



Crew Agreements, Lists and Official Logs

Introduction

Agreements and Crew Lists were introduced into the British merchant service when The Merchant Shipping Act of 1835 required each ship to complete them as well as other related documents. They were then filed with the Register Office of Merchant Seamen (now the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen). The agreements were used by the ship's master (Captain) to record the conditions of employment for the crew on a per voyage basis and to outline their period of service. Each agreement was then signed or marked by the individual seaman before the ship sailed. The resultant crew lists were used by the Board of Trade registry clerks to create entries in the various seamen's registers (See Merchant Seamen's Records - General Research Guide).

Crew Agreements for each merchant ship generally list:

- A description of the ship and its owners
- Name of the ship's Master
- Port of commencement of the voyage in question
- Destination and/or port of termination of the voyage
- Daily meal provisions for the crew
- Rules or laws to be observed during the voyage
- Particulars for each member of the crew, including name (signature), age, place of birth, previous ship, place and date of signing, capacity (seaman, fireman, engineer, etc), Certificate of Competency number (if any), when expected on board, pay for the journey, and address details
- Particulars of discharge (end of voyage, desertion, sickness, death, never joined etc)
- Ports visited (endorsements by British Consuls)

Pre-1835



No systematic record of crew belonging to merchant ships was kept until 1747. Until that date, the researcher must rely upon the chance survival of material amongst records kept for other purposes, especially State Papers and those of the Colonial Office, the Treasury, High Court of Admiralty and High Court of Delegates. Most of these records are not indexed in a way which would assist a search for a specific ship or seaman.

From 1747, masters or owners of merchant ships were required

to keep and file a Muster Roll, giving details of the number of crewmen and the ship's voyages. These lists, which were kept as a result of the Act for the Relief of Disabled Seamen 1747, were filed with the Seamen's Fund Receivers at the ports of arrival. The musters are found at [The National Archives](#), Kew, in series [BT 98](#), piece numbers 1-139.

They cover a number of ports and various dates from 1747 to 1853.

There is no index to the ships' or crews' names in [BT 98](#), and they are arranged by year and port of filing. Sometimes they include a full list of the crew's names, but more commonly they name only the owner and Master and give the number of crew members. The early lists are more likely to show the crews' names and against each name details of the amount of money to be invested in the fund.

1835 - 1860

Following the 1835 Merchant Shipping Act, Crew Lists and other documents up to 1860 form part of series [BT 98](#) (Agreements and Crew List) at [The National Archives](#). Before 1861 all official copies are to be found at The National Archives and can be broken down as follows:

1835-1844

During this period two main types of Crew List are to be found.

- *Schedule C, Crew List (Foreign)*, was made by the Master of each ship undertaking a foreign voyage, and was to be filed within 48 hours of the ship's return to a UK port. The term 'Foreign Going Ship' means 'every ship employed in trading or going between some place or places in the United Kingdom and some place or places situate beyond the following limits, the Coasts of the United Kingdom, the Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Sark, Alderney and Man and the Continent of Europe between the River Elbe and Brest inclusive'.
- *Schedule D, Account of Voyages and Crew for Home Trade Ship (Half Yearly Return)*, was made by the Master of a ship engaged in the coastal or fishing trade, giving the voyages and crew for the preceding half year, and was to be filed within 21 days of the end of June or December. These two types of list contain similar information, but an appreciation of the different filing rules will assist in understanding the entries to be found in the various seamen's registers.



The Crew Lists for the whole period 1835-1844 are filed by ship's Port of Registry; for each port the lists are grouped into boxes by the initial letter of ships' names, but within each box the lists are randomly arranged. At this date, the Crew List will give brief details about the ship, its Master and voyages together with, for each crew member:

- First and Surnames
- Age
- Place of birth
- Rank/duty
- Ship in which last served
- Date and place of joining ship
- Time and place of death or leaving ship

1845-1856

From 1845 onwards further types of list were introduced, and three key ones are found in addition to the Schedules C and D already mentioned. Schedules A, B, C and D all give information which is very similar to that quoted above.

