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Editor’s Note

Nigel Blanchford
Editor, Topmasts

Welcome to this Conference Special issue of *Topmasts*. The conference, *The State of Maritime History Research 2017*, organized by the Society for Nautical Research, in partnership with the Greenwich Maritime Centre, University of Greenwich, took place at Greenwich University on 9 September 2017. I am very pleased to be given the opportunity to publish papers from each of the speakers at the conference, ensuring that those members who were unable to attend the conference can share the experience of those who attended.

Delegates were welcomed by Tim Acott, Director of the Greenwich Maritime Centre, who spoke of the interdisciplinary nature of the centre, bringing together a range of expertise to promote a greater social awareness and understanding of the relationships between sea and society, and this was a theme taken up by speakers throughout the conference. He also emphasized that maritime activities, including seafaring, fishing and shipbuilding, have shaped the character not only of coastal communities but the whole country, and noted that this conference would focus on the importance of maritime history to broader audiences through educational and heritage-based tourism activities, and also that it would move forward the debate about the nature and importance of maritime history.

Admiral Sir Kenneth Eaton, Chairman of the SNR, was unable to attend the conference, but wrote of the wide range of maritime research published in the Society’s journal *The Mariner’s Mirror*, and the support that the Society provides for researchers and conferences. He also commented on the changes to the university treatment of maritime history, and expressed his concern that this had the potential to narrow the range of study and therefore not adequately address the broad issues encompassed by maritime history. Admiral Eaton hoped that the conference would stimulate debate and consideration of the future of maritime history education and research.
The State of Maritime Historical Research

A conference organized by the Society of Nautical Research and the Greenwich Maritime Centre

University of Greenwich, Greater London, 9 September 2017

Conference co-organizers:

David Davies
Vice-President of the SNR
and Chair of its Research and Programmes Committee

Cathryn Pearce
Secretary of the Publications and Marketing Committee of the SNR
also Greenwich Maritime Centre

Chris Ware
Greenwich Maritime Centre

To encourage ‘research into matters relating to seafaring and shipbuilding in all ages among all nations, into the language and customs of the sea, and into other subjects of nautical interest’

(The original aims of the SNR upon its formation in 1910)

Ever since its inception, one of the principal forces that has always driven forward the Society’s activities has been achieving the ambitious aims laid down for it by its founding fathers. The conference held in September in the splendid surroundings of Queen Anne Court at the University of Greenwich was our latest, and arguably one of our most high-profile, innovations aimed at promoting ‘research into matters . . . of nautical interest’, ranking alongside the launch, 106 years ago, of the society’s venerable journal, The Mariner’s Mirror (which, despite many vicissitudes over the years, continues to put the Society’s name at the forefront of maritime historical research, and is an ornament to the organization it represents), and, in more recent times, the creation of both the society’s outstanding website and Topmasts, probably the most impressive newsletter published by any maritime history organization, which is fast becoming a form of ‘journal’ in its own right.

The idea for the conference, and for its theme, emerged from the Research and Programmes committee of the SNR and was enthusiastically endorsed over many months through all the relevant policy-making bodies of the Society. It was equally warmly welcomed by our partners at the Greenwich Maritime Centre, who were also keen to organize an event reflecting on a theme which, by its dynamic and ever-changing nature, demands to be revisited every few years or so. In the past the SNR has provided financial and moral support to very many conferences, some of them organized by individual members, some by other organizations entirely, and the award of grants to deserving cases continues to be a key part of the work of the Research and Programmes Committee. However,
this was the first fully national – indeed, international – conference to have
the SNR as one of its principal co-organizers; to have been fully endorsed
by the society’s Council; to have been promoted as such, both in the
society’s own publicity and at more than one AGM; and to have been
very substantially funded by the Society, over and above the relatively
token amounts regularly provided to the likes of, for example, the New
Researchers in Maritime History conference, the British Commission
for Maritime History seminars at King’s College, London, and various
provincial events.

This special issue of *Topmasts* provides a record of the papers that
were presented on the day, including those of the three keynote speakers,
Professors Eric Grove, Richard Harding (former chairman of the SNR)
and John Hattendorf, who received the Society’s first-ever Anderson
award for lifetime achievement at the beginning of the conference. The list
of speakers included many established, and, in some cases, internationally
renowned scholars, including three vice-presidents of the SNR, with
another as one of the chairs for the day. However, it also contained several
young historians, literary scholars and representatives of other disciplines
entirely.

The sheer variety of the papers, including those published in this issue,
demonstrates conclusively that the day was innovative, wide-ranging, and
thought-provoking. The tone of the conference was exceptionally positive
and hugely enthusiastic: the audience contained many young scholars,
some of them from disciplines far removed from the traditional worlds of
‘seafaring and shipbuilding’, some of them, indeed, not historians at all.
Most of those who were present in Queen Anne Court that Saturday came
away with a real ‘buzz’; indeed, several joined the Society because of their
attendance at the event, principally because they were enthused about the
nature of the day’s programme and by the lively debates that took place
throughout the event, both during the formal programme and during the
breaks. The large amount of feedback to the many senior members of
the Society who were present in Greenwich on the day, and which has
been sent to the society since, suggests that the broad, outward-looking,
forward-thinking and, above all, inclusive approaches of the conference,
went down very well indeed.

For most of those who were actually there, then – speakers and delegates
alike – the conference was an unqualified success, and for making that
the case, huge thanks are due to the hard-working ‘back-room team’ of
the University of Greenwich. This success has confirmed the SNR in its
intention to hold similar events in the future, albeit on different subjects,
so as to draw in, once again, as broad a variety of themes, interests and
delegates as possible. Planning is already under way for a second SNR
conference, again to be held jointly with another major institution, in 2019,
and tentative ideas have been mooted for a third, perhaps in 2022. Details
of these events, and, eventually, accurate reporting of their proceedings,
will appear in future issues of *Topmasts!*
Ubi Sumus?
Reflections by a veteran maritime historian

John B. Hattendorf
E. J. King Professor Emeritus of Maritime History
US Naval War College

Ubi sumus? ‘Where are we? A navigator at sea needs to know where he or she is to know what course to set. Thus that ancient question must also be paired with another: quo vadimus? Where are we going? The young scholars of today, those who are and will be leading the field in the decades to come, are in the best position to answer that question. We ‘old hands’ can, perhaps, contribute by turning the question of ‘where are we’ into an historical statement of ‘how we got to where were are’. At the same time we can suggest where we think that the current path may lead.

In the call for papers for this conference, the organizers noted the successful effort in 2008 to persuade the American Historical Association to add ‘maritime, including naval’ to its taxonomy of academic specialisms. The organizers note that ‘since then, it has been suggested that the field has been marginalized. Or does the growth of new areas of interest . . . suggest a flourishing, if more diverse environment?’ In response to this question, I would suggest that 2008 was not a pinnacle from which the field has declined, but rather a data point that marks just the beginning of wider recognition. The broad field of maritime history will advance and flourish as more scholars begin to work in this field. At the same time historians already working in the various subspecialisms of maritime history can advance the subject by widening their perspectives to have a broader vision of their subject, working at different and complementary levels of analysis, and using innovative approaches based on sound archival research. It is not just a question of a more diverse environment within the field, but rather a broader and deeper intellectual approach that will produce conclusions of greater significance in our understanding of humanity’s multiple relationships with the seas and oceans of the world.

Any field of research has its relative ups and downs. It finds its successes in the importance of the historical work produced. Sometimes recognition from important institutions can help a great deal. At other times and in times of innovation and transition, it is up to individual scholars to step forth as intellectual leaders and to point out a way ahead. In 2008 the North American Society for Oceanic History, a constituent group of the American Historical Association, had been leading the effort for several years to have the category of maritime history added. The John Carter Brown Library, the Munson Institute for American Maritime Studies at Mystic Seaport, and some other organizations and individual scholars, who were also members of the American Historical Association, joined this effort. At that time, I recall that only half a dozen or so scholars listed

subjects that today would fall under the rubric of ‘maritime history’. Many at the time felt that there were more scholars who were working in areas that could be called ‘maritime’, and hoped that they would take advantage of the new designation. Because their field was not one that was previously recognized, scholars had chosen labels for themselves that fitted the preconceptions of university administrators. Thus scholars interested in sailors might list themselves for practical reasons regarding a wider category such as labour historians, or shipyard experts might say they were specialists in industrial history. One does what one must to market skills in the employment environment we face.’

Maritime historians in the United States faced a momentary setback in early 2014, when the American Historical Association’s new president circulated her proposed new and revised taxonomy for the historical profession. Many of us were shocked to find that the category ‘maritime history, including naval’ was omitted, leaving many of us in what we thought was professional limbo. Another letter-writing and email campaign ensued. In May 2015 the association completed its work on the revised taxonomy with the category of ‘maritime’ restored, but this time with the words ‘including naval’ as something tacitly accepted in that label. This past week, I ran a computer search in the AHA’s online Directory of History Departments and Organizations and found that 74 members of the listed faculties and staff at American and Canadian universities, historical societies, and museums listed something ‘maritime’ among the three fields that each person is allowed. That is a notable improvement since 2008, but it is still a very small community.

One needs to go further back than 2008 to understand the trends. It is only within the past 30 years or so that scholars have come to emphasize that maritime history is a very broad subject that stretches across numerous standard academic disciplines to encompass the full range of humanity’s relationships with the seas and oceans of the world. Portions – but only portions – of the subject have long been studied in the English-speaking world. These older branches, each of which we now identity as subspecialisms in the field of maritime history, all began as practical applications of historical information for use in the context of maritime exploration, naval operations, and law.

The oldest aspect is maritime exploration, which one can trace back to the several works of Richard Hakluyt in the late sixteenth century. Naval history in English dates to Josiah Burchett’s Transactions at Sea in 1720. These two were typically taken as quite separate fields, even though the navy sometimes used the king’s ships for exploration and merchant ships came into the navy for use as warships. The findings of the 1993 volume Ubi Sumus? demonstrated that the artificial and very clear division that existed at that time between the historians of merchant shipping and historians of navies existed only in the Anglophone world. The maritime historical literature in Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages did

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not share it. ‘This clear division was certainly the case when I began my work in this field just 50 years ago as a young naval officer returning from the Vietnam War in 1967, but it was not always the situation. Robert G. Albion, the first Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs at Harvard from 1948 to 1963, had sought to unify the subject by calling the field ‘oceanic history’. His efforts were undermined by his publisher, who without Albion’s permission, retitled his pioneer bibliography of the broad field as _Naval and Maritime History: An annotated bibliography_. Many mistakenly took this to be an affirmation of the division, making the perceptual chasm deeper in the following years.

By and large naval historians did not initially help to heal the breach by their continuing focus on naval combat operations. From its outset naval history was part of a growing and developing professional literature that had a legitimate practical application within that profession. It continues to do so today as chiefs of navy exhort their men and women to ‘understand the lessons of history so as not to relearn them’. In more recent years the wider academic approach to maritime history has been having an impact on the older and narrower naval view of operations. Today it includes an understanding of the interaction of logistical resources, finance, industrial support, governmental bureaucratic structures and decision-making, and individual education, training, and perceptions within the context of a rapidly changing and highly technological environment.

Similarly, the history of maritime exploration was initially a subject of practical application during the large of sail. Kenneth Morgan has again documented this in his recent biography of Mathew Flinders and his Hakluyt Society edition of Flinders’ journals. Like others before him, Flinders made practical use of earlier voyage accounts to determine what was new information and what was old or incorrect as well as to use and to learn from the earlier experience and insights into the peoples and cultures that he encountered.

Maritime economic history might be said to have arisen initially from shipping companies recording their business affairs, but eventually found academic specialists in economic and business history to develop the field further. Other maritime history fields began to emerge as separate specialist areas for specific maritime professions. International maritime law is another that dates back to Roman and medieval times and continued as a professional area among solicitors and barristers as well as naval officers from the late nineteenth century to the present. Other areas began as antiquarian pursuits in making a list of ships and naval armament. Modern documented versions of these studies could become valuable as the basis for academic analytical and statistical studies.

What we have been doing in this field during the past half century has been to develop an academic outlook on the subject to make it an appropriate field for university research, while at the same time widening

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the perspective of those who are involved in using one of the subspecialisms within maritime history for practical purposes within navies, the law, and other areas. To widen the intellectual focus to raise the subject to higher and broader academic standards, we are adding new topics of interest to integrate within and across subspecialisms. Currently, these include such themes as culture, environment, gender, memory, commemoration, ideology, science, medicine, and technology.

As I have suggested here, several of the separate subspecialisms within the broad scope of maritime history have very long and old roots, but what is new is to see interrelations across these subspecialisms and across academic disciplines under the overall concept of maritime history. One of the characteristics of the field is that each subspecialism has links to different specific academic specialisms. For example, naval history has links to international relations, military history, and diplomacy, while the history of merchant shipping is linked to business history, finance and economics. Maritime history is an over-arching field and theme in global and world history that links numerous academic fields and narrower subspecialisms together and provides a basis for broader insights that were not previously present. Much of the historical study in the past focused on a single nation and an isolated aspect of the national range of maritime activities. It is true that in history there was a strong national component for the manning and building ships, but once people are at sea in ships, they are in a different environment than can no longer be explained fully or satisfactorily regarding one nation’s outlook or experience. At the same time, the single focus on a specific maritime activity omitted links to other maritime-related activities that lead to deeper understanding of relationships, cause, and effect.

One can study mankind’s relationships with the sea in terms of economic history, resource uses, law, government regulation or decision-making, shipbuilding, trade, fishing, whaling, navies, navigation, art, literature, science, technology, culture, the environment, individual human relationships, international or imperial competition, transoceanic connection, and global integration, leisure pursuits on the water, or any other aspect one can imagine. Whatever the topic in history, they all share involvement with ships, sailors, ports, maritime support activities and maritime communities of one type or another. To refer back to the words in the announcement of this conference, I would argue that the broad subject of maritime history is not marginalized. It has been expanded into a broader intellectual construct with great potential that merely awaits new scholars with their insights and contributions to the field.

