

How did Britain's Maritime Connections lead to Migration?

What can the experiences of individuals and communities connected with seafaring show us about Migration?

Background information:



Collections References: PAF1749, PAE3062

One way that we can investigate the history of migration is through the stories of individuals or communities of peoples moving around the world.

Maritime connections mean those connections that exist between different places by sea. For hundreds of years this was the only way to travel to the British Isles and the main way by which people moved around the world.

What were the experiences of people who travelled to Britain along these routes.

Lascars and Ayahs

Lascars were South Asian seamen who worked on British Vessels. Ayahs were women employed by British families to care for children on the journey from Asia to Britain and sometimes as ongoing nurses or nannies.

South Asian sailors received far lower wages than white sailors and shipping companies were quite happy to play communities off against each other to keep wages down. These divisions helped to deepen and foster racist attitudes. Lascars were at times treated cruelly on ships and at times were attacked or ridiculed.

Ayahs received similarly harsh treatment, and many were abandoned once they had arrived in Britain. Charitable homes were eventually established to support Ayahs and Lascars in London. These acted as employment agencies finding people places on ships back to Asia.

Lascars settled in areas around ports like London, Cardiff, Liverpool, and South Shields. Some of these migrants ended up staying and began to marry women from the towns they had settled in. Ayahs found accommodation in boarding houses, some finding work and others seeking work on a return passage.

In London south Asian men became associated with jobs like crossing sweepers, street vending or travelling musicians as these were 'unofficial' jobs available to them.



Black Communities and Seafarers

Small Black communities had existed in Britain for hundreds of years, since at least the 1500s. Many enslaved people were brought to Britain and lots of these people ended up living in port communities. Some became sailors. Areas of port towns were often multiracial with communities grouping around these areas. These sailors were present on naval ships and trading vessels and were part of the workforce that connected Britain with the world via these ships. Many worked in the engine rooms due to prejudicial ideas about race which were used to justify enslavement and then empire.

Migration, People and Communities

Watch the 'Migration, People and Communities Video' and collect as much information using questions highlighted below. They match different sections of the video. You will then need to use this information together with the background information and your own knowledge from studying migration over time to answer the overall question.

More sailors were employed in West Africa and the Caribbean to fill ships, being paid less than white sailors. There was tension when white sailors who were unable to find work blamed black sailors for their predicament. This contributed to attacks on migrant communities and even to race riots in which communities were targeted in different port towns, for instance in 1919.



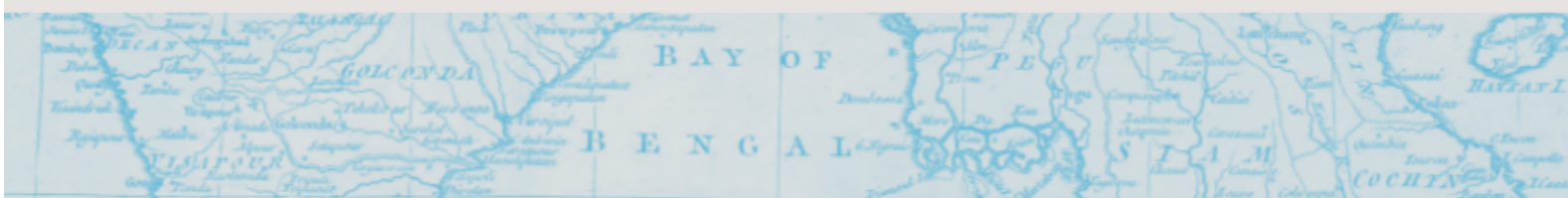
The Crew of the Cawdor in the late 1800s

Who was George Ryan?

Who was George Ryan?

Why did George Ryan migrate/move?

What does George Ryan's story show us about the connection between maritime activity and migration?



Case Study 2 – James Gillespie

Who was James Gillespie and how do we know about his life?

