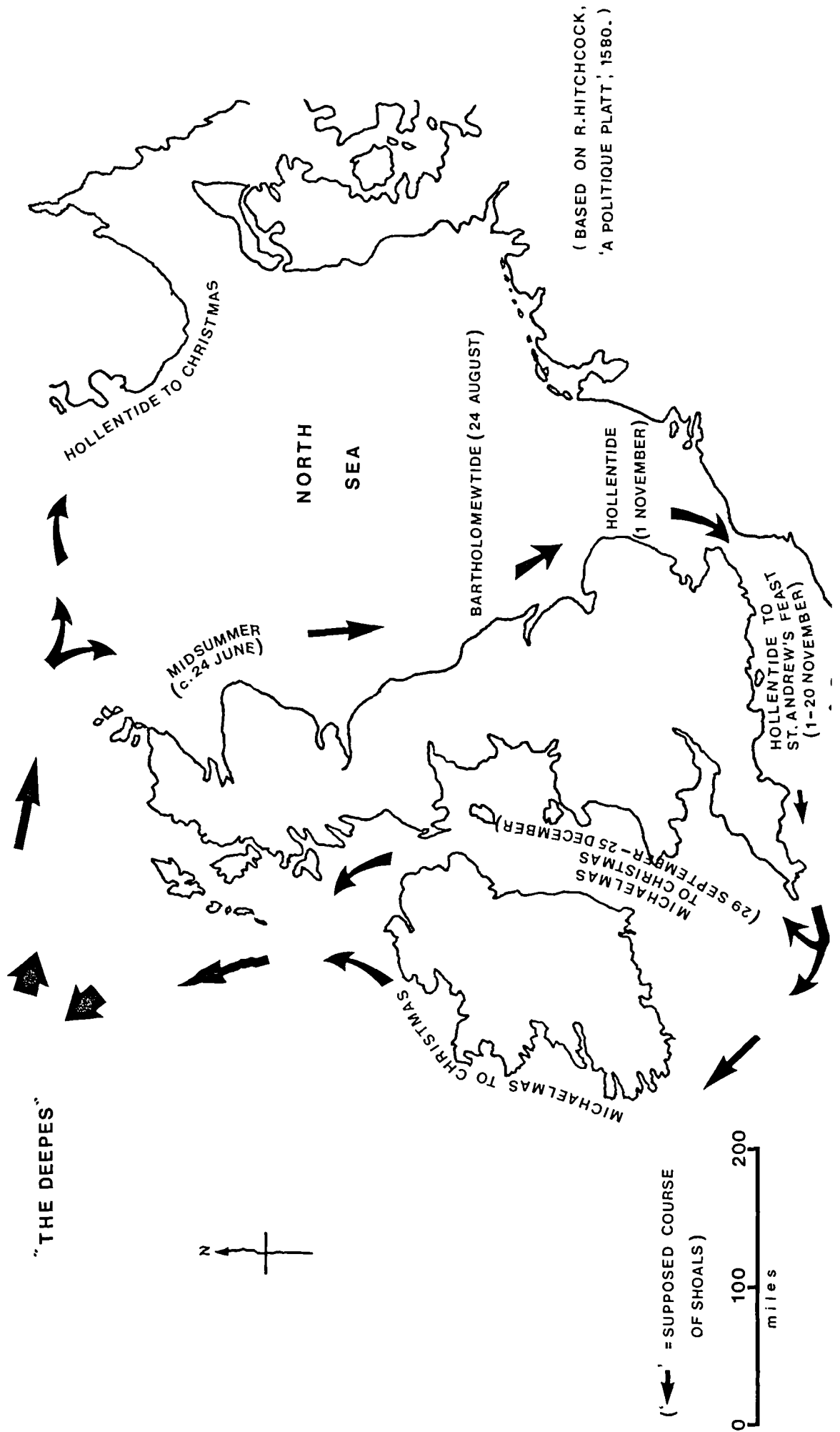
|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| June - mid August:           | off the North-East and<br>Hartlepool |
| Midsummer - Michaelmas       | off Scarborough                      |
| 8th September - 11th October | off Ravenserodd                      |
| October - early November     | off Grimsby and the<br>Humber        |
| Michaelmas - Martinmas       | off Great Yarmouth                   |
| Michaelmas - St. Clements    | off Ipswich                          |
| November - January           | off the Kent coast                   |

37

These seasons (known as "fishing fares") coincided with the time of the annual trade fair at each of the major towns used as bases by seasonal fishermen: the Translation of St. Hilda (26th August) at Whitby; Assumption of the Virgin - Michaelmas (15th August - 29th September) at Scarborough; the 28 days following the Vigil and Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (8th September - 6th October) at Ravenserodd; and the great annual "Free Fair" between Michaelmas and Martinmas (29th September - 11th November) at Great Yarmouth, which was the climax of the herring fishing season.<sup>38</sup>

36. Littler, op. cit., pp.30-31; A.M. Samuel, The Herring, 1918, p.31. When returning to spawn, pelagic fish are usually found very close to the surface, so that in some parts of the country their approach could be detected by look-outs (known in the West Country as "huers") based on the clifftops at appropriate times - eg. V.C.H. Suffolk, Vol. II, 1907, p.219.
37. Littler, op. cit., pp.37-38; Hitchcock, 'Politique Platt', in Tawney and Power, eds., op. cit., Vol.II, p.246; Samuel, op. cit., pp.32-33; Butcher, Driftersmen, p.121.
38. Littler, op. cit., p.83. The word "fare" = "a fishing season" (possibly from O.E. "farran", a journey) - ibid., pp.161, 193.

MAP EIGHT. A SIXTEENTH CENTURY VIEW OF THE 'ROTATION' OF  
THE HERRING SHOALS AROUND THE BRITISH ISLES.



The pattern of these fishing fares, progressing from north to south as the season went on, gave rise to a theory (dating back at least to the medieval period) that all herrings belonged to one vast migratory shoal which originated every year in the Arctic region and "rotated" clockwise around the coasts of the British Isles before "shooting" back north in the late autumn (Map 8). Although ichthyologically quite without foundation, the idea prevailed among fishermen until the early years of this century and profoundly affected their thinking, because it seemed to show the benevolent hand of the Almighty directly at work. The appearance of the herring shoals was eagerly awaited and (except in unusual years) could be predicted to an annual accuracy of two or three weeks. There then followed between one and two months of rich fishing, with peak catches at the time of the full (or "herring") moon, before the fish gradually disappeared again.<sup>39</sup>

Every year fishermen from different parts of the country, their ranks swollen by varying numbers of aliens, visited Scarborough, Ravenserodd, Yarmouth and the small ports of the Suffolk coast, following the herring south as the summer and autumn progressed. Each home port had its own pattern of fishing fares, typically including a period of fishing close to home in the winter, some weeks in the spring taking white fish either off Scarborough (on the Dogger bank) or Blakeney, and

39. J.T. Jenkins, The Herring and the Herring Fisheries, 1920, pp.14-15; J.G. Bertram, The Harvest of the Sea, 1869, pp.229-231; A.R. Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth and its Economic and Social Relations with its Neighbours on both sides of the Sea, 1550-1714', (unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis), 1978, pp.51-55. Anthropocentric thinking on the role of fish (and other animals) in God's creation is discussed in K. Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 1983, especially pp.17-20.

the central event of the year - the herring fishery or Iceland voyage - covering most of the summer months. The fishermen of the Cinque Port town of Rye, for example, went to Scarborough and Yarmouth for herrings, fished for local herring in the winter ("Flew fare"), drifted for mackerel in April and June, and concentrated on local conger eels and sprats at other times. At Hythe and Brighton, on the same coast, a similar annual round was followed, with coastal plaice and herring fares supplementing the Yarmouth and Scarborough ones. Native Scarborough fishermen had their "Dogger drague" for cod and an expedition to the east coast of Scotland ("Ferth fare"), besides the summer and winter herring seasons and (in certain periods) a contingent of Iceland ships.

These fishing calendars have been reconstructed by Heath, Dulley and others from the chance survival of tithe records and legal disputes. Without such evidence, it is much more difficult to establish the seasonal rounds of fishermen from the small Lincolnshire ports, particularly in the months between the main herring seasons. Cod, whiting and haddock could all be caught in the deeper waters of the North Sea, and flatfish and shellfish (the staple of the inshore fishermen) closer to the shore. There also appears to have been a small winter herring fare (similar to the Rye "Flew fare") off Skegness, in November and December each year. It is recorded from the middle of the fourteenth century and was still being conducted in 1511, when the local lord sold his rights to the custom called "leyre" associated with it: the price of 100

40. Littler, *op. cit.*, pp.45-46; A.J.F. Dulley, 'Four Kent Towns' in Roake and Wyman, eds., *op. cit.*, p.72; Dulley, 'Rye Fishing Industry', *loc. cit.*, p.42; Heath, 'North Sea Fishing', *loc. cit.*, pp.56-57.

herrings from every ship laden with them, and 4d. from every stranger's vessel which spread its nets out to dry on Skegness  
41  
meales.

For information about the major herring fisheries of the summer and autumn months, we can turn to the limited number of local customs accounts at Scarborough and Great Yarmouth in the early fourteenth century: most of the evidence at the other main centres of fishing, like Ravenserodd, relates only to alien fishermen, because they alone paid customs on the fish they took off the English coasts. For Scarborough, a single account of quayage (a toll on native and foreign vessels berthing at the town) runs for a year from February 1321, and although it requires careful interpretation, it probably relates partly to the fishing vessels which went there for the herring fare. For Yarmouth, a slightly later series of accounts (from the 1340s) can more certainly be demonstrated to include many of the fishermen who based themselves at the town  
42  
for the season.

Quayage was a general toll levied on merchant and fishing vessels alike, but since Scarborough had little or no trade outside fish and the surviving account is highly seasonal (85% of entries relating to the period 5th May - 13th October) there is little difficulty in ascribing to the majority of the  
43  
tolls paid some association with the herring fishery. The

41. W.O. Massingberd, ed., Court Rolls of the Manor of Ingoldmells, 1902, pp.xix, 154, 156.

42. Littler, op. cit., pp.88-89, 91-112, 204-207, 271; N.S.B. Gras, The Early English Customs System, 1918, p.172; A.R. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth in the Fourteenth Century', (unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis), 1975, pp.191-203, 338-339.

43. Littler, op. cit., pp.273-274; P.R.O. E122/134/3 (Scarborough quayage roll, 1321).

uncertainty lies in interpreting whether they relate to fishing boats or to merchant vessels taking away fish caught by others.

Table 18. Lincolnshire Vessels in the Scarborough Quayage Roll, 1321.

| Town of Origin        | No. of<br>Payments | No. of<br>Merchants/<br>Masters | Tolls Paid |     |     |      |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-----|-----|------|
|                       |                    |                                 | 4d.        | 5d. | 6d. | 6d.+ |
| Barton-on-Humber      | 2                  | 2                               | 2          | 0   | 0   | 0    |
| Bawtry                | 1                  | 1                               | 0          | 0   | 1   | 0    |
| Boston                | 2                  | 2                               | 1          | 0   | 1   | 0    |
| Gainsborough          | 2                  | 1                               | 0          | 0   | 2   | 0    |
| Grimsby               | 8                  | 7                               | 3          | 0   | 4   | 1    |
| Saltfleet             | 16                 | 12                              | 14         | 1   | 0   | 1    |
| Scottermuth           | 4                  | 4                               | 4          | 0   | 0   | 0    |
| Spalding              | 2                  | 2                               | 0          | 0   | 1   | 1    |
| Sutton (-in-Holland?) | 3                  | 2                               | 0          | 0   | 0   | 3    |
| Total                 | 40                 | 33                              | 24         | 1   | 9   | 6    |

Notes

Source: P.R.O. E122/134/3; Littler, 'Fish in English Economy and Society' (unpublished Wales University Ph.D. thesis), 1979, pp.273-274. This table covers the whole roll (February 1321 ff.), not simply the period May - October used by Littler.

We are told that the standard rates laid down in the grant of quayage were 6d. for an imported shipload of goods, 4d. for every vessel and 2d. per last of fresh herrings landed. It will be seen from Table 18 that the majority of the Lincolnshire transactions (60%) were at the rate of 4d., which could relate to the standard rate for bringing in an empty or ballasted vessel or to the landing of between one and two lasts of herrings, and it is not clear from the figures which is the more likely. On the one hand, Saltfleet (the principal Lincolnshire port involved) had a considerable trade in fish and could have been buying it up at Scarborough to re-sell elsewhere. On the other, two tolls of 4d. in one week by Robert Haghehand can only be satisfactorily explained as an instance of fishing rather than trading, and tolls of 6d. are unlikely to relate to imported goods because the only product

which might have been required in bulk - salt - is known at Scarborough to have been procured mainly from the continent. We also know that fishermen from Saltfleet were going to Scarborough for the herring season in the later part of the fourteenth century when local men were accused of stealing nets at the haven for that purpose. It is also an interesting coincidence that the annual fair at Saltfleethaven was held on the six days followings the Vigil and Feast of St. Matthew the Apostle (20th - 27th September) conveniently placed at the end of the Scarborough season and immediately prior to the Yarmouth one.

44  
Fortunately, the evidence concerning the vital Yarmouth fishery is much fuller. Murage, a toll for the upkeep of town walls and defences, was granted to Great Yarmouth on a number of occasions in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and a series of receipt rolls, dated between 1342 and 1348, exists.

44. Littler, *op. cit.*, pp.86-87, 96-97; R. Sillem, ed., *op. cit.*, p.44 (nos. 164-165); Placita De Quo Warranto, 1818, p.397; P.R.O. DL10/117.

45. J.C. Tingey, 'Grants of Murage to Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn', Norfolk Archaeology, XVIII, 1914, pp.139-144; Gras, *op. cit.*, pp.22-23; Littler, *op. cit.*, p.91. The original rolls are as follows:  
B.L. Cart. Add. 14981-14986 (August 1342 - August 1343)  
Norfolk Record Office, Y/C24/1 (August 1343 - August 1344)  
Norfolk Record Office, Y/C4/2, m.1 (August 1344 - October 1344)  
Norfolk Record Office, Y/C4/2, m.6-7 (June 1345 - October 1345)  
Norfolk Record Office, Y/C4/2, m.2-5 (March 1348 - October 1348)

The reference to the roll in the British Library is incorrectly given by Littler as "Add. Mss. 14981-14986", apparently following errors by Saul, *op. cit.*, (Appendix VI(1)) and Gras.

The section Y/C4/m.2-5 is referenced "1347 or 8" in 'Handlist of Great Yarmouth Borough Archives', p.124, and is not fully used by Saul or Littler, presumably because of the uncertainty. However, this can easily be resolved because the notation used to date entries on the account makes it clear that in the year in question Easter Day fell between the Feast of SS. Tibertius and Valerianus and the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist (14th - 25th April), with Pentecost between St. Petronilla the Virgin and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (31st May - 24th June). This can refer to 1348 (Easter = 20th April, Pentecost = 8th June), but not to 1347 when the whole moveable cycle was much earlier (Easter = 1st April, Pentecost = 20th May).

be charged on a wide range of items but there is ample evidence that in the fourteenth century it was, in practice, charged almost exclusively on vessels concerned with the annual fishery. As with Scarborough, there is a strong seasonal bias to the rolls, with most of the items falling into the period Michaelmas - Martinmas, and the link with the fishery was so strong that it caused the borough officials to abandon the usual practice of starting accounts at Michaelmas. Instead, their rolls began on the first day of August because fishermen could begin arriving at the borough at any time from then onwards, usually with an initial import cargo of salt or local produce to sell, to prepare for the arrival of the shoals.<sup>46</sup>

Table 19. Ships of English Origin found in the Great Yarmouth Murage Accounts, 1342-1343.

| County of Origin | 1342 Season<br>(10th Aug - 23rd Nov) | 1343 Season<br>(9th Aug - 15th Nov) |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cornwall         | 2                                    | 4                                   |
| Devon            | 5                                    | 15                                  |
| Dorset           | 6                                    | 16                                  |
| Essex            | 14                                   | 24                                  |
| Kent             | 27                                   | 19                                  |
| Lincolnshire     | 21                                   | 27                                  |
| Norfolk          | 32                                   | 64                                  |
| Suffolk          | 28                                   | 26                                  |
| Sussex           | 1                                    | 17                                  |
| Others           | 14                                   | 15                                  |
| Total            | 150                                  | 227                                 |

Notes

Sources:

Little, 'Fish in English Economy and Society', p.92, checked against B.L. Cart. Add. 14981-14986 and Norfolk Record Office Y/C24/1.

Little's figures for counties other than Lincolnshire have been accepted as accurate, but her Lincolnshire totals have been adjusted where they disagree with mine; (her figures give 20 ships in 1342, 23 in 1343).

46. H. Swindon, The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Burgh of Great Yarmouth, 1772, pp.93-95.

Unlike Scarborough, Yarmouth had a quite independent system of local customs charges, which was run alongside murage and (so far as they can be checked from coincident accounts) quite independently of it.<sup>47</sup> It is certain that fishermen did

Table 20. Lincolnshire Ships found in the Great Yarmouth Murage Accounts, 1342-1343

| Place of Origin  | 1342 Season                 |                               | 1343 Season                 |                               |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                  | No. of Men<br>Paying Murage | No. of Ships<br>Paying Murage | No. of Men<br>Paying Murage | No. of Ships<br>Paying Murage |
| Barton-on-Humber | 1                           | 1                             | 0                           | 0                             |
| Boston           | 4                           | 1                             | 2                           | 1                             |
| Gainsborough     | 0                           | 0                             | 1                           | -                             |
| Holbeach         | 1                           | 1                             | 0                           | 0                             |
| Saltfleet        | 4                           | 3                             | 21                          | 14                            |
| Scotternuth      | 3                           | 1                             | 7                           | 3                             |
| Skegness         | 0                           | 0                             | 1                           | 1                             |
| Spalding         | 2                           | 2                             | 2                           | -                             |
| Wainfleet        | 4                           | 4                             | 4                           | 3                             |
| Wilgrip          | 1                           | 1                             | 1                           | 1                             |
| Wrangle          | 8                           | 7                             | 4                           | 4                             |
| Total            | 28                          | 21                            | 43                          | 27                            |

Notes

Sources:

Littler, 'Fish in English Economy and Society', p.277-279, checked against B.L. Cart. Add. 14981-14986 and Norfolk Record Office Y/C24/1.

The dates of the fishing seasons are as in Table 19. Certain entries in 1343 (denoted "-") are for individuals with no ship mentioned. This table combines Saltfleet and "Saltfleetby" entries - v. Chapter 3, footnote 9.

Littler's figures have been adjusted where they disagree with mine.

not pay the ordinary local customs, unlikely that regular merchants paid murage, and altogether more likely that the authorities at Yarmouth used murage as a means of extracting revenue from those who visited the town in the fishing season.

47. Saul op. cit., pp.202-203, 338-339; Littler, op. cit., pp.112-113.

In 1342 and 1343 (the years for which the evidence is most complete) Lincolnshire sent over 20 vessels to Great Yarmouth during the fare, ranking fourth, behind the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk but with a similar presence to that of Essex (Table 19).<sup>48</sup> The later accounts between 1344 and 1348 show a great decline in all the indigenous vessels visiting Yarmouth. It is unclear how far the effects of war or plague disrupted the fishing by introducing shortages of men or vessels, but the large Saltfleet presence of 1343 (Table 20) contrasts sharply with that for 1344 (none) and 1345 (four), and it is tempting to ascribe some of this to the Bordeaux and Calais campaigns of 1345-1346. In the case of Wrangle, the decline in vessel numbers appears to have begun a year earlier and showed signs of increasing again by the time of the 1348 roll. The abundance of shoals themselves could vary dramatically in different years, and undoubtedly influenced the decision of some fishermen as to whether to go to Yarmouth or not.<sup>49</sup>

What proportion of the craft paying murage were fishing boats? Many of the entries are for a stated quantity of between one and four lasts of herrings, and whereas one fishing trip might yield between half and one and a half lasts, a modest sized merchantman could probably carry between 12 and 20, so that it is difficult to believe that most serious traders would go to the trouble of buying and shipping out such small quantities. However, the strategy employed by Littler of ascribing all murage payments to fishermen is suspect because

48. It should, however, be noted that all vessels from the Cinque Ports had exemption from dues at Great Yarmouth during the Free Fair.

49. P. Zeigler, The Black Death, 1970 Pelican edition, pp.184-186.

the accounts themselves strongly suggest that at least two other groups were obliged to render the toll. This is best illustrated by considering the different levies extracted from the vessels of three contrasting Lincolnshire ports in the year 1343, (for which the greatest number of entries are recorded); (Table 21).

Table 21. Murage Payments by Vessels of Three Lincolnshire Ports, 1343.

| Place of Origin | Vessel Only | Vessel and Salt | Vessel and Herrings |          |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------|
|                 |             |                 | 1-4 lasts           | 4+ lasts |
| Boston          | 0           | 0               | 0                   | 2        |
| Saltfleet       | 1           | 0               | 18                  | 2        |
| Wrangle         | 0           | 4               | 0                   | 0        |
| Total           | 1           | 4               | 18                  | 4        |

Notes

Source: Norfolk Record Office Y/C24/1.

Both the Boston tolls were paid on cargoes of a quite substantial size - 21.5 lasts, for example, in one case. This tendency is confirmed in the rolls relating to other years. The Wrangle tolls, in contrast, usually relate to a cargo of salt and nothing else: 14 weys paid by William atte Courtour, or 24 weys by Thomas Smith, for instance. Payments by Saltfleet men are different again, and generally involve a vessel and between one and two lasts of herrings: 1 last belonging to John Gumeld in the week 18th - 24th October; 1½ lasts of William Gouke in the same week and 1½ lasts the following week, and so on. In view of what is already known of their respective maritime economies, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the muragers charged their exactions not only on fishermen (the Saltfleet examples) but on those who came to

buy up freshly caught herrings and take them elsewhere (the Boston ships) and on those who supplied the town with large quantities of salt during the season (the Wrangle ones).

If so, we can identify Saltfleet, Halton Skitter (Skottermuth), Spalding, and to a lesser extent Wainfleet and Skegness, as the main home ports of Lincolnshire's seasonal fishermen in the mid-fourteenth century. Of these, Saltfleet and Spalding seem to have been the most important. At Spalding, the local prior is said to have financed a herring fleet of some magnitude for the Norfolk fisheries in the thirteenth century, which has left topographical evidence in some of the town's street names: "Herring Lane" leads down to a road which runs parallel to the Welland and which was known as "Crackpool Lane", which Hallam associates with the presence of large numbers of birds ("krakr" = "crow") around the herring  
50  
quays.

If, as the murage rolls suggest, Spalding's former importance as a fishing centre was in decline by the mid-fourteenth century, that of Saltfleet was in the ascendant. The frequency with which "salt-fish" (usually meaning herrings) from Saltfleet occurs in medieval accounts has been noted on several occasions and the local lord, John de Willoughby, expected to raise major revenues from both salted and fresh herring entering his haven. By grants of local customs and quayage in 1339 and 1340 he was entitled to take a toll on all herrings, fresh or salt, which were landed, and to charge quayage of 2d. from every merchantman and every fishing boat ("batella mercatorio vel piscatorio") using his harbour. The

50. H.E. Hallam, The New Lands of Elloe, (Leicester University Dept. of English Local History Occasional Papers, No. 6), 1959, p.8.

township's competition was troublesome enough in Lincoln for a local fisherman to set upon Peter de Sheford of Saltfleet when he tried to sell fish there in 1352 and demand an illegal toll<sup>51</sup> from him before he could do so.

Seasonal herring fishing played a logical and integrated part in the fourteenth century economy of Saltfleet because of the ease with which salt could be procured for its curing; but although the fifteenth century evidence is by no means as full, what exists has already shown that the haven could still be a source of supply for the lords of Tattershall and Covenham and for the Abbot of Markby at that time. Early sixteenth century wills show that there were still men at Saltfleet who had an interest in distant as well as coastal fisheries in Henry VII's time, and who left "southsee taw" and<sup>52</sup> "depse nett[es]" in their bequests. Salt was still being manufactured in the Lindsey coastal marshes, and although Scarborough, Yarmouth and other major centres had gone over to the use of Bay Salt, the local product was still readily available. Although there may have been some drop in demand for fish in the fourteenth century, customs records suggest that in the fifteenth century it remained at a steady (if reduced) rate, and since Boston's share of imported fish fell, there must have been reasonable markets for the sale of<sup>53</sup> whatever quantity Saltfleet fishermen could catch.

51. P.R.O. C66/119 m.54; P.R.O. C66/196, m.24; E.G. Kimball, ed., op. cit., pp.40-41.

52. P.R.O., P.C.C. Wills: John Goodnape, 1504 (23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/117), William Thompson, 1506 (7 Adeane Prob 11/15/50); L.A.O., L.C.C., Will 1534/120 (Robert Manfeld). "Southsee", in this context, means "English Channel" (cf. "North Sea"), and is probably a type of drift net.

53. Littler, op. cit., pp.227-230.

Yet just as the maritime trade of the sixteenth century was totally different in character from that of the late medieval period, so the economic infrastructure which supported seasonal fishing at Saltfleet in the sixteenth century bore little resemblance to that of the fourteenth century. At the time of the Black Death, the haven's distant-water fleet was at least 15 or 16 sail, crewed and mastered by men who probably spent most of their time fishing. Of the skippers named in the 1343 murage account, for example, only one (John Gummeld or Gunneld) also appears as master of a merchantman in the lists of arrested vessels.<sup>54</sup> Hands were employed locally, for fixed periods. In 1335, John Wilkok "of the staithe" ("de hith[a]") complained to the Saltfleet manor court that Walter de Leggesby had failed to hand over a promised bonus payment for working on his ship between the Thursday before Michaelmas and the feast of Martinmas that year: a relatively short contract, presumably for the Yarmouth voyage. In 1375, William Rumfare (a Saltfleet man) was accused before the county Justices of the Peace of breaking a longer agreement, to work "in officio piscatoris" for William Scott<sup>55</sup> for a full year starting on St. Hilary's day (13th January).

The last generations of Saltfleet seasonal fishermen, on the other hand, were both numerically fewer and economically less homogeneous. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, it is unlikely that there were more than half a dozen vessels

54. v. Appendix I(A). Gummeld paid for a ship and one last of herrings at Yarmouth in the week 18th-24th October, 1343.

55. R. Sillem, ed., Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire 1360-1375, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.30), 1937, p.20; L.A.O. 1 ANC 3/13/1 (courts of 13/12/1335 and 28/12/1335).

to be found at the haven of sufficient size to work distant-water fishing grounds. John Bailey of Saltfleet described himself as a mariner, not a fisherman, in his will, and in April 1525 he is recorded as the master of the "George" of Saltfleet on an export voyage to Calais and "Buynes" (Boulogne-sur-Mer?); but William Thompson left him shares in his fishing vessels in 1506, and Bailey himself bequeathed the contents of his "tackel house" presumably used to store fishing gear) to his son. John Goodknape called himself a yeoman in his will, and listed various closes and houses which he held in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet; but he also gave quarter shares in the "Mawdelyn" to his brother Jeffrey, his son-in-law and his nephew (along with various items of fishing gear). Jeffrey Goodknape, together with Robert Manfeld (another fisherman) and Thomas Harbottle (a mariner) were regular members of the jury in the Skidbrooke manor court, and both Goodknape and Manfeld<sup>56</sup> were persistent breakers of the assize of ale. All, in other words, were spreading their economic activities widely, and combining fishing, maritime trade and agriculture to make their livings. Most of them were substantial men, putting their surplus capital into ships, fishing and maritime ventures: their precise role in the (by now mainly agricultural) socio-economic system of Saltfleet and Skidbrooke is something which will be examined in greater detail in Part Three.

56. P.R.O. E122/12/6, m.2; P.R.O. E122/202/4, fo. 30v; ibid., P.C.C. Wills: 23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/177), 7 Adeane Prob 11/15/50); C.W. Foster, ed., Lincoln Wills Registered in the Probate Registry at Lincoln, Vol.II: 1505-1530 (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.10), 1918, p.103; L.A.O., L.C.C. Will 1534/120; ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/11-35, passim.

We have seen that, in Lincolnshire, fishermen can be divided into three groups, which may have overlapped slightly in reality but which need to be treated as historically distinct. Foreshore and weir fishermen were primarily farmers who supplemented their incomes by the opportune use of nearby sources of fish. Coastal fishermen were partly farmers and partly sea-fishers, although they probably never ventured far from their home shores and usually had at least as deep a concern with agriculture as with their maritime work. They combined some of the skills of the seasonal fisherman with the mentality of the trapping fisherman, using the sea as a means to provide additional income. Because both groups were not entirely (or even mainly) concerned in getting a living from the fish they caught, they were less liable to suffer from changes in the trading prosperity of nearby ports or alterations in coastal topography. Their boats were equally at home in a small harbour (like that at Fishtoft) or pulled up on a beach (as at Cleethorpes), and for this reason they could be found in many different parts of the county, seldom existing in sufficient numbers in any one place to dominate the local economy in the way that salters could do. There were therefore few "fishing villages" in the traditional sense, in Lincolnshire although there were usually small numbers of sea-fishers in most coastal settlements.

In contrast, the seasonal fishermen of Lincolnshire were found mainly in the more important harbours where, for much of the time, they co-existed with other mariners. Boston and Grimsby were the only centres for the Iceland cod-fishery, Saltfleet and Spalding the main ones for the east coast herring fares. Unlike coastal fishermen, this group had faded away by

the middle of the sixteenth century with the general decay of the county's ports. Because they were mariners themselves, they shared in some of the problems which the decline in overseas maritime trade produced, and doubtless relied partially on the presence of a favourable economic climate at the ports from which they operated. By the late fifteenth century the Iceland voyage had virtually ceased at Grimsby and was declining at Boston, and those seasonal fishermen who remained at Saltfleet were spending some of their time (like their coastal counterparts) on other activities.

However, because seasonal fishermen were a specialist type of mariner, they were not utterly tied to the same economic forces which influenced other seagoing trades and their final departure from the scene in Lincolnshire undoubtedly owed something to peculiar factors which influenced many of the east coast fishing towns. Hydrographic changes in the North Sea, which followed in the wake of the great topographical disruptions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, could have altered the spawning habits of pelagic fish in the area and made them more unpredictable (as the surviving Yarmouth murage accounts may imply); but the evidence for this is ambiguous.<sup>57</sup> Competition from the highly efficient and well organized Dutch buss fishery was a potentially very damaging development, and their larger vessels and superior curing techniques increasingly dominated the market for salt-herrings as the sixteenth century went on. Traditional methods may have suited the English situation better, but an almost industrialized approach to the problem of supply left the

57. Littler, op. cit., p.98.

smaller herring fishermen looking disorganized and uncompetitive.

In the 1550s Cecil surveyed the consequences of all this gloomily: at King's Lynn, "where there hath gonn[e] to the Northe Seas for heringe xvj sayle nowe there goeth none at all"; at Cromer, "the Towne is gretlye in Decaye & the howses dothe Fall downe". Most eloquently of all, the number of Yarmouth fishing boats had declined by two thirds in a thirty year period, so that even the focal point of the medieval herring fisheries was unable to maintain its vitality. The London fishmongers grumbled that people were eating less fish than formerly, and blamed the poor observance of fish-days (Cecil's own opinion), excessive town tolls, and (perhaps inevitably) a slide into moral laxity in the country at large: "men for the moste p[ar]te be geven to more ease and pleasure nowe then in tymes paste; by reason wherof they bye of Straungers and other [sic] rather than Travail and venture for<sup>58</sup> it Themselves as in tyme paste". This catalogue of decay did not cover the coast north of Lynn, but had it done so we know (from the 1565 surveys) that it would have uncovered the same neglect and disrepair at the havens, the same disinclination to venture life and capital on distant-water fishing - in fact, a progressive withdrawal into a primarily agricultural economy, which hastened the decline of once important harbours such as Saltfleet.

That such a fundamental shift in the relationship between a coastal village and the sea could occur at all, and that it could do so without severely disrupting the local

58. P.R.O. SP15/4/56-57.

socio-economic structures, plainly demonstrates the need (in the final section of this thesis) to consider precisely how the relationship between agriculture and seafaring, as ways of life, interconnected in such a locality.

\* \* \* \* \*

### PART THREE

## 6. INTRODUCTORY

In Part II, we have looked at some of the most important topographical and economic influences which shaped the relationship between Lincolnshire coastal villages and the sea in the period 1400 to 1600. We may summarize the effects of these influences by saying that they tended to restrict the distinctiveness of maritime subculture in rural areas, because it was obliged to exist in an economic relationship with the world of landmen. The coastline was alluvial, widely drained and settled by the eleventh century, and abundant in productive grazing land and saltmarsh, which attracted settlement and was responsible for establishing the initial socio-economic conditions in fenland and marsland alike. This involved the exploitation of the sea indirectly, in so far as saltmarsh could be turned to industrial or agricultural use and low-lying land drained to accommodate the need for more pasture. Some men later developed a more direct association with the sea as a specialist activity, when the topographical and economic climates were favourable, but such mariners and fishermen were only some of the contributors to the social and economic institutions of their coastal villages and not an exclusive counter-cultural group which prevailed over all others. It is important to contrast this situation with the late medieval settlement expansion which often characterized northern or west country fishing villages: Staithes and Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire, Looe, Mevagissey and Gorran Haven in Cornwall, are all examples of medieval secondary settlements on cliff coastlines, comparatively unconcerned with the quality of agricultural land, because their occupational structures were

built around their seafaring activities.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the fishermen and mariners of Lincolnshire coastal villages we therefore need to look more broadly at the various elements within the local structure and how they fitted together at a quite detailed level. For this reason, the last section of this thesis examines just one parish, Skidbrooke-with-Saltfleethaven, in Lindsey. Because of the small geographical area concerned, it should be regarded as an exploratory case study rather than as a model, whose conclusions can be applied with equal confidence elsewhere. The period selected for study is also more circumscribed, and the sixteenth century has been chosen mainly because of the availability of appropriate documentary evidence.

The assumption that a single parish has sufficient functional unity to be an appropriate area for analysis can certainly be questioned, but even the most stringent of critics of "community studies" recognize their value as a means of investigating how small groups of people related to each other. It is difficult to disagree with the simplicity of the view once expressed by Homans that a pre-industrial village was a real social entity to contemporaries, because "the men of the village had upon the whole more contacts with one another than they had with outsiders, entirely aside from the question of  
2  
what those contacts were".

1. W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape, 1955, p.124; A. Storm, 'Robin Hood's Bay', (unpublished Leicester University M.A. dissertation), 1978, pp.1-4; C. Taylor, Village and Farmstead, 1983, pp.187-189.
2. A. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities, 1977, pp.4-16, 33 sqq; G.C. Homans, English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century, 1975 edn., p.403.

Many techniques for dissecting social structure can be devised. The method adopted here has been to approach local society as a series of social groups or institutions, important either in a largely public sense (the parish as a territorial and agricultural unit, occupational structure and ecotype, religion), or in a more restricted context (family, marriage horizons, occupational heredity, and so on). Such groups or institutions overlapped considerably in terms of personnel, without necessarily involving all of the residential group who constituted the parish, but in their mutual interaction lies one definition of the elusive concept of "community". The fundamental question for this thesis must be how fully the local mariners and fishermen were integrated within each of these institutions, and how the process of integration worked.

A number of factors in the history of Saltfleethaven make it a particularly appropriate place to develop such an enquiry. In the sixteenth century, we can examine it during a period when the role of its fishermen and mariners was being transformed by a slow decline in their importance to the village economy. Although in the fourteenth century Saltfleet had been pre-eminent among the north Lincolnshire creeks, by virtue of its links with salt manufacture, fishing and overseas trade, it had never developed these proto-urban features to become a town or incorporated borough. By the later sixteenth century, it had dwindled, instead, to the status of an unimportant rural haven with a limited interest in coasting and fishing. Hitherto, we have been concerned chiefly with tracing the economic reasons for this. It is to its social and cultural implications at a local level that discussion must now turn.

