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**Deal  
and the  
Deal Boatmen  
c.1840 - c.1880**

**Jacqueline Bower**



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Jacqueline Mary Bower  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Deal and the Deal Boatmen, c.1840 - c.1880

Abstract

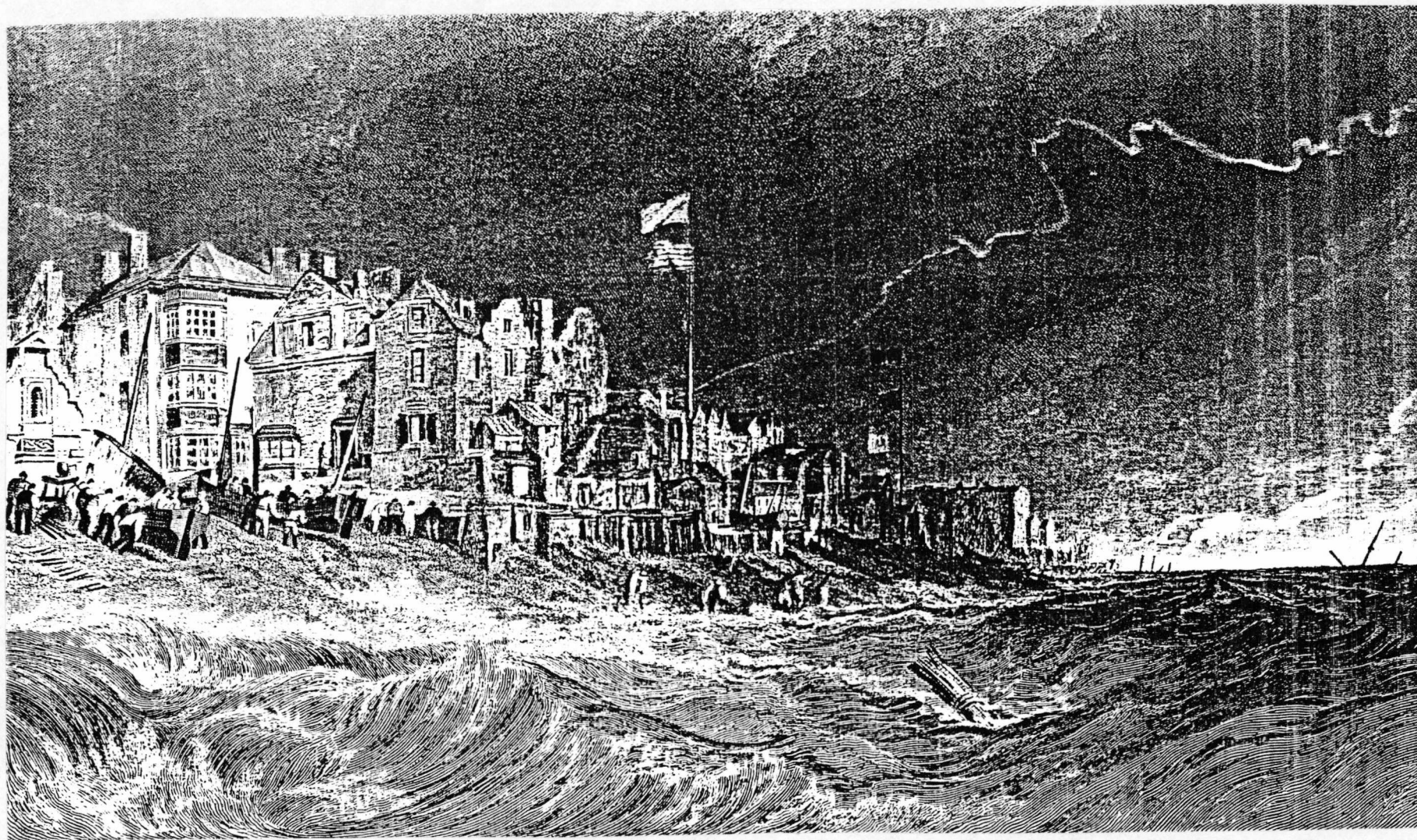
The traditional rôle of the town of Deal, on the East Kent coast, was that of providing services to shipping. The boatmen were the town's dominant occupational group. In the nineteenth century, however, many inhabitants, represented by the Borough Councillors, the local newspapers and some leading townsmen, were conscious that this era was ending and were seeking a new rôle for the town.

The themes addressed in this thesis are therefore twofold. The first is that of how a smallish rural town attempted to adjust, over a period of about forty years, to economic decline. The second theme is the boatmen's work, their society, their family relationships and their position in the community.

The thesis looks at Deal's development from the seventeenth century to its zenith in the early nineteenth century. It suggests that growth and decline in Deal directly coincided with periods of war and peace in national history, and that consequently the decline of the nineteenth century was inevitable, given the century of cross-Channel concord which followed the defeat of Napoleon.

Chapter Three discusses the boatmen's decreasing opportunities for making a living from the 1830s and their consequent decline. Chapters Four and Five consider the effect of this decline on the rest of the population and the attempts made by some sections to redress the situation. These chapters examine the degree to which they had succeeded by 1880, and how the town changed in character as a consequence.

Chapter Six attempts to reconstruct the customs and practices which governed the organisation of the boatmen's work. Chapter Seven assesses the importance of family and kinship in the boatmen's society, while Chapter Eight looks at the extent to which the boatmen existed as a separate community within the town, and whether this separation increased as their economic importance declined.



Deal in a Storm, 1826

(Kent County Libraries)

An engraving from a drawing by J.M.W. Turner

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Abbreviations used in Footnotes

- B.P.P. - British Parliamentary Papers  
K.A.O. - Kent Archives Office  
K.F.H.S. - Kent Family History Society  
P.R.O. - Public Record Office

## Chapter One

### Introduction

"I never think of Deal beach without recalling my first impression of it. The time of year was October ... and an autumn gale was blowing ... out of the north-east .... I made my way into Beach Street, from which narrow, winding thoroughfare a view of the dark green foaming ocean burst suddenly upon my sight. A crowd of vessels lay in the Downs, within a mile of the shore .... Groups of 'longshoremen stood about under the lee of the little tarry boathouses, with huge scarves twisted around their throats and stout pilot coats buttoned across their jerseys. The foreground ... was full of nautical details; a great bower-anchor, with a chain-cable ranged alongside of it, ready for shipping off to the first vessel that should part her ground-tackle; a tall and tottering capstan, erected in a gallows-like frame, and used for heaving up the two or three small boats which lay upon that part of the beach; high naked poles with fleets of sprat-nets wildly fluttering betwixt them, hoisted there to dry; whilst oars and masts, sails and spars, were scattered about .... A small crowd of men were making ready to launch a large lugger. Half a dozen boatmen, all attired in yellow oilskin overalls and sou'westers, clambered over her bright varnished side and disappeared inboards, whilst others were busy in laying a row of long, greased planks, like railway sleepers, from her bows to the water's edge, to assist her passage over the rough, pebbly incline. A warning shout was raised; the chain which held her was then let go, and the boat began to glide down the beach ... till she sped roaring ... into the breakers."

1. Sydney Gerald, "Deal Beach", *The Pall Mall Magazine* (1893), 367.

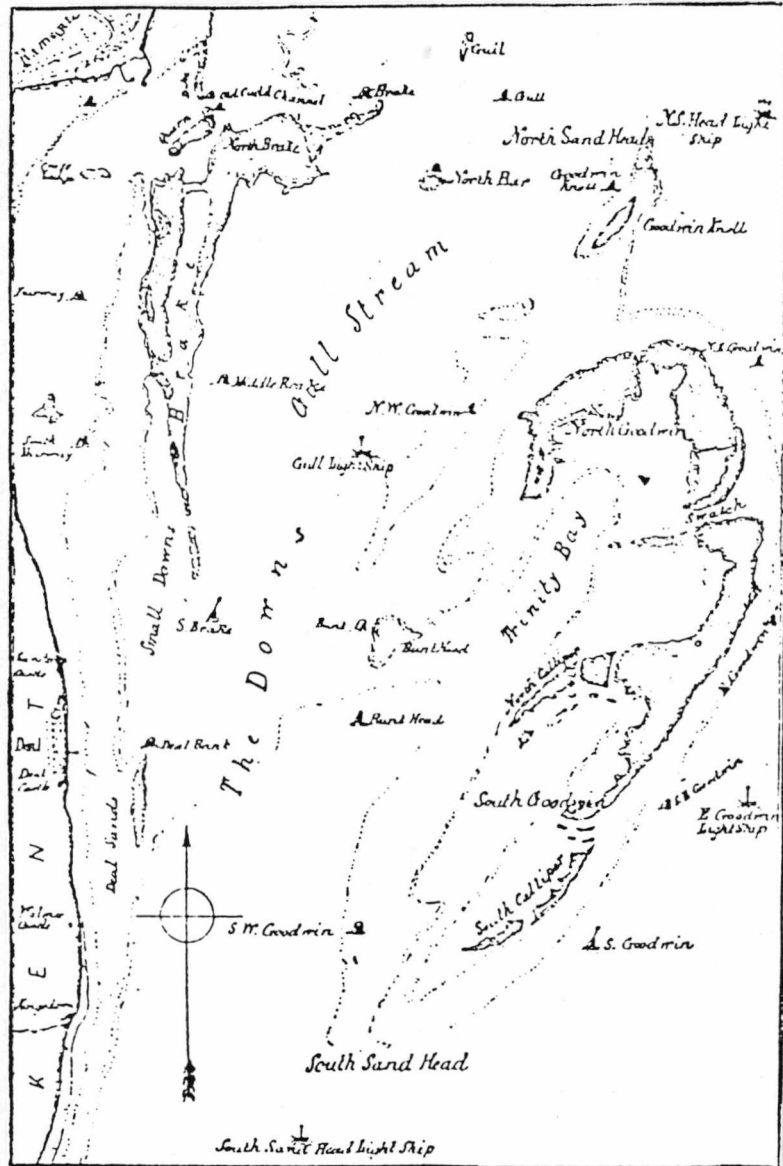
So wrote Sydney Gerald in *The Pall Mall Magazine* in 1893. Illustration 1 depicts a similar scene. The Deal boatmen were a popular subject with nineteenth century writers, who made much of the heroic and romantic nature of their exploits. They claimed that the Deal boatmen were unique; this is not strictly true, but the maritime topography of Deal gave the Deal men advantages that were not available to similar classes of longshoremen elsewhere on the English coast. Map 1.1 shows the East Kent coast and the English Channel. Immediately opposite Deal, about four miles offshore, lie the Goodwin Sands, a sandbank about ten miles long and four miles wide at the widest part, partially exposed at low tide but covered to a depth of between ten and twenty-five feet at high tide. When covered, the Sands become "quick" and can swallow a ship completely in days or even hours. In 1866 an anonymous Channel Pilot wrote in a letter to *The Times*;

"it is not without great risk of life as well as labour and exertion that the Goodwin is approached except in very calm and still weather, and even then the most experienced boatmen of this place do not care to trifle with it or act foolhardily. It is one of the most treacherous places in the world."<sup>2</sup>

Although immensely dangerous to shipping, the Goodwins form a natural breakwater, providing a safe anchorage known as The Downs between themselves and the shore. It was there that sailing vessels used to anchor to wait for a fair wind to enable them either to get

2. *The Times*, 26 October 1866, 10e.

Map 1.1  
Deal, the Downs and the Goodwin Sands



around the North Foreland and into the Thames Estuary, or around the South Foreland and on down Channel. It was at Deal also that outward bound ships would drop the pilots that had brought them so far and take on new pilots who would take them to the Isle of Wight, while homeward-bounders would signal for a pilot for Gravesend, or Newcastle, or Leith, or one of the Baltic ports.

It was this combination of treacherous sands and safe anchorage at the narrowest part of the world's busiest shipping lane which created the class of mariners usually referred to as Deal boatmen. The men of Walmer and Kingsdown were also counted as Deal boatmen by contemporaries, but this study is concerned only with those boatmen who lived within the parish of Deal. It was quite normal for anything up to four hundred ships to be anchored in The Downs at once, sometimes for weeks at a time. While anchored, these ships would require water, provisions and other services to be supplied from shore by the boatmen. Accident, illness or desertion among the crews of ships might necessitate the employment of Deal men in their place, while a night's rough weather could result in Deal boatmen supplying anchors and cables to ships which had been forced to slip their anchors to avoid collision, helping to refloat ships stranded on the Goodwins, or, if the ship was lost, to salvage her cargo.

The work the Deal boatmen did was known generally as "hovelling", a term of which the origin is unknown,



although various explanations were offered by nineteenth century writers. The dictionary definition of a hoveller is "a boatman acting as an uncertificated pilot or doing any kind of occasional work on the coast." In Deal, hovelling embraced a number of different services. A report on the subject of wreck and salvage on the Kent coast, compiled in 1866, defined it thus;

"hovelling is rendering assistance to vessels passing or at anchor off shore. Sometimes the men put off shore to the vessel. Sometimes they provision a lugger and put off on a ten or twelve days cruise, seeking for jobs. Occasionally they put one of their number on board a vessel [as pilot] for which their experience of the channels and shoals in their neighbourhood peculiarly fits them."<sup>3</sup>

Another writer described how the boatmen were "constantly cruising round the Sands and down to the West'ard, giving information to ships, taking off pilots and bringing home friends or letters from outward bound ships, taking out anchors and cables to ships needing such articles or saving shipwrecked cargoes, for which salvage money is allowed."<sup>4</sup>

The term "hoveller" was not unique to Deal. Among the fishermen of Hull, hovelling extended from helping a ship in distress to giving a handout to a former shipmate who had fallen on hard times.<sup>5</sup> It was known to the beachmen of East Anglia, and in Essex the "hobbling" smacks of Harwich assisted in lifesaving work.<sup>6</sup> In the River Thames up to the Second World War, "the shipping

3. P.R.O. MT9/105A/75. Report on the Subject of Wreck and Salvage on the Coast of Kent.

4. G.B. Gattie, *Memorials of the Goodwin Sands* (1890), 101.

5. Alec Gill and Gary Sargeant, *Village Within a City; the Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull, 1986), 52.

6. David Higgins, *The Beachmen* (Lavenham, 1987); Hervey Benham, *The Salvagers* (Colchester, 1980).

companies employed local pilots, known as "hufflers", to guide the boats into dock."<sup>7</sup> In the Isle of Thanet, similar work was known as "foying", but there is no evidence of this term ever having been used to describe the work of the Deal men.

Typical examples of the boatmen's work are described in local newspapers and Parliamentary Reports of the nineteenth century. In 1833, Thomas Trott gave evidence as follows;

"I was cruising under Dungeness and I saw the ship *John* come round the Ness .... I hove to and put a young man ... one of my crew on board .... We got the vessel into the Downs and there we put a pilot on board.'

'What is your system of putting a pilot on board?'

'We run alongside of a vessel ... then the man gets hold of the chains and gets on board and we sheer off instantly.'"<sup>8</sup>

In January 1859, *The Deal Telegram* reported that the ship *Westerbotten* had got on the Goodwin Sands about three o'clock one morning and had been assisted off on the flood tide by the luggers *Princess Royal* and *Dart* and a Kingsdown galley. The ship had lost a bower anchor and thirty fathoms of chain and a stream anchor and warp. For these services, the three boats claimed £822.<sup>9</sup> The following month, the crew of the lugger *Mary Blane* was awarded £260 for supplying the ship *Robert Morrison* with an anchor and chain and piloting her to Margate Roads in a gale.<sup>10</sup> In April of that year, the lugger *Princess Royal*'s crew of ten claimed £350, but were awarded £200,

7. *Evening Standard*, 25 April 1988, 21.

8. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots [VIII] (1833)*, 561.

9. *The Deal Telegram*, 16 January 1859, 4a; *ibid.*, 26 January 1859, 4c.

10. *Ibid.*, 2 February 1859, 4d.

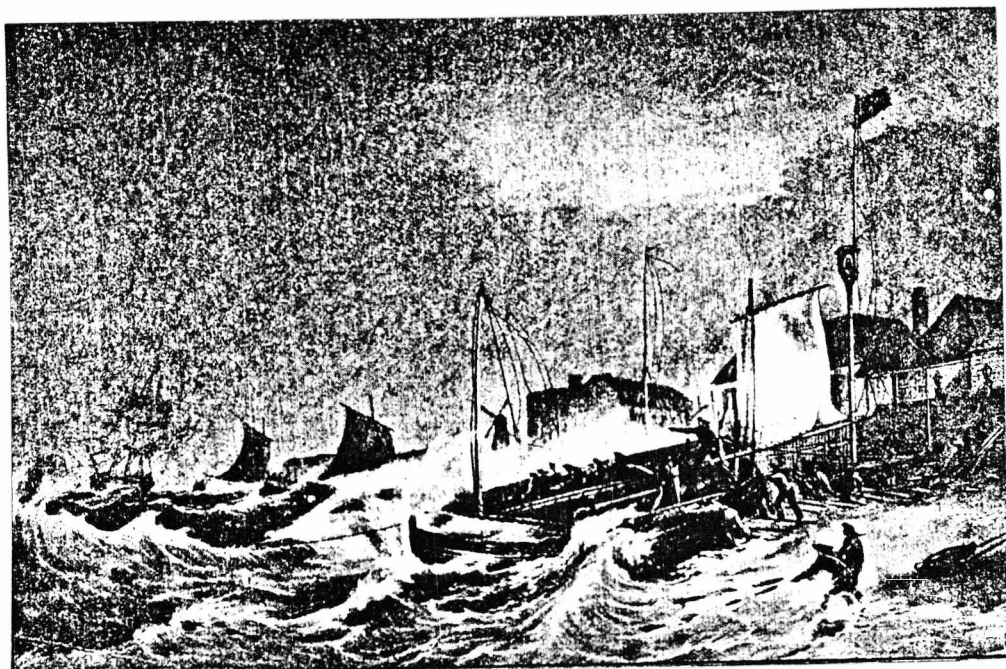
plus £18 for damage to the lugger, for services to the barque *Ablona*. The boatmen had boarded the barque in a dangerous anchorage, then gone for a pilot and succeeded in placing him on board. They assisted in slipping the barque's anchor and chain and running for Margate Roads. They then took the *Ablona's* captain on shore at Margate and shipped an anchor and 120 fathom of chain out to the ship.<sup>11</sup> In August 1859, the Norwegian barque *Ilos* was wrecked on the Goodwin Sands.

"Every exertion was made by the boatmen to get her off, but in vain, and after excessive labour for about twelve hours she became a wreck .... The boats have since been busily engaged in saving the cargo, which is now nearly all landed. Several accidents have occurred in getting out her cargo, and some of the men have been thus disabled from work."<sup>12</sup>

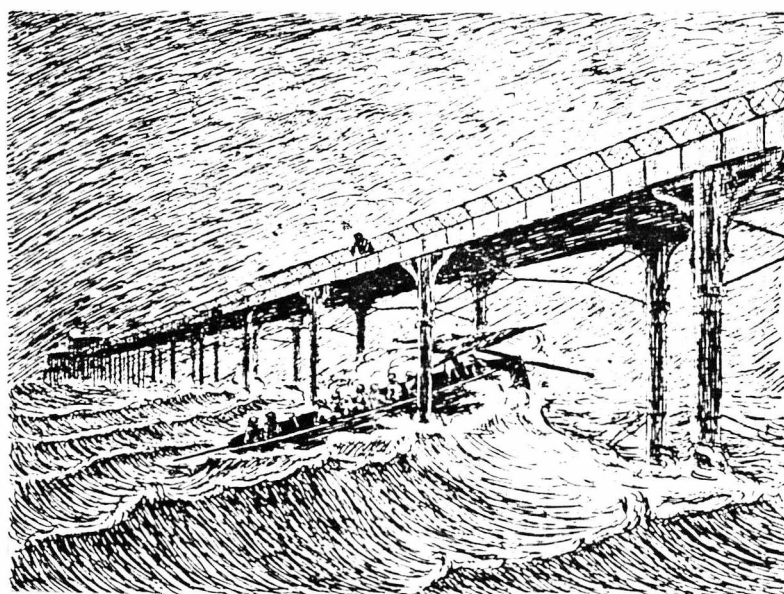
There were great dangers attached to the boatmen's work, as well as occasional great rewards. In the ten years between the beginning of 1862 and the end of 1871, 24 boatmen were reported drowned in the two local newspapers. The greatest disaster was in January 1871. At about six o'clock in the morning, the lugger *Reform* was launched in a gale from the South End of Deal beach. During the launch a rope fouled and the boatmen were unable to raise the sail. The south-westerly gale and strong tide drove the lugger against the Pier; she filled with water and quickly sank. The scene is shown in Illustration 2. Of her crew of eleven, three were taken from the water, still alive, opposite Sandown Castle, a

11. *Ibid.*, 13 April 1859, 4d.

12. *Ibid.*, 21 August 1859, 2e.



1. Launching a Deal Lugger in a Gale



2. The Loss of the Reform, 1871.

mile to the north. The other eight were drowned. The shock and grief felt in Deal at this tragedy are still discernible today on reading the newspaper reports. *The Deal Telegram* appeared that week with black borders, a mark of respect previously only accorded to the Prince Consort and Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. All the eight men were buried on the same day. Two hundred boatmen from Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown followed the funeral procession, and the tradesmen of Deal closed their shops and drew their blinds.<sup>13</sup>

Neither did the boatmen always receive the consideration and assistance they might have expected from the captains of the ships they assisted. On one occasion, in October 1874, the lugger *Galatea*, which was built as a replacement for the *Reform*, set off from Deal with a crew of six, bound down Channel to seek for work. John Bailey was coxswain, accompanied by George Finnis, William Meakins, William and George Lambert and Henry Baker. George Finnis and William Meakins were put aboard different ships to pilot them into the Downs. On seeing a third vessel signalling for assistance, the two Lamberts and Henry Baker launched *Galatea's* punt to go to her. Between the two vessels, the punt capsized in a heavy sea, leaving the three men struggling in the water. On seeing this, the barque which had been signalling for assistance immediately made off without attempting to help. John

13. *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 2f and 3b; *ibid.*, 28 January 1871, 3b.

Bailey, alone in *Galatea*, with the wind and tide against him, was unable to reach his three friends and could only watch them drown before sailing home to Deal with his tragic news.<sup>14</sup>

The parish of Deal has assumed an irregular shape, aggregating 1,153 acres in the 1840s. It extends for about a mile and a quarter along the coastline, which runs almost due north and south at this point. Deal Castle is at the southern extremity, the ruined Sandown Castle marks the northern boundary. Inland, two arms of the parish extend south-west and north-west. The south-western arm, which stretches nearly a mile and a half, is bounded by Walmer and Mongeham. The shorter, north-western arm is surrounded by the parish of Sholden. Map 1.2 shows the parish.

The parish of Deal lies astride two *pays*. Inland to the south and west are the North Downs, with small parishes of only a few hundred population each. To the north are the empty marshes and sand dunes which extend to Sandwich, four miles away. The original settlement at Upper Deal is in the downland half of the parish; the new town of Lower Deal grew on the massive shingle bank which stretches along the coastline. Agriculture in Deal was largely arable, on the downland parts. The northern marshland area was given over to grazing. Market gardening developed from the eighteenth century.

Deal is a part of the Cinque Ports as a "limb" or

14. *The Deal Telegram*, 24 October 1874, 5a; E.C.Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929), 48.

dependent of Sandwich. Administratively, Deal became independent of Sandwich in 1699, when it obtained its own charter of incorporation, but for Parliamentary elections the two towns together formed one constituency until the twentieth century. The original road to Sandwich lay through the Sandhills along the coastline. This was superseded by a road which ran further inland from Upper Deal via Worth. In 1797, this road was widened and straightened as a Turnpike Road.<sup>15</sup>

Also four miles from Deal, a little to the south of Sandwich, is the "considerable village" of Eastry, which in 1881 had a population of 1126.<sup>16</sup> Eastry is in fact an ancient Jutish estate centre and decayed market town; its significance to Deal in the nineteenth century was that it was the head-parish of the Union, where the workhouse was situated and where Deal people had to go to obtain poor relief. Canterbury is eleven miles west of Sandwich, fourteen miles west-north-west of Deal, although travellers by road then and now must go via Sandwich as there is no road over the Downs other than a network of narrow lanes. On the downland west of Deal there is no settlement of more than a few hundred persons. To the south, the first settlement of any size is Dover, "the gateway to England", seven miles away.

Deal lies almost at the eastern extremity of Kent; only the Isle of Thanet extends further eastward. The town is seventy-four miles from London, by Watling Street to

15. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 344.

16. Black's *Guide to Kent* (1889), 261.

Canterbury then either by Dover or Sandwich. North of Deal the coastline is empty. In the nineteenth century, the shingle beaches and mudflats were used only by a few kettlenet fishermen. South of Deal, the coastal settlement of Walmer Road is contiguous with Deal, while three miles further south is the beach village of Kingsdown, a daughter of Ringwould, one mile inland. Beyond Kingsdown, the flat shingle banks give way to the chalk cliffs which rise to the South Foreland.

Walmer's population was always about half that of Deal; in 1881 it was 4390 to Deal's 8500.<sup>17</sup> This included the old inland village as well as the coastal settlement which, like Lower Deal, soon outgrew its parent. The population of Kingsdown remained about four hundred. The boatmen of all three places did similar work, with boats launched from the shingle beach. However, there were differences between them. The men of Kingsdown, for example, relied far more on fishing than those of Deal and Walmer. Kingsdown was a small village, Walmer was a small town, while Deal was, or had been, a considerable town. This thesis is concerned only with Deal. It was felt that to attempt a study of all three places would be an unmanageable task, which would preclude the detailed study of individuals which it was hoped to carry out.

The themes addressed in this thesis are twofold. The first is that of how a smallish rural town reacted and attempted to adjust, over a period of about forty years,

17. Black's *Guide to Kent* (1889), 251, 252.



to economic decline. Deal in the mid-nineteenth century was a town in which the people were conscious of the fact that it was losing its traditional role and were searching for a new one. Chapter Two looks at the development of the town from the seventeenth century to its zenith in the early nineteenth century, and its decline thereafter. It suggests that growth and decline in Deal directly coincided with periods of war and peace in national history, and that consequently the economic decline suffered by Deal in the nineteenth century was inevitable, given the century of cross-Channel concord which followed the defeat of Napoleon.

Chapter Three discusses the boatmen's economic position; their decreasing opportunities for making a living from the 1830s and their consequent decline through to the 1880s. Chapters Four and Five consider the effect of the boatmen's decline on the rest of the population and the attempts made by some sections to redress the situation. These chapters look at the degree to which they had succeeded by 1880, and the ways in which the town changed in character as a consequence.

The second major theme of the thesis is the boatmen's society, their work, their family relationships and their position in the community. Chapter Six attempts to reconstruct, from the oblique references and hearsay which are all the evidence now surviving, the customs and practices which governed the organisation of the boatmen's

work. Chapter Seven assesses the importance of family and kinship in the boatmen's society, while Chapter Eight looks at the extent to which the boatmen existed as a separate community within the town, and whether this separation increased as their economic importance declined.

There are certain difficulties attached to a study such as that outlined above. A good deal of work has been done on northern cities with a large industrial element, such as those by Anderson, Armstrong and Foster.<sup>18</sup> Equally, a considerable amount has been written on entirely rural areas. There is, however, a shortage of work on small towns with populations of between five and ten thousand. It is therefore difficult to draw any firm conclusions with regard to the economic and social structure of Deal, because of uncertainty as to what was and what was not typical of towns of that size in that period. The situation is further complicated when Deal's special maritime functions are taken into account. Little extended work has been done on coastal towns and communities except for studies of their function as seaside resorts, and the unusual nature of the boatmen's work and the fact that as a group they do not fit easily into any classification of Victorian society make comparisons difficult.

The choice of the period 1841-1881 was dictated principally by availability of source material. The

18. M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971); W.A. Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town; a Social Study of York, 1801-51* (Cambridge, 1974); J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (1974).

Censuses of 1841-1881 were used to provide a basic framework of occupational structure, age structure and birthplace data, using other sources such as local newspapers, Customs records and parish registers to illustrate the Census material and to explore some topics in greater detail.<sup>19</sup> If any other period than 1841-1881 had been chosen, the Census would not have been available for all or part of it. Sources would have been largely anecdotal rather than statistical. It would thus not have been possible to treat the period 1841-1881 in a uniform manner with earlier and later periods; either the thesis would have been unbalanced, or it would have been necessary to give less weight to the Census data. It would however be foolish not to exploit such a major source as fully as possible.

In addition, the intention was to pursue individual boatmen and their families in some detail; it would probably not be possible to do this adequately over a period of longer than fifty years or so, and without the Census. If the thesis was to be restricted to a fairly short period of time, therefore, it was thought best to choose the period for which the greatest variety of sources was available.

Although the availability of source material was the first and major consideration, the choice of the period 1841-1881 was not entirely arbitrary. These four decades were a transitional period in Deal, when the townspeople

19. The Deal Censuses 1841-1881, P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

had to come to terms with the fact that they could no longer rely on Deal's maritime functions to bring them prosperity and many of them actively sought ways to change the character of the town in order to achieve economic success.

Dr John Whyman, in his account of depression and adjustment in nineteenth century Deal, took trade directories, contemporary topographical writing and the two local historians Pritchard and Laker as his principal sources.<sup>20</sup> Directories were regularly produced for each county by various publishers from the early nineteenth century onwards. Kelly's and the Post Office Directories covered the whole country, while local printers and publishers produced guides to their own areas. Each town or village included was normally introduced with a historical and topographical description, and information on places of worship and local government. There then followed lists of private residents and tradesmen. Trade directories, while useful as preliminary or introductory material, can only give a superficial and sometimes inaccurate picture of their communities.

One example of this inaccuracy may be taken from the Deal directories of the nineteenth century. Bagshaw's directory of 1848, the Post Office directory of 1866 and Kelly's directory of 1882 all estimate the number of boatmen at about 400. The Post Office directory of 1851, referring to the boatmen of the Downs, which may be

20. John Whyman, "Dover and Deal in the Nineteenth Century, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXXIV (1969), 123; Stephen Pritchard, *The History of Deal and its Neighbourhood* (Deal, 1864); John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917).

supposed to include Walmer and Kingsdown, puts the number at "upwards of 600." The actual number of boatmen in Deal was just under 400 in 1851, but by the 1880s it had fallen to under 300.<sup>21</sup> The problem is partly caused by the publishers' habit of copying the introductory passages from one edition to the other without troubling to verify or update them.

Directories list occupations in their trade and commercial sections, but these should be used with caution. They include only employers, and thus give no indication of the total number occupied in each trade or craft. Whyman, using trade directories, has shown that the number of bakers in Deal fell from 27 in 1847 to 16 in 1874.<sup>22</sup> In the Censuses of 1851 and 1871, the nearest to these dates, the number of bakers was 53 and 59 respectively.<sup>23</sup> Instead of the decline postulated by Whyman, therefore, the number remained almost unchanged. Directories of 1851 and 1882 show the number of builders, brickmakers and bricklayers in Deal rising from eleven to fifteen, one of whom was also a lodging house keeper. This does not give an impression of rapid growth, yet between 1851 and 1881 the actual number in these occupations trebled, from 56 to 159.<sup>24</sup>

Stephen Pritchard published his *History of Deal* in 1864.<sup>25</sup> The work first appeared in instalments in *The Deal Telegram*, and is therefore likely to be accurate at least as regards events within living memory. John Laker's

21. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 10 1003-1004.

22. Whyman, *op. cit.*

23. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 10 1003-1004.

24. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 11 997.

25. Pritchard, *op. cit.*

*History of Deal* was published in 1917.<sup>26</sup> Laker admitted that he drew freely on Pritchard's work. He included in his book many references to Deal from seventeenth century State Papers; it is therefore valuable as an introduction to anyone seeking the origins of Lower Deal. The works of both Pritchard and Laker lack any of the interpretative methods which the modern historian would bring to bear, and today appear very dated, but they are nevertheless valuable as introductions to the history of Deal, not least because both authors were local men.

The principal primary source for nineteenth century social and economic history is of course the Census, taken every ten years from 1801. The Censuses of 1801 to 1831 are of limited value, as they do not record individuals. The original returns for Deal for 1801, 1811 and 1821 have been preserved among the Deal parish records and published on microfiche by the Kent Family History Society.<sup>27</sup> They record the name of each head of household, the number of families inhabiting each house, the number of males and females and the number employed in agriculture or trade. For 1831, a table of occupations derived from the returns is also preserved among the parish records and published by the Kent Family History Society.<sup>28</sup> This is of great value for comparative purposes.

The 1841 Census is the first to record individuals; subsequent Censuses have even greater detail. These returns are released to the public after one hundred years

26. Laker, *op. cit.*

27. *Original Manuscript Returns for the Censuses of 1801, 1811 and 1821* K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 177.

28. *Vestry Minutes, Deal, 1831-1934, including 1831 Census* K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 172.

have elapsed; the latest available is thus the 1881 Census. As more Censuses become available, their use to the researcher becomes greater as he can study his chosen area in detail over a longer period.

It may be worthwhile here to give a brief outline of the method by which the Censuses were taken and the information given. Each parish was divided into enumeration districts, with an enumerating officer appointed for each. These officers obviously had to be of a reasonably high standard of literacy, and so were normally men of some standing in the community, such as schoolmasters. The enumerating officers were directed to leave at each house within their districts a schedule to be filled in by the head of household. The enumerator then collected these schedules and copied the details into the volumes which are now preserved. With high rates of illiteracy, the schedules would, of course, frequently be filled in by a friend or relative or the enumerator himself. The schedule of the Constant family, at 3 George Street in 1881, was evidently filled in by the eldest child, twelve year old Thomas, for instead of being designated "Head" and "Wife" in the relationship column, Mr and Mrs Constant were entered as "Father" and "Mother".<sup>29</sup>

The schedule was supposed to include details of every person who slept at that address on the night of the Census. In 1841, this was 7 June; in 1851, 31 March. In

29. P.R.O. RG 11 997.

1861, 1871 and 1881, the dates were 8, 3 and 4 of April respectively. In 1841, people were asked to state their names, exact ages if under 15, otherwise rounded down to the nearest five years, and occupations. They had also to answer "yes" or "no" to the question whether they were born in the county in which they then lived. The rounding down of ages seems to have caused considerable confusion, with some people rounding up instead of down, some giving their exact age, and others rounding up or down their children's ages, which they were not required to do. In the household of Thomas Bayley of Ark Lane, for example, the inhabitants' ages were given as 78, 66 and 16.<sup>30</sup>

Another apparent source of confusion in the 1841 Census is the question of separate households. When one address or house was occupied by more than one family or household, the enumerator was supposed to indicate this in his transcription, usually by drawing two short lines at the end of each household before proceeding to the next. However, in Deal in 1841 many people were shown as being in separate households when they were not actually members of the head of household's nuclear family but must have been living as part of that family. Two examples will illustrate this point.

30. P.R.O. HO 107 466.



Lower Street

Edward Adams	30	Grocer
Caroline Adams	30	
Caroline Adams	4	
=		
Edward Adams	4	
Norris Adams	2	
George Adams	2 months	

Dolphin Street

John Hart	50	Mariner
Sarah Hart	45	
Sarah Hart	25	
John Hart	15	
Abraham Hart	15	
=		
Elizabeth West	3	
Susannah West	2	31

Servants and apprentices were also often shown as separate households;

Beach Street

Jacob Vile	55	Silversmith
Sarah Vile	45	
Mary Vile	10	
Louisa Vile	8	
Benjamin Vile	6	
Emma Vile	4	
Jacob Vile	3	
=		
Elizabeth Court	15	Female servant

Beach Street

John Reynolds	35	Cordwainer
Jane Reynolds	35	
John Reynolds	9	
George Reynolds	4	
=		
George Stroud	15	Shoemaker's apprentice
William Horner	14	Shoemaker's apprentice

In 1851 and subsequently, people were asked to give name, relationship to head of household, exact age, occupation, and exact place (i.e. parish) of birth. The relationship question often gave rise to confusion, as for example in John Fitall's household at 81 Middle Street in 1881. The members of the family were enumerated as follows:

John Fitall	Head	wid	67
Richard Fitall	Son	unm	37
Willam Cory	G'son	unm	17
George Skinner	S-in-l.	mar	35
Elizabeth Skinner	Wife	mar	35
George Skinner	Son	unm	10
Samuel Skinner	Son	unm	9
John Skinner	Son	unm	8
Richard Skinner	Son	unm	6
Thomas Skinner	Son	unm	1

Elizabeth Skinner's relationship to Head should have been daughter and the five Skinner boys were grandsons. Similar confusion arose in 1861 in the Orrick household at 1 Coppin Street.

32. P.R.O. HO 107 466

33. P.R.O. RG 11 997.

Jane Orrick	Head	wid	71
Thomas Orrick	Son	wid	49
Mary Orrick	Dau	unm	13
Ann Orrick	Dau	unm	11
Maria Orrick	Dau	unm	9 <sup>34</sup>

That the three girls were actually Jane Orrick's granddaughters is confirmed by a local newspaper item of 1859.<sup>35</sup>

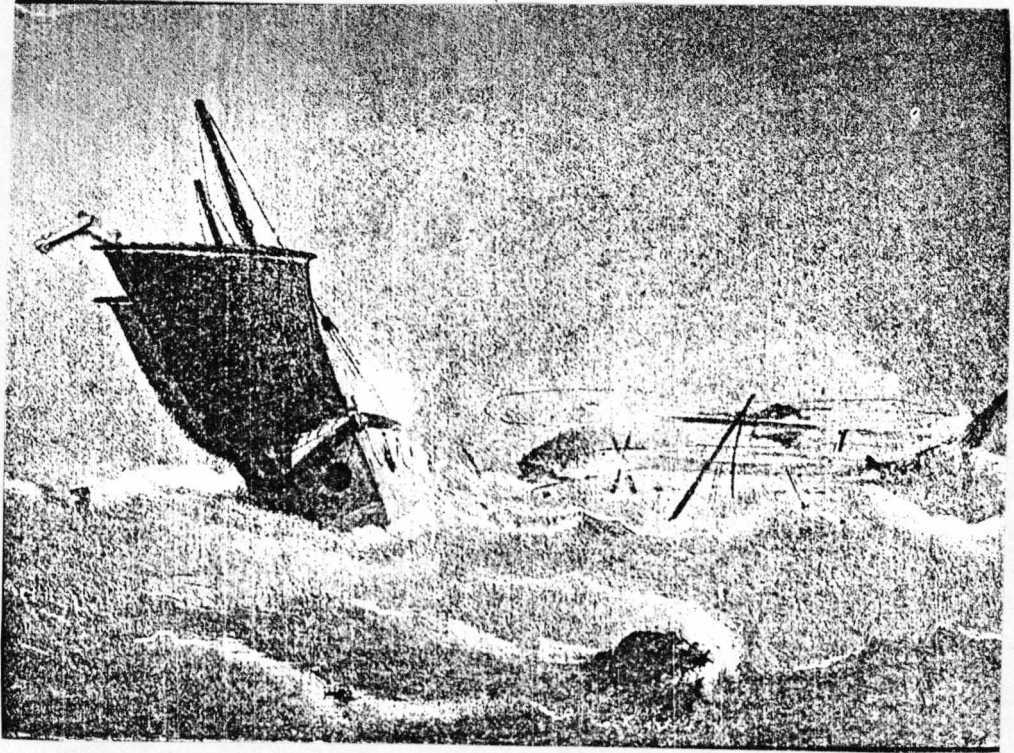
Not all errors of relationship are as obvious as the two quoted above. There are occasions when a man is shown as having a much younger wife, arousing suspicion that the woman in question was in fact his daughter. Confusion is also caused by the use by some enumerators of "mother-in-law" or "son-in-law" where "stepmother" or "stepson" would be used today. Equally misleading is the use of "sister" or "brother" for "sister-in-law" or "brother-in-law". Such a case is that of the family at 186 Middle Street in 1881.<sup>36</sup>

William Finnis	Head	mar	33	Fly Driver	Deal
Louisa Finnis	Wife	mar	37		London
Caroline Finnis	Dau	unm	14	Servant	Deal
Eliza Finnis	Dau	unm	13	Servant	Deal
Alfred Finnis	Son	unm	5	Scholar	Deal
Louisa Finnis	Dau	unm	1		Deal
Martha Bingham	Sis	mar	43	Mariner's wife	London
Martha Bingham	Niece	unm	13		Kingsdown

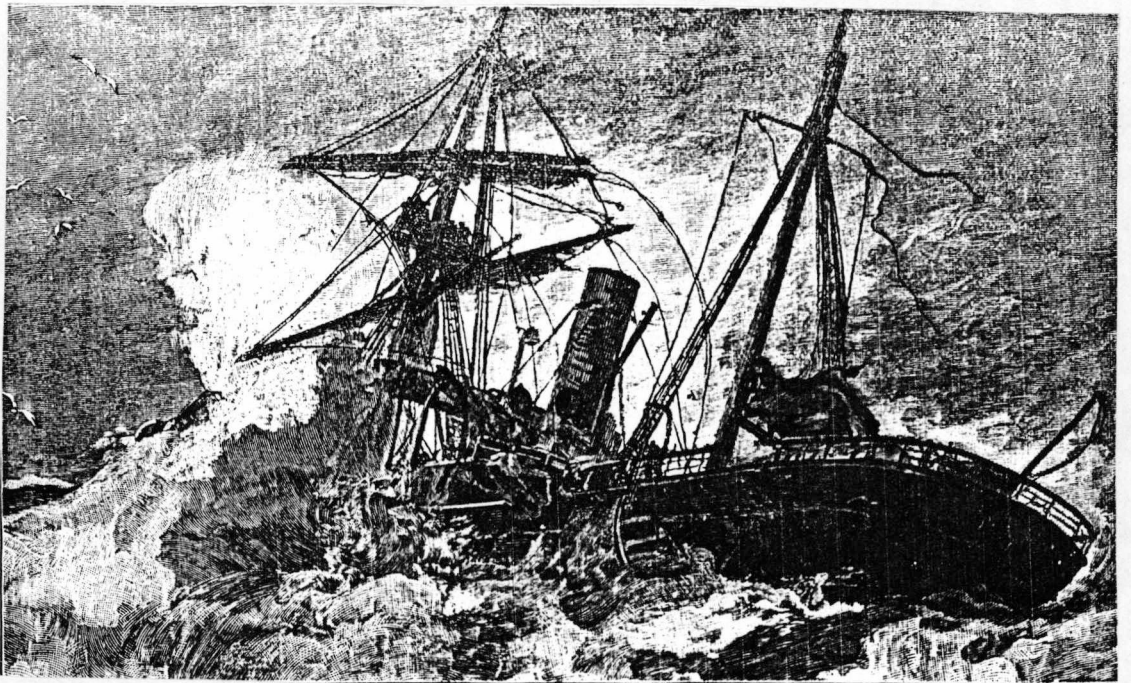
34. P.R.O. RG 9 543.

35. *The Deal Telegram*, 26 January 1859, 4b.

36. P.R.O. RG 11 997



3. A Night Scene on the Goodwins



4. On the Sands

When a study was made of boatmen's wives, Martha Bingham was originally set down as having been formerly Martha Finnis, until doubts were caused by there being no trace of any such person in any earlier Census. The birthplace evidence of 1881 was then taken into account, and the suspicion arose that Martha was actually Louisa Finnis's sister and William's sister-in-law. This was confirmed by the marriage registers of St George's, Deal, which recorded the marriage in 1867 of William Henry Finnis, Fly Driver and Louisa Charlton, the witnesses being John Belsey Finnis and Stephen Charlton. Martha Bingham's eldest son was James (after his paternal grandfather) Stephen Charlton Bingham.<sup>37</sup>

John Saville has cast doubt on the validity of the birthplace data in the nineteenth century Censuses. "There has never been a serious critique of English nativity data from the point of view of the accuracy of the Census returns; and the criticisms which have been raised against the nativity statistics of other countries suggest that such a critique is desirable."<sup>38</sup> Working on birthplaces in the Deal Census has certainly raised several difficulties. Firstly, there were the people who seemed not to know where they were born. Some simply stated "not known", which is fairly straightforward. Others alternated between two neighbouring parishes from Census to Census; this is unlikely to be of crucial importance to the statistics. There were others, however,

37. K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 208, The Parish Registers of St. George, Deal; P.R.O. RG 11 997.

38. John Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales 1851-1951* (1957), 99.

like Ellen Williams, who in 1861 gave her birthplace as Hythe, in 1871, Herne Bay and in 1881, Sheerness;<sup>39</sup> or Jane Elson, formerly Ayers, who in 1871 said she was born in Portsmouth, and in 1881, Bristol.<sup>40</sup> Henry Bubb said in 1851 that he was born in Deal, in 1861 that he was born in Wingham and in 1871 that he was born in Ash.<sup>41</sup> These examples were noted by chance; it would not be possible to identify all such cases without tracing each individual through all the Censuses from 1851 onwards.

Another problem is caused by people not following precisely the Registrar's instructions in giving their birthplaces. They were supposed to name the parish in which they were born; many gave instead a farmstead or hamlet or sometimes one of the ancient Kentish boroughs. Some, such as Foulmead and Finglesham, are close to Deal and easily identified. Martin is now a railway station. Others, such as Marshborough, or Each End, or Summerfield, require a close study of the Ordnance Survey map, and sometimes reference to Hasted.<sup>42</sup> This naming of hamlets instead of parishes as birthplaces may well be a problem peculiar to counties such as Kent, with a pattern of scattered settlement rather than nucleated villages.

A further difficulty is caused by duplication of place-names. There are in East Kent two Minsters, two Prestons, two Goodnestones, three Lyddens, three Newingtons and two Reading Streets, to name just a few examples. Over the whole county, there must be many

39. P.R.O. RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

40. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

41. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004.

42. Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (2nd edn., 1797).

instances of duplicated place-names. Enumerators rarely stated whether they meant, for example, Minster in Sheppey or Minster in Thanet. Sometimes it is possible to make an educated guess by looking at the birthplaces of other members of the family, but not always; in a family of which some members were born in Dover and others in Lewisham, should one plump for Charlton, Dover or Charlton, Woolwich? There is also the problem of inaccurate spelling by enumerators; when one wrote "Sellinge", did he mean Selling or Sellindge?

Finally, sometimes the enumerator omitted to fill in the place of birth column altogether, and sometimes ambiguity was created by an enumerator using ditto marks instead of writing out the place of birth in full on each line. This was usually done when all the people on the page were born in Deal; however, sometimes a page of ditto marks refers back not to Deal but to Kingsdown or St Lawrence, Thanet, which is possible but not very likely.

One enumerator in 1881 was confused by the direction that all names after the first could be represented by initials. This instruction referred to second and third forenames, but this enumerator understood it to mean the names of all people after the head of household. Thus, members of several families at the south end of Middle Street are recorded by initials and surnames only. <sup>43</sup>

43.P.R.O. RG 11 997.

Something which must have occurred, but is very difficult to detect, except fortuitously, is people being enumerated twice. Such a case is that of James Stephen Charlton Bingham, a young carpenter. In 1881, he was recorded as being at home with his father in Deal, and also as a lodger in Hawley Street, Margate.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps he worked in Margate but had gone home to Deal for the weekend without telling his landlady, or perhaps he was staying in Margate for a few days only and his father included him on his own schedule because that was where he normally lived.

One fact to be borne in mind is that the Census shows where people lived, not where they worked. Thus people living in Deal might have worked in other parishes, and people who seem to have disappeared from the town may still have been working there, having merely moved a short distance to live in another parish. The Royal Marine Barracks are an example of this. Established in the 1860s, they must have had a beneficial effect on the economy of Deal, more than compensating for the closure of the Naval Yard in the same decade. Soldiers of the Marines were also responsible for a fair proportion of the crime in Deal, including theft and assaults on women. But although the Royal Marine Barracks were and are generally referred to as being in Deal, they are in fact in the parish of Walmer, and therefore do not appear in Deal Censuses.

44.P.R.O. RG 11 997; RG 11 984-986.



It should always be remembered that the Census is like a still photograph - it only records what was happening on one day every ten years. There is no way of knowing from the Census what was taking place in intervening years. For example, the local newspapers in 1870 reported the drowning of two young boatmen, James Cuthbert Roberts and Julius Caesar Trott.<sup>45</sup> They were children in 1861 and did not survive to be included in the 1871 Census.

Thomas Cottle, aged 56, of Cottage Row, was one of the men drowned in the *Reform* tragedy of 1871.<sup>46</sup> He does not appear to have been in Deal in 1861.<sup>47</sup> He may have been the husband of Susanna Cottle; in 1851 she was a mariner's wife living at 199 Middle Street, the head of the household being absent.<sup>48</sup> John Lambert was an established member of the boatmen's community. In 1868 he was in the crew of the galley *Capper* and the following year was in the lugger *Briton's Pride*. In 1870 he was charged with his brother George, another boatman, with annoying Mr Read, a Coastguard officer. He assisted at the launch of the *Reform* on that morning in 1871 and in 1875 was one of the crew of the lugger *Renown* when she was found to have wrecked goods on board. Yet no John Lambert is recorded as a boatman in any Census.<sup>49</sup>

For the purposes of this research, all five Censuses from 1841 to 1881 were transcribed. It was felt that the population of the town, between six and a half

45. *The Deal Mercury*, 27 August 1870, 2e.

46. *Ibid.*, 21 January 1871, 2f.

47. P.R.O. RG 9 543.

48. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

49. *The Deal Telegram*, 15 February 1868, 2d; *The Deal Mercury*, 27 February 1869, 2d; *ibid.*, 13 August 1870, 3a; *ibid.*, 21 January 1871, 2f; P.R.O. MT10/183/H1067.

and eight and a half thousand over the forty years, was small enough to make it feasible to transcribe the complete Censuses rather than samples, and the benefits of having full transcripts available for consultation at any time far outweighed the difficulties. When the transcription was complete, the Censuses were transferred to cards for ease of handling and reference, with one card for each household. The cards for each Census were stored in address order. For cross-referencing and linking from one Census to another, a surname and address index was made.

Census data would seem ideally suited to computerisation. A computer could be used for purely numerical calculations such as age structure, but would not be greatly labour saving for anything more complex. For birthplaces and migration, for example, a method of proceeding might be to program a computer with all the parish names in Kent, classified according to whether they were five, ten, fifteen or more miles from Deal. The raw birthplace data from the Census could then be input and sorted by the computer. The flaw in this is caused by the common habit of giving as a birthplace not a parish but a hamlet or farmstead, as described above. The researcher would still be required to spend time with Ordnance Survey maps to identify the parishes to which the hamlets belonged. An alternative procedure would be for the researcher to code the information before

inputting. The computer could then produce a print-out, but when the time and work of programming, coding and inputting had been taken into account, little would have been gained.

The same is true of using a computer for sorting occupational data. In order to pre-program, one would need to know all the occupations likely to be found in Deal; it is useless to refer to published classifications, as they never include the occupation "boatman" as it was understood in Deal. There is also the risk, in using existing classifications, that various patterns might be distorted or unobserved. This is especially true of Deal, a town with an extra-ordinary structure.

The five complete Censuses might be stored on a database which could then be required to print out details of, say, all agricultural labourers. Such a printing would not, however, include the farm labourers, farm servants, farm boys, crow boys, thrashers or shepherds, all of which were present in Deal. A print-out of boatmen would not include mariners, master mariners, watermen, fishermen, North Sea Pilots, or those instances where an enumerator records "Head absent at sea."

A computer could, it might be thought, be used to trace individuals through successive Censuses. For this purpose, the computer would need certain non-variable facts, such as name, age and place of birth. This is not

as straightforward as it might seem. There were for example eight agricultural labourers named William Allen in Deal between 1841 and 1881. One appeared only in 1841, so his exact birthplace is not known; all the others were born in Deal. Similarly, there were seven boatmen called William Bailey, six of whom were born in Deal. If there was any discrepancy in the age information from one Census to another, the computer would be unable to distinguish between these individuals. The difficulty might be compounded by the individual giving different birthplaces in different Censuses. The computer could no doubt produce a listing of all William Allens or William Baileys, but the researcher would still have to return to the original data to establish which was the individual required.

An example of the possible difficulties is William Belsey. In 1861 he was living at Pope's Hole, aged 42, an agricultural labourer born in Sholden. In 1871 he was living at 22 Gladstone Road, aged 46, a general labourer born in Mongeham.<sup>50</sup> The names, ages and birthplaces of his wife and children show that this was certainly the same man, not two different men. There is also the example set out below. Deciding whether these are one, two, three or four individuals is really beyond a human brain, let alone a computer.

50. P.R.O. RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004.

1841	Henry Burwell	North Sandy Lane	35+	Labourer	Kent
1851	Henry Burvill	23 Peter Street	41	Farm lab	Woodnesboro'
1861	Henry Burfield	30 Nelson Street	64	Ag. lab	Woodnesboro'
1871	Henry Burvill	5 Sandown	80	Gardener	Woodnesboro'

Finally, what would a computer make of the two John Rogers' enumerated in 1841, one living in New Street, the other in Duke Street? Both were aged 40-44, each had a wife named Elizabeth aged 30-34. Both had seven children, the eldest of which in each case was named William. One was aged 13, the other 14.<sup>52</sup> Or there are the two George Hutchins' listed in 1871. One lived at 10 Short Street, the other at 1 Primrose Hill. Both were aged 30, both labourers, both born in Ramsgate. The wife of each was named Sarah, both wives were born in Ramsgate. One was aged 26, the other 27.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the problem of two, three or more men sharing the same name, birthplace and even age is more marked in Deal than in an inland market town with good land communications.

A final point about using computers; inputting information is a mechanical procedure in which the brain becomes detached from the task. Once the information is stored, it is out of sight and accessible only by listing on a screen or obtaining print-outs - a procedure which takes time. The researcher therefore will not become so familiar with the material as he or she would be if it was stored on cards in boxes, instantly accessible at any time of day or night and frequently handled. By using a computer, therefore, the researcher might lessen his or

51. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004.  
 52. P.R.O. HO 107 466.  
 53. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004.

her chances of making those correlations or connexions between various items of information which are essential in a detailed piece of work and which are only possible when the material is very familiar.

Newspapers are the second most valuable source of evidence for nineteenth century economic and social history, especially in a small town. Dover newspapers were published from the 1830s, but these contain only a small proportion of local news, and hardly any references to Deal. *The Deal Telegram*, Deal's first local newspaper, began publication in 1858, and its rival, *The Deal Mercury*, in 1865. Both were owned and published by Deal men, and concerned themselves chiefly with Deal news. A third paper, *The Deal Chronicle*, began publication in 1874, and thus is only available for the last few years of the period under discussion.

*The Deal Telegram* and *The Deal Mercury* adopted opposing political views and on frequent occasions gave fuller or differing details of the same story, enabling a more complete picture to be built up. Both newspapers have useful information on Deal's development as a holiday resort and the progress of the Victoria Town estate. The local newspapers are also, after the Census, the principal source for the town's economic condition from the late 1850s onwards, although the picture they paint is one of almost unrelieved gloom which should be treated with caution.

The third area in which the local newspapers are useful is that of the boatmen's organisation. Disputes between boatmen, or between boatmen and shipowners or captains, over salvage awards, frequently ended in the local courts, and from the evidence given by the boatmen themselves can be obtained much valuable information on boat ownership, crews, traditions and customs which is available nowhere else, or only as hearsay.

National newspapers occasionally noticed the Deal boatmen, usually when they were involved in a disaster or scandal. The *Reform* tragedy of 1871 and the subsequent inquest were reported in *The Times*.<sup>54</sup> The trial of William Spears, George Baker and William Middleton in 1868 on a charge of salvage fraud was also reported nationally.<sup>55</sup> *The Times* also gave space to a dispute on the subject of the Deal boatmen's alleged rapacity in October-November 1866, with some suitably thunderous editorial comment and a heated correspondence.<sup>56</sup> These national newspaper references do not add anything to information available from sources closer to events, and are valuable chiefly for what they reveal about how the Deal boatmen were regarded by the public at large.

The Deal boatmen were portrayed during the nineteenth century as anything from the most spotless of heroes to the blackest of villains. The heroic aspects of the boatmen's work were much emphasized by a number of nineteenth century writers who used it to make moral

54. *The Times*, 17 January 1871, 6d.

55. *Ibid.*, 29 July 1868, 11e.

56. *Ibid.*, various issues, October-November 1866.

points. The Deal boatmen's work could easily be invested with a touch of heroism or romance to appeal to the sentimental Victorian middle and lower middle classes, and the many journals and magazines which sprang up to cater for these classes were an ideal vehicle for articles of this type. Dickens's *Household Words*, *Chambers' Journal* and the *Pall Mall Magazine* all covered the Deal boatmen at various times in the nineteenth century. In addition, the perilous nature of the boatmen's work and the frequent tragedies often led to appeals in national newspapers, which aroused public support for the boatmen. As another historian has observed, "the high drama of disaster at sea with its connotations of man's frailty in the face of the elements held a peculiar, almost morbid, fascination for the Victorians."<sup>57</sup>

Only one boatman ever wrote an account of his work - William Stanton, born in 1803.<sup>58</sup> Stanton was unusual among boatmen firstly in that he attended a boarding school in Walmer for four years from 1811 and secondly because he was one of the very few boatmen who became Cinque Ports Trinity Pilots. Stanton's schooling probably meant that he attained a higher level of education than most boatmen. Their disadvantages in this respect prevented other boatmen from making the transition. He was also prepared to fight the political jobbery and other vested interests which the boatmen claimed

57. David M. Williams, "James Silk Buckingham: Sailor, Explorer and Maritime Reformer", Stephen Fisher, (ed.), *Studies in British Privateering, Trading Enterprise and Seamen's Welfare, 1775-1900*, Exeter Papers in Economic History No.17 (1987), 107.

58. William Stanton, *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal* (Portsmouth, 1929).



prevented them from becoming pilots by making a personal approach to the Lord Warden, the Duke of Wellington himself.

Stanton wrote an account of his early experiences at sea which were published in 1929 as *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal*. The title, which was presumably chosen by the editor, is inaccurate, as Stanton was clearly writing many years after the events took place and was actually describing the period before he became a pilot. It would be more accurate to call the book a fragment of autobiography. The so-called *Journal* is of limited use to the present study, as it relates to the 1820s and 1830s, outside the period with which this thesis is chiefly concerned.

Samuel Smiles, in later editions of *Self-Help*, was probably the earliest writer to hold up the Deal boatmen's self-reliance and devotion to duty as models for emulation.<sup>59</sup> In 1873, John Gilmore, Rector of Ramsgate, published his *Storm Warriors*. This collection of accounts of rescues on the Goodwin Sands was chiefly concerned with the Ramsgate boatmen, but one chapter was devoted to Deal beach. "Few places in the world, if any, have proved the scene of more daring sailor-life than Deal beach" Gilmore claimed. "Certainly the boatmen of Deal beach are not now, and probably never have been, surpassed for skill and daring ... no hurricane daunts them."<sup>60</sup> Gilmore gives an accurate and vivid description

59. Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1950 edn., 335). Smiles describes a rescue carried out by the boatmen in January 1866.

60. John Gilmore, *Storm Warriors*, (1890 edn.), 195.

of Deal beach and the boatmen's work. He includes a detailed account of launching and beaching a lugger, information which would now be lost if men such as Gilmore had not set it down. Gilmore's work, however, was used as material for penny readings, and his style therefore tended towards the dramatic.

"It would not be well to refrain from bearing testimony to how readily, how gallantly, the men of Deal, of Broadstairs, of Walmer and Kingsdown as well as of Ramsgate man their respective lifboats ... and race out to the scene of action, full of hardihood, of skill, of courage - true storm warriors, ever ready to dare all and do all that they may rescue the drowning from a watery grave."<sup>61</sup>

George Byng Gattie's *Memorials of the Goodwin Sands* was published in 1890. This was a more general account of the history of the Sands which included a section on the boatmen. Gattie's prose style is far more florid than Gilmore's and he includes far less concrete information amid the verbiage. Most of what he does say is available elsewhere.

"Nothing can exceed the cool unflinching bravery of the hovellers as a rule. An instance of a hoveller hesitating for a moment when there is a chance of saving life has, we believe, *never been known*. The howling storm and the raging sea seem to have no terrors whatever for these fellows ... the greater the storm the more ready and willing they are always to face it."<sup>62</sup>

Two years later, the Rev. Thomas Stanley Treanor published the first of a series of books. Treanor was

61. Gilmore, *op. cit.*, 202.

62. Gattie, *op. cit.*, 100.

Chaplain to the Downs branch of the Missions to Seamen and Honorary Secretary of the Downs branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. As such he probably had as great a knowledge of the Deal boatmen and their work as was possible for someone outside their class. *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands*, *Log of a Sky Pilot* and *The Cry from the Sea and the Answer from the Shore* cover various aspects of his work while based at Deal.<sup>63</sup> The first of these is of greatest use to those interested in the Deal boatmen; its chief limitation is that it concentrates more on lifeboat work than on the boatmen generally.

The Deal boatmen also featured in two works of fiction during the nineteenth century. The first of these, *The Lifeboat*, was by R.M. Ballantyne, author of a number of boys' adventure stories.<sup>64</sup> Ballantyne's principal objective in writing *The Lifeboat* was the promotion of the Lifeboat Institute, but the book does show knowledge of Deal and Deal people. Characters are given local names such as Orrick and Bax, and Ballantyne was familiar with the geography of the area and with past events. Unfortunately, the book's high moral tone makes it almost unreadable today.

*The 'Longshoreman* by Herbert Russell, published in 1896, is a much more readable portrayal of the boatman's work.<sup>65</sup> It is written as if by a boatman, and like *The Lifeboat*, most of the characters have local names. Whereas in Ballantyne's work, however, the smugglers are

63. Thomas Stanley Treanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1892); *The Log of a Sky Pilot* (c. 1895); *The Cry From the Sea and the Answer from the Shore* (c. 1895).

64. R.M. Ballantyne, *The Lifeboat* (n.d.) Ballantyne's best-known work is *The Coral Island*.

65. Herbert Russell, *The 'Longshoreman* (1896).

portrayed as villains, Russell's hero, *Jim Mason*, sees nothing wrong in a little smuggling and even takes part in a successful "run" himself. *The 'Longshoreman* is of value because it is one of the few works of fact or fiction from the nineteenth century to paint a true-to-life picture of the Deal boatmen; it becomes unconvincing only in its latter parts, when Russell involves his boatmen in an improbable treasure hunt on the Goodwin Sands.

Nothing so sordid as money was ever mentioned by any of these writers. The fact that the boatmen did this work in order to earn a living was largely overlooked, and the public was allowed to believe that devotion to duty and the pursuit of noble ideals were the boatmen's only motives.

For other writers, no words were black enough to describe the boatmen's iniquity. These condemnations were chiefly voiced in official documents, or by people who believed themselves to have been injured by the boatmen. Thus, the Report on the Subject of Wreck and Salvage quoted above asserted that "a long tradition of fraud, robbery and violence attaches to them as a community,"<sup>66</sup> while *The Times* believed that "wrecking is the profession of a large number of the Deal boatmen."<sup>67</sup> The Collector of Customs at Deal in 1858 referred to "the thieving propensities of the desperate characters in this neighbourhood,"<sup>68</sup> and in 1861 said "this place has long

66. P.R.O. MT9/105A/75.

67. *The Times*, 19 October 1866, 7d.

68. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 8 March 1858.

been notorious for the lawless character of persons who flock by hundreds to disasters merely for the sake of plunder."<sup>69</sup> Another valuable source is *The Last of our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them*, published in 1929.<sup>70</sup> This was originally published as a series of articles in *The East Kent Mercury*. The book relates to the years 1858-1887 and is largely based on information from the local newspapers of that period. Pain also drew on the memories of some of the boatmen who were still living at the time he wrote. According to Pain, these men, although very old, still had clear memories of the events of the 1870s described in the book. Pain's work, although written at a greater distance from the actual events than the others referred to, was thus more likely to be accurate. Its newspaper origins mean that it is also practical and factual in tone and does not waste words on moral reflections as Gilmore, Gattie and Treanor did.

One explanation for the greatly varying accounts of the Deal boatmen's character is probably that they were a closed community who did not choose to reveal their true selves to outsiders. Assessment of their character must therefore be made from indirect evidence. The names given to the luggers and other boats are of interest in this respect. It was said that the naming of a lugger was of as much importance as a family christening, so presumably a lengthy consideration was given to the subject.<sup>71</sup> Names of boats fall into five main categories. There are

69. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 10 January 1861.

70. Pain, *op. cit.*

71. *Ibid.*, 10.

domestic names, such as *Mary, Poll, Annie, Emily*. Others had patriotic names - *Brave Nelson, Princess Royal, Princess Alexandra, British Queen* - or political names, such as *Reform, Cobden* or *Capper* (one of the local Members of Parliament). Other boats had names derived from mythology, for example *Leander, Iphimedia, Spartan, Galatea, Sappho*. The final group of names might be termed inspirational - *Success, Renown, Seaman's Hope, Early Morn, Guiding Star*. This latter group of names suggests that the boatmen were not wholly practical and did have some appreciation of the heroic or romantic nature of their work.

Some names also raise questions as to the boatmen's standards of literacy. The choice of *Sappho* or *Galatea* requires some considerable knowledge of Ancient Greek history and literature. William Stanton went to a boarding school in Walmer, but he was exceptional. Robert Williams admitted in 1869, when he was nineteen, that he could not read.<sup>72</sup> William Spears was apparently capable of writing a forcefully and correctly expressed letter to the local newspapers, yet another letter written by him, part of which is reproduced verbatim in the report on the *Olivia* affair, gives a different impression; "The reason I write to you now, preapts next week i might go to sea for about one week or two, and if you write to me you will know the reason that I am not at home, but as soon as I come home you will here from me if you write."<sup>73</sup>

72. *The Deal Mercury*, 11 December 1869, 3c.

73. P.R.O. MT9/105A.

William Spears' letter was published in both the Deal newspapers, and the suspicion that it was amended before publication is strengthened by the fact that whereas the letter as printed in *The Deal Mercury* refers to "evil-disposed scoundrels", *The Deal Telegram's* version, though otherwise identical replaces "scoundrels" with the milder "fellows".<sup>74</sup>

An anonymous correspondent of *The Times* in 1866 probably gave the most accurate assessment of the Deal boatmen's character.

"The Deal boatmen are as fine a set of men in their speciality as can be found anywhere, and are entitled to any praise that may be given them, but their faults are as patent as their virtues. They are at once the most hardworking and the laziest set of men. They would sacrifice anything to save a life, and they think anyone fair game of whom they can make a shilling. They are generous, hearty and loyal, and the most determined smugglers when they have the chance. They would wreck a ship and risk their lives to save one with equal readiness."<sup>75</sup>

74. *The Deal Mercury*, 19 November 1870, 2f; *The Deal Telegram*, 19 November 1870, 7b.

75. *The Times*, 23 October 1866, 9e.

