

BRITISH MERCHANT TRAINING POLICY – A CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

During the 12th century, English master craftsmen were uniting together to form craft guilds, such as the weavers' guild, and, in order to become qualified as a member of any guild, a trainee had to serve time as an apprentice to a master. Formal references to apprentices can be found in early 13th century statutes of the City of London, and, by the end of that century, there was a considerable body of law and custom regulating apprenticeship.

It is not possible to be precise as to when boys started to be indentured as apprentices in the sea service, but several seamen's guilds existed in the 15th century, and from then until the beginning of the 20th century the growth in British shipping was such that the demand for seamen frequently outstripped the supply. It is equally not possible to lay down simple reasons why boys went to sea as apprentices. Whilst there is no doubt that in the days of sail most apprentices came from backgrounds in which poverty and criminality were the driving forces behind the decision to send them to sea, the allure of a sea-going life should never be understated. Many a boy with a sense of adventure was undoubtedly attracted to the prospect of making a fortune in the mercantile marine, and he was deaf to any reasoned arguments against such a course of action. After all, it is not at all difficult to understand how a boy, who was already an apprentice in a shore-side trade connected with ships and the sea, could be beguiled by the colourful and, no doubt, tall stories told by the sailors of the day!

Nevertheless, in a chronicle such as this it is important to remain focused on what successive British Governments did to improve the standards of training for those who aspired to be officers in the British Mercantile Marine. The sad truth is that it was not until 1845 that a British Government faced up to the need for nationally defined standards of competence for officers in the Merchant Service – and thus, by implication, for the proper education and training of apprentices. Coincidentally, it is interesting to note that at this time those responsible for the Royal Navy were also coming to terms with the fact that its future success depended upon the introduction of a form of continuous service and not with the press gang, which hitherto had been the main instrument of "recruitment" for the Royal Navy.

Although the following chronology will show that Acts of Parliament with respect to Mercantile Marine apprentices were passed prior to 1845, there is little doubt that these were mainly concerned with sending large numbers of poor and often troublesome boys to sea so as to ensure that the Mercantile Marine would be able to provide the press gangs with a sufficient number of trained seamen whenever the Royal Navy went to war. Those Acts certainly did nothing to discourage Mercantile Marine ship owners and masters from treating their apprentices as cheap alternatives to either Ordinary or Able Seamen, and owners and masters who were committed to training apprentices to officer standard were very rare indeed.

Appendix 1 contains a bibliography.

CHRONOLOGY

1562

An Acte towching dyvers Orders for Artificers Laborers Servantes of Husbandrye and Apprentises, 1562 (5 Eliz. 1., c. 4)

This Act may well have been the first attempt to consolidate laws and statutes with regard to the employment of craftsmen, labourers, farm workers and apprentices. Although this Act made reference to an “Apprentice with any Fisherman or Maryner haunting the Seas”, it did not specifically stipulate the length of time that an apprentice should serve at sea. However, with regard to trade apprentices in cities, this Act stipulated that the length of an apprentice’s indentured service must be at least seven years and that the apprentice must continue his indentured service until at least the age of twenty-four.

It is interesting to note that apprentices in the sailing colliers that operated between the River Tyne and the River Thames typically served a seven-year apprenticeship, after which they were not even accepted for employment as Able Seamen until they had passed an examination in seamanship conducted by experienced collier men.

1674

The Stepney Society

The Stepney Society was formed in 1674, and its aim was to apprentice poor boys of London, and especially from the parish of Stepney, to shipwrights, sailmakers, watermen and others who were engaged in marine trades. It also clothed some boys for service on the King's ships.

1703

An Act for the Encrease of Seamen and better Encouragement of Navigation and Security of the Coal Trade, 1703 (2 & 3 Ann., c. 6)

This Act became effective on 25th March 1704, and it is worth quoting the first few lines of the "Reasons for passing this Act":

"Whereas the giving due Encouragement to such of the Youth of this Kingdome as shall voluntarily betake themselves to the Sea Service and Practice of Navigation and obliging others who by reason of their owne or their Parents Poverty are destitute of Employment or any lawfull Means whereby to mainteine themselves may greatly tend to the Increase of able and experienced Mariners and Seamen for the Service of Her Majesties Royall Navy and for the carrying on the Trade and Commerce of this Kingdom Be it therefore enacted..."

From this text it can be seen that the Government was keen to send poor or destitute boys to sea and that the needs of the Royal Navy took priority over those of the Mercantile Marine. This is a theme that was repeated in many later Acts.

This Act went on to stipulate that, for example, "Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poore" could, with the consent of certain officials such as Justices of the Peace or Mayors, bind boys, who had reached the age of ten and who were "chargeable to the respective Parish", to be "Apprentices to the Sea Service to any of Her Majesties Subjects being Masters or Owners of any Shipp or Vessell used in the Sea Service and belonging to any Port or Ports within the Kingdom of England Dominion of Wales or Towne of Berwick upon Tweed" until those boys reached the age of twenty-one.

Here then was a simple way of disposing of poor and, probably, troublesome boys who were a drain on Parish funds; furthermore, ship owners received a steady stream of cheap labour from the Parishes; and, finally, the Royal Navy benefited by having a pool of trained seamen to call upon in time of war.

With regard to impressment into the Royal Navy, this Act apparently treated boys who had been sent to sea as apprentices by the Parish differently from boys who had volunteered to be apprentices. Whilst both were free from the clutches of the press gangs until they reached the age of eighteen, the latter were also free from impressment for three years from the beginning of the period of their indentures. In either case, the Royal Navy would have been sure of impressing boys with a reasonably sound knowledge of the sea.

It is also worth quoting the “Rules for Number of Apprentices to be taken by Masters of Ships according to Tonnage”:

“And for the better providing such Apprentice with Masters for the said Service be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid That all and every of Her Majesties Subjects being Masters or Owners of any Shipp or Shippes Vessell or Vessells used in the Sea Service as aforesaid of the Burthen of Thirty Tun to the Burthen of Fifty Tun be obliged to take One such Apprentice and One more for the next Fifty Tun and One more for each and every Hundred Tun such Ship or Vessell shall exceed the Burthen of One hundred Tun and such Master or Owner of any Ship or Vessell refusing to take such Apprentice or Apprentices as aforesaid shall forfeit the Sume of Ten Pounds for the Use of the Poor of the Parish from whence such Boy was bound Apprentice.”

Finally, it is interesting to note that this Act empowered certain officials, such as Justices of the Peace or Mayors, to “inquire into and examine hear and determine all Complaints of hard or ill Usage from the severall and respective Masters to such their Apprentice and Apprentices”. However, it is unlikely that any apprentice would have had the courage to so complain.

1797

An Act for preventing the Desertion of Seamen from *British* Merchant Ships trading to His Majesty’s Colonies and Plantations in the *West Indies*, 1797 (37, Geo. III, c. 73)

This Act, which came into effect on 1st July 1797, stipulated:

“That all and every Master and Masters of any Merchant Ship or Merchant Ships trading to His Majesty’s Colonies and Plantations in the *West Indies*, shall have on Board his or their Ship or Ships at the Time of such Ship or Ships clearing out from *Great Britain*, One Apprentice, who shall be under the age of Seventeen Years, duly indented for Three Years, for every One hundred Tons Admeasurement of such Ship or Ships, and so in Proportion for every One hundred Tons which such Ship or Ships shall admeasure, according to the Certificate of Registry, and the Indenture or Indentures of every such Apprentice shall be duly enrolled at the Custom House of the Port from whence any such Ship shall clear out, with the Collector or Comptroller, within One Month after the Date or Execution thereof; which said Apprentice and Apprentices shall be, and is and are hereby exempt from serving in His Majesty’s Navy for the Space of Three Years from the Date of such Indenture or Indentures;”

As can be seen from its title, this Act was an attempt to overcome the problem of desertion. At that time, disease killed many seamen in the West Indies with the result that those who were healthy were frequently encouraged to jump ship on the promise of better wages – particularly from masters of privateers. The requirement to carry apprentices, who were protected from impressment, may well have been an attempt to increase “recruitment” into the Mercantile Marine and thus, in the longer term, to increase the size of the pool of trained seamen available for impressment when required into the Royal Navy.