## 7. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS (I): THE PARISH

This chapter is concerned with those social groupings and arrangements (or particular aspects of them) which can be said to apply to the parish in a "public" sense, rather than to the household, the family or the individual. Within this definition, we can consider the parish as a unit of territory and settlement, as a manorial (and hence jurisdictional) entity, as an occupational or religious environment, and finally in the calendrical context within which all of the various social groups operated. This distinction between public institutions and personal or familial ones is inevitably artificial: partible inheritance, for example, can be observed both as a customary public expression of ideas about how land should descend, and as an agreement whose details were worked out within the family, (in which context it will be discussed in the next chapter). In examining all these groups, our main concern must be to identify the place of mariners and fishermen and how fully they were absorbed within them.

### (i) The Pattern of Settlement

The village of Saltfleethaven was one of three separate settlements which made up the parish of Skidbrooke in the sixteenth century. Skidbrooke village itself was an outmarsh daughter of the village of Cockerington, established at some time in the late Anglo-Saxon period and fully independent, ecclesiastically and administratively, by the time<sup>1</sup> of the Domesday Book. Saltfleethaven, Skidbrooke's own secondary settlement, was a later medieval development,

1. Supra, Chapter 3.

following on the growth of salt manufacture and maritime trade at a large tidal creek to the east of Skidbrooke. The precise shape and location of the medieval haven remain a matter for conjecture, but it is apparent that both these economic activities pre-dated the foundation of the haven village, for whose existence there is no clear evidence prior to the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Despite the foundation of chapels there in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Saltfleet never acquired parochial status and was always closely linked with its parent village. After the Reformation, the only religious provision was the parish church of St. Botolph, which was connected to Saltfleethaven by a church path or "cawsey" running across the intervening mile or so of marshland. A third settlement, known as "Skidbrooke North End" or "Skidbrooke Mealehouses", lay in the north-eastern corner of the parish and seems to have been of considerably later origin. Despite charter evidence referring to "the meales" (sand-dunes) as a physical feature, the best guess based upon the available evidence is that the little group of houses which made up this hamlet came into existence in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

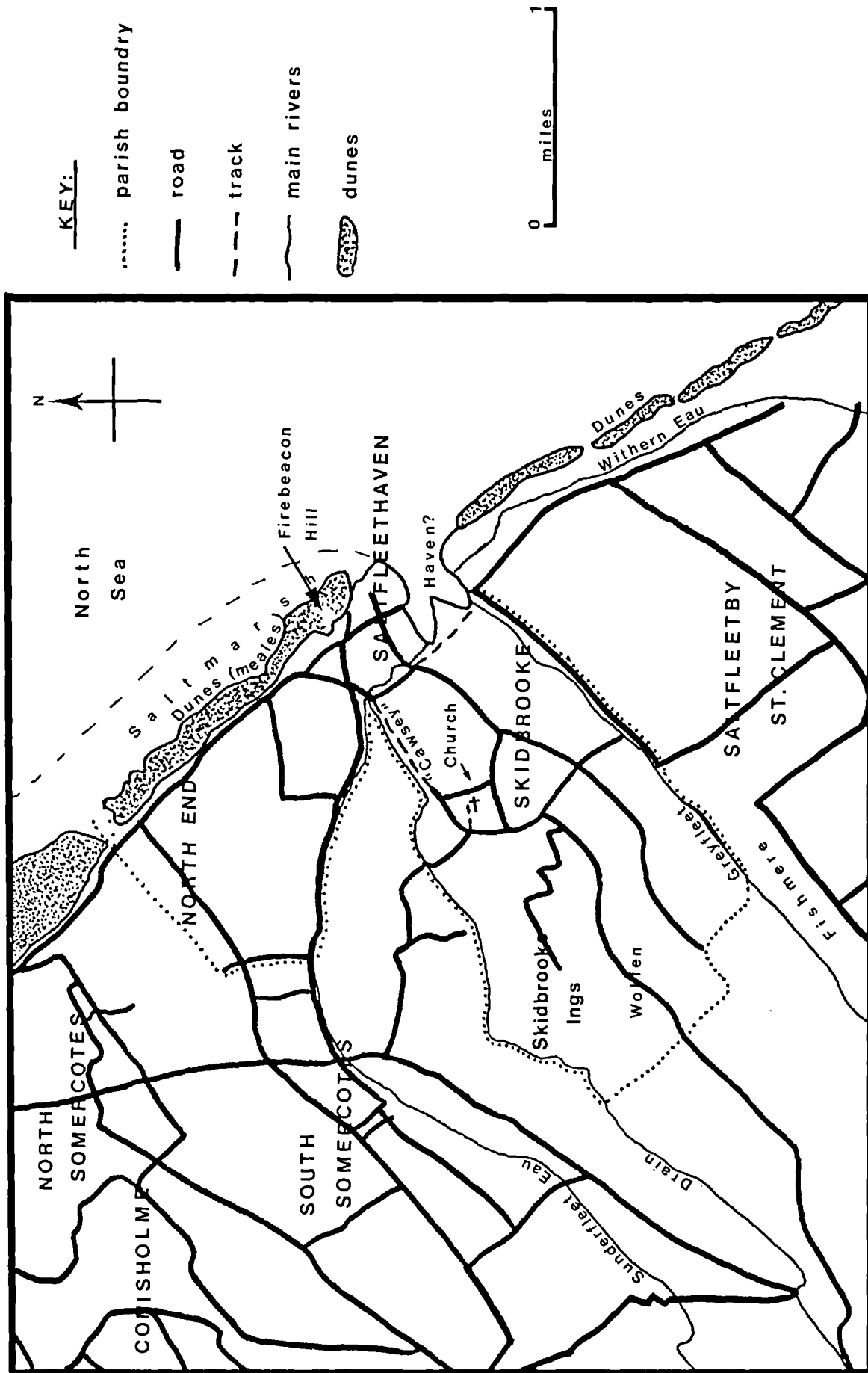
With the fourteenth century economic development of Saltfleethaven as a port, it appears that the focus of settlement shifted in that direction, and the manor house and manor court were probably located there from the early years of

2. A full discussion of the possible shape of the haven in the late medieval period can be found in Appendix V, q.v.
3. K. Major, ed., The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, Vol. V, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 34), 1940, pp.176-187. The first probate record of an inhabitant is John Mawing's will and inventory, 1543 (L.A.O., LCC will 1543-5/349, Inv 1/139).

that century. A considerable proportion of the medieval population - perhaps five or six hundred people in the immediate post-Black Death period - presumably also resided there. However, whilst we can only trace the ensuing fifteenth century decline imperfectly, through the change in the township's trading status and the reductions in its taxable burden, there is little doubt that by the early sixteenth century the entire parish had a population of only about 200 people. It should be stressed that the present day desertion of Skidbrooke village was not directly caused by this contraction. In 1563, we know from an apparently reliable diocesan survey that there were 29 households at Saltfleet, 10 in the North End, and still 18 at Skidbrooke. The real decay of Skidbrooke village dates from a period beyond the scope of this thesis (probably the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century).<sup>4</sup>

In sixteenth century maritime activities within the parish, Saltfleet naturally predominated by virtue of its topographical location, although some fishermen and mariners are recorded in the other settlements. If the reconstruction of the haven's location in Appendix V is broadly correct, we can envisage that the tenements and crofts of the main east-west street (probably known as Chapel Lane) backed down to the sixteenth century harbour, which was in various conditions of decay during this period. Times of particular activity in both maritime trade and fishing, such as the first couple of decades

4. For the sources and methods used to produce these population figures, v. Appendix IV. The reductions in taxable burden in the fifteenth century were significant but not dramatic: 19.5%, for example, in the reallocation of the 1460s (cf. 52% for Skegness) - P.R.O. E179/136/293.



of the century and the 1570s, were interspersed with occasions like the 1560s and 1590s when the port-books record very little traffic and (at the end of the century) none at all by Saltfleet ships. Until the seventeenth century, there is no record of substantial artificial sea-defences to protect the area from the worst tides, and although the village is not mentioned in Holinshed's account of the great flood of 1571,<sup>5</sup> there are hints that it did sustain some damage.

(ii) The Manor

The main manor of Skidbrooke-cum-Saltfleethaven belonged from about 1300 onwards to the Willoughby family or Eresby, and passed during the sixteenth century into the possession of the Brandon Dukes of Suffolk and later the Bertie family through two marriages of its heiress, Katherine Willoughby.<sup>6</sup> It was administered as two notionally distinct fees, the "Bek fee" (Saltfleethaven and its immediate environs) and the "£9 fee" (covering the rest of the parish and a small part of neighbouring Somercotes). Each sent its own jury to the two annual Views of Frankpledge, although much of the business of the manor court related to both fees jointly.<sup>7</sup>

There were two other manors in the parish, subinfeudations of the original Willoughby possessions. We know very little about either of them apart from their names

5. Supra, Chapter 4, Table 14. See also Appendix V.

6. Lincolnshire Archives Committee Archivist's Report, 5, 1953-1954, pp.36-37; G.A.J. Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, (History of Lincolnshire, Vol. VI), 1975, pp.6, 152-158.

7. The two fees are recorded from Michaelmas 1479 (L.A.O. 1 ANC 3/13/10) onwards. The "Bek fee" was named after its former lords, with whom the Willoughbys intermarried. "£9 fee" seems to refer to the original rental value.

and the fact that they still held their own courts, but it seems unlikely that they had any significant territorial extents. The "Gosse fee" which came into the hands of the Day family of Saltfleethaven in the middle of the sixteenth century, had belonged to the Duke of Bedford in Henry VI's reign. The mysterious "feodum de filum aque de Saltfleethaven", which seems to have amounted to some rights in the haven itself, was owned in the sixteenth century by the Fitzwilliam family of Skidbrooke and Mablethorpe. Henry Day of Skidbrooke left his "manor of Goose Fee" with its View of Frankpledge, Court Baron, rents and customs to his brother Geoffrey, in his will of 1571, and William Fitzwilliam sold his "manor in Skidbrooke" with its common of fishing to John Smith of Bilsby in 1572. Both the Days and the Fitzwilliams held land directly of the Willoughby manors and owed suit of court there, and although it is unfortunate that no records survive for the smaller fees, it is unlikely that their loss seriously distorts  
8  
our perspective.

In so far as the manor court's role was related to its legal powers over land and tenure ("court baron"), it had very little hold over the inhabitants of the parish. In common with much of Lincolnshire, there is no record of servile tenure in the village, even in the handful of pre-Black Death rolls which survive and the overwhelming majority of sixteenth century tenants held their land by free socage, exempt from any services except rent and three-weekly suit of court (which they normally commuted by paying 4d. for the year). A full survey

8. L.A.O., HARM 3/2/5; ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (29/4/1522), 1 ANC 3/13/26/2 (1/3/1547), ibid., LCC will 1571/11/7. For the fee of "filum aque" cf. supra, Chapter 2, footnote 9.

of tenants made at the Michaelmas Great Court of 1557 lists 39 free tenants (or their multiple heirs) holding in the £9 fee, compared with just 4 customary tenants (of tofts and crofts) in both fees.<sup>9</sup>

However, in spite of this weak manorialization the Willoughby manor did not wither away into insignificance in the sixteenth century because the family made their profits out of the careful and regular maintenance of large numbers of such individually unprofitable courts. While the three-weekly Courts of Pleas were held less and less frequently during the century, the View of Frankpledge and Great Court continued to be kept every Easter and Michaelmas as part of a circuit of courts in this part of Lincolnshire.

In view of the conclusions drawn in Part I we might expect to find a strong antipathy towards these courts and their powers among the mariners and fishermen of the parish. However, the records themselves demonstrate that their response was normally indistinguishable from that of the other residents and tenants. During the first half of the century, the wealthier mariner-merchants and fishermen were often jurors, as well as being frequent offenders. For example, at the View held on the 4th October 1525 there were 13 names on the Bek fee jury list. The first four - Geoffrey Goodknape, John Bailey, Thomas Harbottle and Robert Manfeld - all had strong maritime connections. Goodknape came from a family of mariner-merchants and the others were all mariners or fishermen. When such men were presented for offences, their misdemeanors were the type common to most other tenants. At the same court, Manfeld and

9. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/1-5, 1 ANC 3/13/27/4 (23/10/1557).

John Bailey junior (the juror's son) had committed trespasses in the fields and pastures of the £9 fee, and John Bailey senior had grazed his livestock on Firebeacon Hill against the custom of the manor. In the Bek fee, Manfeld and Goodknap were presented (as usual) for breaking the assize of ale and John Bailey junior was indicted again for illegal grazing of livestock at Saltfleet.<sup>10</sup> As the village's maritime activity continued to decline, so the number of these wealthier mariners dwindles and fewer and fewer of them are found in the jury lists. But the same pattern of standard offences is also evident among those who were of lesser socio-economic standing: Matthew Hayne, mariner, for example, trespassed on the arable along with Manfeld and another tenant in 1536, grazed cattle on the common against the order of the court the next year, and was breaking the assize of ale regularly until his death in 1575.<sup>11</sup>

On most occasions, the limited jurisdictional powers of the manor court presented no direct challenge to the traditional independence of sailors and fishermen at sea. The customary arrangements upon which so much manor court business depended were known to everybody who lived within the lordship and were concerned with local, tenurial and agricultural matters in which seafarers had similar concerns to those of their fellow jurors or suitors: where and when a man might pasture animals on the waste; what were the rules about attendance at court, poaching in the lord's warren, or breaking

10. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (4/10/1525); cf. supra, Chapter 5, infra, Chapter 8.

11. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (2/10/1536, 12/4/1537), 1 ANC 3/13/36 (9/4/1573) and passim. Hayne was buried on 14th February 1575 - ibid., Skidbrooke parish registers 1/1, 1563-1654.

the assizes of bread and ale; who should inherit houses and land. If they sometimes deliberately offended, they were no different from the rest of their neighbours. One potential source of conflict was the erection of stake-nets or kiddles in the haven and watercourses, which presented navigational hazards and could block the drains and lead to flooding. Yet even here, fishermen made common cause with yeomen, husbandmen and labourers, all of whom sometimes set up similar<sup>12</sup> fishgarths.

At this intimate level of society, most conflicts were at a personal level rather than being based upon occupational or group identifications. If nets interfered with shipping in the haven, the offenders were fishermen but those who complained were likely to be mariners or other fishermen. If a mariner (like John Key in 1536) threw ballast off his ship into the harbour, the manor court fined him for acting against the interests of its other users. Penalties could be incurred for fishing in the haven without the lord's licence, but on at least one occasion (in 1508) this franchise was granted to a consortium of four fishermen, who acquired the sole right to put nets in the port for an annual payment of 2s. Others who attempted to fish there could be fined by the manor court on<sup>13</sup> behalf of these men.

12. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (24/9/1534), 1 ANC 3/13/39 (30/4/1576) and passim.

13. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (2/10/1536), 1 ANC 3/13/18 (10/5/1508); P.R.O., SC 6/Hen VII/373 (manorial account). The fishermen concerned were Richard Manfeld, Thomas Scott, Thomas Harbottle and Thomas Hous.

(iii) Occupational Structure

Agriculturally, most of Skidbrooke was enclosed pasture land by the beginning of the sixteenth century. We hear occasional mentions in the court rolls of livestock trespassing "in the fields [campos]", and most probate inventories list an acre or two sown with arable crops (chiefly wheat, barley and beans). Nevertheless, the prevalence of pastoral farming and the predominance of pasture closes is undoubted and can be seen in the charter evidence as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries<sup>14</sup> Small fields were partly the result of the network of ditches and sewers which criss-crossed the parish, but it is also clear from the court rolls that tenants were expected to maintain hedges and fences between their holdings: "Thomas Rowsson complains against Robert Kydd in a plea of trespass ... that Robert laid waste and despoiled a certain pasture of his with his cattle, because he did not sufficiently make the hedge ["burselam"] between their land", (1539); "eue[ry] man do make ther steles in the cawsey before Mydwin[ter]", (1576).<sup>15</sup>

Private rights of possession were therefore firmly established in men's minds, and could be the source of quite acrimonious conflicts. When Robert Thompson inherited two closes of pasture land early in Henry VIII's reign, he had no sooner taken possession than rival claimants Thomas Elwold and Richard Freshnay, with a gang of ten other men armed with

14. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/22 (4/10/1525), ibid., 2 ANC 1/7/1-58 (Skidbrooke charters); Major, ed., op. cit., pp.176-187; J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming, 1957, pp.57-62.

15. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (Court of Pleas, 3/2/1539), 1 Anc 3/13/39 (26/9/1574); cf. M. Beel, ed., 'The Byelaws of Ulceby', Lincolnshire Historian, 2 (8), 1961, p.38 (a middle marsh parish).

swords, pitchforks and billstaves, descended on his property and forcibly evicted both him and his livestock, "saying w[i]t[h] a tyrryble voyce where is this knave that avyth those beasse yf wee fynde hym herr or if he or any for hym put his beasse in those croft[es] ayen wee shall stowe there eers of there hedd[es]". This threat was not merely gratuitous, but the product of their belief that Thompson was a thief (for whom mutilation was an appropriate punishment).<sup>16</sup>

There was a large tract of unenclosed meadow land in the west of the parish ("Skidbrooke Ings") and various stretches of undrained marsh and fen, particularly the "Wolfen" or "Woolfen" to the south of the Ings. Animals could also be pastured on the sides of the roads or "gates" and on other patches of common in the parish. Sheep were grazed on the saltmarsh east of the dunes, and (despite regulations to the contrary) horses, pigs and sheep upon the dunes themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the parish was liable to quite severe flooding, one further disincentive to arable production. This could be from the sea (as in 1571), or more commonly because of the inadequacies of the local drainage system, whose minutiae were a concern of the manor court: "Everybody is to make good his part of the sewer called Grenedyke by St. John the Baptist's Day", (1558); "They say that the sewer called Woolencroft dike is in disrepair because of the neglect of the lord's tenants and a day is given for it to be made good before the Feast of Pentecost next", (1506); "Noscroft dike is to be

16. P.R.O. STAC 2/31/135.

17. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/19, *passim*, (trespasses on the commons and dunes), 1 ANC 3/13/23 (22/10/1540), 1 ANC 3/13/44/2 (24/4/1581).

properly repaired before the Feast of St. John the Baptist", (1503). In addition, two "dikereeves" were elected annually to levy rates, attend to all matters relating to drainage or sea-defences, and report to a Court of Sewers at Louth each year. Despite all these efforts, the severest weather could still virtually drown the parish in the winter months. One such occasion was in February 1571, when Henry Shepley was born, "at w[hi]ch time of his birth ye wome[n] were brought to his mother in a boate, & ye said Henry brought to ye church in a boate, by reaso[n] of a great th[aw] [tha]t came of a great snowe".<sup>18</sup>

The balance of livestock kept in the parish is illustrated by the figures in Table 22. Sheep were very numerous, but most families kept at least a few cattle for milk and breeding. The number of horses is also noteworthy. They certainly provided the main form of traction: of the 14 pairs of oxen listed, three pairs were the property of just one farmer (who also held land in Mablethorpe).<sup>19</sup> However, it also appears from the number of foals, fillies and colts that horse-breeding was sometimes being pursued for commercial reasons. Lambs were comparatively rare in relation to the number of flocks, no doubt partly because the inventories are biased towards the autumn and winter months, after the surplus had been sold off.<sup>20</sup> A handful of summer inventories tell us a little more about the arable crops of the parish.

18. *Ibid.*, 1 ANC 3/13/27/2 (3/5/1557), 1 ANC 3/13/17 (23/10/1506), 1 ANC 3/13/12 (30/5/1503); *ibid.*, Skidbrooke parish registers 1/1 baptisms, 18/2/1571); *ibid.*, Lindsey Misc. Sewers, *passim*.

19. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, p.72; L.A.O., Inv 57/289 (Thomas Cowbell, 1573).

20. Fattening, rather than breeding, may have been the main concern - Thirsk, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

Table 22. Agricultural Livestock listed in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet  
Probate Inventories, 1537-1600.

|                                              |             |         |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| <u>Horses</u>                                |             |         |
| Mares                                        | 102         |         |
| Foals                                        | 56          |         |
| Others (fillies, nags, etc.)                 | 74          |         |
|                                              | <u>232</u>  | (6%)    |
| <u>Cattle</u>                                |             |         |
| Kine                                         | 204         |         |
| Beasts, quyes and heffers                    | 200         |         |
| Calves                                       | 96          |         |
| Steers                                       | 51          |         |
| Oxen (5 "fat"; 14 "couples")                 | 23          |         |
| Bulls                                        | 4           |         |
| Bullocks                                     | 5           |         |
|                                              | <u>583</u>  | (15.5%) |
| <u>Sheep</u>                                 |             |         |
| Ewes                                         | 845         |         |
| "Sheep"                                      | 772         |         |
| Hoggs                                        | 530         |         |
| Wethers                                      | 322         |         |
| Ewes, hoggs and whethers (appraised jointly) | 104         |         |
| Whethers and tups (appraised jointly)        | 23          |         |
| Tups                                         | 7           |         |
| Lambs                                        | 328         |         |
|                                              | <u>2931</u> | (78.5%) |
| <hr/>                                        |             |         |
| Total                                        | 3746        | (100%)  |

Notes

Source: L.A.O., LCC probate inventories (to 1600) and LCC  
administrations.

The sample is 54 inventories total (excluding only those rare  
occasions when values rather than numbers are given). The table  
excludes "yard" animals like pigs (most households kept 2-4),  
pullen and geese, etc.

Miles Stewardson had corn and hemp in the ground in July 1590;  
John Day had two acres sown with wheat, one with barley, and  
part of an acre with beans. In April 1584, William Burgh had  
five acres of beans and two of wheat, with another 3½ sown with  
corn in Somercotes. This compares with his numerous livestock:  
35 sheep, 2 mares, a yearling foal, 3 kine, a couple of oxen, 3  
five year old steers, 3 yearling beasts and 4 stake-calves.  
21

21. L.A.O., LCC Inv 78/142 (1590), Inv 87/131 (1596), Inv 70/191.

When we examine the range of occupational descriptions available from a study of the wills and inventories, we find that a majority of those whose occupations

Table 23. Occupations listed in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet Wills Inventories, 1537-1620.

| OCCUPATION    | Settlement |           |             | Total     |
|---------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|               | Skidbrooke | Saltfleet | Mealehouses |           |
| Yeoman        | 7          | 3         | 0           | 10        |
| Husbandman    | 4          | 2         | 3           | 9         |
| Labourer      | 6          | 0         | 2           | 8         |
| Total         | <u>17</u>  | <u>5</u>  | <u>5</u>    | <u>27</u> |
| Mariner       | 0          | 4         | 1           | 5         |
| Fisherman     | 0          | 3         | 1           | 4         |
| Total         | <u>0</u>   | <u>7</u>  | <u>2</u>    | <u>9</u>  |
| Carpenter     | 0          | 1         | 0           | 1         |
| Smith         | 0          | 1         | 0           | 1         |
| Tailor        | 1          | 0         | 0           | 1         |
| Weaver        | 1          | 1         | 0           | 2         |
| Total         | <u>2</u>   | <u>3</u>  | <u>0</u>    | <u>5</u>  |
| Widow         | 5          | 0         | 1           | 6         |
| Others        | 2          | 0         | 0           | 2         |
| Total         | <u>7</u>   | <u>0</u>  | <u>1</u>    | <u>8</u>  |
| Overall Total | 26         | 15        | 8           | 49        |

Note

Source: L.A.O., LCC wills, LCC inventories and LCC administrations (to 1620).

are known were described as yeomen, husbandmen or labourers (Table 23). Unfortunately, such evidence is an extremely unreliable guide because of the size and nature of the sample. Designations are recorded in only 44% of the outstanding probate records, and the bias of the material may tend to exclude the poorer sections of the population. The contemporary definitions of titles like "yeomen" were

notoriously vague. In addition to these difficulties, there may well be an inbuilt bias in the direction of Skidbrooke village in the results of Table 23, because of the tendency (particularly in wills) for the scribe to attach the name of the parish in preference to that of the actual settlement. The apparent concentration of non-agricultural occupations in Saltfleet, and the importance of fishing and seafaring among these, is therefore best treated with some caution.<sup>22</sup>

Local inheritance customs also complicated the occupational structure within the parish. Partibility was certainly in operation on the Willoughby manor by the end of the fifteenth century and was firmly established as the principle upon which holdings should descend by the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Although a statute of 1540 allowed free tenants to alter this by will, few of the Skidbrooke and Saltfleet testators tried to do so. Normally, they kept to the spirit of the system, succinctly articulated by Robert Toote in 1538: about one third of the estate went to support the widow during her lifetime, "And the rest thereof I will be equally devydyd among my children accordyng to the Lawe and as the custome of the lordshippe requiryth".<sup>24</sup>

22. M. Spufford, 'Peasant Inheritance Customs and Land Distribution in Cambridgeshire', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E.P. Thompson, eds., Family and Inheritance, 1976, pp.169-173; A. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities, 1977, pp. 122-123.

23. The distribution of the surviving court rolls makes it difficult to establish when this practice began but only fourteenth century juries normally spoke of "the heir" of a man, whereas by the late fifteenth century the plural "heredes" was normal - L.A.O. 1 ANC 3/13/1 (25/1/1336), cf. 1 ANC 3/13/10 (15/6/1480).

24. Ibid., LCC will 1538-40/121 (Robert Toote). This form of partibility was known to local court officials as "gavelkind", although not strictly comparable with the Kentish system: ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/27/1 (14/9/1553).

We should beware of over-emphasizing the fragmenting effects of partibility, because the records of both wills and the manor court (through which it must be traced) clearly do not reveal all the facts. In particular, the court rolls do not record a single example of sale by a parent to children as part of a "retirement" agreement, or a settlement on a son at the time of his marriage, and yet we know from indirect mentions in wills that these did take place. John Edwarde the elder followed the custom and split his land between his sons, but at least one was already married and some provision must have been made for him before this will was drawn up. Robert Elphyn left his son four acres of pasture land but also mentioned two more "I have seyld to John my son". Robert Toote had already made some sort of division of his possessions before he made his last will: "Also I gyff Emote my wyffe and our children all my moveable and vmoveable good[es] w[i]t[h]out the house [John and Agnes exceptyd) because they be maryed and had ther p[ar]tes".<sup>25</sup>

In reality, a survey of the transactions found in the court rolls shows that in only 18% of "intra-family" transfers post-mortem did more than one son inherit the holding. Just over 40% resulted in one son inheriting as sole heir, and in a similar number of cases daughters or kinsmen inherited in default of sons. In the last instance, the land was still ultimately partitioned in half the cases, but this would have occurred even had primogeniture been the rule. Such splits

25. L.A.O., LCC wills 1561/191 (John Edwarde), 1543-5/206 (Robert Elphyn).

could also be avoided by formal or informal cash payments among  
 26  
 the heirs.

Table 24. Acreages of 100 Skidbrooke and Saltfleet Holdings  
 Transferred by Death or Sale, 1480-1600.

| SIZE (in acres) | By Inheritance |      | By Sale |     |
|-----------------|----------------|------|---------|-----|
|                 | No.            | %    | No.     | %   |
| 0 - 5           | 27             | 35   | 12      | 52  |
| 6 - 10          | 19             | 24.7 | 6       | 26  |
| 11 - 15         | 13             | 16.9 | 3       | 13  |
| 16 - 20         | 6              | 7.8  | 0       | 0   |
| 21 - 30         | 6              | 7.8  | 1       | 4.5 |
| 30+             | 6              | 7.8  | 1       | 4.5 |
| Total           | 77             | 100  | 23      | 100 |

Note

- Source: L.A.O., Ancaster court rolls 1 ANC 3/13/9-48,  
 2 ANC 2/15/1-6, 1 ANC 3/26/6, 7, 10, 11.  
 These transactions are all those which give an acreage:  
 many others simply refer to unspecified "lands and  
 tenements". The court rolls for a number of years are  
 missing.

Nevertheless, Table 24 shows the effects on the size  
 of the average holdings at Skidbrooke, which were well below  
 the 40-50 acres Thirsk found to be typical in this part of  
 Lincolnshire. A tenement of 20 acres was quite exceptional,  
 and 76% of those passing by inheritance to the next generation  
 are recorded as being 15 acres or less. In cases where several  
 sons inherited an already small holding, subdivision could  
 therefore be taken to even greater extremes. Michael Johnson's  
 12 acres of arable and pasture were split between 3 orphan sons  
 in 1558, John Ward's 4 acres were split 2 ways in 1521. Partly

26. Appendix IV, Table A.3. A charter of 1521 granted William  
 Twyt (Tirwhy?) the portions of his brothers Richard and  
 Robert, and in 1538 Thomas Parnell's two daughters agreed  
 that one should inherit his messuage for a cash consideration  
 - L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (8/10/1521, 22/4/1538).

as a result of this, there was a small market in land (also shown in Table 24), which could occasionally offset the effects of partible inheritance, by allowing some tenants to acquire extra acres of land and others to find alternative employment or leave the area. The "stints" in operation on the commons, which were usually directly related to pasture holdings, were also generous enough to allow quite small farms to remain viable. Thomas Day, with  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres of pasture and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of meadow, could maintain over 60 sheep by using the saltmarsh.<sup>27</sup>

Even so, the economic facts of local inheritance were a strong incentive for many men to develop a range of dual occupations, based on exploiting the numerous natural resources available. One of the most common supplementary activities (besides brewing and baking for sale) was the cutting of shoots or elders ("symes") on the sand-dunes; for use as domestic fuel. We know that some Saltfleet and Skidbrooke families were not only cutting for personal and local consumption but for sale outside the parish, in an area desperately short of cheap winter fuels.<sup>28</sup> Hemp was also grown, and court roll presentments for soaking it in the dikes reveal that some rope manufacture was taking place.<sup>29</sup> Fowling, rabbiting and hunting hares were all legitimate bye-employments which could help to top-up the income of farmers and labourers. Rabbits and hares (for meat and skins) could be trapped in the closes and fields,

27. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, pp.73-76; L.A.O. 1 ANC 3/13/27/4 (30/3/1558, 1 ANC 3/13/19 (8/10/1521, 22/4/1538); *ibid.*, LCC Inv 6/146.

28. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/9-25, *passim*. For an example of selling "symes", v. 1 ANC 3/13/13 (15/4/1504). Wood was too rare to be burnt as fuel and was mainly used for building or dike repairs. All coal was imported through the haven.

29. *Ibid.*, 1 ANC 3/13/19 (28/10/1545), 1 ANC 3/26/3 (1/10/1549); *ibid.*, LCC Inv 78/142.

but were more easily acquired by poaching them out of the lord's warren in the sand-dunes or "meales". Not surprisingly, this was a particularly common offence among the residents of the Mealehouses, like Robert Mawing and his son John who were frequently indicted as "common poachers in the lord's warren", using ferrets (which, by the early seventeenth century, some villagers were breeding illegally to assist in the poaching). Henry Thompson (who lived at Saltfleethaven) was probably also using these methods when, in 1545, he "tried to catch three rabbits in a certain net called a seine out of the free warren  
30  
of the lord".

Many yeomen, husbandmen and labourers also set up illegal fishgarths in the rivers and drains from time to time, attempting to trap the small fish and eels which could be found in them. Geoffrey Day, John Skipwith, Lancelot Mudd and several other men who caught fish with nets called "lamb-nets" in 1576 were not seafarers, nor were William and John Grant who trespassed in the fishery (probably in the haven) with eel-garths in 1545, or Robert Lesthorpe who trespassed in the  
31  
lord's fishery called "stanggyne" in the dikes in 1536.

The coastal fishermen of Saltfleet and the Mealehouses have to be understood in the context of this widespread economic versatility. Even when the bias of their activities was clearly in the direction of fishing, these men

30. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (12/4/1537), 1 ANC 3/13/34/1 (7/10/1568, 1 ANC 3/13/23 (22/10/1540), 1 ANC 3/13/44/2 (24/4/1581); ibid., Lindsey Q.S. file 1629. no. 106; Thirsk, op. cit., pp.71-72.

31. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/39 (30/4/1576), 1 ANC 3/13/19 (28/10/1545, 2/10/1536). The inventory of Robert Blades, labourer, contains some eel and lamb nets - ibid., ADM. LCC 1596/14.

kept a number of livestock and often sowed an acre or two of arable crops. John Northe, who died in 1573, had 4 cattle, a sow and 3 pigs, 2½ quarters of malt and an acre and a half of winter-sown wheat, besides his 10 shillings worth of sea-fishing gear. Matthew Toote, who died in 1630, may have been thought of as a fisherman, but he also kept a cow and 15 sheep. The inventories of all those actually described as "fisherman" all have relatively low valuations attached to them (£9 median) and often carry no mention of fishing gear or equipment, which suggests that they may have been "employee fishermen" of the sort listed in the 1629 muster. "Fisherman" does not seem to have been a description applied in Saltfleet to people who possessed sufficient wealth in land, livestock or other moveables to qualify as "yeoman" or "husbandman" in the eyes of their neighbours.

John Baggot of Saltfleet called himself a "yeoman" in his will, held 9½ acres of pasture land (which he bought from a Louth man in 1566) and his moveables were appraised at £29 in 1583. Henry Toote believed himself to be a "husbandman". Both, however, left "sea-gears" as bequests to their sons and were concerned with inshore fishing as well as agriculture. Robert Manfeld is best described as a fisherman because he frequently appears in this context in the court rolls and because we know that he owned a part share of a ship and a quantity of fishing and seafaring gear. Whether this is a label with which he would himself have identified is impossible to say, and like many others he refers to himself in his will as "Robert Manfeld of Saltflete hayuen in the p[ar]lyshe of

32. Ibid., LCC Inv 54/20 (1573), Inv 136/224 (1630). For the 1629 muster, v. Appendix III.

Skidbrooke" without mention of occupation or status. Although at least two of the four men who appraised his inventory were fellow seafarers, they did not venture any description  
33  
either.

The seafarers of the parish were therefore not a socially or economically homogeneous group, but a collection of individuals pursuing various types of dual or multiple occupations. Apart from those whose kiddles and eelgarths were simply an extension of agriculture into the nearby streams and drains, we can identify three broad classes of mariner in the village. First, there were men like Robert Harrison, Matthew Hayne and Matthew Toote who formed a sort of "maritime proletariat" with little or no property and who relied on the sea for a considerable proportion of their income. Often, their possessions were too few to necessitate the making of a will. Harrison, a Saltfleet vessel master, lived (when not at sea) in a single room in the house of Robert Curtays and left at his death 3 pigs, 3 geese, some household effects and £9 in  
34  
debts. At the opposite extreme, secondly, were the "mariner-merchants", with surplus wealth acquired from mercantile or agricultural sources, which they could afford to put into maritime ventures. This group is only identifiable at Skidbrooke in the first half of the sixteenth century, when the seafaring links of the haven village were significant enough to allow them a place in the economy. John Goodknape, John Taylor and William Thompson, who all died in the first decade of the

33. Ibid., LCC will 1534 + c./120 (Robert Manfeld), Inv 8/262; LCC will 1585/ii/23 (Henry Toote), Inv 72/73; LCC will 1584/158 (John Baggot), Inv 71/4; ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/32 (1/10/1566).

