Black seamen in British ports c. 1851-1939: The seamen's boarding house, migration and settlement

Black Seamen in British Ports c.1851–1939: The Seamen's Boarding House, Migration & Settlement

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Declaration

I, Joseph Radcliffe, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own and that credit has been given where the work of others has been referenced. Parts of Chapter One and Chapter Two will be used in a chapter due to be published in November 2024.

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Signed

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the seamen's boarding house in the migration and settlement of black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in London, Liverpool and Cardiff from 1851–1939. The seamen's boarding house was a vital institution providing a myriad of services both economic and social to the transitory seaman and by the nineteenth century had established itself as one of the main pillars of the port economy. The influence and power the trade held over the seaman and the labour market saw it come under increasing scrutiny from both local and state authorities who took action to control the trade and curtail its influence. Despite this, the seamen's boarding house remained crucial to the livelihood of black seamen as they migrated and settled in Britain throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The thesis employs the seamen's boarding house as a prism through which the growth and development of areas of black settlement in British port cities can be observed. Furthermore, by examining Caribbean and West African seamen's relationship to the boarding house it also provides an insight into both demographics and, crucially, the complex social dynamics at play between these two groups of seafaring migrants as well as the wider multiethnic space of port cities. Through the seamen's boarding house, it also allows for an in-depth exploration of how the trade and Caribbean and West African seamen navigated the complex and challenging social, economic and political climate of the interwar years and how they affected areas of black settlement in British port cities. Ultimately, this thesis posits that the seamen's boarding house was critical to the social and economic lives of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain and played a crucial role developing, supporting and maintaining areas of black settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff.

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Abbreviations

BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
CBMA	Cardiff Boarding Masters' Association
CBMGS	Cardiff Boarding Masters' Guarantee Society
CBMFPS	Cardiff Boarding Masters' Friendly and Protection Society
CBHL	Cathays Branch and Heritage Library
BL	British Library
GA	Glamorgan Archives
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LBMGC	Liverpool Boarding Masters' Guarantee Company
LRO	Liverpool Record Office
LSE, WL	London School of Economics, Women's Library
NASFU	National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union
NSFU	National Sailors' and Firemen's Union
NUS	National Union of Seamen
TNA	The National Archives

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Introduction

Introduction to the Thesis

Black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa were one of the largest and most prominent demographic groups within Britain's early non-white population before the Second World War. As a direct response to international competition, the British shipping industry looked to colonial possessions to recruit cheap labour and black seamen became an increasing presence within the British merchant marine labour force from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.[1] As a consequence, growing numbers found themselves working on ships travelling to and from metropolitan Britain and, as the century progressed, their presence became more notable in British port cities. Many of these men would ultimately exercise their right as British subjects and settle in the metropole. Pivotal to their time and experience on land was the seamen's boarding house. As Caribbean and West African men began to lay down roots, the seamen' boarding house would play a multifaceted role in their migration and settlement in Britain. These establishments provided a refuge for the transient seamen but even more valuable, they acted as a base from which these men could navigate the social space of the port.

The seamen's boarding house was a contact zone: a cross-cultural, colonial melting pot of interaction and encounter, unique within the heart of the Imperial metropole where typically these zones existed on its fringes. Representative of the maritime space in which they inhabited, the seamen's boarding house was a stalwart of nineteenth century dockside neighbourhoods, or 'sailortowns', across the globe, essential to both the economy of the port and to the seamen that they housed. Sailortowns were a unique urban space, the place where the seaman came ashore and where, as Graeme Milne describes, 'the maritime and urban worlds collided.'[2] However, these spaces gained a negative and insalubrious reputation and came to be identified with transience, drink, prostitution and 'foreignness'.[3] Brad Beaven has described how portrayals of sailortowns altered as the age of sail gave way to the age of steam

[1] Laura Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice', Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.3.
[2] Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront: Sailortown* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.1.
[3] John Belchem, 'Port Cities, Cosmopolitanism and "Otherness" : The (Mis)Representation of Liverpool', in *Regenerating Culture and Society Architecture, Art and Urban Style within the Global Politics of City Branding*, ed. by Jonathan Harris and Richard J. Williams (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p.283.

in the nineteenth century and transformed the perception of the space from 'a socially heterogeneous playground' to something more depraved and dangerous.[4] Seamen's boarding houses, as Johanthan Thayer argues, sat at the epicentre of this maritime world. A product of the market economy, its influence reached into the social, cultural and economic heart of sailortown, and as a consequence they loomed large in public imagination in the nineteenth century as dens of vice in need of moralising.[5] Nonetheless, despite its often poor reputation the seamen's boarding house provided essential services extending beyond simple lodgings for black seamen. It acted as a social and compatriot network, a hub for organised activity, and, crucially, a support system for seamen who found themselves unemployed or struggling to secure regular work. Whilst primarily a transient space the boarding house would come to play a key role in the twentieth century promoting and supporting permanent settlement. Sitting at the heart of Caribbean and West African seamen's migration network, its presence and influence extended into nearly every aspect of their lives in the metropole.

This thesis explores the vital role the seamen's boarding house played in the migration and settlement of seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain from 1851–1939. Through the use of the seamen's boarding house as a prism in three key sites, London, Liverpool and Cardiff, this study will construct a social history that will allow for a qualitative approach to the understanding of migration and settlement growth. Simultaneously it will illuminate the complex demographics and socio-economic factors that defined areas of black settlement and the wider multiethnic space of sailortown in which they were situated. This approach provides an opportunity to explore migration and settlement from the bottom up and gain a clearer understanding of the lived experience and the processes through which Caribbean and West African seamen settled in Britain. Historians have acknowledged that migration of black seamen to Britain from colonies within the British Empire was a gradual process that involved the settlement of small numbers over a long period, as opposed to the mass movement of people such as the Irish escaping famine or Jews from Eastern Europe fleeing pogroms.[6] These groups

[4] Brad Beaven, 'From Jolly Sailor to Proletarian Jack: The Remaking of Sailortown and the Merchant Seafarer in Victorian London', in *Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International Histories of the Waterfront, c.1700—2000*, ed. by Brad Beaven, Karl Bell, and Robert James (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 159–178.
[5] Johnathan Thayer, '"Sailors" Homes': Sailors' Boarding Houses, Maritime Reform, and Contested Domestic Space in New York's Sailortown', in *Negotiating Masculinities and Modernity in the Maritime World, 1815–1940: A Sailor's Progress?*, ed. Karen Downing, Johnathan Thayer, and Joanne Begiato (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), pp. 205–24.
[6] Diane Frost, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p.231.

numerically dwarfed migration from Britain's colonies.[7] The gradual nature of this migration process can complicate our understanding of the factors that drove the growth and development of black settlement. Using the seamen's boarding house as a prism helps to overcome these complications and allows for a more detailed and nuanced understanding of migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen. Furthermore, a bottom-up approach aligns with the established argument of historians such as Laura Tabili and demonstrates that not only was Britain both culturally and ethnically heterogeneous before 1945 but that these early migrants were already well-integrated into certain parts of British society by the mid-twentieth century.[8]

This thesis has chosen to focus on black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa to allow for a broader understanding of migration and settlement in Britain. Nancy Green has highlighted that while having merit, single group studies can be problematic in the study of migration as they tend to neglect universal aspects of the migration experience that transcends ethnic differences.[9] In taking a bilateral approach and concentrating on the migration of these two groups, this thesis provides the opportunity to excavate and reveal both the individual and shared experiences of migrant groups and deepen understanding of the interplay between them. Furthermore, a detailed exploration of the evolving relationship between the seamen's boarding house and Caribbean and West African seamen provides a better understanding of how these seafaring migrant groups encountered the culture and society of the port, the factors that underpinned different migrant groups desire to settle permanently and the networks that facilitated their integration into the multiethnic and multinational dockside neighbourhoods of London, Liverpool and Cardiff.

A largely chronological approach shall be adopted, constructing a social history that will explore these relationships and their development in detail. First, this thesis will look at the seamen's boarding house's role as an important pillar of the port economy in the nineteenth century, interwoven into the social and economic life of both seamen and the port itself. Through this position within the contested, multiethnic space of sailortown it will establish an understanding of

[7] Robert Miles, 'Migration to Britain: The Significance of a Historical Approach', *International Migration*, 29 (1991), p.529.
[8] Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841–1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.2
[9] Nancy L. Green, 'The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 13 (1994), p.4.

how and why it would become fundamental to the livelihood and settlement of black seamen in Britain. Secondly, through the seamen's boarding house, it will explore and deepen our understanding of the growth and development of areas of black settlement in the port cities of Liverpool and Cardiff during the most profound period of black seamen's migration to Britain from the latter half of the nineteenth century. It will provide insight into the dynamics within areas of black settlement and the complexity of the relationships of those that called them home. Thirdly, following an expansion in the number of seamen's boarding houses as a result of the First World War, this study will examine the pivotal role it played in maintaining and protecting established areas of black settlement as they came under social and political attack. Finally, the changes in dynamics within areas of black settlement during the interwar years and the declining role of the seaman's boarding house within them shall be considered. Altogether, this thesis will develop the historiography of early black Britain by bridging the gap between an early, small and disparate black presence and established, vibrant and dynamic neighbourhoods. The development of areas of black settlement in Britain was complex and by placing Caribbean and West African seamen and their relationship to the seamen' boarding house at the centre of the narrative will demonstrate the significant agency they had in their migration and the growth of black settlement in Britain.

Historiography

The time period of 1851–1939, central to the focus of this thesis, is key to developing the understanding of migration and settlement of black seamen. Histories that explore earlier periods of black British history, in particular those that bridge the end of slavery from the mid-nineteenth century through to the outbreak of the Second World War, remain limited but are vital to a richer understanding of British history. Historians within this field, such as Raymond Costello, seek to challenge what he terms the 'Windrush myth', a narrative that places the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* as year zero for black migration to Britain.[10] There is much debate among historians of postcolonial black Britain who argue that using the 'Windrush-as-origin narrative' advances a Caribbean-centric story about the origins of the black British presence, misrepresenting the significant diversity that existed amongst earlier black migrants.[11] Migrants from Africa, in particular, made up a large percentage of Britain's pre-war black

[10] Ray Costello, 'The Making of a Liverpool Community: An Elusive Narrative' in *Britain's Black Past* ed. Gretchen Gerzina (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp.99-118.
[11] Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.14-15.

presence. Acknowledging the pervasiveness of this narrative, Kennetta Hammond Perry contends that it, 'fails to capture the imperial roots of enslavement and colonisation that shaped the routes leading Caribbean and other Black and Asian Commonwealth migrants to Britain well before the mid-twentieth century.'[12] Challenging this narrative has wider ramification within modern British society, especially in light of the 2018 'Windrush Scandal'.[13] Wendy Williams' subsequent report concluded that one of main conditions that allowed this scandal to develop was a profound lack of knowledge within the UK Home Office of the long history of the internal and external migration of black Britons to Britain.[14] This study will add to the historiography that challenges the 'Windrush myth' and continue the work to dispel the myopia surrounding Britain's early black presence.

Some important and influential histories have been successful in situating the early black presence within a longer historical context in Britain. Peter Fryer's seminal work, *Staying Power,* first published in 1984, is still indispensable to historians of black British history almost forty years later due to the scope and depth of his research. In his introduction to the revised edition in 2010, the social theorist Paul Gilroy contends that this work has 'established the basic

[12] Kennetta Hammond Perry, 'Undoing The Work Of The Windrush Narrative', *History Workshop*, 11/9/2018 <https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/undoing-the-work-of-the-windrush-narrative/> [Accessed 21 October 2021].

[13] In May 2012, the then Home Secretary of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph* was quoted as saying, 'The aim is to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal migration.' Part of a party political promise by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron to bring down net migration to Britain, it was to have a profound effect on a whole generation of black Britons. In order to hit required targets, the Home Office expanded border controls beyond ports and airports and introduced checks into hospitals, estate agents, universities and council offices creating an army of what Gentleman describes as outsourced, unpaid informal immigration officers. To have a passport became imperative to proving one's British status. This increase in checks exposed a class of people that hitherto, prior to this new legislation, for varying reasons, did not possess the necessary documentation. These were men and women who came to Britain from Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean commonly referred to as the 'Windrush Generation'. Most arrived as children in the 1950s and 1960s, often travelling on their parent's or another family member's passport at a time when under the British Nationality Act 1948 they had the legal right to settle and work in Britain. Subsequent government legislation removed this right in 1971, however those already domiciled in Britain retained the right to remain. With the introduction of the 'hostile environment', undocumented black British citizens of the 'Windrush Generation' were classed as illegal immigrants. Many lost their jobs, their homes, access to benefits such as the state pension and in extreme cases were denied medical care and faced detainment and deportation. Caught up in governmental bureaucracy, the onus of proof was placed on the individual to prove their British status, something many, despite collating personal information often highlighting decades of residence in Britain, were unable to do until the story was exposed in *The Guardian* newspaper and public pressure forced the government to reassess its treatment of the 'Windrush Generation'. See Ameila Gentleman, *The Windrush Betrayal: Exposing the Hostile Environment* (London: Guardian Faber, 2019).

