

The Maritime Economy of Rye, 1560–1640

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During the first half of sixteenth century the town of Rye enjoyed an economic boom which led to a doubling of its population. By the 1560s Rye, with more than 3,500 inhabitants, was of comparable size with such traditionally important urban centres as the city of Canterbury. The reasons underlying this expansion are well known. Rye's capacious estuarine harbour and geographical location at the far eastern edge of coastal Sussex made it a convenient place from which to operate a fishing industry meeting both local needs and expanding demand from London, and to conduct trade with Netherlandish and northern French ports, notably Dieppe, and above all the English outpost of Calais. In the half-century before its loss in 1558, shipments to Calais accounted for three quarters of Rye's total export trade. At the beginning of the Elizabethan period Rye possessed one of the largest fleets in southern England, and over half the adult male workforce depended heavily on employment within the port. A century later things were very different. By the Restoration the fishing industry had all but disappeared, overseas trade was negligible, and Rye had contracted to little more than a market town of fewer than 1,300 inhabitants.¹

A paper setting out to examine the history of the maritime economy of Rye during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may, however, seem to require some justification, for the explanation for the port's demise has usually been taken to be straightforward. The loss of Calais was in part compensated for during the early Elizabethan period by an expansion of cloth exports to France, but after the 1570s overseas trade tailed off rapidly. Contemporary opinion commonly cited the silting of the harbour as the principal cause of the problems which beset the town during the later sixteenth century, and modern historians have generally been content to follow this lead, positing a simple uninterrupted path of decline – the harbour decayed, trade and fishing gradually abandoned Rye, the dependent service sector contracted and population fell

– end of story.² In reality things were not so simple. Rye enjoyed a remarkable if short-lived boom in its overseas trade during the 1630s, and the problems experienced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were the result of the interplay of a range of factors, of which harbour deterioration was, albeit significant, only one. Above all, if developments in the maritime economy of Rye are to be understood, it is vital to appreciate the extent to which its principal strands, trade and fishing, were intertwined during the early Elizabethan period. For it can be argued that the main casualty of the reduction in Rye's overseas trade between the 1580s and the late 1620s was the town's fishing industry.

Examination of the deployment of capital and labour in the maritime economy of Rye may usefully be placed in the broader context of research which, in recent years, has begun to question the reliability of many of the sources previously regarded as accurate guides to urban economic structure and evolution in late medieval and early modern England. Exploitation of probate, presentment and other kinds of evidence indicating what people *actually* did to earn a living has undermined faith in the accuracy of the 'frozen' occupational designations supplied in freedom and apprenticeship rolls, and drawn attention not only to the economic adaptability of individuals in the face of altered circumstances, be they unforeseen or those associated with the gradual unfolding of the life-cycle, but also to a widespread disinclination among urban workers as individuals, let alone urban workers organized in family units, to put all their income-generating eggs in one basket at any time. The mounting evidence that 'many people followed several occupations, at once or over their life', has in turn contributed to a re-examination of what used confidently to be assumed to be the barriers preventing occupational diversity.³

The traditional view that craft guilds were 'groups of men, pursuing a specific craft, joined with their fellows in exclusive associations which were designed to protect their interests against competition', has been persuasively challenged on a number of fronts by Swanson. The restrictive practices and emphasis on demarcation in guild regulations might represent the aspirations of the masters of the crafts and give the 'illusion of economic structure', but they were, from the point of view of the mercantile elites commanding civic authority, no more than the sops necessary to facilitate control and manipulation of the craft guilds. In reality mercantile oligarchs, who 'approved of no monopolies but their own', were concerned to police the quality of goods made, but not in the least who made them, while 'manufacturing artisans dependent on merchants for supplies were in no position to set the level of wages or to impose restrictive practices'.⁴ The principle of one craft per person

was enshrined in statute in 1363–4 and elaborated in clause 24 of the 1563 statute of artificers, with its requirement of a minimum seven-year apprenticeship for entry into ‘every craft, mystery or occupation’.⁵ But this was cold comfort to masters seeking to establish strict demarcation if the municipal authorities on whom central government continued to rely for the Act’s enforcement (alongside informers for profit) were not inclined to co-operate. In so far as urban governments did enforce the apprenticeship clauses of the 1563 act they often did so on a highly selective basis, and then not necessarily with regulation of employment in mind. Rye corporation’s occasional prosecutions of infringements of the apprenticeship laws owed more to fiscal policy than anything else.⁶ Moreover, in an urban context the apprenticeship requirements of the 1563 statute sat uneasily alongside the acceptance of patrimony and redemption as alternative criteria for admission to guild and commonalty, and thus to enjoyment of the trading privileges associated with freeman status.

The extent of economic privilege associated with freeman status has itself often been viewed as a formidable barrier to occupational diversity among unenfranchised inhabitants, who comprised the majority of the adult male population in most towns, and an overwhelming majority of the working population in all towns. But the claim rehearsed in a number of textbooks that in corporate towns ‘only freemen might legally engage in independent trade’ is increasingly hard to sustain, even as a meaningful generalization. There were, certainly, late medieval and Tudor towns that attempted, more or less successfully, to enforce prohibitions, but in a significant number of urban centres – large and small – it was possible to trade independently as a non-freeman, albeit for a fee, while in others the theory of freeman monopoly was honoured more in the breach than the observance. Statute and municipal ordinance might endorse the model of the duly enrolled apprentice serving his seven years and then seeking admission to the freedom as soon as he was eligible, but many apprentices – out of choice as well as necessity – failed to complete their terms or to enter the commonalty. In practice, Dobson has suggested, ‘the options available to particular city authorities remained bewilderingly open’ and ‘it cannot in any case be sufficiently stressed that the size of the freeman class in any town was directly related to the rigour with which its city authorities enforced’ regulations restricting retail trade to freemen. Thus in fifteenth and sixteenth-century York, where enforcement was generally strict, the take-up of freedoms by those eligible was high (even so, some non-freeman retailers were permitted to trade, subject to a fine) whereas in Norwich, where the authorities were less concerned, a ‘major feature of civic life’ was ‘that of those eligible only

a comparatively low proportion took out their freedoms or rights to follow a trade'.⁷ A chart of take-up rates across English corporate towns would doubtless pepper the scale, though the need to take into account the impact of efforts to promote and sustain oligarchical government on levels of freeman admissions would complicate its interpretation.⁸

If the formal rigidities of guild, civic and statutory regulation often turn out on closer inspection to have been rather less than hard realities, the fiscal barriers to occupational diversity were not necessarily any more insurmountable. With the exception of a handful of trades requiring large capital for initial investment either in equipment, for example brewing, or raw materials, for example silkmaking, those of modest resources or credit-worthiness wishing to diversify into small-scale crafts and manufactures were unlikely to be frustrated by lack of money, for most required only simple and relatively cheap equipment. Where demand was high the cost of additional accommodation might be more onerous, but new small-scale enterprises could often be squeezed into existing spaces, while many forms of occupational diversification – notably in marketing – did not require it.⁹ Evidently someone embarking on a radical occupational departure might confront a skills barrier, but skills – and not infrequently the tools – acquired in connection with one occupation were often readily transferable to allied pursuits.

To the 'vulgar Darwinianism' of those historians who see workers as 'committed to a particular niche', destined to fail when it disappears, Pelling contrasts 'an interpretation which emphasizes the natural flexibility of some occupational populations'. The London plasterers, who began as 'but daubers and mud-wall-makers', came to plaster house-fronts, later applied a limited range of colours known as 'alehouse colours' and finally shook off even this restriction. In late medieval York there was 'a multiplicity of metal-working crafts', but 'for all their apparent definition, none of these crafts had a monopoly of its own'. Overlaps were also common in the leather trades and in textile manufacturing. Indeed in fifteenth-century York and Bristol dyeing was 'undertaken by "persons ... of divers crafts" who, it was claimed, knew "nothing of the art of dyeing"'. In late sixteenth-century Norwich occupational diversification was recognized in regulations and in indentures between, for example, grocers and apothecaries, cappers and hatters, and innholders and tailors. At Canterbury the common seal of the city was granted to the corporation of 'apothecaries, grocers and fishmongers' in 1576. Barbers' other occupations are known to have included wax and tallow chandling, musicianship, ropemaking, silkweaving, razorgrounding, slaymaking, perukemaking, brewing and especially the keeping of tippling houses. Of seventeen persons presented at Rye in February 1602 for 'using the

trade of a barber surgeon' two were butchers, three were brewers, two were victuallers, one an innkeeper and eight ran tippling houses. The food, drink and marketing sectors presented abundant opportunities for occupational diversification. Brewers, accustomed to dealing in grain, found it easy to diversify into baking, many people found openings in petty retailing and hawking, and the ease with which back-rooms could be converted into unlicensed tippling houses, which brewers were nonetheless happy to supply, is amply demonstrated by the numbers known to have operated in English towns. In early seventeenth-century Rye there was one tippling parlour for every dozen households, and during the 1620s Rye corporation derived no less than one third of its income from taxes levied on the drink trade. The popularity of tippling houses was not just a function of the prospect of entertainment and sweet oblivion. It was black market, community and information centre, credit agency and employment exchange rolled into one; vital to the Jacks and Jills of more than one trade.¹⁰

But if it is granted that the convenience and apparent utility of freedom and apprenticeship rolls, together with the fine distinctions of guild, civic and statutory regulation, have concealed as much as they may have revealed, and that economic activity was less demarcated than such sources have invited us to believe, how might this have helped to shape broader developments within urban economies? In some respects occupational flexibility commends itself as a likely source of economic stability, facilitating and smoothing the evolution of patterns of employment in line with shifts in the level of demand for goods and services. On the other hand, where workers had come to rely on the availability of employment in more than one occupation in order to make ends meet, any sudden diminution of opportunities in one sphere might threaten their economic survival as assuredly as had they been dependent on a single source of income. Moreover, if the livelihoods of a large proportion of a town's population depended on opportunities for flexible deployment of capital and labour across a limited range of occupations, a sharp reduction of activity in one sector could have profoundly de-stabilising effects on others. This is what happened within the maritime economy of Rye in the closing decades of the sixteenth century.