34. Ibid., LCC will 1583/i/55 (William Curtays, yeoman); ADM LCC 1589/285 (Robert Harrison).

sixteenth century, had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Their families, and those like the Baileys and Herrysons, invested extensively in ships and exploited their contacts through affinity and kinship with merchant families in Louth and Hull. Taylor's daughter married one of the Goldsmith family, wool merchants in Louth. Baileys and Taylors all had their branches in Hull and Taylor was also close to some of the leading townsmen of Grimsby. Thirdly, and between these two classes, there were the "yeomen-fishermen" like the Tootes and Robert Manfeld who had established sufficient financial stability to invest more modestly in maritime goods. Significantly, at his death Manfeld not only owned his vessel-share and fishing-gear, but a few household and domestic luxuries like silver spoons.<sup>35</sup>

If the availability of investment capital was the major socio-economic distinction between these groups, it is important to appreciate that maritime goods were not necessarily any measurement of their relative wealth or social status. From the occupational descriptions they attached to one another and from the factors which appear to have influenced them when making their wills, it appears that most held a very traditional view of the nature of wealth. To them, its basic currency was land, buildings, livestock and household luxuries, which were the assets they particularly wanted to transmit to the next generation. Even those who were wealthier

35. P.R.O., P.C.C. wills: 23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/117 (1504), 36 Adeane Prob 11/15/287-8 (1508), 32 Aylofffe Prob 11/19/251-2 (1520), 7 Adeane Prob 11/15/49-50 (1506); Borthwick Institute, York, P.C.Y. wills: Prob Reg. 8, fo. 31v (1501), Prob Reg. 6, fo. 107; L.A.O. LCC wills 1520-1531/139 (John Bailey), LCC will 1534+ c./120 (Robert Manfeld).

tended to re-invest in maritime affairs capital which they had manifestly accumulated in other activities, and they invariably kept a considerable proportion of their resources in the safer land-based areas. Brian Mudd was a rich yeoman, his farm stocked with several hundred ewes, wethers and hogs, his house large and comfortable, his total appraised wealth coming to £430 with another £100 out on bonds. He could afford to own a boat outright at the haven, because he had capital he could risk. The "mariner-merchants" of a century earlier had been more directly involved, owning the ships, finding the cargoes and sometimes mastering them themselves, but they were equally concerned with the landed possessions which gave them a sense of economic security and possibly social position. The richer men provided the necessary level of investment support to allow Saltfleet to engage in whatever fishing and seaborne trade its circumstances allowed. This, in turn, encouraged more humble finance from yeoman-fishermen and others, whose surplus was normally insufficient to enable them to sustain such projects on their own.<sup>36</sup>

(iv) Religion

Another important element in the social structure of the parish was the church, whose formal institutions in the pre-Reformation period can be reconstructed in some detail. The parish church always remained in Skidbrooke village, where it is first recorded in a dateable document in 1187, about 100

36. L.A.O., LCC Inv 106/259 (Brain Mudd, 1609); D. Burwash, English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540, 1947, p.42; G.V. Scammell, 'Shipowning in England 1450-1550', T.R.H.S., 5th series, 12, 1962, pp.108-109; P. Ariès, The Hour of our Death, (Peregrine ed.), 1983, pp.190-192.

years before the haven area was permanently settled. The dedication was to St. Botolph, which Arthur Owen explained by reference to the saint's function as the patron of travellers and wayfarers, passing en route for the haven. However, it is equally possible that it was influenced by St. Botolph's little understood association with liminal and boundary areas, or by his apocryphal Lincolnshire connections. There is also an interesting similarity between the geographical location of this church and its namesake at Boston: both originated in a marshland region, on the edge of land and sea.<sup>37</sup>

From the end of the thirteenth century until the Reformation, the advowson and a share of the profits of Skidbrooke church belonged to Torre Abbey, in Devon. This included a group of lands known as "the Sanctuary lands" (valued at 30 shillings in 1535) and a moiety of the tithes, including the "tithe of fishes". The latter is mentioned twice in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but never again as a distinctive item. It was certainly not collected in the post-Reformation period, but it is impossible to say whether it fell into abeyance in the early sixteenth century or at some time before.<sup>38</sup>

37. L.A.O. HARM 3/2/5 (copy of charter of 33 Henry II to Torre Abbey); A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', L.A.A.S.R.P., 5, 1954, p.96; D. Kaye, 'Church Dedications in Lincolnshire (unpublished Leicester University M.A. dissertation), 1973, pp.56-59. The oldest parts of the present church at Skidbrooke are Early English.

38. D.M. Owen, Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire, (History of Lincolnshire, Vol.V), 1971, p.33; G. Oliver, Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis, 1846, pp.178, 181-184; F.N. Davis, ed., Rotuli Hugonis de Welles, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.9), 1914, pp.70, 93, 131-132; L.A.O. HARM 3/2/5. If the fish tithe was still being taken in 1535, there is no mention of it in the Valour Ecclesiasticus, 1821, Vol.IV, p.60.

Despite the foundation of the chapels in Saltfleethaven, the church kept its sole burial rights and remained at the centre of the religious activity of the parish in the early sixteenth century. The "church way" or "high cawsey" which linked the two settlements therefore became a favourite source for the distribution of religious bequests in the wills of Saltfleet men: "to the repa[ra]con of the church way Xs", (1506), "to the high chasey in the church Way Xs",<sup>39</sup> (1504), and so on.

Inside the church, we know that there was an elaborate rood-screen with a gilded cross and images of St. John and St. Mary, and north and south chapels (both now gone).<sup>40</sup> The north chapel was known in the early sixteenth century as "the Laidies Queare" and was the guild chapel of the senior parish guild, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin and founded by the inhabitants of Saltfleethaven in 1510, to provide a chaplain who would celebrate divine service at the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the church every day. The men of Saltfleet, who regarded it as especially their guild, also built a "Guildhall" in their own village to go with it. The Guild Brothers and Sisters elected two wardens, who were responsible for paying the stipend of the priest out of the

39. P.R.O., P.C.C. wills William Thompson, 1506 (7 Adeane Prob 11/15/49-50), John Goodknape, 1504 (23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/177). Other examples include L.A.O. LCC will 1534+c./14 (William Synton), LCC will 1541-3/157 (William Godryke).

40. N. Pevsner and J. Harris, The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire, 1964, p.363. William Thompson left 20 marks to have the rood images re-gilded. This was the same screen mentioned in the "Inventory of Popishe Implements" of 1566 (infra, footnote 57).

fraternity's lands - £6 per year, plus 4d. for every mass and dirge he sang.<sup>41</sup> In the Lady Choir, we are told "that they used to have Leightes in the said church called Lady Leightes w[hi]ch were great serges or tapers of waxe w[hi]ch were maynteyned by the wardens of the guild". Although this was the best endowed of the parish guilds, it was not the only one in existence. In the same period there is also mention of "the gilde of Seynt george" and "the plowe gylde", each of which maintained similar lights in the church. There was also a "Sepulc[h]r[e] lyght" and (most interesting of all) a "Schipe<sup>46</sup> light" (to which William Thompson left an endowment in 1506).

The principal chapel at Saltfleethaven itself was the chantry chapel of St. Katherine, which began its life as a hermitage granted by the Willoughbys in 1327 to "Brother Robert de Billesbye hermite and John de Briddesdale, chaplain". It was upgraded to a place where divine services might be held ten years later, and in 1411 became endowed by Robert de Willoughby as a chantry chapel "for the good estate of the said Robert and for his soul after death and the souls of his parents and Richard de Mysen".<sup>43</sup> Its location is unknown, but a site on or near the main east-west village street seems indicated, "near

41. Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, I(I), 1509-1513, p.355; P.R.O. C66/612/m.15; ibid., E134/34+35 Eliz., Mich. 31; L.A.O., HARM 3/2/5; ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/24/12 (22/9/1543), 1 ANC 3/13/23 (1/7/1541), 1 ANC 3/13/43 (21/4/1580).
42. P.R.O., E134/34+35 Eliz., Mich. 31 (deposition of John Graunt); ibid., P.C.C. wills, 23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/177, 7 Adeane Prob 11/15/49-50; L.A.O., LCC Inv 6/51 (Thomas Carter, 1536-7), Inv 16/1 (John Fitzwilliam, 1546), Inv 7/200 (Thomas Parnell, 1537), Inv 7/43 (Robert Toote, 1538); Owen, Church and Society, pp.119, 127-131.
43. Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. III, 1327-1330, p.126; ibid., Henry IV 1408-1413, p.269; Owen, op. cit., pp.18-19, 99-100.

the houses of the Abbot of Louth Park", on a plot of land 100 feet by 70 feet.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, the building itself cannot have been very large and is described in its grant on dissolution as "the little chapel in Saltflet Haven in Skydbroke, Linc., commonly called the chapel of St. Katherine". Attached to it was the cantrist's house "called le Chauntryehouse" and 7 crofts of land varying in size from 10 to 4 acres, worth about £11 per annum. Like the guilds, this chapel was an object of religious bequests, as a matter of course, in most of the Saltfleet wills prior to the Reformation: "to the work of the chapell of Seynt Kateryn of Saltfletha[ve]n iijs iiijd to be given when any goode work[es] be in doying ther[e]"; "to the reparacion of the chapell of St. Catern of Saltflethaven iiijd; to sanct Katheryne chapell in Saltflethavyn xijd".<sup>45</sup>






The Holy Cross chapel, generally referred to as "the Chapel of the Cross in the Sands" was licensed for worship in 1410 (almost at the same time as St. Katherine's became a chantry), and was manifestly still in existence in the early sixteenth century, although its site and function remain extremely mysterious. The original licence was granted to "the residents and inhabitants" of Saltfleethaven, rather than to any individual as patron or priest and there is never any

44. In 1561, some of the Bek fee tenants took rights to graze their livestock on the dunes between "chappel lane" on the north and the port on the south, and at the same court Thomas Lee entered land bounded by "the common road called chappelane on the north side" and the king's highway on the east. The "houses of the Abbot of Louth Park" may have been Parkhouse Green - v. Appendix V.

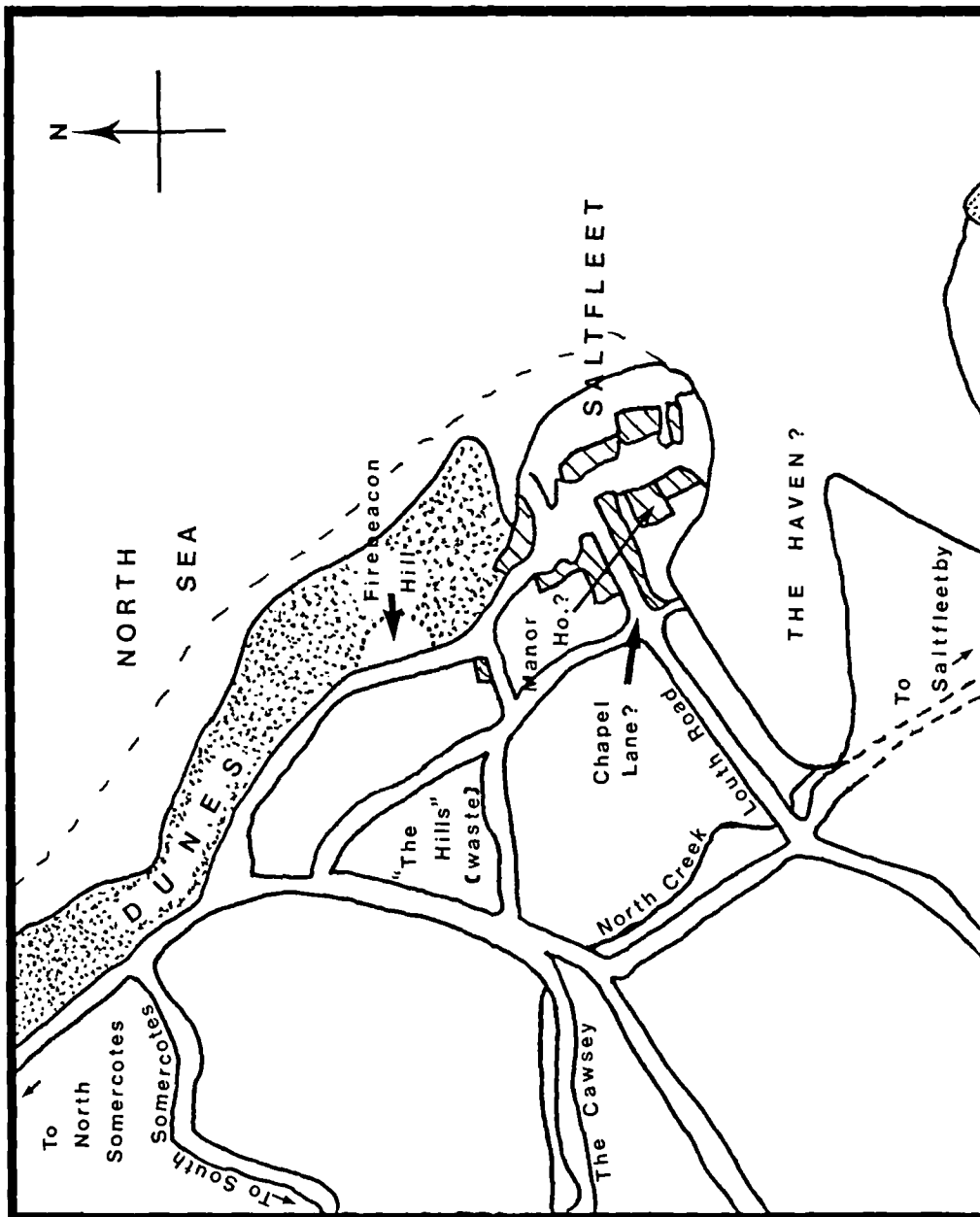
45. Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. VI, 1548-1549, p.358; ibid., Edw. VI 1549-1551, p.271; P.R.O., P.C.C. will 7 Adeane Prob 11/15/49-50; L.A.O., LCC wills 1534+c./14, 1520-1531/34; ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (Mich., 1511, 10/4/1512), 1 ANC 3/13/22 (17/4/1526), 1 ANC 3/13/26/2 (1/3/1547).

MAP TEN. SALT FLEET, c.1500.

KEY:

-  .... dunes
-  .... approx. high - water
-  .... road
-  .... track
-  .... buildings

[based on the reconstruction, Appendix 5.]



Scale: c. 5' to the mile.

record of an endowment to provide a regular income, much less a  
priest or chaplain to maintain the services there.<sup>46</sup> We have a  
full list of the clergy in the parish from the 1526 clerical  
subsidy: Henry Day, the guild priest of St. Mary's guild;  
William Edmundson, the parish curate; and John Richardson, the  
cantarist of St. Katherine's chapel. It is possible that one  
or other of these provided the offices at Holy Cross chapel,  
but this can hardly have been a regular occurrence, in the  
absence of any specific stipendiary obligations. Bequests in  
the pre-Reformation wills always took the form of small cash  
sums - 6d., 20d., 5s., and so on - and were not tied to the  
performance of obits or dirges.<sup>47</sup>

There is similar ambiguity about the chapel's  
topographical position, as a selection of descriptions will  
show: "capella [in] honorem S[an]cte Cr[ucis] sup[er] le sande"  
(1410); "the crose of the Chapell at Sand[es]" (1504); "the  
crosse of the sandes" (1531); "the chapell of the crosse in the  
Sand[es]" (1539).<sup>48</sup>

Arthur Owen believed that this meant a location on a  
sandbank somewhere near the mouth of the haven, basing his  
argument on a report that in the 1820s fishing vessels had  
uncovered a large bell-clapper, a chalice and some dressed

46. M. Archer, ed., The Register of Bishop Philip Repington, 1405-1409, Vol.I, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.57), 1963, p.200; L.A.O., Bishop's Registers, Reg. 15, fo.49r.

47. H.E. Salter, ed., A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526, (Oxford Historical Society, Vol. LXIII), 1909, pp.v-viii, 11-12.

48. P.R.O., P.C.C. wills 7 Adeane Prob 11/4/177; L.A.O., LCC will 1534+c./14 (William Synton); will of John Melner of South Somercotes, in C.W. Foster, ed., Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln, Vol.III: A.D.1530-1532, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.24), p.148.

stones in that area. This story originates in the extremely untrustworthy pages of an early nineteenth century directory, and even if true is probably more plausibly explained as a shipwreck cargo. A structure built on a shifting bank of sand and silt is most unlikely to have endured for over a century.<sup>49</sup> The descriptions seem to imply that the chapel was in some specific location known as "Sands", which obviously conveyed little or nothing to the scribe at the Diocesan Registry or Prerogative Court office, but which any Saltfleet person could easily have identified: "the "meales" or sand-dunes running south from Somercotes to the hill on which the village was built. Such an interpretation has a further persuasive feature, being particularly appropriate, given the dedication of the chapel. The True Cross had been erected on a hill and discovered by St. Helen buried in a hillside. It is not entirely impossible (although unsubstantiated by positive evidence) that Holy Cross chapel was in reality little more than a beacon, warning light or marker on or near "Firebeacon Hill" in the dunes. In medieval Europe, the church was indeed the only regular keeper of lighthouses and had a tradition of maintaining them on dangerous coastlines such as this. There certainly was a beacon, and the lord certainly did not pay for it.<sup>50</sup>

49. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., p.97. This story, and misunderstandings of it, are the origin of the tale that Saltfleet once had its own church, which was washed away by the sea along with the "old town". A (historically asinine) account in The Louth Advertiser ("Ancient Saltfleet", 6/1/1951) identifies the Rosse Bank as the site of these finds. Many Lindsey marsh churches (like Louth) were refurbished in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and materials were delivered at Saltfleet. The "lost church" legend also fails to take account of possible changes in the topography of the haven - v. Appendix V.

50. R.F. Wright, 'The High Seas and the Church in the Middle Ages: Part II', Mariner's Mirror, 53, 1967, p.117.

It will be apparent from this survey of the formal religious institutions of the parish that there was little to establish any functional division between the devotional life of mariners and fishermen and other people. There is nothing in the history of St. Katherine's chantry to link it directly with seafarers (unless a possible location near the haven be considered evidence) and whatever the role of Holy Cross chapel it cannot have played a significant role in the everyday worship at either Skidbrooke or Saltfleet. Yet there is strong national evidence that in the pre-Reformation period seafarers (like other occupational groups) had their own particular saints and often their own chapels in coastal villages: SS. Nicholas (patron of fishermen), Andrew and Clement (patrons of sailors), Michael (placator of winds and storms) and Barbara (especially efficacious against lightening) were all particularly venerated by mariners, as (to a lesser extent) were SS. Peter, Bartholomew, Roland and Anne. At Ilfracombe in Devon, for example, a chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas overlooked the harbour and was used by fishermen for votive offerings in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup>

It is much more difficult to penetrate beyond the formal edifice of religious devotion at Saltfleet to reach individual or group cosmologies of this sort. Will preambles and bequests can frequently be the result of conventional eschatological beliefs, but they provide a few suggestions that local sailors were not totally devoid of such ideas.

51. K. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, (Peregrine ed.), 1978, pp.29-31, 75; Kaye, op. cit., pp.48-56; M. Baker, Folklore of the Sea, 1979, pp.158-159; W.G. Hoskins, Devon, 1972 ed., p.346.



Robert Herryson, a merchant of Hull who was born in Saltfleet, had evidently spent much of his life involved in maritime affairs and listed a specific group of saints in his will: "our lady sancte Mary Saint Michell Saint John Saint James Saint Katheryn Saint Barbara and to all the com[m]pany of saint[es]<sup>52</sup> in heven". Some of these were regular favourites with all will-makers, but James and John were both fishermen, and St. Katherine the patron of the chapel at Saltfleethaven (to which he left 20s.). William Thompson of Saltfleet (as part of the series of masses to be said on his death) ordered that 12d. be given "to eu[er]ly p[ar]lisshe churche beyng w[ilt[h]in the space of iij mylle fro[m] the see, that is to say fro[m] Grembsy to Sutton in the marche", with a further shilling to the priests in them, wherever placebo, dirge and requiem mass could be sung, and 6d. where it could not. Church towers and steeples are known to have been used by sailors for taking bearings and navigating close to shore (especially on flat coastlines) and this provision may well reflect the blend of practical and religious significance such landmarks acquired as a result.<sup>53</sup>

Even more personal and revealing than wills are the names which ship-owners gave to their vessels. Throughout the medieval period, it was normal to use either some traditional title (like "Blithe" or "Godale") or the name of a saint, whose protection was thereby invoked. If we broaden the examination (to allow a sufficient sample) to all those vessels listed in Appendix I, it is evident that among fourteenth century ship-

52. P.R.O., P.C.C. will 32 Aylofffe Prob 11/19/251-2.

53. P.R.O., P.C.C. will 7 Adeane Prob 11/15/49-50.

owners in Lincolnshire the most popular choices were none of the saints commonly associated with seafaring (Table 25).

Table 25. Names of Some Fourteenth Century Lincolnshire Vessels.

| NAME            | No. of Vessels |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mary the Virgin | 16             |
| Blithe          | 15             |
| Godyer          | 9              |
| Mary Magdalene  | 6              |
| St. Margaret    | 6              |
| St. Nicholas    | 5              |
| St. Peter       | 5              |
| Godale          | 5              |
| Welfare         | 5              |
| St. James       | 5              |
| St. Katherine   | 4              |
| St. Trinity     | 4              |
| St. Clement     | 3              |
| Jonete          | 3              |
| Priest          | 3              |
| Eleyne          | 2              |
| St. George      | 2              |
| St. Thomas      | 2              |
| Others (1 each) | 15             |

Notes

Source: Appendix I

Compound names (such as "Mariole") are included under the appropriate saint.

St. Nicholas is recorded 5 times, St. Clement 3 times, and St. Andrew not at all. A surprisingly high ranking is found for St. Mary Magdalene (who, according to popular legend, was cast ashore alive in Provence after a storm), and for St. Margaret (who had promised protection to all who dedicated churches and by extension, boats to her).

However, easily the most popular of all saints among Lincolnshire vessel owners seems to have been the Virgin herself, whose very strong association with the sea has received inadequate attention from many who have written on

this subject. She was closely linked in popular imagery to the moon, whose important and mysterious influence over the tides was well known to seafarers and fishermen. To the medieval church, she was also known as "stella maris" (partly by assimilation with her Latin name "Maria"), with consequent powers both as a star to guide ships and as one to whom prayers for the placation of inclement seas might be directed. It is unfortunate that the general importance of the Virgin's cult often makes it difficult to distinguish the specific maritime links at work, but this should not blind us to their

<sup>54</sup>existence. If this is so, the Guild of St. Mary in Skidbrooke church, founded as an institutional response to the general veneration of the Virgin evoked, may have provided a natural devotional outlet for those in the parish who had business with the sea. If this was the case, moreover, it is a further example of how the mariner-merchant, seafarer or fisherman could find himself structurally accommodated within  
<sup>55</sup>the broader society of local landmen.

In contrast to our knowledge of the religious framework of the late medieval parish, we know comparatively little of the effects or aftermath of the Reformation. The lights and guilds of Skidbrooke church were swept away in Edward VI's reign and St. Katherine's chantry dissolved. Much of the Guild's lands (along with the Guildhouse of Saltfleethaven)

54. M. Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary, 1976, pp.228-229, 255-273; Kaye, op. cit., pp.17-18; cf. also the "Herring Moon" (the time of abundant fish), supra, Chapter 5.

55. Chronologically, both the reverence for "the Lady quere" and mention of the "ship-light" preceded the foundation of the guild. John Goodknape, whose seafaring links have been noted several times, asked specifically to be buried in the Lady Choir in 1504 (6 years before the guild itself was licensed) - P.R.O., P.C.C. will 23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/177.

went to Henry Mapleton, a Yorkshireman, and the land of St. Katherine's chapel to Sir Ralph Sadleyre and others. With them went two of the three resident clergy of the parish: Roger Barrey, the cantarist, and Henry Day, the Guild Priest.<sup>56</sup> The fate of the Holy Cross chapel is unknown, but there is no independent evidence to support the legend that it was washed away by the sea. More probably, it suffered the more mundane fate of abandonment after the Reformation. Much of the parish land which had formerly belonged to the religious houses of Hagnaby, Markby and Louth Park passed into secular hands, as did Torre Abbey's control of the advowson and tithes of the church. There is no record of local involvement in the Lincolnshire Rising, but an inventory of such "popishe implementes" as remained in the church at Elizabeth's accession provides evidence of resistance to change. The rood, with its images of St. Mary and St. John, had survived until Mary's death, after which it had been broken up. At the same time, many vestments, altar hangings and bells had been sold; but the mass-books and all "books of papistry" had disappeared, "gone we knowe not howe", and it was admitted that at least one item<sup>57</sup> had been stolen by Thomas Woodruffe, the previous curate.

The Reformation disposed of formal sanction for the veneration of the saints, but it did so in precisely the period

56. L.A.O., HARM 3/2/4-5; P.R.O., E134/34+35 Eliz., Mich. 31; Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. VI, 1548-1549, p.358; G.A.J. Hodgett, ed., The State of the Ex-religious and former Chantry Priests in the Diocese of Lincoln 1547-1574, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 53) 1959, pp.21, 49, 65, 106.

57. L.A.O., HARM 3/2/4-5; Calendars of Proceedings in Chancery in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Vol.I, 1827, p.371; P.R.O., E134/14 Eliz., Trin. 2; E. Peacock, 'English Church Furniture A.D. 1566', Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, XIV, 1916-1918, pp. 168-171.

when Saltfleet's maritime fortunes were on the wane in any case. The last record of a local ship obviously named after a saint was "the Botolph" (the parish patron) in the early 1550s. Thereafter, vessel names conform to the national pattern of secular or semi-secular forms like "Palmtree" or "Mary Fortune". By the 1580s the local vicar was Robert Coldcoll, a man whose theology can be judged from the tone of his long will preamble: "For I am suer[e] that my Redemer lyeueth and that I shall rise out of the earthe in the laste daye and shalbe couered agayne with my skynne and shall see god in my fleshe. .... My grounde and beliefe ys that there ys but one god and one mediator betwene god and man which ys Jesus [Christ]e so that I do accept none in heauen nor in earthe to be my mediator betwene god and me but onlye Jesus [CChrist]e".<sup>58</sup>

(v) The Calendrical Context

Within each of the institutions examined individually in this chapter - topography, manorial jurisdiction, economy and religion - there lies the suggestion that a strong sense of identity with the parish and its settlements was present in the outlook of all its inhabitants, and superseded any subcultural system of values which might, at certain times and in certain circumstances, have highlighted the separation between the mariners and fishermen of the village, and those who had no direct involvement with the sea. A community existed, which embraced mariner-merchants, farmers, labourers, sailors, fishermen and other occupational and social groups and which

58. P.R.O., P.C.C. will 69 Harrington Prob 11/80/176. See also Appendices II and V.

was a blend of all of them, rather than the direct product of any one. Men drew much of their sense of identity from their personal links and interactions with one another, and from the routine and regular cycles of life and work in which all of them shared. The social cohesion produced by the sharing of a common sense of calendrical time is well-known in inland villages, where it has been studied in detail by Homans, James<sup>59</sup> and others. If, as this chapter has argued, that cohesion existed just as strongly in a coastal village like Saltfleethaven, some attempt must be made to consider its particular annual round and the place of the various groups within it. This technique inevitably involves a certain amount of extrapolation from other sources (particularly in respect of the agricultural year) and many epistemological doubts can legitimately be directed against it. Nevertheless, it may serve to demonstrate some of the possible inter-connections and to identify those aspects in which such a village differed from the established models.

The principal events in the farming year were inevitably different from those in an open-field arable area. Lambing marked the start of the spring period. Lambs could be born at any time from February onwards, but if ewes went to tup around the traditional St. Luke's day, March would have heralded their arrival. Indeed, the probate inventories record no lambs in February, but they are common in those taken after the beginning of March. They would then have been weaned by about May Day. Sheep-shearing was traditionally completed before Midsummer, when we know that a large bonfire festival

59. G.C. Homans, English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century, 1975 ed., pp.353-381; E.O. James, Seasonal Feasts and Festivals, 1961, pp.207-238.

was widely held in Lincolnshire. Once again, the probate inventories lend some support to this belief. John Grant had 19 stone of wool when his goods were assessed on June 13th, 1593, and Richard Blades (a labourer) "[cer]tayne fleeces of wole" on June 26th. Hay-harvest on the Ings probably began soon after Midsummer, and was followed by the harvesting of the other arable crops. At the beginning of August, Lammas marked the time for paying the Great Tithe of wool and lambs to the church. By the mid-sixteenth century, this had been commuted to a cash consideration of 4d. an acre for local men, with various higher sums to the growing number of "foreners" who bought up tracts of marsh-pasture for their own animals. Those who grazed their animals on the commons probably still paid in kind (as they did in the early eighteenth century) with fleeces, lambs, calves and foals.

The end of September marked the turning point in the agricultural year. In the fourteenth century, the annual Saltfleet Fair took place on the days following the Vigil and Feast of St. Matthew (20/21st September). Although this may have lapsed by the mid-sixteenth century, September and October remained the time to visit other fairs, sell off stock, settle accounts, hire labour and prepare for the onset of winter.

60. Thomas, op. cit., p.738; P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1978, pp.181-185; M. Baker, Folklore and Customs of Rural England, 1974, p.25; P.R.O. E134/14 Eliz., Trin. 2; L.A.O., LCC Inv 84/174 (John Grant, 1593), ADM. LCC 1596/14 (Richard Blades); ibid., glebe terrier bundle, Skidbrooke (terrier of 1724).

61. A weekly market at Saltfleet continued (with the day changed from Friday to Tuesday) down to the eighteenth century, but there is no record of the St. Matthew's Fair after the fourteenth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and possibly earlier) there was an annual stock-fair at Saltfleet held on 3rd October: R. Blome, Britannia, 1673, p.143; N.R. Wright, Lincolnshire Towns and Industry 1700-1914, (History of Lincolnshire, Vol.XI), 1982, pp.20-21; Thirsk, English Peasant Farming, p.71.

At Michaelmas, the lord took stock of his possessions and held his View of Frankpledge. In early November, All Saints marked the start of the annual sale and sorting of livestock and the time when those cattle to be overwintered could return to the Ings to graze. Theoretically, both meadow and saltmarsh "stints" were related to pasturage held, and nobody could keep more than their allotted number of sheep, so any surplus of<sup>62</sup> these also had to be sold or killed.

March and April also marked the beginning of the year<sup>63</sup> so far as the coastal trade was concerned. Depending upon the weather the first coasters began to arrive at Saltfleet between mid-March and mid-April and the traffic then increased to reach a summer peak in July and August. In some years, trade continued until the middle of November but normally it ended in the last half of September. During these months, a regular pattern of commerce, which had been in suspension all of the previous winter, was re-established. At times when they were trading, Saltfleet ships brought in cargoes of coal from Newcastle and sometimes took out grain or beans to exchange. How long such a round trip took was dependent on the seas and the weather, but in an average year a ship could expect to make it perhaps only four or five times. For example, "the Speedwell" of Saltfleet, mastered by John Gowland, made its first voyage of 1580 some time towards the end of April and left Newcastle on or about 8th May, putting in at Saltfleet on the 28th. Her second voyage began at Newcastle in early June,

62. P.R.O., SC6/Hen VII/373; L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/34/1-2 (7/10/1568), 1 ANC 3/13/44/2 (24/4/1581); cf. Beel, 'Byelaws of Ulceby', loc. cit., pp.36-37.

63. Most of the following section is based on the Exchequer K.R. port-books in the P.R.O., listed in Appendix II(A).

ending in Saltfleet on the 22nd. This time, she loaded up a cargo of beans, left on 28th June, and returned from Newcastle again on 22nd July. A final trip between 30th July and 20th August<sup>64</sup> completed the year's trading.

Even when no Saltfleet ships were engaged in the coasting, the haven (like others in the county) received regular visits from the ships and masters of other ports, each creek tending to have its own accustomed suppliers. At Wainfleet, Keadby vessels predominated, along with some from Selby and York. At Saltfleet, a wider variety of places are often recorded: Newcastle, York, Grimsby and sometimes local inlets like Marsh Chapel, Somercotes and Northcotes. The same masters appear year after year, men of Newcastle or other centres of the coal-trade, who must have known Saltfleet extremely well. Since they normally owned their own cargoes, delivery was presumably the result of personal commercial contacts with buyers in the neighbourhood, who re-sold the coal in Lindsey. John Bateman, John Gowland, Richard Burlingham, John Ashe and John Brewster were all men of this sort. None of them were locals, although they sometimes mastered Saltfleet ships as well as those from their own home ports. They and their crews must have had their regular haunts in the village during the short turn-arounds between their voyages: there is no evidence of inns in the parish until the early seventeenth century, but no doubt the proliferation of ale-houses owed<sup>65</sup> something to this trade. Whatever their social links with

64. P.R.O., E190/389/10 (customer and controller, Easter-Michaelmas 1580).

65. The original "Old Inn" (later the "New Inn") may be late sixteenth century.

local sailors and masters (like Henry Toote and Robert Harrison), there is no record of these men in village affairs (except for one bastard child possibly fathered by Brewster in 1581).<sup>66</sup>

Overseas trade was non-existent in the period covered by the port books and there is no corresponding record of the activities of the wealthier mariner-merchants of the earlier sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the same summer season is indicated by the dates of the wool-fleets discussed in Chapter 4. These sailed either in May or June (at the beginning of the period) or October-November (at the end). Individual references to local ships in the customs accounts also imply this pattern. The "George" of Saltfleet, with John Bailey as master, took a cargo to Calais in April 1525; the "Mary" of Somercotes made a similar voyage from Hull in May of that year. The "Edward" of Somercotes brought back French wine to Hull on 28th November, 1511, (probably her last major voyage for that year).<sup>67</sup>

In the late autumn, as the agricultural year came to an end, the weather also began to make navigation of the east coast extremely hazardous for coasters. No ships traded into Saltfleet haven in the five months between mid-November and mid-March, unless exceptionally violent gales drove a master heading elsewhere to seek shelter at Saltfleet or Wainfleet, in fear of a shifting load. Such events were very rare,

66. L.A.O., parish registers, Skidbrooke, 1/1 (baptisms, 12th February 1580/81). The parentage is not stated, but she is the only Brewster recorded.

67. P.R.O., E122/12/6, fo. 2r (Boston collector's ledger, 16-17 Henry VIII), E122/64/3, m. 1d. (Hull controllment, 3-4 Henry VIII).

(Saltfleet haven not being an ideal inlet to negotiate in the eye of a storm) and the Deputy Customer always entered them in his port book with the note "per tempestatem".<sup>68</sup>

For those local mariners who crewed the coasters, the winter months therefore meant a return to the village, after the frequent absences of the earlier part of the year. Most of them retained some livestock (which must have been tended by their families during the spring and summer months) and some profit might come from the sale of lambs or skins at around this time. Henry Toote had a linenwheel in his house, and a cheese-press, both of which doubtless provided some income or resources for his household throughout the year. Like others in the parish, mariners could brew beer and sell it, and this seems to have been a favourite winter bye-employment with the more substantial ones like the Goodknapes, Tailors and Manfelds and their wives. Seafarers could also cut gorse, make rope (and possibly nets for fishing), poach in the warren, or go fowling and reed-cutting on the areas of untamed fen and marsh. As in all marshland and fenland areas, this time of year was also used for major overhauls and buildings of banks and sea-defences, all of which required labour. Our shortage of inventories for men specifically stated to have been "sailors" or "mariners" (partly explained by the lack of property, other than livestock, among those which do survive) enables us to do little but speculate about most of these winter occupations; but it seems likely that they re-inforced their sense of

68. Ibid., E190/388/6 (searcher, Michaelmas 1584-Michaelmas 1585).

association with the village because they were not dissimilar  
69  
from those of their neighbours.

However, on the basis of their familial links and the goods of some of those who left probate records, many coasting mariners may also have spent some of the winter working as kiddle and seagoing fishermen. John Toote, a sailor who died in 1603, was the brother of Matthew, a fishermen, and both were left "sea-gears" in their father's will. His kinsman Henry Toote, master of the "Palmtree" of Saltfleet in the early 1580s, was married to the sister of Miles Fleshburne, a fisherman. John Bailey, master of the "George" on its Calais voyage of April 1525, had his fishing-gear in his "tackle-house", and Thomas Harbottle, master of a Saltfleet ship in the wool-fleet of 1518 was also one of the cartel of fishermen who  
70  
bought the lord's franchise in the haven in 1508.

For those fishermen who did not work the coasters or overseas voyages but combined fishing with farming, agricultural labouring or other bye-employments, winter was probably the period when they devoted most of their time to catching fish. In the autumn, vast numbers of common eels passed along the drains and rivers of the fens and marshland on their way back to the sea after spawning, and eel-garths erected at this time could yield a rich harvest to be consumed, salted or sold. In the fourteenth century, the major herring fare of the year took place at Yarmouth at the end of the

69. L.A.O., LCC Inv 82/43 (Henry Toote, 1591), ADM. LCC 1603/145 (John Toote), ADM. LCC 1589/285 (Robert Harrison); ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/9-25, passim.

