

The Vitality of an Elizabethan Port: The Economy of Poole, c.1550–1600

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According to most informed opinion both then and now the port towns of the south and west were far from prosperous in the second half of the sixteenth century. The earl of Leicester noted this in a letter of 1587 to Francis Walsingham, finding the south coast towns 'very ill', not so much because of the war with Spain but chiefly, he thought, because of decay in the cloth industry, which had hurt both clothiers and merchants. Warning of the urgency of this situation, he concluded that 'the bow ys drawn to the highest already; hit might break yf yt strecheth so lytle higher'.¹ Lord Burghley confirmed this state in an oft-quoted memorandum of the following decade.² The verdict has been carried down to the present by several historians, and not just for the '80s and '90s. G.D. Ramsay has called the 1560s 'a period of insecurity and adaptation (in commerce) such as had never before been experienced, and altogether the most difficult decade of the century'.³ Lawrence Stone noted for the same decade that 'London held a monopoly of commercial activity while every other port in the Kingdom, with the possible exception of Bristol, appears to have been in an advanced state of decay'.⁴ To the familiar explanation for this parlous state provided by the evidence of London's grip on national commerce has been added the impact of losing both Calais and the Dutch trade from the 1560s.⁵

Although the Dorset port of Poole certainly began to feel the pinch of these conditions by the time Leicester wrote in the '80s, it does not seem to have suffered until then, nor does it seem to have followed the patterns of economic decline experienced by most other provincial ports of that time, from Bristol⁶ in the west to the Cinque Ports in the southeast.⁷ Instead, Poole maintained distinct prosperity right up to the 1580s: a few decades later than blight had set in elsewhere.

The evidence for this continued prosperity derives from three areas of Poole's economic profile: its population and population structure; its secular building activities; and its trade and shipping. The aim of the pages which follow is twofold: first to establish the persistence of this prosperity up to the middle of Elizabeth's reign, and then to account for it. The conclusions which derive from these issues bear

serious implications for our view both of urban development and commercial resilience in this era.

The demographic analysis of pre-industrial communities carried out primarily by members of the Cambridge Group for Population Studies over the past two decades has produced an accepted consensus regarding the theoretic profile of population structure in a prosperous community. Such a community should in theory have a higher than average mean household size, achieved by a relatively high proportion of children and servants in the population, and a low proportion of either broken families or single person households.⁸ Thanks to the survival of a very rare town census carried out in Poole in May, 1574,⁹ it has been possible to compare the structure of Poole's population at that precise time with the theoretic norms established by the Cambridge Group, especially as expressed in the work of Peter Laslett. As this analysis of Poole's population has been carried out elsewhere it will suffice for the present simply to summarize the extent to which Poole's population structure reflects a comfortably well off community in the mid-1570s.¹⁰ Its 'refined' mean household size of 5.06 persons (reckoned on the basis of household population of 1354 distributed among 266 households) proved substantially above the norm of 4.75 established by Laslett after his analysis of one hundred pre-industrial communities. In addition, Poole proved to have fewer 'solitaire' households, a larger proportion of households with children (79.7% as opposed to the established norm of 74.16%), and a larger proportion as well with servants in the total population (by a margin of 14.5% to 13.4%). Finally, where Laslett and others had found that households could not generally support increases in both servant and sibling numbers as mean household size increased, we have found that in Poole the mean size of *both* servant and sibling group rose steadily along with household size:¹¹ on the whole, the population of Poole could afford both more children and more servants as household size grew.

All these factors point to a community experiencing substantial personal prosperity and a growing population. Fortunately, the survival of an apparently reliable population estimate for the year 1565 (1222 total inhabitants)¹² provides a point of comparison with the known gross population (1375) listed in the census for 1574, and permits us to establish a rate of growth at least for the interval between those dates of a strikingly high 1.51% *per annum*: again a sure indication of a prosperous community!

A second telltale sign of community prosperity may be found in the

construction of private homes and public buildings in the same early Elizabethan period. Indeed, there can be few industrial enterprises in the early modern period requiring more capital expenditure than the construction of buildings,¹³ and both architectural and documentary evidence points to two chief periods of such construction in sixteenth century Poole (following on the heels of an even earlier period of construction in the late fifteenth century). The first of these extended from the 1520s to the early 1540s, when numerous houses, a windmill and a lengthy water conduit were constructed.¹⁴ The second came in the 1560s and '70s, the very period under our scrutiny, and here it is possible to be more precise about the extent of such construction. The Survey of Dorset Ports carried out in 1565 listed 201 houses, all noted as fully occupied, in Poole;¹⁵ the census of 1574 listed 226;¹⁶ a net increase (i.e., allowing for the possibility of some houses being taken or falling down) of 25 houses. Expansion in the 'public sector' in this period was nearly as impressive: a town hall, new market hall and prison were all built between 1569 and 1572.¹⁷ Curiously, the market hall proved inconveniently situated adjacent to the town hall, and so was simply taken down at a cost of some £8 and erected elsewhere;¹⁸ surely the modern age has no monopoly on bad planning!

The third indication of prosperity derives from the statistics of commerce itself, especially those yielded up in the enrolled customs accounts up to 1565 (classed in the Public Record Office as series Exchequer 122) and the Port Books (E. 190) thereafter. Though these sources are most enticing in their apparent fulness, several decades of experience with them by such historians of commerce as Carus Wilson, Coleman, Williams, Hinton, Dietz and others have identified the numerous pitfalls for all who would exploit them as sources.¹⁹ It is not at all encouraging to note Professor Willan's warning about the poor state of the Poole Port Books in particular, though he is entirely accurate in his assessment.²⁰

These sundry caveats duly noted, however, such sources still have great value if they are used with care. For purposes of this paper, it has been considered more prudent (a) to record the number of declared voyages in and out of Poole rather than to tabulate cargoes either by declared content or declared value; and (b) to note the number of ships identified as being Poole or non-Poole ships – information which it was difficult and pointless to falsify (see Table A). These indicators should provide an overall view of the relative – if not absolute – volume of trade, and of the control of that trade, passing through Poole. Even so, we must bear in mind that these voyages declared for customs purposes will fall short of the actual

comings and goings of cargo by anywhere from 25% – 50%.²¹ After the imposition of the new Book of Rates in 1558, the actual totals will likely have been closer to 50% higher than those declared.²² Although the actual extent of smuggling, privateering, or the simple ‘cooking’ of records cannot of course be known, these activities were obviously as rife around Poole as elsewhere.²³

Despite lamentable gaps in the returns for Poole customs, we may thus at least perceive general patterns of overseas trade for the first three-quarters of the sixteenth century and some of the early seventeenth, and of coastal trade for the last third of the sixteenth (Appendix, Table A). In this span we note a flourishing overseas trade first from the 1520s to the mid-1540s – conforming, interestingly, to the first apparent sixteenth century period of domestic building in the town – and a recovery from the slump of the 1550s for the unusual second period of commercial vigour from the late 1550s to the early 1580s with which we are chiefly concerned. Despite the almost certain increase in the proportion of smuggled or otherwise unrecorded cargoes after the customs reforms of 1558, the recorded overseas voyages in and out of Poole harbour for the Exchequer year 1573 – 1574 are actually greater in number than for any of the 26 years for which totals may be recovered for Poole trade going back to 1466. Such dynamic overseas trade is partly balanced by a gradual decline in recorded coastal trade in the same decades, but we unfortunately lack an earlier basis of comparison with which to assess these coastal figures. Turning from the tabulation of recorded cargoes themselves to the question of who controlled the shipping which bore them, it is clear that Poole ships played an increasing role in the trade carried through their home port, and that the number of ships identified with Poole – i.e., the home fleet – grew in this period (Table B).

