The conduct of the coastal metropolitan corn trade during the later seventeenth century: an analysis of the evidence of the Exchequer port books

by Stephen Hipkin

Abstract

The later seventeenth century witnessed a marked increase in the proportion of London's expanding coastal corn imports handled by large shippers. However, while heavy concentrations of trade in few hands at ports supplying the capital alert us to the possibility that leading merchants may have been able to rig local markets, they are not in themselves reliable indicators of oligopsonistic market relations since it is impossible to determine the status of corn shippers from the entries in the London coastal port books covering the post-Civil War period. It seems likely that the period saw the growth of a class of substantial provincial corn merchants and of a breed of agents who organized and oversaw corn exports belonging to producers or other middlemen. Local port book evidence reveals some striking variations in the conduct of the corn trade along the coast of north-east Kent, particularly in respect of the roles played by shipmasters.

Historians are now well informed about how agricultural producers responded to the commercial opportunities brought about by the growth in the English population dependent on the market during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But as Hoyle has recently reminded us, much less is known of 'the systems of retailing and transportation which conveyed market signals into the countryside and conveyed foodstuffs from the countryside to the town and metropolis'.[1] Sadly, comparatively little can be done to dispel our ignorance of the scale and conduct of overland trade in early modern England, since it attracted neither the central government regulation nor the state taxation that would have generated records permitting its quantitative analysis. However, principally as a by-product of the crown's desire to minimize evasions of customs duties on overseas trade, much of Tudor and Stuart England's coastal commerce was, in theory at least, regulated and recorded. As Fisher's article on the London food market during the pre-Civil War period demonstrated almost 80 years ago, the Exchequer port books that survive for many ports from 1565, albeit often in very broken series, provide opportunities to measure trends not only in the volume of coastal trade but also in the numbers recorded as responsible to different extents for its conduct.[2]

[1] R. W. Hoyle, 'Estate management, tenurial change and capitalist farming in sixteenth-century England', *Il Mercato della terra secc. XIII–XVIII* (2003), p. 355.

[2] T. S. Willan, *The English coasting trade, 1600–1750* (sec. edn 1967), pp. 1–10; N. J. Williams, 'The London port books', *Trans. London and Middlesex Arch. Soc.*, 18

Yet in 1985, when Chartres reviewed work on the extent to which the coastal metropolitan corn trade was 'concentrated in few hands' at its provincial end during the later seventeenth century, he found only Burley's examination of trade from the Essex port of Maldon in 1664, 1676 and 1700, and Coleman's exploration of trade from the Kent ports of Milton and Faversham in 1662–3 and 1699–1700, and from Sandwich in 1665–6 and 1699–1700. Unsurprisingly, Chartres called for 'massive work on port books' to provide a fuller picture.[3] What follows provides the overdue response to that call. It is also intended as the companion piece to a recent article examining the growth of the coastal metropolitan corn trade in the later seventeenth century.[4] That article showed that by the time of the Glorious Revolution the trade was twice the size that historians relying on the work of Gras had assumed it to be and that it comprised two distinct strands of roughly equal size: one providing food and drink for the London population, the other (the trade in fodder crops) fuelling the overland trade of the capital. It also demonstrated that, thanks largely to the agency of southern English mariners commanding large coasters, London's demand for fodder crops after the mid–1670s drew most of the coast stretching from as far as Berwick in the North East to Whitehaven in the North West into the orbit of the metropolitan corn market.

In his contribution to volume five of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales* Chartres reported the findings of Burley and Coleman as indicating 'a fiercely competitive market in the selling of cereals in the Kentish ports of Faversham and Sandwich, and in the Essex port of Maldon' during the later seventeenth century. Milton, he thought, 'provides a case of oligopoly, but it was by comparison a relatively small shipping port'; the balance of the available evidence pointed to 'a competitive pattern of factorage, with farmers able to benefit most clearly from this competition in the largest or "quickest" markets'.[5]

However, by the time he came to write his study of London's food consumption and internal trade (published in 1986), Chartres had evidently had second thoughts. Now he argued that 'Coleman's study of Kent and Burley's of Essex both point clearly to [the] fact' that while London's 'supplying merchant shippers in the grain trade were both small and numerous, at their home ports they were often oligopolists'. Dennis Baker's 'massive study of the Kentish marketing system up to 1760' he further suggested, while presenting 'no data for exact comparison … implies a similar if less extreme degree of concentration' of market power. Exports from Kent, Baker was said to have shown, 'were characterized by unequal exchange'. 'Smaller farmers', Chartres now concluded, 'dealt with millers and hoyman-factors on terms of inequality, and the net effect may have been to redistribute wealth towards mercantile capital'. Moreover, while provincial merchants had the upper hand in their dealings with smaller farmers, Chartres argued that evidence for the corn trade at Wiggins Quay in 1678–80

Note 2 *continued*
(1955), pp. 21–23; id., *The maritime trade of the East Anglian ports, 1550–1590* (1988), pp. 18–20. F. J. Fisher, 'The London food market, 1540–1640', repr. in E. M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), *Essays in economic history* (3 vols, 1954), I, pp. 135–51.

[3] J. A. Chartres, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales,* V, *1640–1750* (2 vols, 1985), ii, p. 476.

[4] S. Hipkin, 'The coastal metropolitan corn trade in later seventeenth-century England', *EcHR* 65 (2012), pp. 220–55.

[5] Chartres used the term 'factor' to describe 'pure commission agents or merchants acting on their own account'. Chartres, 'Marketing' pp. 475–7.

demonstrated that London cornfactors held the whip hand in their dealings with provincial merchants. 'The hierarchy of the corn trade thus represented an inverted pyramid, and tended to shift a substantial proportion of the gains from increased agricultural productivity towards urban merchant capital, above all in London'.[6]

Chartres's 1986 verdict has become the orthodoxy.[7] Yet, as we shall see, none of the evidence he cited as corroborating it lends unequivocal support to his overarching conclusion. This is not to say that later seventeenth-century port book evidence does not point to the *possibility* of oligopsonistic market relations at a number of provincial ports supplying corn to the capital. The analysis set out below in Appendix 1 does, I want to suggest, furnish a reasonable guide to locations along the English coastline where, at various times in the later seventeenth century, leading shippers in the export trade may have been able to rig local corn markets. However, in interpreting these data it is important to bear in mind the ambiguities in post-Civil War port book entries, as well as the implications of the fact that 'customs ports' were defined by Exchequer commission as lengths of coastline rather than topographical ports, a point developed in Appendix 2. As will be demonstrated in the case of Milton, other evidence can show that apparently strong indications in port books of the local market power of leading shippers may be entirely misleading.

Section I of this article highlights the ambiguity of entries in later seventeenth-century port books by comparing them with the much fuller entries in the port books for London and the ports of north-east Kent in the pre-Civil War period. Section II extends into the late seventeenth century Fisher's analysis of 'mercantile' participation in the coastal corn commerce from the London end of the trade, disclosing a strikingly different trend in the half-century after 1638 to that which Fisher detected in the preceding half-century. Section III discusses the analysis of the trade from its provincial end that is presented in Appendix 1, while Appendix 2 explores the ways in which statistics derived from port books probably often obscure the proportion of trade conducted by leading shippers in topographical ports because of the way 'customs ports' were defined by the Exchequer.

While the evidence of the later Stuart port books can do no more than alert us to the possibility that the terms of trade within particular customs jurisdictions were manipulated by a handful of leading merchants, it does assuredly tell us a great deal about the numbers of shipmasters who, to varying extents, found employment in the carriage of corn to the capital, about how strong their working associations were with particular shippers, and about how many combined the roles of shipmaster and shipper in the coastal corn export trade. In each of these respects, there are intriguing contrasts in the ways the trade was conducted within the jurisdictions of the customs ports of Milton, Faversham and Sandwich during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Following a review, in section IV, of long-term changes in the volume of corn exported to London from the ports of north-east Kent, these contrasts are explored in section V of the article. Section VI briefly summarizes the key findings of Dennis Baker's

[6] J. A. Chartres, 'Food consumption and internal trade', in A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (eds), *London, 1500–1700* (1986), pp. 185–6.

[7] Chartres's 1986 article is, for instance, the sole authority cited for Glennie and Whyte's assertion that 'strongly oligopsonistic market relations concentrated power among large-scale buyers at all levels of grain trading'. P. Glennie and I. Whyte, 'Towns in an agrarian economy, 1540–1700', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain*, II, *1540–1840* (2000), p. 175.

qualitative examination of the configuration of north-east Kent's coastal metropolitan corn trade in the early eighteenth century and considers how they may profitably inform interpretation of late seventeenth-century port book evidence for Milton and Faversham. Finally, section VII returns to the London end of the coastal trade, comparing data in the records of Wiggins Quay for 1680 with that in the Sandwich coastal port book covering the same year and suggesting an alternative reading of the Wiggins Quay evidence to that advanced by Chartres.

I

The prevailing administrative culture among officials who compiled the late Elizabethan and early Stuart coastal port books for the customs ports of Milton, Faversham and Sandwich led to the production of accounts that are sufficiently detailed to inspire confidence in making judgements about the number and status of corn shippers from what was by far the most important coastal region supplying the capital in the pre-Civil War decades.[8] Port book entries not only indicate when more than one shipper was responsible for a consignment but also name them, and when agents consigned shipments they supply the name of the agent and the name of the owner of the corn for whom he was working. A number of later sixteenth-century port books for Faversham and Milton also specify the occupation and place of residence of each shipper. The handful of extant pre-Civil War London coastal port books are somewhat less informative, in that, occasionally in 1586 and 1638 and more often in 1615, entries signal that cargos were made up of consignments despatched by two or more shippers yet identify only one of the shippers sending corn. Thus, for instance, an entry for 14 February 1615 records that a cargo of malt and wheat in the *Mary* of Faversham was consigned by 'Jo. Wood et alii'.[9] Nevertheless, such entries do at least alert us to cargos assigned by more than one shipper. Agents acting on behalf of owners are also sometimes identified.

Of course, for the great majority of entries in pre-Civil War port books that name only one person as the shipper we cannot be *certain* that customs officials had not left anything out, and that the person named was the sole owner of the whole consignment. Nonetheless, the fact that a significant minority of entries in pre-Civil War Kent and London port books *do* name and distinguish agents and owners, *do* specify cargos consigned by more than one shipper, and *do* name the parties in such cases, suggests, at the very least, that customs officials were concerned to provide these details when they were known.[10] Equally, the fact

[8] S. Hipkin, 'The structure, development and politics of the Kent grain trade, 1552–1647', in Jane Humphries and Steve Hindle (eds), *Feeding the masses* (Economic History Review Supp. 1, 2008), pp. 106–19.

[9] TNA, E 190/18/1, unfol., E 190/7/6, fos 41v, 45, E 190/41/6, fo. 38v. Fisher's suggestions for aggregate numbers of 'merchants' participating in the corn trade must therefore be regarded as minima. A further probable implication of such entries, and of the fact that small and/or short-distance corn shipments authorized by warrant of *transire* rather than certificate generally escaped notice in London port books, is that the proportion of shippers responsible for consigning only modest quantities of corn to the capital during pre-Civil War years was even greater than Fisher's figures suggest. Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 224–6.

[10] There is only one conspicuous shortcoming in the pre-Civil War Faversham and Milton accounts: they do not specify the locations along the stretch of coastline falling under the jurisdiction of the customs port from which cargos were despatched to London. Pre-Civil War accounts for the customs port of Sandwich do, however, provide this information.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Source of corn</th><th>Identity of shipper of corn cargo in coastal port book entry</th><th colspan="3">Intermediaries</th><th>At London quayside</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Farmer</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">is also the shipper in the coastal port book entry</td><td>who pays</td><td>a) shipmaster for freightage</td><td>b) London sales agent</td></tr>
<tr><td>who pays</td><td colspan="2">shipmaster for freightage and factorage at London quayside</td></tr>
<tr><td>pays</td><td>Agent</td><td colspan="4">who organizes freightage and sale of the corn consignment on arrival in London</td></tr>
<tr><td>sells to</td><td>Provincial corn dealer</td><td>who pays</td><td>a) shipmaster for freightage</td><td>b) London sales agent</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="11">Farmer/ dealer</td><td rowspan="4">sells to</td><td>London merchant</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="2">who pays shipmaster for freightage</td></tr>
<tr><td>Agent of London merchant</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Shipmaster-merchant</td><td>who pays</td><td>a) another mariner for freightage</td><td>b) London sales agent</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">who pays</td><td>London sales agent</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">who sells his own corn in London</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">pays</td><td rowspan="2">Shipmaster</td><td colspan="4">who transports corn to London and sells it for the farmer on commission</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">who transports corn to London and pays</td><td>London sales agent</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Agent employed by or working in partnership with shipmaster</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">shipmaster carries corn to London and hands it over to</td><td>factor employed by farmer/provincial dealer to sell it in London</td></tr>
<tr><td>factor employed by shipmaster to sell it in London</td></tr>
<tr><td>sells to London merchant or his agent</td><td>Shipmaster working for London merchant</td><td colspan="4">who transports corn to London</td></tr>
</table>

FIGURE 1. Some possible functions performed by those shipping corn cargos to London

that later seventeenth-century accounts for Kent ports and for London hardly ever offer such information suggests that customs officials were no longer minded to record it. Clearly, while it is reasonable to assume that, unless indicated otherwise, the corn exporters named in pre-Civil War port books for London and the ports of north-east Kent were the owners of the corn they shipped, no such assumption can be made about shippers named in post-Civil War port books.