## Chapter Two

### Development and Decline in Deal to the 1830s

Deal's fame, or notoriety, has always been based on its maritime functions, but it has never been established precisely how and when these functions developed.

"Deal, as early as the year 1229, was esteemed within the liberty of the Cinque Ports, and annexed as a member to the Port of Sandwich. Its mariners were even then in great repute for their skill and daring."

However, at this date Sandwich was the major seaport in Kent, and Lower Deal had not even begun to grow. Deal owed its later importance to its position opposite the Downs, which formed an anchorage for merchant ships passing up and down the Channel and also, being the English waters nearest to the Continent, for the Navy during the country's almost continuous wars in France and the Netherlands.

The Downs' importance as an anchorage is said to date from the silting up of Sandwich harbour in the late fifteenth century, and the functions of the Deal boatmen were becoming established by the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1517, Deal boatmen were accused of acting as pilots although unlicensed and unauthorised,<sup>2</sup> a complaint which was still being made against them over 400 years later. However, Deal did not become known as a centre for provisioning and other services for some time after that. About 1540, Leland

1. Black's *Guide to Kent* (1889), 253.

2. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 104.



described Deal as "half a myle fro the shore of the se, a fischer village ... apou a flat shore and very open to the se,"<sup>3</sup> while Lambarde, writing in 1570, and Camden, writing in the 1580s, mentioned only Henry VIII's three castles of Sandown, Deal and Walmer, built in 1539/40, and the tradition that Julius Caesar landed on this stretch of coastline.<sup>4</sup> Leland's assertion that of Deal was half a mile from the shore indicates that there was no settlement worthy of note along the beach in his lifetime. However, it is likely that the fishermen lived in temporary huts on the shore on a seasonal basis, as Dungeness fishermen did in later centuries.<sup>5</sup> Certainly from the time Deal mariners began to provide services to shipping, there must have been some kind of shelter on the beach, however rudimentary, for men looking out for vessels requiring assistance. If Leland was correct in his belief that Deal was half a mile from the shore, the sea has receded since his time, as Upper Deal is now a mile from the sea. Certainly at Dover the sea has receded during the last two centuries, not only because of reclamation work carried out by the Harbour authorities. The shingle bank on which Lower Deal is built existed in Leland's time, but perhaps it extended seawards in the succeeding century. This might have encouraged the formation of the new settlement on the beach.

Laker refers to "the almost annual assembly of British (sic) warships in the Downs" in Tudor times, and

3. Lucy Toulmin Smith, (ed.), *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales*, IV (1964), 48.

4. William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (1970 edn.), 129; Gordon J. Copley, (ed.), *Camden's Britannia - Kent* (1977), 62.

5. Michael Winstanley, *Life in Kent at the Turn of the Century* (Folkestone, 1978), 138.

there is evidence in Star Chamber proceedings that Deal was becoming known as a victualling base in the 1560s.<sup>6</sup> In 1588 the Downs assumed an even greater importance as Seymour's squadron there was charged with the duty of preventing the Armada, sailing up Channel, from uniting with Parma's invasion troops in the Netherlands. After the battle of Gravelines, many sick English sailors were landed at Deal.<sup>7</sup> However, there is no indication at this date of Deal's future growth. Laker gives the number of communicants in Deal in 1578 as 348.<sup>8</sup> Inflated by 50%, to include children under sixteen, this gives a total population of 522.

The parish registers of Deal, which date from 1559, show, by the number of seamen buried within the parish, the growth of the Downs as a shelter for Naval and merchant vessels from about 1600.<sup>9</sup> The figures are shown in Table 2.1. Royal Naval seamen buried in Deal outnumbered merchant seamen throughout the period except between 1616 and 1623, when 30 out of 57 men buried were from merchant ships. Most of these ships were for or from the East Indies. In 1620 a man and his wife emigrating to Virginia were also buried at Deal. As well as English Naval and merchant vessels, ships and men from Scotland, Norway, Hamburg, Lubeck, Pomerania, Holland, Dunkirk and Genoa were mentioned in the burial registers.

It was from the early decades of the seventeenth century that the development of Lower Deal began. Laker

6. Laker, *op. cit.*, 103.

7. *Ibid.*, 106.

8. *Ibid.*, 55.

9. Jane Jones, *Transcript of Burial Registers of St. Leonard's, Deal*, K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 64.

Table 2.1

Burials of Seamen at St. Leonard's, Deal, 1559-1660<sup>1</sup>

Year	Seamen buried	Year	Seamen buried
1577	1	1625	28 <sup>2</sup>
1588	1	1626	13
1592	2	1627	7
1594	1	1628	4
1596	1	1629	3
1597	2	1630	1
1598	1	1631	3
1600	2	1632	7
1601	4	1633	1
1602	5	1635	12
1603	5	1636	18
1604	4	1637	12
1605	1	1638	14
1606	4	1639	19
1608	3	1640	35
1609	7	1641	6
1610	7	1642	27
1611	8	1643	19
1612	2	1644	10
1613	2	1645	5
1615	5	1646	1
1616	7	1647	1
1617	2	1648	2
1618	6	1652	1
1619	3	1654	2
1620	4	1656	3
1621	5	1657	1
1622	9	1658	30
1623	11	1659	23
1624	2	1660	21

1. No seamen were buried at Deal in the years not shown.

2. 1625 was a plague year.

quotes a survey of the Manor of Court Ash, one of the three manors in Deal, in 1616. Referring to the Sea Valley, later Lower Street, now High Street, it was decreed that "whereas there be now certain houses builded in the said valley, the determination ... whether they shall stand or be demolished as noisome to the Castles there, is to be made by the Right Hon. the now Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports."<sup>10</sup> The maritime functions for which Deal was to become famous, even notorious, in later centuries, were by this date becoming established. The State Papers of 1616 gave the names of 23 "seafaring men of Deal that are master of boats or have any part of any boat."<sup>11</sup> Laker records charges of plundering ships on the Goodwins made against the Deal men in the same year.<sup>12</sup> Complaints about the building of houses on the beach continued throughout the 1620s and 1630s, particularly from William Byng, Captain of Deal Castle. In 1626, 1627 and 1630 he reported that cottages were "daily" being built along the beach, and asked for authority to have them demolished.<sup>13</sup> These complaints give the impression that Lower Deal was now growing rapidly, but by 1640 the population of the parish was still only about 750.<sup>14</sup>

Before the middle of the seventeenth century, the principal Naval victualling house for the Downs was at Dover, in the Maison Dieu, a former religious house. Merchant ships must also have obtained stores from somewhere; in 1629, the *Speedwell*, homeward bound from

10. Laker, *op. cit.*, 45.

11. *Ibid.*, 129.

12. *Ibid.*, 132.

13. *Ibid.*, 134, 143.

14. *Ibid.*, 55.

the East Indies, was in the Downs from 17 October to 13 November.<sup>15</sup> In 1635, the *William and Thomas* was in the Downs from 13 August to 10 September.<sup>16</sup> They sent the bodies of their dead sailors to be buried in Deal; did they also obtain their provisions from there? Victualling from Dover was not entirely satisfactory, for Dover harbour, like Sandwich, suffered from silting, and in adverse wind and tide conditions, boats could not always round the South Foreland to get into the Downs. Laker suggests that the Naval Yard at Deal was established in the reign of James I or Charles I.<sup>17</sup> In 1626, Dutch ships in the Downs came to Deal for fresh water and in 1639 there was an official enquiry into alleged excessive prices of provisions at Deal, due to the demand from Royal and merchant ships offshore.<sup>18</sup> The people of Lower Deal, petitioning against proposals to demolish their houses, stressed the advantage to the authorities of the settlement being there. In 1645, they claimed that they had been "induced to erect such habitations so that they might be near at hand for service and more ready at His Majesty's and the Parliament's command."<sup>19</sup> The people of Deal were apparently hedging their bets by naming King and Parliament in their appeal. In 1656, "we have erected at our own costs houses on the beach waste ground ... that we might serve the Navy and merchant ships."<sup>20</sup> Christopher Chalklin has shown that it was between the 1640s and 1670s that population growth in Deal began to

15. Jane Jones, *op. cit.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. Laker, *op. cit.* 346.

18. *Ibid.*, 140, 152.

19. *Ibid.*, 47.

20. *Ibid.*, 48.

outstrip that in neighbouring parishes. Chalklin attributes this development to Deal's growing importance as a Naval victualling station.<sup>21</sup>

The first Dutch war of 1652-54 saw many actions in or near the Downs. The first Naval Hospital at Deal was established in this period, and on occasions sick seamen had also to be boarded with the townspeople. In 1660, the Navy had six or seven storehouses apparently on the site of the later Naval Yard.<sup>22</sup> Samuel Pepys, aboard the *Nazeby* in the Downs, with the fleet preparing to sail to the Netherlands to bring home King Charles II, recorded how on 11 May, "about eleven at night came the boats from Deal, with great store of provision."<sup>23</sup> This development of Deal as a victualling base coincided with the expansion of the Navy during the Commonwealth and Restoration periods. Under the Commonwealth, 207 new warships were built, and Blake, Dean and Monck "made the Navy a profession, instead of a nucleus of state ships among hastily commandeered merchantmen."<sup>24</sup> Charles II's personal interest and the ability of Samuel Pepys ensured that these advances were not lost after 1660. The Dutch wars of the time required the almost continuous presence of the fleet in the Channel. Overseas trade was also growing and during the 1660s there were frequently one or two hundred merchant ships at anchor in the Downs.<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Pepys thought Deal "a very pitiful town" when he went ashore there in April 1660,<sup>26</sup> and Mrs

21, C.W. Chalklin, "The Making of Some New Towns, c.1600-1720", C.W. Chalklin and M. Havinden (eds.), *Rural Change and Urban Growth 1500-1800* (1974), 229.

22, Laker, *op. cit.*, 187-190, 202.

23, R. Latham, (ed.), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, I, 1660* (1970), 119.

24, Keith Feiling, *A History of England* (1966), 500.

25, Laker, *op. cit.*, 202.

26, Latham, *op. cit.*, 134.

Hutchinson, wife of the regicide imprisoned in Sandown Castle in 1664, described Deal as a "cut-throat town."<sup>27</sup> By the end of the century, however, the impression gained from contemporary descriptions and other sources is one of growth and prosperity. The old parish church of St Leonard's at Upper Deal had a large brick tower added in 1684,<sup>28</sup> and in 1697, Celia Fiennes wrote;

"Deale looks like a good thriveing place the buildings new and neate brickwork with gardens. I believe they are most masters of shippes houses or seamen or else those that belong to the Cordage and saile makeing, with other requisites to shipping."<sup>29</sup>

The distinctive street plan of Lower Deal was evidently established by 1675, as Beach Street is mentioned at that date.<sup>30</sup> John Newman compares the street pattern of Lower Deal with that of Great Yarmouth.<sup>31</sup> It might be useful here to quote at length from Professor Hoskins' discussion of the formation of the latter town.

"Great Yarmouth has - or had before the war - a unique town plan. There were three main streets running roughly north and south along the old sandbank on which the original town grew up in the Anglo-Saxon period. Crossing these three main streets and joining them together were no fewer than 156 narrow lanes....We know that the town started life on a sandbank and was colonized by fishermen. The basic requirements of such an economy were a strip of foreshore on which boats could be drawn up, together with an area of higher ground behind it for a hut and perhaps a garden. At Yarmouth this produced a pattern of parallel land holdings on the lee or western side of the sand bank. But the River Yare was not stable in its course and

27, Laker, *op. cit.*, 225.

28, John Newman, *The Buildings of England; North East and East Kent* (3rd edn., 1983), 281.

29, Christopher Morris, (ed.), *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685-c.1712* (1982), 123.

30, Laker, *op. cit.*, 212.

31, Newman, *op. cit.*, 281.

eventually built up another beach line farther to the west, and then - later still - yet another beach-line beyond that. Each of these old beach-lines is marked by what is now a significantly curving main street. As the foreshore moved westward in this fashion the fishing colony moved to the new beach-line, so extending the original pattern of strips divided by narrow lanes."<sup>32</sup>

Hoskins supports his hypothesis with analogous evidence from Malayan and Burmese fishing villages. Great Yarmouth had similar functions to Deal, as well as a similar street plan, with its community of fishermen, pilots and salvagers.<sup>33</sup>

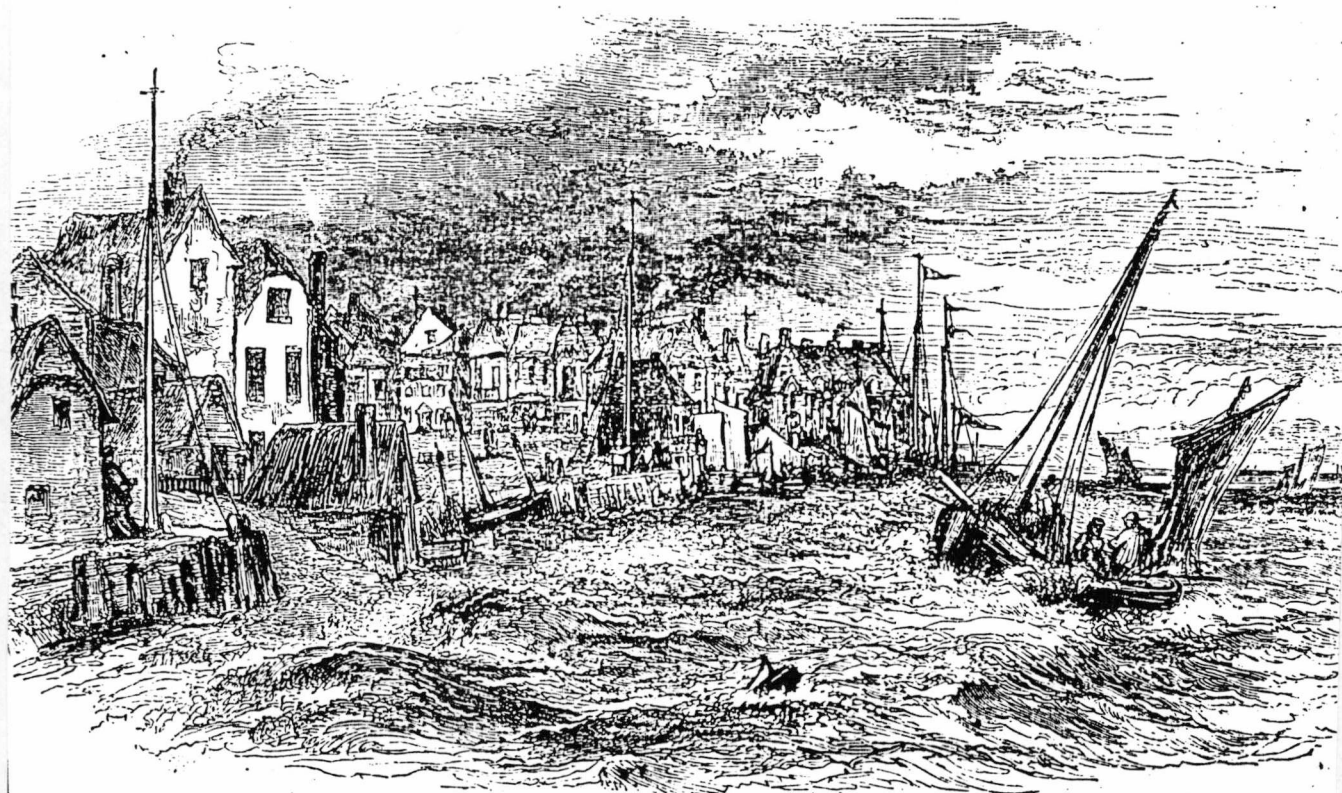
In 1699, Deal was incorporated, and gained its own market, so that corn, malt and other provisions no longer had to be obtained from Sandwich. The town was evidently growing rapidly at this date; the petition for the charter argued that incorporation would make it easier for the town to deal effectively with its poor, who were "very numerous and increasing daily by an influx of strangers coming to settle among us." It was said that Folkestone, Fordwich and Faversham had been incorporated, though "in all respects inferior to us in population, trade and commerce." Deal, it was claimed, "has become a place of considerable trade and is increasing daily in population." Three or four hundred merchantmen were sometimes at anchor in the Downs, "which have been supplied with fresh provisions and necessaries from us." Boatmen "sent daily supplies to the shipping."<sup>34</sup> The population of the town at this time was estimated to be

32. W.G. Hoskins, *Fieldwork in Local History* (2nd edn., 1982), 26.

33. David Higgins, *The Beachmen* (Lavenham, 1987).

34. Laker, *op. cit.*, 248.





4.—DEAL.

(Kent County Libraries)

5. The North End, before the demolition of much of the eastern side of Beach Street and the laying out of the Esplanades.

over 3000.<sup>35</sup> The importance of the provisioning of passing ships to the tradesmen of Deal at this time is demonstrated by the inventory of John Tavenor, a grocer, who died in 1694. He left in his storerooms 109 gallons of vinegar, 429 gallons of various spirits and over a stone of spices and peppers - all goods which could be used for preserving stores on a long voyage. In addition he had twelve "sea books" - perhaps tide or navigational tables - fishing tackle, cordage, "part of a Deale yoale", and £256 in ready money "English and Forraine."<sup>36</sup>

By the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the street pattern of Lower Deal had become established. Thomas Powell, elected Mayor in 1703, being something of a Puritan, resolved to enforce the keeping of the Sabbath in the town. He related how, on his first Sunday in office, he "went through the three streets" ordering innkeepers to close their doors and exhorting people to go to Church.<sup>37</sup> The population of Lower Deal was by this time large enough for some townspeople to urge the building of a new chapel there. In 1712, "the rendezvous of the Royal Navy in the Downs hath of late years so encouraged building houses on that shore that a large and spacious Brick Town, well inhabited with all sorts of Tradesmen and Artificers, now stands on the beach of the sea and is commonly called the Town of Lower Deal."<sup>38</sup> These and later descriptions of Deal invariably mention the brick buildings of the town. Instead of being

35. Laker, *op. cit.*, 240.

36. K.A.O. PRC 27/33/282.

37. Laker, *op. cit.*, 248.

38. "An Act for completing a Chapel of Ease in the Lower Town of Deal by a Duty on Water-born Coals to be brought into the said Town", quoted in Laker, *op. cit.*, 260.

an infallible indication of prosperity, this may be due to the fact that travellers from out of Kent were unused to seeing brick used so extensively.

Deal was referred to as a town in 1712, and certainly by this time overshadowed its near neighbours, but what was the actual population, and what was the pattern of development during the following century? The eighteenth century was the period when Lower Deal developed from a settlement along the beach, subsidiary to Upper Deal, to a town of national importance, totally outgrowing its parent. Although continuing, however, development was haphazard. That there was no attempt at planning is shown by the uncertain course of the streets of Lower Deal, constantly changing in width and direction. Building lines are irregular, and no two cottages are alike.

Population records for the eighteenth century are poor; from the Hearth Tax and Compton Census of the late seventeenth century to the national Censuses of the first decades of the nineteenth century, the researcher has no sources from which he can directly calculate the growth or decline of the town or parish under discussion. This is a crucial lack, for the eighteenth century was a period of major and drastic change in many parts of England, as the Agricultural Revolution, the Enclosure Movement and the Industrial Revolution together changed the nature of society in country and town alike.

Before the nineteenth century Censuses, parish registers and taxation records are the best sources available for the study of population over long periods, but there are serious disadvantages attached to both types of record. Neither was intended to be used for the calculation of population totals. Taxation records, by their very nature, were subject to evasion and under-recording, and taxes were usually levied on households rather than individuals. It is thus necessary to use other available sources to arrive at the normal household size and then use this figure as a multiplier to produce the total population. Peter Laslett has suggested that "household size was remarkably constant in England at 4.75 persons per household at all times, from the late seventeenth until the early twentieth century."<sup>39</sup>

In the late seventeenth century, the Hearth Tax and Compton Census are the most widely used sources of population. The Compton Census was a questionnaire sent to all parish clergy in the Archdiocese of Canterbury in 1676 in an attempt to establish the prevalence of dissent.<sup>40</sup> The first question was how many communicants there were in the parish. Communicants are generally believed to have been people over sixteen and since those under sixteen are thought to have constituted roughly one third of the population in the late seventeenth century, the Compton Census figures must be increased by 50% to arrive at the total population.

39. Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (2nd edn., 1971), 93.

40. G. Lyon Turner, (ed.), *Original Records of Early Nonconformity*, I (1914), for Compton Census.

The principal taxation records available for eighteenth century Deal are the Land Tax returns for 1726 and the Window Tax returns for 1736 and 1763.<sup>41</sup> In 1736, 478 individuals were listed, including those noted as "poor" and not taxed. Multiplied by Laslett's household size of 4.75, this produces a total population of 2270. Excluding non-domestic buildings such as brewhouses and malthouses, where these are indicated, the median number of windows to each house was nine, the average number was eleven. The number of windows to each house ranged from four to 45. In 1763, 643 householders indicated a total population of 3054. The median number of windows per house was seven, the average number 8.5, in a range of three to 55.

Window Tax, like Hearth Tax, is not entirely satisfactory as an indication of wealth, as it is not possible to tell from the returns how many rooms in a building were used for domestic purposes and how many for business. A landowner with seven windows, for example, might have been wealthier than a tradesman with ten, four of which were in his shop and storeroom. However, purely on the figures available here, it appears that while standards of housing at the top end of the scale were improving generally, there was a slight decline over the 27 year period between 1736 and 1763.

Parish registers, the other major source available to demographers before the nineteenth century, record

41. Land Tax Returns for Deal, 1726, K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 169; Window Tax Returns for Deal, 1736 and 1763, K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 181.

baptisms, marriages and burials within the parish. If the demographer has an idea of the birth, marriage and death rates current at the period he is researching, he can calculate the total population from the number of events in each year. The main difficulty here is the likelihood of under-registration, especially of baptisms, caused by a high percentage of dissenters in the parish, carelessness or inefficiency on the part of the clergyman or parish clerk in failing to keep the registers properly, or apathy on the part of parents who simply failed to bring their children to be baptised. A sharp increase in the number of baptisms, indicating a higher birth rate with some underlying economic cause, may be due only to the advent of a new and more energetic vicar.

Wrigley and Schofield have prepared tables of crude birth, marriage and death rates for England from 1541 to 1871, based on data from 404 parish registers.<sup>42</sup> These rates have been corrected to allow for underregistration, late baptism and nonconformity. By applying Wrigley and Schofield's rates to annual totals of events derived from the Deal parish registers,<sup>43</sup> it should be possible to obtain an idea of the pattern of population growth or decline.

The total number of baptisms, marriages and burials in Deal was counted in each year from 1671 to 1836. The starting point of 1671 was chosen to avoid the plague years of the mid-1660s, and in the hope that by this date

42. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (1981).

43. Jane Jones, *Transcript of Baptism, Marriage and Burial Registers of St. Leonard's, Deal*, K.F.H.S. Record Publications Nos. 62, 63, 64.

the registers would have recovered from any post-Civil War deficiencies, although the Deal registers appear to have been kept throughout the Commonwealth period. A starting date in the early 1670s also enables comparison to be made with the estimated population figures from the Compton Census. The series was ended in 1836 because the Deal parish registers show a sharp drop in baptisms in the second half of 1837, generating suspicion that the advent of Civil Registration in that year had a serious effect on the completeness of the parish registers.

The annual totals of events were multiplied by the appropriate birth, marriage or death rate from Wrigley and Schofield's tables, producing three possible population totals for each year. These three figures frequently differed wildly. For example, in 1686, the population total derived from the baptism/birth rate calculation was 2686; that based on marriages was 987 and the figure derived from burials was 1365. In 1805, the totals were 7139, 13,493 and 6401 respectively. These variations might be due to the actual birth, marriage and death rates in Deal having been significantly different from those arrived at by Wrigley and Schofield, or they may be due to other factors which will be discussed later. In order to produce a smoothly progressing series of figures, the three totals for each year were added and divided by three to produce an average. The results are shown in Appendix I.

It must be emphasised at the outset that these figures are not intended to show the actual population in Deal in any one year, but to indicate the *patterns* of growth and decline throughout the period. Wrigley and Schofield's birth, marriage and death rates are averages calculated from figures obtained from parishes all over England; they cannot allow for periodical fluctuations caused by events peculiar to a particular area. As has been seen, Deal was a place of burial for men dying aboard ships in the Downs; in the nineteenth century it was estimated that sailors' burials inflated the death rate in the town from what the Pavement Commissioners believed to be the true figure of 18 per thousand to above 22 per thousand.<sup>44</sup> The accuracy of the population totals obtained by using Wrigley and Schofield's rates can be adjudged by comparing them with figures obtained from other sources. These comparisons are also shown in Appendix I, together with events which may be expected to have had an effect upon the population of Deal.

The number of communicants estimated to be in Deal in the Compton Census of 1676 was 1500; inflated to include children under 16, this would give a total population of about 2200. This is lower than the figure arrived at using Wrigley and Schofield's figures, but the Compton Census is only an estimate and there is reason to believe it is not accurate. The number of dissenters given for Deal in the Census is ten. This is certainly

44. *The Deal Telegram*, 30 January 1864, 2d.



too low; notes probably dating from the later 1660s said there were "not above 20 sectaries" in Deal, and 28 members of the congregation of the Dover General Baptist Church came from Deal during the 1670s.<sup>45</sup>

Sixty years later, in 1736, the parish register total is 2226; the total obtained using the Window Tax figures is 2270; a difference of only 44, or less than 2%. In 1763, the parish register figure was 3263, the Window Tax total 3054; this time a difference of 209, or between 6% and 7%. The differences and similarities between the two sets of figures, and possible reasons for the differences, will be considered in the following discussion.

The Compton Census and parish register figures show a total population of between 2000 and 3000 in the 1670s, falling in the 1680s and rising again from the mid 1690s. Wrigley and Schofield have identified the period up to 1686 as one of falling population nationally;<sup>46</sup> this seems to have been reflected in Deal. In addition, the 1690s, which saw a rise in population, was a time when England and Holland were at war with France, and the English Fleet was frequently in the Downs. In 1696, the Navy landed 500 sick seamen at Deal;<sup>47</sup> this must have had an influence on the burial figures, and also, no doubt, human nature and especially sailors being what they are, on the marriage and baptism totals. Totals of events in the parish register during the 1690s were as follows;

45. J.M. Bower, *The Congregation of the Dover General Baptist Church, c.1660-c.1700*, Leicester M.A. Dissertation (1983).

46. Wrigley and Schofield, *op. cit.*, 212.

47. Laker, *op. cit.*, 236.

Table 2.2

Year	Baptisms	Marriages	Burials
1691	69	18	10
1692	86	14	25
1693	98	17	40
1694	79	28	69
1695	89	18	58
1696	87	31	58
1697	109	34	61
1698	111	40	44
1699	103	18	41
1700	99	23	32

It is noticeable that three years in which the number of marriages was high, 1696, 1697 and 1698, are matched by three years in which baptisms were high - 1697, 1698 and 1699. Population apparently peaked at about 3350 in 1697, the year the war ended, and 1698, falling back by nearly 1000 in the next few years. Peace was shortlived, however; the War of the Spanish Succession broke out in 1701, and the population again climbed to over 3500, again falling back after the Peace of Utrecht in 1713.

During the next three decades, England was at peace. Wrigley and Schofield have identified the years around 1720 as a time of national population fall, and the late 1720s as a period of high mortality and low fertility.<sup>48</sup> Reflecting this, the population of Deal calculated from the parish registers fell to comfortably

48. Wrigley and Schofield, *op. cit.*, 162, 212.

under 2000 around 1730. However, this picture of decline is not borne out by the Poor Law assessments of 1725 and 1729<sup>49</sup> and the Land Tax assessment of 1726, all of which indicate a population of about 2800. It may be that birth, marriage and death rates in Deal were higher than those suggested by Wrigley and Schofield, and the calculations have thus produced an artificially low figure. Daniel Defoe, who visited Deal about 1725, did not describe the town at all, but gave a clear indication of its by then well-established maritime functions.

"This place is famous for the road for shipping, so well known all over the trading world, by the name of the Downs, and where almost all ships which arrive from foreign parts for London, or go from London to foreign parts, and who pass the Channel, generally stop; the homeward-bound to dispatch letters, send their merchants and owners the good news of their arrival, and set their passengers on shoar, and the like; and the outward-bound to receive their last orders, letters and farewells from owners, and friends, take in fresh provisions, etc."<sup>50</sup>

However, there was clearly some depression in the population of Deal at this period; the marriage and baptism totals from the late 1720s and the 1730s are lower than those of the early 1720s, and in 1736 the population calculated from the parish register and that from the Window Tax assessment agree at 2200-2300.

The War of the Austrian Succession lasted from 1740-1748, and in 1745 the population of Deal reached nearly 4000. This was also the year of the second

49. Poor Law Assessment Registers of St. Leonard's, Deal, 1725/6 and 1729, K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 207.

50. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* 1724-26 (Everyman edn., 1962), I, 120.

Jacobite rebellion, actively supported by the French. In 1744, it was said that 15000 troops were assembled at Dunkirk, preparing for an invasion of England.<sup>51</sup> A Scandinavian visitor to the town noted how in 1748

"the houses are almost all built of brick .... The inhabitants are healthy, and keep themselves mainly by trade, for all the ships coming from London, and wanting to go through the Channel, or vice versa, must come and lay up here for a day or so, so they usually stock up here with all sorts of fresh food, but not brandy and other drinks. They also have to pay well for them, since the inhabitants are clever enough to get a good price. A good many get their living by rowing - i.e. by rowing the travellers from the ship to the shore and back again, for all which they ask high rates."<sup>52</sup>

Apart from salvage work, victualling the Navy and supplying passing ships, eighteenth century Deal prospered from smuggling. The Cinque Ports had, in the past, claimed the right to import wine free of duty, under a privilege granted them by Edward I in return for their supplying ships in time of war. It has been suggested that the memory of this privilege contributed to the prevalence of smuggling on the Kent and Sussex coasts.<sup>53</sup> This may or may not be the case; more compelling reasons for the local inhabitants to take up smuggling were the nearness of these coasts to France and to London, the biggest available market for contraband. P. Muskett has said "East Kent and Deal in particular were unusual for the concentration of violence, the value of the contraband being brought in and the extent of

51. Laker, *op. cit.*, 282.

52. A.F.T. Lurcock, "Pehr Kalm's Visit to Kent in 1748, Part II," *Cantium*, IV, (1972-73), 91.

53. F. F. Nicholls *Honest Thieves* (1973), 9.

community involvement."<sup>54</sup> Deal's coastline was ideal for smuggling, being long and flat, so that goods could be landed at any point. The traditional view of smuggling is of a boat coming ashore at a cove, the contraband being manhandled up cliff paths. In fact, this type of coastline is much easier to police. In the Isle of Thanet, with its succession of "gaps" in the cliffs, it was necessary only to station a few men at the head of each gap. Beyond Ramsgate, goods could be landed anywhere between Pegwell Bay and Kingsdown.

Another reason for Deal's exceptional involvement in smuggling may have been the nature of the settlement there. Lower Deal developed as a squatter's settlement, without any overall manorial or urban control. Professor Everitt has suggested that waste or boundary settlements may have been susceptible to lawless influences.<sup>55</sup> Deal was incorporated in 1699, but Thomas Powell's diary shows that a certain disrespect for authority had become established by this date,<sup>56</sup> and these attitudes had by no means been eradicated even by the nineteenth century. A further cause of the prevalence of smuggling at Deal was the presence of so many ships in the Downs. Many ships' officers engaged in private transactions; goods estimated to be worth £70,000 were reputed to have been illicitly landed at Deal from an East Indiaman in October 1781.<sup>57</sup>

The proliferation of import duties caused smuggling to reach its peak between the 1730s and the 1780s. It was

54. P. Muskett, "Deal Smugglers in the Eighteenth Century", *Southern History*, 8 (1986), 46.

55. Alan Everitt, "Nonconformity in Country Parishes", Joan Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People* (1970), 178.

56. Laker, *op. cit.*, 248.

57. Muskett, *op. cit.*, 57.

estimated that in 1733, over the country as a whole, smugglers' commerce with France and Holland equalled one third of the legitimate traffic.<sup>58</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, up to 20,000 men were thought to be actively involved in Free Trade, and later in the century farmers in coastal counties frequently had difficulty in finding labour, as the smugglers would pay for one night's work more than a farm labourer could earn in a week.<sup>59</sup>

It is likely, therefore, that smuggling made at least as great a contribution to the economy of Deal as legitimate business in the eighteenth century. It was said in 1745 that there were in Deal "200 able young men and seafaring people, who are known to have no visible ways of getting a living but by the infamous trade of smuggling."<sup>60</sup> The population of Deal in the 1740s has been estimated at between 2000 and 4000. Taking the median or average figure of about 2600, 200 men represented just under 8% of the total population. In the mid-nineteenth century the boatmen, the largest occupational group, were 4.8% of the total population. If, then, the assertion that in the 1745 200 men, or about 8% of the population, obtained a living entirely from smuggling was correct, this was a very high proportion.

Serious attempts to put down smuggling began when Pitt became Prime Minister in 1784. He provided for the seizure of vessels used for smuggling and, more importantly, reduced or abolished the duties on a wide

58. G.D. Ramsay, "The Smugglers' Trade", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, II (1952), 135.

59. Nicholls, *op cit.*, 30-32.

60. Muskett, *op. cit.*, 52.

range of goods.<sup>61</sup> The story that Pitt ordered the burning of the boats on Deal beach in December 1784 or January 1785, has, however, been shown to be apocryphal.<sup>62</sup> It is certainly hard to believe that the Deal men, whether smugglers or boatmen, would have stood by and watched their boats being destroyed without taking steps to prevent it. Gabriel Bray, commander of the Revenue cutter *Nimble*, had reported in 1783 that the smugglers at Deal had "carriage guns at many Avenues or Streets." The year after, Bray's men suffered "a continual fire of Musquetry for upwards of half an hour" while attempting to seize a lugger on the beach at the North End, and a few weeks later, when giving chase to a lugger between Deal and the Goodwins, he and his men were "fired on by the Luggers crew, from Musquetoons, Blunderbusses, etc."<sup>63</sup> If Pitt had ordered the destruction of Deal boats it is unlikely that he could have survived his periods of residence at Walmer Castle as Lord Warden without, at least, suffering a few broken windows.

Also dating from the beginning of Pitt's first term as Prime Minister are the Records of Seizures returned by each Customs Port. Deal in 1785 reported 62 seizures, ranging in value from £78 to £804 18s, and totalling nearly £9000.<sup>64</sup> It is impossible to say what value of goods escaped seizure. This was at a time when a small tradesman might earn £30 - £50 in a year, and a farm labourer £20 - £40.<sup>65</sup>

61. Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (2nd edn., 1979), 119.

62. Muskett, *op. cit.*, 65.

63. *Ibid.*, 61.

64. P.R.O. CUST 21/85, Records of Seizures.

65. Pamela Horn, *The Rural World 1780-1850* (1980), 31.

It is difficult to assess long term population trends in Deal as the normal pattern was continually disrupted by war. The Seven Years War of 1756-1763 and the American War of Independence, 1776-1783, both caused sharp increases in the town's population. Asa Briggs has suggested that the population of England and Wales, "which was about nine million in 1801, had increased by some three and a half million during the preceding fifty years, and most of that increase had been packed into the last two decades."<sup>66</sup> This was an increase of 70%. Professor Everitt has said of Kent,

"after a time of relative stagnation between 1650 and 1750, the population of the county appears to have almost doubled between 1750 and 1801. This was a rate of growth exceptional in southern or eastern England and without parallel in the history of Kent; but ... very little is known at present about either its local causes or its consequences in the county as a whole. It continued in the rural areas of Kent till well into the nineteenth century."<sup>67</sup>

Everitt based his calculations on Rickman's population estimates and the 1801 Census. Population in Deal, during the second half of the eighteenth century, was clearly growing faster than the national average. The population of Deal in the 1740s and 1750s fluctuated between just over 2000 and just over 4000, the peak being reached in 1757. The average for the ten years 1745-54 was 2854. On this basis, the population of Deal at the turn of the century should have been about 5700. This does agree

66. Briggs, *op. cit.*, 32.

67. Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 88.



quite well with the Census total in 1801, which was 5420, but not with the population as calculated from the parish register, which was 7196. In fact, the parish register totals for 1802 and 1803, the time of the Peace of Amiens, when the town's population may be presumed to have reverted to normal, were 5887 and 5721.

From the start of the French Revolutionary Wars the population climbed steadily. The early nineteenth century population figures dramatically reinforce the hypothesis that growth and decline in Deal were closely linked to war and the presence of the fleet in the Downs. In 1802-03, the period of the brief Peace of Amiens, the population as calculated from the parish registers fell from over 7000 to under 6000, rising again in 1804. Napoleon abdicated, and the war effectively ended, in 1814; the population of Deal in that year was 8215. The following year it fell to 6453, and in 1816 to 5846.

In the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, "the defences in East Kent were centred upon Deal, with its Castle and Naval yard."<sup>68</sup> Sandown Castle was garrisoned with a company of artillery, Deal Castle also had a permanent garrison and there were a barracks and Naval Hospital. Deal was also the final stage in a chain of semaphore signals between the Admiralty and the Channel Fleet.<sup>69</sup> A squadron of ships had already assembled in the Downs prior to the declaration of war in February 1793.<sup>70</sup> At various times, the population was swollen still

68. Peter Bloomfield, *Kentish Sources X, Kent and the Napoleonic Wars* (Gloucester, 1987), 25.

69. *Ibid.*, 16.

70. *Ibid.*, 15.

further by troops awaiting embarkation for Continental expeditions; about 14,000 troops were embarked from Deal beach in one week in September 1799. *The Times* reported that week that "the town was so full that the officers, many of them, are unable to procure beds and sleep upon carpets in the different inns and many of their soldiers on their baggage on the beach."<sup>71</sup> Beach Street, it was said, was crowded from morning to night. Such scenes were frequent in Deal up to 1815, as was the landing at Deal of sick and wounded men from various land and sea campaigns.<sup>72</sup>

The 1801 and 1811 Census returns, although they do not list individuals, give an idea of the expansion of the town at this time.<sup>73</sup> In 1801 there were 945 inhabited houses in Deal, eleven uninhabited. Of the 945, 114, or 12%, were occupied by more than one family. Two houses, presumably lodging houses, were occupied by nine and ten families. The average occupancy was 5.7 persons per house. In 1811, the average occupancy had declined slightly to 5.45 persons per house, but the Census contains evidence of rapid and extensive development. There were 1348 inhabited houses, ten uninhabited. This was an increase of nearly 50% in the decade. The northernmost block of streets between Lower Street and West Street - Duke Street, Nelson Street, Robert Street, Water Street, Princes Street and Peter Street - was laid out at this time.<sup>74</sup> Of the 1348 inhabited houses in 1811,

71. T.J. Sharp, *How Does The Times Illustrate the History, Importance and Position of Deal, 1790-1815?* Kent Extended Essay (1974), 4.

72. Laker, *op. cit.*, 337.

73. Original Manuscript Returns for the Censuses of 1801, 1811 and 1821, Deal, K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 177.

74. Laker, *op. cit.*, 297.

195, or 14.5%, were occupied by more than one family. "The Army, the men of the Royal Navy ashore and registered seamen ashore, were not included in the population of the places where they happened to be at the time of the Census until 1841."<sup>75</sup> It was not, therefore, the Castle garrisons or seamen who contributed to the increase of population between 1801 and 1811, but their wives and families coming to stay in Deal. Any housewife with rooms to spare could earn extra money by taking in lodgers, although it is to be hoped that not all visitors shared Mrs Croft's feelings; "the only time that I really suffered in body or mind, the only time that I ever fancied myself unwell, or had any ideas of danger, was the winter that I passed by myself at Deal, when the Admiral ... was in the North Sea."<sup>76</sup>

The Census figures of 1801 and 1811 are lower than the totals obtained by calculating from the parish registers. The Census counted only those who slept in the parish on that night; the parish registers additionally recorded events in the lives of men (and women) on board ships in the Downs. In the decade between 1805 and 1814, when the war was at its height, the population of Deal calculated on marriages alone was at times over 13,000. Table 2.3 compares the population calculated from marriages only with that based on an average of all three events.

75. W. Page, (ed.), *Victoria County History of Kent*, III (1932), 357.

76. Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Penguin 1965 edn.), 95.

Table 2.3

Population of Deal 1805-14 calculated on marriages only compared with that calculated from all three events.

	Marriages only	All three events	
1805	13493	9011	
1806	10625	9222	
1807	11046	9292	
1808	12375	9563	
1809	11818	9560	
1810	13636	9656	
1811	12857	8994	Census 7351
1812	13125	9479	
1813	13766	9744	
1814	10229	8215	

In 1811, the number of marriages in Deal indicated a total population of 12857; the Census total was 7351. There were 108 marriages in Deal that year, a figure only exceeded in 1805, when there were 112. Of that 108, 27 were marriages of sailors from ships in the Downs. The Deal parish registers record the presence of twenty different Naval vessels in the Downs during 1811. Seven members of the crew of *H.M.S. Monmouth* were married in Deal on various dates between 23 February and 7 November 1811,<sup>77</sup> indicating an almost continuous presence off Deal for nearly a year (since presumably the two men married in February would have required a few weeks to meet and court their future wives.) If these seamen had sufficient time on shore to woo and wed the local girls, they had time also to spend their money in the local shops, to

77. Jane Jones, *op. cit.*

drink in the local pubs, perhaps to get into fights with local men jealous of their success with the girls. If each of the twenty Royal Naval ships had a crew of 100, this would increase the town's population by 2000, without taking into account crew members of merchant ships in the Downs waiting for convoy or stopping for supplies, or the soldiers in Deal as part of the permanent garrison, or passing through on their way to Continental theatres of war. Possibly even the 9744, which was the peak population calculated from the parish register in 1813, was too low, and the population calculated from marriages alone was nearer the true figure; in a number of years between the Peace of Amiens and the Battle of Waterloo, this was over 13000. Whatever the true total, it is plain that the population of Deal during the war years was greater than that recorded in the Census. This unrecorded population, perhaps amounting to nearly as many again as the recorded population, must have had a great impact on the town, however briefly some of these soldiers, sailors and their families may have stayed in Deal. All these extra people had to be fed; the greatly increased demand for provisions, both ashore and afloat, gave impetus to the development of the newly established market gardens in the neighbourhood.

It was not only Royal Naval seamen who would have had an impact on Deal in this period. Overseas trade continued to expand, with exports rising considerably

between 1812 and 1815. The pay of merchant seamen rose, thus giving them greater spending power in their trips ashore. At the same time, marine insurance rates fell significantly, from 25% in the 1790s to 6% in 1810.<sup>78</sup> If more ships and cargoes were insured, there was a greater incentive to Deal boatmen to carry out salvage work, as insurers would pay for salvaged cargoes.

The boatmen were in constant demand, ferrying stores out to the ships, and officers to and from the shore, delivering mails and occasionally assisting in the embarkation of troops, as, for example, when 40,000 soldiers of the Walcheren expedition were embarked by Deal boatmen in the space of a few days in July 1809.<sup>79</sup> Lady Wellesley, later Duchess of Wellington, visited Deal at this period. She described the scenes in her journal.

"A more magnificent [sight] cannot be conceived than that of the Fleet now in the Downs, above 500 sail of transports including 50 Men of War. God Almighty protect our brave Men, success attend them! ... The cheering of our Men as they passed really went to my Heart, God bless them!"<sup>80</sup>

It was said that many boatmen volunteered to accompany the troops to their destination, the mouth of the Scheldt, in order to disembark them.<sup>81</sup>

The collisions, strandings and other accidents that were inevitable with so many ships in so restricted an anchorage provided, in addition, many opportunities for the boatmen to earn salvage money. More directly related

78. Briggs, *op. cit.*, 162.

79. Laker, *op. cit.*, 296.

80. Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: The Years of the Sword* (1969), 189.

81. Laker, *op. cit.*, 336.

to the war, the Sea Fencibles, a local defence force, paid a few shillings to members, while a rather less patriotic but considerably more profitable activity was smuggling escaped French prisoners of war across the Channel. Smuggling, the traditional Deal pastime, continued, although the smugglers were theoretically at war with their suppliers. The Government may or may not have used the smugglers as an unofficial intelligence service; it is said that William Pitt, the then Lord Warden, received the first news of the British Naval victory at Camperdown from a smuggler, while staying at Walmer Castle.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, ashore, the Naval Yard, handling stores and repairing ships, provided employment for local craftsmen, and there were also, Pritchard says, "not less than a dozen boatbuilders' shops in full work, employing many hands, and several ropewalks."<sup>83</sup>

After 1815, all this prosperity ceased. There was a more or less countrywide depression after the peace, but not all regions were equally affected. The factors which contributed to the depression nationally are not all likely to have affected Deal, while circumstances unique to Deal exacerbated the economic decline there. The most immediate economic result of the peace was the cessation of war production. Textiles were no longer required for uniforms, nor iron and steel for arms. Thus a number of men in the industrial north were thrown out of employment, and reduced profits meant that shareholders

82. Laker, *op. cit.*, 312.

83. Stephen Pritchard, *The History of Deal and its Neighbourhood* (1864), 247.

also had to tighten their belts. Over a third of a million men returned from the armed services; many of these were unable to find work, worsening the unemployment problem.<sup>84</sup>

Deal was affected by the ending of wartime production to the extent that the demand for marine stores fell suddenly. Returning servicemen are unlikely to have been such a great problem; Deal boatmen were protected from impressment into the Navy, and with so much prosperity in Deal and employment available in various local defence forces, few men are likely to have joined the Army or Navy voluntarily.

In compensation for reduced Government orders, industry might have expected to benefit from the opening up of trade, both Continental and transatlantic. This expected expansion, however, did not take place, and to reinforce the fact, "shipbuilding was depressed for twenty years after Waterloo."<sup>85</sup> Deal, having been deprived of the presence of the Fleet offshore, would have required a massive increase in merchant shipping to compensate. If this did not occur, all those who made their living from supplying or servicing vessels in the Downs would have suffered.

The fleet left, and so did the Naval officers' wives and families. Between 1811 and 1821, the population of Deal fell by just over 7%. The 1821 Census shows 1321 inhabited houses, 262 uninhabited.<sup>86</sup> Only 92 houses, or

84. S.G. Checkland, *The Rise of Industrial Society in England, 1815-1888* (1964), 8.

85. *Ibid.*, 10.

86. K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 177.



7% of the total, were occupied by more than one family. Unlike 1801 and 1811, no house was inhabited by more than two families. Average occupancy was 5.1 persons per house. The total number of houses had increased by 233 since 1811, but more than this number were empty. Since the boom years for Deal were effectively ended by Napoleon's abdication in April 1814, and Laker suggests that the peak population had already been passed by 1811,<sup>87</sup> the builders and owners of the 233 houses which went up in the years after 1811 are likely to have had their fingers very badly burned indeed.

According to the Census, the population loss had almost been replaced by 1831, but there was another fall of 8% between 1831 and 1841.<sup>88</sup> The Deal Baptism Registers confirm and amplify the picture of declining population. The annual number of baptisms rose from the beginning of the century, being at their highest between 1807 and 1814; the peak year was 1813. In 1815, a sharp fall occurred; except for a slight recovery in 1826/7 and 1833, this decline continued until 1837, the last year for which figures have been calculated. Even more eloquent than the falling number of baptisms is the declining birth rate; just over 40 baptisms per thousand population in 1801, 42.5 per 1000 in 1811, falling to 30:1000 in 1821, and down again to 24.6:1000 in 1831. This continuing fall shows that the 1831 Census total, which indicates recovery, is misleading.

87. Laker, *op. cit.*, 296.

88. Page, *op. cit.*, 358.

Throughout the nineteenth century, contemporary writers bemoaned Deal's supposed economic decline and harked back to the boom time of 1800-15. It is probably more accurate to look upon the wartime years as an aberration, and the relative stagnation afterwards as a reversion to Deal's proper position. There was, after all, no reason why the town should be especially economically successful, and every reason why it should not. In the nineteenth century, Deal had no great natural resource or industry that would bring prosperity to the area, and the town's poor land communications made it unlikely that any industrialist would choose to site his factory there. The North Downs behind the town restricted the main roads out of Deal to the coast; a poor road to Sandwich, and a steep and exposed road along the clifftops to Dover. There was and is no direct road to Canterbury, no easy route to the Isle of Thanet. Deal has never possessed a natural harbour, and the many nineteenth century plans to construct one came to nothing, so it was unable to develop as a cross Channel port, like Dover, or a fishing port, like Ramsgate.

Given that the expectations of some local commentators were perhaps unrealistic, to what extent did Deal suffer depression and decline in the nineteenth century? Many areas of England complained of hard times after 1815, and parts of Kent and Sussex were especially badly affected. The winter of 1829 was an exceptionally

hard one, and the first outbreak of "Swing" violence occurred in Kent in 1830.<sup>89</sup> Stanton wrote of the immediate post-war period that there was "nothing but extreme poverty on every side about this time,"<sup>90</sup> and William Cobbett painted a very depressing picture of the town in the early 1820s.

"Deal is a most villainous place. It is full of filthy looking people. Great desolation of abomination has been going on here; tremendous barracks, partly pulled down and partly tumbling down and partly occupied by soldiers. Everything seems upon the perish. I was glad to hurry along through it, and to leave its inns and public houses to be occupied by the tarred, and trowsered, and blue and buff crew whose very vicinage I always detest."<sup>91</sup>

The great loss of population suffered by Deal in this period must have resulted in reduced business for local tradesmen; Laker observes that there were many bankruptcies in the 1830s.<sup>92</sup> The market gardeners may also have experienced difficulty in disposing of their crops. The Naval Yard was rapidly run down; in 1814 the quarterly wage bill for civilian workers was over £1200; in 1834, the last full year for which paybooks survive, the quarterly wages totalled only £97.<sup>93</sup>

The class which would most keenly have felt the difference in conditions after 1815 would have been the boatmen. They would immediately have suffered great loss of work when the fleet left the Downs, and other factors, not directly connected with the peace, increased their difficulties. The fortunes of the Deal boatmen apparently

89. Alan Armstrong, *Farmworkers* (1988), 61.

90. William Stanton, *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal* (Portsmouth, 1929), 11.

91. William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (Penguin 1967 edn.), 203.

92. Laker, *op. cit.*, 376.

93. P.R.O. ADM 42/375, ADM 42/378, Deal Naval Yard Paylists.

reached their nadir in the early 1830s. William Stanton ascribed the boatmen's distress in the early nineteenth century to the system of making salvage awards in force at the time. Writing of the Salvage Commissioners of the 1820s, he described

"their ignorance of nautical affairs, and [they had] no judgment whatever of our services .... There was a farmer from the county, Vicar of the parish, and others, that scarcely knew a buoy rope from a cable .... Through this great injustice and grievance in a great measure the boatmen and their boats fell into a most deplorable and distressed state. Had they have paid any way like they have these few years the boatmen would never have dropped down to such a poverty stricken state as they and their boats were about the year 1831."<sup>94</sup>

Stanton records that at this period the normal award for taking off an anchor and cable in a gale was £30 - £45, with perhaps £50 in very exceptional circumstances. This had to be shared between twelve to fourteen men, besides the expense of getting the boat up and down the beach. The boatmen were thus getting only a labourer's pay, he said, and concluded

"there never was an award given anything like justice in any case .... They seemed determined that a poor man should not have the possession of money, as if it were to keep him in a servile condition."<sup>95</sup>

In 1832, Stanton was one of seven boatmen who, on behalf of all their peers, petitioned Trinity House on the subject of their difficulties. This led to an enquiry by the Select Committee on the Cinque Ports Pilots, at

94. Stanton, *op. cit.*, 46.

95. *Ibid.*, 46.

which the boatmen were able to air their grievances and a number of causes of their distress were identified. Evidence given by the boatmen and others amply demonstrated the extent to which their fortunes had declined over the previous fifteen to twenty years.<sup>96</sup>

Edward Darby, ship agent's clerk, when asked what was the present state of the Deal boatmen, replied "it is deplorable; the men have not a shift of clothes ... they have no fires to sit by, and not sufficient animal food."<sup>97</sup> On referring to his books, Darby found that "in the year 1809 the office for which I act paid the Deal boatmen, for services to ships, £11,000; in 1819, £2,000, in 1829 £3,000 and in 1832 £650."<sup>98</sup> Lt. Kelly Nazer R.N., collector of light and harbour dues, observed "the greater part of the boats on the beach are in debt and in a very bad state."<sup>99</sup> Thomas Trott, a Deal boatman for forty years, recalled how "sixteen years ago I had seven boats, now I have but one and she is seven years old."<sup>100</sup>

The Committee identified three major causes of distress among the boatmen, apart from that mentioned by Stanton. The boatmen's greatest complaints concerned the pilotage regulations introduced in 1826 "which puts it in the power of a Pilot to supersede any licensed boatmen who may be conducting a ship from the Westward into the Downs, without the boatman having any claim to one shilling of remuneration." Other causes of distress were "the diminution of employment arising from the

96. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, [VIII] (1833).

97. *Ibid.*, 533.

98. *Ibid.*, 535.

99. *Ibid.*, 542.

100. *Ibid.*, 564.

substitution of chain for hempen cables and ... the suppression of smuggling."<sup>101</sup>

After 1815, the Government made a determined attack on smuggling. The shore based Coastguard was expanded and made more efficient, and a Naval Coastal Blockade was established. The detested Captain "Flogging Joey" McCulloch, stationed in the Downs, allegedly vowed to make grass grow in the streets of Deal.<sup>102</sup> This may only be legend, but the town records do show that grass was growing in the streets in 1822 and that grass and weeds were flourishing in 1831.<sup>103</sup> Whether or not this was as a result of McCulloch's presence, there is no doubt that his methods helped to end the large-scale smuggling of the eighteenth century, when boatloads of contraband were landed and openly conveyed through the countryside on packhorses, escorted by gangs of armed men. Even when successfully achieved, smuggling runs were becoming less worthwhile. Goods which had in the war been unobtainable except from smugglers, due to the Navy's Continental blockade, were now freely available, and Huskisson and Peel continued the work begun by Pitt in drastically reducing the number of items on which duty was payable. In 1842 Peel reduced the tariff on 750 of the 1200 dutiable articles, and the following year a further 430 articles were removed from the tariff list.<sup>104</sup>

The anti-smuggling measure which the boatmen claimed caused them the most hardship was the licensing

101. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, (1833), *op. cit.*, 527.

102. Mary Waugh, *Smuggling in Kent and Sussex, 1700-1840* (1985), 78.

103. Leslie H. Shelvey, *The Story of Deal Since its Incorporation 1699-1949*, unpublished Ms. in Deal Library.

104. Briggs, *op. cit.*, 341.

of fishing and hovelling boats, introduced in 1816. Between the North Foreland and Beachy Head, boats were only permitted to go up to four leagues (twelve miles) from the English coast, and fifty to seventy leagues down Channel. Licences permitting them to go within three miles of the French coast might be granted to men of good character, but could be refused a man who was only suspected of being involved in smuggling. Boats found outside the limits for which they had been licensed were liable to be confiscated. The boatmen claimed that these limits restricted their ability to cruise in the Channel on the look out for hovelling work, and the seventy leagues rule certainly permitted them to go no further westward than the Isle of Wight, when they had been accustomed to go as far as the Lizard.<sup>105</sup>

Other regulations introduced in the early nineteenth century which the boatmen claimed caused them hardship concerned the piloting of vessels up and down Channel. From 1813 there was always to be a pilot cutter at sea, either cruising or anchored under Dungeness. Pilots could thus board ships coming up Channel without having to be ferried out from shore by the boatmen, who were normally paid a guinea for this service. Unqualified North Sea or Channel pilots, taken on further down Channel, were said to take ships over towards the French coast in order to avoid the pilot cutter. This is borne out by evidence given to the Committee by Thomas Trott.

105. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, various references.

"I get a vessel sometimes off Beachy Head. The ship cannot pay two people, and the captain says 'You take the ship and run her up, and if you can clear the cutter do so.' I put the ship out of her course which is a wrong thing and I haul in off Folkestone, and I am sure to fall in with a Dover or Folkestone boat, that gets all I have been working for .... I only wish to be paid where I am employed. If the captain employs me to run the ship into the Downs, let me have what I have been working for .... If I am coming up as high as Dover and they see a ship of any magnitude, the pilot cutter is sure to come out, and then I walk away without anything .... The last man who came on board me was Mr Daniel Peake, the warden of Dover. I said to him 'This is a hard case.' He said 'Trott, you know the consequences before you cruize; this is our money, not yours.' At our own cost on credit we have perhaps expended £2 in food for ourselves while afloat and when we return there is not anything for us."<sup>106</sup>

James Tomlin, another Deal boatman, remembered "one ship that I was on board nearly thirty hours and the next morning a pilot came on board and I did not have a farthing."<sup>107</sup>

Despite their evident distress, the boatmen's demands were extremely moderate. Suggestions that pilotage should be thrown open to all the boatmen were strongly resisted by the Cinque Ports Pilots, who feared for their own interests. These events demonstrated the latent hostility which was always present in the boatmen's relations with the pilots.

It was suggested by some members of the Select Committee that the boatmen might turn to fishing to

106. *Report From the Select Committee on Cinque Ports pilots*, (1833), *op. cit.*, 563.

107. *Ibid.*, 574.



supplement their earnings, but even if this had been practical, they are unlikely to have found fishing any more profitable. The Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries, which also reported in 1833, found that the Channel fisheries from Yarmouth to Land's End were

"generally in a very depressed and declining state, that they appear to have been gradually sinking since the Peace in 1815, and more rapidly during the last eight to ten years .... The number of vessels and boats as well as of men and boys employed, is much diminished, and the fishermen and their families who formerly were ... enabled to pay rates and taxes, are now, in a greater or lesser degree, dependent upon the Poor Rates for support."<sup>108</sup>

One of the witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots in 1833 was a long time resident of Deal, former Naval officer Captain Edward Boys.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps as a result of the enquiry, he realised that Deal could not regain its former prosperity by relying on its traditional maritime functions, and began to seek means by which the town could be assisted to develop in other directions.<sup>110</sup>

108. *Report of the Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries* (1833), B. P. P., Fisheries I, 461.

109. *Report of the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 677.

110. Laker, *op. cit.*, 376.

# Chapter Three

## The Boatmen - Change and Decline

### from the 1830s to the 1880s

From the 1830s there were two distinct parties in Deal, with separate and conflicting economic aims. The boatmen, claiming to be suffering hardship after the prosperity of the war years, were concerned to preserve their own way of life. As described in Chapter Two, they initially put forward quite modest proposals relating to pilotage, which they said would alleviate their distress. Later, as their numbers declined, and their economic importance to the town lessened, they could make only ineffectual complaints about changes which further reduced their opportunities to make a living. The other party recognised, from the 1830s, that Deal could no longer rely on its maritime functions for economic growth and sought alternative sources of prosperity.

The nineteenth century population of Deal, as recorded in the Censuses, was stagnating after the growth of the previous 150 years. Table 3.1 shows the pattern from 1831 to 1891.

Table 3.1

The population of Deal, 1831-1891

1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891
7268	6688	7067	7531	8009	8500	8891 <sup>1</sup>

1. K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 172; P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

Between 1831 and 1841, the population actually declined from 7268 to 6688, a fall of 580 or 8%. After 1841, the population rose, but never by more than 500 in a decade until the 1890s. The 1811 total of 7351 was not reached again for fifty years, and in 1891 the population was only 1500 more than it had been in 1811.

As discussed in Chapter Two, comparison with population totals derived from other sources has revealed that the Census figures of 1801 and 1811 were probably considerably lower than the actual population of Deal at the time. It is not possible to make a similar comparison with the later Censuses, for the completeness of the parish registers after the start of Civil Registration in 1837 is highly suspect. However, it is unlikely that the Census totals from 1841 onwards are as defective as those of 1801 and 1811. The two Censuses of 1821 and 1831 agree much more closely with the parish register totals. It was Continental war, with the danger of invasion, and the necessity of keeping the Fleet in the Channel, which had contributed so largely to Deal's expansion. After 1815, Britain was involved in no war in Western Europe until 1914. A Naval Squadron was briefly in the Downs during the Belgian crisis of 1831,<sup>2</sup> but after that date there was no large Naval assembly there until the outbreak of the First World War. Merchant shipping still used the Downs as an anchorage, and no doubt their crews did inflate the population of Deal beyond what was stated in

2. *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), British Parliamentary Papers, Shipwrecks 2, 76.

the Census, but as will be discussed later, their effect on the town's economy diminished as the century progressed.

The boatmen had experienced difficulties since 1815, and the evidence given to the Parliamentary Commission of 1833 suggests that they were in considerable distress at that time.<sup>3</sup> The witnesses chiefly blamed the regulations concerning pilots, and the anti-smuggling measures introduced by the Government after 1815. These continued to be a grievance into the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In 1850, Edward Erridge and Richard Orrick, owners of the luggers *Sparrow* and *Trial* respectively, petitioned the Customs on the subject.

"The prescribed limits ... will have the effect of preventing your petitioners from cruising in a direction where they are most likely to fall in with vessels requiring their services and assistance. That the attendance on shipping forms the most important source of your petitioners' living and consequently that the above restrictions (by narrowing their sphere of industry) will be productive of extensive injury."

The Customs officer, however, was of the opinion that the limits allowed to *Sparrow* and *Trial* were quite adequate.<sup>4</sup>

Other measures, praiseworthy in themselves, and not specifically directed at the boatmen, contributed to their hardship. From the early 1820s, there were moves both in and out of Parliament towards greater safety in merchant shipping. A Select Committee on Shipwrecks was

3. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, [VIII] (1833).

4. P.R.O. CUST 53/1 Customs Letterbooks, Deal, petition of Edward Erridge and Richard Orrick, April 1850.

appointed in the 1830s to look into the causes of and possible remedies for shipping losses. This reported in 1836 and twice in 1843. The Committee made a number of proposals, most of which had been acted upon by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Samuel Plimsoll's campaign in the 1870s against the overloading of ships is the best known movement towards greater shipping safety, but the better education of captains and mates was also important.

The result of these measures was that, as a letter to *The Times* explained in 1858, "of the vessels which ... anchor in the Downs, it is invariably found of late years that they are better supplied and better manned and officered than they used to be, and consequently have less need either of Deal boatmen or of Deal marketing."<sup>6</sup> These measures, however, applied only to British ships; there were still thousands of foreign merchant ships passing the Downs each year; many of the most famous wrecks and rescues described by the authors of *Storm Warriors* and *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* involved foreign ships.<sup>7</sup> Neither did all British shipowners put safety first; both R.M. Ballantyne's *The Lifeboat*, a fictional work, and W. Clark Russell's *Round the Galley Fire*, purporting to be descriptions of actual events, contain accounts of shipowners who put profit before the safety of their ships and crews.<sup>8</sup>

5, David M. Williams, "James Silk Buckingham: Sailor, Explorer and Maritime Reformer", Stephen Fisher (ed.), *Studies in British Privateering, Trading Enterprise and Seamen's Welfare, 1775-1900* Exeter Papers in Economic History No. 17, (1987), 114.

6, *The Times*, 7 October 1858, 2c.

7, John Gilmore, *Storm Warriors* (1876); T.S. Treanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1892).

8, R.M. Ballantyne, *The Lifeboat* (n. d.); W. Clark Russell, *Round the Galley Fire* (1910 edn.)



*From a Photograph*

**'ALL HANDS IN THE LIFEBOAT!'**

*[by W. H. Franklin.]*

**6. "All hands in the Lifeboat!"**

From the early years of the nineteenth century, efforts were made to place lights on the principal hazards around the British coast, including the Goodwin Sands. The North Sand Head lightship was established in 1809, followed by a light at the South Sand Head in 1832. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution was founded in 1824 by Sir William Hillary. His intention was to establish a national service, but this took time and in the interim a number of local and county organisations were set up. The Dover Humane Society placed the first lifeboat there in 1837. The first R.N.L.I. lifeboat serving the Goodwins was established at Ramsgate in 1852. The R.N.L.I. took over the Dover lifeboat in 1855 and followed this by placing lifeboats at Walmer in 1857 and Deal and Kingsdown in 1865. There was a lifeboat also at Broadstairs.<sup>9</sup>

The lifeboats were a mixed blessing to the boatmen. Apart from the coxswain and second coxswain, they had no regular crews, being manned by the first twelve men to reach the lifeboat house and seize the lifejackets on the alarm being given.<sup>10</sup> Since, in addition to any salvage award that might be made, the Lifeboat Institute paid ten shillings to each crew member for a daytime launch, or one pound for a night launch, competition for places in the boat was keen, and there are reports of men actually fighting for possession of a lifejacket.<sup>11</sup> Illustration 6 shows the scramble for places in the North Deal Lifeboat

9. Jeff Morris, *The Story of the Dover Lifeboats* (2nd edn., 1988); Richard Larn, *Goodwin Sands Shipwrecks* (1977), 96.

10. Treanor, *op. cit.*, 84.

11. *The Deal Mercury*, 15 July 1871, 2f.

before a launch in the later nineteenth century. Sailing in the Lifeboat also had the advantage that any damage to the boat would be borne by the Lifeboat Institute, while damage to the boatmen's own luggers had to be paid for by themselves. The men of North Deal probably benefited from the lifeboat being placed there; to the men of South Deal, however, who were too far away from the lifeboat house ever to have a chance of forming part of the crew, she probably seemed like unfair competition. The coxswain and second coxswain of the lifeboat during its first twenty years were Robert Wilds, of the North Star public house at the top of Beach Street, and Richard Roberts, of Alexandra Cottages at the top of Middle Street. Among the regular members of the crew were men of the May, Foster and Sneller families, all belonging to the North End.<sup>12</sup>

Steam power is often referred to as a major factor in the decline of Deal in the nineteenth century. The boatmen's initial reaction to steam power was apparently to predict "a jolly good blow up and no more would be heard of it."<sup>13</sup> The first regular cross-Channel steamer service began in 1820, but "the transition from sailing ship to the iron and steel cargo steamer was not completed for another three decades or more after 1850; the great days of sail lie not before but after the middle of the century."<sup>14</sup> This assertion is borne out by Pain, who gives the following figures for ships passing through the Downs in 1858.

12. Treanor, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

13. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1859, 4a.

14. Gerald S. Graham, "The Ascendancy of the Sailing Ship", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, IX, (1956-7), 74.



