

Mariners letters as signs of literacy

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Video seminar

Welcome to today's seminar. My name is Colin Greenstreet and I am the co-director of the Signs of Literacy initiative, which I run with Dr Mark Hailwood, a social historian, who is a lecturer at Bristol University.

I am also the founder of the MarineLives project, which has been running now for seven years. MarineLives looks at the lives of mariners within the period 1580 to 1680, with a focus on commerce, materials, language and correspondence.

The topic of today's seminar is **“Mariners’ Letters as Signs of Literacy?”**

I will start by giving a forty minute paper on this topic, leaving twenty minutes for discussion. The slides I am using to accompany the paper will be made publicly available after the seminar.

The paper will concentrate on letters and other written documents produced and read by mariners in commercial ships and will not deal with naval matters.

Did mariners write letters? And if they did, where are they?

So why aren't historians searching for and using these mariners' letters?

George Oxenden's correspondence with mariners

Letters received by Sir George Oxenden from mariners and mariner's widows, 1662-1667. Twenty-six in total.

[20th March 1661/62, Letter from Sir William Rider to Charles Conyers](#)

[22th March, 1661/62, Letter from Wm Rider, Nic Hurlestone, Briab \[?\] Hassison \[??\], Edm. \[OR Edw: Johnson \[?John , Swanley to Sir GO, Trinity House](#)

[24th March 1661/62, Letter from William Ryder to Sir GO](#)

[14th January 1662/63, Letter from Arnold Browne to Sir GO, Shipp Dunkirke Roade of Angedeiva](#)

[23rd February 1662/63, Letter from Ann Townesend alias Nicholls to Sir GO, London](#)

[20th March 1662/63, Letter from Peter Cooze to Sir GO, Ratcliff](#)

[24th March 1662/63, Letter from William Rider to Sir GO, London](#)

[25th March 1663, Letter from Nicholas Hurlestone to Sir GO, Redriss](#)

[26th March 1663, Letter from George Smith & William Rider, London](#)

[26th March 1663, Letter from George Smith & William Rider, London, Letter 2](#)

[26th March 1663, Letter from William Rider to Sir GO, London](#)

[March 1662/63, Letter from Peter Cooze to Sir GO](#)

[25th September 1663, Letter from Nicholas Millett, Loyall Merchant, Surat Road](#)

[16th December 1663, Letter from Nicholas Millett to Sir GO, the Loyal Merchant](#)

[3rd January 1665/66, Letter from William Ryder to Sir GO, Bethnall Green](#)

[March 1665/66, Letter from William Rider & George Smith](#)

[March 1665/66, Letter from William Rider to Sir GO](#)

[14th April 1667, Letter from Nicholas Millett to Sir GO](#)

[14th April 1667, Letter from Robert Bowen to Sir GO, Pladsto](#)

[16th April 1667, Letter from William Rider to Sir GO, London](#)

[22nd August 1667, Letter from William Ryder to Sir GO, Bethnal Green](#)

[October 1667, Letter from Robert Bowen to Sir GO](#)

[3rd October 1667, Letter from Robert Bowen to Sir GO, London](#)

[October 1667, Letter from William Ryder to Sir GO](#)

[7th October 1667, Letter from John Privett to Sir GO, Gun Yard, Houndsitch](#)

[15th October 1667, Letter from William Ryder to Sir GO, London](#)

Letter from Captain Peter Cooze, mariner and former master of the *Livorno ffrigot* [March 1663]

Worshipfull Sir George Oxinden

My most humble service presented to you with my prayers to God for your good health as I am in joye with my wife and mother at present who desires to bee kindly remembered to you;

Sir after many troubles, I shall acquaint you of the *Livorne ffrigot* that shee could not be recovered the reason was that the Spaniards ware against it for theire selfe ends; we did send most of the belonging to the Shipp to the vallue of £500 but the charges did eate the better part of it what remained I brought hoame to the valew of two hundred & [?] pounds which I have bought of the owners one consideration that I have payed the marriners 6 months wadges, which was two hundred pounds and 60 pounds which the shipp was indebted to me by accountt in the voyadge so that which was saved of the shipp hath floated the above sums no w the ffreight which I rceivvd at [Livorne](#) from Roushea was – 2997 dolbles besides we had 20 tonn dead ffreight which they under writt to lade at 24 dolbles the tonn; which is Dollbes 490 which now wee are in sute of law for it, I have acquainted Madam Dallyson withall, Sir that is all concerning the *Livorne*;

Now I have a small ffrigot upon the stocks, now of a 120 tonns. I could wish when shee is fitted that I weare in India with her that I could serve you, pray Sir if you have merchants in England of your acquaintance, to write theire good words for mee heere; Sir I have gained great disgust from Mr Love and Mr Briton which I do not much vallew, for I have not testified any thing but what I know upon oath and I hope that your cause will prove them what they are;

Sir I have not more to acquaint you at present I committ you to God who is all sufficient to give you health of soule and body and rest your humble servant

Peeter Cooze

My kinde love to Mr Master and Mr Gibin and the rest of my good ffreinds

Letter from Captain Peter Cooze, mariner and former master of the *Livorno ffrigot* [March 1663]

Sir,

After my most humble service to you, I make bold to trouble you with these few lines, Sir the bearer hereof Edwardd Tarver a musitioner hath a desire to stay in India with you, if you be pleased to vouch safe him entertainment. Sir, I have known him of a child that came of honest parents, and is a preitty sivil young man and for his musick I hope he may have thee happiness to play you a merry lessen. Sir, I pray excuse my boldness. My wife and mother desires their kind remembrance unto you, I have written you in a former letter all thee particulars concerning thee *Livorne Friggatt*. It is inclosed in your letters sent by Madam Dallison.

Having not else at present I rest
Your ever respectful servant to
you and yours

Peeter Cooze

Queene Staires in [Ratcliff](#)

Letter from Captain Nicholas Millett, mariner and master of the *Loyal Merchant* [September 1663]

Right Worshipfull

Your welcome letter of the 14th present received belowe the riversmouth I beleeeve you imagine with what joy it was received I have many things to write and speake to you, but I must leave it till a farther opportunity which I suddenly wish for, ffor to give you a full account of our voyadge I have not tyme, but in parte wee departed [the Downes](#) the 11th Aprill the *Affrican* departe the 6th ditto; we arrived at Johannes the 19th August but no newes of the *Affrican's* arrivall theire or at Mohilia, I must informe that she was designed to touch at John DeNova called by some, but by the ould name Christophers, wheare his shipp was cast a way, his not arrivall heere, makes mee wonder I must referr the rest to tyme, and better intelligence.

I was in good hopes to have gott over this tyde, but had not opportunity so am a feard it will bee 2 or 3 dayes before I have an opportunity to gett over, in respect of the tydes falling out soo late, and so earely, and our shipp drawing soo much watter. I shall endeavour all wayes possible, to gett her in, that you may bee assured off; Sir I have many letters, tokens, and severall things for you, and to advise you which I omitt, I send up the purser with the Company pacquett. Onely I must tell you I have £1000 in Gould for you which [XXXX] the [XXXXX]. But of that an other tyme.

Of what you write in your letter lett mee so bould to tell you, that if Sir George had not beene in India, India should not have seene me, therefore shall referr all to you, as to a person which I dare trust with all that I have; a little indisposednesse of health makes me bee the creditor and to requite that favour of you, that you would send me Mr Ward as soone as possible.

I had fforgott to tell you that your mother, brother, and sister (my ownely) with Sir George Smith, D. Pennington with all yourr freinds, are well, and desire to bee remembred to you; Sir to those that are with you my kinde respects.

I have no more to write but that I am still, as I ever was.

Your Worships humble servant
and ffaithfull freind to comand
Nicholas Millett

Shipp *Loyall Merchant*
Surat Roade September 25th 1663

To Mr Goodyer in particuler my service and Mr Gary

Letter from Ann Townesend, widow of John Nicholls, deceased master of the *Expedition* [February 1663]

Right Worthy Sir

I had once a husband whose name was John Nicholls and was master of the *Expedition* whome you very well did know, I made bould to acquaint your Worshippe in London about my sufferings, and by whom, and your Worshippe was pleased to promise mee your helpe when God brought you to India. Mr Goodyer can very well informe you who has my husband's will for hee was on board when he dyed; I desire that I may have the will heare.

I have given a letter of attorney to one Mr John Oates cheife mate in the *America* who with your powerfull assistance is willing to act for my releife in it; without your Worshipp's helpe hee cann doo nothing I shall not need to begg your helpe of the just and mercyfull whome your Worshippe is well knowne to bee,

Sir I am in a suffering condition, my wants are great, and my desires are no more than just, under God my hopes are in you soo craving pardon for my bouldnesse I take leave and rest

London the 23th ffeb 1662:

Your troublesome friend
and servant
Ann: Townesend
Alias - Nicholls

What can we learn from Sir George Oxenden's correspondence in the 1660s?

He corresponded with mariners and former mariners

- Arnold Brown, master of the *Dunkirk*
- Robert Bowen, master of ship
- Peter Cooze, master of the *Livorno ffrigot*
- Nicholas Hurlestone, master of ship
- Nicholas Millett, master of the *Loyall Merchant*
- John Privett, master of the *London*
- William Rider, merchant, former master of multiple ships

He corresponded with wives of mariners

- Anne Townesend, widow of John Nicholls, master of the *Expedition*

Topics raised by mariners

- Bills of exchange
- Goods sent out on ships
- Greetings from friends and family
- Investments in hands of Surat merchants
- Invitation to invest in new built ship
- Legal matters
- News of imminent arrival
- Personal adventures sent out to Surat and back to London
- Shares in existing ships
- Summary of voyage
- Testimonials

Sent from

- London; Bethnal Green; Plastow; Ratcliff; Rotherhithe; Plastow; Plymouth; Surat road

Women as writers and recipients
of letters to and from mariners

Depositions of mariners wives

Name	Relationship & residence	Age	Signoff	Reference
Elizabeth Beale	Wife of Simon Beale, mariner	31	Signature	HCA 13/61 f.232r
Jane fflaney	Wife of Charles fflaney, mariner, who bought ship the <i>Jonathan</i>	30	Signature	HCA 13/44 f.223r
Dorothy Goodladd	Widow of William Goodladd, mariner and master of the <i>Adventure</i>	22	Signature	HCA 13/53 f.217v
Susanna Grame	Widow of unknown man, living at Camberwell, Surrey; mother of Elisabeth Tison, wife of Thomas Tyson, mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex, and widow of James Sladd, mariner and master's mate on the <i>Abigail</i>	43	Signature	HCA 13/55 f.602v; 605r
Susann Haies	Wife of John Haies, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex	N/A	Signature	HCA 13/58 f.617r
Isabell Seaman	Wife to Captain Edward Seaman, mariner and master of the <i>Sampson</i> of a ship, of Wapping, Middlesex	47	Signature	HCA 13/70 f.225r
Elizabeth Thomas	Wife of Richard Thomas, surgeon of Ratcliff, Middlesex [<i>Simon and Thomas</i>]	37	Signature	HCA 13/61 f.206v; f.208v
Elizabeth Tyson	Wife of Thomas Tyson, mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex	21	Signature	HCA 13/55 f.604v
Marie de Vos	Wife of Jan de Vos, mariner and master of the <i>ffox</i> , of London	43	Signature	HCA 13/73 f.202r
Sara Willis	Wife of John Willis, mariner, on the <i>Lisbon Merchant</i> [London/Lisbon/Brazil/?Lisbon/?London]	26	Signature	HCA 13/58 f.69v
Maria Davison	Wife of Allan Davison, mariner	34	Initials	HCA 13/52 f.16r
Joane Edwards	Wife of William Edwards of Shadwell, Middlesex	42	Initials	HCA 13/51 f.386v
Jane Hooper	Wife of Richard Hooper, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex	21	Initials	HCA 13/52 f.243v
Dorothy Hutton	Wife of William Hutton, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex	56	Initials	HCA 13/42 f.63v
Elizabeth Siborne	Wife of John Siborne, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex	35	Initials	HCA 13/52 f.276r
Catherina White	Wife of John White, mariner and owner of ship	36	Initials	HCA 13/61 f.46v
Elizabeth Wilkenson	Wife of James Wilkenson, mariner of Wapping, Middlesex	43	Initials	HCA 13/42 f.107r
Joane Zouch	Wife of a fisherman, of Barking, Essex	66	Initials	HCA 13/70 f.250v
Margareta Canada	Wife of John Canada, mariner; female servant to Mr Garland, master of the <i>Lisbon Merchant</i>	22	Mark	HCA 13/58 f.70r
Maria Davison	Wife of Allan Davison, mariner	34	Initials	HCA 13/52 f.16r
Helena Goodwin	Wife of Thomas Goodwin, mariner of Shadwell, Middlesex	50	Mark	HCA 13/52 f.243r
Maria Hawkins	Wife of John Hawkins, mariner of Shadwell, Middlesex	40	Mark	HCA 13/56 f.19Av
Christian Hutton	Wife of David Hutton, mariner	36	Mark	HCA 13/58 f.512v
Rabitch Lee	Wife of [?XXX] Lee of Ratcliff, Middlesex, mariner; Former servant to William fflaile	30	Mark	HCA 13/42 f.44r
Maragaret Man	Wife of Silvanus Man, mariner and master of the <i>Josua</i>	40	Mark	HCA 13/41 f.25r
Isabella Simerton	Wife of Edward Simerton, mariner of Wapping, Middlesex, master of diverse ships	N/A	Marke	HCA 13/44 f.44v
Rosa Wrighte	Wife of Thomas Wrighte, mariner of Wapping, Middlesex	45	Mark	HCA 13/58 f.82v

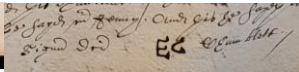
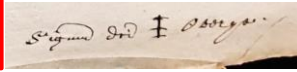
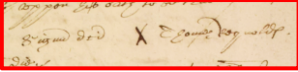
Unable to write or read

Able to read not write

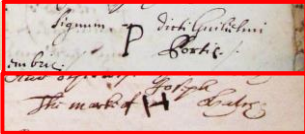
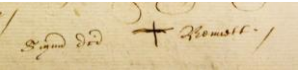
Able to write and read

Able to write and read in multiple languages

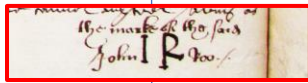
MASTERS



HIGHER OFFICERS



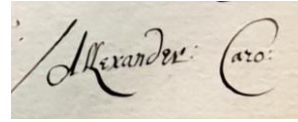
"He cannot write nor read written hand"



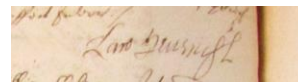
"Hee can neither write nor reade, but yet can keep account of times, by a sort of cyphering which hee hath learnt for his owne use, and thereby remembreth the time"



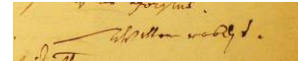
"He can read printing but cannot write"



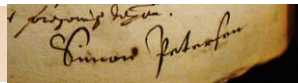
"Hee this examine did keepe a .. journall of the interratre ship's voyage and that is now under this examine's custodie in his chest aboard his shippe called the *Elsabeth and Mary* at ffallmouth"



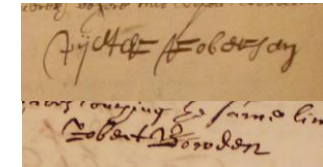
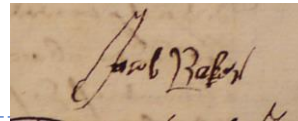
"This hee knoweth for that hee kept a journal"



"Hee can write and reade, and learned the same when hee was a youth...hee can reade written hand well, and understandingly"

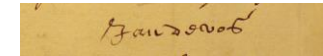


"Hee saith hee can write and read written hand, and sawe and tooke notice of all the goods aboard and of what was as aforesaid embezeled and wanting"



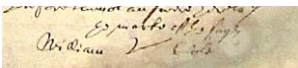
"He can write and read written hand and saith he can speake and understandeth ffrench, Dutch and Spanish, and a little English"

"Which noate this deponent (being acquainted well with the sayd Trenchpaines hand writing and understanding the french tongue) verily beleveeth (although hee sawe not the same written) was and is the proper hand writing of the sayd Trenchpaine"

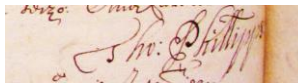
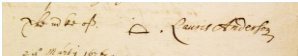


"Hee can read written hand in Dutch very well, and understandingly, and in English hee can reade the names in a Commission, And some few words besides"

LOWER OFFICERS



"Hee cannot write nor reade and soe kept noe journall of the shipp's passage from place to place"



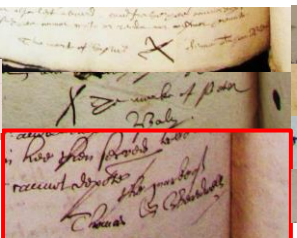
"Being accompt keeper for and on the behalfe of the said shipp's boateswaine, who could not write, this examine entred the said goods and marks and for whose accounts the same were, into the said boateswaine's booke"

"[He] kept a journall of the sayd voyage or memoriall of such tymes as the sayd shipp sett sayle from any place and of her arrivall at any place during the sayd voyage"

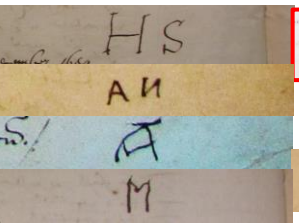
COMMON MEN



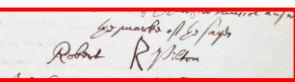
"For what accompte or to whom they were there to bee delivered hee cannott declare, nor how they were marked because hee cannott write nor read nor knows any letters."



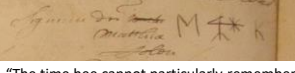
"Hee cannot write nor kept any accompt how the windes stood the tyme interrogated"



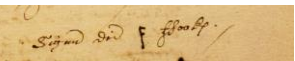
"Hee can speake the North sea language and Lowe Dutch and noe other language, and that North sea is his mother tongue, and other hee learnt in his youth...hee can neithe reade nor write"



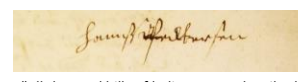
"Hee cannot write nor read but hee remembreth that the winde stood contrarie the sayd 20th of December"



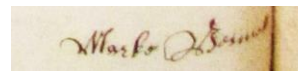
"The time hee cannot particularly remember not knowing how to write or reade"



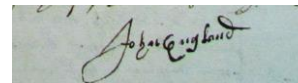
"Hee beinge not able to write or reade did not keepe any iuornall what day the sayd shipp came to Nants, but in regard of his wages kepte an accompte of howe many dayes she stayed there"



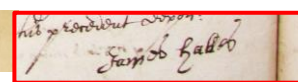
"All the sayd bills of ladinge are subscribed with the proper hand writinge of the sayd Wybrants havinge seene many of his subscriptions in the sayd voyage"



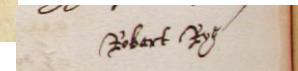
"He can write and reade written hand"



"Hee can both write and read and saith hee did not keepe any diarie or dayly accompt in writing how the windes then stood"



"Hee can write and reade, and saith hee did not take any note in writinge of the time when the disaster aforesaid happened, but very well remembreth it, as hee hath great reason to doe"



"Hee can write and read but remembreth not the date of the writings by him predeposed of"

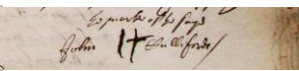
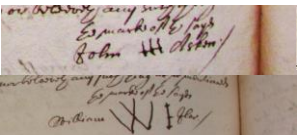
CALIBRATING LITERACY:

"Can you write and read?"

