
Sewing a Safety Net: Scarborough's Maritime Community, 1747-1765

Charles R. Foy¹

On 31 March 1748, during a voyage from Scarborough to London, the fifty-six-year-old seaman Thomas Williamson died. The same year, on a three-month coasting voyage from Scarborough, *Diamond's* fourteen-man crew included forty-year-old Enoch Harrison, forty-five-year-old Samuel Clark, forty-year-old George Addison and fifty-four-year-old George Welborn. The presence of older sailors on Scarborough ships was common; over thirteen percent of the seamen on vessels sailing from Scarborough between 1747 and 1765 were men forty years of age or older. Alongside these weathered tars, young servants comprised twenty-two percent of Scarborough crews. On numerous Scarborough craft, including *Elizabeth and Margaret*, *Peril* and *Dragon*, young servants made up a majority of the crew. While considerable numbers of both old and young sailors served aboard Scarborough vessels, ashore Ann Dickinson and numerous other mariners' widows were provided monthly stipends by the local Trinity House Seamen's Hospital for more than a decade.² Scarborough's experience of large numbers of both older mariners and young servants on its ships, and mariners' widows receiving significant charitable assistance, was not a one-year aberration but continued from 1747 to 1765. In short, Scarborough does not conform to the stereotypical image of an eighteenth-century maritime community comprised of healthy young adult seamen whose wives were often left to struggle on their own in their absence.

¹I am grateful to the National Maritime Museum, American Council of Learned Societies, John Carter Brown Library, Rutgers University and Eastern Illinois University for supporting my research and to personnel at the Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre for providing assistance. Ben Ill and Jonathan Mathews assisted in the research. The author would like to thank all those who read and commented on drafts of this article, including Denver Brunsmann, Lewis Fischer, Newton Key, Roland Pietsch, Teresa Foy-Romano, James Z. Schwartz and two anonymous *IJM*H referees.

²Great Britain, National Archives (TNA/PRO), Customs (CUST) 91/111-112, Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; and North Yorkshire Records Office (NYRO), ZOX 10/1, Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775. The voyages referred to in this article do not include those made by fishing vessels or open boats because such vessels were not included in the Scarborough crew lists.

The reasons that Scarborough stands out in these ways are not readily apparent. Neither the port's crew lists nor the seamen's hospital registers provide evidence of the motivations for the observed patterns. Given the paucity of detailed analyses of British merchant ship musters, the critical role of age in the maritime sector, the connection between sailors' lives at sea and ashore and the way that one community created a social safety net to protect its mariners and their families, it is useful to examine mid-eighteenth-century Scarborough in search of some preliminary conclusions on these important issues.³ Despite the fact that it is one of the few British ports for which fairly complete muster rolls exist, scholars have paid little attention to Scarborough's maritime sector.⁴ As Daniel Vickers has noted, mariners "spent most of their lives...on land." Scarborough's muster rolls (1747-1765) and the records of its Seamen's Hospital (1752-1765) also permit us to address the question of why, if "seafar-

³These records imply that the "jarring confrontation of man against man" which Marcus Rediker depicted on Atlantic ships had, at most, a very limited role on Scarborough vessels, and that Scarborough's maritime community was more like Bermuda and Salem where strong kinship connections mitigated conflicts and supported seamen. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987), 5; Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven, 2005), 78; and Michael J. Jarvis, *"In the Eye of All Trade:" Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill, 2009), 317. While such a preliminary conclusion requires further research, it does suggest that in smaller ports where crews had significant kinship connections and steady employment in less hazardous sectors of the maritime industry, and where the port had a limited number of transient sailors, class conflicts may not have been as prevalent as on large, bluewater Atlantic ships.

⁴There are no muster rolls for most eighteenth-century British ports. Besides those for Scarborough, the National Archives has only those for Colchester (Board of Trade [BT] 167/103, Seamen's Indentures, 1704-1757), Plymouth (BT 98/106-107, Crew Lists, 1761-1783) and Liverpool (BT 98/33-43, Crew Lists, 1772-1783). Bristol musters for 1768-1783 are held by the Bristol Records Office (BRO), SMV 9/3/1/6-8, while Hull's for 1746-1834 are at the Hull History Centre (HHC), DTR/3. Non-academics have dominated Scarborough's historiography. See, for example, Thomas Hinderwell, *The History and Antiquities of Scarborough* (Scarborough, 1811; reprint, London, 2010); Joseph Brogden Baker, *The History of Scarborough from the Earliest Date* (London, 1882; reprint, Charleston, SC, 2012); Arthur Rowntree (ed.), *The History of Scarborough* (London, 1931); Jack Binns, *The History of Scarborough, North Yorkshire* (Pickering, 2001); Colin Waters, *Scarborough: Then and Now* (Stroud, 2005); and Trevor Pearson, *Scarborough: A History* (Oxford, 2009). Academics who have written about Scarborough have focused on it as "Britain's first seaside resort." See John Connell, *Health and Medical Tourism* (Wallingford, 2010); 14; Phyllis May Hembry, *The English Spa, 1560-1815: A Social History* (London, 1990); and Peter Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981).

ing was predominately a young man's occupation," considerable numbers of Scarborough mariners went to sea after their fortieth birthdays.⁵

To answer these questions, it is important first to discover the nature of Scarborough's maritime community in the mid-eighteenth century. By the 1720s, Scarborough had become a bustling resort in which Yorkshire gentlemen, the Earl of Harington and various government officials took the waters at the town's renowned spa. Although the number of visitors to the spa decreased by mid-century, it still continued to attract considerable numbers.⁶ While out-of-towners may have sought cures at the spa on the southern edge of the town, most of Scarborough's residents were more concerned with the activities in the harbour situated below Scarborough Castle to the north. As the only port on England's east coast between the Humber and the Tyne which vessels of a moderate draught could safely enter in storms, Scarborough was a vibrant maritime community. It had an active shipbuilding industry and a large populace of seamen.⁷ Despite having fewer than 6000 residents, mid-eighteenth-century Scarborough played a disproportionately large role in Britain's maritime sector. The 871 resident seamen who served on Scarborough's ships in 1748 comprised approximately two percent of all British seamen and represented one of the largest groups of mariners working on northeastern colliers. And while coal was typically shipped from Newcastle and Sunderland, it was residents of Scarborough and Whitby who owned many of the ships which transported that coal; in 1751, Scarborough's 22,430 tons of registered shipping comprised more than five percent of England's total tonnage.⁸

⁵Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 3; and Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2008), 147. The 1747-1765 musters contain information on 25,167 berths. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, demonstrates the connection between seamen's lives ashore and at sea.

⁶Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (4 vols., Cambridge, 2000-2001), II, 776; TNA/PRO, State Papers (SP) 89/48, A. Castres, letter, 8 February 1751; and *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 27 June and 4 July 1751 and 18 June 1753.

⁷Solomon Wilkinson Theakston, *Theakston's Guide To Scarborough* (Scarborough, 1843), 98; Great Britain, National Maritime Museum (NMM), THS/14/5, James Buckley, "Ships Built in Scarborough Shipyards, 1764-1869;" Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; William J. Hausman, "The Size and Profitability of English Colliers in the Eighteenth Century," *Business History Review*, LI, No. 4 (1977), 464-465; and G.E. Fussell, "English Countryside and Population in the Eighteenth Century, Part 2," *Economic Geography*, XII, No. 4 (1936), 411-430.