Thus far, then, we have a picture of considerable prosperity in the port town of Poole in the early decades of Elizabeth’s reign while such ports as Bristol, possibly Southampton and certainly Chester and the Cinque Ports came on hard times. Population grew at a substantial (but not excessive) rate – in fact it did so even in some of the impoverished towns – and its structure indicated a profile of community prosperity. Building activity, both in regard to private houses and public buildings, grew apace. Maritime trade (and shipping), the keystone to the health of any port, seems to have recovered from the trough of the 1550s. Our task must now be to discover why Poole remained economically resilient in the first two decades of Elizabeth’s reign while many of its rivals and neighbouring ports did not.

As Dr. Olive Coleman noted in an important essay on the port of Southampton, 'urban wealth, or rather the wealth of town dwellers as distinct from the money in the civic coffers, must come primarily from industry, from trade, or from the sale of services'.²⁴ Let us examine these activities in turn to see what each might have contributed to Poole's economic resiliency.

There can be no doubt that Poole enjoyed substantial industrial development, at least for that age, by the early *seventeenth* century, founded especially on the Newfoundland fisheries (from the 1580s) and the extraction and export of fine white clay for the manufacture of tobacco pipes. Yet neither activity had been developed by the opening decades of Elizabeth's reign. What served then as an industrial base if, indeed, anything at all?

The attempt to manufacture saltpetre – the essential ingredient in gunpowder – by an inhabitant of Poole took place at an earlier time than possibly anywhere else in the realm. A Poole mercer named Richard Browne had built a saltpetre furnace close by at Wimborne around 1540, but the operation was taken over during the Anglo-French hostilities of that decade to make saltpetre for the Crown, and the furnace seems to have come to grief in the process. Its brickwork became damaged and it doesn't seem to have returned to active production.²⁵ Similarly, the well-financed project to extract alum in the Poole vicinity from the 1560s also proved a disappointment, though it did produce substantial amounts of the useful chemical known as copperas.²⁶ Like alum, this was used in the dying of cloth and the making of ink.

Unlike some port towns, Poole enjoyed little cloth production in its region (though its merchants vended cloth produced over a wide area) but it may have had a leather tanning industry near the water supply at Tatnam just to the north: the export of skins and hides to the Channel Islands constituted a major local enterprise.²⁷ Closely related is the apparent existence of a butchery industry, including John Swayne, a Blandford butcher who let a shop and cellars in the town, and other victualling industries geared for export or ship supply.²⁸ Some evidence of shipbuilding has also been found, and certainly the large imports of shipping supplies could easily have supported more than mere maintenance operations.²⁹ Finally, the brewing of beer was a particularly important activity as far back as the fifteenth century when ale was still more common than beer. This industry had become surprisingly advanced by Elizabeth's reign, in terms of both of its industrial organization – in which the meagre activities of numerous part-time brewers had been consolidated into the substantial production of a few – and the quantities produced,

which for several decades had already sufficed for steady exports as well as for home consumption.³⁰ Yet despite this brewing and other activities, it can hardly be said that Poole enjoyed much of an industrial base even in its most prosperous years before the seventeenth century.

Most of the services provided by Poole inhabitants were necessarily and closely tied to commerce. Like, for example, Chester,³¹ Poole had few particularly wealthy country gentry in its hinterland for whom luxury services might lucratively be provided. It had several inns and alehouses which served merchants who came by sea and by road, although Poole's location off the major inland routes precluded much passing traffic of a casual nature. Again because of the characteristics of its hinterland, little could be gained by services to agriculture.³² Poole's greatest service activity lay in shipping, and in a sense the sea served as a kind of hinterland for the town so modestly endowed with economic resources ashore. Poole men carried cargoes for the merchants of numerous ports besides their own, and their role in shipping the goods of ports like Southampton was well regarded.³³

Without doubt, the chief business of Poole was business itself. The town hosted an important entrepôt service greatly aided by the construction of the commodious town cellars or 'hall' sometime before the sixteenth century.³⁴ Though it may have contravened by-laws regarding the permissible venues of trade, we know that many goods were also stored before sale in the homes and cellars of individual Poole merchants, and that bargains were often struck in such private premises instead of in the market itself.³⁵ A distinct asset to such commerce was the availability of ready justice in local courts, including (after the town's incorporation as a County of itself in 1568) the Mayor's Court, Sheriff's tourn, Court of pie-power, Poole quarter sessions, the Poole Court of the Admiralty, and the Court of the Staple of Poole, all of which shared some jurisdiction over the conduct of commercial affairs.³⁶ All of these activities, of course, revolved around commerce, and in the end we must turn to such commerce, especially as carried by sea, to understand much about the economy of Poole.

In several respects Poole's commercial development remained distinct from that of many other or perhaps even most ports in the south and west at that time. Poole retained a viable harbour. It developed a more diversified and flexible trade overseas, thus becoming less vulnerable to the collapse of commerce with a particular partner or in a particular commodity. It seems to have avoided the destructive effects which London and Londoners had on

provincial ports. Finally, it developed from an early point an especially strong and important trade with the Channel Islands which proved absolutely crucial to its overall commercial success even in difficult years. These points warrant careful consideration.

Though it could never boast the natural assets of Southampton's harbour or the artificially constructed assets of Lyme's Cobb, Poole harbour remained fairly stable and – with periodic maintenance – reliable. Thus it avoided the silting and ruination experienced in Melcombe Regis (whose ruined anchorage caused it to cede its staple to Poole in the 15th century),³⁷ Chester,³⁸ Sandwich,³⁹ Dover,⁴⁰ New Romney,⁴¹ and other south or west coast ports. While Poole's harbour certainly required regular dredging to clear silt or illicitly dumped ballast,⁴² it retained a minimum depth of twelve to fourteen feet throughout the century,⁴³ provided shelter from Channel storms, could at least in theory be defended from Brownsea Island,⁴⁴ and – like Southampton – enjoyed four daily tides instead of two.⁴⁵ Ships of 50 – 60 tons used it without difficulty, though most which visited were half this size, and ships of three times this burden were readily served by tenders from offshore.⁴⁶

Through this harbour passed ships from nearly all the overseas areas most frequented by English merchants as well, of course, from all parts of the English coast itself. Poole merchants and ships occasionally visited Ireland, the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and more frequently stopped at the Dutch ports of the North Sea. Most frequently served of all were the closer havens of Normandy, Brittany and the Channel Islands, and secondarily the ports of southwest France, northern Spain and even Portugal.⁴⁷ Yet with the prominent exception of the Channel Islands, about which more will be said below, Poole's traders never came necessarily to *depend* on any one of these traders alone, and were thus able to avoid sudden catastrophe when war or other acts of state closed off any particular port such as, e.g., Antwerp or Calais, or the ports of France or Northern Spain.⁴⁸

It is also apparent that an excess of imports from abroad over exports formed the normal pattern of Poole trade throughout most of our period, with the balance of exchange being made presumably by cash payments or cargoes picked up by visiting ships elsewhere along the English coast (see Table A). In turn, Poole *seems* (the absence of coastal shipping records before 1565 makes this somewhat speculative) to have forwarded most of its imports coastally to other English ports. Thus the commodities imported from abroad are the same as those sent out again along the English coast. Only towards the 1570s did exports catch up with imports from abroad: a fact which

may reflect the decline of home markets in the coastal trade and account for more cargoes to be re-exported abroad.

