

# Ships, seamen and emigrants: sources for research



Extract from the illustrated log book of the Lloyd, 1771-1772 (Ref. 38032)

Online catalogue

[archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)

Website

[www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives](http://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives)

Email

[archives@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:archives@bristol.gov.uk)

Telephone

0117 922 4224

# Contents

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| <u>A brief history of the docks and port of Bristol</u> | 3    |
| <u>Ships and ship owners</u>                            | 4    |
| <u>Shipping and trade</u>                               | 6    |
| <u>Seamen</u>   | 9    |
| <u>Emigrants and transportees</u>                       | 13   |
| <u>Bristol Archives catalogue</u>                       | 17   |
| <u>Online sources</u>                                   | 17   |
| <u>Useful addresses</u>                                 | 18   |

**We are grateful to the compilers of the many indexes, lists and transcriptions noted in this leaflet**

## A brief history of the docks and port of Bristol

Until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bristol Corporation (the forerunner of Bristol City Council) maintained the backs and quays of the harbour, where goods were laded and discharged, from fees collected on shipping known as dues. The Corporation found it increasingly difficult to meet the cost and, in 1620, granted the dues to the Society of Merchant Venturers who took over the maintenance of the harbour. The Society was also responsible for keeping the River Avon navigable, for extending the quays as trade increased and for controlling the pilots.

The early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw major development with the construction of the Floating Harbour and the New Cut. The Bristol Dock Company (made up of the Corporation, the Society of Merchant Venturers and subscribers) was set up to construct, maintain and administer the project. To meet the costs, further dues were imposed on ships using the port. However, foreign ships found the dues excessive and, despite the improvement in docking facilities, Bristol lost trade to Liverpool.

The Corporation purchased the city docks from the Bristol Dock Company in 1848. Additional quays and wharves were constructed and larger and deeper entrance locks made at Cumberland Basin. Trade increased and by the 1870s, it was clear that the docks would have to be developed further. In 1877, the first dock at Avonmouth was privately constructed, followed by another at Portishead in 1879.

In 1884 the Corporation took over the river mouth docks and trade steadily increased. The dock at Avonmouth was extended and the Royal Edward Dock was opened in 1908 and extended in 1929.

Acting under the title of the Port of Bristol Authority, the Corporation/City Council continued to develop the dock systems and the Royal Portbury Dock (referred to as the West Dock, during its construction) was opened in 1977 on the west bank of the mouth of the River Avon. In 1991, the Avonmouth and Royal Portbury docks were taken over by Bristol Port Company.

### Books and pamphlets

- “At the Port of Bristol” (three volumes covering the history of the port 1848-1918) by W G Neale: 1968 ([Ref. Bk/364](#)), 1970 ([Ref. Bk/365](#)), 1976 ([Ref. Bk/366](#))
- “A Short History of the Port of Bristol” by C Wells (1909) ([Ref. Bk/367](#))
- “The Floating Harbour: a Landscape History of Bristol City Docks” by J Lord and J Southam (1983) ([Ref. Bk/368](#))
- “Bristol’s Floating Harbour: the First 200 Years” by Peter Malpass and Andy King (2009) ([Ref. Bk/2418](#))

- “Politics and the Port of Bristol in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Record Society volume xxiii ([Ref. J/BRS/23](#))
- “The Port of Bristol 1848-1884” Bristol Record Society volume xxxvi ([Ref. J/BRS/36](#))
- “The Port of Bristol in the Middle Ages” Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 13 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/13](#))
- “The Port of Bristol in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 39 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/39](#))
- “The Port of Bristol in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 5 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/5](#))
- “19<sup>th</sup> Century Engineers in the Port of Bristol” Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 26 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/26](#))

