

# PIRATES AND PILCHARDS: THE WEALTH AND PEOPLING OF FOWEY DURING THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

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*ABSTRACT.* The period 1337–1453 was a time of prosperity for the Cornish port of Fowey, but these years were defined by the Hundred Years War, which placed very considerable demands upon the town's shipping. This essay explores the administration, peopling, and wealth of Fowey, for despite its large contribution to the war at sea, the town had a comparatively small population and only enjoyed a modest form of urban autonomy. The chief topic to be considered, however, is the economy of the port, for this underpinned its considerable shipping profile and remained robust throughout the conflict. Despite the challenges presented by the war at sea, the town grew increasingly prominent during this period.<sup>1</sup>

'The glorie of Fowey rose by the warres in King Edward the first and the third and Henry v. day'.<sup>2</sup> So runs John Leland's assessment of the period in which Fowey forged its reputation as one of the southwest's greatest ports, but the most striking thing about the comments of this famous traveller is his belief that Fowey's status was so enhanced by conflict, particularly the Hundred Years War.

Although the causes of the war — dynastic disputes, long-running disagreement over the feudal status of English-held Aquitaine, and resistance to French state building — seem remote from Fowey, its effects were most definitely felt in the port.<sup>3</sup> Yet the maritime aspects of the conflict have been greatly underplayed in relation to those campaigns fought on *terra firma*. The sea was of secondary import as a theatre of war, but the first great battle of the conflict — and English victory — was fought at Sluys in 1340, and water was the principal mechanism of large-scale transport in the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup>

England, however, had virtually no permanent navy for much of this period, as a result of which the king chiefly relied upon the ancient right of impressment. This was a complex process, but essentially involved the king despatching 'royal agents, commonly sergeants-

<sup>1</sup> An essay on one aspect of this topic was one of the two runners-up of the Royal Institution of Cornwall's Cardew-Rendle Prize, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, edited by L. Toulmin Smith, 5 vols (London, 1906–10), I, 203.

<sup>3</sup> C. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300–c.1450* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 7–12.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 82 and 87; G. Cushway, *Edward III and the War at Sea: The English Navy, 1327-1377* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. ix; for the significance of the sea, see I. Friel 'How much did the sea matter in medieval England (c.1200–c.1500)?' in *Roles of the Sea in Medieval England*, ed. R. Gorski (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 167–85.

at-arms, from port to port with the power to arrest vessels and crews' for royal flotillas.<sup>5</sup> Fowey's shipping was therefore directly mobilised for the conflict. The following article, however, does not propose to analyse Fowey's naval contribution — although this was impressive — but rather to study the material wealth of the port and its people during this period in an attempt to understand how Fowey funded its contribution to the war effort.<sup>6</sup>

In so doing, it will first analyse the complex administration of the port, before considering its peopling. Our attentions will then turn to the main focus of this article, namely an analysis of Fowey's economy during this turbulent period, as well as the cost-benefit ratio of the war itself. Two biographies will then be produced — one of a Fowey-man, Stephen Pole, and his family, the other of Hankyn Selander, a Dutchman who operated out of Fowey — which act as microcosms for the trends identified in this article. Finally, a contemporary account of Fowey piracy will be discussed, which demonstrates the profits and perils of this activity. Although a small port, Fowey's considerable wealth resulted in the Gallants of Fowey making a large contribution to the conflict.<sup>7</sup>

### The Administration and Peopling of Fowey

Fowey takes its name from the river near whose mouth it stands, and although this estuarine position intimately connected the town to the sea, it also shielded the port from the worst maritime perils, both natural and man-made. In our period the town clung to the steep hillside and stretched for a quarter of a mile from its north gate, near the Passage to Bodinnick, in a narrow concave arc, via Place (a gentry residence beside the parish church), to its southern gate at the end of Lostwithiel Street. The river delineated its eastern side — a dense tangle of streets, houses, warehouses, and wharves, stretched along the waterfront.<sup>8</sup> This is emblematic of the port's administration, which consisted of a web of overlapping jurisdictions. The lord of the manor of Fowey was the Benedictine Prior of Tywardreath, but around the year 1200 Prior Theobald granted Fowey a borough charter. In this, he confirmed to all the burgesses (burgage-holding inhabitants) of Fowey *omnes honores dignitates libertates ... quas liberum burgum habere debet*: 'all the honours, privileges and freedoms which a free borough is entitled to hold': he made Fowey a free borough.<sup>9</sup> Many Cornish towns were granted such charters in this period and Henderson wrote that they 'were essentially plants of exotic growth ... fostered by great landholders as profitable sources of revenue'. This is just as true for Fowey, but although some of these 'new towns' failed to take root, Fowey grew into a functioning borough. In 1316 the king granted the town rights for a weekly market and yearly fairs on the feasts of St Fimbarrus and St Lucy, an indication of burghal status,<sup>10</sup> and in 1334 the government taxed Fowey as a

<sup>5</sup> C. L. Lambert, *Shipping the Medieval Military: English Maritime Logistics in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 15–20; J. Sherborne, 'The Hundred Years War: shipping and manpower 1369–89', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), 163–75 (p. 164).

<sup>6</sup> S. J. Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War: A Study of the Port and its People, c.1330–c.1453', unpublished MA dissertation, University of London (2013); M. Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities in medieval Cornwall' in *A Maritime History of Cornwall*, edited by H. Doe, A. Kennerly, and P. Payton (Exeter and London, 2014), pp. 43–59.

<sup>7</sup> *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 204–5.

<sup>8</sup> O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988), pp. 84–5; *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 203; J. Keast, *The Story of Fowey* (Redruth, 1950), p.18; P. Sheppard, *The Historic Towns of Cornwall: an Archaeological Survey* (Wadebridge, 1980), pp. 35–6; Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities in medieval Cornwall', pp. 44–6.

<sup>9</sup> G. Oliver, *Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis* (Exeter and London, 1846), p. 40, no. xii; L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Medieval Cornwall* (London, 1955), p.153; *Victoria History of the County of Cornwall*, vol. II, *Religious History to 1560* (London, 2010), pp. 284–95.

<sup>10</sup> *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1300–26*, p. 306.



Fig. 1. The harbour and town of Fowey, looking westwards across the estuary from near Polruan. The church is in the centre, with the tower and residence of Place behind it to the right. The estuary of the River Fowey flows from right to left out to sea; Bodinnick Ferry is out of sight upriver to the right, and the side-inlet of Pont Pill is at bottom right

*Photograph by Sam Drake*

borough. Yet the essence of an urban settlement did not lie in the tenure of its inhabitants, but rather the work they did and the conditions under which they performed this.<sup>11</sup> The denizens of Fowey looked to maritime industries, not agriculture, for employment, again confirming the burghal credentials of the port.

The prior, however, continued to hold the rights of assize of bread and ale, as well as the view of frankpledge. As such, the manor court retained judicial power with a reeve, an ale taster, and a bailiff elected annually, for it served as the chief organ of town governance.<sup>12</sup> But Tywardreath was an alien priory — its mother house was St Sergius of Angers — so the priory was taken into the king's hands on numerous occasions during the Hundred Years War, weakening the prior's lordship.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, no civic power in Fowey challenged his lordship in the fourteenth century. A mayor of Fowey is occasionally referred to in this century, but a name is never attached to the title, and it seems probable that these references were the product of the chancery's language, rather than administrative reality.<sup>14</sup> In the fifteenth century, however, the 'mayor of Fowey' was more regularly referenced

<sup>11</sup> R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 169 and 193–4.

<sup>12</sup> The Arundells of Lanherne acquired some of the medieval documentation of Tywardreath Priory, including fifteenth-century court rolls of the borough of Fowey, although the exact reason for this documentation coming into the family archive remains unclear: O. J. Padel, 'The Arundells of Lanherne and their archive', *Journal of the Cornwall Association of Local Historians*, 29 (Spring 1995), 8–23 (pp. 18 and 20).

<sup>13</sup> It was taken into the king's hand in 1295–1303, 1324–7, 1337–61, 1369–99, and 1402 onwards: *VCH Cornwall*, II, 284–96, especially p. 289.

<sup>14</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1346–9*, p. 11.

and even his deputy is mentioned, although neither office is attached to a person.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that the townsmen had exploited the priory's weakness and instigated the office of mayor, but his role remained insubstantial as the prior still nominally retained judicial power over the town. More probably, these references were still a product of the chancery's writing practices and Fowey's mayoralty had yet to be instigated. Hence, the town was administered by its manor court and Fowey enjoyed a modest form of burghal autonomy.

