'A Higher Class of Men?'
Sailors and Working-Class Communities in Bristol 1850-1914

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758006

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Portsmouth

September 2019
Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word Count: 76,975 words, excluding ancilliary material.
Abstract

This thesis is a study of merchant sailors in Bristol between 1850-1914. There is a stereotypical perception of the sailor as being a drunken, promiscuous, violent nuisance on the streets of a port town. This perception has been fashioned through popular imagery and imagination but also through an historiography that has largely investigated sailors in maritime and nautical contexts and of sailors working in sailing vessels. This thesis seeks to balance this emphasis by situating sailors in urban contexts and within the culture of Bristol’s working-class people. It takes a quantitative and qualitative approach to sailors, making use of the limited range of sources available for post slavery Bristol, to argue that sailors can be seen in a different light. It seeks to portray sailors in ways not normally associated with the stereotypical image and identity politics of sailors and in so doing reveals the reality of this subsection of labour within working-class life.

This thesis, whilst recognising substantial differences between types of sailors and that conclusions drawn cannot be true for all sailors, argues that sailors as a subsection of the working-class had considerable agency in integrating themselves both spatially and culturally in working-class communities of the city. Naturally, many sailors continued to display behavioural traits of sailors but there were those who more closely aligned to working-class culture, rather than maritime culture, and to those who might be termed as a better class of working man. Through situating sailors in societal, familial, residential, employment, deviant and other cultural contexts, it will be argued that sailors were not the perceived breed apart but were an integrated presence in Bristol’s wider working-class culture, a working-class culture that exuded certain values that transcended occupational differences.

Image 1: Bristol c. 1870.
Source: Bristol Central Library Collections.
Acknowledgements

I should like to thank my supervisors, Wendy Sims-Schouten, Karl Bell and especially Brad Beaven, for their advice and guidance. I have appreciated their trust in me to get on with it but also their aptitude for putting the right amount of pressure on when needed. Brad will be relieved that I will not be bothering him anymore with my gentle mocking of the gradual demise of his beloved Coventry City F.C.

Thanks too to various people who have helped me over the last five years. Many people have offered me advice and fished out nuggets of useful information. I owe much gratitude to the staff at Bristol Archives and at Bristol Central Library, especially Mrs. Dawn Dyer, who every time I visited had found another pile of material to get through. Thank you too to my colleagues in the Faculty of Education and Sociology at Portsmouth University who have given me every encouragement, and the space and time, to get this done. I will see Dr Joe Davey on my door, which will seem rather strange.

I want to thank my family for their forbearance in over five years of grumpiness. My wife, Ceri, and my children, Bill, Max and Nan, have made allowances and given me space, which was never easy in a tiny house. Ceri has made sure that I have not had to iron a shirt for the duration and her support has been wonderful. She has felt the stress on my behalf and I am sorry that I caused her it. Well, it is over now and although my family have shown no interest whatsoever in the subject of my thesis, they have feigned it at appropriate times, and I know that I have made them proud. They are all busy, funny adults, and I am just as proud of them as they are of me. Thank you to my two sisters, Elaine and Mandy and many friends, who have continually asked how I have been getting on. They will never have to ask again, ‘What is that you are you writing about, something about boats?’

If my mum and dad were alive, unlikely with their son at an advanced age, they would be proud that I have achieved a Phd. Dad would have been interested in what I have been up to for the last few years in between jaunts overseas and I would have loved to have talked about working-class sailors with the old man at Blind Jacks pub in Knaresborough. Finally, thank you to Julian, my twin brother, who although having to cope with so much, has always supported me in what I have been doing. He will be proud to see me in coloured robes and a floppy hat.
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Introduction: Aims and Contexts

Bristol Sailors: Identities and Cultures

This study investigates the relationship between sailors and traditional working-class culture in Bristol between 1850 and 1914. It aims to examine whether the lives and behaviours of sailors in Bristol, as a particular occupational group, set them apart from the city’s working classes or demonstrated cultural integration with them. The popular perception of the sailor is uncomplimentary. Stereotypically, sailors arrive in a port city with money to spend and having been separated from land-based pleasures are unrestrained in their drinking, using prostitutes, fighting and general debauched behaviour. Stereotypically, this happens in ‘sailortown’, packed waterside streets of merchant and naval port towns, teeming with brothels, public houses, low lodging houses and the paraphernalia of maritime culture. Therefore, as a result of their occupation, their character and their locale, sailors have a distinct maritime identity and are a breed apart from land-based society. The perception of detachment is well articulated by a Captain Tupper in 1938,

‘The man on shore doesn't bother about the man on the sea. The sailor man comes and goes. For brief spells he touches the fringes of the land that is his, comparatively seldom does he make his way through the sailortown which lines the edges of the sea: generally he doesn't even reach the centres of the big towns ashore. Seamen whose harbour his ship rides in, he isn't seen in the country beyond.’

The stereotypical view of the sailor generally as ‘a lion afloat and an idiot ashore’, still persists, but it can be questioned in the context of Bristol’s sailors. In investigating Bristol sailors’ lives on shore in the context of urban culture, rather than just maritime culture, this study proposes that a different interpretation of sailors can be forwarded. By situating sailors in aspects of working-class urban culture including their residency and spatial location; family, marital and kinship circumstances; employment; leisure; education; hardship; illness and want; inter-class relationships; protest and their illegal activity, a more nuanced understanding of the sailor on shore in Bristol can be constructed. It is possible to interpret Bristol’s sailors as contrary in some aspects to the stereotypical image of the sailor, a sailor who is very much aligned with other workers and who is steeped in working-class culture that was fashioned through national and local forces. Through investigating their real streetwise experiences in the context of other workers, a sailor emerges with characteristics not ordinarily associated with the stereotypical perception of who a sailor was and who can be seen as a better class of working man. By streetwise, it is meant the

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2 Supplement to the Bristol Mercury, Bristol Mercury, 11th June, 1859.
3 In particular, it is Stan Hugill’s Sailortown, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, that does most to perpetuate the stereotypical image of the sailor. He will be referred to throughout this study.
everyday lived experiences of sailors and not just in respect of being aware of potential dangers, although this is part of it.\textsuperscript{4} Whilst not necessarily deliberately or subconsciously denying his seafaring identity the Bristol sailor was a working man whose employment was taken on water but when on land he was an integral part of the later nineteenth-century working-class and subsumed into its culture.

Important to this thesis is the work of Robert Lee who in his 2014 review of the historiography of writing on sailors, notes the dominance of research into the maritime contexts of sailors in large ports that perpetuate the perception of sailors as having a distinct nautical identity that sets him apart from others on land.\textsuperscript{5} Lee’s concern, understandable when one considers that the majority of seafarers lived most of their lives and most of their working lives on land,\textsuperscript{6} is worth quoting at length,

‘The seafarer’s life ashore has seldom been analysed within an appropriate cultural, familial or social context. Moreover, the interface between maritime and port city labour markets have never been explored in detail, insufficient attention has been paid to the location of seafarers within family, kin and community networks and comparatively few attempts have been made to move beyond a cross sectional analysis of port based maritime communities to construct a more nuanced interpretation of life ashore with an explicit longitudinal, life course perspective’.

Further,

‘Seafarers have been treated as a distinct occupational group with a unique cultural profile whose urban role was invariably articulated within self-contained maritime related enclaves, while the interpretation of their lives ashore has been moulded by ... the persistent belief in the continued existence of a distinct maritime culture’.\textsuperscript{7}

The same was opined by Marcus Rediker in 1989, arguing that ‘Studies of cultural relations between seamen and shore communities, ties to working men and women and seamen’s place in working-class history has been almost entirely unstudied for the nineteenth century’.\textsuperscript{8} Both are therefore critical of the neglect of cultural aspects of streetwise existence, although Lee does acknowledge that there have been moves towards addressing this gap.\textsuperscript{9} No such work exists for the relatively small port of Bristol and Lee’s views

\textsuperscript{7} Robert Lee, ‘The Seafarer’s Urban World’, p. 27.
encapsulate the purpose of this study in situating Bristol’s sailors in urban contexts. It will be argued that contrary to general perceptions, there is little to set Bristol’s sailors apart from other workers when placed in urban, societal contexts and nor was there a deliberate attempt to foster a distinct sailor identity by Bristol’s sailors themselves. This is not to argue that there were no visible or characteristic differences between sailors and other residents and visitors, but just that sailors fitted in to a working class comprised of what Patrick Joyce describes as a ‘cluster of attributes’, by which he means a range of cultural practices, customs, art forms, work arrangements and political organisation (among others) inherent in what he broadly defines as populism. As he also says elsewhere, identity is seen as a product of conflicting cultural forces and is composed of ‘systems of difference’. Difference is important here and it cannot be suggested that there was just one uniform, monolithic working-class identity that sailors could be a part of, just as the differences between sailors means there was not just one sailor identity. Seafarers shared common occupational traits but the sheer variety of maritime employment disallows uniformity of identity. David Starkey includes naval seamen, merchant seamen, privateers, sailors involved in coastal trades, inland navigators on rivers and canals, anglers (both inshore and oceanic), sailors on transoceanic voyages and those on short haul voyages to Europe in his list of types of sailors. Richard Gorski points to the occupational, economic, social and cultural distinctions between sailors and to this should be added the distinction between foreign and British sailors, transient or home based, born in the city or not. He includes masters, mates, boatswains, carpenters, sailmakers, quartermasters, lamp trimmers, petty officers, able seamen, apprentices, boys, engineers, firemen, stokers, trimmers and donkeymen among many others. The roles of Bristol’s sailors were therefore eclectic and throughout this study due recognition of differences are made.


13 Richard Gorski, ‘Introduction’, Maritime Labour, p. 9. Over 40 types of sailors and their seafaring occupations on different types of vessels were listed in ‘Statistics from the Return of the Number, Ages and Nationalities of the Seamen Employed on the 31st Day of March 1901 on Vessels Registered under Part One of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 in the British Islands’, Command Papers, Nineteenth-Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Online, 1894, p. iii. Others were oilmen, greasers, winchmen, cranemen, storekeepers, surgeons, stewards and stewardesses, cooks, waiters, butchers,
Furthermore, the myriad working-class cultural traits, urban mores and attributes, far too many to consider in full, afforded a great deal of sailor integration with others and into the fabric and culture of Bristol. Sailors showed commonality with other working-class people and with working-class culture, a culture that was fluid, evolving and constructed from factors both in and out of the control of sailors. As many scholars have pointed out, identity formation, not just culture, is never absolute and is always developing and sailors are best studied not just in the context of their maritime identity but within multiple urban, civic and societal contexts that were rapidly changing in the period under discussion in this thesis. This study therefore takes every opportunity to investigate sailors not in isolation but in relation to the wider working class of Bristol, other ports, non-port cities and in the national context. Furthermore, whilst the focus is naturally on sailors, it is impossible to isolate them from other workers and therefore, if not inadvertently, this thesis gives a fuller understanding of general working-class cultural life in Bristol. Comparisons are drawn throughout with workers from other occupational groups through various aspects of societal and familial life. As said, however, the subjects of this discussion are the members of a subsection of the working class whose profession just happened to take them away from land for periods of time and whose lives on return were constricted within the period of arrival and next departure. This gives them a peculiarity worthy of investigation but how other occupational groups in Bristol related to familial, social, recreational, residential, adversarial, conflictual and criminal aspects that sailors in this thesis have been contextualised within, would be fascinating projects for further investigation.

**Bristol Sailors: Time and Space**

The focus of this study is on the ordinary working class, lower ratings of merchant seamen, the able and ordinary seaman, rather than those of higher rank. These sailors in the context of their everyday lives have rarely had equal treatment as their superiors, partly because it was the better class of sailor who had the means and education to leave behind accounts of their ‘derring do’ and what they did on land. As one of the first historians to consider the ordinary lives of sailors, Jesse Lemisch says, ‘seamen has meant Sir Francis Drake, not Jack Tar, the focus has been on trade and exploration, the great navigators, but rarely on the men that sailed the ships’.

The period 1850 to 1900 was selected for a variety of reasons. Sailors in the post 1850 age have generally received less attention than their forbearers in earlier centuries. The focus in maritime studies of Bristol is mainly situated in the city’s eighteenth-century heyday and

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not on the steam shipping age of urban industrialisation. Only two and a half chapters out of nine in the latest book on maritime Bristol are concerned with the post 1850 era. This imbalance is addressed in this thesis and takes Bristol’s sailors from sail to steam and up to 1914, when wartime forced a drastic evolution outside the scope of this study.

The period 1850-1914 has also been chosen because it saw the consolidation of working-class identities in urbanising Victorian cities and as the question of seafaring identity is at the heart of this study, it is a pertinent era in which to investigate how sailors’ multiple identities related to wider working-class identities. It was also important to select a city that was, as other industrial cities were, developing its civic cultural identity at this time. The reforming zeal of the city’s middle class and the establishment of civic institutions and major infrastructural development, was evident in many major cities post 1850 and Bristol was chosen because it reflected national developments. At the same time, the city saw the consolidation of both working-class and middle-class identities and therefore is a suitable case for investigating how sailors related to changes in civic cultures.

Bristol has also been chosen because the nature of its ‘sailortown’ area was comparatively different to other port cities. This was due to various factors discussed later in this thesis, such as its size, location and the architectural, geographical and topological constraints on its development. Obviously, it was not sufficiently unique to have no problems with sailors using the businesses of sailortown and in common with other ports, Bristol had its dangers. In the eighteenth century, according to a contemporary writer, Bristol’s sailortown was,

‘Emphatically not for the landsman, for it was the scene of frequent drunken brawls and the unwary landlubber, or even the outlandish seaman, stood a good chance of being knocked on the head and robbed.’

But more recent opinion suggests that Bristol’s sailortown, especially in the nineteenth century, was not in the same category as Cardiff or Liverpool. Stan Hugill describes Bristol as a romantic Bristol Channel port and says it never had a true sailortown area. This is discussed in detail later in this chapter but it is worth pointing out here that it will be argued that in our period Bristol had not so much a sailortown but had a few ‘sailorstreets’ containing characteristic businesses of sailortowns. The extent of this was more commensurate with a relatively small mercantile port than would have been with a large naval port, as is discussed later in this thesis. Furthermore, because these sailorstreets were situated topographically and geographically in the city centre, they were not an exclusive enclave for sailors. Scholars of the spatial turn argue for the importance of space in influencing behaviours and sailors’ behaviours had the potential to be modified by the physical natural limitations of the water and the man-made structures of the city. The role

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of regulation of space through laws and licencing, and thus the regulation of behaviours within them, is also considered in this context.\textsuperscript{21} The effect was to place sailors in close proximity with other working-class and middle-class residents, variously ‘jarring and merging’ with them.\textsuperscript{22} Spatial geographies were shared and this facilitated sailors’ integration with others, thus diluting a separate maritime identity. In short, sailors lived out their lives on shared city streets and these streets place them in urban culture rather than just maritime culture.\textsuperscript{23}

**Bristol Sailors: The Development of Bristol**

Important to an understanding of the identity of Bristol’s sailors is the economic and social development of the city because sailors were obviously affected by how the city developed and they were complicit in the formation of Bristol’s identity as a maritime city. In the middle ages, Bristol had been the third most important city in the country after London and Norwich. It had been granted both city and county status in 1373 and traded extensively with Europe, the Atlantic seaboard and Ireland, chiefly in wine and cloth.\textsuperscript{24} The tidal range of the Severn meant that the River Avon did not silt up as much as rivers in other medieval ports which helped to give rise to Bristol’s golden age in the mid-eighteenth century through domination of the slave, tobacco and sugar trades. The fact that Bristol was connected to London and the midlands by rivers and canals helped to establish this dominance.\textsuperscript{25}

The eighteenth-century civic, commercial, manufacturing and residential development of the city were not maintained and by the 1840s Bristol’s position had been usurped by northern industrial cities, which unlike Bristol, were dominated by specific manufacturing industries.\textsuperscript{26} It could not compete with Birmingham’s brass and glass manufacturing, for example, or with coal mining in the north and Wales, or with sugar in Liverpool and Glasgow.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, the decline in the West Indian Market and the depletion of coal and iron ores in the surrounding Somerset mines restricted Bristol’s progress and competitive

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{26} Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of The Victorian Middle Class, Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 12.

\end{footnotesize}
capabilities. Geography was a factor too, the winding River Avon did not allow bigger vessels to come into the city; many a ship foundered on the banks, Image 2, but crucially it limited trade into what is Britain’s most inland port.

Image 2: The River Avon, 1886.
Source: www.bristolfloatingharbour.org.

Improvements and innovations were made. The tidal range of the Severn meant that ships were literally left hanging off the quay walls, so between 1804-1809 the Bristol Dock Company invested in the digging of a new cut of the Avon controlled by locks at either end (Image 3), which created a non-tidal ‘Floating Harbour’ in the centre.

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Map 1: The Floating Harbour above the New Cut, 1810.
Source: Bristol Central Library Collections.

Image 3: Cumberland Basin at the confluence of the Floating Harbour and New Cut, 1920.
Source: Bristol Harbour side, Paul Townend Collection.
www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/albums.

However, subsequent development of the docks was not forthcoming by the Bristol Dock Company or the Society of Merchant Venturers which owned some of the quays.\textsuperscript{30} The Company did not take the advantages described in a contemporary pamphlet of being 36, 85 and 350 miles nearer to America than Liverpool, Southampton and London respectively.\textsuperscript{31} Nor did it take advantage of coal from Port Said being in London a day earlier by rail via Bristol than these ports. The Great Western, Midland, London South Western and London North Eastern Railways converged at the Joint Terminus in Bristol and then had


\textsuperscript{31} J. P. Booth, \textit{Bristol Asleep, Bristol Harbour, Docks and Railway}, Bristol, 1869, p. 4.
onward connections to the docks at Avonmouth. The port was increasingly mismanaged, for example by imposing high port charges that resulted in losing trade to Liverpool, a port that did invest heavily in improvements. The disadvantages were long lasting. By the end of the nineteenth-century Bristol was not in the list of leading ports of Britain which were London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Newcastle and Hull in foreign trade and London, Liverpool, Greenock, Newcastle and Glasgow for the coastal trade. As a specific example of a lost opportunity by the Company, it was proposed that because of the deep water of the Bristol Channel, Bristol being the nearest port to America, having abundant coal supplies and having rail connections to inland areas, should be developed into the country’s main emigration point, but nothing was done to promote this. So hated was the Company and its complacent members that when the docks were finally taken over by the Council in 1848, there was prolonged ringing of bells and a public holiday.

But entrenched interests of an elite clique continued so that a correspondent to the *Daily Press*, wrote in 1863,

‘The old city displays a combination of infirmities which must call forth the sympathies of other ports ... any unprejudiced observer of Bristol during the last 20 or 30 years must have been struck with the fact that from one cause and another, almost every scheme offered for the advancement of the port has been crushed’.

Likewise, a brave lecturer at the Bristol Athenaeum in December 1856, berated the presumably elite audience, saying that,

‘Now there is the habit of self-gratulation but we are behind in everything ... I am not even sure if crinoline has yet gained its full swing amongst us. In your churches, your chapels, in your evening parties, in the concert hall, in the ballroom, the same dull, stuck up, complacent, lethargic old fogeydom prevails’.

It was not until the late 1860s when the Floating Harbour was improved and rail lines put in, and then the opening of docks at Avonmouth in 1877 and Portishead in 1879, that Bristol docks could really be a competitive force. This was enhanced further in 1884 when the Port of Bristol Authority was founded to take over the running of all three docks and then again in 1887 when proper sea docks were built at Avonmouth and then the Royal Edward Dock.

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34 Helen Doe, ‘Five Investor Ports’, unpublished chapter in her forthcoming book on maritime communities. Dr. Doe was kind enough to send me a copy of her yet unpublished book.
37 *Daily Press*, 18th December, 1863.
38 Henry Burnett, *A Lecture Entitled Bristol Past and Present*, 18th December, 1856.
Before these improvements, the poor performance of the port affected Bristol’s economy, although perceptions of its relative industrial performance are disputed. There were larger scale industries which were impervious to cyclical determinants to a greater extent, such as chemicals, printing, chocolate, (in which Bristol was the world leader) tobacco and cotton, the latter housed in magnificent Byzantine buildings. The most established industry, however, and one that was crucial to Bristol’s identity as well as its prosperity, was shipbuilding. Bristol’s traditional shipbuilding was greatly advantaged by being near the Forest of Dean and Grahame Farr details the types of ship built in the city and the implied levels and variety of skills needed for this. As will later be discussed, the opportunities for work in an industry that constructed warships, privateers, East Indiamen, West Indiamen, whalers, traders, mission ships, yachts, trows, river barges, schooners, ketches, luggers, barques, brigs, yaws, corvettes, smacks, cutters, packet boats, colliers, tugs, river steamers, Atlantic steamers, Pacific steamers, paddle steamers, dredgers, light ships, frigates and tankers were very many.

On the other hand, even more prosperity from ship building and indeed trade was limited by the nature of the River Avon which meant that no ship over 332 feet long could come into Bristol, nor obviously could get out. Bristol was also disadvantaged by iron and steel being cheaper in the north, which further curtailed the opportunity to develop steam-shipping construction. Consequently, the majority of people were employed away from ships and related industries in a manufacturing base that was mainly on a small scale, such as of food, drink, shoes, boots, soap, glass, metal ware, ceramics and clay pipes. Furthermore, this production largely catered for the domestic market, which made Bristol predominantly an import centre. Production was still based on the workshop and not factory and therefore economic growth remained limited. The city’s commercial and mercantile elites were seen as complacent and negligent in building on the city’s strength and reputation with one contemporary stating that,

‘It seems incredible that the posterity of the resolute generations to whom this fine city owes its existence, should suffer its commerce to languish in the most progressive age the world has ever seen, merely because a small community of old fashioned brains declare they are satisfied with what they have’.

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41 Grahame Farr, *Shipbuilding in the Port of Bristol*, Basildon, National History Museum, 1977, p. iii. Its most famous ship, the SS Great Britain, was the first iron hulled ship to have screw propellers and at 322 feet long was the longest passenger ship in the world between 1845 and 1854.
43 Charles Harvey and Jon Press, eds., *Studies in the Business History of Bristol*, p. 2. In 1900, Bristol was only 10th in the league table of economic growth of British cities.
Nothing much had changed since the crinoline missing gentleman’s criticism 30 years before, and another contemporary account lamented the fact that the city wasted the market opportunities given by 9,500,000 people living within ten miles of Bristol. On the other hand, such a range of manufacturing showed a great deal of entrepreneurial vitality and whilst many small businesses foundered, many survived. In 1987, there were still 130 firms in Bristol that were over a hundred years old. These businesses, as well as the extensive amount of opportunities in dock work and in service, provided steady work for the rapidly rising population to the east and south of the city, particularly in Bedminster, Easton and Eastville, which was also facilitated by boundary changes in 1835, 1895, 1897 and 1904. It was suggested in the press that because of the diverse and established nature of Bristol’s industry, Bristol’s working population was not as affected by the boom and bust experienced by some cities based on a particular industry, Coventry and its cycle industry for example. This is debatable and judging by the living conditions of Bristol’s poorer people, it is fairly obvious that people of the lower orders were not sharing in the wealth that economic cyclical development brought to wealthier people. Residentially, the affluent areas to the north west of the city in Clifton and Redland had been established by the 1770s, which catered for a middle class that was larger than in other cities and which wielded unprecedented social influence.

This is evidenced in the amount of cultural institutions and philanthropic endeavour in the city, the importance of which to Bristol’s sailors will become clear. But the middle class were also important in the provision of housing for working-class people and by the end of the nineteenth century a multitude of small private landowners, developers, builders and investors had built an eclectic range of working-class housing between the rivers Frome and Avon and in Bedminster. As will be shown, it was these areas that many sailors returned to after finishing a voyage, areas in which ‘manufacturing and industrial processing ... sat cheek by jowl with houses, shops, schools, churches and pubs in a non-descript, workaday environment of low-rise brick or stone buildings with red tiled roofs’. Unfortunately, the standard of such housing was poor. In the 1840s Bristol was the third least healthy town in Britain, with a higher than average mortality rate. The ubiquitous common lodging house still blighted the city; as late as 1893 a report noted six classes of poor people including 1000

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47 *Western Daily Press*, 17th June, 1897.
people a night passing through common lodging houses in St. Jude’s alone.\textsuperscript{53} Kellow Chesney notes that the inspector appointed under the \textit{Common Lodging House Act} of 1851, closed 60 houses in one go in Bristol.\textsuperscript{54} In 1907, a report entitled \textit{Bristol Hovels} noted that the working-class district of St. Philips had 66 people per acre, double what was thought to be healthy. The infant mortality rate in some parts of the city was higher than the average of 76 British cities, not surprising when one three roomed house could contain 12 children in it.\textsuperscript{55} When a single Board of Guardians was formed in March 1898, it had 10,000 paupers to deal with, which was above the national pauper to population ratio.\textsuperscript{56}

The city’s workers were confined to these unhealthy, compact streets in the locales of the Dings, St. Philips, St. Jude’s, Barton Hill and Hotwells. Conditions were so bad that it prompted the \textit{Bristol Mercury}, the main local newspaper that is extensively used as a source of evidence in this thesis, to set up an enquiry into the ‘Homes of the Bristol Poor’, published as articles on the plight of working people between November 1883 and May 1885.\textsuperscript{57} Whether this was responsible for subsequent improvements, or whether they would have come anyway as Britain began to come out of the Great Depression that had started at the beginning of the 1870s, is debatable. Improvements may also have been a consequence of demonstrations by working people, including the biggest one of 20,000 people on Brandon Hill in January 1880, a site that is important in this study as will be shown in later chapters.

How effective the improvements were is debatable and the most recent historiography has argued that compared with northern cities they were timid, limited, skewed and piecemeal, much as the development of the docks outlined above had been.\textsuperscript{58} However, a more sympathetic view is that by the 1870s the situation had improved and increasingly the Municipal Council, or as it continued to be known, the ‘Corporation’, took control of the docks, public health, street improvements, education, electricity, water, sewage and other

\textsuperscript{53} H. J. Wilkins, \textit{What Can Be Done to Promote the Better Housing of the Poor in Bristol? An Appeal to the Citizens and Women of Bristol}, 1893. The six classes were inhabitants of lodging houses, a shifting population renting furnished rooms for between one night and three months, ‘thriftless and drunken’ stationary inhabitants of furnished rooms, respectable and stationary inhabitants of furnished rooms, respectable and disrespectful stationary inhabitants of unfurnished rooms and occupiers of small cottages (artisans and those above the rank of a labourer). Madge Dresser also notes St. Jude’s being the worst area for dosshouses, Madge Dresser, ‘People’s Housing in Bristol, 1870–1939’, in Ian Bild, ed., \textit{Bristol’s Other History}, Bristol, Bristol Broadsides, 1983, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{55} A. Cooke, \textit{Bristol Hovels: The Report of the Bristol Housing Committee}, October, 1907, pp. 6-11.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Daily Press}, March, 1898. In 1901, 30\% of Bristol’s population lived below the poverty line, Helen Reid, \textit{Life in Victorian Bristol}, Bristol, Bristol Broadsides, 1983, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{57} This section of the Introduction on matters pertaining to the working class draws heavily on Mike Richardson, ‘Bristol and the Labour Unrest of 1910-1914’, in Dave Backwith, Roger Ball, Stephen E. Hunt and Mike Richardson, eds., \textit{Strikers, Hobblers, Conchies and Reds, A Radical History of Bristol, 1880-1939}, London, Breviary Stuff Publications, 2014. This is very much a Marxist interpretation of the relationship between capital and labour.
\textsuperscript{58} Helen Mellor, \textit{Leisure and the Changing City} and Peter Malpass, \textit{The Making of Victorian Bristol}, pp. 229-230.
utility supplies. Private investment was encouraged and more municipal resources were given to parks, libraries, museums and swimming pools. Travel guidebooks for the city, although obviously biased and full of ‘Merrily we trot down High Street’ type phrases, give a positive impression of the modernisation of the city.

These improvements were for the benefit of all people, including Bristol’s sailors, and throughout this thesis, sailors lives are contextualised wherever possible in the lives of other workers. Whether social control of the working class was needed in Bristol as much as elsewhere is contested, although the riots of 1831 in which hundreds of lives were lost and major buildings destroyed, including on Queen’s Square, were etched in popular memory.

The rise in the population within the 1835 boundaries from 137,328 in 1851 to 357,173 in 1911, whilst not substantial compared to other cities, due partly to relative modest inward migration (unlike in other port cities, especially Liverpool), needed managing, not ignoring. In 1867 Bristol had the largest number of working-class voters in its parliamentary electorate of any city outside London and Manchester. However, this was still only 12.1% of Bristol’s population in 1867 and the lack of enfranchisement and poor living conditions stirred if not a class-consciousness, a commonality between people who realised that their lives were not benefitting to the same extent of others in the city. Bristol’s elites were aware of the potential rebelliousness of turbulent working people as they were elsewhere. The municipal improvements and the efforts of charitable, philanthropic, religious and rational recreation providers, then, may well have had an element of the civilising offensive to them.

Bristol’s prosperity was built on profits from the slave trade and wealthy families, such as Wills and Fry’s, set up manufacturing industries around the products of the plantations, especially tobacco, cocoa, sugar and molasses (for chocolate production) and cotton. Obviously these industries provided jobs for working-class people who like in other areas of the country migrated in to the city from the countryside to take up work opportunities. But wages were low and housing squalid and profits benefitted the burgeoning middle classes rather than working people. This gave rise to latent feelings of injustice and frustration at the slow pace of reforms, which was manifested in various stages of industrial protest from

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59 Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City, p. 27. The Council sold land at Temple Meads to the Great Western Railway Company and private involvement in the form of the Bristol Tramways Company from 1874 gradually superseded municipal lines, Peter Malpass, The Making of Victorian Bristol, pp. 159 and 225.
60 Guide to Bristol and Clifton, 1906, p. 110.
61 Steve Poole and N. Rogers, Bristol from Below: Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2017, p. 325.
62 Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City, pp. 31-33. For a contrasting picture to Bristol, see Robert Lee’s discussion on migration into Liverpool, Robert Lee, ‘Configuring the City’.
the early 1880s onwards, a period that coincided with the consolidation of workers’ representation in the form of new unions.

Despite this, it will be shown that Bristol did not have the same sense of class-conflict that other cities had. As Matthew Kidd says, and as the following discussion on sailors’ protest also shows, workers largely rejected the conflictual politics of class until around 1910.65 Up to then, the development of the city in a space confined (and defined) by water, civic and commercial structures encouraged the mixing of people from all classes and occupations. As a collective they lamented the lost opportunities of the previous hundred years but they were also proud to be Bristolians.66

**Structure of the Thesis and Key Arguments Proposed in each Chapter**

The overarching aim of this thesis is to advance historians’ understanding of Bristol’s sailors’ relationships with working-class cultural norms in Bristol between 1850 and 1914. Each of the following chapters gives the detailed aims and objectives at their start that contribute to the fulfilment of this aim. The aim of the first chapter is to give an historiographical account of the stereotypical perception of the sailor and of specific working-class cultural characteristics that sailors related to, with the second one developing arguments to advance our understanding of these working-class societal and familial contexts. The third chapter aims to show how maritime and religious organisations facilitated relationships between sailors and other working-class (and to an extent middle class) residents of Bristol, as does the fourth which aims to reveal Bristol middle-class elites’ relationships with sailors as a constituent part of Bristol’s working-class labour force. The fifth and sixth chapters aim to balance the relatively positive ways sailors were situated in working-class normality with how criminal tendencies aligned them with more negative aspects of working-class culture.

It is useful to give a little more detail of the key arguments here. Chapter One gives an historiographical survey of aspects of working-class culture that have a bearing on the arguments proposed. It will argue that although there has been inadequate research into sailors and their familial and societal contexts, there are some important contributions to our understanding of how sailors integrated with others on shore. It will discuss the stereotypical imagery of sailors and how their perceived status of ne’er do wells was perpetuated in newspapers and literature. It will also situate their ‘playground’, sailortown, in the context of urban geographical studies as well as historical. The chapter will also consider notions of class and will argue that there is no such thing as an homogenous working-class identity that sailors could fit in to. It will also introduce aspects of cultural contexts that sailors will subsequently be discussed in, in particular their family life, employment, leisure and criminality.

Chapter Two forms the longest and most important chapter in situating sailors in urban, familial, societal and cultural contexts and not just maritime contexts. It will address the question of the extent of Bristol’s sailors’ cultural separateness and in so doing it establishes the overall argument that Bristol’s sailors were not a distinct maritime breed apart but through their streetwise existence were subsumed into, and typified, working-class cultural norms. This is not to say that they were indistinct in every respect but rather that a more nuanced impression of sailors as having much in common with other workers and more respectable workers is possible. This was partially afforded by where sailors resided in between voyages and this chapter addresses the question of where sailors lived to argue that the majority of sailors, contrary to most prevailing historiography, chose not to live with other sailors nor in sailortown institutions and were instead physically dispersed among non-sailors in non-maritime areas. Chapter Two also addresses the question of the role of the environment and space in modifying sailors’ behaviours and it argues that although they had agency in integrating with working-class people, Bristol’s sailors were also forced to because of the physical, topographical and geographical development of Bristol. It will be argued that identity is constructed through relationships with space, as are behaviours, and the compact area of shared civic, industrial, commercial, mercantile and residential space (Image 4), helped to facilitate a common identity with other working-class people.

The traditional businesses of sailortown were shared with non-sailors and it will also be argued that eschewing them was deliberate. This chapter will question the extent to which sailors in Bristol exercised agency in conducting themselves in more respectable ways than the behaviours of sailors has hitherto been perceived. It will be shown that many Bristol’s sailors as artisanal workers embraced the ‘respectable masculinity’ inherent in being a member of the ‘central working class’, that is, being employed, providing for the family, being responsible and being self-controlled.67 This was important to many sailors, a choice to be made which to a large extent was influenced by the age and marital status of sailors. In particular, being employed was crucial to a sense of self-worth. It will also be shown that outside of work in sailors’ traditional leisure pursuits of drinking and using prostitutes, but also others not normally associated with sailors such as personal self-improvement, sailors were aspiring to the cultural standards of a ‘higher class’ of working man.

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Chapter Three addresses the question of how important the role of maritime and religious organisations in facilitating sailors’ integration were. It argues that sailors’ integration into working-class urban culture was further facilitated by the efforts of institutions such as the Bristol Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute and St. Raphael’s Church but not by the main mariner institution, the Bristol Sailors’ Home. The Home did not have the support that it needed, nor was it run well enough to provide the service that sailors required. It was a rather aloof institution and in some respects unwelcoming. Therefore, sailors went elsewhere for their accommodation but also their entertainment, which was much better provided by the Seamen’s Mission and Institute. Through the provision of rational recreational pursuits participated in by sailors alongside other workers, a great deal of cultural commonality with other workers was afforded. Some institutions more than others had an empathy with sailors and clearly regarded them as integral part of the city’s lower classes and not as a particular occupational group that needed attention. Their perceived needs, moral, spiritual or physical, were perceived in the context of being ordinary workers, not necessarily sailors. Institutional provision by Bristol’s middle-class elites therefore further situated sailors in working-class culture, especially more respectable working-class culture, as did the work of certain churches, especially St. Raphael’s in Bedminster.

Chapter Four highlights further incongruence in the perceived identity politics of sailors through posing the question of how they formed and held relationships with other city residents and the extent to which those relationships were positive and reciprocal. It develops the argument that many sailors fostered positive and crucially reciprocal mutually supportive relationships with other workers in the city but also with the middle-class elites. The confrontational attitudes attributed to a common sailor identity are not as evident among Bristol’s sailors as elsewhere. Many sailors strived to be respectable, to be a higher
class of working man, behave well and hold down a job and in this way they facilitated the establishment of relatively mature, mutually cordial relationships with civic elites.

This also diluted the stereotypical negative perception of sailors; they were a valued and accepted presence in the city, at times tolerated rather than scorned, especially the more skilled ones who were disposed to integrate better. Sailors formed a sizeable proportion of the city’s workforce and were valued by the city’s elites to the extent that there was at times a degree of mutual respect between capital and labour. This is not to say that there was not occupational friction but it will be shown that protest and collective action of sailors against their employers were relatively good-natured. Skilled, resident, more disciplined and mature sailors, perhaps with a degree of learning, may well have had better relationships with their employers than did sailors displaying the characteristics of casual, itinerant, unskilled transient labour. Nevertheless, respect was reciprocated by sailors in their willingness to work for the same employers especially those who perpetuated established, localised, community based paternalistic relationships with their employees. This paternal attitude and care was also shown to sailors who for whatever reason could be classed as the ‘deserving poor’. In common with many industrialising cities, Bristol was known for its philanthropy and sailors were an integral part of a wider working class that at times received relief and assistance from charitable institutions including the Society of Merchant Venturers.

The first four chapters largely construct a more favourable and positive perception of the sailor and go some way to challenge the stereotypical negative perception of the sailor. The last two chapters build on this to question how far and in what ways their deviant behaviours also situate them in working-class culture and, in consequence, how this represents sailors as hardly being a higher class of working man. Chapter Five addresses the question of how and to what extent their petty criminal activities, especially convictions for being drunk and disorderly and for thieving, were exemplifying working-class cultural norms rather than typifying stereotypical sailor negative behaviours. Drinking was a way to cope with the stresses of life and is seen not as stereotypical behaviour of a drunken sailor but as means of escape taken by all people regardless of occupation. The key argument however is that the crimes committed by sailors were in the main crimes that were committed for the purpose of alleviating hardship and poverty. Sailors, as did other


workers, fell on hard times; many fell short of respectable masculinity and like others made recourse to thieving often in collaboration with others.\textsuperscript{70}

Chapter Six takes sailor deviant behaviour further away from stereotypical maritime contexts to situate sailors’ indictable crimes of assault, knife crime and murder in the context of working-class culture. It addresses the question of how sailors used violence, their motivation for using violence and the extent they did so compared with other workers. It will be argued that methods of violence used were not peculiar to seafarers and were ones that other working-class men used. However, it is impossible to say for sure that all sailors’ violence was in common with other working-class men and the potential for distinction is noted. Largely following the paradigms in the work of Tomas Nilson, it will be shown that to some extent, violence was ritualistic and performative in that violence was used to portray outwardly a common working-class trait of masculine prowess.\textsuperscript{71} Violence against the police was a common working-class behaviour and sailors were not doing anything different to other workers when they were fighting with police constables. However, it is also argued that sailors’ violence was mainly ‘individualistically retributional’, often trivial in causation and commonly drink fuelled. It is noted that sailors’ and others’ violence was very likely to have more than one motive and that violence could be personal and performative at the same time. Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that assault and violence were often more to do with addressing perceived personal grievances than about displaying either machismo or a common sailor identity.\textsuperscript{72} This was also the case when using knives is considered. Stereotypically this was the preserve of foreigners, a trait to be deplored, but it will be argued that using knives was just as ritualistic to foreign sailors as pugilistic fighting was to British ones. Contrary to the view that British sailors would not stoop so low to use knives, it will be argued that British sailors as well as other British working-class males, were just as likely to use knives in order to kill and maim. Through the medium of stabbing and other violence, it will be shown that there is little to support notions of a common seafaring identity or of crew based fraternities of sailors. If there was any singularity of identity, it was not because sailors were sailors per se but because they were of the same ethnicity.


\textsuperscript{72} It is also worth noting that 90% of crime was against property not people by the end of the nineteenth century, Paul Thompson, \textit{Edwardians}, p. 217, although he does note the unreliability of statistics to go on.
A Note on Sources and Methods

The problems of finding out about sailors on land have been recognised and this is certainly the case in Bristol. Marcus Rediker says that ‘many aspects of the seamen’s life conspire against the modern historian; his mobility, his poverty, his high mortality, his tendency not to leave marks on the written record’. Matthew Rafferty emphasises that it was only the maritime elite who had the means and the education to leave behind accounts of what they did on land. Daniel Vickers encapsulates the problem, ‘One can be almost certain that the majority of working seamen were too peripatetic to leave any such trace and have therefore escaped the net of research strategies designed for relatively sedentary populations on land ... until ways are found to trace all ranks of merchant seamen to their homes, the discrete adventures we happen upon in court records, newspapers, journals and the like will not be fully understood’.

These views could not be more apt to Bristol’s situation as no autobiography or memoires of ordinary Bristol sailors exist. Only one letter of a sailor has been found and only three first-hand accounts, journals or diaries exist that were written by sailors from Bristol but these were not by ordinary sailors. This problem has also been a challenge and therefore this study has adopted a mixed methods approach and has made use of close textual reading of a range of socio-cultural qualitative and quantitative sources whilst recognising that the majority of them are products of dominant classes. What follows is mainly from the point of view of society’s elites and their perceptions are given through the prism of a ‘landlubber’s gaze, rather than the seafarer’s gaze and herein lies the major difficulty in writing this thesis.

Irrespective of the bourgeois nature of the written sources used for this thesis, it has been necessary to read against the grain and in the context of textual theory, to exercise a degree of empathy to tease out latent meanings of the texts used. In consequence, it is a good example of what Arthur Marwick would define as a mixture of the explanatory mode and the recreative mode, which needs the ability to ‘extract the unwitting testimony’ from sources. It is a shame that the dearth of sailors’ testimony has limited the extent that textual analysis can be applied to the words of ordinary sailors themselves and to the inherent meanings in the language and symbolism therein. There is therefore less of a postmodernist approach to sources taken, not because of any objection per se to the

74 Matthew Rafferty, ‘Recent Currents’, p. 610.
76 For these terms see Gordon M. Winder, ‘Seafarer’s gaze: Queen Street Business and Auckland’s Archipelago, 1908’, New Zealand Geographer, 2006, pp. 50-51.
centrality of representation in constructing meaning through texts, but because those texts almost always emanate from non-sailors, non-working-class sailors and from middle-class elites.\textsuperscript{80}

To take qualitative sources first, extensive use has been made of newspapers mainly to ascertain the criminal activity of sailors. The \textit{Bristol Mercury}, available through the on-line \textit{Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspaper Collection} and at Bristol Central Library has been invaluable because of its searchable database.\textsuperscript{81} There are issues of reliability in using such databases and indeed in any digitalised source. For example, it is easy to locate key words but in doing so there is a danger in neglecting the context. Scanning techniques do not always reproduce the original accurately and very often a part of an article or a column was missing.

Nevertheless, having a search facility saved many hours of going through newspapers physically, although the author did have to do this for other titles with very little return. For the chapters on crime various combinations of search terms were used in relation to sailors and their criminal activity within monthly sampling. Sampling was deemed necessary to make the volume of search finds manageable. Potential problems of using the actual content of newspapers are noted in the context of sailor criminality later but the subjectivity of the journalist in choosing what to include in Police Court trials is a good example of drawbacks to newspapers.\textsuperscript{82} Newspapers were also used quantitatively for the purpose of gleaning comparative statistics on types, numbers and perpetrators of crime. These were supplemented by other quantitative sources in order to gain an understanding of relative commonality of sailors’ criminal behaviours compared with others. Inaccuracies of police criminal statistics are discussed later but notwithstanding the problem of inherent dark figures in judicial statistics, changing definitions of crime and the changing nature of courts, the annual reports of the Police Constable gave useful statistical information, as did the records of Horfield Prison.\textsuperscript{83}

For criminality and other topics, there are other potential inaccuracies, biases and subjectivities inherent in newspapers to be aware of. For example, this thesis has used newspaper reports of various organisations’ meetings and has also used letters of correspondence to the editor from the public. These again typify the bourgeoisie perspective of the writing and are likely to be biased towards a particular view or agenda. On the other hand, newspapers have been, as Arthur Marwick suggests they can be, ‘a rich source for attitudes, assumptions, mentalities and values’ and as they were meant for public consumption he also says that there would at least be an attempt at accuracy.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{80} See John Tosh’s discussion of the cultural turn and postmodernist approaches to sources, John Tosh, \textit{The Pursuit of History}, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{81} The \textit{Bristol Mercury} was first published in 1716. It combined with the \textit{Daily Post} to become the \textit{Bristol Mercury and Daily Post} from 1878 to 1901 and then it became the \textit{Bristol Daily Mercury}. It finally closed in 1909.
\textsuperscript{82} John Tosh, \textit{The Pursuit of History}, pp. 116-117.
\textsuperscript{84} Arthur Marwick, \textit{The New Nature of History}, pp. 165 and 168.
might be assumed that other sources would also tend towards reliability, given public access to them. This thesis has made use of a wide range of contemporary manuscripts and other forms of printed material including authored books and the records and reports of other public and charitable bodies such as the Bristol Asylum, Bristol’s hospitals, Bristol Sailors’ Home, the Bristol Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute, the Chamber of Commerce and the Society of Merchant Venturers. A potential problem with these however, is that they are apt to give glowing accounts of the philanthropic endeavours of the city’s middle classes connected with them but the experienced realities may have been different. However, even if all of these will have been written with set purposes in mind and within specific points of view, they were still useful for gleaning hard evidence.\(^85\) A case in point is the most useful source of this type, the *Report of the Committee into the Bristol Poor of 1884*. It contained a wealth of information that is used throughout this thesis but it is not difficult to sense the motivation behind the enquiry.

Others were useful in that they supplemented the understanding of the development of Bristol and its maritime significance. However, contextualised biographical details of sailors and information on how ordinary sailors negotiated their lives within the culture of the city are almost non-existent. Countless guides on Bristol were read, for example, all of which mentioned the Cabots and the importance of shipping and trade, but contained nothing biographical or statistical about sailors themselves.

Accessing these materials involved weeks spent in the Bristol Records Office (renamed Bristol Archives during the course of writing this thesis), Bristol Public Library, the British Libraries in Kings Cross and in Boston Spa and archives in Hull and London. An inordinate time was spent in Bristol Library scrutinising census records on microfiche. Although on-line access to the census was used this did not allow a search of individual streets, whereas Bristol Library’s paper catalogue of the census did. Locating sailors was naturally very time consuming, as was counting workers of other trades for comparative purposes.\(^86\) Therefore, it was decided to sample the data from various census years but also to focus on 1881 in detail as a mid-period decade. The effort was worth it and the analysis gleaned statistical information that was imperative to the discussion of residency, age of sailors and familial circumstances. As an example, census records enabled the identification of concentrations of different ratings of sailors which could then be plotted on a map.\(^87\)

The potential inaccuracies of census enumerator returns are noted. The reliability of the enumerators recording, the candidness of respondents, ages being unknown or rounded up, misspellings and repeated data are problematic factors as is defining the terminology


relating to occupations and relative status within co-residing groups.\textsuperscript{88} These are clarified in the tables and texts used later in this thesis.

Other than census records, some sources were used for both quantitative and qualitative information. Trade directory listings of lodging houses, city institutions, organisations and businesses gave both types of evidence. Again, their accuracy and comprehensiveness cannot be assumed, although Arthur Marwick makes the point that if they were inaccurate they would have been little value to potential customers using them to find information, accommodation or where certain suppliers and shops were.\textsuperscript{89} City maps were also used to locate sailors’ residency, theirs (and others’) criminal and leisure activities and the location of the streets that contained the businesses of sailortown. Mapping is used for various purposes in this thesis and this proved to be a laborious process. For example, when plotting residential patterns a map as close to 1881 that showed street names had to be located and other maps were needed for other purposes. Streets that were still in existence were the easiest to find by using modern street maps and then locating the streets on the original maps. However, many of the streets no longer exist so finding where certain streets originally were meant close searching of many different versions of maps with a magnifying glass. Trade directories were also gone through because some of them contained street names and most usefully often related small streets to major thoroughfares. The routes taken by enumerators on the census schedules also gave some idea of general locations.

Quantitative and qualitative use has also been made of government reports and proceedings of Parliament accessed through the \textit{House of Commons Sessional Papers Online}, although references to Bristol are surprisingly far less copious than of other bigger ports, especially naval ones. The search facility of these are by no means straightforward to use and it must be borne in mind that the very fact they were intended to be published means that they contain only what was considered fit for public consumption and material that was likely to please its readers.\textsuperscript{90} Another problem was that without specific report numbers it was difficult to locate particular reports and so this necessitated searching the whole of the available command papers by combinations of key words. Nevertheless, pertinent ones have been closely read to glean statistics on the number and ethnicity of sailors in employment, judicial statistics, the number of licenced premises, the number of known brothels and the number of sailors using sailors’ homes. They have also revealed qualitative data through the testimony of witnesses to the various committees, although again it is recognised that there are potential inaccuracies, biases and untruths in such evidence. They have been invaluable for this thesis despite the potential to be ‘full of waffle and hypocrisy’.\textsuperscript{91} Finally, all of the above were contextualised in a wide range of secondary sources, books and journal articles. These were sourced mainly through the services of Portsmouth University Library, Bristol City Library, Bristol Archives and the British Library.


\textsuperscript{90} John Tosh, \textit{The Pursuit of History}, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{91} Arthur Marwick, \textit{The New Nature of History}, p. 165.
A Note on Theory

Throughout this thesis and especially in the historiographical discussion in the next chapter, references to relevant theoretical concepts are made. However, it is useful to give a brief understanding of the nature of the debate around theory and of where in historical enquiry this thesis lies. Whether the study of history can be theorised in the true sense of the word is in itself debatable because the past does not conform to positivist regularities that can give rise to a set of laws as in the natural sciences. The nature of persons and their decisions and actions are non-generalizable. Instead, so Christopher Lloyd argues, historical enquiry is largely based on heuristic general ideas and concepts. But if one assumes that history can be theorised then the need for adopting a theoretical framework is also debatable. Arthur Marwick doubts the necessity of theory as long as historians are ‘reflexive and articulate about their assumptions’. Christopher Lloyd on the other hand argues that we cannot establish the ontology of the past outside an epistemological theory of knowledge.

John Tosh persuasively argues for the necessity of categorising the past thematically and his work is useful in outlining theoretical approaches to the study of the past that allows us to consider the agency of individuals, that is the exercising of free will, as well as determinist structures. He outlines the many different subject disciplines that the past can be studied through. This is useful because this thesis’ multi-faceted content places it into the broad sphere of other disciplines and is in fact to a large extent interdisciplinary. By investigating sailors’ relationships with money, hierarchies, space, crime and social behaviour the social sciences of economics, sociology, geography and anthropology become relevant. These are distinct subjects but they also form the basis of different genres of historical enquiry and contain theoretical approaches relevant to this thesis.

In addition, because of the wide range of aspects of identity discussed in this thesis it can be situated more broadly within both social theory and cultural theory. It is clearly a work of social history because it considers society’s response to social problems via philanthropic endeavour and state provision and it situates sailors in social structures. To be narrower, it fits within the ‘new’ social history popularised by the ‘history from below’ movement of the 1960s and the History Workshop movement of the 1970s. It does so because it considers the lives of ordinary people and attributes agency to them. These ordinary people are often marginalised people who do not normally feature in historical records and sailors fit this description. This thesis is also a work of social theory because it is situated within explanations of society as a whole. It can be situated within a Marxist analysis of the past.

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because it considers in different parts the relationships between labour and capital, the forces of production and the instruments of production.\textsuperscript{98}

This thesis also lies within cultural theory and the cultural turn, also popular since the 1970s, as it is essentially an enquiry into the cultural shared meanings, ingrained beliefs, rituals, practices and attitudes of a sub-section of the working class.\textsuperscript{99} How this thesis is situated in textual analysis has been discussed above and because it considers sailors’ ritualised behaviour such as performative violence this thesis can be considered as a discussion within the remit of cultural anthropology.\textsuperscript{100} In essence, this thesis benefits from being both a work of social and cultural theory. As Andrew August says the realities of shared experience of poverty, working conditions, class, craft, religion, locality, political organisation and leisure, as examples of tenets of social history, are complimented by a focus on narratives, language and culture of cultural history. Both social and cultural theoretical frameworks allow us to investigate sailors’ ambiguous identities that are multiple, contingent and constructed\textsuperscript{101} and according to the anthropological theories of Frederick Barth the perpetual subject and object of negotiation.\textsuperscript{102}

Finally, by considering Bristol as a particular location this thesis is naturally a work of local history, even if the once assumed reason for such a focus that the writer lives in situ does not apply in this case. John Tosh argues that local studies are now seen as microcosmic social history and whilst it cannot offer an in-depth study of all to do with Bristol, this thesis situates Bristol’s sailors in the wider structures of the city and in national contexts.\textsuperscript{103}

\section*{A Note on Terminology}

A difficulty is what to call men who form the basis for this study, with the opportunity to pick from sailor, seafarer, seaman, Jack Tar, merchant seamen, naval sailor and other variants. Many authors spend considerable time deliberating on what should be the correct term and indeed the differences between naval and merchant sailors, whether sailors worked below or above deck, whether official terminology or colloquial and whether ships were powered by sail or steam, all have a bearing.\textsuperscript{104} This study does not seek to give a definitive answer as to what terminology should be used but in common nineteenth-century usage, commentators used the term sailor to refer to all men who worked in merchant ships in our period.\textsuperscript{105} There seems little reason to disagree and so in the main

\textsuperscript{98} John Tosh, \textit{The Pursuit of History}, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{100} John Tosh, \textit{The Pursuit of History}, pp. 221-224.
\textsuperscript{101} Andrew August, \textit{The British Working Class}, pp. 1-4.
\textsuperscript{104} Louise Moon in \textit{Sailorhoods}, provides a fine attempt at defining a sailor, \textit{Sailorhoods}, pp. 14-17.
the word sailor is used. Where the words seamen or seafarer are used this is not to signify any difference to ‘sailor’ but merely for variety in the text.
Chapter One: Historiographical Survey

Image 5: Ships, rail and city meet.
Source: Port of Bristol Handbook, 1886, p. 68.

Introduction

This study is not an investigation of Bristol sailors’ life at sea, nor is it another discussion of sailors’ seafaring culture. Instead the sailor is beyond being, ‘an innocent exposed to temptation and exploitation … a degenerate brutalised misfit’, welded to maritime culture that was played out in a stereotypical sailortown environment. This Chapter provides an historiographical discussion on some of the themes that are pertinent to challenging the perception of the ‘breed apart’ sailor inherent in this description. They are many and space does not allow a comprehensive assessment of all themes covered in subsequent chapters. Therefore, this historiographical survey is selective and its purpose is to show how sailors have been portrayed in academic study in the context of aspects of working-class culture and to give some reference to the underpinning theories of those aspects. It is not a discussion of the full historiography of that culture but is a discussion of aspects pertaining to sailors relationships with the realities of urban existence.

Specifically it does this in four divided sections. Firstly, it will begin by discussing the literature on sailors’ perceived maritime identity constructed within traditional maritime enclaves. Secondly, because this study argues for a commonality of cultural identity within working-class contexts, notions of class and identity politics are discussed. What working class actually means and whether this can be seen as an homogenised entity for sailors to fit into is central to this. Thirdly, aspects of working-class culture, some being synonymous

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with societal and familial themes that Robert Lee says have been neglected, will be considered. Specifically, the historiography relating to notions of domesticity, respectability, employment and leisure will be considered. Related to these cultural aspects, and because it is an important facilitator of integration between sailors and other occupational groups, a discussion of the historiography of criminality and the role of the press in perpetuating middle-class fears of the working class will finally be given.