Thus, even if it is assumed, as it is in what follows, that, after the Restoration, corn cargos were organized solely by those identified in port books as responsible for them, which of course may not always have been the case, there remains the issue of the capacity in which the named shipper was acting. While the William Ovenden recorded in the London port book as the

exporter of 80 qr of wheat, 20 qr of barley and 100 qr of malt unloaded from a Margate ship on 4 March 1681 *may* have owned the grain, he may equally have been a logistics and/or buying or sales agent working for one or more owners, or else the owner of part of the corn he shipped and an agent for the owners of the rest. Equally, his primary occupation might be farmer, merchant trading on his own account, commission agent, or shipmaster.[11] Figure 1 illustrates just some of the possible roles and identities of those named as shippers in port books.

II

Fisher's analysis of numbers of 'merchants' (that is, those named in port books as responsible for organizing shipments) involved to differing degrees in the coastal metropolitan corn trade in 1586, 1615 and 1638 is reproduced in Figure 2, which also shows the results of a similar exercise for four years in the later seventeenth century, 1688 being the last moment for which London coastal port book data covering a 12-month period survive.[12]

Viewing developments exclusively from the London end of the trade, Fisher concluded that the expansion of the coastwise trade during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was 'not accompanied by the rise of a class of grain merchants' (Figure 3).[13] Indeed, shippers handling 1000 quarters and upwards consigned considerably less grain to the capital in the early seventeenth century than they had in 1586, and their share of the coastal trade fell from 24.2 per cent to 11.5 per cent (Figure 4).[14] The growth of the coastal metropolitan corn trade

[11] TNA, E 190/98/1, unfol.

[12] Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147 n. 59. Fisher's statistics for 1580 must be discounted, since they are based on a highly defective port book. For purposes of Fig. 2 it is assumed that identical names (i.e. Christian name and surname) identify different merchants where they are found referring to shippers exporting to London from different ports. Plainly, this will tend to inflate suggestions for numbers of shippers, though it does not do so dramatically. For instance, the total of 456 identified in Fig. 2 as the number of shippers active in the coastal metropolitan corn trade in 1681 includes 40 names common to shippers from more than one port, and the 846 identified as active in 1688 includes 37 names common to shippers from more than one port. Undoubtedly there were some men who shipped corn to London from more than one outport. In 1681, Sir Edward Allen (Milford Haven and Hull), George Moore (Stockton and Milford Haven), Sir John Moore (Hull, Sandwich and Newcastle), Robert Buckle (Carmarthen, Cardigan, Milford Haven, Chester and Faversham), William Russell (Hull, Milford Haven and Carmarthen) and Anthony Sturt (Lancaster and Ipswich) were all probably the London dealers whose names can be found in a directory of metropolitan merchants published in 1677 and/or amongst the names of merchants exporting corn from London to the continent between 1676 and 1683. Between them, Allen, Buckle, George Moore and Russell exported 20% of the 18,641 qtrs of Welsh oats shipped to the capital in 1681. Samuel Lee, *A collection of the names of the merchants living in and about the city of London* (1677); N. S. B. Gras, *The evolution of the English corn market from the twelfth to the eighteenth century* (1915), pp. 196–7; K. H. Burley, 'The economic development of Essex in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1957), p. 289, n. 1; TNA, E 190/98/1. In some cases, names identified with shipments from more than one port belonged to peripatetic mariner-merchants commanding ships based in southern English ports, for instance the Brighton master John Woolford who, in 1681, consigned cargos to London from Milford Haven and Carmarthen. Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 240–1.

[13] Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147. For evidence of very different views at the provincial end of the trade, see Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 119–24.

[14] Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147. To some extent, this decline reflected the failure of a precocious later Elizabethan cohort of Faversham and Milton corn merchants to spawn lasting mercantile dynasties. Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 120–2.

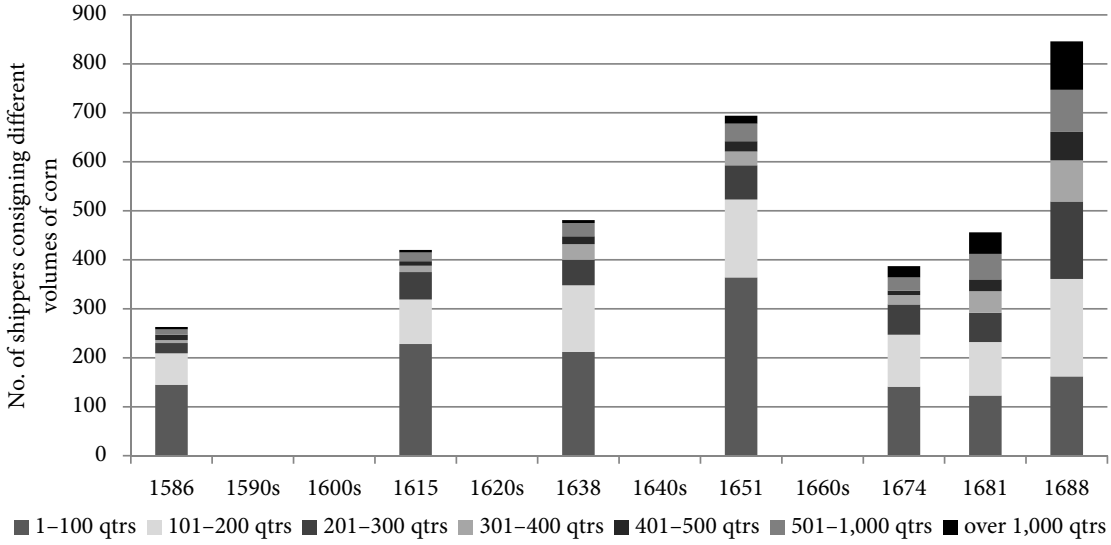


FIGURE 2. Coastal metropolitan corn shippers recorded in London port books, 1586–1688

Sources: Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147, n. 59; TNA, E190/46/1, E190/61/2, E190/98/1, E190/146/1.

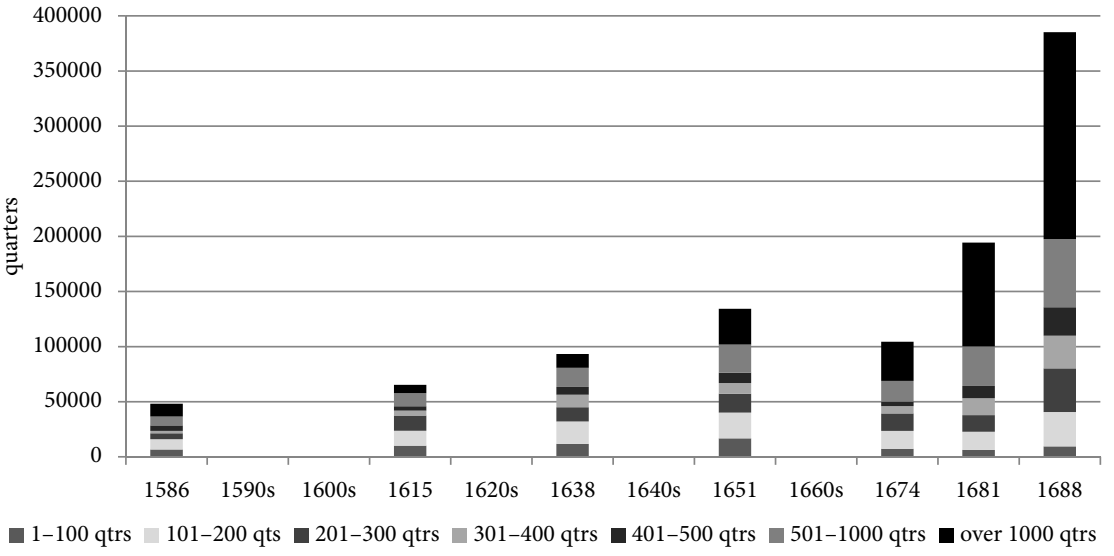


FIGURE 3. Volume of corn consigned to London by shippers of different size, 1586–1688

Sources: As Figure 2.

during the 60 years before the Civil War was 'primarily the work of smaller men'.[15] In Thanet, where the rise of exports to London was particularly marked, these 'smaller men' were often farmers trading with the capital on their own account, and it was probably much the same

[15] Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147.

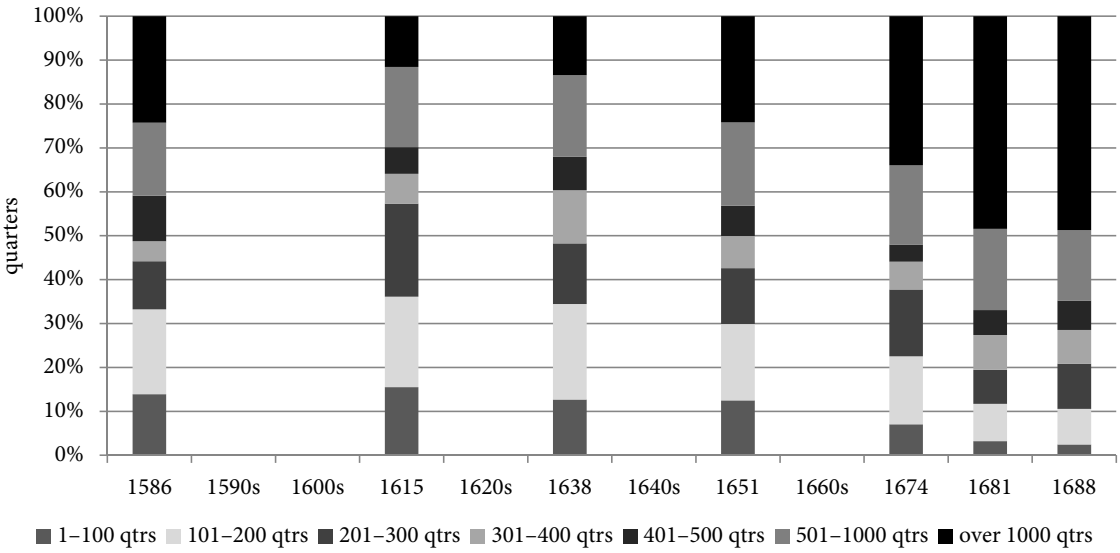


FIGURE 4. Proportion of the coastal metropolitan corn trade conducted by shippers of different size, 1586–1688

Sources: As Figure 2.

story in Norfolk, Essex and Sussex, which by the early seventeenth century were also making significant contributions to London's coastwise corn supply.[16]

As Figure 2 shows, if data for the shortage year of 1651 are any guide, the number of men shipping small quantities of corn to the capital continued to increase until the mid-seventeenth century. Yet the 1651 London port book also discloses the much greater contribution (compared with 1615 and 1638) of substantial grain shippers to the coastal corn supply of the capital (Figure 3). Spearheaded by John Day, who exported 8291 quarters from Faversham, and John Does, who consigned 4424 quarters from Sandwich, a total of 16 shippers (13 from Kent, one from Maldon, one from Yarmouth, and one from Boston) each exported more than 1000 quarters to the metropolis, and together they consigned 24.2 per cent of the coastal metropolitan supply. After 1651, as Figure 3 indicates, the prominence in the coastal metropolitan corn trade of what Fisher was pleased to call 'big men' continued to grow, though to what extent they were exporting their own corn as opposed to organizing shipments on behalf of others in return for a fee is, for reasons already mentioned, impossible to determine.[17] In 1674 they were responsible for conducting one third of the trade, and in 1681 nearly one half of it. During the 1680s when the coastal metropolitan corn trade doubled in size, so did the volume of corn shipped by big men. In 1688, the 99 (of 846) participants in the coastal trade who shipped 1000 quarters or more sent 187,665 quarters of corn to the capital; more, that is, than historians until recently imagined to be the annual volume of the entire coastal metropolitan corn trade during the 1680s.[18]

[16] Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 115–16, 122–3, 134.
[17] Fisher, 'London food market', p. 147, n. 59.
[18] Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 223–4, 255.

III

If, viewed from the London end of the commerce, the growth of a class of substantial shippers in the coastal corn trade in the 50 years after 1638 is clear enough, how do things look from the perspective of ports supplying the metropolis? Appendix 1 shows the volume of corn exported to the capital from every location along the coast identified in the London port books covering 1651, 1674, 1681, 1688 and the last half of 1695. For each of these years it also shows the number of shippers consigning corn from every recorded place of export, and for each of these places the proportion of coastal metropolitan exports handled by the five largest shippers.

As might be expected, Appendix 1 reveals a great deal of short-term variation not only in the size of the coastwise metropolitan corn trade at particular ports, but also in the number of shippers participating in it. However, where the coastal metropolitan trade was well established by 1651, there was a marked reduction in the number of shippers conducting it by 1688. In the 11 ports that consigned more than 1500 quarters to London in both years, 618 shippers exported 125,629 quarters in 1651, whereas just 349 exported 160,277 quarters in 1688. Nonetheless, even during the late seventeenth century there were many shippers who participated only occasionally in the coastal trade. In 1688, 30 of 53 individuals shipping corn from Faversham, and 44 of 59 exporting from King's Lynn, sent just one consignment to London. Since many of these once-a-year traders were probably farmers exporting their own produce, the pool of merchants buying corn locally for export to the capital or offering their services as agents who would broker its shipment and sale must often have been smaller than figures in Appendix 1 may appear to suggest.

