



Family History Indexes

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Seamen's Crew Lists

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Seamen's Crew Lists, 1851



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Seamen's Crew Lists

BT 98

BT 98 Seamen's Agreement and Crew Lists, 1851.

The reason for choosing to index the Merchant Seaman Crew Agreement Lists (CAL) for the year of 1851 are: firstly, this is a census year in which the men on ships were not necessarily recorded in the census; secondly, at this period, the authorities were attempting a registration process where they kept a Register of Seaman that, provided it is filled up properly, has a great deal of information about the men, date & place of birth, height, hair & eye colour, the date they first went to sea and where they lived when not at sea.

By the middle of the nineteenth century impressment was no longer an acceptable method of recruiting for the Royal Navy and the Merchant Shipping Act (1835) was passed and introduced a Register of Seamen in order to keep track of experienced sailors. All sailors from Britain and the Empire would be allocated a numbered Seaman's Ticket. This would be handed to the Master of the vessel on joining and he would enter the name, place of birth and Seaman's Ticket Number (STN) in the Log Book & transfer it to the CAL. When a seaman was discharged, his Ticket would be returned to him. The registration of Merchant Seamen proved a cumbersome and difficult process that went through a variety of experiments in an attempt to find a workable system. It was eventually abandoned when the Royal Navy adopted fixed term enlistment periods, though the keeping of the CAL continued.

For administrative purposes the Merchant Shipping Trade was divided into two types: those engaged in Foreign Trade and those involved in Home (coastal) Trade. All ships had to fill up an Agreement between the Master and the Crew for the journeys undertaken. Apart from the possibility that some men lied and gave false details, a central problem with the registration system was that the Masters were there to sail ships and not to fill out government papers. Thus the accuracy of the CAL cannot be entirely relied upon.

Crew Agreement Lists:

There were five main papers that constituted the CAL but not all have survived for each journey or period.

- Schedule A: Agreement Foreign Trade – List of men serving on the ship, giving age & place of birth, to be handed in within twenty-four hours of return to any UK port.
- Schedule B: Agreement Home Trade – List of men serving, to be handed in to any UK port within thirty days of the end of the period.
- Schedule C: List of Crew, Foreign Trade, giving details of changes during voyage, to be handed in within twenty-four to forty-eight hours of return to any UK port.
- Schedule D: Account of voyages and crew, Home Trade - to be handed in to any UK port within twenty-one days of the end of the period.
- Schedule G: Names and Ticket Numbers of Seamen on Foreign Trade – to be handed in before sailing from any UK port.

The Foreign Trade ships would list the men, with their place of birth, age, STN, the date they joined the ship, where they joined, when, where and why they left the ship. A second copy of the CAL, with the signatures of the men, would repeat the details of the crew and give a brief description of what voyage was intended. Some had a specific journey stated, others had the first port of call, then a general sentence covering future voyages in that area and a time limit for the ship to be away from UK, typically one or two years. Part of this copy had a list of ration allowances for the crew covering both food and alcohol and a list of the numbers from the Regulations for Maintaining Discipline (see below).

The Agreements, along with the Seamen's Tickets, would be handed in to the British Consul of any port where the ship called. The Consul would note on the back that he received the documentation, then handed it back. Changes of crew should be sanctioned by the Consul. He should note on the back of the Agreement when a man left the ship, whether it was by mutual consent or desertion and whether he had been paid any wages due. It is often here, on the back of the Agreement, that it would be noted if a man was being discharged to serve on a RN ship or perhaps he had been sentenced to a term of imprisonment for refusing to do his duty while on board. Occasionally, when foreigners were shipped as crew the Consul would note there were no British crew available.

Most of the foreign trade ships had papers that were reasonably accurate when they left Britain. The majority kept a good record of the changes, though it is obvious some gave dates and other details from recollection once they arrived home. Other papers with the CAL are a list giving the Master's opinion of the men's seamanship ability and conduct and one signed by the crew acknowledging they had been paid.