In the half century that I have observed the field, there have arisen several types of organizations to promote the study of maritime history. For a long time, the Society for Nautical Research stood alone after its founding in 1910. Between 1960 and 1965 a group of scholars established the International Commission for Maritime History in France. In one of the earliest attempts to widening perception among the maritime subspecialisms, it grew out of the former International Commission for the Great Discoveries. In 1971–3, the North American Society for Oceanic History was established initially for both Canada and the United States, but the International Commission for Maritime History required
an organization for each country represented.\(^8\) The Canadian Nautical Research Society and then the Australian Maritime History Association soon followed. Along with these organizations, the number of English-language academic journals in the field has expanded greatly. The oldest, of course, is the century-old *Mariner’s Mirror*. In the United States it was the *American Neptune* from 1941 to 2002. The *Northern Mariner*, now published by both the North American Society and the Canadian Society for Nautical Research, succeeded it. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* was established in 1972. *The Great Circle* came in 1979. Since then several others have appeared, most importantly *The International Journal of Maritime History*, which began as a journal specialized in the subspecialism of maritime economic history and eventually widened its vision to represent the entire field. Its sponsoring organization, too, grew from the International Maritime Economic History Association into the International Maritime History Association and, in the process, subsumed the International Commission for Maritime History.\(^9\) Meanwhile, other journals have also appeared to open up the opportunities for publishing in both online and print formats, for example, *The Journal for Maritime Research*, *The International Journal of Naval History*, *The Trafalgar Chronicle* for the period of the Georgian navy in Britain, and *Coriolis: Interdisciplinary Journal of Maritime Studies*. A field with so many active journals seems to be one that is vibrant.

The first steps in this new and broader approach to global maritime history have been through works with multiple authors, working in teams. In the United States one of the earliest approaches was the 1998 volume *America and the Sea: A maritime history*, which sought to use a complementary team of historians to create a broad, national maritime history that included naval, merchant marine, fishing and other activities.\(^10\) The nine-year long effort to create *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History* involved a global team of 450 contributors from 50 different countries who completed the project in 2007. Its four volumes created the first scholarly global reference work for the field and reflected the state of scholarship at that time. Its most important achievement, in my view, was its attempt to define the broad scope of the field. In 2013 Lincoln Paine’s 500-page *The Sea and Civilization: The maritime history of the world*\(^11\) is the magnificent effort of a single author to look across the multiple subspecialisms, including some of the key contributions of underwater archaeology for the earliest periods, and to produce a general, global history. Earlier this year, in 2017, the French-based Océanides project completed its work in five years. Under the general direction of Christian Buchet, this four-volume, multiauthored work in French and English on *The Sea in History* makes an explicit effort to show the many ways in which maritime affairs have had a direct and critical effect in human society.\(^12\)

\(^8\) See W. A. B. Douglas, ‘The Ties that Bind Us: The roots of NASOH and CSNRS’ [https://www.cnrs-scnr.org/admin/early_days.html](https://www.cnrs-scnr.org/admin/early_days.html)
\(^10\) B. Labaree et al., *America and the Sea: A maritime history* (Mystic CT, 1998).
\(^12\) C. Buchet et al., *The Sea in History*, 4 vols (Woodbridge, 2017).
These broad surveys have continued to widen the broad global perspectives on the field, and they have built on and developed further the more restricted ideas that began with Fernand Braudel’s 1949 work on The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II. David Abulafia has continued work on this theme in his The Mediterranean in History and his other works. To the Mediterranean studies, the theme of Atlantic history has added other dimensions and sights from a different geographic region. Although at first the practitioners of Atlantic History tended to omit the nautical aspects of the subject to look only at the related cultural issues, this now has changed in more recent contributions. Similar academic works is beginning in the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas.

The field of maritime history stretches beyond the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to see the interrelationships of the dynamics of the range of human activity in all the seas, oceans, and waterways of the world. We must remember that this new breadth of vision must be built, as are all broad historical conclusions, by multiple monographs and particular studies that look at the specific elements that can collectively support the basis for significant broad conclusions. In many cases for maritime history, such foundational studies are missing. Typically, such works should have a finely tuned theme that although it focuses on a specific and narrow aspect helps to illuminate a broad and general historical problem or issue.

If you allow me to turn for a moment to my more parochial interest in the maritime subspecialism of naval history, I would like to point out some examples of this problem and the need it creates for new research. Often in naval studies this broad element is missing, but Nicholas Rodger’s projected three-volume study on The Naval History of Britain is a good illustration. Such a wide-ranging work on a national naval topic is a broad synthesis of much archival research and numerous specific scholarly works. The author has organized his work with a triple and intertwined focus on naval operations, administrative and logistical aspects, and social history. Interleaving these in complimentary chapters recognizes the problem of navies as complex organizations that need a complex intellectual construct to analyse them in broad terms. Ideally, innovative monographs on each of these parts would be a prerequisite to developing the broader understanding. In actual practice, some of the component foundational parts are missing, and an author needs to supply an educated description based on less complete evidence. In the case of British naval history, there are enough foundational monographs over a broad range of time to allow a reasonably well-founded synthesis. Different periods present different problems. The earlier eras in history have less evidence to use, while later periods may have a surfeit of information with very little in the way of perspective. Nevertheless, in British naval history we have well-researched monographs on dockyards, naval administration, finance, operations, ship construction and defence politics for a significant number

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of periods in British naval history, if not all, but there is enough to create a broad view.

At the opposite end of the perspective, a broad synthesis is not the last word, but rather a very important component to the further development of historical research and understanding. By creating a wide perspective, one can see more clearly where certain aspects of it need further testing and examination. The detailed studies that follow, in turn, lead to modification, confirmation, or important nuanced understanding of general synthesis.

Such is not the case with the histories of many other navies. As much as we would like to see similar syntheses of the history of other navies that could lead to a broader understanding of it alone or through comparative development in regional, or even global, perspectives, it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to undertake them in the current state of scholarship. The basic foundational studies are missing. In American naval history, for example, we have many biographies of naval leaders and studies of battles and operations, but there is not yet enough social history to understand its broad development within the US Navy. Similarly, there is little that collectively or individually covers a wide enough period on administrative history that employs modern understandings of the development of governmental organizations, bureaucratic decision-making, and the complex relationships between politics, finance, industrial development, and other factors. We do not yet fully understand the essential differences and functions between small navies, medium-sized navies, and great power navies to understand the global naval situation within the broad scope of maritime affairs or even general history. In short, there is a massive research agenda that awaits new scholars and new insights in naval history. This situation is similar within other subspecialisms in maritime history.

In short, I do not see maritime history in any way as a marginalized topic, but as an area of great future potential. Some scholars have already suggested a variety of ways forward, as will the participants in this conference. Over the past 25 years, it has become nearly a cottage industry to write about the state of some aspect of maritime history. These writings have been very helpful in drawing attention to the field and in recruiting...
new colleagues to join us. While I think we are very nearly reaching a saturation point on this topic for the time being, this conference is useful to examine the field as one generation turns over to the next. When the papers and results of this conference have been heard, circulated and have brought us up to date, it will be high time for us all to get on with our work.

If there is any serious problem with maritime history as a field, it is not a unique one, but one that it shares at the moment in attracting students to any field of historical study. Last year the Massachusetts Historical Society, the oldest historical agency in the United States, convened a workshop to celebrate its 225th anniversary and to discuss ‘The Future of History: Historians, Historical Organizations, and the Prospects for the Field.’ One of the organizers, Katheryn P. Viens, used a maritime metaphor to describe one of the broader dilemmas that the field faces. ‘The past is all around us in the physical landscape of public monuments, libraries, and museums. It is also present in personal spaces . . . ’ she noted. ‘In society, history is ubiquitous and idiosyncratic.’

In this modern environment those who earn a living in the field are distinctly divided. We could all just wade into this historical universe and bathe ourselves in the riches of the past wherever they occur. Instead, half of us are standing on the riverbank, fretting about the depth, the cold and the choppy water, and aiming to throw a life preserver to our peers. Meanwhile, many of us in the water quickly find ourselves exhausted.18

So in conclusion I would say: ‘Enough is enough. Let’s all get to work and keep maritime history under weigh with way on!’

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Is the Study of Maritime History Before About 1550 Unjustifiably Neglected?

Susan Rose
University of Roehampton (retired)

To what extent is maritime history before around 1550 taught at undergraduate level at universities in the UK? A survey of available courses does not have very encouraging results if you are looking for anything with some medieval maritime content. Exeter has no undergraduate courses which fulfil this description. At Hull until very recently there was a first-year course called Raiders Traders and Crusaders; it is no longer taught. Reading has a first-year course called Exploring the Atlantic World and another in the second year which uses the modern fascination with piracy to spark student interest, called Pirates of the Caribbean: Empire, slavery and society, 1550–1750. Perhaps the most encouraging module I could find was a second-year one at Warwick called Galleons and Caravans. Although mainly concerned with cultural history and exchanges between Europe and Asia, also listed was one student research project linked to the course called ‘Looking at the role of the Manila Galleons between 1400 and 1800’. Many history departments now have nothing more than a single lecture in a course on England in the sixteenth century dealing with Tudor seafarers and of course pirates.

Before becoming depressed, however, it is as well to consider that a similar trawl through prospectuses and websites looking for courses on, for example, monastic history or medieval trade would have very much the same result. Most current BA history courses in British universities have a similar structure with the emphasis in the first year on introductory courses covering long periods along with study skills. More specialized topics appear in the second and third years but these depend to a great extent on the interests of the teaching staff. It is not unusual to find quite long periods and many important topics not included in a programme at all whether in British or foreign history.

Does medieval maritime history command more attention at postgraduate level? Again most taught MA courses follow a standard format; any lectures or seminars are mainly concerned with research methods; the subject matter of dissertations is up to the individual student although again the interests of possible supervisors have a great deal of influence on individual choices. There are few other easily available details about taught course content. The one exception to this is the MA in Royal Navy history at Portsmouth which includes a course called The Wooden Walls: The Royal Navy under sail 1509–1815. This covers a long period with snapshots of many aspects of naval history from commanders, battles and logistics to life on board. Exeter, despite its Centre for Maritime Historical Studies, has nothing like this. ‘Pre-modern maritime and naval history are simply non-existent at the moment,’ Professor Fusaro told me. Dr Wilcox at Hull made much the same point. There is little formal teaching of any early period.
Despite this, however, there has been some excellent work at doctoral level. Craig Lambert’s book *Shipping the Medieval Military*, an account of maritime logistics in the first half of the fourteenth century was based on his thesis, as was Graham Cushway’s *Lord of the Sea* an account of Edward III’s naval policies. It becomes clear, however, that searching under the formal title of medieval maritime or naval history is a rather parochial approach to this topic, an effort to put it in its own neat little box. A strong maritime element can be found in, for example, the research being undertaken at Royal Holloway by Samuel Drake on Cornwall in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We need to appreciate and welcome the wide appeal and interest in the maritime aspects of history of any period both within and without universities. Limiting investigations to courses with subject specific titles only serves to narrow the field excessively and increases the probability of paying no attention to many of the most interesting current developments, writing and research.

There are recently completed projects and those still under way which amply demonstrate the wide interest in maritime history, including the medieval period, in settings other than formal teaching. In the spring of this year the enormous French project to produce an in depth study of the sea in history was completed. This was conceived set up and brought to completion by Océanides, a French association whose mission is expressed on their website in these words: ‘because understanding the role of the sea in history will enlighten our future, Océanides is studying 5,000 years of interaction between men and oceans relying on the expertise of 300 scientists’. This has led to the publication of a four-volume work called the *Sea in History*, covering maritime history from the classical period to our own times. The medieval volume begins with structures such as ports and ends with the sea as a factor of prosperity in the Middle Ages. It runs to 1,051 pages with contributions from no fewer than 74 scholars. The Mediterranean maritime powers feature strongly but there are also chapters on northern Europe, the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. In the general conclusion to the whole work the eminent French scholar Michel Balard states that the sea acts first as the accelerator of political and economic development, second as the driver of predominance and expansion and finally as the driver (*le moteur*) of history. In the conclusion to the medieval volume he further states, ‘In the Middle Ages, as today, the fortunes of mankind depended largely on the interest shown in matters of the sea.’ A recent reviewer agrees, accepting that the medieval volume ‘undoubtedly throws light on the complex foundations – political, technical, socio-economic’ – of the changes which made the modern world’. This kind of *grand projet* is not something perhaps that would find favour and financial support on this side of the Channel but we can all benefit from the initiative of our neighbours.

Other books in English with a large maritime content have also served to bring the medieval period to the fore. One outstanding example is *The Corrupting Sea* by Peregrine Hordern and Nicholas Purcell published in 2000. The reviewer in the *English Historical Review* called the publication

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1 His paper, ‘The Gallaunts of Fowey: A case study of Fowey during the Hundred Years War, c. 1337–1399’ has much to say regarding local sea raiders based in Fowey and the town’s contributions to naval expeditions. *Historical Research* 90, 2017, 296–317.
of this book ‘a notable intellectual event’. It was followed in 2011 by David Abulafia’s *The Great Sea: A human history of the Mediterranean*, described in the blurb as ‘the story of the sea that has shaped much of world history’. These authors would not perhaps describe themselves as maritime historians but their work is full of an appreciation and understanding of the way the sea influences and moulds human history. It is also the case that these books had good sales and thus reached a large audience, much of it outside the academic world.

The kind of fundamental documentary research which underpins the interpretations in books of this nature is also alive and well, as it were, in the medieval period. The two innovative wide-ranging database projects associated first with the University of Hull and more recently with the University of Southampton are cases in point. Version 2 of the Hull database *Shipping Mariners and Port Communities in Fourteenth-century England* will eventually be incorporated within the Southampton project, *The Evolution of English Shipping Capacity and Shipboard Communities from the early 15th century to Drake’s circumnavigation in 1577*. The new project will include ArcGIS spatial mapping. It is planned that when the website is opened the first thing that people will see is a map of England; each of the 450 ports and creeks that features in the database will appear as a red dot. Clicking on this will link them to information on that place or port. The main database, in both cases, provides information searchable on a wide range of fields, including master’s name, ship name, port, voyage destination and tonnage. The final feature allows a click on a ship name to provide ‘visual voyage mapping’, where the voyage undertaken by that ship will be shown on a map. It is probable that the website with all the GIS work done will launch sometime in the middle of October. The date of the launch of the combined fourteenth- and fifteenth-century databases is not yet known.