Identity: Sailors and Sailortown

Despite recent work, there is still much more that could be done to readdress regarding sailors through the prism of just maritime studies. Twelve years ago and reinforced later, Isaac Land proposed a new emphasis on the liminal space of the coast. However, studies with a maritime emphasis still dominate and research has continued, although not at all exclusively, to concentrate on sailors’ lives aboard ship and on the trading, business and imperial significance of ports, rather than the cultural life of sailors within them. Sailors’ perceived separateness is therefore still the norm and John Mack articulates the common view that,

‘Those who arrive from the sea ... are likewise liminal characters. They have become disconnected from the set of rules which sustained them in the world they have left behind; yet they are not of the world on whose fringes they have been washed up.’

This separateness has contributed to the perception of the sailor as being a breed apart and a law unto themselves. To an extent, this was tolerated because of the high esteem sailors were held in. Those living in port towns were all too aware of when a naval ship came into port but their crews were given license to exercise their behaviours on shore in recognition of their role in forging the nation’s hegemonic identity. The origins of the hagiography of the sailor are obscure but can at least be traced back to the beginning of the age of exploration. The sixteenth century chronicler Richard Hakluyt praised the character of the

Elizabethan sailor\textsuperscript{112} and later, a seventeenth century writer, John Holland, put the sailor next to God and King as worthy of gratitude and praise,’

‘As for honour, who knows not (that knows anything) that in all records of late times of actions chronicled to the everlasting fame and renown of this kingdom, still the naval part is the thread that runs through the whole woof, the burden of the song, the scope of the text?’\textsuperscript{113}

Sailors were held in particularly high esteem in times of war and the iconic heroic masculinity of the lauded victors over the French and defenders of empire was accepted on the streets of naval port towns. Linda Colley says anti French and anti-Catholic feeling lasted well into the twentieth century and therefore sailors’ popularity and even respect lasted just as long.\textsuperscript{114} Similarly, Mary Conley argues that in the face of increasing imperial ambitions of other European nations sailors represented all that was good about Britishness. This was manifested in a later era in the fashion for dressing young boys in navy suits.\textsuperscript{115} George Cruikshank’s picture glorifying early nineteenth century seamen captures the affection and high esteem sailors were held in after victory.\textsuperscript{116}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{112} Richard Hakluyt, \textit{The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation.} London, first published by George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1589. 
\textsuperscript{114} Linda Colley, \textit{Britons Forging the Nation}, p. 368. 
\textsuperscript{116} George Cruikshank, \textit{The Sailor’s Progress}, 1819, reproduced in Peter Kemp, \textit{The British Sailor}, insert between pp. 82 and 83.}
Seventeenth, Eighteenth and early nineteenth century sea shanties and popular imagery, further reinforced hagiographic perceptions of sailors, with the Dutch wars in particular producing a spate of songs celebrating the worth of sailors.\textsuperscript{117}

However, there is an alternative perception of the sailor and important to this thesis is the just as commonly held negative view of the sailor as a debauched drunkard and womaniser. After being holed up surrounded by water for weeks on end sailors were desperate to be let loose on shore, veracious for manly pleasures with money in their pockets to spend on it. Such a perception has again been engrained in the national psyche through less complimentary popular imagery such as a drawing by I. Ibbetson of sailors speeding towards the delights of sailortown, Image 7, and Thomas Rowlandson’s well used painting of Portsmouth Point reproduced on page 179 of this thesis.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{117} Peter Kemp, The British Sailor, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{118} I. Ibbetson, The Jolly Tars of Old England on a Land Cruise, 1802, reproduced in Peter Kemp, The British Sailor, insert between pp. 82 and 83.
This thesis seeks to give a more nuanced interpretation of sailors on shore than these images suggest and is in response to the negative perception that still pervades the historiography. I. Ibbetson, *The Jolly Tars of Old England on a Land Cruise*, 1802, insert between pp. 82 and 83.

Jesse Lemisch, despite his partial attempt to consider sailors’ shore life, reinforced the perception that sailors were ‘fugitives and floaters’, living in distinct ‘sailortown’ areas divorced from the wider urban area. Paul Glije further discusses sailors’ mainly negative behaviours on shore and the beginning of the title of articles by Valerie Burton, ‘Whoring, Drinking Sailors’ and ‘The Myth of Bachelor Jack’, encapsulate the stereotype. Other works, such as Martin Daunton’s study of sailors in Cardiff and Judith Fingard on Canadian sailors, also works of maritime culture, perpetuate the perception of the stereotypical behaviour of the sailor as a drinking, fighting womaniser in port. Marcus Rediker who is discussed in detail later, does the same and argues strongly for the inevitability of such behaviours given their harsh treatment on board.

Those behaviours were exhibited in sailortown and just as there is with the sailor there is a stereotypical view of what a sailortown is: a seething chaos of brothels and drinking dens, filthy alleyways, pest ridden lodging houses and an air of menace and violence. This view

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123 Marcus Rediker, ‘Common Seamen’.
exists in part because of the testimony of sailors themselves, such as Frank Bullen and in particular Stan Hugill’s gazetteer like Sailortown. Hugill says that all sailors really wanted to do was to, ‘drop his anchor ... under the lee of Bum Island’ and therein enter a world of, ‘sordid pleasure, unlimited vice and lashings of booze.’

Hugill’s book has done much to establish the stereotypical view of the sailor in his stereotypical sailortown playground. Hugill’s work has been criticised for not being as academically rigorous as it might be. Indeed, his front piece drawing (Map 2) is a map showing the different types of alcohol that could be found all around the world, which perhaps sets the tone of the book. This does Hugill a disservice because his work is based on testimonies of old sailors that would otherwise be lost to us. Its importance to this thesis is noted and its shortcomings forgiven, as they have by others. Roy Manning thought that whilst having a hint of salaciousness to it Sailortown should not be seen as a work of esoterica or even erotica and instead should be regarded as an important contribution to historical sociology and to qualitative research methods. Most pertinently is that one of the latest contributions to the historiography of sailor identity, Graeme Milne’s People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront, Sailortown, deliberately builds on Hugill’s work but applies a more rigorous academic analysis to sailor behaviours in sailortowns around the world. What emerges is a sailor who is entangled negatively with those he meets on port town streets, a gullible, miscreant nuisance far removed from the norms of civilised citizenship.

125 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. 4.
126 Graeme Milne, ‘Maritime City, Maritime Culture?’ p. 90.
However, Hugill, Milne and the others above were not addressing sailors' behaviour in the context of non-maritime urban culture. Fingard’s work especially neglects sailors’ relationships with other workers and in not discussing steam-shipping misses the transformation of seafaring labour from sailors in the literal sense to a more proletarianised labour force in our period. This historiography is largely contextualised in maritime history, which is understandable but a narrowness that this thesis seeks to address. Returning to Robert Lee, he shows frustration that historians have rarely looked at port cities in the context of being urban entities and he further advises that, ‘Maritime historians must engage more openly in a wider discourse with business, cultural and urban historians, with historical anthropologists and even with historical demographers’. Lee followed other historians lamenting the same, for example Matthew Rafferty, who argued that despite the 'new maritime history' of the 1960s with its emphasis on gender, labour, ideological, nationalist and racial identities of seamen, far too little attention has been given to how seafarers lived out the reality of their lives in port. Across the Atlantic Daniel Vickers argued that even eminent social historians in the field, such as Eric Sager on the nineteenth century, have not inquired seriously into sailors' origins, their families at home, or their later careers on shore.

The study of ports, the spatial geographies that sailors’ lives were lived in, has also been neglected and they are not regarded as truly urban spaces in the same way as industrial

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129 He locates 16 different types of alcoholic drinks to be had around the world!
130 Martin Daunton, ‘Jack Ashore’ and Judith Fingard, Jack in Port.
133 Daniel Vickers, 'Beyond Jack Tar', p. 418. Moreover, Vickers suggests this neglect is because of nostalgia,romanticism and an antiquarian interest in ships.
cities are.\textsuperscript{134} Even though Martin Bulmer includes seafaring communities alongside mining communities and textile towns as being true working-class areas with their 'own codes, myths, heroes and social standards', his study is unusual in this.\textsuperscript{135} Therefore, there has been insufficient research into sailors' social interactions at street level, unlike for other occupational groups in studies by David Cannadine, David Ward, H. Johnson and Colin Pooley among others.\textsuperscript{136} Thus, they miss situating the sailor into urban space which scholars of the post-modernist spatial turn, especially Simon Gunn and Robert Morris, see as fundamental in the formation of identity, as discussed later.\textsuperscript{137}

Further to this, Sarah Palmer argues that there is insufficient attention paid to the type of port being studied.\textsuperscript{138} Bristol is a riverine and inland port. This had an effect on the types of cargo that was transported, the size, type and propulsion of ships, their trading routes and also the demographic of the sailor and his propensity to consciously or subconsciously be subsumed into a wider working class.\textsuperscript{139} It is also a mercantile port and it has been argued that in mercantile ports the constant arrival and departure of ships meant that the conspicuous behaviour that set sailors apart was less likely than in a naval port where the arrival of a ship was an important event with visible and tangible effects.\textsuperscript{140} Because Bristol was a mercantile port it did not have a distinct identity created for them courtesy of any 'cult of the navy'.\textsuperscript{141} Other studies that also draw on an heroic past, such as the seminal works of Eric Hobsbawm, Terrance Ranger and Raphael Samuel, whilst useful for conceptualising notions of national identity do little to inform the reality of lives lived out in the mercantile port of nineteenth and early twentieth century Bristol.\textsuperscript{142}

Indeed, the origins of the stereotypical perceived negative identity of a sailor largely lie in studies of eighteenth-century naval history, American maritime history and those of sailing vessels and these therefore preclude any identity forming realities of steam shipping of later


\textsuperscript{135} Martin Bulmer, The Occupational Community of the Traditional Worker, London, 1973, p. 20.


\textsuperscript{138} Sarah Palmer, The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. III, p. 133. It is beyond the scope of this study but port regions, as opposed to port cities, are also underresearched. See Theo Notteboom, Cesar Ducruet and Peter de Langen, eds., Ports in Proximity, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p. 42.


\textsuperscript{140} Brad Beaven, 'The Resilience of Sailortown Culture', pp. 5 and 13.


nineteenth-century Bristol. However, identity formation is fluid and in any era sailors could live up to their stereotypical imagery and could display multiple identities that they adopted to suit their circumstances. This is vital to this study because it is contended that their identity was shaped more by localised individual circumstances, the opportunities given by the turn from sail to steam and the realities of Bristol’s urban, working-class cultures in urban space.

Andrew August argues for the crucial role locality and space play in this and Ian Baucom’s view of the fundamental importance of ‘the identity-endowing properties of place’ is at the heart of this study. There is not the room here to discuss in detail the theoretical underpinning of space and identity but an awareness of it is useful for context. Classicist social theorists are still relevant. For example, the relative compatibility and integration of sailors and others on Bristol’s streets can partly be explained by what Emile Durkheim describes as the ‘moral density’ that arises from the intimacy and non-segmented nature of cities. As is shown in this thesis, Bristol’s sailors negotiated their existence alongside everyone else in a compact city, some of it hemmed in by natural and man-made features. Its citizens, including transient migratory ones, were concentrated together which not only had the potential to modify behaviours but also characterised the nature of the city itself.

This is not to say that everyone on Bristol’s streets was of equal status and importance or that there was no friction. Spaces ‘exert power by establishing a hierarchy of opportunities and limitations’, just as Bristol did for its sailors, and as Henri Lefebvre has argued, constructed space allowed the continued hegemony of a dominant group over others. At its crudest, money was the basis for this and according to David Harvey the concentration, circulation and accumulation of capital, and the subsequent likelihood of struggles between classes in city spaces over it, was likely to exist in a mercantile and industrialising nineteenth century city such as Bristol. But sailors and others still exercised agency in how they related to space and capital and in Max Weber’s terms they were exercising ‘rationality of choice’ in living out their everyday streetwise experience or what Marx termed the praxis

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144 Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism*, pp. 131-158 and 166-167. Mathew Rafferty has difficulty in pinpointing the sailor and asks whether he was the first modern proletariat, an artisanal labourer, a pirate, a social rebel, a revolutionary, a political or an economic actor, Matthew Rafferty, ‘Recent Currents’, p. 609.


of reality.\textsuperscript{150} There were constraints to these behaviours however, imposed by the regulating efforts of city and national authorities (as discussed later in this thesis), or in theoretical terms, Marx’s superstructure.\textsuperscript{151} There was also self-regulation, what Michael Foucault describes as ‘self-monitoring and subsequent self-correction’ that informed the consciousness of Bristol’s sailors and this was likely to have had some impact on their predisposition towards compatibility with other working-class people in city space.\textsuperscript{152}

In regards to Bristol’s city and waterside space, Hugill advanced the view that the port was not a true sailortown, an opinion later reinforced by Steve Poole and Graeme Milne.\textsuperscript{153} In the eighteenth century Hugill says the streets around the water were dangerous and ‘that rarely would a tipsy sailorman make his ship in safety, usually finishing up in the river, or awakening the next morning with a buzzing head and an empty purse’.\textsuperscript{154} This is an exaggeration and by his own reckoning, Hugill says of Bristol’s waterside area that by the mid nineteenth century, ‘when other sailortowns were only coming of age, it had become almost as safe a place as the rest of the city’.\textsuperscript{155} This study agrees but argues that there were instead ‘sailorstreets’ as opposed to a ‘sailortown’ or ‘sailorhoods,’ which Louise Moon suggests is the more apt nomenclature.\textsuperscript{156} These contained enough of the characteristic businesses of sailortown to keep sailors entertained.

However, a key argument of this study is that Bristol as a port and as a city is inseparable and therefore sailorstreets were not just the playground of sailors but because of their proximity to the urban civic centre were used and owned by all workers and citizens. Because these streets, as will be shown, contained multiple businesses, offices and organisations they were, as Martin Daunton would argue, open to all.\textsuperscript{157} Sailorstreets were therefore not just exclusive platforms for just sailors’ behaviours. Richard Sennett argues that the structures and facilities of any urban space shaped the behaviours that could constitute social and cultural differences.\textsuperscript{158} On the contrary, the argument here is that Bristol’s actual structure was conducive more to the integration of different classes and occupations of its citizens, rather than creating divisions. Within the city, Bristol’s sailorstreets were not and never had been the setting for an authentic sailor existence with a predetermined collective sailor identity, as Doreen Massey says that no place can be.\textsuperscript{159} More accurate is to describe Bristol’s quaysides as a space that contained a ‘multiplicity of

\textsuperscript{152} Michael Bounds, \textit{Urban Social Theory}, pp. 53-54.
\textsuperscript{153} Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’.
\textsuperscript{154} Stan Hugill, \textit{Sailortown}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{155} Stan Hugill, \textit{Sailortown}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{156} Louise Moon, \textit{Sailorhoods}.
heterogeneous influences and forces, relations, negotiations, practices of engagement and power in all its forms’.160

Consequently, this study must be considered to be a study in urban history as well as maritime history and the negative opinion of the quality of work done should be balanced by noting more positive perceptions of pertinent scholarship. Glen O’Hara is optimistic about the amount of research done by British maritime historians investigating the social character of what he called ‘plebeian crews down below’.161 Indeed, the title of one recent paper, A Unique Branch of the Working Class? Dutch Seamen, 1900-1940, indicates interest in the very subject that this study investigates.162 Earlier, Valerie Burton considered the home life of a particular type of sailor, stewards on Southampton’s cruise liners, concluding that the sailors were not a breed apart and did not, at least not all of them and not all of the time, deserve their status of debauched degenerates.163 Burton concentrated on a particular city, as did Louise Moon on Portsmouth and Derek Morris, Ken Cozens and Brad Beaven on Ratcliffe Highway in London.164 This study does likewise.

Burton’s later work examining how merchant seamen were situated amongst mid nineteenth-century capitalist hierarchies further demonstrated the more integrated nature of seafarers.165 Daniel Vickers has also been prolific in work that argues that sailors were closely linked to home, family and communities where they came from,166 although he is criticised, as is Burton, by Louise Moon for not paying more attention to social and cultural deconstructions.167 Others, such as Karl Bell and Rob James, have also shown that the streetwise activities of sailors, including their beliefs and leisure, helped to integrate them.168 Isaac Land in his call to situate sailors in coastal history argued that there was so much contact and intermingling between ship and shore that he doubted whether any

167 Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, p. 39.
distinct, freestanding maritime culture existed at all. He pointed to a fluidity of interaction between seafarers and shore ‘allowing ebb and flow, natural or engineered penetrations into urban space’. He argues that seafarers negotiated urban life through ‘street citizenship’ and that being part of a local community, which Robert Lee says was itself continually changing, was more important than maintaining a seafaring, maritime identity. Thus, instead of sailors wanting to maintain and exhibit distinct maritime traits on shore through their streetwise contact with a port’s inhabitants and urban structures (again indicative of the spatial turn in urban geographical study), they constructed identities that facilitated their integration into common space. As Patrick Joyce makes clear, identity is formed through people in location and sailors assumed the common identities of the communities they touched on or lived in.

Whilst these works are pertinent to Bristol’s situation caution is needed because some are largely investigations of naval towns. Isaac Land, for example, concentrates on naval, pre-1850 contexts. However, his work is still important in its concept of fluidity and adaptability of identity. Other historians suggest less fluidity and agency but more of the continuing resilience of traditional custom in the construction of identity. Brad Beaven’s work on Portsmouth and Plymouth, albeit again both naval towns, shows how sailors perpetuated the negative image of a sailor in port through their acting out of stereotypical behaviour. It is difficult to argue that sailors wanted to be absorbed into any local community if they actively sought to be different in the clothes they wore, the language they used, the curios they brought back from voyages and carried round the streets and their tattoos. Tattoos were a permanent assertion of a distinct common identity and implied undying allegiance and visible otherness living their lives without the ‘conventional ethical checks of life in ordinary society’. John Mack describes potential otherness in that sailors came from,

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171 Robert Lee, ‘Configuring the City’, p. 100.


‘Self-contained societies, diverse in their composition, cosmopolitan crews of different ages and experiences, different languages and cultures in the same boat. They dress differently, possibly share no common language with the coastal peoples into whose world they have erupted, and they may be without their own resources, culturally or materially, on which to draw. Their presence on land is often transitory. They may be uninvited, possibly unexplained, sometimes threatening’. 180

Sailors were let loose on the poor inhabitants of a port city and in their behaviours were seen as almost feral and of obvious bad character, as one sailor writing in 1904 recognised,

‘The very fact of their being a sailor argues a certain recklessness and sensualism of character, ignorance and depravity; consider they are generally friendless and alone in the world; or if they have friends or relatives they are most constantly beyond the reach of good influences ... consider that by their very vocation they are shunned by the better classes of people and cut off from all access to respectable and improving society. Consider all this and the reflecting mind must very soon perceive that the case of sailors as a class is not a very promising one.’ 181

As will be made clear, this study in the context of Bristol’s sailors, disagrees to a large extent and the above works being mainly maritime studies miss the more nuanced understanding of sailor identity in the context of working-class identity gained through societal and familial contexts. 182 Bristol sailors are best seen very much a part of urban society, particularly because sailors lived most of their working lives on land. 183 Sailors in common with others were ‘urban citizens’ and took on an urban identity, just as working-class people did in non-port environments, as Andy Croll’s work on workers in Merthyr Tydfil clearly shows. 184 This was even more so because of the increasing amount of time sailors spent in their local communities. John Duthie describes Aberdeen and its coastal trade plied by smaller ships in the early nineteenth century, where sailors were rarely away from home for more than a fortnight at a time and therefore easily integrated back in. 185 Bristol’s sailors integrated significantly into the urban space that they had left behind and this had the effect of lessening demarcations in identity between them and other workers. David Cannadine argues that workers displayed commonalities with other workers and that these arose from the reality of shared lives in time and space. 186 This is agreed and it is argued in this study that although sailors were clearly still sailors, their identity was subject to forces of dilution

182 Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’, p. 158.
and obfuscation and was less the product of deliberate self-conscious articulation and more the result of subconsciously formed identity by actual lived experience on the street. In David Alexander’s well-used phrase sailors were indeed ‘simply working men who got wet’.

**Identity: Class and Identity Politics**

This study contends that sailors shared a common working-class culture and identity with other working people so it is well to give some discussion on the formation of class identity and seafaring identity within it. Notions of class identity are used throughout subsequent chapters to differentiate both action and interest between people. Whilst it is recognised that any definition of class identity is debatable and that post-modernist, ahistorical, linguistic turn scholars might question its very existence, it is not the purpose or indeed possible to consider this debate to an exhaustive extent here. Given the general argument of this thesis that the relationships between Bristol’s sailors and other citizens of the city were relatively productive for 60 years out of the 64 years covered in this study, it tends towards agreement with historians who have argued that a true class identity, especially if this was predicated on occupational conflict, was only formed towards the end of the period under discussion, rather than within the main focus period. Savage and Miles, for example, suggest that it was only with political radicalism from around 1910 that a true working-class identity was born. Others have more firmly placed identity formation in the later period, Joe White argues that, ‘it is not just permissible but necessary to begin speaking of the working class in the singular’ between 1910 and 1914. Relations, he asserts, were characterised by belligerency and he reproduces the story of engineers drawing a circle on the floor around their machines, which no bosses were allowed to cross. Such an action is an example of the problematic relationship between employer and employee but in respect of Bristol’s labour force, this thesis diverges on the extent of conflict between labour and capital. In Bristol, although it too had minor mainly unofficial

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187 David Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 17.
industrial disputes, relationships between capital and labour, and significantly maritime capital and labour leading up to the post 1910 period, were relatively conciliatory, as discussed in Chapter Four.192 A good example is how the most significant industrial dispute, the 1905 lockout at Bristol’s biggest factory the Great Western Cotton Works, was brought to an end because the Managing Director George Spafford treated Harold Brabham, the local secretary of the Gasworks and General Labourers Union, as a gentleman.193 This cordiality changed towards the end of our period however and like in most industrial cities Bristol was in turmoil in the strike wave of 1910-14, with sympathy strikes for dockers and miners breaking out everywhere, even by schoolchildren. However, even in this period, sailors’, dockers’ and other waterside workers’ strikes were not as intensive or extensive as in Liverpool, Hull, Glasgow and Cardiff, but it cannot be denied that the era or constraint and conciliation had come to an end by 1913.194

The above relationships are situated in a classic Marxist interpretation of identity and this will be revisited later in this thesis. However, it is important as said above to give a theoretical awareness of what identity means to this thesis because just contextualising identity in Marxist terms does not adequately represent what it meant to be a member of the working class nor a working-class sailor. Working-class identities were fluid and complex and as Andrew August reminds it could be constructed differently through different notions of what it meant to be respectable, ethnicity and sectarian differences, local and regional allegiance, leisure activities, deference to the monarchy and empire and occupation.195 Richard Jenkins, a key theorist on identity, would say that uniformity of identity is impossible because of the multi-dimensional and inconsistent way that people as individuals and members of collectives negotiate existence and consequently there can be no implications of homogeneity or definite boundaries.196 Others, such as Brubaker and Cooper, doubt that the word identity has any useful meaning at all given its overuse.197

The author recognises the limitations of this thesis as a contribution to the debate on what identity is, when formation of identity occurred and on the structure of class and working-class culture. The purpose of this thesis is rather more concerned with how sailors reflected characteristic commonalities inherent in these. It is therefore firmly situated in the Annales school of thought, with its emphasis on collective mentalities expressed through culture, although as Matthias Middell suggests, the advent of other poststructuralist approaches have arguably superseded this approach.198 That mentality could mean a ‘class mentality’

192 Mike Richardson, ‘Bristol and the Labour Unrest of 1910-1914’.
195 Andrew August, The British Working Class, pp. 146-152.
and it is therefore contended that E. P. Thompson’s view of class as commonality of interests is still a useful construct when applied to sailors within a wider grouping.\(^{199}\)

Subsequent chapters explore these common interests within the cultural traits of power, sexuality, consumption, adversity and deviance that Simon Gunn identifies.\(^{200}\) The conclusion of commonality rather than difference is therefore drawn from investigating these and many other aspects of culture. It is however, recognised that in what follows there are some inferences and these are made clear where they are offered. What determines action by individuals within cultural norms is complex but as John Tosh suggests it is possible to some extent to infer regularity of behaviours that typify group behaviours.\(^{201}\)

What the word ‘culture’ actually means is of course debatable and it is out of the scope of this thesis to discuss this in detail. However, particularly pertinent in terms of theoretical approaches to culture and to this thesis are the works of cultural theorists who have defined culture not in terms of high and low culture but as being the manifestation of everyday existence. Raymond Williams argues that culture is a ‘particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general’ and Peter Burke defines culture as ‘a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms in which they are expressed or embodied’.\(^{202}\) Both of these definitions describe the ordinariness of the lives of Bristol’s sailors within the context of a wider working-class culture and therefore situate this thesis in the broader genre of cultural history and within the cultural turn in historical enquiry, especially as the main purpose of it is to situate sailors in cultural norms and canonicity.

Indeed, it is the routines of cultural existence that forms identity and these give commonality between sailors and other occupational groups. Dick Jeffrey and Joyce Robbins argue that any mnemonic activity and practice can construct a common class identity in the way E. P. Thompson meant it and David Cannadine refers to the more mundane daily activities that do the same.\(^{203}\) Patrick Joyce points to the importance of geography and industrial development as behavioural determinants manifested in everyday behaviours or in what he terms ‘populism’, an ordinariness echoed by Andrew Wood.\(^{204}\) Similarly, Gareth Stedman-Jones argued class identity could be formed through the rituals of commuting to work, children attending compulsory education or adults going to the pub, racecourse or music hall as a consolation for their status. Identity was constructed through

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fatalistically and stoically accepting their lot, although Andrew August suggests it was not fatalism and instead identity was formed through everyday small-scale challenges to middle-class interventions in their lives by rent evasion, pilfering and truancy.\textsuperscript{205} This set the ‘working class’ against the ‘middle class’ and served to challenge the distribution of power and wealth.\textsuperscript{206} Street level resistance to middle-class elites’ attempts to reform traditional leisure activities, music hall content, gambling, street selling, family life and education, aspects of which Ben Jones says continued into the mid-twentieth century, also facilitated a common identity.\textsuperscript{207}

This thesis argues the importance of these ordinary and mundane expressions of culture and their importance in identity formation because they constitute the very components of societal and familial realities that Robert Lee says are neglected and therefore they are central to this study. These realities were of course different for each sailor and his family and what gives sailors the ability to fit into working-class culture is that there was no such thing as just one homogenised working-class culture. This is important because it is argued throughout that there are differences between sailors who negotiated their existence in relationship with a myriad of ‘others’. Therefore, whilst working class is a useful definition of difference vis a vis middle class, not least in different class interpretations of what it meant to be a good citizen,\textsuperscript{208} there are just too many differences within the working class emanating from the reality of streetwise life to allow it to be seen as a monolithic homogenised whole,\textsuperscript{209} just as there were too many differences among the middle class to allow it to be seen as a single entity.\textsuperscript{210}

Furthermore, Andy Croll rightly argues that class is only one way of constructing identity and when identity is considered in terms of religion, gender and ethnicity then clearly a single class of whatever type is an impossibility.\textsuperscript{211} Alternatively, as David Cannadine says, 

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[206] Andrew August, The British Working Class, p. 159.
\item[207] Ben Jones, The Working Class, p. 146.
\item[209] M. J. Haynes suggests that a unified consciousness is an impossibility anyway because such a concept is constantly changing being built up and then knocked down again, M. J. Haynes, ‘Strikes’ in John Benson, ed., The Working Class in England, 1875-1914, Abingdon, Routledge, 1985, p. 91. He says 1911-14 saw a dramatic spike in strike action with 19,000 official strikes recorded by the Board of Trade between 1888-1914, pp. 89 and 108.
\item[210] David Cannadine, Class in Britain, pp. 69-84.
\item[211] Andy Croll, Civilising the Urban, pp. 7-8.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
there are many other ways to define social order, society being ‘the history of a limitless number of individual self-categorisations and subjective descriptions – of which class is only one among a multitude of competing and frequently changing vocabularies’. Mike Savage and Andrew Miles argued earlier that the concept of a unified working class is a romanticised construct and Joanna Bourke argues that class may well mean a group of people with shared characteristics such as similar lifestyles, appearance, accent, home life and clothes, but the competitive society in which people operated mitigated against the concept of class. Bristol’s working classes were in competition with each other for jobs and services and as elsewhere were not a unified body of people. Nor was there the advantage of the unifying force of the traditions of a single industry. The city’s industrial development meant that different workers related to the means of production in different ways. In this respect, sailors as other workers, would have more of a ‘self-perception’ rather than a class-consciousness and will have known they shared common characteristics with other workers but not necessarily a common working-class identity.

Common identity is formed through realities of existence, then, but the notion of a class identity formed through the reality of conflict between labour and capital is less convincing in the context of Bristol sailors. It has been proposed that sailors constructed for themselves a political identity fashioned out of how they had been exploited through time by the capitalist class. This was a view chiefly proposed by Marcus Rediker, maintaining that sailors in port were in fact very much a distinct group whose experience foreshadowed the factory worker with its hierarchical working structures, confining spaces and regulation of time. Sailors were a proletarian group that reached across racial, ethnic and national lines and they had a common defiant and rebellious identity born out of a history of struggle. As such, a Marxist reading of seafarers’ identity is identifiable in that sailors were confined to certain means of production and a superstructure of capitalist control kept them in check with punishment if necessary. They were a part of what Climo and Cattell term a ‘subordinate group’ that retained elements of their history, culture, traditions and also their superstitions which were passed down through generations of seafarers. Brad Beaven links the practice of superstition with defiance of the civic religiosity of municipal authorities, challenging the social mores of the day and thus contributing to the establishment of a sub-culture. Rediker argues that popular memory of oppression

212 David Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, pp. 11-12.
214 Joanna Bourke, *Working Class Cultures in Britain*.
216 J. Climo and M. Cattell, eds., *Social Memory*, p. 5. They state that ‘collective or social memories are shaped by social, economic and political circumstances, by beliefs and values, by opposition and resistance’ and in this sense sailors not being aware of their collective memory is unlikely, J. Climo and M. Cattell, eds., *Social Memory*, p. 4.
created a mind-set that served their political purposes in the present. As Richard Jenkins says, ‘collective politics involves collective imaginings’ and other historians at different times also proposed a similar interpretation to Rediker. Lemisch called this the ‘folk memory of tyranny’, citing his own examples of sailors’ references to past mutinies, protests and stories of collective action. Richard Johnson argues that sailors had ‘an active and collective agency’ born out of their understanding of historic capitalist repression and Bryan Nolan argues that conflict was inevitable, given the ship was a ‘total institution’ with social structures, deprivations of freedom, sex, autonomy and choice. Its systems of control, divisions of labour and social divisions in the form of separate accommodation all gave rise to the dark and pessimistic side of seafaring.

However, these views can be challenged; they may all be contributory factors to sailors’ common grievances but the victimisation of sailors, as this study demonstrates later, is overplayed. What Rediker misses is the self-regulating and policing and the effective methods that sailors, as their contemporaries did on shore, used to limit the effect of the actions of ship’s authorities. Indeed, a common identity born from adversarial relationships fashioned in ‘a wooden world’ has been criticised by others. Matthew Rafferty, who in his praise of Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh’s Young Men and the Sea, says that their work is a ‘good corrective against the enthusiasm of scholars who try to paint all Tars as unmoored social rebels and internationalist radicals resisting the political and economic order’. Isaac Land, because he argues for empathy between sailors and land based workers, is critical of Rediker and rejects any kind of cosmopolitan, proletarian brotherhood of shipmates who were anti-authoritarian and bound together by perceived injustices and stigma against them. Alexander and Walsh also reject the idea that they were a lumpenproletariat cut off culturally from shore.

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219 Richard Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 25.


223 Margaret Creighton, ‘Fraternity in the American Forecastle, 1830-1870’, The New England Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4, December 1990, pp. 540 and 545-49. Examples were what we now call the ‘go slow’ or ‘work to rule’.


Others, including Lewis Fischer, argue that by the nineteenth century a collective identity had been eroded in the face of new capitalist practices, divisions of labour, changing social composition of the maritime proletariat and the increasing divisiveness of racism. The latter has particular relevance to this thesis, as will be made clear. Magee and Thompson make the point that inward migration increasingly led to hostile reactions from home-grown labour movements towards imported and indentured workers and Bristol was no exception. Daunton says racial tension was a cause of the 1911 seamen’s strike and earlier in 1904, it was sufficient in part to bring about the formation of the British Sailor and Firemen’s Union to campaign against foreign seamen pushing down wages. This study concurs with these latter views on race and the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of Bristol’s crews, coupled with the prevalent anti-foreign sentiments locally and nationally, must bring into question a common identity of seafarers.

Identity: Societal, Familial and Cultural Contexts

This study gives importance to the streetwise existence of Bristol’s sailors and the realities of their lives. Identities were fashioned from sailors’ everyday actions and as such, rebelliousness fashioned from on board hardship was unlikely to manifest itself to any significant extent on Bristol’s streets. It may have been more of an issue for foreign, transient sailors, a distinction that is a significant factor in much of what follows, but sailors returning home were just as likely to play with the children or dig the potato patch than cause trouble. Such activities were a part of the respectable masculinity of the working classes that at the very least meant rejecting what John Huggins calls the triumvirate of gambling, sex and alcohol. Increasingly, working-class males wanted to be seen as respectable citizens just as the middle-class was supposed to be, a debatable concept that has received some attention from historians in recent years.

Michael Roper and John Tosh argue that by contextualising masculinity in gender studies it is possible to equate manliness with family and domestic life. In providing for the family sailors were displaying what R. W. Connell in his pioneering work described as masculine hegemony and patriarchal normative behaviour. Even though the concept of male hegemony has been challenged in theories of masculinity, sailors were performing the normative ‘sex role’ in the context of respectability and family life.

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228 Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalism*, p. 236.
231 Mike Huggins is right to point out, however, that respectability could mean different things to the middle-classes and its traits were not necessarily upheld continuously by them, nor exercised in the same way outside of the home as within it. It was also age dependent, Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures?’ pp. 586-88.
of nineteenth century social relations. As John Tosh says, ‘the cultural weight attached to the male breadwinner was overwhelming’ and sailors were exercising agency in embracing masculine respectability, although this somewhat contradicts the norms of manliness of the later nineteenth century. Although he is referring predominately to naval sailors and whether the extent was the same for merchant sailors cannot be sure, Rob James correctly states that, ‘no longer was Jack identified as the bawdy, highly sexualised figure of the Georgian era. Instead he was a model of respectability: brave, dutiful and patriotic’. A

It is important for the context of this study however to point out that this did not and could not apply to all working-class males nor to all sailors and not to the same extent. There would have been many sailors who in the context of the ‘flight from domesticity’ proposed by John Tosh were happy to do the minimum in the home (or indeed according to Jon Lawrence were deliberately excluded from doing so by the women in the house) and formed their sense of masculinity in the pub or in consuming commercialised leisure, just as the middle classes did in clubs and universities. Many other sailors, Lawton and Lee’s casual, transient, low waged and ethnically separate sailors, would have had no aspiration to, or chance of, bread winning masculinity which as Valerie Burton suggests was largely the preserve of settled steam sailors.

Other sailors would have their own interpretation of what it meant to be masculine. For some, a sense of their own masculinity was still synonymous with manual work and the physical attributes needed for it, as Michael Smith suggests. For others masculinity was still bound to a sense of duty and to what James Mangan describes as the militaristic spirit of the age, even if they were mercantile sailors. Antoinette Burton argues similarly for the continued importance to masculine identity of imperial hagiography but R. W. Connell

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235 John Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain, Harlow, Pearson Education Ltd, 2005, p. 36. This volume is broadly a discussion of the differences between the two.

236 Rob James, ‘If there’s one man that I admire, that man’s a British Tar: Leisure and Cultural Nation Building in a Naval Port Town, c. 1850-1928’, in Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Rob James, ‘Port Cities and Urban Cultures’, p. 196.


and Lynne Segal are among others who also equate respectable masculinity with the conscious decision of men to change their priorities towards their families.241

Asserting manliness therefore could be through varied means: espousing domestication, providing for the family, going to church, respect for others, self-discipline, being moderate in drinking and attending more civilised entertainments, as Rosalind Crone shows.242 It will be shown that despite traditionally not being associated with such virtues, many Bristol sailors did aspire to these higher cultural traits. On the other hand, manliness could also be asserted through physical violence which was just as much a part of working-class culture, even if it was becoming increasingly unacceptable.243 Lesley Hall notes that men were expected to have an appropriate degree of assertion and even aggression but this was ideally to be kept in rational check.244 As will be seen many Bristol sailors, ‘men without investment in the domestic sphere’, carried on using violence and were happy to inflict the suffering that Carter-Wood argues the middle class increasingly associated with barbarity and savagery.245

For many Bristol sailors, particularly those akin to an artisan worker, respectable masculinity was primarily expressed through holding down a job and providing for the family. Keith McClelland quotes Thomas Wright’s ideal ‘Representative Artisan’ as one who,

‘Can command good work and good pay all the year round, has a comfortable home, saves money, provides through his trade clubs for the proverbial rainy day, is in his degree respected because self-respecting, and on the whole is a person rather to be envied than pitied.’246

This embodies new notions of masculinity that were being embedded in working-class culture and it presupposes a sufficient level of income. Few would risk losing their jobs247

244 Lesley A. Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. p. 17.
246 Thomas Wright, ‘Our Craftsmen’, The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 20, 1886, p. 551, cited in Keith McClelland, ‘Masculinity and the Representative Artisan in Britain 1850-80’, in Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., Manful Assertions, p. 74. For this turn to being more respectable see also Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City, p. 243; Lesley A. Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013; John Tosh, A Man’s Place (although given the title, this mainly considers middle-class domesticity) and Valerie Burton, ‘Whoring Drinking Sailors’.
247 Standish Meacham, A Life Apart, p. 152.
and as McClelland has shown, respectable masculinity increasingly became manifested in supporting dependents.\textsuperscript{248} Margaret Creighton argues that changes in the nature of maritime employment had serious consequences for a sailor’s sense of manhood and therefore sailors sought work on land that was comparable and compatible.\textsuperscript{249} Moreover, it was likely that returning sailors would more easily pick up work in a more, according to Magee and Thompson, interconnected labour market if they knew the owners, foremen, managers, other employees or family members.\textsuperscript{250} David Vickers and Vince Walsh also point to the importance of locality and the social, economic and family ties therein which allowed sailors to fit back in to mixed maritime and non-maritime occupational communities.\textsuperscript{251} This was very much a feature of Bristol’s labour market and as Bristol’s manufacturing was still more akin to the workshop than the factory, the potential for sailors to find employment in such a labour market was high with its continuance of small scale work places, apprenticeships, traditional piece work and ‘penny capitalism’.

The change from sail to steam also facilitated this because it mirrored what was happening in many industries on land. The deskill ing of the work place led to a much more homogenised, indistinguishable workforce.\textsuperscript{252} Patrick Joyce promulgates the deskill ing argument and homogeneity of the work force,\textsuperscript{253} as does Richard Price.\textsuperscript{254} There are others, such as Jon Lawrence and John Benson, who disagree with the existence of deskill ing.\textsuperscript{255} John Benson points to the continuance of wage differentials, the continued importance of regional specialisms, the ineffectual nature of legislation designed to rationalise and regulate working practices and the fact that 75% of workers were still not in unions by 1914.\textsuperscript{256}

However, Bristol sailors benefitting from the proletarianisation of labour is possible. Lucy Delap argues that deskill ing was important because it gave rise to new types of sailor, such as firemen on big ships, who could just transfer their unspecialised labour to the land and back again.\textsuperscript{257} Standish Meacham argues that those with a real skill could find work in specialist industries but so could those in the pool of casual labour and seasonal workers, so forwarding the argument that heterogeneity of experience facilitated integration into

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{248} Keith McClelland, ‘Masculinity and the Representative Artisan’, especially pp. 83-88.
\item\textsuperscript{250} Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, \textit{Empire and Globalism}, p. 12.
\item\textsuperscript{251} Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, ‘Young Men and the Sea’, p. 19.
\item\textsuperscript{253} Patrick Joyce, \textit{Work, Society and Politics}, pp. 62-63.
\item\textsuperscript{255} Jon Lawrence rejects any deskill ing argument and argues for continued distinction based on trade, Jon Lawrence, \textit{Speaking for the People}, p. 29.
\item\textsuperscript{256} John Benson, ‘Work’, pp. 66-76.
\end{itemize}
the community.\textsuperscript{258} Alston Kennerley makes the point that there had always been a myriad of jobs available connected to shipping such as blacksmithing, gunnery, cooperage, shipwrighting, navigation and sail making. When this gave way to steam ships and then oceanic steamships, made possible from the 1860s by metal hulls, screw propellers and high-pressure boilers, new categories of sailors were created such as firemen, trimmers, boiler men, and skilled engineers who had the potential to find work ashore.\textsuperscript{259}

Furthermore, Richard Lawton and Robert Lee argue that ‘unskilled employment was predominant, constituting a distinctive secondary labour market accompanied by low wages, casualisation, an absence of training, residential immobility and ethnic separateness’ and these were certainly characteristics of Bristol’s sailors.\textsuperscript{260} The more skilled such as engineers and boilermen had the potential to find work in the mines, factories and railways and ordinary sailors who often started off their working lives in manual unskilled work being children of labourers, farmhands and other sailors, could possibly pick up similar labouring work.\textsuperscript{261} However, these studies also underestimate the marketability of sailors and even firemen had a level of skill which would be desirable to some employers in that they had to know about boilers, valves, gauges and make judgements on keeping boilers serviced.\textsuperscript{262}

An alternative view of sailors and other employment is that working on ships was all sailors knew. G. R. Hennings makes this point and argues that shipowners held monopolistic control of seafaring labour because working on ships was all that sailors could do.\textsuperscript{263} This may have been the case for Bristol’s sailors and in reality it should be pointed out that the extent that the city’s sailors got work on shore is unclear from archival sources relating to Bristol. Some qualitative evidence is provided later of sailors working in alternative roles as the maritime historians mentioned above, especially Alston Kennerley, have found for other places. Bristol asylum records show that sailors could turn to hawking or could get work in factories, such as one sailor who got work between voyages in a fish-processing factory. Therefore, as an inference, opportunities could be available if sailors wanted or needed extra work between voyages or more likely as an alternative career to sailing. However, it is recognised that there is insufficient evidence to give a systematic analysis of the extent of sailors’ work on shore, or to be conclusive as to their reasons for doing so. It may be that some Bristol sailors needed to find work to supplement their income or it could have been possible that having regular employment from sailing was enough. The likelihood is that the

\textsuperscript{258} Standish Meacham, A Life Apart, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{259} Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 186. See also Marcus Rediker, ‘Common Seamen’, p. 349.
\textsuperscript{262} Alston Kennerley, ‘The Seamen’s Union’, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{263} G. R. Henning, ‘Fourpenny Dark and Sixpenny Red’, Labour History, No. 46, May, 1984, pp. 53-54. Although it should be said that wage levels were agreed between shipowners and were not subject to market forces.
situation was different for individual sailors as it was for other people, but neither of these can be quantified.

Above are the conditions that made finding work between voyages possible and for some sailors, working on shore would afford opportunities to mix with other working class people. The same is true of where they lived and what they did in their spare time. Matters of residency are discussed in detail later and are grounded in the theories of historical geographers, chiefly H. W. Dyos. 264 Also important to matters of residency is the work of Colin Pooley who considers the factors influencing residential differences. 265 Where they lived would naturally have a bearing on how sailors spent their leisure time and time spent in leisure would be an indicator of commonality with working-class people. Whether there was a common working-class identity in the context of leisure for sailors to fit into is debatable. Some historians such as Andrew August argue that distinctiveness of class was formed through cultural and leisure pursuits, 266 but others have argued that there was no such thing as homogeneity of class in terms of leisure and that any relationship between class and leisure is far too simplistic. 267 Paul White cites geographical considerations, gender divisions, uneven economic development and the hierarchies of labour as mitigating factors against commonality in recreation. 268 In his seminal work on working-class leisure, Peter Bailey writes of what he calls a pluralist culture and that through the study of leisure we can discern shifting factors that form identity, giving rise to multiple identities. 269 Sailors may have shared a common interest with local working-class people in going to a music hall or to the football. If they did then one would hope that they might have watched a better match than Bristol City against Newport in 1922, that ‘was about as exciting as playing dominoes with the village curate’. 270 If not then sailors may have participated in continuing

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266 Andrew August, *The British Working Class*, p. 159.


However, other interpretations of how sailors spent their leisure time can be drawn because evidence to suggest what Bristol sailors did, including whether they spent time in watching or playing organised sport, is difficult to find and therefore this thesis is unable to pursue this line with certainty. Playing for a team requires a regular commitment and the nature of a sailing career despite shorter times at sea and more regular sailing times may well mitigate against playing football. No club or association records consulted for this study mention anything particular relating to sailors and football. Helen Mellor’s book on rational recreation in nineteenth-century Bristol does not contain one reference to sailors as separate to the generic nomenclature of working class, which suggests significant commonality.272 Dr. Mellor was kind enough to go through her notes for the benefit of this thesis and confirmed that she too found no mention of sailors. Similarly, in conversations with Dr. Alston Kennerley who has done work on Bristol’s sailors in the context of its Sailors’ Home and a careful re-reading of his references to Bristol’s sailors, revealed no reference to participation in organised sport.273 However, this does not preclude sailors enjoying their leisure time with other working-class people or being involved with sport. One sailor was

271 Eileen Yeo points to self-made leisure and that provided by Owenite socialism, Chartism, friendly societies, temperance movements and schismatic Methodism, Eileen Yeo, ‘Culture’, p. 155; Paul Wild gives similar examples for Rochdale half a century later. He says that by the beginning of the twentieth century, leisure time was still dominated by church and chapel provided activities, Paul Wild, ‘Recreation in Rochdale’, p. 141. Paul Thompson adds flower shows, gyms, libraries, concerts, pantomimes and penny banks to the services provided by the church. Thompson, Edwardians, pp. 204-206. Andrew Davies says the whole argument of commercialisation of leisure as a working class stereotype is a fiction and conjured up in the 1950s and 60s by intellectuals like Eric Hobsbawm to augment their ‘cloth clap’ imagery and the more wealthy working classes carried on with the traditional working class pursuits of pub, gambling, cinema and seaside holidays, Andrew Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty, pp. viii, ix and 2 and Hugh Cunningham, ‘Leisure’, in John Benson, ed., The Working Class in England, pp. 136, 137 and 151.

272 Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City. See James Walvin, The People’s Game, p. 56 and Tony Mason, Association Football and English Society, for this, the latter especially for the role of football in forming class identity.

part of a rowing crew at a regatta on the river in 1852, a pass time that might be particularly suited to a sailor’s skill. A group of sailors were fined for playing an illegal game of pitch and toss in the street, something it is not hard to imagine any working-class person doing and again indicating the normality of sailors on the streets.

However, where there is evidence regarding what Bristol’s sailors did in their time on shore concerns the most common working-class leisure pursuit, going to the pub. Their drinking placed sailors alongside other workers as recipients of middle-class efforts to ‘civilise’ the working classes through modification of their behaviours. The moral standards of the lower class naturally exercised the city’s urban elites and sailors as a subsection of this class were subjected to the same transforming endeavours as any fitter, wood turner or loom weaver. Alongside other workers, sailors needed to be socially controlled, (although it has long been recognised that such a term is rather loose) and were as much as likely to be subjected to the imposition of rational recreation as any other working-class group. As Brad Beaven says, ‘whilst popular leisure patterns were often seen as an obstacle to good citizenship, appropriate ‘rational’ leisure was perceived as the antidote to urban degeneracy’ and more starkly, Eileen Yeo says it was used against a working class that even by 1830 in places such as Bradford, Manchester and Oldham was still a beast to be tamed.

Synonymous with the sailor was the working-class leisure activity of drinking and it was this part of leisure culture that most worried the middle classes. It is hard to argue against the continuance of the lure of alcohol when in 1899 men drank an average of 57 gallons of beer a year each. Sailor specific drinking is discussed extensively in the next chapter but many historians have commented on the continued importance of drinking in working-class culture and leisure, such as Andrew Davies who says that going to the pub still dominated and was indicative of the continuation of working-class leisure practices even in the era of the commercialisation of leisure. Paul Thompson says that ‘beer had few rivals as a form of entertainment, either inside or outside of the home; it provided both a sedative pleasure and also a consumable article for symbolic exchange with friends’. The pub was a place of warmth, for a chat, to read the paper, to eat something and above all was free to get in. Hugh Cunningham notes that even if the number of pubs were decreasing half of the spending on leisure was on alcohol between 1875 and 1900. Trends were downwards,

274 Bristol Mercury, 11th September, 1852.
275 Bristol Mercury, 4th November, 1899.
277 Brad Beaven, Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 235; Eileen Yeo, ‘Culture’, p. 176 and Robert Sindall, Street Violence in the Nineteenth Century, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1900, p. 5. There is extensive literature on rational recreation but the seminal work is Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class.
278 Standish Meacham, A Life Apart, p. 123.
279 Andrew Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty, pp, ix, 35, 28-29.
279 Paul Wild, ‘Recreation in Rochdale’, p. 159.
280 Paul Thompson, Edwardians, pp. 197-199.
281 Paul Thompson, Edwardians, pp. 202-203.
however. For the end of our period Paul Thompson points to the importance of the increasing tendency to stay at home, tending to the pigeons, gardening, hobbies and playing with the children, the previously discussed ‘respectable masculinity’.\footnote{Paul Thompson, \textit{Edwardians}, p. 199. Perhaps this is epitomised by spending a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the park with the family, Standish Meacham, \textit{A Life Apart}, p. 118.}

Mindful of the fact that as with other aspects of working-class culture, working-class leisure was not an homogenised entity,\footnote{Access to leisure depended on many factors, such as time, money and location but it also could be cyclical depending on where a person was in his or her life cycle, see Hugh Cunningham, ‘Leisure’, pp. 145-147.} Bristol’s sailors would have been part of all this drinking and it is hardly surprising that such behaviours were exhibited given long periods at sea and separation, discipline on board, the dangers and hazards of the voyage, illness and injury.\footnote{Andrew Davies, \textit{Leisure, Gender and Poverty}, p. 108 and C. I. Hamilton, \textit{Naval Hagiography}, pp. 5-6.} When over half or Bristol’s population, over 104,000 people, went to a drinking place on the first Saturday of 1882, it is probable that sailors would be a part of this demography.\footnote{Standish Meacham, \textit{A Life Apart}. He gives the statistics that in 1900 there was one pub for every 195 people in Bristol.} However, proportionality is the issue here and the view that sailors because their drinking habits were identified with a particular area of the city were the worst of working class groups, has been challenged by some. Port cities are not just sailor towns and Lee comparing port cities with industrial ones such as Manchester, concludes that sailor’s alcohol consumption was not excessive in comparison.\footnote{Robert Lee, ‘The Seafarer’s Urban World’, pp. 55-56.} Similarly, Lee urges that using prostitutes should also be seen in the context of wider sexual behavioural patterns of the working class. He gives the example of Birkenhead in the early 1870s where the majority of users of prostitutes were from other urban working-class groups and not sailors.\footnote{Robert Lee, ‘The Seafarer’s Urban World’, p. 60.}
Identity: Criminality

Drinking was obviously a part of maritime culture and the next chapter details how sailors’ drinking situates them within working-class, urban culture but in a more nuanced way, and the same applies to sailors’ criminality in Chapters Five and Six. There has been extensive research into working-class criminality in recent years and into every conceivable type of crime. The issue, however, is that none of these established works on working-class criminality discuss sailor specific crime and sailors’ violent crime, for example, has been left to Rediker and others to discuss in the context of sailors’ treatment aboard. Hence the importance of more recent localised studies on sailor violence, such as Brad Beaven in London, Louise Moon in Portsmouth, Steve Poole for Bristol and Tomas Nilson for Gothenburg that rightly point out the reasons for sailor violence.

The argument of many of these historians in the generalised works on working-class violence, Andrew Davies, Clive Emsley, Martin Wiener and John Archer among others, was that violence was used to uphold perceived strong masculine characteristics. Violence was a natural display of hardness, an acceptable streetwise expression of prowess. There are dissenting theoretical views to this. Randal Collins, a theorist essential in contextualising the work of Tomas Nilson, whose own centricity to this thesis is made clear in Chapter Six, argued that violence against another is situational, has to be triggered and is not the natural manifestation of anger. However, in the context of nineteenth century Bristol, this thesis does not concur with this view. Instead, it is argued that a violent response as retribution for perceived injustice was a normal entrenched facet of working-class culture.


290 Brad Beaven, ‘Seafarers and Working Class Culture: Ritualised and Performative Violence in London’s Sailortown, c.1850-1880’, unpublished article, 2019; Louise Moon, Sailorhoods; Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’ and Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’.


Motivations for violence can go beyond the personally retributinal, however, and Tomas Nilson’s categorisation of violence being ritualised and performative is also relevant to Bristol’s sailors. Implicit here is the theory of Erving Goffman in that he argues that such action, in this case violent action, is essentially the maintenance of public image performed in public space. Violence of this kind can also be usefully contextualised in theories of performance developed in the last third of the twentieth century. Sailors and others were using violence in what Victor Turner, a key theorist in this field, would describe as ritualised performance in which culture is manifested in behaviours. Sailors’ violence is therefore an example of what Richard Schechner terms as ‘ritualised collective memories encoded into action’ and sailors fighting on Bristol’s streets were drawing on cultural norms to do just that.

Violence was a constituent part of criminality overall which is generally accepted to have decreased in our period. David Jones’ summary is that there was a gentle upward trend in crime during the eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth and thereafter there was a decline. When matters of ‘type’ of crime is considered, Gatrell argues that the rate of indictable (serious) crimes went down by a third in England and Wales between 1850 and 1914 and by 43% between the early 1860s to the late 1890s. The reliability of criminal statistics is of course questionable and criminal records cannot be taken at face value because of the sheer amount of unrecorded crime, the inconsistency of law enforcement, the increasing size and mobility of the police force, changing definitions of crime and public attitudes to crime. David Jones adds other potential problems such as the differences between urban and rural crime rates and activities, those between established towns and new industrial ones, between big cities and small ones, matters of gender and, as he recognises, the virtually unexplored would of the port city, which this thesis goes a small way to address. As such, historians’ opinions on this must be treated with caution and we should perhaps adopt Geoffrey Pearson’s opinion that ‘Statements about rising crime (or about falling crime) can neither be regarded as true or false in this strict sense. Instead we must regard them as logically undecidable’.

Nevertheless, figures for violent crime, the type of crime that is most discussed in this thesis, was decreasing in our period for many reasons. Martin Wiener and John Carter-Wood in particular have argued that one of the reasons for this was because the acceptability of

293 Michael Bounds, *Urban Social Theory, City, Self and Society*, p. 28.
299 David Jones, ‘Setting the Scene’, pp. 3-6.
fighting in civil society had substantially reduced by the end of the nineteenth century due to the civilising drive of the middle classes. As Carter-Wood says, ‘in general, the nineteenth-century civilising offensive fostered an individual psyche structured by stricter standards of self-control and restraint’. However, this civilising offensive within a wider civic project, as Andy Croll crucially points out, should not be seen as just a ‘middle-class’ endeavour and working-class people were just as implicit in the construction of civic and civil identities. In this respect not all working-class people ‘bought into’ civilising forces and carried on with traditional cultural practice. Violence was still an important way for many people, sailors included, to show masculine prowess, especially if this did not come from alternative sources such as through having regular employment. The use of violence remained an important part of working-class culture as a way to publicly earn status. What changed, according to John Carter-Wood, who is crucial to what follows, is that a new mentality of violence emerged, a reassessment of its legitimacy in society and its invention as a social problem to be solved. It is contended in this study that in the reality of Bristol’s streets, violence may have been a problem to the elites but for sailors and other workers it was an acceptable continuum of working-class culture.

