

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Frigren, Pirita

Title: Finns as mobile maritime labor in coastal ports of the United Kingdom, 1850-1930

Year: 2018

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2018 Walter de Gruyter GmbH

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

Please cite the original version:

Frigren, P. (2018). Finns as mobile maritime labor in coastal ports of the United Kingdom, 1850-1930. In M. Ojala-Fulwood (Ed.), *Migration and Multi-ethnic Communities : Mobile People from the Late Middle Ages to the Present* (pp. 93-122). De Gruyter.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110528879-005>

Pirita Frigren

Finns as mobile maritime labor in coastal ports of the United Kingdom, 1850 – 1930

Finnish sailors as a part of migration history¹

“There are also sailors among the Finnish immigrants who, due to their excellent fitness, can be found recruited on board merchant vessels all around the world these days. [...] Indeed, wherever you go nowadays, you can be as sure to find a Finnish working man as you would find Finnish soldiers in the seventeenth century.”² – Zacharias Topelius (1893)

The quote above, from Zacharias Topelius – the patriotic Finnish author, social intellect and historian – draws attention to the increasing social and geographical mobility of people in the nineteenth century. The old ideal of the God-given estate society, in which everyone should stay put in the position given them to at birth (see also Riitta Laitinen’s contribution in this book), was steadily giving way to a more fluid social order. Hundreds of thousands of Finns, mainly from among the landless poor, joined the tens of millions of Europeans migrating mainly to North America to look for a better future. As we can see, Topelius took particular note of the Finnish seafarers among these immigrants. He regarded merchant sailors as diligent hardworking men who were sought after everywhere they went. In their internationality, he saw these seamen as a modern version of those early modern soldiers that served the Swedish Empire at its zenith. Elsewhere in his writing, one of his characters is an optimistic Finnish sailor who is thought to have disappeared for good on his travels abroad, but who returns home rich and skilled, after serving for years in foreign merchant navies.³

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Docent Tuomas Martikainen (Head of Finnish Institute of Migration), Dr. Richard Gorski, Dr. Ulla Ijäs, Docent Ann-Catrin Östman, Dr. Jutta Ahlbäck, Dr. Hanna Lindberg, Dr. Johanna Wassholm, Dr. Sami Suodenjoki, and MA Anna Sundelin for all the help and comments that helped in improving this article.

² “Muuttoväkeä ovat lisäksi suomalaiset merimiehet, joita kelvollisuutensa tähden nykyään käytetään kaikkien kansojen kauppalaivoilla. [...] Suomalaisia työmiehiä on nykyään kaikkialla, samoin kuin suomalaisia sotilaita 17. vuosisadalla.” Zacharias Topelius, *Suomi 19. vuosisadalla* [Finland in the nineteenth century] (Helsinki: Leo Mechelin 1893), 70. Translation by the author.

³ Zacharias Topelius, “Briitta Skrifvars [title of the play]”, in *Z. Topeliuksen kootut teokset VIII: Draamalliset teokset* [Collected Drama], Finnish trans. by Toivo Lyy (4th ed., Helsinki: WSOY 1935, orig. 1866); Zacharias Topelius, “Sjömannen” [The Seaman. Story of Erik Lund], Published as a serial in the *Folkvännen* newspaper from April 20 – June 1, 1864 (No. 16–22), The National

But seafaring is portrayed as not only a gateway to migration, and a path from rags to material riches; but also positively in an abstract sense too. The seafarer is taking responsibility for his own fortune by seeking it abroad, by improving his skills, and by doing physically demanding but honest outdoor work. Interestingly, as John Tosh has shown, all of these precisely fitted the nineteenth-century ideal of masculinity that many working men learned to emphasize in their accounts of migration to the British colonies. This ideal was that they could only complete the transition to full manhood once they had gone abroad.⁴

In this chapter, I will particularly focus on the mobility of Finnish sailors in coastal ports of the United Kingdom, as these were among the most typical destinations for Finnish merchant vessels. Work on board a ship provided a much better chance, and a cheaper means, for sailors to emigrate than those of fellow working-class landmen, or women, for that matter.⁵ I will ask how Finnish sailors fitted into the bigger picture of international maritime mobility, and how they were seen in the eyes of the local British seaport community. Was their contribution to these communities really as welcome as Topelius thought? Besides providing important historical knowledge on immigrant occupations and the ensuing multiethnic encounters between foreigners and locals, answering these questions will also provide an important historical context as to how the British controlled migration according to world politics and situations in the labor market.

Although migration in the maritime context has received increasing international academic attention over the last few years,⁶ apart from Topelius' enthusiastically positive comments, it has been largely ignored in Finland. When it comes to the history of mass migration to North America in the nineteenth

Library of Finland, Digital Collection, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/search?language=en>.

4 John Tosh, "All the masculine virtues': English emigration to the colonies, 1815–1852," in John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (New York: Pearson Education, 2005), 173–91.

5 Women were typically only recruited once they began to be needed on the first passenger ships in the service sector. For female maritime labor, see e.g., Sari Mäenpää, *New maritime labor? : Catering Personnel on British Passenger Liners, 1860–1938*. (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 2002), passim; Carola Johansson, "Kvinnor i Nagu sjöfart [Women in Nauvo seafaring]," in *Skärgård : tidskrift utgiven av Skärgårdsinstitutet vid Åbo Akademi* (1985), 46–55.

6 For instance, Sarah Bosmans, Richard Gorski, Richard and Joost Schokkenbroek eds. Special issue "Mobility in a maritime world: Working Around, Across and Beyond the North Sea," *International Journal of Maritime History* 27 (2015), passim.; Jelle van Lottum, *Across the North Sea. The Impact of the Dutch Republic on International Labor Migration, c. 1550–1850* (Close Encounters with the Dutch. Amsterdam: Aksant Amsterdam University Press, 2007), passim.

and early twentieth centuries, sailors are recognized as having been the first Finnish-Americans. They either settled in San Francisco during the gold rush, or crewed on American or Canadian freshwater and oceangoing vessels.⁷ In the UK too, the dominant occupation among Finnish migrants was as merchant sailors from as early as the seventeenth century, until the 1950s when female domestic servants became more common among them.⁸ Previous research about Finnish seamen in the UK has been mainly the work of Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, who, via the Finnish Seamen's Mission, has found a wealth of information in a magazine dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, called *Merimiehen Ystävä* (The Seafarer's Friend). The magazine included announcements of lost men published by their family members and reports on men found by priests of the Seamen's Mission. The latter depicted these men in quite the opposite manner to Topelius, as utterly alienated, sad characters who were unable to build a life for themselves in their host country, yet had also lost their connections with home. These mariners would mostly end up as vagabonds of the seas and often ending in death at the Greenwich Hospital.⁹

One of the reasons why migrant seamen have received such scant attention until recently, is that they usually migrated to different destinations and in more complicated ways than the masses of migrants who travelled on passenger-ships with fixed tickets and travel arrangements. Sailor's work was, of course, mobile in nature too, even if they remained merely in the service of domestic employers and never actually migrated. But it is precisely because maritime mobility was often temporary and only took place in specific urban dock areas – thus being a form of migration that mostly escaped the official formalities of entering a country – which gives it such a unique and important place in the history of

7 Reino Kero, "Sjömän från Finland som emigranter i Amerika under 1800-talet [Seamen from Finland as immigrants in America in the 1800s]," *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 73 (1988), 395–413; Lewis R. Fischer, "A Dereliction of Duty: The Problem of Desertion on Nineteenth Century Sailing Vessels," in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, eds. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (St. John's Memorial University of Newfoundland: Maritime History Group, 1980), 51–70.

8 Marjatta Bell, "Britannia [Great Britain]," in *Suomalaiset Euroopassa* [Finns in the Europe], eds. Krister Björklund and Olavi Koivukangas. (Turku: Suomen Siirtolaisuusinstituutti Suomen siirtolaisuuden historia VI [History of Finnish overseas migration VI], 2008), 126–31.

