Chapter 2: Bristol's International Shipping Market, 1539-1546

Demand for Bristol's shipping came from three sources: commerce, the Crown and privateers. Since they all had calls on Bristol's marine during the period under study, a complete examination of the shipping market will need to consider the level and timing of demand from all of these sources. However, since commerce was the mainstay of the industry, the analysis will concentrate on the demand for shipping generated by Bristol's own trade. Fortunately, it is not necessary to consider the demand for shipping at other English ports for, although Bristol's greatest ship, the *Saviour*, was sometimes chartered out to the London-Levant trade, it appears to have been unusual for Bristol ships to service the trade of other ports.[1] The market for Bristol's shipping was thus effectively the same as Bristol's shipping market.

The examination of the demand for commercial shipping will begin by considering the trades that the shipping industry serviced and the background of the merchants who bought the freight space. Once this has been completed an analysis will be made of the structure and scale of Bristol's shipping market in the different branches of the city's trade.

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[1] Apart from Bristol there were four other port-authorities in the west of England / Wales for the collection of Crown customs. With the exception of Bristol, all had sub-ports where customs could also be collected. The ports and sub-ports were: Bridgwater (sub-port Minehead), Plymouth (sub-ports Looe, Fowey, Truro, Penryn, Mount's Bay, Saint Ives, Padstow), Exeter (sub-ports: Dartmouth, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe) and Poole (sub-ports: Lulworth, Weymouth, Lyme). Yet in the thirteen customs accounts surviving from Plymouth, Exeter and Poole for the years 1539-46, there are only two references to Bristol ships. These are the *Mary Fortune*, which left Plymouth on 7 September 1540, and the *Nicholas* which entered Ilfracombe on 15 January 1543: P.R.O. E122 206/9, 116/11, 116/13, 116/16, 201/10, 201/11, 43/14, 43/15, 43/17, 43/19, 207/4, 207/5, 207/6. The nearest port to Bristol was Bridgwater, from which five accounts (1538/39, 1540/41, 1541/42, 1544/45, 1545/46) survive for the period under study: P.R.O. E122 200/2, 27/15, 27/18, 27/21, 27/24. Of these, three (1540/41, 1544/5 and 1545/6) contain no references to Bristol ships. The remaining two (1538/39 and 1540/41) contain a total of seventeen references to Bristol ships – most of which deal with the export of beans: App. 6, *Magdalen*, *Mary Bu'ke*, *Mary George* (1), *Nicholas* (2), *Trinity More*, *Primrose*, *Sunday*. These entries demonstrate that there was nothing to stop Bristol ships from servicing other English ports. Nevertheless, while the five accounts indicate that the total value of Bridgwater's trade carried by Bristol ships was £161, the value of the Bristol's trade conducted by Bristol ships in the three surviving accounts of the 1540s was £16,665. Bristol's shipping thus had a very limited involvement in the trade of other western ports. For the reference to the chartering of the *Saviour*, see Appendix 6.

The Overseas Trade of Bristol

The most useful sources for the study of Bristol's overseas trade are the customs accounts – three of which survive intact from the 1540s. The accounts detail all the declared international trade of the eastern end of the Bristol Channel, for any goods entering or leaving England from this region were meant to pass through, and be recorded at, the customs house in Bristol. The surviving accounts run from October to September and cover the year's 1541/2, 1542/3 and 1545/6.[2] The data from these accounts was fed into a computerised data-base and all the statistical analysis of the customs accounts is derived from this. Nevertheless, although the customs accounts constitute an invaluable source, they do not tell the whole story, for not all of Bristol's trade was legally declared. The examination of Bristol's overseas trade will therefore also consider the nature and significance of city's illicit trading activities.

During the sixteenth century, Bristol's international trade focussed almost exclusively on three areas: Biscay, south-west Iberia and Ireland.[3] For practical purposes these can be divided into the Continental trade and the Irish trade. This makes a natural division, for while there was a considerable overlap between the commodities, shipping and personnel involved in the trades to Biscay and southern Iberia, the Irish trade involved a distinct set of commodities, smaller ships and a generally separate set of merchants. Since the division between these trades was marked, it is possible to determine from the customs accounts whether a ship was engaged in the Continental or Irish trade - even though the customs accounts of this period do not specifically state where a ship was sailing to or from. The method by which the journeys were identified as Irish or Continental is described in Appendix 4 and the division provides the basis for much of the following analysis of both Bristol's trade and its shipping market.

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[2] P.R.O. E122 21/10, 199/4, 21/15. An additional account, covering the period 1543/4, also survives: E122 21/12. However, since it is badly damaged, it can only be examined under direct supervised access and is in too poor a condition to be microfilmed, it was not possible to add the information in it to the main data-base.

[3] Vanes, *Overseas Trade,* pp. 13-25.

The Declared Trades

As stated, Bristol's Continental trade focused on two areas: Biscay and south-west Iberia. Imports from Biscay consisted of wine from Gascony, woad and salt from south-west France and iron from Guipuzcoa in northern Spain. Imports from southern Portugal and Andalusia consisted largely of wines, oil, soap, Azores woad and fruit. In return, Bristol exported cloth, lead, and leather. The composition and value of this trade, as represented by the customs accounts, is provided below.[4] The tables indicate the value of all items that accounted for at least one per cent of total trade during this period. The full tables are provided in Appendix 5.

Table 2.1 – Imports from the Continent to Bristol, in £ Sterling: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Summary Table	*1541/2 £*	*1542/3 £*	*1545/6 £*		Total £ for 3 years	% Total for 3 years
Wine	6222	4230	7929		18381	56
Iron	2096	1390	1753		5239	16
Woad	2115	281	668		3064	9
Olive Oil	855	140	1194		2189	7
Fruit	315	364	313		992	3
Salt	160	84	414		658	2
Soap	263	128	243		634	2
Newfoundland Fish	414	1	0		415	1
Miscellaneous	400	164	624		1188	4
Total Value	12840	6781	13138		32758	100

[4] The customs accounts provide nominal valuations for all goods except wine, tanned hides and woollen cloth paying custom. However, since the nominal values of goods had been set in the 15th century, inflation meant that by the early 1540s the real value of trade was probably at least twice that indicated by the customs accounts. For instance, while imported iron was valued at £2 10s. per ton, Smyth was selling it in Bristol for around £6 per ton, while olive oil, valued at £5 per tun, was being sold for £12-15 per ton: *Smyth's Ledger*, fos. 53, 84, 127, 178. Exports were also generally more expensive – for instance calf-skins, valued at 3s. 4d. per dozen, cost Smyth around 6s. per dozen in the early 1540s: *ibid*., fos. 6, 31. In order to provide an impression of the relative importance of wine and woollen cloth in Bristol's import and export trades, these commodities have been allocated nominal values of £4 per tun for wine and £2 per cloth of assize. These nominal values are the same as those adopted by Wendy Childs in her study of the Bristol-Ireland trade of the late 15th century: W. R. Childs, 'Ireland's trade with England in the later middle ages', *Irish Economic and Social History*, IX (1982), pp. 18 n.17, 21. In reality Smyth sold wine for around £5-7 per tun in Bristol and broadcloths cost him £3-4 each: *Smyth's Ledger*, fos. 4, 38, 144, 145. Tanned hides are valued at £1 per dicker. This seems appropriate given that hides normally cost Smyth around 40-50s. per dicker: *ibid*. fos. 6, 31.

Table 2.2 – Exports from Bristol to the Continent, in £ Sterling: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Summary Table	1541/2 £	1542/3 £	1545/6 £		Total £ for 3 years	% Total for 3 years
Cloth paying custom	3466	2844	5139		11449	54
Cloth paying poundage	358	505	1878		2742	13
Lead	1018	478	3773		5270	25
Hides	124	183	925		1234	6
Calf Skins	19	141	275		435	2
Misc.	52	55	90		197	1
Total Value	5037	4207	12080		21323	100

There was nothing particularly innovative about this pattern of trade, which, in its essentials, was similar to that described by Carus-Wilson in her studies of Bristol's late medieval trade.[5]

The Irish trade during the 1540s also appears to have been following a pattern that was typical for its century. Commerce was conducted primarily with Ireland's southern ports such as Waterford, Ross and Youghal. Imports from Ireland consisted almost exclusively of a cheap frieze cloth called Check, in addition to fish, animal skins and Irish mantles. In return Bristol sent Ireland a wide range of both English goods and Continental re-exports. Although the 1541/2 customs account also records some significant exports of arable produce (hereafter referred to as grain), this was atypical and appears to have been prompted by the high demands for foodstuffs created by England's campaign in Ireland.[6] As with the Continental trade, the tables 2.3 and 2.4 indicate those items that accounted for at least one percent of the total import or export trade. The full tables are provided in Appendix 5.

[5] E. M. Carus Wilson, 'The overseas trade of Bristol' in E. Power and M. M. Postan (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp. 183-246

[6] During this year just over half the grain exported (worth £83 10s.) was exported tax exempt under the name of Sir Anthony St. Ledger, the Governor of Ireland: P.R.O. E122 21/10.

Table 2.3 – Imports from Ireland to Bristol, in £ Sterling: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Summary Table	1541/2 £	1542/3 £	1545/6 £		Total £ for 3 years	% Total for 3 years
Check Cloth	2084	1187	891		4161	42
Other Cloth	110	6	36		152	2
Mantles	238	211	284		733	7
Hake	317	382	296		995	10
Herring	509	234	352		1094	11
Salmon	419	54	273		746	7
Other Fish	100	39	32		171	2
Sheep Skins	325	211	291		827	8
Lamb Skins	103	180	218		500	5
Salted Skins	11	102	5		119	1
Other Skins	37	28	82		147	1
Wine	35	67	0		102	1
Misc.	61	43	113		217	2
Total Value	4348	2742	2872		9962	100

Table 2.4 – Exports from Bristol to Ireland, in £ Sterling: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Summary Table	1541/2 £	1542/3 £	1545/6 £		Total £ for 3 years	% Total for 3 years
Cloth Paying Custom	685	478	479		1642	28
Cloth Paying Poundage	15	6	9		30	1
Silk	340	243	302		885	15
Clothing	25	13	26		63	1
Points	83	60	81		224	4
Coloured Skins	43	22	23		88	1
Pillions	29	13	26		69	1
Aniseed	17	71	61		149	3
Saffron	271	269	417		957	16
Other Spices	18	19	27		64	1
Beans, Malt & Wheat	166	21	0		187	3
Hops	26	8	64		98	2
Wine	2	6	132		140	2
Corrupt Wine	40	23	47		110	2
Salt	0	75	43		118	2
Iron	41	91	139		271	5
Knives	141	95	119		356	6
Millstones	0	27	61		88	1
Misc.	115	86	129		330	6
Total Value	2058	1625	2186		5869	100

Of the two branches of Bristol's trade, the Continental was the most important, accounting for 74% of total trade in 1541/2, 72% in 1542/3 and 84% in 1545/6. In both the Irish and the Continental trades the customs accounts suggest the value of imports exceeded that of exports - in the Continental by 54%, in the Irish by 70%.

Turning from the goods traded to the merchants who bought the freight space, it may be noted that one of the long-standing features of Bristol's Continental trade was the extent to which it was dominated by English merchants in general and Bristol merchants in particular.[7] The table and graph below illustrate the level of control exerted over the Continental trade over the three years for which complete customs accounts survive.[8]

Table 2.5 – Control of the Continental Trade by Bristol, Other Indigenous and Alien Merchants: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6 [9]

Year & Month	Bristol £	Other £	Alien £	Year & Month	Bristol £	Other £	Alien £	Year & Month	Bristol £	Other £	Alien £
1541/10	356	10	268	1542/10	234	49	67	1545/10	331	25	3361
1541/11	3242	296	31	1542/11	0	2	0	1545/11	750	80	1390
1541/12	2461	394	44	1542/12	174	0	0	1545/12	691	5	745
1542/1	403	61	8	1543/1	336	99	0	1546/1	822	266	262
1542/2	1818	13	3	1543/2	4098	385	249	1546/2	1494	246	1745
1542/3	599	4	110	1543/3	231	1	94	1546/3	2900	1058	1391
1542/4	884	186	26	1543/4	106	60	2	1546/4	440	129	28
1542/5	1012	35	69	1543/5	0	68	0	1546/5	771	69	787
1542/6	1273	133	227	1543/6	0	19	0	1546/6	331	32	89
1542/7	1142	75	262	1543/7	1641	76	361	1546/7	617	27	468
1542/8	883	281	250	1543/8	0	2	0	1546/8	730	188	637
1542/9	2634	77	593	1543/9	182	0	166	1546/9	1492	380	441

[7] Carus Wilson, 'The overseas trade of Bristol' p. 183; G. Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English Trade with Spain in the early Tudor Period* (London, 1954), p. 9

[8] Since the customs accounting year started on 28 September and several Bristol ships left Bristol on 30 September 1542, carrying goods worth £2,287, the total recorded trade for the twelve month period October-September 1541/2 and 1542/3, does not match the earlier tables 2.1 and 2.2.

[9] Merchants were identified as being from Bristol if their names either matched those identified as Bristol men in John Smyth's ledger or if their names appear in a list, included with the ledger, which suggests merchants who should be admitted to Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers. This was established in 1552: *Smyth's Ledger*. Since the list was compiled some years after the customs accounts under examination, and it seems improbable that Smyth would have mentioned every Bristol merchant involved in international trade in his ledger, some of the individuals included as 'other indigenous' were probably also from Bristol.