⁸M.A. Lewis, "Ports and Harbours," in David B. Lewis (ed.), *Yorkshire Coast* (Beverly, 1991), chapter 11; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1962; reprint, Newton

Although located on the North Sea with its bountiful fishing areas, few Scarborough residents, in Philip Larkin's memorable phrase, "smelt the fish-dock." Fishing was not of great importance in eighteenth-century Yorkshire towns such as Whitby, Bridlington and Scarborough where men focused on more profitable endeavours such as shipbuilding, the collier trade and voyages to the Baltic. Burial records for St. Mary's Anglican Church demonstrate the limited role of fishing in the port. From 1735 to 1749, fewer than six percent of mariner family members buried in its cemetery were from fishing families. By 1788, there were only eleven first-class fishing vessels registered in Scarborough.⁹

Newspapers boasted that Scarborough and other northern ports could "on two Days Notice, [send] a hundred Ships, capable of sinking twice seven hundred French flat-bottomed Vessels without firing a Gun." Despite such proclamations, few Scarborough seamen or shipowners participated in privateering during the Seven Years' War. Just seventeen letters of marque were issued for Scarborough ships, less than one percent, considerably below the 23.3 percent of British ships that were granted letters of marque during the conflict. Moreover, those Scarborough vessels which were fitted-out as privateers were less than half the size of Bristol's, and their crews averaged only

Abbot, 1972), 27; and Richard W. Unger, "The Tonnage of Europe's Merchant Fleets, 1300-1800," *American Neptune*, LIV, No. 3 (2002), 261. There is no eighteenth-century census of Scarborough. A reasonable estimate of its population can be arrived at by multiplying the number of burials in a ten-year period by thirty-one, resulting in a figure of 4600-5700 residents between 1729 and 1769. Scarborough Central Library (SCL), St. Mary's Scarborough, Burials, 1689-1781. From 1753 to 1765, there were between 38,705 and 48,375 British merchant seamen, with no more than 1229 mariners in the northeastern coal ports of Newcastle, Sunderland, Stockton, Whitby and Blyth. Ralph Davis, "Seamen's Sixpences: An Index of Commercial Activities," *Economia*, New ser., XXIII, No. 4 (1956), 328-343; and Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650-1775* (London, 2007), 7. Dwight Robinson, "Secret of British Power in the Age of Sail: Admiralty Records of the Coasting Fleet," *American Neptune*, XLVIII, No. 1 (1988), 5-21, estimated the number of seamen on all English colliers in 1776 at approximately 4000, although that estimate has been criticized as being too high; see John Armstrong and John Curler, "The British Coastal Fleet in the Eighteenth Century: How Useful Are the Admiralty Registers of Protection from Impressment?" *American Neptune*, LX, No. 3 (2000), 235-251.

⁹Philip Larkin, "The Whitsun Wedding," in Anthony Thwaite (ed.), *Collected Poems of Philip Larkin* (New York, 2003), 92; Robb N.W. Robinson, "The Fish Trade in the Pre-Railway Era: The Yorkshire Coast, 1780-1840," *Northern History*, XXV (1989), 221-234; Binns, *History of Scarborough*, 191; and SCL, St. Mary's Anglican Church Burial Records (these records contain only scattered occupational information after 1749).

twenty-eight men, a fraction of the size of the average English privateer.¹⁰ During the Seven Years' War, English newspapers, which often triumphantly announced privateering captures, reported not a single prize taken by a Scarborough privateer. As a port with many Quaker ship captains, the reluctance of local residents to engage in privateering was likely due in part to condemnations issued by the local Society of Friends against those "bearing Arms & paying Trophy money." Quakers such as William Lovejoy, who taught others "patterns of war," found themselves disowned by Scarborough's Friends.¹¹

In rejecting fishing and privateering, two maritime sectors with notoriously high mortality rates, many in Scarborough's maritime community turned instead to the coastal and short-sea trades. The port's ships for the most part transported coal and corn (the region's main agricultural crop) to southern England or to the nearby Continental ports, although there were occasional voyages to North America. The collier trade was particularly important. More than two-thirds of voyages from Scarborough went to other British ports, and the bulk of these involved coal. The importance of this activity was recognized by Parliament in 1732 when it imposed coal duties to allow Scarborough to improve its harbour specifically to shelter colliers. Because most people at the time believed that work on colliers required seamen of "a high calibre," the trade was often considered a "nursery of seamen." Scarborough's coasters and colliers provided regular employment to seafarers, who often made as many as eight voyages a year.¹² Voyages from Scarborough, by colliers and small vessels, were short in duration, many lasting less than three months. Very few of Scarborough's ships made long transatlantic voyages; in 1748, only six of the port's 229 vessels sailed to the Americas. Even during the Seven Years' War, when a number of the Scarborough's vessels were impressed into the Trans-

¹⁰Henning Hillmann and Christina Gathmann, "Overseas Trade and the Decline of Privateering," 24 October 2010, draft, table 2, Social Science Research Network, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1112111, accessed 1 May 2012.

¹¹*Public Advertiser* (London), 16 February 1756; TNA/PRO, High Court of Admiralty (HCA) 26/5/99, Letters of Marque for Scarborough Ships, 1754-1765, 125, 135 and 154; HHC, DQR/10/23, Monthly Meetings of Society of Friends, Scarborough, minutes of advice; and DQR/10/15 and 11/31, disownment records.

¹²Theakston, *Theakston's Guide To Scarborough*, 98; Buckley, "Ships Built in Scarborough Shipyards;" Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 December 1729; *Newport Mercury*, 14 December 1767; Hausman, "Size and Profitability of English Colliers," 464-465; and Fussell, "English Countryside," 411-430.

port Service, more than seventy percent of the port's sailing craft continued to be employed in coasting or short voyages to northern European ports.¹³

During the Seven Years' War, the Royal Navy's manning needs resulted in one out of every ten British adult men being in the navy. With many sailors wishing to avoid the harsh working conditions on British warships, naval officials resorted to impressment, a tactic which provided between eighteen and thirty percent of all seamen who served in the Royal Navy.¹⁴ For those mariners who sought to avoid being impressed, berths on Scarborough ships would have been very appealing. Among the classes of seamen exempt from impressment were those who worked on the colliers. As a result, press gangs were not as active in Scarborough as in larger southern and western harbours. Thus, even those Scarborough seamen who served on vessels other than colliers were less likely to be impressed than mariners from many other British ports. Service on a Scarborough vessel would have been particularly attractive to men like sixty-year-old Thomas Vazey of Thornton. Being over the age of fifty-five, Vazey would have been exempt from impressment whether he served on a collier or a vessel carrying corn to the Baltic. Apprentices were also exempt from impressment, although only for three years. These factors attracted both older tars and eager young men from both Scarborough and nearby maritime communities such as Filey, Bridlington and Scalby to the port. While other northeastern ports, such as Sunderland, had violent reactions to impressment, Scarborough was a harbour to which escapees from impressment sailed stolen naval boats.¹⁵

Work on Scarborough vessels also provided seamen with a reliable source of income. Unlike naval sailors who often went unpaid for extended periods – in 1741, Admiralty officials estimated that naval seamen and officers were owed £1,600,000 – Scarborough's mariners appear to have been paid regularly. Seafarers frequently signed onto the same vessel for second voy-

¹³Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; Simon Ville, "Trade Factor Productivity in the English Shipping Industry: The North-East Coal Trade, 1700-1850," *Economic History Review*, New ser., XXXIX, No. 3 (1986), 357; and Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, II, 714. Of all berths on Scarborough ships between 1747 and 1765, only 1.68 percent were for voyages to North America.

¹⁴Denver Alexander Brunsmann, "The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2004), 382.

¹⁵Georgian North East England, <http://www.englandsnortheast.co.uk/Georgian.html>, accessed 4 May 2012; Denver Alexander Brunsmann, "The Knowles Atlantic Impressment Riots of the 1740s," *Early American Studies*, V, No. 2 (2007), 337; and John R. Hutchinson, *The Press-Gang Afloat and Ashore* (London, 1913; reprint, Gloucester, 2008), 301-302.

ages, a sure sign in a port with hundreds of available berths and short voyages that seamen were being paid in a timely fashion. Moreover, Scarborough's seamen deserted at a very low rate, less than 0.2 percent, another indication that they were receiving their pay consistently. The few men who did desert, such as the eighteen-year-old Scot, George Drummond, who "ran" from *Success* in London, were almost never Scarborough residents. In contrast to the labour strife that would roil the northeast collier fleet in subsequent decades, Scarborough's maritime labour force was relatively peaceful in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁶

The available documentary record indicates that few of Scarborough's seamen suffered the early death which took many English mariners. Harsh working conditions resulted in high mortality rates on eighteenth-century oceanic voyages, whether men-of-war, East Indiamen or whaling vessels. Indeed, in the eighteenth century fully one-quarter of all seamen from Dunkirk, France, and Salem, Massachusetts, died in their twenties. In contrast, Scarborough's muster rolls list fewer than a dozen men dying at sea between 1747 and 1765, the bulk of whom drowned. The burial records of Scarborough's Anglican church, St. Mary's, confirm the low mortality among seamen: only a handful of the mariners buried in the Church's hillside cemetery died in their twenties. This low mortality was likely due to the small number of whaling trips and the emphasis on short-sea rather than long-distance voyages. Moreover, the port's limited involvement in privateering and its focus on coasting and short-sea voyages meant that the vast majority of the mariners had limited exposure to the more dangerous components of the maritime sector. Rare was the muster which indicated that a seaman had been "wounded" aboard a Scarborough vessel. These factors all combined to make it more likely that Scarborough mariners would die, as did seventy-four-year-old Charles Gibson, as old men ashore rather than as victims of a mishap at sea while young men.¹⁷

¹⁶NMM, HAR/3, Memorandum and Notes by George Lee on Court Martials; Christopher Lloyd, *The British Seaman, 1200-1860: A Social Survey* (London, 1968), 93; and Karel Davids, "Seamen's Organizations and Social Protest in Europe, c. 1300-1825," in Catharina Lis, Jan Lucassen and Hugo Soly (eds.), *Before the Unions: Wage Earners and Collective Action in Europe, 1300-1850* (Cambridge, 1994), 164.

