

**Merchant Mariners**  
**Researched by: Chris Champion**  
**Last Update: 29 March 2008**

The earliest record for any of our ancestor's associated with a seafaring career can be found in 'The Crew Lists and Agreements for the years 1863 to 1913'; Samuel Champion listed as an Able Seaman on board the '**Industry**' ( a Ketch built in Bideford) and known to have been in port at Liverpool in 1883.

In the 1901 Census Samuel Champion is listed as an Able Seaman on board the '**SS Sound Fisher of Barrow**', moored at Weston Point Docks, Runcorn and his son William Thomas Champion is listed as an Ordinary Seaman on board the Schooner '**Duchess**', moored at Red Bristol City Docks.

The '**SS Sound Fisher of Barrow**' was a screw steamship, built at Troon in 1894, and intended as part of the fleet of James Fischer & Sons of Barrow, who specialised in the short sea and coasting trade. Fishers' typically transported heavy bulk goods, such as stone, grain, and iron ore, although they later diversified into carrying other abnormal loads, including gun mountings and railway locomotives. Most of their ships incorporated the word 'Fisher' into their name. In 1920, the registration for the 'Sound Fisher' was transferred to the Port of Belfast, and has become difficult to ascertain her ultimate fate.

The '**Duchess**' ( a schooner built in 1878) was a Custom vessel that operated from Appledore, Devon covering the Bristol Channel area. The 'North Devon Maritime Museum' have some great snippets on the Custom Services for the area; for instance in the Custom House records there are details on the protection of the coast against threats from both the Irish and Napoleon between 1793 to about 1812. One entry from an officer reported to his Honors' in London that he had 'found two vessels discharging cargo in an illegal and resolute manner, he had words with the Masters' when much insolence persisted. He was 'advised to quit immediately on account of a mob collecting to molest and insult him', and pointed out 'these circumstances will afford your Honors' some idea of the licentious disposition of the inhabitants of Appledore, a great part of whom we have every reason to think are by no means well affected to Government'.

The crew of one Customs cruiser complained because they had not been paid for nine months! Plus they did not have money for victuals, their arms and ammo did not arrive and it was found the local Customs Office had not ordered it. The answer was 'not enough funds in the chest!', but the crew were still expected to go to sea arrest ships and stop smuggling.

Samuel's youngest son John James Champion sailed on the '**Anne Jones**' and '**Sarah Jane**' (a Ketch built in 1878, Appledore) in 1909, and the '**Good Templar**' during 1910 and 1911.

Whilst visiting the Liverpool Public Library I was fortunate enough to trace records relating to ancestors employed as seaman from a CD archive produced by the Crew List Index Project (CLIP), The Merchant Crew lists between 1863 – 1913. This is the main source for individual seafarers for during this period.

The Merchant Crew lists between 1863 – 1913 provides details of vessels visiting Liverpool Docks during this period, and lists crew members, their place of birth, the vessels they sailed on, the year in which vessels were docked at port, the official registered number of a vessel and source identification number.

### **Crew Lists and Agreements**

The crew lists and agreements form the main record of seafarers during the period 1861 to 1913. They replaced the system of seamen's tickets and registers, which had been in place until 1857 and which were re-introduced in 1913.

The crew would sign on to a crew agreement at the start of a new voyage, or when they began their service with the ship. They were given a certificate of discharge when they signed off at the end of the voyage or at an intermediate port by mutual agreement. The crew agreement was either delivered to the Superintendent of Shipping at the final port or in some cases retained and used to compile the half-yearly crew list which was then delivered up at the end of each half-year. All the documents were eventually transmitted to the Board of Trade in London.

It's clear from the documents that they were often checked carefully and sometimes returned for corrections. The master of the ship was potentially subject to legal sanctions if the documents were not returned on time and it is quite common to find letters or even affidavits excusing late returns.

The Official Log Books were used to record accidents to the ship, disciplinary matters relating to the crew and illness and death amongst crew and passengers. The crew lists and agreements and the logbook all contain details of the ports at which the vessel called, but do not usually record the day-to-day passage of the ship. The Official Log books are often particularly disappointing, containing nothing more than a list of the crew's names. Though accidents and deaths were frequent, many long voyages were apparently quite uneventful!

*(CLIP)*

**'Sailor', 'seaman' and 'mariner'**; a mariner would most likely have been a merchant seaman. A sailor would most probably have served in the Royal Navy; and a seaman would have served in the merchant navy. This distinction is by no means absolute; both the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy use the terms ordinary seaman and able seaman to denote a seafarer's competence.

*(My Ancestor was a Merchant Seaman; SOG Publication)*

**Merchant Mariner Records 1863 - 1913****Source: LIVERPOOL RECORD OFFICE****1901 Census****Surname: CHAMPION (CHAMPIN)****Research by: Chris Champion****Last update: 17 September 2003**

Name	Birthplace	Capacity	Vessel	List Starts	Official Number	Source ID	Notes
CHAMPION Samuel	Bideford, Devon	AB	Industry	1883	10865	SOM 038300	LRO
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CHAMPION Samuel	Appledore, Devon	Able Seaman	SS Sound Fisher of Barrow	1901	99940	Barrow	Census
CHAMPION William	Appledore, Devon	AB	Duchess	1900	76552	FLI 038303	LRO
CHAMPION William	Appledore, Devon	Ordinary Seaman	Duchess	1901	76552	FLI 038304	Census & LRO
CHAMPION John	South Shields	AB	Anne Jones	1909	67962	FLI 038296	LRO
CHAMPION John	Appledore	AB	Sarah Jane	1909		SOM 038298	LRO
CHAMPION John	South Shields	AB	Good Templar	1910		SOM 038297	LRO
CHAMPION John	South Shields	Mate	Good Templar	1911		SOM 038299	LRO

## **Merchant Vessel Records 1863 – 1913**

**Source: LLGC NLW  
ABERYSTWYTH SHIPPING  
Deposited by the Keeper of Public Records, 1971**

**Research by: Chris Champion**  
**Last update: 30 September 2003**

9310  
Industry  
Year of Registration: 1845  
In NLW: 1863  
Probably in the National Maritime Museum: 1864  
No Document Found: 1866, 1867

14416  
Anne Jones  
Year of Registration: 1847  
In NLW: 1863, 1864, 1866, 1882, 1884, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1894, 1896,  
1897, 1898  
Probably in the National Maritime Museum: 1893  
No Document Found: 1881, 1883

28045  
Industry  
Tonnage: 71  
In NLW: 1870, 1871, 1874, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1887,  
1888, 1889, 1890, 1891  
In NLW inc. log book: 1873  
Probably in the National Maritime Museum: 1872  
No Document Found: 1892

39129  
Sarah Jane  
Tonnage: 64  
Year of Registration: 1857  
In NLW: 1863, 1866, 1868  
In NLW inc. log book: 1867  
Probably in the National Maritime Museum: 1864

67632  
Ann Jones  
Tonnage: 91  
In NLW: 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1887