Chapter 4: Bristol Shipowners at War: 1543-1546

This chapter will examine how Bristol's shipowners employed their ships during Henry VIII's last great war with France. Although war was not formally declared until August 1543, maritime hostilities began in early February, when both England and France arrested each other's shipping and started to issue open letters of marque to privateers.[1] Between 1543 and 1544, England and the Holy Roman Empire combined against France. In September 1544 the Empire made peace with France but war continued between England and France until 11 June 1546.[2] Although this study will concentrate on the deployment of Bristol's ships during the war, it will also consider the three-and-a-half month period following the proclamation of peace. The terminal point for the study will be the end of September 1546, when the Bristol customs accounts for 1545/6 finishes.

As in Chapter 3, the study will be divided into two parts. The first part will examine the deployment of the Bristol ships used to service the Continental trade. This section will include a detailed study of how Bristol's ships were employed during the war. It will then consider how the city's shipowners maximised benefits they received from ship ownership over this period. The second, much shorter, part of the chapter will consider the deployment of those Bristol ships that served the Irish trade.

The Deployment of Bristol's Continental Shipping

In Chapter 2 it was noted that the outbreak of the Anglo-French war created new demands for shipping, as the Crown pressed ships into naval service and adventurers began to employ them for privateering. However, Bristol's commercial shipping market also grew during the war, since it was safer for ships sailing between Iberia and England to sail by way of the Bristol Channel than the English Channel.[3] As a result, between October 1545 and June

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[1] The arrest in France was issued on 4 February, that in England on 6 February: *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 114, 122. In February the English naval forces at Newcastle were instructed to take all French ships as good prize: *L&P,* XVIII, i, no. 225. On 28 March the first general letter of marque against French shipping was issued in England: *L&P,* XVIII, i, no. 329. By the 2 April, the Vice-admiral of Flanders was instructing an agent in London 'to learn whether the English ships will join ours against the French, as the French do with the Scots against the English.': *L&P,* XVIII, i, no. 356. War was formally declared on 2 August: P. L. Hughes & J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, Vol. I, p. 320.

[2] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations,* Vol. I, p. 369.

[3] Even diplomatic correspondence was generally sent via Bristol. For instance, in September 1542 an Imperial messenger travelling from London to Spain was reported to have gone to 'Bristol to pass the more surely with the fleet that goes from thence.': *L&P*, XVII, no. 780.

1546 the tonnage of goods legally shipped into or out of Bristol was 40% higher than it had been between October 1541 and June 1542.[4] What happened to the illicit trade during the war is difficult to determine but on the basis of the evidence examined in Chapter 2 it appears that, while the illicit trade in leather continued, little grain was exported at this time. The main reason for this was that rising prices in England and falling prices in Iberia reduced the profitability of the grain trade.[5] However, any Bristol merchants who considered exporting grain might also have been put off by a proclamation, issued on 7 January 1544, which banned all grain exports, even under licence, and imposed tough new penalties on transgressors.[6] The extent to which Bristol's shipowners continued to control Bristol's declared shipping market is examined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 and their corresponding graphs, Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

[4] The total quantity shipped between October 1541 and June 1542 was 3232 tons. That shipped between October 1545 and June 1546 was 4511 tons: Tables 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2

[5] The only grain Smyth exported during the war was on the *Clement* of Framilode (11 April 1543). This was sent to Guipuzcoa where it rested for two years before being sold for an 8% net loss: see chapter 2, n. 74.

[6] The proclamation provided that, in addition to having their grain confiscated, merchants would 'suffer imprisonment and make fine at the King's pleasure'. For their part, custom officers 'suffering the same shall loose and forfeit £100 and also have imprisonment at the King's majesties pleasure': Hughes & Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations,* Vol. I, p. 324.

Table 4.1 – Imports from the Continent to Bristol, by Ship's Origin, in Tons: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

Year & Month	Bristol	England & Wales	Empire & Portugal	France	Unknown / Other	Total
1543/3	0	30	0	0	0	30
1543/4	40	17	0	0	0	56
1543/5	0	11	0	0	0	11
1543/6	0	38	0	0	0	38
1543/7	0	160	239	0	0	399
1543/8	0	1	0	0	0	1
1543/9	0	0	72	0	0	72
1545/10	0	19	65	0	2	86
1545/11	0	18	453	0	235	706
1545/12	0	10	154	0	159	324
1546/1	0	2	332	0	0	334
1546/2	0	18	631	0	148	797
1546/3	39	0	642	0	0	681
1546/4	0	6	0	0	0	6
1546/5	3	18	382	0	0	403
1546/6	0	21	22	0	6	49
1546/7	0	22	103	0	0	125
1546/8	0	13	0	177	62	252
1546/9	31	139	283	127	40	619
Tot. Tons	112	542	3378	303	652	4989
% Total	2	11	68	6	13	100

Table 4.2 – Exports from Bristol to the Continent, by Ship's Origin, in Tons: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

Year & Month	Bristol	England & Wales	Empire & Portugal	France	Unknown / Other	Total
1543/3	0	0	13	0	0	13
1543/4	0	7	0	0	0	7
1543/5	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/6	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/7	0	0	102	0	0	102
1543/8	0	0	0	0	0	0
1543/9	0	0	17	0	0	17
1545/10	0	0	236	0	154	390
1545/11	0	0	17	0	0	17
1545/12	0	0	41	0	86	127
1546/1	0	0	9	0	0	9
1546/2	0	0	77	0	40	117
1546/3	0	0	177	0	139	316
1546/4	0	0	45	0	0	45
1546/5	0	0	39	0	0	39
1546/6	30	0	46	0	0	76
1546/7	21	0	117	0	0	138
1546/8	92	0	0	54	18	164
1546/9	29	32	67	58	0	187
Tot. Tons	172	39	1005	112	436	1765
% Total	10	2	57	6	25	100

Figure 4.1 – Imports from the Continent to Bristol, by Ship's Origin, in Tons: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

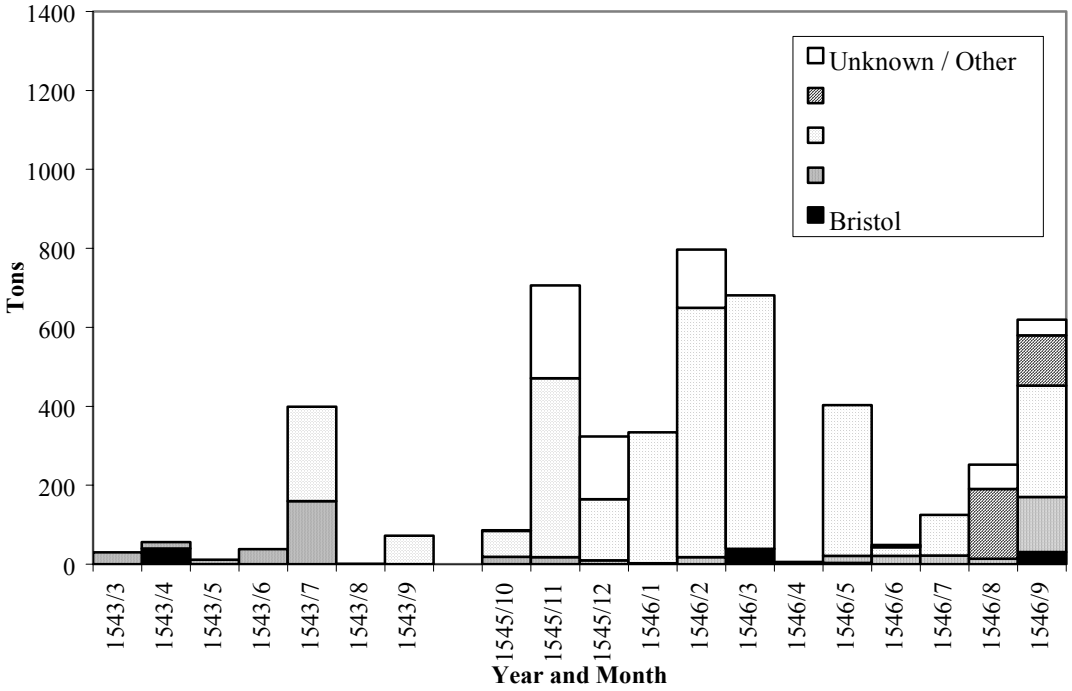
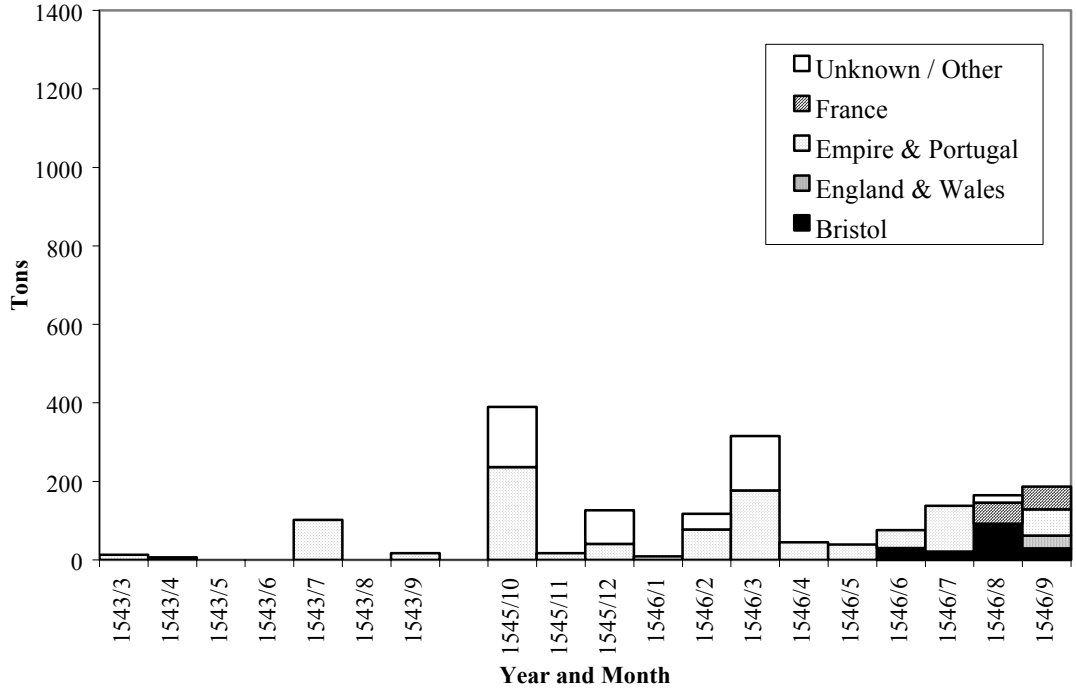


