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# The Newfoundland trade and Devonian migration c. 1600–1850

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## Abstract

*The Newfoundland trade, which began with a male-dominated migratory fishery and evolved as a triangular trans-Atlantic system, has been widely studied, but this article investigates the effects of the specialised trade on the characteristics of migration from and within Devon. It examines the nature of the migrations of the main socio-economic participants and the evolution of the nature of migration over time—from temporary to permanent and from mainly that of labourers to that of artisans. Within Devon, settlement examinations show that for labourers a Newfoundland migration often followed a parish apprenticeship and that the distances travelled prior to departure varied. Finally, consideration is given to the impact of the Newfoundland trade on local population balances and migration figures.*

## Introduction

John Wyatt was born in Bovey Tracey, but his family moved to Denbury where he was bound a parish apprentice until he was 24 years old. He then hired himself in Ashburton, Ilsington and Denbury before ‘he went to Newfoundland where he remained seventeen years he then returned to work at divers places for one and a half years’. Then he returned to Newfoundland for five years and subsequently spent 26 years on Prince Edward Island before returning, landing at Falmouth.<sup>1</sup> The accuracy of such accounts is debatable, but the inclusion of Newfoundland is not surprising: it was not uncommon for those from south Devon to travel and work there. It was said that nearly every labouring man about Coffinswell had been a servant, that is, a fishing servant, in Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup> The Newfoundland trade provided an additional, trans-Atlantic dimension to Devon migration.

This article examines the nature of external and internal migration, including seasonal and temporary movements as well as long-term or permanent residential change, which arose in relation to the Newfoundland trade. The Newfoundland trade existed from before 1600 into the first half of the nineteenth century, but the largest part of the available documentation relates to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A number of

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1 Devon Record Office, Exeter (hereafter DRO), 2396A-1/PO 13; 2160A/PO 783.

2 D. W. Prowse, *A history of Newfoundland*, facsimile edn (Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2002 [1st edn 1895]), 298.

secondary works cover the nature of the seasonal Newfoundland fishery, while others consider the theoretical background of migration.<sup>3</sup>

The most important recent study of migration and mobility is the work of Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull, who used data from multiple sources to create individual residential histories, based on information supplied by members of family history societies. Devon's society, however, is not among those listed as having provided information, so the county may be under-represented in Pooley and Turnbull's sample. Although Pooley and Turnbull provide sample case studies of individuals' migration histories, local detail is sometimes obscured by aggregation. For example, in their chapter on 'overseas migration, emigration and return migration', the USA and Canada are treated as a single destination, and Devon as part of the south-western region. The ratio of emigration and overseas migration to internal outmigration from this region was 12.2—above the average for England as a whole but below the north-western and northern regions—and 34.6 per cent of those going overseas went to the U.S.A. or Canada, again about the English average but lower than some northern and midland regions. The relative influence of Devon on these regional figures is not known. There is one reference to a Cornish miner who travelled to Newfoundland, but not until 1869.<sup>4</sup> For trans-Atlantic migration, Alison Games's book *Migration and the origins of the English Atlantic world* refers mainly to New England and places to the south, with most data from the port of London; any Devonian passengers are subsumed into the category 'other', and destinations given do not include Newfoundland. On Games's introductory map Newfoundland is not shown as an English possession, although it had been claimed for the queen in 1583 by Devonian Humphrey Gilbert.<sup>5</sup>

In the most useful work to date on English migration to Newfoundland, W.G. Handcock used information from the Newfoundland church registers and other sources to establish the main areas from which the migrants came. He showed that Devon contributed more than 35 per cent of the English migrants, who in total comprised nearly 90 per cent of Newfoundland's immigrant population. Handcock then used resources in England to establish the relative importance of the parishes in south Devon and the Poole area of Dorset, using an index of 'migration intensity'.<sup>6</sup> This article uses some of the same

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3 Examples are: K. Matthews, 'A history of the west of England-Newfoundland fishery' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1968); D. J. Starkey, 'Devonians and the Newfoundland trade', in M. Duffy et al eds, *The new maritime history of Devon*, Vol. 1 (London, 1992), 163–71; T. Gray and D.J. Starkey, 'The distant-water fisheries of south west England in the early modern period', in D.J. Starkey, C. Reid and N. Ashcroft eds, *England's sea fisheries: the commercial sea fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000), 96–104; I.D. Whyte, *Migration and society in Britain, 1550–1830* (Basingstoke, 2000); L.A. Kosinski and R. Mansell Prothero, *People on the move: studies on internal migration* (London, 1975), 1–10.

4 C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (London, 1998), 275–98, 337–8.

5 A. Games, *Migration and the origins of the English Atlantic world* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 2, 21, 56–7.

6 W.G. Handcock, *So long as there comes noe women: origins of English settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's, Newfoundland, 1989), 154–83; W.G. Handcock, 'English migration to Newfoundland', in J.J. Mannion ed., *The peopling of Newfoundland: essays in historical geography* (St John's, Newfoundland, 1977), 16–48. Here at 29.

Figure 1 Map of Devon, showing places mentioned in the text



resources, including ships' muster rolls in the National Archives (BT98), but the concentration is on local documents, including wills, census returns and settlement examinations. Although north Devon ports had taken part in the trade, it became concentrated on the south coast at Plymouth, Topsham (Exeter), Dartmouth and Teignmouth, especially the last two, where it continued longest. This article, therefore, focuses on the area between the Exe and the Dart: Figure 1 shows the main places in Devon mentioned in the text.

## The Newfoundland trade

The fishery involved an annual trans-Atlantic migration, a form of transhumance, in pursuit of cod to be salted and dried and brought back across the Atlantic for sale, especially in Spain and Portugal. These countries, along with France, also engaged in this fishery for their own use. The components of the trade are mapped in Figure 2 and the Newfoundland destination area in Figure 3.

Laden with salt and supplies, ships set out in spring for Newfoundland where the English established shore bases for curing the cod. A fishing ship carried its own small boats and engaged the men to operate these and to 'make' the fish. On return to England, the fish was sent on to the Mediterranean countries for sale and ships returned with cargoes of salt and wine or fruit. Some built or bought their own boat(s), engaged their own crew(s) and, while travelling to and fro each year as passengers, left their boats 'by' in Newfoundland; these were the bye-boat keepers. A few would remain in Newfoundland for the winter in order to protect the property and prepare the fishing 'room' for use in the next season. Increasingly, sack (or trading) ships were introduced. These took the bye-boat keepers, with their crews and supplies, and afterwards some took the fish directly from Newfoundland to the West Indian or European markets, returning with other cargoes. It became a triangular trade, but since it was not exclusive to the English, international politics played their part.