70. P.R.O., E122/202/4, fo. 30v. (Hull particular account, 9-10 Henry VIII); L.A.O., LCC will 1520-1531/139 (John Bailey, 1528), LCC will 1585/ii/23 (Henry Toote), LCC will 1630/518 (Matthew Toote), LCC will 1597/258 (John Fleshburne).

agricultural year, between Michaelmas and Martinmas. In the sixteenth century, some fishermen may have taken their nets to the herring grounds off Skegness for the November and December fishery there. Shrimp, shellfish and inhshore flat fish (especially flounders or "butts") could be caught using comparatively small boats and the less expensive sorts of gear which some of them owned. In the spring and summer, many must have been preoccupied with agriculture, and it is unlikely that their fishing trips took place so frequently in that season.<sup>71</sup>

If the basic elements in this reconstruction are correct, we can see that the various occupational and social groups in local society were interconnected in different ways at different times of the year. In the period between Easter and Michaelmas, most fishermen were concerned, in some capacity, with the agricultural calendar and the same routines as their fellow parishioners: breeding and rearing lambs and calves, mowing the hay, shearing, harvesting the arable crops, slaughtering and selling off the surplus. In the meantime, coasting and overseas mariners were participating in a completely different seafaring routine, in which the fluctuations of tides and weather and the semi-regular Newcastle and Saltfleet visits were their main points of reference. During this time, they spent several weeks on end away from home and family and in the company of other sailors. But in the second part of the year, from November until March or April, these same mariners returned to the parish to pursue some of the bye-employments commonly undertaken in that season

71. Ibid., LCC Inv 44/133 (Andrew Sanderson, 1565), Inv 54/20 (John Northe, 1573), ADM. LCC 1589/1183 (John Hayne).

and to assist their fishermen friends and relations when they, in turn, were most concerned with their specialist activity. In such a system, links of kinship and family were bound to be extremely important, and in the final chapter we will move on to explore this other essential element in the social and economic fabric of local society.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 8. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS (II): FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Kinship and the family are very important elements in any consideration of community. In a "closed society" - and, once again, we may take the stereotyped "fishing village" as a model - they are an essential cement which bonds local occupational solidarity to its geographical surroundings, because the inhabitants are supposedly unwilling to involve themselves in social or marital associations with people who do not share the "mentalité". Endogamy, complex kinship ties and possibly unusual patterns in the seasonality of demographic events therefore result, further strengthening the feeling of separation which already exists between the occupational group and the outside world and rendering penetration of local society by an outsider virtually impossible.<sup>1</sup>

At Skidbrooke and Saltfleet, however, we have already seen that fishing and the coasting trade were merely elements of an extremely varied ecotype, where flexibility of occupation was essential. Seafaring was one of a wide range of (often seasonal) alternatives, and local mariners therefore appear as an economically rather amorphous group of men. What, then, of the "mentalité" we identified at the beginning of this thesis, the sense of shared identity and subculture? Without it, there could have been little of the co-operative cohesion necessary to equip and crew the vessels, or to preserve the traditional skills which made fishing or seagoing trade possible. We are therefore bound to ask how far the demographic peculiarities

1. A. Storm, 'Robin Hood's Bay' (unpublished Leicester University M.A. dissertation), 1978, p.14; J.G. Bertram, The Harvest of the Sea, 1869, pp.431-432; D. Clark, Between Pulpit and Pew, 1982, passim.

and kinship networks associated with fishing villages were present in this parish and whether the relationship between family and occupation can help to reconcile the preservation of a maritime tradition with the apparently paradoxical failure of its practitioners to manifest themselves as an exclusive or closed community.

#### Demographic Seasonality.

Because the seasonality of rites of passage can only be investigated through parish registers, for 50% of the period under consideration we have no data from which to assess how closely Skidbrooke conformed to the national patterns.<sup>2</sup>

However, the available information does not appear to be significantly different from them. As previously noted, local population growth in the second half of the sixteenth century was steady but unspectacular, at the rate of about 1% per annum.<sup>3</sup> Appendix IV(B) discusses the techniques used to investigate crisis mortalities within the parish between 1569 and 1615. The results indicated only one such period, between June and October 1592, which may have been part of the national "2-star" epidemic of the years 1591-1592, or (more likely) the result of purely local factors. It is possible to speculate on the transmission of infection through the seafaring contacts of the haven, but there is no positive evidence to support this.<sup>4</sup>

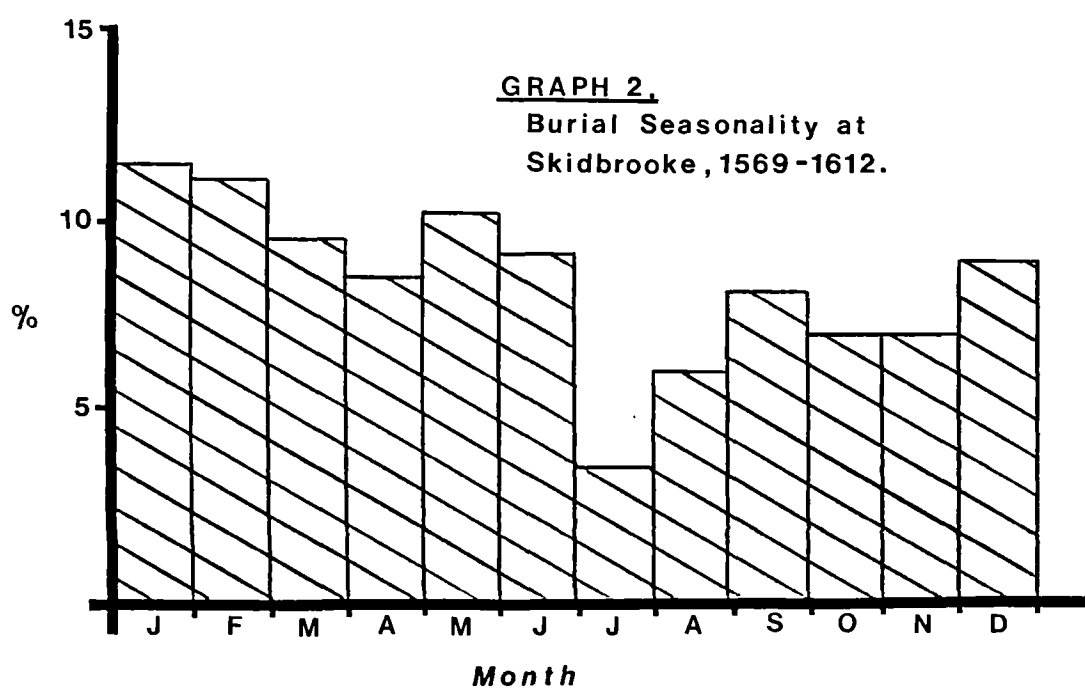
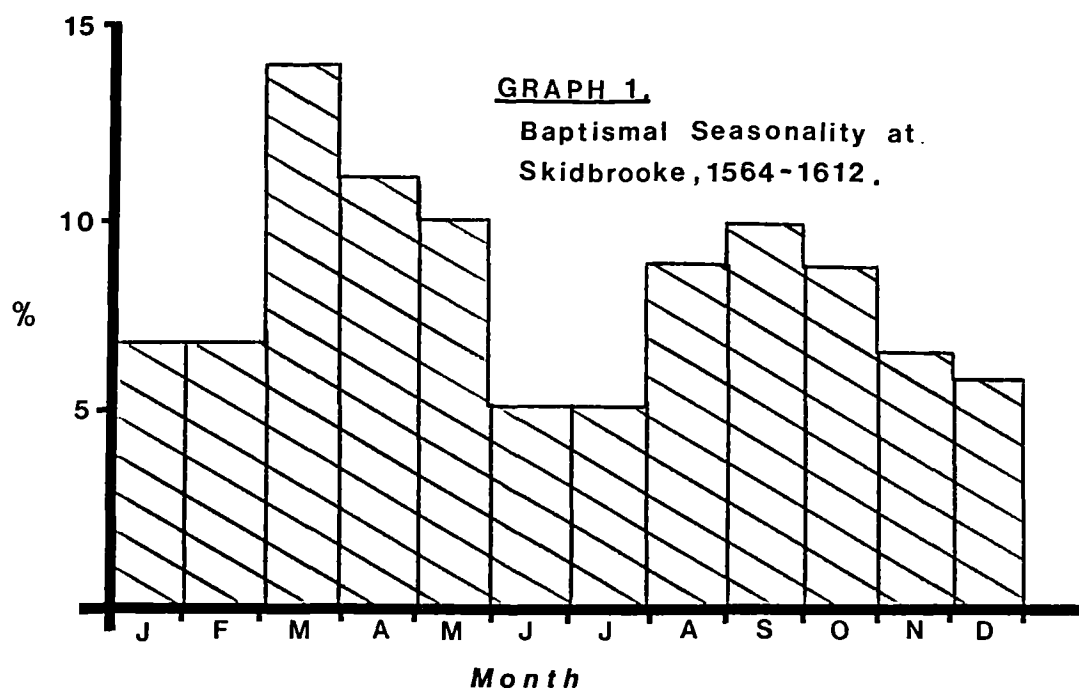
The seasonal pattern of births, marriages and burials revealed by the parish registers is similarly unexceptional.

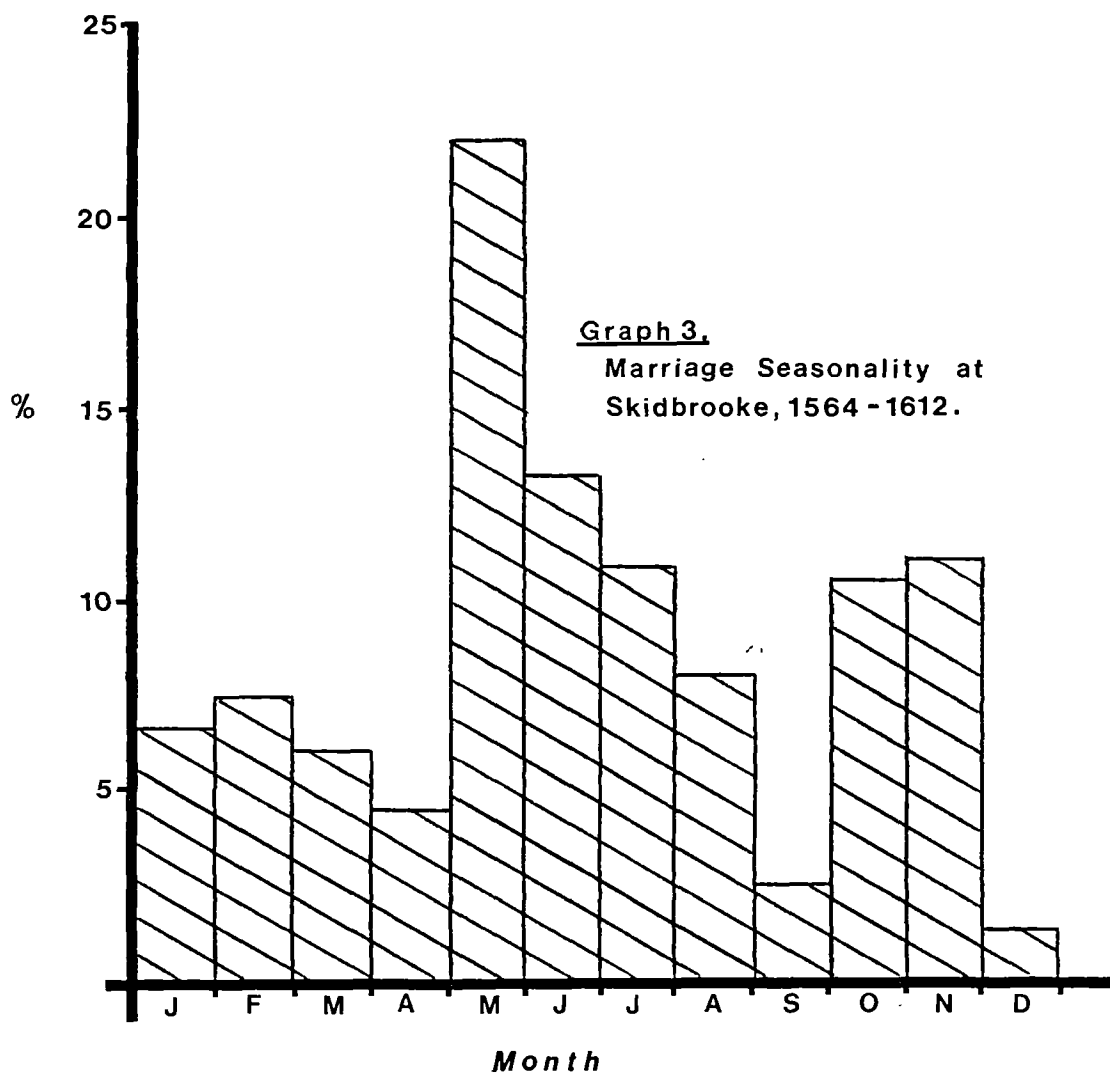
2. The parish registers begin in 1563: v. Appendix IV for details.
3. Ibid.
4. This subject is more fully discussed in Appendix IV(B), q.v.

Baptisms display the familiar spring and autumn peaks and the usual summer trough. Marriages were most popular in May and November and least common in March and December, broadly in line with inland areas. The most unusual feature is the comparative lack of seasonal fluctuations observable in the burial figures, which remained at around 9% or 10% in the majority of months, with a significant drop only at the height of summer (July and August). Such local variations in the graph profile are by no means uncommon, but in this instance the statistics may have fallen foul of the size of the parish, the short run of data, and especially the intrusion of the crisis period in the 1590s. This corresponded with months normally significantly below the average, and may be responsible for the distortion.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the differences between the picture of demographic seasonality at Skidbrooke and that established for the country as a whole are slight, and do not suggest major divergences between this sort of coastal parish and those inland. Had seafaring dominated the parish, we might have expected marriages, for example, to peak in the autumn and winter months (between coasting seasons and after times of maximum fishing opportunities), and baptisms to drop to their lowest points in September or October (nine months after the peak of the previous coasting season). As the economic analysis of the previous chapter should already have led us to anticipate, this does not occur.

5. L. Bradley, 'An Enquiry into Seasonality in Baptisms, Marriages and Burials' (3 parts), in M. Drake, ed., Population Studies from Parish Registers, 1982, pp.1-13, 23, 85-88. See also Appendix IV, Graph A.4.





## "Kernel" and "Peripheral" Families

Quite apart from the difficulties in interpreting observable trends, this demographic approach has the usual statistical drawback of measuring quantity rather than importance. It re-affirms our impression that local maritime subculture did not pervade the parish social structure, but it cannot tell us much about whether, as a tradition, it influenced the occupational arrangements of particular families. For this purpose, we need to look at the names and backgrounds of the known mariners and fishermen of the parish. Table 26 provides a necessarily incomplete list of these, arranged according to surnames. Only those who can be identified beyond reasonable doubt as mariners or sea-fishermen, as opposed to (say) casual poachers in the drains,

Table 26. Surnames of Known Skidbrooke Mariners and Fishermen, 1500-1600.

| SURNAME    | No. of<br>Seafarers | SURNAME   | No. of<br>Seafarers |
|------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Baggot     | 2                   | Nutting   | 1                   |
| Bailey     | 3                   | Rowse     | 1                   |
| Brice      | 1                   | Rowson    | 3                   |
| Cawthorpe  | 1                   | Sanderson | 1                   |
| Fleshburne | 1                   | Scott     | 1                   |
| Goodknape  | 3                   | Stafford  | 1                   |
| Harbottle  | 1                   | Taylor    | 4                   |
| Hardy      | 3                   | Tendry    | 1                   |
| Harrison   | 1                   | Thompson  | 3                   |
| Hayne      | 2                   | Toote     | 8                   |
| Hous       | 1                   | Whitofte  | 1                   |
| Manfeld    | 4                   | Wodchild  | 1                   |
| Northe     | 1                   | Wood      | 1                   |
| Total 51   |                     |           |                     |

### Notes

Sources: All available evidence.

have been included, which means the omission of some men (particularly some members of the Rowse and Thompson families) over whom there remains some doubt. The table emphasizes a basic distinction between those whose association with seafaring was individual and those for whom it represented the continuation of some sort of family tradition. The "singleton" seafarers were in the majority: 16 out of the 26 surnames appear only in respect of one individual. By contrast, in a handful of cases - notably the Manfelds, Taylors and Tootes - a strong family link is indicated.

If this group of families was in some way responsible for the preservation and basic continuity of the occupation, it is perhaps not surprising that their influence should not be apparent from a purely aggregative analysis. Not only were they few in number, but because of the nature of the local economy there was no social or cultural barrier dividing them from their agricultural neighbours. The Tootes, the largest and most persistent maritime cousinhood, intermarried freely with families like the Riddles and Burghs of Skidbrooke, who were husbandmen with no maritime interests, and the Powells of Somercotes, who were tailors.<sup>6</sup> Equally, contact with other seafaring families inevitably led to marriage alliances with them, which had the effect of pulling some of them into a close (but not closed) network of kinship: Goodknapes and Taylors were connected in this manner in the first half of the sixteenth century, Tootes, Fleshburnes and Baggots in a later period.

6. L.A.O., Skidbrooke parish registers, 1/1 (marriages 1589, 1598, 1614); *ibid.*, South Somercotes parish registers, 1/1 (marriage Tootes-Tathwell, 1598); *ibid.*, ADM. LCC 1592/123 (Robert Hildreth).

The more numerous "singleton seafarers" existed on the periphery of these networks, linked by a common occupational environment at certain times of the year. Often, it is difficult to discover much about their family backgrounds, beyond the fact that they were not connected with the sea. For instance, of the five employee fishermen listed in the 1628 muster, only John Hardy's background can be established clearly: he came from a Mealehouses family with intermittent maritime interests. Robert Wood was born before the parish registers commenced. George Stafford's parentage is unclear but we know that his immediate family had only land-based occupational interests. Richard Tendry and William Whitofte both appear to have been the sons of butchers.<sup>7</sup>

We know very little about the ownership and crewing of vessels at Saltfleet in the sixteenth century, but fishing voyages probably required the involvement of both family and "outsiders", because neither the necessary manpower nor the special skills and equipment could always be found in one nuclear family, or even its more distant kin. Neighbours and affines were the obvious source for such assistance and, in the context of the economy being practised at Skidbrooke, it is easy to envisage how this might lead to the development of "kernel" and "peripheral" families. The presence of a few families with deeper and more extensive maritime traditions than others could ensure the maintenance of seafaring options, to which others were then drawn in varying degrees and (according to the economic climate) in varying numbers.

7. Ibid., LCC Inv 1611/102 (Brian Hardy); ADM. LCC 1613/171 (Thomas Hardy); LCC will 1637/179 (George Stafford), Inv 146/76; ADM. LCC 1648/207 (John Dawson); LCC Inv 175/489 (William Stafford, 1672); ADM. LCC 1649/94 (Richard Tendry); ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/41/1 (31/10/1577).

For example, John Baggot was a "yeoman-fisherman", combining the cultivation of his farm with some sea-fishing. On his death, he provided for his sons by leaving his land to the younger one, Richard, and "all my see gears" to Robert, the elder. Robert was clearly intended to specialize more fully in the fishing than had his father, thus leaving the under-aged Richard to inherit the undivided holding on the death of his mother. It is surely no co-incidence that within two years a double Toote-Baggot marriage alliance had been struck: affinity between "kernel" and "peripheral" families was a natural consequence of shared interests. After William Whitofte became involved in fishing, his sister married Nicholas Toote. Francis Hayne (a relative of John and Matthew) married a Rowson in 1569, and John Northe (the fisherman who died in 1573)<sup>8</sup> another one in 1566.

The complexities of these inter-relationships are best illustrated by considering a series of family histories, drawn from overlapping periods. A full-scale reconstitution of the parish has not been attempted, because the surviving evidence does not meet the stringent criteria stipulated as essential by the advocates of this technique. However, enough data is available to reconstruct the main features of a number of families by other (perhaps more flexible) methods.<sup>9</sup>

8. Ibid., Skidbrooke parish registers, 1/1 (marriages 1566, 1569, 1584, 1586, 1632); ibid., LCC will 1584/158 (John Baggot), LCC will 1583/1/71 (Richard Rowson), LCC Inv 54/20 (John Northe, 1573); ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/32 (1/10/1566).

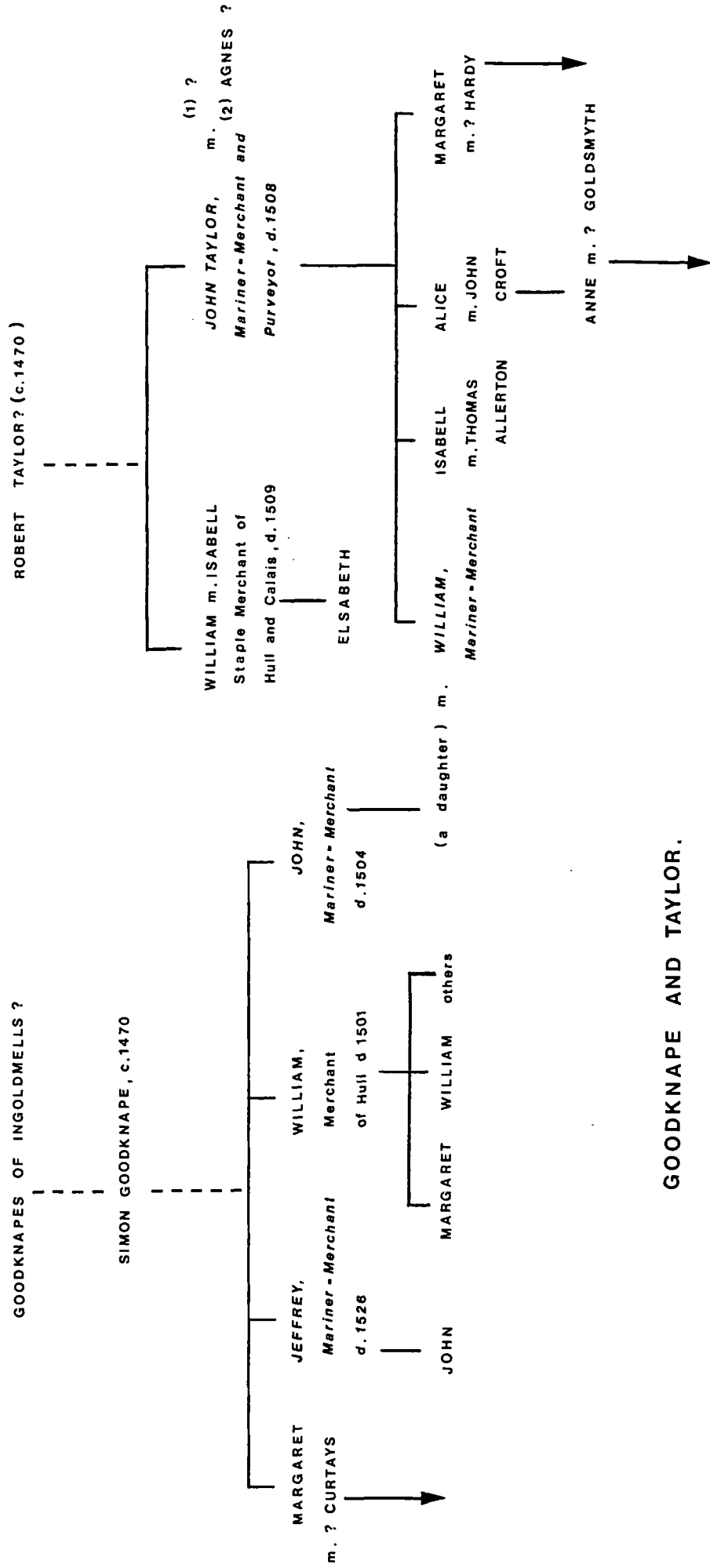
9. The family histories in this chapter were compiled from a name-index, adapted from the system outlined in A. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities, 1977, Chapter 3. For some advantages of this method over normal reconstitution, v. ibid., pp.137-140.

## The Goodknapes and Taylors

The Goodknapes and Taylors were the two most important mariner-merchant families in Saltfleet in the last half of the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth. As we have seen, they belonged to a class of entrepreneurs, whose willingness to invest in ships and contract their cargoes was essential to the commercial health of most late medieval creeks and havens. They can be bracketed alongside such men as Robert Mauncelot of Wainfleet and William Ward of Saltfleet, as far back as the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The Goodknapes may have originated in another coastal parish, Ingoldmells, where a family of that name is recorded in the later years of the fifteenth century. In 1470, a certain Simon Goodknape took up a 20 year lease on a piece of pasture land in Skidbrooke called Skuppelmarsh, agreeing to maintain it and build a ditch around it. Jeffrey, John and William, the three mariner-merchants, were probably born around 1450. William lived most of his later life in Kingston-upon-Hull, but Jeffrey and John remained in Saltfleet until their deaths, in 1526 and 1504 respectively. John's daughter married William Taylor, who was the son of John Taylor, probably the richest and best connected of the Saltfleet mariner-merchants. Taylors may have been in the village from a much earlier period: Robert Taylor, possibly the father of John, was the

10. Supra, Chapter 2.



master of the "Cuthbert" of Saltfleet in the 1471 wool-fleet<sup>11</sup>  
which sailed from Boston to Calais.

For all of these men, a solid foundation in the possession of land was of great importance. Jeffrey Goodknape, who had less direct involvement with seafaring than his brother, does not catalogue his property in his will, speaking only of "all my howsys and landes"; but John Goodknape goes into considerable detail: 6 acres "vnder the sedyke" in Saltfleetby St. Clements; another acre there bought from Thomas Barbour; a house and 2 little closes in Thorycroft; 2 more acres in Skidbrooke, and "the house that William Yong dwellith[e] in", besides an unspecified residue, bequeathed to Jeffrey and his heirs. Court roll transfers after the death of John Taylor enable us to estimate his possessions more accurately: 2½ acres passed to Thomas Allerton and John Croft, his sons-in-law, at the same time that Willam, the son, entered the main holding of 20½ acres. Four more acres defaulted to Allerton in 1521, and a further 6 acres of pasture were earmarked to support obits, candles and the like. There was also a family house in Louth, (doubtless used for the wool-trading).<sup>12</sup>

11. W.O. Massingberd, Court Rolls of the Manor of Ingoldmells, 1902, p.284; L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/9 (2/12/1470, 7/5/1471); ibid., LCC wills 1520-1531/34 (Jeffrey Goodknape, 1526); P.R.O., P.C.C. wills 23 Holgrave Prob 11/14/117 (John Goodknape, 1504); ibid., E122/10/13, fo. 8r-10r; Borthwick Institute, York, P.C.Y. wills, Reg. 6, fo. 107r (William Goodknape, 1504).
12. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/18 (10/5/1508), 1 ANC 3/13/19 (5/10/1508), 8/10/1521); P.R.O., P.C.C. wills 36 Adeane Prob 11/15/287-8.

It seems likely that most of the maritime trade and fishing which Saltfleet enjoyed in this period was directly the result of the involvement of these two families. In turn, they drew in a wider circle of "peripheral" men, some of whom may have had (now untraceable) links of affinity with them: John Bailey, senior, and John Bailey, junior; Thomas Harbottle; Richard and Robert Manfeld; Richard Saule; Martyn and Thomas Rowse. John Goodknape, John Taylor and William Thompson all owned ships, or part-shares in them. John Goodknape made specific bequests of 3 quarter shares of the "Mawdelyn" in his will: one quarter to Jeffrey, one quarter to Jeffrey's son, John; one quarter to William Taylor. He may have had other shares, subsumed in the residue of his estate. Taylor's will carried a blanket clause for his seafaring estate, covering all such goods "whether beyond the sea or upon the sea, with ships and nets and other maritime goods and chattels". Buying and selling ships was obviously a common transaction to him; indeed only months before his death he had been embroiled in a tangled legal and jurisdictional dispute with one John Johnson of Grimsby, over a vessel they had jointly purchased (probably for fishing) from Brian Hanserd of Clee.

13

Table 27 demonstrates what we know of some of the trade conducted by these men, on which they were required to pay customs. Wool was still the main preoccupation, and by the early sixteenth century their centres of operation had moved away from their home village to the nearest large port towns,

13. S.H.A.R.O., 1/102/2, part 1 (23 Henry VII - 2 Henry VIII), Mayor's Court book, fo. 3v; cf. E. Gillett, A History of Grimsby, 1970, pp.47-48. Hanserd was not, as Gillett thought, a party to the dispute itself.

Table 27. Some Saltfleet and Somercotes Overseas Trade,  
1463-1526.

| Year | Ship     | Of         | Master            | Voyage           | Cargo      |
|------|----------|------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1463 | George   | Mouytidam  | John Brown        | In at Saltfleet  | Sundry     |
| 1468 | Katheryn | Caumfer    | Peter Clayson(A)  | In at Saltfleet  | Salt etc.  |
| 1471 | Cuthbert | Saltfleet  | Robert Taylor     | Boston to Calais | Wool/Hides |
| 1471 | Trinity  | Saltfleet  | Richard Saule     | Boston to Calais | Wool/Hides |
| 1487 | Mary     | Caumfer    | John Thompson(A)  | In at Saltfleet  | Salt etc.  |
| 1511 | Edward   | Somercotes | Richard Willflete | In at Hull       | Wine       |
| 1511 | Edward   | Somercotes | Richard Willflete | Hull to Calais   | Wool/Hides |
| 1511 | Edmond   | Saltfleet  | John Chater       | Hull to Calais   | Wool/Hides |
| 1518 | George   | Saltfleet  | Thomas Harbottle  | Hull to Calais   | Wool/Hides |
| 1524 | Katheryn | Somercotes | William Dady      | Boston to Calais | Victuals   |
| 1525 | Mary     | Somercotes | William Dady      | Boston to Calais | Corn/Grain |
| 1525 | George   | Saltfleet  | John Bailey       | Boston to Calais | Wine       |
| 1526 | Mary     | Somercotes | John Hall         | Hull to Calais   | Sundry     |

Notes

Source: Boston and Hull Particulars of customs accounts, P.R.O.  
E122/10/4, E122/10/8, E122/10/13, E122/11/2, E122/64/3,  
E122/60/3, E122/64/1, E122/202/4, E122/12/5, E122/12/6,  
E122/202/5.  
(A) = Alien.

Boston and Hull. Saltfleet remained the heart of their landed possessions, and had certain advantages because of its convenient proximity to Louth and the wool producing parts of Lindsey. Directing the trade profitably through the Staple, however, required good contacts there, and these were apparently provided for by family and affines in Kingston-upon-Hull. William Goodknape, the brother of John and Jeffrey, was a merchant there, as was William Taylor, John's brother, and Robert Herryson from another Saltfleet family. The last two were specifically stated in their wills to have been Merchants  
14  
of the Staple. The other main trading opportunities seem to

14. P.R.O., P.C.C. wills 32 Aylofffe Prob 11/19/251-2 (Robert Herryson, 1520); Borthwick Institute, P.C.Y. wills, Reg. 6, fo. 107r (William Goodknape, 1504), Reg. 8, fo. 31v (William Taylor, 1509).

have been victuals and supplies of a military nature, for the Calais garrison and expeditionary armies in France. In 1492, John Taylor was appointed purveyor to acquire (and presumably deliver) "wheat, beans, peas, oats, beer, flesh and fish, fresh and salt, cheese, butter, and other victuals for the army in France during the King's present voyage". Another such supply voyage was made from Saltfleet itself, in 1524.<sup>15</sup>

The customs accounts cannot help to document coasting trade, or the sea-fishing which took place using the same ships and the same financial backing; but we know from evidence discussed at the end of Chapter Five that John and Jeffrey Goodknape, William Thompson, Thomas Harbottle, the Baileys and the Taylors were all involved in it. In view of the Taylor-Johnson dispute mentioned above, it is possible that local mariners may have gone occasionally to Iceland, through sailings out of Grimsby or Hull. In the 1440s, another legal dispute over such a voyage took place at Grimsby Mayor's court involving a man named Richard Manfeld, who may well have been connected with the family of the same name in Saltfleet.<sup>16</sup>

The mariner-merchants differed from later Saltfleet seafarers principally in the level of their personal wealth, which meant that they could not only establish the mercantile contacts necessary for trade, but could afford to put up the capital for the ships which conducted it. The wider kinship network which they maintained with their Hull relatives is one manifestation of how important family ties were to them. It also suggests that they often put to sea themselves. How,

15. P.R.O., E122/12/5, fo. 3v.

16. Gillett, op. cit., pp.35-36.

otherwise, could John Goodknape act as executor for the will of his brother in Hull (and possibly Calais), or William Taylor for the wills of William Bailey and John Goodknape at Saltfleet?<sup>17</sup> No doubt it was partly because of this that they were not socially segregated from those of less independent means - Harbottles, Rowses, Hardys, and so on - whose affines they may have become, and to whom they readily bequeathed fishing-tackle or vessel shares.

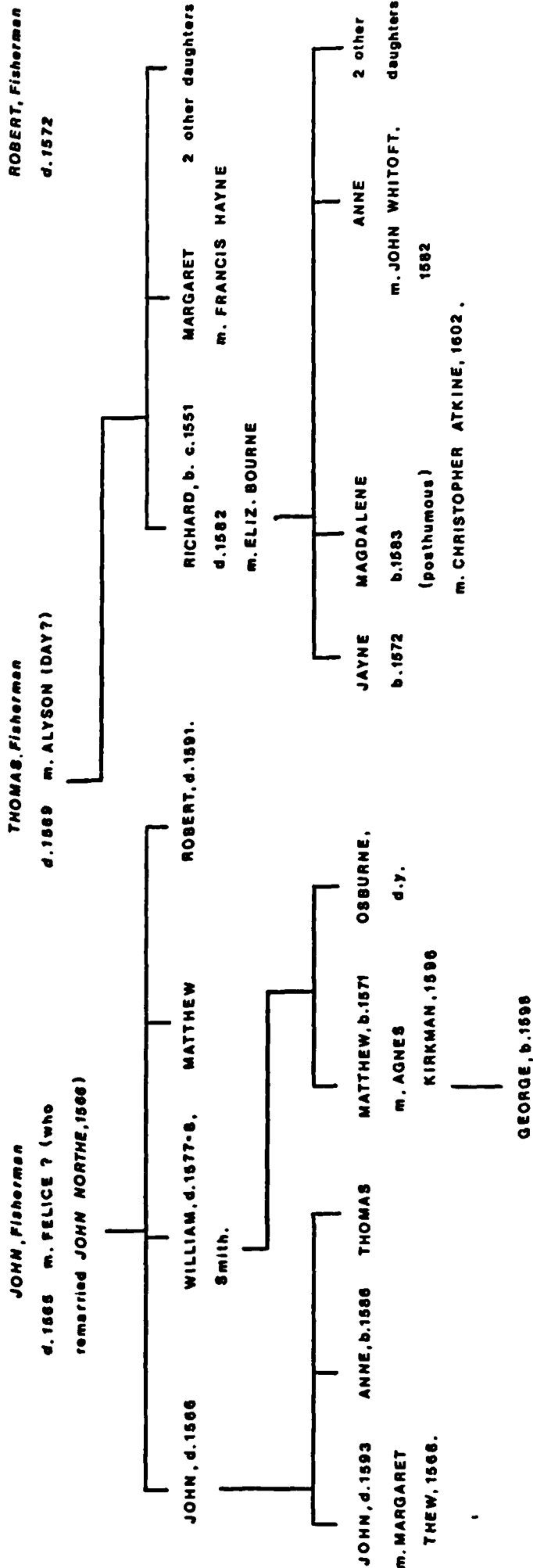
### The Rowsons

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the mariner-merchants had given way to a very different type of man, less financially secure, less well endowed with land, and so far less willing to risk limited capital in large-scale seafaring ventures. Families like the Rowsons came from a different socio-economic milieu and were involved at the fringes of local fishing, using it to supplement their agricultural activities without a compelling stake in it as a way of life. Consequently, they were inclined to drift away from it again in the course of just one or two generations.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Rowson clan consisted of 3 nuclear families, headed by the brothers John, Thomas and Robert Rowson, all of whom were fishermen. Robert is the least visible from the records, although he is one of the few local fishermen who ever styled himself as such (when witnessing a will in 1554). He died in 1572. So far as we know, he had no children, and the Rowsons of the late

17. Borthwick Institute, P.C.Y. wills, Reg. 6., fo. 107r; Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, I(I), 1509-1513, P.204 (pardon 438).