Theobald's charter made provision for business transacted on ships docked in the port, but his authority did not extend beyond the shore. Instead, the maritime profits of Cornwall belonged to the duke, and he held the prerogatives of Fowey Water, by dint of possession of Restormel Castle. This represents *de facto* and *de jure* recognition of Fowey's importance, as in creating the duchy the crown had deliberately pursued a policy which enhanced its power over this prime anchorage.<sup>16</sup> These rights included keelage and measurage, as well as profits from fisheries, but the duchy often leased the farm of Fowey Water to the burgesses of Lostwithiel, so it was frequently included in that town's maritime court.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the havener, the chief duchy official in the administration of Cornish ports, still had sway in Fowey, and from 1337 his headquarters were based in the town, although he sometimes clashed with the admiral of the west who also exercised extensive maritime powers over the port.<sup>18</sup>

The parish of Fowey was divided into three tithings, one of which was Fowey itself, while of course the port's administration also dovetailed into county and national government. The king regularly issued instructions concerning Fowey to county administrators, or directly to borough bailiffs, and Fowey was treated like any other English port, being included in virtually all instructions that concerned the realm's maritime population.<sup>19</sup> There were evidently many overlapping layers of governance and in 1459, for instance, twelve Fowey jurors presented Hanys Dutyshman and Hugo Wolff for the king: Dutyshman had drawn a sword on John Scote, and Wolff had struck John Milward with a dagger.<sup>20</sup> These men would then have received justice in a more prestigious court. Such cases are also noteworthy because both men appear to have been aliens and there was a significant migrant population in the town. The dedication of the town's church to St Fimbarrus suggests an Irish link, and the Alien Subsidy of 1439 records thirty foreign householders, and a further thirty two non-householders, including three women: see Table 1. These figures represent minimum numbers as medieval taxation was marked by large-scale avoidance, especially as the Spanish were exempted from this subsidy. Moreover, assessments were mainly undertaken at Easter and Michaelmas and therefore did not include much of the year, including the summer when most shipping activity occurred. Indeed, these returns name only one shipman, the Portugese man Peter Portyngale, and therefore fail to assess the transitory population of aliens who passed through the port. Equally significant is the

<sup>15</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1405–8*, p. 301; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1429–36*, p. 426; National Archives, C 47/28/7/26.

<sup>16</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'Port towns: England and Wales 1330–1540', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, I, 600–1540, edited by D. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 467–94 (pp. 474–5).

<sup>17</sup> M. Kowaleski, *The Havener's Accounts of the Earldom and Duchy of Cornwall 1287–1356*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 44 (Exeter, 2001), pp. 7 and 55; J. Hatcher, *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 1970), p.191.

<sup>18</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1381–5*, p. 319; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1396–9*, pp. 141–2; S. Campbell, 'The haveners of the mediaeval dukes of Cornwall and the organisation of the Duchy ports', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, n.s. 4 (1961–4), 113–44 (pp. 113, 126, 132 and 138).

<sup>19</sup> Henderson, *Essays in Cornish History*, p. 32; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1381–5*, p. 380; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1429–36*, p. 426; H. Jewell, *English Local Administration in the Middle Ages* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 60–1.

<sup>20</sup> Cornwall Record Office, Truro (henceforth CRO), ART/2/1/10.

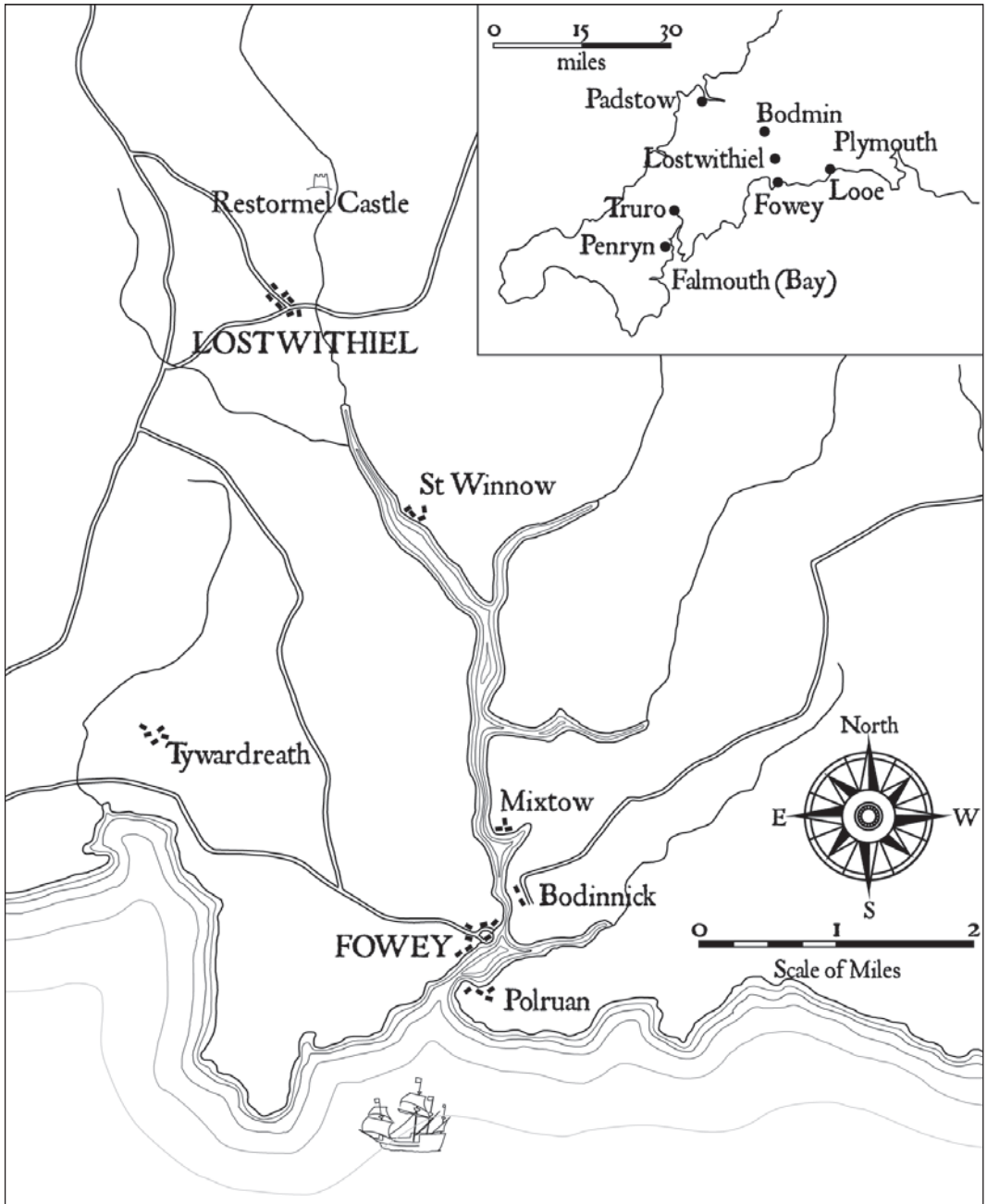


Fig. 2. Fowey Haven; (inset) Cornwall, showing places mentioned in the text

*Drawn by Pete Joseph*

**Table 1: Fowey's Assessment in the 1439 Alien Subsidy**

Source: *England's Immigrants 1330-1450, Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages*,  
(see note 21, below), from National Archives, E179/87/8, mm. 3-4

Nationality:	Householders:	Non-householders:
Breton	1	3
'Dutch'	5	2
Fleming	2	-
French	1	1
Gascon	1	1
Guernseyman-	1	
Irish	10	11
Norman	2	3
Portuguese	2	1
Unknown	5	6
Women assessed separately: 3		

fact that many of the individuals listed were householders, and assuming a conservative figure of two persons per household, it seems that a more realistic assessment may be about 100 aliens resident in Fowey in 1440, although some of those listed may have dwelt in surrounding settlements.<sup>21</sup> Even so, this strikingly high number says much about the degree to which migrants were integrated into the town and in 1459 there was even a resident Flemish goldsmith, John Browne.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, a significant number of the non-householders were servants of Fowey families.<sup>23</sup>

The transitory population of non-denizens of course fluctuated, but throughout the period foreigners were a constant fixture in the town. Fowey's wharves were undoubtedly thronged with many itinerant people from England's other ports as well, but their numbers are impossible to assess as they were not taxed separately. Men from the full reach of the river Fowey — Lostwithiel, Mixtow, Polruan, and others — moved to, and traded in, the port, and Robert Walter de Lostwithiel was bailiff of Fowey in 1416.<sup>24</sup> All of these settlements were connected by water, but although some people settled in Fowey, and many came to the town to trade, its drawing power was too small to prompt substantial long-term migration.

But how large was Fowey's population? As with all questions of medieval population, the answer is far from simple.<sup>25</sup> The borough's 1377 Poll Tax returns sadly do not survive,

<sup>21</sup> Lostwithiel and Lanteglos-by-Fowey were assessed separately, however.

<sup>22</sup> *England's Immigrants 1330-1350: Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages*, at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/englandsimmigrants/person/51093> (accessed 26 July 2014); taken from National Archives, E359/30, rot. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *England's Immigrants*; National Archives, E179/87/78, m. 4.

<sup>24</sup> CRO, ART/2/1/1.

<sup>25</sup> J. C. Russell, *British Population History* (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 132; but the accepted figures have been pushed higher since this seminal work was published; J. Hatcher, 'Plague, population and the English economy, 1348-1530', in *British Population History from the Black Death to the Present Day*, edited by M. Anderson (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 15-93 (pp. 17-19).

