COASTWISE FROM CUMBERLAND:

MARYPORT COASTAL TRADE,

1855–1889

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Maryport Coastal Trade, 1855-1889

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Abstract

This thesis examines the British port of Maryport, with an emphasis on its coastal trade. During the period 1855 through 1889 Maryport boasted a lively trade, extending from Wales to Scotland and across the Irish Sea. Although a variety of products were involved, the lion's share of Maryport's shipping, especially across the Irish Sea, was based on the coal industry. This trade, involving Maryport and larger centres such as Belfast, Dublin, Londonderry and Liverpool, will be examined with a focus on three specific facets. The first is coastal capital, that is the actual ships involved and the investors who bought them. Second, there is the human capital, the crews who manned Maryport's coasters, from masters down to apprentices. Third, we will look at the actual voyages made by coastal vessels. This section will also focus attention on the Irish Sea and the coal industry—the physical boundary of the voyages and the industry which spurred many of them.

       This study is one of the few to examine specifically the coastal trade of a single British port. Although there are numerous essays on the general shipping of UK ports, most study foreign or colonial shipping, with only passing reference to the portion of trade comprised by coasters. Since the tonnage of British coasting prior to the 1890s was much greater than deep-sea shipping, it stands to reason that a substantial part of many ports' trade was accounted for by coasters.[1] This was certainly the case in Maryport, where coasting accounted for a third of all shipping tonnage entering and clearing as late as 1900. Since so

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[1]   Derek Aldcroft, "The Eclipse of British Coastal Shipping 1913-21," *The Journal of Transport History* IV (1963): 24.

little has been written on this portion of *any* port's trade, this thesis makes an important contribution to the literature.

This study demonstrates that Maryport coasting retained much of its sail character well into the "age of steam." Despite this, the coastal trades continued to be important into the new century. This is another side of British coasting, where the bulk of scholarly work has been done on trades most receptive to technological change. It also challenges the belief that only innovative trades enjoyed long-term success, particularly in the late Victorian period. The essentially local nature of Maryport's shipping, both in terms of investors and the men who actually crewed the vessels, is stressed. From the middle of the nineteenth century, extensive sea links were maintained with western England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland's east coast. In this respect, the thesis is not only the story of a single port but also says much about the United Kingdom's Irish Sea trade in general.

failed to lend support. If there is anyone I have forgotten, my apologies. I remember you in my heart if not on the page. Best wishes.

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This study examines the British registry port of Maryport. Although important components of its trade were concerned with foreign and colonial shipping, the focus here will be on its coastwise trade. In the nineteenth century coasting was part of the "home trade," which might involve commercial traffic around the British Isles, or to the near continent from the River Elbe to Brest in France. In Maryport's case we will deal only with trade around the United Kingdom, specifically from Scotland to Wales and across the Irish Sea.

An obvious question might be raised at this point. Why study a British coasting port at all? The study of Britain's nineteenth-century coastal trade is important for several reasons. Although these arguments will be reiterated throughout the essay, they will be stated here for the sake of clarity.

In the first instance, coasting as a branch of maritime history has seldom received the attention it deserves, particularly compared to the deep-sea trades. Indeed, it has also suffered compared to railways, its nineteenth-century competitor. Both railways and Bluewater shipping have, on the other hand, generated thousands of books and articles. The entire corpus of British coastal shipping studies amounts to fewer than 400 works in total. This has been pointed out most eloquently by John Armstrong, with whom we will deal in Chapter 1. This case can be overstated, naturally. Quite a few maritime historians devote a portion of their work to coasting. Nonetheless, the volume of coastwise literature on Britain, greatest maritime power of the nineteenth century, is rather puny. Clearly this is an area with many gaps and offers fertile opportunities for the researcher.

This brings us to the second justification for coastal research in the British context--its importance to UK internal trade and even its scope compared to foreign trades. As Armstrong argues, the coaster's role in prewar British transport was crucial: coasters carried 22,900,000 tons of goods per annum by 1913. Yearly tonnages grew by two per cent from the 1830s.[1] Derek Aldcroft remarks of the coasters:

> Hundreds of little coastal vessels...collected cargoes from the large ports and distributed them to the many small ports dotted around the British Isles, or brought cargoes into the principal ports for transhipment abroad...For much of the nineteenth century the tonnage of coastal traffic was substantially greater than that of ocean shipping. Only from the 1890s onwards did the latter tonnage exceed the former.[2]

As Aldcroft's article suggests, ports were an important part of the coastal transport network, bringing us to the next point--why study a port? Although certain areas of coasting have been reasonably well documented--trades where the incorporation of new technology was very rapid and coaster relationships with the railways--some areas are clearly lacking. One such area is coastal port studies. At present there are no book-length studies specifically on the coastal trade of any port and precious few articles. As the port is one of the basic components of coasting such studies may pave the way one day for a general synthesis.

Maryport is a good candidate for study since for much of the nineteenth century it

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[1]   John Armstrong, "A Revised View of the Transport History of the Nineteenth Century-The Neglected Role of the Coastal Ship," *History Teaching Yearbook* VI (1992): 63.

[2]   Derek Aldcroft, "The Eclipse of British Coastal Shipping 1913-21," *The Journal of Transport History* IV (1963): 24.

maintained a thriving coastal export trade in coal and iron along Britain's west coast and particularly across the Irish Sea. Maryport was also part of the trading network of larger centres such as Belfast, Dublin and Liverpool. The town also maintained a large coastal trade into the 1880s based largely on sail. The successful use of older technology on coastal routes has often been overlooked by historians in favour of those trades that adapted quickly to new advances. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in this emphasis, but Maryport serves as a reminder that other strategies were employed to considerable effect. With this in mind it is now appropriate to look at the port's background.

Maryport has a rich tradition of interaction with the sea. For the historian there is ample ground to explore the town's maritime past. Yet, to date there is a dearth of good academic research on any aspect of this. Not only the coastal trade but also the foreign and fishing fleets of Maryport have escaped the attention of historians. This allows a wide scope for new studies of Maryport seafaring, although the lack of secondary resources can be frustrating.

Maryport is located in the modern British county of Cumbria, near the Scottish border. Part of the Lake District of northwestern England, Cumbria as a geographic entity would have been unknown to Victorians. During the period under study Maryport was situated in the old county of Cumberland, a short train ride from the city of Carlisle. Today's Cumbria consists of this former county plus Westmorland and parts of Lancashire. Then as now, Maryport was located on and greatly influenced by the sea. Its harbour is in form much as it was a century ago, although its fleets of cargo vessels are long gone. Through the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries agriculture formed the basis of Cumberland's economy, but Maryport's shipping was built upon the region's extractive industries.[3]

Maryport's modern history can be traced to the late eighteenth century when the town grew from a small village into a town of more than 1,000 persons. At the time most people were employed, directly or indirectly, in coal mining. According to L.A. Williams this is a good example of the impact that expanding coal production can have on urban growth.[4] In fact, much of Maryport's development can be traced to Cumbria's extractive industries and the need to transport the output to markets.

Coal fields extending from Maryport to St. Bee's Head contributed the majority of a total Cumberland production of 500,000 tons of coal per year by the 1780s. As early as 1828 coal exports from Maryport itself amounted to 40,000 tons annually. Iron was another pillar of the Maryport economy, with the Napoleonic wars stimulating production. Although it fell following the end of hostilities, output rose once more in the 1840s. By 1849 100,000 tons of haematite ore annually were being exported from Cumberland--a fifth of the United Kingdom's production. Exports of this iron ore grew until the late 1860s. Maryport itself was

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[3]   David Clarke, "Maryport: A Late Coastal Switch to Steam Propulsion, 1865-1910," *Proceedings of the Steam at Sea Conference* (Hull: University of Hull, Forthcoming), 4-5. There are a number of good studies of Cumbria as a region. the best are: J.D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties From 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1981), 64 and Roy Millward and Adrian Robinson, *Landscapes of Britain--Cumbria* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

[4]   L.A. Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 21.

one centre of a Scots-run iron industry in the region. The Gilmour family was early furnace owners in the town, but produced only pig-iron and went out of business in 1893. At mid-century production of Bessemer steel became important. The proportion of metal workers increased from 3.3 to 13.53 per cent of West Cumbria's workforce between 1851 and 1911.[5]

The town was dependent on available shipping facilities for the export of local mineral resources. By the second quarter of the nineteenth-century, however, the quantities of these commodities being shipped out through Maryport made the harbour facilities inadequate. In 1836 a floating dock, known as Campbell's Dock, was constructed to handle the increased traffic. This was about the same time, in 1838, that ships were first registered at Maryport.[6] Prior to this the port had fallen under the jurisdiction of Whitehaven. In keeping with the town's new status, a customs house and harbour office were constructed. Concurrently, however, the port's infrastructure became inadequate, as trade continued to expand, aided greatly by rail linkages.[7]

The building of the Maryport to Aspatria Railway in 1840 allowed easier access to

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[5] Williams, *Road Transport*, 92; Clarke, "Maryport," 5; Herbert and Mary Jackson, *Holme Shipping Line: Maryport-1873 to 1913* (Workington: Firpress, 1991), 7. See also: Oliver Wood, *Development of the Coal, Iron and Shipbuilding Industries of West Cumberland, 1750-1914* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1952).

[6] Vessels were owned in the town much earlier, but formal registry facilities were not established until this date.

[7] Herbert and Mary Jackson, *Holme Shipping Line: Maryport--1873 to 1913* (Workington: Firpress, 1991), 8; Annie Robinson, *Maritime Maryport* (Whitehaven: George Todd, 1978), 11.

the North of Cumbria's. Along with the Whitehaven Junction Line in 1847, this railway laid the groundwork for substantial increases in Maryport's coal traffic. Coal exports in 1839 amounted to 110,000 tons, rising to 333,871 tons in 1857. By 1865 the port shipped as much as 12,000 tons of coal during exceptional weeks. Another line, the Maryport and Carlisle, trebled the coal traffic coming into Maryport by 1844. The importance of the coal industry to railways radiating from Maryport can be gleaned from newspaper reports of the day. When in 1865 it was decided "to bring a line to join the Maryport & Carlisle Line near Ellengrove and tunnel through by the quarries," the cooperation of colliery owners was considered crucial to success.[8]

In 1854 the town's Board of Trustees decided to construct another dock to deal with the increased coal traffic. Although nearly scuttled by lack of funds, the project was eventually completed and the Elizabeth Dock opened on 20 October 1857. The new dock required the construction of an entirely revamped transportation system, authorization for which had been granted by Parliament in 1855. This meant that in addition to the dock Maryport now had an improved rail traffic system with new lines and bridges. Coal hurries were also erected to allow for more efficient processing of material.[9]

In time Elizabeth Dock, at six hundred feet in length and two hundred forty feet breadth, itself became too small for Maryport's mineral traffic, especially with the growth

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[8]   Williams, 144-6; *Maryport Examiner*, 20 October 1865 and 2 and 17 November 1865.

[9]   Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Line*, 10.

of the iron trade. Spanish iron ore was imported through Maryport and taken by rail to Workington.[10] The opening of the Maryport Haematite Iron Company in 1868 and the Solway Haematite Iron Company in 1871 created further demand for the ore. During this same period the region's own exports of pig iron continued to increase. Larger ocean-going craft engaging in the trade were unable to use the Elizabeth Dock and a bigger facility was clearly needed. By 1879 a £100,000 dock was being proposed. Although it too was plagued by setbacks during construction, the Senhouse Dock, measuring eight hundred fifty feet by three hundred feet and covering an area of six acres, was opened in May 1884. From that date until 1902 the town's total imports and exports rose by 131 per cent. During the last four years of this period the Seahorse Dock handled an average of about sixty-nine per cent of all Maryport's import and export traffic. A great deal of this must have been part of the coasting trades.[11] In 1899, for example, Workington's iron industry accounted for fifty-seven per cent of Senhouse Dock's tonnage entered and cleared.[12]

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[10] For example, in 1890 the ship *Dunboyne* transported coke to Australia. Steel rails were also traded to the southern colony, as witnessed by a voyage of the *Ladas* in 1895 to Newcastle, New South Wales. Steel rails were also shipped to foreign ports, an example being the *Midas'* voyage to Valparaiso in 1896. See Herbert and Mary Jackson *Tragic Maryport Sea Captain's Letters* (Workington: Firpress, 1991).

[11] This supposition cannot be tested with any rigour since none of the surviving official sources distinguishes between coastal and deep-sea shipping on a systematic basis.

[12] Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Line*, 11-12. F. Kelly, *Maryport Harbour and Docks -- A Report by the Clerk of Harbour Commissioners*, 1902; *Maryport and Workington Advertiser*, 2 January 1885.

Such extractive products, increasing in volume over time, were transshipped from Maryport as part of both the foreign and coastal trades. It is difficult to pin down which cargoes travelled on what particular vessel, but this certainly translated into large increases in shipping traffic --By 1870 the town ranked eleventh of eighty --three British coasting ports in terms of both vessel numbers and tonnage registered. In the coastal context, coal and coke were mainly shipped to Ireland, a trade by its nature requiring seaborne carriage. As late as 1910 the city of Dublin alone imported 30,000 tons of Maryport coal per annum. In 1870, coastal tonnage entering and clearing Maryport totalled 299,969 tons. Although these numbers contracted somewhat during the next three decades, by 1900 entrances and clearances by coasters peaked at 356,154 tons and remained well above the 200,000 ton mark until the outbreak of World War I.[13]

With credentials such as these, including the obvious links to railway history, it is

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[13]   Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers* (BPP), *Annual Statement of Navigation and Shipping*, 1890, 338-43; BPP, 1872, LVI,164-7; Maryport's shipping also spawned numerous ancillary industries. A number of shipbuilders called the port home from the Georgian through Victorian periods such as: Peat & Co. (1773-1840); Wood & Co. (1790-1862); I. Middleton (1816-1837); Huddleston & Ritson (1831-1840) and Ritson & Co. (1841-1906). In addition there were numerous service industries catering to sailors, not the least of which were taverns and inns. By 1910 sixteen such establishments existed. Some acted as coaching and posting inns and their names reflected the town's port status. These included *The Lifeboat, Royal Oak, Hope and Anchor* and *Sailors Return*. Although such businesses are not a focus of this work, they provide evidence of important economic spinoffs of shipping in Maryport. See: Michael K. Stammers, "The High Character Obtained by Cumberland Ships--A Shipbuilding District in the Nineteenth Century," *International Journal of Maritime History* X (1998), Forthcoming,, 8; Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Line*, 4; Robinson, 28.

unfortunate that Maryport's coastal trade has not attracted much scholarly attention. In the chapters to follow this oversight will be addressed. There are a number of important areas which need to be explored if a clear picture of Maryport coasting is to emerge. First, there are the ships themselves, along with the individuals, men and women, who owned them. Second come the men who crewed these vessels, from masters down to unpaid apprentices. Third are the voyage patterns of the ships and men as they plied the coasts of the United Kingdom in search of cargoes. Before looking at these specific facets of Maryport coasting, however, a review of the literature available on coasting in general is appropriate to provide an intellectual context for the chapters to follow.

Chapter 1
The General Coasting Trade: Past Commentaries

British coastal shipping has not attracted the attention of scholars to the extent that her bluewater trades have. Still, there exists a range of material to interest the researcher. Although some studies take the form of books, scholars have generally written articles on the coasting trades. The corpus of works on UK coasting amounts to less than four hundred books and articles.[1] But even this is an exaggeration, since many works are not scholarly. Some are simply antiquarian compilations of statistics which are not placed in any wider context. Other works on coasting do little more than list vessels owned by a particular company. The literature review to follow will emphasize the serious academic treatments of the subject, leaving popular history aside, for the most part. Although no comprehensive overview has yet to be written, many facets of British coasting have been examined. The present focus will be on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although I will not ignore works on earlier eras.[2] The scholarly treatment of British coasting generally falls within several broad categories. These include port studies, examinations of specific trades, and general overviews of UK shipping which include some material on coasting. It is on the basis of these demarcations that we will proceed to review the literature.

To date, the most unsatisfactory treatments of coasting are the overviews. Many

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[1] The most comprehensive guide to these publications is John Armstrong, "An Annotated Bibliography of the British Coastal Trade," *The International Journal of Maritime History* VII (June 1995): 117-192.

[2] These parameters reflect the temporal range of the thesis to follow. All periods, from ancient times on, have received some attention from scholars. *Ibid.*, 119.

comprehensive essays have been produced on British shipping generally, but there are no real counterparts for coastwise trades.[3] In this century, however, a small number of competent general studies have appeared and studies of the coastwise trades are often found as part of these. But for the serious scholar interested in coasting, the available volumes are superficial. Consisting of at most a chapter or two in much larger texts, these sections give only a skeletal picture of the topic. Researchers are left to fill in the gaps themselves. The situation is much the same concerning more specific aspects of shipping such as the social lives of sailors and the ships themselves.[4]

Of the volumes which *do* concentrate exclusively on general coasting, one of the earliest is the anonymous volume, *The Coastwise Trade of the United Kingdom*. Published in 1925, the slender book came at a time of crisis for Britain's shipping industry, at least compared to her Victorian successes. The inter-war period saw a decline in the proportion

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[3]   Such general works include Adam W. Kirkaldy, *British Shipping: Its History, Organization and Importance* (London, 1914; reprint, New York: A. M. Kelly, 1970); Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962); A. G. Course, *The Merchant Navy, A Social History* (London: F. Muller, 1963); Ronald Hope, *A New History of British Shipping* (London: John Murray, 1990).

[4]   For a detailed treatment of works that include (or ignore) the topic of coasting see John Armstrong, "The Cinderella of the Transport World: The Historiography of the British Coastal Trade," *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping: Studies in Transport History,* in Armstrong (ed.), Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), ix-xxiv. See also Knut Weibust, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 1969); Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailor Towns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Basil Greenhill, *The Ship: The Life and Death of the Merchant Sailing Ship* (London: HMSO, 1980).

of world tonnage accounted for by British bottoms. In 1914 British ships comprised 39 per cent of the total; dropping to 33 per cent in 1921; to 29 per cent in 1931; and finally to 26 per cent on the eve of World War II.[5] Of course, Britain's share of world tonnage had no direct relevance to the coasting trades. Nonetheless, the condition of British coasting was deplorable in its own way. According to Derek Aldcroft:

> [well before the outbreak of the Great War it was clear] that...the coastal trade was not keeping pace either with the growth of traffic passing through the major ports or with the needs of the population and industries grouped around the smaller ports...coastal shipping was expanding more slowly than other forms of transport.[6]

The disruptions of the First World War compounded the problems experienced by the United Kingdom's coasting trades. By the early 1920s tonnage figures for British coastal movements were less than half those for 1913 (see table 1.1).[7]

Despite these trends, the book exudes a jingoistic belief in the Empire's continued strength. There is a genuine conviction about Britain's dominance on the world stage. British hegemony, is considered a vital factor to future success. The author believes that, notwithstanding the postwar downturn, Britain remains unchallenged as a sea trader. As proof he offers tonnage figures for the United Kingdom's fleet compared to those of other

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[5]   Hope, *A New History of British Shipping*, 359,362.

[6]   Derek H. Aldcroft, "The Eclipse of British Coastal Shipping 1913-21," *The Journal of Transport History* 1st Series, VI (1963): 24. In fact, this essay is reprinted in Armstrong's compilation *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping*.

[7]   For an analysis of why UK coasting declined during this period see: Aldcroft, "The Eclipse of British Coastal Shipping."

nations.[8] Despite an overall decline, Britain retained a leading role in shipping. The author's figures reflect this, but tend to gloss over the implications of this decline which would have undermined the idea that Britain remained unchallenged at sea. In addition, the author gives no references, making his figures impossible to verify.

Table 1.1

Arrivals and Departures of Vessels With Cargoes in the General Coasting Trade of the United Kingdom (excluding Ireland).

Year	Total Trade. 000 net tons
1913	45,066
1918	14,333
1919	20,267
1920	25,820
1921	21,073

Source: Derek H. Aldcroft, "The Eclipse of British Coastal Shipping 1913-21," *The Journal of Transport History* 1st series, VI (1963): 25.

The author next reviews the history of his nation's shipping, coasting in particular. Again, the focus is on establishing British credentials as a first-rank oceanic power. Given Britain's maritime credentials, this hardly seems necessary. The author's statistics might be of more use to a researcher. For example, he notes that from 1750 to 1795 the number of British coasters in service rose 87 per cent, from 6,396 to 11,964 vessels, with tonnage rising 130 per cent.[9] Again, the figures' value is compromised by a lack of references. Although not

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[8]   Anon. *The Coastwise Trade of the united Kingdom Past and Present and its Possibilities* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1925), 5.

[9]   *Ibid.,* 25. The figure of 11,964 coasters is highly suspect, since only about twice that number were in service in 1913. Again, a lack of references makes checking

atypical of the period, this can still be frustrating for contemporary scholars.

The book is most useful as a contemporary view of the indifference shown to the coastal trade, despite its benefits and innovations. But this volume is also an early recognition of coasting's contribution to British economic success. Moreover, the writer perceives the willingness of coaster owners to employ new technology: he spends several pages on the adoption of steam by coasters and the use of inventions like iron ventilators on cross-channel cattle ships. These positive features weigh against government's lack of attention to coastal infrastructure, including inefficient ports and loading facilities. This neglect caused delays brought about by the need to use docks and the necessity to wait for proper tides; by the failure of port authorities to modernize entrances to older docks to accommodate modern shipping; and finally by the failure of government to provide national funding for facility modernization.[10] Improvements suggested include "the development of facilities for transshipment of cargoes in...ocean ports"; lowering costs of bunkering coal through improvements in equipment and the colliers themselves; provision of better quay accommodation; and reversing the tendency to afford coasters only the most inadequate dock accommodation. Such progressive ideas mark the author as an early champion against relegating coasting to second-place status in favour of deep-sea trades.[11]

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accuracy difficult.

[10]   *Ibid.*, 80-95.

[11]   *Ibid.*

When a further volume on British coasting appeared in 1938, the industry remained in a slump. T.S. Willan's *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750* is a more modern academic study than its anonymous predecessor. It is neither a lament for better times past nor a celebration of a hoped-for glorious future. Willan simply explores the mode of transport with an eye to understanding its nuances more fully. The book contains extensive shipping figures for the period and these are of greater value than his predecessor's. All are extensively footnoted, allowing the researcher to verify their accuracy. Willan's work is more open to collegial criticism and more accountable as a serious academic study. Furthermore, the author includes a number of useful appendices and an extensive bibliography.[12]

Willan's study is useful not only for its meticulous referencing, but also for valuable insights into the role played by early modern coasting in shaping British--and consequently world--history. Coal is a prime example of this process. Willan brings out the overlooked fact that coal, as a valuable coastal good, predated the industrial revolution by a century and a half. He states "that symbol of later industrial change shared with corn the proud place of staple commodity."[13] Indeed, the coal trade had implications in the period's politics. When the Scots and Royalists were suspected of interrupting the coal trade in 1643 to control the Tyne and Sunderland, Parliament intervened. This standoff was not resolved until the

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[12] T. S. Willan, *The English Coasting Trade 1600-1750* (2nd ed., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

[13] *Ibid.*, 55.

Roundheads defeated the Royalist garrison at Newcastle in 1644.[14]

Willan can be little faulted for his quality of research--his book is still considered the standard text for pre-1750 coasting. Unfortunately, decades after the first and second editions appeared, few academics have taken up the study of coastwise trade. This is something Willan lamented in the preface to his 1967 edition.[15] After thirty years few new works had surfaced, with the situation only improving recently. Willan's study, though focussed on coasting in a fairly broad sense, is limited temporally. Covering only 150 years, the nineteenth century remains beyond its purview. As yet, no similar volume exits for the latter period. This lack of research makes general surveys the area most lacking in coastal shipping history. Fortunately, the literature on specific branches of coasting is more fertile. One prolific area, by coasting standards, examines specific trades and services.

One of the most important of these services was the transport of passengers. Britain, as an island, relied on the sea for many travel needs prior to the advent of more advanced modes of transport. This became more important as internal modes of travel had been long neglected by British governments.[16] Understandably, this movement of people had a role in national development and has attracted the attention of historians. Although articles dominate the literature on coastal shipping, an important look at British passenger services is a full-

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[14]   *Ibid.*, 56-57.

[15]   *Ibid.*, vii.

[16]   James A. Williamson and Donald Southgate, *A Short History of British Expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 7.

length book.