## **Ships & ship owners**

“Bristol Privateers and Ships of War” by J W Damer Powell ([Ref. Bk/442](#)) is the major printed work on Bristol ships and contains references to about 900 ships. Privateers were men of war, fitted out by their owners to cruise against the enemy in time of war. They were usually merchantmen which later returned to their ordinary trade but, while privateering, carried no cargo. Other merchantmen were taken into royal service at time of war and for the duration formed part of the Royal Navy. A third category of merchantmen were those engaged on trading voyages which carried ‘letters of marque’, licensing them to attack enemy shipping and take prizes. Therefore, in addition to privateers and ships of war, the book actually contains information on much of Bristol’s mercantile fleet from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

“Records of Bristol Ships 1800-1838” published by Bristol Record Society ([Ref. J/BRS/15](#)) lists all ships over 150 tons registered in the port of Bristol in that period. The introduction also gives details of sources for shipping records other than those held by Bristol Archives.

### **Books and pamphlets**

- “Bristol Privateers and Ships of War” by J W Damer Powell (1930) ([Ref. Bk/442](#))
- “Records of Bristol Ships 1800-1838” Bristol Record Society volume xv ([Ref. J/BRS/15](#))

- “Bristol Shipbuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 27 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/27](#))
- “The Steamship Great Western: the First Atlantic Liner”, Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 8 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/8](#))
- “The Steamship Great Britain”, Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 11 ([Ref. Pamphlet/HA/11](#))

Records of the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen date from 1814; these are held by the National Archives, which also holds other records relating to shipping and seamen.

An Act of Parliament of 1795 required all boats and barges used on navigable rivers and canals to be registered. Bristol Archives holds a register of ships navigating within the city for 1795-1802.

A large number of ships are named in the volumes of “Servants to Foreign Plantations, 1654-1679” (see pages 15-16 of this leaflet).

Other records held by Bristol Archives may also contain information about individual ships. For example, amongst the records of the Smyth family of Ashton Court there are a number of bills of lading 1747-1786; these give the names of ships, as well as noting the cargoes carried and the ports from which they had sailed.

### **Registers of ships**

Under an Act of Parliament of 1786, ships had to be registered at their port of origin. Registers of ships were compiled, which give details of dimensions, ownership, history and the fate of each ship, in chronological order of registration. Registers of Bristol ships held by Bristol Archives cover 1824-1868 with subsequent transactions to 1886. It is likely that the earlier registers were destroyed when the Customs House was set on fire during the Bristol Riots of 1831.

### **Ships’ log books**

Some ships’ log books for the period 1863-1874 are included among the crew lists held by the Record Office ([Ref. 30182](#)).

In addition, log books for a limited number of ships have been deposited as part of private collections. The largest number is included in the steamship company P & A Campbell Ltd for the period 1911-1985 ([Ref. 40505/A/4](#)) and 1948-1979 ([Ref. 37980/A/1](#)). Other log books held are those for the Lloyd 1771-1772 ([Ref. 38032](#)) and the Snow Fanny 1777-1791 (which is more of a shipping account book than a log book of voyages) ([Ref. 12162](#)). There are also log books of three pilot vessels amongst the records of the Port of Bristol Authority, for the 1970s-1980s ([Ref. PBA/Mgt/SL](#)).

## Indexes, transcriptions and further information

- For details of records held, check the Bristol Archives catalogue, available in the searchroom or online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)
- There are lists of Bristol ships in the 19th century, compiled mainly from the registers of ships and includes dimensions, builders, owners and masters
- There are lists of ship owners and various shipping-related lists including one of subscribers to Lloyds Register
- For details of ships, ships' masters and owners and merchants involved in the slave trade see "Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth Century Slave Trade to America" Bristol Record Society volumes xxxviii (Ref. [J/BRS/38](#)), xxxix (Ref. [J/BRS/39](#)), xlii (Ref. [J/BRS/42](#)) & xlvii (Ref. [J/BRS/47](#))
- There are transcriptions of extracts from the log books included among the crew lists of 1863
- A list of the log books included among the crew lists held by Bristol Archives is in progress [2013]

## Shipping & trade

### Collectors of customs records

The main national series of records relating to the movement of shipping are those of the collectors of customs, held by the [National Archives](#).