[14] Wendy Williams, *Windrush Lessons Learned Review* (London: HM Government, 2020), p.139.

orientation point for historical scholarship on Britain's black communities.'[15] Fryer's ubiquitous presence in monographs and articles that explore the early history of black people in Britain corroborates Gilroy's claim. *Staying Power's* sweeping narrative structure covering Roman Britain through to the aftermath of the 1981 riots, while not providing detailed analysis of one particular period, does permit historians to ground themselves in the long history of the black presence in Britain and begin to place the migration and settlement of black seamen within it. Similar contemporary works on this scale exist, most notably from James Walvin and Ron Ramdin.[16] Furthermore, there have been recent attempts to revise Fryer's expansive approach with Professor Hakim Adi's 2022 book focusing the lens firmly on the African and Caribbean presence in Britain over several centuries.[17] Whilst Adi manages to present a formidable and engaging history, his reliance on secondary sources means that his work does not progress our understanding of earlier periods of black history much beyond that of which Fryer achieved in the 1980s. Moreover, often by their very nature, these broad expansive histories provide a top-down look and lose sense of the lived experience as black people in Britain navigated social, economic and political challenges. Which is why to understand migration and settlement effectively, this thesis posits that a more focused approach is required.

Additionally, these broader, more expansive works within the historiography of black British history constructed by scholars such as Fryer and Adi place a focus on and explore within their historical narratives the development of black solidarity and resistance among the earliest black presence in Britain. The conceptual model of 'resistance' has proved popular as a means through which to view colonial relationships as it allows historians to explore the innovative and conscious means by which colonised people resisted and adapted to a European, imperial presence.[18] Often applied to the history of colonial frontiers it can be just as relevant closer to home as a framework with which to examine colonised subjects' experiences in metropolitan Britain itself. Fryer and Adi, have framed black resistance and solidarity in Britain during the period of this study as primarily an anti-racist and, to a similar extent, anti-imperial movement. This early black presence in Britain finds itself presented as a transnational, intra-colonial

[15] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).
[16] James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society ,1555–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 1973); Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1987).
[17] Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2022).
[18] Lynette Russell, 'Introduction,' in *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies* ed. by Lynette Russell (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001). p.4.

collective which came together and built solidarities over a long period to resist and combat both white racism and the effects of colonialism. However, Rob Waters argues, that in the case of Fryer specifically, this approach comes at the cost of understanding of black culture and social lives, with the everyday only visible when viewed through the lens of race politics. This results, Waters contends, in our understanding of blackness in Britain being reduced simply to resistance.[19] Furthermore, relationships between black groups in the metropole were complex. As Winston James highlights the black experience in Britain was one, 'of tensions as well as self-identifications and solidarities formed among these groups.'[20] Other scholars agree with James suggesting that in fact black solidarity developed as much through the negotiation of differences among people of African descent as against shared racial oppression.[21] This thesis, by narrowing the lens and focusing on the social lives of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain rather than on the broader politics of transnational anti-racist and anti-imperial resistance will allow for an exploration of these broad themes through an examination of the everyday and the local. This approach, in turn, will present a deeper, more nuanced exploration of the negotiations and contradictions present within developing solidarities between two specific groups of black migrants in Britain before 1939.

There have been some scholars of black history who have undertaken more focused work that illuminates specific elements of Britain's early black presence throughout the period of this study. Jeffrey Green narrows his lens on Britain's Edwardian black population challenging what he sees as the prevailing focus on students and seamen, drawing attention to a broader, more diverse black presence in the country.[22] While Hakim Adi's earlier research centres on West African students in Britain, tracing their formative years in the metropole and examines how these experiences informed the development of their politics and created a solidarity that helped pave the way for independence movements in Africa.[23] These works are important as they help locate black seamen within a wider black presence that was represented at nearly every level of the social hierarchy in Britain by the early twentieth century. However, the metropolitan and

[19] Rob Waters, 'Thinking Black: Peter Fryer's Staying Power and the Politics of Writing Black British History in the 1980s', *History Workshop Journal*, 82 (2016), pp.115-116.
[20] Winston James, 'The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. by Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.34.
[21] Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), p.45.
[22] Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).
[23] Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998).

colonial born black Britons that are the focus of these studies are primarily middle-class and educated and do not concern themselves with migration and settlement growth that will be the focus of this thesis.

Earlier historiography of the seamen's boarding house, its keeper and its role within the social and economic life of sailortowns has tended to draw focus to the more negative aspects of the trade, in particular the illegal activities associated with and perpetrated by the crimp. The crimp was simultaneously a real and imagined threat within sailortowns. The term came to be used to describe the unruly elements within the port economy who exploited seamen on land and the practice came to be most widely associated with the boarding house trade in the nineteenth century. These histories engendered images and ideas established in contemporary culture which paint the whole profession of the seamen's boarding house keeper as 'semi-criminal' middlemen leeching off the seaman's wages while simultaneously manipulating the labour market for their own financial gain.[24] Conrad Dixon attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of the boarding house keeper by highlighting the important role they played in the supply of labour to the shipping industry.[25] However, his focus on the crimp means he falls short of making a clear distinction between the fraudulent and more reputable arms of the trade, a fine and opaque line at the best of times especially as seamen's boarding houses remained unregulated until the late nineteenth century. More recently, Graeme Milne has built on Dixon's approach devoting a whole chapter to crimps and crimping. By separating them and their practices from his short exploration of the seamen's boarding house he clearly distinguishes between the two aspects of the trade, succeeding in disabusing some of the more hard-worn negative stereotypes and drawing attention to the social, moral and economic complexity associated with the trade.[26]

Milne's work and the historiography on the seamen's boarding house recognise that it was as much a part of the social, as well as economic, fabric of sailortowns.[27] It provided a base in the port that supported migrant seamen as they navigated the social space of sailortown while simultaneously offering business and employment opportunities for seamen who were tired of a transient life and looking to settle on land. However, these explorations of the seamen's

[24] Judith Fingard, 'Masters and Friends, Crimps and Abstainers: Agents of Control in 19th Century Sailortown', *Acadiensis,* 8 (1978), pp.22-46.
[25] Conrad Dixon, 'The Rise and Fall of the Crimp 1840–1914' in *British Shipping and Seamen, 1630–1960: Some Studies* ed. Simon Fisher (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984), pp.49-67.
[26] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* pp.146-153.
[27] Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p.196; Thayer, p.207.

boarding house are limited to the heyday of sailortown culture in the nineteenth century. This study will broaden the history of the seamen's boarding house beyond the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Extending the history of the seamen's boarding house will reveal the changing position it had within the port economy as it navigated an ever changing social and economic landscape. Simultaneously through its relationship to black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa it will explore what role it continued to play in the lives of migrant seamen and to what extent, if any, it remained significant as they settled in the metropole.

Fundamentally, it was the seamen's boarding house's provision as a base for black seamen during their time in the metropole that would see it become an integral and essential part in their migration network, facilitating and supporting cross-community migration. Wendy Gamber notes that the boarding house has historically been crucial to migration, linking their growth in America in the nineteenth century to what has been termed the 'market revolution', a turn to a free-market economy powered by increasing industrialisation and the emerging dependence on wage labour that saw an explosion of internal economic migration as workers moved from the countryside to cities across the country and encouraged external migration from Europe. She goes as far to argue that this 'revolution' would not have been possible without the boarding house and its keeper providing the housing that sustained it.[28] This thesis aligns with Gamber's argument and will explore in the context of the port cities of London, Cardiff and Liverpool the extent to which the seamen's boarding house supported the port economy and facilitated and sustained the migration of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain.

Whilst fundamental to the understanding of migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain, the significant relationship of black seamen to the seamen's boarding house, especially with regards to migration and settlement, presents a lacuna within the historiography. This gap is particularly surprising as historians have long acknowledged the importance of its role and prominence within early settlements. Diane Frost acknowledges that it was likely to have played a significant role in the settlement of West African seamen in Liverpool.[29] Whereas Laura Tabili goes further and contends that it was the most important institution available to black seamen in Britain, offering both a support and social network along

[28] Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p.3.
[29] Diane Frost, 'Racism and Social Segregation: Settlement Patterns of West African Seamen in Liverpool since the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22 (1996), p.91.

with protection from an intermittently hostile host nation.[30] Tabili's later work on migration and settlement in South Shields sees the seamen's boarding house woven more intimately into her narrative acknowledging further the dual role it played supporting both maritime trade and the diverse population of transient seafaring migrants that manned it in Britain.[31] By placing the relationship of black seamen to the seamen's boarding house at the centre of this study addresses the lacuna and provides deeper insight into the social lives of early black migrants as well as how their relationship to labour markets and the state in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain dictated the development of areas of black settlement. Moreover, it can also highlight to what extent the seamen's boarding house aided and facilitated navigation through the multiethnic space of British port cities and how this may have supported black seamen's transition from a transient to settled migrant.

Furthermore, understanding the seamen's boarding house as a contact zone makes for an innovative and novel method through which to study the colonial migrant experience in the context of British port cities. The concept of contact zones has played an important role in the historiography of the British Empire and the experience of colonised people. Scholar Mary-Louise Pratt first coined the term 'contact zone', describing them as a 'space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations.'[32] Contact zones, above all, were spaces of encounter. As Ballantyne and Burton have explored in the context of World History, these were commonly physical spaces; not only meetings on imperial frontiers, but also diverse spaces such as courtrooms, sports fields and colonial clubs.[33] However, they can also be less tangible, intellectual spaces. For example, Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles have investigated how women's raced and classed bodies became vital contact zones within Canadian colonial history.[34] Challenging the perspective that contact zones merely existed on the very fringes of empire, Antoinette Burton has chosen to focus on the importance of contact zones in metropolitan Britain itself. Through viewing historical encounters 'at home', she argues, historians are best positioned to

[30] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* pp.141-142.
[31] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* pp.226-231.
[32] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.8.
[33] Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, 'Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories', in *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* ed. by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton (Duke University Press, 2005), p.6.
[34] Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles, 'Introduction', in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* ed. by Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), p.1.

understand the myriad ways that colonised subjects were able to challenge imperial power relations and structures.[35] Ultimately, what contact zones help to expose is the collective agency and resilience of colonised people, while simultaneously revealing the means by which they developed resistance implicit within colonial power relationships.[36] Perhaps most crucially, as Anna Maguire contends, the study of contact zones 'allow us to locate encounters within everyday relations and everyday spaces.'[37] The seamen's boarding house was part of the everyday environment and everyday relations of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain. Through an exploration of this crucial space as a contact zone, this thesis will explore the impact that it had on the development of black settlement in Britain as well as black seamen's integration into, and interaction with, the wider port society of London, Liverpool and Cardiff and Britain more broadly. Furthermore, this approach adds further to the historiography of contact zones by placing the focus on contact between two sets of colonised migrants in Britain where more commonly it is framed around the coloniser/colonised dynamic.

The central relationship of Caribbean and West African seamen to the seamen's boarding house raises further questions as to the role of the boarding house keeper within areas of black settlement in Britain. When it comes to community leaders, Norma Myers has argued that one has to be careful not to impose them on Britain's early black population as some historians have done previously. The most notable examples of this she highlights is the citing of the three black literary greats of the eighteenth century, Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho and Ottobah Cugoano as leaders of Britain's black community. However, Myers argues that these men had more in common with the white middle classes than the majority of black people living in Britain at the time.[38] By the twentieth century as more substantial areas of black settlement formed, prominent and long-established members and families began to emerge from within. In sailortown neighbourhoods these were often, but not exclusively, boarding house keepers and their families. This thesis will consider through the seamen's boarding house keepers' position within the social hierarchy of areas of black settlement to what extent they could be seen to fulfil the role of proto-community leaders.

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[35] Antoinette M. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[36] Sarah Winter, 'Response: Settler Colonialism and the Contact Zone', *Victorian Studies*, 61 (2019), p.290.
[37] Anna Maguire, *Contact Zones of the First World War: Cultural Encounters across the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p.9.
[38] Norma Myers, 'In Search of the Invisible: British Black Family and Community, 1780–1830', *Slavery & Abolition*, 13 (1992), pp.156–158.

The migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen in British port cities is complex, and placing them within the study of migration is complicated. Port cities have a long interwoven history with migration. Not only did migrants contribute to growth they also played a prominent role in transforming the maritime urban environment. As Reimann and Öhman have argued, 'people on the move prompted complex cultural exchanges and competing impulses that rendered port cities particularly dynamic places.'[39] While migration was not necessarily the primary motivation for West African and Caribbean seamen to go to sea, those that did choose to migrate were able to utilise established trade routes across the Atlantic to reach Britain and ultimately settle. Black seamen fall into some of the established conventions of cross-community migration as laid down by Patrick Manning; small in number, primarily young and mainly male. However, their position as a migrant cannot be neatly situated within one category and with the exception of invaders, Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain could be found to occupy any one of the other migrant categories as defined by Manning; settlers, sojourners and itinerants[40]. It is the mobility of black seamen and the fluid nature of their migration that make them an intriguing subject of study, in addition to the local factors that helped dissolve boundaries and turn these transients into settlers. As Manning argues, cross-community migration is, in most cases, facilitated by networks, chains of people, organisations and institutions that facilitate movement and, significantly, at the end, settlement.[41] This thesis contends that the seamen's boarding house was a vital institution in the migration of Caribbean and West African seamen that played a crucial role facilitating their settlement in Britain, and it is through the boarding house that the complex study of their migration can be addressed.

