

The Mayor of Plymouth was no more forthcoming, as our hapless Captain Pennington found when he bargained with the mayor for an anticipated 3-400 men. The constables of the wards bought in only 10 or 11 old men not fit for service, and Pennington suspected deliberate concealment. Sir James Bagg, after supplanting his rival for the Vice-Admiral's job, also complained about a lack of assistance from the mayors of Dartmouth and Plymouth, even suggesting to the Lord High Admiral that to

'have [the mayor of Plymouth] by the heels will give example to others'

Throughout the days of the press-gangs, astute fishermen found themselves elsewhere when they came calling, and were well able to take those broad hints as to when would be a good time to be 'at sea'.

Alongside are 64 local names from the two surveys, 29 of whom feature in both surveys (*albeit with variant spellings*). In the 1626 survey, two people were recorded as being 'at sea' but this had been struck through, and on the 1629 list, Anthony Trebell was crossed out. Of those names who only appear in one list, the elderly fishermen in the earlier list may have died or were no longer able to work at sea by 1629. The younger ones in the later list were probably too young to go to sea in 1626. Others may simply have been overlooked by the compilers, possibly accidentally rather than by design.

The ages should not be taken as accurate in either list, as those given rarely differ by the expected 3 years and in many cases appear to have become younger in the later survey. The earlier list was done in a rush of just a few days in August 1626 and perhaps an estimate was all that was expected. The later survey was done at a slightly more leisurely pace during January and February 1629, but it may be that, even if the men knew their exact age, these were deliberately falsified to mislead subsequent press-gangs.

Analysing the 1626 notes, of the 44 men listed, 29 (59%) were at sea, perhaps typical in summer. In 1626, all the men were reported as 'fishermen', whereas in 1629 an attempt was made to classify them into 'mariners' (*master mariners or other types of senior seamen*), 'sailors' (*an ordinary seaman engaged to sail the vessel*) and 'fishermen' (*those others who worked on board, typically close inshore rather than deep sea*). The 1629 survey lists 1 mariner (Roger Davys), 35 sailors and 14 fishermen.

There can be few places that have such records confirming the longstanding relationship with the sea by so many of the local families still present in our parish today.

Malcolm Lee

Reference

Gray, Todd. 1990. Early Stuart Mariners and Shipping. The Maritime Surveys of Devon and Cornwall, 1619-35. Devon & Cornwall Record Society New Series Vol. 33.