	Total Ships	Steamships
March 31 - April 4	225	5
April 27 - May 9	208	9
June 22 - June 28	204	7

In 1865, according to Pain, out of 5,760,309 tons of British shipping, only 823,533 tons, less than 15%, were steamships.<sup>15</sup>

The years between 1849 and 1870 were the age of the clipper ships, in which the art of the shipbuilder and the sailor combined to their greatest effect. It was in the 1860s that the annual tea races from China reached their zenith. The great race between the clippers *Ariel* and *Taeping*, when the two ships arrived in the Downs within ten minutes of each other, after 99 days at sea, was in 1866. The two most famous clippers of all, *Thermopylae* and *Cutty Sark*, were launched in 1868 and 1869 respectively. The Suez Canal was opened in the year *Cutty Sark* was launched, and thereafter opportunities in the tea trade for sailing ships virtually ended, but there were still great opportunities in the Australian wool trade. It was not until 1895 that *Cutty Sark's* owners decided she was no longer paying her way, and sold her to Portugal.<sup>16</sup>

The one way in which steam power did affect Deal was the innovation of steam tugs, the employment of which obviated the need for sailing vessels to wait in the

15. E. C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929), 14.

16. Frank G. G. Carr, *The Cutty Sark and the Days of Sail* (n.d., c.1960).

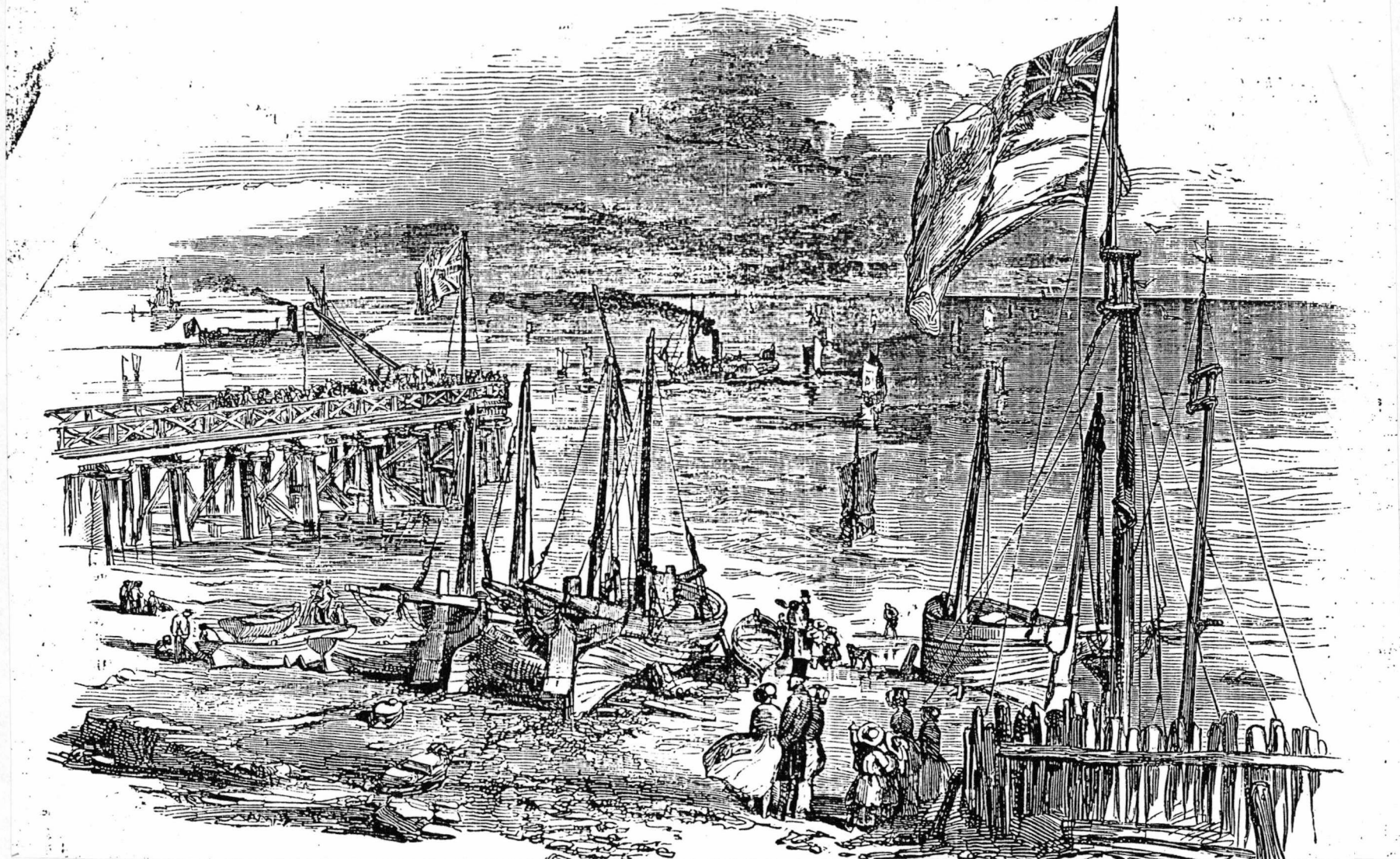
Downs for a fair wind. As early as 1828, holidaymakers at Ramsgate reported seeing "a ship which we think must be an E. Indiaman ... towed by a steamer."<sup>17</sup> The growing use of steam tugs meant that vessels actually at anchor in the Downs could be supplied from places other than Deal; as a local newspaper correspondent complained in February 1869, "during the whole winter a great number of chains and anchors have been lost in the Downs and they would not give a Deal boatman a job at any price to bring them off, but telegraphed to London and had them sent down in a steam tug."<sup>18</sup> In cases of wreck, the steam tugs berthed in Ramsgate and Dover harbours could reach a ship more quickly and often assist more efficaciously than the Deal luggers. In the second half of the nineteenth century, steam tugs took an increasing share of salvage awards which earlier would have fallen wholly to the boatmen. The steam tugs *Champion* and *Vulcan* took £3632 10s of the £7122 5s awarded for the salvage of the *Iron Crown* in February 1866.<sup>19</sup>

There was undoubtedly a reluctance on the part of some shipping companies to employ the Deal boatmen. Some believed that Deal men stirred up dissatisfaction among crew members, and certainly Deal magistrates had more than their fair share of cases of refractory seamen. Seamen who signed on a ship in one of the north-eastern ports, and received an advance on their wages, would often refuse to proceed on the voyage when the ship

17. John Whyman, *Kentish Sources VIII, The Early Kentish Seaside (1736-1840) Selected Documents* (Gloucester, 1985), 387.

18. *The Deal Mercury*, 27 February 1869, 2f.

19. *Ibid.*, 19 November 1870, 2f.



(Kent County Libraries)

7. Deal Beach and the Downs, c.1850  
Showing the first Pier, with two  
paddle steamers approaching.

reached the Downs. Usual reasons for refusal were that the ship was undermanned or unseaworthy, or that the food was bad. The law required the captain to record the men's complaints in the ship's log and to give them the opportunity to state their case before a magistrate. The magistrate would order the complaints to be investigated by a competent, independent person and if, as was usually the case, they were found to be unjustified, the seamen could be sentenced to six weeks in Sandwich Gaol. Deal Town Councillors disliked refractory seamen because the cost of maintaining them in Sandwich Gaol fell upon Deal ratepayers, simply because it was Deal magistrates who sent them there.<sup>20</sup> The Deal boatmen were also accused of fraudulent practices; the usual victims were shipowners or their insurers, the degree of fraud ranging from routinely overestimating the value of goods salvaged or services rendered when making salvage claims to deliberately causing a ship to slip her anchor so that the boatmen might be paid for bringing off a new one. This crime earned a sentence of six months' hard labour in Maidstone Gaol for three leading boatmen in 1868.<sup>21</sup>

One of the causes of the boatmen's decline identified by the 1833 Report was the ending of large scale smuggling. Edward Darby, a ship agent's clerk, claimed that this was a factor, and Captain Edward Boys recalled how "thirty years ago a Deal man principally looked to smuggling."<sup>22</sup> Because smuggling was of course a

20. Pain, *op. cit.*, 140.

21. P.R.O. MT9/105A/1649; *The Deal Telegram*, 1 August 1869, 7d.

22. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, (1833), *op. cit.*, 683.

clandestine activity, it is not easy to be sure of the extent to which it occurred, but the evidence available suggests that a certain amount of organised smuggling continued into the second half of the nineteenth century at Deal.

Twenty seven cases of smuggling in which Deal men were involved were reported at Deal between 1848 and 1881, the period covered by the Letterbooks of the Customs Port of Deal. This does not include cases within the limits of the port of Deal not involving Deal men, or "runs" made by Deal men outside Deal. In 1857, for example, the boat *Lydia* of Walmer was seized while attempting to land smuggled tobacco at Pegwell Bay - a venture in which the Deal lugger *Industry* was also believed to have been involved.<sup>23</sup> The Collector of Customs at Deal recorded his belief that the Deal lugger *Fawn*, which had been run down with the loss of her crew of four in 1864, had been on a voyage to "Nieuport there to ship a quantity of tobacco to be landed somewhere in the Isle of Thanet."<sup>24</sup> The distribution of these cases over the period is shown in Table 3.2.<sup>25</sup>

The number of cases is not large enough for any firm conclusions to be drawn, but it may be significant that five of the twenty seven cases occurred in 1858 and 1859, when the Deal boatmen are believed to have been suffering particular hardship. The Collector of Customs had speculated in 1851 that "the distressed and fallen

23. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 7 January 1857.

24. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, January 1865.

25. P.R.O. CUST 53/1-4, Customs Letterbooks, Deal, 1848-1881.

Table 3.2  
Smuggled Goods Seized at Deal, 1848 - 1881

November	1848	160 lb tobacco
January	1850	62 lb segars
December	1850	62 lb tobacco
February	1851	6 lb "segars") in hat, stays 6 lb tobacco ) & boots
March	1851	5 1/2 gallons Geneva
August	1851	24 lb cigars
June	1852	1200 lb tobacco
November	1852	10 lb tobacco
October	1853	1 lb 14 oz tobacco in coat & hat
April	1854	12 oz tobacco
December	1857	143 lb tobacco at Railway Station
January	1858	1 lb tobacco
May	1858	370 lb tobacco in ballast bags
June	1858	248 lb tobacco
June	1859	151 lb tobacco
October	1859	26 lb tobacco in Beach Street
April	1861	24 lb tobacco
June	1862	84 lb tobacco
March	1863	35 lb tobacco
October	1863	1 3/4 lb tobacco
January	1864	1 3/4 lb tobacco
March	1864	20 lb tobacco
July	1865	66 gall spirits
April	1869	2 lb cigars & 2 1/2 lb tobacco
September	1876	7 gall brandy, believed part of larger cargo from boat owned by a publican of Deal rumoured to have been to Calais, freighted by her owner & 2 or 3 other publicans
May	1879	56 lb tobacco, 12 1/2 lb segars, 1 quart eau de Cologne
June	1881	67 lb tobacco

state of the culprits" was the cause of continued smuggling at Deal.<sup>26</sup> Treanor also suggested that poverty drove the boatmen to smuggling.<sup>27</sup> The number of cases declined from the mid 1860s, but the Collector of Customs suggested in 1865 that this was no reason for the authorities to relax their vigilance; "I do not for a moment doubt that if the force in this locality were weakened so that the chances for successful smuggling became greater than they now possibly can be, systematic smuggling once so rife here now only dormant would revive."<sup>28</sup>

Smuggling was regarded with acquiescence, if not actively encouraged, by the majority of the local population. William Stanton gave up smuggling not through any conviction that it was wrong, but because he was afraid of being caught.<sup>29</sup> In 1860, the Collector reported how the case against Thomas Foster Jr. failed due to the conflicting evidence given by the chief prosecution witness, Richard Winder. Winder was, said the Collector, "very much alarmed when he went into the court as the Boatmen are all highly incensed against him, believing him to be the informer ... even after the dismissal of the case, the mob threatened to tar and feather him, and made such a demonstration that the police were obliged to detain him at the station adjoining the Town Hall."<sup>30</sup> In 1864, when Thomas Erridge, Henry Foster and Edward Hanger

26. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Collector to Lord Clanwilliam, 15 May 1851.

27. Treanor, *op. cit.*, 50

28. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, January 1865.

29. William Stanton, *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal* (Portsmouth, 1929), 54.

30. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 19 June 1860.



were convicted of smuggling twenty pounds of tobacco and imprisoned, "there were loud cries of 'shame, shame,' from some of the audience - in the endeavour to stop these cries the Inspector of Police was assaulted and his coat much torn by a brother-in-law of one of the prisoners."<sup>31</sup> The reason convicted smugglers were conveyed from Deal to Sandwich Gaol by a hired conveyance rather than by train, the Collector informed the Board in 1865, "appears to be solely to avoid a noisy demonstration of popular sympathy, which, ever displayed in the justices court towards convicted smugglers - would certainly be attendant upon their march from Deal prison to the Railway Station."<sup>32</sup>

It was not only the Deal boatmen who sympathised when one of their fellows was convicted of smuggling. When smuggling boats seized by the Customs were sold at auction, the Collector of Customs at Deal reported, "the tradesmen here and at Ramsgate will not bid against the owner of any seized boats."<sup>33</sup> The Collector complained of

"the sympathy which when detected and punished the boatmen receive from those in a superior position in society - very many of whom have been pointed out to me as owing their position to the fortunate contraband speculation of their immediate ancestors - some too of whom I have heard spread their opinion that there is not much harm either in smuggling or wrecking."<sup>34</sup>

The sympathy with which smugglers were regarded by the local people was one factor which the Collector claimed made the task of the Customs at Deal particularly

31. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 10 March 1864.

32. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, 21 October 1865.

33. CUST 53/2, *ibid.*, 2 August 1859.

34. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, January 1865.





difficult. Another difficulty was the nature of the coastline at Deal; in 1857 the Collector described how boats were "drawn up at intervals on the beach, extending over a distance of four miles ready for launching at any moment, and therefore we cannot have that control over their movements which we might otherwise have if moored in harbour."<sup>35</sup> The special problems posed by the position of Deal and the nature of the boatmen's work were reiterated in 1858.

"There is no port in the United Kingdom where the services of an active and intelligent officer are more required ... than here, as the facilities for smuggling are so great, not only in consequence of the exposed nature of the coast and its proximity to the Continent but from the hourly communication existing between the shore and the hundreds of homeward and outward bound vessels constantly passing through or at anchor in the Downs."<sup>36</sup>

The majority of the cases recorded in the period under discussion involved attempts to smuggle tobacco. Because it was solid and could be cut into small pieces, tobacco was easier to smuggle than spirits. Contraband spirits were reported on only three occasions, in 1851, 1865 and 1876. The most significant of the three was in 1865, when the galley punt *Providence* was found to have 21 tubs containing 66 gallons of spirits concealed under fishing nets.<sup>37</sup> Occasional big runs of tobacco were still attempted; the largest seizure was of 1200 lbs of tobacco on board the lugger *Earl Grey* in 1852.<sup>38</sup> Other big

35. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 14 March 1857.

36. *Ibid.*, 8 March 1858.

37. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, 13 July 1865.

38. CUST 53/1, *ibid.*, 8 June 1852.

seizures were in 1858, when in May the open boat *Lark* was found to have 370 lbs of tobacco concealed in her ballast bags and the following month the open boat *Gem* had 248 lbs of tobacco similarly concealed.<sup>39</sup> However, the majority of cases involved small amounts of tobacco, often concealed in a boatman's clothing. The authorities at Deal believed that "scarcely a boatman lands without a pound or more of tobacco concealed about his person, which is disposed of to persons on the lookout and afterwards forwarded by them in large quantities to all parts of the country."<sup>40</sup> In 1859, John Thompson, a local baker, was found in Beach Street carrying a basket containing 26 lbs of tobacco. "As the tobacco is in very small pieces" said the Collector "I infer that it has not been run at one time but has been purchased from the boatmen who may have managed to conceal a piece about their persons when landing from vessels in the Downs."<sup>41</sup>

Tobacco, when run in large quantities, was believed to come from Nieuport in Belgium.<sup>42</sup> Customs officials also believed that boatmen frequently obtained smaller amounts of contraband from officers and men aboard ships in the Downs. In 1851, the two William Irvines, father and son, were found to have one and three quarters of a pound of tobacco concealed about their persons when they landed on Deal beach. William Irvine Sr. said they had been visiting a ship in the Downs on board which were his brother, whom he had not seen for some years, and two

39. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 1 May 1858 & 12 June 1858.

40. *Ibid.*, 5 January 1858.

41. *Ibid.*, 5 October 1859.

42. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1858.

former shipmates of his son's. Having had too much to drink, William Jr., against his father's advice, had accepted the tobacco from his friends. The elder William, the Collector said, had previously been strongly suspected of smuggling.<sup>43</sup>

Later in the century, as true smuggling apparently declined at Deal, the Customs had to contend with the practice of boatmen being paid for their services to ships' captains in goods rather than cash. The objections to this practice were twofold; firstly that the goods brought ashore in this way were often dutiable, and secondly that they were usually taken from the ships' stores and were therefore not the captains' property to give away. "The system is one under which merchants and shipowners have been plundered to a very great extent" it was claimed.<sup>44</sup> Treanor believed that this type of smuggling was "almost forced on the men by foreign vessels."

"Perhaps four boatmen have been out all night looking for a job in their galley punt. At morning dawn they find a captain who employs them to get his ship a good berth, or to take him to the Ness. Perhaps the captain says - and this is an actual case - in imperfect English, 'I have no money to pay you, but I have forty pounds of tobacco, will you take dat? Or vill you have it in ze part payment?' The boatmen consult; hungry children and sometimes reproachful wives wait at home for money to purchase the morning meal .... They take the tobacco, and the first coastguardsman ashore takes *them*, tobacco and all, before the magistrates."<sup>45</sup>

43. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Collector to Board, 12 May 1851 & 22 May 1851.

44. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, August 1868.

45. Treanor, *op. cit.*, 50.

One such case was that of a boy called William Adams who in February 1868 was found offering for sale a few ounces of tobacco given to him by the steward on board a ship in payment for posting two letters.<sup>46</sup> The boy was let off with a caution, but the Collector regarded the problem as serious, as he explained in a report the following month.

"It is becoming the practice for boatmen to bring on shore considerable quantities of coals from vessels lying in the Downs, in exchange for provisions, newspapers, etc., and as this practice opens up a channel for smuggling, besides being contrary to the regulations, ... I directed that the next lot of coals brought on shore in such a manner should be detained .... On Saturday last the Coastguard detained about 1 ton 8 cwt brought ashore by three lads in the boat *Two Brothers* they state that the coals were given to them by ... the master of the *Helen*, Charleston to Caen, in exchange for bread, newspapers and for reporting his vessel .... the practice unless checked may be very much extended, which I submit at this port would be very undesirable."<sup>47</sup>

The Board concurred in this view, and the Collector was instructed "to inform the Deal boatmen that in any future similar case their boats used in the illegal removal of goods from vessels lying in the Downs or elsewhere will be seized."<sup>48</sup> A notice to this effect was posted outside the Custom House, but the boatmen did not readily submit to it. In August 1868, the Collector reported that "complaints have often ... been made to me that the custom of exchange viz. fresh provisions and

46. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 25 February 1868.

47. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, *ibid.*, 26 March 1868.

48. *Ibid.*, 31 March 1868.

vegetables for ships' stores - which ever existed in the Downs should thus have been interfered with."<sup>49</sup> Over the next five years, the Collector recorded a number of cases of boatmen bringing ashore stores, usually coal, as payment for services to passing ships.

The Customs' attempts to stamp out the practice seem shortsighted and insensitive. Except where dutiable goods were concerned, the strict legal position is unclear. It was never possible to predict how long a sailing ship voyage might take. A captain whose ship had been weeks crossing the Atlantic or had spent up to a month in the Downs waiting for a fair wind might well find himself short of fresh provisions and of ready cash to pay for them. In all the cases recorded, the stores were given in payment for services to the ship rather than the captain personally. It was of no benefit to shipowners that their crews should be prevented from obtaining fresh vegetables and other provisions. The Deal greengrocers, grocers and bakers who would have supplied these stores would have lost business as ships' captains, finding they could no longer get provisions from Deal, sought them elsewhere. At a time when the boatmen's livelihood was rapidly disappearing, one more source of income was being closed to them.

Because there was no harbour at Deal, ships' officers having business on shore, or their agents wishing to visit ships in the Downs, had to be ferried to

49. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, August 1868.

and fro by boatmen. This deterred many, including a ship's captain who remarked in 1861 "I have been in the habit of passing the Downs about six times a year for the last twelve years, but have never been on shore at Deal but once before, which is about eight years since."<sup>50</sup> The charge for bringing people ashore varied considerably. The ship's captain quoted above expected to pay £3 10s or £4, which he said he did not complain of, "as I am aware that the sum ... has to be split into a good many shares which leaves but a trifle for each." In 1864, a boatman described how he agreed for fifteen shillings to take three gentlemen out to a ship and wait to bring them back, but the gentlemen were told on enquiry at a stationer's shop that the charge was "an imposition." The fifteen shillings in question, the boatman continued, "would have been divided into six shares, and we sometimes go many days without earning even that sum - a fact which is not taken into consideration by those unacquainted with a boatman's occupation."<sup>51</sup> In 1869, the Collector of Customs at Deal reported that "Mr Hammond, Consul for many nations at this port ... informed me that on one occasion, he, having dined on board a vessel in the Downs, signalled for a boat to bring him ashore, a boat fetched him off and demanded and received £10 for their service."<sup>52</sup>

It was partly to encourage ships' crews and passengers to land at Deal and spend their money there

50. *The Deal Telegram*, 30 March 1861, 2d.

51. *Ibid.*, 14 May 1864, 7d.

52. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 19 July 1869.

that the Pier was built in the early 1860s. This was seen by some as a major contributor to the boatmen's decline. In January 1873, nearly 400 ships' boats came to the Pier, landing about 200 passengers and taking off nearly 80 tons of water and four tons of provisions. The following month, Trinity Pilots began to embark from the Pier instead of being shipped out from the beach. Much of this work would otherwise have been done by the boatmen.<sup>53</sup>

Other changes in shipping technology tended also to work against the boatmen, principally the use of chain cables, which were less likely to part under stress than hemp. Pritchard recorded how "many thousands of pounds annually used to be paid for hemp cables and for the loss of anchors, which has become a comparatively small matter now."<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, on one day in February 1869, Deal boatmen supplied to vessels in the Downs eleven anchors and 615 fathoms of chain and in November 1878, after a gale, "the business of supplying anchors and chains ... has been somewhat active." This, however, was after "many months of forced idleness or unfruitful toil" on the part of the boatmen.<sup>55</sup>

In 1858, some of the local gentry enlisted the help of readers of *The Times* in promoting an emigration scheme for boatmen.<sup>56</sup> *The Deal Telegram* observed in 1859 that "for the last two or three years" the Deal boatmen had "been compelled to look around them for new sources of

53. Pain, *op. cit.*, 58, 163.

54. Stephen Pritchard, *The History of Deal and its Neighbourhood* (Deal, 1864), 247.

55. *The Deal Telegram*, 20 February 1869, 2d; *ibid.*, 16 November 1878, 4f.

56. *The Times*, 7 October 1858, 2c.

income and means of obtaining a livelihood."<sup>57</sup> *The Deal Telegram*, however, was engaged in its own schemes for building a Pier and promoting Deal as a watering place; to this end, it suggested that the boatmen could find an alternative livelihood in providing "pleasure excursions" for visitors. *The Deal Telegram* always adopted an exceedingly patronising attitude towards the boatmen; the idea that these skilled and hardy men would see "trips round the bay" as a satisfying or financially rewarding substitute for wreck and rescue on the Goodwin Sands, or a suitable employment for their valuable luggers, is not the worst example of this newspaper's lack of sympathy or understanding for the boatmen, but it is one of the most absurd. It provoked a proper response from "A Boatman."

"You always mention the boatmen with a sneer and prove their circumstances very bad, if you can, by any possible means. Now we don't need your sympathy, but would prefer you to leave us alone."<sup>58</sup>

The boatmen's living being an irregular one, it is almost impossible to arrive at any accurate estimate of their earnings. Their income was derived from many sources - salvage, piloting, supplying provisions, fishing - and, as shown above, might not always have been paid in cash. There were also perhaps illicit earnings from smuggling and wrecking and, later in the century, the possibility of taking visitors on excursions.

One of the boatmen's regular sources of income was shipping pilots out to vessels in the Downs, or landing

57. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1859, 4a.

58. *Ibid.*, 8 June 1859, 4a.



pilots from them. The fee for this service was one guinea. *The Deal Telegram* recorded that about 6,000 ships anchored in or passed the Downs in 1858.<sup>59</sup> If each had a pilot to be landed or shipped by the Deal boatmen, this would amount to £6,300. When shared between about 500 boatmen of Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown, this would provide about £12 or £13 per man per year. The true amount which could be earned from shipping and landing pilots, however, was probably much less. Vessels could obtain pilots from the pilot cutter off Dungeness without using the boatmen at all - this was a long standing grievance, and one of the major complaints of the boatmen at the Parliamentary enquiry of 1833.<sup>60</sup> Deal boatmen cruising about had to compete with boats from Dover or Thanet looking for similar work. From the 1870s, pilots landing at or departing from Deal could be brought to or from the Pier by ships' boats, rather than being disembarked or embarked on the beach by the boatmen. From the 1850s also the Deal pilots were gradually transferred to Dover, so there was in any case less work of this type available for the Deal boatmen.<sup>61</sup> When a guinea was earned, perhaps after several days cruising in the Channel looking for work, the cost of the men's food on the voyage, possibly supplied on credit by a Deal grocer and the boat's share of the earnings had to be deducted. There would then be little enough left to share between the three or four men who usually made up the crew of a galley-punt.

59. *The Deal Telegram*, 19 January 1859, 4a.

60. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* [VIII], (1833).

61. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 405.

As well as taking Cinque Ports Trinity Pilots to and from vessels, the boatmen piloted ships down Channel or into the North Sea themselves. This was another area of their work which diminished during the nineteenth century, as the authorities insisted on ships employing Cinque Ports or Trinity House pilots instead of the unqualified boatmen. Neither was the work especially remunerative. In 1863, Thomas James Bayley was employed to take a vessel to Shields. He received £6 as his share, but had only £3 left after expenses.<sup>62</sup> In November 1872, John Files, with one of the Trotts and two other men, went off in the galley-punt *Sappho* to a Norwegian brig in the Downs. Trott was engaged for £3 to take the vessel from the Downs to Boulogne.<sup>63</sup> He would have had to pay his own fare back to Deal, and the money that was left would have had to be shared with Files and the two other men and *Sappho's* owners. The following year, Robert Spratling piloted a ship from the Downs to the Isle of Wight. He was paid £9, but his expenses travelling home to Deal were £4 10s, so that only half the amount paid was available for sharing with the other members of his crew.<sup>64</sup> Pain records another occasion when a Deal boatman engaged to pilot a ship received totally inadequate compensation for his work.

"Take, for instance, the case of John Williams, ... who, in the spring of 1862, was shipped on the *Royal Charlie* as she passed through the Downs, for the purpose of piloting the vessel down Channel as far as the Isle of Wight. A

62. *The Deal Telegram*, 21 November 1863, 2f.

63. *The Deal Mercury*, 18 January 1873, 3a.

64. *Ibid.*, 12 July 1873, 2e.

strong wind was blowing from the east at the time. On arriving off the Isle of Wight the wind had by no means abated. The captain of the ship was unwilling to lose the advantage of the favourable breeze, and did not stop to put in at the termination of the pilot's journey, but proceeded on his course, hoping to fall in with some vessel by which Williams might return. The *Royal Charlie* had gone some three hundred miles beyond the Channel when they fell in with the schooner *Ranshawe*, bound to Liverpool. Williams was transferred to the homeward bound vessel and eventually landed at Liverpool. For his services he was rewarded with the munificent sum of £2.<sup>65</sup>

Williams would have been greatly out of pocket by the time he had travelled back to Deal, and his prolonged absence must have caused his family considerable anxiety.

The year 1859 is supposed to have been an exceptionally good one for the boatmen. *The Deal Telegram* gives details of 41 salvage awards totalling over £8700. Divided between 360 boatmen, the number recorded at Deal in 1861, this amounts to just over £24 per man. Money earned from other work is not taken into account, but is unlikely to have more than doubled the boatmen's earnings. In October 1866, the Rector of Deal claimed that "during the last twelve months not less than twenty thousand pounds has been awarded to the boatmen of this part of the coast (Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown) for salvage services rendered to ships in danger and distress."<sup>66</sup> Divided among an estimated 500 boatmen from all three places, this yielded an average income of £40 per man. The £20,000 referred to, however, included an

65. Pain, *op. cit.*, 66.

66. *The Times*, 31 October 1866, 11b.

exceptional award of £7000 made in February 1866 in respect of salvage services to the ship *Iron Crown*, aground on the Goodwins. This was divided between the steam tugs *Champion* and *Vulcan*, the North Deal Lifeboat *Van Kook*, and the South End luggers *England's Glory* and *Morning Star*. *England's Glory's* award, when shared between the 20 men aboard her on that occasion, amounted to £112 14s per man.<sup>67</sup> When this £7000 is excluded from the £20,000 mentioned by the Rector, the annual earnings of the men who did not participate in it fall to £26. In 1870, a North End boatman, Thomas Edward Bingham, declared "I went away to sea three weeks last Saturday .... I was away eight or nine days." He was living apart from his wife, but had arranged to meet her near St. George's Church because "I wanted to give her 8s 6d, half my earnings."<sup>68</sup> At that time, a labourer's pay in Deal was 2s 6d per day, or 15s a week.<sup>69</sup> For all the discomfort and danger of more than a week at sea in an open boat, and despite his skill as a seaman, Thomas Bingham had earned no more than an ordinary labourer

Even in the last third of the nineteenth century, however, salvage awards of several hundred pounds were still frequently reported in the local newspapers. In the period from January to early April 1873, £3930 was awarded to the Deal boatmen for salvage.<sup>70</sup> This was regarded as a large sum. There were about 320 boatmen in Deal at the time;<sup>71</sup> if the £3930 was divided equally

67. *The Deal Mercury*, 19 November 1870, 2f.

68. *Ibid.*, 30 April 1870, 3a.

69. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 March 1866, 2e.

70. *The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram*, various issues.

71. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004.

between them, each man would have had about £12 5s, or less than £1 a week over the quarter. This is without taking expenses or the boats' shares into account. Some big awards were also made in the winter and spring of 1881. £1000 was paid to *Sappho*, *Renown* and *Albion* in January, to be divided into thirty or forty shares.<sup>72</sup> A further £1200 was paid to the Deal boatmen in early April.<sup>73</sup> The total amount paid between January and early April was £2375, but if shared equally between all the boatmen, this would have amounted to only about fifteen shillings per week per man. This was the busiest time of year for the boatmen, and the money earned then would no doubt have to be stretched to cover many weeks when little or nothing could be earned. The early part of 1881 may have been the last period when the boatmen experienced any real prosperity. In October 1882 it was reported that "business on the sea for the last twelve months has been at a very low ebb."<sup>74</sup>

Even when salvage awards of up to £1000 were made, therefore, the Deal boatmen's annual earnings probably did not exceed those of a labourer. Either most boatmen had another source of income, or else the majority were experiencing considerable poverty. Many boatmen had alternative sources of income from concerns run by their wives, such as public houses or lodging houses. Also, some men who gave other occupations in Censuses also worked as boatmen either regularly or occasionally.

72. *The Deal Telegram*, 22 January 1881, 4d.

73. *Ibid.*, 2 April 1881, 4e.

74. *Ibid.*, 28 October 1882, 5b.

All the boatmen of Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown went fishing at the appropriate seasons. It was said in the 1870s that "the Downs yields a good supply of whiting, cod, herrings, sprats mackerel, place [and] skate."<sup>75</sup> The mackerel season ran from the beginning of May to the end of July and the herring season from the beginning of October to the end of November. Autumn and winter were also the seasons for sprat fishing.<sup>76</sup> The Kingsdown men especially devoted much of their time to fishing. Kingsdown was at the southernmost extremity of the Goodwin Sands, and the men were thus at a disadvantage when racing for wrecks.

The claim that there was a plentiful supply of fish in the Downs was not a unanimous opinion. There were complaints throughout the period that fishing in the Channel was in decline, with the fish becoming scarcer. A Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries reported in 1833 that they found the fisheries from Great Yarmouth to Land's End to be in a very depressed state. The causes of the depression, the Committee decided, were the large quantities of foreign-caught fish imported into London, a general decrease in fish in the Channel, and the "extensive interference and aggression of the French fishermen on the coasts of Kent and Sussex."<sup>77</sup>

The Deal boatmen also believed the French were to blame, and later in the century took quite energetic steps to protect their fishing grounds from encroachment

75. *New Handbook to the Downs Neighbourhood* (Deal, n.d., c.1876), 22.

76. *Report from the Commissioners of Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom* (1863), British Parliamentary Papers, Fisheries 4, 439.

77. *Report from the Select Committee on British Channel Fisheries* (1833), British Parliamentary Papers, Fisheries 1, 461.

and interference. In June 1859, the crew of the Deal lugger *Mary Blane*, on seeing the Boulogne fishing lugger *St. Etoile* shooting her lines within a mile of the English coast, boarded the French boat and brought her and her crew back to Deal as prisoners. The Frenchmen were brought before the Collector of Customs, who took no action beyond cautioning them, pointing out to the Deal men that they had committed a breach of the peace and put themselves in the wrong by taking the law into their own hands. The Collector of Customs observed, in his report on the incident, "the Deal boatmen are in a very excited state ... and from my experience of their determined character, I am persuaded, if immediate steps are not taken to shield them from the encroachment of the French, that the most dire effects will ensue, as they ... will not hesitate in going any lengths to obtain justice."<sup>78</sup>

In 1863, John William Arnold, a Trinity House Pilot and drift-net fisherman at Deal, gave evidence to another Commission on Sea Fisheries. He claimed that there had been a decrease in the amount of cod caught in the last ten or twelve years, and in mackerel over the last seven years. He predicted that "if something is not done by the government as far as the drift-net fishing is concerned they must abandon it altogether."<sup>79</sup> Arnold believed that trawlers should be banned from shallow waters, as they disturbed the fish while they were spawning. Trawlers also, he claimed, damaged drift-net fishermen's gear.

78. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 24 June 1859; *The Deal Telegram*, 29 June 1859, 4b.

79. *Report from the Commissioners of Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom* (1863), *op. cit.*, 439.

"You will perhaps have a fleet of drift-nets overboard which cost £150. That is an immense lot of property to have there running the risk of being destroyed .... If the trawlers get amongst them they will cause £100 worth of damage in a very few hours."

He, too, blamed the French for most of the trouble. "They trawl through everything; they don't care for anybody's gear, and they make a pretty mess of us sometimes." It was also the French, he said, who had caused the most disturbance to the fish in shallow waters.

"In Rye Bay and Hythe Bay I have seen sometimes fifty sail of French boats right in along the shore close to Dungeness; they come in so thick that as soon as a fish pokes his head out of the sand he is raked up at once, and it does not matter how small he is .... You might almost stand on Dungeness point and stone them, they are as close in as that."<sup>80</sup>

In a good fishing season, substantial profits could be made in a short time. It was stated that in ten days in October 1865, about £1,000 was shared between the Kingsdown fishermen, about £30 per man. In the autumn of 1867, crews of Deal and Walmer luggers each took from £80 to £100 worth of fish in one night.<sup>81</sup> When the expenses of landing the catch and transporting it to London, and the boats' shares, had been deducted, each man's share was probably about £7 or £8.

Fishing was no more regular an occupation than hovelling. The mackerel season was a short one, and was said to have failed more than once in the 1850s. In other years, there was a glut, with catches being left to rot

80. *Report from the Commissioners of Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom* (1863), *op. cit.*, 439.

81. Pain, *op. cit.*, 105.



on the beach because the price obtainable was not sufficient to make it worthwhile sending them to market. It was also claimed that the amount of shipping in the Downs made the risk of damage to nets unacceptably high.<sup>82</sup>

The dangers of the boatmen's work were as great as the potential rewards. Two of the part owners of *England's Glory*, William Spears and William Middleton, had shares in another lugger, *Albion*. She also participated in some large awards, most notably £1006 11s 6d, in January 1859, for services to the brig *Commandant*, but she was totally wrecked on Deal beach in December 1867.<sup>83</sup> Since the cost of a new lugger, which would fall on her four owners, was about £400, this loss wiped out nearly all the profits from the *Iron Crown* the year before. It so happened that William Spears and William Middleton were two of the three men jailed for six months in July 1868 "for conspiring to defraud ... on account of fictitious salvage claims,"<sup>84</sup> so this was a bad twelve months all round for these men. William Middleton was drowned in 1871, one of fifteen Deal men drowned in a period of just over twelve months, leaving nearly thirty children fatherless.<sup>85</sup>

There is, then, no reliable means of ascertaining the level of the boatmen's earnings. Is there any hard evidence of the boatmen's prosperity and economic importance in the nineteenth century? There is the

82. Pain, *op. cit.*, 28.

83. P.R.O. BT 108/37; *The Deal Telegram*, 14 January 1859, 4a.

84. P.R.O. MT9/105A/M7352.

85. *The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram*, various issues, 1870-71.

evidence of the Censuses for the period 1831-1881. This shows that boatmen were the most important economic group during the period, but were declining in importance throughout. Table 3.3 shows the number of boatmen in each Census, and their changing relative importance as an occupational group.

Table 3.3						
The Deal Boatmen in the Census, 1831-1881 <sup>86</sup>						
	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Number of boatmen	392	320	374	360	321	252
Per 1000 occupied men	-	202	195	176	153	108
per 1000 population	53.9	47.8	52.9	47.8	40.0	29.6

The Census evidence conflicts with that given to the Select Committee on Shipwrecks in 1843. John Boys was asked: "has not the number of hovelling boatmen decreased in the Channel?" He replied "not in Deal for the last ten years; we had about ten years ago about 430, and we always consider that we have about 400 on our beach that are considered as hovellers."<sup>87</sup> When referring to the number of boatmen in Deal "ten years ago", Boys no doubt had in mind the figures given to the 1833 Select Committee on the Cinque Ports Pilots, to which he also gave evidence.<sup>88</sup> This purported to list by name all the boatmen of Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown, with the stations (usually public houses) to which they were attached. No information was given as to how the list was compiled, but it is most likely that someone simply walked around

86. K.F.H.S. Record Publications, No. 172; P.R.O. HD 107 466; HD 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997. The occupational data available from the 1831 Census is insufficient to calculate the total number of occupied men in that year.

87. *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), British Parliamentary Papers, Shipwrecks 2, 78.

88. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 685.

and asked. Any men who were absent at the time might well have been omitted therefore. The list for Deal is certainly not complete - there is, for example, no mention of any of the Budd family, who were in Deal at that time. The Parish Register includes 18 boatmen who had children baptised in Deal in 1833 and 1834, but whose names do not appear in the 1833 list. The 1833 list names 364 men; adding the 18 names from the parish register gives a total of 382.

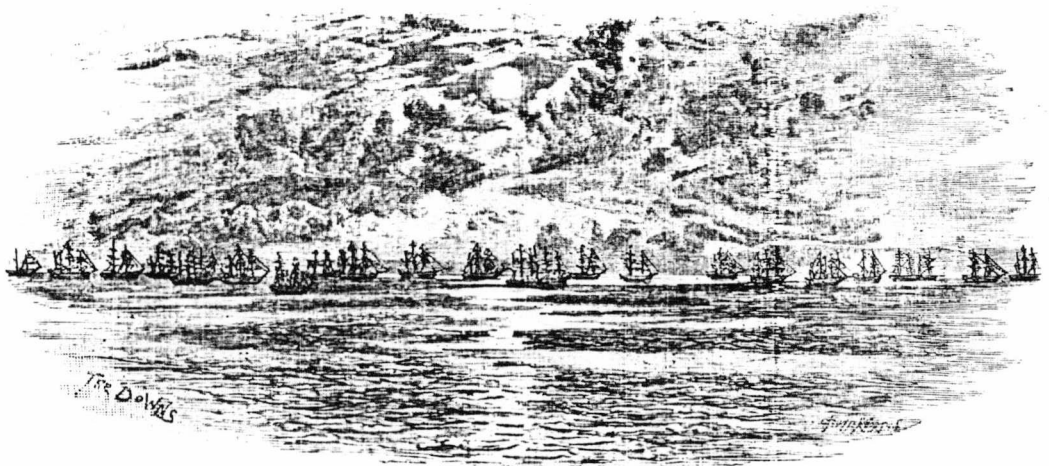
In addition to the 364 boatmen at Deal, there were said in 1833 to be 43 at Walmer and 30 at Kingsdown - a total of 437.<sup>89</sup> Boys was probably including the Walmer and Kingsdown boatmen in his total. There is thus no great divergence between his opinion, the 1833 total and the 1831 Census, but it is not so easy to reconcile his belief that numbers did not subsequently decline with the 1841 Census total. If the number of boatmen remained at about 390 throughout the 1830s, this implies that about seventy men were absent on the night of the 1841 Census. This is not beyond the bounds of possibility, for the 1841 Census, unlike the later ones, was taken in June, the height of the mackerel fishing season, when more men than usual would have been away from home. In Kingsdown almost every head of household was absent from home on Census night.<sup>90</sup> However, the 1831 Census was taken on 30 May, only a week earlier than that of 1841, and the same conditions might be expected to have applied then.

89. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 685.

90. P.R.O. HO 107 469.



8. North Deal- "What's that on the Goodwins?"



IN THE DOWNS.

9. In the Downs

If one accepts Boys' assertion that the number of boatmen had not fallen in the 1830s, and was still about 390, one is also required to accept that the proportion of boatmen in Deal rose from 53.9 per 1,000 population in 1831 to about 59 per 1,000 population in 1841. The boatmen in 1833 had claimed to be suffering extreme hardship, and the population of Deal had fallen by nearly 600, or 8%, between 1831 and 1841,<sup>91</sup> almost certainly largely as a result of the distress suffered by the boatmen. It seems most unlikely, therefore, that the boatmen should not only have maintained their numbers but also increased their relative importance.

The proportion of boatmen to the total population of Deal was almost the same in 1831 and 1851. Assuming the proportion of boatmen to population would have been the same in 1841 had it not been for the absentees, a total number of boatmen of between 350 and 360 is arrived at - still lower than in the preceding or succeeding Censuses. Apparently, therefore, Boys was mistaken, and there was a genuine decline in the boatmen's numbers in the 1830s, followed by recovery in the 1840s. The hypothesis that there was a genuine increase in numbers between 1841 and 1851 is borne out by the fact that there was a rise in the proportion of young boatmen under thirty years old between 1841 and 1851; these young men must have begun to be boatmen after 1841.

Boys was probably correct in his belief that the

91. K.F.H.S. Record Publications No.172; P.R.O. HO 107 466.

number of boatmen "would have increased but for the nautical school which we have established at Deal."<sup>92</sup> At the time of the 1841 Census, 28 young Deal men, all about twenty years old, were serving in the Royal Navy aboard *H.M.S. Implacable* in the Mediterranean.<sup>93</sup> Most of these lads said they had been brought up to the trade of fisherman or waterman; some actually returned to Deal later and took up the boatmen's occupation. If these 28 are added to the boatmen in Deal in 1841, the total rises to 348 and the ratio of boatmen to total population rises to 52.0 per 1000 - almost the same as in 1831 and 1851.

It was customary for young Deal men to serve some time in the Royal or Merchant Navy in order to gain knowledge of the North Sea and Channel waters and experience in handling square-rigged vessels, which would enable them later to call themselves North Sea or Channel pilots, but for 28 of them to be serving in the same Royal Navy ship at the same time seems to call for some explanation. *Implacable's* Captain was Edward Harvey, later Admiral Sir Edward Harvey. He was a member of a Deal family, many of whom served in the Royal Navy.<sup>94</sup> This local connection may explain why so many Deal men were posted to his ship. The majority of these young men joined the Navy early in 1838.<sup>95</sup> It has already been noted that the population of Deal fell by 580 during the 1830s; was there some severe crisis in the town about 1837 which caused this fall and which prompted this

92. *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), *op. cit.*, 78.

93. P.R.O. ADM 37/9248; ADM 53/710.

94. *The Deal Telegram*, 13 May 1865, 7a.

95. P.R.O. ADM 37/9248.

group, little more than boys, to leave Deal? The number of baptisms in 1837 was 24 less than in each of the previous two years, the fall being especially noticeable in the second half of the year.<sup>96</sup> This may indicate that 1836/37 was a particularly bad time for Deal, or it may simply be that, with the introduction of Civil Registration in 1837, parents whose religious faith was not particularly strong ceased to take their children to be baptised.

The Naval recruits may have been pupils at the Nautical School mentioned by Boys. This was established in Deal in 1834, with the object of training boys for a seafaring career. "From which" Boys said in 1843, "we have sent 165 boys to sea educated in Navigation."<sup>97</sup> Bagshaw's 1848 directory put the number of boys sent to sea at 194 but after seventeen years, the number of boys sent to sea from the school was only about 250. The school's influence therefore seems to have been greatest during the first years of its existence; it had apparently closed by 1858.<sup>98</sup>

From 1851, the number of boatmen fell in absolute as well as real terms, the rate of fall accelerating in each decade. Between 1871 and 1881, the number of boatmen fell by over one fifth. The local newspaper agreed that the 1850s were the years when the boatmen began to suffer, and it was in 1858 that the boatmen's situation was thought to be so serious by the local gentry that

96. Jane Jones, *op. cit.*

97. *Report from the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), *op. cit.*, 78.

98. Laker, *op. cit.*, 344.



they established a scheme to assist those who wished to emigrate to New Zealand. Fifty men were said to have expressed an interest, and at least thirteen men, with their families, actually went.<sup>99</sup> Not all the emigrants' motives, however, were quite what the scheme's promoters intended; one man, Richard Roberts, born in 1824, was thought by the Customs to have gone to avoid being arrested for smuggling.<sup>100</sup>

Although the nineteenth century was a time of increasing migration into Deal, this was not reflected among the boatmen. Some families, such as the Kirkaldies and the Irvines, had come to Deal to work as boatmen in the early decades of the century, no doubt attracted by the prosperity of the town at that time. By the middle of the century, there were no such incentives to draw men from outside to work as boatmen in Deal. In 1851, 12% of all boatmen were born outside Deal.<sup>101</sup> Many of these were elderly or in late middle age, perhaps the last of those whose families had been attracted to Deal in the boom years. Others were probably temporary visitors, for example, David Smith, a mariner from Spalding, a visitor at Mrs Ann Erridge's lodging house in Beach Street. In 1861, the percentage of boatmen born outside Deal fell to 6.9%;<sup>102</sup> the older men were dying, and young men were not coming in from elsewhere. In 1871 and 1881, the pattern changed again. The percentage of boatmen born outside Deal rose to 10.3%, but all the increase was in men born

99. Pain, *op. cit.*, 128.

100. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 16 August 1859.

101. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

102. P.R.O. RG 9 543.



Table 3.4a  
Number of Boatmen in each Age-group

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
under 15	0	0	1	0	0
15-19	6	23	25	24	8
20-24	32	49	33	41	28
25-29	32	48	38	33	37
30-34	35	38	32	27	23
35-39	33	40	35	30	28
40-44	38	32	35	25	17
45-49	40	33	35	22	16
50-54	32	31	30	25	15
55-59	31	28	28	25	22
60-64	20	22	26	21	23
65-69	7	23	21	24	12
70-74	8	5	12	12	9
75-79	5	0	5	9	10
80+	1	2	3	3	2
Unknown	0	0	1	0	2

Table 3.4b  
Boatmen in each Age-group as Percentage of all Boatmen in that Census

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
under15	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
15-19	1.8	6.1	6.9	7.4	3.1
20-24	10.0	13.1	9.1	12.7	11.1
25-29	10.0	12.8	10.5	10.3	14.7
30-34	10.9	10.1	8.9	8.4	9.1
35-39	10.3	10.7	9.7	9.3	11.1
40-44	11.8	8.5	9.7	7.8	6.7
45-49	12.5	8.8	9.7	6.8	6.3
50-54	10.0	8.3	8.3	7.8	5.9
55-59	9.6	7.5	7.7	7.8	8.7
60-64	6.2	5.9	7.2	6.5	9.1
65-69	2.1	6.1	5.8	7.4	4.7
70-74	2.5	1.3	3.3	3.7	3.5
75-79	1.5	0.0	1.4	2.8	3.9
80+	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.8

in places less than five miles from Deal; numbers coming from further away decreased.<sup>103</sup> The boatmen now migrating to Deal included four men of the Erridge family who came from Kingsdown about 1867; others came from Walmer. The boatmen of these places were also finding life difficult, and were moving to Deal, the larger town, in the hope of finding more work. The Kingsdown boatmen experienced particular difficulties because they relied on fishing to a greater extent than their neighbours at Deal or Walmer, but had no railway station nearer than Walmer, two miles away, through which to transport their catch to London.

As well as falling numbers, there were changes in the age distribution of the boatmen. Tables 3.4a and 3.4b show the number of boatmen in each age group in each Census, and as a percentage of all boatmen in each Census.

The number of boatmen in the 15-19 age-group was always small, in comparison with older age groups, due to the boatmen's unwillingness to take boys in the luggers. This point will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six. The number of boatmen in their twenties fluctuated. It increased dramatically in the 1840s as the boatmen recovered from the hard times of the 1830s, then fell again in the new depression of the late 1850s. In the 1870s, the number of boatmen in their twenties fell again, but the proportion increased as the decline in other age groups was even greater. In 1881 half the

103. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

boatmen were under forty. The boatmen thus apparently do not exhibit one of the most common signs of a declining occupational group, an ageing workforce. There were, however, indications in 1881 that young men were beginning to look elsewhere for work. Between 1871 and 1881, all the fall in the number of boatmen in their twenties was in the 20-24 age-group, while the number of boys aged 15-19 had fallen by 16 from the level maintained over the last three Censuses, and proportionately from about 7% of all boatmen to only 3%. There had thus apparently been a sudden fall in the number of young men becoming boatmen during the second half of the decade. The 1881 Census thus gives the first indication of the beginning of the final decline of the Deal boatmen.

It was among men in their forties and early fifties that the decline began earliest and was most dramatic. The reason why decline started with men in their forties might be that it was at this age that a man's need for a steady income was at its greatest. A man who was married in his late twenties, the normal age for marriage, according to Laslett,<sup>104</sup> might by the time he was forty-five have half a dozen children too young to be earning. His parents, if they were still living, would be around seventy and perhaps needing help. As the boatmen's living became more precarious, these men would be the first to decide that they must find a more reliable source of income.

104. Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (2nd edn., 1971), 85-86.

The picture of an occupation in decline is reinforced when looking at the boatmen in each age group as a proportion of all men in each age-group. Their declining importance in the economy and society of Deal is clearly demonstrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5  
Deal boatmen in each age-group as percentage of all men  
in that age-group

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
15-19	2.47	8.94	8.74	7.16	2.33
20-24	16.24	23.33	15.76	17.07	10.65
25-29	16.66	23.15	25.16	15.96	14.62
30-34	19.12	19.37	17.02	15.42	10.26
35-39	22.29	20.40	18.78	16.48	12.85
40-44	26.57	18.67	17.52	13.15	8.99
45-49	31.25	24.06	18.81	14.37	9.69
50-54	22.53	23.13	18.98	15.06	9.86
55-59	24.03	27.18	19.85	14.28	15.71
60-64	20.61	20.19	26.00	18.75	14.64
65-69	9.45	25.27	26.25	22.42	10.52
70-74	12.69	7.35	16.90	19.04	12.67
75-79	12.19	00.00	12.19	21.42	22.72
80+	4.54	8.69	10.34	11.11	7.69

In 1841, over 26% of men aged 40-44 were boatmen, and over 30% of men aged 45-49. This figure of 31.25% was the highest in any group in any Census. Numbers were already dropping by 1851, and by 1881, less than 10% of men in their forties were boatmen. The proportion of men in their early fifties who were boatmen also fell, but from a lower initial figure.

There seems to have been no common retiring age for boatmen. Of course, those who owned shares in boats could continue to take part of the profits without being actively involved. In 1841 the proportion of boatmen among men over 65 fell, but in 1851 over 25% of men aged 65-69 were boatmen and in 1881 over 22% of men over 75 were boatmen, by far the largest proportion of boatmen in any age-group in that Census. It might have been presumed that men of this age were no longer actively occupied as boatmen; however, Thomas Spears was still working at fishing and landing pilots at the age of nearly 80 in 1881.<sup>105</sup> The high proportion of boatmen in the older age-groups might indicate that boatmen lived longer than other men. There are certainly some remarkable cases of individual longevity among the boatmen, considering the hard conditions under which they worked.

It is evident from the Census information that large numbers of men ceased to be boatmen during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Many of course died. It has not been possible to establish definitely the fate of others who apparently ceased to appear in the Census. The Marsh and Norris families were so numerous that individual members cannot be traced from one Census to another with any certainty. In other cases, such as that of the three (or four) Edward Wells', born in the 1820s, inaccuracies in the recording of ages in the Census mean that it is impossible to be sure which men

105. *The Deal Telegram*, 2 July 1881, 5a. See also Table 7.6.

left Deal and which stayed, or even how many men of that name and approximate date of birth there were.

After setting aside all those boatmen known to have died between 1841 and 1881, all those who were over fifty at their last appearance as boatmen in the Census, who may have ceased to be boatmen due to death, old age or infirmity, and all those regarding whom there is any ambiguity, as indicated above, 181 men ceased to be boatmen between 1841 and 1881. Of these 181 men, 35 took up alternative occupations in Deal. Table 3.6 shows these alternative occupations. Where two occupations are shown, the man changed from one to the other between Censuses.

Table 3.6  
Alternative Occupations Adopted by Men Ceasing to be  
Boatmen

Licensed trades	8	Labourer/carter	1
Labourer	3	Farm labourer	1
General porter	2	Policeman	1
Painter/publican	2	Painter	1
Fishseller	2	Carpenter	1
Fisherman	2	Bricklayer	1
Fishcurer/fisherman	1	Railwayman	1
Bathing machine proprietor/fisherman	1	Lodging house keeper	1
Greengrocer/lic. vic.	1	Customs officer	1
Ropemaker/labourer	1	R.N. Seaman	1
Ag. lab./policeman	1	"Manager"	1

The most popular alternative occupation for boatmen was licensed victualler or publican, with eight men

turning to it immediately and two more coming to it later after spending some time working at other trades. The publicans of Beach Street had close links with the boatmen; many of them may have continued to work as boatmen, leaving their families to run the pubs. Six other men turned to fishing, either as fishermen or fishcurers or sellers. They too may not entirely have given up the boatmen's work, switching from one to another as opportunities presented themselves. Nine men changed their occupation from boatman or mariner to fisherman in different Censuses. Table 3.7 shows how they progressed from one to another.

The pattern is one of boatmen and mariners turning to fishing later in the period. Perhaps they did so as they became too old for the more demanding work of the boatman, or perhaps the table bears out the assertion that "as hovelling declined, the luggers on this part of the coast seem to have been more systematically employed in fishing during the mackerel and herring seasons."<sup>106</sup>

Reasons advanced for the Deal boatmen's not turning more to fishing when hovelling declined were that the Deal luggers were not suitable for use as fishing boats and that too much time spent in fishing would make the boatmen unfit for their more important work of providing services to shipping. Luggers full of sodden fishing nets, it was said, could not go quickly to the aid of vessels in distress. In addition, "the qualities

106. Pain, *op. cit.*, 35.

Table 3.7  
Boatmen and Fishermen in Deal, 1841-1881

Name	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
John Arnold <sup>1</sup>	?at sea	B	F	F	====
Thomas Baker	====	B	B	B	F
William Baker	====	====	====	B	F
George Jarvis <sup>2</sup>	?B	?B	?X	F	B
Robert Larkins	====	====	B	F	B
Thomas Neeve	====	B	B	X <sup>3</sup>	F
William Neeve	Navy	B	F	F	F
Thomas Snoswell	F	B	X <sup>4</sup>	====	====
William Trapps	B	F	====	====	====
Henry Trapps	====	B	B	X <sup>5</sup>	F

B = Boatman or Mariner      F = Fisherman

1. Not the same man as John Arnold, fisherman and Trinity Pilot, who gave evidence to the Parliamentary Commission in 1863.
2. There may have been two men of the same age named George Jarvis. The occupation in 1861 was beer retailer.
3. Thomas Neeve was a fishcurer in 1871.
4. Thomas Snoswell was a net owner in 1861.
5. Henry Trapps was a bathing machine proprietor in 1871.



necessary to constitute the two men are opposed to each other; in fishermen there is slow patient plodding ... incompatible with the quick, daring, dashing intrepidity of the hoveller; to sink the boatman in the fisherman would be to destroy the spirit which creates him what he is."<sup>107</sup> Or, as a character in *The Longshoreman* remarked, "Fishing? ... Deal hovellers have to be pretty hard up, I reckon, to take to that job."<sup>108</sup>

Only nine boatmen turned to the occupations that were expanding in Deal in the mid and late nineteenth century. Two became policemen, four entered the growing building trades, two as painters, one as a carpenter and one as a bricklayer. One man went to work on the railway and two turned to the growing holiday trade, as a bathing machine proprietor and a lodging house keeper. These again were seasonal occupations, the day to day work of which could quite easily be left to other members of the family while the man continued to work as a boatman.

The 35 men who took up alternative occupations in Deal represent less than 20% of the 181 who ceased to be boatmen between 1841 and 1881. There may have been a general unwillingness among the boatmen to abandon their traditional way of life and work, but they must also have been at a disadvantage when seeking other work, having no skills or training that would be useful ashore. This is demonstrated by the number of former boatmen who took up unskilled work such as labouring at various times.

107. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 682.

108. Herbert Russell, *The Longshoreman* (1892), 72.

The remaining 146 men who ceased to be boatmen apparently left Deal altogether, as they do not appear in the Censuses in any other capacity. No doubt some of these men died, and some might by chance have been absent from home for two or more Censuses, or might merely have moved across the parish boundary to Walmer, but the conclusion must be that the majority of men who found that they could no longer make a living as boatmen either could not or would not take up alternative occupations in Deal and preferred to seek work elsewhere. It is understandable that the boatmen were unwilling to take up alternative occupations in Deal. Boatmen, even those who were not also boatowners, could largely please themselves about how, when and where they worked. They must have been almost unique in nineteenth century society in having to be deferential to nobody, because no-one was in a position to enforce deference by means of economic sanctions. Probably only landowners could afford similar independence, for even successful tradesmen and businessmen had to consider their customers. In any other occupation that was available in Deal, however, the boatmen would have been subordinate to somebody. Running a public house with fellow boatmen for customers was probably the alternative occupation which allowed a boatman to retain the greatest independence, but he was still subject to the licensing laws, of which many landlords fell foul, and the brewery. Whether the

preserving of their independence was a factor in so many boatmen's deciding to leave Deal rather than pursue alternative occupations in the town cannot be judged without knowing where they went and what they did, but it probably played some part.

As the number of boatmen declined, so too did associated crafts and trades. Pritchard, writing in the 1860s, claimed, "there were in the last war not less than a dozen boatbuilders' shops in full work, employing many hands, and several ropewalks, where cables of all sizes used to be made. All this employment has long ceased."<sup>109</sup> Pritchard's assertion is amply borne out by the Census evidence. This is set out in Table 3.8.<sup>110</sup>

Table 3.8  
Numbers Involved in Maritime Trades and Occupations,  
1831-81

	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Boatbuilder	30	26	27	25	20	16
Sailmaker	3	8	6	6	5	4
Ropemaker	6	6	4	5	7	1
Mast & Blockmaker	0	0	1	2	1	2
Total	39	40	38	38	33	23

Ropemaking had virtually disappeared from Deal by 1881. The street names Ropewalk and South Ropewalk were changed to Sandown Road and Blenheim Road during the 1860s.<sup>111</sup> The number of boatbuilders fell from 30 to 16 in the fifty years from 1831 to 1881. Boatbuilding in

109. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, 247.

110. K.F.H.S. Record Publications No.172; P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

111. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004.

Deal was largely restricted to a few families. Bayley, Gardiner and Hayward were the oldest established family firms. James Nicholas established his business in 1858, while members of the Durban family worked for Bayley's for over 60 years. Deal boatbuilders were chiefly renowned for building the Deal luggers, said to be the best boats of their kind in Britain, possibly in the world. At one time, Deal boatbuilders received orders to build boats for Customs stations all over the country, and James Nicholas built two luggers for export to Australia.<sup>112</sup> The great luggers, however, were chiefly used for shipping heavy anchors out to vessels in the Downs and as chain cables replaced hemp, with the result that new anchors were less often needed, and those that were required were more frequently shipped from London by steam tug, demand for new luggers became less and less. As early as 1859 *The Deal Telegram* reported how, after a period of stormy weather,

"all the large forepeak luggers were called into requisition, which is a very rare circumstance. In fact it is but seldom that even one lugger of the tonnage of the *Tiger* is required, the smaller boats affording under ordinary circumstances sufficient convenience for the purpose."<sup>113</sup>

Change came to the boatbuilders in the 1860s. In 1861, there were 25 boatbuilders, their ages quite evenly distributed between 13 and 73. By 1871, the six eldest had all died and six or seven of the younger experienced

<sup>112</sup>. Pain, *op. cit.*, 124; P.R.O. CUST 53/1, various references.

<sup>113</sup>. *The Deal Telegram*, 9 November 1859, 2b.

men had either died or left Deal. In the 1860s and 1870s, very young men were still becoming boatbuilders, but there was a shortage of men in their thirties and forties - men who were knowledgeable and experienced, but young enough to adapt to changing conditions and carry the boatbuilding firms on when the older men could no longer continue.<sup>114</sup> The situation is summed up by March's observation that Henry Durban at the age of 70 built the galley punt *Cruiser* with help from a boy.<sup>115</sup>

The ability to adapt was becoming imperative by the 1880s, for fewer and fewer luggers were being built, the work available being no longer sufficient to justify the cost of these big boats. Instead, the boatmen were turning more to the smaller and cheaper galley-punt. Some boatbuilders did come to terms with new technology; Isaac Bayley built two small sail-assisted steam tugs, and James Nicholas built a number of motor boats towards the end of his long career.<sup>116</sup> But Bayley was born in 1808 and Nicholas in 1827, and Bayley at least was not followed into boatbuilding by any son or grandson.<sup>117</sup>

An unknown number of men might have been involved in maritime trades like boatbuilding, but not enumerated as such. James Chittenden was a carpenter in 1851; his son William was a smith. They were the son and grandson of John Chittenden, a boatbuilder.<sup>118</sup> It is very probable that James, at least, was employed in boatbuilding at some time in his life.

114. P.R.O. RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

115. Edgar J. March, *Inshore Craft of Great Britain in the Days of Sail and Oar*, II (1970), 102.

116. *Ibid.*, 102, 110.

117. P.R.O. RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

118. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

Sailmaking, throughout most of the nineteenth century, was solely in the hands of the Finnis family, but by the 1870s, the business was being carried on by ageing men and boys;<sup>119</sup> like the boatmen and the boatbuilders, the young adult men of the Finnis family were being forced to leave Deal to seek employment. Edgar J. March, in his analysis of accounts kept by George Finnis between 1870 and 1897, has demonstrated the extent to which business had declined by the end of the century. In 1873, Finnis made 65 sails, including 25 for luggers. By about 1890, no more than 18 sails were cut in one year, only three of which were for luggers. "The last few years in this loft must have been grim," March concludes, with Finnis taking only £3-£4 a week gross.<sup>120</sup>

Table 3.9  
Pilots in Deal, 1841-1881

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Pilot n.o.s.	40	9	9	9	15
Cinque Ports Pilot	0	42	26	13	2
Cinque Ports					
Trinity Pilot	0	0	9	2	0
Trinity Pilot	0	2	3	10	35
North Sea Pilot	0	0	0	4	25
Channel Pilot	0	0	1	1	1
Oversea Pilot	0	0	2	1	2
London Pilot	0	0	1	0	0
Coasting Pilot	0	1	0	0	0
Total	40	54	51	40	80

<sup>119</sup>. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.  
<sup>120</sup>. March, *op. cit.*, 116.

In 1881, 13 of the Trinity Pilots and 16 of the North Sea Pilots were enumerated aboard the boats on board which they were absent at sea.<sup>121</sup> If these are excluded, the total number of pilots falls to 51, close to the total in previous Censuses. The North Sea pilots were actually boatmen but have not been added to the total number of boatmen in 1881 as to do this would be to distort the figures, as boatmen and pilots at sea were not enumerated in any of the previous Censuses,

In the first half of the nineteenth century, 56 pilots were stationed at Deal under the control of the Cinque Ports. Accusations of political jobbery in the appointment of Cinque Ports Pilots were common at this time.<sup>122</sup> In 1853, control of the Cinque Ports Pilots was transferred to Trinity House, and from this time, the Deal pilots were gradually transferred to Dover.<sup>123</sup>

There was some confusion between pilots and boatmen among contemporaries. Black's *Guide to Kent* of 1889 refers to "the Deal boatmen, limited by statute to the number of fifty-six, ... world famous for gallantry and self-devotion."<sup>124</sup> Cinque Ports Pilots and later Trinity Pilots were qualified and certificated men who had had to pass an examination. The boatmen who often referred to themselves as North Sea or Channel or Oversea Pilots were not certificated and had no qualification except their experience. The working relationship between the pilots and the boatmen was ambiguous and sometimes strained.

121. P.R.O. RG 11 997.

122. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*; *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), *op. cit.*

123. Laker, *op. cit.*, 405.

124. Black's *Guide to Kent* (1889), 257.

Pilots relied on boatmen to ferry them to and from the shore, and the one guinea they earned each time they performed this service was an important part of the boatmen's earnings. However, pilots and boatmen were also in competition for piloting work.

Fishing, as indicated above, never appears to have played a major part in Deal's economy. Having no harbour, the town was not suitable as a centre for fishing on a large scale, as the catch had to be unloaded on the beach. Fishing, when compared to what could be earned from salvage, was much work for little reward. Only 33 men gave their occupations as fisherman in the Censuses between 1841 and 1881. The number of fishermen in each Census was as shown in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10

Fishermen in Deal, 1841-1881

1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
6	7	13	9	10

None of these men are recorded in any Census as having any secondary occupation, although it is very likely that some did. Fishing is largely a seasonal occupation, and it does not seem to have been a very profitable one, nor one that men pursued for the whole of their working lives. Only eight men appeared as fishermen in more than one Census, and only four were fishermen in three or more



Censuses. Over half the men engaged in fishing at any time between 1841 and 1881 were over fifty. Men under fifty were recorded as engaged in fishing 21 times during the period, but on fourteen occasions, the man was unmarried. Of the seven young married fishermen, the wife of one worked as a dressmaker, while three others had adult relatives lodging with them and bringing in an extra wage. Two of the remaining three had no children.

The maritime classes in Deal, therefore, were in decline during the nineteenth century. This is reflected in the changing attitudes to the boatmen both in and out of Deal during the century. The 1833 Parliamentary Report on the Cinque Ports Pilots emphasized the important contribution the Deal boatmen made to the national economy by salvaging cargoes and saving life.<sup>125</sup> In 1859, *The Deal Telegram* referred to the boatmen as "a most important and world-renowned class of our fellow townsmen"<sup>126</sup> By 1880, however, regard for the boatmen had declined to such an extent that even *The Deal Mercury*, which had always been rather better disposed towards them than its rival, printed a letter from a visitor suggesting that

"some of the boatowners' beach privileges ought to be bought over and they should be told to move on. The boats might be concentrated more than they are now. They disfigure many of the finest sea views and run backwards into people's front doors. I would not see the maritime business destroyed, but I would have the boats subordinate themselves to other and quite as important interests."<sup>127</sup>

125. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, (1833) *op. cit.*, 525.

126. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1859, 4a.

127. *The Deal Mercury*, 31 July 1880, 2f.

It was in the 1880s that it was recognised that the boatmen's era was passing away. In 1882 it was claimed that the luggers "lay on the beach for months together unused"<sup>128</sup> and in February 1883 the Mayor, Mr William Nethersole, declared that

"The old source of income of Deal was drying up, namely, that derived from the water .... The steam tug had encroached upon and superseded the calling of the boatmen .... The day for hovelling was gone by."<sup>129</sup>

In the following decade, Nature and the Borough Council combined to hasten further the boatmen's end. Strong winds and abnormally high tides during the winter of 1897-98 caused the sea to encroach dramatically on the foreshore at the North End, sweeping away storehouses and capstan grounds. At the same time, the Council persisted with its schemes for improvement of the sea front, buying up capstan grounds as the opportunity arose in order to extend the Esplanade.<sup>130</sup> The scene on Deal beach in 1893 as described by Sydney Gerald was in marked contrast to his earlier view, quoted at the beginning of Chapter One.

"One cannot but survey with regret the groups of these hardy seafarers, lounging about upon the steep of the shingle, listlessly gazing away seawards, without heart enough to launch a boat and sail the barren tract of ocean in search of a job. Their day is past, their vocation all but dead .... With the last of the present generation will depart the good old type of Deal boatman ... who snatched his livelihood out of hard gales and the distress of mariners."<sup>131</sup>

128. Pain, *op. cit.*, 167.

129. *The Deal Mercury*, 10 February 1883, 5b.

130. Pain *op. cit.*, 139.

131. Sydney Gerald, "Deal Beach", *The Pall Mall Magazine* (1893), 367.

## Chapter Four

### The Development of Deal as a Holiday Resort

Deal had been known as a holiday resort since the seaside first became fashionable in the mid-eighteenth century. Bathing machines were introduced there in 1754. In 1781, Deal was one of a number of Kentish seaside towns said to "have attracted greater numbers this season than for some years past."<sup>1</sup> In 1805, it was said of Deal that "though a maritime town ... the resort of summer visitors makes [for] a brisk circulation of money."<sup>2</sup> Social life was said to have flourished at Deal in the first decade of the nineteenth century, with assemblies, balls and theatres.<sup>3</sup> It is surprising that Deal, so close to the French coast, should have been popular with pleasure-seeking visitors at a time when the threat of invasion was at its height. No doubt many of them were relatives of the soldiers and sailors stationed there, or were attracted by the presence of the garrison. Jane Austen described how Lydia Bennet looked forward to a visit to Brighton when a militia regiment was quartered there. "She saw ... the streets of that gay bathing place covered with officers, ... she saw all the glories of the camp; its tents stretched forth in beauteous uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to complete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at

1. John Whyman, *Kentish Sources VIII, The Early Kentish Seaside (1736-1840) Selected Documents* (Gloucester, 1985), 186, 318.

2. *Ibid.*, 365.

3. T.J.Sharp, *How does The Times Illustrate the History, Importance and Position of Deal, 1790-1815?* Kent Extended Essay (1974).

least six officers at once."<sup>4</sup>

After 1815, British spas and seaside towns whose only rivals for the twenty years of war had been each other were suddenly exposed to competition from Continental towns and resorts. British visitors flocked to Paris and to Brussels as soon as peace was declared. Many Continental towns, in addition to the charm of novelty, could offer a better climate and more dramatic scenery than Britain. Seaside resorts all over Britain introduced programmes of building and development to counter this competition. In Kent, new streets were laid out in Margate and Ramsgate after 1815; the latter town also benefited in the 1830s from the patronage of the Duchess of Kent and her daughter, the future Queen Victoria.<sup>5</sup> Waterloo Crescent on the seafront at Dover was built in 1834-38. Herne Bay was laid out as a resort in the 1830s and a major development also took place in Gravesend in this decade.<sup>6</sup> In June 1825, *The Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser* observed

"many improvements are going on at Deal and Walmer, where lodgings have at this early period of the season become scarce .... We have no doubt it will ere long rank as high in the estimation of the public as its beautiful situation fully entitles it to."<sup>7</sup>

In 1834, Captain Edward Boys, a long time resident in the town, proposed that the people of Deal should attempt to repair their fortunes by promoting the town as a holiday resort. The principal objective of the

4. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Pan 1967 edn.), 172.

5. Whyman, *op. cit.*, 29.

6. John Newman, *The Buildings of England; North East and East Kent* (3rd edn., 1983).

7. Whyman, *op. cit.*, 17.

Committee formed by Boys was to buy up and demolish properties on the eastern, seaward side of Beach Street, in order to lay out promenades. At this period, there was a continuous line of buildings along this side of the street, and access to the sea could only be gained through narrow passageways between them, which were no doubt frequently obstructed by boatmen's gear. Eventually two parades were laid out, South Parade and the North or Pilots' Parade. Later, when the old Naval Yard area was redeveloped, the South Parade was extended to Deal Castle, but it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the Town Council was able to gain possession of the last of the sea front properties and join up the two Esplanades.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, and independently of Boys' project, other attempts were made to attract visitors and middle class residents to Deal. A private company erected gasworks in Cannon Street, and gas lighting was introduced into the main streets. In 1836, another company established a waterworks to replace the wells which then provided Deal's water supply, but which were frequently tainted by sea water.<sup>9</sup> The Adelaide Baths were opened in 1835.<sup>10</sup> These were never successful and were purchased by the town in 1882, amid some controversy.<sup>11</sup> All these were speculative ventures, which would not have been started if their promoters had not believed there were sufficient people in Deal able and willing to pay

8. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 340.

9. Stephen Pritchard, *The History of Deal and its Neighbourhood* (Deal, 1864), 266, 273.

10. Laker, *op. cit.*, 375.

11. *The Deal Telegram*, various issues, March 1882.

for these services to produce a return on their investment.

In the early nineteenth century, Deal had shown no signs of developing in the way that Margate had done and Ramsgate was doing. The town lacked the qualities which assisted the development of Thanet as a resort area. It had no wide sandy beaches, and the steep shingle banks had to be shared with the boatmen. Most visitors to Thanet came from London; Deal was further than Thanet from London both by road and sea, and communications were poor. Passengers by road from London could not travel direct to Deal, but had to change to local coaches at Dover or Canterbury.<sup>12</sup> Sailing vessels, and later steamships, from London served all the Kentish coastal towns, but the journey to Deal was longer and thus more expensive. Deal was at a further disadvantage in having neither harbour nor pier, so that all passengers had to come ashore in small boats, disembarking on the beach.

The railway first came to Deal in 1847, when the town became a terminus on the South Eastern Railway. Travellers from Deal to London had to go to Minster and there change on to the main line which ran from Margate to London, via Canterbury and Ashford. This was a long and inconvenient journey. Pilots, in particular, who often left their ships at Gravesend, complained of the time and cost involved in returning to Deal by train. A Bill to extend the railway from Deal to Dover was put

12. Whyman, *op. cit.*, 44.

before Parliament in 1865. James Gosley, a Trinity Pilot, gave evidence to the Committee which clearly demonstrated the problems he and his colleagues faced.

"'When we land we have to wait some length of time, sometimes two or three hours at Gravesend to wait for the South East train. There is the North Kent Line, and we have to come to Petts Wood and wait sometimes at Maidstone, and it takes a circuit of some six or seven hours to get from Gravesend to Deal.'

"'I believe sometimes you go to Birchington on the London, Chatham and Dover Line, and then drive to Minster?'

"'Yes, at great expense...'

"Sometimes you go to Dover and drive from Dover?'

"'Yes .... From Dover there is no way to get home without 10s, 12s or 13s for a trap.'" <sup>13</sup>

Despite the obvious need for the Deal-Dover link, petty jealousy between the South Eastern and London, Chatham and Dover railway companies prevented it from being completed until 1881.

One of the proposals made by Boys in the 1830s was that lodging houses should be fitted up to attract holiday visitors. The lack of good class accommodation in Deal for visitors gave rise to frequent complaints during the nineteenth century. In 1859, a non-native resident of the town asserted that Deal was "half a century behind most watering places ... the retired haberdasher or well-to-do grocer can scarcely find apartments equal to their ideas of gentility." <sup>14</sup> In 1864, *The Deal Telegram* reported that

13. P.R.O. RAIL 1066/371.

14. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 April 1859, 4e.

"the enquiries for detached or semi-detached villas, ranging from £30 to £50 per annum in the neighbourhood of Deal are incessant. We could undertake to find respectable tenants for twenty such immediately."<sup>15</sup>

In July 1865, "a better class of lodging houses is in daily demand, which, if we were in a position to supply, would ... add greatly to the numbers [of visitors]." The next month, "enquiries for furnished houses and apartments are far beyond the supply at Deal."<sup>16</sup>

There were numerous inns in Deal, but these chiefly catered for maritime trade - ships' officers from vessels offshore, pilots who had brought ships into the Downs and passengers disembarking from homeward bound ships. Holiday visitors making a stay of some weeks required a different type of accommodation. This was perceived by William Betts, an immigrant to Deal, who in 1844, as a speculation, purchased a plot of ground near Sandown Castle and built "five of the most magnificent houses that can be seen anywhere on the English coast." These houses, known as Sandown Terrace, had, Pritchard claimed, been occupied at times by nobility. Although the houses themselves were fine enough, their situation, on the edge of the sand dunes which extend to Sandwich, was exposed and isolated. On their northern side was nothing except the Good Intent or Sandown Castle Inn and the ruins of Sandown Castle. Pritchard believed "it will not be long before many more [houses] of similar description will be erected on land contiguous to them",<sup>17</sup> but when Pritchard

15. *The Deal Telegram*, 17 September 1864, 2d.

16. *Ibid.*, 29 July 1865, 7a; *ibid.*, 19 August 1865, 7a.

17. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, 280.



wrote, Sandown Terrace was already twenty years old. It was not until the turn of the century that a line of villas and bungalows began to extend northwards from North Street to Sandown. In the 1851, 1861 and 1881 Censuses, two out of five houses in Sandown Terrace were uninhabited.<sup>18</sup> In 1871, three were uninhabited.<sup>19</sup> Two of the three houses that were inhabited in 1861 were occupied by William Betts himself and his son. Perhaps the elder Betts' speculation had failed to the extent that he had either to occupy his houses himself, or sell them. Or perhaps he had decided that the time had come to retire to Deal (he was seventy in 1861) and had set aside another house for his son and his son's family, who had recently returned from Canada and probably had no other home in England.

The next attempt to provide high-class accommodation for visitors to Deal was as part of the Victoria Town development in the 1860s and 1870s. The houses of Prince of Wales Terrace were

"in every respect to be of a first class character, and greatly superior to any already in existence. The magnificence of their position, combined with the excellent adaptability and comfort of their internal arrangements, cannot fail to secure for them an immediate purchase."<sup>20</sup>

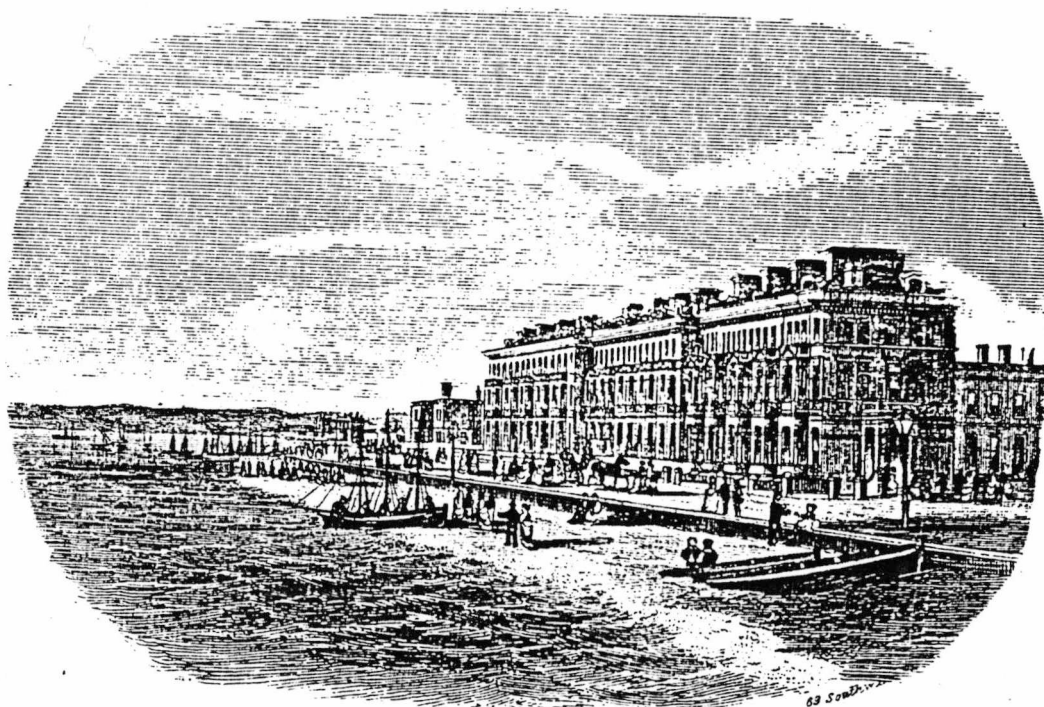
These houses were completed in 1873. The southernmost part of this development was the Queen's Hotel, next to Deal Castle. This "commodious and splendid hotel" was expected to open in June 1878.<sup>21</sup>

18. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 11 997.

19. *Ibid.*, RG 10 1003-1004.

20. *The Deal Mercury*, 18 February 1871, 2c.

21. *The Deal Telegram*, 8 June 1878, 5a.



June 18 7 1876.

*Prince of Wales Terrace, Victoria Town Deal.*

(Kent County Libraries)

10. Prince of Wales Terrace

A major issue in Deal in the middle decades of the century was the provision of a Pier, to compensate for the lack of a harbour and to provide recreation for visitors. The first attempt was in 1838 when the engineer Sir John Rennie was commissioned to build a 445 foot Pier to the north of the Royal Hotel. Just over half this length was built, then the money ran out.<sup>22</sup> This truncated structure is shown in Illustrations 7 and 13.

There is some doubt as to the eventual fate of this Pier. Laker states that

"nothing more was done ... to complete the structure, and year by year parts of it succumbed to the violence of the winter gales. About 1857 a sudden south east gale brought the whole structure down."<sup>23</sup>

In February 1859, however, *The Deal Telegram* reported a case at the Petty Sessions in which George Woodland, a boatman, was charged with assaulting Josiah Bayley on the Pier. Bayley, it was said, was in the habit of going on the Pier to tout for business among the ships' boats there. There was thus evidently a Pier at Deal in useable condition early in 1859, yet in the same issue of the paper a letter was published advocating the construction of an iron Pier opposite Broad Street.<sup>24</sup> This was the beginning of an energetic campaign by Edward Hayward, editor and proprietor of the *Deal Telegram*, to have a new Pier built at Deal. Letters advocating the project appeared so frequently that one suspects many of them were written at the instigation of, or even by, the editor himself. Regular leading articles pointed out the

22. Laker, *op. cit.*, 378; *The Kent Herald*, 25 March 1841, 3b.

23. Laker, *op. cit.*, 379

24. *The Deal Telegram*, 23 February 1859, 4a, 4d.

editor himself. Regular leading articles pointed out the benefits that would accrue to the town through an increase in summer visitors attracted by a new Pier. At the end of May 1859 a meeting took place of gentlemen favourable to the idea, preparatory to forming a Committee.<sup>25</sup> By the end of July, a survey of the proposed site had been completed but progress was slow and it was not until 30 March 1861 that *The Deal Telegram* was able to announce the preliminary prospectus for potential shareholders.<sup>26</sup> Despite Mr Hayward's continuing efforts to generate interest, by early July only one fifth of the shares available had been subscribed for.<sup>27</sup> However, by November of that year, the Pier company had been registered as a limited liability company.<sup>28</sup>

The new Pier was opened with due ceremony in July 1864.<sup>29</sup> In September *The Deal Telegram* reported that 27,544 people had paid the penny toll to use the Pier in the 51 days it had been open. This sounds an impressive number, but amounted to only about £2 5s a day, less than £115 in total. This was at the height of the summer season when the Pier still had the attraction of novelty. It is not surprising that *The Deal Telegram* reported that "notwithstanding the great favour by which the Pier is received by the more sensible portion of the inhabitants it has met with great disfavour from others and an ill-feeling still exists among some classes, hardly credible."<sup>30</sup> Despite the continuing enthusiasm of *The*

25. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1859, 4c.

26. *Ibid.*, 27 July 1859, 4c; *ibid.*, 30 March 1861, 2d.

27. *Ibid.*, 6 July 1861, 2c.

28. *Ibid.*, 2 November 1861, 2d.

29. Laker, *op. cit.*, 400.

30. *The Deal Telegram*, 3 September 1864, 2e.

*Deal Telegram*, the Pier never did make a profit. In 1866 the Company was wound up and, as money was still owed to the building contractors, a Glasgow company, ownership of the Pier passed to them.<sup>31</sup>

The Pier's promoters saw it as a means of increasing Deal's prosperity by encouraging more summer visitors and bringing men ashore from ships in the Downs who might otherwise have found the boatmen's charges too high or the exertion of embarking and disembarking on the open beach too great. Indirectly, they suggested, it would help the boatmen by bringing in more visitors who would wish to take excursions. It was improbable that the presence of a Pier alone would be sufficient to draw greater numbers of visitors to Deal, and by making it possible for people to come ashore without the boatmen's assistance, the Pier's promoters were in fact doing the boatmen, and indirectly the whole town, a disservice. The boatmen themselves believed that the Pier was not only a threat to their livelihoods but a danger to life itself.<sup>32</sup> In both assertions they were vindicated. The editor of *The Last of our Luggers and the Men who Sailed them* spoke of "the few years which remained to our luggers after the Pier was erected," and the boatmen blamed the Pier for the sinking of the *Reform* in 1871.<sup>33</sup>

Deal's other major attraction was the Regatta, first held in 1826 and annually thereafter except in 1870. The Regattas were organised by voluntary committees

31. *The Deal Telegram*, 14 July 1866, 7b.

32. *Ibid.*, 21 July 1866, 2f.

33. E.C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1917), 58; *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 3b.

of local gentry and tradesmen; apathy seems to have been responsible for the failure in 1870.<sup>34</sup> The event included races for local luggers and galley-punts and open races for boats from all parts of the Kent and Sussex coasts. Regatta day seems to have had something of a fairground atmosphere, with stalls and entertainments along the Esplanades. Special trains ran from London on the day, and in 1874 it was estimated that there were 20,000 spectators.<sup>35</sup>

An Amalgamated Fête, held by all the local Friendly Societies in the grounds of Walmer Castle, also became a regular feature of the summer season in the 1870s.<sup>36</sup> Deal's healthy situation was seen by many as one of its chief recommendations. "Deal is a nice, healthy, quiet, clean watering place" said one visitor in 1859.<sup>37</sup> In 1870, *The Queen* mentioned Deal's "pure air, sea breezes and rational recreation." The article continued "the little old fashioned town is in itself full of interest, from the historical associations of the place; and its sea-faring population is hardly less interesting," and concluded "as a healthy watering place, Deal is almost unrivalled for its bracing influence."<sup>38</sup> *The Hour* in 1874 singled out the boatmen and the views of shipping in the Downs as Deal's greatest attractions.<sup>39</sup> *The Deal Telegram* the same year listed such varied attractions as excursions in the Deal luggers, perhaps as far as Calais or Boulogne, the Promenade Band, concerts, flower shows,

34. Laker, *op. cit.*, 371; *The Deal Telegram*, 27 August 1870, 7a, 7b.

35. *The Deal Telegram*, 5 September 1874, 4c.

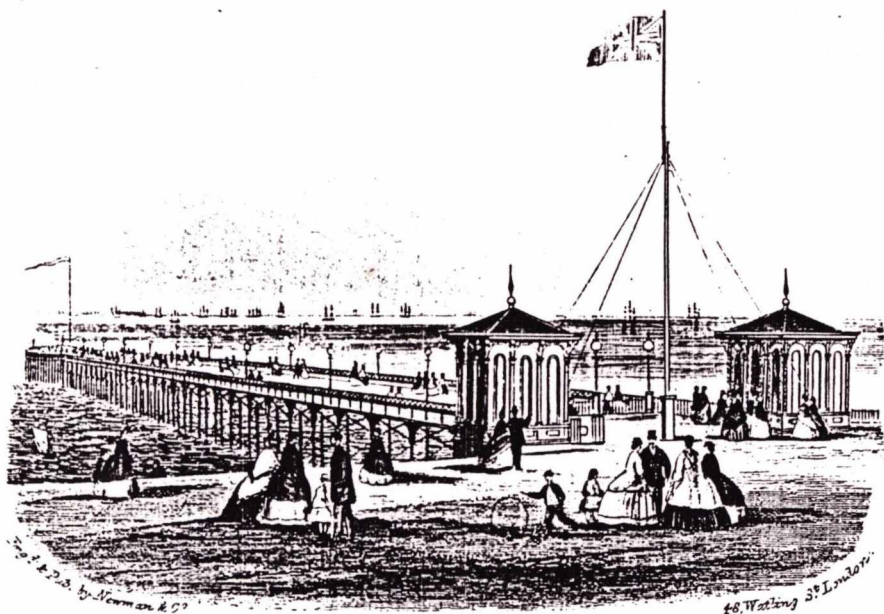
36. *The Deal Mercury*, 18 July 1874, 3b.

37. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 April 1859, 4e.

38. *Ibid.*, 21 May 1870, 7a.

39. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1874, 5c.

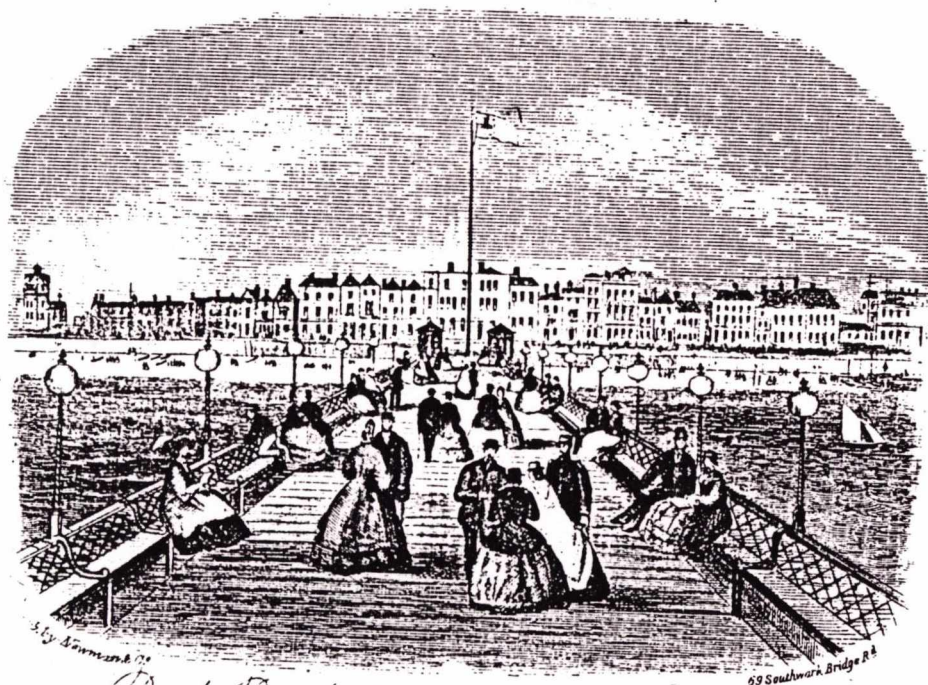




*Deal Pier from the Esplanade!*

(Kent County Libraries)

11. Deal Pier from the Esplanade, c.1865



*Deal Pier looking towards the Esplanade!*

(Kent County Libraries)

12. Deal Pier looking towards the Esplanade, c.1865

boat races, fêtes, cricket matches and athletic sports.<sup>40</sup>

A visitor in 1872 was of the opinion that

"Deal possesses many more attractions for visitors than is commonly supposed .... In the first place I should point to the proximity of Deal to the Downs and the constantly changing character of the shipping .... The interest may be vastly augmented by occasional gossips with the intelligent and civil boatmen on the beach, who are ever ready to impart information."<sup>41</sup>

Not everyone agreed the boatmen were among Deal's attractions. In April 1859 a correspondent in *The Deal Telegram* complained of the South Esplanade being occupied by boatmen "smoking, spitting and giving audible utterance to such language which every decent person must revolt at", and suggested that if there were no improvement, the authorities should threaten to remove the boats from in front of the Esplanade.<sup>42</sup> In 1863, a visitor asked if the seats on the South Esplanade were intended for the use of the public.

"If so, it is hardly fair that visitors should be compelled to submit to the constant annoyance of a set of idle men who are allowed to smoke and spit without the least possible restraint .... The language too frequently used is most abominable and disgusting."<sup>43</sup>

Neither was there complete unanimity among visitors and townspeople as to what type of entertainments were desirable at Deal. A visitor in 1869 thought a band should be employed throughout the season, but another visitor disagreed, preferring quiet.<sup>44</sup> *The Queen*, after extolling the healthiness of Deal, went on "music is not

40. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 September 1874, 4c.

41. *Ibid.*, 31 August 1872, 7c.

42. *Ibid.*, 6 April 1859, 4b.

43. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1863, 7b.

44. *The Deal Mercury*, 14 August 1869, 3b; *ibid.*, 21 August 1869, 3a.



heard on the pier as often as it should be; the reading room is ill-supplied with books and papers and public entertainments are almost unknown."<sup>45</sup> In 1871, it was claimed that "visitors universally complain of the extreme dullness and lethargy which characterise our town and many of them are really forced to shorten their visit on this account."<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, steamer trips to and from Ramsgate and Dover were as likely to take people away from Deal as bring them in, while entertainments such as Punch and Judy were vulgar.<sup>47</sup>

Deal and Walmer had one claim to fashionable status in that Walmer Castle was the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. For most of the nineteenth century, the Lord Warden was a man of international stature - Lord Liverpool, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Palmerston. Wellington in particular spent a large proportion of his time at Walmer. In 1842, he was visited there by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.<sup>48</sup> Unlike Victoria's earlier visits to Ramsgate and Broadstairs, this sign of Royal approval does not seem to have greatly raised Deal and Walmer's status as resorts. After the death of Lord Palmerston in 1865, there was some local agitation in favour of the Prince of Wales being appointed the new Lord Warden. The hope was that Deal and Walmer would then become fashionable.<sup>49</sup> If the Prince had been appointed, and had taken a liking to the area, these hopes would no doubt have been realised,

45, *The Deal Telegram*, 21 May 1870, 7a.

46, *The Deal Mercury*, 10 June 1871, 2e.

47, Joan James, "Travelling Circuses and Showmen in Deal and Dover", *Bygone Kent*, V, 1984, 605.

48, Gregory Holyoake, "Wellington at Walmer", *Bygone Kent*, IV, 1983, 141.

49, *The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram*, various issues, October/November 1865.

but whether the presence of the Marlborough House set would have been altogether welcomed by the respectable burgesses of Deal is debatable.

Despite all the efforts of the townspeople and Deal's natural attractions, the town's success as a watering place was not achieved quickly. In 1867 *The Deal Telegram* reported that

"our visitors' list still presents but a meagre appearance and the town anything but the bustle of summer. Lodgings and apartments unoccupied are abundant."<sup>50</sup>

It was in the 1870s that Deal began to seem successful as a holiday resort. In August 1874, *The Deal Telegram* reported that

"never has the ancient and honourable borough of Deal been so inundated with visitors as during the past two weeks. The hotels and lodging houses are crowded from cellar to garret and are hourly besieged by numerous applicants for domucialatory (sic) accommodation."<sup>51</sup>

A week later, "the great increase from year to year in the number of visitors sufficiently shows how largely and rapidly the locality is growing in public estimation,"<sup>52</sup> and at the end of the following month, "during the past season, we have had residing amongst us many persons from distant parts ... every county in England has been represented ... in addition to Ireland, Scotland and the Continent - even our cousins from Yankeeland have put in an appearance."<sup>53</sup>

Deal was said to be especially suited to families with young children, owing to the cleanness and

50. *The Deal Telegram*, 13 July 1867, 2f.

51. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1874, 4a.

52. *Ibid.*, 22 August 1874, 4c.

53. *Ibid.*, 26 September 1874, 4d.

healthiness of the town and the honesty and good nature of its inhabitants. Visitors were said to be "chiefly merchants from London, the merchants' clerks, and the London retail tradesmen,"<sup>54</sup> but the town was also sometimes chosen for factory outings, as when about eight hundred employees of the Peek Frean factory in Bermondsey came to the town by rail for a day trip in August 1867.<sup>55</sup> Merchants' clerks and factory employees were unlikely to be lavish spenders, even while on holiday. A few years later, the social status of visitors seems to have risen a little, but the emphasis was still on economy.

"Society at Deal differs very much from society at Ramsgate or Margate. It is a little more select. People come to Deal to escape the din and bustle of the great watering places on the eastern coast .... Deal must be delightful to clergymen, there are so many of them here .... You need not be very rich to enjoy all it has to offer. For that reason there happens to be a decidedly professional air about the visitors to Deal. There you may find the not over-rich but awfully hardworking barrister stealing a few days from the brain drudgery by which he lives .... There is also your solicitor and the merchant who is not wealthy, and the thrifty bank clerk, and a small regiment of gentlemen of all ages belonging to the Civil Service .... It is quiet and secluded and cheap enough for them."<sup>56</sup>

As shown in Table 4.1, there is evidence in the Census of the growing importance of the holiday trade in Deal. This shows an increase in the importance of the holiday trade, but comparison with directories reveals that the Census does not give the full picture. The 1881

54. *The Deal Telegram*, 11 June 1864, 7c.

55. *Ibid.*, 21 May 1870, 7a; *ibid.*, 24 August 1867, 2d.

56. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1874, 5c.

Table 4.1  
Men involved in Holiday and Entertainment Trades in Deal,  
1841-1881

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Lodging House Keeper	1	0	0	2	5
Hotel Keeper/Proprietor	0	0	2	2	6
Eating House Keeper	0	0	1	0	0
Coffee Shop Keeper	0	0	1	0	1
Baths/Bathing Proprietor	0	1	1	3	1
Pier Manager/Collector	0	0	0	1	1
Music Hall Manager	0	0	0	1	0
Musician	0	1	3	7	2
Vocalist/Singer	0	0	2	1	0
Comedian	0	0	0	1	3
Theatrical Performer	0	0	1	0	0
"Professional"	0	0	0	1	0
Music Seller	0	0	1	0	2
Piano Tuner	0	0	0	1	2
Organ Builder	0	0	0	0	4
Billiard Marker	0	0	0	0	1
Photographer	0	0	1	5	6
Total	1	2	13	25	34

Census enumerates five male lodging house keepers. The 1882 *Post Office Directory* lists 36 male lodging house keepers. Only two of these gave lodging house keeper as their occupation in the Census, so there were actually 39 men involved in lodging house keeping in Deal in 1881-82.

Of the 36 male lodging house keepers in the 1882 directory, thirty can be identified on the Census. Four of these were unemployed or retired, the remaining 26 had other occupations. Although these men advertised as lodging house keepers, therefore, they were almost certainly not themselves involved with the day to day running of the houses. In only one case, however, was the wife of one of these men returned as a lodging house keeper in the Census. One wife was returned as a dressmaker, another as a laundress; the remainder gave no occupation at all. This may be due to the seasonal nature of the occupation - the women were probably not actively engaged in lodging house keeping at the time the Census was taken. Alternatively, it may be due to a certain resistance to the idea of married women working which has been noted elsewhere. Trevor Lummis has described how some elderly informants in oral history projects denied that their mothers ever went out to work and only after repeated questioning mentioned that their mothers did sometimes have jobs.<sup>57</sup>

Most of the occupations associated with the holiday trade were more commonly carried on by women than by men.

57. Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* (1987), 60

John Walton particularly identifies the occupations of laundress and domestic servant as being indicators of the status of a town as a resort.<sup>58</sup> Table 4.2 shows the total number of women involved in the holiday and entertainment trades in each Census.<sup>59</sup>

Table 4.2					
Women associated with Holiday and Entertainment trades, 1841-1881					
	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Domestic Servant	345	432	489	471	456
Lodging House Keeper	0	24	31	48	65
Laundress	25	61	68	72	82
Entertainer	0	0	2	5	2
Totals	370	517	590	596	605

All the women involved in entertainment as actresses, singers or dancers were, or claimed to be, married. For women to be professionally connected with the stage was in the nineteenth century widely thought to be synonymous with immorality. A single woman's reputation would no doubt have suffered accordingly. The number of musicians, singers and other entertainers would no doubt have been greater had the later Censuses, in which they feature, been taken in the summer months.

Among women lodging house keepers, 65 were enumerated in the Census and only 42 in the Directory; 28 were common to both directory and Census. The total number of male and female lodging house keepers in

58. John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort; a Social History, 1750-1914* (Leicester, 1983), 75.

59. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

directory and Census in 1881-82 was 118. No doubt many more families took in lodgers on an occasional or seasonal basis and were never recorded anywhere as lodging house keepers.

Of the 26 male lodging house keepers who had different occupations in the Census, thirteen were boatmen. Perhaps boatmen in particular needed an alternative source of income. It is also possible that boatmen were more likely to take in lodgers because they lived in the part of Deal nearest to the sea, where most visitors would wish to stay. Of the total of 78 male and female lodging house keepers listed in the 1882 directory, 28 were in Beach Street. A further 25 were in the streets between Beach Street and High Street. Most of the houses in this part of Deal were small and old. They fronted directly on to the street and were not detached from their neighbours and were thus susceptible to noise and disturbance. Few would have had such amenities as private parlours, bathrooms or inside toilets. It is easy to understand why middle class visitors, accustomed to increasingly high standards of comfort in their own homes in quiet suburbs, complained of the lack of good lodgings in Deal.

How far did the holiday trade, and catering for retired and independent residents, replace the lost trade from passing ships? If Deal was not "half a century behind most watering places," as asserted by the

correspondent of 1859,<sup>60</sup> it was certainly not in the vanguard of fashion. Most seaside resorts had pleasure piers from the 1840s onwards.<sup>61</sup> Deal did not acquire one until the 1860s. Prince of Wales Terrace was completed in 1873, but according to John Walton, massive Gothic seafront terraces of this type were already becoming outdated in the 1870s.<sup>62</sup> Despite the optimistic reports of the local newspapers in the early 1870s, in 1878 *The Deal Telegram* was again referring to "the long continued depression in trade." The new Mayor, Mr James Lush, was proposing another major initiative to promote Deal as a holiday resort. In his speech to the Town Council, he referred to Captain Boys' earlier attempts to promote Deal as a watering place, and proposed that the town should continue Boys' plans by widening Beach Street and extending the Esplanades.<sup>63</sup> In 1881 a Parliamentary Report was able to dismiss Deal as "a watering place of no great ambition".<sup>64</sup>

Holiday visitors would inflate the population of Deal in the same way as the crews of passing ships did, making demands on local tradesmen. However, holiday visitors would not affect the town's economy to anything like the same extent as passing crewmen. Ships were passing Deal all the time, whereas the holiday season lasted for only part of the year. In 1874, *The Deal Telegram* reported that "the season at Deal is gradually extending; some few years back the end of August finished

60. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 April 1859, 4e.

61. Felicity Stafford and Nigel Yates, *Kentish Sources IX, The Later Kentish Seaside (1840-1974)* (Gloucester, 1985), 21, 62.

62. Walton, *op. cit.*, 127.

63. *The Deal Telegram*, 18 May 1878, 5b.

64. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Existence of Corrupt Practices in the Borough of Sandwich* (1881) [XLVI], v.



what was called the visitors' time but now it extends to the middle of October."<sup>65</sup> At times there could be up to 400 ships anchored off Deal; if each had a crew of twenty, this would amount to 8000 men, equal to the permanent population of Deal. In contrast to this, John Whyman has estimated that in Margate in 1841, about 1200 of those enumerated or just over 11% of the population were holiday visitors.<sup>66</sup> The proportion of visitors to Deal would have been lower, and the people who chose Deal for their holidays were not of the wealthiest classes. The next chapter will discuss what happened to the tradesmen of Deal in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and in what way the town changed in character in that period.

65. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 September 1874, 4c.

66. John Whyman, "Visitors to Margate in the 1841 Census Returns", *Local Population Studies*, VIII (Spring 1972),

## Chapter Five

### Change in the Nineteenth Century

During the Napoleonic period, the prosperity of the tradesmen of Deal depended upon the Naval and Military presence there. They, as well as the boatmen, suffered in the depression of the 1830s. Chapters Three and Four showed that Deal's major occupational group was in decline and the attempts to promote the town as a holiday resort in no way compensated for the loss of maritime trade. To what extent did Deal's tradesmen still depend on the town's maritime connections in the mid-nineteenth century, and how did their position change as the boatmen declined? *The Deal Telegram* in 1859 believed that the town's prosperity was still dependent on the boatmen. "It has been truly said that no class can long prosper in a community at the expense of any important portion of its people, neither can one class be borne down by poverty without it soon exerting a withering and collapsing influence upon the body politic."<sup>1</sup> When the mackerel fishing that year was disappointing, "the town itself has also suffered in trade."<sup>2</sup> In 1865, when the mackerel season was bad, "a prosperous fishing season influences trade at Deal and Walmer to a considerable extent."<sup>3</sup>

In 1861 *The Deal Telegram* plainly believed that Deal's prosperity depended on the presence of shipping in the Downs.

1. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1859, 4a.
2. *Ibid.*, 13 July 1859, 1f.
3. *Ibid.*, 17 June 1865, 2e.

"It is with regret we observe the great distress prevailing at the present time in Deal, in consequence of the long continued easterly winds, which not only throws out of employ some hundreds of our brave boatmen for many weeks together, but renders labour scarce amongst various other classes of labourers ... hence the trade of the town is seriously affected. Not only a great falling off of business is experienced but our local rates are considerably increased."<sup>4</sup>

As late as 1878, when it should have been plain that the boatmen's era was passing, *The Deal Mercury* reported that "when there is no trade on the beach, there is but little in the town."<sup>5</sup>

*The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram* made frequent references to the depressed state of trade in Deal. In 1861, "it is well known to the inhabitants of this district that the trade has not expanded ... but has rather diminished."<sup>6</sup> The following year, "there is a general depression of business at Deal, to a degree which has not been experienced for many years."<sup>7</sup> In 1867, "the dull state of trade in Deal is severely felt among all classes"<sup>8</sup> and in 1871, "we are painfully aware that for the past five months the trade of the town has been in a most depressed and sluggish state, that our shops have presented a very gloomy and dispirited aspect."<sup>9</sup>

However, other evidence contradicts this view and indicates that the town of Deal, while it might have been somewhat depressed during the middle and later years of the nineteenth century, was not in extreme distress.

4. *The Deal Telegram*, 11 May 1861, 2e.

5. *The Deal Mercury*, 12 July 1878, 4c.

6. *The Deal Telegram*, 30 March 1861, 2d.

7. *Ibid.*, 21 June 1862, 2e.

8. *Ibid.*, 16 March 1867, 2c.

9. *The Deal Mercury*, 18 February 1871, 2c.

Previously, the majority of property in Lower Deal - the settlement along the beach - was held on lease from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Moves to enfranchise these leaseholders were instigated in 1856, and within a year or two, much of the leasehold property had been converted to freehold.<sup>10</sup> Many of the new freeholders set about making improvements to their properties.<sup>11</sup> Evidence of these mid-nineteenth century improvements can still be seen in Deal today, for many of the houses in Beach Street and Middle Street which have nineteenth century brick fronts are, when seen from the side or back, plainly much older than this.

It has already been shown that the boatmen, the biggest occupational group in Deal, declined during the nineteenth century, and the character of the population changed in other ways, with an increase in the proportion of the population born outside the town, and a fall in the number of young men in the population. Table 5.1 shows the occupational structure of Deal, as shown by the Censuses, between 1831 and 1881.<sup>12</sup>

The figures for 1831 are preserved among the Deal Parish Records, but do not include retired, professional or independent men, or those in some other categories. Since the most important occupational groups were included, however, it was thought worthwhile including 1831 in the table. The figures for males' occupations 1841-1881 show all men and boys recorded as engaged in

10. Stephen Pritchard, *The History of Deal and its Neighbourhood* (Deal, 1864), 286.

11. *The Deal Telegram*, 25 May 1859, 4a.

12. K.F.H.S. Record Publications No. 172; P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

Table 5.1  
Men's Occupations, 1831-1881  
Total Numbers

	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Maritime	486	408	478	481	421	375
Agriculture	145	144	212	184	125	130
Labourers	135	174	134	139	207	261
Gardeners	-	46	54	75	83	79
Building	43	53	109	135	186	243
Woodworking	59	65	69	91	103	100
Drink	47	51	70	85	85	93
Food	110	112	155	169	162	180
Clothing	150	164	186	167	146	131
Retired/Independent	-	151	152	154	164	192
Metal & Leather	34	44	45	40	43	52
Professional	-	35	55	40	53	63
Customs & Coastguard	-	29	23	25	18	15
Transport and						
Communications	14	28	26	44	52	66
Specialised Trades	17	21	30	48	53	58
Miscellaneous	11	15	26	32	41	47
Education	-	13	16	23	22	34
Public Officials	-	12	14	17	25	24
Army & Navy	-	8	16	25	13	39
Clerical	-	7	17	21	23	35
Gas/Water/Mechanical	-	2	3	13	21	31
Holiday/Entertainment	-	1	2	13	25	34
Railway <sup>1</sup>	0	0	20	22	26	42

1. The railway in Deal did not open until 1847.

some occupation in a Census. Men said to be retired or of independent means have been included, those said to be unemployed have not. Except for ten farmers' sons in 1851, those described as "son of", followed by the father's occupation, have not been included. It is usually assumed that such a designation implies that the son (or wife or daughter) so described assisted the father in his occupation, but in many cases, especially in the 1861 Census, the enumerators have used this method of describing every person in the household, even when it would be ridiculous to suppose that the person so described could have been in any way actively involved in the occupation in question. For example (an extreme case) the household at 14 Duke Street included a "master butcher's daughter" aged seven months. Rather than risk distortion by including all these people or adopt the arbitrary method of, for example, including only those over fourteen, it was thought best to exclude all people described in this way.

The number of occupied males as a proportion of the whole population increased between 1841 and 1851 and thereafter remained fairly steady. The 1841-51 rise may be a genuine increase; alternatively, it may reflect the fact that the population in 1841 was perhaps swollen by unoccupied summer visitors. It has also been suggested that the 1841 Census was somewhat deficient in its recording of occupations.<sup>13</sup>

13. E.A.Wrigley, (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society; Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (1972), 82.

Agriculture was the second largest occupational group until the 1860s when it was overtaken by building. Censuses nationally show falling numbers employed in agriculture from 1851. British farmers were suffering increasing foreign competition in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the 1870s, about 70% of the country's grain requirements were imported, and the Australian wool trade also expanded from this time.<sup>14</sup> Nurserymen and market gardeners increased in number both nationally and in Deal; possibly arable and pasture land was turned over to market gardening. This was less vulnerable to foreign competition than arable farming, since perishable fruit and vegetables could not be imported over long distances. Apart from the suitability of the soil in the area, Deal was a good centre for market gardening. Demand for fresh fruit and vegetables from ships in the Downs was likely to continue even if they no longer required less perishable goods or anchors and cables. Deal also had reasonably easy access to the vast and increasing London markets by rail and sea, and the growing middle classes in the town itself would be able to afford, and be aware of the need for, a more varied diet.

It is also possible that the apparent fall in the number of agricultural labourers is due rather to differences in terminology rather than any actual difference in the work done. In some Censuses,

14. David Thompson, *England in the Nineteenth century* (1950), 163; S.G. Checkland, *The Rise of Industrial Society in England, 1815-1885* (1964), 215, 187. It was to the wool trade that the fast clipper ships turned when the China tea trade was taken over by steamships.

agricultural labourers were enumerated simply as labourers - the number of labourers went up as the number of agricultural labourers went down. There were 98 instances of men changing their occupation from agricultural labourer to general labourer or labourer, or vice versa. Some men changed from one to the other and back again in successive Censuses, as shown below.

Thos Barwick    Labourer/Ag. Lab./Labourer/Ag. Lab.  
 Richard Betts   Ag. Lab./Labourer/Ag. Lab./Ag. Lab  
 John Bubb        Ag. Lab./Labourer/Farm Lab.  
 Jas Chandler    Ag. Lab./Labourer/Farm Lab.  
 Richard Dadd    Ag. Lab./Labourer/Ag. Lab.  
 William Dunn    Ag. Lab./Farm Lab./Ag. Lab./Labr./Ag. Lab.

The proportion of agricultural labourers and labourers born outside Deal fell as the proportion of the total population born outside the town went up. Table 5.2 shows the proportion of agricultural labourers born outside Deal.

Table 5.2  
 Agricultural Labourers and Labourers born outside Deal as  
 % of all Agricultural Labourers and Labourers

1851	1861	1871	1881
40.6	38.2	41.4	36.7

The proportion born outside Kent but elsewhere in England rose from 7.5% of those born outside Deal in 1851 to 19.6% in 1881, but most of the migrants came to Deal from



less than ten miles away, and the majority from less than five miles away. In 1851, 61.3% of the migrants came from less than five miles away; over 40% came from less than five miles away in subsequent Censuses. While the agricultural labourers and labourers were less firmly rooted in Deal than the boatmen, most of them had only moved over very short distances. A move of less than five miles need not have involved a change of job, and may simply have been prompted by a desire to take advantage of the greater amenities available in Deal in contrast to the small hamlets nearby. The town may also have been seen as providing greater anonymity and freedom from paternalistic supervision by landlords and employers.

Between 1831 and 1881 building developed from being a minor occupational group to the second or third largest in the town.<sup>15</sup> The building trade in the area would have been stimulated by a number of large scale projects undertaken in the middle decades of the century - Eastry Workhouse, 1835, St Saviour's Church, Walmer, 1848-49, St Andrew's Church, Deal, 1850, Kingsdown Church, 1856, and the Royal Marine Barracks, Walmer, in the 1860s.<sup>16</sup> The number of bricklayers in Deal rose from 18 in 1831 to 101 in 1881. The biggest increases came in the 1840s and 1860s. However, the building trade did not provide an alternative occupation for Deal men whose traditional occupations were in decline. As the numbers involved in building rose, so too did the proportion of them who were

15. Depending upon whether labourers are counted as agricultural workers or as a separate occupational group.

16. John Newman, *The Buildings of England: North East and East Kent* (3rd edn., 1983).

migrants from outside Deal. In 1851, 28.7% of all builders and bricklayers were born outside Deal. By 1881, 43.1% were born outside Deal, compared with 36.7% of all men in Deal having been born outside the town. The pattern of migration of these builders and bricklayers was also changing. In 1851, only one quarter of them came from more than fifteen miles away. By 1881, over half came from more than fifteen miles away, over 40% from outside Kent. There were therefore sufficient opportunities in the building trade in Deal in the 1870s to draw men in from a considerable distance away.

Of the local family names found among the bricklayers and builders of Deal, those which were most strongly represented, such as Barwick and Friend, were most numerous among the farmworkers and market gardeners in the town. It was only during the 1870s that a few of the young sons of boatmen, instead of following their fathers' occupation, as had been traditional among boatmen, began instead to be apprenticed to bricklayers or painters. One sign of the prosperity of the building trades is that in the spring of 1866, the carpenters and bricklayers demanded an increase in pay of from 2s 6d per day to 3s. The bricklayers actually went on strike to achieve this. At the time this dispute took place, the tradesmen were fully occupied "fitting up the lodging houses for the reception of the sea-side visitors."<sup>17</sup>

Mr Cottew's was the biggest building firm in

17. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 March 1866, 2e; P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 19 September 1866.

Deal.<sup>18</sup> The first Cottews in Deal were George and Thomas from Herne, who came to Deal about the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, married local women and settled down as bricklayers. George and Thomas both retired about 1850 and were succeeded by George's son, also called George, who was born in 1823. In 1851, he was a mason and bricklayer employing eight men. By 1861, he was describing himself as a builder and bricklayer, employing 22 men and three boys - the 1850s had obviously been good for George Cottew, however difficult they may have been for other people in Deal. In the early 1860s, he was still a young man, with an expanding business, ideally placed to seize the opportunity offered by the development of the Naval Yard area. By 1881, he was employing 42 men and eight boys, and had moved from Farrier Street, in the older part of Lower Deal, to one of his own new houses in Southampton Terrace, near the Castle. Two of his sons had followed him into the building trade.

The Naval Yard in Deal was finally closed down in 1863. The yard had been of so little significance for so long that it is unlikely that its closure had any large impact on the town. In 1864, the land formerly occupied by the yard, between South Street and Deal Castle, was sold off for private development; in March 1866, *The Deal Telegram* was able to announce the ceremonial laying of the first foundation stone on what had been named the

18. Information on Cottew family from Deal Parish Registers and Censuses.

Victoria Town Estate. Mr Cottew was to build six shops - part of the parade on the east side of Victoria Road, then known as Prospect Place.<sup>19</sup> Mr Cottew's progress was noted from time to time over the next year or so; in November 1866,

"the land on the estate is now allotted and stumped out, the footpaths and roads all made, and the splendid promenade on the sea front is in course of being asphalted .... Mr Cottew has commenced two private dwellings on the Prospect Place frontage, and we may hope soon to see the most important portion - the sea front - occupied with a class of houses that Deal does not at present possess."<sup>20</sup>

The numbers involved in woodworking trades also increased from 1831 to 1881. Though carpenters and sawyers may have suffered with the decline of boat-building in Deal, the work available in the development of Victoria Town and other new housing must have more than compensated.

Licensed houses in Deal covered the whole spectrum from the Royal Hotel to backstreet beershops. The distribution of licensed premises was very uneven. In 1851 there were six in Upper and Middle Deal, 21 in Lower Street and the western half of Lower Deal and 35 in Lower Deal east of Lower Street. It was said that there was "an excess" of public houses in Deal in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In 1841, there was one licensed house to every 142 people in the town. In subsequent Censuses, the figures were 114, 103, 101 and 111 respectively. In

19. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 March 1866, 7a.

20. *Ibid.*, 24 November 1866, 2d.

21. *New Handbook to the Downs Neighbourhood* (Deal, n.d., c.1876), 22.

Banbury, a major market centre in Oxfordshire, there was one publican to every 110 inhabitants in 1851 and one publican to 131 inhabitants in 1871.<sup>22</sup> In the later nineteenth century, therefore, the people of Deal were much better supplied with drinking places than those of Banbury. When women, children and gentry who were unlikely to frequent public houses have been excluded, the ratio is nearer to one public house for every thirty or forty men in the town.

It is likely, therefore, that licensed houses derived custom from sources other than the population of the town and that licensees frequently had some other source of income. The fact that many public houses were in Lower Deal, and especially in Beach Street, implies that custom was derived from the officers and men of passing ships. The Lower Deal public houses also had close relationships with the boatmen. These will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

A number of publicans and beersellers recorded dual occupations in the Censuses. In 1851, four out of 62 publicans, or 6.4%, had secondary occupations. In 1861, this proportion jumped to 24.6%. In 1871 and 1881 the proportion of publicans with dual occupations fell back to about 13%.<sup>23</sup> The number of publicans needing an alternative source of income was thus greatest at the time when it has been suggested that Deal, and especially the boatmen, were experiencing the severest depression.

22. C.W. Chalklin, "Country Towns", G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside* (1981), 282.

23. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

It is very likely that other publicans had alternative occupations that were not recorded. It will be suggested in Chapter Eight that many worked as boatmen, leaving their wives and families to run the public houses.

For those men involved in supplying food, absolute numbers rose between 1831 and 1881, but the number of food retailers per 1000 population fluctuated; the distribution of men within the food supplying trades also changed. The proportion of men involved in food supplying was at its highest in 1861, fell in 1871 and rose again by 1881, although not recovering its previous highest position. Local tradesmen who had spent capital on redeeming their leaseholds from the Archbishop, had possibly overspent on improvements before being hit by the depression of the late 1850s, perhaps finally abandoned the struggle to make ends meet and gave up their businesses in the 1860s. Tradesmen would also have been affected by falling demand for provisions from ships in the Downs. The number of bakers fell from a peak of 63 in 1851 to 49 in 1871 and 1881. The other two principal food trades, grocer and butcher, suffered varying fortunes, but not quite such a dramatic reversal.

By the late 1870s sufficient families would have moved on to the new housing in Victoria Town to compensate a little for the loss of passing trade. The growing middle class influence in the town can be detected in the widening variety of foodstuffs available

on a retail basis. The number of fishsellers, fruiterers and greengrocers, milkmen and dairymen all increased throughout the period. All these provisions had no doubt always been readily available in the town, but from the middle of the century their supply was being put on a more formal basis.

Clothing is the second major necessity of life. The clothing makers and retailers in Deal suffered even more than their counterparts in the food trades. During the period 1831-1881 their numbers fell in absolute as well as real terms. The peak was in 1851, with 26.3 suppliers of clothing to every 1000 of the population; in 1881, the proportion was 15.4 to every 1000.

The number of drapers and linendrapers rose during the period; no doubt the new houses, and the improvements to old ones, stimulated a demand for sheets and curtains. The growing number of lodging houses also required furnishings, which were perhaps replaced more frequently than those in a private house would be. The decline in the clothing trades was experienced by the tailors and boot and shoemakers. The number of tailors fell from 55 in 1851 to 28 in 1881. Deal tailors were probably chiefly accustomed to providing Sunday suits for farmworkers and boatmen and new outfits for sailors arriving in the Downs after long voyages. Perhaps they were simply not skilled enough for the wealthier classes settling in Deal, who could afford to have their suits made in London.

In 1851, there were 100 men in the boot and shoemaking trades in Deal, one to every 70 people in the town, more than one to 70 if infants not requiring shoes are excluded. Even if everyone had a new pair of shoes or boots every year, there was far from sufficient work in the town alone to employ this number of people. Deal shoemakers may have supplied shoes to people in the nearby villages, but in this they would have been in competition with shoemakers in Sandwich, Eastry, Dover and perhaps Wingham and Canterbury as well as rural craftsmen. Shoe repairs may have contributed to the shoemakers' income, but until comparatively recently it was common for the fathers of working class and lower middle class families to carry out shoe repairs themselves. "Boots were rarely taken to the 'snob' or cobbler to be mended. Father did them at home."<sup>24</sup> Shoemakers must thus have had a considerable outside market which declined after 1851; the probability is that the demand came from passing ships.

Contemporaries recognised that the numbers involved in some of these trades in Deal were excessive.

"A glance at the number of shops in each trade, in the streets and slums of Deal, is quite sufficient to prove it is out of all proportion to the population and the requirements and the disposable money of the town. That all keep open, when but few enter them, proves ... either that profits are exorbitant, or that a little goes a very long way in the ancient town of Deal."<sup>25</sup>

24. Michael Winstanley, "Voices from the Past: Rural Kent at the Close of an Era", G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *op. cit.*, 631.

25. *The Deal Mercury*, 8 February 1879, 2d.



In 1871, a local newspaper correspondent described the situation from the small tradesman's point of view; "last year my income fell to £65 .... I have been compelled to keep two of my children from school and have done away with a small servant." He blamed the Civil Service Stores and Co-operatives for unfair competition, and also complained that "whenever any of my lady customers want the most trifling article they will have it carried home for them; this necessitates an extra errand boy, though now my son, who ought to be at school, does it."<sup>26</sup>

The number of men and women in Deal who were retired or of independent means was high in 1841, but this was because the 1841 Census was taken in June, and the number was swollen by summer visitors. The proportion of the population describing themselves as retired or independent was smaller in subsequent Censuses, but rising. The proportion of retired or independent men rose from 66 per 1000 occupied men in 1851 to 82 per 1000 in 1881. For women, the proportion changed from 123 per 1000 occupied women in 1851 to 142 per 1000 in 1881. The number of occupied women in each Census was of course much smaller than the number of men, but the majority of the single and widowed women who apparently had no occupation must be presumed to have had private means.

Education was of increasing importance in Deal during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The proportion of teachers, men and women, rose from 6.7 per

26. *The Deal Telegram*, 14 January 1871, 2b.



*Esplanade & Pier Deal*

(Kent County Libraries)

13. Esplanade and Pier, c. 1850.

Looking North. Like Illustration 7, this shows the old Pier, with a paddle steamer approaching. Note also the absence of any boats or boatmen, or any other indication of Deal's maritime functions.

1000 population in 1841 to 13.3 per 1000 in 1881. A number of women were governesses in private families and five women and two men were teachers in the Deal parish schools, but the majority were teachers in private schools in the town. Eleven of these are listed in Kelly's *Directory of Kent* for 1882, and a number of them were boarding schools. The number of boarding pupils in Deal rose from 48 in 1851 to 171 in 1881, the largest establishment being Alfred House Academy for Boys at the north end of Lower Street, which in 1881 had eight teachers and 77 boarding pupils. The principal, Mr James Lush, was also an Alderman and Justice of the Peace. Several of the pupils at this and other boarding schools in Deal had overseas birthplaces,<sup>27</sup> and were no doubt the children of colonial civil servants and servicemen. A large boarding school such as Alfred House was of benefit to Deal, for not only did it require domestic staff - five maids and a cook at Alfred House - but it must also have brought much welcome business to local tradesmen.

The numbers employed in the other professions and in clerical occupations also rose during the nineteenth century. There were increases in the numbers involved in law, medicine, banking and the Church. The implication is that there were more people requiring these services and able to pay for them, and that Deal was seen as an increasingly attractive place for professional people to settle. The aim of the Victoria Town development was to

27. P.R.O. RG 11 997.



attract more middle class families to Deal, and the Census evidence indicates that it was at least partially successful.

The numbers involved in luxury or specialised trades more than doubled between 1841 and 1881. Jewellers, booksellers and stationers, china, glass and fancy dealers all increased. In the 1860s and 1870s the townspeople supported two, later three, local newspapers, three florists, twelve watchmakers, six photographers, two music sellers and two piano tuners, among other non-essential trades. In June 1882, Edward Hayward, proprietor of *The Deal Telegram*, thought it worthwhile to publish a four page advertising supplement promoting one of his alternative concerns, a pianoforte warehouse.<sup>28</sup> In the licensed trades, the spectrum of those involved widened to include, by 1881, seven wine and spirit merchants; there had been none in 1841. The growth of these trades indicates that by the 1870s the population of Deal included a sizeable number of families of a reasonable standard of education, with a fair amount of leisure, appreciation of comfort and small luxuries and the money to gratify these tastes - the kind of people, in fact, who are usually described as middle class.

The figures in Table 5.1 show the relative importance of different occupations in Deal, but of course give no indication of whether this occupational structure is typical of towns this size, or whether the

28. *The Deal Telegram*, 17 June 1882, supplement. Information on occupations from Deal Censuses.

pattern has been altered by Deal's unique position and function. The potential market available to the tradesmen and craftsmen of a coastal town is less than that available to an inland market town, as part of the hinterland is taken up by the sea. This would be compensated for in Deal's case by the presence of ships in the Downs. Comparative material is hard to come by. Most urban studies have been concerned with the great industrial cities rather than small towns, and there is the additional problem that little if any work has yet been published which uses the 1881 Census. Many researchers, such as Armstrong, discuss the occupational structure of their chosen towns using the Registrar General's classifications.<sup>29</sup> These are inappropriate as a basis for discussion of the occupational structure of Deal due to the impossibility of fitting the boatmen in to any of the Registrar General's groups.

Figures are available for the town of Prescott in Lancashire in 1851, 1861 and 1871.<sup>30</sup> The populations of the two towns were almost the same in 1851, after which Deal grew while Prescott declined. Table 5.3 shows the comparison between Deal and Prescott. The proportion of occupied males per one thousand population was roughly the same in both towns except in 1871, when it had declined in Deal but increased in Prescott. This is the only indication that Prescott may have been more prosperous than Deal. The major industry of Prescott was

29. W.A. Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town; a Social Study of York, 1801-51* (Cambridge, 1974).

30. J.A. Williams, "A Local Population Study at a College of Education", *Local Population Studies*, XI, (Autumn 1973), 23.

Table 5.3  
Comparison of Occupational Structures of  
Deal and Prescott, Lancashire, 1851 - 1871  
(Numbers in Each Occupation per 1000 Occupied Men.)

	1851		1861		1871	
	Deal	Prescot	Deal	Prescot	Deal	Prescot
Agriculture	138	181	126	130	99	74
Army & Navy	8	-	12	2	6	1
Building	57	43	66	31	89	49
Clerical	9	12	10	19	11	22
Clothing	97	66	82	67	70	48
Colliery	-	77	-	33	-	39
Customs/Coastguard	12	-	12	-	8	-
Drink	36	9	41	16	40	15
Education	8	1	11	4	10	3
Food	80	36	83	25	77	42
Holiday/Entertainment	1	1	6	3	12	5
Labourers & Servants	70	184	68	103	99	215
Specialised Trades	15	4	23	7	25	5
Maritime	249	-	235	11 <sup>1</sup>	200	1
Gas/Water/Mechanical	1	23	6	6	10	13
Metal & Leather	23	32	19	64	20	78
Miscellaneous	13	6	15	26	19	22
Pottery	-	21	-	5	-	6
Professional	29	9	19	22	25	17
Public Officials	7	3	8	10	12	11
Quarrying	-	-	-	6	-	17
Railway	10	-	10	-	12	38
Independent	79	-	75	1	78	-
Transport/Communications	13	18	21	50	24	20
Watch & Clock Making <sup>2</sup>	-	227	-	333	-	230
Weaving	-	9	-	1	-	2
Woodwork	36	18	44	20	49	21
Total Population	7067	6393	7531	5136	8009	5077
Total Occupied Males	1916	1803	2043	1380	2097	1550
Occupied Males per 1000 Population	271	282	271	268	261	305

1. Probably related to the canal at Prescott.

2. A very small number of watchmakers is included under specialised trades in the Deal figures.

evidently clock and watch making, with a number of men also employed in colliery work. The fortunes of the clock and watchmaking trades fluctuated considerably between 1851 and 1871.

It is immediately apparent that apart from the fact that both towns had one dominant occupational group, the occupational structures of the two places differed greatly. Which is the more typical, or even if there is such a thing as a "typical" nineteenth century town, cannot be judged on the evidence available here. Many of the differences between the two, however, can be accounted for by reference to Deal's functions as a base for the supply of ships and as a resort town.

In Deal, the numbers employed in the supply of such necessities as food, clothing, housing and drink were in all cases greater, in some cases much greater, than in Prescot. The building trade in Deal was more flourishing than in Prescot, reflecting the fact that the population of Deal was increasing, while that of Prescot was falling. There were proportionally far more men involved in the drink trades in Deal than in the northern town, confirming contemporary views that there were too many licensed houses in Deal, and further strengthening the hypothesis that the number of public houses was related to Deal's maritime function. The proportion of the male population involved in education, the professions, and specialised trades in Deal far

Table 5.4a  
 Women's Occupations, 1841-1881  
 Total Numbers

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Domestic Service	345	432	489	471	456
Sewing/Millinery	78	191	206	204	234
Education	32	38	50	67	79
Nursing	15	18	19	25	20
Lodging Houses	--	24	31	48	65
Food	13	28	33	29	29
Clothing retail/Draper	7	7	13	18	18
Shoemaking	4	20	35	5	2
Drink	8	9	11	17	9
Other retail	6	2	13	20	30
Independent	292	128	134	143	173
Pauper	34	61	10	9	5
Laundress	25	61	68	72	82
Other	10	18	7	14	9
Occupied single women	--	712	809	747	822
Occupied married women	--	83	95	128	115
Occupied widows	--	243	215	267	274
Total Occupied Women	869	1037	1119	1142	1211
Per 1000 population	130	146	148	142	142



outnumbered those in Prescott. Another indication of the difference between the two towns is in the proportion of men of independent means. This was over 70:1000 in Deal in all three Censuses, while there were none in Prescott in 1851 and 1871 and only one in 1861. Deal's function as a resort is thus emphasized. Food and clothing trades were also more strongly represented in Deal. It is not possible to draw any definite conclusions without knowing more about conditions in Prescott, but these figures give the impression that Deal had a much larger middle class element and was altogether more flourishing than Prescott.

Working women accounted for a far smaller proportion of the population than occupied men, and were employed in a narrower range of occupations. Tables 5.4a and 5.4b show the total numbers of occupied women between 1841 and 1881 and the proportion in each occupation.<sup>31</sup>

The proportion of occupied women per thousand population was never above 150. As discussed in Chapter Four, comparison of trade directories and Censuses reveals some under-recording of women's occupations in the Censuses. Of the 107 businesswomen listed in the 1882 Directory, 89 can be identified in the 1881 Census. Twelve of these, or 13.5%, had no occupation recorded. Even if there was some under-recording, however, women cannot have had a great impact on economy of Deal.

The increase in middle class housing, hotels and boarding schools might have been expected to lead to a

31. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

Table 5.4b  
Women's Occupations, 1841-1881  
per 1000 Occupied Women

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Domestic service	397	416	436	412	376
Sewing/Millinery	89	184	184	178	193
Education	37	36	44	58	65
Nursing	17	17	17	22	16
Lodging houses	--	23	27	42	53
Food	15	27	29	25	24
Clothing retail/draper	8	6	11	15	15
Shoemaking	4	19	31	4	1
Drink	9	8	9	14	7
Other retail	7	1	11	17	24
Independent	336	123	119	125	142
Pauper	39	58	9	8	4
Laundress	28	58	60	63	67
Other	11	17	6	12	7
Occupied single women	--	685	723	654	678
Occupied married women	--	80	85	112	95
Occupied widows	--	234	192	233	226

rise in the number of domestic servants in the 1870s. In fact, the number and proportion of female domestic servants fell from a peak in 1861. It is possible that, although more middle class and retired people were settling in Deal, many of them were on low or fixed incomes - for example, retired Civil Servants, Army or Navy Officers - and thus there was no increasing demand for servants. Also, if the local tradesmen were, as they claimed, feeling the pinch, many who had formerly employed domestic servants may have ceased to do so.

That Deal had an attraction for young people seeking work is confirmed by the fact that a far higher proportion of female domestic servants was born outside Deal than women in the whole population.