Obviously different sailors had different propensities towards violent acts and Carter-Wood makes the point that it was the lowest of the working class rather than the respectable working class that were more likely to adhere to violence. All ‘classes’ had their criminal elements but as early as the 1830s the working class were equated with poverty and criminality and were a perceived threat to the middle class who feared the power of the masses should they ever break our socially and geographically. Criminals were the feared residuum of the working classes, the result of Darwinist heredity and of psychological defects, and middle-class contemporary commentators were quick to blame the lowest of the lower classes, labelling them as a criminal class, mentally and physically deficient with an ‘acquisitive morality’. They were caught in Engels’ ‘culture of alienation’, characterised by assault, theft, prostitution, family violence, infanticide and suicide. Consequently,

302 Andy Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, pp. 3-11.
308 David Jones, ‘Setting the Scene’, p. 11.
there was a real fear of lower-class barbarity, emerging in no small measure, as Gareth Stedman-Jones argues, from Mathew Arnold’s forays into London’s east end and observing ‘vast miserable, unimaginable masses of sunken people.’\textsuperscript{310} Criminality was by a working class which could not help themselves and who knew no better. Working-class males naturally resorted to crime because it was in their nature to be uncivilised.\textsuperscript{311} To many, sailors typified this and were just another type of worker drawn from the lower reaches of society. David Taylor points out that most criminals were drawn from the least educated and the least skilled sections of society for whom involvement in petty crime had become a way of life and this would naturally include Bristol’s sailors.\textsuperscript{312} Brad Beaven argues this point in relation to London’s sailors and that with the superseding of sail by steam after the 1850s they began to be regarded as a part of the unskilled, feared, urban proletariat.\textsuperscript{313} Lower still were the foreign sailors who were replacing English ones.\textsuperscript{314} Much blame for crime was put on transient foreign seamen, Graeme Milne’s ‘temporary dangerous class’,\textsuperscript{315} who fitted the notion of the sailor being an anti-social outsider, a foreign (literally) body infecting society.\textsuperscript{316}

Related to this is the role of the press and as the press is a major source of evidence for this study, its importance needs to be noted. The sensationalising role of the press is crucial to this perpetuation of anti-foreign feeling but also to the construction of the perceived inferiority of sections of the working class in general, although not all, and sailors among them. This was made easier by the new science of criminology from the 1870s onwards.\textsuperscript{317} The residuum of working-class people was predestined to evil and the press did its best to embed this into the collective conscience of society. The \textit{Bristol Mercury} regularly carried stories of shocking murders of children by their mothers in the city. Examples include the story of a mother who strangled her baby with a ligature and threw her in the water closet on top of the night soil, another mother murdering her daughter, wrapping her in paper and leaving her in field and another starving her eighteen month old daughter to death and then carrying her body around Bristol’s pubs.\textsuperscript{318} Journalists sensationalised such stories of criminal activity and when accompanied by dramatic pictures they exaggerated the threat that a criminally inclined lower class posed to middle-class order.\textsuperscript{319} Image 8 illustrates in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{313}Brad Beaven, ‘From Jolly Sailor’, p. 160.
  \item \textsuperscript{314}Brad Beaven, ‘From Jolly Sailor’, p. 171.
  \item \textsuperscript{315}Graeme Milne, ‘Maritime City, Maritime Culture?’ p. 89.
  \item \textsuperscript{316}David Taylor, \textit{Crime}, p. 49.
  \item \textsuperscript{318}\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 17\textsuperscript{th} April, 1868, 30\textsuperscript{th} May, 1874 and 19\textsuperscript{th} April, 1879.
  \item \textsuperscript{319}Michael Diamond, \textit{Victorian Sensation, or the Spectacular, the Shocking and the Scandalous in Nineteenth-Century Britain}, London, Anthem Press, 2003, p. 189.
\end{itemize}
graphic form the immoral actions of the working class attacking the very heart of the middle-class establishment and helping to promote a ‘conservative didacticism’ that equated working class males with barbarity of action.320

Image 8:  *Illustrated Police News, 1st May, 1869.*

Source:  Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages than Men’, p. 169.321

According to Martin Wiener the perceived barbarity of working-class behaviour increased with the proliferation of newspaper publications, popular literature, increasing literacy, the invention of the steam press and the progressive legislation such as the removal of advertising duty in 1853, stamp duty in 1855 and paper duty in 1861.322 Now all people had access and even respectable middle-class women were exposed to the debauchery of the

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322 Martin Wiener, ‘Convicted Murderers’, p. 110; Gretchen Souderland, *Sex Trafficking, Scandal and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885-1917*, University of Chicago, Chicago Press, 2013, p. 32. Also through short sensational novels from the 1860s onwards, see Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation*, p. 189, through serialisations in newspaper weeklies such as *Clark’s Weekly Dispatch*; Graham Law, ‘Nothing but a Newspaper,’ *The Contested Space of Serial Fiction in the 1840s,* in Laurel Brake and Julie Codell, eds., *Encounters*, p. 44 and in monthlies such as *The Cornhill, Temple Bar and Macmillan’s*, see Sally Mitchell, ‘Sentiment and Suffering: Women’s Recreational Reading in the 1860s’, *Victorian Studies*, October, 1st, 1977, p. 29.
lower class through specific sections for women in newspapers. Working class readers themselves could increasingly read of their own class’ fictional and real depravity in the ‘penny bloods’, plagiarised and miniaturised versions of middle class weeklies, alongside the plethora of working class newspapers, especially after the repeal of newspaper taxes. Martin Hewitt shows that increasing commonality between the established and cheap working-class papers meant that all classes were aware of the same societal issues. ‘New journalism’ exposed readers to sensationalism which was not available in the fairly staid reporting of the first half of the nineteenth century, in part due to William T. Steads exposure of ‘white slavery’ through the publication of his *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*. The sensationalism of the barbarity of working-class people sold papers and anything that would differentiate the lower class from their middle-class readership was printed. Papers played up to the stereotypical imagery of working-class people and the tone of many reports was very often condescending and ridiculing of working-class people. The *Bristol Mercury* was just as guilty of this. A Bristol hotel porter, Robert Williams, beat his wife up with a hairbrush and at his court appearance got so angry, calling her names and trying to get his shoe off to throw at her with a comical description of him falling over in the process. Another report playing up the farcical drama of the working class was when a labourer tried to get on to a train without having a ticket for his dog. Instead of that being the reason the guard, Mr. Body, would not let the dog on because it did not have a proper chain and collar. Mr. Body threw the passenger and the dog off but then the man’s wife got involved, holding the dog up to Mr. Body’s throat and threatening to set it on him. Mr Body retaliated by giving her a thumping and then other passengers got involved refusing to allow the dog into their carriage.

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327 Sensationalism was also available in song, drama, freak shows and exhibitions, even in waxworks found all over Britain, epitomised by Madam Tussaud’s, Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation*, p. 163.


329 Gretchen Souderland, *Sex Trafficking*, p. 24. Other newspapers followed in this ‘new journalism’ and sensational use of language. Local press such as the *Bristol Mercury* increasingly carried stories from the London police courts, especially, as Drew Gray proposes, papers after 1868 could no longer report on the actual executions of criminals and therefore sensationalised even more the reports of the events and the trials, Drew Gray, ‘Gang Crime and the Media,’ p. 565. Martin Wiener suggests that it was also in the courtrooms and there was a correlation between the harsher sentencing of judges with the tone of murder case reporting in the press, Martin Wiener, ’Convicted Murderers’, p. 111.

330 *Bristol Mercury*, 2nd January, 1895.

331 *Bristol Mercury*, 2nd October, 1875.
Given the sailor degeneracy portrayed in the press, but also in fiction, it is little wonder that sailors were thought to be incapable, thieving inebriated thugs.\textsuperscript{332} It was thought that urban working-class culture constructed an inferior human being unworthy of being classed as a respectable citizen. Whilst some Bristol sailors would reside in the residuum most would not and even in their offending, rather than be part of a professional ‘criminal class’, they were unlikely to be socially and culturally different to other members of the working class, as Barry S. Godfrey and Paul Lawrence are one of the latest to argue.\textsuperscript{333} This Chapter in discussing the historiography of elements of working-class culture that are particularly pertinent to sailors has generally agreed with their views. The next chapters do likewise and investigate these aspects in more detail, starting with a major discussion on social and familial contexts.


\textsuperscript{333} Barry S. Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, \textit{Crime and Justice Since 1750}, London, Routledge, 2015, p. 117.
Chapter Two: Working-Class Sailors

Image 9: An early view of Bristol in the age of sail by J. Varrall, 1830.
Source: Bristol Archives Collection.

Introduction

This Chapter addresses the central point of Robert Lee’s concern that the societal and familial contexts of sailors’ lives ashore have been neglected in historical research. It does this by relocating their everyday existence away from maritime space and culture towards urban space and within working-class culture and in so doing goes someway to debunk the stereotypical perception of ‘Bachelor Jack’.\(^{334}\) It takes aspects of working-class life and culture to show sailors as being typical of Bristol’s variant working class and immersed into urban culture and not just maritime culture. The choice of themes made is because they encompass a representative range of familial and societal situations, behaviours and circumstances that are typical of the working man.

Firstly, it is important to discuss their actual physical location and presence in the city, because the urban context of sailors cannot be investigated without reference to their intermixing with other people and with the infrastructures of space. The typical view of the sailor is that he did what sailors did amongst other sailors in a demarcated sailortown area. However, it is argued that Bristol’s sailor were a ubiquitous familiarity on the residential, commercial and civic streets of the city, not just maritime streets, and therefore they were an integrated reality in the lives of other working-class and indeed middle-class people.

Furthermore, it is argued that other residents of the city shared the same spaces and streets as that typically thought of as being the domain of sailors. Space was shared multi-functional space with a diverse ownership and not an exclusive sailors’ enclave. Crucial to the mixing of sailors and non-sailors is that there were physical forces in play that pushed sailors away from the waterfront towards urban working-class areas. Because of the physical, geographical and topographical development of the city, Bristol’s city docks were an integrated physical feature of the centre of the city where other citizens lived out their lives. Sailors were literally delivered into civic space by their ships and from the moment of disembarkation were forced to negotiate their presence in relation to ‘ordinary’ citizens, going about their own daily lives.

This is not to say that the public houses, brothels and lodging houses did not attract certain types of sailors to waterside streets but it will be argued that these stereotypical haunts of sailors were shared with other working-class groups and had to compete with civic institutions and city centre businesses for space. The compactness of the area, hemmed in by water, limited the amount of sailortown businesses that could physically fit into it and this had the effect of pushing sailors away from the waterfront into the wider-working class areas of the city.\(^{335}\) Stan Hugill’s ‘world of sordid pleasure, unlimited vice and lashings of booz,’ was therefore somewhat restricted.\(^{336}\) Similarly, as well as the topographical position of the rivers Avon and Frome doing this, man-made alterations, namely the digging of the New Cut and Cumberland Basin between 1806 and 1808, stretched the area of sailor activity out to the west of the city. Whilst sailortstreets provided only a mediocre Fiddler’s Green, engineered new waterways pulled sailors towards the west and south of the city into working-class areas.

Another aspect of working-class culture is their residency and because this study recognises the main tenets of the spatial turn discussed in the previous chapter, in particular that identities can be fashioned through interactions within distinct spatial geographies, this chapter considers where sailors actually lived on shore. Census returns and spatial mapping of sailors will show that sailors consciously removed themselves from the quays into dispersed working-class communities and mainly lived with members of other occupational groups, not sailors. In so doing, they were distancing themselves from maritime culture and by choosing to reside and mix with other working-class people, sailors had considerable agency in situating themselves in urban culture.

To certain extents, this was dependent on the familial circumstances of the sailor, his age, marital status, ethnicity and his maritime occupational role. It will be shown that a majority of Bristol’s sailors were sailors returning to their homeport and were of an age and marital status that led to most forgoing the company of other sailors to go home to their families. This was not always easy but also not surprising and therefore a more nuanced argument is proposed that they were doing so to espouse the respectable masculinity of the second

half of the nineteenth century. The domestic arrangements of sailors represents a different kind of sailor to the perceived stereotypical Jack ashore, wasting his time and money in ‘a Fiddler’s Green of pubs, dance halls, groggeries and brothels [on] some Shit Street, an effluent maze of alleys found in sailortowns throughout the world’. It might be assumed therefore, that sailortestreets were left to other types of sailors, single, transient and foreign ones, but it will be argued that these too, and not just home sailors, were also more inclined not to linger around the water.

An important part of working-class respectability was being in employment and being able to provide for the family. It will be shown that many Bristol sailors had a positive attitude towards work, evidenced for example by being regularly employed by the same employers. It will also be shown, although the evidence does not allow for a systematic investigation of sailors’ on shore work, that some sailors took up other employment opportunities either between voyages or as an alternative to sailing. Newspapers, the records of some of Bristol’s institutions and oral testimony, give some insights into sailors’ alternative employment.

Outside of work, how sailors chose to spend their leisure time is an important social and familial context and further situates sailors in working-class culture. Leisure is many faceted and it is only possible to consider some aspects of this. The choice is partly determined by the availability of sources and it is unfortunate that there are very little existent for sailors’ recreational pursuits. Evidence does exist, however, in the form of records of criminality for the two most stereotypical pastimes of sailors, drinking and using prostitutes. These are investigated to suggest that although sailors obviously did partake, they did not do so disproportionately and were no more of a problem to the city’s elites than any other occupational group. On the contrary, one other aspect that positively enhances sailors’ reputation in the city was leisure time spent in self-motivated betterment, such as by taking the educational opportunities provided by civic and charitable authorities, including those offered by the Society of Merchant Venturers.

Sailors’ leisure activities give an insight into the extent to which sailors integrated into the culture of the city and demonstrate a shared cultural identity with other working-class groups. In doing so sailors were exercising considerable agency in fashioning how they lived their lives but this was not always possible. Therefore, this chapter will also argue that alongside other working-class people, Bristol’s sailors experienced less welcome aspects of urban culture. Not all sailors had families to go to or could get jobs, some were too welded to the bottle to consider self-betterment and personal dignity, others were sick in body and mind. Just as with sailors’ criminality discussed in Chapters Five and Six, it is important to balance the positive efforts to attain respectability with other aspects of urban culture that were both less attractive and most often out of a sailor’s control. In arguing that sailors were needful as any other of the remedial help of the city’s hospitals, asylum and

337 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. 72.
workhouses, a fuller picture of the immersing of sailors in urban cultural contexts is afforded.

**Societal Contexts: Contested Space**

The exclusivity of a sailortown area around the water, and sailors’ penchant for staying in it, is a stereotypical perception of a port city. Sailortowns’ tightly packed streets, teeming with sailors unleashed from the confines of their ships, were extensively chronicled in Stan Hugill’s *Sailortown*. However, Bristol’s sailors lived the reality of their existence not in an exclusive sailortown playground for sailors but did so alongside the activity of non-sailors in waterside areas, in central civic areas and also in dispersed working-class areas. The main reason for this is the shaping of the city by water, which gave Bristol a restricted, compact, insular and intimate identity in its centre but also drew out its sailors westwards along Hotwell Road to Cumberland Basin. As Stan Hugill says, the serpentine nature of the city’s rivers and the wharves and quays alongside them meant that the seafaring fraternity was somewhat scattered which meant a wider dispersal and greater ubiquitousness of sailors among others.

Hotwells was notorious for its pubs, in 1871, it had 30 pubs within a quarter of a mile and as ships were moored alongside its streets waiting to proceed into the city (Image 10), the area accommodated waiting sailors.

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338 Stan Hugill, *Sailortown*.
339 Stan Hugill, *Sailortown*, p. 34.
Image 10: A ship moored along Hotwells Road
Source: Bristol Harbour side, Paul Townend Collection.
www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/albums.

In the city, the Rivers Frome and Avon framed the central area (Map 3), and this meant that city space had to be shared between the civic and maritime functions of the city.341

Map 3: Bristol’s Waterways, 1876.
Source: Bristol Central Library Collection.

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Space was therefore tight for the multi-functions of a modernising city and for any true sailortown. Stan Hugill’s hand drawn map (Map 4), shows the resulting location of a restricted sailor quarter within this insular city space, which sailors had to share with everyone else. Streets around the water were therefore not an exclusive sailortown nor indeed did they constitute a ‘sailor quarter’. Up until 1976 when the city centre docks closed, mercantile business happened amongst other businesses and leisure activity and sailors’ ships placed sailors in the middle of it all, negotiating the same civic space as other people.

Map 4:  Map drawn by Stan Hugill of Bristol’s Sailor Quarter.


Ships could advance right into the centre of town and did not have to offload sailors into separate demarcated, walled areas (Image 11). The lack of walls or other physical structures that in other ports separated sailors from other residents in clearly defined areas, thereby providing an arena for conspicuous behaviour, was absent. This allowed translation between agency and structure and indeed sailors, as historical geographers of the spatial turn would argue, also created the space they lived their lives in, as did their ships,

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342 Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City.
343 Graeme Milne suggests a similar situation in Antwerp, Graeme Milne, People, Place and Power, p. 23.
344 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. 34.
346 Nigel Thrift, Spatial Formations, p. 63.
interacting with the central area and focus of the city and bringing a physical architectural presence with their masts matching the heights of surrounding buildings (Image 12).  

The close proximity of water with commercial, residential and recreational brick facilitated sailors’ societal interaction with other members of the public and therefore made Bristol’s port and urban interface less of a liminal space than other ports. Bristol’s sailors were not ‘physically and culturally marginalised from the centres of economic and political power’, which was often the case in naval towns. This resulted in a less distinct sailor identity and diluted the collective behaviours that challenged Victorian social mores and morality and which characterised sailors in other ports. Instead, they took their place in a city built on water. It always had been; Alexander Pope visited in 1739 and wrote about being amazed at seeing ships apparently in the middle of the street and a correspondent to the Morning Leader nearly two hundred years later in March 1911 would have agreed, opining that,

‘There is no other port in the kingdom, not even London, in which ships and buildings, the municipal offices, and the sailors’ grog shops, land and water, are so intimately mingled. Bristol is, in fact, afloat’.

Image 11: A sailing vessel passing a moored steam vessel and residential housing on the approach to the city centre, docks circa 1880.


349 Peter Malpass, The Making of Victorian Bristol, p. 174. He would probably have been talking about Broad Quay, which was and is (although now filled in) surrounded on both sides by buildings.
Bristol’s sailors were therefore an integrated presence in the working population of a busy city and notwithstanding Bristol’s insularity, sailor and ship numbers, although not as large as in London or Liverpool, were not small. Kennerley calculates that the number of ships and sailors coming into Bristol daily in 1865 was 20.4 ships and 76 men. In 1863, there were 3,465 men registered as sailors in Bristol; 2,900 were British and of these 719 were born in Bristol, 464 being foreign sailors. Sailors added to the numbers of people already connected to the water. It is estimated that in the early 1860s, 10,000 passengers a week passed up and down the River Avon in steamboats. In 1861, 1871 and 1891, merchant sailors constituted 3.6%, 3.1%, and 1.9% of the total male population of Bristol respectively, compared with Britain as a whole at 2.4%, 2.3% and 1.9%, although these figures are prone

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351 Alston Kennerley, Welfare, p. 97. With steam, the number of seamen coming into Britain grew by 97% between 1865 and 1905, 3950 to 7797 daily, Alston Kennerley, Welfare, p. 101.
353 A Bristol Calendar, (no author), January 1858 to May 1864, p. 303.
to inaccuracies because of the changes in occupational classification between censuses. Sailors were a ubiquitous part of this maritime community, which in itself was a part of a wider mercantile one. As W. G. Neal says,

‘In truth the Port of Bristol is and has been from time out of memory a community of men from the inwards pilot and Bristol crews to the men moving cargo in ships’ holds or ashore and from the many within the docks to those without in the city offices of ship-owners, merchants, warehousemen and brokers’.  

This was perhaps too much for one woman who was less tolerant of the seafaring presence, compelled to write a letter of complaint to the Bristol Mercury complaining about steam hooters sounding from ships on New Year’s Eve. Space was limited for all these people, seafarers and others alike, and space was certainly compromised for the stereotypical behaviours of sailors. Even if streets around the quays contained the prerequisites of sailortown, being in the city centre they were also the location of some major city institutions and business premises in a space roughly half a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. These buildings occupied physical space but they also imposed a reminder of civic authority and civil respectability. It is quite possible that the close juxtaposition of buildings having varied functions and containing people from all classes and professions had a sobering effect on the activities of sailors and others on the streets, at least during some parts of the day, although less likely at night. Waterside streets were situated around Queen’s Square, which contained some of the grandest residences in the city, as well as offices and places of work (Image 13). In 1871 the Danish, American and Spanish Consuls lived there, alongside shipowners’ offices, the William Tapson Academy, Mrs. Prowse’s Ladies’ School, ships’ chandlers, corn merchants, a sail maker, a cooper, lodging houses, the Sailors’ Home (front entrance), the Postal Telegraph Office, the Civic Inland Revenue Office, the Bristol Docks Office and the Bristol Charities Office. Queen’s Square was thus shared space but also a space that presented, as Patrick Joyce would argue, an outward expression of civilised social order.


355 W. G. Neale, At the Port of Bristol, Volume Two, The Turn of the Tide, 1900-1914, Bristol, Port of Bristol Authority, 1968, p. 16.

356 Bristol Mercury, 13th December, 1899.

357 Louise Moon, Sailorhoods.

358 Report of an Enquiry by The Board of Trade into Working Class Rents, Housing and Retail Prices, Together with the Standard Rates of Wages Prevailing in Certain Occupations in The Principal Industrial Towns of the United Kingdom, 1905, p. 113.

359 Mathews Trade Directory, 1871. The location of the Sailors’ Home was of significance as discussed in Chapter Three.

Similarly, in 1871, nearby King Street contained nine public houses but also the public library, the Marine School, the Society of Merchant Venturers and St. Michaels Almshouses, Merchants Hall, King Street Hall and Coopers Hall and the Theatre (now the Bristol Old Vic). King Street was the nearest to the archetypal sailor town street that Bristol had but that imagery was further diluted by 1881 with the addition of the Danish Consulate and the offices of Guinness. Prince Street had 11 pubs and a lone temperance hotel but it also had an insurance agent, chemist, painter, ships’ agent, watch maker, ship portrait painter, nautical instrument maker, engraver, an architect, two wine merchants, tobacconists, tailors and bootmakers, three chandlers, ships’ carpenters and outfitters, the Seamen’s Institute and the Midland Railway Office. These other institutions not only took up physical space but also characterised streets around the water as multi-function areas with elements of respectability, rather than the stereotypical playground of sailors, at least during the daytime. In the evenings when shops, businesses and civic buildings were closed these streets were more likely to be the scene of ‘uncivilised behaviours. Unsurprisingly, many sailors’ convictions for being drunk and disorderly were for incidences in and outside pubs at closing time. However, during the day, sailors were in civic space frequented by citizens of the city and although we cannot say with certainty that anybody deliberately modified their behaviours accordingly, it is possible that they did so. This does not make Bristol unique of course, nor do civilising influences only impact sailors’ behaviours on its

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361 Matthews Directory, Bristol, 1871.
362 Matthews Directory, Bristol, 1881.
363 As one of many examples that could be given see Bristol Mercury 26th June, 1879. This incident resulted in a stabbing.
streets, but the compact, multi functioning nature of the centre of the city may well have given rise to more circumspect behaviours. Naturally, and shown elsewhere in this thesis, in respect of their residency, employment, church going and crime among other aspects of ordinary lives, sailors were dispersed throughout the city, not just in the centre of town. They and their behaviours were not confined to any sort of sailors’ enclave.

Sailors then, through their everyday existence and associated behaviours, were simultaneously an integrated presence in the wider city, city centre and on the streets by the water. This is a more nuanced interpretation of sailors’ behaviour but it is not to say that this was an absolute and sailors like other working-class people could when it suited them display occupational characteristics, as was the case elsewhere. Andrew Davies talks about the Monkey Parades in Manchester.\textsuperscript{364} However, research for this thesis does not give a sense of sailors exclusively occupying typical sailor space to any great extent nor claiming it through ostentatious displays of constructed sailor identity or performance of identity politics. Sailors were ubiquitous but not necessarily conspicuous, which is contrary to the views of some historians of other port towns.\textsuperscript{365} It would vary according to type of sailor and most conspicuous behaviours evidenced from newspaper coverage of court cases were exhibited by foreign sailors and especially when they used knives as discussed in Chapter Six.\textsuperscript{366} It will be shown that the press certainly played on the classic sailor stereotype and characterised foreign sailors in particular as dangerous, unprincipled and unmanly others.

It is impossible to state with certainty the extent that sailors’ exhibited behaviours were congruent with the behaviours of other working-class people. Sailors could simultaneously be rowdy drunk working-class people at the same time as being rowdy drunk sailors. At other times sailors’ behaviours would identify them as an othered presence, as newspapers reports of criminal activity referred to later testify. How they appeared could also set them apart, the seafarer’s swagger being a performative masculine spectacle, was instantly recognisable. But the nature of the streets provided to an extent the conditions that facilitated integration of sailors with others. Bristol does not have its own, ‘Oh, as I wuz a-rollin’ down (add name of street)’ verse that every other port seemingly had on its broadsides and it certainly did not have the violent character of a Cardiff Tiger Bay with its ‘dirt and danger’, ‘colonies of foreign sailors,\textsuperscript{367} knuckle dusters on sale in the shops’, where a seamen ‘returning to his ship ... rarely made it but was commonly found slugged off with

\textsuperscript{364} Andrew Davies, \textit{Leisure, Gender and Poverty}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{366} Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’.
\textsuperscript{367} Although if there was any concept of a sailor identity it was largely portrayed through the violent activity of certain races of foreign sailors, as is discussed in Chapter Six.
a knife in his back’. Nor were there particular notorious sailors’ pubs to compare with the 
Prussian Eagle on London’s Ratcliffe Highway or the House of Blazes in Cardiff or Tom’s Hall in Liverpool. The closest equivalents, and still remaining, although now more likely to cater for the lunchtime excesses of office workers and for tourists who have replaced sailors as targets for ‘bleeding of the gullible’, were the Hole in the Wall on the Grove and Llandoger Trow on King Street, but these were not the preserve of just sailors as pubs in other ports seemed to be. These other sailortowns had their own characteristics fashioned through many factors including their size, location and cargoes, so it should be noted that there are limits on their usefulness for comparative purposes to Bristol.

Nevertheless, other sailortowns are still important for contextualising Bristol’s sailors in a wider understanding of their lives on shore. Bristol’s sailors were squeezed out and did not linger in this masculine space alongside other sailors and their time on shore indicates a more integrated existence with people from other occupational groups. Indeed, the majority of Bristol’s sailors eschewed what was on offer and went home, leaving the businesses of sailortowns to more transient sailors and mostly those still working on sailing vessels. It has been argued that these were more inclined to carry on the stereotypical behaviours of sailors, maintaining a seafaring identity through expressions of masculinity such as using prostitutes, getting drunk and fighting in sailortown. However, most sailors went back to close knit communities with the neighbourhood being a base of stability in which density of contacts and bonding of the working class could happen.

**Societal Contexts: Residency, Family and Marriage**

Sailors, then, had significant agency in locating themselves away from the businesses of sailortown which facilitated their integration into working-class cultures of the city. To investigate this in detail a case study of the 1881 census returns has been carried out and the data on residency and their homes is given in Figure 1. Accuracy cannot be sure, however. What is meant by home is debatable and it would have meant different things to different sailors. As Alston Kennerley points out sailors could have multiple homes when on land, almost always living in rented accommodation between voyages. Whether a home or lodgings sailors could muster three or four addresses: a genuine home address, a local port

368 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, pp. 128-131. Nor would ‘every night ... a body of a sailor, robbed and beaten to death ... be found in the gutter’, p. 120.

369 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, pp. 118, 130 and 110.

370 David Hilling, ‘Socio-economic Change in the Maritime Quarter’, pp. 33 and 35. See Laura Balderstone, Graeme Milne and Rachel Mulhearn, ‘Memory and place on the Liverpool waterfront’, for a discussion on sailortown culture remaining in a port city.


373 Mike Savage and Andrew Miles, The Remaking of the British Working Class, p. 64.

374 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881.
address (most likely in a boarding house), on board the ship about to be joined or even on board the last ship if still in port. Occupational definitions also need some explanation. All entries in the 1881 census for sailor, seaman and mariner were analysed. Where it was possible to distinguish engineers, captains, stewards, cooks, firemen, masters and mates as seamen, they have also been included. Only three obvious marine engineers are listed (among railway, hot water, artisan, telegraph, civil and mechanical) although helpfully the enumerator has written seamen on most entries of engineer. Similarly, unless ‘seamen’ is written on the form, fireman could mean a fireman at a distillery, gashouse, galvanised works, on a railway engine or a stationary engine. Mates could refer to blacksmith’s mate and only one that was not also recorded under ‘mariner’ was noted. No ship’s carpenter was included as it was impossible to tell whether they were a shipwright on shore or a carpenter taken on voyages (if they went with the ships ship carpenters were often in charge of the anchors). Twenty-two ship stewards have been included. No marine coal trimmer was recorded by the enumerators, although there were plenty of clothes, coach, cast iron and tailor’s trimmers. There was only one ship’s cook, no donkeymen and no boatswains.

The data does little to perpetuate the perception of sailors wanting to be centralised around the businesses of sailorstreets and are suggestive of sailors choosing to live with other working-class people in a variety of settings. Work by Martin Daunton on Cardiff reveals a highly segregated seafaring workforce and also a high degree of segregation along ethnic lines. More generally, Robert Lee with Richard Lawton, bearing in mind their study has an international emphasis, say that incomers into port cities in the nineteenth century were characterised by a marked degree of residential segregation with initial settlement at least associated with low socio-economic status, poor housing and overcrowding. This was not the case with Bristol’s sailors whether initially or more long term and there is no conclusive pattern of ethnic segregation.

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375 Alston Kennerley, Seamen and Their Homes, p. 128.
376 Martin Daunton, Cardiff, 1870-1914, Leicester, Leicester University, 1977.
378 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married, Head of Household, with or without children having sole occupancy.</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married, Head of Household, with or without children living in co-residency with non-sailing families.</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married, Head of Household, with or without children living in co-residency with other sailing families.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, living with parents, brother or uncle having sole occupancy.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, living with parents, brother or uncle in co-residency (none of these contained other sailors).</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, lodging with a sailing family having sole occupancy.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, lodging with a non-sailing family having sole occupancy.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, lodging with other sailors in co-residency.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, lodging with non-sailors in co-residency.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, living in the Sailors’ Home.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, living in public houses.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>417</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1:** Chart Showing Sailors’ Residency in 1881.

**Source:** Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881.

The total of 417 will not be the true figure. Notwithstanding enumerating errors and uncooperative sailors, many sailors remained on board. Counting the numbers of sailors on board is problematic in itself but on census night in 1881, there were 102 craft that were crewed by more than one sailor moored in the three docks, upriver or lying in Kingroad (Bristol Channel). The total number of crew that remained on board was 565 who were largely transient sailors. A further 194 crew went ashore and presumably were part of the 417 enumerated on land. Therefore, there were in the region of one thousand sailors enumerated on census night and if not on board their ships, the majority were living in some kind of family situation, which suggests that in a city the size of Bristol sailors may not have exercised the city authorities too much.

Within these co-residential, family occupied houses, Bristol’s sailors were more inclined to share space with non-sailors and therefore a substantial degree of assimilation with other occupational groups occurred. This is in contrast to the findings of other studies that have looked at the residential patterns of sailors, albeit in different contexts. Martin Daunton’s method of indices of residential segregation in his study of Cardiff shows a much higher degree of residential segregation between different occupational groups than in Bristol. Valerie Burton’s research into Southampton’s late nineteenth and early twentieth sailors

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380 Census Enumerator Books, Vessels, Bristol, 1881.
on cruise liners also shows that seafarers took lodgings with other manual workers. However, her findings much more strongly imply non-integration tendencies, with sailors preferring to live with other sailors, evidencing that that a third of sailors staying in private households lodged with other seafarers or their wives often because they came from Southampton, from south-west counties or even the same village.\textsuperscript{383}

That is not to say that some Bristol’s sailors were not living around the water with other sailors; King Street in 1871, had 12 houses of multiple occupancy in which 25 sailors lived with 69 other working adults of mixed occupations.\textsuperscript{384} Among them were the usual labourers, servants, laundresses, dressmakers, charwomen, tailors, clerks and porters and an auctioneer, a staymaker, a milliner, a cooper, a painter, a gas fitter, a general dealer, a hawker, a coach painter, a publican, a watchman, a waistcoat maker, a smith and even an artist’s assistant. As an example of a house on the street ten years later, one boatswain, originally from Wells in Somerset, lived at number 30 King Street with his wife and five children alongside a carpenter, three dressmakers, a clerk, a labourer, a boatman, a docker and a ship’s smith.\textsuperscript{385}

However, single sailors also had a tendency to reside with people from other occupational groups. Figure 1 shows that only 3.4\% of single sailors chose to live with other single sailors in lodgings and 10.3 \% of single sailors preferred to live apart from other sailors. The fact that only 1.7\% chose to live in a family headed by a sailor also indicates an ambivalence to sharing with other sailors. The total number of different residences that sailors occupied on census night in 1881 was 375 and of these only 14 contained two or more sailors, which demonstrates the same inclination to live away from other sailors and a willingness to share with people from other working-class occupations.

None of this is conducive to sailors maintaining a distinct seafaring identity or perpetuating seafaring culture. The highest number of sailors in one residency was seven sailors out of 24 residents in 7 Prince Street. Only three of the 14 houses had more than two sailors in them, the rest had just two. Of these, four of them were foreign sailors, which suggests that even transient foreign sailors did not stereotypically stay around the haunts of sailortown. Not that numbers of foreign sailors was over burdensome. Crew lists for 1863 indicate that there were only 464 foreign sailors out of a total of 3465 sailors registered in Bristol. This number included 70 Germans, 67 Swedes, 50 Americans, 40 Norwegians, 37 Canadians, 30 Italians, 25 Belgians and Dutch, 20 Danes, 16 Greeks, 12 Africans, 10 South Americans, Poles, French and Maltese, six Australians and New Zealanders, East Indians and Finns, four Indians, one Swiss, Chinese, Russian and Syrian and others with unstated ethnicity. \textsuperscript{386} It has been estimated that there were 13.7 foreign sailors out of every 100 sailors on British ships.

\textsuperscript{383} Valerie Burton, \textit{Work and Home Life of Seafarers}, pp. 197-201, 278-279.
\textsuperscript{384} Matthews Directory, 1871.
\textsuperscript{385} \textit{Census Enumerator Books}, Bristol, 1881.
\textsuperscript{386} Barbara Austen, ‘The Merchant Seamen of Bristol’. 
in 1880, rising to 21.1 by 1900, but on census night of 1881, only 37 foreign sailors were enumerated in Bristol, with a further 110 remaining on board. These included one sailor from Sweden, Gibraltar, Italy, Trinidad, Sierra Leone, France, West Indies, and West Indies; two from Spain and Finland; three from America; four from Denmark; six from Germany and Canada and seven from Norway. These numbers are proportionally less than in other port cities. For example, it is ten years later but this equates to 8.9% of all sailors in port, 15% if the numbers of sailors who stayed on board are added, in contrast to the 30% of foreign sailors residing in the Ratcliffe Highway district of London in 1891.

Of the 1881 cohort, four of the 37 were in relatively respectable accommodation in the Sailors’ Home; others were in other types of accommodation including lodging with non-seafaring families. Of these, two, a German and a Canadian, had wives living with them, which suggests they may have been permanent residents and the rest were scattered across the city in 23 separate addresses. Only four foreign sailors were staying in a public house, in the Britannia on King Street. Indeed sailors in general seemed to eschew staying in public houses. In 1881, there were only 11 sailors living in nine public houses in the whole of the city on census night and only two of these had more than one sailor in. The Duke of Devonshire in Great Anne Street only had a sailor listed because he happened to be the publican and the Bell in Guinea Street likewise had a sailor staying only because his wife was the innkeeper. Oddly, a master mariner was staying at the Ostrich Inn in Guinea Street with his whole family, children as well and they were the only people staying that night. Ten years earlier in King Street in 1871, there were nine public houses but on census night only the Llandoger Trow with one sailor resident and The Royal Navy Volunteer with five, had sailors staying. This therefore is contrary to the stereotypical view of sailors’ relationship with drinking establishments.

The 1881 data indicates a preference for living in domesticated, family circumstances and this is indicative of the number of married sailors in Bristol. It is argued throughout this study that many sailors were aspirational for working-class respectability and marriage was a way towards this. In 1881, sixty-nine percent of Bristol’s sailors were married and returned from sea to live with their wives, with or without children, in their own houses or in co-residence with other families, all but 20 being British. The same is evident a decade earlier in 1871. In King Street, 12 out of the 25 sailors listed as living on the street lived with their

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388 *Census Enumerator Books*, Bristol, 1881.
390 *Census Enumerator Books*, Bristol, 1881. Others were the Ship Inn, Anchor Lane, one sailor staying; The Royal Talbot, Victoria Street, one sailor staying; Bacchus Inn, Temple St, one sailor staying out of six people in total; The Cardigan Arms, King Street, only two residents, one of them a sailor; The Jolly Sailor, Guinea Street, Britannia, King Street, three sailors staying, two Norwegians and one from Finland.
391 These two pubs are still in operation. The Royal Navy Volunteer’s resident sailors were one Irish, one German, one Dutch, one American and a lone British sailor from Hastings. *Census Enumerator Books*, Bristol, 1881.
families. Sailors and his family residing with another family were doing so as a related or non-related ‘co-residing group’. Defining ‘co-residency’, a ‘census family’, or indeed a ‘house’ was as problematical to census enumerators as they are to historians interpreting their data, so caution is required as to accuracy. A house might be a building with divided, partitioned or party walls; it might be single storey or have multiple floors and might have exclusive or shared bedrooms. However, when combined with 12.4% of single sailors also living in some kind of house that had a family in it, over four-fifths of sailors lived with a family (Figure 2).

![Graph Showing the Residency of Sailors in Bristol, 3rd April 1881](image)

**Figure 2:** Graph showing residency of Sailors, 1881.
**Source:** Census Enumerator Books, 1881.

Being married and having a family would have had an influence on a sailor’s behaviour. The amount of criminal convictions for neglect of family shown in Chapter Five clearly shows that this was not always the case but marriage would have given a degree of normal respectability. Lee points out that by 1891, 46% of British sailors were either married or once married but in Bristol, the proportion was higher. In Bristol, 286 sailors were married in 1881, showed proportionally in Figure 3 and a high propensity to marriage is also indicated in the age range of Bristol’s sailors. Older sailors having gone through the seafaring cycle of early entry to retirement were more likely to be married. The ages of the 286 married sailors are shown in Figure 4, revealing most lying in the 25-40 age range,

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394 Peter H. Fricke, *Seafaring and Community*, p. 4.
which should have at least tempered behaviours for some. Barbara Austen’s work also shows that in 1863, with the youngest sailor being 10 and the oldest 70, the largest number of sailors was in the 16-35 age range, optimal for marriage and for having children.\

**Figure 3**: Proportion of married to single sailors.

**Source**: Census Enumerator Books, 1881.

**Figure 4**: Graph Showing ages of Married sailors.

**Source**: Census Enumerator Books 1881.

For married, older sailors having a decent home was a normal aspirational part of working-class culture and the type and quality of accommodation increasingly mattered. Some may have owned their own houses, as by the turn of the century two-third of a house’s cost was

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available on mortgage to those who could put up the other third. Alternatively, they may have been the main tenant, ‘farming’ the house out to other tenants.\textsuperscript{396} Other sailors married or not will have taken rooms in lodgings and boarding houses of varying quality.\textsuperscript{397} In September 1852 the Bristol Board of Health called low lodging houses ‘crowded receptacles’, found in low neighbourhoods which ‘have long been known as nurseries of disease and filth’.\textsuperscript{398} Characterising and counting lodging houses is of course problematic despite the regulating functions of the 1851 \textit{Common Lodging House Act} and the 1871 \textit{Prevention of Crimes Acts} and \textit{Public Health Act} 1875. They may have been just a room or two over a shop or for a cheaper option, unattached sailors may have stayed in more squalid lodging houses that were primarily for the lowest of the working classes, hawkers, vagrants, beggars, out of work itinerants, the sick and other general outcasts. They may also have been brothels but the extent to which lodging houses and public houses were used as brothels is again impossible to say, although the 1871 \textit{Prevention of Crimes Act}, which allowed prosecution of landlords for brothel keeping, may have reduced it.\textsuperscript{399} Whatever the quality, the number of lodging houses available to sailors is indeterminable and unreliable. In 1862 there were 236 known common lodging houses according to a report in the \textit{Bristol Mercury}\textsuperscript{400} but in \textit{Mathews Directory} there were over a hundred less.\textsuperscript{401} In February 1882, the Bristol Sanitary Authority counted only 36 registered and 23 non-registered common lodging houses,\textsuperscript{402} whereas in \textit{Mathews} the number was 126. It is unsurprising that so few are evident in the census and directories because proprietors would come under the auspices of housing acts if they declared themselves as lodging houses. Having to pay a fine not exceeding £5 for non-registration under the terms of the 1875 act was obviously not much of a deterrent to non-registration.

According to the \textit{Reports of the Medical Officer of Health of the Sanitary Condition of the City and County of Bristol and the Port}, in 1885, 1886, 1887, 1892, 1893, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1910 and 1911 there were 68, 62, 57, 50, 47, 35, 40, 46, 42, 44 and 41 registered lodging houses listed respectively.\textsuperscript{403} But these figures and others like them do not include the countless unofficial lodgings in all manner of buildings and there are no separate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{396} Madge Dresser, ‘People’s Housing in Bristol’, p. 142.
\item \textsuperscript{397} See P. M. Tillott, ‘Sources of Inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses’, in E. A. Wrigley, ed., \textit{Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods}, pp. 112-116.
\item \textsuperscript{398} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 25\textsuperscript{th} September, 1852. A Mission Workers’ Convention in 1888 heard from a worker amongst the poor about one lodging house in St. Jude's that had 96 people living in it. \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 14\textsuperscript{th} March, 1888.
\item \textsuperscript{400} Compared with 184 in Liverpool and 370 in Manchester, \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 29\textsuperscript{th} August, 1863. The provenance of these figures is not given.
\item \textsuperscript{401} \textit{Mathews Trade Directory}, 1861, pp. 313-315.
\item \textsuperscript{402} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} February, 1882.
\item \textsuperscript{403} \textit{Mathews Trade Directory}, 1882, pp. 329-330. In 1870 there were 131 lodging houses listed and 145 in 1891. \textit{Reports of the Medical Officer of Health of the Sanitary Condition of the City and County of Bristol and the Port}, various dates.
\end{itemize}
sections for sailors’ lodging houses in the trade directories for Bristol. But the licensed ones at least were mainly found away from the water. Of the 145 licensed lodging houses in 1891, 122 were in the affluent areas of Clifton, Durdham Down and Redland and some of Bristol’s sailors chose to live in them. Only four lodging houses were listed on sailor streets around the dock area, on Queen’s Square itself. In 1871, there was none on the main sailor streets of Welsh Back, King Street, Guinea Street, The Grove and Broad and Narrow Quays, although there were six on or around Prince Street and four in Queen’s Square. In 1881, only around 45 sailors were in residence on sailor streets and therefore the majority clearly chose to live in lodgings in other parts of the city. A woman reminiscing on her life as a child in Bristol recalls that the worst streets for lodging houses that sailors and others used, were Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and Wade Streets, not therefore typical sailor streets. She describes fights between sailors and she remembers following Chinese sailors who were cooks on the ships, down those streets, with their pigtails and sandals, calling them ‘Chinky, Chinky Chinaman’.

Sailors were dispersed in their accommodation and to some extent the quality of their lodgings would have been dependent on what they could afford and the regularity of employment to earn the money. Developments in steam technology on ships made getting a berth more certain, which facilitated sailors having a more settled, regular lifestyle. Whilst there were casual sailors, frolickers, adventurers, escapers, whose ideas of masculinity still lay in drinking, using prostitutes and fighting, there were also those who had done with all that, who took their career seriously, seeking promotion and providing for their families. Shipping tonnage in steam surpassed that of sail for the first time as early as 1869 in the foreign trade, and 1884 saw the number of sailors on steam ships first outnumber those on sailing vessels, which benefited sailors working out of Bristol with its dominance of long haul trading routes. The coastal trade was also crucial to Bristol and as coastal trading ships tended to be crewed by British crews, local sailors were more able to go home between voyages.

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404 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881.
405 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1891.
406 Mathews Trade Directory, 1891, pp. 481-482.
407 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1871.
408 Bristol People’s Oral History Project, 1980, Respondent R065, transcript, p. 14. Chinese sailors were particularly hated; see Martin Daunton, ‘Jack Ashore’, pp. 193-194, for how they were treated in Cardiff. There is not the space to discuss the concept of memory and space in depth but useful for a theoretical understanding of memory and urban structure see S. Hoelscher and D.H. Alderman, ‘Memory and place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship’, Social and Cultural Geography, 5, 2004, pp. 347–55.
409 Judith Fingard, Jack in Port, pp. 51-52.
410 Graeme Milne, People, Place and Power, p. 141.
Regularity of employment, regular pay, higher ratings and higher earnings meant that some sailors could reside in better quality housing and in more respectable neighbourhoods. It is possible to gain an understanding of where different ratings of sailors lived from the crew lists that after 1894 were legally obliged to contain the addresses of sailors. Map 5 summarises the spatial distribution of different ratings of sailors serving on the Jersey City, Menantic, Llandaff City, Douro, Kansas City, New York City and Wells City between 1896 and 1911.\textsuperscript{414}

\textsuperscript{414} Crew Lists held at the Bristol City Archives.
Map 5: The spatial distribution of different ratings of sailor on selected steam ships.
Source: Ships crew lists between 1895 and 1911.

Blue: Firemen and coal trimmers
Orange: Able seamen
Green: Cooks and stewards
Pink: Engineers
Yellow: Masters and mates
Very few sailors of any rating stayed around the water. The better class of sailor and likely better educated, older and married, lived further away from the water, radiating outwards from the focused sailor streets. Of the higher ‘class’ of engineers, masters and mates, two of them lived in Queen’s Square, thus further evidencing the respectability of this central civic space. But most of the higher ratings migrated towards the peripheries of the city to the comfortable suburbs of the north and west of the centre. Likewise, the maritime proletariat, lower ratings of sailors who were more akin to labourers stoking boilers or mining coal, tended to live amongst other working-class people in the city’s industrial southern area of Bedminster and in St. Jude’s and St. Phillip’s. Thus, in these patterns of dispersal, sailors were contributing to the residential segregation that was a significant characteristic of Bristol and they were exercising considerable agency in framing themselves as a constituent part of urban working-class geographies and cultures.

Societal Contexts: Employment, Home and Respectability

What sailors did when they got to working-class geographies is the subject of this section. The problem of situating sailors in urban environments is well known and as Daniel Vickers lamented,

‘Until ways are found to trace all ranks of merchant seamen to their homes the discreet adventures we happen upon in court records, newspapers, journals and the like will not be fully understood’.

Going home and maintaining relationships with familial members were problematical in itself but whether single or married, sailors were expected to spend varying amounts of time at home. Unfortunately, personal testimony of Bristol’s sailors that might give us an insight into how they felt about their home life is virtually non-existent. Only one traceable letter gives a sense of a sailor’s relationship with his family. A Bristol seaman, Frank Mogg, in a letter to his parents in August 1892, gave exact instructions of how he wanted his allotment dividing up per month: 30 shillings for father, 20 for mother, 10 for his sister Flory and five each for sister Milly and brother Tony. He tells of missing his dog terribly and his total faith in God. He is sad at being deceived by his young lady who had not written to him.

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415 The dots at the edges of the map do not show the exact location of domicile but indicate residences off the map, further out away from the city centre and waterfront.
416 Brad Beaven’s proletariat of the steam age, Brad Beaven, ‘From Jolly Sailor’.
420 Alston Kennerley argues the centricity and importance of literate sailors keeping up correspondence with loved ones at home, Alston Kennerley, Seamen and Their Homes, p. 132.
421 Bundle of letters in miscellaneous items, Bristol Archives, 1892.
in 125 days of voyaging round the Cape. A later letter expressed sadness at how his parents had shunned him since he got married to a girl that they thought was unsuitable.\(^{422}\)

These were personal sentiments and there were potential difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships and adapting back to home life for all the family. The oral testimony of a woman born in 1900 remembers her sailor father being a hard man who gave regular beatings and making her sell flowers on the streets, not letting her return home until she had sold them all. He didn’t drink though and belted any of the children who swore.\(^{423}\)

Robert Langdon, a Bristol sailor, describes being back on shore ‘irksome’, especially with the nagging of his girlfriend who did not want him to go to sea again.\(^{424}\)

Kennerley notes there was only so much usefulness around the house that could be made of. Wives and families got used to sailor husbands being away and lack of mutual interests to discuss could separate them from those on land.\(^{425}\) This is unfortunate because with the turn to steam families had to get used to sailors being at home more. Kennerley calculates that before the First World War, a foreign going vessel’s average time at sea was under four months\(^{426}\) and the more regular employment patterns that steam afforded gave sailors a greater potential for displaying the respectability of patriarchy, sober, self-controlled, responsible bread winner.\(^{427}\)

Whether sailors or indeed any workers were expected to live up to the pre-requisite characteristics of intellectual energy, moral purpose, sexual purity and Christian values inherent in the code of manliness laid down by Mathew Arnold, is debatable.\(^{428}\) Nevertheless, if sailors were to be accepted as an example of this better class of working man and to be able to emulate the middle class in their pursuit of domesticity,\(^{429}\) it demanded a change of attitude on the part of sailors towards, for example, providing adequate money for the family to live on.\(^{430}\)

Sailors had been encouraged to save and remit money through a savings bank for sailors established by the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 but there had always been informal arrangements for saving money.\(^{431}\)

In Bristol, the landlord of the Brittania Tavern in King Street, Joseph Packer, was well known for keeping money for sailors.\(^{432}\) Sailors also made use of the financial services of the Bristol Sailors’ Home, as sailors did in other homes. In

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\(^{422}\) Bundle of letters in miscellaneous items, Bristol Archives, 1892.


\(^{426}\) Alston Kennerley, \textit{Seamen and Their Homes}, p. 133.

\(^{427}\) Helen Mellor, \textit{Leisure and the Changing City}, p. 243.


\(^{430}\) Bristol Mercury, 7\textsuperscript{th} June, 1856.
the first 40 years of the London Sailors’ Home, £2 million was deposited with the Home of which £700,000 was remitted to family and friends. 433 The increasing regulation of advanced notes and allotments and especially the extension of the Transmission of Wages (Midge) Scheme to all UK ports in 1878 also facilitated more regularity of provision for sailors’ families. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 allowed up to a half of a sailor’s wages to be allotted but in 1895, although it was taken up by four-fifths of able bodied sailors, typically only one month’s wages were done so. 434 Money transmitted was income that very often formed a part of a joint income; 40% of families nationally were still engaged in some kind of ‘penny capitalism’ in 1914, despite industrialisation processes. 435 Despite aspirations to be the breadwinner, working-class males had to rely on other family members bringing in some money. 436 Working-class women supplemented the earnings of their husbands and sailors’ wives did also. The 1881 census shows at least one sailor’s wife as the proprietor of a lodging house in Bristol, another as a publican, many in service and countless seamstresses or laundress, which were common euphemisms for prostitute. 437 The police Public and Beerhouse Complaints Book for February 1899 records another sailor’s wife as a cook at the Brandy Cask on Broad Quay 438 and more generally, the report of the Committee to Inquire into the Conditions of the Bristol in 1884 noted an increase in women and children working in the city. 439

Families would have got used to a sufficient level of joint income and it is likely that sailors would try to find work on shore if they needed to supplement their sailor’s wage. Not all would need to. If, as noted in Chapter Four, their labour was in demand by shipowners willing to sign them on continually, it is possible to suggest that sailors just worked on ships and therefore remained separate from other workers on land. This thesis cannot firmly conclude the extent that sailors took up land based employment but they clearly were employed in alternative ways, as shown below. A respectable sailor would have wanted to make sure there was enough to live off but also for treats. Valerie Burton talks about sailors returning to their families and treating the children, all dressing up in Sunday best to go to the shipping office to get the rest of the pay and then going to the pub. 440

Whether a sailor’s wage was enough is another matter and as with all occupations, sailors’ wages fluctuated in line with the state of the economy and trade, both national and international. 441 The general contemporary understanding was that an ordinary sailor

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434 Alston Kennerley, Seamen, p. 140.
439 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 28.
440 Valerie Burton, Work and Home, p. 256.
441 Joe White, ‘1910-1914 Reconsidered’, p. 75
earned more than an unskilled labourer on shore but less than a skilled one, although recent scholarship suggests that in some places they earned less than those in comparable work ashore did. In addition, because sailors rarely worked more than nine months of the year, they were worse off than a labourer was. However, the problem was still the irregularity of work and wages, despite steam ships not relying on the wind and employment opportunities would not always have been available for returning sailors. The Bristol Mercury carried out its own survey into working-class homes, also in 1884, and gave examples of the problems of irregular work and wages in Bristol, such as a quay worker who only earned nine shillings in seven weeks and another who had only two days work in three weeks. An oral interview with a woman told of her father who was a dock labourer only able to get about a day a week’s work and having to go in front of the Guardians around 1906 and having to poach rabbits.