Among those trading more regularly from ports exporting substantial quantities of corn to London during the later seventeenth century, it is usually possible to identify a distinct core of leading shippers. Frequently handling between half and two thirds of metropolitan exports, occasionally more, these leading shippers often included one or two whose local market presence – if they were buying the grain they shipped – must have been keenly felt: men like the shipmaster-cum-shipper Jonah Lambe, who in 1674 accounted for 85 per cent of corn exports from Leigh (Essex), and Walter Long, who in 1688 exported 9036 quarters from Great Yarmouth, 78 per cent of the port's coastwise metropolitan corn trade.[19] Moreover, because 'customs ports' were stretches of coastline which might embrace a number of places from which corn exports were shipped to London, there is good reason to suppose that the figures set out in Appendix 1 may often understate the degree to which in reality the conduct of the coastal metropolitan corn trade was concentrated in the hands of a few shippers in topographical as opposed to 'customs' ports. The probable reality along the coast of north-east Kent is explored in Appendix 2, and it is to case studies drawn from that region that we now turn to examine in greater depth those aspects of the conduct of the coastal trade at its provincial end upon which port book evidence casts direct light. It scarcely needs saying, however, that there may have been many variations in provincial trading cultures beyond those observable by comparing evidence for the customs ports of Milton, Faversham and Sandwich.

IV

The changing size and significance of the contribution of corn exports from Milton, Faversham and Sandwich to the coastal provision of the capital during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are highlighted in Figures 5 and 6. Between the 1580s and the 1650s when the coastal metropolitan corn trade roughly trebled in size, the coast of north-east Kent consistently shipped 50–60 per cent of London's imports. The region still accounted for nearly half of the trade as late as 1674, but although the three ports shipped corn to London in much greater amounts during the 1680s, such was the expansion of the coastal corn trade to London from other regions in the decade before the Glorious Revolution that the proportionate contribution of the Kent ports fell to around one quarter, at which level it remained during the 1690s.

Figures 7–9 show aspects of the evolution of the metropolitan trade from each customs port between 1580 and 1700.[20] Although the great bulk of the capital's corn requirement was furnished by inland producers and conveyed by cart or river barge, it seems clear that early Stuart London normally depended on seaborne imports for part of its corn supply, and that the substantial expansion of the corn trade from Faversham and Sandwich in pre-Civil War decades was driven by metropolitan demand rather than regional surplus. Undoubtedly, demand from the capital stimulated corn production in north-east Kent, particularly in Thanet, and, as noted earlier, many of the farmers who 'increasingly looked to the London market as the hub of their economic universe' chose to trade with the capital on their own account.[21] Thus, the number of corn shippers rose substantially at Faversham and Sandwich. At the same time, the proportion of trade handled by the five largest shippers fell at Faversham to around one third, and at Sandwich to one fifth.

If the first half of the seventeenth century saw a significant expansion in the volume of the coastal metropolitan corn trade from north-east Kent, things were very different in the first two decades following the Restoration. I have argued elsewhere that there is compelling evidence that, by the mid-1670s, and probably by the Restoration, improvements in the supporting commercial and transport infrastructure and in the conduct and productivity of agriculture in the capital's inland provisioning zone meant that it was, other than in the wake of severe harvest failure, more than capable of delivering all the corn intended for human consumption that Londoners required.[22] This of course meant that, to sell in the London market, Kent corn delivered coastwise had to compete successfully with supplies delivered overland, and from other coastal regions. All the available port book evidence – though there is not much of it – suggests that in the late 1660s and early 1670s it was often unable to do so. During this period, the London corn trade from Faversham and Milton was about half the size it had been in the 1630s, and at Sandwich only 16,000 quarters of corn were shipped to

[19] TNA, E 190/61/2, 46/1.

[20] In cases where both owners of grain and agents for its export to London are specified in pre-Civil War port book entries, calculations for Figures 6b, 6c, 7b, 7c, 8b and 8c count the owner rather than the agent as the 'shipper'.

[21] Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 106–119; Fisher, 'London food market', p. 145. The most widely accepted estimates suggest London's population rose from 200,000 in 1600 to 400,000 by 1650. J. Boulton, 'London 1540–1700' in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge urban history*, II, p. 316.

[22] Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 223, 229–36.

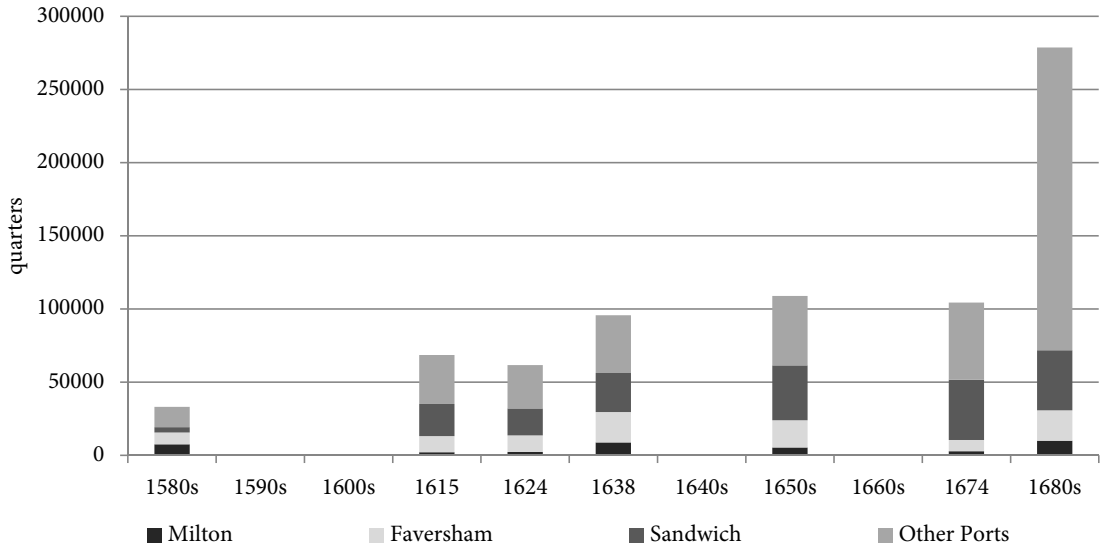


FIGURE 5. Volume of coastal corn exports to London, 1580–1688

Sources: Fisher, 'London food market', pp. 136, 138; Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade' pp. 107–8; TNA, E190/45/4, E190/45/6, E190/46/1, E190/46/2, E190/61/2, E190/63/6, E190/98/1, E190/110/1, E190/122/1, E190/140/3, E190/141/3, E190/146/1.

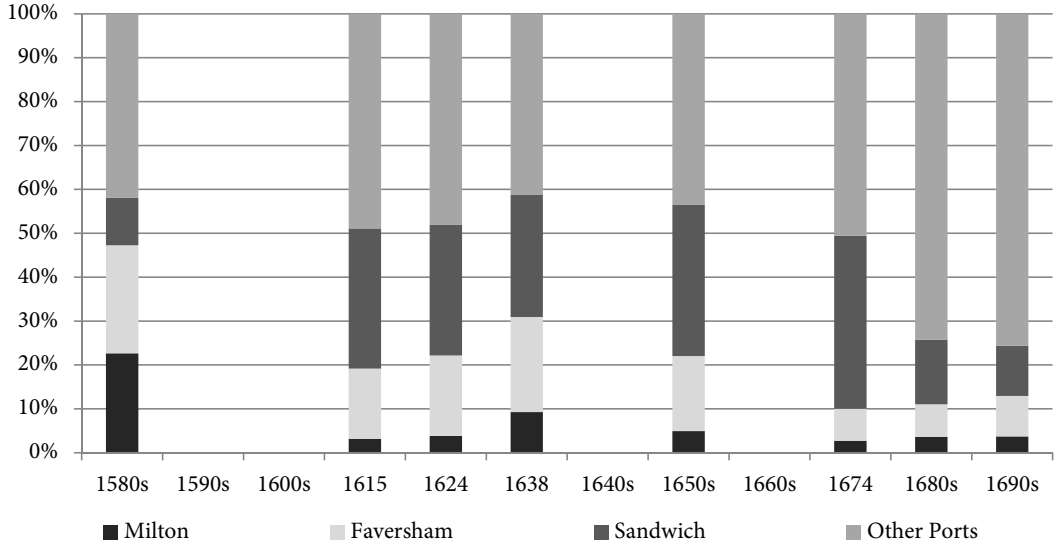
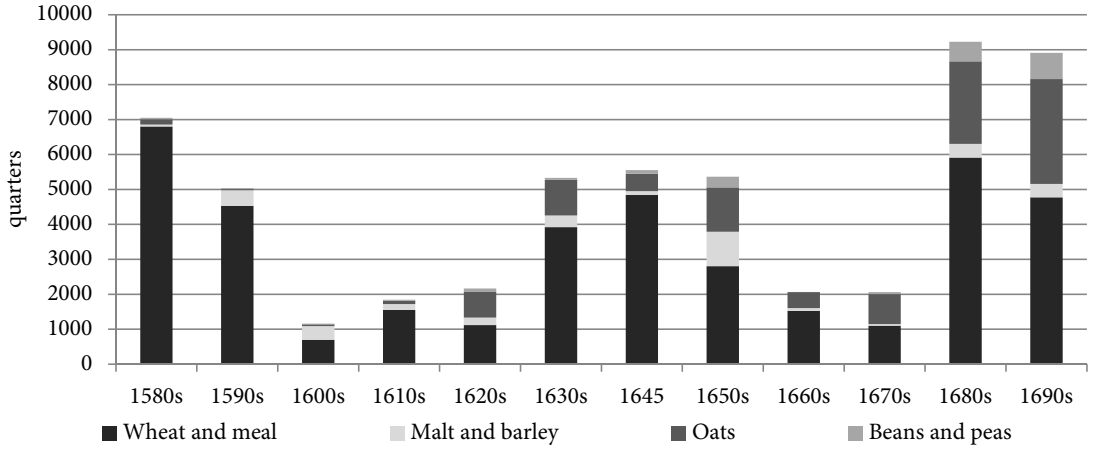
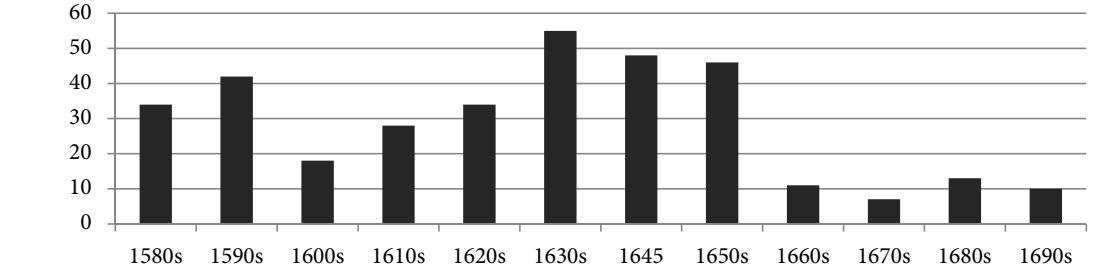


FIGURE 6. Proportionate contribution of Milton, Faversham and Sandwich to coastal corn exports to London

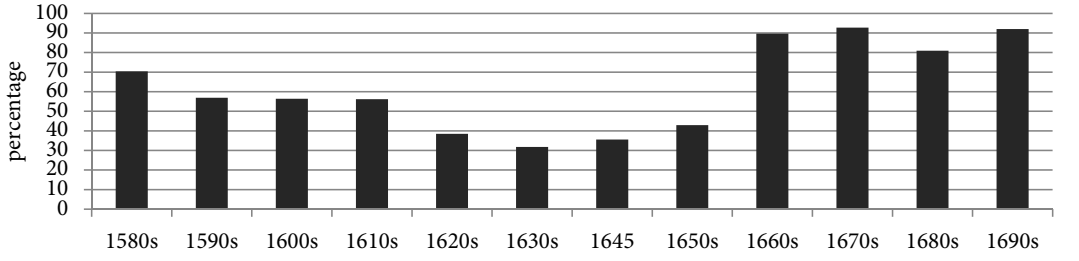
Sources: As Figure 5, and TNA, E190/149/10, E190/151/1, E190/155/2.



