

## **2009 New Researchers in Maritime History**

**held at**

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**Speaker abstracts**

**Mike Bender, University of Exeter.**

Developing a narrative approach to the history of British yachting.

Yachting has been a major leisure sport, particularly among the upper classes, for some 250 years. Its size, particularly from the Victorian period, means that it has had considerable economic importance for many ports and harbours. It has also played an important part in defining national identity.

This paper draws on the author's work in collating and analysing narratives of British yachting from Elizabethan times to 2005. Therefore, the first step was to create a reasonably comprehensive database of relevant texts.

It soon became apparent that the yachting narrative was not only carried by the written word; an equally strong narrative stream was the oil painting, and from the late nineteenth century, photography.

I will show how among *verbal* texts, the medium of the narrative has changed across time from Caroline and Georgian diaries and autobiographies, to newspaper accounts of racing on the Thames and early nineteenth century Aristocratic pomp at Cowes; and then to books which told of Corinthian pluck and self-reliance in small boats; and the flowering of the classic sailing novels – *Three Men in a Boat*; *The Riddle of the Sands* and *The Wind in the Willows*, in Edwardian times. I will examine these narratives and show how they are embedded in a number of contexts – literary, historical and political etc.

**Richard Blakemore, University of Cambridge**

“A nation by themselves”?: The seamen of the seventeenth century

In the three and a half centuries since the earl of Clarendon (arguably the most well-known contemporary to characterise the sailors of his time) declared seamen to be ‘a nation by themselves’, relatively little, in terms of published scholarship, has emerged to consider this statement, much less to qualify it. This paper will not attempt the entirety of that task, but rather, taking Clarendon's words as a starting point, will discuss what can be known about the seamen of the seventeenth century.

I will briefly consider the few and quite disparate works on this subject: the two most clearly relevant being D.E. Kennedy's ‘The Crown and the common seamen’, *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, 11 (1964) and chapter 3, ‘Seamen and mutiny’, of K.R. Andrews' *Ships, Money & Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the Reign of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1991). Following this, I will discuss the sort of source material I have encountered in my research, and what each kind of source in particular can tell us. I aim to

conclude by considering, in the light of the evidence I have discussed, whether it is fair, or indeed accurate, to call the seamen ‘a nation by themselves’.

**Kate Coughlan, University of Greenwich**

“Drawing and seafarers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: an insight into the ‘wooden world’”

Based on a dissertation submitted towards a Masters in Maritime History, this paper will be based predominantly on a collection of 565 images taken from twenty pre-selected original manuscripts dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These volumes originally belonged to active seafarers and are most likely to have been carried with them during a period of their lives at sea. For the most part the seafarer artists were men employed in some way by the Royal Navy, whether as Surgeons, Lieutenants or Commanders and the images they created are both varied and similar at the same time. This paper will discuss several key individuals, and what can be learnt about them from the drawings they created. It will also draw from their images information about the way seafarers interacted with each other and their environment, and the parallels that can be seen between them. This is a particularly important area of study as very little work has been done in the field, and it highlights the value of these images as eye witness records of places and people around the world.

**Jeong-yon Ha, University of Edinburgh**

The representation of the Pool of London in the visual arts, 1880-1910

This paper presents an art-historical study on the visual representation of the Pool of London at the turn of the twentieth century. The principal source material of my study is the work of the marine artist and founding member of the Society for Nautical Research, William Lionel Wyllie (1851-1931), including *Toil, Glitter, Grime and Wealth on a Flowing Tide* (Tate Britain), *The Opening of Tower Bridge* (Guildhall Art Gallery), and *Lower Pool* (National Maritime Museum). These works represented different aspects of the Thames, which I consider in terms of British maritime commerce and imperialism. In analysing the material I address the issues of changing imperial economy and technical change, and examine the ways in which those issues are represented in the visual arts through different artistic aims, means and modes. The specific questions raised in the paper include: Why did the artist choose this particular site? What can his specific perspective of viewing the Pool of London mean? What aspects of the river are emphasised in his representation? What ideas and subjects are projected via means of viewpoint, colour and composition? The paper also explores what the different kinds of ships can symbolise, how they are arranged in a Thames picture, and what a particular arrangement might mean.

## **John Johnson-Allen, University of Greenwich**

Changes in trading patterns in the British Merchant Navy 1960 -- 1980: An oral investigation into the views of Master Mariners.