There is little evidence that allows a systematic investigation of sailors’ alternative employment but there are indications of other ways that sailors made money. Bristol’s sailors had an advantage in that Bristol’s small scale, diverse local industry and the close familial connections between those with maritime interests and other merchants, manufacturers, industrialists and ordinary men, had the potential to provide opportunities for sailors to find work. This will have been in temporary jobs, seasonal jobs or in factories or as unskilled labour on shore; opportunities arising from what Richard Gorski calls the migratory rhythms of employment. As just one example, a testimonial written by the Rector of Christ Church Bristol, Reverend E. P. Cole for a sailor, Thomas Trevyn, recorded that he regularly gave him occasional employment and that he found him to be ‘thoroughly sober and trustworthy’. It is also plausible that Jesse Lemisch’s argument that sailors were simply landsmen gone to sea is pertinent, given that Bristol was a relatively small port city surrounded by countryside, agricultural industries and the Somerset coalmines. Landowners and mine owners needed labour and sailors and others such as fishermen may have obliged, but there are no records to prove this. For Bristol’s workshops, a gazetteer of Bristol in 1900 named 255 separate industries, from custard powder to cycle tyres, hams to hammers, manure to mattresses and tents to tinned

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445 *Bristol Mercury*, *Special Report into The Homes of the Bristol Poor*, 1884, p. 79.
446 *Bristol People’s Oral History Project*, 1980, Respondent R008, transcript, p. 34.
447 Helen Doe, unpublished chapter in a forthcoming book on maritime communities, p. 42. Dr. Doe was kind enough to send me a copy of her yet unpublished and named chapter of her book on maritime communities.
449 Hand written testimonial, dated 18th June, 1883, Bristol Archives, 97327/2/24.
sweets.\textsuperscript{451} By 1906, there were over a hundred factories and the census of 1901 shows 4,388 males in factory work.\textsuperscript{452} For those holding less skilled roles on board, such as firemen and coal trimmers who were disparagingly described as only being sailors because ‘they have not the contrivance enough to be continually in gaol’, integration into urban areas where unskilled employment was predominant was possible.\textsuperscript{453} Sailors did not need the skills necessary to sail sailing ships, now all they required was muscle\textsuperscript{454} which was synonymous with the proletariat of industrialised society.\textsuperscript{455} As Frank Bullen, once a sailor in steam himself wrote, ‘what is wanted in a steamer is only a burly labourer who is able to steer’.\textsuperscript{456}

As said, the extent to which sailors took up jobs is difficult to discern and unfortunately none of the evidence enjoyed by Jari Ojala, Pirita Frigren and Anu Ojala, the authors of the latest work on sailors and employment, who were able to use the data of thousands of sailors contained in Scandinavian Seamen’s Houses enrolment records, exists for Bristol’s sailors.\textsuperscript{457} They conclusively show that taking a voyage was a stopgap between having work on shore but it can only be a matter of conjecture whether the same attitudes towards work existed among Bristol’s sailors. However, there is evidence for the avenues for alternative employment in Bristol for sailors between voyages or as alternatives to sailing.\textsuperscript{458} Dock work is an obvious related job and oral testimonies speak of sailor fathers taking dock work between voyages, an example of what Rediker describes as lateral movement into something alternative.\textsuperscript{459} Sailors taking dock work was common enough to necessitate in January 1890 an agreement between the Secretary of the Bristol Dockers Union and the General Secretary of the National Association of Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union, on which kinds of work belonged to sailors and which to dock workers.\textsuperscript{460}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{451} The Port of Bristol, 1900, p. 43.
\item \textsuperscript{452} Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working Class Rents, Housing and Retail Prices, Together with the Standard Rates of Wages Prevailing in Certain Occupations in the Principal Industrial Towns of the United Kingdom, 1906. Copy of the section on Bristol held at Bristol Central Library, p. 113.
\item \textsuperscript{454} The life of a fireman or a trimmer in the engine rooms of steam ships was tough. For a contemporary view of the lives of sailors in merchant shipping, see Frank Bullen, \textit{Men of the Merchant Service Being the Polity of the Mercantile Marine for ’longshore readers’}, London, Smith Elder and Co. 1900.
\item \textsuperscript{455} Brad Beaven, ‘From Jolly Sailor’, pp. 168-169.
\item \textsuperscript{456} Frank Bullen, \textit{Men of the Merchant Service}, p. 177.
\item \textsuperscript{458} Daniel Vickers says snippets are all we have, Daniel Vickers, ‘Beyond Jack Tar’, p. 422.
\item \textsuperscript{460} Bristol Mercury, 27th January, 1890.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Other unskilled work was available. Robert Langdon spent time between voyages preparing ships in Lime Kiln Dock for departure. Work like this would suit a sailor with knowledge of ships, although another sailor similarly employed scraping the sides of vessels laying at the Butts, died when the rope holding him broke, plunging him into the water. Fishing was another related occupation and the Pill pilots, although more river boatmen than sailors were mackerel fishermen when not piloting. Another drew on personal experience of the ways of the sailor. The census returns for 1881 showed one sailor as a landlord of a public house and there are police crime records published in the Bristol Mercury of sailors making money from prostitution, such as one who was convicted for running a brothel in July 1890.

Work unrelated to seafaring was also available for sailors. Some sailors had a trade they could draw on to find work; one sailor worked as a shoemaker before he went to sea. The Bristol asylum records show that a sailor inmate had been working in a salmon factory before he was admitted. Hawking was an obviously unskilled occupation that anyone could take up. The Bristol Mercury reported that a sailor who was usually blind drunk was selling religious tracts in the street and was arrested for using obscene language to anybody who refused to buy one. True to stereotype a French sailor walked the streets as ‘an itinerant vendor of onions’. Labouring would have provided opportunities, although one sailor was not particularly good at erecting scaffolding for the Wills Tobacco factory extension in Bedminster; it collapsed killing a carpenter below.

A few higher-ranking sailors like Samuel Baker, did much better for themselves. When he retired in 1853 he became the water bailiff and harbour master on a salary of £20 per month. Charles Goodland travelled all over the world for the Bristol Steam Navigation Company and on retirement became a lock man at Cumberland Basin. T. J. Gyles, alternated working on ships, getting to the rank of first engineer, with working as an engineer on land with Chellow Navigation Company and also attending the Society Of Merchant Venturers (SMV) night school to further his education. Other sailors were

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462 Bristol Mercury, 19th October, 1893.
464 Bristol Mercury, 14th July, 1890.
465 Bristol Mercury, 24th June, 1896.
466 Bristol Asylum, Register of Admissions, 2nd December, 1893.
467 Bristol Mercury, 31st July, 1869.
468 Bristol Mercury, 25th March, 1899.
469 Bristol Mercury, 25th March, 1899.
471 Charles Goodland, An Account of Voyages and Servitude at Sea, 1829-1853, hand written in Bristol Records Office, no date.
472 T. J. Gyles left some notes of his voyages as an engineer on SS. Penvearn between 1912 and 1935. With these are all his references that pointed to him being an exemplary, sober sailor.
employed by the training ship *Formidable* as instructors and another sailor was employed by the Seamen’s Friend Society and Bethel Union to deliver religious tracts to ships.473

![Age Distribution of Bristol Sailors 3rd April 1881](chart.png)

**Figure 5:** Graph showing the age distribution of Bristol sailors.

**Source:** Census Enumerator Books, 1881.

Whether these alternatives were temporary between voyage work, a career change or taken on retirement is difficult to ascertain. Many mariners were sailors for life and could remain in long-term secure maritime employment. Kings Shipping Lines in Bristol employed engineers for their whole career.474 One sailor, James Howell, was employed by Miles Shipping Company for 30 years.475 An application for admission to Haberfield’s Almshouses for a sailor, Charles Crabb, records that at the age of 60 he was still working on ships.476 However, what is clear from other studies is that seafaring was a young man’s occupation and sailors, including those in Bristol, were inclined to give it up when they could.477 The graph in Figure 5 shows the ages of seafarers in April 1881 and indicates a steady decline in the number of sailors as age increases after the age of 40, with the on-set of physical decline. The 1884 enquiry noted that deep-sea sailors were generally cashiered at 55 and turned to related work such as ship riggers, lumpers and jobbers on the quays and at

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475 *Bristol Mercury*, 20th July, 1878.

476 A single loose application to the almshouse made in May 1894 by the Vicar of St. Mary’s Redcliffe and Edward Lucas, African Merchant, on behalf of Charles Crabb. Crabb lived in Thomas Street, his wife was dead, he had six grown up children, had no savings and had earned between £3-5 a month.

Avonmouth and Portishead. Tracking a sample of 60 Bristol sailors from the censuses of 1881 to 1891 gives an indication whether they were still sailors or not. The accuracy of this is debatable; whether a sailor was no longer in Bristol, had died or was just elsewhere on census night is impossible to tell. However, 54 of the 60 did not feature in the census of 1891 at all. Of the six that did three men were still sailors, one had become a cab driver, one a wood turner and one a warehouseman.

**Societal Contexts: Leisure, Drinking and Prostitution**

Whatever the work, sailors as much as the next man would not have been unaware of the changing perceptions of true masculinity. Greater respectability was also expected outside of work if working-class men were to be considered worthy citizens. What sailors did in their leisure time was just as important as what they did at work in the context of filling the gap in our understanding of societal relationships. Consuming alcohol is a case in point and sailors as working men, formed a part of the drinking culture of the working classes. After 1875, the amount of money spent on rational recreation pursuits and on commercial entertainment as a proportion of national expenditure on goods and services surpassed that spent on drink. However, despite the declining alcohol consumption during the nineteenth century and even more rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth century, going to the pub or beerhouse was central to working-class culture and still formed the main recreational activity of the working man.

Bristol’s sailors were embedded in this culture, taking their share of the 1,100 million gallons of beer, 42 million gallons of spirits and 17 million gallons of wine drunk in Britain, in 1875. Useful evidence exists for Bristol in the form of a special report carried out by the Bristol Mercury in 1884. The paper did a major investigation into the homes of the Bristol Poor over many days and it reveals that Bristol had one licenced drinking establishment for

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478 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 188.
479 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881
480 Brad Beaven and John Griffiths, Urban Elites; Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., Manful Assertions; Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City; Lesley A. Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change; John Tosh, A Man’s Place; R. W. Connell, Gender and Power; Lynne Segal, Slow Motion and Brad Beaven, Leisure.
481 James Kneale, ‘The Place of Drink’, p. 43.
every 152 people, second only to Portsmouth with 148.\textsuperscript{485} The number of licensed premises in the city in 1896 was 1,173 with only the big northern cities, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Sheffield having more.\textsuperscript{486} In 1909 the Chief Constable’s Report to the Licensing Committee of Justices noted 1256 licensed houses consisting of 447 alehouses, 705 beerhouses, one refreshment house with a wine licence, 78 grocers and 25 chemists, plus 33 clubs of various sorts. This was a decrease on 1908 and by February 1914, Bristol had 1145 licensed premises, which equated to one licenced house per 311 people.\textsuperscript{487} Even inmates of the workhouses had plenty of opportunities to get a drink. The Bristol Workhouse drinks bill for the inmates in 1887 exceeded that of 133 other workhouses added together.\textsuperscript{488} It was obviously second nature to the city’s occupants. A report carried out by the Bristol Examiner into the condition of the working classes of the city in 1850 noted that, ‘Even donkeys have a habit of stopping outside pubs, so used to their masters going in’.\textsuperscript{489} Bristol’s city librarian noted in a series of articles that he wrote on Bristol’s hostleries earlier in 1850 that,

> ‘Merchants and sailors, then as now drink hard, and when they had finished their debauch, or in elegant modern phraseology, ‘had got a skin full’, they reeled to their homes’.\textsuperscript{490}

The amount of drinking that went on in the city is impossible to quantify accurately and the picture is clouded somewhat by imprecise definitions of drinking establishments. David Beckingham discusses the problems inherent in the changing definitions of drunkenness and the confusing range of drinking establishments, both licensed and back door secret ones.\textsuperscript{491} However, that Bristol had a drinking problem was noted in a petition signed by major city worthies, business leaders, vicars and charity leaders, calling on the magistrates not to grant any more drinks licences. They said Bristol was second only to Portsmouth in the number of licenced premises and that this was ‘resulting in serious demoralisation, crime, pauperism and injury to the city at large’.\textsuperscript{492} Bristol’s sailors were subsumed into this culture without being more of a conspicuous problem than other group of workers.\textsuperscript{493} Sailors who tended to go home between voyages

\textsuperscript{485} Bristol Mercury, March, 1884.  
\textsuperscript{486} Joseph Rowntree and Arthur Sherwell, the Temperance Problem and Social Reform, London, 1899, p. 491.  
\textsuperscript{487} Chief Constable’s Report to the Licensing Committee of the Justices, 1909, cited in Walter Reid, Bristol as it was and as it is, Bristol, 1909. Western Daily Press, 3rd February, 1914.  
\textsuperscript{488} Bristol Workhouse Drink Bill: A Social Services Pamphlet, 1887.  
\textsuperscript{489} Bristol Examiner, 12th February, 1850.  
\textsuperscript{489} George Pryce, Bristol Times, September 1856, in the form of a cutting in a scrapbook of his writings grandly entitled, Pryce’s Contribution to History and Literature.  
\textsuperscript{491} David Beckingham, ‘Gender, Space and Drunkenness’, pp. 649-650 and pp. 656-658.  
\textsuperscript{492} Bristol Times and Mirror, 20th September, 1888.  
\textsuperscript{493} For works on sailors and drink generally, see works referenced earlier in this thesis including Judith Fingard, ‘Masters and Friends’, pp. 22-46; Judith Fingard, Jack in Port; Valerie Burton, ‘As I wuz a rolling down the Highway’; Valerie Burton, ‘Whoring, Drinking Sailors’; Paul Gilje, Liberty on the Waterfront. Gilje says that ‘not every sailor conformed to the stereotype of drinking, cursing, carousing, fighting, misbehaving and spending to excess while on leave’, p. 24.
would have imbibed the same as other workers in their local streets. More transient ones were more likely to stay around the water but this was not an exclusive sailortown area and drinking was done among other working-class people. There were no targeted attempts to control sailor specific drinking in streets around the quays unlike in other port cities, Portsmouth, for example, where in response to public disquiet policing of sailortown streets was increased.  

Sailors’ drinking was an accepted part of the culture of the city as an antidote to their deprivations. The Chairman of the Bristol Education Committee, Dr. Cooke, speaking at the opening of the Sailors’ Home and Rest at Avonmouth said that people should not be severe on sailors who indulged in some excesses after time away at sea because it was ‘quite a natural thing’. Others were stoical about it; one doctor much earlier in 1855 wrote to the Bristol Mercury saying that he had,

‘Often been called out of my warm bed on a cold winter’s night to pump drugged beer or sometimes-pure laudanum from the stomach of some poor unfortunate sailor or miserable prostitute’. Philanthropic organisations did not seem to see a disproportionate problem in sailors either. Efforts by the many temperance societies in the city were not particularly aimed at sailors but were towards the working classes as a whole. It is hard to imagine that any other city of comparable size could surpass Bristol for the number of temperance societies. They were so numerous that it was felt necessary to establish the Bristol United Temperance Council in 1897 to coordinate their overlapping activities. A Mrs. Smith, a stalwart member of Bristol’s Clifton Down Gospel Temperance Society formed in 1883, might have lamented ‘the utter abandonment of principle, the loss of health and life at the Hotwells amongst sailors’ but was nevertheless encouraged by the fact that 1000 sailors had signed the pledge during the previous three years alongside thousands of other workers. Far from being a unique problem sailors were an accepted and an integrated presence to be dealt with by the authorities. Perhaps too integrated at times; on one occasion a policeman was sent to arrest a sailor for being drunk but the officer instead visited various city pubs with the sailor whilst still on duty, for which he was dismissed from the force.

Certain public houses attracted sailors more than others but they were also in civic, commercial and residential spaces in the city centre and its suburbs and therefore attracted other working-class people just as much as sailors. Map 6 shows every public house that

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494 Louise Moon, *Sailorhoods*, p. 179.
497 *Bristol Mercury*, 29 May, 1855.
499 *Clifton Down Gospel Temperance Society Minute*, Book entry for 7th April, 1884.
500 *Police Watch Committee Notes*, Volume 9, entry for 22nd February, 1862, p. 503.
sailors frequented that is identifiable from all the sources referred to in this study, although this does not include any number of other undefinable drinking dens, gin palaces, beerhouses, licenced victuallers or licenced dance halls that are impossible to locate. Naturally, many were around the localised and compact quays and wharf area but these pubs were also city pubs not just sailor pubs, even if some were more popular with sailors than others were. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Bristol did not seem to have its notorious sailors’ only drinking holes, even if some pubs were more associated with sailors than others such as the Goat in Armour by the waterside on Narrow Quay. The Police Public Beerhouse and Complaints Books note sailors being drunk and disorderly in there but alongside men of other occupations, such as labourers and coachmen. Sailors are mentioned in other pubs away from the waterside, such as Terminus Tavern on Bath Parade and the Mason’s Arms on Temple Street and again mention is made of non-sailors being a nuisance in them, labourers in particular. Of course, these pubs may have been locally known as ‘sailor pubs’ at the same time as being city pubs but there is no archival evidence to suggest notoriety in this respect. Sailors’ excesses were played out in urban as well as maritime space and alongside other working-class people, which, as James Kneale says, fostered neighbourliness, generosity and egalitarianism, the idealized qualities of working-class society.

501 The names of the pubs that sailors frequented was found from police records, press reports of criminality, correspondence to the Bristol Mercury, the unique Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books which recorded complaints from the public to the police about mainly prostitutes in pubs and census records for 1881. They were Masons Arms Temple Street, Terminus Tavern Bath Parade, Golden Bottle Welsh Back, Naval Volunteer King Street, Totterdown Hotel Wells Road, Noah’s Ark Old Charlotte Street, Malters Arms Philip Street, Brandy Flask New Quay, Goat in Armour Narrow Quay, Royal Oak Prince Street, Cross Keys Welsh Back, Langdodger Trow King Street, Merchants Arms Prince Street, Royal Oak West Street, Stork Hotel Hotwell Road, Royal Hotel Avonmouth, York Commercial Hotel Hotwell Road, Britannia Back Street, King of Prussia Alders quay Lane, Don Cossack Redcliffe Street, General Draper Hotwells, Giants Castle Lewins Mead, Royal Coliseum Marsh Street, Cornish Mount Quay, Saracen’s Head Temple Gate, White Lion Quay Head, Assembly Rooms Prince Street, Champion of Wales Quay, West of England Tavern Broad Quay, Plume of Feathers Hotwells, Green Fields of Erin Gravel Street, Britannia Tavern King Street, Union Tavern Hillgrove Street, Bunch of Grapes Market, Packet Tavern Bathurst Basin, Post Office Tavern Temple, Gloucester Tavern Broad Quay, Theatre Tavern King Street, Bell Tavern Broad Quay, White Hart Tavern Lewins Mead, Albion Cumberland Road, White Hart Market Street, Masonic Tavern Thunderbolt Street and Garrick’s Head Broad Quay.

502 It is impossible to give an accurate number of these as they would not be recorded in censuses. See Paul Jennings, ‘Occupations in the Nineteenth-Century Censuses: The Drink Retailers of Bradford, West Yorkshire’, Local Population Studies, Vol. 64, No. 1, 2000.

503 Police Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, 26th February, 1898.

504 Police Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, 19th February, 1897.

Map 6: Public houses that sailors were known to frequent.

Sources: Various Police Court and Intelligence reports, Police Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, press correspondence, Census Enumerator Books, Vigilance Society records, Bristol Sailors’ Home records.

Similarly, in that other stereotypical sailor’s use of leisure time, frequenting brothels, sailors were not ostentatious in respect of other occupational groups. Again it is not the intention here to suggest that Bristol’s sailors did not have ‘certain recklessness and sensualist of character, ignorance and depravity’; this applied to Bristol’s sailors as anywhere else.\textsuperscript{506} It

also applied to other working-class men. The problem of prostitution and the working class, without over concern for sailors as a subsection of it, certainly exercised the city’s middle classes.507 Bristol had a very active Vigilance Association which was affiliated to The National Vigilance Association. This was established in 1895 and had as its aim the ‘protection of young women and children from those who seek to compass their ruin.’508 This gave Bristol’s elites plenty of opportunity to get involved in the rescue of fallen women or just as likely in helping the police clear the streets of their nuisance. In 1886 it was proud of its assistance to the police in their actions against 39 disorderly houses, two indecent shows, a registry office, a purveyor of indecent literature and one herbalist.509 Worthies of the city occupying seats on other committees and boards also got involved. For example, in 1878, the Board of Guardians lamented the fact that the Council seemed to have given up closing brothels down. It counted 200 houses in the city, 20 at least on Park Row, and complained that ‘they only have to walk the public streets of an evening to find hundreds of young girls of about 14 or 15 years of age plying their shocking vocation upon the streets’.510 The state of the girls was also evidently a problem. The Superintendent of the Lock Hospital in Portsmouth told the Royal Commission on the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases Act in 1871 that, ‘Portsmouth girls are very much cleaner and that the Bristol women come frequently in such a state that we had to take off their clothes and burn them’.511

The public were aggrieved too. A correspondent to the Bristol Mercury was most put out that he could not walk from Bond Street to St. James’ Parade because the footway was blocked by prostitutes.512 Brothels, organised ones, make shift ones, rooms in the back of pubs or whatever form they took, were ubiquitous in any industrial city but just like with pubs, the actual number of brothels and prostitutes in Bristol cannot be taken as accurate, as it could not elsewhere. Martin Daunton records only 229 brothels in Cardiff in 1860, which seems very low considering Cardiff’s reputation as one of the ‘worst’ sailortowns in the world.513 The 1884 Bristol report noted 700 prostitutes in the city centre but without any provenance for that figure.514 It is of course impossible to know the true extent of prostitution in the city and the numbers of women involved in it. The 1881 census records no prostitutes in the whole of Bristol, although there were 343 seamstresses, 1,410 dressmakers and 1,353 laundresses, all known euphemisms for prostitute.515

507 For the development of the social purity movement see Lesley A. Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change, especially Chapter 1.
508 Lesley Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change, p. 24
510 Bristol Mercury, 15th July 1876.
512 Bristol Mercury, 29th July, 1878.
513 Martin Daunton, ‘Coal Metropolis’.
514 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 331.
515 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1881.
To the correspondent above and others, prostitutes were the instigators of immorality and inconvenience, not victims and were deserving of scorn.Prostitutes were defying the mores of civil society and a nuisance that obviously needed to be addressed, not least through licencing of pubs. As Michael Smith says, the public house was subject to social controls of a ferocious kind and David Beckingham has shown for Liverpool, through licensing of public houses the city’s authorities sought to control the behaviours of women in urban space where drink had created a ‘demoralizing environment of contamination’ to the extent of pushing them off the streets into private space.

Efforts to control prostitution in Bristol were not always successful however, and this was mainly because prostitutes had the support of working-class people who resented the moralising reforming efforts of the authorities. There was a virtual riot at an open meeting called by the Mayor of Bristol in 1881 to consider extending the powers of the Council to regulate disorderly houses. This is again illustrative of working-class objections to interference by the elites into traditional working-class culture, and the working people at the meeting who shouted, ‘No, no we won’t have it’ and ‘we want our liberty’, were clearly aggrieved at this attack on this part of their street existence. When it was announced that proposed amendments to any bill would be allowed there was a cry of ‘no amendments, we shall vote against the lot’. This was part of sailor culture too and sailors attending this demonstration were cooperating with other workers to protect their cultural institutions and in some cases livelihoods. The Committee Report of 1884 records one small trader who refused to sign a protest against the number of brothels in St. James, St. Augustine’s and St. Michael’s saying, ‘Why Should I? They pay me well’. The report notes that many traders’ businesses were twice as lucrative as in non-brothel areas and that brothel keepers were of the most wealthiest and influential persons. Despite these local protests the Council also proposed imposing powers to reclaim the streets from the working classes in other ways by banning dancing, singing and playing musical instruments in the street, gaming, obstructing the pavements and swearing, which were common traits and pastimes of sailors and all working-class people.

Brothels were naturally used by sailors but gauging the extent compared with other workers and the potential nuisance sailors caused in them are problematic. The Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, notes sailors consorting with prostitutes in around 35 public

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519 David Beckingham, ‘Gender, Space and Drunkenness’.
520 For example gambling by the *Street Betting Act* of 1906.
521 *Bristol Mercury*, 12th November, 1881.
522 *Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor*, Bristol, 1885, p. 89.
523 *Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor*, Bristol, 1885, p. 89.
houses across the city. This is unsurprising but these sailors were a nuisance, not necessarily a menace. In fact, they were tolerated in certain pubs with the police merely recording their continued presence rather than doing anything about it. The police A Division’s *Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books* record, as an example, the same named prostitutes and their sailor friends on three consecutive days in September 1900 in the *Goat in Armour* pub on Narrow Quay. Overall, the *Books* contain the names of 89 different pubs in which police regularly recorded the same prostitutes but nothing was done to close them down.

Sailors did not seem to exercise the bench particularly frequently and they were often portrayed as victims of prostitutes, not the other way round. A search of all *Police Court* and *Police Intelligence* reports in the *Bristol Mercury* between 1850 and 1900 reveals only 20 sailors in association with prostitutes, nine of these merely being with prostitutes and the rest being the victim of theft or assault by the prostitute. Sailors were not a disproportionate problem and were seen as just part of a wider dispersed clientele. As Robert Lee has argued for Birkenhead, as an example, a significant proportion of prostitutes’ customers came from other occupational groups rather than from sailors. The 1884 report into Bristol noted that brothels in St. James’s and parts of St. Augustine’s were chiefly supported by the labouring classes, artisans and sailors but that in other parts of St. Augustine’s and in St. Michael’s, ‘a better class—clerks, professional men, ‘farmers on Thursdays’ and ‘gentlemen’, frequent the brothels.

Map 7 indicates the distribution of known brothels across the city and the worst offending streets and in fact, the most notorious streets for prostitution were not sailor streets. The five most problematic streets were Bond Street, Park Row, Host Street, James Street and Clarence Street. Letters to the press and in Vigilance Association records also indicate the

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526 Police *Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books*, 7th to 9th September, 1900.
529 *Bristol Mercury*, *Police Court*, *Police Intelligence*, Assize and Tolzey Courts records. The problem of defining ‘prostitute’ is well documented. Patrick Dunae, ‘Sex, Charades and Census Records, Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City’, *Social History*, Vol. 42, No. 84, 2009, pp. 267-297, discusses the difficulties of counting prostitutes. Locating brothels is also problematic, although some studies have managed to locate known brothels to actual streets. Louise Moon locates most brothels known to the police but it seems fairly obvious that sailors would be in them, Louise Moon, ‘*Sailorhoods*’, pp. 139-149. She discusses in depth the agency of prostitutes in relation to the *Contagious Diseases Acts* and the disrepute prostitution brought on Portsmouth, but without specific reference to the role of sailors in this, ‘*Sailorhoods*’, pp. 182-194. Valerie Burton, however, does recognise that the covert nature of prostitution precludes knowing the occupations of clients, Valerie Burton, *Work and Home Life*, p. 285. Further studies on this include Judith and Daniel Walkowitz, ‘We Are Not Beasts of the Field: Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton Under the Contagious Diseases Acts’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 and 4, 1973, pp. 73-106.
531 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 91.
532 Based on the number of times these streets are mentioned in the varying records used for this section and the number of individual disorderly houses referred to on them.
main areas being around Park Row and Bond Street. The prostitutes blocking the streets mentioned above were therefore doing so on city streets, not sailor streets.
Map 7: The location of known brothels.

**Source:** Various: Police Court and Intelligence reports, Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, press correspondence, Census Enumerator Books, Vigilance Association records, Bristol Sailors’ Home records.\(^{533}\)

**Blue:** Known brothels

**Green:** Known brothels on the main streets in Bristol for prostitution, Bond Street, Park Row, Host Street, James Street and Clarence Street

\(^{533}\) Each dot does not represent one brothel; rather they indicate areas and streets where known brothels were. There will of course have been many more unrecorded ones.
Societal Contexts: Self-Improvement

Rather than using prostitutes and getting drunk, in pursuit of respectability, the settled, homebound sailor could decide to bypass sailor streets, try to be a good citizen and spend his leisure time in respectable pursuits, perhaps in efforts at self-betterment, even in some reading. Jonathan Rose uses working-class autobiography to gauge the response of working-class people in their role as audience of literary cultural provision. The opportunities in Bristol seem to be limited for working-class men, however. There were only four free libraries with reading rooms, very few clubs or meeting halls and not enough recreational grounds and facilities in general. As far as sailors are concerned, as there are no autobiographies of Bristol’s sailors, their response to what they experienced is not available. Similarly, the numbers of sailors attending the popular penny readings put on by philanthropists for better working-class people is impossible to quantify, but again it is likely sailors would have attended.

In terms of reading, the generic problem of finding out about what working-class people read are well known and this extends to sailors. We also cannot with any surety know that Bristol’s sailors were great readers. But three volumes of Bristol Public Library Reports survive and include lists of publications held that would appeal to literate sailors, although as Jonathan Rose says there is no empirical evidence of what working-class people actually read in libraries before a major survey in Sheffield in 1918. However, between the Central, Redland, Hotwells, St. Phillips, Fishponds and St. George’s libraries, The Shipping Gazette, Army and Navy Gazette, Navy League Journal, The Mariner, Mercantile Navy List, Mercantile Year Book and Nautical Almanac were available to read. Such titles suggest a maritime sectional interest but if sailors did go into the libraries to read them, they were showing a commonality with other men of their class in spending some of their time in reading. As for borrowers, readers are categorised loosely and sailors may well have been among those labelled as ‘labourers’, ‘occupation not stated’ or possibly ‘members of professions’. During 1911-12, 3,900,000 people used Bristol’s libraries, 11 times the population and it is more than possible that sailors in common with other working-class men in an effort to better themselves, would be in that number. Sailors borrowing books will have been resident sailors because to use the library service a person had to be on the Burgess Roll. The rules of the Hotwells Library were written in their catalogue of books and it states that the library only lent to people who were members of a family and who was

535 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, pp. 126-129.
536 Brad Beaven, Leisure, pp. 20-24. He also notes that increasingly the working class themselves were involved in running such events, p. 24.
539 Bristol Public Library, Reports, 1892 to 1914.
resident and paying tax within the parliamentary boundaries of Bristol. Also not allowed were people with dirty clothing, anyone with a dog, anybody drunk, people talking too loudly, chewing, smoking, eating, drinking or guilty of any misconduct. Sailors moored up at Hotwells would clearly have had problems borrowing reading material but if they paid attention to their appearance, they may have at least been allowed in to read the papers. Sailors found reading material at both the Seamen’s Institute and the Sailors’ Home. The annual meeting of the latter discussed and approved taking in some suitable publications for the sailors to read, including Cassell’s Illustrated Times and Dickens Household Words.

Beyond improving literature, some Bristol sailors clearly wanted to better themselves through getting an education, as did other working-class men. They took advantage of the schools provided by city elites that were regarded, as were reading rooms and other more cerebrally inclined places and institutions, as tools in a moral crusade to get labour to invest in its own betterment. By 1900 there were 45 schools for men in Bristol, which was second only to London proportionally. The Newcastle Commission into schools in 1858 stated that those who attended Bristol’s evening schools were ‘the elite of working people’. There had been some rudimentary training of sailors since 1821 when the first Bethel Ship Mission, The Ark was brought into service followed by the Aristomones in the same year, then the Etna in 1846 and the Gloriosa in 1883. As well as teaching scripture to sailors it also gave a basic nautical instruction and attendances of men eager to benefit from this training was always high. An early marine school was established in January 1824 and in that year 29 out of the 74 enrolled were adult sailors. Commendably, an inspection committee noted that,

‘Adult sailors also attended during the day, ‘voluntarily seated at the same desk with mere children and sedulously endeavouring, by redoubled application, to acquire, at a more advanced period of life, those advantages of education the less enlightened spirit of the times had denied to their earlier years’.

The city’s merchant elites encouraged sailors’ learning through the provision of education by the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV). It was a major funder of the most basic sailor education, the training ship Formidable for aspiring sailors. The Formidable evolved from the industrial school on Park Row and as such was an extension of educational provision provided for other working-class young men. The Fourth Annual Report of the Formidable records significant financial donations to it by the SMV, some of whose members were also

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541 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Annual Meeting of Subscribers, reported in The Bristol Mercury, 19th January, 1856. The proposer got the title wrong and probably meant Cassell’s Illustrated Family Magazine.
545 Bristol Marine School, Annual Meeting Report, 1827, pp. 7-8.
shipowners.\textsuperscript{547} It describes them as competing for the signatures of sailors on articles of agreement. Between 1869 and 1879, 502 well-trained young men had passed through the ship to go to sea and 1152 ten years later.\textsuperscript{548} Its curriculum for 50 boys at a time consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history and poetry for three hours a day followed by practical seamanship for the rest practiced on its own sailing ship \textit{Polly} from 1875.\textsuperscript{549} Even though the ship was primarily for boys, the city elites were proud of their young sailors and were taking their responsibilities towards seafarers of Bristol seriously. They wanted their sailors to be worthy of the traditions of the city and provided them with skills needed to be a part of civil society. The curriculum of the \textit{Formidable} also equipped young sailors with transferable skills that would have been useful for them when their sailing days were done. As well as basic academic skills and seamanship, the selected young men were taught making and mending clothes, carpentry, shoemaking and even basic cooking and hair cutting.\textsuperscript{550}

Skills like these may well have kept cashiered sailors off the streets in alternative employment. As a continuum of this, a diverse curriculum teaching alternative skills was also available to adult sailors who could take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the SMV. The SMV later established a marine school in King Street in 1845 where the roll gradually changed from children to 16-18 year old sailors taking their masters and mates examinations after finishing their apprenticeships. By 1869 the school had changed to become a school exclusively for adult sailors\textsuperscript{551} aiming to ‘raise their social status, making them thereby a more efficient and trustworthy body of men’.\textsuperscript{552} The school’s buildings were also used as a private school for candidates for Marine Board Examinations and enrolled 19-45 year old sailors for two to six weeks at a time at their own volition and expense.\textsuperscript{553} The SMV also ran a Technological College that put on evening classes that would be attended by sailors aspiring to higher ratings including in navigation, types of sailing, use of nautical instruments, mechanical engineering and related sciences.\textsuperscript{554}

We cannot gauge the effect of such education other than to say that gaining qualifications would have been beneficial to sailors and it is likely that these educational institutions could produce well-adjusted sailors with a modicum of intelligence and aptitude and enhanced

\textsuperscript{547} The Bristol Training Ship Formidable, \textit{Annual Report}, 1872. It was permanently moored at Portishead until it was scrapped and replaced by the permanent National Nautical School in May 1906, Shirley Hodgson, \textit{Bristol’s Pauper Children}, Bristol, Bristol Books, 2017, pp. 93-121. The writer of the history of the ship was proud to say that not one of the sailors trained there turned out badly, \textit{The Story of the Formidable}. p. 20.

\textsuperscript{548} \textit{The Story of the Formidable}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{549} The Bristol Training Ship Formidable, \textit{Annual Report}, 1889.

\textsuperscript{550} The Bristol Training Ship Formidable, \textit{Annual Report}, 1889.

\textsuperscript{551} Letter from the SMV proposing the establishment of the Marine School and the \textit{Formidable} Training Ship, 26\textsuperscript{th} May, 1869.

\textsuperscript{552} Letter from the SMV in the \textit{Bristol Mercury} proposing the establishment of the Marine School, 26\textsuperscript{th} May, 1869.


\textsuperscript{554} Merchant Venturers Technical College, \textit{Calendar}, 1896-97.
Societal Contexts: Adversity

For many sailors, just as it was for other working-class people, it was not possible to reach or maintain the standards of working-class respectability or be seen as a higher class of working man, and through adversity and hardship, sailors were further integrated culturally in their reliance on the welfare provision of civic authorities. Just like any other working-class person, a sailor could end up in the workhouse or asylum or be desperate enough to resort to suicide. They found themselves in situations in which they had to beg on the streets and if they fell ill they were treated for the same diseases. The delegation of the provision of services to local authorities, which started as far back as 1835 with the Municipal Corporation Act, demanded the municipal implementation of government welfare reforms and improvements to the city’s infrastructure. Therefore, and particularly from the 1860s onwards, the Sanitary Commission of 1869-71, the Local Government Board of 1871, the passing of the 1870 Education Act, The Torrens and Cross Housing acts of 1868 and 1875 and the Public Health Act of 1875, required action from Bristol’s civic elites to make positive changes that would better the lives of all citizens. Consequently, there was

557 Bristol Mercury, 13th April, 1850.
559 Bristol Mercury, 19th October, 1896.
560 Or indeed resorting to criminal behaviour, mainly stealing, as discussed at length in Chapter Five.
561 In 1872, there were 26 suicides by seamen, Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England, London, 1872.
563 Oscar Handlin, ‘The Modern City as a Field of Historical Study’, in Oscar Handlin and John Burchard, eds., The Historian and the City, 1 Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge,
to a debatable extent modernisation of the infrastructure across the city and also around the waterfront, which improved the living standards of working-class people and among them sailors. The provision of better housing, roads, cleaning and lighting of streets, sewage disposal, refuse collection, water, policing, sanitary and health provision improved the lot of the sailor as it did the factory worker.\textsuperscript{564}

The changing nature of the city, as well as Government legislation, therefore obliged civic authorities to give assistance when needed to all working-class people and thus sailors were among the recipients of nineteenth and twentieth-century welfare reforms.\textsuperscript{565} This was in addition to being beneficiaries of long established sources of assistance such as street level mutual help, friendly societies, cooperative societies and trade union provision.\textsuperscript{566} The provision of health care was complicated. The Council adopted the 1848 \textit{Public Health Act} and therefore acted as the Local Board of Health and Urban Sanitary Authority. As such, it levied the District Rate for health and environmental spending, whereas the Borough rates paid for everything else except for all Dock Estate expenditure which was separate. All three had their own committees.\textsuperscript{567} However confusing as to responsibilities, Bristol’s elites understood that the life of the merchant steam sailor was dangerous, especially for the firemen (stokers in naval vessels); British sailing ship crews in the 1890s were ten times as likely to die in accidents as British coal miners and steam ship crews between three and four times.\textsuperscript{568} At sea, sailors died from shipwrecks but more often from diseases such as cholera, fevers and dysentery and from accidents and falls. Out of 203,720 merchant mariners at sea in 1872 (excluding masters), there were 4,123 deaths, a mortality rate of 20.2.\textsuperscript{569} The risks to seafarers were sufficient enough to warrant the Church of England’s \textit{Book of Common Prayer} having a section of prayers for sailors.\textsuperscript{570} For the non-faithful, measures such as the establishment of the Merchant Seamen’s Fund in 1881 was a necessary measure, given that sailors were left out of much of the welfare provision afforded to other working-class people because they were assumed to be too transient to benefit, although it did not extend to all sailors, especially not foreigners and especially again not Lascars.\textsuperscript{571}
The biggest cause of death, 2,297, was by drowning but of medical conditions it was yellow fever. Malaria was the other main killer and for one sailor his woes did not end at death. John Rees, a Bristol sailor, died of malaria at Amoy (Xiamen) in China 19th June 1870. He lay peacefully in the Amoy Foreign Cemetery until the Chinese Government buried the cemetery in protest at Britain’s invasion of Suez and then erected the Xiamen Music Hall on top of it in 1978. His ignominy also continued with his prodigy. His son, also John, a Master Mariner, lost his licence when he was captain of a ship that ran ashore on Beachy Head because he and the whole crew were drunk. 

Most deaths were caused by accidents and between 1875 and 1883, 22,188 sailors were killed at a ratio of 1 in 75 on steam ships, mainly from falls and 1 in 33 in steam, mainly accidents with machinery. The records of the Bristol Infirmary and the General Hospital confirm this with breakages, crushing and head injuries very commonly entered against sailors’ names. The consequences of injury are not readily thought of in connection with sailors but occupational injury was a factor of working-class life for sailors as it was for any other type of worker. As an example, Charles Little in August 1896, had a fall whilst he was on his ship which resulted in a head injury. He spent the next two years trying to get a berth but his injuries prevented him being taken on. He had fits, three attacks of paralysis and had not spoken for six months before his admittance to the asylum. His five children (he had had ten but five had died of bronchitis) and his wife were left to the mercy of the poor law. Less sympathy however, could be afforded to James Mead who also ended up in the asylum after successive falls from the rigging of sailing ships. On every occasion he had apparently been drunk, although how he got his supplies is unknown.

At a national level, the provision of health care for sailors was inconsistent. Tim Carter puts this down to the increase in short voyages, the mobility of sailors, the employment of Lascars, the incoherence surrounding the causation and treatment of diseases and the lack of reliable evidence on disease and injury. All these hindered the effective provision of health care for sailors. However, the Public Health Acts of the early 1870s obviously applied to sailors living permanently on shore and there were other preventative elements targeted at sailors specifically, such as the requirement for port health authority officials to board ships to check for diseases. The Bristol Port Authority served orders on masters of ships to report all incidences of disease, remedy defects in sailor accommodation, put sailors with infectious diseases in the isolation hospital at Avonmouth and disinfect and fumigate ships that carried sailors with diseases. In Bristol inspections of ships in harbour were routine and

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572 I am grateful to a member of Bristol Family History Society for sending me these details.
574 Bristol General Hospital, Registers of Admissions.
575 Bristol Asylum, Case Records, 1896.
576 Bristol Asylum, Case Records, 1893.
577 Tim Carter, Merchant Seamen’s Health, p. 83.
579 Tim Carter, Merchant Seamen’s Health, pp. 69-84.
they revealed the usual filthy conditions (and habits) of sailors. In 1888, 1,371 inspections across the three docks were carried out and identified cases of smallpox, measles, fever, diarrhoea, malaria, ague, scurvy and enteric fever. These infectious diseases normally affected the travelling sailor but other illnesses detected on board; flu, pneumonia, rheumatism, heart, liver and lung disease, colds and indigestion gave them another unfortunate aspect of commonality with working-class people.

For sailors, Bristol had its own lock hospital and a hospital ship called *The Margarida*. The *Margarida* had 12 beds and was fitted out in 1893. It was scrapped in 1915 after a collision and by then a new isolation hospital at Ham Green had opened in 1899 in response to the frequent Scarlet Fever epidemics. Sailors went there as well as continuing to be isolated at Avonmouth. Apart from these facilities, ill sailors relied on the care given at the Bristol Royal Infirmary and the General Hospital. On census night in 1881 there were nine sailors in hospital for various ailments and injuries. The list of ailments of sailors admitted includes toothache, laryngitis, tonsillitis, coughs, haemorrhoids, bronchitis, dog bites, constipation, vomiting and colic, which are not ailments normally thought of when considering the health of sailors. Indeed, the notion of a sailor in a state of illness, pain or hopelessness is not one that readily is brought to mind or one that fits with the stereotypical view of the sailor. However, he needed this type of state provided assistance just as much as a labourer did and his needs were increasingly seen in the context of contemporary concerns.

Similarly, mental illness is not something ordinarily associated with sailors, nor with rough, unskilled or skilled, streetwise working-class men, but it is clear that sailors could suffer just as much as any other working-class person. In 1888 a hundred and twenty two sailors died from some kind of ‘mental illness’, although as epilepsy was classed in this category it cannot be a reliable indicator that there was a sound understanding of mental illness.

Mental illness of sailors was a concern to the authorities and an early expression of sympathy in this regard was given by the Bristol Chamber of Commerce. In 1858 it called for amendments to the *Merchant Shipping Act* of 1854 and proposed an asylum in Bristol for ‘worn out and disabled and at the same time homeless seamen belonging to the merchant service’. It also proposed pensions of £100 a year for masters down to £20 a year

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580 Report of the Medical Officer for Health on the Sanitary Condition of the City and County of Bristol and the Port of Bristol, 1888, p. 77.
581 Report of the Medical Officer for Health on the Sanitary Condition of the City and County of Bristol and the Port of Bristol, 1891 and 1903.
582 David Large, *The Municipal Government of Bristol*, pp. 143-144 and an article by Ethel Thompson in a local paper, *The Shire*, 1995. There was also an isolation hospital at Avonmouth, although Bristol’s Council did not have quarantine powers as this came under the Board of Trade in the city, *Report of the Medical Officer for Health on the Sanitary Condition of the City and County of Bristol and the Port of Bristol*, 1883, p. 12.
583 Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1891.
584 Bristol General Hospital, *Registers of Admissions*.
for seamen, firemen and stewards.\footnote{587} This asylum was not built but in 1861 the Bristol Lunatic Asylum (Image 14), was founded with a capacity of 200 patients, with expansion in subsequent years. It replaced the inadequate provision at St. Peter’s Hospital in the city and was well thought of.\footnote{588} On their regular inspections visiting committee members were generally positive about the running of the asylum and the treatment of the patients, although perhaps concern for their welfare was being taken to the extreme when a member of the committee in 1894 praised the dinner given to the inmates but thought the meat should be carried from the kitchen on hot water dishes rather than on cold wooden slabs.\footnote{589}

\textbf{Image 14:} Bristol Asylum, c. 1900.  
\textbf{Source:} Loxton’s drawings held at the Bristol Central Library.

The admission books for 1850 to 1900 have been scrutinised and as they are one of the few sources of biographical information on Bristol’s sailors, they are worth considering in relative depth. They show sailors to be equally vulnerable as other working-class people. The majority of sailors were diagnosed with having mania or dementia. Others suffered from depression, melancholia, monomania of suspicion and delirium. The causes were often given as physical, such as intoxication, constipation, feebleness, cerebral disease, paralysis, blows to the head, epilepsy and even sunstroke. However, for other sailors their incapacity was due to personal circumstances and hardship. A ship’s steward, Henry Coles, could not cope with his wife being ‘most immoral’ when he was away at sea.\footnote{590} Another,

\footnote{587}Bristol Chamber of Commerce, \textit{AGM Report and Proceedings}, 27\textsuperscript{th} January, 1858, p. 50.  
\footnote{588}For an account of the asylum, see David Large, \textit{The Municipal Government of Bristol}, pp. 151-170.  
\footnote{589}Visiting Committee to the Lunatic Asylum for the City and County of Bristol, \textit{Report}, 1894, p. 6.  
\footnote{590}Bristol Asylum, \textit{Case Records}, 1893.
Henry Parker, went insane because he could not get a job\textsuperscript{591} and in other cases the death of a child is a cause and quite common is jealousy. The tragedy in sailor John Bezzant’s life would test anybody’s sanity. His father had been a heavy drinker and was dead, his mother did not have anything to do with him, he was married but had not seen his wife for 18 years, his only brother had been killed in a fight, his five sisters ‘were very bad tempered’, five of his six sons died in infancy and his only daughter died of diphtheria. There is also a hereditary element here because his uncle had died in the asylum.\textsuperscript{592}

The number of sailors is not extensive with 101 registered between 1850 and 1906 but at any one time the number of sailors admitted to the asylum was in proportion to other sectors of the working class.\textsuperscript{593} The following numbers in Figure 6 taken from the five surviving \textit{Visiting Committee Reports} suggest that the admittance of sailors was not uncommon and that the civic authorities regarded them as worthy of the same treatment as anyone else and did not just leave sailors to the care of seafaring organisations.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Occupation} & \textbf{1894} & \textbf{1895} & \textbf{1900} & \textbf{1902} & \textbf{1914} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
Actor & 1 & 1 & 1 & 3 & 3 & 8 \\
Agent & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 6 \\
Baker & 2 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 5 \\
Butcher & 3 & 2 & 2 & 2 & 2 & 20 \\
Clerk & 2 & 2 & 3 & 3 & 3 & 12 \\
Commercial Traveller & 1 & 1 \\
Cricketer & 1 \\
Gardener & 2 & 1 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 9 \\
Grocer & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 6 \\
Groom & 3 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 6 \\
Hawker & 3 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 2 & 8 \\
Labourer & 26 & 25 & 12 & 26 & 26 & 115 \\
Missionary & 1 \\
No occupation & 5 & 5 & 4 & 2 & 5 & 21 \\
Porter & 4 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 12 \\
\textbf{Sailor} & 6 & 3 & 5 & 1 & 1 & 16 \\
Tailor & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 7 \\
Teacher & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 3 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Annual new admittances for different occupational groups.}
\end{table}

\textbf{Source:} Bristol Asylum Visiting Committee Reports.

Some of the sailors were sent to the asylum from the Sailors’ Home or from the workhouse, which suggest some cooperation between welfare organisations working together for the relief of sailors. It was not just ordinary sailors who suffered and one of the sailors who were

\textsuperscript{591} Bristol Asylum, \textit{Case Records}, 1903.
\textsuperscript{592} Bristol Asylum, \textit{Case Records}, 1895. The personal tragedies that sailors endured are largely unrecorded, although the asylum records give a small insight.
\textsuperscript{593} Bristol Asylum, \textit{Registry of Admissions}, 1850-1906, 13 volumes.
sent to the asylum from the workhouse was a 45 year old, married, ship’s captain called Tyson Blower. He started off as inmate of Eastville Workhouse which was Bristol’s main one but eventually in August 1905 was transferred to the asylum with ‘mania and in a very feeble state’. He died soon after. Not for him the respectability of rank and family and he clearly illustrates that the stereotypical view of the educated, professional and affluent later career sailor does not always hold true. Sailors of whatever rank could suffer from mental illnesses that inflicted people of all classes, which was also true of Thomas Percy who was a chief engineer, a rank of considerable kudos. He was admitted to the asylum from Horfield Prison where he was serving a sentence for assaulting two little girls. His delirium and violence could not be coped with at the workhouse and so he was put out of the way in the asylum.

Percy was hardly an example of middle-class respectability or indeed a better class of sailor. Many sailors like him, as Chapters Five and Six will show, deserved their incarceration but others who were deviant were clearly misunderstood. For example, a sailor called Edwin Kebby got sunstroke in the Caribbean. The ship’s captain, whether through ignorance or malice, decided to put him in leg irons for the whole of his return voyage. When he got on shore he was put straight into the asylum. His mistreatment on board caused his condition to persist and worsen when on shore. He became excessively violent and on his regular discharges from the asylum back to his family regularly beat his children. He was unable to find further work on ships and eventually ended up in the workhouse.

In common with other working-class people, sailors who were destitute, criminally inclined or pauperised could find themselves put in the workhouse. How the provision of workhouses developed in Bristol is complicated with various renamings, mergers and closures throughout our period. The Clifton Union Workhouse, for example, which was also known as 100 Fishponds Road or Eastville Workhouse, became the Barton Regis workhouse in 1877. There was also Stapleton Workhouse nearby and all these came together under the Bristol Board of Guardians in 1898 after city boundary changes in 1897. Separate to this was the Bedminster Union Workhouse built in 1838, a new Barton Regis Union Workhouse at Southmead in 1902 and various smaller ones and poorhouses. These workhouses were spread throughout the city into the areas that sailors lived in and consequently sailors made up a proportion of the city’s workhouse population, albeit not a very large one. Four percent of the inmates of Eastville workhouse in 1881 were transport workers and the census for that year records 18 sailors out of 1195 inmates. Perhaps these sailors got some comfort from their time at Eastville from the amount of alcohol they were allowed to drink. A social services pamphlet published in 1887 shows 618 workhouses below Eastville for money

594 Bristol Asylum, Case Records, 1896.
595 Bristol Asylum, Admissions Register, August 1905.
596 Bristol Asylum, Case Records, 1902.
597 Bristol Asylum, Case Records, 1885.
598 Roger Ball, Di Parkin and Steve Wills, 100 Fishponds Road, Life and Death in a Victorian Workhouse, Bristol, 2016, p. 56.
spent on spirits, wines and malt liquors. Put another way, the 971 inmates that year had more spent on their drink than 30,885 inmates put together elsewhere.599

More seriously, their importance here is that workhouses and indeed the hospitals and the asylum placed sailors amongst the normality of working-class existence. They were an integrated part of a class that needed the assistance of state run institutions. When sailors’ needs are brought to mind they are more likely to be in relation to the welfare provided by maritime organisations, such as sailors’ homes and missions, philanthropic organisations and charities, which are extensively discussed in the next chapter. In Bristol, these did exist and did cater for sailors but sailors were also beneficiaries of state care that attended to the needs of all working-class people, irrespective of occupation.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed factors that facilitated sailors’ integration into the physical space of the working classes and into working-class culture. It has suggested that sailors can be classed as a subsection of the working class, highly integrated with working-class people in a literal sense especially in respect of where they lived. The spatial geography of the city allowed the presence of some elements of sailortown in the lesser form of sailortreets but because of the constricting forces of the water, these streets were not the exclusive playground of sailors. The space for stereotypical behaviour was limited by the spurs of water and the close proximity of city buildings, offices and institutions.600 This had the possibility of tempering the behaviours of sailors in Bristol, as did the fact that sailortreets were also commercial, residential and civic streets used by all. Sailors’ existence was therefore just as much an urban existence as it was for other workers.

Many sailors declined ostentatious displays of sailor identity and the services of sailortown institutions and instead, dependent to an extent on the type of sailor they were exercised agency in locating themselves away from sailortreets. The majority of sailors preferred not to live with other sailors but were at the stage of their seafaring careers, and at the age, to be married and to go back to their families. This was in their own house or in co-residency with other families in dispersed areas of the city and in more comfortable accommodation than that offered by common lodging houses and public houses. In their residencies many sailors desired to emulate the middle-class and the more refined working-class man who aspired to the respectable masculinity required of the post 1850 era. In doing so, they took their familial responsibilities seriously and fulfilled the respectable duty of a good citizen of providing financial solvency for their families. This was through taking advantage of transmission of wages but also by seeking alternative employment when between voyages, although it is recognised that the extent of this is uncertain.

599 Bristol Workhouse Drink Bill: A Social Services Pamphlet, 1887
600 Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, p. 82.
In their leisure time between voyages sailors continued to show the stereotypical cultural commonalty with other working-class people by spending it in drinking and to a lesser extent frequenting brothels. However, the incidences of this were no more of a problem to the city authorities than that caused by other working-class groups. It has also been suggested, although again the evidence for Lee’s societal integration of sailors is very limited, that leisure time will have been taken in participation of the rational recreational activities provided by middle class philanthropists. However, they also took educational opportunities, primarily provided by the Society of Merchant Adventurers, in efforts to better themselves. Not all sailors were able or equipped to take advantage of such provision and opportunities and because of various personal circumstances, sailors were a further integrated presence in urban culture through the adversities and health issues that they encountered as ordinary working-class people. Some of these needs were addressed by state organisations but further to these, other maritime, religious and philanthropic institutions also facilitated sailors’ integration within the city’s working-class, urban culture. This is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Three: The Role of Maritime and Religious Institutions in the Cultural Integration of Sailors

Introduction

This chapter progresses Chapter Two by considering how Bristol’s middle-class elites in their role as custodians of maritime and faith based institutions, facilitated sailors’ integration into working-class urban culture. It will be argued that some maritime and religious organisations, but not all, fostered a great deal of integration between sailors and other working-class people and indeed between sailors and people from higher social classes. Success in this came from tailoring their provision as close to working-class cultural norms as possible. The Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute and St. Raphael’s Church in particular exhibited an empathetic understanding of sailors’ physical, spiritual and cultural needs and their outreach and activities closely reflected characteristics of working-class culture. It will be argued that sailors appreciated the provision of the Mission and St. Raphael’s more than that of the Home because they provided activities in a more convivial and non-condescending way than the Sailors’ Home did. In addition, the importance of St. Raphael’s was that it was located in the physical working-class space of Bedminster and thus had the function of situating sailors physically among others in working-class communities. It also had a ‘College’ in which working-class people could take classes and it had an almshouse attached. Both these institutions, it will be argued, were instrumental in placing sailors among other city dwellers. Because of their activities sailors were a visible presence amongst others, not in the sense of conspicuous sailor identity but just as ordinary people. This helped the perception of sailors as a normality in the demographic makeup of Bristol, not a separate entity. On the other hand, it will also be argued that the Bristol Sailors’ Home, the main maritime institution providing welfare for sailors, was less instrumental in this and it reflected maritime culture more than working-class culture. This was welcomed by some sailors but manifestly not others.