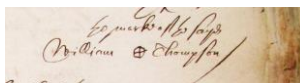
Source: Signs of Literacy Initiative, SOLM2019 dataset, ver.3.8, pub. 17/09/2019

On coal ship

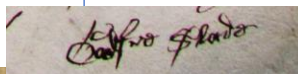
FISHERMEN



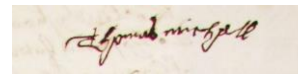
"Hee cannot write nor reade written hand, but hath seene writings and heard them read"



"Hee can read, but not write nor read written hand"



"Hee can write his name but not reade written hand very perfectly"



"He can both write and read and hath divers tymes seene writings in the hands and custodie of the stewards for the tyme being of the mannor and hundred of ffaversham"

Isabell Seaman, forty-seven years of age, wife of Captain Edward Seaman, master of the *Sampson*, living in Wapping, Middlesex [1654]

"After the returne of the shipp the *Sampson* interrater, (whereof this deponents husband Captaine Seaman ^[1] interrater was commander) from Smyrna to Legorne, this rendent received severall letters from her said husband at Legorne, some or one whereof did import and require this rendent to enquire by her selfe or freinds, whether the policy entred in the Assurance Office here concerneing the trading voiage of the said shipp did stand good. And saith, that none of the said letters did import any thing otherwise or contrary to what is predeposed saving that the said shipp *Sampson* was to be employed in the service of this Commonwealth against the dutch. And that upon that occasion the said Captaine Seaman desired to knowe whether the said policy of assurance would stand and continue valid and effectuall till the said shippe's returne for England, whereof this rendent being affirmatively assured returned an answer accordingly to her said husband...

In prosecution of her said husbands order shee desired the interrater Mr Hoxton Justice of Peace to enquire on what condition the said policy of assurance stood, but as to the demannds made by the assurers to the said Justice Hoxton as is interrater shee saith shee is utterly ignorant thereof....

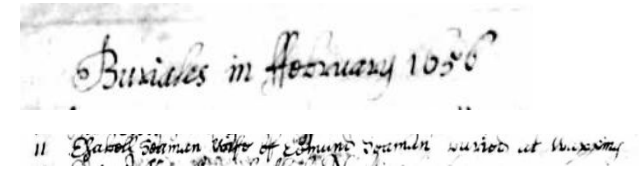
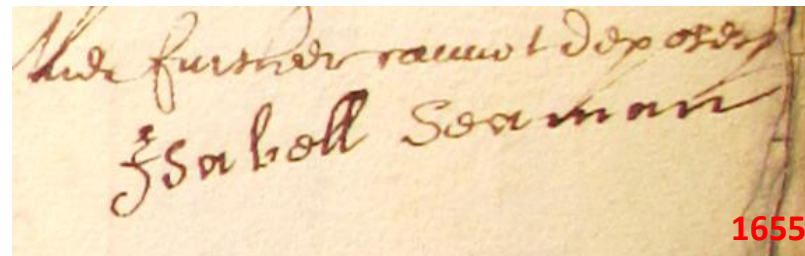
To the best of this rendent's remembrance shee never returned any answer to her said husband upon the report of the said Justice Hoxton, but having by some others of the freinds understood, that the said policy of assurance did stand firme and valid shee did as aforesaid intimate so much by letter unto her said husband then at Legorne...

(1) Edward Seaman (see deposition of Thomas Death, goldsmith, who saw Captain Edward Seaman at the mole of Leghorne in February and March 1652 (HCA 13/70 f.60r); The *Sampson*, set out as a man of war, was equipped with 36 to 44 guns and had a crew of between 90 and 130 men (Carl Ballhausen, *Der erste English-Holländische Seekrieg*, 1652-1654 (Dordrecht, 1923), p.527). The ship the *Sampson* was attacked by the Dutch, caught fire and exploded., near Leghorne.

Shee never received any letter or letters from her said husband to the effect interrater. And further shee cannot depose...

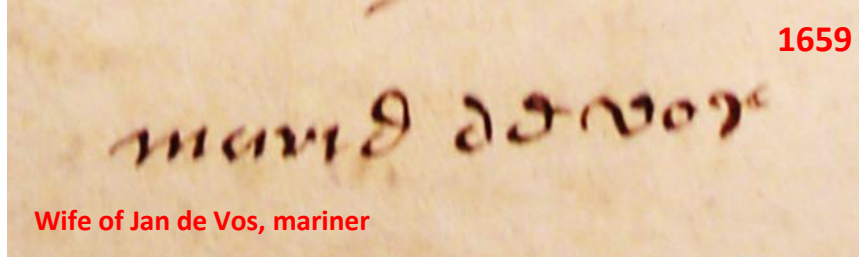
Shee hath no letter or letters remaining in her custodie to the effect interrater, nor doeth shee knowe where any such letter or letters are, adressed to her selfe or any other person whatsoever for or concerning the businesse aforesaid, nor hath shee or any other person of her knowledge kept any copie or copies of letters sent by her to her said husband concerning this or any other businesse, nor can shee recollect her memory so farr, as to be able to expresse the particular contents of the letters mutually sent and received to and from her said husband during the transactions in question otherwise then as aforesaid...

Shee never heard her husband Captaine Seaman interrater say, that hee had ever expressed any forwardnesse, or made any voluntary proffer to engage his said shipp in the service interrater, but that hee was by authority and command from Mr Longland the then Agent of Legorne for this Commonwealth forced and impressed into the said service, and that to the effect and order by the said agents procurement was read and published at the maine mast of his said shipp then at Legorne." (HCA 13/70 ff.224v-225r)



Saint Mary Whitechapel, Parish
Register, 1653-1665, Ancestry.com
Burial date 11/02/1656/57

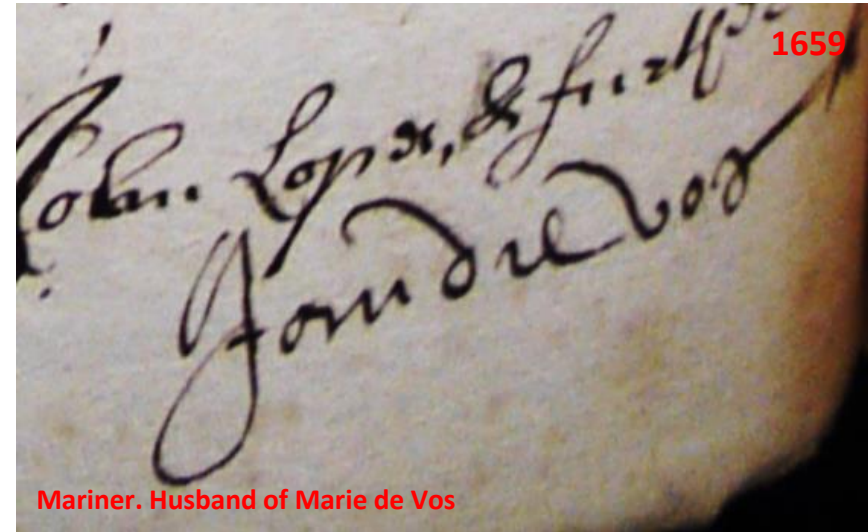
Marie de Vos has signature just as competent and practised as her husband, Jan de Vos, mariner and master of the *ffox*. She had lived in Middleburg, Amsterdam, Dover and London and had recently travelled to Amsterdam.



1659

Wife of Jan de Vos, mariner

Marie de Vos, forty-three year old wife of Jan de Vos, mariner and master of the *ffox*. Living in London. Formerly lived in Middleburg, Amsterdam and Dover. Deposed April 21st 1659. HCA 13/73 f.202r.



1659

Mariner. Husband of Marie de Vos

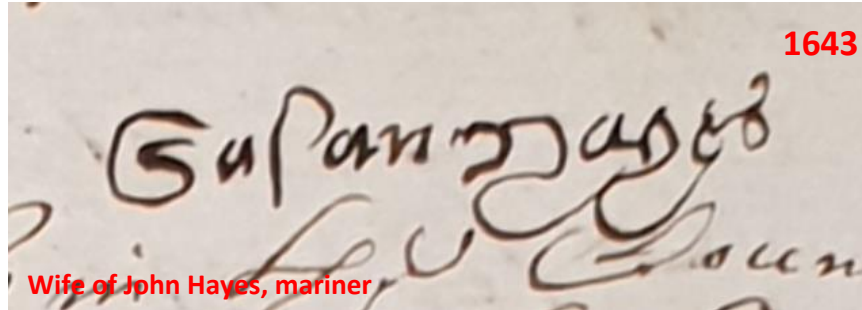
Jan de Vos, fifty-three year old mariner of London. Master of the *ffox*. Born at Nieuport, Flanders. Formerly lived in Middleburg, Amsterdam and Dover. Deposed April 21st 1659. HCA 13/73 f.201v.

[Captured ship: Fox of Ostend, master Joos de Vos. History: bound from Ostend to Rouen,...](#)

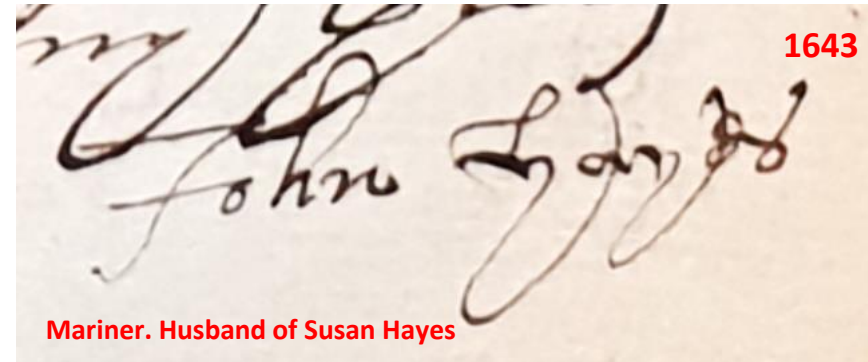
High Court of Admiralty: Prize Court: Papers. Depositions and Examinations in Prize Causes, Second Anglo-Dutch War. Nos. 201-400. (Described at item level).... Captured ship: Fox of Ostend, master Joos de Vos. History: bound from Ostend to Rouen, laden with cheeses, alum and lanthorn horns; taken in February 1666 by HMS Colchester ketch (Thomas Langley

Held by:	The National Archives, Kew - High Court of Admiralty and colonial Vice-Admiralty courts
Date:	1666
Reference:	HCA 32/11/365B
Subjects:	Armed Forces (General Administration) Conflict International Litigation Navy Operations, battles and campaigns

Basic signature of Susan Hayes. Definitely able to read and could probably write basic letters. John Hayes, her mariner husband, has a competent signature.

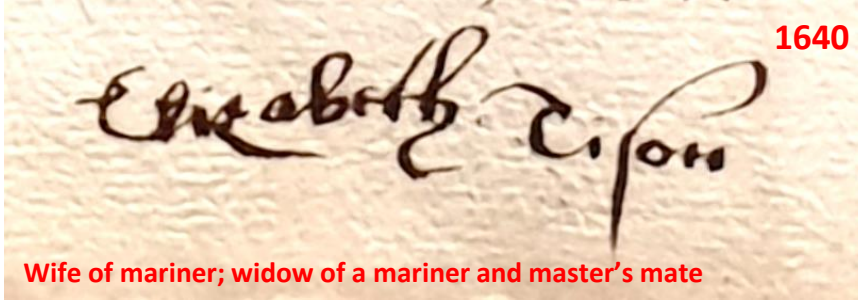
A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The name 'Susan Hayes' is written in a cursive script. The year '1643' is written in red ink in the top right corner. Below the signature, the text 'Wife of John Hayes, mariner' is written in red ink.

Susan Hayes, age unknown, wife of John Hayes, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex. Deposed April 19th 1643. HCA 13/58 f.517r.

A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The name 'John Hayes' is written in a cursive script. The year '1643' is written in red ink in the top right corner. Below the signature, the text 'Mariner. Husband of Susan Hayes' is written in red ink.

John Hayes, forty-three year old mariner, of Ratcliff, Middlesex. Deposed April 19th 1643. HCA 13/58 f.517r

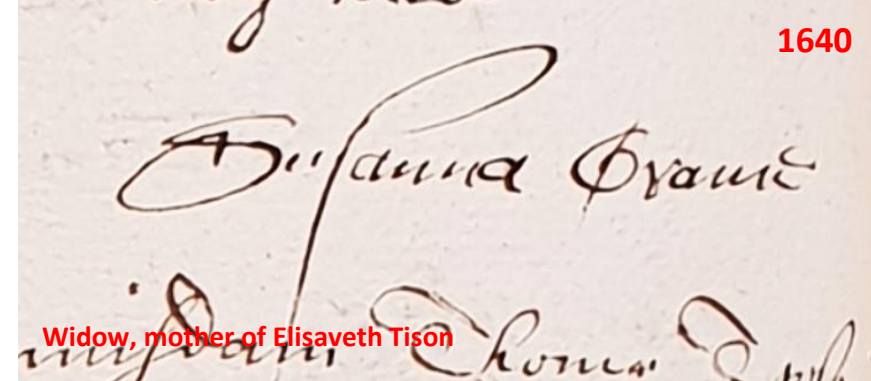
Elizabeth Tison, wife of Thomas Tison, mariner of Limehouse, and the widow of James Sladd, deceased master's mate of the *Abigall*; and her mother, the widow Susanna Grame



1640

Wife of mariner; widow of a mariner and master's mate

Elizabeth Tison, twenty-one year old wife of Thomas Tison, mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex, and widow of James Sladd, deceased master's mate of the *Abigall*, who was on a voyage from London to Saint Christophers. Deposed April 16th 1640. HCA 13/55 f.604v.

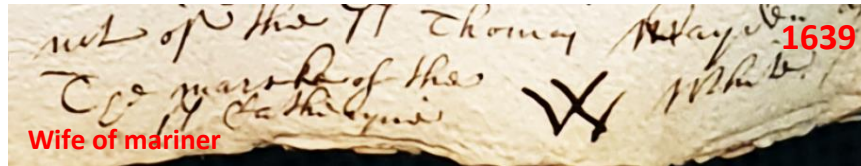


1640

Widow, mother of Elisaveth Tison

Susanna Grame, forty-three year old widow, of Camberwell, Surrey. Deposed April 16th 1640. HCA 13/55 f.602v.

Catherine White, wife of John White, mariner and owner and master of ships, of Saint Mary Bermondsey, Surrey [1639; 1648]

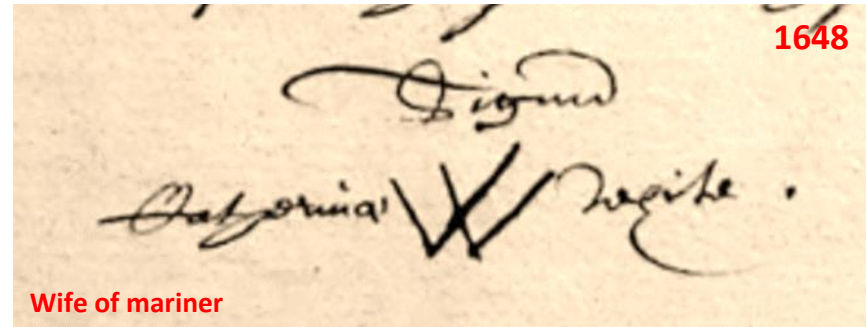


not of the Thomas Mayden
Catherine White
1639
Wife of mariner

Catherine White, eighteen year old wife of John White, mariner of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey, who purchased then sold the *Anne*. Sister to Thomas Mayden, mariner, son of Anne and Thomas Mayden. Deposed August 26th 1639. HCA 13/55 f.222r.

"At the signe of the Naggs Heade a tavernne scituat in Thames streete London upon or aboute the 8th of October 1638 in the presence of her this examine and other witnesses then presente Anne Mayden the wife of Thomas Mayden whoe was then very sicke did deliver and pay into the arlate John Cardwell the summe of fifty twoe pounds sterling to bee layd out and otherwise disposed of here at the discretion of the said Cardwell and the value or proceede thereof to bee delivered and payd unto her this examine's husband the arlate John White sonne in lawe to the said Anne Mayden at Ostend the said Cardwell beinge then ready to goe over theither and her said husband beinge then there aboute buyeing of a shippe there for the use of himself and his freindes, and the said Cardwell was as shee conceiveth noe ways tyed or obliged to deliver the same money which was delivered to him to her said husband but to dispose thereof in such manner as hee should thincke moste conveniente which the said Cardwell did undertake to doe upon the delivery of the said money, but did not, as shee this examine conceiveth, for that since the arrival of her said husband with th arlate shippe the *Anne* here at this porte of London, both the ssaid shippe and her said husband were in trouble about the said money and her said husband enfored to sell his intereste in the said shippe to the arlate William [?Hocke]...The schedule arlate was and is subscribed with the proper hand writeinge of the arlate John Cardwell, which shee knoweth to bee true, for that shee sawe him subscribed the same and shee hath subscribed her name or marke as a witness thereunto."

[Deposition of Catherine White; HCA 13/55 f.222v]



Signed
Catherine White
1648
Wife of mariner

Catherine White, twenty-six year old wife of John White, mariner of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey, master and owner of the *ffortune*. Sister to Thomas Mayden, mariner, son of Anne and Thomas Mayden. Deposed May 1st 1648. HCA 13/55 f.222r.

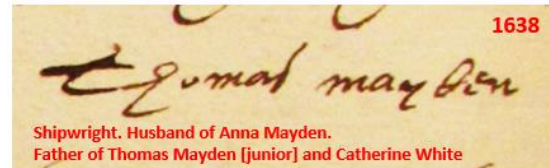
"Shee this deponent well knoweth the ship the *ffortune* arlate, having often seene her and bin on board her in the river of Thames whiles shee was in the custody and belonging unto the arlate John White her this deponent's husband, and saith the said John White her husband about two years and a halfe since bought the said ship and furniture thereunto belonging by bill of sale of the arlate David Morris and Elizabeth his wife, as shee this deponent hath often heard her said husband say. And saith that for the space of nyne monethes or neere thereabouts after such his buying of her, hee the said John White was in quiet and peaceable oossession of the said ship the *ffortune* of her sight and knowledge beinge diverse times on board her in that time, and in the said time of such his being in quiet possession of her, hee the said John White made one voyage with her to Burdeaux and safely retourned, this deponent seeing her upon such her retourne from that voyage...

Shee is wife unto the interrante John White whoe solde the said ship in question unto James Smalley the producent...