1823

An Act for regulating the Number of Apprentices to be taken on board *British* Merchant Vessels; and for preventing the Desertion of Seamen therefrom, 1823 (4, Geo. IV, c. 25)

This Act came into effect on 1st January 1824, and it stipulated that:

“all and every Master and Masters of any Merchant Ship or Merchant Ships, exceeding the Burthen of Eighty Tons, shall have on board his or their Ship or Ships, at the Time of such Ship or Ships clearing out from any Port of the United Kingdom called *Great Britain*, One Apprentice or Apprentices, in the following Proportion to the Number of Tons of her Admeasurement, according to the Certificate of Registry; that is to say, For every Ship or Vessel exceeding Eighty Tons and under Two hundred Tons, One Apprentice at least; for every Ship or Vessel of Two hundred Tons and under Four hundred Tons, Two Apprentices at least; for every Ship or Vessel of Four hundred Tons and under Five hundred Tons, Three Apprentices at least; for every Ship or Vessel of Five hundred Tons and under Seven hundred Tons, Four Apprentices at least; for every Ship or Vessel of Seven hundred Tons and upwards, Five Apprentices at least; who shall, at the Period of being indentured, respectively be under the Age of Seventeen

Years: Provided that every Apprentice so to be employed on board any Ship or Vessel, as above described, shall be duly indented for at least Four Years; and the Indenture or Indentures of every such Apprentice shall be duly enrolled with the Collector and Comptroller at the Custom-house of the Port from whence any such Ship or Vessel shall first clear out after the Execution of such Indenture or Indentures.”

This Act also stipulated that:

“every Apprentice so enrolled shall be and is hereby exempted from serving in His Majesty’s Navy, until he shall have attained the Age of Twenty-one Years, provided he is regularly serving his Time either with his first Master or Ship-owner, or some other Master or Ship-owner to whom his Indentures shall have been regularly transferred;”

It is interesting to see that this Act, which replaced the West Indies Act of 1797 (37, Geo. III, c. 73) with regard to the carriage of apprentices, was intended for worldwide application. Whilst fewer apprentices were required under the new formula, the period of indentured service was increased by at least one year, and, furthermore, each apprentice was immune from impressment for at least one more year. With worldwide application, the overall effect would have been to increase the number of apprentices in the Mercantile Marine – all of whom would have had a longer period to be trained as seamen before becoming liable for impressment.

Note:

A copy of the original Act is available for download on this web site.

1835

An Act to amend and consolidate the Laws relating to the Merchant Seamen of the United Kingdom, and for forming and maintaining a Register of all the Men engaged in that Service, 1835 (5 and 6, Will. IV, c. 19)

This Act came into effect on 31st July 1835, and with regard to parish boys being sent to sea as apprentices, it stipulated that:

“whereas the giving due Encouragement to such of the Youth of the United Kingdom as shall voluntarily betake themselves to the Sea Service, and obliging others to do so who by reason of their own or their Parents Poverty are destitute of the Means of

obtaining Subsistence and Employment, will not only greatly tend to the Increase of able and experienced Seamen, as well for the Service of the Royal Navy as for carrying on the Commerce of His Majesty's Subjects, but will likewise provide them with Employment, and thus materially diminish the Burthen of Expence cast upon Parishes by their Maintenance; be it therefore enacted, That it shall be lawful for the Overseers of the Poor or other Persons having the Authority of Overseers of the Poor of any Parish, Township, or Place in the United Kingdom, or in whom the Duty of Overseers or Guardians of the Poor shall or may be vested, and they are hereby empowered, to bind by Indenture and put out any Boy having attained the Age of Thirteen Years, and of sufficient Health and Strength, who or whose Parent or Parents is or are chargeable to or maintained by any such Parish or Township, or who shall beg for Alms therein, with his Consent but not otherwise, an Apprentice in the Sea Service to any of His Majesty's Subjects being the Master or Owner of any Ship registered in any Port of the United Kingdom, for so long Time and until such Boys shall respectively attain the Age of Twenty-one Years, which Binding shall be as effectual in the Law to all Intents and Purposes as if such Boy had been bound by virtue of any Statute now in force respecting the binding of Parish Apprentices, or as if such Boy were of full Age and had bound himself an Apprentice, and notwithstanding the Residence of the Master or Owner to whom he may be bound shall be more than Forty Miles distant from such Parish or Place: Provided always, that every such Binding shall be made in the Presence of Two Justices of the Peace acting for the County, Riding, Division, City, Borough, or Place within which such Parish or Township shall be situate, which Justices shall execute the Indenture in Testimony of their having been satisfied that such Boy hath attained the Age and is of sufficient Health and Strength as required by this Act;"

This text reveals three interesting developments since the Act of Queen Anne in 1703 (2 & 3 Ann., c. 6) enabled parishes to send boys to sea:

Firstly, the lower age limit was raised from ten to thirteen.

Secondly, the boys had to be of sufficient health and strength – thereby preventing parishes from dumping sickly boys onto the Mercantile Marine.

Finally, the boys had to give their consent – although it is hard to believe that any would have had the courage to withhold it.

Nevertheless, the next paragraph of this Act enabled parishes to open up a new source of apprentices for sea service by stipulating that:

“it shall be lawful for any Master or Person to whom any poor Parish Apprentice shall have been or shall be hereafter bound to a Service on Shore according to the Statutes already in force relating to such Apprentices, or for the Executors or Administrators, or, there being none such, for the Widow of any such deceased Master, with the Concurrence of Two or more Justices of the Peace residing in or near to the Place where such poor Boy shall have been bound Apprentice, to assign and turn over such poor Boy, with his Consent but not otherwise, Apprentice to any Master or Owner of any ship not having her Complement of Apprentices as herein-after required, to be employed by such Master or Owner in the Sea Service during the Period then remaining unexpired of his Apprenticeship.”

As it would have been extremely unlikely that a Master of a shore-based trade would have wished to lose any good apprentices, it can only be assumed that this was a convenient way of disposing of the bad ones, and it is hard to believe that any such boy would also have had the courage to withhold his consent.

The number of apprentices required by this Act to be carried in proportion to the tonnage remained the same as that passed by George IV in 1823 (4, Geo. IV, c. 25).

A major step forward heralded by this Act was the establishment of “The General Register Office of Merchant Seamen” in the Port of London, which was tasked with maintaining a central register of all the mariners and seafaring men of the United Kingdom. In order to achieve this, the Act made it compulsory for Masters and Owners to submit crew lists and other details regarding their vessels to specified officials and at specified times. For example, the indentures of both parish and voluntary apprentices to the sea service had to be registered. When the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir James Graham, proposed the establishment of a compulsory central register he intended to use it to replace impressment, which had become a completely discredited form of “recruitment”. He argued that, if there were not enough volunteers to man the ships of the Royal Navy in time of conflict, then a ballot of registered seamen would be taken to make up the shortfall. However, when passed, this Act remained silent on the subject of either the ballot or of impressment.

