Early Modern Mariners Letters international workshop

Second day introductory slides
## Colin Greenstreet

July 15th 2022

- We are finding many mariners letters in multiple languages (e.g. English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, Basque) in a wide range of archives, through structured search and through serendipidty

- Our speakers have sourced mariners letters in multiple languages from 1600 through to the early C19th from English High Court of Admiralty (HCA 13/20-78; HCA 13/30; HCA 13/32); from National Museum of the Royal Navy; from National Library of Scotland … but have barely scratched the surface

- We have started to explore some potential uses from the building of corpora of mariners (and other) letters
  - Letters from common men and junior officers to family and friends show a wide range of linguistic variety not found in printed language from the same period and have considerable value to historical linguists
  - Mariners letters, conceptualised and studied as part of a combined sea and land Early Modern commercial information system, have the potential to challenge and broaden land and merchant centric thinking about Early Modern communication

- We have started to surface some interesting themes
  - Relationship of hybrid languages and their variants (North Sea tongue; Lingua Franca) and regional languages or dialects (Basque; Breton) to written expression in mariners letters
  - Possibility (debated both ways at the seminar) that there were distinct forms of letter writing by mariners (as distinct from other occupations such as merchants and tradespeople)

- We have started to develop some interesting hypotheses
  - High level of mariner literacy at all levels (common men, junior officers, senior officers) and nature of voyages (often multi-nodal, with frequent port stops) was conducive for reading, writing, sending, and receiving mariners letters
  - Litigiousness of Early Modern English (and other European) societies encouraged commitment of plans and actions to letters to ensure a written, legally useful record
  - Relatively high frequency of personal letter writing from common men and junior officers to wives, family, friends
  - Context of interception of letters in Prize Papers means that there is plenty of contextual information about the identity and status of mariner letter writer and recipients on board ships

- Estimates of the assumed number of letters originating from seafarers in the EM period are generally not contradicted by the participants, the estimates just vary somewhat (e.g. 100 000 letters between 1793-98 Helen Watt, 10 million for both centuries Colin).

- Reasons identified for the absence of Mariner Letters in today's archives: loss, sorting out, destruction/burning, repurposing (used as wrapping paper, etc.).

- Letters in the Prize papers are unique in terms of their language variety (particularly in terms of dialects), but therefore also more complicated to understand

- He/she who searches, finds! We have to dig deeper and dare the adventure of searching in local and national archives - especially in regional archives (example France)

- The definition of mariners' letters needs to be sharpened: What counts as a mariner letter?

- Should we rather speak of mariners' correspondence?

- What are the special characteristics of mariners' letters?

- Are there common characteristics of mariners' letters? Form, style, material, handwriting, language? Where do they learn to write?

- What about the letters that were sent to the seamen? How can we characterise them?

- Who belongs to the group of mariners? Carpenters, sailmakers, cooks, too? What about the passengers on board (question from the audience)?

- Are there any differences in letter writing of seafarers serving in the Royal Navy and/or on merchant ships? If so, does this have anything to do with RN training/schooling? Are there different requirements for the literacy and competence of seafarers in military shipping and in commercial shipping?

- What would be the position and/or motivation for a sailor to move from being able to sign letters to be learning to write letters? Advancement to helmsman?

- What were the typical events/situations when the sailors wrote? When did they have or get the time to write? Special occasions (ships being captured, mutinies) vs. regular occasions (Christmas)

- How do we combine more macro- (e.g. on literacy rates) and micro-historical perspectives (e.g. on the careers of mariners)?

- How can we integrate seafarers and their letters from other parts of the world? North Africa, Asia. Where do we find their letters? Looking forward to today's papers!