Shee hath often heard her said husband John White saye that when hee bought the said ship of the interrante Morris and his wife hee paid them five pounds in part towards the same, but whether hee paid any more for the same at any time or not, shee saith shee knoweth not nor hath heard her husband saye that hee paid any more....Her husband upon selling the said ship to the producent James Smalley, received of him the said Smalley in part of payment for her the summe of eight and twenty pounds, which was paid him at this deponent's father Thomas Mayden his house in Bermondsey parish aforesaid, this deponent being then present in the same house."

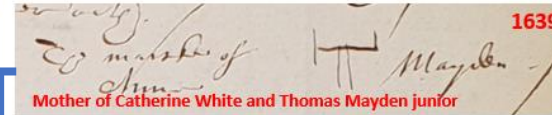
[Deposition of Catherine White; HCA 13/61 f.46v]

Literacy map for two Bermondsey families in the 1630s and 1640s. Shipwrights and mariners.



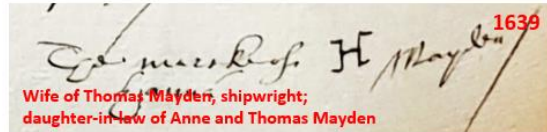
Thomas Mayden [senior], fifty-nine year old shipwright of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey. Owner of dock in Bermondsey. Father of Thomas Mayden [junior] and husband of Anna Mayden. Deposed January 12th 1638. HCA 13/54 f.390r.

Owner of shipwright's dock in
Rotherhithe [Redriff]



Anne Mayden, fifty year old wife of Thomas Mayden, shipwright, of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey. Mother of Catherine White, who was married to John White, mariner, of Saint Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, Surrey. Deposed August 26th 1639. HCA 13/55 f.222r.

Witnessed bill of sale of the *Anne Catherine*

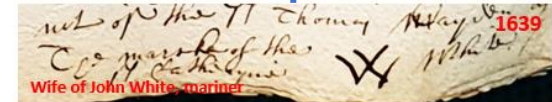


Hanna Mayden, nineteen year old wife of Thomas Mayden, shipwright of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey. Daughter-in-law of Anne and Thomas Mayden, shipwright. Deposed August 26th 1639. HCA 13/55 f.222v.

Witnessed bill of sale of the *Anne Catherine*

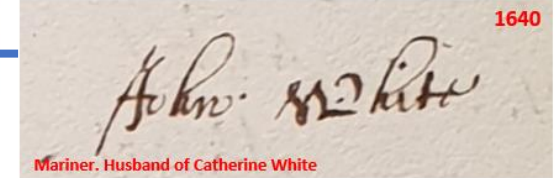


Thomas Mayden, twenty-two year shipwright of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey. Husband of Hanna Mayden. Deposed August 26th 1639. HCA 13/55 f.223v.



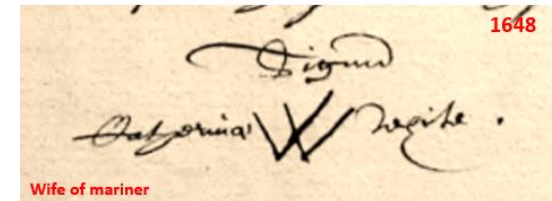
Catherine White, eighteen year old wife of John White, mariner of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey. Sister to Thomas Mayden, mariner, son of Anne and Thomas Mayden. Deposed August 26th 1639. HCA 13/55 f.222r.

Witnessed bill of sale of the
Anne Catherine and subscribed
"her name or mark"



John White, twenty-seven year shipwright of Redriff, Surrey. Husband of Catherine White. Deposed June 11th 640. HCA 13/56 f.79r.

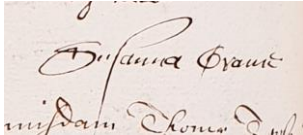
Owner, probable master, and
forced seller of the *Anne Catherine* [1639]
Owner and master of the *ffortune* [1648]



Catherine White, twenty-six year old wife of John White, mariner of Saint Mary Magdalen Bermondsey, Surrey, master and owner of the *ffortune*. Sister to Thomas Mayden, mariner, son of Anne and Thomas Mayden. Deposed May 1st 1648. HCA 13/55 f.222r.

Literate women associated with mariners as wives, mothers, sisters and business partners

**Widow; daughter married to mariner
Saw note written by master's mate of goods laded for private adventure**



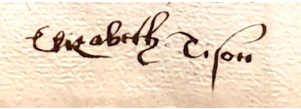
"Shee saw a noate of what particular goodes the said Sladd had laded aboard the arlate shippe the *Abigall* the vouage in question outwards bound for his owne accompte in the custody of the said Sladd's wife, which to her beste remembrance was subscribed or written by the said Sladd, and shee knoweth the places where hee bought some of the said goodes and shee beleeveth the schedule arlate which shee hath nowe seene at the tyme of this her examination is a coppie extracted out of that noate which shee sawe because shee doth remember and knowe of some of the particulars therein mentioned, which the said Sladd had provided to transporte in the said shippe the said voyage and knewe where they were bought.

She beleeveth all the several goodes and commodities which the said Sladd laded or caused to bee laded aboard the foresaid ship outwards bounde and which hee did died possesse of were the proper goodes and merchandizes of the said Sladd and others his frende for whom hee was intrusted and they were all as shee hath heard and beleeveth worth to the value of one hundred poundes sterling little more or lesse.

Shee this rendent was and is the natural mother of Elizabeth Tison whoe was the widdowe of the said Sladd deceased and that neither shee this rendente nor the foresaid Tison or any other to his knowledge hath any promise from the interrante Younge in case hee prevaille in this suite and recover of the interrante Cason more then his due debte oweinge to him, of any parte or parcel of the said Sladd's estate, neither doth shee ever expecte any benefit thereby onely shee hopeth that the overplus or some parte thereof shalbee allowed towards the maynetenance and bringing upp of a childe of the said Sladd's which shee this rendente doth yet helpe to provide for and keepe."

[43 year old widow of Camberwell, Surrey] (HCA 13/55 ff.601v-602r)

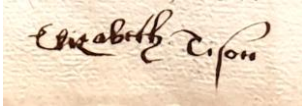
**Widow of deceased mariner and master's mate
Husband's estate owed money by master of ship**



"Within the tyme libellate whileste the arlate shippe the *Abigall* lay at Gravesend outwards bounde the arlate Cason [master of the *Abigall*] came to the Redd Lyon the place where shee and her said gusband James Sladd had layne the nighte before, and then and there shee this examine did deliver to her said husband the summe of £10 sterling which hee noe sooner received but presently goeing into the nexte roome hee delivered the same to the said Cason for stronge waters which hee was to have of him the said Cason that voyage according to agreement between them and afterwards shee heard the said Cason acknowledge and confesse the receite of the said money her said husband demanndinge the said stronge waters of him that hee might sett his marcke upon them, and shee then alsoe heard the said Cason say that his stronge waters were unknowne to him put into the hold of the said shippe and that hee could not then well come to them but hee the n sayd hee should have them after hee came to sea and for that ten poundes and the foresaid forty shillings for his harbour wages due as aforesaid hee was to have had 12 or 13 cases or bottles of stronge water of the said Cason

[21 year old wife of Thomas Tison, mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex, and widow of James Sladd, mariner and master's mate of the *Abigall*, who died on a voyage from London to Saint Christophers] (HCA 13/55 ff.603r)

**Widow of mariner and master's mate
Entrusted with note of particulars of her husbands private adventure**



"Within the tyme libellate her said husband James Sladd deceased did provide divers such sorts and kinds of goodes as in the arlate schedule as is expressed and sett to bee transported in the arlate shippe the *Abigall* for his owne proper accounte the voyage then intended the value of which did amounte unto above one hundred poundes sterling, which shee knoweth to bee true for that shee sawe a greate parte of the said goodes and knoweth the several places where hee bought the same, and as shee verily beleeveth in her conscience all or moste of the goodes scheduled were laded aboard the arlate shippe by her said husband deceased whileste she was and ramined in the river of Thames outwards bounde for Saint Christophers giving a reason of such her beleife for that her said husband gave her a noate of what goodes hee had laded aboard the said shippe for his owne accounte and his frendes for whom hee was intrusted which noate shee delivered to the partie producente and out of which noate shee beleeveth the arlate schedule was extracted [the note containing the values of the goods]...Shee sawe some of the cloth scheduled aboard the foresaid shippe at Gravesend under her husband's marke...

The interrante shippe the *Abigall* the voyage in question outward bounde departed from Gravesend the third of March laste was two years[1638] to her nowe beste remembrance.

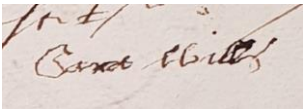
The said shippe the *Abigall* was caste away in a whirle wynde as is interrante...This shee heard from Cason's owne mouth.

All or moste parte of the said goodes in question were packed upp some in packs and some in barrels and such other things as her husband deceased thoughte moste fit and convenient for that use which shee knoweth to bee true for that shee this rendent did packe upp all or moste parte of the lynnen in the arlate schedule metioned in packs to bee laded aboard the said shippe the *Abigall* and did after the said shippe was at Gravesend mende a faulte which shee sawe in one of the packs wherein the said lynnen was made upp in...

Shee this rendent finding that her said husband's debts after his death were greater and more then shee expected or thought of and beinge [?XXXX] to marry againe and leste to bringe her selfe and her second intended husband no trouble and for noe other reason or reasons shee did renounce the administration interrante

[21 year old wife of Thomas Tison, mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex, and widow of James Sladd, mariner and master's mate of the *Abigall*, who died on a voyage from London to Saint Christophers] (HCA 13/55 ff.603v-604v)

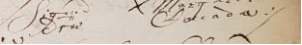
**Wife of mariner (possibly of a master of a ship)
Shipped a servant of her husband on a ship bound for Lisbon**



"This examine living then at Shadwell the next doore to the arlate Garland was often at the house of the said Garland and heard him hired men to goe to sea with him in the arlate shippe the *Lisbone Merchant* then bounde out for Lisbone and shee heard some of them asjke the said Garland the intent of his voyage and hee tolde them yt was to goe to Lisbone but to what places alsoe hee should goe to the Streights or to any other place hee knew not untill he came to Lisbone, or whether hee should come home from thence or not, and soe hee told this examine in perticuler when shee shipt a servant of her husband to proceed with the said Garland uppon that shipp and voyage...She cannott tell the names of any of the marriners that were hiered to serve in the said shipp and voyage more then John Sharpe her husband's servant aforesaid"

[26 year old wife of John Wills, mariner, of Ratcliff, Middlesex (HCA 13/58 ff.69r-69v)]

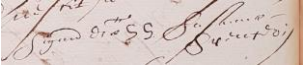
**Female servant to master of ship and wife of mariner
Heard hiring of men in her master's house**



"When the arlate shipp the *Lisbone Merchant* was bounde out for Lisbone this last voyage shee this examine beeing then servant to the arlate Garland heard him hire divers men to goe to sea with them that voyage and head him still tell there that they were to goe with him to Lisbone and whither else his designe should fall, without nameing any other place...Shee doth not know the names of any of the marriners that were hiered as aforesaid...saving that Garland's wief and this rendent were present with him in the hall of theen his house at Shadwell when hee hiered some of the men as aforesaid, and heard him aggree with them...Shee heard Garland when hee shipt some of his men tell them yt may bee his voyage might bee ten or twelve monethes, or 18 monethes or perhaps longerm hee could not tell untill hee came to Lisbone."

[22 year old wife of John Canada, mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex, and servant to John Garland, mariner and master of the *Lisbone Merchant* (HCA 13/58 ff.69v-70r)]

**Mother to wife of mariner and master of ship
Heard hiring of men in her son-in-law's house**



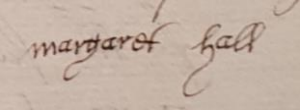
"Whilst the arlate Garland was shipping his company to goe to sea with him in the arlate ship the *Lisbone Merchant* the last voyage, his wife lyeing in, and this examine helping to tende her and her childe, did heare him hire divers men to goe to sea with him that voyage, and heard him tell them still when they asked him whether they shoulde goe, that they should goe to Lisbone and then as the designe should proffer, hee did purpose to imbrace yt, and that until hee came to Lisbone hee could not tell whether hee should goe to the Streights or whether else...And this shee affirmeth upon her oath to bee true, being mother to the said Garland's wife.

Shee doth not knowe the name of any of the men that shee heard Garland ship as aforesaid more then Burrowes the chief trumpeter, but they were hiered at the said Garlande's house at Shadwell."

[66 year old widow of Shadwell, Middlesex, and mother to wife of John Garland, mariner and master of the *Lisbone Merchant* (HCA 13/58 ff.70r-70v)]

Literate women associated with mariners as wives, mothers, sisters and business partners

**Widow; kept a Stepney victualling house
Witness in case brought by a mariner**

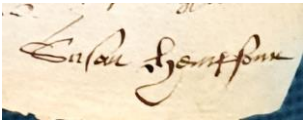


"Shee this examine hath knowne the arlate Goodwyn for the space of these twoe yeares laste paste and some thinge more and saieth that before the said Goodwyn's laste goinge to sea with Mr Betts hee the said Goodwyn was at a victuallinge house at the signe of the Carpenters Armes scituate in Olde Gravell Lane within the parishe of Stepney... shee then haveinge a chamber in that house...

Shee cometh to testifie in this cause at the requeste of Mr Betts the producent...Shee first came acquainted with the said Goodwyn at the signe of the Shippe Carpenters Armes aforesaid shee then keepinge that house and the greateste of her acquaintance with him was there hee comeinge as a gieste to that house to drincke and hee is somewhat a browne sathe man and of a reasonable stature somewhat stoopinge forward"

[35 year old widow of Old Gravel Lane, Stepney, Middlesex, keeping a victualling house] (HCA 13/58 ff.84v-85r)

**Widow of mariner and master of ship
Planning to peruse her husband's accounts**



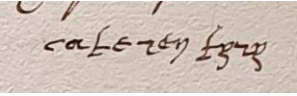
"Shee this examine using the shoppe where the interratt Richard Clarke lived hath knowne the said Clarke as shee beleeveth for the space of these twelve yeares laste paste...Her husband deceased and the interratt Clarke have often had dealeings together and soe shee beleeveth they had the voyage in question, but for what shee saith shee knoweth not, but beleeveth it was for such commodities as the said Clarke tradeth in hee beinge by profession a lynnyn draper, and that the said Clarke the voyage in question outwards bounde did adventure some commodities with her said husband since deceased whoe wente out master of the interratt shippe the *Royall Merchant*, but to what value shee knoweth not, neither doth shee knowe whether there were any debts betweene her husbände and the said Clarcke or what haveinge not yet perused or examined over her husband's accounts nor had any accounte of the said Clarke about any such thinge. And shee this examine hath alsoe had dealeings with the said Clarke and hath had and boughte things of him but never had or boughte any thinge of him upon truste but payd him ready money for the same...

For her parte shee never received any monies, pearles or other goodes whatsoever by the interratt shippe the Golden Angell or any other shippe or shippes upon accounte betweene her husband deceased and the foresaid Clarke since the departure of the interratt shippe the *Royall Merchante*...

Shee never received any peeces of eight of or from the interratt Henry Trewen or any such man"

[40 year old widow of mariner and master of the *Royall Merchante*, of Limehouse, Middlesex] (HCA 13/58 f.32r)

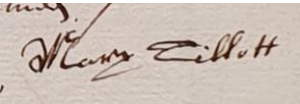
**Widow; husband's occupation unclear
Had seen many letters from merchant nephew in Naples**



"Shee this examine did knowe and was very well acquainted with one Stephen Therry the sonne of John Therry late of the parishe of Saint Steevens Colemanstreeete London deceased whoe whileste hee lived was by trade a weaver but by profession a merchante and shee knoweth the said Stephen by the space of twelve or fowerteene yeares before his goeinge over beyond se which was aboute twelve yeares since and shee hath heard the said Stephen is nowe liveinge at Naples which shee beleeveth is true for that her sonne received a letter from him aboute Christmas laste dated at Naples (which letter shee sawe and had in her hand and before that many other letters) but howe longe hee hath lived there shee knoweth not"

[64 year old widow of Whitechapel, Middlesex. Aunt through her husband to three nephews, two of whom moved overseas, one to Amsterdam and the other to Naples] (HCA 13/55 ff.136v-137r)

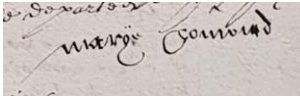
**Widow of master of ship
Received letters and other writings from her husband**



""This examine doth verily beleeeve in her conscience the five bills of ladeinge in Dutch in the article mentioned beinge nowe shewed unto her at the tyme of this her examination were and are subscribed by the proper hand writinge of her husband John Tillott whoe went out master of the arlate shippe the John and Dorothy in this her last voyage to sea in which voyage homewards bounde shee was caste away and perished in the sea aand as shee is informed by some of her company whoe not without greate dannger escaped to shoare a live, her sayd husband was in swimmenge a shoare drowned and for that shee is very well acquainted with her sayd husbands chaacters and manner of writinge haveinge divers tymes heretofore in his life tyme received letters and other writeinges from him and many tymes seene him write his name. Shee beleeveth the contents in the sayd twoe bills of ladeinge because as shee conceiveth subscribed by her sayd husband as before shee hath deposed were and are true and soe had and done as is therein contained." (HCA 13/55 f.216r) "

[34 year old widow of mariner and master of the *John and Dorothy*, of Wapping, Middlesex] (HCA 13/55 f.216r)

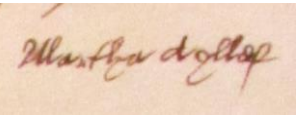
Mother of apprentice who went to sea with his mariner godfather, a mariner



"Upon Easter Wednesday was twelve monethes the arlate Robert Bishopp came to this examinatt's house scituate in Wrestlers Vourt in Bishopsgate street London and told this deponent that he was goeinge to sea on a fishinge voyage for Scotland and asked this deponent's sonne the arlate Richard Gomond if he would goe with him, and this deponent replied that she intended that he should have gonne into Spayne to one Mr James Busfield, but referred it to her sonne to take his choyce, and the sayd Richard Gomonde beinge then and there present sayd that he would rather goe with his godfather (meaninge the said Robert Bishopp) then with any man in England and the sayd Bishopp told him that it should be a very good voyage to him, and that if the sayd Gomond did not goe with him he must take another, but sayd he had rather have him the sayd Gomond then another, because (as he conceived) he could speake some languages, and her sonne told him that he could speake Dutch, Spanish and Portugall, and teh sayd Bishopp replied that perhappes he should have occasion to use his Dutch tongue, if they mett with the Hollanders, as hee thought they should...His the sayd Gomond's chiefe worke and imployment should be to be his the said Bishopp's interpreter for the Dutch tongue if he mett with the hollanders upon the sayd coaste and to marke barrells and to doe such tother things as the said Bishopp should directe him to doe..." (HCA 13/51 f.52v) "

[40 year old mother of Richard Gomond, party producent , who was on a fishing voyage on the *Nathan* off the Scottish coast] (HCA 13/55 f.216r)

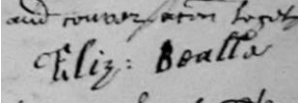
**Wife of Bermondsey ship carpenter
Privy to legal proceedings concerning repayment for a debt owing her deceased husband of a female friend**



"[She] hath severall times heard the said Leonard Guy say and acknowledge that hee had made over and by bill of sale his said hulke to the said Mary for and in consideration of the said debt and money, or in part of satisfaction for the same. And againe since the same, this deponent was present and sawe the said Leonard at this deponents husbands house on Redriff wall bring and deliver some amounts to the said Mary and heard him tell her that that was the first money hee had earned with her hulke, (speaking of the said hulke *Elizabeth*) and that every weeke hee would bring her some"

[36 year old wife of ship carpenter of Saint Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, Surrey, whose house was on Redriff wall] (HCA 13/72 ff.56r-56v)

**Wife of Stepney mariner
Friend with neighbour, whose husband was master of a ship and shared news of his ship**



"Shee heard it reported before such time as Richard Little master of the shipp the Marigold came home that the said shipp was lost, but heard not certaintie of such losse before his said coming home, but at or about what time it was that hee soe came home shee saith shee cannot by any meanes call to minde it beinge soe longe since, neither can shee remember of whom shee heard the said report...