The foundation of the study, from which this talk is abstracted, is a series of interviews, which were undertaken with Master Mariners of the British Merchant Navy who were serving at sea in the period 1960 -- 1980. In the post-war period, there had been significant growth in the Merchant Navy; however by 1966 there was a strong feeling of dissatisfaction within the National Union of Seamen, which resulted in the Seamen's strike of that year. Out of the resolution of that dispute came the recommendation for an Inquiry into the shipping industry. Chaired by Viscount Rochdale, his Committee looked at all aspects of the industry. A significant part of the Committee's report was devoted to aspects of the working lives of Masters and Mates.

This paper looks at one aspect where significant change in their working lives was taking place: the changes in the trading patterns of shipping. The Rochdale report and the methodology of the interviews are considered before the changes in trading patterns, of near sea trades, passenger liners and container ships are highlighted from the interviews of Masters and Mates who were serving in the ships at the time.

## **Ian Murphy, National Museums Liverpool**

The Liverpool Docks Charitable Fund Casebook: Using Maritime Archives to Create Personal Exhibition Content

The casebook of the Charitable Fund of Liverpool's Dock trustees recorded petitions from dockworkers and their dependents who had been injured, or found themselves in financial difficulty in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The casebook contains the kind of anecdotal details of the port's operation that are often missing from other, more systematic records. Museum exhibitions are increasingly expected to incorporate elements of personal and social history into displays that have traditionally employed a more objective approach, and records like the casebook offer a potential source for this kind of exhibition content.

There are opportunities and dangers in using this kind of material in exhibition content and such use needs to be managed to mitigate the drawbacks of using such a narrowly focussed source. The casebook provides biographical detail on areas of society that would be unrepresented in many governmental sources, and amassing case studies of anecdotal information in the accounts listed can also provide indications of wider social patterns.

The use of the casebook is examined within the context of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's *Maritime Park* project, refurbishing Liverpool's Canning Graving Docks.

**Geoffrey Shamos, University of Pennsylvania**

Spheres of Influence: Tapestry and the Promotion of Portuguese Maritime Superiority in the Early Sixteenth Century

When the 19-year-old João III (r. 1521-1558) ascended to the throne of Portugal in 1521, he followed more than a century of Portuguese maritime success. The numerous voyages sponsored by João's forebears resulted in mercantile and colonial expansion in Africa, Asia, and the New World, greatly enhancing Portugal's wealth and bolstering its esteem among other European powers. In constant competition with the Spanish Habsburgs, João commissioned a series of three tapestries from a Brussels workshop in the 1530s. Designed by Bernaert van Orley or a member of his circle, the tapestries depict three spheres: the armillary sphere supported by Atlas, the celestial sphere supported by Hercules, and the terrestrial sphere flanked by João III and Catherine of Austria in the guise of Jupiter and Juno. Costly and monumental, the purchasing of tapestries was largely reserved for the most elite patrons, and the medium frequently served propagandistic ends within the leading courts of sixteenth-century Europe. While some tapestries promoted the martial strength of a ruler or praised his virtue, my paper argues that the *Spheres* series asserted Portuguese prowess at sea, which served as the source of Portugal's territorial possessions and the basis for its economic strength. In presenting the three spheres, the tapestries display the proprietary knowledge underlying Portuguese claims to power.

**Britt Zerbe, University of Exeter**

'A Bridge Between the Gap: the Operational and Martial Identity of the Marine Corps, 1762-1802'

Military history has recently been influenced by the emerging fields of cultural, masculine and identity studies. Slowly the eighteenth-century British Armed Forces and their operational aspects are beginning to be considered in this same methodological approach. The eighteenth-century British soldiers held a marginal position in society and no group more so than the Marines (by 1802, Royal). Previous scholarship has seen the Marines solely as an ill-trained unit solely in existence as a nursery for potential seamen. However, this paper will show that the Marines were an incredibly valuable tool to the British state (and its armed forces) for implementing and enhancing its image of imperial power abroad.

How did the transfer of the Marines from Army control to Naval control in the mid-eighteenth century define this military unit's operational identity? What effect did peacetime imperial operations have on the Marines of this period? These questions and others are the focus of this paper, which centres on combat operations and identity issues for the Marines. The Marines in this period suffered from an identity crisis as a combat force but in the end they were able to bridge the gap between the operational needs the Army and Navy.