

DEVON AND CORNWALL RECORD SOCIETY

New Series, Vol. 36

THE LOCAL CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS
OF THE PORT OF EXETER
1266-1321

Edited and translated with an Introduction by

MARYANNE KOWALESKI

M.A., M.S.L., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Fordham University, New York

INTRODUCTION

THE MEDIEVAL PORT OF EXETER

Exeter in the middle ages was the head port of a royal customs jurisdiction that encompassed most of Devon and Cornwall, despite the fact that the city actually lies up the Exe river over ten miles from the open sea. With the construction of weirs on the Exe river in the mid-thirteenth century, access by ship to Exeter proper (which had never been easy) became virtually impossible. This obstruction meant that the village of Topsham, located about four miles south of Exeter at the head of the estuary, had to serve as Exeter's outpost. Topsham, however, probably filled this role even in the Roman period; despite the claims of later Exonians to the contrary, it is doubtful whether any but the smallest vessels had ever sailed up the river to unload goods at Exeter.¹ From at least 1178/9 the lords of Topsham, the powerful earls of Devon, enjoyed the privilege of collecting wine custom at the port, and from at least 1225/6 they owned permanent market stalls in the village;² both rights suggest that Topsham had long served as the outpost for Exeter, particularly for the larger ocean-going ships that transported wine from the continent. Indeed, even before the weirs were built in the mid-thirteenth century, the number of ships docking at Topsham was very close to the number that unloaded cargo there after the weirs were constructed.³

The earls' rights to collect Exeter town customs at Topsham probably originated as a payment by Exeter citizens for the use of the earls' manor of Topsham as a landing place.⁴ These customs rights, like those enjoyed by the city, centred on the import trade; local export duties were never collected at the port by either the earl or

¹ For the finds of Roman coins, pottery, and buildings at Topsham cited in support of this view, see Chris Henderson, 'Exeter (Isca Dumnoniorum)', in *Fortress into City*, ed. Graham Webster, London, 1988, pp 92-3.

² *The Pipe Roll for the Twenty-Fifth Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1178-1179*, Pipe Roll Society, xxviii (1907), p 15. For the earl's wine custom and stalls in 1225/6, see K. Ugawa, 'The Economic Development of Some Devon Manors in the Thirteenth Century', *TDA*, xciv (1962), pp 661-2. The presence of such stalls (some later designated specifically for wine) at a small village that did not have a chartered market until 1300 (*CChR 1257-1300*, p 448) must have resulted from the ships unloading there.

³ The minimum number of ships arriving can be calculated from keelage (a 2d toll charged on each ship docking) collected at Topsham; the 5s collected in 1225/6 (Ugawa, 'Economic Development', pp 661-2) and 4s 6½d collected in 1286/7 (PRO SC 6/827/39) after the weirs were built show that at least 30 ships moored at Topsham in 1225/6 and 27 in 1286/7. Given the widespread exemptions to which such tolls were subject, the actual number of ships docking was probably higher and not far from the average number (47) docking there in the first decade of the fourteenth century.

⁴ See also Andrew Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom of Devon', *TDA*, civ (1972), pp 61-2 on this and the following point.

the city of Exeter, in part because exports were of such low value compared to imports.⁵ From the first mention of these customs rights in the late 1170s, the earls' share was restricted to tolls on wine, a limitation that most likely reflected the necessity for heavily-burdened wine ships, unable to navigate the shallow four-mile stretch of river to Exeter, to unload at Topsham even before the weirs closed off the river to all vessels.⁶ The earls' claim to wine custom was also limited to one-third of the amount collected by the city.⁷ This division of profits may derive from the "earl's penny," the customary payment of every third penny to the earl, since Topsham was owned by a succession of earls, including Earl Harold before the Norman Conquest.⁸ The earls' rights to Exeter town customs may also have been responsible for the unusual fullness of the customs accounts kept by the city, as well as the eventual division of the accounts into two parts, one dealing with wine and the other with general merchandise.⁹ Indeed, the often strained relationship between the city and the earl was particularly tense around the time that the city began keeping track of ship entries, an action perhaps taken to assure the earl that he was getting his fair share of the wine custom.

Conflict began when the earl of Devon, Baldwin de Redvers, built a weir (probably between 1239 and his death in 1245) on the Exe river between Topsham and Exeter. The weir allowed him to take greater profits from his salmon fisheries on the Exe, but also effectively blocked any boats at all from reaching Exeter.¹⁰ To make matters worse, his son Baldwin (1235-1262) also established a fair at Topsham in 1257 that was timed to precede Exeter's own Lammas

⁵ For a longer discussion of Exeter's export trade, see Maryanne Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter*, Cambridge, forthcoming, chapter 6.

⁶ For the hazards of navigating the Exe estuary, particularly around Topsham, see E.A.G. Clark, *The Ports of the Exe Estuary 1660-1860*, Exeter, 1960, pp 4-10. For explicit statements by shipmasters that their heavily-loaded wine ships could not make it up the treacherous and shallow estuarine channel to Topsham, see DRO, ECA MCR 1360/1, m. 15d; 1364/5, m. 14; 1365/6, m. 6d; 1422/3, m. 7d; DRO, ECA CRA 1433/4, 1440/1; CPR 1364-7, p 167.

⁷ The earliest statement regarding the one-third share of the earl is in a document dated about 1250 (J. R. Brooking Rowe, *A History of Plympton Erle*, Exeter, 1906, pp 11-12) but the division had clearly been practiced for some time.

⁸ O.J. Reichel, 'The Domesday Hundred of Wenford or Wonford', *TDA*, xlv (1912), pp 316-17. Earl Godwin (Harold) had similar rights to one-third of the monies collected from "the waterway where ships moored" in Southwark (*Domesday Book, Surrey*, ed. John Morris, Chichester, 1975, no. 5,28). The "earl's penny" was owed on wide variety of payments, including fines and tolls.

⁹ Totals of the sums collected for wine custom and the share delivered to the earl are noted in the earliest accounts (below, pp 85, 99, 113, 118, 134, 158), but no such totals appear for customs collected on other merchandise until 1353/4.

¹⁰ He was noted as the builder in PRO KB 26/167, mm. 1d, 12d. Copies of most of the original documents concerning the on-going disputes with the earls of Devon may be found in DRO, ECA Book 51, ff. 43-48v; DRO, ECA Misc. Roll 3; and John Vowell alias Hoker, *The Description of the Citie of Excester*, ed. Walter J. Harte, J. W. Schopp, H. Tapley-Soper, DCRS, xii (1919), pp 32-4, 626-57. These are discussed and expanded with additional citations by Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', pp 57-79.

fair by only a week or so.¹¹ The citizens of Exeter complained bitterly to the king about both initiatives but received no satisfaction; their frustration boiled over in July 1263 when a group of the most prominent citizens tore down the weir.¹² A heavy fine was exacted by the crown for this unauthorized destruction, but the people of Exeter were undeterred. A few months later, many of the same citizens marched to Topsham and forcibly prevented merchants from landing and selling their goods there.¹³ The citizens lost this dispute as well since the crown jury impanelled to hear the case both ordered them to pay another fine for this action and sanctioned the rights of merchants to land and sell cargoes in Topsham without having to come to Exeter. But the city also received some legal redress; the same jury confirmed Exeter's claim to exact port customs at Topsham, provided always that one-third of the sum collected on wine imports was delivered to the lord of Topsham.¹⁴

This settlement did not lead to a lasting peace. Further problems erupted with the construction of new weirs in the 1280s and the earls' acquisition of new market and port facilities at Topsham in the early fourteenth century. Much of this latter activity was led by Earl Hugh Courtenay who, after inheriting the earldom in 1293, initiated a long period of particularly strained relations with the citizens of Exeter. He vigorously promoted the commercial fortunes of Topsham by raising a new market, fair, wharf, and a crane for unloading goods there, fostering the use of Topsham properties for storage and the hire of his tenants as carters, interfering with the city's legal jurisdiction over ships in the estuary, and extorting extra tolls from ships and merchants unloading at Topsham.¹⁵ Earl Hugh also caused the city great distress by enforcing his prerogatives in Exe Island, a suburban manor that lay outside the city's west gate beside the Exe

¹¹ For the fair charter he acquired, see *CChR 1257-1300*, p 2. For the city's complaints, see *CCR 1259-61*, p 218; and *PRO KB 26/167*, mm. 1d, 12d. See *CCR 1242-7*, p 340, however, for a reference to an earlier fair at Topsham (or possibly Exeter) that his mother enjoyed as part of her dower. For the complicated history of Exeter's fairs, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 2.

¹² *PRO JUST 1/178*, m. 8d; Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', pp 59-60. This Baldwin died in 1262 so the remaining disputes were with his mother, the Countess Amicia (who held Topsham in dower), and with his sister and heir, Isabella de Fortibus (countess of Albemarle), who held Topsham from 1284 to her death in 1293.

¹³ *PRO KB 27/11*, m. 12d; *PRO KB 27/12*, m. 16d; a translation appears in *DRO, ECA Law Papers on Town Customs, Mayor of Exeter v. Lawrence*, Box 8, pp 197-200.

¹⁴ The judgment recorded in *PRO KB 27/12*, m. 16d, does not specify the wine custom, noting only that Countess Amicia had rights to one-third of toll taken by Exeter at Topsham. Wine custom must have been intended, however, as indicated in the earlier references to the earl's share (above, n. 2) and the right to wine custom noted in her inquisition post mortem; (*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, London, ii, pp 327-8). Jackson ('Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', p 61) suggests that the judgment was a mistake or biased in her favour by the jurors.

¹⁵ *DRO Misc. Roll 3*, no. 5 (printed in Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', pp 72-5); see also Hooker, *Cities of Exeter*, pp 636-45, 652-6.

river.¹⁶ Local animosity against Hugh ran so high that later Exeter writers often portrayed him as the instigator of an all-out trade war against the city, although many of their accusations about his construction of new weirs and a host of other offences were probably not true.¹⁷ The citizens' hostility towards the earl undoubtedly reflected their frustration over the city's lack of success in legal actions against him.¹⁸

This list of injuries visited upon Exeter by the earls of Devon should not, however, obscure the extent to which the city itself acted as an aggressor in maintaining and extending its domain over the Exe estuary. In the 1260s, for example, the city was involved in a dispute with the abbot and convent of Sherborne (Dorset) over their claim to control the ferry and sale of fish at *Checkstone* (a settlement now part of Exmouth) and to collect toll from merchandise landed at there and other places in the abbey's manor of Littleham (where *Checkstone* was located).¹⁹ Exeter seems to have triumphed since the abbot and convent agreed to grant the city their ferry across the mouth of the estuary, in return for which the city allowed the abbey's monks and tenants free passage, as well as the right to buy and sell fish in the estuary without paying custom.²⁰ But vigorous objections were soon made by estuarine residents to the higher fares that the new owners charged for ferry trips and to the city's claim to a monopoly on all ferry crossings.²¹ On several occasions in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Exeter had to mount further defences in court of its claims to the quay, ferry and toll at Exmouth.²² One victory came as late as 1411 when the city acquired the right to collect tolls on fish sales at Exmouth.²³

Legal actions and negotiated settlements were not the only tactics employed by the city to enforce its rights in the estuary. As the citizens' raids on the Topsham weirs and port testify, they were not reluctant to resort to more strong-arm methods as well. In 1264–5 men of Exeter conducted a night raid at Littleham, breaking up chests and carrying off goods which presumably had been landed

¹⁶ DRO, ECA Book 60h, ff 21v–32v; Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, 389–95, 407–10; see also MCR 1304/5, mm. 27, 27d; 1318/19, m. 21; 1323/4, m. 7d for the ongoing disputes with the earl.

¹⁷ The sixteenth-century city chamberlain, John Hooker (who wrote DRO Book 60h and *Citie of Excester*) and Richard Izacke (*Remarkable Antiquities of the City of Exeter*, 2nd edn, London, 1724, pp 36–44) clearly exaggerated the wickedness of his deeds.

¹⁸ PRO SC 8/264/13160; Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, 636–56; Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', pp 68–9.

¹⁹ DRO, ECA Misc. Roll 2, no. 34; Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, pp 499–503.

²⁰ In 1266 (MCR Roll 1, m. 17) the city received 7s 2d from the "passage at *Cheekstone*", but not long afterwards moved the ferry to *Pratteshide* (Peter J. Weddell, 'The Excavation of Medieval and Later Houses and St Margaret's Chapel at Exmouth, 1982–1984', *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society*, xlv (1986), pp 120, 124; and CRA 1339/40 et seq.).

²¹ PRO JUST 1/181, m. 36d.

²² CRA 1410/11; Izacke, *Remarkable Antiquities*, pp 52, 69, 88.

²³ The profits were first enrolled in CRA 1411/12. See also MCR 1460/1, m. 13 for the city's continuing efforts to make fishers carry their catch to Exeter for sale.

there without the city's permission.²⁴ In the 1270s another group of citizens, this time led by the mayor of Exeter, descended upon Littleham to compel a Devon coroner to recognize their claim to wreck in the estuary, going so far as to steal away a grounded ship upon which the coroner was trying to hold an inquest.²⁵

The city pursued its claims over the fish trade in the estuary with similar vigor. In the mid-thirteenth century, the lord of the estuarine manor of Bradham (north of Littleham) charged a city bailiff with forcibly preventing two of his fishermen from selling their fish at Exmouth; the bailiff asserted that they were regrating the city's market (that is, reselling fish they had purchased from others and thereby raising its price).²⁶ Similar complaints surfaced in the king's eyre court of 1280/1 when the men of East Budleigh hundred (which encompassed all of the eastern bank of the estuary) accused Exeter officials of hindering them from purchasing fish and other cargoes at Exmouth as they once had been able to do.²⁷ Control over the fish trade throughout the estuary was of vital importance to the Exeter authorities, as seen in the many fines and distrains they levied on fish dealers for custom evasion at Exmouth, Kennford, and Topsham.²⁸ Control over the valuable woad trade was also strenuously enforced; the city made merchants bring all shipments of woad only to Exeter for sale, under the pretext that this valuable dyestuff had to be examined by the city's woad assayers.²⁹ The city emphasized its rights over this lucrative trade in the wording of the headings of the merchandise sections of the customs accounts; by the 1310s they were usually titled "accounts of woad and other merchandise".

In 1290 the city managed to get both a jury from Wonford hundred (in which Topsham and Exeter were located) and a city jury to affirm that the entire ten-mile length of the estuary from the mouth of the Exe to Exe Bridge outside the city gates lay within Exeter's jurisdiction.³⁰ The earls' bailiffs did not always recognize the city's claims, however, as is evident from the tussle that took place shortly afterwards when several Exeter bailiffs tried to arrest a ship at Topsham for evading custom.³¹ But the city persevered and continued to punish those who challenged what it perceived to be its jurisdictional rights in the estuary. Even the leading citizens of Exeter

²⁴ PRO JUST 1/181, m. 42d; the raid was probably linked to the dispute with Sherborne abbey.

²⁵ PRO JUST 1/186, mm. 37d, 38; Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', p 63. For similar claims by Exeter that sent the city's own coroner to places within the estuary, see JUST 1/181, mm. 35, 37.

²⁶ PRO JUST 1/181, m. 36d; Misc. Roll 2, no. 52; DRO, ECA Misc. Roll 55, no. 1 (complaints of the Prior of St Nicholas).

²⁷ PRO JUST 1/181, m. 36d.

²⁸ For example, MCR Roll 1, mm. 1 (1264), 7 (1265), 1287/8, m. 14; 1288/9, m. 39; see also Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 7.

²⁹ MCR Roll 1, mm. 2 (1264), 9 (1286), 18d (1266).

³⁰ Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, pp 630-2; PRO SC 8/264/13160.