The cargoes carried in and out of Poole (and especially the imports) also exhibited considerable diversity, so that Poole trade never came to rely at any time before the end of the century on just one or two staples as did some ports. The tabulation of Poole cargoes presented in Table C (see Appendix) demonstrates this diversity of commodity: canvas, cloth, fish, fruit, and wine could all be considered major imports throughout this period, while beer, cloth, horses (recorded until legislation of the 1540s limited their export and almost certainly smuggled thereafter), lead, tin and wax were all frequent exports at some time during the century.

The smothering effect which London's markets and merchants had on the trade of provincial ports is too familiar to warrant recapitulation here except to point out several forms which that domination could take. The lure of England's only true metropolis simply drew ships of other nations to it directly at the frequent expense of provincial ports which they had once frequented: a pattern all too apparent at Southampton by the opening decades of the Tudor era⁴⁹ and in Bristol later on.⁵⁰ The activity of Londoners themselves in controlling the trade – and sometimes other aspects of urban life – of other ports is also familiar, and was well understood even at the time. The growth and rapid dominance of foreign trade by the chartered companies often represented a formalization and legal recognition of trading monopolies which chiefly benefited London merchants. Even where provincial merchants gained entry to such exclusive bodies, policies still tended to be dictated from the centre rather from the periphery.⁵¹

Eventually this last aspect of London's dominance even caught up with the merchants of Poole, only a few of whom were admitted to the chartered companies of the Elizabethan era. Yet it must still be said that Poole remained remarkably resilient to the other elements of London's overwhelming pull, particularly when contrasted with such classic examples as Southampton in the first half of the century. We find virtually no evidence of Londoners owning property in Poole in this period. Not one of seventeen known creditors to the Poole Corporation in the mid-Elizabethan era was a Londoner.⁵² Ships bound for or coming from London do of course appear in the Poole customs records in all years sampled, but they never formed a dominant element of Poole's trade right up to the end of the century.⁵³ Though Poole merchants are recorded as having moved on to Dartmouth, Southampton and elsewhere, they do not seem to have moved on much to London itself until later.⁵⁴ Finally, and in

further contrast to many other ports of the west and south, Poole's only truly essential trading partners were the merchants of the Channel Islands, and this one trade proved of little direct interest to the merchants of London who were after bigger fry.

Though one cannot deny the role of London in a more general way on the economic life of Poole in this period, it has proven difficult to find evidence here of the more direct forms of such involvement as have been found in many other towns. The reason appears to lie partly in Poole's size: a town one ninth the size of Bristol or one third that of Southampton may simply have been too small for Londoners to bother with.⁵⁵ Part of the answer may also lie with the diversity of commodities in Poole's trade and its failure at this time to establish overwhelming specialities which might be enticing plums for particular London merchants – much as the trade in pipe clay became in Poole some decades on.⁵⁶ Indeed, one forms the distinct impression that Poole's maritime enterprise dealt in anything and everything in order both to serve its own citizens and meagre hinterland and to survive against the competition of other ports, several of which (Bristol, Exeter, Barnstaple, etc.) had substantial industrial bases to support specialized trade.

The single exception to this commercial diversity – the strong and uniquely important links with the Channel Islands of Alderney, Jersey and Guernsey – are much more significant than they might at first appear. Not only do they account in large measure for Poole's relative invulnerability to London's influence, but they go a long way toward accounting for her commercial resiliency and constitute an important chapter in the economic history of that part of the Atlantic culture shared by the inhabitants of southern England, western France and northern Spain. This factor in Poole's economic life bears close scrutiny.

While Poole and other south coast ports had established firm trade links with Guernsey and Jersey (tiny Alderney's trade came slightly later) by the mid-15th century, the role which such trade would come to play in the Tudor era was only established, oddly enough, by a Papal Bull of 1483. By this instrument the Islands were declared neutral for purposes of trade in time of war. Successive English as well as French monarchs recognized this neutrality, with the authority of the Papal Bull being first supplemented by and eventually replaced by royal fiat throughout the sixteenth century. Sundry grants exempting the Islanders from tolls and customs in English⁵⁷ ports also ensued with some regularity.

From time to time specific English ports received individual trading privileges with the Islands. Poole, along with Southampton,

Dartmouth, Topsham, Plymouth and Lyme, was one of this number.⁵⁸ The scant discussion which this topic has received to date has expressed the assumption that trade with the Channel Islands became largely a preserve of Southampton.⁵⁹ In reality, Southampton did maintain extensive Channel Island trade, and certainly took exceptional steps to do so. It reduced local customs on imports from Guernsey in 1515 specifically to try and wrest control of that trade from Poole,⁶⁰ and acted similarly in the reign of Mary.⁶¹

Yet Southampton never succeeded in elbowing Poole out of this market, and for a variety of reasons Poole proved a serious contender for the Islanders' custom in the sixteenth century. Channel Islanders tended to get lost in the shuffle of Southampton's more lucrative trade directly to the Continent, just as their five and ten ton ships must have been swamped in the wake of ships developed for the Mediterranean or other long distance trades. Certainly the Londoners who dominated Southampton overseas trade would scarcely have bothered with the small fry from the Channel. Southampton was also further by sea from the Islands than Poole: 108 nautical miles from Guernsey as opposed to but 69 miles between Guernsey and Poole.⁶² Finally, the efforts of Southampton merchants to attract this trade were not consistent, and relations between men of Southampton and the Channel Islands were frequently tense or even bellicose. Thus, for example, the reduction of tolls accorded Guernseymen by Southampton in 1515 – a privilege not accorded the neighbouring men of Poole – was eventually revoked, and may not have brought the desired domination of Guernsey trade in any event.⁶³ Other attempts to exempt both Guernsey and Jersey men from rules governing the sale of linen in Mary's reign were widely resented by local people and thus were similarly repealed.⁶⁴ This led to considerable bitterness and frequent protests from the Islanders to the Privy Council in Elizabeth's reign. Even in the 1580s, when Southampton's terrible economic decline should have dictated good relations with any trading partner at hand, the Islanders were driven to complain of their treatment in Southampton.⁶⁵

In consequence, though many Channel Island ships continued to call at Southampton,⁶⁶ Poole appears to have had considerable success in holding their custom as well, and relations between the two throughout the century seemed much more positive. The port book evidence leaves no doubt that the Islanders were Poole's most frequent trading partners in nearly every year assessed throughout the century. Confirmation of this comes from the Hallage payment records which survive from 1572 – 3 and the toll accounts (covering keyage, cellarage, murage and other tolls) of 1590. Even though

these presumably include trade carried by cart as well as by ship, Guernsey men come second only to Salisbury merchants in the frequency with which they stored trade goods as recorded in the first of these sources (16 out of 52 payments to the latter's 18 out of 52) and first in frequency (19 out of 93 payments) in the second, leading merchants of Blandford and Wimborne (17 each), Ringwood and Shaftesbury (9 each), Salisbury (5) and ten other towns.⁶⁷

Such relations, moreover (as at Southampton), consisted of more than mere trade. At least two girls of Poole are known to have apprenticed as servants to Channel Islanders who came to Poole in search of such labour, and several Guernsey and Jersey lads followed an oft-travelled migratory route by apprenticing to Poole men in the same era.⁶⁸ Poole also performed certain legal services for the Islands. When in 1593 Nicholas Cosin of Alderney received a gift of land on that Island from his cousin in Southampton and wanted to assure its title by civil registration of the transfer, he took it to the Staple Court of Poole.⁶⁹ It is not too much to suggest, in the face of such evidence as this, that the Islands related to Poole in two distinct capacities: both as a 'hinterland' in nearly all respects associated with that term and also as an important link with continental commerce.⁷⁰

At first glance the actual trade to and from the Channel Islands would hardly seem worth the trouble of maintaining. The total population of all three islands could hardly have exceeded a few thousand, local produce for export purposes was limited to salt congers and a bit of rough cloth, and the indigenous market for English goods, though steady enough, can hardly have been great. Yet the role of the Channel Islands lay not so much in production or consumption as in trade itself. Their widely recognized neutrality made them essential links in the cross-Channel economy.