? m ELIZABETH ?



ROWSON.

sixteenth and seventeenth century were all descended from John and Thomas. Both men were intermittent offenders in the manor court for illegal fishing in the sewers and the port, the first such occasion being in 1534. They also frequently appeared as<sup>18</sup> jurors.

We know from the court transfers that both Thomas and John had average-sized holdings at the time of their deaths, which they farmed in tandem with their fishing activities. John's sons split their father's 13 acres between them in 1565 and Thomas left a messuage and 12 acres to his only male heir, Richard, in 1569.<sup>19</sup> Matthew Rowson, one of John's sons, later added to his own holdings by the purchase of 2 acres of pasture<sup>20</sup> and 2 more of meadow from William Godryke of Skidbrooke.

It is evident that Richard Rowson, perhaps because he was the only son, was not expected to specialize in fishing. His father made a concerted attempt, by his will, to force his widow to waive her rights to the customary one third of his land, so that Richard could inherit a viable farm immediately. She was to make do with "all the good[es] she brought to me" and one close of pasture: "and yf she be not contented w[i]th theis land[es] and bequest[es] aforesaid my mynd is she shall take no benefite of this my said will ne to haue anie thinge of my good[es] but that, that the lawe will geve her And yf my said wief will not be contented but will take the third[es] of my land[es] then I will and my mynd is that my debt[es] shalbe paid of my land[es]". These, according to his inventory,

18. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (24/9/1534, 2/10/1536, 28/10/1545).

19. Ibid., L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/26/2 (1565), 1 ANC 3/13/34/2 (11/4/1569).

20. Ibid., L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/32 (1/4/1567).

totalled £9 10s. out of a total moveable estate of £25. As usual with the probate records of these later Saltfleet fishermen, there is no record of vessel shares and only a small amount seems to have been invested in seafaring goods: in this case, 2s. worth of nets. There is no evidence that Richard continued to practise his father's dual occupation, although one of his daughters later married into the Whitofte family.<sup>21</sup>

Nothing leads us to suppose that any of John's four sons were ever fishermen; indeed the occupation of William (who died in 1578) is known from his inventory to have been a blacksmith. In only two generations the Rowsons (like others of their contemporaries) had moved from being half dependent on the sea to a fully land-orientated family economy. Yet links with seafarers still continued: besides the Whitofte marriage already mentioned, Richard Rowson's sister Margaret married Francis Hayne in 1589 and John Rowson's widow waited only a few months before re-marrying another yeoman-fisherman, John Northe.<sup>22</sup>

### The Fleshburnes

The economic pressures which resulted in Miles Fleshburne becoming a fisherman were rather different. He was the only son of a small-scale husbandman, John Fleshburne of the Mealehouses, who died in 1597. John's agricultural interests were quite modest. Some arable lands in the North End (where he grew wheat), some cattle, a couple of

21. Ibid., LCC will 1568/22 (Thomas Rowson), Inv 47/294.

22. Ibid., Skidbrooke parish registers, 1/1 (marriages, 1566, 1569, 1582); ibid., LCC Inv 61/278 (William Rowson, 1578); Inv 54/20 (John Northe, 1573).

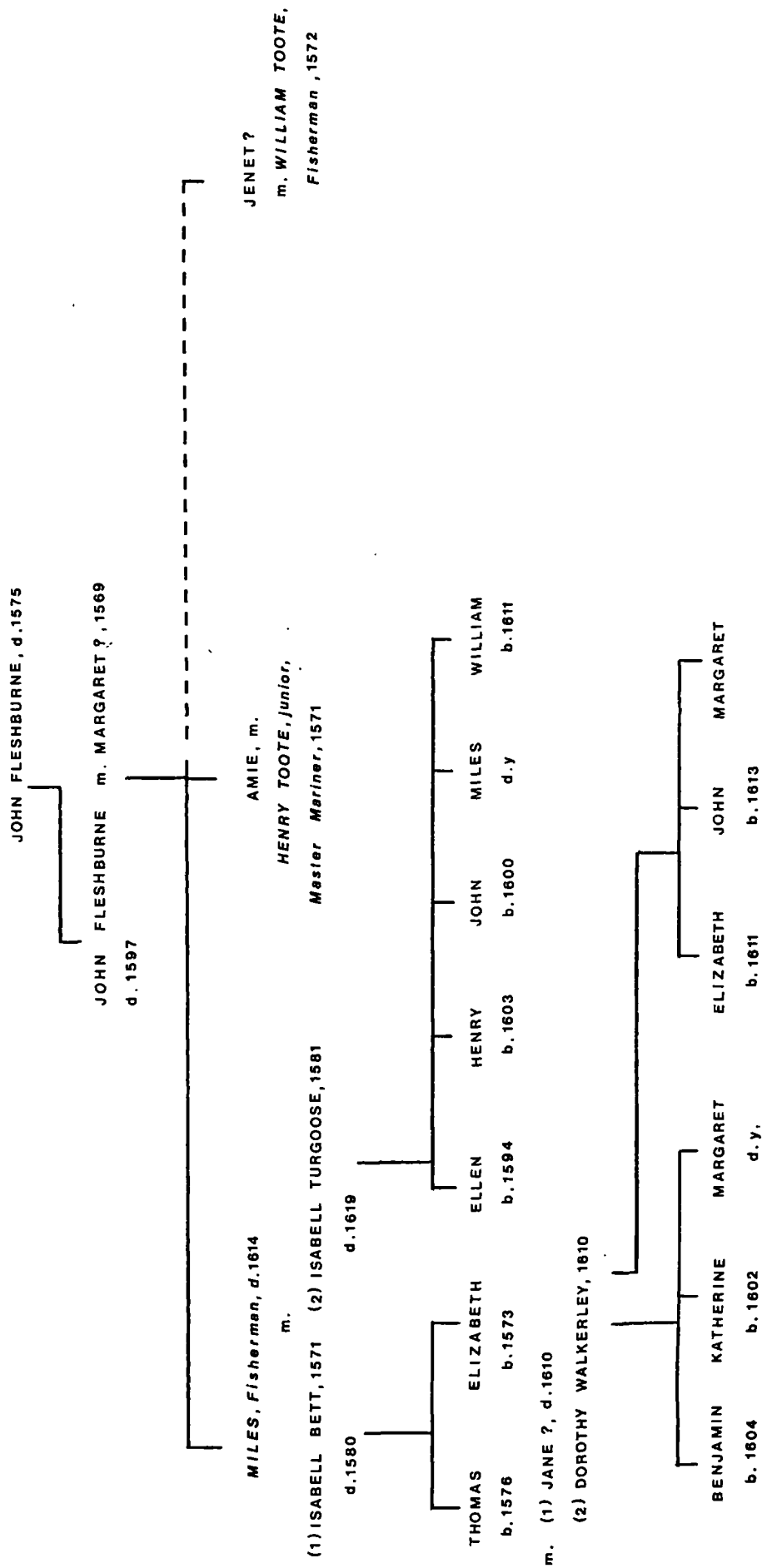
sheep and yard birds were all he had to his name, when his inventory was drawn up. At his own death, Miles had only one cow and his household effects. This was a family which possessed little and it is perhaps not surprising that an only son in these circumstances could drift into sea-fishing, because there was nothing to inherit when his father died.<sup>23</sup>

The Mealehouses was an extremely small hamlet, and it seems probable that Miles Fleshburne began his fishing as a result of being a neighbour of the Tootes, the most perennial of all the local maritime families. Amie Fleshburne, Mile's sister, married Henry Toote, a master mariner, in 1571, and Jenet Fleshburne (probably another sister) a widower from the same cousinhood the next year. Miles himself was married twice, and on the second occasion became affined to a family which included fishermen in North Somercotes.<sup>24</sup>

Miles's family was very large: two children by his first wife survived into adulthood, and four from his second. They presumably had to be kept mainly out of the proceeds of the fishing, since his probate inventory mentions no other livestock apart from his cow, and only "ij wheeles" indicate any additional bye-employments. Doubtless he could engage in the same supplementary activities as his fellow marshmen - cutting gorse, catching rabbits and so on - but it is still worth remarking that fishing could furnish a considerable proportion of a man's basic income and keep him and his family

23. Ibid., LCC will 1597/258 (John Fleshburne), Inv 88/301; LCC Inv 114/219 (Miles Fleshburne, 1614).

24. Ibid., Skibrooke parish registers 1/1 (marriages, 1571, 1572, 1581); ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/43 (24/9/1579, Turgoose purchase by charter), cf. Appendix III (under "North Somercotes").



FLESHBURNE.

(albeit in straitened circumstances) for at least part of the year. Since joint ventures with the Tootes were probably the main focus of his work, he may have doubled as a hand aboard the coasters mastered by his brother-in-law, in the summer months.

As with the three Rowson brothers, however, this sort of personal involvement, based on affinity and a disposition for the work, was insufficient to create any strong sense of occupational identification among the next generation. No Fleshburnes are listed as employee fishermen in the 1628 muster (and we can discount the possibility of vessel ownership in this case). Like the Rowsons, the Fleshburnes were one-generation seafarers who entered the occupation (and its kinship network) from the outside.

#### The Tootes

Most of the "kernel families" who preserved the maritime traditions of the parish through several generations, are frustratingly difficult to reconstruct genealogically. We can be certain of the recurrent nature of the ties between Manfelds, Thompsons and Hardys and the sea, but their precise relationships to each other elude us. Fortunately, the family history of the Tootes is much clearer.

Like the other families we have looked at, the Tootes originated as farmers. Roger Toote, who was probably born about 1440, would have been a contemporary of John Taylor and the Goodknappe brothers, but neither he nor his children seem to have had any inclinations towards maritime trade or fishing. When he died in 1507, he had accumulated a 27 acre holding, considerably above the average, even at the beginning of the

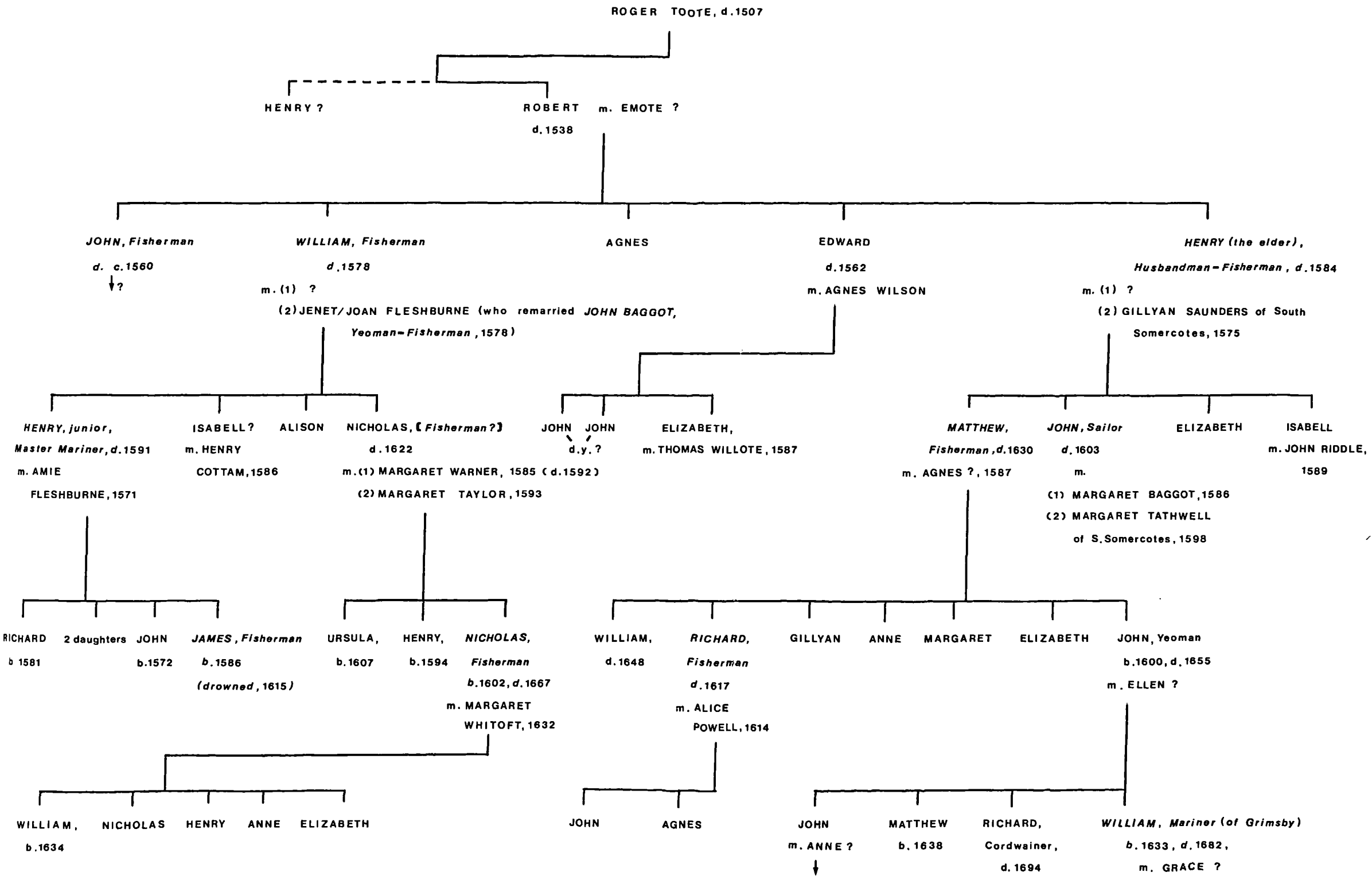
sixteenth century. We know only what little the court rolls can tell us about him: that he was a regular jurymen at Views and Courts of Pleas between 1480 and his death, that he was never indicted for any offences in the years for which records survive and never even failed to present his suit unless properly essoined (usually by John Ward) - in fact, a model<sup>25</sup> tenant.

The records are annoyingly inconsistent about what happened to his large farm at his death. The original entry in 1507 declares the heirs to be Robert Toote, his son, and Henry Toote "nepos suis" - a term normally meaning "nephew" or "younger relation" in medieval usage. In 1522, however, we are told that Henry Toote was the son and half-heir of Roger, which seems altogether the more likely in the absence of any recorded<sup>26</sup> will.

It was Robert, however, whose descendants eventually took to seafaring. We can assume that he received about 13 acres from his father, and he shared in the purchase of another 3 "in a place called Fulsyke" only 2 years later. Because the court rolls at the time of his death are missing, we cannot be certain how much land he then held, but the move into fishing by most of his sons may have been due to the comparatively meagre portions each of them would have got when Robert's estate was settled in 1538. Under the terms of his will, all his lands were to be divided equally between his sons, while

25. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/10 (8/10/1479) - 1 ANC 3/13/17 (15/9/1507), passim.

26. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/18 (5/10/1507), 1 ANC 3/13/19 (29/4/1522). Wills bequeathing socage land were not impossible before 1540 - v. A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism, 1978, pp.83-84.



TOOTE. (simplified)

his moveables were shared among his wife and the unmarried children. His vehement insistance that this was according to local custom may indicate that he anticipated some acrimony over the arrangments, as did the testy comment that "yff eny of them do grudge thewith I will they haue nothyng but even as it shall please my sup[er]vis[ors]".<sup>27</sup>

Three of the four sons therefore diversified, becoming "yeoman-fishermen". Edward, the fourth, does not appear to have done so and remained simply a husbandman until his death<sup>28</sup> (at quite an early age) in 1562. John Toote, the second brother, was one of those presented in 1545 for erecting eel-garths and fishing illegally in the port, along with brother William. He was a legatee in the will of William Godryke in 1543, one of the appraisors of the accompanying inventory, and one of the able-bodied men mustered in the parish in 1542, but he apparently left no descendants and was dead by the time the<sup>29</sup> parish registers began in the 1560s.

It was in the families of William (died 1578) and the elder Henry (died 1584) that the maritime tradition took hold. Henry, who still called himself a husbandman in spite of the fishing-tackle he owned, took partibility to its ultimate in his will and partitioned his house between his family in a way that (at first sight) implies the creation of the sort of

27. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (10/4/1510); ibid., LCC will 1538-40/121.

28. Ibid., LCC will 1562/10 (Edward Toote). Edward was under age in 1538, and left two under-aged sons at the time of his own death.

29. Ibid., 1 ANC 3/13/19 (28/10/1545); ibid., LCC will 1541-3/157 (William Godryke), Inv 12/13; P.R.O. SP 1/173/87, (1542 muster). The last mention of him is as an appraisor of Thomas Potoke's inventory, 1559 (Inv 34/287).

co-resident sibling household, thought by historians of the family to be utterly alien to the English tradition.<sup>30</sup> His widow, Gillyan, got one end of the house during her lifetime; but his two sons split the ownership, Matthew getting the west end of the house, a little buttry and 3 acres, bounded by "the hie waye one the southesid of the howse", and John "all the rest of my houses towards the east, and one acre one the west sid of the same buttinge against gould land[es] w[i]th the garden stede, and all the rest of the ground one the northsid of the howse, and ij acres of arrable land lynige at

<sup>31</sup>dearebowght". Unfortunately, Henry Toote's household was complicated and (like many of his family) he was married at least twice: Gillyan cannot have been the mother of either Matthew or John, given their marriage dates. Neither John's administration and inventory nor Matthew's will and inventory contain any suggestion of shared residence, and it may be that the arrangement was only intended to make provision for Gillyan's widowhood, after which the house was expected to be sold.<sup>32</sup>

Henry also left "vnto my said sonnes all my sea geares equally to be divided betwixt them". Matthew, and his own son Richard, were both sea-fishermen, whilst John is described at the time of his death as a sailor, presumably indicating that he spent the summer months working aboard the coasting vessels. Both men were closely connected with their

30. Macfarlane, Origins of English Individualism, pp.136-168; P. Laslett and R. Wall, eds., Household and Family in Past Time, (Cambridge paperback ed., 1974), pp.1-73.

31. L.A.O. LCC will 1563/11/23.

32. Ibid., ADM. LCC 1603/145 (John Toote); LCC will 1630/518 (Matthew Toote), Inv 136/224.

cousins, the two sons of William Toote. William himself was also married twice and, once again, we do not know the name of the first wife. However, shortly before his death he remarried Jenet or Joan Fleshburne, perhaps the sister of Miles. On William's death, she promptly wedded another widower fisherman much older than herself, John Baggot (whose daughter, Margaret, had married John Toote, the sailor).<sup>33</sup>

William's sons, Henry and Nicholas, are constantly found in association with their cousins, Matthew and John. Henry (usually distinguished by the epithet "Henry Toote, junior") supervised the elder Henry's will and Nicholas and Matthew took John's inventory in 1603. It seems reasonable to suppose that John Toote and the younger Henry Toote worked on the same coasting vessels together during the summer and that all of them operated their fishing voyages as a family concern between themselves, their Fleshburne and Baggot affines and (in later years) their children. The elder Nicholas is nowhere referred to as a fisherman, but under the circumstances his participation seems likely.

By 1580, Henry Toote junior had become a master mariner, in charge of one of the coasting ships which sailed on the Newcastle voyage every summer season. Between 1580 and 1584 he mastered the "Palmtree" of Saltfleethaven, and from 1586 to 1588 the "Daniel". According to the port books, the "Palmtree" was 50 or 60 tons burden and the "Daniel" 40 tons, each carrying between 20 and 30 chaldrons of coal per voyage. These cargoes are always entered, as with most coasting transactions, as the master's own property, so we must suppose

33. *Ibid.*, Skidbrooke parish register, 1/1 (marriages, 1572, 1584). When John Baggot died, she turned her attentions to a third husband, George Obie or Abie (1586).

that he was also responsible for negotiating the purchase and  
34  
finding the buyer.

Whether he had any personal investment in these ships is a much more difficult question to answer. We have seen that boat-shares of any description are rarely mentioned in Saltfleet probate documents after the middle of the sixteenth century, although the commonly used expression "sea gears" may have been taken to include such things, and shares could in any case be sold or given away before death. It is interesting to note that the younger Nicholas Tooté is not found on the 1628 list of fishermen "going to sea without boats", which may imply  
35  
that he possessed a small craft at that time. Yet outright control of a 40 or 50 ton coaster is another matter, and seems likely to have been beyond the means of Henry Tooté or his contemporaries. They simply provided manpower and sailing skills, while landowners produced the necessary capital. We have already seen that the rich yeoman Brian Mudd owned "one Boat w[i]th c[er]taine ropes and coles at Saltflethauen" at the time of his death; but most of the money probably came from an even more elevated social level, the gentry and aristocracy. Many titled families are known to have dabbled in shipping in this period, the Berties and Willoughbys among them. The Earl of Lindsey was sole owner of the "Expedition" of Saltfleethaven (40 tons) in 1627, and the Willoughbys had such ramified coal and shipping concerns that in 1601 the young heir was advised to sell off all the ships, as "a charge intollerable, fitter for one that hath a grownded estate than for those that are to

34. Appendix II, q.v. A Newcastle chaldron in this period was about 40 cwt - J.U. Nef, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, 1932, Vol. II, pp.368-369.

35. Appendix III, q.v.

begin your world", and "only profitable to Marchants that laye  
36  
their owne hande to the Plowghe".

Even when the state of Saltfleet haven had driven away the coasting trade and turned the village into "a small Maritime-town of little account; but of chief note for being a place frequented by the Gentry in the Sommer season, for the eating of fish", the Tootes remained attached to the fishing.  
37  
Henry Toote's son James followed his father to sea, his career being cut short when he died "suffocatus in mare" at the age of 29. Nicholas's son, Nicholas, was still making his living as a fisherman in Saltfleet (presumably supplying the gentlemen visiting the New Inn) when he died in 1667. Matthew Toote's older son, Richard, also died unusually young in 1617, and his younger son, John, was a yeoman farmer with no apparent interest in the maritime way of life. By the middle of the seventeenth century, when John's son, William, wanted to follow the family tradition and become a mariner, it was no longer realistic to remain in the village, with its decaying and now largely deserted haven. Instead, he moved away to Grimsby, where a man could still hope to find regular employment as a  
38  
seaman.

36. L.A.O., LCC Inv 106/259 (Brian Mudd, 1607); ibid., 2 ANC 14/17 (letter John Guevara to Robert, Lord Willoughby); I.S. Beckwith, 'The River Trade of Gainsborough 1500-1850', Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 2, 1967, pp.3-5; G.V. Scammell, 'Shipowning in England 1450-1550', T.H.R.S., 5th series, 12, 1962, p.119; Cal. S.P.D., 1628-1629, p.298 (letters of marque, 4 June, 1627), cf. Acts of the Privy Council of England, September 1627 - June 1628, pp.327-328.

37. R. Blome, Britannia, 1673, p.143.

38. L.A.O., Skidbrooke parish registers, 1/1 (1563-1654), 1/2 (1654-1720); ibid., LCC will 1667/11/801 (Nicholas Toote); ADM. LCC 1617/152 (Richard Toote); LCC will 1691/11/118 (William Toote of Great Grimsby); P.R.O., P.C.C. wills 1655, fo. 466, Prob 11/251/324 (John Toote, yeoman).

The kinship links of fishermen and mariners, as revealed in this chapter, display the same essential features of integration within the wider society of the village which we have already noted in other spheres of their lives. Just as maritime occupations slotted easily into the economy of a marshland parish, without ever threatening to dominate it, so those who practised them mixed and intermarried freely with their agricultural neighbours. If all fishermen were in some degree concerned with agriculture, many husbandmen or labourers (under pressure from family poverty or the effects of partible inheritance) could turn to fishing as a means of additional support. They did not need to qualify for this through membership of some closed occupational kinship network. The traditions, skills and subculture of fishing and sailing were rooted in a handful of families, but even among these there was no total or irrevocable divorce from the land or agriculture and no sense, in their marriage alliances, of a desire to retreat into a counter-cultural enclave. This system carried with it a flexibility of manpower and involvement which would have been impossible in a community entirely dependent on the sea, and it meant that all manner of changes in the nature, size and relative importance of maritime affairs in the locality could be accommodated, without uprooting the economic or social structures of the parish as a whole.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CONCLUSIONS**

## CONCLUSIONS

The main concern of this thesis has been to study the coastal villages of Lincolnshire between 1400 and 1600, and to consider what effect their proximity to the sea had on their socio-economic structure. Although the maritime way of life encouraged a distinctive set of values and subcultures, it has been urged that this was primarily a product of the occupation itself and not the result of the type of villages which the seafarers inhabited. We observe the existence of a distinctive maritime "mentalité" most clearly when some threat (real or imagined) intruded from the outside, and in such circumstances it embraced a far wider community than simply the mariners themselves.

Lincolnshire's rural fishermen and mariners lived in agricultural villages, in the fens and marshlands, which differed economically from their inland counterparts, mainly in their exploitation of a diverse range of resources, allowing great flexibility of employment. They participated in the same shared experiences of rural life as their fellow villagers, which gave a basic cohesion to local senses of community. Utilising the proximity of the sea, for fishing or trade, was only one of a number of options available to them, and in many ways it was the least reliable, because the changing fortunes of regional trade and the rapid topographical changes which could take place in the configuration of navigable creeks and havens. We can contrast the extensive fourteenth century maritime economy of Saltfleet with its declining importance two centuries later. Our knowledge of the township's social structure in the earlier period is sketchy, but it can have

borne little resemblance to that which we observe in the middle of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the ability of such a township to accommodate different levels of economic importance for fishermen and sailors is clear evidence that seafaring never entirely swamped the agricultural alternatives.

If this sort of seaboard settlement was not just confined to Lincolnshire, we need to ask one extremely important historical question in conclusion: what factors determined the respective developments of "fishing villages" and "multi-occupational coastal villages" on different coastlines? In a recent discussion of this point, the oral historian Paul Thompson - one of the few to have noted it - advances two explanations, which both require careful consideration: that, until recent times, it was impossible for most seaside villages to find large enough markets to allow complete specialization; and that truly independent fishing villages were mainly a product of industrial society.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to accept that marketing problems form a significant part of the explanation. We know that the areas representative of genuinely specialist "fishing villages" from an early period were actually more distant from the major population centres than the multi-occupational regions. Fresh fish could get from the Cinque Ports to London's markets inside one day, and by the sixteenth century Coventry (as far inland as any English city) was supplied with fresh sea-fish regularly.<sup>2</sup> In Lincolnshire (and at most major ports) the

1. P. Thompson, Living the Fishing, 1983, pp.13-15.

2. A.J.F. Dulley, 'The Early History of the Rye Fishing Industry', Sussex Archaeological Collections, CVII, 1969, p.54; W.G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, 1976, p.117.

majority of the fish was either sold locally or preserved by salting or drying techniques. Gluts and shortages are a reality of fishing, especially with pelagic fish. Elizabethan and Jacobean pamphleteers never tired of pointing out that the Dutch could organize their fishing as a precise, capitalistic industry, and that there was no reason why the English could not do likewise. They also knew that large-scale investment was the key to Dutch success, and that English fishermen lacked the means and inclination to compete, without government intervention.

This leads us to Thompson's second point, that industrialization and its social and economic consequences were chiefly responsible for creating the specialized fishing village. As a generalization, it holds good only on certain sections of the English seaboard. In the period before the eighteenth century, such settlements were not to be found in Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire or Holderness (apart from a minority of exceptional cases), whereas it is possible to point to some later examples: Cleethorpes, for instance, in Lincolnshire.<sup>3</sup> However, we have noted in this thesis numerous examples of such fishing villages dating from the late medieval period or the sixteenth century: Looe, Megavissey, Gorran Haven, Staithes, Robin Hood's Bay, and so on. A geographical distinction between the multi-occupational coastal villages of lowland, eastern England and the tightly-knit fishing villages of the west and north, is obvious.

The historical development of these areas is so different that a wide variety of explanations might be put

3. F. Baker, The Story of Cleethorpes, 1953, passim.

forward to account for their different coastal settlement types. Devon, Cornwall and the north of England were remote from the centres of trade, population and administrative control, and were settled and colonized in different ways. Yet remoteness alone cannot provide the entire explanation. Much of Kent (where multi-occupational villages predominated) was extremely inaccessible before the nineteenth century, particularly its marshlands. Lincolnshire was not noted for its urbanity: Henry VIII's famous jibe that its people were "one of the most brute and beastly of the whole nation" betrays<sup>4</sup> an undercurrent of opinion to that effect in the south.

However much differences of historical and cultural background may have influenced this division, a topographical explanation can also be advanced for what is, after all, a basically topographical observation. The quality of land behind the coastal village must have had profound influences on its economy, and hence on the sort of society which grew up there. In areas like Lincolnshire, this land was usually good, and sometimes exceptionally fertile. The terrain invited drainage and use for grazing and (where appropriate) salt manufacture, settlement spread swiftly and comparatively early, and the local economy developed a marked agricultural element, long before seafaring had an opportunity to attract ships and men to the area. Farmers tamed the waste between the existing villages and the sea, and only then did the fishermen move in. On cliff coastlines, the land was often inhospitable, unrewarding to cultivate, and physically difficult to reach. As a result, settlement tended to be late and the settlers were

4. cf. K. Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 1983, pp.41-48.

seeking openings other than agriculture, from which to make a living. Once established, such a village offered (by definition) little else except seafaring, resulting in "fishing village" social structures.

Land was fundamental to the fabric of pre-industrial rural society, as well as being the foundation of its economy; a truism that stands repeating here. The secular and religious calendars revolved around it, systems of marriage alliance and inheritance depended on it, the local machinery of justice (the manor court) placed it at the centre of its concerns. To belong to the culture of rural society was to relate, in some way, to the land. Lincolnshire seafarers often worked on it, normally kept livestock on it, and regarded it as the safest form of investment. Maritime investment, as we have noted, was the prerogative of those who had risk capital - a surplus, that is, over and above what they regarded as essential for their security.

For a man to cut himself off, by placing all his energies and all his capital in fishing or maritime trade, was therefore unthinkable in a multi-occupational coastal village, because it would have implied rejection of the shared common culture (to which his own particular experience of maritime subculture was simply an addition). He lived, and also married, within that wider culture and neither his wife nor his children necessarily participated in his subculture.

Isolation from this shared rural experience could occur in three ways. In urban society, the land no longer dominated the economic system as it did in the countryside, so it is not surprising that historians have found "fishermens'

quarters" in many late medieval and early modern cities, just<sup>5</sup> as there were other occupational and ethnic enclaves. In the society which existed after the industrial revolution, where the link with the land had often been broken in the process, it is also possible that proletarian elements pushed to the margins might develop, as Thompson suggests, into isolated fishing communities. In the late medieval "fishing villages", finally, the land had never been a central feature of the local economy, its place being taken by the sea and fishing. In consequence, these also dominated the social structure, the calendar, and the religious provisions. We should, however, realize that none of these situations was universal or inevitable, and that the experience of a great many coastal villages (in the east and south-east especially) was much more akin to that described in this thesis than to the villages on which so much attention has hitherto been lavished.

\* \* \* \* \*

5. P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1978, pp.36-42; M. Prior, Fisher Row, 1982, passim; M. Reed, 'Economic Structure and Change in Seventeenth Century Ipswich', in P. Clark, ed., Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England, 1981, pp.103-105. There was also a "Fish Row" in Boston in Henry VIII's time - P. Thompson, The History and Antiquities of Boston, 1856, p.63.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

## APPENDIX I

### SOME FOURTEENTH CENTURY LINCOLNSHIRE VESSELS

#### NOTES:

- (1) The following lists have been compiled from a variety of sources to give the fullest possible coverage of the vessels belonging to the Lincolnshire creeks and towns in the periods shown. The source of each item is represented alongside it in coded form, the number referring to the list of documents at the end of each section. Where appropriate, variations in the masters, tonnages, crew compositions and dates are shown on the tables, together with the period covered and the place of arrest (where known). If owners are recorded separately (as occasionally in C42/2/30) this is also noted.

In addition to the rolls of 1334 (P.R.O. C47/2/23(15)), 1337-1339 (collated from P.R.O. E101/21/12 and C47/2/30) and 1369 (P.R.O. E101/29/31, E101/29/36, E122/7/12 and E101/36/14), a limited amount of information has been included for the intervening period (section B), and for 1373-1378 (section D). Neither of these, however, makes any claim to be comprehensive, although providing some comparison with sections A and C (especially with regard to the names of masters).

- (11) Some difficulties inevitably surround the unequivocal identification and cross-matching of ships recorded in different accounts, especially those drawn up at intervals of several years. The tables testify to the very limited variety of names usually given to medieval ships, and it was consequently common for two or three with the same name to belong to one port: of the vessels at Heachem, in Norfolk, for example, in 1337-1338, there were three called "la Garlond" and two called "la Godyer" (P.R.O. C47/2/25 (19)). It also seems likely that the common names "Saintmaryship" and "Saintmaryboat" were mutually interchangeable, whatever the sensibilities of modern mariners over such terminology. The presence of a master's name or a measurement of tonnage (which is usually remarkably reliable) can normally settle these problems, but some judgement has also been applied on occasions, on the (conservative) assumption that two vessels are not one and the same, unless other evidence clearly suggests this. Errors resulting from this process are far more likely in sections B and D, where the evidence is spread across a greater number of years. It is for this reason that the data in A and C have been used for the statistical analysis in Chapter 4.