Figure 2.1 - Control of the Continental Trade by Bristol, Other Indigenous and Alien Merchants: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

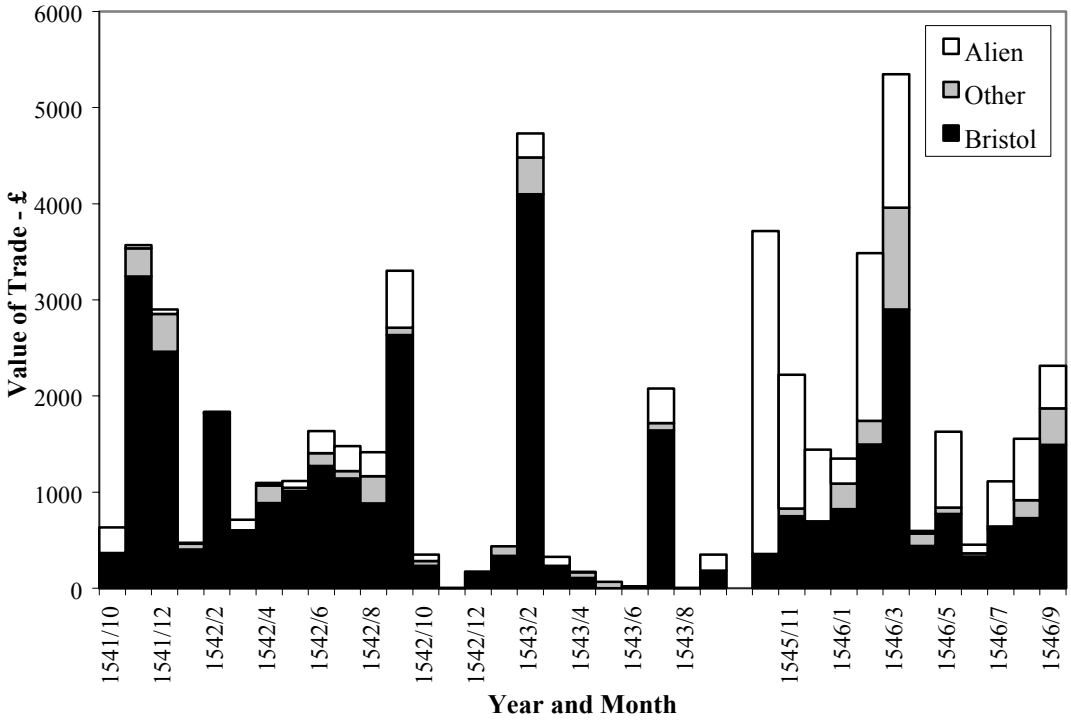

Table 2.5 and figure 2.1 indicate that the vast majority of Bristol's Continental trade was in the hands of Bristol merchants during the years 1541/2 and 1542/3. This was significant for Bristol's shipowners because, as will be seen in chapter 3, there were reasons why Bristol merchants should favour the use of Bristol owned ships. By 1545/6 the percentage of trade in the hands of foreign merchants had grown, since piracy in the English Channel, associated with England's war with France, meant that it became safer for Imperial merchants to dispatch their goods by way of the Bristol Channel. However, the greater control of Bristol's trade by alien merchants was of little significance to Bristol shipowners for, as will be seen in chapter 4, until June 1546 Bristol ships had little involvement in Continental commerce.

Like the Continental trade, the Irish trade was almost entirely in the hands of indigenous merchants in the period 1541-1543. Yet, unlike the Continental trade, foreign merchants did not increase their share of the Bristol-Ireland trade during 1545/6. The almost absolute control by indigenous merchants during the 1540s is illustrated by Table 2.6, which records the amount of customs paid by indigenous and foreign merchants.

Table 2.6 – Control of the Irish Trade by Bristol, Other Indigenous and Alien Merchants: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Year	Bristol £	Other £	Alien £	Total £
Annual Total:1541-2	938	5467	0	6405
Annual Total:1542-3	459	3901	8	4368
Annual Total:1545-6	780	4276	2	5058
Total £ for 3 years	2176	13645	10	15831
% Total for 3 years	13.75	86.19	0.06	100

Although the customs accounts indicate that the Irish trade was almost entirely controlled by indigenous merchants it is difficult to ascertain where in the British Isles they came from. As the Table 2.6 indicates, at least part of the Irish trade was in the hands of Bristol merchants and, indeed, the two merchants who maintained the largest individual trades to Ireland were the Bristol men William Appowell and Nicholas Thorn.[10] Nevertheless, the bulk of the trade was carried by individuals who cannot be identified as Bristol merchants from either Smyth's ledger or the 1552 list of those to be admitted to the Society of Merchant Venturers, which should have included all those actively engaged in overseas trade at that time.[11] Given this, it seems likely that the majority of the trade was in the hands of merchants from either Ireland or other ports in the Bristol Channel. Although it is difficult to determine which is the case, since many of the merchants on the Irish vessels had typical Irish names, and Irish vessels carried 75% of the trade during the three years, it seems probable that a large proportion of the Bristol-Ireland trade of the 1540s was in the hands of Irish merchants.[12]

The pattern of declared trade during the late 1530s and 1540s was thus fairly typical for its century. Bristol's Continental trade was focussed on Biscay and south-west Iberia. It was largely in the hands of Bristol merchants and was rooted in the import and export of a limited range of well-established products.[13] The Irish trade was focussed on Ireland's south

[10] William Appowell, or William Appowell and associates, traded goods worth £678 over the three years. Nicholas Thorn, or Nicholas Thorn and associates, traded goods worth £293. These were the only merchants, or merchants with associates, to conduct more than £200 worth of trade in this period: E122 21/10, 199/4, 21/15.
[11] P. McGrath, *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (B.R.S. Publications, XVII, Bristol, 1952), p. xii.
[12] The value and percentage of the Irish trade carried by ships of different Irish ports is as follows: Waterford - £9115 (58%), Ross - £884 (6%), Youghal - £618 (4%), Cork - £492 (3%), Wexford - £397 (3%), Dungarvan - £280 (2%), Dublin - £31 (<1%): App. 3.
[13] Vanes, *Overseas Trade of Bristol*, pp. 17-25.

coast ports. The goods traded between Bristol and Ireland were similar to those traded in the late 15th and early 16th century, although imports of check cloth had grown markedly in the intervening period.[14]

The Illicit Trade

The extent of illicit trade has always been a difficult matter for historians to determine, for official records only record the activities of those who were caught. However, for Bristol in the period under study, the survival of two separate merchant's accounts, which implicate a fair portion of Bristol's commercial elite in illicit trading activities, provide a window on the city's illicit commerce. By employing these accounts, and linking them to customs accounts, it is possible to determine the nature and extent of Bristol's illicit trade to the Continent.

Since Bristol's illicit trade consisted of everything that was not recorded in the customs accounts, a useful first step to examining the nature and scale of the illicit trade is to assess the accuracy of these accounts. This can be done by comparing the customs accounts to the independently generated commercial records of the merchants of Bristol; the purpose being to reveal any differences between what was declared and what was actually laded.

For the import trades it is possible in seven cases to make a direct comparison between the total lading of a ship as indicated by the customs accounts and a total shipment given in a charter party or Smyth's ledger. Although the full details are given in Appendix 6, the summary comparisons of five of these journeys are also reproduced below.[15]

[14] Childs 'Ireland's Trade with England in the Later Middle Ages' pp. 17-20; A. K. Longman, *Anglo-Irish Trade in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1929), pp. 213-19.
[15] App. 6, *Primrose* of Bristol, 20 November 1536; *Trinity* of Bristol, 22 December 1536; 22 November 1541; 13 April 1542; 14 August 1542; 13 February 1543; 24 March 1544.

Table 2.7 - *Trinity* of Bristol, 13 April 1542

Ledger	*Tons*	**Customs Account**	*Tons*
All merchants	129.0 iron	John Smythe & assoc.	125.0 iron

Table 2.8 - *Trinity* of Bristol, 14 August 1542

Ledger	*Tons*	**Customs Account**	*Tons*
All merchants	118.2 iron	Thomas White & assoc.	122.0 iron

Table 2.9 - *Trinity* of Bristol, 24 March 1544

Ledger	**Tons**	**Customs Account**	*Tons*
All merchants	122.0 iron	John Smyth & assoc.	119.75 iron

Table 2.10 – *Primrose* of Bristol, 20 November 1536

Charter Party	*Tuns*	**Customs Account**	*Tuns*
John Smythe	14.125	John Smythe	10.5
William Shipman	4.125		
William Shipman & Cutte	4.0		
John Court	0.5		
Francis Codrington	11.125	Francis Codryngton	8.5
John Gorney	4.5	John Gurney	3.5
William Sprat	7.0	William Sprat & Teson	7.75
Thomas Tizon	2.125		
John Branthon	7.5	John Brampton	6.5
William Cox	5.5	William Cockys	4.0
William Ballard	2.0	William Balard & Pryen	3.5
Richard Prynn	3.0		
Edward Prynn	2.5	Edward Pryn & Typton	5.5
Owen Thurston	4.5		
TOTAL	68.5 tuns	TOTAL	53.75 tuns

Table 2.11 – *Trinity* of Bristol - 13 February 1543

Smyth's Ledger	*Tuns*	**Customs Account**	*Tuns*
John Smith	19.5 wine	Nicholas Thorn & Smith	20.5 wine
Nicholas Thorn	4.5 wine		
John Smith	2.0 oil	Nicholas Thorn & Smith	2.0 oil
John Smith	1.0 soap	Nicholas Thorn & Smith	0.75 soap
John Smith	0.35 alum	Nicholas Thorn & Smith	0.3 alum
William Sprat	2.5 wine	William Rowley & Sprat	5.0 wine
William Rowley	4.0 ton		
John Gorney	3.0 wine	John Gurney & Tyson	6.75 wine
Thomas Tyson	5.0 wine		
Edward Prin	2.0 wine	Edward Pryn & Cox	6.0 wine
William Cockes	5.0 wine		
John Cutt	5.0 wine	John Cutt & Gyttens	8.25 wine
Robert Guytton	5.0 wine		
Robert Guytton	1.0 oil	John Cutt & Gyttens	1.0 oil
Arthur Smith	3.0 wine	Arthur Smyth & Pressy	5.5 wine
Robert Pressy	4.0 wine		
Thomas Harrys	5.0 oil	Thomas Harrys & Hyll	6.25 oil
Alan Hill	1.5 oil		
Alan Hill	3.0 wine	Thomas Harrys & Hyll	2.5 wine
Richard Sawnders	6.0 wine	Giles White & Sawnders	7.0 wine
		Giles White & Sawnders	0.5 oil
Mathew Kent	5.0 wine	Mathew Kent & Tyson	6.0 wine
Nicholas Tison	1.0 ton		
Alice Smith	1.0 oil	Alice Smith & assoc	1.875 oil
Thomas Hicks	1.0 wine	Alice Smthe & assoc	1.75 wine
Nicholas Gay	2.0 wine		
TOTAL	78.5 wine	TOTAL	69.25 wine
	10.5 oil		11.625 oil
	1.0 soap		0.75 soap
	0.35 alum		0.3 alum

These tables indicate that the goods listed in the customs accounts were the ones the ships were actually carrying and that the quantities listed in the customs accounts are reasonably accurate. Although there are some discrepancies between the two sources, these are minor and not necessarily the result of illegal action. In particular, the discrepancies recorded between wine shipped and wine customed can largely be attributed to the Crown's right of prisage, which would also lower the quantities customed by two tuns for any ship carrying over 20 tuns of wine, and ullage (leakage) aboard ship, which could account for as much as

10% of a ship's lading.[16] The above tables thus provide no evidence that a large-scale illicit trade existed in the import trades of wine, iron, oil and soap – which together accounted for 81% of Bristol's declared trade. Since the comparisons between accounts of complete ladings, provided above and in the Appendix, do not deal with all the major import trades, it is possible that evasions occurred in the import of woad, fruit or salt. However, on the basis of John Smyth's own practices, it appears that he at least paid his dues when engaged in the fruit and woad trades.[17]

Turning to the export trades it may be noted that, since Smyth did not record the freights owed him on outbound cargoes and since no charter parties have survived from outbound ships, it has not been possible to reconstruct the entire ladings of individual ships. However, it is at least possible to compare the private records of Smyth, and on one occasion the Tyndall brothers, to the customs accounts. The following tables provide these comparisons for cloth, lead, leather and grain, which were responsible for the vast majority of export tonnage shipped to the Continent.

Table 2.12 – Comparison of John Smyth's Lead Exports Between the Ledger and the Customs Accounts

Smyth's Ledger *(folio, date & ship)*	*tons*	**Customs Account**	*tons*
f.136, 15 October 1542, *Trinity* of Bristol	7.05	22 September 1542	6.0
f.173, 31 January 1542, *Trinity* of Bristol	12.2	13 January 1542	10.0
f.173, 20 June 1542, *Trinity* of Bristol	10.15	19 May 1542	8.0
f.196, 8 January 1544, *Trinity* of Bristol	2.05	5 January 1544	2.0
f.196, 4 April 1544, *John Baptist* of Renteria	10.1	10 March 1544	10.0
f.196, 12 April 1544, *Peter* of the Pasajes	6.15	11-20 April 1544	5.5
f.254, 20 Sept. 1546, *Mary* Conception	21.04	9 August 1546	20.0
f.254, 20 Sept. 1546, *Marieta* of Fuenterrabia	19.1	8 September 1546	15.0

[16] A 1528 account dealing with the cost of shipping wine from Bordeaux to London suggests that a merchant should expect to lose one tun in ten to 'lecage and oylage': Vanes, *Overseas Trade,* p. 85. However, this was probably an exaggeration, since Smyth's worst losses to ullage never amounted to more than 8% of his cargo. For instance, a Gascon wine accounts of 1540 notes that of 33.25 tuns shipped he had lost 1.83 tuns had been lost to ullage, while an Andalusian account of 1542 notes that he had lost 3.75 tuns to ullage of the 44.5 tuns wine laded that year: *Smyth's Ledger*, fos. 108, 180.