Figure 2 Trade routes across the Atlantic

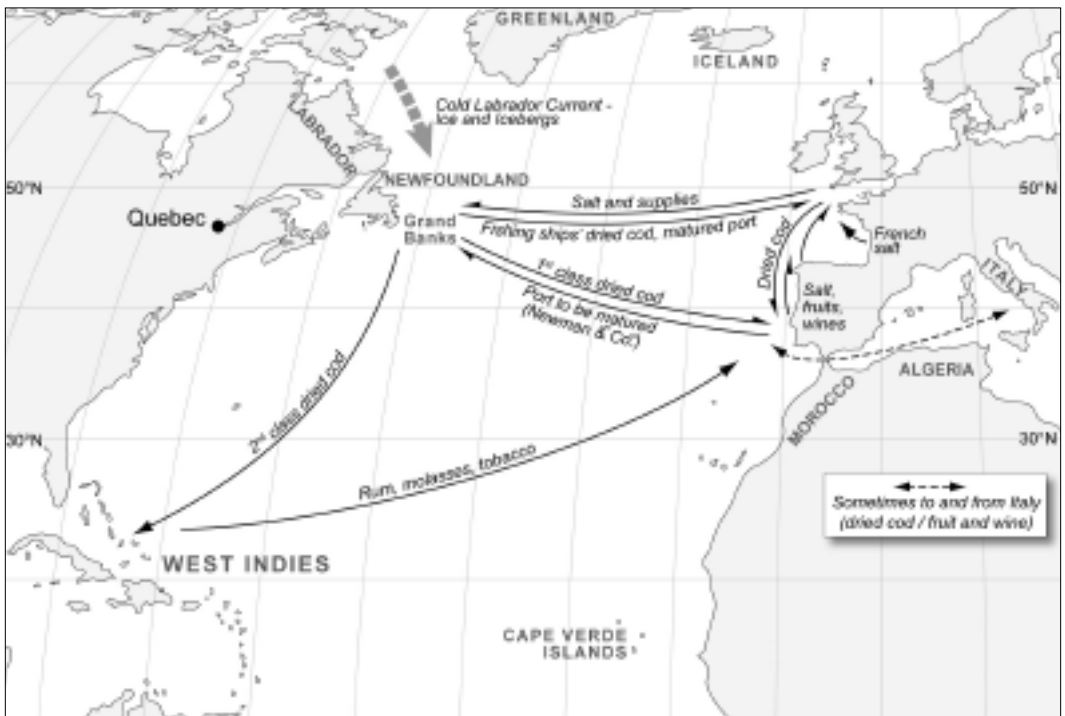
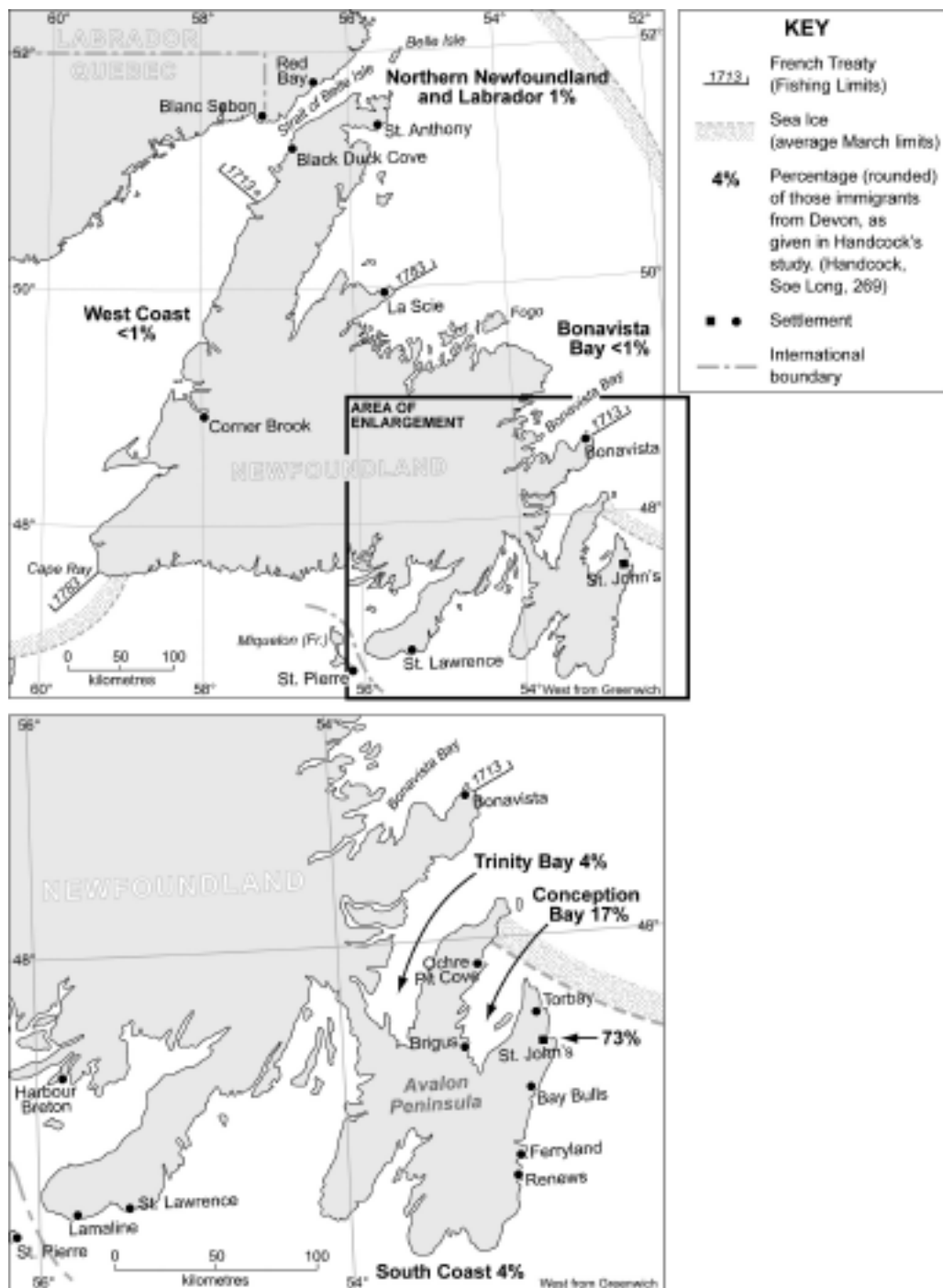


Figure 3 The Newfoundland destination area, showing main areas of Devonian settlement



**Table 1 The Newfoundland fishery, 1698–1833: average number of vessels per annum**

Year(s)	Peace/ war	British fishing ships	Boats belonging to fishing ships	Bye- boats	British sack ships	Residents' boats	Percentage of fish (in quintals) taken by migratory fishery
1698–1701	Peace	137	585	101	54	522	60.4
1702–1712	War	44	129	57	37	283	42.1
1713–1738	Peace	116	283	267	54	354	69.5
1739–1748	War	80	182	319	72	449	54.2
1749–1755	Peace	160	308	434	84	748	55.2
1756–1763	War	95	183	253	77	927	37.7
1764–1775	Peace	275	452	462	116	1,245	53.9
1776–1783	War	217	336	567	108	990	51.0
1784–1792	Peace	277	353	446	140	1,448	53.6
1793–1801	War	66	75	133	109	1,290	29.8
1802	Peace	58	n.a.	0	170	n.a.	n.a.
1803–1815	War	33	52	0	349	2,331	5.1
1816–1833	Peace	20	n.a.	0	443	3,461	6.4

**Source:** D.J. Starkey, 'Devonians and the Newfoundland trade', in M. Duffy, S. Fisher, B. Greenhill, D.J. Starkey and J. Youings eds., *The new maritime history of Devon* (London, 1992), Vol. 1, 163–71. Here at 164–5. Reproduced with the permission of Conway Publishing.