However, although it did not appeal so much to sailors the Home’s administration and organisation, its financial insecurity, austerity and general unwelcoming atmosphere ironically had the effect of also pushing sailors outwards into the wider fabric of the city thus providing the potential for even more commonalty with working-class people within

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601 See Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City, for church efforts to better the working class in Bristol, especially Chapter 7. For the seminal work on rational recreation, see Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class, 1978. For legislative input into the improvement of sailors’ conditions see Alessandro Stanziani, ‘Seamen, National Workforce and Global Deregulation’, pp. 540-55. For general works on church activity in sailor welfare and betterment see Roald Kverndal, Seamen’s Missions; Alston Kennerley, ‘Welfare in British Merchant Seafaring’; Alston Kennerley, ‘Ratings for the Mercantile Marine; Alston Kennerley, Seafaring Missionary Societies’; Alston Kennerley, ‘Writing the History’; Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions; Alston Kennerley, ‘British Merchant Seafarers and their Homes’; Jon Press, ‘Philanthropy and the British Shipping Industry’ and David M. Williams ‘Mid-Victorian Attitudes’, pp. 101-126. For the same in a naval port town see Brad Beaven, ‘Slum Priests’ and Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, especially Chapter Six.
urban environments. In so doing, it had the effect of reducing the actual number of sailors on the streets around the waterside. As has been shown above even transient sailors sought lodgings in dispersed areas and more pertinently many remained on board. This thesis therefore questions the efficacy of the Home in its intended function but argues that it and other maritime instructions through their administration, location and cultural provision fostered a great deal of sailors’ integration with other occupational groups. In doing so, it forwards a different interpretation to the generally argued, albeit with noted deficiencies, positivity towards sailors’ homes.602

The Bristol Sailors’ Home

The main maritime organisation for the welfare of sailors in Bristol was the Sailors’ Home which opened in 1853 and was largely modelled on the first Sailors’ Home that opened in Wellclose Square in London in 1835603 and on the homes in Liverpool and Portsmouth.604 The Mercantile Marine Act of 1850, re-enacted in the Merchant Shipping Act in 1894, encouraged the setting up of Sailor Homes throughout the country and was cemented on a firm footing by the establishment of the Sailors’ Home Institution in London in 1852.605 By the 1850s, sailors’ homes were ubiquitous wherever sailors set foot, designed to usurp the provision of services and facilities by sailortown businesses and produce a more civic-minded sailor. They obviously provided some relevant services and in some places, as Robert Lee says, there was strong demand for the accommodation and a bed, conviviality and entertainment was most welcome to many.606 To various extents they offered food, drink (for extra payment), accommodation, banking services, baggage storage, character references, engagement and discharge services, medical services, entertainment, religious counselling, elementary and nautical education and for the destitute sailor, free food and reduced rates for accommodation.607

Bristol Sailors’ Home was obviously popular with many sailors; numbers over the length of its existence were in total not insignificant. Bristol’s Home being relatively small and run by a husband and wife team was perhaps more pleasant than some and many sailors were happy to return to the Home when they were in port. In 1908, out of the 874 seamen registered, 450 of them had been there before.608 The Home was strict and some sailors obviously preferred a disciplined environment akin to shipboard life. A Royal Navy Captain,
Captain Pryce, stayed on 85 separate occasions between 19th April 1855 and 20th November 1856.609 Royal Navy residents were rare but perhaps the six who stayed there in August 1900 did not mind the relative strictness.610

Others may have been attracted by where the Home was and the location was perfect for both its founders as well as its residents (Map 8). It has been noted that sailors’ homes were deliberately sited where they could visibly challenge the businesses of sailortown and Bristol’s imposing structure was no exception.611 The back door of this architecturally imposing building lead directly on to one of Bristol’s sailortructures, the Grove, as it still does today.612 If anywhere, it was this area that presented the potential for depravity, ‘blighted by low public houses, brothels, crimps and ruffians, always ready to prey upon seamen’.613 The river is no more than 30 metres away from the Home’s door and so it was hoped that sailors would stop there rather than go beyond to waste their money in sailortown businesses.

Map 8: The Location of the Bristol Sailors’ Home.
Source: Bristol Central Library Collection.

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609 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Ledger, 1855-56.
612 Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, pp. 100-107.
613 ‘Church Work Amongst Bristol Sailors’, Bristol Mercury, 20th February, 1878.
Its situation was not just convenient and almost impossible to miss but its location was chosen to situate transient sailors among civilising influences of civic space. The Home was sited in the civic centre of the city, its back door might have faced the water but its front door led out onto Queen’s Square, the grandest square in the city and even if it was not as salubrious as it once was, it was still an imposing quadrangle of magnificent Georgian buildings. In the space of fifty paces a sailor could disembark from ship, walk in the back door on the quay, cross the tiled floor and exit through the front door into Georgian splendour on Queen’s Square (Image 15). This may well have induced some self-attention on how to behave properly.

![Image 15: The photograph on the left is the Sailors’ Home back entrance facing the quayside. The photograph on the right is the grander front entrance facing Queen’s Square. Source: The author.](image)

Furthermore, its position situated the Home in commercial and civic space amongst the grand architecture and topography of the city. Queen’s Square, ‘a happy illustration of aristocratic grandeur and commercial activity’, was the location of the offices of many major businesses in Bristol but also three major maritime institutions, the Sailor’s Home, the Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute and the Marine Board. Its location thus facilitated the representation of sailors among other residents and businesses of the city. However its spatial statement of intent is one thing but how effective it was in enticing sailors to use its facilities is another and in the case of Bristol it is clear that despite good intentions, it had its limitations in outreach to sailors. The relative under-usages of the Home by transient sailors could only mean that they dispersed themselves to accommodation that was frequented by other working-class people, despite the Home

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614 Certainly not as salubrious when the City Council decided in the 1970s to lay a dual carriageway across it, thankfully since removed and the buildings restored.

615 Scammell and Company Directory for Gloucester, Bristol and South Wales, Bristol, 1853. It also lists 31 Anglican churches, four Catholic, one synagogue and 50 dissenting churches, which gives an impression of the importance of religion in the city.
being regarded as being a much better option at 16s a week than ‘generally unsatisfactory’ private boarding houses.\textsuperscript{616}

Between 1879 and 1914, Alston Kennerley calculates that Bristol’s occupancy was on average just 9.1 beds per night, which was only a fifth of capacity.\textsuperscript{617} In 1871 there were eight sailors resident out of 60 available beds, which included two Portuguese and one each from Ireland, Liverpool, London, Birmingham and Bristol. In 1881 there were six out of 52 comprising a mate, a master mariner and four able seamen. The mate and two of the seamen were from the same town in Newfoundland and there was one each from Cornwall, Isle of Man and Finland.\textsuperscript{618} From the late 1870s residence rates show decline or a stubborn tendency to remain fixed at low levels (Figure 7).

\textbf{Figure 7:} Daily averages of sailors staying in the Home.
\textbf{Source:} Bristol Sailors’ Home Committee Books.

As the graph above shows, figures contained in the Sailors’ Home Committee Books correlated by Alston Kennerley do not present a positive indication of sailors’ intentions to stay there,\textsuperscript{619} which did not go unnoticed in the local press.\textsuperscript{620} The number of beds available was 60 each night and the highest nightly average number of sailors staying in any one year, 5.5, was in 1870 and 1871. The total number of sailors using the Home between 1853 and 1914 was 72,429, which is a small fraction of the 1,335,900 beds available.

There were fluctuations of course and attributing reasons at individual points is difficult, but it does seem clear that the Home was hit by competition from the Mission to Seamen.

\textsuperscript{616} Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{617} Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{618} Census Enumerator Books, Bristol, 1861, 1871 and 1881.
\textsuperscript{619} Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, Appendix 1a, p. xx.
\textsuperscript{620} Bristol Evening News, 20\textsuperscript{th} October, 1906.
and Seamen’s Institute, discussed in detail below. In 1885, to take an example of a year by which time the Mission was well established, Kennerley calculates that the average daily number of sailors on foreign going vessels entering Bristol was 43.621 Using this figure, 15,695 foreign going sailors entered Bristol that year but in the same year only 1,012 sailors of all types stayed at the Home. Figure 8 shows this correlation for other years and it clearly shows the uptake was not healthy.

![Graph Showing the Number of Foreign Going Sailors Entering Bristol and the Number of Sailors Staying at the Bristol Sailors' Home](image)

**Figure 8:** Number of sailors entering Bristol and staying at the Home.
**Source:** Bristol Sailors’ Home Committee Books.

To make it worse many of these would have been sailors who were returning to the Home or long-term residents and so the figures do not indicate the rate of new sailors to the Home. In addition, occupancy rates were at times inflated by the fact that it was used as a staging post for shipwrecked sailors sent there awaiting onward shipping by the Shipwrecked Mariners’ Society and these may not have chosen to stay there if they had a choice.622 In 1889, out of the 826 sailors who stayed there, 129 were destitute sailors, 41 were shipwrecked sailors and eight were apprentices.623 The figures for 1914 were inflated by Belgian refugees being placed there by the Belgian Refugee Committee in Clifton before being sent to France.624 Perhaps it is a kindness to the Home to suggest that low occupancy was partly to do with keeping space in reserve in case of a sudden influx of sailors. The 23 sailors spending the night after their ship the *City of Montreal* was shipwrecked on 19th December 1880 would have benefited the income column of the accounts book but would have been merely a night of temporary excited activity.625

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622 Alston Kennerley, *British Seamen’s Missions*, p. 95.
The reasons for the poor figures are varied but it is worth noting that not all of this can be attributed to the failings of the Home and there were factors out of its control that affected patronage. One was the general decline in shipping and the loss of trade to Liverpool, as previously noted.\textsuperscript{626} Better accommodation for sailors on ship, which enticed sailors to stay on board and quicker turnaround times also resulted in less sailors on shore.\textsuperscript{627} In addition, changing rules of the Board of Trade that allowed sailors’ wages to be remitted anywhere meant that sailors could move on more quickly. The Transmission of Wages Scheme or the Midge System of 1880 offered the possibility of immediate rail travel home because sailors did not have to wait for wages. Monies being forwarded by telegraph simply meant less sailors in town.\textsuperscript{628}

Having said this, the more substantial reasons that sailors continued to go elsewhere in the city were the responsibility of the Home and the main one was that the Home’s unstable financial situation disallowed substantial spending on what ordinary working-class people wanted from a temporary residence. Had the Home been able to spend more on its facilities it may have attracted more sailors who therefore through their payments would have allowed further investment. However, the Bristol Sailors’ Home had insecure finances from the start and this was mainly because of the relative indifference of the city’s elites to having one. The cost of the building, its dining room for 80, reading room, smoking room with various games, library, 60 separate cabins with clean beds and bedding and supplies, all in place by the date of its opening, had to be met. However, the founding trustees lamented in the press the lack of interest and funding from the shipowners of Bristol (except for shipowners Charles Hill who were ever present on the Home’s Committee), the employees of whom the Home was built for.\textsuperscript{629} This is surprising, given the positive esteem sailors were held in in the city, as demonstrated in the next chapter, but it was a struggle from the start and by the end of the first year, discussions were already being had about closing the Home down.

It stayed open and thereafter sought other sources of funding but with limited success. One method was to raise donations; many homes relied on donations to keep open because having to match the charges of lodging houses meant ordinary income was not enough.\textsuperscript{630} The mean donated income to the Bristol Sailors’ Home between 1854 and 1860 was around 25% annually and being at the mercy of the whim of philanthropists to such an extent did not make for financial security.\textsuperscript{631} In addition, much of it was earmarked for particular purposes. The Bible Society, for example, donated money equivalent to 20 bibles in

\textsuperscript{626} The decline in shipping, the change to steam, better accommodation on board and the declining numbers of sailors in Bristol formed the agenda of the Bristol Sailors’ Home Committee meeting of 17\textsuperscript{th} June, 1860.
\textsuperscript{627} See David M. Williams, ‘Mid Victorian Attitudes to Seamen’, pp. 101-126, for an account of agitation for better accommodation for sailors on board and ashore.
\textsuperscript{628} Alston Kennerley, \textit{British Seamen’s Missions}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{629} John Lavers, ‘Bristol Institutions’, articles on various welfare institutions collated from the \textit{Western Daily Press}, 1883, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{630} Bristol Sailors’ Home Entry Books, 28\textsuperscript{th} September, 1866.
\textsuperscript{631} Alston Kennerley, \textit{British Seamen’s Missions}, p. 88.
September 1866.632 Using Kennerley’s figures, in 1871 donated income was £311 out of total ordinary income of £1082, which equates to 29%. By 1908 donations were down to 17% (£82 out of a total of £484).633 Money from donations was not forthcoming enough and the turnover halving in the same period shows a decreasing commitment by the local community over time. The Annual General Meeting Report notes that in 1908 there were no voluntary donations at all from shipping companies. There were subscriptions but again mainly from non-shipping companies such as Imperial Tobacco, Spillers and Fry.634 More funding was needed but the money simply was not available to allow continuous improvements that might have attracted more sailors to make up the short fall. In 1908, an Admiral Close, said that the Home had to turn sailors away because of lack of funds and that it was ‘a poor building unworthy of Bristol’. He told the annual meeting that only £70 had been given by shipping companies, that there was a deficit in the budget and subscriptions were down.635

Lamenting the lack of support is a feature of many of the annual reports. As late as 1913 the Reverend de Jersey noted in his contribution that the Home was not as it should be for want of funds to carry on the work.636 In December 1913 it was necessary to launch a general appeal for money and later still in 1924, it was beholden to the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society which held a huge nautical bazaar at the city’s premier venue, the Colston Hall, to keep the Sailors’ Home going.637 Indifferent support and commitment continued throughout the years of this study to the extent that the report of the annual meeting in 1910 was scathing of the ‘Bristol Merchant Princes’ who refused to donate more and neglected the state of the Home. The Bristol Home was unfavourably compared to Portsmouth’s flourishing Sailors’ Home and also to the Sailors’ Rests established by Agnes Weston, both of which were in a much better financial state and had much more community support than in Bristol.638 Thus, through their lack of support the middle-class elites involved with shipping and other things maritime were doing very little to contribute to the supposed civilising process of this part of the working-class.639

General apathy or at least ambivalence could also extend to the Committee itself. The Chairman of the Committee in 1890 lamented the poor turnout at the annual meeting and rather optimistically suggested that, ‘he supposed it meant that the people were satisfied with the manner in which the house was conducted.’640 Kennerley notes that there were long periods in the 1880s when the Committee’s monthly meetings lacked quorums641 and

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632 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Entry Books, 28th September, 1866.
633 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 135.
636 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Annual Report, 1913. The annual report for 1929 is particularly scathing.
637 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Appeal leaflet, December, 1913.
639 Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City.
641 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 133.
in January, March and May 1898, only one Committee member turned up out of nine.\textsuperscript{642} Apathy towards it from the community suggests that it was an unremarkable institution, one of just many philanthropic organisations that were doing some good in the city. Indeed, despite its physical presence the Home seemed to be an almost forgotten part of the fabric of the city. In 1908, the Lord Mayor of Bristol addressed the annual meeting of the Home and described it as a ‘quiet and unobtrusive society’ that had been doing useful work for more than half a century.\textsuperscript{643} In 1913, the Bishop of Bristol was asked to chair the annual meeting of the Home and in his opening remarks said that he had not realised there was a sailors’ home in the city because of the hundreds of other charities that obscured it.\textsuperscript{644}

The Committee members gradually became aware of the shortcomings and they were put in to sharper context with the opening of the Mission to Seamen’s and Seamen’s Institute in 1880 with which the Committee saw itself in competition. After seeing this in action for a number of years the Committee admitted that they were perceived to be old fashioned and that it had to be more attractive and provide more of what working-class people wanted.\textsuperscript{645} The Committee also woke up to the need to raise more money and it attempted to emulate how the Mission to Seamen and Institute was doing so. If the Home was to provide the extensive facilities provided in other homes such as Liverpool and London, the Committee had to be active in raising finances through activities that would appeal not just to sailors but also to the wider working class, at least the more respectable ones. The Home’s Committee therefore belatedly recognised the need for situating what it provided in the context of cultural norms so that it would facilitate the mixing of sailors with other working-class people.\textsuperscript{646}

It has limited success in this. In 1890, unrealised plans were drawn up to open a coffee house near the shipping office around the corner in Prince Street. As well as raising money via the ‘very considerable traffic’, its siting would have put it in the heart of a busy commercial street and would have facilitated mixing of sailors and residents.\textsuperscript{647} Other fund raising was designed to take advantage of the increased leisure time and real disposable incomes of working-class people but they did not raise much money. For example, the Home’s entry books note that they provided tea and dinner for outsiders with no obligation of residency.\textsuperscript{648} It took possession of a piano for singsongs in 1896,\textsuperscript{649} weekly concerts were put on, as were fortnightly magic lantern shows, which raised in 1911-13, a relatively small sum of £57.\textsuperscript{650}

\textsuperscript{642} Bristol Sailor’s Home, \textit{Committee Meeting Minute Books}, June, 1898.
\textsuperscript{644} Bristol Sailors’ Home, \textit{Annual Report}, 1913.
\textsuperscript{645} Bristol Sailors’ Home, \textit{Committee Meeting Minute Books}, 9\textsuperscript{th} April, 1893.
\textsuperscript{646} Bristol Sailors’ Home, \textit{Committee Meeting Minute Books}, 9\textsuperscript{th} April, 1893.
\textsuperscript{647} Bristol Sailors’ Home, ‘Report of the Annual General Meeting, 1899’, \textit{Bristol Times and Mirror}, 21\textsuperscript{st} March, 1890.
\textsuperscript{648} Bristol Sailors’ Home, \textit{Entry Books}, 12\textsuperscript{th} February and 19\textsuperscript{th} September, 1874.
\textsuperscript{649} Bristol Sailors’ Home, \textit{Committee Meeting Minute Books}, 10\textsuperscript{th} October, 1894.
The issue was that in addition to the failure of the coffee house all these efforts came rather late and were in response to such activities already being provided by other working-class cultural institutions long before and certainly by its main rival the Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute literally just round the corner. Overall, little attention was given to the personal comforts of the residents and modernisation was very slow to happen. Enlarging the cabins, thus making the accommodation more comfortable did not happen until 1902 and again in 1904. It only provided oil stove heating in the cabins in 1901 and electricity was not installed until 1896.

Just as much of a concern for sailors as the comforts was that they were obliged to obey sailor home rules that were akin to being on ship. The Bristol Home was perhaps more lenient than some, at least sailors staying there did not have to endure religious services because it was run on non-sectarian lines. This of course may have been a disincentive to some sailors but it did have prayers at the sacrosanct meal times of 8.30am breakfast, 2.00pm dinner, 6.00pm tea and 9.00pm supper. It also allowed inmates to buy alcohol, even though it was not a particularly generous amount and cannot be considered to be a challenge to the pubs nearby. The Home’s expense book entry for 2nd December 1856 records three gallons of beer for the 22 inmates that night but a few months before on 25th May 1856, they could imbibe a little more with four and a half gallons between 27 of them.

But as Milne and Kennerley point out despite the rate of returnees to some homes indicating a level of satisfaction, and Kennerley in particular giving a more sympathetic portrayal of sailor home life, sailors did not appreciate the barracks, prison, asylum or hospital like nature, their strict rules and moralising attitudes towards how sailors should behave or their lack of charity, low wages given to staff and bureaucratic inflexibility. The Bristol Home’s reputation as a rather unwelcoming institution was in place as early as 1859, when a speaker at that year’s AGM voiced his opinion that sailors were unlikely to want to come to the Home because it ‘was pictured to sailors as a very undesirable place’. Strict rules largely based on the London model were laid down at the first meeting of the Bristol Sailors’ Home in June 1853, which forbade quarrelling, smoking, the use of abusive language and drunkenness and set the lock out time at 11.00pm. The Home clearly would not

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652 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 2nd February, 1880.
653 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 9th January 1902, 11th July, 1904, 9th February, 1901, 9th December, 1896.
654 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, pp. 118-119.
655 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Expense Book, 1855.
656 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Expense Book, 1855 and 1856.
659 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Expense Book, 1855.
countenance any breaking of the rules and in 1908 it could still dictate the character of the sailors allowed resolving that, ‘parties evincing a habitual inclination so as to disgrace themselves will not be allowed to remain in the Institution’. 660

Considering the ‘nature’ of a typical sailor these rules were draconian and attempts at protest were not heeded, complaints about the breakfast being fairly typical. 661 The annual report for 1866 even notes a complaint from residents about the quality of the beer on sale. 662 Other complaints were made about security and it was not a place that sailors could feel secure in, nor confident that their possessions would be safe amongst fellow sailors. The Home’s entry books recorded a resident stealing ten pounds from another sailor in the Home, another stealing a fellow sailor’s watch and still another having his coat stolen. 663 Perhaps the untrustworthiness of the Home was a factor in the significant reduction in deposits from sailors to the Home’s bank in 1908, for example. 664 The safety of sailors’ health in the Home was also an issue and there were complaints about the cleanliness. The Home’s reputation was further sullied by an outbreak of smallpox in the Home in 1871. 665

Image 16: The Mourners, a Corner of the Sailors’ Home Bristol, by Eyre Crowe, 1895.

These factors gave the impression that the Home was not a particularly welcoming place to stay in and a painting by Eyre Crowe of 1895, miserably named The Mourners (Image 16),

660 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Annual Report, 1908, p. 15.
661 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Minute Book, 19th January, 1860.
662 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Annual Report, 16th August, 1866.
664 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Annual Report, 1908, p. 3.
665 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Minute Book, 13th April, 1871.
presents a rather gloomy ambiance. The Bristol Home, like most Victorian institutions was austere and its structure and location, its size and grandeur mentioned as positives above could easily be construed as an expression of middle-class self-importance and superiority, condescending to allow a transient working-class sailor temporary access to its ‘comforts’. The Committee’s attitude towards sailors, one member opining, ‘It is a common observation that sailors are a reckless, drunken set and that any attempt to ameliorate their condition is impracticable’, did not particularly auger well for an empathetic and compassionate treatment of its guests.666

Indeed, it can be said that the Home had an air of indifferent impropriety about it. As charitable organisations, sailors’ homes might be expected to show exemplary practice in their financial affairs and professional integrity but Bristol’s often did not live up to these expectations. In 1859, it managed to make a loss on cashing in sailor’s advance notes.667 Internal corruption and poor behaviour of its staff is evident; the steward and cook were dismissed in 1877 for accepting bribes from clothing sellers.668 In August 1856, both porters were dismissed for repeated drunkenness669 and in December 1859, the porter on duty refused entry to some shipwrecked sailors, for which he was severely reprimanded.670 Another porter was dismissed for impertinence and his replacement lasted exactly 33 days before being dismissed for disorderly conduct.671 Clearly, the Committee were not adept at recruitment; one Superintendent was taken on despite severe health and physical disabilities that prevented him doing any outside work, he was dismissed after six months.672 Another Superintendent, the face of the Home in the community, was fined for drunkenness in June 1892.673 Nor could it always control what its residents got up to and the incident in which a sailor, William Clark, got so drunk that he fell into the sewer on Welsh Back and had to be taken to the Infirmary, raised suspicions of the Home’s integrity.674

These shortcomings of the Home further pushed sailors away from the waterfront and into other working-class areas but it also pushed them towards the lodging houses and boarding houses along the quays. As Milne, Moon, Burton and others have identified there was a reciprocal level of mutual interest between boarding house proprietors and sailors and this was hard to interrupt.675 In 1857 the Committee lamented the continued use of lodging houses and boarding houses and hoped that,
The time was not far distant when seamen would be induced to see the wisdom of living in respectability and comfort at institutions such as these instead of passing their time on shore in the horrible dens to which so great a portion of them resort.676

This was indeed hopeful and sailors continued to choose how they spent their money and continued to provide a service to traditional sailortown business. Moreover, because of the shortcomings of the Home many other sailors, especially transient ones, chose to either stay on board ship or seek accommodation in the wider city areas, as has been discussed. These both had the effect of removing the presence of sailors from waterside areas and if quantity were a component of conspicuous identity, this would have had the effect of diluting notions of a common seafaring identity.

There was also the simple matter of the price of a night’s stay, although there is no way of quantifying the number of sailors who chose to go elsewhere because of this. Lodging housekeepers would have been delighted when sailors who had been sent to the Home by the Chaplain of the Seamen’s Institute because it was full up chose not to go in because they could get a bed for a shilling cheaper in a nearby lodging house.677 George Sorrell, a sailor who stayed at Bristol Sailors’ Home, was aggrieved at the cost and opined that, ‘People seem to think that these so called homes are benevolent institutions, but I can assure them that sailors residing in them pay full value for what they receive’.678 The charge of 11s and 4d in 1853, even if it was not as much as London and Liverpool, was still a relatively high price679 as was the doubling of this to 22 shillings and six pence by 1909.680

This meant that the Sailors’ Home could not and did not put an end to the lure of sailortown businesses, even if it made some effort to do so. On its inception it offered sailors the use of its own savings bank which took in £8000 in deposits in its first year, presumably some of which would have found its way to sailortown businesses.681 It also tried to influence the magistrates into controlling lodging houses; in 1857, the Committee called for licensing of lodging houses, which they said were banding together against the Home.682 Also in 1857, the Home tried to ameliorate the effects of crimps working for lodging houses by buying a boat and employing an agent at Pill down river to board vessels before they got to the city’s quays.683 Employing an agent to go on the ships, or perhaps out-crimping the crimps, did increase the number of seamen using the home from a daily average of 2.0 in 1859 to 3.1

676 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 1857.
677 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 10th October, 1894.
678 Cicely Fox-Smith ed., The Man before the Mast: Being the Story of Twenty Years Afloat, Methuen, 1929, p. 2.
679 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 87.
681 John Lavers, Bristol Institutions, articles on various welfare institutions collated from the Western Daily Press, 1883, p. 118.
682 Bristol Sailors’ Home, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 1857.
683 John Lavers, Bristol Institutions, articles on various welfare institutions collated from the Western Daily Press, 1883, p. 118.
in 1860\textsuperscript{684} and nearly half the total for 1858.\textsuperscript{685} However, the fact that it needed to employ such drastic tactics shows the Home’s struggle to become the residence of choice. The ban on going aboard obviously applied to the Bristol Sailors’ Home agent at Pill and he was withdrawn in April 1883.\textsuperscript{686}

**The Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute**

If the Sailors’ Home struggled in its endeavours to attract and influence sailors, it was not as difficult for the other major maritime institution concerned with sailors’ welfare the Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute. Its relative success in attracting sailors was because it did not portray a sense of aloofness or superiority; it was much more inclusive and evidently well run. Crucially, it was more centred in working-class urban culture in terms of its outreach and activities and was just what social commentators were calling for, the provision of institutions, facilities and leisure pursuits that provided reforming recreations for working people.\textsuperscript{687} The 1884 report noted the Mission as only one of four significant ‘clubs’ in the city that lived up to its recommendations of being ‘largely managed by members, having reading facilities, games, entertainments, temperance refreshment, good rooms, good light, comfort, liberty, self-management and a tone of self-respect’, and it was one that appealed to sailors and to other working-class people.\textsuperscript{688} It was closest in kind to the facilities and activities provided by working-men’s clubs, the first in Bristol being opened in 1864, and its efficient organisation was also more akin to the better organised, better facilities and more diverse provision of later nineteenth-century clubs.\textsuperscript{689} Whereas the Home with its moralising tone and Spartan comforts pushed the sailor away from its doors and into the working-class cultures of the wider city, the Mission and Institute fostered the integration of different subsections of the working classes through its empathy, benevolence and its provision. Furthermore, this was also the case when other faith-based organisations are briefly considered; they too showed a much greater awareness of how sailors might best be helped and in doing so, through putting a focus on outreach within the context of aspects of working class-culture, fostered their integration with other working and middle-class people.

\textsuperscript{684} Alston Kennerley, *British Seamen’s Missions*’ p. 90.

\textsuperscript{685} Bristol Sailors’ Home, *Committee Meeting Minute Books*, 16\textsuperscript{th} June, 1859.

\textsuperscript{686} Bristol Sailors’ Home, *Committee Meeting Minute Books*, 12\textsuperscript{th} April, 1893 and in Alston Kennerley, *British Seamen’s Missions*, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{687} Helen Mellor’s *Leisure and the Changing City* is a detailed account of the efforts of the middle class to reform the working classes of Bristol.

\textsuperscript{688} Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 128.

Missionary work to seamen in the city has its origins in the work of George Charles Smith a Pastor in Penzance who came to Bristol in 1820 and established the Bristol Seamen’s Friend Society with its own Bethel Companies, a succession of bethel ships moored off the Grove between 1804 and 1807, a marine school, Sunday school, a seamen’s registration society and an agency for inspecting seamen’s lodging houses. A later incarnation of this, The Incorporated Seamen and Boatmen’s Friend Society, set up a Sailors’ Home and Rest along the river at Hotwells open to sailors, destitute sailors and dockworkers which emulated the Mission to Seamen in providing a permanent building.690 The Mission to Seamen itself was originally founded in 1836 by a Reverend John Ashley who made it his purpose in life to minister to the sailors on board vessels in the Bristol Channel. In 1858, his mission combined with other smaller missions to form The Mission to Seamen and eventually the Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute in 1880 under the auspices of the established church.691

The Mission was built on Prince Street running off Queen’s Square. Just as with the Sailors’ Home, its siting was well considered (Map 9). It was both adjacent to the water and close to the respectability of Queen’s Square. It was also actually better sited than the Home to attract sailors on their way from the quays into town. It was a substantial building (Image 17). A city worthy, a Mr. W. F. Lavington, a wine merchant who obviously appreciated what sailors did more than other merchant benefactors who were reluctant to fund the Sailors’ Home, gave the whole £5,000 for its construction. According to the 'Religious Census' carried out by the Western Daily Press on October 30th 1881 it had space for 300 people and the Mission was instantly popular, with 105 people present at the first morning Service and 252 at Evening Service. More importantly, as will be further evidenced below, the congregation at this first meeting was made up of sailors but also non-sailors, which became an established characteristic of its congregation.692

For those who could not get in the Mission also had its own floating chapel. Floating chapels were used extensively by sailors’ missions because it was thought they would attract sailors who were more comfortable being on the water than on land. The Mission’s first floating chapel was the Aristomones, moored on the Grove. This was almost directly opposite the back door of the Sailors’ Home, which may have been irksome to those in charge of the Home. It was indeed an imposing vessel that could easily seat 1000 people and it was designed to be a reminder of the presence of God amidst sailortown businesses.

690 Roald Kverndal, Seamen’s Missions, p. 364; Bristol Institutions, 1883, p. 128 and Western Daily Press, 6th May, 1910.
691 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 61
692 Western Daily Press, October 30th, 1881.
Beyond its obvious proselyting function and missionary endeavours amongst sailors, seen as worthy subjects for ‘pity and reform’, the Mission via its institute provided limited accommodation for sailors to stay in. This was not on the same level as the Home and the aim was not to compete with it. No records exist of the number of sailors staying at the Institute but a report in the *Bristol Mercury* in 1899 notes that its rooms were always full and that additional rooms had to be added. In other respects the Mission’s authorities sought to provide ‘healthy recreation and innocent amusement’ to the sailors visiting it and it is the social side of the Mission’s activities that situates the sailor into the working-class culture more successfully than the Sailors’ Home did.

The Mission was part of the city’s vast socio-religious provision catering for working-class people. In Bristol this was led by the Young Men’s Christian Association which was particularly active in providing for the working class. It had many huts and rooms all around Bristol as well as its central establishment. It had over 200 hundred women helpers, it had football teams, a library, classes and apparently its doors were never closed. Other intuitions were also important in catering for the needs of the city’s workers. These included the Workers’ Education Association, the Mutual Improvement Society, Bristol Young Men’s Improvement Society, Bristol Evening Class and Recreation Society, The Mechanics Institute, the Working Men’s Reform Association, various other working men’s clubs, and Clifton College Mission (in reality a working-men’s club). Their collective aim, summarised by Helen Mellor, was to ‘make for

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693 Mathew Rafferty, ‘Recent Currents’, p. 615.
694 *The Bristol Mercury*, 10th July, 1899.
695 *The Bristol Mercury*, 10th July, 1899.
the social improvement and mental equipment of working people.” The Mission found its way within this structure and offered penny readings, lectures, outings and respectable entertainments just as the other organisations did for educational benefits in their own right but also in relatively gentle and surreptitious civilising.

Furthermore, the Mission knew how to approach its work and it knew that overzealousness was counterproductive. Rather than trying to shape working-class identity, as Ruth Cherrington has said elements within working-men’s clubs were prone to do, it was more inclined to reflect working-class culture. As Milne has written, sailors were not so much interested in the religious side of things, citing Stan Hugill in saying sailors would put up with a bit of preaching for a bun and a cup of tea. Sailors were no different to the London labourers who at an evening of music and readings organised by local manufacturers and dignitaries in 1874, put up with recitations of literature in return for ‘a slap up meal’, as described by Brad Beaven, a clear example of working-class people, acquiescing to middle-class civilising efforts on their own terms and to their own advantage.

After its successful start the Mission endeavoured to cast its net widely, targeting sailors but not exclusive of other working-class people and it was relatively successful in doing so. It was noted in 1909, long after its opening, that its congregation was regularly made up of sailors alongside non-sailors. Its average attendance at Sunday services in 1895 of 340 indicates significant popularity. Kennerley notes that in 1880, the total number of attendees at services, classes and concerts was 29,295 and in 1885, the total was 48,999. Putting in extra seating at services and entertainments was a regular occurrence and the attendance at magic lantern shows and fortnightly concerts doubled in these five years and were popular with sailors, their families and other supporters of the Mission. These provided opportunities for sailors and local residents to mix together and its other activities also situated it within working-class culture. It regularly held second hand clothing sales open to sailors and others to buy and also sales of craftwork. One of these sales of work took place at one of the premier rooms in the city, The Victoria Rooms, at the bottom of the most fashionable area in Bristol, which illustrates the Mission’s positive standing in the city.

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698 Andy Croll, Civilising the Urban and Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City.


700 Graeme Milne, People, Place and Power, p. 160, citing Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. 280. See also Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, p. 276, for strong anti-preaching feelings of sailors in Portsmouth sailors’ rests.


702 George Stone, Bristol as it was and as it is, Bristol, Waller Reid, 1909, p. 154.

703 The Bristol Mercury, 16th January, 1896.

704 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 148.

705 Alston Kennerley, British Seamen’s Missions, p. 148.

706 Seamen’s Institute, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 22nd June 1892 and 17th May, 1893. Strangely, these are held in Hull Records Office and not in Bristol Archives.

707 Seamen’s Institute, Committee Meeting Minute Books, 8th December, 1899.
The content of entertainments at the Institute, attracting 11,683 people in 1895, would no doubt be more sober than in a pub or music hall but were nevertheless popular, which was still evident in 1927 when for every 10,000 seamen who attended services, 2000 attended concerts and entertainments. Its lectures, mostly dry and uninspiring elsewhere, were often on subjects that would appeal to a wider working-class audience, such as on the South African war. Other lectures may have made them at least think of their situation in life, the delights of Canada, as a potential emigrant destination, for example. High attendances also helped in terms of finances and it did not have the issues that the Home did. At the opening of new rooms, Reverend Charles Griffiths paid tribute to its founder, Mr. Lavington, but also to the continuing support of local gentlemen.

In comparison to the unwelcome reformative motivation of the Sailors’ Home, the Mission was an inclusive organisation and seemed to actually care about those who used it and understood the needs of the sailor on shore and his working-class provenance. At its inception its aims clearly equates sailors’ perceived needs with those of working-class people. The deeds of the building on Prince Street capture this,

‘A part of the said premises to be used as reading room, club and institute for seamen belonging to or touching at the Port of Bristol, or being in the City of Bristol, or in the neighbourhood thereof and to permit other part of the said premises to be used as a chapel belonging to the said Institute to be used for the promotion of the religious and moral welfare of such seamen aforesaid and for their social and mental improvement and recreation’.

708 The Bristol Mercury, 16th January, 1896.
709 Western Daily Press, 7th April, 1927.
710 Brad Beaven, Leisure, p. 20.
712 The Bristol Mercury, 10th July, 1899.
713 The Seamen’s Mission and Institute, Deeds, 1880, p. 3.
Unlike the Home the staff were perhaps more suited to their task. The fact that in 1884, 23 of the Mission’s lay associates were former ordinary seamen will have heartened a sailor. Its deployment on a rota system of two chaplains, two scripture readers and a lay helper to forewarn incoming crews of the danger of crimps is perhaps indicative of how visible it wanted to be in helping the sailor and not only when he had set foot ashore. It was a proud institution and feisty with it. The Mission saw itself as the leading example for other similar missions around the country to emulate. Indeed the above Mr. Griffiths was able to say to the opening of rooms event that other ports modelled their institutes on the one at Bristol. At the same meeting the Chaplain, Reverend Norman de Jersey, opined that other missions had tried to ‘beat it’ but had not succeeded yet.

The activities of the Mission were diverse and as such its work amongst the sailors in the city was only a small part of its operations. As well as on Prince Street, where it was the first mission to run an institute as well (on the ground floor with the chapel above), it ran missions and institutes in Portishead and Avonmouth villages, went out to ships in

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714 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor, Bristol, 1885, p. 200.
715 Chairman, address to The ‘Select Committee on Merchant Seamen’, Command Papers, Nineteenth-Century House of Commons Session Papers, Parliamentary Papers Online, 19th March, 1878, 205 and 187.
716 The Bristol Mercury, 10th July, 1899.
717 The Bristol Mercury, 10th July, 1899.
Portishead and Avonmouth docks and provided mission services to boats in Kingroad, on local canals, to the *Formidable*, the lightship, the lighthouse and to the islands in the Bristol Channel. The chaplains and lay volunteers visited every boarding house and inn used by sailors and provided tracts and books to them.\(^{718}\) Obviously the motive for this was outreach to lost souls but it also served to spread the activities of the main Mission in Bristol into other working-class areas. Whereas the Sailors’ Home was naturally immovable and could only offer its main provision of a bed in the centre of the city, the Mission did all it could to replicate its functions elsewhere. The Mission at Avonmouth situated itself centrally in working-class culture by renting a part of a popular coffee tavern.\(^{719}\) This was in 1887 and over time it moved to premises that incorporated a concert hall, refreshment rooms, a reading room and even a bunkhouse for sailors who could not get into the city.\(^{720}\) One night in 1912, when a concert party failed to turn up because of bad weather, a sailor started playing the piano and ‘songs, recitations and other items were heartily rendered by the seafaring audience’ and ‘a goodly number of genuine seamen and a few friends were present.’\(^{721}\)

**Other Missions and Churches**

The Mission’s work resulted in substantial impetus to sailors being an integrated part of the working-class culture of the city but it was not the only religious organisation that deliberately welcomed sailors and facilitated their mixing with other working-class residents. There were other missions specifically for sailors. Bristol had a branch of the other national evangelical missionary society, the British and Foreign Sailors Society.\(^{722}\) In 1891, *Matthews Directory* listed a Bethel Ship Mission, a Seamen and Boatmen’s Bethel, a Seamen and Boatmen’s Mission, a Seamen’s Bethel Room, a branch of the Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners’ Benevolent Society and a mission at Pill. By 1909, there were 37 various mission rooms listed including two more specifically for sailors further along the river at Cumberland Basin.\(^{723}\)

There were also the Catholic churches and various non-conformist chapels catering for sailors. Bristol always had a strong non-conformist tradition; in 1881, the Salvation Army catered for 15.4% of the church going population.\(^{724}\) It provided accommodation for sailors at their shelter, as did the Church Army Home. The crew list for the *Jersey City* in 1904 show

\(^{718}\) *The Bristol Mercury*, 16\(^{th}\) January, 1896.
\(^{719}\) *The Bristol Times and Mirror*, 28\(^{th}\) April, 1926.
\(^{721}\) *Avonmouth Mail and Shipping Gazette*, 12\(^{th}\) January, 1912.
\(^{722}\) Alston Kennerley, ‘Seafaring Missionary Societies’ and *British Seamen’s Missions*.
sailors entering these institutions in the column indicating where they lived. Many of the city’s established Anglican churches also sought to have sailors sitting in their pews alongside non-sailors. An article in the Bristol Mercury entitled Church Work Amongst Bristol Sailors states that the cathedral itself was regularly well attended by sailors. The same article lists 14 parishes that abutted the Floating Harbour that sailors frequented. It was not just casual attendance and much was done to attract sailors to services and entertainments. Incumbents went on board vessels and to the pubs and boarding houses exhorting sailors to come to use the ‘free seats’. Indeed the report praised most of the parishes’ willingness to accept sailors along the two miles of the river and that this in fact was the only way to cater for the thousands of sailors in port.

One church that particularly did this was St. Raphael’s on Cumberland Road (Image 18), on the edge of Bedminster, which was the main working-class area across the river. St. Raphael’s was built in 1857 and for the first six years directed its work almost entirely at sailors. However, it was awkwardly situated across the river from the main quays and it required the crossing of a toll bridge to get to it or a ferry. It was therefore decided to extend its outreach to other working-class people who came from all over Bristol, which suggests healthy integration of sailors into the community.

Image 18: St. Raphael’s Church and College.
Source: Loxton’s drawings held at Bristol Central Library.

725 Crew List for the Jersey City, 1904.
726 ‘Church Work Amongst Bristol Sailors’, Bristol Mercury, 20th February, 1878.
727 Bristol Mercury, 8th May, 1878.
728 Bristol Mercury, 8th May, 1878.
St. Raphael’s became an integral part of the city’s working-class infrastructure and it sought other ways to integrate sailors with working-class people and indeed with people of a higher class. Not only did it to do this through its services but it also built and ran its own almshouses for sailors and set up its own ‘college’ next to the church. Two hundred sailors’ families were regulars but so were another 100 middle-class families. In 1877, of 173 baptisms, 29 were children of sailors, seven were of middle-class children, and the rest were labourer and mechanics’ children. In its community work the attached Sisters of Charity attended 4000 cases of distress and the ‘ladies’ of the church visited regularly 200 families, 68 of them sailors’ families in that year. Activities such as these were effective in welcoming sailors to the church and in placing sailors and their families at the heart of working-class communities. Unfortunately its good work was not allowed to continue for long. The church had a troubled existence with its parent Bishopric. For a predominantly Anglican and non-conformist city, St. Raphael’s services were very traditional and close to Catholic liturgy. Because of this it was closed by the Bishop of Bristol in 1877 after complaints from three of the congregation that its services were too Catholic. Exchanges in the press between the incumbent Reverend A. H. Ward and the Bishop are not always restrained and the case occupied many column inches in the Bristol Mercury. The controversy died down in time and the church reopened in 1893. It was never as popular as it was before, however, and after a brief spell as a Greek church it was closed. The building no longer exists as it was bombed during the war and was pulled down in 1954.

Conclusion

This Chapter has mainly investigated how the integration of sailors was facilitated by the two main sailors’ institutions found in most port cities, the Bristol Sailors’ Home and Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute. Both sought to modify behaviours of sailors on Bristol’s streets so that in keeping with the wider civilising mission of civic and philanthropic elites, they could become respectable citizens or less troublesome transients. Both had substantial buildings in a central area that no sailor could miss. By its nature, the Bristol Sailors’ Home aimed its appeal and activities to temporary resident sailors and sought to influence behaviours whilst sailors were between ships. The Mission to Seamen and St. Raphael’s church considered themselves to be servants of these but also of more permanent resident sailors who resided in working-class areas. The fact that St. Raphael’s was situated in a firmly working-class area further promoted its efficacy as did the fact that it also offered educational classes and had significant outreach activities in working-class areas.

As far as the Home was concerned there was an element of competitiveness with the Seamen’s Mission and in this context; the conclusion is that the Mission was more relevant to sailors in its outreach work. The Mission appropriated aspects of working-class culture

729 J. F. Nicholls and John Taylor, Bristol Past and Bristol Present, Civil and Modern History, Volume Three, Bristol, 1882.
730 The Case of St. Raphael’s, Bristol, Church History, Vol. VI, 1877.
731 The Case of St. Raphael’s, Bristol, Church History, Vol. VI, 1877.
better than the Home did and displayed more of an empathy with sailors. It had a more inclusive understanding that seafarers were working-class people who were an integral part of the city, its civic centre, commercial areas, quayside areas and crucially working-class communities. The Mission’s appealing and appreciated activities, and its sound financial situation and active outreach, allowed it to foster the integration of sailors with other working-class people. The Mission did not see them as much of a separate entity nor treat sailors as condescendingly as the Home did and as such invited sailors to be recipients of welfare and activities that were available to all. This is not to say that the Home did not try to do its best to ‘civilise’ sailors but it suffered from the institutional reputation that all sailors homes had as austere in its accommodation and condescending in its opinion towards its charges.

The Home’s Committee and its administration, particularly its lack of finance raising acumen, did not always help its cause. Neither did the somewhat ambivalent attitude of middle-class residents of the city, the Home being just one among Bristol’s bewildering number of philanthropic organisations. Many sailors used the Home in its years of operation but many more did not see it as a home from home and felt more of a welcome at the Mission to Seamen and its Institute. Both institutions and other religious organisations helped to situate the sailor in urban working-class culture and in so doing diluted vestiges of seafaring identity, but it was the Mission that was more successful in this. The Mission, Sailors’ Home and St. Raphael’s cemented sailors in the psyche of the city, they were part of the city not an adjunct to it. The next chapter continues the theme of sailors’ integration and acceptance by investigating sailors’ relationships with other middle-class elites.

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732 Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City.
Chapter Four: Positive Relationships, the Worth of Bristol’s Sailors

Introduction

This chapter considers Bristol’s sailors in a further context not normally associated with the stereotypical perception of the sailor. Sailors were generally thought to be a problematic presence on the streets, unwelcome to all but to sailortown businesses and contradictory to what it meant to be a good citizen. Whilst many sailors still typified this caricature, especially visiting, transient sailors still working under sail, other Bristol sailors wanted to present a different image. Aspirations to masculine respectability have already been discussed and part of this was to present a more mature less confrontational persona. Many Bristol sailors wanted to have positive relationships with others and it will be argued that cordiality was reciprocated. Whilst not being unproblematic there was an appreciation of sailors in the city by middle-class elites because they were, and always had been, an important part of the working-class economic and industrial culture of the city. Their worth to the city was recognised which manifested itself in more than might be expected mutually tolerant relationships between sailors and others. Sailors were perceived not as a distinct belligerent group worthy of special attention but as normal citizens living in a rapidly changing city. As such, a more nuanced understanding of sailors is proposed, one that progresses the perception of the sailor from miscreant to valuable economically productive citizen who did not necessarily have the advantages that other workers did.

The relationship between capital and labour was not always as confrontational as elsewhere and this is demonstrated when inevitable occupational disputes arose. In this context it will be argued that through their representatives, Bristol’s sailors sought to ingratiate themselves with city elites in the sense that even when they were taking action to improve their lot as a collective workforce they often did so in a spirit of relative cooperation. Despite Bristol’s reputation for militancy and its history of protest there is little to suggest that its sailors resembled Marcus Rediker’s rebellious proletariat.\textsuperscript{733} Even demonstrations over missing out on work to foreign sailors were relatively low key compared to other ports such as Cardiff and Liverpool.\textsuperscript{734} These comparisons are important and the situation in Bristol is contextualised in this chapter within that found in other ports, regions and in other occupations.

Furthermore, it will be shown that relationships went beyond often-expressed cordiality to actual appreciation. It will be argued that the city’s elites showed how much they valued their sailors by being in the forefront of moves to end crimping and in the provision of welfare that went beyond the civilising motive discussed previously and subsequently. The nature of the mariner’s trade had always been well understood in the city and rather than

\textsuperscript{733} Marcus Rediker, \textit{Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea}.

being scorned and ostracised, sailors met with tolerance for coping with their uniquely poor working conditions at sea and how they were victimised on shore.\textsuperscript{735} Sailors often responded by signing on for the same shipping lines and shipowners and other elites reciprocated by being mindful of the welfare of sailors in between voyages and how they were treated on shore. This is not to say that there were not the normal antagonisms between sailors and their employers but there is evidence to suggest that there were often mutually respectful relationships entered into.

It will be shown that this ‘caring attitude’ was genuine and a reflection of the philanthropic nature of the city. Bristol prided itself on its charitable work, its corporate motto is \textit{virtute et industria}, virtue and industry, after all.\textsuperscript{736} It will be argued that charitable and philanthropic institutions in common with the same endeavours in cities across the country,\textsuperscript{737} extended welfare provision to sailors, or at least to those that were considered to be a constituent part of the deserving poor, not just in an effort to civilise them but because it was an ingrained cultural trait of the city.\textsuperscript{738} Thus, sailors’ welfare was the responsibility of all and not just that of maritime intuitions. Bristol took its virtues that were fashioned from its history, ceremony, civic identity, permanency of its buildings, economic privileges and philanthropy, very seriously. There was a pride in being a Bristolian which manifested itself in the provision of philanthropic endeavours that facilitated the establishment of genuinely caring relationships between classes.\textsuperscript{739} Through this, sailors provided plenty of opportunity for middle-class people to show their credentials as worthy citizens and in providing for the welfare of sailors, the middle classes were able to fulfil their stewardship obligation to working-class people.\textsuperscript{740} The temperance movement was very active in this, as were many other philanthropic organisations run by elite members of the community. One of these civic elites was in the form of a venerated Bristol institution, the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) and it will be argued that as well as its charitable work the SMV had the effect of centralising sailors in the very identity of Bristol as a city built on water.

\textbf{Friction and Protest}

From the 1850s, there were rapid developments in ship building technology that not only changed international trading relations but also the lives of sailors on the new, modern merchant ships. Many innovations came together in a relatively short space of time. For example, trade was advanced by the combination of the screw propeller and iron hull from the 1840s, by compound engines in the 1850s and 1860s and then the triple expansion

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{735} Graeme Milne, \textit{People, Place and Power}, p. 67.
  \item \textsuperscript{736} Jonathan Barry, ‘Bristol Pride: Civic Identity in Bristol c. 1640-1775’, in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw, eds., \textit{The Making of Modern Bristol}, p. 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{737} For a discussion of nineteenth century philanthropy, see Frank Prochaska, \textit{The Voluntary impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain}, Faber, London, 1988.
  \item \textsuperscript{738} See Helen Mellor, \textit{Leisure and the Changing City}.
  \item \textsuperscript{739} Jonathan Barry, ‘Bristol Pride: Civic Identity’, pp. 40-42.
  \item \textsuperscript{740} As they did elsewhere, in Portsmouth, for example, Brad Beaven, \textit{Slum Priests}, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
engine of the 1880s.\textsuperscript{741} The technical details are not important here but with this change from sail to steam in our period there was an increasing demand for sailors that could service engines just as much as climb the rigging. The skill set of the sailor on steam vessels needed to change and Bristol’s sailors who remained a vital part of the national work force had to change too.\textsuperscript{742} Bristol, despite its relative industrial underdevelopment was still an important component of a British shipping industry that dominated the world’s commercial shipping.\textsuperscript{743} The British fleet in 1850 carried more than 60% of trade between Britain and the rest of the world and British registered ships employed 130,000 men in foreign going trades in the 1870s and 185,000 by 1910.\textsuperscript{744}

Naturally, sailors had a perception of their own worth within this as a vital component in the industrialisation process of post 1850 Britain. This is not to say that the merchant fleet propelled by sail was not still vitally important. Indeed, even after the innovations in steam ships, the number of ships with sails still outnumbered steam ships well into the 1870s. In 1873 there were still 18,785 sailing ships in the British merchant fleet.\textsuperscript{745} Helen Doe in her unpublished chapter on maritime communities, notes that in 1879 sail still accounted for sixty-three percent of the tonnage in the United Kingdom, eighty-two percent of the number of ships registered and sixty percent of the men employed in merchant shipping.\textsuperscript{746} Sailors with traditional seafaring skills continued to be needed.

Furthermore, ship builders and owners knew how vital their employees were, whether in steam or sail, and mutual recognition was expressed through the often-cordial relationships between sailors and their employers. There is not the scope here to discuss unionisation in detail but since 1815 there had been over 50 seamen’s groupings nationally\textsuperscript{747} and when in 1887 the first union was established for sailors, the National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen Union of Great Britain (NASFU), which was itself replaced by the National Seamen and Firemen Union (NSFU) in 1894,\textsuperscript{748} shipowners had to reformulate their thinking on how they treated their employees. The formation of the NASFU prompted shipowners to form their own representative organisation in 1890, the Shipping Federation, which argued the


\textsuperscript{742} As they were in all ports in an increasingly connected globalised internationalised world market. See Judith Fingard, \textit{Jack in Port}, p. 4, for a Canadian perspective on this and Alston Kennerley, \textit{British Seamen’s Missions}. See also Valerie Burton, ‘Counting Sailors’, pp. 305-20. The total seamen in the country in 1873 was estimated to be around 250,000 on 21,581 ships, including 20,000 coloured British and 5000 Lascars, \textit{Church Work Amongst Sailors in 64 Homeports as set Forth by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, 15th Feb 1878}, London, 1878, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{743} Graeme Farr, \textit{Shipbuilding in the Port of Bristol}.

\textsuperscript{744} Graeme Milne, \textit{People, Place, and Power}. p. 40.

\textsuperscript{745} \textit{Church Work Amongst Sailors in 64 Homeports as set Forth by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, 15th Feb 1878}, London, 1878, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{746} Helen Doe, unpublished book on maritime communities. She cites ‘British Parliamentary Papers, 1880 LXV’: \textit{Tables of number of sailing and steam vessels belonging to United Kingdom and on register, 1869-79}, p. 41.


\textsuperscript{748} Alston Kennerley, ‘The Seamen’s Union’, p. 16.
case for the shipowners in future industrial disputes.\textsuperscript{749} The development of these representational bodies inevitably led to conflict, as it did in most industries, but in Bristol, there existed at certain times a sense of reciprocal respect and empathy between sailors, their leaders and their employers that offer a different interpretation of employee/employer relationships.\textsuperscript{750}

Despite the riots of 1831, Bristol’s militancy has been questioned. Chartist activity was not extensive,\textsuperscript{751} although conflict was evident later in the 1870s during the age of new unionism between 1889-1892 and then 1910-14.\textsuperscript{752} But in between those times Bristol’s trade unionism was characterised by caution and moderation which resulted in a detected reluctance to take disputes too far and more of a willingness to try to achieve resolution quickly so as not to create too much inconvenience.\textsuperscript{753} After the successes of the 1899-92 period when many small craft industries won their trade disputes, often after just two days of action, the labour movement in general in Bristol turned towards more socialist aims rather than focusing on trade disputes.\textsuperscript{754} Even the most militant of workers, the dockers, were pragmatic. Bristol dockers went to London in 1911 to support the London Dock Strike but returned after three days and went back to work.\textsuperscript{755} Strike action by Bristol’s sailors was never as extensive or as intensive as in Hull, Glasgow or Cardiff.\textsuperscript{756} The city gained a reputation for its relative pacifism\textsuperscript{757} and the wave of seamen strikes in 1890 in London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Hartlepool, North and South Shields, Newcastle, Leith, Aberdeen, Hull and Swansea, was moderate in comparison in Bristol.\textsuperscript{758} In September 1890, sailors even joined a ‘Board of Conciliation and Arbitration’ that was set up in the city to resolve disputes.\textsuperscript{759} Thereafter the Bristol branch of the National Seamen and Firemen Union (NSFU) was more inclined ‘to improve the conditions and protect the interests of all


\textsuperscript{750} See Marcus Rediker’s \textit{Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea} for a confrontational perspective of sailor/employer relationships.

\textsuperscript{751} K. Kelly and Mike Richardson, ‘The Shaping of the Bristol Labour Movement, 1885-1895’, in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollenershaw, eds., \textit{The Making of Modern Bristol}, p. 211.