The documentation was handed in at the first port of call in the UK, within twenty-four to forty-eight hours of arrival. This is one reason why there are so many gaps when following men through the system. The CAL would claim the men would be continuing on the same ship, but they would not be there on the subsequent voyage. Having handed in the documentation at the first port of call, the men would stay with the vessel till it reached its home port, before being discharged. This latter voyage would not be covered by the documentation. The ship would take on a new crew at home, head to one of the larger ports to pick up cargo and passengers for their next voyage, the paperwork would then be filled up and the new crew would give the current ship as their previous service.

Ships engaged in the Home trade filled out two sets of CAL a year, each covered a six month period, January – June and then July – December. There should be two papers for each period. One page had the details of the men along with a description of the voyages, while the second page, (frequently missing) had the men's signatures or marks X. The detail given of the journeys varied. Some had dates, places and cargo carried, others would merely say "involved in the coasting trade". It should be noted that many masters considered a quick trip to the western coast of Europe, Antwerp, Rouen, Nantes etc, as part of the coasting trade.

The Home Trade CALs had the same detail as the Foreign Trade vessels and while some are well kept with accurate detail of movements of the crew, others are quite frankly fiction. With the latter you tend to get a snapshot of who was serving either at the beginning or the end of the period with no record of any comings or goings. They claim one crew as having served the whole six months and those serving at 30 June would remain on board the vessel, only to have a completely different crew on the next List. Those sailors on the July – December List give their current ship as the previous ship served and again say they have served the whole period. This can result in a man appearing to serve in two ships at the same time.

The CAL could be handed in at any port and would be sent to the Board of Trade in London. A number of papers appear not to have found their way to London or have been misfiled. The details of the journeys taken should have been extracted and entered against the sailors entry in the Register of Seamen (PRO Series BT 113). This proved cumbersome and time consuming and was not always done. The information is entered in the form of a code, the full key to which has not survived. Thanks to the work of Chris and Michael Watts it is partly understood and the PRO information leaflets (Domestic Records Information 113 & 114) explain how you can attempt to follow your sailor's career, once you have his Ticket Number. There is a semi-alphabetical index to BT 113 in BT 114 and a couple of men have been found by using it but it is a bit hit and miss.

FORMAT OF THE INDEX:

SURNAME:

The spelling is as on the CAL. If there are different spellings on the same set of papers I have put an aka, If the man features on another ship and it is spelt differently then I have not.

FORENAME:

As given.

SHIP:

Where there are two ships of the same name registered at the same Port I have put the date of registration in brackets by the name eg AGNES(7/1844) of Scilly & AGNES(7/1848) of Scilly.

TRADE:

Home and/or Foreign Trade, many ships did both.

AGE:

As given, this can vary from ship to ship.

PLACE OF BIRTH:

The spellings are as on the documents. Sometimes you get just the parish, sometimes just the county and sometimes both. Where both are given I have put eg St Ives, CWL. Occasionally you get one birthplace on one page and something else on a second page, I have then separated it with a backslash, eg Truro/DEV

TICKET NO:

The number given for the Master is generally the Master's Ticket Number though sometimes it is possible it is his STN. Occasionally they document that a number is the Master's STN and I have put that in the Comments Column. Mostly the numbers are the STN that can be found in BT 113. Many of the Mates have Mate's Tickets Numbers, which appears to be the same as a Masters Ticket Number and I have put that in the Comments Column.

The STN is occasionally wrong. They had the same problem with 3, 5 & 8 and 1 & 7 as we do today and sometimes accidentally put in another man's number. Where there are two different STN on the same set of documents I have consulted the Register (BT113) and put the correct number in the index. If a wrong number has been put down throughout the record of a journey, I have left it there. Thus if you search the Index you may find the same man with two different but similar numbers.

RANK:

Some men are employed in two roles eg Cook & Steward. Others change role while on the ship eg Cook/Ord Seaman.

DATE JOINED:

As on the CAL but sometimes they are inaccurate, see above.

PLACE JOINED:

As given.

