

MARITIME ARCHIVES & LIBRARY

INFORMATION SHEET 5

MARITIME CHARITIES

In the nineteenth century there was no welfare state for the relief of unemployed or destitute sailors, their families or even their orphaned children. The shipowners and merchants of Liverpool played an integral role in raising the interest of the people of Liverpool in welfare provision for seamen and their families.

The archives, which relate to maritime charities and missions, demonstrate the importance of trained merchant seafarers to the maritime economy. However, they also reflect how the people of Liverpool came to realise the numerous hazards, physical and moral, affecting the life of a sailor.

Liverpool Sailor's Home

Reverend G.C. Smith of the Mariner's Club, London, expressed the view, in the early 1820s, that seafarers should be provided with low cost accommodation, banking and employment services between voyages. The first London Sailor's Home, in Well Street, opened in 1835.

Liverpool made the first efforts, after London, to emulate the same kind of institution. A number of shipowners, merchants and inhabitants met to discuss this in February 1837, but it was not until April 1841 that the committee achieved subscriptions for approximately £1,800. In May 1844 the Council finally allocated land to enable the plans to proceed. Temporary premises were opened on Bath Street in 1845, prior to the first Liverpool Sailor's Home opening in Canning Place in 1850.

The Liverpool Sailor's Home provided important assistance to seafarers in Liverpool, especially during the depression years and the two World Wars. By the 1960s, however, the Home was too basic and outdated, and so was closed in 1969 and the Canning Place premises demolished. The residential work of the Liverpool Sailor's Home continued in Aigburth until 1975. The Liverpool Sailor's Home Trust continues to support seafaring organisations on board ship and retired Liverpool seafarers in their own homes.

Records

Minutes, 1838 - 1954.

Account Books, etc., 1845 - 1963.

Miscellaneous correspondence and papers, c.1844 - 1947.

Daily record book of payments for board, 1967 - 1969.

Outfitting department accounts, 1951 - 1969.

D/LH

1838 - 1969

6 Boxes and 1 Volume

The Maritime Archives & Library holds further material related to the Liverpool Sailor's Home in miscellaneous collections. Please see *Guide to the Records of the Merseyside Maritime Museum*, Vol. 2, pp. 81-82, for relevant references.

Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union, Liverpool Seamen and Emigrants' Friend Society and Bethel Union: Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society

The Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union was formed in Liverpool in 1820. It was non-denominational and offered support to seamen, their families and departing emigrants, and loaned portable libraries to ships. The Society also established the first floating chapel in Liverpool.

In 1881 the Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society made its first move towards accommodating seafarers when it obtained a room in Mariners Parade for use as a free sitting and reading room. In 1900 the Right Honourable Samuel Smith, M.P., erected and furnished a building as a memorial to mark the death of his son, J. Gordon Smith. The Gordon Smith Institute, Paradise Street, became the headquarters for the Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society, accommodating up to two hundred seafarers a night. In 1975, due to financial problems, the Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society ceased to operate.

Records

Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union annual report.

SAS/23D/1/1	1843	1 Item
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Liverpool Seamen and Emigrants Friend Society and Bethel Union annual report.

DX/1472	1871	1 Item
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Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society annual reports.

DX/1472	1904, 1911, 1940, 1947	4 Items
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P/CC/SF/1-9	1916-18, 1920, 1923-27	9 Items
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The Mersey Mission to Seamen

The Liverpool branch of the Mission to Seamen was established in 1856 at a meeting in Liverpool of leading shipowners and influential merchants. The object of the Mission was "to promote and minister to the spiritual, moral and temporal welfare of Merchant Seamen".

In 1873 The Mersey Mission to Seamen was established as having a more independent and autonomous role. The Mission rented a number of rooms as meeting places for seafarers - including a room in Runcorn catering for bargemen and flatmen, and a room in the Liverpool Sailor's Home as a rendezvous for seafarers when ashore. In 1876 newly erected premises were opened on Hanover Street by Ralph Brocklebank, and remained the headquarters of the Mission until 1957 when new headquarters were built on James Street. In 1984 the Mission moved to its present address at Colonsay House, Crosby.

The majority of the Mission's records are held at Liverpool Record Office.

Records

Annual Reports

DX/812	1952-53, 1959	3 Items
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Knitting pattern book for seamen, 1914.