Mariners Letters 1600-1800 International workshop: Need to build a broad corpus of Early Modern letters (and other ephemera) to see orthographic, stylistic, dialectical variation
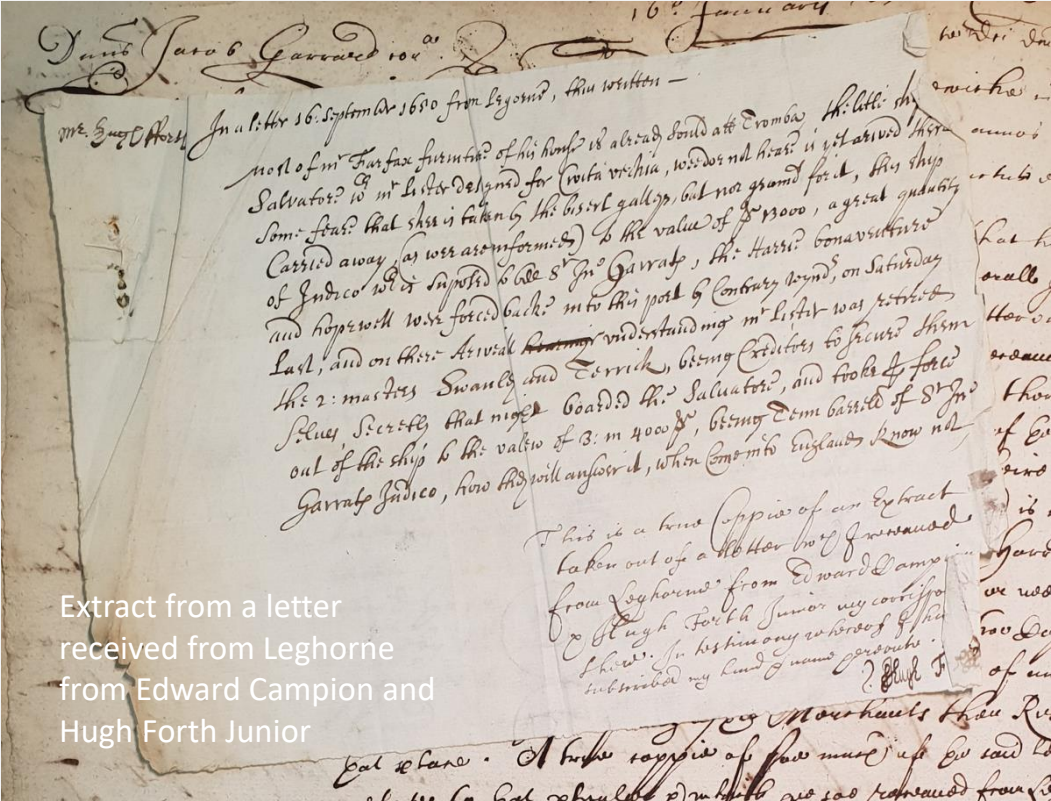
Extract from a letter received from Leghorne from Edward Campion and Hugh Forth Junior
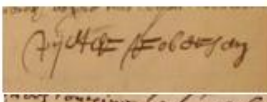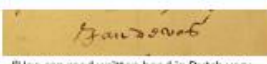

Invoice from John Rabson for carpenters store (timber and planks)
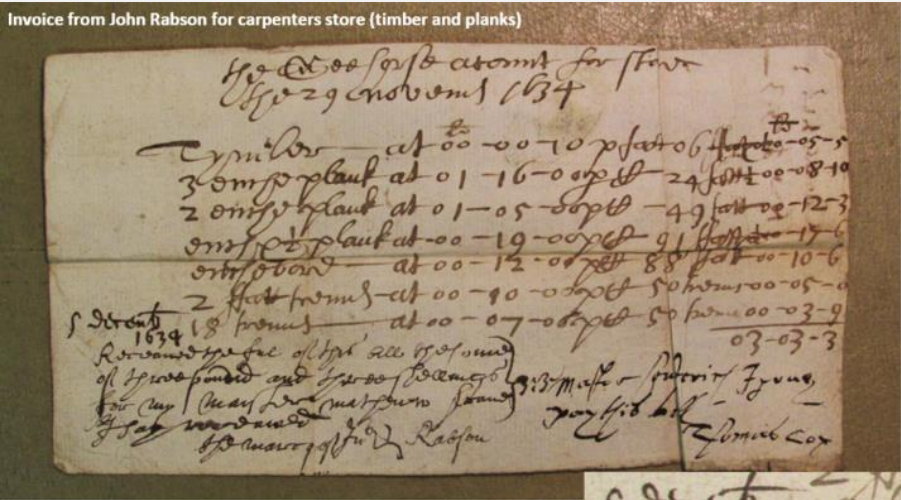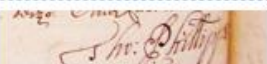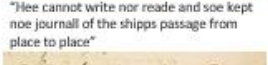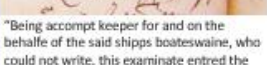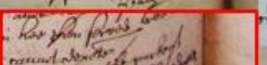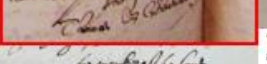
Front page of master's account. HCA 13/51 unfol. 126_06_6680