DATE LEFT:

As on the CAL but sometimes they are inaccurate, see above.

PLACE LEFT:

As given.

WHY LEFT:

It is worth noting that those who deserted did not always stay where they left the ship. Some can be picked up returning to UK on another ship, eg John Johns who deserted the ROYAL ADELAIDE of Fowey in Quebec on 15 June 1851 can be picked up shipping on the JANE LOWDEN of Padstow on 27 June 1851. I had assumed they were drunk again and missed the ship but Chris Watts tells me that men who engaged for a return journey got higher rate of pay. Some men got an advance on their wages before they joined the ship, then notched up so many fines for bad behaviour they deserted because they were in debt to the ship.

PREVIOUS SHIP:

This is not always accurate see above. Sometimes if they served a short period on a ship they would not give that but the one before that as their previous ship.

COMMENTS:

Here, anything out of the ordinary is noted, including incidences of wrong filing - where papers for one port are in the piece number of another.

REFERENCE:

The PRO piece number.

This list of regulations is attached to many of the Agreements and gives an insight into what was expected of the men.

Regulations for Maintaining Discipline Sanctioned by the Board of Trade,

In pursuance of the Mercantile Marine Act, 13 & 14, Vict.,
c. 93 ss. 46, 79, 86.

These Regulations are distinct from and in addition to, those contained in the Act, and are sanctioned by, but not universally required, by Law. All or any of them may be adopted by agreement between the Master and his Crew, and thereupon the Offences specified in such of them as are adopted will be legally punishable by the appropriate Fines or Punishments. These Regulations are all numbered, and the numbers of such of them as are adopted must be inserted in the space left for that purpose in the Agreement, and a copy of these Regulations must be made to correspond with the Agreement by erasing such of the regulations as are not adopted, and must then be attached to, and kept with, the Agreement which the Master of the Ship takes to sea with him. If the Agreement is made before a Shipping Master, his signature must be placed opposite such of the Regulations as are adopted.

For the purpose of legally enforcing any of the following penalties, a statement of the Offence must, immediately after its commission, be entered in the Official Log Book by the direction of the Master, and must at the same time be attested to be true by the signature of the Mate, or, if there is no Mate by the Carpenter, Boatswain, or one of the oldest members of the Crew. If the punishment is a Fine, this entry must, upon discharge of the Crew, be shown to the Shipping Master before whom the Crew is discharged, or, in the case of a Home Trade Ship, to some Shipping Master at or near the place where the Crew is discharged; and if he is satisfied that it has been properly and truly made and attested, the Fine must be deducted from the Offender's wages, and paid over to the Shipping Master.

If, in consequence of subsequent Good Conduct, the Master thinks fit to remit or reduce any fine incurred by any Member of his Crew which has been entered in the Log, and signifies the same to the Shipping Master, the Fine shall be remitted or reduced accordingly. If Wages are contracted for by the Voyage or by Share, the amount of the Fines is to be ascertained in the manner in which the Amount of Forfeiture is ascertained in similar cases under 7 & 8 Vict., c. 112, s.8.