¹⁷Alain Cabantous, "Les gens de mer et la mort: l'exemple de l'amiraute de Dunkerque au XVIIIe siècle," in Paul Adam, *Seaman in Society/Gens de mer en société* (Bucharest, 1980), 109-118; and Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 108 and 266 (graph 4). In the mid-eighteenth century, Dunkirk sailors averaged thirty-five years of age; Alain Cabantous, *Les citoyens du large: Les identités maritimes en France (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris, 1995), 128. Gibson had served as a sixty-five-year-old ship's cook. Scarborough Crew Lists, 1754-1765; and Trinity House Records, 1752-1775, account book. The St. Mary's burial records also reflect the central impor-

Another factor that benefitted Scarborough's seamen was the port's location on the North Sea. The relative proximity to northern European markets from where liquor and other highly taxed goods could be smuggled into England and its remoteness from any British naval base made Scarborough an ideal location to engage in contraband trade. Throughout the Seven Years' War, when Royal Navy ships were largely occupied with military operations, a "very great Smuggling" was observed in the Scarborough area. The circle of Scarborough residents profiting from this activity is hinted at in the local Friends Society's resolution that the purchase of "run goods" for one's "own consumption is in a Degree ye same thing & as much condemnable as where they are bought for sale." In 1767, an additional sloop was posted at Scarborough to crack down on the rampant smuggling.¹⁸ Illicit trade provided significant opportunities for sailors to obtain wealth beyond their usual wages of twenty-five shillings per month. Given that wages also rose significantly during wars, it can be reasonably assumed that some Scarborough seamen who engaged in smuggling were able to enjoy a relatively comfortable lifestyle.¹⁹ Older mariners, often with detailed knowledge of the coastline and the practices of Customs officers, were valuable members of crews that sought to bring contraband into England. Although we do not know how many mariners, whether old or young, engaged in smuggling, it is clear that illicit trade put many additional shillings in the pockets of Scarborough's jack tars and the coffers of its shipowners. The additional coins earned by Scarborough's older seafarers through smuggling provided another, albeit illicit, means of economic support for men who were traditionally dependent upon others.

Scarborough's maritime community was characterized by the local nature of its crews and the paucity of foreigners aboard its ships. Sixty-six percent of Scarborough's crews were from the North Riding, while three-quarters were Yorkshire residents, mostly from coastal towns such as Bridlington, Hull, Whitby, Cloughton, Malton and Filey. The adjoining counties of Dur-

tance of the maritime sector since maritime families comprised more than forty percent of burials from 1747 to 1765; St. Mary's Anglican Church Burial Records, 1689-1781.

¹⁸TNA/PRO, Treasury (T) 1/467/247-248, Customs House Report, 17 December 1768; Monthly Meetings of Society of Friends, Scarborough, minutes of advice, 1756; Neville J. Williams, *Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling* (London, 1961); Jack Dykes, *Smuggling on the Yorkshire Coast* (Clapham, 1978); W. A. Cole, "Trends in Eighteenth-Century Smuggling," *Economic History Review*, New ser., X, No. 3 (1958), 395-410; and Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "'Trends in Eighteenth-Century Smuggling' Reconsidered," *Economic History Review*, New ser., XXVIII, No. 1 (1975), 28-43.

¹⁹Earle, *Sailors*, 33-34; and Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 119 and 304.

ham and Tyne and Wear, with their ports of Newcastle, Sunderland and Shields, provided another ten percent. Despite the fact that many Scarborough voyages went to the south of England, less than five percent of the crew was from London or the south. Seamen from large western ports were almost completely absent; of the more than twenty-five thousand berths on Scarborough ships, Bristol and Liverpool mariners occupied a mere ten. Between 1747 and 1765, only 0.85 percent of the seafarers sailing from the port were foreign residents and less than two percent had been born abroad. In sum, the crews were largely Yorkshiremen with the remainder mostly from northeastern or Scottish coastal towns. When in 1749 Captain John Maling sailed *Amity's Friendship* out of Scarborough harbour, few would have noted that his twenty-man crew contained nineteen Scarborough residents plus William Jordon from the nearby port of Shields. Even during the Seven Years' War, a time marked by much movement of maritime labour in the Anglo-American Atlantic, an increased foreign presence on British ships and the regular employment of local vessels in the Transport Service, seamen from southern Britain or abroad on Scarborough vessels never exceeded seven percent in any year. Scarborough's experience firmly establishes what records from Salem suggest: that some Anglo-American maritime labour markets were "deeply parochial."²⁰

Many Scarborough captains repeatedly employed the same seamen, creating a tight social order on the ships. The composition of the crew on *Durham's* two voyages from Scarborough to Holland in 1748 within an eight-month period was similar to many Scarborough vessels, as the same seven men comprised the crew for both voyages. That same year, William Smith and eight other mariners were employed for nine months on *Golden Apple*, making three voyages along England's east coast. Neither *Durham* nor *Golden Apple* was unusual in repeatedly employing the same mariners. The tight-knit nature of Scarborough's maritime community was something that held true for an extended period; for sixty years after the end of the Seven Years' War, Scarborough mariners fought efforts to employ seamen from outside the port.²¹ The size of the crews, the nature of the work, the type of employment available ashore and the length of voyages help to explain why many of Scarborough's

²⁰Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; Earle, *Sailors*, 19 and 202-203; and Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 129. Scottish-born seamen comprised 2.8 percent of Scarborough crews. Scarborough was not the only eighteenth-century port with crews comprised largely of local men. See Thierry Sauzeau, "Los marineros Sain-tonge: del Atlántico padecido al Atlántico elegido (1760-1860)," *Les Cahiers de Framespa*, IX (2012), <http://framespa.revues.org/1223>, accessed 1 May 2012; Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 123-124; and Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 145.

²¹D.J. Rowe, "A Trade Union of the North-East Coast Seamen in 1825," *Economic History Review*, New ser., XXIV, No. 1 (1972), 81 and 85. Hull seamen similarly served on ships for consecutive voyages; Earle, *Sailors*, 46.

ships had largely local crews. Scarborough's fleet made generally short voyages, most taking less than three months. The vessels were generally 100 tons or smaller. Crews on the coasters averaged eight men, but many sailed with only four or five. Such small groups had several advantages over the large crews employed on naval, East India and transatlantic vessels. The sailors' familiarity with their fellow seamen made working on a vessel attractive and created cohesion among the crew which made for effective shipboard operations. Almost completely absent from Scarborough's musters are any reference to dismissal of mariners for disciplinary reasons, something common on larger ships. Scarborough's coastal voyages were less physically demanding than oceanic voyages, permitting the hiring of young and elderly family members; indeed, fathers, sons and brothers frequently worked together. Men like Henry and George Kirby shared family connections, and as the master and mate of *Mary and Alice* had lives that were intertwined both personally and economically. With physically demanding agriculture being the other primary industry in the North Riding, work at sea on short voyages, often with relatives and friends, was a pleasant alternative to toiling as a wage labourer on a farm.²²

Land transactions and wills indicate that although common seamen rarely acquired much wealth, captains often led comfortable lives. The Duesbery, Cockerill, Hebden, Robinson, Thornton, Disbrough, Fox and Taylor families all amassed considerable wealth largely by investing the money they made at sea in land-based businesses or property. A good number of them owned their ships, and the more successful sometimes bought a second or even a third. But like all smart investors, they mitigated their risks through diversification. Taking on a £400 mortgage or lending £150 to an out-of-town merchant were common investments for Scarborough's ship captains. And like successful shipmasters elsewhere, Scarborough's captains generally owned their own dwellings and often left significant bequests to their children. When these men left St. Mary's after Sunday service and looked down the hill at the harbour, what they saw was the foundation for their comfortable lives.²³

²²Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; Earle, *Sailors*, 8; and Buckley, "Ships Built in Scarborough Shipyards." Unlike other east coast mariners who Peter Earle, *Sailors*, 20, characterized as the "least literate" of Britain's seafarers, more than eighty percent of Scarborough's mariners who were married in St. Mary's signed their names to the marriage register; East Yorkshire Archives (EYA), PE 165/15, St. Mary's Anglican Church Marriage Records, 1754-1765.