Account of goods laden on board the *Prosperous* for the use of English men

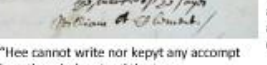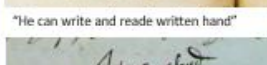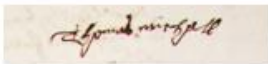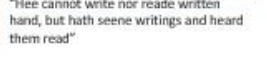|	Unable to write or read	Able to read not write	Able to write and read	Able to write and read in multiple languages
MASTERS			"Hee this examinate did keepe a .. journall of the interrate ship's voyage and that is now under this examinate's custodye in his chest aboard his shippe called the *Elsabeth and Mary* at ffallmouth"	"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 writeing 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"
HIGHER OFFICERS	"He cannot write nor read written hand"	"Hee can neither write nor reade, but yet can keep accompt of times, by a sort of cyphering which hee hath learnt for his owne use, and thereby remembreth the time"	"This hee knoweth for that hee kept a journal"	
		"He can read printing but cannot write"	"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 embeazeled and wanting"	"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"
			"Hee can write and reade, and learned the same when hee was a youth...hee can reade written hand well, and understandingly"	
LOWER OFFICERS	"Hee cannot write nor reade and soe kept noe journall of the shipps passage from place to place"		"Being accompt keeper for and on the behalfe of the said shipps boateswaine, who could not write, this examinate 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 read but hee remembreth that the winde stood contrarie the sayd 20th of December"	"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"	"Hee can write and reade, and saith hee did not take any note in writing of the time when the disaster aforesaid happened, but very well remembreth it, as hee hath great reason to doe"
	"Hee cannot write nor kepyt 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"	"He can write and reade written hand"	"Hee can write and read but remembreth not the date of the writings by him predeposed of"
		"The time hee cannot particularly remember not knowing how to write or reade"	"Hee can both write and read and saith hee did not keepe any diarie or dayly accompt in writing how the windes then stood"	
		"He beinge not able to write or reade did not keepe any iuornall what day the sayd shipp came to Nants, but in reguard of his wages kepte an accompte of howe many dayes she stayed there"		**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"	

Table Three: Mariner literacy by sub-occupation

Occupation	Count Other	Count Signoffs	Count Marke	Initials	Signatu	Total		% Other	% Marke	% Initials	% Signatu	% Total
Purser	3	310	1	0	309	313		0.96%	0.32%	0.00%	98.72%	100.00%
Chirurgion [on ship]	4	196	1	0	195	200		2.00%	0.50%	0.00%	97.50%	100.00%
Factor/Sopracargo	4	169	1	1	167	173		2.31%	0.58%	0.58%	96.53%	100.00%
Master[all ship types]	23	2741	119	111	2511	2764		0.83%	4.31%	4.02%	90.85%	100.00%
Master's mate [no variants]	21	1046	50	56	940	1067		1.97%	4.69%	5.25%	88.10%	100.00%
Coxwain	0	41	1	4	36	41		0.00%	2.44%	9.76%	87.80%	100.00%
Pilot	2	216	24	19	173	218		0.92%	11.01%	8.72%	79.36%	100.00%
Mariner	112	8639	1206	875	6558	8751		1.28%	13.78%	10.00%	74.94%	100.00%
Cooper (on ship)	0	107	17	12	78	107		0.00%	15.89%	11.21%	72.90%	100.00%
Gunner's mate	1	89	15	9	65	90		1.11%	16.67%	10.00%	72.22%	100.00%
Boatswain	3	580	82	86	412	583		0.51%	14.07%	14.75%	70.67%	100.00%
Gunner	3	371	43	71	257	374		0.80%	11.50%	18.98%	68.72%	100.00%
Trumpeter	0	27	5	4	18	27		0.00%	18.52%	14.81%	66.67%	100.00%
Carpenter [on ship]	4	476	94	104	278	480		0.83%	19.58%	21.67%	57.92%	100.00%
Steward [on ship]	2	94	19	20	55	96		2.08%	19.79%	20.83%	57.29%	100.00%
Common man & variants [1]	2	208	68	36	104	210		0.95%	32.38%	17.14%	49.52%	100.00%
Foremastman	1	88	18	27	43	89		1.12%	20.22%	30.34%	48.31%	100.00%
Quartermaster	6	330	95	79	156	336		1.79%	28.27%	23.51%	46.43%	100.00%
Sailor	11	608	244	92	272	619		1.78%	39.42%	14.86%	43.94%	100.00%
Cook [on ship]	1	126	46	29	51	127		0.79%	36.22%	22.83%	40.16%	100.00%

[1] Common man & variants = common mariner + common seaman + ordinary mariner +ordinary seaman

Compare mariners; rivermen; fishermen; labourers

Table Four: Mariner literacy compared with lightermen, watermen, fishermen, and labourers

Occupation	Count Other	Count Signoffs	Count Marke	Count Initials	Count Signature	Count Total		% Other	% Marke	% Initials	% Signature	% Total
Mariner	112	8639	1206	875	6558	8751		1.28%	13.78%	10.00%	74.94%	100.00%
Sailor	11	608	244	92	272	619		1.78%	39.42%	14.86%	43.94%	100.00%
Common man & variants [1]	2	208	68	36	104	210		0.95%	32.38%	17.14%	49.52%	100.00%
Foremastman	1	88	18	27	43	89		1.12%	20.22%	30.34%	48.31%	100.00%
Lighterman	0	116	37	36	43	116		0.00%	31.90%	31.03%	37.07%	100.00%
Waterman	1	211	87	55	69	212		0.47%	41.04%	25.94%	32.55%	100.00%
Fisherman	4	128	78	24	26	132		3.03%	59.09%	18.18%	19.70%	100.00%
Labourer	0	42	24	12	6	42		0.00%	57.14%	28.57%	14.29%	100.00%