³¹ Below, p 67. See also Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', p 67 for the events surrounding this dispute, and MCR 1304/5, m. 27 for one of the countersuits by the earl.

could be subject to censure, as was Stephen de Smalecombe who dared to use the court of Topsham rather than that of Exeter to pursue an attachment against a shipmaster who owed him money.³²

By the middle of the fourteenth century, this turbulence had calmed considerably, and the relationship between the earls and the city remained relatively stable throughout the later middle ages.³³ The earls' efforts on behalf of Topsham had effectively reduced Exeter's near monopoly on the sale of maritime cargoes, but Exeter's commercial well-being was not really threatened. Few Topsham traders ever successfully competed with Exeter merchants in the port trade. Perhaps more damaging was the earls' active promotion of transport services and storage facilities at Topsham; its tenants were well-placed to monopolize the carriage of goods by land to Exeter or elsewhere in the hinterland.³⁴ The earls also profited from the tolls of keelage and cranage at Topsham, as well as their one-third share of wine custom. But keelage (a 2d charge on every vessel that anchored there) rarely amounted to much and was, moreover, not one of the earls' recent innovations as it had been associated with their share of wine custom since at least 1225.³⁵ Cranage (charged to unload heavy goods with the help of the crane installed by Earl Hugh) brought in more substantial sums, ranging annually from £5 to almost £10.³⁶ Yet these encroachments on the trading revenues of Exeter were probably less costly to the city than either the loss of the valuable Exe fisheries or the earls' assertion of their rights of lordship in the city's western suburb of Exe Island.³⁷

Although the citizens' grievances against the earls tended to focus above all upon the loss of trade and shipping occasioned by the construction of weirs on the Exe, Exeter never lost its right to collect town customs on all goods unloaded at estuarine ports, keeping for itself not only a two-thirds share of the wine custom, but also the whole custom on other merchandise. The city also maintained its

³² MCR 1310/11, mm. 27, 28.

³³ One exception was the construction of two more weirs by Earl Edward Courtenay in the 1390s which occasioned renewed complaints about flooding and the loss of the fish trade (PRO CP 40/509, m. 150d; BL Additional Charter 64322; Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, pp 649–51, 657; Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', pp 70–1).

³⁴ For Earl Hugh's attempts to monopolize the land transport of maritime cargoes, see Misc. Roll 3, no. 5 and Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', p 69. For storage at Topsham, see MCR 1332/3, m. 38d; PRO E 101/78/18; Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, pp 633–4. There were very few carters in Exeter, suggesting that these services were more often provided by men of other villages or towns.

³⁵ Above, n. 3. By the mid-fifteenth century, the earl was also collecting bushelage and plankage while cranage brought in almost £6 and keelage 6s (DRO W1258M/G6/50).

³⁶ PRO C 135/260/15; BL Additional Charters 64318–19. In 1431/2 (DRO, CR 501) the Courtenays spent over 25s to repair the *machine* at Topsham; see also DRO W1258M/G6/50 for similar expenditures in 1452/3.

³⁷ After the construction of the weirs, the Topsham fisheries were more valuable than the earl's other fisheries (PRO SC 6/827/39; PRO C 135/260/15; Ugawa, 'Economic Development', pp 1962: 652–3; Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe and the Earldom', p 66).

jurisdictional rights to distraint and attachment throughout the estuary if there was a suspicion of customs evasion.³⁸ The Exeter authorities, moreover, made the earls' promotion of the port facilities at Topsham work to their advantage. By the end of the thirteenth century, Exeter officials were insisting that all ships unload their saleable cargoes only at Topsham, and in the following two centuries, they collected considerable monies from those seeking licences to do so at other estuarine ports.³⁹ The jurisdictional unity of the estuarine ports was also reflected in the interchangeable nature of such terms as the "port of Exeter", "port of Topsham" or "port of Exmouth" in the local and national port customs accounts.⁴⁰ As early as 1250 one description of the port noted "there is at Topsham a sea port called Exmouth because the River Exe empties itself into the sea, where the ships and boats come".⁴¹ Exeter's jurisdictional control of the estuary was evident too in the royal writs for naval levies or customs collection which, even if directed to the bailiffs of the port of Topsham or Exmouth, were put into effect by Exeter officials, not the bailiffs of Topsham or the other estuarine manors.⁴²

CUSTOMS COLLECTION, RATES, AND EXEMPTIONS

In the early fourteenth century, port customs accounted for roughly 8–9 per cent of the total annual revenues of Exeter.⁴³ The amounts collected each year could vary widely, however, because of fluctuations in trade and because of the exemptions from customs enjoyed by many importers. Wine custom in this period normally averaged annually about £3–5 after the earl of Devon received his one-third share. Custom from other merchandise was generally higher, averaging about £6 each year, but could fall to under £4 (in 1317/18) or rise to almost £12 (in 1320/1). The sums collected for wine custom were often enrolled on the accounts themselves (because of the care taken to assure the earl he was getting his fair share), but totals for the mercantile portions of the account were never listed in this period

³⁸ MCR 1290/1, m. 15; 1302/3, m. 3d; 1334/5, m. 37d; 1409/10, m.3; DRO, ECA PCA 1398/9.

³⁹ The licences were usually enrolled in the MCR (below pp 47–69); many have been collected and noted in DRO, ECA Transcript 108. *Colepole* (probably in Exmouth; see below, n. 49) was the landing place most often mentioned; others were *Checkstone*, *Pratteshide* (both in Exmouth; see above, n. 20), *La Chyve* (a small manor in Topsham), and Powderham (sometimes at a place termed *Powderhampole*). In the later middle ages, *le Turffe* (near the border of Exminster and Powderham parishes), *Shilpole* and *Crowdounesworth* (neither identified) were also noted.

⁴⁰ Thus, the appearance of these terms in the headings to the customs accounts (below, p 15 especially) and in the formulas used to record ship moorings (below, p 33) were not meant to be taken literally as the exact place where ships docked.

⁴¹ Rowe, *History of Plympton Erle*, p 12.

⁴² Jackson, 'Medieval Exeter, the Exe, and the Earldom,' p 62.

⁴³ Figure derived by comparing customs totals with total receipts minus arrears in the seven surviving city accounts before 1349, as listed in *The Receivers' Accounts of the City of Exeter, 1304–1353*, ed. Margery M. Rowe and John M. Draisey, DCRS, new series, xxxii (1989), p xxiv.

(although they can be calculated by adding up the individual customs noted after each entry).⁴⁴ The monies actually collected by the city were enrolled in the annual city accounts (called the receivers' accounts) which, unfortunately, survive for only two of the years covered by the accounts printed here. Comparisons of the sums noted in the port customs accounts and those recorded in the receivers' accounts show that the payments actually received by the city were often less than those anticipated in the port customs accounts.⁴⁵ Such disparities occurred frequently, but only occasionally amounted to more than five shillings.⁴⁶

Not much is known about the procedures involved in the collection of local customs at the port of Exeter. It is clear, however, that importers were obliged to unload their saleable cargoes only at Topsham and to pay custom before unloading or selling their goods. Those caught doing otherwise were subject to fines or forfeiture of their cargoes.⁴⁷ Cargoes could be unloaded elsewhere in the estuary only if the shipmaster or importers purchased a licence from the Exeter authorities.⁴⁸ *Colepole* (probably located near present-day Exmouth where the estuarine channel is deeper than at Topsham) was the most frequently named alternative landing place in the estuary.⁴⁹ *Pratteshide*, site of the Exeter-owned ferry, was another popular landing place, although it was more often mentioned in connection with importers seeking to avoid city custom than those paying for licences to unload there. Among those whom the Exeter authorities successfully prosecuted for landing goods illegally at *Pratteshide* was David Uppehulle, who claimed he was free of custom because he unloaded his wares at land he owned there.⁵⁰ Actual concealment of imports to avoid custom seems to have been uncommon and involved

⁴⁴ For customs totals for wine, see above, n. 9.

⁴⁵ The sums collected for wine custom in 1304-6 (CRA 1304/5 and 1305/6, printed in *Receivers' Accounts*), were about 14s less each than the totals noted in the customs accounts (below, pp 99, 113).

⁴⁶ CRA passim; Henri Touchard, 'Les douanes municipales d'Exeter (Devon). Publication des rôles de 1381 à 1433,' Thèse complémentaire pour le Doctorat ès Lettres, Université de Paris, 1967, pp lvii, 365-66.

⁴⁷ For example, below, pp 42, 49, 67; and MCR 1304/5, m. 3d; 1306/7, m. 17; 1334/5, m. 37d; 1390/1, m. 42d; 1429/30, m. 27d; PCA 1339/40 (merc. account); Hooker, *City of Excester*, pp 939-40. One of the clearest statements of these rights is in MCR 1410/11, m. 3d.

⁴⁸ For example, below, pp 47-8, 51, 113.

⁴⁹ The exact location of *Colepole* cannot be determined, but court cases suggest it was located in East Budleigh hundred (PRO JUST 1/186, m. 37d) between Lymptone and Littleham parish and lay "three leagues" by water from Topsham (PRO E 101/555/14, m. 1). The reference to a ship from *Colepole* mastered by a man from Kenton, along with a taxpayer with the surname *de Colepole* in Kenton might suggest, however, that the place was located on the other side of the estuary near Kenton (MCR 1291/2, m. 23d; *The Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, ed. Audrey M. Erskine, DCRS, new series, xiv (1969), p 123). It was especially favoured as a landing place for heavily-laden wine ships (below, pp 47, 49; and MCR 1351/2, mm. 13, 15; 1360/1, mm. 2d, 15d; 1365/6, m. 6d; 1368/9, m. 7d; CRA 1341/2, 1349/50, 1350/1). For other landing places, see above, n. 39.

⁵⁰ MCR 1289/90, mm. 12, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 25, 30, 32. See also MCR 1301/2, m. 9, and Weddell, 'The Excavation of Medieval and Later Houses,' pp 120, 124.

relatively small cargoes, such as one or two tuns of wine owned by a shipmaster.⁵¹

Shipmasters and importers probably made their own customs declaration rather than waiting for a municipal representative to inspect and then custom the cargo.⁵² The customing process itself seems to have taken place in Exeter, rather than in Topsham where the vessels unloaded. Annotations in the accounts regarding the actual receipt of custom never mention Topsham while those regarding the placement of custom monies in the town pyx (cash box) kept in the Guildhall indicate that at least this part of the customing process transpired at Exeter. The assessment of customs for one large wine ship in the presence of the mayor and bailiffs (i.e., the stewards) also points to the process occurring at a session of the mayor's court.⁵³ The involvement of important civic officials (such as the mayor, stewards, receiver, or city clerk) in the collection of customs or the purchase of licences to unload elsewhere, also implies that customing took place at Exeter, not at Topsham.⁵⁴ The absence of references in the annual receivers' rolls to the expenses these officials may have incurred at Topsham or other estuarine ports provides further (albeit silent) evidence that the customing process occurred at Exeter.⁵⁵

Importers well known to the Exeter authorities were allowed to delay paying custom if they found suitable pledges to guarantee future payment. Some of these importers paid their custom in instalments, as indicated by the later annotations made in the accounts regarding the receipt of sums owed. Most seem to have paid within one or two weeks, the period normally stated in those entries specifying due dates.⁵⁶ Pledges came largely from the city's ruling elite (many of whom imported cargoes on the same ship as the merchants who required sureties), although other Exeter merchants, officials, and even some foreign merchants also filled this role.⁵⁷ Non-Exeter pledges were rare, however, and those foreigners who served in this capacity, such as John Moset and Bartholomew Bygge of Amiens, were probably accepted as pledges because they had joined the freedom or frequently did business in Exeter.⁵⁸ Trustworthy local pledges

⁵¹ For example, MCR 1306/7, m. 17; Touchard, 'Les douanes municipales', pp xvi-xvii. For other reasons why customs evasion was probably not rampant, see below, pp 40-3.

⁵² For a similar process in Ipswich, see *The Black Book of the Admiralty*, ed. Travers Twiss, 4 vols., London, 1871-6, ii, p 207.

⁵³ Below, p 69.

⁵⁴ See below, Appendix 2, for a more extended discussion of the involvement of these officials in custom collection.

⁵⁵ CRA passim. In contrast, small expenses incurred for travel to estuarine ports for other purposes were often noted in the CRA.

⁵⁶ Below, pp 120-1, 130, 138, 166.

⁵⁷ Compare the names of pledges with those of the ruling elite (listed in Appendix 2, below), and with the names of other importers.

⁵⁸ Below, pp 107, 112, 120, 127-8; MCR 1305/6, m. 16d. Moset paid £6 13s 4d to enter the freedom in 1311, the highest entry fee on record (*Exeter Freeman 1266-1967*, ed. Margery M. Rowe and Andrew M. Jackson, DCRS, extra series i (1973), p 11).

were favoured because of the difficulties of ensuring prompt payment of customs; pledges who resided in Exeter could more easily be prosecuted in the local courts if they or the merchants they pledged did not pay in full. The difficulties involved in collecting customs can be seen in the various strategies pursued by the authorities to ensure timely payments.⁵⁹ In the thirteenth century, civic officials occasionally held back part of the cargo as security until importers or their pledges paid the sums owed.⁶⁰ Not all pledges fulfilled their obligations, however, as indicated by the disparities between the custom assessed in the port accounts and the amounts finally noted in the annual receivers' accounts. In the early fifteenth century, the city tried to tighten the pledging process by forbidding receivers to take sureties for custom unless the receivers were themselves willing to satisfy the city for unpaid balances.⁶¹

Customs at Exeter were assessed according to the type and amounts of goods unloaded, but not on their value. Those responsible for assessing custom probably consulted a table of rates such as the partial one that survives in the city's *custumal* (compiled around 1240).⁶² Such tables did not, however, cover all contingencies. The complex weights and measures of medieval commerce caused considerable problems; the struggle of customs assessors to deal with this problem can be seen in annotations in the accounts regarding the equivalents of such measures as the bale, hundredweight (abbreviated as C in the text), charge, and seam.⁶³ Clerical negligence, rounding, and errors in addition generated further inconsistencies in the rates charged. After assessment of their cargoes, importers generally rendered their customs payments in cash, although some remnant of payments in kind was visible in two entries of 1295/6 when the bailiff claimed one hundredweight of the herring cargo.⁶⁴ This provision echoed clauses in the city's *custumal* which dictated that those landing red herring at the port pay one hundredweight of the cargo to the bailiff and one thousandweight to the castle on top of the other customs owed.⁶⁵ No trace of the payment to the castle can be found, however, and the customary payment to the city bailiff was never mentioned again after 1295/6.

Except for the fragment extant in the city's *custumal*, no table of Exeter's local customs rates survives for the middle ages. A list of imports subject to such tolls and the rates charged for each can be compiled, however, from the custom sums noted in the local port

⁵⁹ Both the receiver and sureties waiting to be repaid by the merchants they pledged were sometimes forced to sue for payments in the borough courts (Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 5, esp. table 5.1).

⁶⁰ Below, p 52.

⁶¹ Misc. Roll 2, no. 22.

⁶² *The Anglo-Norman Custumal of Exeter*, ed. J. W. Schopp, Oxford, 1925, p 24. The *custumal's* list notes only six commodities and their rates before being cut off.

⁶³ See Appendix 3, below.

⁶⁴ Below, p 50.

⁶⁵ *Anglo-Norman Custumal*, p 37; note also the provision (p 31) that sellers of eels from boats owed toll in the form of one out of every seven sticks sold.

accounts. Thus wine was assessed at 4d per tun, woad (a blue dye) at 1s per tun, iron at ½d per quintal, garlic at 1d per seam, herring at 1d per thousandweight and 4d per last, and saffron at 1d per pound.⁶⁶ Other goods liable to custom included almonds, anise, archil, canvas, cumin, figs, iron spurs, linen cloth, onions, oxen, pepper, and yarn. Goods that appear not to have been subject to local port customs in this period include all grains, potash (a mordant), weld (a yellow dye) and, surprisingly, salt. By the late fourteenth century, however, the scope of items customised at Exeter had grown to include at least grains and salt.⁶⁷ Perhaps Exeter authorities reacted to the declining level of trade in the late fourteenth century (occasioned by the Anglo-French conflicts of the Hundred Years War and the demographic devastations of the Black Death) by widening the purview of customable wares in order to continue collecting similar sums from port customs.⁶⁸

The actual custom rates assessed at Exeter were relatively light compared to both the national rates and the local customs at ports such as Southampton and Yarmouth.⁶⁹ The 4d charged on each tun of wine at Exeter was considerably lower than the 2s per tun the royal customs collectors charged aliens from 1303 or the 2–3s per tun subsidy assessed later in the century on all overseas importers.⁷⁰ Southampton charged 8d for each tun of wine coming from overseas, while each tun arriving via coastal craft owed 4d, and tuns re-exported by coast paid another 4d.⁷¹ In general, the custom rates at Southampton were greater than at Exeter because they charged slightly higher rates on some goods, covered more commodities, applied an *ad valorem* tax on several items, and were assessed on exports as well as imports. In only a few instances were the Exeter customs heavier. The levy on the expensive dye woad was particularly high (1s per tun) at Exeter compared to the 6d per tun at Southampton and most other ports; iron at

⁶⁶ The wine and woad rates are obvious from the many tolls importers of these goods paid. For iron, see below, pp 134, 143; for garlic, pp 107, 178; for herring, pp 92, 179–80; for saffron, p 144.