OFFENCE**FINE**

1	Not Being on Board at the time fixed by the Agreement	Two Days Pay
2	Not returning on Board at the expiration of Leave	One Days Pay
3	Insolence or contemptuous language or behaviour towards the Master or any Mate	One Days Pay
4	Striking or assaulting any person on Board or belonging to the Ship	Two Days Pay
5	Quarrelling or provoking a quarrel	One Days Pay
6	Swearing or using improper language	One Days Pay
7	Bringing or having on Board spirituous liquors	Three Days Pay
8	Carrying a sheath knife	One Days Pay
9a	Drunkenness: First offence	Two Days half-allowance of Provisions
9b	Drunkenness: Second offence	Two Days Pay
10	Neglect on the part of the Officer in charge of the Watch to place the look out properly	Two Days Pay
11	Sleeping or gross negligence while on the look out	Two Days Pay
12	Not extinguishing lights at the times ordered	One Days Pay
13	Smoking below	One Days Pay
14	Neglecting to bring up, open out, and air bedding, when ordered	Half a Days Pay
15	(for the cook) – Not having any Meal of the Crew ready at the appointed time	One Days Pay
16	Not attending to Divine Service on Sunday unless prevented to by sickness or duty of the Ship	One Days Pay
17	Interrupting Divine Service by indecorous conduct	One Days Pay
18	Not being clean, shaved, and washed, on Sundays	One Days Pay
19	Washing clothes on a Sunday	One Days Pay
20	Secreting contraband goods on Board with intent to smuggle	One Months Pay
21	Destroying or defacing the copy of the Agreement which is made accessible to the Crew	One Days Pay
22	If any Officer is guilty of any act or default which is made subject to a fine, he shall be liable to a Fine of twice the number of Day's Pay which would be exacted for a like Act of Default from a Seaman, and such a Fine shall be paid and applied in the same manner as other Fines.	

Bibliography

Kelvin Smith, Christopher T Watts and Michael J Watts, *Records of Merchant Shipping and Seaman*. (PRO Publications, Kew, 1998)

Christopher T Watts and Michael J Watts, *My Ancestor was a Merchant Seaman: How can I find out more about him?* (Society of Genealogists, London, 1991)

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made in the production and checking of this index, no warranty as to its accuracy can be made. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracy or incompleteness whatsoever.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Rosie Bailey for the sketch of the seamen.

[Other publications available from Family History Indexes](#)

(i)

My main project during the past eight years has been to index entries in the **Criminal Registers** in Class HO 27 at the PRO. My interest in and knowledge of the Public Records started following the discovery of a great great grandmother, Hannah Mayes from Leicestershire, who was sentenced to transportation in 1825. She had stolen a sovereign and five shillings' worth of half-pence. Having found an entry for her in the Criminal Registers in Class HO 27, I started to transcribe these and have so far published on microfiche, floppy disk and CD-ROM over fifty volumes of indexes, starting in 1805 and covering the whole of the country. I have a database currently growing beyond 75,000 entries.

(ii)

"PRONames 1", "PRONames 2" and "PRONames 3" are indexes to miscellaneous personal names occurring in documents at the Public Record Office. Each collection is available on disk and contains over **10,000 records** from a variety of sources. Entries are sorted alphabetically by surname and several personal details are given for each record as well as the full PRO document reference number. You should be lucky enough to find somebody in here whose name can be found on your tree!

(iii)

The Jutland Roll of Honour. Everybody has a relation who served in the First World War and, with 1998's release of Naval ratings' records of service, let us have a look at the members of the senior service. *PRONames 2* incorporates a list of casualties from the Battle of Jutland in 1916 - both killed and wounded. These entries have been expanded from the *PRONames* format and compiled into a separate publication - ***The Jutland Roll of Honour***, which is available on both fiche and disk. It lists all those appearing in the Admiralty Registers of Killed and Wounded but a cross-check has also been performed on lists published during the War. Each man's fate is shown and several supplementary lists are included to record notes and discrepancies. Details and dimensions of each ship at the Battle are included as well as a record of its casualties.

(iv)

Criminal Lunatics is a database of 614 records, indexing the names of all the patients recorded in a document referenced HO 20/13 at the Public Record Office. This is a very interesting book which reads from both ends. At the front is the register of Bethlem Hospital with much more than just the names of the patients. At the other end, is a list of Criminal Lunatics from around the country who were held in County institutions or occasionally who were released into the custody of individuals.

(v)

Cornwall Railway is a database of 457 records, listing and indexing the names of all the men employed by the Cornwall Railway at the time of its take-over by the Great Western Railway Company on 15 June 1889. The basic information from PRONames 2 has been expanded to record the men's names, occupations, places of work and wages or salaries (from the Engineer at £900 per annum to the mason's lad at 4s0d per week); the dates of entering service (for the officers & clerks and the Traffic Department) and dates of birth also for the officers & clerks.