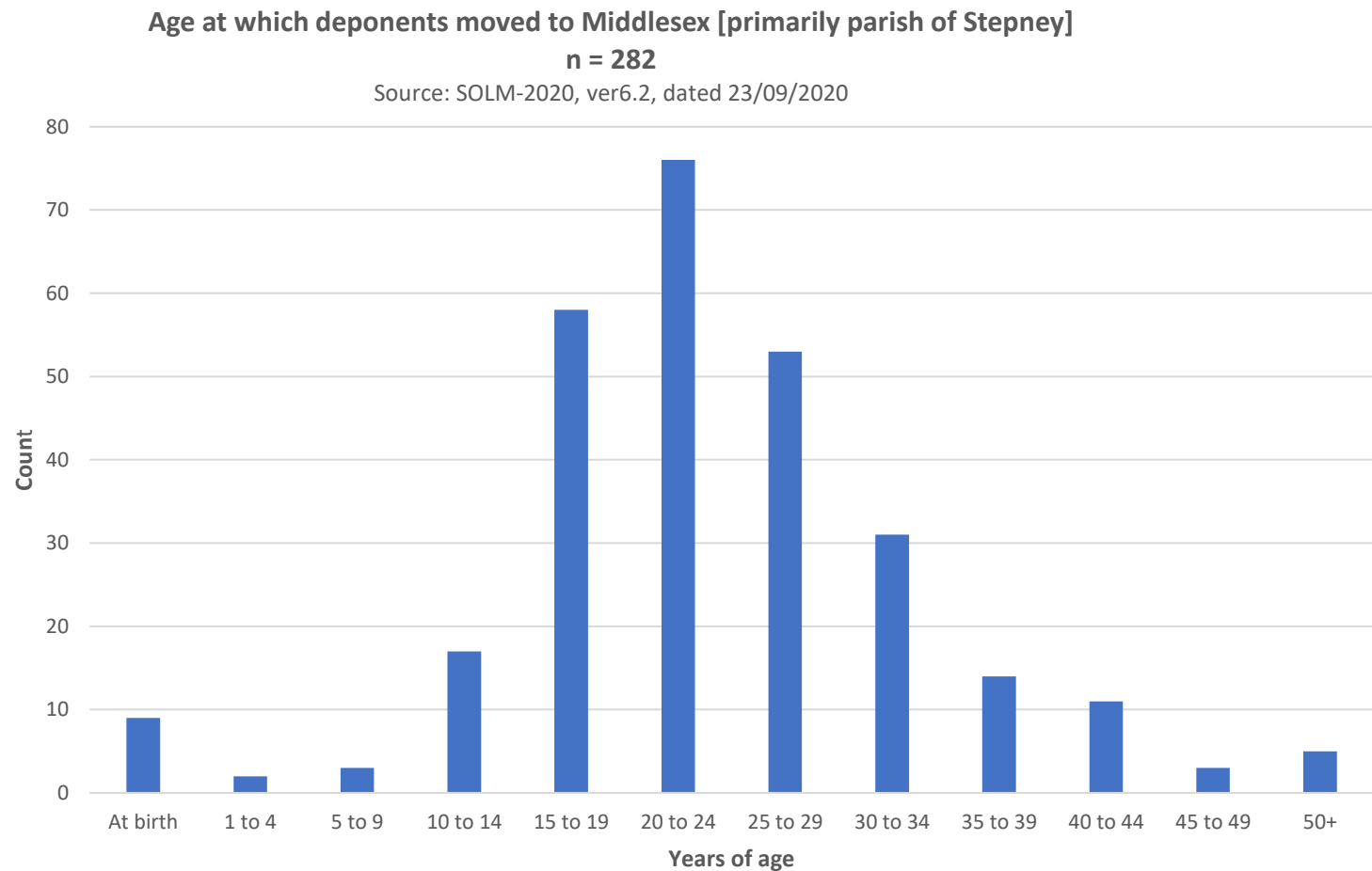[1] Common man & variants = common mariner + common seaman + ordinary mariner + ordinary seaman