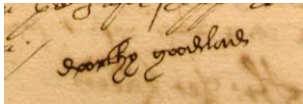
About a daye or two after this examine heard the foressaid report of the losse of the said shippe, she acquainted the interrogate Mrs Little therewith, which was before such the said Littles comming home, but the daye of the moneth or other certaine time shee remembreth not..

Mrss Little and this examine live about 6 doores distant each from other at Wapping Wall and at the time interratt they lived there about 20 doores distant each from other and saith that they have had often meeting and conversation together "

[31 year old wife of Simon Beale, mariner, of Stepney, Middlesex] (HCA 13/61 f.232r)

Literate women associated with mariners as wives, mothers, sisters and business partners

Widow of mariner and master of ship

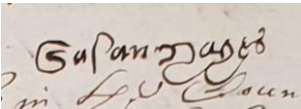


"Uppon a Sattirday beinge the fower and twentieth day of October anno domini 1635 (late in the eveninge) John Bredcake the master's mate of the arlate shipp the *Adventure* came to this deponent and her husband William Goodladd since deceased late master of the sayd shipp at their lodginge at one Mr Gardner's house at Tower wharfe and tould them that the sayd shipp was arrived and come to an anchor that day at Gravesend and the next day this deponent and her husband dyninge at the arlate Mr John Marstone's house in London, tould him that the sayd shipp was at anchor at Gravesend and theruppon the sayd Marstone appointed to goe downe to Gravesend the next day beinge Munday the 26th of October 1635, and accordingly the same Munday the said Marstone and this deponent and her husband went downe to Gravesend and there sawe the said shipp ridinge at anchor, and on the Wednesday followeinge beinge the 28th day of the same moneth the sayd shipp sett sayle from Gravesend and on her then intended voyage for Cadiz, which she knoweth to be true for that she went downe in the sayd shipp from Gravesend to Leigh in the countye of Essex with her sayd husband...

This rendent's father-in-lawe William Goodladd was owner of one eighte part of the sayd shipp, tackle and furniture, Katherine Goodladd late of Lee aforesayd widdowe deceased in her lifetyme was owner of another eighth part]"

[22 year old widow of William Goodladd, mariner and master of the *Adventure*] (HCA 13/53 f.217v)

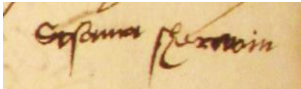
Wife of mariner Took out an assurance policy in the name of her husband on his ship



"Shee affirmeth uppon her oath, that neither Andrewe Shawe, Christopher Hutton, Robert ffortune, nor any other person or persons whatsoever did deliver her any letter directed to her husband, nor had shee any other information on Sonday or Monday before Easter last was two yeares, that the interrater shipp the *Jonas* was cast away or neere Holand, nor before shee caused the pollicy of £150 to bee made in her husband's name...After David Huttom the master of the said shipp came home, hee telling this examine that the[?rest] of the owners of the said shipp that had assured expected to have a share with those that had, shee said yt should bee soe yf her husband would consent thereunto"

[Susan Hayes, age unstated, wife of John Hayes, mariner, of Ratcliff, Middlesex] (HCA 13/58 ff.506v-507r)

Wife of mariner and master of ship Received husband's letters from Allicante and from his successor as master of his ship sent from Venice



"In the yeares 1633 and 1634 and part of the yeare 1635 the arlate Thomas Sherwin since deceased was master of the arlate shippe the *Scipio*, which shee knoweth to bee true, for that all that tyme shee was the wife of the said Thomas Sherwin and was divers tymes within that tyme aboard the said ship with her said husband...

Within the tyme arlate the said Thomas Sherwin sett saile with the said shippe from this port of London bounde upon a voyage to the Streights, and puttinge into Allicante outwards bounde that voyage the said Thomas Sherwin as appears by his letters written to this examine from thence and from his speeches since was there arrested and imprisoned, but his shippe rideing then without commander there, [?XXXXed] and sett saile from thence on her intended voyage under the command of the arlate Humphrey Barrett being then the said Sherwin's chief mate....

Since the said voyage was ended shee hath often heard tehs aid Barrett confesse that hee caused the said anchors to bee put on shoare at Venice and lefte them ther in the hands of one Yates a merchant, and shewed this examine a noate which hee said hee had from the said Yates for the receipte of those anchors, and that noate the said Barrett the nexte voyage carried forth with him in the said shippe being the bounde to Venice, and from Venice that voyage the said Barrett wrott a letter to this examine her husband being then dead whereby hee did advise her that yt was not known but that those anchors were her husbandes, and that one of them was souled, and that the party with whom he the said Barrett lefte those anchors was dead, but had lefte sufficient to pay every body."

[Susanna Sherwin, 46 year old widow of Thomas Sherwin, deceased master of the *Scipio*, of Wapping, Middlesex] (HCA 13/58 ff.506v-507r)

Letters received by mariners wives and widows

A decent portion of mariners wives and widows were literate

- 37% of mariners wives and widows in SOLM2019 data set use signatures [10/27]

There is clear evidence of mariners wives receiving letters from their husbands

- Three examples
 - “Shee is very well acquainted with her sayd husbands characters and manner of writinge haveinge divers tymes heretofore in his life tyme received letters and other writeinges from him and many tymes seene him write his name “ [Mary Tillott, thirty-four year old widow of John Tillett, the deceased master of the *John and Dorothy*, who was drowned. Living at Wapping]
 - “This rendent received severall letters from her said husband at Legorne, some or one whereof did import and require this rendent to enquire by her selfe or freinds, whether the policy entred in the Assurance Office here concerneing the trading voiage of the said shipp did stand good...this rendent being affirmatively assured returned an answer accordingly to her said husband... shee did as aforesaid intimate so much by letter unto her said husband then at Legorne...” [Isabell Seaman, forty-seven years of age, wife of Captain Edward Seaman, master of the *Sampson*, living in Wapping, Middlesex]
 - “Puttinge into Allecante outwards bounde that voyage the said Thomas Sherwin as appears by his letters written to this examine from thence and from his speeches since was there arrested and imprisoned ...from Venice that voyage the said Barrett wrott a letter to this examine her husband being then dead [Susanna Sherwin, 46 year old widow of Thomas Sherwin, deceased master of the *Scipio*, of Wapping, Middlesex]

Arguably a culture of letter writing existed within mariner families

- Combining personal and commercial lives
- Wives of masters, master’s mates and surgeons, but quite probably wives of other men with different offices and places

Reconstructing literacy within ships

The *Anne* of Hulbridge

Voyage: Wakering [Essex]/London

Return lading: ?

Ship burthen = 130 tons [60 chaldron of coals]

Known company = 2 men

Missing company = 1 man

Total company = 3 men

1609

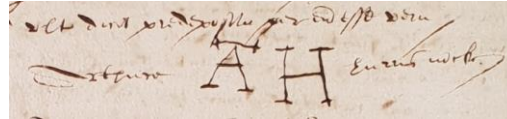
Master: Arthur Harris senior

Voyage length = 1 to 2 days

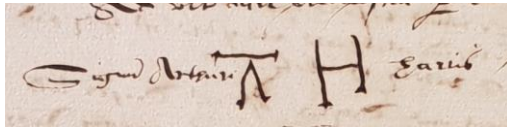
Definitely unable to write or read

Probably unable to write or read

Probably able to write and read



Arthur Harris senior, sixty-one year old mariner of Hulbridge, Essex. Master of hoy named the *Anne* of Hulbridge.



Arthur Harris junior, sixteen year old mariner and son of Arthur Harris. One of two of the company of the hoy the *Anne* of Hulbridge.

The *Successe* of Dover

Voyage: Newcastle/Dover [Kent]

Return lading: Coals

Ship burthen = 100 tons

Known company = Master + 4 men + 1 boy = 6

Missing company = 2

Total company = 6

ca. 1654

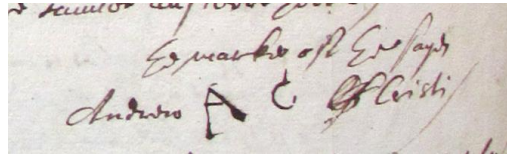
Master: David Adamson

Voyage length = N/A

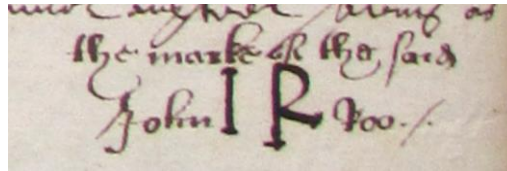
Definitely unable to write or read

Probably unable to write or read

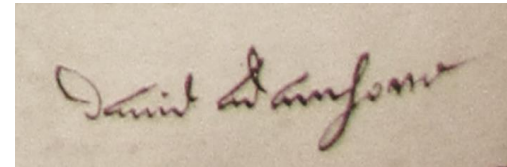
Probably able to write and read

A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The text is written in a cursive script and appears to read "Daniel Cristi". There are some additional markings and a large 'A' or 'C' symbol below the name.

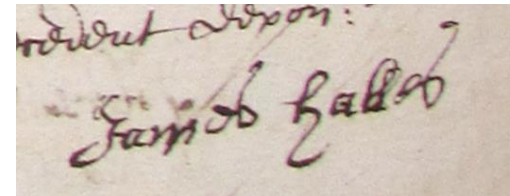
Daniel Cristi, fifty year old mariner of Dover, Kent. Common mariner of the *Successe* of Dover.

A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The text is written in a cursive script and appears to read "John Roo". There are some additional markings and a large 'R' symbol below the name.

John Roo, forty-six year old mariner of Dover, Kent. Master's mate of the *Successe* of Dover.

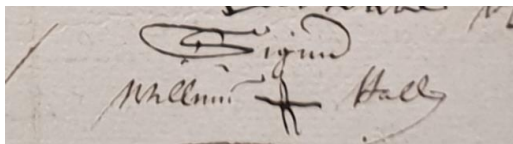
A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The text is written in a cursive script and appears to read "David Adamson".

David Adamson, thirty-six year old mariner of Dover, Kent. Master of the *Successe* of Dover.

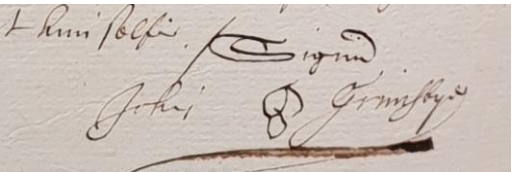
A handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The text is written in a cursive script and appears to read "James Hales".

James Hales, fifty-seven year old mariner of Dover, Kent. Ordinary mariner of the *Successe* of Dover.

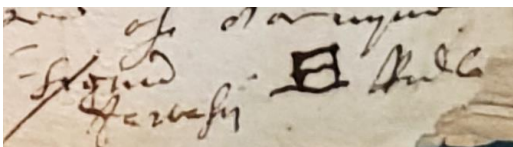
All probably unable to read or write



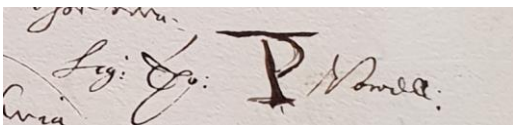
William Hall, age 25, of Deptford, Kent; mariner, one of the company of the *Plyades*. "Hee hath used to goe to sea for these eleaven yeares laste paste but never as master or masters mate of any shipp nor ever tooke uppon him the charge of a shipp as master or master's mate."



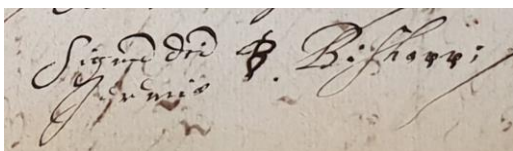
John Grimsby, age 33, of Deptford, Kent; mariner, one of the company of the *Plyades*. "Hee this rendent the tyme aforesaid was one of the company of the interraste shippe the *Plyades* but had no office in her."



Gervase Ridla, age 38, of Stepney, Middlesex; served in the *Plyades*. Came into the *Plyades* at Venice and served in her for 16 months, including 14 months in service of the Duke of Venice.



Thomas Powell, age 35, of Stepney, Middlesex; shipwright, carpenter's mate of the *Plyades*.



Jeremy Bishopp, age 38, of Redriff, Middlesex; mariner, master's mate of the *Plyades*.

The *Plyades* of London

London/San Lucar/Malaga/Venice//Venice/?/Corfu/?/Venice//Venice/?/Zant/?/London

Return lading: currants; oil

Ship burthen = 350 to 400 tons

Known company = Master + Purser + 15 men

Missing company = 23 to 33 men

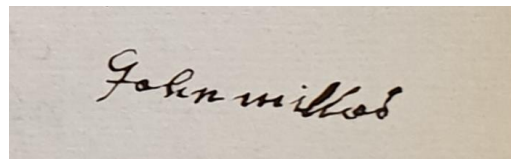
Total company = est. 40 to 50 men

ca. October 1637 to ca. May 1640

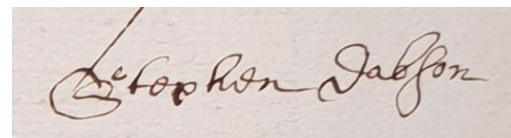
Voyage length = 32 months

"This hee affirmeth uppon his oath to bee true, who was then at Venice master's mate of the shippe the Love of London then alsoe lett out there for the same service and was there on shore with the said Anthony and others of the company of the *Plyades* after they went there on shore out of her as aforesaid" (HCA 13/58 f.150r); "The said Anthony [the chirurgeon], 3 of the quarter masters, the carpenter and boatswaine's mates, 3 trumpeters and some other of the company of the *Plyades* as were on shoare at Venice and there stayed fower or five dayes and this rendent heard them say that they would not goe onboard her againe and proceed in the service of the Duke of Venice unlesse they might have more wages than they were shipt for in England" (HCA 13/58 f.150v)

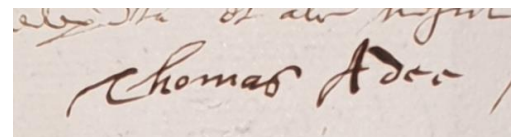
All almost certainly able to read and write



John Milles, age 28, of Stepney, Middlesex; mariner, foremast man of the *Plyades*.



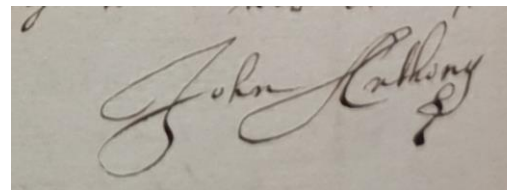
Stephen Dabson, age 27, of Wapping, Middlesex; mariner, one of the company of the *Plyades*. "Hee hath used the sea as a common sailor or mariner for the space of about these fower years laste paste."



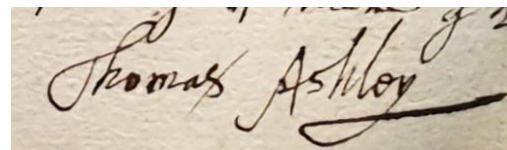
Thomas Adea, age 35, of Wapping, Middlesex; quartermaster of the *Plyades*. "Hee hath bine employed as a seaman or mariner in merchants' shippes and the King's shippes in all for the space of about these fourteene yeares laste paste."



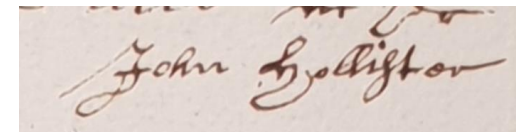
Jefferie Steavens, age 30 or 33, of Saint Brides, London; mariner, master's mate and one of the company of the *Plyades*.



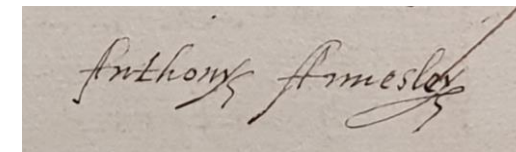
John Anthony, age 28, of Saint Dunstons in the East, London; one of the company and chirurgeon of the *Plyades*.



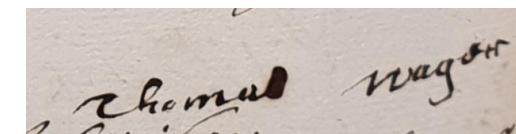
Thomas Ashlye, age 40, of Limehouse, Middlesex; mariner, chief master's mate and pilot of the *Plyades*.



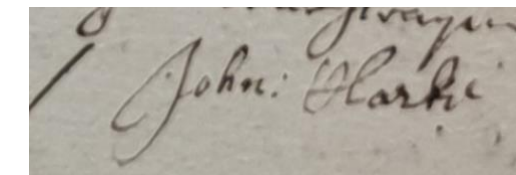
John Hollister, age 20, of Stepney, Middlesex; mariner, second master's mate of the *Plyades*.



Anthony Annesley, age 40, of Limehouse, Middlesex; mariner, first boatswain's mate, then gunner's mate of the *Plyades*.



Thomas Wager, age 40, of Limehouse, Middlesex; shipwright, carpenter of the *Plyades*.



John Clarke, age 26, of Deptford, Kent; boatswain of the *Plyades*.

66.7% signature literacy on partial headcount

The *William* of London

Voyage: ?/Tunis [Barbary]/Livorno/?

Return lading: ?

Ship burthen = N/A

Known company = Master [deceased] +12 men

Missing company = ?

Total company = ?