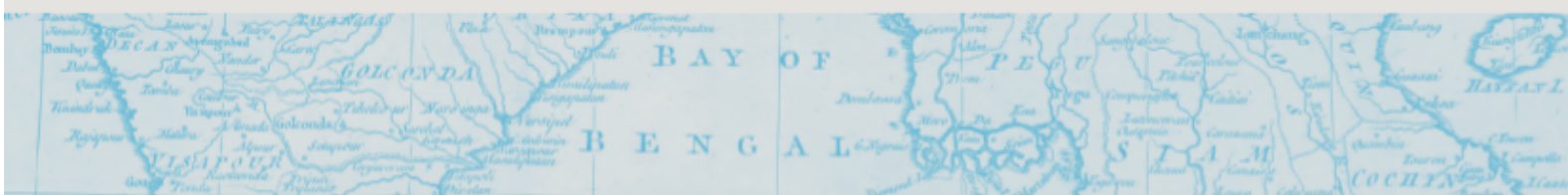
What does James Gillespie's story show us about the connection between maritime activity and migration?

Ayahs and Lascars

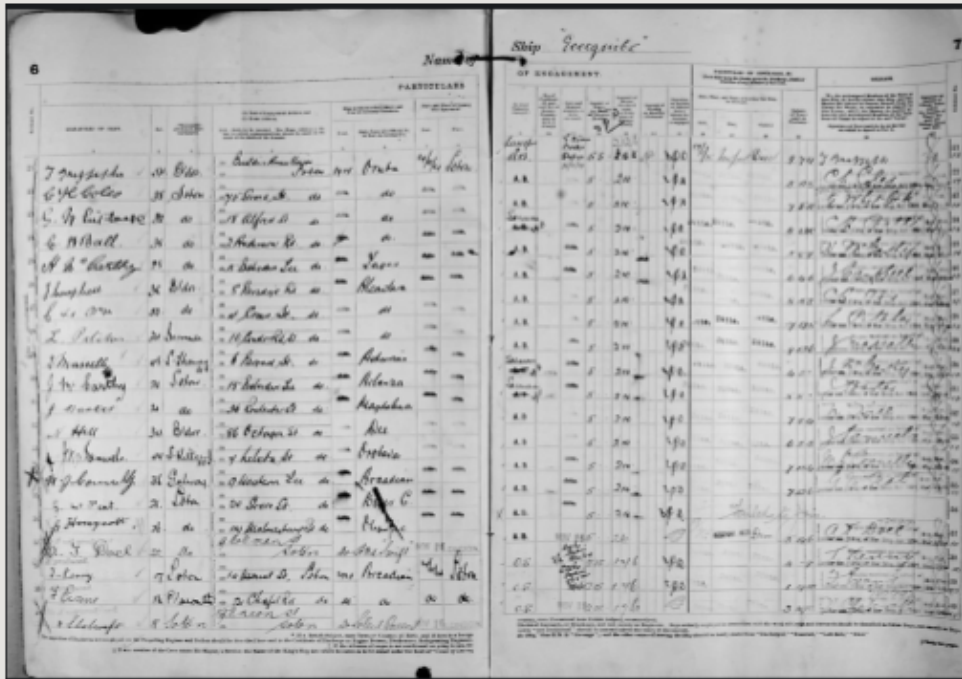
When did South Asian people start to come to the British Isles, and why?

Who were Lascars and Ayahs?

Why is it challenging to investigate personal experiences of both Lascars and Ayahs?



Historical Sources Investigation:



This is a crew list from a ship called Essequibo. This ship was sailing between the British Isles and the Caribbean in 1915. Crew lists include information on the crew, including their names, their nationality or place of birth, a contact address, as well as their role on the ship. What information can you work out about migration using this document?

Name Age Birthplace Address

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Name	Age	Birthplace	Address
J. Grogan	34	Bldo.	25, Broad St. Soton
G.H. Gyles	35	Soton	17, Broad St. Soton
G. H. Lister	35	do	18, Alfred St. Soton
G. H. Ball	35	do	2, Andrew St. Soton
A. H. Bastley	35	do	15, Broad St. Soton
J. H. Smith	38	Bldo.	5, Broad St. Soton
G. W. Cook	38	do	11, Broad St. Soton
L. Lister	38	do	10, Broad St. Soton
J. Marshall	41	Soton	1, Broad St. Soton
J. H. Bartley	38	Soton	15, Broad St. Soton

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Look through this page of the crew list.

1. Highlight all the sailors who were born OUTSIDE the British Isles.

Soton in the address column means Southampton. The do. means ditto which means 'same as above'. Almost all these sailors, have an address in Southampton.

2. Why do you think these sailors from the Caribbean came to Britain and stayed?

3. What does this show about the migration of people working on ships to Britain and its ports?