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TABLES:

M = mariners

C = constables

B = boys

Ow = owner

ff = the period following

? = no information recorded

| VESSEL                     | TONS | CREW    | MASTER                           | REFERENCE (CODE) |
|----------------------------|------|---------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| <u>BARTON-ON-HUMBER</u>    |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Mariote                    | ?    | ?       | William Wright (Wreite)          | 1                |
| Peter                      | ?    | ?       | William Wasselyn                 | 1                |
| ?                          | ?    | ?       | William Holl (Hole)              | 1                |
| Seintmariebote             | ?    | ?       | William Cray                     | 1                |
| Nicholas                   | ?    | ?       | Thomas Morre                     | 1                |
| Nicholas                   | ?    | ?       | John Sker                        |                  |
|                            |      |         | (John De Potterflet, Ow.)        | 1                |
| Blithe                     | ?    | ?       | John Reynchard                   |                  |
|                            |      |         | (Robt. Perman, Ow.)              | 1                |
| Trinite                    | ?    | ?       | John De Potterflet               | 1                |
| Lyghtfot                   | ?    | ?       | Thomas De Thorn                  | 1                |
| Maudelyn                   | ?    | ?       | Robert Stoyt                     | 1                |
| Maudelyn                   | ?    | ?       | Thos. De Thorn                   | 1                |
|                            |      |         | (Stephen De Estrikes, Ow.)       |                  |
| Mariote                    | ?    | ?       | William (ms. damaged)            | 1                |
| <u>BOSTON</u>              |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Blithe                     | ?    | ?       | Thomas Chanaler                  | 1                |
| Blithe                     | ?    | ?       | Thomas Frost                     | 1                |
| Botolph                    | 95   | 34M, 2B | Robert Le Carter                 | 2                |
| Welyfare                   | 40   | 18M, 1B | William Cleald                   | 2                |
| Welyfare                   | 80   | 30M, 2B | Hugh Ward/Walter Skinner         | 2                |
| Godale                     | ?    | ?       | William Galey                    | 1                |
| Nicholas                   | ?    | ?       | John Fleye                       | 1                |
| Blithe                     | 40   | 14M, 1B | Robert Pysonne/Simon Farman      | 2                |
| Margarete                  | 100  | 31M, 2B | John Permay (Perman)             | 2                |
| Godyer                     | ?    | ?       | Robert Perman                    | 1                |
| Seintmarieship             | ?    | ?       | Henry Reyn                       | 1                |
| James                      | 40   | 12M, 2B | William Godfrei                  | 2                |
| <u>BURTON-ON-STATHER</u>   |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Jonete                     | ?    | ?       | Roger Fitz Eon                   | 1                |
| <u>GRAINTHORPE (SWINE)</u> |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Blithe                     | 40   | 13M, 1B | Ralph Ingessone/William De Rygby | 1;2              |
| Godale                     | 40   | 16M, 2B | Walter Perman/William Galey      | 2                |
| Eleyne                     | ?    | ?       | Thomas Mauncelot                 | 1                |
| Margarete                  | 50   | 13M, 1B | Thomas Croner (Cronay)           | 1;2              |
| George                     | ?    | ?       | Robert De Pantrie                | 1                |
| Preste                     | ?    | ?       | John Christianesonne             | 1                |
| <u>GRIMSBY</u>             |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Malachy                    | ?    | ?       | John Jugesson                    | 1                |
| Blithe                     | 20   | 9M, 1B  | John De Tyktone                  | 2                |
| <u>KIRBY FERRY (HAXEY)</u> |      |         |                                  |                  |
| Clement                    | ?    | ?       | Robert Wend                      | 1                |

| VESSEL                              | TONS | CREW    | MASTER                       | REFERENCE (CODE) |
|-------------------------------------|------|---------|------------------------------|------------------|
| <u>MARSH CHAPEL (FULSTOWMARSH)</u>  |      |         |                              |                  |
| "A ship"                            | ?    | ?       | John Coronay                 | 1                |
| "A ship"                            | ?    | ?       | Thomas Heynesson             | 1                |
| "A ship"                            | ?    | ?       | Thomas Heynesson             | 1                |
| <u>NORTHCOOTES</u>                  |      |         |                              |                  |
| Maudelyne                           | ?    | ?       | Robert Bakstere              | 1                |
| <u>SALTFLEET</u>                    |      |         |                              |                  |
| Godyer                              | 20   | 7M, 1B  | William De Bladworthe        | 2                |
| Welyfare                            | ?    | ?       | (William De Southgrith, Ow.) | 1                |
| Trinite                             | ?    | ?       | Thomas Gyrby                 | 1                |
| Laurence                            | ?    | ?       | (Robert Tailor, Ow.)         | 1                |
| Blithe                              | ?    | ?       | Ralph De Flete               | 1                |
| (Christofer ?)                      | ?    | ?       | John Gunned                  | 1                |
| Rose                                | ?    | ?       | (John De Kirke, Ow.)         | 1                |
| Blithe                              | ?    | ?       | Andrew De Conisholm          | 1                |
| <u>SKOTTERMUTH (HALTON SKITTER)</u> |      |         |                              |                  |
| Sofare                              | 40   | 15M, 1B | Richard Swift                | 2                |
| <u>SURFLEET</u>                     |      |         |                              |                  |
| Godyer                              | ?    | ?       | Robert Calmot                | 1                |
| <u>WAINFLEET</u>                    |      |         |                              |                  |
| Nicholas                            | ?    | ?       | Walter De Seymar             | 3                |
| Preste                              | 60   | ?       | Thomas De Brier              | 3                |
| Preste                              | 100  | 37M, 2B | John Mawesonne               | 1;2              |
| Peter                               | 60   | ?       | John Le River                | 3                |
| James                               | ?    | ?       | Hugh Ward                    | 1                |
| Godyere                             | 100  | ?       | Henry, Son of Adam           | 3                |
| Blithe                              | 80   | ?       | Henry, Son of Adam/William   |                  |
|                                     |      |         | Freshnay                     | 3                |
| Peter                               | 80   | ?       | Henry, Son of Adam/William   |                  |
|                                     |      |         | Freshnay                     | 3                |
| <u>WRANGLE</u>                      |      |         |                              |                  |
| Godyere                             | ?    | ?       | Thomas Geffreisson           | 1                |
| ?                                   | ?    | ?       | (William Johnson, C.)        | 1                |
| ?                                   | ?    | ?       | (John Rogerson, C.)          | 1                |

KEY TO REFERENCE CODES

1. P.R.O. C47/2/30 (Roll of deserters, 1337-1339)
2. P.R.O. E101/21/12 (Account of William de Kyngston of payments to mariners, 1338)
3. P.R.O. C47/2/23 (15) (List of vessels and ships in port and at sea north of the Thames, 1334 - imperfect)

B: SOME LINCOLNSHIRE VESSELS RECORDED 1340 - 1368

| DATE                       | VESSEL      | TONS              | CREW        | MASTER                     | REFERENCE (CODE) |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| <u>BARTON-ON-HUMBER</u>    |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1351-2                     | Blithe      | ?                 | ?           | John De Grymmesby          | 7                |
| <u>BOSTON</u>              |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1342                       | Blithe      | ?                 | ?           | Robert Chanaler            | 2                |
| 1345                       | Blithe      | ?                 | 1C, 24M, 2B | John Ponton                | 5                |
| 1342                       | Osman       | ?                 | ?           | John De Grunham            | 2                |
| 1363                       | Redecog     | 170               | 1C, 25M, 2B | William Caweson            | 6                |
| 1345                       | Welyfare    | ?                 | 1C, 17M, 2B | Adam Alman                 | 5                |
| 1345                       | Katerine    | ?                 | 18M, 3B     | Walter Westfare            | 5                |
| 1345                       | Godyer      | ?                 | 11M, 1B     | Simon Farman               | 5                |
| <u>GRAINTHORPE (SWINE)</u> |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1342-3                     | Codale      | ?                 | ?           | William Galey              | 1;2              |
| 1343                       | Blithe      | ?                 | ?           | John Perman (The younger)  | 1                |
| 1342-3                     | George      | ?                 | ?           | Walter Perman              | 1;2              |
| 1342                       | Godyer      | ?                 | ?           | Thomas Haynesson           | 2                |
| 1343                       | Mangarete   | ?                 | ?           | John Perman                | 1                |
| <u>GRIMSBY</u>             |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1342                       | Blithe      | ?                 | ?           | John Jugesson              | 2                |
| 1342                       | Godyer      | ?                 | ?           | Robert Haynesson           | 2                |
| 1351                       | Faucon      | (A "king's ship") |             | ?                          | 3                |
| <u>HORNCASTLE</u>          |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1345                       | Fluve Johan | ?                 | 20M, 2B     | Walter Chyke               | 5                |
| <u>SALTFLEET</u>           |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1343                       | ?           | ?                 | ?           | John Smyth                 | 1                |
| <u>WAINFLEET</u>           |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1342                       | Trinite     | ?                 | ?           | Adam Atte Stone            | 2                |
| 1351-2                     | Mariole     | (A "king's ship") |             | Thomas Godfrey/Thomas Rann | 3;4              |
| <u>WALKERETH</u>           |             |                   |             |                            |                  |
| 1342                       | Nicholas    | ?                 | ?           | Roger De Walkereth         | 2                |

KEY TO REFERENCE CODES

1. Calendars of Close Rolls, 1343-1346, pp. 133-4, (list of deserting vessels, 1343).
2. P.R.O. C47/2/35 (Roll of vessels going to Brittany, 1342).
3. P.R.O. E101/26/14 (Account of the refitting and transportation to London of king's ships, 1351).

4. P.R.O. E101/24/14 (Detailed itinerary of "la Mariolle", and wages account, 1351-1352).
5. P.R.O. E101/25/9 (Roll of vessels going to Bordeaux, 1345).
6. P.R.O. E101/26/1 (Account of mariners' wages on trip to Gascony, 1363).
7. R. Brown, Notes on the Earlier History of Barton-on-Humber, Vol. II (1908), p.189.

C: LINCOLNSHIRE VESSELS 1369

| VESSEL                  | TONS | CREW       | MASTER                 | DATE AND PLACE OF<br>PAYMENT (OR ARREST) | REFERENCE<br>(CODE) |
|-------------------------|------|------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>BARTON-ON-HUMBER</u> |      |            |                        |                                          |                     |
| James                   | 24   | 6M<br>8M   | William<br>Fysshlake   | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369          | 1;3                 |
| Katherine               | 20   | 8M<br>6M   | William<br>Codlyng     | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369          | 1;3                 |
| Katherine               | 24   | 9M<br>7M   | Nicholas<br>Todde      | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369          | 1;3                 |
| Redecogg                | 20   | 6M         | John<br>Wranby         | Arrested at Boston,<br>May ff., 1369     | 2                   |
| Petre                   | 30   | 11M<br>9M  | John De<br>Wyberton    | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| Welfare                 | 24   | 9M<br>7M   | John De<br>Filyngham   | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| <u>BAUMBER</u>          |      |            |                        |                                          |                     |
| Marie                   | 50   | 11M<br>9M  | John De<br>Fissshelake | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369          | 1;3                 |
| <u>BOSTON</u>           |      |            |                        |                                          |                     |
| Katherine               | 60   | 14M<br>16M | Robert<br>Palmer       | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| James                   | 32   | 6M<br>8M   | William<br>Whitenene   | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| Marleshipp              | 50   | 14M<br>16M | Robert<br>Bond         | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| Margarete               | 100  | 23M<br>25M | John De<br>Spaldyng    | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |
| Clement                 | 20   | 6M<br>8M   | John<br>Hobulday       | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |

| VESSEL         | TONS     | CREW       | MASTER               | DATE AND PLACE OF<br>PAYMENT (OR ARREST) | REFERENCE<br>(CODE) |
|----------------|----------|------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Laurence       | 50       | 11M<br>13M | Hugh<br>Fox          | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369          | 1;3                 |
| Seintmarishipp | 93<br>94 | 22M<br>26M | John Atte<br>Castell | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369       | 1;3                 |

(SOUTH) FERRIBY

|       |    |          |                   |                                 |     |
|-------|----|----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Marie | 20 | 7M<br>5M | John<br>Perkynson | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369 | 1;3 |
|-------|----|----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|

FLEETHAVEN

|         |    |          |                   |                                 |     |
|---------|----|----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Godyere | 20 | 9M<br>6M | Hugh<br>Perkynson | (? Orwell)<br>(? May ff.,) 1369 | 1;3 |
|---------|----|----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|

GRAINTHORPE (SWINE)

|         |    |                    |                   |                                           |       |
|---------|----|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| Clement | 24 | 9M<br>7M<br>6M, 1B | Thomas<br>Campion | Sandwich et. al.<br>June (May?) ff., 1369 | 1;3;4 |
|---------|----|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|

|       |    |                    |                               |                                                    |       |
|-------|----|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Jonet | 42 | 9M<br>9M<br>8M, 1B | Richard<br>Miriell/<br>Maryel | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369<br>Aug-Sept., 1369 | 1;3;4 |
|-------|----|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------|

GRIMSBY

|           |    |          |              |                                 |     |
|-----------|----|----------|--------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Margarete | 25 | 5M<br>7M | John<br>Ward | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369 | 1;3 |
|-----------|----|----------|--------------|---------------------------------|-----|

|       |    |           |                   |                                 |     |
|-------|----|-----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| James | 40 | 8M<br>10M | Robert<br>Emanson | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369 | 1;3 |
|-------|----|-----------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|

|       |    |           |                      |                                    |     |
|-------|----|-----------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----|
| Jonet | 36 | 9M<br>11M | Robert Atte<br>Milne | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369 | 1;3 |
|-------|----|-----------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----|

|           |    |            |                   |                                 |     |
|-----------|----|------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Gabrielle | 70 | 16M<br>18M | Geoffrey<br>Pedde | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369 | 1;3 |
|-----------|----|------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|

SALTFLEET

|         |    |                     |                                   |                                              |       |
|---------|----|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------|
| Charite | 42 | 11M<br>9M<br>8M, 1B | William<br>Hobilday<br>(Hobelday) | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., May-July,<br>1369 | 1;3;4 |
|---------|----|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------|

| VESSEL              | TONS | CREW                          | MASTER                        | DATE AND PLACE OF<br>PAYMENT (OR ARREST)       | REFERENCE<br>(CODE) |
|---------------------|------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Godale<br>(Godhale) | 55   | 14M<br>11M<br>10M, 1B         | Roger De<br>Blaktoft          | Orwell et. al.<br>May-Sept., 1369              | 1;3;4               |
| Mariole             | 110  | 22M<br>1C, 23M, 2B            | Thomas<br>Stevenson           | Arrested at Grimsby,<br>June-Sept., 1369       | 1;3;4               |
| Blithe              | 40   | 10M<br>8M<br>8M, 1B           | Robert<br>Aylmer              | Orwell et. al.<br>May-June/July, 1369          | 1;3;4               |
| Carlond             | 80   | 15M, 2B<br>15M, 2B<br>15M, 2B | Richard De<br>Waltham         | (?); 3 payments<br>1369                        | 2                   |
| Peter               | 18   | 8M                            | Richard De<br>Misen           | Arrested at Grimsby,<br>May ff. 1369           | 2                   |
| Seintemarishipp     | 70   | 18M<br>16M<br>1C, 18M, 1B     | Richard<br>Bayons<br>(Baions) | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff. + Aug-Sept.,<br>1369 | 1;3;4               |
| <u>SKEGNESS</u>     |      |                               |                               |                                                |                     |
| Thomas              | 18   | ?                             | Richard De<br>Burgh           | Arrested at Skegness<br>(? month), 1369        | 2                   |
| <u>SURFLEET</u>     |      |                               |                               |                                                |                     |
| Magdalene           | 40   | 11M<br>9M                     | William<br>Hirry              | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369             | 1;3                 |
| <u>WALKERITH</u>    |      |                               |                               |                                                |                     |
| Marie               | 50   | 14M<br>12M                    | Roger De<br>Flete             | Orwell et. al.<br>May ff., 1369                | 1;3                 |
| <u>WRANGLE</u>      |      |                               |                               |                                                |                     |
| Seintmaribote       | 22   | 8M<br>6M                      | William De<br>Kelsey          | Sandwich et. al.<br>May ff., 1369              | 1;3                 |
| Margarete           | 40   | 10M<br>8M                     | Robert<br>Stirkard            | Sandwich et. al.<br>June ff., 1369             | 1;3                 |

KEY TO REFERENCE CODES

1. P.R.O. E101/29/31 (Receipts for the payment of mariners' wages, 1369).
2. P.R.O. E101/29/36 (List of vessels arrested at Hull and elsewhere, 1369).
3. P.R.O. E122/7/12 (Disbursements by customs officials at Boston, 1369).
4. P.R.O. E101/36/14 (Accounts of payments in connection with the fleet, 1369).

D: SOME LINCOLNSHIRE VESSELS RECORDED 1373-1378

| VESSEL                          | TONS     | CREW                       | MASTER                                                 | DATE AND/OR PLACE<br>OF PAYMENT                  | REFERENCE<br>(CODE) |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>BARTON-ON-HUMBER</u>         |          |                            |                                                        |                                                  |                     |
| Thomas                          | ?        | 10M<br>10M, 1B             | Thomas<br>Peper                                        | 1 Aug-26 Sept, 1377;<br>4-18 Jan, 1378 (London)  | 3;6;7<br>8          |
| Marie                           | ?        | 7M, 1B                     | Peter<br>Anneson                                       | August-Sept., 1377                               | 6                   |
| <u>SALTFLEET</u>                |          |                            |                                                        |                                                  |                     |
| Codyale                         | 60<br>50 | 7M, 1B<br>9M, 1B<br>8M, 1B | Thomas<br>Stevenson/<br>Robert Aylmer                  | May-July, 1373                                   | 1;2;3;6<br>10       |
| Charite                         | 50       | 7M, 1B<br>10M, 1B          | William Hobulday<br>Walter Codeley<br>Thomas Stevenson | Sept 1374-April 1375<br>April-August, 1377       | 1;2;3;<br>4;6;9     |
| Seintmariship/<br>Seintmaribote | 40       | 11M, 1B<br>9M, 1B          | John Rolleson                                          | April-July, 1373<br>June-Sept., 1377             | 2;3;4;<br>6;10      |
| Elene                           | 44       | 8M, 7M<br>5M, 4M<br>(+1B)  | John Rumbold                                           | April-Sept., 1377                                | 1;2;3;<br>4;6       |
| <u>SURFLEET</u>                 |          |                            |                                                        |                                                  |                     |
| Maudelyn                        | 70       | 10M                        | William Hirry                                          | April-July, 1373                                 | 10                  |
| Maudelene                       | 120      | 1C, 19M, 1B<br>1C, 18M, 1B | William Hirry                                          | March-Sept., 1377<br>Jan., 1378 (London)         | 1;2;3<br>4;6;7<br>8 |
| <u>WAINFLEET</u>                |          |                            |                                                        |                                                  |                     |
| Trinite                         | ?        | 10M<br>1C, 16M, 2B         | William<br>Catesson                                    | June-Sept., 1377<br>Jan. ff., 1378<br>(Sandwich) | 2;3;6<br>7;8        |
| Mariole                         | 70       | 16M, 2B                    | Hugh Satrer                                            | April-July, 1373                                 | 10                  |

| VESSEL               | TONS | CREW                                                             | MASTER           | DATE AND/OR PLACE<br>OF PAYMENT | REFERENCE<br>(CODE) |
|----------------------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>BARGES</u>        |      |                                                                  |                  |                                 |                     |
| The Lincoln<br>Barge | ?    | 64M, 1B<br>46M, 2B<br>46M, 1B<br>64M, 3B<br>70M (+1C throughout) | Geoffrey<br>Pede | April 1377-Jan., 1378           | 1;2;3;8             |
| The Boston           | ?    | 21M, 1B<br>20M, 2B<br>23M, 2B (+1C throughout)                   | Richard Baydon   | June-Sept., 1377                | 2;5;6;7             |

KEY TO REFERENCE CODES

1. P.R.O. E101/34/25 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
2. P.R.O. E101/37/15 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377-8).
3. P.R.O. E101/37/13 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
4. P.R.O. E101/37/7 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
5. P.R.O. E101/37/18 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
6. P.R.O. E101/37/14 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
7. P.R.O. E101/37/17 (Account of payments to mariners, 1377).
8. P.R.O. E101/38/18 (Account of payments to mariners, London et. al., 1378).
9. P.R.O. E101/33/31 (Account of payments for the Brittany voyage, 1374-1375).
10. B.L. Add. Mss. 37494 (Accounts in connection with the French Wars, 1372-1374).

## APPENDIX II

## APPENDIX II

### SOME SIXTEENTH CENTURY LINCOLNSHIRE VESSELS

#### NOTES

- (i) The list of vessels in Section B has been compiled from a combination of sources between 1550 and 1612 to provide a coverage of all known ships from the Lincolnshire havens between those dates. The series of Exchequer K.R. Port Books for Boston (P.R.O. Class E190) begin in 1565, but a number of earlier parchment books and controllments of the coasting trade for Boston have survived among the relevant Particular of Customs Accounts (P.R.O. Class E122). A full list of the items used and the dates covered in this exercise is provided in Section A. In addition, the data from the government survey of 1582 preserved among the State Papers Domestic (P.R.O. SP12/156/45 and SP12/156/46) has been included where appropriate, and where this disagrees with the tonnages computed in (ii) below, that of the survey has been given in brackets for comparison. Tonnages in 1582 appear, in general, to have erred on the generous side. One or two references are provided for each vessel in Section B, referring either to the document, or the first and last documents (but not any intervening ones) in which it is found.
- (ii) Recorded tonnages of vessels are much more variable in these series of records than in those of the fourteenth century. Although there is a little more variety of vessel names, judgement has again been necessary in a number of cases in order to distinguish individual ships. The difficulties are in this case probably greater amongst the smaller (20- tons) craft, where there may have been less certainty as to the precise cargo-carrying capacity and where it is also possible (as in the case of the Spalding boats) that recording was sporadic. Following R.W.K. Hinton (The Port Books Of Boston 1601-1640, 1956, p.xxvi) it is assumed that vessels of the same name recorded more than a few years apart are unlikely to have been identical unless positive proof is forthcoming. Hinton also noted (*ibid.*, pp.xxi-xxii) that tonnages varied considerably, usually in an upwards direction, and argues that this renders them a very untrustworthy guide. However, such variations can probably be attributed to the fact that tonnage was a measurement acquired by the experience of the master, and therefore likely to vary most (as these coastal Port Books bear out) in the period when either vessel or master was new (v. also D. Burwash, English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540, 1947, p.90, and R.W. Unger, The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 1980, pp. 29-32). In the list in Section B below, the tonnage quoted is the modal average of all entries or (if there is none) the later one. In practice, these two usually coincide.

It should be noted that neither the earlier E122 customs controllments nor the later (post 1601) Port Books usually give the tonnages of coastal shipping.

- (111) The appellation "of x" when applied to a ship gives a reference to its "home-port", an expression whose precise meaning is not certain. T.S. Willan (The English Coastal Trade 1600-1750, 1938) argued that this represents the place of residence of its owner, while Hinton (op. cit., p.xx1) also adds that it was the place where it would most usually be found when not at sea. When these two did not correspond, it is plain that the residence of the owner was the real criterion. Hinton himself quotes the case of a vessel of Kelstern, near Louth (15 miles from the sea). The "Marye Fortune" of Boston in 1565 clearly belonged to the town only in name, and in practice operated out of Norfolk ports (P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1)). Nevertheless, given the small size of many ships and the navigability of most rivers until Tudor times, it has been supposed throughout this thesis that such an absolute division between the home of the owner and the most common port of call was not normal, particularly in cases where (as, for example, at Dogdyke) other evidence suggests that shipping did operate there.

\* \* \* \* \*

A: BOSTON CERTIFICATE BOOKS, COASTAL CONTROLLMENTS AND  
PORT BOOKS 1550-1612

(M = Michaelmas      E = Easter      X = Christmas      S = Searcher  
C+C = Customer and Controller      Cu = Customer      Su = Surveyor).

(I) CERTIFICATE BOOKS AND CONTROLLMENTS

|    |             |                  |                        |
|----|-------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | E 122/12/21 | C + C Account    | January - July, 1550   |
| 2  | E 122/12/23 | Controllment     | M - E, 1552-3          |
| 3  | E 122/12/25 | Certificate Book | J - E, 1553            |
| 4  | E 122/13/3  | Certificate Book | M - January, 1553      |
| 5  | E 122/13/1  | Certificate Book | February - April, 1554 |
| 6  | E 122/13/5  | Controllment     | M - M, 1554-5          |
| 7  | E 122/13/9  | Certificate Book | M - E, 1555-6          |
| 8  | E 122/13/8  | Controllment     | Sundry 1553-4/1557-8   |
| 9  | E 122/13/17 | Certificate Book | M - E, 1557-8          |
| 10 | E 122/13/12 | Controllment     | M - M, 1557-8          |
| 11 | E 122/14/4  | Certificate Book | M - E, 1560-61         |
| 12 | E 122/14/6  | Certificate Book | June - M, 1561         |
| 13 | E 122/14/14 | Certificate Book | E - M, 1564            |
| 14 | E 122/14/20 | Certificate Book | M - E, 1564-5          |

(II) PORT BOOKS

|    |              |     |                 |               |
|----|--------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|
| 15 | E 190/387/1  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | E1565 - M1565 |
| 16 | E 190/387/2  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1565 - E1566 |
| 17 | E 190/387/4  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | E1566 - M1566 |
| 18 | E 190/387/3  | C+C | Coastal         | M1566 - M1567 |
| 19 | E 190/387/7  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1569 - M1570 |
| 20 | E 190/387/11 | C+C | Coastal         | E1570 - M1570 |
| 21 | E 190/387/10 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1570 - M1571 |
| 22 | E 190/388/4  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1572 - M1573 |

|    |              |     |                 |               |
|----|--------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|
| 23 | E 190/388/7  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1573 - M1574 |
| 24 | E 190/388/6  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1574 - M1575 |
| 25 | E 190/388/10 | C+C | Coastal         | E1574 - M1574 |
| 26 | E 190/388/9  | C+C | Coastal         | M1574 - E1575 |
| 27 | E 190/388/13 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1575 - M1576 |
| 28 | E 190/388/12 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1576 - M1577 |
| 29 | E 190/389/4  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1577 - M1578 |
| 30 | E 190/389/3  | C+C | Coastal         | M1578 - E1579 |
| 31 | E 190/389/5  | C+C | Coastal         | E1579 - M1579 |
| 32 | E 190/389/6  | C+C | Coastal         | M1579 - E1580 |
| 33 | E 190/389/7  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1579 - M1580 |
| 34 | E 190/389/10 | C+C | Coastal         | E1580 - M1580 |
| 35 | E 190/389/12 | C+C | Coastal         | M1580 - E1581 |
| 36 | E 190/389/9  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1580 - M1581 |
| 37 | E 190/390/4  | C+C | Coastal         | E1581 - M1581 |
| 38 | E 190/390/3  | C+C | Coastal         | M1581 - E1582 |
| 39 | E 190/390/1  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1581 - M1582 |
| 40 | E 190/390/7  | C+C | Coastal         | E1582 - M1582 |
| 41 | E 190/390/5  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1582 - M1583 |
| 42 | E 190/390/11 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1583 - M1584 |
| 43 | E 190/390/14 | C+C | Coastal         | E1584 - M1584 |
| 44 | E 190/390/13 | C+C | Coastal         | M1584 - E1585 |
| 45 | E 190/391/1  | C+C | Coastal         | E1585 - M1585 |
| 46 | E 190/391/2  | C+C | Coastal         | M1585 - E1586 |
| 47 | E 190/391/4  | C+C | Oversea/Coastal | M1586 - E1587 |
| 48 | E 190/391/5  | C+C | Oversea/Coastal | M1587 - E1588 |
| 49 | E 190/391/7  | Cu  | Coastal         | E1588 - M1588 |
| 50 | E 190/391/8  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1591 - M1592 |
| 51 | E 190/391/9  | C+C | Coastal         | E1592 - M1592 |
| 52 | E 190/391/11 | C+C | Coastal         | M1592 - E1593 |
| 53 | E 190/392/1  | C+C | Coastal         | M1594 - E1595 |
| 54 | E 190/392/4  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1594 - M1595 |
| 55 | E 190/392/9  | C+C | Coastal         | M1599 - E1600 |
| 56 | E 190/392/14 | Su  | Coastal         | M1600 - M1601 |
| 57 | E 190/392/15 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1600 - M1601 |
| 58 | E 190/393/2  | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1601 - M1602 |
| 59 | E 190/393/3  | C+C | Coastal         | X1611 - X1612 |

(III) UNFIT FOR PRODUCTION (1982)

|    |              |     |                 |               |
|----|--------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|
| 60 | E 190/390/6  | C+C | Coastal         | M1582 - E1583 |
| 61 | E 190/391/10 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | M1592 - M1593 |
| 62 | E 190/393/13 | S   | Oversea/Coastal | X1607 - X1608 |

B: VESSELS BELONGING TO THE LINCOLNSHIRE CREEKS  
HAVENS AND RIVER-PORTS 1550-1612

| PLACE       | VESSEL            | TONNAGE | DATE RANGE | REFERENCE LIMITS         |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|------------|--------------------------|
| Bardney     | Marye             | ?       | 1553       | E122/13/1                |
| Barrow      | Christopher       | ?       | 1554       | E122/13/8                |
|             | Jesus             | ?       | 1561       | E122/14/4                |
|             | Swane             | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/5                |
| Barton      | Merliall          | 16      | 1592-1594  | E190/391/8; E190/392/4   |
| Burringham  | Elizabeth         | ?       | 1612       | E190/394/3               |
|             | Mary Anne         | 14      | 1602       | E190/393/2               |
| Croft       | Valantyne         | 16      | 1582       | SP12/156/45              |
| Dogdyke     | Anne              | 14      | 1560-1566  | E122/14/4; E190/387/2    |
|             | Bull              | 10      | 1561-1566  | E122/14/6; E190/387/4    |
|             | Christopher       | 10      | 1553-1567  | E122/12/25; E190/387/3   |
|             | Frances           | 8       | 1577       | E190/388/12              |
|             | George            | 16      | 1579       | E190/389/3               |
|             | Isabell           | ?       | 1554-1561  | E122/13/1; E122/14/6     |
|             | James             | 16      | 1570-1576  | E190/387/7; E190/388/13  |
|             | John              | ?       | 1553       | E122/12/25               |
|             | Katheryn          | ?       | 1552       | E122/12/23               |
|             | Luke              | ?       | 1552-1554  | E122/12/23; E122/13/1    |
|             | Magdalene         | ?       | 1550-1556  | E122/12/21; E122/13/9    |
|             | Mary Anne         | 20      | 1566       | E190/387/2               |
|             | Mary Fortune      | 12      | 1557-1565  | E122/13/17; E190/387/1   |
|             | Mary Fortune      | 24      | 1584       | E190/390/11              |
|             | Mary Grace        | 16      | 1576-1593  | E190/388/13; E190/391/11 |
|             | Mary James        | 20      | 1573       | E190/388/4               |
|             | Margaret          | 16      | 1580       | E190/389/7               |
|             | Matthew           | 16      | 1579-1580  | E190/389/6; E190/389/10  |
|             | Raiffe            | 4       | 1599       | E190/392/9               |
|             | Robert            | 20      | 1577-1583  | E190/388/12; E190/390/5  |
|             | Robert            | 16      | 1587       | E190/391/4               |
|             | Snyttle           | 10      | 1569-1570  | E190/387/7               |
|             | William           | 10      | 1571-1576  | E190/387/10; E190/388/12 |
| Fosdyke     | Mary Fortune      | 24 (36) | 1580-1588  | E190/389/7; E190/391/7   |
|             | Thomas            | 24      | 1601       | E190/393/2               |
| Frampton    | William           | 30      | 1592       | E190/391/8               |
| Ingoldmells | Edward            | 12      | 1584-1585  | E190/390/14; E190/390/13 |
|             | Solomon           | 30      | 1580-1581  | E190/389/7; E190/390/4   |
| Keadby      | Christopher       | 32 (36) | 1577-1584  | E190/388/12; E190/390/14 |
|             | Elizabeth         | 30 (40) | 1566-1583  | E190/387/4; E190/390/5   |
|             | Eliz. Bonaventure | 40      | 1573-1582  | E190/388/4; E190/390/7   |
|             | George            | 20      | 1595-1601  | E190/392/4; E190/392/14  |
|             | Grace of God      | 60      | 1588-1592  | E190/391/7; E190/391/9   |
|             | Greyhound         | 30      | 1570-1577  | E190/387/7; E190/388/12  |

| PLACE              | VESSEL              | TONNAGE | DATE RANGE | REFERENCE LIMITS        |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------|------------|-------------------------|
| Keadby<br>(Cont'd) | John                | 60      | 1592-1595  | E190/391/8; E190/392/4  |
|                    | John the Evangelist | 40      | 1595-1602  | E190/392/4; E190/393/2  |
|                    | Katherine           | 30      | 1581-1584  | E190/390/4; E190/390/14 |
|                    | Mariell             | ?       | 1612       | E190/394/3              |
|                    | Mary Anne           | 20      | 1601-1602  | E190/392/14; E190/393/2 |
|                    | Matthew             | 40 (35) | 1578-1592  | E190/389/4; E190/391/9  |
|                    | Swallow             | 20      | 1567       | E190/387/3              |
| Kirkstead          | Anne                | ?       | 1556       | E122/13/9               |
|                    | Isabell             | ?       | 1553-1557  | E122/12/25; E122/13/12  |
|                    | Mary Fortune        | ?       | 1555-1557  | E122/13/5; E122/13/17   |
|                    | William             | ?       | 1557       | E122/13/12              |
| Lincoln            | Anne                | 10      | 1573-1577  | E190/388/7; E190/388/12 |
|                    | Christopher         | ?       | 1554-1555  | E122/13/9               |
|                    | Ellen               | ?       | 1557       | E122/13/12              |
|                    | Frances             | 8       | 1574       | E190/388/10             |
|                    | James               | ?       | 1552-1555  | E122/12/23; E122/13/5   |
|                    | John                | 20      | 1578       | E190/389/4              |
|                    | John                | ?       | 1612       | E190/394/3              |
|                    | Marye               | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/9               |
|                    | Mary Anne           | 8       | 1570-1578  | E190/387/7; E190/389/4  |
|                    | Mary Anne           | 20      | 1576       | E190/388/13             |
|                    | Mary Grace          | 16      | 1583       | E190/390/5              |
|                    | Peter               | ?       | 1550       | E122/12/21              |
|                    | Peter               | 12      | 1570       | E190/387/11             |
|                    | Robert              | 20      | 1577       | E190/389/4              |
|                    | Robert              | 6       | 1599       | E190/392/9              |
|                    | Thomas              | 16      | 1578-1586  | E190/389/4; E190/391/4  |
|                    | Thomas              | 8       | 1601-1612  | E190/392/14; E190/394/3 |
|                    | William             | ?       | 1553-1557  | E122/13/3; E122/13/17   |
|                    | William             | 10      | 1575       | E190/388/13             |
|                    | William             | 16      | 1580       | E190/389/7              |
| Marsh Chapel       | Anne Gelover        | 70      | 1582       | SP12/156/45             |
|                    | Cork                | 30      | 1595       | E190/392/4              |
|                    | Elizabeth           | 28      | 1578       | E190/389/4              |
|                    | Elizabeth           | 40      | 1595       | E190/392/4              |
|                    | Kungysiven          | 40      | 1580       | E190/389/10             |
|                    | Trinity             | 40      | 1583-1588  | E190/390/5; E190/391/7  |
| Northcotes         | Daniel              | 40 (50) | 1580-1588  | E190/389/10; E190/391/7 |
|                    | George              | 40      | 1601-1602  | E190/392/14; E190/393/2 |
| Pinchbeck          | George              | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/5               |
|                    | Henry               | 5       | 1556       | E190/387/4              |
|                    | John                | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/5               |
|                    | William             | 6       | 1566       | E190/387/4              |

| PLACE         | VESSEL           | TONNAGE | DATE RANGE | REFERENCE LIMITS         |
|---------------|------------------|---------|------------|--------------------------|
| Saltfleet     | Botolph          | ?       | 1553       | E122/12/25               |
|               | Boyer            | 70      | 1582       | SP12/156/45              |
|               | Daniel           | 40      | 1586-1588  | E190/391/4; E190/391/7   |
|               | Fortune          | 20      | 1580-1584  | E190/390/4; E190/390/14  |
|               | Grace            | 30      | 1573       | E190/388/4               |
|               | James            | 23      | 1584       | E190/390/14              |
|               | Margaret         | 24      | 1570       | E190/387/11              |
|               | Palmtree         | 50 (60) | 1580-1584  | E190/389/7; E190/390/14  |
|               | Redhorse         | ?       | 1570       | E190/387/7               |
|               | Speedwell        | 30      | 1580       | E190/389/10              |
|               | Valantine        | 24      | 1580       | E190/389/10              |
| Skegness      | Magdalene        | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/5                |
| Somerootes    | Mary Katheryn    | ?       | 1555       | E122/13/5                |
| Southolle     | Bundle of Boards | 10      | 1592       | E190/391/8               |
| Spalding      | Barnith          | 4       | 1573       | E190/388/7               |
|               | Gift of God      | 10      | 1592-1600  | E190/391/8; E190/392/9   |
|               | Hopewell         | 6       | 1601       | E190/392/14              |
|               | John             | 4       | 1595       | E190/392/4               |
|               | Marye            | ?       | 1556       | E122/13/9                |
|               | Mary Anne        | 8       | 1592       | E190/391/9               |
|               | Richard          | 8       | 1595       | E190/392/4               |
|               | William          | 6       | 1574       | E190/388/9               |
|               | William          | 16      | 1577-1593  | E190/388/12; E190/391/11 |
|               | William          | 10      | 1585       | E190/390/13              |
| Theddlethorpe | Audrey           | 20      | 1582       | E190/390/7               |
|               | Fortune          | 56      | 1582       | E190/390/7               |
|               | Prudence         | 40      | 1581       | E190/390/4               |
| (Long)        | Anne             | 20      | 1601       | E190/392/14              |
| Sutton        | Gift of God      | 30      | 1601-1605  | E190/393/2; *Hinton p.36 |
| Tattershall   | Christopher      | ?       | 1557       | E122/13/12               |
|               | William          | ?       | 1556       | E122/13/9                |
| Wainfleet     | Magdalene        | ?       | 1560       | E122/14/4                |
|               | Valantine        | 18      | 1580       | E190/388/9               |
|               | William          | 20      | 1603       | * Hinton p.24            |

\* transactions noted in Hinton, op. cit., in published Boston overseas books for those years.