### Port books

Bristol Archives has a list of Bristol port books 1565-1701 held by the National Archives and microfilm copies of these 1565-1603 and 1667-1685.

### Dues (Ref. [F/D](#))

Several sorts of fees or charges, known as dues, were payable on merchandise coming into Bristol for sale. These included wharfage (see below) and presentments (see page 7) and town, mayor's and crantage dues. Records of many of the dues survive only from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The right to charge town dues were originally granted to the town by the Crown in the Middle Ages. The records of town dues include dues levied on foreigners (ships trading from overseas or involving long voyages) 1789-1917 and on coasters (ships trading between neighbouring ports or ports of the same country or continent) 1789-1807. The

information given includes the name of the ship, the name of the master, tonnage, the port from whence it came and the date of arrival.

Mayor's dues were payable on all vessels over 60 tons. They were originally granted by Henry VIII to the sheriffs in 1519, but were collected by the quaywarden. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were transferred to the Mayor and then known as mayor's dues. Records of mayor's dues include collectors' accounts 1791-1835, quay warden's receipts 1803-1846 and water bailiff's receipts 1826-1847. There is also a list of vessels paying mayor's dues for the period 1816-1820.

Cranage dues were charges payable for the use of the cranes on the quays. There are cranage rates and cranage masters' accounts 1837-1856 and the records of the Society of Merchant Venturers include cranage accounts 1769-1792.

### **Wharfage books (Ref. SMV/7/1/1)**

The records of the Society of Merchant Venturers contain wharfage books which are, in effect, account books detailing the amounts paid for the lading and landing of goods. The dates covered are 1654-1693, 1711-1712, 1727-1861 (covering dates).

They provide little information concerning Bristol's exports as they do not give details of commodities and members of the Society did not pay wharfage dues outwards. Goods imported, however, are listed by commodity together with the name of the merchant or business partnerships concerned. Sometimes names of captains are shown as they also imported goods in their own right.

The wharfage books also contain receipts from anchorage and, between 1683-1686, they include lists of all ships paying the duty, their masters and the ports from whence they came. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century wharfage books, these details are also given at the end of every quarter.

### **Presentments or bills of entry (Ref. F/D/P)**

Presentments were a printed record of merchandise entering and leaving the port. They were published twice weekly and gave the following details: the name of the ship, the port from whence it had sailed, its future destination, master, tonnage, whether British or foreign (and if British, its owner or agent), dates of arrival and departure and details of cargo. Bristol Archives holds presentments for 1790, 1801-1858 (covering dates only). Presentments 1770-1917 are held by the Reference Library at Bristol Central Library, which also holds contemporary newspapers containing shipping information.

### **Arrivals and departures (Ref. PBA/Mgt/AD)**

The records of the Port of Bristol Authority, held by Bristol Archives, include a large number of volumes recording the arrival and departure of vessels. These are mostly 20<sup>th</sup> century but some date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the harbour masters' registers inwards, which cover 1870-1977.

### **Other shipping & trade records**

Other records held by Bristol Archives may also contain information about shipping and trade. For example, amongst the records of the Smyth family of Ashton Court there are a number of bills of lading 1747-1786 (Ref. AC/MU/2), which note cargoes carried, the names of ships and the ports from which they had sailed.

Many shipping matters of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century are noted in the deposition books (Ref. JX/1). These contain copies of sworn statements, made before the mayor and one or more of the aldermen, in connection with a wide variety of subjects including the loss of ships and merchandise at sea. Bristol Record Society has published two of the deposition books: 1643-1647 (Ref. J/BRS/6) and 1650-1654 (Ref. J/BRS/13).

Bristol Archives holds minute books of the Bristol Dock Company, dating from 1791 and the Bristol Docks Committee, dating from 1848 (Ref. PBA/Corp/M). There are also copies of reports submitted to the Bristol Dock Company by Isambard Kingdom Brunel 1832-1848 (Ref. PBA/Corp/R/1/1). These include his report on the problem of silting in the Floating Harbour and other discussions with the Dock Company culminating in the construction of a new entry lock at Cumberland Basin, still known as Brunel's Lock.