From Poole through the Islands went copious amounts of tin bound for the market at Anvers, lead, beer, leather and hides, broad cloths and kersies bound for one of several markets or remaining in the Islands themselves, and horses (either sent legally or, after the regulatory legislation of the mid-century, illegally) to Normandy. In return, sometimes after storage in the well developed entrepôt industry on the Islands themselves, Poole took in vast quantities of Gascon or Spanish wine, Breton or Norman canvas (dowlais, lock-eram, vitry, oleron and poldavies) and crest cloth, woad from Toulouse, and salt from Bourgneuf Bay, Spain or Portugal.⁷¹

Obviously such items were and had been also carried directly to and from the Continent much of the time, but such direct trade was continually vulnerable to the vicissitudes of warfare or international affairs: the capture of prizes or sequestration of both men and ships in

time of war or the banning of trade as an instrument of diplomacy by any of the Atlantic powers, including, of course, England herself. Such circumstances loomed very large in the decline of such ports as, e.g., Bristol⁷² (which never developed a Channel Islands trade of any significance) and would play a devastating role in Poole itself by the 1620s. But their neutrality made the Islands largely immune to most of these risks, and the customs accounts and port books tell us that well into the Elizabethan era (and certainly throughout the commercially precarious '60s and '70s) Poole and perhaps a few other English ports continued to enjoy a more or less 'normal' trade for supplies which would otherwise have been nearly or literally unobtainable. They did so, moreover, with the active support of the Crown.

In the midst of the Anglo-French War of 1557 – 1559, for example, Mary's council ordered the release of French merchants and their ships which had been captured *en route* to the Isle of Jersey by the Queen's own admiral, William Winter.⁷³ In a protracted dispute of the 1580s the Islanders themselves won a similar case against their own governor, Sir Thomas Leighton, who had violated their neutrality by seizing French ships bringing cargoes from Spain. Again, despite the state of hostilities which existed between Spain and England, the Privy Council supported the local merchants and the cargoes were released.⁷⁴

Thus the Channel Island trade provided Poole with a most valuable commercial hedge against the disruptions of the era. It provided on the one hand a market for the victualling activities already developed at Poole, either through the consumer demand of the Islanders themselves or the requirements of the garrison at Cornet Castle, and on the other an ever-open back door through which Continental trade could be borne with minimal regard for the state of relations among the Atlantic powers of the day. As close examination of the customs accounts, as well as the Hallager receipts and toll accounts show, the Channel Island trade remained a constant and substantial part of Poole's total commercial enterprise even when other markets or suppliers were unable to operate. Though Poole never actually monopolized this trade, it benefited from it as much or more than any other English port.

Even with the advantages of the Channel Islands trade, Poole joined most other south and west coast ports in a state of serious decline by the 1580s. For this there are several explanations. For one, the large expenditures undertaken on the construction projects of the '70s caught up at last with those who had – in expectation of

repayment from Town coffers – actually footed the bill. A grand financial reckoning carried out at the Mayor's request in 1578 listed seventeen townsmen to whom the corporation owed sums ranging from a modest £1. 3s. 4d to a very substantial £91 13s. 4d.⁷⁵ In the end many of these sundry debts had simply to be written off, thus depriving some of the Town's most substantial citizens of duly anticipated repayment.⁷⁶ Prosperity and even mercantile ingenuity thus proved in the end no shield against over-expansion and – as with the poorly sited market hall – bad management.

Nor did it guard against disease, for the years 1581 and 1583 brought mortality crises as severe in Poole as any other years of the century.⁷⁷ Curiously, these years were not significant in the demographic patterns of the realm as a whole, and here again Poole's fortunes seem shaped as much by its cross-Channel neighbours as by its inshore hinterland. France experienced widespread influenza in these years, and indeed the timing and progress of the monthly mortality statistics in Poole more closely resemble the characteristics of influenza or 'hot agues' than the more notorious bubonic plague.⁷⁸

In the end, of course, a small port such as Poole, bereft of much industry or rich agricultural surroundings, lives or succumbs by its commerce, and the languor which set in during the '80s must still be accounted for chiefly in this regard. Though an almost complete absence of customs records for Poole in that decade makes a precise analysis somewhat more difficult, comparison between Port Books of the '70s and those of the '90s leaves little doubt of the magnitude of the decline. But why, in turn, did this occur?

The author of 'A Discourse of Corporations' laid the blame on the instigation of commercial restrictions which he presumed to have resulted from Poole's incorporation in 1568. Poole, he noted, had been 'a proper towne in the West Country, riche and furnished with good shippinge and riche merchautes, but since the Incorporatinge of the same the merchautes decaied, theire shippinge gonn and theire towne poore'.⁷⁹ Of this explanation that anonymous author had not the least doubt, but we may not take it with such certainty. Not only is it hard to see that incorporation brought with it in actual practice any restrictions which did not already pertain, but the evidence for the Town's population structure and for a very limited degree of dire poverty simply do not support a collapse following 1568. Indeed, there seems little evidence that incorporation alone may be held responsible for decay in almost any ports, or that absence of such status could account for prosperity in the remainder.⁸⁰

The more likely explanation is also broader and perhaps more

obvious. By its very nature the activity of commerce is reciprocal, and when Poole's coastal trading partners fell into decay it was perhaps inevitable that Poole should follow suit in time. The remarkable point is that this took so long to happen. Most commodities imported even from the Channel Islands were shipped coastwise from Poole, and the general decay in other English ports obviously inhibited Poole's ability to resell its imports. By the same token, whereas Poole mariners and shipmasters had done well in supplying the transport for cargoes of other English ports, the demand for this fell off as well. Despite the general recession of maritime trade in England at this time, in fact, some ports actually increased their shipping capacity, thus further curtailing the opportunities of Poole's carriers.⁸¹ Once these tendencies took effect, the resources in so small a town as Poole proved thin indeed as preparation for recovery.