Table 1 shows how the numbers of ships involved varied from year to year, depending on conditions of war or peace. Fishing ships declined as the number of sack ships increased, and, as the number of boat-owning Newfoundland inhabitants grew, the migratory trade declined. It also shows that the greatest activity came in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Treaty of Paris (1763) ceded Labrador to Britain. Sir Hugh Palliser, then governor of Newfoundland, set the fishery regulations for Labrador, which initially had the effect of continuing a seasonal trade with the incentive of a bounty based on the number of men 'actually going out from, and returning directly to his Majesty's Dominions in Europe ... every Fifth Man to be a New or Green Man'.<sup>7</sup> The 1798 inventory for the will of Daniel Codner, a Shaldon merchant, refers to such bounties.<sup>8</sup>

Devon-born Captain Richard Whitbourne, writing in 1620, had advocated migration to Newfoundland:

it would be a great ease to all the rest of your Maiesties subjects, if some part of our superabounding multitudes was transplanted into New-found-land; ... There are many thousands of poore people ... which might be spared ... and in great want, would be perswaded to remove their dwelling into New-found-land,

<sup>7</sup> W.G. Gosling, *Labrador: its discovery, exploration, and development* (Toronto, 1910), 178–9.

<sup>8</sup> DRO, 53/6 Box 34/49, 'Third part of bounties at Custom House x passages £18-6-0'.

where they might not only free themselves of their present miseries, but also by their industrie, in time enrich themselves[.]<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, the merchants were keen to maintain the seasonality of the fishery, with ships obliged to victual and be fitted out from England each year. The Western Charters were important in maintaining this aspect of the trade. From 1670, the rules of the trade included:

7. That every fifth man be a green man not a seaman.
8. That masters of ships provide victuals in England according to number of men, for which voyage, salt only excepted.
9. That no fishing ship part hence for Newfoundland before the month of March.
12. That no fisherman or seaman remain behind after fishing is ended.<sup>10</sup>

Foreign salt was, of course, essential for the satisfactory curing of the fish. The migratory fishery was favoured over colonisation and gave advantages to the seasonal participants over the resident fishermen. The trade was claimed to provide a nursery of seamen for the nation's navy, but it is debatable whether these rules were more beneficial to the merchants or to the navy.<sup>11</sup> The requirement for 'green men' meant that some had to be recruited from among the farm labouring population, which extended the trade's opportunities beyond the coastal parishes.

The operation of the trade involved three general socio-economic groups of people: the merchants, master mariners and shipowners (some individuals fell into two or three of these categories); the bye-boat keepers; and the many fishing servants, the labourers, who were needed. While each of these groups engaged in migration of some kind, its nature and length varied with their socio-economic standing.

### The merchant class

These were men, often locally influential landowners, of sufficient means to invest in ships, supplies and men. They perceived that investing in the trade would be profitable in spite of the potential hazards of the sea, the fishing season and the market, not to mention pirates and privateers, although some engaged in privateering themselves. The earliest of the known Dartmouth merchants, who were also shipowners, were the Newmans, already

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9 T. Whitburn ed., *Westward hoe for Avalon: in the Newfoundland as described by Captain Richard Whitbourne, of Exmouth, Devon, 1620* (London, 1870), 21.

10 The regulations are quoted in full in Prowse, *History*, 154–5.

11 D.J. Starkey, 'The west country-Newfoundland fishery and the manning of the Royal Navy', in R. Higham ed., *Security and defence in south-west England before 1800* (Exeter, 1987), 93–101. Here at 100–1.

wine merchants, who participated in the Newfoundland trade from 1565 onwards; later, they matured their port in Newfoundland. Others included the Roopes and the Holdsworths.<sup>12</sup> In 1663, the naval surgeon and diarist James Yonge recorded those at Renew's (see Figure 3), who included 'Mr. Thomas Waymouth of Dartmouth, who kept 18 boats, in the *Dorcas*'. The first captain to arrive in a harbour became the 'admiral' for that season: he had the first choice of a site and the responsibility for maintaining law and order. (The first governor and justices of the peace were not appointed until 1729.) Waymouth was admiral in 1663; others there at this time were from Barnstaple and Plymouth.<sup>13</sup>

Members of these families, if not the main merchant himself, certainly engaged in the annual seasonal migration across the Atlantic. Arthur Holdsworth was not popular with people in St John's as he always claimed admiral status and, ignoring the rights of settlers, put his men into the best fishing rooms. When the fishing admiral system was ended by the rules of 1711 and 1712, one of the 'most determined antagonists' of this change was Peter Ougier, formerly of Dartmouth, but by then a merchant of Bay Bulls.<sup>14</sup> Ougier later committed suicide at Bay Bulls so that his migration had become permanent, intentionally or not.<sup>15</sup> The Newman and Holdsworth families, while retaining property in St John's into the twentieth century, were never more than temporary migrants: in later years, the chief merchants did not go at all but relied on their agents to deal with the business in Newfoundland. The agent was sometimes a member of the merchant family; Samuel Codner, for example, is thought to have acted as his father's agent before becoming a merchant in his own right.<sup>16</sup> A member of a merchant's family might remain over winter to care for the fishing equipment; for example, John Roope was in St John's during the winter of 1704–5.<sup>17</sup>

During the Civil War in England a number of people had remained in Newfoundland for a time. The ports tended to favour the parliamentary forces, but Dartmouth was held by the royalists from 1643 until 1646. P.E. Pope suggests that the Boone family, to take one example, saw the island as a refuge from the war, but that they did not establish lineages there at that time.<sup>18</sup> Ambrose Jennens was a Plymouth merchant, but from 1641 to 1645 he was in Seville: it is not clear whether this was a commercial decision, an escape from the

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12 R. Freeman, *The contributions of the Holdsworth and Newman families to Dartmouth*, 2nd edn (Dartmouth, 2006 [1st edn 1995]), 2.

13 F.N.L. Poynter ed., *The journal of James Yonge (1647–1721)* (London, 1963), 54–56.

14 Prowse, *History*, 228, 254, 271–3, 328, 359.

15 M.A. Chang, 'Newfoundland in transition: the Newfoundland trade and Robert Newman and Company, 1780–1850' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University Newfoundland, 1975), 63.

16 W.G. Handcock, 'Codner, Samuel', *Dictionary of Canadian biography online* (Toronto, 2000), Vol. 8: <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?Bioid=37960> [6 March 2011].

17 Prowse, *History*, 241–4.

18 P.E. Pope, *Fish into wine: the Newfoundland plantation in the seventeenth century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 60.



royalist siege of Plymouth, or both. The Civil War may have acted as a ‘push’ factor towards at least temporary migration.

During the seventeenth century in Seville there were at least three members of the Upton family and a Richard Hill, all from Devon.<sup>19</sup> This shows that the other elements of the trade (Figure 2) also gave rise to migration, when merchants established their own bases in the overseas ports or in London, which provided the chief English market for the wines. One of the Newmans became a partner in Hunt, Roope, Teague and Co. of Oporto, and a Robert Newman relocated to London to open Newman and Land as wine importers.<sup>20</sup> Of the Codner families, one Richard moved from Abbotskerswell to St Olave’s in London in connection with the wine trade.<sup>21</sup>

Local movements also took place, perhaps depending on fortune and fashion. From the later eighteenth and into the early nineteenth centuries, Dartmouth seems to have attracted those climbing the social ladder. Daniel Codner senior lived in Kingskerswell but moved to Shaldon; of his sons, John moved on to St Marychurch (now part of Torquay), William remained in Shaldon, but Samuel moved first to Teignmouth, visited or lived temporarily in Leamington Priors, and died in South Town, Dartmouth. John’s son, Daniel, moved to Dartmouth, where he also served a period as mayor. All of these family members were merchants and shipowners with family or other trading partners.<sup>22</sup> Andrew Pinson (1727–1810), who had had more varied early fortune, began life in Abbotskerswell—he was the son of a bye-boat keeper—but lived in a number of places, including Broadhempston, until he spent his last years at Wadstray House, in Blackawton, just inland from Dartmouth.<sup>23</sup>

These families engaged in seasonal and temporary migrations, some to Iberia, as a result of their Newfoundland trade, but the heads of the larger scale operations tended to keep their main home in Devon, or at least in England. However, they were out-numbered by the middle and lower classes in the trade.