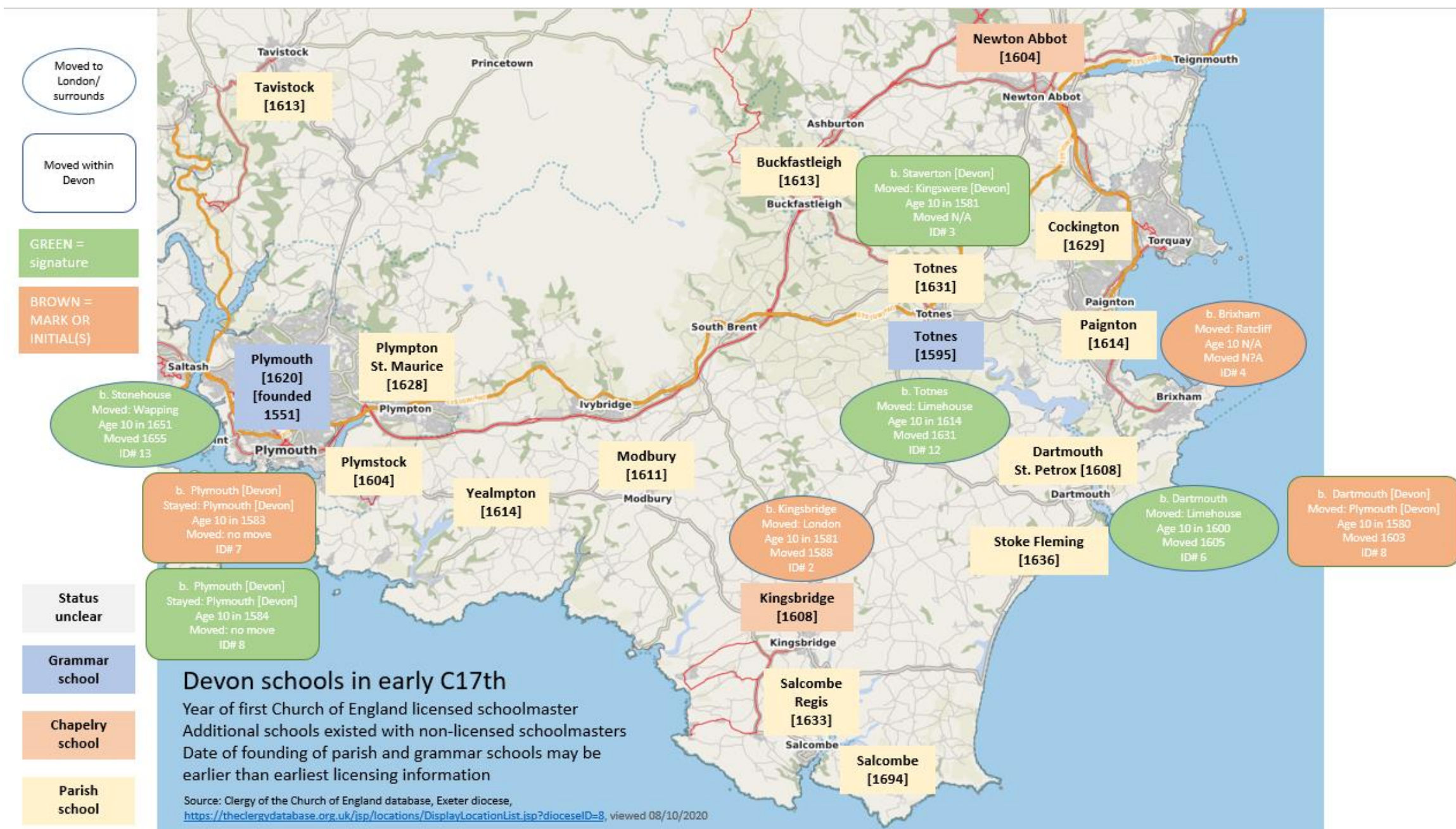**Age profiles of selected Early Modern maritime occupations**

Source: SOLM-2018 data set, ver. 1.94, pub. 04/07/2019

Average ages

Sailor	= 27.6 years
Foremastman	= 29.8 years
Master's mate	= 35.1 years
Quartermaster	= 36.8 years

