

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 50

Lloyd's of London "Captains Registers" and related sources



Masters' and Mates' certificates

By an order of 1845 the Board of Trade authorised a system of voluntary examinations of competency for men intending to become masters or mates of foreign-going British merchant ships. The system was made compulsory by the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850 and extended to masters and mates of home trade vessels by the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854. A master's or mate's certificate of competency was issued to each man who passed the examination. Men who were considered by the examiners to have sufficient experience as a master or mate were eligible, without formal examination, for certificates of service.

Lloyd's "Captains Registers"

Lloyd's "Captains Registers" give details of the careers of captains and mates of merchant ships who held masters' certificates (but not of mates who held a mate's certificate only) and who were active between 1869 and 1947. Details of the earlier careers of masters' certificate holders who were still active in 1869 are also given; these details go back to 1851 or the date of obtaining the master's certificate, whichever is the later. Although called "Captains Registers" the volumes strictly relate to holders of foreign-trade masters' certificates, including some who served only as mates. For the years 1869-1911 and 1932-47 there are also details of holders of masters' certificates who did not serve at all as master or mate. The registers usually exclude masters of coasters, ferries, fishing vessels or yachts.

The Registers were compiled by Lloyd's from information regularly transmitted by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, for the use of Lloyd's members in assessing insurance risks, although no information relating to insurances is given. They list for each person the place and year of birth (but not home addresses in later life); the date, number and place of issue of the master's certificate obtained; any other special qualification, including the "steam" certificate from 1874; the dates of engagement and (sometimes) discharge as master or mate since the certificate was obtained, with the name and official number (taken from the Mercantile Navy List) of each ship; the general area of the destination of each voyage; casualties (sinkings, collisions etc.); and notes (e.g. reprimands, special awards).

Reasons for unsuccessful searches in the registers

Searches in the "Captains Registers" sometimes fail to produce any information relating to a particular individual. Possible reasons for this include:

- a) The man was a captain or mate on a British merchant ship and held a master's certificate but ceased active service before 1869 or began active service after 1947.

- b) The man was a captain or mate on a British merchant ship and held a master's certificate but the information was not transmitted to Lloyd's.
- c) The man was a captain or mate on a British merchant ship but did not hold a foreign-trade master's certificate.
- d) The man was a mate on a British merchant ship and held a mate's certificate only.
- e) The man was a captain or mate but did not serve on a British merchant ship (e.g. he may have served in the Royal Navy or on a foreign ship).
- f) The man was not a captain or mate at all, but may have gone to sea as an ordinary merchant seaman or in some other capacity.
- g) The man held a master's certificate issued between 1912 and 1931, but never took up any appointment as master or mate and is therefore omitted from the surviving records of Lloyd's.

It should be borne in mind that the term "master mariner" was sometimes used loosely and that not everyone so called held a master's certificate.

Sometimes a man's place and year of birth are given in the Register together with details of his certificate but there is a gap in the record of voyages or no details of voyages at all. Entries of this kind suggest that the man did not go to sea as captain or mate (although he may have served in a lesser capacity) during the period in question, or served on a foreign-owned ship, or that details of his voyages were not transmitted to Lloyd's. The criteria for the transmission to Lloyd's of the details of a voyage and for their inclusion in the "Captains Registers" have not been identified.

Other sources of information

The records of the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, from which the information in the "Captains Registers" was derived, give details of all captains and mates of merchant ships who held masters' certificates, beginning in 1845. They are held (to c.1921) by the National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU (<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/Contact>), and (from c.1921) by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, Unit 12, Cheviot Close, Parc Ty Glas, Llanishen, Cardiff CF4 5JA. These offices also hold many other records relating to merchant seamen, including registers of certificates issued to mates (from 1845), to engineers (from 1862), and to skippers and mates of fishing boats (from 1880).

The Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF, holds the original applications for, and Board of Trade office copies of, certificates of competency and service, issued 1845-1927. After 1928 office copies have not survived. The applications give details of applicants' earlier maritime careers. The certificate number, which can be found in indexes at the National Archives and, in the case of certificates issued to masters who were active between 1869 and 1947, in

Lloyd's "Captains Registers", is needed before the application and copy certificate can be produced. Enquirers who wish to see a certificate or have it copied should contact Manuscripts at the National Maritime Museum. Further information, including 'Digital scans and photocopying order forms', is available at www.rmg.co.uk/researchers/library/.

Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH, holds Mercantile Navy Lists 1857-64 which list masters back to 1845 who were still active in these years. Lloyd's List includes some names of masters 1741-1837 and these are indexed in a database maintained by Guildhall Library. Please contact guildhall.library@cityoflondon.gov.uk or call 020 7332 1868 for further information.

Records of other merchant seamen

There are no records of ordinary merchant seamen in the Lloyd's of London archive. The National Archives holds registers of seamen compiled between 1835 and 1857, but outside this period records of ordinary seamen can be difficult to use and may not be easy to locate. They consist chiefly of the muster rolls (1747-1851), and crew lists (1835 to the present) of individual voyages. All the surviving muster rolls (there are few before 1800) and the crew lists up to 1860 are at the National Archives. From 1861 the crew lists are dispersed in various repositories: 1861-1938; 1950-1976

- a) A random 10% sample at the National Archives.
- b) The remaining 90% for voyages ending in 1861, 1862 and years ending in "5" (except 1945) at the National Maritime Museum. At least two weeks' notice of a visit is required.
- c) Miscellaneous papers of local interest are held by local record offices: these are generally for voyages beginning at ports in the area concerned. The National Archives at Kew can provide details.
- d) All other surviving papers are held by the Maritime History Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1C 5S7 (e-mail: mha@mun.ca). A microfiche index to the crew lists held by the University, arranged by ship's official number, is available at Guildhall Library (address as before) for the period 1861-1913.1939-1950; 1977 onwards

All papers at the Registrar General of Shipping & Seamen.

Access restrictions

- The National Archives does not normally undertake searches in its records relating to service in the Merchant Navy, but they are available for consultation by members of the public or by professional searchers working on their behalf.

- Requests for information from the records held by the Registrar General of Shipping & Seamen must be made in writing.

The records are fully described in *Records of Merchant Shipping and Seamen* by Kelvin Smith et al (Public Record Office Publications, 1998).

"Captains Registers" of Lloyd's of London

Lloyd's arranged the information in alphabetical sequence of masters' names.

The Lloyd's "Captains Registers" are divided into three sections:

- Ms 18567/1-87 - [1851-1911]
- Ms 18568/1-15B - [1901-1948]
- Ms 18569/1-41 - [1885-1948]

There are also two supplementary card indexes:

- Ms 18570/1-9 - [1912-47]
- Ms 18571/1-2 - [1932-47]

The individual series are described in more detail below. Please note that Ms 18568-71 are all available on microfilm.

Name Index to the Captains Registers

A personal names index to Ms 18567 is two-thirds completed and new letters are frequently being added. Completed volumes are available on the open shelves in the Information Area or can be downloaded from www.history.ac.uk/gh/capintro. "In progress" sections to the index can also be consulted on request. Please ask staff at the Information Desk for further details about letters that are "in progress".

Guide to abbreviations

Much of the information in the "Captains Registers" is given in abbreviated form. The abbreviations are explained in Tables 1-4 below:

Table 1: letter prefixes to master's certificate numbers

Abbreviation	Explanation
C	before number denotes certificate of competency.
S	before number denotes certificate of service.
CHT	before number denotes certificate of competency for home trade passenger ships.
SHT	before number denotes a certificate of service for home trade ships (1st, 2nd, or 3rd class refers to the voluntary examination passed)

Abbreviation	Explanation
	between the years 1845 and 1850).
Col, Can etc	before number denotes that the certificate was obtained abroad (i.e. Colonial, Canada, etc.).

Table 2: special qualifications referred to

Abbreviation	Explanation
Ex	Extra Master (someone who has passed the Extra Master's examination and is qualified in higher navigation).
F & A	master for fore-and-aft rigged vessels only.
Stm	qualified in the usages of the steam engine.
Crown	before name denotes officer in Royal Naval Reserve.