**Table 2: Fowey's assessment in the 1327 Lay Subsidy**

Source: National Archives, E 179/87/7 m.12r, column 2

Parochia de Fawe					
De	Maco Bagga	x s.	De	Joh' Willam	xij d.
De	Henr' de Penton	iiij s.	De	Waltero de Holond	vj d.
De	Ric' Skuryrn	ij s.	De	Thom' de eadem	vj d.
De	Joh' Trenens	ij s.	De	Nich' de Lamelyn	ij s.
De	Agn' de eadem	xij d.	De	Adam Ron	ij s.
De	Rob' Joan	ij s.	De	Thom' Tregysky	xij d.
De	Luc' Joan	ij s.	De	Joh' de eadem	xij d.
De	Ric' Donnach	ij s.	De	Marco Baudrey	vj d.
De	Will' de Hille	ij s.	De	Henr' Loef	vj d.
De	Mabill' M Bacoun	ij s.	De	Petro Bonefas	iiij s. vj d.
De	Thom' Bollok	xij d.	De	Rob' Harpur	iiij s. vj d.
De	Rog' le Graunt	xij d.			
De	Ric' Welifed	xij d.		Summa L s.	

but in the 1327 Lay Subsidy the parish of Fowey was reckoned to have movable wealth of £50, with twenty-four people taxed. Seven years later, in the 1334 Lay Subsidy the borough, excluding the rest of the parish, was reckoned to have movable goods worth £34 3s. 4d.<sup>26</sup> The lower numbers are partly explained by the fact that only the borough was taxed in 1334, but the underlying low figures cause pause for thought. Even assuming five people per household, with only twenty-four people taxed in 1327 a figure of just 120 is produced: this is far too low. In the 1327 Lay Subsidy those with less than ten shillings worth of goods were exempt, however, so the lowest echelons of Fowey's civic society were not taxed. Equally, those of minor estate were not assessed on goods for their own consumption, removing yet more people from this list. These figures, therefore, only represent Fowey's wealthier men. More significant, however, was the fact that assessments for royal taxation were undertaken by local people, who therefore had a vested interest in minimising their tax liabilities. Urban areas in particular became notoriously and 'increasingly adept at the art of undervaluation'.<sup>27</sup>

Instead, we are forced to turn to other strands of evidence, which, if not truly scientific, at least provide a sense of the scale of royal underassessment. Perhaps most telling is the town's commercial clout. Fowey's trading importance and shipping profile was too substantial to have been maintained by a population in the low hundreds, and the government was able to impress very considerable numbers of ships for royal fleets, some seven for one expedition in 1345, for instance.<sup>28</sup> Moreover a whole array of service industries supported the town's shipping and a considerable alien population dwelt

<sup>26</sup> National Archives, E179/87/7, m. 12r; *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, edited by R. Glasscock (London, 1975), p. 31; in 1525 some 58 people were taxed: *Cornwall Subsidies in the Reign of Henry VIII, 1524 and 1543*, edited by T. L. Stoate (Bristol, 1985), p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> J. F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property, 1290-1334: a Study in Medieval Financial Administration* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 11; J. R. Maddicott, *The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294-1341* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 7-12; W. M. Ormrod, 'The Crown and the English economy, 1290-1348', in *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century*, edited by B. M. S. Campbell (Manchester and New York, 1991), pp. 149-83 (p. 155).

<sup>28</sup> Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities', p. 45; National Archives, E101/25/9; H. Hewitt, *The Organisation of War under Edward III, 1338-62* (Manchester, 1966), p. 182.

in Fowey. Whilst bearing these caveats in mind, it seems likely that Fowey's population consisted of at least eight hundred souls, but this figure would have fluctuated substantially depending on the time of year, the number of vessels in port, and the presence or not of troops in the town. Yet Fowey cannot have escaped the ravages of the Black Death, and the Black Prince granted the burgesses of Lostwithiel ten marks from the farm of Lostwithiel's Water because of damage from 'pestilence'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, unlike Truro, plague does not appear to have adversely affected Fowey's population or wealth in the long term, and the number of inhabitants in the town may actually have increased across the course of the war.<sup>30</sup> Undoubtedly the borough grew increasingly prominent as the conflict progressed.

In point of fact, Fowey was one of the richest ports in Cornwall with movable goods reckoned to be worth over £34 in 1334; St Mawes was thought to possess goods of just over £5, Penryn of £20, and East and West Looe combined of £29. However, in comparison to ports further afield — such as Dartmouth, assessed at £50, Great Yarmouth at £100, and Southampton at £530 — the wealth of Fowey seems more minor: it was but a small port, although one which had the largest shipping profile in Cornwall.<sup>31</sup>

## II. Fowey's Economy

The prosperity of the town was reliant upon the sea. Fishing represented one pillar of this maritime based economy, and there was a marked expansion in south-western fisheries during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>32</sup> Fowey was one of the ports in which this growth was most evident, as the port had a large hinterland (by Cornish standards) — stretching as far as Bodmin — which bolstered demand for fish, and in 1337 Fowey possessed one of the largest fishing fleets in the county.<sup>33</sup> The town was fully integrated into the wider Cornish economy, which itself was buoyant and diversified in our period.<sup>34</sup> This expansion also resulted in increased



Fig. 3. A medieval ship portrayed on a bench-end of about 1500 at St Winnow church, three miles upriver from Fowey  
*Photograph by Sam Drake*

<sup>29</sup> *Register of the Edward the Black Prince*, 4 vols (London, 1930–3), II, 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1377–81*, p. 208.

<sup>31</sup> *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, edited by Glasscock, pp. 34, 30, 64, 192 and 121; Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities', p. 45; *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 72–3.

<sup>32</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'The expansion of the south-western fisheries in late medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 53 (2000), 429–54 (pp. 430, 439 and 442).

<sup>33</sup> *The Caption of Seisin of the Duchy of Cornwall (1337)*, edited by P. L. Hull, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 17 (1971), p. lvi.

<sup>34</sup> Kowaleski, 'Expansion of south-western fisheries', p. 438; J. Hatcher, 'A diversified economy: later medieval Cornwall', *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), 208–27 (p. 209).



investment in ships, nets, and suchlike, as well as stimulating curing industries in the port.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the river Fowey was home to freshwater fisheries from which the borough also reaped financial benefit, although not necessarily legally.<sup>36</sup> The town's shipmen also traded fish, and these mariners transported large cargoes of this to Exeter and Bristol, while between 1427 and 1430 three Fowey ships arrived at Southampton carrying ling and mulwell.<sup>37</sup> Fish was also exported overseas; in 1364, for instance, the government granted numerous Fowey-men licences to export this foodstuff, and in 1437–9 John Smyth exported haddock and pilchards.<sup>38</sup>

The town occupied a significant position within south-western fisheries, both as a supplier and trader of fish, but it was from trade that Fowey really profited. Yet in the main, Fowey's domestic demand did not draw merchants to the port. Instead, Fowey acted as a gateway into the wider Cornish economy, providing the docking and shipping that linked foreign and domestic demand and supply; ports, as Friel reminds us, are 'the key points at which maritime and terrestrial society meet'.<sup>39</sup> Until 1402, the havener collected customs for the duchy in Cornish ports, and his accounts therefore prove useful for analysing Fowey's commerce, but after this date Fowey and Plymouth were combined to create a Royal Customs Area.<sup>40</sup> Fowey was made a subsidiary headport in recognition of its importance.

The salt trade was closely linked to fish-curing industries, and considerable amounts of this commodity were handled by the port because of its proximity to producers in Bourgneuf Bay.<sup>41</sup> Substantially more salt was landed in Fowey in the 1340s than at any other Cornish port, but although some was sold in the town — John Vermeu of Spain traded this commodity in Fowey — much would have been transported to other destinations, such as London and Southampton.<sup>42</sup> Fowey played an essential role as a trans-shipment station and safe-haven for trading vessels, which in this period hugged the coast when at sea. This role is well demonstrated by an instruction from the Black Prince in 1359. The prince commanded the havener not to take prise of wine from ships of Chester 'driven by storm and tempest' into Cornish ports. Similarly, in 1379 the king ordered the receiver of Cornwall to return the remaining barrels of spice and other goods which Genoese merchants had left in his keeping at Fowey, for the peninsula ran parallel to major sea lanes.<sup>43</sup> Carew beautifully describes Fowey's role as a safe-haven, writing that Cornish harbours 'lying in the way, bringeth forraine shipping to claime succour at their harbours, when, either outward, or homeward bound, they are checked by an East, South, or South-east wind: and where the horse walloweth, some haire will still remain'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Kowaleski, 'Expansion of south-western fisheries', pp. 445–6.

<sup>36</sup> Hatcher, *Rural Economy*, p. 191; *Register of the Black Prince*, II, 24–5.

<sup>37</sup> Kowaleski, 'Expansion of south-western fisheries', pp. 433–4; *Port Book of Southampton 1427–30*, edited by E Studer (Southampton, 1913), pp. 32, 68 and 96.

<sup>38</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361–5*, p. 496; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1364–7*, pp. 32 and 7; National Archives, E122/113/55.

<sup>39</sup> Friel, 'How much did the sea matter?' p. 169.

<sup>40</sup> E. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade 1375–1547* (Oxford, 1963), p.175; J. Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550* (Oxford, 1973), p.165; Campbell, 'Haveners of Cornwall', pp. 123–33.

<sup>41</sup> Kowaleski, 'Expansion of south-western fisheries', p. 449; A. Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1955), pp.69–75, 94–5, 114–16, 121 and 140–1; *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, p. 229.

<sup>42</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 239, 191 and 70–1.

<sup>43</sup> *Register of the Black Prince*, III, 363; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1377–81*, p. 186.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall* (London, 1602), p. 4r.