The role of the seamen's boarding house and its relationship to black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa is particularly important when considered as part of the wider social, political and cultural exchange taking place during the period of this study. Across the Atlantic Ocean cooperation and solidarity among people of African origin was being built and developed through a variety of transnational networks and a variety of means and methods. Paul Gilroy first conceptualised what he termed the 'black' Atlantic as a means to transcend constrictive

[39] Christina Reimann and Martin Öhman, 'Introduction', in *Migrants and the Making of the Urban-Maritime World : Agency and Mobility in Port Cities, c. 1570–1940*, ed. by Christina Reimann and Martin Öhman (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp.2-3.
[40] Patrick Manning, 'Cross-Community Migration: A Distinctive Human Pattern', *Social Evolution & History,* 5 (2006), p.41.
[41] *ibid*.

national and nationalistic perspectives and draw a connection to a more fluid and international processes which proved integral to the development of black solidarity and cooperation.[42] Political organisation was one of the primary ways in which diverse and disparate groups of people of African origin forged relationships globally. The development of movements such as Pan-Africanism, which initially stressed the unity of all people of African origin before developing into an anti-colonial movement, was particularly important and influential in these processes.[43] While leading political actors such as Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement League also played a significant role in the development of an international black solidarity. Instrumental to the dissemination and rapid spread of politics and ideas such as 'Garveyism' across the 'black' Atlantic was the importance of a vibrant print culture that developed through an informal international distribution network staffed mainly by black seamen.[44] Running parallel to these more conventional political movements was a more broad black internationalism that developed on both sides of the Atlantic via black radicals who developed a unique diasporic identity and politics born out of their experiences with race, class, gender, and colour.[45] Labour organisation likewise proved instrumental in the development of black internationalism from below with seamen again playing an integral role.[46] However, as Lara Putnam argues, it was not only through explicit political organisation, authors and print culture that black solidarity and cooperation was consolidated and built. Other, implicit, methods proved just as vitally important to its development such as music and dance that spread a different kind of internationalism generated and circulated by people across the broad spectrum of gender and class.[47] While vital to the spread of ideas and identity, some scholars have chosen to challenge the historiographical focus on the transnational, 'black' Atlantic. Jacqueline Nassy Brown chooses to emphasise social relations, culture and politics generated locally. This approach, she contends, generates a better understanding of a black global world through negotiations undertaken on a local level that have profoundly shaped racial identity and the formation of communities.[48] Like

[42] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso Books, 1993).
[43] Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Adi, *West Africans in Britain,* p.4.
[44] Jake Thorold, 'Black Political Worlds in Port Cities: Garveyism in 1920s Britain', *Journal of African Economies*, 33 (2022), pp.1-3.
[45] Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
[46] David Featherstone, 'Maritime Labour and Subaltern Geographies of Internationalism: Black Internationalist Seafarers' Organising in the Interwar Period', *Political Geography*, 49 (2015), pp. 7–16.
[47] Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age*, New edition (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2013).
[48] Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

the port itself, the seamen boarding house was at once local and global connected to the local social and economic environment of the port and part of these wider transnational global networks. This thesis will consider the unique environment of the boarding house and the role it played within the wider explicit and implicit cultural exchange happening across the Atlantic in developing cooperation and solidarity between Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain.

Fundamental to the history of Caribbean and West African seamen's migration to and settlement in Britain was their relationship to British shipping. In his expansive social history of black seamen on British ships, Ray Costello illuminates nearly 400 years of continuous presence playing a pivotal role in the expansion of both the merchant navy and the Empire itself. Costello contends that this free movement of black seamen played an instrumental role, alongside the slave trade, in a wider global distribution of people of African origin.[49] Patrick Manning supports Costello's argument and suggests that the two great processes of industrialisation and emancipation had a profound and transformative effect on the African diaspora.[50] Both scholars agree that after the initial forced migration propagated by the slave trade, seamen of African origin had considerable agency in dictating their own movement and settlement. Alan Cobley suggests that for Caribbean seamen going to sea could provide a level of social, economic and even psychological independence after the end of slavery.[51] Perhaps the most profound indication of agency among black seamen was their decision to base themselves in Britain allowing them to take advantage of better employment opportunities available to them in the metropole. Furthermore, through the seamen's boarding house and black seamen's relationship to it allows for this study to examine how and why many would ultimately choose to lay down permanent roots and how influential the boarding house was in aiding such a transition.

Few scholars have examined the growth and development of black settlement in Britain. Diane Frost proves a notable exception and her extensive research has explored in depth the migration and settlement of Kru seamen from West Africa in Liverpool.[52] The Kru ethnic group

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[49] Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[50] Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.17.
[51] Alan Cobley, 'Black West Indian Seamen in the British Merchant Marine in the Mid Nineteenth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, 58 (2004), p.259.
[52] Frost, *Work and Community;* Diane Frost, 'Racism, Work and Unemployment: West African Seamen in Liverpool 1880s–1960s', in *Ethnic Labour and British Imperial Trade: A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the*

initially migrated from the independent nation state of Liberia to the British colony of Sierra Leone, attracted to the colony by the prospect of wage labour.[53] Whilst Frost's focus on a single ethnic group in a single city allows for her to focus her study, it conceals the complexity of the black presence in Liverpool. It will be shown that while West African's, and Kru in particular, came to dominate the black presence in the city, an exploration of the seamen's boarding house and the growth and development of areas of black settlement over a long period can reveal insights into the complexity of demographics of black seamen in Liverpool as well as London and Cardiff. Early pre war areas of black settlement are vital to contextualising the larger post war settlements and by expanding this exploration to consider several key port cities provides a foundational understanding of the diversity of Britain's black presence and how dynamics and relationships were shaped and reshaped both before and after the First World War.

The growth and development of areas of black settlement in Britain is a topic ripe for investigation within the historiography of the pre Second World War black presence. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that the entirety of Britain before 1939 was ethnically diverse, this thesis will explore three of the most notable sites of diversity during this period and cities home to a significant West African and Caribbean presence: the port cities of Cardiff, Liverpool and London. Whilst these cities have each been the subject of separate study into their historic black presence, they are rarely considered in juxtaposition. This thesis shall demonstrate that a comparative approach is beneficial to furthering the understanding of migration and settlement of seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain during the period 1851–1939.

The foundations for much of the historical understanding of the early black presence in Cardiff lie in the work of social anthropologist Kenneth Little.[54] In order to contextualise the post-war black settlement of his study, Little provides a detailed history of its origins and the factors, both social and political, that he believed shaped its growth. Some scholars have accused Little's

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UK, ed. by Diane Frost (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp.22–33; Diane Frost, 'West Africans, Black Scousers and the Colour Problem in Inter-War Liverpool', *North West Labour History*, 20 (1995), pp.50–57; Diane Frost, 'Racism and Social Segregation: Settlement Patterns of West African Seamen in Liverpool since the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22 (1996), pp.85–95; Diane Frost, 'Diasporan West African Communities: The Kru in Freetown & Liverpool', *Review of African Political Economy,* 29. (2002), pp.285–300.

[53] George E. Brooks, *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium* (Newark: Liberian Studies Association in America, 1972), pp.3-4.

[54] Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London: Routledge, 1948).

work of containing outdated ideas, such as an influence of eugenics.[55] However, it is generally accepted that Little's work remains a formative piece of research and relevant for situating Cardiff's black population within the long history of the city.[56] In addition to Little, a significant amount of knowledge and understanding of Cardiff's early black presence has its foundations in the research of Neil Evans. His early pioneering work on the 1919 ethnic riots in South Wales was the first in-depth exploration of this pivotal event and has been influential in restoring Cardiff's black presence to the historical narrative.[57] Evans' research continues with a focus on the black experience in Cardiff in the interwar years as black seamen in the port negotiated the state at a local, national and imperial level, the intrusions of white philanthropy into areas of black settlement and continued racial antagonism.[58] This influential body of work, while instrumental to our understanding of the early twentieth century black presence in Wales, neglects the genesis of settlement and the factors that affected its initial formation. Much of the social histories that support Evans' work are by their own admission non-academic.[59] Written by local community historians, they rely on a mixture of oral and family history to shine a light on the city's early black presence, often with whom the authors have intimate knowledge.[60] While works such as these may lack academic rigour, they remain helpful to the social historian of the period as they add much-needed detail and understanding of the lived experiences and relationships of black Butetown families in Cardiff.

The second city that this thesis shall explore, London, presents a unique challenge for historians of black history before the Second World War. The size and sprawl of the city and density of the population makes focused, precise studies of migration and settlement challenging. As a consequence, limited work has been undertaken on the history of areas of black settlement in

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[55] Marika Sherwood, 'Racism and Resistance: Cardiff in the 1930s and 1940s', *Llafur*, 5 (1991), p.62.
[56] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.6; Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain,* p.viii.
[57] Neil Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots of 1919', *Llafur*, 3 (1980), pp.5–29.
[58] Neil Evans, 'Across the Universe: Racial Violence and the Post-war Crisis in Imperial Britain, 1919–25', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 13 (1994), pp.59–88; Neil Evans, 'Region, Nation, Globe: Roles, Representations and Urban Space in Cardiff, 1839–1928', in *Representation of British Cities: The Transformation of Urban Space, 1700-2000*, ed. by Andreas Fahrmeir and Elfie Rembold (Berlin: Philo, 2003), pp.108–29; Neil Evans, 'Regulating the Reserve Army: Arabs, Blacks and the Local State in Cardiff, 1919–45', in *Race and Labour in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. by Kenneth Lunn (London: Frank Cass, 1985), pp.68–115; Neil Evans, 'Urbanisation, Elite Attitudes and Philanthropy: Cardiff, 1850–1914', *International Review of Social History*, 27 (1982), pp.290–323.
[59] Neil M. C. Sinclair, *The Tiger Bay Story* (Cardiff: Butetown History & Arts Project, 1993).
[60] Rebecca J. Eversley & Paul B. Eversley, *African Connections: The Seamen Who Came to Wales* (Cardiff: Historic Dock Project, 2021).

the city.[61] London, as the imperial capital, attracted black British subjects from all over the empire and it became a hub for black political expression in the early twentieth century. Scholars have explored how as political identities formed black residents in Britain often used London as a hub to engage in both anti-racist and anti-imperial activities from the heart of the metropole.[62] However, as is a recurring theme within the historiography, there is a lack of dedicated work on migration to, and settlement in, the city of black working-class seamen, a group that made up a significant demographic of the non-white population of the city. A contemporary social survey published in the 1930s acknowledged that a significant number of Caribbean and West African men in London who had moved into other professions had at one time been seamen or at the very least worked their passage to Britain as seamen before pursuing other occupations.[63] In the 1950s, Michael Banton undertook a similar anthropological approach to Little, examining the black presence that had developed in and around the borough of Stepney in East London, an area that had been part of the city's historic sailortown in the nineteenth century. However, the focus of Banton's research is limited to post war migration into the area and while he acknowledges that these new migrants were moving into already well-established black neighbourhoods his work does not go into considerable detail as to their formation and growth.[64] This thesis has met with many of the challenges faced by other historians of the black presence in London. However, it remains relevant to this study in particular in regards to the exploration of the seamen's boarding house in the nineteenth century as well as the social and economic status of Caribbean and West African men and their families during the interwar period.

Finally, the third city that this thesis examines, Liverpool, has generated a rich literature that continues to explore its early black presence. This body of work has grown, in part, due to the marginalisation felt by the modern Liverpool-born black community and the desire to draw attention to its historic legacy. Jessica Moody emphasises the importance of this legacy and the pivotal role the black presence in the city has played in shaping public memory of both slavery

[61] Howard Bloch, 'Black People in Canning Town and Custom House between the Wars', *Association for the Study of African, Caribbean and Asian Culture and History in Britain*, 14 (1996).
[62] Matera, *Black London;* Caroline Bressey, 'Geographies of Solidarity and the Black Political Diaspora in London before 1914', in *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange*, ed. by Jane Carey and Jane Lydon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 241–61.
[63] Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933), p.74.
[64] Michael Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Cape Publishing, 1955).

and imperialism in Liverpool.[65] It is this rich historic legacy, some scholars have argued, that has shaped a unique black experience in Liverpool.[66] Raymond Costello, in particular, has looked to reposition and celebrate the origins and early history of the city's black presence and his work proves useful, acting as an orientation point placing migratory black seamen within a broader black presence in the city that, at times, managed to transcend both class and geographical barriers.[67] On the other hand, more negative influences have also impacted the black experience in the city. In particular, important histories have been constructed to highlight how the impact of racism shaped these experiences.[68] John Belchem's social history attempts to debunk what he sees as the myths that have helped construct an image of the city as a cosmopolitan entrepot, an urban space devoid of racial intolerance and a model for 'race relations'.[69] Belchem argues that the consistent marginalisation of the historic Liverpool-born black population and its failure rather than successes in supporting relationships between ethnic groups had led it to becoming one of the least diverse cities in Britain. However, despite being a robust and detailed piece of research, by focusing the historical lens on early black settlers' experiences of racism, Belchem's work, alongside further scholarship by Law and Henfrey and Murphy, ignores the agency of these early migrants. As a result, there is a lack of clarity surrounding the lived experience of early historical actors and their active role in the founding and development of areas of black settlement in the city that this thesis seeks to correct.