Loose-leaf knitting pattern book for sea-boot stockings, c.1941.

DX/1194	1914-c.1941	2 Items
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Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution

A group of leading shipowners, concerned about the lack of provision for orphaned children of seamen, invited members of the Liverpool public to attend a meeting at the Mercantile Marine Services Association Rooms on 16 December 1868.

In August 1869 the Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution opened in temporary accommodation in Duke Street. By the end of 1869 sixty children were already in residence.

In 1870 Liverpool Town Council approved a resolution to give land at Newsham Park to the committee to construct a permanent building for the Institution and in January 1874 the children were transferred from the Duke Street premises to Newsham Park with an additional forty-six newcomers. The Institution also looked after children on an outdoor relief basis. In the Annual Report of 1899 it is recorded that 321 children attended the orphanage and 508 received outdoor relief.

The Institution was formally opened on the 30 September 1874 by the Duke of Edinburgh - the "Sailor Prince" - fourth son of Queen Victoria, and in May 1886 Queen Victoria herself visited the Orphanage, adding her name to the list of patrons. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Orphanage was evacuated to Hill Bank, Wirral. After the War preparations were made for the return to Newsham Park, but the Committee members were becoming concerned over the possible effects of the great expansion of the country's social services. These services lead to gradual decline of children living at the Orphanage. In addition new legislation prevented children under 11 years old from being educated at the same school as older children and made it illegal for young children to live at a school of an institutional nature. Although the Orphanage was therefore closed on the 27 July 1949 it continued to provide for the relief and education of orphaned children and in 1969 celebrated its centenary.

Records

Minute books and indexes, 1869 - 1969.

Annual Reports, 1869 - 1997.

Registers of Children, 1768 - 1948.*

Bound volumes: account books, letter books, visitor's book (Royal Visit), school register, 1869 - 1974.

Letters and papers, re Orphanage Committee and staff, 1873 - 1916.

Personal Case Paper, c.1870 - 1949.*

D/SO	1869 - 1988	102 Boxes
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Written permission is required from the Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution to view any material, re the Registers of Children and Personal Case Papers. Write to:

Secretary
Royal Liverpool Seaman's Orphan Institution
2nd Floor, Tower Building
22 Water Street
Liverpool, L3 1BA

The Maritime Archives & Library holds further material related to the Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution in miscellaneous collections. Please see *Guide to the Records of the Merseyside Maritime Museum*, Vol. 2, pp. 87-88, for relevant reference.

Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society

The Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society was founded in 1839 following a hurricane that wreaked havoc in the Irish Channel and the Mersey area on 7-8 January 1839. The absence of funds available to aid the unfortunate victims of what was said to have been the first hurricane ever met in the area, prompted a public meeting on 9 January 1839, to raise funds to assist the victims and to reward the heroes.

At the first annual general meeting on 15 January 1840, it was proposed that the Society be called the "Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society".

In 1884 it was suggested that the Society should extend its funds to those families who had lost relatives at sea. However, it was decided that the Society's limited funds should be reserved from those families who had lost fathers and husbands who had attempted to save the lives of others.

The medals and awards of the Society cover three main areas: Marine, Fire and General. Life-saving proficiency medals and awards are also given. The Society is still active and sends a copy of its annual report to the Maritime Archives & Library.

Records

Minutes, 1839 - 1975.

Annual Reports 1901 - 2001.

D/LS	1839 - 2001	6 Boxes
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Bibliography

EVANS, B. *Mersey Mariners*. Birkenhead: Countrywise Ltd., 1997.

HUGHES, T.E. *The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution, A Century of Progress 1869-1969*. Liverpool: The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution, 1969.

JEFFERY, S. *The Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society 1839-1939*. Liverpool: Daily Post Printers, 1940.

KENNERLEY, A. *British Seamen's Missions and the Sailor's Homes 1815-1970. Voluntary Welfare Provision for Serving Seafarers*. Exeter: University of Exeter, 1989.

KINGSFORD, M.R. *The Mersey Mission to Seamen 1856-1956*. Abingdon: Abbey Press, 1957.

KVERNDAL, R. *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth - A Contribution to the History of the Church Maritime*. California: William Carey Library, 1986.