The Port of Bristol Authority collection consists mainly of 20<sup>th</sup> century material, although there are annual accounts and correspondence dating from the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Society of Merchant Venturers collection also includes other records concerning the administration and development of the port and docks, as well as records relating to trade with Africa and the West Indies, America and Ireland.

### **Books, pamphlets and further information**

- For details of records held, check the Bristol Archives catalogue, available in the searchroom or online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)
- The deposition books of Bristol 1643-1647 (Ref. J/BRS/6) and 1650-1654 (Ref. J/BRS/13) have been published by Bristol Record Society
- "The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages" Bristol Record Society volume vii (Ref. J/BRS/7)



- “The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Record Society volume xxxi ([Ref. J/BRS/31](#))
- “Merchants & Merchandise in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Bristol” Bristol Record Society volume xix ([Ref. J/BRS/19](#))
- “The Trade of Bristol in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Record Society volume xx ([Ref. J/BRS/20](#))
- Information about the Society of Merchant Venturers and the port of Bristol is included in “Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century” Bristol Record Society volume xvii ([Ref. J/BRS/17](#))
- For details of ships, ships’ masters and owners and merchants involved in the slave trade see “Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth Century Slave Trade to America” Bristol Record Society volumes xxxviii ([Ref. J/BRS/38](#)), xxxix ([Ref. J/BRS/39](#)), xlii ([Ref. J/BRS/42](#)) & xlvii ([Ref. J/BRS/47](#))

## Seamen

### Seamen’s Hospital fund ([Ref. SMV/9](#))

An Act of Parliament of 1747 was designed to encourage young men to enter the Merchant Service by providing a pension scheme. In the same year, a proposal was made to establish a hospital for the relief of merchant seamen and their families, for which the Corporation of Bristol granted a site on Brandon Hill. The scheme for a hospital was abandoned but the fund was established and administered by the Society of Merchant Venturers. In 1853, the fund and its management were handed over to the Board of Trade.

### Muster rolls ([Ref. SMV/9/3/1](#))

Seamen paid 6d (2.5p) a month out of their wages of 19s (90p) to £1 a month. The details of period of service and payment were recorded on a muster roll produced by the captain of the vessel. He listed all the personnel involved on a voyage in order of precedence together with each man’s date of entry, his previous ship, his usual place of abode and where or whether discharged, deserted or died. The heading of the muster roll indicates which trade was involved; for example, a roll headed ‘Bristol, Africa, Jamaica, Bristol’ is that of a slaving voyage.

The muster rolls cover 1748-1795. They are not name indexed and, without knowing the date of a voyage and the name and/or muster roll number of the ship on which a seaman served, they can be extremely time-consuming to study. However, there is a

list of ships 1747-1795 which gives the muster roll number of each ship for each year. By working backwards through the muster rolls, using the record of previous ships, it is possible to build up a picture of a seaman's career at sea. The list of ships also includes the names of ships' captains.

If a seaman petitioned for financial assistance from the Seamen's Hospital Fund, this can provide the date of the last voyage on which he served, the name of the ship and its muster roll number for that year (see "Seamen's petitions and certificates" below). His career can then be traced backwards through the muster rolls.

### **Indexes and transcriptions**

- Ships' captains are recorded in a list of ships 1747-1795 which gives the muster roll number of each vessel (Ref. NPM/B/123)
- There are lists of crew compiled from the muster rolls of slaving voyages 1790-1795 (Ref. SMV/10/5/2/2)

### **Seamen's petitions and certificates (Ref. SMV/9/3/3)**

A merchant seaman with 5 years' service was entitled to apply for relief, which could be a 'one-off' payment or a pension, generally £12 a year for captains and 3s (15p) a week for an able seaman or his childless widow. Widows with families received 1s (5p) per child less than 14 years of age.