9 Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, "Expressions of Longing, Sources of anxiety? The Significance of Contacts with Home for Finnish Sailors in London and Hull in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *People of the Northern Seas*, eds. Lewis R. Fischer and Walter Minchinton (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economy History Association Research in Maritime History 3, 1992), 63–79; Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, "Land Amidst the Sea – Merchant Seamen and Port Towns in the Nineteenth Century," in *Reclaiming the City: Innovation, Culture, Experience*, eds. Marjaana Niemi and Ville Vuolanto (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, Studia Fennica, 2003), 177–90.

labor migration. This mobility is often defined as *seasonal and circular migration*, albeit without any clear regularity about when these “seasons” of migration began or ended, when (if at all) seamen would return home, or whether they would enter the ports of foreign cities individually or in a group.¹⁰ Besides, seamen’s mobility was not necessarily always circular or seasonal migration, in so far as families back home could organize their livelihood according to what they were expected to earn abroad. Even with the emergence of institutions that would make it easier for migrants to transfer their salaries home, for a family to rely wholly on a sailor’s income was as precarious as confidently expecting his return home. Indeed, when looked at from the both ends of the voyage, it seems that maritime-related mobility required family members to share the consequences of those experiences as did their counterparts back home.¹¹ In some cases, there were also some seamen who even managed to get their Finnish wives and children to settle with them in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century.¹²

Guest workers, as most sailors were, are often regarded as outsiders from the integration perspective, due to their legal status of residing abroad, which leads to the challenging question of whether they were actually immigrants at all. However, as migration sociologists Peter Kivisto and Thomas Faist note, determining immigration by the level of integration is harshly state-defined. Guest workers may also see themselves as migrants anyway, especially when their initially temporary journey may well become permanent.¹³ Furthermore, to divide people up into official and unofficial migrants before the twentieth century may be anachronistic. As Margrit Schulte Beerbühl writes in her study of German merchants who migrated to England before 1815, the majority of people moved unofficially, as only the wealthiest strata had the economic and social means

10 Seasonal or temporary migration would often depend on seasonal demands in agriculture, fishing, forestry, and early manufacturing. It would imply the movement of large groups of people who would migrate together to the same area (e. g., from the same rural village). It is thought to have been a highly common migration pattern in preindustrial times, and was usually male-dominated, though in some regions in Europe it affected both men and women. See Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Second edition, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2003), 59, 76–82, 99.

11 Pirita Frigren, *Kotisatamassa: merimiesten vaimot, naisten toimijuus ja perheiden toimeentuloehdot 1800-luvun suomalaisessa rannikkokaupungissa* [Merchant Sailors’ Spouses, Household Economy and Female Agency in the Finnish Seaports, c. 1830–1870] (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2016), 170–97.

12 Bell, “Britannia,” 130–31.

13 Peter Kivisto and Thomas Faist, *Beyond a Border: the Causes and Consequences of Contemporary Immigration*. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications Inc., 2010), 88.

to take formal routes.¹⁴ Nevertheless, even if this was the norm up until the First World War (WWI), the situation for undocumented migrants was far more vulnerable, as it is also nowadays, than for those with the recognized or legal status of naturalized immigrants.

This chapter casts its net over those sailors who found themselves, for shorter or longer periods, caught in this impermanent situation between Finland and United Kingdom from the 1850s and the 1930s. This era witnessed changes in the way in which this group's mobility was controlled as we shall see. Although Finns are represented here as a numerically marginal group, among the mass of migrants in general, they are seen case-specifically as a group of foreigners that local people would have been well aware of in a city port. This was especially the case, for example, in the Humber estuary port of Hull (Kingston-Upon-Hull), which due to mutual trade connections between Finnish and British shipping entrepreneurs across the North and Baltic Seas, had passenger and cargo links with Finland. Hull was also the main stopping off point for shipping companies transporting migrants (from Finland among other places) to North America.¹⁵ Finnish ships and their crews were therefore a familiar part of the townscape, and their appearance brought the first Finn-owned boarding houses to Hull in the 1880s and 1890s and the Finnish Seamen's Mission (as part of the joint Scandinavian Mission) to Grimsby, on the other side of the Humber estuary.¹⁶

Harbors are often romantically depicted as cosmopolitan places where cultures meet and mix, but what did multiethnicity mean in terms of Finns in Britain? To some extent they were familiar, in being white, more-or-less Scandinavian, Protestant and familiar trading partners; but in others they were not – coming from a poor country located at the periphery of Europe, which remained part of the Russian Empire until 1917. In this latter respect they were labeled with otherness.

To begin to answer this, we should look at how this group was seen both in terms of their Finnish ethnicity, and in terms of their seafaring occupation. Although seamen might have differed in terms of their age, marital status, socio

14 Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, *The Forgotten Majority: German Merchants in London, Naturalization, and Global Trade, 1660–1815*, transl. Cynthia Klohr (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 17.

15 Line routes were operated by Hull-based John Good & Sons Ltd., and the Finnish Steamship Company (SHO). This also continued after WWII. BBC Humberside May 13, 2014: “*Hull's Finnish Migration Links Marked with Plaque*,” accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-humber-27389795>.

16 Bell, “*Britannia*,” 130–31.

economic background, skills, and maritime career, they were a predominately homosocial cluster of working-class men. The early and late nineteenth century was the heyday of growing concern over sailors' working conditions and welfare all over the transatlantic world. Maritime working culture was perceived not only as being tough, hierarchical, and alienating, but also related to violent behavior and heavy drinking – in effect, an old-fashioned antithesis of the modern ideal paid laborer.¹⁷ The turn of the twentieth century was also an era, which saw the development of racial theories. Anthropologists, ethnologists, medical scientists and others published widely on the subject of determining the racial origins of European peoples. As the white Anglo-Saxon outlook became the superstandard against which other peoples' looks were compared, Finnish scientists spent a lot of time trying to prove that Finns were not “Mongolians”. Indeed, even in the early twentieth century, many visitors to Finland expected to meet exotic-looking people that were very different from other Europeans.¹⁸ In maritime fiction too, there were eccentric ethnic qualities attached to Finns, such as having the supernatural power to tame stormy winds at sea.¹⁹ Although racial elements were generally understood in terms of outward appearance, ethnic categorizations also affected how Finns were understood as foreigners and how their skills as seamen were evaluated.

In this chapter, I will first explore the opportunities for mobility available to a Finnish sailor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; then attempt to piece together the scale of maritime-related Finnish migration to the UK. After this I shall analyze the local Hull newspaper reports and those by the British, world-wide operating society, Missions to Seamen, on foreigners working in var-

17 For more on the growth of various nineteenth-century religious, philanthropic and social movements that concentrated on the welfare of seafarers and promoting reforms in their working conditions, see Richard Gorski, “Protecting British Seafarers on the Continent: The Export of Attitudes, Ideals and Systems in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *The Parallel Worlds of the Seafarer: Ashore, Afloat and Abroad*, eds., Richard Gorski and Britta Söderqvist (Gothenburg: Sjöfartsmuseet Akvariet, Papers from the 10th North Sea History Conference, 2012), 71–95.

18 Aira Kemiläinen, “Mongoleista eurooppalaisiksi 1900-luvun rotuteorioissa [From Mongolians to Europeans – Finns in Racial Theories of the 1900s],” in *Mongoleja vai germaaneja? Rotuteorioiden suomalaiset* [Mongolians or Germans? Finns in Racial Theory], eds., Aira Kemiläinen, Marjatta Hietala and Pekka Suvanto (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Association, Historiallinen Arkisto 86, 1985), see especially 295–330, 377–78; Anssi Halmesvirta, *The British conception of the Finnish ‘race’, nation, and culture, 1760–1918* (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Association, Studia Historica 34, 1990), 81–190.

19 For instance, Kirsi Uola, *Vastakohtien meren ristiriitainen sankari. Suomalainen merikirjallisuus – oppositioasetelmia ja rajanvetoja* [The Contradictory Hero of the Sea of Contrasts: Finnish Sea Literature Embodies Opposites Literal Borderlines] (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004), 262.

ious ports in Britain and Ireland. Through linking these sources, the voices that were talking about Finnish sailors and their presence in local urban seaport communities can be compared.