Beyond certain minimum requirements of size there was nothing in the construction of sixteenth-century ships that dictated their exclusive deployment in either trade or fishing. Even size was rarely a constraint. On 2 September 1574 the tiny 'Susan' of Lydd, a mere 4 tons burden (carrying capacity), arrived at Rye from London to disgorge her mixed cargo of cloth, groceries and hops, and seventeenth-century Rye port books contain several references to boats of less than ten tons burden

making the round trip to Dieppe.¹¹ Despite injunctions to do so, those charged with compiling shipping returns to the government usually found it impossible to discriminate between 'fishing' and 'merchant' vessels. The commissioners surveying the Kent ports in 1565 commented of the twenty vessels returned for Dover that 'these ships or crayers [are] for the most part occupied in and about the trade of merchandise, fishing and serving there the passage'. At Sandwich the seventeen vessels were said to be 'occupied in and about merchandise, wood, coal and fishing'. At Ramsgate fourteen vessels were returned as 'for the most part occupied in and about the carrying of grain and fishing'. It was a similar story at Faversham and Rochester. Only where there was very little trade, or conversely no fishing, were the commissioners prepared to report, as they did for Broadstairs, that all eight vessels were 'almost wholly and only occupied in and about the trade of fishing', or, as they did for Dartford, Maidstone and Rainham, that all the boats were occupied in merchandise.¹²

Where commissioners did make distinctions between fishing vessels and merchantmen, as was normally though not invariably the case at Rye (Table 1) they were, at best, describing current rather than only usage. At least two 'merchant' vessels returned in 1572 appeared in the 1565 survey as 'fishing' boats, and 32 Rye vessels traded with London in 1571-2, despite the fact that there were supposedly only thirteen merchant ships based at Rye six years previously. Rye's short-haul overseas trade was not, in itself, conspicuously seasonal in nature, but there are strong indications that the rhythm of Rye's trade was linked to the annual cycle of North Sea fishing seasons.¹³ Many of the Rye boats joining in North Sea fishing voyages during the Elizabethan period can be identified as partaking in cross-channel trade, and all five 'merchantmen' returned as based at Rye in 1629 went to the Yarmouth herring fair in the later 1620s. Conversely, a majority of the nine 'fisher boats' noted at Rye in 1629 were regularly engaged in coastal and overseas freight carriage during the late 1620s and 1630s. Indeed seventeen different Rye boats were involved in overseas trade in the year following Christmas 1634, more than the total number of vessels based at Rye five years earlier according to the official return. At least twenty different Rye boats carried coastal cargoes to and from Rye in 1633 and at least 22 were engaged in coastal and overseas trade combined in 1639 (Table 2). Elsewhere it was a similar story. Several of the 'ships of burden' based at Suffolk ports were involved in the Iceland fishery, at Yarmouth 'the number of ships available for trading was considerably reduced each autumn by the demands of the herring industry', and throughout the East Anglian ports 'the fishing industry was closely related to the carrying trade'.¹⁴

**Table 1: Government returns of Rye shipping,
1565-1653.**

Description	1565	1580	1587	1596	1626	1629	1630	1653
Merchantmen	13	20	18	10	6	5	?	6
Fishing boats	45	31	27	25	10	9	?	10
Total	58	51	45	35	16	14	15	16

Sources: 1565-96, A. J. F. Duley, 'The early history of the Rye fishing industry', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 107 (1969), p. 62; R. F. Dell (ed.), 'Rye shipping records 1566-1590', *Sussex Record Society*, 64 (1965), pp. 8-12. 1626-53, RYE 47/106, 110, 114, 148.

If boats were a flexible asset, so too were the men who worked on them. Professor Davis thinks it probable that 'many men and boys simply walked on board ship and were taken on' as common seamen. Despite the absence of crew lists it is clear that men slipped easily into and between maritime occupations. 'Mariners', as we emphasized before, were not embraced by the statute of artificers, and any properly equipped fisherman could effortlessly enter the carriage trade. If a common seaman was simply an employee in that business, when he wished to transfer to fishing, custom required that he beg, borrow or share nets to earn his portion on fishing expeditions. Then, masters, beyond making elementary judgements of competence and repute, were unlikely to inspect the formal credentials of common seamen they recruited. Those seeking employment at sea understood the vagaries of the weather, the unpredictability of the catch, the uncertainty of future opportunities on trading voyages and, not least, competition in the labour market, and were – like artisans dependent on merchants for supplies – in no position to impose general regulations and restrictive practices. When a number of common seamen at Rye tried in 1567 they succeeded in establishing some paper regulations for a seamen's guild, only to be defeated within a few years by the refusal of other maritime workers to show solidarity and abide by them. Another group tried again in 1581, this time attempting to secure a royal charter, a move blocked by the Rye magistracy, suggesting that paternalism was one thing, ceding real control was quite another. The men made do with revised paper construction acceptable to Rye corporation, and although this guild was confirmed in 1583, within a couple of years it simply vanished from the record. Lack of demarcation within maritime trades was acknowledged by shipping commissioners in Elizabethan Norfolk, who reported that in most creeks and landing places they could neither distinguish between fishing vessels and coasters 'nor divide the men who sailed these various ships into

"mariners" and "fishermen"; "for that they serve all to every of the said sciences". Doubtless as a reflection of similar conditions in Kent, the county's commissioners did not even attempt to separate 'fishermen' from 'mariners', confining themselves instead to gross estimates of numbers employed at sea. Whatever their preferred title, including common seaman, the rank-and-file maritime employees took what work they could get.¹⁵

Table 2: The number of different Rye boats¹ engaged in coastal and overseas trade² in some years between 1602 and 1647.

<i>Period</i> ³	<i>Coastal</i>	<i>Overseas</i>	<i>Coastal & Overseas</i>
MM 1602-03		7	
MM 1603-04		5	
MM 1604-05		10	
XX 1611-12		5	
XX 1612-13		5	
XX 1613-14	5		
XX 1621-22		4	
XX 1622-23	5	6	8
XX 1623-24		6	
XX 1626-27		6	
XX 1629-30	10	8	12
XX 1632-33	20		
XX 1633-34		11	
XX 1634-35		17	
XX 1635-36	13	14	19
XX 1636-37		15	
XX 1638-39	17	12	22
XX 1646-47		12	

Notes:

1 Different meaning different in name (e.g. six entries for boats named 'The Peter' count as one entry in the table, even though there may have been two or more boats under that name. Hence totals in the table are minima).

2 Totals are for import and export shipments combined.

3 M = Michaelmas, X = Christmas.

Sources: PRO E 190, 752/23; 753/6, 23; 754/9; 756/1, 11, 16; 757/1; 759/10; 760/5, 8; 761/5; 762/12; 763/7, 13; 764/9; 765/1, 3, 16; 766/5, 19, 24; 767/1, 14, 15, 21; 767/30.

It might be expected that masters commanding vessels – for whom statistical evidence is better, though very patchy – would be rather less flexible than the crews they hired. Nonetheless, numbers combining fishing and trading activities were by no means small. At Rye over one third of known merchant voyage commanders during the mid-Elizabethan period also skippered fishing expeditions,¹⁶ and at least 36 masters were employed in both trade and fishing in the early seventeenth century. No evidence survives of numbers from Rye engaged in English Channel fishing after 1614, but during the 1630s seventeen masters who regularly captained boats on trading voyages also commanded on trips to the Yarmouth herring fair.¹⁷

Ship masters often combined an owner's with a foreman's eye. In 1580 41 of the 51 boats listed at Rye were wholly or partly owned by the master returned as commanding them. There was never any danger of a monopoly of ownership developing; boat owning was a risky business and, for reasons discussed below, at Rye it was becoming riskier by the year. As they became increasingly wary, investors who did not withdraw altogether during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries limited their overall commitment, or else spread the risk by purchasing smaller shares in a greater number of boats. In 1580 eighteen of the 51 vessels (35 per cent) were wholly owned by one person, but by 1626 only three (19 per cent) of the much reduced fleet of sixteen vessels were not jointly owned. Mariners continued to be prominent in the list of owners, while Rye merchants and a sprinkling of other inhabitants retained an interest in the fleet, but by 1626 outside investors had withdrawn altogether. As overseas trade began to revive at the end of the 1620s outside investment began to be attracted once more, and in 1629 the 'Speedwell' was returned under the ownership of a consortium comprising six men from Rye (three merchants, two brewers and a surgeon), two London merchants who were regularly to trade through the port in the early 1630s, and Sir John Hippisley, the Lieutenant of Dover Castle. The 'Speedwell' was the exception in 1629 and there is no evidence of the pattern of boat ownership for the decade before the civil war, but it is likely that there was a more extensive recrudescence of outside investment in the Rye fleet as the port's overseas trade rapidly expanded in the 1630s.¹⁸

In the early Elizabethan period Rye was one of the busiest ports in southern England. It had become so because investors had learnt that since there were opportunities for the flexible deployment of vessels in trade *and* fishing they were reasonably assured of making profits. Labour had been attracted to the port because it too could be flexibly deployed. The continuing attractiveness of the port to capital and labour depended

to a large extent on Rye's ability to satisfy what had, by mid-century, become a firmly established culture of economic expectations, and did so increasingly as the Elizabethan period wore on and another factor came more into play.

As I have examined in detail elsewhere, during the century before the civil war rising demand for agricultural produce from an expanding English population prompted landowners in the Rother levels to undertake extensive reclamation of the fertile marshlands which comprised Rye's immediate hinterland. One consequence of this drive to bring potentially high-value acreage into production, and its principal effect so far as Rye corporation was concerned, was an acceleration of the silting-up of the town's estuarine harbour. Between 1570 and 1640 Rye waged a vigorous campaign to prevent land reclamation in the Rother levels but, pitched against the vested interests of some of the most powerful county gentry families of Kent and Sussex, the corporation achieved no more than the occasional and invariably pyrrhic victory.¹⁹ As Rye harbour deteriorated, so vessels were exposed to an increased risk of storm damage. By 1570, it was claimed,

the shore weareth lower, the Camber being gone and worn away, therefore the force and rage of the sea hath more power to fall in here than ever heretofore it hath had ... we lose and are damaged among our sea craft, for want of good harbouring in one foul night more than we are able in one whole year to get up again.²⁰

Boat owners had to make progressively greater provision to meet the costs of harbour deterioration, directly in the form of more frequent bills for repairs to storm-damaged craft, and indirectly as Rye corporation sought to raise revenue from local taxation in order to fund largely abortive but hugely expensive harbour restoration schemes.²¹ What then of the prospects for trade and fishing?