²³NYA, Z.1038, Z.1275, Deeds and Wills, 10 August 1733; HHC, UDDU/21/7, bill of sale, 28 December 1736; UDDDE/21/9, bill of sale; UDDSY/x1/25/108, mortgage, May 1759; UDDBM/x1/19/40, mortgage, 2 February 1714; and UDDDU/17/7, deed, 15 October 1728, are examples of captains' financial dealings. Their property ownership and investment in land-based businesses were simi-

Creation of a Maritime Safety Net

Given the nature of Scarborough as a maritime community focused on short coasting voyages with vessels manned largely by Yorkshiremen who were often related, how did the port protect its mariners and their families from the vicissitudes that often befell those who lived in other communities? Scarborough sewed a safety net comprised of four interrelated parts: a web of kinship and family connections that permitted sailors to move between land and sea as well as between maritime roles as they aged and their personal situations changed; the employment of maritime servants; "retirement at sea," that is, the hiring of elderly seamen; and the use of the Seamen's Sixpence in a way that kept mariners' widows and children from becoming impoverished and that also permitted elderly seamen to "return to the sea." None of these components was by itself sufficient to provide adequate protection for Scarborough's maritime families, but combined they provided a social safety net that was, by eighteenth-century standards, robust and effective.²⁴

Family and Kinship Connections

Scarborough's mid-eighteenth-century maritime community provides considerable support for Ralph Davis' assertion that mariners went to sea "to do what fathers do."²⁵ Three out of every ten of Scarborough's crews in the period 1747-1765 included family members working together. The short coastal voyages on which most Scarborough seamen served were not as physically taxing or stressful as service on naval ships or privateers, thereby permitting the hir-

lar to the activities of other British ship captains in the mid-eighteenth century. Earle, *Sailors*, 63-64; and Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 120-123.

²⁴In the mid-eighteenth century, Hull's Trinity House used the Seamen's Sixpence to support a seamen's hospital, but it is unclear whether such charitable efforts enabled older seamen to "retire at sea." See "The Trinity House," in K.J. Allison (ed.), *Victoria County History of Yorkshire East Riding, Vol. 1: The City of Kingston upon Hull* (Cambridge, 1969), <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66786>, accessed 4 May 2012.

²⁵Davis, *Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 396; and Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1750. Hull fishermen were similarly said to go to sea because "that was the livelihood of their fathers;" see Roland Pietsch, "Ships' Boys and Youth Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Navy Recruits of the London Marine Society," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, XIV, No. 4 (2004), 23. Men who served as slave ship captains also came from maritime backgrounds; Stephen D. Behrendt, "The Captains in the British Slave Trade from 1785 to 1817," *Transactions of the Historical Society for Lancashire and Cheshire*, CXL (1991), 124-125.

ing of considerable numbers of young sons and brothers, as well as older, often elderly fathers. Doing so both cemented family ties and provided a way for new generations to be trained while permitting older sailors to make a gradual transition to retirement. When David, Thomas and William Adamson signed on to *Edward* as the carpenter, mate and seaman, respectively, they were doing what John, Thomas and Peter Stonehouse, the master, mate and seaman who sailed alongside each other on the voyage of *Francis and Mary* to France were doing. Many other family groups worked together on Scarborough's vessels, bringing on board the rhythms and patterns of their lives ashore. Even on ships where no family member was an officer, fathers and sons working together tended to reinforce patriarchal patterns of obedience and deference.

Family groups on board Scarborough ships could also invert traditional English patriarchal roles and in so doing provide support for elderly seamen. Sailors who by most standards were elderly – that is, tars who were fifty-five years of age or older and thus far beyond their prime seafaring years – commonly served on Scarborough ships. In fact, more than four percent of all berths in this period were filled by such weathered seamen. These older men frequently worked with their sons. When sixty-five-year-old Scarborough resident John Fox climbed aboard *Amity's Advice* in 1754 to serve as the cook, his twenty-four-year-old son Richard was one of the seamen. No longer an active seafarer, having not been to sea for seven years, John's fatherly authority was likely to have been lessened by his role as the ship's cook and the sole older man aboard *Amity's Advice* – but the family ties were undoubtedly strengthened. Robert and John Harrison on *Free Britain*, and Christopher and Richard Warkup on *Lion*, similarly had to accommodate themselves to sea-board situations where the father's authority was diminished by age, frailty and the son's maritime abilities. Counterbalancing these men's decreasing influence over their sons while at sea were the positive benefits older tars gained from the companionship and support their sons provided them while away from home and hearth.

The strong family ties among Scarborough's maritime families extended both to the land and the sea. In January 1756, when Ann Trott's father escorted her into St. Mary's Church to wed John Wharton, the assembled guests witnessed the coming together of two maritime families. The groom had served as a seaman on several Scarborough vessels in the past decade. Because the male Trotts had served on a number of Scarborough vessels at the same time, Ann's extended family would have known John as a seafarer before they considered him as Ann's intended husband. No fewer than four members of different branches of the Trott family were seamen who received benefits from the Seamen's Hospital in the 1750s and early 1760s, a fairly clear indication of a family whose livelihoods were deeply connected to the port's maritime interests. The Trotts' maritime ties also extended to the nearby port of Whitby

where some of them lived.²⁶ Inter-marriage among Scarborough's maritime families such as the Trotts and Whartons was common; thirty-five percent of St. Mary's marriages involved situations where both spouses came from such families. This is hardly surprising given that mariners comprised more than forty-four percent of the grooms, and forty-six percent of the families of individuals married in St. Mary's between 1754 and 1765 had mariners among their members.²⁷

The cramped streets of Scarborough, described by visitors as "ill-built, and very badly paved," assisted and abetted the tight kinship connections of the port's maritime community. Not until the 1760s did the town expand significantly beyond the medieval dykes, walls and gateways that had framed it for hundreds of years. It would have been nearly impossible for a seaman walking down the narrow streets to the wharves to have avoided passing the house of other members of the maritime community since the port's seafaring families literally lived cheek to jowl. The number of mariners' wills which described their dwellings as "adjoining the back" of a fellow seaman's home demonstrates the physical and emotional closeness of the town's maritime community.²⁸

The short life of Thomas Cockerill illustrates the deep ties that bound Scarborough's maritime community. Cockerill was seventeen when he joined *Ann and Mary* as a servant. The son of "the most considerable Rope-Maker in the North of England" and an original signer of the Scarborough Pier Bylaws, Thomas was related to a number of ship captains, ensuring that he knew something of seafaring before signing on to *Ann and Mary*. Thomas was likely to have been acquainted with Captain Francis Goland because both families were active members of St. Mary's Anglican Church. Aboard *Ann and Mary*, Thomas worked under the direction of seventeen-year-old Francis Goland, Jr., the ship's mate. Given that their fathers likely had business dealings, it is probable the two young men spent time together before Thomas went to sea with the Golands, whether in St. Mary's or in a tavern. Thomas must have performed ably as a servant on the vessel because shortly after arriving back in Scarborough, the young seafarer was taken aboard *Unanimity* for a voyage to London as a seaman. Cockerill's prior contacts with John Woodill, *Unanimity's* cap-

²⁶Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775.

²⁷St. Mary's Anglican Church Marriage Records, 1754-1765. The proportion of mariners being married in St. Mary's is higher than the figures quoted herein because the former does not include men serving on Royal Navy ships, ships from other ports and Scarborough fishing vessels and open boats, nor those mariners for whom musters and Trinity Hospital records list no name or residence.