⁶⁷ Salt and wheat were assessed at ½d per quarter from at least the 1360s on (PCA passim); potash may also have been customised (see PCA 1357/8 under the *St Marie cok* of Exmouth) but the decline of potash and weld imports offer too few examples to determine whether these goods were then being customised. See also Touchard, 'Les douanes municipales', pp xix–xxvii for the rates charged on other goods.

⁶⁸ For the port trade decline, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, table 3.2, and chapter 6. The sums collected from customs in the late fourteenth century, however, were similar to what they had been in the early part of the century (CRA passim). For the further enlargement of the scope of customs at Exeter in the sixteenth century, see Hooker, *City of Excester*, pp 554–66, 662–3. It is also possible rates on some goods may have been raised; for such an occurrence at Southampton, see Henry S. Cobb, 'Introduction', *The Local Port Book of Southampton 1439–40*, Southampton Records Series, v (1961), p xvii.

⁶⁹ Cobb, 'Introduction', *Local Port Book of Southampton*, pp xvi–xvii; see also below, n. 73.

⁷⁰ N.S.B. Gras, *The Early English Customs System*, Cambridge Mass., 1918, pp 83–4.

⁷¹ *The Oak Book of Southampton*, ii, ed. P. Studer, Southampton Record Society, xi (1911), pp 2–3, and 4–27 for other goods; the rates date from the early fourteenth century.

Exeter ($\frac{1}{2}$ d per quintal) was also assessed more heavily than at Southampton ($\frac{1}{2}$ d per quintal). Rates at Exeter were also more substantial than at the smaller Devon port of Dartmouth where each wine tun paid only 2d and each thousandweight of herring owed but $\frac{1}{2}$ d compared to the 1d charged at Exeter.⁷² Although other ports also occasionally charged lower rates than Exeter for important commodities like wine, the scope of their customs was usually wider in that they also collected export duties, which Exeter did not.⁷³

Aside from the regular local customs, the city also sometimes charged pavage and murage tolls at the port. The privilege of exacting these tolls was granted by the king, and their profits were to be applied to the repair or construction of city pavements and walls. Although Exeter enjoyed murage grants almost continuously from 1224 to 1310, and again from 1338 to 1377, collection efforts concentrated on the traffic coming through the city gates; murage was assessed at the port in fewer than twenty years between 1338 and 1374.⁷⁴ Pavage was exacted at the port even less frequently, in 1320–22 and 1329–32.⁷⁵ When charged, however, murage and pavage tolls could be particularly profitable because they touched more commodities than local customs and usually included a 3d tax on each ship liable to toll.⁷⁶ In the merchandise account of 1320/1, for example, the city collected almost £14 from pavage but only some £11 7s from local customs.⁷⁷ Like local customs, however, pavage and

⁷² *Rotuli Hundredorum temporibus Henrici III et Edwardi I in Turri Londinensi et in Curia Receptae Scaccarii Westmonasterii Asservati*, 2 vols, ed. W. Illingworth, London, Record Commission, 1812–18, i, p 90.

⁷³ Sandwich's customs were very similar to those of Exeter: 4d per tun of wine or woad, $\frac{1}{2}$ d per quintal of iron, 4d per hundredweight of canvas, and 4d per last of herring (Gras, *Early English Customs*, pp 167–72). Winchelsea's customs were particularly low: only 1d per tun of wine, 2d per bale of almonds, and $\frac{1}{2}$ d per last of herring (*ibid.*, pp 177–91, mistakenly labelled as from Sandwich by Gras). Only wine owed local customs at Chester in the fourteenth century although both incoming and outgoing tuns owed 4d each (*Chester Customs Accounts, 1301–1566*, ed. K. P. Wilson, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, cxi (1969), pp 11–12, 143). Rates at Ipswich were also generally lower than at Exeter but the export tolls charged there, along with special dues that varied according to the size of the ship, found no parallel at Exeter (*Black Book of the Admiralty*, ii, pp 185–97).

⁷⁴ Most Exeter murage grants are listed in Hilary Turner, *Town Defences in England and Wales*, London, 1971, pp 194–5, 238–40. For years when murage was collected at the port, see PCA 1338/9–1342/3, 1360/1, 1361/2, 1368/9–1372/3; DRO, ECA Misc. Roll 6, mm. 22 (1341–2), 16 (1363–5), 14 (1372/3); CRA 1372/3, 1373/4.

⁷⁵ CPR 1317–21, p 526; CPR 1327–30, p 369; PCA Roll 1, mm. 10 (1322/3 wine account), 11 (1320/1 merc. account, printed below, pp 199–200); PCA 1329/30, 1331/2 (no account survives for 1330/1). Pavage was part of the grant made for five years in 1360 (CPR 1358–61, p 357) but only murage was collected at the port.

⁷⁶ For a list of the tolls assessed for pavage in 1329/30, see Hooker, *City of Exeter*, pp 540–3; goods such as grain, potash and weld were charged pavage but were not liable to local town customs.

⁷⁷ PCA Roll 1, m. 11 (below, pp 190–201). Murage tolls at the port brought in £6 in 1341/2 (Misc. Roll 6, m. 22) and only £1 1s–£2 8s in the 1360s and 1370s (Misc. Roll 6, mm. 14, 16; CRA 1370/1–1373/4) when the port trade was going through a period of decline and was visited by fewer foreign merchants, who bore the brunt of pavage and murage tolls.

murage were both subject to exemptions so the amounts collected could vary widely from year to year.

Importers could escape paying town customs in basically four ways. Those who imported goods for their own use were normally not liable to customs since they did not intend to sell their imports.⁷⁸ Only a few importers fell into this category, however, and most were of gentry or clerical status. References to wine brought in "for drink" by the archdeacon of Wells, the treasurer of Exeter cathedral (Thomas de Henton), or the shipmaster Ralph le Sanger also probably allude to this privilege.⁷⁹ Many more importers avoided customs because none were due on the particular items they were importing; coal, grains, salt, and some dyestuffs were among the uncustomed imports at Exeter in this period. A third category of exemption was enjoyed by shipmasters and mariners who claimed portage: the right to freight some cargo free of charge in lieu of wages.⁸⁰ At Exeter, shipmasters were usually allowed to bring in two tuns of wine and mariners one tun custom-free by way of portage. Other goods imported in this fashion included alum, canvas, herring, iron, and especially garlic and onions. On occasion, mariners also seem to have sold their rights of portage to merchants freighting goods on their ship.⁸¹

The fourth and surest way to avoid customs was to enjoy complete exemption by virtue of one's status or residence in a privileged town. For example, those who belonged to the Exeter town freedom—a privileged organization that conferred specific political, legal, and economic rights on its members—were free of all customs in Exeter and elsewhere in England.⁸² Franchised residents of other exempt towns, such as the Cinque Ports, London, and Southampton, were also free of port customs, although if unknown to the Exeter authorities they had to come equipped with proof of their status. Some brought copies of charters showing their exemptions while others had to find pledges to back up their assertion or wait until their claim could be proved before having their customs respited.⁸³ Exeter, like other towns, also kept a list of towns whose citizens enjoyed customs

⁷⁸ Iron imported to repair the ship was also allowed in custom-free under the condition it not be sold (PCA 1336/7 wine account).

⁷⁹ Below, pp 131, 155, 165

⁸⁰ *Black Book of the Admiralty*, ii, p 305; F. R. Sanborn, *Origins of the Early English Maritime and Commercial Law*, New York, 1930, pp 72, 402. For the customs of the sea that allowed mariners such freightage (often called *mareage*) in lieu of wages, see *Black Book of the Admiralty*, i, pp 112-3, 122-5, 134-5, 138-43; ii, pp 191, 232-5 (although note the dispute about the interpretation of one of the relevant clauses in Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540*, Toronto, 1947, pp 171-6).

⁸¹ Below, p 92; see also *Black Book of the Admiralty*, ii, pp 234-5, 451.

⁸² For the freedom, see Rowe and Jackson, 'Introduction', *Exeter Freemen*.

⁸³ These claims were often registered in the margins of the port customs accounts (for example, below, pp 60, 76, 161). For importers who showed charters or other documents backing up their claims, see MCR 1378/9, m. 3d; 1390/1, rider by m. 18; for importers whose custom was respited after some time had elapsed to prove their claims, see CRA 1396/7, 1410/11; for an importer (from Winchelsea) whose claim was backed by local pledges, see MCR 1296/7, m. 19d.

exemptions, although the list was by no means complete since it omitted many port towns outside Devon.⁸⁴ The town's preoccupation with custom status is visible in the many annotations made in the accounts regarding the free or customed status of individual merchants and in the disputes that arose when importers claimed exemptions the city hesitated to recognize.⁸⁵ The same preoccupation with custom liability is reflected in the unusually careful listing of each importer's name and cargo in the Exeter accounts.

SHIPS AND MARINERS

The accounts printed here record the entry of 641 ships, almost half of which had home ports in Devon (see Table 1). Not surprisingly, the single largest contingent of ships (22 per cent) was associated with ports in the Exe estuary. The medieval agricultural region of east Devon (which stretched from the Somerset border to the Teign estuary),⁸⁶ led by the many vessels from Teignmouth, came next, followed by contributions from south Devon, especially the port of Dartmouth. By the second half of the fourteenth century, this proportion had changed, largely because of the Hundred Years War. A disastrous French raid at Teignmouth in 1340 (from which the port only slowly recovered) caused ship contributions from east Devon to decline to about 8 per cent. In contrast, south Devon ships at Exeter increased because of royal patronage bestowed on Dartmouth and Plymouth during the War. Owned by the newly established duchy of Cornwall, these two ports and their shipping stock expanded greatly during the later middle ages, as did their port facilities, recruitment of mariners, borough privileges, and trade.⁸⁷ This south Devon expansion, however, had a more muted effect on the carrying trade of ships from the Exe estuary which declined only slightly in the second half of the century.

About one quarter of the ships at Exeter in this period were attached to home ports elsewhere in England, while another one quarter originated in continental or Channel Island locations. Dorset

⁸⁴ *Anglo-Norman Customal*, pp 24-6 includes a fragment of a list that also served as the basis of the copy in DRO, ECA Book 51, ff 223-4 (Hooker's *Commonplace Book*) although the latter, like the list in Hooker, *Citie of Excester*, pp 302-7, has some later additions. The medieval portion of the list names about 61 places, 80% of which are in Devon and only 9 of which are ports (including the Cinque Ports which are counted as one place); this distribution reflects the overland emphasis of Exeter's medieval trade.

⁸⁵ Note the disputes about Taunton importers (below, pp 38-9), the custom status of Newton Abbot and Topsham importers (below, p 38), and other claims questioned by the Exeter authorities (below, pp 60, 76).

⁸⁶ The regions noted here are the medieval agricultural regions (for a map, see Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Port Towns of Fourteenth-Century Devon', *The New Maritime History of Devon*, i, ed. Michael Duffy et al., London, 1992, p 65), not the modern administrative regions.

⁸⁷ Kowaleski, 'Port Towns,' pp 62-72. In PCA 1350-99, south Devon ships comprised almost 36% of vessels visiting Exeter while about 21% were associated with ports in the Exe estuary; see also Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, table 6.3.

TABLE 1: HOME PORTS OF SHIPS AT EXETER, 1266-1321

| Home Port | No. of Ship Arrivals | Area Total | % of Total |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|
| EAST DEVON | | 119 | 18.6 |
| Sidmouth | 27 | | |
| Ottermouth | 9 | | |
| Dawlish | 1 | | |
| Teignmouth | 82 | | |
| EXE ESTUARY ¹ | | 142 | 22.1 |
| SOUTH DEVON | | 48 | 7.5 |
| Dartmouth | 35 | | |
| Totnes | 2 | | |
| Plymouth | 8 | | |
| Others | 3 | | |
| NORTH DEVON | | 2 | .3 |
| CORNWALL | | 7 | 1.1 |
| DORSET | | 37 | 5.8 |
| Lyme | 15 | | |
| Poole | 10 | | |
| Weymouth | 9 | | |
| Others | 3 | | |
| HAMPSHIRE | | 53 | 8.3 |
| Hamble and Hook | 22 | | |
| Lymington | 11 | | |
| Southampton | 7 | | |
| Others | 13 | | |
| ENGLAND | | 56 | 8.7 |
| Yarmouth | 21 | | |
| Winchelsea | 5 | | |
| Others | 30 | | |
| CHANNEL ISLANDS | | 37 | 5.8 |
| PICARDY & ARTOIS ² | | 47 | 7.3 |
| NORMANDY | | 16 | 2.5 |
| BRITTANY | | 33 | 5.1 |
| SOUTH FRANCE | | 10 | 1.6 |
| SPAIN | | 3 | .5 |
| UNIDENTIFIED | | 31 | 4.8 |
| TOTAL | | 641 | 100.0 |

Source and Notes: PCA 1266-1320/1. The identified ships include twenty whose home ports, while not stated in the accounts, could be identified from other information given in the entries; 2 of these ships were from Teignmouth, 6 from Exmouth, 1 from Weymouth, 5 from Le Vivier (Brittany), and 6 from the Channel Islands.

¹The jurisdictional unity of the Exe estuary meant that scribes did not carefully distinguish the actual home ports of estuarine ships.

²Includes one ship from Sluis in Flanders.

and Hampshire ships were especially frequent visitors, as were Yarmouth herring ships. Most of these vessels engaged in coastal trade between Exeter and other English ports, either transshipping foreign goods from larger ports like Southampton, or carrying local products from ports in southern and eastern England.⁸⁸ Some also sailed on overseas routes, with Bordeaux (for wine) or northern France being favourite destinations. Foreign ships at Exeter came largely from Picardy and Artois, followed by the Channel Islands, Brittany, and Normandy. Again, by the second half of the fourteenth century, this pattern had changed. The Hundred Years War greatly affected the distribution of English and continental vessels sailing to the port; ships from areas at war with England (Artois, Picardy, and Normandy) rarely appeared at Exeter while vessels from regions allied with England (Brittany and the Channel Islands), almost doubled in importance.⁸⁹ Similarly, the growth of the south Devon carrying trade cut into the business of carriers from other English ports, reducing their presence at Exeter from 24 per cent to less than 9 per cent in the second half of the fourteenth century. Vessels from Cornwall were the only English ships to appear at Exeter in greater numbers in the later middle ages, an increase due in large part to the growth of the south-western fishing trade.⁹⁰

Roughly 302 different ships can be distinguished in the total of 641 listed in the customs accounts. Differentiating them is difficult because of scribal idiosyncracies. For example, ships called *Goodyear* appear under English versions (such as *Godyer*) or French versions (such as *Boman*), while ships named *Jonete* occur under no less than thirteen different spellings (some of which may also have meant *Jouette*). The *Margaret* of Exmouth was sometimes called the *Langbord*, perhaps to distinguish it from at least two other Exmouth ships also named *Margaret*. Scribal use of the definite article varied greatly as well; *la* was generally attached to female names and *le* to male names, but at times scribes appended either indiscriminately.⁹¹ The identification of home ports could also be lax in that ships from smaller ports were sometimes listed under their head ports. The *Lyon* of Lymington (Hampshire), for example, was almost certainly the same ship as the *Lion* of Southampton since both were mastered by the same man.⁹² This tendency to conflate smaller ports under their jurisdic-

⁸⁸ For a longer discussion of coastal trade, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 6, esp. table 6.1.

⁸⁹ In PCA 1350–99, only 1.2% of the ships at Exeter were from Picardy, Artois and Normandy, while just over 11% were from Brittany and almost 11% from the Channel Islands; the percentage from Spain and southern France changed little.

⁹⁰ In PCA 1350–99, 3.9% of the ships were from Cornwall, 1% from Dorset, 1.5% from Hampshire, and 2.9% from other English ports (*ibid.*, chapter 7, for the fish trade).

⁹¹ For example, both *la* and *le* were used with ships named *Bartholomew* and *Notre Dame* (see below, pp 63, 111, 161, 176). Of the 641 ships, 94 appeared with no definite article, 193 with *le*, and 354 with *la*.