Hide exports from the town were also linked to the salt trade, as these were produced from animals reared in Fowey's hinterland and treated with traded salt.<sup>45</sup> In 1342 John Greek of Fowey, William Bidow of Guernsey, and many others, paid customs for salted hides loaded onto their ships in the port.<sup>46</sup> Many hides were exported by aliens, and in the 1340s Fowey was a favoured destination for foreigners exporting this commodity from Cornwall, only being exceeded by Lostwithiel, although 'Fowey' in some documents may simply have been shorthand for a number of nearby maritime settlements. Nevertheless, many merchants from Bodmin shipped goods from the town, as did merchants from other ports; for instance two London vessels exported hides from the town in 1347–8. Fowey ships also traded in other Cornish ports, such as Truro and Padstow: the sea connected Cornwall's maritime populations.<sup>47</sup> The great majority of these hides would have subsequently been transported to major population centres. Other hides were shipped from Ireland, via the county, to London. In 1455–6, for example, the *Mary* of Dublin, whose cargo included hides, was sailing to the capital when it was seized by Cornish pirates and taken to Fowey.<sup>48</sup>

Fowey's role in the shipping of tin was of greater significance than that of salt and hides, however. Being the nearest port to Lostwithiel, the only coinage town active throughout this period, Fowey had a commanding position within the transport of this internationally important metal.<sup>49</sup> This was barged down from Lostwithiel and then loaded onto sea-going vessels in Fowey, as the town had eclipsed Lostwithiel as a port by the start of the war.<sup>50</sup> The growing size of vessels in the fourteenth century increasingly rendered Lostwithiel's port inadequate, but both towns also stood below the stannary district of Fowymore. The volume of material — rock, soil, and so on — which was washed into the river Fowey in 1356 prompted the Black Prince to order the cessation of tin production in six places near the river as the haven of Fowey was 'well-nigh ruined'. The owner of these, Abraham le Tynnere, was also arrested and the prince established a blanket ban on any workings which might affect the haven.<sup>51</sup> Yet it seems that it was Lostwithiel's harbour, rather than that of Fowey itself, that was being damaged, the former being technically within the port of Fowey. Silt evidently played a role in Lostwithiel's decline, the river was silted up with 'sande that cummith from tynne workes'.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, Fowey and Lostwithiel, along with Bodmin and other settlements on the Fowey, formed an economic unit — all were connected by water, with riverine and maritime transport dovetailed. The will of John Smyth of Fowey in 1448 reveals that he owned part of the *Barry* of Fowey, and part ownership of vessels and cargoes was common, with men of Bodmin, Lostwithiel, Polruan, and Fowey, all owning stakes in certain vessels and

<sup>45</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 70–1; J. Cherry, 'Leather', in *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products*, edited by J. Blair (London, 1991), pp. 295–318 (pp. 296–9).

<sup>46</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 160–1 and 149.

<sup>47</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 190–1, 160 and 251; Keast, *Story of Fowey*, pp. 13 and 15; R. Pearse, *The Ports and Harbours of Cornwall: an Introduction to the Study of Eight Hundred Years of Maritime Affairs* (St Austell, 1963).

<sup>48</sup> C. Tyldesley, 'The Crown and the Local Communities in Devon and Cornwall from 1377–1422' unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Exeter (1978), pp. 42–3; Cherry, 'Leather', pp.307–16; D. Gardner, *A Calendar of Early Chancery Proceedings relating to West Country Shipping 1388–1493*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 21 (1976) pp. 78–9.

<sup>49</sup> Hatcher, *Rural Economy*, p. 24

<sup>50</sup> N. G. Pounds, 'The ports of Cornwall in the middle ages', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, 23 (1947–9), 65–72 (pp. 67–8); *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 206.

<sup>51</sup> R. Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600–1600* (London, 1980), pp.163–4; *Register of the Black Prince*, II, 110, 121 and 156. Five were 'stremwok[s]', one was a 'neuteye'.

<sup>52</sup> Hatcher, *English Tin*, p.45; Cornwall Archaeology Unit, *Fowey Estuary: Historic Audit* (Truro, 2000), pp. 6–7 and 11; *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 206.

cargoes.<sup>53</sup> Men from all these towns operated out of Fowey, and the slipway at Bodmin Pill, slightly further up the Fowey, was much used by the men of Bodmin to land goods.<sup>54</sup> In 1339, however, one of these partnerships caused the authorities some confusion. William Scoer, William Scarlet, Roger Blake and Thomas le Goldesmyth, all of Bodmin, as well as Thomas Gueynt of Lostwithiel 'had a ship in common in the water of Fowey.' The admiral of the west therefore presumed that Bodmin was a sea port and tried to exact four ships of war from the town. When these were not forthcoming, he had the mayor, John Dreu, and three other burgesses imprisoned in Lostwithiel's gaol 'until they should find the ship'. It was only after an inquisition that it was found that Bodmin was six or more leagues from the sea and that 'the men of the town have no ships or mariners'; those arrested were therefore released.<sup>55</sup> Despite the odd difficulty, these men were evidently bound together by common investments in shipping, and Kowaleski convincingly argues that ships 'probably outstripped all other forms of industrial investment in [medieval] England'.<sup>56</sup> Credit also linked these men; Richard Kendal of Lostwithiel pursued a debt against Roger Pretor of Fowey in 1375, and such credits networks stretched overseas as well.<sup>57</sup>

Fowey certainly profited from the export of tin, for aliens exported more of this metal from Fowey than any other Cornish port.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, in ascribing all of these shipments to Fowey there is a danger that vessels from nearby ports were recorded as coming from the town for ease of accounting. Even so, in 1339 John Boylet, attorney for the Bardi, one of Florence's banking houses, exported £920 worth of tin, of which £436 was carried on four Fowey-vessels. Some of this was directly exported overseas from Cornwall and there was a thriving trade with northern France and Flanders, although this Bardi consignment appears in London before exportation; Cornish tin diffused far and wide.<sup>59</sup> These figures are made all the more remarkable when it is remembered that the majority of Cornish tin was smuggled out of the county, having been cast into smaller bars known as 'pocket tin' for ease of transport.<sup>60</sup>

Fowey was also an essential staging-post for the internal tin trade. In 1423–4 nine ships from the town were searched and found to be carrying 2,264 pieces of tin to the Capital, a cargo which represented almost half of annual production.<sup>61</sup> While much of this metal was transported directly to London, considerable shipments were also sent to Southampton, and John Dogowe, a Fowey merchant, transported tin to that city in the 1430s.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the importance of coastal trade cannot be overstated, although documentation is sparse. Many aliens then exported this metal from Southampton, but large consignments were also sent to London, and Dogowe, as well as a London draper, Philip Malpas, carted this

<sup>53</sup> N. Orme, *Cornish Wills 1342–1540*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 50 (Exeter, 2007), pp. 80–1; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1341–3*, p. 144; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1343–6*, pp. 334–5.

<sup>54</sup> *Fowey Estuary: Historic Audit*, pp. 14 and 44–5; *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 204.

<sup>55</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1339–41*, p. 196.

<sup>56</sup> National Archives, E122/113/3; M. Kowaleski, 'Warfare, shipping, and Crown patronage: the impact of the Hundred Years War on the port towns of medieval England' in *Money, Markets and Trade in Late Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of John H. A. Munro*, edited by L. Armstrong, I. Elbl and M. Elbl (London, 2007), pp. 233–54 (p. 235).

<sup>57</sup> National Archives, C241/157/116; J. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150–1500* (London, 1980), pp. 302–5.

<sup>58</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, pp. 241 and 70-1

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 147–8. Hatcher, *English Tin*, pp.93–5 and 111, *Calendar of Close Rolls 1337–9*, p. 323.

<sup>60</sup> Hatcher, *English Tin*, pp. 6 and 110–111.

<sup>61</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1399–1405*, pp. 354–5; Hatcher, *English Tin*, pp.137–8.

<sup>62</sup> *Port Book of Southampton 1435–36*, edited by B. Foster (Southampton, 1963), p. 44; *Port Book of Southampton 1439–40*, edited by H. Rothwell (Southampton, 1961), p. 52.

metal between the Capital and its out-port.<sup>63</sup> While the majority of this was subsequently exported by aliens, particularly the Venetians, a quarter was reserved for pewter production.<sup>64</sup> Pewter was a major industry in London, and this commodity was traded both internally and overseas: the Hansa represented a particularly ready market.<sup>65</sup> Strikingly, Dogow rose to become warden of the pewterers in 1460.<sup>66</sup>

The town also had a considerable profile in the wine trade, and large shipments of imported wine are recorded in Fowey. In 1341–2, for instance, ten ships arrived at the port, from places such as Plymouth, Poole, and Grimsby, carrying this commodity.<sup>67</sup> The great majority of wine produced in Gascony was exported to England, and Fowey was one of the favoured stop-overs for this trade as the port was favourably positioned on the sea-lanes to Aquitaine.<sup>68</sup> Fowey's own ships also took advantage of this advantageous geography, and in 1409–10 nine Fowey ships exported wine from Bordeaux.<sup>69</sup> This trade, however, was much reduced in the fifteenth century, partly as a consequence of the war.<sup>70</sup> Even so, the increased risks, and therefore costs, of transporting wine favoured the western ports, including Fowey, which were advantageously located on the shortest sea routes to Gascony, enabling them to increase their share of shipping on this valuable sea-lane.<sup>71</sup>

Although Fowey accrued the most economic benefit from the previously mentioned trades, most vessels carried diverse cargoes, including items as varied as armour, beads, honey, horses, and garlic.<sup>72</sup> Aliens also exported wool from the port in the 1360s, while the king granted many Fowey-men licences to export cloth in 1364, for the western ports dominated the export of lower grade cloth in the fourteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, the cloth industry in east Cornwall expanded in the later fourteenth century, and exports from Plymouth and Cornish ports, including Fowey, increased tenfold in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>74</sup> There was also money to be made transporting pilgrims to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela. The barge *la George* of Fowey received a licence to carry 'four-score' pilgrims on this journey in 1394, and in 1332 even Fowey's priest, John Grey, went

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 87; Hatcher, *English Tin*, p. 92; *Brokage Book of Southampton 1443–4*, vol. I, edited by H. Rothwell (Southampton, 1960–1), pp. xxi–ii.