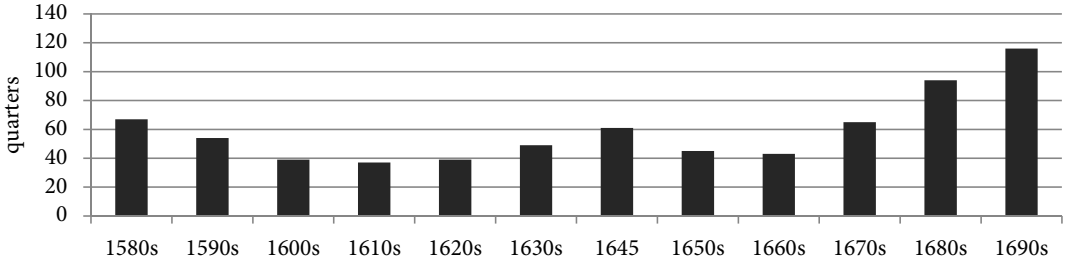
a. Volume of exports to London



b. Average number of corn shippers



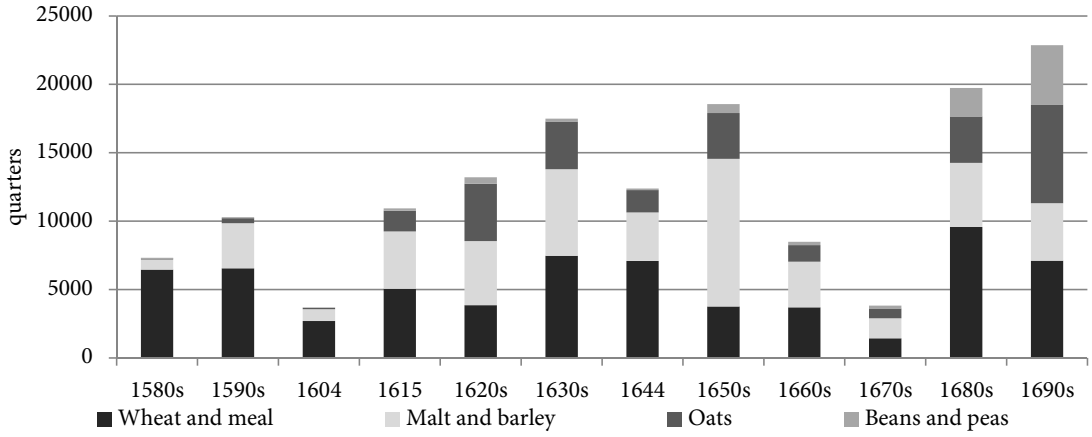
c. Proportion of trade by top five shippers



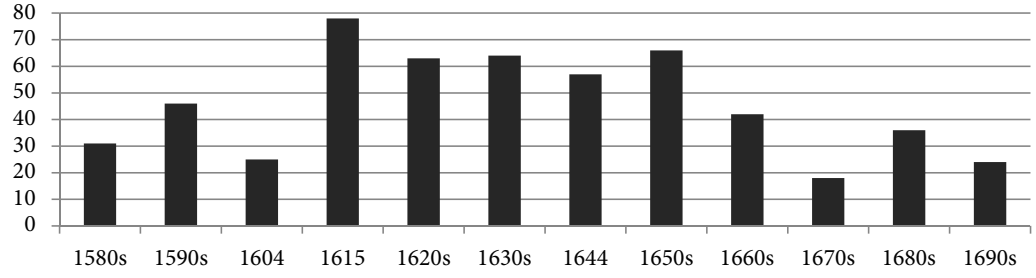
d. Average size of corn shipment

FIGURE 7. The evolution of the coastal metropolitan corn trade of Milton, 1580–1700

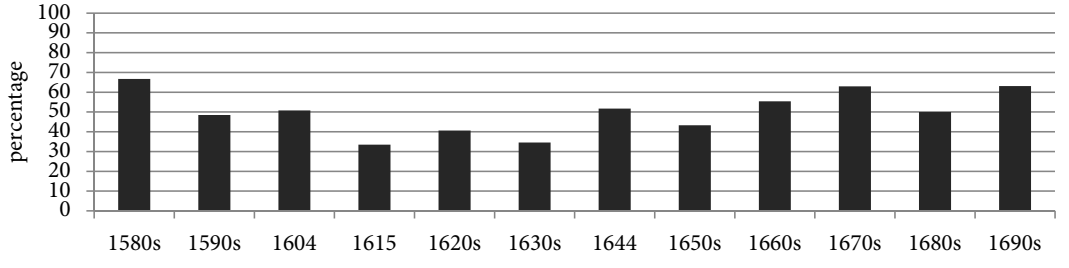
Sources: TNA, E190 (Exchequer Port Books, 1580–1700).



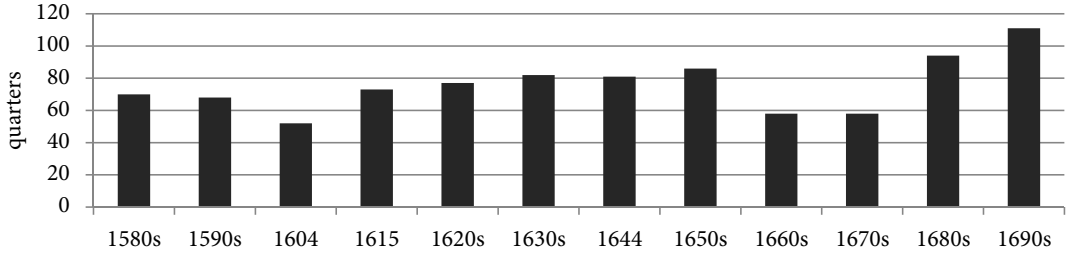
a. Volume of exports to London



b. Average number of corn shippers



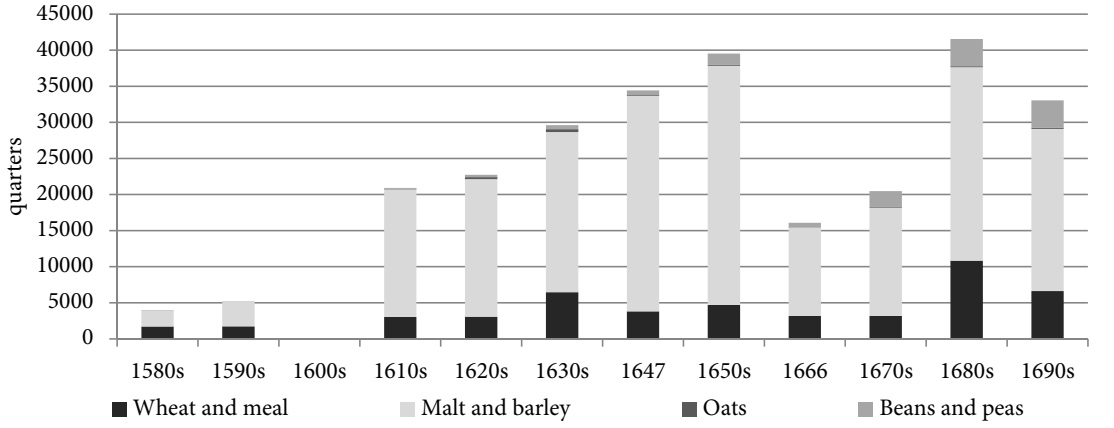
c. Proportion of trade by top five shippers



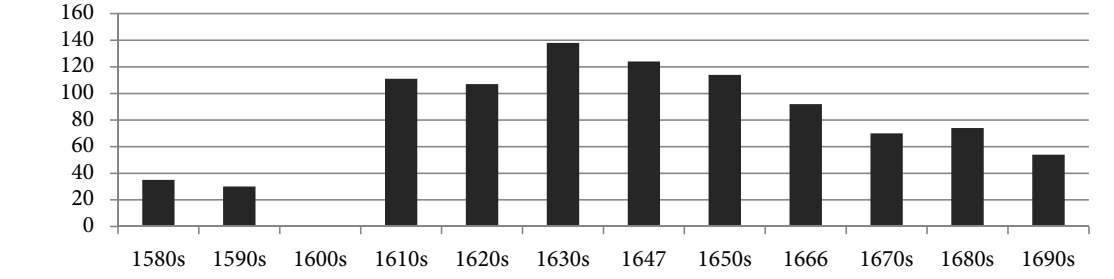
d. Average size of corn shipment

FIGURE 8. The evolution of the coastal metropolitan corn trade of Faversham, 1580–1700

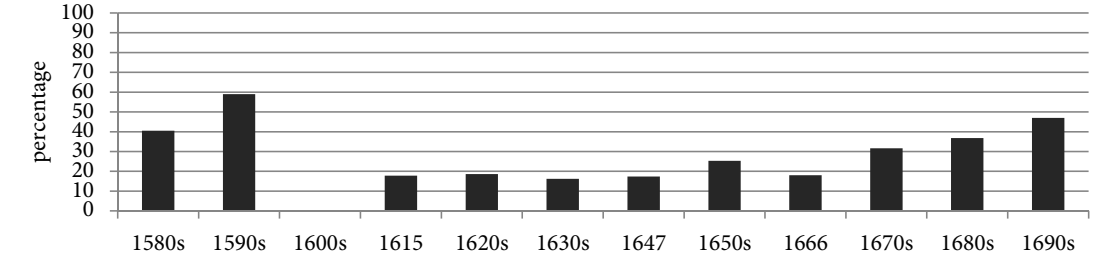
Sources: TNA, E190 (Exchequer Port Books, 1580–1700).



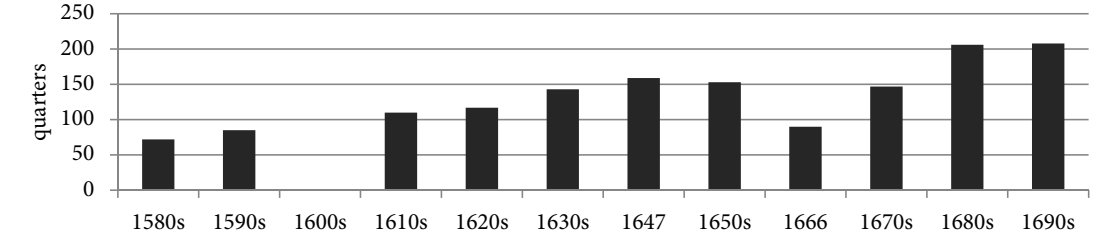
a. Volume of exports to London



b. Average number of corn shippers



c. Proportion of trade by top five shippers



d. Average size of corn shipment

FIGURE 9. The evolution of the coastal metropolitan corn trade of Sandwich, 1580–1700

Sources: TNA, E190 (Exchequer Port Books, 1580–1700).

the capital in 1666, compared with normally more than 30,000 quarters during the 1630s.[23] It may be that the decade following the dearth of 1661–62, when grain prices were consistently low, witnessed a reduction of the acreage given over to corn production in north-east Kent.[24] In August 1668, one correspondent reported from Deal that having 'been at several places in the country, and also in the city of Canterbury', he found 'all complain at the dullness of trade, and the country people much at the great cheapness of corn and number of taxes. Many farmers give the landlords their leases and to[o] many of late and before or by next Michaelmas must break, and talk very boldly'.[25]

Even if they kept faith with corn, by the time the government first experimented with bounties to stimulate overseas grain exports (and enable landowners to pay taxes), many north-east Kent producers may have severed the connections their predecessors had maintained with commission factors in the capital and ceased to regard the London market as the hub of their economic universe. While exceptionally high metropolitan prices following the very poor grain harvest of 1673 did stimulate a revival of grain exports from Sandwich in 1674, the response at Faversham and Milton was muted, and between 1675 and 1678, when the coincidence of corn bounties and war between France and Holland briefly stimulated significant continental demand for the region's corn, coastal metropolitan exports from Faversham and Milton were reduced to a trickle, while those from Sandwich averaged less than 15,000 quarters.[26]

Unless currently accepted estimates of London's population during the late seventeenth century are far too low, there can be little doubt that the inland provisioning zone of the capital was as capable of providing the bread and brewing grains that its population required in the 1680s as it had been in the 1670s, for national harvest yields for the grains consumed by Londoners for the most part ranged from good to abundant throughout the decade.[27] It might therefore be expected that corn supplied from the north-east Kent coast would enjoy no more success in the metropolitan market than it had in earlier post-Restoration years. Clearly then, port book evidence that during the 1680s (and the 1690s) corn was often shipped from Sandwich, Faversham and Milton to London in large quantities requires some explanation.[28]

Much of the explanation may lie in a widening of differences between local and London prices for beer and bread grains to the advantage of Kent farmers, though in the absence of detailed price data for different grains at either end of the trade this is impossible to determine.[29] Part of the explanation, certainly, lies in rapidly increasing demand for the fodder crops (oats and

[23] Ibid., p. 234 (Fig. 8).

[24] For national grain prices see P. J. Bowden, 'Appendix III: statistics', in Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian history*, V (ii), pp. 828–9; W. G. Hoskins, 'Harvest fluctuations and English economic history, 1620–1759', *AgHR* 16 (1968), p. 29.

[25] TNA, SP 29/241/207.

[26] Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 232–6.

[27] Ibid., p. 236; Bowden, 'Appendix III: statistics', p. 829; Hoskins, 'Harvest fluctuations', pp. 29–30.

[28] For instance, the three ports altogether shipped 55,235 quarters in 1681, 83,940 quarters in 1688, 52,937 quarters in 1692, and 81,114 quarters in 1699.

[29] It should be noted, however, that comparison of Bowden's regional decennial grain price averages for the 'home counties and London' and the 'South' (which included Kent) during the later seventeenth century yields no encouragement for the suggestion that price differences shifted to the advantage of Kent producers during the 1680s and 1690s. Indeed Bowden's regional decennial price averages, which are of course very broad measures, suggest changes in price differences that would have discouraged exports of wheat, malt and barley from Kent to London during the late seventeenth century. Bowden, 'Appendix III: statistics', pp. 864–5.

beans) produced in the Weald and in Blean Forest to fuel the growth of overland transport to and from the capital.[30] However, part of the explanation, perhaps not an insignificant part, may lie in changes in the way trade was conducted during the 1680s, for if the potential for profitable trade depended on the difference between London and local prices, the size of the required difference was determined by transport and transaction costs.

Reductions in transport costs were most likely the result principally of efficiencies arising from the deployment of larger vessels in coastal trade, and of competition between coastal carriers. If the number of shipmasters carrying corn cargos from different places along the coast (taking the home port of the ship as indicative of the place of shipment) offers any guide, evidence summarized in Appendix 2 suggests that during the late seventeenth century there was no increase in competition among carriers – though no shortage of it – at Sandwich, Margate or Faversham, limited but probably effective competition at Whitstable and Milton, a shortage of it at Herne and Queenborough, and a distinct lack of it at Crown Quay. Yet even if there was no obvious increase in competition between carriers, freight charges at most places along the coast may have fallen significantly after the 1670s as a result of the deployment of larger ships in the corn trade. Post-Restoration port books do not record the tonnage of ships engaged in coastal commerce, but compared with the 1670s the average corn shipment from the customs port of Faversham was 77 per cent larger during the 1680s and 1690s, at Milton corn cargos were 62 per cent bigger, and at Sandwich they increased by 41 per cent.[31]

The most striking feature of the metropolitan trade at all three customs ports in the closing years of the seventeenth century is that while the average volume of corn exported annually to the capital was higher than in the 1630s, the number of corn shippers recorded by officials had more than halved. Apart from reducing the unit cost of transporting corn, the deployment of more large ships in the coastal trade must have encouraged farmers with insufficient corn for export to fill a large hoy either to sell locally to middlemen or to employ agents to combine their corn with that of others in single consignments big enough to fill such ships.[32] Yet because it is not possible to determine from later seventeenth-century port book entries the interest shippers had in the cargos they exported, the evidence may equally well reflect the rise of a class of powerful corn merchants perhaps able sometimes to dictate the terms of trade in local markets, or the emergence of a class of agents who specialized in putting together composite cargos of corn owned by a number of clients and ensuring that hoys were regularly sent to London loaded at something close to full capacity.[33] In other words, it is quite possible that

[30] Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', pp. 237–8, 245–6, 253–4. Fodder crop exports rose from 7825 quarters in 1681 to 14,783 quarters in 1688 and to 22,520 quarters in 1699.