By 1588, when Poole had been asked by the privy council to supply one 60 ton ship and one pinnace, both fully rigged and manned, against the impending Spanish Armada, the Town protested its inability to comply. In itself, such a protest might not indicate much at all regarding the true state of the town, for such cries of insufficiency were as common as their motive was obvious. Yet in Poole's case the protest was real enough, and so – remarkably – was it treated by the council. Eight days following their request the councillors excused Poole its contribution in recognition of its decay.⁸² Much the same exchange ensued at the time of the Irish Wars of the 1590s,⁸³ and indeed Burghley was not exaggerating when he listed Poole as one of the most obviously decayed ports in 1598.⁸⁴

The example of Poole's fortunes in the latter half of the sixteenth century suggests greater economic individuality among English ports than has usually been recognized. For Poole, at least up to a point, small size and flexible, diversified commerce proved valuable assets at a time not generally considered favourable to maritime communities in England. In that period we find no evidence in Poole's story to support the allegedly dire consequences of the loss of trading links with Calais or Antwerp.⁸⁵ At the same time, the strong links with Channel neighbours and their markets served to sustain Poole's commercial viability when other trading towns, some of them over-specialized or no longer in control of their own trading strategies, fell by the wayside. Finally, the course which has been plotted of Poole's prosperity and decline compels a more searching look at the lengthy periods of either 'decay' or 'recovery' which have been offered up as general descriptions of the pre-industrial urban community. Greater allowance must be made for individual patterns,

and periods of prosperity and decline in smaller towns might perhaps be measured by the decade rather than the century.

Notes:

¹ Leicester to Walsingham, 6 April, 1587, Public Record Office, State Papers (P.R.O., SP) 12/200/5.

² SP 12/266/3, 2 January, 1598. Burghley specifically cited Southampton, Poole, Weymouth, Bristol and Chester.

³ G.D. Ramsay, *John Isham, Mercer and Merchant Adventurer* (Northampton Record Society, vol. 21, 1962), p. xxi.

⁴ Lawrence Stone, 'Elizabethan Overseas Trade', *Economic History Review*, II (1949), p. 39.

⁵ Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (1972), p. 12.

⁶ P. McGrath, ed., *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Adventurers of the City of Bristol* (Bristol Record Society, 1952), pp. xiv-xv; Jean M. Vanes, ed., *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century* (Bristol Record Society, 1979), pp. 5-12, 23-26.

⁷ 23 Elizabeth, c. 7, 'An Act for the Repaying of Dover Haven'; William Lambard, *A Perambulation of Kent, 1570* (1826 ed., Chatham), p. 118; Edward Hasted, *History of . . . Kent* (12 vol., Canterbury, 1799) VIII, pp. 234 and 449-450; M. Oppenheim, 'Maritime History' in *Victoria History of the County of Kent*, II (1908), pp. 151-152; Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society . . . Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), p. 8.

⁸ Peter Laslett, 'Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries' *Population Studies*, vol. 23 (1969), pp. 199-233; Laslett, 'Mean Household Size in England Since the Sixteenth Century', in Laslett and R. Wall, eds., *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972); Nigel Goose, 'Household Size and Structure in Early Stuart Cambridge', *Social History*, V, (1980), pp. 347-385; Ian Roy and Stephen Porter, 'The Structure of an Early Modern Suburb', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 53, no. 128 (Nov., 1980), pp. 203-217.

⁹ Poole Borough Archives (hereafter P.B.A.), MS. 92(48).

¹⁰ The following information derives from Robert Tittler, 'Population and Prosperity in Elizabethan Poole; the 1574 Census and its Implications', (in preparation).

¹¹ Laslett, 'Mean Household Size', p. 147 and Tittler, 'Population and Prosperity' Tables C and D.

¹² SP 12/38/9:1, fol. 43v. See Tittler, 'Population and Prosperity'.

¹³ R. Machin, 'The Great Rebuilding, a Reassessment', *Past and Present*, 77 (1977), p. 33.

¹⁴ Evidence for the construction of houses in this era comes from the *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, Dorset*, II, pt. 2 (1970), pp. 189-221. The mill and conduit were built with statutory permission, 34 and 35 Henry VIII, c. 25. In addition, H.P. Smith cites expenditures for large amounts of wallstone and lime in 1525 and '26 for repairs of the Town gate; Smith, *History of Poole* (2 vols., 1949-51), II, 35, pp. 42-3. A note of 1554 in the 'Mayor's Book of Accounts' tells us that the mill cost £116 7s to build; P.B.A. 26(4) fol. 50r.

¹⁵ SP 12/38/9:1, fol. 43v. See also the *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments*, as in n. 14 above.

¹⁶ P.B.A. 92(48).

¹⁷ P.B.A. 108(63), fol. 100; Smith, *History of Poole*, II, p. 95.

¹⁸ P.B.A. 26(4), fol. 66v.

¹⁹ See, for example, E. Carus Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (1963), pp. 18-33; N. Williams, *Contraband Cargoes* (1959), ch. 2; N.

Williams, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan Port Books', *English Historical Review* 66 (1951), pp. 387-395; N. Williams, 'The London Port Books', *Trans. London and Middlesex Archeol. Soc.*, xviii (1955); J.H. Andrews, 'Two Problems in the Interpretation of Port Books', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2 ser., IX (1956), pp. 119-122; R.W.K. Hinton, ed., *The Port Books of Boston, 1601-1640*, (Lincolnshire Record Society, 50, 1956), Introduction; B. Dietz, ed., *The Port and Trade of Early Elizabethan London* (London Rec. Soc., VIII, 1972), Introduction.

²⁰ T.S. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester, 1959), p. 79.

²¹ J.M. Vanes, *Overseas Trade of Bristol*, (unpublished PLD thesis, Univ. of London, 1975), pp. 10-11; Hinton, *Port Books of Boston*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; Williams, 'Francis Shaxton . . .', p. 393.

²² This revision raised duties by an estimated average of 118% and increased the number of customable items from c. 800 to over 1100; T.S. Willan, *A Tudor Book of Rates* (Manchester, 1962), pp. xxvi-xxviii.

²³ For local examples in this period, see special commissions regarding the smuggling of horses, E.178/702 (12 Elizabeth), another on the smuggling of wine (in which the Privy Councillor, Sir Christopher Hatton, was named as a recipient of the smuggled goods), E.178/712 (1579) and a third on the smuggling of wheat, E.178/693 (24 Elizabeth). Several customs officials serving in Poole were also investigated for corruption, including Thomas Lewis, E.134/11 Eliz., East., no. 3; Robert Gregory, E.133/10/items 1531, 1558 and 1559; William Constantine, E.178/695 and E.133/ Bundle 1/97, and John Browne, E.134/16 Eliz., Hil. 4.

²⁴ O. Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century; Some Aspects of the Trade of Southampton', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XVII, pt. 1 (1963) p. 17.

²⁵ C1/1193/73-75.

²⁶ The standard work, though amateurish and often muddled, remains R.B. Turton, *The Alum Farm* (Whitby, 1938) but see also the account in J.W. Gough, *The Rise of the Entrepreneur* (London, 1969) pp. 176-181 and Rhys Jenkins, 'The Alum Trade in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries and the Beginnings of the Alum Industry in England' in *The Collected Papers of Rhys Jenkins* (Cambridge, 1936) pp. 193-203. Precise descriptions of the alum and copperas works in the Poole vicinity at Parkstone, Okeman's Close, Canford, Alum Chine, and Brownsea Island, are found in an Exchequer survey of 19-20 Elizabeth, E.178/710 m. 1-3 and E.133/ Bundle 3/464A.

²⁷ I am indebted to Mr. Ian Horsey, Poole Archaeological Officer, for the information that such activity persisted at Tatnam into the early nineteenth century, at which time it was considered 'ancient' by local residents.

²⁸ P.B.A., 56(11) p. 4 for Swayne.