Table 3: destinations

Abbreviation	Explanation
A	West coast of Africa and adjacent islands
Aust	Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand
B	Baltic, Norway, White Sea, Gulf of Finland and Cattegat
C	China, Japan and oriental archipelago
Cp	Cape colonies, Ascension, St. Helena, Natal, Algoa Bay
Ct	coasting trade, including Holland, Belgium, France from River Elbe to Brest
EI	East Indies, Burma, Mauritius, Red Sea
FPS	France (South of Brest), Portugal, Spain (outside Straits of Gibraltar) Azores
M	Mediterranean, Black Sea, Sea of Azoff, Adriatic
NA	British North America, Greenland, Iceland
NP	North Pacific and West coast of North America
NS	West coast of Denmark
SA	Brazils, River Plate
SP	South Pacific and West coast of South America
US	United States (East coast and Gulf ports)
WI	West Indies and Gulf of Mexico
For	Foreign (not further identified)

The number which follows the name of a ship is her official number, and corresponds with her number in the Mercantile Navy List.

Casualties (sinkings, strandings, collisions etc.)

Casualties are recorded in blue ink. The nature of the casualty is given (collision, grounded etc.) together with a cross-reference to the daily shipping newspaper Lloyd's List. The reference is given as a date (usually month and day only as the year is given at the top of the page) and, below that, a number. The date is that of the appropriate Lloyd's List and the number denotes the column in which the casualty is recorded. A typical entry might read as follows:

Grounded near Barcelona $\frac{\text{Oct.1.17}}{22}$,refloated $\frac{2.17}{21}$

This denotes that column 22 of the issue of Lloyd's List for 1 October 1917 reported that the ship in question had grounded near Barcelona, and that column 21 of the Lloyd's List for 2 October reported that the ship had been refloated.

A near-complete file of back numbers of Lloyd's List is available at Guildhall Library (address as before).

Casualty entries are sometimes accompanied by:

1. "inq" or "Inquiry" and a serial number. This is a reference to a Board of Trade inquiry into the incident. Some printed sources giving additional information about Board of Trade inquiries are available at Guildhall Library (address as before).
2. A serial number composed of several digits enclosed within an oval, for example, 1234. These numbers refer to the Confidential Reports which were sent to Lloyd's by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen. London Metropolitan Archives holds Reports with serial numbers 500-699 covering 1908-46 (Ms 36855). The whereabouts of other Confidential Reports are not known. The information was extracted from the Registrar General's "Black Books" which are now held at the National Archives. Guide to entries in Ms 18567

Guide to Registers in MS 18567

"Captains Registers", compiled 1869 to 1911, of master's certificate holders who during this period were considered "active", i.e. had received their master's certificate or an appointment as master/mate within the previous five years. All recipients of master's certificates issued from c. 1864 are therefore included, but master's certificate holders "inactive", i.e. retired for five years, by 1869 do not appear unless they subsequently received appointment as a master or a mate.

Volumes 1-15, compiled 1869-73, also give details of earlier voyages by master's certificate holders who were "active" in 1869: these details go back to 1851 or to the date of obtaining the master's certificate, whichever is the later, and are recorded in the form of printed entries pasted into the registers. These pasted entries were cut from a printed "Captains Register" produced in 1869; no other printed "Captains Registers" appear to have been prepared. The printed volume is available at Guildhall Library (address as before).

Most of the entries (see earlier for contents) appear in exact alphabetical order of surname and then of first name(s), but extra entries were added either at the bottom of the page closest to their correct position in the alphabetical sequence or on "Extra folios" at the end of all the entries for each letter of the alphabet. Readers should pay particular attention to these extra entries, in case the person they seek is recorded there rather than in the main alphabetical sequence.

Much of the information in the registers is given in abbreviated form. Tables 1-4 above give those most generally used. Other information is entered in different codes at different dates, as follows:

- 1851-69 (pasted entries):

Ship's name in ordinary type: engagement as captain;
Ship's name in italics: engagement as mate.