Figure 4.2 – Exports from Bristol to the Continent, by Ship's Origin, in Tons: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546



The above tables and graphs reveal that once maritime hostilities had begun, the domination of Bristol's commercial shipping market quickly shifted to the Empire (Spain and the Low Countries) and Portugal. During the period March to September 1543 and October 1545 to June 1546, Bristol ships controlled only 2% of the shipping market, while ships from other parts of England and Wales controlled an additional 8%.[7] The total level of control by English and Welsh shipping thus dropped from 83% before the war to 10% during it. Although the main beneficiaries were clearly the Spanish, Portuguese and Low Countries' shipowners, there was also an increase in the amount laded on ships listed here as 'unknown / other'. This is partly because more shipping came from unidentified ports, such as 'Bokeslate' and 'Intha', and partly because in the 1545/6 accounts the name of the port is frequently not given.[8] Given this, it is possible that some of the ships in the 'unknown / other' category were from Bristol. However, since the names of the ships cannot be identified from other sources as being from Bristol and the ship's masters are not obviously Bristol men, or even English men, this seems unlikely.[9]

That Bristol's shipping market was dominated by foreign shipping throughout the war, and not just at the beginning and end of it, is confirmed by both the fragmentary customs account of 1543/4 and the freighting practices of John Smyth. Although it was not possible to carry out a detailed statistical examination of the 1543/4 customs account, it indicates that Bristol's Continental merchantmen made, at most, one voyage to the Continent during this year. The account reveals that most of Bristol's ships left during the winter of that year and almost all had returned by July 1544.[10] By contrast, the customs account makes constant reference to foreign ships and some of these made at least two voyages to Bristol during the

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[7] The total tonnage imported and exported during this period was 4,668 tons. Bristol ships carried 112 tons, others from England and Wales 375 tons: Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

[8] The value of trade carried each year by ships from all the recorded ports is given in App. 3.

[9] The three ships in the 'unknown / other' category that carried the largest tonnages during 1545/6 were the *Trinity Bermeo*, master Johannus Ithiago (287 tons), the *San Sebastian*, master Anthonius Martinus (144 tons) and the *Santa Maria Gomar*, master Hugo Lucas (104 tons).

[10] The customs account for the period October 1543 to September 1544 is listed by the P.R.O. as 'unfit to be seen' except under direct supervised access: P.R.O. E122 21/12. The top third of each folio is missing and the rest is in too poor a condition to be microfilmed. Nevertheless, most of what survives is legible. It lists the arrival and departure dates of following Bristol ships that appear to be engaged in the Continental trade: *Harry*, returns 7-11 February; *Jesus* (2), returns 18 February; *Julian*, returns 14 July; *Margaret*, departs 7 January, returns 10 July; *Mary Bulleyne*, returns 17 July; *Mary Conception*, departs 7 January, returns 10 July; *Mary George*, departs 6 November, returns 9 September; *Mary James*, departs 8 January, returns 19 June; *Primrose*, departs 28 January, returns 29 April; *Saviour*, departs 31 December, returns 9 July; *Trinity*, departs 5 January, returns 24 March; *Trinity More*, departs 15 January, returns 14-20 July: see App. 6 for full details.

year.[11] For his part, Smyth's lading practices indicate that between March 1543 and June 1546 he laded 74% of his total cargo on foreign ships and that he laded no goods on Bristol ships between July 1544 and the end of the war.[12]

Once the war ended the amount of cargo transported on Bristol ships quickly increased. From July to September 1544, 29% of export tonnage was carried on Bristol vessels.[13] Although the amount imported on Bristol ships was still very small at this time, this is because it would have been very difficult for a Bristol ship to acquire a cargo in Bristol and complete a round-trip voyage to the Continent between the declaration of peace and the end of September.

To understand why Bristol's shipowners reduced their involvement in the city's Continental shipping market during the war will require a detailed examination of how the city's shipping was deployed at this time. Once this has been done, it will be possible to examine some of the strategies they employed to maximise the returns on their shipping during the war.

At the outbreak of maritime hostilities, Bristol's marine included at least eleven vessels that were engaged solely in the Continental trade and four more that serviced both the Continental and the Irish trade.[14] Half the ships were over 100 tons burden and, by the standards of the time, all of the specialised Continental merchantmen would have been

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[11] For instance, the *Saint John* of Renteria, master Michael de Arisavalo, left Bristol at the end of December 1543 with a cargo of cloth and hides. Although the reference of its return to Bristol has not survived, it is again noted as leaving Bristol at the end July, when both John Smyth and the Tyndall brothers laded on it: Chapter 2, Tables 2.15 and 2.16; P.R.O. E122 21/12.

[12] Between 1539 and February 1543 Smyth shipped 1453 tons of which 123 tons (8%) was sent on foreign ships. From March 1543 to June 1546 he shipped 542 tons of which 402 tons (74%) was sent on foreign ships: App. 2. The last Bristol ship to carry his goods was the *Julian*, which entered Bristol on 14 July 1544: App. 6.

[13] Bristol ships carried 142 tons out of the 489 tons exported during this period and 31 tons out of the 996 tons imported: Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The following Bristol owned ships left the city for the Continent between the declaration of peace and the end of September: *Bark Seymer* of Bristol, 21 June; *Trinity More* of Bristol, 24 July; *Harry* of Bristol, 25 August; *Mary Conception* of Bristol, 28 August; *Trinity* of Caerleon, 10 September; *Trinity Gorney*, 13 September; *Magdalen* of Bristol, 20 September: App. 6.