To claim relief or a pension the seaman or his widow had to produce a certificate of the 'hurt' they had received. Two crew members had to explain how and in what manner the hurt or death had been received, giving details of the ship and voyage. The parties signed the truth of the matter before a Justice of the Peace. A widow had to produce further certificates attesting that she was a lawful wife, that her children were under 14 years and that they had been born after the marriage.

The details for these certificates were extracted from parish registers and were signed either by a minister or churchwarden. Petitions were generally presented by widows, who swore the truth of them before the Mayor. Both certificates and petitions often include details of record of service before 1747, letters from family members or supporting letters from merchant ship owners.

They are useful when tracing a seaman's career through the muster rolls as they can provide the date of the last voyage on which he served, the name of the ship and its muster roll number for that year. There are over 470 certificates and petitions 1750-1809, which are name indexed (Ref. SMV/10/5/2/1).

**Seamen's Hospital orders (Ref. SMV/9/3/2/1)** give additional information about the petition and the petitioner. From 1758 they include an annual review of pensioners, with details of any change in their circumstances such as re-marriage.

## Indexes and transcriptions

- The seamen's petitions and certificates 1750-1809 have been name indexed ([Ref. SMV/10/5/2/1](#))

## Pilots

As well as regulating the pilots who brought ships up and down the River Avon to Bristol, the Society of Merchant Venturers also regulated the pilots covering an area from Milford Haven in South Wales to Barnstaple in North Devon. Those wishing to become pilots were examined by the Society and those successful signed a bond in the sum of £100 with the Master and Wardens of the Society. The Mayor issued the licence to operate as a pilot. The Society dealt with discipline and suspended pilots when necessary.

The pilot bonds cover 1684-1762, 1764-1783 ([Ref. SMV/7/1/6/6](#)) and the names in them are included in the Bristol Archives catalogue. There are also pilots' petitions 1772-1792 ([Ref. SMV/7/1/6/3](#)), which include some asking for relief or to be reinstated after suspension and some from pilots objecting to more pilots being licensed. There are also complaints against pilots 1783-1792 ([Ref. SMV/7/1/6/4](#)) and a list of pilots 1773-1783 ([Ref. SMV/7/1/6/6](#)).

## Indexes, transcriptions and pamphlets

- There is a list of pilots 1773-1783 ([Ref. SMV/7/1/6/6](#)) and names from the pilot bonds 1684-1762 and 1764-1783 are included in the Bristol Archives catalogue
- The pamphlet "Bristol Pilots" by John Rich ([Ref. Pamphlet/1620](#)) gives names and dates of pilots from the 15th century to the 1990s

## Crew lists and agreements ([Ref. 30182](#))

An Act of Parliament of 1835 enforced the drawing-up of written agreements for seamen signing up for service in merchant vessels. The Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen compiled these records under the auspices of the Board of Trade.

Records up to 1860 and a 10% annual sample thereafter are held by the National Archives. The National Maritime Museum took a 10-yearly sample, being all records for 1861, 1862, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1895 and 1905 (less the 10% sample held by the National Archives). The Maritime History Archive at the Memorial University of Newfoundland also took part of the collection. For the period 1863-1913, crew lists relating to ships registered at the port of Bristol (less the 10% and 10-yearly samples) were transferred to Bristol Archives.

## Indexes and transcriptions

- Bristol & Avon Family History Society has produced a name index to the crew lists for selected years between 1866-1911
- There are indexes and transcriptions of the 1863 and 1893 crew lists

A few seamen's discharge certificates also exist in private collections deposited in Bristol Archives and may be found using the catalogue.

## Further sources

These are the only records held which specifically relate to seamen. However, mariners occur frequently in the apprentice and burgess books and in wills and probate inventories. Ships' captains are listed in the early trade directories.