[17] On those occasions when Smyth imported figs or raisins his accounts indicate that he paid the correct amount (2 s. per ton) for fruit: *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 146, 195. Two of Smyth's accounts throw light on the customs he paid on woad imports. On 19 June 1540 Smyth imported 6.8 tons of Azores woad on the *Jesus* of Bristol. After reaching the Quay this was subject to aggregated costs of 6s. 8d. per ton. Since petty charges for haulage etc. never cost Smyth more than a few pence per ton, most of the charge would have been custom. As Azores woad paid custom of 6s. 8d. per ton in Bristol, the consignment must have been recorded fairly accurately: *Ibid*, fo. 101. On 6 November 1541 Smyth received 24 half-bales woad from the *Anne* of London, for which he paid 14s. custom, suggesting that the officials treated the consignment as 28 half-bales by their measure: *Ibid*. fo. 52.

Table 2.13 – Comparison of John Smyth's Cloth Exports Between in the Ledger and the Customs Accounts

Smyth's Ledger *(folio, date & ship)*		**Customs Account**	
f.136, 15 Oct. 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	0 cloths	9 Aug. 42	18 cloths
f.136, 15 Oct. 42, *Mary James*	10 cloths	2 Oct. 42	64 Manchester
	1 Bristol frieze		
	34 Manchester		
f.136, 15 Oct. 42, *Mary Conception*	64 Manchester	30 Sept. 42	60 Manchester
f.173, 31 Jan. 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	40 penny hewes	13 Jan. 42	33 cloths
			4 white kerseys
f.173, 20 June 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	50 penny hewes	19 May 42	45 cloths
f.174, 11 Apr. 43, *San John* of Renteria	30 cloths	29 Mar. 43	8 cloths
and	1 Bristol frieze		
	2 Manchester		
John of Pasajes		27 Mar. 43	9 cloths
f.174, 30 July 43, *St. Maria* of Renteria	20 cloths	7 July 43	18 cloths
			3 yellow lining
f.174, 30 July 43, *San John* of Pasajes	10 cloths	7 July 43	9 cloths
			2 yellow lining
f.195, 15 Jan. 44, *Mary Conception*	10 cloths	7 Jan. 44	10 cloths
	37 Manchester		30 Manchester
f.195, 15 Jan. 44, *Margaret*	10 cloths	7 Jan. 44	10 cloths
	37 Manchester		30 Manchester
f.195, 15 Jan. 44, *Mary James*	10 cloths	8 Jan. 44	10 cloths
	37 Manchester		30 Manchester
			7 Bristol frieze
f.196, 4 Apr. 44, *John Baptist* of Renteria	30 cloths	10 Mar. 44	30 cloths
			3 north. cottons
f.221, 9 Aug. 44, Two ships called	30 cloths		59 cloths
San Johannes of Renteria	6 truckers	28 July 44	36 cloths
	10 white kerseys		
	150 Manchester		
f.254, 20 Aug. 46, *Mary Conception*	1 hewling	28 Aug. 45	40 tavestocks
	100 Manchester		120 Manchest.
f.254, 20 Sept. 46, *Marieta* of	7 friezes	8 Sept. 46	6 friezes
Fuenterrabia	3 truckers		3.5 cloths
			40 Manchester

Table 2.14 - Comparison of John Smyth's Grain Exports Between the Ledger and the Customs Accounts

Ledger (folio, date & ship)	quarters	**Customs**	quarters
f.173, 31 Jan. 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	19.125 peas	13 Jan. 42	0
f.136, 1 Feb. 42, *Mary Fortune* of Glouc.	125.875 wheat	12 Dec. 41	0
f.173, 20 June 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	12 wheat	19 May 42	0
f.136,15 Oct. 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	138 wheat	22 Sept. 42	48 wheat
f.174,11 Apr. 43, *Clement* of Framilode	120 wheat	4 April 43	30 wheat

Table 2.15 - Comparison of John Smyth's Leather Exports Between the Ledger and the Customs Accounts

Ledger (folio, date and ship)	(goods)	**Customs**	(goods)
f.173, 31 Jan.42, *Trinity* of Bristol	10 dick. ox 30 dick. cow & steer 152 doz. calf	13/1/42	18 dick. hides
f.173, 20 June 42, *Trinity* of Bristol	3 dick. ox 20.2 dick. cow & steer 67 doz. calf	19 May 42	5 dick. hides
f.174, 11 Apr. 43, *Clement* of Framilode	17 dick. cow & steer 100 doz calf	4 Apr. 43	3 dick. hides 10 doz calf
f.174, 30 Jul. 43, *Santa Maria* of Renteria and *San John* of Pasajes	5 dick. ox 3 dick. cow & steer 80 doz calf 110 doz calf	7 July 43 7 July 43	5 dick. hides 100 doz calf 80 doz calf
f.196, 8 Jan. 44, *Trinity* of Bristol	12 dick. ox 26.6 dick. cow & steer 168 doz calf 13.75 cwt. tallow	5 Jan. 44	70 doz calf
f.221, 9 Aug. 44, Two ships called the *San Johannes* of Renteria	8 dick. ox 54 dick. cow & steer 59.5 doz calf	28 July 44[18]	10 dick. hides 20 doz calf

Note – 1 dicker = 10 hides. For licence purposes 10 dozen calf skins = 1 dicker hides.[19]

Table 2.16 - Comparison of William & Robert Tyndall's Leather Exports Between their Ledger and the Customs Accounts [20]

Account (date, ship)	(goods)	**Customs**	(goods)
12 Aug. 44, *Saynt John* of Renteria	38.5 dick. cow & steer 6 dick. ox 12 doz. calf	28 July 44	16 dick. hides

The above tables provide no indication that Smyth carried out any significant evasions when he was engaged in the export of lead or cloth. Although the lead exports recorded by the customs accounts were slightly lower than his own figures, the discrepancy can be largely accounted for by the use of different measures, for John Smyth's iron accounts suggest that

[18] This entry is heavily mutilated. The account lists the two ships sequentially. The first entry is clear and records the departure of the *Saint John* of Renteria. John Smyth exported 5 dicker hides on the ship. The name of the following ship is badly damaged and only legible under ultra violet light. However it records the departure of the 'Le *Seint Jo*...' John Smyth was reported to have exported 5 dicker hides and 20 doz calf skins on the ship: P.R.O. E122 21/12.
[19] *L&P*, XVII no. 443/7.
[20] Vanes (ed.), *Overseas Trade of Bristol*, pp. 118-19; P.R.O. E122 21/12.

the custom's ton was heavier than his own.[21] Similarly, although the cloth exports recorded by the customs account do not exactly match Smyth's records, this was because, while Smyth recorded the actual cloths he exported, the customs officers often recorded cloth exports in terms of nominal cloths of assize. However, in the leather and grain trades there are major discrepancies between what the customs accounts indicate Smyth was exporting and what his own records state he laded. Since there is no constant, or even near constant, relationship between the two sets of figures, the discrepancies cannot be explained by the use of different measures by the customs officers. They also cannot be due to the goods being laded under the names of other merchants, since Smyth's own ladings were often greater than the entire lading of the ship. Given this, it is difficult to come to any conclusion other than that Smyth was exporting a large portion of his cargoes of leather and grain illicitly. The entry relating to the Tyndall brothers' export of leather suggests that they too were exporting leather illegally and their account confirms the illegality of their practices by noting that some of the leather was laded at Kingroad, at the mouth of the Avon, and that a payment of £3 10s. was made to two Bristol customs officers 'for ther gentlenes shewed in the ladyng of the seid lether.'

The reason Smyth and the Tyndall brothers might have desired to avoid customs payments on these goods and not on others becomes obvious when the extent of the dues they had to pay is examined. Until the late 16th century the basic customs dues that merchants had to pay on most products was very low. The standard tax of poundage consisted of a tax of 5% on the nominal value of goods imported or exported. However, even before the currency debasements of the later 1540s, inflation had caused real values to rise above nominal values to the extent that most goods only paid tax worth in the region of 2-4% of their real

[21] When Smyth imported iron he always recorded the quantity at least twice – giving the weight in Spanish tons and the weight by his own measures. On the twenty-one occasions he makes the conversion, the ratio between his own ton and the Spanish ton was almost constant – his own ton equalling between 0.91 and 0.93 Spanish tons. From the nine occasions when Smyth also recorded the weight as customed, it is clear that the customs officials were less precise in their measurements. According to their measures Smyth's ton varied between 0.79 and 0.91 customs tons. Yet, although the customs officials may not have been exact in their estimates, it is clear that their ton was somewhat heavier than that employed by Smyth: *Smyth's Ledger*, fo. 53, 127, 153, 176, 198, 234, 272, 282.

cost.[22] Similarly the payments of tonnage on wine and custom on English woollen cloth only amounted to a few percent of the value of these commodities.[23]

The situation with leather and grain exports was, however, completely different. Dealing first with customs dues, it may be noted that although grain formally only paid poundage, leather exports were required to pay a group of taxes that amounted to 4s. per dicker - a dicker being a standard measure of ten hides. Since Smyth commonly bought leather at a price of 40-50s. per dicker, these taxes added about 8-10% to his costs.[24] Yet, much more important than this was the requirement to obtain licences to export leather and grain. Although the export of these goods was normally banned, the Crown did in practice grant export licences to senior courtiers and other favourites in return for their services. The recipients of these licences typically sold them on to merchants, who might in turn break them up and sell shares on to lesser merchants at a higher price. Nonetheless, even if a merchant were to buy a licence direct from the original recipient, the cost was so high that it could add up to 60% to the purchase cost of the goods. For instance, when Smyth bought a licence to export leather in February 1540 it cost him 13s. 4d. per dicker at a time when he was buying hides at 44s. per dicker and when he bought a licence to export grain in February 1541, it cost him 5s. per quarter for grain he had bought for 8s. per quarter.[25] Since such charges, added in the case of leather to the already substantial customs dues, bit heavily into potential profit margins there was a very strong motive to export leather and grain illicitly.

Thus far, it has been established that at least two of Bristol's major merchants were apparently involved in the evasion of customs and licence dues in the leather and grain trades. However, the extent of this illicit trade within the merchant community, and the way in which it was conducted, has yet to be established. To address these issues, the two surviving merchant's accounts of the period will have to be examined in more detail.

Evidence of fraud within the merchant account books has been found on three levels. First, John Smyth's ledger contains some accounts that deal explicitly with his purchase, employment and sale of licences which, when compared to his export accounts, indicate that

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[22] See this chapter, footnote 4.
[23] Broadcloth's, worth c. £4, paid 14d. per cloth custom. Wine, worth £5-8 per tun, paid 3s. per tun custom: see this chapter, footnote 4.
[24] *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 6, 31.
[25] *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 20, 71 119.

he and other Bristol men were involved in illicit exports over the whole period covered by ledger. Second, in instances where licences are not explicitly mentioned, it is sometimes possible to establish the existence of fraud, by cross-referencing between accounts that deal with the buying of leather or grain in England and those that deal with the export of the same consignments. Where this can be done, it is sometimes possible to establish that Smyth was not paying the full dues, for the difference between the purchase cost of a consignment in England and its 'clearaboard' cost on board ship is too small for it to have been possible for all the official dues to have been paid on the consignment. Thirdly, both Smyth's ledger and the Tyndall accounts contain references to lading practices that were strictly illegal and to unofficial payments to customs officials that can be connected directly to fraudulent exports. Details of all the identified frauds are provided below and many are discussed in 'The Ships' Histories' in Appendix 6, but to demonstrate the practical application of the methodology described, the entries relating to one particularly well documented case will be described below. This concerns the sailing of Smyth's ship, the *Trinity* of Bristol, in February 1541.

This example is particularly clear because to cover the export, Smyth purchased a single licence from the king's secretary, Sir William Paget, and then proceeded to record all his other payments and receipts associated with the export of the consignment of grain on his ship.

Account in Smith's ledger of costs accruing to a cargo of wheat laded on the Trinity [26]

anno 1540

Lycens for wheat owith the 12 day of December £25 paide for the lycens of won C qr. to Alvaro de Astodillo Spanyard at 5s the quarter for horse hire	£25		
& Hamondes cost*es* 2 tymes to London 30s 4d	£1	10s	4d
for £3 6s 8d to Stanebanck for a gowne of damaskyn	£3	6s	8d
for a Cordavan skuyn to the s*er*cher of Gloucester 4s	4s		
for £3 pd. the 4 day of February to Tristan & his fellow	£3		
for 7 dozen 1/2 mattes to J*oh*n Methwey 30s	£1	10s	
for 2 bulkhedes 4s & fagottes 2s 8d	6s	8d	
for costom & the cocquett 17s 4d	17s	4d	
Total	£35	15s	

anno 1540

lycence per contra is dewe to have the 10 day of February £20 8s for so myche I make 51 weyes laden in the Trynte for my accowmpt debitor of	£20	8s	
Itm. the same dey £14 9s 10d that is for so myche I do make Frances Codryngton debitor fo. 60 for the lycens costom & costes of 30 weyes wheat in the Trynte at 8s per wey & of 15s 2d for Hamondes cost*es* & of 33s 4d to Stonebagg & of 16d for 4 matt*es* d'd to the Harry	£14	9s	10d
Itm. 17s 2d for the lycens & cost*es* of 3 weyes which the m*aste*r lade at the wey as it may apere to hym in debito fo. 65	17s 2d		
Total	£35	15s	

Note: 1 wey = 6 quarters

In the above account, Smyth first lists all the costs involved in the export of the grain on his ship. This includes the cost of acquiring the licence to export 100 quarters wheat and the cost of preparing the ship to take the grain by fitting bulkheads and mats. It also includes the cost of custom and cocket. Since the custom on 100 quarters was 16s. 8d. and since 8d. was a typical price for a cocket, it appears that the amount customed was also the amount licensed.[27] However, the most interesting entries in the account are the ones relating to payments in cash or kind to four individuals. One of these is identified as the customs searcher of Gloucester. Stanebanck and Tristan can be identified as Anthony Stanbank and

[26] *Smyth's Ledger*, fo. 71.
[27] Wheat was valued at 3s. 4d. per quarter in the customs accounts and therefore paid 2d. per quarter in custom: P.R.O. E122 21/10.

