Conclusion

This study has investigated the maritime involvement in the wars conducted by Edward II and Edward III between 1320 and 1360, a 40-year period that certainly witnessed England's greatest military endeavours of the middle ages.[1] The kings of England were, for much of this time, engaged in two inter-related wars against two other kingdoms. The militarisation of sections of England's population had been gathering pace since the wars initiated by Edward I in the 1280s.[2] This study has aimed to demonstrate that it was not only the English landed community that felt the impact of these wars, but also the maritime sections of society. Indeed, to analyse fully the effects of the wars on England's society and economy one needs to take account of all aspects of the war effort. Edward III did not assemble 14,000 men for the Crécy expedition; he actually recruited 30,000, as he also raised 16,000 mariners to serve on board the ships that transported his army. This point is pertinent to every campaign of the period and obliges us to radically revise our estimates of recruitment and demands on the population.[3]

The book began by examining the hidden bureaucratic procedures that underpinned the raising of a fleet in the fourteenth century. It showed that behind what, on the surface, looks like a simple procedure was in fact a complex operation organised by a skilled administrative staff who were capable of organising large numbers of men and ships and deploying them, at the same point in time, into functioning fleets. The book also examined the maritime contribution to the logistical operation and showed that its support in this process was perhaps the

[1] Cf., J. Sherborne, 'The cost of English warfare with France', which demonstrates that the warfare between 1369 and 1380 was both intensive and costly.

[2] This process is amply dealt with by D. Simpkin, *The English aristocracy at war*, particularly Chapter 1.

[3] This is an important point to note. For example, K. B. McFarlane, 'War, the economy and social change: England and the hundred years war', *Past and Present* 22 (July, 1962), pp. 3–18 makes no mention of the maritime element of the campaigns or the manpower, and money, required to put it into operation when he discusses the effects of the war on England, even though he includes a detailed analysis of the land-based armies in his account and what effect raising such numbers of men had on society. However, M. M. Postan, 'The cost of the Hundred Years War', did include the maritime manpower in his assessment.

most important part of any campaign, underpinning the land-based expeditions of the period. In fact the process of collecting and distributing victuals by sea was as complex as the methods employed when raising a fleet. The campaigns in Scotland, regardless of whether they were successful or not, were proven to be supported by meticulous planning of supply provision. In addition to the arrangements made for invading armies, it was also shown that the survival of English garrisons within Scotland relied on provisioning by sea. With regard to continental wars it was argued that English armies, far from living off the land when campaigning in France, were well supplied with foodstuffs and military equipment. Indeed, if the Reims campaign were included in the overall totals recorded in Table 2.9, the supply of victuals for continental campaigns would far outstrip those quantities shipped to Scotland.

In the analysis of the transport fleets of the period we discovered that in terms of numbers of ships the English merchant fleet was more than capable of meeting the increasing demands of the crown. Particularly so, because of the methodology adopted here, the overall the number of individual ships recorded in Table 4.2 could be in error by 30 per cent, which would still mean that relatively large numbers of vessels operated in this period. This study has, therefore, illuminated the vital role played by England's maritime communities in the wars of Edward II and Edward III. Their commitment to the expeditions of these two kings in terms of manpower and money was equal to that of the land-based elements of the campaigns. Furthermore, the reign of Edward III witnessed a series of administrative experiments designed to simplify the fleet raising procedures. These new developments also had the advantage of decreasing the complaints from the merchant class and parliament. In short, the sophisticated administrative systems developed by Edward III unlocked and tapped into the resources that the crown required in order to prosecute a largely successful continental war after 1340.

The number of ships that participated throughout the campaigns in Scotland and France was immense, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the English merchant fleet in the fourteenth century was larger than has been previously appreciated. When we consider the involvement of thousands of mariners with the demands for supplies, and the system that ensured their collection, as well as taking into account the land-based forces that also operated concurrently with these two facets of the war effort, it can be stated fairly conclusively that England's population felt the effects of total war. From 1322 to 1360 there was not a single manor, vill, town or port that did not supply foodstuffs, military supplies, manpower, ships or the other materiel of war. Every section of the population from the peasant to the king was involved in the wars of the period. The peasants worked the land which supplied the food; the merchants and clerks arranged for this to be collected, stored and distributed it to the armies; the merchant marine provided the instruments to freight provender, horses and men to the theatres of war; the landed gentry supplied the brute force required for the *chevauchées* and battles of the wars; and the clergy prayed for success in the expeditions

whilst issuing propaganda for the kings.[4] By 1360 England's maritime communities had supplied thousands of ships and tens of thousands of men for service in the campaigns. Indeed, comparisons between the quotations at the beginning of this book and the findings of the study prompts the conclusion that rather than a barrier, a dangerous obstacle that was best crossed infrequently, the sea and the people who worked on it, were the main artery in England's wars, trade and communication with the other kingdoms of Europe. This achievement by England's medieval maritime communities was not forgotten. Nearly five hundred years later, when England faced another threat from the continent, in the guise of Napoleon, the British looked back to the maritime achievements of Edward III to provide them with the inspiration and the courage to face the threat by taking stock of the past victories and successes when the merchant fleet, that of fourteenth-century England, was called upon to take the war to the enemy for its kings.[5]

4 For the level of gentry support, see A. Ayton, 'Edward III and the English aristocracy', but see also A. Ayton and P. Preston, *The battle of Crécy*, Chapter 5 in which Dr. Ayton assesses the English army including a discussion on the non-aristocratic element in a major Edwardian army. The wide-ranging affects on the general population of the Scottish and French wars had been noted by W. R. Jones, 'The English church and royal propaganda during the hundred years war', *JBS* 19 (1979), pp. 18–30, p. 18.

5 In 1803 an opera was performed at Covent Garden to an important audience by a well-known and famous cast to provide inspiration for the coming naval war against Napoleon. It was entitled *The Fleet of 1342* and was composed by John Braham and Thomas Dibdin and was received with rapturous applause. It can now be found in the rare collections in the Maritime History Museum at Greenwich, PBE 6737.