[14] The Continental merchantmen, with their size in tons burden, were: *Harry* (135 tons), *Julian* (60 tons), *Magdalen* (55 tons), *Margaret* (135 tons), *Mary Bonaventure* (90 tons), *Mary Bride* (120 tons), *Mary Conception* (105 tons), *Mary James* (105 tons), *Primrose* (75 tons), *Saviour* (255 tons), *Trinity* (115 tons). The ships which serviced both the Continental and the Irish trades were the *Jesus* 2 (35 tons), *Michael* (30 tons), *Little Trinity* (45 tons), *Trinity More* (40 tons). Although it was not a Bristol registered ship, it is probably also appropriate to consider Continetnal merchantman the *Trinity* of Caerleon (135 tons) as a Bristol vessel, since it was owned by a Bristol man by this time: App. 6.

considered suitable for military service.[15] The Crown soon had reason to be grateful for this as Henry received intelligence that the French were preparing to send gold and arms to the pro-French party in Scotland. At this time Henry VIII was in the midst of delicate negotiations with the Earl of Arran, who had recently been appointed the Protector and Governor of Scotland following the defeat of the Scots at Solway Moss and the death of James V. With Henry hoping to achieve nothing less than the removal of the infant Mary Queen of Scots to England, and her betrothal to Prince Edward, a union of crowns seemed tangibly close.[16] In this context, Henry was understandably keen to prevent any succour reaching his opponents, so, when he heard that the French were planning to send aid by way of the Irish Sea, he decided to mobilise the Bristol marine.[17] If he wished to stop, or at least delay the French aid, this was really his only option, for the King's own ships were fully occupied in the Narrow Seas and North Sea.[18]

In order to prepare the city's ships for naval service, the Bristol merchant, John Wynter, was called to London and, on 23 February, he was provided with £1000 'to fit out ships at Bristol to be sent to sea for the defense of the King's subjects'.[19] In less than a month, Wynter had four Bristol ships stationed in the Irish Sea between Dublin and Holyhead.[20] Not only did their presence force the French to delay their expedition but, as the Lord Deputy of Ireland reported, the presence of the Bristol ships led both to a reduction in activity by French and Scotch privateers on the coast of Ireland, and made the Irish rebel, Odonnell, reconsider his position, for his security depended on his island strongholds.[21]

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[15] This is confirmed by a case heard in the Court of Star Chamber in 1543, where it was noted that at Bristol 'ther ar xii or xiii shippes able to do good seruice vnto the kynges maieste': I. S. Leadam (ed.), 'Radclyffe, Parishoners of vs. Mayor of Bristowe', *Select Cases Before the Star Chamber, Vol. II, A.D. 1509-1544* (Selden Society, Vol. 25, London, 1911), p. 253.
[16] *L&P,* XVIII, i, pp. i-xiv.
[17] The first report to suggest the French were planning to send aid via the Irish Sea was written by Paget, the ambassador in France, on 2 February. Subsequent intelligence from a number of sources confirmed that this was the French plan: *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 106, 112, 286, 305.
[18] During the winter the only naval ships in service were those in the Narrow Seas (between Dover and Calais) but once news arrived that Scottish privateers were returning to Edinburgh, with about 19 English ships taken at Bordeaux, the King sought to augment his forces in the east. On 8 January, Lord Lisle was ordered to take up ships at Newcastle and by 26 January the plan was to gather all available ships at Tynemouth to await the return of the Scots. However, a severe storm in early February left the English navy in the east 'so spoiled and torn with tempest' that even this proved impossible: *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 19, 80, 104, 123, 127, 161.
[19] *L&P*, XVIII, ii, no. 231, p. 130.
[20] An entry in the King's Augmentations Accounts records a payment on 19 March of £152 'for pay of ships serving in the west parts for one month'. This would have been more than enough to cover the basic pay of the 530 men that are recorded on 10 May to be serving upon the Irish Sea in four ships. Since the latter payment was made to John Wynter, it is clear that he was left in charge of the finances of the Bristol fleet: *L&P,* XVIII, ii, no. 231 pp. 129-30.
[21] *L&P,* XVIII, i, no. 373, 553.

Over the next few months, the French gathered a larger force for their expedition and Henry augmented his navy in the West Seas.[22] By July, six or seven English ships were stationed in the mouth of the Clyde, where the French fleet was expected to land.[23] However, this appears to have been in addition to the vessels stationed in the Irish Sea, for a letter written by Henry VIII later asked for tidings, of the 'tenne shipps which we sent from Bristow' to encounter the French.[24]

In the end Henry's efforts went for nought, for although an alliance was agreed with the Governor of Scotland during the summer, the Governor soon reneged on it and crossed over to the pro-French faction. With this, Henry VIII's Scottish policy collapsed and the Clyde fleet, which appears to have depended on victuals supplied by the Governor, withdrew.[25] So, when the French fleet did finally arrive in October, there were no Bristol ships to meet it.[26]

In the first six months after the outbreak of hostilities it appears that most of Bristol's Continental merchantmen would have been in Crown Service. Which ones were involved is uncertain but there are reasons for believing that the force included the *Trinity* of Bristol, the *Saviour* of Bristol, and the Bristol owned *Trinity* of Caerleon.[27] It also seems likely that the *Mary James* of Bristol was employed as either a Crown ship or a privateer during the summer, since the half tun of wine it brought into the city on 11 May can hardly have been the fruit of a regular commercial voyage.[28] Of the other ships, only one vessel that was capable of serving the Continental trade made another commercial voyage between March

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[22] The French clearly recognised the danger the Bristol ships posed, for on 5 June, the Papal Legate accompanying the French mission wrote to a colleague that they would be sailing to Scotland 'in danger from the English who guard that sea, and they were bound to pass between England and Ireland.' On 16 July he wrote again to say that they would be departing with 'four ships to carry the artillery and munition and our persons; and that eight other armed ships would accompany us' : *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 652, 900.
[23] *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 810, 952.
[24] *Hamilton Papers*, II, pp. 159-60.
[25] The Governor had undertaken to victual the fleet after its arrival in the mouth of the Clyde on 2 July. Henry's Ambassador confirmed that this had been done on 28 July. However, this supply was probably cut off during August, as the Pro-French party gained the upper hand, and it would certainly have stopped once the Governor defected to the pro-French camp on 3 September: *L&P,* XVIII, i, nos. 810, 966.
[26] *L&P,* XVIII, ii, no. 257.
[27] App. 6, *Saviour* of Bristol, 31 August 1543; *Trinity* of Bristol, Summer 1543; *Trinity* of Caerleon, 28 August 1543.
[28] App. 6.

and September. This was the 30 ton *Michael* of Bristol, which left Bristol for Ireland on 10 August.[29]

On the basis of the above evidence, it appears that the main reason Bristol's ships were withdrawn from the Continental shipping market during the spring and summer of 1543 was that they were being prepared for, or were engaged in, naval service. Of the fifteen Bristol, or Bristol owned, ships that were large enough to engage in the Continental shipping market, only one made a new commercial voyage between March and September. Ten of the ships served in the navy for at least part of the summer. Although it is not clear what the remaining ships were doing, since they do not appear to have been employed by the Crown, the most likely reason for their absence from the commercial shipping market is that they were engaged as privateers.

After Bristol's ships had returned home in the late summer or autumn of 1543, they were sent on a commercial voyage to Iberia. Although ships serving the Iberian wine trade normally left Bristol in August or September, on this occasion most of the Bristol marine did not leave until December or January. This was presumably because it took some time to refit the ships after their period of Crown service and many of Bristol's shipowners might, like John Smyth, have decided to carry out an extensive program of work to prepare their vessels for the times ahead.[30] Some of work carried out by Smyth on the *Trinity* during 1543, such as the mending of guns and the making of grapnels and shear-hooks was clearly designed not only to prepare the *Trinity* for action, but to prepare it for offensive action.[31] Since Kenneth Andrews has suggested that the most profitable form of privateering during the late sixteenth century was the combined privateering/commercial voyage, it is likely that the Bristol ships which left during the winter of 1543/4 were prepared both to defend themselves and to attack enemy shipping.[32]

As noted earlier, all the Bristol ships that engaged in a winter voyage to Iberia had returned home by July 1544. The reason they did not attempt another commercial voyage that summer appears to be that the Crown once more needed the city's ships. After the collapse

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[29] App. 6.
[30] App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol, Autumn 1543.
[31] Shear-hooks were scythe-like blades fixed to the ends of the yard-arms, which would slash through another ship's rigging when the attacker bore down on it. Grapnels were used to secure an enemy ship before boarding.
[32] K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering During the Spanish War 1585-1603* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 135.

of his Scottish policy the year before, Henry VIII decided to secure England's northern border by destroying Scotland's capacity for making war. He did this by ordering a series of deep raids through the Borders and Lowlands, burning towns, villages, crops and farmsteads.[33] The most ambitious of these attacks was a seaborne raid into the Firth of Forth and the planned occupation and fortification of Dumbarton Castle, on the Clyde, which could then be used as a base for making further raids into the heart of Scotland.[34] The ships intended for the western expedition were gathered at Bristol, under the direct supervision of John Wynter, and in early August the fleet left with 400 English soldiers to occupy Dumbarton.[35] A letter written by the Lords of Scotland claimed that it consisted of 18 ships.[36] Although the Crown had presumably hired most of these vessels, some appear to have been privateers, for orders issued to the fleet make reference to 'such other ships as did accompany them of their own charges'.[37] After some delays, the fleet arrived in the Clyde in late August or early September but since the English were unable to gain the castle, they were forced to retire and by 30 September the fleet was back in Bristol.[38] If the estimate of the fleet's size by the Lords of Scotland were even close to being true, this summer expedition explains why none of Bristol's Continental merchantmen left Bristol on a commercial voyage during the spring, summer or early autumn of 1544.

