

# Liverpool RECORD OFFICE

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## LIVERPOOL RECORD OFFICE, LOCAL STUDIES AND FAMILY HISTORY SERVICE

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For opening hours, some catalogues and development news, please  
visit our website at [www.liverpool.gov.uk/archives](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/archives)

Appointments are not essential for viewing sources on microfilm and  
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maps, photographs and watercolours. Please bring proof of name  
and address. You will be asked to leave any bags in lockers before  
consulting original material.

Annual closure for stock-taking and special projects 3rd and 4th weeks in  
June.



May 2008

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# RECORDS OF MERCHANT SEAMEN

INFORMATION LEAFLET - 14





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### INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of seamen have come from and passed through the port of Liverpool during its long history. This leaflet deals with how to find out about merchant seamen as opposed to men serving in the Royal Navy (see Leaflet 15 for this) and will give you an idea where to start a search.

These are the main repositories:

#### THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

There was no systematic registration of seamen before 1835. Many records formerly held by the Registrar General of Shipping & Seamen have been transferred to the National Archives. These include registers of certificates issued to mates (from 1845), engineers (from 1862) and skippers and mates of fishing boats (from 1880).

A series of useful research guides on merchant seamen can either be seen online at The National Archives website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) These cover such items as crew lists and agreements and registers of service.

#### SOUTHAMPTON ARCHIVES

Southampton has the Central Index Register of Seamen from 1918-1941. This takes the form of a number of card indexes, containing over a million cards. There are four main series: two arranged alphabetically and two by the number of the individual's discharge book. Contact: Southampton Archives Service, Civic Centre, Southampton SO14 7LY. Tel: 0238083 2251. email: [city.archives@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:city.archives@southampton.gov.uk) A research service is available at a cost per surname basis.

### GUILDHALL LIBRARY

Lloyds Captains' Registers give details of the careers of captains and/or mates on those vessels whose voyage details were lodged at Lloyds and cover the years 1869-1947. Earlier information (going back to 1851) is given for those who were still active in 1869. The Guildhall Library in London ([www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/leisure\\_heritage/libraries](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries)) has the best collection of these lists. Liverpool Record Office has NO Captains' Registers. Merseyside Maritime Museum (see below) has registers covering 1874-1887.

#### LIVERPOOL LIBRARIES CREW LISTS

Crew lists and agreements were completed for every British vessel before each voyage. The lists include crew names, ages, places of birth and various other details and are useful sources for the history of seamen's careers. They are listed however by the **name of the ship**.

We have a sample of crew lists, 1863-1913, with an alphabetical index of ships' names. A national project to index a sample of these lists by seamen's names called CLIP (Crew List Index Project) has led to a cd-rom being produced which includes references to 269,000 seafarers. A copy is available in the Record Office. Information can also be found online at [www.crewlist.org.uk](http://www.crewlist.org.uk)

Crew lists are also held by The National Archives (10% sample of crew lists and log



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books), the National Maritime Museum, London and the Maritime History Archive at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

### **BIRTHS AND DEATHS AT SEA**

We have the General Register Office indexes of Marine Births & Deaths from 1837-1965 on microfiche. The index will only give details of *reported* births and deaths and usually, in the case of deaths, gives the age at death of the deceased and the ship they were sailing on.

### **ARCHIVES**

We have some archives relating to seafarers.

These include:

*(Please note certain records under a hundred years old are closed under the Data Protection Act.)*

The Indefatigable & National Sea Training School for Boys, 1865-1995 (387 IND - on microfiche only).

Booth Line, 387 BOO/3 contains details of steamers voyages from 1866-1943

Cunard White Star Line, (387 WHI)  
Staff & crew registers 1894-1897 and 1914-1927. These consist of five volumes only, covering the cargo ships or supply vessels for the line. They also include two 'blacklist' books relating to the crew. The main Cunard archive is held at Liverpool University Special Collections.

Inman Steamship Company, 387 INM - Abstracts of ships' logs

### **BACKGROUND MATERIAL**

What was the life of a seaman once ashore in Liverpool? There are many references in the Local Studies Catalogue under the heading "Seamen" .

Two useful books have been published on this subject:

C T & M J Watts - *My ancestor was a merchant seaman: how can I find out more about him?* (2002) H 929.30883875 WAT

Imperial War Museum - *Tracing your family history-Merchant Navy* (2000) H 929.1028 IMP

There is also the Port Cities website which details the development of the Port of Liverpool at: [www.mersey-gateway.org](http://www.mersey-gateway.org)

### **LIVERPOOL SHIPS**

In addition to information on seamen the following sources can be used to find information on Liverpool ships:

Liverpool Customs Bills of Entry (Hf 382.05 CUS): bound in yearly volumes from 1841 to 1880 and then from 1917 to 1939. There is a set on microfilm from 1820, 1825-1837 and 1881-1917. They indicate the goods coming into the port but have no index. The Merseyside Maritime Museum also has a set.

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (387.2058 LLO): give information on where the vessel was built and who owned it. The master or captain is named between 1764 and 1921.



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From the 1870's the Register has tried to include all merchant vessels over 100 gross tons. Liverpool's set is housed in the Business and Technology Library.

Sea Breezes (Hq 387.205 IND): one of the main shipping periodicals and has a wealth of anecdotal articles about ships and shipping. Indexes have been published to non-military vessels covering the years 1920-1955.

Photographs: The Photographs and Small Prints Collection includes views of ships. An index is available at the enquiry desk of all the ship images at the Record Office.

Newspapers: Many of the early Liverpool newspapers were published mainly to give details of shipping movements in and out of Liverpool and are kept on microfilm. These include the Liverpool General Advertiser (1765-1876) and Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser (1756-1856). Both sets are incomplete.

### **OTHER REPOSITORIES**

MERSEYSIDE MARITIME MUSEUM,  
Albert Dock, Liverpool L3 4AQ  
tel.0151 478 4499;  
website: [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime)  
e-mail: [maritime.archives@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:maritime.archives@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

This has a major collection of materials covering Liverpool shipping companies and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company which ran the Port of Liverpool. It has similar holdings to Liverpool Record Office and may cover gaps. Liverpool Record Office has the guide to its records in two volumes (H026.387 GUI)



NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM,  
Greenwich, London SE10 9NF  
website: [www.nmm.ac.uk](http://www.nmm.ac.uk)

This contains the Caird Library "the largest and most significant reference library of its kind in the world."

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND,  
Maritime History Archive, St John's, NL AIC 5S7  
website: [www.mun.ca/mha/index.html](http://www.mun.ca/mha/index.html); e-mail:  
[mha@mun.ca](mailto:mha@mun.ca)

This collection mentioned above with regards to crew lists covers the North Atlantic and has a useful website.

### **INTERNET SOURCES**

GENUKI, a major portal to genealogical sources in the UK, ([www.genuki.org.uk/big/MerchantMarine](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/MerchantMarine)) has a section on the merchant marine which lists many useful websites and links, including guides to The National Archives and National Maritime Museum.