### The bye-boat keepers

These constituted a sort of middle class: they were independent operators but relied on the merchants to buy their fish. The capital needed to build or buy a boat was much less than

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19 J. Palmer ed. *The letter book of Thomas Hill 1660–1661*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series, 51, (Exeter, 2008), xxix.

20 M.R. Hardy, ‘Exe-Dart Devon: some social and economic effects of the Newfoundland trade’ (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Leicester, 2009), 106.

21 *London Gazette*, 11 November 1797, 7.

22 DRO, will of Selina Codner (microfilm, 1835), 53/6 Box 53; *Exeter Flying Post* (hereafter *EFP*), 25 August 1814, 4; other sources include Pigot’s directories, 1823, 1831 for Teignmouth and Dartmouth; census enumerators’ books for Dartmouth 1841, 1851; DRO, parish registers of Kingskerswell and St Nicholas.

23 *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 80 (1810), 495; information from a descendant; The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), PROB 11/1515. Pinson is buried at Broadhempston: DRO, parish register, April 1810.

that needed by a merchant, although some bye-boat keepers sold land or took out a loan to finance this. They went out as passengers each year or became temporary, long-term or permanent residents, by design or circumstance.<sup>24</sup> In or around 1740, Lawrence Ffield of Denbury and John Ealing of St Marychurch both fished at Bay Bulls, Hugh Whiteway of Denbury at Petty Harbour, and John Hill of Kingskerswell was a boat-keeper nearby. Edward Tree of Paignton had had a boat at Petty Harbour until about seven years before, but was then resident at Bay Bulls where he also ran a public house. His reasons for deciding to remain in Newfoundland can only be guessed, but love and finances may have been involved. Susanna, a widow, who had been Tree's winter landlady for two years, had become pregnant with his child and had gone with him to Newfoundland, where they had remained. By now they had four children, but if Susanna was found to have married Edward, she would have lost her widow's inheritance.<sup>25</sup> In Newfoundland terms, Tree had become an inhabitant or planter.

Planters existed from quite early on, but records suggest that they were short-term migrants. At Renew's in 1663, there were five planters, with between one and three boats each. One of these was a Richard Codner. The family appears to have retained an interest at Renew's for over 150 years, as in 1820 a 'Richard Codner late of Torquay' was there.<sup>26</sup> According to Dr K. Matthews's 'Who Was Who' of families engaged in the fishery, nine of the 15 planters named by James Yonge at St John's in 1669 were likely to have been from Devon, as were all four of the 'interlopers'.<sup>27</sup> Of the 15 planters, only two were still there in 1682. A few wives were there, but as widows they appear to have remained for only one winter. There was a considerable turnover in the persons who resided all year. Lists for St John's in 1703, 1706 and 1708 also show considerable changes. 'Return migration' was very common at this time.<sup>28</sup>

Some did not return to Devon, although this may have been due to ill health, accident or circumstances rather than intention. Some seventeenth-century deaths in St John's are recorded in Devon, and there are also some Newfoundland wills. For example, Nicholas Power of 'Brickas' (Brigus) in 1745 stated that he was a 'dweller in this cove' and he bequeathed his wife, among other things, 'one shallop and fishing craft with as much room as is sufficient for the curing one shallops [fishing boat's] catching'.<sup>29</sup> John Symonds, who had sold land at Harberton, died in Newfoundland before 1730, in debt for £15 12s.

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24 Surrey History Centre, Woking (hereafter SHC), 2225/14/5.

25 DRO, 4652M/Z27, Reynell papers.

26 Poynter, *James Yonge*, 55; *London Gazette*, 1 August 1820, 1496.

27 DRO, 19MA-T, copy of K. Matthews, 'A "Who Was Who" of families engaged in the fishery and Settlement of Newfoundland, 1660-1840' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University Newfoundland, 1911), 22-23, 36, 156, 206, 333.

28 A.G. Macpherson, 'The demographic history of St. John's', in A.G. Macpherson ed., *Four centuries and the city: perspectives on the historical geography of St. John's* (St John's, Newfoundland, 2005), 1-18. Here at 3-7.

29 DRO, Stokeinteignhead parish registers, 1674, 1676; Consistory Court box 211, no. 69.

Another was said to be very poor in Newfoundland or New England, showing that there may have been onward migration.<sup>30</sup>

In 1817, Robert Tolchard of East Ogwell, near Newton Abbot, claimed that he had been making fishing trips to Newfoundland for over 49 years. For him, the annual migration remained a regular livelihood. When he died in Devon, in 1825, he left a 'fishing room, houses and plantations ... in Torbay in ... Newfoundland'.<sup>31</sup> Such property was often inherited by those who had no connection with the fishery, but it became a source of income through renting. However, by the nineteenth century, permanent migration became more common. In 1838, when Stephen Halfyard of Ochre Pit Cove in Conception Bay, 'planter', sold property in Bovey Tracey, at least some of the family had been in Newfoundland since the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the Devon property had been retained against failure in Newfoundland. Bye-boat keepers, with property in Newfoundland, probably had a greater incentive to become at least longer term, if not permanent migrants, as suggested in Table 1.

While travelling annually, the bye-boat keepers were also making short land migrations within Devon. Anthony Lovell of Hennock in the Teign valley was probably another boat-keeper, since in 1765, he had Andrew Grindon, a 'poor child' of Drewsteignton, as an apprentice to be instructed 'in the Art of the Newfoundland Fishery' until the age of 24.<sup>33</sup> Those who were at some stage parish apprentices constituted a proportion of those who made up the fishing servants, especially the 'green' men.

## Fishing servants

These constituted the largest proportion of the seasonal or temporary migrants. A servant to a bye-boat keeper would have agreed to go to Newfoundland for a season, and merchants' seamen usually contracted for a single voyage, but, for their fishing servants, typical contracts were for two summers and a winter, sometimes three summers and the intervening winters. Many servants were thus obliged to be temporary emigrants. For 1669, it is possible to calculate that St John's had a total of 167 boats and 835 men employed for the season. Fifteen of the 16 fishing ships were from south Devon. There were others at places on the Avalon peninsula coast, such as Renewes and Torbay, but in smaller numbers. If owner-operators are included, the number of people from Devon in Newfoundland at any one time would have been from one to two thousand.<sup>34</sup> For

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30 SHC, 2225/14/5.

31 Surrogate court records of Colonial Archives, St. John's, 1816/17, quoted in B. Tolchard, 'A Newfoundland fisherman', *Devon Family History Journal* (February 2001), 31.

32 DRO, 312M/TH 778; Newfoundland's Grand Banks, 'Halfyard Burial Ground, Ochre Pit Cove': <http://ngb.chebucto.org/Cemetery/cem-halfyard-unk-bdv.shtml> [6 March 2011].