Finally, this Act retained the right of apprentices to complain of hard and ill usage by their Masters, but it also introduced the right of Masters to complain about misbehaviour on the part of their apprentices, and it is worth quoting the relevant text:

“any two or more Justices of the Peace residing at or near to any Port at which any Ship as aforesaid, having on board thereof any Sea Apprentice, shall at any Time arrive, shall have full Power and Authority to inquire into and examine, hear and determine, all

Claims of Apprentices upon their Masters under their Indentures, and all Complaints of hard or ill Usage exercised by their respective Masters towards any such their Apprentices, or of Misbehaviour on the Part of any such Apprentice, and to make such Orders therein as they are empowered by Law to do in other Cases between Masters and Apprentices.”

The addition of the right of Masters to take action against apprentices who misbehaved no doubt reflected the increasing dislike by both Masters and Owners of the compulsory apprenticeship system, which was primarily used by parishes to get rid of unwanted boys.

1844

An Act to amend and consolidate the Laws relating to Merchant Seamen; and for keeping a Register of Seamen, 1844 (7 and 8, Vict., c. 112)

This Act came into effect on 1st January 1845, and it introduced the requirement for every seaman and apprentice to be in possession of a “Register Ticket”, although, in the case of apprentices, this “Ticket” had to be “annexed to the original Indenture”. This Act also stipulated that no Master could employ a seaman who did not produce his “Ticket”. The intent of these requirements was to ensure that the central register held by the Registrar of “The General Register Office of Merchant Seamen” provided a true and reasonably up-to-date record of the number of British seamen and apprentices employed in the British Mercantile Marine.

As regards Parish Boys being “put out Apprentices to the Sea Service”, this Act differed from the previous Act of William IV in 1835 (5 and 6, Will. IV, c. 19) in several ways of which the following are of significance:

Firstly, the minimum age before a boy could be indentured was reduced from thirteen to twelve years.

Secondly, the length of the indenture was for seven years or attainment of an age of twenty-one – whichever occurred first.

Finally, for the first time in an Act, specific forms of indenture were laid out in Schedules to this Act.

It is worth noting that the “Form of Parish Apprentice’s Indenture” specifically included the following conditions:

Firstly, that the boy gave “his own free Will and Consent” to become an “Apprentice in the Sea Service”.

Secondly, that he [and his parents if applicable] was [were] chargeable to and maintained by the Parish.

Thirdly, that the person to whom the boy was bound as apprentice – be it the ship’s Master or Owner – would “teach, learn and instruct”, or cause to be “taught, learned and instructed”, the apprentice in the “Art, Trade, or Business of a Mariner or Seaman.....in the best Way and Manner that he or they can; and shall and will find, provide, and allow unto the said Apprentice competent and sufficient Meat and Drink, Apparel, Lodging, Washing, Medicine, Medical and Surgical Aid and Advice, and all other Things necessary and fit for an Apprentice”.

Fourthly, that the apprentice would not be a charge to the Parish in any way.

Finally, that the Parish was indemnified for the period of the indenture.

As regards boys who volunteered to be apprentices in the sea service, the “Form of Apprentice’s Indenture” differed in the following significant respects from that provided for parish boys:

Firstly, there were obviously no references to parishes and their responsibilities, liabilities, etc.

Secondly, this form actually made reference to the possibility that the apprentice might be “impressed”.

Finally, there was no specific reference to the term of the apprenticeship, although the main body of this Act stipulated that no apprentice should serve past the age of twenty-one.

Significantly, neither form of indenture contained any specific undertaking to train the apprentice to be an officer. Nevertheless, this Act stipulated “that every Person (Apprentices excepted) who shall be employed or engaged to serve in any Capacity on board the same shall be deemed and taken to be a Seaman”. There is little evidence to suggest however that Masters at this time treated apprentices as anything other than deck hands, and, if apprentices learnt anything about how to behave as an officer, it was most likely to be through observation and not through any direct instruction from the Master or his officers.

The number of apprentices required by this Act to be carried in proportion to the tonnage remained the same as that passed by George IV in 1823 (4, Geo. IV, c. 25).

Finally, this Act retained the right of apprentices to complain of hard and ill usage by their Masters as well as the Masters right to complain about misbehaviour on the part of their apprentices.

1845

The First Legislation Defining Standards of Competence for Officers in the Merchant Service

For the first time in British history, the Government, by Order-in-Council dated 19th August 1845, faced up to the need for nationally defined standards of competence for officers in the Merchant Service – and thus, by implication, the need for education and training. Nevertheless, this particular piece of legislation was limited in its application to those who volunteered to be examined for certificates of competency as either Master or Mate. At that time, the Board of Trade was not equipped to carry out such examinations on a national scale, and so it delegated responsibility for this to the following local organisations:

The Corporation of Trinity House.

The Sub-Commissioners of Pilots at Gloucester, Milford, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Yarmouth.

Hull Trinity House.

Newcastle Trinity House.

Leith Trinity House.

Glasgow Pilotage Board.

Dublin Ballast Board.

Liverpool Pilotage Commissioners.

Whilst the curriculum of the subjects for examination was prescribed nationally, the manner of the examination was decided at local level.

Certificates for Master and Mate were subdivided into three classes – first, second and third – such that the first and second class certificates related to foreign going vessels and the third class related to short coastal voyages of home trade vessels.

1849

An Act to amend the Laws in force for the Encouragement of *British* Shipping and Navigation, 1849 (12 and 13, Vict., c. 29)

This Act came into effect on 1st January 1850. In repealing what are often referred to as the “Navigation Acts”, it abolished the compulsory carriage of apprentices in British owned merchant ships.

1850

An Act for improving the Condition of Masters, Mates, and Seamen, and maintaining Discipline in the Merchant Service, 1850 (13 and 14, Vict., c. 93)

Faced with mounting evidence for the need for more regulation with regard to the standards of competence of officers in the Merchant Service and emboldened by the modest success of the voluntary examinations introduced in 1845, the Government passed this Act on 14th August 1850. Its Short Title was “The Mercantile Marine Act, 1850”, and it came into force on various dates depending upon the subject matter.

In its list of definitions, this Act stipulated that: “The Word Seaman shall include every Person (except Masters and Apprentices duly indentured and registered) employed or engaged to serve in any Capacity on board any Ship”.

With regard to the supervision of the British Mercantile Marine, this Act stipulated, among other things, that:

- The Board of Trade was to be responsible for the general superintendence of matters relating to the British Mercantile Marine.
- The Board of Trade was empowered to establish Local Marine Boards at certain Seaports, which were to be answerable to it for putting this Act into effect.
- Membership of a Local Marine Board was to comprise persons nominated by the Board of Trade as well as persons elected by the owners of “Foreign-going Ships” registered at the Seaport, all of whom were to serve for specified periods of time.

- Each Local Marine Board was to establish and regulate a Shipping Office at its Seaport under the management of a Shipping Master whose general business was to afford facilities for engaging seamen.
- Any functions or powers relating to seamen or apprentices not employed in Her Majesty's Service, which were vested in or exercised by the Lord High Admiral or the Commissioners for executing his Office, could, with his or their consent, be transferred to and exercised by the Board of Trade.
- The Board of Trade was to take over responsibility for the "General Register and Record Office for Seamen" from the Lord High Admiral or the Commissioners for executing his Office.
- The Board of Trade could, with the concurrence of the Lord High Admiral or the Commissioners for executing his Office, dispense with the laws relating to the requirement for every seaman and apprentice to be in possession of a "Register Ticket".