Table 5.5a

Birthplaces of Female Domestic Servants

	1851	1861	1871	1881
% born out of Deal	63.1	64.8	64.1	67.9

Table 5.5b

Patterns of Migration of Female Domestic Servants

	1851	1861	1871	1881
0- 5 miles	47.1	50.4	35.5	35.4
5-10 miles	20.5	12.9	16.0	11.0
10-15 miles	3.9	7.3	7.1	9.7
Elsewhere in Kent	11.3	10.3	16.1	18.6
England	13.9	15.9	21.7	20.3
Wales, Scotland, Ireland	2.2	2.1	2.6	3.1
Overseas	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.7

The proportion of domestic servants coming from less than five miles away is consistently higher than for all women. Girls from the villages of Sholden, Mongeham or Northbourne would probably have visited Deal before and so would not be going to an entirely strange place. They and their employers might already have been known to each other. The girls would be near enough to their homes to be able to visit easily on a free day or half day.

The "pull" of Deal did not exist over a longer distance. In 1851, 1861 and 1871, the proportion of domestic servants born five to fifteen miles from Deal was lower than among all women. Girls born in this area were nearer to the much bigger towns of Dover and Canterbury, or the Thanet resorts, especially Margate. By 1881, the proportion of domestic servants from other parts of Kent equalled the proportion of all women. This is possibly accounted for by Deal's growth as a seaside resort in the 1870s.

Another possibility is that, as more occupations became available to women, domestic service was seen as a less attractive option. The number of occupied women rose throughout the period, and the proportion of occupied women to the total population remained steady from 1851. There were increases in the number and proportion of women engaged in sewing, retail trades, education, lodging house keeping and laundry. All these trades allowed more independence than domestic service, and many

could, unlike domestic service, be carried out from a woman's own home, thus allowing her to earn money while continuing to fulfil her domestic responsibilities. This is reflected in the fact that the number and proportion of occupied married women rose from 1851, (it is not possible to make this calculation for 1841) peaking in 1871 and falling back a little in 1881. One cannot say whether married women worked because they wanted to or because they had to, but it seems that in the second half of the nineteenth century it was increasingly possible for married women to follow some occupation. There were the seasonal opportunities of the holiday trade and, by the end of the period, sources of casual or temporary work such as the canning factory at the North End. In June 1874 this was employing 110 women, boys and girls shelling peas. It was said they could earn from one shilling to 2s 6d a day.<sup>32</sup> The increasing acceptability of women in business is demonstrated by the trade directories. In 1851, 32 women were listed as being in trade or business; in 1882, this number had risen to 107.

The new housing in Victoria Town, and the villas which at the same time were being built along Middle Deal and Upper Deal Roads, were of a higher standard than much of the housing already in Deal, intended for people such as independent or professional men, or tradesmen in comfortable circumstances - families who would perhaps keep one or two servants. This, together with the

32. *The Deal Mercury*, 20 June 1874, 3a.

increased migration into Deal during the nineteenth century, raises the question of whether, and in what way, the character of the town changed during this period. Trades and occupations which were increasing suggest growing "middle classness." Throughout the period 1851-1881 the number of people migrating into Deal was increasing, so since the population grew only slowly there must have been either a very low birth rate or else a correspondingly high migration of people out of Deal. Since the proportion of the population under ten years old was over 23% between 1841 and 1881 and if anything rose slightly, during the second half of the century, it seems that numbers of Deal-born men and women must have been leaving the town, being replaced by immigrants. It has already been shown that many boatmen who could no longer make an adequate living in Deal left the town. Deal was thus changing in character to some extent, even if it was not actually in decline.

John Walton has suggested that one characteristic of a seaside resort is a greater surplus of women in the population, a predominance of elderly people and a high incidence of out-migration of young men. He has further suggested that it was between 1871 and 1911 that most resorts became distinctive demographically.<sup>33</sup> The detailed Census returns for Deal are available only up to 1881, which is too early for the trends discerned by Walton to have become established. However, a town which

33. John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort, a Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester, 1983), 100. Age structure of Deal derived from Deal Censuses, P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

was economically stagnating or declining, as Deal was supposed to have been during the middle years of the nineteenth century, might have exhibited similar demographic traits. How, then, did the age structure of Deal's population between 1841 and 1881 confirm or contradict these theories?

The ratio of men to women was 100:120 in 1841, rising to 100:122 in 1861 and falling again to 100:120 in 1881. Among children under 15, and in 1841 in the 15-19 age-group also, boys always outnumbered girls. The proportions were reversed in the 15-24 age-group, and to a lesser extent among those aged 25-34. This is what should be expected if there was a large out-migration of young men and a high in-migration of young female domestic servants attracted to work in lodging houses and resident middle class families. In a well-established resort, a disproportionate number of elderly women might have been expected, but this was no more marked in Deal than might be accounted for by women's greater longevity.

Among boatmen, the first drop in the number of men was noted among men in their forties. This was not reflected in the population as a whole. The proportion of men in their forties remained at about 9.5% of all men throughout the period, except in 1861, when it rose to 11.4% of all men. This was an actual as well as a proportional rise, from 299 in 1851 to 380 in 1861. In compensation, there was a fall in the proportion of men

aged 20-29 between 1851 and 1861, from about 13% of all men to 10.7% of all men, followed by recovery in the next twenty years. This too was a change in actual numbers as well as proportionally. The fall, however, although noticeable, was not excessive, being an actual decrease of 59. Almost the entire loss was in the 25-29 age group; perhaps it was when these young men married and began to have children that they found they could no longer earn a living in Deal. It must be recalled also that these are the men who were born in the 1830s, when the birth rate fell and the population was certainly experiencing difficulties. These are the only indications which support the hypothesis derived from other sources that the 1850s were exceptionally difficult.

Age structure within the male population of Deal does not therefore seem to have changed greatly from 1841 to 1881. A clearer picture of what was happening to the male population can be gained by following each cohort as it aged through the forty years. These figures are shown in Table 5.6.

Those who were born before 1791 - who were over fifty at the time of the 1841 Census - were growing old during the period and are not really relevant to the town's economic condition. Their numbers declined steadily, as one would expect. Men born between 1791 and 1801 were in their forties in 1841, and should then have been at the peak of their earning power. After 1841,



Table 5.6

Number of Men in Each Cohort in Each Census					
Men born	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
1751-1760	22				
1761-1770	102	23			
1771-1780	171	105	29		
1781-1790	271	195	112	27	
1791-1800	271	237	180	105	26
1801-1810	331	299	299	219	115
1811-1820	389	387	380	341	271
1821-1830	595	413	369	343	292
1831-1840	769	609	354	357	354
1841-1850		873	676	459	454
1851-1860			905	717	497
1861-1870				990	735
1871-1880					1020

their numbers declined, in a smooth though accelerating progression. The rate of fall roughly doubled in each decade. Among those men born 1801-1811, there was a fall in numbers in the 1840s, when they were in their thirties. These were perhaps young family men who were beginning to find things difficult, and who were experiencing the last effects of the depression of the late 1830s. After the 1840s, numbers in this group remained steady until 1871. By this date, when the men were approaching seventy, some of them must have been dying. Men born between 1811 and 1821 maintained their numbers until the 1860s, when there was a slight fall, followed by a sharp drop in the 1870s, when the men were in their fifties. Men born in the 1820s experienced a very sharp fall in the 1840s, when they were at the start of their working lives, and again in the next decade. Numbers remained steady in the 1860s, then fell again in the 1870s, by which time these men were aged 50-60. The remaining cohorts, born in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s all followed a similar pattern, with a sharp fall in numbers in their teens. As each group of men reached the beginning of their working lives, therefore, and attained an age at which they could leave home, many of them decided to leave Deal, confirming Walton's theory that resort towns experienced considerable out-migration of young men. This was reinforced in Deal's case by the fact that the town's principal occupation was in decline.

One sign of a town in decline is an ageing population, but the proportion of men and women over 60 remained at just under 10.5% from 1841 to 1871, rising to 11.4% in 1881. However, statistics relating to elderly people in Deal must be treated with caution. The town was recognised as a particularly healthy place. "Disease of an endemic or epidemic nature never prevailed here," and in 1864, "not a single case of cholera has occurred at Deal within the memory of the oldest inhabitant."<sup>34</sup> The death rate was estimated to be about 22:1000, and some people objected that this figure was too high, as it was calculated on the number of burials within the parish each year, which included not only townspeople but seamen dying aboard ships in the Downs and drowned men washed ashore.<sup>35</sup> The town was said to be "remarkable for its fine and salubrious climate ... the genial and refreshing breezes of the sea ... confer health and longevity to a remarkable degree upon the inhabitants."<sup>36</sup>

The only meaningful way to discuss the age structure of Deal 1841-1881 is by comparison with other places. Armstrong has studied the age structure of York in 1841 and 1851. Whyman has broken down the age structure of Margate in 1841, and Walton has prepared tables showing the age structure of the population of various resorts in 1851 and 1871.<sup>37</sup> These figures are shown in Tables 5.7 and 5.8.

In 1841 the correspondence in the age structure of

34. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, 298.

35. *The Deal Telegram*, 30 January 1864, 2d.

36. *New Handbook to the Downs Neighbourhood*, *op. cit.*, 1.

37. Armstrong, *op. cit.*; John Whyman, "Visitors to Margate in the 1841 Census Returns", *Local Population Studies*, VIII (Spring 1972); Walton, *op. cit.*, 99.

Table 5.7

Age Structure of Deal Compared with Other Towns  
1841

Males and Females in Each Age Group  
as % of all Males and % of all Females

	Deal		Margate		York	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
0- 4	13.6	10.4	13.0	10.0	12.6	11.1
5- 9	12.7	10.6	13.0	10.0	10.7	9.7
10-14	12.0	10.3	14.0	9.0	9.8	9.4
15-19	8.3	10.0	8.0	10.0	9.1	10.3
20-24	6.7	9.9	8.0	11.0	9.9	10.9
25-29	6.5	7.4	7.0	9.0	8.7	9.4
30-34	6.2	6.4	6.0	8.0	8.8	8.1
35-39	5.0	6.4	5.0	8.0	6.4	8.1
40-44	4.9	4.7	5.0	6.0	6.1	5.8
45-49	4.4	4.7	4.0	5.0	4.1	3.8
50-59	9.2	8.9	7.0	8.0	6.7	6.9
60-69	5.8	6.2	5.0	4.0	4.5	6.9
70+	4.2	4.5	3.0	4.0	2.5	3.3

the male populations of Deal and Margate is remarkable. The greatest divergence is two percentage points in the 10-14 age-group, this group being proportionally smaller in Deal than in Margate. With boys this young, the difference cannot be due to any personal decision to emigrate for economic reasons. There were proportionally more girls in this age-group in Deal than in Margate. It is unlikely that many domestic servants this young were coming into Deal to work, and one would in any case have expected this to be more marked in Margate, which was far more developed as a resort at this date than Deal. When boys and girls are added together, 10-14 year olds account for the same proportion of the population in both towns. Perhaps for some reason more boys were born in Margate than in Deal during the late 1820s.

Only among the older men was there any appreciable divergence in the age structure of the male population of the two towns, with men aged over 50 accounting for 19.2% of the male population of Deal and only 15% of the male population of Margate.

Among women, the age groups in which one would expect to find most domestic servants are 15-19 and 20-24. Girls aged 15-19 accounted for the same proportion of the population in Deal and Margate, while the proportion of young women aged 20-24 was about one percentage point greater in Margate than in Deal. This is somewhat surprising as a high number of domestic servants

Table 5.8  
Age/Sex Structure of Selected Towns as % of Whole Population  
1851

	0-14		15-39		40-59		60+	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Eng & Wales	17.8	17.6	19.6	20.9	8.2	8.6	3.4	4.0
Brighton	16.4	16.0	17.4	26.2	7.5	10.0	2.7	3.8
<b>Deal</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Gt Yarmouth	16.3	16.7	16.5	24.0	7.8	10.0	3.5	5.2
Scarborough	17.3	16.4	16.4	22.9	7.8	10.1	3.8	5.2
Southport	18.4	19.1	16.9	22.2	7.3	9.1	2.8	4.2
Torquay	15.7	16.3	17.5	26.5	7.5	9.9	2.7	4.0
York	17.4	20.6	20.5	23.0	6.5	8.2	1.3	2.4

	0-14		15-39		40-59		60+	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Eng & Wales	18.1	18.0	18.8	20.3	8.4	9.0	3.5	4.0
Brighton	16.1	16.2	16.6	24.8	7.7	10.8	3.1	4.7
<b>Deal</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Eastbourne	18.3	18.4	16.9	22.5	7.8	9.2	3.2	3.8
Gt Yarmouth	16.7	16.7	17.9	21.5	8.2	10.3	3.6	5.0
Ilfracombe	16.8	16.8	15.1	21.6	7.4	10.3	5.0	7.0
Lowestoft	17.3	18.1	20.8	19.1	8.4	8.7	3.4	4.1
Margate	19.5	17.1	15.9	22.9	6.8	9.4	3.4	5.1
Scarborough	17.0	16.9	16.2	23.4	8.2	10.1	3.3	4.9
Southport	17.0	16.9	15.5	25.9	6.9	10.3	3.1	4.4
Torquay	15.4	15.9	15.2	26.1	7.7	11.3	3.5	4.8
Worthing	17.8	16.7	15.5	22.3	7.6	10.5	3.9	5.6

is one of Walton's characteristics of a seaside resort, and Margate was a much bigger and longer established resort than Deal in the 1840s.

It is in the women aged 25-49 that the age structure of the female population of Deal differed from that of Margate. Women in this group were 36% of the female population of Margate, only 29.6% of the female population of Deal. This is probably accounted for by a much higher number of female lodging house keepers, governesses and teachers in Margate, plus a higher number of summer visitors. Whyman estimated that there were 1297 visitors in Margate in 1841, or 11.7% of the total population. It is not possible to determine the number of visitors in Deal in 1841 in the same way, but it is very unlikely that they formed such a high percentage of the population.

A high proportion of elderly women is an indication of a resort town. Women over 50 were 19.6% of the total female population of Deal, only 16% of the total female population of Margate. Deal was probably more attractive to elderly women as a holiday or retirement home than Margate, as it did not share the latter town's rather rowdy reputation.

The age structure of Deal and Margate together may be compared with that of York in 1841. Men aged between 20 and 49 formed a much higher proportion of the population of York than of Deal and Margate - 44% as

against 33.7% and 35% respectively. This may be a reflection of Deal's economic sluggishness and Margate's resort status, but may also be due to the absence at sea of numbers of men from the two coastal towns, owing to the 1841 Census having been taken at the height of the mackerel fishing season. Men over 50 in Deal formed 19.2% of the total male population, compared with 13.7% of the male population of York.

Among young women aged 15-24, there was little difference between the three towns, Deal having the smallest proportion of women in this age group. Deal also had the smallest proportion of women in the 25-49 age-group; York, where women of this age were 35.2% of all women, was only marginally behind Margate, where the proportion was 36.0%. In compensation, Deal had a higher proportion of elderly women than York.

In 1851 and 1871 it is possible to compare the age structure of Deal with that of all of England and Wales and a selection of other resort towns and, in 1851 only, York as well. In 1851, it is immediately evident that men aged 15-39 formed a much smaller proportion of the total population of Deal than in the country as a whole or in any of the other towns, although all the other towns except York had a higher status as resorts than Deal. The proportion was 14.9% in Deal and 16.4% in Scarborough, the next highest. Although some Deal men were absent at sea on the night of the 1851 Census, this cannot fully



explain the difference, for Great Yarmouth had a similarly strong fishing and salvaging element in its population and men aged 15-39 accounted for 16.5% of the total population there. In the group aged 40-59, although all the towns were below the national average, with York, surprisingly, lowest of all, Deal was comparable to all the other resort towns.

In men over 60, Deal again showed itself to be different. York had a much lower proportion of elderly men than all of England and Wales and than the resort towns. Surprisingly, Brighton, Southport and Torquay also had a lower proportion of elderly men than did all of England and Wales. Great Yarmouth and Scarborough had about the same proportion as the country as a whole - about 3.4% of the total population - but Deal, at 4.6%, had a much higher proportion of elderly men.

The proportion of men to women in Deal in 1851 was slightly above the national figure, but comparable to that in the other towns. Deal's proportion of women aged 15-39 was a little higher than nationally, but lower than all the other towns in the table, although quite close to the Southport figure. Women aged 40-59 in Deal in 1851 formed a higher proportion of the population than in the country as a whole, but not quite as high as in some other resorts. Elderly women aged over 60, however, were a higher percentage of the population of Deal than of the country as a whole or of the other towns considered.

As noted above, John Walton believes that by 1871, the age structure of resort towns was becoming noticeably different from that of the rest of the country. At this date, Deal can be compared with all of England and Wales and with a number of other resort towns, including Margate. Women in Deal were a slightly higher proportion of the population than in the whole country, but smaller than most of the resort towns, and considerably lower than some, notably Brighton, Southport and Torquay. The proportion of men aged 15-39 was again much lower than the national figure and all the other towns, including Margate. Men aged 40-59 were a higher proportion of the population in Deal than in all the other towns, but only slightly higher than nationally. Only Ilfracombe had a higher proportion of men over 60 than Deal.

The proportion of women aged 15-39 in Deal in 1871 was lower than in England and Wales and lower than in all the resorts except Lowestoft. Women aged 40-59 made up a larger proportion of the population in Deal than in the whole country. Only Brighton had a higher proportion of women in this age group than Deal, but in most of the towns, as in Deal, women aged 40-59 made up between 10% and 11% of the total population. The proportion of elderly women in Deal was more than 50% higher than in the whole of England and Wales. With the exception of Ilfracombe, there were proportionally more women over 60 in Deal than in any of the other resort towns.

In 1851 and 1871, therefore, the age structure of the population of Deal, when compared to the age structure of the whole population of England and Wales and with that of other towns, can be seen to have had some of the characteristics of a resort town or a town in economic decline, with a small proportion of younger men and a high proportion of elderly people. Other characteristics, such as a great surplus of women, especially younger women who might have been employed as domestic servants, were not so marked.

There was considerable and increasing in-migration into Deal from 1851 to 1881.<sup>38</sup> Migration patterns derived from Census data are liable to some distortion, since they are based on birthplace information and assume that people made only one move, whereas a series of shorter moves is more likely.

Table 5.9  
Percentage of Total Population Born Outside Deal,  
1851-1881

1851	1861	1871	1881
34.96	36.92	40.26	42.96

As was the case in other parts of England, women were more likely to have migrated than men. The proportion of men born outside Deal rose from 14.1% of the total population in 1851 to 17.2% in 1881. The proportion of women born outside Deal rose from 21.1% of

38. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

the total population in 1851 to 26.1% in 1881. Overall, the proportion of the population born outside Deal rose from 35.2% in 1851 to 43.3% in 1881. A greater number of women than men migrated into Deal from 1851, and the difference increased over the thirty years. Patterns of migration are shown in Tables 5.10 and 5.11 and also in Maps 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4.

Table 5.10  
Birthplaces of Male In-Migrants as % of Total Population,  
Excluding Boarding School Pupils

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
0- 5m	-	4.1	3.82	4.56	3.92
5-10m	-	2.72	2.94	2.67	2.16
10-15m	-	1.34	1.16	1.30	1.24
Elsewhere in Kent	-	1.67	1.90	1.86	2.60
Out of Kent	2.87	3.12	3.70	4.60	6.18
Wales, Scotland,					
Ireland	0.39	0.74	0.47	0.56	0.58
Overseas	0.06	0.31	0.35	0.21	0.36
Total	-	14.00	14.34	15.77	17.04

Men were drawn into Deal from greater distances away over the period. The proportion of male migrants born in Kent but more than fifteen miles from Deal rose from 12.0% in 1851 to 15.3% in 1881. The proportion born in England but outside Kent rose from 22.2% in 1851 to 36.3% in 1881. The proportion of men born in the British Isles outside England or overseas was always very small. Men and women in the former category were usually members

of Coastguard and Customs families that had been stationed in Ireland. As the proportion of men from further away from Deal increased, the proportion born up to ten miles from Deal decreased, from 48.7% of all male migrants in 1851 to 35.7% in 1881.

In 1851, most migrants had been born in Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Devon and Norfolk, with Essex next. Less than ten men migrated to Deal from each of the other counties; none had come from the extreme north-west, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire or Hertfordshire. By 1861 the numbers migrating from Norfolk, Surrey Hampshire and Middlesex had increased, as had numbers from Yorkshire and Cornwall. In 1871, there were growing numbers of men in Deal from the south coast and East Anglian counties, and by 1881 there were men in Deal from every English county except Westmorland.

Table 5.11  
Birthplaces of Female In-Migrants as % of Total Population,  
Excluding Boarding School Pupils

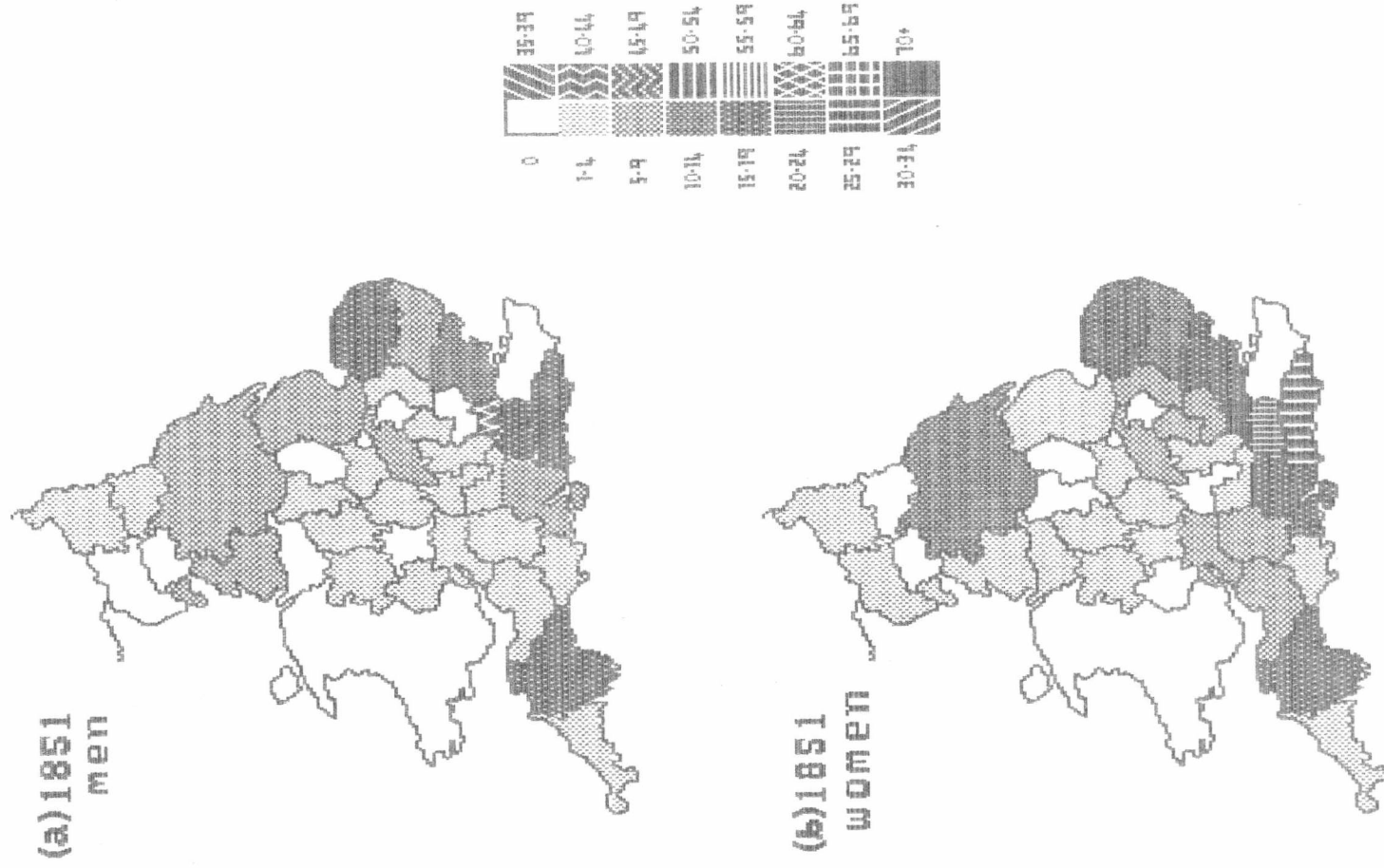
	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
0- 5m	-	6.52	7.20	7.41	6.66
5-10m	-	3.86	4.43	4.22	3.50
10-15m	-	1.68	1.76	2.15	1.70
Elsewhere in Kent	-	3.32	3.18	3.13	4.19
Out of Kent	3.46	4.52	5.01	6.60	8.61
Wales, Scotland,					
Ireland	0.57	0.73	0.60	0.61	0.74
Overseas	0.03	0.35	0.43	0.43	0.59
Total	-	20.96	22.58	24.49	25.92

Although more women than men migrated into Deal, they did so over shorter distances. A higher proportion of women migrants came to Deal from within Kent. Women would come to Deal either because their husbands' or fathers' occupations demanded the move, or as young domestic servants. Young single women are unlikely to have moved very long distances, and if a female servant wanted to move a long distance from home, she is more likely to have gone to London or a bigger resort like Margate or Brighton. Women migrants from outside Deal, like the men, came mainly from the eastern and southern counties, but migrated over longer distances as the century progressed.

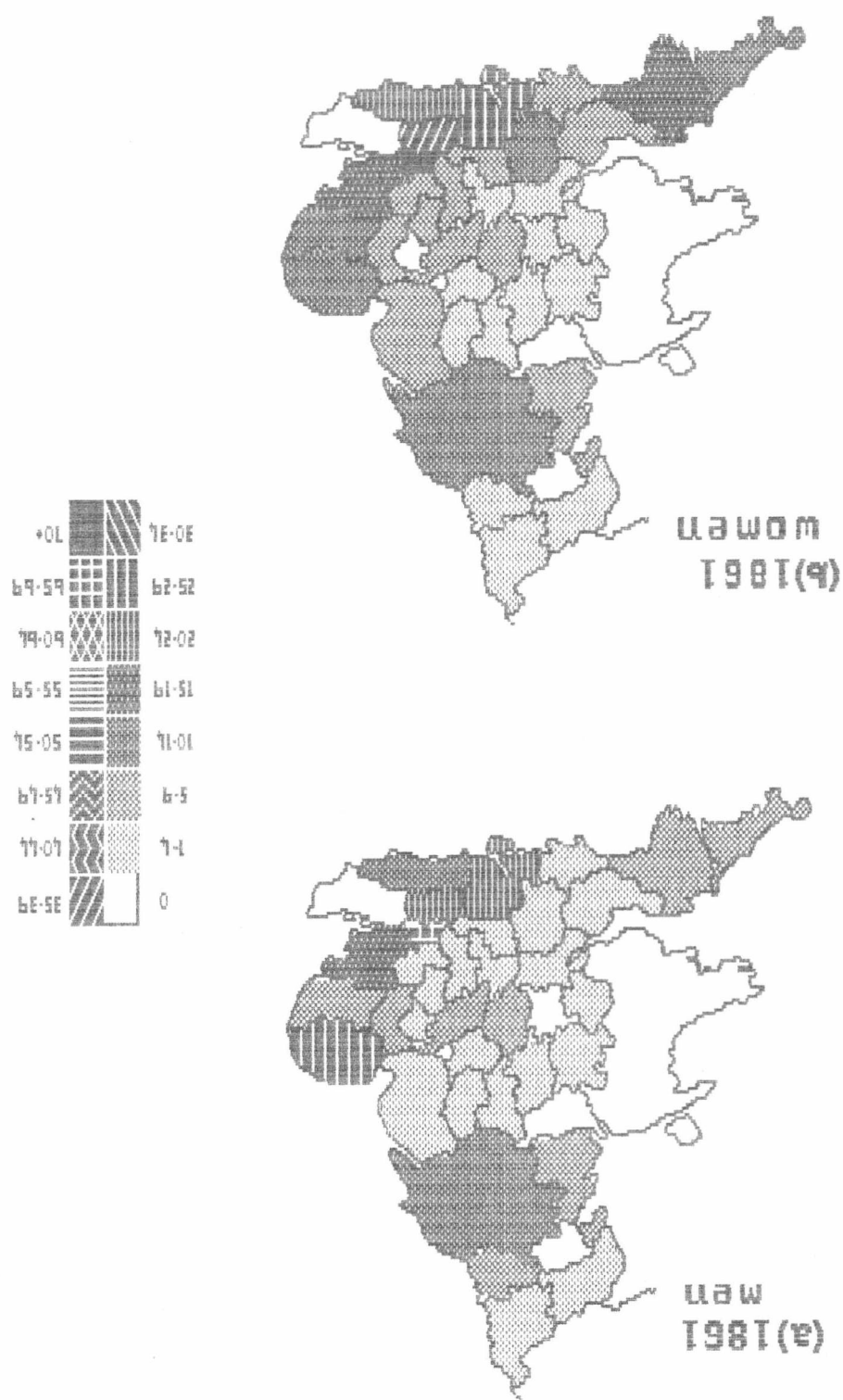
The age structure of the migrants into Deal can reveal something of the town's economic condition. High in-migration of young men would indicate progress and prosperity, while in-migration of elderly people would be a sign that Deal was becoming a place of retirement. It has already been shown that there was a considerable loss of men in the 15-29 age-group over the period.

In all age-groups from 15-64 years, there was a rise in the proportion of migrants over the period 1851-1881. The increase was most noticeable in the 15-29 age-group, in which men born out of Deal rose from 30.5% of all men in that age group in 1851 to 52.9% of all men of that age in 1881. The implication is that while young Deal men were leaving the town because their traditional

# Map 5.1 Migrants to Deal From Outside Kent



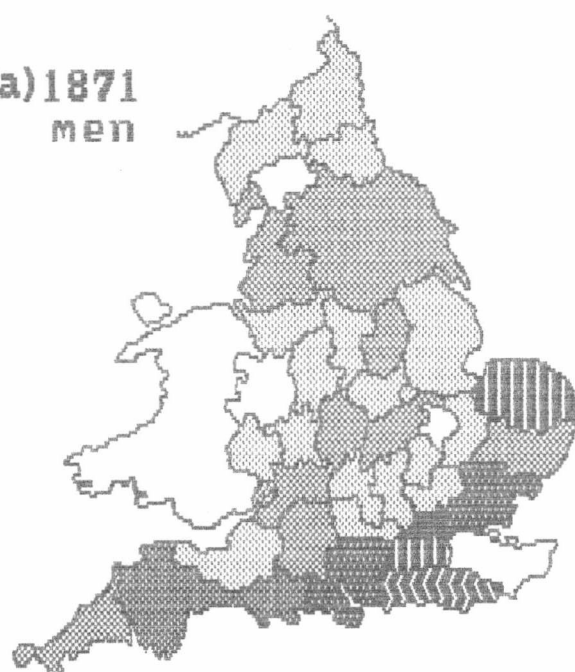
Map 5.2  
Migrants to Deal From Outside Kent



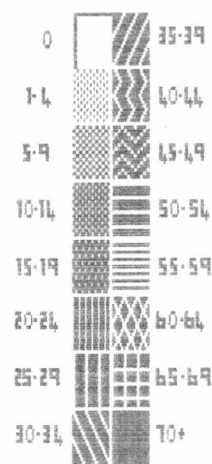
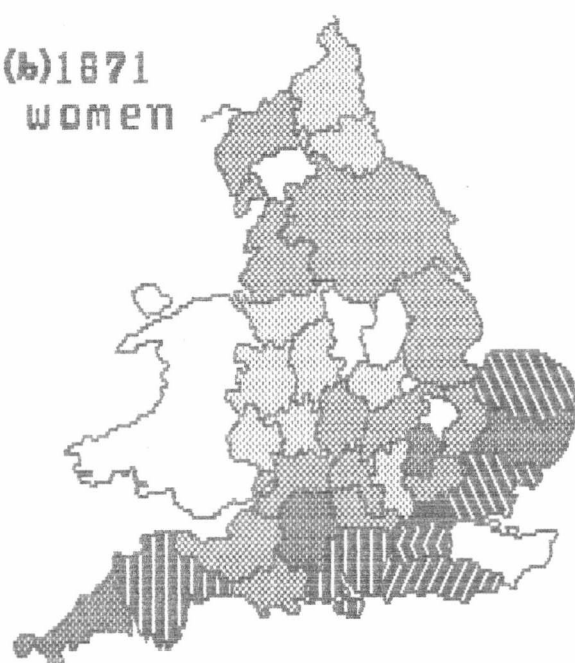


# Map 5.3 Migrants to Deal From Outside Kent

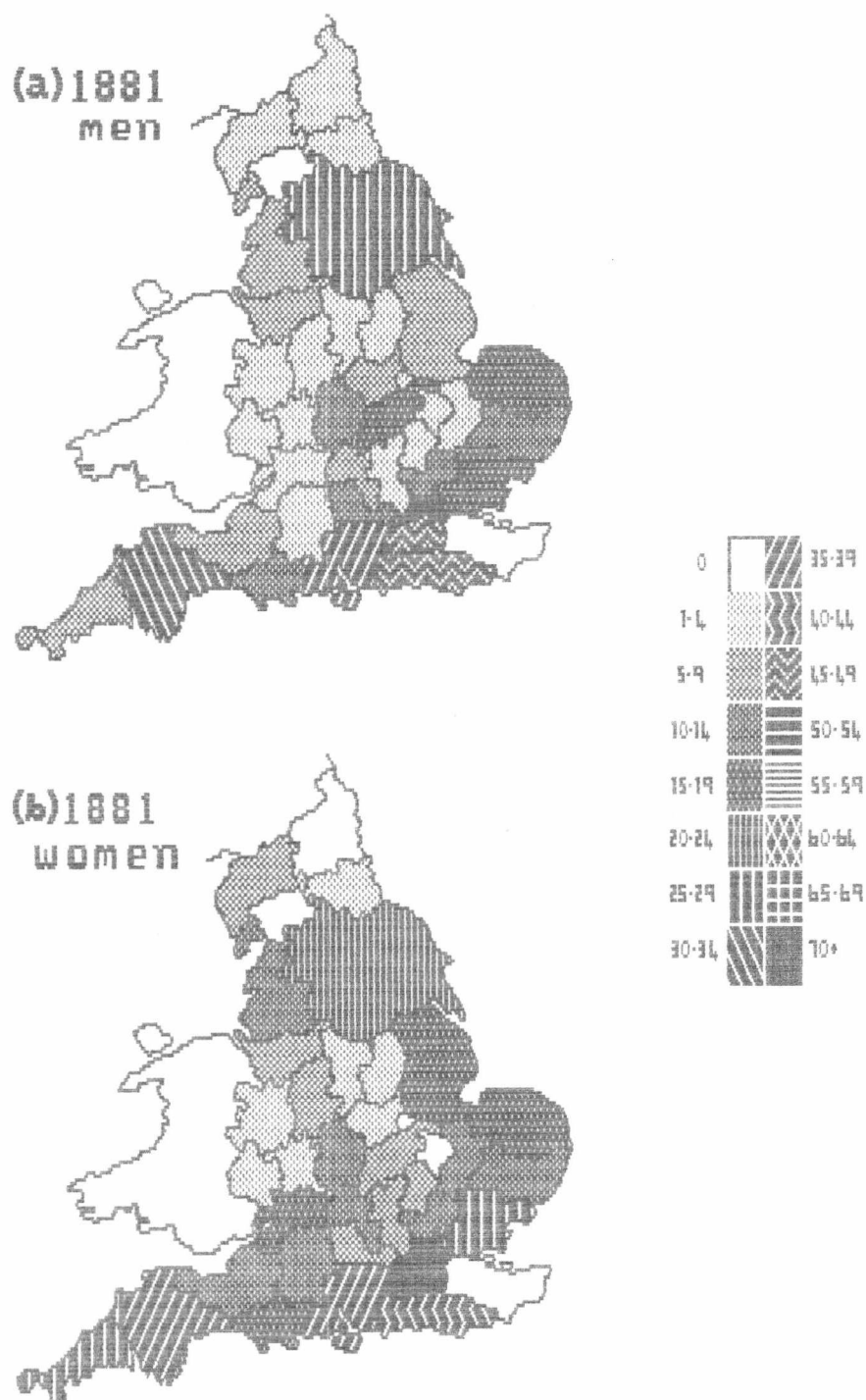
(a) 1871  
men



(b) 1871  
women



# Map 5.4 Migrants to Deal From Outside Kent



occupations were declining, there were still employment opportunities in Deal to attract young men from outside the town. A study of the occupations of in-migrants would prove or disprove this. In the 40-44 age group, the proportion of in-migrants rose from 33.1% of the total in 1851 to 56.0% of the total in 1881. Surprisingly, the proportion of men over 65 who were born outside Deal fell during the period. Unlike the 1841 Census, those from 1851 to 1881 were taken in either late March or early April, so there is no question of one set of figures being distorted by the presence of a greater number of temporary residents. Of course, among very elderly men the samples are so small that only two or three individuals more or less can make a big difference to the percentages. However, the question arises as to whether Deal might have become less attractive to men as a retirement area as the century progressed. In 1851, there might still have been living in Deal a number of retired Naval officers who had chosen to settle in the town on retirement because they had served there during the Napoleonic Wars. There would have been progressively fewer of these in each successive Census.

There must have been some attraction to cause so many men at the peak of their working lives to migrate to Deal. Deal was of course better known throughout the country than many other towns of comparable size. Its maritime functions and Naval and Military connections

meant that it was familiar to many merchant seamen, Naval Yard workers and Royal Marines, some of whom no doubt chose to settle there after discharge. A number of Customs and Coastguard men also stayed in the town after their retirement. Attempts to promote Deal as a seaside resort, and the fame of the boatmen, also led to the town being widely publicised. Events such as the *Olivia* frauds, the alleged wrecking of the *North*, the *Reform* tragedy and the sinking of the *Strathclyde* were reported at length in *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Articles also appeared at various times in *The Quarterly Review*, *Household Words*, *The Hour*, *The Bath Chronicle*, *Kind Words*, *Chambers' Journal* and *The Queen*.

The effectiveness of this type of publicity may be judged by the fact that the proportion of migrants among men who were retired or of independent means rose from 56.5% in 1851 to 72.9% in 1881. Other occupational groups in which the proportion of in-migrants increased were clothing, food and licensed trades. This implies that suggestions that numbers involved in these trades were excessive were inaccurate. Alternatively, local people who knew that there was only a poor living to be made from these trades may have been abandoning them, while in-migrants who thought Deal was more prosperous than was the case were coming in to take their place.

In some occupations, such as education, the professions, specialised trades and clerical work, which

were growing in the mid-nineteenth century, the proportion of migrants rose and fell again. By the end of the period, the Deal-born children of earlier middle class immigrants would have been reaching adulthood and taking up occupations. The children of Deal people also were, in the 1870s, looking beyond the occupations they had traditionally followed. They were able to take advantage of the fact that education was now compulsory for all, and of the increasingly wide range of work available. In 1881, Richard and Maria, children of William Riley of 92 Middle Street, publican and suspected smuggler, son and brother of boatmen, were occupied as a shorthand writer and pupil teacher respectively.<sup>39</sup> This represents a definite move away from the traditional maritime Deal towards the new, middle class town, and may stand as a symbol of the break up of the old community which Deal was experiencing in this period.

39. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 12 June 1858 and 22 June 1858; CUST 53/5, Collector to Board, 5 December 1857; RG 11 997.

## Chapter Six

### The Boatmen's Work

"From the Tyne to the Thames the whole east coast was a graveyard of ships throughout the age of sail."<sup>1</sup> Shallow waters and shifting sandbanks off the shores of Lincolnshire, East Anglia and Essex were a constant threat to sailing vessels. The Thames Estuary, leading to London, the world's busiest port, had only one safe channel. The Longsand, thrusting out into the North Sea, was second only to the Goodwins as a navigational hazard, and was known to the salvagers of Essex as "the Burying Grounds". Around the North Foreland, the Goodwin Sands lay in wait for the unwary mariner, further restricting the already narrow width of the English Channel.

With the great development of trade from the end of the eighteenth century, the shipping passing up and down the east coast increased dramatically. Marking the treacherous places with lighthouses, buoys and light-ships, however, did not keep pace with the growth of shipping. In addition, some ships' officers were so unfamiliar with the waters through which they had to navigate their vessels that they sometimes mistook Walton on the Naze for the South Foreland, the Thames Estuary for the English Channel and the North Kent coast for the coast of France.<sup>2</sup> In 1843, one ship's captain ran his vessel on to the French coast, with considerable loss of

1. Hervey Benham, *The Salvagers* (Colchester, 1980), 4.  
2. *Ibid.*, 12.

life, because he mistook the light of Cap Gris Nez for that of Dungeness.<sup>3</sup> Stanton described one voyage up the Channel when, despite the fact that he and two other Deal men were in the crew, the ship's officers became quite lost, mistaking the light of Boulogne for that of Dungeness and concluding that they were in Rye Bay, although, as Stanton said, the light was on the wrong side.<sup>4</sup>

In response to the needs of shipping, therefore, communities of salvaging boatmen became established from the Humber to Dungeness, with French boatmen also carrying out salvage work in the English Channel. While the details of their organisation differed from place to place, the work done by all these mariners was basically the same. The beachmen of East Anglia were perhaps the most highly organised, with each town or village having one or more named company, with written articles of association. Beachmen were definitely attached to one company or another, with membership being attained by purchase of shares or by inheritance. Even so,

"other than at Yarmouth, the beachmen were first and foremost fishermen. The beach company income, when available, supplemented their other earnings."<sup>5</sup>

In Essex, some mariners, notably those sailing out of Harwich and Brightlingsea, made their livings almost entirely from salvage work, while others were opportunist salvagers but lived mainly by fishing, oyster dredging or, later in the century, providing pleasure trips for visitors.<sup>6</sup>

3. *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), British Parliamentary Papers, Shipwrecks 2, 81.

4. William Stanton, *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal* (Portsmouth, 1929), 15.

5. David Higgins, *The Beachmen* (Lavenham, 1987), 17.

6. Benham, *op. cit.*, 27.

The mariners of the North Kent coast also found their living from a variety of sources. Whitstable oysters had been famous since Roman times, and in the nineteenth century the town began to specialise also in salvage diving. The men of Thanet changed from fishing to salvage work to pleasure cruises as the season demanded. Ramsgate had a particular advantage; not only was it the biggest fishing port in Kent, but for salvage work its seamen had equal access to the English Channel and the Thames Estuary. The Ramsgate lifeboat was provided for rescue work on the Goodwin Sands, which the town faced, but its most famous launch was to the wreck of the *Indian Chief*, on the Longsand in the Thames Estuary, in 1881.<sup>7</sup>

The Deal men, more than any other community of boatmen in Kent, lived by providing services and assistance to shipping. The town was ideally placed for such work, immediately opposite the anchorage of the Downs and the hazard of the Goodwin Sands. The Sands were, in Shakespeare's words, "a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried."<sup>8</sup> This chapter draws together all the available information on the Deal boatmen's work in an attempt to reach an understanding of their organisation and customs.

The seafaring men of Deal described themselves in the Censuses, and other sources such as newspaper reports, as mariners, boatmen, North Sea or Channel Pilots, or, occasionally, watermen. These terms seem to

7. T.S. Ireanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1892), 213.

8. *The Merchant of Venice*, III, i.



have been used quite interchangeably; Thomas Ashington, born in 1824, was a boatman in 1871 and a Channel Pilot in 1881. Thomas Baker, born in 1809, gave his occupation as mariner in 1851, boatman in 1861, North Sea Pilot in 1871 and mariner in 1881. John Blissenden, born in 1818, was a mariner in 1841 and 1851, a boatman in 1861, and a waterman in 1871.<sup>9</sup>

The Deal luggers, which were said to be the finest sea-boats of their kind anywhere in the world, had evolved in response to the special needs of the boatmen of this part of the coast. This was attributed partly to the fact that the Deal boatbuilding firms had remained in the hands of the same families for generations.<sup>10</sup> Having to be repeatedly hauled up and launched from the shingle beach, often with an anchor weighing several tons aboard, the luggers needed to be strongly built. For their work in shallow waters in stormy weather, they needed to be of shallow draft and broad beamed. A description of the Deal luggers of about 1850 noted how "they float on a rough sea like a cork, and are worthy of the gallant fellows who man them."<sup>11</sup> Loss of life at sea among Deal boatmen was frequent, and might occur through a boat being run down by a steamer, swamped while towing behind a bigger ship, driven ashore by adverse winds and tides, or through accidents in launching, but there is no record of a lugger ever having capsized or sunk purely due to stress of weather. The Deal luggers were quite different

9. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

10. E.C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929), 118.

11. *The Land We Live In, Part IX, The South Eastern Coast*, quoted in *Reminiscences of Old Deal* (Deal, n.d., c.1950), 31.

from the boats used by the beachmen of East Anglia. Although the work these men did was very similar, their yawls were much narrower and shallower.

At the peak of the boatmen's prosperity, the most used boats were the great luggers. These might be of twenty tons or more and forty feet long. Later in the nineteenth century, as the demand for the boatmen's services declined, the so-called second class luggers, which were not more than thirty-four feet long, were more commonly used. The only difference between the two classes of lugger was their size, so a description of one may be applied to all.

The lugger *Albion* was built in Deal in 1855. She was clench built (i.e. with the strakes or planks overlapping instead of butted) of elm, and would have been varnished and not painted. She was 37.4 feet long, 12 feet wide and 6.6 feet deep - for purposes of registration, boats were measured in tenths of feet rather than inches. *Albion* had three masts; later in the century, two were more common.<sup>12</sup> The front part of the boat, or forepeak, was decked over, thus giving the boats their alternative name of forepeak lugger, or forepeaker. In the small cabin thus formed, there was a stove, for warmth and cooking when at sea, and room for perhaps three men to sleep, albeit in somewhat cramped conditions. The main body of the boat was left open, for the carrying of anchors and cables or chains.<sup>13</sup>

12. P.R.O. BT 108/37, Register of Shipping, 1855.

13. Treanor, *op. cit.*, 45

Luggers and galley-punts were not cheap. In 1833, the cost of the bare hull of a lugger was said to be about £100.<sup>14</sup> In 1866, the 25 ton lugger *Alexandra*, built for Ramsgate owners by Isaac Hayward of Deal, cost between £600 and £700.<sup>15</sup> The lugger *Pilgrim*, shown in Illustration 22, built by Bayley's for the Bingham family at Kingsdown for the 1872 mackerel fishing season cost £400, while in 1879, Edward Grigg paid £150 for the lugger *Caxton*, previously of Kingsdown, with her gear and contents.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the cost of the boat, the owners had to supply equipment amounting to another £200. The gear required for a great lugger is shown in Appendix II. The great luggers also carried punts of about fourteen feet long. The punt would be used for transferring from the lugger to the shore, if it was decided not to beach her, or from the lugger to another boat or ship.

The other type of boat principally used by the Deal boatmen was the galley-punt. These were twenty-one to thirty feet long and seven feet beam, with one mast. These boats were entirely open, but their crews of three or four still stayed at sea for several days at a time.<sup>17</sup> Galley-punts came into use more and more towards the end of the nineteenth century, as work for the big luggers was no longer available. Because they required a smaller crew than the luggers and, being smaller, could be launched and beached more easily, galley-punts were

14. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), [VII], 748.

15. *The Deal Telegram*, 24 February 1866, 2e.

16. *Ibid.*, 31 August 1872, 2a; *ibid.*, 29 November 1879, 5a.

17. Treanor, *op. cit.*, 50.

cheaper to use. They were employed for such jobs as shipping a pilot out from the shore, or landing a pilot from a vessel, when it was not necessary to launch a big lugger. In the 1860s, a new galley-punt, with all her gear, cost about £160.<sup>18</sup>

A lugger was said to have a life of about ten years, although when times were hard and owners could not afford to have new boats built, many were kept on the beach much longer than this. Of the 19 on Deal beach luggers listed in the Parliamentary Report of 1833, eight were ten years old or more and a further eight were between five and ten years old. Only three were less than five years old.<sup>19</sup> The lugger *Albion* was built in 1855 and was totally wrecked on launching in 1868.<sup>20</sup> *Earl Grey* was built in about 1832 by James Ratcliffe of Deal and was still sailing on smuggling trips in 1852, although she was not at this time of any great value, or her owners would not have risked having her confiscated by the authorities.<sup>21</sup> The luggers *Mary Blane* and *England's Glory* were mentioned in the Customs records in 1849. *Mary Blane* was still sailing in 1862, and *England's Glory* was still in use in 1871.<sup>22</sup>

One of the greatest obstacles encountered when attempting to reconstruct the history and ownership of individual boats was the habit among Deal boatmen of giving the same name to more than one lugger or galley punt at the same time. There were five luggers named *Po*

18, *The Deal Telegram*, 3 July 1869, 2f.

19, *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 748.

20, P.R.O, BT 108/37.

21, P.R.O, CUST 53/1, Petition of Elizabeth and Mary Petty and Sarah Pettitt, 20 June 1852.

22, CUST 53/1, Requests for Licences for *Mary Blane* and *England's Glory*, 5 March 1849; *The Deal Telegram*, 1 November 1862, 7c; *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 2f.

listed in the Parliamentary Report of 1833.<sup>23</sup> *The Deal Mercury* in 1870 reported a collision between two galley-punts, both called *Hope*, both of the North End, one belonging to Messrs Foster and Co., the other to Messrs Bowbyes and Co.<sup>24</sup> *Mexborough* was run down and sunk in 1861, but a lugger of that name was mentioned in 1869.<sup>25</sup> The original *Albion* was wrecked in 1866, but there was another *Albion* in existence in the 1870s and 1880s. Luggers may also have been renamed when they changed hands. Furthermore, local newspapers reports did not always specify whether boats mentioned were luggers or galley-punts, or whether they belonged to Deal or to Walmer. Only boats belonging to Deal have been considered here, not those of Walmer or Kingsdown.

Some men were the sole owners of luggers or galley-punts, but it was more usual for ownership to be shared by four, six or eight men. Many men, and some women, probably acquired shares in a boat by inheritance. Others took out mortgages to buy or build a new boat. Some boatmen no doubt used the proceeds from a lucky salvage award to become boat owners. However it was achieved, ownership of a lugger was an investment which required a large amount of capital and involved a high level of risk. What private insurance arrangements were available to owners is not known; no doubt the premiums were considerable. When the Walmer lugger *Pride of the Sea* was lost off Shanklin in 1887, it was said that her owners

23. Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots (1833), *op. cit.*, 748.

24. *The Deal Mercury*, 22 January 1870, 2d.

25. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 April 1861, 2e; *The Deal Mercury*, 28 August 1869, 3b.

"had been struggling hard during the last ten or eleven years to pay off all claims on their craft, and had but recently cleared off the last mortgage. She was not insured, the premium on vessels so dangerously employed being too high."<sup>26</sup>

This was towards the end of the boatmen's era; possibly in more prosperous times, mortgages were more quickly paid off and the cost of insurance more easily met.

There were various friendly or benevolent societies which compensated members in the event of a boat being lost or damaged, but the sums paid were usually negligible. The owners of the lugger *Mexborough*, run down and sunk while at anchor in 1861, received £6 15s from the Shipwrecked Fishermen's and Mariners' Benevolent Society.<sup>27</sup> The same society paid the owners of *Reform*, lost in 1871, sums ranging from £1 15s to £2 17s 6d, according to their varying periods of membership. They were also sent ten guineas by Lloyd's.<sup>28</sup> These sums, amounting to less than £25, went a very little way towards the cost of a new lugger, yet *Reform's* replacement, the 20 ton *Galatea*, was launched from Isaac Hayward's yard within six months of her loss.<sup>29</sup> Her owners must either have had considerable reserves of capital or have made careful and adequate insurance arrangements.

Who, then, were the owners of the Deal boats? John Boys, a retired Naval officer and long time resident of Deal, told a Parliamentary Committee in 1843 that

26. Pain, *op. cit.*, 99.

27. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 April 1861, 2e.

28. *The Deal Mercury*, 28 January 1871, 2e; *ibid.*, 18 February 1871, 3c.

29. *Ibid.*, 8 July 1871, 2e.

"there are very few of the hovellers who have really shares; some of them may have small shares. In the war time they all had shares, but since the war they are reduced so much from the want of employment, that the boats principally belong to boatbuilders and speculators."<sup>30</sup>

In 1852, Thomas Reakes, the then Mayor of Deal, told the Collector of Customs that "the owners ... are in many cases tradesmen and persons unconnected with maritime pursuits."<sup>31</sup> Boys, however, was concerned to emphasize the poverty of the boatmen, and Thomas Reakes had his own reasons for wanting to stress the distinction between boatowners and boatmen. In fact, as the nineteenth century progressed, it is likely that boat owning as an investment became less attractive to those not closely connected with the boatmen. Shares in luggers were held in multiples of 1/64th, a form of ownership which rendered all co-owners equally liable for any debts contracted by the boat. The boatman James Tomlin, giving evidence to the Parliamentary Report of 1833, stated that the boats on Deal beach were in debt to a total of £1500 or £1600;<sup>32</sup> boat owning, therefore, was not an investment likely to attract many tradesmen and entrepreneurs who had another source of income.

It is not easy to obtain information on boat ownership in Deal. Open boats under fifteen tons were not required to be registered; as luggers were generally about fifteen tons, many of the smaller ones therefore

30. *Report of the Select Committee on Shipwrecks* (1843), *op. cit.*, 75.

31. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Memorial of the Mayor of Deal, 26 August 1852.

32. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 575.

escaped registration. The Sea Fisheries Act of 1868 laid down regulations for registration by the Customs of all fishing boats and the issuing of identifying letters and numbers to all boats. There were 23 fishing boats registered under the act in the Port of Deal in 1881,<sup>33</sup> but these registers appear not to have survived. Information on ownership has therefore been collected from those registers of boats over fifteen tons which are available in the Public Record Office, Customs letterbooks, and the Deal newspapers.

Boatmen's wills might have been a source of information about boat ownership. Announcements of the deaths of boatmen from 1858 to 1880 were extracted from *The Deal Telegram* and *The Deal Mercury*, and the calendars of wills at Somerset House were searched for wills made by any of these men. This method obviously excluded from the search any boatmen whose deaths were not mentioned in the newspapers, but it can be argued that men whose families were sufficiently conscious of their position in local society to insert an announcement in the papers are the ones most likely to have made wills. In fact, out of 123 boatmen whose deaths were announced or reported in this way, only three left wills.

It could be argued that the newspaper sample is unrepresentative; many of these men drowned or otherwise died young, and might perhaps have made wills if they had lived longer. Of the 123, 47 were under 40 when they

33. P.R.O. CUST 53/4, Collector to Board, 27 October 1881.



died, and were thus of an age when making a will is not a prime concern. On the other hand, 26 of those who died were aged 70 or over, an age when men normally do begin to be conscious of their mortality. It might also be argued that the very precariousness of the boatmen's calling might have caused them to be more likely to make wills. One of the three who did leave a will, William Middleton, was drowned in the *Reform* tragedy of 1871. His will was the only one of the three to mention boats, although without being more specific, and since he was already known to have been a boat owner, his will adds little to our knowledge in that respect.

It is not easy to estimate the total number of luggers on Deal beach between the 1830s and the 1880s. The Parliamentary Report of 1833 enumerated 48 first and second class luggers on the beach at that date.<sup>34</sup> If each of these was replaced every 15-20 years, there should have been a total of nearly 150 different boats over the fifty year period. However, this assumes that the number of luggers remained constant and does not take into account the declining number of boatmen and the loss of several capstan grounds as a result of the sea front improvements. The Deal newspapers mention 63 different luggers by name between 1858 and 1882, a period of 24 years. This seems to support the suggestion that 120-150 different luggers existed over the fifty year period.

Forty two people can be identified as owners or

34. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 748.

part owners of luggers. This is not a complete list; Edward Grigg referred to himself in 1869 as "part-owner" of the lugger *Success* but did not name his fellow owners.<sup>35</sup> In 1872, "Thomas Bingham and others" were said to own *Seaman's Glory*.<sup>36</sup> In 1850, Edward Erridge was said to be owner of *Sparrow* and Richard Orrick of *Trial*, but these men were apparently among the poorer boatmen, so one suspects there were other part-owners, not named.<sup>37</sup>

Of the 42 lugger owners, four were women. In 1852, Elizabeth Petty, then aged 82, Sarah Pettitt, aged 60, and Mary Petty, claimed to be the owners of the lugger *Earl Grey*, having inherited her from their husbands. The lugger had been caught with 1200 lbs of smuggled tobacco on board, and was therefore forfeit.<sup>38</sup> On 20 June 1852 the three women petitioned the Customs for her return, claiming that it had "been a support to us in our aged days in bringing in a few pounds a year ... you must be aware the Boat being taken we have nothing to support us in our Old Days." The Customs disputed the women's claim: "We have no knowledge of the petitioners being part owners of the boat as she was licensed at this Port on 17th August 1848 and Bond given by John Foster ... and he declared himself as sole owner."<sup>39</sup> On 26 August the Mayor of Deal, in reply, stated that the original four owners had been David and John Petty and Peter Pettitt, the husbands of the three women, and John Foster, and that ownership was now shared equally between the three widows

35. *The Deal Mercury*, 11 December 1869, 3c.

36. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 July 1872, 2e.

37. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Petition of Edward Erridge and Richard Orrick, April 1850.

38. *Ibid.*, Collector to Board, 8 June 1852.

39. *Ibid.*, Petition of Elizabeth and Mary Petty and Sarah Pettitt, 20 June 1852.

and John Foster, who was also master.<sup>40</sup> The Collector of Customs, commenting on the Mayor's letter, remarked that he believed that "the widows named in the memorial have a small share of her but they are not the principal owners" and named John Foster and Abraham Sneller as the true owners. A report by Lt. Batt, of the Coastguard, which was attached, stated that

"the ownership of the *Earl Grey* belongs to John Foster, Abraham Sneller, James Buttress with Elizabeth Petty and Mary Petty, widows, who it appears have a very small proportion of her ... John Foster, the principal owner, is named on the stern of the lugger ... and acknowledged to me ... that he was the sole owner of her."<sup>41</sup>

This dispute clearly illustrates the difficulty of establishing the ownership of the Deal boats.

A fourth woman owner was identified only as Mrs Smith, part owner with Thomas Obree and Onesiphorous Sneller of an unnamed lugger.<sup>42</sup> William Middleton, who was unmarried, willed his shares in boats to his younger sister Sarah. When he made the will, William Middleton was a part-owner of the luggers *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory* and Sarah was an unmarried girl in her early twenties. By the time of William's death in 1871, *Albion* had been wrecked, and Sarah had married Frederick Miles, a builder's labourer, the son of Edward Miles, a labourer. There were Miles's among the boatmen, but they were not members of Edward and Frederick's immediate family.<sup>43</sup>

40. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Memorial of the Mayor of Deal, 26 August 1852.

41. *Ibid.*, Collector to Board and information of Lt. Batt, 26 August 1852.

42. *The Deal Mercury*, 8 July 1870, 3e.

43. Information on Middleton and Miles families from Deal Parish Registers and Censuses.

What, then, did Sarah Miles, née Middleton, do with her legacy? Did she take an active interest in the working of the boats? Boat ownership involved activities which, especially in the nineteenth century, would have been difficult for a woman to take part in; the sharing of earnings, for example, usually took place in a public house. A woman did not have the specialised knowledge necessary to argue a claim for salvage or pursue disputes over earnings or damage with crew members. Did Frederick Miles pursue these activities on his wife's behalf, although he himself probably knew little of the practical side of the boatmen's work? The couple perhaps simply relied on William Middleton's surviving partners paying over their share in any earnings, and took no interest in the actual working of the boats. It is possible that they found the shares too troublesome an inheritance and preferred to sell. Woman boat owners really needed a reliable boatman as partner or master - the role which John Foster seems to have played in relation to the three *Earl Grey* widows. In the East Anglian beachmen's communities, it was the custom for a beachman's widow, inheriting her husband's share in a yawl, to employ a man to take the husband's place in the boat. He was known as the "widow's man".<sup>44</sup> There is no evidence of any such system in Deal. Possibly, since boatmen's sons almost invariably followed their fathers' occupation, until the last third of the nineteenth century, boat owners passed

44. Higgins, *op. cit.*, 100.

their shares to their sons during their lifetime and made other provision for their wives.

Of the 38 male lugger owners, 30 can be positively identified as boatmen working in Deal. Of those lugger owners who cannot be shown to have been boatmen, five were the owners of *British Queen* registered in 1846 - Thomas James Bushell, a miller, Thomas Jelly, a baker, George Laurence, a shipping agent's clerk, Simon Marsh, a blacksmith, and William Bailey Marsh, a baker.<sup>45</sup> Three others who cannot be identified as boatmen were Henry Marsh, a publican and part owner of the *Brave Nelson*, who in 1868 claimed that he did not "at any time follow the occupation of boatman",<sup>46</sup> Thomas Shelvey, in 1845 owner of the lugger *XL*, who in the register gave his occupation simply as boatowner,<sup>47</sup> and Stephen Marsh. In 1861 Stephen Marsh was part owner with three boatmen of the lugger *Mexborough*;<sup>48</sup> he will be discussed more fully later.

The Marsh family was very numerous in Deal, as might be expected, since the family had been in the area at least since the sixteenth century. There were Marshes in 32 different households in Deal in 1851.<sup>49</sup> Members of the family were to be found in all walks of life, from maidservant to farmer employing eight labourers. Of the four boat owning Marshes, the most senior was William Bailey Marsh, a baker and partowner of *British Queen*. His age as given on the 1851 Census fits with a baptism in 1795, that of William Bailey Marsh, son of William and

45. P.R.O. BT 107/303.

46. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 13 July 1868.

47. P.R.O. BT 107/303.

48. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 April 1861, 2e.

49. Information on Marsh family from Deal Parish Registers and Censuses.

Ann Bailey. It has not been possible to establish any family connection between William Bailey Marsh and another part-owner of *British Queen*, Simon Marsh. Simon was baptised in 1796, son of John and Charlotte. His trade was that of blacksmith; he worked at the Naval Yard until its closure,<sup>50</sup> and later combined blacksmithing with running the Blue Anchor public house in West Street. This is too far from the beach to have been much used by the boatmen; probably its name was the only maritime thing about it. In 1851, one member of his household was his stepfather, Stephen Chapman, an agricultural labourer from Word (Worth). Henry Marsh, part owner of *Brave Nelson* with master mariner Charles Pearson, was the landlord of the Five Ringers in Gravel Walk; again, not a boatmen's pub. His parents have not been identified.

Simon and William Bailey Marsh shared the ownership of *British Queen* with Thomas James Bushell, George Laurence and Thomas Jelly, who also owned *Spartan*. Thomas Jelly gave his trade as baker in the shipping register, but in 1851 he was a victualler at the Black Bull in Lower Street. In 1832 he had married Catherine Chambers Bushell, and was thus the brother-in-law of Thomas James Bushell. Thomas Shelvey cannot be identified in any Census. George Laurence presumably became aware of the possibility of profit to be made from investing in a boat through his work as a ship agent's clerk. In 1833, Edward Darby, clerk to Messrs Iggulden, ship agents, told the

50. P.R.O. ADM 42/378, Deal Naval Yard Paylists.



14. Launching  
the  
Lugger



15. Hauling  
up the  
Lugger



Parliamentary Enquiry his work "frequently" brought him into contact with boatmen, and described how "some boatmen came to me ... and said 'we can raise £50 to place in the builder's hands; if you will guarantee £50 more we will set the boat up immediately'"<sup>51</sup>

Men who did not work as boatmen also owned or part-owned other, smaller boats. In 1879 Charles Evans of 17 Farrier Street wrote to the Customs of his unnamed boat which had been taken and used for smuggling by some unidentified boatmen;

"I bought her to go pleasuring in .... I am not a waterman myself neither do I fraternise with them, who ever took her even broke the rules of the beach as she was stern to the sea."<sup>52</sup>

For a man who claimed not to fraternise with boatmen, Mr Evans showed himself to be remarkably familiar with the rules of the beach, and indeed, living in Farrier Street it would have been difficult not to fraternise with boatmen. Number 17, Mr Evans' home, was uninhabited at the time of the 1881 Census, but numbers 7, 9, 12, 14a, 15a and 18 were all inhabited by mariners and pilots. The only Charles Evans in Deal at this date was a house agent and valuer, at the Black Bull Hotel, 30 High Street, with his son, sister and niece. All the family were born in Middlesex, so to that extent at least had no connection with the boatmen's community.<sup>53</sup>

Richard William Robinson owned the boat *Gipsy Girl* in 1850-51. He kept The Fox alehouse at 10 Beach Street

51. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 533, 539.

52. P.R.O. CUST 53/4, Petition of Charles Evans, 19 May 1879.

53. P.R.O. RG 11 997.



from the mid 1840s to the 1870s.<sup>54</sup> "Disabled by lameness from the more active concerns of life," he claimed that he "endeavoured to improve his means of living by investing his savings in the purchase of a Boat [and] the loss of the boat will be productive of the most serious consequences ... especially by depriving him of the power of contributing to the support of his mother."<sup>55</sup> Although by this account it would appear that Richard Robinson owned *Gipsy Girl* purely as a source of investment income, he had close connections with the maritime community, as his father John and his brother, also John, were both boatmen.<sup>56</sup> Presumably only Richard's lameness prevented him from pursuing the same occupation.

With this exception, these men seemed to own shares in luggers purely as an investment; all had other trades and some, such as Simon Marsh, blacksmith and publican, and Thomas Jelly, baker and publican, had two alternative occupations. None of them, therefore, relied on their boats' earnings as their sole or even their principal source of income. Simon Marsh had worked at the Naval Yard as a young man, and George Laurence, as a ship agent's clerk, would presumably have been familiar with the boatmen's work, but none of them except Richard Robinson can be shown to have any direct connection with the sea. It is noticeable, however, that a number of the boat owners who did not work as boatmen were publicans. As pointed out elsewhere, running a pub was a job which

54. S. Bagshaw, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Kent* (Sheffield, 1848); P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004.

55. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Petition of Richard William Robinson, January 1851.

56. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

could be delegated to the wife and family, leaving the man free to pursue other interests or occupations.

It is possible that non-boatmen owners were more numerous than it appears, but are not so easy to trace through such sources as newspaper items as they remained more in the background. However, the majority of those who have been identified as owning luggers were boatmen who themselves worked the boats full time. Of the 30 full-time boatmen/boatowners, half belonged to the North End and half to the South End. Between them they had shares in the ownership of thirteen luggers.

The ownership of only seven luggers can be established in sufficient detail to make prolonged discussion worthwhile. Two, *British Queen* and *Earl Grey*, have already been considered. Of the remaining five, *Reform*, *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory* belonged to the South End and *Mexborough* belonged to the North End.