⁹² Below, pp 158, 162. Other examples are the *Annoce* of Keyhaven and Lymington (below, pp 183–4, 186), and the *St Louis* of Abbeville and St Valéry (below, pp 87, 112).

dictional head port was especially common for ships from the Exe estuary; scribes often listed Exmouth as the home port of all estuarine vessels even though the ships may have been attached to Kenton, Topsham, Lympstone, or *Pratteshide*.⁹³

Ship names with religious connotations were especially numerous; those called after saints enjoyed particular favour. *Notre Dame* was the single most common appellation, appearing on about eighteen different ships. The popularity of some names may have resulted from local circumstances. The many Exe estuary ships called *Margaret* (or some version thereof) probably derived from Topsham's parish church dedication to St Margaret, while the popularity of French ships named *St Louis* perhaps reflected devotion to the sainted King Louis IX (1226–70).⁹⁴ There were also at least twenty different ships with some version of the name *Nicholas*, the patron saint of mariners. Names descriptive of the ships themselves were also prevalent, such as *Long Batel*, *Langbord*, *Petite Nicholas*, *Vertbois* (green wood) and *Red Cog* (cogs were a type of ship). Others were simply known by the names of their owners, such as the *Rith'vele* (probably owned by the Rithiveles, a wealthy Exeter family).

The accounts reveal little information about the size and type of the ships since this information was of little relevance to the customing process. The amount of wine carried by ships, however, offers a rough idea of ship size since the wine tun (of 252 gallons) was generally employed as the basis of measurement for ship capacity in medieval England. At least twenty ships exceeded 100 tuns, including the *St Mary cog* of Teignmouth which arrived with a cargo of 151 tuns, the *Goodyear* of Exmouth and *St Cruz* of Portsmouth which carried almost 140 tuns, and the *Alne* of Teignmouth, *St Mary cog* of Exmouth, and the *Notre Dame* of Exmouth which unloaded about 120 tuns.⁹⁵ The *Barthelemeu* of Lyme, with a cargo of over 1000 quarters of grain, must also have been fairly substantial. These large ships, however, were exceptional; most medieval trading ships were considerably smaller, averaging 50 tuns or less.⁹⁶ Few of the foreign ships specializing in lighter cargoes (such as dyestuffs, garlic, onions and canvas) and few of the coastal vessels transporting overseas goods from the bigger English ports to Exeter were as large as the ships that plied the wine route between Bordeaux and England. Many of these larger ships (about 50 of the 302) were cogs, the cog being a bulk carrier whose length-to-beam ratio (3:1) caused it to be termed a "round"

⁹³ For example, the *Jonete* of Exmouth and *Jonete* of Lympstone were both mastered by William Cok while the *Margaret* of Exmouth and *Margaret* of Topsham were both mastered by David le Rede (below, pp 74, 79, 98, 106).

⁹⁴ All five ships named *St Louis* came from France. The popularity of the ship name *Margaret* in the Exe estuary may also be related to the chapel of St Margaret established at Exmouth sometime before 1374, while the popularity of the ship name *Sauve* might refer to the earlier St Saviour's chapel there (Weddell, 'The Excavation of Medieval and Later Houses', p 115).

⁹⁵ Below, pp 53–4, 56, 123, 133, 188.

⁹⁶ For the capacity of fourteenth-century Devon ships, see also Kowaleski, 'Port Towns', table 7.4; and Ian Friel, 'Devon Shipping from the Middle Ages to c1600', *The New Maritime History of Devon*, pp 73–8, esp. table 8.2.

ship by some. Several other ships from Brittany and Guernsey were labeled a *holhop*, perhaps a reference to a sloop.⁹⁷ Aside from these appellations and one reference to a barge (an oared sailing vessel, usually smaller than a cog), the accounts mostly used some variation of the words ship (*nau, nav', nawe, nef, neof*) or boat (*batel, bot*) to describe the vessels.⁹⁸

Slightly more information about the crews that manned these vessels can be gleaned from references to portage, a customs exemption claimed by mariners who were carrying their own merchandise on board ship in lieu of part or all of their wages. Some associated with portage were shipmasters and a few were merchants (who paid mariners for the privilege of using the space on the ship they were allotted), but most were common seamen.⁹⁹ Many remained nameless, referred to as "the crew", "the mariners", or alluded to only in a general fashion in lists of goods brought in under portage. But many were named and appear several times in the accounts. They include Richard Edmund, who declared one tun of wine for portage on the *Goodyear* of Exmouth on two different voyages, and also served as one of 28 mariners hired to accompany the *St Mary cog* of Exmouth on naval service to Scotland. Roger Aleys, Benedict Edmund, Richard Edward, Richard Gille, Peter Godlok, Walter Hardy, and Walter de Ilfridecomb were other mariners who claimed portage at Exeter and also served in the royal navy with Richard Edmund.¹⁰⁰ Foreign mariners appeared in the accounts claiming portage as well, although the goods they brought were more likely to be onions or garlic than wine. Mariners also seem to have exercised this option more often on some ships than others. Sidmouth ships, for example, especially the *St Giles cog* (usually mastered and probably owned by Ralph le Sanger), often had large numbers of mariners choosing this method of wage remuneration.¹⁰¹ Portage claims slowed to a trickle, however, in the second half of the century, an indication that mariners could no longer afford this option.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Other variations which appear in the accounts are *halop, hollow, hollok, and holoc*; see the Index for references to all occurrences. The words seem to be related to the Dutch sloop from which the French *chaloupe* and English *shallop* also derived; see *Nouveau glossaire nautique d'Augustin Tal*, vol 7, Paris, 1992, p 858. The last two versions may also refer to a hulk, a ship which rivalled the cog in carrying capacity by the late fourteenth century, although the spelling variations argue against this.

⁹⁸ For the barge, see below, p 178. The *Buzard* from Normandy (below, p 48) may also have been an allusion to the *buss* or *buza*, a cargo ship with less capacity than a cog; for descriptions of all these vessels and a discussion of how they changed over the course of the middle ages, see Richard Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy 600-1600*, London, 1980, esp. pp 136-44, 163-72, 204-8.

⁹⁹ For this custom in maritime law, see above, notes 80 and 81.

¹⁰⁰ For their portage at Exeter, see the references under their names in the Index. For their naval service in 1310, see DRO, ECA ED/M/214 (printed in Michael Jones, 'Two Exeter Ship Agreements of 1303 and 1310', *Mariner's Mirror*, liii (1967), p 317).

¹⁰¹ Below, pp 96, 102-3, 131-2, 189.

¹⁰² For the much higher prices of wine and freightage in the later middle ages (largely a result of warfare in wine-producing regions, war-time piracy, and privateering on the high seas), see Margery James, *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade*, Oxford, 1971, pp 37, 64-9, 151-5.

The most important mariners were shipmasters; responsible for freighting the ship, directing the mariners, and sailing the ship and its cargo into port safely, they received more recognition and profit than common seamen. Many shipmasters regularly imported goods on ships they mastered, although their cargoes were never as large as those of the bigger merchants.¹⁰³ But within their own coastal communities, shipmasters could be relatively prominent. Many appeared in the lay subsidies (which taxed only the wealthier section of the population) paying taxes as high as 5s.¹⁰⁴ Some invested in ships as well as mercantile ventures; Peter Godlok, who mastered at least five different Exmouth ships, and Richard le Wayte of Topsham, who mastered at least three ships, were also part owners of two of these ships, the *St Mary cog* and the *Sauweye* of Exmouth.¹⁰⁵ The occupation also had a strong familial cast; fathers, sons, and brothers often became shipmasters, probably receiving their training on voyages captained by close relatives. Examples include the Edmunds of Topsham (Walter, Richard, and Robert), the Doos of Dartmouth (Gilbert and Hugh), the Bolts (Giles, Julian, and Roger) and Payns (Roger, Thomas, and William), both of Teignmouth, and the Sangers of Sidmouth (Ralph, Roger, and William).¹⁰⁶

Common mariners, such as Benedict Edmund of Topsham, also hailed from these families. The attraction of life at sea for residents of coastal settlements like Benedict and his shipmaster kinsmen can be seen in such mariners' surnames as de Gernemuth (Yarmouth), Hardenesse (in Dartmouth), de Slapton, de Torre (in Torbay), de Waymuth (Weymouth), and de Wynchelse (Winchelsea). The sea also occasionally lured men from such land-locked areas as the Dartmoor manor of Ashburton, the home of Thomas Knollying, a villein who sought manumission from his lord so that he might more freely practice his *ars navalis*.¹⁰⁷ Employment opportunities for mariners were limited only by the number of ships available. Highly mobile because of the nature of their occupations, many mariners probably settled in ports far from their native homes; surname evidence suggests, for instance, that men from Winchelsea served on Dartmouth and

¹⁰³ In this period, their wine cargoes were rarely over 7 tuns. In 1381–91, they represented about 15% of all importers but were responsible for importing only 5% of the iron, 6% of the wine, 9% of the salt, but 31% of the fish (Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 6).

¹⁰⁴ The following shipmasters appeared in the 1332 lay subsidy; Richard Mugge of Teignmouth (5s); John Luerich of Dartmouth (4s); Richard Harvest of Kenton and Gilbert Whetepayn of Teignmouth (2s); John Luerich of Teignmouth (18d); John Avery of Topsham, Richard Gillot of Dartmouth, and Robert Stanbrigg of Topsham (12d); Adam Slegh of Powderham (10d); and Walter Parys of Topsham (8d); (*Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, pp 51, 56–57, 93, 111, 122).

¹⁰⁵ DRO ED/M/214.

¹⁰⁶ Paris Edmund was probably an alias for Walter Edmund (also called Walter Parys) rather than a fourth relative. William Sanger appears in these accounts as a common mariner but by 1326 he (and Hamelin Sanger) had become shipmasters (*CCR 1323–7*, p 609).

¹⁰⁷ *The Register of John de Grandisson, 1327–69*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 3 vols, London and Exeter, 1894–9, ii, p 1159.

Exmouth ships, men from Slapton and Spain worked aboard Teignmouth and Dartmouth ships, and a man from Ilfracombe in north Devon mastered an Exmouth ship.¹⁰⁸ Crew sizes for purely mercantile voyages were rarely recorded, but can sometimes be estimated from the number of mariners claiming portage on a particular voyage. The ten to twelve mariners aboard the *coc Cler* of Dartmouth (which freighted 96 tuns of wine) and the *St Gyles cog* of Sidmouth (116 tuns), for example, were probably close to the total number of mariners carried by these ships.¹⁰⁹ Cogs in particular did not demand much in way of skilled handling and were favoured for both their large capacity and relatively low labor costs.¹¹⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that cogs were particularly prominent on the wine routes between France and Exeter.

THE IMPORTERS

Importers' names, like those for ships, were often inconsistently recorded in the customs accounts. The translation of French and English names into Latin accounts, the varying languages and dialects spoken by shipmasters and importers, and the many different scribes and officials involved in the customing process all created difficulties. A surname like Cook can appear as *Coc*, *Cok*, *Cocus*, *Keu*, *Ku*, or *Qu* and the surname Skinner as *Peleter*, *Pellipar*, or *Skynnere*. Further problems arise from the use of aliases. Joel de Bradecrofte was probably the same person as Joel le Taverner, just as Kyde of Pratteshide may have been the same as Philip Kyde.¹¹¹ Identification of importers is also hindered because the place where they resided was only occasionally recorded by the scribes, largely to draw attention to the custom status of the importer or to distinguish importers with similar names.¹¹² Importers well known to the local authorities, notably Exeter inhabitants and those regularly doing business at the port, were almost never identified in terms of their place of residence. More positive identifications can be made, however, by standardizing surnames and matching references in other documents to clues offered in the accounts themselves (such as dates of activity, custom status, importing activities, occupations, partners, ships employed as carriers, and so on). A preliminary analysis of the importers along these lines allows us to distinguish about 1071 different importers among the 2439 names in the accounts of 1302-21; about 70 per cent (748 of the 1071) can be

¹⁰⁸ E.g. below, pp 58, 180.

¹⁰⁹ Below, pp 96, 105.

¹¹⁰ Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy*, pp 139, 148-9.

¹¹¹ For the identification of Joel de Bradecrofte as a taverner, see below, p 73. For Kyde, see below, pp 66, 123.

¹¹² For example, the identification of Topsham and Taunton importers was probably due to disputes about their custom status at Exeter (below, pp 78, 127, 133). Note also that Martin, Richard, and William Cook of Bridford actually lived in Exeter but were identified in this fashion to distinguish them from other Exeter residents with a similar surname.

identified in terms of residence, but this group owned 85 per cent of the cargoes.¹¹³

Residents of Exeter accounted for 19 per cent of the individual importers, but they owned over half of the cargoes.¹¹⁴ The vast majority of the Exeter importers were wealthy members of the town's ruling elite, having served at one time or another as mayor, steward, or councillor.¹¹⁵ The most prominent Exeter importer was Philip Lovcok, who was elected mayor ten times and was probably the richest man in Exeter.¹¹⁶ In the surviving accounts of 1302–21, he imported 1060 tuns of wine and 745 quarters of grain, as well as herring, salt, wax, alum, canvas, iron, saffron, almonds, pitch, and salt-cellars. Not all Exeter residents imported on such a large scale; most traded in a more limited way and specialized in one or two imports. Wine was the most common specialty, followed by herring. Among the less prominent Exeter importers were men like John Whitebrother, who only imported herring on the cheaper coastal routes and who, unlike Philip, never served in high municipal office. John did not even gain admittance to the exclusive freedom organization until several years after he had begun importing goods and paying custom for doing so.¹¹⁷

The participation of Exeter merchants in the import trade was actually far more extensive than the accounts indicate since they purchased in bulk many of the goods brought in by foreigners and other non-residents who did not want to retail imports themselves. Exeter importers like William Brewer and John de St Nicholas, for instance, made large purchases from the Rouen importer, Adam Sage, while Richard de Spaxton, an Exeter wine importer, bought wine in bulk from James de Bertram of Bordeaux.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Nicholas Lydeford,

¹¹³ For the standardized surnames, see the Index, where Exeter residents are also identified. Residences were established by carefully matching details offered in the accounts with information found in other documents. The particularly good extant records for Exeter, Dartmouth, and Teignmouth (together home to more than half of the identifiable importers) made this task much easier. Most useful were *Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*; CCR; CPR; the royal port customs accounts (PRO E 122/40/1–1A; E 122/40/3, /5, /7; E 122/78/3A; E 122/156/8); Exeter MCR (which include all the civic elections); Exeter mayor's tourns (a yearly market or leet court); Exeter deeds (many printed in *Exeter Property Deeds 1150–1450*, ed. P. R. Staniforth and J. Z. Juddery, Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit Reports Nos. 90.45–48, 1991); *Exeter Freeman*; Hugh R. Watkin, *Dartmouth*, Devonshire Association Parochial Histories of Devonshire, no. 5, 1935; ECL D&C 2946 (Teignmouth records, including a 1314 rental).

¹¹⁴ A cargo consisted of all the goods one importer owned on one ship; Exeter residents owned at least 1414 of the 2939 cargoes and comprised 201 of the 1071 importers. These are minimum figures since the preliminary analysis only assigned residences when names were unambiguous and identifications could be corroborated by at least two different pieces of evidence.

¹¹⁵ The fortunate survival of almost all annual elections in the MCR makes such identification possible; see also Appendix 2, below.

¹¹⁶ He paid the highest subsidy in Exeter in 1332 (*Devonshire Lay Subsidy*, pp 50, 110, 127 where John de Fenton's tax should be 40d. not 40s.).

¹¹⁷ *Exeter Freeman*, p 9.