The potential of a research tool on this scale is enormous, creating possible fruitful links with other research areas. This is particularly the case with archaeology, whether on land or the nautical variety. Some of the most intractable problems faced by medievalists interested in ships and the sea relate to the lack of good technical information concerning ships and their equipment. Much of the evidence for shipbuilding comes from royal accounts which list materials bought but give very little precise information as to how they were to be used. For example, in accounts dating from 1350–3 there are listings of various kinds of timber. Some of the names relate to the origins of the timber, for example righolt boards imported from Riga and Welsdysshbord which came from the Weald of Kent. We have little clear idea of where in the hull or upper works of a vessel each type of timber was used, although it is probable that righolt board was softwood. Similarly there is no clear evidence linking the medieval ship-type the hulk with the curious banana-shaped hull shown in some manuscript illustrations.

An outstanding example of the way nautical archaeology can provide crucial evidence is probably the excavation of the Bremen cog in the estuary of the Elbe near Bremen in 1962. It was clear that vessels of this type had a flat bottom with carvel-laid timbers while the upper strakes or planks

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were overlapped in the classic clinker building mode. The flat transom
carried a sternpost rudder. Other similar vessels were found in excavations
in the drained parts of the former Zuider Zee. They were eminently suited
to the relatively shallow waters of the Baltic. Were the ships called cogs in
English documents of a similar hull design? We cannot be sure without
some fortuitous discovery of a locally built wreck of a similar design in
British waters – something which the maps of creeks and harbours in the
Southampton database may assist. Equally important in many ways is the
Newport ship. This merchant vessel was built in the middle years of the
fifteenth century, probably in the Basque country. It is, as far as we know,
the only surviving example of the ships that were the workhorses of both
merchant and naval fleets at this period in these waters.

The remains of some vessels from this period found in silted-up
waterways have in the past been destroyed before the nature of the timbers
found at the base of a trench was realized. The potential for making
new discoveries, however, still exists and hopefully will be exploited in
the future. The same applies to what might be called port facilities, the
traces of wharves, staithes, warehouses and ship-building sites; the study
of these can be as valuable as that of actual vessels. Material remains and
documents need to be considered together whenever possible, with each
source providing an important element to help complete the picture of
maritime technology, warfare, life and trade in medieval times.

There is little doubt that the division sometimes encountered between
maritime history in general and naval history in particular has little
relevance to the medieval period. It can be argued, however, that there
is a possibility that maritime history can be seen as of interest only to
specialists if the field is defined too tightly. The point of view put forward
by the editors of the Océanides project of the almost universal influence of
the sea on history is one which should be widely accepted. In the medieval
period, maritime history contributes an invaluable element to the wider
picture of the history of society as a whole.
Making Early Modern Naval History Relevant: Discussing warship design in the undergraduate classroom

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How can the current state of naval history in higher education be described? With events including ‘The State of Maritime Research’ in September 2017, and with the development of new courses such as the MA in naval history at the University of Portsmouth, it could be said that the field is experiencing a restoration following a series of unpopular wars since the 1970s that resulted in the marginalization of war studies.¹ Yet, with this said, it is in my experience that the field continues to attract certain stigmas that are disseminated among new and existing students. Perhaps it is because of war’s unpopularity in current affairs that the majority of today’s academics and researchers are more inclined to refer to themselves as ‘maritime’ rather than ‘naval’ historians, even when they focus on naval history.

It is worth taking into account that of the 12 papers presented at Greenwich on 9 September, just two used the term ‘naval’ in their titles, with the majority preferring to use ‘maritime’. One of the objectives of this event was to address issues in maritime studies such as ‘sea blindness’ and, bearing in mind naval history’s relative isolation here, does this suggest that the more distinct field that concerns the military dimension of maritime studies is truly marginalized? If there is a degree of ‘sea blindness’ that exists towards history, then how susceptible is the smaller field of naval history to floundering? Finally, to provide the field with adequate attention is it necessary to isolate naval studies through separate events such as the McMullen Naval History Symposium?

It must be stressed that, as ever, the key to naval history’s preservation is firmly placed within the education sector. In Britain, as with most sea-bordered states, maritime history, and with it naval history, thrives near the coast, where trade and naval activity is most prominent: Exeter, Greenwich, Hull, King’s College London, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton and Swansea all have maritime centres or courses dedicated to the field. It is also pleasing to know that the University of Birmingham runs an undergraduate module ‘Warfare at Sea from the Armada to D-Day’. Furthermore, with the presence of research in landlocked institutions such as in Oxford, Reading and Warwick, it would be unfair to say that maritime and naval history is something taught only on the coast.

Although this suggests that the field has a very promising future, it does not show the entire picture. It is a misunderstanding that naval history is a niche field that concerns only battles at sea, and yet this view often influences departmental decisions to not teach it in great depth. This decision, which can be inadvertent, is particularly prominent because of the unpopularity

¹ My thanks to Professor John Hattendorf for highlighting the case of Vietnam.
of war in contemporary affairs, and it is also the product of the cultural
turn of history which interestingly occurred at around the same time that
war studies became unfavourable. As a result naval history has suffered
a number of blows because of its strong connection to military history.
It has in some ways been pushed to the fringes of academic study, while
the broader field of maritime studies has become increasingly popular.
Having studied and worked in a midland-based higher education institute,
I have found that associating myself as a naval historian (which in many
ways I am) has, unjustly, negative meanings attached to it. Indeed, with
my research interests firmly based in early modern history, it has been
suggested on more than one occasion that I should consider myself an
early modern historian and not a naval historian because of the prospects
that it could open for my career.²

Yet it would be preposterous to assert that the number of students and
researchers approaching naval history is declining, and when reflecting
on the event at Greenwich, it is clear that naval history has moved with
the times, even if it often chooses to operate within the limits of maritime
history instead. Researchers who would not describe themselves as naval
historians now produce publications on naval history at an increasing
rate. As an outcome, the field is being considered through a wider lens
of themes and perspectives that provide it with the means to become
interwoven within broader research disciplines including gender, animals
and health. This is not a new development; scholars more closely aligned
with political, cultural or social trends, such as Bernard Capp and Clifford
Davies, produced some of the key contributions to early modern naval
history during the second half of the twentieth century.³ As a result,
although naval history in higher education may not have as many devoted
naval scholars attached to it today, the field has the potential to increase
its popularity by expanding to influence and relate to broader historical,
as well as scientific, disciplines.

One way of achieving this is by ensuring that historians collaborate
with maritime museums. Working with the resources that museums have
to offer can enhance both research and teaching, and the benefits of this
are particularly apparent within the early modern field. Considering the
popularity of Henry VIII and the Tudors, the recently reopened Mary
Rose Museum provides a valuable path that leads students studying Tudor
history into the exploration of naval developments. For this reason,
resources including the Mary Rose and the Vasa in Stockholm are useful
teaching materials that can influence future historians. From the thousands
of artefacts recovered from the Mary Rose wreck including rosary beads
and nit combs, as well as the human remains that highlight the detrimental
effects of working on a warship, such as the crushed kneecaps of gunners
and impaired shoulder joints of archers, we can show our students that
naval studies is a far more open, relevant and approachable topic than may
be presumed. It is not just about guns and battles.

² Having discussed this with a number of attendees at this event, it is clear that I am not
the first person to receive this advice.
³ B. Capp, Cromwell’s Navy: The fleet and the English Revolution, 1648–1660 (Oxford,
1989) and C. S. L. Davies, ‘The Administration of the Royal Navy under Henry VIII:
The origins of the Navy Board’, The English Historical Review 80 (1965), 268–8.
As someone who is driven by research-led teaching, using these resources in the classroom is particularly important in a department, such as Warwick, that is strongly inspired by social and cultural history. Under this influence, my research has recently explored the design, decoration, and names of Tudor and early Stuart warships. Bearing this in mind, when discussing this research in class I try to engage students by acknowledging that naval history is more than just military studies, and that the sea was important to the early modern world. Courses that discuss the early modern economy, identity, the political landscape, popular and elite culture, as well as the more obvious military connections, should stress the importance of the sea, and with it the navy.

By teaching I hope to increase awareness that in history the sea, and with it the navy is always in the background of developments. The most obvious point to start when confronting this is by discussing the military revolution debate that connects military advances to state development. Although the navy has since been introduced into this debate, when it is discussed by naval historians, this valuable work is often under-appreciated because it struggles to break through the bubble of naval scholarship into more diverse readership. In other words, the navy’s importance to this debate is acknowledged in key texts, and yet at the same time the navy is largely cast away to sail in the distant background of the subject. This is a pity considering that for the majority of European states standing navies were new institutions of the period that required entirely new administrative frameworks to operate them, unlike land forces. For this reason, when students are approaching revolutions in infantry, the trace italienne, gunpowder (and so on and so forth), it is important that the development of standing navies (and the technical achievements that came with them) is considered in equal depth.

This approach does, however, follow traditional misunderstandings of the field, by relating naval studies only to military and political trends, and it is important that the future of naval history goes beyond this. Historians of architectural design who explore the importance of palaces and other historic buildings relate their work to social and cultural history, and the study of warships and private vessels should be studied with similar intentions when their construction was led by similar motivations – to impress, represent and empower. This is just one example of how naval history is relevant to broader disciplines. Students do not need to be enrolled on modules tailored to naval history in order to use this field as part of their research. By assessing images and contemporary accounts of warships in the classroom, students can discover how the design and career of vessels was politically, culturally and socially developed. By asking students why the Naseby was renamed and its figurehead hung from a gibbet and later burned following the Restoration, as one example,
we can show that navies were not disconnected tools of history but were instead important components of history’s progression.

Navies were the product of international rivalry, and could develop through a belligerent arms race or through more amicable competition, and they thus served as an interesting representation of political and cultural developments. Adapting this argument for teaching is particularly rewarding for any comparative course that encourages students to compare a nation’s history (most often Britain’s) with that of another. Looking at diplomatic events in class illustrates how the navy could serve as an important component of national histories. For example, as part of the Field of Cloth of Gold in June 1520, the *Henry Grace à Dieu*, the flagship of Henry VIII, had its sails painted gold in honour of the event; moreover, in another case, the *Prince Royal* was used to transport Princess Elizabeth and her husband Frederick of Bohemia to the continent in April 1613 following their wedding. Highlighting the visual and ceremonial importance of the navy, and providing students with access to imagery and written accounts will encourage more students to engage with naval history as part of their own research.

Naval history, then, and with it the broader maritime discipline, is in good strength and its future has the potential to prosper. It is, however, important for naval history to continue to expand across disciplines in order to avoid criticism for its overtly military outlook. As social, cultural, political, religious and other historical disciplines progress, we need to ensure that naval history is not left behind, and this can be done by teaching students that its developments were an active component of broader historical trends, or at the very least, it serves as a useful representation of them. Just as HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, recently completed and now based at Portsmouth, received a very popular response from the state, public and media at its arrival, the same reception would have been received in the early modern period with the launch of celebrated vessels. The construction and presence of these vessels received a large popular national response that was engrained into society and culture. Navies have always been more than just weapons of statesmen, as they are also connected to national, regional and individual identity. The navy was, and remains today, far more than a military apparatus, and in teaching we need to ensure that students understand this.
This short essay, which develops the paper we gave on the ‘New Disciplinary Horizons’ panel at the State of Maritime Research conference in Greenwich, outlines some of the ways in which maritime studies might be brought into dialogue with certain areas of literary studies and cultural history, before offering some more general thoughts on the future of the discipline.

The first claim we wish to make is that maritime historians often undervalue, as a resource, voyage diaries and other forms of private writing by passengers and crew. The relative neglect of such documents reflects the tendency in maritime and naval history to focus on technological, economic or political aspects of shipping, or on the biographies of great seafarers and naval captains. It can also be explained by the practicalities of historical research and the nature of diaries as historical sources. Held at diverse and dispersed locations, from major research libraries such as the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum (which holds hundreds of diaries) to regional records offices (which may hold only one or two), these documents are often written in difficult hands and frequently remain untranscribed. Where transcripts are available, they are usually written out on a typewriter but often not digitized, and thus unsearchable through keyword searches. If a researcher in maritime studies is looking for relatively ‘raw’ data (on numbers or names of passengers, for example, or on specifics of routes or of cargo), voyage diaries are not of great assistance: as sources of such data they are unwieldy, offering limited information that is relatively unreliable and difficult to track down, at least when compared with other documents such as passenger lists, port books, and ships’ logs.

But voyage diaries also offer something that other sources do not, or at least not to the same extent: a rich and detailed account of life at sea. Other forms of written text may tell us that a ship travelling from Liverpool to Adelaide in 1892 had 14 pigs on board, but a voyage diary can help us think more carefully about what it was like to share a small wooden world with farm animals that were as out of their element as was, in many cases, the diarists themselves. Other documents may tell us how many passengers on a certain vessel travelled in first or cabin class and how many in steerage, but a voyage diary can provide first-hand evidence as to how these proportions affected shipboard dynamics, or how passengers of different class affiliations thought of and related to one another. Other documents – most obviously the many surviving menus – can tell us what was eaten and drunk on passenger vessels, but voyage diaries can tell us how drunk passengers got and what were the consequences of this inebriation. They can also hint at what meal-times meant to a passenger divorced from their usual daily routines. In addition, diaries often elaborate on scandalous
or tragic incidents that might only merit a few terse words in the tight columns of a logbook. Many nineteenth-century migrants, for instance, had to witness and come to terms with deaths of family members and fellow passengers, especially of babies and young children, during lengthy voyages. Where logbooks record the number and dates of deaths, personal documents allow us a glimpse into the emotional impact of such tragedies and hint at how such events shaped the experiences of sea travel.

Elaboration is in some ways the key: these diaries are modelled on logbooks, and can be thought of as their gregarious cousins. Whether written by apprentice seamen, surgeons or passengers of various kinds, voyage diaries generally attempted, like logbooks, to account for time spent at sea. They offered an entry for each day, and often recorded the geographical co-ordinates at which entries were made. The accuracy of such co-ordinates is questionable: as with logbooks, of course, assertions as to geographical position were subject to the margins of error involved in all navigation. But in the case of voyage diaries they were also subject to the individual author’s conscientiousness and the extent of their grasp of navigation (some diarists accidentally inverted the figures for longitude and latitude, for example). Yet, the very attempt to imitate the logbook tells us something interesting about these authors’ experiences at sea. Diaries did not merely record shipboard experience; more than this, they were a means of coming to terms with that experience. They offered a point of stability in an unstable world, a site of privacy in an environment that frequently lacked it, and, in particular on longer voyages, a means of marking out time and space in a realm where such matters were thrown into unusual doubt.