\textsuperscript{754} K. Kelly and Mike Richardson, ‘The Shaping of the Bristol Labour Movement, 1885-1895’.


\textsuperscript{756} Martin Daunton ‘Inter-Union Relations on the Waterfront’ and Graeme Milne, \textit{People, Place and Power}, p. 215.

\textsuperscript{757} Brian Atkinson, \textit{Trades Unions in Bristol}, p. 5.


\textsuperscript{759} Brian Atkinson, \textit{Trades Unions in Bristol}, p. 11.
members of the union afloat and ashore’ than fight the employers, which itself became NSFU policy after its defeat in the strikes of 1893.\footnote{Members Contribution Book and Rules of the National Sailors and Firemen’s Union, belonging to W. Whitehead, 71 College Street, St. Augustine’s, Bristol, October 1911. There was some violence in this dispute, Matthew Kidd, ‘Class without Conflict’, p. 108.} There are many examples of compromise. In 1899, the local secretary of the NSFU instructed the crew of the mail boat Arawa not to strike so that letters could be delivered.\footnote{Bristol Mercury, 7th September, 1899.} In this dispute all but one of the shipowners acquiesced at an early stage to the sailors’ demands and such avoidance of antagonism was often a feature of later disputes between sailors and owners. In June 1911, Bristol’s sailors went out on strike alongside dockers and other waterside workers in the city but some of the large ship owning companies, especially the Bristol Steam Navigation Company, gave into wage increase demands of the NSFU in Bristol at an early stage.\footnote{Mike Richardson, ‘Bristol and the Labour Unrest of 1910-1914’, pp. 210-214. For a discussion on earlier mutual support of workers related to seafaring see William Kendrick, ‘The Shipping Federation and the Free Labour Movement, a Comparative study of the Waterfront and Maritime Industrial Relations, 1889-1891’, in Richard Gorski, ed., Maritime Labour.} No doubt mindful of their relationships with other merchants and middle-class citizens in the city who were concerned about the potential loss of trade and poor returns on the £6,000,000 invested in the docks in 1908, it was the shipowners not the dock authorities that moved to make concessions to striking seamen.\footnote{Western Daily Press, 30th June to 5th July, 1911, cited by Mike Richardson, in ‘Bristol and the Labour Unrest of 1910’, p. 213.} This was pragmatic and supportive of other business in the city and the close relationship between shipowners, manufacturers and merchants had always been the foundation of Bristol’s industrial sector.\footnote{Kenneth Morgan, ‘The Economic Development of Bristol, 1700-1850’; Phillip Ollerenshaw and Peter Wardley, ‘Economic Growth and the Business Community in Bristol Since 1840’, in Madge Dresser and Phillip Ollerernshaw, eds., The Making of Modern Bristol, pp. 48-76 and 124-156 and John Penny, Bristol at Work.} Steve Poole calls this ‘Bristol’s self-absorption’ whereby the city had always been a ‘self-regulating social organism united by commercial interests’.\footnote{Steve Poole, ‘To Be a Bristolian’, in Madge Dresser and Phillip Ollerernshaw, eds., The Making of Modern Bristol, p. 80.} The presence of shipowners and brokers among manufacturers, merchants, professional and commercial gentlemen and crucially from 1881 working-class representatives on the City Council, fostered a commonality of interests of different sectors of Bristol society.\footnote{David Large, The Municipal Government of Bristol, p. 12.}

Furthermore, the middle-class representatives on the Council formed a group of interconnected wealthy citizens who headed the city’s other leading organisations.\footnote{As Robert Lee says also existed elsewhere such as in Newcastle and Liverpool, Robert Lee, ‘Configuring the City’, p. 101.} Individuals as ‘Community Capitalists’ took on multiple roles in public life; many merchants were members of the Council but also the Chamber of Commerce and importantly the Society of Merchant Venturers.\footnote{Charles Harvey and John Press, eds., Studies in the Business History of Bristol, p. 24.} They also spent the endowments of charitable agencies and acted as ruling group that became revered for its work in the philanthropic, religious
and civic life of the city.\textsuperscript{769} It is not intended to suggest that relationships between labour and these elites were always positive and cordial but evidence suggests that to some extent a genuine sense of cooperation and empathy between them was preferred to antagonism. In 1861, a function was put on by a number of ‘benevolent gentlemen’ for navvies digging the South Wales Union Railway, because they wanted to get a better idea of their working and living conditions.\textsuperscript{770}

Such civility was extended to other groups of workers, including sailors, as was exemplified at a meeting held by Bristol’s sailors on 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1886 at the Seamen’s Institute. The meeting was one of a series of events that demonstrates a level of reciprocated cooperation and goodwill extended to Bristol’s sailors by the city elites and how sailors were mindful of presenting themselves as respectable citizens in return. The meeting was arranged by sailors themselves and the de-facto leader, a Mr. Fitzpatrick, eager to promote a positive perception of Bristol’s sailors, eloquently debunked the perception of sailors being drunkards and spoke of the qualities of the sailor as a working man.\textsuperscript{771} The meeting’s demands were modest and unlikely to alienate too much. Among other things it called for was for old sailors to be able to access the payments they had made to the British Seamen’s Pension Fund.

More seriously, the meeting also wanted to impress on shipowners that Bristol’s sailors were losing work to foreign sailors. Shipowners increasingly became more inclined to employ foreign sailors because they accepted lower wages, which naturally pitched capital against labour. Whilst the average pay of an able seaman was £2.15s a month in 1898, foreign sailors were prepared to take much less.\textsuperscript{772} This had the effect of driving down wages. Lascars, for example, only received a third to a fifth of a British sailor’s wage and naturally this caused resentment. Also irksome to British sailors was that the reputation of foreign sailors being better than them was continually being reinforced. A report made by an assistant to the Board of Trade, Thomas Gray in 1886, made clear the view of shipowners nationally that foreign sailors were ‘more trustworthy than the lower class of British seamen’.\textsuperscript{773} Shipowners could hardly be blamed for employing foreign sailors before British ones if they were perceived to be better and cheaper, even if this reinforced the stereotypical imagery of different types of foreign sailors. Consequently, the proportion of foreign and Lascar sailors employed increased from 20% in 1886 to 32% in 1903 and by the 1890s, a third of sailors in the British merchant marine were foreign.\textsuperscript{774}

\textsuperscript{769} Helen Mellor, \textit{Leisure and the Changing City}, pp. 72-77.
\textsuperscript{770} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 31\textsuperscript{st} August, 1861. One of the gentlemen, a Mr. Hunt, had met with 2000 of them on different occasions before the meeting.
\textsuperscript{771} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1886.
\textsuperscript{773} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 4\textsuperscript{th} June 1886.
Not all sailors from overseas were held in the same contempt as others and some nationalities were perceived more favourably.\textsuperscript{775} Certain ethnicities were practically loathed by many people, the Chinese being a particular target for scorn, which was not helped by the vehement vitriol against them expressed habitually by the National Seamen and Firemen’s Union and its leader Havelock Wilson.\textsuperscript{776} Martin Daunton writing about Cardiff’s seafarers in the late nineteenth century details racism against Chinese sailors from the NSFU and cites Wilson describing Cardiff as the ‘dumping ground of Europe’.\textsuperscript{777} Asian and African sailors were thought to be more suited to manual labour in ships’ boiler rooms because of the heat; ‘dagoes’ of southern Europe were useless desperate lazy cut-throats and African American sailors were only good for being cooks and stewards. On the other hand Nordic sailors were generally thought to be high quality sailors and certainly better (and more sober) than British ones.\textsuperscript{778}

This was in a national context but in Bristol, although foreigners were blamed for putting indigenous labour out of work, anti-foreign sailor animosity was not as strong as elsewhere, unless in the context of serious violence, as developed in Chapter Six. There was some sympathy for foreign sailors who were ‘poorly paid and eminently exploitable, the natural prey for the crimp and harpies of sailortown’.\textsuperscript{779} In some respects, racist attitudes were positively mild and it is unfortunate that the levels of animosity did not remain at the level of that expressed in letters of complaint to the \textit{Bristol Mercury} about flags on British ships being made in Germany.\textsuperscript{780} Relatively moderate animosity was also because of the comparative low number of foreigners on Bristol’s streets, as evidenced in other contexts in this thesis. Out of a population of 137,000 in 1851, although 45% originated from outside the city (mainly West Country origin but also Irish (3.4%), Welsh (3.2%) and Scottish (0.5%)), there were only 700 foreign born residents, the biggest group being Germans as musicians, language teachers, servants and watchmakers. In 1863, only 9.7% of the 3465 registered sailors were foreign and of these only 91 were from countries whose sailors were considered the most troublesome which included Greeks, Polish, Italians, Indians, Maltese, West Indian and Russian.\textsuperscript{781}

This is not to say that racism and stereotypical views of foreigners did not exist, it was bound to when ‘outsiders’ were still ubiquitous in the city. In part, it was perpetuated by sailors from the city itself. The rare account of a Bristol sailor’s voyages by Robert Langdon

\textsuperscript{775} Graeme Milne, ‘People, Place and Power, p. 215; Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’; Brad Beaver, ‘Seafarers and Working Class Culture’; Brad Beaver, ‘Slum Priests’ and Laura Tabili, \textit{We Ask for Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain}, New York, Cornell University, 1994.
\textsuperscript{779} Judith Fingard, \textit{Jack in Port}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{780} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 10\textsuperscript{th} March, 1899. Although not as many as there might have been, most foreign sailors stayed on board when in port. Valerie Burton says that on census night in 1891, three-quarters of foreign sailors were not enumerated on shore, Valerie Burton, \textit{A Floating Population}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{781} Barbara Austen, ‘The Merchant Seamen of Bristol’, p. 408.
describes the Africans he came across as childlike, overly violent and prone to cannibalism. The editors of his journals argue that his views were illustrative of other Bristol sailors, although they do not give examples of them.782 However, in respect of Bristol’s sailors, anti-foreign feeling is better described as an example of the ‘selective racism’ described above. The superintendent of the Mission to Seamen, Reverend Robert Buckley, when called to the Select Committee on the Merchant Seamen Bill in 1878, typifies inconsistent attitudes but echoed national feelings. He considered Norwegians, Finns, Danes and Germans to be ‘first class men’, cited others who described southern Europeans as blood thirsty, knife-wielding murderers but was more generous in conceding that merely ‘disturbance’ might be caused by Austrians.783

At street level it was the Irish that received the most vitriol in Bristol and the intensity of racialism that Cardiff and Liverpool witnessed towards the Chinese was not evident in the city.784 However, on some occasions racism towards foreign sailors could get out of hand and take the form of mob demonstrations. Again, in Bristol, demonstrations against foreigners were not on the scale of other port cities. Liverpool seemed to be the worst for mass violence amongst sailors and between sailors and residents of the city. In April 1878, an argument over wages ensued between black foreign seamen and white British ones in the Sailors’ Home. It soon got out of hand, word got round and there was mass fighting in the streets between hundreds of sailors spilling out of their boarding houses, 2000 locals spectating and getting involved. There were racist chants, knives and stabbings, the naval reserve got involved and attacked the foreign seamen. After virtually a whole day of chaos it took 1000 police constables to eventually subdue it.785 In contrast, the most serious angry demonstration against foreigners in Bristol was just before the February meeting in 1886 when two foreign sailors were attacked by a ‘group of ruffians’, as described in the Bristol Mercury, on their way to the Marine Office in Prince Street to sign articles for the Jersey City. They and other foreigners, mainly Greeks, were chased around the quays for a while until the mob was dispersed by the police. After that it turned into a peaceful demonstration outside of the offices of Kings Shipowners. Even the headline in the Bristol Mercury, ‘Serious Disturbance in Bristol, Cowardly Attack on Foreigners,’ showed some

785 Liverpool Mercury, 3rd April, 1878.
sympathy with the foreign seamen and a correspondent in the same issue urged that ‘the hand of fellowship be extended to all, considering that the commerce of our nation is dependent both on British and foreign sailors’.786

The February meeting discussed above was followed by other similarly non-confrontational agitation. In March a demonstration and march was organised, again led by Fitzpatrick and this one was important in that it was supported by other sectors of the working class. At its beginning there were 150 sailors at Cumberland Basin but this was soon doubled by other working-class men and women joining them and expressing their support for British sailors. There would have been more apparently but the Seamen’s Institute in town was giving out free groceries to working people, another example of the Institute’s work in the working-class community. Reports noted an absence of any ‘rough element’ and there was not even ‘a yell raised due to the thorough determination of the sailors to give, by a practical illustration, a public denial to the statement that they were not sober nor steady men’.787 Cooperation with the authorities was paramount and it was reported that,

‘Mr. J. Fitzpatrick, a fireman who has been out of employment since a fortnight before Christmas, and who was the chief of the demonstration, gave the Superintendent the route they intended to take so that proper police arrangements could be made. From the frequent consultations of the police Superintendent and the chief of the agitators, it was evident to an outsider that the two were working together’.

Fitzpatrick urged the sailors to keep order so that they would elicit public favour and sympathy. They marched carrying two Union Jacks and the original intention was to carry them pointed downwards but it was thought that this would signify mutinous tendencies so they held them up.789 When they passed the town hall the band struck up the National Anthem; the city’s greats would have been pleased with this show of loyalty and the sailors certainly ingratiated themselves with the Police Superintendent. At the end of the meeting on Brandon Hill the sailors gave loud cheers for the police and they all went home!790 The fact that it was on Brandon Hill is also significant because this space had always facilitated a mass platform for working-class protest in the city, as had Queen’s Square. Both of these large open areas right in the heart of civic and mercantile space were the scenes of expressions of a unique ‘respectable, locally focussed radicalism’.791 These spaces were accepted spaces for the expression of working-class grievance and sailors’ protest in them were an embodiment of the culture of the city.

786 Bristol Mercury, 26th February, 1886.
787 Bristol Mercury, 21st March, 1886.
788 Bristol Mercury, 21st March, 1886.
789 Judith Fingard writes of similar marches in Halifax, Canada, that had a convivial, almost performative atmosphere with banners and music, although she admits that they often got nasty with confrontations between sailors and locals, Judith Fingard, Jack in Port, p. 129.
790 Bristol Mercury, 21st March, 1886.
791 Steve Poole, ‘To be a Bristolian’, p. 90.
Notwithstanding the genuine grievances expressed against foreign sailors, the way the sailors conducted themselves at Fitzpatrick’s march was exemplary, as again it was when a further meeting was held on the Bethel Ship a month later. The fact that it was on the ship shows again cooperation between sailors and elites, this time religious ones. Furthermore, it shows that the sailors cause had advanced from sailors organising themselves to the respectability of middle-class activism on their behalf. It was chaired by one of the city’s major businessmen and philanthropists, Roger Moore, a soap boiler, and it was addressed by the biggest employer in the city, Frank Wills, cigarette manufacturer. He said he was very glad to be present to show as a landsman how he sympathised with the sailors in their troubles. Other businessmen spoke in support of sailors and it was extraordinarily resolved to call a conference to help sailors set up their own trades union.

For national contextual purposes, their grievances would have been many. Conrad Dixon has compiled a list of sailors’ legitimate complaints and it would be surprising if aspects of these were not discussed, such as that eighty-four hour weeks were commonplace; that there was no standard rate of pay, no proper scheme of compensation, no continuity of employment, the under-manning on ships and no statutory increases in size of accommodation or scale of provisions on ships. Lucy Delap notes that sailors continued to face financial hardship and expressed their grievances over wages well up to the beginning of the First World War, as the increasing amounts of collective protest through unionisation attests to. There was 4-5% fall in seamen’s wages between 1890 and 1905.

In Bristol, a meeting of the Trades Council the day after the Bethel meeting also resolved to support the effort to set up a conference and on 26th April the conference was held at the Coffee Palace, again chaired by Roger Moore. Officers, engineers, seamen, firemen, coal trimmers, watermen, lightermen, pilots, tug boat hands, trowmen and bargemen all attended and discussed foreign sailors, ‘assorted riff raff’ with dubious qualifications and identities, the abolition of apprentices, the discharge system, contributions to the seamen’s fund and sailors suffering economically. Despite the intensity of feeling there was again no trouble spilling out on to the streets and the event passed off without incident.

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792 British sailors had cause to be upset. In 1852, 3.7% of sailors on British ships were foreign; by 1900 it was 21.1%, Martin Daunton, ‘Jack Ashore’, p. 190.

793 Bristol Mercury, 31st March, 1886.


795 Lucy Delap, ‘Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness’.

796 Bristol Mercury, 1st April, 1886.

797 Bristol Mercury, 27th April, 1886.

798 Roger Moore was a typical, very active Liberal Councillor. First elected in 1881, he was involved in numerous campaigns to improve the conditions of Bristol’s working classes. Irksome to some was that there was no nationally provided health care specifically for merchant seamen who despite having to pay six pence a month could never benefit from the welfare provision provided at Greenwich for naval sailors. Tim Carter, Merchant Seamen’s Health, pp. 19-20.

799 Many grievances were exposed by The society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen founded in 1867. See David M. Williams, ‘Mid Victorian Attitudes to Seamen’, pp. 101-126. This organisation campaigned for more sailors’ homes, seamen friendly lodging houses, sailors’ clubs and institutes, insurance and pension schemes, the exclusion of crimps and prostitutes from docksides and the licensing of lodging house runners.
presence of Mr. Fox, leader of the Trades Council, gave it added respectable gravitas and he pointed out strongly that as sailors were a part of the city’s workforce their grievances should be addressed just as any other section of the community.  

The same afternoon rules were drawn up for an association and the next day it was inaugurated with discussions on the Merchant Shipping Bill, crimping, foreign sailors and even the *Contagious Diseases Acts* potential extension to seamen. Mr. Moore became its first President and Fitzpatrick its first Secretary, which illustrates well the commonality in interests and mutual respect of capital and labour.

Through these meetings, Bristol’s sailors were presenting their grievances in peaceful, less confrontational ways than sailors had done elsewhere, which demonstrates that sailors as a collective attempted to present themselves in a positive and civilised light. Steve Poole has noted that compared with Liverpool confrontations between elites and sailors never got too serious in the eighteenth century either and that the authorities maintained a conciliatory attitude towards sailors in their protests. Fitzpatrick over a century later was continuing this cordiality and this was also present when sailors supported protest of other working-class sectors. In 1892, sailors took part in a citywide peaceful demonstration and procession. It involved a range of workers and their organisations ostensibly to support striking girls at *Sanders and Sons* confectionary factory and locked out deal runners. It included firemen, ordinary seamen, shipwrights, gas workers, chemical workers, members of provident societies, bricklayers, masons and more. Noteworthy is the level of mutual support of different working-class groups, including sailors, and the fact that the protest was held in a carnival type atmosphere, with a band leading the way and 4-5000 people on Horesefair listening to speeches on two stages. The good-natured tone of such meetings seemed to be a feature of protest in Bristol, perhaps mindful of the terror of the 1831 riots. The vehemence expressed at a meeting against the Council’s proposed increases in its power over the daily lives of citizens in November 1881 was forthright but also humorous. When it was announced that control of singing and playing instruments in the streets were to be controlled someone shouted out, ‘What about the police band, better send the instruments to the workhouse’.

**Appreciation and Respect**

The tendency of sailors to adopt a non-confrontational approach to addressing grievances and their implied relative good character did not go unrecognised by their employers and others elites connected to merchant shipping. They often made for positive relationships

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800 *Bristol Mercury*, 27th April, 1886.
801 *Bristol Mercury*, 24th April, 1886.
803 The same cooperation in protest is evident between American sailors and other workers see Jesse Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets’ and Marcus Rediker, ‘Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea’.
804 *Bristol Mercury*, 5th December, 1892.
805 *Bristol Mercury*, 12th November, 1881.
that built on that already existing between sailors and others. At the inaugural public meeting called to discuss the establishment of the Sailors’ Home in 1850, one of the biggest shipowners of the city was very complimentary about the sailors who worked for him. Mr. W. P. King said that a home had never been needed because Bristol’s sailors had always been very much better than any others had.\textsuperscript{806} Mr. King understood the character of the sailor, telling the meeting that any home should give sailors as much liberty as possible because they do not take kindly to discipline ashore when they were subjected to so much on ship.\textsuperscript{807} Similarly, other shipowners made efforts to treat their sailors well. A report in the \textit{Bristol Mercury} quoted the testimony of Reverend Buckley to the \textit{Select Committee} in 1878 saying that Bristol shipowners made the ships so comfortable and paid such good wages that they had the services of a higher class of sailor.\textsuperscript{808} The committee also heard from another Bristol shipowner, Edward Hill, who when asked about whether sailors were likely to consolidate against ill-treatment thought they would not because ‘as a class, they are not that kind of men’.\textsuperscript{809}

The writers of the 1884 report into the Bristol poor thought that the city’s sailors were, ‘ordinarily fairly educated, being able to both read and write, and as a class well disposed’.\textsuperscript{810} A city guidebook certainly thought that Bristol’s sailors were worth getting to know,

‘Sailors home from strange lands, with ringed ears or a patched eye and curiously tattooed, hearty good fellows, ready at an hour to slip with you into some inn in Cock and Bottle Lane and tell you tales which need be no more than strict truth to set your hair on end’.\textsuperscript{811}

It is not the intention to suggest that at all times, in all circumstances and from all quarters, there was mutual positivity but appreciation came from elsewhere among the elites too. The ubiquitous soap manufacturer, Roger Moore, praised Bristol’s sailors to the 1878 Committee and stated that they rarely deserted or broke their contracts. Reverend Sydney Turner speaking at the \textit{Formidable’s} inauguration clearly thought the character of seamen he encountered on Bristol’s streets was good enough already and said that ‘smartness and civility and manly self-respect characterise nearly all our young sailors’.\textsuperscript{812} Even the highest of the elites had good words to say about them. Prince George in a later speech made in

\textsuperscript{806} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 13\textsuperscript{th} April, 1850.
\textsuperscript{807} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 13\textsuperscript{th} April, 1850.
\textsuperscript{808} Reverend Robert Buckley, ‘Evidence to The Select Committee on Merchant Seamen’, Command Papers, \textit{Nineteenth-Century House of Commons Session Papers, Parliamentary Papers Online}, 205, XVI.77, 19\textsuperscript{th} March, 1878, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{809} Testimony of Edward Hill, Bristol shipowner and builder, Justice of the Peace, Marine Board member and Chair of Cardiff Shipowners Society, ‘Evidence to The Select Committee on Merchant Seamen’, Command Papers, \textit{Nineteenth-Century House of Commons Session Papers, Parliamentary Papers Online}, 205, XVI.77, 19\textsuperscript{th} March, 1878.
\textsuperscript{810} \textit{Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor}, Bristol, 1885, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{811} Ernest Walls, \textit{The Bristol Avon}, Bristol, 1927.
\textsuperscript{812} \textit{The Story of the Formidable}, p. 18.
Bristol in 1924 voiced admiration of the city’s seamen, calling them the ‘sons of Cabot’ and called on the city to,

‘Give them clean and decent rest homes ... let them know their dependents will be cared for and that their boys can be trained in their own ancient profession, then we shall feel that we have paid some of the great debt we owe them’.\(^8\)

Praise from a less exalted source came from the writer of a supplement to the *Bristol Mercury* much earlier in 1859, saying of Bristol sailors that ‘their temperance, frugality and prudence contrast favourably with more than one branch of employment on land’.\(^9\) He would have been pleased with the actions of one Bristol sailor who donated five shillings to the Soldiers’ Dependents Relief Fund in September 1855.\(^10\) In return for such compliments respect was reciprocated towards the city’s elites by, for example, Bristol sailors’ willingness to repeatedly sign on for the same shipping company.\(^11\) Crew lists of the *Douro* owned by a small company G. K. Stothert, show that on a five-month voyage to Lisbon in January 1898, 12 of the 16 crew were the same as on the voyage before. Ratios on his other voyages average 8/12 returnees and the ratios of a much bigger shipowner in the city, Charles Hill, average at 16/26. C. J. Kings, which operated all the tugs and much coastal trade regularly had the same crews on all voyages. A trip taken in January 1911 had all but one of the same crew on board one taken in July 1909.\(^12\) Some of King’s engineers stayed with the Company all of their careers as did sailors employed by Fyffes bananas.\(^13\)

Sailors were also evidently happy to serve under the same masters and mates on Bristol ships and unusual cordiality was present between sailors and their superiors. In one of two testimonies of Bristol sailors to a *Royal Commission on Safety at Sea* in 1886, Fitzpatrick, he of the meetings, praised Bristol’s masters and mates and could only recollect one incident of brutal behaviour towards seamen. Another Bristol sailor, William Price, said that in his thirty years he had never seen ill treatment by mates.\(^14\) The Reverend Buckley in his testimony brought the Committee’s attention to the ‘kind, just, liberal and considerate’

\(^8\) *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 17th December, 1924.
\(^9\) Supplement to the *Bristol Mercury*, *Bristol Mercury*, 11th June, 1859.
\(^10\) Hand written note on a scrap of paper in Bristol Archives recording the donation by Henry Boucher, dated 18th September 1855, 00369/18. This fund was also known as the Patriotic Fund.
\(^11\) As Graeme Milne has also noted was the case in Liverpool, although he is talking about liner shipping, Graeme Milne, ‘Maritime City, Maritime Culture’, p. 95.
\(^12\) Crew Lists of the *Douro*, *Menantic*, *Llandaff City*, *Jersey City*, King, *Avonmouth and Sea Queen*. One sailor, an engineer called T.J Gyles, was very pleased to have worked for one Bristol company and wrote with pride of his ‘single breasted tunic with brass buttons and a peaked cap decorated with the companies (sic) badge’. T. J. Gyles, *Memoire of a Voyage as an Engineer on SS Penvearn*. This is a rare personal testimony from a sailor out of Bristol but for a later period. The date is unclear but is between 1912 and 1935.
treatment of sailors by ships’ masters’. Masters were happy to recognise good service. Various masters of Elders and Fyffes Shipping described one sailor, B. Hope, as being steady, sober, honest, competent, attentive, trustworthy, reliable and efficient. He stayed with them all of his career and worked his way up from apprentice to Captain.

Empathy towards sailors from the elites was also shown through their understanding of the problems inherent in the irregularity of a sailor’s employment and that when they stepped on shore they were subjected to the predatory nature of those waiting to relieve them of what money they had. In Bristol, as elsewhere, sailors were a handy source of income for whom, ‘a stay in port was too often synonymous with being fleeced’. As far as some were concerned this was partly the sailors’ own fault. The Chairman of the Bristol Education Committee in his speech at the opening of the Sailors’ Home and Rest in 1910 opined that,

‘Those who live in seaport towns need to hardly be reminded of the tendency on the part of sailors when they come ashore, to give way to vicious habits and squander the money that they have saved up during a long voyage.’

But he continued,

‘And they must also be aware of the temptations which are placed in the way of seamen on their arrival at ports by designing persons anxious to relieve them of their hard earned savings’.

Although Bristol’s reputation for the evils of crimping did not match that of Cardiff it spurred middle class sympathy and calls for action to protect the city’s sailors. Roger Moore advocated the abolishment of advance notes because of their unfairness and how it made sailors prey to crimps. He was angered, as were others in the city that sailors from the city were habitually kept drunk and then taken out to decrepit ships way out in Kingroad, 60 miles out to sea. Calls for action also came from religious sectors of society. Temperance organisations got involved with one campaigner opining that sailors were at the mercy of ‘niggardly merchants who send sailors out in coffin ships’.

In 1876 a branch of the Church of England Temperance Society at St. Andrews the Less began a campaign to get the Watch

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821 Handwritten testimonials for B. Hope, 1906-09, found in Bristol Archives, 43541/3/1.
823 Isaac Land, War, Nationalism, p. 32.
824 Western Daily Press, 5th May, 1910.
826 Mr. Roger Moore, ‘Evidence to the Select Committee’, p. 123.
827 Western Temperance Herald, Vol xxxvii, no. 1, Bristol, 1873.
Committee to stop crimping in its parish.\footnote{\textit{Police Watch Committee, Minute Books}, vol. 14, 7\textsuperscript{th} June, 1876, p. 419. The Watch Committee appointed a special officer to coordinate anti-crimping activities in September, 1876.} Reverend C. D. Strong coordinated a large number of clergy from all over the city in calling for an end to crimping.

These actions express indignation and concern at how Bristol’s sailors were being treated by crimps and other landsharks and the effect this had on their well-being and character. It was an example of the philanthropic nature of the city that was regularly awakened by injustice.\footnote{\textit{Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City}, especially Chapters 4 and 6.} Middle-class elites would not allow fellow Bristolians to suffer and sailors’ injustices provided plenty of opportunity for middle-class people to show their credentials as worthy citizens, as they did in most industrialising cities.\footnote{A point argued by Derek Fraser in \textit{The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution}, London, Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1984, Chapter 2.} Thus, just as the business elites showed a degree of empathy to Bristol’s sailors, so did those in charitable and philanthropic positions of responsibility. This could also almost extend to affection. A writer to a temperance publication in Bristol gave her opinion that, ‘no one can know or observe sailors much without having a sort of affectionate liking for them’.\footnote{\textit{Western Temperance Herald}, Vol xxxvii, no. 1, Bristol, 1873.} Other sailors, if not of affection, were recipients of at least sympathy from other sections of the elite. Hapless sailors were endlessly brought in front of the magistrates. On one occasion, the judge heard that a drunk sailor was persuaded by a fellow drinker to give him some of his clothes to pawn, promising to bring back his money. Of course the man absconded with the clothes so in court the judge gave him a half crown from the poor box.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 1851.} On another occasion a judge took pity on a Japanese sailor who was mortified that he allowed himself to get drunk. He charmed the jury, continuously bowing to them and thanking the Bristol police for all they had done for him. Instead of a sentence he was allowed to be taken by a missionary woman from Clifton to the Asiatic Sailors’ Home in London with the court granting 30s for his trip.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 29\textsuperscript{th} January, 1897.}

**Philanthropic Relationships**

There is no suggestion here that all sailors were likable but the character of the sailor was widely understood by the city’s elites. As an example, the Chairman of the \textit{Bristol Sailors’ Book Mission} said of Bristol’s sailors in 1879 that ‘taken as a whole, there were no Englishmen who were so attractive as the sailors — there was a frankness and generous disposition about them which made them very attractive’.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} January, 1879.} This may have been praise too far but at the very least sailors provided valuable assets for assuaging middle class elites’ consciences. To many, philanthropy was not just altruistic but had a necessity in eliminating the hostile elements in Bristol’s urban environment.\footnote{\textit{Helen Mellor, Leisure and the Changing City}, p. 122.} Bristol did not have its own example
of slum priests working among sailors, as Brad Beaven describes was the case in Portsmouth, but it did have its other ‘powerful civic cultures and elites, Richard Rice’s ‘self-styled morality squad’, who were keen to preserve the Victorian social and moral order’. Some Bristol sailors typified the working-class person that needed civilising, especially those that remained in sail and those who constituted the undeserving poor. Sailors not aspiring to working-class respectability could still be a threat to public order, a ‘source of infection, a potential call on the poor law and a drain on the rates’.

On the other hand, sailors were given the attention of the elites because they simply needed help, as any other working-class person did. The plight of the sailor triggered the philanthropic nature of the city referred to throughout this study. Of course, they needed reforming into social citizens but the realities of their needs were paramount in the relationship between the elites and those less fortunate. What is meant by citizenship of course is debatable but at its basic level, as Brad Beaven describes, citizenship is the relationship between individuals and the authorities. Ideally, these relationships might give rise to citizens that aspired to do their duty, behave with a higher morality and eschew the worst of mass urban working-class leisure in favour of rational recreational pursuits provided in newly generated, architecturally grand and civilised cities. However, these relationships also facilitated the opportunity for those who could to help others who were in need. Personal motivation for doing something worthy is difficult to discern and there may have been an element of having to be seen to be doing some good in the community. However, for others in this city where altruism was historically engrained, sailors benefited alongside other working-class people from the efforts of others.

A starting point would be to persuade sailors to give up the drink, not an evil in itself but sobriety was normative of the new code of manliness evident in the second half of the nineteenth century. Getting sailors to give up drinking was no easy task, given that the perception of port towns as dens of iniquity into which sailors were poured into to take

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840 Bristol Sailor’s Home, *Committee Meeting Minutes*, June, 1898.
the pleasures of sailortown was well entrenched. *The Morning Chronicle* articles of 1850 that recorded the sojourns of Mayhew into London’s rookeries were typical in their description of the drinking and sexual excesses of sailors let loose on London’s Ratcliffe Highway.\(^\text{844}\) Bristol’s sailorstreets were not comparable to London in their extent or excesses but nevertheless the temperance movement was still very strong in Bristol amongst sailors and other workers, as discussed in Chapter Two. Helen Mellor lists the bewildering variety of temperance movements in the city and by 1878, the Western Temperance League in Bristol had 350 societies affiliated to it.\(^\text{845}\) The extent of the activities of these organisations would naturally reach sailors as a presence in the wider working-class communities. In April 1884, a lecturer at The Clifton Down Gospel Temperance Society talked of his lecture on shipwrecks that was well received by sailors and other workers in the audience.\(^\text{846}\)

Other than temperance, the copious amounts of charitable and philanthropic endeavours expended on sailors were characteristic of the nature of the city, its recognition of sailors as part of the city's fabric and their inclusion into working-class urban culture, not separate from it. In Bristol, the variety of middle-class organised philanthropic activities was extraordinary in its variety, even stretching to some gardening. A report in the *Bristol Mercury* in January 1875 read,

‘An effort is being made to induce a taste for the cultivation of flowers amongst the working classes in the large and populous parish of St. Philip and Jacob, and in connexion with it is proposed to hold in the month of July an annual show of home-grown plants, the prizes to be open to the working classes and their families’.\(^\text{847}\)

We cannot tell if sailors were particularly adept at cultivating marrows but they could take advantage of a wide range of altruistic provision. *Matthews Directory* for 1891 notes that there were 173 benevolent institutions in addition to 104 schools, 215 churches and 125 different clubs and societies.\(^\text{848}\) The establishment of the Bristol Charity Organisation for Organising Charitable Relief and Suppressing Mendacity in 1905 was just one of many coordinating bodies overseeing philanthropic endeavours.\(^\text{849}\) Sailors benefited from these alongside other workers. For example, the Bristol branch of the Stranger’s Friend Society

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\(^{844}\) *The Morning Chronicle*, 7\(^{th}\), 11\(^{th}\), 14\(^{th}\) March; 3\(^{rd}\), 11\(^{th}\), 19\(^{th}\) April, 1850; 2\(^{nd}\) and 9\(^{th}\) May, 1850, cited in Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power*, p. 65.


\(^{846}\) Clifton Down Gospel Temperance Society, *Programmes*, 7\(^{th}\) and 30\(^{th}\) April, 1884.


\(^{848}\) *Matthews Directory*, 1891.

\(^{849}\) Bristol Charity Organisation Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Suppressing Mendacity, *Annual Report*, 1905.
gave aid to out of work sailors. A sailor with six children living in a hovel and having sold the furniture to feed his family is fairly typical of a family in need even if ‘the honest and pleasing manner of this family, together with their expression of gratitude for the aid afforded would amply repay a benevolent public’, is perhaps missing the point of giving help.

Similarly, the misleadingly named Soldiers Dependent Relief Fund regularly raised funds from the Corporation, churches, the Freemasons, and on one occasion from the private Red Maids School for sailors in the city.

These endeavours place sailors among others in need but there was also a very significant effort to help sailors separately within philanthropic cultural contexts, which shows the high esteem they were held in the city. The amount of sailor specific institutions attests to this. Wrights Directory for 1891 lists the Bristol Sailors’ Home and the Bristol Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute, missions at Pill, Portishead and Avonmouth, Bethel Ship Mission on Guinea Street, Seamen and Boatmen’s Mission on King Street, Seamen’s Bethel Room on St. Georges Road, The Formidable Training Ship at Portishead, King Street Almshouses, The Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners’ Royal Benevolent Society and tenuously The Humane Society. Other directories show new missionary organisations for mariners, the closing of some and alternative ones formed through mergers, but the number of them indicates proactive care for sailors, spiritual and physical.

The Seaman’s Handbook for Shore Leave of 1909 is more selective and gives details of the Seaman’s Institute, Bristol Sailors’ Home (providing board and lodging at 22 shillings and six pence a week), the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society on Broad Quay (board and lodging at six pence a night) and the YMCA which took in sailors.

Other one off events were designed to help sailors too. There were frequent appeals for funds to help the families of sailors who had perished at sea, some previously referred to. A citywide fund was set up by the Bristol Athenaeum Society when the barque Mable was shipwrecked in January 1886, with not one survivor. It is not recorded but it is likely that there would be some show of sympathy at the death of W. Boothby, a sailor from Bristol who died whilst working as a steward on the Titanic. More routinely in 1913 there was a Sailor Saturday Appeal for funds organised by the three Bristol branches of the National Sailors’ Society and the Distressed Seaman’s Fund had an appeal in 1886 which raised enough money to provide 3065 dinners to Bristol’s sailors at only three pence each.

Deserving sailors and their families, then, were well catered for but the main organisation that provided for sailors was the Society of Merchant Venturers. The purpose of the SMV was to promote the role of the merchant mariner, it had funded Cabot’s voyages and it was the main charitable organisation that provided welfare for sailors. Its wealth came from the

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851 Soldiers’ Dependent Relief Fund, Records, 1850s and 1860s.
852 Wrights Directory, 1891.
854 Bristol Mercury, 25th February, 1886.
855 Register and Indexes of Births Marriages and Deaths of Passengers and Seamen at Sea, 1912.
856 Bristol Mercury, 24th March, 1886.
slave trade and its influence on city affairs, wealth and prestige was second to none in the city. The organisation was venerated in the city, it had unprecedented influence on how the city developed, running the docks until the City Corporation took them over in 1809 and it supported much of the city’s other philanthropic endeavours. By 1872, the SMV managed 22 charities and had permanent institutions for sailors in the form of almshouses and schools.\footnote{City of Bristol Charities Under the Management of the Society of Merchant Venturers, *Inspectors’ Report*, Part 3, 9\textsuperscript{th} March, 1872, Index.} It also built lighthouses, built the Clifton Suspension Bridge and part funded the Great Western Railway.\footnote{J. Latimer, *The History of the Society for Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol*, Bristol, 1903.} The importance of the SMV here is that through its provision of welfare for sailors it ensured the centrality of seafarers in the psyche of the city, inculcated the notion that sailors were an integral part of the city’s working class and reinforced the city’s gratitude for the contribution that sailors made to making Bristol a leading maritime city.\footnote{Helen Mellor, *Leisure and the Changing City*, p. 36.}

The SMV was synonymous with the identity of the city itself and thus ensured that the role, importance and welfare of sailors were entrenched in all that the city did. A visible manifestation of the SMVs work was its almshouses on King Street (Image 19). Theirs were not the only almshouses that took in sailors and records show retired sailors living with other people in some of the 22 other almshouses the city had by 1898.\footnote{David Evelegh, *Bristol, The Photograph Collection*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2003, p. 105.} The admissions book for Foster’s Almshouse records a sailor John Bateman living there.\footnote{Fosters Almshouse, *Admissions Book*, entry for 3\textsuperscript{rd} October, 1882.} As previously noted, an application was made to Haberfield’s almshouse, for the admittance of a sailor called Charles Crabb. St. Raphael’s, discussed in full above, had its own almshouse that took in sailors and non-sailors. The SMV’s almshouses on King Street led off Queen’s Square and therefore just as with the Sailors’ Home and Mission, situated sailors in the heart of the commercial and civic space of the city, a popular location, as has been described above. It was not easy to get in to and sailors had to be recommended, such as in this typical nomination for an old sailor, Henry Bailey in 1884. It reveals compassion, pride and gratitude to these time served Bristol sailors,

‘He has sailed from this port 60 years and was for more than 20 years in the employment of R. C. King and Co. He is now 72 years of age and was left a widower last June. He suffers much from rheumatism and is too old now to earn his living by going to sea. He has nothing to depend upon’.\footnote{Society of Merchant Venturers, *Nomination Books*, 1884.}

His life in King Street would have been a comfortable one, as long as he did not lie, swear, get drunk or refuse to go to church. Mr. Bailey may have managed to fit this exemplar of
decent but no doubt for others living up to such imposed virtues may well have been difficult.\footnote{City of Bristol Charities Under the Management of the Society of Merchant Venturers, \textit{Inspectors’ Report}, Part 3, 9\textsuperscript{th} March, 1872.}

\textbf{Image 19:} The Society for Merchant Venturers Almshouse in King Street.  
\textbf{Source:} Bristol Central Library Collections.

The SMV also ran the Colston Almshouse and helped fund Hill’s Almshouse. It provided aid on a nomination system to sailors in the community as out pensioners and also to their widows. There was a process to go through to receive such aid, in or out, with nominations needed to attest to worthiness and good character. In April 1872, 15 women were nominated for two vacancies as out pensioners and in 1879 there were five nominees for two male in-pensioners.\footnote{Society of Merchant Venturers, \textit{Nomination Books}, 1872 and 1879.} It was also trustee of the Bristol Merchant Seamen’s Fund, which since 1747 had provided pensions to sailors who had served the city’s merchant fleet. As an example, in 1857, £601, 9s and 6d was given out to six masters, two mates, two blind seamen, 58 worn out and disabled sailors, 118 widows of sailors and 167 children, as well as paying money to shipwrecked sailors in other ports.\footnote{Society of Merchant Venturers, \textit{Audited Accounts}, 8\textsuperscript{th} August, 1857.} Its distribution of funds was egalitarian with money going to all ranks of sailor and the same is true of inmates it accepted into its almshouse, with every rank from captain to donkeyman admitted. The majority of newly admitted inmates at King Street were able seamen and the second highest were mates.\footnote{Society of Merchant Venturers, \textit{Registers}, June, 1869 to October, 1914.}
Conclusion

The work of the SMV embodies the argument of this chapter that in many ways and to certain extents sailors were regarded positively by Bristol’s inhabitants and were accepted as an integral part of Bristol society. A more nuanced understanding of how Bristol’s sailors fitted in and a perception not normally connected to sailors is possible when the relationships between sailors and middle-class citizens are considered. Merchant employers at times were willing to listen to sailors’ grievances and demands and they showed an understanding that the lives of sailors both on shore and at sea were not easy. Sailors’ time afloat did not radicalise sailors to the extent that some historians have proposed and there was a streetwise reality in the relationships with their employers. Sailors needed jobs and shipowners needed sailors and this led to a situation that when in times of conflict, both employers and sailors could facilitate the resolution of disputes in a manner of cordiality and restraint. When friction arose, shipowners and other city elites, merchants and employers often reacted with common sense and sailors too could act with restraint and with mutual respect. Whether it was because of the involvement of sailors other working-class protests were also often cordial and there was an intention on both sides of disputes not to take conflicts too far. Perhaps because of the riots of 1831 there was a certain level of pragmatism in settling industrial disputes. There was also humour and after all, Bristol being relatively small, the protagonists were all likely to be known to each other to some extent and in a city where sailors were largely integrated into commercial and civic areas, it made sense not to be too antagonistic.

In acting civilly, sailors were attempting to represent themselves as respectable citizens worthy of being an accepted part of society. The more than expected civilised behaviour often displayed by this subsection of the working class helped to establish Bristol sailors in the normality of what it meant to be a Bristolian. Some Bristol’s sailor typified what the middle-class hoped to see in their fellow citizen as a rational, reasonable member of the community. Middle-class elites were prepared and happy to share platforms and seats on committees with sailors and positively encouraged the formation of representative bodies. Many of the city’s merchants and other worthies held sailors in high esteem and were open in their praise of them as a higher class of men.

Also at the root of the acceptance of sailors was the recognition that wayward behaviours were not necessarily their fault and that their unique position as labourers who just happened to get wet resulted in understandably deviant, sometimes idiotic behaviours. Tolerance was shown towards them and this was extended, notwithstanding the entrenched racism of the time, to less negativity towards foreign sailors. It cannot be questioned that foreign sailors received unwanted negativity from British sailors and others living in Bristol but there was also understanding that foreign sailors had hardships to endure. They were ‘othered’ just as any intruder to the city was but the fact that they did not form a high proportion of the population mitigated against the potential of significant,

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867 Marcus Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea.
sustained racial conflict. It did happen and there was group violence against sailors but this was relatively low key compared with other cities. Certain ethnicities of sailors received more antipathy than others, especially the Irish and sailors whose skin colour revealed their origin as southern and eastern. As it will be shown later, of these it was the Italians who most frequently found themselves in conflict with members of Bristol’s community.

Furthermore, for sailors who needed help, the citizens of Bristol had a relationship with sailors that facilitated copious amounts of altruistic, compassionate and philanthropic endeavours. This was in part sailor specific but it was also provided to sailors as a constitute part of the wider community, just as Chapter Three argued many religious and maritime organisations did. This integrating work was facilitated by ordinary people but also a civic elite that dominated the institutions of local authority. When things went wrong for the sailor, thus demonstrating needs common with other working-class people, the philanthropic nature of the city was activated, thus situating Bristol within a wider national trend. The amount of missionary endeavour centred on sailors was impressive, with an uncountable number of organisations across the years of this thesis catering for the needs of sailors. Temperance organisations were also active in this but their work amongst sailors, as has been discussed earlier, was within their wider endeavours among Bristol’s working class. The worth of Bristol’s sailors was established and more than just a blind eye was turned towards them when deviancies surfaced. After all, sailors helped build the city and helped to create its wealth and status and this was not to be forgotten. The work of the SMV in particular ensured that this was engrained in the city’s psyche. It cannot be denied however, that some of the efforts of the SMV and other philanthropic organisations and altruistic individuals were to civilise sailors as a part of the wider working class in the image of middle-class elites. The extent of the success of this is impossible to quantify but given the criminality of sailors discussed in the next chapter, there was clearly more work to be done.
Chapter Five: Sailors’ Deviant Behaviours, Petty Criminality

Introduction

Continuing the themes discussed thus far, this chapter similarly places sailors into Bristol’s urban and working-class cultural contexts but this time a culture which was deviant, regressive and contrary to notions of respectability. Under discussion here are those sailors, both transient and resident, who committed crimes of a less serious nature than the serious crimes of assault, knife crime, sexual violence and murder which are discussed in Chapter Six. Most of Bristol’s sailors were ‘home’, working-class sailors who chose to work on the water and returned to working-class communities. They therefore returned to people who were not necessarily habitual criminals, a term that was enshrined in legislation passed in 1869 and 1871, but people who may not have been immune to the temptations of petty criminal activity in certain circumstances. 868 This ‘type’ of sailor was one who did not espouse the new masculine respectability or who can be regarded as a higher class of working man. The reasons for criminal activity were various but overall the argument proposed in different contexts in this chapter is that the petty criminality that sailors were involved in was for the primary purpose of alleviating hardship. Just as with other working-class criminality, sailors’ petty criminality was instrumental in that it had a distinct purpose of staving off the worst of falling on hard times. 869

There has been some recent work on the criminality of sailors but as an aspect of urban history, the subject has been neglected. 870 What research there has been has largely focussed on the violence of sailors 871 and less on sailors’ petty, less serious crime. Robert Lee’s plea to place the sailor in societal contexts would be incomplete without the consideration of this aspect of culture 872 and in doing so, a different perception of the sailor emerges. To an extent sailors have always been associated with criminal activity but it is argued here that this goes beyond the stereotypical association with smuggling and desertion to place sailors in the ordinary criminality of working-class people. Both minor and serious criminality was committed and sailors exhibited characteristics of both petty criminals and hardened, deviant ones, which again reflects cultural divisions within a non-homogenised working class.

This chapter, divided into three sections, gives a quantitative and qualitative comparison of some of the different types of minor crime that both sailors and workers of other

869 Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’.
871 Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’; Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’; Brad Beaver, ‘Seafarers and Working-Class Culture’ and Louise Moon, Sailorhoods.
occupational groups were involved in. In the first section it will be shown that in the types of crime, the number of criminal acts committed and where these took place, sailors were proportionally guilty as other subsections of the working class and committed the same criminal acts that had the same causations rooted in urban working-class culture.\footnote{Barry S. Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, \textit{Crime and Justice}, pp. 11-31; Chris A. Williams, \textit{Policing the Populace}, pp. 160-180; David Taylor, \textit{Crime}, pp. 71-87 and Heather Shore, \textit{Criminality, Deviance and the Underworld}, pp. 121-123.} The crime rate was falling in the period of this study; in England and Wales indictable offenses declined by 79 percent between 1842 and 1891.\footnote{For discussions of working class criminal activity, see Vic Gatrell, \textit{The Decline of Theft and Violence}; Barry S. Godfrey, \textit{Crime in England} and W. Meier, \textit{Property Crime in London}.} Despite the general decline in criminal activity, especially in two areas important to this study, drunkenness and theft, sailors were involved in criminality that signifies their integration into working-class culture in urban environments. Sailors’ behaviours were in part constructed by the localised cultures they lived within, including a culture of crime as well as national economic and societal trends.\footnote{David Jones, \textit{Setting the Scene}, pp. 25-27. See Geoffrey Pearson, \textit{Hooligan}, for prevailing conditions that were likely to lead to criminality.} Sailors broke the law just as their neighbours and work mates did and because of its multifaceted nature, sailor criminality was urban criminality, not just maritime criminality.

The second part of this chapter considers a crime obviously associated with this, sailors’ drinking and being drunk and disorderly. Drinking will be discussed in two respects. Firstly, this will be in the context of sailors’ drinking that facilitated their committing other crimes. This will then progress to discussing drinking leading to criminal convictions for being drunk and disorderly. It will be argued that drinking indeed was a factor in the criminality of sailors and in common with other people it led to other crimes being committed. It will also be argued that sailors’ drunkenness as a crime in itself was not disproportionate to any other occupational subsection of the working class. This therefore represents a more nuanced understanding of the nature of sailors, one that places them in urban, working-class cultural and societal contexts.

The final section of this chapter discusses the particular crime of theft in its many forms. Theft, burglary and larceny were the main criminal acts of the working classes, as it was for sailors, and it therefore offers a pertinent vehicle for showing the extent of integration of sailors with working-class cultural norms. Whilst drinking was no doubt a way of temporarily alleviating whatever problems a sailor might have had, thieving was a practical way of doing the same in that it provided money and goods to live by. It will also be argued that sailors’ thieving could be collaborative as well as being individualistic and cooperation in crime between sailors and workers from other occupational groups further situates sailors in urban culture as well as maritime culture.
Types and Incidences of Crime

Figures 9 and 10 give a general overview of sailor and working-class criminal activity. Figure 9 is composed of all sources referred to in the research for this thesis. Figure 10 is based on the annual report of the Chief Constable for 1890 taken as a typical example of his annual reports which hardly deviate from each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malicious damage</th>
<th>Deserting militia training</th>
<th>Obstruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Drunk and disorderly</td>
<td>Threatening language</td>
<td>Attempted murder</td>
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<td>Theft and stealing</td>
<td>Cruelty to children</td>
<td>Murder</td>
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<td>Embezzlement</td>
<td>Debt</td>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
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<td>Malicious wounding</td>
<td>Ill-treating an animal</td>
<td>Infringing of</td>
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<td>Vagrancy and begging</td>
<td>Failure to join ship</td>
<td>workhouse rules</td>
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<td>Common assault</td>
<td>Loitering</td>
<td>Contempt of court</td>
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<td>Assualts on women</td>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>Malicious wounding</td>
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<td>Assaults on police</td>
<td>Non-payment of sureties</td>
<td>Obtaining goods by FP</td>
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<td>Neglecting family</td>
<td>Disobeying ship’s commander</td>
<td>Obtaining money by FP</td>
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<td>Non pay of Maintenance</td>
<td>Living off prostitution</td>
<td>Indecent exposure</td>
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<td>Stowing away</td>
<td>Failure to report to the police</td>
<td>Rape</td>
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<td>Stabbings</td>
<td>Receiving stolen goods</td>
<td>Bigamy</td>
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<td>Gambling</td>
<td>Smuggling</td>
<td>Carnal knowledge of a child</td>
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<td>Sodomy</td>
<td>Obscene language</td>
<td>Non-payment of fare</td>
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<td>Illegal pawning</td>
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**Figure 9:** List of criminal activity of sailors in Bristol, 1850-1914.

**Source:** Horfield Prison records, Quarter Session, Assize and Police Court reports in the *Bristol Mercury*, other police records, Bristol Council records and other miscellaneous sources.
Arson
Murder, attempted murder
Stabbing
Horse stealing
Shooting
Wounding
Bigamy
Assault
Larceny
Malicious damage
Forgery
Receiving stolen goods
Uttering counterfeit coins
Indecent exposure
Sacrilege
Prostitution
Attempted suicide
Embezzlement
Fraud
Breaking and entering
Concealing the birth of a child
Cruelty to children
Cruelty to animals
Sexual assault on girls
Rape

Figure 10: Table of criminal activity of all working males.
Source: Chief Constable’s Annual Report to the Police Watch Committee, 29th September, 1890.

Figure 9 shows the types of crimes sailors were found guilty of in Bristol, whereas Figure 10 catalogues the indictable crime of members of other occupational groups. This data is useful but at the same time somewhat frustrating in that it had the potential to reveal a lot more. Figure 10, the Police Chief Constable’s annual reports, do not give an occupational breakdown of perpetrators and therefore quantifying sailors’ criminality in relation to specific other occupational groups is not possible from this or his other reports. His report shows that there were 182 incidences of indictable crimes tried by a judge at the assizes and quarter sessions and also 5521 dealt with by the magistrates but no occupations. Nevertheless, the similarity between the two lists show a commonality between sailors and other working-class males and sailors being involved in far more types of crime than those traditionally ascribed to them. One would not have expected sailors to have committed crimes such as contempt of court, infringing workhouse rules, non-payment of fares or illegal pawning. More to be expected were crimes of smuggling, obtaining money and goods falsely, all kinds of assault, drunk and disorderly, theft and even sodomy. Some of their criminal acts, sexual abuse, wife beating and murder, placed sailors among the residuum of society. However, less serious crimes reflect the reality of working-class life. In being convicted for swearing, gambling, obstruction and skipping fares they were displaying...

876 Chief Constable’s Annual Report to the Police Watch Committee, 29th September, 1890.
characteristic actions of any other young male. More importantly, many of the crimes are symptomatic of living in hardship. Various types of stealing, neglecting the family, begging on the streets, being admitted to the workhouse and committing suicide when it got too much to bear, were desperate measures taken by sailors and others alike.

Discovering how often these crimes were committed by certain occupational groups is more problematical than identifying their type. There are no convenient lists of perpetrators and consulting newspaper reports has to be approached cautiously. In the reports of crime cases tried summarily in the *Bristol Mercury*’s Police Intelligence and Police Court columns there is an element of subjectivity on the part of the reporter who chose what to include. On average there were about 60 cases brought up for summary judgement by magistrates each month and journalists normally only chose ones ‘presenting more than ordinary features of interest’. There is also the issue of irregularity in giving the occupations of culprits. In June 1882, to take a random month as an example, of 43 cases reported on only seven occupations were given. Another problem is the changing pattern of court trials, which crimes were tried summarily and which were indicted. The types and severity of crime that Assize Courts, County Quarter Sessions and Petty Sessions dealt with continually changed and so even by 1857, justices in petty sessions dealt with 20 times the number of cases dealt with in all other courts.

However, as examples of what they can show reports of crimes in the *Bristol Mercury* have been analysed in detail for four months of two random years to show sailors’ crimes in relation to other occupations as shown in Figures 11 and 12.