By bringing these cities together within the scope of a single study, this thesis will not only add depth to the individual histories and experiences of the black presence in each city but also examining social, economic, political and geographical trends that influenced and dictated the migration and settlement patterns of black seamen in Britain. It is the consideration of the black seamen's social and economic relationship to the seamen's boarding house, key in all three cities, that facilitates this bottom-up exploration to illuminate the lived experience of black seamen across these port cities. Moreover, this approach recognises the complexity of the

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[65] Jessica Moody, *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 65–100.
[66] Mark Christian, 'An African-Centered Approach to the Black British Experience: With Special Reference to Liverpool', *Journal of Black Studies,* 28 (1998), pp.291-308; Mark Christian, 'Black Struggle for Historical Recognition in Liverpool', *North West Labour History,* 20 (1995), pp.58-66.
[67] Ray Costello, *Black Liverpool: The Early History of Britain's Oldest Black Community 1730–1918* (Liverpool: Picton Press, 2001).
[68] Ian Law & June Henfrey, *A History of Race and Racism in Liverpool 1660-1950* (Liverpool: Merseyside Community Relations Council, 1981); Andrea Murphy, *From the Empire to the Rialto: Racism and Reaction in Liverpool 1918–1948* (Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1995).
[69] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

relationships within areas of black settlement in port cities, and their influence not only between Caribbean and West African seamen, but other ethnic groups within the wider multiethnic space of sailortown including metropolitan-born white women.

As shall be explored, the growth of areas of black settlement across these port cities did not happen in isolation, but developed within the wider multiethnic space of sailortown. A variety of competing ethnic and national groups of seafaring migrants including those from the Caribbean and West Africa made these maritime spaces their home. In particular, British port cities saw substantial Chinese migration and settlement,[70] while 'Lascar' seamen from both the Indian subcontinent as well as Arab seamen from the Yemeni peninsula also made up a large percentage of non-white residents in Britain.[71] The significant presence of black and other non-white seamen in British ports, particularly those who were domiciled, caused much social concern. However, rather than coming from within sailortown, Brad Beaven contends that it was outside observers such as the press, novelists and middle-class social investigators who generated this anxiety as they sought sensationalist headlines and portrayed maritime quarters as areas plagued by 'menacing foreign sailors.'[72] Likewise, Laura Tabili has argued that evidence of interethnic solidarity was consistently ignored as it countered the prevailing school of thought that ethnic or racial difference was an inevitable source of conflict.[73] Beaven further concludes that evidence from the late nineteenth century in fact suggests that an interdependence between locals and both non-white and foreign seamen may have proved a significant factor in off-setting racial tensions that were prevalent in other parts of the east end of London during this period.[74] This thesis seeks to further contribute to the understanding of

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[70] Gregor Benton and Edmund Terence Gomez, *Chinese in Britain, 1800–Present: Economy, Transnationalism, Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Douglas Jones, 'The Chinese in Britain: Origins and Development of a Community', *New Community*, 7 (1979), pp.397–402.
[71] Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700–1947* (London: Pluto Books, 1986); James W. Frey, 'Lascars, the Thames Police Court and the Old Bailey: Crime on the High Seas and the London Courts, 1852–8', *Journal for Maritime Research,* 16 (2014), pp.196-211; Jonathan Hyslop, 'Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c.1880–1945', *Journal of Asian and African Studies,* 44 (2009), pp.49-67; Conrad Dixon, 'Lascars: The Forgotten Seamen', in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, ed. by Gerald Panting and Rosemary Ommer (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), pp. 263–282; Mohammed Siddique Seddon, *The Last of the Lascars: Yemeni Muslims in Britain 1836–2012* (Markfield: Kube Publishing, 2014).
[72] Brad Beaven, '"One of the Toughest Streets in the World": Exploring Male Violence, Class and Ethnicity in London's Sailortown, c. 1850–1880', *Social History [London]*, 46 (2021,) p.9.
[73] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.2.
[74] Brad Beaven, 'Foreign Sailors and Working Class Communities: Race, Crime and Moral Panics in London's Sailortown 1880–1914', in *Migrants and the Making of the Urban-Maritime World : Agency and Mobility in Port Cities, c. 1570–1940*, ed. by Christina Reimann and Martin Öhman (New York: Routledge, 2020), p.102.

cooperation and conflict within maritime quarters. The identification of a prevalence of mixed seaman's boarding houses, those catering to both Caribbean and West African seamen as well as other ethnic groups, raises questions as to the level of cooperation and conflict among competing groups within sailortown. The inclusion of mixed seamen's boarding houses in this study facilitates an exploration of these relationships and to what extent they were defined as much by cooperation and as by conflict.

This investigation of the relationship between black seamen and the seamen's boarding house has the ancillary benefit of highlighting the important role women played in both the migrant experience and socially within the wider multiethnic space of sailortown. As the twentieth century progressed increasing numbers of black seamen's boarding houses came to be run by women. Historians have acknowledged that personal relationships between white women and black seamen in port cities in Britain were integral to and aided the formation of early settlements.[75] Indeed, women were so important some scholars have argued that they were effectively 'gatekeepers' into British society.[76] However, it could be considered that focus placed merely on the personal diminishes the more nuanced role that they played professionally.

Regarding the professional relationship, the landlady is an often overlooked historical figure. As Gillian Williamson notes, a lack of surviving voices forces the historian to rely on the voices of others, most often the press and usually in the context of crime. These sources, along with the impact of both gender and class prejudice leave the landlady with an oft-maligned reputation that has been hard to dispel.[77] For instance, relations between the migrant lodger and landlady disconcerted Victorian observers as the overlap of public and private space within boarding houses as well personal and professional relationships challenged societal norms.[78] The lack of surviving voices and the bias of the limited existing sources makes the study of seamen's boarding house keepers and understanding their relationship to black seamen more complicated, a limitation that not only affects female boarding house keepers but also their male counterparts.

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[75] Hakim Adi, *The History Of African and Caribbean Communities in Britain* (London: Wayland, 2007).
[76] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p.10.
[77] Gillian Williamson, 'The Georgian Landlady: Surrogate Mother, Love Interest or Hard-Nosed Businesswoman?' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44 (2021), pp.383–403; Gillian Williamson, 'Genteel, Respectable, and Airy: The Lodgings Market in London, 1770–1800', in *At Home in the Eighteenth Century: Interrogating Domestic Space*, ed. by Stephen G. Hague and Karen Lipsedge (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 147–73.
[78] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p.154.

Following the First World War, personal relationships between black men and white women were conceptualised and problematised. With the rise in eugenics many contemporary commentators believed that these relationships led to an inevitable conflict between white and black men, they encouraged sexual immorality, and finally, they resulted in children of mixed-heritage, a demographic group that was increasingly being viewed in a negative light.[79] Both contemporary sources and historians often cite sexual jealousy together with a fear of miscegenation as a primary factor contributing to episodes of ethnic violence such as the riots of 1919.[80] However, there is debate surrounding the true extent to which mixed relationships played a role as a catalyst for violence. Some scholars suggest, similar to the social anxieties surrounding non-white residents in sailortown neighbourhoods, it was, in fact, more a concern of middle-class observers in the press rather than the working-class communities themselves who resided in port cities.[81] Laura Tabili argues that women within the multiethnic port cities suffered from the constraints of a 'triple handicap' of race, class and gender. Yet, despite this, she goes on to contend that it was through transgressing the boundaries of race through marriage and relationships allowed these women to challenge imperial racial hierarchies and strengthen social solidarities within these mixed communities.[82] The interplay and power dynamics between black seamen and metropolitan-born women make for intriguing study and through the exploration of women's relationship to the boarding house along with their professional role as boarding house keepers, this thesis can broaden the understanding of the role women played beyond that of simply being sexual partners, and by so doing, gain further insight into their lived experience and the multifaceted role they played in facilitating and supporting Britain's interwar multiethnic settlements in port cities.

As a consequence of the First World War, areas of black settlement in British port cities underwent a rapid expansion as black seamen stood up and filled labour shortages left by white British seamen who had enlisted in the armed forces. Similarly, the seamen's boarding house trade had expanded to meet this increase in demand. With the end of hostilities and as the

[79] Lucy Bland, 'White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War', *Gender & History*, 17 (2005), pp.29–61.
[80] Michael Rowe, 'Sex, "Race" and Riot in Liverpool, 1919', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 19 (2000), pp.53–70.
[81] Andrea Murphy, *From the Empire to the Rialto: Racism and Reaction in Liverpool 1918–1948* (Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1995), p.48.
[82] Laura Tabili, 'Women "of a Very Low Type": Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain', in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. by Laura Levine Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 165–92.

country recalibrated after four years of war, Caribbean and West African seamen, both transient and settled, living in sailortown neighbourhoods faced severe social and economic challenges. Despite its own challenges to its trade, the seamen's boarding house remained tightly intertwined in their lives. As the interwar period progressed, this thesis will evaluate the role it would play in protecting and maintaining areas of black settlement as they came under both social and political attack.

The history of post First World War West African and Caribbean settlement in Britain is often viewed through the narrow lens of conflict, be that the social unrest of the 1919 ethnic riots or political attack through legislation such as The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925. An exploration of the growth and development of areas of black settlement over several decades, allows this thesis to take a less restricted approach to periods of conflict and to understand them in a broader context that allows for greater understanding of how they impacted on migration and the development of settlement

Perhaps the most notorious episode of conflict was what has become most commonly referred to as the 1919 'race' riots. The violent events of that summer touched nearly every major port city in Britain, from London in the south to Glasgow in the north, with Liverpool and Cardiff the sites of some of the worst rioting and subject to particularly intense and sustained violence. This turbulent episode in early black British history has generated a robust literature that explores the events of the riots and the multitude of social and economic factors that ignited them.[83] Jacquline Jenkinson has undertaken the most comprehensive history of the riots that took place in 1919. Her detailed study, *Black 1919,* examines all the sites, both major and minor, where violence occurred, exploring how a wide range of socio-economic factors stemming from the worldwide depression in the wake of the First World War fed into and influenced the local factors that led to conflict.[84] Jenkinson argues that although race and racism were a factor in the violence, the predominant cause of the riots lay instead with the poor social and economic conditions affecting Britain at the time. In an effort to further emphasise her argument that it was these broader socio-economic factors that lay behind the violence, she reclassifies the

[83] Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots', pp.5-29; Jacqueline Jenkinson, 'The Glasgow Race Disturbances of 1919', *Immigrants & Minorities,* 4 (1985) pp.43-67; Roy May & Rob Cohen, 'The Interaction Between Race and Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919', *Race & Class,* 16 (1974), pp.111-126; Jerry White 'The Summer Riots of 1919', *New Community,* 57 (1981), pp.260-161.
[84] Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

terminology of the riots as 'seaport riots' rather than 'race riots'. To argue that it was racism alone that acted as the catalyst for violence, she contends, does not explain why the riots only took place in port cities and no other urban environments.[85] However, through this argument Jenkinson neglects to consider that other industrial urban centres in Britain during this period, unlike port cities, did not have the same visible, substantial and, perhaps most importantly, established black populations. With this in mind, while it is agreed that racism was not the only factor in sparking conflict it has to be acknowledged that it was the overriding one. This would explain why the riots were contained to port cities and did not spread to other urban industrial centres in Britain that were suffering similarly from difficult social and economic pressures following the First World War. However, this thesis recognises that the term 'race riot' is outdated and no longer fitting, it is important to acknowledge that racism played a central role in the violence and it was this key factor, in fact, that explains why these riots only took place in port cities in 1919 and not in other industrial centres in Britain. It is commonly accepted in the twenty-first century that 'race' is a subjective, socially constructed term and has been used historically to undermine and control people of colour.[86] This thesis will employ the term 'ethnic riots' where necessary to acknowledge that the violence did not only focus solely on black men and their families but all ethnically non-white residents in Britain, in particular those of Arab heritage in Cardiff as well as Chinese in London.

Attacks on the black population of port cities throughout the interwar years were not only prevalent on a social level but also manifested on a political level. Initially governmental agencies explored a policy of repatriation in order to reduce Britain's black presence. However, when repatriation alone proved ineffective the state enacted a more explicit policy, The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925, to restrict and control black settlement in Britain. Introduced principally to target and prevent alien Arab seamen from becoming domiciled in Britain, the lack of definition around the term 'coloured' and the inconsistency in the issuing of appropriate identification documentation would see black British subjects also caught up in its application. Earlier historiographies of the 1925 Order suggested that it was politics at a local level combined with overzealous policing, especially in Cardiff that led to misapplication and

[85] *ibid,* p.27.
[86] Reena Bhavnani, Heidi Safia Mirza, and Veena Meetoo, *Tackling the Roots of Racism: Lessons for Success* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2005), p.15.

abuse of the 1925 Order.[87] This early scholarship underwent a major revision.[88] Laura Tabili challenges the conception that local politics were the major driving force for the misapplication of the legislation. She argues that rather than a desire for legislation being generated from the bottom up by discrimination and abuse by local authorities and seamen's unions, its formulation and enactment had been constructed from the top down at the very heart of central government. The 1925 Order was, in her words, 'the first instance of state-sanctioned race discrimination in Britain.'[89] In the face of this progressively aggressive political intervention in the migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen, this thesis will consider the continuing position of the seamen's boarding house and its keeper. Importantly, it will explore what role it had protecting and maintaining both black seamen and areas of black settlement in Britain as a result of hardening immigration policy.