The Short Sea Route by Fraser G. Machaffie chronicles Irish Sea passenger traffic from the seventeenth century through the 1970s. For current purposes the focus will be on sections dealing with the nineteenth century. Machaffie's work is useful not only for its description of events, but also for its thematic links to other areas of coasting research, including the relationship between coasting and the railways and the role of technology.

The railways were especially important as their construction often provided the impetus for establishing packet services. This was the case in 1862 when railways first reached the harbour at Stranraer and the port of Larne was linked by rail to Belfast. Although the sea link failed, the Stranraer and Larne Steamboat Company became the first "fixed schedule service between London and Belfast."[17]

The other point of interest, technological change, permeates the entire work, especially that portion dealing with the steam revolution. Chapter 2 deals with steam services prior to mid-century, which focussed not on passenger but on mail runs. In any event, the services were often interlinked as passengers frequently travelled on mail packets. The subject of mail packets will be discussed later in this chapter when looking at Philip Bagwell's work.[18]

As with the mails, Irish Sea passenger routes were also pioneers regarding the early

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[17]   Fraser G. Machaffie, *The Short Sea Route* (Prescot: T. Stephenson and Sons, 1975), XIII, 51-2.

[18]   *Ibid.*, 17-32, 36.

deployment of steam technology. The first regular Glasgow-Stranraer link was provided by the steamer *Highland Chieftain* as early as 1822. By the early 1860s routes such as Belfast-Stranraer had established fixed schedules using reliable steamers. This treatment of technology continues later in the book as Machaffie relates a debate over the relative merits of paddle wheels and screws. His narrative points out that technological adaptation continued on such routes beyond the nineteenth century. In 1910, the *King Edward* was launched and she became the testing ground for the new technology of steam turbines. The vessel was used successfully into the 1930s.[19]

Although much of Machaffie's book is a straightforward narrative, describing events relating to the passenger trade, its discussion of railway-coaster links and the role of technology reflects a wider view of coasting. With this in mind we may turn to Bagwell's essay which looks at a similar trade and themes as Machaffie.

In addition to moving people, coasters were important in the carriage of the mails. Even for an island nation, the carriage of mail is more closely associated with overland than sea transport. Nonetheless, coasters played a vital role in this service, especially across the Irish Sea. Philip Bagwell's "The Post Office Steam Packets, 1821-36, and the Development of Shipping on the Irish Sea," looks at this service during the early steam era and explores the implications of the new technology.

In Bagwell's opinion, prior to steam the Irish Sea mail service was notoriously slow

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[19]   *Ibid.,* 49, 85, 100.

and unreliable. The Howth-Holyhead run, normally taking eight hours, on one occasion required fifty-one. With the introduction of privately-owned steamers, government mail ships immediately became obsolete. Initially reluctant to use steamers, competitors forced government to reassess its position. By the early 1820s post office steamers had established viable year-round steam services on the Irish Sea. The government service lasted only fifteen years, however, and private operators were the true innovators in steam mail provision.[20]

The service trades, particularly the mail and passenger runs, were suited to the incorporation of technological advances. Both were areas of high return, where speed plus regular service were of the essence.[21] In some cases, this argument could be made for cargo trades as well. This was especially so where items like manufactured goods, which generated high returns in relation to their bulk, made the introduction of costly steamers viable. In the case of lower-value bulk trades, innovation was generally late. Sailing vessels were preferable when low costs rather than speed were important to the shipper. Some other goods were fragile and required a slower approach to loading. Included in this bracket were clay pipes and bricks.[22] Where any of these conditions existed, change came slowly.

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[20] Philip Bagwell, "The Post Office Steam Packets, 1821-36, and the Development of Shipping on the Irish Sea," *Maritime History* I (April 1971): 5.

[21] See: J. Graeme Bruce, "The Contribution of Cross-Channel and Coastal Vessels to Developments in Marine Practice," *Journal of Transport History* IV (November 1959): 65-80.

[22] John Armstrong, "Management Response in British Coastal Shipping to Railway Competition," *Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord* I (January 1997): 15-17.

Although much has been written on high-value trades, the bulk trades have proved similarly attractive to historians. This is particularly so in the case of mineral products, such as metals and especially coal. Since coal was so important to British growth, it is logical that historians should comment on its value to the wider economy. This is one area where a true debate has arisen concerning UK coasting. In his 1987 article, "The English Coastal Coal Trade, 1691-1910: How Rapid was Productivity Growth?" William Hausman addresses productivity change in the coal trade from the northeast to London over two centuries. One important issue, according to Hausman, concerns ship size. In deep-sea trades technological changes caused a fall in freight rates, both nominal and real, from the 1820s to 1900. Hausman's main contention is that no such decline occurred in the coastal coal trade. He argues that the century after 1760 saw little growth in the average tonnage of colliers. Despite size increases occasioned by steam colliers, freight rates did not fall subsequently.[23]

Hausman asserts that the mid-eighteenth century saw few changes in the size of ships employed in London's coal trade. He believes the 1750s were marked by an increase in the number of smaller craft making the run between the northeast and London. Although coal imports rose less than 2 per cent during this time, vessel movements were up by 35 per cent. The most dramatic change, according to Hausman, came with the introduction of steam, in response to railway competition. Seven years after the 1845 connection of London to the

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[23]   William J. Hausman, "The English Coastal Coal Trade, 1691-1910: How Rapid was Productivity Growth?" *Economic History Review* Second Series, XL (1987): 588-596, 589, 595. (The article is a response to Simon's Ville's article "Total Factor Productivity," which appeared in an earlier issue of the same journal).

midland coal fields by rail, the first iron steam collier, the *John Bowes*, was constructed. Within a decade the wooden sailing collier had virtually disappeared. Hausman finds it surprising that shipping costs did not fall under these circumstances.[24]

Hausman observes a remarkable growth in the industry during his study period. Coal shipments by sea to London went from about 400,000 tons in the late seventeenth century to nine million in the early twentieth. Nonetheless, Hausman does not credit the shipping industry with any great role in the process of change. In his opinion, the changes in coasting had little direct impact on the larger economy. This is especially so in the context of other industries. Echoing Ralph Davis, he allows that while shipping was important to the industrial revolution, it made no contributions of any "special character to the transition."[25] This assertion seems quite extreme. Indeed, given Willan's evidence on the early sea transport of coal, one might argue that Britain's extensive coastline and inland waterways facilitated the transition to industry. By efficiently providing fuel coal prior to overland alternatives, coasting may have given the United Kingdom an edge over its rivals. As with any monocausal explanation, this is overly simplistic. Taken as a contributing factor, however, the evidence is hard to ignore. With this in mind we turn to Simon Ville's rejoinder.

Ville's article, "Defending Productivity Growth in the English Coal Trade During the

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[24]   Hausman, "The English Coastal Coal Trade," 595.

[25]   Hausman, "The English Coastal Coal Trade," 595; and Ralph Davis, *The English Shipping Industry*, 393.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," is a response to Hausman. Ville believes Hausman's conclusions, while interesting, do not change his own views on coastal coal rates. Ville argues that "most...productivity growth [in the coal trade] was due to rising output rather than to savings in shipping costs."[26] In addition, real price declines are not a true gauge of the impact created by productivity changes. According to Ville, Hausman accepts that "productivity gains may enable prices to remain constant when demand pressures would otherwise cause them to rise."[27] Without these gains there would have been a dramatic rise in shipping costs. As a result coal prices in London would have been much higher. In this situation it would be unlikely that development could have proceeded apace. Ville is surprised at Hausman's apparent agreement on this point while still supporting Davis' interpretation. Even if costs were constant, Ville asks how readers can accept that coal shipments played less of an economic role in Britain than the cotton industry.[28] Although Ville's argument appears sound, it is not the final word on the coastal coal trade. This debate has since been taken up by John Armstrong.

Armstrong's recent article, "Late Nineteenth-Century Freight Rates Revisited: Some Evidence From the British Coastal Coal Trade," reopens the debate on the economics of

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[26]   Simon Ville, "Defending Productivity Growth in the English Coastal Coal Trade During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review* 2nd series, XL (1987): 601.

[27]   *Ibid.*, 601.

[28]   *Ibid.*, 601-602.

seaborne coal. Echoing Ville, he feels the industry *did* play a role in industrialization. To Armstrong, the deciding factor in the expansion of the coal trade lay in the good's final market price. With a lowering of transport costs, certain products find new markets as prices become competitive. Demand is further stimulated by these new markets, which induce producers to improve production and extraction. This lower unit cost would be symbiotic, benefiting the industry and consumer alike. Armstrong allows that the price of transport is not necessarily the most important determinant in the success or failure of a product although the nature of coal meant that, in this instance, it was. As a low-value bulk good, coal was less able to stand increased transport costs than luxury items. The freight rate accounts for more of the total cost and any increase will more greatly impact on final prices.[29]

The presence of inland transport and rival coasting firms made for a competitive industry, hastening the decline in freight rates. In this setting collier owners remained viable through a variety of methods. One was to increase their vessels' mean carrying capacity to take advantage of economies of scale. Larger vessels, although able to carry more, did not require proportional amounts of fuel, equipment, or manpower to operate, increasing profitability. This fits in with Hausman's hypothesis on technological adaptation, but Armstrong gives it less importance than prices. In addition, collier owners constrained the wages of the more numerous ranks of seamen. As time went by, Armstrong argues, capital

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[29]   John Armstrong "Late-Nineteenth Century Freight Rates Revisited: Some Evidence From the British Coastal Coal Trade," *International Journal of Maritime History*, VI (1994): 46.

returns increased along with collier efficiency, due mainly to increased speed and faster turnaround in ports. This allowed a profitable coastal coal trade despite the long-term trend toward low rates.[30]

The crux of Armstrong's argument is that from 1875 to 1899 coastal freight rates plunged more steeply than the cost-of-living index, at least in the capital, a trend that continued into the twentieth century. Coastal rates likewise fell faster than the price of the product carried, meaning cheaper coal for London and possibly all ports receiving sea-borne coal. This translated into a lower cost of living.[31] Although it may be little more than theory, Armstrong makes the case that:

> ...coastal shipping made a positive contribution to [Britain's] economic growth and welfare. The continued erosion of urbanization and industrialization--dependent almost wholly on coal for heat, light and power-- would likely have been retarded if the operating costs of the coastal ships had not been reduced so drastically.[32]

Although arguably the most important British extractive product, coal was not the only one traded coastwise. Given its role in the British economy, however, coal dominates the literature. Despite this, there have been scholarly works on the shipment of metals, for example. One was the nineteenth-century copper ore trade in south-west England.

Peter Stanier's piece illustrates how this sector was intertwined with the industrial

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[30] *Ibid.*, 69-77.

[31] *Ibid.*, 68.

[32] *Ibid.*

revolution and Great Britain's emergence as an industrial power. Although nonferrous mining had a long history in southwest England, the trade only became significant in the late eighteenth century with industrialization. 56,000 tons of copper ore were produced in 1800, rising to an average annual production of 140,000-150,000 tons by mid-century. The trade had nearly vanished by 1900 due to foreign competition.[33]

This trade also highlights the importance of coal in industrialization while illustrating how certain industries could feed off one another. To smelt and refine the ores great quantities of coal were needed. After 1760 ores were shipped up the Bristol Channel to the coal source, principally smelters at Swansea, Llanelly, Neath and Port Talbot. This was the most economic way to conduct the two combined bulk trades. The trade employed a large volume of shipping, with the vessels collectively being named the "Welsh Fleet." The ore trade, Stanier notes, was considered one of the great "nurseries for seamen" in the period. An estimate has placed the number of sailors engaged in the trade as high as 800.[34]

In Stanier's view, the ships themselves were the "important link" in the southwest and Welsh copper trade. These craft initially were small, but quickly increased from an average of 60 tons in the late 1700s to around 100 tons for most of the nineteenth century.

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[33]   Peter H. Stanier, "The Copper Ore Trade of South West England in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Transport History* V (1979): 18.

[34]   *Ibid.*, 19. Part of my own findings on Maryport crews suggests that coastal seamen were not infrequently middle-aged. This may suggest the coastwise trade as a place of later employment for experienced seamen as opposed to being a training ground for the deep-sea trades.

Brigs were the vessels of choice in the early 1800s, replaced by two-masted schooners in the 1860s. Stanier does not explain why this occurred, but it likely relates to the schooner's great manoeuverability, a plus in coasting trades and lower man-ton ratios. Although larger, these later vessels remained vulnerable to the weather due to the deadweight carried. Stanier's thesis is that this nineteenth-century trade was dependent upon the small sailing coasters that carried many tons of copper ore needed by British industry.[35]

Stanier's article, like many examined thus far, contains interrelated themes. Prominent among these is the notion of coasting competing with other modes of transport. In terms of the literature, the bulk of research concerns the rivalry between coasters and railways. Also prominent is the role of technology in the development of coasting, particularly in the post-1850 period.

The paucity of material on certain areas of coasting is well illustrated by the subject of technological change. One article has become the standard reference for most works bearing on this topic. Although much coasting research includes the theme, the sole concentration on technology makes J. Graeme Bruce's, "The Contribution of Cross-Channel and Coastal Vessels to Developments in Marine Practice," almost unique. Indeed, many coastal surveys concentrate on trades which fit his thesis; that is, where technological change

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[35]   *Ibid.*, 24-32. To an extent these findings are consistent with my research on Maryport. In this case bulk cargoes, of which coal and iron ore predominated, were also carried by fairly small coasters. As in the case of the south west copper trade, sail was predominant until the late nineteenth century. See Clarke, "Maryport."

was introduced early on.[36] This is not so much a critique of more recent scholars as a complement to Bruce's insightfulness.

The "lack of glamour" associated with deep-sea trades frequently obscures the leading role coasting played in sea-transport as a whole. Although coaster owners in certain trades were innovators, this fact was seldom recognized prior to Bruce.[37] The crux of Bruce's argument is that coastal routes bred new ideas. He states in his introduction:

> ...the chronological record shows that the first experiments and applications of many successful and familiar techniques [in sea-transport] were to be found, not on the ocean-going liners or in the navies of the world, but among, river, coastal, and cross-channel passenger shipping.[38]

In the British context it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that steamers of all types comprised a greater amount of tonnage than sail. This resulted from the inefficiency of early steam engines. Their need for large amounts of coal precluded using steam on long voyages. This was coupled with a streak of unreliability, not to mention high costs. On coastal routes, owners were less likely to suffer disastrous losses through the destruction of capital. This naturally made owners of coastal bottoms more willing to

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[36]   Clarke, "Maryport," 1-3. One article which explores the reasons for the delayed adoption of new technology is Graydon R. Henning and Keith Trace, "Britain and the Motorship: A Case of the Delayed Adoption of New Technology," *The Journal of Economic History* XXXV (1975): 353-385.

[37]   In this case "seldom" does not imply never. See: Anon, *The Coastwise Trade*, 39-44.

[38]   J. Graeme Bruce, "The Contribution of Cross-Channel and Coastal Vessels to Developments in Marine Practice," *The Journal of Transport History* IV (1959), 65.

experiment with new ideas. According to Bruce, coastal companies were at the forefront of not only steam propulsion but also ship construction, reciprocating engines, turbines and paddlewheels, only being left behind on screw propellers and diesels.[39]

Bruce's work remains a prime justification for studying coasting. There is, unfortunately, a downside to which we will return. Like few other works, Bruce's essay removes the trade from the shadow of long-distance routes. Bruce's assertions are further strengthened by tonnage figures in the *Parliamentary Papers*. By 1870 steam tonnage in British coasting was almost on a par with sail--11,783,902 tons and 12,423,673 tons, respectively. Indeed, sailing coasters had been on the decline since 1845.[40] Bruce's arguments for innovative thinking in the coastal trades are convincing even today.

The most noticeable failing of Bruce's article lies not in the work itself, but in the way it has been used. Coastal innovation provides a solid justification for researching the trade, but it is not the only reason. Still, most historians of coastal shipping continue to adopt Bruce's research agenda. From the other perspective, this same thinking might have led to a neglect of trades that were slower to modernize. Works similar to Stanier's on the copper ore trade are exceptions. Bruce's successors have tended to look in the same direction as he did. Just as deep-sea trades are "more glamorous" than coasting, coastwise trades exhibiting

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[39]   *Ibid.*, 65-80.

[40]   BPP, *Annual Statement of Navigation and Shipping*; Maryport Vessel Registries (1871); John Armstrong, "A Revised View of the Transport History of the Nineteenth Century--The Neglected Role of the Coastal Ship," *History Teaching Review Yearbook* VI (1992).

the greatest change are considered most fit for study. Bruce's thesis is reasonable as it stands, but it must be kept in mind that it does not apply to all trades, especially those where low-value cargoes are concerned. Many important components of British coasting--the trades emanating from Maryport being one example--relied on the older methods well into the late nineteenth century.

This criticism does not mean, however, that there are not alternative research agendas. A number of historians have been more concerned with the relationship between railways and coasting. Peter Perry's article, "The Dorset Ports and the Coming of the Railways," is a good example.

In the nineteenth century, Dorset contained six ports, of which Poole, Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis "were primarily concerned with general trade derived from their local hinterlands." According to Perry, the arrival of railways had greater significance to the region and its ports than any other event. This may be overstated since other factors including changing markets must have been a factor over time. Perry does not appear to have carried out an extensive survey to confirm his thesis, but nonetheless, railways certainly had an impact on Dorset's trade. In the 1830s and 1840s these four ports handled cargoes including coal, timber, grain, bricks and soap. These commodities were almost exclusively conveyed by ship. The situation changed with the first railway, built in 1847, and especially during a spate of construction between 1857 and 1863. At once, coastal shippers lost that portion of

their bulk cargoes not directly linked to a port's immediate locality.[41] Perry next outlines the long-term effects of the new arrival on coasting. He suggests these were not necessarily negative.

Although railways co-opted much purely local traffic, substantial portions of a port's trade often remained--normally of the coastal variety. Deep-sea routes were largely absent from Dorset by the mid-nineteenth century, but coasting remained important. The trade left to coastal shippers became very specialized over time. Clay emerged as the major commodity in Poole, rising from 38 per cent of exports in 1846 up to 50 or 60 per cent in the 1850s and 1860s. Poole coasters vacated the importation of Portsmouth hides and London groceries, for example, soon after the railway's arrival. In certain instances, trades not immediately taken over by the railways continued to be the province of coastal ships until 1914.[42]

Coaster owners adapted not only by specialization in certain trades, but also by adopting profit maximization strategies. On sailing coasters, crews were frequently reduced, more economical rigs employed, and equipment and maintenance standards lowered. In the Dorset trades deterioration of quay accommodation, plus tiny, ill-equipped harbours like Lyme Regis, sometimes undermined this strategy. In these cases commercial decline ensued.[43]

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[41]   Peter Perry, "The Dorset Ports and the Coming of the Railways," *Mariner's Mirror* LIII (August 1967): 243-246.

[42]   *Ibid.*, 246-248.

[43]   *Ibid.*, 248.

Generally, the railways provided efficient service and cheap fares, although coasters could often undercut their prices. Perry believes the railways were not without failings. Poole clay and Portland stone accounted for 100,000 tons of material a year until the outbreak of World War I. Both trades remained the purview of coasters, yet Perry does not credit the shippers themselves with this success. In his view, it was the "operational problems, high costs and even gross inefficiency" on the part of railways that allowed coasters to remain in the game. Perry concludes that railways brought considerable change to Dorset transport. This was a result primarily of their ability to lure local trade away from their competitors.[44] This is a pessimistic view of the situation that does not allow for creativity and adaptation by shipowners. Among historians, John Armstrong in particular takes a more positive view of coasters. It is likely, however, that relative success by either mode of transport was not precipitated by only their own, or their rival's actions, but by a combination of both.[45]

Perry's study was a forerunner of later railway/coaster studies. Its basically negative view of coasters differs, however, from most recent essays. Although Perry acknowledges the success of coastal traders up to 1914, this is attributed mainly to failings by the railways. That coasters could only remain in trades unnoticed by railways, or by cost-cutting, does their economic contribution no credit. There were certainly railway shortcomings to be exploited.

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[44]   *Ibid.*, 248-249. As a side note, Perry does credit the motor lorry with the eventual decline of Dorset coasting. This is, however, more applicable to the post-1918 era.

[45]   This is not to mention a myriad of other factors--prices, markets, labour and the presence of foreign competition, to name a few.

It does *not* follow that coasters were unable to compete as a viable, in some cases superior, alternative. This positive view of coasters versus the railways has been brought out ever more strongly in the years since Perry's article. An article by T. R. Gourvish is one example.

Gourvish's "The Railways and Steamboat Competition in Early Victorian Britain" is one of a small number of works which centre more on the railways than coasters. This may reflect a maritime history concern with coaster/railway interaction. Railway historians have traditionally paid less attention to coastal shipping--Gourvish is one of their number who has not. From the point of view of railway owners, he contends that while steamboats could provide linkages beyond terminals, they were nonetheless considered a dangerous rival. Steamer traffic was larger numerically than competing modes of transport and had the additional advantage of an exemption from a tax on passenger carriage. Independent boat companies could offer low prices, comfortable through travel, and quick response to technological change.[46]

The railways fought back in a number of ways. Over longer hauls the advantage of speed lay with the locomotives, not the coasters. In advertising the railway tended to emphasize speed rather than comfort or cheap fares. A major strategy adopted by railway owners was the purchase of steamers as feeder services. This presented a problem as railways, under a form of government anti-monopoly policy, could not legally own steamships. As with many contemporary business restrictions, this could be circumvented.

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[46]   T.R. Gourvish, "The Railways and Steamboat Competition in Early Victorian Britain,"*Transport History* IV (March 1971): 1-2, 11.

Certain directors invested in steam tonnage privately, as on the Blackwall-Gravesend passenger route. The three railway boats did little to aid the railway. In the end they simply increased competition on the route and most passengers continued making the journey by sea. A similar scenario occurred with the Glasgow, Paisley & Greenock railway. Again, the use of railway boats was a mistake. The railway steamers were costly to run and only antagonized independent coaster companies.[47]

Gourvish concludes that railway-steamboat links were generally unprofitable. Passengers responded more to lower fares than speed. Therefore, the railways' main advantage over their rivals was negated. The small profits made on rail traffic ended up paying off losses accrued by steamship feeder services.[48] Prior to the 1850s:

> The railway was unable to exploit fully its potential advantage over a rival which had successfully adapted steam-power to water transport. The newcomer, intending to defeat rather than supplement the steamboat, was forced into a relatively subordinate position until the logical implications of railway building produced a network capable of reaching most towns previously served by water transport.[49]

Gourvish feels that with lower overheads, the smaller boat companies could better adapt to changes in demand than railways. Overall, the attempt by early railways to crush their competition was "a failure."[50] This assessment is important to the study of coasting.

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[47]   *Ibid.*, 4-6, 12.

[48]   *Ibid.*, 17.

[49]   *Ibid.*, 17-18.

[50]   Gourvish, "The Railways and Steamboat Competition," 18.

First, it provides a positive look at the strength of coasting, albeit from a rival perspective. Second, Gourvish's study reinforces the view of coasting as a vibrant industry contributing to the British economy. The drawback, from the perspective of this study, is the period he reviews. The 1830s and 1840s were decades when rail linkages were in an embryonic stage. This changed rapidly, but it constitutes a different situation than in the 1850s and beyond. Steamship technology itself was making rapid strides in the period. Paddle wheels gave way to the screws, and innovations like the reciprocating engine would greatly increase steamer efficiency. For this reason Gourvish's implication that coasters did well in his period by dint of incomplete rail links appears at least slightly unfair. Just as the railways evolved, so too did steamboats. Even when much of Britain became fully integrated by rail, the coasters continued their work. In some trades, their share of traffic actually increased. With this point in mind, we turn our attention to John Armstrong's work.

The competition between coasters and railways is a frequent theme in Armstrong's essays. His article "Management Response in British Coastal Shipping Companies to Railway Competition" is especially pertinent here. The article makes an ideal counterpart to Gourvish's work. Where the latter author looks at strategies by railway executives to deal with coasting firms, Armstrong does the same for their opposite numbers. Other writings by Armstrong contribute to the coaster/railway theme.

Armstrong begins by discussing coasting's role in Britain prior to the establishment of rail lines. An important facet of this era, according to Armstrong, was the revolutionizing of coastwise trade with the advent of steam propulsion. Despite a primary focus on the

coaster/railway debate, Armstrong feels the technology of steam is an important part of the rivalry to follow.[51] Indeed, this is of great relevance to the coasting literature. Like much recent coastal literature, this article demonstrates the value of interlocking themes.