Maritime-related labor migration to Britain: opportunities, restrictions and figures

The British Merchant Navy became a significant destination for migrant workers when restrictions on the employment of aliens were removed in 1853–1854. By the 1880s, foreigners made up an estimated 14 percent of all its workforce and 2.3 percent of its ship officers. But in Hull and Cardiff, which were the top destinations for these foreign migrants, it reached 21 percent of the total workforce.²⁰ The fact that there were lots of jobs available, and hardly any bureaucratic immigration formalities to go through, was clearly a pull factor for migrants of various nationalities including Finns. Other factor which made Finns join the British Merchant Navy, was the Crimean War (1853–1856). Because of the war some Finnish shipping companies were forced to sell their ships abroad, obliging the crews to find work elsewhere.²¹

However, perhaps the most common way for Finnish sailors to enter the international labor market was illegally, by jumping ship in a foreign port and then enlisting on another vessel. At least 10–20% of Finnish seamen left their job in this way.²² Desertion could lead to a harsh punishment back in Finland – impris-

20 Conrad Hepworth Dixon, *Seamen and the Law: An Examination of the Impact of Legislation on the British Merchant Seaman's Lot, 1588–1918* (PhD Diss., University College London, 1981). Retrieved from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317735/1/282305.pdf>], accessed March 22, 2017, 247–49; John Torpey, “Passports and the Development of Immigration Controls in the North Atlantic World During the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War-Period*, eds., Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 73–91.

21 Yrjö Kaukiainen, “Finnish sailors 1750–1870,” in *‘Those Emblems of Hell’? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570–1870*, eds., Jaap Bruijn, Jan Lucassen, and Paul van Royen (St. John’s, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, Research in Maritime History 13, 1997), 211–32.

22 For more on desertions see e.g., Kustaa Hautala, “Merimiesten karkaaminen suomalaisilta laivoilta 1800-luvulla [Desertions on Finnish Merchant Ships in the 1800s],” in *Näkökulmia menneisyyteen [Perspectives on the Past]*, eds., Sven-Erik Åström, Yrjö Blomstedt and Ilkka Hakalehto (Helsinki: WSOY, 1967), 104–105; Jari Lybeck, “Nyrkki on lyhennetty merilaki”: Hierarkia, kuri ja karkaaminen purjelaivoilla 1800-luvun jälkipuoliskolla [The Fist is the First Law at Sea: Hierarchy, Discipline and Desertion on Sailing Ships in the Latter Half of the 1800s],” in *Keulakuvia ja*

onment, flogging, or half a year's hard labor – although by 1856, Alexander II of Russia did issue imperial pardons to those who came home voluntarily. Another reason for there being such high desertion rates, was the unlimited duration of voyages, and thus working contracts, until the maritime law of 1873 restricted them to a maximum length of two years.²³ The same imperial law decreed the punishment for desertion be no more than three to six months imprisonment; and if the sailor returned home voluntarily, the sentence would be reduced to only one to three months imprisonment, or a fine of 20 – 100 Finnish Marks (similar to an approximate worker's wage for 16 – 83 days). The new legislation also allowed for seamen to apply for a special kind of passport that would allow them to work abroad for a limited time; nevertheless, even with all these new laws in place, desertion continued to be a significant contributory factor for the mobility of maritime labor.²⁴

In the nineteenth century, desertion was especially common in the bigger ports of Britain, North America, and Australia. Most often runaways were from Britain, North America, Northern Europe or Scandinavia, and they deserted either in the hope of emigrating, or of finding better wages and conditions on board another ship.²⁵ The cause (and consequence) of this was that there were lodging-house landlords in these ports, among others, who specialized in “crimping” – that is illegally finding work for deserting foreign seamen, on other ships. Although they were brokers in the process, they were often depicted as human traffickers who demanded payment from wide-eyed sailors lacking the necessary language skills, and who would be left owing them money.²⁶ All the same, these brokers were crucial in meeting the high demand for labor in this gray area of the employment market in spite of government efforts, such as

peränpitäjiä. Yrjö Kaukiaisien 60-vuotisjuhlakirja, eds., Riitta Oittinen & Marjatta Rahikainen (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 2000), 39 – 61; Jari Ojala, Jaakko Pehkonen and Jari Eloranta, “Desertions in Nineteenth-Century Shipping: Modelling Quit Behaviour,” *European Review of Economic History* 17 (2013), 122–140.

23 Hautala, “Merimiesten karkaaminen,” 112–13; Ojala, Pehkonen, and Eloranta, “Desertions in Nineteenth-Century Shipping,” 4.

24 Hautala, “Merimiesten karkaaminen,” 111–12; Lybeck, “Nyrkki on lyhennetty merilaki,” 50; Fischer, “A Dereliction of Duty,” 53.

25 Fischer “A Dereliction of Duty,” 53–65. Fischer does acknowledge, however, that more or less three quarters of all seamen did *not* desert.

26 Judith Fingard, “‘Those Crimps of Hell and Goblins Damned.’ The Image and Reality of Quebec’s Sailortown Bosses,” in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, eds., Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (St. John’s Memorial University: Maritime History Group, 1980), 323–24; 65; Lybeck, “Nyrkki on lyhennetty merilaki,” 52. Ojala, Pehkonen and Eloranta, “Desertions in Nineteenth-Century Shipping,” 5.

the British Mercantile Act of 1850, which aimed at replacing crimps with official employment agencies.²⁷ As Judith Fingard suggests, sailors were perhaps not always as defenseless as contemporary social thinkers and religious voices were saying. Perhaps this rather romantic image of the child-like sailor who cannot look after his financial matters is one more sailor-stereotype.²⁸ Fingard's critique fits with the wider notion of migration historians who draw attention to migrants' own agency, their knowledge, experience, and their contacts, all of which helped them face the highs and lows of arriving in a new country.²⁹ Sailors might well have had previous knowledge, either from their own experiences or from stories told to them by fellow seamen.

The convoluted nature of sailors' migration makes it difficult to estimate how many of those who entered British ports from Finland actually stayed in the UK, and how many of them continued onwards to North America, Australia, Europe, and elsewhere. Recent estimates, made by Yrjö Kaukiainen, suggest that five or six thousand Finnish-born sailors may have entered the international maritime labor market by the 1880s, equal to the number working in the whole of the Finnish maritime sector at the time. Kaukiainen then goes on to say that, by the turn of the twentieth century, this number had surpassed that of those working on domestic vessels.³⁰ There was clearly, therefore, a drain of cheap maritime labor leaving Finland in the late age of sail.

There are no clear statistics on how many Finnish migrant-sailors ended up in Britain. One reason these estimations are complicated is that, until Finnish independence in 1917, all Finns were recorded as Russians in official censuses. For example in 1814 as many as a thousand Finns were thought to be in the British Merchant Navy, and yet between 1835 and 1857 only 99 Finns (and 44 Russians)

27 Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2011), 56–57.

28 Fingard, "Those Crimps of Hell and Goblins Damned," 326–29.

29 Barbara M. Posadas and Roland L. Guyotte, "Sending Money 'Home': Toward a Transnational History of Migrant Remittances," in *Between the Old and the New World: Studies in the History of Overseas Migration*, eds., Agnieszka Malek and Dorota Praszalowicz (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 13–14. However, perhaps migrants should not be regarded as "perfectly rational decision-making atoms" since they would have been acting on information gleaned only from personal kin, friends, acquaintances, and other contacts. See Moch, *Moving Europeans*, 16.

30 Yrjö Kaukiainen, "Kun suomalaiset olivat filippiinoja [When Finnish Seamen were 'Philippinos']," in *Työ merellä [Work at Sea] Nautica Fennica 2015–2016*, ed. Tapio Bergholm (Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Antiquities, 2016), 195–111. Figures are based on the Finnish Seamen's Mission reports on Finns who died abroad when serving on a foreign ship, and on data regarding numbers of deserters.

were officially registered as being so (appendix 1).³¹ These figures should thus be seen as just the tip of the iceberg, revealing only the officially registered part of the foreign workforce, especially as employing foreign seamen was not officially allowed until the 1850s. Indeed, the total official number of foreign sailors in the British Merchant Navy from Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe was typically only some hundreds, while the Chinese numbered only 19, and seamen originating from India only 2,343, implying that these figures (appendix 1) should be seen as merely suggestive, and not the real figures.³²

By 1891, there were 23,884 foreign seamen thought to be residing in Britain, in addition to 21,322 men who were categorized separately as ethnically discriminated group of “lascars”.³³ But it was not until the First World War required clarification, that the provenance of Britain’s foreign maritime labor became clearer. Table 1 shows the origins of those born abroad (between 1860 and 1900) who were awarded WWI Mercantile Marine Medals, or British War Medals from 1914 to 1925. It shows that there were a lot of men who had a merchant marine background before serving in the Royal Navy in wartime.