Literary critics are in an especially good position to squeeze fresh insights from such documents because they are trained in ‘close reading’ – that is, in paying close attention to the structure of texts. It is not only the content, but also the form and the incidentals of these texts that offer windows onto the experience of being at sea. The new maritime terms the diarists encounter (‘topmast’, ‘windward’) are frequently clothed in quotation marks – as though, creatures of an alien environment, they need to be handled with kid gloves. Switches in register – for example, from a terse and factual entry to a descriptive passage that aspires towards the sublime – suggest the fluctuations in mood suffered by the homesick, seasick traveller. On a more basic level, the lengths of entry can point towards the mental health of the diarist and the extent to which they were participating in shipboard activities. Everything is worth analysing. Like illuminated medieval manuscripts, these are documents whose meanings are to be found not only in their text but also in everything that surrounds that text and in its mode of transmission. A switch in handwriting might suggest a switch in mood; a stain betrays the circumstances in which a passage was composed; a correction with a sharper pencil indicates that a diarist took care to revise their impression of a scene, perhaps after seeking out further knowledge from another seafarer. It is not only literary scholars who can tease out the meanings of these texts in these ways; rather, we want to suggest, a literary-critical approach – an attentiveness to diction, mise-en-page, quotation, genre, subject positions, narrative techniques, and so forth – allows us to think about these documents in new ways. To a far greater extent than voyage narratives composed after the event, these
are documents that enable us to piece together the experiences of those who put pen to paper in the watery world – migrants, soldiers, pilgrims and others who found themselves between lands for whatever reason. It is a frequent complaint in the humanities that scholars treat the sea as a ‘non-place’ or a ‘between-place’: a site without a proper history. Studying voyage diaries allows us to counter this tendency, and to write the history of the sea in new ways.

The second claim we wish to make is that analysing voyage diaries allows us to think more broadly about cultural practices taking place at sea. If writing, whether for professional or for private reasons, was integral to the experiences of seafaring, so was the related practice of reading. Seafarers-to-be frequently engaged with texts to prepare for their journeys; and once at sea they read copiously as a means of mitigating the tedium and monotony of a long voyage. But more than simply entertaining and distracting seafarers, reading took them on intellectual journeys, variously into the realms of knowledge, education and imagination, and these journeys shaped oceanic travel in myriad ways. In many instances, it is the personal writing and reflections contained in diaries that offer a glimpse into how words, texts and books helped travellers to make sense of their lives, their mobility across oceans, their geographical position, and their oceanic transits. Reading, like writing, could provide mental and imaginative connections to the past, remind travellers of previous experiences, or prepare them, even if only imaginatively, for future lives. In the here and now, both practices offered mental and spatial compass points while on the move, orientations in an ever-changing, fluid and often unfamiliar environment.

Many diarists, for instance, noted how reading, whether on board or in the past, shaped how they made sense of their surroundings, of geographical space, and how reading was part of navigating across oceans. The kinds of texts used for geographical orientation could vary widely. Travellers might recall text passages from the Bible when passing through the Middle East and the Mediterranean, or the popular nineteenth-century adventure novels of Rider Haggard or Rudyard Kipling when stopping at exotic ports of call. Poetry reading, especially, mediated reflections on landscape and on the sublime and majestic, yet also terrifying, environment of the ocean. One diary of a New Zealand soldier travelling during the First World War, for example, referenced Shelley’s ‘The Cloud’, inspired by the beauty of a night sky observed from the deck of a troop ship. Recollections of imaginary geographies and literary evocations of landscape and weather were common elements in travellers’ diaries. In addition, such literary memories indicate how time spent at sea always also related to previous lives and experiences.

During the conference in Greenwich, and from our position as interlopers and newcomers to the field of maritime history, we observed concerns that maritime studies was being neglected by the emerging generation of scholars, and that in some ways the field was suffering an identity crisis. ‘What is maritime history today and what is its future?’ many conference participants seemed to wonder. These concerns surprised us, as in our experience a great number of academics, many of them with PhDs awarded within the last ten years, are preoccupied in one way or another with the sea. The difference is that they may not badge themselves as scholars
working in maritime studies, but instead as cultural and social historians, anthropologists or literary scholars with interests in ‘oceanic studies’ (or, and especially if their research has environmental concerns, the ‘blue humanities’). Far from being snubbed or treated as a little eccentric by the institutions for which they work, such individuals find that working on the sea opens doors and allows them to collaborate with scholars whom they would not otherwise encounter. In our view maritime studies has a terrific opportunity to look outwards and engage with the multitude of academics who, often coming from a culture of ‘hydrophasia’ (Margaret Cohen’s coinage), would love nothing more than to learn from those who know and love the sea. Our research will be enhanced if we know the difference between a topsail and a stud-sail, or the importance of the time piece in the history of navigation, or the diet of the eighteenth-century ordinary seaman; equally, we believe, maritime studies will be invigorated by the new questions researchers from different backgrounds bring to it.

We hope this brief article has begun to sketch out some possible areas of future research. This is, in fact, a future in which we already live. Just a few of the literary scholars whose recent work might interest maritime historians are Margaret Cohen, Dan Brayton, Bernhard Klein, Steve Mentz and Hester Blum. The topics covered in their work include: logbooks’ relations to maritime fiction; navigation and the fisheries in Shakespeare; the reading and writing habits of American sailors of the nineteenth century; and early English voyages to the Guinea coast. (And, to answer a concern raised by one participant at the Greenwich conference, at least one of these scholars – possibly more than one – can be trusted in a boat.) As a field, maritime studies is already diverse. But it can, we believe, reach even further, and into disciplines that confront many of the most urgent concerns of our time, such as the environmental humanities, migration studies, and postcolonial studies.

Accompanying links
Several archives have begun to digitize some shipboard diaries and have made these available on their websites, sometimes including transcriptions. They are too numerous to list here, but here is a small selection:

The State Library of New South Wales, Australia, for example http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110527080
Museums Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, for example https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1822279
Alexander Turnbull Library, at the National Library of New Zealand, Shipboard Diary Digitisation Project, for example http://ndhadeliver.natlib.govt.nz/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE3809771
Is Coastal History Maritime History?

Cathryn Pearce
Greenwich Maritime Centre

‘The State of Maritime Research’ conference extended a conversation about our subject, which, as David J. Starkey pointed out, has gone on since ‘1911, [when] the founders of The Mariner’s Mirror pondered the topical parameters of their newly founded journal.’ It was an opportunity to connect with scholars who write maritime history, but who do not define themselves as ‘maritime historians’, as well as to give rising scholars a voice in their newly adopted subdiscipline. This discussion is also occurring outside traditional maritime history circles. Geographers, anthropologists and literary scholars have called for greater attention to ‘watery worlds’ by taking the seas ‘from the margins to the centre of academic vision’. Mainstream historians, too, have claimed that ‘Maritime scholarship seems to have burst its bounds across the discipline, the sea is swinging into view.’ Since then, there have been further appeals to create new specialisms. One of these, ‘coastal history’, is considered here.

‘Littoral’ and ‘coastal’ history

Thirty-two years ago, in Great Circle, Michael N. Pearson appealed for a coastal or ‘littoral’ approach, ‘focusing on people whose lives were connected with the sea’, and who lived in ‘a continuum . . . where land and sea intertwine in complex and various ways.’ However, it was not until his Seascapes conference keynote in 2003, and a subsequent article published in 2006 in the Journal of World History, that his argument for ‘littoral’ history gained the attention of mainstream historians, including proponents of the new ‘coastal history’.

‘Coastal history’ as a separate subfield is the conceptualization of two cultural historians influenced by geography, John Gillis and Isaac Land. Gillis had already argued for ‘island history’ in his keynote at the Seascapes conference. Both encouraged historians to engage with the environmental and cultural history of the coasts, a region they felt had been ignored. Gillis claimed that ‘maritime historians . . . are obsessed with the deep sea, [and] with blue-water navies rather than the much more abundant brown-water vessels’. Misleadingly, he neglected the rich historiography of ‘brown-
water vessels’ such as that written by John Armstrong. However, he is correct that coastal topics are not well-represented in maritime history journals. His main point also has merit, that ‘we need to recover some sense of all the ways that humans have lived with the coasts’ and to ‘find a narrative that is less terracentric, one that recognizes humanity’s long relationship with the sea as an edge species, occupying ecotones where land and water meet’.

**Coastal history’s big questions**

The argument that coastal history should be seen as a separate subfield rests in its definition and methodology. Land contends that it occupies ‘a vacant lot happily situated somewhere in between several different subfields that don’t interact very often’. He, along with Pearson and Gillis, see coastal history as having distinct themes and concerns, many of which are coastal and can be maritime, but not always. A key characteristic is ‘a “distinctive tension” of some sort’. In other words, coastal scholarship can ‘face both ways’, towards land and sea.

Coastal historians are interested in shore folk, and in discovering what characteristics they have that differentiates them from people inland, particularly occupationally and culturally. Populations considered are ‘fractionally maritime’, who ‘had one boot in the boat and the other in the field’, to repeat a folk saying that describes not only fishermen, but the majority of seamen and other coastal folk who made their living in multiple occupations. David Worthington suggests that the ‘seaward and landward perspectives may offer complementary approaches for understanding societies where both influences “keep coming back at each other just as do waves.”’ This concept of maritime interaction and connectivity is useful for writing histories which link maritime communities to inland organisations, such as the Shipwrecked Mariners’ Society.

Coastal historians are not only interested in rural coastal populations, but also in urban ones. The Port Towns and Urban Cultures group at

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8 A search of the keyword ‘coastal’ in the *International Journal of Maritime History* pulled up 487 articles, mainly on coastal shipping. A few articles covered coastal communities and their economies, particularly fishing and shipbuilding, but not many. *The Mariner’s Mirror* yields a similar story, with articles on coastal shipping and craft, boat design, naval coastal operations and defences, port operations and trade, but little on the social and cultural history of coastal communities. The majority of articles focus on economic and business history, naval operations and tactics, and shipping – topics which are viewed by ‘outsiders’ as being distinctly ‘maritime’ and ‘blue water’.


11 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 3’.


Portsmouth have taken on methodological challenges offered by coastal history to assess the ways port cultures are constructed. Since port towns ‘were as much a part of urban settings as maritime ones’, their cultures may or may not have been maritime-influenced. Their work has produced a successful blog series, a conference and an edited volume.

Other coastal questions concern ‘the shape, depth, and influence of the coastal zone’ and the distance its range extends landward. Pearson presents the coast as a ‘permeable . . . frontier zone’, an ‘amorphous area of gradations between land and sea’, while Land sees it as a question, rather than a definition. Indeed, he referred to wrecking (shipwreck plundering) to illustrate how a particular coast could be assessed beyond ‘describing [its] physical extent and ecology’. Wrecking concerned both common law and Admiralty law, and the question of how far out to sea manorial wreck rights apply was an important legal concern. Indeed, the history of wrecking ‘faces both ways’. Other studies ‘facing both ways’ draw attention to environmental dimensions and effects of anthropogenic change.

Topics may be ‘coastal’ but not necessarily ‘maritime’, especially if studies focus on landward influences. Some folk ‘live on the coasts, but not with it’. By taking such non-maritime populations into account, Land maintains that ‘to propose a coastal history that is truly, and fully, within maritime history probably misses the point’. But does it? Is there anything about the discipline of maritime history that precludes a coastal history perspective? Indeed, Pearson claims that a ‘littoral’ focus, with its ‘mixture of maritime and terrestrial influences’ is a ‘paradigm for maritime history in general’. He sees littoral/coastal history as maritime history.

Of course, maritime history has not been stagnant. It has been evolving, which is not taken into consideration by the promoters of coastal history. Most accepted definitions of maritime history are broad, and have been since its early development. It is the study of ‘humankind and the sea’, and as Sarah Palmer has noted, is ‘concerned with the interrelationship of people, things, and events on land and sea’. Naval and maritime historians are embracing other perspectives, such as cultural, gender, and environmental history. They are connecting to wider historical debates, including global and world history. And some are even analysing naval and maritime topics that ‘face the land’.

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20 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 9’.
21 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 5’.
23 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 2’.
the definition of maritime history, including its coastal elements: port towns and coastal settlements, resorts, recreational boating and yachting.27 The environmental is also an increasingly important ‘relationship of humankind with the sea’.28 Most recently Huw Bowen suggested that maritime historians investigate ‘where the sea ends and land begins in terms of providing an arena or organizational framework for studies of maritime history . . . it is rarely clear how far inland the influence of the sea is felt in different states and societies’.29 These sound a lot like the concerns put forward by coastal history.

Maritime and Coastal History Practitioners

Heretofore, discussion of maritime versus coastal history has been confined to academia. Independent historians may well want to know if they fit in. They absolutely do. Indeed, the SNR ‘was founded by enthusiasts for enthusiasts’,30 in 1911, when professionalization of history was in its infancy. Coastal history as a subfield, on the other hand, was envisioned within academia. But this limited outlook changed after the Firths and Fjords Coastal History Conference in Dornoch, Scotland, in 2016. Enthusiasm for the subject sprang from the community’s participation, as well as from the mix of independent and academic scholars from history, geography, archaeology, art, museums, music, film and so forth. As well, Land’s introduction of #coastalhistory on Twitter took on a life of its own. The hashtag appeared in copious tweets, which ‘suggests that it’s not just [an academic] subfield – coastal history could be an activity or way of seeing and experiencing the coasts’.31 This aligns coastal history with the remit maritime history already holds – a place for maritime enthusiasts who love learning and writing about diverse maritime topics. As Harding rightfully noted, maritime history ‘never has been nor will be sustained by professional maritime historians or students’.32 We need each other.

The majority of work in coastal history can be described as ‘maritime’ history, and coastal historians recognize that overlap.33 Indeed, some coastal historians define themselves as maritime historians, such as the author. Coastal history is an approach that mirrors the coasts: it is permeable, liminal, and amorphous.34 It can be likened to the Thames Estuary, where sea and land seem to swap places depending on the view and the season. Coastal history explicitly opens up new questions, and new ways of seeing the coasts that we can use in writing maritime history, as well as bringing attention to our changing coastlines as man-made and natural disasters take their toll. Even if we do not consider it a separate subfield, it surely deserves its own keyword.