²⁸Binns, *History of Scarborough*, 160-178; and HHC, UDP/204/7, William Robinson, will, 27 February 1750.

tain, may have bolstered his movement up the maritime hierarchy. Woodill was the port's Customs Searcher from 1756 to 1765 and in that capacity was acquainted with or knew directly most of the port's shipowners, maritime business leaders and captains. Given his contacts, family background and apparent maritime skills, Cockerill would have been a strong candidate eventually to become a captain. Other Scarborough servants, such as Archer Rowles, moved quickly through the port's maritime hierarchy from servant to seaman to mate to master. In contrast to this typical Scarborough maritime career path, Cockerill died at the age of nineteen before he had the opportunity to take advantage of the tight-knit maritime community in which he grew up.²⁹

Members of Scarborough's maritime community also provided for the next generation of mariners through careful estate planning. Robert Wost, a master mariner, was hardly unusual in having a will that stipulated that his eldest son should inherit his vessel and that considerable monies be bequeathed to his other children. Such wills indicate a community with resources, a desire to provide for the next generation of mariners and plans to protect the resources and the community that enabled mariners to live decent lives.³⁰

Strong family connections among Scarborough seamen were not limited to the merchant service. If Plymouth remittance registers are an accurate reflection of practices in the Royal Navy, Scarborough men appear to have been among the most consistent of naval sailors in remitting funds to family members. Unlike the hundreds of seamen from London, Bristol and Liverpool who had their wages remitted to themselves care of their home port's collector, most Scarborough seamen in Plymouth arranged to have their pay sent to their wives or other family members. When James Stonehouse sent £7 to his wife in 1759, and George Batchelor, a Scarborough seaman on HMS *Litchfield* had £28 remitted to his wife Elizabeth in 1761, they were but two of several score of Scarborough seamen at Plymouth who between 1759 and 1763 did not fit the stereotype of sailors as footloose and free. Instead, the evidence suggests that they were firmly tied to home, hearth and wife.³¹

Just as important, the short voyages of most Scarborough seafarers, combined with regular payment of the ships' crew, mitigated two of the causes of anxiety for many mariners' wives: having to wait for extended periods of

²⁹*London Evening Post*, 4 November 1740; St. Mary's Anglican Church Burial Records, 1689-1781; NYRO, Z.1203, Scarborough Pier Bylaws; Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765; and HHC, UDDBM/x1/19/40, James Cockerill, mortgage, 2 February 1714.

³⁰NYRO, Z.1275, Robert Wost, will, 23 November 1750.

³¹TNA/PRO, Admiralty (ADM) 174/291, Remittance Book, Plymouth, 13 December 1758-9 August 1763.

time for their husbands to be paid and spending much of their lives not knowing if their spouse was safe.³² The rhythm of Scarborough's short voyages offered a consistency of income that made family life a good deal less stressful than for many mariners' families elsewhere. These short trips ensured a fatherly presence between voyages that was often lacking in the homes of British sailors. Regular stops at home also offered married couples the benefits of spending time together and provided the physical intimacy sorely lacking in the lives of many naval, whaling and Atlantic seamen.

Retirement at Sea

That "high mortality rates and the rigours of maritime work made seafaring a young man's occupation" is a view shared by almost all British and American maritime historians. The consensus has been that by the time they reached their thirties or forties, eighteenth-century mariners looked to shift to land-based work and that only "abject poverty and misery" kept older men at sea. For example, in Salem, only two percent of the seamen were over the age of forty.³³ In contrast, 11.94 percent of Scarborough's crew members in 1749 were over this age, and by 1759 such men comprised over sixteen percent of Scarborough's crews. Older tars could be found among captains, officers, seamen and cooks on the port's vessels. Given that these men, even on short coasting voyages, could have had difficulty performing seamen's duties, especially in bad weather, why were such a large group of men over the age of forty employed on Scarborough's ships? As noted earlier, exemptions from impressment for those who worked on colliers attracted some older men. But the large numbers of older seafarers on Scarborough vessels, and their presence in both peacetime and wartime, indicates that there were additional causes for this behaviour.

In the period between 1747 and 1765, mariners on Scarborough ships averaged twenty-seven years of age, a fairly typical statistic for English crews of the era. What was unusual about Scarborough's crews were the 378 cooks over the age of forty. Although being a ship's cook was not a highly respected position and was often seen as a feminine task, the relative lack of physical demands made it an ideal post for older seamen. The Royal Navy often em-

³²Constance Anne Fournier, "Undercurrents; The Experience of New England Maritime Women, 1790-1912" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hawai'i, 1993), 44 and 316.

³³Vickers with Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 119; and Earle, *Sailors*, 49-50. This consensus among historians is hardly surprising given that throughout the eighteenth century the life expectancies of Englishmen at birth never exceeded forty years; E.A. Wrigley, "The Growth of Population in Eighteenth-Century England: A Conundrum Resolved," *Past and Present*, No. 98 (1983), 129.

ployed disabled or wounded men as cooks. As one sailor described the cook on his man-of-war, a bullet “shot away one of his limbs, and so cut him out for a Sea-Cook.” Neither Patrick Jourdain’s loss of an arm nor Samuel Short’s loss of an eye disqualified them from service as naval cooks. Scarborough ship captains were even more willing than their Royal Navy counterparts to employ older men as cooks. The nature of the coasting trade made this possible. Cooking for fewer than a dozen men on most Scarborough vessels meant handling pots and pans but generally did not require lifting large bags or containers that the mass production of food on long-distance voyages entailed. Nor did Scarborough’s older cooks have responsibility on their small ships for goats or other large animals, such as was sometimes the case on Royal Navy ships. On short coasting voyages they had few worries about spoilage, needing to obtain fresh supplies or having to provide the crew with a variety of meats.³⁴

The hiring of an older seafarer as a cook was not an isolated occurrence on Scarborough vessels. In an era when most small coasters did not employ a cook – crews shared the responsibility of preparing meals – almost one-quarter of Scarborough ships employed cooks, triple the rate on Plymouth vessels.³⁵ Scarborough masters and owners clearly thought that the job of cook would be reserved largely for the elderly: the average age of Scarborough cooks was 50.5 years, with fewer than fourteen percent of them under the age of forty. War clearly played a role in this; during the Seven Years’ War the numbers of older cooks on Scarborough ships increased from 35.17 percent in 1753 to more than half between 1754 and 1763. While in peacetime there were fewer elderly cooks, the practice of hiring older men marked the entire 1747-1765 period as sailors over the age of forty comprised 52.7 percent of Scarborough’s ship cooks. The remarkable nature of this pattern is perhaps best illustrated by the hiring practices of John White. Between 1751 and 1757 White, the captain of *Vulture*, not only employed elderly cooks but even hired two seventy year olds – John Crompton and Thomas Brathwaite – for extended periods. Clearly, extreme old age was not seen as an absolute bar to working on a Scarborough vessel.

³⁴NMM GC/4/31, Francis Geary to Commissioners of the Navy, 30 May 1743; TNA/PRO, ADM 106/1156/17, Patrick Jourdain, petition, 13 April 1767; ADM 106/1156/93, letter to Navy Board, 22 September 1767; and Janet MacDonald, *Feeding Nelson’s Navy: The True Story of Food at Sea during the Georgian Era* (London, 2004; 2nd ed., London, 2006), 104 and 142-143. For a translation of Johnson’s Latin rhyme about a goat which provided naval officers with milk for their coffee during two global circumnavigations, see James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (6 vols., Oxford, 1807; reprint, Charleston, SC, 2007), II, 144.

³⁵Plymouth Crew Lists, 1761-1783. Eight percent of Plymouth’s vessels carried a cook.

If, as Samuel Johnson believed, food was a central concern for all seafarers, then work as a cook clearly placed many older mariners at the centre of social life aboard Scarborough vessels. It was during meals that crews were able to relax and socialize. Cooks who provided edible fare were appreciated, while those who failed to do so or took advantage of their position to sell grease to sailors to spread on their biscuits became objects of scorn and ridicule. This element of caring for others by cooking reinforced the natural paternal role that older men often played in English society.³⁶ While being older may have made some cooks the subject of taunts, it is more likely that on Scarborough's small coasters the older cook was accepted as an equal, especially if he either sailed with the crew or captain before as a seaman, as many elderly cooks had, or was capable of helping out on deck when the need arose. When the fifty-five-year-old Joseph Temperton cooked on a voyage to London on *Henry*, first in 1747 and then again in 1748, eleven of the twelve-man crew sailed on both voyages. Such familiarity, while it may sometimes have bred contempt, often served to ease the prospect of working together.

The nature of Scarborough's vessels appears not only to have assisted in making work for older mariners more tolerable but also helped sons move up the maritime hierarchy and ease their fathers' move into retirement. When fifty-eight-year-old David Tristram shipped out in 1748 as a seaman on *New Recovery* for a voyage to Ipswich, the vessel's captain was his twenty-seven-year-old son. This was the very same ship on which David had served as master earlier that year. Similarly, in the 1750s William Hurd Sr.'s son, William, took the helm of a Scarborough ship his father had formerly commanded while the former master served as a crew member. The Tristrams and Hurds, as well as the Robinsons and Hodgsons, were but four of two score Scarborough families in which elderly fathers served on ships on which their sons were officers. Thus, while the movement of an older seaman from captain to seaman, sailor or cook may have been due to physical deterioration, the desire to assist family members ascend the maritime hierarchy also played a role in older men continuing to work aboard Scarborough ships.

The overwhelming majority of Scarborough's older seamen – sixty-eight percent – made only one voyage a year, and almost two-thirds were at sea for fewer than four months. When many older sailors joined ships in Scarborough harbour between 1747 and 1765, they were only part-time seamen. The change from regular to sporadic employment enabled these men to extend their careers and allowed them to make the transition to retirement gradually.