¹¹⁸ MCR 1311/12, mm. 44–44d; 1313/14, m. 3d.

an Exeter merchant and skinner, only directly imported herring but purchased over £40 worth of Walter Launde of Winchelsea's cargo of 300 quarters of wheat and rye.¹¹⁹ Nicholas either retailed much of this grain himself, or sold it to inland merchants who marketed it to others. Exeter merchants further deepened their involvement in maritime commerce by participating in the export trade. Hides, cloth, and a small amounts of wool were exported by Exeter merchants, all of whom also engaged in the import trade.¹²⁰

About one quarter of the importers came from coastal settlements in Teignmouth, the Exe estuary, and Sidmouth. Teignmouth importers such as John de Bovy, Gilbert in the Combe, and William Ralle were particularly active, focusing largely on wine imports. Few importers came from inland locations, in contrast to the later middle ages when importers from inland towns in east Devon and Somerset were more prominent.¹²¹ Three Taunton merchants imported goods at Exeter during this period, concentrating on the importation of woad, a blue dye used in the cloth industry.¹²² Importers from elsewhere in England came almost exclusively from port towns. Most resided in Dorset, Hampshire, or Yarmouth, but some came from Cornwall, London, Winchelsea and other places. At least five importers resided in Southampton, including one of the town's wealthier burgesses, Henry de Lym, whose agent in Exeter, Peter de Exebrigg, improperly claimed Henry's custom-free status when selling his own imports of woad, potash, and corn.¹²³ Yarmouth importers, not surprisingly, brought mostly herring to Exeter. The Londoners included Adam Burgoyne (who also imported wine to London), William Fratre (importer of a wide range of goods at Exeter), and William Trente, alderman and king's butler.¹²⁴

Foreign importers were not often identified as such in the Exeter accounts, although surname evidence and information recorded in the mayor's court rolls and the national customs accounts provide more definitive information on their origins. The most active foreign importers at Exeter came from Picardy, Normandy, and Gascony. Foremost among them was Peter le Monier of Amiens who imported 65 cargoes in 30 different ships between 1302 and 1321. Dyestuffs (woad, weld and potash) dominated his cargoes, although in the famine years of 1317-21 he imported large amounts of corn. He was responsible for the single largest grain cargo to medieval Exeter: 1023

¹¹⁹ Below, p 193; MCR 1320/1, m. 26d.

¹²⁰ PRO E122 as listed above, n. 113. Cloth exports by denizens were not recorded in these accounts, but the many dyestuff imports and debt cases (MCR *passim*) referring to cloth sales point to the importance of this trade among Exeter merchants.

¹²¹ Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 6; E. M. Carus-Wilson, *The Expansion of Exeter at the Close of the Middle Ages*, Exeter, 1963.

¹²² Philip Chepman, Robert Russel, and Nicholas le Webbe.

¹²³ MCR 1300/1, m. 2d; Colin Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, A.D. 1000-1600*, London, 1973, pp 73, 248-9.

¹²⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, *Medieval London from Commune to Capital*, London, 1970, pp 119-20, 146, 154.

quarters of corn, peas and barley in 1320.¹²⁵ John and Thomas Petit of Amiens (who was John's son and the nephew of Peter le Monier) often acted as his agents in Exeter, marketing woad to local dyers and conducting business with tanners who probably sold Peter some of the hides he exported.¹²⁶ The Petits themselves also exported hides and imported woad, weld, and corn to Exeter. From Rouen came Adam and John Sage who employed Thomas Fartheyn, one of the most influential officeholders in Exeter, as their attorney in commercial debt suits tried in the borough court.¹²⁷ Gascon merchants imported wine, usually in far larger consignments than most importers handled. Bernard Andru of Bordeaux, for example, imported almost 90 tuns in two cargoes only seven months apart, while William Dyne regularly shipped wine to Exeter, including 69 tuns in 1316/17.¹²⁸ In return, these foreign merchants exported cloth, hides, tin and wool from Exeter.¹²⁹

Besides casting light upon place of residence, the customs accounts also occasionally state the occupation of importers or point to their clerical status. Servants of wealthy merchants (who probably acted as the travelling commercial agents of their masters) at times imported goods in their own names, as did men described as a baker, carpenter, cutler, mercer, sarger, soaper, tailor, and taverner.¹³⁰ The clerics included well-off canons of Exeter Cathedral, such as Robert de Veteri Terra (Oldland) and the treasurer, Thomas de Henton.¹³¹ The bishops of Exeter and Bath and Wells, and the archdeacons of Exeter and Wells also imported goods, as did the rector and chaplain of Thorverton (near Exeter). Most of the clerics restricted their imports to wine with the exception of the prior of Otterton who brought in one ton of salt, the vicar of Kenton who imported spurs, and Master Nicholas de Fovyle of Rouen who imported what appears to be Caen stone. Female importers were rare, numbering only fifteen in 1302–21. Most were widows or wives of wealthy male importers in Exeter or Topsham; Alice daughter of Gilbert atte Combe of Teignmouth was one of the few exceptions. Most if not all of these women were substituting for male relatives when they were recorded as importers, either because their husbands had died or were away on business.¹³²

¹²⁵ Below, p 69. He also occasionally imported onions. He may have been related to the Peter le Monier of Amiens who had settled in Wells by 1340; see A. J. Scrase, 'A French Merchant in Fourteenth-Century Wells', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, cxxxiii (1989), pp 131–40.

¹²⁶ MCR 1312/13, m. 4d; 1314/15, m. 44d; PRO E 122/40/7 for this and the following.

¹²⁷ MCR 1311/12, mm. 44–44d. Fartheyn was a royal custom collector (Robert L. Baker, *The English Customs Service, 1307–1343*, Philadelphia, 1961, p 66) and regularly served as a city steward (MCR elections) but only occasionally imported goods.

¹²⁸ Below, pp 173, 175 for Andru. For Dyne, see also PCA 1323/4 and PRO E 122/40/7A, 7B.

¹²⁹ PRO E 122 as in n. 113, above.

¹³⁰ For example, see below, pp 72–3, 77, 100, 104, 113, 140, 143, 196.

¹³¹ John Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1300–1541*, vol. ix, *Exeter Diocese*, ed. Joyce M. Horn, London, 1964, pp 10, 22, 24.

¹³² They are listed in the Index under women. Exeter importers who travelled abroad for business included William Brewer (MCR 1309/10, m. 32d); Walter Fraunceis (*CPR 1281–92*, pp 201, 211), Henry de Rixthivele (MCR 1299/1300, m. 4); Michael Thoraud (MCR 1301/2, m. 37d), and Thomas de Tettebourne (MCR 1317/18, m. 19d)

THE IMPORTS

Most of the goods arriving at the port of Exeter probably came via coastal routes. In the late fourteenth century when direct comparisons can be made between coastal and overseas trade, only 30 per cent of the vessels docking at the port employed direct overseas routes; most of these were wine ships from Bordeaux or smaller ships from the Channel Islands and Brittany.¹⁵³ By coastal routes came both native English goods such as fish (especially herring), coal, and corn, or foreign goods transshipped from re-export centres like Southampton. The large number of Hampshire ships recorded at Exeter indicates how often foreign goods were freighted first to Southampton, then re-loaded onto coastal craft for shipment to Exeter and other English ports. Dartmouth and Plymouth served a similar role (especially in the late fourteenth century) since they, like Southampton, had better harbours and more valuable exports (such as tin) to lure vessels directly from continental ports.¹⁵⁴ In the last two decades of the fourteenth century, 90 per cent of the valuable trade in foreign dyestuffs, linen cloth, canvas, garlic, onions, and spices arrived by coast from such re-distribution centers. Even wine, the import most likely to arrive directly from overseas, was frequently freighted first to ports like Southampton before being shipped by coast to Exeter.

Wine dominated the list of commodities arriving at the port of Exeter, accounting for about 53 per cent of the imports in 1302-21 (see Table 2). Annual imports averaged 964 tuns in this period, but ranged from 1557 tuns in 1305/6 to only 691 tuns ten years later.¹⁵⁵ Exeter merchants owned at least half of these cargoes and at least 56 per cent of the tunnage.¹⁵⁶ By purchasing and then reselling the wine cargoes of non-resident importers like Philip Rurde of Dartmouth or Robert le Lumbard of Gascony, Exeter merchants further extended their share of this important commerce.¹⁵⁷ Their role as middlemen brought them substantial profits when they marketed wine to other merchants and taverners in the hinterland (such as Elias William of Cadeleigh) and in Exeter, on occasion taking advantage of their better access to bulk supplies to cheat their customers.¹⁵⁸ Many of the most prominent Exeter wine importers employed their own taverners to retail wine on terms favourable to the importer.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, the grip

¹⁵³ For this and the following, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 6, esp. table 6.1.

¹⁵⁴ For canvas transshipped from Plymouth to Exeter, see below, p 77.

¹⁵⁵ These figures do not include the imports of 1303/4 when the account covering September-May is missing. They do include the 724 tuns imported in 1320/1 when part of the account is also missing.

¹⁵⁶ In the surviving accounts of 1302-21, 10,924 tuns of wine were imported of which at least 6374 tuns were owned by Exeter residents.

¹⁵⁷ MCR 1287/8, m. 4d; 1288/9, m. 33d; 1289/90, m. 9d.

¹⁵⁸ For example, MCR 1302/3, m. 7; 1304/5, m. 12; 1306/7, m. 20; see also Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Merchants*, chapter 6 for other examples.

¹⁵⁹ MCR 1291/2, m. 4d; 1296/7, m. 31; 1300/1, m. 23. This arrangement seems to have died out by the second half of the century.

TABLE 2: COMMODITIES IMPORTED AT EXETER, 1302-21

| Import | No. of Imports | Total of Imports | % of Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------|
| WINE | | 1858 | 53.0 |
| FOODSTUFFS | | 841 | 24.0 |
| Fish (Herring=245) | 258 | | |
| Grain | 223 | | |
| Onions | 97 | | |
| Salt | 79 | | |
| Garlic | 70 | | |
| Almonds | 35 | | |
| Spices | 33 | | |
| Figs, raisins, fruit | 15 | | |
| Bacon, livestock | 8 | | |
| Lard, grease | 8 | | |
| Other | 15 | | |
| DYESTUFFS & CLOTH INDUSTRY | | 354 | 10.1 |
| Woad | 152 | | |
| Potash | 75 | | |
| Weld | 71 | | |
| Alum | 33 | | |
| Archil | 9 | | |
| Other | 14 | | |
| RAW MATERIALS | | 236 | 6.7 |
| Iron | 145 | | |
| Coal/charcoal | 16 | | |
| Lead, copper, tin, steel | 13 | | |
| Rosin, pitch, tar | 15 | | |
| Wax | 12 | | |
| Hides, skins, leather | 24 | | |
| Building stone, glass, wood | 8 | | |
| Other | 3 | | |
| MANUFACTURED GOODS | | 217 | 6.2 |
| Canvas | 72 | | |
| Linen cloth | 25 | | |
| Other cloth & mercery | 48 | | |
| Clothing & domestic linens | 13 | | |
| Domestic utensils | 25 | | |
| Spurs, horseshoes | 15 | | |
| Millstones, mortars | 6 | | |
| Other | 13 | | |
| TOTAL | | 3506 | 100.0 |

Source: PCA 1302/3-1320/1. Commodities imported by partners are only counted once. The figures reflect only the number of times a commodity was imported, not its volume or value.

of rich Exeter merchants on this valuable trade was partly responsible for the complaints in 1320 about excessively high wine prices in Exeter and other towns in Devon and Cornwall.¹⁴⁰ The greater familiarity of Exeter importers with the local market could also work to the disadvantage of foreign importers. In 1319/20, for instance, Robert le Carpeñter of Bordeaux accused Richard le Seler of Exeter and Bernard Andru of Bordeaux of holding back some of the wine of his kinsman Bruni le Carpenter for so long that its value decreased significantly.¹⁴¹

Other foodstuffs made up 24 per cent of the imports in 1302–21; herring accounted for about one-third of these goods, followed by grain, onions and garlic, salt, and “luxury” items such as almonds, dried fruit, and spices (Table 2). Salt imported at Exeter probably came mostly from Brittany and the Bay of Biscay, although salt from Normandy is mentioned once and English sources also provided some of this essential commodity.¹⁴² Most of the onions and garlic originated in Brittany (and some from Normandy), as did anise, vetches and the one cargo of butter. From the Channel Islands came fish (especially mackerel), bacon, oxen, and eggs. Mediterranean products included dried fruit (figs, raisins), nuts, oil, rice, spices (cumin, liquorice, pepper, saffron) and sugar.

The accounts printed in the present volume are particularly valuable for the light they cast on the importation of grain during the “Great Famine” that affected England (and most of Europe) in 1315–22.¹⁴³ Rainy weather and other problems during this period severely reduced the amount of grain harvested, leading to widespread shortages and very high prices. No grain was imported at Exeter in 1315/16, but 341 quarters came in the following year and the astronomical amount of 11,783 quarters arrived in 1319/20.¹⁴⁴ Since this quantity was far more than Exeter itself could consume in a year, much of the grain must have been sent to locations in the hinterland. Most of the imported grain was wheat. At least half (and probably more) came from the continent, particularly northern France, but some, imported by men from Chichester, Winchelsea,

¹⁴⁰ *Rotuli parliamentorum ut et petitiones et placita in parlamento*, 6 vols., London, 1783, i, p 375.

¹⁴¹ Below, pp 68–9.

¹⁴² For example, the salt arriving on a ship from Lutton (below, p 000), a Lincolnshire coastal settlement that produced salt in this period (H. E. Hallam, ‘Saltmaking in the Lincolnshire Fenland during the Middle Ages’, *Reports and Papers of the Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society*, new series, viii (1960), pp 87, 98–9; I am grateful to Derek Keene for pointing out this reference).

¹⁴³ Ian Kershaw, ‘The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England 1315–22’, *Past and Present*, lix (1973), reprinted in *Peasants, Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, ed. R. H. Hilton, Cambridge, 1976, pp 85–132; Henry S. Lucas, ‘The Great European Famine of 1315, 1316, and 1317’, *Speculum*, v (1930), pp 343–77.

¹⁴⁴ For this and the following, see Maryanne Kowaleski, ‘The Grain Trade in Fourteenth-Century Exeter’, in *The Salt of Common Life: Essays Presented to J. Ambrose Raftis*, ed. Edwin B. DeWindt, Kalamazoo MI, forthcoming.

Sandwich, and Norfolk, also arrived from eastern England.¹⁴⁵ Exeter merchants played an important role in this trade as owners of at least 26 per cent of grain cargoes and 22 per cent of the grain by volume. As with wine imports, their role as purchasers and distributors of the grain imported by others gave them control over a much larger percentage of the trade than these figures indicate. Indeed, several times during the early fourteenth century customers vociferously complained that their unfair commercial practices led to excessively high prices for corn and other victuals.¹⁴⁶

Dyestuffs comprised the third largest group of imports (Table 2). They included archil (a red or purple dye made from lichen), copperas (a dye and mordant made from iron sulphate), ochre (iron hydrate oxide that produced yellow to brown colors), weld (a plant yielding a yellow dye), and woad, as well as mordants like alum and potash.¹⁴⁷ Woad was the most valuable as well as the most common of these imports, accounting alone for almost one-half of dyestuffs arriving at Exeter in 1302–21. Produced from the leaves of a plant grown all over Europe, it could be permanently affixed to wool fibres without a mordant, and could also serve as a base for other dyes to produce green, purple, black, brown, and other hues. Most woad imported to England at this time came from Picardy.¹⁴⁸ At Exeter, merchants of Amiens were especially prominent in this trade, including Bartholomew Bygge, Leonard (and probably John) de Cuntysf, Peter le Monier, John and Thomas Petit, John de Quarel, and John le Queynte, all of whom concentrated almost exclusively on the importation of woad.¹⁴⁹ The value of this trade at Exeter was recognized in the annual election of woad assayers (usually dyers) who measured and tested the quality of all imported woad in order to set its selling price. Although Exeter merchants as well as foreign and other English merchants had a say in this election, accusations of favouritism, false assessments, and outright fraud regularly cropped up.¹⁵⁰ Exeter merchants only accounted for about 20 per cent of woad importers in 1302–21, and their average cargo was generally less than that of foreign importers of woad, but the regulation of the trade in Exeter clearly promoted their acquisition of the supplies imported by foreigners. For example, the city forced woad importers who were not members of the freedom to offer their woad for sale to Exeter

¹⁴⁵ For these English imports, see also below, pp 51, 111, 129, 193–4; MCR Roll 1, m. 4 (1265); PCA 1322/3, 1332/3.

¹⁴⁶ *CFR 1307–19*, p 139; *CPR 1334–8*, p 445; *CPR 1338–40*, p 64; *CPR 1345–8*, p 320.

¹⁴⁷ Saffron could also be used to produce a yellow colour but it was probably more often employed as a spice at Exeter. Cork may also have been used as a dye.

¹⁴⁸ E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'La guède française en Angleterre: un grand commerce du moyen âge', *Revue du nord*, xxxv (1953), pp 93–102.

¹⁴⁹ Bygge and Queynte were identified as from Amiens in the accounts (below, pp 101, 188). For the others, see MCR 1300/1, m. 28 (Cuntysf); 1305/6, m. 16d (Quarel); MCR 1314/15, m. 44d (Monier, the Petits). John Hangard (below, pp 172, 190; Carus-Wilson, 'La guède', p 99) was also from Picardy.