33 DRO, 2165A PO 751.

34 Poynter, *James Yonge*, 55, 119–20.

1675–81, south Devon, including Plymouth, contributed 63 per cent of those on fishing vessels in Newfoundland and over 99 per cent of those fishing at St John's.<sup>35</sup>

In or around 1755 it was reported that the 'common people' of the parishes of Tormohum (Torquay) and Dittisham went to Newfoundland every year.<sup>36</sup> Apprentices, either parish apprentices or voluntarily bound ones, like John Sampson of South Bovey and a few, like Robert Perriton, who were ordered to go, had no choice.<sup>37</sup> Some ran away from their local apprenticeship, like Joseph Kentisbeare who went to Fortune Bay until of age, and some, like John Down, received 'an invitation to go to Newfoundland'.<sup>38</sup> Others were recruited by local merchants or boat-keepers like Tree, but many put themselves forward to gain a contract. In Devon, Newton Bushell was the main centre of recruitment.<sup>39</sup> Joseph Farington, a visiting diarist, described the recruitment of men before the Napoleonic Wars:

Here at the Season appointed for hiring sailors ... great numbers flocked for that purpose. Our Landlord said there have been 1200 sailors at one time assembled in the town, to be hired, and that those who had not made an engagement carried white rods in their hands ... The terms were higher or lower according to the qualifications and experience which the Sailors might have[.]<sup>40</sup>

Another diarist, the able seaman Aaron Thomas, commented in 1794 on the men's wages:

Some of them, who are expert in the Art of Fishing, get thirty pounds for their services for the season, others, taken from the Plow tail will get Ten Pounds, and sixteen for the season. They are carry'd free of expense. They will return, if they like, to England by November or December. Most of them pay their own charges back[.]<sup>41</sup>

The potential earnings and a degree of adventure had to be balanced against any local opportunities, the hazards of the Atlantic and the relatively inhospitable conditions in Newfoundland. The proportion of these men who stayed on in Newfoundland, like John Wyatt, is not known. Some may have had an opportunity of work, others may have been obliged to stay as a result of profligate spending, and merchant Andrew Pinson had a reputation for leaving men in Newfoundland with liquor and goods instead of providing

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35 Hancock, *So longe*, 66.

36 West Country Studies Library, Exeter (hereafter WCSL), Dean Milles, parochial collection, microfilm 1. The original manuscripts are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

37 DRO, 2160A/PO 710 (1781) and PO 780 (1823) (Bovey Tracey); 818A/PO 135 (1772) (West Alvington).

38 DRO, 3009A/PO12/455; 3419A/PO 16/1(Combeinteignhead).

39 J.M. Murray ed., *The Newfoundland journal of Aaron Thomas Able Seaman in H.M.S. Boston* (London, 1968), 33.

40 K. Care ed., *The diary of Joseph Farington: volume X, July 1809–December 1810* (Newhaven and London, 1982), 3561–2.

41 Murray, *Newfoundland journal*, 33.

for their return passage as the regulations demanded.<sup>42</sup> A few are known to have died in Newfoundland; ships' muster rolls tell of death or drowning at sea; and in some cases seamen 'ran', abandoning ship.<sup>43</sup>

Particularly during the late seventeenth century, a ship might be taken by Barbary pirates, resulting, at best, in a temporary forced migration, and, at worst, death in slavery in North Africa.<sup>44</sup> Release from captivity required a ransom. Fifteen men were aboard the *Blessing* of Dartmouth, taken in 1684. The mayor and 12 others signed the relations' petition, which implored that they be given 'ye accustomed bounty' towards their release.<sup>45</sup> Some men were more fortunate, like one who was redeemed by a merchant; others gave all that they had to return, impoverished and in some cases maimed, to England.<sup>46</sup>

Conflicts with the French resulted in men being taken into France. Young John Sampson was on his second voyage when he and his shipmates were taken by the French. Having returned to England in a 'Cartell' (a ship employed in an exchange of prisoners), he became a potter in Bovey Tracey.<sup>47</sup> In other cases, time spent as a seaman might be extended by naval service—either by choice or as a result of impressment—but such service is not normally counted as migration.<sup>48</sup>

## The rise of permanent migration to Newfoundland

The 1851 census records show that some Devonians had returned after living temporarily in Newfoundland. Samuel Mudge, consular agent for Newfoundland, was living in Newton Abbot, the Creed family were nearby, and John Gregory, a retired merchant, was living in Dartmouth. Each of these had one or more Newfoundland-born children.<sup>49</sup> Such records suggest that, as the population of Newfoundland grew, migration was more likely to include the family and the periods were longer, but still with a return, perhaps to retire. However, some members of merchant families, like Row(e), Job and Whiteway, became permanent residents in Newfoundland.<sup>50</sup> Newman Wright Hoyles was a merchant in St John's in 1808 when he sold his lease on property in Dartmouth.<sup>51</sup>

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42 'Pinson, Andrew', in C.F. Poole and R. Cuff eds, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St John's, Newfoundland, 1993), Vol. 4, 306–7.

43 TNA, BT98/3 and BT98/9 contain a number of examples.

44 DRO, QS/128/69/8.

45 DRO, QS/128/42/26.

46 DRO, 2915A/PW 2 (1675, 1761 for examples).

47 DRO, 2160A/PO/710,736, 780.

48 DRO, 300A-99/PO14 has three examples.

49 1851 Census H.O. 107/1871; H.O. 107/1873/440.

50 See Prowse, *History*, 451, 467 and 506 for examples.

51 DRO, 1163F/L87, 1163F/L89.

Using evidence from marriages in Newfoundland, Handcock suggested that the main period of permanent migration from Devon came in the early nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> The growing population in Newfoundland began to provide a sufficient market for people to earn a living there, so that many who migrated permanently in the nineteenth century were artisans. As the result of an order for three grandfather clocks, Benjamin Bowring of Exeter contemplated moving to Newfoundland. He subsequently emigrated, in 1811, but maintained the Exeter business until 1815, when his wife and family joined him. The Newfoundland business evolved successfully to include shipping and insurance.<sup>53</sup>

Handcock lists a number of emigrants from St Nicholas parish, Shaldon with Ringmore, on the Teign. Included are five merchants, eight mariners, two boat-keepers, two carpenters/joiners, two coopers, three shipwrights and a shoemaker.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly the 1851 census enumerators' books for St Nicholas shows a considerable number of tradesmen from beyond the parish, including shipwrights and carpenters. There would appear to have been a degree of counter-stream migration to replace the emigrants. Other in-migrants of the time seem to have been retirees and it is possible that some were resident only in summer.

In the 1820s some people emigrated to Newfoundland directly from Torquay, but numbers were smaller than those who went from Plymouth. Whiteway Mudge and Co. of Torquay operated at least two sailings, the second, in 1829, calling also at Dartmouth.<sup>55</sup> Exeter, Chudleigh and Torquay all suffered bread riots, which suggests that life may have been difficult and emigration was not an alien idea to people from this area.<sup>56</sup> The tendency for the men to migrate first, their families following later, may have contributed to the unbalanced populations of some parishes (see below).