²⁹ Several shipwrights have been identified in Poole at this time and another Poole shipwright is known to have been recruited to work in the Royal Dockyards at Woolwich earlier in the century. P.B.A. 25(3) fols. 34, 252. V.C.H., Dorset, II, p. 195.

³⁰ An ale taster was employed by the Town to assure standards of quality by 1515, (P.B.A. 23(1) p. 32 *et seq.*) but the customs accounts even in the 1480s refer to 'servicie' or beer, which was just around then being developed in England as an improvement (because of its better keeping qualities) on the traditional ale. By the 1570s Poole had four brewers brewing substantial quantities for the export market, and the trade gained sufficient status to provide mayors for four yearly terms by the end of the century: John Bremble (1582, 1590 and 1598) and Robert Nicholas (1580). Bremble's wealth was very substantial. By his will he left a malt house and kiln for drying malt, two brewhouses and one beer house plus numerous furnaces and other equipment. He also left several other properties and £2140 in cash; transcript of Bremble's will in Dorset R.O., Ms. LU5/19. See also Patricia Smith, 'The Brewing Industry in Tudor England', MA thesis, Concordia University, 1981.

³¹ D.M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester* (Hull, 1970), chap. I.

³² The Dorset historian John Hutchins referred to the Poole hinterland as 'barren and dreary heath', *History of the Town and County of Poole* (London, 1788), pp. 1-2, a verdict largely confirmed in Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (1962), map, p. 4 and pp. 68-70.

³³ Cf., for example, J.L. Wiggs, 'The Seaborne Trade of Southampton in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century' (unpublished MA thesis, Southampton University, 1955), pp. 101, 171–172.

³⁴ *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, Dorset*, II, pt. 2, p. 204. The building still exists, though it has been bisected by the extension of Thames Street, and thus exists as two buildings.

³⁵ Cf., for example, the case of *Lucett and Blanch vs. Cen* (1584–5) and *Pryor vs. Cox* of the same years. In both cases bargains were struck in the house of the Poole merchant John Field. Mayor's Court Book, P.B.A., 28(6), fols. 3–5 and 6–8. No fewer than 34 private 'piles' or small docks and 8 cellars were listed in a Poole property list of 1563: many of the latter were no doubt used for storage, and both indicate the extent of private shipping facilities among Poole merchants. P.B.A. 56(11) pp. 1–8.

³⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Eliz.*, IV, item 1004, 23 June, 1568.

³⁷ Hutchins, *History of Poole*, pp. 31–33.

³⁸ Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, p. 3.

³⁹ Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent, 1570* (1826 ed.), p. 118.

⁴⁰ 23 Elizabeth, c. 7, 'An Act for the Re-Edifying of Dover Haven'.

⁴¹ Edward Hasted, *History of the County of Kent*, VIII, pp. 449–450.

⁴² Frequent attention to the need to clear the haven are recorded in the Admiralty Court Book of Poole, P.B.A. 24(2), *passim*.

⁴³ Hutchins, *History of Poole*, pp. 33–34; *Calendar of State Papers* (hereafter *C.S.P.*); *Domestic, Elizabeth, 1598–1601*, pp. 178–179.

⁴⁴ Though intended fortifications were probably never completed, Brownsea held a Castle which was provided with a gunner. Provisions were made at various times for improved fortifications, ordnance and garrisons; Smith, *History of Poole*, II pp. 118–124; M. Oppenheim, 'Maritime History' in *V.C.H. Dorset*, II, p. 205. The Mayor of Poole took an inventory of the Castle in 1568; P.B.A. 25(3). See also P.B.A. 23(1), fol. 56; Dorset Record Office Ms. 2693B (a summary of the town's obligations toward the upkeep of the Castle); *Acts of the Privy Council* (hereafter *A.P.C.*) n.s., I, pp. 203 and 232; II, p. 165; IX, p. 192.

⁴⁵ Hutchins, *Poole*, p. 33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ These conclusions derive from the evidence of customs accounts (E.122) and port books (E.190) analysed for the years indicated in Table A.

London seems to have been especially hard hit by the closing of the Antwerp trade in the 1560s, while Bristol seems representative of those ports which suffered from an intermittent cessation of English trade with Spain or France in the '60s and '70s. The economic impact of Calais is often given as a factor for the commercial problems of English ports in the early Elizabethan years (cf. note above) but the case against such a strong impact has also been put and in this author's view is more compelling. G.D. Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor*, (Manchester, 1975), *passim*; J. Vanes, *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol*, 6, 12, 25–26.

⁴⁹ Cf. especially A.A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton, 1270–1600*, (Southampton Record Series, 1951), pp. 261–271; O. Coleman, 'Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XVI, pt. 1 (1963), pp. 9–22.

⁵⁰ Vanes, thesis pp. 13–14, 18–21.

⁵¹ P. McGrath, ed., *Records Relating to the Merchant Adventurers of Bristol*, pp. xiv–xvi.

⁵² P.B.A. 26(4) (Mayor's Book of Accounts, 1568–1578), fol. 130r.

⁵³ Interestingly, of the 52 merchants listed as paying hallage for the storage of goods in the town cellars in 1572–3, only four were Londoners, the same number as men of Taunton, while Salisbury men are represented eighteen times and Guernsey men come second with sixteen; P.B.A., 59(14).

⁵⁴ P.B.A. 25(3) ('Old Record Book no. 3') fols. 247v, 249v, 255v; A.L. Merson, ed., *The Third Book of Remembrance of Southampton, 1514–1602*, (Southampton R.S., 1955) II, p. 112, n. 4; H.P. Smith, *History of Poole*, II, p. 129; Dorset Record Office

Ms. 2693C ('Richard Bramble's Notes').

⁵⁵ Bristol ranked as the second or third largest urban centre in the realm and its population has been estimated at 12,000 by the end of the century; P. McGrath, *Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth Century Bristol*, (Bristol Record Society, 1955), p. ix. Southampton's population has been estimated at c. 1750–1950 for 1524 in Colin Platt, *Medieval Southampton* (1973), p. 263, and at c. 4200 in 1596 by W.J. Connor, ed., *The Southampton Mayor's Book of 1606–1608*, (Southampton Record Series, 1978) p. 4 n. 23. Estimates of c. 10,000 for Bristol and c. 3500 for Southampton thus seem reasonable for the early Elizabethan years, when Poole had c. 1100 (1558) to 1375 (1574).

⁵⁶ Cf., for example, the Poole coastal port book for 1635–1636, E.190/876/5, where every single recorded shipment emanating from Poole contained clay. Though this is an unusual and remarkable concentration in an impoverished port, even such a major port as Bristol relied to an overwhelming extent on just two commodities from overseas in the Elizabethan years: wine and cloth; Vanes, thesis, p. 12; while Exeter's trade relied overwhelmingly on the export of Devon cloth, W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540–1640* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 160–174.

⁵⁷ A.J. Eagleston, *the Channel Islands Under Tudor Government, 1485–1642* (1949), pp. 6–9, 43–47; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edward IV and Henry VI, 1467–1477* (1900) p. 124; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, XVIII*, pt. i, no. 915; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Eliz. I*, p. 337.

⁵⁸ Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping, 1460–1540*, (Toronto, 1947), pp. 124–125; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, pt. i, no. 915; *Cal. Pat. Rolls Edward VI*, V, pp. 402–403; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Elizabeth I*, pp. 45–46.