¹⁵⁰ MCR 1298/9, m. 33; 1319/20, m. 12d; 1328/9, m. 46d; 1334/5, m. 41d.

merchants for the first forty days before selling it to others.¹⁵¹ Persons not in the freedom were expressly forbidden to participate in the trade in woad, weld, alum, and potash; as a result, the wealthier merchants and dyers of Exeter enjoyed the greatest profits from this trade.¹⁵² The city also ordered that woad imports could only be sold in Exeter, heavily fining those found selling woad at Topsham or elsewhere.¹⁵³ Once in Exeter, woad could be carried out of the city for sale elsewhere, but it then was charged additional custom (although the woad importers from Taunton and Chard probably escaped this toll because of their customs exemptions).¹⁵⁴ All these regulations obviously favoured the Exeter merchant-middleman who could dominate sales to dyers and sell before his foreign competitors.

The city also attempted to place restrictions on the trade in weld, potash and alum but seems to have met with less success in this endeavour.¹⁵⁵ Weld and potash were handled by the same merchants who imported woad, although it is likely that much of the potash came from the Baltic area via Flanders.¹⁵⁶ Potash, called *cinerum* (ashes) in the accounts, was an alkaline substance prepared by leaching wood ashes. Used as a mordant to help fix dyes more permanently, it was imported in several forms: black, white, or mixed with some woad (which like potash could act as a mordant for other colours) or even weld. Alum, a mineral salt used as a mordant in dyeing as well as to taw or dress leather, was a Mediterranean import that probably reached Exeter from re-export centres like London and Southampton. Exeter merchants dominated this trade, accounting for over 73 per cent of alum importers in Exeter in 1302–21. Other imports related to cloth production were teasels (used to raise the nap of fabrics), Flemish clay (possibly used in the fulling process), yarn, and wool of Spain.

Iron was the raw material most often imported, comprising about 4 per cent of all imports at Exeter in 1302–21 (Table 2). At least some of this metal came from Spain. Lead, copper, tin and steel appear much less frequently. Other raw materials included coal, pitch, rosin, tar, and wax. Special types of leather (basan and cordwain) and imported furs (mostly rabbit and budge, lambskins imported from the Mediterranean) were relatively rare in this period compared to the later middle ages. Building materials (especially roofing slate and tiles) were also more common in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Their rarity in the earlier accounts reflects either their less frequent importation or their importation for immediate use rather

¹⁵¹ MCR 1289/90, m. 19.

¹⁵² MCR 1312/13, m. 7d; but see MCR 1310/11, m. 25d for the difficulty of enforcing this regulation.

¹⁵³ Below, p 47; MCR Roll 1, m. 2 (1265); 1285/6, mm. 9, 21; 1289/90, m. 10.

¹⁵⁴ Below, p 147; MCR Roll 1, m. 14d (1266). Philip Chepman and Nicholas le Webbe of Taunton, and John de la Hegh of Chard imported woad. For customs exemptions, see above, p 13.

¹⁵⁵ MCR 1312/13, m. 7d.

¹⁵⁶ T. H. Lloyd, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages*, New York, 1982, pp 78–9.

than for resale. The fabric accounts of Exeter Cathedral, for example, note the arrival by sea of building stone from Beer, Salcombe, Purbeck, and Caen, as well as glass from Rouen, lead purchased at the Boston fair, and iron from Dartmouth, but because they were not saleable, their importation was not recorded in the customs accounts.¹⁵⁷ Yet the cathedral builders also bought such imported items as iron and lead at Topsham, and these purchases can sometimes be traced to specific cargoes.¹⁵⁸ At least one of the cargoes of Caen stone noted in the customs accounts may also have ended up in the hands of the cathedral builders.¹⁵⁹ The customs accounts also record two cargoes of glass, one imported by an Exeter merchant (William Brewer) and one by Adam Sage of Rouen. Timber and wood were imported by a merchant from Polruan (Cornwall), while plaster arrived on a Norman ship. The boards and nails imported by several Exe estuary shipmasters may have been intended largely as ballast although some of the imported boards were perhaps included among the "Irish and Welsh boards" occasionally purchased for the cathedral works.

Raw materials and manufactured items each accounted for about 6 per cent of the imported commodities (Table 2). As with building materials, manufactured goods were more common in the later middle ages when standards of living were higher and the South West was experiencing more economic growth. In the early fourteenth century, various types of cloth, especially canvas and linen cloth from Brittany, accounted for the bulk of imported manufactures. Items of clothing (hats, hose, caps) and domestic linens (tablecloths, tapets, towels, and quilts) only occasionally appear. Furnishings (chairs, chests, coffers, misericords), utensils (cooking-pots, cups, knives, lavers, pans, posnets, salt-cellars), and other domestic items (candles, lanterns, mirrors) were slightly more common; most were imported by Exeter merchants. Millstones, mortars, horseshoes, and spurs are also mentioned.

These imports offer valuable insights into the late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century economy of Exeter and its hinterland, especially when compared to what we know of imports in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁶⁰ Dyestuffs in the early period were twice as prominent as they were in the late fourteenth century, although the later decline was due more to the interruption of continental supplies by the Hundred Years War than to any crisis in the local cloth industry. Woad continued to be imported, but in smaller

¹⁵⁷ *The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, 1279-1353: Part I: 1279-1326*, ed. Audrey M. Erskine, DCRS, new series, xxiv (1981), passim.

¹⁵⁸ *Accounts of the Fabric*, pp 34, 42, 56, 77, 115, 117.

¹⁵⁹ The purchase of Caen stone at Topsham noted in *Accounts of the Fabric*, p 87 coincides with the importation of Caen stone by Gilbert Doo (below, p 149). Note also that the stone imported by Master Nicholas de Fovyle of Rouen was also probably Caen stone (below, p 163).

¹⁶⁰ For this and the following, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, chapter 6; E. M. Carus-Wilson, *The Expansion of Exeter*.

amounts, and from Languedoc more often than from Picardy. Madder (a red dye) increasingly replaced woad as the most popular imported dye in the later middle ages. Devon cloth exports surged in the late middle ages, but consisted largely of russet and white (undyed) cloths. Cereal imports fell even more markedly than dyestuffs in the later period, a reflection of the more secure grain supplies available to a population reduced by both the Black Death and the recurrent epidemics of the following hundred years or more. Wine imports also dropped by about 2 per cent in the late fourteenth century, but this was a small decline when we consider how much smaller the population was after these demographic devastations. Indeed, rising standards of living in the later middle ages were reflected in the relatively stable, even rising level of imports of wine, canvas, linen cloth, fish, metals, and Mediterranean products such as honey, oil, and Spanish wine.

The impact of maritime trade on the fortunes of the city of Exeter can also be examined. In the earlier period Exeter merchants represented almost 20 per cent of importers, handled almost half of all cargoes, and owned 58 per cent of the wine tunnage. In contrast, during the late fourteenth century, they comprised only 8–10 per cent of importers, handled but 29 per cent of the cargoes, and controlled about 44 per cent of the wine tunnage brought in. At first glance, it thus appears that Exeter merchants had by the late fourteenth century lost their previously firm grip on the port trade. Significantly, however, their share of the value of trade still hovered around a healthy 40 per cent while their control of the woad and iron trade grew. We should be wary, therefore, of assuming that these figures show an economic crisis in Exeter, especially in light of the evidence that Exeter prospered in the late middle ages when many other English towns were suffering decline.¹⁶¹ The increasing presence of inland importers from Devon and Somerset in the later middle ages points to economic expansion in the hinterland, an expansion from which Exeter merchants clearly profited. As entrepreneurial middlemen in the networks that linked local, regional, and international trade, Exeter merchants were poised to take advantage of economic expansion in both inland and maritime commerce.

¹⁶¹ On urban decline, see Alan Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400–1640*, London, 1991.

THE DOCUMENTS

Local port customs accounts survive for only a few English ports in the middle ages.¹⁶² Although the earliest extant accounts date from the thirteenth century, port customs were levied by local lords and towns on ships and their merchants from as early as the Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁶³ From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, many towns acquired these rights from the king as part of their grants of fee farm. Administered separately from the national customs system controlled by the king's exchequer, local port customs were also distinguished from the national system by the tolls they charged on coastal trade: a commerce ignored by the national customs accounts which recorded only overseas trade.¹⁶⁴ In ports like Exeter, where coastal trade comprised as much as 70 per cent of all shipping traffic, local customs accounts often supply a completely different picture of the local maritime economy than that furnished by the national customs accounts.¹⁶⁵

The local customs accounts extant for medieval English ports vary widely in scope and form. Most towns taxed both incoming and outgoing traffic, although not all distinguished between imports and exports or even between coastal and overseas trade. Only a few (Southampton and Yarmouth) occasionally indicated the direction of trade in their accounts.¹⁶⁶ Most levied different rates on different commodities, and some also assessed other port-duties (such as anchorage and keelage on ships mooring at the port), shore-duties (such as crantage and wharfage charged for the use of a crane or wharf), or murage and pavage granted temporarily by the king. Of the few accounts which survive before 1300, only those of Exeter, Sandwich and Winchelsea provide many details about ships, importers, or their

¹⁶² The surviving accounts are listed and discussed in Henry S. Cobb, 'Local Port Customs Accounts Prior to 1550', *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. Felicity Ranger, London, 1973, pp 153-210. Local accounts in print may be found in Gras, *Early English Customs*, pp 153-210 (Sandwich, Scarborough, Southampton, Yarmouth, Winchelsea); *The Port Books of Southampton, 1427-1430*, ed. P. Studer, Southampton Record Society, xv (1913); *The Local Port Book of Southampton of 1435-36*, ed. Brian Foster, Southampton Record Series, vii (1963); *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*, ed. H. S. Cobb; *The Port Books of Southampton for the Reign of Edward IV (1469-81)*, ed. D. B. Quinn, 2 vols., Southampton Record Society, xxxvii and xxxviii (1937-8); H. Bush, *Bristol Town Duties*, Bristol, 1828, pp 17-25 (an account of 1437/8); *Chester Custom Accounts, 1301-1566*.

¹⁶³ Such customs were levied by right of prescription or by charter; for a history of local customs, see Cobb, 'Local Port Customs Accounts', and Gras, *Early English Customs*, esp. pp 21-37, 153-216. For an example of such customs in the Anglo-Saxon period, see above, n. 8.

¹⁶⁴ For descriptions of the national customs system in medieval England, see Gras, *Early English Customs*; and Wendy R. Childs, 'Introduction', *The Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, cxliv (1986), pp xi-xxix.

¹⁶⁵ This figure is derived from a comparison of the trade enumerated in the particular accounts of the national customs and that in the local customs of Exeter for roughly five years from 1383 to 1411; see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter*, table 6.1.

¹⁶⁶ Cobb, 'Local Customs Accounts', p 228, n. 135.

cargoes.¹⁶⁷ With the notable exception of the Exeter accounts, all surviving local customs records also suffer from two distinct limitations: there are many gaps in their series, and merchants and cargoes exempt from town customs were rarely recorded.¹⁶⁸ Thus one of the fuller series of extant local accounts, those of the port of Southampton, begin only in 1426 and survive for fewer than twenty years of the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁹ The customs exemptions enjoyed by the burgesses of Southampton and other privileged towns, moreover, means that their local accounts omit much of the denizen (i.e., English) trade.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, this practice of excluding exempt merchants and cargoes is probably the biggest drawback to the use of local port customs accounts.

The local port customs accounts of Exeter are distinguished from other local accounts by their early date, high rate of survival, and comprehensive record of all incoming (but not outgoing) ships that unloaded goods in the Exe estuary. Enrolled on the dorses of the mayor's court rolls from as early as 1266, they were recorded on separate rolls by 1302/3 and survive for about 70 per cent of the years between then and 1498. Several periods contain remarkably few gaps (such as 1315-46 and 1381-1433). Unlike the accounts of other towns, they list almost every ship's name, home port and master; the importers, their custom status and custom owed; and the type and quantities of all goods imported. Of special importance is the accounts' enumeration of the importers and commodities that did not owe custom. As a result, the local customs accounts of Exeter furnish an unusually complete record of the import trade of a provincial port in medieval England.

Although Exeter had been collecting town customs at its port from at least 1178,¹⁷¹ the first specific references to the docking of ships at the port of Exeter occur on the first extant mayor's court roll in 1266. A court of record, the mayor's court met every Monday and handled a wide variety of pleas; it also recorded the annual municipal elections, admissions of freemen, testaments relating to real property, the assize of bread, and other items of borough business. Given the scope of the court's interests, it is not surprising that the civic authorities chose to

¹⁶⁷ For the Sandwich accounts, see Gras, *Early English Customs*, pp 167-72, 203-7; Cobb, 'Local Customs Accounts', pp 216-17. The Winchelsea accounts (PRO SC 6/1031/19-25) begin in 1266 and are the most complete series of thirteenth-century accounts. None of these accounts, however, provide as many details as the Exeter accounts.

¹⁶⁸ Besides Exeter, only the lone surviving account for Bristol (Bush, *Bristol Town Duties*, pp 17-25) seems to have included custom-free merchants in the accounts.

¹⁶⁹ *Local Port Book of Southampton 1439-40*, p 111. The earlier accounts (1339-42) in PRO E 122 137/8, 10-12; 193/10, are summary accounts that offer few details.

¹⁷⁰ The liability of all merchants at Southampton for crantage (paid on goods such as wine and oil stored in tuns or pipes that had to be lifted with a crane) means that denizen trade in these items were better covered by the accounts (Cobb, 'Introduction', pp lxiii-lxvii).

¹⁷¹ Above, n. 2; see also *CPR 1216-25*, p 248.

enter memoranda in its rolls regarding the landing of ships.¹⁷² Three notes about ship arrivals were specifically labelled *memorandum*, three similar entries were recorded because of fines paid by merchants for unloading cargoes in the wrong place or without proper authorization, and one was noted in an inquisition concerning the sale of wine. The fact that all but 11 of the 99 entries recording specific ships were written on the dorsos, usually at the bottom of the membrane, also points to the memoranda-like nature of these entries.

Our knowledge of the thirteenth-century maritime traffic at Exeter depends largely on the survival of these notes about ship arrivals recorded in mayor's court rolls. After the first court roll (which mostly contains courts dating from 1264 to 1266), no rolls are extant until 1285/6.¹⁷³ In the years following there were several entries about ship arrivals recorded in each surviving court roll until the start of Customs Roll 1 in 1302/3.¹⁷⁴ Thereafter the court-roll entries about ships largely disappear, with the exception of two memoranda in 1302/3, five entries in 1312/13, and two in 1319/20; three of these later entries were also inscribed on Customs Roll 1.¹⁷⁵ The form of the entry in the court rolls changed little over the years. Most start by noting the name of the ship, its home port, and the shipmaster before listing the individual importers, their imports, and notes about the custom and pledges. Most also give a summary of the cargo prior to listing the importers. Before 1300/1, the shipmaster was normally listed before the individual importers; thereafter his name usually appeared after the importers, the format followed throughout the accounts in Customs Roll 1. By 1287/8 almost all entries began with the phrase "Ship that is called [ship name] of [home port] docked at Topsham with ...", a formula also employed in the later customs accounts.

Only seven of the court-roll entries provide direct statements as to when the ship docked at the port.¹⁷⁶ For the remainder, the date of the court under which the entry was recorded offers the only evidence about the timing of the ship's arrival. But since the seven dated entries were all enrolled under courts which occurred within a few days of the date noted in the entry, there is good reason to believe that most ships actually arrived (or were customed) very close to the

¹⁷² Other items of financial interest to the town were also sometimes placed on these rolls; see, for example, references to the receipt of various city revenues (MCR Roll 1, m. 17 (1266), 1308/9, m. 30d) and expenses (MCR 1290/1, mm. 16d, 24d). These types of items later appeared on the annual city accounts (CRA) which are extant from 1304, not far removed from the date of the first extant Customs Roll (1302).

¹⁷³ MCR Roll 1 contains courts from 1264/5 and 1265/6, as well as some from February–April 1271 and August–September 1307, along with one extract from June 1288. The next MCR (1285/6) contains courts from February–September 1286; thereafter all the mayor's court rolls cover one fiscal year running from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.

¹⁷⁴ No court rolls survive for 1291/2–1294/5.

¹⁷⁵ Below, pp 67–9.