31 Bell, “Britannia,” 128–136; The National Archives (United Kingdom): the register of seamen series I in BT 120 (1835–1836), the register of seamen series II, in BT 112 (with its associate name index in BT 119) (1835–1844), the register of seamen’s tickets, in BT 113 (the surname index is in BT 114) (1845–1854), the register of seamen series III, in BT 116 (1853–1857).

32 The low number of Indian seamen depends on whether they were categorized among South Asian “lascars” (see the next footnote). That there are only 19 hits regarding Chinese men is related to control over Asian seamen coming to Britain which was tightened during the nineteenth century. However, their amount has been estimated to be as high as 500 (just in London) already by the early nineteenth century. Yu Po-ching suggests that many of these were unregistered. Yu Po-ching, “Chinese Seamen in London and St Helena in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Law, Labor and Empire. Comparative Perspectives on Seafarers, c. 1500–1800*, eds., Maria Fusaro et. al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 289–303.

33 Lascars were seamen recruited on European ship originating from certain areas of South Asia, Southeastern Asia and Arab world although they were generally identified as Indian men. Lascars did not have the same occupational status and working conditions as other foreign seamen. Dixon, *Seamen and the Law*, 242; Conrad Dixon, “Lascars: The Forgotten Seamen,” in *Working Men Who Got Wet: Proceeding from the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project July 24- July 26, 1980*, eds., Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (St John’s Memorial University of Newfoundland: Maritime History Group, 1980), 265–81.

Table 1: Common countries of origin of foreign seamen awarded the British War Medal and WWI Mercantile Marine Medals, 1914 – 1925 (n=157,424).

Country of origin	Number of men
1. Ireland	739
2. Sweden	712
3. Scotland	608
4. India	582
5. Greece	522
6. Russia	496
7. Norway	422
8. Finland	379
9. Denmark	373
10. Australia	367
11. Holland*	318
12. Spain	284
13. Africa**	228
14. The United States/North America ***	164
15. Belgium	156
16. Italy	155
17. Canada	144
18. France	103
19. South Africa	103
20. Ceylon	91
21. Portugal	70
22. Germany****	11
Together	7,027

Source: The National Archives (United Kingdom): Merchant seamen’s campaign medal records 1914 – 1918, accessed May 29, 2016, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/merchant-seamens-campaign-medal-records-1914-1918/ .

* Holland and the Netherlands.

**The place of birth registered merely as “Africa”. See the comments in the Appendix 1.

***May include hits referring to Canada.

****Germany and Prussia.

The figures not only show Britain's relationship with belligerent states (i. e., the small number of Germans) but also the preponderance of Scandinavian nationalities. Sweden's contribution is certainly remarkable, but so is Norway's which by the outbreak of WWI had the fourth biggest Merchant Navy in the world and provided much of the manpower for foreign demand. The number of Finns is also very significant if one considers the total population of Finland at the time was only 3.3 million, and that many of them may still have been counted as Russians.

In fact, when many of the sailors from Nordic countries ended up working in a wartime capacity for the British, without becoming naturalized British subjects, this compromised their countries' supposed neutrality (though Finland was a part of Russia until 1917). It was not just that their maritime industries were destroyed by the war, but they also experienced human losses. Norway, Sweden and Denmark reported losing altogether almost 2,500 merchant seamen in a civilian capacity during the war,³⁴ nor did the war make it any easier to control the unofficial entry of aliens. Many Scandinavian merchant seamen ended up in Britain after their ships were sunk, and innkeepers, landlords of lodging houses, and employers were keen to use these men as willing customers or a cheap source of labor. The Finnish Seamen's Mission also tried to find workplaces on land for Finnish sailors in Britain instead of letting them be part of the war effort. For others, however, working for the British in the war may have been the best job option available in a situation where getting back home was difficult if not impossible.³⁵

Not all of those sailors who jumped ship or served in the British Navy in WWI became documented migrants, let alone British citizens. In 1844, the naturalization process became cheaper and easier as the Secretary of State for the Home Office was able to grant citizenship without recourse to Parliament, but before this most of the foreigners residing in the UK avoided any legal formalities altogether, finding it easier to live as "denizens" (or legalized alien) rather than citizens in their adopted country. Even after 1844, naturalization remained the path of immigration for only a select few, i. e. those newcomers who were seen

³⁴ Bjarne Bendtsen, "Neutral merchant seamen at war. The experiences of Scandinavian seamen during the First World War," in *Scandinavia in the First World War: Studies in the War Experience of the Northern Neutrals*, ed. Claes Ahlund (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012), 328–330.

³⁵ Erkki Kansanaho, *Kirkko ja merenkulkijat. Sata vuotta Suomen Merimieslähestysseuran työtä* [The Church and the Seafarers. A Hundred Years of the Finnish Association of Seamen's Mission] (Helsinki: Kirjapaja, 1983), 11, 115, 134.

as “beneficial” for Britain. These were usually entrepreneurs, skilled craftsmen, and academics; and they also happened to be Protestant Christians.³⁶

A search through all the declarations and certificates of naturalization from the period 1870 – 1912 returns 325 hits for people coming from Finland, only three of whom were women.³⁷ More precisely, 56 Finnish-born people were naturalized in the period 1893 – 1911, all but one of whom were men. Almost all of these, 44 were sailors, and 39 of them even had a specific merchant marine status e.g., able-bodied seaman, ship’s carpenter, second mate, or master mariner.³⁸ So a naturalized Finnish immigrant was not only likely to be mariner, but a skilled one. This is interesting, as back in Finland, and also in Sweden skilled men formed only a quarter of the entire maritime workforce. In addition, it was mainly young, unskilled, and unmarried seamen who deserted Finnish and Swedish ships.³⁹ The opposite is confirmed by the data for the period 1893 – 1911; of the 56 naturalized Finns in Britain, 53 were over 30 years of age, 28 were married, and 13 had children.⁴⁰ From this we can gather that most migrant seamen would spend a relatively long time in the country before going through the formal naturalization process. One factor which must have spurred married migrants to committing it was the Naturalisation Law of 1870 (in force right through to 1914), which decreed that British women would lose their citizenship if married to foreign men.⁴¹

36 Schulte Beerbühl, *The Forgotten Majority*, 3–4, 13–19. See also National Archives’ guide to “Naturalisation, registration and British citizenship,” accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/naturalisation-british-citizen-ship/>.

37 The National Archives (United Kingdom), Home Office (HO334) “Naturalisation Certificates and Declarations, 1870 – 1912”. Searched using term “born in Finland,” accessed June 1, 2016, <http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=9156> .

38 The naturalization certificates include the person’s name, age, birth place, relationship, event date, current residence, parents’ names, names of children, marital status, and occupational status. This information was based on personal documents and information supplied by applicants. There are some mistakes, for instance three people are recorded as coming from Finland when in fact their birthplace is in Sweden.

39 The average age for 1752–1950 was 27 on sailing ships, and 30 on steamers in Sweden and Finland. Jari Ojala, Jaakko Pehkonen and Jari Eloranta, “Nuorten miesten ammatti? Ikä ja ammattitaito merenkulussa 1700-luvulta 1900-luvun puoliväliin. [A young man’s profession? Age and skill in shipping from the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century],” in *Työ merellä* [Work at sea] *Nautica Fennica 2015 – 2016*, ed. Tapio Bergholm (Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Antiquities, 2016), 27–31.

40 “Naturalisation Certificates and Declarations, 1870 – 1912”.

41 Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, “British Nationality Policy as a Counter-Revolutionary Strategy During the Napoleonic Wars: the Emergence of Modern Naturalization Regulations”, in *Migra-*

Simply looking at those who were granted citizenship, i. e., only the most fortunate and skilled individuals, thus really only scratches the surface of mobile maritime labor. In many ways, the nineteenth century was an era of free immigration to Britain. One did not require citizenship to work on board a merchant vessel sailing under the Red Ensign, or for that matter any other country's flag. After jumping ship in a UK port, it was important to find another as soon as possible, so it was usually on the quayside where individuals made a swift job-related decision to switch their country of residence.