The qualifications of Masters and Mates were dealt with in some detail by this Act, and the following points are worthy of note:

- For the first time in British History, it was compulsory for Masters and Mates of foreign-going ships to be in possession of a valid "Certificate of Competency".
- The Board of Trade was responsible for the overall conduct of the examinations for the certificates of competency.
- The Local Marine Boards were responsible to the Board of Trade for the day-to-day management of the examinations for the certificates of competency.
- The Examiners appointed by the Local Marine Boards were required to possess certificates of qualification granted by the Board of Trade and to adhere to the general plan of examination instituted by it.
- Those who had passed the voluntary examinations introduced by Order-in-Council dated 19th August 1845 would be issued with the relevant Certificate of Competency without further examination.

- Those who had before 1st January 1851 served as Masters or Mates in the British Merchant Service or those who had attained, or might attain, specified ranks or positions in either the Royal Navy or the East India Company were entitled to “Certificates of Service”.
- The Board of Trade was empowered to cancel or suspend the certificate of any holder found guilty of specified misdemeanors.
- Copies of all certificates were to be held by the Registrar of Seamen.

Thus this Act brought about a major change from voluntary and locally controlled examinations to compulsory examinations taken locally but subject to a form of central government quality control.

With regard to the national standard being set, a Board of Trade Circular issued in the same year as this Act stated:

“The qualifications have been kept as low as possible; but it must be distinctly understood that it is the intention of the Board of Trade to raise the standard from time to time, whenever, as no doubt will be the case, the general attainments of officers in the Merchant Service shall render it possible to do so without inconvenience.”

It is interesting to note that the newly formed Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade was not funded to provide any financial assistance to help candidates study for the now compulsory Masters and Mates Certificates of Competency.

1853

An Act to make better Provision concerning the Entry and Service of Seamen, and otherwise to amend the Laws concerning Her Majesty’s Navy. 1853 (16 and 17, Vict., c. 69)

This Act was passed on 15th August 1853, and it introduced a series of measures designed to encourage men to commit to continuous and general service in the Royal Navy for a period of ten years. Thus, for the first time in its history, the Royal Navy became a standing navy, and impressment effectively came to an end. However, this Act stipulated that:

“Any Proclamation of Her Majesty, Her Heirs or Successors, calling for the Services of seafaring Men, either during the Time of Peace or War, shall, at the Pleasure of Her Majesty, Her Heirs or Successors, apply to all seafaring Men, or be restricted to any particular Class or Classes of seafaring Men, either according to their Ages, the Numbers of their Register Tickets, or otherwise; and every such restricted Proclamation shall be as valid and effectual in Law as any such Proclamation calling for the Services of all seafaring Men, and as to the Men within such Class or Classes shall and may be enforced accordingly.”

Nevertheless, the Government, by this Act, had consigned the press gangs to history.

The Department of Science and Art

The Department of Science and Art was created in 1853, and it was placed under the control of the Board of Trade. This Department was given the responsibility for providing encouragement and support for schools teaching navigation. It did this by granting funds towards the training of teachers, their salaries and their training aids and by inspecting the schools and assessing the quality of instruction.

1854

An Act to amend and consolidate the Acts relating to Merchant Shipping. 1854 (17 and 18, Vict., c. 104)

This Act, whose short title was “The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854”, came into effect on 1st May 1855; it was two hundred and twenty-two pages long, and it comprised eleven parts.

The Third Part of this Act – relating to “Masters and Seamen” – extended the requirements of the Mercantile Marine Act, 1850 (13 and 14, Vict., c. 93) so as to introduce compulsory examinations for Certificates of Competency for Masters and Mates of Home Trade passenger ships.

1856

Transfer of the Department of Science and Art

In 1856, this Department was transferred from the Board of Trade to the newly created Education Department, but responsibility for supervising the standards of the shore-based navigation schools remained with the Board of Trade.

1862

An Act to amend “The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854,” “The Merchant Shipping Act Amendment Act, 1855,” and “The Customs Consolidation Act, 1853.” 1862 (25 and 26, Vict., c. 63)

This Act, whose short title was “The Merchant Shipping Act Amendment Act, 1862”, extended the requirements of The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854 (17 and 18, Vict., c. 104) so as to introduce compulsory examinations for Certificates of Competency for Engineers, and it stated that:

“On and after the First Day of *June* One thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, every Steam Ship which is required by the Principal Act [The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854 (17 and 18, Vict., c. 104)] to have a Master possessing a Certificate from the Board of Trade shall also have an Engineer or Engineers possessing a Certificate or Certificates from the Board of Trade as follows; that is to say,

- (1.) Engineers Certificates shall be of Two Grades, viz., “First-class Engineers Certificates,” and “Second-class Engineers Certificates:
- (2.) Every Foreign-going Steam Ship of One hundred nominal Horse Power or upwards shall have as its First and Second Engineers Two Certificated Engineers, the first possessing a “First-class Engineers Certificate,” and the second possessing a “Second-class Engineers Certificate” or a Certificate of the higher Grade:
- (3.) Every Foreign-going Steam Ship of less than One hundred nominal Horse Power shall have as its only or First Engineer an Engineer possessing a “Second-class Engineer’s Certificate” or a Certificate of the higher Grade:
- (4.) Every Sea-going Home Trade Passenger Steam Ship shall have as its only or First Engineer an Engineer possessing a “Second-class Engineer’s Certificate” or a Certificate of the higher Grade:

- (5.) Every Person who, having been engaged to serve in any of the above Capacities in any such Steam Ship aforesaid, goes to Sea in that Capacity without being at the Time entitled to and possessed of such Certificate as is required by this Section, and every Person who employs any Person in any of the above Capacities in such Ship without ascertaining that he is at the Time entitled to and possessed of such Certificate as is required by this Section, shall for each such Offence incur a Penalty not exceeding Fifty Pounds.”

1863

Official Criticism of Navigation Schools

In 1863, the Department of Art and Science’s Inspector for Science observed that the vast majority of Navigation Schools seemed to focus entirely on cramming to pass the Board of Trade Certificate of Competency examinations, and that, as a result, these schools had failed to teach navigation subjects to any great depth.

1864

Financial Support for Navigation Schools

With effect from 1st January 1864, the Department of Art and Science introduced a financial support system for Navigation Schools based upon payment by results. However, in this case, the “results” were tied to the syllabus and examination structure approved by that Department. As these examinations were of no professional benefit to mariners – i.e., they were not Board of Trade Certificate of Competency examinations – it is hardly surprising that few mariners showed any interest in them, and that the number of Navigation Schools receiving financial support from the Department of Art and Science thus went into a steady decline. At the end of the day, mariners had one simple educational objective – to pass the Board of Trade Certificate of Competency examinations – and it would appear that the Government was unwilling to establish a national education and training system that was designed to assist them.