¹⁷⁶ Below, pp 50, 65–9.

dates of the courts where they were first recorded.¹⁷⁷ The timing of seasonal cargoes also supports this supposition; large consignments of vintage wines were normally mentioned in courts dated between late October and December, herring in courts dated between November and February, and grain in courts dated between March and June. Presumably the purpose of the enrolment of the ship entries in the first place—to keep track of the incoming ships liable for custom—also caused ships to be recorded soon after they docked.

Although separate port customs rolls are extant only from 1302/3, they may have been kept even during the period when ship arrivals were regularly noted in the mayor's court rolls. One very interesting membrane from the court of 1287/8 suggests that separate accounts were maintained that early; membrane 20 begins with a formal heading similar to those inscribed at the tops of the annual accounts in Customs Roll 1. The wording (*Adhuc de navibus applic' apud Topsham anno 16*) and placement of the heading at the top of the membrane, along with the fact that both the heading and two entries were crossed through, all imply that the membrane was originally part of a separate account. Unlike most of the other court-roll entries, moreover, those inscribed on this membrane contained annotations about custom payments that were clearly added later, a characteristic also found in the annual accounts bound together in Customs Roll 1. The enrolment of the entries at the top of the membrane, and on its front rather than the dorse, was also unusual and provides further evidence that this particular membrane had once been intended to form part of a separate customs account.¹⁷⁸

Other features of the court-roll entries about ship arrivals also imply that they served as memoranda for later enrolments in more formal port customs accounts. Scribes crossed through six of the entries, an action they may have taken after entering the information in the port customs accounts. In one of these cases, the clerk wrote in the margin "because elsewhere" in Latin, a clear indication that the ship arrival had been recorded somewhere else.¹⁷⁹ By beginning an entry with "memorandum" or scribbling entries on the bottom dorses, scribes were also acting as if their annotations were notes kept on the rolls of the city's chief written record in preparation for transfer to other documents. The weekly nature of the entries may also reflect a weekly accounting that we know was customary in other early local customs accounts (such as those of Sandwich, Southampton, Win-

¹⁷⁷ The courts occur (in the order they appear) 2 days earlier than the dated entry, the same day (two entries), 1 day earlier, 4 days earlier, and 1 day earlier; the entry in MCR 1319/20, m. 14d (below, p 68) is not relevant since it concerns an inquisition. Note also that the local accounts tended to record ships earlier than the national accounts (below, p 40), another indication that the local customers did their job fairly quickly.

¹⁷⁸ The heading's implied reference to previous entries is also in keeping with the May arrival date noted in the two entries that follow (below, p 48).

¹⁷⁹ Below, p 49.

chelsea, and Yarmouth).¹⁸⁰ A similar situation may have existed at Exeter where the weekly accounts both helped the clerk compile the annual accounts and functioned as a kind of check or counter roll to the information enrolled in the annual accounts.

The first surviving local port customs roll contains seventeen annual accounts from 1302/3 to 1326/7, twelve of which are printed here.¹⁸¹ The 31 membranes in this roll were bound up together at a later date; several of the membranes are out of chronological order and at least one (containing the first part of the account for 1303/4) is missing altogether.¹⁸² After 1326/7, accounts generally survive in individual rolls, one for each year, except for some periods in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when accounts for several years were again bound up together.¹⁸³ Until 1305/6 there was a single account for each year; by 1310/11 two accounts were formulated for each year, one for wine and one for other types of merchandise. This annual division into two accounts was the norm until the 1380s when all customs were again recorded in one annual roll. The separation of wine from other imports reflected both the overwhelming importance of the wine trade (which in the late fourteenth century accounted for roughly 70 per cent of the total value of imports) and the claim by the earl of Devon to one-third of the wine custom.¹⁸⁴

The widely varying size and condition of the membranes also indicate that they were bound up together at a later date. Although normally 19–23 cm in width, the membranes range in length from 30 to 87 cm.¹⁸⁵ Several membranes are in very good condition, but others are marred by tears and stains, particularly on the edges and bottoms.¹⁸⁶ Headings appear at the start of most of the accounts, but vary

¹⁸⁰ An early fourteenth-century ordinance at Southampton explicitly dictated weekly accountings of the port customs (Cobb, 'Introduction', *Local Port Book of Southampton*, p. lv). See also Gras, *Early English Customs*, pp. 172–3, 176–91 (Sandwich and Winchelsea); PRO SC 6/1031/19–25 (Winchelsea); BL Additional Charters 14,976–86 (Yarmouth).

¹⁸¹ It was thought convenient to end the edition before the gap in the accounts that occurs in 1321/2; the accounts from 1322/3 to 1326/7 (not printed here) are enrolled on mm. 1–10.

¹⁸² Below, p. 80, for the missing membrane of 1303/4. The first part of the merchandise account for 1323/4 (m. 7) may also be missing since the account has no heading and the first entry is dated 11 December 1323. It is also likely that the second part of the wine account for 1324/5 (m. 5) is missing since the last entry is dated 1 December 1325 and the account contains no details of the spring (racked) wines; a comparison with the national port customs accounts of this date also supports this possibility (below, n. 214). Arguing against this possibility is the fact that the customs totals and one-third share given to the earl of Devon are noted at the bottom of m. 5, and that the totals match those in the surviving portion of the account.

¹⁸³ Many of the sixteenth-century accounts are in book form; see the detailed list of customs rolls in the DRO for more details.

¹⁸⁴ For the wine trade, see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, table 6.6. The earls' claims are discussed at greater length above, pp. 1–7.

¹⁸⁵ The shortest are mm. 29–30, the longest m. 11.

¹⁸⁶ The membranes most affected by damage are mm. 30, 23, 17, 13, 12, 11, and 4; the bottom part of m. 12 (1320/1) is completely torn away (below, p. 189).

greatly in their wording.¹⁸⁷ Some refer to customs of ships, others to customs of wines, and still others to customs of woad and other merchandise. The dating clauses in the headings also vary; most note a regnal year but only a few record the beginning or terminal dates of the account. The ends of the accounts differ as well; six of the twelve accounts finish with summaries of the amount of wine custom paid, along with the amount of custom delivered to the earl of Devon for his one-third portion.¹⁸⁸

The accounts contain many emendations and later additions which indicate both the care taken by the clerks to compile accurate accounts and the running nature of the accounting process. The scribes often corrected individual forenames, surnames, commodities and their amounts by crossing out or expunctuating the old version and inserting the correction, usually interlineated.¹⁸⁹ Superscript annotations were often employed to indicate the custom status of importers, the amount they owed, and whether they had paid or not; many of these notes were clearly made later, an indication that the accounts were regularly updated.¹⁹⁰ Most of the membranes were written in two or three different hands; even those accounts composed largely in one hand were compiled not at one time, but over the space of several weeks or months, as indicated by changes in the ink, variations in spacing and format, and later marginal or superscript annotations. Several times the scribe left a blank space for the name of the home port, a surname, or the exact amount of a particular import as if he intended to go back and fill in these items later.¹⁹¹ These features all suggest that the accounts were kept as a running record rather than written up at the same time. This practice probably reflected the customs collection system whereby the city's agents at the port handed over their rough notes regarding ship arrivals and customs to the city clerk, receiver, or other officials who compiled the accounts from these notes.¹⁹² It also paralleled the weekly enrolments of customs entries on the earlier mayor's courts.

Like the mayor's court rolls, the local port customs accounts run from Michaelmas to Michaelmas. With the exception of five years (1302/3, 1304/5, 1305/6, 1310/11, and 1312/13) the vast majority of the entries gave the day, month, and year of arrival.¹⁹³ Even in these

¹⁸⁷ The account of 1303/4 (below, p 80) lacks a heading since the first membrane is missing. There is also no formal heading at the start of the merchandise account of 1310/11 (below, p 118) or the merchandise account of 1323/4 (Roll 1, m. 7).

¹⁸⁸ Below, pp 85, 99, 113, 118, 134, 158.

¹⁸⁹ These are all indicated in the footnotes of the text, below.

¹⁹⁰ Additions to the accounts clearly inserted at a later date are enclosed in curly brackets in the text. Interlineations are enclosed in round brackets.

¹⁹¹ For example, a home port and surname on m. 21 (below, p 139), and a measure and amount on m. 15 (below, p 172).

¹⁹² For the compilation of the fifteenth-century Southampton port books from rough returns, see Cobb, 'Introduction', *Local Port Book of Southampton*, pp lvii–lviii. For more on the collection of custom at Exeter, see above, pp 8–10.

¹⁹³ In the twelve years, 396 of the 551 entries are dated; of the 155 undated entries, 148 occur in these five years.

five years, the occasional dates offered allow us to discern at least the season and often the month particular ships arrived because the entries generally followed in strict chronological order. The few entries placed out of sequence in the dated accounts were usually awry by only a few days or weeks; those awry by several months were almost always placed by scribes in blank spaces near the bottom of membranes when they ran out of room elsewhere.¹⁹⁴ Occasionally clerks made mistakes in dating by putting in the wrong regnal year or noting arrivals "on the same day" of an entry they had forgotten to date.¹⁹⁵ In general, however, they carefully recorded dates of arrival, going so far as to cancel whole entries and remove them to another account if they had not been included in the correct accounting year.¹⁹⁶

The form and content of each entry differ little from the earlier entries in the mayor's court rolls, although they are even more formulaic. Almost all entries commence with the phrase "Ship that is called [ship name] of [home port] docked". Some continue with "at Topsham" as in the entries in the mayor's courts, while others add "at Exmouth" instead; in the accounts, the two locations were used interchangeably to refer to the jurisdiction of the port of Exeter rather than discrete landing places.¹⁹⁷ The date of the entry came next, followed by a summary of the cargo (for large cargoes of wine and other goods)¹⁹⁸ and then lists of the individual importers and their imports. After enumerating the cargo, the scribe noted the shipmaster's name, followed by information about the customs if owed. This final section also recorded the names of the pledges and annotations regarding collection and receipt of the sums owed. Similar comments about the collection of customs were also entered in the left-hand margin, along with the name of the main cargo.¹⁹⁹

Besides the standard information about ships and imports offered in each entry, the accounts also contain other types of annotations. Miscellaneous scribal scribbles or notes appear on some membranes, referring to such matters as custom collected on woad carried beyond the city gate, a pending trespass case, or money received by the city clerk for one term.²⁰⁰ A second group of annotations comments on the accounts themselves. They mark off sections of the account dealing

¹⁹⁴ For example, the entry of 19 August 1304 placed at the bottom of m. 30 (below, p 82) should have come at the end of m. 30d but the scribe ran out of room and so wrote this entry in the blank space remaining at the bottom of m. 30. A similar situation occurred for the August entry noted at the bottom of m. 19 (below, p 151).

¹⁹⁵ Below, p 96 and 140.

¹⁹⁶ Below, p 85.

¹⁹⁷ See the sample account in Appendix 1 for the variations in phrasing. See also above, p 33.

¹⁹⁸ Such summaries do not always match the contents of the cargo, an indication of the faulty arithmetic of the scribes or customs collectors.

¹⁹⁹ Since the marginal notations often repeated information in the text of the account, they have here been included in the custom section of each entry. See also Appendix 1, below, for examples of the marginal notes in the account of 1310/11.

²⁰⁰ See below, pp 107, 134, 147; for the city clerk, see also Appendix 2, pp 211-12, below. Another such scribble is the *Universis* written at the bottom of m. 11 (p 196, below).

with vintage or racked wines,²⁰¹ give directions to look on the other side of the membrane for the continuation of the account,²⁰² note the number of membranes in the account for a particular year,²⁰³ refer to a certain cargo of a particular importer,²⁰⁴ point to difficulties collecting customs from certain importers,²⁰⁵ or record the number of tresses (a measure) in a horseload to help calculate the custom owed on a cargo of garlic.²⁰⁶ A third group of annotations refers to the regnal year of particular accounts and were generally written at the bottom of membranes. One in 1304/5 was accompanied by the name of Robert Newton, that year's receiver (the chief financial officer of the city who was ultimately responsible for the collection and reporting of the port customs).²⁰⁷ The two longest dating annotations appear together on a piece of parchment sewn onto the end of membrane 19d to serve as the cover to Customs Roll 1 when rolled up. Both were written in a later hand, one of the fifteenth century and the other probably of the sixteenth; these annotations show that the customs rolls were examined in later times.²⁰⁸

The fourth group of annotations were also written at a much later date and are particularly interesting for the hints they provide as to why these accounts were preserved for so many centuries. All refer to a search made of the customs accounts for importers from Taunton in order to discern whether they were free of custom in Exeter. Three consist only of a hand with a finger pointing to an entry noting an importer from Taunton; a fourth such hand occurs on the bottom of one membrane with the note that this mark indicates Taunton importers.²⁰⁹ Two other accounts simply contain the word "scrutinized" near the start of the account; one of these also ends with the

²⁰¹ Below, pp 113, 116, 142, 156, 174.

²⁰² Below, p 145.

²⁰³ Below, p 85.

²⁰⁴ Below, p 145.

²⁰⁵ Marks, perhaps meant to be a single pointing finger, were drawn both over the names of some importers and in the left-hand margins of the wine accounts of 1322/3-1326/7 (mm. 10-10d, 8, 5, 4, 2, not printed here). They probably referred to importers from Topsham or Newton Abbot who, as noted at the bottom of m. 5, were not paying custom, thereby decreasing the amount the city rendered to the earl of Devon for his share of the wine custom.

²⁰⁶ Below, p 82. The sum of £2,470 17s noted in the account of 1304/5 (below, p 89) was too large to refer to the local customs (which in any case were never assessed by value of the goods). It probably pertains to the new custom administered by the national customs system starting in 1303; this valuation would have rendered a custom of about £31 at the going rate of 3d in the pound (Gras, *Early English Customs*, p 66). See also below, pp 39-43 for the relationship between the local and national customs accounts.

²⁰⁷ Below, p 99; for the other such dating clauses, see below, pp 111, 121, 130, 147, 164. For the role of the receiver in the collection of port customs, see also below, Appendix 2.

²⁰⁸ Below, p 152. Note also the "Customs" written at the bottom of m. 31d (below, p 80) which contains the earliest account in the roll.

²⁰⁹ Below, pp 127-8, 130. Note also the memo on p 164 that simply states "Taunton" in the same late hand that wrote the other memoranda.

note "scrutinized and nothing found".²¹⁰ The hand of the annotations is much later than those that compiled the accounts; it probably dates from the fifteenth century, a time when Taunton merchants were complaining that they were unfairly being charged custom at Exeter.²¹¹ Their complaints seem to have led to a legal suit which prompted the Exeter officials to search their old customs rolls for evidence; such suits and searches help to explain why the city kept its customs rolls for so long.

The local accounts of Exeter are fuller and considerably more accurate than the national port customs accounts, as a comparison of the two types of accounts illustrates. In the early fourteenth century, national port customs were only charged on certain goods: exports of wool, wool-fells and hides by both denizens and aliens, exports of certain goods like cloth and corn by aliens, and imports of wine and other merchandise by aliens. Since Exeter only kept track of imports and the royal customers only noted alien trade, comparisons must focus on alien imports and importers recorded in the two sets of accounts. The surviving national and local accounts for the port of Exeter overlap for only a few years during this period; they cover wine imports for two and one-half years from 5 March 1323 to 29 September 1325,²¹² and other merchandise for slightly over three years from 3 February 1323 to 26 May 1326.²¹³

All but three of the 54 alien importers noted in the national accounts can be located in the local port customs accounts; the three who are untraceable may have appeared in the two missing or torn

²¹⁰ Below, pp 80, 111, 135; a similar annotation appears at the top of PCA 1329/30 (wine account). An annotation in the margin of the account of 1322/3 (Roll 1, m. 9) regarding the liberty of Taunton may also have been written in the fifteenth century.

²¹¹ Several Taunton residents wrote a petition, complaining about the unfair tolls they were charged at Exeter, to an unnamed bishop of Winchester who was also chancellor of England at the time; this probably refers to Henry de Beaufort c. 1413–17 (PRO C 1/6/329). Although Taunton was not specifically noted on the list of custom-free places kept by the city, its residents should have been free of custom by virtue of their status as tenants of the bishop of Winchester; see above, pp 13–14 for a discussion of toll exemptions at Exeter.