In 1846 a fire destroyed almost all waterfront property in St John's, together with much on two or three parallel roads on the north side of the harbour. This created employment opportunities. The *Exeter Flying Post* reported in April:

The brigantine 'Nancy', belonging to Mr Mathew Warren of Teignmouth, left this port on the 10th instant, for St John's, Newfoundland, with upwards of sixty passengers,—mostly masons, carpenters, &c., for rebuilding the town, public buildings, store-houses, &c., lately destroyed by fire—where mechanics of every description are in great demand. ... The 'Haberdine', belonging to the same owner, is now about loading for the same port ... thereby affording a

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52 Handcock, 'English migration', 34–5.

53 J. Youings, 'The Bowring ancestry', in J. Youings ed., *Sir John Bowring, 1792–1872: Aspects of his Life and Career* (Exeter, 1993), 1–11. Here at 5.

54 Handcock, *So longe*, 176–7 (table 8.2).

55 R.A. Perkins, 'Emigration to north America from Torquay', *Devon Historian*, 67 (October 2003), 20–23. Here at 20.

56 G. Holloway, *Battles, bullets and mayhem: Devon's turbulent past* (Exeter, 2001), 111–18.

capital opportunity for others to avail themselves of a lucrative employment at St John's, Newfoundland.<sup>57</sup>

This was an opportunity in an area with which the community would have felt familiar through relatives or hearsay, and where migrants would find themselves among many other people who had moved from Devon. Figure 3 shows that immigrant Devonians were mainly in St John's and almost all in the south, perhaps because of seasonal ice, early connections and the limitations of the French fishing agreements. The one per cent in the north probably comprised nineteenth-century immigrants, such as Thomas White of Modbury and Henry Cross, described on his tombstone as a 'Native of Devonshire'.<sup>58</sup>

The foregoing suggests that, over time, merchants and shipowners tended to give up trans-Atlantic migrations in favour of leaving a representative in Newfoundland. Some family members might move permanently to other ports in England, or overseas in order to have further control over the triangle of trade, or, later, permanently to Newfoundland. Bye-boat keepers had personal vested interests in Newfoundland and perhaps were more likely to become at least longer-term, if not permanent, residents. During the early period, ownership of a waterfront site was gained by occupying it and erecting a building. Being part of the means to a livelihood, it was an acquisition to be retained as long as possible. Some who stayed, like bye-boatman Peter Winsor from Denbury, who was elected to the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, gained in social standing.<sup>59</sup> Those who took their skills to serve the growing population were following opportunities of less seasonal work, and family migration was more likely in such cases. By contrast, the servants often had no such ties and so were more likely to work their contracts, then choose whether or not to make further such migrations, depending on their inclinations, circumstances or opportunities. However, common to all those involved was a degree of movement within Devon, especially among the fishing servants.

### Migration within Devon

Movements of seamen within Devon can be traced using the muster rolls of Dartmouth ships going to Newfoundland, as these give places of birth as well as residence. The rolls for 1770–3 show 123 changes of residence, of which 78 related to Dartmouth, giving the town a net gain of 76, of which 19 came from Ireland. Southern Ireland provided the last port of call before the trans-Atlantic crossing. Just over half of Dartmouth's in-migrants came from beyond Devon, whereas elsewhere there were only three migrants in total from outside the county. Most moves were inter-parochial within the Exe-Dart area, with each parish gaining or losing up to seven inhabitants. Newton Abbot had the largest net loss,

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57 *EFP*, 22 April 1847, 3, column a.

58 Tombstones in Black Duck Cove: both were born c.1809.

59 Prowse, *History*, 438.

of six, and there were small net gains in the arc of parishes from the Teign to the Dart.<sup>60</sup> However, Dartmouth's total population did not increase, and most seamen were living where they had been born.

The movements of fishing servants can be traced in settlement examinations. The details available from settlement examinations vary—'divers places' and 'ever since' are rather elastic terms—but, despite such vagueness, a general picture of inter-parish and overseas movements can be obtained from these sources. In all, 166 settlement examinations from 29 parishes have provided information about some of the returned participants and their migrations. Of these documents, 2 per cent are from before 1750, 44 per cent from 1750 to 1800 and 54 per cent from 1800 to 1839. As proportions of the sets of settlement examinees, the percentages of those going to Newfoundland ranged from 46.5 per cent in Coffinswell and 43.5 per cent in Combeinteignhead, to just 10 per cent in Dartington.

The nature of the sources means that employment in the Newfoundland trade came before the dates of the settlement examinations, although going to sea again might not be precluded. The examinees were seeking parish assistance for which they had to prove their parish of legal settlement. The examinations provide brief, life-work histories. In some cases the wife or widow applied, but her settlement was that of her husband whose qualification was needed. The majority were former parish apprentices, with 65 per cent from farming and labouring occupations. Those with trades constituted 18.5 per cent and there was just one failed merchant.<sup>61</sup> It was possible to calculate the approximate ages at which these people went to Newfoundland for the first time, but rarely the date, unless the age at examination was given. The peak ages at migration were 21 and 24 years, indicating that many went when their parish apprenticeships ended.

The birthplaces of those who had been to Newfoundland show the direction of their migration within Devon. Using four parishes each with a good number of records, and straight line distances, Table 2 shows that those in Broadhempston and Coffinswell were almost all from within three to eight miles; those at Chudleigh, a small market town on the main route from Exeter to Newton Abbot, were mostly local, but a significant minority came from further afield. Combeinteignhead, not on a main route and with the second smallest population, had gained people from much further away, presumably because it neighboured Newton Abbot where the Newmans recruited and also had a number of the Teign estuary merchants nearby.<sup>62</sup> A good many of those examined in Combeinteignhead had also married there, perhaps because the parish was deficient in males as a result of longer-term migrations; this, however, is only conjecture.

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60 TNA, BT98/3; Hardy, 'Exe-Dart', 78–80.

61 Hardy, 'Exe-Dart', 130.

62 C.R. Fay, *Life and labour in Newfoundland* (Cambridge, 1956), 20 n.



**Table 2 Distances from place of birth, in miles, of settlement examinees in four parishes who had been to Newfoundland, 1757–1835**

Miles from place of birth	Living in			
	Coffinswell	Combeinteignhead	Broadhempston	Chudleigh
0	3	0	6	5
0.5 to 5	8	8	14	4
5.5 to 10	1	3	2	5
10.5 to 15	3	3	1	2
15.5 to 20	0	2	0	0
20.5 to 25	0	6	0	0
More than 25	0	5	0	1

**Source:** TNA, BT98/3, settlement examinations.

From Coffinswell and Broadhempston, over 60 per cent of the local examinees who went to Newfoundland had already made multiple trips; for Combeinteignhead and Chudleigh the figures are only 24 and 11 per cent respectively. Those of the Broadhempston area may have responded to local boat-keepers, or Pinson's influence, and those in Coffinswell or local to Combeinteignhead to the Teign estuary merchants or recruitment in Newton Abbot. Generally, those who had moved further seem to have been less likely to repeat the experience.

Some seamen moved around within Devon before or after gaining a Newfoundland contract. Philip Bond was baptised on 8 October 1749 at Down St Mary, near Crediton. Before he was ten, he was bound apprentice by the parish overseers to Mary Wrayford, who died, but he continued on the same estate 'for about 5 years'. He then went to Chudleigh for one week, on to Highweek, Tormoham and then Combeinteignhead for a few days before agreeing to work for a year in Ashcombe. Bond agreed another year, but left after nine months, with consent, to go to Combeinteignhead where he started by the week but, in July 1769, agreed at £5 for the year. In January 1770, Bond 'shipped himself for Newfoundland' and then made another agreement, at 1s. 6d. a week, to work until he sailed in April. He did two seasons in Newfoundland and after his return to Combeinteignhead in late 1771, aged 22, he married Dorothy Nicholls, on 14 January 1772. A month later, he was asking for parish assistance.<sup>63</sup> Non-qualification would have led to a removal order, a further migration.