1879

Criticism of the English Training System

In 1879, Lieutenant Commander Chadwick, of the United States Navy, reported to Washington on the English training system in the following words:

“The great defect of the mercantile training systems now in use in England is that too many of the vessels are mere reformatories which send into the Service boys with bad antecedents. Too great a supply of such boys tends to cast a stain upon the profession and cause it to be looked upon as a refuge for the destitute, worthless and vagabond class. The great aim ought to be to elevate it as a reputable calling; to make men to think and feel that it is as respectable as any other manual labour, the general thought and feeling of parents being that for a boy to go to sea is to go entirely to the bad. This latter feeling is, of course strengthened in the Service itself, where too many of a depraved class are sent from reformatory institutions and houses of refuge. The aim ought rather to be to attract volunteers to the training ships, and not, as in too many cases in England, require that the boy should be a pauper before he can have the advantages and facilities offered by these vessels.”

He was, almost certainly, referring to those School Ships that had been established as a result of the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Acts, of 1854 and 1866, to provide a corrective environment for those who were regarded as social outcasts with the aim of giving them the opportunity to make something of their lives. Whilst these schools were not set up with the intention of providing recruits for the Merchant Service, it was inevitable that many boys who were sent to these schools would end up as merchant seamen, and it was equally inevitable that they would then have an impact upon the volunteer apprentice whose aim it was to become an officer.

1894

An Act to consolidate Enactments relating to Merchant Shipping. 1894 (57 and 58, Vict., c. 60)

This Act, whose short title was “The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894”, ran to two hundred and ninety-one pages, and it was, as its full title shows, a major exercise in consolidating merchant shipping legislation. It came into effect on 1st January 1895.

Part II – “Masters and Seamen” – stipulated that:

“92.–(1.) Every British foreign-going ship and every British home trade passenger ship, when going to sea from any place in the United Kingdom, and every foreign steamship carrying passengers between places in the United Kingdom, shall be provided with officers duly certificated under this Act according to the following scale:–

(a) In any case with a duly certificated master:

(b) If the ship is of one hundred tons burden or upwards, with at least one officer besides the master holding a certificate not lower than that of only mate in the case of a foreign-going ship, or of mate in the case of a home trade passenger ship:

(c) If the ship is a foreign-going ship, and carries more than one mate, with at least the first and second mate duly certificated:

(d) If the ship is a foreign-going steamship of one hundred nominal horse-power or upwards, with at least two engineers, one of whom shall be a first-class and the other a first-class or second-class engineer duly certificated:

(e) If the ship is a foreign-going steamship of less than one hundred nominal horse-power, or a sea-going home trade passenger steamship, with at least one engineer who is a first-class or second-class engineer duly certificated.

(2.) If any person–

(a) having been engaged as one of the above-mentioned officers goes to sea as such officer without being duly certificated; or

(b) employs a person as an officer, in contravention of this section, without ascertaining that the person so serving is duly certificated,

that person shall be liable for each offence to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds:

(3.) An officer shall not be deemed duly certificated, within the meaning of this section, unless he is the holder for the time being of a valid certificate of competency under this Act of a grade appropriate to his station in the ship, or of a higher grade.

93.–(1.) Certificates of competency shall be granted, in accordance with this Act, for each of the following grades; (that is to say,)

Master of a foreign-going ship:

First mate of a foreign-going ship:

Second mate of a foreign-going ship:

Only mate of a foreign-going ship:

Master of a home trade passenger ship:

Mate of a home trade passenger ship:

First-class engineer:

Second-class engineer.

(2.) A certificate of competency for a foreign-going ship shall be deemed to be of a higher grade than the corresponding certificate for a home trade passenger ship, and shall entitle the lawful holder thereof to go to sea in the corresponding grade in the last mentioned ship; but a certificate for a home trade passenger ship shall not entitle the holder to go to sea as master or mate of a foreign-going ship.

94.-(1.) For the purpose of granting certificates of competency as masters, or mates, to persons desirous of obtaining the same, examinations shall be held by Local Marine Boards at their respective ports.

(2.) The Board of Trade may make rules which shall be strictly adhered to by the examiners for—

(a) the conduct of the examinations; and

(b) the qualification of the applicants:

and may depute any of their officers to attend and assist at any examination.

(3.) The approval of the Board of Trade shall be necessary so far as regards the number and the remuneration of the examiners, and an examiner shall not be appointed, unless he holds a certificate of qualification to be from time to time granted or renewed by the Board of Trade.

(4.) The Board of Trade may, if it appears to them that the examination for two or more ports can be held without inconvenience by the same examiners, provide that the examination be so held, and require the Local Marine Boards of those ports to act as one board for the purpose of the examination.

(5.) Subject to the powers of the Board of Trade under this section the Local Marine Board may appoint, remove, and re-appoint examiners, and regulate the conduct of the examinations, and any member of the Local Marine Board may be present at and assist at the examinations held by that Board.

95. Where the business of a mercantile marine office is conducted otherwise than under a Local Marine Board, the Board of Trade may exercise all such powers and make all such provisions for the holding of examinations as may be exercised and made by a Local Marine Board.

96.-(1.) For the purpose of granting certificates of competency as engineers to persons desirous of obtaining the same, examinations shall be held at such places as the Board of Trade direct.

(2.) The Board of Trade may appoint times for the examinations, and may appoint, remove, and re-appoint examiners to conduct the same, and determine the remuneration of those examiners, and may regulate the conduct of the examinations and the qualification of the applicants and may do all such acts and things as they think expedient for the purpose of the examinations.”

Model Form of Indenture

The model form of indenture issued by the Board of Trade at this time included a phrase that required the Master to teach the apprentice navigation and seamanship and the business of a seaman and of a ship's officer. This was quite a step forward as, hitherto, apprentices had generally been regarded as nothing more than a cheaper alternative to Ordinary or Able Seamen, and that whether or not they aspired to be able to navigate and to be officers was of no concern of the Master.

1901

The Shipping Federation Establishes an Apprenticeship Department

In 1901, the Shipping Federation, which was formally constituted on 2nd September 1890, established an apprenticeship department at its chief office. This department concentrated upon the recruitment and selection of apprentices who desired to become certificated navigating officers.

1914

An Act to amend the Law relating to Examinations for Certificates of Competency. 1914 (4 and 5 Geo. V, c. 42)

This Act, whose short title was "The Merchant Shipping (Certificates) Act, 1914", was passed on 10th August 1914, and it stipulated that:

"1.–(1) For the purpose of granting certificates of competency as masters or mates to persons desirous of obtaining such certificates, examinations shall be held at such places as the Board of Trade direct.

(2) The Board of Trade may appoint times for the examinations, and may appoint, remove, and reappoint examiners to conduct the examinations, and determine the remuneration of those examiners, and may regulate the conduct of the examinations and the qualification of the applicants, and may do all such acts and things as they think expedient for the purpose of the examinations.

(3) Sections ninety-four and ninety-five of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, are hereby repealed."

Thus Local Marine Boards no longer had a role to play with regard to examinations for certificates of competency, and, instead, the Board of Trade alone had complete responsibility for ensuring that there was a uniform national standard of examination.

1927

A Review of the Examination System

In 1927, the Board of Trade appointed a Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman, “to consider the present system under which candidates for certificates as master or mate on merchant ships are examined by the Board of Trade, and to advise whether any, and, if so, what alterations are required in the system under which the examinations are conducted, or in the subjects in which the candidates are examined.”

1931

Changes to the Certification System

As a result of recommendations made by the Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman’s committee, which was set up in 1927, changes to the certification system were introduced on 1st January 1931. The “square-rig” and “Only Mate” certificates were abolished – resulting in the following certificate structure:

Certificates for Foreign-Going Ships:

- (1) Second Mate: Candidates to be not less than twenty years old and to have served four years at sea in foreign-going ships, or six years in home-trade ships.
- (2) First Mate: Candidates to be not less than twenty-one and a half years old and to have served five and a half years at sea in foreign-going ships or eight and a quarter years in home-trade ships. In addition, service as an officer of one and a half years in a foreign-going ship (lowest capacity, third of three watch-keeping officers), or two and a quarter years in a home trade ship as First or Only Mate.