That more information is available on South End than North End boats is probably partly due to the fact that the South End beach was much nearer to the centre of Deal - to the main business centres in Queen Street and the south end of Lower Street and to the railway and coach stations. Thus, the affairs of the South End would be more generally known to visitors and to the town at large than those of the north. Also, being nearer to the newspaper offices, the South End would be more likely to

attract the notice of reporters who might not undertake the exertion of the mile-long, blustery walk to the North End. It was also the case that it was the South End luggers which were involved in events most likely to seize the attention of press and populace. The owners of *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory* were accused and convicted of fraud in a case which attracted national as well as local interest, and the lugger *Reform* was at the centre of the greatest single tragedy to strike the boatmen's community in the period under discussion.<sup>57</sup>

Three of the part-owners of the North End lugger *Mexborough* can definitely be identified as boatmen. They were Stephen Blissenden, J.K. (Joshua) Mockett and E. (Edward) Wells. The fourth part-owner was Stephen Marsh.<sup>58</sup> All that is certainly known of him is his name. No Stephen Marsh was listed in the 1861 Census for Deal, although this is the year in which he was said to have been an owner of the lugger. No Stephen Marsh was ever recorded as a boatman in any Census. Seven Stephen Marshes were baptised in Deal between 1780 and 1837. The other three owners of *Mexborough* were born in the 1820s; one Stephen Marsh was born in this decade - Stephen Chapman Marsh, son of Simon Marsh, blacksmith, and Sarah, baptised in 1824. Simon Marsh, part owner of *British Queen*, and Stephen Marsh, part owner of *Mexborough*, were therefore apparently father and son. Their interest in the maritime economy may have arisen through Simon's

57. P.R.O. MT9/105A; *The Deal Telegram* and *The Deal Mercury*, January 1871, various issues.

58. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 April 1861, 2e.

earlier employment at the Naval Yard, or perhaps there was some relationship, which it has not been possible to establish, with the Marshes who were boatmen.

One South End lugger of which all the owners are known is *Reform*. She was owned by Henry and John Bailey, John Cottle, Thomas and William Goymer, Richard Lambert and William Meakins.<sup>59</sup> The two Baileys were brothers, as were the two Goymers, but otherwise the men cannot be shown to have been related. Ownership of three other South End luggers, *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory* was shared between a group of six men.<sup>60</sup>

	<i>Albion</i>	<i>Briton's Pride</i>	<i>England's Glory</i>
? Files		X	
William Middleton	X	X	X
? Selth		X	
Henry Spears	X	X	
William Spears	X	X	X
Thomas J. Wilkins	X	X	X

Files was either John, born in 1827, or one of his cousins, Thomas and Philip, born in 1827 and 1831 respectively. The two Spears' were brothers, but other than this there is no evidence of any relationship between the men.

It was not unusual for a boatman to have shares in more than one boat. Frederick Caspell, another South End boatman, spoke of his "boats",<sup>61</sup> while George Porter of the Fountain Inn, had shares in three boats and was owner of four others.<sup>62</sup> At the North End, Frederick Caspell's

59. *The Deal Mercury*, 28 January 1871, 2e; *ibid.*, 18 February 1871, 3c. Deal Parish Registers and Censuses for family relationships of owners, and see also Chapter Seven.

60. P.R.O. BT 108/37; MT9/105A/1639/1875.

61. *The Deal Mercury*, 4 January 1873, 3a.

62. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 November 1873, 7b.

nephew, Thomas Bingham, had shares in *Seaman's Glory*, *Mexborough II*, *Bouncer*, *Wild Girl* and *Minatour* (sic).<sup>63</sup>

William Stanton, when he was a boatman in the 1820s and 1830s, had a one-sixth share in three boats.<sup>64</sup> Spreading an investment over three or four boats was of course sound business sense; it reduced the risk and maximised the chance of profit. At Deal, however, there was a further reason for owning shares in more than one boat. The boats owned by a group of partners would be of different types and sizes. Stanton shared in a big lugger, the *Ox*, the second class *Fox*, and a galley punt. The galley punt or smaller lugger would be used to race out to a ship signalling for assistance, while the big lugger was used for heavier work where speed was not a prime requirement. Thus in 1867 William Middleton, William Spears and their crew used the nine ton lugger *Briton's Pride* to go out to the ship *Olivia*, which was signalling for a pilot, and subsequently launched the much bigger *Albion* to take out a new anchor and chain.<sup>65</sup> In 1872, four men took a pilot to a brig in the galley-punt *Sappho*, and later took out a new anchor and chain in the lugger *Briton's Pride*.<sup>66</sup>

There was one lugger which did not conform to the usual pattern of ownership. This was the North End lugger the *Tiger*, which was owned by a company of 120 shareholders. The lugger's affairs were handled by a committee of twenty shareholders, and for this reason she was often

63. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 July 1872, 7a; *ibid.*, 26 December 1874, 4f; *The Deal Mercury*, 27 December 1879, 2d; Pain, *op. cit.*, 106.

64. Stanton, *op. cit.*, 54.

65. P.R.O. MT9 105A/1639/1875.

66. *The Deal Telegram*, 18 January 1873, 7c.

referred to as the "committee boat". The committee was generally represented by Edward Hanger. The *Tiger* was the biggest boat on the beach, and was used for exceptionally heavy jobs.<sup>67</sup>

The ownership of only a small part of the total number of luggers can be discovered, therefore. Of those owners, the majority either worked as boatmen or, like Richard William Robinson or the widows Elizabeth and Mary Petty and Sarah Pettitt, had close connections with the maritime community. From the evidence available, it seems to have been generally the case that luggers were owned by partnerships of four to eight men, no doubt due to the large capital investment required. There is no evidence to show that luggers were commonly owned by members of one family in partnership, although brothers and cousins might own shares in the same boat. However, as will be demonstrated below and in subsequent chapters, most of the boatmen had been associated for so long as neighbours and workmates that the distinctions between kin and non-kin must have become blurred over the years.

Describing a typical crew, Thomas Trott told the Parliamentary Enquiry in 1833 that "we never go to sea with less than eight when it blows hard, and six in summer", although they might take "more than a dozen occasionally".<sup>68</sup> The lugger *Success* carried a crew of twenty on one occasion in 1869,<sup>69</sup> and in 1874, *Renown*, with a crew of six, carried a party of 23 visitors on a

67. Paine, *op. cit.*, 30.

68. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 561.

69. *The Deal Telegram*, 16 January 1869, 2e.

day cruise to Calais.<sup>70</sup> A lugger could, however, be handled by one man, although no doubt with some difficulty. John Bailey, who was one of the most skilled and experienced helmsmen of his generation, twice brought the lugger *Galatea* home to Deal single-handed after having been separated from his crew.<sup>71</sup>

"It appears that no particular set of men is attached to any boat. Those resident near to, or who are on the lookout at the boats' stations, go promiscuously in any boat which may be on the beach, and whatever is earned by that boat is divided into as many shares as there were men employed in it."<sup>72</sup>

Thus a Committee of Elder Brethren of Trinity House reported to the Parliamentary Enquiry into the condition of the Deal boatmen in 1833. Lt. Batt of the Coastguard was more sceptical. "Any boat on Deal beach with her head toward the sea can be taken from the beach by any of the Hobblers ... this is a plan that the smugglers have adopted of late, that is you can take the boat and if you succeed in your illegal purposes you pay so much for the boat and if seized she was clandestinely taken from the beach without the owner's consent."<sup>73</sup> In 1861, the Collector, commenting on the petition of William Budd and Thomas Upton for the return of their galley-punt *Martha Town*, which had been seized with 24 lbs of smuggled tobacco on board, observed that "it is the practice at this port for the hovellers to take any boat from the beach without first obtaining the consent of the owners,

70. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 September 1874, 4c.

71. *Ibid*, 24 October 1874, 5a.

72. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 742.

73. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Information of Lt. Batt, 26 August 1852.

but ... this circumstance is always made use of as a ready excuse to exonerate the owners."<sup>74</sup> In his appeal on behalf of the three *Earl Grey* widows, the Mayor of Deal wrote "all boats placed on Deal beach are by ancient usage liable to be used by any of the boatmen, the owners participating in the earnings; and although the various boats are ordinarily worked by one or two crews, they are very frequently taken and used without the cognizance of the owners."<sup>75</sup> Despite the scepticism of the Customs and Coastguard, the Mayor was right in saying that the custom of having no regular crews was an ancient one. A State Paper of 1616 said of the Deal boatmen of that time "they change masters when they please."<sup>76</sup>

The rule that any man could take any boat is unusual, but it was apparently a true custom of the beach, not merely a ploy to circumvent the law. There is contemporary evidence that the practice was a genuine one, not just a ploy to evade the smuggling laws. At a court case in 1870, Stephen Osborne gave evidence that "we first launched the *Reform*, but she filled and then we went off in the *Princess Royal*."<sup>77</sup> It was not immediately certain how many men had been lost in the *Reform* in 1871. *England's Glory* had been launched minutes before *Reform* and sailed away, her crew unaware of the tragedy. The launch took place at six o'clock on a January morning, when it would have been pitch-dark. It was only when *England's Glory* returned to Deal later that day that it

74. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 1 May 1861.

75. CUST 53/1, Memorial of the Mayor of Deal, 26 August 1852.

76. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 129.

77. *The Deal Mercury*, 16 April 1870, 2f.



was definitely established which men had gone in which boat. Amos Wilkins, Stephen Osborn and one of the Tapleys, who were thought to have been in *Reform* were found to have sailed in *England's Glory*. William Middleton, however, who was a part owner of *England's Glory*, and might have been expected to sail in her, went in *Reform* and was drowned. John Bailey, a part owner of *Reform*, who was steering her on the last launch and survived the sinking, had on other occasions been helmsman in *England's Glory*.<sup>78</sup>

The custom that any man could go in any boat no doubt evolved in response to local needs. If a sudden emergency arose in the Downs, such as a wreck on the Goodwins, there was no time to waste in gathering together a regular crew and obtaining the owners' permission to take a boat. Equally, if boat owners always insisted on their permission being asked before boats were taken, any owner who was not on the spot when his boat was required would soon find himself losing salvage earnings to other, less exacting boat owners. The custom did leave owners open to the risk of having their boats taken by incompetent men and perhaps damaged or lost. It must also have made it much more difficult to obtain insurance. There is little evidence, however, that this was a problem. There were occasional disputes about the fair distribution of a boat's earnings, but complaints of unauthorised use of boats, except to try to circumvent

78. *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 2f; Treanor, *op. cit.*, 57.

the smuggling laws, were rare. In 1863, a boatman, one of the Halls, took a boat belonging to a man named Reynolds without leave and used it for two days. In the County Court, Reynolds demanded six shillings for the hire of the boat and was offered 3s 6d as a share of the earnings.<sup>79</sup> Mr Reynolds is not identified any more precisely in the newspaper report, but he was probably Henry Reynolds, ship and insurance agent, of 165 Beach Street. He was born in Great Yarmouth, and was thus an immigrant to Deal.<sup>80</sup> A local man would have known of the custom that boatowners took only a share of the earnings.

No doubt the force of local custom and public opinion within the closely knit boatmen's society operated as powerful sanctions against the misuse of boats. Possibly also disputes not involving anyone outside the boatmen's community were settled among themselves, without recourse to the Courts, and thus were never reported. There were some restrictions on who could go in which boat, due for instance to personal enmities. In 1876, for example, when Edward Erridge intended to board the lugger *Seamen's Hope* William Budd said to the other men already aboard, "if he comes here we'll chop his ---- legs off."<sup>81</sup>

The boatmen were divided into North Enders and South Enders, according to which end of Lower Deal they lived in. The Royal Hotel was usually taken as the dividing line between the two parts of the beach. North

79. *The Deal Telegram*, 6 June 1863, 2f.

80. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004.

81. *The Deal Mercury*, 5 February 1876, 2e.

End men habitually sailed in the boats on that part of the beach, while men from the South End went in South End boats. This division probably originated with the "first come, first served" method of gathering a crew, when a man would naturally run to the nearest boat. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the demarcation had become far more rigid, with whole families belonging exclusively to one end or the other, and rarely found working in the boats at the other end. John Ashington described how this division led to a fatal accident to Robert Vickers while hauling up a lugger in January 1863.

"I belong to the North End. We got the hovel and took the *Albion* [a South End lugger] to take off the anchor and chain as our boat was not large enough .... I was a stranger to the capstan and to the gear attached."

James Roberts agreed that they "were strangers to the ground and gear."<sup>82</sup>

There is some anecdotal evidence of men regularly sailing as part of the same crew. In 1877, the then Collector of Customs said "The custom of the beach being for any crew that can be got together at a moment's notice to launch in the first boat at hand ... in practice, however, a boat's crew is generally made up from the same lot of men".<sup>83</sup> In 1870, the boatman Thomas Petty Buttress died of head injuries received through falling down some steps while returning to the lugger *Early Morn*, tied up in Dover Harbour. At the inquest, it transpired that the men who had been with Buttress on

82. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 January 1863, 2e.

83. P.R.O. CUST 53/4, Collector to Board, 22 August 1877.

that occasion had since "gone off again in the large boat to go to the westward." His neighbour, Mary Hanger, said "I don't know whether the men he went away with are those he usually goes with."<sup>84</sup> On the inquest being resumed later, Charles Norris stated that this had been his second trip with Buttress in *Early Morn*, while Edward Snoswell had been with him on three cruises.<sup>85</sup>

In July 1871, William Sneller was charged with wounding Thomas William Epsley while on board the boat *Taeping* in Folkestone Harbour. Evidence was given that "Sneller and Epsley had been together all winter."<sup>86</sup> The same year it was said of the crew of the *Reform* that they "had been in the habit of working together and were on the best of terms."<sup>87</sup> The men had been called up out of their beds for the launch, so there was evidently some element of selection on that occasion. In 1873, William Spears, when describing to the County Court how some earnings were divided said the share "was especially agreed to that morning, as it always is when we pick out the men."<sup>88</sup> There had been some selection on that occasion because more men were present than were needed, but Spears' evidence implies that it was not unusual.

In practice, the method of crewing a boat depended upon the type of voyage. On a planned cruise to the westward, lasting a week or two, the master of a lugger would naturally choose the men he wanted to take, and to this extent, a lugger might have a regular crew.

84. *The Deal Mercury*, 27 August, 1870, 3a.

85. *Ibid.*, 10 September, 1870, 3a.

86. *Ibid.*, 1 July 1871, 3a.

87. *Ibid.*, 21 January 1871, 3b.

88. *Ibid.*, 18 January 1873, 3a.

The Customs records and local newspapers have yielded references to over 150 different boatmen associated with boats or other boatmen.<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to be certain of the exact number because it is not always possible to be certain which of two men of the same name was the one referred to at any time. Reports also sometimes omit the Christian names of the men involved, making it impossible to tell whether the man named is, for example, John, Philip or Thomas Files, Richard or George Hall, George or Thomas Finnis.

Seven men were mentioned in association with the same boat on more than one occasion. William Middleton can be shown to have worked more than once with two different boats.

John Files	<i>Renown</i>	1871, 1875
Richard Hall	<i>Renown</i>	1871, 1875? 1881
Edward Hanger	<i>Early Morn</i>	1870, 1876
William Middleton	<i>England's Glory</i>	1852, 1868
William Middleton	<i>Briton's Pride</i>	1862, 1866
William Spears	<i>Briton's Pride</i>	1862, 1866
Thomas Trott	<i>Renown</i>	1870, 1871
Robert Williams	<i>Success</i>	1869, 1881

William Middleton and William Spears were part-owners of *England's Glory* and *Briton's Pride*;<sup>90</sup> possibly the other men owned the boats they were most often associated with. However, boatmen did not only sail in the boats they owned. As noted above, William Middleton sailed in *Reform*, which he did not own, even when he could have gone in *England's Glory*, which he did own.

89. The following discussion is based on information from CUST 53/1-4, *The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram*. Personal and family data on boatmen from Deal Parish Registers and Censuses.

90. P.R.O. MT9/105A/1639/1875.

Fifty men were mentioned as being associated with two or more boats at different dates, giving support to the assertion that crews were irregular. John Bailey and William Middleton's association with *England's Glory* and *Reform* have already been mentioned. Henry Caspell sailed in *Seamen's Hope* and *Princess Royal*. John Files was in *Dart* in 1862 and *Renown* in the 1870s. His cousin Philip was also in *Dart* and in *England's Glory*. Thomas Finnis sailed in *Royal Exchange*, *Seamen's Pride*, *Success* and the *Yarmouth Packet* in the late 1860s and early 1870s. William Meakins sailed in *Galatea* in 1874 as a part owner, but the following year was in *Renown*. In 1871, Amos Wilkins sailed in *England's Glory* and in *Renown*.

Twenty men can be shown to have worked with the same boatman or boatmen on more than one occasion. William Bailey worked with Stephen Blissenden twice in 1870. Thomas Baker sailed with John Lambert, Edward Trott and John Wilkins in 1868 and 1871. John Griggs was with Alex Riley in *Success* in 1869 and *Guiding Star* in 1881. Freeman Thompson and Edward Wells were together in *Hope* in 1859 and were drowned together in the *Fawn* in 1864.

The career of John Lambert, born in 1846, may be used to illustrate the variety of boats and boatmen with which a man might be associated. He was first recorded in 1866 as one of six men in the galley-punt *Leander*. Two years later he was in the galley-punt *Capper* with nine different men. He was in the *Reform* in 1871, the *Renown*

in 1875 and the *Albion* in 1881. In fifteen years, he had been in two galley-punts and three luggers, with 30 different men. Another South End boatman, John Bailey, born 1821, was associated with three boats - *Princess Royal*, *Reform* and *Galatea* - between 1870 and 1874, and with 25 different boatmen. He worked with three of these men on more than one occasion. He is also known to have sailed in *England's Glory* in the 1860s.

It was inevitable that, after the loss of the *Reform* and eight boatmen, there should have been some reorganisation of the working of the South End boatmen, but even before this boatmen can be shown to have worked with several different men and boats. The same pattern can be seen at the North End. Edward Hanger, born 1844, sailed in the *Mary Blane*, the *Susannah* and the *Early Morn* between 1862 and 1876 and was also associated with the *Tiger*. He worked with at least twenty different men.

The evidence available suggests that there were random, irregular crews, but this evidence is chiefly derived from details of salvage awards reported in the local newspapers. These are likely to have been crews assembled at a moment's notice to meet a particular emergency. The method of crewing the lifeboat supports the theory that in an emergency, it was first come, first served.

Although it is not possible to show that individual boatmen were members of the crew of one boat for any

length of time, it is possible to demonstrate continuity of association between groups or families of boatmen over long periods. In 1851, ten South End boatmen were absent at sea on Census night.<sup>91</sup> It is reasonable to assume that they were all aboard the same boat. The ten men were

George Baker	born 1812
William Budd Sr.	1784
William Budd Jr.	1823
Stephen Files	c1811
Adam Lambert	1813
William Miles	1800
John Osborne	1805
Arthur Trott	1808
George Trott	1816
John Trott	1825

The majority of these men were at or approaching middle age in 1851; twenty years later, they would have been approaching the end of their working lives. Eight of them had younger relatives working together in 1871. In the *Reform* tragedy of that year, one of George Baker's nephews, William, was drowned. Another nephew, Thomas, survived. William Budd Jr. was present at the launch; his life was saved by the fact that he was one of four men who got out of the boat at the last minute to lay more woods on the shingle. Adam Lambert's nephew John was similarly fortunate. John Osborne's son Stephen was one of the three men who were thought to have been in the *Reform*, but had actually sailed in *England's Glory*. Of the three Trotts absent in 1851, George and John were

91. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.



brothers, Arthur was their cousin. Two Trotts were lost in 1871; Edward Charles was Arthur's nephew, George Edward was the son of George and the nephew of John.

Links between the Lamberts and the Trotts can actually be traced over a period of nearly fifty years. In the early 1830s, Richard Lambert, born 1810, was one of the crew of the *Po*, of which Thomas Trott, baptised 1773, was owner and master.<sup>92</sup> Richard Lambert was the brother of Adam, mentioned above, and Thomas Trott was the father of Adam's presumed shipmate Arthur. In 1868, John Lambert, nephew of Richard and Adam, was on board the galley-punt *Capper* with Edward Trott and Edward's cousin William. William Trott was nephew of Arthur and grandson of Thomas. The connection of John Lambert and George and Edward Trott with the *Reform* tragedy has already been noted. In 1881, John Lambert was aboard *Albion* with John Trott, son of the John Trott who was at sea in 1851, and cousin of George Trott, drowned in the *Reform*. These relationships are shown in Table 7.7.

There was a similar coincidence between the crews of the *Mary Blane* in 1862 and *Early Morn* in the 1870s. *Early Morn*, a North End boat, was the fastest lugger on the beach, and won the lugger race at the Deal Regatta nearly every year in the 1870s and early 1880s. Of the crew of the *Mary Blane*, Edward Hanger was master of the *Early Morn*, and was associated with the lugger for many years from 1870. John and Thomas May sailed in the *Mary*

92. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 561.

*Blane*; "Jack" May was a regular crew member of *Early Morn*, sometimes as master. John or Jack May was probably the man of that name born in 1842, the son of William May and Susannah Petty. Thomas May was either his elder brother or his cousin. George Buttress was one of the crew of *Mary Blane*; his brother Thomas Petty Buttress sailed in *Early Morn* in 1870. Brothers James and William Sneller sailed in *Mary Blane* and, at different times, in *Early Morn*. John Snoswell was in *Mary Blane*, his brother Edward in *Early Morn* in 1870. Alfred Redsull was in the crew of both luggers.

There were two men called Edward Hanger in Deal in the 1860s. One was born in 1806 and died in 1871. The other was his son, born in 1844. There is nothing in the contemporary sources to indicate which of these was in the crew of the *Mary Blane*. Pain, however, asserted that it was the younger Edward.<sup>93</sup> Since Edward Hanger Jr. was still alive at the time Pain wrote, and was interviewed by him, one may presume that Pain's information was correct. His presence and that of Alfred Redsull in *Mary Blane's* crew in 1862 is surprising because the two were only 18 at the time and the question of whether boys under 21 were allowed to sail in luggers was one that aroused considerable controversy.

The 1833 report on the Deal boatmen observed that "there is no apprenticeship there, a man takes his boy in his boat if he pleases."<sup>94</sup> The Deal boatmen's

93. Pain, *op. cit.*, 23.

94. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots* (1833), *op. cit.*, 685.

organisation left no room for apprenticeship; since every man was self-employed, there were no masters, journeymen and apprentices as in other trades. In this respect, the Deal boatmen differed significantly from the fishing industry, in which apprenticeship played an important, if not notorious, part. Many parishes apprenticed boys in their care to masters of fishing boats, regardless of whether the boys had any desire to go to sea. Through most of the nineteenth century, there was no regulation, and once a boat was at sea it was impossible to control the way in which his apprentices were treated. Stories of ill-treatment and brutality were common, and boys often absconded, even though this was an offence punishable by a prison sentence. In Ramsgate, apprenticeship played a major part in the organisation of the fishing fleet. In 1893, when apprenticeship was dying out in most other fishing ports, the Ramsgate fleet had over 150 former workhouse boys serving as apprentices.<sup>95</sup>

In Deal, in contrast, boys were discouraged from going as crew in the luggers; they were inexperienced, and took the places of experienced men. Edward Griggs, captain and part-owner of the lugger *Success*, told Deal County Court in December 1869 that "it is a well known fact that boys under twenty do not share as the men."<sup>96</sup> [i.e. in the boat's earnings.] Henry Spears, captain and part-owner of another boat, agreed with Griggs. Boys thus had to gain their experience in some other way. Treanor

95. Paul Thompson with Tony Wailey and Trevor Lummis, *Living the Fishing* (1983), 21, 51; Clive Powell, *Smacks to Steamers; a History of the Ramsgate Fishing Industry, 1850-1920* (Ramsgate, n.d., c.1985), 30.

96. *The Deal Mercury*, 11 December 1869, 3c.

said that a boatman might go "first, perhaps, as boy on board a trawler [presumably out of Ramsgate] ... and then for a short service of a few years on board a dashing frigate in Her Majesty's service."<sup>97</sup>

The Nautical School which existed at Deal in the 1840s and 1850s educated boys for careers in the Merchant or Royal Navy. A number of boatmen, including John Bailey, Thomas Cribben, George Hanger and Richard Redman, served in the Royal Navy for a few years in their late teens and early twenties.<sup>98</sup> In 1881, it was noted that "but few of Her Majesty's ships are without some of their crew belonging to Deal."<sup>99</sup> Alternatively, boys gained experience by working in the coasting trade. Robert Williams, the plaintiff in the County Court case referred to above, had been to sea in a collier from Sandwich.<sup>100</sup> Earlier the same year, William Trott, sixteen year old son of boatman and oversea pilot George Trott, fell from the mast of a ship at South Shields and was seriously injured.<sup>101</sup> William Stanton gained his early experience in the merchant service.<sup>102</sup> Of the two men who crewed the Mission Boat, Treanor said that Stephen Wilds had been the mate of a collier, while George Philpott had been a "bluejacket."<sup>103</sup> Other boys initially took up unskilled work such as shop boy or errand boy before becoming boatmen when they reached their twenties. Francis and Jack Adams were both tailors in 1871, when they were aged 14 and 16, before becoming boatmen by 1881. John Baker,

97. T.S. Treanor, *The Cry From the Sea and the Answer From the Shore* (n. d., c.1895), 87.

98. P.R.O. ADM 37/9348.

99. *The Deal Telegram*, 7 May 1881, 5a.

100. *The Deal Mercury*, 11 December 1869, 3c.

101. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 February 1869, 2c.

102. Stanton, *op. cit.*, 49.

103. Treanor, *The Cry From the Sea*, *op. cit.*, 205.

born in 1855, was a butcher's boy in 1871. His cousin Thomas, who survived the *Reform* in 1871, was a grocer's assistant in 1861 when aged 16. Joseph May, born in 1826, most unusually, was an agricultural labourer for a short time in his teens, before going on to spend the rest of his working life as a boatman.<sup>104</sup>

In Chapter Three it was established that the boatmen's opportunities for earning a living were decreasing in the nineteenth century. Russell's fictional boatman, *Jim Mason*, writing of Deal in the 1870s, described the efforts made by Deal boatmen to find work.

"When times are hard at Deal it is no uncommon thing for the boats from our place to keep dodging one another as far away from home as Gravesend, in order to get the chance of hooking on to a ship and towing down astern until the pilot is ready to quit her. Indeed, the Deal galley-punts may not infrequently be seen up at the London docks themselves, lying alongside some vessel which the boatmen know will shortly be hauling out and getting under way."<sup>105</sup>

Seeking work was attended by hardship and danger, as Treanor described.

"The men are sometimes, even in winter time, three days away in these open boats, sleeping on the bare boards or ballast bags and wrapped in a sail .... To be towed in the teeth of a north-easterly snowstorm from Gravesend to the Downs ... is the common experience of the Deal boatmen."<sup>106</sup>

Ships passing through the Downs requiring a pilot to be shipped or landed were unwilling to stop. Treanor

104. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

105. Herbert Russell, *The Longshoreman* (1896), 97.

106. Treanor, *Heroes*, *op. cit.*, 52.

described how, in such circumstances, the boatmen had to "hook on" to a steamer.

"On the steamer comes full speed right end on at them. The Deal men shoot at her under press of canvas, haul down sail, and lay their boat in the same direction as the flying steamship, which often never slackens her speed the least bit. As all this *must* be done in an instant, or pale death stares them in the face, it is done with wonderful speed and skill. While a man with a boat-hook, to which a long 'towing-line' is attached, stands in the bow of the galley punt and hooks it into anything he can catch, perhaps the bight of a rope hung over the steamer's side, the steersman has for his own and his comrades' lives to steer his best and keep his boat clear of the steamer's sides, and of her deadly propeller revolving astern, while the bowman pays out his towing-line, and the others see it is all clear, and another takes a turn of it round a thwart ....

"This 'hooking' of steamers going at full speed is most dangerous, and often causes loss of life and poor men's property .... The last fatal accident happened to a daring young fellow who had run his boat about six feet too close to a fast steamer ... the steamer cut her in two and he was drowned with his comrade, one man out of the three alone being saved."<sup>107</sup>

As Treanor implies, the boatmen were often shown a lack of consideration by ships' officers which added to the difficulty of their work. The Deal newspapers reported several cases of boats being lost or damaged while crew members were attempting to board ships. In 1876, the galley-punt *Taeping* was attempting to get a tow from a passing vessel when a patent log was thrown overboard from the ship. This struck one of the *Taeping's*

107. Treanor, *Heroes*, *op. cit.*, 53.

crew, Richard Dawes, in the stomach, killing him.<sup>108</sup> In 1878, the galley-punt *Gipsy King* was towing behind a barque which in turn was being towed by a steamer. The mate of the barque fell overboard, and the crew of the *Gipsy King* immediately cast off their tow rope and went to his rescue. At the same time the tow rope was cast off from the barque and was thus lost. It was worth about £5, and the captain of the barque whose mate had been rescued refused to compensate the boatmen in any way.<sup>109</sup>

The boatmen frequently complained that, while they could be awarded considerable amounts for salvaging ships and their cargoes, there was no reward for saving life. The point was made by the crew of the *Mary Blane* in a letter to *The Deal Telegram* in November 1862. The writers asked for publicity to be given to the fact that they had been instrumental in saving the crew of the brig *Trio*,

"principally to show that boatmen are not likely to receive any reward, however meritorious their services may be, for rescuing the lives of their fellow creatures at the risk of their own .... While cruising in the Gull Stream, we saw part of a sunken wreck, and also a boat riding by it. Regarding the case as one of urgent necessity, we made up our minds at once to proceed to the spot, although opportunities were not wanting for some profitable employment, preferring, as we did, the preservation of life to minor considerations of personal advantage .... Only a few days ago the lifeless body of some poor fellow ... was picked up and the sum of five shillings was forwarded for so doing; whereas for saving five lives it appears not the fraction of a penny is allowed."<sup>110</sup>

108. *The Deal Mercury*, 10 June 1876, 2d. A log was an instrument towed behind a ship to measure the distance sailed.

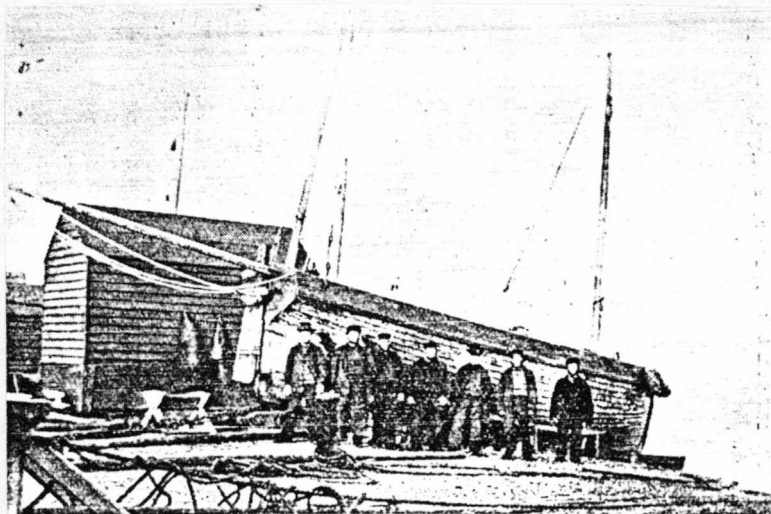
109. *The Deal Telegram*, 9 February 1878, 4f.

110. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1862, 7c.



16. North Deal Beach  
The building with  
the cupola is the  
Lifeboat House.  
To the left is the  
North Star Inn.

17a. "Early Morn"  
and her  
crew



17b. Richard Roberts and  
Edward Hanger,  
members of the crew  
of "Early Morn" and  
first and second  
coxswain of the  
Deal Lifeboat.



Similar circumstances arose in February 1876 when the British steamship *Strathclyde* was run down by the German liner *Franconia* just outside Dover. Although the *Strathclyde* began to sink at once, the *Franconia* made no attempt to render assistance. The Dover Harbour steam tug put to sea on learning of the collision, but went to the aid of the *Franconia*, which was in no immediate danger, rather than the *Strathclyde*. The Dover Lifeboat was not launched, although the collision was seen from the shore. There was heavy loss of life in the *Strathclyde*, with fifteen women passengers being drowned. All the survivors were rescued by the luggers *Brave Nelson* of Walmer and *Early Morn* of Deal.

The captains of the *Franconia* and the Dover Harbour tug later excused their actions by saying that they had believed the *Franconia* was also sinking, but in the protracted inquiries and court proceedings which followed the tragedy, only the crews of the *Brave Nelson* and *Early Morn* emerged with any credit. It was emphasized that if they too had deserted the *Strathclyde* and gone to the *Franconia*, they could have earned a considerable amount in salvage. As it was, not only did they gain no reward for their actions, they had to give up their time to give evidence at the various inquests. As some of the bodies were landed at the London Docks, and proceedings thus took place at Poplar, this was not a small matter.<sup>111</sup>

Anchors lost in the Downs were a hazard to

111. *The Deal Mercury*, 26 February 1876, 2e; *ibid.*, 11 March 1876, 3c; Pain, *op. cit.*, 16.

shipping; they could become entangled with fishing nets or anchor chains and, in shallow water, could hole the bottom of a lugger or galley-punt. This is what was thought to have happened to four young boatmen who in 1871 set off for the Goodwin Sands in the galley-punt *Hope* and were never seen again.<sup>112</sup> When no other employment offered, the boatmen spent time "creeping" for lost anchors. Not only did this contribute to their own safety, it was also remunerative. Anchors were treated as salvaged goods, the boatmen being paid for their recovery according to their weight. "Creeping" for anchors was done with a grappling iron towed along the sea bed.

Many of the difficulties of the boatmen's occupation arose over the payment they received for their work. The custom was for the boatmen to draw up a declaration of the services they had performed. The statement of William Frost Spears of the services rendered to the *Olivia* by the luggers *Briton's Pride* and *Albion* is recorded in the report of the Board of Trade enquiry into this incident. William Spears is said to have been assisted in making the declaration by "Mr Goymer, who is in the habit of drawing up statements of services for the men." The fact that the report claimed that "every material assertion is ... false" need not detract from the value of the declaration as an example of the form in which these statements were normally made.

112. Treanor, *Heroes*, *op. cit.*, 26.

"The Declaration of W. Spears

On the morning of 21st, blowing a heavy gale of wind, about W. by N.W., with a heavy sea running on the beach, we got our crew together and launched from the beach, with great assistance, about 10 a.m., and cruised amongst the shipping in the Downs, with our pump constantly going. About 1 p.m., we saw a large ship come in and let go her anchor and brought up. After some time, we observed the ship driving right in the hawse of another large ship. We immediately made towards her and at great risk boarded her. I, William Spears, got on board; the captain, seeing the dangerous position of the ship, immediately employed me and the crew for assistance. I then gave orders to loose the necessary sail as quick as possible, and set it, and put the helm hard a-starboard, to slip the chains; by so doing was the only means of saving the ship from a fearful collision. We got clear about 2 p.m., and brought the ship up in a good berth. Our lugger came alongside and took the captain on shore to his agent for anchor and chain to replace the one lost. we arrived on shore about 4 p.m., took the captain to his agent, who, as quick as possible, sent anchor and chain. Got our large lugger *Albion* ready, with great assistance put in [the anchor]. About 10.30 p.m., with great assistance and personal risk, launched from the beach and proceeded towards and boarded the ship about 11 p.m. With assistance out of our lugger, we put the anchor and chain on board, got our lugger clear, and left the ship about 2 p.m. (sic) of the morning of 22nd; arrived on shore about 4 a.m.; hove the lugger upon the beach about 10 a.m.; fetched the captain on shore, and have to take him on board again. These services were performed by two luggers and 16 men, and we make in all 21 shares.

Deal, 22 April 1867 William Spears"<sup>113</sup>

Richard Arnold, a Trinity Pilot, acting for the boatmen, and the local Lloyd's agent, then met to discuss what award should be made, on the basis of the boatmen's declaration and the captain's account of events. In this case, because the captain was a party to the conspiracy to defraud, his account tallied with the boatmen's. Richard Arnold and the Lloyd's agent agreed to an award of £421, about £130 of which was for taking out the anchor, and the remainder for the other services rendered. The captain of the *Olivia* received £60 from William Spears for his part in the fraud.

In the case of the *Olivia*, chiefly because the boatmen, the ship's captain and possibly the ship agents, Adams, West & Co., were all a party to the fraud, the award was made immediately, with no dispute. Frequently, however, the ship owners or agents would contest the award. The boatmen would have to agree to settle for less than their original claim, or take the case to the Admiralty Court, which would involve time being wasted in attending court to give evidence, the expense of legal fees and perhaps an even lower award in the end. Thus in January 1859, the crew of the galley *Surprise* claimed £60 and were awarded £40. The crew of the lugger *Mexborough* claimed £700 and were awarded £475.<sup>114</sup> The following month, the crew of *England's Glory* claimed £500 and were awarded £306, and the crews of *Fawn* and *Sparrow* claimed £100 and were awarded £50.<sup>115</sup> Similar cases occurred in

114. *The Deal Telegram*, 19 January 1859, 4d.

115. *Ibid.*, 16 February 1859, 4c.

succeeding years. William Stanton experienced difficulty in getting a fair reward for his labour in the 1820s and 1830s,<sup>116</sup> and the problem was recognised by *The Deal Mercury* in 1881.

"Between the hoveller's golden days there are long and dreary intervals .... And when ... a good job falls in their way, its settlement is often long postponed. Every effort is made to reduce the amount of their claim, litigation often ensues, and legal charges swallow a portion of their shares."<sup>117</sup>

The Board of Trade also thought the system was unsatisfactory, but for different reasons.

"The faults of the tribunal adjudicating on claims for salvage are apparent. There is no sifting of the evidence, and no real examination of the parties. It is a method of settlement devised to prevent litigation in the Admiralty Court, the very name of which seems to frighten any owner or captain inclined to resist extortionate demands."<sup>118</sup>

The difficulties of settling the boatmen's claims were inextricably entwined with the nature of their work. Shipowners or their agents, perhaps without first hand knowledge of the sea, considering a claim in the safety of an office on dry land, could not appreciate the precise dangers and difficulties experienced by the boatmen working from small open boats perhaps ten miles from land, at night, or in a gale or a snowstorm. The shipowners would naturally try to reduce the amount awarded to the boatmen; the boatmen, expecting to have their award reduced would, equally naturally, exaggerate

116. Stanton, *op. cit.*, 46.

117. *The Deal Mercury*, 19 March 1881, 2c.

118. P.R.O. MT9/105A/78261.

the importance of their services and increase the amount of their claim. Perhaps if the shipowners had been more inclined to generosity in their dealings with the boatmen, they in their turn might have moderated their initial claims.

When the money was paid, it was shared at whichever public house was frequented by that particular group of boatmen. Newspaper reports provide evidence of the boatmen's use of inns and public houses for business purposes. In 1861, some boatmen who had taken the *Briton's Pride* sent for one of her owners, William Spears, "to come to the Port Arms; they asked the amount of my claim."<sup>119</sup> In 1867, *Albion* and *Briton's Pride's* claim for their services to the ship *Olivia* was "made out on a slate at the Queen's Head."<sup>120</sup> The following year, John Job described how a number of men and boys had been engaged to act as porters to assist in getting an anchor and chain aboard the *Tiger*. Afterwards, "£2 17s was given to me to distribute among the porters, we shared it at the Napier Tavern."<sup>121</sup> In 1871, some salvage money awarded to the Lifeboat crew was shared at the North Star, home of the coxswain, Robert Wilds.<sup>122</sup> In 1874, Thomas Marlow, landlord of the Lifeboat Inn, was summonsed for having his house open during prohibited hours. P.C. Parker had discovered two boatmen, George Petty and his cousin Richard David Petty May, sitting in the bar with tumblers of beer. The landlady attended

119. *The Deal Telegram*, 9 March 1861, 2e.

120. P.R.O. MT9/105A/1639/1875.

121. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 October 1868, 7e.

122. *The Deal Mercury*, 15 July 1871, 2f.

Court to explain that "the two men had just come on shore or she would not have served them." Petty and May confirmed that they "had just come from a ship with a few letters to post and wanted change to divide the money, and they went into the Lifeboat for that purpose, when a glass of beer was given to each of them." Thomas Marlow, the landlord, said that he was himself afloat at the time of the incident and knew nothing about it, but "his wife had told him that the house was only open temporarily for a short period to enable the men to share some money."<sup>123</sup> The year before, William Lambert of the King's Head had been charged with a similar offence. His explanation was that there was a meeting of 14 or 15 boatmen to discuss sharing the award for the salvage of the ship *Merle*, wrecked on Deal beach some time previously.<sup>124</sup>

The boatmen attached great importance to the fair sharing of earnings. They frequently resorted to legal action against those whom they considered guilty of unfair practice. Conversely, men accused of cheating reacted strongly. William Frost Spears was sent to prison for six months for his share in the *Olivia* fraud. This apparently in no way damaged his standing with his colleagues; it was suggested in 1881 that he had considerable influence among the boatmen. Yet a rumour that he had not dealt fairly with the money awarded to the crew of his lugger *England's Glory* in respect of

123. *The Deal Mercury*, 10 October 1874, 5b.

124. *The Deal Telegram*, 9 August 1873, 7b.

their services to the *Iron Crown* roused him to anger.

"A false and slanderous report has been circulated ... concerning me .... Now Sir, I think I am known sufficiently well in my native town to be able to treat this calumny with silent contempt, but as there are a certain class of people who are always ready to believe anything to a man's discredit, I must ask you to publish the following copy of the *official statement of accounts* .... I think after this public refutation, if those slanderers have any sense of shame left in them, they will feel a little compunction at having falsely accused an innocent man."<sup>125</sup>

Or, as he claimed in quite different circumstances a decade later, "if he made £1000 he shared it with others engaged equally; that was being a Deal boatman."<sup>126</sup>

Although they were strict about enforcing their own rules, the boatmen had no hesitation about making the maximum profit, legally or illegally, from those outside their own community. Ship owners and insurers especially were fair game, and accusations of wrecking recurred at intervals throughout the nineteenth century. This was the chief cause of conflict between the boatmen and the authorities after the suppression of large scale smuggling. The Collector of Customs observed of the Customs Boatmen at Deal in January 1850 that "the greater part of the duty of these men at this season of the year is preventing the salvagers from running wrecked property ... upwards of twenty luggers sometimes make the shore at the same time and the beach [is] literally covered with valuable goods."<sup>127</sup> In 1858 the Collector remarked that

125. *The Deal Mercury*, 19 November 1870, 2f.

126. *Ibid.*, 16 October 1880, 2f.

127. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Collector to Board, 10 January 1850.



"in cases of wreck ... when valuable ... goods are washed on shore for miles along the coast, it requires an officer of no ordinary courage and determination to resist the thieving propensities of the desperate characters in this neighbourhood, who are taught from their earliest infancy to look upon wrecked property as a Godsend, and plunder as a matter of right."<sup>128</sup> After a wreck in 1861, the Collector commented that "this place has long been notorious for the lawless character of persons who flock by hundreds to disasters of this kind merely for the sake of plunder."<sup>129</sup> When five ships were wrecked on Deal beach in one night in February 1870, the Collector wrote "I have employed a number of extra officers, all being Coastguard pensioners .... This I considered imperative, knowing the habits of the beachmen here and their ideas regarding wrecked property."<sup>130</sup> Despite these precautions, the Collector had to report a few days later that

"the coast was strewn for miles with wreckage, many hundreds of people have been daily collecting property since the wrecks, the Coastguard not being sufficient to prevent wrecking. The Inspecting Commander had to obtain assistance from the officers commanding the Marine Depot battalion .... Even with this force, pilfering went on to a great extent and the Coastguard made many seizures."<sup>131</sup>

This scene is shown in Illustration 18.

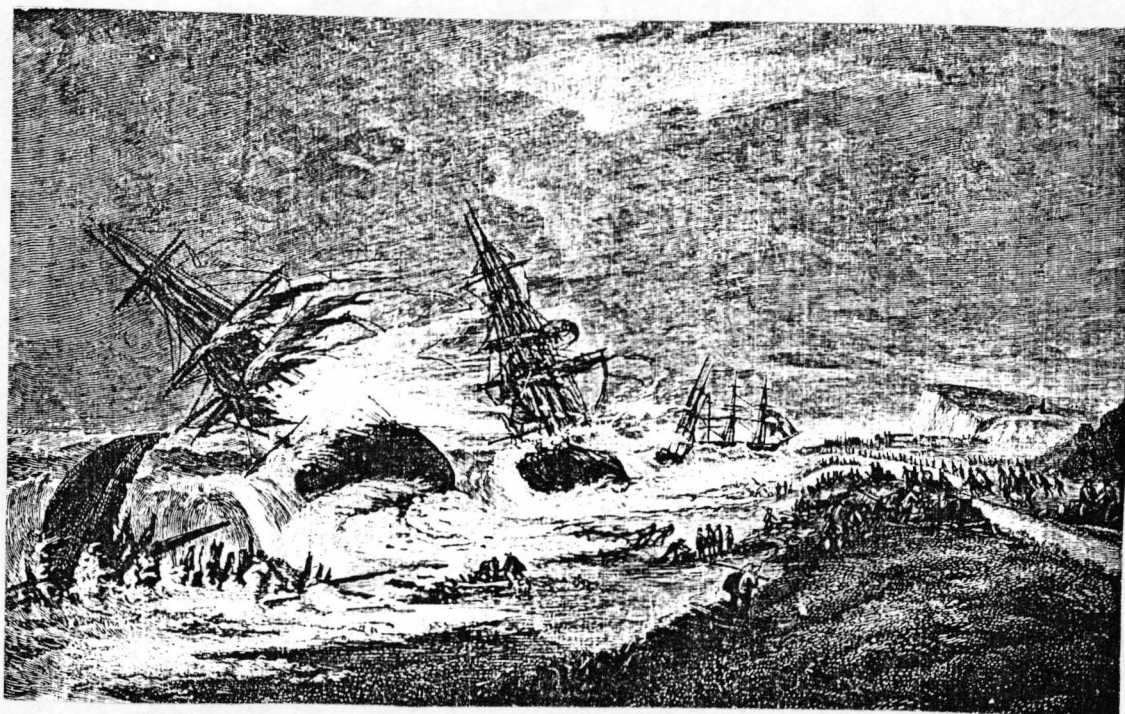
Wrecking, in Deal history, does not mean deliberately causing a ship to be wrecked by, for example, using false lights to lure her into a dangerous

128. P.R.O. CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 8 March 1858.

129. *Ibid.*, Collector to Board, 10 January, 1861.

130. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 16 February 1870.

131. *Ibid.*, 19 February 1870.



18. Scene on Deal Beach, 15 February 1870

position, as the Cornish people are sometimes said to have done. In Deal, wrecking was the practice of removing from an already stranded and abandoned ship any movable article of any value. However, although there is no doubt that many boatmen's activities in this respect would not bear strict legal scrutiny, widespread confusion among landsmen about what was and what was not lawful practice did lead to unwarranted accusations being made against the boatmen, which aroused their resentment.

The removal of cargo, property or ships' stores from a wreck was not in itself illegal - quite the reverse. A ship on the Goodwins could be swallowed completely in the space of two tides, and if no attempt was made to remove her possibly valuable cargo, bring ashore any salvageable rope or sails, rescue the crew's property and strip the copper sheathing from the hull, a major loss would result for the ship's owners or insurers. This was a normal and potentially profitable part of the boatmen's work, and a great service to shipowners and merchants.

As long as the boatmen were occupied in removing property from a wreck and stowing it in their own boats, they were acting entirely properly. Where they often transgressed was when they returned to shore. The correct procedure was that on landing, boats were searched or "rummaged" by the Coastguard on duty on the beach, any salvaged goods being declared and not concealed in any

way. The goods were handed to the Receiver of Wreck, who kept account of what was received and reported to the owners or insurers. In due course an auction would be arranged, and when all accounts were settled the boatmen were paid in proportion to the value of the goods.

Sometimes, however, instead of following this procedure, the boatmen would dispose of wrecked goods to ships in the Downs, or attempt to land them without the Coastguards' knowledge and sell them themselves, often to marine stores dealers. This type of activity was looked on as a traditional sport by many of the boatmen, but wrecking also reflected their dissatisfaction with the system of remuneration for their services. If they complied with the regulations, they had to wait weeks if not months for payment. If any dispute arose, they might have to go to court, perhaps in London, which would mean finding the cost of legal representation, travelling expenses, and possible loss of earnings.

The boatmen sometimes picked up flotsam and jetsam at sea, the owners of which could not be found. This property would be sold by the Receiver and the proceeds paid to the boatmen. However, if the goods were perishable or damaged by sea water, the price received might be very small. Also, if the goods were dutiable, the duty had to be paid either by the boatmen, which would reduce their eventual profit, or by the purchaser, which meant the Receiver would get a lower price. In

1852, Thomas Baker, on behalf of the crew of *England's Glory*, wrote to the Board of Customs in London.

"Being cruising on Thursday last between Fairlee and Dungeness in very thick weather we fell in with and boarded a French Brig the Captain of which requested us to tell him where he was, when we conducted his vessel till we made, and pointed out to him, Dungeness light, for which service, he having no money gave us about twelve gallons of vinegar, which on our landing at Deal on Saturday last was stopped by the Preventive men and taken to the Custom House. We have seen the Collector who says he cannot let us have the Vinegar without paying duty, and applying to your Honours for the same."<sup>132</sup>

Five years later, Richard Bushell made a similar plea.

"I humbly beg to make you acquainted with the circumstances of my risk with others in saving a cask of 26 gallons of rum belonging to the barque *Reliance* wrecked on the main near Walmer Castle and to submit in consideration of my being obliged to go into the water in saving the same, that you will kindly remit a portion of the duty, the rum in question only realised 4d per gallon more than the duty so that the salvage only amounts to a very small trifle."<sup>133</sup>

The whole process also no doubt involved a good deal of red tape and form filling not to the boatmen's taste. It was much simpler, if a barrel of rum was picked up at sea, or a bale of tea taken from a wrecked ship, to sell it to the first passing ship, with no questions asked.

Cases of misappropriation of wrecked goods were reported in 1849, 1857, 1861, 1866, 1870, 1873, 1875 and 1882.<sup>134</sup> These cases varied in their seriousness. The most notorious was that of the *North*, wrecked on the Goodwin

132. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Petition of Thomas Baker, 24 May 1852.

133. CUST 53/2, Petition of Richard Bushell, 24 February 1857.

134. Information from CUST 53/1-4 and Deal newspapers.

Sands in August 1866. Some rope from the *North* was traced to a paper mill near Dover, and a marine store dealer named Foster was charged with handling stolen goods. He was acquitted, but *The Times* the next day reported how

"Mr George Read, a Coastguard officer, stated that for many days after the ship struck, swarms of Deal boatmen went out daily to the place where the *North* was stranded and actually stripped her of everything that could be carried away .... The whole of the evidence was of the most extraordinary character, and proved conclusively that 'wrecking' is the profession of a large number of the Deal boatmen."<sup>135</sup>

Despite remonstrations by several correspondents, including Charles Capper, a local Member of Parliament, *The Times* reiterated a few days later that "boats went out daily to the wreck and stripped the vessel of everything that could be carried away ... the boatmen who carried off her stores had only done what they and other boatmen were accustomed to do on all similar occasions."<sup>136</sup> *The Times* clearly did not understand the law or the boatmen's work, for the actions described here were not illegal; what was at issue was the ultimate disposal of the goods removed from *The North*.

The furore stirred up by this affair was such that the Board of Trade held an enquiry which reported in June 1867. Of the boatmen who gave evidence to the enquiry, the report noted that

"there was a general strong desire to exculpate themselves and their fellow townsmen, and while their

135. *The Times*, 19 October 1866, 7d.

136. *Ibid.*, 24 October 1866, 6d.

recollection of what they themselves did at the time of the wreck was clear and explicit, it was, as to the conduct of anybody else, confused and indistinct. None of them could remember the name of a single Deal beach boat other than their own, or boats that went out to sea or returned with them [or] seen by them at the wreck, and inability to give any description of the state of the ship, as to its canvas or its rigging, was to be remarked in the evidence of most of them."<sup>137</sup>

A major characteristic of the Deal boatmen, therefore, was loyalty to each other. Their work was governed by custom and tradition, and boatmen who transgressed those customs were viewed with disapproval. As a group, however, the boatmen did not have a similar regard for the laws of the land which governed their work, as is demonstrated by their reputation for smuggling, wrecking and rapacity. This indication that the boatmen somehow existed as a separate community will be more fully explored in the next two chapters.

137. P.R.O. MT9/105A.

## Chapter Seven

### The Boatmen - Family and Kinship

The position and importance of the family enters into much discussion of social history. Charles Phythian-Adams has stressed the significance of kinship networks in society, and the influence that may have been wielded by the core families in a community.<sup>1</sup> Anderson, in his study of mid-nineteenth century Preston, assessed the effect of industrialisation on family life.<sup>2</sup> Mary Prior found that kinship links played a central role in the organisation of the river and canal boatmen's community centred on Fisher Row in Oxford. Men made use of family relationships in their business up and down the river and canal, and women and children often assisted in the day to day working of the boats and barges.<sup>3</sup> Women and children also had significant parts to play in various branches of the sea fishing industry. Every member of the family could help with mending nets and baiting hooks for line fishing. Professor Everitt, discussing family networks, has pointed out that

"we know a great deal about this kind of dynastic ramification at the level of the aristocracy, the squirearchy and the landed gentry. We know a fair amount at the level of the so-called 'clerisy' .... There is also a growing number of community studies."<sup>4</sup>

Reconstructing family networks among the

1. Charles Phythian-Adams, *Rethinking Local History* (Leicester, 1987).
2. M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971).
3. Mary Prior, *Fisher Row* (Oxford, 1982).
4. Alan Everitt, "Dynasty and Community Since the Seventeenth Century", *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 311.



aristocracy and gentry is comparatively simple, for we may learn from their letters, diaries, wills, entails and marriage settlements details of family relationships and the importance attached to them. The working lives of the upper classes and gentry, being often concerned with public service, generated records which may reveal how frequently relatives were called upon to exercise patronage. At the lower level of tradesmen and small professional men, details of family relationships and the importance attached to them may be recovered from wills and apprenticeship and freemen's registers. Among the less literate classes of society, kinship networks are more difficult to reconstruct, and direct evidence as to the importance attached to family relationships is virtually non-existent.

Family feeling is an abstract and emotional concept which is not reflected in official records such as the Census and cannot be expressed statistically. Neither is it something likely to have been discussed with outsiders, such as the Rev. Thomas Stanley Treanor, who may have taken an interest in the boatmen's affairs. For one thing, family ties are likely to have been taken for granted and not analysed by the boatmen, and for another they may well have felt that their family relationships were no business of anyone else's. Dr. James Hall, who, as medical officer on call to the merchant vessels in the Downs during the Second World

War came to know that generation of boatmen well, noted their reticence. "My first impression of these boatmen at close quarters was their innate courtesy, especially to strangers, and their aloofness to any further intimacy."<sup>5</sup>

Since the boatmen themselves have left no written records, such as wills, which might have been used to throw light on the subject, the researcher has to resort to such documentary sources as the Censuses and parish registers and local newspapers to attempt to reconstruct genealogies and to arrive at some estimate of whether family relationships were important to the boatmen.

The following discussion relates only to the boatmen of Deal itself. Without extending the study to other groups of society, which would make it unmanageably large, it is not possible to say whether they - the boatmen - or Deal were typical of their time. Few studies already exist with which the Deal boatmen can be satisfactorily compared. Anderson's chosen town of Preston is too unlike Deal to be a valuable comparison, and Anderson was only able to use the Censuses of 1841-1861. Since the 1841 Census is largely useless for the study of family relationships, he was able to study a period of only just over ten years in detail.<sup>6</sup> Now Census material is available up to 1881, it is possible to study family and kinship over a thirty year period, and two or three generations. Also, one

5. James S. Hall, *Sea Surgeon* (1968 edn.), 88.

6. Anderson, *op. cit.*

must always take into account the fact that differing individual reactions to similar circumstances mean that even within a group, people's experiences of kinship, and the importance attached to it, will differ. For example the early death of one parent and the remarriage of the survivor might bring about the break up of the family in one case, but in another might lead to a close relationship with the step-family. Human nature has changed very little over time and, allowing for better communications and easier travel, what is true of family relationships today was probably true a century or a century and a half ago.

Professor Everitt has argued that the increasing population in the eighteenth century, the growth of towns and the expansion of the economy provided opportunities for family aggrandisement and the establishment of dynasties.<sup>7</sup> In nineteenth century Deal, opposite circumstances contributed to the survival of family networks. With the decline of the town's maritime economy the old families clung to the boatmen's occupation, and were not diluted by incomers attracted by economic prosperity. There were increasing numbers of in-migrants to Deal, but these were of a different class to, and out of sympathy with, the boatmen, and were unlikely to intermarry with them.

Professor Everitt has suggested that when tracing family networks, the historian should look at entire

7. Everitt, *op. cit.*, 315.

neighbourhoods, rather than individual communities. In two south Leicestershire parishes, he found that

"very few families ... remained within their borders continuously for as much as two centuries; but there is a substantial nexus of dynasties ... that have remained in the same *neighbourhood* since the fifteenth or sixteenth century."<sup>8</sup>

W.G. Hoskins too has stressed that "families in the past rarely lasted more than one hundred years in one place,"<sup>9</sup> although his home county, Devon, would probably reveal a larger number of deeply rooted families than many other regions. In East Kent, a study of the distribution of family names even as late as 1851 would prove rewarding. In the parish registers of Deal and the surrounding area, the same family names recur from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth.<sup>10</sup> Recurrence of the same surnames in a particular region over a long period of time is not unusual. Richard McKinley has noted how

"in most English counties, the surnames present up to the nineteenth century retain a distinctively local character .... In most areas of England, there is a substantial stock of surnames which appear in each area when hereditary surnames first develop in sizeable numbers (often during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) and which still form the greater part of the local body of names at the start of the nineteenth century and in many cases even later."<sup>11</sup>

What is remarkable about East Kent is that many families have remained rooted not merely in the same area but in the same parish for centuries. The yeoman family of

8. Everitt, *op. cit.*, 312.

9. W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (2nd edn., 1972), 32.

10. Jane Jones, *The Parish Registers of St. Leonard, Deal, 1559-1837* K.F.H.S. Record Publications No.62, No.63, No.64.

11. Richard McKinley, *The Surnames of Lancashire* (1981), 441.

Prescott, for example, is first recorded in the parish of Guston, above Dover, in the 1520s, although it was probably there earlier. Younger members of the family moved out to Dover and Deal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the senior branch maintained a continuous presence in Guston until the 1970s.<sup>12</sup>

In Deal, of the 806 men who gave their occupations as mariner or boatman in the Censuses of 1841-1881, 673, or 83%, belonged to families that had been in Deal for more than 100 years before 1841. Sixteen families, which together accounted for 132 boatmen, or 16% of the total, had been in the parish continuously since before 1600. They included the Bayley or Bailey family, the Bakers, the Mays and the Nicholas and Roberts families. Table 7.1 lists the family names which were most common among the boatmen, with the dates at which they first appear in the Baptism Registers of St. Leonard's, Deal.<sup>13</sup>

Table 7.1  
Dates of First Appearance of Some Boatmen's Families  
in Baptism Registers

Ashington	1678	Nicholas	1562
Bailey	1568	Norris	1658
Baker	1578	Redsull	1774
Buttress	1721	Roberts	1561
Erridge	1761	Thompson	1601
Foster	1627	Trott	1745
Hall	1653	Wells	1610
Marsh	1610	Wilkins	1728
May	1573		

12. P.R.O. E179 124/196, Lay Subsidy 1523/4; K.A.O. PRC 32/15/147, Will of Edward Prescott, 1531.

13. Jane Jones, *op. cit.*

Alan Storm discovered a similar pattern in his study of the Yorkshire coastal community of Robin Hood's Bay. In 1841 in the parish of Fylingdales, which included Robin Hood's Bay, 250 people out of 1611 bore surnames which had appeared in a grant relating to the parish dated 1565. Of the 743 people in Robin Hood's Bay itself, 159, or 21.4%, bore names which had appeared in 1565.<sup>14</sup> In the Hastings fishing community, "many of today's families have been at work on Hastings beach for over a hundred years, while a significant number can trace their ancestry back to the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, and some even to the Middle Ages."<sup>15</sup> Such long established families must have been very influential within the community, acting as a repository of tradition and regulating conduct. As Mary Prior has remarked,

"in any community the sense of stability and continuity may vary even where quantitatively the turnover is the same. It depends who stays and who goes. If its main social centres are in the hands of the same families over many generations, this gives a strong sense of continuity .... If the new families are constantly on the move it makes little difference to the community. If, however, it is the older families which go, the continuity and stability of the life of the community is undermined."<sup>16</sup>

As will be shown in Chapter Eight, boatmen were a class apart from other families in Deal. A study of their kinship networks could be extended to include the boatmen of Walmer and Kingsdown, but may be carried out

14. Alan Storm, *Robin Hood's Bay, a Character Study of a Coastal Community, with special reference to the period 1780-1880 and the Shipping Boom*, unpublished M.A. Dissertation (Leicester, 1978).

15. Steve Peak, *Fishermen of Hastings: 200 Years of the Hastings Fishing Community* (St. Leonard's, 1985), 151.

16. Prior, *op. cit.*, 235. 283

quite adequately if restricted to Deal. Indeed, it will be argued below that the boatmen of Kingsdown, Walmer and even of North and South Deal maintained separate communities. Although there was inevitably some movement, it is possible to identify different families with different parts of the five mile stretch of coastline. Bingham, Erridges and Lamings belonged to Kingsdown. The Arnolds came from Kingsdown and Walmer and the Axons, Claringboulds and Heard from Walmer. The Trotts, Baileys and Lamberts were South End families, while the May, Ashington and Roberts families belonged to the North End. As the century progressed and getting a living became harder, several of the Erridges moved to Deal from Kingsdown. Some of the Hood family moved in from Kingsdown and Dover and there was also some movement between South Deal and Walmer.

What role then did family relationships play in the lives of the Deal boatmen? Among the boatmen there was a number of families which had been established in Deal for centuries, living and working closely together and inevitably intermarrying. However, the boatmen were perhaps unaware of, or did not attach importance to, the fact that many of their neighbours were also their kin, and there were other factors which might have loosened the ties of kinship, particularly for the men. Young men often spent some time in the Royal or Merchant Navies, which entailed long periods away from home. John Bailey

and a number of his contemporaries were absent from Deal from February 1838 to January 1842, serving in the Royal Navy in Canada and the Mediterranean.<sup>17</sup> One of the Irvine family as a young man made two voyages to the West Indies.<sup>18</sup> In addition, as the nineteenth century progressed and it became harder to make a living as a Deal boatmen, more and more of the young men were leaving the town altogether. This must have led to a weakening of family ties as the older generation died.

Professor Everitt believes that focal families gave communities an "extraordinary toughness of fibre" and contributed to the "intractability of provincial character."<sup>19</sup> In Deal, longevity of older members of the boatmen's family networks would have had an influence in holding the families together. The ages attained by some of the boatmen working in Deal between the 1840s and the 1880s are shown in Table 7.2.<sup>20</sup>

Many boatmen must have lived to see their grandchildren reach adulthood. William Grigg, 1799-1878, saw the birth of at least one great-grandchild, the son of his granddaughter Lydia and her husband John Roberts. A boatman in his eighties might recall information he had been given about his grandparents' generation of 150 years before. He would be able to identify second and third cousins and pass this information on to his own descendants. Knowledge of family relationships was thus probably more widespread in Deal than in an industrial

17. P.R.O. ADM 37/9248.

18. P.R.O. CUST 53/1, Collector to Board, 12 May 1851.

19. Everitt, *op. cit.*, 328.

20. Information from the Deal Censuses, deaths announcements in *The Deal Mercury* and *The Deal Telegram* and E.C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929).



Table 7.2

## Longevity of Some Boatmen

Boatman	Born	Lived to
James Sneller	1833	96+
Richard Roberts	1840	94
Henry Marsh	1815	92
William Spears Sr.	1762	89+
John Files	1826	89
John May	1842	87+
John Bayley	1789	87
William Selth	1782	87
Richard Riley	1795	87
Edward Hanger	1843	86+
George Pain	1843	86+
Thomas Long	1777	86
Thomas Selth	1830	86
Arthur Trott	1782	83
Thomas Snoswell	1787	83
William Spears Jr.	1822	83
John Bailey	1820	82
John Roberts	1787	82
William May	1797	82
James Nicholas	1827	82

city where life expectancy was shorter and people moved about far more.

Professor Everitt has noted "the tendency for skills and 'mysteries' to be passed on within the family circle ... at the level of the craftsman and the small manufacturer." This tendency was "especially pronounced in occupations that were becoming increasingly skilled, increasingly localised, or increasingly specialised; your skill, after all, was in this context your capital; it was only natural that you should wish to hand it on to your descendants."<sup>21</sup> Alun Howkins has suggested that the practice was not restricted to highly skilled or specialised occupations.

"The father-son situation ... was almost universal in labourers' skills. A man who could thatch a rick, for instance, inevitably taught his son .... One suspects that this informal training in basic skills, and there were many, went right down the scale of farm work."<sup>22</sup>

The Deal boatmen's work fulfilled all three of Professor Everitt's conditions; it was unquestionably highly skilled, and it was also highly localised. Since such a large part of their livelihood was derived from shipping in the Channel and rescue and salvage work on the Goodwin Sands, the boatmen obviously required easy access to those areas; but this was also available, to a certain extent, to the mariners of Thanet, Dover and Folkestone. The Deal boatmen's particular speciality, which set them apart from the other Kentish seafaring

21. Everitt, *op. cit.*, 323.

22. Alun Howkins, "The Labourer and Work", G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside II* (1981), 508.

communities and effectively restricted them to the five mile stretch of coastline between Sandown and Oldstairs Bay, was that their luggers were designed for launching into the sea from a steeply shelving shingle beach.

The occupation of Deal boatman was thus strongly dynastic, handed on from father to son over generations. Even in the fairly short period under discussion there are numerous examples of three generations of boatmen in one family - Ashington, Budd, Foster, Grigg, Obree and Thompson, to name only some. It was unusual to find men becoming boatmen who had no previous connection with the maritime population. Men who were apparently the only members of their families among the boatmen can often be shown to have had connections with other boatmen's families. When James Troy's father, also named James, was married in 1811, he was a seaman aboard *H.M.S. Monmouth* in the Downs. There is no earlier mention of his family in the Deal parish registers. James Troy's mother, however, was Ann Wesson of Deal; a number of her relatives were boatmen. Richard Beal was a labourer's son, but his mother was one of the Trapps family, four men of which were boatmen. Thomas Bingham was born into a family of Kingsdown boatmen. He moved to the North End of Deal in 1869, initially to run the Scarboro' Cat public house. His maternal grandfather, Edward Caspell, was a boatman in Deal, as were his three Caspell uncles, Frederick, Henry and William.<sup>23</sup>

23. Information on kinship in this and following paragraphs is derived from Deal Parish Registers and Censuses.

Of the 431 boatmen whose fathers' occupations are known, 356 or 82.6% were boatmen, while 21 followed other maritime occupations, such as fisherman or boatbuilder. Only 52 of the 431, or 12.1%, are known to have followed other occupations. Families like the Trotts were not unusual. Thomas Trott and Jane Simes or Sims were married at St. Leonard's, Deal, in 1773. Of their 41 male descendants who reached adulthood before 1881, the occupations of 24 are known. One was a shoemaker, one a Royal Navy seaman and one a boatbuilder; the remainder were boatmen. Similarly, twenty male descendants of John May and Elizabeth Lambert, married in 1792, were boatmen.