28 Williams, ‘Humankind and the Sea,’ 11.
31 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 37’.
33 Land, ‘Coastal History Blog 2’.
Towards a New ‘New Naval History’: 
The need for a still wider perspective

Eric Grove
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Much has been made in recent years about the ‘New Naval History’ that transcends operational and technical matters to look at the wider politico-strategic aspects of naval policy. My own recent work has demonstrated that the research net needs to be spread even wider. I was given the idea for this keynote by working up a paper on food and the First World War for a conference at Liverpool Hope University during my short period there. This revealed that the story of 1917 is rather different from that normally related by naval historians. This, of course, is that the German introduction of unrestricted submarine warfare almost brought the British Empire to its knees. The First Sea Lord, Sir John Jellicoe, said Britain was facing defeat. Only the belated introduction of convoys saved the day and safeguarded sufficient imports for the war to continue.

Work on my paper revealed that this analysis, based primarily on Admiralty perspectives, needed serious revision. According to the important book by Margaret Barnett, *British Food Policy During the First World War* (London, 1985) published over 30 years ago, in the quarter that covered maximum sinkings of Allied and Neutral merchant shipping, April, May and June 1917, vital imports of wheat and flour actually increased to a wartime maximum, almost 1.8 million tons. Admittedly, wheat and flour stocks had been at a wartime low on 1 April, 1.24 million tons, almost half those of 1 October 1916 (2.4 million tons) but these stocks began to recover to 1.36 million tons by 1 July and were no less than 3.1 million tons by 1 October, more than they had been on 1 October 1914. Clearly the impact of the U-boat had been decisively mitigated. How was this done?

It cannot be denied that losses to U-boats were certainly very severe. In the first month of unrestricted warfare, losses of allied and neutral merchant shipping, already high at almost 370,000 gross register tons (grt) in January, spiked to 540,000 grt and almost 600,000 grt in March. This was the German monthly target which they thought would bring Britain to its knees. April was even worse with no less than 881,027 grt lost (516,000 of this British). A quarter of ships setting out from Britain were being sunk before returning. Sinkings came down a little in May but it the total was still almost 600,000 and losses increased again to almost 690,000 grt in June.

Yet the German strategy did not work, certainly in the predicted six months and even after losses exceeded the desired monthly average of 600,000 grt over the period. It also proved highly counter-productive strategically, leading to the USA breaking off diplomatic relations with Germany the same day the first American ship of the campaign, *Housatonic*, was stopped and sunk by a U-boat on 3 February. It was also
a key, if not the only, factor in America entering the war on 6 April. This led in turn, not only to US Naval assistance to the defence of shipping that was a vital factor in the introduction of convoy but the recruitment to the Allied cause as an ‘Associated Power’ of the neutral that had been the major thorn in the side of the Allied blockade policy, whose noose was now drawn even more tightly – and decisively - around the necks of the Central Powers.

There were ironies here. *Housatonic* was one of the former German ships that had been a serious bone of contention between Britain and the USA earlier in the war. The Americans also had to suspend their ambitious ‘Navy Second to None’ battle fleet that was being built to sustain freedom of the seas against the British. The Wilson administration also reduced food imports to Britain to very low levels, 670,000 grt in the fourth quarter of 1917, as they considered British stockpiles, over 3 million tons of wheat and flour by 1 October, to be too large. Woodrow Wilson was a much more effective interdictor of British food supplies than Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Holzendorff ever were.

One reason for limiting the extent of the crisis was the very extent of the Germans’ target. In 1914 45 per cent of the world’s merchant fleet was under British control. If one takes just the ocean-going fleet of over 3,000 grt the percentage was over 60 per cent. In 1915 there were 4,881 ships over 3,000 grt, of these over 3,000 were British, 228 were French, 225 Japanese, and 211 Italian, making an Allied total of over 75 per cent of the global total. This was a huge number of ships, a quantity difficult upon which to inflict decisive damage.

Of the major neutrals, in August 1914 the USA, Netherlands, Sweden and Norway could muster 600 more cargo ships, 15 per cent of the world fleet. This increased a little as the USA acquired German ships (to British chagrin). In 1917 the Germans hoped to scare all these ships away with their submarines. In April, neutral shipping was carrying only a quarter of its normal traffic. Nevertheless, the contribution of neutral shipping was hardly decisive and in any case these ships could be, and soon were, coerced back into action by British control of coal supplies plus diplomatic skill and hard bargaining. The USA, of course, entered the war and its merchant fleet was added to the cause of the ‘Allied and Associated Powers’.

Another way in which losses could be absorbed was by new construction. Construction of merchant ships in Britain increased to 1.2 million tons in 1917 with corresponding reductions in warship building. This was still less than both the output of merchant ships in the last year of peace (1.9 million grt) and only 20 per cent of the year’s losses. Nevertheless the construction of half a million tons in Britain, plus a similar amount in the rest of the world plus the seizure of a similar amount of German shipping mitigated the situation significantly in the crisis period.

The key and decisive factor, as pointed out by Admiral Hezlet in his excellent book *The Submarine and Sea Power* (New York, 1967) almost half a century ago, was the newly created Ministry of Shipping’s control and direction of available merchant ships. This exercise in government control proved remarkably agile and effective. There had been fears about North American grain supply in 1916 with predicted bad harvests, a potential global problem which encouraged the Germans in their unrestricted warfare decision. To hedge against this, the British bought the Australian...
wheat supply, but this required too many ship days to transport it around the world. Some Australian wheat was sent in the spring but the Ministry of Shipping used its powers to disregard financial and economic factors and concentrate all available shipping on the North American run. This decisively saved ship days. Tonnage requisitioned for military purposes was also reduced. British imports of vital foodstuffs therefore increased. This is not to denigrate the impact of the introduction of convoy that was the long-term solution to the U-boat problem, but shipping management getting the most out of the total fleet was the decisive factor in maintaining imports in the short and medium term.

The history of the 1917 crisis must be put into a wider perspective than merely naval history. In the circumstances one can understand why Lloyd George, fully aware of the wider picture, lost patience with the pathologically pessimistic Jellicoe (although his brutal treatment of his First Sea Lord is hard to defend). The neutralization the U-boat in 1917 had little to do with the Admiralty and everything to do with the Ministry of Shipping. This is a clear demonstration that the history of the maritime war of 1914–18 needs to be put in the widest possible economic, political and bureaucratic context.

The same is true of the Second World War. In a sadly obscure paper given by Dr Kevin Smith,1 one of the most important – if unsung – historians of the maritime war argued that:

Obsession – then and now – with anti-submarine warfare has generated a legacy of disproportionate attention devoted to that issue . . . Yet British efforts to maximize merchant shipping capacity – especially through the particularly key aspect of rapid, thorough repair of damaged ships – was and is overlooked. Attention to the mundane aspects of maintaining logistical infrastructure in good working order enables a balanced perspective. British merchant repair yards’ inefficiency kept far more merchant ships out of service at any given time than the U-boats knocked out of service in any given month. Even allowing for the fact that the consequences of U-boat sinkings were cumulative while repair yards’ failures had temporary short-term effects, it was only after three years of war that their long-term cumulative activity actually deprived Britain of more shipping capacity than did day-to-day ship repairing failures. Throughout the era of Allied obsession with the U-boat, Britain’s repair yards certainly deserved more attention than they received. Their failures helped generate Anglo-American friction and would eventually help delay offensives, including the Second Front in France.

He went on to argue that ‘rising repair volume, a shortage of available facilities, an inadequate priority mechanism, and an angry, dislocated, depleted labour force created serious congestion in Britain’s West Coast repair yards.’ He then emphasized the human factor. Ship repairing productivity was abysmal, as it was also in the related shipbuilding industry, from which many

1 ‘U-boat vs. Dockyard: The importance of British merchant ship repair yards’ failure in the battle of the Atlantic, 1940–1943’, Ohio Valley History Conference at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, October 1996.
employees were necessarily drawn. Workers still resented employers’ efforts to reduce capacity during a 1930s depression that saw British shipbuilding fall 89% between 1927 and 1933, resulting in 60% unemployment. The leading figure in co-ordinating management’s downsizing response had been Lithgow, now Churchill’s choice to oversee merchant shipbuilding and repair. Since workers blamed him for unemployment, this was an unfortunate choice. Workers would suspect employers’ influence upon Government policy and resist efforts to expand the pool of skilled labour.

As the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport, Philip Noel-Baker, wrote, ‘the present position of . . . Lithgow is acting as a deterrent to production in the West of The Scotland Shipyards . . . Mistrust is so deep that enthusiasm for the war effort is not possible so long as the choice seems to lie between Lithgow and Hitler.’

In February 1941 about a quarter of British merchant shipping was immobilized, awaiting or undergoing repair in British ports. It is often forgotten that Churchill’s declaration of the ‘Battle of the Atlantic’ on 6 March 1941 said that ‘tonnage losses and enforced concentration on repairs’ would be its ‘crux’. Measures were duly taken and, although there were still problems, by July 1941 tonnage under repair in British yards had been reduced by almost two fifths.

Professor Smith made this crucial point,

inadequate ship repairing labour and facilities kept at least seven times more shipping out of service at any given time as compared to the U-boats . . . More frequently it sidelined eleven times more shipping, and occasionally kept fifty to one hundred times as much shipping out of service at any given time as compared to the U-boats’ efforts to eliminate them from service (August, November, and December 1941). On a day-to-day basis, the real shipping crisis was in British shipyards.

Still other factors need to be taken into account to understand fully for the maritime 1939–45 war. My own work on the maritime chapter in the recently published Oxford Illustrated History of the Second World War showed how far German resource shortages neutered much of Germany’s naval efforts. The attempt to build revolutionary fast battery drive U-boats foundered on these problems together with the building sections of the boats in various locations, a procedure necessitated by the Allied bombing offensive; assembly of incompatible parts proved very difficult. The need to carry out trials on what boats were completed were also decisively disrupted by the much maligned (by naval historians) RAF Bomber Command whose ‘gardening’ mining missions decisively disrupted the German trials areas in the Baltic.

The message of all this is that we naval historians cannot understand our subject without putting it into the widest possible context, economic, political and strategic. This is our challenge. It certainly makes the subject a good deal more interesting and opens up to new researchers subjects that seemed closed and settled.
The Place of Exploration in Maritime History: The National Maritime Museum and the polar regions

Claire Warrior
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

The Society for Nautical Research played an important role in the establishment of the National Maritime Museum (NMM). It seemed appropriate, then, that this first SNR conference, considering the state of maritime history research and being held in Greenwich, should include a consideration of this nearby museum, and its role in shaping and reflecting public perceptions of maritime heritage. Here, I will briefly outline the shifting significance of polar exploration as a means of tracking the ways in which the museum’s perception of its core subject-matter has shifted, and the interplay between the institution, its collections and its audiences’ expectations. The positioning of polar exploration, particularly in relation to the Antarctic, has rarely been stable within the museum, with galleries frequently changing in scope, size and location. Nevertheless, the significance of the collections, and the public interest in polar exploration, has usually ensured that something relating to the subject has been on display.

The National Maritime Museum (NMM) has one of the most comprehensive collections of artefacts relating to polar exploration in Britain. Pinning down exactly what the material culture of polar exploration might be is, in itself, difficult to do: although the museum has, historically, had a category of ‘polar equipment and relics’, the things that can be used to represent expeditionary activity go beyond this. There are over a thousand artefacts that relate to polar exploration and its protagonists, including navigational and scientific instruments, flags, medals, manuscripts, photographs, rare books, charts, maps, artworks, uniforms and artefacts of indigenous manufacture. The collection’s strength lies in the Royal Naval expeditions of the nineteenth century, particularly in the 1845 expedition led by Sir John Franklin and the 1875–6 British Arctic Expedition, commanded by Sir George Nares. The NMM’s Antarctic holdings are smaller, but nevertheless include some iconic artefacts, such as Robert Falcon Scott’s sledging flag.

Despite the richness of this collection, very little material relating to the poles was on display when the museum first opened in 1937. This was partly due to the chronological scope and arrangement of the new museum’s galleries. The displays began in the Queen’s House with ‘The Early Tudors (1485–1558)’ and ended in the West Wing’s Caird Galleries with ‘The

2 A more detailed discussion of this can be found in C. Warrior, ‘Rekindling Histories: Families and British polar exploration’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 2016).
Napoleonic War, 1803–1815’. This excluded the most active period of polar exploration, from 1818 onwards. There were some tangential references to the poles as part of the larger story of the development of British naval and maritime power in, for example, Westall’s painting of Nelson’s legendary encounter with a polar bear. However, under the museum’s first director, Geoffrey Callender, the displays were focused upon paintings, while the strength of the polar collections was in artefacts.

This was merely the first phase in the NMM’s development. At this stage, polar exploration was not singled out; indeed, it was barely visible. Further galleries, particularly in the East Wing, were planned to continue the historical story through to the present day. The outbreak of the Second World War and subsequent requisitioning of areas of the museum as part of the war effort meant that development stalled and the new galleries only came to fruition in the 1950s. It was in this context that the first Polar Gallery opened.

The initial plans for the East Wing, drawn up in early 1949, did not include a ‘Polar Room’. The galleries were to ‘continue the story of our maritime history from 1815 to the present day, with models, pictures and relics’, arranged in two subsections: one suite with a technological bent, ‘Sail to Steam’, and another called ‘Two Great Wars’. Polar exploration did not seem to fit. The archives offer no clear reason as to why a polar gallery was eventually added in the basement, opening in 1951, but the significance of the collection itself may have had a role to play, the ‘Franklin relics’ having been on display in Greenwich since the mid-nineteenth century. The gallery seemed to occupy an uneasy position, detached from the chronological narrative, and there are no detailed files in the museum archive on what it contained, although photographs suggest that both Arctic and Antarctic artefacts were included.

The East Wing galleries were tackled again in 1967. The arrival of a new director, Basil Greenhill, who took a broader view of maritime power and wanted to shift the museum away from its naval focus, played its part. The Polar Gallery seems to have become more integrated into the displays that surrounded it, linking, via a whaling display, to a gallery on the development of the fishing industry. A more wholesale refurbishment of the gallery was undertaken in the early 1970s, with Ann Savours Shirley, a new member of staff and polar expert in her own right, being asked to produce a brief. She suggested that the Polar Gallery space should become an Arctic Gallery, a newly available room should become the Antarctic Gallery and the two should be connected by a whaling display. After 20 years of display, polar exploration seemed to occupy a more secure position, perhaps bolstered by Greenhill’s personal interest in it, but only the Arctic Gallery was realized. The chronological display was driven by the established collections, particularly with regard to Franklin, relying upon what were considered to be the most important historical narratives, and thereby reinforcing them.

