

Crew Research Guide



Merchant Seamen Research - P&O

Introduction

The following information relates only to former staff members of P&O and its subsidiary companies. Before you begin your research, it is advisable that you have some information to hand about the merchant seaman or the crew member you are researching, starting with the name, rank and an approximate service date range (if known). If you are not in possession of the above information, or if you are not certain the person worked for P&O or its subsidiary companies, please consult our research guide entitled [Merchant Seamen – General](#), which explains in detail how to locate specific information on the merchant seaman including their ticket number, a list of ships they served on and rank.

The P&O Archive contains a reasonable amount of information for researchers and genealogists attempting to locate past P&O crew, however not all records were retained and some years are incomplete. P&O and their subsidiary companies' archives are on permanent loan at the [National Maritime Museum](#) in Greenwich, London.

To assess whether or not the appropriate records exist to aid in your research, please use the links below. If you know in what capacity the crew member served with P&O, click on the relevant job title. If you do not know or are unsure of their rank, it is suggested you start by following the Seniority Lists and Crew List links. If the crew member worked for a subsidiary company of P&O, please select the relevant company. Once you have identified the existence of sources, please consult the National Maritime Museum's [online catalogue](#) and arrange directly with them should you wish to view any of the material.

Who are you looking for?

P&O Archives crew records for the following ranks: **Deck Officers & Engineers, Surgeons, Pursers, Stewards, Petty Officers** (Boatswains, Gunners, Carpenters, etc), **Ordinary European Seamen** and **Asian Seamen**.

Information regarding Seniority Lists, Crew Lists and Sea Staff Deaths is also included.



The archives also contain personnel files for some of our subsidiary companies including **British India Steam Navigation Company, James Nourse Line, New Zealand Shipping Company, Orient Line** and **General Steam Navigation Company**.

Deck Officers & Engineers

The P&O Collection includes good individual career records of deck officers and engineers from the late 1840s until the mid 1950s. Thereafter individual files were transferred first to a card index and then to separate folders for each individual, and these records have not been kept. Please refer to series P&O/75 and P&O/76 at the [National Maritime Museum](#). For additional information, please consult section on 'Seniority Lists' and 'Crew Lists' on this webpage.

Surgeons

Surgeons are contained in the Officers ledgers and exist from the 1840s through the 1950s. These records can be found in series P&O/75 at the [National Maritime Museum](#).

Pursers

Records for Pursers do not exist although there are a few volumes of reports on performance of pursers from about 1880 to 1953, which are located in series P&O/77 at the [National Maritime Museum](#).

Stewards

Records of Stewards-in-Charge exist from approximately 1880 to 1953. There are ledgers of stewards' careers between the 1890s and the 1930s in which each individual may appear several times as they were engaged on a voyage-by-voyage basis. This is the case even if their continuing employment lasted for several years. There are separate index volumes, however because of gaps in the files, the coverage of career records and indexes do not exactly coincide: an individual may be indexed, but the record no longer exists, or he or she may be in a ledger but not in the index and therefore effectively untraceable. In order to locate a steward, please refer to series P&O/77 at the [National Maritime Museum](#).



Petty Officers

Petty Officers such as boatswains, gunners and carpenters are covered by two volumes covering the years between 1910s and 1949 which are located in series P&O/78 at the [National Maritime Museum](#).

Ordinary European Seamen

There are no records of ordinary European Seamen in the P&O archives.

Asian Seamen

There are no records of Asian Crew in the P&O archives although the death of an Asian crew member may have been recorded in the P&O Nautical Reports. Please refer to the Ships' Movements Research Guide for further information.

Seniority Lists

Seniority Lists exist from the 1880s to 1917, 1940, 1950 and 1960 to the 1970s. Each volume lists officers by rank in order of appointment and gives their date of birth, the date they joined the Company and the date they attained their current role. The ship in which an individual was serving at the date of the list may also be recorded, as may be his or her professional qualifications. Some volumes have been amended by hand to include (for example) dates of retirement or resignation. Lists after 1960 include officers transferred from Orient Line, but those after 1970 only cover P&O Passenger Division. Please refer to series P&O/75 at the [National Maritime Museum](#) for further details.