- (3) Master or Extra Master: Candidates to be not less than twenty-three years old and to have served seven years at sea in foreign-going ships, or ten and a half years in home-trade ships – service being subject to special restrictions.

Certificates for Home Trade Passenger Ships:

- (1) Mate: Candidates to be not less than twenty years old and to have served four years at sea in home trade or foreign-going ships.
- (2) Master: Candidates to be not less than twenty-three years old and to have served five years at sea in home trade or foreign-going ships. In addition, service as an officer, while possessing a Mate's certificate (home trade) or Second Mate's certificate (foreign-going), of one year in home trade ships as Only Mate or two and a half years in home trade ships as Second Mate in charge of a watch.

The syllabuses were also modified and amplified, and the marking system was revised.

Defining an Apprentice

A report by the Sub-Committees of the Seafarers' Education Service on Apprentices and Ships' Boys in April 1931, defined the word "apprentice" as an inclusive term descriptive of boys who go to sea with the stated object of becoming officers in the Merchant Service. It is useful to bear this definition in mind when faced with frequent use of the terms "cadet" and "midshipman" in the context of an "apprentice".

1935

Establishment of the Central Board for the Training of Officers for the Merchant Service

As a result of an initiative by the Shipping Federation, the "Central Board for the Training of Officers for the Merchant Service" was established in 1935. Its aim was to "establish a training scheme for navigating officer apprentices and cadets which would, so far as possible, compensate for the advantages by way of technical colleges and day and evening classes which are available to those in shore professions and employment". The three main elements of the scheme were to provide:

- (1) A detailed standard syllabus of training and instruction covering the whole period of apprenticeship.
- (2) Periodical reports by the Master on the apprentice's conduct and progress.
- (3) An annual examination on board ship to test progress and accustom the apprentice to the technique of answering examination papers.

Membership of the "Central Board for the Training of Officers for the Merchant Service" included representatives from: the Shipping Industry, Boards of Education, the Board of Trade, relevant professional societies and other educational interests.

1942

The Merchant Navy Training Board

The success of the "training scheme for navigating officer apprentices and cadets", set up by the "Central Board for the Training of Officers for the Merchant Service" in 1935, was such that it was extended to cover the training of deck ratings as well as engine-room, stokehold and catering personnel. As a consequence, the Board changed its name in 1942 to the more appropriate "Merchant Navy Training Board".

Note:

A copy of an "Apprentices' Handbook" on the "Training of Officers" – containing a "Syllabus of Instruction with Notes for use of Apprentices" – issued by the "Merchant Navy Officers' Training Board" is available for download on this web site.

1950

Success of the Merchant Navy Training Board

In its diamond jubilee year, 1950, the Shipping Federation was able to claim that:

“more than 93% of the total number of apprentices and cadets are under the scheme [i.e. that administered by the Merchant Navy Training Board]. Owners pay an annual fee for each apprentice or cadet and this finance is supplemented by grants from the Ministry of Education and from the [Shipping] Federation.”

1952

Training of Engineer Officers for the Merchant Navy

In April 1952 the Ministry of Transport issued Merchant Shipping Notice No. M.361, which contained the following information regarding the introduction of an alternative training scheme for those wishing to become engineer officers in the Merchant Navy:

“Following consultations between the Ministry of Transport, the organisations representing shipowners and engineer officers in the Merchant Navy, and other interested parties, approval has been given by the Ministry to a new scheme for training engineer officers for the Merchant Navy, and a number of shipping companies are proposing to adopt it.

The scheme will embrace, firstly, a two-year Ordinary National Diploma course in mechanical engineering at an approved technical college, with additional practical training during vacations, followed by a period of 18 months’ service as an apprentice engineer at sea, and finally a period of 12 months’ special training in a shipyard or marine engine builders’ or other suitable engineering works. This scheme will be regarded as an alternative to the standard period of four years’ suitable training in engineering works which is required under the Ministry’s regulations for the examinations for certificates of competency as Engineer.

Candidates must have reached the age of 16, and must have had full-time education up to the age of 16 and have shown proficiency in mathematics and physics or, alternatively, must have had a full-time education up to 15 followed by at least a years’ part-time education at an approved technical college qualifying for admission to the first year of the Ordinary National Diploma course.

The National Diploma courses will begin annually in September, but intending candidates should apply to shipping companies as soon as possible.

The names and addresses of shipping companies who have adopted the scheme can be ascertained from any office of the Shipping Federation, the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool, the Engineer Officers' Organisations, Youth Employment Office, or Ministry of Transport Mercantile Marine Office."

It is important to note that this was an Alternative Training Scheme (ATS) and that it was still perfectly acceptable for candidates for the Second Class Certificate of Competency as a Marine Engineer to follow what had been the traditional route of serving a minimum of four years as an apprentice engineer or journeyman "on work suitable for the training of a marine engineer in the manufacture or maintenance of machinery". Irrespective of whether the candidate chose the traditional or the ATS route, he was still required to complete a period of twenty-one months sea service as an engineer before becoming eligible for the Second Class Certificate of Competency as a Marine Engineer.

1957

Requirement for a Certificate of Proficiency as Radar Observer in Merchant Ships

The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation declared that: "No candidate for a Certificate of Competency as Second Mate (foreign-going) or Mate (home-trade) who passes any part of his examination on or after 1st June 1957, will be issued with his certificate unless or until he produces a Certificate of Proficiency as Radar Observer in Merchant Ships in a form approved by the Ministry. Subject to an overall maximum of twelve months' remission, a maximum period of one week will be allowed to count as qualifying sea service in respect of attendance at an approved radar observer course."

It is worth noting here that "Radar Observer Courses for Navigators" had been introduced as long ago as 1948 – i.e. nine years before a Certificate of Proficiency as Radar Observer in Merchant Ships finally became mandatory!

1958

The Revised (1958) Edition of the Regulations for the Examination of Masters and Mates

This Revised Edition stated the following with regard to age and sea-time requirements for Second Mate (foreign-going):

“Second Mate (foreign-going). A candidate must be not less than 20 years of age and must have served four years at sea on foreign-going ships;

Apprentices. The *whole* of the time claimed under indentures of apprenticeship will be accepted as actual sea service provided (a) that the indentures have not been cancelled through some fault of the candidate, but are endorsed by the Owner or Master to whom he was bound to the effect that he has performed his service faithfully during the time he remained as apprentice; and (b) that the candidate has served at sea four-fifths of the time claimed, that is to say, he has not spent more than one-fifth of the time in home ports.

In cases where an apprentice is qualified for examination before the expiration of his indentures, e.g. where he has had training ship or other sea service prior to being bound, which, together with his actual time as apprentice, makes up the required four years, or where his indentures are for a period of more than four years, a letter from the Owner or Master will be accepted in place of the endorsement referred to above.

Midshipmen and Cadets. The *whole* of the time served as midshipman or cadet under indentures will be accepted subject to the *same* conditions as those laid down for apprentices. Similar considerations apply even when the candidate is not bound by indentures, provided that the service as midshipman or cadet has been continuous, that on the date of the termination of the period of service claimed in this capacity the candidate was on articles or attending at a recognised sea school and that he can comply with the requirements of the Regulations in serving or making up the four-fifths period at sea during the time claimed.