- *Schedule A, Agreement for Foreign Trade*, (commonly called 'Articles') was an agreement between Master and crew, and was to be filed within 24 hours of the ship's return to a UK port.
- *Schedule B, Agreement for Home Trade*, was the equivalent for the coastal and fishing trade and was to be filed within 30 days of the end of June or December.
- *Schedule G, Names and Register Tickets of Crew (Foreign Trade)*, was a list of crew, with their Register Ticket numbers, to be filed for a foreign-going ship on sailing.

For this period the Crew Lists are arranged in [BT 98](#) by the year, the port of registry and are then grouped into boxes according to the initial letter of the ship's name. To locate the crew list of a ship on which an individual seaman sailed, it is necessary to determine its name - this is not given in the registers of seamen's service until 1854. A search of all the available crew lists is only practical for small ports.

1857-1860

From 1857 onwards, the records are arranged in [BT 98](#) by ships' Official Number (ON). The ON was allocated on registration and was retained for the life of the ship (even if the ship was renamed) or until it left the British register, and was not reused. ONs may be found from the *Mercantile Navy List* or *Lloyds Register*, copies of which are available at The National Archives.

1861 - 1938 and 1950 - 1989

Unfortunately the majority of crew agreements that exist for these periods are scattered amongst a number of repositories both in the UK and abroad. A 10% specimen group of crew agreements for each year, taken at random (every tenth box of papers) together with those for famous vessels (with some exceptions, such as those for the *Cutty Sark* and *SS Great Britain*), are in [The National Archives](#) series [BT 99](#) for the periods 1861 to 1938 and again from 1950 to 1989. For the period 1861 to 1923, they can be searched for on [The National Archives](#) catalogue using the ship's Official Number (ON) which is obtainable from the Mercantile Navy Lists. After that date, the Catalogue gives ranges of ship's Official Numbers.

The remaining 90% for 1861, 1862, and for years ending in '5' from 1865 until 1935 and 1955 up until 1975, are held by the [National Maritime Museum](#), Greenwich.

Local and Regional Record Offices hold some Agreements for the period 1863-1913 (see the next page for a list).

The rest, approximately 70% of the Agreements and Crew Lists for 1863 to 1938 and 1951 to 1976, were transferred to the [Maritime History Archive, Memorial University at St John's, Newfoundland, Canada](#).

After 1972 only the two 10% samples of Agreements and Crew Lists held by [The National Archives](#) and by the [National Maritime Museum](#) have been preserved. The rest of the Agreements and Crew Lists, up to 1989, have been destroyed. The [Registry of Shipping and Seamen](#) hold all Agreements and Crew Lists from 1999.

1939 - 1950

[The National Archives](#) holds the surviving official Agreements and Crew Lists for the Second World War and the succeeding years up to 1950. These can be found in various record series and can be searched for by the ships' Official Numbers in the Catalogue.

Series Records:

- [BT 99](#) Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen and predecessor: Agreements and Crew Lists, Series II 1939-1950
- [BT 100](#) Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen and predecessor: Agreements and Crew Lists, Series III (Celebrated Ships) 1939-1950
- [BT 385](#) Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen: Index to WWII Ships' Log Books and Agreements and Crew Lists 1939-1950
- [BT 380](#) Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen: WWII Log Books, Agreements and Crew Lists and associated records 1939-1950
- [BT 381](#) Registry of Shipping and Seamen: WWII Coast Trade Official Log Books and Crew Agreements 1939-1945
- [BT 387](#) Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen: WWII Log Books and Agreements and Crew Lists of allied foreign ships requisitioned or chartered by HMG 1939-1946



Agreements and Crew Lists, 1863 to 1913, in regional Record Offices:

The sheer quantity of information contained in some of these regional offices makes it impossible to note it all here. The name of the repository, the ports covered by it and their holdings are briefly summarised below. You are advised to contact any of the repositories directly before travelling:

- [Anglesey County Record Office](#): Crew Lists and agreements for ships registered at Beaumaris between 1863 and 1913.
- [Bristol Record Office](#): Index of vessels registered in Bristol and a separate annual listing of ships' holdings by number are available in the search rooms. Some of the Agreements and Crew Lists have log books attached. Bristol and Avon Family History Society has produced a surname index of all crew lists for the years 1866, 1871, 1876, 1881 and 1886.
- [Gwynedd Archives](#), Caernarfon Record Office: 10% sample of the Agreements and Crew Lists for the Port of Caernarfon 1863-1913. The ships are listed in alphabetical order on index cards. Some of the crew lists have been included in the data of the Clip Project (see below).
- [Cambridgeshire Country Record Office](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [Carmarthenshire Record Office](#), Carmarthen, Llanelly: Ship's index cards in search room and some related records, eg log books, journals etc.
- [Ceredigion Archives](#): Log books, crew lists and agreements for ships relating to Cardiganshire.
- [Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies](#): 100% of Agreements and Crew Lists for Runcorn, 1861-1913, with typescript lists of ships and the Agreements and Crew Lists. There are also shipping registration

papers (but not registers) 1847-1963. The records are arranged by ship (in order of registration number) and date.

- [Cornwall Record Office](#): Ports for which crew lists are held: Falmouth, Fowey, Hayle, St. Ives, Padstow, Penzance, Scilly, Truro 1863-1913. The holdings are a 70% representative set of documents for one voyage only, of all ships registered at out ports There are not any log books/journals etc. relating to the above vessels. The crew lists are listed twice in the Merchant Shipping's Record catalogue: they are grouped alphabetically within their port of registration and also alphabetically by ship name irrespective of port.
- [Cumbria Record Office and Local Studies Library](#), Whitehaven: Ports of Whitehaven and Workington, Agreements and Crew Lists 1863-1914, registers of shipping for Whitehaven and Workington and a very few log books which predate the crew lists. The crew lists are listed for each vessel with covering dates and the port the vessel was registered in. In addition there is also a shipping index which was compiled before 1985.
- [Cumbria Record Office](#), Carlisle Headquarters: Agreements and Crew Lists for Carlisle and Maryport 1863-1914.
- [Devon Record Office](#): A catalogue to Devon's local Agreements and Crew Lists covering the period 1863-1913 is available via Access to Archives (A2A). The records do include log books where they survive. They have also acquired, since 1987, photocopies of some of the documents in Newfoundland.
- [Dorset History Centre](#) : Agreements and Crew Lists for Bridport, Lyme Regis, Poole and Weymouth for the period 1863-1913. This represents approximately 80% of the Agreements and Crew Lists for the ports for this period. Some of the Agreements and Crew Lists have the ships' logs attached. The archive participated in the CliP Project (see below) and all the Agreements and Crew Lists have been catalogued to provide an alphabetical list of ships' names and the dates of the Agreements and Crew Lists held for each ship. An index of seamen's names for the years ending in a 3 or an 8 has been compiled.
- [Essex Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Harwich, Colchester and Maldon, 1863-1913. There are some log books within the collection. The records are held by year then by port - enquirers will therefore need to know the port and year of sailing. The archive also holds some shipping registers for the ports.
- [Flintshire Record Office](#): The Record Office has approximately 90% for the port of Chester, 1863-1913, and a few strays from Barrow, Bideford, Douglas, Faversham, Fleetwood, Folkestone, Fowey, Goole, Jersey, London, Lowestoft, Padstow, Preston, South Shields, Sunderland, Truro, Whitehaven, Aberdeen, Ardrossan, Berwick, Campbeltown, Dumfries, Glasgow, Inverness, Kirkcaldy, Leith, Perth, Peterhead, Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Newry, Sligo, Youghal, Wexford and Halifax and Windsor in Nova Scotia. They also hold Chester port registers, 1836-1913, some registration documents and some log books, cargo books and other papers for a small number of these vessels.
- [Glamorgan Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Cardiff, 1863-1913, excluding all years ending with 5. There is a list of ships published on the internet. There are very few log books with the crew lists, but there are shipping registers organised by ship's registration number within each year and indexes of ships' names and of masters.