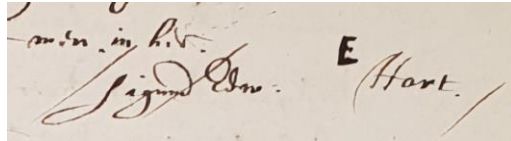
ca. 1640

Master: Abraham Steevens [deceased by 1640]

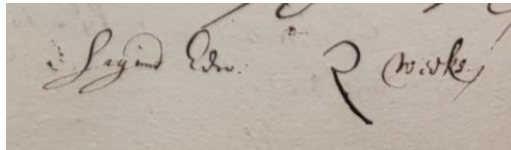
Voyage length = N/A

83.3% signature literacy on
partial headcount

All probably unable to read or write

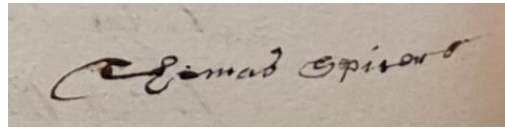
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward Hart". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

Edward Hart, 38 year old mariner of Limehouse, Stepney. One of the quartermasters of the *William* of London.

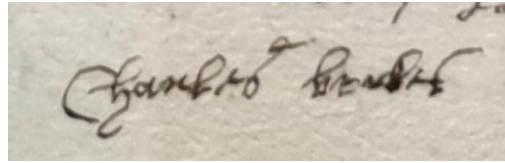
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward Weeks". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

Edward Weeks, 24 year old shipwright of Stepney, Middlesex. Carpenter's mate of the *William* of London.

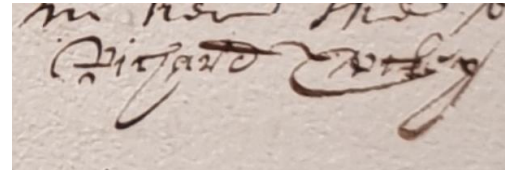
All almost certainly able to read and write

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Spicere". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

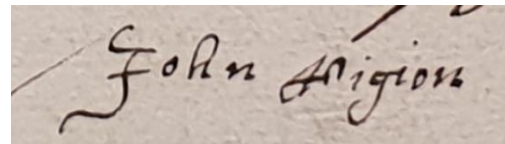
Thomas Spicere, 32 year old ship carpenter of Stepney, Middlesex. Carpenter of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charles Becket". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

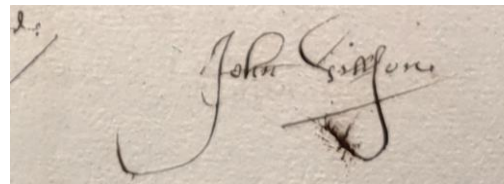
Charles Becket, 38 year old mariner of Saint Olaves, Southwark. Cook of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Tuckey". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

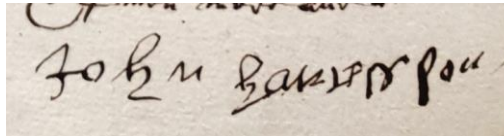
Richard Tuckey, 36 year old mariner of Saint Olaves, Southwark. One of the quartermasters of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Pigion". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

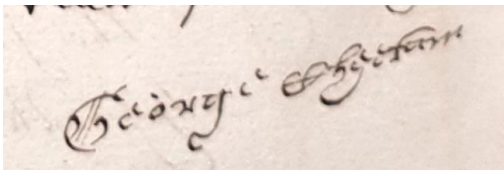
John Pigion, between 18 and 19 years of age, mariner of Stepney, Middlesex. Mariner of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Gilson". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

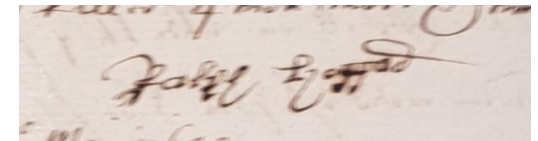
John Gilson, 36 year old mariner of Limehouse, Stepney, Middlesex. Master's mate of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Harrison". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

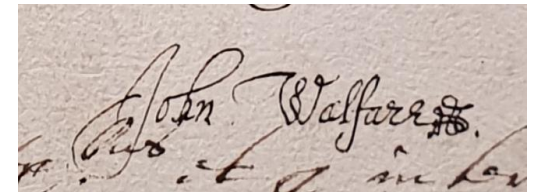
John Harrison, 40 year old, Saint Bottolphs within Bishopsgate, London. Cooper of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George Cheetham". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

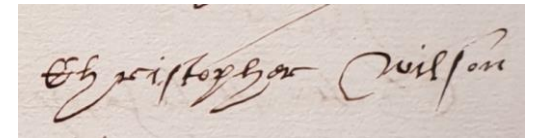
George Cheetham, 20 year old, Greenwich, Kent. Trumpeter's mate of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ralph Huggard". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

Ralph Huggard, 45 year old mariner of Greenwich, Kent. One of the quartermasters of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Walfare". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

John Walfare, 26 year old, of Stepney, Middlesex. Surgeon of the *William* of London.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Christopher Wilson". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly discolored.

Christopher Wilson, 47 year old mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex. Boatswain of the *William* of London.

Mariners letters

Few mariners letters have been clearly identified and contextualised

They were, however, frequently written and received, and were written both for commercial and personal reasons.

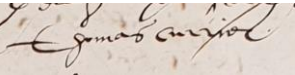
Their existence and range can be inferred from legal depositions in the English High Court of Admiralty.

Evidence of mariners writing and receiving letters in all offices and places on board ship

- Commercial and personal letters
- Masters; pilots; master's mates; gunners; boatswains; pursers; coopers; coxwains

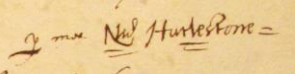
Letters of masters and pilots

**Master
Seen letters from
former ship mates,
now galley slaves**



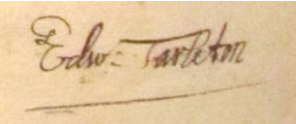
"William Knott, John Sicksword, Martyn Mason, William Browne and John Twayth and divers other marriners went forth in the *Prosperous* of Legorne belonging to the greate duke of fflorence from this porte of London to the porte of Legorne in the parts of Italy about three yeres laste of this examine's knowledge for that hee was master of the said shippe at that tyme...The foresaid marriners with 11 more whose names hee doth not nowe remember gott passage in a shippe of Holland bounde for Holland...of his certaine sighte and knowledg for this examine sawe them when theye wente on bord the said Holland shippe and should have come in her himselfe at that tyme, but that hee had some busines to the said duke which hee had not then dispatched...This hee affirmeth to be true for that hee hath seene letters written from the said English men gallislaves as aforesaid declareing their takeing and miserable service [in Barcelona gallies]" [35 year old mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex. Master of the *Prosperous* of Legorne, on a voyage from London to Livorno] (HCA 13/40 ff.145v-146r)

**Master
Received letter from
purser on his ship
whilst he, the
master, was on shore
at Seville**



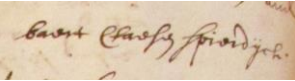
"The arlate shipp the ffortune (whereof the arlate John Roope was master) as at Cadiz in July laste and this examine in the shipp the *Society* of London (whereof hee was master) as alsoe then there hit uppon some occassions this examine went himselfe to Sivill leaveing his shippe aforesaide at Cadiz and whilst he was soe at Sevill his purser that hee left the despatch of his busines with at C diz wrott this examine a letter to Sevill, adviseing him that hee together with the said John Roope the master of the ffortune and John Crowther the master of the *Jonas* the last day of July aforesaide were carried by the Kinge of Spaines officers before the Governour of Cadiz and that hee commannded them to put in [?ffienza] for those shippes not to depart out of that porte or else hee would put souldiers aboard them" [30 year old mariner of Redriff, Surrey; master of the *Society* of London, on a voyage touching at Cadiz] (HCA 13/54 f.67r)

**Master
Received letters in
London from ship's
owner, dated
Liverpool and
Coventry**



"The last time and place that this deponent saw the said Sandiford, was on Monday last near three weekes in that Eaten Streete where the said Sandiford was on horseback come out of the Maidenhead Inne going for Manchester, whence hee said hee was to goe for Ireland; And saith the since his departure hee this deponent hath received a letter from him dated at Liverpoole the twelveth instant (which came to this deponents hands about three dayes after) and before that this deponent received other from him the said Sandiford which hee wrote and dated from Coventry as hee was going downe the Wednesday week after such his departure, which letters hee hath now here in his custody" [30 year old mariner of Liverpool; master of the *Manchester*, bound out on a voyage from London to Dublin] (HCA 13/72 f.623r)

**Master
Received letter sent by
his brother from Spain to
Amsterdam**



"On or about the eighteenth day of March (new stile) next following the said moneth of May 1654, and about six weekes before Generall Penn and the English flete came to Hispaniola (according as hee hath heard of the time of their arivall there) the Governour and officers of Santa Domingo caused this deponent and his said brother to be imbarqued in a Spanish frigot and sent them away prisoners for Spaine, in regard of such their comming (as was by the Spaniards pretended) to trade at Santa Domingo, And saith that in their course of proceeding for Spaine comming to the Westward of the T[?]e[r]c[?]XX)a llands they met a flushing man of warr, which being of greater strength than the Spanish frigot tooke this deponent out of the frigot, but with consent of this deponent and of his said brother staid still in the frigot to the end to goe to the King of Spaine and obtaine reparation of their said vessells and goods; which according his said brother (as hee afterwards wrote into Holland procured, (namely libertie for himselfe and sentence of restitution of both the said shippes and their goods, with license to saile to Santa Domingo with a dutch shipp and dutch men to fetch away the said shippes and lading. Which newes ariving at Amsterdam by by letter from his said brother, this deponent coming to Amsterdam to give his owners an account of their voyage, was by them in or about December 1655 new stile sent from Amsterdam for Cadiz to assist his said brother, and to buy or freight a shipp for Santa Domingo for the effect aforesaid, and consigned this deponent to John [DorXXX] and Peter Pulla the younger (sonne of the said Peter one of the owners) both dutch men resident in Cadiz to be by them supplied with moneys for the ends aforesaid" [34 year old mariner of Amsterdam; master of the twenty-two gun ship the *Yellow Sunn*, on a voyage with his brother (who was master of a slave ship, the *Nicholas*, to Guine to procure slaves to be transported to Martinica or Saint Christophers] (HCA 13/72ff.339r-339v)

**Master
Familiar with hand
writing of Teneriff
factor; received letter
from London merchant
with advice; had general
letter copied out and
distributed to other
masters at Teneriff**

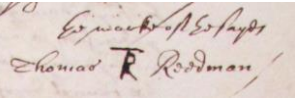


"Having perused the letter in this fifth article mentioned (hee being well acquainted with the arlate Mr Arthur Ingrams hand writing) doth hee doth verily beleieve the sayd letter to bee all his the sayd Mr Ingrams hand writing...

[He] was at the Canaries the voyage in question in the shipp the *Catherine* whereof hee was master and came home full laden, and saith hee received a letter at the Isle of Wight before his goeing on his voyage to Teneriff from his merchant adviseing him that hee thought it convenient for for him their deponent to staye there eight dayes before hee proceeded on his voyage to Teneriff...

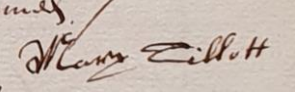
The generall letter predeposed of sent from the factors at Teneriff came first to this deponents hand and by him was [commonisated] to the rest of the masters of the English ships then there lyeing and among the rest to the sayd Smith aboard the shipp *Katherine* in Teneriff road saith they all of them read the originall and then caused every of them coppies of the same to bee transcribed out of it and saith the coppies that have their deponent caused to be made thereof was examined with the originall by this deponent and another" [42 year old mariner of Deptford., Kent; master of the *Catherine*, on voyage from London to Canaries and back] (HCA 13/71 ff.61v-62r)

**Pilot and master
Saw letter from part-
owner of ship giving
master directions**



"Hee sawe a letter from one Mr Edward Jackson of Gainsburgh (who is accompted owner of the greatest part of the shipp *William*) wherein hee ordered the sayd Huntington her master, (after his ladeing brought to London delivered) to goe with his sayd shipp *William* to the Sheilds and there lade salt for his the sayd Jacksons accompt and goe therewith to Gainsburgh And beleeveth shee was bound then soe to doe" [49 year old mariner of Kingston upon Hull, Yorkshire; pilot of the *William* of Gainsborough; experienced pilot and master of ships for twenty years (HCA 13/70 f.515v)

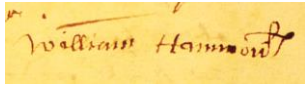
**Widow of master of ship
Received letters and
other writings from her
husband**



"This examine doth verily beleeeve in her conscience the five bills of ladeinge in Dutch in the article mentioned beinge nowe shewed unto her at the tyme of this her examination were and are subscribed by the proper hand writeinge of her husband John Tillett whoe went out master of the arlate shippe the *John* and *Dorothy* in this her last voyage to sea in which voyage homewards bounde shee was caste away and perished in the sea aand as shee is informed by some of her company whoe not without greate dannger esaped to shoare a live, her sayd husband was in swimmenge a shoare drowned and for that shee is very well acquainted with her sayd husbands charecters and manner of writinge haveinge divers tymes heretofore in his life tyme received letters and other writeinges from him and many tymes seene him write his name. Shee beleeveth the contents in the sayd twoe bills of ladeinge because as shee conceiveth subscribed by her sayd husband as before shee hath deposed were and are true and soe had and done as is therein contained." [34 year old widow of John Tillett, the deceased master of the *John* and *Dorothy*, who was drowned . Living at Wapping. (HCA 13/55 f.216r)

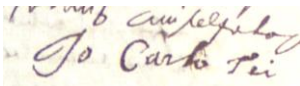
Letters of masters

Mariner; part-owner of ship; acting master
Acted in response to a letter



"In or about the end of November last past this deponent (who was and is a part owner of the said vessell) going to the said Capitaine John Greene to his house at or neere Saint Catherines, to enquire about freight for the said vessell, the said Greene told him that hee had received a letter from the said Goulding (dated from Sandwich or Ramsgate) inviting the said Greene to come downe and speake with him about account of the said shipp, and tould this deponent that hee should goe downe with him and take command againe of the said vessell" [70 year old mariner of Redriff Wall, Surrey; part-owner of the *Prosperous*; requested to act as master, replacing John Goulding] (HCA 13/81 f.577r)

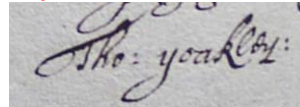
Colourable Italian captain
Received letter from shore at Canaries



"The said merchant lader during such abode of the said shipp at Legorne, the better to secure her (being an English vessell) procured a passe or certificate from his highnes the grand duke of Tuscany, purporting that the said shipp belonged to Italians, subiects of the said duke, and calling her in the said passe the *Santa Antonio di Padua*, and put this deponent (an Italian) Capitaine of her, whose name was contained in the said passe as Capitaine of the said vessell soe therein named the *Santa Antonio di Padua*, all which was donne and shee was furnished with the said dukes colours to secure and preserve the said shipp the *Lisbone frigot* and her lading from seizure by the Spaniards, in regard of the warres betwext England and Spaine...

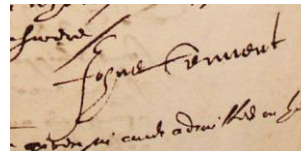
Two dayes after this deponents said retourne aboard the officers came to the sea side and sent aboard the said shipp the *Lisbone frigot* (then there riding by the name of the *Saint Anthony of Padua*), to have her bills of health and dispatches brought ashore to them to the end that they having visited them, the said ship might proceed to her pratique or trade, and at this comming of the said officers, the said John Maria Basso the next day before their said comming advised this deponent by a letter. And saith that the Captain del Marie or officer usually employed in that behalf being soe come aboard at the end of the said two dayes, to advertise them of the Lieutenants or officers attendance ashore to view their dispatches, and the said Capitan Dell Mara withall requiring in the name of the said officers ashore that this deponent should come with the said dispatches and bring the masters mate, pilot, chiurgion and boatswaine with him, and one of the shippes company putting it into the said Bartholomew ketchers his head that this was some trick to get them ashore and betray them" [25 year old mariner of Livorno; (HCA 13/73 f.37v)

Master and part-owner of ship
Received letters regarding rescue of his ship



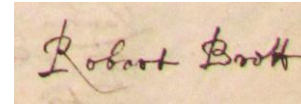
"Hee well knoweth the ship the *Thomas* arlate, And saith that the arlate Mr Cowell and one Mr Canham Mr Reed and Michael Yoakeley the elder, and Michael Yoakley the younger and this deponent, set out the said ship, about January 1653 from this port of London on a voyage to bee made with her from hence to Roan, and to other places beyond the seas and they the said Cowell Canham, and Reed, and the said Yoakeleys are the true and lawfull owners of her and by the consent of thereof her said owners went master of her, and saith the said ship, (being in her course for this port and coming from Morlaix) was together with this deponent, and company seized by a three Brest men of warr; on or about the fifteenth of Aprill 1654: and saith that hee hath bin certainly informed by letters and otherwise that the said Ship *Thomas* was taken as aforesaid rescued and brought unto ffallmouth" [21 year old mariner of the precinct of Saint Catherines near the Tower of London; master of the *Thomas*, voyage from London to Rouen, Morlaix and back to London] (HCA 13/73 f.84v)

Master
Read open letter circulated amongst Scottish masters



"Hee alsoe well knew the vessell of warr interrogate belonging to Rotterdam the commander whereof was the interrogate Capitaine Kirkoff and saith the sayd vessell of warr carried eight gunnes and fifty men or thereabouts and was about the beginning of March 1655 English style in the river of fforth neere Boraston in Scotland whether hee came as convoy to several shippes from Rotterdam to the sayd place and saith that the sayd Kirkoff while hee soe lay there did give notice by letter to masters of shippes in generall upon the sayd coast (each of them to show it to others) that hee was bound for Rotterdam and would accept under his convoy all shippes thereabouts that had occasion to goe for holland and secure them in their voyage thither from the danger of all men of warr or to that effect which letter was communicated and showne to this deponent by one Robert Camell master of a shipp belonging to Leith" [32 year old mariner of Kircaldy, Scotland; master of the *Union* of Leith] (HCA 13/71 f.179r)

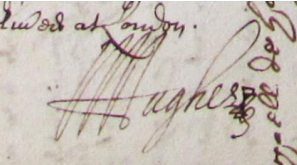
Presumed master
Received letters from one of ship owners



"He well knew a shipp called sometimes the *Dolphin* and sometimes the *Prince Arthur*, which said shipp lay at Dartmouth in the yeare 1654 but he cannot remember the time when he the deponent being putt in possession of the sayd shipp by one Thomas Cowell, Arthur Ottoway and John Greene, this deponent being in possession therof for their use did receive a letter from the sayd Thomas Cowell to deliver or surrender up the sayd shipp to Mr Wheeler the then Mayor of Dartmouth for the use of Alderman ffrederick the party producent as of the sayd Wheeler, which he the deponent did accordingly" [31 year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex; (HCA 13/70 f.354r)

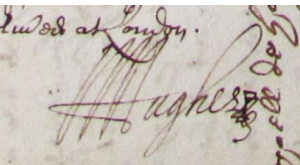
Letters of pursers

Purser
Letter from Livorno
sent via English
merchant at Zant
and delivered to
master of ship



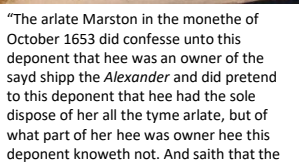
“The letter interrate came from Legorne inclosed in a letter to Mr George ffarington [merchant] at Zant, who delivered the same as now it is to the said George Hughes [master of the *Thomas Bonadventure*]” [23 year old rope merchant of Deptford, Kent; former purser of the *Thomas Bonadventure*, on voyage from London to the Eastern Mediterranean] (HCA 13/70 f.158r)

Purser
Wrote letter on
behalf of master of
ship and sent from
Livorno to freighters
in London



“To the first Interrogatorie and schedule therein mentioned and now shewne unto and perused by this examine, hee saith and depose, that the same was and is a letter writtten with the proper handwriting of this rendent by the appointment of the said George Hughes [master of the *Thomas Bonadventure*], and that this examine by appointment as aforesaid sent the said letter from Porto Longone to the interrate Alderman ffrederick and Companie, and saith that the contents thereof were and are true.” [23 year old rope merchant of Deptford, Kent; former purser of the *Thomas Bonadventure*, on voyage from London to the Eastern Mediterranean] (HCA 13/70 f.157v)

Purser
Carried open letter
from London to Cork,
which he read

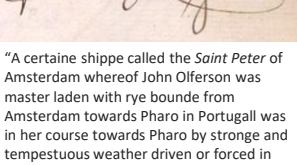


“The arlate Marston in the monethe of October 1653 did confesse unto this deponent that hee was an owner of the sayd shipp the *Alexander* and did pretend to this deponent that hee had the sole dispose of her all the tyme arlate, but of what part of her hee was owner hee this deponent knoweth not. And saith that the sayd Watson did usually observe the order of the sayd Maston as an owner of the sayd shipp ...