Anderson, in his study of nineteenth century Preston, produced a table of the proportion of sons in same trade or industry as their fathers in 1851.<sup>24</sup> The figures are broken down by socio-economic group and relate to co-residing sons only. Table 7.3, overleaf, gives Anderson's figures in comparison with those for the Deal boatmen.

There are some difficulties involved in comparing Anderson's figures with the boatmen. Anderson used co-residing sons only, the boatmen's figures are calculated from all boatmen whose fathers' occupations are known. Anderson however comments that co-residing sons are more likely to share their fathers' occupations; the figures therefore are if anything

24. Anderson, *op. cit.*, 53.

biased away from the boatmen. Anderson's figures for sons under 20 cannot be compared with the boatmen as the number of boatmen under 20 was negligible. Finally, it is not possible to allocate the boatmen to any of the socio-economic groups used by Anderson. Boatowners rate with small business owners. All boatmen were highly skilled and self-employed, so are not comparable with factory workers. However, it is clear that a far higher proportion of boatmen's sons followed their fathers' occupation than any of the groups considered by Anderson in Preston.

Table 7.3

Proportion of Sons with Same Occupation as Father in  
each Socio-Economic Group in Preston, 1851,  
Compared with Numbers of Deal Boatmen with Fathers in  
Same Occupation, 1841-1881

SEG of father	Sons under 20		Sons over 20	
	%	number	%	number
I & II White collar	42	12	17	6
III Trade	37	43	58	31
IV Higher Factory	73	55	60	15
V Artisan	22	60	35	20
VI Lower Factory	86	21	50	10
VII Labourer	11	72	44	36
VIII Hand loom weaver	4	45	54	13
Deal Boatmen	-	--	82.6	356

Young men of the boatmen's families would have relied on their fathers or other older male relatives to sponsor them as crew members. Another factor which strengthened the tendency for the boatmen's occupation to be inherited was that as well as his skill, the Deal boatman often had something more concrete in the form of capital to pass on to his descendants; a share in a lugger or other boat. This at once provided a source of income and a passport into the *Gemeinschaft*, as well as reinforcing the dynastic tradition.

The question of whether families in the past were commonly nuclear or non-nuclear has been much discussed, the usual conclusion being that the nuclear family was the norm. In Deal in 1851, out of 255 households in which a boatman was the head, 38 or 14.9% contained non-nuclear kin.<sup>25</sup> These were as follows.

Table 7.4a  
Relationship to Head of Household of Non-Nuclear Kin  
in Boatmen's Families, 1851.

Grandchildren	5
Parents or parents-in-law	8
Sister/brother or sis/bro-in-law	13
Nephew/niece	3
Son-in-law and grandchildren	2
Stepson	1
Stepson and mother	1
Father-in-law and niece	1
Grandmother and sister	1
Aunt	1
Father, brother & brothers-in-law	1
Parents, sister, brothers & bros-in-law	1

25. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

In contrast, in the 91 households in which an agricultural labourer was head in 1851, 15 or 16.5% contained non-nuclear kin.<sup>25</sup> These were distributed as follows.

Table 7.4b.  
Relationship to Head of Household of Non-Nuclear Kin in  
Agricultural Labourers' Families, 1851

Grandchildren	5
Grandparents	2
Sister/brother or sis/bro-in-law	3
Nephew	1
Son-in-law and grandchildren	1
Sister and mother	1
Mother and grandchild	1

As the boatmen were supposed to have been in economic distress and therefore likely to have been seeking ways to reduce household expenses, one would expect there to have been a higher proportion of non-nuclear kin among the boatmen's families than among the farmworkers. In addition, the boatmen's frequent absences from home would have encouraged their wives to share their homes with relatives for support and companionship. Despite these arguments, a slightly greater proportion of farmworkers' households contained non-nuclear kin. One should, however, draw a distinction between resident non-nuclear kin who were dependent upon the nuclear family, such as infant grandchildren (often illegitimate children of unmarried daughters of the family) and aged parents, and those who were able to

make a contribution to the household finances. A higher proportion of the resident kin of the farmworkers' households are likely to have been dependent than of the boatmen's households, so one may perhaps say tentatively that the farmworkers were offering shelter to their dependents, whereas the boatmen were looking for assistance with household expenses.

There are also no doubt a number of cases of kin sharing a house, but being enumerated as separate households. Where the surname is different, the relationship is not be apparent. The question then arises of how separate these households actually were. For example, in Brewer Street in 1851 lived Rebecca Heather, a boatman's widow, and her two adult sons, also boatmen. Living in a separate household at the same address was Edmund Randle or Randall, another boatman, who was a bachelor. By 1861, Edmund Randle had married Rebecca Heather;<sup>26</sup> it is highly probable that for some time before the marriage, she had been cooking some or all of his meals, attending to his cleaning and laundry, and that he had been spending some or all of his leisure time with the Heathers. How separate were those two households? Also in 1851, at 9 North Street, were the following two families.

26. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543.



William Grigg	Head	53	Mariner	Deal
Sarah	Wife	56		Maldon
William	Son	29	Mariner	Queenborough
=				
Thomas Epsley	Head	29	Mariner	Deal
Sarah	Wife	30		Deal
Thomas	Son	2		Deal

Sarah Epsley was the daughter of William and Sarah Grigg. By 1861, the two families had moved together to 6 Alfred Square, although the younger William Grigg had by this time left home and his parents had taken in an elderly female lodger, and the Epsleys had seven children, including five month old twin sons. The two families were still together in 1871, but had parted by 1881.<sup>27</sup> The break up probably came with William Grigg's death in 1878.<sup>28</sup> The two families must have made a conscious decision to share housing over a long period. The presence of a lodger in 1861 suggests that reduction of household expenses was one factor in the decision, but no doubt with both their husbands often away at sea, Sarah Grigg and Sarah Epsley were glad of each other's company, and Sarah Epsley probably welcomed her mother's assistance with her children. Assuming the two families began to share a house when Sarah Grigg and Thomas Epsley were married, which must have been about 1848, they lived together for about thirty years. It must be

27. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

28. *The Deal Telegram*, 8 June 1878, 5f.

debatable how separate these two households were over this period, but their relationship would not have been detected if Thomas and Sarah Epsley had not named their second son, who was nine years old in 1861, Grigg.<sup>29</sup>

Some families showed a strong preference for living near to each other. The Trotts occupied four or five houses in one short stretch of Beach Street for at least thirty years, as follows.

1851 75, 76, 78, 81  
1861 76, 77, 78, 80, 81  
1871 74, 78, 80, 81, 83  
1881 56, 78, 81, 85

Many of the May family lived in the three adjacent streets of Bulwark Row, North Street and Dolphin Street. The Finnis family, who were boatmen and sailmakers, lived in Beach Street, Dolphin Street, Exchange Street and especially in Farrier Street. In 1871, there were Finnises in Farrier Street at numbers 10, 11, 13 and 16 and in 1881 at numbers 4, 10, 11, 13 and 18.<sup>30</sup> In these circumstances, the distinction between family under the same roof and the family next door or round the corner must have been slight.

Women were and are more likely than men to maintain kinship links. When Martha Bingham separated from her husband Thomas, she went to live with her sister and brother in law.<sup>31</sup> Thomas turned to his sister

29. P.R.O. RG 9 543.

30. P.R.O. RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

31. P.R.O. RG 11 997.

and mother for help in running the public house he kept at the time and later, when he went back to sea, with looking after his five children.<sup>32</sup>

As demonstrated below, boatmen's wives were far more likely to have been born outside Deal than the boatmen themselves, and so would be separated from their own kin and unfamiliar with their husbands' families. Identification of wives with their husbands' kin must have occurred to a certain extent even with Deal-born wives. There was intense rivalry between the North and South Ends of Deal beach. It was claimed that "boatmen at the North End were looked down upon by the South End and at Walmer as of a lower class and of inferior attainments."<sup>33</sup> Men from one end of the beach rarely, if ever, moved to the other end. This was natural, as boatmen followed their fathers or other male relatives as crew members and might have found it difficult to gain entry to crews where they did not have such an introduction. Women, however, did move from one end to the other. Elizabeth Ashington, from the North End, married James Bailey and became the mother of a well-known family of South End boatmen. Elizabeth Lambert, from the South End, married into the May family, who lived exclusively at the North End. Similar marriages took place in the Spears, Wilds and Bowbyes families.<sup>34</sup> Women must, therefore, in matters of work at least, have transferred their allegiance from one end of

32. *The Deal Mercury*, 19 March 1870, 3c; *ibid.*, 30 April 1870, 3a.

33. Pain, *op. cit.*, 170.

34. Jane Jones, *op. cit.*

the beach to the other upon marriage.

It is difficult to reach an accurate assessment of the part played by the women of the boatmen's families. They had no active role, like the fisher girls who followed the herring fleets up and down the east coast from Lerwick to Lowestoft, or the canal women on inland waters who made their homes afloat and took a man's part in the running of their husbands' boats and barges. It was claimed that the boatmen's wives "frequently carried on some small trade or business on shore by keeping shops or doing work of different kinds."<sup>35</sup> William Irvine's wife worked as a charwoman and servant at the Pelican Hotel, Beach Street, while David Petty's wife Harriet took in lodgers.<sup>36</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, many boatmen's wives ran lodging houses, and another common occupation was running inns or beerhouses. In 1851, George Philpot, licensee of the Pelican in Beach Street, was actually "at sea in an open boat" on the night of the Census.<sup>37</sup> However, as married women rarely gave an occupation in the Censuses, it is impossible to tell how many boatmen's wives had regular paid work.

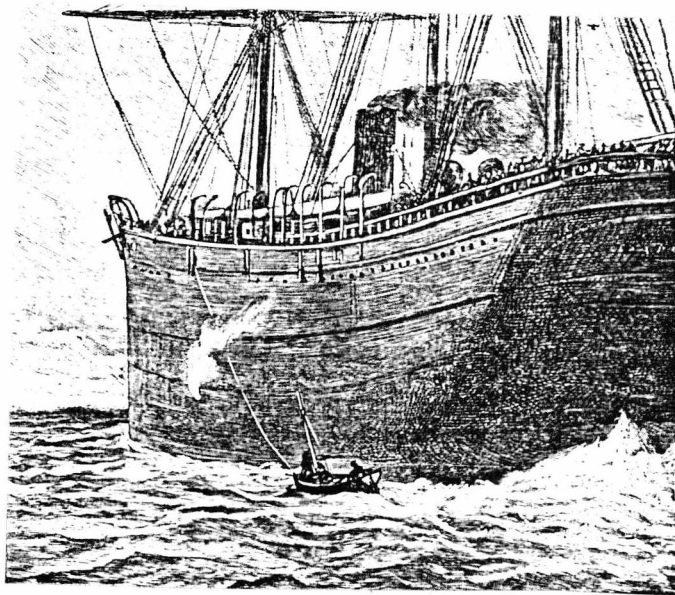
It is never suggested that the women were involved in the boatmen's work. Contemporaries noted that the naming of a lugger "was of as much importance as a family christening" and that "to say that they [the owners] and every member of their family believe in her is the mildest possible way of stating the case."<sup>38</sup>

35. G.B. Gattie, *Memorials of the Goodwin Sands* (1890), 100.

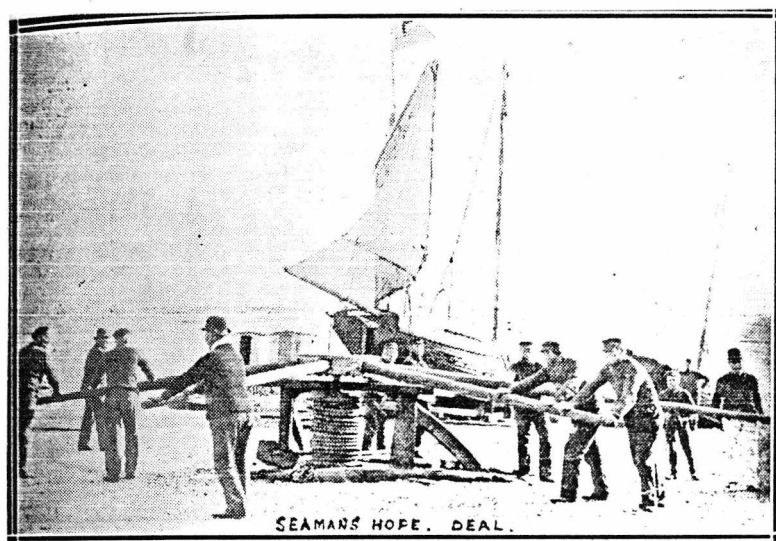
36. *The Deal Telegram*, 14 September 1872, 2e; *ibid.*, 4 October 1879, 5c.

37. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

38. Pain, *op. cit.*, 10; T.S. Treanor, *The Log of a Sky Pilot* (n.d., c.1895), 179.



19. Hooking the Steamer



20. Hauling up the lugger "Seamen's Hope" at the South End. Two bathing machines are just visible above the capstan.

There is, however, no indication that the women took any active part. Of the many descriptions of Deal beach written during the nineteenth century, only two mention the women of the boatmen's families. "The boatmen are lounging about the beach here and there, ... tanned sails are spread abroad on the shingle drying, women hang about knitting and watching the ships at anchor for any signal for a boat."<sup>39</sup> Or, when a lugger is launched, "mingling among the workers are the wives and mothers, putting a piece of bread and cheese in Tom's pocket, or helping on 'father' with his oilskin."<sup>40</sup>

With the boatmen away from home for up to two weeks at a time, domestic society in their community must have been centred around the women. Boatmen's wives had to be women of character and determination. They had to tolerate the boatmen's undoubted predilection for drinking and fighting, and resign themselves to seeing their housekeeping money spent on fines and sureties. Because of the boatmen's frequent disregard of the laws on smuggling and salvage, a boatman's wife was probably more likely than other women to see her husband in prison. They had to cope with their husbands' frequent absences, during which time they had to take on the main burden of bringing up the children and dealing with tradesmen and officials. When in 1879, for example, two boatmen were summonsed for failing to send their children to school, it was their wives who attended

39. John Gilmore, *Storm Warriors or Life-Boat Work on the Goodwin Sands* (1890 edn.), 196.

40. T.S.Treanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1895), 120.

court to make their excuses, explaining that their husbands were at sea and could not be there.<sup>41</sup> The irregularity of the boatmen's earnings meant that their wives would have to be more than normally competent housekeepers. It would be the women who would have to ensure that the men's earnings were stretched to cover long periods when little or no money was coming in. They would have to negotiate extended credit with landlords and tradesmen. It is no doubt largely to the credit of their wives and mothers that few boatmen were "County Courted" for failure to pay household bills and rent.

Each time their menfolk set off on a voyage, they must have been all too aware of the possibility that they would not return. The Deal newspapers reported the deaths by drowning or other accidents at sea of 35 Deal boatmen between 1858 and 1881; Walmer and Kingsdown also had their fatalities. Sarah Constant of Walmer's first husband was Edward Trott. He was drowned in the *Reform*. Sarah then married William Lambert, only to lose him in the *Galatea* tragedy of 1874.<sup>42</sup> Mrs Ann Baker must also have been all too bitterly aware of the dangers of the boatmen's occupation. Her second son George was killed in 1868 at the age of 20 falling from the topsail yard of a vessel off the coast of South America. Her first and third sons, Thomas and William, were both aboard the *Reform* on her last launch; Thomas survived, William was drowned, aged 22. Mrs Baker's fourth son, Henry, was

41. *The Deal Mercury*, 29 November 1879, 2d.

42. *Ibid.*, 24 October 1874, 2e.

drowned with William Lambert in 1874, also aged 22.<sup>43</sup>

As the boatmen were so deeply rooted in Deal, it might be expected that they would have preferred Deal-born wives, who would have had a better appreciation of the special demands of a boatman's calling. The proportion of boatmen's wives born in Deal was higher than the proportion of all women born in Deal, and much higher than the proportion of agricultural labourers' wives born in the town. However, the proportion born outside Deal was still high when compared with the proportion of boatmen born outside Deal.

Table 7.5  
Boatmen's and Farmworkers' wives -  
Percentage of total born in Deal

	1851	1861	1871	1881
All Women	61.6	58.4	55.4	52.0
Boatmen's Wives	64.1	64.3	62.1	53.7
Ag. Labs' Wives	42.5	33.8	30.0	31.6

One reason why the boatmen married women from outside Deal might be that they themselves frequently visited other coastal towns and ports in their piloting work along the south and east coasts. Yet no boatman married a woman from Gravesend, the place where Cinque Ports Trinity Pilots yielded to Thames Pilots, and with which Deal boatmen were certainly familiar. Neither did any boatman marry a woman from Tyneside, although this was also an area visited by Deal boatmen as pilots or as

43. Pain, *op. cit.*, 43.



young men learning their trade aboard coasting vessels or colliers. When the Walmer lugger *Pride of the Sea* was wrecked off Shanklin in 1887, *The Ventnor Gazette and Isle of Wight Mercury* noted that "these Deal luggers are well known all around this coast, also their crews ... who frequently put in here for provisions." The crew of the *Pride of the Sea* were, it was said, well known to the people of Shanklin. However, no boatman ever married a woman from the Isle of Wight.<sup>44</sup>

The success or otherwise of a boatman's marriage does not seem to have depended upon his wife's origins. The matrimonial difficulties of three boatmen were aired at some length in Court in the 1860s and 1870s. George Hanger was summonsed in 1865 for striking his wife, a Deal-born woman, and giving her a black eye. The trouble was said to have arisen because he came home late, although he pointed out that his occupation required him to be out at all hours of the day and night. The case was dismissed after the couple's son gave evidence that Mrs Hanger had threatened her husband with a poker.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas Edward Bingham was married to a labourer's daughter from London. Their marriage failed because of her drinking.<sup>46</sup> Thomas Bingham's sister, Mary Jane, married a boatman, Richard David Petty May. She must have been fully aware of the demands of the boatmen's work, since her maternal grandfather and uncles and five of her six brothers followed that occupation. The couple

44. Pain, *op. cit.*, 98.

45. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 August 1865, 7b.

46. *Ibid.*, 22 March 1879, 4f.

eventually separated due, Mary Jane claimed, to her husband's violence when drunk.<sup>47</sup>

Drink was a factor in two of these three cases. There were frequent references to drunkenness among the boatmen. Whether this was a serious social problem or just something that annoyed other residents is open to question. There were many public houses in Deal and the boatmen were in the habit of conducting their business in the public houses in Beach Street. It was thus inevitable that drink would play a part in their lives. However, the boatmen's work required quick thinking and split-second timing; it is unlikely that any of them could have been habitually heavy drinkers, or would have been tolerated as crew members if they were. It is more likely that the nature of the boatmen's occupation - a week or two at sea followed by a spell ashore, perhaps with a salvage award of up to a hundred pounds to spend - led to occasional "binges". After a period of abstinence, it takes less to make a man drunk than if he is accustomed to drink alcohol every day. The boatmen's usual excuse was "I had just come on shore and had a drop too much." This pattern of behaviour was found in other maritime communities, such as the fishermen of the Hessle Road community of Hull. These men were said to indulge in lavish spending and drinking in their brief periods ashore to compensate for the hardship and deprivation of up to three weeks at sea.<sup>48</sup>

47. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 January 1878, 5b.

48. Alec Gill and Gary Sargent, *Village within a City: the Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull, 1986), 30.

Despite the inconclusive evidence of the birthplaces of boatmen's wives, it is possible, using the Censuses and marriage registers, to construct extensive kinship networks including many boatmen. Such networks are common in other specialised communities. Mary Prior traced networks of kinship stretching back into the seventeenth century among the Oxford boatmen and bargemen.<sup>49</sup> Intermarriage was common among the Hastings fishermen, and Scottish fishermen also tended to find their brides within their own community.<sup>50</sup>

With so many families having been so long established in the town, and associating so closely by working together and living in the same streets, it was inevitable that there would be some intermarriage. It is possible that because of the danger and uncertainty of their occupation, and their own lawless behaviour, boatmen may have been seen as unsatisfactory husband material by young women, and their fathers, in other walks of life. Whether intermarriage occurred fortuitously or by conscious choice, the effect was to link together some of the most numerous and longest established boatmen's families in a wide and complex network of cousinage. Some of the most successful of the boatmen, whose personalities come across most strongly to the modern researcher, and who seem to have been leaders among their peers, were members of the network.<sup>51</sup> Among them were William Frost Spears, part

49. Prior, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

50. Peak, *op. cit.*, 150; Paul Thompson with Tony Wailey and Trevor Lummis, *Living the Fishing* (1983), 15.

51. Information on kinship and marriage from Parish Registers and Censuses. Pain, *op. cit.*, for personal characteristics of boatmen.

owner of three of the best known luggers, *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory*, and in whose ventures there was often "just that element of daring which invested the Deal lugger with an atmosphere of romance."

Also linked to the network was John Bailey, a close contemporary of William Spears, who steered *England's Glory* to her most valuable award in February 1866 and who was at the helm of the *Reform* when she was wrecked in January 1871. Edward Galley Grigg, who was often called as a witness when disputes as to the custom of the beach resulted in lawsuits, was another member of the network, while his daughter Lydia's brother-in-law, Richard Roberts, was the long-serving coxswain of the North Deal Lifeboat. Richard Roberts was also one of the crew of *Early Morn*, which during the 1870s regularly won the race for second class luggers at the Deal regatta. Another member of *Early Morn's* crew, John May, was also related to many other boatmen in Deal.

One family which became related to many others by marriage was that of the Ashingtons of the North End. Their kinship links are shown in Table 7.6. Thomas Ashington and Rebecca Redman, who were married in 1784, had two sons and three daughters between 1789 and 1805. The eldest, Margaret, married Thomas Epsley. Thomas and his two brothers were all boatmen, as were Thomas and Margaret's two sons. The elder, also Thomas, married

Sarah Grigg, who was the daughter and sister of boatmen. The Grigg or Griggs family was also connected by marriage to the Roberts and Job families.

William Ashington, baptised in 1793, married Sarah Pilcher in 1812. Three of their sons were boatmen, as were at least two grandsons. Thomas and Rebecca's second daughter, Elizabeth, married John Bailey, of the South End of Deal. They had a large family, five sons and nine grandsons becoming boatmen and boatowners. By naming their second son Robert Ashington, Elizabeth and James Bailey ensured that the connection with the Ashington family was remembered. The Baileys often worked with men of the Middleton family, and in 1878 one of James and Elizabeth's grandsons, Thomas, married Mary, daughter of Thomas and Sarah Middleton.

Thomas and Rebecca Ashington's third daughter, Rebecca, married as her first husband a boatman named John Heather. They had two sons, both of whom were boatmen. After John Heather's death, Rebecca took as a lodger another boatman, Edmund Randle or Randall, and after a number of years married him as her second husband. Thomas and Rebecca's second son, John, another boatman, had a son who was a boatman and a daughter, Zipporah, who married William Bushell, a boatman.

Altogether, it is possible to identify 28 descendants of Thomas and Rebecca Ashington. The majority of their sons and grandsons were boatmen.

Another pattern emerges, however, among men born after about 1850. The five sons of Thomas Epsley and Sarah Grigg, born between 1849 and 1860, did not become boatmen. Neither did the younger sons of Thomas Job and Lydia Blissenden, nor the younger sons of Robert Ashington Bailey and his wife Elizabeth, nor the sons of John and Jane Ashington.

Another extensive family network was centred on the Trott family of the South End. Their family relationships are shown in Table 7.7. The first Trotts to live in Deal seem to have been Michael and Emlyn, who had five sons baptised in the parish between 1738 and 1751. Of these, neither Walter nor Samuel were married in the parish, neither did they have children baptised there. Michael and William had five sons and two daughters between them, but both died young and none of their sons appear to have remained in Deal to establish a new generation.

It is from Michael and Emlyn Trott's fourth son, Thomas, baptised in 1748, that all the Trotts in Deal in the nineteenth century were descended. He married, in 1773, Jane Simes or Sims. Five of their sons and one daughter survived infancy. The eldest, Samuel, was baptised in 1774. In 1808 he married Margaret Keys of Dover; they seem to have had only one child. Margaret died in 1827. Samuel was still alive in 1841, living in South Street in the house of John Tapley, with whom he

was remotely connected by marriage. He was then said to be of independent means. He had presumably died by 1851.

Thomas and Jane's second son, Thomas, was baptised in 1773. In 1796 he married Elizabeth Elliott. They had six sons and one daughter surviving to adulthood. Thomas was described as a mariner at the baptisms of his two youngest sons in 1814 and 1816 and also in 1841. He and Elizabeth were probably both dead by 1851, as they did not appear in that Census.

Thomas and Jane's first daughter, Charlotte, was baptised in 1777. She married in 1802 William Goymer. They had four sons between 1804 and 1810. The first and third, John and Thomas, were not recorded in Deal at any Census. The second son, William, married Mildred Barber Roberts of Deal in 1827. He was a cordwainer in the Censuses, although he may have been a boatman as a young man. His youngest brother, Richard, who married Eliza Holbrook of Deal, was a letter carrier. William and Mildred and Richard and Eliza each had three sons who reached adulthood and had occupations recorded in the Censuses. William and Mildred's sons, William, born 1833, Thomas, born 1838 and John, born 1840, were all boatmen. Richard and Eliza's sons, who were slightly younger, were all clerks.

The next two brothers of Charlotte Goymer, née Trott, both died young. The youngest child of that family, Arthur Sims, was baptised in 1783. Some time

before 1807 he married a girl called Jane from Stepney. Arthur and Jane had five sons and four daughters baptised in Deal between 1807 and 1827. Arthur's occupation was mariner at all the baptisms after 1813, when fathers' occupations were first recorded in the baptism registers, and in 1841 and 1851. In 1861, when he was 78, he described himself as a boatman.

Of the next generation, the most senior was John Samuel, son of Samuel and Margaret, baptised in 1809. He married in 1826 Ann Sylllystra Blown. The Blowns were not numerous in Deal and were not members of the maritime community. Those in Deal in Census years were chiefly involved in the building trades. John Samuel's age in the Censuses confirms that he was born in 1809, and was therefore married at 17. Ann Sylllystra was the same age. The reason for this very early marriage is soon obvious; their first child, a daughter who did not survive, was baptised five months later. Despite the loss of their first child, these two had a large family, three sons and nine daughters born between 1828 and 1850. John Samuel's occupation was recorded as mariner at all the baptisms up to 1837 and in 1841 and 1851. In 1861 he was a boatman. He died in 1869.

John Samuel Trott, an only child, had two large families of cousins. His uncle Thomas and aunt Elizabeth's eldest son, Thomas, was baptised in 1797. Thomas married firstly, in 1825, Charlotte Marsh. They



had three children before her death in 1834. In 1835, Thomas married Mary Gard. She was then in her late thirties, and they had no children. Her brother John, a boatman, lodged with them for many years. Thomas was a mariner or boatman from the time of his eldest child's baptism in 1830 until his death in 1866. His next brother, John Elliott, was baptised in 1799; there is no further record of him in the parish registers or Censuses. The next brother was Arthur Sims (II), baptised in 1808. He married in 1832 Sarah Ann Street. They appear never to have had any children. He was a mariner in 1841, "at sea in an open boat" in 1851 and a boatman in 1861. He died in December 1870, as the result, it was said, of a boat accident earlier that year in which three men, including his cousin John Samuel's son Julius Caesar, were drowned.

Thomas and Elizabeth Trott's fifth son, William, was born in 1812. About 1840 he married a Walmer girl called Sarah. Their four sons and one daughter were born between 1843 and 1851. William was a mariner in 1841 and 1851 and was apparently dead by 1861. William had two younger brothers. Edward, baptised in 1814, died at the age of sixteen. Henry Cooper, baptised in 1816, married in 1840. He and his wife, with their infant daughter, appeared in the 1841 Census, when he was a boatman, but by 1851 the family had apparently left Deal.

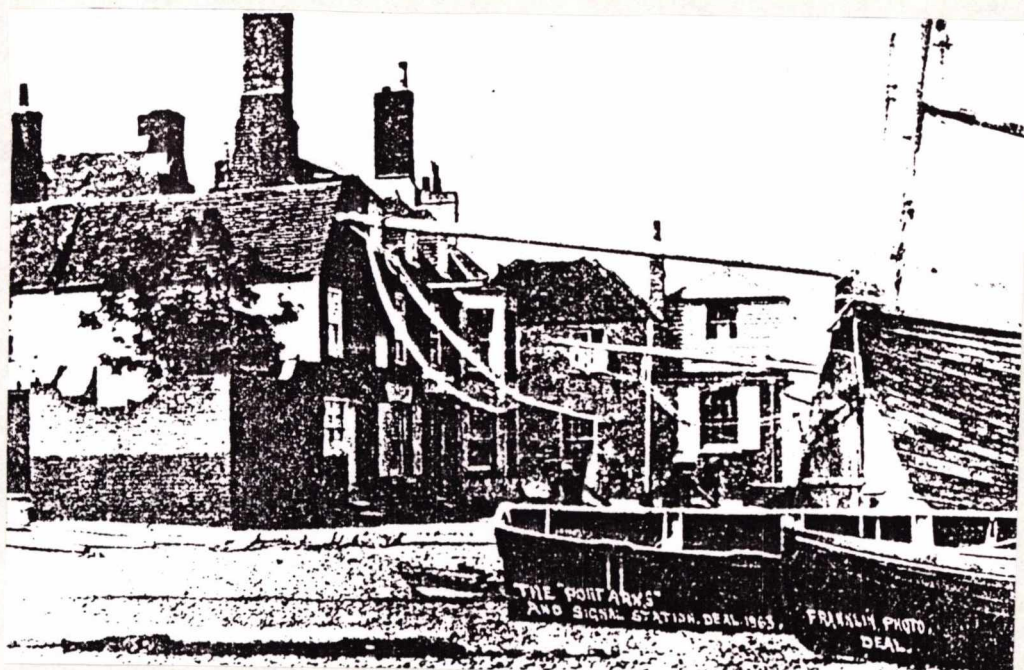
The other branch of the Trott family in Deal at

this time was formed by the children of Arthur Sims (I) and his wife Jane. Their first three children were daughters. The fourth, a son, William, was baptised in 1813. In 1832 he married Pleasant Harbour Tapley. Through her, the Trotts became connected to numerous other boatmen. Pleasant's father and three brothers were all boatmen. Their mother was Ann Wilkins; the Tapleys were thus cousins of the extensive Wilkins family. This connection was reinforced when Pleasant's sister Jane married their cousin Edward Wilkins. The relationships were further complicated when Jane and Pleasant's brother John married Elizabeth Mackins or Meakins and Elizabeth's brother William Collard Meakins married Mary Ann Wilkins. John and Elizabeth Tapley's daughter Mary Jane married Thomas Valentine Selth, another South End boatman, while William Collard and Mary Ann Meakins' son William was also a leading South End boatman.

William and Pleasant Trott had a daughter and three sons. William was a mariner at the baptism of his eldest child in 1833 and in 1841. The family was not in Deal in 1851 and he was dead by 1861. His younger brother George was baptised in 1815. George's his wife Mary came from Walmer; they had eleven children. George's occupation was variously recorded as mariner, Oversea Pilot and North Sea Pilot. The next son of this family, Arthur, was baptised in 1817, but makes no further appearance in any record of Deal. The next son,

John, and his wife, Mary, had only one son. John's occupation was mariner. The youngest child of this family was Thomas, baptised in 1827. He married Charlotte, who was either a Fitall, or had been previously married to one of that family. They had three daughters. Thomas's working life did not follow the same pattern as that of his brothers and cousins. In 1851, 1861 and 1871, he was a licensed victualler at the Port Arms at the South End of Beach Street. His wife Charlotte died during the 1860s. Thomas was still at the Port Arms in 1871, with his three daughters, the eldest of whom was then 20. In 1881, he was living in Wellington Road, his second daughter acting as housekeeper. His occupation then was mariner.

It was more usual for boatmen to take public houses when they reached middle age than for a licensed victualler to become a boatman later in life. Thomas was 43 in 1871, when he was still a licensed vitualler; it seems unlikely that he would have begun to go to sea in his mid-forties. It is more likely that Thomas himself always worked as a mariner while his wife ran the pub. In 1851 and 1861, the family had a young servant girl living in, so it was presumably too much for Charlotte to manage alone while bringing up a family. After his wife's death, Thomas continued to run the Port Arms with his daughters' help, but when they left home, he gave up the pub and turned full time to the occupation that was



21. The South End  
Port Arms and Lloyd's Signal Station

traditional in his family.

In the next generation, which was the last to be established before 1881, the senior branch was that of the children of John Samuel and Ann Sylllystra. Their eldest son, Samuel Richard, was baptised in 1828. He married a woman from Lincolnshire; they had one son. Samuel Richard's occupation in 1851, 1861 and 1871 was mariner; he died in the 1870s. The second son, John, was born in 1838. He appeared in no Census after reaching adulthood; consequently his occupation is not known. The third and youngest son, Julius Caesar, was born in 1847. As already noted, he was drowned in a boat accident in August 1870.

The next family was that of Thomas, baptised in 1797, and Charlotte, formerly Marsh. Their elder son, Edward Charles, was born in 1832. In 1851 he was a mariner, still living with his parents. By 1861 he had married Sarah Constant of Walmer and was describing himself as a boatman. They had two sons and a daughter over the next ten years, but Edward did not survive to the 1871 Census; he was one of the eight men drowned in the *Reform* tragedy of January 1871. In the Census of that year, his widow Sarah was a licensed victualler at the King's Head, 83 Beach Street. In March 1872, this licence was transferred to William Stephen Collard Lambert, presumably on the occasion of his marriage to the widowed Sarah Trott. Sarah almost certainly

continued to run the pub herself, for William did not stop going to sea; he was drowned in October 1874, leaving Sarah a widow for the second time in less than four years.

The youngest child in Thomas and Charlotte Trott's family was Thomas, baptised in 1834. He was a mariner in 1861 and 1871, but was apparently not in Deal in 1881.

The next most senior branch of the family was that of William, baptised in 1812, and Sarah. It is in their family that the one can see the first break in the pattern of son following father as boatman from one generation to the next. The eldest son, Richard, was born in 1843; he was not in Deal as an adult. The next son, William, was born in 1846. He was first recorded as a boatman in 1861, at the unusually young age of fifteen. He continued to follow this occupation in 1871 and 1881. The next son, Arthur, was a boatbuilder; he too continued in the same occupation until 1881. The youngest child, Charles, was a shoemaker in 1871 and 1881. Although all three brothers were over 30 in 1881, none had married and all were living at home with their widowed mother. Out of four boys in this family, only one followed the traditional occupation of boatman, with one other taking up the related occupation of boatbuilding. This shift away from the traditional pattern continued in the next family, that of William and Pleasant, née Tapley. Their eldest son, Edward

Robert, was baptised in 1834. He does not appear as an adult in any Census. The middle son, William Henry, was baptised in 1836. He was a boatman in 1861, and died in 1866. The youngest son, Francis, born in 1840, like his eldest brother, apparently left Deal on reaching adulthood.

The next family, that of George and Mary Trott, was a large one, seven sons and four daughters. The eldest son, George, born in 1841, was the second member of the Trott family drowned in the *Reform*. The second son, Henry, born in 1847, either died young or left Deal on becoming an adult. The third son, Edward, joined the Royal Navy. The next two sons, William, born 1854, and Daniel, born 1856, were both boatmen. The youngest son, Arthur, does not seem to have lived in Deal as an adult. There was one other man in this generation of the Trotts - John, born 1849, the son of John and Mary. He also was a boatman. Several of this generation had married and had children by the early 1880s, but none of the children had reached adulthood before the end of the period under consideration.

One effect of this extensive web of kinship was to make disasters much more keenly felt throughout the community. Two of the eight men drowned in the *Reform* tragedy were second cousins, Edward and George Trott; a third was John Wilkins, to whom the Trotts were related by marriage through their aunt, formerly Pleasant



Tapley. One of the three survivors, William Goymer, was another cousin. Another survivor, John Bailey, was related to many boatmen through his mother, formerly Elizabeth Ashington. Probably every boatman in Deal was either related to, or had worked with, or lived in the same street as, one or other of the eleven men involved.

The intricate relationships of the Trott, Goymer, Tapley and Wilkins families led to brothers, first cousins and second cousins frequently working together. Brothers and first cousins at least must have been aware of their relationships, but their working together may not have been entirely a matter of choice. If, as was said in 1833, young men were introduced to boats' crews by their fathers, brothers would naturally tend to work together. Also, as the boatmen were divided into North Enders and South Enders, in such comparatively small groups men were bound to encounter relatives reasonably frequently. It is also possible that as the boatmen declined, men on the periphery of the community whose families were not among the longest established, fell away, leaving the families at the centre to continue. Thus, as fewer boatmen remained, they were increasingly likely to be related.

There is some evidence that the boatmen were aware of their family relationships and that they attached importance to them. It was a common habit to give the surnames of relatives to children as Christian names;



the mother's maiden name was often given in this way. William Frost Spears was named after his mother's son by her first marriage, while Richard David Petty May was named after his mother's brother David Petty. Grigg Epsley was the son of Thomas Epsley and Sarah, formerly Grigg. Richard Lambert May, John Lambert May and George Lambert May were named after relatives of their mother, as were Thomas Ashington Bailey and Robert Ashington Bailey. They were cousins of Thomas Epsley, mentioned above. The use of the unusual Christian name Pleasant among the women of the Meakins, Wilkins and Tapley families revealed the connection between them. Pleasant Tapley's parents were James and Ann, formerly Wilkins. Their eldest surviving daughter was baptised Jane Wilkins; when she married her cousin Edward in 1830, she became Jane Wilkins Wilkins.

It is important not to over-estimate the importance of such a network in the boatmen's society. There were, after all, many boatmen who did not marry into other boatmen's families. The 145 boatmen's wives who were not born in Deal, Walmer or Ringwould/Kingsdown could not have been the daughters or sisters of boatmen. By moving away from their native parishes, however, even if they had moved with their immediate families, these women would have become separated from their own kin, and thus would have been more likely to become integrated into the boatmen's kinship than weaken it by

drawing their husbands and children away.

Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, the Deal boatmen and their families were probably so accustomed to living and working closely together that kin and non-kin experienced equally close relationships. The question of the existence of a boatmen's community within the wider community of the town of Deal will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Eight

### The Boatmen - Community and Conflict?

Study of community today forms a major part of the work of local historians; it is the dominant theme of the "Leicester approach" to the subject. The historians of the Department of English Local History at the University of Leicester argue that the local historian should not write the history of his chosen settlement by pursuing in isolation separate and distinct topics such as religion, economy, local politics and so on - the approach adopted by nineteenth century antiquarians and early volumes of the *Victoria County History*. The proper subject for the local historian, wrote Professor Hoskins, initiator of the Leicester approach and father of modern local history,

"should surely be the origin and growth of his particular local community or society; the peculiar and individual nature of this society and the way it worked through the centuries."<sup>1</sup>

Having concluded that he should be studying community, the local historian must then decide what or where his community is. In geographical terms, a community is a collection of dwellings, a hamlet or a village, or a district within a town. Sociologists and social historians, when talking about community, mean something different. The nature of community, in the sociological sense, and whether it truly exists, has been

1. W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (2nd edn., 1972), 14.

the subject of much debate. Ninety-two definitions have been put forward, but its characteristics have been broadly defined as follows; stability of population, a common occupation, or at least common economic aims, and close linkage of members of the community through kinship and marriage. This is community of the type which existed in the East End of London until recently. A former Headmistress who taught in the East End for many years remembers;

"I was very much struck by the village like communities each district formed, each having a distinct culture, for example Bethnal Green was strikingly different from Homerton. Many of the older residents had not been outside their own immediate area."<sup>2</sup>

The German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies, writing in the 1880s, used the term *Gemeinschaft* to describe a society in which human relationships were strong and based on recognition of each person's place in society, members of the community were not mobile, and culture was homogeneous. Tonnies, and others who followed him, suggested that *Gemeinschaft*, or community, had been based on common social bonds, such as work or religion - as, for example, the dissenting congregations of the seventeenth century - but was moving, or had moved, towards a territorial organisation - the community related to a particular place.<sup>3</sup> This is probably an over-simplification; mining villages, often referred to as being especially strong examples of community, have

2. In a private letter to the writer, 11 May 1988.

3. Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies* (1971), 23.

developed in particular places because of the work done by their inhabitants. Charles Phythian-Adams, in his most recent writing on the subject, has taken the argument a stage further; "community as a social entity relates not to a geographic or to a socio-economic context, influential as those contexts may be on many major characteristics of a community; "community" relates in the first place to the wider local society within which it is embedded."<sup>4</sup> Phythian-Adams thus postulates the idea of a community within a community.

The nineteenth century is often regarded as the period which saw the beginning of the decline and break up of what Professor Hoskins has called "the old community".<sup>5</sup> However, in Kent, as in many other places, there were still in this period examples of remote, tightly knit groups of population unaffected by outside influences. Professor Everitt mentions the people of Ide Hill, twenty miles from London, who in the early nineteenth century, "were so ignorant as never to have heard the name of Christ." and those of the Hoo Peninsula, and "the confused web of their religious beliefs, their many magical practices ... their fatalism and fierce dislike of outsiders."<sup>6</sup> Similarly primitive were the people of the extra-parochial area of Dunkirk. Although only three miles from the ecclesiastical centre of Canterbury and close to the major thoroughfare of Watling Street, the people of these parts were so

4. Charles Phythian-Adams, *Rethinking Local History* (Leicester, 1987), 25.

5. Hoskins, *op. cit.*, 28.

6. Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization* (1986), 52, 65.

credulous in the 1830s as to fall for the pretensions of the self-styled Messiah William Thom, alias Courtenay. This episode led to the death at the hands of the military of several of Courtenay's followers in the Battle of Bossenden Wood. Such communities survived despite Kent's supposed nearness to London and the all-pervading influence of the metropolis. Professor Everitt has pointed out that "Canterbury is in fact further from London than Cambridge, and Sandwich as far as Market Harborough,"<sup>7</sup> but no-one suggests that the development of the East Midlands has been influenced by that area's nearness to London.

The road network of the county contributed to the isolation of the easternmost part of Kent, as well as that area's distance from London. The one major roadway through Kent until quite recently was the Roman Watling Street through Dover, Canterbury and Rochester to London. Travellers to and from the Continent would dash up and down Watling Street, stopping here and there for a night at an inn, but its lack of importance to the people of the county may be seen by the very small number of settlements on the road itself. Most of these are what Professor Everitt has called street migrations - daughters of older settlements which developed on the road for the sole purpose of providing services to travellers. Sittingbourne, a daughter of Milton Regis, developed in this way.<sup>8</sup>

7. Alan Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660* (Leicester, 1973), 22.

8. Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 100, 160.

The road system which was developed by Kentish people themselves was based on the ancient transhumance customs of the county. These roads began in the north and ran south-west into the Weald. The scattered settlement pattern of the county caused the further development of a tangled network of minor lanes and tracks, linking individual farms, manor houses and parish churches, for purely local use. The fact that the Kentish road system was on a north-east to south-west axis meant that the triangle of country east of Watling Street and south of the River Stour was especially isolated. Deal, at the easternmost extremity of this part of the county, with the sea to the east and empty marshland to the north, was of all places likely to retain the characteristics of the old community. Is there any evidence of yet smaller, more restricted communities existing within the town? Did the boatmen maintain a separateness from the rest of the population? Were they, in fact, a community within a community?

Prior to and during the nineteenth century, Deal was really two settlements. Upper Deal, the original settlement around the parish church and manor house, in common with most Kentish coastal settlements, was about a mile inland, safer from floods, storms and surprise attack by hostile French or Dutchmen. Lower Deal developed along the shingle beach and in the nineteenth century consisted of three main streets running parallel

to the coastline - Beach Street, Middle Street and Lower Street - joined together by numerous lanes and alleyways. By the middle of the nineteenth century, development was gradually spreading beyond the western, inland side of Lower Street, filling up West Street, and causing new streets to be laid out. Ribbons of new building stretched along Middle Deal Road and the Turnpike Road, which joined Upper and Lower Deal.

It is common in the older established towns to find "districts, and certainly streets, devoted to the residences and work places of well defined craft occupational groups."<sup>9</sup> In most of the ancient towns and cities of England, street names still reveal how, in medieval times, followers of one craft or trade tended to congregate in the same street or area. Bristol has its Corn Street, Wine Street and Exchange Street, its Haymarket and Horsefair. The butchers' and mercers' quarters are still discernible in Canterbury, as are the streets of the potters, fishers and butchers in Sandwich. In Ramsgate in more recent times, "frequently large numbers of fishing families congregated in particular areas," as they did also in Hull.<sup>10</sup>

The Deal boatmen too congregated in one quarter of the town, but this was due primarily to the requirements of their work. Since their livelihood depended upon immediate access to the sea, the boatmen lived entirely in Lower Deal. The Censuses show that no boatman lived to

9. David Ward, "Victorian Cities - How Modern?", *Journal of Historical Geography*, I, 1975, 135.

10. Clive Powell, *Smacks to Steamers: a History of the Ramsgate Fishing Industry, 1850-1920* (Ramsgate, n.d., c.1985), 30; Alec Gill and Gary Sargeant, *Village Within a City: the Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull, 1986), 6.



the west of West Street, and very few lived west of Lower Street. Most lived in Beach Street and Middle Street and the streets between. This was a matter of convenience and efficiency rather than a conscious desire on the part of the boatmen to segregate themselves from other sections of the population. If there was a wreck on the Goodwins or a ship in the Downs signalling for assistance, the first boat to reach her secured the "hovel" and possibly great rewards. On such occasions it was literally a race between luggers. In February 1866 the lugger *England's Glory* beat the North Deal lifeboat to the wrecked ship *Iron Crown* by sailing straight across the Sands on a falling tide - a highly dangerous manoeuvre, but one which earned the owners and crew of *England's Glory* £2254.<sup>11</sup> As well as financial rewards there were often lives to be saved, and in such circumstances it was imperative that no time be lost in gathering a crew together.

As well as dictating where they lived in Deal, the nature of the boatmen's work meant that they were likely to be remote from other sections of Deal society. The luggers and galley punts were generally owned by the boatmen themselves, usually in groups of four or eight men. They were thus independent, not relying on the goodwill of an employer or of clients or customers. They were also frequently away from home, cruising in the Channel on the lookout for work for two weeks at a time.

11. T.S.Treanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1892), 57; *The Deal Mercury*, 19 November 1870, 2f.

While on shore, the boatmen's main dealings were with boatbuilders and sailmakers; afloat, they did business with the captains of passing ships. The people with whom they spent the most time, though, and to whom their first loyalty would have been, were their fellow boatmen.

The second largest occupational group in Deal, after the boatmen, consisted of the agricultural workers and market gardeners. They, naturally, lived in Middle and Upper Deal, among the farms and fields; as well as having separate economic aims, the boatmen and farm workers were separated physically. Table 8.1 demonstrates how the boatmen lived entirely in Lower Deal and shows their relative lack of contact with those in agricultural occupations.

Table 8.1

Where Agricultural Workers and Boatmen Lived, 1851<sup>12</sup>

	Ag. labs.		Boatmen	
	No.	%	No.	%
Upper & Middle Deal	106	54.3	0	0
West Lower Deal and				
Lower St.	65	33.3	93	24.1
East of Lower St.	24	12.3	292	75.8
Total	195		385 <sup>1</sup>	

1. Includes boatmen who can be shown to have been absent on Census night, but not recorded as such.

12. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

Most agricultural labourers in Lower Deal lived in West Street and the streets between there and Lower Street, and in Cannon Street. The boatmen were not, like the eighteenth century men of Thanet, "amphibious animals, who get their living both by sea and land ... equally skilled in holding helm or plough, according to the season of the year,"<sup>13</sup> or like the kettlenet fishermen of Dungeness, who combined that trade with agricultural work.<sup>14</sup> For recreation, the farm workers would have used the public houses in Upper and Middle Deal, such as the Magnet, Admiral Keppel or Norfolk Arms. The boatmen went to the many public houses in or near Beach Street. For religious worship, the farm workers had the old parish church of St Leonard in Upper Deal; the boatmen would have attended St George's Chapel in Lower Street, consecrated in 1716, St Andrew's Church in West Street, consecrated in 1850, or the religious services held at the Boatmen's Reading Rooms in Beach Street.

Comparison of the surnames of agricultural workers and boatmen between 1841 and 1881 reinforces the view that there was a lack of contact between the two groups. Table 8.2 illustrates this point.<sup>15</sup> Twelve families each had ten or more representatives among the farm workers or market gardeners of Deal, amounting to 165 men. Only five of these families had men among the boatmen. The seventeen most common surnames among the boatmen encompassed 260 men; only 48 agricultural workers shared these names.

13. Paul Thompson with Tony Wailey and Trevor Lummis, *Living the Fishing* (1983), 13.

14. Michael Winstanley, *Life in Kent at the Turn of the Century* (Folkestone, 1978), 155.

15. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

Table 8.2  
Most Common Surnames Among Boatmen and Farm Workers

Surname	No. of Boatmen	No. of Farm Workers
Ashenden/Ashington	10	0
Bailey	31	7
Baker	16	2
Buttress	11	3
Erridge	11	1
Foster	16	2
Hall	13	0
Marsh	19	7
May	20	7
Nicholas	11	3
Norris	24	2
Redsull	10	7
Roberts	11	4
Thompson	12	0
Trott	18	0
Wells	12	3
Wilkins	15	0
Total	260	48

Surname	No. of Farm Workers	No. of Boatmen
Allen	17	0
Barwick	12	0
Bedwell	10	0
Betts	10	2
Dunn	14	1
Farrier	10	0
Friend	15	0
Laurence	10	0
Newing	16	0
Spinner	13	1
Walker	10	8
Williams	28	7
Total	165	19

This division between the two groups is the more remarkable when Deal's isolated, almost peninsular position is taken into account. In the nineteenth century, land communications were considerably poorer than they are today. As explained above, Deal was on the periphery of the road network of Kent. The mobility of the population was thus greatly restricted. Isolation of maritime communities from other groups within the town was not unique to Deal, however. In Hull, "most of the people concerned with fishing ... lived within a few hundred yards of Hessle Road [and] with the isolation of their homes at one end of the town, and with the special conditions under which those connected with the trade worked, for a whole century the fishing community was almost completely severed socially and geographically from the rest of Hull."<sup>16</sup>

The area to the east of Lower Street is only about 100 yards from east to west and one mile north to south, from Sandown Castle to the Naval Yard. This was the most densely populated part of Deal. In 1851, 44% of the population lived there. This part of the population was more deeply rooted in Deal; in 1851, only 30.2% of the people in this area of Deal were born outside the town compared with 35.2% of the whole population.<sup>17</sup>

Boatmen accounted for 30.9% of occupied men in this part of Deal, compared with 19.0% of all occupied men. Boatmen and men in other maritime occupations together

16. Gill and Sargeant, *op. cit.*, 6.  
17. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

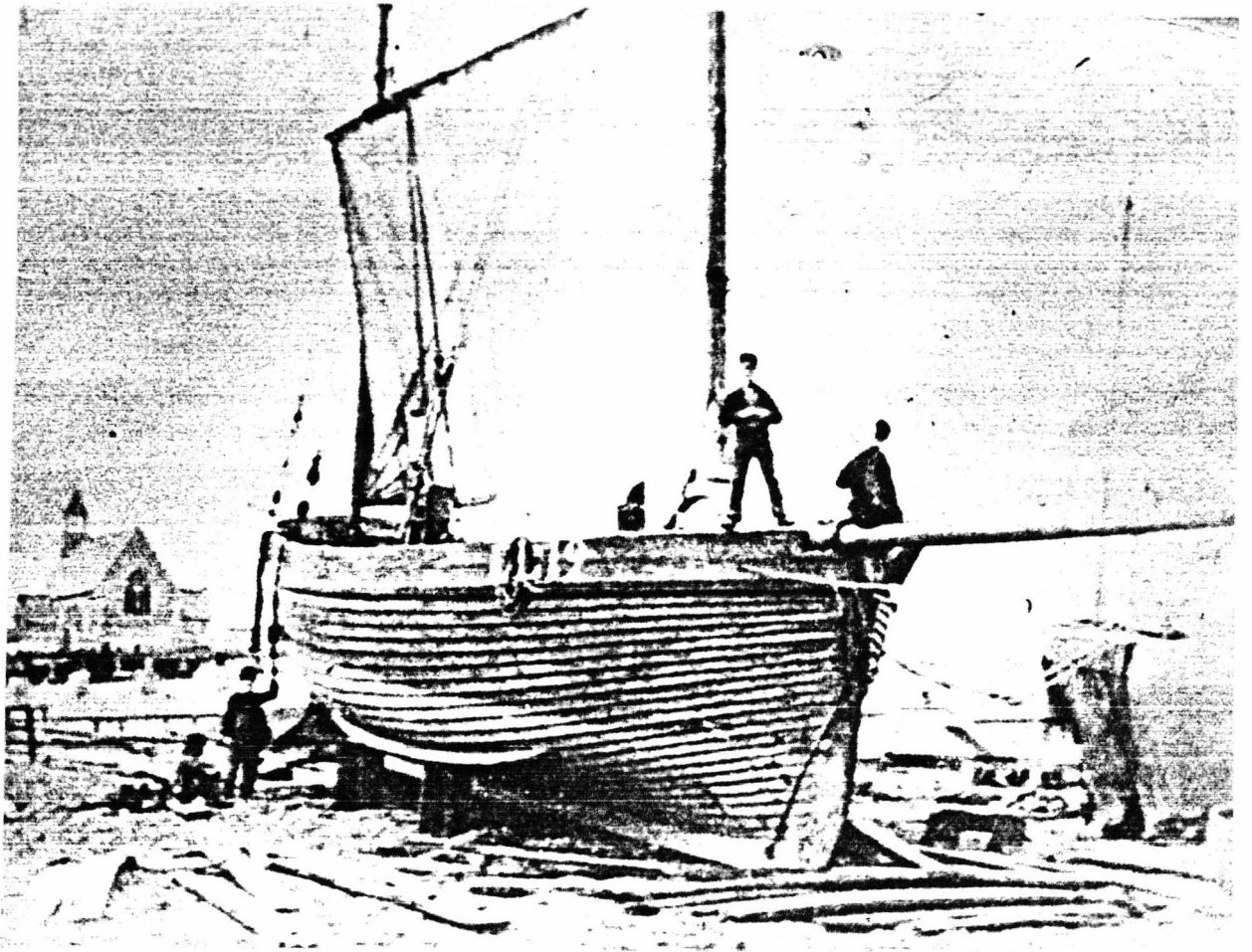
amounted to 37.2% of all occupied men in the eastern half of Lower Deal. The interests of this part of the town were therefore overwhelmingly maritime, although not all the maritime groups in the town had identical interests.

Boatmen and pilots were not, generally, drawn from the same families. Between 1841 and 1881, 117 different Deal Pilots were enumerated in the Censuses, with 87 different family names.<sup>18</sup> Of these 87 names, 31 are to be found among the boatmen. The Norris and Bailey families were extremely numerous in Deal by the mid-nineteenth century. Members of the Norris family were present in 37 households in Deal in 1851, and Baileys in 21 households. It is not surprising, therefore, that these families were represented among both the pilots and the boatmen. Most of the families that were most numerous among the boatmen, however, and most closely integrated into the network of cousinage, such as the Ashingtons, Bakers, Mays and Trotts, were not represented among the pilots. William Stanton, born in 1803, was unusual in being a boatman who became a Cinque Ports Pilot.<sup>19</sup>

The pilots had their own quarter of Deal, the block of streets at the north-western corner of Lower Deal, bounded by Lower Street, West Street and Western Road. In 1851, 27 of the 54 Cinque Ports Pilots listed in the *Post Office Directory* lived in Duke Street, Water Street, Union Row, Princess Street and Nelson Street. They did not require to be so close to the beach as the boatmen as

18. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

19. William Stanton, *The Journal of William Stanton, Pilot of Deal* (Portsmouth, 1929), 7.



22. The Lugger "Pilgrim"

they operated on a strict system of 'turns'; when a pilot's services were required, the Ruler of Pilots sent for the man who was next on the list.

The pilots were not so deeply rooted in Deal as the boatmen. The birthplaces of 99 out of the 117 pilots are known. Of these, only 42 were born in Deal, 22 were from Dover and seven from Walmer. The remainder came from various towns around the coast from Gravesend to Rye, except for three who were born in Scarborough, Staple and Wye respectively. Qualified pilots appeared to lay claim to a higher social status than the boatmen - all pilots' families kept a servant; even though these servants were usually very young girls, this was a status symbol the boatmen did not aspire to. The pilots, therefore, formed a separate community of their own, which was not linked to that of the boatmen.

It was suggested in 1865 that there was a certain amount of ill-feeling between the pilots and boatmen. A case in which two boatmen were alleged to have assaulted a pilot during the course of the election campaign was said to have been "got up by the pilots to the injury of the watermen of this town". However, in giving judgement, the magistrates observed that "as to the ill-feeling between the watermen and pilots, the Bench did not believe any such feeling prevailed."<sup>20</sup>

The third maritime group in Deal consisted of the boatbuilders, sailmakers and ropemakers who provided

20. *The Deal Telegram*, 12 August 1865, 2b.



services for the boatmen. Their prosperity depended upon that of the boatmen, and there were also family connections between boatbuilders' families and between them and the boatmen. The boatbuilding families of Allison and Durban were related by marriage, and the boatbuilding brothers Henry and Charles Durban were the sons and brothers of boatmen. James Nicholas, the boatbuilder who designed and built many of the most famous luggers, was the grandson, son and brother of boatmen. He occasionally went to sea himself.<sup>21</sup>

Since 44% of the population lived in this part of Deal, one would expect to find a similar distribution of the different occupational groups. Table 8.3 shows what percentage of men in each occupational group lived in the eastern part of Lower Deal and demonstrates the groups with which the boatmen were most likely to have contact.

Table 8.3  
Percentage of Each Occupational Group Resident in  
Eastern Lower Deal, 1851

Maritime	70.0	Customs & Coastguard	60.8
Agriculture	10.8	Transport & Communications	38.5
Labourers	42.5	Specialist	56.7
Clothing	52.7	Miscellaneous	26.9
Retired/Independent	34.2	Education	31.2
Food	56.1	Public Officials	42.8
Woodwork	49.3	Army & Navy	37.5
Building	38.5	Clerical	76.5
Drink	42.8	Gas, Water, Mechanical	33.3
Metal & Leather	48.9	Holiday & Entertainment	100.0
Professional	23.6	Railway	5.0

21. E.C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929), 118.

Although the majority of the inns and public houses were in Lower Deal, only 42.8% of men in the licensed trades lived in the easternmost part of the town. Despite the boatmen's custom of using public houses for sharing earnings, and the fact that many licensees also worked as boatmen, the Census data does not, at first glance, give the impression that publicans were an integral part of the maritime community.

Of the 224 licensees whose birthplaces can be established, over half were not born in Deal. The turnover of licensees was rapid. Of the total of 263 publicans in the five Censuses, 208 or 79% appeared as licensees only once. Forty, or 15%, appeared twice, twelve or 4.5% were in three Censuses and only four publicans, 1.5% of the total, appeared as such in four Censuses. No-one was a licensee in all five Censuses. Of the sixteen licensees who were present in three or four Censuses, however, thirteen were born in Deal, and two of the remaining three were born in Northbourne and Ramsgate.<sup>22</sup> The names of these longstanding publicans reveal that they belonged to long established families, many of which were represented among the boatmen. Table 8.4 gives the names of the sixteen longest established licensees and indicates those that were connected with the boatmen's community.

22. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

Table 8.4  
Surnames and Birthplaces of Licensees Appearing as such  
in Three or Four Censuses

Surname	Birthplace	Family Connections
Collins	Deal	
Darby	Deal	
Denne	Northbourne	
Durban	Deal	Boatmen & boatbuilders
Finnis	Deal	Boatmen & sailmakers
Fitall	Deal	
Hayman	Deal	Boatmen
Kidner	Ramsgate	
Mockett	Deal	Boatmen
Redman	Deal	Boatmen
Riley	Deal	Boatmen
Robinson	Deal	Boatmen
Sneller	Deal	Boatmen
Trott	Deal	Boatmen
West	Deal	Boatmen
Whittall	Shropshire	

Running a public house does not seem to have been an occupation traditionally handed on from one generation to the next; there were only six occasions on which a licensee was succeeded by a relative other than his widow. The families involved were Jarvis, Norris, Redman, Redsull, Sympson and Verrier. Significantly, all except Sympson were among the longest established local families. There were eight examples of a widow taking over the house after her husband's death. This is to be expected, as women frequently ran the houses while their husbands pursued other occupations.

Sharing of a boat's earnings usually took place in one of the public houses on Beach Street. The use of inns as combinations of social clubs and business premises dates at least from the sixteenth century; Professor Everitt suggests that the development of the urban inn as a trading or market centre may have begun in the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> In Southwark in the early Stuart period,

"victualling houses were important popular alternatives to the church as centres of neighbourhood social life and activity .... Such establishments acted, in their own way, as informal meeting places for neighbours .... Edward Alleyn's diary contains ... references to his arbitrations of disputes between neighbours as well as other social activity which often took place in local inns, victualling houses or taverns"<sup>24</sup>

In eighteenth century Northampton, individual inns became associated with particular commodities, and innkeepers sometimes acted as bankers for the merchants and agents who frequented their premises.<sup>25</sup> On the Thames,

"the pivot of the boatman's world was the pub .... the boatman's pub was not only a social centre, it had an important part to play in the web of transport and commerce .... To the boatman he [the publican] might act as post office, bank, pawnbroker, employment exchange, employer or tommy-master."<sup>26</sup>

Of the Nag's Head and the Running Horses in the Oxford boatmen's community of Fisher Row, Mary Prior wrote that "throughout the nineteenth century either one or both pubs was run by families which were intimately related to the families of the canal community."<sup>27</sup> J.A. Chartres has

23. Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 155.

24. Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society in a London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (1987), 269.

25. Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, *op. cit.*, 168.

26. Mary Prior, *Fisher Row* (1982), 208.

27. *Ibid.*, 211.

written of a Suffolk village in the Victorian period,

"Like other members of their trade, Wortham's publicans were by-employed in various ways, or were the proprietors of various businesses .... Publicans frequently acted as small-scale creditors .... The public house remained a key institution in village and hamlet, in many ways the rival as a social centre of church or chapel."<sup>28</sup>

The Parliamentary Report of 1833 reported that in Deal, the boat stations along the beach were named after the public houses in Beach Street - Fountain, Harp, India Arms, Rodney, Royal Exchange - and that the boatmen were attached to one or the other of these stations.<sup>29</sup> Herbert Russell's *Jim Mason* was a regular at the Yarmouth Packet. He described how

"along Deal beach the men are considered to be split up into cliques according to the public houses they frequent, and it is seldom indeed that you will find one of our 'longshoremen in an inn which he does not habitually use. Thus these houses may be likened to little clubs."<sup>30</sup>

Boats were sometimes named after public houses - there were boats called *Fountain*, *Royal Exchange* and *Yarmouth Packet*.

Many publicans continued to work as boatmen, leaving their wives to oversee the day to day running of the pub. Excluding hotels, there were 26 inns and beer-houses on Beach Street. At least fifteen were run at some time by licensees who were connected with the maritime community. Onesiphorous Sneller, a boatman and boatowner, was at different times landlord of the Scarboro Cat and

28. J.A. Chartres, "Country Tradesmen", G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, (1981), 307.

29. *Report from the Select Committee on Cinque Ports Pilots*, (1833), *op. cit.*, 685.

30. Herbert Russell, *The Longshoreman* (1896), 65.

Napier Tavern. Robert Wilds, coxswain of the North Deal Lifeboat, ran the North Star Inn, next door to the Lifeboat House. The landlord of the Port Arms, at the South End, for more than twenty years, was Thomas Trott; almost certainly he worked as a boatman while leaving the running of the pub to his wife and daughters, as did George Philpot of the Pelican.<sup>31</sup> In 1873, Frederick Caspell, boatman and landlord of the Waterman's Arms, explained that his house had been open outside the permitted hours because the weather had been rough and he and one of the Uptons, anticipating a launch, had been out on the beach in the early hours of the morning.<sup>32</sup> Henry Spears and William Meakins, boatmen and part-owners of *Reform* and *Galatea* took on pubs in Beach Street later in the period, as did Thomas Selth and Edward Griggs.

Over 56% of those involved in the food trades lived in the eastern half of Lower Deal. The boatmen must have had dealings with the food trades in that they, or their wives, had to buy food to feed their families. The butchers, bakers and grocers would also have expected to do business with ships requiring provisions, and to that extent were dependent upon the boatmen. Indications of how this might have been arranged are found in the local newspapers. In 1864, a dispute between Benjamin Coleman, a grocer, and William Bayley Budd, a boatman, ended in the Petty Sessions. William Budd explained "I was in Mr Coleman's shop settling about taking him afloat in the

31. Information on licensees from Deal Censuses, Trade Directories and local newspapers.

32. *The Deal Mercury*, 4 January 1873, 3a.

Downs when I asked him for what I had earned - I mean some profit off certain goods we had taken off and sold on board one of the ships in the Downs, which I estimated at about £3 5s."<sup>33</sup> From this account, it appears that the grocer himself was accustomed to go to sea to seek for business. Whether or not this was common practice, it is not now possible to say, and in this case anyway it seems to have led to disagreement.

The boatmen may have had business dealings with the food trades - they are unlikely to have had widespread family connections. The grocers, butchers and bakers in the 1851 directory of Deal have 51 different surnames. Only 21 of these names are found among the boatmen, and five of these - Bailey/Bayley, Brown, Hayward, Marsh and Smith - were so numerous in Deal, and found among so many different groups and classes, as to have no significance. If all those employed in the food trades were taken into consideration, there would no doubt be a greater correspondence, as the sons of boatmen often took work as errand boys or shop boys while too young to go to sea but few continued to complete an apprenticeship.

David Ward found that in Victorian cities, residential areas were socially mixed until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Social class is difficult to define - it means different things to different people at different times. It is evident that the boatmen were regarded as inferior by their

33. *The Deal Telegram*, 7 May 1864, 7e.