Tristan Lecknor, who were both customs searchers at Bristol. Since Tristan was a searcher it seems probable that his 'fellow' was also one. In her thesis on Bristol's sixteenth century trade, Jean Vanes noted these payments and suggested they demonstrated that 'Even with a licence the export of wheat seems to have involved the distribution of gifts to the customs men at Gloucester and Bristol.'[28] However, if the two sides of the account are compared, it becomes apparent that while the full ship's lading was covered by custom and licence for 100 quarters, it was actually carrying considerably more than this. Smyth laded 306 quarters, Frances Codrington 180 quarters, and the ship's master, John Darby, 18 quarters. Since this made a total of 504 quarters, less than 20% of the consignment was legally covered. In the light of this, it would appear that the payments to the customs officials were actually bribes to make sure that they did not search the ship after it had left the customs house in Bristol, for the function of the 'searchers' was to check that ships did not lade goods after leaving customs.

This account illustrates that several other merchants, mariners and customs officials were involved in illicit exports along with Smyth. However, from the formalised way in which the account is detailed, with shares in the fraud actually being sold by Smyth for a slight profit, it appears that fraud was a regularised activity at this time. However, what is particularly interesting about this voyage is that apart from lading grain, Smyth also laded leather on the ship. The export account which deals with this and the accounts which deal with Smyth's purchase of the said leather are provided below:

Smyth's Export Account for February 1541[29]

Viages to Biscay in este Spayne...
Itm. the 15 day of February anno 1540 lode in my ship the
Trynte, master under God John Darby...
7 dicker ox lether & 10 dicker & 1 hide cow &
stere which cost clere abord £41 1s 8d as it may apere fo.
119. More 127 dozens of calve skuns which cost clere
abord £41 4s 9d as it may apere fo. 119.

[28] Vanes, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century' (PhD thesis), pp. 96-97.
[29] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 69. Smyth gives the year as 'anno 1540' because he took Lady Day (25 March) as the start of the year.

Smyth's Hides Account for December 1540 [30]

Hides owith for my owne acowmpt the 16 day of December 43s 4d for so myche pd. to Lawrence Hancot for won dickar of cow & stere, montith	£2	3s	4d
Itm. the same day 9 dicker & 1 hide cowe & stere bowght of Machyn at 40s 40d the dicer & 7 dicker ox lether at 53s 4d the dicker, montith £38 3s 4d	£38	3s	4d
Itm. for bryngyng it abord the Trynte 15s		15s	
	£41	1s	8d

Smyth's Calf Skins Account for November-December 1540 [31]

Calve skuyns for my owne acowmpt owith the 10 daye of November £16 16s 8d that is for 6 dozens bowght at Wursettor of Thomas Aberley for 43s 4d & at Glocester for 15 dozens bowght of Luyes tanner & 20 dozens of Edmond Allen at 6s 8d the dozen & ffor 12 dozens bowght of Richard Allen at 5s the dozen, montith	£16	16s	8d
Itm. the 16 day of December £13 19s 9d for 44 dozens bowght of Lawrence Hanckot for the same somm	£13	19s	9d
Itm. the seid day £9 which is for 30 dozens calve skuyns r. of Thomas Machyn at 6s the dozen montith	£9		
Itm. for costes & charges to ride for to by them & to lade them		13s	4d
Itm. for bryngyng them abord the Trynte 15s		15s	
	£41	4s	9d

Smyth's account for that voyage indicates that he laded 70 ox hides, 101 cow and steer hides and 127 dozen calf skins on the ship. The cost of the hides was listed as £41 1s. 8d. clearaboard. The cost of the calf skins was £41 4s. 9d. clearaboard. The origin of all this leather is indicated in a leather account. This notes the cost of buying the leather from up-country merchants. A total of 30s. was added for bringing the leather directly aboard the *Trinity* and 13s. 4d. was added for the costs of riding to fetch the leather. The total costs indicated in the leather accounts exactly match the clearaboard cost. This means that none of the leather could have been licensed or customed and that Smyth did not even bother to bribe any customs officials in this case. He presumably considered it safe to do this because, since he had already bribed them to overlook his grain exports, they were not likely

[30] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 119.
[31] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 119.

to investigate his ship to check on his leather exports. This account also reveals the mechanism by which it was possible to avoid the customs house in its reference to the bringing of the leather directly aboard the ship. This was in itself an illegal practice, for all goods destined for export were meant to pass through the customs house at Bristol. Since Smyth could hardly have laded his ship from the boat while it was sitting in the middle of the harbour at Bristol, the lading of the ship with uncustomed goods almost certainly took place in the Bristol Channel. That this did happen in practice is indicated by various other references in his ledger to the lading of leather or grain in the Kingroad, Hungroad or Chareston Pool - which lay in the Bristol Channel.[32] This appears to have been the normal way of evading customs for in 1543 an Act of Parliament was passed with the specific intent of preventing ships from dumping ballast in the Kingroad and Hungroad prior to lading illicit cargoes of grain from river boats.[33]

Although there is not always sufficient data to make a judgement about whether or not Smyth or Tyndall were engaged in illicit exports of grain or leather, in every case where sufficient information exists to make a judgement, they failed to declare at least part of their cargoes. In all, the commercial records of these two merchants indicate the involvement of at least five customs officials and thirty-two merchants, ship's masters and suppliers from Bristol, Gloucester, Caerleon and the upper reaches of the Severn Estuary. Like Smyth, many of the merchants involved were major figures in Bristol's commercial community and senior members of the Bristol establishment, holding political office up to the rank of sheriff, mayor or M.P. A summary of the evidence relating to these individuals is given below.

[32] *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 25, 47, 87, 120, 128.
[33] 'An Acte for the preservacon of the Ryver Severne', *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. III, pp. 906-7.

Table 2.17 – List of those Involved in the Illicit Export Trade, 1539-1550

Name	Home town	Involvement	High Office [34]
Edward Butler [35]	Bristol	shipping	
William Carr [36]	Bristol	shipping, trading	Sheriff / Mayor / M.P.
Francis Codrington [37]	Bristol	shipping, trading	Sheriff
John Cutt [38]	Bristol	shipping	Sheriff / Mayor
Francis Fowler [39]	Bristol	trading	
Thomas Harris [40]	Bristol	shipping	Sheriff
Thomas Hicks [41]	Bristol	shipping	Chamberlain
Edward Pryn [42]	Bristol	shipping, trading	Sheriff
John Smyth [43]	Bristol	shipping, trading	Sheriff / Mayor
William Sprat [44]	Bristol	shipping	Sheriff
Nicholas Thorn [45]	Bristol	shipping	Sheriff / Mayor / M.P.
Robert Tyndall [46]	Bristol	shipping, trading	
William Tyndall [47]	Bristol	shipping, trading	Sheriff / M.P.
George Winter [48]	Bristol	shipping	
William Young [49]	Bristol	trading	Sheriff / Mayor
William Jones [50]	Caerleon	shipping, trading	
Robert Pole [51]	Gloucester	shipping, trading	
John Boshar [52]	Bristol	ship's master	
John Derby [53]	Bristol	trading, ship's master	
Bastian Millior [54]	unknown	ship's master	
Anthony Piggot [55]	Bristol	ship's master	
Robert Thomas [56]	Bristol	ship's master	

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[34] W. Barrett, *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol* (1789) pp. 117, 155-56, 684-85.
[35] App. 6, *Margaret* of Bristol (1541).
[36] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 71; App. 6, *Harry* of Bristol (26 February 1541).
[37] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 71; App. 6, *Harry* of Bristol (26 February 1541).
[38] App. 6, *Magdalen* of Bristol (1540).
[39] App. 6, *Jesus* of Bristol (8 March 1540).
[40] App. 6, *Mary Conception* of Bristol (19 September 1549).
[41] App. 6, *Harry* of Bristol (26 February 1540).
[42] App. 6, *Margaret* of Bristol (1541).
[43] See discussion in this chapter, pp. 44-52.
[44] App. 6, *Jesus* of Bristol (8 March 1540).
[45] App. 6, *Mary Conception* (March 1540).
[46] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, pp. 46, 119, 137; P.R.O. E122 21/12.
[47] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, pp. 46, 119, 137; P.R.O. E122 21/12: App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol (15 February 1541).
[48] App. 6, *Hart* of Bristol (5 April 1549).
[49] App. 6, *Magdalen* of Bristol (1540).
[50] App. 6, *Trinity of Wales* of Caerleon (16 October 1540).
[51] App. 6, *Mary Fortune* of Gloucester (12 December 1541).
[52] App. 6, *Mary Conception* of Bristol (19 September 1549).
[53] App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol (15 February 1541).
[54] App. 6, *Trinity of Wales* of Caerleon (16 October 1540).
[55] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 87.
[56] App. 6, *Jesus* of Bristol (8 March 1540).

Thomas Webb [57]	Bristol	trading, ship's master	
Nicholas Weysford [58]	unknown	ship's master	
William Bullock [59]	Elmore	illegal lading	
John Laughton [60]	Hanley	illegal lading	
Thomas Machet [61]	Berkeley	illegal lading	
John Russel [62]	Longney	illegal lading	
John Spark [63]	Newnham	illegal lading	Mayor of Newnam
William Taylor [64]	Tewkesbury	illegal lading	
William Trawnter [65]	Longney	illegal lading	
Giles Dane [66]	Bristol	customs searcher	
William Hill [67]	Bristol	customs searcher	
Tristram Lecknor [68]	Bristol	customs searcher	
Anthony Stanbank [69]	Bristol	customs searcher	Sheriff / Mayor
Unknown [70]	Bristol	customs searcher	
Unknown [71]	Gloucester	customs searcher	

The reason why so many Bristol merchants engaged in the illicit trade becomes clear when the profit margins on the leather and grain trade are compared to those achievable in the other export trades. Although the layout of Smyth's export accounts often means that it is impossible to estimate the profit margins on individual consignments, those cases where this can be done indicate that Smyth's highest profits were achieved in the grain and leather trades. For instance over the period 1539-41, Smyth's net profits on grain exports were generally between 50% and 150%, while his net profits on leather could be as high as 84%.[72]

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[57] App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol (13 January 1541, 19 May 1542, 22 September 1542).
[58] Master of the *Clement* of Framilode: *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 174; P.R.O. E122 199/4.
[59] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 87.
[60] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 119 (reproduced on p. 48); App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol (15 February 1541).
[61] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 128.
[62] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 120.
[63] *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 186, 264.
[64] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 25.
[65] *Smyth's Ledger,* fo. 47.
[66] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, p. 119.
[67] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, p. 119.
[68] See discussion this chapter, pp. 48-49.
[69] See discussion this chapter, pp. 48-49.
[70] See discussion this chapter, pp. 48-49.
[71] See discussion this chapter, pp. 48-49.
[72] Smyth's net profit margin over buying costs on grain exports can be determined for seven voyages made between 1539 and 1541. These were: *Trinity* of Bristol / Anton de Astecu's ship (July 1539) 191.875 quarters wheat, 71.0625 quarters beans – clearaboard £117 10d., net sale £197 1d., profit 68%; *Jesus* of Bristol (8 March 1540) 14.5 quarters wheat – clearaboard £6 19s. 1d., net sale £10 10s. 6d, profit 51%; *Margaret* of Bristol / *Harry* of Bristol (August 1540) 99 quarters wheat – clearaboard £40, net sale £99 9s. 5d., profit 149%; *Trinity* of Wales (October 1540) 80 quarters wheat – clearaboard £24, net sale £50, profit 108%; *Trinity* of Bristol / *Anthony* of the Porte (15 February

By contrast Smyth rarely made more than 10% net profit on cloth and he sometimes had to sell it at a loss.[73] After 1541 the profitability of the grain trade collapsed as prices rose in England and fell in Iberia. As a result, two of the four consignments Smyth dispatched in 1542-3 were sold at a loss, and two of the consignments were only sold after two years.[74] Although profits on leather also appear to have declined after 1541, respectable profits were still achievable. For instance, a consignment dispatched in 1542 was sold for a net profit of 13% and a 1545 consignment was sold for a net profit of 21%.[75] As the profits grain and leather declined, Smyth, along with the rest of Bristol's merchant community, began to

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1541) 472 quarters wheat, 248 quarters beans – clearaboard £218 17s. 8d., net sale £255 6s. 7d., profit 17%; *Harry* of Bristol (2 March 1541) 248 quarters wheat – clearaboard £85 10s. 10d., net sale £147 1s. 11d, profit 72%; *Trinity* of Bristol (17 August 1541) 323.125 quarters wheat – clearaboard £171, net sale £270 12s. 9d., profit 58%: *Smyth's Ledger*, fos. 55, 56, 103, 136. Smyth's profits on leather can be calculated for two voyages in this period: *Trinity* of Bristol / Anton de Astecu's ship (July 1539) 30 dicker hides, 1.33 doz calf skins – clearaboard £65 3s. 4d. (assumes the cost of wheat and beans on Astecu's ship, which is aggregated with the leather, was the same as that laded on the *Trinity*), net sale £119 19s, 3d., profit 84%; *Trinity* of Bristol (15 February 1541) 17.1 dicker hides, 127 doz calf skins – clearaboard £82 6s. 5d., net sale £134 16s. 1d., profit 64%: *ibid*, fos. 55, 69.