<sup>64</sup> *The Views of the Hosts of Alien Merchants 1440–1444*, edited by H. Bradley (London, 2012), p. xlii.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 387, 118 and 120; *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480–1*, edited by H. Cobb (London, 1990), p. xxxv.

<sup>66</sup> R. Homer, 'The medieval pewterers of London c. 1190–1457', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 34 (1985), 137–62 (pp. 137–40); C. Welch, *The Worshipful Company of Pewterers of the City of London*, II (London, 1902), p. 203.

<sup>67</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 141 and 167–8.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 28, 151, 257 and 70–1; M. James, *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 9 and 124.

<sup>69</sup> Hatcher, *Rural Economy*, p. 34; E. Carus-Wilson, 'The overseas trade of Bristol', in *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. E. Power and M. Postan, (London, 1933) pp.183–246 (p. 205).

<sup>70</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 123, 15, 23–4, 38–41, 57–9 and 95–116.

<sup>71</sup> Kowaleski, 'Port towns', pp. 480–1.

<sup>72</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 140, 267 and 292; R. Ward, *The World of the Medieval Shipmaster: Law, Business, and the Sea, c.1350–c.1450* (Woodbridge, 2009), p. 84; Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities', pp. 49–50; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1343–6*, pp. 334–5.

<sup>73</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361–4*, p. 496; Kowaleski, 'Port towns', p. 478.

<sup>74</sup> A. Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England 1350 to 1377: their Legal and Economic Position* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), p.158; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361–4*, pp. 496–7; Hatcher, *Rural Economy*, pp.169–70; Carus-Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.79–87, 93 and 98.

to Compostela.<sup>75</sup> All told, Fowey's wharves handled a multiplicity of commodities and it was a significant trading hub.

Each of these trade routes was greatly affected by the war at sea, however. The conflict made the Channel an increasingly lawless place, with ships often seized. Fowey's merchants lost many cargoes, but they also won many prizes, as we will see. The broader point which emerges is that the strains of war reshaped these sea routes, yielding the advantage to western ports as they were nearer to their trading destinations, and therefore were less exposed to the risks of long sea voyages. This reduced costs, which were on an ever-upward trajectory.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Kowaleski compellingly argues that these shifts enabled Fowey, and many western ports, to raise its profile on these sea-lanes.<sup>77</sup> Hence the structural changes to trade wrought by the war favoured Fowey.

Yet profits were not only made from voyages, and the ships which arrived in the port from places as diverse as Genoa and Grimsby required victualling. When these ships docked, costs would have been incurred for transporting goods from ship to shore and vice versa, as well as for equipment, such as ropes and nails. Visiting crews also needed to be housed, warehousing was required for unloaded goods, and supplies of food had to be laid in for the remainder of their journeys.<sup>78</sup> The inhabitants of the town earned considerable sums providing these goods and services. In 1454 David Taylour and Thomas Raulyn were brought before Fowey's manor court for keeping 'taverns for strangers in their houses without the lord's licence', while in 1480 John Treffry leased out an alehouse and its utensils to Richard Haryngton.<sup>79</sup> The townsfolk did not only provide ale, and in 1456 Joan Breme and her daughter, another Joan, were investigated by the manor court because they 'live suspiciously with great expense and no income'; eleven years earlier, John Rye had brazenly kept a brothel 'to the harm of the whole town'.<sup>80</sup> Fowey evidently possessed all the paraphernalia of a major port and the kaleidoscopic array of minor costs incurred by the vessels and crews which arrived in the town amounted to considerable sums.<sup>81</sup>

Smuggling was another important pillar of Fowey's economy. The authorities certainly appreciated the smuggling potential of Cornwall's rugged coast, and in 1387 the sheriff of Cornwall was instructed to cause proclamation that no merchant shall take goods out of the realm or transport them in via 'crykes'.<sup>82</sup> Fowey-men were definitely involved in this activity as in 1393 a number of them, including Mark Michelstow, were named in a mass pardon to many Cornishmen who had shipped tin 'without repairing to the staple', and the townsmen broke the trading embargo with Iceland in the fifteenth century.<sup>83</sup> The success

<sup>75</sup> M. Oppenheim, 'Maritime history', in *Victoria History of the County of Cornwall*, I (London, 1906), 475–513 (p. 482); *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1391–6*, p. 362; *The Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter 1327–1369*, edited by F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 3 vols (London, 1894–9), II, 657; Kowaleski, 'Warfare, shipping, and Crown patronage', pp. 245–50.

<sup>76</sup> Ward, *World of the Medieval Shipmaster*, p. 84.

<sup>77</sup> Kowaleski, 'Warfare, shipping and Crown patronage', pp. 235 and 245–50; Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities', pp. 49–50; Kowaleski, 'Port towns', pp. 478 and 486–7.

<sup>78</sup> For examples of the type of costs incurred, see *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 140 and 223.

<sup>79</sup> CRO, ART/2/1 mm. 17 and 20 (CRO Catalogue); CA/B46/6.

<sup>80</sup> CRO, ART/2/1 mm. 20 and 2 (CRO Catalogue).

<sup>81</sup> Hatcher, *Rural Society*, p. 35; *idem*, 'Diversified economy', p. 212; *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, p. 11; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1300–26*, p. 306.

<sup>82</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1385–9*, p. 305.

<sup>83</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1391–6*, p. 263; Hatcher, *English Tin*, pp. 114–15; E. Carus-Wilson, 'The Icelandic trade', in *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by E. Power and M. Postan (London, 1933), pp. 155–82 (p. 168).

of this enterprise, however, was determined by avoiding customs, leaving little record of its true scale, although it undoubtedly was great.

'Piracy' was another important generator of wealth, with captured vessels and cargoes often sold in port. But the term 'pirate' is disingenuous as all shipping of this period was armed: violence was standard form within 'a system of mutual reprisal'.<sup>84</sup> In medieval Latin, moreover, *pirata* refers predominantly to a style of sea warfare with few legal or moral overtones. Therefore Rodger has compellingly argued that instead of viewing disorder at sea as piracy, we should consider it a form of private naval warfare.<sup>85</sup>

Undoubtedly the Hundred Years War fuelled disorder at sea, for the Channel was a natural no-man's land. Endemic lawlessness also plagued Cornwall on land,<sup>86</sup> and there was a two-way transmission of lawlessness from sea to shore and from shore to sea. Cornwall's distance from the central courts further encouraged gangsterism in the Channel, as did the complex and overlapping legal jurisdictions in the county, between the admiralty, havenry, borough courts, county court, and so on. Legislation attempted to control private naval warfare, and a statute of 1353 stipulated that if any seized goods were landed in an English port the victim might, on proof of ownership, 'receive his property without the necessity of a suit at the common law'.<sup>87</sup> Although these measures were extended, the Channel remained a lawless watery frontier. In point of fact, England and France's bellicose crowns encouraged private naval warfare for national gain: it was a form of border warfare. Ford has shown that in 1400–3 the king provided redress only when he chose, and mainly in cases concerning attacks on neutral or denizen shipping.<sup>88</sup> This holds true for the entirety of the war. The cases in the Chancery Rolls therefore only represent the excesses of 'piracy', as attacks on the French went unrecorded because they did not merit restitution. Government policy overlooked 'piracy' of this kind as it served to harry the French with minimal outlay: prizes funded this activity.<sup>89</sup> But government control over these men should not be overplayed and freebooting was rife.

Indeed, there were rich prizes to be had and the most famous case of Fowey profiting from 'piracy' was the seizure of the *St Anthony and St Francis* of Barcelona by men of Fowey and Polruan in 1449: its cargo was valued at £12,000. The owner of the galley, Francis Junyent, named seventy-six men who had benefited from the seizure of the ship, including members of the gentry such as John Arundell, Nicholas Carminow, and Hugh Courtenay. Powerful interests protected Fowey's 'pirates'.<sup>90</sup> Yet this is but one of many cases of private naval warfare, for the town had a well founded reputation for freebooting:

<sup>84</sup> C. L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in XVth Century England* (Oxford, 1925), pp.78–9; M. Pitcaithly, 'Piracy and Anglo-Hanseatic relations, 1385–1420', in *Roles of the Sea in Medieval England*, edited by Gorski, pp. 125–46; for a popular history of piracy, see J. Eddisson, *Medieval Pirates, Pirates, Raiders and Privateers, 1204-1453* (Brimscombe Port Stroud, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, 'The law and language of private naval warfare', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 100 (2014), 5–16.