Crew Lists

Crew lists have not been retained in the P&O Archive. The nearest approximations are the 'Fleet Lists' (series P&O/75) giving the names of Officers and Petty Officers aboard each ship for each voyage. These cover the years 1867 to 1964 and 1837 to 1979 respectively.

For more information on Crew Lists, Crew Agreements and Ships' Official Logs, please refer to our Crew Lists, Agreements and Official Logs Research Guide.

Death of Sea Staff

Between the 1850s and the 1920s P&O's Death Book gives details of in-service deaths of European sea and shore staff including where and on what ship the death occurred and sometimes where the deceased was buried. The single volume can be found at the [National Maritime Museum](#) under reference number P&O/88/3. Some of this information will also be given in the Nautical Reports, which tend to be the only source of information on the death of Asian crew.

British India Steam Navigation Company



There is an Officers and Engineers' Register between 1863 and 1877, reports on Officers and Engineers between 1885 and 1933, Engineers' Record Books between 1894 and 1925, Commanders' Record Books between 1866 and 1957, Steward Staff Afloat between 1913 and 1953, Cadets' Service Books between 1906 and 1953 and Engineer

Service Records between 1905 and 1957. Please note that not every year will appear in all of the records listed. Should you wish to view the full catalogue, please refer to the [National Maritime Museum](#).



James Nourse Line

There are Apprentice Papers from 1880 to 1963, Service Records of Masters, Mates, Carpenters, Engineers and Sailmakers between 1890 and 1921, Service Records for Deck and Engine Officers between 1919 and 1956, Seniority Lists between 1919 and 1965, Crew Lists from 1937 through to 1961 and Applications for Employment of Deck Officers and Engineer Officers for 1941. Should you wish to view the full catalogue, please refer to the [National Maritime Museum](#).



New Zealand Shipping Company

There is a Captain's Register from 1905 to 1956, a joint Officers' and Engineers' Register from 1877 to 1933, an Officers' Register from 1918 to 1936, an Engineers' Register from 1929 to 1938, a Register of Stewards in charge from 1912 to 1950, a Surgeon's Register 1919 to 1947, Record of Masters from 1874 to 1898, the Pension Members Sheet from 1931 to 1967 and Officers' and Engineers' Photographs from 1947 to 1966. Should you wish to view the full catalogue, please refer to the [National Maritime Museum](#).



Orient Line

There are Steward Records from 1884 to 1927, War Records (i.e. POWs &c) from 1939 to 1945, various Pension Records from 1938 to 1963, lists of Officers and Engineers of the Fleet from 1927 to 1937 and a Seagoing Personnel Record from 1943 to 1957. Should you wish to view the full catalogue, please refer to the [National Maritime Museum](#).



General Steam Navigation Company

Employee Record of Service book, containing entries on date of commencement, advances, monies paid etc. in respect of all staff, sea-going and shore based c.1850–1914. Should you wish to view the full catalogue, please refer to the [National Maritime Museum](#).

Useful Contact Information

<p>The National Archive Ruskin Avenue Kew Richmond Surrey TW9 4DU Tel: +44 (0)20 8876 3444 Web: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/</p>	<p>National Maritime Museum Romney Road Greenwich London SE10 9NF Tel: +44 (0)20 8858 4422 Web: http://www.nmm.ac.uk/</p>
<p>Southampton City Archives Southampton City Council South Block Civic Centre Southampton SO14 7LY Tel: +44 (0)23 8083 4563 Web: Southampton City Archives</p>	<p>Registry of Shipping and Seamen MCA Anchor Court Ocean Way Cardiff CF24 5JW Tel: +44 (0)29 2044 8800 Web: http://www.mcga.gov.uk/</p>
<p>Guildhall Library Aldermanbury London EC2P 2EJ Tel: +44 (0)20 7732 1868 Web: Guildhall Library</p>	<p>Maritime History Archive Memorial University of Newfoundland St. John's Newfoundland A1C 5S7 Canada 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 Tel: +44 (0)14 0784 0628 Web: http://www.crewlist.org.uk/</p>	<p>Imperial War Museum Lambeth Road London SE1 6HZ Tel: +44 (0)20 7416 5220 Web: http://www.iwm.org.uk/</p>