[73] For example: *Jesus* of Bristol / *Mary Christopher* of Bristol / *Trinity* of Wales (8 March 1540 / 6 April 1540) 20 cloths, 18 truckers – clearaboard £128, net sale £124 1s. 3d., loss 3%; *Trinity* of Bristol / *Primrose* of Bristol / *Anthony* of the Porte (15 February 1541 / 20 March 1541) 17 coarse truckers, 3 kerseys, 2 Aurbgeynes, 20 London cloths – clearaboard £127 5s., net sale £131 6s. 8d., profit 3%; *Mary James* of Bristol / *Mary Conception* of Bristol (15 October 1542) 10 cloths, 98 manchester cottons, 1 Bristol frieze – clearabord £114 10s., net sale £123, profit 7%; *San John* of Renteria / *San John* of Pasajes (11 April 1543) 30 cloths, 1 Bristol frieze, 1 manchester cotton – clearaboard £122 10s., net sale £138 5s. 2d, profit 13%; *Mary Conception* of Bristol / *Margaret* of Bristol / *Mary James* of Bristol (15 January 1544) 30 cloths, 111 manchesters – clearaboard £203 9s. 6d., net sale £207 10s. 4d., profit 2%; *Mary Conception* of Bristol / *Marieta* of Fuenterrabia (20 September 1546) 1 cloth, 3 truckers, 150 manchesters, 7 Bristol friezes – clearaboard £133 13s. 4d, net sale £131 4s., loss 2%: *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 56, 69, 136, 174, 195, 254.

[74] *Trinity* of Bristol (31 January 1542) 19.125 quarters peas – clearaboard £17 13s., net sale (sold 26 November 1543) £13 5s. 10d., profit 74%; *Mary Fortune* of Gloucester (February 1542) 125.875 quarters wheat – clearaboard £75 17s. 11d., net sale £72 18s. 2d., loss 2%; *Trinity* of Bristol (15 October 1542) 184 quarters wheat – clearaboard £81, net sale £100 5s. 10d., profit 24%; *Clement* of Framilode (11 April 1543) 160 quarters wheat – clearaboard £67 15s., net sale (sold 12 May 1545) £62 11s. 8d., loss 8%: *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 136, 174, 221.

[75] On 29 December 1542, Smyth valued 4.1 dicker hides and 27 dozen calf skins in San Sebastian at £21 5s. On 26 November 1543 he records their net sale for £23 19s. 8d., making 13% profit: *Smyth's Ledger,* fo.174. On 19 June 1544 Smyth records that he has 1.2 dicker hides and 213 dozen calf skins left in Guipuzcoa. This is valued, along with a consignment of wheat, at £150 10s.: *ibid*, fo. 221. The wheat, when it was laded on the *Clement* of Framilode in April 1543, had cost £67 15s. clearaboard: *ibid*, fos. 174, 196, 221. Smyth must therefore have been valuing the leather at £82 15s. On 9 August 1544, Smyth dispatched a further consignment of 62 dicker hides and 59.5 dozen calf skins, which cost clearaboard £169 6s. 8d. On 12 May 1545 he recorded the sale of all the above leather for £287 11d. 1f., 21% profit.: *ibid*, fo. 221.

export lead. However, his profits on lead between 1542-46 never exceeded 15% net and some consignments were sold at a loss.[76]

Given the high profits achievable on the grain and leather trades it is understandable why Smyth, in common with many other merchants, engaged in the export of grain until 1541 and why Bristol merchants continued to export leather thereafter. Although these goods could have been exported legally, the attraction of illicit trading was that it was much cheaper for the direct costs of legal export outweighed the cost of bribes by as much as 20:1.[77] This meant that the only disincentive to engaging in the trade was the danger of being caught, since this would result in the confiscation of the goods. However, if the customs searchers could be bribed, this would only occur if an informer made an official complaint about an illegal export, which forced the customs officials to act. Yet, even when this happened, the customs officers could aid the merchant by warning them of the planned search and assisting them afterwards if they were forced to seize the vessel. An excellent example of this is provided by Jean Vanes, in her examination of corrupt and illegitimate practices at Bristol. This concerns an illegal shipment of grain in 1558 by the aforementioned William and Robert Tyndall. In a letter before the seizure Robert is warned by William to depart with William's pinnace since:

> 'I have hadd much talke with the Custumer and Comptroller, who be honest men but yott (beyng enformed) must nedes doo what they wold nat willyngly. And therefore I pray God send tyme for that pynnas that she may depart, otherwise I feare me the officers must nedes cumm aboord and for ther owne discharge doo harme'[78]

In the event Robert did not get away in time and the ship, the *Margaret* of Elmore, was seized with 40 quarters of undeclared wheat. Nevertheless, the customs searcher, William

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[76] *Trinity* of Bristol (15 October 1542) 7.05 tons lead – clearaboard £33 17s. 6d., net sale £38 5s. 10d., profit 13%; *Trinity* of Bristol (8 January 1544) 2.05 tons lead – clearaboard £10, net sale £9 4s. 6d, loss 8%; *John Baptist* of Renteria / *Peter* of Pasajes (4 April 1544 / 12 April 1544) 16.25 tons lead – clearaboard £71 10s., net sale (on 13 May 1545) £72 18s. 2d., profit 2%; *Marieta* of Fuenterrabia / *Mary Conception* of Bristol / *Trinity* of Wales (20 September 1546) 50.518 tons lead – clearaboard £269 8s. 7d, net sale £310 10s. 4d., 15% profit.: *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 136, 196, 221, 254.

[77] For instance, as noted earlier in this chapter, when the *Trinity* left Bristol in February 1541 it was carrying at least 404 quarters wheat, 17.1 dicker hides and 127 dozen calf skins uncustomed. The cost of legally exporting this cargo would have been £104 7s. 4d for the wheat and £24 8s. 4d. for the leather - assuming a licence cost 13s. 4d per dicker. The legal dues would thus have equalled £128 15s. 4d. while the cost of the bribes Smyth paid came to £6 10s. 8d.

[78] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, p. 46.

Harvest, valued the ship at only £10 and, although an Act of 1554 stated that vessels carrying illicit goods should also be confiscated, Robert Tyndall was able to redeem the ship by making an official payment of £2 2s. 4d. and an unofficial payment of £3 to Harvest.[79]

For their part there was also a strong incentive for potential informers to keep quiet, for if they did inform on a merchant, they could be made to suffer for it. Such an instance is illustrated in another case noted by Vanes, in which a man called Tegge Plowman reported Edward Pryn for illegally exporting grain in 1541. However, as Vanes writes 'he soon found that he was provoked into a quarrel; whereupon half the Town Council including Pryn with the Mayor and Recorder apparently came armed to seize him and put him in the pillory.'[80]

The above study has indicated that the illicit export trade was a widespread, efficiently organised and often highly profitable activity. It was possible to prosecute it at Bristol in the knowledge that the customs searchers could be bribed and the city's council was dominated by a merchant elite who were themselves engaged in the illicit trade. However, this does not necessarily mean that all merchants had equal access to the illicit trade, for success clearly depended on maintaining close relations with both the local customs officials and the city's elite. This point is illustrated by the case of a Bordeaux merchant who sought to export grain from the area in 1518.[81] In a later complaint to the French authorities, the merchant noted that, having obtained a licence to export 228 quarters corn and 210 quarters beans, he laded his cargo in a Breton ship and sailed to Charston's Pool to prepare his voyage. He claimed that he then sent a boat to Bristol to buy victuals but the boat was subsequently seized by a shipload of armed men and the crew imprisoned at Bristol, presumably on the grounds that the victuals they were carrying represented an illicit export. The merchant complained that, although he was not found guilty of any offence, it had cost him a great deal of time and money to secure the release of his crew and he lost his voyage as a result. His experience in dealing with the authorities thus provides a marked contrast to those of John Smyth, Edward Pryn, or the Tyndall brothers, and illustrates the means by which Bristol's commercial elite could have used their political power to exclude foreign competitors from the illicit trade.

[79] Vanes, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century' (PhD thesis), pp. 110-11.
[80] Vanes, ibid., pp. 99-100.
[81] Vanes, *Overseas Trade*, p. 79.

Apart from the advantages of maintaining close contacts with city officials, engagement in the illicit trade also appears to have been facilitated by the maintenance of a close network of suppliers and the possession of warehouses up the Severn Estuary. John Smyth's main suppliers of leather and wheat all came from small towns along the River Severn and the Severn Estuary. These men are listed in Table 2.17 as 'illegal laders'. Sometimes these agents delivered Smyth's illicit cargoes directly to ships in the Bristol Channel. At other times their goods were collected at the house of his agent, John Spark, in Newnham, where they could be stored away from prying eyes until required.[82] Without the political and commercial contacts that Bristol merchants enjoyed, the costs and risks of the illicit trade must have been much greater. Given this, it seems likely that, Bristol's merchants, who already dominated the city's declared trade, probably had a virtual monopoly of the illicit trade. Yet, even among them, not all would have been equally well placed to conduct this trade. This was because not all of them were shipowners and, as will be seen in chapter 3, there appear to have been advantages to merchants owning their own ships if they were engaged in the illicit trade. So, while the basic cost differentials that fuelled the illicit trade were equally attractive to all, not all merchants were equally well placed to exploit it.

While all the evidence that has been presented here relates to illicit exports to the Continent, there was almost certainly also an illicit trade in grain to Ireland. The existence of such a trade seems a certainty, since licences were required to export grain to Ireland and a number of such licences were granted between June 1539 and April 1542.[83] These were granted in order to relieve food shortages in the English territories and the provision of licences at this time explains why such large quantities of grain were exported from Bristol to Ireland in 1541/2. However, since licences were required, it seems highly likely that more, possibly much more, was exported illegally. On the other hand, it is unlikely that any leather would have been illicitly exported to Ireland, since Ireland itself was a significant exporter of hides and skins.

Having outlined the main features of Bristol's declared and illicit trades it is possible to examine the level of demand for shipping generated by Bristol's trade.

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[82] *Smyth's Ledger,* fos. 186, 264.
[83] *L&P*, XIV, i, no. 1192/37; ii, no. 113/26; XV, no. 611/14; XVI, no. 220/32, 1056/80; XVII, nos. 71/16, 285/19.

The Commercial Shipping Market

As with the study of Bristol's trade, the structure and extent of shipping demand generated by Bristol's declared trade will be examined through the three surviving customs accounts of the 1540s. To develop a sophisticated account of shipping demand requires the customs records of goods shipped to be translated into an estimate of tonnages shipped. At first sight this might appear to present an insurmountable problem, for although the notion of a ton of cargo capacity had become well established by the 1540s, the weight or volume of many goods appearing in the customs accounts is unknown.[84] However, for the Continental shipping market, it was possible to produce an estimate of tonnages shipped from the customs accounts. This was because the vast majority of shipping demand in this branch of Bristol's trade came from a small number of goods, which are recorded in the customs accounts either according to their tonnage or in a form that can readily be translated into tonnage. This means that, even if major errors were made in the estimated weight of some of the minor items that appear in this trade, these errors would have little impact on the overall pattern of shipping demand. Unfortunately, the highly varied nature of the Irish trade and the difficulty of determining the tonnage of goods shipped to and from Ireland, meant that it was not possible to estimate tonnages shipped in this branch of the city's trade. The analysis of shipping demand generated by the Irish trade is therefore less sophisticated. Nevertheless, it is still possible to determine some of the basic features of Irish shipping demand by examining trade statistics and shipping movements.

Continental Shipping Demand

As noted earlier, Bristol's import trade from the Continent was dominated by a small group of products. Since these commodities were all quite bulky relative to their weight, the most important trade items, like wine, oil and iron, also accounted for the bulk of shipping demand. Tables 2.7 and 2.8 and their accompanying graphs, Figures 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the gross monthly tonnage of goods shipped between Bristol and the Continent and indicate which commodities were responsible for most of the shipping demand. Full details of how the tonnage of the different commodities was calculated are provided in Appendix 1.

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[84] The cargo ton, used by all English merchant-shipowners from the fifteenth century until modern times, was based originally on the tun of Bordeaux wine, which weighed 2,240 lbs. and took-up 40 cubic feet of capacity: D. Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540*, pp. 91-95.

Table 2.18 – Tons Imported: Continent to Bristol: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Year & Month	Wine Tons	Iron Tons	Salt Tons	Oil Tons	Fruit Tons	Woad Tons	Misc. Tons	Total Tons
1541/10	0	0	0	0	0	57	0	57
1541/11	813	38	0	2	15	4	9	881
1541/12	581	0	0	12	133	12	12	750
1542/1	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	36
1542/2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
1542/3	45	57	0	0	2	10	4	118
1542/4	34	353	41	4	0	0	9	441
1542/5	2	81	28	0	0	46	1	157
1542/6	50	38	104	14	13	173	5	397
1542/7	8	59	52	182	0	0	132	432
1542/8	2	213	96	0	0	0	6	317
1542/9	0	0	0	0	0	10	85	95
1542/10	7	0	0	0	33	0	0	40
1542/11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1542/12	0	70	0	0	0	0	0	70
1543/1	59	0	0	0	58	10	1	128
1543/2	951	151	10	35	53	17	18	1235
1543/3	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	30
1543/4	17	0	0	0	38	2	0	56
1543/5	2	0	0	0	0	9	0	11
1543/6	0	0	38	0	0	0	0	38
1543/7	12	250	120	0	0	1	17	399
1543/8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1543/9	15	56	0	0	0	2	0	72
1545/10	63	0	21	0	0	0	2	86
1545/11	487	127	55	0	20	5	12	706
1545/12	204	35	17	0	62	0	6	324
1546/1	260	0	2	43	19	0	9	334
1546/2	425	128	93	65	54	0	33	797
1546/3	449	71	77	51	16	0	16	681
1546/4	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
1546/5	113	178	20	47	1	3	40	403
1546/6	24	0	22	2	0	0	1	49
1546/7	16	5	8	91	0	5	0	125
1546/8	32	2	181	0	0	33	5	252
1546/9	106	155	327	0	1	26	5	619
Total for 3 Years	4811	2095	1317	547	518	424	432	10145