Although, as David Feldman points out, unwanted immigrants had been expelled at the local level by poor law guardians, parish officers and voluntary organizations, there was no actual state control of immigration up until the 1905 Aliens Act. It was primarily targeted towards Russian Jews and poorer immigrants who could not prove their ability to support themselves and their families. The unemployed and those who had criminal a background could be ordered to leave the country. Thereafter, all aliens entering the country, including foreign sailors who had jumped ship, needed not only a valid passport, but to register themselves with the local authorities. Meanwhile, the landlords of lodging houses were obliged to report the foreigners who were lodging with them for longer periods of time.⁴²

When WWI ended, the shipping recession caused mass unemployment in the maritime sector and foreign seamen residing in Britain without the means to support themselves were now seen as highly undesirable. The Aliens Order 1920 was brought in to this effect, as an amendment to the Aliens Restriction Act of the previous year. It required all aliens seeking employment or residence to register with the police. Failure to do so would result in deportation. Further, under the Order, the Home Secretary retained the power to deport any alien whose presence was considered detrimental to the public good. The Special Restrictions Order of 1925 went one step further in requiring all “coloured alien seamen” to register themselves as aliens if they could not prove that they were sub-

tion Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War-Period, eds. Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 58–67.

⁴² David Feldman, “Was the Nineteenth Century a Golden Age for Immigrants? The Changing Articulation of National, Local, and Voluntary Controls,” in *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War-Period*, Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil eds. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 167–175.

jects of the British Empire.⁴³ But, as we shall see below, rather than stopping these unofficial routes of migration, it only made them more visible.

Finnish sailors ashore – discussions in the press

When using newspapers as a source for the typical portrayal of a Finnish sailor in a British port, certain difficulties arise. The events which make the news are usually exceptional cases where something contrary to everyday life has happened. Thus, the normal, peaceful coexistence between locals and migrants seldom gains publicity as this is often less “newsworthy”. I stress this point because it also has a bearing on the parameters within which the research is done. The way I looked for Finnish immigrant seamen in the large newspaper databases was to use search terms such as “Finn”, “Finnish” or “Finnish seaman”. These phrases are of course less relevant in cases where the foreigner is fully settled into the community, or where his or her ethnic or national background is less of an issue. For example, advertisements by entrepreneurs originally from Finland did not need to stress the Finnishness of the entrepreneur if it had nothing to do with what was being sold. This means the data is, therefore, skewed more towards those stories in which ethnic background is an issue. For instance, the twentieth-century hits outnumber the nineteenth-century hits, almost certainly because of the Crimean War (1853–1856). The impact of that war on events in the Baltic Sea, were the main news stories most likely to mention Finns in the nineteenth century.

Even so, the news stories concerning Finnish merchant sailors during the Crimean War show how, for the most part, they were portrayed as innocent outsiders and victims of Russian acts of aggression. The war not only led to British attacks off the Finnish coast in the summer of 1854, but also if Finnish merchant ships were in British waters at the outbreak of war, and they had not left quickly enough, they were captured and any people onboard would be taken prisoner. For former Finnish and British trading partners, this often led to complicated situations; for instance, some cases were taken to the Admiralty Court to decide if prisoners should be set free.⁴⁴ It seems that, at the beginning of the war, the general opinion in Britain was that Finns were eager to reunite with Sweden and willing to emphasize their civilization, culture, and race as distinct from Russian culture. It then followed that Finns must be pro-British by default, and merit

⁴³ Torpey, “Passports and the Development of Immigration Controls,” 73–86.

⁴⁴ The Morning Post (London) June 22, 1854 “Prize cases -the Phoenix.”

sympathy.⁴⁵ Thus, in many ways, the reports of captured Finnish merchant seamen, such as the one below from the *Worcestershire Chronicle*, struck a similarly rosy tone as the citation by Zacharias Topelius at the beginning of this chapter:

“The men think very little of the Csar, and have expressed their readiness to join her Majesty’s service. [...] They appear hardy and active young fellows and are described to very smart sailors. According to the present rate of wages in the port of London, the men will be entitled to an advance sufficient to equip themselves for the new service.”⁴⁶

Although the above is clearly war propaganda, the Crimean War did indeed offer, just as WWI would also, an unexpected opportunity for foreign sailors to migrate. The restrictions on the hire of foreign seamen had just been abolished in the UK and there was a shortage of labor. During the wartime years of the 1850s, countless seamen found themselves marooned beyond the Baltic Sea because their ship had either been captured, lost or sold abroad. Many of them had to find some other means of making a living and could only make their way home after the war.

So far we have looked at how these aliens were viewed in times of war, but how were they seen by local seaport communities in times of peace? To look at one such community (Kingston-Upon-Hull) in detail, its local newspapers—for the most part the *Hull Daily Mail*, but others too (see table 2)⁴⁷ are analyzed more closely. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hull more than doubled its population from roughly 85,000 inhabitants in 1851 to over 200,000 and much of this was due to the growth of maritime industries, such as merchant shipping, passenger traffic, ship building, fishing (including the whaling that Hull was famous for until the 1860s), and the building of the docks themselves. Indeed, the docklands by the Humber also grew up into distinct areas with their own infrastructure of shipping offices, warehouses, taverns, wharves, seamen’s churches,

⁴⁵ Halmesvirta, *The British Concept of the Finnish ‘Race’*, 150–65. One example of this sympathy was when, in 1856, the British Quakers collected money to compensate Finns who had suffered in the British bombing of Finland.

⁴⁶ *Worcestershire Chronicle* May 10, 1854.

⁴⁷ The *Hull Daily Mail* online archive spans the years 1885–1950, and its predecessor was the *Hull Packet* (available online 1787–1885). The latter plays minor role in the present study, as it produced only five hits between 1850 and 1855, two of which reporting on the Baltic Sea events of the Crimean War (1853–1856). The same goes with the *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald* (available online for 1886–1937) and the *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette* (available online for 1794–1867).

and boarding houses, alongside the houses of local residents.⁴⁸ I have used the local newspapers to trace how encounters with foreign sailors were reported to locals in one of the busiest ports in the UK.

Table 2: Search hits with “Finnish sailor”, “Finnish seaman”, and “Finnish seamen” in Hull local newspapers.

Publication	Hits 1850–1899	Hits 1900–1950
Hull Packet	5	
Hull Daily Mail	5	108
Hull and Eastern Counties Herald	5	
Hull Advertiser and Exchange	5	

Source: British Library Newspaper Archive, accessed on May 20, 2016, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>.

The table above shows the paucity of data that is available for the nineteenth century when compared to the first half of the twentieth century, and from this we might assume that Finns made the news more often only after state immigration controls came into force, which would of course have made foreigners more topical. Yet in spite of this skew in the data towards the era of stricter immigration policy, not all of the analysis can be simply explained by the change in legislation. Not only was there perhaps more news available all round in the twentieth century, as the population of the local area increased and printing technology improved, but also local circumstances and individual encounters with foreigners would have made a difference, too. It is these encounters which we will turn to next.

Trouble downtown and on the dockside

As might be expected, from the explanations above, most of the search hits were from newspaper stories which cast a negative light on foreigners. In the maritime context, this meant stories about criminal acts on the waterfront; breaking and

⁴⁸ K.J. Allison, “Modern Hull,” in *A History of the County of York East Riding: Volume 1, the City of Kingston Upon Hull*, ed. K. J. Allison (London: [s.n.], 1969), 215–286; *British History Online*, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/yorks/east/vol1/pp215-286>.

entering, smuggling, accidents, brawls, and other violent acts.⁴⁹ However, stories that are more neutral, and sometimes even positive, can be found, for example in news about ships arriving or departing, especially if the ship was particularly big or famous.⁵⁰

Stories about Finnish sailors caught jumping ship and being taken into police custody were rare in the nineteenth century,⁵¹ but after the legislation of 1905, 1919, and 1920 prohibiting unregistered aliens, such stories broke into the news more often, and opinions were made clear. In one report, for instance, telling of the sentencing of a Finnish sailor to 21 days hard labor for living ashore without permission, “Mr. G.J. Bentham (chairman), at the Hull Police Court, [...] said that men like him are not wanted in England.” In this case, the sailor explained his behavior with an excuse that seems to have belonged to bygone times; he had missed the departure of his Finnish ship from London after getting drunk and staying out too late, and had ended up in Hull by chance.⁵² Similar cases in which Finnish sailors could not properly explain to Hull’s Aliens Registration Department precisely why they had been left ashore were poorly tolerated and were simply filed under failure to register. Some men, for example, could not remember the name of the foreign ship on which they had been sailing, and some were even suspected of being stowaways rather than professional seamen.⁵³

It is quite possible, as already mentioned, that crimes in which the accused were foreigners were more likely to be reported than if they were locals. Interestingly though, a look at the minutes of the local court shows that the nationality of the accused was rarely recorded in cases of petty crime. For example, the *Hull Daily Mail* reported that two Finnish sailors were accused of theft in August 1914, and sure enough this tallies with the minutes of Hull Magistrates Court. And yet,

49 All the searches have been made in the British Library Newspaper Archive online database, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> by searching with the words “Finnish seaman”, “Finnish seamen”, and “Finnish sailor/s”. Thereafter the search has been framed to the Yorkshire and the Humber, England -region.