Section two deals with the pre-1850 period, when railways first came into their own. Armstrong's conclusion differs greatly from Gourvish's, perhaps because of its different perspective. According to Armstrong, early rail construction did not constitute a "failed attempt" by rail directors to crush coasters. He feels the rivalry was a boon to the coastal firms, which benefited from the carriage of materials for railway construction and by acting as feeders. Armstrong believes early railways enhanced the value of coasters by "channelling trade onto [the coasters], as many ran from the interior to a port and hence did not compete for traffic, but rather generated it for coastal shipping."[52] This conclusion does not necessarily contradict Gourvish's findings. If early railways were a benefit to coasters, it may still be true that coasters were perceived as threats by railway executives. Indeed, the failure of railways to defeat coaster firms decisively and replace them with their own ships may partly explain the contemporary expansion of coasting.

Armstrong's article proceeds chronologically to the post-1840s, when the railways began a period of explosive growth. In Armstrong's view, this was when they were first

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[51]   Armstrong, "Management Response," 1. This section argues that steam power greatly increased the usefulness of coasters. Many of the themes Armstrong brings out have been discussed previously.

[52]   Ibid., 6.

perceived as threats to coasting firms. Comprising a "truly national network," the railways from this point on were better suited to the rapid carriage of goods. For perishable items especially, the railways became a more attractive alternative to coasters. For a time certain bulk trades were even co-opted by the railways. By 1867, despite increasing use of screw colliers, railways claimed a lion's share of the London coal trade.[53]

If there was a threat from the railways, or at least the perception that a problem existed, how did coaster owners respond? This question is addressed in Armstrong's next section. He feels the coaster firms moved to reduce competition. Conferences, including the Octuple Agreement of 1851 and the Humber Conference of 1855, allowed a degree of price control plus the sharing of proceeds on long-distance routes. In the long-run, conference agreements did not disadvantage coaster companies. Armstrong takes the idea of collaboration one step further in suggesting the railways themselves might have been part of the process. He suggests that coaster and railway companies may have entered into their own conferences, appraising the other of rates. Having similar price structures allowed for "comparison shopping" by potential shippers. With their cheaper fares this tended to work in favour of the coasters.[54] If these conferences were of any value, the railways must have also benefited. If not, railway directors would never have participated. This is a point not brought out explicitly in Armstrong's essay.

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[53]   *Ibid.*, 7-9.

[54]   *Ibid.*, 9-13.

Correct, or not, the view of coaster owners as more savvy than their railway counterparts recurs. The technological advances noted by Bruce formed part of a strategy in dealing with the railways. Quite simply, upgrading technology in coasters made them more efficient. Railways themselves were by no means static and coasters had to keep up, if they hoped to maintain the loyalty of customers. Some of these changes have been outlined in the discussion of Bruce, but they included replacing stone with water ballast, using winches and other machinery for loading and improving dock facilities. Such improvements allowed the coaster to maintain lower average costs than the railways and still give superior service. Water ballast, for example, was free and could be taken on simply by opening sea cocks, and then pumped out when no longer needed. Also, it could be done in transit and cost nothing to load or unload.[55] This technological race brought out the strengths of each mode of transport. Here, Armstrong focuses much more on the coasters. To move large volumes of bulk commodities, coasters became the preferred means. Armstrong concluded that at worst these changes helped coasters maintain their relative position, but may have actually improved their "cost structure and allowed a greater price differential."[56]

Aside from these strategies, Armstrong outlines a number of changes which evolved in both coasting and railway firms in response to the other. Coasters increasingly varied the range of services offered to customers. Thus a shipper could find everything from cheap, but

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[55]   Armstrong, "Late Nineteenth-Century Freight Rates Revisited," 78.

[56]   Armstrong, "Management Response," 13-14.

slow sailing coasters to state of the art screw vessels. To ensure success, the railways and sea-traders occasionally took similar measures. This is best reflected by the tendency toward mergers. Perceiving coasters as a threat, railways were encouraged to join forces. In 1870 and again in 1913, the ten largest railways accounted for three-quarters of all revenue. Although coasting firms were slower to employ this strategy, they did follow suit. In fact, Armstrong notes numerous examples of coastal liner companies taking over single-ship firms. From the 1890s this trend was accelerated and formalized. By the late 1920s the provision of coastal liner services was a virtual monopoly of a few large firms.[57]

How did these strategies affect the coastal firms' performance? Armstrong feels the strategies adopted by coaster companies were successful for the most part. After all, coasters performed greater work over the period, were more important than railways on longer and bulk cargo trips and accounted for similar ton-mileage. Until the First World War the role of coasters in British trade remained unchanged. Alternatively, Armstrong believes coastal firms could not have done more to secure their positions. The railways were something of a Goliath to the coasters' David. For example, the Cory Coasting Company was valued at £2 million in 1897 while the North Eastern Railway had a net worth of £60 million. Although Armstrong never says so, it can be assumed such disparities were fairly typical. In addition to this size difference, coasters never made much of an inroad on the valuable passenger trade. Nonetheless, Armstrong concludes that the late nineteenth century was a time of

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[57]   *Ibid.*, 17-19.

general harmony between the two forms of transport. It was maintained because the alternatives would have benefited neither side.[58]

Another of Armstrong's articles, "The Role of Coastal Shipping in UK Transport," provides a further account of the railway-coaster rivalry. Unlike the above work, this article is very narrow temporally. Focussing on the year 1910, it summarizes the continued role of coasting in UK internal trade. Armstrong estimates that there remained 8,671,781 tons of shipping in the coal and coke trade. In addition, there were 23,293,302 register tons of shipping engaged in other coastal trades in 1910. For the year a total of more than 81,000,000 million tons of cargo was carried by coaster, according to Armstrong's calculations. This can be broken down into a straightforward conclusion which fits Armstrong's perception of the coastal trade--that it remained vitally important in transportation. Even by 1910 the railways had by no means superceded it. As Armstrong concluded, "In terms of ton mileage, coastal shipping in 1910 provided at least as great a freight transport service for the United Kingdom as did the railway system."[59]

As noted above, this important service encompassed a variety of trades, although it is often referred to in the singular. Aside from looking at commodity-based trades, it is equally relevant to look at those based around a geographic area. We have examined the coal

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[58] *Ibid.*, 19-20.

[59] Armstrong, "The Role of Coastal Shipping in UK Transport: An Estimate of comparative Traffic Movements in 1910," *The Journal of Transport History* 3rd series VIII (September 1987):164-178.

trade, especially that supplying the city of London, the copper ore trade of southwest England and the goods carriage of Dorset with a focus on the arrival of railways. Regionally-based studies notwithstanding, an even clearer micro-view of the industry may be through port studies. There are a number in existence, of which two will be reviewed in-depth here.

In 1989, the book *Liverpool Shipping, Trade and Industry* appeared. One of the contributions was a port study, "Liverpool's Mid-Nineteenth Century Coasting Trade," by Valerie Burton. Burton perceptively notes that in 1989 and even today, "Few previous attempts have been made to describe, let alone quantify and analyse the coasting trade of any port in the nineteenth century."[60] This point has been stressed previously in a general sense and holds equally true for coasting ports. Indeed, the need for further research lies at the core of this work. Using as her principal data source the Liverpool Bills of Entry, Burton profiles the port for the months of March, July and October 1853.

Burton illustrates many facets of Liverpool coasting, at least for the one year. First, Liverpool is a prime illustration of Bruce's technological thesis. As Burton notes, the returns make no distinction between sail and steam. Fortunately statistics are available showing Liverpool to be the period's preeminent user of coastal steam. There is likewise information concerning the position of Liverpool coasters in relation to railways. For example, south eastern British ports tended to trade commodities to/from Liverpool by canals or railway. In this case distances overland were less than by sea. Despite this, Liverpool coasters still

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[60]   Valerie Burton, "Liverpool's Mid-nineteenth Century Coasting Trade," in Burton (ed.), *Liverpool Shipping Trade and Industry* (Liverpool: Icon, 1989): 27.

ranged 240 miles to the north and 300 south. In addition, they made frequent trips across the Irish Sea. This would suggest a healthy trade, despite competition. Liverpool imports also connect with broader coastal themes. It has been noted by historians that much of the traffic retained by coasters comprised bulk goods. Liverpool, even at this early stage, fit the trend. As Burton points out, the most numerous coastwise imports were coal and iron. For her study year imports of coal averaged 15,000 tons monthly. Copper was imported coastwise as well, to the tune of 8,000 tons per annum. This was mainly used in shipbuilding on Merseyside. Coal formed the second largest of Liverpool's exports. Although small compared to its later scope, the trade was surpassed in volume only by iron.[61]

In addition to general coasting tie-ins, Burton makes a number of observations peculiar to Liverpool. The unique character of each port is one reason port studies are vital to understanding British coasting. Burton's findings are numerous, but we can concentrate on a select few. A seldom noted trend in Liverpool coasting concerns the origin of many goods. Many trades reviewed thus far have concentrated on products of the British Isles, like copper and coal, or on providing services. Burton notes, however, that many items shipped coastwise between Liverpool and London were not of domestic manufacture. Much trade actually entailed the re-distribution of overseas imports among subsidiary ports. This phenomenon held true for trade with not only London, but also with Leith, Bristol, Swansea,

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[61]   *Ibid.*, 28-32, 34, 37.

Dublin, Whitehaven, Maryport, Greenock, and Glasgow.[62]

Aside from these transshipped goods, Liverpool was an entrepot for a large number of trades. These included lead and silver ores as well as sulphur, soda ash and lime–for "chemical, soap and glass manufacturers." Liverpool was the main centre for coastal imports used in the pottery industry. A large portion of imports to Liverpool from the southwest was comprised of china clay. In all, about 12,000 tons a month reached Liverpool from the region. From across the Irish Sea linen was the chief import, accounting for 5,253 boxes and bales in July 1853.[63]

After dealing with imports Burton goes on to examine Liverpool exports more closely. Her aim is "To demonstrate the importance of Liverpool's coastal shipping as an agent of inter-regional trade." Foodstuffs, according to Burton, were possibly the most important component. These items arrived at Liverpool from Ireland and overseas, and then were transported to other British and Irish ports. Liverpool was also an important transshipment point for foreign imports--hides, guano, timber, tobacco, palm, oil and dye woods. Liverpool acted as distributor for the products of South Lancashire and Cheshire, especially salt and coal. A wide distribution, Burton believes, indicates widespread demand for the products Liverpool exported.[64] The importance of the port to UK internal trade may

[62] *Ibid.*, 32.

[63] *Ibid..*, 38-41.

[64] *Ibid..*, 45-48.

be summed up in her own words:

> Coastwise exports, then, were widely distributed from Liverpool...Long
> before the mid-nineteenth century coastwise shipping was the chief external
> link of many coastal regions of Britain...during the second quarter of the
> nineteenth century the tonnage deployed in Liverpool's coasting trade more
> than doubled and the volume of cargo carried increased to an even greater
> extent. Liverpool's enhanced role as an entrepot of overseas trade was central
> to this development.[65]

Burton's study provides an in-depth snapshot of a coasting port and its trading sphere.

The drawback is its concentration on a single year. This limits the degree to which change

over time can be accounted. Nonetheless, the article gives a very detailed account of the port

at a certain point in its history. Burton's emphasis on Liverpool's trade as an influence on its

trading partners is also important. It serves as a reminder that single-port studies lead

naturally into a network of trade involving multiple locales. In Burton's article, a prominent

part of Liverpool's trade network includes Maryport. This leads into the next port study and

from there into the wider thesis.

My own 1996 article, "Maryport: A late Coastal Switch to Steam Propulsion," might

just as easily fit the category of technological change as that of a port study. This preliminary

essay, while exploring general aspects of Maryport coasting, takes as its specific focus the

transition from sail to steam by the port's coasters. The argument grows out of Bruce's

article, though from another perspective. The idea is that despite rapid technological

advances in certain trades, this scenario was by no means universal. Maryport is an example

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[65]   *Ibid.*, 51.

which does not fit the outlines of Bruce's thesis. This is important, as many coastal studies following Bruce's work have focussed on cases of rapid change. Maryport's slow shift from sail to steam, while surely not unique, is one of the few cases to be studied. This is similar to the trade in re-exported foreign goods coastwise from Liverpool. My case is that Maryport was no trend setter in investing in steam. In fact, in the three decades after 1865 Maryport shipowners lagged behind the nation as a whole in the percentage of its coasters using steam propulsion.[66]

Using the *Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping* and the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* as the main sources, a data base was compiled for the years 1865 through 1910. The popularity of sail in relation to steam gives an overview of the time Maryport shipowners took to switch to the new technology. In 1865, Maryport had not begun the transfer to steam on a large scale. Another decade elapsed before substantial amounts of steam tonnage entered and cleared the port. In Maryport, it would be nearly the turn of the century before steam movements accounted for more tonnage than sail. Even then, Maryport's sail tonnage (28 per cent), remained higher than the nation as a whole (25 per cent).[67]

For sail tonnage to have remained popular for so long there must have been some advantage to owners in not switching to new methods. The crucial factor may be in the

[66]   Clarke, "Maryport," 3.

[67]   *Ibid.*, 3-14.

cargoes carried by Maryport's coasters, along with the influence of port infrastructure. However, the primary sources employed are limited when examining cargoes. The Parliamentary Papers, like newspaper accounts, often fail to note cargoes carried on any particular voyage. Nonetheless, what there is can be used to infer the owners' motivations. Although certain high-end goods were found at Maryport vessels' ports-of-call, their cargoes often consisted of bulk goods. In addition, many ports at which Maryport's vessels called lacked modern infrastructure. Low-value bulk goods require low-cost transport above reliability and speed. Ports having little in the way of facilities exacerbate this situation. Sail vessels require less capital outlay than steamers and are especially suited to waiting out inefficient loading procedures. This is a truncated summary of the argument, but it will be taken up in detail in the following chapter.[68]

This chapter was written to provide a context in the form of an examination of the state of coastal history at this time. In a number of areas historians, despite a limited output, have done a good job chronicling the industry. These include railway versus coaster competition, various trade studies and the impact of technological change. The latter topic resurfaces in the Maryport context. Of the areas which have not generated much interest one of the most glaring are general surveys. Another concerns the topic of specific ports and their coastal activities. While many works exist which study a particular port in general, very few focus solely on the coastal aspect of trade. This is often referred to, but usually takes a back

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[68]   Ibid.., 15-17.

seat to foreign and colonial trades. This gives the reader an impression that coasting comprised only a small share of most ports' trade. This was certainly *not* the case in Maryport. There, coasting comprised more than a third of all shipping activity up to the turn of the century. It is only by understanding these constituent parts of Britain's coastal trade network on a micro level that we can move to the macro level of general surveys. In addition, there is another important reason for studying places like Maryport. This relates to the technological "revolution" in shipping. Since Graeme Bruce's article, coastal historians have, as noted, emphasized areas most innovative in terms of technology. Maryport is a reminder to historians that not all successful centres of coasting were quick to adopt newer methods. It will be demonstrated that the town was a successful coasting port well into the final quarter of the nineteenth century, despite retaining large amounts of sail tonnage. With this in mind we begin our discussion of Maryport coasting by looking at investors in tonnage and the forms the capital generally took.

Chapter 2
Owners and Capital

In all forms of shipping, whether foreign, or coasting, liner, or tramp, the central piece of capital is the ship itself. The argument might be made that the vessels employed in a particular trade represent little more than moving containers. Indeed, the cargoes being carried, human, or otherwise, provide the impetus for owning merchant tonnage in the first place. Without passengers a ferry is an unnecessary expense. Similarly, clippers represent an enormous investment, justified only by copious amounts of tea and other high value commodities. Despite this, it is the ship, as much as its cargo, which made trade over water possible in the pre-aircraft era.[1]

From the earliest reed boats to modern supertankers, the need for merchant shipping of various designs has turned commercial seafaring into a specialized occupation. If all water borne goods traffic could be handled by a simple raft anyone could be a shipowner and conceivably a mariner. The development of multi-masted and trade specific craft turned the tar into a skilled worker. Increasing specialization over time likewise created "technological mariners" such as engineers, wireless operators and now computer technicians. The great cost of investing in such capital insured that the owner became something of a specialist over

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[1]   In the period before the telegraph, ships also filled the role of information exchange medium. The ability of ships to traverse long distances allowed their crews to both pass on and absorb the latest news and culture. Ships also allowed the transport of media such as letters and newspapers. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, ships were perhaps the closest thing to an information superhighway. For a discussion of the role of ships see Eric W. Sager with Gerald E. Panting, *Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*, (Montreal: Mcgill-Queens University Press, 1990), 47.

time. From the beginning, the risks entailed precluded all but the adventurous businessperson who could afford the possible loss of his investment. From the risk taking of such entrepreneurs, the shipping industry developed. Whatever their failings in some regards, they set the wheels in motion. The place occupied by these owners and their capital investments makes it fitting to discuss them first as part of Maryport's coastal trade.

The ships employed in Maryport's coasting trade, display a number of characteristics which changed somewhat in the period 1855-1889. To begin, we will examine the vessel types which came onto Maryport registry during this time. Although vessels registered outside Maryport were frequent visitors, they will be excluded. Instead, only those craft actually registered in the port will be considered. The port's vessel registry documents provide the temporal range of this study.

The Board of Trade 108 Vessel Registry Series covers the period 1855-89. The BT 108s give information concerning the length, tonnage, place/date of build, previous registrations and details concerning the current owner(s) of a port's vessels. This provides information on particular ports, including the form shipping capital took. For convenience, this thesis spans the duration of the BT 108s. The BT 108s present problems in separating coasting from foreign trade vessels since they do not clearly distinguish between the two. In fact, such demarcations may be impossible to do with complete precision. There was nothing to prevent a vessel's deployment in both trades, if owners chose to do so. Indeed, there is evidence from The Empire Agreements and Accounts of Crew, discussed in Chapter III, that some vessels served in both the deep-sea and coasting trades. Still, this difficulty can be

surmounted. Extant coastal agreements provide a profile against which the fleet can be measured.

The agreements studied indicate a clear preference of Maryport coaster owners for small vessels. Eighty-eight per cent of agreements searched were bottoms of less than 200 register tons.[2] Another eight percent were accounted for by vessels between 200 and 300 hundred tons. Thus, it is reasonably certain that Maryport's coastal fleet consisted predominantly of craft under 200 tons. Although some vessels may have been used in the home trade to the near continent, their small size makes it unlikely any were regular foreign, or colonial traders.[3]

Maryport registries contain seven main vessel rigs, two of which were most closely associated with the coastwise trade. The ship, a square rigger with three or more masts, was usually employed in ocean-going trades due to its large size. Other vessel types include three-masted barques and barquentines plus brigantines and, most numerous of all, brigs. The last two vessel types carried two masts, with brigs having square sails on both the fore and aft masts. Since much of Maryport's shipping was involved in the low-value bulk coal trade, this made sense. As Simon Ville remarks, "[two masters] permitted economies in manning and

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[2]   Unless otherwise indicated, all tonnage figures given are in register, as opposed to gross, or net tonnage.

[3]   Crew Agreements, Various years.

facilitated access to the cargo hatches for rapid loading and discharge."[4] This pair of rigs comprised the bulk of Maryport's coastal fleet. Fifty-three per cent of vessels represented in the Crew Agreements were brigs, while twenty-seven per cent were brigantines. There were a number of barques and as schooners as well. Compared to brigs and brigantines, neither of these craft showed up in significant numbers. No coastal agreements were located for other rig types.[5]

Evidence from the Crew Agreements allows some precision in defining the coaster fleet's net size. To estimate this figure only vessels most likely employed as coasters will be examined, that is craft under two hundred register tons, rigged as brigs, or brigantines. Likewise, steam tonnage played only a small role. Although steamers came to dominate new registries late in the century, they accounted for few of the coastal agreements examined. Brigs and brigantines continued to serve Maryport's coasting needs into the mid-1880s. These small vessels had a life expectancy of just under a decade. The average for a brig was

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[4]   Simon Ville, "Patterns of Shipping Investment in the Port of Newcastle on Tyne, 1750-1850," *Northern History* XXV (1989): 209.

[5]   *Crew Agreements*, various years. It is surprising that schooners, the coaster of choice in locales such as Newfoundland, are so poorly represented. Although twenty schooners under two hundred tons appeared on the town's registry between 1855-1889, few were represented in the Crew Agreements. It is likely some were coasters, but were perhaps employed in the fishery, as in the Newfoundland context. For these reasons, the discussion of coasting will be based on brigs and brigantines only.

8.5 years and just under nine for brigantines.[6] This is not especially long-lived, but the majority of these vessels were purchased second-hand. Table 2.1 gives an indication of the average net size of Maryport's registered coastal fleet. These figures consist of newly registered shipping minus those leaving the registry.

Table 2.1
Net Size of Maryport's Registered Coastal Fleet 1855-1889.

Years	Brigs < 200 Register Tons		Brigantines < 200 Registered Tons	
	Average Annual Tonnage	Average Annual Vessels Numbers	Average Annual Tonnage	Average Annual Vessel numbers
1855-59	677	6	77	0.6
1860-64	2,683	21	592	5
1865-69	2,953	22	1,420	11
1870-74	1,509	12	2,879	24
1875-79	1,087	9	2,027	16
1880-84	1,010	8	1,618	13
1885-89	569	5	1,017	8

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

Accepting these small brigs and brigantines were coastal traders allows a number of observations concerning Maryport's coastal fleet. The first is the surprising number of less than 200 ton brigs registered in Maryport and ostensibly used for coasting. In the 1860s especially, the tonnage of brigs outstripped that of brigantines. This is unusual as brigantines,

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6   Great Britain, Maryport Vessel Registries, Board of Trade 108 Series, various years.

like the rarely observed schooners, have a comparative advantage in the coasting, since their fore-and-aft sails afforded considerable manoeuverability along a coastline. However, much of Maryport's coastal trade did not involve such voyages. The most common trade was across the Irish Sea, where square sails might be a more efficient choice. Such short-sea trade accounted for 152,068 tons entering and clearing Maryport in 1875, compared to only 30,321 tons of general coastal shipping. Prior to this date the trades were not separated in official documents. For sail coasters these proportions changed little during the next decade.[7]

Another striking feature of Maryport's coastal sail fleet was its temporal span. Rising quickly in numbers and tonnage between 1855 and 1865, the fleet declined steadily after 1875. The onset of the growth period coincided with developments in Cumbrian trade and industry. In February 1845 the Maryport and Carlisle Railway was opened, linking the port to inland coal pits and increasing its export trade. Two years later a further impetus to trade was created by the connection of Maryport to Whitehaven and Harrington via the Whitehaven Junction Railway. By 1853 Maryport exported 269,000 tons of coal by sea to coastal and foreign markets. Equally important was the opening of the Elizabeth Dock for coal traffic in October 1857. Successful from its inception, the dock opening corresponded almost exactly with the beginning of large-scale expansion of Maryport's coasting fleet.[8]

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[7]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years; Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers* (BPP) (1876, LXXII.289), (1886, LXIV. 373).

[8]   Herbert and Mary Jackson, *Holme Shipping Line* (Workington: Firpress, 1991); 9-10; J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties From 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1981), 34-35; Maryport

A second growth period, at least for brigantines, began in the early 1870s. A noticeable decline by brigs relative to brigantines may have reflected the owners' desire to maximize the value of tonnage. Neither square-rigged brigs, nor schooners were best suited to *both* coastal and short-sea trading. One might suppose that the brigantine, with its "combined" rigs, was the most flexible of the vessels. Investors may gradually have realized its suitability to Maryport's trades. The expansion of brigantines may also have been spurred by a boom in West Cumberland's iron industry. Coasters not only carried the metal itself but also the coal or coke used by county furnaces. As this trade, unlike coal, was centred on the English coast, the more nimble brigantines might have garnered additional favour.[9]

The coastal sailing fleet declined almost as rapidly as it had expanded--its fall taking little more than a decade. The fleet's absolute size began declining in the mid-1870s, at the same time steamers first made inroads into the trade. In Maryport this change was occasioned by a few entrepreneurs such as the Hine brothers, Wilfred and Alfred and their investments in the Holme Line of steamers. No long-term coastal steamer agreements were found during this survey, apart from single passages between ports. Despite this, the *Parliamentary Papers* and newspaper shipping reports indicate a steady rise in entrances and clearances by coastal steam after the mid-1870s. In 1875, for example, 22,039 tons of coastal steam entered and cleared Maryport with cargo. By 1885 this figure rose to 61,679 tons. Sail coasters still

Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

[9]   *Ibid.*; Marshall and Walton, 45.

accounted for a majority of coastwise movements, but time and technology were catching up.[10]

The strategy of employing sail tonnage late into the steam era worked for many years as trade expanded along with the sail fleet's net size. By the late 1880s, however, the wisdom of the continued use of sail was in doubt. The numbers of new registries declined dramatically after mid-decade, further reducing the fleet. During the decade 1875-1884, Maryport's registry averaged about six new vessels per year in all trades. The period 1885-1889 recorded only seven new vessels purchases in total. Although steam tonnage movements increased from 1885-90, the vessels were more frequently registered outside the port. Perhaps a strategy that had been successful for three decades was too ingrained to abandon, or the alternative of switching to steam may have been too costly for most local investors. Whatever the reason, the halcyon days of Maryport coasting were coming to an end by the 1880s.[11]

One must wonder why these owners employed sail tonnage until such a late date. The answer may lie in the nature of Maryport's coastal trade. Let us assume that Maryport owners prior to the 1880s were unable to make a profit from sail tonnage. Given their position as businessmen, such a situation could not continue unchecked. Logically, owners would try to maximize profits by tactics such as reducing crew size relative to tonnage (the man-ton

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[10]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s; BPP, (1876, LXXII. 289), (1886, LXIV. 373).