Hee this deponent being present at the meeting of the sayd Warner and Marston in the sayd moneth of October 1653 did then heare the sayd Marston confesse and acknowledge that hee had received notice from the arlate Watson of the contents of the sayd Watsons agreement with the sayd Warner touching the voyage in question...

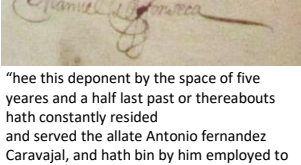
Hee well knoweth that the sayd John Marston did by this deponent send a letter to the arlate Watson into Ireland (which letter was delivered to him this deponent open and by him read) wherein was conteyned is to this effect that hee the sayd Marston did approve of the agreement made betweene the sayd Watson and the sayd Warner touching the voyage in question and was contented that the sayd Watson should proceede thereon and prosecute the sayd voyage to Virginia” [27 year old mariner of Newington Butts, Surrey; purser of the *Alexander*, on a voyage from London to Cork in Ireland and then to Virginia] (HCA 13/71 ff.432r-432v)

Merchant
Letter sent from Cornwall
by master of ship driven
onto rocks



“A certaine shippe called the *Saint Peter* of Amsterdam whereof John Olferson was master laden with rye bounde from Amsterdam towards Pharo in Portugall was in her course towards Pharo by stronge and tempestuous weather driven or forced in amongst the rockes upon the coast of Cornwall neere a place called Mounts baye where the master and his company for safeguard of the sayd shippe and goods was enforced to cast some of her ladeinge over board into the sea and to implore the ayd and assistance of the inhabitants thereabouts for safeguard of the remainder but soe it fell out that divers parties under pretence of saveinge and preserving the said shippes ladeinge, stoll and imbeselled away parte of the same and converted it to theere owne private uses to the preiudice and iniurye of the sayd master and his company and the true owners of the same whome were and are merchants of Amsterdam some of whose names were and are Wessell Nooreman and Jacob [?Rowbands] and this hee knoweth to bee true for that about a moneth since hee speake with the said master of the sayd shipp heere in London and since that received a letter from him out of Cornwall where he nowe is” [53 year old merchant, resident in the parish of Saint Hellens, London] (HCA 13/62 f.3r)

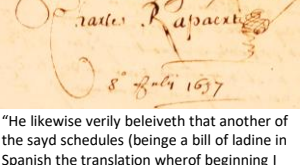
Merchant, book keeper
and letter writer
Letter sent via London
post house to Dartmouth
for master of ship



“hee this deponent by the space of five yeares and a half last past or thereabouts hath constantly resided and served the allate Antonio fernandez Caravajal, and hath bin by him employed to write in his bookes and letters concerning his commerce and correspondence in merchandizing affaires...

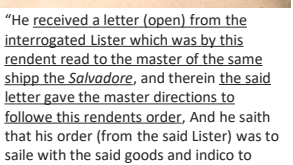
Which said letters and writings this deponent did see and carefully peruse and observe, and well remembreth and knoweth, that by order and in the name of the said Fernandez a letter was written wherein the said order to Policarpio was inclosed by this deponent and by him delivered at the Poast house London to be delivered at Dartmouth to the master of the said shipp the *New England Merchant*, to the end and intent, to be by him delivered to the said Policarpio de Oliveira, as it effectually was upon the said shippes arrival at Porto Porto, as this deponent hath likewise seene and observed by and in a letter of the said Policarpio sent to the said Fernandez wherein hee acknowledged to have received the said order of his said correspondents, and also by a like letter of the said shippes master intimating his receiving of the said packett (to witt the packett wherein the said order was enclosed) and that he would deliver the same unto him, the said Policarpio upon his arrival at Porto Porto aforesaid” [21 year old merchant of London] (HCA 13/72 ff.477v-479r)

Merchant, former
book keeper
Seen bills of lading
and other writings
from master of ship



“He likewise verily beleiveth that another of the sayd schedules (beinge a bill of ladine in Spanish the translation wherof beginning I Cornelius Nieuport et cetera is subscribed with the proper handwriting of the sayd Cornelius Nieuporte, for that the sayd Nieuport was master of the sayd shipp [the *ffortune* of Dover] by the space of three yeares or therabouts before her castinge away and within that tyme this deponent hath seene a great many of his subscriptions to bills of ladinge and other writings which is very like in the character to the subscription to the sayd bill of ladinge, and that the same bill is faythfully translated and the translation therof doth substantially agree with the originall which he knoweth because he hath compared them together and understandeth both the English and the Spanish tongues” [22 year old merchant of Dover; formerly book keeper for Peter de Thosse of Calais, merchnat, who was sole owner of the *ffortune* of Dover] (HCA 13/53 f.222v)

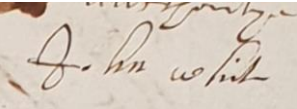
Servant to English
merchant at Livorno
Read open letter to
master of ship



“He received a letter (open) from the interrogated Lister which was by this rendent read to the master of the same shipp the *Salvadore*, and therein the said letter gave the master directions to followe this rendents order. And he saith that his order (from the said Lister) was to saile with the said goods and indico to Civita Vecchia” [21 year old gentleman of Brixworth, Northampton; formerly servant to John Fairefax at Livorno] (HCA 13/65 f.2v)

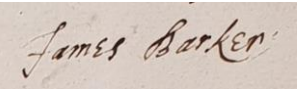
Letters of master’s mates

**Master’s mate
Sent letter along
Spanish coast
concerning death of
master**



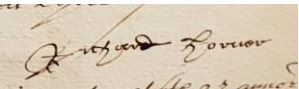
"The arlate John Lowe dyed at Nerca arlate and the arlate Steevens was then at Mallega which is distante from Nerca at leaste tenn leagues. And this examine was at Nerca when the said Lowe dyed and did write a letter to the said Steevens then at Mallega to acquainte him of the death of the said Lowe which letter as hee heard was delivered the said Steevens at Mallega aforesaid...Hee this rendent was master's mate of the said shippe to the said Lowe deceased whileste hee lived and afterwards to the foresaid Steevens whose succeeded Lowe in his mastershippe and hee hath received all the wages which hee expecteth to receive due to him for his service in the foresaid shippe the Beaver the voyage in question. And hee received the same of the said Steevens" 35 year old mariner of Wapping, (HCA 13/56 ff.69r-69v)

**Master’s mate
Knows ship’s master
wrote letters to his
owners on shore**



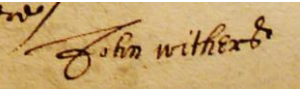
"The pilott asked the said Russell yf hee would sett saile for Dunkercke, but hee the said Russell [the master of the *Desire* of Harwich] said hee could not then sett saile for that hee must goe a shoare to write letters home to his owners and that morneinge Russell wente ashoare to Sandwich and when hee came a shoare he resolved not to goe to Dunckercke without further order from Mr Lewes [?Vandance] [English mariner; chief mate of the *Desire* of Harwich, on a voyage from France, touching at the Downs]" (HCA 14/45 ff.28r-28v)

**Master’s mate
Received letter from
master, who was ashore,
giving instructions for
lading**



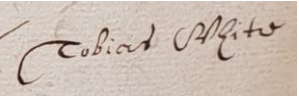
"Within the tyme arlate the arlate shipp the *Phenix* of Ipswich (wherof the arlate Richard Waade was master and part owner) was at Quinsborowe deipe in the Eastland and the sayd Mr Waade went up into the countrey about the sayd shipp's affayres and beinge there sent a letter to him this deponent beinge his mate, directinge him what goods he was to take in of every merchant that was to lade goods aboard her and amongst the rest he have this deponent direction to take in ten lasts of goods which were to come from Brownsborough in the Eastland for the accompte of the arlate Christopher Vincent..." [25 year old mariner of Ipswich, Suffolk; master's mate of the *Phenix* of Ipswich, on a voyage to Konigsberg in Prussia and the Eastland] (HCA 13/50 f.590r)

**Master’s mate
Copied factors’ letter
and compared to
original**



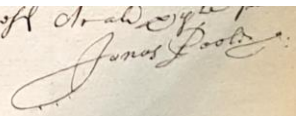
"Hee saw the original letter interrogate but did not see Ingram or Stevens [Arthur Ingram and David Stephens were English factors or merchants at Teneriff] or any of the rest whose names are thereto subscribe the same, but well knoweth their names are thereto and soe were when this deponent copyed out the same for the sayd Smith [master of the *Prosperous*] , and saith hee copied the same by the sayd originall and compared it with the originall, videlicet hee this deponent read the originall and John Yonge [commander of the *Exchange*] whose name is to the sayd coppie looked upon the sayd copy, the rest who have alsoe subscribed thereto being present and saving the same soe compared, and for saith those premisses were done aboard the Richard aforesayd" [58 year old mariner of Deptford, Kent; master's mate of the *Richard* of London, on a voyage from London to the Canaries and back] (HCA 13/71 ff.63r-63v)

**Master’s mate
Heard letter read out
loud to master of ship
from Alicante
merchant**



"He the said Cary [Alicante merchant who had received wrong bale of goods out of the ship the *George and Elisabeth*] forthwith wrott a letter directed to the said Burdett at Naples to the effecte aforesaid, which hee read to the said Ellison [Master of the *George and Elisabeth*] in this examine's heareinge and then delivered yt to the said Ellison in this examine's sighte" [49 year old mariner of Ratcliff, Middlesex; master's mate of the *George and Elisabeth*, voyage from London into the Streights] (HCA 13/55 f.105v)

**Purser and master’s
mate
Received many letters
from the master during
the voyage**



"The two schedules or bills of ladeinge arlate are as hee this examine verily beleeveth in his conscience subscribed with the proper hand wrteinge of the arlate Tillett the then master of the arlate shippe the *John and Dorothy* which Tillett is since deceased, and that all and singular the contents there in mentioned were and are true and were soe had and done as is therein contained...for that hee this examine is very well acquainted with the said Tillett's hand and character and manner of writeinge haveinge often tymes seene him write and haveinge received many letters from him whileste hee was upon the voyage in question and hee beleeveth the said Tillett was soe honeste a man that in a busines of this nature would not have subscribed his hand to a false bill of ladeinge" [27 year old mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex; purser and master's mate of the *John and Dorothy*; voyage from Lisbon towards Dover or Dunkirk, but cast away] (HCA 13/55 f.225r)

**Master’s mate
Saw letter in hands of
master ordering his
discharge**

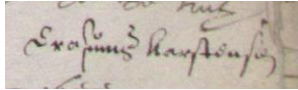
SIGNATURE
[IMAGE MISSING]

"About the latter end of december last past, this deponent saw a letter in the hands of the said Fawcner the master whereby the interrrate Best gave order to the said Fawcner to discharge this deponent and the said John Vinitro [ship's carpenter], whereupon this rendent replied hee would have his wages before hee would be discharged and then the said master wished him this rendent to stay a while longer and see if any moneys would come for their payment this rendent not knowing of any other discharge neither of himselfe nor any other of the said shipp's companies" [27 year old mariner of Limehouse, Middlesex; master's mate of the *Swan*; on voyage from London to the Bermudas] (HCA 13/71 f.184r)

Letters of gunners, coopers, coxwains and common mariners

Gunner

Carried open letter from Amsterdam to Saint-Malo



"In or about the beginning of March last newe stile hee this deponent being at Amsterdam was there hired by one Mr La Gard a merchant there dwelling to goe to Saint Malo's to the shipp the *Crosse of Jerusalem*, (which hee said was lying at Saint Malo's) and to goe gunner of her from thence in a voyage for Spaine, whereupon this deponent went accordingly to the said shipp to Saint Malo's and there arrived on the 7th of Aprill next following or thereabouts new stile...

Monsieur La Gard sent this deponent and the said five others from Amsterdam for Saint Malo's in the shipp the *White Unicorn*, whereof Cornelius Jacobs Sayle was master, to whom the said Monsieur La Gard wrote in an open letter (which this deponent read) that hee should receive and transport the said six persons in his said ship the *White Unicorn*, to Saint Malos, whither they were going to serve in the said shipp the *Jerusalems Crosse*, and that the owners of the said shipp the *Jerusalems Crosse*, should pay him the said master of the *White Unicorn* at Saint Malo's for their passage or transportation, or to the same effect, and saith hee this deponent carried and delivered the said letter from Monsieur Le Gard to the said master of the *White Unicorn*, who transported them accordingly....

Monsieur La Gard sent a letter by this deponent to Peter Martinsen master of the *Crosse of Jerusalem*, which this deponent delivered to the said Peter aboard the said shipp at Saint Malo's, and sawe him break it open and take thereout two papers for the said shipp, the one in ffrench and the other in dutch" [36 year old mariner of Amsterdam; gunner of the *Jerusalems Crosse*](HCA 13/70 ff.603v-604r)

Cooper

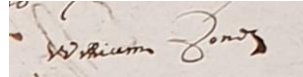
Reports letter sent by master of ship to master's servant

SIGNATURE
[IMAGE MISSING]

"Hee this deponent with some others of the said ships company were set on shore in Corenewall about the 14th or 15th day of february next after the seizure of the said shippe And saith that one John Hawten servant to his precontest haveing receaved a letter from his Master and order to deliver the same at London to his father assoone as hee could after hee was set ashore in England hee did make what haste hee could hither but hee being stripped and travelling on foote could not bee heere sooner than in 12. or 13. dayes space But what the contents of the said letter were hee knoweth not" [24 year old mariner of Southampton; cooper of the *Mathew and John*] (HCA 13/55 ff.254v-255r)

Coxswain

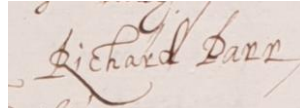
Delivered letters to Newfoundland ship masters and read them aloud to those who could not read



"He was cockswayne of the sayd shipp the sayd voyage and whilst the sayd shipp was at Newfoundland this deponent was by the master sent a coastinge to finde out some shippes from whom the sayd shipp the *Alethia* was to have her ladinge of fish and oyle and carried letters to the masters of those shippes from the owners of those shippes some of which letters he reade unto some of the sayd masters that were not able to reade the same themselves" [21 year old sailor of Limehouse, Middlesex; coxswain of the *Alethia* of London, on a voyage to Newfoundland and Lisbon] (HCA 13/51 f.4r)

Mariner

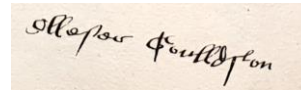
Reports purser sent letter from West Indies to part-owner of ship in London



"Aboute Christmas after the departure of the said shippe from this porte of London the voyage in question outwards bound the said Jones had a letter from the purser of the said shippe dated at Tartuga an island in the West Indies which letter hee shewed to the arlate Man, and the said Man then told the said Jones that hee did not doubt but that the said shippe would make a good voyage and then againe promised to pay the £52 odd money to the said Awle which hee afterwards refused to doe" [29 year old mariner of Stepney, Middlesex. In the ship the *William and Anne*, voyage from London to Saint Christophers. (HCA 13/55 ff.254v-255r)

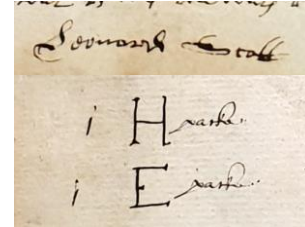
Mariner

Seen letters from former ship mates, now galley slaves



"He hath seene letters written from the said English seamen gallie slaves as aforesaid whereby it doth appeare that theye were taken by certaine Spaniards of Maiorcke and there imprisoned for a long time and afterwards putt into the gallies where they nowe remaine" [29 year old mariner of the precinct of Saint Catherines near the Tower of London. Served in the *Prosperous* of Leghorne on voyage from London to Livorno] (HCA 13/40 f.147v)

Mariner; Nephew of Danzig factor to whom goods consigned Carried letter(containing a bill of goods) to master or boatswain of his ship



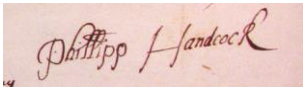
"There were severall packs of cloath laden or caused to bee laden aboard the shipp by the arlate Leonard Scott his order videlicet one when shee was in Skitterroade before shee went to sea and the other in Hull roade after shee was driven backe in theither againe by some disaster or other which were to bee transported in the said shippe there hence to Danske for the use and accounte of him the said Leonard and that those packs of cloathe were marked with the marks in the margente articulate and one of them numbred E and the other H which hee knoweth to bee true for that hee this examine carried them aboard the said shippe by the said Scotts order and when hee carried downe the firste of those packs which was delivered aboard the shippe in Skitterroade hee alsoe carried downe a letter with him from the said Scott wherein hee the [2sawe] there was a bill for the said packe of cloath which letter together with 5 shillings which the said Scott had sent to the company to drincke hee this examine to his nowe best remembrance delivered to the said Hemslye the master of the said shippe or his boateswaine but which of them hee doth not at present well remember" [31 year old markiner of Hull Yorkshire; served on ship the *Pennrose* of Hull on voyage from Hull to Danzig and back] (HCA 13/57 ff.47v-48r)

Journal keeping

Journal keeping was widespread amongst Early Modern mariners. These master’s mates kept detailed journals of the days, ports, winds & seas they encountered on their voyages.