<sup>86</sup> H. Kleineke, 'Why the West was Wild: law and order in fifteenth century Cornwall and Devon', in *The Fifteenth Century*, III, *Authority and Subversion*, edited by Linda Clark (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 75–93.

<sup>87</sup> Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, pp. 80–1.

<sup>88</sup> Ford argues for complete control in the period 1400–3, while both Kingsford and Pistono argue for a much greater degree of lawlessness: C. Ford, 'Piracy or policy: the crisis in the Channel, 1400-1403', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 29 (1971), 63–78; Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, pp. 78–106; S. Pistono, 'Henry IV and English privateers', *English Historical Review*, 90 (1975), 322–30.

<sup>89</sup> Kowaleski, 'Warfare, shipping and Crown patronage', p. 250; Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War', pp. 16–18.

<sup>90</sup> Gardner, *Early Chancery Proceedings Relating to West Country Shipping*, pp. 80–4.

in 1336 a ship was seized in the 'port of Fawe' itself, and its crew assaulted.<sup>91</sup> Many men took advantage of the disorder at sea, and in 1452 men of Fowey and Polruan, including John Huyssh, master of *la Julyan* of Fowey, and Walter Hill, a priest, captured a Spanish ship transporting the goods of Philip Mede of Bristol.<sup>92</sup>

Fowey's leading family in this period were actually a 'pirate dynasty'. The Michelstows probably originated from the settlement now called Mixtow, across the estuary in Lanteglos parish, but by this period were well established in Fowey.<sup>93</sup> Richard (fl. 1350–90), Mark (fl. 1387–1421), and John (fl. 1428–44), had very active piratical careers.<sup>94</sup> Richard served the Black Prince, Mark became Henry IV's 'pirate admiral', and in 1433 John and 200 men captured a Genoese carrack off the coast of Cape St Vincent, Portugal. Although the Genoese crew offered no resistance, they 'were put ashore in Portugal in a destitute condition on the plea that they were "Sarasenes", though they were not' and the captured vessel was taken back to Fowey.<sup>95</sup> Yet we should remember that Fowey's inhabitants were often the victims of 'piracy', that redress was rarely received from foreign crowns, and that freebooting disrupted legitimate trade: the war at sea powerfully affected the port. In Bristol there is 'little evidence that piracy was particularly profitable', but this is not the case in Fowey, although of course any assessment remains impressionistic.<sup>96</sup> Fowey vessels were undoubtedly seized during these private naval conflicts, but the growing prominence of the port, especially of its freebooting profile, suggests that Fowey profited from private naval warfare. Indeed, the town exceeded all other Cornish ports in this 'industry', although not those of Devon, and Carew records that the people of Fowey 'skum the seas, with their often piracies', a condition which continued well beyond 1453.<sup>97</sup>

Having seen that the effects of the war at sea were all-pervasive, it is worth considering whether the costs incurred from the conflict outweighed the benefits which Fowey accrued.<sup>98</sup> Undoubtedly the war was destructive. English vessels were captured by enemy fleets and foreign 'pirates', while the French and English crowns often impounded foreign merchandise, again resulting in considerable losses. Perhaps most destructive, however,

<sup>91</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1334–8*, p. 296.

<sup>92</sup> Gardner, *Early Chancery Proceedings Relating to West Country Shipping*, p. 71; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1452–61*, p. 118.

<sup>93</sup> Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War', pp. 21, 31–2, 45–6 and 55–8; *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, p. 44.

<sup>94</sup> S. J. Drake, 'The Michelstow Family (fl. 1350–1455)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (forthcoming, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1429–36*, p. 355.

<sup>96</sup> C. Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350–1400* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 54.

<sup>97</sup> Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, p. 135v; J. Appleby, 'Devon privateering from early times to 1668', *The New Maritime History of Devon*, edited by M. Duffy, S. Fisher, B. Greenhill, D. Starkey and J. Youings (London, 1992–4), I, pp. 90–7; see also the biography of John Hawley in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386–1421*, edited by J. S. Roskell, L. Clarke and C. Rawcliffe, 3 vols (Stroud, 1993), III, 328–31.

<sup>98</sup> For the debate about the cost-benefits of the war, see M. Postan, 'Some social consequences of the Hundred Years War', *Economic History Review*, 12 (1942), 1–12; K. B. McFarlane, 'War, the economy, and social change: England and the Hundred Years War', *Past and Present*, 22 (1962), 3–13; Sherborne, 'Shipping and manpower', nuanced the debate for the realm's maritime population; and A. Saul concluded that the war had a pernicious affect upon Great Yarmouth: A. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth and the Hundred Years War in the fourteenth century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 52 (1979), 105–15; Kowaleski takes a more favourable view ('Warfare, shipping and Crown patronage'); and Moore has produced an analysis of one expedition: T. K. Moore, 'The cost-benefit analysis of a fourteenth-century naval campaign: Margate/Cadzand, 1387' in *Roles of the Sea in Medieval England*, edited by Gorski, pp. 103–24.

were the four raids which Fowey endured between 1338 and 1457, all of which disrupted trade, and in 1338 the havener wrote that ‘boats hardly dare to go to sea because of the war at sea’.<sup>99</sup> But these were not the only costs incurred by Fowey’s shipmen, and Sherborne argued that impressment ‘was in effect a tax’ which fell heavily on the realm’s maritime population, particularly as there was no standardised payment to impressed shipping until 1380.<sup>100</sup> However, although the war was burdensome it was far from crippling. For example, the raids on the town were made less damaging by the fact that Fowey’s ships were often at sea when the port was attacked, and these were the most valuable assets in the borough.<sup>101</sup> There were also large profits to be made from private naval warfare, and, as we have seen, it does appear that the town earned more than it lost from this activity. Moreover, Fowey’s ships were often hired by the crown and the duchy, while shipmasters and mariners were paid daily wages when serving the king, injecting yet more money into the port. Fowey’s position as an embarkation point also yielded profits, and contingents of troops in Fowey paid for food and accommodation whilst in port. In fact, although the war made naval transport more risky and thus expensive, reshaping sea-lanes, this shift favoured Fowey and other western ports. Their proximity to southern France and the Iberian peninsula reduced the risks to their shipping, and therefore costs, allowing them to increase their share of trade. It was not just structural shifts of this kind, but also the resilience of Fowey’s burgesses which facilitated the port’s growing clout. Of course no true balance-sheet can be drawn up, particularly as the Black Death and subsequent visitations of the plague totally refashioned the economy of the realm, but the port became increasingly prominent as the conflict progressed, suggesting that enterprising Fowey-men found ways to capitalise on the war. The careers of Stephen Pole and Hankyn Selander stand as testament to this adaptability, but we must first consider the final pillars of Fowey’s wealth.

The presence of the havener’s head office, the havener’s hall, in the port also provided economic benefit, for he regulated trade in all Cornish ports, often hiring cellars in Fowey to store wine and salvage.<sup>102</sup> In point of fact, the maritime infrastructures of the port were well developed, with the waterfront particularly built-up. Fowey’s chief quay stretched out from what is now Webb Street, but there were a multitude of slipways and quays attached to merchant houses, which were funded by piecemeal private investment.<sup>103</sup> Over time, the building and extension of these resulted in land reclamation, enlarging Fowey’s harbour. Leland also records that on the shore in the middle of the town there was ‘a house buildid quadrantly... which shodowith the shippes in the haven ... from 3. parts [of the] haven mouth and defendith them from stormes’.<sup>104</sup> Yet it was not simply the immediate harbour which was essential to shipping, and windmills acted as daymarks, while the light in St Catherine’s Chapel was a beacon at night; there was a corresponding seamark on the eastern side of the harbour entrance, St Saviour’s Chapel at Polruan.<sup>105</sup> Shipbuilding facilities were also present in the port, with all the required equipment for this industry, and the roof of a late medieval merchant’s hall of ‘major status’ is preserved in a property standing at 4 Town

<sup>99</sup> *Havener’s Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, pp. 44, 137, 152, 156 and 309.

<sup>100</sup> Sherborne, ‘Shipping and Manpower’, pp. 137, 152, 156, 165 and 174–5.

<sup>101</sup> Drake, ‘Fowey during the Hundred Years’ War’, pp. 33–4.

<sup>102</sup> Its location was preserved in 1480 (CRO, CA/B45/6); *Havener’s Accounts*, pp. 138, 223 and 233; *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, p. 14.

<sup>103</sup> *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit* pp. 14 and 32.

<sup>104</sup> *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, p. 7; *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 203.

<sup>105</sup> *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, pp. 29 and 34; *Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 207 and 323.



Quay: the town possessed much human capital and maritime expertise.<sup>106</sup> Combined with the port's prime, deep-water anchorage, these underpinned the town's economy.

Evidently the sea was fundamental to the town's economy, but Fowey's land links were also significant. In 1411 an indulgence was granted for repairs to the bridge between East and West Looe which was 'also of great importance to travellers between the towns of Plymouth and Fowey'.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, in 1480 Thomas Randyll paid custom duties in London for the transport of cloth to Fowey on horseback.<sup>108</sup> Within the locality, many tracks and roads linked the town to its hinterland, and although the river Fowey presented problems to travellers using these highways, the crossing between Bodinnick and Fowey was only 'a bowshot's distance' and a ferry linked the two.<sup>109</sup> In fact, terrestrial, maritime, and riverine transport networks intersected at Fowey, a convergence from which the town profited handsomely.