[11]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

ratio). If such schemes failed, a particular owner would have little choice but to convert to steam in order to remain competitive. Failing this, he would probably be forced to quit the business entirely. Since they did not make an early switch to steamers, or discontinue use of sail craft, we can only assume that Maryport owners continued to reap a profit from their sailing vessels.[12]

Although this assumption is logical it does not explain the factors which allowed the viable retention of sail in Maryport coasting. The answer can likely be found in the cargoes carried by such craft and the port infrastructure of Maryport's trading partners. Here the *Shipping World Yearbook* is a valuable primary source that describes not only the imports and exports of these ports, but also their facilities. In the case of cargoes, however, such information is only suggestive. The *Yearbook* gives no clues as to what any specific vessel carried at any time. An alternative might have been the Bills of Entry, but they seldom list cargo data for coasters.[13]

Maryport sailing voyages were most concentrated to ports that lacked an improved infrastructure. According to shipping intelligence published by the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, sail coasters generally favoured ports such as Dumfries, Wigtown, Portaferry and Strangford. Dumfries and Wigtown were both noted by the *Shipping World Yearbook* as

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[12]   David Clarke, Maryport: A Late Coastal Switch to Steam Propulsion, 1865-1910, *Proceedings of the Steam at Sea Conference* (Hull: University of Hull Press, Forthcoming), 15.

[13]   *Shipping World Yearbook* (London: Gresham, 1887).

having little modern equipment such as cranes. In addition, the harbour at Wigtown was dry at low tide. Portaferry and Strangford do not even merit entries in the *Gazette*, perhaps being considered too insignificant by its editors.[14]

To reduce operating costs in such small ports, the crews rather than stevedores, or mechanical devices were used to load and unload vessels. This practice was done throughout the period with sailing vessels but was anathema to steam owners. Costs in primitive ports could be further reduced by sailing the vessel onto sloping beaches at low tide. When the craft came to rest on the bottom, cargoes could be loaded onto horse carts for transport to shore. By such means a lack of infrastructure, which was detrimental to high-cost steamers, helped to create a definite niche for the older technology.[15]

Sailing vessels maintained a comparative advantage where low transport costs were important and there was no hurry to receive goods. Sailing tonnage generally cost less to operate than steamers, since in many cases sail had a book value of close to zero. This allowed shipowners to maximize profits on low-value cargoes. Certain cargoes such as bricks, clay and chimney pots were best handled in a slow, deliberate manner to avoid breakage. Steamers were most profitably employed when a customer needed quick and reliable transport of a high-value product such as manufactures.[16] Neither Dumfries nor

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[14]   *Ibid.*; *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, various years.

[15]   John Armstrong, "Management Response in British Coastal Shipping to Railway Competition," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord* I (1997), 15.

[16]   *Ibid.*, 15-17.

Wigtown handled much in the way of such high-value commodities. The main products passing through the former port were general merchandise, potatoes, seeds and timber. The latter imported pig-iron, timber, grain, coal and manure, while exporting agricultural produce and baled goods. None of these products was suited to steam transport and their trade was certainly a factor in retaining sail tonnage. Another possibility has been suggested by Adrian Jarvis. Although steamers preferred larger ports, Maryport's sailing coasters could also be found there. Jarvis suggests that in Liverpool's Central Docks a form of "ghettoisation" occurred. Coasters were often afforded the worst facilities and the lowest priority for entering docks. It might be natural for coaster owners to invest in cheaper sail tonnage, which would lessen the impact of costly delays.[17]

Having suggested *why* Maryport owners long remained loyal to sail, we should inquire as to *where* their coasters came from. As with most ports, tonnage came onto registry from numerous sources both inside and outside the United Kingdom. Among British-built vessels a wide variety of locales were represented, Including Aberdeen; Workington; Sunderland; Liverpool; Belfast and Maryport itself. Most locales provided only one or two vessels, with one-quarter of the total coming from Maryport.[18] A few coasters came from the

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[17]   *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 1887. Adrian Jarvis, *Liverpool Central Docks: 1799-1905 An Illustrated History* (Bath: Bath Press 1991), 124-127. As for foreign-going craft, these retained sail longer in any event. This was due to the inefficiency of early steam engines over longer distances. See J. Graeme Bruce, "The Contribution of Cross-Channel and Coastal Vessels to Developments in Marine Practice," *Journal of Transport History* IV (1959), 65-80.

[18]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

United States. The *Ethiopian*, owned by the engineer Henry Fisher, was built in New Haven, Connecticut. Other vessels came from Baltimore, Massachusetts and New York. Yet only about three per cent had American origins. Even rarer were the occasions where that Maryport owners bought vessels built in other European countries. Although there was one French and one Prussian-built vessel, a reliance on European-built tonnage was never common in Maryport's shipowning community.[19]

Table 2.2
Maryport-New Coaster Registries by Place of Origin

Built	Percentage of New Registries
Maryport	9.6
Other UK Locales	29.8
Canadian	47.1
Foreign	4.8
Unknown/Illegible	8.6

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years. Numbers do not equal 100% due to rounding.

The largest single source of Maryport vessels was British North America, especially from the mid-1850s through the 1870s. British North American ships In some years comprised over half of all new shipping of the Maryport register, with all coming from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or Quebec.[20] Forty-seven per cent of new coaster registries from 1855-89 were Canadian-built. It is no exaggeration to say that

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[19]   *Ibid.*

[20]   *Ibid.*

Maryport's coastal fleet had more of a Canadian than a British flavour. (See table 2.2).

It might be desirable to look briefly at the way such vessels became a trade commodity. Certainly these vessels must have been an attractive option to British buyers in terms of price. Eric Sager and Gerald Panting present evidence of a considerable price advantage accruing to British north American tonnage from the 1830s. Domestic vessels of that period normally cost between £10 and £25 sterling per ton. Even the cheapest British craft, those from Sunderland, commanded between £10 and £12 sterling a ton, while top US bottoms were about $55.00 per ton (£11). This was considerably higher than Atlantic Canadian vessels, whose prices remained relatively stable over a long period. Even by the late 1860s a Nova Scotia or New Brunswick vessel with a five-to seven-year "A" rating at Lloyds cost only $30.00 to $40.00 per ton (£6-8) fitted for sea. However, these numbers are greater than what Maryport investors would have normally paid. Sager and Panting's statistics concern newly-built tonnage, whereas 96 per cent of Maryport's "Canadian fleet" was purchased second-hand.[21]

There were a number of reasons why British North American tonnage was so attractive to buyers in Maryport and other British locales. Being largely of softwood construction--usually pine or spruce--colonial vessels had a natural price advantage over a ship constructed of oak, for example. For the British owner this could be a double-edged

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[21]   Eric W. Sager and Gerald E. Panting, *Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Montreal: Mcgill-Queens University Press, 1990), 68-70.

sword. During the first half of the nineteenth century Canadian-built vessels had a reputation for being short-lived. The softwood hulls were particularly vulnerable to dry rot and deterioration. Compounding this problem were inferior construction techniques, such as the use of improperly seasoned timber. Prior to mid-century there was some justification in calling colonial vessels "coffins of death." But this did not continue.[22]

Table 2.3
Average Vessel Life by Decade Built (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Fleets)

Decade	Average Life (Excluding Transfers)
1820s	9.1
1830s	9.5
1840s	10.3
1850s	12.1
1860s	11.5
1870s	12.9
1880s	14.9

Source: Eric Sager and Gerald Panting, *Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Montreal: Mcgill-Queens, 1990), 66. These figures exclude transfers, but marine disasters and de novo registries are retained. Excluding such vessels, along with those sold foreign, the numbers show greater stagnation in vessel life.

Lloyds surveyors insisted on improved building techniques if Atlantic Canadian vessels were to receive A ratings. A variety of improvements were implemented, which Sager and Panting discuss in detail, and by 1850 it was not uncommon for New Brunswick vessels to receive an A rating for four years and sometimes as long as seven. From the 1820s

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[22]   Sager and Panting, *Maritime Capital*, 62, 63.

on, the average life of such vessels continued to grow. By the 1870s Lloyds ratings of A9 and A10 were common for such bottoms. The tarnished reputation which had dogged these ships was largely gone by the 1850s, and British buyers continued to purchase them for use In any trade where low price was a critical consideration.[23]

Table 2.4
Average Tonnage of Newly Registered Coastal Vessels by Decade and Rig

Decade	Brig	Brigantine	Average
1850s	126	129	127.5
1860s	196	135	165.5
1870s	157	126	141.5

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years; Eric Sager and Gerald Panting, *Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*, (Montreal: Mcgill-Queens University Press, 1990), 55.

Over time new registries in Maryport, whether Canadian-built or otherwise, tended toward a general increase in size. This was not the case for the coastal fleet, however. Maryport's coastwise trade to small ports with little infrastructure provided a certain logic to relatively static tonnages. Brigs and brigantines peaked during the sixties, declining on average in the seventies. (see table 2.4). Even in the 1860s brigs only increased to an average of slightly less than 200 tons, with brigantines at 135 tons. In small poorly-equipped ports such as Wigtown and Dumfries, even two hundred tons was beyond the optimum operational size for vessels.[24]

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[23]   Sager and Panting, *Maritime Capital*, 62-68.

[24]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

If we accept these conclusions about the general nature of Maryport's coasting capital, what of the people who invested in it? Just as official records give information on vessels, they also provide evidence about Maryport's shipowning community. There are a number of questions which need to be addressed concerning these individuals, including the general area from which they were drawn, their principal occupations and the pace at which a specialization of shipowning developed.

New vessel shares on the Maryport registry were normally owned by individuals under their own name. Ownership might take the form either of sole-ownership of a vessel, or part-ownership with one or more other investors. From 1854 all vessel shares were by law measured in sixty-fourths, although this had been the normal pattern for some years. Translated, this meant that a sole owner would possess sixty-four shares in any vessel. The owner of thirty-two shares owned half a vessel and so on. Part-ownership operated under the principle of "tenants-in-common." Under this system the death, of a partner meant that shares reverted to his heirs instead of the other partners. Owners of shares could dispose of them as they wished without regard to the preference of fellow owners. Also, no one was permitted to sell or mortgage the shares of another investor. When shares were owned by a company or partnership individual interests were not noted. In the case of Maryport this latter form of ownership was insignificant as only one such "body corporate", the Maryport Steam Shipping Company, was listed as an investor. Likewise, financial institutions such as banks played no direct role in Maryport shipowning. As Simon Ville notes for Newcastle, "[This reflected] the minimal role played by financial institutions in the financing of industry. Their

role was viewed more in terms of providing working capital to masters during a voyage."
Although this comment refers to the late eighteenth century, it appears to hold true for
Victorian Maryport as well.[25] In Maryport the individual owner, albeit sometimes owning
shares jointly, was the backbone of shipping investment.

Table 2.5
Newly Registered Vessels by Number of Owners (All Vessels)

Decade Registered	Number of Owners on Registry						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	>6
1850s*	16 48.48%	2 6.06%	2 6.06%	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	0 0%	11 33.33%
1860s	47 48.45%	10 10.31%	8 8.25%	8 8.25%	1 1.03%	2 2.06%	21 21.65%
1870s	33 55.93%	8 13.56%	1 1.69%	5 8.47%	2 3.39%	6 10.17%	4 6.78%
1880s	20 68.97%	6 20.69%	1 3.45%	2 6.90%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years; Sarah Palmer, "Investors in London Shipping, 1820-50," *Maritime History* II (1972):51. *Includes the years 1855-59 only, the former date being the start of the BT 108 series of registries. Rows may not equal 100% due to rounding.

This should not be taken to mean that Maryport-registered craft were overwhelmingly
owned by a single individual. Indeed, throughout the period 1855-89 jointly-owned craft
were common, although less so in later years. The pattern of ownership according to the
number of owners is illustrated in table 2.5.

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[25]   Sarah Palmer, "Investors in London Shipping, 1820-50," *Maritime History* II
        (1972): 49-50; Ville, "Patterns of Shipping Investment in the Port of Newcastle,"
        212.

The single-owner vessel was by far the most important registry type in Maryport for the entire period. (See table 2.5) Yet, there were quite a few vessels with a large number of owners. During the 1850s and 1860s it was not uncommon for over ten investors to be part-owners of a single vessel. In a small number of cases the figure was over twenty. Sarah Palmer notes certain advantages in co-ownership. For one thing, large numbers of owners could share costs and risks in the event of loss. By this means the individual minimized his liability. At the same time, of course, Palmer admits that such arrangements could present management problems.[26]

Perhaps the clearest trend illustrated by table 2.5, however, is the trend *away* from multiple ownership arrangements. From comprising over thirty per cent of all registries in the 1850s, vessels owned by more than six individuals fell to less than ten per cent by the 1870s. This trend accelerated in the following decade when no vessels came onto registry with more than four investors. Almost ninety per cent of newly-registered shipping now had only one or two owners. From an average of 5.4 owners per vessel in the 1850s, the number fell to 1.5 investors thirty years later.[27]

Palmer and Ville found similar trends in London and Newcastle. Both historians speculated as to why investors might "go it alone" more often over time. By 1824, according to Palmer, the price of shipping began to fall and thus remained in reach of a single investor.

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[26]   *Ibid.*, 52.

[27]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, Various Years.

A similar trend may have been present from the 1850s, allowing Maryport buyers to capitalize on cheap tonnage. The tonnage glut that began to develop in 1854 on British and international markets gives a further reason to believe this. Other trends Palmer and Ville mention may apply to Maryport buyers from the 1850s, but should also be treated with caution. For example, the growth of marine insurance during the nineteenth century made the possibility of losing an entire ship of less concern to the investor. Some insurance companies further reinforced the trend by making loans only on entire vessels. For the coasting trade this line of reasoning can be taken only so far, since coasters were not as likely to be insured as deep-sea vessels.[28]

Another trend emerging from the registries is the local nature of Maryport shipowning. In the thirty-four years after 1855 the overwhelming majority of investors in the town's shipping came from within its boundaries. Non-resident owners, or at least those from outside Cumbria, were almost non-existent. Aside from Maryport itself, the only locales to appear with any frequency in the registries are other Cumbrian towns, such as Whitehaven and Workington. A few owners were from Scottish ports such as Port Glasgow, or from coastal towns as far south as Liverpool. Generally speaking though, investors were from Cumberland.[29] The gap between resident and non-resident investors was wide and increased over time. (See table 2.6)

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[28]   Palmer, "Investors," 52; Ville, "Shipping Investment," 219.

[29]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

Table 2.6
Local Verses Outside Investment in Newly registered Shipping. (All Vessels)

Year	Maryport	Other Locales
1870	66%	34%
1875	87.5%	12.5%
1880	75%	25%
1885	100%	0%
1889	100%	0%

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, 1870-1889.

If Maryport's shipping investors were fairly homogeneous in terms of residence, they were less so in terms of occupation. Between 1855 and 1889 well over thirty occupations were given by shipping investors. Some were obviously linked to the sea. There were, for example, master mariners, sailmakers and shipbuilders. There were also individuals with no occupational connection with the sea, like accountants, farmers, butchers and booksellers. The connection of the first group to shipowning is obvious but the second group is less clear. It is likely that, as Ville reasons, "[they were] quite simply...taking advantage of the opportunities shipping offered to the small, passive, non-specialist investor."[30] Ville's hypothesis is supported by the Maryport data. When non-maritime investors appear they are routinely paired with persons linked to the sea. For example, the *Eliza*, a 131-ton brig, had four owners. They were a master mariner with twenty eight shares, a merchant with sixteen shares, and a butcher and a yeoman, also with eight shares. It is likely that owners with the

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[30]   Ville, "Shipping Investment," 212-213.

greatest connection to shipping had the more active role in management.[31]

As one might guess, most shares were accounted for by those in sea-related occupations. Master mariners, shipbuilders, shipbrokers, ship chandlers, ship riggers and harbour masters owned about thirty-six per cent of all shares in new tonnage. Professional shipowners accounted for the largest share-holdings in newly registered vessels with about forty per cent of all new tonnage. All others accounted for less than a quarter of total shares. Among this latter group, however, are trades Ville considered maritime-related occupations. Newcastle's economic prosperity, like Maryport's, relied in large measure on coal exports. For this reason Ville placed coal workers among the maritime sector. The same could be said of Maryport, which exported much of its coal across the Irish Sea by ship. Therefore, the numbers of maritime-oriented shareholders may be even higher than indicated. Among the investors were listed a coal miner, coal agents, and coal trimmers. Nonetheless, the impact of this group as owners should not be overstated. In most cases such persons owned only a few shares of any particular craft.[32]

The registries do not indicate why any particular group invested in shipping. Prominent among non-professional shipowners in Maryport were master mariners. Palmer indicates that in London it was common for masters to receive shares in a vessel as part of wages. If a master owned part of a vessel he would be induced to play a very active role in

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[31]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

[32]   *Ibid.*; Ville, "Shipping Investment," 21-213.

profit maximization. This form of ownership by masters played a smaller role in Maryport, if it existed at all. According to Palmer, masters generally owned but a small portion of most vessels on London registries. In Maryport, however, the trend was toward masters owning most or all of a vessel. In addition, such master-owners tended to appear on a vessel's first registry, an unlikely situation if the shares were received from the owners as part payment. Obviously, those masters who owned vessels outright were not being paid for service in Palmer's London study. It is more likely Maryport masters simply invested on their own initiative.[33]

Merchants were another important group of owners mentioned by Palmer. This group also was important in Maryport. The connection between merchants and shipowning, both in London and Maryport, presents difficulties. The BT 108s are mute as to whether these persons invested to carry their own products or if shipowning was a separate venture. Palmer feels that Bills of Entry might establish such links, although she admits she has not done this. The London study provides an example in the form of Henry Warburton, an MP who was also a timber merchant. Warburton invested in his own ship to save wasted time chartering timber transports. It might be assumed that similar motivations prompted Maryport's merchant community to invest. Unlike Warburton, however, Maryport's merchants owned but a few shares in any particular vessel and their importance declined markedly over time.[34]

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[33]   Palmer, "Investors," 58; Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

[34]   Palmer, "Investors," 56-7; Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years. Merchants were also concerned with keeping a vessel gainfully employed, the

Another important group were "professional and private individuals," as Palmer calls them. The largest such grouping in Maryport referred to themselves as "gentlemen." Others included engineers, yeomen, painters and accountants. Ville sums up this group in a way that probably applies to Maryport as much as Newcastle. "Many gentlemen were formerly in the shipping industry, or the coal trade and had retired because of their age, or wealth, or in the belief that, having accumulated sufficient funds, they were above active involvement in commerce."[35] Like merchants, this group was especially important in the years prior to 1870.

Maryport investors were mainly "groups of men." This categorization leaves out an important component of the town's shipowning: women investors. The shipping registries invariably record these women as either "spinsters" or "widows." This was a common practice in the nineteenth-century, where women were routinely defined by their relationship to men. As part of their dowry young brides might receive vessel shares. Widows also relied on shares for an income. This was especially important in an age where state welfare programs were non-existent and working women were less common than today. Ville refers to ship shares as "a rather unsteady from of income" for these women. At least two Maryport widows, however, owned a vessel outright. Mary Melmore's *Hazard* remained in her possession for fourteen years before being wrecked at Kirkcudbright. Likewise, Mary Robinson's coaster *Ama Mary* was a source of income over a twenty-six year period. In fact,

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converse of which could be more expensive than putting it to sea.

[35]   Ville, "Shipping Investment," 213.

both women owned shares in a number of other vessels. For these two widows shipowning must have formed a substantial part of their incomes. Although women like Melmore and Robinson are not common, the role of female shipowners in Maryport must not be overlooked.[36]

Table 2.7
Percentage of New Shipping Shares Owned by Occupational Groupings in Maryport
Shares Owned

Year	Shipowners	Maritime-Related Occupations	Others
1855	0%	43%	57%
1860	0%	63%	37%
1865	40%	20%	40%
1870	32%	36%	32%
1875	87%	13%	0%
1880s*	40%	36%	24%

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years. *Due to the small numbers of registries during the 1880s this portion of the table consists of a moving average from the years 1880, 1885 and 1889. This will, hopefully, give a more balanced picture of share holdings after the 1870s.

Table 2.7 above indicates not only the distribution of shareholding but also gives some indication of the professionalization of shipowning. Maryport's registries show increasing specialization on the part of investors over time. In 1855 and 1860 no investors yet defined themselves as shipowners. Perhaps this is not surprising, since the term "shipowner" did not appear in London's trade directories until early in the century. Assuming the occupation given on a registry constituted a person's primary means of earning a living,

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[36]   *Ibid.*, 213-214; Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

shipowning must have remained secondary to other concerns for most investors of the time. As table 2.7 indicates, the percentage of investors who considered themselves shipowners peaked in 1875. Through to 1889, however, professional shipowners remained the dominant investors in Maryport tonnage.[37]

If Maryport shipping was, by the 1880s, dominated by professional shipowners, does this mean that large numbers of men and women had acquired multi-vessel fleets?[38] For the most part, the answer is no. Although certain names recur as co-owners, a great many held only a few shares in any particular vessel. For such persons it is hardly appropriate to speak of ownership of an actual fleet of vessels. There were, however, a number of persons whose shipowning interests went far beyond that of the casual investor. For these men--and they were all men--owning their own tonnage, or at least a controlling interest, was a serious business. The willingness of more persons to classify themselves as "shipowners" attests to this. While these men remained a small clique among Maryport owners their importance was far larger than their numbers.

There were no more than ten to a dozen individuals who could claim to have bonafide fleets based in Maryport. These included the Hine brothers ; Robert Ritson and his partner William Ostle; Thomas Benn and John Melmore. For our purposes we will examine the fleets of all but the last of these men. Benn, Ritson and Ostle are especially important, as

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[37]   Palmer, "Investors," 55.

[38]   From this point a "fleet" will be regarded as consisting only of those vessels in which one individual owns a craft outright, or at least has a controlling interest.

their vessels fit most closely the profile of Maryport's coaster fleet. Ritson and Ostle's holdings include seven vessels, three owned entirely by them, for which Crew Agreements were used in this study.[39]

Thomas Benn began acquiring shipping capital with the *Gertrude* in 1856. This remained the only ship in which he owned controlling interest until the addition of the *James* in 1859. Benn then bought no new vessels until 1864. It is from this date with the addition of two further vessels, that Benn's fleet may be said to date. For the next dozen years Benn maintained a fleet of between four and seven vessels, its peak size reached in 1870. In many ways Benn's assemblage of ships reflects Maryport shipping in general during the period. The majority of his ships were brigs and included no steam tonnage. At various times Benn owned at least five of his vessels outright, but sold off some shares over time. At one point, for example Benn owned the brigs *Gertrude* and *Wanderer* on his own. By 1872 Benn had sold twenty-eight shares of the *Wanderer* and by 1876 only retained sixteen shares. In that same year Benn also had sold sixteen shares of the *Gertrude*. This was about the time Benn began liquidating his shipping interests and 1876 was the last year which he controlled multiple ships. For the next two years only the *Mandover* remained of his fleet, and after that nothing at all. At its height from 1864 until 1876, however, Benn controlled an average of 5.4 vessels per annum.[40]

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[39]   Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years.