50 For instance, *Hull Daily Mail* July 2, 1936 “English Girl before Mast of a Finnish Sailing Ship. Four-Masters Arrival at Hull. Thrills of Grain Race from Australia”; June 8, 1933 “Rare Type of Ship Visits Hull. World’s Largest Sailing Vessel.”

51 For instance, *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette* September 3, 1864; *Hull Packet* September 2, 1864; *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald* September 26, 1867.

52 *Hull Daily Mail* October 22, 1927 “Not Wanted”; see also November 8, 1927 “A Free Trip to England”; January 7, 1921 “Before Hull Bench To-day”; August 13, 1919 “Before Hull Bench To-day”; November 20, 1923 “Something We Don’t Pay For.”

53 *Hull Daily Mail* November 8, 1927 “A Free trip to England”; see also December 23, 1935 “Seaman in Court at Hull.”

as in countless other court cases in the same year, there is no mention in these minutes of the nationality of the perpetrators, even if all the other details of the crime are carefully described; the theft of two celluloid soap cases, a date-stamped bar of soap and a toothbrush. It is thus impossible to verify exactly how many foreigners were sentenced in these proceedings. The minutes also prove that the newspapers chose their particular case out of dozens of others that would have happened on the same day.⁵⁴

In many cases, troubles began if foreign sailors went downtown, leaving the dock areas where sailors usually spent their free time between trips. Nevertheless, even if they stayed there, tales of fighting and cases in which people had died “down at the docks” became an exotic source of rumors for local people, so it would be only natural that these stories would be preferred over others.⁵⁵ Equally, the trials and tribulations of a foreigner would make good copy, arousing sympathy even from a distance, as in the *Hull Daily Mail*'s case of a Finnish sailor who was found hanged on board a steamer stranded at Dungarvan in Ireland.⁵⁶ Another was the cover story in the *Hull Daily Mail*, from September 1912, in which a brawl between two Finns in Hull's Victoria Dock, led to the death of a young fireman who worked on board the Finnish ship, *Arcturus*, a passenger liner which regularly plied between Hull and the Finnish ports. The brawl had started after a ‘Midnight Dock Dance’, which had been organized in a transit hall for the sailors, stewardesses, and others working on all the ships that were in port at the time.⁵⁷ Andres Nikolai Mattjus, who worked as a trimmer on board the *Arcturus* and eye-witnessed the incident, wrote his relatives a letter which goes into greater detail about it and reveals more about the dockside culture among foreigners.

“The killing took place in what we call the ‘circle’ (piiri) by the end of our gangway leading to the dock. [...] The maids [catering personnel] from our ship had once again organized a dance there and men from other ships were also present. Suddenly a quarrel broke out over the women from our ship. The only man involved in it from our ship was the man who got

⁵⁴ *Hull Daily Mail* August 20, 1914; C DPM/2/137 Hull Magistrates Court, Minute Book July–September 1914.

⁵⁵ For instance, *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald* January 10, 1867 “Cutting and Wounding”; *Hull Daily Mail* September June 12, 1933 “Seaman in Hiding” [A Finnish seaman hiding his other crew members for the opposite opinions in terms of Finnish dock strikes]; December 24, 1900 “Smoke From the Hold. Young Finn's Extraordinary Conduct”; April 28, 1917 “Hull Dock Murder.”

⁵⁶ *Hull Daily Mail* December 11, 1923 “Fear of the Lord.”

⁵⁷ *Hull Daily Mail* September 18, 1912 “Midnight Dock Dance. Tragedy Last Night. A Fatal Quarrel. Death of a Young Fireman.”

killed, [his name]. He was a bit drunk and began the fight with a man from Turku [Finnish city]. Then two other Finns appeared who had nothing to do with the fight and hit him from behind [...].”⁵⁸

Mattjus was, in fact, the man who inherited the job the killed man left behind, becoming thereafter a fireman. According to this letter, ships’ crews would organize spare time activities, like dances themselves; and these would usually happen down at the docks, close to (if not on) the ships, where crews of the same or different nationalities could meet and socialize, and if there was sometimes fighting, it would cause no trouble for local people.

But occasionally things did get out of hand with foreign seamen downtown too. In one case, dating from as early as 1864, a Finnish sailor ended up stabbing a young local man as he thought he was looking for a fight. His poor language skills cannot have helped either:

“It appeared that the prisoner was one of a group of foreigners who were, on Saturday night last, very prone for mischief. One of the party very gratuitously said to a young man named Thacker, who was walking quietly on, ‘Me vill fight you.’ Thacker declined the offer, saying ‘No, not tonight,’ and proceeded on his way. The foreigner followed and then knocked his hat off [...].”⁵⁹

In another case almost 65 years later, not much seemed to have changed. A heavily drunk Finnish sailor

“was said to have been shouting and causing a crowd to collect in Hedon-road [Hedon Road]. He went to a motor-car standing outside a café and smashed a window, and when P.C. Middleyard got there [the sailor] was bleeding from a cut hand. While he was there [the sailor] struck P.C. Tansley in the “vicinity of the eye”, and then on the way to the police station, between the two officers, he was violent and kicked so much that he had to be handcuffed.”

58 Jukka-Pekka Mattjus, “Anders Mattjus – jännittävää merimieselämää 1900-luvun alun melkskeissä [Anders Mattjus – the Exciting Life of a Sailor at the Restless Start of the 1900s],” *Turun matkustajahöyrylaivat [Turku Steamers]*, accessed 18 April, 2017, <http://www.turkusteamers.com/oheistietoa/juttuja/mattjus/Anders%20Mattjus.pdf>. “Tämä tapahtui niin sanotulla piirillä eli tokaan vievän laivasillan alkupäässä. Siellä pitävät laivaväki tanssiaisia keskenänsä. Laivan piikat olivat taas hommanneet sinne tanssit. Sinne tuli miehiä toisista laivoista. Siinä syntyi riitaa miesten kesken, johon oli synnä juuri meidän laivan piikat. Meidän puolelta oli ainoastaan murhattu, jonka nimi oli [miehen nimi]. Hän oli hiukan juovuksissa. Riita syntyi ensin hänen ja erään Turkulaisen pojan kanssa. He rupesivat ensin nyrkeillä tappelemaan, mutta silloin tuli kaksi muuta miestä joille asia ei kuulunutkaan edes ja löivät [tapettua miestä] vaivihkaa takaapäin ennen kuin kukaan kerkesi estämään.” Free translation by the author.

59 *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette* September 8, 1864; September 28, 1864.

What stands out from the article is that the sailor's violent behavior was not explained by the ethnic background but with his occupation: "He is a sailor and probably enough you said 'a salt', said Mr Macdonald (the stipendiary magistrate)."⁶⁰ Surprisingly little was written about foreign sailors' as a potential risk regarding local women and their safety, given the rough reputation most sailors had.⁶¹ Only one "West-Hull Woman's story" told of a widow and her friend who were crowded by foreigners on the street when one of them, a drunken Finnish sailor no less, "put his arms around Mrs Smith and kissed her."⁶²

These cases draw the line between the urban space of the actual town and the dockside, as noted in other works considering port cultures, where a cosmopolitan but insalubrious waterfront is seen as a place apart.⁶³ Indeed, sailors' most significant encounters in port would normally be with other sailors (including those from other countries), innkeepers, the landlords of lodging houses, and Seamen's missionaries, rather than with the locals, unless they worked on the docks.⁶⁴ This was their perspective of the multiethnic dockside, a place where they could cross paths with other strangers in the city, strangers who shared their line of work in some way.