Table 2.19 – Tons Exported: Bristol to Continent: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Year & Month	Lead	Coal	Cloth	Leather	Misc.	Total Tons
1541/10	8	0	9	2	0	19
1541/11	0	0	6	0	0	6
1541/12	0	6	2	0	12	20
1542/1	15	0	10	9	0	34
1542/2	76	0	68	1	0	144
1542/3	2	4	13	0	6	25
1542/4	0	18	1	0	2	22
1542/5	45	34	15	5	2	102
1542/6	0	22	0	0	0	22
1542/7	4	0	9	3	2	17
1542/8	24	0	33	1	0	57
1542/9	68	0	109	25	21	223
1542/10	12	46	9	0	0	67
1542/11	0	0	0	0	0	0
1542/12	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/2	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/3	0	0	11	1	1	13
1543/4	0	0	0	1	6	7
1543/5	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/6	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/7	36	0	44	20	2	102
1543/8	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/9	10	0	2	5	0	17
1545/10	278	0	91	16	5	390
1545/11	13	0	1	4	0	17
1545/12	8	80	17	22	0	127
1546/1	0	0	0	9	0	9
1546/2	8	40	27	40	2	117
1546/3	132	24	120	38	1	316
1546/4	13	0	28	4	0	45
1546/5	10	0	9	20	0	39
1546/6	32	28	5	10	1	76
1546/7	135	0	3	1	0	138
1546/8	69	49	28	16	2	164
1546/9	97	34	42	15	0	187
Total for 3 Years	1093	385	710	267	67	2522

Figure 2.2 - Tons Imported: Continent to Bristol: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

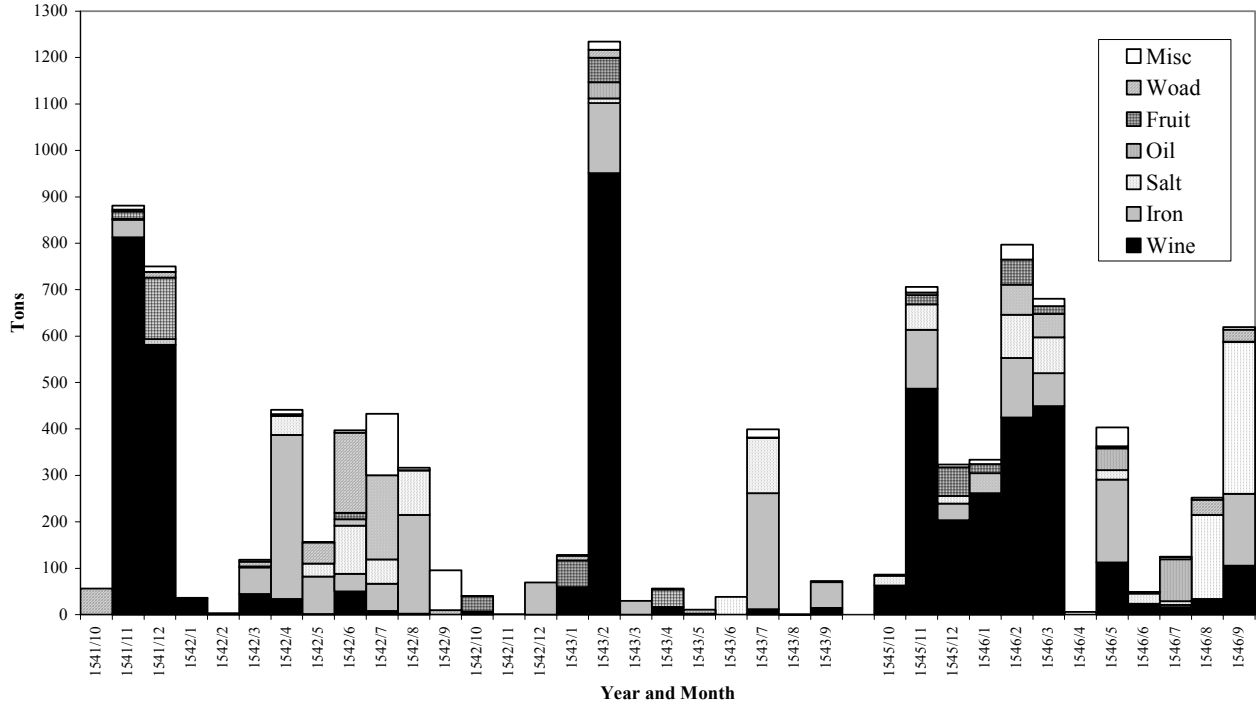


Figure 2.3 - Tons Exported: Bristol to Continent: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

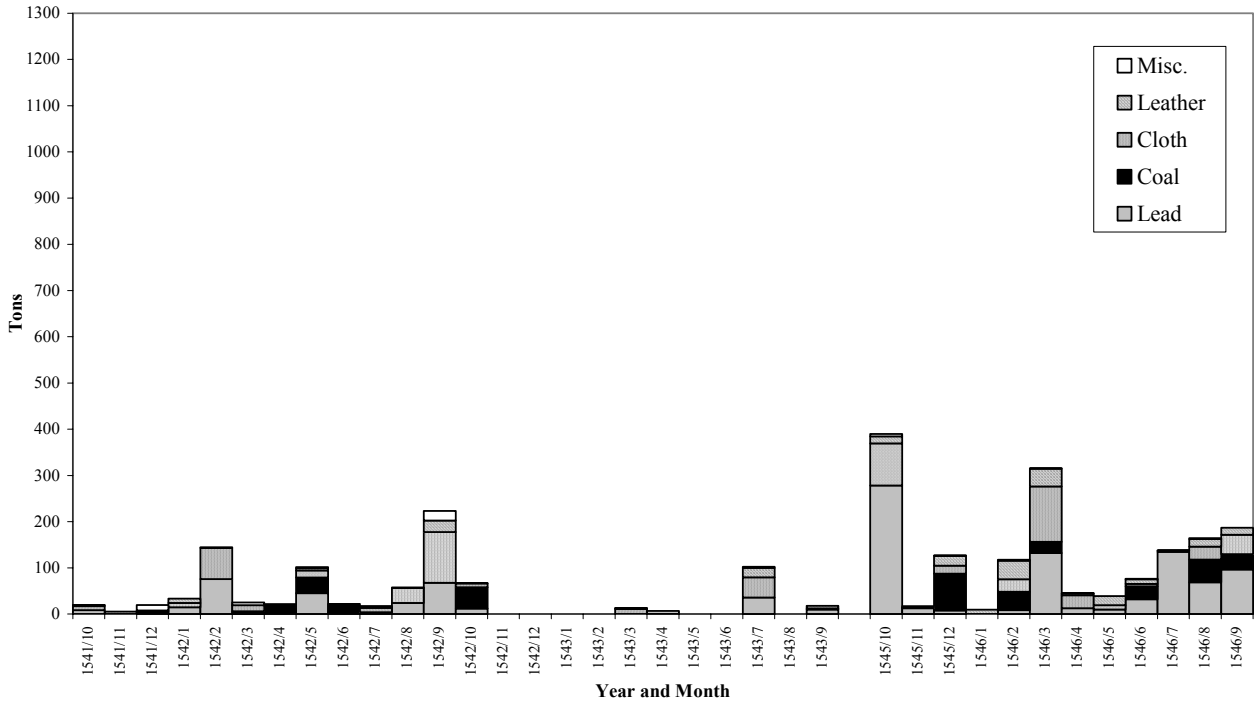


Table 2.18 and Figure 2.2 illustrate that the annual demand for freight services was not even throughout the year. In all three years examined, the highest demand for shipping was associated with the winter wine trade from France and Iberia. The needs of this trade meant that during a very short period of time a great deal of shipping was required.[85] Since most mercantile capital was invested in the wine trade at this time of year, few other goods were shipped during the winter. However, during the spring and summer merchants directed their capital into alternative commodities such as salt and Spanish iron. The above figures also indicate that the gross level of shipping demand could vary considerably from year to year. For instance, the gross level of tonnage shipped in 1545/6 was more than twice that shipped in 1542/3.

Turning from imports to exports, Table 2.19 and Figure 2.3 illustrate that cloth, leather, lead and grain dominated exports to the Continent. The most striking feature of this graph is that the tonnage of goods exported from Bristol was only a quarter of that imported. The main reason for this is that cloth and leather dominated English exports. Since these were of much higher value relative to their weight than the main imports, export shipping demand would still have been lower than import shipping demand, even if the value of Bristol's exports had exceeded that of imports. The above figures thus indicate that the secular imbalance between England's import and export shipping demand, which existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was also a feature of Bristol's mid-sixteenth century trade.[86] This imbalance would have had enormous implications for shipowners engaged in Bristol's Continental trade, since their vessels would have been under-utilised on the Bristol to the Continent leg of their voyages. As a result shipowners, who depended entirely on the declared trade, would have had to charge a high price for freighting goods from the Continent to Bristol, since their costs would have to be covered primarily by this part of their voyages. However, in the study of Bristol's overseas trade it has already been demonstrated that not all of Bristol's export trade was declared. Since the illicit trade involved exports, its demand for shipping services must have helped to rectify the secular imbalance that existed between the demand for import and export shipping generated by Bristol's declared trades. To evaluate the potential importance of shipping demand

[85] Indeed, in reality the total level of demand associated with the wine trade was actually higher than suggested by the table, since the loss of wine during voyages, called ullage, meant that the amounts laded were typically 5-10% higher than that customed in Bristol.
[86] R. Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, pp.185-87.

generated by the illicit trades, John Smyth's call on shipping services during the years under study will be examined.

Table 2.20 - Smyth's Imports from the Continent 1539-46, in Tons

Year & Month	Wine	Iron	Oil	Misc.	Year & Month	Wine	Iron	Oil	Misc.
1539/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1542/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/2	29.5	0.0	5.0	1.2
1539/4	0.0	46.7	0.0	0.0	1543/3	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/5	0.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	1543/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/7	0.0	46.3	0.0	0.0
1539/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/10	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	1543/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/11	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/12	50.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/1	2.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	1543/12	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
1540/2	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/2	66.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
1540/4	0.0	48.1	0.0	0.0	1544/3	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
1540/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.8	1544/5	27.3	4.0	0.0	0.0
1540/7	0.0	0.0	6.0	10.7	1544/6	0.0	0.0	9.5	0.0
1540/8	0.0	57.0	6.3	0.0	1544/7	14.0	45.2	8.5	0.0
1540/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/11	26.5	0.0	0.0	0.7	1544/10	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
1540/12	48.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/2	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/4	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	1545/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/5	0.0	46.6	0.0	0.0
1541/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/8	0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	1545/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/10	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	1545/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/11	66.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	1545/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/12	38.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/11	38.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	1545/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/4	0.0	89.0	0.0	0.0	1546/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/5	0.0	8.1	0.0	0.0	1546/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/7	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	1546/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/8	0.0	63.0	0.0	0.0	1546/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Total	438.6	666.9	83.3	29.9

Table 2.21 - Smyth's Exports to the Continent 1539-46, in Tons

Year & Month	Grain	Lead	Cloth	Leather	Misc.	Year & Month	Grain	Lead	Cloth	Leather	Misc.
1539/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1542/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.0	1543/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/3	53.3	0.0	3.2	0.8	0.0	1543/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/4	24.0	0.0	2.8	4.8	0.0
1539/6	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	1543/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/7	4.3	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	1543/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/8	48.3	0.0	4.9	3.6	0.0	1543/7	0.0	0.0	2.9	5.2	0.0
1539/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	1543/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1539/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/10	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0
1539/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1543/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/1	0.0	2.1	8.5	12.3	0.2
1540/3	40.1	0.0	2.4	10.3	0.0	1544/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/4	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	1544/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/4	0.0	16.3	2.8	0.0	0.0
1540/6	49.8	0.0	1.8	1.3	0.0	1544/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/7	16.8	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	1544/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/8	19.8	0.0	3.6	0.0	2.0	1544/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/8	0.0	0.0	8.7	12.1	0.0
1540/10	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1540/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1544/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/2	57.6	0.0	2.8	5.3	0.0	1545/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/3	87.6	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	1545/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/4	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
1541/6	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	1545/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/6	0.0	0.0	4.2	11.1	0.0
1541/8	64.6	10.6	4.2	5.4	0.0	1545/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/9	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	2.0	1545/8	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
1541/10	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	1545/9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/11	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	1545/10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1541/12	25.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1545/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/1	3.8	12.2	3.7	9.9	0.0	1545/12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/2	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	1546/1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/5	2.4	10.2	4.5	5.3	0.0	1546/4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/9	27.6	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1546/8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1542/10	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	0.0	1546/9	0.0	50.5	5.4	0.0	0.0
1542/11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Total	537.4	108.8	90.2	89.7	6.2