The 1980s saw instability in the positioning of polar exploration once more. By February 1980 the museum’s deputy director, Philip Annis,

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3 See H. Lewis-Jones, *Imaging the Arctic: Heroism, spectacle and polar exploration* (London and New York, 2017), chapter 2, for further discussion.
5 Interview with Professor Roger Knight, 27 Oct. 2011.
indicated that other priorities were more important, suggesting a gallery on the modern merchant service to replace the Arctic Gallery. The curatorial response from John Munday of the Weapons and Antiquities Department was robust:

I very much hope that the proposed storage of the Polar displays is not a *fait accompli* . . . for we are, I feel, on dangerous ground, not to say thin ice . . . it should be remembered that the Admiralty lodged the relics at Greenwich in 1854 and that they and the later additions have by now acquired something approaching the aura of Nelson relics.

He emphasized a perceived public hunger for the display of polar exploration – ‘The interest . . . is larger than one might think’ – and added, ‘Exploration and discovery as a theme is important to us and the Arctic endeavours are a gripping story, the removal of which would leave the Museum’s galleries the poorer both from the subject and the visual points of view.’ The gallery did continue for a few more years, until an engineering fault cause a partial flood and the space had to be cleared as a result.

Ann Shirley continued to press for a polar display, and although her pleas centred around both public demand, longevity of display and the significance of the collection, it was external events that finally had the biggest impact. In 1984 Canadian anthropologist Owen Beattie exhumed the body of one of Franklin’s crew from Beechey Island. News reports and photographs generated publicity, and the expedition was revived in the social memory, highlighting its absence at the NMM. Shirley used this carefully:

It is indeed sad that I cannot say to all the descendants and other interested, ‘Come and see the Franklin relics on our Arctic Gallery at Greenwich.’ It was particularly embarrassing to have to tell the ITN *News at Ten* presenter John Suchet . . . that the gallery had been dismantled and turned into offices.

A new display was planned, albeit reusing existing infrastructure. Shirley did not envisage major changes from the 1970s display, other than once more trying to bring in some Antarctic material, which did not prove to be possible. Significantly, though, the new gallery was to be on the ground floor, finally bringing the Polar Gallery up from the basement. Although speed was of the essence, as the entire wing was to be cleared for 1988’s *Armada* exhibition, staff shortages and the difficulty of adapting a display into a pre-existing space had an impact on the time scale. The final result, which opened in 1986, relied heavily on graphic elements, but was commended internally as ‘an interesting and lively new display’.

The longer narrative of polar exploration was not visible again until

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6 Memorandum to John Munday from Philip Annis (Deputy Director), 20 Feb. 1980, NMM Archives, G5/3/06B.
7 Internal memorandum from John Munday to the Director and Deputy Director, March 1980, NMM Archives, G5/3/06B.
8 Ibid.
9 ‘Arctic (Polar) Gallery’ memorandum, Ann Shirley to the Chairman of the Gallery Committee and its Members (Dr Ormond, Dr McGowan, Professor Malin), 3 Oct. 1984, NMM Archives G5/3/06B.
10 Note by an unknown author, added to memo by J. Harris, 12 Dec. 1985, NMM Archives 2G5/3/06.
1999, when the NMM undertook a major expansion and refurbishment, creating 19 new permanent galleries. The Neptune Court redevelopment was designed to reinvigorate the institution, and the galleries were to be arranged thematically rather than chronologically. Exploration was the only theme to be covered in more than one gallery; it was hoped that the new display would break down Eurocentric views of exploration, although the collections were limited in this respect. The chronology was ambitious – from prehistory to Franklin in one display, with the second looking at underwater archaeology and navigational technology, including material from the 1875–6 British Arctic Expedition. It was felt that Franklin was one of the museum's 'treasures' but that maritime exploration should not just be about cold parts of the world. Arguably, this was the most integrated polar exploration had ever been. Exploration was framed as being about discovery, human endeavour and science, without explicit militaristic overtones: this was seen to be a positive force in shaping what maritime heritage might be in the new millennium.

Today, the museum is currently building four new permanent galleries, one of which will focus on the collections relating to the Arctic and the Antarctic; the south will finally regain a foothold in the displays. The polar regions are once more on the public agenda, which has influenced how the gallery is being envisaged, bringing together historic collections and contemporary concerns. One such issue is climate change. The ways in which both regions are altering is certainly a maritime story – for example, the decrease in sea ice in the Northwest Passage is beginning to open up the possibility that it could be used as a shipping route. The gallery will make reference to the potential impact of a changing environment, and ask people to think about its consequences.

Although the Arctic collections are undoubtedly larger, the museum has, at particular moments, made concerted efforts to augment its Antarctic material. This was particularly the case in the late 1990s, when it acquired Scott's sledging flag, primus stove and ration bags from the Terra Nova expedition and Shackleton's liquid boat compass from the James Caird voyage. Having these important artefacts and not displaying them in a brand-new gallery would be a missed opportunity, particularly as Shackleton and Scott are among the best-known polar explorers. Nevertheless, including both polar regions can lead to their conflation as 'cold places', rather than recognizing their very different histories and historiography, and, most importantly, the fact that the Arctic is inhabited. The museum's collections do not support an extensive investigation of Inuit culture, but opportunities to work with indigenous people have been taken wherever possible. For example, the museum hosted a residency by the Inuk musician Tanya Tagaq in the summer of 2017, supported by Arts Council England, and two new pieces by her will feature in the display.

The placement of polar exploration in the NMM has changed over time, the location of the gallery reflecting the extent to which the subject and collections have been seen as relevant and significant to the museum and its audiences. In the twenty-first century, the new gallery will demonstrate the relevance of what have sometimes been seen as peripheral areas of the world to all our lives today.

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11 Interview with Dr Eric Kentley, 15 Feb. 2012.
The aim of this paper is to look at the progress made by UK maritime museums in representing ‘minorities’. Specifically race, gender and sexual identity were the focus. Disability and class would also have been examined had time allowed.

As the conference was about assessing progress in maritime historical research it was appropriate to apply that to museum exhibitions and events. How is the UK currently progressing with the fairer representation of minorities, and building on the scholarship that can richly fertilise such displays and related activities such as talks and blogs?

Discussing museum workers’ experiences of obstacles and their successful strategies in tackling such subjects for public consumption provided useful examples. Evidence was based both on my insider experiences as sometime curator/consultant/critical friend, plus informal interviews with colleagues at four UK maritime museums, as well as three European ones.

Connecting glass case and mortarboard

It is worth reminding ourselves of the clear ways maritime museums and academic activity interconnect. They are almost twin motors carrying us to the desired end: greater understanding, which then (hopefully) stimulates individuals to further explore the subject and even take productive action, such as promoting equality and diversity.

Museums worldwide welcome bridges with the academic world in different ways. The best museums – and those in university towns – actively seek theorized interpretation of their collections. Exhibitions generate deposits of artefacts by the public and discussion, which are valuable because they enable desk-bound researchers to explore more and

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1 This article is dedicated to the many historians and museologists who are also activists committed to equality: in particular to Dan Conlin, Sean Creighton, Charles Foy, Sheila Jemima, Christopher Mason, Ian Murphy, Tony Tibbles, and Sarah Wajid, and those in the Museum Detox group.

2 This also builds on earlier research I did specifically about women: J. Stanley, ‘Putting Gender into Seafaring: Representing women in public maritime history’, chapter in H. Kean, P. Martin and S. Martin (eds), *Seeing History: Public history now* (, London, 2000), 81–103.
also enable the public to contribute to wider public understanding.

Just as universities can assist museums, so responsive museums with ‘outreach’ or ‘community engagement’ projects can help universities. Funding bodies require that university research demonstrably has impact on the wider society. Impact is defined by the Higher Education Funding Council for England as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’.3

Minorities matter: why, and why don’t we see that more?
A key question here is ‘why bother with minorities?’ There are many answers, among them that it is only fair to represent the population accurately and to rectify long-standing imbalances and exclusions. Women are now 51 per cent of the UK’s population; Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are 14 per cent; and people who say they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) are about 2 per cent. Disability affects at least 18 per cent of the population and 45 per cent of people identify as working-class.4 Pragmatically, museums need to attract non-traditional visitors. And it is a civic duty to counter discrimination by assisting public education. Most refreshingly, museums can bring joy and illumination because revealing occluded matters, such as all the people who were not the stereotypical white, heterosexual, able-bodied Jack Tars, is so interesting. Seeing the wider picture beyond norms and outdated misapprehensions is fascinating.

Given all the positive arguments for moving the marginalized into the mainstream, why is not this happening more? Four principal explanations for why the nettle is not more frequently grasped are these. First, there is cultural lack of readiness – a perception that the public are not ready. Funding ‘unpopular’ subjects can be controversial, especially if museum trustees are conservative. Second, and related, museums can feel concern about committing scarce resources to something that may generate negative wider publicity. Third, busy staff without sufficient training in diversity and inclusion often feel uncertain about how to represent an ‘adult’ or sensitive subject, such as homosexuality, in a tactful and family-friendly way. And fourth, this position can be justified by the real problem: absence of evidence, especially of 3-D artefacts. For example, how do you represent the story of women on ships if there is no photo or object to reveal the crew were other than male?

Assistance in moving forward
All maritime museum initiatives on this matter deserve attention. Those particularly focused upon in this paper were two on race (Black Salt at Merseyside Maritime Museum (MMM) in 2017 and Indian Ocean Seafarers

1891–1961, a mini-exhibition, at the National Maritime Museum (NMM) in 2016; one on sexual identity (Hello Sailor: Gay Life on the Ocean Wave, MMM, 2005 and continuing); and two on gender, the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN)’s From Pioneers to Professionals: Women & the Royal Navy, 2017 and the NMM’s pop-up exhibit on Haenyeo: Women of the sea, 2017. The people the curators worked with included academic experts in the field and independent writers and artists. Most museums hope to that aspects of their temporary exhibition will, in the long term, be incorporated into the permanent displays.

Different museums have found different ways to make displays more inclusive. Usually the key assets are extremely pro-active and expert staff; good timing in relation to both the museum’s internal situation and a receptive cultural climate in society; and the existence of a book or body of work on the subject, meaning that expertise is already in place. With these factors in place, the planned exhibition felt concrete and realisable.

In relation to race, what helped Black Salt at MMM were the following factors. Ongoing local commitment and interest existed; for example, the International Slavery Museum (which, of course, foregrounds race) is based in the maritime museum; Liverpool has had many relevant previous community and academic history projects, such as those on Chinese and Kru seafarers; and the current Sankofa (‘go back and get’, in the Ghanian language, Twi) black history project. Staff were enthusiastic so the door was wide open. Some internal funding happened to be available. Dr Ray Costello had written a book, Black Salt (Liverpool, 2012), and lived in Liverpool, so was able to be the co-curator, with Rebecca Smith.

Similarly, factors that helped launch the NMM’s two creative mini exhibitions, Haenyeo (meaning the ‘diving grannies’ of Korea) and Indian Ocean Seafarers 1891–1961, included the involvement of a very dynamic BAME diversity worker, Sara Wajid, founder of the Museum Detox group of BAME museum workers, who was there pushing for change. Also the museum had a curator, Aaron Jaffer, who is an expert on Asian seafarers, and the museum had a long-standing awareness that something needed to done as soon as possible.

It is a truism that maritime and naval historiography often omit women. At the NMRN in Portsmouth an exhibition entirely on gender was possible and indeed highly desirable because a peg existed: the centenary of the Women’s Royal Naval Service. It was as obvious a slot as the centenary

of the battle of Jutland had been a few months earlier. Curator Victoria Ingles knew that artefacts were available as the NMRN has the biggest WRNS archive in UK. Good links also existed with many active veteran Wrens who were willing to respond to requests for further artefacts, such as evidence of modern women naval engineers’ achievements.

Representing diverse sexual orientation is still difficult in this subtly homophobic climate. Stockholm’s Sjöhistoriska Museet tackled it with Safe Havens for Europride 2008. And the MMM’s Hello Sailor travelled to several other courageous museums: Southampton Maritime Museum, Newcastle’s Discovery Museum, Glasgow’s The Tall Ship at Riverside and Nova Scotia’s Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Some of the assets that helped Hello Sailor succeed were an existing book and links with gay seafarers, plus brave, and committed directors such as Tony Tibbles at the MMM and Christopher Mason in Glasgow. In addition LGBTQI matters were becoming more open: for example, camp TV presenter Graham Norton had television shows five nights a week, generating relative queer acceptance. Also, the MMM’s decision to adopt a lightweight tone – signalled, for example, by pink bunting – made it more readily acceptable to family audiences.

What is still difficult?

Bringing ‘minorities’ into the full light of major maritime museums’ biggest spaces is still not easy. Reasons for this include the issue that bigotry and covert xenophobia continue, and are possibly increasing. Conversely museums worry that visitors who are part of a marginalized group may go on the attack if ‘their category’, for example F2M (Female to Male) trans people, are not represented enough, or in a way that spokespeople feel is ‘correct’.

Unfortunately, some hidebound people still take maritime history to mean vessels and naval warfare, rather than seaborne workers and passengers. In other words, there is a lingering perception of what is ‘proper’ in a maritime museum, which affects visitor expectations, trustees’ willingness, staff and possibly traditionally minded sponsors.

Crucial practical obstacles exist. Funding is scarce, meaning that there is a tendency to prioritize exhibitions that will attract the most visitors. Our throwaway culture, and the reduced amount of home storage available these days, and a decrease in kinship links all mean that families potentially retain fewer artefacts, especially if they could be incriminating (homo-sexuality at sea, for instance, was a crime until the late twentieth century).

Issues in doing such historiography for public use

Undoubtedly great cultural sensitivity is needed. One solution to this is to involve focus groups as advisors. The Museum of the Atlantic worked with an existing Halifax LGBT group, for example. Links with the academic world are crucial because they enable museum staff to

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venture into discussing – accessibly – what is not there but should be, and recognizing that philosophical truism that ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’. Experts in their field can help museologists make scholarly speculations about what might have been displayed; why it no longer exists; and why it might be acceptable to show replicas.

Scholarship and museology overlap with activism and even with emotions. A responsible museum representing a minority has to find ways to help victims of marginalization to publicly discuss the impact of systemic exclusivity, as expressed through the hegemonic gender order, inadvertent homophobia and institutional racism.