[40]   *Ibid.*

Robert Ritson began his fleet somewhat later than Thomas Benn. As an owner he is a different case. Having come from an established shipbuilding tradition, Ritson usually listed himself as a shipbuilder in the registries rather than as a shipowner. On the surface Ritson appears somewhat unimportant as a fleet owner, having sole control of only one vessel, the *Allerby*. This perception is misleading. In fact, Ritson owned or held controlling interest in a number of other vessels, but always jointly with either his business partner William Ostle, or members of the Ritson clan. Like Benn, Ritson's fleet was founded on sail rather than steam tonnage, again not surprising considering his start before the 1870s. Unlike Benn, however, Ritson's fleet never numbered more than four vessels at any one time. Nonetheless, the Ritson fleet did number either three, or four craft per year from 1874 to 1888, with an average of 3.6.[41]

By far the largest fleet in Maryport was owned by Wilfred Hine, sometimes in partnership with his brother Alfred, but more often alone. The vessels owned by the brothers fell under the blanket designation of the Holme Line. Hine began acquiring tonnage later than either Benn, or Ritson, but soon eclipsed his competitors. From 1877 to 1889 the Holme Line averaged 13.7 ships a year, more than double Benn and Ritson's numbers combined. By the 1880s the Holme line was the uncrowned king of Maryport's shipping industry. Although new purchases fell off markedly over time, the Hine brothers continued to acquire ships. Of all the Maryport fleet owners, Wilfred Hine was the one who most frequently invested in

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[41]   *Ibid.*

tonnage on his own. In this way he represented a new breed of shipowner. The Holme Line also relied on steamers as did no other of the port's investors. In addition, the Hines' were given to buying new, rather than second-hand tonnage. This is not to say that the Holme Line contained no sailing craft or older bottoms but rather that it made a decisive break with the port's older ways of doing business.[42] Table 2.8 gives the average size of the three fleets during their main decades of operation.

Table 2.8
Hine, Ritson and Benn Fleets during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.
Average Number of Ships Per Annum

Owner Name	1860s	1870s	1880s
Wilfred Hine	NA	8.2*	14.8
Robert Ritson	1.5**	2.7	3.6
Thomas Benn	3.6	3.9	NA

Source: Maryport Vessel Registries, BT 108s, various years. *This starts with the year 1875, in which Hine began building his fleet. **Includes only the years 1868,9. Prior to this no ships are recorded as being controlled by Ritson.

The stories of these shipowners have attracted the attention of local historians, which is understandable given their importance to the town's shipping industry. To flesh out this discussion we will look briefly at the most important owner linked to coasting, Robert Ritson. As a fleet owner Ritson was by nature atypical of the average investor. Despite this, he is a good choice for study due both to the material available on him and his impact on the

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[42]   *Ibid.*; See also Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Shipping Line*. This book contains a good detailing of the Holme Line ships, including its sixteen sailing vessels and twenty-seven steamers.

town's maritime life.[43]

Robert Ritson's involvement in shipowning might seem minimal if one takes only a cursory glance at the documentation. He considered himself a builder rather than owner of ships in the first instance. As table 2.8 indicates, he was the outright owner of much less tonnage than the Hine brothers and owned less than Thomas Benn. However, Ritson's importance to the port's maritime life cannot be overstated. During the course of his career Ritson owned at least some shares in over twenty vessels registered in the port. Including those in which he owned a controlling interest, usually jointly with Ostle or his sons John and Thomas, this certainly qualified Ritson as one of Maryport's premier shipowners. Yet it was his main business, along with ancillary interests, as much as investing which made him a major player.

Robert Ritson's family connection with shipbuilding began with his father John, a manager at Maryport's Peat & Co. Shipbuilding yard. Departing Peat's in 1830, Ritson helped found the firm of Huddleston & Ritson. Located on Irish Street, the yard would expand over time into Maryport's biggest yard. Over 100 vessels were finally constructed by the firm, starting out with wooden sailing craft, and then to iron and steel and finally

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[43]   Wilfred Hine, although the town's most important shipowner by tonnage, will not be detailed at length as his fleet was primarily foreign-going. However, a portion of his fleet was involved with coasting. One of Hine's steamers, the 41 ton clinker *Elizabeth and Ann*, was employed specifically to carry coal from Maryport to Belfast. Other of Hine's vessels including the *Forest Holme, Greta Holme* and *Isel Holme*, also made voyages under coasting articles, although they were mainly employed in the foreign and colonial trades. See Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Line*, 64-5, 70-1, 77, 81.

steamers. Ritson's had the capacity to both build new and repair old vessels, the latter jobs being carried out on patent slipways. After 1862, with the closing of its competitor Kelsick Wood, the Ritson yard became the sole shipbuilders in Maryport. Situated on the River Ellen, only sixty feet across at high tide, new constructions had to be launched broadsides. The business was fairly long-lived, launching its last sailing craft in 1897. Their final vessel was the steel steamer *Lycidas* in 1902.[44]

Robert and his brother William joined the business in 1840. At about the same time the firm was renamed Robert Ritson & Co., indicating Robert's importance to the company. John died in 1844, followed by William in 1866. From this point Robert took control of the yard, bringing in his own sons. The firm enjoyed a reputation for quality and its success was reflected in the family. Robert, also a JP, erected a fine red sandstone estate in 1850 which he named "Ellenbank." Another mansion, built by a brother, Thomas, in 1863 rounded out the family holdings and the two residences remained the homes of their descendants for a number of years. Robert himself died in 1887, having taken the family business to its pinnacle of success. For much of the period Ritson remained at the fore of Maryport's nautical business community.[45]

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[44]   Herbert and Mary Jackson, *Tragic Maryport Sea Captain's Letters* Workington: Firpress, 1991), 25; Jackson and Jackson, *Holme Line*, 22; Michael K. Stammers, "The High Character Obtained by Cumberland Ships--A Shipbuilding District in the Nineteenth Century" *International Journal of Maritime History* X (1998), forthcoming, 7,8.

[45]   Jackson and Jackson, *Tragic Letters*, 25-6.

His links in this regard include a more indirect interest: railways. For many years, starting in 1859, Ritson was a member of the Maryport and Carlisle Railway's board of directors. His frequent partner in ship investments, William Ostle, was a director prior to this and served until his death in 1875. In that year Ritson rose to the position of Deputy-Chairman of the committee, replacing his late friend. In fact, the Ritson connection to the railway was begun by Robert's father John who, along with Ostle, sat on the original management committee that proposed the railway in 1835.[46]

Ritson's interest in the railway was intimately linked to his position as an owner and builder of ships. Much of the line's revenue was accounted for by iron and especially coal exports, both of which were often exported by ship to both foreign and coastal ports after reaching Maryport's docks via the railway. Coal in particular needed transport by sea, especially to Irish ports. The importance of these trades to the Maryport and Carlisle railway is illustrated by its half-yearly statement of revenue. Passengers, goods and cattle combined brought in about £14,000 gross in 1867 and about £15,000 in 1868. Comparable figures for coal products plus iron ore were approximately £25,000 each year. With the railway relying on products requiring additional seaborne transport, it is hardly surprising that Ritson was active in both sectors.[47] The ties between railway and shipping are further brought out in the Directors' concern for matters relating directly to the harbour. The following quote, although

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[46]   Cumbria Record Office (CRO), Maryport and Carlisle Railway, *Half-Yearly Reports*, various years.

[47]   *Ibid.*

from after Ritson's death, illustrates the point:

> ...we charge 2d. Per ton for any pig iron shipped by the iron or storage companies as toll for the use of our lines at the head of the Elizabeth Dock....With reference to conversation at the Harbour Commissioners' meeting yesterday: The Maryport Haematite Iron Company shipped a great portion of their pig iron traffic...at the north-west side of the Elizabeth Dock Basin by laying down a short curve from their Ellenborough Colliery High Level Line.[48]

Unfortunately the railway documents do not tell us if such iron and coal cargoes were being shipped by Ritson and Ostle's own vessels, or if some arrangement had been made with an outside shipping company. T.R. Gourvish's article "The Railways and Steamboat Competition in Early Victorian Britain" offers some clues in this regard. During the early 1840s the London & Blackwall railway engaged in competition with steamer companies over lucrative passenger traffic. They were unable to co-operate with any of the steamer lines. This meant the directors had to seek alternative means of providing feeder services. Railways could not own steamships directly, but directors could invest in tonnage as private individuals, as some did. Although railway documents do not say so, the ability to provide their own feeder service for coal and iron exports, plus passenger services, may have influenced Ritson and Ostle's investment in shipping.[49]

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[48]   CRO, Maryport and Carlisle Railway, "Letter From Secretary and General Manager's Office," April, 1900.

[49]   T. R. Gourvish, "The Railways and Early Steamboat Competition in Early Victorian Britain" *Transport History* IV (1971), 5,6. The importance of low-value bulk cargoes to the railway may also justify why Ritson primarily invested in sail tonnage. Of course Ritson's connection to the sea as a shipbuilder undoubtably gave some impetus to his shipowning.

These investors, like their smaller counterparts, provided the backbone for a thriving coastal fleet in Maryport, which only began winding down at the turn of the century. With this in mind, we can summarize the main points of this chapter. The coastal fleet had a number of distinctive characteristics. It was, in large measure, comprised of brig and brigantine-rigged vessels of less than 200 register tons. As some of Maryport's coastal trading partners like Dumfries were very small and had limited infrastructure, this made perfect sense. Although at least a few barques and schooners were found among the coasters, it is unlikely that their influence was very great. Three masted barques, with their large size, were much better suited to deep-sea trades. Schooners were more likely candidates for the coastal trades, but cannot have been much of a factor as few were on the Maryport registry. Barquentines and the largest vessels, ships, were absent from the coasting agreements examined.

The coastwise fleet, like Maryport shipping generally, consisted largely of vessels built in the United Kingdom, or in British North America; few bottoms originated outside these nations. Wherever they were built, Maryport's small brigs and brigantines had a life expectancy of just under a decade on average. Their boom came in the early 1870s when net annual tonnage averaged slightly over 4300 register tons per year. Their decline began after mid-decade, but did not become pronounced until the late 1880s. Although they resisted change until that late date, the investors, finally succumbed. With the increasing use of steam by outside investors, Maryport owners took less of a share in their own town's coasting. The 1870s sail fleet quietly slipped away. This is not to pronounce the retention of sailing tonnage

a failure. Indeed, Maryport owners carried on for nearly sixty years after the first steam experiments on coastal routes. In addition to their capital investments, however, there must have been other factors contributing to the success of Maryport coasting. One was certainly the men who crewed the vessels. It is they whom we will examine next.

Crews

The Maryport Maritime Museum, formerly the Queen's Head Inn, stands near the old Elizabeth Dock as a tribute to community members who dedicated their lives to working at sea. In front of the museum stands a statue depicting two old mariners, possibly fishermen, engaged in conversation. A young boy, the future of Maryport's nautical tradition, stands looking at their catch. Even today memories of those who crewed Maryport's fleet remains. Their legacy remains, embodied in the fishers who still call the town home.

These mariners were a vital part of Maryport's coastal trade. Once an owner, or owners, purchased a coaster many factors determined the success enjoyed by the craft. The vessel's state of repair and the decision whether to improve it might be the difference between a long life expectancy, or foundering on a maiden voyage. Considering that vessels, especially new ones, could represent large capital investments, owners were wise to be vigilant when making decisions concerning their craft. An important factor in determining a successful voyage was the crew. A skilful crew could better ensure safe shipment of goods while allowing satisfactory delivery times for customers. Even in the bulk trades, where speed took second place to cost, a consumer could only wait so long for a cargo. For owners the selection of a crew was indirect. Their interests would normally be guarded by their captain, a man whom they could trust not only to make a profit but also to pick a suitable crew.

The crews who signed on in the various Irish, Cumbrian and Scottish ports traversed by the coasters shared a number of characteristics, making possible a picture of an "average"

Maryport coasterman. It may be unfair to describe the average seaman, since each man was an individual, but the exercise will provide useful insights into who was likely to sail on such craft. To determine the common links between Maryport's coastal tars the main source of information is the British Empire Agreements and Accounts of Crew.

The Crew Lists were contracts signed between a master and crew prior to sailing. The agreements spelled out specific details of a voyage including its route, duration, provisions, wages and other relevant details under which a mariner shipped. They also contain personal information on each mariner such as name, age, birthplace, capacity and discharge. The records also provide information pertaining to the voyage, about which more will be said in the following chapter. On foreign voyages masters were required by law to have articles stamped by an official, usually the British Consul, at each port of call. On coastal routes, of most concern here, the record was normally kept by the master himself, or by the mate acting on his behalf.[1]

The Crew Agreement is essentially a civil contract entailing the limited surrender of a seaman's liberty for the length of a voyage. The agreement had its origins in the days of sail, when ships were most at the mercy of the elements. In this situation quick and full obedience to the master's directives could make the difference between life and death. A case brought before the US Supreme Court in the 1930s used evidence from ancient civilizations

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[1]   Lewis R. Fischer and Eric W. Sager, "An Approach to the Quantitative Analysis of British Shipping Records," *Business History XXII* (July 1980), 137-38. For an account of the British Consular Service see D.C.M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (London: Longman, 1971).

to justify enforcement of such agreements. The court ruled that navigation required that a seaman not desert his ship at a crucial juncture. Most maritime nations have provided penalties against those who broke articles. As early as 900 BC the inhabitants of Rhodes promulgated laws to punish captains or sailors who did so. Similar statutes were found in the English thirteenth-century Rules of Oleron, as well as in codes promulgated by the Hanseatic League and Napoleonic France. Although many seafaring nations had variants of these laws, the British, with their far-reaching commercial empire, took them to their logical limit. British agreements were also developed to provide a national register of seamen in case of emergencies such as war, although this scheme was not altogether successful.[2]

The articles have limits to their usefulness, however. While they provide a reasonable view of certain characteristics relating to seamen, they give little substance to the person behind a particular name. Since coasting trades gave mariners more time with their families than did deep-sea pursuits, it is reasonable to assume such considerations affected decisions to serve on coasters. It would be of interest, for example, to compare the number of married versus unmarried men in the two branches of trade over time. The agreements also give no indication of the role of women in coasting families. With husbands away at sea for weeks at a time, a greater share of the burden of child-rearing must have fallen to these women than was normal even in the Victorian period. Concerning such social questions, the agreements

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[2]   James C. Healey, *Foc's'le and Glory Hole* (New York: Greenwood, 1936), 14. About seventy-five per cent of the extant British Crew Agreements are housed at Memorial University of Newfoundland's Maritime History Archive.

are mute.[3]

The best way to put flesh on the bones of these mariners would be to look at personal correspondence, family records and census materials. Although few such documents apart from the latter are readily available, there are a few anecdotes in local popular histories. These are not typical, however, since they often reflect the most interesting or tragic events in the life of a seafarer and hence are by definition unusual. In addition, they tend to come most often from masters as opposed to members of the lower ranks. Supplementing such evidence are more general data on the lives of seamen in general. These include primary accounts by social reformers such as Samuel Plimsoll and Thomas Brassey. These can be useful if it is remembered that such persons, although sympathetic, often saw seamen from a social distance.[4]

These coastermen and their counterparts in foreign trades have been referred to as sailors, seamen, mariners and tars. Who exactly were these people as a class in society? To Samuel Plimsoll, "the Seaman's Friend," they were quite simply men of the working class, albeit a peculiar portion. In typical Victorian fashion, Plimsoll regarded his nation's mariners as being much like dry grinders, coal miners and construction workers in "not [being] given

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[3]   For more information on the husband/wife relationship in seafaring families, see Margaret S. Creighton, "Women and Men in American Whaling," *International Journal of Maritime History* IV (June 1992): 195-218.

[4]   There are also modern studies of mariners such as Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailor Towns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); and Knut Weibust, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 1969).

to calculating too nicely all probable dangers [of their job]." Plimsoll asserted that if such persons were more aware of the risks of physical labour, most of society's arduous tasks would never be completed. The articles made life at sea especially dangerous. Penalties imposed for breaking an agreement meant that sailors were forced to put to sea even when they *did* perceive the risk of shipping aboard a particular vessel.[5] Plimsoll's definition of a seaman is more useful for revealing class-based paternalism toward labour than for a working definition of a sailor. For this we turn to a more recent work.

Writing in the 1930s, James C. Healey began his book on American seamen by reviewing what being a sailor entailed. Although his vision was somewhat romanticized, it gave a good indication of what such a life represented. The sailor, Healey wrote, was "among the best known of men." Contact and popular culture had transformed "Jack Tar" into a kind of folk hero. To landsmen he was at the same time strange and fascinating, exuding an air of mystery about where he would go next and what he would do. Despite this, ashore he was much like other people. He dressed similarly and attended the same entertainments. Still, the mariner, in Healey's view, remained the supreme individualist.[6] He said of the breed:

> Friends and loves [the sailor] has none, nor home nor blest abode. He has no loyalties either for his ship or the shipowner. Home to him is a place some distance from the port he happens to be in. On the whole [seamen] linger as a mental image of a good natured group of men...doing work that seem[s] a trifle unskilled and [is] probably paid for as such. [The ranks] sleep in the slum bowels of the ship and eat their food from agate dishes in rivet-studded

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5   Samuel Plimsoll, *Our Seamen: An Appeal* (London: Virtue, 1873), 20.

6   Healey, *Foc's'le*, 4.

mess halls. Gold stripes change each of them to swivel-chair potentates with emissaries waiting to obey their every command. The seaman is all this and more.[7]

This description is flowery and poetic but fits the popular image of the mariner. Healey's description was geared toward mariners in the deep-sea trades, however. Such seamen may have been among the best known of men, but the same was not true for his coastal counterpart. The reason may relate to Healey's own romantic description of the seafarer. The coastal trades, while having their share of tribulations, lacked the allure of blue-ocean routes. While this can be overstated, the point is certainly valid. In the long-distance trades mariners might have found themselves in exotic climes and fantastic situations for a number of years. The vicissitudes of such a life were reflected in the record of frequent drunkenness, deaths and the occasional mutiny provided by logs and personal accounts. By nature, coasting was a more mundane business. Coasters ranged over short distances to places that even the landsman visit. For the English coastal sailor, Ireland was arguably the most exotic locale. Moreover, coasters were "ugly ducklings" compared to ships such as the China tea clippers. Coastal cargoes were also quite often mundane; most vessels carried nothing more inspiring than coal, iron, or china clay.[8] There was rarely a need for detailed logs on short-sea routes. When crew members departed their vessel it was usually because they had been "paid off" or "discharged." The reality behind foreign seafaring was more

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[7]   *Ibid.*, 4-6.

[8]   See John Armstrong (ed.), *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), xii.

trying than might be inferred from Masefield's poetry.[9] Still, it is the deep-sea trades which have caught the imagination of neophytes and most scholars. This chapter will help to put a more visible face on their coastal brethren.

The men who served aboard Maryport's coasters performed a variety of jobs which would have been familiar to their more celebrated foreign-going counterparts. The most common were able-bodied seamen (ABs), mates, runners, apprentices, ordinary seamen (OSs) and of course masters.[10]

The most common of these ranks, the AB, is perhaps most problematic to define. It has been said that the AB "just is." He might have been any sailor who signed on who, in Healey's context of 1930s America, could claim at least three years service at sea. In both Healey's time and in nineteenth-century Britain, certain skills were universal for an experienced AB. He needed the ability to knot, "bend," splice and hitch ropes; to evacuate a ship in distress; to handle a ship at sea; and to understand nautical terminology. This

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[9] John Masefield was a British poet and novelist. After serving an apprenticeship in the merchant service his career at sea was ended by illness. *Salt Water Ballads*, his first collection of poetry appeared in 1902, inspired by his life at sea. In 1913 he produced another work *Dauber*, which also dealt with maritime themes. See Magnus Magnusson (ed.), *Chamber's Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 1993).

[10] These ranks were found on both sail and steam vessels. Peculiar to the latter were jobs relating to the running of the engines, such as engineers, donkeymen, firemen, trimmers and stokers. For the most part this chapter will deal with crew members of sailing craft. Although steamers became increasingly important in Maryport after the mid-1870s, few Crew Agreements could be located for coasting steamers. Those that were found consisted mainly of a single coastal voyage made between deep-sea passages by foreign-going vessels.

combination allowed rapid response to orders. In addition, skill with the compass and all marine signals was essential. The main problem concerning the status of ABs involved false claims about qualifications. As Healey wrote, "there are many such [unqualified] men to be found on board ship. They are burdens to masters, officers and other members of the crew. Because of the present lack of system of identifications, it is a difficult matter to eliminate them."[11]

This same problem was a concern in Victorian Britain. Thomas Brassey's 1877 work, *British Seamen*, devoted a chapter to unqualified personnel passing themselves off as ABs. According to Brassey, part of the problem was that many captains had been lax in their post-voyage rating of seamen. It was common to award top grades for conduct to sailors who did not merit it. As a result, captains of other vessels on which the individual signed had no way of knowing about his lack of qualifications. It must be remembered, however, that such ratings were very general. Masters may not even have paid much attention to them, especially on coasters where men were locals and well known. Ratings were important mainly because they appeared by law on discharge papers, which were presented to masters by men seeking work. Brassey did not put too much blame on masters for trivializing the ratings. After arriving in port, particularly in foreign trades, the master might have been relieved to be rid of a troublesome crew member and might have given him a good rating while vowing never to deal with the man again. Brassey did not excuse carelessness by masters altogether, and

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[11]   Healey, *Foc's'le*, 20-22.

noted that many British consuls complained about the practice. In 1874 the Board of Trade affirmed the consuls' position by including a provision in that year's Merchant Shipping Act making it a misdemeanour for any captain to knowingly overrate the performance of a seaman. In Brassey's opinion this did not go far enough and he suggested a further remedy for the problem.[12]

Brassey felt the British merchant fleet should adopt certificates of competency for anyone shipping as an AB. As a Liverpool committee of shipowners noted, many men were being shipped as ABs after only one or two voyages. In addition, the ease of becoming an AB discouraged many boys from following regular apprenticeships. The committee's plan would have made examinations compulsory for anyone wishing to become an AB. As a reward, higher rates of pay were to be introduced for the newly certified ABs. Although Brassey noted opposition to the scheme on the grounds of difficulty in testing, he felt such fears were exaggerated. As proof he offered the example of the Royal Navy, which had always had a system of ranking and provided gradations in pay by skill level.[13]

Brassey's observations, like much of his writing, were geared toward the deep-sea trades. How much his ideas applied to coasting is uncertain. It is true that most mariners in Maryport's coasting fleet were discharged with grades of "Very Good." This might support Brassey's claims concerning competency, but should be treated with caution in the present

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[12]   Thomas Brassey, *British Seamen* (London: Longmans, Green, 1877), 281-2.

[13]   *Ibid.*, 282-4.

case. The Crew Agreements indicate that an unqualified man claiming to be an AB on a Maryport coaster might not easily get away with it. The trade entailed short distances and a limited number of ports. As well, mariners tended to reappear on different coasters. Given that captains probably knew each other, a tarnished reputation might force a man out of this limited trading sphere into an arena where incompetence might go unnoticed longer. Therefore, an AB appearing on a Maryport coasting agreement likely possessed the skills that he claimed. In any event, it is important to recognise the ambiguity surrounding this position in the articles.