[31] Of course, cargos carried to London sometimes combined grain and other commodities, but throughout the period 1580–1700 a very high proportion of shipments from Faversham, Sandwich and Milton consisted solely of grain; high enough, certainly, to make comparison of average corn cargo sizes over time a meaningful exercise.

[32] Hoys, the 'racehorses of the port', were the favoured vessel for deployment in the corn trade. In the early seventeenth century Faversham's corn hoys were 20–30 tons apiece, but by the 1720s some were as large as 60 tons. D. Baker, 'The marketing of corn in the first half of the eighteenth century: north-east Kent', *AgHR* 18 (1970), p. 130.

[33] To judge from the evidence in Port Books, larger hoys carried a wide range of merchandize on their return from London, but were often filled to considerably less than capacity, presumably because the priority among hoymen specializing in the corn trade was a swift return to collect the next grain cargo.

after 1680 many north Kent farmers, who had previously never engaged with (or had even withdrawn from) the London market were drawn into selling in the metropolitan market, perhaps at the initiative of middlemen advertising a service, without their proprietorial interest in the corn exported from the region being registered in port books.[34]

V

Except at ports where corn exports flowed more or less exclusively to the capital, of which there were few outside south-east England, it would be unwise to assume that where Appendix 1 shows leading dealers conducting an extremely high share of the metropolitan trade, they were necessarily more likely than dealers at other ports to have been able to force down prices paid to local corn producers. This is not only because shippers named in port book entries may often have been agents for producers selling in London – which was true at all places exporting to the capital – but also because, even if they had bought the corn they were exporting, the leading shippers in the metropolitan commerce at ports with significant multidirectional coastal corn trades may have faced stiff competition in local markets from other dealers purchasing for export to other destinations. Thus, for instance, since Norfolk ports enjoyed a large corn export trade with north-east England, and a good number of merchants exported exclusively to Newcastle, evidence that over 90 per cent of the London trade from Blakeney and Great Yarmouth in 1688 was conducted by five shippers is a relatively weak indication of possible oligopsony in local corn markets.[35]

At Wisbech, on the other hand, where coastal trade in the 1690s was almost entirely focused on the capital's oats market, leading dealers may have been able to manipulate local prices in 1694, for five of the 15 shippers recorded in the local port book exported only one consignment and 90 per cent of the remaining 25,458 quarters of oats exported to London was shipped by just six dealers.[36] Equally, at Rochester, a coastal corn trade more or less solely directed to London was, by the 1690s, entirely in the hands of six or seven shippers who, if they were not merely agents providing a service for producers selling in London, may have been able to divert a healthy slice of local farmers' profits into their own pockets.[37]

[34] Equally, agents may often have been employed by hoymen and others who, having invested in the provision of larger ships perhaps only to discover that they had no choice but to pass on most of the benefit of lower transport costs in order to make selling in the London market commercially viable for farmers, had every incentive to ensure that matters were so arranged that hoys were efficiently turned round and sent regularly to London fully loaded.

[35] TNA, E 190/441/4, 441/7, 442/7, 443/1, 443/2, 146/1; Willan, *Coasting trade*, pp. 82, 116, 126–32.

[36] TNA, E 190/442/7, 443/1.

[37] TNA, E 190/155/2, 670/15, 671/13, 673/16, 676/12, 677/2, 677/8, 678/6. Irrespective of whether shippers had bought the corn they exported, since port book evidence tells us nothing about the number of buyers or sellers in local markets or the volume of corn that was exchanged in them, it cannot demonstrate oligopsonistic or oligopolistic relations in those markets, it can only indicate places where leading merchants in the coastal trade may have been sufficiently powerful to rig them. Even so, port book evidence will not necessarily indicate all places where this may have been the case. It is possible that some major provincial or indeed London corn merchants were in the habit of devolving the task of organizing the shipment of corn to London to a number of different agents in a single port, with the names of the latter being recorded in port books as the shippers of the consignments they arranged, thus hiding from view major players in the coastal trade.

Like that from Rochester, during the later seventeenth century the coastal corn export trades of the three customs ports of north-east Kent were almost entirely directed to London, and other than between 1675 and 1678 they shipped little if any corn to the continent, so evidence for their metropolitan trades is apt to yield more meaningful indications of the possible power exercised by leading factors than that for ports in regions with multidirectional corn export trades. Analysed in the speculative but probably broadly accurate fashion of the table in Appendix 2, port book evidence indicates that, *if* they were purchasing merchants rather than agents working on commission, during the 1680s and 1690s leading shippers may sometimes have been in a position to rig the corn market in their favour at Margate, Herne, Whitstable, Faversham, Crown Quay, Milton, and Queenborough.

There are some intriguing contrasts in the trading cultures observable at different places along the north-east Kent coast. As Table 1 indicates, whereas the men who skippered hoys carrying corn to London from the customs port of Sandwich in 1585–6, 1591–2 and 1615 were seldom identified as shippers, during the later seventeenth century between one third and two thirds of masters carrying corn to the capital in any year were also noted as corn shippers by customs officials. In 1681, the 13 local hoymen who organized as well as carried corn shipments from Margate and Sandwich were responsible – in their capacity as shippers – for exporting 31 per cent of all the corn sent to London from within the customs jurisdiction of Sandwich. They included Daniel Cousar, Thomas Crockenden, and George Hurst, each of whom shipped more than 1000 quarters over the course of the year. However, as Table 1 also indicates, in 1681 – as in other years – these hoymen went out of their way to avoid skippering voyages carrying corn cargos for which they were also noted in port book entries as the shipper. Instead, the hoymen cooperated extensively with one another, presumably to minimize exposure to financial risk in cases where they owned part of or all the corn they were shipping as well as part of or all the ship or ships they skippered.[38]

There is, however, little evidence at Sandwich or Margate of strong working partnerships

[38] For instance, George Hurst skippered nine voyages from Sandwich to London in 1681, on four of which he carried corn exported in the name of Thomas Crockenden. Crockenden, meanwhile, was master of six voyages to the capital, three times carrying corn exported by Hurst. Hurst also shipped corn in boats skippered by John Hutton and Daniel Cousar. John Hutton made in all nine trips to London, once carrying corn for which he was also identified as exporter in the port book entry, and four times with corn shipped in the name of other local merchant-hoymen, viz., George Hurst, William Hutton, William Jordan and Thomas Crockenden. William Hutton made two trips to London, on one of which he carried corn exported in the name of John Hutton. William Jordan made seven trips to London, three times carrying corn shipped by Daniel Cousar. Cousar was the master of 12 voyages to the capital, once carrying corn shipped in his own name, twice carrying cargos consigned by William Jordan, once carrying a cargo exported by John Wheeler, and once a cargo in the name of George Hurst. John Wheeler made five journeys to the capital, on one of which he carried a cargo shipped by Daniel Cousar: TNA, E 190/98/1. Similar cooperation amongst mariner-merchants is evident at Wells (Norfolk) during the mid-1690s: TNA, E 190/442/7, 443/1.

Coleman's suggestion that such cooperation may have resulted from 'group interest in a number of ships' and 'may also have implied joint ownership' does nothing to explain why Sandwich shipmasters went out of their way to avoid carrying cargos for which they were the shippers; indeed, such group interest/ownership would make shippers' evident aversion to carrying their own cargos in the ships they skippered more difficult to account for. D. C. Coleman, 'The economy of Kent under the later Stuarts' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1951), p. 132.

TABLE 1. Shipmasters as shippers in the Kent corn export trade to London, 1585–1700

		Volume of corn exported to London	*Number of shipmasters carrying corn consignments*	*Number of shipmasters acting as shippers*	*Number of shipmasters carrying corn cargos shipped in their name*	*Number of shippers*
Sandwich	1585/6	5615	30	1	1	33
	1591/2	5875	38	2	1	26
	1615	21801	30	0	0	115
	1651	47914	61	21	1	134
	1666	16081	31	22	1	92
	1674	41146	36	28	2	96
	1681	35895	25	13	2	57
	1686	40645	35	19	5	82
	1692	29279	24	13	0	53
	1699	34299	30	13	2	58
Faversham	1585/6	11797	43	0	0	49
	1591/2	9533	22	1	0	39
	1615	10806	22	1	0	78
	1651	26245	42	4	0	72
	1663	11859	35	4	0	66
	1671	10161	21	6	6	33
	1674	7615	21	4	3	26
	1681	12371	21	1	1	27
	1686	26002	25	2	2	44
	1692	16696	21	1	1	24
	1699	35820	23	0	0	21
Milton	1585/6	9241	23	3	3	29
	1591/2	5173	23	0	0	27
	1615	2312	21	0	0	39
	1651	7778	20	1	0	63
	1663	3027	9	6	6	15
	1674	2855	10	9	9	9
	1681	6969	14	11	11	14
	1686	13233	14	13	13	15
	1692	6962	9	9	9	9
	1699	10995	9	9	9	9

Sources: TNA, E190/7/6, E190/9/3, E190/18/1, E190/46/1, E190/61/2, E190/98/1, E190/140/3, E190/141/3, E190/661/6, E190/661/8, E190/662/5, E190/662/18, E190/671/1, E190/671/2, E190/671/4, E190/671/7, E190/671/9, E190/671/10, E190/676/1, E190/676/14, E190/677/1, E190/677/5, E190/677/10.

between prominent specialist corn shippers and local shipmasters at any time between 1585 and 1690. Of the seven shippers who consigned five or more cargos to London in 1615 – by which time the metropolitan corn trade from Sandwich had reached a considerable size – only two relied on freightage by a single shipmaster; while the leading three skippers in the corn trade – who made 24, 22 and 19 voyages to London – worked for 18, 18, and 14 different shippers respectively.[39] In 1651, Sandwich's leading corn exporter, John Does, employed six masters to convey the 20 corn cargos (containing 4424 quarters) he sent to London, while of the six other shippers who exported more than 1000 quarters that year, only Phineas Moore relied on a single master to transport all his exports (in six shipments) to the capital. Meanwhile, the eight masters who made a dozen or more voyages carrying corn cargos to the capital in 1651 each worked for at least six shippers.[40]

In 1681, William Ovenden of Margate used seven local shipmasters to transport the 11,533 quarters of corn he exported to London. His most frequent employee, Valentine Hogben, was also the busiest of Thanet's masters, undertaking 16 voyages to the capital carrying corn consigned by Ovenden, but also ten more as carrier for six other local shippers.[41] As in earlier decades, most shipmasters working out of Sandwich or Margate during the 1680s who frequently carried corn to London did not conspicuously work with any particular shipper, and often carried cargos consigned by half a dozen or more over the course of a year, a pattern reflected in exaggerated form in 1686 by the labours of Roger Laming, who undertook 32 trips to London carrying cargos exported by 20 different shippers.[42] It was not until the 1690s that strong partnerships between specialist shippers and specialist shipmasters – including some that were evidently family partnerships – began to emerge with any regularity at Sandwich or Margate.[43]

Things were different along the coast to the west. Other than in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Faversham shipmasters were rarely noted as shippers in the coastal corn trade. The few who, after 1674, were noted as masters of vessels carrying corn to London were also recorded as responsible for shipping the corn on board. Assuming that this handful of late seventeenth-century mariner-shippers were risk-averse and owned or part-owned the hoys they commanded, it is probable that they were acting as agents for the owners of the corn they were named in port books as responsible for shipping.

While shipmaster-cum-shippers of the kind prominent in the trade of later seventeenth-century Sandwich and Margate are notable by their absence within the customs jurisdiction of Faversham, the strong associations between specialist shippers and specialist shipmasters that were lacking at the Thanet ports until the 1690s can be detected occasionally at Faversham

[39] TNA, E 190/18/1.

[40] TNA, E 190/46/1.

[41] TNA, E 190/98/1.

[42] TNA, E 190/140/3, 141/3.

[43] In 1699, for instance, Roger Laming (by that date transformed from Margate's leading shipmaster to its leading shipper) shipped 34 consignments of corn to London, 22 of them carried by John Pound, who worked for no other shipper that year, while Valentine Hogben who had likewise moved from being shipmaster to shipper, consigned 23 cargos from Margate, 16 of which were carried to London by Clement Hogben. Clement did, however, also carry cargos consigned by four other shippers in 1699. TNA, E 190/676/14, 677/1.

and Milton a full century earlier, though they became a significant feature of the conduct of Faversham's corn trade only after the Civil War.[44]

In 1651, four partnerships between shippers and masters generated nine or more corn shipments from Faversham to London, among them that between the shipper Edward Miles and the skipper of 'The John' of Whitstable, John Barber, whose 17 voyages to London that year carried nothing other than corn exported by Miles.[45] Again, in 1663, four partnerships generated nine or more shipments, and in one case both shipper and master worked exclusively with the other during the year.[46] Strong partnerships are somewhat less evident in the depressed coastal corn trade from Faversham during the 1670s, but in 1681 seven associations between corn shippers and shipmasters yielded ten or more voyages to London. In four of these cases, hoyman and shipper worked exclusively with each other over the year, while 12 of the 13 voyages John Lawrence made to London (almost certainly from Herne) shipped 1670 quarters exported in the name of Robert Knowler.[47] Very strong working associations between shippers and shipmasters are evident in five cases in 1686 where shipmasters commanding ships registered at Faversham undertook at least 15 trips to London carrying corn for the same shipper.[48] By 1692, strong associations between shippers and shipmasters existed not only at Faversham and Herne, but at also Whitstable, where the nine cargos Edward Oliver transported to London carried only and all the corn shipped by Thomas Dunkin that year.