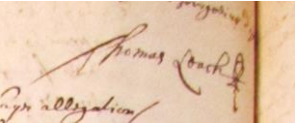
KEPT A JOURNAL

Master’s mate



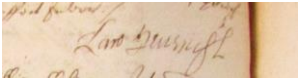
"[He] remembreth the same the better for that hee kept a iournall or memoriall of the sayd voyage" [Master's mate of the *Hopewell*, voyage from London to Scanderoon and back]

Master’s mate



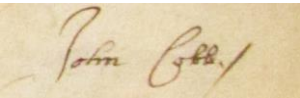
"Hee this deponent being masters mate [of the *Trades Increase*] as aforesayd kept a iournall of the voyage in question and thereby knoweth that upon the fifteenth day of July last the sayd shipp Trades Increase came out of Spikes Bay in the Barbados laden with sugar and other goods and bound for England at which tyme shee was a staunch shipp and not [XXX] leakie soe as to preiudice her ladeing nor any otherwise leake then other which trade to such hott countries usually are and soe continued till the [XX] of August last on which day the sayd shipp in her passage from the Barbados towards England mett with an extraordinary storme and tempest" [XXXX; master's mate of the *Trade Increase*; voyage from London to Barbados and back] (HCA 13/72 f.193v)

Master’s mate



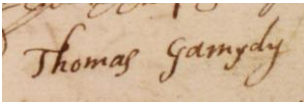
"The sayd shipp first sett sayle from London on the eighteenth of September last and thence went to Gravesend where the winde proveing Easterly and the shipp being alsoe of necessity to stay there to bee cleered by the officers of the blockhouse shee lay there to procure her cleereing and to expect a fayer winde from the nynteenth of the sayd moneth which was the day of her arrivall thither untill the twenty fowerth day of the same moneth, on which day shee sett sayle thence to the downes where shee arrived on the twenty fifth day of the sayd moneth in the night tyme and the next morning waied anchor and sett sayle from the Downes bound for Rotchell and touched at noe port till shee was by storme and contrary windes forced as aforesayd into Plymouth upon the twenty nynth of the sayd moneth. This hee knoweth for that hee kept a iournal" [38 year old mariner of Dorcehster, Dorset. Master's mate of the *William and Anne*. On voyage from London to La Rochelle and Wexford, but cast away]

Master’s mate



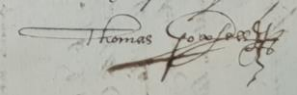
"He (having now his iournall of the voyage in hand)...The premisses he deposeth having his iournall now in his hand, wherein is faithfully and exactly sett downe every dayes passage of the sayd shipp during the voyage in question" [Master's mate of the *Gilbert*, voyage from London to Barbados and back]

Master’s mate



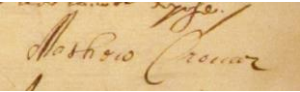
"Since the returne of the sayd shipp the Desire from the voyage in question Mr Slany, Mr Cloberry, Mr Bence Johnson and the foresayd Mr Hooper and two others whose names he knoweth not mett together at the Shipp taverne behinde the Exchange and had some conference together concerninge the differences nowe in question and this deponent did then give the sayd Mr Bence Johnson a true copie of part of the iournall kept by him in the voyage in question" [31 year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex. Master's mate of the *Desire* of London. On failed voyage from London to the Tereras islands]

Master’s mate



"The skiff belonging unto the interrrate shipp the William (uppon the 25th day of October 1639 interrrate) to this deponents knowledge by his iournall was sent ashoare to a small island thereabouts to search for fresh water for the releife of the said shipp the William" [26 year old mariner of Saint Olaves, Southwark; master's mate of the *William* of London, on voyage from London to Spain, Barbados, Saint Christophers and Bristol] (HCA 13/56 f.499r)

Master’s mate



"Hee being master's mate as aforesaid and keeping a iournall of the whole voyage in question thereby knoweth that the Olive Branch did not arrive at the port of Ligorine till the seaventeenth day of January 1657" [28 year old mariner of Redriff, Surrey. Master's mate of the *Olive Branch* of London. On unsuccessful voyage intended from London to Bantam and back to London via Livorno for pepper]

Exploring literacy using invoices & receipts

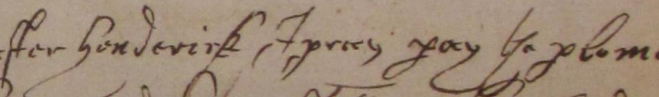
[illegible]

Plumber 1635
Thomas Barstey.

Mariner 1612

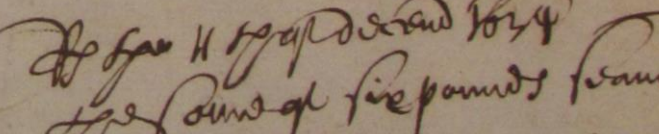
130

Thomas Cox



Master Hendrick, I pray you to please
 five pound seven shilling for love I

Instructions to pay invoice [1634]
 Handwriting of Thomas Cox



Received of Mr H. [illegible] 1634
the sum of five pounds seven
shillings in full payment
of his bill
Thomas Bardsey

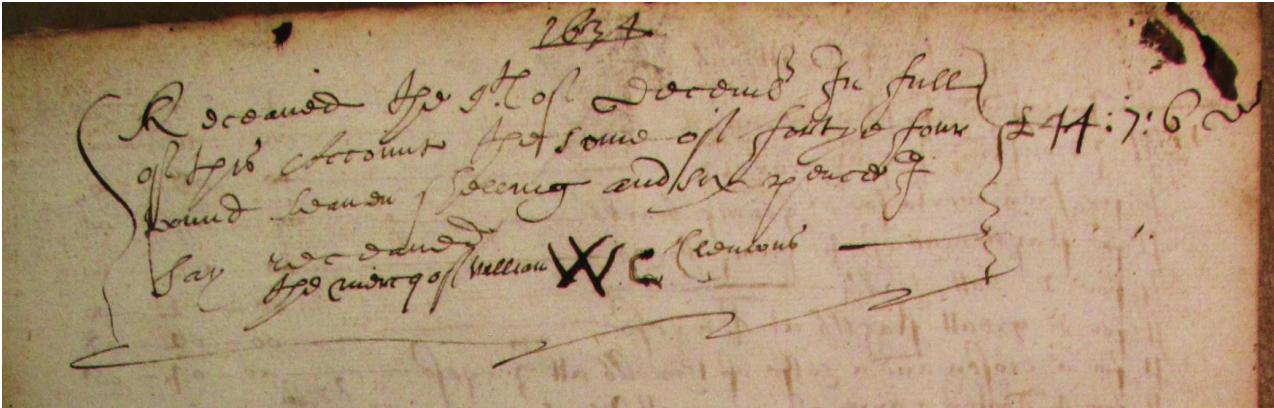
Receipt of payment [1634]
Handwriting of Thomas Bardsey

41

Initials of William Cleamans, smith. Handwriting of receipt in a different hand.

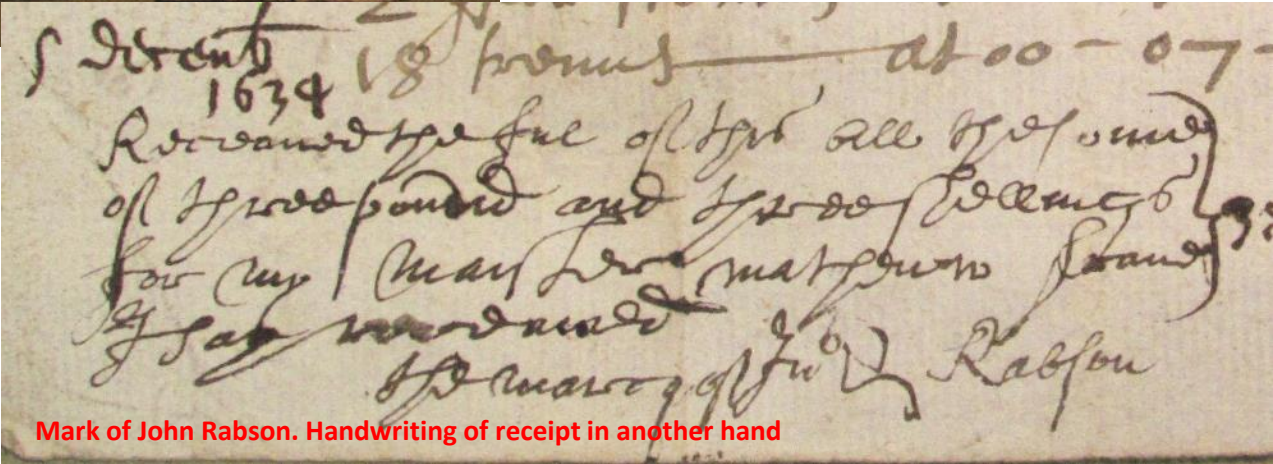
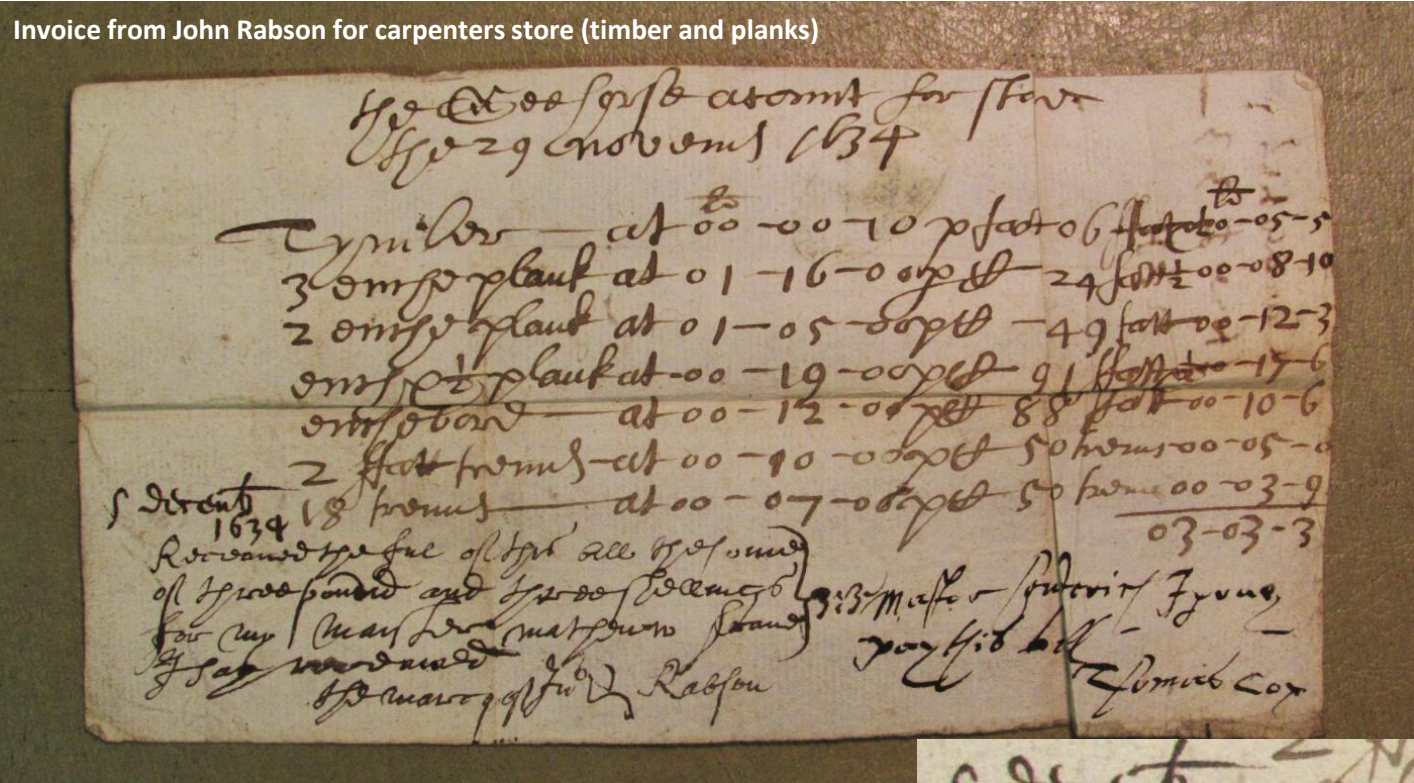


Back of invoice from Willaym Cleamans, smith, for work done



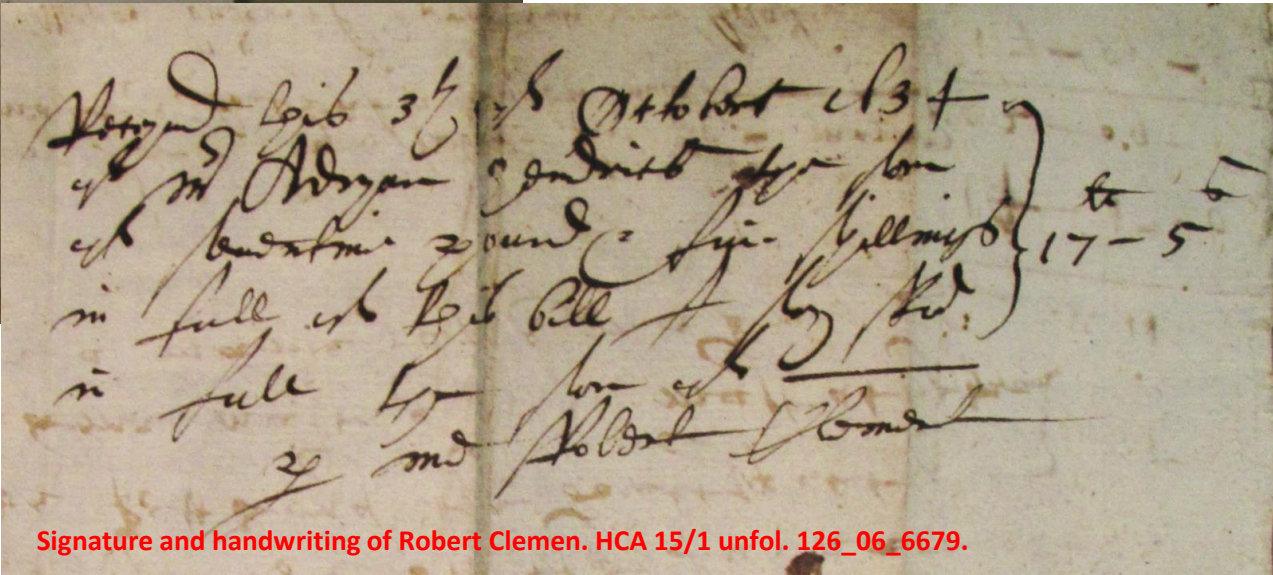
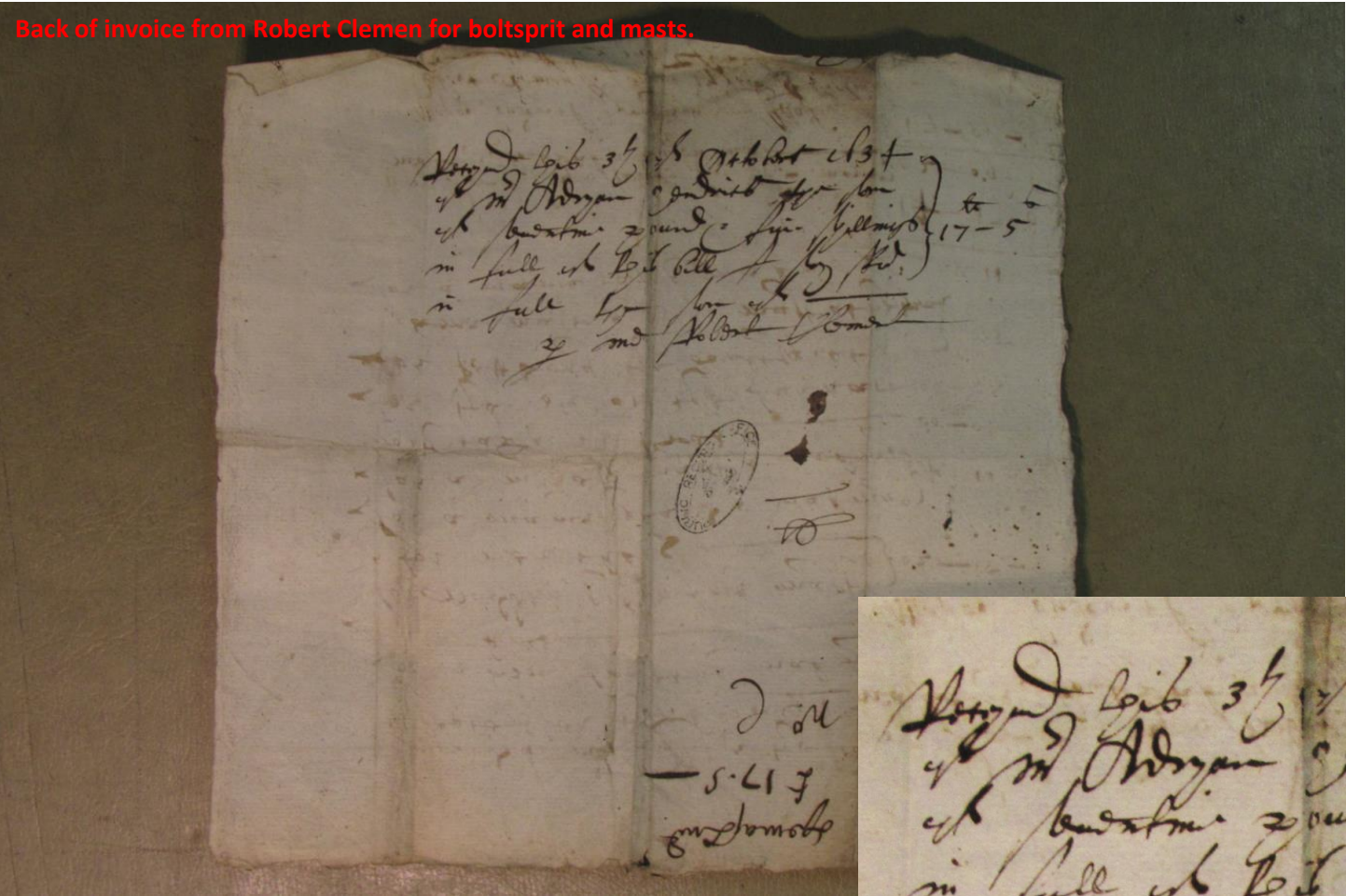
Initials of William Cleamans. Handwriting of receipt in another hand. HCA 15/1 unfol. 126_06_6671.

Mark of John Rabson, carpenter. Handwriting of receipt in a different hand.

