



Merchant Mariners

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, Devon 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 eldest son William Thomas Champion is listed as an Ordinary Seaman on board the Schooner '**Duchess**', moored at Red Bristol City Docks. The '**Duchess**' was a schooner operating in the Coasting Trade of the United Kingdom.

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.

Samuel's youngest son John James Champion also pursued a career as a mariner. The first known vessel he sailed on was the '**Lizzie Ellen of Barnstaple**' in 1907. His career was tragically cut short on the 12 November 1911, when he was drowned at sea while serving as ships Mate onboard the '**Good Templar**'.

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 from 1863 to 1913.

The Merchant Crew lists provides details of vessels, mariners, 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.

CLIP provides information and data about the records of British merchant seafarers, mainly from 1863 to 1913. The site also provides information and data about the records of British merchant shipping with records of every British registered ship from 1855 to the 1950s. The data is focussed on tracking down crew lists, but also provide other resources, such as indexed images of the Mercantile Navy List, as well as a comprehensive set of links to other useful sites hosting maritime records.

With the help of the CLIP database I have been able to track further records for Samuel, William and John Champion.

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)

Samuel Champion - Merchant Mariner Records 1883 - 1915

Name of Ship	Ship Build Type	Official No.	Previous Ship	Engaged As	Agreement Date	Discharge Date	Source-Document Ref.
Unnamed Fishing Vessel	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	-----	-----	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/37/43/10865
Industry	Sail - Sloop	10865	unknown	unknown	-----	Jun 1883	
Industry	Sail - Ketch	10865	Fishing Vessel	Able Seaman	20 Nov 1883	31 Dec 1883	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/37/43/10865
Margaret Davies	Sail - Ketch	44247	unknown	Ordinary Seaman	15 Feb 1891	31 Dec 1883	TNA-BT 99/1682/118
Ethels	Sail - Barkentine (Bargentine) Barque	47433	unknown	Able Seaman	1896	1896	swanseamariners.org.uk
Reigate	Iron Ship	45063	Ethels	Able Seaman	23 Feb 1897	24 Feb 1897	swanseamariners.org.uk
S. S. Wynnstay	Steam Ship	89175	unknown	Able Seaman	1899	-----	TNA-BT 99/2105/99940
S. S. Wynnstay	Sail - Schooner	91148	unknown	Able Seaman	1899	-----	
S. S. Sound Fisher	Steam Ship	99940	S. S. Wynnstay	Able Seaman	10 Oct 1899	05 Jan 1900	TNA-BT 99/2105/99940
Millgate	Steam Ship	108833	unknown	Able Seaman	-----	Jun 1900	LRO-387CRE/843
S. S. Volante	Steam Ship	86554	Millgate	Able Seaman	28 Jun 1900	04 Jul 1900	LRO-387CRE/843
S. S. Volante	Steam Ship	86554	Remained on board	Able Seaman	04 Jul 1900	15 Dec 1900	LRO-387CRE/843
S. S. Sound Fisher	Steam Ship	99940	unknown	Able Seaman	31 Mar 1901	-----	TNA-BT 99/2105/99940
Snowden	Steam Ship	111039 99404	unknown	unknown	1914 / 1915	1914 / 1915	TNA-BT400-3659-013
Thistledhu	Steam Ship	114638	Snowden	Boatswain	1915	1915	TNA-BT400-3659-013

Source:

SHLS = Somerset Heritage and Library Services

TNA = The National Archives

swanseamariners.org.uk = Swansea Mariners Website

LRO = Liverpool Record Office



William Thomas Champion - Merchant Mariner Records 1900 - 1909

Name of Ship	Ship Build Type	Official No.	Previous Ship	Engaged As	Agreement Date	Discharge Date	Source-Document Ref.
Driving Mist	Sail - Schooner	47031	Sarah Jane	Ordinary Seaman	15 Jun 1900	Remained on Board	MHA-Driving Mist O.N. 47031
Driving Mist	Sail - Schooner	47031	Driving Mist	Ordinary Seaman	01 Jul 1900	13 Dec 1900	MHA-Driving Mist O.N. 47031
Duchess	Sail - Schooner	76552	Driving Mist	Ordinary Seaman	16 Nov 1900	Remained on Board	FRO-SR/1900/96 & 1901/88
Duchess	Sail - Schooner	76552	Duchess	Ordinary Seaman	01 Jan 1901	20 Jun 1901	FRO-SR/1900/96 & 1901/88
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	-----	Mate	31 Jul 1907	-----	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Remained on Board	Mate	01 Jan 1908	Remained on Board	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Remained on Board	Mate	01 Jul 1908	Remained on Board	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Remained on Board	Mate	01 Jan 1909	-----	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347

Source:

MHA = Maritime History Archive – Memorial University of Newfoundland

FRO = Flintshire Record Office

DHS = Devon Heritage Service

John James Champion - Merchant Mariner Records 1907 - 1911

Name of Ship	Ship Build Type	Official No.	Previous Ship	Engaged As	Agreement Date	Discharge Date	Source-Document Ref.
Lizzie Ellen of Barnstaple	Sail - Schooner	69851	-----	-----	1907	-----	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Lizzie Ellen of Barnstaple	Ordinary Seaman	01 Jan 1908	Remained on Board	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Remained on Board	Ordinary Seaman	01 Jul 1908	Remained on Board	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Waft	Sail - Schooner	51347	Remained on Board	Ordinary Seaman	01 Jan 1909	30 Jun 1909	DHS-Eng 6 1976/WAFT/51347
Annie Jones	Sail - Schooner	67962	Waft of Brixham	Ordinary Seaman	09 Jul 1909	11 Nov 1909	FRO-SR/1900/42
Sarah Jane	Sail - Schooner	29225	Annie Jones of Chester	Able Seaman	02 Dec 1909	Remained on Board	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/63/21/29225
Good Templar	Sail - Ketch	67835	Sarah Jane	Able Seaman	15 Jun 1910	Remained on Board	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/64/70/67835
Good Templar	Sail - Ketch	67835	Good Templar	Able Seaman	01 Jul 1910	Remained on Board	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/64/71/67835
Good Templar	Sail - Ketch	67835	Good Templar	Mate	01 Jan 1911	Remained on Board	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/65/59/67835
Good Templar	Sail - Ketch	67835	Good Templar	Mate	01 Jul 1911	Drowned at Sea	SHLS-DD/RSS/1/65/60/67835

Source:

DHS = Devon Heritage Service

FRO = Flintshire Record Office

SHLS = Somerset Heritage and Library Service