Historians have cited that periods of conflict not only shed light on the early black presence in Britain, but also played a fundamental role in the formation of a black British community as men from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds came together to resist ethnic violence and discrimination. Ray Costello contends, in the case of Liverpool, that the community was born from crisis, of which the riots were an essential factor.[90] Indeed, further historians have argued that in respect to Liverpool's black population at least, the only way these early settlers were homogenous was in their experience of racism and discrimination.[91] Nonetheless despite its importance in building a level of solidarity, the singular focus on the violence can construct a victim narrative, with early black actors portrayed as merely reactive to local events and dynamics of a country hostile to their presence. This narrative disguises the considerable agency that black seamen, both transient and settled, had within the social life of port cities and the role they played building social solidarity within these spaces. Tabili notes that historians' fascination with notorious episodes of conflict such as the 1919 ethnic riots has the detrimental effect of neglecting histories that explore the formation of communities and the internal dynamics that underpin them.[92] Furthermore she argues that non-white populations in Britain's

[87] Little, pp.63-67; Fryer, pp.362-364; Ramdin, p.102.
[88] Laura Tabili, 'The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925', *Journal of British Studies,* 33 (1994), pp.54-98; Tony Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire: The Case of the Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925', *Immigrants and Minorities,* 13 (1994), pp.104-129.
[89] Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', pp.56-58.
[90] Costello, 'The Making of a Liverpool Community', p.113.
[91] Murphy, p.vii.
[92] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p.6.

ability to resist and survive lay in their ability to organise across barriers of culture and race.[93] While periods of conflict emphasise a coming together in a particular moment, it is through this investigation into the seamen's boarding house and its relationship to black seamen over a broader time period that this thesis can avoid the limitations of the focus on violence, allowing for it to reveal a more nuanced picture as to the development of solidarity between Caribbean and West African seamen, as well as other ethnic groups in sailortown.

Finally, having considered the seamen's boarding house in its prime and its role supporting Caribbean and West African seamen during periods of increased migration and demand, this thesis shall turn to consider the boarding house and its place within areas of black settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff as they underwent significant social change during the economic depression of the 1930s. It will consider not only the impact this social change would have on the boarding house trade itself but also how changing social and economic dynamics impacted on areas of black settlement.

The historiography of 1930s black Britain has predominantly leaned towards a focus on labour history. The decade saw several prominent black labour leaders take the lead in organising black and other non-white seamen in British port cities such as Cardiff as they fought systemic discrimination in the labour market.[94] While these histories contextualise the need for labour action by drawing attention to the significant effect of economic depression as well as social marginalisation had on black seamen in Britain, the focus on black political action and identity has been at the neglect of an in depth social history. Some scholars, attempting to better understand the social history of early black Britons, have looked to a trend in the publication of social surveys during the decade that provide valuable source material. However, historians have argued that some of these social surveys are so problematic as to make them irrelevant to academic study.[95] As Mark Christian argues in his study deconstructing perhaps the most notorious of these social surveys, *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports* conducted in Liverpool in 1930,[96] which he contends was responsible

[93] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.160.
[94] David Featherstone, 'Harry O'Connell, Maritime Labour and the Racialised Politics of Place', *Race & Class*, 57 (2016), pp.71–87; Christian Høgsbjerg, *Mariner, Renegade & Castaway: Chris Braithwaite : Seamen's Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist* (London: Redwords, 2014); Sherwood, 'Racism and Resistance', pp. 51–69.
[95] Belchem, *Before the Windrush,* p.62.
[96] LRO, 352.26 FLE, M.E Fletcher, *Report on the investigation into the colour problem in Liverpool and other ports* (Liverpool: Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children, 1930).

for cementing pejorative terms for black and mixed-heritage Britons such as 'half-caste' that continue to persist to the present day.[97] However, Christian acknowledges that whilst the Fletcher Report has many serious ethical and methodological failings it's subject matter and the manner in which it is presented are integral to the understanding of the black experience in Britain during the later interwar period.[98] This thesis takes inspiration from Christian's approach and considers the Fletcher Report, with caution, alongside several of the most prominent social surveys commissioned throughout the 1930s. These reports allow for the construction of an integrated and thorough picture of the lived experience of black and mixed-heritage working-class people in British port cities in the 1930s.

This thesis, through its exploration of Caribbean and West African seamen's migration to and settlement in British port cities, ultimately intersects several historical themes. By bridging the historiographical gap between small scale, nascent settlement and the larger, more established and dynamic areas of black settlement post-First World War, this thesis continues to enrich our understanding of black history in Britain and extend knowledge of the long history of black Britons and their importance to British society and culture. As a piece of social history, it explores from the bottom up the migration experience of black seamen from the Caribbean and West African and the agency they expressed as they navigated the social and cultural life of the port as well as British society more broadly. Moreover, this view from below allows for this research to provide further insight into the complex relationships that existed between these two groups of migrants as well as other ethnic groups within the wider multiethnic melting pot of sailortown. Furthermore, in the field of maritime history, this study adds depth and understanding to the importance of the seamen's boarding house both in shaping the economy of port cities as well as its pivotal role within the social economic lives of seafaring migrants in Britain beyond its heyday in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Finally, for labour history, it broadens our understanding of the British shipping industry's complicated relationship with non-white labour and how labour patterns influenced migration to and settlement in Britain. Chiefly, this thesis places the symbiotic relationship between Caribbean and West Africa seamen and the seamen's boarding house at the centre of the historical narrative, highlighting the importance and significant impact of this relationship and advancing

[97] Mark Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930: A Historical Case Study of Contested Black Mixed Heritage Britishness', *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 21 (2008), p.214.
[98] *ibid*, p.238.

our understanding of black seamen's migration and settlement in Imperial Britain from 1851–1939.

Methodology & Sources

The sources available have dictated how the three cities will be utilised for this study. Similarities in the size and concentration of the black population of Cardiff and Liverpool and the dominance of seafaring within the economy and culture of these cities has generated material that allows for a near direct comparative approach at every stage of research and analysis. However, empirical evidence for London's black population is lacking, the result of which means it cannot be used comparatively; nonetheless, it does remain essential to this study for the reasons that follow. The opacity of London's black presence does not mean it is lost entirely, and fragments of it have been uncovered. Although the data available may not be able to be used in the same way to show growth over time, as in Liverpool and Cardiff, the inclusion of the city in several social surveys of Britain's black population in the 1930s is symbolic of a significant presence and is crucial in helping to understand the social issues faced by black Britons. London, therefore, plays a pivotal role in Chapter Four's discussion on the difficulties faced by residents within areas of black settlement in the 1930s. Similarly, the city is vitally important in the understanding of the culture of port cities and the structures of the seamen's boarding houses themselves.

The thesis has chosen 1851–1939 as the focus of study as this period begins with the identification of the first seamen's boarding house for either Caribbean or West African seamen uncovered during this research. The period also coincides with the beginning of an increased scrutiny by both local and state authorities into the seamen's boarding house and its role within the port economy that would lead to subsequent intervention into the operation of the trade. The mid-nineteenth century presents a useful starting point as this period saw British shipping beginning to engage black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in greater numbers and they became a marked presence in British ports. James Walvin argues that by 1870 the growth of the black population in Britain had stalled and was in decline. However it was with the expansion of the shipping industry and increased trade with both West Africa and the Caribbean from the late nineteenth century that gave impetus and stimulated a new growth.[99] The First World War created further conditions for a sharp increase. As black seamen heeded the call of

[99] James Walvin, *Passage to Britain: Immigration in British History and Politics* (London: Beltha Press, 1984), pp.71-72.

Britain and filled labour shortages in the merchant marine working ships to and from Britain areas of black settlement swelled. Due to the transient nature of seafaring work, accurate figures for the size of Britain's black presence throughout this period has proven nebulous for historians to obtain and encouraged much debate.[100] For example, with Liverpool, often cited as having the second largest black population after London, Peter Fryer estimated the post-war black presence in the city could have been as large as five thousand. In contrast, Neil Evans contests this and argues that it is doubtful that the population was ever more than two thousand strong.[101] Rather than getting mired in elusive quantitative data, analysis of seamen's boarding house data allows for a more qualitative approach to the understanding of settlement growth. Between the late nineteenth century and the end of the First World War there was a notable increase in boarding houses catering to black seamen. The demand for more temporary housing, it will be argued, was symptomatic of an increased black presence in port cities that, in turn, led to an increased settlement.

This study draws on a variety of material generated by both state and local government; thus, a comprehensive archival approach has been undertaken. Alongside the National Archives at Kew, documents held at local city archives were consulted at the Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff, the Liverpool Record Office and the London Metropolitan Archives. Where black seamen's lives touched the state, their status was often ambiguous and those tasked to handle issues that arose were often quick to shuffle them off onto another department. As a result, black seamen are a pervasive but scattered presence in the archive, and patient methodical and creative investigation is needed to flesh out and gain access to their lives. Black seamen's presence in both Home Office and Colonial Office files highlights the contested status that black British subjects held once they crossed the frontier from colony to metropole. While individual voices of black seamen exist within these files to challenge established authority and bring much needed balance to the narrative, alternative methods were needed to help bring black lives into sharper focus. The use of census data, for example, has been vital in helping uncover the personal lives of black seamen but its use is far from straightforward and has to be handled with care. Crucially, as John Seed notes in his article investigating the growth of the Chinese presence in Limehouse, census data can be problematic. For example, place of birth noted in census

[100] Murphy, p.ix.
[101] Fryer, p.304; Evans, 'Across the Universe', p.83.

returns, is by no means a definitive indication of ethnicity.[102] To make assumptions of ethnicity based solely on census data can lead to imprecise data collection. However, clues and information on ethnicity in other sources help inform census data so it can be used as accurately as possible within such constraints. The transient nature of seafaring and the precariousness of the boarding house trade means lives can disappear as quickly as they appear in the census. Some notable exceptions exist that have allowed for the reconstruction of households and family units and enabled a better understanding of the economic and social life of early black families.

As Laura Tabili has noted in her own extensive research, the seamen's boarding house can prove ephemeral.[103] For an institution historically so important and influential to the seaman on land, little physical evidence has been left behind. The disappearance of the buildings themselves can be attributed to a mixture of slum clearances throughout the second half of the twentieth century and the modern redevelopment of dockland areas.[104] Despite being subject to licensing under local byelaws that meant any business operating as a seamen's boarding house needed to be registered with the local authority, very few of these registers still exist. The only complete register extant is held at the London Metropolitan Archives and records the boarding houses that came under the authority of the London County Council in Poplar and Stepney predominantly. In Cardiff, while no official register exists, the procedures put in place for the application and issue of a licence to run a seamen's boarding house with the local police force have generated a wealth of important material. Each year keepers had to apply for renewal of their licence and, for some properties, this has built up substantial packets over several decades. While often a perfunctory rubber-stamping of approval, some applications were found to contain personal statements from both the boarding house keeper and the police contesting refusal of a licence or describing notable events that involved the boarding house. These letters and notes offer a unique and rich insight into the social lives of those involved in the trade that sources such as the London register lack.

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[102] John Seed, 'Limehouse Blues: Looking for Chinatown in the London Docks, 1900–40', *History Workshop Journal,* 62 (2006), p.62.
[103] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p.186.
[104] The redevelopment of the Liverpool docklands in recent years has been so extreme that in July 2021 it was stripped of its UNESCO world heritage site status, Josh Halliday, 'Unesco strips Liverpool of its world heritage status', *The Guardian*, 21/7/2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/21/unesco-strips-liverpool-waterfront-world-heritage-status> [accessed 22 July 2021].

Census data again has been consulted to unearth properties that operated as seamen's boarding houses for black seamen and their keepers. This method is not without its flaws. While the occupation of boarding house keeper is prevalent in census data, it is important to acknowledge that this data in its rawest form presents a challenge for the historian. Not all of those who the census recorded as a 'boarding house keeper' kept boarding houses for seamen and not all those that kept seamen's boarding houses described themselves as a 'boarding house keeper'. However, following a thorough investigation of individual records it does become apparent which properties boarded seamen and which did not. This method has allowed for the collection of a substantial sample size for analysis. Census records for London, Liverpool and Cardiff for the years 1851–1921 were consulted for this thesis. Alongside the address of the boarding house, and the name of its keeper, information on their age, gender, marital status and nationality was collected. This method has allowed for a comparative approach to understand trends within the profession. Importantly for this period of black history in Britain, this thesis has extensively utilised the 1921 census released in January 2022 which reveals a significant amount of detail hitherto unavailable to earlier historians of this period. The census allows for a deeper understanding of the boom in migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain as a result of the First World War, adding further detail to our understanding of the growth and development of areas of black settlement in Britain. Furthermore, for the first time in 1921, the census included valuable information about an individual's employment status giving the historian a much clearer picture of the employment issues faced by black seamen in the aftermath of the war.