John Milford from Chulmleigh did not return there directly from Newfoundland. He had sailed to Bristol, worked there for about two and a half years and then on the Bridgewater and Wells turnpike road for about a year before re-entering Devon, spending some months in Rose Ash before applying for assistance in Chulmleigh.<sup>64</sup> Such migrations

<sup>63</sup> DRO, 3419A/PO9/3, and parish registers.

<sup>64</sup> DRO, 4678A/PO2/9.

appear to have been the results of a combination of choice, circumstances and intervening opportunities.

### The local impact of the migration

Although a few wives took part in the migration before the nineteenth century, the majority of the migrants were male, which meant that the local populations in Devon would have become unbalanced, at least seasonally. Before the period covered by the census, only circumstantial evidence is available, as of women fishing and their common employment in agriculture, including ploughing and digging potatoes.<sup>65</sup>

Using the 1811 census, which was taken in May when seasonal seamen and migrants were away, it is possible to calculate the percentages of males in each parish of the area studied. Hancock names the Devon parishes each supplying 2 percent or more of the Newfoundland seamen and immigrants. These parishes are outlined on Figure 4. Dartmouth and Teignmouth are notable. In later years, the correlation between the percentage of males and the migration zone was less marked. Stokeinteignhead remains an unexplained anomaly. Although some of the apparent lack of men might be due to additional females, as servants for tourism in Teignmouth for example, the overall patterns suggest that, for this area, Newfoundland-related migration may have made an impact.

The age distributions of the populations were examined for 1841. Teignbridge district's pyramid is of conventional shape, with no visible impact of the Napoleonic Wars, but three ports and three Teign estuary parishes show varying degrees of imbalance. Tables 3(a) and 3(b) illustrate the main age groups of the 'missing men'. Smaller overall numbers of the parishes tend to exaggerate the percentages, but Stokeinteignhead has an inexplicably low number of people aged 30–35 (born c.1805–11). In each case, the highest numbers of females are in the 15–25 year range, so quite possibly servants, who seem not to impact on the lowest percentages of men.<sup>66</sup>

Given that most of the servants who were recorded in settlement examinations went to Newfoundland in their twenties, these older groups suggest that either some of the young had remained abroad, or that the older men were continuing in a seasonal trade as seamen or master mariners.

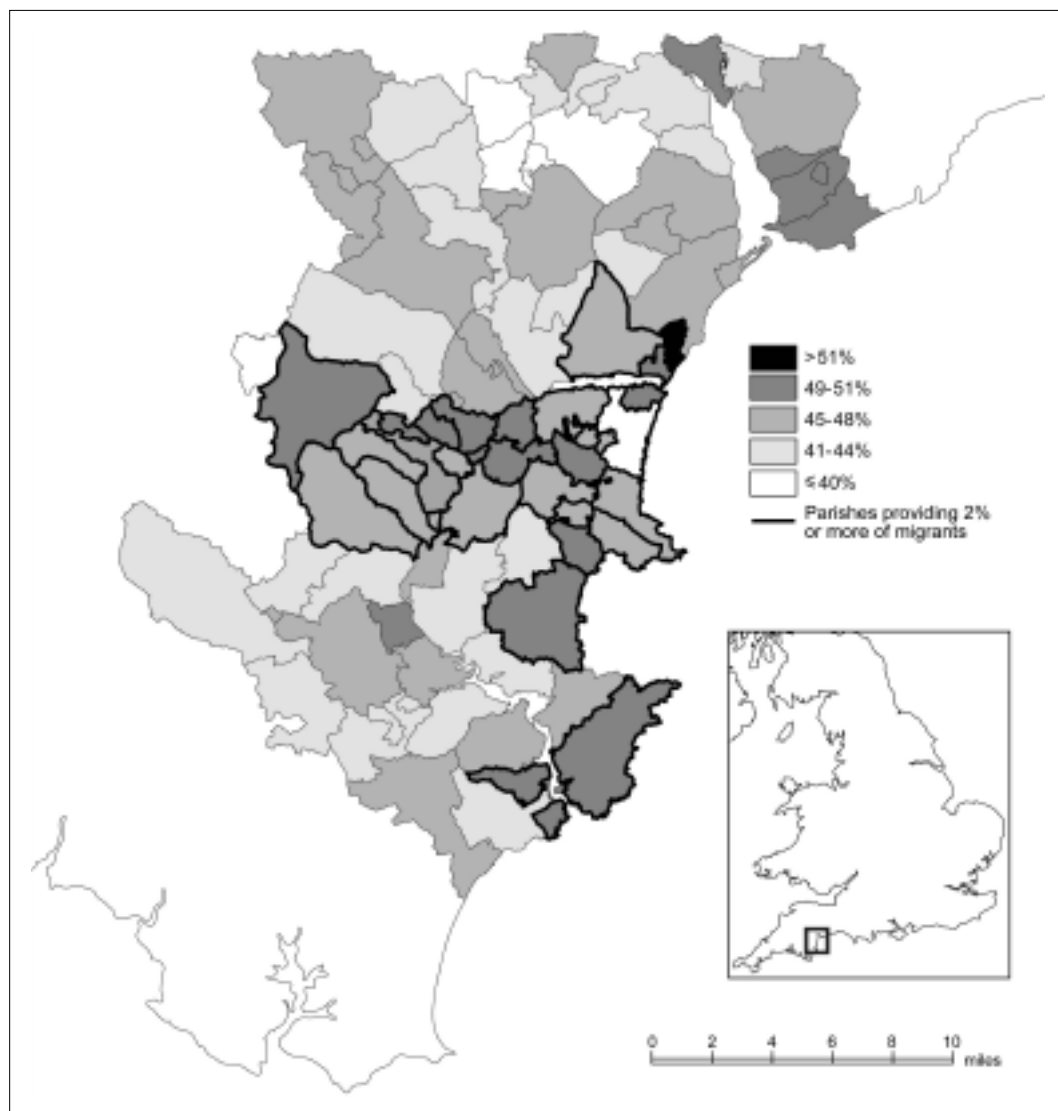
It is more difficult to estimate the annual net migration within the area over the study period. Figures for parish populations calculated from the Compton Census, Bishop's Visitations, parish registers and 1811 census data show considerable net migration losses

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65 L.E. Troide ed., *The early journals and letters of Fanny Burney, volume 1: 1768–1773* (Oxford, 1988), 294; R.P. Chope ed., *Early tours in Devon and Cornwall*, 2nd edn (Newton Abbot, 1967 [1st edn 1918]), 237; W. Clowes, *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (London, 1843), 93.

66 Hardy, 'Exe-Dart', 132–9.

Figure 4 Percentage of males, by parish, 1811, showing parishes sending migrants to Newfoundland



**Source:** 1811 census report; W. G. Handcock, *So longe as there comes noe women: origins of English settlement in Newfoundland* (St John's, Newfoundland, 1989), 167 (table 8.1).

in the period 1676–1811 (see Table 4). From 1801 to 1851, data is available from the census and parish records, and similarly high net migration is shown, with the exception of Stokeinteignhead (see Table 5). In 1851, St Saviour's (Dartmouth) reported further population losses by emigration 'due to lack of employment and depressed trade', which is evident in the figures.<sup>67</sup> The destinations are unknown, but migration was

<sup>67</sup> WCSL, bound volume of census data for Devon, 1801–1901, 47 n.