²¹² The national accounts are in PRO E 122/40/7A/2 (5 March 1323–30 April 1324), E 122/40/7B/3 (30 April 1324–29 September 1324; printed in Gras, *Early English Customs*, pp 397–8), and E 122/40/7B/6 (27 November 1324–29 September 1325; printed in Gras, *Early English Customs*, p 398). The accounts do not cover the two-month period from 30 September–28 November 1324 (although they should have been included in Richard le Seler's account of E 122/40/7B/6), but they can otherwise be compared with the wine accounts in PCA 1322/3, 1323/4, 1324/5 (PCA Roll 1, mm. 5–10, not printed here). Note, however, that the second half of the local wine account of 1324/5 seems to be missing (above, n. 182 and below, n. 214).

²¹³ PRO E 122/40/7A/3 (3 February 1323 to 30 April 1324), E 122/40/7B/2 (30 April 1324 to 15 April 1325; printed in Gras, *Early English Customs*, p 395), and E 122/40/7B/4 (15 April 1325 to 26 May 1326; printed in Gras, *Early English Customs*, p 396). These accounts can be compared with PCA 1322/3, 1323/4, 1324/5 and 1325/6 (PCA Roll 1, mm. 3–10, not printed here).

sections of the local accounts.²¹⁴ Over half of the "arrival" dates of the alien cargoes in the national accounts match those given in the local accounts, but eleven are later (usually by a few days or weeks) and one is earlier.²¹⁵ The earlier dates noted in the local accounts suggest that the local customers (i.e., the customs officials) did their job more quickly than those assessing customs for the king. Similar discrepancies in the naming of cargoes also point to the greater efficiency of the local customers. Four of the fifteen wine cargos were underestimated in the national accounts,²¹⁶ and ten of the 35 merchandise cargos omitted commodities noted in the local accounts for these alien importers.²¹⁷ The national customs officials also had a tendency to conflate the cargoes of merchants who imported goods on several different ships in one year. For example, while the local customers carefully noted the three cargoes of corn imported by Astoricus de Sergynole on three ships that all docked at different times, the national customers listed Sergynole only once for a cargo of corn worth £176 (probably the aggregate value of all three grain shipments).²¹⁸

The most compelling evidence of the relative accuracy of the local accounts, however, shows up in the large number of alien importers and their cargoes who were recorded in the local port customs, but escaped enumeration altogether in the national accounts. Many of

²¹⁴ Raymond Manent was charged custom for 10½ tuns of wine on 2 August 1325 (PRO E 122/40/7B/3); unfortunately, the wine account of PCA 1324/5 seems to be missing for the months of January–September 1325; see also above, notes 182 and 212, for the other inconsistencies in this particular E 122 account. An unnamed importer of 21½ tuns of wine on 23 September 1325 (PRO E 122/40/7B/6) would also have been on this missing portion of the account. Bertram de Campeneys was customed for woad worth £70 on 10 May 1326 (PRO E 122/7B/4); he may have been noted on a torn and illegible section of the wine account of PCA 1325/6 (PCA Roll 1, m. 4) which notes the arrival of several ships in May, at least one carrying woad (the *Nicholas* of Exmouth). See also below, n. 220, for another possible explanation of this missing cargo.

²¹⁵ The term used in the national accounts was *adduxit* while the local accounts employed *applicavit*; both refer to arrivals but probably relate to the day the ship and its contents were customed. In the one instance of an earlier "arrival" date in the national accounts, the local officials customed a cargo (PCA 1325/6) 23 days after it had been registered in PRO E 122/40/7B/4. In the eleven other cases, the dates in the local accounts were earlier by 3, 5, 6, 8, 14, 16, 17, 30, and 36 days, and twice by one year. In these last two instances (both in PRO E 122/40/7B/3), the day and month but not the year of arrival matched in both sets of accounts; it is probable that the customers noted the wrong regnal year, a likely occurrence in this mistake-ridden account which also notes smaller cargoes for two of the importers and includes one entry (for Raymond Manent on 2 August 1325) which cannot be traced in PCA 1324/5 (see above, n. 214). The discrepancies were of 1, 2, 10 and 20 tuns.

²¹⁷ These items were usually wool or linen cloth (both of which were subject to new custom); alum, bacons, spices, and canvas were other imports not recorded by the national customers but noted in the local accounts. Only once did the local accounts fail to name a commodity mentioned in the national accounts: garlic that accompanied a cargo of onions (that was noted). For custom on goods other than wine, the national accounts only named the commodity imported and its value so it is not possible to compare amounts as with the wine imports.

²¹⁸ PCA 1322/3 (Roll 1, m. 9); PRO E 122/40/7A/3. The royal customers probably grouped his imports together because the three ships arrived within days of each other and he was sole importer on all three ships.

these alien importers can be identified because they were customed elsewhere in the national accounts; thus the royal customers taxed Martin de Vermuwe (probably from Bermeo in Spain) for a cargo of fruit in 1326, but never noted his salt imports in 1323.²¹⁹ Similarly, they recorded two woad cargoes of Bertram de Campeneys in 1326, but failed to custom three other imports of woad under his name in 1324 and 1325.²²⁰ The royal customers also omitted the 15 tuns of wine imported by Raymond de Vyngan of Bayonne, as well as the cargoes of many other importers whose surnames and trading activities make it likely that they were aliens rather than denizens.²²¹

Many other examples of gaps in the national accounts could be given. Their omissions and inaccuracies may have been the result of fraud, collusion between collectors and merchants, or simply the neglect, inefficiency, and lack of supervision of the royal customs collectors.²²² The local men appointed to these unpaid offices (generally prominent citizens whose high positions in city government brought them to the attention of the king) had little to lose if their accounts were not particularly accurate.²²³ Indeed, they had much to gain from temporarily using the money they collected for their own interests, charging special fees, accepting bribes to overlook customs owed, omitting their own customable cargoes from the accounts, and even committing embezzlement for their own profit. The three Exeter men who acted as royal customs collectors during this period were all wealthy members of the ruling oligarchy who served in the city's highest offices during the same years they were responsible for collecting royal custom at the port.²²⁴ Thomas Fartheyn and Henry Lovecok served as royal customers for almost nine years, and Richard le Selser for two years, with no complaints lodged against them.²²⁵

²¹⁹ PRO E 122/40/7B/4; PCA 1322/3 (Roll 1, m. 9: salt imported on 22 June 1323).

²²⁰ PRO E 122/40/7B/4; this account also contains a woad cargo belonging to Campeneys that could not be located in PCA 1325/6 (Roll 1, m. 4) for the reasons noted above, n. 214. It is possible that the national customers recorded an extra cargo of woad under his name to make up for all the cargoes they had missed in previous years; see PCA Roll 1, m. 7 (18 April 1324) and m. 6 (23 April 1325 and 12 May 1325). It is also possible that the customers conflated his various woad imports as they did for Astoricus de Sergynole (above, p 40).

²²¹ PCA 1324/5 (Roll 1, m. 5).

²²² Baker, *English Customs Service*, discusses these problems at length, although he concentrates primarily on the export accounts.

²²³ Baker, *English Customs Service*, esp. pp 9-12, 20-23, 33. Before 1294, collectors were often appointed locally (Baker, *ibid*, p 7, n. 19); see MCR 1299/1300, m. 26 for the local appointment at Exeter of a searcher to supervise the traffic in money.

²²⁴ PRO E 122/40/7A, 7B; Baker, *English Customs Service*, p 66. They were Thomas Fartheyn (elector 14 times, steward 8 times, receiver once, councillor once from 1307 to 1327), Henry Lovecok (elector 31 times, steward three times from 1304 to 1339), and Richard le Selser (elector 27 times, steward 4 times, councillor twice and mayor once between 1301 and 1343); see MCR election returns and below, Appendix 2. In 1332, Henry Lovecok paid 40d and Richard le Selser 10s in the lay subsidy (*Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, p 110).

²²⁵ For the fraud of royal customers at Exeter later in the fourteenth century, see CPR 1367-70, p 52; PRO E 159/169 Easter recorda, m. 38 and E 159/171 Easter recorda, mm. 84-84d (failure to account for wool exports in 1391-2); E 159/171 Michaelmas communia, m. 1d (dispute on gauging wine in 1394).

Since they had limited personal involvement in maritime trade, they may have been more conscientious than their counterparts elsewhere who had more of a vested interest in the assessment of national customs.²²⁶

The local customs officials had better reasons to keep careful accounts. Their activities took place under the watchful eyes of fellow citizens who were ready to report inconsistencies or frauds that would decrease the amounts collected for the city. Indeed, the Exeter authorities were quick to fine any burgesses who infringed the city's privileges at the port, even if they were wealthy members of the city's ruling oligarchy.²²⁷ The receiver, the civic officer ultimately responsible for reporting the sums collected from local customs, was also elected annually, thereby ensuring not only that he did not grow comfortable in office, but also that several men would be familiar with the duties attached to the post. The efforts taken by the city to secure customs jurisdiction over the whole Exe estuary also prompted extra vigilance on the part of local officials; indeed, given the control exercised by the city of Exeter over shipping along the entire length of the estuary, it is unlikely that many ships and cargoes escaped the notice of the authorities.²²⁸

The officials of the national customs system also seem to have recognized the greater accuracy of the local accounts, going so far as to check their own accounts against those compiled for the town customs. In the last part of the local wine account of 1322/3, for example, an X was placed over the names of alien wine importers, as if checking off their names and imports. These same importers were listed in the corresponding national account as well; the dates of arrival, ship names, home ports, importers, and tunnage match exactly, normally a very unusual occurrence.²²⁹ Similar markings placed in the margin next to certain ships in the merchandise account of 1319/20 suggest the same practice, since they also accompanied

²²⁶ In 1302-21, example, Fartheyn appeared once as an importer, Lovcok three times, and Seler five times. None of these men ever appeared in the extant national customs. Other local men appointed as royal customs collectors were, however, more actively involved in maritime trade; Walter de Langedon and Michael Toraud (*CFR*, 1307-19, pp 9, 78) are two examples. Toraud also served as city receiver (see below, Appendix 2).

²²⁷ See, for example, the wealthy citizens assessed heavy fines for unloading wines at the wrong place in MCR 1288/9, m. 6d (below, p 49).

²²⁸ Above, pp 1-7.

²²⁹ These marks first appear in 24 April 1323 and go to the end of the account on 29 September 1323 (PCA Roll 1, m. 10); these dates correspond to those covered by the wine account in PRO E 122/40/7A/2 that starts 5 March 1323 and ends 30 April 1324. No such markings appear, however, in the wine account of 1323/4 (PCA Roll 1, m. 8) which covered the same period as this national account. It is also significant that the two alien wine shipments noted in this national account that appeared elsewhere (merchandise account of 1322/3 in PCA Roll 1, m. 9, and the wine account of 1323/4 on m. 8) were not marked with an X and were recorded as smaller shipments than noted in the local accounts.

entries about alien imports.²³⁰ These marks on the local customs account clearly show that it was used to check the accuracy of the national account (or even to compile it in the first place). Other annotations in the local accounts, such as the customs valuation at the bottom of one membrane and the reference to a pledge for custom owed to the king, also show an overlap between the local and national customs systems.²³¹ Over 150 years later the national customs system again recognized the greater accuracy of the local customers at Exeter. In 1476, suspicious of the work of the royal customers in Devon, the royal exchequer ordered the city to send a copy of its local account to Westminster to allow them to use it as the controlment account (the account compiled by the controller to check the accuracy of the collectors' account) for that year.²³² This use of the local accounts by the royal customs system, like the searches conducted to find evidence for legal disputes, also helps to explain why the Exeter local port customs accounts were for so long retained by the city. The local accounts of Exeter thus not only provide unusual information about the coasting and overseas trade, but also detail this trade with unusual accuracy.

TRANSLATION AND EDITING PRACTICE

The translated accounts that follow are divided into two parts that correspond to the two types of sources recording the entries of ships. The first (pp 47–69) includes memoranda of ships unloading cargoes that were enrolled on the dorses of the Exeter mayor's court rolls. Because the ship entries recorded in these memoranda are usually short and laconic and because the style of enrolment was still evolving, the translation offered here aims to convey the format and wording of the originals as much as possible. Entries containing long lists of importers, however, are recorded in tabular form for easier comprehension. Since the entries were often scribbled at the bottom of the membrane and rarely noted when the ship had docked, the date of the court under which the entry was enrolled offers us the only clue as to when the ship arrived at the port.

²³⁰ Five entries in the local account ranging in date from 25 February 1320 to 23 August 1320 contain an X in the left-hand margin; see below, pp 182–3, 185–6. Within this period, however, there were also alien importers who had no such mark near their entry; see, for example, the Caen importer on p 184. Unfortunately, no national account survives for this year so the correspondence between the two accounts cannot be checked. An X was also placed next to an entry in the wine account of 1318/19 (below, p 164) but the importers on this ship seem to include no aliens; the X may have been meant to draw attention to the unpaid custom noted there.

²³¹ For the valuation, see below, p 89 (and above, n. 206). For the pledge who stood for both local custom and “the new custom of the lord king if it ought to be rendered”, see below, p 77. Both references came shortly after the new (and more complicated) custom of 1303 was introduced, which may account for the unusual intrusion of the national customs system into the local accounts.

²³² Izacke, *Remarkable Antiquities*, p 89.

The second part (pp 71–20) includes twelve extant accounts dated from 1302/3 to 1320/1 that appear in Roll 1 of the Exeter local port customs accounts. By this time the style of entry was established and the information offered was generally quite full, although arrival dates were still not always stated. From 1310/11, the accounts themselves were usually divided into two separate sections: one for wine and the other for woad and other merchandise. Because the entries had become so stereotyped, they are translated here into a tabular form that preserves the order of the entry, with two exceptions. First, the name of the shipmaster is given after the ship's name, whereas in the original it normally came after all the importers and their cargoes had been listed. The other exception concerns the custom section which here includes information drawn both from the very end of the entry (which usually offers the names of the pledges for the custom) and from the left-hand margin (which normally contains the amount of custom). No attempt has been made to distinguish marginal from textual annotations concerning custom pledges or amounts, in part because they often repeat the same information on the amount of customs and its collection. The membranes are also rearranged so that the entries appear, as much as possible, in chronological order, with the wine account preceding the merchandise account.

The following principles have been followed in editing both sets of accounts. *Names* of ships are preserved in the original Latin and italicized in the text. Some of their standardized equivalents may be found in the Index. The type of ship and the definite article preceding the ship's name are in lower case but the ship's name is capitalized. All places and forenames are anglicized and modernized, but surnames are left in their original spellings and unidentified or now lost places are italicized and spelt as they appear in the Latin original. The definite articles contained in some surnames are all given here in lower case. Forenames abbreviated by one letter have been left as they appear in the original, but the extended form of surnames ending in an apostrophe has been supplied when the spelling is known from other entries.

Numerals in the original appear as Roman but are here rendered in Arabic. Except for the halfpenny (½d) and farthing (¼d), all sums of money are translated as they appear in the text. *Dates* in the translation are supplied in modern form, except for those stated in the headings to the individual accounts. Fiscal years are noted with a slash separating the two years (e.g., 1302/3); the city accounts and court rolls usually run from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.

Punctuation in the originals is very inconsistent and often lacking altogether. While some attempt has been made to preserve the spirit of the punctuation in the early mayor's court roll entries, punctuation is kept to a minimum in the translation of Roll 1 in favour of a more accessible tabular format.

Erasures and emendations to the text (such as words crossed out) are indicated in the footnotes, as are underlined words. Empty square brackets ([]) indicate places where the scribe deliberately left a black space in the manuscript.

Later additions to the text, normally written in another hand than that which wrote the original entry, are enclosed in curly brackets. It is unlikely, however, that all such additions have been identified since later insertions in the hand of the clerk who wrote the original entry are difficult to spot unless obviously written in a different ink. See below, Appendix 2, for a discussion of these additions.

Interlineations and superscript annotations are enclosed within round brackets and placed as close as possible to where they appear in the text. Those that were clearly inserted at a later date are enclosed in curly brackets.

Illegible or missing words are designated by three stops (...). When the transcription of a word is uncertain because of a stain or tear in the manuscript, a question mark enclosed in round brackets (?) follows the word. When the translation is uncertain, a question mark has been added at the end of the relevant translation and the Latin passage enclosed in square brackets.

Editorial insertions and extensions are enclosed in square brackets. Difficult or interesting words and passages are given in the original Latin, italicized, and enclosed within square brackets after the English translation.

Weights and measures have all been translated except for those with no known English equivalent. The C and M are used here to mean either the hundredweight and thousandweight, or the hundred and thousand by tale for commodities which are not expressed in any other measure; the original wording has been provided for ambiguous cases. Appendix 3, below, provides a glossary of weights and measures.