Training Ships. One half the time served after the age of 14 on board an approved training ship will be allowed to count as qualifying sea service, provided that the candidate can produce a satisfactory certificate from the appropriate Committee or Captain Superintendent testifying to his good conduct and proficiency up to the time of leaving the ship, subject to a given limit in the case of each training ship and to the condition that the total remission of sea service in respect of attendance at training ships and approved schools shall never exceed twelve months. Training ship service will not be regarded as equivalent to service in square-rigged vessels.

Approved training ships qualifying for remission of sea service:

H.M.S. “Worcester”, T.S. “Mercury” and T.S. “Dufferin” – half time to count up to a maximum of twelve months.

T.S. "Arethusa" – half time to count up to a maximum of six months.

Shore Schools for nautical training. Time spent after the age of 14 at a school for nautical training conducted on premises ashore may be allowed to count in some proportion as service at sea provided that:

- (a) The school is recognised under the appropriate Regulations by the Department of Education concerned;
- (b) After an inspection by one of his officers the Minister is satisfied that the school gives a training that justifies time spent there being reckoned as part of the necessary qualifying time for a certificate of competency; and
- (c) The candidate produces a satisfactory certificate as regards conduct and proficiency from the authorities of the school on leaving it.

The schools to which these arrangements may apply are of three kinds:

- (i) Schools at which a boy resides and receives training for a period of years: or courses of not less than one academic year, in navigation and seamanship, after the age of 16 at nautical residential training colleges. The maximum remission of sea service that will be allowed in respect of attendance at such a school will be fixed at the time of approval; it will never exceed twelve months.
- (ii) Courses in navigation and seamanship at junior technical schools or similar non-residential institutions, which boys attend before going to sea; the maximum remission of sea service in these cases will be fixed at the time of approval; it will never exceed six months.
- (iii) Senior courses in navigation at technical or other similar non-residential schools which candidates attend after completing the whole or the larger part of the service required to qualify for examination for a Second Mate's certificate or for a Mate's (home trade) certificate; the maximum remission of sea service in these cases will be fixed at the time of approval; it will never exceed three months.

In the case of schools of classes (i) and (ii), the certificate must show whether or not he has completed the course.

In the case of schools of classes (ii) and (iii), the certificates which the candidate produces (paragraph (c) above) must in addition testify to the candidate's continuous and regular attendance at all the approved classes, and also, in the case of schools of class (iii), must state the total number of hours during which he has attended at the school.

A candidate who, at different times, has attended two or more approved schools of nautical training will be allowed a remission of sea service in respect of attendance at each of them, subject to the condition that the total remission of sea service in respect of attendance at approved schools and training ships will never exceed 12 months.

Approved residential schools on shore qualifying for remission of sea service under class (i) above:

Gordonstoun School, H.M.S. "Conway", Nautical College Pangbourne and General Botha South African Nautical College – half time to count up to a maximum of twelve months.

Reardon Smith Nautical College and Indefatigable and National Sea Training School for Boys – half time to count up to a maximum of six months.

School of Navigation, University of Southampton, Warsash – full time to count up to a maximum of nine months.

Approved cadet course at technical schools qualifying for remission of sea service under class (ii) above:

Robert Gordon's Technical College, City of Belfast College of Technology, Welsh College of Advanced Technology, Dundee Technical College, Fleetwood Navigation School, Kingston-upon-Hull High School for Nautical Training, Kingston-upon-Hull Nautical College, Hull Trinity House Navigation Schools, Glasgow Royal College of Science and Technology, Watt Memorial School, Leith Nautical College, City of Liverpool College of Technology, King Edward VII Nautical College*, London Nautical School, Plymouth and Devonport Technical College, South Shields Marine and Technical College and Lews Castle College – half time to count in each case up to a maximum allowance of six months. (* An additional two weeks is allowed for each term in residence at the college)

Approved senior courses in navigation qualifying for remission of sea service under class (iii) above:

Robert Gordon's Technical College, Auckland School of Navigation New Zealand, City of Belfast College, Bombay Nautical and Engineering College, Bristol College of Technology, Welsh College of Advanced Technology, Dundee Technical College, Fleetwood Navigation School, Glasgow Royal College of Science and Technology, Watt Memorial School, Kingston-upon-Hull Nautical College, Hull Trinity House Navigation Schools, Leith Nautical College, Liverpool Technical College, King Edward VII Nautical College, Plymouth and Devonport Technical College, University of Southampton School of Navigation, South Shields Marine and Technical College and Wellington School of Navigation New Zealand – half time to count in each case up to a maximum allowance of three months.”

1962

Sea Service Remission for Mid-Apprenticeship Courses and for Persons with Higher Academic Qualifications

Chapter IV – “Rules for Estimating Sea Service” – of the Revised (1962) Edition of the Regulations for the Examination of Masters and Mates included the following with regard to “Mid-apprenticeships courses” and “Persons with higher academic qualifications”:

“52A. Mid-apprenticeship courses. Time spent by a deck apprentice or cadet (whether indentured or unindentured) at a fully residential course ashore at approximately the middle of his apprenticeship, may attract a remission of sea time equal to the full period of residence, up to a maximum of six months, provided that the total remission of sea service shall not exceed 18 months. To qualify for a remission, the course must be recognised by the Ministry.”

“53A. Persons with higher academic qualifications. A remission of nine months sea service will be granted to candidates who have obtained the qualifications listed at one of sub-paragraphs (a) (b) (c) and (d) below, provided that the candidate was in receipt of full-time education up to the date of gaining the qualifications.

(a) Passes in at least five subjects in the General Certificate of Education, of which two, including either mathematics or physics, must be at advanced level.

(b) A Scottish Leaving Certificate (or from 1962 onwards, a Scottish Certificate of Education) with passes in at least five subjects, of which three should be of the Higher grade; one of the Higher grade passes must be either in mathematics or in science (which must include physics).

(c) Passes in at least five subjects in the Northern Ireland Grammar School Senior Certificate Examination, of which two, including either mathematics or physics, must be at advanced level.

(d) Other qualifications which are accepted by the Ministry as being at least equal to (a) (b) or (c) above.

A candidate who wishes to obtain remission under this paragraph should forward evidence of his academic achievements, together with a certificate from his Headmaster that he was in receipt of fulltime education up to the date of gaining the qualifications, to the Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates, Ministry of Transport, St. Christopher House, Southwark Street, S.E.1, preferably before going to sea. The Principal Examiner will then issue him with a statement certifying that he is entitled to this remission.”

Note:

It is more than likely that these two additional forms of sea service remission were introduced in 1960, but the author of this chronicle has been unable to find original documentary proof to substantiate this. However the first Mid-apprenticeship course began at the Navigation School at Plymouth in September 1960, and the author of this chronicle obtained nine months remission of sea service in accordance with sub-paragraph 53A(a) above just prior to starting his apprenticeship with The New Zealand Shipping Company on *Rakaia* in August 1961.

Examination of Second Mates (Foreign Going) and Mates (Home Trade)

In October 1962 the Ministry of Transport issued Merchant Shipping Notice No. M.471, which contained the following information regarding qualifying sea service:

“Regulations for the Examination of Masters and Mates (Exn. 1) have been revised so that apprentices, cadets and midshipmen will, subject to complying with other requirements, be able to sit the examination for a Certificate of Competency as Second Mate (foreign-going) or Mate (home trade) as soon as they have completed their qualifying service on board ship. Furthermore, such candidates will now be required to serve three-quarters of the nominal period on board ship, subject to a minimum period on board ship of twenty-two and a half months, instead of being required to serve for four-fifths of the nominal period on board ship away from home ports. Those who complete their qualifying service before reaching the age of twenty will be able to sit the examination as soon as they are nineteen and a half, but will not be issued with their certificates until they have attained the age of twenty.