Note: All occupations are self-described by deponents in the English High Court of Admiralty, 1573 – 1684. Self-described sailors are never officers. Foremastmen are never officers. Master's mates and quartermasters are considered officers.
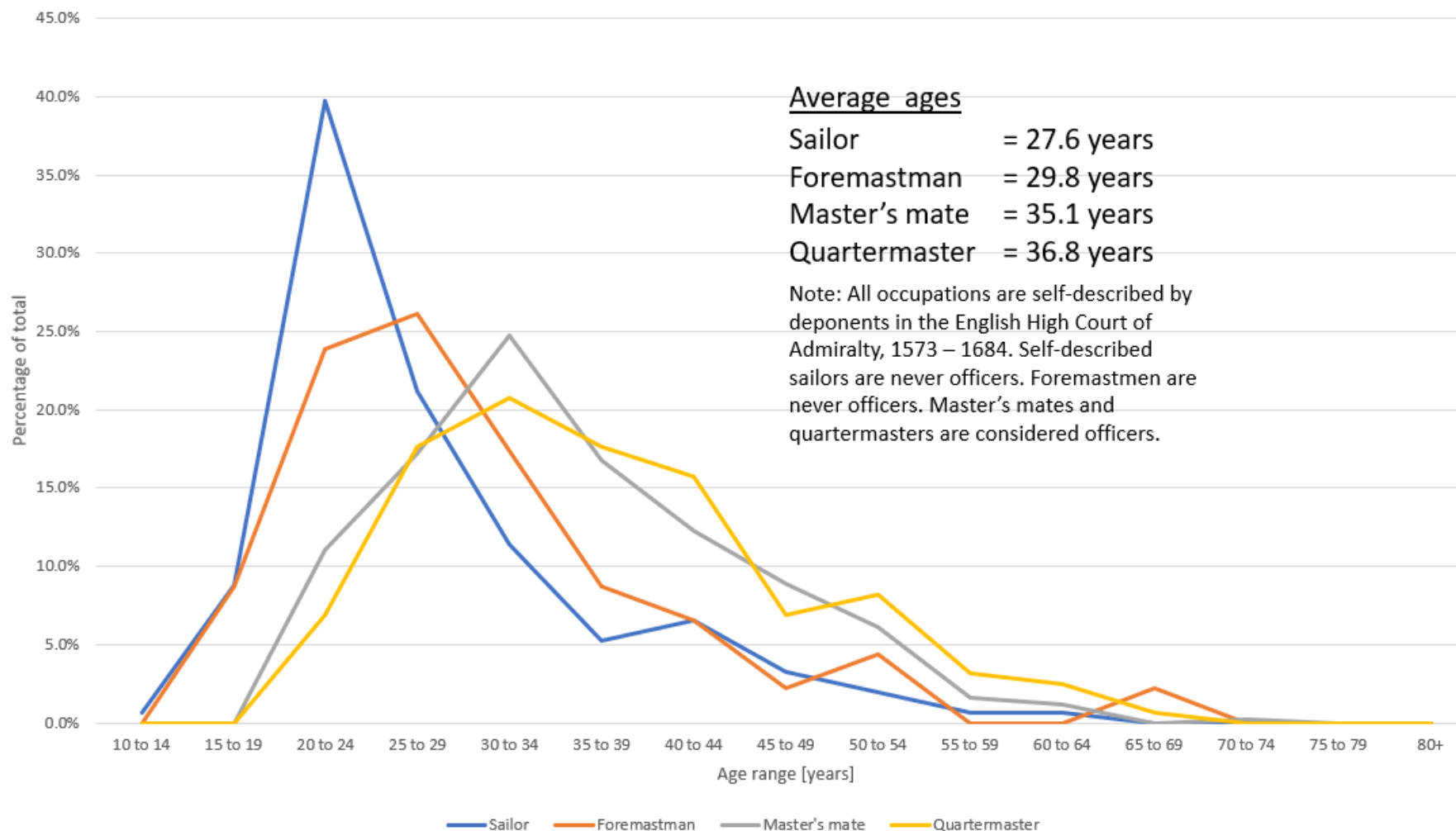
Sample sizes: sailor = 307; foremastman = 46; master's mate = 506; quartermaster = 159

Age at which deponents moved to Middlesex [primarily parish of Stepney]
n = 282
Source: SOLM-2020, ver6.2, dated 23/09/2020

Geographic origins of mariner migrants to Middlesex in C17th: part of Devon

Legend:
- Moved to London/ surrounds
- Moved within Devon
- GREEN = signature
- BROWN = MARK OR INITIAL(S)
- Status unclear
- Grammar school
- Chapelry school
- Parish school

Map labels:

Tavistock [1613]

Newton Abbot [1604]

Buckfastleigh [1613]

b. Staverton [Devon] Moved: Kingswere [Devon] Age 10 in 1581 Moved N/A ID# 3

Cockington [1629]

Totnes [1631]

Totnes [1595]

Paignton [1614]

b. Brixham Moved: Ratcliff Age 10 N/A Moved N?A ID# 4

Plympton St. Maurice [1628]

Plymouth [1620] [founded 1551]

b. Stonehouse Moved: Wapping Age 10 in 1651 Moved 1655 ID# 13

b. Totnes Moved: Limehouse Age 10 in 1614 Moved 1631 ID# 12

b. Plymouth [Devon] Stayed: Plymouth [Devon] Age 10 in 1583 Moved: no move ID# 7

Plymstock [1604]

Yealmpton [1614]

Modbury [1611]

b. Kingsbridge Moved: London Age 10 in 1581 Moved 1588 ID# 2

Dartmouth St. Petrox [1608]

b. Dartmouth Moved: Limehouse Age 10 in 1600 Moved 1605 ID# 6

b. Dartmouth [Devon] Moved: Plymouth [Devon] Age 10 in 1580 Moved 1603 ID# 8

Stoke Fleming [1636]

b. Plymouth [Devon] Stayed: Plymouth [Devon] Age 10 in 1584 Moved: no move ID# 8

Kingsbridge [1608]

Salcombe Regis [1633]

Salcombe [1694]

Devon schools in early C17th

Year of first Church of England licensed schoolmaster
Additional schools existed with non-licensed schoolmasters
Date of founding of parish and grammar schools may be earlier than earliest licensing information

Source: Clergy of the Church of England database, Exeter diocese, https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/locations/DisplayLocationList.jsp?dioceseID=8, viewed 08/10/2020