Towards an inclusive future

The future of diverse and inclusive maritime historiography can work, for many reasons. These include that new sorts of ‘exhibitions’ now exist. Fresh practices include the increasing tendency for museums to work with artists, who can help envisage what is not actually evidenced. Also museums use non-traditional spaces. *Haenyeo: Women of the Sea*, was on for just one month, in a 10-square-foot hexagonal stand in the foyer, rather like a kiosk.

Museum blogs work as adjuncts and mini-exhibitions in virtual annexes. They can also generate more information such as via comments in chat rooms. In public life, particular social media and the current popularity of television series such as *Who Do You Think You Are* mean that family donors are ready to share more. Relatedly, museum outreach links with community groups are being assiduously maintained.

This public engagement is helped by the many and growing links with universities. Financial pressures on universities to demonstrate ‘impact’, plus the bridge-making that scholars engage in, are valuable in creating richer exhibitions with fresh interpretations of subjects. In the UK the Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities (DCDC) annual conferences help all sectors together thrash out ways to ‘surface the infinite potential of our extraordinary collections. Collaboration is at the heart.’

‘Such crucial interchanges between colleagues ties in with the new conceptual connectivity bringing useful cross-fertilization between maritime, port, island, and coastal histories. It is part of seeing maritime history as social and cultural history.

Finally, real ‘minority’ pioneers, such as Captain Belinda Bennett, the UK’s first black woman master, are breaking through (in her case in 2016). She is there in *Black Salt*. Other ground-breakers like her are providing models, artefacts and grist both for future maritime history studies and for maritime museum displays.

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Maritime West Africa: Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone since 1900

Oliver Coates
Cambridge University

West Africa is an important maritime region within the South Atlantic, both economically and in terms of the security challenges posed to shipping. From 2001 to 2014 regional container volume has increased from 1.7 million 20-ton equivalent units (TEUs) to 7.5 in 2014, with Nigeria leading the region at a capacity of 1,818,000, as opposed to 977,000 for the Ivory Coast, and 905,000 for Ghana.1 But despite this dramatic growth in port infrastructure, recurrent problems frustrate the region’s leading maritime market: Nigeria. In the 2000s Nigeria lost approximately 25 billion Naira to piracy and maritime crime; with opportunistic robbery off the southwestern shores of the country vying with organized violence on the part of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Nigeria Delta in the east.2 Congestion problems limit the potential capacity of Lagos, with 2 million containers containing an estimated 5 trillion Naira worth of goods being stranded at the port in 2017 due to road deterioration.3 This brief article will survey the development of twentieth-century maritime trade in three key Anglophone countries, before relating the contemporary challenges of insecurity and poor infrastructure to historical problems of unequal pay within the shipping industry, and rapid urban development along models originally stipulated by colonial governments. The important cases of Francophone territories, Mauritania and Liberia will not be considered due to space.

Ghana

The dramatic contrasts of this contemporary vista are largely continuities from a twentieth-century history of uneven investment, colonial exploitation and rapid urban development around key ports. Ghana’s history has seen important European ports since the seventeenth century, particularly that of Elmina, which became the sea of Dutch administration in the region.4 By the nineteenth century Accra was becoming an

increasingly busy port, due to gold exports from the Akim and Ashanti, as well as palm oil from the Akwapim mountains.\(^5\) By the beginning of the twentieth-century, a series of ports continued to vie for attention, the majority being ‘surf ports’ where goods had to be unloaded from ocean-going vessels on to canoes in order to be brought ashore.\(^6\) The canoe men were highly skilled labourers, but unpredictable sea conditions and inexperienced European crew meant that disaster was never far away; approximately seven vessels ran aground at Takoradi and other ports in the first decades of the twentieth century.\(^7\) Without regular maintenance several ports, such as Accra, were in danger of silting over and becoming unusable; during the First World War this silting blocked the Gold Coast’s major cocoa port, which had in 1910 been responsible for around 60 per cent of cocoa shipped from the colony.\(^8\) From the First World War the increasing volume of produce exports, particularly cocoa, from the Gold Coast necessitated the development of deep-water ports, with the new Takoradi deep port opening in 1928, at the time the most expensive civil project in British Africa.\(^9\) Takoradi would play a key role in the Second World War; Allied efforts to ship goods destined for North Africa to the port from North America and Europe saved around 8,000 miles of shipping and a month’s transport time.\(^10\) By the time of its expansion in the 1950s, Takoradi was the Gold Coast’s premier port and continued to dominate the Ghanian export economy during the post-colonial period.

**Nigeria**

Nigeria’s nineteenth-century maritime history was characterized by two developments: European efforts to use their domination of the seas to reach inland, especially along the first stretches of the navigable Niger, as far as the Niger–Benue confluence, and second by African entrepreneurs’ attempts to gain a foothold in maritime trade, either through securing preferential terms for trading with the Europeans, or by trying to purchase their own vessels and break directly into maritime markets. The island of Fernando Po, today part of Equatorial Guinea, was a key base for European voyages up the Niger and for trade with the Delta; Lagos had become a protectorate of the British from 1860 and even in that decade had earned the moniker ‘Liverpool of West Africa’ due to its economic importance.\(^11\) While in 1866 Lagos had a population of 25,083, by 1931 it had grown to 126,474; the city was home to Yorubas, Ibos, Hausas, Syrian traders, Indian merchants, Krios and a long-standing Saro community descended from slaves who had returned from Brazil.\(^12\)

\(^{6}\) Ibid., 111.
\(^{7}\) Ibid.
\(^{9}\) Ibid., 134.
\(^{12}\) K. Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington
Colonial Nigeria relied upon maritime transport to ship cocoa, palm kernels and other core produce. After the disappearance of Woermann Linie, the major German firm in West Africa, and of German demand for four fifths of Nigeria’s palm kernel produce in 1914, British firms were free to monopolize shipping in Lagos. Elder Dempster was by far the largest of these firms, enjoying a close relationship with the colonial government and carrying government employees on credit until 1948. Regional ports were of considerable importance in Nigeria, at the eastern port of Calabar, Elder Dempster shipped the produce of member firms of the Association of West African Merchants, including the Compagnie Française de l’Afrique Occidentale, La Société Commerciale de l’Ouest Africain, Peterson Zochonis, and Mandillas and Kalaberis. Ultimately, Lagos was dominant; during the Second World War the port handled 70 per cent of Nigerian imports and half of all exports.

The area of Apapa, across the lagoon from Victoria Island, was soon developed as deep-water port and railhead with connections to northern Nigeria. From the 1970s, industrial maritime provision at Lagos extended to Tin Can Island and then to Ikorordu Container Port. By 2001 the port had an annual turnaround of 9.9 metric tons and generated $1.8 billion in 2008 for the federal government. But the city’s infrastructure could not cater to the massively increased workforce attracted to rapid port construction. As late as 1950, 65.4 per cent of Lagosians lived on Victoria Island due in part to the lack of adequate transport in the city. Organized labour had a strong tradition in the Lagos docks, playing a key role in seminal events such as the 1945 general strike; as late as the 1970s, many trade unions in the docks could trace their history back between 30 and 40 years. Post-colonial firms such as the corruption-ridden Nigerian National Shipping Line were as much targets of worker protest as their colonial-era counterparts.

Sierra Leone

Freetown was perhaps the pre-eminent port in Second World War Africa; even though its major contribution to convoy supply, refuelling, coaling and manpower in the battle of the Atlantic remains ‘little known’. The natural harbour of Freetown was so large that entire convoys could form in its waters free from the U-boat threat that lingered off the Sierra

14 Ibid.
Leonean coast. Many Africans who worked onboard merchant navy vessels boarded at Freetown; the Kru, originally from Eastern Liberia, were sought after by British shipping firms. As with Lagos, accelerated industrialization, in the case of Freetown during the Second World War, led to assertive trade unions; entrepreneurs flourished and men such as Agibu Jalloh acquired significant influence in Freetown, starting his own fleet of motor lorries. A degree of international celebrity was attained by Siddi Khayam, the leader of Elder Dempster workers upon the MV *Apapa* which, upon arriving at Liverpool from Lagos, refused to dock; Khayam’s legacy is controversial but the actions of the African seamen on the *Apapa* briefly drew the world’s attention to Elder Dempster’s practice of casual racism on board its vessels. During the 1950s, Colonial Freetown was ethnically diverse and hosted a comparatively large community of South Asians, mainly from Sindh. Nor was the significance of Freetown limited to Sierra Leone; by the 1970s, Liverpool hosted a large Kru diaspora.

**Troubled histories**

This brief survey is necessarily highly selective; readers who are familiar with West African history will discern many gaps in the account. But my intention is to draw a connection between the insecurity and paradoxes of the contemporary maritime sector in the region, and a modern history of extraordinarily rapid economic achievement crippled by racial, social, and geographical inequalities. Piracy represents a major expense for shipping firms operating in the Gulf of Guinea, but the contexts to this activity are inseparable from disputes over land and ownership of resources that can be seen in the highly unequal ownership of shipping companies and labour resources during the twentieth century. Infrastructural problems, such as poor road networks and still worse rail infrastructure, threaten the meteoric growth of Lagos’s container terminals. This challenge must be understood in relation to the accelerated urbanization of Lagos in the twentieth century.

Ports in Takoradi and Lagos grew rapidly, but far from simply being sources of economic development, they also became beacons of divisive labour practices. The asymmetry of Africa’s relations with the outside world remains at the heart of its maritime history; but it should not blind us to the enduring resourcefulness and skill of West African seamen who, at different times and in various places, succeeded in unpacking large vessels in rough seas, challenging discrimination onboard European vessels, facing the threat of submarine warfare, or taking control of their own shipping companies.

Recent research on West Africa’s maritime past has exposed how seamen themselves were customarily shut out of shipping company profits,

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especially since the 1980s. As the research of several Nigerian historians has demonstrated, the port of Lagos has played a major role as hub for intercontinental trade arriving by sea, and also as a centre for exporting goods from all over the Sahel.

26 A. Olukoju ‘Spatial Analysis and Inter-Port Competition: Lagos, the Niger and the ‘Capture’ of the Kano-Tripoli Trade, C. 1890-1914’, *The Great Circle* 18, no. 1 (1996), 30–47; Chilaka, ‘Piracy . . .’.
Maritime Historical Research in Wales: A peripheral view

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James. G. Davies
Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage

This examination of maritime historical research in Wales over the last two decades, though mainly concerned the maritime history of Wales, it is not an exclusive examination of such, and, further, also considers contributions from the fields of maritime heritage and archaeology. To provide some context, the following snapshot of postgraduate research in maritime history in the UK is perhaps useful. As of 2015, according to information collected by the Institute of Historical Research at University of London (History Online) there were some 3,741 history theses listed as then in progress at UK universities. Of these perhaps 106 (3 per cent) can be classed as being concerned with maritime history broadly defined or of having significant maritime concerns or interest. Among them there are two (three if we are to include the history of resorts) that are engaged with Welsh subject material. If we look in turn at history theses that were completed in UK universities in 2014, then we can see that out of a total of 515 there were perhaps 9 (under 2 per cent) that might be considered maritime in the broadest definition.

To put these findings in their wider context, if we consider all history theses completed in the UK in the 20-year period 1995 to 2014 as listed in the IHR dataset, we find that out of some 10,392, there are around 208 (2 per cent) which considered maritime history broadly construed. Of these there are just three that have considered the Welsh maritime context, one PhD and two MPHils – though there have also been two PhDs looking at the maritime history of Bristol Channel ports. If we then compare this output with that of our Celtic neighbours, we find that there were some 12 PhDs completed on Scottish maritime subjects; and if we look at those theses listed for the Republic of Ireland we find that there were at least six PhDs and one MA considering maritime matters in Ireland. Looking at maritime history overall, it would seem that the existence of some 100 ongoing research projects as at 2015, compared to some 200 theses completed in the 20-year period prior to that, suggests some upsurge in interest.

In their recent assessment of the health of maritime history, Ojala and Tenold took as their reference group the some 300 scholars who have been published in the International Journal of Maritime History (IJMH) and while it is not our intention to rehearse their conclusions here, we have used some of their key observations as a partial framework for the following. Looking at their reference group, it is painful to admit that not

one single paper on a Welsh maritime history topic has ever appeared in that journal since its inception in 1989. Indeed, if we cast the net a little wider and consider those authors that could fulfil the wider criteria of international engagement but who have not been published in the *IJMH*, then it is still a light catch, as we can see in the following analysis of a selection of journals with an international editorship where we might expect to find such contributions. If we look at all contributions to *Mariner’s Mirror* over the past 20 years we find that there are, perhaps, at best just two papers which touch upon the maritime history of Wales. If we look at articles in the *Journal of Transport History* over the same period, among a small group of maritime papers, only one considering Wales has been published. There have been no such contributions to the *Journal for Maritime Research* since its inception in 1999. A consideration of the 244 articles carried by our premier national journal the *Welsh History Review* since 1996 reveals that there have been nine published which concern maritime history broadly defined.

Ojala and Tennold go on in their health check to acknowledge that:

> Many of the most knowledgeable, dedicated and prolific practitioners of maritime history are not part of this community – and have never aspired to become part of it. Indeed, the most popular ‘branch’ of maritime history comprises locally-based, geographically-limited and knowledge-focused studies that are based on local or regional maritime sources and artefacts, and disseminated to a general audience. Although such ‘maritime history’ has neither academic nor international pretensions, it is undoubtedly the most visible part of our field, with the biggest headcount. ([pp. 345–6)]

Given the applicability of this description to the situation pertaining in Wales, the importance of having a dedicated maritime journal for Wales cannot be overstated. We are extremely lucky that *Cymru a’r Môr/ Maritime Wales* has for the past 40 years successfully straddled the divide between the academic and the antiquarian, regularly publishing the work of independent scholars in both English and Welsh. Other outlets for the printed dissemination of maritime research include the various Welsh county journals and historical society transactions, though in these the amount of maritime history that has been published is limited, possibly in part due to the success of *Maritime Wales*.

Books in the subject area continue to appear, notably the past four years has seen the publication of J. D. Davies *Britannia’s Dragon: A naval history of Wales*, of Robin Evans *Merched y Môr (Women of the Sea)* and of McInnes and Banstead’s Marine Research report *Art as Tool in Support of the Understanding of Coastal Change in Wales*, which was produced for Crown Estates. In the past year we have seen the publication of the business letters of Captain Daniel Jenkins, 1902–11 edited by David Jenkins for the South Wales Record Society, Ken Lloyd Gruffydd’s *Maritime Wales in the Middle Ages: 1039–1542* and an English adaptation by Elinor Ellis of Aled Eames *Gwraig y Capten/The Captain’s wife*; though we should perhaps note that three of these titles are in fact posthumous works.