Though it may be true for other classes of documentary material, historians cannot be accused of taking exchequer port book evidence at face value. The problems of interpretation are too well known to require discussion here,²² but for that very reason the virtues of port book evidence, particularly as compared with the local customs records for the port of Rye, are worth emphasizing. At no time were coastal and overseas shipments, or even imports and exports, systematically distinguished within Rye's local customs records (the 'lesser box'), and, in general, entries are summary in nature. Origins and destinations are rarely specified, and often little more than 'in' or 'out' of a boat precedes the list of cargo, though the name of the master was sometimes added for purposes of identification. By contrast, entries in exchequer port books provide

far more detail, facilitating qualitative assessment, albeit few for the late sixteenth century specify the origins or destinations of cargoes, and such information needs to be treated cautiously since the immediate destination of a ship was not necessarily the port destination of a cargo on board. Moreover, notwithstanding the unquantifiable but probably significant variations from year to year in the proportion of trade recorded in port books, a number of quantitative trends at Rye do seem clear, if only because so pronounced. As indicated by Table 3, the biggest problem is simply the patchy survival of both local and national customs evidence.²³

The loss of Calais in 1558, which dealt a severe blow to Rye's overseas trade, was followed by the virtual loss, during the late sixteenth century, of Rye's woodfuel-export-led trade with the Netherlands, due largely to a combination of periodic shortages of Wealden supplies, land transportation problems and frequent government restrictions on exports when domestic fuel supplies were short.²⁴ Briefly revived in the early 1620s, the trade had once again all but vanished by the closing years of the decade, snuffed out by wartime disruptions and local export prohibitions imposed by paternalistic Rye magistrates anxious to ensure sufficient woodfuel supplies 'to serve the poor at reasonable and moderate prices.'²⁵ But loss of trade with the Netherlands was, from the perspective of Rye boat owners and their employees, of less serious consequence than might be thought, for it had offered few local opportunities for employment in freight carriage. Of the 49 shipments to the Netherlands recorded in the earliest surviving and detailed overseas port book for Rye, covering 1566-7, Rye boats had carried only six, and three of these comprised cloth shipments to Antwerp. Since the bulk export trade in woodfuel was overwhelmingly carried in Netherlandish vessels, its departure represented, at worst, a loss of potential rather than actual business for Rye operators. The link with the Norman ports, in particular Dieppe, was another matter altogether, for of the total of 84 recorded shipments of all sorts between the two ports in 1566-7 seventy (83 per cent) were carried in Rye boats. As harbour deterioration pushed up operating costs at Rye during the late sixteenth century the buoyancy of the carriage trade between Rye and the Norman ports became ever more critical to the viability of much of the Rye fleet.²⁶

The carriage trade between Rye and Dieppe to which the earliest Rye port books testify was in fact of recent origin, and especially fortunate for Rye given the equally recent severing of connections with Calais. The period after 1560 witnessed a significant increase in the importance of France as a recipient of English woollen cloth, first because the crisis in England's trade with Antwerp, which erupted in 1564, forced English

Table 3: Numbers of inward and outward shipments at Rye recorded in exchequer port books and lesser box accounts, 1566-1659.

<i>Period</i> ¹	<i>Coastal port books</i>	<i>Overseas port books</i>	<i>Combined coastal & overseas port books</i>	<i>Lesser box</i>
MM 1566-67		164		
ME 1568-69	59		}	
MM 1568-69		97	} 156*	
MM 1570-71		75		
MM 1573-74		117	} 197*	
EM 1574	80		}	
ME 1574-75	77			
MM 1578-79		82*		
ME 1579-80	69		}	
MM 1579-80		112	} 181*	
MM 1580-81				361
MM 1581-82				365
MM 1582-83				417
MM 1583-84				382
ME 1584-85	49		}	
MM 1584-85		43*	} 92*	413
MM 1587-88		37*		
MM 1588-89		89*		
ME 1589-90	57	22*	79*	
ME 1590-91	56		}	
MM 1590-91		77	} 133*	
MM 1591-92		90		
Jan-Dec 1592				251
MM 1593-94				196
EM 1596	29			
Jan-Dec 1597				221
MM 1597-98		56		
MM 1598-99		36		
Jan-Dec 1599				127
MM 1599-1600	43	46	89	133
MM 1600-01		39		123
MM 1602-03		29		119 ²

MM 1603-04		29	}	49*	
EM 1604	20		}		
MM 1604-05		51			
MM 1608-09					111
ME 1608-09		11			
XX 1611-12		33			
XX 1612-13		21			
XX 1613-14	81				
MM 1617-18					178
EM 1619		14*			
XX 1621-22		58			
XX 1622-23	90	72		162	
XX 1623-24		43			
XX 1626-27		33			
XX 1629-30	87	109		196	
XX 1632-33	91				
XX 1633-34		121			
XX 1634-35		145			
XX 1635-36	72	167		239	
XX 1636-37		145			
EM 1638		73			
XX 1638-39	92	110		202	
XX 1640-41	72				
MM 1644-45					84 ³
Jan-Dec 1646					100 ³
XX 1646-47		66			
MM 1651-52					120 ³
MM 1652-53					120 ³
MM 1654-55					85 ³
Jan-Dec 1656					100 ³
Jan-Aug 1657					92 ³
MM 1658-59					125 ³

Notes:

* Exchequer port book information known to be incomplete (i.e. lacking inward or outward shipments). See Table 6.

1 M = Michaelmas, X = Christmas, E = Easter.

2 Estimate based on records for 11 months.

3 As with lesser box accounts prior to 1580, the post-1644 accounts record cargoes unrelated to individual shipments. Shipping movements have been estimated.

Sources:

Exchequer Port Books: Coastal. PRO E 190, 738/12; 740/5, 25; 741/13; 742/38; 745/24; 746/36; 749/19; 750/21; 751/13; 754/4; 757/1; 760/8; 763/7; 764/9; 766/19; 767/21, 26.

Overseas. PRO E 190, 737/11, 24; 738/18, 25; 739/6, 16, 28; 741/7, 8, 29, 30, 35; 742/12, 24, 26; 744/17, 19; 745/15, 27; 746/19, 34; 747/4, 8, 17; 748/11; 750/7, 8, 32; 751/7, 22; 752/3, 23; 753/6, 23; 754/9; 755/9; 756/1, 11, 16; 758/16; 759/10; 760/5; 761/5, 11; 762/12; 763/13; 765/1, 3, 16; 766/5, 24; 767/1, 14, 15, 30.

Lesser Box: Totals for 1580-1603 are calculated, with one or two minor inferences, from monthly totals tabulated in Dell, 'Rye shipping records', p. 145. Totals for 1608-59 derived from RYE 66/76-9, 90-3, 104, 106-9; RYE 47/146, 148, 152, 154, 156, 159.

Table 4: The direction of overseas exports and imports at Rye in some years, 1566-1647.

	Dieppe	Elsewhere in France	The Netherlands	Other	Total Recorded Shipments
Exports ¹					
MM 1566-67	42	1	49	2	94
MM 1604-05	17	0	0	4	21
XX 1621-22	7	6	10	0	23
XX 1622-23	12	12	9	0	33
XX 1629-30	59	1	3	0	63
XX 1633-34	52	3	0	0	55
XX 1646-47	17	0	0	0	17
Imports ¹					
MM 1566-67	42	6	21	1	70
MM 1604-05	20	10	0	0	30
XX 1621-22	13	10	12	0	35
XX 1622-23	12	16	11	0	39
XX 1629-30	40	4	2	0	46
XX 1633-34	56	6	0	1	66
XX 1646-47	46	2	1	0	49

Notes: 1 M = Michaelmas, X = Christmas.

Sources: PRO E 190, 737/11, 24; 754/9; 759/10; 760/5; 763/13; 765/1, 3, 16; 767/30.

and especially London merchants to develop markets elsewhere, and secondly because the early years of the religious wars disrupted production in the old drapery industry of southern France, providing an opening for English exporters of cheap Welsh and Northern cottons, kersies and

dozens. The commercial geography of France made Normandy the gateway to the whole French market. After 1564 London merchants moved rapidly into the French trade via Rouen, a trade which they had previously largely ignored. As a general rule the expansion of cloth exports to France from the outports in the second half of the sixteenth century was less dramatic than from London, but the rise evident at Rye during the 1560s and 1570s reflects the fact that, at first, many merchants chose to send their cargoes of cottons through the Norman gateway via Rye, employing Rye vessels as carriers. Forty of the 42 recorded shipments from Rye to Dieppe in the twelve months following Michaelmas 1566 consisted wholly or partly of cottons, at a time when London's cottons exports to France were negligible. The volume and, as Table 5 shows, the value of cottons exports from Rye continued to rise in the 1570s, reaching a high point of 129,600 goads in the year beginning Michaelmas 1578. Shipments of new draperies and of kersies and dozens also increased, the latter valued at nearly £20,000 in 1578-9. This export-led trade encouraged a reciprocal flow of imports, mainly of French manufactured medium and light quality linens and canvas, textiles not produced in any quantity in England. Some luxury textiles, mainly of Italian manufacture, also found their way into England via Lyons, Dieppe and Rye during the 1570s, though they did not yet have the significance which, as will be seen, they were to assume for the Rye carriage trade during the 1630s.²⁷

Rye's prominence in the Elizabethan transit trade was not, however, to endure. During the 1570s London also became a major exporter of Northern and Welsh cottons, and after 1579 exports from the capital were taking place at the expense of Rye. Moreover, war with Spain and the turmoil caused by civil strife and plague in France seriously disrupted Anglo-French trade in the late sixteenth century, with exports from London as well as Southampton, Exeter and the Dorset ports badly hit. These difficulties were compounded by the build-up of opposition in the northern French woollen textile belt to imports of English new and finished old draperies, which culminated in 1600 in a royal edict banning imports of all English cloth, other than white or dyed-in-the-wool. As Table 5 shows, by 1591-2 old drapery exports from Rye were less than one fifth of their 1578-9 level, and exports of cottons had slumped to just 3,000 goads per annum by 1602-5. New drapery exports had all but ceased by 1597-8. Correspondingly, imports of canvas, which had peaked in 1568-9 at around 100,000 ells, averaged just 8,675 ells by 1597-1601.²⁸

Table 5: Exports of woollen cloth from Rye to France for certain years between 1566 and 1634.