Another common rank on Maryport's coastal vessels is the OS. These men had less experience than ABs and there were fewer of them. The latter characteristic might be due to the nature of coasting or may have resulted from the faking of qualifications that Brassey described. In Healey's maritime world, the OS started out as a "deck boy," although the rank of boy was rare in Maryport. The duties of such young men included working in the kitchen, if a mess boy, or doing a myriad of maintenance jobs aboard ship. After about a year at sea the boy graduated to the rank of OS. The OS would then unofficially learn more advanced nautical skills, such as rope work and compass navigation. After three years the OS was generally considered a full AB.[14]

Another rank found on most Maryport sailing coasters was "runner." This position is the most poorly-documented of all the coaster rankings and few secondary works even

[14]   Healey, Foc's'le, 19-20.

mention it. Evidence in the Crew Agreements is limited as to exactly what these people did. From their much lower rates of pay it can be inferred that were general labourers, performing a variety of unskilled tasks which experienced seamen were too busy to do or which were considered beneath an AB. Unfortunately, the extent of their duties remains vague, but it is fairly clear that their work was menial. Runners appear to have spent little time on one vessel before moving to another, or possibly to a better life ashore.[15]

Aside from these categories of sailors, a few more crop up on Maryport's coasters under Healey's designation "unlicenced personnel." These include the boatswain, the highest position aside from the officers. The "bosun" was responsible for keeping his craft ship-shape and oversaw most work aboard the vessel. Healey referred to him as taking orders from the first officer. In Maryport, the bosun usually appeared in place of a mate and seldom served on a vessel where a mate was present. This is because on coasters the master often took a watch himself, reducing the number of supervisory personnel needed. Aside from the bosun, there were sometimes cooks on board. This position was neither highly regarded on Maryport coasters nor did it have a high professional standing. Often it was filled by teenage boys, who seldom lasted long in the job. In fact, the inattention to cooking services on British vessels cropped up in Brassey's work. As with ABs he recommended introducing certificates of competency for shipboard cooks. He noted that "Crews suffer because the cook is not a

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[15]   See Crew Agreements, various years. Another possibility is that these men were persons hired "by the run." This is unlikely, however, as pay dispersed in this manner was usually noted. Furthermore, many runners were recorded as having been paid in monthly, or "per voyage," installments like their crewmates.

cook." The Crew Agreements suggest that this was true of Maryport coasting as well. Brassey's greatest concern in this regard was sanitary, with crews possibly becoming ill due to badly prepared foodstuffs.[16]

Another crewman in the Maryport agreements was the apprentice. These were simply young men who were being trained, almost as indentured servants, for careers at sea. Once their indentures were completed, these individuals would have been ready to begin a paid career as seamen. During the first half of the nineteenth century apprenticeship was widespread, especially in deep-sea trades. Legislation required owners of all large vessels to carry set numbers of apprentices with an eye to maintaining the number of seamen. Although not all Maryport coasters carried apprentices, they were certainly not uncommon.[17]

These positions comprised the bulk of crews, but such men were, or course, under the command of officers. All Maryport coasters carried a master and frequently a first officer, or mate. On larger British vessels, especially foreign-going craft, the captain might have been assisted by as many as three deck officers. Because most Maryport coasters were under 200 tons, it was customary to carry only one deck officer, called simply the mate. Even he might

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[16]   Healey, *Foc's'le*, 22-3; Crew Agreements, various years; Brassey, *British Seamen*, 287. British cooks in general were well paid compared to their counterparts in other national merchant marines. The casual nature of the cook on Maryport coasters may relate to voyage duration. Periods at sea were generally under a week and the need for a professional cook may have been lessened.

[17]   V. C. Burton, "Apprenticeship Regulation and Maritime Labour in the Nineteenth Century British Merchant Marine," *International Journal of Maritime History* I (June 1989): 29. This article is an in-depth look at the institution.

be replaced by a bosun, which was not surprising since coaster mates were usually uncertified. The mate had to demonstrate great skill in seamanship and navigation and gain the respect and cooperation of the crew. By the time Healey wrote, albeit from an American perspective, aspiring mates needed at least one year's service as an AB before they could sit for a third mate's "ticket." In Maryport's coastal trades the process seems less formal. A small number of men were promoted from the foc's'le during the course of voyages--naturally, such men were already ABs or bosuns. In this case it is unlikely they were chosen because of a formal ticket, but rather for their leadership qualities.

Although the mate had great responsibility, it was the master who ultimately saw the vessel home safely and profitably. He ideally possessed the most extensive knowledge of nautical topics. Besides being expert in navigation, he was a firm disciplinarian and socially graceful when dealing with passengers.[18] The master needed to be familiar with all types of vessels, but especially his own. A good master would understand port facilities and the nature of all cargoes he was expected to handle. He would need good business skills as well in order to represent his employers. In addition, he should have been knowledgeable about marine law. Although not often certified on coastal routes, the master was a ship's consummate professional. Of all the crew who served in Maryport's coasting fleet, only masters regularly remained with a particular craft, regarding it as their own. Healey wrote that "the position is a responsible one. [The master's] task...is to bring the ship...its cargo,

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[18]   Navigation was less of a concern for coastal masters, whose vessels traversed
          short distances in familiar waters.

crew and passengers, safely and expeditiously to port so that the voyage is as profitable as possible to the owners of the vessel."[19]

Mariners serving in Maryport's coasting fleet were quite homogeneous insofar as their places of birth. British deep-sea vessels might carry mariners who hailed from any part of the country, empire, or even the world. A much different situation prevailed aboard Maryport coasters. No foreign mariners were ever noted as serving on these vessels.[20] Given the local nature of recruitment, colonial subjects were also virtually absent from their decks. A few isolated examples, such as a Robert Smith of Nova Scotia, who served on the brigantine *Farmer*, and a single Newfoundlander, can be located, but these were exceptions.[21]

Men from the United Kingdom outside Maryport's trade sphere comprised only a minority of crewmen on her coasters, although their importance increased during the 1880s. Many in this category, although from outside Cumbria, came from parts of nearby Scotland or from Ireland within Maryport's trading area. From the 1860s through the 1880s, an average of forty-three per cent of mariners came from Maryport itself. About seven per cent came from other Cumbrian locales, such as Whitehaven, Wigtown and Carlisle. Just over

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[19]   Healey, *Foc's'le*, 37-8.

[20]   There were foreign mariners present on some of the steamship voyages examined. However, these do not appear to be regular coasting voyages. They actually represent deep-sea crews temporarily assigned home-trade status. See Crew Agreements, various years. Several examples come from the Hine brothers' Holme Line ships.

[21]   Crew Agreements, various years.

fourteen per cent hailed from the major Irish trading partners Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry. The remainder, about thirty-six per cent, were born in other parts of the United Kingdom. Again, it must be stressed that most were, in fact, from towns in Maryport's trading sphere. Only a small proportion came from outside. In this context Maryport coastermen might be regarded as a truly regional workforce, a characteristic which did not begin to change until the 1880s. Even in that decade, Cumbrian crewmen and those from major Irish trade partners accounted for fifty-six per cent of coastal mariners. With Cumbrian coal and iron mines competing for the labour of these "unskilled" workers, it might be expected that increasing numbers of sailors would come from outside the region. This seems to be the case after the 1870s, but the trade maintained an essentially local flavour. Obviously, the coasting trade continued to be an attractive, or perhaps the only viable, option for certain men in the region (see table 3.1).[22]

The local nature of crews, especially before the 1880s, must have made for a tightly-knit community. Census returns for the county of Cumberland, compiled by J.D. Marshall and John K. Walton, indicate that persons employed at sea, or as boatmen comprised only a small part of the county's workforce. In 1871, for example, 1746 persons, of which only two were women, listed their occupation under this heading; this accounted for 1.66 per cent of Cumberland's workforce. This compares with 23.12 per cent of workers engaged in agriculture where the almost 25,000 workers made it the largest employer in the county.

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[22]   *Ibid.*

Reflecting the trend away from employment at sea, in the next census year the numbers for sea-related occupations dropped. In 1891 only 1.5 per cent of all Cumberland's workforce were so employed, amounting to 1545 persons, all males. Nonetheless, their proportionate influence on Maryport coasters remained substantial, even if it diminished over time.[23]

Table 3.1
Maryport Coaster Crews. Percentages by Place of Birth.

Decade	Maryport	Cumbria	Ireland-Major Trade Partners*	Other
1860s	53%	14%	0%	33%
1870s	56%	8.5%	8.5%	27%
1880s	27%	5%	24%	44%
Total	43%	7%	14%	36%

Source: Crew Agreements, various years. *includes Dublin, Belfast and Londonderry only.

In addition to the phenomenon of "local boys," the Crew Agreements indicate that the seamen comprised a fairly mature workforce. Certain crew members, such as apprentices, were always youths, but there was a trend in Maryport's coastal labour force toward mariners over thirty years of age. In fact, a considerable number of seamen could be considered middle-aged. By the 1870s and throughout the 1880s, just over eleven per cent of Maryport's coastal mariners were over fifty. During the 1860s about forty-five per cent of mariners were

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[23]   J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties From 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 244. The designation "Sea and boatmen" is fairly broad and likely covers not only coastermen but also foreign-going mariners and fishers as well. It might also be noted that 1911, although outside the temporal range of this survey, indicates a more dramatic drop in this category of worker. For that year only 544 persons gave this as their occupation. By now the group accounted for a mere 0.52 per cent of all Cumberland's workforce.

over thirty and by the next two decades a majority of Maryport coastermen were above this age. From the 1860s through the 1880s the average age of mariners of all ranks was never below thirty. For the 1860s it averaged thirty-one years, rising to thirty-five by the next decade and levelling off at thirty-four in the 1880s.[24]

David Alexander examined the issue of older mariners in "...an industry...dominated by young men," in his article "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899."[25] Alexander's study focussed on the port of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. His introduction noted that in the Norwegian, American and Canadian merchant marines, few persons continued at sea beyond their twenties or early thirties. At the outset of his period over eighty-two per cent of Yarmouth's Canadian sailors were under thirty. This contrasts with Maryport, whose coaster crews comprised only fifty-five per cent of seamen under thirty at their high point. Alexander notes a drop in the number of boys under twenty putting to sea by the 1880s. Over time the number of men over thirty on Yarmouth craft steadily increased. To Alexander this indicated an aging workforce. He suggested that either seafaring was increasingly unappealing to Yarmouth youth or it was becoming a lifetime career, not an occupation to be abandoned at an early age.[26]

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[24]   Crew Agreements, various years.

[25]   David Alexander, "Literacy Rates Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (eds.), *Working Men Who Got Wet* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1980), 6.

[26]   *Ibid.*, 6-8.

In the Maryport case, the presence of older crewmen appears to have been the norm throughout, although with an increase from the 1860s. Large numbers of sailors over thirty appeared from the beginning. During the 1860s about forty per cent of all the coastermen were above thirty. By the 1870s this had jumped to forty-six per cent, but by the 1880s it had stabilized at forty-seven per cent. As might be expected, older mariners were concentrated on the bridge, with younger crewmen more common in the foc's'le, although there were large numbers of seamen over thirty even there. About half of all ABs were over thirty throughout the period, with just under half of all other unlicenced personnel above thirty.[27]

Table 3.2
Coastermen-Age Distribution by Rank, 1860s-1880s.

Rank	Under 30 Years	30-49 Years	Above Age 50
Master	12%	69%	19%
Mate	17%	64%	17%
AB	49%	44%	7%
Other Ranks	54%	37%	9%

Source: Crew Agreements, various years. Note: Rows may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Although crews did not seem to be aging after the 1860s, a variation on Alexander's second theme may have some merit. Alexander suggested that coasting was a natural choice for aging mariners. As the percentage of seamen over thirty remained above forty per cent, this suggests a stable workforce whose members tended to be older than their deep-sea

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[27] Crew Agreements, various years. It must be remembered that the designation "other" includes such ranks as "boy" and "apprentice" who were, by nature, very young.

counterparts. Another traditional argument has been that coasting was a place in which to start *and* end one's career at sea. Maryport figures give credence to the second part of this theory. If we take the rank of AB as an example, the proportion of mariners above and below thirty was about equal.[28]

Table 3.3
Percentage of Mariners by Age Group

Decade	Under 30 Years	30-49 Years	Above 50 Years
1860s	52%	40%	8%
1870s	43%	46%	11%
1880s	41%	47%	12%

Source: Crew Agreements, various years. Figures may not equal 100% due to rounding.

These data also call into question the old bromide that coasting constituted a "nursery" for the more challenging deep-sea trades. As John Armstrong argued in his introduction to *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping*:

> The view of the British coastal trade handed down by writers on deep-water marine activity has sometimes been patronizing and has downplayed its role. The notion that the coasting trade was the "nursery" of seamen suggests a kindergarten for immature sailors who would eventually graduate to a higher form of education, presumably the blue-water trades.[29]

Short of tracing the careers of many individual mariners over time, it would be difficult to prove conclusively that Maryport's coastal trade was not a training ground for deep-sea sailors. Despite this, Crew Agreement evidence does seem to contradict this view.

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28   Crew Agreements, various years; Alexander, "Literacy Rates," 31.

29   Armstrong (ed.), *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping*, xiii.

The presence of fairly large numbers of crewmen over thirty and even over fifty suggests that coasting was more a place to end than to start a career at sea. With presumably some experience at sea, sixty-two per cent of all masters, mates and ABs were above thirty during the period. With such a high proportion past their twenties it is clear that, wherever they gained their sea training, these men were not abandoning coasting for a "more mature" environment.[30]

Apart from age and place of birth, another way of profiling Maryport's coaster crews is via average levels of education. Although a person's sea training is indicated relatively well by his position on a vessel, this gives little sense of the formal education a coasterman was likely to have. There is no provision in the Crew Agreements for displaying educational backgrounds, but clues appear indirectly. As part of the recruitment process mariners were required to sign-on to their potential vessel. This entailed giving one's signature. If any crew member were illiterate he was forced to make a mark, usually an "X"' which the master would certify as his. This does little to indicate the level an individual might have reached in school, or if he attended school at all, but at the very least basic literacy points toward some modicum of education.[31]

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[30]   Crew Agreements, various years.

[31]   *Ibid.*

Table 3.4
Maryport Coasting Crews: Percentage Able to Sign Their Name

Decade	Able to Sign	Unable to Sign
1860s	78%	22%
1870s	75%	25%
1880s	84%	16%

Source: Crew Agreements, various years.

According to Alexander, an ability to sign one's name was a middle-level indicator of literacy. Although it is likely that fewer could sign their names than could read, more could do so than could read and write fluently. Mariners signing articles were more likely to need this ability than landward manual labourers. For this reason they may have had greater cause to memorize their signature if otherwise illiterate. Alexander understood the problem this created, but acknowledged the difficulty of knowing when a signature marked the extent of literacy. To guard against this, he believed the ability to sign one's name must indicate some ability to read and write.[32] Marshall and Walton agreed with this assessment. For large groups "consistent trends appear...and it is evident they are not statistically meaningless, even though they may well over-estimate by 5 or 10 per cent the numbers of people who were genuinely literate."[33]

Table 3.4 is indicative of a fairly well-educated workforce, assuming Alexander's

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[32] Alexander, "Literacy Rates," 6; R. S. Scofield, "Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750-1850," *Explorations in Economic History* (1973): 440-1; Ira Dye, "American Merchant Seafarers," *Explorations in Economic History* (1973): 340-1.

[33] Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties,* 138.

literacy criteria. For the first two decades of the period, the literacy rate among British and Irish seamen can be compared to Carlo Cipolla's research on bridegrooms able to sign their names on marriage registers. In fact, Maryport's coastermen were relatively literate compared to the populace as a whole, although their performance dropped off between the 1860s and the 1870s. Nonetheless, the coaster crews did make a large jump in literacy in the next decade. Considering the working-class background of seafarers, their performance is certainly not lacking.[34]

Table 3.5
Marriage Signatures Compared to Coaster Crew Literacy

Decade	Marriages	Crews
1860s	79%*	78%
1870s	83%	75%

Source: Alexander, "Literacy Rates, 19"; Crew Agreements, various years. * Includes the years 1865-1869 only. Percentages above represent the proportion able to sign their names.

Given the fall in literacy among coastal seamen from the 1860s to the 1870s, and the substantial rebound in the 1880s, there is no definite indication of whether mariners were generally becoming more literate over time. On balance, the evidence seems to suggest that they were. Of equal interest is the fact that they lagged behind the populace as a whole in increasing their rates of literacy from the 1860s to 1870s, as Cipolla's evidence suggests

[34]   Crew Agreements, various years; Alexander, "Literacy Rates," 19; Carlo Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (London: 1969), 121-3. One must keep in mind that Cipolla's survey included a broad range of the United Kingdom's populace. The Maryport data concern only a tiny and specific portion of the working class in a limited geographic area. For this reason broad conclusions should not be drawn from this comparison.

most Europeans did. Indeed, even by the 1880s the percentage of literate mariners, eighty-four per cent, was marginally less than the eighty-five per cent found in marriage registers for 1875-1879. For the moment we can say that Maryport's coaster men were not badly educated when compared to the UK's populace in general. They did, in fact, possess language skills little inferior to countrymen ashore.[35]

Given this, were there any advantages to Maryport coastermen in being literate? Alexander suggests a number of reasons why this skill might prove useful. Literacy was essential in the Yarmouth trades if a crewman wished the leave the forecastle for the bridge. This rule was not hard and fast in Cumbria's coasting sector. Still, the officers were generally literate. In addition, Alexander suggested that sailors were not the irresponsible group that they were often portrayed as being. For a young Yarmouth or Maryport man, the possibility of not advancing at sea might make a landward career a better option. In this instance greater education provided a buffer against hardship, much as it does today. Alexander makes the further assertion that literate men on Yarmouth vessels earned more on average than did illiterates, even as deckhands. Although there are wage data from Maryport, they are too fragmentary to support such a conclusion. Nonetheless, a similar scenario cannot be ruled

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[35]   Alexander, "Literacy Rates"; Crew Agreements, various years. The Crew Agreements also provide a sense of the relative education levels of Irish versus British mariners in this trade. Although in the 1870s, when large numbers of Irish crewmen first appeared, they were less literate than their British counterparts, by the 1880s the Irish were five per cent more likely to sign their names. It must be remembered that many of these were natives of the larger population centres in Ireland. Illiteracy was more likely a problem among the rural, agrarian population.

out. At the very least there may have been a perception among Cumbrian seamen that this was the case. This may relate to the region's rural nature. Of Alexander's conclusions, the most applicable to Maryport may be that seamen in no way comprised a less-literate stratum of the working class. "Jack" by no means represented the dregs of his society.[36]

The high literacy rate among Maryport coastermen was reflected in the county at large. During the period 1839-1845 Cumberland and the nearby county of Westmorland contained among the highest proportion of those who could sign marriage registers, a position they maintained throughout the century. There were a fairly large number of schools and teachers in both counties. In remote agricultural areas, younger sons might encounter greater hurdles to employment than were generally found in industrial regions. For this reason education might afford a better chance of work or betterment. Given this, the literacy rates among Maryport's coaster crews are not so surprising.[37]

As these crews were for the most part functionally literate, did literacy impose any barrier to filling coaster jobs? For the most part the answer is "no." Throughout the Crew Agreements are examples of illiterate mariners filling a variety of positions. The jobs of AB, OS, boy, runner and cook were all filled in some instances by people unable to sign their names. For lower ranks, this finding is hardly surprising.[38]

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[36]   Alexander, "Literacy Rates," 30-32.

[37]   Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties,* 138-9.

[38]   Crew Agreements, various years.

Of greater interest are ships' officers, for whom writing ability may have been a natural part of their social position. The vast majority of mates were at least functionally literate, although there were certainly exceptions. For example, two mates on the *Creole* were forced to make their mark in lieu of signing their names. For first officers who could not write, practical seamanship and experience must have comprised their primary credentials.[39]

Coastal masters are a different story. The rank of captain marked one as a member of the elite, as befitted a person controlling a seagoing vessel. Even in the "lowly" coasting trades, the distinction existed. Ashore, a master mariner's prestige carried over throughout the circles in which he moved. For these men literacy must have gone hand-in-hand with their standing both at sea and in their community. Of all the master mariners examined, none were completely illiterate.[40] In testimony before the Commission on Unseaworthy Ships in 1873, Thomas Gray noted some of the duties required of a captain. "The examination of officers for the mercantile marine does not only include seamanship [but also]...various questions the master has to consider when away from the owner; handwriting, spelling, certain parts of the law."[41]

This fits well with Healey's description. Since a master had to act as a kind of

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[39]   *Ibid.*

[40]   *Ibid.*

[41]   Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers (BPP), *Preliminary Report From the Commission on Unseaworthy Ships with Minutes and Digest of Evidence and Appendix 1873.*

maritime lawyer and represent the interests of his employers, the ability to read and write fluently would have been essential. Healey's point concerning the ability to interact comfortably with upper-crust passengers might also suggest that he should have been able to converse concerning books and newspapers, although this had little relevance on a coastal collier.[42] It is unlikely that completely illiterate masters existed, even if all Maryport coastal agreements had been located.

Using data from the Crew Agreements, a final insight might be gained into Maryport's coasting crews by examining wages. This is one of the more problematic statistics from the agreements, perhaps even more so than literacy. Wages on coasting voyages were normally dispersed "by the run," "per voyage," weekly, or monthly. Many Crew Agreements give little direct indication of how pay was dispersed. Masters had a number of choices on the form about how their crews were paid. They were then expected to cross out all but the pay period that applied to that particular voyage. Evidently, this rule was not strictly enforced, as the vast majority of agreements do not indicate pay periods.[43]

The first two period designations are further complicated, since their duration was undefined. This is likely because a "run," or "voyage" was of variable length. A run appears to consist of a single trip between two points, say Maryport and Belfast. When a "by the run" designation appeared, the agreements seem to indicate that this was an expedient way of

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[42]   Healey, *Foc's'le,* 37-38.

[43]   *Crew Agreements*, various years.

hiring men for a short trip, perhaps when crews could not easily be found on short notice. In some cases the pay for a run was quite high, even though a crewman was only engaged for a limited time. Therefore, "by-the-run" hiring seems to have been something of an emergency measure. Indeed, the designation does not appear at the top of Crew Agreements. Generally, "by the run" dispersals were noted by being pencilled in next to the amount of wages.[44]

The next designation, "per voyage," is the most common found on Maryport coasting agreements. This designation is also problematic. There is never a statement as to how long a voyage was, although a rough estimate can be inferred. When compared to monthly wage levels for deep-sea mariners, as compiled by Lewis Fischer, "per voyage" pay for Maryport coasting crews was higher. From the mid-1860s to about 1880, monthly pay for blue-water sailors averaged £3.18. Wages peaked in 1873-4, but never went higher than £3.60 per month. Given the greater risks involved, foreign trades would likely command higher pay rates than coasting, assuming comparable pay periods. Since "per voyage" rates on Maryport coasters are noticeably greater than Fischer's rates for their counterparts it is likely that Maryport crews received wages at intervals longer than four weeks. The problem is being

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[44]   *Ibid.* Maryport coaster crews had an added advantage in that their food was usually provided. For this reason they were not required to buy their own supplies. The provision of food is usually noted in the articles either by a specific ratio table, or simply "[Provisions] sufficient without waste."

precise about how long this was.[45]

From the Crew Agreements it appears that the designation of "voyage" referred to a round trip, including time spent in loading/unloading cargo. From Fischer's data, combined with the apparent duration of voyages, it can be estimated that an average voyage was between five and seven weeks. In more official terms a voyage might refer to the six-month duration of a standard Crew Agreement; in the context of pay periods this classification need not concern us. In any event, the "per voyage" designation is an unreliable indicator. Data from the agreements indicate that each may have been something of a unique case. We know, for example, that arrival and departure times for sailing vessels were notoriously irregular. For this reason, a sailor making the round trip to Dublin from Wigtown might be looking at a time difference of a week or more, depending on the weather.[46] Adding to the confusion is evidence that "per voyage" pay rates to one port may not have been the same as to another, even if this differential scale is seldom noted.

The brigantine *Fairhaven*, under the command of Heskett Hood, was employed on the run between Maryport and Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry, most likely in the coal trade. Although Hood did not give any insightful information concerning wages on most of these

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[45]   *Ibid.*; Lewis Fischer, "International Maritime Labour, 1863-1900: World Wages and Trends," *The Great Circle*, I (1988), 1-21. Fischer argues that Britain's wage rates for seamen remained low at this time despite the nation's maritime dominance.

[46]   Crew Agreements, various years.

voyages, two include a curious detail--wage rates "per voyage" by individual port.[47] Table
3.6 illustrates this.

Table 3.6
Fairhaven, Per Voyage Pay Rates by Port July 1883-June 1884

Port	Mate	AB
Belfast	£4 14 0	£4 4 0
Londonderry	£5 14 0	£5 4 0
Dublin	£5 4 0	£4 14 0

Source: *Fairhaven*, Crew Agreements, 1883-4.

If there were differential port rates, perhaps dependent on factors such as sailing
conditions, this further complicates using the "per voyage" designation to establish pay. In
addition to their uncertain duration, there may be no common rate per voyage. If this is the
case, the researcher is further hindered by the absence of a rate scale for the trip to and from
any particular port.[48] For this reason, the best choice in examining wages would be either the
weekly or monthly period.

The first is of little value since so few cases have been located, which makes any
conclusions drawn from them next to useless. It is therefore monthly pay periods that we will
examine. The only examples where monthly pay rates were definitely noted are found in the
1870s and 1880s. Even here not all years are included. Given this fact, average monthly wage
calculations can only be a rough estimate. Only wage rates for the positions of mate and AB

47   *Ibid., Fairhaven,* 1883-4.