But of course foreign seamen were not only the perpetrators of crime; they were sometimes the victims of it too, at the mercy of locals who could take advantage of their poor language skills, their lack of knowledge of the area, and their tendency to get drunk.⁶⁵ Also the way some less reputable landlords treated foreigners desperate to find jobs caught the attention of local reporters. They would promise to introduce men to local captains at a broker's office but would then keep their advance notes. Interestingly enough, foreign seamen

⁶⁰ *Hull Daily Mail* May 2, 1939.

⁶¹ Valerie Burton, "Whoring, Drinking Sailors': Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-century British Shipping," in *Working out Gender. Perspectives from Labour History*, Margaret Walsh ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999), 84–101.

⁶² *Hull Daily Mail* December 19, 1924. Similar kind of story *Hull Daily Mail* January 26, 1929.

⁶³ Brad Beaven, Karl Bell, Karl and Robert James, "Introduction," in *Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International Histories of the Waterfront*, eds. Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Robert James (London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2016), 1–10.

⁶⁴ Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, A Survey of the Mentality of Finnish Merchant Sailors at the Turn of the Century (*Scandinavian Journal of History* 14:4, 1989), 300. See also Tytti Steel, "Encounters on the Waterfront: Negotiating Identities in the Context of Sailortown Culture," in *Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International Histories of the Waterfront*, eds. Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Robert James (London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2016), 111–132.

⁶⁵ *Hull Daily Mail* June 23, 1919.

who were at the mercy of these “crimps” would usually get their money back if cases like this ever got to court.⁶⁶

Finns and other Scandinavians staying in the town were also supposed to know how the local police and judicial system worked so that they would, for example, come to court when called as a witness.⁶⁷ Due to the well-established trade connections between Finland and Hull, Finnish seamen were even able to get the help of an interpreter when taken to court. There was always somebody who knew some Finnish or Swedish. But despite these best intentions, it might be that these seamen would not understand a word of Finnish and just say “ja” to everything, as they would be from the Swedish-speaking minority of Finns. Indeed, there were even some cases when interpreters were needed to sort out mutual quarrels *between* Finns in Hull’s magistrate court, as they did not share the same language.⁶⁸ Perceptions attached to such things as language, ethnicity, and maritime occupation could thus amplify the sense of otherness in these sailors when they got into trouble. When locals met them, not all these attributes would necessarily be picked up on though, as they were more likely to lump nationalities together into the stereotype of a “foreign sailor” or “old salt” (typically seen as a lower-class [white] man).

Despite these predominantly negative reports of Finnish seamen in the local papers, there are also aspects of humor and familiarity in the ways they were depicted. Occasionally there are even positive, or at least neutral mentions of those who had settled down and become permanent residents. In April 1935, for instance, the *Hull Daily Mail* wrote about a 73 year-old former sailor-turned-tailor (or “outfitter”) from Finland who had been living in the city since 1891, and had never applied for UK citizenship. After he first arrived in Hull, he had carried on going to sea until 1895, and then in 1897 he became the landlord of a boarding house. Later on he started his business as a tailor, until he went bankrupt to the tune of over £400, after which he had been scraping by with the help of his daughter.⁶⁹ Despite its penurious ending, the man’s story is proof that a sailor-migrant within the town of Hull itself, could run a business, start a family, and live out his entire life without ever needing to become a formally naturalized

⁶⁶ *Hull Daily Mail* November 21, 1892 “Illegally Supplying Seamen.”

⁶⁷ *Hull Daily Mail* September 3, 1915 “Coroner and Neglectful Witnesses,” where two Norwegian sailors were blamed for not coming to the court in the case of a dead Finnish sailor found down at the Victoria dock.

⁶⁸ *Hull Daily Mail* November 15, 1910 “A Finnish Quarrel. Difficulty at Court,” July 13, 1938. “They all said ‘ja’ ,” December 24, 1949 “Why Finns Sometimes ‘Speak Queer.’”

⁶⁹ *Hull Daily Mail* April 15, 1935. The case is also found in *Hull Magistrates: Bankruptcy Book* (C TFD/3/3) October 10, 1927 – September 29, 1938, Indexed 2 volume.

British citizen. Another story in a neutral tone was about an old Estonian sailor who had died in the Seamen’s Lodging House in the company of a Finnish sailor. In passing it was mentioned that the Estonian had been lodging at the house for three years.⁷⁰

“Pious and hardworking” – The British Seamen’s Mission’s descriptions of foreigners

In the late nineteenth century, British theories about the hierarchies of race placed Finns close to the dominant Western, “Teutonic”, “Norman” and “Gothic” races in terms of their physical attributes and civilization.⁷¹ This comes across in some of the statements by British ship-owners about Scandinavian and German sailors being sober and obedient workers, even if they fell somewhat short of British sailors in terms of their physique, manners, tidiness, and attitude.⁷² A similar tone can be found in the reports by the British *Mission to Seafarers* (an Anglican missionary society founded in 1856 with the original name *Missions to Seamen Afloat, at Home and Abroad*) about its work among seafarers.⁷³ These reports are from earlier decades than the tales of crime in the newspapers and they paint a much more favorable picture of Finnish sailors in among the wide range of foreign sailors they worked with.

Besides those who the Mission to Seafarers catered for onshore in the latter half of the nineteenth century, its floating congregation was described by the Chaplain of Plymouth as “Mahomet’s stern disciples, the native of ‘the Isles of Greece’, Spaniard and Italian, vivacious Gaul and phlegmatic Teuton, Slavonian subject of the Czar and hardy Norseman, Dane, and Swede, and occasional visitors from our kinsmen across the Atlantic [...]”⁷⁴ The chaplains and preachers would board vessels that had docked in ports throughout the United Kingdom, and hand out bibles, tracts and other religious texts that had been translated into several foreign languages. These were either handed out or sold in a very organized manner, with texts sorted into different languages. For example, in 1860–75, a total of 7,721 Bibles, 5,644 New Testaments, 40,604 Bible portions, and countless hymn and prayer books published in languages other than English were sold or distributed to foreign sailors in just the Cork Estuary and Har-

⁷⁰ *Hull Daily Mail* March 31, 1934 “Died During Talk – Man’s Sudden End in Hull.”

⁷¹ Halmesvirta, *The British Conception of the Finnish ‘race’*, 162.

⁷² Dixon, *Seamen and the Law*, 248–249.

⁷³ The Mission to Seamen Port Reports 1867–1875, 1871–1881.

⁷⁴ The Mission to Seamen Port Reports, Plymouth 1876.

bor. Three percent of these foreign language Bibles and New Testaments were in Finnish.⁷⁵ According to the Mission's reports, the visits had great social meaning for both the sailors and preachers, although it was not always easy to persuade mariners.

Regardless of their nationality, seamen were portrayed in these reports as being more the victims of sin, rather than as agents of it. One from 1870 even went so far as to claim, referring to sailors in Rochester, Kent, that "the men were so fearful of their enemies [prostitutes, and hustlers of one kind or another], they would hardly go ashore. Of course those who too often plunder our sailors are terribly embittered against us; but we must go forward, and by God's blessing, strive in every way to benefit our own sailors and those of all nations".⁷⁶ In this respect, when sailors were involved in violence they were seen as victims of a battle waged inside their souls between good and evil, as the missionaries' magazine, *Word on the Waters* (1877) shows.

"For instance, while I was at Liverpool a month ago, there was a seaman who was brought before the magistrates for stabbing another man in a drunken brawl, and yet the man (the very day before) had been wrecked; and after he had escaped plunged again into water to save a woman and a child who were drowning, and saved them. This was a life so noble in its natural religion as to touch the heroic. Yet he violated the simplest element of Revelations – 'Thou shall not kill'."⁷⁷

The transnational emergence of Seamen's Missions was indicative of the general increase in concern over seamen's welfare in the nineteenth century. In this context Protestant Missions presented their own manifesto for saving seamen's souls from the decadence of the dockside and the need to provide for the religious welfare of all seafarers.⁷⁸ It is interesting that the somewhat pessimistic social concern of Finnish Seamen's missionaries for these migrant sailors "doomed" to a life of alienation is not present in the reports by the British priests on their work with foreign sailors.⁷⁹ The tone reflects more the challenge they will face winning their souls back to God, rather than any critique of their condition as, regardless of nationality, the remarks are mainly positive and optimistic.

⁷⁵ *Word on the Waters* no. 138 (1876), 17. "Table of circulation Among Seamen Afloat in Cork River and Harbour, by Chaplain of the 'Missions to Seamen' During Fifteen Years," from January 1, 1860, to December 31, 1874.