**Table 3 Age distributions by sex, 1841**

**(a) Port parishes**

Age group	Topsham			Teignmouth			Dartmouth		
	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)
0–5	263	267	98	231	246	93	243	257	94
6–10	249	236	105	236	267	88	261	263	99
11–15	181	214	84	252	234	107	239	245	97
16–20	137	180	76	179	241	74	185	238	77
21–25	112	196	57	136	291	46	128	275	46
26–30	118	162	72	120	236	50	139	181	76
31–35	110	147	74	97	183	53	121	177	70
36–40	81	110	73	95	141	67	78	125	62
41–45	80	124	64	87	154	56	112	180	62
46–50	61	80	76	106	244	43	82	139	58
51–55	82	89	92	110	171	64	108	139	77
56–60	41	61	67	65	69	94	49	80	61
61–65	51	65	78	56	74	75	51	83	61
66–70	27	36	75	32	53	60	37	55	67
71–75	28	37	75	32	55	58	49	61	80
76–80	16	26	61	17	13	130	25	29	86
80+	11	28	39	13	27	48	19	21	90

**Source:** Census of England and Wales, 1841, 'Ages of Persons': <http://www.histpop.org/> [6 March 2012].

**(b) Mariner parishes**

Age group	Combeinteignhead			Stokeinteignhead			St Nicholas		
	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	Male	Female	Sex ratio (males per 100 females)
0–5	37	29	127	39	45	86	80	99	80
6–10	29	21	138	39	27	144	70	85	82
11–15	30	34	88	44	38	115	43	74	58
16–20	13	20	65	29	33	87	26	100	26
21–25	17	10	170	23	24	95	27	50	54
26–30	11	18	61	22	28	78	23	56	41
31–35	10	11	90	5	7	71	18	24	75
36–40	6	13	46	12	14	85	20	49	40
41–45	8	13	61	15	23	65	15	44	34
46–50	9	12	75	19	18	105	27	52	51
51–55	10	4	250	9	8	112	17	15	113
56–60	11	12	91	12	10	120	20	33	60
61–65	8	7	114	7	6	116	15	13	115
66–70	3	5	60	9	8	112	9	28	32
71–75	2	5	40	5	7	71	10	7	142
76–8	1	2	50	2	1	200	6	11	54
80+	1	4	25	2	4	50	1	3	33

**Sources:** HO 107/262/19; HO 107/264/5; HO 107/263/24–5 of 1841 census microfilm.

**Table 4 Annual migration rates in selected parishes, 1676–1744 and 1744–1811 (1676–1779 and 1779–1811 for Dartmouth/St Saviour's)**

	(a) Pop. est. for 1676	(b) Pop. est. for 1744	(c) Baptisms minus burials, 1676–1744	(d) (a) + (c)	(e) (b) – (d)	(f) Migration rate (per '000/year) 1676–1744	(g) Baptisms minus burials 1745–1811	(h) (b) + (g)	(i) Pop. in 1811	(j) (i) – (h)	(k) Migration rate (per '000/year) 1744–1811
St Nicholas	300	360	*	*	*	*	437	797	772	-25	-1.03
Stokeinteignhead	600	360	-123	477	-117	-2.86	290	650	669	19	0.78
Combeinteignhead	560	315	-52	508	-183	-4.8	201	516	409	-107	-5.06
Dartmouth/ St Saviour's	4,350	1,800	-1,465	2,885	-1,085	-3.65	597	2,397	1,861	-536	-9.3
		1779	1676–1779	1676–1779	1779–1811	1676–1779	1779–1811				1779–1811

**Sources:** A. Whiteman ed., *The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition* (London, 1986); DRO, parish registers; Friends of Devon Archives, Bishop's Visitations, 1744 and 1779.

**Notes:** (1) The population estimate for 1676 is calculated by multiplying the figure in the Compton census by 1.5. The figures for Devon are considered to be for all adults aged sixteen and over, so the low multiplier has been used to give approximate totals. (Whiteman, *Compton*, lxxxiv, cxiii, Appendix E; also A. Whiteman, 'The Compton Census of 1676' and T. Arkell, 'A method for estimating population totals from the Compton census returns', both in K. Schurer and T. Arkell eds, *Surveying the people* (Oxford, 1992), 78–116. The estimate for 1744 (Dartmouth/St Saviour's, 1779) is calculated by multiplying the figure for families given in the episcopal returns by 4.5.

(2) The parish records for St Nicholas are discontinuous for the earlier period.

**Table 5 Inter-censal net migration rates in selected parishes, 1801–1851**

	1801–11	1811–21	1821–31	1831–41	1841–51
St Nicholas	7.96	–1.72	–1.02	–12.32	4.04
Stokeinteignhead	11.41	–21.4	–5.03	–10.39	–0.98
Combeinteignhead	–25.38	–11.33	6.01	–6.99	–4.65
Dartmouth/St Saviour's	–0.22	3.51	–9.55	–2.96	–14

**Source:** DRO, parish registers; WCSL, Devon census statistics, 1801–1901.

**Notes:** (1) Rates were calculated using inter-censal average populations and DRO, parish registers. See A. Hinde, *Demographic methods* (London, 1998), 191–5.

(2) In 1801 and 1851, the census was taken in March, in 1841 in June; the others were in May. These differences were taken into account when counting births and deaths in the registers, but the dates could also affect the proportion away at sea.

familiar here. Even allowing for the limited validity of the figures, and some small base numbers, the migration rates appear to be above average and show considerable variations. For English net migration for the period, Wrigley and Schofield's highest figure is just 1.05.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Newfoundland trade contributed to seasonal, temporary and later permanent overseas migration from the Exe-Dart region of Devon during the period 1600–1850. Within Devon, in the case of poor former migrants, the overland movements tended to be by steps, often only across one parish, or sometimes several, at a time. However, some moved over considerable distances and time in relation to their Newfoundland migration. That Newton Abbot was the main recruitment centre, for both Dartmouth and Teign estuary merchants, seems to have been known a considerable distance inland along the eastern and northern edges of Dartmoor. While the two higher classes of participants in the trade were responding mainly to the potential for economic gain, the servants depicted in their examinations were influenced both by negative circumstances in Devon and the possibility of employment—and perhaps by a desire for adventure. It is thought that before the nineteenth century the bye-boat keepers were the most likely to emigrate long-term or permanently, but this remains unproven.

The Newfoundland trade appears to have at least contributed to mainly negative migration rates, but other migration streams may have been involved. Future research should consider the extent of migration to other areas within and beyond Devon, although this would be difficult to ascertain before 1841; in addition, more detailed work on Teignmouth would be useful. Other areas within Devon could also be considered: did the

68 E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541–1871: a reconstruction*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2002 [1st edn 1981]), 40, 219, 485–6.

Plymouth-Newfoundland trade have a similar effect on the areas south and west of Dartmoor? Since Dorset provided a further 29 per cent of English Newfoundland emigrants from 1755–1884, what were the effects there and in south Somerset?<sup>69</sup> The full extent of the impact of a localised overseas trade's influence on migration patterns has yet to be discovered.

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<sup>69</sup> Hancock, *So longe*, 147.