⁵⁹ Typical in this regard are Ralph Davis, *The Rise of The English Shipping Industry* (1962), p. 202; and J.L. Wiggs, thesis, pp. 3, 126–127.

⁶⁰ Agreement reprinted in A.L. Merson, ed., *The Third Book of Remembrance of Southampton, 1514–1602*, vol. I (Southampton, 1952), pp. 27–28.

⁶¹ Merson, *op.cit.*, II, p. 39.

⁶² William Berry, *The History of The Island of Guernsey* (London, 1815), p. 22.

⁶³ Merson, *op.cit.*, II, p. 39.

⁶⁴ Merson, *op.cit.*, pp. 138–9.

⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., B.L. Lansdowne MS 111/51, entitled, 'The Injuries Offered by the habitauntes of Southampton to thinhabitauntes of thisles of Garnsay and Jorsay', and Lansdowne 111/52.

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Southampton port books E.190/814/1; E.190/814/2 and E.190/814/8.

⁶⁷ P.B.A., 59(14) pp. 1–8 and P.B.A., 12(78), 1590.

⁶⁸ Margaret Moore and Joane Howard both apprenticed to Islanders; P.B.A., 25(3) ('Old Record Book no. 3') fols. 255v and 247r; Thomas Pyston of Jersey apprenticed to Andrew Cloude, cooper of Poole, and Lawrence Gawden of Alderney apprenticed to Nicholas Curie the Younger, merchant; *ibid.*, fols. 260v and 256v.

⁶⁹ P.B.A., 'Book of the Staple' (uncatalogued), p. 4.

⁷⁰ See the suggestive discussion of the 'maritime hinterland' in John Patten, *English Towns, 1500–1700*, (1978), pp. 224–35.

⁷¹ In addition to the evidence from port books as presented in the Appendix, cf. the following: *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edward VI*, V, pp. 402–3; S.P. 15/30/27; B.L. Cotton MS Vesp. CXIII, fol. 318.

⁷² This is emphasized especially in J. Vanes, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol', pp. 125–130, 167, 226, 286–290, and P. Croft, 'English Trade with Peninsular Spain', (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Univ. of Oxford, 1970), pp. 15–31, 89–91, *et passim*.

⁷³ B.L. Royal MS. 13, B.I, fols. 280–281 and 281–282.

⁷⁴ B.L. Lansdowne MS. 53, fol. 8; S.P. 15/30/27. See also A.J. Eagleston, 'Guernsey under Sir Thomas Leighton, 1570–1610', *Report and Transactions de la Société Guernseiseise* (1937), XIII, pp. 72–108.

⁷⁵ P.B.A., 26(4), fol. 130r.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 118–129.

⁷⁷ Poole Parish Registers, burials, Dorset Record Office P227/RE/1C.

⁷⁸ Charles Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, (2 vols., Cambridge, 1891

and 1894), I, pp. 406–409.

⁷⁹ 'A Discourse of Corporations' (c. 1587–1589) reprinted in R.H. Tawney and E. Powers, eds., *tudor Economic Documents*, (3 vols., 1924), pp. 265–276, especially.

⁸⁰ Robert Tittler, 'The Incorporation of Boroughs, 1540–1558', *History*, vol. 62 (1977), pp. 24–42.

⁸¹ This seems true for both Bristol and Southampton; Wiggs, thesis, pp. 10, 52–54 and Vanes, thesis, pp. 39–40 and 164.

⁸² *Acts of the Privy Council*, n.s., XVI, pp. 9–10 and 16.

⁸³ *Acts of the Privy Council*, n.s., XVI, pp. 144 and 266–267.

⁸⁴ See note 2 above.

⁸⁵ See note 48 above.

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Table A. Analysis of Shipping in and out of the Port of Poole

part i: Overseas Trade, 1487-1620

Years	MS. reference	P.	Outbound		P.	Inbound		P.	Totals	
			O.	T.		O.	T.		O.	T.
1487-88	E.122/120/3	14	42	56	11	56	67	25	98	123
1505-06	E.122/120/11	13	37	50	11	45	56	24	82	106
1518-19	E.122/207/1									109
1521-22	E.122/121/3	10	14	24	10	30	40	20	44	64
1523-24	E.122/121/5	13	55	68	17	62	79	30	117	147
1525-26	E.122/207/2	14	37	51	16	64	80	30	101	131
1528-29	E.122/121/7	30	35	65	32	52	84	62	87	149
1529-30	E.122/121/8	16	33	49	31	71	102	47	104	151
1530-31	E.122/207/3	18	23	41	32	42	74	50	65	115
1538-40	E.122/207/4		(Information not given)							171
1540-41	E.122/207/5	17	41	58	24	75	99	41	116	157
1541-42	E.122/207/6	23	38	61	44	63	107	67	124	168
1547-48	E.122/207/7	34	33	67	26	34	60	60	67	127
1548-49	E.122/122/5	34	34	68	36	36	72	70	70	140
1551-52	E.122/207/8	30	15	45	41	30	71	71	45	116
1552-53	E.122/122/8	31	9	40	41	20	61	72	29	101
1555-56	E.122/122/21	26	10	36	46	25	71	72	35	107
1556-57	E.122/207/9	33	10	43	52	24	76	85	34	119
1558-59	E.122/122/19	46	10	56	56	21	75	102	31	133
1571-72	E.190/865/1	42	31	73	42	24	66	66	55	121
1573-74	E.190/865/5			117			75			192
1610-11	E.190/870/8	29	19	48	33	13	46	62	32	94
1615-16	E.190/871/10	49	10	59	35	25	60	84	35	119
1618-19	E.190/872/3	28	8	36	27	16	43	55	24	79
1619-20	E.190/872/9	37	12	49	46	22	68	83	34	117

part ii: Coastal Trade, 1565-1600

1565-66	E.190/864/1&4	37	12	49	31	19	50	68	31	99
1566-67	E.190/864/7&8	38	14	42	31	15	46	69	29	98
1571-72	E.190/865/1	39	14	43	(30)	(12)	(42)	69	26	85
					(estimated)					
1573-74	E.190/865/5			42			37			79
1596-97	E.190/867/1&3	15	2	17	11	8	19	26	10	36
1599-1600	{ E.190/867/14 E.190/867/17 }	7	5	12	6	7	13	13	12	25

Key: P. - Poole ship
 O. - Other ship
 T. - Total

Table B. *Ships of the 'Poole Fleet'*

Note: These figures must be treated as approximations only, especially toward the end of the century when the coastal figures exclude larger ships trading exclusively overseas and/or fishing in Newfoundland. Shipping surveys sometimes yield larger numbers of ships and total tonnages than customs accounts because they include larger Newfoundland ships which – when they fished instead of traded – do not appear on the customs accounts. These ships grow more numerous from the 1580s, though one can only guess at their number. Some surveys, especially of the late '80's and '90s and probably that of 1574 are deliberately under-stated as they result from the government's attempt to assess contributions to maritime warfare or the obligations of Ship Money.