⁷⁶ On Greek sailors threat of being "robbed" by crimps see Mission to Seafarers Port reports, Rochester 1870.

⁷⁷ *Word on the Waters*, no. 141 (1877), 20.

⁷⁸ Gorski, "Protecting British Seafarers on the Continent," 71–95.

⁷⁹ Hinkkanen, "Expressions of longing, sources of anxiety," 63–79.

“The foreign sailors, also, who come from nearly every part of the world, call for attention; they are delighted to receive tracts in their own language, and when I speak some a few words in their own native tongue, they appear greatly pleased. Spaniards and Italians (especially the former) receive a Bible with great delight, reading as much of it in harbor as they can.”⁸⁰

Catholic Italians were however, depicted as being very poor and sometimes not at all willing to read, even if literate. Given that Italians were among the most typical foreign labor to be found on British merchant ships, it is curious that there are no further comments on their ethnicity and Catholic faith in the documents.

Scandinavians in turn were usually reported as being quite religious, eager to read texts out loud, and to sing religious songs with the preachers on board. There was even some comparison of piety, in 1876, between each of the Scandinavian nationalities. Norwegians, for instance, were regarded as especially righteous due to the rugged terrain and ruthless climate of their country. “By side of that personal piety, however, there has always existed a great deal of darkness and ungodliness, and many sailors are: ‘stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears’.” Meanwhile, Swedes were depicted as polite but slightly less religious. “When a clergyman goes on board a Swedish vessel he is often met with much courtesy, but this is not always really meant as indication of interest in his message [...]” In the same text, Danes garner even less respect.

“His [the Dane’s] religion is not so earnest as that of the Norwegian, nor his manner so courteous as the Swede. He is very converse, and speaks readily upon different subjects, except personal religion. He takes great interest in things temporal and what belongs to the earth; and is always fond of amusements [...] Notwithstanding this, however, many Danish seamen are very religious people, and the number of devout sailors is growing constantly.”⁸¹

Finns were hardly mentioned in this comparison, but one report from a couple of years earlier claimed that the “Russ and Finns are even more eager for books than Norwegians, and I have seen many a well-thumbed Prayer Book being read by them in the forecabin on a Sunday morning. One always meets a warm reception on board such vessels.”⁸²

In Hull, there were several forms of welfare work provided by various seamen’s missions. There was the evangelical Port of Hull Society’s East Coast Mission (1821), the Hull Mariners’ Church & Sailors’ Rest Society (1841), also known

80 The Mission to Seamen Port Reports, Plymouth 1868.

81 *Word on the Waters* no. 138 (1876), 38–39.

82 The Mission to Seamen Port Reports, Dublin 1875.

as the Hull Mission to Seamen (Church of England), and the Hull Sailors' Home (1859); all of which also served foreign sailors and promoted a cosmopolitan atmosphere by bringing them together all under the same roof. By 1934, however, a report on the Sailors' Home pointed out that it was only "patronized by a few local unmarried seamen, and seamen passing through port, with occasional shipwrecked crews and a small number of distressed seamen sent with free tickets for lodging [...] The Home does not appear to be as popular as it might be, and it is a pity it should not be utilized by all sailors of the port as a social gathering place rather more than is now the case."⁸³ This comment was clearly harking back to a romanticized multiethnic era in the days before WWI, when the coming and going of sailors was less formally controlled, the same world which Zacharias Topelius populated with his characteristically happy-go-lucky Finnish sailors traveling around the world.

Conclusions

Migration and working abroad has always characterized the lives of mariners. Work on board a ship takes one far from home and into a multiethnic and multicultural environment; and this mobile maritime labor also shaped the urban maritime community too; not just through peaceful coexistence, but also through violence and hierarchies being established between different nationalities and ethnic groups of sailors, not to mention the sailors and locals. This chapter has focused on a period of increased mobility relating to the growth of maritime related industries in the UK. Sailors from Finland and other Nordic countries were already a typical sight in the British Merchant Navy and in British ports in the early nineteenth century, and by WWI, their number had risen in disproportionate terms to the small overall population of these countries.

Finnish sailors would join the international labor market mainly by deserting their original ship once in a British port. Although this was, strictly speaking, illegal, it was often worth the risk for seamen seeking jobs in Britain where the demand for labor was high. It was also possible to reside in the country as an alien without permanent assimilation or even naturalization. Many Finnish sailors would therefore hang around in port until their next job on another ship came along. However, with first the Crimean War, and then WWI, many Finnish sailors found themselves either marooned in Britain, or forced to join the British army.

⁸³ The Mission to Seamen Port Reports, Hull 1886–1942. Report on visit to Seamen's Welfare institutions in Hull, March 30, 1934.

In the early twentieth century, immigration policy was tightened. This meant that the illegal entry of foreign seamen caught the attentions of local media, as the police would now have to arrest sailors who did not have the necessary papers. The newspaper materials used in this chapter might not be enough to show the rise of racial intolerance and nationalism in the early twentieth century, but the fact that most of them were reporting on crimes committed by foreign seamen would have given locals the impression that these seamen were up to no good. But this was not so much a case of ethnic stereotyping, their otherness had more to do with being sailors. This “race of their own” had a reputation for getting drunk and into fights. Another aspect to bear in mind is that sailors’ work, leisure, and social life was often restricted to the harbor areas. They were more likely to come across fellow compatriots and sailors from other countries there than any of the locals, unless they ventured downtown.

On the other hand sailors were also seen by some as an occupational group vulnerable, not only to physical threats at sea, but to moral threats in foreign ports far from home, too. This is clear from the Seamen’s Mission reports and magazines, which seldom criticized its maritime congregation. Finns, like fellow Scandinavians, were seen as devout, willing to read, and God-fearing, perhaps due to the everyday risks of death at sea which made them thankful to be alive. Both these negative and positive views on Finnish migrant mariners were based on combining certain aspects of their ethnicity, language and skills at work. They were both familiar and yet exotic, coming from the peripheries of Europe, and their work skills were lauded, as we have seen from the comments of Zacharias Topelius. However, their position in seaport towns was not a secure one, especially when unemployment hit the shipping sector after WWI.

Interestingly, there is one factor that may have affected how Finnish sailors were perceived, but is only weakly implied across the sources used in this chapter. As Hinkkanen points out, the Finns used sailing ships for much longer than other North European and Scandinavian fleets which had all switched to steam at the beginning of the twentieth century. Serving on a sailing ship meant putting up with much longer voyages and port visits, it was physically more demanding and dangerous work, and the sailors would have been paid comparatively less.⁸⁴ This old-fashioned technology may have had the effect on how foreign sailors from the furthest corner of the Baltic were seen; and how, for example, their arguments for emigrating were taken, as they will have appeared poorer. This poses further questions about sailors’ mobility and how it relates to the way their working conditions and culture changed in the Age of Steam.

⁸⁴ Hinkkanen, “A Survey of the Mentality,” 301–302.

Appendix 1: Common countries of origin of foreign seamen employed in British Merchant Navy, 1835–1857 (n=1,915,010).

Country of Origin	Number of men
1. Canada	16,676
2. Scotland	6,510
3. Ireland	3,668
4. India	2,343
5. Australia	1,443
6. Holland*	1,350
7. Greece	739
8. Sweden	653
9. South Africa	439
10. Denmark	334
11. Africa**	299
12. Germany***	276
13. Norway	267
14. East Indies	262
15. France	206
16. Ceylon	204
17. Italy	171
18. Portugal	115
19. Finland	99
20. Belgium	94
21. Spain	59
22. Russia	44
23. North America/United States****	32

Appendix 1: Common countries of origin of foreign seamen employed in British Merchant Navy, 1835–1857 (n= 1,915,010). *(Continued)*

Country of Origin	Number of men
Together	36,283

Source: The National Archives (United Kingdom): Britain, Merchant Seamen, 1835–1857, accessed May 27, 2016, <http://search.findmypast.com/search-world-Records/britain-merchant-seamen-1835-1857>

* Holland + Netherlands

** The hits concerning Africa are unclear as men's place of birth was often recorded as being merely "Africa". There are, for example, only two results from the search by "Somaliland". Thus it is unclear how men coming from the later African colonies were registered in the early nineteenth century altogether. The share of South African seamen, however, is prominent and listed separately. On similar shortcomings considering India see the chapter.

***Germany +Prussia

**** May include hits referring to Canada

