

# MARITIME ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

#### **INFORMATION SHEET 65**

# LIVERPOOL PILOTS

Approaching the Port of Liverpool, navigating the sand banks, shifting sands and the powerful tides of the Irish Sea, Liverpool Bay and the Mersey Estuary has always been a hazardous undertaking. In 1689 the first official chart of the Mersey was produced and a later version appeared in 1738. Although charts made navigation easier, it was still precarious and local fishermen were required to act as guides for incoming vessels, operating an unofficial pilot service for vessels facing hostile weather conditions and tides.

The first official Liverpool Pilot Service was established by the Liverpool Pilotage Act of 1766 and resulted in the compulsory presence of a pilot aboard all vessels in the Mersey. The Act regulated the operation of the service and established a Pilotage Committee to oversee the working of the service including the issue of licences.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the significant development of Liverpool as a port of international standing, and consequently to be a pilot was an extremely well established career. The pilots of the Port of Liverpool, as in other ports of the world, were employed to meet and take charge of the navigation of the vessel, 'well to seaward' of the bay and river estuary. The pilot provided essential knowledge in navigating sand banks and channels, and manoeuvring vessels through the complex dock system. Outward bound ships would have required the presence of a pilot for the same reasons.

Responsibility for supervising and administering the service was transferred to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's (MDHB) Pilotage Committee in 1858. In 1883 the sailing pilot schooners, which had before been privately owned, were transferred to the Board's ownership, but pilots themselves remained self-employed until 1988. The new pilotage office was opened at Canning Pier in 1883. The building later housed the Museum of Liverpool Life from 1993 to 2006.

The first steam pilot boat, the *Francis Henderson*, was launched in 1896. Only in 1982 did the service complete the change from the large pilot vessels to the fast launches. One of the last large pilot vessels, *Edmund Gardner*, is now part of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's ship collection and is situated in permanent dry dock by the Great Western Railway Shed.

The Maritime Archives & Library holds an exceptionally comprehensive collection relating to history of the Liverpool Pilot Service. This archive is an important resource for maritime, local and family history research, but it is also a unique document, demonstrating the significance of the pilot service to this international port.

## **MDHB Liverpool Pilotage Committee Records**

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Collection, held at the Maritime Archives & Library, contains the records of the Pilotage Committee and therefore all registered Liverpool pilots. The collection is indispensable for locating information on individual pilots, the Pilotage Committee and further related organisations.

Pilotage Committee Minutes	-	1779 - 1859
MDHB/MP/14/1-11		
Oaths, Commissioner of Pilotage	-	1766 - 1857
Pilots Character Books	-	1788 - 1974
Register of Pilot's Children	-	1814 - 1905
Register of Deceased Pilot's Children and Widows	-	1827 - 1884
Pilot's Committee Letter Book	-	1854 - 1859
Register of Masters and Mates holding Pilot's Certificates	-	1860 - 1972
Register of Persons Unemployed, Pilot Boat Service	-	1896 - 1930
Lloyd's Policies	-	1941 - 1953
Liverpool Pilotage Bye Laws	-	1797 - 1920
Pamphlets	-	1878 - 1934
Notices to Pilots	-	1900 - 1966
Liverpool Pilot's Mutual Benefit Society and Miscellaneous Documents	-	1848 - 1956

#### MDHB/PIL

## Records of the Edmund Gardner Liverpool Pilot Boat (No. 2)

The *Edmund Gardner* was one of the last pilot boats to be used by the Liverpool Pilot Service, and was built in 1953, by Philip & Son Ltd., Dartmouth. She operated as Pilot Boat No. 2 of a fleet of four pilot vessels introduced into the service between 1937 and 1958. The other three were the *Sir Thomas Brocklebank* (No. 1), the *Arnet Robinson* (No. 3) and the *William M Clarke* (No. 4). Items regarding these vessels are included in this collection, along with records relating to the *Puffin* and *Petrel*, two launches introduced into the Pilotage Service in October 1962.

Log Books	-	1953 - 1981
Bridge (Wheelhouse) Records	-	c.1960 - 1980
Bridge (Radio Room) Records	-	c.1960 - 1980
Chief Engineer's Cabin Records	-	c.1950 - 1980
Liverpool Pilotage Authority	-	c.1960 - 1980
Staff Records	-	c.1960 - 1980
Photographs	_	c.1950

Poster - 1963

Navigational Records - 1969 - 1981

Plans - 1949 - 981

#### MDHB/EG

Please note that all records are subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. Access to some items is therefore restricted.

#### **FURTHER READING**

## **Liverpool Pilot Service**

REES, John S. History of the Liverpool Pilotage Service, 1949.

TEBAY, P.J.H. *Liverpool Pilot Service. List of Pilots 1734 - 1990*. Liverpool: Liverpool Nautical Research Society, 1991.

YOUDE, Barrie. *Beyond the Bar. A Light History of the Liverpool Pilot Service*. Liverpool: Laver Publishing, 1994.

## **General**

CLULOW, Derek. *No Tides To Stem. A History of the Manchester Pilot Service, Vols. 1 - 3.* Birkenhead: Countyvise Ltd., 1995.

CUNLIFFE, Tom. *PILOTS. The World of Pilotage Under Sail and Oar. Vol. 1, Pilot Schooners of North America and Great Britain.* France: Le Chasse Maree, 2001.

CUNLIFFE, Tom. *PILOTS. The World of Pilotage Under Sail and Oar. Vol. 2, Schooners and Open Boats of the European Pilots and Watermen.* France: Le Chasse Maree, 2001.

HIGNETT, Harry. *The History of the United Kingdom Pilots' Association*. London: United Kingdom Pilots' Association, 1984.

SANDERS, David J. *The Nautical Institute on Pilotage and Shiphandling*. London: Nautical Institute, 1990.