What happened after September 1544 is less clear but, as noted earlier, Smyth did not lade goods on any Bristol ships until the end of the war and few of Bristol's ships were involved in the Continental shipping market between October 1545 and June 1546. This was again partly due to the exigencies of the Crown, for although the Scottish threat was eliminated in 1544, the separate peace which the Empire concluded in September 1544 left England exposed to the full force of the French navy. Early in 1545 it became apparent that the French were raising a great fleet to invade England.[39] To help meet this threat the Crown hired seven of Bristol's largest ships in the summer of 1545 and the city's ships were

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[33] For a full account of the raids conducted between September 1543 and August 1544, see: *L&P,* XIX, ii, no. 53.
[34] The East Coast expedition involved 37 ships and over 2,000 men. It left at the beginning of May and by 20 May it had captured all the shipping in the Forth and burnt Edinburgh, Leith, most of Settlements around the Forth, and all of those on the road back to Berwick: *L&P*, XIX, i, nos 533, 534, 643.
[35] The mandate of the expedition is spelled out in a memorial drawn up in July: *L&P,* XIX, i, no. 813. According to a letter written by the Council with the Queen to Henry VIII, the 'navy from Bristoll' departed about 5 August: *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 39.
[36] *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 312.
[37] *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 280.
[38] *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 186; *State Papers,* I, p. 770.
[39] *L&P,* XX, i, nos. 11, 121.

employed for the first time in the English Channel. The *Saviour* of Bristol had been hired by May and, along with the other ships, was based at Portsmouth during early August.[40] All the Bristol ships, along with most of the rest of the fleet, were dismissed in early September.[41] This proved to be the last time during the war in which a substantial portion of Bristol's shipping was hired for the navy, for by April 1546 it had become apparent that the French were not preparing a great fleet that year.[42] So, the only Bristol ship to be hired during 1546 was the *Saviour*.[43]

The Crown's demand for shipping during the summer of 1545 thus provides a partial explanation for Bristol's low level of involvement in the Continental shipping market after September 1544. However, since the navy hired only part of the city's marine during this period, and most of these ships only served for a few months, the city's shipping must have been engaged in some other business during this period. For the reasons given below it seems likely that this was privateering.

The period from autumn 1544 to spring 1546 has long been recognised as a time of intense privateering by Englishmen. During this time large numbers of English armed vessels were sent to sea and some of the attacks on Spanish shipping prefigure the activities of Elizabethan adventurers such as Raleigh, Drake and Hawkins.[44] As in the late sixteenth century, privateering grew in the latter part of the 1543-46 war because the Crown promoted it. Henry VIII's ostensible reason for doing this was that England, deserted by the Empire, needed to better provide for its maritime defence against the French and Scots.[45] However, if the Crown relaxed its control over privateers and showed a liberal attitude to those who seized goods from Imperial ships, English privateers would also inevitably turn on these neutral vessels. By promoting privateering Henry was thus able to both increase the number of armed English ships at sea and punish the Emperor for his betrayal.

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[40] The Bristol-registered ships were the *Harry*, *Margaret*, *Mary Conception*, *Mary James*, *Saviour* and *Trinity*. The Bristol owned *Trinity* of Caerleon also served: see App. 6 references to these ships dated 3 and 10 August 1545.
[41] *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 368.
[42] By late April, the Council was already instructing the Lord Admiral to scale down the size of the English fleet 'perceyveng that thenemys have no great power on the seas nor that there is any lykelyhood they will send shortely': P.R.O., S.P.1 216 f.88.
[43] The '*Salviour'* of Bristol is among the King's ships being sent to the Narrow Seas at the end of March: App. 6, *Saviour* of Bristol. One other Bristol ship, the *Trinity Smith,* can be found in the naval lists of this year, but that was because the Crown bought it from John Smyth sometime before 22 March: App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol.
[44] G. Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake* (London, 1954), pp. 133-73.
[45] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations,* Vol. I, p. 345-6.

The most important step the Crown took to promote privateering was the issuing of a proclamation, on 20 December 1544, to remove restrictions on the activity.[46] The proclamation contained three important measures. First, it removed the need for privateers to acquire an explicit letter of marque to justify their actions. This meant that anyone could engage in privateering, without having first to acquire a licence or place bonds or recognisance before the Privy Council or Admiralty Courts. Second, the proclamation abolished the right of the Lord Admiral, or any other party, to take a share (usually one-tenth) of privateering gains. Not only did this increase the direct returns on privateering but it also meant that privateers no longer had to engage in the expensive and time-consuming business of declaring their gains before a prize court. Third, all officers of the Crown and the civic authorities of all port towns were ordered to promote privateering and aid those who engaged in it. This included the specific stipulation that the Crown's officers should not requisition munitions or equipment from privateers, unless they had specific orders from the Crown to do so.

From the beginning of 1545, privateering was thus an almost entirely deregulated and unrestricted activity. The Crown's continued interest in promoting privateering is illustrated by a further proclamation, issued on 11 April, which suggested that anyone who wished to serve his majesty on the seas at their own adventure could sign up at Billingsgate with one, John of Calais. However, although such proclamations sent a message to the country that privateering was a patriotic activity, the Crown's shift in policy towards English privateers who seized goods from the neutral shipping of the Empire was equally important to the promotion of privateering.

By contemporary custom it was considered acceptable for privateers to seize goods from a neutral vessel if the goods belonged to an enemy merchant. However, in practice, this was usually difficult to prove for such goods were usually 'coloured' by false documentation to make it appear that the goods belonged to an individual from a neutral country. The onus was thus nominally on the privateer to demonstrate that the goods belonged to a merchant from an enemy country. Nevertheless, since any disputes resulting from a seizure would be tried in England, the English Crown was able to decide for itself what constituted a fair prize. During the latter part of the war with France, the Crown was able to provide

[46] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations,* Vol. I, p. 345-6.

significant encouragement to privateers by favouring Englishmen in such disputes. The most extreme example of the Crown's bias in favour of English privateers was when Robert Renegar seized Imperial treasure from a Spanish ship returning from America in March 1545. In this case the goods could not possibly have been French but despite this the Crown dragged its heels in offering restitution and Renegar, who was regarded as one of England's leading sea-captains, was supported by the Crown in the subsequent dispute.[47] Unsurprisingly, the result was that English attacks on Imperial shipping increased.

The Imperial response to these seizures was to arrest English shipping in Antwerp from January to April 1545 and then, after Renegar's exploits, English goods and ships in Andalusia were arrested to force a return of the goods he stole.[48] However, this simply provided Henry with an excuse for delaying restitution further and, since those who suffered from the seizures in Andalusia were primarily those engaged in trade rather than privateering, the arrests merely provided another incentive for Englishmen to quit the commercial shipping market altogether. This must have been particularly true of the owners of Bristol's Continental merchantmen, for if they could not trade safely with Spain, the only trade they could serve was that between Bristol and Portugal. This state of affairs continued until April 1546, when the approaching peace with France, and Henry's unwillingness to antagonise the Emperor further, finally persuaded him to the recall England's privateers from the sea.[49]

Turning from the national situation to that of the West Country, it may be noted that even before the Crown issued the proclamations to encourage privateering, the West Country communities were apparently heavily involved in the practice. In November 1544 the Privy Council answered a complaint by Lord Shrewsbury, concerning the depredations of Scottish pirates on the north-east coast of England, by suggesting that although it was unable to spare any of the navy to protect them:

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[47] Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake,* pp. 174-96.
[48] The arrest in the Low Countries was on all English goods, ships and merchants. It lasted from 5 January 1545 (*L&P,* XX, i, no. 21) to 6 April: *L&P,* XX, i, no. 494. The arrests in Spain lasted from 31 March 1545 to 8 November 1546: *L&P,* XX, i, no. 459; XXI, ii, no. 371.
[49] *A.P.C.*, I, 13 April 1546, pp. 383-84.