(vi)

Prisoners Pardoned (Class HO 13, from 1782) will help to get you back before the early nineteenth century in a series almost as important as the Criminal Registers themselves. Copies were kept of the Home Secretary's correspondence relating to prisoners and their supporters in the *Criminal Entry Books*. Each original volume, covering approximately a year, contains a contemporary listing, usually alphabetised by surname of those involved, in sections relating to pardons (free and conditional), references, remissions, respites and warrants particular. The indexes are being released in volumes corresponding to the originals. Details given are name, alias, court, notes, type of record and PRO reference. The whole of England & Wales is covered in each volume.

(vii)

Musters of the Militia (Class WO 13, 1781-82). The Militia Act of 1757 provided for men to serve in the militia at home in order to counter any threat arising while the majority of the regular army was stationed abroad. Lists of eligible men in each parish were known as militia ballot lists and from these, the men actually chosen appeared in the *militia lists* which are often to be found in county record offices. At the Public Record Office, however, are the muster and pay lists in series WO 13. These record the men actually serving and the indexes provide details for each man at the three or four musters during the two year period for which records survive. County regiments, although recruited locally, often served away from home and these indexes tell precisely where, under whom and on what dates the men were mustered. There are sixty-five volumes covering the whole of England & Wales.

(viii)

Military Courts (1879-1994). Completely cross-referenced, this publication lists name, date, offence and type of proceedings, along with other details where available, such as rank, unit and related documents. Includes a number of civilians as well as a wide range of offences.

(ix)

Everton Necropolis (Liverpool, Low Hill Cemetery - Burials, 1825-1827)
In the mid-nineteenth century, this register was surrendered to the Non-Parochial Registers Commission and is now in the custody of the PRO. The index includes many details from the originals including parents of deceased children, ministers and causes of death.

(x)

Naval Marriages In response to Admiralty orders, many original certificates and certified entries, together with covering letters, were sent from all parts of the world to ensure that widows' claims could be verified when the need arose. The Admiralty's own index is reproduced in this publication covering 1806-1866.

(xi)

The Dambusters, 1943 This is an account of each aircraft's flight, including a full crew list and details of awards made, compiled from the Operations Record Book of 617 Squadron.

Stuart Tamblin, January 2002

Useful addresses, telephone numbers and World Wide Web sites:

Public Record Office

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Federation of Family History Societies

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That Palace by the Thames - the Public Record Office, Kew.

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Sample

Abbot William

Current Ship: EMPRESS of Scilly Trade: Foreign
 Age: 18
 Born: CAE Ticket No: 229977
 Apprentice
 Date Joined: 26 Apr 1847 Place Joined: Indentured at Sutherland
 Date Left: Bef 11 Dec 1851 Place Left: Why Left:
 Previous Ship:
 Comments:
 BT 98/: 2702

Abbott John

Current Ship: ALERT of Fowey Trade: Home
 Age: 22
 Born: CWL Ticket No: 39625
 Mate
 Date Joined: 22 Apr 1851 Place Joined: Fowey
 Date Left: Remains Place Left: Why Left:
 Previous Ship: WISH of Plymouth
 Comments:
 BT 98/: 2489

Abraham Richard

Current Ship: NEED of Fowey Trade: Home
 Age: 21
 Born: St Veep Ticket No: 36724
 Seaman
 Date Joined: 23 Jun 1851 Place Joined: Fowey
 Date Left: Remains Place Left: Why Left:
 Previous Ship: CHARLOTTE & MARIA of Fowey
 Comments: aka Abram
 BT 98/: 2490

Abram Richard

Current Ship: CHARLOTTE & MARIA of Fowey Trade: Home
 Age: 21
 Born: Fowey Ticket No: 36724
 Seaman
 Date Joined: 09 Jul 1850 Place Joined: Plymouth
 Date Left: bef 21 May 1851 Place Left: Why Left:
 Previous Ship: CHARLOTTE & MARIA of Fowey
 Comments:
 BT 98/: 2489