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878 The journalist who gave this as his criteria for selection sounded extremely bored, *Bristol Mercury*, 12th January 1850.
879 *Bristol Mercury*, 1st to 31st June, 1882.
### Figure 11: Breakdown of criminal activity reported in the *Bristol Mercury, 1876.*

#### Source: Bristol Mercury Police Intelligence and Police Court reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>January</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>October</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>OMFP</td>
<td>Quay labourer</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Commercial traveller</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Boiler worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Docker</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Hawker</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Porter</td>
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<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Indecency</td>
<td>Greengrocer</td>
<td>OGFP</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawker</td>
<td>Att. suicide</td>
<td>Quarrymen</td>
<td>No fare</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
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<td>Artisan</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Haulier</td>
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<td>Collier</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Clothier</td>
<td>RSG</td>
<td>Cab driver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Assault on wife</td>
<td>Quay labourer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Smuggling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Neglect of wife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Theft</td>
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**1876**
Figure 12: Breakdown of criminal activity reported in the Bristol Mercury, 1895.

Source: Bristol Mercury Police Intelligence and Police Court reports.

OGFP: Obtaining goods by false pretences.
RSG: Receiving stolen goods.
(F): Foreign sailor.
Refusal: Refusal to go to sea after signing articles.
(NS): Not a sailor.
D and D: Drunk and Disorderly.
OMFP: Obtaining money by false pretences.

These give an indication of similarities between sailors and other occupations in the crimes committed and proportionality they suggest sailors being commonplace among other workers. A more accurate quantitative assessment can be gained from the records of Horfield Prison, although these are just for indictments and do not include crimes dealt with by magistrates. Horfield became the city gaol in 1874. It was built ironically on Horfield.
Pleasure Gardens to replace the decrepit Bristol Gaol, itself built to replace the original one destroyed in the Bristol riots in 1831. Fortunately, registers have survived for some of the years between 1884 and 1907 and these have been analysed in Figure 13. This is not to compare actual quantities of sailors Vis a Vis other occupational groups as categorising thousands of prisoners’ occupations is beyond the scope of this study. However, every incident of sailors’ crime has been recorded which gives both numbers and type of crime.

Figure 13: Types and numbers of crimes sailors in Bristol were convicted of 1884 to 1907.

Source: Horfield Prison records, 1884-1907.

The registers show that there were 51,421 males (and a further 14,375 females) registered at the prison and of these 1456 were sailors. Given that only 1456 sailors were imprisoned over a period of 13 years, sailors were relatively underrepresented and as a proportion of the number of sailors on the streets at any one time the incidences of sailor

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881 Its forbidding gates and front walls still stand at the entrance to a plush riverside housing development.

882 Theft includes larceny, stealing, shop and house breaking, obtaining goods and money by false pretences and receiving stolen goods; vagrancy and begging includes sleeping out and loitering; common assault includes assaults on men, women and on wives; neglect of family includes non-payment of maintenance and leaving family to the care of the three unions; malicious wounding includes using a knife; malicious damage includes wilful damage and workhouse damage; drunk and/or disorderly includes using obscene language; murder includes attempted murder and manslaughter; minor money offences includes non-payment of rail, tram and steamer fares, illegal pawning, non-payment of sureties, forgery, gambling and embezzlement; sex crimes includes rape, carnal knowledge of a child under 13, sodomy and indecent exposure; seafaring related includes smuggling, embezzlement of ships’ stores, disobeying orders, desertion from ship and militia training and stowing away; personal circumstances includes attempted suicide and debt and other includes crimes that appear between one and three times such as bigamy, cruelty to an animal, cruelty to a child, living off prostitution, obstruction, not reporting to the police, being on premises and being a ‘rogue’.

883 There are potential inaccuracies resulting from some prisoners being recidivists.
crime is low. The Report on the Bristol Poor in 1884 noted that 1000 foreign ships enter
Bristol each year carrying upwards of 15,700 men which is in addition to 8,300 coastwise
vessels carrying another 33,400 sailors.884 Therefore there might have been an expectation
that more sailors would be involved in indictable crime than is the case.885 In 1893, only 55
sailors, mariners and soldiers combined were sent to the city’s gaols.886

These relatively low numbers suggest that sailors were not a particular concern to the
authorities and were incorporated in the generality of working-class miscreants. Indeed,
only 350 sailors who committed some kind of crime that necessitated a custodial sentence
were from Bristol. Thus, only 0.7% of all males that went to prison were sailors from the
city that suggests that the rest of Bristol’s sailors stayed away from the most serious
offences or were lucky enough not to be caught. A group having numbers of this size would
more likely to be considered a nuisance rather than a significant problem and were not
conspicuous in respect of their deviant behaviours. Furthermore, neither were foreign
sailors. These will be discussed in the context of violence in Chapter Six but when criminal
acts are considered as a whole, of the 1456, 19% (279) were by foreign sailors, presumably
transient ones. Their misdemeanours consisted of 32 different crimes and as Figure 14
shows the majority of crimes were also related to varying degrees of hardship.887 Most
convictions not surprisingly were for drunkenness but the various types of stealing,
vagrancy, begging, neglect of family, debt, not paying rail fares, receiving stolen goods and
obtaining goods and money by false pretences are crimes associated with not having
sufficient means by which to live by. Other of the crimes are not ones associated with
sailors. One might expect criminality relating to their profession, including, smuggling,
desertion, stowing away and disobeying orders but not particularly attempted suicide,
forgery or cruelty to an animal.

884 Chief Constable’s Annual Report to the Police Watch Committee, 29th September 1890 in a volume of
cuttings on policing in the city, (no other provenance).
885 Report of the Committee (Appointed February 8th, 1884) to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol
Poor, Bristol, 1885.
886 ‘Return of Judicial Statistics for England and Wales’, Command Papers, Nineteenth-Century House of
Commons Session Papers, Parliamentary Papers on-line, 1893, 108. The number of labourers was 1,156.
887 For working class poverty in general see Alan Kidd, State, Society and the Poor In Nineteenth-Century
England, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999; David Englander, Poverty and Poor Law Reform in
Nineteenth-Century Britain, 1834-1914, From Chadwick to Booth, London, Routledge, 1998 and for a
wider perspective, Stuart Woolf, The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth
Figure 14: Types and numbers of crimes that foreign sailors were imprisoned for.

Source: Horfield Prison Records, 1884-1904.

Parole records also suggest that sailors were not a disproportionate problem to the authorities and that criminal activity was related to hardship suffered by many. For 12 years between 1896 and 1914, (although 1908-11 are missing) Bristol Police kept records of persons required to report to them after their release from prison or return from penal servitude (Figure 15). In some cases the occupation of the offender is given although this is by no means in all cases.

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888 Theft includes larceny, shop and house breaking, obtaining goods and money by false pretences, receiving stolen goods and forgery; vagrancy and begging includes sleeping out and loitering; assault includes assaults on men, women, on wives, sexual assault, using a knife and attempted murder; neglect of family includes non-payment of maintenance and leaving family to the care of the three unions; fraud includes forgery and obtaining goods and money on false pretences; indecency includes ‘exposure of person’; seafaring related includes smuggling, disobeying orders, desertion from ship and stowing away and other includes crimes that appear between one and three times namely obstruction, gambling, aiding a prostitute, obscene language and want of sureties.
Figure 15: Number and occupations of persons reporting to the police, 1904-15.


Whilst it cannot be accurate with not all offenders attributed an occupation, Figure 15 gives some idea of the proportion of recidivist offenders who were deserving of continuing supervision. It shows sailors were not exceptional and were in synchronicity with other workers from different occupations. In total there were 142 persons with 36 different occupations who were required to report. A rough categorisation of these suggests that sailors were not overrepresented with 14 being recorded. Two thirds of the number of crimes of those requiring to report were connected to obtaining money through stealing, larceny, house breaking, embezzlement and receiving money by false pretences and eight out of the 14 sailors’ crimes were for the same, suggesting a further link to hardship.889

Their crimes therefore show commonality with other workers in both type and incidence and at least in part would have alleviating hardship as a motive. A detailed analysis shown in Figure 16 of four of the Horfield registers supports this.890

889 **Transport** includes cab drivers, fly drivers and stablemen; **retail** includes hawkers, bakers, butchers, shop keepers and dealers; **skilled** includes carpenters, masons and tailors; **other** includes umbrella makers, factory workers, chocolate makers (Frys and Cadburys were big employers); **building** includes plumbers, brick layers, decorators, painters and **primary industry** includes animal workers, miners and gardeners.

890 The registers, with some exceptions noted, contain 287 pages with eight inmates registered on each page. Each page contains both males and females so figures have been calculated to include just males.
Figure 16: Statistical comparison of sailors’ crimes compared to other working class occupational groups.

Source: Horfield Prison Records Nominal Registers for: 23rd March, 1885 to 1st March, 1886; 16th November, 1890 to 31st October, 1891; 30th March, 1894 to 31st January, 1895 and 20th June 1904, to 17th January, 1905.

Despite potential inaccuracies, especially what constitutes a labourer, there is rough quantitative proportionality between sailors and other selected occupations in the types of crime committed.\textsuperscript{891} Again, it is criminality connected with hardship and drunkenness that are most prevalent and the same is evident in another source, The Report of the Bristol Discharged Persons’ Aid Society of 1904. This includes sailors amongst other occupations as needing of assistance after being released from prison for larceny, burglary, forgery, embezzlement, begging, debt, hawking without a licence, not paying rail fares, vagrancy, neglect to maintain a family, wilful damage, indecency, drunkenness, receiving stolen goods and work house offences.\textsuperscript{892} The majority of these have some connection with financial hardship and sailors must have been in some despair if they had to apply to the Society for help.

\textsuperscript{891} What constitutes a labourer of course is debatable but it is the occupation that was inserted on the registers on admittance. For this study, occupations that are unskilled have also been included. \textbf{Carpenters} include wood turners, joiners and cabinetmakers; \textbf{Hawkers} include commercial travellers and pedlars; \textbf{Shoemakers} include boot makers, finishers and clickers; \textbf{Hauliers} include carters, \textbf{Painters} include decorators; \textbf{Clerks} include administrators and \textbf{Builders} include bricklayers and plasterers.

\textsuperscript{892} Report of the Bristol Discharged Persons’ Aid Society, 1904, pp. 2-3.
Sailors’ Drinking

All of the above indicates a commonality in the types of petty crimes sailors carried out and are not disproportionate in the number of offences sailors committed in comparison to males in other occupations. Sailors experienced hard times just as others did and resorted to various types of crime that would bring in some money or make life more comfortable, as well as other unquantifiable motivations. One crime that firmly situates sailors as part of a working-class culture of want is being drunk and disorderly, especially as it was a means of escape from real life hardship. This is important to consider because many other crimes were committed when the perpetrator was drunk and in this respect sailors can be regarded as culturally congruent.⁸⁹³ Sailors’ drinking did not characterise them as the stereotypically ostentatious separate group of miscreants that needed any more controlling than any other section of the working class. They got drunk and committed other crimes when drunk but their actions again were very much part of wider working-class cultural norms.

Drunkenness and sailors is a ubiquitous pairing but the perception of this relationship is more in the form of sailors creating a nuisance when having too much to drink, living up to their stereotypical image. The oft-used Rowlandson etching (Image 20) shows jolly drunken sailors in a sailortown area.⁸⁹⁴

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Similarly, any number of sea shanties contains representations of drunken sailors: naughty, silly, but not malicious:

‘From Liverpool to Frisco a-rovin’ I went,
To stay in that country wuz my good intent;
But drinkin’ strong whiskey, like other damn fools.
I soon got transported back to Liverpool!’

It is difficult to think of another occupation that is more associated with drinking except perhaps for navvies and drinking was culturally important as an expression of working-class masculinity. All classes of people drank but to the middle classes excessive drinking was a differentiating determinant, being ‘the essence of an immoral popular culture’ and it had to be controlled at a localised level as well as a national one. On a national scale the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869 and the Licensing Act of 1872 localised drinking to distinct geographical areas in towns. Many town councils took independent measures to control

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895 Verse from a traditional Forebitter, Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. 205.
897 James Kneale, ‘The Place of Drink’, p. 44.
the extent of drinking on its streets, such as that in Merthyr Tydfil as discussed by Andy Croll, in which he shows how the increased monitoring of public spaces revealed and helped to control localised hotspots for drink and other related crime. As he says, ‘the noisy inebriate represented a fundamental challenge’ and evidently not just to the middle class as he notes that members of the working classes increasingly got involved in monitoring behaviour.\footnote{Andy Croll, ‘Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame, Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian Town’, \textit{Social History}, 24, No. 3, 1999, pp. 254 and 257. See also his \textit{Civilising the Urban}, especially Chapter Three for the regulation of public space.} This was extended to port cities too, in Liverpool David Beckingham details middle-class elites’ efforts to control drinking behaviour of the lower orders through the application of legislation designed to control urban space and therefore the drinking, womanising and criminal behaviour that went on in that space. This resulted in distinct geographies in Liverpool where that conduct could take place. If a magistrate closed down a pub this would not only change the physical characteristics of that area but also influence the behaviour in that area. As Beckingham says, licensing laws ‘impinged on social freedoms of women and men and played an important part in the regulation of urban space and public behaviour’.\footnote{David Beckingham, ‘Gender, Space and Drunkenness’, p. 648.} Martin Daunton’s study of Cardiff also points to the relevance of a physical geographical sailortown area subjected to controlling legislation that both constructed and contained the behaviours of sailors and others by the waterside.\footnote{Martin Daunton, ‘Jack Ashore’.

\footnote{J. R. Greenaway, \textit{Drink and British Politics Since 1830, a Study in Policy Making}, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 and Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’, p. 81. See also Judith Rowbotham, ‘Only when drunk’, Stereotyping Violence in England, in Shani D’Cruze, ed., \textit{Everyday Violence}, pp. 155-169.} That behaviour had to be modified because drunkenness was seen as a major contributory factor to other crime and therefore working class drinking could not be ignored.\footnote{The Bristol Temperance Herald, 31st October, 1854.} The Prime Minister Lord Palmerston himself, in a speech in Romsey, lamented the drinking habits of the working classes saying that they ‘not only led to the degradation of the individual and the impoverishment of his family but they lead to offences and crimes which tend to place the man in the condition of a felon and a convict.’\footnote{Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’.} Naturally, sailors were included in such sentiments and Tomas Nilson’s work on sailors in Gothenburg bears Palmerston’s fears out. Nilson notes that 83% of crimes committed by sailors were drink related and included indecency, disturbing the peace, insubordination, urinating in public, screaming and shouting, singing loudly and violence.\footnote{Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’.

\footnote{The Bristol Temperance Herald, 31st October, 1854.} The place of sailors in these trends are very difficult to discern but an investigation of sailors’ convictions for drinking in Bristol via the Police Court and Police Intelligence reports in the \textit{Bristol Mercury} for 1850-1900 shows that sailors’ drinking habits were as expected and no more of a problem than it was in relation to other working people. It would be impossible to read every case of drunkenness reported between 1850 and 1914 but a close proximity search using the terms ‘charged’ with ‘drunk’ revealed 2034 references. Out of these, a
further search revealed that only 57 charged were classed as sailors. For the purpose of comparison, the broad occupational categories of labourer, factory workers and casual workers were searched using the same search terms and revealed the results in Figure 17.

**Figure 17:** Number of summary convictions for drunkenness by magistrates at the Bristol Police Court between 1850 and 1900.

**Source:** The Bristol Mercury Police Court and Police Intelligence reports, 1850-1900.

This does not take into account the number of men in these occupations but it gives some indication that other working-class males were just as deserving of the disapproval of the city’s elites as sailors were and that sailors were not disproportionately found guilty of drink related criminality. Interestingly, 12 out of the 57 were recorded as being foreign sailors, presumably visiting ones, 14 if a Scotsman and an Irishman are counted. From these readings there does not seem to be any notoriety attached to sailors in the city. In other sources related to drinking sailors do not feature at all. For example, after the passing of the Licensing Act in 1902 Bristol’s police force began to keep a Register of Habitual Drunkards. It is unfortunate that only one volume survives for 1904, and equally unfortunate that the occupations of the men and women listed is rarely given. However, of the occupations given, pedlars, labourers, hawkers, stablemen, quay workers, dockworker and other miscellaneous occupations, no sailor is included. It is tempting to say that this shows sailors as indicative of the type of working-class male turning towards masculine respectability but the reality is more to do with the inadequacies of written records for Bristol’s sailors.

Similarly, the volumes of recorded complaints about beerhouses and pubs noted in Chapter Two lists sailors among other occupational groups in certain pubs sitting with known

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905 Register of Habitual Drunkards, 1903-04.
prostitutes. Nothing is said about sailors being drunk or disorderly and any nuisance is clearly attributed to the prostitutes not the sailors.\footnote{See Chapter Two for a discussion on the fault attributed to prostitutes.} Sailors obviously provided welcome business for landlords and others plying their trades from public houses and the police were seemingly happy to facilitate this by turning a blind eye.\footnote{See Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, ‘Young Men and the Sea’; Yrjo Kaukiainen, ‘Seamen Ashore; Port Visits of Late Nineteenth-Century Finnish Sailors’, The Northern Mariner, vol. 7, No. 3, 1996 and Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, for the mutual dependency between sailors and drinking establishments. Police Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books, 29th October, 1901, 11th June, 1910 and 20th November, 1910.} References to any drunken misdemeanours in particular public houses in the press are also relatively few. A close proximity search of ‘sailor’ or ‘seamen’ with ‘public house’ or ‘drink’ in the Bristol Mercury Police Court and Intelligence Reports show only 20 cases of sailors being drunk and disorderly in the named public houses discussed in Chapter Two.\footnote{Compiled from a search of all references to sailors or seamen and public house, beerhouse or tavern in the Bristol Mercury, 1850-1900. The pubs were Brittonia, King of Prussia, Don Cossack, General Draper, Plume of Feathers, Green Fields of Erin, The Ostrich, Bunch of Grapes, Packet Tavern, Hole in the Wall, Gloucester Tavern, Theatre Tavern, Bell Tavern, White Hart Tavern, Albion, White Hart, Goat in Armour, Masonic Tavern and Garrick’s Head.} Occupational distinction was obviously not an important detail to record and sailors were seemingly a common and accepted presence in pubs around the water and in the city without being particularly notorious for drunken behaviour.

Furthermore, what misdemeanours sailors did commit were not necessarily around the waterside and sailor drinking got them into trouble in varied locations, as the map of definite locatable positions (Map 10), shows. The red dots represent notorious thieving hot spots targeted by sailors and other thieves, which are discussed below. The black dots on the map are representative of where drunkenness took place and do not necessarily represent individual cases. Some of the dots represent pubs that had numerous drunk and disorder incidents in. Some of these pubs were associated with sailors such as The Hole in the Wall, The Ostrich and The Goat in Armour. However, as said above, these did not have sinister associations to the extent that some of the pubs in other port cities had and according to the Public and Beerhouse Complaints Books used earlier in this thesis and reports in the Bristol Mercury, many of them had mixed clientele, even though they were situated around the water. Having said all of this it is hard to believe that other pubs around the water or elsewhere were not sites of sailors’ drunkenness. King Street had (and still has) the archetypal sailors’ pub, the infamous The Llandoger Trow, but there is no connection with it to sailors at all in any police records or other documents.
Map 10: Map showing known locations of sailors’ acts of drunkenness and theft.

**Black:** Known drunk and disorderly offences of Sailors.
**Red:** Known locations of theft by sailors.
Thieving Sailors

From all the sources consulted, it is stealing that is one of the main criminal acts of the lower classes and this is true also of sailors’ criminality. Some of this was collaborative and cooperation between sailors and workers from other occupational groups in thieving further allows sailors to be seen as an integrated subsection of the lower orders, many of whom clearly turned to theft to maintain themselves and cater for their family needs. In Bristol sailors could be just like any other working men being involved in a bit of thieving to get by and to alleviate the worst of poverty. For transient sailors on Bristol’s streets providing for the family is less relevant and we can only presume that they took to stealing to get more money for the delights of sailorstreets, compensate for inadequate wages or as a response to being fleeced by ‘landlords, barkeepers, clothiers, crimps and boarding house loungers, the land sharks, (who) devour him limb by limb’.

If there had been adequate financial arrangements for sailors, who after all were not likely to have much money management expertise, then possibly not so much thieving would have happened. Governments were slow to do anything about this and legislation to offer protection for sailors’ money only began with the enactment of the Seamen’s Savings Bank Act of 1856 and parallel legislation of the Seamen’s Money Order scheme in 1855. Conrad Dixon argues that legislation against crimping in 1835, 1845 and 1854 did little to stop sailors being exploited and made no dent in the double earnings for the crimps of cashing advanced notes and supplying drunken sailors to a ship for ‘head money’. He gives the example of 1860s Cardiff where it was normal for around 30 crimps to board in-coming vessels.

The scourge of being at the hands of crimps should have improved with the Transmission of Wages or ‘Midge’ scheme in 1878 that allowed sailors to forward their pay to the nearest Mercantile Marine Office and with the passing of the Merchant Shipping (Payment of Wages and Ratings) Act of 1880 which abolished conditional advance notes and provided for the allotment of half of a sailor’s earnings to his family. However, the enforcement of all this legislation was patchy and habits were hard to change. Sailors resorted to the petty criminality that they and others like them had always done. In consequence of this, petty criminality by seamen was almost expected. In Bristol as in other port cities, the labour market was a secondary one, made up predominantly of unskilled workers on low wages,

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909 Martin Daunton, ‘Jack Ashore’, pp. 176-177, echoing Stan Hugill’s first-hand experience of seamen being the victims of crime, Stan Hugill, Sailortown, p. xix. G. R. Henning discusses the problems crimping caused for sailors, ‘Fourpenny Dark and Sixpenny Red’, p. 52. This study is based on Australia’s crimping but as he notes, and cites Hugill to evidence it, the same happened in ports the world over, p. 54. An Australian paper noted that crimping in England was such a big problem that sailors’ homes were set up in England specifically to prevent sailors being pounced upon by crimps, Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Apr. 1851, cited in G. R. Henning, ‘Fourpenny Dark and Sixpenny Red’, p. 56.

910 Conrad Dixon, Seamen and the Law, pp. 113-116, 186-187, 203-258 and 262-282. None of this was helped by the inadequacies of further acts such as the 1892 and 1894 Shipping Acts. Bruce Nelson discusses this in an American context, Bruce Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen and Unionism in the 1930s, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1988.

911 Paul Gilje, Liberty on the Waterfront, p. xii.
casualization, residential immobility and ethnic separateness and it is no wonder that sailors amongst them got involved in criminal theft.\footnote{Richard Lawton and Robert Lee, \textit{Population and Society}, p. 16.} Mostly it was spontaneous acts of theft from a person in the street or from a shop and this could happen anywhere including away from the waterfront, sober or drunk. Other theft took some planning. In January 1895, a sailor was convicted of stealing an oil stove well away from the maritime environment at Lawrence Hill. The Joint Railway station was a popular location for stealing by sailors and others.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 24\textsuperscript{th} January, 1895.} For example, a young German sailor, Otto Tesch, was given six months hard labour for stealing a portmanteau and two coats from the station.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 8\textsuperscript{th} January, 1876.} Stealing a stove and clothing could be for personal use to provide warmth or to sell on to raise some money and both would be a means by working-class people to alleviate hardship.

A report by the Inspector of Prisons in 1850 listed the types of theft that the inmates of Bristol’s gaol had committed as of 8\textsuperscript{th} January 1850.\footnote{Fifteenth Report of the Inspectors of Prisons for Great Britain, South and Western District, London, 1850. \textit{Containing table of thefts committed by prisoners at Bristol Common Gaol and House of Correction on January 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1850}. For Bristol City Gaol and Bridewell the list was much the same but also included uttering false coin and illegal pawning, both of which sailors were found guilty of as shown elsewhere.} Some were obviously of goods for selling on such as a chaff-cutting machine, a desk, timber, an accordion and a silver case. According to the \textit{Bristol Mercury} Police Court and Intelligence reports the types of stealing that sailors did around the same date were also of goods for selling on including timber, obviously in an attempt to make some money. However, the majority were goods that made life more bearable: items of food and clothing, such as flour, beans, sugar, meat, tea, bread, tobacco, clothing, a cap, a hat, shoes, boots, a handkerchief, a shawl and bedclothes. David Taylor points out that the bulk of stolen property whether from property or the person took the form of food, clothing, money and other valuables. Sailors’ thieving was the same and sailors fitted the typical description of the thief coming from ‘the poorly and irregularly paid ranks of the unskilled for whom life was both hard and precarious.’\footnote{David Taylor, \textit{Crime}, p. 40.} As an example of such distress, a report of 1860 describes a sailor arrested for stealing and assaulting a policeman in the process. He had tried to cut his own throat and was described in court as an unfortunate with a wild maniacal look, dishevelled hair and neglected person.\footnote{\textit{Bristol Mercury}, 11\textsuperscript{th} February, 1860.}

An analysis of the trials at Bristol’s County Quarter Sessions supports the contention that sailors’ behaviour was very much congruent with other workers (Figure 18). Ideally, a more accurate picture of the occupational profile of petty thieves would be gained by sampling Calendars of Prisoners of the courts but only three for Bristol for the whole of the period of this study survive. Nevertheless, although these figures do not account for the actual number of people in these occupations, they still give an indication of the occupational groups that were charged with stealing. No doubt the ‘dark figures’ of non-recorded stealing if known would alter the totals and the above includes only nine of the different 95
occupations listed (including a bell hanger, a theatrical and a sausage skin maker). Again, what this shows is a proportionality of sailors with other occupations.

Figure 18: Theft by occupations between 1850 and 1900.

Source: Reports of crimes tried at Bristol Quarter Sessions. 918

As usual, labourers committed the most thefts of varying kinds but sailors show behaviour that was not out of the ordinary. The fact that the 80% of sailors’ thefts were of items of clothing (coats mainly), food items and money from the person shows again that just with other people, hardship was an underlying factor. A four monthly survey of the Bristol Mercury for all years between 1850 and 1914, two years of which feature in Figures 11 and 12, show sailors stealing money, whiskey, coats, belt and braces, various clothes, an oil stove, a purse and various food items, 919 all suggestive of hardship.

The diverse range of working-class men involved in thieving (Figure 18), facilitated sailors’ integration into working-class communities and this is also demonstrated in the way that they colluded with others to commit theft. Mixing of sailors and other types of workers in residences, in pubs and on the streets resulted in established relationships which made cooperation in theft not an unusual occurrence. Thus, cooperation with others in felonious action situated the sailor firmly in urban culture. This was not usually spontaneous theft but stealing that involved planning. In 1864, two sailors conspired with a labourer and a rigger

918 Carpenters include wood turners, joiners and cabinetmakers; hawkers include commercial travellers and pedlars; shoemakers include boot makers, finishers and clickers; hauliers include carters; painters include decorators; clerks include administrators and builders include bricklayers and plasterers.

919 These are exclusive of smuggling and thefts from ships.
to steal a boat, moor it by the wall of a riverside coal yard, break into the yard and throw 12 cwt of coal over the wall on to the mud. They then loaded it into the boat and took it to the back of the Plume of Feathers for unloading and distribution.\textsuperscript{920} Here sailors, a ship rigger, a coal yard labourer and a pub landlord were all colluding and presumably more when recipients of the coal are added. On a smaller scale, a Tolzey Court report of January 1858 details the case of an old woman who ran a grocery shop from her house, which was being supplied by a sailor with tea, sugar and alcohol.\textsuperscript{921} Another sailor had a peculiarly specialised line in supplying stolen nails to a beerhouse keeper.\textsuperscript{922} Sailors also abetted theft from the person. In July 1868, two labourers got a sailor acquaintance to trip their victim up whilst he was walking down Hotwell Road. Whilst he was on the ground they stole his watch and beat him into insensibility.\textsuperscript{923} Less violently, in March 1885 a sailor was found guilty of colluding with a labourer to steal a watch and handkerchiefs from a man in the street by creating a diversion. The headline to the report was ‘Jack Ashore in Trouble’, as three more were in October 1895 when they were convicted of colluding with a labourer to steal blocks of deal from Redcliffe Wharf and hiding it in their schooner on Welsh Back. The labourer worked at the yard and helped the sailor to get in.\textsuperscript{924} Valuable items were often stolen, such as two chronometers from an instrument shop by two sailors who got a labourer mate to stash them in his house.\textsuperscript{925} House breaking was also common; in January 1862, a sailor combined with a labourer and a cabinetmaker in breaking and entering a house.\textsuperscript{926} Two years later a sailor was convicted of conspiring with a labourer to steal items of clothing from a house. As this was his third conviction for theft he was sentenced heavily to eight years penal servitude.\textsuperscript{927}

These examples necessitated established relationships and cooperation, which suggests a period of longevity on shore. However, transient foreign sailors were also involved in collusion to commit theft. Many cases of foreign sailors and prostitutes in collusion were found. John Lawrence, a ‘Mulatto’, was found guilty of stealing two promissory notes with the assistance of a 17-year-old prostitute. She took a man to a room at a coffee house and whilst they were occupied Lawrence stole the notes from the man’s pocket.\textsuperscript{928} In other incidences the sailor was the facilitator rather than the main protagonist. One of the biggest industries in the city was tobacco processing and on this occasion a casual labourer was found guilty of stealing a large quantity of tobacco and giving it to an Italian sailor friend of his who was convicted for receiving stolen goods.\textsuperscript{929}

\textsuperscript{920} Bristol Mercury, 9\textsuperscript{th} July, 1864.  
\textsuperscript{921} Bristol Mercury, 2\textsuperscript{nd} January, 1858.  
\textsuperscript{922} Bristol Mercury, 27\textsuperscript{th} October, 1860.  
\textsuperscript{923} Bristol Mercury, 11\textsuperscript{th} January, 1868.  
\textsuperscript{924} Bristol Mercury, 30\textsuperscript{th} October, 1895.  
\textsuperscript{925} Bristol Mercury, 25\textsuperscript{th} June, 1881.  
\textsuperscript{926} Bristol Mercury, 11\textsuperscript{th} January, 1862.  
\textsuperscript{927} Bristol Mercury, 9\textsuperscript{th} July, 1864.  
\textsuperscript{928} Bristol Mercury, 30\textsuperscript{th} October, 1858.  
\textsuperscript{929} Bristol Mercury, 14\textsuperscript{th} July, 1855.
Another common trait with working-class people was that theft was often occupation specific in that it involved defrauding one’s employer including by breaches of merchant marine legislation, most commonly in the form of contract disputes and desertion.930 Desertions after signing articles or in other ports were very common and any number of examples could be given. Often crewmembers of common ethnicity deserted together. For others it was spontaneous; one sailor, showing a marked lack of intelligence, after absconding from the S.S. Bayano took lodgings at the Sailors’ Home where he was promptly arrested.931 Another sailor obviously gave his desertion some thought as he left a note at his house saying that his body would be found in the river.932

Occupational specific stealing was mainly in the form of smuggling and stealing goods from their place of work or from fellow workers. Sailors will be forever associated with smuggling but because this study moves sailors away from maritime towards urban contexts, smuggling is not dwelt on here to any great extent. Smuggling was done by all ratings of sailors with a surprisingly high number of mates being involved in concealing cigars, bottles of perfume, liquor and tobacco, the latter being by far the most numerous smuggled item. Cases are far too numerous to count and will have only been reported on in the press if they were especially interesting or showed the sailor to be particularly daring, clever or stupid. One sailor, not a particularly competent smuggler, was charged with fraud for trying to sell a bag of smuggled tobacco to an innkeeper. When he was apprehended by the police, the tobacco he was trying to sell was in fact a bag of sawdust.933

Theft of goods clearly needed some kind of specific knowledge of place and personnel and sailors took advantage of knowing their way around ship. As a typical example, two towmen, John Brice and Henry Batt, were convicted of stealing rope and iron from an Austrian barque, the Nicole Tommassco, being apprehended when they were loading it on to another boat crewed by a labourer.934 Sailors were also involved in pilfering from dockside warehouses, a type of theft that David Jones says was very common in port cities, including theft of cotton, metal, coal, rope and wood.935 Foreign sailors were also guilty of work related theft. Two Norwegian sailors, John Sloot and Henry Beckhuizen, broke into the cabin of the captain of the Norge and stole gold dust, rings, guns, foreign coins, cash and other things which they passed on to ‘a fence’ on shore.936

Other attempts at theft took advantage of having knowledge of their work mates and numerous examples of sailors stealing from fellow sailors are in evidence, which somewhat negates the notion of fraternity between sailors. Sailors in these incidences were the victims of crime, not the perpetrators. A sailor stealing a fellow sailor’s boots, for example or a Scottish seaman stealing money, two pairs of trousers and other clothing from a fellow

930 Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power*, pp. 84-85.
932 *Bristol Mercury*, 15th September, 1880.
933 *Bristol Mercury*, 18th January, 1860.
934 *Bristol Mercury*, 15th July, 1876.
935 David Jones, ‘Setting the Scene’, p. 13.
936 *Bristol Mercury*, 22nd July, 1876.
crewmember of the *Coronet* are typical.  

Money was very often taken from crewmembers known to have just been paid off, often at pubs on a drunken spree, and often happening in sailors’ homes. Sailors were no doubt familiar with the procedures of sailors’ homes wherever they were in the world and some used this to commit theft from fellow sailors. In 1874, the Bristol Sailors’ Home entry books recorded an inmate stealing ten pounds from another sailor in the home and another stealing a fellow sailor’s watch in 1896. The victimisation of sailors happened on the streets too. This was sometimes perpetuated by organised gangs such as the ‘Ashbox gang’ in Cardiff, so called because they waited for sailors to come off the ships, threw ash over them and whilst they were blinded robbed them. No evidence of gangs targeting Bristol’s sailors has been found but sailors were the victims on Bristol’s streets. A sailor called Henry MacGlynne had five ten dollar Peruvian gold pieces, a dollar, half a sovereign, and some silver stolen from him by a prostitute and her accomplices. After she had finished with him two men broke in to the room, beat him senseless and stole his money.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that sailors were very much a synchronicity with those working-class people who eschewed domestic respectability, who resorted to acts of petty criminality and who clearly were not a higher class of working man. Some of the crime that sailors committed was peculiar to their profession but the majority was crime that ordinary working-class people committed. Individual motivation for criminal acts is hard to distinguish from newspaper reporting and official reports. It may have been for amusement, as a show of bravado or out of boredom. It may have been organised and needful of the cooperation of others to succeed but it was also spontaneous, on the spur of the moment individualism. For many it is the alleviation of hardship that characterises the petty criminality of sailors and others, especially demonstrated through acts of stealing. Chapter Two has noted the insecurity of employment and sailors had increasing amounts of time between voyages when they were back in their communities. Most sailors settled into domestic life and sought to cater for their families legally but others took to bits of petty crime, including foreign, transient sailors, to make ends meet.

Much of petty criminality was drink fuelled. Sailors drinking habits made criminal activity more likely, although as a crime in itself, sailors convictions for drunkenness does no more than put them on a par with other working-class people. Sailors’ drinking was situated in the spatial geographies inhabited by other workers and their other petty misdemeanours, the use of prostitutes and thieving especially, do the same. Drinking crimes and thieving which are possible to trace from various sources happened by the water but it happened in

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937 *Bristol Mercury*, 3rd May, 1880 and 4th October, 1890.
938 This time on New Year’s Eve at the *Steam Packet Tavern*, *Bristol Mercury*, 31st December, 1859.
939 *Bristol Sailors’ Home*, entry books, 17th May, 1874 and 20th January, 1896.
940 Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power*, p. 85.
941 *Bristol Mercury*, 28th November, 1857.
wider areas of the city as well. Bristol sailors did not just stay around the water; they mingled with others which also gave rise to them being victims of the petty criminality of others.

Sailors’ petty criminality firmly situates them in working-class urban cultural norms. Robert Lee has lamented the dearth of historiography that places sailors in societal contexts and this Chapter has sought to address this in ways uncomplimentary to the sailor. By discussing a subject not normally associated with sailors, their urban criminality, it has given a more nuanced profile of the sailor, moving him away from the maritime context towards an urban one. It is easy to equate sailors with smuggling and other criminality associated with their occupation. However, having the necessity to steal is not something that is usually associated with sailors nor indeed are some of the other crimes that sailors were guilty of. In reality, much of their crime was perhaps not surprising, given the cultural norms of nineteenth century Britain. Criminal activity attributed to individual opportunism after a drink-fuelled night in the pub was hardly going to be a novel occurrence. Important here is the perception of the sailor and how he fitted into the criminal culture of the working classes. As with other chapters, this one has considered the sailor in a different way and presented a perception of him that is different to that which his maritime identity might be expected to construct. The final chapter of this study does this too by further considering sailors’ criminality in the context of other working-class people but this time in much more serious criminal acts of assault, sexual violence, stabbings and murder.
Chapter Six: Sailors’ Violent Crime

Introduction

Chapter Five situated sailors in Bristol in the context of petty criminal activity of the working class as a whole and in cultural norms of urban environments. This chapter continues the theme of sailor criminality but presents the sailor in context of his more serious deviant behaviour. Whilst many sailors aspired to working-class respectable masculinity, both resident and transient sailors, to different extents, exhibited the less than civilised working-class characteristic of a tendency to violence. Violence was very much an entrenched part of working-class culture and as a subsection of that class sailors were exhibiting an urban, cultural identity. By considering the sailor in these contexts this chapter aims to challenge some of the views prevalent in the historiography to give a different perception of the sailor on the streets.

Despite a perception that physical violence characterised sailors’ behaviours when on shore there has been a neglect of sailor’s violence in the literature of working-class criminality, as noted in Chapter Five. None of the seminal works on working-class violence discusses sailors as a separate entity and the implication is that sailors were held in common with other workers. As young working-class males sailors were therefore in part responsible for the continuation of uncivilised violent behaviours that in their roles of civic, church and charity leaders, so exercised the middle classes and the press. By the nineteenth century, as John Carter-Wood says, the middle classes understood that violence was, ‘Caused by and located among the working classes, in their increasingly segregated urban neighbourhoods ... while depicting the working classes as bestial barbarians was a caricature, which served various interests, from advertising one’s own refinement to arguing against working-class suffrage, the lower classes did in fact continue to adhere to a customary mentality of violence that legitimated the use of physical force in a relatively wide variety of circumstances.’

It has been argued, however, that working-class people were increasingly rejecting violence; as Carter-Wood also says, there was a new ‘mentality’ of violence that increasingly questioned its ‘acceptable’ use in the contexts of gender, national identity and

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imaginations of public space. Such behaviour was increasingly seen as uncivilised and showing a lack of restraint and self-respect and hardly redolent of a higher class of working man. To be civilised was to reject the cultural norm of violence and aspire to the civilised behaviours of respectability, forbearance, civility and politeness of the middle classes. Thus, the working class in Bristol was subjected to the civilising process of the middle class and those who chose not to conform became a subculture of ‘roughs’, ‘outcasts’ and ‘hooligans’ who differentiated themselves from the more respectable artisan working class. Whilst there were those in Bristol that did aspire to being in the top part of this new hierarchy it is argued here that Bristol’s sailors were very much subsumed into a working-class culture that largely continued using violence in traditional ways. Violence was still an essential element of working-class culture and Bristol’s sailors continued its utilisation for particular ends. As such, this was a continuation of working-class pre late nineteenth-century cultural norms: sailors alongside others on sailorstreets and on city streets were upholding the traditional streetwise behaviours inherent in working-class communities.

Sailors were a part of a working-class culture that still demanded a violent response to perceived injustice. They were not a breed apart using violence to maintain a seafaring identity, a commonly held view by some earlier historians such as Judith Fingard and Valerie Burton and by historians, chiefly Marcus Rediker, who propose that violence was because of an engrained sense of injustice resultant of their ill treatment on board ship. In their view this was a continuum of response to perceived capitalist exploitation and strict discipline and arbitrary authority meted out on sailors. However, this chapter argues that in Bristol there is little to suggest that sailors sought retribution for grievances that arose from unfair treatment from ships’ authorities or from comparisons with other shore-based workers. No doubt some sailors could be harshly treated but it cannot be argued that this led to any particular incidences of violent behaviour or contributed to a distinct sailor identity. The halcyon days when ‘the necessary and indispensable amount of broken heads, black eyes, bloody noses and otherwise damaged countenances has been given and received’, were passing with the change to steam. Nor is it argued that on the lesser scale of individual ships violence was particularly an expression of common crewmember identity. Very few cases of crewmembers engaging violently as a collective have been found.

947 See Elijah Anderson, Code of the Street, for a discussion of this, albeit in an American context.
950 Margaret Creighton, ‘Fraternity in the American Forecastle’, p. 543.
for Bristol. On the contrary, there is more evidence for the prevalence of intra-crew violence and when knife crime is discussed in detail below it will be argued that any notions of common identity is predicated on common nationality and ethnicity, not on the fact that the perpetrators were sailors, per se.

The crucial argument made in this chapter is that the main reason for sailors’ violence, the methods of which were the same as other workers and not particular to seafaring, was not to do with identity politics but was personal. Sailors’ violence was primarily to right perceived wrongs. It is argued here that despite the efforts of middle-class reformers and the increasing unacceptable use of violence, just as with any labourer, painter or haulier, sailors sought retribution for slights on their honour, their masculinity, integrity, their reputation and on those of whom they were close to. Violence was mainly interpersonal, often drink fuelled, one on one, ‘intra-class’ violence. It was indicative of working-class cultural norms considered to be necessary, designed for vengeance and despite a changing mentality of violence, still very much acceptable to use.\(^\text{951}\) This is not a new concept in the historiography of violence, many historians have pointed to the continuance of maintaining face, position and masculine prowess.\(^\text{952}\) This thesis, however, advances the importance and centrality of the personal as far as sailors are concerned. This is not to say that all violence can be solely attributed to personal motivation, these acts may have had other reasons but personal retribution, especially in violence used against those in authority, can be evidenced.

This argument is advanced through situating the retributinal behaviour of sailors in the most recent history of sailors’ violence, that of Tomas Nilson’s paradigms of ritualistic, performative and instrumental violence. Nilson argues that violence was to maintain masculinity and personal honour which was ‘the single most important cultural and social capital available to a man’.\(^\text{953}\) However, he also argues that sailors’ violence was performative, a show of bravado in front of others, and in the form of rescuing others who were being arrested by the police, an explicit performative show of defiance against authority was taking place.\(^\text{954}\) It is argued here that Nilson’s paradigm can be modified in that anti-authority violence was not so much performative but rather an individualist response to anybody in authority who on the one hand was interfering with culturally embedded working-class behaviours and on the other being disproportionately unfair and treating the sailor unjustly.

\(^{953}\) Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’, p. 71.
\(^{954}\) Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’. He also argues that alcohol played a large lubricating role. John Archer, ‘Men Behaving Badly’, p. 47.
Nilson’s concept of instrumental violence is more applicable to Bristol’s sailors in that violence was used as a means to an end to ensure the success of criminal activity. This was a cultural reality, even more so because it often involved inter-occupational cooperation and organisation to ensure the success of the criminal act.955 Furthermore, this could happen anywhere in the city and there is little to suggest a facilitating contributory factor of a delineated space in which it could happen, as there was in naval towns such as Portsmouth,956 or in a much larger mercantile ports such as London.957 Bristol’s spatial geographies facilitated sailors’ integration with other citizens and given that there was the absence of targeted intervention against distinct occupational groups, as there was in Merthyr Tydfil, Liverpool and Portsmouth among other places.958 A violent, forbidding exclusive sailortown identity is not as easily evidenced. Unfortunately, some of this violence on sailorstreets and on city streets was against women and children who had angered or aggrieved the aggressor and it will be argued that domestic violence by sailors was another example of the continuation of cultural norms that resisted the new respectable mentality of violence, thus evidencing a myopic criminal blind spot that allowed such savagery to continue.959

Nilson also argues that such violence could be ritualistic, played out within recognised rules of engagement and crucially using fists not weapons. This study concurs to some extent but for Bristol’s home sailors it will be argued that their violence was less of an organised, ritualised performance and more of spontaneous street level scrap, situated in the practices of everyday culture.960 Where it could be considered to be ritualistic was when it was an expression of ethnicity and this is especially in consideration of knife crime by transient foreign sailors. The use of a knife and other violence was used more to defend ethnic sensibilities than to maintain a common seafaring identity. Recent studies have discussed how rather than fighting fair by using bare knuckles the perceived view of the foreign sailor was that they were unprincipled knife wielding maniacs, a stereotypical, vehemently anti-foreign image that was promoted heavily by a xenophobic press.961 This was part of the fear of the foreigner that was whipped up by the press in many ways, in their coverage of violent gangs, for example. Clive Emsley has argued that the violence of gangs of the late nineteenth century was an expression of working-class manliness, a way of gaining respect and position in what gang members perceived to be a tough man’s world.962 This was also...

955 Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’.
957 Brad Beaven, ‘Seafarers and Working Class Culture’.
961 See Graeme Milne, People, Place and Power, p. 88; Brad Beaven, ‘Seafarers and Working Class Culture’ and for Bristol, Steve Poole, ‘More like Savages’.
a characteristic of mid-nineteenth century gang culture and in 1856 and 1862, the activities of gangs who went around garrotting people filled many pages of newsprint. This was extended periodically to reporting of atrocities by foreign gangs, such as the coverage of riots by gangs of Italians in Stepney in 1856 and later the Russian revolutionary group who committed the Tottenham Outrage in 1909. This fuelled general anti-foreign feeling on Bristol’s streets as elsewhere. However, in respect of foreign sailors in particular and not in the context of gang membership, (although groups of foreign sailors taking violent action in support of each other is a feature of the violence to be discussed), it is argued that however abhorrent foreign sailors’ violence on British shores was to middle-class commentators, and especially foreign sailors using knives, this was still ritualistic violence nonetheless. It was done by their own codes of engagement, different to the English pugilist way but nevertheless a working-class characteristic. This is also suggested by stabbings being mainly ritualistically designed to maim rather than to kill, a characteristic of certain ethnic groups.

Furthermore and contrary to the view that it was only ‘swarthy’ eastern and southern European sailors (and non-sailors) who used knives to settle disputes, it will be shown that northern European sailors were just as likely to use knives. It will also be argued that the concept of British working males never stooping so low as to use a knife in a fight was nostalgic unreality. Working-class males, and crucially sailors as a subsection of them, increasingly used knives and when stabbings did happen the perpetrator was more likely to be a British sailor than a foreign one, thus furthering the argument of Steve Poole. This latter argument is also extended to the ultimate violence, murder, and within this the role of the press in fermenting xenophobic, anti-foreign hysteria is emphasised.

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966 Steve Poole, ‘More Like Savages’.
Preliminary Data

Assaults By Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Worker/Craftsmen</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Industry</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19: Assaults by occupation.

Source: Bristol Mercury Crime Reports for January, April, July and October for thirty-three years between 1850 and 1900.

Figure 19 gives an occupational analysis of perpetuators of violence and assault. To find the data the Bristol Mercury Police Court, Police Intelligence, Quarter Session Intelligence and Assize Intelligence columns were sampled for four months of thirty-three years. This is not without inaccuracies and so to provide complimentary evidence to this, four surviving records of Horfield Prison were analysed in depth to show the custodial sentences given for assault by different occupational groups (Figure 20).

967 Transport includes cab drivers, porters, carters and hauliers; retailers include commercial travellers, a grocer, landlords, hawkers, a butcher, stationers, a marine store dealer; skilled workers/craftsmen includes a potter and a turner; building includes painters and masons; miscellaneous includes single occupations such as an undertaker, a rat catcher, a bill poster, a bandsman (German), a chimney sweep, a potter; clothing includes shoemakers, tailors, hosiers and a milliner; labourer is the normal catch all term for anyone doing unskilled manual work and primary worker includes agricultural workers quarrymen, a gardener and miners.

968 See Martin Wiener, Men of Blood, p. 8, for a discussion on the unreliability caused by the gap between actual and recorded crime levels.
Complimentary again to this is the consideration of reasons for violence and these are indicated in Figures 21 and 22, 21 for all occupations and 22 for sailors. Recording every case of assault reported is impossible, so for the purposes of this study a rolling survey of one month per year in the *Bristol Mercury* was undertaken to give a systematic recording of the number of assaults and their reasons perpetrated by working-class people in general and sailors in particular. Notwithstanding the inconsistencies of recording the details of occupations, the ambiguity in determining the causes of violence and indeed in the very definition of violence, this gives at least an indication of numbers and motivation. Eleven different reasons for violence have been categorised, although assigning single causation was not always possible.

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969 23rd March, 1885 to 1st March, 1886; 16th November, 1890 to 31st October, 1891; 30th March, 1894 to 31st January, 1895 and 20th June, 1904 to 17th January, 1905.
970 Elizabeth A. Sanko, ‘Conceptualising the Meanings of Violence’, p. 3.
Figure 21: Working-class male violent assault, fifty-month survey, 1850-1900.
Source: Bristol Mercury Crime Reports, 1850-1900.

Figure 22: Sailors’ violent assault, fifty-month survey, 1850-1900.
Source: Bristol Mercury Crime Reports, 1850-1900.
Violence and Identity

Figures 21 and 22 show proportional commonality of violent assault between working-class males and sailors. Assaults on the police feature the most and drunken assault second in both data sets. The types of assault committed by sailors were the same as committed by other working-class males and these show less vestiges of occupational maritime culture and more of a common working-class, urban culture of violence. There is little in the data presented above that suggests that factors relating to the nature of sailors’ employment were a major cause of sailor violence. There is no tangible evidence to support the existence of such a collective maritime culture that might nurture Rediker’s Marxist anti-authoritarian rebellion against capital. Indeed, it is contended in this thesis that the existence of a distinct sailor identity among Bristol sailors is hard to maintain through any means. It is difficult to envisage late nineteenth-century sailors on Princess Street, in the White Hart or in the Sailors’ Home bonding over singing songs of murder and revenge on the seas and other angst-ridden shanties, which Paul Gilchrist discusses for an earlier steam age. At times sailors had cause to complain about their working conditions, their pay, advance notes, pensions and crimps but there is no newspaper record of any kind of serious rebellious action on board by crewmembers against ship authorities. As David Large says of Bristol’s workers generally, ‘Karl Marx meant very little to them’. The furthest it went was sailors seeking retribution by refusing to sail when they felt they had been ill-treated by a ship’s master. The aforementioned Reverend Buckley was of the opinion that some ship’s masters were themselves drunkards and did not treat their crews fairly but he also praised Bristol’s shipowners and masters some of whom ‘have made their ships so comfortable and shown such decided preference to men of good habits, as to pay better wages to such, and have a higher class of men, and no doubt this pays in the long run’.

In these circumstances, crewmembers were unlikely to form a bond united by common grievances. Indeed violence attributable to bonds between sailors from the same ship for any reason is rare and the solidarity between them said to be common by Tomas Nilson is not readily evident among Bristol ships’ crews. Only three incidents have been found where violence was used by crewmembers to help another in trouble and one of them was technically out of the city boundaries at the docks at Avonmouth. When the mate and two

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971 See Paul Gilchrist, ‘‘Hail, Tyneside Lads in Collier Fleets’: Song Culture, Sailing and Sailors in North East England’, in Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Rob James, ‘Port Cities and Urban Cultures’, pp. 29-49. Nor were they likely to draw on elements of maritime superstitions that Karl Bell notes were dying out as sail gave way to a nautical age of ‘steam…education, the march of science and above all, time’, Karl Bell, ‘They are Without Christ’, pp. 56-5 and 61-64. See also his The Magical Imagination: Magic and Modernity in Urban England, 1780-1914, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

972 David Large, Radicalism in Bristol in the Nineteenth-Century, Bristol, Bristol Record Society, University of Bristol, 1981, p. 19.

973 Making a sailor work when sick was one complaint made, Bristol Mercury, 26th April, 1851.


975 Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’, p. 84.
sailors of an all-American crew refused to pay their bill at the Avonmouth Hotel, the property owner called on some locals to evict them. Other sailors from their ship piled on shore and the ensuing brawl resulted in numerous arrests.976 Earlier in 1861, there was a brawl between sailors from two different ships, the Francis Lewis and the Minerva, which started when an Austrian seaman of the Francis Lewis left his cap in a pub. When he went back for it he unwisely accused one of the crew of the Minerva of stealing it. Fourteen fellow crewmembers set upon him and an Inspector Bell addressing the court at one of the seamen’s trial thought that it was lucky that nobody was murdered.977 One other example shows an unusual degree of loyalty. A sailor got into an altercation with a woman and other people on Corn Street. His captain saw what was happening and joined in the shoving and pushing. Both men then blew whistles and more of the same crew turned up and joined in.978 Incidents of violence that might be construed as being to protect a common sailor identity such as this were rare and findings concur more with John Mack’s opinion that the cosmopolitan nature of crews with different ages of sailors, backgrounds, languages and cultures, does not necessarily make for strong bonds among crewmembers.979

There is more to suggest that violence was a force for the deconstruction of commonalty of identity. Violence was very often between sailors from the same ship and usually again were squabbles that got out of hand, rather than carrying any notion of identity politics. Two sailors on an American ship, the Villafranca, were hardly displaying any bonding when they were arrested for fighting on the Hotwells Road. There had been a long-standing feud between them and one night one ran on board and was followed by the other who stabbed him. Similarly, two fellow seamen from the steamship SS Balmoral980 were involved in a knife fight over a prostitute at a pub on the Quay in August 1866.981 More seriously, a Norwegian sailor who was married with three children was murdered by a fellow Norwegian crewmember in a squabble over money at the White Hart in Lower Maudlin Street.982 On another occasion a German crewmember stabbed the German mate of their ship for criticising his steering 250 miles off the Cape and he had to be hospitalised when the ship docked.983

976 Bristol Mercury, 27th January, 1886.
977 Bristol Mercury, 16th February, 1861. Judith Fingard notes for late nineteenth-century Canada that most sailors’ fights and larceny were between members of the same crew, Jack in Port, p. 131.
978 Bristol Mercury, 3rd May, 1862.
980 The Balmoral is still in operation as a pleasure steamer in the Bristol Channel. It is moored during the winter on the harbour side.
981 Bristol Mercury, 4th August, 1866.
982 Bristol Mercury, 4th August, 1877.
983 Bristol Mercury, 3rd May, 1881. Another fight on board happened when a sailor bizarrely took offence at the bad language being used by another, Bristol Mercury, 20th December, 1898.
Violent Retribution

None of this point to notions of a brotherhood of sailors protecting their common sailor identity. It was typical working-class culture, people resorting to violence as they had always done in retribution for a perceived slight or a false accusation. Grievances could not go unaddressed and violence, contrary to any manifestation of a new ‘mentality of violence’ or evolving cultural attitudes proposed by Carter-Wood, continued to be committed by working-class males, sailors among them, to uphold masculine virtues. In Bristol there was a certain acceptance of violence on Bristol’s streets by working-class people; if a man was wronged it needed to be corrected. One unusually literate Bristol sailor went as far to write a letter to the *Bristol Mercury* in 1851 to explain why he had punched a man. He explained that he had gone to the assistance of another sailor who was being set on outside the York Hotel. In the process, he was punched and so he was, ‘obliged in self-defence, to retaliate, as any other man would have done if similarly assaulted’.