> 'his majestes pleasure is thatt your lordeshipp shall travayle with thinhabitantes of the portes and creekes within your commission, to doo as other his majestes subjects have doon all this yere, and yett doo in many other partes of the realme. We assure yow ther ar att the lest, of the west partes xii or xvi shippes of warre abrod att there own aventures, who have goten this yere amones them (as it is credibly reaported) nott so lytel as x^{ml} li.'[50]

The continuing involvement of West Country ships in privateering is further illustrated by the Privy Council's minutes of the following summer. As fears of a French invasion grew, the Crown became concerned to build up its navy. So, in June letters were sent to the Mayor of Bristol and the sheriffs of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset ordering 'a proclamation to be made for the retiring of all adventurers from the see'.[51] However, after the French invasion fleet had arrived in the Solent, and while French troops were actually being landed in the Isle of Wight, the Privy Council wrote from Portsmouth:

> 'to the Mayour of Bristowe declaring the Kinges Majestes contentacion that thaddventuroures might passe to the sees upon bonde not to moleste themperour's subjectes or others of his Majestes frendes.'[52]

The city was thus not only active in the West Country privateering scene, but was apparently favoured in 1545 by being allowed to send out its privateers when the rest of the South Western shipping was being called up to serve the Crown.

Although it is clear that Bristol adventurers were taking part in privateering, the involvement of individual shipowners is harder to document. There is, however, one case to which reference is made in *Acts of the Privy Council,* which concerns an action taken against two such men. This relates to a Portuguese caravel that was seized:

> 'by a ship of Mynnet [Minehead] beside Bristow, wherof John Hille and John Dulyne of Mynett were capteins, and parteners or vitaylers of the same William Aplom, grocer, and John Capes, merchaunt, of the said Citie, emonges whome the said goodes were devided.'[53]

Here, although the ship was not itself Bristol registered, it appears to have been part owned by John Capps and a man more clearly identified in a follow up letter, as William Appowell.[54] Both these men were Bristol merchants and shipowners who conducted a

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[50] *The Hamilton Papers*, II, p. 355.
[51] *A.P.C.*, I, 14 June 1545, p. 192.
[52] *A.P.C.*, I, 20 July 1545, p. 212.
[53] *A.P.C.*, I, 29 May 1546, p. 435.
[54] *A.P.C.*, I, 24 December 1546, p. 558.

significant international trade through the city.[55] That the taking of the caravel was not the only act of privateering by this ship is made clear in letters sent in July and August 1545 from the Lord Deputy of Ireland to Henry VIII. These note that John Hill had taken two French prizes with his ship on the coast of Scotland and intended to serve the King further, at his own cost, on the coast of Ireland.[56]

Even clearer evidence of Bristol's shipowners being involved in privateering comes from a:

> 'Supplicacion exhibited by Mr. Thorne of Bristowe in the behaulf of Walter Robertes, capten of a ship of the saide Towne, who being by force of wether dryven, with v lawfull prises taken by him of the Frenchemen, to the Towne of S. Sebastians in Spaine, was there by them of thinquisition not only arrested and put in prison with iii Inglishe merchauntes moo, but also his shippe stayed, his chestes broken uppe, and goodes sett on land and deteigned'[57]

This supplication to the Privy Council indicates not only that a known Bristol merchant was directly involved in privateering but that, on being imprisoned, he should be represented by Nicholas Thorn, the city's foremost international merchant and the owner of Bristol's greatest ship.[58] The representation of a privateer by such a substantial figure would seem to suggest that Bristol's merchant community regarded privateering as a respectable activity for one of their number to be involved in.

The last piece of evidence is more suggestive than conclusive but is interesting as, if the reading given is correct, it seems to hint at the way in which the shipowners of Bristol could integrate the functions of Crown service and privateering. Again the evidence relates to the Acts of the Privy Council. In the minutes of February 1546 it is recorded that:

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[55] The value of trade listed in the surviving customs accounts of the 1540s under William Appowell, or William Appowell and associates, was £2,407. This was 3.4% of the city's total trade during this period making him the city's second largest merchant. During the same period the value of trade belonging to John Caps, or John Caps and associates, was £356 or 0.5% of the city's total trade: P.R.O. E122 21/10, 199/4, 21/15. William Appowell and John Capps were joint owners of the *Little Trinity* of Bristol: App. 6.

[56] *L&P,* XX, i, no. 1287; XX, ii, no. 120.

[57] *A.P.C.*, I, 26 November 1545, p. 275.

[58] Walter Roberts and Nicholas Thorn both appear in the Bristol customs accounts of the 1540's. The value of trade listed under the name of Nicholas Thorn, or Nicholas Thorn and associates, was £5,205. This was 7% of the Bristol's total trade during these three years and was twice as great as the next biggest merchant, William Appowell (£2,407). Walter Roberts appears to have been a minor Bristol merchant, with whom John Smyth maintained a personal credit account. The value of trade listed under the name of Water Roberts, or Walter Robets and associates, during the same period was £37 : P.R.O. E122 21/10, 199/4, 21/15; App. 6, *Saviour* of Bristol; *Smyth's Ledger*, fo. 106.

> 'William Karye, Robert Leyton, and John Pryne, merchauntes of Bristow, being commanded by John Wynter, deceassed, about i yere passed to prepare for the Kinges Majestes service on the sees their ship called the Marye James of Bristowe, and haveng not sufficient ordenance for the furniture of the same, bought vi peces of ordenance with their chambres'[59]

The minutes record that the merchants were being sued by the sellers of the ordnance for non-payment. However, the King decided to pay for the ordnance himself as, after the period of royal service, Wynter, acting as the treasurer of Marine Causes, did 'bestow and dispose of the saide ordenance to his Majestes use.'[60] Now the *Mary James* did indeed serve the Crown in the campaign of the summer of 1545 but, as it did not serve over the winter, it was presumably among those Bristol ships dismissed in early September.[61] For this analysis the interesting factor is that the owners of the ship bought the ordnance themselves and would have been liable to pay for it had Wynter not requisitioned it. This suggests that on buying the ordnance they felt they would have a use for it once the King's fleet broke up. It could be that their intent was merely to provide for the protection of their ship while it was engaged in peaceful trading activities but Bristol's ships were little involved in trade during the latter part of the war. It therefore seems more likely that, although the ship was being prepared for Crown service, the owners intended to use it afterwards for privateering. Indeed viewed from this perspective a period of royal service might be seen to prospective privateers as a valuable training occasion for the crew and a chance to test out ordnance, which would probably be paid for by the Crown if it had proved defective when fired.

In conclusion, it appears that for most of the period from February 1543 till the end of the war in June 1546, Bristol's shipping was engaged either in Crown Service or privateering. However, the issue that has yet to be addressed is how the shipowners maximised their returns from such activities.

Returns from Crown Service and Privateering

When returns on Crown service or privateering are considered it is perhaps natural to think first in terms of direct financial reward. When the Crown hired ships it contracted to maintain them during their period of service and compensate shipowners if their vessels were lost or damaged. A hire fee was also paid of one shilling per month per ton of the vessel.

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[59] *A.P.C.*, I, 6 February 1546, p. 332-333.
[60] *A.P.C.*, I, 13 April 1546, pp.380-381.
[61] App. 6.

This meant, for instance, that John Smyth would have received £7 10s. per month for the hire of the 150 ton (by naval standards) *Trinity*. Since he valued his ship at £250 in 1539 this would have represented a 36% per annum return on his capital. However, although this represents an excellent rate of return for what was, in theory, a risk free venture, in reality the hire of a ship by the Crown was unlikely to be so lucrative. One reason for this was that a shipowner was clearly expected to pay the costs of fitting-out a ship before its period of service in the same way that they would for a normal commercial voyage.[62] Moreover, even if the Crown paid all its dues, ships were rarely hired for a long period and payments were only made for the exact number of days of the ship's hire.[63] This meant that ships could be forced to wait while the Crown determined its needs and then, since the Crown's main demand for shipping came during the summer, shipowners could miss their normal autumn voyage to Iberia for the sake of a few months' hire. The practical effect of this should be clear from the earlier examination of the employment of Bristol's ships during the war. For instance, although most of the Bristol ships hired by the Crown in 1543 would only have served for only a few months, Bristol's Continental merchantmen appear to have been unable to make a commercial voyage between February 1543 and December or January 1544. Similarly, in 1544 and 1545, the periods of Crown Service, though short, were so timed that the ships would have missed the opportunity to service the Iberian wine trade. Crown service was thus unlikely to have been a lucrative activity and since there was little that shipowners could do to improve the direct financial returns from it, any additional benefits they received from Crown service would have had to come in the form of political favours.