To ensure a large enough sample size of seamen's boarding houses that catered exclusively for black seamen was collected, a more diverse collection of sources was required. While the above methodology revealed a significant number of seamen's boarding houses, documents investigating a wide variety of issues facing black seamen in British ports, from overcrowding in boarding houses to the problem of unemployment produced by both local and state governments uncovered in both local and the National archives, proved a rich source. These sources are often explicit as to which boarding houses specific ethnic groups used. Similarly local press, despite often publishing sensationalist and negative articles that focused on conflict involving black residents of port cities, proved useful in identifying black seamen's boarding houses in all three cities. Census data was then employed to trace the history of the boarding house through the decades. Concurrently, once an area was identified as having a particular concentration of black seamen's boarding houses, this research utilised the census further to

conduct a street by street search to ascertain if more boarding houses were present. This method had the incidental benefit of unearthing the homes of black seamen who no longer resided in the temporary lodgings but had moved into more permanent residence in the area surrounding the seamen's boarding house and had either married or were cohabiting. Identifying this has allowed for the construction of a richer picture of the growth of black settlement and the evolution from transient to settled migrant. Due to the concentration of black settlement, this methodology proved particularly effective for Cardiff. The cities of Liverpool and London, that had larger, more sprawling dock areas presented more of a challenge when unearthing the cities black population. With a wider area to analyse this methodology, while effective, proved incredibly time consuming. As a consequence, it was decided that due to the time constraints associated with this research project the comparative approach to the growth and development of areas of black settlement explored in Chapter Two was limited to Cardiff and Liverpool only. However, employing this methodology for a smaller more concentrated area in London around Canning Town returned similar results as the other two cities. Despite these methodological challenges this approach has remained viable and raises important questions. Specifically, what the more fluid boundaries of these cites revealed in regard to the importance that the geography of the port played in when defining areas and concentration of black settlement.

The challenge when collating data on the seamen's boarding house stems from the difficulty in distinguishing between properties that were bona fide businesses and those that simply took in, on an ad hoc basis, a single lodger for some extra income but otherwise did not make a living from lodging seamen. Laura Tabili when investigating the seamen's boarding house as part of her study of migrant communities in South Shields faced similar issues as the evidence available to her permitted little distinction between professional boarding houses and households who simply took in a lodger or boarder.[105] In order to obtain a clear data set from which to work, this thesis has chosen not to count houses with only a single boarder as a seamen's boarding houses unless specifically stated. From the evidence gathered for this research and the sources available most of these properties were unlikely to be professional boarding houses. However, these properties have not been disregarded entirely and remain important in understanding the complexities in the growth and development of black settlement in British port cities.

[105] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p116.

Newspaper reports play a vital role in constructing social history, and this thesis has utilised The British Newspaper Archive extensively. This vast online resource proved essential as, under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, during which this thesis commenced, it allowed for thorough and detailed research to be undertaken almost unconstrained. The archive has its flaws, and search terms are not as accurate as one would hope; however, a patient methodical approach using key events, such as the 1919 ethnic riots, as well as names and addresses, helped narrow the search and proved fruitful in uncovering hitherto unknown boarding houses and, as mentioned above, clues to identifying ethnicity with more accuracy. The use of newspaper sources always requires care. Both local and national press tended towards bias and were guilty of playing a role in stigmatising Britain's black population, often reporting settlement as a social problem in need of removal.[106] Where possible this thesis has sought to temper these sources with black voices, either present in letters to the press challenging this representation or from black-led publications such as *The Keys,* the official organ of the League of Coloured People. *The Keys* as a political journal had its own agenda and biases. However, in a period when black voices were often muted in Britain it remains valuable. Despite bias, and in some cases because of it, the black and white press provides important clues as to the lived experience of early black migrants and residents in Britain.

One of the most valuable sources for this thesis and the early black history of Liverpool more widely is a police list of black seamen residing in the city. Compiled in the wake of the 1919 ethnic riots by the local police in Liverpool its purpose was to take a census of black seamen in the city in preparation for repatriation.[107] The source contains a plethora of information, including name, age, nationality, occupation and, importantly, the address of the boarding house of 283 black seamen in Liverpool. It offers a respectable sample size through which a good understanding of Liverpool's black presence's diverse ethnic and cultural makeup can be gleaned. While this source is widely used by historians, it is commonly read fairly narrowly with the focus on demographics. This reading is to the detriment of the wealth of other information it holds, such as which seamen served in the British Armed Forces. Perhaps most relevant for understanding the social conditions of black seamen in Britain post First World War, it contains valuable information on the debts accrued by individual seamen both to their boarding house

[106] 'The Colour Problem', *Western Mail,* 11/4/1929.
[107] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 28/6/1919.

and more generally. This thesis thoroughly interprets this source in such a way as to allow not only for the exploration of demographics but also for the construction of a vivid picture that serves to illustrate the social conditions of black seamen, both transient and settled in Liverpool, and their relationship to their boarding house and its keeper after the First World War.

Part of the exploration into the more settled black presence in the later interwar period has meant utilising some of the most problematic sources of this study. The 1930s and 1940s saw several social surveys conducted by both private and public organisations into the so-called 'colour problem' in British port cities. Surveys were undertaken in Liverpool in 1930,[108] London and Cardiff in 1933,[109] and finally, all three cities in 1935.[110] Steeped in the theory of eugenics and imperial racial hierarchies and conducted using dubious methodologies, these reports played a significant role in the stigmatisation of early black Britons and, in particular, children of mixed heritage. Indeed, as mentioned above, the most notorious of these, Muriel Fletcher's *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports,* scholars have deemed so problematic and imbued with racism as to make it irrelevant to academic study.[111] However, Mark Christian, through his detailed study shows that the Fletcher Report, has argued that rather than falling into irrelevance, it is in fact key to our understanding of the historic black experience in Liverpool, and Britain more widely, and demands a response.[112] Through the utilisation of these sources this thesis can unlock what these social surveys can reveal about the lived experience of working-class black Britons and their families and add a new depth to our understanding of the changes in dynamics of areas of black settlement into the 1930s.[113] Simultaneously, the problematic nature and bias often explicit in these sources reveal how

[108] LRO, 352.26 FLE, M.E Fletcher, *Report on the investigation into the colour problem in Liverpool and other ports* (Liverpool: Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children, 1930).
[109] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).
[110]LSE, The Women's Library, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Seamen: Publications incl. - pamphlet 'Social conditions in ports and dockland areas. London, Liverpool, Cardiff', survey conducted by the Joint Council of the British Social Hygiene Council and the British Council for the Welfare of the Mercantile Marine (1935).
[111] Belchem, *Before the Windrush,* p.62.
[112] Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930', p.238.
[113] Two later surveys published just outside of the period of study of this thesis but focus on the pre Second World War black communities are also employed to provide context to the development of areas of black settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff. TNA, MT 9/3952, Report on condition of life of coloured population in Stepney and comments on general conditions of seamen, white and coloured, 1944; 309.1 UNI - David Caradog Jones, 'The Economic Status of Coloured Families in the Port of Liverpool' in New Merseyside Series : Reports Issued in Continuation of the Social Survey of Merseyside, 1934–1950 (Liverpool: The University Press of Liverpool, 1940).

society more broadly viewed black Britons and the areas in which they lived and how these viewpoints impacted on their social and economic status within British society.

Finally, like many research projects in recent years, the difficult conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic under which this thesis was begun forced some amendments to its original research plan. While online resources provided invaluable tools whilst archives and libraries remained closed, as lockdown measures eased some of the original aims of this project proved impossible. It was initially hoped that this project would include insights and research gathered from local historical groups and community historians in London, Liverpool and Cardiff. These historians and groups, many the direct descendants of original settlers, often hold unique and invaluable sources and oral histories gathered and preserved over many years. However, due both travel and contact with third parties being restricted, this part of the research sadly had to be abandoned.

Terminology

A brief introduction to the terminology that this thesis utilises is required. 'white' and 'black', are complex and nebulous terms historically shaped through the prism of social and political relations.[114] The historian must be sensitive to this social and political formation and not fall into hazy or lazy generalisations. For example, throughout the period of this study, the label 'coloured' is used as a broad and unspecific term to describe anyone who was not white.[115] In the context of this study, the term 'black' is used to describe a person of African heritage. This term is still not ideal as there is a heterogeneity to blackness. This thesis explores two very different and complex demographic groups and as William Ackah succinctly argues, 'all black people do not look alike or think alike! Hence, what it means to be black is contested, fought over and prone to change in local, national and global contexts.'[116] This thesis acknowledges this difference and will explore the interplay between West African and Caribbean seamen in the local context of the multiethnic spaces of metropolitan port cities.

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[114] Diane Frost, 'Ambiguous Identities: Constructing and De-Constructing Black and White Scouse identities in Twentieth Century Liverpool' in *Northern identities: Historical Interpretations of "The North" and "Northerness"* ed. Neville Kirk (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.195.

[115] Dated terms such as 'coloured' and 'negro' will only be employed in this study in historical context where appropriate.

[116] William Ackah, 'The Face of Blackness: Identity in Context', in *Black Organisation and Identity in Liverpool: A Local, National and Global Perspective* eds. William Ackah and Mark Christian (Liverpool: Charles Wootton College Press, 1997), p.56.

This thesis will focus on the migration and settlement of black seamen from West Africa and the Caribbean. It is essential to define these terminologies. Both West African and Caribbean are umbrella terms for broad geographic areas encompassing many different countries, cultures and ethnicities. West African is used primarily in this thesis to denote seamen who hailed from British West Africa, including Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Gambia as well as parts of Nigeria. In this study, the largest contingent that settled in British port cities were from Sierra Leone, particularly the Kru ethnic group. However, some cities saw substantial migration from other parts of West Africa, in particular Cardiff that saw significant migration from Cape Verde, part of Portuguese West Africa. This adds to the complexity of areas of black settlement and the dynamics within them and where this demographic group is included it is acknowledged.

This thesis has chosen to employ the term 'Caribbean' to refer to seamen from the islands in the Caribbean Sea, rather than the more common 'West Indian' found in contemporary sources and earlier historiography. 'West Indian' is a problematic term that is both colonial and intellectual in its construction and has been shown to be somewhat imprecise throughout history. From the earliest days of colonisation of the Caribbean through the era of slavery and the plantocracy that dominated the islands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, West Indian had come to mean 'an inhabitant or native of the West Indies, of European origin or descent'. Even as late as 1876 the term stood as a bye-word for magnificent wealth brought back to Britain. As Catharine Hall notes, 'the West Indian had been whitened.'[117] It was only in the late nineteenth century that a new black West Indian identity began to form, albeit one that continued to find its construction mainly in the metropole.[118]

Local terminology is likewise coded and contested. In the case of Liverpool, a very specific term has grown and become established to describe the city's black residents, 'Liverpool-born black'. In Mark Christian's appraisal, this simply became a coded term for mixed-heritage children of white British and black African parents. Christian argues that it is a term that needs to be understood in the context of white racism and black settlement specific to the city, which is why

[117] Catherine Hall, 'What is a West Indian?' in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* ed. Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.34.
[118] For example, cultural theorist Stuart Hall on his arrival at Oxford in the early 1950s noted that he found it strange to have suddenly been created 'West Indian', rather than Jamaican. Particularly as he was placed in a group with those from other Caribbean islands that he felt he shared little cultural experience with or much knowledge of. See Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), p.164.

nowhere else in Britain utilises the same term.[119] Despite being a contested term, however, some have stressed that there is a 'need for unique terminology to reflect the uniqueness of Liverpool black people.'[120] Even in Cardiff, with its similarly long history of black settlement and sharing many similarities with the black experience in Liverpool, the term Cardiff-born black has never been employed. However, Neil Sinclair argues that the conditions found in Cardiff did condition, what he terms, an Afro-Celtic culture unique to the city born 'amidst its intra-cultural and multi-ethnic heritage.'[121]

The term British-born to describe those born in metropolitan Britain is a misnomer. During this period those born within the British Empire were considered a British subject. This thesis to avoid confusion employs the term 'metropolitan-born' to describe those people of black and mixed-heritage born within the United Kingdom itself. Finally this thesis has chosen to employ the term 'mixed-heritage' to describe children born to West African and Caribbean men and white women. Some who have interrogated the vocabulary used to describe mixed-heritage have described the term as 'the best of a bad bunch.' Though this terminology is imperfect it is argued that it at least reflects the complex and diverse nature of heritage and ethnicity.[122]

Chapter Outline

Chapter One introduces the seamen's boarding house and explores how and why it became fundamental to the livelihood and settlement of black seamen in Britain and its wider role historically within the port environment. The seamen's boarding house sat at the heart of the port economy and was engaged in a running battle with the shipping companies and both local and state authorities over the control of its most valuable resource, the seaman. There was much resentment from these actors towards the influence and power the boarding house held over the seaman and attempts were made with varying degrees of success to control the trade. This chapter introduces the seamen's boarding house and explores how it developed its practices and protected its interests in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the

[119] Mark Christian, 'Black Identity in Liverpool: An Appraisal', in *Black Organisation and Identity in Liverpool: A Local, National and Global Perspective* eds. William Ackah and Mark Christian (Liverpool: Charles Wootton College Press, 1997), p.72.
[120] Moody, p.73.
[121] Sinclair, p.4.
[122] Laila Woozeer, 'As A 'Mixed' Person, The Language To Describe Me Is Not Fit for Purpose', *The Guardian,* 30/8/2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/30/mixed-person-language-vocabulary> [accessed 12 November 2022].

twentieth century. It will also show how a mutually beneficial but not always harmonious relationship with the seaman they boarded was established and maintained.