In 1699, when 35,820 quarters of corn were shipped to London from within the jurisdiction of Faversham customs port, 17 shippers worked with the same shipmaster on at least ten occasions, and nine of 21 the shippers worked *exclusively* with one shipmaster, whether as their employer, partner or employee. Together, these nine exclusive shipmaster-shipper associations accounted for 190 of the 379 corn shipments to London over the year.[49] That Edward Oliver carried 26 cargos shipped by Thomas Oliver clearly suggests a family partnership, but it is impossible to determine whether the shipper, shipmaster or neither was the dominant party in the other cases. However, it is not hard to imagine that men like Leonard Meeres and Michael Jones, two of ten shipmasters who skippered between 23 and 26 voyages to London in 1699, might want to employ agents at Faversham to organize future cargos in their absence in order to speed turn-round times. That some shippers were in the employ of shipmasters is perhaps indicated by the fact that Meeres and Jones were both Faversham common councillors in 1699,

[44] In 1591–2, for example, the grain merchant Alexander Oare of Ospringe near Faversham employed the shipmaster Robert Rye on 11 of the 14 occasions over the year when he exported corn to London, TNA, E 190/9/3. At Milton in 1585–6 the Sittingbourne grain merchant Roger Jenkins employed the shipmaster Robert Hamon to carry 31 corn cargos to London, while Thomas Bradbury of Milton employed William Hunt to transport 19 cargos to the capital. TNA, E 190/7/6; Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 119–22.

[45] TNA, E 190/46/1.

[46] This partnership, between Richard Sturges (shipper) and John Marks, master of 'The Anne', of Faversham, was responsible for 13 corn cargos to London. TNA, E 190/661/8.

[47] In 1671 three associations between shipper and shipmaster generated nine or more corn cargos, and in 1674 two did. TNA, E 190/662/18, 61/2, 98/1.

[48] Michael Rixon carried 23 cargos consigned by Thomas Everden, John Lawrence undertook 21 trips (probably from Herne) carrying corn shipped by Robert Knowler, and Richard Reynolds made 20 trips carrying corn shipped by John Tall.

[49] TNA, E 190/676/1, 677/10. In addition, while the 26 cargos consigned by Matthew Hoult were carried by two shipmasters, Christopher Castle and John Larriman, they were always transported in a hoy named the 'Christopher and John', which suggests that the two shipmasters co-owned the ship in which all the grain Hoult consigned was exported.

whereas the sole shippers of the cargos Meeres and Jones carried, and the shippers only of those cargos, Henry Marlowe and Stephen Toker, were not.[50]

While a growth in the significance of hoymen in the organization of the metropolitan corn trade from Faversham during the closing decades of the seventeenth century may be disguised by their employment of agents whose names appear as shippers in the pages of local port books, as Table 1 indicates, the increasing prominence of hoymen in the organization of the corn trade within the customs jurisdiction of Milton after 1651 is impossible to miss in the port books covering its trade. By the 1680s with few exceptions, and during the 1690s without exception, corn shippers identified in Milton's port books were hoymen who skippered only voyages carrying corn that they were also recorded as responsible for shipping.[51]

The heavy concentration of Milton's trade in the hands of a few shippers at the end of the seventeenth century was first detected by Coleman.[52] Noting his finding that 93 per cent of metropolitan corn exports recorded in the Milton port books covering the year beginning Christmas 1699 was shipped in the names of just six men, Chartres, as mentioned earlier, concluded that Milton 'provides a case of oligopoly'. Yet while on the surface this statistic may appear to suggest that local consumers and producers were vulnerable to the market manipulations of a handful of corn engrossers, there are very strong grounds for supposing that those recorded as shippers in port books for late seventeenth-century Milton often had not bought the corn they exported.

VI

Baker's examination of the metropolitan corn trade from north-east Kent during the early eighteenth century lacks any quantitative dimension, since, after 1702, coastal port books ceased to record corn exports to London from harbours to the west of the North Foreland, but his analysis of the conduct of the grain trade makes use of a number of revealing farmers' inventories and accounts.[53] Among the latter are accounts for Hogshaw farm at Milstead (near Sittingbourne), which make clear that throughout the first half of the eighteenth century Richard Tylden consigned large quantities of wheat, oats, beans and other products of his farm to London, which were transported and sold for ready cash in London by Milton hoymen who paid Tylden on their return.[54] Unless we are to suppose that farmers following similar practices

[50] Centre for Kentish Studies (hereafter CKS), Fa/AC 4, pt 1. (unfol.). Michael Jones died a wealthy man, leaving an inventory valued at £1,184 in 1715. D. Baker, *Agricultural prices, production and marketing, with special reference to the hop industry: north-east Kent, 1680–1760* (1985), p. 306.

[51] To judge from evidence in London port books, the only other port briefly to witness a similar domination of trade by merchant-hoymen was Leigh (Essex) during the 1670s.

[52] Coleman, 'Economy of Kent', p. 129.

[53] J. H. Andrews, 'Geographical aspects of the maritime trade of Kent and Sussex, 1650–1750' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1954), p. 34.

[54] As Baker points out, 'A notable aspect of Tylden's commercial policy, repeated on many other farms in the region, was an all-the-year trading programme. Crops were sold according to prevailing market conditions. At the time this was a widely recognized feature of agricultural marketing: "The rich farmers, who are in a capacity as to a fortune, to keep the whole, or the greatest part of their crop the year over, speculate on the markets, thresh out and sell when they like the price"'. Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 301, 303, citing C. Smith, *Essay on the corn trade and the corn laws* (1758), p. 12; Baker, 'Marketing of corn', p. 138.

did not exist in the hinterland of Milton during the 1690s, it must follow that at least some of the corn exported from Milton and Crown Quay (Sittingbourne) had not been bought by those identified as responsible for shipping it, if for no other reason than that the *only* shippers named in Milton port books during the 1690s were the hoymen carrying the cargos. It is likely that the bulk of the late seventeenth-century corn trade from within the customs port of Milton, if not all of it, was conducted by hoymen providing a service for local farmers and dealers selling their corn in the capital, although, given the monopoly over the coastal carriage of corn exercised by one or two shipmasters at Crown Quay and Queenborough, some may have found themselves paying a premium for it.[55]

It is scarcely any less likely that at least some of the top shippers at each of the topographical ports of Faversham, Whitstable, Herne and Margate often did not own the corn they shipped, but were acting in one capacity or another as agents for farmers or middlemen, or else were employees of hoymen who had contracted with farmers or middlemen to deliver their corn to the London market. During the closing decades of the seventeenth century, corn from north-east Kent probably often reached the metropolitan market in much the manner that it did during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, when, as Baker has shown, an 'intensive spirit of competition among the various family firms characterized the Kentish hoy business' and hoymen used 'local inns as information and collection centres' in the effort to attract custom.[56]

During the late 1730s, for example, the Herne hoyman Francis Turner – or his agent – could be found every Wednesday touting for business in Canterbury: in 1738 at The Rose, and in 1739 at the larger Bull's Head Inn. The service he offered was comprehensive. It was necessary for farmers who lived at a distance and wished to send corn to the London market only to bring their corn as far as Canterbury. For a fee, Turner did the rest. Goods for London were frequently stored at Canterbury or Whitstable inns before being taken to the hoys. Corn merchants and farmers who could afford to bide their time would monitor recent London prices, for news of which, until 1717, they had probably relied heavily on shipmasters frequently visiting the capital. After its launch in 1717, farmers had recourse to the *Kentish Post*, which regularly published Bear Quay corn prices. When they judged the time right, the farmers gave instructions for their corn to be shipped immediately to London. During the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and perhaps also during the half century before, hoymen were commissioned by farmers both to transport their corn to London and to sell it there to the highest bidder, but Baker found no evidence that hoymen traded on their own account.[57] Notwithstanding Chartres's claims to the contrary, Baker's study hardly reveals a trade conducted in ways that imply that 'exports from the region were characterized by unequal exchange', the 'net effect' of which 'may have been to redistribute wealth towards mercantile capital'.[58]

[55] Besides transporting goods, the Tappendens, who owned the hoy business operating at Crown Quay during the late seventeenth century, 'were transmitting cash for well-to-do clients' and extending loans-at-interest. Baker, *Agricultural prices,* pp. 313–14.

[56] Ibid., pp. 307–8.

[57] Baker calculated the normal cost of freightage and factorage as for wheat 5–6%, for oats 8%, and for beans 10% of the selling price at Bear Quay. Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 305, 307–9, 311, 316–18; R. B. Westerfield, *Middlemen in English business particularly between 1660 and 1760* (1915), p. 154.

[58] Chartres, 'Food consumption', p. 185.

Of course, while eighteenth-century farmers may not have suffered at the hands of hoymen, those with few reserves – like their forbears in the pre-Civil War period – doubtless often had to surrender much of their margin to those at the provincial end of the coastal grain trade who could afford to play a long game, not least professional middlemen of the sort prominent in the coastal metropolitan trade of the Kent ports in the Elizabethan and early Stuart period.[59] However, since large farmers with access to ample storage facilities and accustomed to speculation were just as likely as any professional middleman to take advantage of small tenant farmers as rent day approached, it is far from clear that the 'net effect' of their vulnerability was a redistribution of wealth from producers to merchants on any greater scale than the redistribution of wealth from poor to rich farmers that it also brought about.

On the other hand, there is every reason to suppose that the 'net effect' on the wealth of arable farmers in north-east Kent of the absence of a coastal metropolitan outlet for their corn after 1680 would have been decidedly negative. There are also grounds for supposing that had it not been for developments in the transport and commercial infrastructure of the coastal trade as a result of the investment and enterprise of middlemen, the metropolitan market could not often have been served with competitively priced grain from the region.

VII

For all the reasons discussed above, the 'strongly oligopsonistic market relations' that, it has recently been asserted, 'concentrated power among large-scale buyers at all levels of grain trading' cannot be read from evidence indicating that, at quite a number of ports, much of the late seventeenth-century coastal metropolitan corn trade was handled by only a few shippers.[60] What then, finally, of the London end of the trade?

The only quantitative evidence so far unearthed bearing on the marketing of coastal corn imports reaching the capital in the post-Restoration period is that for Wiggins Quay during the late 1670s and early 1680s, which Chartres first examined in an article published in 1980. He argued that records of lighterage fees charged on each quarter of corn landed at the wharf show that in 1678–9 and 1679–80 'the top six corn factors buying through Wiggins Key' controlled 'respectively 77.7 and 84.2 per cent of the traffic at the quay', whereas 'the top six shippers, the typical merchant-hoymen' who were delivering the corn 'conducted little more than a quarter of the traffic'. This, he suggested, indicates that 'without exhibiting total control, the corn factors possessed great power in the market, and were clearly the dominant partners in the trade'.[61] Hoymen, keen to turn round rapidly, needed to dispose of their cargos quickly, 'but', Chartres argued, 'the hoymen in this relationship became effectively the clients of the factors, and the economies in shipping cannot have entirely compensated for the losses through the market power of the greater dealers to whom

[59] Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 119–24. Baker's account of the coastal metropolitan corn trade scarcely mentions corn merchants, but it seems reasonable to assume that during the early eighteenth century they contracted with hoymen on much the same terms as local farmers who were selling in the London market.

[60] Glennie and Whyte, 'Towns in an agrarian economy', p. 175.

[61] J. Chartres, 'Trade and shipping in the port of London: Wiggins Key in the later seventeenth century', *J. Transport Hist.*, 3rd ser. 1 (1980), pp. 36, 45; id., 'Food consumption', p. 186.

they sold'.[62] This interpretation rests entirely on the assumption that the factors taking delivery of the sacks of corn off the ships had bought it from the shipmasters who had carried it from its port of origin. It is, however, at least as likely that the London factors receiving the corn at Wiggins Quay were agents working on commission, their task being to sell the corn on behalf of its provincial owners for the best price they could get, probably at Bear Quay, which by the beginning of the 1680s was the chief corn market in the capital.[63]

As Chartres pointed out, Wiggins Quay was one of 19 'Free Keys' of the city, and, though clearly important, handled only 41,000 quarters of coastal corn imports in the year commencing Michaelmas 1678.[64] This probably represented between one fifth and at most one third of corn imports that year (in 1674 London imported 104,000 qr of corn, and in 1681 194,000 qr).[65] Thus, even if the nature of the exchange between shipmaster and London factor was what Chartres assumed it was, there remains the question of whether the great majority of London's coastal corn imports that were unloaded at other quays were also purchased overwhelmingly by a handful of dominant factors.