If Crown service offered few financial rewards, it might be suspected that privateering would offer better opportunities. When a ship engaged in privateering, the shipowner received one third of the spoils and had a much greater degree of control over their vessel than when it was engaged by the Crown. This meant that it would have been possible to fit cruises into a more general pattern of commercial activity or even to combine privateering with commerce to undertake what has been defined as 'commerce-raiding' in a study of eighteenth century privateering.[64] It has already been suggested that Bristol's ships might have undertaken a

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[62] In the case of the *Trinity*, this included the cost of purchasing a new main-yard and extra spars, as well as the mending of guns, dressing of an anchor and the making of grapnels and shear-hooks: App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol, 1543.
[63] For instance, an account for the East Coast expedition of 1544, noted that hired ships were paid at the rate of 22 ½ d. per ton, which represents the exact daily rate for the 53 day period of hire at 12d. per ton per (28 day) month: *L&P,* XIX, i, no. 643.
[64] D. J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter, 1990), p. 66.

combined commercial/privateering voyage during the winter and spring of 1544. It has also been noted that the preparation of ships like the *Trinity* of Bristol or the *Mary James* of Bristol for periods of Crown service, would have left them more effective as privateers after they had been dismissed. This would have been particularly true if Bristol's mariners received additional training, for instance in gunnery, while serving in the navy. In the absence of more information about the activity of Bristol's privateers during the 1543-6 war, it is not possible to provide any further assessment of how Bristol's shipowners could have maximised their takings from privateering. However, on the basis of the scant evidence provided above, it can at least be noted that the main cruising grounds of Bristol's privateers appear to have been Biscay and the waters around Ireland and western Scotland.

Apart from financial rewards, the political returns on Crown service and privateering should also be considered. This was important because, for Bristol's shipowners the military value of their vessels to the Crown proved to be a useful way of gaining concessions and favours from the King. Such royal largess could be both individual and collective, and, as will be seen, the value of such patronage could be considerable. The following analysis will examine the cases of two Bristol merchants who received substantial rewards for their particular services to the Crown and consider how others in Bristol's merchant / shipowning community may have benefited directly or indirectly from royal patronage distributed for maritime services.

The clearest example of a Bristol man receiving favours for his naval services to the Crown is the merchant John Wynter. He is interesting because he took a pro-active approach to Crown service, actively seeking royal attention and patronage through the provision of 'naval' services. Wynter first came to the King's notice when he went to court in 1534 to deliver a communication from the customs officer of Bristol. Although his message was directed to Thomas Cromwell, Wynter gained an audience with the King and was able to use the occasion to promote his own ideas and interests, for one of Henry's chief courtiers later wrote to Cromwell that this unknown:

> 'had grete and long conference with his Grace aswell of the occurrents upon the costes of Biscaye and Ireland as also of the good redyness of x shipps which now be at Bristowe and of the grete desire he had to serve his Grace in this his busynes in Irland'[65]

[65] P.R.O. S.P.1 85 fos.189-90.

Indeed, so impressed was the King that he proposed that Wynter, and an associate Wynter recommended, should be made captains of two of the ships which were being prepared to do service in Ireland. Over the next few years Wynter occasionally provided additional 'naval' services to the Crown. For instance in late 1534 he was acting as a spy in Spain to investigate the ships the Spaniards were making and in 1537 he manned a Bristol ship with soldiers, at his own cost, in the hope of capturing some Breton pirates who were frequenting the Bristol Channel.[66] Yet, he was only able to move beyond the position of an occasionally useful merchant-shipowner during the 1543-46 war. At the start of 1543 Wynter was called to London and was given financial control over the Bristol ships dispatched to the Irish Sea. He must have proved his worth, for the following year he was not only given total control over the Bristol fleet going to Dumbarton Castle, but he was made paymaster for the East Coast expedition into the Firth of Forth.[67] After this he rapidly acquired financial responsibility for the whole of the English navy, documents from the end of 1544 till his death in December 1545 describing him variously as 'paymaster of the King's ships', 'paymaster for sea matters' and 'treasurer of the marine causes'.[68] For his services he received a number of royal annuities during 1544.[69] For Wynter the rewards of patronage were great and though he died before he could reap the full benefits himself, he nevertheless had time to install his son, the future Sir William Wynter, as keeper of the King's storehouse at Deptford.[70] In this way John Wynter was able to establish his descendants as a maritime family of note, who were to play a prominent role as privateers, naval officers and pioneering merchants during Elizabeth's reign.[71]

Although Wynter was an exceptional case, at least one other Bristol merchant received royal recognition for services that were at least partly maritime. This was the fairly minor Bristol merchant, Matthew Kent.[72] He entered the King's service in 1544 when he organised the transportation to England of 1000 Irish foot-soldiers who were to serve the King in Scotland and France.[73] When the troops arrived in Chester, they were divided, six hundred of the best being sent to France under the command of Lord Power of Ireland and the remainder going

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[66] *L&P*, VII, no. 1535; XII, ii, no. 208.
[67] *L&P,* XIX, i, nos. 408, 643, 813.
[68] *L&P*, XIX, ii, no. 777; XXI, i, no. 643, f.66; XX ii, no. 707/45; *A.P.C.,* Vol I, p. 381.
[69] *L&P,* XX, i, no. 557 (fo. 47).
[70] *L&P*, XXI, no. 1334.
[71] Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateers*, pp. 13-14, 89-90, 99.
[72] Matthew Kent imported £176 worth of woad and wine during the period October 1541 to September 1543, which represented 0.4% of Bristol's total trade (£39, 637) in this period: P.R.O. E122 21/10, 199/4.
[73] *L&P,* XIX, i, no. 477 (5).

to Scottish Marches.[74] It appears that Kent was given command of the 400 bound for Marches and he served there till the following year.[75] While based there he was captured by the Scots, but still managed to send intelligence back to Lord Shrewsbury, who oversaw the operations against Scotland who forwarded this letter to the King.[76] Kent was rewarded at the end of 1545 'for his good service in the last wars in Scotland', by being granted a licence to export 400 dicker leather and import 300 tons Gascon wine.[77] After this he remained in King's service and in March 1546 he was, perhaps more appropriately for a Bristol merchant, made the captain of the King's ship the *Swallow* (240 tons), serving in the Narrow Seas. He must have continued to do good service for, in October 1546, the King granted 'Mathew Kent, a gentleman usher of the chamber, annuity of £20'.[78]

The cases of Wynter and Kent illustrate how some members of Bristol's merchant-shipping community prospered during the 1543-46 war because the Crown had need of the abilities and connections of men who had experience of maritime affairs. Although these are the only known cases of Bristol men reaching senior positions during this war, it seems likely that others also benefited, either directly or indirectly, from royal patronage. For instance, it appears that some Bristol men were made captains of hired ships because of their family connections, while John Smyth certainly benefited from Matthew Kent's good fortune, for he was able to buy over half the leather licence granted to Kent for the unusually low price of 6s. 8d. per dicker.[79] It seems highly probable that Smyth's connection to John Wynter would also have facilitated matters when Smyth sold the *Trinity* to the Crown in return for a lucrative lead concession.[80] However, although there were probably many instances of

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[74] The Justice and Council of Ireland appointed Lord Power the commander of the whole force but when it reached Chester it was divided along the lines described. A set of accounts for the French war later records that Power was serving in France during the summer with 505 'kernes': *L&P*, XIX, i, no. 471, 477; ii, no. 552.

[75] Matthew Kent is not identified as the 'grand captain of the Irishmen' serving in the Marches until the 23 March 1545: *L&P*, XX, i, no. 410. However, various earlier references speak of the 'captain of the Irishmen' and seem to infer that he was English. For instance, a letter written on 30 June 1544 by Sir William Evers (The Deputy Warden of the East Marches) to Lord Shrewbury notes that 'The captain of the Irishmen has been with me, and takes much pains to rule the said Irishmen, who are by nature wild.': *L&P,* XIX, i, no. 808; ii, no. 284.

[76] *Hamilton Papers*, II, pp. 586-7; *L&P,* XX, i, no. 410

[77] *L&P,* XX, ii, no. 1067 (23); XXI, i, no. 149/10.

[78] *L&P,* XXI, i, no. 498; ii, no. 476/81.

[79] A list of captains serving at Portsmouth on 10 August 1545, notes that John Wynter's son, Arthur Wynter, was the captain of the *Saviour* and that the *Margaret Butler* of Bristol was captained by William Butler, who was presumably related to the ship's owner, Edward Butler: App. 6. Before the war Smyth bought leather licences for between 10s. and 12s. 6d. per dicker. In February 1547 he sold a licence, which may have come from the batch bought from Kent, for 10s. per dicker: *Smyth's Ledger*, fos. 71, 90, 139, 189.