Years	ships	total tonnage	ave. tonnage	ref. no.	Comment
1528-9	9			E122/121/7	Overseas customs account
1529-30	9			E122/121/8	Overseas customs account
1530-1	9			E122/207/3	Overseas customs account
1540-1	11			E122/207/5	Overseas customs account
1541-2	12			E122/207/6	Overseas customs account
1547-8	13			E122/207/7	Overseas customs account
1551-2	18			E122/207/8	Overseas customs account
1552-3	14			E122/122/8	Overseas customs account
1556-7	17			E122/207/9	Overseas customs account
1558-9	26			E122/122/19	Overseas customs account
1565-6	18	335	(18.6)	E190/864/1 and 4	Coastal Port Book
1565	23	393	(17.1)	SP12/38/9:1	Shipping Survey
1566-7	21	390	(18.6)	E190/864/7 and 8	Coastal Port Book
1566	24			E190/864/8	Overseas Port Book, Easter-Michelmas only
1571-2	28	524	(18.7)	E190/865/1	Coastal and Overseas Port Book
1571-2	27			SP15/22/18v	Shipping Survey
1574	20			P.B.A. 92 (48)	Shipping Survey on Town Census
1582	18	1179	(65.5)	SP12/156/98r	Shipping Survey, includes Newfoundland ships
1591	21			SP12/238/142	Shipping Survey
1590-1	20	577	(28.9)	E190/865/22 and E190/866/3	O'seas and Coastal customs acc'ts.
1592	21	836	(39.8)	Robert Gregory's Letterbook, Dorset R.O., film no. 12, p. 79,	Shipping Survey
1596-7	11	204	(18.5)	E190/867/1 and 3	Coastal voyages only
1599-1600	7	159	(22.7)	E190/867/14 and 17	Coastal voyages only

Table C. Imports and Exports of the Town of Poole, 1483-1610

The following indicates the frequency rather than the quantity of trade: a factor considered somewhat more reliably listed in the customs accounts. The figures indicate the percentage of ships in each year carrying the indicated commodity. Total number of ships in each year is given in Table A.

Part I: A. Imports from Overseas

	Canvas	Cloth	Dyes	Fish	Fruit	Hops	Malt	Wheat	Iron	Oil	Pitch/ Tar	Salt	Soap	Spices	Wine	Wood
1483	55	23	9	25		4			14	7	18.6	11.6	4.6	2.3	4.6	1.9
1487-8	61	25.3	9	40				3	18	6	1.4	11.9	2.9	1.4	13.4	
1505-6	55.3	25	7.1	57.1					7.1	3.5		1.7	1.7	1.7	14.2	1.7
1521-2	60	10	2.5	30		2.5		5	7.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5		32.5	
1523-4	64.5	39.2	18.9	26.5	2.5				8.8	1.2	2.5	2.5		1.2	8.8	
1525-6	66.2	28.7	7.5	20.5	5.0	5			7.5	7.5	2.5	6.3	1.3		13.8	
1528-9	46.4	19.0	5.9	38		5.9			13	4.7	2.3	4.7	2.3	4.7	13	
1529-30	37.2	5.8	3	45		4.9	1		5.8	4.9	1	10.7	4.9	1	14.7	
1530-1	41.2	12.2		45.9		5.4				9.5	2.7	4.0	5.4	2.7	16.2	
1540-1	45.5	10.1		46.5		3.0			7.0	4.0		12.0	4.0	3.0	11.1	
1541-2	45.7	12.1		44.8		3.7			5.6	1.8	1.8	4.6	1.8	2.8	6.5	
1547-8	43.3	15.0		61.6		1.6				5.0	1.6	3.3	3.3		26.6	1.6
1548-9	31.9	16.6		54.1	8.3	2.7			11.1	2.7	1.3	2.7	1.3	4.1	11.1	1.3
1551-2	35.2	8.4		35.2	7.0	1.4			4.2	4.2	1.4	2.8	5.6	8.4	18.3	
1552-3	49.2	11.8	3.4	33.8	16.9	3.4		1.6	3.4	8.4	3.4	6.7	6.7	5.0	8.4	
1555-6	18.3	4.2	5.6	35.2	26.7	4.2			1.4	4.2		7.0	2.8	1.4	38.0	
1556-7	14.4	2.6	5.3	35.5	17.1	4.0			5.3	5.3		7.9	4.0	1.3	36.8	
1558-9	37.3	20.0		21.3	14.6	5.3			4.0	2.6	4.0	13.3	4.0	5.3	16.0	
1571-2	(Commodities are not listed in this port book)															
1610-11	24.3	13.3	15.5	15.5		4.4				26.6	4.4	26.6		6.6		24.4

Part 1: B. Imports from English Ports

	Canvas	Cloth	Dyes	Fish	Fruit	Hops	Malt	Wheat	Iron	Lead	Tin	Oil	Pitch/ Tar	Salt	Soap	Spices	Wine	Wood
1565-6	4.2	14.9	4.3	29.8	6.4	19.1		2.1	17.0	2.1	14.9	4.2	17.0	10.6	12.8	6.4	31.9	2.0
1566-7	2.0	4.1	24.4	20.4	10.2	32.7			26.5		14.2	8.2	22.4		28.5	6.1	30.4	12.2
1571-2	Commodities are not listed in this port book																	
1596-7	5.3				36.8	31.6			31.6				47.4	5.3	36.8		5.2	10.6

Part 2: A Exports Overseas

	Beer	Cloth	Copperas	Horses	Leather/ Hides	Iron	Lead	Tin	Oil	Salt	Wax/ Candles	Wheat	Wine	Fish
1487-8	41.0	51.7		25.0	8.9		5.3	3.5			5.3			
1505-6	14.0	80.0		20.0	14.0	6.0	6.0			2.0	2.0	8.0	2.0	
1521-2	25.0	50.0			8.3			70.1						
1523-4	42.6	33.8			13.2	8.8	10.2	12.8		1.4	1.4	22.0		
1525-6	17.6	47.0		17.6	9.8		3.9	13.7			5.8	11.7		
1528-9	47.6	56.9		4.6	15.3		12.3	4.6			1.5			
1529-30	44.8	81.6		14.2	4.1		26.5	12.2						
1530-1		73.1		4.8	2.4		7.3	17.0						
1540-1		85.0		6.9			15.5	6.9			15.2	6.9		5.2
1541-2		75.4		14.8			22.9	1.6		4.9	1.6			
1547-8	46.2	44.7		4.5			28.3	31.3			10.4	11.9		
1548-9	80.8	25.0			5.8	2.0	7.3	4.4			10.2			
1551-2	33.3	53.3			2.2		26.6	8.8		2.2	13.3			
1552-3	24.2	81.8			6.1	15.2	27.3	18.2			18.2		3.0	
1555-6		50.0			2.7		55.5	36.1			5.5			
1556-7		51.7			2.3		53.4	41.8			4.6			
1558-9	48.3	24.1				6.9	27.6	13.8			5.2			
1571-2														
1610-1	86.6	10.1			5.4			2.7	5.4		2.7			8.1

Part 2: B Exports to English Ports

	Beer	Canvas	Cloth	Fruit	Hops	Wheat	Malt	Barley	Copperas	Alum	Iron	Lead	Tin	Oil	Pitch/ Tar	Soap	Wax	Wine	Fish
1565-6	6.1	16.3	4.1	30.6	10.2	4.1	6.1	8.2		2.0	6.1		2.0	28.6	6.1	4.1	18.4	38.8	
1566-7		2.0	2.0	9.0		15.3	11.5	1.9	13.4	3.8		5.7	9.6	26.9	3.8	11.5		32.6	
1571-2																			
1596-7	22.2								33.3					33.3		44.4	11.1		
*1599-				33.3		33.3			33.3					33.3				16.6	16.6
1600																			

* Represents six month totals only.