Chartres analysed the Wiggins Quay material in isolation from port book evidence, and so was able to identify the home ports of fewer than half the vessels whose corn cargos were unloaded wholly or in part at Wiggins Quay. He knew that ships trading from Hull, Spalding, Wisbech, Lynn, Yarmouth, and from within the customs port of Sandwich, used the quay, but not what proportion of the corn consignments unloaded at Wiggins Quay were from each of these ports, nor what proportion of the corn export trade of any provincial port was unloaded at the quay.[66] It is, however, possible to compare entries in the Sandwich coastal port book for 1680 with records of lighterage payments at Wiggins Quay that year. Close comparison reveals that 71.2 per cent of the 32,807 qr of corn for which lighterage fees were recorded at Wiggins Quay in 1680 was unloaded from ships sailing from within the customs jurisdiction of Sandwich. However, the 23,352 qr unloaded at Wiggins Quay represents only 63.6 per cent of the 36,697 qr of corn exported to all London quays from the port of Sandwich in 1680. Comparison also makes it clear that in some instances less than the entire corn cargo of a Sandwich ship was moved by lighter to Wiggins Quay.[67] Presumably in such cases the rest of the cargo was brought ashore by lighters working at other quays, which – given that ships were often moored in midstream – would have been as easy as not to do and, one would imagine, happened all the time.

Plainly then, shipmasters commanding corn hoys from within the customs jurisdiction of Sandwich had recourse to other corn factors besides those at Wiggins Quay, which must call into question the extent to which those at Wiggins Quay were the 'dominant partners' in their dealings with those shipping corn from Sandwich. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the vast bulk of the corn from north-east Kent that came ashore at Wiggins Quay was transferred to just a handful of London corn factors; only a dozen of them received Kent grain in 1680

[62] Chartres, 'Food consumption', p. 186.

[63] P. V. McGrath, 'The marketing of food, fodder and livestock in the London area in the seventeenth century, with some reference to the sources of supply' (unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1948), pp. 136–7.

[64] Chartres, 'Wiggins Key', p. 30; id., 'Marketing', p. 477.

[65] Hipkin, 'Metropolitan corn trade', p. 255.

[66] Chartres, 'Wiggins Key', pp. 38–9.

[67] TNA, C 113/14 pt II, E 190/665/14.

(ships from Kent customs ports other than Sandwich did not use Wiggins Quay that year), and five factors (John Smith, Edward Day, William Brandon, Matthew Stokes and Henry Noble) handled 88 per cent of it. This may be evidence of their 'great power' in the market, but it is also precisely what one would discover if those organizing the coastal grain trade in Sandwich relied on the services of a small band of trusted commission agents living in London to sell their corn in the capital, as was certainly often the case during the early seventeenth century.[68]

Furthermore, the corn factors of Wiggins Quay were not always bigger players in the coastal corn trade than shippers at its provincial end. As we have seen, with very few exceptions, it was not the hoymen of Sandwich and Margate who were the shippers of the corn they carried. In 1680 William Ovenden shipped 7080 quarters of corn from Margate to London, 2375 quarters of which was brought ashore at Wiggins Quay off ships skippered by Zachary Boreman (five times), John Laming (five times) and Richard Stevens (seven times). So the question that arises is this. Were the three masters of the hoys the men on whom Ovenden relied to sell the corn on its arrival in the capital, or did Ovenden entrust that task to the six corn factors of Wiggins Quay to whom the corn was transferred off the ships?

Unfortunately, while it is possible to frame the right question, the currently available evidence is not good enough to permit it to be answered.[69] The rapid turn round of vessels that Chartres doubtless correctly identified as crucial to the economics of coastal shipping could be achieved more certainly and probably more efficiently by retaining commission agents in London who would – if necessary working cooperatively – take delivery of cargos as soon as they arrived, than by relying on sales negotiated on arrival, and of course would eliminate the risk that prices might have to be discounted in the process. There was also an established tradition of Kent corn dealers employing commission agents resident in London to conduct the metropolitan end of the trade for them.

On the other hand, it may be that London corn factors were no longer willing to deal with provincial merchants on such terms and that broader market forces during the late seventeenth century gave them the power to insist on the point. Equally plausible is the implicit suggestion in Chartres's interpretation of the Wiggins Quay evidence, that the hoymen were the men also relied upon by the owners of the corn they carried to sell it at the London end of the coastal corn trade. During the early 1570s John Crux, a Preston farmer, employed the Faversham hoyman Robert Rye to carry his wheat to London and sell it for him in the capital.[70]

[68] See for example TNA, C 2/JasI/03/29, *Offley v Owre, Salley and others* (1624). The defendants (grain producers in the Faversham hinterland) explained that for 'divers years' they had converted the barley they grew, and that which they purchased locally, into malt which they 'send up and transport to the city of London, and do there sell the same for the better furnishing of the market of the said city by such factors and agents … as are always resident in London and do there receive the said malt from such as these defendants do send the same by … And the said malt so received do have and used to sell at such prices as such malt there is usually sold for and to such persons as they think fit, sometimes for ready money and at other times do give time for payment thereof. And when the said money is received by them, the said agents or factors so respectively employed by these defendants as aforesaid do, with all the convenient speed they can, send down the said monies to such of these defendants for whom the said malt was sold'. The factor's commission on such sales was 'two pence in every twenty shillings'. See also McGrath, 'Marketing of food', p. 122.

[69] Clues to the answer may of course await discovery in records of commercial litigation in the central courts.

[70] TNA, E 122/171/13.

Rye also worked for the prominent Faversham merchant Richard Philpot, who entrusted him with delivering a sample of his wheat 'to one Blewe, a baker of London dwelling in the Old Exchange', in 1592, when Rye was 89 years old, 'or thereabouts'![71] During pre-Civil War decades such arrangements may have been as common as those between producers or provincial merchants on the one hand and resident London factors on the other. Furthermore, as noted earlier, during the second quarter of the eighteenth century Kent hoymen 'accepted commissions from farmers to sell at Bear Quay', while after 1750, when the corn exchange was erected at Mark Lane (by which time corn was mostly being sold by sample), Kent hoymen were specifically allocated eight of the 72 stands from which they (or perhaps in many cases their London agents) marketed their clients' corn. That said, there are no indications in Baker's work that eighteenth-century Kent hoymen were ever at the mercy of a small group of powerful corn factors when they were selling at Bear Quay. Indeed, once they had obtained stands at Mark Lane, Kent hoymen enjoyed a privileged position in the market, which doubtless worked to the benefit of the Kent farmers who commissioned the hoymen to transport and sell their grain in the capital.[72]

VIII

By the 1680s nearly half of the coastal metropolitan corn trade was concentrated in the hands of shippers exporting upwards of 1000 quarters per annum. It seems likely that this was mainly the result of two late seventeenth-century developments. First, the growth of a class of substantial merchants who bought corn in the provinces, exported it in their own name and arranged for its sale in the capital. Second, the emergence of a breed of agents who made at least part of their living organizing and overseeing corn exports belonging to producers or other middlemen, and who, over time, probably increasingly worked in partnership with, employed, or were employed by the masters and/or owners of ships that carried corn cargos to London.

While research on records of commercial litigation might clarify our understanding of the modus operandi of agents and partnerships in the coastal corn trade, it is unlikely to do much to resolve the crucial question entries in later Stuart port books do not answer: what proportion of exports was shipped by owners of corn and what by agents employed by its owners or by owners of the ships in which it was conveyed to London? On this issue we appear destined to remain mainly in the dark. For this among other reasons explored in this article, high concentrations of corn exports in the hands of leading shippers cannot be accepted as proof of oligopsony in local markets. Nonetheless, particularly at ports where the coastal corn trade was overwhelmingly directed to London, such concentrations do signal the *possibility* that leading merchants may have been able to rig the market.

That the Exchequer port books do not provide the detailed evidence required to convict safely those guilty of manipulating grain prices in the hinterland of coastal ports should not lead us to underestimate their unique value as a source. There is no evidence for overland

[71] CKS, Fa/JQe 10.

[72] Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 317–20; Westerfield, *Middlemen,* p. 154.

commerce that would enable us to identify systematically the major provincial participants in the corn trade during the later seventeenth century. Nor is it possible, for the overland trade, to investigate systematically the activities of those who undertook the transport of corn and the regularity of their associations with those who arranged its transit. Only detailed research on port books for other places analysed in Appendix 1 will show whether the striking diversity of post-Restoration commercial cultures in the ports of north-east Kent was matched in the coastal metropolitan corn trade of other English regions.

Appendix 1

Volume of exports and numbers of shippers conducting the coastal metropolitan corn trade from outports, 1651–95

	1651			*1674*			*1681*			*1688*			*Midsummer–Christmas 1695*		
	Top five shippers (% exports)	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*
North East															
Berwick			0	100.0	5	710	63.8	17	16804	23.1	33	18649	100.0	2	280
Blyth			0			0	100.0	2	810	100.0	5	1092			0
Hartlepool			0			0	100.0	3	1127	100.0	4	3344			0
Stockton			0	100.0	5	625	73.6	10	10845	56.7	16	10825	99.8	6	1370
Others			50			52			1007			395			220
Total			**50**			**1387**			**30593**			**34305**			**1870**
Yorkshire															
Bridlington			0			0	98.8	6	2,060	94.4	6	2,125	100.0	2	951
Hull	100.0	4	1234	94.4	7	2894	65.1	42	32679	55.2	47	29337	49.5	42	18278
Others			80			0			0			0			0
Total			**1314**			**2894**			**34739**			**31462**			**19229**
Lincolnshire															
Boston	100.0	4	1256	100.0	3	245	100.0	4	873	72.3	9	2779	56.5	12	4337
Grimsby			0			0	100.0	5	1160	100.0	4	2938			0
Spalding			0	100.0	3	610	100.0	4	1840	68.0	13	5,700			0
Others			0			0			0			180			0
Total			**1256**			**855**			**3873**			**11597**			**4337**
Norfolk and Cambs.															
Blakeney	100.0	1	180			0	100.0	1	550	91.0	9	6298	100.0	4	750

	1651			*1674*			*1681*			*1688*			*Midsummer–Christmas 1695*		
	Top five shippers (% exports)	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*
King's Lynn	90.6	7	1698	69.5	15	5015	76.9	12	4323	30.0	59	29885	69.3	15	5555
Wells			0	100.0	4	840	100.0	5	1050	45.2	32	15030	31.6	35	11555
Wisbech	100.0	1	80	72.5	22	11384	86.2	10	5914	75.4	18	15822	77.1	11	14522
Yarmouth	48.1	26	5339	36.9	39	8676	63.3	17	1967	91.5	16	11614	69.2	15	3735
Others			0			400			0			0			470
Total			**7297**			**26315**			**13804**			**78649**			**36587**
Suffolk															
Aldeburgh	92.8	7	222	85.7	11	630	97.3	7	742	67.1	15	2134	82.8	10	2264
Ipswich	57.2	23	2905	58.3	25	2551	51.1	18	1570	61.4	27	3518	78.9	19	11108
Woodbridge	88.2	14	1325	83.7	14	1820	92.8	10	2184	50.1	22	3486	70.9	13	4885
Others			2			150			111			886			415
Total			**4454**			**5151**			**4607**			**10024**			**18672**
Essex															
Colchester	39.0	52	5149	70.1	18	3688	74.9	12	1740	87.4	10	2348	74.5	15	4963
Leigh	37.9	46	4124	100.0	4	2555			0	59.6	25	7262	83.2	10	3145
Maldon	20.6	94	12636	30.4	38	4699	38.5	31	7681	34.6	36	13611	61.5	16	7297
Harwich			0			0			0			0	83.3	8	2258
Others			0			0			0			36			0
Total			**21909**			**10942**			**9421**			**23257**			**17663**
Kent															
Deal			0			0			0	98.4	6	1324			0
Dover	58.6	18	5140	97.3	6	1731	71.6	13	2642	75.9	11	4350	100.0	5	2414

	1651			1674			1681			1688			Midsummer–Christmas 1695		
	Top five shippers (% exports)	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*
Faversham	**52.5**	**72**	**26245**	**67.6**	**26**	**7615**	**57.7**	**27**	**12371**	**48.4**	**53**	**25600**	**67.4**	**30**	**13037**
Milton	**32.5**	**63**	**7778**	**87.9**	**9**	**2855**	**76.7**	**14**	**6969**	**77.3**	**12**	**12455**	**94.7**	**6**	**4607**
Rochester	56.6	83	6701	98.0	6	253	100.0	3	1052	92.9	9	3713	95.2	7	5840
Sandwich	**25.2**	**134**	**47914**	**20.3**	**96**	**41146**	**51.1**	**57**	**35895**	**28.4**	**90**	**45885**	**55.5**	**28**	**13155**
Others			40			0			0			0			0
Total			**93818**			**53600**			**58929**			**93327**			**39053**
Sussex															
Arundel			0	100.0	2	160	100.0	4	932	96.0	7	3029	100.0	2	355
Chichester	100.0	2	60	100.0	3	358	78.7	9	1128	57.7	29	10437	84.6	8	1950
Newhaven	98.2	6	759	100.0	1	300	100.0	4	784	71.6	10	1945	100.0	1	210
Rye	82.9	9	671	100.0	5	237	77.0	11	1726	60.7	13	1769	97.7	6	882
Shoreham	100.0	4	630	80.6	9	1595	98.9	6	1819	51.7	20	7065	94.2	6	1545
Pevensey	94.7	7	338			0	100.0	1	200	100.0	5	593	100.0	1	20
Hastings	100.0	3	393			0	100.0	4	464	100.0	2	718			0
Brighton			0			0	100.0	1	190	100.0	4	577			0
Total			**2851**			**2650**			**7243**			**26133**			**4962**
Hampshire															
Portsmouth	96.9	7	1240			0	100.0	4	825	75.1	15	5550	100.0	2	546
Southampton			0			0	97.8	8	1774	45.2	36	12835	100.0	1	80
Cowes			0	100.0	2	42	98.1	7	1339	91.3	6	631	100.0	1	290
Total			**1240**			**42**			**3938**			**19016**			**916**
South West															
Barnstaple			0			0			0	100.0	5	1338			0

	1651			*1674*			*1681*			*1688*			*Midsummer–Christmas 1695*		
	Top five shippers (% exports)	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*	*Total no. shippers*	*Total corn exports, in qtrs (=100%)*
Bideford			0			0			0	100.0	1	2684			0
Dartmouth			0			0	100.0	1	301	100.0	1	1276			0
Exeter			0			0	100.0	2	32	81.5	8	1451			0
Falmouth			0			0	100.0	2	802	100.0	1	110			0
Plymouth	100.0	2	13			0	100.0	1	8	100.0	2	1100	100.0	1	5
Poole			0			0	100.0	2	111	96.5	6	2823	100.0	2	576
Others			86			0			23			773			140
Total			**99**			**0**			**1277**			**11555**			**721**
South Wales															
Carmarthen			0			0	74.5	10	7209			0			0
Cardigan			0			0	100.0	3	980	100.0	4	2634			0
Llanelli			0			0	100.0	1	200	53.5	19	10243			0
Milford Haven			0	100.0	1	513	75.6	13	9775	55.0	25	24294	100.0	1	350
Tenby			0			0	100.0	2	922	100.0	5	2010			0
Others			0			0			921			1101			0
Total			**0**			**513**			**20007**			**40282**			**350**
Northwest			0												
Lancaster			0			0	92.8	6	3052	100.0	4	2519			0
Whitehaven			0			0	100.0	3	2511	100.0	5	2502			0
Others			0			0			382			609			0
Total			**0**			**0**			**5945**			**5630**			**0**
Total exports			**134288**			**104349**			**194376**			**385237**			**144360**

Sources: TNA, E190/46/1, E190/61/2, E190/98/1, E190/146/1, E190/155/2.