Figure 2.4 - Smyth's Imports from the Continent 1539-46, in Tons

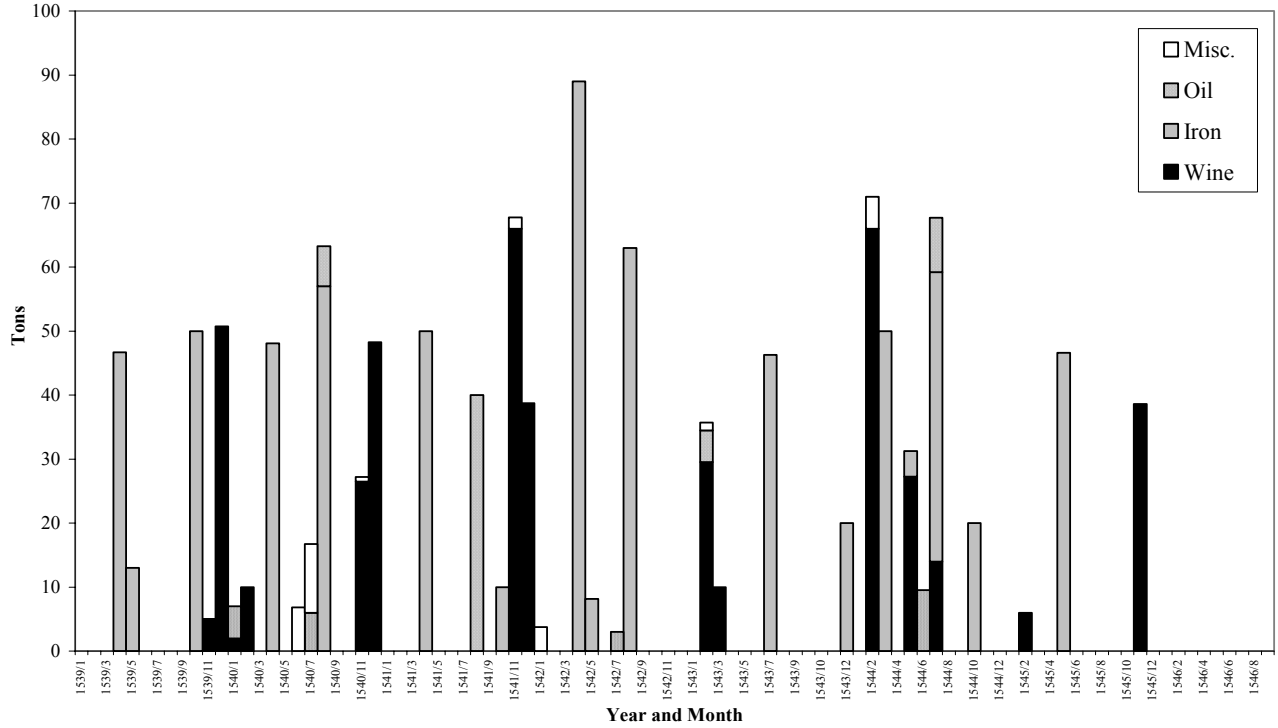
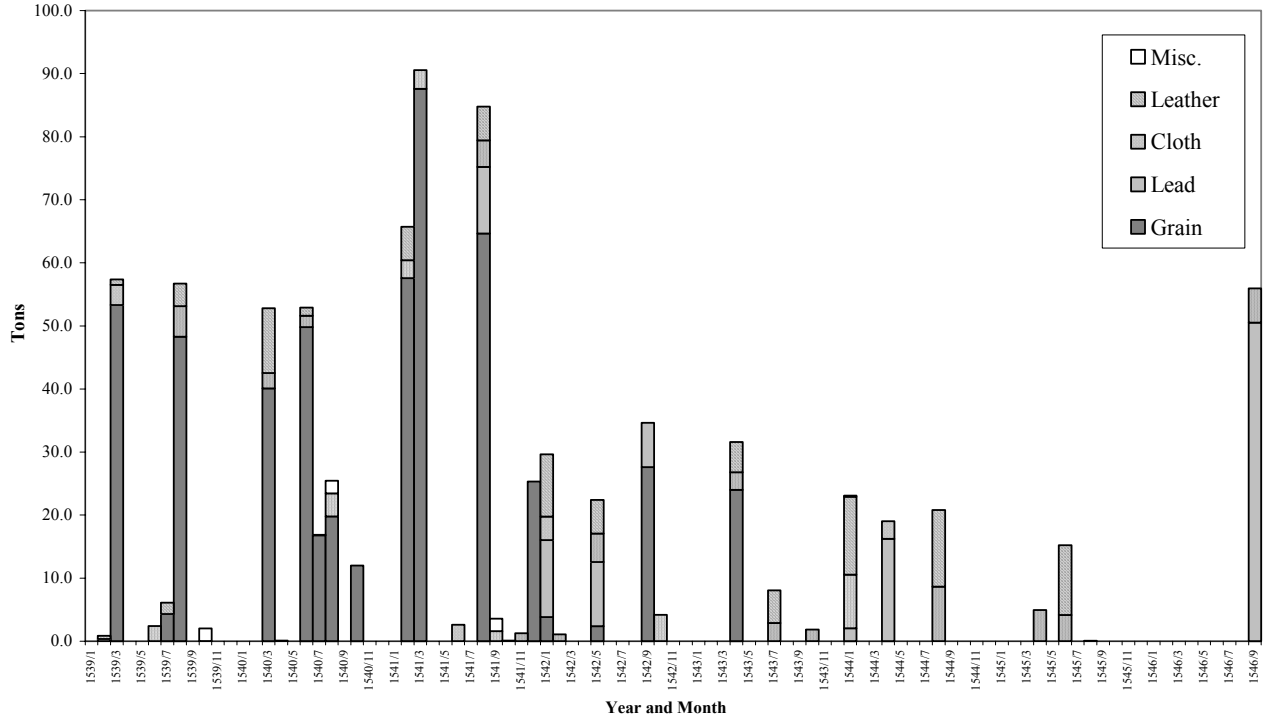


Figure 2.5 - Smyth's Exports to the Continent 1539-46, in Tons



The above tables and graphs illustrate that Smyth's import activities were fairly typical of a merchant engaged in the Continental trade. Like the rest of the merchant community his largest calls on freight services were associated with the winter wine trades and the iron trade, which he conducted primarily between March and September. However, when his export activities are reviewed, striking differences may be noted between his call on export freight and that revealed by the earlier study of the customs accounts. During the period 1539-41 Smyth's vigorous engagement in the grain trade meant that his demand for export freight space was 93% of his demand for import freight space.[87] After 1541, Smyth reduced his exports of grain as the profitability of the trade declined. However, in the period covered by the customs accounts from October 1541 - September 1543, his illegal exports of grain and leather still continued to such an extent that his illicit trading activities continued to generate as high a demand for export freight space as his legal demand.[88]

Smyth's activities thus suggest that the illicit trade had the potential to be of enormous significance to shipowners, since it could provide a significant market for under-utilised export freight space. Smyth's records indicate that ships, which would otherwise have sailed out almost empty, could be filled with illicit cargoes of grain. This meant that a shipowner who was willing and able to carry illicit goods could significantly increase the use of a vessel at almost no extra cost. That many did take advantage of this opportunity is suggested by an Act of Parliament passed in 1543 'for the preservacon of the Ryver of Severne'.[89] This noted that so many ships had been dumping their ballast at the mouth of the River Avon, in order to create room for illicitly laded grain cargoes, that the passage into the Bristol Channel was in danger of becoming blocked. Various measures were proposed to remedy the situation, including a provision that anyone caught dumping ballast here could automatically be fined £5.

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[87] His imports amounted to 599 tons and his exports 560 tons: Tables 2.20 and 2.21.
[88] From October 1541-September 1543 Smyth's imported 375 tons and exported 158 tons. His exports included 108 tons grain and leather. However Tables 2.14 and 2.15 indicate he only declared 16 tons grain (78 quarters) and 9 tons leather (31 dicker hides and 190 dozen calf skins) during this period. So 83 tons, just over half of his export tonnage, would have been exported illicitly.
[89] *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. III, pp. 906-7.

Irish Shipping Demand

As with the Continental shipping market, the customs accounts are the most useful source for assessing the demand for shipping in the Bristol-Ireland trade. Yet, since the Irish trade involved a large number of commodities, and the weight and volume of many of these commodities is unknown, no attempt was made to estimate the tonnage of goods shipped between Bristol and Ireland. Nevertheless, it is still possible to gain some insight into the nature and timing of shipping demand generated by the Irish trade. In particular, it is possible to determine the rough balance between import and export shipping demand and to throw some light on the timing of shipping demand during the year.

The study of Continental shipping demand revealed that a secular imbalance existed between the demand for import and export shipping in Bristol's declared trade, with import demand greatly exceeding export demand. It seems likely that this was also true of the Bristol-Ireland trade, for while the Bristol customs accounts of the 1540s contain 279 references to ships entering Bristol from Ireland, they contain only 170 references to ships leaving Bristol for Ireland. This means that many of the ships engaged in the Bristol-Ireland trade must have left Bristol in ballast. However, whether this meant that the ships sailed back to Ireland empty is less certain, for it is possible that ships found additional cargoes at other ports in the Bristol Channel. Since this has been suggested as a possibility for the late 15th century, it is worth examining whether it might have happened in the 1540s.

In her study of Anglo-Irish trade in the 15th century, Wendy Childs has proposed that the trade imbalance, that existed between Bristol and Ireland at that time, might have been rectified by the other ports of the Bristol Channel. She noted that in the 15th century, as in the 1540s, the value of Irish imports to Bristol exceeded the value of exports. However, at the end of the 15th century the value of Bridgwater's exports to Ireland exceeded the value of imports during most years. Since Childs was able to identify cases in which ships entered Bristol with a cargo from Ireland, took on a part lading, and then proceeded to Bridgwater to acquire additional goods, she proposed that Anglo-Irish trade may have been less imbalanced than the Bristol customs accounts imply. If she were right, the supposed imbalance in shipping demand between England and Ireland in the 1540s may also have been less than the Bristol accounts imply.

To determine whether other Bristol Channel ports made up for the imbalance in shipping demand generated by the Bristol-Ireland trade of the 1540s, the Bridgwater accounts of 1538/9, 1540/41, 1541/2, 1544/45 and 1545/6 were examined.[90] Since the present analysis is concerned with shipping, it is sufficient to examine the movements of vessels that were clearly engaged in Bridgwater's Anglo-Irish trade. As there is very little evidence that Irish ships were ever involved in the Anglo-Continental trade, it was assumed that any Irish ships appearing in the Bridgwater accounts were engaged in the Irish trade. On the basis of the detailed study that has been carried-out on the Bristol marine of this period, it appears that thirteen out of the seventeen Bristol ships which appear in these accounts were also engaged in the Anglo-Irish trade.[91] The table below indicates the number of entrance and exits of Bristol and Irish ships in the Bristol and Bridgwater accounts.

Table 2.22 - Ship Movements of Vessels Engaged in Bristol-Ireland Trade: 1538-1546

	1538/9	1540/1	1541/2	1542/3	1544/5	1545/6
Irish Ships : Entrances	n/a	n/a	48	32	n/a	29
Irish Ships: Exits	n/a	n/a	43	33	n/a	29
Bristol Ships: Entrances	n/a	n/a	17	14	n/a	8
Bristol Ships: Exits	n/a	n/a	12	8	n/a	11

Table 2.23 - Ship Movements of Vessels Engaged in Bridgwater-Ireland Trade: 1538-1546

	1538/9	1540/1	1541/2	1542/3	1544/5	1545/6
Irish Ships : Entrances	52	25	24	n/a	18	11
Irish Ships: Exits	65	30	53	n/a	20	9
Bristol Ships: Entrances	1	0	1	n/a	0	0
Bristol Ships: Exits	4	0	7	n/a	0	0

It may be noted from these tables that Irish ships appear frequently in the Bridgwater accounts and that in four of the five years the number exiting the port with cargoes exceeded the number entering it. This suggests that the port's export demand for shipping exceeded

[90] P.R.O. E122 200/2, 27/15, 27/18, 27/21, 27/24.
[91] App. 6, *Magdalen*, *Mary Bu'ke*, *Mary George* (1), *Nicholas* (2), *Trinity More*, *Primrose*, *Sunday.*

import demand. However, a heavy excess of export over import demand is only apparent in 1541/2, when more than twice the number of Irish ships exported goods from Bridgwater as imported. This was due to the heavy trade in grain to Ireland in this year. However, in other years there is no evidence that a major imbalance occurred which would help to rectify the supposed imbalance in shipping demand at Bristol. This position can be further justified by the absence of Bristol ships in Bridgwater, except during 1538/9 and 1541/2, when Bridgwater was visited by a number of ships, to acquire additional cargoes of grain for Ireland. Since Bristol ships did not visit Bridgwater on a regular basis, it appears that although Bridgwater may sometimes have helped to rectify the proposed imbalance of shipping demand between Bristol and Ireland, this would have only been true when the price of grain was high in Ireland.

Apart from being able to gain some insight into the balance of shipping demand between Bristol and Ireland, shipping movements can also throw light on both the pattern of seasonal requirements for shipping and on the changes that occurred in the level of demand on a year to year basis. This can be done by examining monthly shipping movements and trade flows during the three years under study.

Table 2.24 - Bristol-Ireland Trade and Shipping Movements: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

Year & Month	Import £	Ship Entrances	Export £	Ship Exits	Total £	Total Ship Movements
1541/10	683	13	0	0	683	13
1541/11	188	11	339	3	527	14
1541/12	55	7	11	4	66	11
1542/1	632	17	19	1	651	18
1542/2	360	17	289	14	649	31
1542/3	111	18	335	14	446	32
1542/4	113	6	117	5	230	11
1542/5	190	8	2	1	192	9
1542/6	31	2	168	6	199	8
1542/7	1515	18	674	10	2189	28
1542/8	260	6	71	5	331	11
1542/9	209	4	31	1	239	5
1542/10	598	14	202	3	800	17
1542/11	22	4	159	3	181	7
1542/12	9	2	5	1	14	3
1543/1	490	22	47	2	537	24
1543/2	413	17	313	23	726	40
1543/3	52	4	167	4	219	8
1543/4	92	6	8	2	100	8
1543/5	138	4	151	7	289	11
1543/6	159	4	75	2	234	6
1543/7	693	10	167	4	860	14
1543/8	30	5	318	6	348	11
1543/9	45	1	14	2	59	3
1545/10	602	7	34	1	637	8
1545/11	154	9	380	6	534	15
1545/12	58	1	23	2	81	3
1546/1	11	1	109	2	120	3
1546/2	74	2	0	0	74	2
1546/3	929	22	600	14	1529	36
1546/4	127	3	173	5	300	8
1546/5	45	3	125	1	170	4
1546/6	96	3	52	5	148	8
1546/7	774	7	74	5	848	12
1546/8	2	1	615	6	617	7
1546/9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total for 3 Years	9962	279	5869	170	15831	449

Figure 2.6: Imports: Ireland to Bristol and Recorded Shipping Arrivals from Ireland to Bristol: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6

