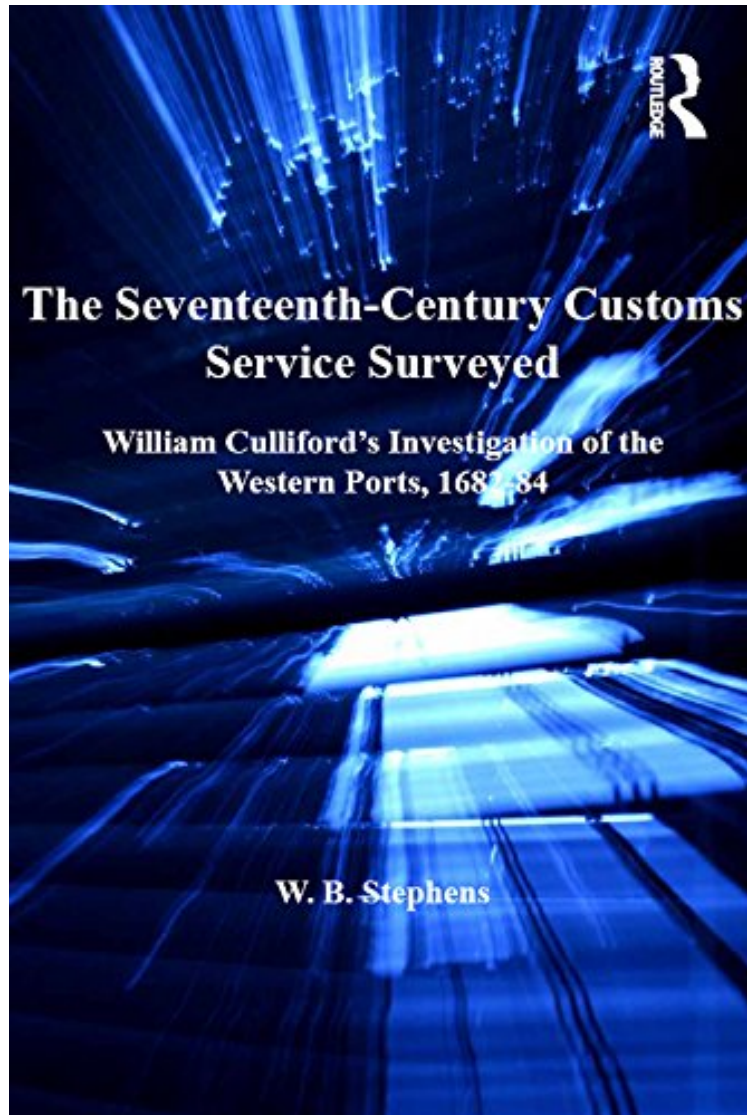


[Ebook pdf] The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682-84

The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682-84

William B. Stephens

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William B. Stephens : The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682-84 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682-84:

In January 1682, William Culliford, a loyal and experienced officer in the King's customs service, began an extraordinary journey under Treasury orders to investigate the integrity and efficiency of the customs establishments of southwest England and south Wales as part of a drive to maximize the Crown's income from customs duties (on which it relied for much of its revenue). Starting at Bristol, Culliford eventually completed this daunting task in Cornwall over two years later in the spring of 1684. His report on each of the ports he inspected (the primary source for this book) revealed widespread smuggling and fraud in the context of a customs service both lacking in efficiency and riddled with corruption. The book documents the varied frauds and wide-ranging abuses uncovered and their facilitation by customs officers only too ready to collude with smugglers, dishonest merchants and seamen and to accept bribes to ignore tax evasion. It describes, too, Culliford's assessment of the administrative practices of each port inspected and his judgment on the levels of probity and efficiency of individual officers, detailing his recommendations for procedural improvements and the treatment of the corrupt and incompetent and, incidentally, of those suspected of political and religious dissent. Additionally, the book presents a body of statistical data on the customs revenue actually collected at individual ports in the 1670s and 1680s and surveys the extent and nature of the maritime trade of the ports Culliford examined. It thus not only throws light on the history of the customs service, but provides a rare insight into the interactions of economic, social and political issues in the later seventeenth century, and makes a valuable contribution to the particular histories of the ports and maritime districts visited by this energetic and tenacious investigator.

'Stephens uses his great expertise in West Country local history effectively in a book that will be troubling for maritime trade historians, valuable for those concerned with the history of any English port between Swansea and Plymouth in the later Stuart period, and necessary for those studying the history of English governance and the customs service on the eve of Monmouth's rising.' *International Journal of Maritime History* 'Stephens provides an extremely useful breakdown of the Customs anatomy in the provincial ports... I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in understanding the huge alternative economy that characterized late seventeenth-century England.' *Journal of British Studies* 'In reality Stephen's book is much more than a survey of the late seventeenth century customs service, casting valuable light on the nature of south-western merchant and maritime communities, patterns of trade and shipping, together with local politics and religion during the 1680s. As such, it cannot be recommended highly enough.' *Southern History* 'The story of Culliford's purge in the Westcountry is told in this book in a highly readable and engaging manner. Dr Stephens manages to combine his erudition and considerable scholarship with a lightness of touch and accessibility. It is a beautifully written book. Ashgate titles are, of course, invariably produced to an exceptionally high standard; this book is no exception. It is moreover one of those rare research texts that has genuinely wide appeal.' *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* '... smuggling deserves to be the subject of 'serious history' after all.' *Urban History* About the Author Over a career as Deputy General Editor of the *Victoria County Histories*, as Reader in the University of Leeds and as Hon. Research Fellow at University College London, Dr Stephens has published widely in the fields of economic and social history and in English and US local history.