The names of some ships' captains and seamen in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century are noted in the deposition books (Ref. JX/1). These contain copies of sworn statements, made before the mayor and one or more of the aldermen, in connection with a wide variety of subjects including the loss of ships and merchandise at sea. Bristol Record Society has published two of the deposition books: 1643-1647 (Ref. J/BRS/6) and 1650-1654 (Ref. J/BRS/13).

## Indexes, transcriptions, books, pamphlets and further information

- For details of records held, check the Bristol Archives catalogue, available in the searchroom or online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)
- There are lists of captains, mates and seamen in the mid-19th century
- There are lists of Bristol ships in the 19th century, compiled mainly from the registers of ships, which include builders, owners and masters
- There is a list of ship owners and various shipping-related lists including one of subscribers to Lloyds Register
- "The Merchant Seamen of Bristol 1747-1789", Bristol Branch of the Historical Association pamphlet 38 (Ref. Pamphlet/HA/38)
- "Seamen deserters from Bristol and Northern Somerset reported at Melbourne Victoria Australia 1850 - 1900" by Florence Chuk, 1989 (Ref. Pamphlet/1449)
- For information on apprentice and burgess books, wills and probate inventories and trade directories, see the Bristol Archives leaflet on family history sources

- Bristol Record Society has published two of the deposition books: 1643-1647 ([Ref. J/BRS/6](#)) and 1650-1654 ([Ref. J/BRS/13](#))

## Emigrants and transportees

Bristol Archives does not hold any records of emigration; the majority are held by the National Archives. There are various books available on emigration to America and Australia, some of which include records held by the National Archives and in Australia.

### Books and pamphlets

- Emigrants from Bristol to Australia are listed in “Passengers Who Sailed on Vessels Which Left the Port of Bristol for Port Phillip, Victoria, 1841-1863” compiled by F Chuk ([Ref. NPM/B/136](#))
- “The Somerset Years” by F Chuk (1987) ([Ref. Bk/440](#)) is based on the shipping lists held in Victoria and lists all government-assisted emigrants from Bristol and Somerset who arrived in Port Philip, Victoria 1839-1854 [Bk/440]
- Emigrants to America from Bristol and other ports are listed in Emigrants from England to the American Colonies, 1773-1776” edited by P W Coldham (1988) ([Ref. Bk/439](#))
- “The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660” edited by P W Coldham (1987) ([Ref. Bk/436](#)), lists people from all over England and includes not only those emigrating for economic reasons but also those who were deported for vagrancy, roguery and non-conformity
- “The Original Lists of Persons of Quality; Emigrants; Religious Exiles; Political Rebels; Serving Men Sold for a Term of Years; Apprentices; Children Stolen; Maidens Pressed; and Others who went from Great Britain to the American Plantations 1600-1700” (often referred to as “Persons of Quality Emigrating to America”) edited by J C Hotten (1931) ([Ref. Bk/435](#)) is a collection of lists of early inhabitants of the American colonies and includes not only emigrants but also transportees and those convicted for their part in the Monmouth rebellion of 1685

### Passenger lists

Bristol was not a major passenger port in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because liners were too large to use the city docks. However, many emigrants travelled on smaller merchant

ships, which often advertised for passengers in local newspapers (held by the Reference Library at Bristol Central Library). No passenger lists are held in Bristol Archives. The National Archives holds passenger lists dating from 1890.

### **Books and pamphlets**

- Passenger lists for the SS Great Britain 1852-1875 have been published in “Is Yours an SS Great Britain Family?” by A Ball (1988) ([Ref. Bk/448](#))

### **Transportees**

The Bristol courts of assize and quarter sessions dealt with many persons who were sentenced to transportation to the penal colonies.

Bristol had its own assize jurisdiction until 1831 but only the records of gaol delivery 1741-1828 ([Ref. JQS/GD](#)) for this court survive. They include details of transportees and those covering 1741-1799 have been published by Bristol Record Society ([Ref. J/BRS/40](#)). Assize records relating to Bristol after this date are held at the National Archives.