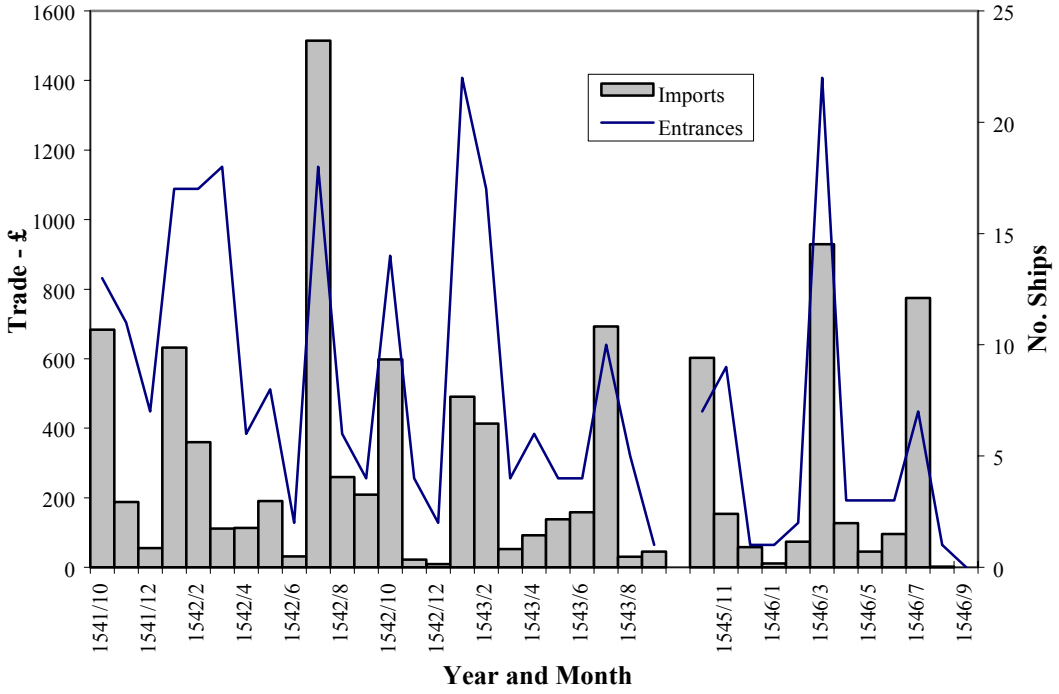
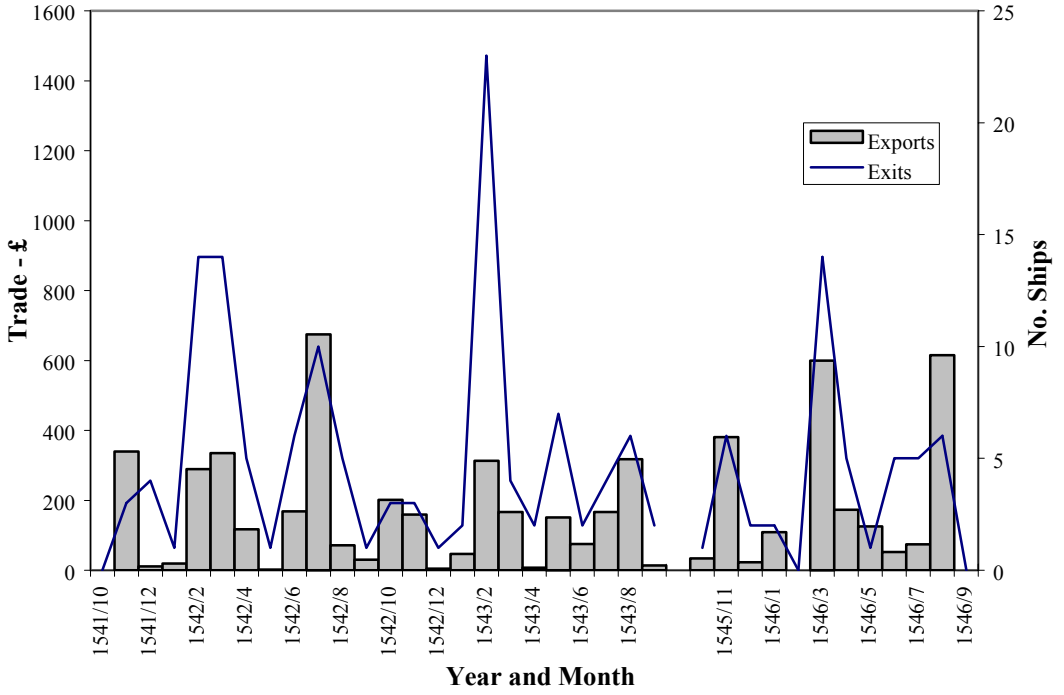


Figure 2.7 : Exports: Bristol-Ireland and Recorded Shipping Departures from Bristol to Ireland: 1541/2, 1542/3, 1545/6



These tables and graphs indicate that some correlation existed between the periods of high trading activity and the movements of shipping. They reveal that although Bristol's absolute levels of shipping and trade with Ireland did not vary significantly between the years under study, shipping and trading activity was not even throughout the year. A major reason for this appears to have been the clustering of commercial activity around the time of Bristol's two great fairs. These were the St James Fair, held after 25 July, and the Candlemas fair, which was held, until its banning in 1543, from 2-9 February.[92] The influence of these fairs on Irish commerce becomes more apparent when the movement of ships and goods from Ireland is examined more closely. For instance, in February 1542, 12 ships arrived from Ireland in the ten days prior to the Candlemas fair and 11 left for Ireland within 10 days of its completion.[93] Apart from the fairs, another reason for the rather spasmodic nature of shipping demand in the Bristol-Ireland trade was that some of the individual trades were highly seasonal in character. For instance during the three years for which complete customs accounts survive, 69% of the herring was imported in October-November and 84% of hake was imported in January-March.[94]

The study of the Irish shipping market has concentrated on demand from the declared trade. However, it was suggested earlier that, as with the Continental trade, grain was almost certainly exported there illicitly when prices were high in Ireland. Since this appears to have been the case between at least 1539-42 the apparent imbalance in shipping demand in the declared trade was probably offset by illicit exports of grain.

Crown Service & Privateering

Thus far this chapter had dealt with the demand for shipping generated by Bristol's trade. The following section will consider the level and timing of demand generated by the Crown and privateers. Since the demand from these sources was irregular, and depended entirely on the nature of Crown policy and England's foreign relations, this issue is best addressed by examining the period on a strictly chronological basis.

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[92] R. C. Latham (ed.), *Bristol Charters 1509-1899* (B.R.S. Publications, XII, 1947), pp. 66-67.
[93] P.R.O. E122 21/10.
[94] P.R.O. E122 21/10, 199/4, 21/15.

The period under study was marked by two great crises in English foreign relations. The first was the threatened Franco-Spanish invasion of 1539, the second the Anglo-French war of 1543-6 - which reached its peak with the attempted invasion of England by the French in August 1545. Although the first crisis was the most dangerous to England's security, it lasted for only a short time and at no point were letters of marque issued to privateers. As a result, the non-commercial demand for English shipping was limited to the creation of a great fleet at Portsmouth during the Spring of 1539. This was maintained from April to June and included eight Bristol ships.[95] So, although the Crown's call on shipping was intense, it lasted only a few months.

The relative tranquillity of the next few years meant the Crown had no call on private shipping and open letters of marque were not issued. However, following the outbreak of maritime hostilities with France this situation changed. When hostilities broke out in February 1543, one of Henry VIII's first actions was to have four Bristol ships dispatched to serve in the Irish Sea between Holyhead and Dublin.[96] The intent of this was to prevent his enemies in Scotland from receiving arms, money and political support from France. The royal accounts of this period only mention disbursements for these four ships, but at least ten Bristol ships were serving the Crown that summer by blockading Glasgow and trying to prevent French support from reaching the Scots by way of the western seas.[97] As the Crown began to issue open letters of marque, the opportunities for privateering would certainly have increased.[98]

During 1544, the Crown also had a major call on West-Country shipping, for in July an expeditionary force was gathered at Bristol to sail to the west coast of Scotland with Lord Lennox. This fleet, which was reported to have consisted of eighteen ships, left Bristol on 5 August and did not return until the end of September.[99] Besides such official service it

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[95] A letter of 28 April reported that four Bristol ships had joined the fleet at Portsmouth and that four more, including the *Savyor* and *Gret Nicholas*, had yet to arrive. A naval list of 10 June includes the *Savyor*, *Nicholas*, *Jesus* and *John Baptiste* of Bristol. At least two other ships in the list, the *Mary Concepcyon* and *Mary Christopher*, match the names of Bristol ships of that time: *L&P*, XIV, i, no. 880, 1097; App. 6.
[96] *L&P,* XVIII, ii, no. 231.
[97] *L&P*, XVIII, i, nos. 810, 952, 966; ii, no. 44, 231; Bain, *The Hamilton Papers*, pp. 159-160.
[98] The first open letters of marque against French shipping were issued in March-April 1543: *L&P,* XVIII, i, no. 346/58, 346/59, 474/22, 474/23, 476/21.
[99] *L&P,* XIX, ii, no. 39, 187, 312; *State Papers,* Vol. I, (1830), p. 770.

appears that privateers from the West-Country also had a high call on shipping during this year for in November 1544 the Privy Council reported to Lord Shrewsbury that:

> 'ther ar att the lest, of the west partes xii or xvi shippes of warre abord att there own aventures, who have goten this yere amones them (as it is credibly reported) nott so lytel as x^{ml} li'.[100]

The highest level of demand for ships, from both the Crown and privateers, came in 1545. The level of demand from the Crown was high because early that year it became apparent that the French were raising a fleet to attack England. In response Henry VIII assembled a rival force. The first merchant ships were hired in May and by early June, Lord Lisle had 160 ships at sea.[101] This fleet was maintained until the end of August but was quickly disbanded once news reached England that the French fleet was being laid-up. By 11 September only the rump of the English navy remained in service.[102]

English privateering reached its highest level during 1545 because Henry, incensed by the separate peace the Empire had concluded with France the previous September, relaxed restrictions on English privateers. His first step in this direction was a proclamation of December 1544 that abolished the need for prospective privateers to take out an explicit letter of marque, suspended the Lord Admiral's right to take a portion of privateering shares and declared that privateers need make no account of their actions to any court or authority.[103] Since the proclamation also ordered that officers of the Crown should not hinder any privateer by requisitioning men or munitions for their own service, the incentive to engage in privateering was greatly increased. However, the result was that the number of illegal seizures of neutral vessels increased to the point that the Empire was forced to retaliate by first arresting English ships in the Low Countries early in 1545 and then by placing a stay on English shipping in Spain.[104]

At the beginning of 1546, it appeared that the previous year's pattern might be repeated again. Yet, by late April it was apparent that the French were not assembling a great naval

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[100] J. Bain (ed.), *The Hamilton Papers: Letters and Papers Illustrationg the Political Relations of England and Scotland in the XVIth Century*, Vol. II, (Edinburgh 1880-1892), p. 335.
[101] D. Loades, *The Tudor Navy,* pp. 31-34.
[102] *L&P,* XX, ii, no. 346.
[103] P. L. Hughes & J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* Vol I (Yale, 1964) pp. 345-6.
[104] G. Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*, pp. 127-173.

force and the Lord Admiral of England was instructed to scale down the navy.[105] On 13 April a general stay on privateering was also ordered by the Crown and ships at sea were ordered to return to port.[106] All potential demand for shipping from the Crown or from privateers ceased with the declaration of peace in June.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to set the market framework in which Bristol's shipowners operated during the period 1539-46. The main points that can be drawn from this study are as follows.

Bristol's international shipping market was based on the servicing of two distinct trades, the Continental and the Irish. The declared component of the Continental trade was marked by a secular imbalance between the demand for import shipping and the demand for export shipping. However, this imbalance was partially rectified by the illicit export trade, especially during the years 1539-41. It was also noted that the Continental trade was seasonal in nature and this created a regular seasonal pattern of shipping demand. The key component of this was the wine trade, the demands of which were so high that each year a great quantity of shipping was called on during a short space of time.

The study of the pattern of shipping demand generated by the Irish trade was necessarily much less detailed than the study of the Continental trade. Nevertheless, it was suggested that, as in the Continental trade, the demand for import shipping would normally have exceeded the demand for export shipping. However, when grain prices were high in Ireland this long-term imbalance may well have been rectified, or even reversed. Since licences were required to export grain to Ireland, much of this trade probably went undeclared. Like the Continental trade, the pattern of demand for shipping in the Irish trade was seasonal in nature. The heaviest demand for shipping was associated with the concentration of trade at the time of Bristol's two great fairs. Other peaks in demand may be associated with the trades in seasonally available commodities, such as herring and hake.

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[105] P.R.O. S.P.1, 216, fo. 88.
[106] *A.P.C.,* p. 380.

After examining the pattern of commercial demand for shipping, the second area which was considered was the level of demand generated by the Crown and privateers. This study indicated that, while there were long periods when there would have been no non-commercial demands on Bristol's shipping, at other times the demands from the Crown were great and unavoidable.

Turning from general patterns to the specific conditions of the years under study, it was noted that the period started with a major international crisis that caused Henry VIII to assemble a great fleet in Portsmouth. This included eight Bristol ships, which served from April to June 1539. However, there were no opportunities for privateering at this time and once the ships were released they rapidly returned to commercial activities. Commercial shipping was probably highly profitable at this time because the boom in the illicit export trade would have greatly increased the demand for export shipping. Since the profits achievable by exporting grain to Iberia remained high until the end of 1541, and the Crown continued to issue licences to export grain to Ireland until April 1542, this period must have been a prosperous time for shipowners engaged in the illicit trade.

Although hostilities began between France and England in February 1543, the tonnage of goods imported into Bristol increased during the war. This was probably because it was safer to send goods up the Bristol Channel than along the English Channel. The war also led to an increase in non-commercial demands for shipping. A large proportion of the Bristol marine served the Crown during the summers of 1543, 1544 and 1545. From the Spring of 1543 till early 1546 large numbers of English ships were engaged as privateers. However, in 1546 the level of non-commercial demand for English ships decreased as it became clear that the French were not raising another great fleet and English privateers were recalled.