### APPENDIX III

### APPENDIX III

#### MUSTER OF LINCOLNSHIRE SEAMEN 1628

##### NOTES

- (i) The returns under this muster are in the Public Record Office, SP/16/138/61, headed "a gen[er]all Muster of all such Marriners Salers Seafaring men and Fishermen belonging to anie the porte townes w[it]hin the saide county (of Lincoln) accordinge to directions receaued from the Lordes of his ma[jes]ties Counsell taken before me S[i]r Clem[e]nt Cottrell Viceadmirall of the saide countye the eleaventh daie of March 1628 At Boston"; but (as noted in Chapter 5) the only surviving sections are headed "Fishermen that goe to sea w[it]hout Boates", which is taken to mean employee fishermen and not vessel owners.
- (ii) In the following transcript, Christian names and place names have been extended where appropriate and the use of numerals (variously found in Roman and longhand forms in the original) rationalized. The occasional use of the caveat "or thereabouts" is probably intended to apply to all the stated ages.

\* \* \* \* \*

##### Names and Ages of Employee Fishermen Mustered in 1628

|                  |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| <u>Boston</u>    | Richard Lauger   | 36 "or thereabout[es]" |
|                  | John Yates       | 28                     |
|                  | John Pavyn       | 40                     |
|                  | William Babb[er] | 24                     |
|                  | Christopher Clay | 43                     |
| <u>Wainfleet</u> | John Warde       | 30 "or thereabouts"    |
|                  | George Lawson    | 50                     |
|                  | Thomas Stevenson | 33                     |
|                  | John Everington  | 24                     |
|                  | Robert Brakely   | 38                     |
|                  | Benedict Cowke   | 40                     |

|                    |                   |                     |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Friskney</u>    | William Freston   | 40                  |
|                    | Henry Hutchinson  | 50                  |
|                    | Thomas Hutchinson | 30                  |
|                    | William Freeston  | 24                  |
|                    | Thomas Cottnam    | 27                  |
|                    | John Warde        | 38                  |
|                    | Robert Freeston   | 40                  |
|                    | John Harrison     | 29                  |
|                    | Hamonde Cooke     | 24                  |
|                    | John Hewitson     | 50                  |
| <u>Croft</u>       | Thomas Baxter     | 50                  |
|                    | Robert Williamson | 34                  |
|                    | Thomas Hill       | 29                  |
| <u>Winthorpe</u>   | William Cotnam    | 40 "or thereabouts" |
|                    | George Hudson     | 32                  |
|                    | William Bontoft   | 24                  |
|                    | John Covell       | 20                  |
| <u>Ingoldmells</u> | Robert Baulden    | 20                  |
|                    | Thomas Sargent    | 33                  |
|                    | Luke Graye        | 40                  |
|                    | Nicholas Burkitt  | 50                  |
| <u>Hogsthorpe</u>  | Thomas Smythe     | 27                  |
|                    | Edward Wright     | 39                  |
|                    | Robert Baron      | 50                  |
|                    | John Quarum       | 18                  |

|                      |                   |                     |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Mumby Chapel</u>  | Humphrey Parr     | 40                  |
|                      | John Crowe        | 28                  |
|                      | Thomas Shadforth  | 18                  |
| <u>Anderby</u>       | Matthew Robinson  | 34                  |
|                      | Edward Skynner    | 39                  |
|                      | Richard Bettison  | 40                  |
| <u>Huttoft</u>       | Robert Wrighte    | 54                  |
|                      | James Bonner      | 40                  |
|                      | Philip Arthrey    | 28                  |
| <u>Trusthorpe</u>    | John Scargall     | 33 "or thereabouts" |
|                      | Thomas Mawer      | 19                  |
|                      | John Hilton       | 32                  |
| <u>Sutton</u>        | Richard Goate     | 28                  |
|                      | Thomas Swashe     | 40                  |
| <u>Mablethorpe</u>   | William Rasen     | 40                  |
|                      | William Ellyot    | 24                  |
|                      | William Hickforth | 38                  |
| <u>Theddlethorpe</u> | Robert Gowan      | 24                  |
|                      | Edward Mawer      | 37                  |
|                      | William Howe      | 50                  |
|                      | John Burne        | 55                  |

|                             |                   |                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Saltfleetby</u>          | Benjamin Burne    | 54                  |
|                             | Robert Fothergill | 39                  |
|                             | Thomas Dover      | 25                  |
|                             | Hugh Bogg         | 23                  |
|                             | John Richardson   | 18                  |
|                             | William White     | 58                  |
| <br><u>Skidbrooke</u>       | William Whitofte  | 38                  |
|                             | Richard Tendrie   | 26                  |
|                             | George Stafforde  | 40                  |
|                             | Robert Wodd       | 50                  |
|                             | John Hardie       | 61                  |
| <br><u>Wragholme</u>        | Silvester Wodd    | 34 "or thereabouts" |
|                             | William Mawer     | 40                  |
|                             | William Britton   | 29                  |
| <br><u>North Somercotes</u> | Henry Cottam      | 39                  |
|                             | Paul Baddy        | 40                  |
|                             | Robert Turgoose   | 45                  |
|                             | William Starke    | 29                  |
| <br><u>Northcotes</u>       | John Robinson     | 18                  |
|                             | Allen Willson     | 34                  |
|                             | William Robinson  | 54                  |
| <br><u>Tetney</u>           | Robert Caduey     | 50                  |
|                             | John Caduey       | 33                  |
|                             | William Crawhares | 24                  |

|                         |                   |                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Humberstone</u>      | Richard Roper     | 20                  |
|                         | Richard Rogers    | 38                  |
|                         | Robert Rogers     | 40                  |
| <u>Cleethorpes</u>      | John Tomson       | 24                  |
|                         | Thomas Williamson | 38                  |
|                         | John Drewry       | 40                  |
|                         | Samuel Johnson    | 45                  |
|                         | Richard Ragg      | 56                  |
| <u>Wildsworth</u>       | John Browne       | 40 "or thereabouts" |
| <u>Barton-on-Humber</u> | William Apleyard  | 54                  |
|                         | Edward Hudles     | 36                  |
|                         | John Hurste       | 58                  |
| <u>South Ferriby</u>    | John Browne       | 43                  |
|                         | John Crowder      | 38                  |
|                         | Robert Cooke      | 24                  |
| <u>Amcotts</u>          | Thomas Ballden    | (no entry)          |
|                         | Robert Hawker     | (no entry)          |
| <u>Gainsborough</u>     | Edward Stapleton  | 38                  |
|                         | Thomas Proppers   | 29                  |
|                         | Thomas Mere       | 40                  |
|                         | Richard Hauxsby   | 60                  |
|                         | William Pallmer   | 49                  |
|                         | Edward Stapleton  | 24                  |
|                         | Ruben Wrighte     | 22                  |

Within the age limits represented in this list, (18-61, roughly in line with most muster lists) the range of ages found breaks down as follows:

| <u>Aged</u>  | <u>No of Fishermen</u> |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 18-20        | 7                      |
| 21-30        | 29                     |
| 31-40        | 42                     |
| 41-50        | 14                     |
| 51-60        | 9                      |
| 60+          | 1                      |
| Not Recorded | <u>2</u>               |
| Total        | 104                    |

\* \* \* \* \*

APPENDIX IV

#### APPENDIX IV

##### THE POPULATION OF SKIDBROOKE AND SALTFLEET

Establishing population levels before the nineteenth century, especially in areas as small as an individual parish, depends not only upon the accurate compilation and correlation of all the available information but upon the methods of analysis employed by the individual historian. In view of the radical disagreements which continue to exist upon such fundamental issues as the size of the medieval or early modern household, or the population of England prior to and following the Black Death, few local historians (restricted to the microscopic and therefore statistically more circumscribed unit of a single parish) would now deal so confidently with their data as W.G. Hoskins felt able to do in his famous study of one Leicestershire village in 1957.<sup>1</sup> The objectives of this Appendix are more limited. In Section A, the extant sources of information and some of their limitations are considered, and some estimates of the parish population attempted when this appears to be justified by the quality of the evidence. Section B then briefly considers the incidence of local crisis mortality, as suggested by the parish registers at the end of the sixteenth century.

1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Population of an English Village 1086-1801: A Study of Wigston Magna', Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society, XXXIII, 1957, pp. 15-35. For contrasting views on the population of England in the middle of the fourteenth century, for example, cf. J.C. Russell, British Medieval Population, 1948, p.55 sqq. (2.2 million people), T.H. Hollingsworth, Historical Demography, 1969, p.386 (3.65 million people) and M.M. Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, (Pelican edition), 1975, p.34 (between 6 and 8 million people).

Since no national source prior to the 1801 census purports to provide an accurate enumeration of population in individual parishes, estimates have to be produced by making judgements about the coverage and reliability of taxation lists, ecclesiastical surveys and other such indirect material. At best, if the comprehensiveness of a particular source is known, percentage multipliers have to be used to convert the recorded population into an aggregate one. On other occasions, however, the amount of omission or evasion in the data is unclear, and in such cases the choice of a suitable multiplier almost always requires the application of informed guesswork. Although the evidence with the clearest parameters has been used wherever possible in what follows, it can hardly be over-emphasized that such information is capable of producing approximate orders of population magnitude and no more.

Some of the inadequacies of the surviving documentation are of a purely local character. For example, it would obviously be of the very greatest interest to know the dynamics of the distribution of the population between the three centres of settlement which made up the parish of Skidbrooke; but such detail is simply unavailable from most sources, and our only glimpse of the relative size of the hamlets is that provided by the 1563 Diocesan Survey. Even if we ascribe a considerable accuracy to this, it is a synchronic picture which tells us nothing of the situation in earlier periods. Skidbrooke possesses no manorial extents of any date from which indications both of

2. The parish register does not normally distinguish the residents of the three settlements, and the designation "of Skidbrooke" in probate records may, of course, refer to the parish rather than the settlement. Even the aggregated figures of the first four national censuses do not break down the distribution -  
V.C.H. Lincolnshire, Vol. 2, p.372.

population distribution and size might be coaxed. It lacks (along with the rest of Louthesk Wapentake) the second instalment of the important 1524-1525 lay subsidy returns; and (even more seriously, for present purposes) although large numbers of 1674 Hearth Tax exemption

Table A.1. Raw Population Data for Skidbrooke and Saltfleet, 1327-1676.

| DATE | SOURCE                 | FIGURE | UNIT COUNTED               |
|------|------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| 1327 | Lay Subsidy            | 91     | Taxpayers (rate of 1/20th) |
| 1332 | Lay Subsidy            | 137    | Taxpayers (rate of 1/15th) |
| 1377 | Poll Tax               | 343    | Adults aged 14+            |
| 1524 | Lay Subsidy            | 43     | Taxpayers                  |
| 1542 | Muster List            | 32     | "Able Men"                 |
| 1548 | Chantry Certificates   | 103    | Communicants               |
| 1563 | Diocesan Survey        | 57     | Households                 |
| 1603 | "Liber Cleri"          | 150    | Communicants               |
| 1641 | Protestation Oath Roll | 77     | Adult Males 18+            |
| 1676 | Compton Census         | 130    | Communicants/Dissenters    |

#### Notes

Sources: P.R.O. E179/135/11, m.16; E179/135/16, m.19; E179/135/68, m.19; E179/138/478, m.3d.; SP1/173/87; C.W. Foster and A. Hamilton Thompson, eds., 'The Chantry Certificates for Lincolnshire', A.A.A.S.R.P., 36, 1921-3, p.277; G.A.J. Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, p.195; Foster, ed., The State of the Church, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.23), p.324; House of Lords Record Office, 1641 Oath Roll; A.S. Langley, 'A Religious Census of 1676', Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, XVI, 1920-21, p.42.

certificates survived for Lindsey, the area is especially short of the (nationally more common) assessments or returns for this form of taxation. The one surviving and badly damaged north Lincolnshire assessment of Michaelmas 1662 has no entries for Skidbrooke. We are therefore robbed of the opportunity to check the 1563 ecclesiastical survey against the one comparable piece of evidence.

3. J. Sheail, 'The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as indicated in the Lay Subsidy Returns (1524-5)', (unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis), 1968, Part II, n.p.; P.R.O. E179/334 (Lindsey hearth-tax exemption certificates), E179/140/806 (1-3), (Lindsey hearth-tax assessment).

Certain other sources employed by Hoskins in his Wigston Magna work must now be used, if at all, with great caution, because the statistical acrobatics required to make them yield figures for total population produce margins for error on what Postan once called "a heroic scale". For example, despite Hoskin's attempts to quantify the levels of evasion in the 1332 lay subsidy and so produce an idea of pre-Black Death population levels, it is now generally agreed that (whatever its uses for determining relative levels of wealth distribution) this taxation is simply incapable of being employed as an indicator of village size at this date.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the returns of the 1524-5 subsidy can no longer be supposed to represent, as Hoskins believed, "a complete directory of the households in the village", since Cornwall's comparative work on it has revealed that up to one third of the adult male population (heads of household or otherwise) probably escaped its exactions. Compensating for such omissions means that uncertainty is introduced into population estimates based on this taxation, even before the proportions of women and children are taken into account. Further difficulties are introduced in the case of Skidbrooke by the absence of a corresponding 1525 return to act as a control. If, for the sake of argument, we follow Cornwall's formula and apply it to the local 1524 data, the result is as follows:

|                                        |              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| 43 taxpayers                           |              |
| For omission of adult males: (x 3/2)   | = 64.5       |
| Double this figure (for women):        | = 129        |
| Add another 40% (51.6) (for children): | = <u>181</u> |

Presupposing that the rate of omissions in the original data has been satisfactorily corrected, this represents the only available fix on

4. Postan, op. cit., p.32; M.W. Beresford, 'The Lay Subsidies: I', Amateur Historian, III, 1958, pp.326-327; R. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England 1334-1649', Econ. H.R., XVIII, 1965, pp.486-487.

the early sixteenth century population of Skidbrooke and Saltfleet - a little under 200 individuals - although it will be obvious that the margin for inaccuracy with this particular source is quite  
5  
considerable.

In view of the national population decline in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the decay of Saltfleet as a port, we should obviously expect to find a considerably greater population in the area at the time of the 1377 poll tax, which represents the only yardstick against which the rate (as opposed to the fact) of the decline can be judged. Unlike the lay subsidies hitherto discussed and unlike the later poll taxes of 1379 and 1381, the impost of 1377 was intended to be levied on the entire population over the age of  
6  
fourteen at a flat rate of a groat (4d.) per head. Two major uncertainties in the use of most other subsidies - the precise proportion of women in the population and the number of those with too little wealth to fall liable - are thus removed from this calculation. Three further problems remain before any estimation of total population can be extracted from the returns: the size of the exempt clerical population, (which need not detain us in the case of one village like Skidbrooke); the number of children under fourteen years old; and the level of evasion of the tax. The percentage of the population under fourteen was thought by Russell to have been 35%, but

5. Hoskins, 'Population of Wiston Magna', loc. cit., p.18; J. Cornwall, 'English Population in the early Sixteenth Century', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, XXIII, 1970, pp.35-36. In fairness to Hoskins, it should be pointed out that if the subsidy is taken to list households, a multiplier of (say) 4.5 suggests itself to covert this to individuals; whereas the Cornwall formula can be reduced in its simplest form to a multiplier of 4.2. On small populations, therefore, the results of the two computations will always be similar. See also note 7, below.
6. M.W. Beresford, 'The Poll Taxes of 1377, -1379 and 1381', Amateur Historian, III, 1958, p.271.

Postan (working on the supposition of lower life expectancy and higher birth rates) has suggested a multiplication of up to 45%. For evasion, Russell allowed only 5%, which is now almost universally thought to be too low. Historians with one view of the causes and duration of late medieval economic and demographic decline will tend to favour higher multipliers, those with an opposite view lower ones. For this discussion, it may be most helpful to consider the two extreme poles of disagreement as represented by the positions of Russell and Postan respectively:

#### 343 taxpayers

| <u>Russell</u>                | <u>Postan</u>                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Add 35% (children) = 457.3    | Add 45% (children) = 497.35    |
| Add 5% (evasion) = <u>480</u> | Add 25% (evasion) = <u>622</u> |

Although such widely differing views obviously make it futile to pretend that we can establish the real population of Saltfleet or Skidbrooke in the fourteenth century they do at least show that a very substantial decline must have taken place during the fifteenth century - between 62% and 71%, depending on which 1377 estimate is preferred. This can be compared with the computations of Hatcher and Hollingsworth that the overall national population in 1377 was not dissimilar from that in 1524-5, despite the preceding pestilence<sup>7</sup> and the intervening fifteenth century low point.

7. Ibid., p.275; Russell, op. cit., p.143; Postan, op. cit., pp.12-15; J. Krause, 'The Medieval Household: Large or Small?', Econ. H.R., 2nd Series, IX, 1957, pp.420-432; J. Hatcher, Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530, 1977, pp.68-71; Recent work by E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield (The Population History of England 1541-1871, 1981, pp.215-218) suggests that Russell's estimate of the number of children in pre-industrial England was considerably more accurate than once supposed. If so, our estimate of the 1524 population may also be somewhat generous.

If we allow that (whatever its nadir may have been) the population of the parish had reached a level somewhat under 200 in the first decades of the sixteenth century, we now need to consider how this estimate can be projected forward to the point at which the parish register commences in 1563. For this, there are several potential sources of information: a detailed local muster of 1542, the Chantry Certificates of 1548 and the ecclesiastical survey of 1563. As usual, substantial problems surround the use of each of them. Most sixteenth century muster lists survive only in the form of hundredal or wapentake totals of "able men", but even where (as in this instance) a detailed list of the men mustered in one village has survived, knowing what proportion of the adult male population this constituted is almost impossible.<sup>8</sup> Schofield, discussing an Oxfordshire list for the same year, proposes a multiplier of between 3.33 and 4.5 to convert the list into a total village population, provided that the muster itself was thorough. Yet applying this to the 32 "able men" in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet results in a population of 144 maximum, which is below both our 1524 estimate and the absolute lower limits which the later 1563 survey will suggest are credible. Hoskins believed that a multiplier of 7 was more realistic for most muster returns, and this would certainly conform rather better to the population we might expect at Skidbrooke on the basis of other evidence. The application of Schofield's multiplier simply appears to demonstrate that this 1542 muster was defective, and so unlikely to

8. Most of the musters discussed by E.E. Rich ('The Population of Elizabethan England', Econ. H.R., II, 1949-50, p.254) are summary totals of this sort - cf. P.R.O. SP12/118/54 (1577), SP12/137/48 (1580), SP12/204/36 (1587). -

add to the knowledge which we can by this date acquire from  
elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Conjectures are also necessary before we can decide on the group of people listed in the 1548 Chantry Certificates as "housling people" or "people that recyve the Blessed Communion". Most historians in the past have taken this to mean all those over the ages of 14 or 15 years, but this is now open to serious doubt. Cornwall and Palliser are both clear that the normal age of confirmation prior to the Reformation was 7 years, with first communion then deferred until "the years of discretion" - possibly (but by no means certainly) 10 years old. Confirmation after the Reformation was at 14, 16 or even 18 years old, but in the case of conservative areas like north Lincolnshire, it is impossible to be sure how long the Catholic custom on this matter survived during Edward VI's reign, much less which age groups then qualified as "communicants".<sup>10</sup> Compounding the confusion is the possibility that the numbers returned were rough approximations, rather than actual counts. Russell thought that rounded guesses would manifest themselves plainly in the figures as multiples of ten, but in cases such as Skidbrooke (where 103 communicants were returned) the final digit may just have been added<sup>11</sup> by the parson and the churchwardens for the sake of versimilitude.

9. R.S. Schofield, '1542 Muster Rolls', Local Population Studies, Spring 1971, pp.61-65; W.G. Hoskins, Local History in England, (1972 edition), p.172. Separate musters of mariners and fishermen are known to have taken place from time to time (as in 1628) but this is not the cause of the under-enumeration in this muster which includes several known seafarers.
10. Hoskins, Local History, p.171; Russell, op. cit., p.19; Cornwall, 'English Population', loc. cit., p.32; D.M. Palliser, The Age of Elizabeth, 1983, pp.32-33.
11. Russell, op. cit., pp.20-22; J. Thirsk, 'Sources of Information on Population', Amateur Historian, IV, 1958-60, pp.131-132.

In contrast, the unit of measurement employed in the 1563 Diocesan Survey can be established with much less difficulty. The close correlation between this and the survey of Lincolnshire havens (supra, Chapter 4, Table 11) demonstrates both that the count was by households (and not as some historians have suggested, co-resident families) and that glaring inaccuracies as the result of casual guesswork are surprisingly unlikely.<sup>12</sup> It follows that any multiplier introduced into the equation to produce an approximation of the total village population is governed only by an estimate of household size. The relative plausibility of this element can be clearly expressed (and to some extent checked) by comparison with both local and national data. Unlike the other evidence examined so far, only one coefficient is at work. So far as Skidbrooke and Saltfleet are concerned, this survey also has two happy coincidental qualities: it is the only set of figures prior to 1841 which breaks down the parish population into its three constituent hamlets, and it coincides neatly with the starting date of the local parish register.

What is required is a suitable multiplier to convert number of households into number of individuals within the parish. The best theoretical model for household size and composition is now widely accepted to be that advanced by Laslett, according to which mean household size in England remained fairly stable at around 4.75 between the mid-sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In about 10% of the households examined some resident kin were found but in the majority of them there lived a maximum of two generations: a married couple and their children. So even and widespread do these results

12. The 1565 havens survey specifically counts "housholdes inhabited" (P.R.O. SP12/38/23(1)). For doubts on these points v. Thirsk, 'Sources', loc. cit., p.132 and M. Drake, ed., Population Studies from Parish Registers, 1982, pp.xxix-xxx.

appear to have been, that it is tempting to apply a blanket multiplier of 4.75 in all cases. But Laslett himself warns against this, and multipliers anywhere between 4 and 5 may be appropriate, depending on local circumstances. Even so small a difference can exert a strong influence when it is being employed as a percentage multiplier on a comparatively small sample.<sup>13</sup>

Without a full-scale family re-constitution of the parish, no checking process can indisputably narrow the margin for error any further; but a certain amount of verification of the local conditions can be obtained from the evidence found in wills and in land transfers made through the manor court rolls. Both sources can be used for information on the average number of children per family, which can then provide an idea of whether the standard compromises of 4 or 4.5 per household appear acceptable for Skidbrooke. However, in both cases there is a danger in compounding inaccuracies and uncertainties in this process, unless the data produced is regarded with great caution. Will makers and land inheritors represent only a particular stratum of society and may not be typical in household size or characteristics. Since one reason for making a will was to change some aspect of established inheritance custom, the two sources also have the possible disadvantage of being potentially mutually exclusive. With neither can we be certain that all children are included in the record, and in the case of land transfers daughters will only appear if there were no living sons. Furthermore, the children named in either document are only those who have survived until the expiry of their father. Calculating the number of children

13. P. Laslett, 'Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries', Population Studies, XXIII, 1969, pp.207, 218-219.

in the family group involves two further assumptions: that male and female ratios are roughly equal, and that the arrangements for the inheritance have not involved any informal arrangements or prior division of the holding.

Table A.2. Numbers of Children named in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet Wills, 1504-1600

| Date<br>Range | No of<br>Wills | Sons |      | Daughters |      | Total |      | S.D. |
|---------------|----------------|------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|------|
|               |                | No   | Mean | No        | Mean | No    | Mean |      |
| 1504-1550     | 21             | 21   | 1.0  | 26        | 1.23 | 47    | 2.24 | 1.84 |
| 1551-1600     | 39             | 50   | 1.28 | 42        | 1.07 | 92    | 2.36 | 1.7  |
| 1504-1600     | 60             | 71   | 1.18 | 68        | 1.13 | 139   | 2.3  | 1.73 |

Notes

Sources: L.A.O., LOC Wills, 1520-1600; P.R.O., LOC Wills, 1504-1600.  
Wills of widows have been included only if their husbands died intestate.

Nevertheless Table A.2. shows a remarkably consistent pattern. In the first place, the mean number of sons and daughters named in Skidbrooke and Saltfleet wills remains very similar in both the first and second halves of the sixteenth century, despite the increase in the surviving number of wills. Moreover, the mean number of children mentioned in wills (2.3) brings the probable average household size among will makers in the parish to 4.3, which is remarkably close to 4.5 - 4.75 suggested as a national average by Laslett and others. Table A.3. further reveals that among landholding families, 40% had no surviving sons when the land was passed on; but of these, a further 11% had at least one (and usually two) daughters who inherited instead. In only 18% of cases did more than one son inherit the land, and the mean (and modal) average was around one son per household, so long as the number of informal arrangements which blot out the record of other sons was not too great. On the further

Table A.3. Number of Sons inheriting from Fathers in Skidbrooke Manor Court Transactions, 1480-1600

| No. of Inheritors | No. of Transactions | %     |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 0 Sons            | 43                  | 40.57 |
| 1 Son             | 44                  | 41.5  |
| 2 Sons            | 16                  | 15.09 |
| 3 Sons            | 1                   | 0.94  |
| 4 Sons            | 2                   | 1.9   |
| Total             | 106                 | 100   |

Notes

Sources: L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13; 2 ANC 2/15

assumption of rough numerical parity between the sexes, around two children per family on the death of the father is again indicated.

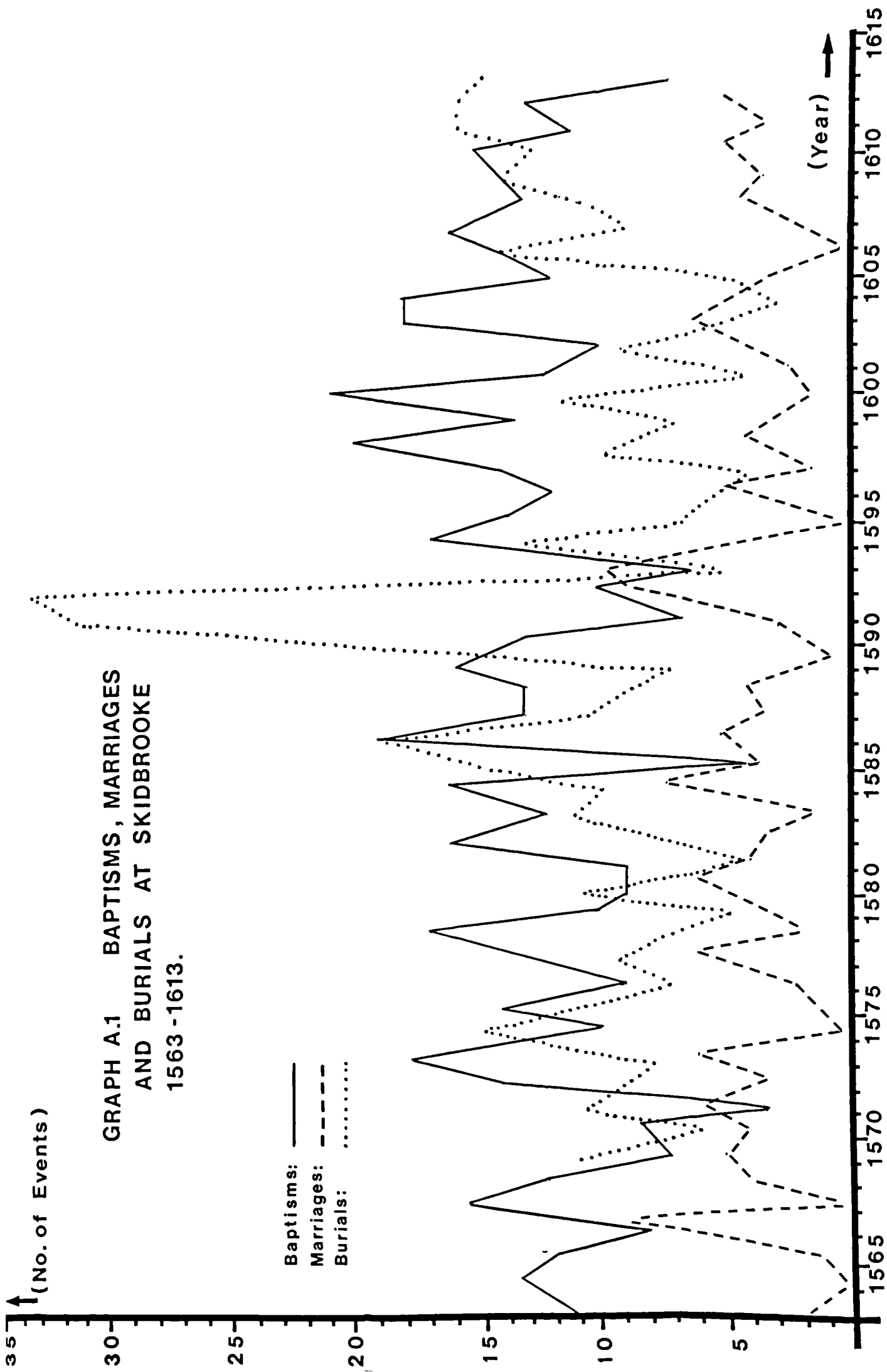
Although the inadequacies of these processes are obvious, their mutual reinforcement may therefore be taken as some evidence that family size in the parish does not appear to have been exceptional, despite the local custom of partible inheritance. We may therefore proceed to suggest a possible estimate of population size and distribution in the parish in the year that the parish register commences (Table A.4). If we allow that 5 is the upper limit for a

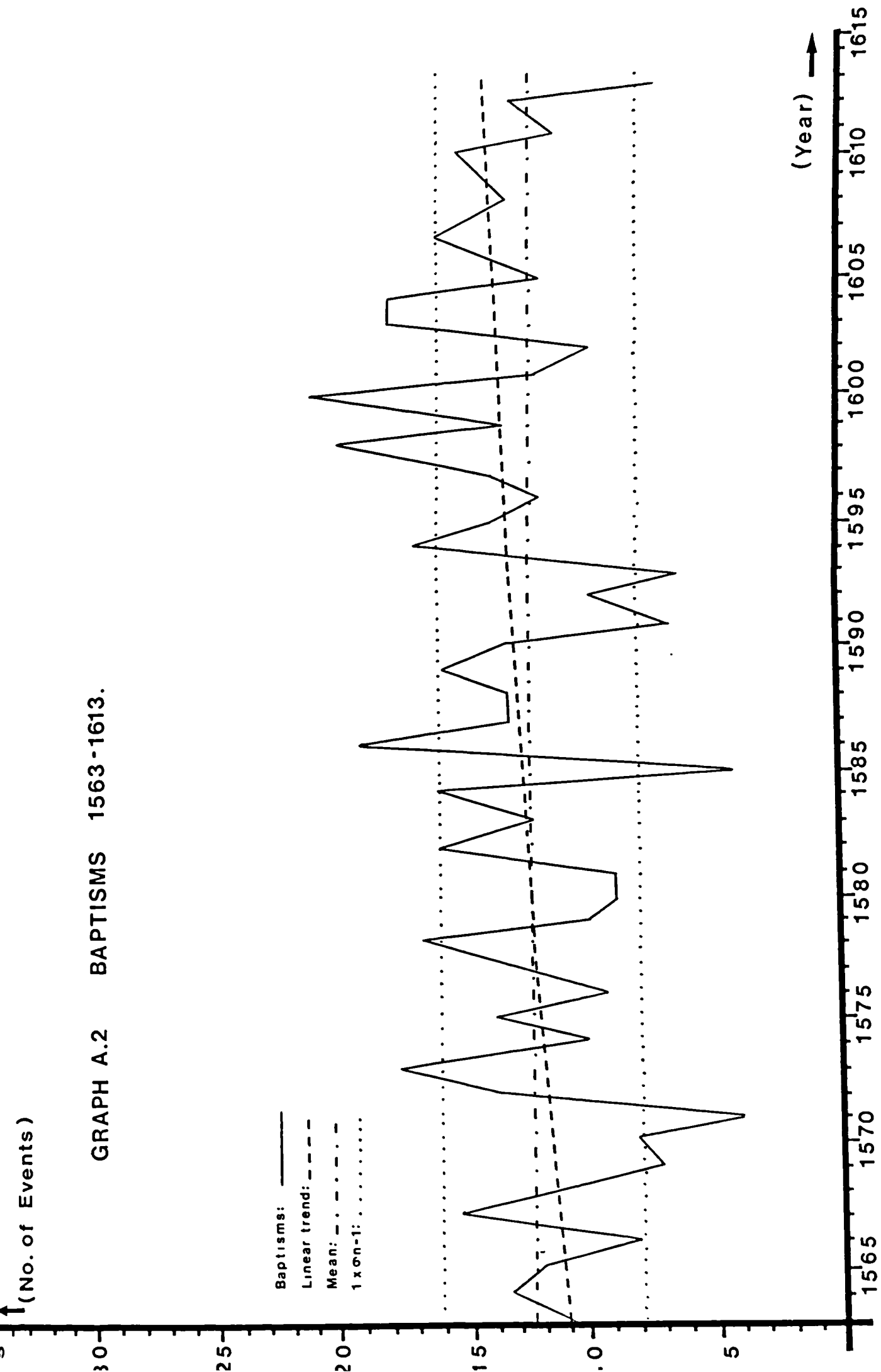
Table A.4. Population of Skidbrooke Parish, 1563  
(From Diocesan Survey)

|                      | No of Households | Possible Population (x 4.5) | %    |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| Skidbrooke Village   | 18               | 81                          | 31.6 |
| Saltfleethaven       | 29               | 130                         | 50.9 |
| North End ("Meales") | 10               | 45                          | 17.5 |
| Total                | 57               | 256                         | 100  |

Notes

Source: Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, p.195, (B.L., Harl. Ms.618)





multiplier, and 4 the lower limit, we may also say that the population at that time lay somewhere between 230 and 285 people, at the absolute lower and upper extents of probability. Accepting that in 1524 the population was between 180 and 200 people there had been a considerable (perhaps 20-25%) increase in the first half of the sixteenth century.

For the period after 1563, more detailed evidence of population levels and changes is provided by the parish registers. These form a continuous and unbroken series between that date and the middle of the seventeenth century, and for the sake of convenience a period of 50 years (up to 1613) has been taken as forming a reasonably  
14  
appropriate unit for analysis. As Graph A.1 shows, in most years the number of baptisms was running slightly ahead of the number of burials. Over the 50 years covered by the baptism register, the mean baptismal rate per annum was about 12.5 and over the 44 complete years of the burial register the crude average number of burials was 10.9  
15  
per annum. It should, however, be noted that abnormally high

14. L.A.O., Skidbrooke-cum-Saltfleet Parish Registers, I, 1563-1654. These have been checked against the bishop's transcripts (*ibid.*), where they survive and adjusted where appropriate. As in most parishes, the first volume of the Skidbrooke register is a transcript made about 1603 in response to an order from the government of that year, and in this case dates back only to 5 Elizabeth (1563). The copy is out of monthly sequence for the first few years, but appears to be reasonably complete. The exception to this is the burials register, which is missing as a separate record until 1567, and unsystematic until 1569. In the following analysis, therefore, 1569 is taken as the starting point for burials data.
15. Except when analysing the incidence of crisis mortality in Section B, the annual totals in this Appendix are computed on the basis of calendar (New Style) years, rather than the "harvest year" generally favoured by demographers, because the village was mainly pastoral. A year beginning at All Saints or Martinmas (the season for herding, slaughtering and salting livestock) might have been even more appropriate.

numbers of burials in 1586 and crisis mortalities in January - February 1591 and late summer 1592 have the effect of over inflating this mean; so that if it is re-calculated for the remaining 41 years the rate per annum drops down to 9.3. In all but exceptional circumstances, therefore, baptisms as an average outpaced burials at the rate of about 2.5 - 3 a year, with an underlying linear trend (Graph A.2) which increased the number of baptisms from 11 each year in 1563 to 14 in 1613.<sup>16</sup> The population, in other words, was growing at a minimum of 1% per annum over this period. This implies that the multiplier commonly proposed for the 1603 "Liber Cleri" (1.66) is absurdly low in the case of this particular parish, since, even if we take the minimum 1563 population of 230 people, this would lead to a figure in excess of 300 people at the turn of the century; whereas the Liber Cleri reports 150 communicants, which multiplies up (x 1.66) to only 249 - less than the more probable estimates of the 1563<sup>17</sup> population.