Period ¹	Shortcloths (Old Draperies)	(Value)	Cottons and Frizes	New Draperies	Total
MM 1566-67	68	(£453)	£2,218	0	£2,671
MM 1573-74	c. 1,000	(£6,667)	c. £2,000	£338	£9,005
MM 1578-79	c. 2,900	(£19,333)	c. £5,000	c. £1,000	£25,333
MM 1591-92	543	(£3,620)	£313	£670	£4,603
MM 1597-98	162	(£1,080)	£226	£22	£1,328
XX 1612-13	0		0	0	0
1624	84	(£560)	—	—	—
XX 1633-34	500	(£3,333)	£399	£1,459	£5,191

Notes: 1 M = Michaelmas, X = Christmas.

Source: H. A. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French Trade 1540-1640' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976), p. 321.

The impact of the collapse of the transit trade on the employment opportunities for the Rye fleet is strikingly illustrated in Table 6. During those years in the 1570s and 1580s for which overseas port books survive, at least 30-57 outward and 26-44 inward shipments per annum were carried in Rye boats. For the 1590s surviving overseas port books record Rye boats carrying between only 3-28 outward and 6-21 inward shipments. At the beginning of the seventeenth century overseas freight carriage business stood at approximately one sixth of the levels of the 1580s.

There was never any possibility that loss of business on such a scale could be made good by turning to coastal freight carriage. Supplies of Rye's principal coastal exports – Wealden iron, timber and wood products – were, as already indicated, vulnerable to shortages at source and prone to disruption when the roads leading into the town fell into a particularly bad state. Imports consisted mainly of grain, sea-coal and composite cargoes destined for the merchant-retailers of Rye, numbers of which depended largely on the level of demand from the town's own population (Rye's marshland hinterland was sparsely populated) which in turn was heavily dependent on the vitality of the maritime economy. Any significant increase in coastal import carriage business for Rye boats was thus going to be the result, not the cause, of expanding activity at the port. In the event, as Table 7 shows, such was the scale of the drop in the town's population that whereas the number of grain shipments to Rye normally ranged between 70-90 per annum in the 1560s and 1570s, after

Table 6: Numbers of overseas shipments carried in Rye boats 1566-1647.

Period ¹	Outwards			Inwards		
	Rye boats (%)	Other boats	Total	Rye boats (%)	Other boats	Total
MM 1566-67	44 (47)	50	94	36 (51)	34	70
MM 1568-69	20 (38)	33	53	19 (43)	25	44
ME 1570-71	40 (93)	3	43	26 (81)	6	32
MM 1573-74	40 (73)	15	55	44 (71)	18	62
MM 1578-79	57 (70)	25	82	—	—	—
MM 1579-80	30 (54)	26	56	26 (46)	30	56
MM 1584-85	34 (79)	9	43	—	—	—
MM 1587-88	34 (92)	3	37	—	—	—
MM 1588-89	—	—	—	33 (37)	56	89
ME 1589-90	—	—	—	6 (27)	16	22
MM 1590-91	20 (69)	9	29	21 (44)	27	48
MM 1591-92	28 (48)	30	58	14 (44)	18	32
MM 1597-98	19 (79)	5	24	19 (59)	13	32
MM 1598-99	4 (25)	12	16	8 (40)	12	20
MM 1599-1600	3 (16)	16	19	6 (22)	21	27
MM 1600-01	3 (19)	13	16	7 (30)	16	23
MM 1602-03	5 (50)	5	10	6 (32)	13	19
MM 1603-04	8 (67)	4	12	3 (18)	14	17
MM 1604-05	20 (95)	1	21	14 (47)	16	30
ME 1608-09	3 (50)	3	6	2 (40)	3	5
XX 1611-12	8 (80)	2	10	7 (30)	16	23
XX 1612-13	3 (75)	1	4	8 (47)	9	17
EM 1619	—	—	—	5 (36)	9	14
XX 1621-22	9 (39)	14	23	11 (31)	24	35
XX 1622-23	14 (42)	19	33	17 (44)	22	39
XX 1623-24	9 (50)	9	18	10 (40)	15	25
ME 1625-26	—	—	—	4 (100)	0	4
XX 1626-27 ²	11 (85)	2	13	16 (80)	4	20
XX 1627-28	? ?	? ?	1	? ?	? ?	5
XX 1629-30	36 (57)	27	63	18 (39)	28	46
XX 1633-34	33 (60)	22	55	32 (48)	34	66
XX 1634-35	51 (76)	16	67	56 (72)	22	78
XX 1635-36	77 (95)	4	81	78 (91)	8	86

XX 1636-37	56	(97)	2	58	79	(91)	8	87
EM 1638	30	(100)	0	30	42	(98)	1	43
XX 1638-39	49	(96)	2	51	50	(85)	9	59
XX 1646-47	12	(71)	5	17	22	(45)	27	49

Notes:

1 M = Michaelmas, X = Christmas, E = Easter.

2 As a result of the ban on trade with France, no inward or outward shipments took place after the beginning of May 1627.

Sources: PRO E 190, 737/11, 24; 738/18, 25; 739/6, 16, 28; 741/7, 8, 29, 30, 35; 742/12, 24, 26; 744/17, 19; 745/15, 27; 746/19, 34; 747/4, 8, 17; 748/11; 750/7, 8, 32; 751/7, 22; 752/3, 23; 753/6, 23; 754/9; 755/9; 756/1, 11, 16; 758/16; 759/10; 760/5; 761/5, 11; 762/12, 18; 763/13; 765/1, 3, 16; 766/5, 24; 767/1, 14, 15, 30.

1599 the total annual number of inward coastal shipments ranged between just 21 and 43. Moreover, an increasing proportion of inward coastal shipments comprised sea-coal from Newcastle and Sunderland, the only expanding sector of Rye's coastal import trade during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. From an average of 147.5 cauldrons per annum in the early 1580s imports rose to 377 and 354 cauldrons in 1639 and 1641 respectively. Twenty of the 31 inward coastal shipments recorded in 1639, and nineteen of the 30 recorded for 1641, consisted entirely of sea-coal. This did much to boost the proportion of inward coastal shipments carried in Rye boats (Table 7), as well as the proportion of inward coastal trade handled by Rye merchants (Table 9). Indeed the two trends went hand-in-hand; the master in command of the vessel and the merchant importing the sea-coal commonly being one-and-the-same, and often having collected the shipment after partaking in the annual summer fishing voyage to Scarborough for cod and ling.²⁹

The combined effect of depression in the French trade and a slump in coastal exports of timber and iron at the turn of the century is most apparent in the dwindling number of entries and clearances recorded in the lesser box accounts. Twelve month totals fell from 413 in 1584-5 to 251 in 1592, 221 in 1597 and ranged from just 119 to 133 per annum between 1599 and 1603 (Table 3). If the willingness and/or ability of individuals to invest in boats operating out of Rye rested on the likely balance between operating costs and income-generating opportunities, then conditions prevailing by the late 1580s would already have begun to make many think twice. Rising repair and maintenance bills and increasing levels of direct and indirect taxation were matched against dwindling opportunities to deploy vessels in the transit trade between Rye and Dieppe, and an overall contraction in coastal business. That in turn meant a degree of reliance on fishing which not only ran counter

to an economic culture premised upon opportunities for flexible deployment of labour and equipment, but also, in many cases, could not be made to work. It was precisely the interweaving of trade and fishing that had given strength to the maritime economy based at Rye; to remove one strand of the rope fatally weakened the other. When it was put under strain it broke.

Table 7: Numbers of coastal shipments carried in Rye boats 1568–1641.

Period ¹	Outwards			Inwards		
	Rye boats (%)	Other boats	Total	Rye boats (%)	Other boats	Total
ME 1568–69	11 (52)	10	21	8 (21)	30	38
EM 1574	14 (58)	10	24	17 (30)	39	56
ME 1574–75	10 (48)	11	21	13 (23)	43	56
ME 1579–80	12 (50)	12	24	9 (20)	36	45
ME 1584–85	2 (18)	9	11	5 (13)	33	38
ME 1589–90	8 (57)	6	14	7 (16)	36	43
ME 1590–91	3 (21)	11	14	8 (19)	34	42
EM 1596	6 (60)	4	10	4 (21)	15	19
MM 1599–1600	2 (25)	6	8	10 (29)	25	35
EM 1604	2 (100)	0	2	5 (28)	13	18
XX 1613–14	25 (64)	14	39	17 (40)	25	42
XX 1622–23	35 ² (74 ²)	12?	47	25 ² (58 ²)	18?	43
XX 1629–30	28 (56)	22	50	19 (51)	18	37
XX 1632–33	53 (90)	6	59	28 (88)	4	32
XX 1635–36	37 (73)	14	51	16 (76)	5	21
XX 1638–39	55 (90)	6	61	27 (87)	4	31
XX 1640–41	41 (98)	1	42	25 (83)	5	30

Notes:

1 M = Michaelmas, E = Easter, X = Christmas.

2 Minimum estimate.

Sources: PRO E 190, 738/12; 740/5, 25; 741/13; 742/38; 745/24; 746/36; 749/19; 750/21; 751/13; 754/4; 757/1; 760/8; 763/7; 764/9; 766/19; 767/21, 26.