48   *Ibid.,* various years.

have been calculated, since these are the only occupations with enough cases (see table 3.7). The small gap between mate and AB pay is much less than that found by Fischer and Nordvik for Norway. In the 1850s, first mates on Norwegian vessels received an average of eighty-six per cent more per month than ABs. Although the differential declined by the 1890s, it remained at forty-one per cent. It must be kept in mind, however, that these data were for a deep-sea fleet, where mates were more commonly licenced than in coastal trades.[49] We might speculate that lack of certification devalued the role of coastal mates in the eyes of owners.

Table 3.7
Average Monthly Pay Rates for Maryport Coaster Crews

Decade	Mates	ABs
1870s	£4 19 13	£4 5 6
1880s	£3 10 0	£3 3 15

Source: Crew Agreements, various years.

Pay rates for masters were almost never noted. In those few cases where they were, the dispersals are "per voyage." As a comparison, however, we have the articles for the brigantine Farmer for the year 1878. During this period ABs on the Farmer were paid £5 4 0 per voyage, mates received £5 14 0, while the master got £7 5 0. Given this difference, it may be assumed a similar gap in wages was present for masters under the monthly scale.[50]

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49   Ibid.; L. R. Fischer and Helge Nordvik, "From Namos to Holden: Myths and Realities in the History of Norwegian Seaman's Wages, 1850-1914," Scandinavian Economic History Review XXXV (1987): 54.

50   Crew Agreements, various years.

Although rough, there are a number of things to be learned from table 3.7. As might be expected, mates were better paid than ABs. During the 1870s a fairly large wage range was noted. Although the lowest pay for a mate was £4 10 0, compared to a low of £2 for an AB, the top of the wage scale is a different matter. The highest monthly pay rate for a mate was £5 14 6, compared to a high of £6 5 0 for an AB The number of agreements using a monthly scale is limited, however and too much should not be read into this. When comparing the more common "per voyage" rates, mates were paid higher than ABs as a matter of course.[51]

The most interesting feature of the wage data concerns the large drop in average monthly pay from the 1870s to the 1880s. In Fischer's example, wages peaked in the early to mid-1870s. This is somewhat different from the Maryport case, where wages peaked around the end of the decade. The decline in nominal wages thereafter may have been caused by the decline in freight rates that set in from the mid-1870s. But at the same time prices in Britain, as elsewhere in the western world, fell in the trans-Atlantic depression late in the century. As a result while nominal wages declined, real wages might have actually have risen, as they did in Norway. Still, since nominal wages tended to be more important to individual decision-making, at least in the short term, the fall in money wages may help to explain why there was a decline from the mid-1870s in the number of Maryport residents

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[51]   *Ibid.* The highest rates of pay for ABs seem to have been given to those crewmen of long-standing service, or when no mate was actually present. In the latter case, an experienced seaman might be performing the duties of a mate and being paid as such without a commensurate elevation in rank.

serving on the town's coasters. Perhaps remuneration levels were not as attractive as in industries like mining. Since data on monthly wages come from a limited number of agreements--and since we know little about mining wages--this association can be no more than tentative.[52]

Wage rates fluctuated from voyage to voyage, perhaps dependant on availability of cargoes and labour. Wage differences by port do not seem significant. The *Farmer*'s January to July articles for 1868 record all men as signing on in Dublin except two. For the second half of the year all signed articles at Maryport and received the same rates of pay as Dublin-recruited crewmen. The situation was similar in 1878. Mariners in the first half of the year joined in Whitehaven, Dublin and Maryport. Under the next set of articles, all joined at Maryport, and again wages were the same in all cases. This suggests a divergence from Fischer's findings. According to his data, blue-water sailors joining in Ireland were generally paid better than those signing on in England, likely due to the relative abundance of labour in the latter. Apparently, this was less of a factor in the coasting trades. This wage stability may also relate to the birthplace of the mariners involved. During both sets of articles all but one were Cumbrians. Despite the place of signing, this factor may have created fixed expectations about wage levels.[53]

Wages, like many aspects of the coasterman's life, must have undergone some

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[52]   *Ibid.*; Fischer, "International Maritime Labour;" Fischer and Nordvik, 49-53.

[53]   *Crew Agreements*, various years; Fischer, "International Maritime Labour."

changes with the introduction of steamers. Aside from the obvious addition of engine room personnel, the composition of crews in general must have altered. It is unfortunate that no agreements could be located for Maryport steamers employed full-time in coasting. Those that do exist for steamers reveal that the differences between the foreign and coasting trades were as great, or greater, than between sail and steam.

A major difference between the steamers and their sailing counterparts concerned size. While few sailing coasters exceeded 200 tons, the majority of steamers were larger than 1000 tons.[54] Wilfred Hine's Holme Line steamers were among the largest. One vessel, the *Thorn Holme,* was just over 1100 tons, while another, the *Fern Holme,* was 1714 tons. This translated into larger crew sizes, the normal complement being ten or more. This compared to an average of about five or six on sailing coasters. The diversity among crews was also greater than on sailing coasters, where crews were mainly local. Many steamships carried at least one foreigner, usually a central or northern European. A voyage by the SS *Thorn Holme* in 1887 had a Maryport captain and a Scandinavian crew. The most common countries of origin for foreign mariners were Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Germany. Of those crewmen hailing from the British Isles, places of birth were more dispersed than on sailing coasters. Crew members come from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland, with Liverpool

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[54]   Crew Agreements, various years. The size of these steamers makes it unlikely they were coasters, unless they were passenger steamers. In fact, their recorded coastal voyages were simply single runs in between trips on foreign articles. The nationality of foreign personnel suggests that the steamers were travelling at least as far as Germany and Scandinavia.

especially prominent. As on the sailing craft, however, there was little representation from the colonies. Only one colonial seaman appeared, a Jason Goldsworth from St. John's, Newfoundland, who was second mate on the *Thorn Holme* in 1888. The steam agreements also offered evidence of women working onboard, something never seen on sailing coasters. A July 1884 trip by the *Fern Holme* employed a stewardess named Annie Thompson, recording it as her 'first ship.' Wages were also much different than on the sailing vessels. For example, first mates on the *Fern Holme* and *Thorn Holme* in 1886 and 1888 earned £9 and £8 8 0, respectively, per month. This is far higher than similar rates on the sailing coasters. This fits Fischer's thesis that crews on foreign-going vessels would have earned higher wages than in coasting. Again, one should not take these differences as being true for steamers employed full time as coasters. Although they were certainly larger than similar sail craft, such vessels probably looked much alike concerning crew composition, leaving aside the engineering department and other engine room staff.[55]

The data for both steamers and sailing craft more particularly, can tell us much about Maryport coastermen. For all this, however, this evidence provides little insight into people's life beyond the vessel. As an example we can look at the coasting career of Shadeach Harrison, a native of Maryport. Harrison was a fairly average Maryport coasterman, except

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[55]   *Ibid.*; Fischer, "International Maritime Labour." Wages for the engineering department were even higher than those for mates, reflecting the value of these skilled technicians in the early days of steam. For example, on a voyage where the first mate earned £9 a month, the chief engineer received £15. On another voyage the comparable rates were £8 8 0 and £14.

for his unique given name. He was forty-four when first encountered and able to sign his name. Harrison first appeared on Maryport's coasters in July 1878, having served previously on the *Rapid*. His position on his new vessel, the *Faucet*, was as an AB, as it had been previously. During this period, however, Harrison moved on to a new vessel, the *Robert*. Here he signed on as a bosun, an obvious promotion. By July 1879 Harrison had advanced again, this time to mate, a position he maintained on the *Robert* until 1881.[56]

Although this gives some picture of Harrison as a person, there are still large gaps. Prior to 1878, no records on him have been located. Since crew agreements can only be traced backwards, tracing his post-1881 career is nearly impossible, unless more documents are found by chance. In addition, details of Harrison's private life are unclear. For example, how many years had he served in the merchant marine and where? Given his rapid advancement, his experience and authority must have been substantial. We also have no knowledge of his family life. We do not know if he was married, nor if Harrison had children. If he did have a family, this might have motivated him to pursue a career in coasting rather than engaging in the foreign trades. The impetus behind this decision and many others in seamen's lives remains unclear when Crew Agreements are one's main source of information.[57]

What *does* this documentation record about the "average" Maryport coaster

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[56]   Crew Agreements, various years.

[57]   *Ibid.*

crewman? First, Maryport crews were generally a regional and even a local workforce. Drawn primarily from the port itself, but also from its main trading partners and Cumbria, the Maryport coasterman was essentially a native, either of the east of Ireland or north west England. After the 1870s this situation began to change, possibly occasioned by wage trends. Although wages for both ABs and mates stood at well over £4 during the 1870s, they dropped to an average of just over £3 in the next decade. Mariners appear to have possessed good writing skills, only slightly below the populace as a whole. The officers as a group were almost universally literate. If they were not wholly uneducated, for the most part, neither were they youths hoping to gain experience before "graduating" to deep-sea trades. Young men were certainly present, but there was a high proportion of seamen over the age of thirty. It was fairly common to see coastermen active well into their fifties. The records give the impression that the average tar plying Maryport's coastal waters was an experienced sailor who had chosen to make it a long-term career. It is almost certain that family considerations played a role in this decision, but neither the agreements nor local folklore give much information in this regard. This notwithstanding, little serious study has been undertaken on the labour force behind Britain's vital coastal trades. The present study is in some ways a stepping stone rather than an end in itself. It sheds valuable light on a neglected group within Britain's seafaring community and the work they performed. Bearing in mind that the relationship between the working person and his job is often very close, we can now turn our attention to the voyages themselves. The next chapter will concentrate on exactly where coasters travelled and when, including the time needed to complete a voyage. This will be

combined with information on the handling of their main cargoes, coal and iron products.

Chapter 4
The "Celtic Mediterranean"

The voyages made by Maryport coasters, both along the coast of Great Britain and across the Irish Sea, should be considered within the context of the sea itself and the industry which prompted many of the trips. These facets are important since the sea's geography, including its size and weather conditions, influenced the nature of voyages, while the coal trade, in particular, made the voyages necessary. Once this context has been established we can proceed to the actual voyages, both on a general and specific level. As a first step, we should become acquainted with the sea on which the coasters traversed, a body of water referred to a century ago as "the British Mediterranean."[1]

The Irish Sea lies between 52 and 55 degrees North and 3 and 6 degrees West, running between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. Channels on its northern and southern extremities link it with the Atlantic Ocean. The southern channel, St. George's, is forty-four miles wide between St. David's Head, Pembrokeshire and Carnsore Point, Wexford, widening to fifty-four miles between Holyhead and Dublin. To the north the gap is much narrower. Only twelve miles separate the Mull of Kintyre from Antrim's Torr Head. A further nineteen miles are added from Galway to Island Magee. In this context, the Irish Sea has a length of about 180 miles, with a maximum width of 150 miles. The sea's waters have their own peculiar temperature and salinity which separate it from surrounding waters.

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[1] Michael McCaughan and John Appleby (eds.), *The Irish Sea: Aspects of Maritime History* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1986), 3. This reference to the Irish Sea was made by geographer Halford Mackinder. Lloyd Laing recently reiterated this point, but instead called the sea, perhaps more aptly, "the Celtic Mediterranean."

The Irish Sea, as the most enclosed body of water abutting the British Isles, has distinctive currents, tides, waves and wind patterns. To an extent, its enclosure protects the sea from the full force of the Atlantic Ocean. A shallow sea, its depth is generally under fifty metres, but greater depths can be found in the North Channel. The beaches, cliffs, sand-filled bays and rocky headlands which surround it give the Irish Sea its varied and scenic landscapes.[2]

To appreciate the voyages made by Maryport's coaster crews it is important to fully understand this sea, since it was here they plied their trade. As R.H. Buchanan remarks, "it is the reality of wind and tide which confronts the seaman of every age, and his assessment of prevailing conditions which ensures safe passages." The distances encompassed by the Irish Sea translate into relatively short voyages, both in distance and duration. Coastal features in the enclosed basin are often visible from the far shore. The coast itself played a large role in acting as a navigational aid for mariners, and knowing its every feature was important. Some of Buchanan's examples illustrate this point aptly. The cliffs of Kintyre can be clearly viewed across the North Channel from the coast of Antrim on a fine day. From Mt. Snaefell on the Isle on Man one can see the sea's edge at three different points: Slieve Donard is found to the east, Galloway and the Cumbrian hills lie north-west, and the Snowdon range is to the south. From the same vantage point an observer can sometimes make out the veil of cloud which sits atop the Wicklow Hills.[3]

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[2]   *Ibid.*, 1.

[3]   *Ibid.*, 1-2.

A number of features affect navigation on the Irish Sea. Tides on the sea can range from as little as two metres or less in northeast Antrim, to eight metres along the shallow Lancashire coast. This large range can present navigational hazards by concealing reefs and sandbars offshore and making the construction of harbour-works more complicated and expensive. Conversely, such works are sometimes rendered unnecessary. The tidal range allows vessels to be hauled up onto a beach during outgoing tides and refloated when tides come in. These tides are accompanied by tidal streams flowing in via the Atlantic at the north and south extremities. The northern streams, constricted between Fair Head and Kintyre, can reach speeds of up to five knots, making the shortest route across the sea among the most dangerous. As one travels south the tidal stream rapidly loses velocity, reaching its weakest point between the Isle of Man and the Irish coast at St. John's Point. St. George's Channel, three times the breadth of the North Channel, contains much more placid tidal steams, except where local conditions intervene. Nonetheless, they still affect navigation. Even with complementary winds, a day's sail south to north on the sea will be hampered by an opposing tide during part of the trip.[4]

Winds, no less than tides, are shaped by the enclosed Irish Sea. Prevailing west and southwest winds are significantly abated by the time they pass over the landmass of Ireland. The Irish Sea has its own meteorological designation: its weather is seldom as harsh as along Scotland or Ireland's Atlantic coasts. It is not that the Atlantic has no influence. While the

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[4]   *Ibid.,* 2-3.

sea is certainly not known for "light airs and tranquil waters," it is calmer than the Atlantic, allowing small vessels to make safe voyages over much of the year. The sea may have been a factor in the prevalence of coasters under 200 tons. On the Irish Sea wave heights are generally between a third and a half lower than those of Ireland's Atlantic coast.[5]

According to Buchanan, differences in patterns of wind, waves, tides and tidal streams means that the Irish Sea itself is not a uniform body of water. It should be considered an extension of smaller seas, each with its own characteristics. Of most concern to a Maryport vessel would have been the northern section, named by Buchanan "the Manx Sea."[6] Around most of the adjacent coast the Isle of Man's hills are visible and its harbours of Peel, Castletown, Douglas and Ramsey offer shelter from the most harrowing portions of the Irish Sea. To the north of the Point of Ayre is the Galloway coast. Here Luce and Wigtown's shallow bays provide contrast with the Nith and Dee's rocky inlets. The Solway is ringed with mudflats and saltings, while glacial till is found among Cumbria's older rock formations. Morecambe Bay, south of the Isle of Walney and the low coast, marks the Irish Sea's largest stretch of tidal sands, home to much bird life and shrimp. Although navigation presents a challenge, many ports are found along this stretch of coast. Lancaster, Heysham, Fleetwood and Preston all had their time in the sun, as did the greatest Lancashire port, Liverpool. Located on the Mersey's muddy estuary, its trade was founded on links to the

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[5]   *Ibid.*, 3-4.

[6]   R. H. Buchanan, "The Irish Sea: The Geographical Framework," in *ibid.*, 5.

Americas and Africa. After the Dee silted up, Liverpool became an important ferry port for
Ireland. From the 1700s on, the Irish Sea became more meaningful than ever to those who
lived on its shores.[7]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the sea acted as a vital form of
communication when transport was needed for a variety of commodities and persons. All
regions bordering the Irish Sea had something to contribute to its shipping. Slate came from
North Wales, grain and cattle from Ireland, and, of course, Cumberland and Ayrshire coal.[8]
Accompanying these cross-sea trades was traffic up and down the coasts, since bulk goods
could generally be shipped more cheaply by sea than by land.[9]

The importance of coal mining and iron extraction to the Cumbrian region extended
further back temporally than the eighteenth century.[10] Both resources were exploited in

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[7] McCaughan and Appleby (eds.), *The Irish Sea, 4-5.* There are numerous examples
of port studies in existence, although few are exclusively on coasting. See: Francis
E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: The Development of a Port, 1700-1970*
(Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971); Adrian Jarvis, *Liverpool Central
Docks 1799-1905, An Illustrated History* (Bath: Bath Press, 1991).

[8] Irish cattle provided Maryport with its most important import. The trade ensured a
year-round supply of high-quality beef. Although first moving through
Whitehaven, the cattle trade later became centred in Maryport. See J.D. Marshall
and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties From 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century*
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 64.

[9] B.R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry 1800-1914*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 30.

[10] There are many good overviews of the British iron industry during this period.
One concise volume which gives an overview, with some reference to Cumbria, is
J.R. Harris, *The British Iron Industry 1700-1850* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

Cumbria as early as the twelfth century. It was not until the mid-sixteenth century, however, that Cumbria's mineral resources were systematically exploited. At this time the Mines Royal Company began to mine copper in Newlands, Borrowdale, Caldbeck and Grasmere. By the seventeenth century coal mining grew rapidly in importance, based on west coast collieries and the trade with Ireland.[11]

Coal mining in seventeenth-century Cumbria was tied to this expanding Irish market. The export trade to Ireland originated in the early part of the century. As J.V. Beckett remarks, "[Coal mining] provided the base from which flowed all the other [economic] developments in west Cumberland." The coal trade between West Cumberland and Dublin shared a number of similarities with the contemporary Tyneside-London trade. The capital's demand for coal stimulated both primary and secondary industries in its trade partner. On a reduced scale, Dublin played a parallel role in West Cumbria. Industries using coal as a fuel prospered into the mid-eighteenth century. These included salt panning, glass manufacture and ore smelting. Merchants in Cumbria, particularly in Whitehaven, branched out into other trades such as tobacco. The productivity of such industry and trade made Cumbria an attractive place. Newly-wealthy merchants drove up the price of coal-bearing land to the point where the local magnate Sir James Lowther complained that they were "mad" to pay

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[11]   J.V. Beckett, *Coal and Tobacco: The Lowthers and the Economic Development of West Cumberland, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6.

such large amounts for small pieces of land.[12]

The land was important to men such as Lowther--indeed, such landowners fired the region's economic development. As early as the 1500s landowners began promoting agriculture and reaping the rewards of a growing coal industry. Mining contributed greatly to industrial development prior to the Industrial Revolution. Families such as the Lowthers owned mineral-rich lands and possessed the necessary capital for their exploitation. By the late seventeenth century, however, their influence on British industry was declining. Although a few large landowners continued mining into the nineteenth century, most had retired from such enterprises. For them, an income from leases was more appealing than continuing investment. West Cumbria went against this trend. The Lowthers in particular, although maintaining the facade of country gentry and absentee landlords, ran a profitable business enterprise. In this respect, agriculture, the linchpin of the country gentleman, was of only secondary importance to their collieries. By 1750 three-quarters of the Lowthers' Cumberland revenue came from the latter source.[13]

The coal trade's importance continued into the next century. Despite a stagnation of the trade after the mid-eighteenth century, coal remained central to Cumbria's economic well-being. As demand from Ireland continued to grow, Harrington, Workington, Maryport

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12   *Ibid.*, 6-7. For a time the value of tobacco to Whitehaven entrepreneurs threatened to undermine the less-profitable coal trade. The continued importance of coal to Cumbria throughout the Victorian era shows clearly that this scenario never did materialize.

13   *Ibid.*, 13.

and Whitehaven prospered. After mid-century Maryport, Harrington and Workington increased their market shares at Whitehaven's expense.[14] In the nineteenth century, output continued to increase, peaking in the third quarter. During this period, the only markets of significance for England's northwest coalfields, apart from local use--eighty-six per cent of the total in 1869--were coastwise. The bulk of exported coal went to Ireland, with the remainder travelling short distances along the British coast to Lancashire, Cheshire and the North Wales coast. The geographic boundaries encompassed by Maryport coaster voyages can be explained by reference to these coal import areas.[15]

Although iron was very important to the Cumbrian economy as a whole, coal was the focus of Maryport's trade with Ireland, accounting for a majority of its nineteenth century coastal trade. For this reason, the coal industry is more important than iron when looking at Maryport's coasting. The nearby county of Lancashire, where the districts of Furness and Cartmel now form part of Cumbria, dominated the region's coal trade. In 1869 coal mined in Lancashire and Cheshire amounted to 8.5 million tons, of which 2.5 million were used in

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[14]   The decline of Whitehaven was closely linked to the foreign trades. Spanish non-phosphoric iron ore was imported through Cumbrian ports from the 1870s in competition with local ore. The Lonsdale Dock in Whitehaven was too small to handle the large vessels carrying the ore. After 1884 the Senhouse Dock, accommodating vessels of up to 6000 tons, hastened the decline. Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 50.

[15]   McCaughan and Appleby (eds.), *The Irish Sea*, 8; Beckett, *Coal and Tobacco*, 202; Mitchell, *Economic Development*, 30. The percentage of locally-used coal in Northwest Britain includes steam transport and the iron industry, although their shares were small.

cotton mills. In that year the alkali industry used 580,000 tons of this coal and about 385,000 tons were used in British salt production. About 200,000 tons was shipped to London by rail and sea, where it was used mainly for naked flame lamps. Such shipments comprised a majority of the small export trade in north-west coal. Regarding coastwise shipments, however, Cumberland dominated. As late as the 1850s, three-quarters of the Irish Sea's coastal coal originated in Cumberland and the county at the time had no additional export markets. Twenty years later things had changed little, irrespective of the growing iron industry. It was only by the 1880s that Cumberland figures began to fall off even slightly.[16] Cumberland's coal export trade was aided by its price, 5s 6d a ton in 1882, close to the lowest in England, where the national average was 8s 3d.[17] As Marshall and Walton remarked, "Each of the Cumbrian ports except Barrow continued to find coal a vital staple in its handling trade and the Irish export remained significant well into the next century."[18] Table 4.1 illustrates the uses made of this region's coal production. Unfortunately, given the differences between coal-producing areas, Cumbria was lumped in with Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales in the original surveys. Although iron and other goods were found on Maryport-registered coasters, only coal could claim to dominate the region's trade.

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[16]   Mitchell, *Coal Industry*, 31. In fact the decline in coal exports at this time may have had a direct bearing on shipping investment in Maryport and its decline after the 1870s, although this is only speculative.

[17]   Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 52.

[18]   *Ibid.*, 53.

But what about the voyages? There are a number of primary sources from which coastal voyage information can be taken. There are shipping newspapers which carried information on vessel movements, such as times of arrival and departure from a port. These postings also included the port from which a vessel arrived, or to which it was bound. For our purposes, the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* is the most appropriate. The *Gazette* reported daily vessel entrances and clearances for British ports and reliably distinguished between foreign and coastal voyages.[19] In addition to the *Gazette*, the *British Parliamentary Papers* are also valuable, if not for actual voyages then in providing information on aggregate tonnage movements and import/export figures. The main drawback is that both sources record statistics on the basis of total vessel movements. Craft registered in the port itself are not distinguished from those registered outside. Therefore, vessel movements indicated by these sources are not specific to Maryport coasters, but encompass all shipping that used the port. This drawback notwithstanding, there is a great correspondence between these movements and the voyages undertaken solely by Maryport-registered craft. For information on these ships alone we must turn to the Crew Agreements. The documents give detailed accounts by vessel masters of their ships' movements, over six-month periods. These accounts include not only the ports of call but also length of time in port and travel times between harbours. With only rare exceptions the commodities shipped on any one voyage

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[19]   The *Gazette*'s information was sampled by taking the month of June in every fifth year as a representative sample for 1865-1910. This period was chosen because it contained the best reporting of movements prior to World War I.

can only be guessed at. Likewise, there is little in the way of detailed logs for coastal

voyages, so a picture of daily life on board is somewhat hazy. Bearing these caveats in mind,

however, a profitable study of Maryport's coastal voyages is possible.

Table 4.1
Estimated Consumption of the Output of the Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumberland and
North Wales Coal Fields by Uses. 1855-1887 (In Million Tons)

Use	1855	1869	1887
Exports (Foreign)	0.5	0.8	0.6
Coastwise*	0.9	1.1	1.5
Ironworks	0.3	0.8	0.9
Local General Manufacturing**	4.5	7.9	12.7
Local Domestic	2.6	3.6	5.1
Railways	0.1	0.2	0.3
Steamships	0.2	0.4	1.0
Collieries	0.6	1.4	1.9

Source: B. R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the Coal Industry 1800-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), 17. * Includes some coal also included under "railways" and "steamships" ** Includes gasworks and electricity works.