Progress March 2022 to July 26th 2022

SUMMARY DATA							
Volume	Pages	Text Regions	Lines	Words	Total Page	% of total	Predicted words
HCA 13/46	31	149	1563	4670	1130	2.74%	
HCA 13/48	27	120	1409	1724	1178	2.29%	
HCA 13/49	39	357	1976	6993	1297	3.01%	
HCA 13/51	58	405	3586	1353	1201	4.83%	
HCA 13/52	26	140	1461	968	1055	2.46%	
HCA 13/53	0	0	0	0	1366	0.00%	
HCA 13/55	27	238	1496	1232	1267	2.13%	
HCA 13/56	33	256	1655	0	1084	3.04%	
HCA 13/57	429	2595	19926	175636	965	44.46%	
HCA 13/58	30	199	1447	4089	1501	2.00%	
HCA 13/59	45	286	2204	7679	1541	2.92%	
HCA 13/60	43	257	2288	7136	1450	2.97%	
HCA 13/61	1071	8938	61977	612839	1090	98.26%	
HCA 13/64	760	5320	44103	426113	1051	72.31%	
HCA 13/65	241	1740	13380	120896	1338	18.01%	
TOTALS	2860	21000	158471	1371328	18514	15.45%	8877191

12 work days (of which 2 were partial) (+ 3 days anticipated cleanup);
1 person + baseline model + HTR model
ca. 630,000 words

Creating HCA 13/61 searchable edition
Page output per day

98 pages/day for ten full days

2860 pages   1.37 mill words

Server | Overview | **Layout** | Metadata | Tools

Type	Text	Structure	Readi...
∨ Page			
∨ TextRegion		date-of-deposit...	1
> Line	May All please your Hovery ye 15. Anstant Receive		1
> Line	ye Duncke order son to goe for renchmouth to		2
> Line	Refille & ye ry Instant Cooke in our monies		3
> Line	which was a moneth. And during home		4
> Line	small More for to Cary mee aboute ent		5
> Line	any boast waie for the Sman demand that		6
> Line	in her house they conserved, Refused forth		7
> Line	deliver any without out one order my fort		8
> Line	enter is lately doed and his mate is Kinn		9
> Line	saving that out before before saile		10
> Line	to looke out for a Carpenter it was one fortune		11
> Line	ye last munday selding out boate a shore		12
> Line	for water, shee was forced by an entrary gall		13
> Line	her		14
> Line	of winde and plained my humble request in that		15
> Line	for Honer will be cleased to order those small		16
> Line	store for me where or hower please have		17
> Line	being not refilled not since March last.		18
> Line	in Humble request in that goe longe lease		19
> Line	oditye order to Challim or whare or house		20
> Line	thicks fitt or hone Mort Humble servand		21
> Line	to Command		22