Once the economy of Rye's fishing-trading fleet was compromised by the loss of much of the latter input, and further imperilled by rising local costs deriving from harbour deteriorations, Rye's engagement in the London fishmarket immediately became vulnerable to increased competition from rival suppliers.³⁰ So it did not help that marshland reclamation schemes also damaged the routes across the Rother levels

used by packhorses to transport fish to the capital and often caused 'the stay and interruption of rippers'. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the joke in government circles was that stale news was 'like Rye fish, unfit for consumption'.³¹ More seriously it meant that the London market was 'often times utterly unserved' from Rye. Even more damaging were the piracy and frequent 'stays' of shipping during the late Elizabethan wars, which were almost as great an impediment to fishing as to trading operations.³² Furthermore, a considerable body of evidence suggests that, beginning in the 1580s, but to a far greater extent in the early seventeenth century, Rye's fishermen faced fierce competition from rival English and especially French fishing fleets which, according to much local testimony, regularly invaded Rye's traditional fishing grounds in the English Channel equipped with illegal nets, and which 'the fishermen of our town do think themselves altogether unable ... to suppress and repel ... by reason that they are so many in number and so strongly prepared, armed and violently bent to defend their unlawful proceedings'. In February 1603 '30 or 40 [French] boats ... with unlawful nets' were said to be at work, and the following year John Swayne deposed that he had been attacked by the crews of French boats armed with muskets. French fishermen 'in great barks' taking cod and herring were alleged to spoil the nets of Rye fishermen 'by running over them', so destroying the equipment also needed for the Yarmouth and Scarborough voyages.³³ Besides the increasing difficulties experienced in catching fish, there were the time-honoured struggles associated with selling it, as fishermen sought to avoid surrendering the best of their take at knock-down prices to a resident royal purveyor loath to pay his bills,³⁴ and, in alliance with Rye corporation, fought off the repeated attempts of the company of London fishmongers to corner the market, intent on 'the enriching of that company of fishmongers only, and their agents, and ... the impoverishment of all the fishermen of Rye'.³⁵ Finally, competition from Essex and north Kent fleets to supply the capital made it impossible for the Rye industry to pass on rising costs to the metropolitan consumer.

Although the problems associated with piracy and 'stays' of shipping were common to all south coast fishing industries, the majority of those sketched above were peculiar to or impacted particularly on Rye. And since, by the late 1580s, there were far fewer compensatory benefits to be had in the form of opportunities to deploy vessels in the carriage trade than had been the case a generation earlier, the incentives to remain at Rye were – for a good proportion of boat owners and operatives – becoming difficult to see. Brighton and Hastings had little sea-borne commerce and neither possessed a harbour of any sort, but the system of hauling boats up above the high water mark which prevailed at both

these towns greatly reduced the risk of storm damage.³⁶ Equally, local taxes elsewhere were less onerous. If the only available option most of the time was to deploy vessels in fishing expeditions there were places better than Rye from which to do so. Between 1585 and 1600, precisely the period when trade fell away from the port most rapidly, the Rye fishing industry contracted by about one third, while government returns suggest a reduction of similar magnitude in the total number of vessels based at Rye (Table 1).³⁷

A dramatic revival and expansion of Anglo-French trade occurred in the two decades following the peace concluded between England and Spain in 1604 and the successful negotiation of the Anglo-French trade treaty in 1606. By the 1610s something in the order of 25,000 short-cloths-worth of old draperies and new draperies valued at £65–70,000 were being exported annually to France. At the ports of south-west England, where a significant rise in the volume of English cloth exports to France was recorded, a three-fold increase in the volume of French linen and canvas imports also took place between 1600 and 1620.³⁸ But as Table 6 shows, Rye did not benefit from this expansion and overseas trade remained depressed until the end of the war with France in 1629. One of the key differences between Rye's cloth trade with France and that of the outports of south-west England was that the latter were not, prior to the 1630s, directly competing with London. For the south-west ports traded primarily with Brittany, whereas London directed virtually all its northern French trade to Normandy, which was also the focus of Rye's trade with northern France. The development of London as a major centre of the Anglo-Norman cloth trade provided an obvious alternative for many of the cloth merchants who had at first chosen to direct shipments through Rye. The fall in the volume of recorded cottons exported from Rye after 1579 suggests that London had begun to attract trade away before the later 1580s and 1590s, but in any event it seems clear that wartime disruptions of trade in the late Elizabethan period provided the catalyst for many cloth merchants to shift the base of their shipments to the capital. Between 1599 and 1609, when only very small quantities were shipped out of Rye, the volume of recorded cottons exported from London almost doubled, rising from 197,165 to 386,900 goads. Since, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the pattern of the reciprocal Anglo-French cloth trade was generally dictated by English exports it is not surprising that imports of French linen and canvas, other than those destined for use in the town and its hinterland, were diverted from Rye. Where trade went, vessels were apt to follow. That some had 'gone to London' was confirmed by Rye corporation in the early seventeenth century.³⁹

If levels of overseas trade at Rye remained deeply depressed until the end of the 1620s there were at least some earlier signs of a revival of the coastal iron exports. Efforts to repair the highway approaches in response to the crescendo of complaints in 1602 seem to have reaped some benefits, albeit rather belatedly. Local customs books record 63 tons of bar-iron shipped out in 1601, 318 tons in 1607 and 435 tons in 1610, and coastal port books record iron exports from Rye of nearly 600 tons in 1614 and over 600 tons in 1633. Although few Rye merchants played any part, much of this trade (over three-quarters of which was to London) generated welcome business for Rye boats. During the 1630s, when local vessels carried 90 per cent of coastal export shipments, bar-iron was by far the most important coastal commodity shipped out of Rye. Coastal timber exports also recovered somewhat, perhaps partly in response to Rye corporation's decision in 1621 to cut local customs duties, though there is no evidence of an upturn in overseas timber exports (Table 7).⁴⁰

The early seventeenth-century coastal carriage trade, particularly in sea-coal imports and iron exports, did something to cushion the fishing industry and stabilize the size of the Rye fleet for a time at the reduced level reached by 1600.⁴¹ But the underlying conditions for the Rye fishing industry continued to worsen and it is clear that it entered a further period of rapid decline in the later 1610s. Confrontations with French fleets in the English Channel occurred with increasing frequency. The privy council sought a resolution by licensing a certain number of French boats in the service of the king, but this proved ineffective. A night-time check in 1616 showed several boats carrying counterfeit licences. In 1620 it was alleged that although only thirteen French vessels were licensed '40 or 50 sail boldly'. The following year Rye once again turned its attention to the illegal nets carried by the French, which 'so rake the seas that ... four boats ... have caught more sole than all our boats have taken in a whole year'. The governor of Dieppe, it was claimed, had been bribed to 'tolerate their unlawful nets'. The consequences of French fishing were 'apparent and sensible' at Rye in the 'loss which hath fallen on the fish-fare'. By 1621 'scarcely ten' Rye boats were employed in Channel fishing, 'the effects whereof appear in the ruin and decay of the town'.⁴²

But increased competition from other English fleets had also contributed to this state of affairs. Prior to the seventeenth century trawl fishing had been banned within the Cinque Ports confederation on the grounds that it damaged fish fry. But in the harsher competitive climate at the turn of the century Hastings began to follow the lead of fleets from north Kent and Essex, which were by then commonly to be found trawling in the Channel. Already labouring under many disadvantages

Rye's fishing industry sought protective legislation that would outlaw trawling and champion the trammel fishing which was practised only at Rye and Hythe. It succeeded, at least on paper, in getting the trawling ban re-imposed within the Cinque Ports after a disputed trial of fishing techniques in 1608, but could do nothing about trawlers from Barking, Rochester and Strood which, along with French fleets, trawled Rye's local grounds in the 1610s and 1620s. Rye's failed attempt to promote a bill in parliament in 1621 to enforce trammeling and place a general restraint on trawling was, as its opponents noted, intended 'to monopolize this kind of fishing unto those two towns only and, by so consequence the whole city [of London] to be served with such fish as shall be sent from those places'. The opposition diagnosed the causes of the bill with equal accuracy; 'that plenty of fish by us daily sent unto the gate doth bring down their prices in fish street, for which cause they complain'.⁴³

That indeed was the rub. In the later 1610s and 1620s Rye's fishing industry was rendered wholly uncompetitive by a devastating combination of high and rising direct and indirect local operating costs, increased competition from more efficiently equipped rival English and French fleets, and above all, a paucity of opportunities to deploy vessels in freight carriage due to the prolonged crisis in the port's overseas trade. In 1619 Rye corporation reported that whereas in previous generations 'there hath been 40 sail of fisherboats with 10 to 12 men in every boat daily going to the sea fishing', these were 'now drawn unto the compass of 16 or 17 boats at the most'. If the ongoing dispute between Rye's fishermen and the London company of fishmongers abated somewhat after 1610, this was only because the Rye fishing industry was no longer a major supplier to the capital.⁴⁴

Rye's population fell by at least twenty per cent – to below 2,000 – in the fifteen years after 1610. The Rye fleet voyaging to Yarmouth – the most significant and resilient of all fishing expeditions – fell from sixteen boats in 1620 to ten in 1624, a number it exceeded only once thereafter. A government return in 1626 noted only sixteen vessels at Rye, a total of 295 tons, less than a quarter of the tonnage noted in 1580. What remained of the Rye fishing industry in the later 1620s had to contend with the frequent and highly disruptive restraints on shipping movements arising out of England's wars with France and Spain. In 1627 Rye corporation told the lieutenant of Dover Castle that

our poor distressed fishermen, whose poverty by a few days restraint from their ordinary calling appearing unto us far greater than we could ever imagine, enforceth us to write to you in their behalf ... that they may be permitted to go fishing to provide maintenance for themselves

and families, who having no other means of living cannot live but perish if their means of living be but a while longer taken from them.⁴⁵

Yet those who survived the nadir of the 1620s found their employment prospects transformed during the 1630s.