34. David Ward, *op. cit.*, 141.

contemporaries. The local newspapers maintained a strict social hierarchy. Local gentry, Members of Parliament and so on were distinguished by the suffix "esquire". Substantial tradesmen were called "Mr." The boatmen were normally referred to by their surnames. In the report of the case mentioned above, the grocer was "Mr B. E. Coleman", while the boatman was merely "William Bayley Budd." Despite this, many of the boatmen were financially and probably educationally equal to the smaller tradesmen of the town. However, the middle classes as they are traditionally understood were under-represented in the eastern half of Lower Deal. There were fewer retired and independent people, fewer professional men and fewer men occupied in education. Those in the building trades were also under-represented. This was a rapidly growing group, which would have had increasing influence during the period.

This small part of Lower Deal was further divided into the North and South Ends. The North End, from Sandown Castle to the Royal Hotel, was the more remote. In 1851, 1923 people, or 27.2% of the total population lived in the North End. This part of the town has been studied more closely in an attempt to obtain some idea of how close a community the boatmen's was, by looking at the proximity with which they lived to one another.

There are some difficulties attached to a reconstruction of this kind. In the nineteenth century,



all the streets in Lower Deal were numbered up one side and down the other. Within the last hundred years, this has been changed to the more usual system of odds one side, evens the other. The original house numbering was reconstructed by referring to the Census enumerators' books, which made it possible to identify the houses on the corners of Middle Street and the intersecting roads. Some fieldwork was also necessary to map buildings such as public houses which are identifiable today. When these fixed points had been established, the remaining houses could be slotted into their places. Beach Street was the most difficult to reconstruct because of the demolition of the east side and infilling at the North End of the west side in the last 150 years. This led to such irregular numbering as that at the North End of Beach Street in 1881; number 185 (the North Star Inn), followed by the Lifeboat House, then 185 1/2 (the Lifeboat Inn) and 185a (the Forester Inn). Sometimes streets or parts of streets had no numbering at all - in 1861, a large part of Lower Street was not numbered.<sup>35</sup> Numbering also changed from Census to Census, presumably as houses were demolished or new ones built.

Map 8.1 shows in diagram form the streets of the North End, and shows the distribution of boatmen's and other maritime households in 1851.<sup>36</sup> In this part of Deal, 169 boatmen lived in 118 different households. Of these 118 households, 33, or 27.9%, included more than

35. P.R.O. RG 11 997; RG 9 543.

36. P.R.O. HO 107 1631.

one boatman. 76 boatmen, or 44.9% of the 169, lived in households with at least one other boatman, while 82 boatmen, or 48.5%, had a boatman as next door neighbour. In Bulwark Row, North Street, Dolphin Street and Exchange Street, nearly every house was occupied by boatmen, and the length of Middle Street between Alfred Square and Griffin Street also included many maritime households. In these narrow streets at the North End of Deal, where front doors opened directly on to the pavement and only a small backyard separated each house from the one in the street behind, even those boatmen who were not next door neighbours must have been constantly meeting and greeting each other. They moved in a small circle between home, street, beach and pub, encountering the same men, who were very likely to be kin, at work and leisure. William Sneller and Henry Trapps, crew members of *Mary Blane* in 1862,<sup>37</sup> were neighbours at 169 and 169 1/2 Beach Street. Two of the men lost in the *Fawn* in 1864, John Riley and James Redsull,<sup>38</sup> lived next door to each other at 83 and 84 Middle Street.

One would expect to find that the Deal boatmen fulfilled one of the requirements for the existence of community, that of stability of population. The highest number of boatmen born outside Deal was 45 out of 374 in 1851. The highest percentage was 13.9% in 1881. In 1851 and 1861 just under one half of those born outside Deal came from less than ten miles away; in 1871 and 1881,

37. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 November 1862, 7c.

38. *Ibid.*, 20 August 1864, 2f.

over half came from less than ten miles away.<sup>39</sup> The majority were from the adjoining coastal parishes of Walmer and Ringwould or Kingsdown. Some of the boatmen born outside Deal were the sons of established Deal families, whose parents happened to be living away from the town at the time of their birth. James and Matthew Roberts, born at Langton, Dorset, in 1829 and 1830 respectively, were the sons of Richard Roberts, a Coast-guard, who was himself born in Deal. There is a Coast-guard Station at Langton. George Buttress was born in Ireland in 1838. His mother was also Irish-born, but his father was a member of a family that had been in Deal since the early eighteenth century. Edward Grigg was born in Sunderland in 1821, but the Grigg or Griggs family had been in Deal since the 1750s.<sup>40</sup>

One test of the stability of any society is the length of time families remain at the same address. It was common for families to make several moves, usually over a short distance, as they required, or could afford, larger or smaller houses or lodgings. The Deal boatmen were to a certain extent restricted as to where they could live as their occupation required them to be near the beach, and custom apparently limited them to either the North End or the South End. Table 8.5 shows the number of boatmen who remained at the same address for more than one Census - that is, for a period of ten years or more. Great caution had to be exercised when using the

39. P.R.O. HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

40. Information on family connections in this and following paragraphs from Deal Censuses and Parish Registers.

1841 Census, as street numbers were not used then. Boatmen who were living in the same street in 1841 and 1851 were counted as being at the same address unless there was good reason to believe otherwise.

Table 8.5  
Boatmen Living at the Same Address for Ten Years or More

						At same address	
						No.	%
No. of boatmen in 2 Censuses	197					120	60.9
" " " " 3 "	122					27	22.1
" " " " 4 "	85					9	10.6
" " " " 5 "	39					3	7.7
Total	443					159	35.9

It is not possible to make any realistic comparison between the boatmen and any other occupational group. In Middle and Upper Deal, where the agricultural labourers and farmers, the second largest occupational group, lived there was no street numbering in any Census. No other group was large enough to make any comparison meaningful.

The high percentage of Deal-born men among the boatmen suggests that it would not have been easy for outsiders to break in. By the second half of the nineteenth century, earning opportunities for the Deal boatmen were diminishing, and there would have been little incentive for outsiders to join the group. There is evidence to show that in earlier, more prosperous times, new families did settle in Deal, established their own dynasties of boatmen, and became accepted. The Irvine

family, in the mid-nineteenth century, consisted of a grandfather, William, born in Scotland about 1780, his son, also William, born in Newcastle in 1802 and married to Eliza Rowland, of Deal, but not of a boatmen's family, and William and Eliza's young family. Both the Williams, and three of the younger William's sons, were boatmen. The family seems to have settled in Deal between 1802, when the younger William was born in Newcastle, and 1808, when his brother was baptised in Deal. This was the period when the town was enjoying its greatest prosperity and the population was growing rapidly. William Irvine, father and son, worked at the Naval Yard in the 1820s and 1830s, as did other immigrant boatmen such as Christopher Harper and John Grant.<sup>41</sup> After the Naval Yard closed, many of these boatmen and their families disappeared from Deal. The Irvines, however, remained, and by the middle of the century William Irvine Jr. was so far accepted by the other boatmen as to have acquired a nickname and to be strongly suspected of smuggling by the local Customs.<sup>42</sup>

Given the longevity of some of the boatmen's families in the parish, and indeed the longevity of some of the individual boatmen, the close relationships between many of the leading families, and the continuity as the occupation passed from father to son to grandson, it is not surprising that the boatmen's work was so much hedged about by custom and tradition. These are referred

41. P.R.O. ADM 42/378, Deal Naval Yard Paylists.

42. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, 22 May 1851.

to time and again in contemporary sources. In July 1868 the Collector of Customs reported that "a peculiar custom rules within this district under which any boat lying on the beach with her head to the sea can be launched and used by watermen not her owners."<sup>43</sup> In February 1861, Thomas Obree, giving evidence at the Police Court, stated that "there is a rule among us that the first boat which arrives [at a vessel] after a signal has been hoisted shall be employed."<sup>44</sup> In March 1862 four boatmen sued a clerk at Adams & West & Co., ship agents, for their share of a salvage award "according to the custom always observed amongst hovellers."<sup>45</sup> On another occasion, in the County Court, William Frost Spears asserted that "it has always been the custom for the lugger to have a share and a half of any earnings and for the punt to have half a share." James Roberts agreed that "this is the usual custom observed on the beach," as did John Foster and William Middleton.<sup>46</sup>

This web of custom and tradition tied the boatmen more closely together, and increased their separation from other sections of the population, who did not understand it. In the last-mentioned case, for example, John Baker, one of the Files family, and other, unnamed boatmen, had taken the lugger *Briton's Pride* and the punt belonging to *England's Glory* to assist a vessel on the Goodwin Sands. In the course of the "hovel", an anchor belonging to one of the boats was lost. William Spears

43. P.R.O. CUST 53/3 Collector to Board, July/August 1868.

44. *The Deal Telegram*, 13 February 1861, 2e.

45. *Ibid.*, 22 March 1862, 2f.

46. *Ibid.*, 9 March 1861, 2e.

and his fellow-owners had claimed as their portion of the earnings one and a half shares for the lugger, half a share for the punt and 35 shillings for the loss of the anchor, but had received only one and a half shares. They had therefore gone to court for the extra half share and compensation for the lost anchor. The magistrates, however, found for the defendants, declaring that "the loss of the anchor was an accident and the claim for the extra half share could not under the circumstances be enforced." The magistrates had apparently completely misunderstood William Spears' quite clear statement of his case. On another occasion in the County Court, the magistrate, failing to comprehend the case brought by one boatman against another, "asked if someone present would kindly explain to him the usual mode of business among boatmen."<sup>47</sup>

Because of the repetition of surnames and the small number of Christian names in use during the nineteenth century, it was customary for the boatmen to have nicknames. In 1841 there were four boatmen called William Norris in Deal; in 1861, there were four William Baileys. In 1871 there were four Henry Marshes, and there were four boatmen called Thomas May in 1871 and 1881.<sup>48</sup> There are many examples of three boatmen of the same name living in Deal at the same time. Among the eleven men aboard the *Reform* when she was wrecked in January 1871 were two members of the Baker family and two of the Trott

47. *The Deal Telegram*, 27 June 1874, 5c.

48. P.R.O. HO 107 466; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

family. Two of the eleven had the Christian name Thomas, two were called Edward and three William.<sup>49</sup> It is easy to see why nicknames were thought to be necessary; at sea in a small boat, orders had to be given and carried out promptly with no possibility of misunderstanding. It is easy too to see how the use of nicknames could set the boatmen apart from the rest of the population. Mary Prior and the authors of *Living the Fishing* have anecdotes of how the use of nicknames by canal boatmen and sea fishermen respectively led occasionally to confusion.<sup>50</sup>

In Deal, *The Deal Telegram*, which habitually patronised the boatmen, seemed to regard the custom as a quaint and humorous practice which existed solely for the amusement of its readers, who in theory included the boatmen. In August 1861, an anonymous visitor wrote;

"I was delighted to observe ... the South Promenade fitted up with commodious seats for the use of visitors and invalids ... *if not previously occupied*. And Sir, who can but feel delighted at the burly appearance of those noble boatmen who universally occupy the two seats nearest the Custom House, and often the third, both night and morning, no doubt for the purpose of watching to save life from the Goodwin Sands.

"On a recent occasion, from seeing the same faces so often, I was induced to enquire of one of their number the names of these daring and intrepid characters, and was surprised to receive in reply to my enquiries the following; 'That jolly looking chap is Punchy A---t, next Twig'em W---s, Clogg H-----n, Catchall B---y, Merry A----s, and Maggoty U---n. They on the other seat are My Lord F---t, Admiral G--d, Friar J-----n, Antipo

49. *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 2f.

50. Prior, *op.cit.*, 13, 200; Thompson, Wailey & Lummis, *op.cit.*, 83.



C-----m, Scotchee I-----, and Lawyer P--n.' On hearing the recital of such aristocratic names my wonder ceased and I fancied I had discovered the reason why they kept their post and never moved for any one."<sup>51</sup>

In October 1862 Ralph Waters of Lower Street took up the theme. Mr Waters was probably a visitor to Deal or a recent immigrant, for he did not appear in the 1861 Census, neither is he listed among the private residents or tradesmen in Deal in the *Post Office Directory* of 1866.

"Some few years ago a most influential meeting ... took place in Deal to take into consideration who had the most right to the seats on the Esplanade, placed there for the accommodation of the public .... That eminent statesman Lawyer P--n was unanimously voted to the chair, supported by ... My Lord F----t, Rear Admiral G---d, Cocky L---s, Twig'em W---s, Toby M-----n, Bunkum B--d sr., Scotchee I-----, Uncle Ducky W---s, Billy Glory S-----, Chainey W---s, King S-----, Johnny Lump B-----, Flabby O-----, Shuckey J----n, Catsey M-----n, Roguey R-----n, Bassy W----, Catchall B----y, Cherry -----, Badger P----t, Sugar Plum P----t, Kibby B----, Tonny W-----d, Tuck S-----l, Nickey E-----e, Bunkum B--d jr., Old Slave F----, Crollis M-----, Clodgey H-----, Hock W----, Butcher S-----, Punchy A----, Johnny Rory B-----, and a host of others too numerous to enumerate .... It was unanimously decided that the seats were to be used by the 'truly thoroughbred English' to the exclusion of all sanguinary squatters and d-----d foreigners of every description. That they have most religiously carried out this resolution ... is a matter of everyday remark .... P.S. Would it not be advisable for the town authorities to place spittoons around the seats on the Esplanade?"<sup>52</sup>

It is possible to fill in the blanks in the letters quoted above to give the surnames of most of the men

51. *The Deal Telegram*, 10 August 1861, 7b.

52. *Ibid.*, 11 October 1862, 7c.

Table 8.6  
Deal Boatmen's Nicknames

Punchy A---t	Abbot
Merry A----s	Atkins
Catchall B---y	Bailey/Bayly
Bunkum B--d Sr.	Budd
Bunkum B--d Jr.	Budd
Johnny Lump B-----	? Bailey or Baker
Johnny Rory B-----	? Bailey or Baker
Antipo C-----	Cunningham
Nickey E-----e	Erridge
My Lord F----	? Files, Frost or Foster
Old Slave F----	? Files, Frost or Foster
Admiral G--d	Gard
Clogg H----n	Hayman
Clodgey H-----	? Hayman or Hayward
Scotchee I-----e	Irvine
Friar J-----n	Jarman
Shuckey J-----n	Jarman
Catsey M-----n	Middleton
Toby M-----n	Middleton
Crollis M-----	? Marsh or Middleton
Flabby O-----	? Oatridge, Obree or Orrick
Lawyer P--n	Pain
Badger P-----t	Pettitt
Sugar Plum P-----t	Pettitt
Roguey R-----n	? Redman or Robinson
Tuck S-----l	Snoswell
Billy Glory S-----s	Spears
Butcher S-----	Spears
King S-----	Spears
Maggotty U---n	Upton
Tonny W-----d	Wellard
Chainey W-----s	? Wells, Wilkins or Williams
Twigem W-----s	? Wells, Wilkins or Williams
Uncle Duckey W-----s	? Wells, Wilkins or Williams
Bassy W----	?
Hock W----	?
Cherry ----	?

mentioned, although not, in most cases, to fit a nickname to an individual boatman. Table 8.6 shows the surnames. Nickey (Nicholas) Erridge and King Spears were the Christian names of these two men, not nicknames. "Scotchee" Irvine must have been William Irvine, born on Tyneside in 1802; his father, who actually was born in Scotland, died before 1851. This, and "Bunkum" Budd senior and junior, suggests that by this date, nicknames were becoming hereditary. Ballantyne, in *The Lifeboat*, also asserted that nicknames were "frequently" handed on from father to son.<sup>53</sup> Since William Spears was part owner of *England's Glory*, it is tempting to identify him as "Billy Glory", but other sources give his nickname as "Butcher".<sup>54</sup>

Like most nicknames, the meaning and derivation of many of these is obscure. "Merry", "Flabby", and "Roguey" may reflect the personalities or appearance of those who bore those names, but nicknames are often ironical, intended to convey the opposite to their apparent meaning, as when big men are called "Tiny". "Catchall" may have been lucky during the fishing season, while "Catsey" should perhaps have been "Catseye". "Maggoty", "Sugar Plum" and "Uncle Duckey" are more colourful than John, Thomas or William, but their significance is probably lost forever.

The boatmen were in decline in the second half of the nineteenth century; paradoxically, this probably had

53. R.M. Ballantyne, *The Lifeboat* (n.d.), 116.

54. Pain, *op. cit.*, 49.

the effect of strengthening their community. Adversity often draws people more closely together, and they must have experienced increasing isolation as their importance to the town and its economy declined. The boatmen's lifestyle, living in one quarter of the town, frequently away at sea, tended in any case to set them apart from their fellow townsmen. As the century progressed, more and more of these were immigrants to Deal, who had less and less sympathy with the boatmen's viewpoint. Certainly the local newspapers of the period provide evidence of a divergence of interests between the boatmen and other sections of the population almost amounting to conflict.

Martin Daunton has identified the growing Victorian desire for strict segregation of public and private space, with official attempts to regulate the activities taking place in the former.<sup>55</sup> Lower Deal did not, and could not be made to, conform to this pattern. Deal did not resemble Newcastle, described by Daunton, with its closed courts and entries a yard wide, but the streets of the maritime quarter were narrow and winding, with courts and alleyways and houses tucked away in yards. Only Lower Street was broad and straight. This was the one of Lower Deal's three main streets least occupied by maritime interests, given over instead to tradesmen.

The actions of the nineteenth century Borough Councillors show that, consciously or unconsciously, they subscribed to the contemporary desire for clear

55. Martin Daunton, "Public Place and Private Space", Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe, (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (1983), 212.

delineation of public and private space. Until the 1830s, there were buildings along both sides of Beach Street, and access to the beach could be obtained only through narrow passages, no doubt frequently obstructed by boatmen's gear. Starting with Boys' initiative of 1834, the eastern side of Beach Street was gradually demolished, providing access to the beach for all. It was as the sea front was opened up that conflict began over the use of the beach and Esplanades.

Complaints about the boatmen's use of the seafront promenades continued intermittently for twenty years. Chapter Four described how the boatmen were thought by many to detract from Deal's recommendations as a seaside resort. In 1869 a local newspaper correspondent asked "whether the time has not arrived when the pandering to the class alluded to should cease and such considerations be no longer permitted to impede the progress of Deal as a watering place."<sup>56</sup> The boatmen might perhaps have asked whether their valuable services to life and property were to be impeded by pandering to the demands of visitors resident in the town for only a few weeks at a time, but either they did not consider these complaints worth replying to or, equally likely, *The Deal Telegram* chose to ignore their point of view.

In 1865, *The Deal Telegram* published a poem by a writer identified only as "Q" which presumably reflected its own attitude towards the boatmen.<sup>57</sup>

56. *The Deal Telegram*, 17 April 1869, 7e.

57. *Ibid.*, 14 October 1865, 7a.

"Our Boatmen

What if we spend a great part of the day  
In drinking some quarts of Denne's Sparkling Ales;  
And lazily fritter the bright months away,  
Abiding the winter's tempestuous gales?

It's nothing to you!

What if we lie half the day on the beach,  
Or perch on the capstans like so many crows,  
What if our pants are worn out at the breech,  
And our shoes let the daylight peep in at the toes?

It's nothing to you!

What if we go to our homes and there find  
Our children in tears and the cupboard shelves bare;  
What if we curse them and feel half a mind  
To thrash them because they can't live on the air?

It's nothing to you!

What if they frequently go out and beg  
For food, for a frock, or a pair of old shoes;  
And folks like to give them a crust or a rag  
Or a decent old garment or two if they choose,

It's nothing to you!

What if our neighbours catch plenty of fish  
And live on the proceeds in comfort and ease,  
What if we like a more nourishing dish,  
Of beef-steaks, and pay for it just when we please,

It's nothing to you!

What if the grocer looks shy and is queer  
And won't let provisions go out of his shop;  
Because there's a bill that's been standing a year,  
And, may be, will just twice as long have to stop?

It's nothing to you!

What if our houses are cheerless and bare  
And those who're at home can do little but fret,  
What if it's clear that the broker's been there,  
And made a sad wreck of our goods for a debt,

It's nothing to you!

What if we claim to be dauntless and brave,  
And fearless put off to the storm-driven bark,  
To rescue a crew from a watery grave,  
Then spend half we get in a glorious lark,

It's nothing to you!

What if we don't choose to see it's *more* brave  
To manfully struggle for children and wives,  
What if we make but few efforts to save  
From hunger and sorrow their everyday lives?

It's nothing to you!

What if we yield to conviction a trifle,  
And partly admit some of this may be true,  
What if the voice of our conscience we stifle,  
And carelessly say that it's nothing to you?

Is it nothing to us?"

The message behind the poem seems to be that the boatmen should stop idling about and neglecting their families and get "proper" jobs. The suggestion in the fifth verse that the boatmen should go out fishing is especially unfair as only a few months previously *The Deal Telegram* had itself reported that the mackerel season had been "disastrous" and that the boats had been unable to cover their expenses.<sup>58</sup> Neither had the boatmen

58. *The Deal Telegram*, 17 June 1865, 7a.

themselves ever claimed to be "dauntless and brave". When such claims were made on their behalf, their usual response was that they were "only doing their duty."

That any local newspaper should print anything so derogatory, even insulting, to the biggest single group in its readership, who alone were responsible for the town's being known outside its immediate area, is remarkable. Almost more remarkable is the fact that apparently the only remonstrance received by *The Deal Telegram* was a letter from "A Visitor" which itself was denigrated by "Q" in the issue after its publication.<sup>59</sup>

*The Deal Mercury*, usually quick to seize on anything in its rival's columns worthy of ridicule, ignored the affair altogether. The incident further demonstrates the lack of regard and respect for the boatmen felt by considerable sections of the population of Deal.

It was claimed in 1870 that "certain persons had arrogated to themselves the right to use the beach as if it was their own freehold."<sup>60</sup> The occasion was a complaint to the Pavement Commissioners about the sea view being obscured by nets hung up to dry in front of the Esplanade. Certainly the boatmen looked suspiciously upon attempts by outsiders to use the beach where their boats were drawn up. An incident in 1879 illustrates this.

59. *The Deal Telegram*, 28 October 1865, 7b; *ibid.*, 4 November 1865, 7a.

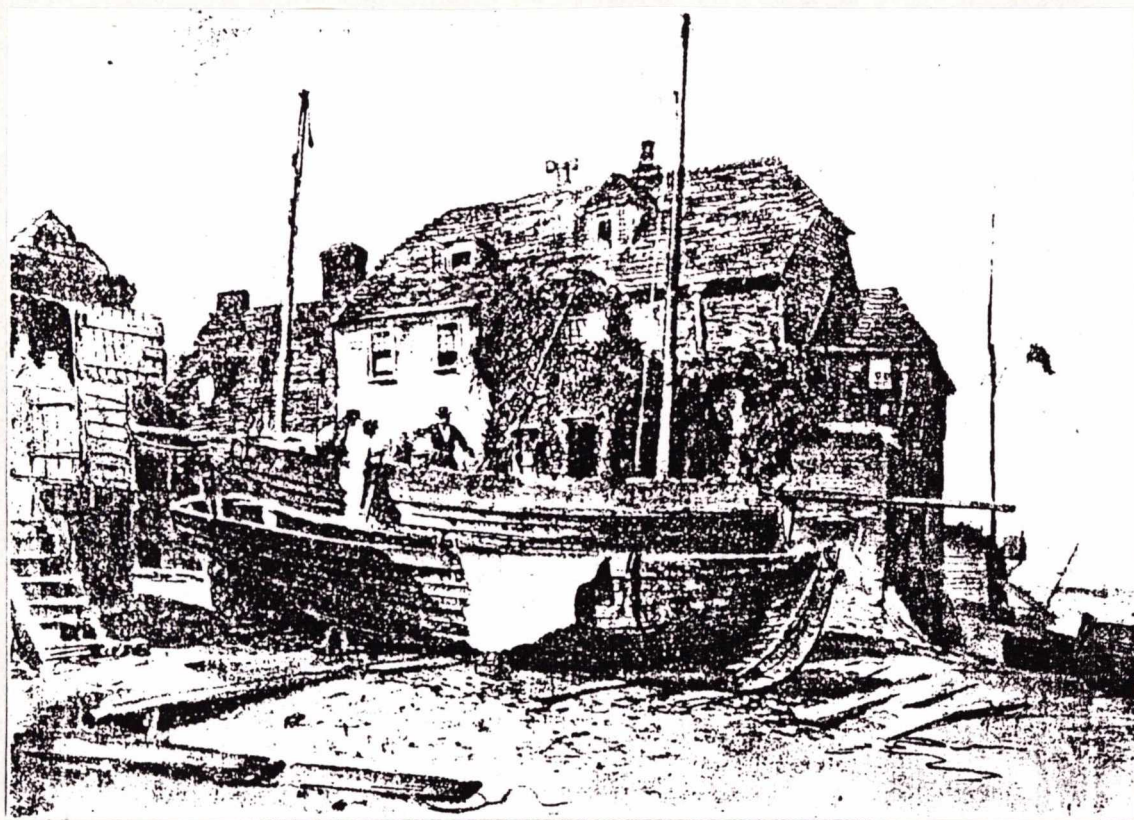
60. *Ibid.*, 3 December 1870, 7a.



"On Sunday morning about fifty horses belonging to Messrs Sanger and Sons' Circus were brought out from Mr Ewell's field in South Sandy Lane for the purpose of taking a bath in 'the briny deep'. On arriving at the boatmen's stage at the top of South Street ... they were about to go down on the beach, when the boatmen protested against this (what they considered) encroachment on their grounds; and not only used words of strong import, but also threatened to send for a policeman to stop the threatened invasion of their premises. Undeterred by these threats, the Circus men persisted .... The animals were soon over the rough pebbles and into the sea .... On the following morning, the men and horses again appeared on the scene .... But ... a strong detachment of 'salts' being posted on the spot, resisted this second attempt at invasion with such success that both bipeds and quadrupeds had to 'skedaddle' to another place .... Thus the boatmen for a time achieved a victory; but it was only for a time, for in an hour the Circus men again appeared in the field attended by six ponderous elephants. The boatmen made a vain attempt at resistance, their war song being 'move off', but the chieftains of the elephant brigade cried ... 'move on'. This order the elephants obeyed with utmost alacrity, completely routing the boatmen and spectators ... leaving the elephants and their masters completely masters of the situation."<sup>61</sup>

The boatmen's objection was that the animals would trample and disturb the shingle, which they kept smooth for the easier launching of their boats. The newspaper report presents the incident as high comedy, but it had a serious side. The beach was the boatmen's workplace, and they were understandably annoyed when their work was impeded. It was as if a steelworks or woollen mill was

61. *The Deal Mercury*, 20 September 1879, 2b.



23. North Deal Beach



24. Pier Parade and Deal Beach in the 1880s

invaded by a party of trippers who proceeded to picnic on the factory floor. The beach could also be unsafe. It was recognised that hauling luggers up the beach was a difficult and dangerous business; there were at least two fatal accidents caused by capstans spinning out of control during the 1860s.<sup>62</sup> To the holidaymaking middle class Victorians, however, the beach was a place for recreation, and with the self-righteousness which sometimes characterises the Victorian middle classes, they refused to accept that most watering places and resorts had other functions.

Illustrations 13 and 24 show how conflict could arise through different concepts of the use of the sea front and beach. Illustration 13 shows the wide esplanade with genteelly promenading ladies and gentlemen, the beach empty. Illustration 24 shows the beach as it really was, a jumble of boats, capstans, storehouses and ropes, spilling over into Beach Street.

A fundamental difference in outlook was responsible for the conflicts between the boatmen and other sections of the community. Most people derived their income from the land, either directly through farming or mining, or indirectly through investment, manufacturing or trade. They were accustomed to working regular hours, during daylight; bad weather was unwelcome because it damaged crops or interfered with trade by making transport difficult. To the boatmen, the land mattered only as a

62. *The Deal Telegram*, 11 January 1862, 2c; *ibid.*, 10 January 1863, 2e.



place to come occasionally to sleep and to revictual their luggers. It was of less importance to them than it is to fishermen; fishermen need a market for their catch. Night and bad weather were the times of greatest opportunity for the boatmen; on fine days they were to be seen loafing on the beach, lounging against capstans and storehouses, giving an impression of idleness.

Another factor which contributed to the boatmen's separation from the rest of society was their dress. Normal outdoor wear for the middle classes and respectable tradesmen in the mid-nineteenth century was the frock coat and top hat. For shepherds and other agricultural workers, the smock survived to the end of the century, but for most other men, normal dress was some combination of trousers, shirt, waistcoat and coat or jacket. The boatmen's wear can be seen in contemporary photographs and illustrations and was also described in a handbill circulated in the area in 1869 after the loss of two Kingsdown boatmen, offering a reward for the recovery of their bodies.

"Drowned in Dover Bay on the 1st July 1869, James George Bingham, aged 28 years .... Had on when drowned a white flannel shirt, blue striped ditto, serge and guernsey, blue stockings, blue kersey trousers, black silk neckerchief, a pair of blucher shoes .... Also Henry Webb ... had on a white flannel shirt, blue check ditto, guernsey frock, blue kersey trousers, blue serge drawers, blue stockings, a pair of blucher shoes."<sup>63</sup>

63. *The Deal Telegram*, 3 July 1869, 7a.

The guernsey was sometimes covered by a jacket or serge fisherman's smock. At sea, or in bad weather, the boatmen wore oilskins or "painted clothes" - canvas coat and trousers treated with some kind of tarry preparation to render them waterproof. Boatmen's headgear consisted of a sou'wester or seaman's traditional peaked cap or a round sealskin cap. The outfit might be completed by a big knitted scarf around the neck. This served a dual purpose of providing extra warmth and preventing chafing of the skin by saltwater and oilskins. This was one reason, in addition to the difficulty of shaving while at sea, why so many boatmen wore beards or long side whiskers. Because of their distinctive dress, boatmen were instantly recognisable as such.

Illustration 25 shows the boatmen's dress, and also illustrates a further point. Many contemporary writers described how the boatmen's occupation allowed a considerable amount of time lounging around on the beach with hands in pockets. The fact that they spent their time in the open, able to wander up and down, and the fact also that they were accustomed to work with different men, meant that the boatmen would come to know well all the men on their part of the beach. A craftsman would come to know only those few men with whom he shared a workshop. The boatmen also had greater opportunities for gossip than other men, who would have orders to fulfil and probably an overseer or employer to discourage



25. Deal Boatmen on the lookout for a hovel

too much time-wasting talk. News about other boatmen could thus quickly be passed along the beach, national and local issues be discussed and group opinion formed.

This apparent idleness was of course anathema to Victorians brought up to believe in the value of self-reliance and the Protestant work ethic. The boatmen's contemporaries might also have felt uneasy because they did not fit easily into the rigid hierarchy of Victorian society. They seem to have been regarded as on a par with the working classes; middle class writers such as Treanor habitually adopted a patronising tone, however favourably they intended to portray the boatmen. Treanor wrote of "humble heroes" and "the simple-minded boatman." He called the men he said were his friends "Roberts" and "Wilds", while they called him "Sir".<sup>64</sup> A County Court magistrate who felt that he had been treated with insufficient deference by the two parties of boatmen involved in a particular case in 1879 remarked that

"he was obliged to notice that in Deal ... whatever seafaring men were at sea, they were most insubordinate on shore .... He found seafaring men the most difficult class he had ever dealt with. Deal boatmen possessed many great and noble qualities ... but they ought to know that they could not be allowed to ride roughshod over other portions of the community."<sup>65</sup>

Yet despite the lowly place they were expected to occupy in society, the boatmen were highly skilled men, all self-employed, while those who owned shares in one or more luggers were capitalists on quite a large scale.

64. T.S. Treanor, *Heroes of the Goodwin Sands* (1892); *Log of a Sky Pilot* (n.d., c.1895); *The Cry from the Sea and the Answer from the Shore* (n.d., c.1895), various references.

65. *The Deal Mercury*, 1 November 1879, 2e.



There is evidence that the boatmen did take an interest in politics. According to Pain, "the boatmen were inevitably strong partisans."<sup>66</sup> Many of their boats' names reflected their political allegiance - *Canning*, *Cobden*, *Lady Brassey*, *Capper*, *Lord Paget*. In 1880 there was a sailing race around the Goodwin Sands between the galley-punts *Gipsy Queen*, representing the Tories, and the *Minotaur*, for the Whigs.<sup>67</sup> Pain relates that William Adams, born 1850, who followed Richard Roberts as Lifeboat coxswain, was "a staunch Conservative who rarely missed a political meeting." John Files, born 1826, regularly took part in election parades in support of the Liberals.<sup>68</sup> Whatever their true feelings, the boatmen seemed to approach the corrupt election campaign of 1880 in a lighthearted fashion, entering with enthusiasm into the distribution of bribes. Some boatmen accepted bribes from both sides. They seem to have regarded the candidates and their profligate agents in much the same light as they did shipowners, being cheerfully prepared to make as much as they could out of the affair.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever their attitude to national politics, the boatmen took no part in local politics. Their lifestyle militated against it as, being often at sea, they could not attend Council meetings regularly. Deal's maritime interests were represented on the Borough Council by different Cinque Ports Trinity Pilots at various times, but the pilots' interests were not those of the boatmen;

66. Pain, *op. cit.*, 34.

67. *The Deal Mercury*, 12 June 1880, 2e.

68. Pain, *op. cit.*, 35, 75.

69. *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Existence of Corrupt Practices in the Borough of Sandwich* (1881) [XLVI], For an entertaining insight into the boatmen's attitude, see the evidence of William Frost Spears as reported here and in *The Deal Mercury*, 16 October 1880,



in many ways they were rivals rather than allies.

Neither the pilots nor any of the other Borough Councillors seriously considered the boatmen's interests in their many discussions on how best to improve and develop the town during the nineteenth century. The majority of the councillors were tradesmen, and their chief aim throughout the period under discussion was to improve the trade of Deal by attracting more visitors to the town. It was not their declared intention to act detrimentally to the boatmen's interests, but it so happened that many of the steps they took in pursuit of their aims, such as building the Pier and laying out the seafront promenades, were damaging to the boatmen.

Deal was not unique in experiencing conflict between its maritime community and other sections of the population in the nineteenth century. In Hastings, the fishermen were similarly unrepresented on the Town Council, and hostility towards them was much more overt. The Hastings fishermen occupied valuable land, and their trade, being both smelly and obtrusive, was seen as unattractive to visitors. According to one local historian, Hastings council has, over the last 150 years, pursued a secret and consistent policy of trying to force the fishermen off the beach altogether. Similar policies at Eastbourne, Brighton and Worthing have succeeded in killing the fishing industry in those towns.<sup>70</sup>

Neither Deal nor Hastings nor the last three towns

70. Steve Peak, *Fishermen of Hastings: 200 Years of the Hastings Fishing Community* (St. Leonard's, 1985).

had harbours; their maritime industries were all beach-based. Beach-based maritime communities were at a disadvantage in comparison with those which had harbours from which to operate. Beach communities, which spread over the whole length of a town's sea frontage, were more obtrusive, and interfered more with the resort trade. Harbour communities could be confined to one area, while development could take place in other parts of the town.

As far as it is possible to judge, the boatmen were not concerned by this apparent neglect of their interests. The two Deal newspapers supported the moves for improvement, and so would not have been likely to give space to any opposing factions. The Pier, in fact, was a pet project of *The Deal Telegram*. The South End boatmen's justified complaint that the Pier was a danger to their boats was published in *The Kent Herald*, not in a Deal paper. *The Deal Telegram* noticed it with a jibe.

"*The Kent Herald* ... says 'our boatmen consider the Pier a great obstruction, very dangerous to vessels in rough weather, and hope it will soon be unscrewed.' How very destructive to the interest of boatmen and how painful to their sensibilities, to see a vessel in danger. Cannot somebody devise a scheme for the removal of the Goodwin Sands for their benefit?"<sup>71</sup>

The boatmen's views and opinions, therefore, were not represented in print. Nor were they ever represented on the Borough Council, although many boatmen had the vote. Boatmen themselves may have been prevented from holding office by their frequent absences, but had they

71. *The Deal Telegram*, 21 July 1866, 2f.

been collectively interested in civic affairs they could have persuaded a retired boatman, or one of the licensed victuallers who were so closely linked to the boatmen's interests, to represent them.

In 1880, Richard Thomas May of North Street was elected to the Council.<sup>72</sup> Although by his name and address one would expect him to have been a member of the boatmen's community, he was in fact a baker, and belonged to the branch of the May family which did not universally follow the boatmen's occupation. Thus, while his grandfather, uncles and some cousins were boatmen, his father was an agricultural labourer and his brothers were agricultural and brickfield labourers.<sup>73</sup> Whether Richard May was prepared to advance the interests of his boatman cousins on the Council is therefore debatable, and in any case by the time of his election in 1880 it was probably too late to reverse policies which by that time had been established for nearly fifty years. In 1881 the boatmen were still, despite the nineteenth century decline, the largest single occupational group in Deal. That their interests were not represented in local government seems to indicate a lack of concern with town affairs. This is a renewed reminder of the fact that their interests were wholly concerned with the sea, but the boatmen's abdication from local affairs must have increased their separation from the larger community.

Foster has shown that it was possible for working

72. Kelly's *Post Office Directory of Kent*, (1882).

73. P.R.O. HO 107 466; HO 107 1631; RG 9 543; RG 10 1003-1004; RG 11 997.

class movements to take control of local government with far less political power than the boatmen had.<sup>74</sup> Foster might argue that the boatmen's apparent apathy was due to the fact that they could not conceive that the system could be changed. The boatmen, however, had nothing to gain by fighting against the capitalist system. They were not subservient as a class, or dependent upon others for their living. Economically, their success largely depended on factors beyond the control of man - the direction of the wind or the frequency of shipwrecks. The two developments which negated these factors - steam power and greater attention to shipping safety - were beyond the boatmen's power to alter.

The one area of their work in which the boatmen did come into conflict with major propertied interests beyond Deal, and appeared as a threat, however minor, to the established capitalist order, was over the question of wrecked goods. The vituperation with which they were attacked on this subject, often by people with little or no real understanding of the issue, shows the importance attached to property by contemporaries.

The local newspapers of the 1870s contain evidence of economic dissent and labour organisation, even some belated Luddism,<sup>75</sup> among the agricultural workers of East Kent, but there are no signs of class consciousness, in Foster's sense, among the boatmen.

74. John Foster, "Nineteenth Century Towns - a Class Dimension", H.J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History* (1968), 281.

75. See, for example, *The Deal Telegram*, 14 December 1878, 5a, "Horrible Murder at Woodnesborough".

"Working class power depended on a solidarity that stretched to all sections of the labour force .... But it needed organising .... [It required] something near semi-permanent mobilisation .... The solidarity slogan had to be banged out incessantly."<sup>76</sup>

The Deal boatmen's way of life was not suited to this type of organisation. As the authors of *Living the Fishing* wrote,

"fishermen certainly experience a powerful communal solidarity. And this is reinforced by mutual dependence on work mates in an exceptionally dangerous occupation. But work also divides fishermen, for they are scattered at sea in small units with scarcely more than a dozen to a crew working aboard boats which may be in port altogether only for brief moments two or three times a year between fishing seasons, are very likely individually owned, and certainly actively competing against each other."<sup>77</sup>

All these remarks are equally true of the Deal boatmen. Their society was a fragmented one; they were in competition for work to an even greater extent than fishermen, with rivalry between the North End boatmen and those of the South End, between the crews of different boats, with luggers racing each other to a "hovel", and even between individual boatmen, with frequent petty disputes over the sharing of earnings. Because they worked in small groups, with frequent absences from Deal, potential working class leaders had no large captive audiences as they had among factory or mill workers. Also, factory labourers such as those in Oldham described

76. Foster, *op. cit.*, 287.

77. Thompson, Wailey and Lummis, *op. cit.*, 4.

by Foster had a focus for their dissatisfaction in the factory owners and their families, visible every day, enjoying comfortable lifestyles, big houses, carriages and fine clothes, purchased with profits derived from the workers' inadequately rewarded labour. Foster quotes a description of a demonstration in 1817 by Oldham workers against some principal inhabitants who had signed a declaration of loyalty.

"The signatures he read over one by one with a considerable pause betwixt each of them. This pause was filled up by some sort of indecent remark accompanied by a characteristic gesticulation ... all the most respectable people in the town for character and property were made the subject of derision."<sup>78</sup>

The boatmen's labour, in contrast, benefited no-one but themselves, and due to their custom of sharing all earnings equally, there was no cause for jealousy between different groups of boatmen. The only group they did occasionally demonstrate against were the Customs and Coastguard men, but these could in no way be regarded as oppressors as the northern factory owners were. Neither was there any underlying threat of violence such as that which necessitated a permanent garrison in Oldham; the mood seems to have been one of rough good humour rather than sullenness. Of Foster's three towns of Oldham, Northampton and South Shields, Deal had most in common with the last, with its fluid élite of tradesmen, shipbuilders and shipowners, and its fragmented working

78. Foster, *op. cit.*, 288.

class. It has been suggested that class consciousness was not a random phenomenon and that specific local or national factors might underlie its incidence. In this context, it may not be entirely coincidental that the two places which show least signs of class consciousness were both maritime towns.

In 1833, when seven Deal boatmen were politely petitioning Trinity House for redress of their grievances, the Hastings fishermen were staging a riot in defence of their interests.<sup>79</sup> The Deal men were certainly capable of vigorous action at times; they did not, however, appear to be so united as the Hastings men. The explanation may lie in the differing nature of their work. When herring and mackerel were in Rye Bay, they were there for anyone prepared to go to the trouble of taking them. If the fishing failed, then all suffered equally. Hovelling or piloting jobs, however, were available only to the boat that reached them first. Competition between boatmen, therefore, was likely to be far more intense than between fishermen, and it is likely that even great necessity could not induce the Deal men to sink their individual rivalry in concerted action.

The boatmen must, nevertheless, have been aware of a certain group identity. Two boatmen at least recognised that the relationship between members of their community was closer than the mere association of workmates. In 1878, James Bailey thanked his "brother boatmen of the

79. Peak, *op. cit.*, 17.

North End" for their assistance in his recent illness.<sup>80</sup> John Files put the matter even more plainly in 1880; "we Deal boatmen are all brothers."<sup>81</sup> Chapter Six described the boatmen's customs and traditions and the importance they attached to them. The boatmen's sense of group solidarity can be seen in their unwillingness to incriminate their fellows in the *North* case and their demonstrations in support of men convicted of smuggling. Their feud with Mr Read the Coastguard officer has already been mentioned. This first manifested itself in Mr Read's effigy "being taken round the town by the lower order of Deal boatmen."<sup>82</sup> Earlier, the boatmen's wrath had been directed against a marine store dealer from Charlton, Dover, suspected of informing against some smugglers. "The boatmen are all highly incensed against him, believing him to be the informer ... even after the dismissal of the case, the mob threatened to tar and feather him."<sup>83</sup> It is interesting that in both cases, the boatmen resorted, or threatened to resort, to traditional, folk customs to show their displeasure.

The capture of a group of French fishermen by the crew of the lugger *Mary Blane* is another instance of the Deal boatmen acting in defence of their interests.<sup>84</sup> They were also ready to repel "foreigners" ashore. In 1873, the mere presence of some Dover men in the Port Arms in Beach Street was sufficient to bring a crowd of Deal boatmen intent on having a fight.<sup>85</sup> The Deal boatmen were

80, *The Deal Telegram*, 25 October 1879, 4e.

81, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Existence of Corrupt Practices in the Borough of Sandwich* (1881), *op. cit.*, 168.

82, *The Deal Telegram*, 3 August 1867, 7a.

83, P.R.O., CUST 53/2, Collector to Board, 19 June 1860.

84, *Ibid.*, Collector to Board, 24 June 1859.

85, *The Deal Telegram*, 19 April 1873, 7b.



thus ready, even eager, to take direct physical action when they believed their interests to be threatened. Such actions, however, were not viewed with approval by the authorities. The crew of the *Mary Blane* were reprovved for taking the law into their own hands. In 1865, a magistrate asserted that "boatmen were apt to be too ready to use their fists."<sup>86</sup>

There are few, if any examples of the boatmen uniting to act in concert in a manner which might have been approved by the authorities, and which might have achieved some good. In April 1867 it was reported that "Mr E. Foster" of Middle Street acted on behalf of the Deal boatmen at a meeting to discuss the new scales of payment for the recovery of anchors lost in the Downs.<sup>87</sup> There is no information as to how Mr Foster was elected or appointed to be the boatmen's spokesman, and it seems, according to his own account anyway, that most of the work of actually organising the boatmen's opinion fell to the Collector of Customs at Deal.

"During the last few weeks I have personally communicated with most of the boatmen in my district who are concerned in the salvage of anchors and chains .... An agreement drawn by me, subject to the approval of Lord Granville the Lord Warden ... has been signed by about 200 of the boatmen .... I hardly dare step out of the Custom house without being fastened on by some Deal boatman who fancies himself aggrieved by the Act."<sup>88</sup>

The boatmen were willing enough to voice their objections, but only as individuals; they were unable or

86. *The Deal Telegram*, 23 September 1865, 7b.

87. *Ibid.*, 13 April 1867, 2b.

88. P.R.O. CUST 53/3 Collector to Board, 27 November 1867. See note on Chain Cables and Anchors Act at the end of this chapter.

unwilling to act together. The Collector reported that since the new regulations had come into force, "the Deal boatmen have not lifted either anchor or chains - nor will they do so until some arrangement shall have been made under which they may be immediately paid on delivery of the articles."<sup>89</sup> There is no suggestion of an organised strike by the boatmen, merely that it was not worth their while to do the work under the new system.

There is no evidence that anything counted at sea beyond skill and experience, but ashore there were considerable differences in social status between the boatmen. None were in the servant-keeping class, but some men had shares in two or three luggers - a capital investment of several hundred pounds. Such a man was William Spears, who was part owner of the first class luggers *Albion*, *Briton's Pride* and *England's Glory*. *Albion* was said to have been "one of the finest and strongest luggers on the beach."<sup>90</sup> On his death in 1905, William Spears's estate was worth over £1600. Men like these were capitalists and entrepreneurs; in the context of the boatmen's work, they owned the "means of production". They might be ranked with shopkeepers or other businessmen employing a number of men. Working class politics or revolutionary ideals would have been unlikely to appeal to these men.

At the other end of the scale were the "'bum-boatmen' who trade with the ships that are from time to

89. P.R.O. CUST 53/3, Collector to Board, October 1867.

90. Pain, *op. cit.*, 53.

time in the Downs ... often receiving ships' stores in part payment."<sup>91</sup> Thomas Orrick was one of the lower class of boatmen; his neglect of his motherless daughters frequently landed him in the Police Court, where on one occasion he was told to "prevent his children wandering the streets in the state in which they then appeared and was further recommended to have them kept clean and decently clad and sent to the Infant School."<sup>92</sup> Yet even Thomas Orrick was some way above the lowest rungs of the economic ladder, for he was a skilled man and self-employed, and even the poorest boatman could hope for one big salvage award which would enable him to buy a share in a lugger.

The boatmen, therefore, formed a community of their own in that their lifestyle separated and even alienated them from the rest of the population of Deal. This lifestyle, however, as well as loosening the ties between the boatmen and their fellow townsmen, also weakened the links between boatman and boatman. The boatmen were prevented from drawing together and becoming as tightly knit as, say, a farming community consisting of similarly long established families whose work was ruled by custom and tradition.

91. P.R.O. MT9/31 M27/1867.

92. *The Deal Telegram*, 26 January 1859, 4b.

Note on Chain Cables and Anchors Act, 27 & 28 Vic.

This Act made it unlawful for anyone, from and after 1 July 1865, to sell any anchors or chains for the use of any vessel unless they had been tested and stamped. Previous to this, anchors recovered from the Downs by the boatmen were delivered to the Receiver of Wreck at Deal, who immediately paid the boatmen their salvage money. The anchors were then stored in a field ready to be shipped to any vessel requiring one. Under the new Act, all anchors and chains had to be delivered to the Collector of Customs at Deal, who had recently assumed the duties of Receiver of Wreck, to be sent to Millwall in London for the prescribed testing. The boatmen were not paid until this had been done.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

History reveals a long succession of societies and communities which grew, flourished for a while and then died. This has never been more so than in the last two hundred years, during which time change has occurred at an unprecedented rate. A man born into the age of the stagecoach could have lived to see Bleriot land on the cliffs above Dover. Enclosure and industrialisation brought about revolutionary changes in rural and urban life between 1780 and 1880. Small farmers were squeezed out as land became concentrated in the hands of fewer landlords. Agriculture ceased to be the major source of employment in England, cottage industries died out and families were drawn into the cities and the factories. Others took the greater step of sailing away to the new lands of North America, South Africa, Australia or New Zealand. Liverpool replaced Bristol as England's second seaport. Canals gave way to railways, causing the decay of such communities as Oxford's Fisher Row. Checkland lists numerous occupations that were superseded in the nineteenth century due to the development of alternative sources of supply or improved technology - the Scottish kelp industry, the East Anglian woollen trade, oil lamp making and handloom weaving. "The purge of those whose functions were being eclipsed went relentlessly on."<sup>1</sup>

1. S.G. Checkland, *The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815-1885* (1964), 13.

Despite the progress made in the nineteenth century, the Victorians were aware that there were several different strata of society in their world. For the gentry and the increasingly numerous and affluent middle classes, life was safer and more comfortable. Wider medical knowledge, with the development of vaccination, anaesthesia and antiseptic surgery and greater understanding of the causes of disease extended life expectancy, while gas lighting, railway travel and other technological advances made life generally more pleasant. In London, the great industrial cities of the north and even some provincial towns such as Nottingham, however, some people lived in unimaginable squalor, crammed together in badly built tenements with no sanitation or clean water supply. At the same time, life in many of the rural areas unaffected by enclosure remained primitive and untouched by progress.

Kent was largely unaffected by the Enclosure Movement. In common with the rest of England, however, the county felt the effect of the railways. The "pull" of London began to be felt over a much wider area. Commuter suburbs spread in the north-west of the county and in the 1880s nine parishes were lost to the new London County Council. Industry developed along the Thames Estuary, the Medway valley and in Ashford, which became an important railway town. Kent also experienced the development of watering places around its long coastline, with an annual

influx of visitors. Rural communities were also exposed to outside influences through the regular invasion of Londoners for the hop-picking.

Chalklin believes that country towns were usually essentially of local importance serving a hinterland of a few miles radius.<sup>2</sup> Some, such as Canterbury, were regional centres with an influence over an area containing several market towns. Deal's hinterland was apparently of little significance. Although there was no market town on the North Downs to the west and south-west of Deal, the town did not obtain its own market until 1699, and then its purpose was to ease trade with shipping, not with the surrounding rural area. Deal therefore has little in common with other rural market towns.

Deal of course was not, strictly speaking, a Victorian town. Upper Deal was in the nineteenth century still essentially a village, with church, manor house, pub and cottages clustered together. Lower Deal was a seventeenth and eighteenth century town which had been tinkered with during the nineteenth century to make it look (and smell) better. Alderman Brown described the situation perfectly in 1878. Speaking of Beach Street, he commented that "scarcely any of the houses ... had been pulled down to give place to better ones, but with few exceptions there had been a better face put on the old ones."<sup>3</sup> In many streets of Deal, nineteenth century brick

2. C.W. Chalklin, "Country Towns", G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside* (1981), 275.

3. *The Deal Telegram*, 8 June 1878, 5c.

fronts conceal much older houses.

Other coastal towns offered anchorages to shipping, but none was quite the same as Deal. East coast towns such as South Shields, Yarmouth and Harwich dealt only with shipping going to the north-eastern ports of Britain. The Downs offered shelter to vessels to and from London and the European North Sea ports also. Most other coastal towns had a wider economic basis than Deal - South Shields, for example, had shipbuilding; Yarmouth had its fisheries. They also had harbours and were able to carry on some degree of import-export trading in coal, timber or other goods. Deal therefore was unique in that it derived greater economic benefit from the presence of shipping than any other town, but was also far more vulnerable to any diminution in this trade. As *The Deal Telegram* asserted, "few towns suffer from the prevalence of easterly winds so much as Deal."<sup>4</sup>

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Deal's great prosperity could not survive the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the long period of peace which ensued. The town's dependence upon war was recognised by early nineteenth century writers. "Deal, from its particular situation, is always more flourishing in times of war than of peace" one topographical writer observed in about 1807.<sup>5</sup> This was written at a time when Deal had not yet reached the peak of wealth and population it was to attain later in the Napoleonic period. A few years later,

4. *The Deal Telegram*, 11 May 1861, 2e.

5. E.W. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, VIII, Kent (c.1807), 1018.



another tourist guide to Kent remarked that "Deal ... is a large and populous town but one which ... has most severely felt the transition from extensive war to universal peace which has taken place within the last few years."<sup>6</sup> Or, as a local saying quoted by Pain put it, "as dull as Deal in time of peace."<sup>7</sup>

The boatmen, however, while they suffered a certain distress as a result of the peace, owed their final decline to other circumstances. These were inevitable and outside the control of the boatmen or anyone else in Deal. It was the greater attention to shipping safety, the increasing use of steam tugs and ultimately the yielding of sail to steam which brought about the end of the hoveller. Despite periodical depression, notably in the early 1830s and in 1857-58, the boatmen survived until the 1860s. Thereafter, a permanent decline set in. Numbers fell, and many were forced to leave Deal, while their sons took up alternative occupations. By the late 1870s and early 1880s, it was acknowledged that the hoveller's era was passing. Although some boatmen continued to "follow the water" from Deal beach through the 1890s and even into the twentieth century, few if any were any longer able to make more than a meagre living. On his last voyage in March 1905, in which he lost his life, Thomas Bingham was at sea for a fortnight and earned nothing.<sup>8</sup>

While the factors which caused the boatmen's

6. *The Kent Tourist, or Excursions in the County of Kent* (c.1820), 125.

7. E.C. Pain, *The Last of Our Luggers and the Men who Sailed Them* (Deal, 1929), 163.

8. *The Deal Mercury*, 25 March 1905, 5d.

decline were due to the irresistible march of technological innovation and the Victorian conscience and thus could not be prevented, there were ways in which the other classes of the population at Deal could have assisted the boatmen and perhaps postponed their end. The Pier may not have attracted many visitors to Deal, but it played its part in depriving the boatmen of work, and was certainly a major contributory factor in, if not the whole cause of, the loss of eight boatmen's lives in 1871. The Borough Council's neglect of the North End sea defences led to the loss of capstan grounds there following severe storms in the 1890s, and their improvement schemes at the South End brought about the gradual disappearance of capstan grounds there. Furthermore, the attitude of the Council and many of the middle classes and tradesmen to the boatmen seemed to be that they were a liability rather than a credit to the town, and that they and their interests were not worthy of consideration.

The actions of the Borough Council, while they were detrimental to the boatmen's interests, did not lead to great progress for the town in other areas. Several factors probably contributed to Deal's lack of success in the nineteenth century. The town was dominated by neither landlord nor factory owner. The major landholder was the Archbishop of Canterbury, who owned most of Lower Deal. The Archdiocese, however, had never taken any active

interest in the development of the town, and in the 1850s abdicated responsibility altogether by allowing its tenants to convert their leaseholds into freeholds. This indifference had advantages in Deal's times of prosperity in that there were no obstacles to the local tradesmen exploiting their opportunities to the utmost, but was perhaps not an entirely good thing in the difficult decades of the mid-nineteenth century. An interested landowner might have given greater impetus to Deal's development as a seaside resort. Lord Radnor, who owned most of Folkestone, provided the impetus which transformed the town from a small and unremarkable fishing town in the early 1840s to one of the most fashionable resorts in the country by the end of the century.<sup>9</sup> If Deal had had the interest of an influential local landlord, the Dover-Deal railway, for example, would probably have been built much earlier than it was.

Deal's most influential connections were with the Lords Warden of the Cinque Ports, but they were not permanently resident in the area, and had matters of national and international importance to engage their attention. As Lords Warden, also, they were concerned with the Kent and Sussex coasts from Sandwich to Hastings, and could not favour one part at the expense of another.

Deal had to depend for its advancement in the nineteenth century upon the energies of its Borough

9. Felicity Stafford & Nigel Yates, *The Later Kentish Seaside (1840-1874)* Kentish Sources IX (1985), 11,12.

Councillors, drawn from the tradesmen and middle classes of the town. They might have been influenced by the notion of "improvement" identified by Asa Briggs. Briggs traces the concept from Daniel Defoe and Samuel Johnson and links it to the rise of the middle classes in the Victorian era. It reached its apotheosis, he believes, in the sense of progress and achievement embodied in the Great Exhibition of 1851.<sup>10</sup>

The theory of improvement, commonly held across all shades of political opinion, was that life and society would gradually move forward until a state of perfection was reached. When this was achieved, all individuals would be able to develop their full potential, aided by the rational use of leisure time, and the imperfections of society would be eliminated. This Utopia through progress would be aided by the advance of technology. In this context, pulling down old buildings and replacing them with new ones was to be encouraged.

Thus Deal Borough Council took pleasure in the development of Victoria Town and their new Esplanades and disapproved of the "unimproved" North End. The necessity for "improvement" at Deal was emphasized in mid-century. "The spirit of improvement strikes the attention of every observer as he walks the streets of our town; new shops and house fronts; new houses ... rise up in our midst."<sup>11</sup> In 1861 a visitor to the town observed "I am much pleased to find that a steady improvement has taken place here

10. Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (2nd edn., 1979), 2.

11. *The Deal Telegram*, 18 May 1859, 4a.

for the last three or four years - old shop fronts have vanished, to give place to others of modern and elegant appearance - old houses have passed away and many new ones have been built."<sup>12</sup>

This movement towards improvement is evident in the physical structure of Deal. Lower Deal, east of Lower Street and north of South Street, remained an ancient town. The streets are narrow and crooked and the buildings jumbled together. In Victoria Town, in contrast, the streets were laid out with grid-like precision, the buildings solid and uniform. As well as improvement of the town's physical structure, attention was also paid to mental improvement. There were references to "rational pursuits" and a Deal Mutual Improvement Society existed in the 1850s.<sup>13</sup>

The boatmen, in contrast, were not interested in improvement. Contemporaries complained that the boatmen inevitably reacted negatively to such developments as chain cables, steam power and the Pier. Apart from the fact that these innovations threatened their livelihood, the boatmen's society was essentially traditional and reactionary. Their working practices depended upon customs that had developed over centuries, and there was nothing rational about the drinking and brawling with which they filled their leisure time.

When the boatmen began to experience hard times, it was due to outside influences and there was little the

12. *The Deal Telegram*, 1 June 1861, 2f.

13. *Ibid.*, 2 February 1859, 4d.

Borough Council or other local people could have done. They could, however, have taken steps which would have delayed the boatmen's final decline. The North End of Deal was furthest from the main trading area, the railway station, the coach stop in South Street and from the middle class and gentry housing in Middle and Upper Deal and Victoria Town. It was not on a through route and thus was unlikely to be visited by people who did not live there. The North End was acknowledged to be considerably behind the South End in improvements; housing was poor and rents low. The town's maritime interests were concentrated in this area, which thus had least influence on local affairs. The North End had always suffered from encroachment by the sea; Sandown Castle was destroyed in this way in the 1860s.<sup>14</sup>

Possibly the Pier aggravated the problem by acting as a groyne and impeding the northward and eastward drift of shingle. Despite the continuing threat, the Borough Council did nothing. In the early 1880s, the North Ward Councillors repeatedly urged the Council to act to prevent further damage. About 240 feet of Esplanade and sea wall at the North End had disappeared in three years, it was alleged, and a further thirty feet were threatened. Further south, long stretches had been extensively undermined by the sea's action. The Council was accused of seriously neglecting the North End while spending large sums of ratepayers' money on the

14. *The Deal Mercury*, 21 January 1871, 2e.

improvement of the South End and on ill-advised schemes such as the purchase of the old Adelaide Baths.<sup>15</sup> In all the debate, however, there was no mention of the effect of the continuous erosion of the foreshore on the boatmen. Whether this neglect was a deliberate attempt by the Council to undermine the North End maritime community, as Steve Peak has suggested was the intention in the case of similar inactivity on the part of Hastings Council, or simply due to ignorance and parsimony, the result was that a series of violent storms in the 1890s destroyed the storehouses and capstan grounds at the North End and so brought about the end of the boatmen on this part of the beach.<sup>16</sup>

The decline of the maritime community can be traced in the pages of *The Deal Telegram*. Although the boatmen were still the biggest occupational group in 1881, from the early 1880s references to their affairs in the local paper became less and less frequent. *The Deal Telegram* in 1882 included no accounts of boatmen's brawls, no County Court disputes over the sharing of boatmen's earnings and details of very few salvage awards. No doubt these events still occurred, but they were not thought to be of interest to the readership of *The Deal Telegram*. Instead, more space was given to items likely to be of interest to a growing middle class readership. Reports of fancy dress dances and fashionable weddings in local gentry families took up an increasing amount of space in the early 1880s.

15. *The Deal Mercury*, 9 April 1881, 2e; *The Deal Telegram*, 18 March 1882, 5b.

16. Steve Peak, *Fishermen of Hastings; 200 Years of the Hastings Fishing Community* (St. Leonard's, 1985), *passim*; Pain, *op. cit.*, 138.

These factors are symptoms of the increasing divergence between the boatmen and the growing middle classes in Deal. The situation in the town during the second half of the nineteenth century reflected Professor Everitt's conclusion that

"almost wherever one looks in Victorian England one finds evidence of ... traditional society living in juxtaposition to the newer world of industry ... not as a decaying relic, nor as a self-conscious revival, but simply as an older society with a different life-cycle alongside the new industrial world."<sup>17</sup>

The difference is that in Deal the traditional community was decaying. The decline was accelerating throughout the second half of the century, with the final break up probably coming in the 1890s. In this decade, while the number of boatmen continued to decline, the population of the town grew by 19%. This sudden growth, which was almost certainly chiefly due to increased immigration into the town, would have completed the process of marginalising the boatmen and excluding their interests from consideration. Thus the era of the Deal boatman ended with the century. They became simply one more in the long succession of communities which have lived and died throughout history; the historian is left just with the words of Marcus Aurelius:

"time is like a river made up of the events which happen, and its current is strong; no sooner does anything appear than it is swept away, and another comes in its place, and will be swept away too."

17. Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 7.



Appendix I  
Estimated Population of Deal, 1671-1835

Year	Population	
1671	2292	
1672	2107	Third Dutch War, 1672-74
1673	2382	
1674	2803	
1675	2842	
1676	2668	Compton Census: 1500 Communicants
1677	2669	
1678	3070	
1679	3046	
1680	2130	
1681	2101	
1682	1982	
1683	2327	
1684	1847	
1685	2016	
1686	1679	
1687	1729	
1688	1678	
1689	1965	French Wars, 1689-97
1690	1378	
1691	1747	Fleet in Downs
1692	1986	
1693	2498	
1694	3200	
1695	2282	
1696	2826	Navy lands 500 sick seamen at Deal
1697	3349	
1698	3360	Population "over 3000" <sup>1</sup>
1699	2337	
1700	2327	
1701	2753	War of Spanish Succession, 1701-13
1702	2893	
1703	2984	
1704	3427	
1705	2436	
1706	3742	
1707	3013	
1708	3310	
1709	3653	
1710	3385	
1711	3628	
1712	3327	
1713	3562	Peace of Utrecht

1. John Laker, *History of Deal* (Deal, 1917), 63.

1714	2724	
1715	3035	
1716	2982	
1717	2570	
1718	2591	
1719	2797	
1720	2970	
1721	2802	
1722	2572	
1723	2579	
1724	2551	
1725	2117	Poor Law assessment: 2808
1726	2814	Land Tax assessment: 2836
1727	2121	
1728	2512	
1729	1919	Poor Law assessment: 2892
1730	1600	
1731	1677	
1732	1935	
1733	2148	
1734	3128	
1735	2155	
1736	2226	Window Tax assessment: 2270
1737	2520	
1738	2512	
1739	2076	War of Jenkins' Ear, England-Spain
1740	2098	War of Austrian Succession, 1740-48
1741	2513	
1742	1755	
1743	2251	
1744	3006	
1745	3953	
1746	2940	
1747	2131	
1748	2570	Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle
1749	3397	
1750	2811	
1751	2620	
1752	2349	
1753	3149	
1754	2628	
1755	2738	
1756	3174	Seven Years' War 1756-63
1757	4223	
1758	3708	Population 3325 <sup>2</sup>
1759	3207	
1760	3286	
1761	4124	

2. Laker, *op. cit*, 65.

1762	3803	
1763	3263	Window Tax assessment 3054;
1764	3236	[Peace of Paris
1765	3181	
1766	3190	
1767	3353	
1768	3402	
1769	2693	
1770	3348	
1771	3196	
1772	3455	
1773	2619	
1774	4040	
1775	3037	
1776	3904	American War of Independence
1777	3854	[1776-83
1778	3127	
1779	5512	
1780	6029	
1781	5199	
1782	6411	
1783	5978	Treaty of Versailles
1784	5313	
1785	4835	
1786	4427	
1787	5015	
1788	4390	
1789	4511	
1790	4382	
1791	4747	
1792	3558	
1793	5072	French Revolutionary War
1794	6896	
1795	7566	
1796	6045	
1797	5883	
1798	6374	
1799	7282	
1800	7251	
1801	7196	Census 5420
1802	5887	Peace of Amiens
1803	5721	War renewed
1804	7593	
1805	9011	
1806	9222	
1807	9292	
1808	9563	
1809	9560	

1810	9656	
1811	8994	Census 7351
1812	9479	
1813	9744	
1814	8215	Abdication of Napoleon
1815	6453	The "Hundred Days" and Waterloo
1816	5846	
1817	5317	
1818	5800	
1819	5729	
1820	5992	
1821	5526	Census 6811
1822	5184	
1823	5202	
1824	5107	
1825	5095	
1826	6031	
1827	5795	
1828	4848	
1829	5125	
1830	6136	
1831	5804	Census 7268
1832	5550	
1833	6338	
1834	5173	
1835	5793	

Appendix II  
The Gear Required for a Great Lugger

One great foresail  
Two storm foresails  
Two storm mizens  
One great mainsail  
Two jibs  
One great mainmast  
One great foremast  
One storm foremast  
One mizen mast  
Two outriggers  
Eighty ballast bags  
One ballast tarpaulin  
Two tarpaulins to cover sails  
One davit and carlings  
Two threefold blocks  
One messenger block  
Two cables  
Two anchors  
One track line  
Two creeps and shot  
Four oars and boathook  
One boarding hook and rope  
One chest with tools  
One windlass  
One compass and binnacle  
One pump and two sets of boxes  
One carbuse  
Twenty ways and four chocks  
One haul-off rope  
One capstan and bars  
One stem and one stern strap  
One capstan rope  
Rigging and blocks  
Shovels [used to keep the shingle beach smooth]  
Baskets

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K.A.O. - Kent Archives Office  
K.F.H.S. - Kent Family History Society  
P.R.O. - Public Record Office

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1851	HO	107	1631
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1871	RG	10	1003, 1004
1881	RG	11	997

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