[80] App. 6, *Trinity* of Bristol, 20 March 1546.

individual Bristol merchants and shipowners benefiting from royal largess at this time, it is perhaps more interesting that Bristol's shipowners could exploit the importance of their shipping to the Crown as a way of obtaining collective, rather than individual, advantages.

The best and clearest example of their ability to promote their collective interests concerns the banning of Bristol's Candlemas Fair in 1543. At the beginning of the 1540s Bristol had two great fairs. These were the St. James Fair, which took place in July and the Candlemas Fair, which was held in early February in the suburb of Redcliffe. However, while the St James Fair was well established and widely supported, the city's elite appear to have had some grievance against the Candlemas Fair, the receipts of which went to Redcliffe and a number of other parishes outside the centre.[81] The exact nature of their grievance is uncertain, for, as will become clear, the stated reasons for their opposition to the fair cannot be trusted. Whatever the reasons they had for opposing it, in 1543 the City Council, which was controlled by the commercial elite, decided to override the Royal Charter that had created the Candlemas Fair, and, entirely illegally, the Mayor banned it. This resulted in an immediate outcry by the citizens of the affected parishes, who appealed to the Crown to overturn this ruling.[82] When the City Council was called to account, their approach was direct. Rather than trying to claim any legal right to their action, they simply claimed that were forced to ban the fair, stating in a counter-petition that:

> 'the said merchauntes and owners of shippes of Bristowe do say that the contynuance of the said fayre shall be the utter distrucion and decay of the navy of the said towne by reason that all strangers of the parties of beyond the sea do resorte with their shippes and ballyngars unto the said towne purposly to serve the same fayre to th'entent the merchauntes strangers may by and sell with other strangers and foreners by the libertie of the said farye so frely so that we the marchauntes of the said towne can have no suche utterance of the marchandises which we bryng whome in our owne shippis as we used to have in suche tyme before the said fayre was purchased. By reason wherof wheras our great shippis used to make ii or iii viages in the yere, nowe scarcely we make with them oon viage in the yere, so that for lak of utterance of our marchandizes we shall be compellid and constrayned to give over our great shippes and to use ballyngars and suche other small vesselles to the utter decay of the navy of the said towne'.[83]

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[81] The parishes involved were Redcliff, St. Thomas the Appostle, and Holy Cross: I. S. Leadam (ed.), 'Radclyffe, Parishoners of vs. Mayor of Bristowe', *Select Cases Before the Star Chamber, Vol. II, A.D. 1509-1544* (Selden Society, Vol. 25, London, 1911), p. 237.
[82] Leadam (ed.), 'Radclyffe, Parishoners of vs. Mayor of Bristowe', pp. 237-247.
[83] *Overseas Trade*, p. 31.

The case went before Star Chamber and since most of Bristol's marine were engaged as naval vessels in the Irish Sea and off the coast of Scotland at this time, it will perhaps be no surprise to learn that the Crown ruled in the City's favour. This was despite the fact that the claims made by the merchants were utterly fraudulent for the fair was visited almost exclusively by merchants engaged in the Irish trade. As the Irish trade was carried out by small ships and was any way largely in the hands of Irish men, the fair could not possibly have affected the city's great shipping. That the banning of the fair was simply a political manoeuvre on the part of the city's elite, for whatever reasons, is apparently confirmed by the way in which Bristol's Council obtained a charter to hold a new Winter fair seven years later. This was the St. Paul's Fair that was held each year, from 1550 till 1838, just a week earlier than the former Candlemas Fair.[84]

The banning of the Candlemas Fair is the most clear-cut example of Bristol's commercial and political elite exploiting the importance of their ships in order to obtain the Crown's support. Nevertheless, it seems likely that there was another important way in which shipowners achieved political leverage from the ownership of their ships. In Chapters 2 and 3, it was noted that Bristol's merchants conducted a large-scale illicit export trade from the city and that this trade was of great significance to the city's shipping industry. This was because the illicit trade enabled shipowners to fill their ships on their under-utilised outward voyages. Since participation in the extremely lucrative illicit export trade was facilitated by the ownership of a ship, a direct attack on the illicit trade would have weakened the Bristol marine and provoked considerable hostility from merchants and shipowners, who were otherwise willing supporters of the Crown during crises. That the Crown recognised that the illicit export trade was important to English shipowners can be justified by a 1563 'Acte towching certayne Politique Constitutions made for the maintenance of the Navye'.[85] Among other measures this legislation stipulated that a ship caught 'transporting or carreng of any wheate or other corne or thinges prohibited' would not be confiscated unless the 'owner or owners shalbee witting, knowing, aiding or consenting to the prohybyted transporting or carrieng'. Since it was in practice difficult to prove that a shipowner knew that goods would be illicitly laded on a ship, this legislation effectively freed shipowners from the fear that their ships would be seized if they serviced the illicit trade.[86] The Act thus

[84] R. C. Latham, *Bristol Charters, 1509-1899* (B.R.S., Vol. XII, Bristol, 1946) pp. 66-68.
[85] *Statutes of the Realm*, IV, i (London, 1819), p. 425.
[86] Until 1555 only the goods transported on a ship were confiscated. The law had been changed during Mary's reign, to allow for the confiscation of a vessel: *Statutes of the Realm*, IV, i, pp. 243-44.

represented a tacit acceptance by the Crown that it was more important to encourage the development of the English shipping industry than to discourage the illicit export trade.

To conclude, the study of how Bristol's Continental shipping was deployed during the 1543-46 war with France has revealed that, although the city's shipping market grew during the war, Bristol's ships were engaged primarily as naval vessels or privateers. Although it is not possible to quantify the benefits Bristol's shipowners received from their vessels during the war, it is at least clear that they sought to maximise the political benefits they received from ship ownership and crown service. During the war some Bristol merchants clearly prospered from the individual services they offered to the Crown in the maritime arena. As such individuals rose in prominence, other members of Bristol's commercial community would have benefited from their contact with these influential people. However, for the current study, what is more interesting is that Bristol's shipowners appear to have been willing to exploit the collective importance of their shipping during the war to achieve forms of collective patronage. Some of this patronage, such as the banning of the Candlemas Fair, was fairly direct and tangible. Yet, in the long run, perhaps the most important consequence of the city maintaining a large and important marine was that it discouraged the Crown from interfering too much in the city's 'private' affairs.

The Deployment of Bristol's Irish Shipping

When the Bristol-Ireland shipping market was examined in the last chapter, it was noted that during the period October 1541 to February 1543, Irish vessels dominated this shipping market. However, two groups of Bristol ships did operate in this market. First, there were a few small vessels of 15-25 tons burden, such as the *Sunday* of Bristol, which appear to have been engaged almost entirely in this trade.[87] Second, there were four larger ships of 30-45 tons burden, which served both the Irish trade and the Continental trade.[88] To determine whether this state of affairs continued after the outbreak of the war, the tables 4.3 and 4.4 and their corresponding graphs, figures 4.3 and 4.4 will examine how great a proportion of the Bristol-Ireland trade was carried by Bristol vessels.

However, as noted in Chapter 2, shipowners, like William Tyndall, were still sometimes able to avoid such a fate.

[87] App. 6, *Margaret* (2); *Mary George*; *Nicholas*; *Sunday.*

[88] App. 6, *Little Trinity*; *Jesus* (2); *Michael*; *Trinity More*.

Table 4.3 – Imports from Ireland to Bristol, by Ship's Origin, in £ Sterling: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

Year & Month	Bristol	England & Wales	Ireland	Unknown	Total
1543/3	19	0	30	3	52
1543/4	4	88	0	0	92
1543/5	21	13	103	0	138
1543/6	23	0	136	0	159
1543/7	12	26	494	161	693
1543/8	7	20	4	0	30
1543/9	0	45	0	0	45
1545/10	38	29	536	0	602
1545/11	0	120	34	0	154
1545/12	58	0	0	0	58
1546/1	11	0	0	0	11
1546/2	0	74	0	0	74
1546/3	54	13	861	2	929
1546/4	0	1	127	0	127
1546/5	21	0	25	0	45
1546/6	0	15	81	0	96
1546/7	6	60	708	0	774
1546/8	0	2	0	0	2
1546/9	0	0	0	0	0
Total £	273	505	3137	166	4081
% Total	7	12	77	4	100

Table 4.4 – Exports from Bristol to Ireland, by Ship's Origin, in £ Sterling: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

