

New Researchers in Maritime History
University of Salford
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Abstracts

Birgit Braasch, Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University

From Crossing to Cruising: The Construction and Experience of the North-Atlantic Seascape through Travel and Tourism from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In my paper I am using a cultural-history approach to analyze the development from crossing the North Atlantic between Europe and North America by steamship to crossing it by plane. This technological development took place during the time between the 1950s and the 1970s. For the analysis I am focusing on the questions how tourists, who crossed the Atlantic during this time, experienced their voyage and how this experience is related to published images of travel across the Atlantic.

In order to answer those questions, I am conceptualising the North Atlantic as a seascape, which is constructed through cultural practices and social interactions. This conceptualization is based on approaches from landscape studies. Whereas, a central part of landscape studies is the physical environment, the study of seascapes is focused on its representations in visual images and narratives and on the imagination of the ocean. Furthermore, ships and planes function as markers and representations for the North Atlantic space. In addition, these means of travel shape the tourists' experience of the Atlantic through their actual physicality as well as through the specifics of life on board and the imagery that is connected to them.

Michael R. Harrison, Glasgow Museums

Inventing Safety: Patent Model Discoveries from the Smithsonian Institution

A recent project to improve understanding of the maritime patent-model collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History provides a window into the background, education, technical expertise, and mechanical abilities of the citizens involved in nineteenth-century America's technological dialogue and the types of problems they felt compelled to address. The vital importance of maritime commerce to the United States created a fertile environment for entrepreneurs and inventors to devise faster and surer ways to deliver people and cargos over the water. Importantly, however, increased migration and improved communication brought home the dangers of working and travelling on the water in new ways. Inventors responded by pouring their creative efforts into conceiving an astonishing variety of life-preserving boats, rafts, clothing, and other gear. Examination of the surviving models from the patent process suggests this new sensibility led inventors to justify propulsion and construction innovations as well in the vigorous language of life-saving potential and not just in terms of improved efficiency, speed, and strength.

Andrew Wells, Merton College, University of Oxford

The Politics of Memory in the *Titanic* Disaster, 1929-1958

Despite the continuing popularity and ubiquity of the *Titanic* disaster in contemporary culture, representations of it have rarely, if ever, been uncontested. Recent work historicising memory from 1912 has recognised this phenomenon, but memory of the disaster in the UK after 1914 remains a crucial lacuna in its cultural history. This paper attempts to partly fill this gap by examining the archives of the BBC, Board of Trade, and the publishing records pertaining to Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember* (1956). These all demonstrate that a complex of industrial and affective concerns policed memory and representation of the disaster in the half century following 1912. Until 1945, fictive representations were only possible by avoiding all mention or connection with the real *Titanic*. Even when this condition was met, these representations were subject to considerable adverse comment from specific interests.

Likewise, even after 1945, 'factual' (non-dramatised) accounts of the disaster, such as the film of Lord's book, were treated with suspicion. Such restrictions, however, depended on the medium of each particular representation: mass-media representations were subject to the most scrutiny. Understanding this regulation, and the agencies involved, is crucial to an historical understanding of subsequent representations of the disaster, especially as regulation is not entirely absent in its most recent and successful manifestation, James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997).

Sam Cavell, University of Exeter

Young Gentlemen and the Admiralty's Social Agenda

Social histories of the Royal Navy's officer corps during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars have focused on a linear trend of social polarization, whereby the quarterdeck became the preserve of the well-born and well-connected. An assessment of the social backgrounds of 4800 midshipmen, captains' servants, and first-class volunteers, sampled at ten year intervals between 1761 and 1831, shows that while a higher social quality characterized young gentlemen of the post-war Navy, the trend was neither linear nor consistent.

Midshipmen and quarterdeck boys were uniquely positioned at the gateway to naval command and provide the most immediate tell-tales of change in Admiralty policies toward its officer corps. This paper looks at two major Admiralty directives affecting young gentlemen during the period: the Order in Council of 1794, which replaced captains' servants with first-class volunteers, and the order of 1815 which gave the Admiralty control of midshipmen's appointments. The intent of these orders relative to the Admiralty's desire to socially mould its officer corps from the bottom up is compared to the statistical data provided by the sample. The effectiveness (and otherwise) of the Admiralty's agenda is reflected in the shifting social make up of the junior officer corps.

Cori Convertito-Farrar, University of Exeter

Tattooing in the Victorian Navy

The Royal Navy unintentionally sparked the phenomenon of tattooing amongst sailors when they commissioned the three voyages of Captain James Cook to the South Pacific in the 1770s. During the voyages, the Captain and crew came into contact with the indigenous population and witnessed, firsthand, the practice of tattooing. They were not the first Western

sailors to observe the practice, but they were the first to systematically record the process in a written form as well as sketches. They, themselves, participated in the custom, arriving back in England with these exotic markings and sparked the Western image of sailors with tattoos.

At a time when the majority of sailors in the Royal Navy were illiterate and very few records of their thoughts and emotions exist on paper, investigation of the tattoos that decorated these sailors provides a tremendous insight into the motivations that drove these men to permanently mark their skin. Description Books were mandatorily kept by the Navy and records 'distinguishing marks' on each sailor aboard a vessel and supply the majority of the research material that this study is based upon. This resource lists an individual's tattoos and its location on the body, thus allowing for an in-depth study into the motivations that encouraged the practice. These motivations can be broken down into general subcategories; group motivations, such as religion and conformity, and individual motivations, such as sentimentality and ethnic identity. It is within these subcategories that individual examples are cited demonstrating the various motivations through the eyes, or more appropriately, the skin, of Victorian Navy sailors.