Through the prism of the seamen's boarding house**,** Chapter Two traces the growth and development of areas of black settlement in the port cities of Liverpool and Cardiff. As British shipping came to utilise an increasing workforce of black labour from the Caribbean and West Africa from the late nineteenth century, many found themselves working ships to and from Britain. As a result a growing number of seamen's boarding houses became especially important to black seamen as they provided a social, economic and cultural hub to both transient and settled migrants in port cities. Central to the seamen's time on land these boarding houses became central to areas of black settlement. Through an exploration of the seamen's boarding house this chapter also provides rich insight into the social and economic status of black seamen in Britain. Furthermore, it raises questions as to the complexity of the relationships that developed within areas of black settlement, not only between Caribbean and West African seamen but other ethnic groups as well as metropolitan-born white women within the wider multiethnic space of sailortown.

Chapter Three explores the challenges faced by Caribbean and West African residents in areas of black settlement and the seamen's boarding house in the early interwar period. Areas of black settlement, swelled by an increase in migration as a result of the First World War, came under attack as they found themselves framed as scapegoats for post-war economic problems in Britain. In 1919 a series of riots throughout Britain saw black men and their families targeted and attacked in their homes and neighbourhoods. In response the British government framed the victims of this violence as a social problem and pursued a policy that looked at removing Britain's black residents through repatriation. When this failed it sought to enact legislation in the form of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925 aimed at preventing black settlement altogether. Despite facing its own difficulties, the seamen's boarding house would play a pivotal role in protecting Caribbean and West African seamen from these attacks and prove vital in maintaining areas of black settlement in Britain.

Finally, Chapter Four investigates the continuing role of the seamen's boarding house within the changing social and economic landscape of areas of black settlement in Britain in the 1930s. The persistent economic depression in British shipping and continued political interference by both the state and local actors in the port economy would see the migration of Caribbean and

West African seamen to Britain decrease considerably. As a result, well-established black neighbourhoods in London, Liverpool and Cardiff came to be defined by a settled rather than transient presence. As the interwar years progressed both economic depression and social marginalisation of their residents severely affected areas of black settlement in Britain in the 1930s. Furthermore, by the 1930s the seamen's boarding house trade had gone into significant decline. Nevertheless, despite its loss of status and influence within the port economy it still played a central role maintaining areas of black settlement providing social welfare support for unemployed and destitute black seamen in Britain.

Chapter One

Welcome to Sailortown: The Seamen's Boarding House & the Maritime Quarter

Introduction

To understand how and why the seamen's boarding house became fundamental to the livelihood and settlement of black seamen in Britain, it is necessary to explore its wider role historically within the space of the port. The boarding house and its keeper had a complex relationship not only with the seamen in their care but also with the local authorities tasked with regulating them, and with the shipping industry that relied on them for the upkeep of their labour force whilst on land. In his discourse on the dynamics of nineteenth-century sailortowns, Graeme Milne termed the complicated interconnectedness that existed within the port as a series of 'entanglements'.[1] He argues that this term best conveyed the fluidity of these relationships and how they could adapt and change over time. The boarding house was at the heart of these sailortown entanglements, reaching into all aspects of the port economy and providing services that were vital to its maintenance. These services were not always appreciated, and there was often resentment from both the local authorities and the shipping industry to the power the boarding house held and attempts were made, with varying degrees of success, to curtail its influence. An uneasy relationship, underpinned by a mutual dependence, existed between the seamen's boarding house and the shipping industry. One could not survive without the other. The latter brought seamen into the port which the former required for their trade, whilst the shipping industry could not operate without the role the seamen's boarding house played in mediating the labour market and providing seamen to it. This chapter will explore how the boarding house developed its practices and protected its interests in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century and, despite offering a vital service to the port economy, how it navigated deep-seated antagonism from competing sailortown actors. It will also show how it established and maintained a mutually beneficial but not always harmonious relationship with the seamen they boarded that would see it prove vital to their social and economic life whilst in port.

[1] Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront: Sailortown* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.5.

Welcome to Sailortown: London, Liverpool & Cardiff

The maritime quarter, known more evocatively by the moniker 'sailortown', was a unique urban environment that derived from a relationship characterised by its physical and economic dependence on, and dominance by, the port.[2] This environment defined the seamen's boarding house and its role. Set back from the docks, consisting of a warren of streets and alleys, sailortown was the frontier between the urban and maritime worlds where the transient seaman and the resident working-class communities lived together, plied their trades and sought and provided all manners of entertainment.[3] The presence of the shipping industry was conspicuous by the offices of merchants and brokers and their warehouses. While representing the interests of the state were the Board of Trade shipping offices that dealt with the signing on of seamen.[4] As with frontiers on the edges of the empire, port cities were a contact zone. Here a multitude of international and ethnic groups mixed and interacted with varying, sometimes competing needs and intentions as transients, sojourners and indeed settlers.[5] Although sailortowns throughout Britain and the wider world shared universal characteristics deriving from their common function of providing goods and services to the shipping industry and the seamen that maintained it, each had its own unique history and specific geography.[6] The three port cities that form the basis of this study, London, Liverpool and Cardiff, are illustrative examples of this.

Being the capital and premier port of Britain and its Empire, London had a diverse sailortown that had developed over many centuries, with Wapping already exhibiting some of the common traits of a sailortown as early as the seventeenth century.[7] By the 1830s and 1840s, London's sailortown consisted of three parishes, St George's in the East, Wapping and Shadwell, now all part of the modern borough of Tower Hamlets in the East End of the city and sitting at its heart was its main thoroughfare, Ratcliffe Highway.[8] The Highway's reputation as London's principal

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[2] Frank Broeze, 'Port Cities: "The Search for an Identity"', *Journal of Urban History,* 11 (1985), p.213.
[3] Brad Beaven, 'Foreign Sailors and Working Class Communities: Race, Crime and moral panics in London's Sailortown 1880–1914' in *Migrants and the Making of the Urban-Maritime World : Agency and Mobility in Port Cities, c. 1570–1940* eds. Christina Reimann & Martin Öhman (New York: Routledge, 2020), p.86.
[4] Sarah Palmer, 'Ports' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 3: 1840–1950* ed. Martin Daunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.138.
[5] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p.1.
[6] David Hilling, 'Socio-Economic Change in the Maritime Quarter: The Demise of Sailortown' in *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment* eds. B.S Hoyle et al. (London: Belhaven, 1988), pp.21-24.
[7] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.15.
[8] Stan Hugill, *Sailortown* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p.114.

sailortown and ‘one of the toughest streets in the world’ was cemented in the mid-nineteenth century and famous in Victorian popular imagination as a place of squalor, brutality and vice.[9] From the 1850s, as the port expanded, its sailortown extended further east, encompassing Poplar and Limehouse.[10] By the early twentieth century London’s vast docklands snaked along the banks of the River Thames as far east as West Ham. London was exceptional compared to both Liverpool and Cardiff in that its port was not central to the city’s economy. As Sarah Palmer emphasises, ‘London was a port - but much else besides.’[11]

Map 1. Map of London Docklands (Source: Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Kent I (includes: Barking; East Ham; Ilford.) Published: 1872, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 3rd January 2023. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

[9] Brad Beaven, ‘“One of the Toughest Streets in the World”: Exploring Male Violence, Class and Ethnicity in London’s Sailortown, c. 1850–1880’, *Social History [London]*, 46 (2021), p.1.
[10] Sarah B. Palmer, ‘Seamen Ashore in Late Nineteenth Century London: Protection from the Crimps’, in *Seamen in Society: Papers of a Conference Held in Bucharest,* ed. P. Adam (Rue du Grand: P. Adams, 1980), p.55.
[11] Palmer, ‘Ports’, p.141.

In contrast, Liverpool was a city defined by its port. It grew in the eighteenth century to be one of the leading ports in Europe and second only to London in Britain due to its central role in the transatlantic slave trade. Despite the trade's abolition in 1807, Liverpool continued to dominate international trade with both the Americas and Africa. Liverpool's sailortown developed in the early nineteenth century and by the 1850s it occupied a formidable section of the city in the area referred to as the South End.[12] Like the London docks, Liverpool's port developed somewhat of an unsavoury reputation in the nineteenth century. At any one time, it was a temporary home for up to 30,000 sailors, men paid off and looking to take full advantage of all the entertainment its sailortown had to offer.[13] The centrality of the port and its proximity to the rest of the city gives Liverpool its rare character with the docks dominating both the economic and social life of the city. Anthropologist Jacqueline Nassy Brown best described this close relationship as filling the city full of 'portness'. In her view, Liverpool was 'portness' personified.[14]

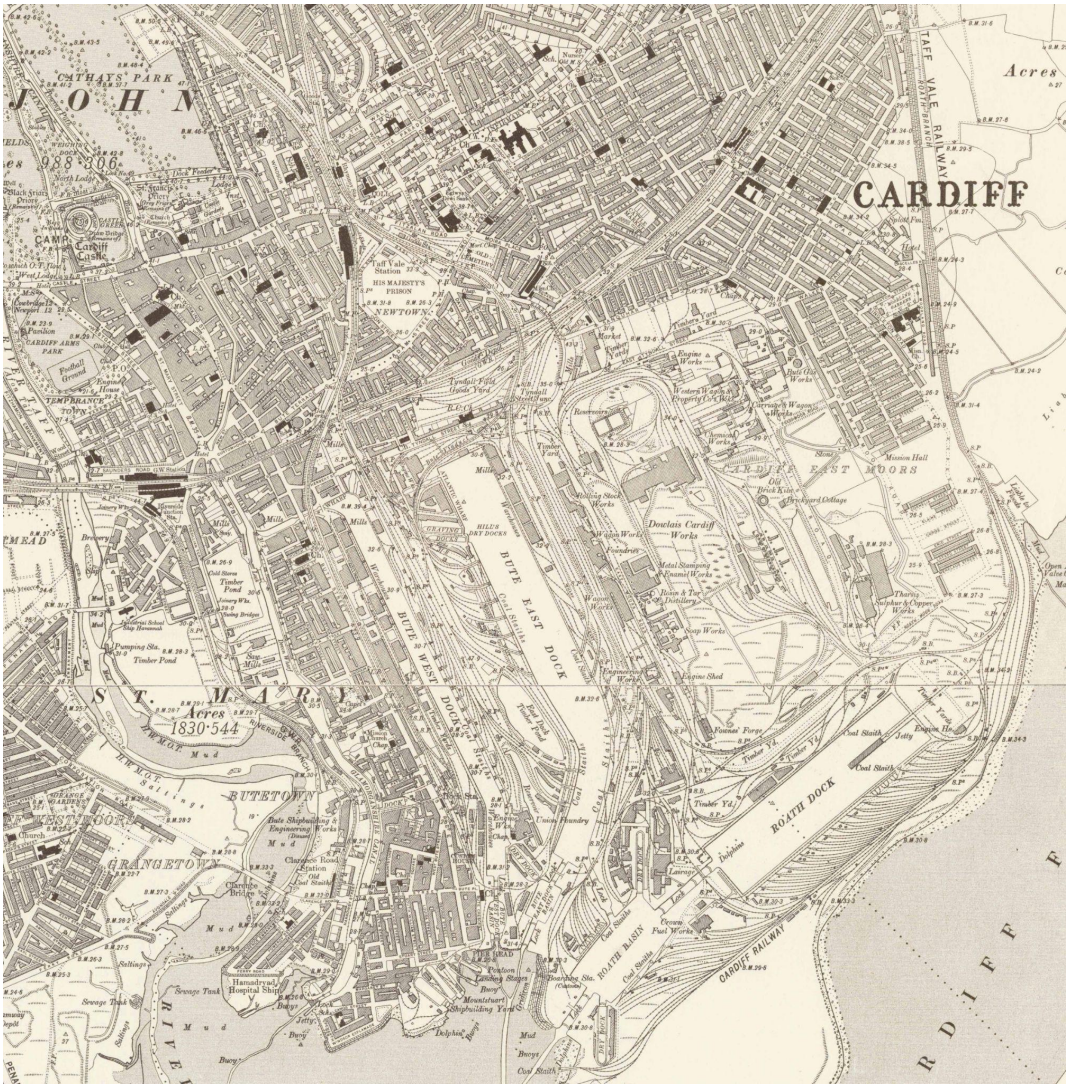
[12] Hugill, p.95.
[13] John E. Archer, *The Monster Evil: Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p.4.
[14] Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.25.

Map 2: Map of Liverpool Docklands. (Source: Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Lancashire. CVI.14 Published: 1908, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022; Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Lancashire. CXIII.2, Published: 1908, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

In comparison with London and Liverpool, Cardiff developed its reputation as a major port much later. Its rise to prominence in the mid-nineteenth century was inextricably connected to the coal industry in its hinterland and the subsequent coal export boom.[15] A meteoric rise saw it grow from a small provincial town in 1801 to one of the country's largest ports by 1871, competing with London and Liverpool in terms of tonnage shipped.[16] Cardiff proves unique as its docks and the surrounding sailortown, Butetown, were segregated from the rest of the city by a

[15] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.16.
[16] M. J Daunton, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff 1870–1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p.7.

combination of natural and artificial barriers. The main thoroughfare of Butetown, Bute Street, ran along a north-south axis. The River Taff formed a natural boundary on its most eastern edge, whilst the Taff Vale Railway ran across its most northern border.[17] Cut off from the main central core of the city, Butetown gained a reputation as a dark, dangerous and mysterious place. It became known locally and internationally as 'Tiger Bay', a sobriquet that would ultimately come to define the area and those who lived and worked there. These varying and distinct geographies influenced the dynamics within sailortown environs and, perhaps most importantly, how the area and its inhabitants came to be viewed both socially and by the state.