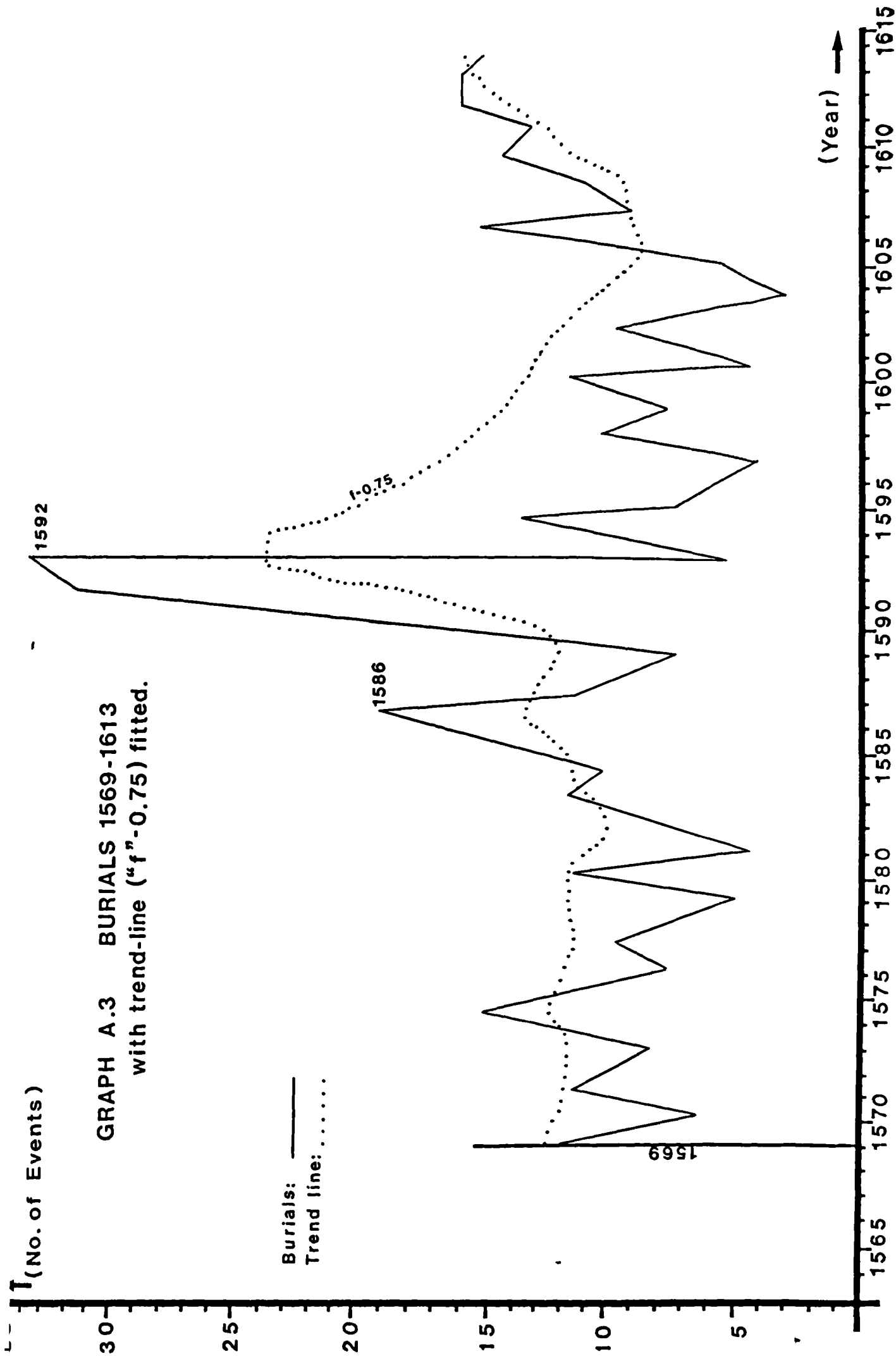
#### B: BURIAL RATES AND MORTALITY CRISES IN SKIDBROOKE 1569-1613

Turning to the graph (Graph A.3) showing annual burial rates in Skidbrooke, we have already noted that certain prominent peaks resulted on two occasions (1586 and 1591-2) in the annual total,

$$16. \quad Y_T = 11.032 + 0.059X_T$$

calculated by the least squares (long) method. This linear estimate of the underlying baptismal trend has been preferred (for all its limitations in a fluctuating series) to one employing a moving average, since the run of years is too short to utilise a long interval (such as 25 years). The periodicity is in any case irregular, and the average therefore open to distortion from the effects of whatever interval is chosen.

17. C.W. Foster, ed., The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I As illustrated by Documents Relating to the Diocese of Lincoln: Volume I, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.23), 1926, p.324. For multipliers, v. Thirsk, 'Sources', loc. cit., pp.132-133 and Drake, ed., op. cit., pp.xxix-xxx.



exceeding one standard deviation above the (unadjusted) mean. The publication of the demographic work of Wrigley and Schofield now allows a much more sophisticated analysis to be made of these local fluctuations. In this, the criteria upon which a particular period is judged to have been "in crisis" are not fixed simply by employing averages (moving or otherwise) but by taking into account what Laslett succinctly calls "the internal structure of the series": regular seasonal changes, the relative size of the parish, the recent and less recent trends and the level of deviation from such factors which is necessary before crisis levels are deemed to have been reached.<sup>18</sup> By isolating extraneous influences, a moving forecast trend-line ("f") is projected for each successive month and a constant crisis-level or severity rate (which might conveniently be referred to as a "ceiling") is fixed in relation to it. The actual data (seasonally adjusted and calculated for the "mortality year" running July - July) is then measured, to see if it lies above or below the "ceiling".<sup>19</sup>

The results identify the precise periods during which crisis levels were reached in the parish and show that these were more isolated than the raw data for burials might have suggested. For example, although an exceptionally high total of burials is recorded for the calendar year 1586, it fails to qualify as a crisis year by the strict definitions of the Wrigley and Schofield technique: in no month did the seasonally adjusted total rise as high as the "ceiling" for any two consecutive months of crisis (5), much less to the level

18. Wrigley and Schofield, The Population History of England, (Appendix 10), pp.645-693; P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost Further Explored, 1983, pp.136-138.

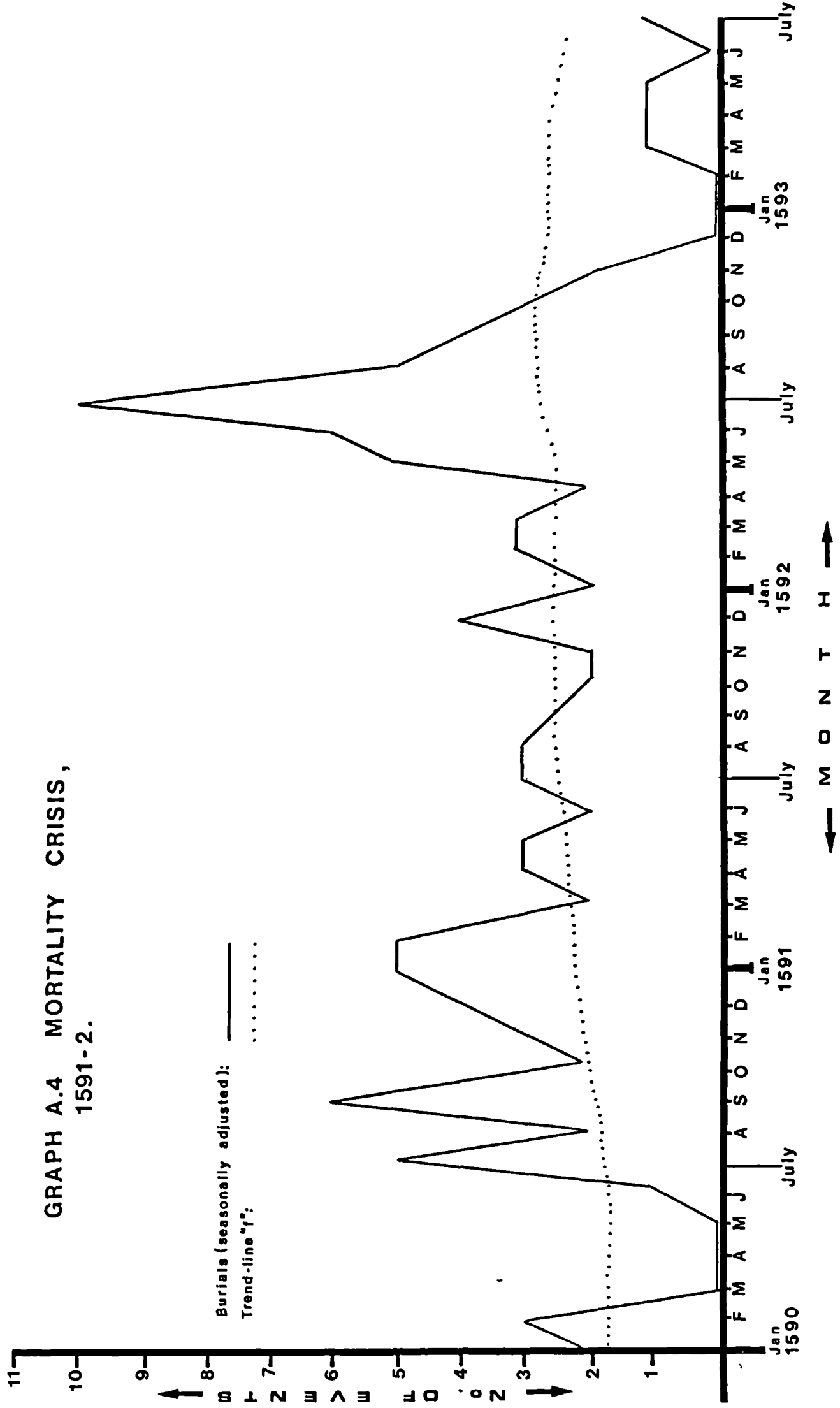
19. A full description of the mathematics of this process can be found in Wrigley and Schofield, op. cit., pp.645-649. It has been applied without alteration to the data extracted from the Skidbrooke burial register (including the initial twenty year "trend fixing" back-run) in order to ensure comparability with the results they produced.

required to qualify a single month (7). The much larger aberration of 1591-2, however, resulted in crisis months in January and February of 1591 (when the ceiling of 5 burials for a run of two consecutive months was reached but not exceeded) and again in July 1592 (when the seasonally adjusted figure of 10 burials rose above the ceiling of 9, at that time established for a single month of crisis). There are also strong grounds for regarding June 1592 as a "de jure" crisis month, although it narrowly failed to count as such under the orthodox<sup>20</sup> interpretation of the Wrigley and Schofield guide lines.

In the absence of any identifiable national mortality crises, it is difficult to attribute causes to these local ones. We know that a number of areas did experience "1 star" and "2 star" mortality crises in 1591-1592 and again in 1592-1593, although on nothing like the scale of the national harvest failures in the last years of the decade. Both events are suggested by Wrigley and Schofield to have been plague epidemics, but the profile outlined by them (in which it began in autumn 1592 and continued until autumn 1593) does not correspond very closely with the peak months of burials

20. The two severity rate "ceilings" (representing 2.05 and 3.36 standard errors above the forecast trend-line "f" respectively) were deliberately set at a very demanding level by Wrigley and Schofield so that random fluctuations were not mistaken for crises. A corollary of this is that if one month just fails to qualify, its figures are then included in the next computation of "f", and over a run of several months this can have the effect of raising the "ceiling" even higher. "Blips" can therefore develop in the forecast trend-line, particularly noticeable in the period 1590-1600 (Graph A.3).

GRAPH A.4 MORTALITY CRISIS,  
1591-2.



at Skidbrooke. In these years the plague was also generally supposed<sup>21</sup> to have been confined to London and its environs. The concentration of the Skidbrooke crisis between the months June - October is strongly suggestive of one of the late summer infections (such as bubonic or pneumonia plague or dysentery). In contrast, winter peaks such as that of January - February 1591 were commonly caused by viral infections, such as influenza.

\* \* \* \* \*

21. Ibid., pp.152, 334, 654-655. It is, of course, possible, that plague could have been spread from rats aboard the vessels entering Saltfleet haven. Although no direct contact is recorded with London in this period, Newcastle coasters, (which sailed the whole length of the East Coast) were regular visitors.

## APPENDIX V

## APPENDIX V

### THE TOPOGRAPHY OF SALTFLEET HAVEN



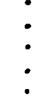
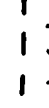

Even the most casual visitor to Saltfleet cannot fail to be struck by the lack of physical contiguity between the nucleus of the village and the haven from which it takes its name. For normal tides, the high water mark is now the Black Gowt sluice, in the south-eastern corner of the parish and several minutes walk away from the main settlement north of "Mill Lane" (a modern track).

There seems no reason to doubt that the focus of the medieval town of Saltfleethaven (established as an outlying hamlet of Skidbrooke in the thirteenth century) was on a small hill rising to about 22 feet above sea-level and sheltered behind the sand-dunes which extend southwards from Somercotes. Even in the early nineteenth century, we know that there were virtually no buildings south of the New Inn, except for a windmill on the old sea-bank.<sup>1</sup> However, the eccentric location of the haven is not easily reconciled with the place-name evidence of the medieval period. Strictly speaking, the town itself never acquired an independent name and was simply identified with the formerly uninhabited environs of "saltfleet-haven" a tidal inlet which was a feature of the local landscape long before its first documentary mention in Domesday Book.<sup>2</sup>

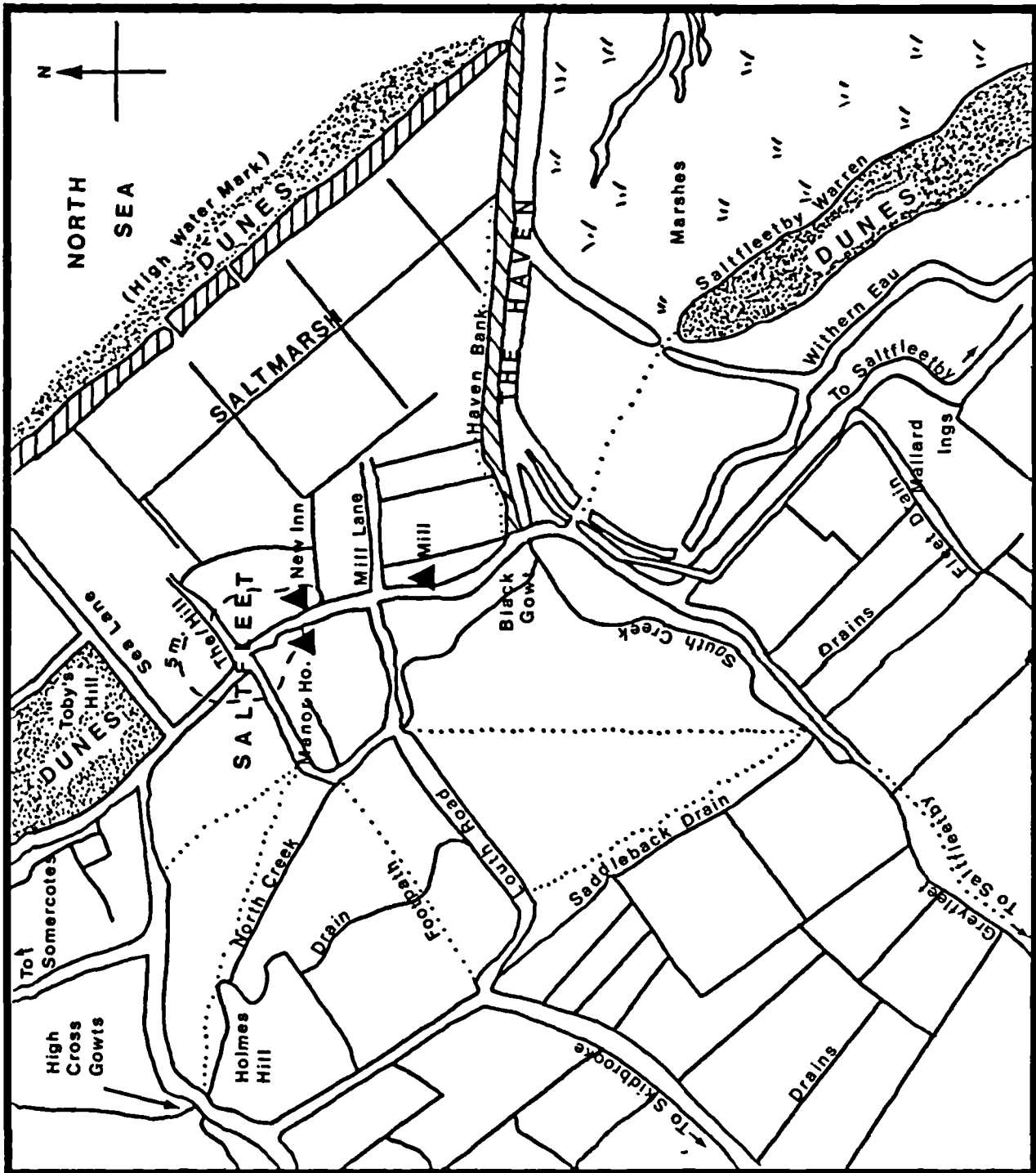
Ekwall considered that the creek in question was the Withern Eau, but this has been convincingly refuted by Owen. He, in turn, identified it with the North Creek, and demonstrated that this was

1. A.E.B. Owen, 'The Early History of Saltfleet Haven', L.A.A.S.R.P., 5, 1954, P.91.
2. Supra, Chapter 2. The creek must have been significant enough for the village of "Saltfleetby" to retain the O.E. element unchanged when it received its name (probably in the tenth century).

**KEY:**

-  = Sea Banks
-  = Dunes
-  = Paths & tracks
-  = 5 metre contour
-  = Marshland

Scale: about 6" to 1 mile



tidal up to half a mile above the Black Gowt in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but he did not directly address the problem of the physical divorce between haven and township. Yet, if the tide did indeed reach as far as Holmes Hill in this period, and if the haven was large enough to accept the 24 ships from Hastings on which Asger of Skidbrooke charged a toll shortly after the Conquest, it is evident that a far larger arm of the sea is indicated than that which currently exists. The objective of this Appendix is therefore to consider what evidence can be found to support this proposition and to attempt to reconstruct the position of the head of the haven during the period of concern to this thesis.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of the boats which now use the haven tie-up along the first quarter of a mile of an embanked channel, which runs from the gowts to the modern sea-defences. All of this was constructed in the first half of the nineteenth century. The watercourse itself was created in 1832 to supersede the crooked creek which used to lie somewhat to the north of it and which is clearly indicated both on the 1853 enclosure plan and on the first edition of the Ordnance map (surveyed between 1818 and 1820). When the saltmarsh was enclosed in 1854 the embankment was then erected on the northern side of this channel, to protect the reclamation; and the new haven itself was used to define the parish boundary between Skidbrooke and Saltfleetby St. Clements (which, until then, had never been clearly established). As the modern map shows, the mouth of the haven has now

3. E. Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names, 4th edition, 1960, p.403; Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.90-93, 98-100; C.W. Foster and T. Longley, eds., The Lincolnshire Domesday and the Lindsey Survey, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol.19), 1924, pp.214-215.

been pushed by the prevailing longshore drift to a position roughly  
4  
identical to that prior to 1832.

Before the saltmarsh was reclaimed, the tide had been accustomed to come in about a quarter of a mile further than it now does, up to the dunes behind which the village itself was built. The New Inn, for example, originally backed directly onto the beach and from the end of the eighteenth century it had been providing "bathing  
5  
machines" for the use of its guests. Between here and the Saltfleetby dunes, therefore, there were no natural sea-defences and only half a mile of artificial banks prevented the area to the west from being inundated at high tides. These banks were constructed in 1648, in a major engineering undertaking, the orders for which survive in the records of the county's courts of sewers. After over 20 years of petitioning and attempting to raise the costs by a "charitable benevolence" and other expedients, the marshland villages (as far away as Louth) were finally obliged to shoulder the costs - some £1,100 - for a new system of gowts and sluices, to be installed "in the most conyeinient place betwixt the two hills of Saltflethauen nye the Mannor house on the North And the hill over against it in Salfletby Warren on the south". After this, a dyke or bank "sufficient to keep out the sea" was then thrown up across the top of the sluice, extending between the same northern and southern limits. All the waters which fed the haven were to be collected together into two

4. L.A.O., Longley 1/19 and Goulding 4A/1/10/20; ibid., Skidbrooke Saltmarsh Enclosure, 1853 Lindsey Award 117.
5. D.N. Robinson, The Book of the Lincolnshire Seaside, 1981, pp. 57-58; idem., 'Coastal Evolution in North-East Lincolnshire', East Midlands Geography, 5, 1970, p.66. The Hon. John Byng, who ate a disagreeable lunch at the New Inn in 1791, called it "a wretched inn-bathing house" - The Torrington Diaries, (ed., C. Bruyn Andrews), 1935, Vol.II, pp.385-387.

tunnels - one for the North and South Creeks, the other for the Withern Eau and Saltfleetby drains - "and to be so kept till they be clear through the sluice and then meeting together in the haven may goe powerfully downe together to the sea". Despite some later alterations to this arrangement, it is recognizably the forerunner of "the Gowts" of today; and the northern half of the sea-bank (from the Manor House opposite the New Inn as far as this point) can still be traced on the ground, with the mill and some modern houses now standing upon it.<sup>6</sup>

Before the middle of the seventeenth century, the haven could therefore have occupied the whole of the gap which these new sea-defences had plugged. Indeed, sixteenth century evidence from the manor court rolls suggests that this was so. In 1561 some of the lord's tenants at Saltfleet were granted the liberty to graze their animals on the hills along the seashore, between Chapel Lane and the port ("a chappel Lane vs[que] ad port[um]"). A near-contemporary order also instructed tenants not to cut gorse on the dunes between "le haven" and Firebeacon Hill (= Toby's Hill). We also know that, until its enclosure at the time of the 1838 Tithe Award, the wasteland east of the North Creek, between the Louth Road and the Black Gowt, was known as "the Coal Green". This description makes little sense in the context of the post-1648 topography, but may well indicate that part of the former shoreline on which colliers once beached to unload their cargoes.<sup>7</sup>

6. Acts of the Privy Council (1621-1623), p.437; L.A.O., Louth Sewers (Laws), bundle 1631-1649; ibid., Lindsey Misc. Sewers, bundle 1, no. 55. The Manor House is a seventeenth century brick building, dated by Harris "sometime before 1673" - N. Pevsner and J. Harris, The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire, 1964, p.346.
7. L.A.O., 1 ANC 3/13/28/1 (27/3/1561), 1 ANC 3/13/26/3 (1/10/1549); ibid., Skidbrooke Tithe Award, 1838, L83. "Green", when applied to field-names, is often indicative of marshy ground - J. Field, English Field-Names, 1972, p.93.

If this area represents the sixteenth or early seventeenth century high-water mark, the haven itself must have reached even deeper inland than this when the tide was in. We know, from numerous sources, that prior to the 1648 improvements the sea carried in with it quantities of sand and silt, which the waters flowing down from the marshlands were ultimately insufficient to dislodge. As a result, many larger vessels would have been unable to enter very far up the haven itself. The 1648 orders complained that "the ancient harbour or Hauen belonging to Salflet is quite decayed and growne vp by the silt & sande whiche choaketh the same to the great hindrance of navigac[i]on". The waters of Withern Eau, which provided one of the most essential sources of scour, were being diverted in 1600 some distance upstream from Saltfleet. All of this was on top of the decay already well progressed at Saltfleet when the haven commissioners<sup>8</sup> reported in 1565.

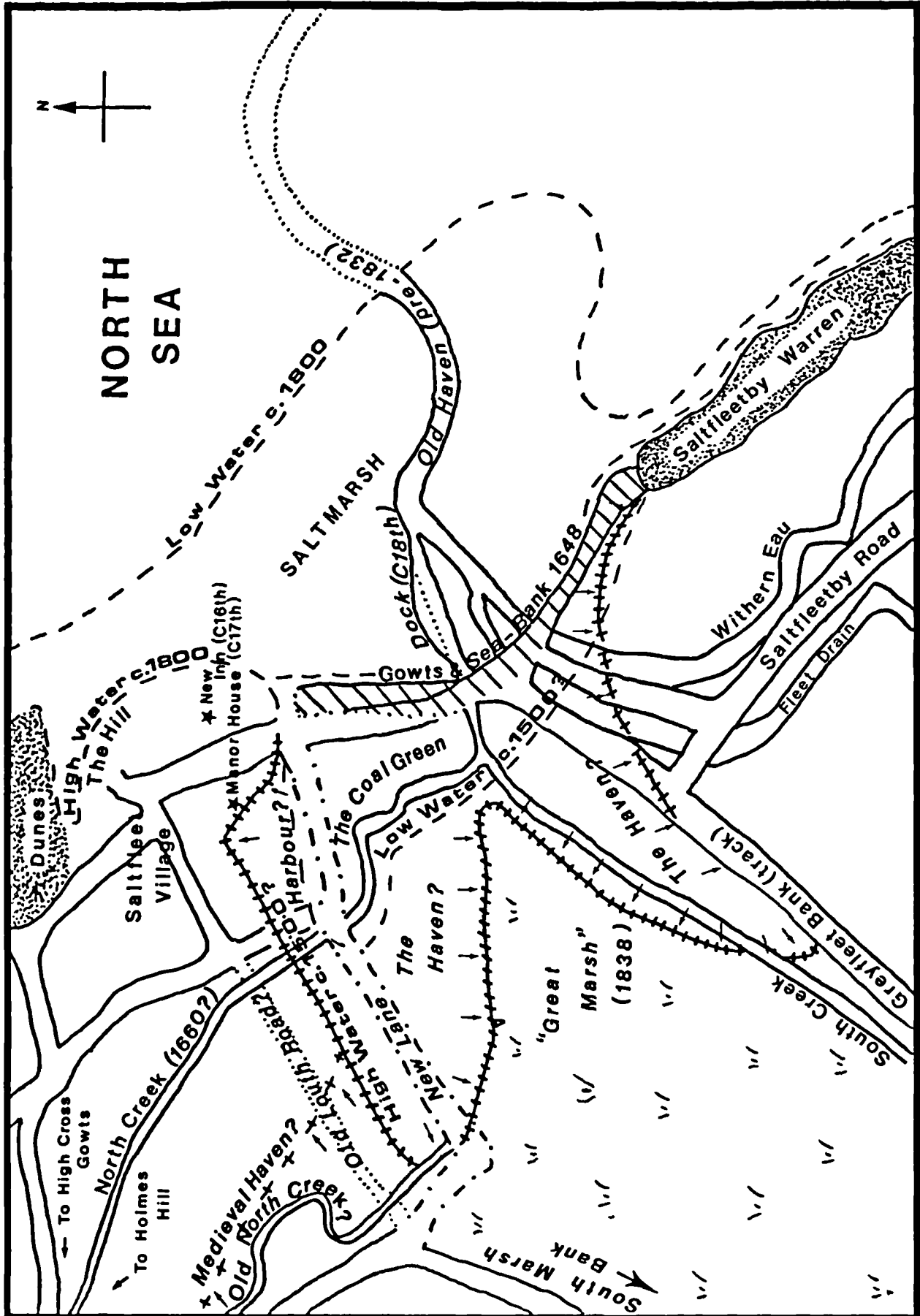
There are a number of topographical clues which suggest where we might look for the upper reaches of the haven at an earlier period. The ground between the Louth Road and the South Creek was undrained marshland as late as the early nineteenth century, and the dyke along Saddleback Drain to its west (at that time known as "South Marsh Bank") is considerable enough to suggest that it was designed to resist an onslaught from the sea. The current course of the North Creek has every appearance of being an artificial cut - probably that dug in 1660 "from ye High Crosse Goate & Grift out end by a strei[ght] lyne to the sea" - replacing an old channel (now reduced to a drain)<sup>9</sup> to its west. It may therefore be significant that the original North

8. Acts of the Privy Council (1600-1601), pp.46-47; P.R.O., E/178/1273 (cf. supra, Chapter 4).

9. L.A.O., Lindsey Misc. Sewers, bundle 3, no. 1/9.

KEY:

- |                                      |                           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| --- = tidal limits (approx.)         | ++++ = possible extent of |
| [stippled] = dunes                   | C16th haven               |
| [hatched] = sea-bank                 | + + = possible extent of  |
| - . - . = 'New Lane' (reconstructed) | medieval haven            |
- (Features in *italics* are reconstructions.)



Scale: about 8" to the mile.

Creek now comes to an abrupt end at its intersection with the Louth Road. This runs along the fringes of the marsh, and was known in the nineteenth century as "New Lane"; prompting the conclusion that it replaced an original highway which was a continuation of the main east-west street of Saltfleet village and which is now reduced to a footpath. Whatever its date, it is certainly possible that the construction of New Lane represents a particular phase in the warping-up of the haven, in the wake of which the adjacent marshland would inevitably have retreated southwards with it.<sup>10</sup>

The clearest affirmation of this is that documents of the sixteenth century and earlier demonstrate the existence, in the village itself, of tenements which once backed directly onto the harbour. For example, the property known as "Parkhouse Green" belonged (as its name implies) to the Abbey of Louth Park until 1545, when it was procured by John Broxholme and John Bellow (two avid purchasers of ex-monastic estates). Besides a house, there was also a "steyre" or "staithe" there, which opened directly onto the haven and which Broxholme was ordered on 3 occasions between 1550 and 1553 to put into better repair. The same landing-place seems to have marked the head of the haven for administrative purposes: "And Nobody is to put any nets called butt nett[es] in le haven, that is to say between the sea and le Steyre, on pain of 3s. 4d.", (manor court rolls,<sup>11</sup> 1549). Among those who used this staithe to load and unload their

10. "New" may, of course, mean any date; but it is indicative of an alteration.

11. G.A.J. Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire, (History of Lincolnshire, Vol. 6), 1975, pp.59-60 (on Broxholme and Bellow); P.R.O., SC6/Hen 8 2006, m.43d (survey of lands of dissolved religious houses); L.A.O., HARM 3/2/4; *ibid.*, 1 ANC 3/13/19 (20/3/1543), 1 ANC 3/13/26/3-5 (1/10/1549, 5/4/1550, 16/9/1552), 1 ANC 3/13/27/1 (14/9/1553).

goods was John Garbray, who imported 19 chaldrons of Newcastle coal into either Saltfleet or Boston (aboard "the Botulph" of Saltfleethaven) in 1553; and who was fined in the same year for taking an illegal distress at Parkhouse Green, no doubt in connection with his merchantile dealings. William Thompson, the tenant of the house on Parkhouse Green until his death in 1544, spoke in his will of a quantity of timber which he stored "at ye haven syde", while his sons were (not surprisingly) frequent offenders in the matter of erecting traps and stake-nets in the harbour. Henry Thompson, for instance, put "certain retes, in English nett[es], in le haffen to the annoyance of the lord's tenants" in 1543, and trespassed in the fishery there with eel-garths ("instrument[is] voc[antur] elgars") in 1545.<sup>12</sup>

Other havenside messuages are the subject of fourteenth and fifteenth century charters. One lease of 1431 concerned "a messuage built in Saltfleethaven with 5 ells of empty land on the north side, and a vacant plot next the harbour". Another, in 1334, granted to Walter Randman and his family "a messuage in the vill of Skidbrooke at Saltfleethaven" and "a plot of land there 32 feet by 16 feet, butting south on the harbour". The most likely location for the Randman land must be on the south side of the east-west street in the village.<sup>13</sup>

All of this is concurrent with the evidence of twelfth century salt-working at Holmes Hill, further to the north-west of the village. By the time of the charter evidence, most of the salterns had already been converted to pasture land, and the tide must therefore have been penetrating far less deeply into the creek. At

12. P.R.O., E122/12/25, fo. 4v (Boston Certificate Book, 7 Edw. VI); L.A.O., LCC Will 1543-5/362; *ibid.*, 1 ANC 3/13/19 (20/3/1543, 28/10/1545), 1 ANC 3/13/27/1 (14/9/1553).

13. L.A.O., 2 ANC 1/7/52, 2 ANC 1/7/44, 2 ANC 2/15/2, (6/5/1417).

the beginning of the thirteenth century, Roger son of Wignot Knotting granted land to Lincoln Cathedral church which included a number of acres of arable and both halves of a "salt-meadow"; and another contemporary charter mentions "1 perch of arable in Saltecoteholm". Among the property confirmed to Louth Park Abbey in 1314 was "as much of the holm of Ranulph de Somercotes in Saltfleet as ran southwards from the wall on the north ('Nordparte') of their house to the water, and as much as runs from that 'Crike' on the west side of the house to the east side of the said Holm". These bounds seem to indicate the North Creek on the western side, and "the water" ("aqua", probably meaning the haven) on the south. In view of the location, it may even  
14  
be the original grant of the later Parkhouse Green.

It is in the context of the slow accumulation of salters' debris and silt in the thirteenth century that we must turn, in conclusion, to the question of the Withern Eau diversion. Owen has produced a considerable amount of evidence to support his view that, at some time between 1330 and 1347, some ambitious re-channelling work diverted the Withern Eau away from its original outfall (preserved in the line of the Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe parish boundary) along several miles of artificial cut and into Saltfleet haven, with the intention of scouring the harbour and keeping it open for ships. The course of the river from Saltfleetby to Saltfleet is evidently the result of some such undertaking and documentary evidence indicates that it must have been completed by the middle of the fourteenth  
15  
century at the latest.

14. K. Major, ed., The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, Vol. V, (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 34), 1940, pp.181-183 (nos. 548, 550); Calendar of Charter Rolls, III, (1300-1326), p.255.
15. Owen, 'Early History of Saltfleet Haven', loc. cit., pp.98-100; cf. supra, Chapter 3, Map 5.

If, as the foregoing has urged, the head of the haven was at that time somewhere near the intersection of the North Creek and the Louth Road, it is certainly of interest to note that a projection of the Withern Eau in a straight line north of Mallard Ings, (from which point it has obviously been interfered with by later drainage changes), would bring it to more or less precisely this position.

Moreover, manuscript evidence, left unconsulted by Owen, not only reinforces his original suggestion but goes some way towards establishing a more precise date for this venture. The arrest of vessels in Lincolnshire creeks between 1337 and 1339 demonstrates that no ships were impressed on this occasion at Saltfleethaven itself, whilst a quite exceptional number (including 6 from Saltfleet) were at anchor in the silted and almost disused Northcotes harbour. It appears likely that Saltfleet was open in 1335 when John Wilkok complained that Walter de Leggesby had underpaid him for working on his ship "vlt[ra] p[rae]ter[ea] in vill[a] de Skidbrok", and by the early 1340s its fishing industry was thriving. It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that the arrests of 1337-1339 took place at precisely the time when the decision to introduce the waters of the Withern Eau into Saltfleet haven had temporarily rendered access to it difficult, thus forcing traffic to the previously  
16  
redundant harbour at Northcotes.

If the above interpretations are correct, they simply confirm that Saltfleet was not immune from the phenomenon of "haven creep" which afflicted most of the Lincolnshire inlets. In the twelfth century, it

16. P.R.O., C47/2/30, (cf. supra, Chapter 4, Table 5); Robinson, 'Coastal Evolution', loc. cit., p.63.

was apparently normal for the tide to reach a point well to the north-west of the township, from which it was thereafter gradually but relentlessly receding. By the early sixteenth century, it may be that it had reached a point somewhere in the area of the Louth Road, and that thenceforth silting became ever more rapid, until the new sluice and sea-bank finally redefined the drainage pattern in the middle of the seventeenth century. It is not impossible, on the grounds of this assumption, that the back lane which now runs from the main east-west village street parallel with North Creek, represents a possible former position for the quayside, and that the "jetty", which is known to have existed at Saltfleet in the sixteenth century, ran out somewhere in this vicinity to protect the village (and particularly the tenements below the hill) from the influx of the sea. Whether this was so or not, it appears that the disjunction between village and haven is a comparatively recent feature of the landscape.

\* \* \* \* \*

17. Repairs were put into effect on this "Jettie" (apparently a substantial structure and not merely a series of groynes) in November-December 1571, presumably after damage caused by the catastrophic "High Tide" of 5th October that year - L.A.O., Alford Severs (Dykereeves Accounts), Louthesk, bundle 10, nos. 6-7.

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