Perhaps the greatest surviving illustration of this wealth is the church of St Fimbarrus. Bishop Grandisson rededicated this church *de novo constructam* to St Nicholas in 1336.<sup>110</sup> At this date it had three altars, and with its plain octagonal piers and double-chamfered pointed arches, the lofty, light, and expansive interior of the church stands as testament



Fig. 4. Polruan castle at the entrance to Fowey harbour. Modern buildings of Fowey town are visible north-westwards across the harbour mouth; the open sea is south-westwards to the left, and the old town of Fowey is upriver to the right

*Photograph by Sam Drake*

<sup>106</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1350–54*, p. 386; Kowaleski, 'Coastal communities', p. 45; P. Beacham and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cornwall* (New Haven and London, 2014), pp. 204–5.

<sup>107</sup> *The Register of Edmund Stafford, (A.D. 1395-1419): an Index and Abstract of its Contents*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1886), p. 245; two further indulgences were required as the bridge remained unfinished: C. Henderson and H. Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (Truro, 1928), pp. 67–70.

<sup>108</sup> *Overseas Trade of London*, edited by Cobb, p. 99.

<sup>109</sup> William Worcester, *Itineraries*, edited by J. H. Harvey (Oxford, 1969), p. 23; *Fowey Estuary Historic Audit*, pp. 12 and 33.

<sup>110</sup> *Regestrs of Bishop Grandisson*, edited by Hingeston-Randolph, II, 819; he changed its dedication from St Fimbarrus.

to Fowey's financial clout.<sup>111</sup> The townsmen lavished money on their church and the number of funeral effigies in Fowey further evidences the wealth of these burgesses.<sup>112</sup> St Fimbarrus's style, moreover, is suggestive of Breton influences, a fact which once again illustrates the movement of goods and ideas by sea. Nevertheless, although Fowey was wealthy and significant in this period, its defences were sub-standard throughout the war.<sup>113</sup> Evidently the conflict profoundly affected Fowey, but remarkably the net result appears to have been to the town's benefit.

### Two of Fowey's Inhabitants: Stephen Pole and Hankyn Selander

The Poles were one of Fowey's more significant families in the fourteenth century. Stephen Pole first appears in 1338–9 when he was taxed 20s. for the export of hides on the *Seynte Mariecog* of London.<sup>114</sup> His business interests, however, did not always run so smoothly and in 1343 Pole, along with William Scarlet, another Fowey-man, had loaded the ship of John Dien of St Helens, *la Juliane de Wyght*, with a diverse cargo in Fowey.<sup>115</sup> This vessel was supposed to be taken to Flanders, but in 1344 Copinus Theghelere of Calais and many others from France boarded the ship, killed the mariners, and seized its cargo. Despite this crime being committed during a truce, King Philip of France gave no compensation. In seeking this, Pole and his associates produced a detailed list of goods, worth £500 overall, which had been on their captured vessel:

372 pieces of tin weighing 52 *miliare*, worth £240  
 17 dickers of hides, worth £8. 10s.  
 1,707 stones of cheese, worth £100  
 54 bacon hogs, worth £10. 12s.  
 57 stones of Butter, worth 66s. 8d.  
 And cloth of diverse colours, beds, and armour, worth £30  
 And 6 sacks of feathers, worth £6

The diversity of commodities traded from Fowey stands revealed, which emphasises both the port's wealth and the strength of its merchant class. Yet as the king of France provided no recompense, the goods of the Frenchmen who had seized the vessel were confiscated in England. Costs were evidently incurred by both sides from 'piracy'.<sup>116</sup> Later in 1344, it emerged that in seizing the ship the French freebooters had killed fourteen mariners and two attorneys, so the sheriffs of London were instructed to seize goods worth a further £300 from the French.<sup>117</sup> Pole and Scarlet successfully lobbied the government, an achievement which demonstrates the importance of the maritime interests of the realm to the crown.

But Pole also profited from 'piracy', and in 1350 a warrant for his arrest was issued as he had seized Adam Scarlet's ship *la Trinite*, which was carrying supplies to Bordeaux Castle. His brother, John Pole, was also involved in this theft, but John also had legal business interests, and the king granted him license to export cloth from Fowey in 1364.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, II, 819 (three altars); Beacham and Pevsner, *Cornwall*, pp. 204–5.

<sup>112</sup> Orme, *Cornish Wills*, p. 81; Beacham and Pevsner, *Cornwall*, pp. 204–5; Keast, *Story of Fowey*, p. 17; W. Lack, H. Martin Stuchfield and P. Whitemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Cornwall*, Monumental Brass Society, County Series, 6 (London, 1997), pp. 41–6.

<sup>113</sup> S. J. Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War', pp. 18–20 and 29–30 (especially pp. 20 and 30).

<sup>114</sup> *Havener's Accounts*, edited by Kowaleski, p. 149.

<sup>115</sup> *Calendar of Inquisition Miscellaneous 1307–49*, p. 465; Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War', p. 48.

<sup>116</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1343–6*, pp. 334–5.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 381, 430, 511 and 527.

<sup>118</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1348–50*, p. 593; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361–4*, p. 694.

The family's wealth was founded upon a fusion of trade and 'piracy', and the Poles adapted to the changes engendered by the war at sea. They certainly maintained a presence in the town throughout the century, and Gerard Pole was commissioned to search Fowey to prevent the export of gold in 1378; ten years later, Robert Pole's ship, the *George*, was impressed by the government.<sup>119</sup>

In contrast to the Poles, Hankyn Selander<sup>120</sup> was a Dutchman who first appears in Fowey in 1433. The town's reputation for private naval warfare attracted people from far and wide, including aliens. In this year his arrest (with others) was ordered as he was involved in taking the goods of John de La Mer of Bayonne at sea, and although others had already been arrested, they did not have the means to pay.<sup>121</sup> Evidently there were attempts to police 'piracy', but during Henry VI's reign it far exceeded the narrow confines of government policy.<sup>122</sup> In 1436, while operating out of Falmouth with a great ship and two balingers, Selander seized five Flemish vessels on a voyage from Lisbon, but this was only the beginning of his career.<sup>123</sup> In 1439 he was to be put in prison 'until further order' as he had seized John Loven's ship, *Seint Fiacre* of Brittany, which was sailing under letters of safe conduct towards *le Rochell*. Selander had appeared in a ballinger and boarded the vessel; he then 'took away his [Loven's] letters of safe conduct and threw them overboard, and robbed him of his ship and goods'.<sup>124</sup> Lawlessness abounded, but profits were certainly made from this state of affairs: Selander, like the Michelstows, was a 'professional pirate'.

He next appears in 1441 when he seized a Breton ship, *le Cristofere* of St Servan, along with four other ships off the Isle of White. Selander tried to buy off the townsmen of Newport by selling the cargo cheaply, and even gave one of the captured vessels to the parish. After these gifts the Breton merchants, unsurprisingly, were not keen for the men of Newport to be called upon as witnesses.<sup>125</sup> Two years later he seized *le Cristofore* of Legue which was carrying a cargo of 100 tuns of wine, as well as leather and iron. He distributed these stolen wares within Fowey, but also to places as distant as Tavistock and Chard.<sup>126</sup> These profits diffused far inland.

In September 1443 Selander, along with Haukyn Loo of Fowey, seized a Portuguese ship which was owned by Alfonso Mendes, but both men were granted a general release.<sup>127</sup> Strikingly, Selander's crew were Fowey-men, and employment of this kind reveals his integration into the town. Also in this year, his ship the *Palmer* of Fowey, master Berne Busbas, came out of Plymouth and captured a pinnace, the *Mighell* of Dartmouth, which was laden with wine and linen. An order was sent to investigate the theft with an aim to provide restitution but nothing more is recorded.<sup>128</sup>

This was far from being the end of Selander's piratical career, however, and in June 1444 a commission was issued to enquire into his seizure of the ship of Martin Sanches of

<sup>119</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1377–81*, p. 309; National Archives, E101/40/40 m.2; A. Ayton and C. Lambert, *Shipping, Mariners and Ports in Fourteenth-Century England* (Database, 2011), at <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk>.

<sup>120</sup> Also named as John Seland, or Zelander.

<sup>121</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1429–36*, p. 352.

<sup>122</sup> Drake, 'Fowey during the Hundred Years' War', pp. 25–9.

<sup>123</sup> Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, p. 91.

<sup>124</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1436–41*, p. 373.

<sup>125</sup> Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, p. 91.

<sup>126</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1441–6*, p. 244, Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, p. 91.

<sup>127</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1441–7*, p. 148.

<sup>128</sup> Gardner, *Early Chancery Proceedings Relating to West Country Shipping*, pp. 59–60; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1441–6*, p. 246.