³⁶Christopher C. Lloyd, "Victualling of the Fleet in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in Duncan J. Watt, E.J. Freeman and W.F. Bynum (eds.), *Starving Sailors: The Influence of Nutrition upon Naval and Maritime History* (London, 1981), 12.

Unlike the Royal Navy, which often discharged mariners such as sixty-three-year-old David Mann far from home as “unusable,” few older Scarborough seamen were forced ashore. Only one of twenty-two older seamen discharged before the end of a voyage on a Scarborough vessel was let go outside the county in which he resided. Richard Blanchard was representative. When the fifty-six-year-old Blanchard was discharged at Hull during *Friendship's* voyage to Holland, he was near his Scarborough home. There is no record of why he was discharged, but given his age and the relative proximity of Hull to his home, it is likely that William Harbutt, *Friendship's* captain and a fellow Scarborough resident, was being protective of a man he knew both as a neighbour and an employee when it had become clear that Blanchard could no longer handle a sailor's duties. Rather than perceiving elderly mariners as fungible workers to be discharged at will, it appears that Scarborough masters saw them as vital members of the maritime community and as neighbours who deserved to be protected from the vagaries of weather, markets and age. The hundreds of older seamen who served on Scarborough's vessels between 1747 and 1765 attest to the willingness of shipowners and captains to hire men who in many maritime markets would have been deemed unsuitable for work.³⁷

Maritime Servants

The willingness of Scarborough's captains to employ older seamen not only assisted them in extending their careers but also ensured that young servants brought on board to learn the maritime trade would have the benefit of the wisdom of experienced sailors.³⁸ The 1757 coasting voyage of *Dolphin* illustrates this point. When forty-four-year-old Captain Thomas Buck and his forty-year-old-mate, Thomas Cape, steered the vessel out into the North Sea, the crew included five teenage servants – John Shelton, Thomas Braitthwell, John Jackson, Robert Slophenson and an unidentified eighteen-year-old lad. These youngsters, who all came from Scarborough or nearby towns, worked alongside the sixty-year-old cook, James Wood, and five seamen in their fifties: Ned Thompson, Samuel Cook and William Dickinson, all fifty-seven years of age, and Valentine Evans and John Trowton, both fifty-eight years old. Since sailors were reputed to have little truck with landlubbers, the young men were undoubtedly the subjects of a good number of barbed comments as they hauled

³⁷TNA/PRO, ADM 36/7738, HMS *Mercury*, muster toll, 1774-1776; and Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1765.

³⁸Scarborough Crew Lists, 1754-1765. Scarborough's musters indicate that only fourteen young men were hired as “apprentices.” While some of the more than 4700 servant berths may have been for captain's servants, it is clear from the large number of “servants” among Scarborough's crews that most, if not all, of these youngsters were hired to work as novice seamen.

the ship's lines and stumbled about trying to find their sea legs. But during this short voyage they also received guidance from the old salts on basic seamanship, such as the fact that changes in the colour of the sea suggest that a craft was moving into shallower water. The crusty veterans may have preferred to sit by themselves during meal times, but they knew that their own safety and that of *Dolphin* depended on the servants becoming useful crew members. Whatever hostility they may have felt was probably kept in check as they helped to instruct their young charges.

Not all young boys coming aboard Scarborough's ships lacked knowledge of maritime matters. During the Seven Years' War, few Scarborough parents rushed to enlist their sons in the London Marine Society, which had been established to train naval seamen; indeed, only one Scarborough boy entered the Marine Society between 1756 and 1762. The Society's lack of appeal may have been due to a distaste for the Royal Navy's proto-industrial training or concern that it diverged from the Scarborough tradition of using older seamen to mentor the young.³⁹ But it certainly did not mean that the parents were unconcerned about providing maritime training for the offspring. A number of young Scarborough men received maritime training through the Amiable Society. Established in 1729 to provide clothing and education for Scarborough's poor, the Society ensured that some Scarborough youths would "attain a competent knowledge of navigation" through instruction at the Society's seminary. In addition to those trained by the Amiable Society, a considerable number of boys received maritime instruction by more informal means. The sons of prominent Scarborough maritime families regularly sailed as servants on the port's ships.⁴⁰ When *Amity* cleared Scarborough in 1748, its crew included young members of the Pattison, Welborn, Williamson and Dickson families. Each of these families was involved extensively in Scarborough's maritime sector, owning, building and/or commanding vessels. Their sons undoubtedly received maritime instruction from relatives prior to their initial voyages. During their tenures as maritime servants, they were also watched over, trained in maritime matters and made ready to take their places in the port's maritime

³⁹Roland W.W. Pietsch, "Ships' Boys and Charity in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The London Marine Society, 1756-1772" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2003); and Pietsch, *The Real Jim Hawkins: Ships' Boys in the Georgian Navy* (Barnsley, 2010), 92.

⁴⁰Hinderwell, *History of Scarborough, 275-276*. The Amiable Society's competent teaching stands in stark contrast to that of a number of charity schools of the time where teachers were said to have "managed with a great disadvantage" their students' education. See John Carter Brown Library, Wolverhampton Charity School for Boys, 1 Codex=Eng.11.

hierarchy. Unlike some other young British boys of the era, they did not despair that they had “no resource but the army or navy.”⁴¹

Trinity Seamen’s Hospital

Historians have offered conflicting views over the reach and efficiency of the Seamen’s Sixpence programme. Established in 1696, it was intended to assist disabled mariners, the widows of seamen who lost their lives at sea, and children who were unable to provide for themselves. To support the operation of the Greenwich Hospital, all naval seamen or sailors “in any Ship or Vessel, whatsoever belonging to or to any the Subjects of England, or any other His Majesty’s Dominions” were to pay sixpence each month they worked at sea. Seamen who were engaged in bringing fish to Great Britain or Ireland, and those who worked on vessels or open boats plying British rivers or coasts were exempted.⁴² Conrad Dixon has asserted that the programme was a “most successful confidence trick” by which the state used merchant seamen’s monthly contributions to provide services for naval mariners. In contrast, N.A.M. Rodger contends that “most professional seafarers could establish some naval service without difficulty” and thereby gain access to the Greenwich Hospital.⁴³ Dixon, however, exaggerates the lack of benefits for merchant seafarers. Rodger, on the other hand, overlooks the fact that many English seamen were not “professional seafarers” but rather men who regularly shifted from sea to land. More than sixty percent of the men on Scarborough ships spent less than five months a year at sea, and only twenty-two percent made more than one voyage per annum.⁴⁴ Such sporadic, short-term connections with the sea do not suggest that Scarborough was filled with professional seamen. Even assuming

⁴¹Roland Pietsch, “Urchins for Life: The Story of the Marine Society in the Seven Years War,” *Journal for Maritime Research*, II, No. 1 (2000), www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g933270939, accessed 14 June 2011.

⁴²7 and 8 Wm. II, c. 21 (1696); 10 Anne, c. 17 (1711); and Davis, “Seamen’s Sixpences,” 329.

⁴³Conrad Dixon, “Seamen’s Sixpence,” *Mariner’s Mirror*, LXX, No. 4 (1984), 433-434; and N.A.M. Rodger, “Seamen’s Sixpences,” *Mariner’s Mirror*, LXXI, No. 2 (1985), 232-233. Davis, “Seamen’s Sixpences,” 330, note 9, contends that prior to the 1747 legislation reforming the programme, merchant seamen “received no appreciable benefits from Greenwich Hospital.”

⁴⁴This is not to argue that Scarborough’s maritime community failed to offer opportunities for long-term careers at sea. Scarborough mariners, such as Captain Thomas Popelwell, regularly went to sea for more than a decade. Notwithstanding the presence of such professional seamen, however, many Scarborough sailors do not sustain Rodger’s claim that English mariners had long careers at sea.

that some of the landsmen serving on Scarborough vessels did eventually serve in the Royal Navy, the majority of maritime workers would have been unlikely to ever have been eligible to receive benefits from the Greenwich Hospital.