As Table 6 shows, numbers of overseas shipments recorded in Rye port books for the 1630s were dramatically above previous seventeenth-century levels. Customs officials also recorded more inward than outward shipments. The movement of exchange rates and of gold and silver greatly encouraged both English and alien merchants to import French goods in the 1630s. Indeed there is some evidence that the exchange rate was encouraging commodity imports by the mid-1620s, and that an import boom from France was postponed by the Anglo-French war. In marked contrast to the export-led transit trade through Rye during the Elizabethan period, the revival of overseas trade through the port after the cessation of hostilities in 1629 was certainly import led. Table 8 is a far from perfect guide, but it does show that the increase in the volume of overseas trade through Rye was more than matched by an increase in the part played by foreigners in that trade. French merchants were at a particular advantage in Anglo-French trade after 1629, and even more so after 1632, when increased duties were imposed on the trade of English merchants in France, but not upon the exports of the native French.⁴⁶

Although Normandy canvas figured significantly in the first half of the 1630s, the character of Rye's overseas import trade during the decade was very different from that during the 1570s and 1580s, and was increasingly dominated by luxury textiles (which were included in twenty shipments during 1633-4, forty in 1634-5 and fifty in 1636-7), and millinery, haberdashery and pedlars' wares (contained in 28 shipments in 1633-4, 44 in 1634-5 and 41 in 1636-7). The boom in such commodities helped raise national customs revenue on inward shipments at Rye from £196 in 1629-30 to £1,476 in 1636-7.⁴⁷

The explanation for this trade almost certainly lies in the disruptions caused on the continent by the Thirty Years War (1618-48). The overland routes through the Netherlands and Germany, along which Italian luxury textiles were traditionally carried to England, became part of a war zone, making it necessary to find alternative routes. The development of England's direct seaborne commerce with Italy, in response to the disruption of European overland routes during the Thirty Years War, has been chronicled by Davis, but an overland trade via Lyons remained possible and also important for alien merchants who had little share in Anglo-Italian trade. From Lyons, Italian and French luxury textiles were exported to England via the Norman ports, a proportion entering the

kingdom at Rye. This trade and the generally favourable climate for French merchants exporting to England in turn stimulated exports of millinery, haberdashery and other fashion-related goods. The millinery and haberdashery shipped into Rye may have formed a very significant proportion of the total volume of such goods imported into England. In 1634, for example, very little haberdashery and no hats at all were imported to London from France.⁴⁸

Outward shipments from Rye must be considered in the context of a notable decline in cloth sales to France from London and other English outports during the 1630s. This trend, clear even at the ports witnessing a revival in cloth exports to France in the immediate aftermath of war, was the consequence of additional French tariff burdens imposed on English cloth from 1632, and falling French demand, especially in the later 1630s, as taxes to pay for the war reduced the purchasing power of the poorer classes, traditionally the main market for English cloth.⁴⁹ So far as cottons, kersies and new draperies are concerned, exports from Rye to France reflected this general trend, reviving at the beginning of the decade but falling off after 1634. However, the immediate post-war period also saw the beginning of an export trade from Rye in gloves and woollen, worsted and silk hosiery, which then experienced a near three-fold increase between 1634–5 and 1635–6, and remained buoyant during the later 1630s, during which time the available evidence suggests that over 2,000 dozen pairs of gloves, 4,000 dozen pairs of woollen and worsted stockings and in excess of 5,000 pairs of silk stockings were being exported annually to France. But cargoes of cobweb lawns and tiffanies provide the outstanding feature in Rye's overseas trade during the later 1630s. Neither figured among exports in 1630, but over 30,000 yards of tiffanies were shipped to France in 1639, and available port book evidence suggests that similar quantities of lawns may have been shipped to France throughout the latter half of the decade.⁵⁰ Attention has recently drawn to the importance of the silk manufacturing industries introduced at Canterbury and Sandwich by their late sixteenth-century French and Walloon refugee communities, and in 1639 Canterbury's city weavers listed 'tiffanie', a delicate woven cloth like muslin, among 'diverse new stuffs' they claimed to have invented, so it may well be that a large proportion of the luxury textiles exported from Rye during the later 1630s were of Kentish manufacture.⁵¹ However, the chronology of the boom in cargoes of lawns and tiffanies invites speculation that some were of Flemish or Dutch manufacture, and represented an overspill of the re-export trade centred on the Dover entrepôt, which is known to have received a tremendous boost from the outbreak of war between France and Spain in May 1635.⁵²

Table 8: Merchant entries in Rye overseas port books, 1602-1647.¹

Period ²	Exports					Imports				
	Rye ³	(%)	'Aliens'	Other ⁴	Total	Rye ³	(%)	'Aliens'	Other ⁴	Total
MM 1602-03	9	(64)	0	5	14	18	(50)	3	15	36
MM 1603-04	10	(59)	1	6	17	11	(46)	7	6	24
MM 1604-05	18	(55)	1	14	33	26	(49)	13	14	53
ME 1608-09	3	(50)	0	3	6	4	(67)	1	1	6
XX 1611-12	6	(55)	4	1	11	14	(47)	13	3	30
XX 1612-13	4	(80)	1	0	5	11	(61)	6	1	18
XX 1621-22	10	(42)	14	0	24	11 ⁵	(28 ⁵)	25 ⁵	4 ⁵	40 ⁵
XX 1622-23	14	(40)	19	2	35	19	(40)	29	0	48
XX 1623-24	9	(50)	9	0	18	18	(55)	15	0	33
ME 1625-26	-	-	-	-	-	11	(79)	3	0	14
XX 1626-27	12	(67)	4	2	18	29	(52)	17	10	56
XX 1629-30	38	(43)	10	41	89	38	(51)	26	11	75
XX 1633-34	15	(13)	39	59	113	43	(39)	52	14	109
XX 1634-35	18	(13)	66	54	138	33	(22)	97	22	152
XX 1635-36	15	(10)	58	82	155	33	(23)	72	38	143
XX 1636-37	4	(3)	60	64	128	23	(14)	89	56	168
EM 1638	2	(4)	0	51	53	8	(10)	1	68	77
XX 1638-39	5	(3)	72	78	155	7	(7)	70	25	102
XX 1646-47	2	(9)	4	17	23	23	(42)	27	5	55

Notes:

1 Figures are for the number of name entries, *not* for the number of different merchants.

2 M = Michaelmas, E = Easter, X = Christmas.

3 Known Rye inhabitants, see Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 164-92.

4 Figures include - in addition to all English merchants other than known Rye inhabitants - often quite large numbers who were almost certainly aliens, but who were not specified as such in an entry. The 'aliens' column includes only those entries specified as 'alien'.

5 Minimum estimate.

Sources: PRO E, 190 752/23; 753/6, 23; 754/9; 755/9; 756/1, 11, 16; 758/16; 759/10; 760/5; 761/5, 11; 762/12; 763/13; 765/1, 3, 16; 766/5, 24; 767/1, 14, 15, 30.

It would certainly be difficult to explain trends in Rye's overseas trade during the later 1630s without reference to France's involvement in the war and the consequent severing of overland trade connections after May 1635. For, in addition to perhaps stimulating a re-export trade, it is likely that well-connected merchants handling English manufactures moved

swiftly to exploit gaps opening in the French market. The extent of foreign interest in cargoes shipped out of Rye between 1635 and 1639 is certainly striking (Table 8). During this period aliens controlled proportionately nearly as much of Rye's exports as they did its imports.⁵³ As merchants, Rye inhabitants were conspicuously unable to gain a foothold in the luxury trade that did so much to revive the number of shipments in and out of the port during the 1630s. But as boat-owners, masters and crew it was a different story. The benefit derived by Rye boats from their status as neutral carriers in the period after the outbreak of war between Spain and France is clearly shown in Table 6. Between December 1635 and December 1639, 90 per cent of inward shipments, and 96 per cent of outward shipments for which there is port book evidence, were carried in Rye boats.

Table 9: Merchant entries in Rye coastal port books, 1599-1641.¹

<i>Period</i> ²	<i>Exports</i>				<i>Imports</i>			
	<i>Rye</i> ³	(%)	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Rye</i> ³	(%)	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
MM 1599-1600	0	(0)	8	8	11	(30)	26	37
EM 1604	0	(0)	2	2	9	(47)	10	19
XX 1613-14	1	(3)	32 ⁴	33 ⁴	14 ⁴	(54 ⁴)	12 ⁴	26 ⁴
XX 1622-23	0	(0)	44 ⁴	44 ⁴	13 ⁴	(45 ⁴)	16 ⁴	29 ⁴
XX 1629-30	1	(2)	46 ⁴	47 ⁴	28	(76)	9	37
XX 1632-33	0	(0)	64	64	21	(66)	11	32
XX 1635-36	1	(2)	58	59	10	(48)	11	21
XX 1638-39	9	(15)	53	62	19	(61)	12	31
XX 1640-41	7	(14)	42	49	24	(80)	6	30

Notes:

1 Figures are for the number of name entries, *not* for the number of different merchants.

2 M = Michaelmas, E = Easter, X = Christmas.

3 Known Rye inhabitants, see Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 164-92.

4 Minimum estimate.

Sources: PRO E 190, 750/21; 751/13; 754/4; 757/1; 760/8; 763/7; 764/9; 766/19; 767/21, 26.

The early 1630s thus witnessed a rapid widening of opportunities for workers and investors in the maritime economy of Rye. There are no government returns of shipping for the 1630s, but an upturn in the recruitment of apprentice shipwrights and ships' carpenters suggests a revival of local investment, while, as previously mentioned, the fact that twenty different Rye boats carried coastal cargoes in 1633 and 22 were

engaged in coastal and overseas trade in 1639 implies an expansion of the fleet. Indeed there are some indications that the speed and strength of the revival in trading opportunities caused labour shortages which inhibited fishing operations from time to time during the 1630s, as maritime workers found themselves spoilt for choice. In March 1636, when neutral carrier status meant trade was buoyant, the magistracy had occasion to remark on 'the neglect of the fishing trade in our town by our fishermen depending on merchandise to Dieppe', and 'on the passage', that is, the passenger service to Dieppe. The wider consequences of a revival in demand for labour in the maritime economy are signalled by the indications of a modest recovery in the town's population – to around 2,000 – following two decades of steep decline.⁵⁴

A statistical darkness falls over the 1640s and 1650s, but there is enough light to see that the civil war put paid to Rye's overseas trade revival and thereby ushered in the final collapse of the other strand of the maritime economy. In 1651 no Rye boats voyaged to the Yarmouth herring fair and throughout the 1650s the fleet was never more than five strong. Receipts in the land chamberlain's account suggest that in 1659–60 only two Rye boats were fishing in the English Channel. Meanwhile, further along the Sussex coast the fisheries that had not matured as part of a multi-faceted maritime economy survived in much better shape. During the 1650s Hastings was annually sending in excess of twenty boats to Yarmouth and up to fifty Brighton vessels were fishing in the English Channel.⁵⁵

Rye's later sixteenth and early seventeenth-century maritime economy was characterized by a high degree of occupational flexibility. During this period, variations in the scope for flexible deployment of capital and labour shaped the contours of the port's, and with it the town's economic fortunes. If the contours outlined above tend to suggest that trade volumes influenced the prospects for fishing more than the reverse, this may to some extent simply reflect the absence of evidence which would permit assessment of price competition in the freight market, and in particular the degree to which cost reductions facilitated by flexible deployment of capital and labour in fishing might give those bidding for freight contracts a competitive edge.⁵⁶ Freight charges, along with legal and administrative restraints and considerations of geographical convenience, speed, reliability and familiarity, must have influenced merchant decision-making. The export-led cross-channel carriage trade was encouraged to come to Rye in the early 1560s by the presence of a large fleet and labour force sustained by employment in fishing as well as trade, and, equally, Rye's failure to share in the revival of Anglo-French trade at the beginning of the seventeenth century was to some extent conditioned by the growing

uncompetitiveness of its fishing industry, which in turn was largely a product of the combined impact of rising local operating costs and the down-turn in the cross-channel carriage trade during the 1580s. For without regular opportunities to deploy vessels in trade, boat owners could not fully exploit their assets, which made it very difficult to absorb increasing overheads, and competition to supply the London market precluded raising prices for the product of fishing expeditions. The explanatory loop is unavoidable; the prospects for trade underwrote – or undermined – those for fishing, and vice-versa.