A number of those who took part in the Bristol Riots of 1831 were sentenced to transportation. They were tried at the assizes in 1832; therefore, records of their trials are held by the National Archives, although detailed local accounts can be found in printed sources at Bristol Archives.

Transportees are mainly to be found in the doggett (or docket) books of the quarter sessions from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries ([Ref. JQS/D](#)). These are brief summaries of the court sittings and they are name indexed from 1826.

Most criminals were sent to Australia and Tasmania but, at an earlier date, they were sent to America. The date of conviction of those transported to Australia may be found in records held in Australia and in the National Archives. The details recorded in the doggett books are very brief and do not give personal information such as age and place of origin but local newspapers reports of the time (held by the Reference Library at Bristol Central Library) can often add detail.

There are also quarter sessions papers ([Ref. JQS/P](#)), which often contain detailed witness statements (informations) and lists of prisoners (calendars) which give their ages. Quarter sessions bundles, dating from the 1820s ([Ref. JQS/B](#)), are large rolls of documents which give brief details of each case. The convict's parish of residence is given and, in theft cases, the items stolen are described. These bundles are not name indexed and they are only roughly in date order, so they can be time-consuming and confusing to study.

## Indexes, transcriptions, books, pamphlets and further information

- For details of records held, check the Bristol Archives catalogue, available in the searchroom or online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)
- There is a series of transcriptions of the quarter sessions papers 1699-1804 and incomplete transcriptions of some of the papers 1805-1860. There is a name index to the transcriptions 1699-1804 and a name index to the quarter sessions papers 1804-1817, all these are available in the searchroom
- “Bristol Gaol Delivery Fiats 1741-1799”, Bristol Record Society volume xl ([Ref. J/BRS/40](#)) contains many references to transportation
- “Bristol Transported” by J F Mackeson (1987) includes lists of prisoners transported to Botany Bay 1787-1809 with notes on each and a calendar of prisoners April 1793 ([Ref. Bk/441](#))
- “Transportees from Gloucestershire to Australia 1783-1842” ([Ref. Bk/416](#)) published by Gloucestershire Record Society (volume I) is an A-Z listing which includes offenders from Clifton and St Philip & Jacob [Bk/416]
- “The Original Lists of Persons of Quality; Emigrants; Religious Exiles; Political Rebels; Serving Men Sold for a Term of Years; Apprentices; Children Stolen; Maidens Pressed; and Others who went from Great Britain to the American Plantations 1600-1700” (often referred to as “Persons of Quality Emigrating to America”) edited by J C Hotten (1931) ([Ref. Bk/435](#)) is a collection of lists of early inhabitants of the colonies and includes not only emigrants but also transportees and those convicted for their part in the Monmouth rebellion of 1685
- “The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660” edited by P W Coldham (1987), ([Ref. Bk/436](#)), lists people from all over England and, as well as those emigrating for economic reasons, also includes those who were deported for vagrancy, roguery and nonconformity
- “The Complete Book of Emigrants in Bondage 1614-1775” edited by P W Coldham (1988) ([Ref. Bk/437](#)) is an A-Z listing of those from all over England transported to America
- “The King’s Passengers to Maryland and Virginia” edited by P W Coldham (1997) ([Ref. Bk/2084](#)) lists those from all over England transported to Maryland and Virginia between 1718 and 1783, together with a list of felon runaways 1734-1788]
- “City Under Fire” by Geoffrey Amey (1979) ([Ref. Bk/170](#)) includes brief details of what happened to those transported for taking part in the Bristol Riots of 1831

## Servants to Foreign Plantations

The names of approximately 10,000 young men and women are recorded in two volumes known as “Servants to Foreign Plantations” (Ref. Bk/438). They crossed the Atlantic as indentured servants to masters in the West Indies and the North American colonies between 1654 and 1679. Scattered entries in the city’s rough apprentice books continue the series to 1686. These people came from all parts of the British Isles, though chiefly from the south west of England and south Wales, and from many social classes. They sailed from the port of Bristol and, to protect them from exploitation, their indentures of service were registered in Bristol in the same way as city apprentices.