However one wants to characterize the Seamen's Sixpence programme, several things are indisputable. First, as the First Lord of the Admiralty acknowledged in testimony before Parliament, some time in the King's service "was always required" in order to obtain the benefits at Greenwich. Second, even those mariners with extensive service in the Royal Navy, such as John Nicol, who broke his "King's bread" from 1775 to 1783 and from 1794 to 1801, found coming to London to seek entry to Greenwich Hospital to be of "no use," leaving them to "eke out" their "subsistence in the best manner" they could. Third, by mid-century many merchant seamen were dissatisfied with the programme. Whether due to having to travel long distances to pursue a claim or believing, as did New England fishermen in the 1760s, that few of them could reasonably anticipate admission, the programme had few supporters among merchant seamen.⁴⁵ Most important, seamen who had not served in the Royal Navy could not receive services at Greenwich.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Dixon, "Seamen's Sixpence," 434; TNA/PRO, ADM 82/71-100, pension registers; Christopher Magra, "Soldiers...Bred to the Sea: Maritime Marblehead, Massachusetts, and the Origins and Progress of the American Revolution," *New England Quarterly*, LXXVII, No. 4 (2004), 544; and John Nicol, *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner* (Edinburgh, 1822; reprint, New York, 1999), 209-210. Some disabled North American seamen were required to sail to England at their own expense to receive pension monies; Rhode Island Archives, Petitions to the Rhode Island General Assembly, 1753, reel 8, 90 and 1758, reel, 11, 45. Dixon's argument that the Seamen's Sixpence was a program under which monies were redistributed from one class of mariners to another is not without merit. In Scarborough, monies paid to the Trinity Society by landsmen, servants, occasional seafarers and mariners from ports other than Scarborough were used for the benefit of Scarborough's professional mariners and their families. For example, among the widows who received benefits for more than five years from the Seamen's Hospital and whose husbands could be identified from St. Mary's marriage records, seventy-five percent were married to men who were at sea four or more months a year or made three or more voyages a year during at least a two-year period. More than seventy percent of the mariners who received benefits were professional seamen. Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775; and St. Mary's Anglican Church Marriage Records, 1754-1765.

⁴⁶TNA/PRO, ADM 82/71-100, Greenwich Hospital Registers, also indicate that very few black or North American seamen received benefits at the hospital. See also Isaac Land, "Bread and Arsenic: Citizenship from the Bottom Up in Georgian London," *Journal of Social History*, XXXIX, No. 1 (2005), 96 and 100. The sixpence paid by North American seamen each year was a not inconsiderable sum; in 1764 it totalled £1931, almost twice what the Trinity Society spent in 1752 to build a seamen's hospital in Scarborough; Joseph R. Frese, "Henry Hulton and the Greenwich Hospital Tax," *American Neptune*, XXXI, No. 3 (1971), 216.

Scarborough had a long-standing tradition of efforts to avoid its disabled and elderly seamen being “by poverty...constrained to beg.”⁴⁷ By the first half of the seventeenth century, Scarborough had created an institutional structure to provide for its elderly and disabled mariners. Commencing in 1638, Trinity House offered assistance to Scarborough seafarers. Although Ralph Davis believes that there was no widespread evasion of paying the sixpence, in the 1730s Scarborough “crews were not paying the [required seamen’s sixpence] dues,” resulting in “distress amongst the seamen of the Town.” This left the Society seriously short of funds. As part of a growing concern over many disabled and elderly mariners being without resources, Parliament in 1747 authorized the Trinity House at Scarborough and organizations in other ports to collect the duty and to supervise its use for local programmes in “support of maimed and disabled seamen, and the widows and children of such as shall be maimed, disabled or drowned in the Merchant Service.” Although the 1747 legislation authorized Bristol’s Society of Merchant Venturers, the Corporation of Trinity House at Hull, and *ad hoc* committees in other ports to develop their own charitable programmes for mariners using sixpence monies, many towns failed to do so.⁴⁸ In contrast, shortly after the 1747 reform the Trinity Society constructed a hospital with twenty-seven apartments. Its location in the middle of a bustling port town was a physical reminder of the cost of maritime employment and the central importance of mariners to the town’s economy. The port’s seamen demonstrated approval of local control over the sixpence assessments by commencing regular payments. In the eighteen years after the 1747 reform less than one-half of one percent of all mariners on Scarborough ships refused to pay the seamen’s sixpence. Why Scarborough’s tars were willing to pay an assessment transmitted to their local Trinity Society rather than to Greenwich Hospital cannot be known with certainty as neither newspaper accounts nor correspondence have been found that sheds light on this question. But given the strong resistance by many merchant

⁴⁷“The Wretched Sailor’s Complaint,” in James Stanier Clarke, Stephen Jones and John Jones (eds.), *The Naval Chronicle for 1806: Containing a General and Biographical History of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom* (London, 1808), 431-433. The Society of Friends also provided charitable relief, generally “metts of coal” and sporadic payments of five to ten shillings, to some Scarborough mariners. But because the records do not contain occupational information, the full extent of such assistance to mariners is unclear. Not until John Taylor’s 1765 £100 bequest did the Quakers provide housing to the poor. HHC, DQR/10/23, Records of the Scarborough Society of Friends; and HHC DX/258/5, Records of the Charities of the Taylor Family.

⁴⁸20 Geo. II, c. 38; TNA/PRO, SP 116/482, “An Act for Collecting at the Port of Leghorn Certain Small Sums of Money,” 1737; Records of Scarborough Trinity House; NMM, PBC 6985, James Buckley, “The Outport of Scarborough, 1650-1853” (1973), 22-23; and Davis, “Seamen’s Sixpences,” 329-331.

seamen to the assessment, it would appear that local control of the monies by men many sailors knew, had worked with and probably trusted would have been a factor. In any event, as a result of seamen resuming their payments, the Trinity Society's bank account quickly grew to more than £1000. These monies enabled the Society to build in 1752 the Seamen's Hospital with twenty-five "spacious" apartments. The Hospital's financial condition was also aided when Scarborough shipmasters made contributions to its operations. The subscription list reads like the port's shipping list as many of the port's notable maritime families helped underwrite the Hospital.⁴⁹

Admission to the hospital did not require that its beneficiaries work each day, as was required of those in the local workhouse. Instead, elderly seamen – such as seventy-eight-year-old John Coats, who had continued working at sea until the age of seventy – were provided services by the Society solely on the basis of their prior maritime employment. Once admitted to the hospital, the benefits provided compared favourably with other forms of welfare in northern English communities of the time. Whereas typical income replacement in the region ranged between ten and twenty percent, the standard four shillings that Scarborough Seamen's Hospital pensioners received constituted sixteen percent of the typical seamen's twenty-five shilling monthly wage. Moreover, seamen and widows with children received additional benefits, usually two shillings per child per month. As a result, more than four out of ten pensioners received eight or more shillings per month.⁵⁰ Such payments were more in line with benefits provided in southern England which averaged thirty percent of income replacement. Scarborough pensioners were also provided with housing, making Seamen's Hospital benefits generous compared to those received by other pensioners in the region. These relatively generous benefits, combined with the fact that pensioners were not required to wear a badge marking them as recipients of charity, as did English poor houses and New York church wardens when they provided relief, were explicit expres-

⁴⁹Buckley, "Outport of Scarborough," 22; R.P. Hastings, "The Unreformed Workhouse in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c. 1730-1834," in Hastings (ed.), *More Essays in North Riding History* (Northallerton, 1984); Hinderwell, *History of Scarborough*, 284; NYRO, CRONT 1266, "Account of the Workings of the Trinity House;" and NYRO, ZOX 1/1, Trinity House, account book, 1780-1788. Despite the fact that foreign sailors did not receive pensions from the Trinity Hospital, more than ninety-five percent of foreign-born seamen on Scarborough ships paid the sixpence assessment.

⁵⁰If the sizable initial payments paid to some pensioners were included in the total of payments such pensioners received and averaged over the length of their stay, the percentage of Scarborough pensioners receiving benefits greater than thirty percent of wage replacement would have exceeded one-half.

sions by the Scarborough community that it valued older seafarers and maritime widows.⁵¹

Although the Seamen's Hospital assisted elderly mariners, the bulk of its efforts benefited Scarborough's maritime widows and children. Scarborough merchant seamen's widows could not count on the crown to provide the kinds of adequate pensions that Rachel Hannah Burden and other widows of Royal Navy officers often received.⁵² Thus, they needed to rely upon local resources. Among the 296 adults who were beneficiaries of the Hospital's services between 1752 and 1765, 236 were widows and only sixty were elderly, disabled or infirm mariners. Many of these widows received substantial benefits and more than thirty percent received them for five or more years. Although many, such as Elizabeth Colling and Mary Boswell, received the standard four shillings per month, others received considerably greater amounts, generally due to having children to care for.⁵³ Mary Allatson, who received £512.7, or more than £39 a year over a thirteen-year period, was unusual in receiving such considerable benefits. But even those receiving four shillings per month were provided a standard of living similar to that of many of the port's labourers and considerably better than those in the town's poorhouse.