Appendix 2
The implications of customs ports jurisdictions for the analysis of coastal trade

In the parlance of English customs administration, there were three types of port: headports, members, and creeks. Headports and members were lengths of coast demarcated by Exchequer commission, rather than single places, though they were usually named after the largest place that lay within their bounds. Creeks were places within the jurisdiction of a headport or member where junior customs officers were stationed for the supervision of the coasting trade. Thus, for example, the stretch of coastline that comprised 'Faversham' (which was a member of the headport of Sandwich) embraced the creek of Milton-next-Sittingbourne to the west of Faversham proper, as well as, to its east, Whitstable harbour and Herne bay, which, albeit places of no official standing, were capable of handling significant volumes of trade.

Normally, trade along the entire coastline that fell within the jurisdiction of a headport or member was recorded in the coastal port books issued to customs officials resident at the place that gave the jurisdiction its name. However, some creeks, Milton among them, were issued with their own coastal port books, and the customs officials of Milton in practice also recorded the coastal trade of Rainham, Queenborough and Crown Quay at Sittingbourne. Faversham's coastal port books recorded trade from the eastern part of the Isle of Sheppey as well as that from a mainland coastline stretching some 15 miles east of Conyer, via Faversham, Whitstable, and Herne, to Reculver. It fell to customs officials compiling the port books of the headport of Sandwich to record the trade of the Thanet ports of Margate, Broadstairs, and Ramsgate, of Sandwich itself, and, until 1680, of Deal.[73]

Although port books for Faversham and Milton do not specify the places along the coast from which the exports they recorded were shipped, pre-Civil War coastal port books for the headport of Sandwich (though not those for the later seventeenth century) do. They show that during the 1620s and 1630s – by which time often more than 30,000 quarters of grain was shipped annually to London from along the coastline that fell within the jurisdiction of the customs port of Sandwich – up to one third of exports was shipped from Margate.[74]

Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century London port books, however, simply record all trade from Thanet as being shipped from 'Sandwich'. On the other hand, until 1686, London coastal port books consistently record the port of registration of ships importing goods from the coastlines covered by the port of Sandwich and the creek of Milton, while those surviving for the period up to 1651, and that covering 1686, note the home port of ships trading from the coastline under the jurisdiction of the customs port of Faversham. Since pre-Civil War Sandwich port books show that overwhelmingly Margate's exports were transported in ships registered at Margate, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the place where the ship carrying a consignment of corn from the Kent coast was registered was in most cases the place where the consignment it carried originated, provided of course that the 'home port' of the ship fell within the jurisdiction of the customs port from which the corn was exported. With few exceptions, London-bound

[73] Andrews, 'Geographical aspects', pp. 17–25

[74] Hipkin, 'Kent grain trade', pp. 107–110.

shipments of corn from the creeks and harbours along the north-east Kent coast throughout the period were carried in local ships skippered by local hoymen.

The table that follows shows the effect of reconfiguring London and local port book data for corn shipped from Sandwich, Faversham and Milton for a number of years between 1585 and 1686, including three for which the entire metropolitan coastal trade is analysed in Appendix 1, on the assumption that consignments were exported from the home port of the ship carrying them.[75] Obviously, the results of this exercise are no more than indicative, but the table is strikingly suggestive.

Other than at the minor port of Rainham in 1585/6 and 1591/2, and at Sandwich proper in 1681, 1692 and 1699, the conduct of the coastal corn trade appears to have been less – often much less – concentrated in the hands of leading shippers within customs ports (the 'all origins' rows) than it was at the ports that fell within their jurisdictions. Furthermore, the lower shipper concentration ratios in Sandwich proper compared with the customs port of Sandwich in 1681, 1692 and 1699 are all by-products of the heavy concentration in the hands of leading shippers of the metropolitan corn trade from Margate. In 1681, the industrious William Ovenden exported 11,533 quarters of wheat, malt, barley, oats and beans to London in 71 shipments, 70 of them in Margate ships, while in 1692 and 1699 Roger Laming of Margate shipped respectively 4910 qr and 8320 qr of corn to the capital.[76]

The clear implication of the table is that insofar as the topographical port of origin of corn shipments was not the customs port, London port books (and thus Appendix 1) will tend to misrepresent the proportion of the metropolitan corn trade handled by leading shippers at specific locations along the English and Welsh coast.

[75] London port book data analyzed in the table cover 1585/6, 1591/2, 1615, 1651, 1674, 1681 and 1686. Local port book data analysed are for Faversham and Milton in 1663, Sandwich in 1666, Faversham in 1671, and for all three Kent customs ports in 1692 and 1699.

[76] TNA, E 190/98/1, 671/4, 671/7, 676/14, 677/1.

TABLE A.1. Possible volumes of exports and numbers of shippers and shipmasters conducting the coastal metropolitan corn trade from havens within the customs ports of north-east Kent, 1585/6–1699

Port	*Origin of ship*	*Total metropolitan corn exports*	*Total number of shipmasters*	*Total number of shippers*	*Top two shippers (% exports)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*
Sandwich						
1585/6	Sandwich	2447	7	17	26.9	48.2
	Margate	1627	10	14	39.9	70.5
	Broadstairs	225	2	4	62.2	100.0
	Ramsgate	420	5	5	73.8	100.0
	Other	896				
	All origins	**5615**	**30**	**33**	**21.7**	**40.1**
1591/2	Sandwich	2730	6	7	74.7	91.9
	Margate	1590	11	10	48.4	79.6
	Broadstairs	461	9	8	50.9	88.9
	Ramsgate	974	10	7	64.7	92.8
	Other	120				
	All origins	**5875**	**38**	**26**	**34.7**	**60.2**
1615	Sandwich	12493	12	53	13.3	24.7
	Margate	8276	12	54	13.5	26.0
	Broadstairs	310	3	6	45.2	90.3
	Ramsgate	722	3	6	65.4	94.5
	All origins	**21801**	**30**	**115**	**7.6**	**15.0**
1651	Sandwich	27115	18	55	24.2	35.9
	Margate	19448	29	68	22.7	35.6
	Broadstairs	487	3	6	57.7	91.0
	Ramsgate	623	6	9	29.7	67.4
	Other	241				
	All origins	**47914**	**61**	**134**	**15.1**	**25.2**
1666	Sandwich	10342	17	49	11.2	25.3
	Margate	5510	12	46	18.6	34.0
	Ramsgate	95	1	1	100.0	100.0
	Deal	134	1	1	100.0	100.0
	All origins	**16081**	**31**	**92**	**7.3**	**18.0**
1674	Sandwich	24388	22	62	15.3	29.8
	Margate	15479	13	43	19.7	40.1
	Deal	1279	1	4	70.3	100.0
	All origins	**41146**	**36**	**96**	**9.9**	**20.3**

Port	*Origin of ship*	*Total metropolitan corn exports*	*Total number of shipmasters*	*Total number of shippers*	*Top two shippers (% exports)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*
1681	Sandwich	19592	18	46	17.1	37.4
	Margate	16303	7	14	77.2	91.0
	All origins	**35895**	**25**	**57**	**37.6**	**51.1**
1686	Sandwich	26433	25	48	16.0	30.8
	Margate	14168	9	40	37.9	57.9
	Ramsgate	44	1	1	100.0	100.0
	All origins	**40645**	**35**	**82**	**17.5**	**30.6**
1692	Sandwich	18285	15	39	17.3	33.9
	Margate	10694	7	14	76.1	88.2
	Other	300				
	All origins	**29279**	**24**	**53**	**27.8**	**42.6**
1699	Sandwich	18872	13	34	22.4	42.1
	Margate	15427	18	24	72.2	87.1
	All origins	**34299**	**30**	**58**	**32.5**	**48.8**
Faversham						
1585/6	Faversham	9024	27	40	46.4	67.4
	Whitstable	2189	13	12	53.4	86.0
	Others	584				
	All origins	**11797**	43	49	**35.5**	**54.2**
1591/2	Faversham	8933	19	33	31.2	57.1
	Whitstable	530	2	6	54.7	96.2
	Other	70				
	All origins	**9533**	22	39	**29.2**	**53.5**
1615	Faversham	8256	16	50	23.4	43.8
	Whitstable	2550	8	28	25.0	44.3
	All origins	**10806**	**22**	**78**	**18.5**	**33.5**
1651	Faversham	21545	33	46	47.4	61.8
	Whitstable	3882	5	14	47.0	67.3
	Leysdown	718	1	11	32.3	68.0
	Other	100				
	All origins	**26245**	**42**	**72**	**38.9**	**52.5**
1663	**All origins**	**11859**	**35**	**66**	**27.0**	**49.8**
1671	**All origins**	**10161**	**21**	**33**	**28.6**	**56.4**
1674	**All origins**	**7615**	**21**	**26**	**53.2**	**67.6**
1681	**All origins**	**12371**	**21**	**27**	**28.0**	**57.7**

Port	*Origin of ship*	*Total metropolitan corn exports*	*Total number of shipmasters*	*Total number of shippers*	*Top two shippers (% exports)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*
1686	Faversham	15143	18	26	39.1	70.4
	Whitstable	3536	6	18	46.2	71.9
	Herne	6463	3	3	97.8	100.0
	Other	860				
	All origins	**26002**	**25**	**44**	**27.7**	**55.5**
1692	Faversham	11211	15	14	49.8	82.2
	Whitstable	857	4	5	59.9	100.0
	Herne	4628	3	5	60.7	100.0
	All origins	**16696**	**21**	**24**	**33.5**	**61.7**
1699	Faversham	20871	13	11	46.9	88.3
	Whitstable	5812	6	4	72.3	100.0
	Herne	9137	4	6	70.0	98.0
	All origins	**35820**	**23**	**21**	**27.3**	**56.1**
Milton						
1585/6	Milton	8061	15	18	66.2	87.8
	Rainham	1026	4	10	59.7	79.4
	Other	154				
	All origins	**9241**	**23**	**29**	**58.1**	**80.4**
1591/2	Milton	2041	10	11	46.6	82.8
	Rainham	1355	6	14	28.0	61.3
	Sittingbourne	1485	2	3	97.3	100.0
	Queenborough	80	2	2	100.0	100.0
	Other	212				
	All origins	**5173**	**23**	**27**	**50.8**	**68.2**
1615	Milton	1507	12	26	30.4	47.0
	Queenborough	458	2	10	32.8	70.3
	Other	347				
	All origins	**2312**	**21**	**39**	**22.9**	**39.4**
1651	Milton	5167	14	44	25.3	42.6
	Queenborough	2007	4	15	39.0	68.9
	Other	604				
	All origins	**7778**	20	**63**	**18.5**	**32.5**
1663	**All origins**	**3027**	**9**	**15**	**66.5**	**86.6**

Port	*Origin of ship*	*Total metropolitan corn exports*	*Total number of shipmasters*	*Total number of shippers*	*Top two shippers (% exports)*	*Top five shippers (% exports)*
1674	Milton	1133	3	3	96.0	100.0
	Queenborough	1522	5	4	69.1	100.0
	Other	200				
	All origins	**2855**	10	**9**	**42.0**	**87.9**
1681	Milton	2355	4	3	80.6	100.0
	Queenborough	2882	5	5	72.2	100.0
	Crown Quay	1268	1	1	100.0	100.0
	Other	464				
	All origins	**6969**	14	**14**	**36.7**	**76.7**
1686	Milton	5529	8	9	62.3	95.3
	Queenborough	5079	3	4	71.6	100.0
	Crown Quay	1799	2	1	100.0	100.0
	Other	826				
	All origins	**13233**	14	**15**	**42.3**	**78.0**
1692	Milton	5177	5	5	74.8	100.0
	Queenborough	1683	2	2	100.0	100.0
	Other	102				
	All origins	**6962**	**9**	**9**	**61.7**	**90.1**
1699 Midsummer to Christmas	Milton	5049	6	6	72.6	99.9
	Queenborough	1170	2	2	100.0	100.0
	Conyer	348	1	1	100.0	100.0
	All origins	**6567**	**9**	**9**	**55.9**	**93.5**

Sources: As Table 1 on p. 224.