- [Gloucestershire Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists, 1863-1913 for the Port of Gloucester. The collection has been catalogued as a table which is arranged alphabetically by ship showing the years within the period for which records are held. The collection includes some log books and this is indicated in the catalogue. The records are arranged by year and then alphabetically by vessel within each year. There is a collection of Registers of Ships, 1759-1833, with particulars of cancellation to 1893. These registers act as documents of title for the ships and provide information about the ownership and dimensions of individual volumes. Most of the ships were built in either Gloucestershire or Shropshire. The information usually includes: name of the ship and her master, when and where she was built, name of the surveying officer, and a note of its fate (occasionally). There is an appendix arranged alphabetically by ship giving the name of the vessel, her type, the date of registration and the reference in the register.
- [Gwent Record Office](#): The crew lists cover the years 1868-1909 and mainly relate to the port of Newport. A few relate to the ports of Chepstow, Chester and in one case London and Newport. The records are indexed on card by name of ship in alphabetical order.
- [Hull City Archives](#): Fishing vessel crew agreements under the 1883 Sea Fisheries Act 1884-1914, reference is DPF. They are arranged by year in H number order. There is an outline index to the H numbers, and a more complete index to vessel owners.
- [National Archives of Ireland](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [East Kent Archives Centre](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Deal 1863-1883, Dover 1863-1913, Folkestone 1880-1897 and Ramsgate 1863-1913. They cover an estimated 10% of the Agreements and Crew Lists for these ports. There are also fishing vessel crew lists for Dover 1884-1900 and Folkestone 1884-1914. The records are catalogued under port, and then by vessel name, chronologically. The records were indexed as part of the CliP project (see below).
- [Centre for Kentish Studies](#): A small quantity of crew lists for Faversham, 1863-1909. The catalogue gives: name and type of vessel, tonnage, and register number.
- [Lancashire Record Office](#): Crew Lists for ships registered at Fleetwood, Lancaster and Preston for 1863-1913 (ref: SS/1/1-61), ships' names are given in the catalogue along with relevant dates. There is a handlist to maritime records, including shipping registers, crew lists, port records, private business records of shipping companies/owners, diaries of officers and seamen, correspondence of officers and seamen, wills and inventories of officers and seamen, ship building records, maps and charts, photographs, ship's logs deposited privately, shipwrecks, Local Government records, and other miscellaneous related material (Handlist 45). There is also an index to the shipping registers for the Port of Lancaster.
- [Lincolnshire Archives](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [North East Lincolnshire Archives](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Grimsby vessels 1864-1914. They are indexed by crew name c1880-1900 and indexed by vessel name c1880-1900. There are a few log books included in the series. There is a published Index of ships registered at the port of Grimsby 1824-1918.
- [Liverpool Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew lists c1861 - c1913. There is not a published catalogue, but there is a list in alphabetical order of ship, which also gives dates of holdings and ship's official number. In some cases log books, journals, discharge papers etc have survived and these have been kept with the relevant crew list. The records are kept in alphabetical order of ship, users therefore need to know the name of the ship. Some work has been done on indexing crew members as part of the CliP Project (see below).
- [Manchester Archives and Local Studies](#): Mixture of Agreements and Crew Lists and official log books with crew lists for ships registered at Manchester from 1894-1913. The catalogue entries are in tabular form listing name and official number of each ship, the year registered and where and when it had previously been registered.