The Seamen's Hospital served several purposes. Most important, it provided for those mariners unable to care for themselves. Long-term stays, such as Joseph Scott's seventy-seven months, were common. At the end of 1765, more than forty percent of the mariners noted in the 1752-1765 registers remained in residence, many having been there for more than forty months. More than one in five of those listed in the 1752-1765 registers died in the Hospital. When elderly seamen were no longer able to serve as cooks, the Seamen's Hospital provided both financial assistance and housing. Elderly cooks were the most likely seafarers to receive pensions. Although cooks comprised less than three percent of the men serving on Scarborough ships, they made up twenty-two percent of the seamen who received hospital benefits.

⁵¹Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), 257-259; and Billy G. Smith, "Poverty and Economic Marginality in Eighteenth-Century America," *Proceedings of American Philosophical Society*, CXXXII, No. 1 (1988), 92.

⁵²After Mrs. Burden's husband was slain by a privateer, she received an annual pension of £70. TNA/PRO, Privy Council (PC) 1/15/10, Report of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 4 September 1778, sent to King George III.

⁵³The exact number of children in the hospital cannot be stated with certainty, as hospital registers did not list individual children. Children's presence in the hospital can be gleaned from pensions given to "children of" deceased mariners, and the widows who received payments considerably in excess of the usual four shillings per month stipend. Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775.

Officers, who were most likely to have independent economic resources, were under-represented in the hospital's register comprising only twenty-two percent of pensioners while occupying twenty-nine percent of the berths.⁵⁴ Thus, although professional seamen and their families may have been the primary beneficiaries of hospital care, Scarborough's redistribution of sixpence assessments tended to focus on the care of the neediest of its maritime families.

The Hospital also provided Scarborough's elderly seamen a means to retain some economic independence. Frail health denied many of them the opportunity to continue to go to sea, thus making them reliant upon others. While the offer of four shillings a month and a warm bed would have been attractive to many older mariners, such enticements did not cause large numbers of Scarborough seamen to remain in the Hospital for extended periods. In contrast to Greenwich Hospital pensioners who sang of "ne'er to sea again," Scarborough's elderly seamen remained active mariners long after most sailors elsewhere had taken off their tarred breaches for the last time. The Seamen's Hospital register is replete with notations of elderly mariner pensioners leaving in the spring to work "at sea" only to return in the fall or winter. Typical of many such pensioners was Robert Graden. A sailor in his mid-to-late fifties, in 1758 and 1759 he left the Hospital between February and April to work "at sea" and returned the following fall. Among the sixty men in the Hospital between 1753 and 1765, forty percent returned to the sea. In their old age – they averaged fifty-one years of age when returning to sea – these men were able to retain their seafaring identities by working on short coastal voyages. The practice of allowing these men to return during the winter also meant that they did not risk losing their safety net by going back to sea. Seafarers such as John Galecliff could for six years go to sea, return to the Hospital each winter and, when they could no longer handle the rigours of maritime work, remain as full-time pensioners in the Hospital for more than five years after their last voyage.⁵⁵ This pattern of older mariners returning to sea during the warm months and avoiding the harsh conditions of the North Sea during the winter likely extended the lives of William Marshall and other pensioners who survived for more than a decade after returning to sea. It also avoided the problem that nearby towns experienced in the early nineteenth century of being

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵"Greenwich Hospital," <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/places/queens-house/fact-files/greenwich-hospital>, accessed 27 June 2011; Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1750; and Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775. The Seamen's Hospital also permitted "disabled seamen" to return to maritime employment.

“much troubled with applications” from maritime workers during the winter “for poor relief.”⁵⁶

The strength of Scarborough’s maritime social safety net and the role the Seamen’s Hospital played in that network can be seen in the career of John Hodgson. In 1748, at the age of thirty, Hodgson was a seaman on *Ann and Mary* on a coasting voyage from Scarborough. Hodgson was apparently disabled in 1753-1754, spending that winter in the Seamen’s Hospital before he “returned to the sea” in May 1754. In October 1755, Hodgson married Jane Sneaton of Scarborough. His work at sea provided the couple with a decent lifestyle; he even had sufficient funds to provide a mortgage for John Brown to purchase a house. After his nuptials at St. Mary’s, John served on a number of coasting and short voyages to northern European ports. At the beginning of 1759, Hodgson was listed as a member of the carpenter’s crew on HMS *Lowestoff*. While *Lowestoff* was stationed at Plymouth, Hodgson arranged to have £20 remitted to his wife in Scarborough. Just over a year later, the Scarborough sailor was again disabled. Rather than apply for admission to Greenwich Hospital, he chose to return to Scarborough and re-enter the Seamen’s Hospital where he received a monthly stipend of four shillings for at least the next five and one-half years. Scarborough was a community that provided Hodgson maritime employment for more than a decade, the love of a family and an institution which enabled him to return to sea at a time when many disabled mariners lost access to seafaring employment. All made the return to the Seamen’s Hospital more appealing for Hodgson than entering the Greenwich Hospital.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The period between 1747 and 1765 provided a set of circumstances that ensured that many of Scarborough’s maritime dependents were well cared for. Generally healthy working conditions on short coastal and North Sea voyages, timely payment of wages, an extensive kinship network that supported the

⁵⁶Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775; St. Mary’s Anglican Church Burial Records, 1689-1781; Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1750; R.P. Hastings, “Poverty and the Poor Law in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c. 1780-1837,” *Borthwick Papers*, No. 61 (1982), 4. It was said seamen would “rather run the Hazard of an East-India Voyage, then be obliged to sail all the Winter between London and Newcastle.” J.C., *The Compleat Collier, or, The Whole Art of Sinking, Getting, and Working, Coal-Mines &c., as is Now Used in the Northern Parts, especially about Sunderland and Newcastle* (London, 1708; reprint, London, 2010), 47.

⁵⁷Scarborough Crew Lists, 1747-1750; Plymouth Remittance Book, 13 December 1758-9 August 1763; NYRO, Z.1275, mortgage, 1755; and Records of Scarborough Trinity House, 1752-1775. The Sneatons were also a maritime family.

port's maritime dependents, the 1747 legislative reform, Trinity House's effective response to the opportunities offered by the reform, seamen's willingness to pay their sixpence assessments to local authorities, shipowners' financial support of the Seamen's Hospital, and the flow of illicit profits from smuggling all helped create an effective social safety network. Another factor that was likely to have spurred the residents of Scarborough to create and maintain this safety net was that almost every day a ship returned to port with men who paid for and were often dependent upon the charitable assistance the network provided. The need for and benefits obtained from the network were not abstractions or something to be obtained only after long years at sea and traveling to London to file papers at the Navy Office. The local nature of the network, overseen by local residents and benefiting friends and neighbours, likely generated support for the network's development and maintenance. And while the motivation for this network cannot be stated with certainty, it can be said that the safety net it provided to the port's maritime dependents was unusual in both its reach and effectiveness.

While Scarborough's residents can take credit for this significant achievement, the role of the Royal Navy and the war with France and Spain cannot be understated. Without the movement of Scarborough's young men into the navy, fourteen-year-old Peter Postell and the other young boys who learned their maritime craft as servants on Scarborough's vessels would have had far fewer opportunities to obtain berths. And it is considerably less likely that John Gatecliff or most of the other elderly men who regularly "returned to sea" from the Seamen's hospital, or many of the older cooks on Scarborough's ships, would have been so employed as young men discharged by the Royal Navy came home seeking merchant ship berths. Support of the port's maritime dependents changed after the Treaty of Paris. The postwar decrease in shipping reduced monies paid to Trinity House at the same time that demands for its services increased significantly. In the face of lessened sixpence payments, the Trinity Society in 1764-1765 began reducing pension benefits. All pensioners found their monthly stipends cut in half, with ninety-six receiving only one or two shillings, a significant decrease in their standard of living.⁵⁸ At the same time, shipowners and other potential private benefactors experienced decreases in revenues as well. When these factors are combined with the sizable costs in providing benefits to the elderly and disabled mariners who would no longer have been employed on Scarborough ships, it is reasonable to conclude that the nature of the maritime safety net that existed between 1747 and 1765 would have been significantly different in the ensuing decades. All this points to the conclusion that Scarborough's maritime safety net in the period

⁵⁸Demands and expenses for providing for North Riding's aged, disabled, widowed and orphaned increased significantly in the second half of the eighteenth century; Hastings, "Poverty and the Poor Law," 7-8.

1747-1765 was unusual, of limited duration and the result of a particular, and perhaps unique, set of conditions existing in Scarborough prior to the end of the Seven Years' War.