At the university level, there has recently been some welcome engagement in maritime history in Wales, though this appears to have been short-lived, and the demise of the MA in Maritime and Imperial
History that briefly ran at Swansea is to be lamented. This was exactly the type of programme which could have helped to redress the criticisms Lewis Fisher made of maritime scholarship in 2006, and further one which recognized the importance of the application of collaborative research to the development of materials for use in public history and heritage contexts. Ojala and Tenold also observed that ‘The main – or at least most influential – dissemination channel for maritime history has always been maritime museums, rather than university departments.’ Wales has had a long tradition of community maritime museums and collections, for example the Llyn Maritime Museum established by volunteers in Nefyn in 1977, Holyhead Maritime Museum in 1986 and the West Wales Maritime Heritage Society founded in 1984. While some of these grassroots volunteer-led centres for conservation, research and education have been forced to close, for example Caernarfon maritime museum in 2012, there is now a growing awareness of and engagement with maritime heritage as evident by the resurgence in investment in existing museums and the development of new centres and projects.

Key milestones in this resurgence include the discovery of the Newport Ship in 2002, the 2010–15 pan-Wales coastal heritage Arfordir project and the appointment of a maritime officer at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW). Furthermore, the major recent grant from the Heritage Lottery fund awarded to the RCAHMW for their ‘Wales and the U-boats’ project, and the EU-funded ‘CHERISH: Climate Change and Coastal Heritage’ project shows a commitment to engaging in an exploration of the Welsh maritime dimension. In the related field of maritime archaeology, the contributions of Nayling on the twelfth-century Magor Pill wreck, and (as already noted) those of McGrail and Roberts on the third-century Romano-Celtic Barlands boat have contributed to our historical understanding, as has the more recent work of Nayling on the Newport ship, and Lowri Roberts’s work on the Victorian submarine Resurgam II, which sank off Rhyl in 1880, for her MSc at Bournemouth. In addition to these, the recent revision of the excellent Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales provides a wide-ranging maritime research agenda that could be equally applied to maritime history in Wales. As Bellamy has recently commented in The Mariner’s Mirror (103(2), May 2017, 131), it is important that ‘archaeologists and historians . . . work together to understand our maritime cultures more fully. We all too often exist in separate worlds and fail to appreciate the importance of each other’s work. Only by marrying the two disciplines together can we hope to develop new understandings.’

For some, the loss of the maritime and industrial museum in the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay in 1998 and the rebranding of what is now the Waterfront Museum at Swansea are a source of continued frustration. More recently, the failure to develop a Wales Maritime Heritage plan as part of Cadw’s Pan-Wales Interpretation strategy is disappointing. When considering alternative conduits for the dissemination of maritime historical research, MOROL/Institute of Welsh Maritime Historical Studies, a voluntary sector organization, has since 2009 organized an annual conference, and is also responsible for the biennial Aled Eames memorial lecture. Within Wales, there have been few other opportunities to engage in the discussion of maritime research.
In general histories of Wales the maritime dimension still features very little and the majority of books in print on this subject are often the result of the activities of small presses, archives and museums, with much of this work has being produced by those outside or on the fringes of academia. While the excellent contributions that continue to be made from those involved variously in museums, the heritage sector and marine archaeology are vital and welcome, we must ask: are they sufficient? While on the surface the continued publication of *Cymru a’r Môr/Maritime Wales* and the appearance of new titles on Welsh maritime history are reassuring, the question as to whether this is a sustainable position and what (if anything) needs to be done, does not appear to be being properly considered. The past decade has witnessed the loss of a number of the most active and regular contributors to the subject area. Two of the most productive authors over the past ten years, who contributed 11 articles to *Maritime Wales* between them, were Robin Evans, who published in both Welsh and English, and who passed away in 2014 and Mike Stammers who died the year before. This year we have lost Owain T. P. Roberts (2017) a long-standing editor of (and contributor to) *Maritime Wales*, and last year we lost Ken Lloyd Gruffydd (2016), the foremost commentator on maritime Wales in the middle ages. Others who have made major contributions to the field and who are no longer with us include J. Geraint Jenkins (2009), Robin Craig (2007), Lewis Lloyd (1997) and Aled Eames, (1996).

It would seem by and large that many of the issues for maritime history that Fisher outlined in 2011 and recently restated in the *IJMH*, remain for the most part unconsidered or unaddressed in Wales, and worse than having not much more than our journal (to paraphrase Fisher), we are in danger of running out of contributors. There appears to be little current concern that we are running low on maritime historians with interests in Wales, or that those that we do have are not much visible internationally. The recent upsurge in interest in heritage matters is helping to make maritime history more visible in Wales, and this is to be welcomed. Perhaps the way forward in Wales with regard to the continued future of research into and publication of maritime history is to seek to be more fully engaged with the heritage sector and its wealth of staff and volunteers, to both identify and encourage potential.
Talking Across Disciplines: Historians, social scientists and the understanding of maritime history

Richard Harding
University of Westminster

Maritime history is happily a very diverse endeavour. It draws upon the expertise of historians from many different countries, periods and specialisms. What was once the preserve of historians interested in the details of naval warfare or maritime commerce is now attracting significant attention from a broad community of social, political and cultural historians. The benefits of this interaction are evident in the wide variety of output that can be classified as maritime history.

Maritime history is of such significance that it also draws the attention of social scientists from many disciplines. While the contribution of the social scientists has always been important to maritime history and there is much that binds historians and social scientists together in their understanding of the subject, there are also aspects of their approaches that create barriers to dialogue. This paper is a short exploration of these barriers.

Historians and social scientists share fundamental belief in an evidence-based analysis at the centre of their work, but they differ in other ways. On the whole, social scientists (economists, international relations specialists, political scientists and psychologists among many others) are seeking generalizations for contemporary application. The importance of science in their work is explicit. Generalisations, based upon rigorous observation, controlled experimentation, reliable replication, are intended to generate theories that can lead to predictions of behaviour or events and thus provide the basic information for future action. Historians, on the other hand, are generally more comfortable with the idea that the events they are investigating are unique, and the contribution they are providing leads to an improved understanding the cause, course and impact of those events. The difference can lead to a great deal of heat rather than mutual learning. Historians often accuse social scientists of over-theorizing and trying to force unique events into over-arching theoretical models. Social scientists, supported by some philosophers of history, accuse historians of under-theorising, being blind to theory or (worst of all) being little more than antiquarians who collect their facts and artefacts for their own sake. Facts cannot speak for themselves, but are given significance by the researcher and the failure to explicitly articulate the theories that govern the selection and weighting to the information the past has left us risks exposing the historian to misinterpretation.

This conflict is, of course, at the extremes of the discourse, but maritime history has its fair share of them. From reactions to the endeavours of enthusiasts as little more than ‘rivet counting’ to the rejection of ‘psycho-history’ in the analysis of historical decision-making, we have all had experience of the tensions that exist. It is the contention of this paper that while the accusations on either side can be true at the extremes, and that
the differences of approaches do exist, there is no intrinsic reason why
the different traditions of scholarship cannot fruitfully engage and derive
mutual benefit.

The first point to note is that the simplistic dichotomy of past-focused
historians/antiquarians and future-focused social scientists is over-drawn
(figure 1). The historian and antiquarian are very seldom concerned
exclusively with the past. The questions historians raise are informed by
their own times and they are working towards contemporary answers.
Antiquarians have been at the heart of contemporary questions about
identities since the nineteenth century – questions that have re-emerged
as some of the most stimulating political issues today. Similarly, social
scientists are seldom exclusively focused on the development of theory for
future application. There is a far greater commonality in their scholastic
endeavours – indeed, this might be one of the reasons for the disputes.
Historians claiming to have something to say about the future and social
scientists claiming to know about the past comes close to impudent or
dangerous academic turf invasions – usually grounds for extremely hostile
reactions.

Nevertheless, the differences have to be acknowledged (figure 2). There
are many, well-known barriers between historians. The institutional
structures that support historians; universities, research councils,
professional subdisciplines and linkages to external interests. All this

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The historian</th>
<th>The social scientist</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
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<td>The past</td>
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<td>Knowledge development</td>
<td>Theory development</td>
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**Figure 1** Past or future focus?

<table>
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<th>Boundaries between historians and social scientists</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
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<td>Knowledge development</td>
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<td>Boundaries of subjects within history</td>
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<tr>
<th>Institutional structures of a discipline/subject subdisciplines of naval maritime, business economic history, port history, local history</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regard for theory/models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regard for founding philosophies (economics, sociology, psychology political science, material sciences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship with ‘amateurs’</td>
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<td>Tolerance of language</td>
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**Figure 2** The problems of crossing disciplinary boundaries
makes the preservation of difference and a desire for exclusivity a factor to some degree. This is even more evident in relations to social sciences, where the same institutional barriers exist alongside the philosophical and procedural issues. For most social sciences, the importance of explicit theories and models and the fundamental canon of knowledge, shape what is explored and how it is developed. Experimental techniques are more acceptable than they would be to historians, for whom the extant evidence from the past imposes a stricter limit on the development of knowledge. The specificity of language and the exclusion of the amateur are usually more strictly imposed in social scientific context than among historians.

Nevertheless, these are not impermeable or unalterable barriers. Scholarship today demonstrates a variety of approaches which show that while the barriers can be seen they do not inhibit valuable contributions so long as the assumptions are recognised. I will use three examples to illustrate this.

The different approaches of the historian and social scientist to writing maritime history are simplistically summarized in figure 3. The historical event under investigation is seen by the historian as a subject from which more historical knowledge might be accumulated, and what happened and why might be better understood. For the social scientist the same event might be investigated as a case study to illustrate theoretical principles and add to the development of theory. Hence, the historian may be accused of under-theorising and the social scientist over-theorising their subject.

Within this simple diagram many variations may occur, showing more or less leaning towards an historian’s or social scientist’s approach. A good example of a fine piece of historical writing, well informed by a social scientific approach to theory, is the work of Duran and O’Brien on the economic impact of the Royal Navy. For them the eighteenth century dominance of the Royal Navy was the event and their explanation for it lay in a rigorous application of macro-economic theory to the historical situation.¹ The historical event is the focus and it is the contribution to

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understanding it that dominates the work. They are not focused on the theory or its development and their conclusion is stark:

The historical story behind the comparative advantage enjoyed by the British economy in the wake of an era of mercantilist policies to promote overseas commerce and industrialisation emanated from kinetic energy and high wages combined with geopolitical power, that is from coal and the Royal Navy’.

A second example is that of Keith Grint’s study of D-Day. Grint’s starting point for this historical event is a theory about leadership. The narrative unfolds with this at the centre. Essentially, it is D-Day told through the lens of a particular leadership theory. Grint does not explicitly proceed to verify the theory using the historical event, but it is closer to that approach than Duran and O’Brien.

Finally, a recent article by Henrikki Tikkanen on Admiral Sir John Fisher’s battle cruiser policy comes closer still to a social scientific study. The historical event is explicitly a case study which is explored with the intent of adding to Top Management Attention theory. It does add something to our understanding of the historical event, but Tikkanen’s purpose is far more related to contributing to the theory.

All three blend a foundation in social science with historical research. All three have something to tell us about the historical event, but they each give a different weight to the event and its historical significance.

As historians, what does this difference mean for maritime history? The social sciences have contributed a great deal to the writing of history, not least through historians using the theories and conclusions of social scientists to inform their own consideration of events. This will no doubt continue to be fruitful. Under pressure from funders (and the public) to demonstrate the current relevance of their research, historians are even more likely to be framing the questions they ask and methods they use in a manner that dominates popular discourses, the most powerful of which is still scientific rationalism. Understanding and utilising the language of this discourse will be useful to historians.

However, there is another factor that should encourage historians to engage with their colleagues in both the social sciences and humanities. The deeper research is entrenched in society, the more it fragments into subdisciplines with their own characteristics. Maritime history itself is the result of this process. Maritime history is multifunctional in that is serves the intrinsic interests of people, it helps provide solutions to contemporary problems and it contributes to an understanding of the current global condition. It is also multidisciplinary and each of those disciplines is growing and diversifying. Figure 4 shows a very small fragment of this.

2 K. Grint Leadership, Management and Command: Rethinking D-Day (Basingstoke, 2008)
which might provide a helpful lens for our study of history.

Historians should not be led by theory, but they can be informed by it and they can acknowledge it. They can acknowledge their own theoretical perspectives in order to help others engage with them. It seems likely that the global research community will continue grow and diversify, creating more subdisciplines with potential links to our core interest, the history of the maritime world. Definitions of the maritime world are likely to develop, as will the lenses through which it is studied. It is as well for historians to be prepared for this and welcome it while showing the tremendous value that history and classical historical method continues to contribute.
The following is a very brief summary of the input made by one speaker who was unable to provide a paper for this conference special edition of Topmasts.

**Oceanic Futures: Maritime spaces and the history of science and technology of, and on, oceans**

Sam Robinson  
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In his presentation, Sam Robinson considered the relationship between maritime histories and the histories of ocean science and technology, its recent historiography and future directions.

Recently published books have considered the development of ocean science. H. Rozwadowski, *Fathoming the Ocean* (Cambridge MA, 2008) demonstrated the centrality of knowledge of the ocean to maritime communities and how it became a field of maritime endeavour in the nineteenth century; J. Hamlin, *Oceanographers and the Cold War* (Washington DC, 2005) showed the centrality of oceanography to the militarization of submarine space during the Cold War; and D. G. Burnett, *The Sounding of the Whale: Science and cetaceans in the twentieth century* (Chicago, 2012) demonstrated the link between marine mammals, industrial fishery, international organizations and environmentalism by asking how whales have become the poster organism for the modern environmental movement. Robinson suggested that these and other works have made scientists see that the science of the sea is integral to environmental science.

In conclusion Robinson argued for a closer working relationship between historians of science and their maritime counterparts, and that just as it can be argued that wider history is sea blind, maritime historians should not become science blind. He suggested that as a way forward maritime and science historians could benefit by finding and exploiting common ground for the development of an interdisciplinary history.