Server | Overview | **Layout** | Metadata | Tools

Type	Text	Structure	Readi...
Page			
TextRegion		date-of-deposit...	1
Line	May it please your Honers ye 15th Instant I received		1
Line	ye Douckes order her to goe for parchmouth too		2
Line	Refitte and thers Instant I worke in our provision		3
Line	which was a moneth. And I wanting some		4
Line	Small Stores for to Cary mee aboute I sent		5
Line	my boast wame for the small demand that		6
Line	it have of corsee they conserued refused for to		7
Line	deliver any without your Honors order my Care		8
Line	penter is lately deed and his maste is runn		9
Line	paway that I must be forceed before I saile		10
Line	to seeke out for a Carpenter it was our fortunn		11
Line	ye last munday I seedling our boate a shere		12
Line	for watter, she was forced by an externary god		13
Line	Shor		14
Line	of winde and stance my humble Request is that		15
Line	your Honer will be pleased to order these small		16
Line	Stores for mee where your honor pleases I have		17
Line	being nott refilled nott since march last		18
Line	my Humble Regiest in that your longingleige		19
Line	to direcct your order to Chaltum or where your honor		20
Line	thinks fitt your hones Most Humble Servant		21
Line	to Command		22
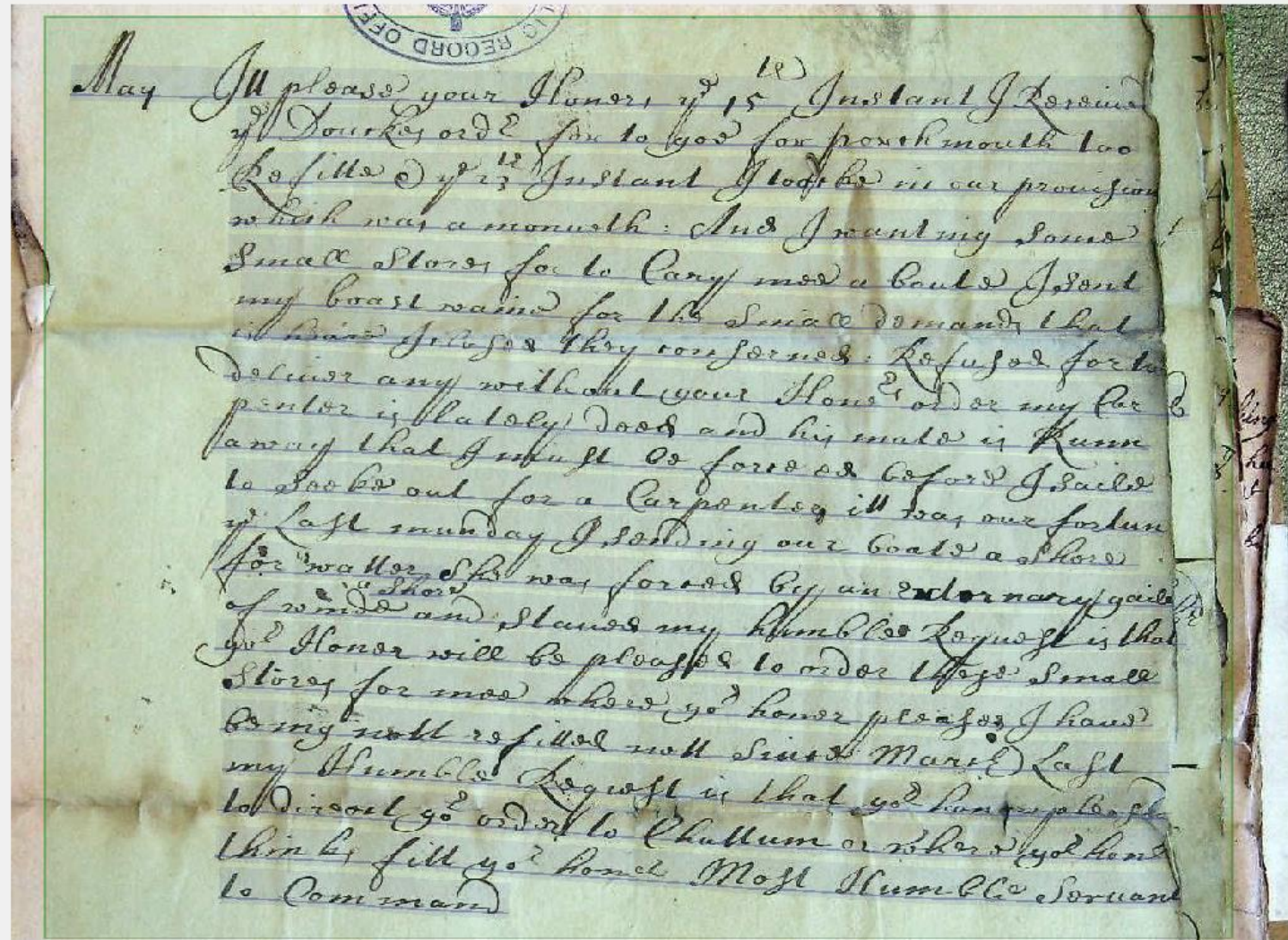
Edward Prestwich, master of the *Blessing*, was on a contract to the English Naval Board to carry English soldiers from Rochester to Deal. He wrote ten letters written solely or jointly to the Naval Board in less than two months
(November 4th, 1673 to Jan 27th 1674)

- June 28, 1673: James Strong, Master, the Golden Wheatsheaf, Samuel Atkinson, Master, the Content, Peter Parsons, Master, the Greenwich, Edward Prestwich, Master, the Blessing, at Tilbury Hope, to Naval Board (ADM 106/282/34)
- Nov 4, 1673: Edward Prestwich, at Rochester, to Naval Board (ADM 106/289/228)
- Nov 9, 1673: Edward Prestwich, master of the Blessing, and Henry Lydell, master of the Marigold, at Rochester, to Naval Board (ADM 106/289/386)
- Nov 13, 1673: Henry Lydell, master of the Marigold, and Edward Prestwich, master of the Blessing, and Richard Lister, master of ?, at Rochester, to Naval Board (ADM 106/290/133)
- Nov 30, 1673: Edward Prestwich, at Rochester, to Naval Board (ADM 106/291/156)
- Dec 11, 1673: Edward Prestwich, at the Nore, to Naval Board (ADM 106/292/68)
- Dec. 18, 1673: Henry Lydell, master of the Marigold, with extra note by Edward Prestwich, master of the Blessing, at the Downs, to the Naval Board (ADM 106/292/236)
- Dec. 25, 1673: Edward Prestwich, at the Downs, to the Naval Board (ADM 106/293/95)
- Jan 3, 1674: Edward Prestwich to Naval Board (ADM 106/302/177)
- Jan 16, 1674: Edward Prestwich, master of the Blessing, at Deal, to the Naval Board (ADM 106/302/179)
- Jan 27, 1674: Edward Prestwich to Naval Board (ADM 106/302/181)

Source: TNA, ADM 106/ metadata search. See possibly also Captain Edward Prestwich, captain of the *Falcon*, letter dated April 7, 1684, East India Company Letter Book 7, E/3/90 f.187