Physical provocation deserved a physical response but so did verbal provocation, for example if a man’s wife was insulted. As one of many examples that could be given in 1888 a labourer beat another man with a whip after he had accused his wife of adultery. He was proud to say to the court that he had given Davies a good thrashing and implied his sentence was worth it for maintaining a show of masculinity. Sailors were no different; an American sailor William Neron was stabbed by a Greek one George Worgeris in October 1857 in retribution for being rude about his wife. Other working-class and sailors’ retribution was in response to a slight or perceived injustice that was seemingly trivial but it necessitated, as Isaac Land has demonstrated, a display of not being seen to be intimidated or bettered. In one of many incidents, two men accidentally brushed up against each other in the street, both turned round accusing the other of trying to block the other’s progress on the pavement. Neither would back down until forced to by one of them shouting at the other (no doubt audible to a watching audience), ‘I am as good a man as you,’ and then breaking his leg. A haulier assaulted a man in the street for tweaking his donkey’s ears and a labourer assaulted a fellow lodger over an argument about leaving a mattress in an awkward place.

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985 *Bristol Mercury*, 11th January, 1851.

986 *Bristol Mercury*, 10th July, 1888.

987 *Bristol Mercury*, 10th October, 1857. Neron may have provoked his attacker by knocking the cigar from his mouth in the street in front of others. See Valerie Burton, ‘The Myth of Bachelor Jack’, pp. 180-181, for sailors settling minor grievances.


989 *Bristol Mercury*, 16th December, 1892.

990 *Bristol Mercury*, 5th March, 1863 and 17th January, 1874.
Sailor violence of this kind showed the same lack of emotional intelligence and intellect as other workers unable to let irksome matters pass. One thin-skinned sailor was upset about being called names by a quay lumper and beat him senseless with a big stick; another was prosecuted for kicking a boy because he was in the way and another was arrested for assaulting a man in an argument over election night results. It could also be comical. An English sailor who liked to play his violin was practicing in his house when an Italian organ grinder started playing outside on the street. He was so annoyed by this he went down and beat up not only the organ grinder but his monkey as well. On the other hand, it was not always the sailor who lacked a sense of proportion: one larking sailor was unlucky to be prosecuted for assault by a gentleman who had his top hat knocked off with a well-aimed snowball.

These are examples of individualistic personal, retributonal responses by sailors’ but their retributonal violence could also be communal and cooperative. This was mainly on ethnic lines and naturally therefore largely concerns transient, foreign sailors. It was a feature of port cities and Graeme Milne describes a standoff between American and British sailors in Cardiff in 1856 and another between a thousand Austrians and French in 1859. In Bristol, an analysis of the press reports of violence connected to ‘riots’ or ‘brawls’ reveals that sailors of the same nationality could be quick to get involved when one of their number was being attacked in a pub or on the street. In Bristol, communal violence variously involved bands of Norwegian, Portuguese, Scottish, Spanish and French sailors coming to the assistance of each other, thus supporting David Jones’ view that it was the ‘marginal and ‘othered’ on the streets that were most likely to be regarded as criminally inclined. However, in Bristol it was not foreigners of a different complexion that caused the most street brawls, it was the Irish who epitomised the savage/civilised juxtaposition discussed by Carter-Wood. By the mid-nineteenth century there was a developed prejudice against them and an acknowledgement that they were predisposed to criminality, just as Gypsies and travellers were assumed to be. In October 1851, there was a huge brawl between Irish sailors who had joined up with some Irish quay workers and about thirty American sailors on Broad-Quay. It started when one of the Americans stabbed an Irishmen which

991 Bristol Mercury, 26th August, 1893; 13th March, 1869.
992 Bristol Mercury, 4th July 1867.
993 Bristol Mercury, 17th December, 1892. Not all men were evidently musical and one labourer who was so fed up with a concertina player playing in the street, violently assaulted him and smashed up his instrument, Bristol Mercury, 14th December, 1863.
994 Bristol Mercury, 23rd July, 1853.
995 Graeme Milne, People, Place and Power, p. 88.
996 David Jones, ‘Setting the Scene’, p. 29. See John Archer, ‘Men Behaving Badly’ for a discussion on the excitement of a punch up.
resulted in a mass fight and the arrest of one of them, Cornelius Flynn. These Irish sailors in their tribal loyalty were living up to their reputation and deserving of the magistrate Mr. Herspath’s admonishment, ‘what a pugnacious set you Irish are, you are never happy unless you are fighting’. 999

**Sexual Violence**

Whether the violence exampled above was personal or communal, very often an underlying cause to the retribution was the inability to be rational because of being drunk. Assault when drunk constitutes the second largest category of violence for both sailors and working-class males as a whole (Figures 22 and 21), whereas the middle class had the training to control their aggression and channel it into things like sport. 1000 The importance of drink as instrumental in contributing to working-class violence and to sailors’ violence in particular is a factor noted in nearly all of the historiography consulted for this thesis. 1001 Virtually all of the oral testimonies collected of Bristol residents born before the First World War who spoke of seeing fights, including their fathers against other men, said that the men involved were drunk. 1002 Reports of working-class male and sailors’ assaults, too numerous to reference here, record drunken assaults on prostitutes, tram conductors, fellow inmates, landlords, fellow workers, teammates, the police and unfortunately women.

Being drunk was the underlying cause of much retributive violence and this is readily evidenced in sailors’ violence against women. 1003 The continuation of violent assault on women by sailors situate them in the strata of working-class males who had no intention of becoming respectable or aspiring to civilised sophistication and who continued to mete out violence to women who had in some way affronted their perceived masculine rights, usually when drunk. Assault on women in public space, mainly hitting, accounted for 12.6% of the total for working-class males. It cannot be quantified exactly but the majority of the 70 working-class male attacks on women in Figure 21 happened in streets, pubs and brothels, and the courts heard repeatedly the assault happened because the woman, very often a prostitute, refused to go with the man. Bristol sailors were also guilty, amounting to 4.7% of their assaults. The case of two drunk French sailors assaulting a prostitute on Queen’s Head Court for not going with them is illustrative of many others. 1004 It could go much further as when a sailor in 1888 in a drunken state, shot a prostitute on College Green for not going with him. 1005

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999 *Bristol Mercury*, 17th October, 1851.  
1003 See Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’ for the importance of drink in sailor violence, pp. 81-82.  
1004 *Bristol Mercury*, 15th November, 1862.  
1005 *Bristol Evening News*, 18th October, 1888.
Attacks on women also took the form of what we now term domestic violence, despite changing attitudes to assault of this kind, not least from women themselves. An oral testimony of a woman born in 1906 recalls, ‘Oh yes, I saw a man knock a woman down and when she was on the floor she screamed at the man, ‘you (expletive) coward, you can’t hit a woman when she’s down on the floor!’’.\textsuperscript{1006} This was pertaining to a later age but the passing of the \textit{Matrimonial Causes Act} in 1857 and particularly its amendments in 1878 reflected increasing societal intolerance of this expression of male hegemony in the time period of this thesis. Violence against women was increasingly incongruent with notions of masculine respectability\textsuperscript{1007} and wife beaters were a ‘brutal other of the urban lower depths’.\textsuperscript{1008} In Bristol as elsewhere violence against wives was so ubiquitous of this class of people that a judge signalled the authorities’ determination to stamp it out, stating that the ‘magistrates were determined that wife beating, which prevailed to a terrible extent in Bristol, should be put a stop to’.\textsuperscript{1009} However, domestic violence was not always condemned and was often seen as excusable retribution for wrongdoings of the female. Furthermore, many middle-class contemporaries still thought that wife beating was acceptable as a means of social control, allowing the man to control women through culturally engrained domestic corrective behaviours.\textsuperscript{1010} As long as the man exhibited other positive traits such as being hardworking\textsuperscript{1011} the judiciary could still tolerate wife beating as ‘disciplinary violence’ against wives, as Carter-Wood shows.\textsuperscript{1012} Furthermore, the judiciary, the press and other elites could still hold the view that it was women who provoked men into violence.\textsuperscript{1013} As epitomised by the Jack the Ripper murders, it was women who brought the violence on themselves.\textsuperscript{1014}

Assault on wives or cohabiting females by working-class males, very often paralytic, accounted for 13.3\% of violent crime in Bristol, indicated in the above data, which gave the press adequate material for emphasising the inferiority of the working classes, sailors among them, and for feeding the ‘voracious appetite for vice and villainy’ of the reading public.\textsuperscript{1015} No details were spared. The \textit{Bristol Mercury} reported the case of a haulier who knocked down his wife whilst she was nursing their child and ‘threatened to kick her face off’.\textsuperscript{1016} In July 1895, there was a report of a brutal beating of a woman by her husband with a poker and then another time with the tongs in revenge for her pawn ing his only

\textsuperscript{1007} Lesley Hall, \textit{Sex, Gender and Social Change}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{1009} Bristol Mercury, 29\textsuperscript{th} April, 1876, Anne Oakley, \textit{Subject Women}, New York, Martin Robertson, 1981, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{1011} Judith Rowbotham, ‘Only when drunk’, p. 160. Not just excusable but acceptable depending on the class, age or gender of both perpetrator and victim of violence, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{1013} Anna Clark, ‘Domesticity and the Problem of Wife beating’, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{1014} Judith Walkowitz, \textit{City of Dreadful Delight}, especially Chapters 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{1015} Joanne Jones, ‘She resisted with all her might’, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{1016} Bristol Mercury, 9\textsuperscript{th} January, 1875.
change of clothes for beer money.\textsuperscript{1017} Similarly, although 8.6\% is proportionally less than for all working-class males, sailor’s domestic violence was consistent with working-class behaviours. One, Henry Matthews, went home drunk to his wife in Dowry Place in Hotwells and tried to shoot her (and the cat) with a revolver for nagging him about not having a ship for five months, being drunk all the time and not providing for the family.\textsuperscript{1018} Another sailor severely beat his wife because he was annoyed with her spending all her time at the Church of the Latter Day Saints and in entertaining its congregation at their house.\textsuperscript{1019} In 1876, a ship’s captain savagely beat the woman he was living with and bit her chin off in another display of ‘cannibalism’ so loved by the press for not having his dinner ready.\textsuperscript{1020}

In common with other males, sailors did not only assault their spouses. Examples of non-sailors’ violence towards their children or towards other children was horrific, although not too horrific to be embellished in the press. On 3\textsuperscript{rd} January 1895, Thomas Bateman, a Bristol fitter, was summoned for assaulting and hospitalising his daughter by throwing her against the ceiling. He had previously been cautioned for beating her and kicking another child down the stairs. Similarly, Albert Willicombe was charged with beating his wife because he was annoyed with her spending all her time at the Church of the Latter Day Saints and in entertaining its congregation at their house.\textsuperscript{1021} In 1876, a sailor physically assaulted his wife but also his mother-in-law and son at the same time, ripping the inside of the boy’s cheek out.\textsuperscript{1022} Worst still was that sailors could exhibit characteristics of the worst of working-class people, those guilty of rape and those who preyed on children. An English sailor attacked and sexually assaulted two prostitutes in one night in Bath Street.\textsuperscript{1023} Fraternity among sailors is hardly evident when William Pocock raped another sailor’s wife at the lodgings they shared in Guinea Street whilst he was away at sea.\textsuperscript{1024} Three sailors were prosecuted separately for sexual assault on their own children, two on daughters and one on a son. Two other English sailors assaulted their own mothers.\textsuperscript{1025}

In other cases, The Bristol Mercury, again emphasising the depravity of the lower classes, wrote explicitly of an Italian sailor indecently assaulting a little girl, aged six, the daughter of the proprietor of the British Workman pub.\textsuperscript{1026} An English sailor, John Longman, the nephew of the owner of the house he lodged in and William Mereweather, a labourer, attacked Elizabeth Coles, the daughter of the owner and then her friend Ellen Mockridge. They raped them in turn and brutally beat them with a red-hot poker.\textsuperscript{1027} Another sailor lured three 13-year-old girls on board his ship, he took up the ladder so they could not get

\textsuperscript{1017} Bristol Mercury, 3\textsuperscript{rd} July, 1895
\textsuperscript{1018} Bristol Mercury, 4\textsuperscript{th} April, 1895.
\textsuperscript{1019} Bristol Mercury, 30\textsuperscript{th} April, 1864.
\textsuperscript{1020} Bristol Mercury, 9\textsuperscript{th} December, 9\textsuperscript{th} December, 1876.
\textsuperscript{1021} Bristol Mercury, 12\textsuperscript{th} December, 1876.
\textsuperscript{1022} Bristol Mercury, 2\textsuperscript{nd} April, 1864.
\textsuperscript{1023} Bristol Mercury, 5\textsuperscript{th} January, 1861.
\textsuperscript{1024} Bristol Mercury, 31\textsuperscript{st} March, 1877 and 7\textsuperscript{th} May, 1881.
\textsuperscript{1025} Bristol Mercury, 14th October, 1876.
\textsuperscript{1026} Bristol Mercury, 24\textsuperscript{th} April, 1890.
off but their screams alerted a passing policeman. One sailor was convicted of sexually assaulting an eight-year-old girl well away from the waterfront area in a public park in the northwest of the city. It was a planned attack, waiting for her to go by and then grabbing her leg and pulling her into some bushes. Crimes such as this one defy being assigned to categorisation of violence but simply indicate further cultural congruency of sailors with other depraved, working-class people. The location of it and other sailors’ violence further locates sailors away from the water into more dispersed city streets. Map 11 shows that sailor violence could happen away from sailor streets. In Bristol, sailors’ violence took place on sailor streets but it was, as has been suggested, not so much of a traditional sailors’ enclave that would accommodate outrageous sailor stereotypical behaviour to any great extent. In Bristol, the concept of its quayside areas being a liminal space where sailor violence was endemic cannot be substantiated. John Carter-Wood discusses the importance of space and environment in facilitating violence and this study concurs in that sailor streets were shared spaces that limited the spatial scope for violence and the time violence took place.

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1027 *Bristol Mercury*, 2nd September, 1886. The case was thrown out for contradictory evidence.
1028 *Bristol Mercury*, 5th September, 1863.
**Map 11:** Known Locations of Violent Assault by Sailors.\textsuperscript{1031}

**Source:** All sources used in this study.

**Red:** Assaults by British Sailors  
**Green:** Assault by Foreign Sailors  
**Purple:** Sexual Assault by Sailors on Children.\textsuperscript{1032}

\textsuperscript{1031} These locations are only the ones that are identifiable. Again, each dot does not necessarily represent one incident.  
\textsuperscript{1032} The four purple dots are the actual locations of four cases, the others are not known.
Performative Violence

It is striking that the data in Figures 21 and 22 show that most of the use of violence was against the police as acts of performative violence in front of others in defying police arrest, as described by Tomas Nilson. Violence was also used in the attempted rescue of one person by another or others when they were being apprehended or taken away by the police. In Bristol’s case occurrences of this type was rare. Only four cases of violence used by non-sailors in the ‘attempted rescue’ of a prisoner in custody have been found and only three involving sailors rescuing other sailors, two of them involving foreign sailors. As examples, a man was convicted for rescuing a prisoner from a Police Constable Bignell, thrusting his knee in his stomach in the process. On another occasion, a PC White was brutally attacked in the Goat in Armour by a drunk man, John Dowdell, getting two black eyes and a nosebleed in the process. PC White managed to get him outside but was set upon by ‘a gang of quay roughs’ who further kicked him and rescued the prisoner. For sailors, in Lewins Green in February 1872 an Italian sailor attacked a police constable who was arresting him in a pub. A group of fellow Italians unsuccessfully tried to get him away from the policeman. Another time a Swedish sailor got a fellow Swedish sailor away from a policeman during a tussle on the ground and the ‘rescuer’ got his compatriot away, so as the report said, to stop him beating up the policeman any further. Finally, the rescue of Robert Lyall by John Brandon at Hotwells was the only example of a rescuing of a British sailor by another.

The evidence available cannot give a conclusive interpretation of why sailors were motivated to rescue other sailors from the police but a shared suspicion of authority is demonstrated by one incident when multiple people in a crowd tried to rescue a sailor, John Cutler, who was being arrested for attacking two policemen. Despite the ferocity and violence of Cutler against the policemen, he was still deemed worthy of being freed from custody by other working-class people. Other violence against the police was clearly personally motivated and not performative in that it directly impacted on personal freedom of action. This is most clearly the case when used by sailors who felt they had been unfairly treated by the police and action of this kind was a common working-class expression of masculinity. In 1883 a sailor attested to the court that he had assaulted a policeman in retaliation for the policeman using excessive force and for giving him ‘a heavy back hander in the mouth’. In a similar case the judge found in favour of a sailor up for assaulting a policeman and concluded that the policeman had been over zealous in the use of his

1033 Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’, p. 84. See also Brad Beaven, ‘Seafarers and Working-Class Culture’, pp. 19-22 and Louise Moon, Sailorhoods, p. 173.
1034 Bristol Mercury, 23rd October, 1875 and 22nd January, 1876.
1035 Bristol Mercury, 2nd March, 1872.
1036 Bristol Mercury, 8th December, 1886.
1037 Bristol Mercury, 26th June, 1880.
1038 Bristol Mercury, 23rd April, 1870.
1039 Bristol Mercury, 18th October, 1883.
truncheon and had exceeded his duty in trying to move the sailor and others on in the street.\textsuperscript{1040}

In other cases anti-police violence was used to stop the police intervening in what working-class people and sailors had culturally always done.\textsuperscript{1041} Drinking is the obvious example and many police were attacked when they were trying to remove sailors from pubs, such as the \textit{Saracen’s Head} in Temple Street and the \textit{Royal Coliseum} in Marsh Street. Assaulting policemen trying to protect prostitutes from their advances also feature quite often, possibly because they thought that it was the prerogative of the sailor to take a prostitute.\textsuperscript{1042}

In using violence against the police, sailors, whether personally motivated or not, were not doing anything different to what any working-class male would do. Similarly, it was not just the police that were often felt to be unjust and others in authority could be set upon for perceived injustice. A sailor was prosecuted for assaulting the manager of a theatre for throwing him out for smoking his cigar when others around him were allowed to smoke theirs.\textsuperscript{1043} Other cases involved assault in response to being thrown out of a lecture and beating up the headmaster of the school for hitting a child.\textsuperscript{1044}

**Instrumental Violence**

Another of Nilson’s categories of violence is instrumental violence, violence used to ensure the success of other criminality. Here it is obvious that sailors were showing a great deal of cultural commonality with other workers and this is most obviously seen in thieving.\textsuperscript{1045} Thefts from the person were committed by all working-class males, sailors included, and violent robbery and mugging amounted to 4.2% of sailors’ crimes.\textsuperscript{1046} An incident when a very drunk sailor assaulted the occupants of a house that he was breaking into is illustrative of many.\textsuperscript{1047} Sometimes assault was part of a planned robbery attempt. In July 1868, a reasonably elaborate plan was laid by two labourers, a sailor and a prostitute. She accosted a man in Hotwell Road; he was not interested but somehow she manoeuvred the man towards her accomplices who tripped him up, beat him up whilst on the ground and then stole his watch. They all had previous convictions for the same offence and so they were

\textsuperscript{1040} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 13th April, 1850.


\textsuperscript{1042} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 20th November, 1858; 25th June, 1859; 23rd April, 1870; 28th February, 1884; 1st September, 1860 and 4th November, 1878.

\textsuperscript{1043} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 6th February, 1875.

\textsuperscript{1044} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 21st April, 1877 and 20th September, 1894.

\textsuperscript{1045} Tomas Nilson, ‘Hey Sailor’, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{1046} \textit{Figure 22}.

\textsuperscript{1047} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 1st January, 1851, 8th June, 1861 and 13th, January, 1900.
tried at the Quarter Sessions rather than summarily.\textsuperscript{1048} The degree of collusion here further illustrates occupational integration of the working classes, this time in ritualised criminality.

**The Press, Ritualised Violence, Knife Crime and Murder**

The most serious kinds of assault that sailors are associated with, stabbings and murder, serve to show how sailors can further be seen in common with other working-class people. Stabbings to maim or murder were seen as an underhand and non-English way of settling scores and much feared. It was thought that stabbings were only done by the lowest kind of sailor, particularly foreign ones and especially the southern European and Latin ones.\textsuperscript{1049} Transients were the effeminate, dirty foreigners, flashing their blades, unlike settled, English sailors who preferred a good traditional fistfight to settle grievances, whether this was organised into a ritual spectacle or not.\textsuperscript{1050} The press played an important part in disseminating these views. Local newspaper coverage of stabbings and murders were quick to emphasise the otherness of visiting sailors, all of whom, it seemed, carried knives for the purpose of doing harm. Because of this outrageous cultural trait, foreigners’ inferiority was embedded in social consciousness and was done so through varying channels. One was obviously through the press but increasingly it was also through scientific and anthropological justifications for notions of superiority in which ‘everything was measured in the light of British technology, law, religion and philosophy’\textsuperscript{1051} A correspondent writing in to the *Bristol Mercury* articulated the implied superiority of British culture with theatrical language,

‘One quite shudders at the idea of hot-blooded desperados going about with long knives concealed about them, ready to be whipped out and plunged, without a thought for the value of human life, into the vitals of any temporary foe or some innocent whose only fault is not to be in bed by 10.00 o’clock.’\textsuperscript{1052}

Editorials also emphasised the superiority of the English character. In 1865, an editorial said that,

‘We are well accustomed to think of Spaniards, Italians and all manner of irascible foreigners secretly drawing their knives, daggers or other lethal weapons and dealing a deadly thrust. But happily it has not hitherto been a characteristic of Englishmen to do anything so cowardly ... There is a kind of self-reliance and open handed pluck displayed when a man is content

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{1048} *Bristol Mercury*, 11th July, 1868.
\bibitem{1049} See Clive Emsley, *Hard Men*, p. 87, for the reaction of magistrates in London to foreigners using knives in fights.
\bibitem{1052} *Bristol Mercury*, 11th March, 1854.
\end{thebibliography}
to make his fists the vindication of all his quarrels but which immediately disappears when he resorts to the use of cold steel’.\textsuperscript{1053}

Indeed, in Bristol’s press, ‘shocking’ and ‘murderous’ were popular signifiers used to denigrate foreign sailors. A story carried on 6\textsuperscript{th} July 1867 had the title ‘Shocking Murder of a Seaman in the Welsh Back’ in which two Greek sailors used a knife, bludgeon and sling shot to kill a Swedish sailor; not just one murder weapon but three. ‘Shocking Murder of a Sailor at Bristol Docks’ ran the headline of a story on 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 1881, in which it was reported that a Portuguese sailor was stabbed by another from Manila at Cumberland Basin. Details were given of the knife dripping with blood and how the attacker was ‘marked with small pox and of a sullen, ferocious cast of features’ and who ‘appears to have been feared even by those who were his own countrymen from his savage disposition’.\textsuperscript{1054} The report also lamented that the murderer was one of a wholly foreign crew comprising sailors from Manilla, Portugal, Spain, America, The Azores, Sweden, West Indies and Sierra Leone. Obviously not enough was being done to keep foreigners out. As early as 1851, The Hereford Journal reported an attempted murder of a pilot by three Greek sailors in Bristol and the reporter blamed the terms of the Navigation Acts for giving ‘such fellows too much favour in this country’ and that their aim was to ‘attain over the lives of the British sailor an infamous ascendency’.\textsuperscript{1055}

Two murders committed in Bristol are particularly useful in exemplifying the otherness of foreigners but also in demonstrating working-class ritualism and the retributive use of violence. Foreign sailors were a marginal group and as such displayed characteristics of any marginalised group, including physically defending ethnic sensibilities.\textsuperscript{1056} In this respect they were continuing the close ethnic bonds developed on ship where demarcation according to nationality was accepted, even down to different groups having established nicknames.\textsuperscript{1057} However, when they got on shore and used knives it was just as much a ritualised cultural signifier as using fists was for English workers and sailors. One of the murders was a by a single sailor and the other by a mob of foreign sailors. In them, the foreigner was an evil degenerate whereas the British victim epitomised the superior character of the British working man. In January 1873, an innocent seventeen-year-old docker, William Claypole, the sole provider for his widowed mother and five sisters, accidently brushed up against two Italian sailors, one of whom stabbed him.\textsuperscript{1058} The press made much of Claypole’s stainless character in stark contrast to the Italian murderer who delighted in shouting as he ran away, ‘I’ve stabbed an Englishman!’; and then casually went to the Three Sugar Loaves pub where he continued to boast of it.\textsuperscript{1059} The Bristol Mercury presented the murder as an affront to the city itself with a picture of the coffin’s route to

\textsuperscript{1053} Bristol Mercury, 4\textsuperscript{th} October, 1865.
\textsuperscript{1054} Bristol Mercury, 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 6\textsuperscript{th} August, 1881.
\textsuperscript{1055} Hereford Journal, 29 January, 1851.
\textsuperscript{1056} For a discussion on marginalised groups and crime, see David Jones, Crime, pp. 29, passim.
\textsuperscript{1057} Isaac Land, War, Nationalism, pp. 24-25.
\textsuperscript{1058} Steve Poole bases his article around this murder, ‘More Like Savages’, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{1059} Bristol Mercury, 5\textsuperscript{th} April, 1873.
the cemetery lined with thousands of people. The city was united in grief for this poor boy who did not stand a chance against a vicious, weapon wielding, foreigner who had done something that none of the white on-lookers, white sailors among them, would have been debased enough to do.

Earlier than this in 1854, the *Morning Post* headlined a story with the title ‘Riot and Murder by a band of Spanish Sailors at Bristol’. In this case a Scottish vessel, the *Highlander* was in port, as was a Cuban one, the *Rosario*. One of the crew from the *Highlander*, a Scot, tried to protect a woman from being ‘ill-used’ by a member of the Spanish crew, an incident that got heated but was defused by the police. Later that night a fight ensued. It was the Spanish who set upon the Scottish, so reported the writer, who in this instance fled from their attackers. The following night the Spanish again found the Scots and ‘with their *murderous* knives’ attacked them outside of the *Hole in the Wall* pub. One of the Scots suffered broken ribs but another was stabbed and died in the infirmary. An Irish sailor, Cornelius Murphy, who just happened to be standing there, was also stabbed and died in hospital. The paper made it clear that the Spanish were to blame, beginning with one’s ungentlemanly conduct towards the woman and then actively seeking out innocent Scottish sailors having a drink, followed by actions of clear murderous intent. On the other hand, there was the Scottish crewmember, most valiant in his attempt to help a woman in need, the Scottish crew who were sensible enough to run away and the innocence of an Irish bystander who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. On the one side the foreigner perpetuated all aggression and on the other all were innocent recipients of it.

What is made clear is that the character of the foreigner was inferior to the British, especially because they had the temerity to use knives. However, what such sentiments miss is that using knives was ethnically ritualistic, just as fist fighting was ritualistic. It was a part of many European working-class cultures, of Greeks, for example, as noted above and by Brad Beaven.1060 Furthermore, despite the common belief that British workers would not stoop so low, British working-class men, sailors among them, increasingly wielded knives and exhibited behaviours that once only the foreigners did. The problem was acute in Bristol. A correspondent to the *Bristol Mercury* in August 1878 wrote in to complain that Bristol’s residents were now copying foreigners, judging by the number of stabbings on Bristol’s streets.1061 A later editorial in the *Bristol Mercury*, commenting on the increasing appearance of knives on the city’s streets, lamented the passing of ‘the openness and frankness of John Bull’ and its giving way to the ‘secretive character of the Italian.’ The writer blamed the foreigner for this though saying that ‘English men are driven to it in self-defence because the arms that nature bestows are no match’. He went as far as to say that

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1060 Brad Beaven in ‘Seafarers and Working-Class Culture’ draws on the work of T.W. Gallant, ‘Honor, Masculinity, and Ritual Knife’, p. 361, to illustrate how the use of the knife was ritualized and not designed to kill.

1061 *Bristol Mercury*, 20th August, 1878.
using knives will transform the English character and fairness that is fostered by pugilism will be replaced by the vengeful features of the secret stabber!\textsuperscript{1062}

Knives were so ubiquitous that Steve Poole argues that citizens of Bristol were more likely to have a knife drawn on them by other working-class people than by foreigners and this study concurs but goes further. He shows that there were 50 (four fatal) knife incidents involving foreign males but 176 (five fatal) involving Irish and British males. However, Poole only considers the years between 1850 and 1875 and therefore this is extended to 1900. Poole also only uses the \textit{Bristol Mercury} but the data in Figure 23 is collated from all primary sources used in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality of Perpetrator</th>
<th>Stabbings By Sailors</th>
<th>Fatal Stabbings by Sailors</th>
<th>Stabbings by Non-Sailors</th>
<th>Murders by Male Non-Sailors</th>
<th>Murders by Females</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>191 including Irish</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Austrian</td>
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<td>Danish</td>
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<td>Finnish</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Negro’</td>
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<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Figure 23:} Stabbings in Bristol by males, 1850-1900.

\textbf{Source:} Police Court, Police Intelligence, Assizes, and Quarter Session reports in the \textit{Bristol Mercury} and all other sources on criminality.

Most non-fatal stabbings by a single foreign nationality were by Italians followed by Spanish, thus confirming the prejudices of middle-class commentators to some extent.

\textsuperscript{1062} \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 4\textsuperscript{th} October, 1865.
However, 26% were carried out by northern Europeans, Finns, Dutch, Germans, Austrians, Swedes, Danes and Norwegians. If British and Irish sailors are included, it is 49%. Therefore, a half of stabbings were not by ‘swarthy’, southern, and east European types and if Americans and West Indians are excluded only 35% of stabbings were by Italians, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese and Greek sailors. British and Irish sailors were also clearly not adverse to using knives in fights, which is commensurate with the 191 cases of knives being used by other British working-class males. More stabbings were done by British and Irish sailors, 19 (25%), than Italians and Greeks combined 14 (18%) and at 12%, more than Spanish and Portuguese combined. When stabbings resulted in murder, only five were by foreign sailors, four of them on other sailors. Of the 41 murders by non-sailors, not surprisingly only one was by a foreigner, but the fact that the rest were variously of men, wives, girlfriends and children and were by beating, suffocation, strangling, drowning, poisoning, slitting throat, systematic starvation, a defenestration and stabbings, British workers were therefore obviously not entirely exemplars of British masculinity upholding working-class ritualistic tradition of the fair fight.

The potential inaccuracies in counting should again be noted but qualitatively, the reasons for Bristol’s sailors’ knife crime are embedded in urban culture rather than maritime. Working people almost always carried a knife as a tool of their trade and resorting to it in fights was not out of the ordinary. Sailors were the same and there is no recognisable method of violence, knife or otherwise, that distinguishes sailors’ violence from other working-class people. Similarly, in common with other working-class violence, it was mostly retributive and drink fuelled, silly squabbles that got out of hand, thus supporting John Archer’s view (he says that 45% of all men arrested in Manchester in 1876 were drunk) and that of Tomas Nilson’s of the significance of alcohol. A typical example is when a Swedish sailor stabbed another during a quarrel over cleaning a mess in the kitchen at a boarding house on College Place. He was so drunk that he had no recollection of anything taking place. In 1866, two sailors left a pub and one chided the other for not being able to walk straight after having half a gallon of beer each. A quarrel ensued and what must have been a common refrain in these situations, ‘I’m a better man than you’, was said. A fight started, a knife drawn and one of the men was stabbed in the head and neck. Other drink lubricated stabbings were the outcome of two men bumping into each other, a squabble over a bed in a lodging house, being too noisy, being overcharged in a refreshment house, jealousy and verbal abuse.

However trivial this was the perpetrator felt personally aggrieved at this slur on his masculinity and meting out violent retribution was still clearly acceptable to many sailors,

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1063 Steve Poole includes cases where knives were brandished but not used but these are not counted above because of the ubiquitousness of workers carrying knives and the ease of showing them without any intention to injure or kill, ‘More Like Savages,’ p. 168.
1065 Bristol Mercury, 9th September, 1865.
1066 Bristol Mercury, 21st April, 1866.
irrespective of the changing mentality of violence and of nationality. In reality, using a knife was a culturally embedded individual response to perceived grievances but knives were also wielded in incidents where groups of sailors felt the need for retribution. Most often this was nationalistic and knives were used when sailors felt their ethnicity was being traduced. This had little to do with the fact that they were sailors per se, nor was it an expression of a common seafaring identity. Communal use of the knife was instead to defend ethnic sensibilities and it was also often ritualistic in that it was more likely to be used to maim and injure and not kill. Maiming was an ethnically cultural signifier for Italians, a slash across the face being typical. Maiming was also used ritually by English gangs; Clive Emsley has shown that an important part of British gang membership was a slash not necessarily to kill but merely to ‘cut’, with the intention to wound. He quotes a gang member describing the ‘V’ shaped cut on an enemy’s face left by one particular gang leader and himself being careful to slice down someone’s face so as not to cut an artery, knowing that ‘only mugs do murder’.

Italian sailors seemed to have a greater patriotism than most and were always ready to brandish knives to defend other Italians. As a typical example, in August 1876, there was a big fracas between Italian sailors and some English deal runners. Racist insults were shouted and in the general uproar, the Italians made a great show of flashing their blades without the intention to actually kill anybody. It only came to court because there was one accidental stabbing and at the trial the Italians swore there was no real malicious intent. This is a good example of a silly incident that got out of hand; it was triggered by one of the Italians throwing a bunch of thistles at the Englishmen through the window of the Albion public house on Cumberland Road. A limitation on murderous intent is also shown by the fact that other stabbings did not always involve a knife, which reduced the possibility of fatalities. Various cases concerning varied nationalities and both individual and communal note a candlestick, a cheese taster, broken glass and scissors among other improvised stabbing implements. The use of these does not suggest an intention to seriously injure or kill.

**Location**

Finally, as with general assault, when the above is plotted on to a map of the city (Map 12), the integration of sailors into working-class urban areas, and conversely other workers into typical sailor areas, is demonstrable. It is clear that spatially, just as with other criminality, the use of knives by sailors did not just occur in waterfront areas on sailorstreets. Sailors did stab people on sailorstreets around the water but so did other working-class people,

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1070 *Bristol Mercury*, 7th January, 1884.
1071 *Bristol Mercury*, 12th August, 1876.
the railway worker killing the policeman happened on Welsh Back, for example. Just as the waterside was not an exclusive playground for sailors, nor was it a site that they exclusively used for knife and other violence. The spatial geography of sailors' knife crime was a shared one with other occupational groups and situated sailors in urban contexts, not just maritime.
Map 12: Location of known stabbings by sailors and other workers.¹⁰⁷²
Source: Bristol Mercury crime reports and all miscellaneous other sources.
Orange: English non-sailors
Black: English and Irish Sailors
Green: Foreign sailors

¹⁰⁷² These are only the identifiable locations. Each dot does not necessarily represent one stabbing.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the above has demonstrated that sailors’ violent deviant behaviours were congruent with that of other working-class people in the context of urban culture, rather than just maritime culture. Violence cannot be attributed to particularly harsh treatment whilst at sea, proposed by Marcus Rediker among others, or to any notion of belonging to a proletarian fraternity of sailors. There seems little to attribute the use of violence as an expression of inherent identity based on realities on board or collective seafaring memories.\footnote{Jeffrey Dick and Joyce Robbins, ‘Social Memory Studies’, p. 124.} Nor can violence be attributed to a crew-based microcosm of seafaring identity. Cultural bonds of ethnicity were strong among sailors of certain countries, especially the Irish and Italians, and rather than there being a sense of occupational identity being played out in brawls and mob violence, or of a common identity developed in being members of the same crew, communal violence was mainly predicated on ethnic lines.

In the main, sailors reacted like any other working-class male with a grievance to put right or a retribution to be served. Violence was retributive, mainly to settle scores and often very trivial ones. It was mainly individualistic and to a much lesser extent collective and a response to the challenges that urban culture presented. Part of this culture was the maintenance of masculine identity and the motivation for violence was often retribution for perceived slights on a sailor’s manhood. Many sailors did not align themselves with what some historians have argued was the decline in the acceptable use of violence and upheld cultural norms in resorting to violence. This was also evident in the continuing violence against women and children. The argument that violence against women and violence in general to resolve conflict was becoming an anathema in society is less true as far as Bristol’s sailors were concerned. At its most serious, women and children bore the brunt of much sailor physical or sexual violence and as such situated some sailors firmly in one of the most depraved aspects of working-class culture. Violent sailors certainly cannot be thought of as a better class of working man.

Tomas Nilson’s categorisation of violence has been extremely useful and pertinent to this study but the evidence for violence as performance against the authority of the police and others is relatively sparse. Attacks on the police by sailors and other workers were common but this was mainly as retribution for when they thought that the police had exceeded their authority or when thwarting the streetwise actions of people intent on committing crime. Thus, sailors’ violence was more aligned to Nilson’s instrumental violence, violence in the service of other criminal acts and these acts often involved some forethought, planning and collaboration across occupational groups.

Any showing off involved was more often than not down to being drunk. To a very large extent, whatever the type of violence and reasons for it, sailors were carrying it out when drunk and out of control, unable to react rationally to perceived slights and trivial squabbles. This happened around where the pubs were but violence was not restricted to the lubricating function of sailorstreets’ drinking establishments. Sailors’ violence and
stabbings happened around the water where it might be expected but it also happened in civic areas and in more dispersed areas of the city. Furthermore, the same is true of non-sailor workers who were happy to enter traditional sailorstreets to carry out violence. Again, sailor space was also civic space that all people owned, traversed and committed crime in.

Most of the violence by British sailors was assault meted out by using fists and in doing so they were demonstrating their credentials as true working-class males. However, it has been noted that increasingly British sailors used knives in fights, something that foreign sailors were stereotypically known for but which ordinary non-seafaring working-class males were also doing more of. Furthering the work of Steve Poole, working-class men increasingly brought out knives mainly as a show, or at the most to maim rather than kill and sailors were a part of this trend so worrying to middle-class elites. Foreign sailors using knives was a ritualistic expression of their own working-class culture, just as using fists was for British sailors. However, whereas pugilism was seen as a noble British trait the press’ vilification of foreigners using knives served to other the foreigner in Bristol and increase xenophobic hatred of them. This ignored the increasing cultural closeness of foreign and British sailors using knives and certainly, in Bristol, the most danger was from British sailors, not foreign ones. Furthermore, increasing use of knives and other violence by sailors were not just committed on sailorstreets and they took their violent behaviour into other areas of the city.
Conclusion

The task of re-appraising the seafarer’s urban world represents both a challenge and an opportunity for maritime historians, given the continued absence of detailed case studies that locate seafarers within their communities. This study has sought to partially fill this gap in providing a study of Bristol that locates its sailors within working-class communities. By addressing the societal and familial contexts of urban life, contexts that Robert Lee argues have not been researched enough for sailors, it is possible to portray a more nuanced view of the sailor on shore. As such, this thesis has advanced our understanding of the interaction of sailors with working-class people in urban contexts rather than just maritime contexts. It has investigated sailors in the context of cultural norms not normally associated with them and therefore it has developed an alternative characterisation of Bristol’s sailors to that of the stereotypical debauched, drunken philanderer.

The majority of work up to recent times has been into the lives of sailors’ on board ship and into their behaviours in maritime contexts on shore. The emphasis has been on the stereotypical perception of sailors as promiscuous womanisers, child-like drunkards who when let out of the confines of their ships were unable to help themselves in immersing themselves into the delights of sailortown. This study has challenged this perception on several accounts. Fundamentally, it has been argued that Bristol’s sailors’ behaviours on shore were congruent with that of working-class behaviours and that in a myriad of contexts they should be regarded as a subsection of the working class, rather than a distinct breed apart. This was made possible by the non-homogenous nature of the working class, which allowed sailors agency and opportunity to fit into working communities. The ambiguities inherent in what ‘class’ and ‘identity’ actually is has also facilitated the situating of sailors into cultural norms of working people, although it is recognised that this study had not the space to discuss matters of class and/or identity to an in-depth extent.

The existing historiography has largely reinforced the view that sailors were deserving of their debauched reputation because research has mainly been in the disciplines of maritime and nautical history. This thesis has shifted the focus in the context of one port city towards urban history and has placed the sailor in societal and familial contexts. A different interpretation of the sailor has therefore been offered, in respect of his residency, for example. Sailors were dispersed citywide in shared accommodation with non-sailors. Most Bristol sailors lived with their families and when they came on shore, they tended to eschew the offerings of Bristol’s sailortowns and immersed themselves in the culture of urban, rather than maritime streets. Where evidence has allowed this thesis has differentiated between ‘types’ of sailors and it has been shown that even single sailors preferred to live elsewhere with non-sailors. Other sailors stayed around the water, especially transient and foreign sailors, who were more likely to use the businesses of sailortown. However, this

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1075 Andy Croll, Civilising the Urban; Patrick Joyce, Visions of the People; Ben Jones, The Working Class, David Cannadine, Class in Britain and Brad Beaven, Leisure, Citizenship among others.
thesis has also offered a different interpretation of transient sailors in this respect by showing that even they did not stay in sailortown and indeed were more likely to remain on board. Of course many sailors, both transient and resident, occupied the businesses of sailortown and therefore Stan Hugill’s view that Bristol did not have a true sailortown for them has been qualified to argue that there were instead ‘sailorstreets’ which housed enough attractions for the sailors who wanted them.1076

Furthermore, these sailorstreets were not exclusively sailors’ playgrounds, thus supporting historians, especially Robert Lee and Isaac Land, who propose significant integration.1077 Indeed, Bristol’s sailorstreets were inclusive places, traversed and occupied by all classes and occupations because it was located in the heart of the city in space that was just as commercial and civic as it was maritime. Whilst there were no demarcating properties of port walls and gates, this thesis has shown the importance of water, both naturally formed and engineered, in defining shared spaces. Integration was facilitated by the geographical, topographical and architectural formations of the city. The spatial turn in urban geography suggests that reciprocal interaction between citizens and structure are vital in identity formations.1078 Thus, by forcing sailors to mix with others in a confined waterside area, which was itself an integral part of civic space, actual and potential cultural commonality was fashioned with other working-class occupational groups. Whilst Bristol’s sailors could still be an obvious visual presence on the streets, and the extent of inclusivity cannot be accurately gauged from the evidence, it is possible to suggest that there was less cultural difference between them and other shore based people than has hitherto been thought.

Thus, Bristol did not just have a common maritime cultural bond formed from maritime links. As David Hilling describes, it also had urban cultural bonds formed from urban links.1079 Bristol exemplifies how urban space was crucial to the formation of the identity of its citizens, as Gunn and Morris among others have argued, and for Bristol’s sailors that identity was to a large extent working-class urban identity, not necessarily seafaring identity.1080 In fact, there is much to suggest agreement with Daniel Vickers’ characterisation of another Atlantic port city, Salem, that Bristol was not so much a sailortown as a town with sailors in it.1081 Sailors thus negotiated their streetwise existence in the realities of multiple identities and cultural traits that were inherent in urban environments. Through this, this thesis has challenged the caricatured view of the sailor as a waster hanging around the businesses of sailortown and has presented him in some

1076 Stan Hugill, Sailortown, pp. 34-36.
1078 Simon Gunn and Robert Morris, Identities in Space.
respects, but not all, as synonymous with a higher class of working man. Many of those Bristol’s sailors who went home between voyages were being exponents of respectable masculinity whilst on shore. In common with other working-class people they tried to be good husbands and fathers and settled back into their local communities and if not working on ships, might find alternative work. Fitting back in was facilitated by more regular voyages that the turn to steam brought and a steam driven economy afforded the opportunity for sailors to be part of a proletarianised workforce, however much the existence of such a force is contested.\footnote{Lucy Delap, ‘Thus Does Man Prove’, Alston Kennerley, ‘Seamen’s Union’ and other works, Marcus Rediker, ‘Common Seamen’.} Whilst acknowledging that evidence for this is sparse, this thesis has shown there is at least an indication of the other ways that sailors could make a living.

Similarly, this thesis has gone someway to debunk the stereotypical image of sailors ashore being a disproportionate problem for the authorities to solve. In some respects it has been shown that Bristol’s sailors were no more of a nuisance to the authorities than any other occupational group in respect of the cultural normality of working-class drinking, for example. The same is true of their use of prostitutes; obviously sailors did frequent brothels but the areas of notoriety for prostitution were not sailorstreets and the clientele of Bristol’s brothels was mixed. Non-transient Bristol’s sailors were more inclined to take their leisure at home among others in working-class communities. Many practiced sobriety and displayed self-restraint in behaviours resonant of working-class culture.

The agency of sailors in their educational self-betterment is an unexpected characteristic of sailors that this thesis has revealed and their acceptance of educational opportunities provided by middle-class elites supports the view that sailors were adept at manipulating such provision, and not just recreational provision, to their own ends.\footnote{Peter Bailey, \textit{Leisure and Class} and ‘Will the Real Bill Banks’.} Education was just one way that middle-class elites sought to ‘better’ sailors as a constituent part of the working classes and sailors were just as much recipients of the civilising offensive as any other worker.\footnote{Andy Croll, \textit{Civilising the Urban} and Helen Mellor, \textit{Leisure and the Changing City}.} But it has also been shown that whilst notions of control of the lower classes were at play, there was another side to middle-class contact with sailors and this was the genuine care and compassion afforded to them when in need. This was indicative of the ethos of the city of Bristol which like in many cities was embraced by a middle-class that was at pains to appear compassionate to people of lower status. Not all sailors were able to better themselves, nor provide for their families or maintain their health. This thesis has given a different interpretation of the masculinity of sailors by arguing that many were vulnerable to adversity and in times of hardship had to rely on state and philanthropic remedial provision from hospitals, asylums, workhouses, maritime institutions, charities and missions and crucially the Society of Merchant Venturers. Any notions of a strong, devil may care, belligerent seafaring identity is modified by the physical and mental want shown by many sailors and the care that they received.
Many organisations, churches, institutes, foundations and clubs catered for sailors, both those in need and others who were simply away from home. Bristol had a range of maritime welfare institutions providing accommodation, sustenance and entertainment for mainly transient sailors. The main one, as it was in most port cities, was the Bristol Sailors’ Home, which provided an important function in providing for the basic needs of sailors. In this, this thesis supports the view of Alston Kennerley and others of the important role of the Home in the welfare of sailors but it also has proffered an alternative view of the significance of maritime institutions that goes beyond accommodation, recreation and welfare. Although the Bristol Sailors’ Home met the physical needs of sailors staying there, albeit in rather stark and uncomfortable surroundings, more importantly in the context of this thesis was that it inadvertently fostered the integration of sailors within working-class culture. Because of its administration, atmosphere, rules and ambience, it pushed sailors into the community to seek alternative provision. On the other hand, other institutions, especially The Mission to Seamen and Seamen’s Institute and St. Raphael’s church, pulled sailors into wider communities through their empathetic understanding of working-class culture. Especially in their provision of their ‘rational recreation’ activities, which were much more akin to what working-class people experienced in other recreational provision, the Institute and St. Raphael’s facilitated a commonality between sailors and other working-class people much more than the Home did. St. Raphael’s location in the working-class residential area of Bedminster further facilitated the mixing of sailors among others. However, the importance of all three institutions also lies in that they all furthered the dilution of a distinct seafaring identity among sailors. The Home did this negatively through being unwelcoming enough to push even transient sailors away or making them stay on board their ships. The Mission and St. Raphael’s did the same but positively by fostering greater mixing of sailors with people from other occupational groups.

Maritime institutions and other philanthropic organisations facilitated sailors’ integration within working-class culture. The positive relationships between sailors and altruistic middle-class elites, even if it cannot be argued these existed all of the time, fostered this. However, most working-class sailors’ relationships with middle-class people were set in the context of occupational relationships where the potential for conflict was greater. Marcus Rediker’s work is pertinent to this and his contention that by the time of our period labouring sailors were in true capitalistic relationships with maritime capital holds true.1085 However, in the context of Bristol’s sailors’ relationships with their employers and with other middle-class civic elites, this thesis has shown that Rediker’s argument that the antagonism and conflict resulting from the juxtaposition of capital and labour that helped to create a common seafaring identity is not applicable to Bristol’s sailors. The sailors’ meetings and other mutual cordialities do not suggest that such relationships were overly antagonistic or contributory to the formation of a unique seafaring identity. There is little evidence to suggest that the experience that Bristol’s sailors had on board radicalised them.

into being a belligerent, proletarianised breed apart when on shore. Occupational conflict obviously was a presence but this thesis has moved the interpretation of rebelliousness among sailors to one of relative cooperation, at least at certain times and when it suited the protagonists. There is less belligerent, oppositional and occupational conflict from the point of view of Bristol’s sailors that Savage and Miles suggests was the product of capitalist exploitation, and any that there was largely occurred in the last years covered by this study. In industrial conflict, Bristol’s sailors were not at all fatalistic or apathetic, they were forceful but also could be conciliatory. As such, this thesis supports the view of historians such as Andrew August who would see sailors’ protest in common with other working-class action as a conflict over resources but not necessarily authority. Both sailors and their employers knew their worth and importance and it was in the traditions of the city that pragmatism very often superseded conflict.

A more nuanced understanding of a city’s middle-class people’s attitudes towards sailors has also been presented in that they to a large extent reciprocated with their own cordiality. Previous studies have not proffered mutual respect and appreciation as defining characteristics of relationships between sailors as working-class people and elites as middle-class people. However, this thesis has gone someway to question the binary oppositional perception. This is not to say that all sailors had mutually cordial relationships with those in authority over them and certainly not all of the time, and this is shown in the level of criminality of sailors in Bristol. Very little has been written about sailors’ criminal activity and this thesis has gone someway to fill this gap in suggesting that there were more commonalities between sailors and other workers in criminal activity than differences. Sailors, just as other working-class men, fell on hard times and much petty criminality, particularly theft, was to make ends meet. Some of this was through the stereotypical crime of smuggling but this thesis has advanced our understanding of the sailor away from nautical temptations to the theft of goods and property on shore. Much of this was stealing to sell on in an effort to get money but the majority was of goods that made an uncertain, irregular life more bearable. Most sailors did not steal of course and managed on a sailor’s wage but others clearly had a need or a compunction to steal. This thesis has also proposed that much of this was also done cooperatively with other working-class males which is suggestive of established relationships. Thieving was a cultural trait of the working-class and sailors were examples of small-minded miscreants within this.

Much of the theft was spontaneous and this and other crimes were often committed in a drunken state, but in the crime of being drunk and disorderly, this thesis has argued again for a different interpretation of the sailor to the stereotypical, sailortown drunkard. Sailors of course got drunk and were convicted of it but proportionally they were no more of a

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1086 Marcus Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. Rediker does acknowledge however, that conflict between labour and capital depended to some extent on the size of the port. Bristol, being relatively small, was more likely to retain paternalistic relationships between sailors and shipowners, Marcus Rediker, ‘The Common Seamen’, p. 343.
1087 Mike Savage and Andrew Miles, Remaking, p. 8.
problem to the authorities than any other working-class group. The same is true when serious crime is considered, although the picture is more complicated. In respect of their violence, sailors’ criminality was mainly spontaneously retributional personally motivated violence for perceived slights on their honour and their masculinity. This has been noted by other scholars but this thesis has advanced our understanding of causation of violence by identifying personal retribution to be at the root of much violence, whilst at the same time recognising that evidence does not allow the complete discarding of other possible causes of violence. Violence still prevailed as an important trait of working-class culture, as it was a way to maintain streetwise credibility and status, especially for those not able or willing to embrace more respectable avenues to express their masculine prowess. Despite what Carter-Woods describes as an evolution in cultural attitudes towards violence and a new mentality of violence, the use of violence by this subsection of the working class continued. This was often horrifically seen in the continuance of violence against women and children and in domestic violence. Those that suffered were victims of retribution for perceived wrongs that were committed in the domestic sphere but also on the streets. Violence was also perpetrated against the police, not necessarily in the performative sense that Tomas Nilson describes, but as retribution for perceived injustices served on sailors by persons in various types and levels of authority.

Violence was also used instrumentally to ensure the success of other criminal acts and this took on retributional characteristics when sailors were thwarted in achieving their aims. Sailors’ violence was also ritualised in that fist fighting was still the predominant way of settling scores. However, this thesis has advanced the argument that ritualism in violence was a common working-class trait irrespective of nationality of sailors. This is particularly evident in knife crime and non-British sailors in using knives were expressing their own ritualistic working-class cultural traits just as much as British sailors were in using fists. However, it has also been argued that the citizens of Bristol were more likely to be stabbed by a British person than a foreign one and by a British sailor than a foreign sailor. In terms of knife crime, British working-class people and sailors among them were increasingly displaying ritualistic commonalities with working-class people from other countries. Nevertheless, a xenophobic press compounded anti-foreign views in Bristol and the notion of bloodthirsty, knife wielding foreigners was still prevalent. What has been shown in this thesis however is that whilst this may be the case, the use of knives by foreigners was done more in defence of ethnicity than for the maintenance of a distinct seafaring identity.

Therein lies the overall conclusion of this study of Bristol’s sailors between 1850 and 1914. By situating them in societal, familial, urban and working-class culture, a more nuanced understanding of the shore life of sailors is possible and one that challenges some of the established historiography that argues that sailors had a distinct sailor identity. In Bristol’s case, sailors were not a breed apart nor locked into the stereotypical confines of caricatured floaters and wasters, cut adrift in the liminal space between sea and shore. This study has been challenged by the relative lack of primary source material from sailors themselves but

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through engaging with socio-economic, qualitative and quantitative sources relating to both maritime and urban contexts, a more nuanced understanding of the character and life of Bristol’s sailors has been forwarded. Bristol’s sailors deserve to be interpreted within urban historiography and in so doing they can be seen as a subsection of the working class who as individuals were steeped in the realities of cultural norms. These cultural norms may have been positive and to an extent many sailors can be regarded as a higher class of working man, although it has also been recognised that the street level behaviours of many others preclude this being extended to all.

Through the behaviours of themselves and others, sailors were an established component of the psyche of the city. The ordinary sailor encountered in this thesis was a worker amidst others in a non-homogenised, all-encompassing working class and one who was displaying the characteristics of any working man living the reality of their streetwise existence within urban and working-class culture. This is not to say that there were no cultural differences between sailors and others and sailors could still be regarded as ‘othered’ in aspects discussed in this thesis. A Bristol sailor could be employed or unemployed, married with a family to feed or single with or without ties to a locality. He could be staying for a few days, to be found loitering around the water and in the businesses of sailortown. Alternatively, he could be on his way home, taking a while to sit with friends he had grown up with in a city pub. Or he may already be at home playing with the children. He might spend his evening reading some improving literature or he may still be on board or in the Sailors’ Home. At the weekend he might go to the football or tend his dahlias or with his fellow countrymen look for trouble on the streets. On the Monday a sailor might be found signing articles at the Marine Board for the same shipowner he had been employed with for years or he may be getting his first berth. He might like his work and be satisfied with his lot or he may protest, but not too much. Hopefully he is in good health but he might spend an evening visiting another sailor fallen on hard times or even in temporary incarceration for a lapse into a bit of thieving.

Whoever that sailor was he was displaying the characteristics of any working man living in Robert Lees’ neglected cultural, familial and social contexts, navigating his way through the urban and working-class culture of Bristol’s streets. Through the realities of his streetwise existence, he may emerge as a higher class of sailor or he may have failed to reach that status or even had no intention of trying. But what was common for all the Bristol sailors in this study was that when he was on his ship he was likely to get wet but when he was on shore he was as dry as the next man.

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'A Higher Class of Men?' Sailors and Working-Class Communities in Bristol 1850-1914

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