Year & Month	Bristol	England & Wales	Ireland	Unknown	Total
1543/3	15	0	152	0	167
1543/4	0	3	4	0	8
1543/5	18	32	101	0	151
1543/6	0	0	75	0	75
1543/7	0	66	0	101	167
1543/8	35	22	257	4	318
1543/9	0	14	0	0	14
1545/10	34	0	0	0	34
1545/11	0	0	380	0	380
1545/12	11	12	0	0	23
1546/1	109	0	0	0	109
1546/2	0	0	0	0	0
1546/3	148	0	451	0	600
1546/4	14	10	149	0	173
1546/5	0	0	125	0	125
1546/6	13	5	34	0	52
1546/7	34	9	10	22	74
1546/8	12	38	566	0	615
1546/9	0	0	0	0	0
Total £	444	210	2305	127	3085
% Total	14	7	75	4	100

Figure 4.3 – Imports from Ireland to Bristol, by Ship's Origin, in £ Sterling: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546

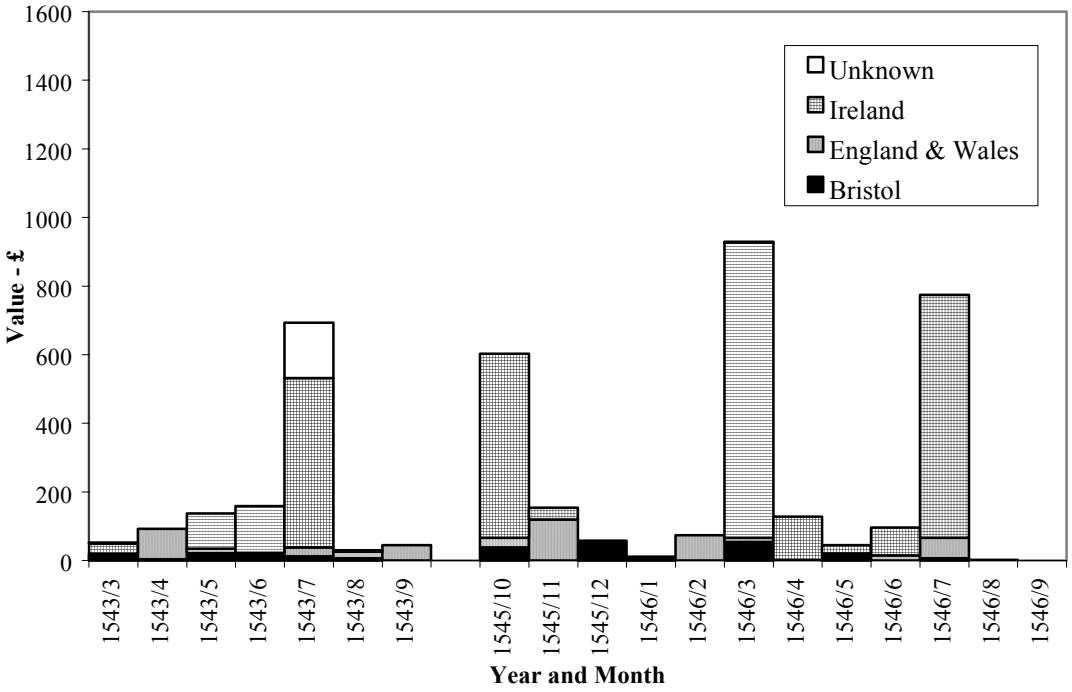
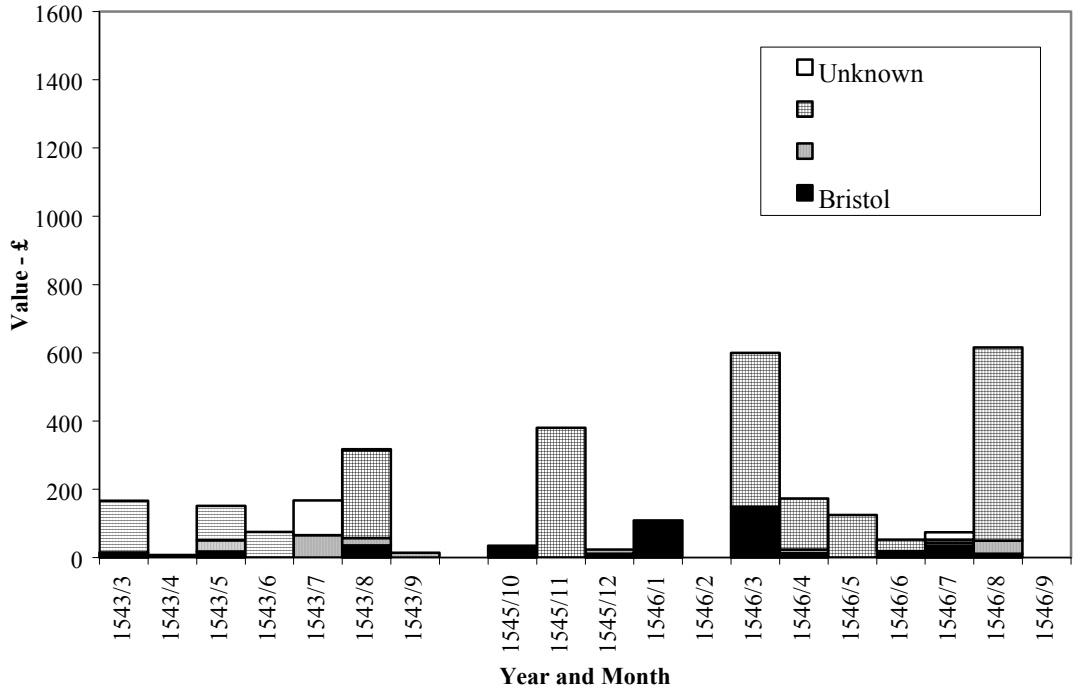


Figure 4.4 – Exports from Bristol to Ireland, by Ship's Origin, in £ Sterling: March 1543 – September 1543 and October 1545 – September 1546



The above tables and graphs indicate that the war appears to have had little effect on the level of the Bristol-Ireland trade or on the shipping that carried it. Irish shipping continued to dominate the Bristol-Ireland trade, carrying three-quarters of the total trade. Bristol, meanwhile, continued to carry about 10% of the trade. As before the war, most of the trade conducted by Bristol ships was carried by vessels of between 15-45 tons burden. The one exception was that on 18 March 1546 a ship, which seems to be the 105 ton *Mary Conception* of Bristol, left the city with about 52 tons of Continental re-exports that were presumably intended for Ireland.[89] This appears to have been the only time that one of Bristol's large ships carried goods to Ireland and it did not acquire a return cargo while there. One possible explanation for this unusual voyage is that the ship was leaving Bristol to cruise off Ireland but the owner decided to take a part-cargo to Ireland first. However, apart from this occasion, there is little indication that the war had any effect on the Bristol-Ireland trade. That this was the case should not really be surprising given that Ireland remained remarkably peaceful throughout the war and, as the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland reported, 'in no war with France have the enemies done so little hurt upon this coast'.[90] Given this, the only reason the Bristol-Ireland shipping market might have been affected by the war is if the Crown had need of the city's ships. Since the ships that serviced the Bristol-Ireland trade were smaller than those the Crown normally employed for naval service, it is unlikely that any of them did serve in the navy.

In general, it thus appears that the war brought few changes in the Bristol-Ireland shipping market but this does not mean that it had no effect in this area at all. It has, for instance, already been noted that some of the mid-sized Bristol ships, which served both the Continental and the Irish trade, appear to have been withdrawn from all commercial operations during the spring and summer of 1543. There were certainly also occasions when ships from Irish Sea ports, including Waterford, Chester and Bridgwater were pressed into the King's service as troop carriers.[91] However, since such activity had little discernible effect on either the Bristol-Ireland trade or its shipping market, it is not necessary to give

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[89] App. 6.

[90] The general passivity of Ireland during the 1543-46 war was noted a number of times by the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland. For instance, in April 1545, the Lord Deputy noted that 'this realm remains in the same quiet as for two or three years past' and in November he reconfirmed that 'This realm is as quiet as a land may be.': *L&P*, XX, i, no. 519; ii, no. 819. The comment on the lack of enemy activity on the coasts was made on 13 August 1545: *L&P*, XX, ii, no. 120.

[91] As noted earlier in 1544, Matthew Kent hired ships from Chester, Liverpool and Ireland to transport 1000 Irish soldiers from Dublin to Chester: *L&P,* XIX, i, no. 477. More significantly in November 1545 twenty-one ships, including those from Waterford, Chester, Bridgwater, Minehead and Milford, were employed for taking 2,000 men to campaign in Scotland: *L&P,* XX, ii, no. 819.

detailed consideration to the non-commercial demands on Bristol's ships in detail in this branch of the city's activities.