The revision will come into force on 1st January, 1963, and will apply to all indentures dated, and to all unindentured cadets and midshipmen whose sea service started, on or after 1st April, 1959. In the case of cadets, apprentices or midshipmen whose indentures are dated, or whose sea service started, between 1st January, 1959 and 31st March, 1959 the revised Regulations will apply except that four-fifths will be substituted for three-quarters.”

Note:

A copy of Merchant Shipping Notice No. M.471 is available for download on this web site.

1964

The British Shipping Federation

The Shipping Federation was renamed the British Shipping Federation in 1964.

1975

The General Council of British Shipping

The British Shipping Federation merged with the Chamber of Shipping, in 1975, to form the General Council of British Shipping.

1977

The Merchant Shipping (Certification of Deck Officers) Regulations 1977

The Merchant Shipping (Certification of Deck Officers) Regulations 1977, which were published as Statutory Instrument No. 1152 in 1977, introduced an entirely new classification of Deck Officer Certificates of Competency.

Table 1 of these Regulations is reproduced below to show the comparison between the new and old classification of certificates of competency. Column 1 of this table lists the certificates of competency as defined in the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, and Column 2 lists the equivalent certificates of competency as defined by the new Regulations:

Column 1	Column 2
<i>Class of 1894 certificate</i>	<i>Equivalent class of certificate of competency issued under these Regulations</i>
Master Foreign Going	Class 1 (Master Mariner)
First Mate Foreign Going	Class 2
Second Mate Foreign Going	Class 3
Master Home Trade	<p>Class 1 (or any lower class with a command endorsement issued under these Regulations) in any passenger ship, and in any other ship not exceeding 10,000 GRT, going between locations in the Near Continental trading area; or</p> <p>Class 4 or class 5 in any ship going to, from or between locations in the combined Middle Trade and Unlimited trading areas</p>
Mate Home Trade	<p>Class 2, 4 or 5 in any passenger ship, and in any other ship not exceeding 10,000 GRT, going between locations in the Near Continental trading area; or</p> <p>Class 4 or class 5 in any ship going to, from or between locations in the combined Middle Trade and Unlimited trading areas</p>

Table 1 (Statutory Instrument No. 1152,1977)

Statutory Instrument No. 1152, 1977, stipulated that these Regulations “shall come into operation on 1st September 1981”.

A new Standard Scheme of Training for the attainment of a Class 3 Certificate of Competency

With the introduction of the Class 3, 4 and 5 Certificates of Competency came a new “standard scheme of training” to achieve them. This scheme of training took the form of a “sandwich type course”, which was based upon an ONC or OND in Nautical Science, and it inevitably spelt the end of the traditional apprenticeship route to becoming a Deck Officer in the Merchant Navy.

The standard scheme of training comprised the following elements:

- A two-week induction course;

- A period of sea service of about nine months;

- The first period of study at a shore-side college for the ONC or OND lasting between 18 or 26 weeks;

- A period of sea service of about twelve months;

- The second period of study at a shore-side college for the ONC or OND lasting between 18 or 26 weeks;

There were several important conditions attached to this scheme of training:

Firstly, the students attending the college phases for both the ONC and OND courses in Nautical Science had to live in residential accommodation under proper supervision by College staff and participate fully in organised extra-curricula activities. Failure to adhere to this condition would mean that these college phases would not be eligible for full remission of sea service.

Secondly, the students had to complete a period of planned training at sea of not less than twenty months. Proof of planned training at sea would normally take the form of a Merchant Navy Training Board Deck Cadet’s Record Book – duly completed by the Masters and officers of the ships in which sea service was performed. Failure to produce satisfactory evidence of planned training at sea when making application for examination for a certificate of competency upon completion of the ONC or OND course would entail the performance of such additional period of satisfactory sea service as the Department of Trade might specify before admission to the examination was granted.

Thirdly, continuity of academic studies had to be maintained during the considerable interval between college phases. Colleges had to maintain regular contact with students during the sea period and encourage them to develop their studies by means of suitable guided study in cultural as well as vocational subjects. Important features of these guided study programmes were projects that helped to show the practical applications of topics studied and to integrate the various subjects of the ONC or OND course.

Having passed the ONC or OND in Nautical Science the student would be entitled to exemption from a substantial part of the written examination for a Class 3 certificate of competency.

Nevertheless, before becoming eligible for a Class 3 certificate of competency, a candidate who had undergone the standard scheme of training as a cadet or trainee deck officer would still have to meet the following additional requirements:

A candidate must be not less than twenty years of age.

A candidate must have served at sea in ordinary trading vessels for three years – bearing in mind that remission of a maximum of twelve months could be claimed for attendance at approved courses of training such as the ONC and OND in Nautical Science.

At least six months of the final twelve months' sea service must have been spent on duties associated with bridge watchkeeping under the supervision of a certificated officer.

Thus a candidate for the Class 3 certificate of competency would normally spend a period of some months at sea after the second period of college training.

Candidates with certain passes in GCE 'O' and 'A' levels were eligible for reductions in college time to achieve the ONC or OND. However the minimum requirement for three years sea service remained.

The years following the introduction of the standard training scheme saw changes in both the sea time requirements and the types of approved courses that attracted remission of sea service, but the essential "sandwich" course style of the overall training scheme remained.

It is quite clear that the fundamental change from an apprenticeship scheme, which included some form of training regime whilst the apprentice was at sea, to a “sandwich” course, which included extended periods at college, was an attempt to attract people to a career as a deck officer who would otherwise have followed the college/university route to a shore-based career.

1982

The British Shipping Careers Service

This Service came to an end in 1982.

CONCLUSION

For several hundred years successive British governments seemed to be more interested in using the Mercantile Marine as a suitable receptacle for disposing of boys who were poor, ill-educated and often guilty of breaking the law. By making these boys apprentices in the sea service, governments achieved at least two positive results: firstly, these boys ceased to be a drain on Parish resources, and, secondly, they helped to swell the pool of trained seamen that could be “pressed” into service in the Royal Navy in time of war. This remained the status quo during the greater part of the period when Britannia most certainly ruled the waves.

Then, in the mid-nineteenth century, the tide at last began to turn towards legislation designed to remove the threat of impressment, to abolish the compulsory carriage of apprentices and to improve the competence of officers in the Merchant Service. Nevertheless, it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that real progress was made with regard to the development of a national training scheme for navigating officer apprentices and cadets. By then, decisions were being made in government, which would lead to the steady decline of the British Merchant Navy – a decline that would become terminal in the second half of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, much more effort was being made to improve the lot of the sea apprentice and to encourage academically capable young men to view a career at sea as an alternative to a career ashore. Indeed, by 1981, the traditional apprenticeship route to

becoming a deck officer had been replaced by a “sandwich” course system that was not that far removed from training schemes for talented young men seeking careers in shore-based industry.

Thus, on the one hand, successive British governments did little to prevent the demise of a once great British Merchant Navy, whilst, on the other hand, they introduced a succession of measures to encourage young men to go to sea to become Merchant Navy Officers – a tragic state of affairs.

I would greatly appreciate any suggestions with regard to corrections and additions to this chronicle.

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