- [Manx National Heritage Library](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Castletown (including Derbyhaven), Douglas, Peel and Ramsey for the period 1861 to 1913. The Library holds about 90% of the Agreements and Crew Lists and the HM Customs and Excise Shipping Registers for Manx ports for these years.
- [Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Rochester 1863-1913. Published in database on website. There are also Port of Rochester shipping registers. Organised by date and registration number. Customers need correct port and rough date of registration.
- [Merseyside Maritime Museum](#): Catalogues of the records are available, and work has been done on the crew lists by CliP (see below).
- [Public Record Office of Northern Ireland](#): For 1862-1938, approximately 80% of Agreements and Crew Lists largely for ships registered in Belfast, Newry, Coleraine and Londonderry but also include ships built in Northern Ireland but registered elsewhere. They do include some official logbooks. The crew lists and agreements are listed, when completed the alphabetical list of will also be available on the website.
- [Northumberland Record Office, Berwick-upon-Tweed](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [Northumberland Record Office, Newcastle](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [North Yorkshire County Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for ships registered at Middlesborough, Scarborough and Whitby 1857, 1861-1867, 1872, some log books but by no means for every vessel. The records are arranged chronologically and by official number. They are available to researchers on microfilm (MIC nos. 2966-70, 2972, 2974-75).
- [Pembrokeshire Record Office](#): Crew Lists for Milford Haven and Cardigan for the period 1863-1913. There are a few log books amongst the crew lists; these have not been individually listed. The crew lists are arranged by ship's number within each calendar year. They have a card index, alphabetical by ship name, and a hard-copy alphabetical list by ship name within each year. The CliP indexing project (see below) covers the years 1863, 1880, 1881.
- [Portsmouth Records Office](#): Service Crew Lists for Portsmouth and Cowes 1863-1913. The holdings are listed in book form and listed alphabetically by ship's name. They are currently indexing the crew names for each ship as part of the CliP project (see below).
- [National Archives of Scotland](#): Agreements and Crew Lists are held under the reference BT3, and cover the dates 1867-1913, for Scottish ships only. The ships are listed alphabetically by name in the paper catalogue. Official logs are found with the Agreements and Crew Lists, where they survive.
- [Somerset Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for the Port of Bridgewater which included Minehead 1863-1913. A manuscript check list exists and there are gaps in the series. For a few ships there are no records at all, for a few others they have practically the complete coverage, and for the majority there are odd years missing at intervals. The records are stored by year in ships' official number sequence. To access the records an enquirer needs the ship's number and a year. A volunteer has indexed them all by name of crew member and the index is available on the website. The index can be searched by name of ship or name of crew member (See Bridgewater Crew List).



- [Southampton Archives Office](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for ships built or registered in Southampton and also those who used the port regularly 1863-1913. The archive also holds the records of the Furness Withy shipping line.
- [Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch](#): It is believed that the Archive has Agreements and Crew Lists.
- [Suffolk Record Office, Lowestoft Branch](#): Crew Lists for the port of Lowestoft 1863-1914. An index is available within the search room. Additionally there Lowestoft shipping registers, 1852-1874, 1879-1946 which have been transcribed and indexed by owners, Port of Lowestoft Research Society collection which contains photographs and/or index cards to most Lowestoft vessels. The index cards record such information as where built, yard number if known, dimensions, tonnage, ownership and incidents of note within the vessels shipping career, records for some of the fishing companies from Lowestoft and ships drawings and assorted miscellaneous items for individual vessels.
- [Tyne & Wear Archives Service](#): Crew Lists for Shields 1863-1914 (ref: 2599). Fairly complete, but these are only listed in an incomplete format. Arranged chronologically, not indexed (ships, fishing boats bundled separately within chronological sequence).
- [National Library of Wales, Department of Collection Services](#): Agreements and Crew Lists for Aberystwyth 1863-1913. There is an index available for these papers in the form of a schedule. They are organised by the name of the ship and the year of the voyage, and are stored yearly by the ship's Official Number. Log books are also available for some ships for certain years.
- [West Glamorgan Archive Service](#): An estimated 80% Agreements and Crew Lists for Swansea and Port Talbot 1863-1913. Log books, journals etc are sometimes filed with the crew agreements. The records are arranged first by year then by ship's Official Number. It is necessary for a researcher to know the name of the ship in order to find a crew member. There is a card index of ships and of ship's masters in the search room, as well as a catalogue showing for what years we have crew agreements for a particular ship. A database of crew members for 1881 has been compiled by CliP (see below).
- [West Sussex Record Office](#): Agreements and Crew List for Arundel, Chichester, Littlehampton and Shoreham 1863-1913. There is a typescript catalogue, arranged by ship's official number and indexed by name of the vessel for the 461 ships. It is believed that the record office has 100% of the surviving Agreements and Crew Lists for the period but they cannot guarantee complete documentation for each vessel. Additionally there are log books for approximately 40-50% of the vessels.