The crisis in Rye's overseas trade lasted long enough to weaken the town's fishing industry beyond the point of recovery, which made it highly unlikely that there could be any significant revival of overseas trade at Rye after 1620, other than as the result of an exceptionally favourable combination of external circumstances. That, in the event, occurred. When Rye's overseas trade did revive in the 1630s it was as the import-led by-product of a combination of exchange-rate movements, changes in French tariffs and, principally, continental warfare; more a case of trade being deflected to Rye than positively attracted to the port. Indeed the expansion of the transit trade in the 1630s may have been initially constrained by earlier reductions in the Rye fleet, occasioned by the inability of owners to sustain fishing operations made uncompetitive by a hostile local-cost environment and the paucity of compensatory opportunities for freight carriage during the early seventeenth century. By the later 1630s, however, as Table 3 shows, more overseas shipments to and from Rye were being recorded in exchequer port books than at any time since the 1560s. That this was so disposes of the simplistic single notion that the silting of the harbour had, by that time, rendered the port unserviceable. As late as 1652 a report by a commission of investigation included an optimistic assessment of the state of Rye harbour, concluding that 'there may lie afloat at low water 15 or 20 sail of ships ... and at the same time, further up in the channel may ride afloat at low water 50 or 60 sail'.⁵⁷ There can be no doubt that harbour deterioration played an important part in helping to *shape developments* in the maritime economy of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Rye, but it did so as one element in a complex and evolving field of force.

In any economy characterized by a high degree of occupational diversity the prospects in one strand of activity are likely to influence and be influenced by those elsewhere. If the long term viability of the family unit often depended on a mesh of interdependent resource-generating strategies, then so equally might the larger urban unit. The broad implications of capital and labour fluidity on the development of early modern urban economies are as yet largely unexplored, and by their nature hard

to quantify. But multi-faceted maritime economies are not difficult to detect at many English ports and, if the case of Rye is at all typical, the impact of occupational diversity and interdependence on the course of their development was profound.

Notes

1. S. A. Hipkin, 'The economy and social structure of Rye, 1600-1660' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), pp. 2-64; G. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (Falmer, 1987), pp. 19-20, 247-53.
2. See for example J. Patten, *English Towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone, 1978), p. 119, and C. E. Brent, 'Employment, land tenure and population in eastern Sussex, 1540-1640' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1974), pp. 323-5.
3. M. Pelling, 'Occupational diversity: barbersurgeons and the trades of Norwich, 1550-1640', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 56 (1982), pp. 486-7, 503; J. F. Pound, 'The validity of the freemen's lists: some Norwich evidence', *Economic History Review*, 2 ser. 34 (1981), pp. 48-59; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 193-8; H. Swanson, 'The illusion of economic structure: craft guilds in late medieval English towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 33-8; J. Barry 'Introduction', in *idem.* (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town, 1530-1688* (Harlow, 1990), p. 8.
4. Swanson, 'Illusion of economic structure', pp. 29-48; *idem.*, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 107-26: but see also G. Rosser, 'Crafts, guilds and the negotiation of work in the medieval town', *Past and Present*, 154 (1997), pp. 3-31; Pelling, 'Occupational diversity', p. 503.
5. The technical requirement of a seven-year apprenticeship had been in place in some towns long before 1563. On the other hand there were in fact exceptions made in the 1563 act to accommodate the pre-existing customs of London and Norwich, which both permitted the entry into any occupation by a freeman of the city. Nor did the occupation of mariner come within the scope of the statute of artificers. Swanson, 'Illusion of economic structure', pp. 33, 38; M. G. Davies, *The Enforcement of English Apprenticeship 1563-1642* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), pp. 2n., 271-4; N. J. Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports 1550-1590* (Oxford, 1988), p. 231n.
6. S. A. Hipkin, 'Buying time: fiscal policy at Rye 1600-1640', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 133 (1995), pp. 245-6, 251; *idem.*, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 39-40, 208-11, 222-9, 291-2. It has also been persuasively argued that apprenticeship in early modern Rye was 'restricted to quite specific categories' and often 'tantamount to modern-day adoption', rather than part of a policy to regulate employment. G. Mayhew, 'Life-cycle service and the family unit in early modern Rye', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991), pp. 201-26.
7. P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), p. 115; D. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth* (Harlow, 1983), pp. 220-1; W. T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640* (Cambridge Mass., 1975), pp. 72-89; S. A. Hipkin, 'Closing ranks: oligarchy and government at Rye, 1570-1640',

- Urban History*, 22 (1995), p. 340; I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen: urban apprentices in early modern England', *Social History*, 16 (1991), pp. 155-72; *idem*, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 129-31; *idem*, 'Service and coming of age in seventeenth-century England', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), pp. 56-8; R. B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom of the city of York in the later middle ages', *Economic History Review*, 2 ser. 26 (1973), pp. 15-6; D. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 177, 269-70; Pelling, 'Occupational diversity', pp. 493, 510.
8. For discussion of the possible political factors influencing magisterial attitudes to freeman admissions, particularly in smaller sixteenth-century corporate towns see Hipkin, 'Closing ranks', *passim*.
 9. C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1984), II, pp. 64-9.
 10. Pelling, 'Occupational diversity', pp. 503-7; Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, p. 241; Swanson, 'Illusion of economic structure', pp. 41-3; Hipkin, 'Buying time', pp. 248-51; Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, CC/AC/2 fo. 311. I owe this reference to Graham Durkin; P. Clark, 'The alehouse and alternative society', in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds), *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 47-72; P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (Harlow, 1983), pp. 123-65.
 11. A. J. F. Dullea, 'The early history of the Rye fishing industry', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 107 (1969), pp. 46-7; R. F. Dell (ed.), 'Rye shipping records 1566-1590', *Sussex Record Society*, 64 (1965), pp. xxxvii-iii, 72; For boats of less than ten tons burden making the trip to Dieppe see, for example, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice] E[xchequer]. 190, 752/23. In any case, only four boats out of 58 returned as being based at Rye in 1565 (excluding cockboats) were ten tons burden or less, only three in 1580, none in 1587, one in 1596, none in 1626 or 1629 and only one in 1653. Some lists of ships based at Rye evidently named only part of the existing fleet. A return in October 1587, for example, noted 34 vessels, whereas a similar listing, compiled in February the same year, included 45 boats. *Victoria County History of Sussex*, ii (London, 1907), p. 151; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 109-11; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, pp. 219, 224-5.
 12. S[taffordshire] RO, D. 593, S/4/5.
 13. Dell, 'Rye shipping records', pp. xxxv, 57-145; Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, p. 246; Brent, 'Employment, land tenure and population', pp. 306, 315-7; *idem*, 'Urban employment and population in Sussex between 1550 and 1660', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 113 (1975), p. 44.
 14. Dell, 'Rye shipping records', p. xlv; E[ast] S[ussex] RO, Rye Corporation Manuscripts (hereafter RYE) 47/53, 110; RYE 1/6, f. 81v; 1/11, ff. 217v, 264r, 307v. For port book references see Table 3. Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, pp. 165, 216, 240.
 15. R. Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 113-4; RYE 99/5, 6; RYE 1/4, f. 138; 1/5, f. 13v; Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, pp. 216, 231n; SRO D 593, S/4/5, 16; D 593, S/4/19/1.

16. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, p. 164.
17. These comments are drawn from an analysis linking all coastal and overseas port book evidence for the early seventeenth century with evidence of numbers of boats going to Yarmouth, contained in the Rye assembly books, and records of those engaged in Channel fishing up to 1614, contained in the sea chamberlains' accounts: RYE 1/7-14; RYE 62/4-9. For port book references see notes to Table 3. There is fragmentary evidence for Channel fishing in 1659-60, RYE 61/58, ff. 1v, 2r. For more detailed exploration of these points see Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 111-3.
18. Dell, 'Rye shipping records', pp. 8-10; RYE 47/106, 110; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 113-4.
19. S. A. Hipkin, 'The impact of marshland drainage on Rye harbour, 1550-1650', in J. Eddison (ed.), *Romney Marsh: The Debatable Ground* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 138-47; *idem*, 'The structure of land occupation in the Level of Romney Marsh during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries' in J. Eddison, M. Gardiner and A. Long (eds), *Romney Marsh: Environmental Change and Human Occupation in a Coastal Lowland* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 174-63; *idem*, 'Closing ranks', pp. 332-5.
20. RYE 99/5.
21. Hipkin, 'Buying time', pp. 245-50.
22. See for example Williams, *East Anglian Ports*, pp. 10-49 and works cited therein; *idem*, 'Francis Shaxton and the Elizabethan port books' *English Historical Review*, 66 (1951), pp. 387-95; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 127-32; Dell, 'Rye shipping records', pp. xxx, 16; W. B. Stephens, 'The cloth exports of the provincial ports 1600-1640', *Economic History Review*, 2 ser. 22 (1969), p. 228; Brent, 'Urban employment and population', p. 40; H. A. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French trade 1540-1640' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976), pp. 274-82; R. Tittler, 'The vitality of an Elizabethan port: the economy of Poole, c. 1550-1600', *Southern History*, 7 (1985), 97-8.
23. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 127-32, 316-18. Table 3 indicates the distribution of surviving exchequer port book (PRO E 190) and of local customs or 'lesser box' evidence (RYE 66), though - with the exception of Jan-Aug 1657 - only where annual totals can be derived have shipping movements recorded in local customs evidence been included in the final column of Table 3. Before 1580 local customs books recorded cargoes unrelated to individual shipments, but an unbroken series detailing shipping movements survives for the period July 1582-December 1585. After a gap until January 1592 there is a useful, if incomplete run of accounts until 1603, but thenceforth gaps in the series are frequent, often long, and yield few reliable statistics. In 1622 the lesser box was put to farm and no evidence survives from that point until 1644-7. Further lesser box accounts covering periods during the 1650s have been found in the corporation's general correspondence files, but these, like the pre-1580 series, do not record shipping movements, which have had to be inferred. The totals for the 1640s and 1650s are at best crude estimates but have been included in Table 3 as the sole guide to the extent of coastal and overseas trade at Rye during the period. For an account of Rye's Elizabethan trade based largely on local