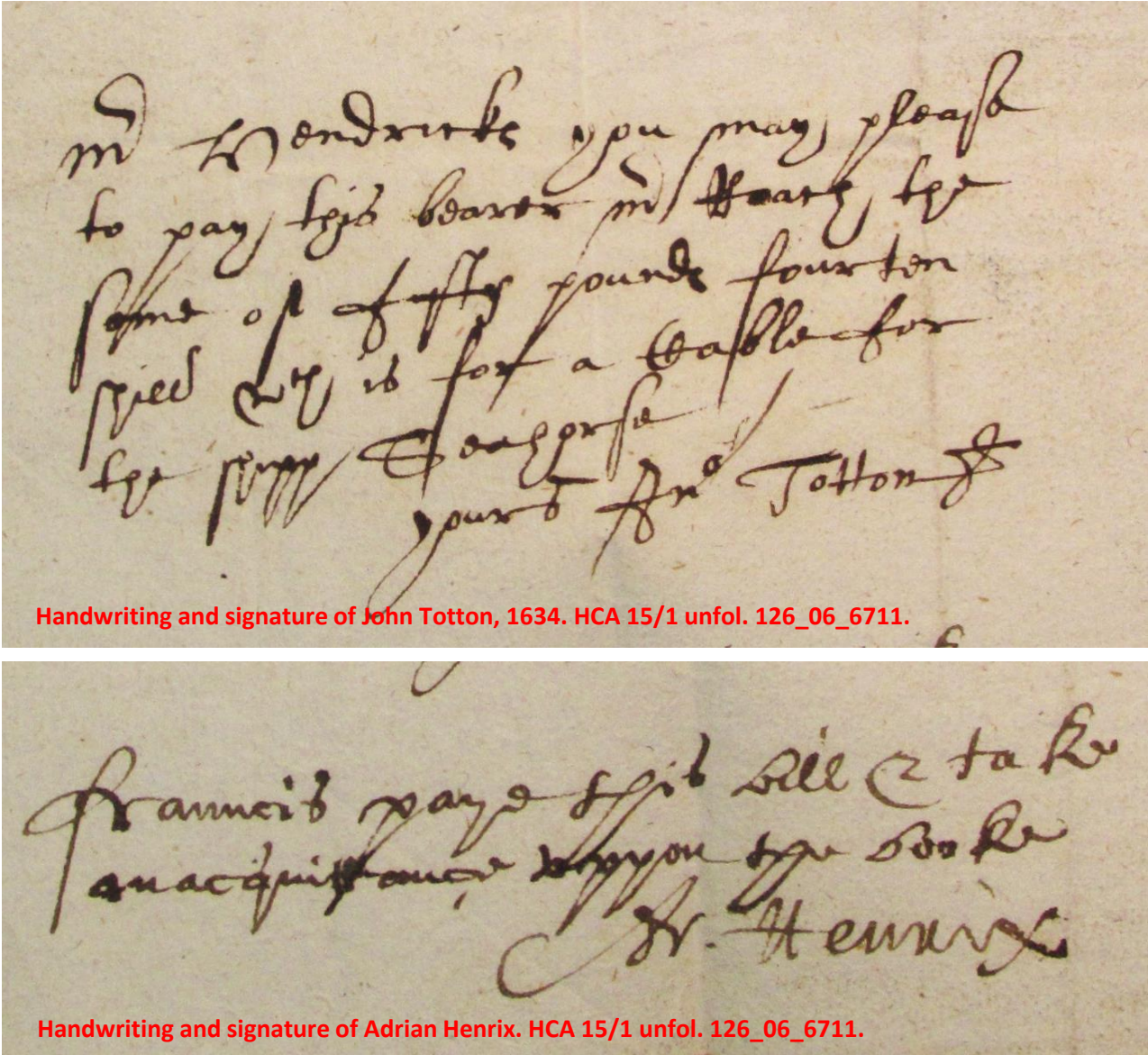
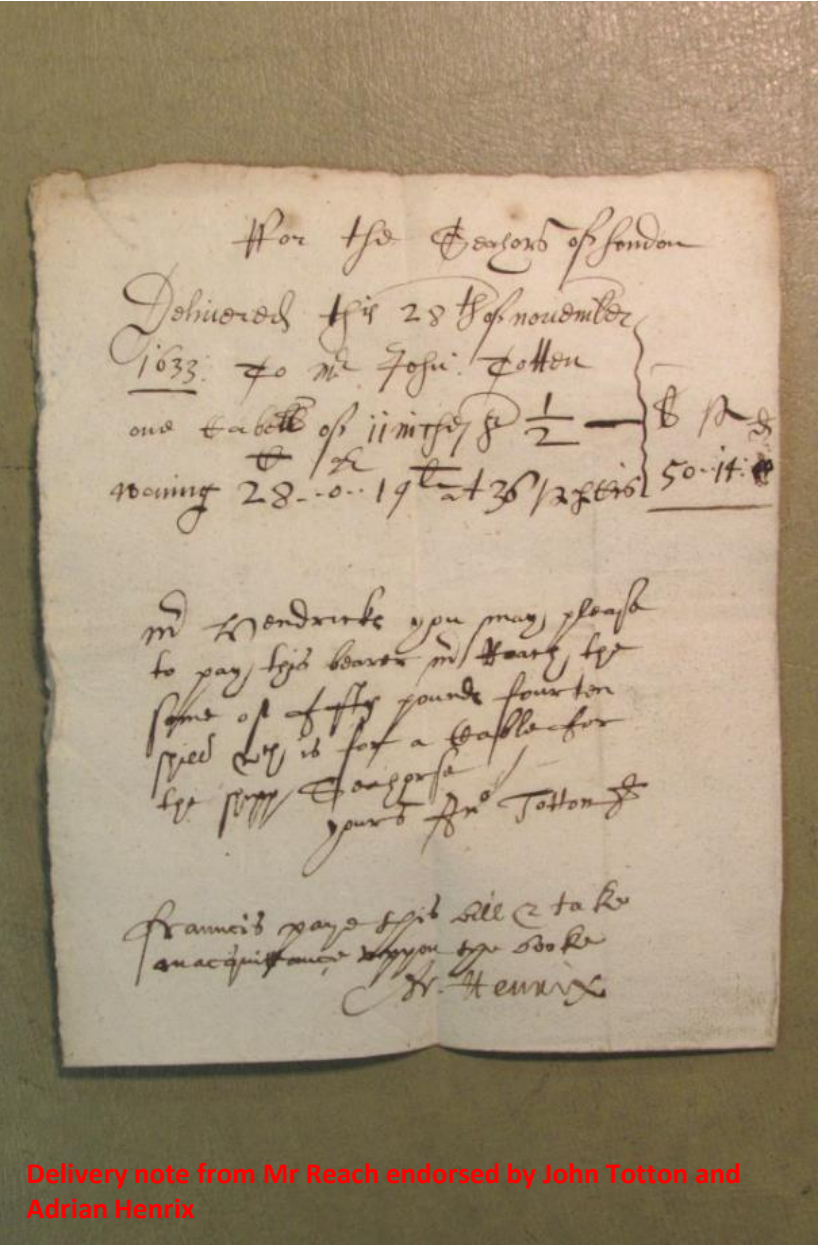


Mark of John Rabson. Handwriting of receipt in another hand

Signature of Robert Clemen, ?timber merchant. Handwriting of receipt is same as that of signature.



Signature and handwriting of Robert Clemen. HCA 15/1 unfol. 126_06_6679.



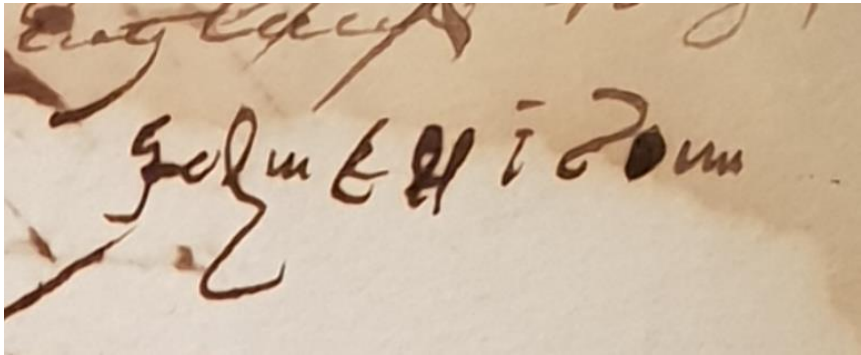
Handwriting and signature of John Totton, 1634. HCA 15/1 unfol. 126_06_6711.

Handwriting and signature of Adrian Henrix. HCA 15/1 unfol. 126_06_6711.

Impact of schooling on signatures

Unschool'd hand of John Ellison, mariner and captain, father of Edmund Ellison. His signature is consistent between the ages of fifty-seven and sixty-six.

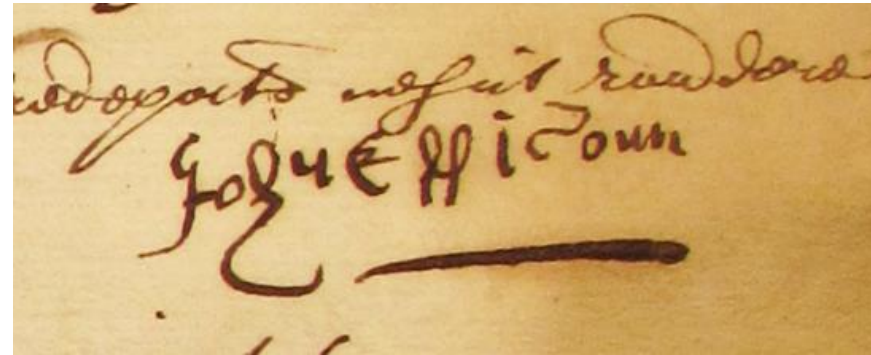
FATHER OF EDMUND ELLISON

A close-up of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The signature is written in a cursive, 'unschool'd' hand and reads 'John Ellison'.

John Ellison, fifty-seven year old mariner of Shadwell, Middlesex. Deposed November 1639. HCA 13/55 f.390r.

Mariner and part-owner of his son's ship

FATHER OF EDMUND ELLISON

A close-up of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The signature is written in a cursive, 'unschool'd' hand and reads 'John Ellison'. There is a horizontal line drawn below the signature.

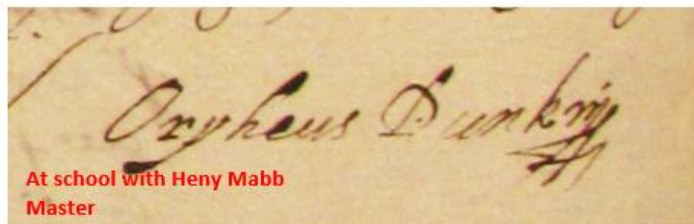
Captain John Ellison. Sixty-six year old mariner of Shadwell, Middlesex. Deposed October 1650. HCA 13/63 f.389r.

Mariner; Captain

"Before the arlate shippe the *George and Elisabeth* sett saile from Gravesend the voyage arlate the arlate George Hanger did treat and agree with the arlate Edmund Ellison in the presence and hearing of this examine for the transportation of eleaven negroes in the said shippe from England to Mallega or some other places thereabouts in Spaine and the said Edmund Ellison agreed to finde them victuals at his chardge in their transportation...He is the natural father of the said Edmund Ellison the producent, and was owner of a quarter part wanting a 32th of the interrater shippe the voyage interrater." [Deposition of John Ellison, November 1639] (HCA 13/63 ff.389r-389v)

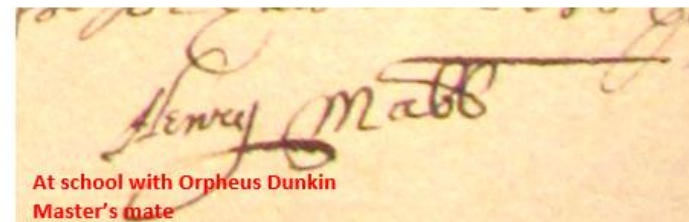
"Hee this deponent being a chirurgeon by profession was aborde the shipp the *George and Elisabeth* whereof the producent Captaine [Edmund] Ellison was captaine and commander in and about the yeare 1635 interrater and was and did execute the place of chirurgeon all the said voyage aboard the said shippe" [Deposition of James Russell, chirurgeon of the *George and Elisabeth*, under the command of Captaine [Edmund] Ellison; called as a witness in the HCA suit concerning Edmund Ellison as master and commander of the *Pearcy*] (HCA 13/63 f.124r)

What do schooled mariner hands look like? These pairs of signatures are of school friends. Orpheus Dunkin and Henry Mabb were at school together in Cornwall circa 1610. John Crockson and Edmund Ellison were also at school together, possibly in Shadwell.



At school with Henry Mabb
Master

Signature of Orpheus Dunkin, thirty-eight year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex. Master of ships for the last five years. Deposed April 28th 1638. HCA 13/54 f.79v.



At school with Orpheus Dunkin
Master's mate

Signature of Henry Mabb, thirty-eight year old mariner of the precinct of Bridewell, London. Master's mate of the *George and Elizabeth* of London. Dated May 25th 1638. HCA 13/54 f.101r.

1638



School friend of Edmond Ellison
Boatswain

John Crockson, forty-five year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex. Boatswain of the *Rebecca* of London. Deposed May 1650. Carried survivors from the *Pearcy* home to London from Toulon. HCA 13/63 f.114v.



School friend of John Crockson
Master and commander

Edmond Ellison, mariner of Shadwell, Middlesex. Master of the *Pearcy*, a ship of ca. 425 tons, 26 guns and ca. 42 men; his ship captured in a fight with a French man of war on a voyage home from Livorno via Lisbon to London. Deposed May 1650. HCA 13/63 f.119v.

1650

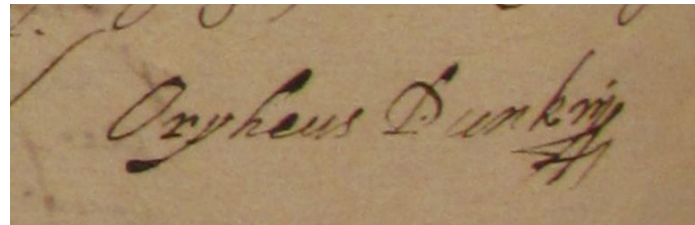
"This rendent went to schoole in Cornewall with the sayd Mabb and never knewe or heard that the sayd Mabb was brought up as a taylor or any other trade or profession but at sea but as he beleiveth he the sayd Mabb hath bene broughte up as a seaman but this rendent sawe him not from the tyme that he went to schoole with him which was about twentye eighte yeares since, untill about nyne or ten yeares since and then the sayd Mabb had the commandd of a shipp as master." (HCA 13/54 f.79v)

It is an open question how much schooling mariners had before they went to sea, from between the age of ten and sixteen, often as apprentices

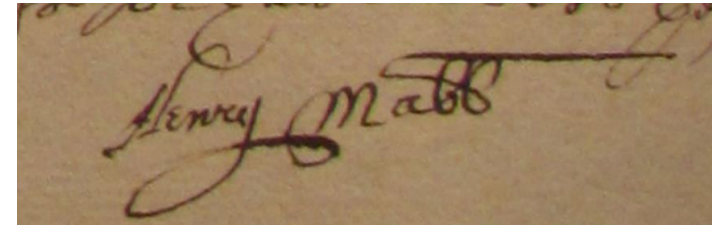
"He hath knowne the arlate Henry Mabb the producent for these thirty years last past or thereabouts...This rendent went to schoole in Cornwall with the sayd [Henry] Mabb and never knewe or heard that the sayd Mabb was brought up as a taylor or any other trade or profession but at sea but as he beleiveth he the sayd Mabb hath bene broughte up as a seaman but this rendent sawe him not from the tyme that he went to schoole with him which was about twentye eighte yeares since, untill about nyne or ten yeares since and then the sayd Mabb had the commannd of a shipp as master." (HCA 13/54 ff.79r-79v)

[Orpheus Dunkin, thirty-eight year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex. Master of ships for the last five years. Deposed April 1638.]

Implies that the two ship masters, Orpheus Dunkin and Henry Mabb were both at school together in Cornwall from about the age of eight until they were both about the age of ten.



Signature of Orpheus Dunkin, thirty-eight year old mariner of Wapping, Middlesex. Master of ships for the last five years. Deposed April 28th 1638. HCA 13/54 f.79v



Signature of Henry Mabb, thirty-eight year old mariner of the precinct of Bridewell, London. Master's mate of the *George and Elizabeth* of London. Dated May 25th 1638. [HCA 13/54 f.101r]

Thought experiment

How many letters did Early Modern English mariners write each year? How many of those letters have survived and where are they?

English mariner/sailor populations, late C16th to late C18th [Earle, *English Sailors, 1570-1775*, in Van Royen *et al.*, 1997, p.86]

Table 1
Sailors and Shipping Tonnage

Year	Tonnage	Sailors	Ton/Man
1582	68433	16119	4.25
1686	350000	c. 50000	7.0
1773	581000	52789	11.0

Sources: 1582: tonnage from L.A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws* (New York, 1939), 322; sailors from Great Britain, Public Record Office (PRO), State Papers (SP) 12/156, no. 46. The total has been inflated by 4.9% to include an estimate for Wales; see Harper, *English Navigation Laws*, 323, fn. 6. 1686: tonnage from Ralph Davis, "Merchant Shipping in the Economy of the Late Seventeenth Century," *Economic History Review*, Second Series, IX (1956), 72, fn. 5; sailors from John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III* (Cambridge, 1953), 110-111. 1773: tonnage and sailors from Harper, *English Navigation Laws*, 329 and fn. 28.

Table 2
Regional Distribution of Sailors

Region	1582		1792		%
	N	%	N	%	
Northeast	2180	13.5	18197	20.8	835
East Anglia	2952	18.3	4820	5.5	163
Southeast	1888	11.7	4347	5.0	230
London	1325	8.2	30200	34.5	2279
South	983	6.1	2414	2.8	246
Southwest	5461	33.9	11658	13.3	213
Wales	790	4.9	3296	3.8	417
Northwest	536	3.3	12637	14.4	2358
Total	16115	99.9	87569	100.1	543

Notes: Northeast: Northumberland, Durham, Yorks and Lincs; East Anglia: Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire; Southeast: Essex and Kent; South: Sussex and Hampshire; Southwest: Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Gloucester; Northwest: Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumberland.

Source: For 1582: PRO SP12/156 No. 46, omitting the London "wherry-men." Welsh sailors have been estimated as in table 1. For 1792: BL, Add. Ms. 38432. This lists tonnage port by port and "the number of sailors usually employed therein," so that real totals would be less since not all ships would be at sea at once.

because there was no work. Sir William Petty estimated in the 1670s that only half of the country's population of sailors was at sea at any one time, probably an under-estimate but not outrageously so judging by individual experience as revealed in depositions.²⁸

Earle (p.88)

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Assume

Common man sig literacy = 50%
Common men = 70% of total men
Officer sig literacy = 65%
Officers = 30% of total men
Common literate men 1 letter/year
Officers literate 3 letters/year
30,000 mariners

Letters/year = common men [10,500]
+ officers [17,550] = 28,050
Letters/decade = 280,500

Assume

Common man sig literacy = 30%
Common men = 70% of total men
Officer sig literacy = 60%
Officers = 30% of total men
Common literate men 1 letter/year
Officers literate 3 letters/year
30,000 mariners

Letters/year = common men [6,300]
+ officers [16,200] = 22,500
Letters/decade = 225,000

Table 2
Regional Distribution of Sailors

	1582		1792		%
Region	N	%	N	%	Inc
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Discussion