Agreements and Crew Lists, 1863 to 1913, in overseas repositories:

- [National Archives of Australia](#): Large number of record series concerning ships' crews and the merchant navy. These records include registers of engagement, articles of agreement, registers of discharge, registers of deserters, employment history records, etc. All of these record series are indexed on the [Record Search database](#).

CLIP Project: 1861 - 1913

The Crew List Index Project (CLIP) started as a project to improve access to the records of British merchant seamen for the last part of the nineteenth century - mainly by indexing records at local record offices throughout the UK. CLIP has gathered the largest database of entries directly from crew lists. Its website gives information about the nature of crew lists, how to find the original documents and the seafarers on them, indexes of seafarers including the CLIP data, CLIP finding aids and details of projects on the records of shipping and seafarers. The CLIP database can be consulted on www.crewlist.org.uk or on www.findmypast.co.uk

Official Logs

Official Logs are not, as many people assume, a daily diary of a ship's movements (these would be more usually be known as Bridge Logs or Deck Logs, which were compiled for use by the shipping company and not for legal reasons). Official Logs are more of a 'parish register' for the ship, noting vital information about the crew and passengers, but updated only when an event was considered worth recording. The Mercantile Marine Act of 1850 required Masters of all British-registered ships to keep an Official Log for every voyage and laid out rules for doing so; however, most recorded events were limited to new arrivals on board (such as births or the signing on of a new crew member), departures (death, disappearance, desertion, or signing off crew members at intermediary ports before the end of the voyage), marriages, illness, and any disciplinary action taken against crew members.



The Log typically records the ship's position at the time of any birth or death, but may make no other reference to the ship's movements. Sailing and arrival dates are sometimes noted but were not a requirement of the log. The crew agreement, which provides as a minimum the date and place of the beginning and end of the voyage, is often more informative in this respect.

Home Trade ships were required to deposit their Log half-yearly, and Foreign Trade ships after each return

voyage, with the [Registry of Shipping and Seamen](#). The earliest surviving logs date from around 1852, but relatively few exist for the early years.

If you are able to locate a Crew Agreement for a particular voyage, it is likely that you will find the Official Log attached if it still exists.

Suggested repositories for Official Logs include [The National Archives](#) series [BT 165](#) (Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen and predecessor: Ships' Official Logs) which contains a partial collection of log books covering the period 1857-1972. This series contains select logs from 1857 to 1889, and a further selection from 1922 to 1972. For the period 1902-1912 when a birth, marriage or death occurred on board the Log was normally preserved; it is therefore possible to find death records for soldiers and prisoners-of-war returning on ships from the Boer War. For the First World War (1914-1919) all surviving logs containing casualties are preserved in the same series [BT 165](#).

Useful Contact Information

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| <p>The National Archive Ruskin Avenue Kew Richmond Surrey TW9 4DU</p> <p>Tel: +44 (0)20 8876 3444 Web: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/</p> | <p>National Maritime Museum Romney Road Greenwich London SE10 9NF</p> <p>Tel: +44 (0)20 8858 4422 Web: http://www.nmm.ac.uk/</p> |
| <p>Maritime History Archive Memorial University of Newfoundland St. John's Newfoundland A1C 5S7 Canada</p> <p>Tel: +1 709 737 8428 Web: www.mun.ca/mha</p> | <p>Crew List Index Project (CLIP) Peter and Jan Owens Glan Aber Aberffraw Ty Croes Ynys Mon LL63 5LX</p> <p>Tel: +44 (0)14 0784 0628 Web: http://www.crewlist.org.uk/</p> |