- customs evidence see Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 238–44, 253–6. There are a number of errors and conflation in Mayhew's tabulations of port book evidence at Tables 41 and 42.
24. The following summary account of Rye's coastal and overseas trade is based on detailed analysis contained in Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 132–63.
 25. *Ibid.*, pp. 126n, 135–6, 139, 150; T. S. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester, 1959), p. 77; RYE 1/5, ff. 70v, 94v; 1/11, ff. 159v, 201v; 1/12, ff. 101v–2r; RYE 47/107. See Table 4.
 26. PRO E 190, 737/11, 24.
 27. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French Trade', pp. 11, 17, 87, 153–5, 166, 170–5, 177; PRO E 190, 737/11, 24; 739/16, 28; 741/7, 8, 35; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 142–7.
 28. *Ibid.*, 142, 147–8; for port book references see Table 3; Nicolle, 'Anglo-French Trade', pp. 12, 19, 88–91, 93, 156–8, 162, 166–9, 175–84, 265–71, 318.
 29. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 31–52, 69, 132–8; Brent, 'Employment, land tenure and population', pp. 49–50, 79–80, 141, 168–170, 299, 301, 315–6; PRO E 190, 767/21, 26.
 30. This summary of developments in the fishing industry is based on analysis contained in Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 114–27.
 31. 'Rippiers' were responsible for transporting fish overland from Rye by pack-horse and were 'employed ... as the tide falleth out, be it by night or day ... immediately to carry the fish there taken towards the court and city of London with all possible speed'. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 124–5; PRO S[rate] P[apers] 12, 284/88; RYE 47/94.
 32. *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 13th Report, Appendix Part IV, The Manuscripts of Rye and Hereford Corporations* [hereafter HMC. Rye] (1892), pp. 39–41, 51, 60, 62, 65, 70, 72, 78–9, 94, 96–7, 106.
 33. RYE 1/5, ff. 82r, 106r; 1/7, ff. 407r, 409r, 558v; RYE 47/65, 75, 102; HMC. Rye, pp. 77, 124, 136–9, 142–4.
 34. RYE 1/5, ff. 87–8; 1/7, f. 414; RYE 47/68, 75; HMC. Rye, pp. 109–10, 117, 140–1; SRO D 593, S/4/55/8.
 35. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 123–4, 301; RYE 47/68, 75; RYE 1/10, f. 98; HMC. Rye, pp. 102, 125, 130–1.
 36. Dulle, 'Rye fishing industry', pp. 58–9.
 37. In the decade following 1585 the average number of Rye boats fishing the English Channel seasons fell as follows: hookmen from 22 to thirteen, harbourmen from ten to five, trammelers from 21 to fourteen. Numbers of Rye boats undertaking the trip to the Scarborough fair, which peaked at thirty per annum in the early 1550s had by the late sixteenth century fallen to four or five. A notable fall in the number of Rye boats sailing to Yarmouth occurred after 1596, when 26 vessels made the trip; in 1600 only seventeen sailed. Thereafter the size of the Rye fleet voyaging to Yarmouth never exceeded eighteen sail. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 115–8.
 38. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French trade', pp. 166–7, 169, 182–4; Stephens, 'Cloth exports', pp. 233–43; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 149–50.
 39. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French trade', pp. 19, 83, 87, 94, 155n 2, 162, 166, 233, 255–9, 318; RYE 47/65; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 149–53, 234–5. The

- export trade in cloth which had developed at Rye in the 1560s and 1570s had never been conspicuously based on the town's proximity to the centres of the broadcloth industry in the Weald of Kent, for the market in France was chiefly for the cheaper varieties of old draperies produced in northern and south-west England and Wales, whereas the chief export markets for Kentish broadcloth were Germany and the United Provinces, with which Rye had little contact. P. J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962), pp. 50-1; C. W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent* (Rochester, 1978), pp. 116-7.
40. RYE 1/7, ff. 302v, 438r, 527r; Brent, 'Employment, land tenure and population', p. 141; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 137-8. All eight outward coastal shipments recorded in the port book for the twelve months following Michaelmas 1599 included iron, while in 1613-14 36 out of 39 and in 1632-3 over half of such shipments consisted wholly or partly of bar-iron. No evidence survives for early seventeenth-century iron exports from Winchelsea, hence it is impossible to know whether, in a reversal of late sixteenth-century trends, the recovery of iron exports from Rye occurred at Winchelsea's expense. PRO E 190, 750/21; 751/13; 757/1; 760/8; 763/7; 764/9; 766/19; 767/26; RYE 66/80-94; Hipkin 'Buying time', p. 250.
 41. In 1614, the last year for which there is evidence, there were 15, 13 and six Rye boats fishing the Channel trammel, hook and harbour seasons respectively, very similar to the numbers operating in 1600. The Scarborough fleet averaged five and the Yarmouth fleet numbered between fourteen and eighteen over the same period. RYE 62/4-9; Hipkin, 'Buying time', p. 245. See above, note 37.
 42. SRO D 593, S/4/55/7; PRO SP 14, 74/24; 86/91-4; 96/47; 97/105; 99/26; 108/35, 42; 110/107, 113/39; 119/104, 125; 120/3; 124/25; 127/45, 98, 143; 131/52; 161/5, 12; 162/3, 18, 19; RYE 47/97, 99; HMC. Rye, pp. 156, 159.
 43. PRO SP 14, 86/127; 91/4; 162/14; 163/45, 77; RYE 47/72, 75, 97, 115; HMC. Rye, pp. 133, 135, 139, 171; Hipkin, *Economy of Rye*, pp. 120-1.
 44. RYE 47/94; HMC. Rye, p. 156; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 121-5.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 69; *idem*, 'Buying time', p. 245; RYE 47/106, 123. Government restraints on shipping movements were in force during March-April 1625, August-October 1625, September 1626, April-June 1627, May-June 1628, August-September 1628. HMC. Rye, pp. 173-90; RYE 1/11, f. 159v; RYE 47/107.
 46. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French trade', pp. 77, 94-5, 99-102, 231-2; J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper (eds), *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 494-6. The figures in Table 8 certainly underestimate the role of foreigners since they include only those specifically identified as aliens, and port books often do not distinguish between native and alien merchants. For example, in the record for Easter to Michaelmas 1638 only one explicit identification of an alien merchant appears.
 47. This summary of Rye's overseas trade in the 1630s is based on analysis of the following port books: PRO E 190, 763/13; 765/1, 3, 16; 766/5, 24; 767/1, 14, 15. For more detailed analysis of trends see Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 153-61.
 48. Nicolle, 'Anglo-French trade', pp. 141-51; R. Davis, 'England and the

- Mediterranean 1570–1670', in F. J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 135.
49. Stephens, 'Cloth exports', pp. 240–3; Nicolle, 'Anglo-French Trade', pp. 188–9.
 50. The increasingly valuable nature of cargoes is reflected in the customs revenue collected. In 1629–30 outward shipments yielded £241 in duties, whereas in 1636–7 five fewer shipments realized £1,186.
 51. D. J. Ormrod, 'Industry, 1640–1800', in A. Armstrong (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640–1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 96–7; Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 124.
 52. J. S. Kepler, *The Exchange of Christendom: The International Entrepôt at Dover 1622–1641* (Leicester, 1976), pp. 12, 18, 20, 27, 36–52, 105–15, 165–6; H. Taylor, 'Trade, neutrality and the "English Road", 1630–1648', *Economic History Review*, 2 ser. 25 (1972), p. 250; Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 154, 158–9. The Dover entrepôt handled re-exports to many destinations, but one aspect of its business which had become significant by 1638 was the inter-regional trade whereby cloths of Dutch and Flemish manufacture were shipped from Dover to France, principally to Rouen. Dover of course enjoyed the advantage of the composition system, by virtue of which foreign commodities were re-exported at reduced rates. Any foreign merchants re-exporting goods at Rye had to pay the usual rate of 6.25 per cent. However, it was not the composition system *per se* that brought the expansion of the Dover entrepôt. 'It was rather the protection which English ships offered as neutral carriers that induced foreign merchants to send their goods to Dover, where there was a dependable supply of such shipping'. If the primary concern of foreign merchants was to find neutral carriers it is easy to imagine that some could have been persuaded to send their goods to Rye, which was conveniently located and possessed vessels that were able to act as carriers. If, as at Dover, goods intended for re-export were subject to customs duties only at the time of re-shipment, and consequently ships carrying only such cargoes into Rye were not recorded, it follows that the suggestions yielded by port books for numbers of inward overseas shipments at Rye during the later 1630s shown in Table 6 are bound to be underestimates.
 53. Though the habit of English customs officials of anglicizing foreign names makes it hard to tell, it does seem that some of the names of alien merchants trading through Rye in the later 1630s were Dutch.
 54. Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 69, 89–90, 109, 126, 160–1; *idem*, 'Buying time', p. 245 (Table 1). RYE 1/11, f. 266r; 1/12, ff. 23v, 124r, 308v. Ten youths were locally apprenticed as shipwrights between 1630 and 1635, more than the total over the preceding thirty years, and only eight short of the combined total apprenticed to all other trades at Rye in the first half of the decade.
 55. For some discussion of this period see Hipkin, 'Economy of Rye', pp. 127, 162–3.
 56. The handful of charter-parties (freight contracts) which survive for trade at Rye are to be found in the corporation's general correspondence files, RYE 47.
 57. HMC. Rye, p. 219; Hipkin, 'Marshland drainage', p. 146.