Records of vessel movements for the latter nineteenth century, as found in the

Shipping and Mercantile Gazette, indicate extensive contacts with the west coast of England,

as well as Irish and Scottish ports. Coasters docking at Maryport ranged from as far north as

Greenock and Glasgow and, in later years, as far south as Cardiff, Llanelly and Newport. The

nature of these trade linkages is suggested by data from the *Bills of Entry*, although from a

slightly later period. Maryport in 1910 exported 790 tons of pig iron to Port Glasgow, while

in that same year importing 1321 tons of grains, meal and corn from Liverpool. The

Liverpool example is expanded on in Burton's article. In addition to importing 5,460 tons

of pig iron directly from Maryport in 1875, vessels bound for Liverpool also loaded iron at

Maryport for coastwise re-export. Maryport imported a variety of grocery products from

Liverpool as well as pitch and resin for its shipyards and salt for its herring processors.

Indeed, trade with Maryport at mid-century helped alleviate a decline in Liverpool's foreign

trade. The movement of such goods supplemented coal and iron in maintaining a steady flow

of goods into and out of Maryport. Despite this network of trade along the west coast of

Great Britain, there is little evidence of contact with the extreme south or the east of England.

In any event, east coast linkages provided by the Maryport & Carlisle Railway and the

Newcastle & Carlisle Railway after mid-century probably made such traffic redundant.[20]

   In the late nineteenth century the bulk of Maryport's coaster traffic was employed in

the Irish trades. In 1880, for example, 26,681 tons of sail traffic cleared in the general

coasting trade. This was compared to 123,192 tons cleared in the Irish trade. According to

statistics in the *Parliamentary Papers*, this disparity is typical of the entire period. It is for

this reason that coal, being the most important trade commodity to Ireland, is so important.

As seen in the introduction, Dublin alone imported 30,000 tons of Maryport coal as late as

1910. This volume is even more impressive compared to the quantities of other products

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[20]   *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, various years; *Bills of Entry*, various years;
       Valerie Burton, "Liverpool's Mid-Nineteenth Century Coasting Trade," in Burton
       (ed.) *Liverpool Shipping, Trade and Industry* (Liverpool: Icon, 1989), 48, 51. In
       Burton's study year, 1853, seventeen Maryport-registered vessels, amounting to
       3124 tons, entered inward at Liverpool.

noted above. Among Irish destinations, the most important were Belfast, Londonderry and Dublin. Few vessels clearing from Maryport made the trip to western Ireland, perhaps also due to rail linkages, although a small number ranged as far as Lough Swilly and Sligo.[21]

The *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* provides insight into another aspect of the voyages which Crew Agreements do not--some of the differences between sail and steam deployment out of Maryport. Again, this gives a picture only of coasters using Maryport, not simply those vessels registered there. However, the ports of call and presumably the cargoes, were similar to those recorded in the agreements for Maryport coasters. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that the patterns, if not identical, were at least similar for both Maryport-registered craft and others. It should also be remembered that the breakdown between sail and steam voyages only became significant following the mid-1870s. Prior to this, the vast majority of Maryport's coastal tonnage was sail.

According to a *Gazette* sample, from the 1860s until about the turn of the century, the main destination for all vessels putting into Maryport, whether sail and steam, was Belfast. During the period 1865-70 more than fifty-two per cent of all shipping movements into and out of Maryport were bound for, or had originated in, Belfast. For the next decade and a half this figure remained above forty per cent, dropping to just over twenty-five per cent in 1890. Likewise, Dublin was an important destination for Maryport's coastal traffic however, it too declined--and more rapidly than Belfast. Of vessels sampled for the period 1865-1880, just

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[21]   *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, various years; Great Britain, House of
         Commons, *Parliamentary Papers* (BPP), various years.

over twenty per cent started or ended their voyage in Dublin. After that date, however, no vessel movements involving Maryport either originated or terminated in Dublin. Mitchell's study of the British coal industry may shed light on this trend. We know that Maryport's exports to Ireland consisted primarily of coal and that trends in this industry would affect trade. It is not surprising that at about the time vessel movements to Belfast and Dublin began to decline, in the 1880s, Cumbrian coastwise exports of coal were also contracting. From this period the Cumbrian coal export trade became stagnant. At the same time its competitors in Lancashire and Chester increased their share of the trade, exporting 2.5 million tons per annum by 1913. While Mitchell does not elaborate on why this was so, it clearly ties into the decline of Ireland's largest cities as trading partners.[22]

Of the main Irish ports Belfast in particular attracted both sail and steam vessels from Maryport.[23] Dublin was a different case, having declined as a trading partner prior to Maryport's "steam revolution." Aside from Belfast, however, the two vessel types were generally employed in different ports. This is not to imply that most ports saw only one type of craft from Maryport, but rather that there were definite preferences on where to send each kind. Sailing craft ranged more widely in search of cargoes than steamers, suggesting that

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[22]   Mitchell, *Economic Development,* 31; *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette,* various years. These figures were compiled for a previous work on Maryport. For the period 1865-90 it involved 253 vessel movements sampled during June.

[23]   This situation lasted only until 1900 after which most vessel movements in the Maryport-Dublin trade were made by steamers. This is hardly surprising as Maryport had generally switched to steam propulsion by this date. *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette,* various years.

many steamers were likely liners. The sample includes more than fifty ports of call in western Britain and Ireland. Aside from Belfast and Dublin, the most important of these, in descending order, were Dumfries, Wigtown, Portaferry, Strangford and Carrickfergus. Steamers were more restricted in their choice of ports, calling at a total of thirty-three. Again leaving aside the two main Irish ports, the "big five" for steamers were Londonderry, Liverpool, Cardiff and Newry, with Carrickfergus and Larne tied for last place. Steamer routes were even more restricted in terms of recorded movements to each port. Although seven of the main sail ports recorded more than five movements, only the top three steam ports were above this mark. As this trio, plus Belfast, were among the most developed on the Irish Sea, it underscores the argument from Chapter 2 about steamers needing better infrastructure.[24]

Concerning specific voyages by Maryport-registered shipping, this is about as far as we can go using newspaper reports. At this point the focus will shift to the Crew Agreements. As there are literally hundreds of these, they will be examined on the basis of individual voyages which were representative of larger patterns of trade. While the best way to proceed would be in chronological order, we will begin with a voyage from the 1870s. Of

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[24]   *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, various years. Recorded movements in the
         sample break down as follows: **Sail**--Dumfries 11 movements; Wigtown 9;
         Portaferry 8; Strangford 8; Carrickfergus 6; Drumore 5; Londonderry 5;
         Dongahadee 4; Seven ports with 3 each; five with 2; twenty eight with only 1
         movement. **Steam**--Londonderry 8; Liverpool 7; Cardiff 6; Newry 4;
         Carrickfergus 3; Larne 2; Glasgow 2; Whitehaven 2; twenty-three ports recording
         1 movement each. This represents not only the current sample period but the years
         1890-1910 as well. All movements were sampled from the month of June.

all the agreements examined thus far it is unique in listing the main cargoes carried on each leg of the journey. Therefore, we can be certain with which trade we are dealing—a particularly useful fact, since in this case the vessel was employed as a collier.

Table 4.2
Maryport Vessel Movements Involving Belfast and Dublin 1865-90

Year	To/From Belfast (%)	To/From Dublin (%)
1865	52.5	24.5
1870	52.8	18.2
1875	40	18.2
1880	50	25
1885	40.4	--
1890	25.8	--

Source: Shipping and Mercantile Gazette, various years. See Also David Clarke, "Maryport: A Late Coastal Switch to Steam Propulsion, 1865-1910," *Proceedings of the Steam at Sea Conference* (Hull: University of Hull Press, forthcoming).

This particular coal voyage was made during the period January to June 1871. The vessel making the trip was a fairly average Maryport coaster. Built in Molbayne in 1851, the brigantine *Farmer* had been previously registered to a Maryport owner in 1854. As was the custom in Maryport it was re-sold in 1869 to eight individual investors. Chief among these was master mariner Thomas Lowden, who captained the vessel. Among the other investors were Robert Ritson and William Ostle who owned four shares jointly. At 73.5 feet in length, the *Farmer* was registered at 108 tons.[25]

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[25]   Crew Agreement, *Farmer*, January-June 1871; BT 108, Maryport Vessel Registries,, 1869.

Nine men sailed with Lowden during the six-month period, although there were no more than five on board at any one time. The crew included about two ABs at a time and a cook who doubled as an ordinary seaman. The first mate was Fletcher Lowden, probably a relative of Thomas, although being older, certainly not his son. Both Lowdens hailed from Maryport, while the majority of their compatriots came from either Belfast or Dublin. Atypically for a Maryport coaster, the *Farmer* carried a colonial subject, Robert Smith from Nova Scotia. At the end of the voyage five men, including the Lowdens, remained aboard the vessel.[26]

The *Farmer* began her journey on 23 January 1871, clearing Belfast in ballast. After a protracted voyage of sixteen days it reached its destination, Garston. As voyages across the Irish Sea were often made in under a week, even by sail craft, this seems rather lengthy. Given the time of year, however, it may have been that, buffeted by wind and tide, the little vessel made slow progress. The stopover in Garston lasted more than six weeks, surprising considering that the port had coal drops capable of loading a ship the *Farmer*'s size, about twenty wagon-loads, in two hours.[27] A number of factors might explain this delay. Perhaps the crew were given time off to visit family while in port, although this is extremely unlikely. Shipping was profit-driven like all capitalist enterprises, and in the nineteenth century at

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[26]   *Ibid.*

[27]   In fact, according to Jarvis, *Liverpool Docks* (106), Garston's four coal drops, built by the country's largest railway company, were only nearing completion in 1876 and cannot have been used by the *Farmer* at this time.

least, placing workers' welfare over profit would have been anathema to most owners. The length of the trip itself might have been a factor in the long tie up in Garston. A trip of over two weeks across the sea in January was likely caused by severe weather. It may be that the *Farmer*'s time in port was spent not only unloading ballast and taking on coal, but also in making repairs to torn sails and damaged masts resulting from its harrowing trip. This could be more easily proven if records were made of such things, but Lowden did not do so on this occasion.[28] A third explanation is suggested by Adrian Jarvis's study of the Liverpool docks, mentioned in Chapter 2. It may be that, although such quick loading technology was available, it was reserved for foreign-going craft. As Jarvis remarks for Liverpool:

> ...the berths [coaster owners] had to use in [Liverpool] were generally allocated not on the basis of what the ships needed, discharging equipment, well-lighted capricious sheds...for example, but on what they did not need, such as great depths of water and wide entrance passages. Few of the coastal berths were rail connected, with the result that such cargo was once again at the mercy of the ubiquitous carter, to take its chance in penny lots on the congested and ill-surfaced avenues and quays...and the process was, of course, repeated in reverse when coasters arrived bringing goods for export overseas.[29]

This description of Liverpool's coaster facilities is unlikely to mirror Garston, or the *Farmer*'s other ports of call directly, but it is suggestive. If we suppose, for example, that Garston's facilities were not made available to the *Farmer*, loading would have been considerably slowed. If we assume that the discharging of ballast, presumably rocks, and the

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[28]   *Farmer*, Crew Agreement, January-June 1871.

[29]   Jarvis, *Liverpool Docks*, 125.

loading of coal was done manually, a much longer time than two hours would be needed. In fact there is evidence that in most cases some form of equipment was used to load coal on the *Farmer* after the lay-over in Garston. Following that leg of the voyage Lowden and his crew returned to Belfast with their cargo, this time taking the more normal time of three days. From there the *Farmer* sailed to Maryport and thence to Dublin, trips averaging two days. After the Garston stopover loading was more rapid, with time in port averaging only six days. When unloading its cargoes of coal, however, the average time was longer-sixteen days. This figure is inflated by one particularly long stop in Dublin that lasted over a month. Throughout the month of June the vessel traversed between Silloth, Belfast and Dublin, with two stops to unload coal taking only seven and five days.[30]

Given these figures, a number of conclusions can be drawn concerning the *Farmer's* voyages. First of all, it is apparent Lowden's voyages were expected to pay for themselves on only one leg of the journey since all trips made west to east across the Irish Sea and into Silloth were in ballast. Also, it is clear that conditions on the sea at any given time could cause considerable delays for a sailing vessel. Given the *Farmer's* log, however, the normal time would have been no more than two or three days. Finally, even with a short passage across the sea, or along the Irish coast, delays were to be expected both when loading and

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[30]   *Farmer,* Crew Agreement, 1871. For a discussion about loading/unloading
procedures in Liverpool, see Jarvis, *Liverpool Docks,* 100-116. The evidence he
presents suggests a port characterised by mismanagement and underutilised
potential. If the situation in Maryport's Irish Sea trade was anything like this, the
long delays in port by colliers are understandable.

unloading--the vessel averaged twelve days in port in the six-month period.[31]

The *Farmer*'s voyage was similar to many others made by Maryport-registered sailing coasters, even in the preceding decade. Another brigantine, the *Robert*, made a comparable set of voyages between July and December 1869. This craft, part of the Ritson fleet, had similar dimensions to the *Farmer*. Sixty-eight feet long, the vessel was about 104 register tons. During the six-month period in question, the *Robert*'s runs were exclusively between Maryport and Dublin. This six-month voyage represents many made when Dublin retained a central role in Maryport's coastwise trade. Given the pattern of trade and the Crew Agreement notation that it was "Coal & Coasting," there is little doubt as to the ship's primary cargo. Whether she returned to Maryport in ballast or with some cargo such as cattle cannot be ascertained. The vessel made eleven runs across the sea for the duration of the agreement, her average time at sea being just over two days. Like the *Farmer*, the *Robert*'s stopover times in port were fairly protracted, averaging about twelve days. There was a wide range in these times, however, from eighteen down to only five days. In almost all cases turnaround times were lower when the craft docked in Maryport. This suggests that the loading of coal was accomplished more efficiently than the discharge, possibly combined with the acquisition of new cargo or ballast.[32]

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[31] *Farmer*, Crew Agreement, 1871. There may be another explanation for turnaround times. It is possible that there were intermediate ports of call not recorded in the *Farmer*'s log. This is only speculative, however, and must remain so without corroborating evidence.

[32] *Robert*, Crew Agreement, July-December 1869.

The third and final example of a Maryport coasting voyage comes from the 1880s. Although steam was being used more frequently than previously, the run for this period will again be for a sailing coaster.[33] The focus in this case is a brig, the *Defiance*. At 244 registered tons, and with a length of 109 feet, the *Defiance* was somewhat larger than either the *Farmer* or the *Robert*.[34] The vessel had been operating out of Maryport for almost two decades, first having been registered in the port in 1864. The craft was sold again in 1874 to another Maryport owner. In each case she was purchased by a single individual. The *Defiance*'s date of construction attests to the long use life of certain vessels. Built in 1852, she was part of Maryport's "Canadian fleet," having been laid down in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The vessel's longevity further attests to the quality of vessels being produced in Atlantic Canada by the third quarter of the century.[35]

The *Defiance*'s voyage of March to June 1882 was listed in the articles as being in the "general coasting" trade. The lack of a coal designation may have related to Cumbria's slow decline, but too much should not be read into this. After all, many coasting voyages were made outside the coal trade prior to the 1880s and many in that decade continued

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[33]   The decade of the 1870s is not dealt with here, as the *Farmer*'s voyage was quite typical of those surveyed for the time. The use of a sailing vessel as an example is once again reflects the dearth of true coastal voyage agreements for steamers.

[34]   Indeed, the *Defiance*'s tonnage was larger than that used for vessels comprising Maryport's coastal fleet. It should be remembered that the vast majority of the coasters were under the 200 ton mark.

[35]   *Defiance*, Crew Agreement, January-June, 1882; BT 108, Maryport Vessel Registries.

operating under "coal and coasting" articles. If there is something definite that the *Defiance*'s voyage reflects, it is the uncertainties and delays associated with all forms of shipping. Although the vessel's articles began in January, conforming with British regulations, she did not get under way until late March. For the first three months of 1882 the craft was laid up in Troon undergoing repairs, and her date of departure was the last of the month.[36]

Once the vessel was finally under sail she departed Troon for Londonderry in Ulster and from there sailed to Ardrossan. The *Defiance* then returned to Londonderry, went back to Troon and finally sailed to Dublin, where she remained until the end of the half-year. Compared to the earlier voyages examined, the progress of the *Defiance* was by no means slow. Her trips averaged just under two days, with the range being from one to three days at sea. This was probably not hindered by the original date of sailing, which missed the months of January and February altogether. The vessel's turnaround time in port was also good at about two weeks and two days. The longest stay was twenty-four days; the shortest was ten. These fairly short times might be accounted for by the cargoes carried by the vessel. Unlike the previous cases, however, there is no evidence as to what she carried on any particular leg of the voyage. This voyage was made at the twilight of the *Defiance*'s career, as she was "sold to be broken up" in 1885.[37]

These voyages represent a good picture of what voyages undertaken by Maryport

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[36]   *Defiance*, Crew Agreement, January-June, 1882.

[37]   *Ibid.*

coasters from the 1860s to 1880s would have looked like, especially the cross-sea trades which dominated Maryport coasting. Over the entire period, in fact, the ports of call, the time needed to reach them, and turnaround times remained fairly static--again excepting steam traffic. The picture emerging from these voyages is one of fairly secure and stable markets for products like coal and a trade which was in no hurry to change. Voyages form the last major component of Maryport's coastal trade to be examined. As such, we conclude with a summation of the role of the town as a coasting port.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

Maryport's period as a coasting port began in the eighteenth century. It was based on the coal industry that had spurred the town's early growth. By the mid-nineteenth century Maryport's home county, Cumberland, was host to an iron ore export traffic which further expanded trade. By 1870 Maryport entered and cleared almost 300,000 tons of coastal shipping, and this figure remained above the 200,000-ton mark until the First World War. In 1870 Maryport ranked eleventh of eighty-three British coasting ports in terms of vessel movements and tonnage. Coastal tonnage entering and clearing for the year amounted to more than a quarter-million tons. This compared to the port's foreign and colonial trade of only 14,689 tons.[1]

The introductory chapter addressed the question of *why* Maryport merits study, and focused particularly on the dearth of available material on British coasting ports. The figures associated with the industry, as restated above, provide further justification for closely examining this portion of Maryport's shipping.

In chapter 2 we saw that Maryport's coastal fleet in the period 1855-1889 was comprised largely of brigs and brigantines of under 200 register tons, although there were a small number of vessels over this tonnage mark, including a few schooners. Taking the small brigs and brigantines as a measure, Maryport's sailing coaster fleet averaged about 1,346 tons

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[1]   L. A. Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth-Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 21, 92; Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers (BPP), *Annual Statement of Navigation and Shipping*, 1872 and 1890.

per annum, counting newly-registered craft minus those going off registry.[2]

These little craft proved successful for three decades after mid-century. By the late 1800s, however, steam technology began a wholesale replacement of sail. Nonetheless, Maryport's sailing fleet lasted well into the age of coastal steam—indeed, almost into the days of turbines and diesels. For this reason the port's sailing fleet should be counted a successful, if not altogether innovative, component of British coasting.

Those who invested in such capital tended almost exclusively to reside in or near Maryport. Apart from Maryport itself, which always accounted for more than two-thirds of the port's shipowners, investors only appeared in numbers from nearby towns such as Whitehaven and Workington. In terms of occupations these men and women were less similar, representing over thirty professions, including shipowners. Although many shares were owned by those in marine-related industries, such as master mariners and shipbuilders, there were also investors listed as butchers, gentlemen and painters. Almost invariably these latter investors were tenants-in-common with maritime owners, who presumably had more experience with seaward industry.[3]

Once a vessel was engaged for Maryport's coasting trade it had to be manned. Like the owners themselves, crews were generally from Maryport, its hinterland, or major coastal

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[2]   Maryport Vessel Registries. BT 108, Maryport Vessel Registries, various years. There were a number of reasons vessels might go off registry, including being lost, scrapped, or sold to new owners.

[3]   *Ibid.*

trading partners, as we saw in chapter 3. They performed a variety of roles on board ship, from master through the skilled seamen known as ABs, down to lowly apprentices, preparing for a career at sea. Most men were fairly mature, especially compared to the typical image of the young, rowdy tar engendered by blue-ocean trades. The officers--masters and mates-- tended to be the oldest crewmen, as might be expected. However, even when considering all other ranks, including boys and apprentices, about half were above the age of thirty, with a fair proportion above fifty.[4]

Another important point regarding these coastermen concerns their level of education. Although largely working class, their literacy rates were comparable to levels for the population in general. It is unclear if literacy aided promotion or resulted in higher pay in the Maryport context but it at least demonstrates that these mariners were not a less-literate part of the proletariat. This challenges the popular image of "Jack" as representing the dregs of society.[5]

The voyages undertaken by these men are also informative, as we demonstrated in chapter 4. From the mid-nineteenth century on, there was extensive coastwise contact with western England and Scotland and the east coast of Ireland. The Irish trade, dominated by coal, accounted for the bulk of these voyages, the most important destinations being Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry. The sailing fleet ranged over more than fifty ports of call in

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[4]   Crew Agreements, various years.

[5]   *Ibid.*

western Great Britain and Ireland. The most frequent trading partners, after the "big three" Irish ports, were Dumfries, Wigtown, Portaferry, and Carrickfergus.[6]

Voyages across the Irish Sea generally took less than a week, but might last more than two, depending on weather conditions and the time of year. Stopovers in port were fairly lengthy. This may be accounted for by a lack of infrastructure, especially in small ports like Wigtown and Dumfries, or it may be that the best facilities, even when available, were allocated by a system of preference that put coasters at the very bottom.[7]

These facts give only a partial view of life on the Maryport coaster. This study has relied primarily on official documents. These tell much about the town's coastal trade in bureaucratic terms, but in some cases are less forthcoming about the human side of affairs. For this reason it may be fitting to conclude with an anecdote recounted by a local Maryport writer, Annie Robinson. Although not as informative statistically as official records, it does reveal the personal side of coasting. Robinson's story is worthwhile for a number of reasons. First, it touches on the Irish coal trade, the most important component of Maryport coasting. The tale also gives a sense of the economic importance of the trade to Maryport and its implications in this regard. Finally, it illustrates the peril for those who chose to make a living on the coasters and the financial risks involved in owning the vessels.

The drama began on the last day of March 1859. On that day a large contingent of

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[6]   *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, various years.

[7]   Adrian Jarvis, *Liverpool Central Docks: 1799-1905 an Illustrated History* (Bath: Bath Press, 1991), 125; Crew Agreements, various years.

vessels departed Maryport for Ireland, laden with coal. Among their number were the the *Ann* and the *Dove*. The fleet was caught unaware by an early spring storm, although most vessels managed to make harbour safely. Of the *Ann* and the *Dove*, however, there was no word. On 12 April news of the worst finally reached Maryport when another vessel spotted the masts of a submerged craft, which was confirmed as the *Ann*, captained by Thomas Lowden.[8] Of the *Dove*, however, no trace was ever found; it was assumed that she foundered with all hands. No survivors were located from either vessel.[9]

The weather during these months caused even greater distress for Maryport in financial terms. As conditions had been especially severe since Christmas, many of Maryport's coasters had been unable to make their usual coal runs. It was reported that much of the town's shipping became stranded on the Irish side of the sea. As a direct consequence, Maryport's trade temporarily stagnated as colliers remained unusable. At the same time local shopkeepers, dependent on seaborne provisions, were hard pressed to keep their shelves stocked.[10] The little coasters which ranged forth from the town were an important link in Maryport's economy. As with most ports, the great volume of trade they handled has been

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[8]   As a point of interest, a coaster named the *Ann* was included as part of this survey, but its records are from the 1870s. It is not clear if the vessel were refloated, or if this was simply another craft using a common name. It is also noteworthy that a Thomas Lowden was one of the masters mentioned in the preceding chapter, although at a later date. Perhaps the two namesakes were related, possibly even father and son.

[9]   Annie Robinson, *Maritime Maryport* (Whitehaven: George Todd, 1978), 23.

[10]   *Ibid.*

largely forgotten. Their contribution to the port's, and ultimately to Britain's, economic well-being is something that this thesis has attempted to both recognize and celebrate.

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