Most signed up to serve for four or five years and their conditions of service ensured that at the end of that period they received land, money or tools sufficient to enable them to become settlers if they wished. Early entries give the date of enrolment, servant’s name and place of origin, master’s name, destination, term of years and conditions of service. The place of origin is omitted after 1660 but from 1670 onwards, the name of the ship in which the servant sailed is given. The conditions of service rapidly become abbreviated and are often omitted. The volumes have been transcribed and published.

There are also records of young people leaving Bristol for North America as indentured servants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Ref. J/BGAS/99). Printed registration forms exist for the period 1763-1768 and in them the details of 125 individuals are given, including the name of the servant, gender, place of origin, age and occupation, marital status, date of indenture, name of master, place of residence and occupation, the servant’s length of service and their destination.

### Indexes, transcriptions, books, pamphlets and further information

- For details of records held, check the Bristol Archives catalogue, available in the searchroom or online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)
- The “Servants to Foreign Plantations” volumes are published as “The Bristol Registers of Servants to Foreign Plantations, 1654-1686” edited by P W Coldham (1988) (Ref. Bk/438)
- For the 18th century indentured servants see “Bonded Servants in the North American Continent in the Eighteenth Century: Some New Evidence from Bristol” by H B Jameson in Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society volume 99 (Ref. J/BGAS/99) which also contains a list of their names



---

## Bristol Archives catalogue

Amongst the records held by Bristol Archives there may be other material of interest to those researching ships, seamen and emigrants. Further details may be found in the Bristol Archives catalogue, which is available in the searchroom and also online at [archives.bristol.gov.uk](http://archives.bristol.gov.uk)

Many of the records held by Bristol Archives may also be found by using the National Archives Discovery website [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

---

## Online sources

There are numerous websites containing information on ships, seamen and emigration; some provide information whilst others hold actual data which may be searched. Some websites are free and others must be paid for, either by subscription or pay-to-view.

New websites are being created all the time. The following are not recommendations but offered as examples of the many websites available:

Ancestry holds emigration and passenger lists and many other family history sources. Bristol Libraries and Bristol Archives provide free access to Ancestry [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

Findmypast (previously known as 1837online) holds passenger lists and many other family history sources [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)

Passenger lists may also be searched at [www.ancestorsonboard.com](http://www.ancestorsonboard.com) and at [www.theshipslist.com](http://www.theshipslist.com). Passenger lists of emigrants to the United States may be searched at [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)

There is a crew list index project at [www.crewlist.org.uk](http://www.crewlist.org.uk)

There are also specialist websites dedicated to ships, shipping and seamen such as [www.shipphotos.co.uk](http://www.shipphotos.co.uk) and [www.figureheads.co.uk](http://www.figureheads.co.uk)

---

---

## Useful addresses

### **The National Archives**

Kew

Richmond

Surrey TW9 4DU

Tel: 020 8876 3444

Email Use contact form on website

Website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### **Maritime History Archive**

Memorial University of Newfoundland

St John's, NL A1C 5S7

Email [mha@mun.ca](mailto:mha@mun.ca)

Website [www.mun.ca/mha](http://www.mun.ca/mha)

### **National Maritime Museum collections**

The Caird Archive and Library

National Maritime Museum

Greenwich

London SE10 9NF

Tel: 020 8312 6516

Email [library@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:library@nmm.ac.uk) (for library items)

Email [manuscripts@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:manuscripts@nmm.ac.uk) (for manuscripts, charts and atlases)

Website [www.nmm.ac.uk](http://www.nmm.ac.uk)

### **Bristol Central Library: Reference Library**

College Green

Bristol BS1 5TL

Tel: 0117 903 7202

Email [refandinfo@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:refandinfo@bristol.gov.uk)

Website [www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/reference-library](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/reference-library)