Elinor Romans, University of Exeter

The Royal Navy and 'Officer Like Qualities' in the inter-war period

'Officer Like Qualities' were an important part of officer selection and training in the inter-war Royal Navy yet at no time were they formally defined. There was widespread disagreement about whether officer like qualities could be taught or were simply inherent in some types of boy but not others, therefore officer like qualities were a major factor in any argument to democratise the officer corps of the Royal Navy by widening the backgrounds and social classes of its members.

In this paper I will seek to define officer like qualities as viewed by the inter-war Royal Navy, giving regard to both official views and those of serving personnel. I will attempt to show how officer like qualities affected officer recruitment and democratisation and to illustrate the conflict between the Royal Navy and certain sections of the government. Finally, I will show how the Royal Navy attempted to imbue officer like qualities in its officers and how its methods were affected by the Invergordon mutiny.

I shall make use of a variety of primary sources, primarily I shall use official Admiralty documents but I will also make use of the recollections of individuals and Hansard.

Rob Buckley, Independent scholar

Mongols Take to the Water

This paper outlines a significant project in Mongol History presently in the early stages of development. The Mongol army was extremely successful, and well suited, to land warfare in Central Asia and Northern China. Two later phases of Mongol expansion during the 13th Century, amphibious warfare in Southern China and Naval Warfare against Japan required changes to both Mongol tactics and logistics.

The project aims to write a detailed history of this adaptation and to answer the following key questions:

1. How precisely did Mongol tactics and logistics develop to accommodate amphibious warfare.
2. What plans were made for the two failed Mongol naval assaults on Japan.
3. During those assaults why were the Korean constructed and lead ships apparently more successful than those built by the Chinese.
4. What can the events of the two Naval campaigns tell us about different attitudes to the sea among the Chinese, Koreans and Japanese at this time.

The paper will discuss these questions in detail and indicate how they are to be tackled.

Matthew McCarthy, University of Hull

An Enemy in Peace: The Commerce-Raiding Threat to Britain in the Latin American Wars of Independence

Private maritime violence was a constant feature of the Latin American Wars of Independence (1808-1826). Privateers – *los corsarios insurgentes* – were launched by the rebel Spanish American colonies to prosecute their revolutionary struggle at sea, while pirates took advantage of the political turmoil to plunder trade.

Although commerce-raiding activity has generated a vast literature, only a handful of studies have investigated piracy and privateering during the Latin American revolutions. Works on insurgent privateering, utilising sources generated in only one or two countries, have been written exclusively from the perspective of the belligerents, emphasising the impact of privateering on Spain's ability to wage war. Such an approach has ignored the impact of maritime predation on neutral nations. Furthermore, piratical activity has been marginalised and misinterpreted in these studies.

This paper will deploy sources in Spanish, American and British repositories to clarify the character and scale of commerce-raiding activity in the period 1808-1826, analyse the impact of predation on British trade and shipping, and assess the effectiveness of the British government's response. Such an analysis will shed new light on the debate surrounding the motivation of individuals to engage in maritime predation and reveal much about the hazards of work at sea and the limits of state power in the early nineteenth century.

Peter Ward, University of Exeter

The East India Station under the Command of Vice Admiral Peter Rainier

Few students of the Royal Navy and the growth of the British Empire during the Wars of 1793-1815 would recognise the name of Admiral Peter Rainier. The literature covering his life is minimal. Yet this admiral commanded the Far East Station for almost 11 years, during which period Britain's Indian possessions became secure, its trade with China grew to become vital to the British economy, and when an Empire in the Far East became a possibility.

The East Indies Station was unique; it was geographically the largest and the most distant from Britain. And its commander had to work closely with the officers of the Honourable

East India Company who would have a large influence on how the admiral could perform his duties.

This paper will describe a man who would follow orders to the utmost of his abilities, but without taking unnecessary risks, who was a good manager and administrator, an excellent diplomat, sailor and navigator, and whose vast experience in the region allowed him to understand fully his station and its complexities.

It will also attempt to answer why Rainier has been the recipient of so little interest from naval historians in a period of change that laid the foundations of the Victorian British Empire.

John Rowlands, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Investment in shipping: North Cardiganshire in the nineteenth century

There have been a number of studies of ship-ownership at the great ports, and innumerable studies of the ship-owning companies trading from those ports. However, little has been published about small-scale investment in local shipping in a predominantly rural context by many who had no obvious connection with the sea.

This presentation would be based on a study of investment in local shipping in a rural county in west Wales over the period 1824-1883. For this the Custom House registers for the Port of Aberystwyth have been used. They cover over 800 individual vessels and nearly 20,000 records relating to share ownership (including mortgages).

The study seeks to identify:

- the occupational profile of investors, the scale of their investment, and changes over time
- what networks/financial mechanisms may have existed in promoting/supporting the purchase of shares
- whether investment in local shipping was one indicator of a rising middle class
- whether investment was purely for profit, or were there other influences at play

Particular attention is being paid to the involvement of farmers and the role of Dissenting Ministers. Eventually it is hoped that it may be possible to draw comparisons with other studies in the north Atlantic region.