- 1869-93 (from 1888 a key is printed at the top of each left-hand page):

Black ink: engagements;
Red ink: discharges;
Blue ink: casualties and notes;
Ship's name not underlined: engagements as captain;
Ship's name underlined: engagements as mate.

- 1894-1911:

Black ink: engagements as captain;
Red ink: engagements as mate (engagements as 2nd/3rd mates in red ink with ship's name underlined);
Blue ink: casualties and notes

Discharges are not shown

NOTE: if no place and date of certificate is given this is because the master had a certificate of service (indicated by S before the certificate number), rather than a certificate of competency. Men who were considered by the examiners of competence to have sufficient experience as a master or mate were eligible, without formal examination, for certificates of service.

Guide to entries in Ms 18568 and Ms 18569

"Captains Registers", compiled 1912 to 1947, of master's certificate holders who either:

1. Obtained their certificate between 1912 and 1947 and during this period received at least one appointment as a captain, and not just as a mate;

Or

2. Obtained their certificate in 1911 or earlier, and during the years 1912-47 received at least one appointment, as a captain or a mate, so long as, between the date of their certificate and 1947, they received at least one appointment as a captain.

The volumes in Ms 18568 and Ms 18569 appear to have been compiled on an identical basis, but record different individuals. Readers should consult both series when searching for a particular master's certificate holder.

NOTE: the following holders of master's certificates in the period 1912-47 do not appear in these series:

- a) Those who from the date of their certificate up to 1947 received appointment(s) only as a mate, and never as a captain:
 - if their certificate was issued before 1912, see Ms 18567 for the period to 1911, followed by Ms 18570 for any appointments in the period 1912-47;
 - if their certificate was issued in the period 1912-47, see Ms 18570 only.
- b) Those who in the period 1912-47 never (officially) received any appointment at all:
 - if their certificate was issued before 1912, see Ms 18567;
 - if their certificate was issued 1912-31, no record of them exists in the Lloyd's "Captains registers";
 - if their certificate was issued in the period 1932-47, see Ms 18571.

Arranged in alphabetical order of surname and first name(s); details go back to the date of obtaining the master's certificate. A key to codes and abbreviations used appear on each page.

Guide to entries in Ms 18570

Card register, compiled 1912 to 1947, of master's certificate holders who either:

1. Obtained their certificate between 1912 and 1947 and during this period received appointment(s) only as a mate, not as a captain;
- Or
2. Obtained their certificate in 1911 or earlier, and during 1912-47 received at least one appointment as a mate, and from the date of their certificate until 1947 received appointment(s) only as a mate, and never as a captain.

NOTE: the following holders of master's certificates in the period 1912-47 do not appear in this card register:

- a) Those who between the date of their certificate and 1947 received at least one appointment as a captain, and not just as a mate. For these see Ms 18567-9 above.
- b) Those who in the period 1912-47 never (officially) received any appointment at all:

- if their certificate was issued before 1912, see Ms 18567;
- if their certificate was issued 1912-31, no record of them survives in the Lloyd's "Captains Registers";
- if their certificate was issued in the period 1932-47, see Ms 18571.

Arranged as Ms 18568-9. Much of the information given on the cards is in abbreviated form. Tables 1-4 give those most generally used. Other information is entered in the following codes:

- Red ink: engagements as mate (engagements as 2nd or 3rd mate have ship's name underlined);
- Blue ink: casualties and notes.

Discharges are not shown

Guide to entries in Ms 18571

Card register, compiled 1932 to 1947, of holders of master's certificates issued during this period who by 1947 had never (officially) received any appointment at all, either as a master or a mate. The content is similar to Ms 18567-70, but no details of appointments are given; arranged alphabetically. No similar register survives for 1912-31 and holders of master's certificates issued during this period who by 1947 had never (officially) received any appointment at all are not recorded in the "Captains Registers". Cards for such individuals may have been "weeded" by Lloyd's after a period of years or when an individual career was deemed to have ended (e.g. through death or incapacity). It is possible that the cards in Ms 18571 have been weeded on a similar basis.

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London Metropolitan Archives
40 Northampton Road
London
EC1R OHB

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Telephone: 020 7332 3820
Fax: 020 7833 9136
Email: ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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