*Valendis*, which was transporting fifty marks worth of woollen cloth from Southampton.<sup>129</sup> In October of that year, the sheriff of Cornwall was to levy 200 marks of ‘John otherwise Hankyn’ Selander as he had given an undertaking to present himself to the chancery, ‘but took no heed to appear’. He was summoned to appear again, but was a man of considerable means who had little care for the law.<sup>130</sup> Yet his career was seriously damaged in November 1444 when he had to make a ‘gift in consideration of the trespass hereinafter mentioned’ of two ships, *le Cristofore* and *la Eelen*, and all his goods and chattels in part recompense as he had seized a ship of the Queen of France, *la Marie*, which was laden with diverse goods- and chattels of the queen and was sailing to England under a letter of safe conduct.<sup>131</sup> Surprisingly even this was not the end of his career, and in 1456 he is recorded as capturing a Portuguese carvel.<sup>132</sup> ‘Piracy’ evidently provided Selander with a long and profitable profession, and it should be remembered that these cases represent only a fraction of his freebooting activities.<sup>133</sup> Fowey then had a well-founded reputation for private naval warfare, an ‘industry’ which was abetted by the war at sea and one in which the town excelled.

### A Contemporary Account of Fowey-Based Pirates

The chronicler Thomas Walsingham provides a vignette of the sort of ‘piracy’ which was so common in this period.<sup>134</sup> He records that in 1379 a Fowey barge was preparing to return home after ‘completing the service on which the king had sent it to watch over the channel’. This was before the service of Sir Hugh Calveley and Sir Thomas Percy of watching ‘over the channel’ had begun, and ‘when the knights saw the boat and learned the reason for its return they asked the crew to turn around and join them with their boat’. But the Cornishmen refused, as they thought ‘they were abandoning the chance to make gains of their own if the opportunity arose on their way back to gain spoils from the enemy’. Based hundreds of miles away in St Albans, Walsingham had evidently heard of Fowey’s reputation.

The Fowey-men therefore made the excuse that they would rather sail home, and ‘return later with fresh provisions, and new equipment and having renewed their strength’. Their journey home, however, did not go as planned and after the vessels parted company, ‘the Cornish sailors came upon a Flemish vessel, fully manned with armed troops, packed with treacherous men, full of cruel men, laden with evil intent’. The Flemings, seeing that the Fowey barge was alone ‘put all their effort into their usual activity, abandoning scruples, banishing virtue, and acting with audacity ... [they] turned their arms against our men’. The Cornishmen ‘prepared to resist manfully’, and a ‘dreadful conflict took place’. Yet the Fowey-men were outnumbered, and Walsingham, with one of his many rhetorical flourishes, asks ‘but what could few do against many, the tired against the strong?’ The men of Fowey had ‘experienced the privations of the sea ... [and were therefore] no match for the enemy, who were greater in number and not at all exhausted by the sea’. Hence the Flemings won the day, and ‘seized the barge, put our men to the sword, threw them overboard and drowned them; they saved nobody’. Once the Flemings had done this, ‘they commended the barge to the deep to prevent their deceit ... coming to the notice of the English’. The Channel was a lawless place.

<sup>129</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1441–6*, p. 290.

<sup>130</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls 1441–7*, p. 244.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 273–4.

<sup>132</sup> Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise*, pp. 91–2.

<sup>133</sup> Ford, ‘Crisis in the Channel’, pp. 63–5.

<sup>134</sup> *The St Albans Chronicle: the Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, edited by J. Taylor, W. Childs and L. Watkiss, 2 vols (Oxford, 2003–12), I, 289–93.

One Cornish boy, however, ‘while the fierce fighting raged on both sides, saw that our men must perish, and leapt on to the Fleming ship’ to hide in that ship’s hold. Three days passed, but on the third the ship docked in an English port and ‘when he heard the Flemings conversing with the English, for he recognised their dialect, he suddenly appeared out of the ship’s hold, shouting loudly for the loyalty and support of the English’. After a few moments of confusion, the Flemings’ deeds were discovered and they were ‘arrested and imprisoned, destined to receive a worthy reward for their deed’. Their ship and merchandise were confiscated for the king’s service, an act which highlights the way in which private warfare blurred into the formal conflict, for every aspect of maritime life faded into another.

### **Conclusion**

Although Fowey was a comparatively small port, of perhaps 800 souls, its wealth was founded upon the sea and the port’s prosperity grew as the war progressed. Each aspect of its maritime-based economy was interconnected, a fact commented upon by Leland, who wrote that Fowey’s greatness was secured ‘partely by feates of warre, partely by pyracie, and so waxing riche felle al to marchaundice: so that the town was hauntid with shippes of diverse nations, and their shippes went to al nations’.<sup>135</sup> Fowey, with its deep-water harbour and favourable geographical position, was an intrinsic part of the ocean-going world, and, as large-scale transport was far easier by water than land, this was a very significant position indeed. A powerful sense of maritime connectivity therefore emerges, as the sea acted as an enabling space which linked Fowey into a multitude of watery networks and to a diversity of places. This facilitated the transport of people, commodities, and ideas. Of course there were considerable maritime solidarities, with those who forged their lives at sea facing the same challenges of wind and tide, but there were also numerous tensions. The Channel remained a lawless watery frontier and Fowey a ‘frontier town’.

To support its shipping, Fowey possessed developed maritime infrastructures and much marine expertise. Indeed, the port performed a diversity of shipping functions on many sea-lanes: it was a transshipment station and safe haven, as well as an entry and exit point to the Cornish economy; the town’s merchants also shipped many commodities in their own right. Moreover, the port formed a robust economic unit with its hinterland and stood at the nexus of maritime, riverine, and terrestrial transport. Its noteworthy profile on numerous sea-lanes was augmented by the war, which increasingly favoured the western ports, for these settlements sat on the shortest, and cheapest, sea routes to many major trading centres. Private naval warfare, moreover, appears to have yielded greater profits than losses, while raids were not as devastating as once thought. Considerable crown and ducal patronage flowed into the town as well, and wages further injected hard cash into Fowey’s economy. Enterprising Fowey-men found ways to profit from the conflict, a fact which stresses their resilience and adaptability. The port actually grew in prominence, suggesting that its ‘glorie’ really did ‘rise’ as a result of the Hundred Years War.

Yet Fowey’s experience establishes a rather larger point, namely the significance of the south-west during the conflict. Maritime geography resulted in Cornwall lying beside major sea lanes, allowing access to the Bay of Biscay, Spain, and a myriad of other lands. The ports of Cornwall and Devon were therefore cogs of great import in the commerce, shipping, and warfare, of this period and beyond.

<sup>135</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland*, edited by Smith, I, 203.

## Acknowledgements

My great thanks to Nigel Saul, Clive Burgess, Hannes Kleineke, and the editor of the Journal, for their help and advice. This work was made possible by an award from a Block Grant Partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

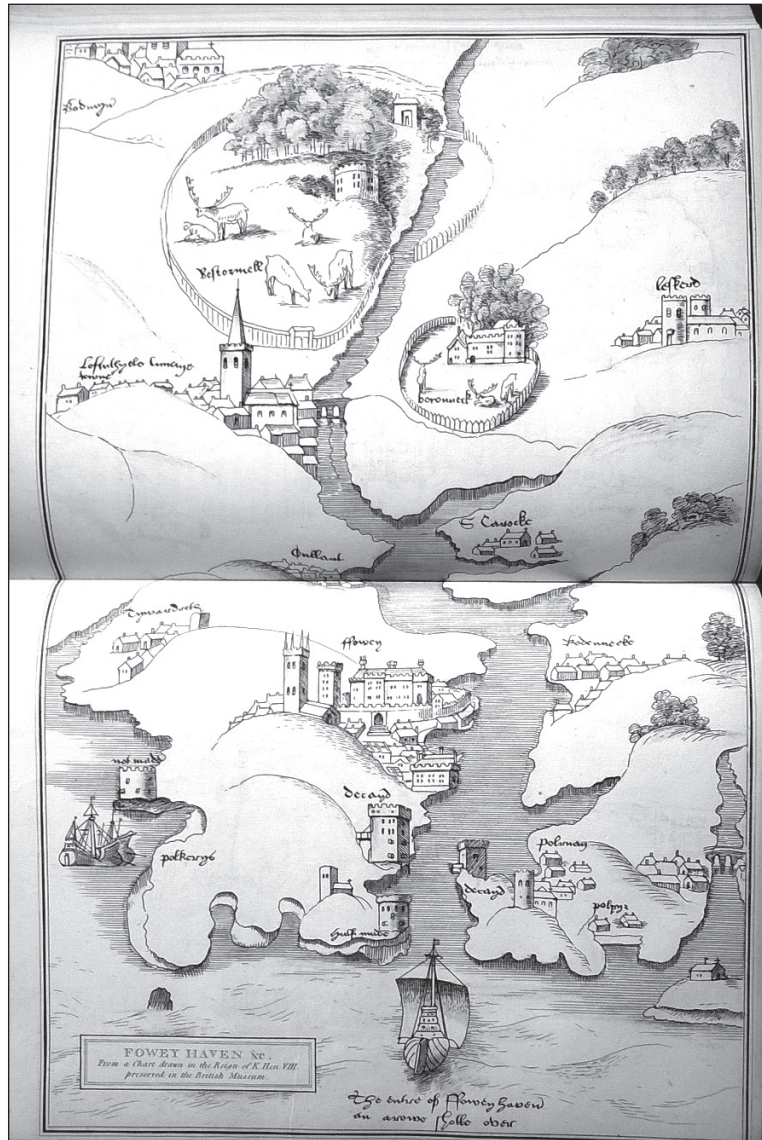


Fig. 5. Fowey Haven in the time of King Henry VIII, redrawn from a chart now in the British Library  
*D. and S. Lysons, Magna Britannia, vol. III, Cornwall (London, 1814), between pp. 108 and 109*