Map 3: Map of Cardiff including its docklands, Butetown. (Source: Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Glamorgan XLIII.SE, Published: 1901, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022; Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Glamorgan XLVII.NE, Published: 1901, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.)

[17] Hilling, 'Socio-Economic Change', p.27.

Many of the images and myths of sailortown, and its inhabitants, were constructed by middle-class and religious observers, often outsiders to the seafaring world, who ventured into the maritime quarter. The views of Reverend George Mitchell, reflecting on his time as a missionary in London's sailortown in the early twentieth century, were typical of this type of discourse:

> Limehouse might aptly be called the "no man's land of East London" for while it is an industrial beehive and the centre of the nautical world, no one really cares to confess himself a member of this ever-increasing family of aliens and undesirable units of a socially outcast people[18]

Views of sailortown and its inhabitants as 'aliens' and 'outcasts' would prove persistent. This would become particularly problematic for the black population living and working in these maritime quarters. As areas of black settlement began to form, they inherited many of these myths surrounding sailortown in terms of crime, vice and 'otherness', and, as time went on, they would find it difficult to escape such misconceptions and representations.[19] The seamen's boarding house and its keeper, so intricately entangled in the fabric of sailortown, would also see its reputation moulded by these same attitudes. In the eyes of another commentator, sailortown had long been a place where, 'All the dregs and offscourings of male and female humanity swarmed in the foul and filthy dens […] ready to prey on the lusts, the follies and the trustfulness of the sailor.'[20] Charles Dickens, only in the company of the police, ventured into Liverpool's sailortown at night in search of the pitfalls and temptations that befell 'poor Mercantile Jack' and to his dismay discovered an, 'unsleeping host of devourers who never go to bed, and are always in their set traps waiting for him.'[21] Dickens and other social observers unequivocally considered the seamen's boarding house among the very worst of these 'set traps' and 'dens''. These contemporary sources continued to foster the image of an innocent 'Jack' ashore at the mercy of a predatory service sector that needed to be contained and controlled. Attempts to assert control would occupy both local government and port authorities throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

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[18] Rev George H. Mitchell, *Down in Limehouse,* (London: Stanley Martin & Co., 1925), p.15.
[19] John Belchem, 'Port cities, Cosmopolitanism and "Otherness": The (Mis)Representation of Liverpool' in *Regenerating Culture and Society Architecture, Art and Urban Style within the Global Politics of City Branding* eds. Jonathan Harris and Richard J. Williams (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p.291.
[20] Cicely Fox Smith, *Sailor Town Days* (London: Methuen & Co., 1923), p.28.
[21] Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1861), p.75.

The Seamen's Boarding House, its Keeper & Sailortown Relationships

The first task for the newly arrived seaman in sailortown was to find suitable lodgings for the duration of his time on land. The option most commonly available to him was one of the numerous seamen's boarding houses that crowded the side streets in and around the main thoroughfares of the maritime quarter. In 1851, for example, the health committee in Liverpool reported that there were 214 seamen's boarding houses in the city.[22] Whilst there was a minority of seamen's boarding houses that existed as large scale operations, the majority were small businesses taking in three or four boarders at a time, usually to subsidise income from the proceeds of other occupations.[23] It was notoriously difficult to make a living from exclusively lodging seamen and many boarding house keepers claimed it was almost impossible to make an 'honest living' from boarding seamen alone. As a result many also operated an ancillary business and generated additional income as outfitters, slop dealers, publicans and other trades that historically made money from the seaman in sailortown.[24] Taverns in particular had historically operated a dual trade providing both a traditional drinking establishment as well as lodgings for seamen in sailortown.[25]

The seamen's boarding house, and more specifically its keeper, was at the centre of the seaman's time on land, facilitating his access to the myriad of activities, both legal and illegal, that sailortown had to offer.[26] Although the freshly paid off seamen often had a large sum of money to spend, after having paid for his boarding house this usually quickly disappeared in the many taverns and brothels of sailortown. As a consequence, the provisions and extra services that the boarding house provided to the seaman during his stay, such as food and clothing, were generally offered on credit. The need to protect this investment meant that the boarding house keeper was required to keep a keen eye on the seamen in their care at all times. The principal means by which boarding house keepers recouped this investment was through the seamen's advance note, issued to him when he signed on for his next voyage. The advance

[22] 'Sanitary Statistics for 1851', *Liverpool Mercury,* 23/1/1852.
[23] Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841–1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.114-115.
[24] 'Cardiff Seamen's Lodging Houses', *South Wales Daily News*, 27/6/1894.
[25] Michael Seltzer, 'Haven and a Heartless Sea: The Sailors' Tavern in History and Anthropology', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 19 (2004), 63-93.
[26] Hilling, 'Socio-Economic Change', p.21.

note was a promissory note for part of a seaman's wages, usually one month, issued by the shipping company ostensibly for him to clear any debts he may have accrued whilst on land and equip himself for his upcoming voyage.[27] To access ready money, the seaman would be able to cash his advance note with his boarding house keeper. However, this was a risk for the keeper as the note was only honoured on the condition that the seaman sailed with his ship. If he deserted or otherwise failed to appear the note would be voided and the keeper out of pocket. This risk meant that keepers only advanced money subject to a commission, referred to as a discount in the nineteenth century. This discount could be anywhere between 5% to as much as 40% of the note's value.[28] As a consequence, a lucrative trade in discounting grew up in sailortown. For example, Liverpool boarding house keeper Thomas Farricker charged a discount of 1 shilling per pound of an advance note's value.[29]

Due to their influence and control, middle-class and religious reformers singled out the boarding house keeper as the main agent responsible for conning and corrupting the helpless seaman.[30] The Reverend W. Leigh Morgan, preaching at the opening of the new church for seamen at Bute Docks in 1852, was particularly scathing:

> what religious good can we hope to effect, as long as his lodgings on shore are those dens of infamy and debauchery called - "seamen's boarding houses?". We must try to rescue him from these snares where his character is corrupted and his hard earned wages are worse than wasted.[31]

This view of the seamen's boarding house and its relationship to the seaman would persist throughout the nineteenth century. The seamen's boarding house was a complex institution offering safety, respite and repast to the seaman after many hard months at sea but also could be a place of manipulation and control.

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[27] David M. Williams, 'Advance Notes and the Recruitment of Maritime Labour in Britain in the Nineteenth Century' in *The Market for Seamen in the Age of Sail* ed. Lewis R. Fischer (St John's: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1994), p82.
[28] *ibid,* pp.86-87.
[29] TNA, MT 9/292, Scale of Costs for 16 St James' Street, 1887.
[30] Judith Fingard, 'Masters and Friends, Crimps and Abstainers: Agents of Control in 19th Century Sailortown', *Acadiensis,* 8 (1978), p.22.
[31] 'Opening of the New Church for Seamen, at Bute Docks', *Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*, 14/8/1852.

Beyond its primary role providing support for the physical needs of the seaman whilst he was on land, the seamen's boarding house had a vital ancillary role within the port economy. The boarding house keeper was often responsible for supplying seamen to outward bound ships and actively sought out berths for their lodgers.[32] The boarding house was a vital conduit in the supply of labour to the shipping industry, with the keeper acting as an informal employment agent facilitating and effectively controlling the seaman's entry into the market. However, this service took place in an atmosphere of semi-illegality. The employment practices of the boarding house keeper were never officially sanctioned by the authorities or the shipping companies; it was a mutually beneficial relationship. As the keeper relied on the money from the seaman's advance note they would do all they could to ensure that the seaman was on board a ship when it sailed.[33] This arrangement not only saved the ship owner trouble but saved them money too, as the service provided was offset against the seaman's own wages.[34] While it was widely acknowledged that the boarding house provided this important service to the shipping industry, the control they exerted had historically caused both the authorities and shipping companies to view them with scepticism and distrust.[35]

Before this chapter examines in more detail the relationship of the seamen's boarding house to the port economy and the authorities, it is beneficial to take a more practical look at the boarding house itself as a physical institution and investigate the dynamics that existed within it and explore and introduce those who chose to keep them. As British ports grew throughout the nineteenth century, developers began building fine housing and offices to accommodate wealthy merchants and their families alongside residences for dock workers and seamen and their families. In Cardiff this was an explicit attempt by the estate of the Marquess of Bute to create a self-contained hub of commerce and trade. For a period this was the case, with merchants occupying the grander homes in the squares of Butetown, such as Loudoun Square, and the workers living in more modest terraced housing. Over time, however, whilst their offices remained, the merchants moved out of the docks, and the area transformed solely to meet the needs of the seaman.[36] Similarly, the elegant houses of Wellclose Square in the heart of London's sailortown, which had likewise developed in the eighteenth century as residences for

[32] Williams, 'Advance Notes', p.87.
[33] *ibid*.
[34] BPP, 1886, LIX.197, *Report on Supply of British Seamen, Number of Foreigners on British Merchant Ships and on Crimping, by Assistant Secretary to Board of Trade,* p.10.
[35] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* pp.119-120.
[36] Daunton, *Coal Metropolis,* p.74.

its wealthy merchant class, had, by the nineteenth century, also been taken over by the port's transient and working-class population.[37] This shift from the inner city to the suburbs was largely due to the increasing industrialisation of the port throughout the nineteenth century that had created a more polluted and inhospitable environment and those that had the means sought more healthy and wholesome living conditions.[38] As a result, the grand houses of Britain's port cities were repurposed for the needs of the port economy as a mixture of seamen's boarding houses and shared housing for families

Through multiple sources, this research can construct a representative picture of a typical seamen's boarding house. The surviving register of licensed seamen's boarding houses for the London boroughs of Stepney and Poplar gives an insight into the size and layout of a wide range of properties used to board seamen.[39] The typical seamen's boarding house in London consisted of roughly eight rooms set over three to four floors, their size a tribute to their former grandeur. As a condition of licensing regulation that would be introduced in the late nineteenth century, a fixed number of seamen that a boarding house could board at any given time was set, with some providing facilities for as many as fifty boarders. However, it was more common that a house would accommodate between five and ten seamen. A single, shared bathroom and toilet were all that was available to meet the hygiene needs of boarders. Only the very largest houses provided multiple toilet facilities. A seaman could expect little privacy in his boarding house and with each room offering multiple beds, personal space was at a premium. In some larger, more commercial operations, this could see as many as fifteen men in a room; however, it was more common to find three men sharing a single room.

The typical rate for a day's board for a seaman in Liverpool in 1887 was 2s 6d.[40] While Cardiff's rates varied from 2s per day to 3s 2d.[41] These rates remained consistent with minimal variation throughout the nineteenth century. Even with competition from the more affordable Sailors' Home, privately owned seamen's boarding houses were not forced to lower their prices to compete. A critical factor behind this was the boarding house extending credit on their goods

[37] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.15.
[38] Palmer, 'Ports', p.139.
[39] LMA, LCC/PH/REG/01/019, Register of Seamen's Lodging Houses, undated, c.1901-18
[40] TNA, MT 9/292, Scale of Costs for 16 St James' Street, 1887.
[41] 'Darker Cardiff', *South Wales Daily News,* 22/11/1893.

and services whereas other facilities such as the Sailors' Homes did not.[42] The seaman's heavy reliance on credit due to the nature of maritime work meant there would always be a market for the services of the seamen's boarding house at a price set by their keepers. As noted above, operating a boarding house could be a precarious occupation financially. In order to make a living, it fell to the keeper to maximise the income they earned from their seamen boarders. In this respect, keepers in Liverpool had an advantage over their peers in both London and Cardiff. After a successful petition by Thomas Farricker on behalf of the Liverpool Boarding Masters Guarantee Company, the byelaws that would be introduced for the city, and that will be explored in greater detail below, granted keepers the privilege to, 'sell and supply to bona fide seamen boarders in his house, and to no other person or persons, clothes and slops.'[43] Each keeper was required to submit annually their scale of charges for the services and products they offered to the Local Marine Board for approval. The scale of charges for Thomas Farricker's seamen's boarding house at 16 St James' Street gives a comprehensive example of what was on offer to the seaman and what it could cost him. Alongside charges for board and services such as cartage, they offered a whole range of stock from essential working clothes to incidental items such as accordions and jewellery.[44] As shown in Figure 1 below, every product sold existed on a sliding scale. This pricing allowed keepers to cater to all classes of seamen as well as providing plenty of opportunity for upselling.

[42] The Sailors' Home was one of the most prominent threats to the trade of the seamen's boarding house in the nineteenth century. First opened in London in 1835, the Sailors' Home offered similar services and was in direct competition with the boarding house for the seaman and the lucrative supply of his services to the shipping industry. The Sailors' Home were semi-charitable organisations with an ideology grounded in protecting the innocent, childlike seaman from not only exploitation but from all the evils and depredations they may encounter in sailortown. However, as Graeme Milne is keen to highlight, spaces of protection are often simultaneously places of control. Indeed, as time went on, the Sailors' Home grew to control the seaman's time and money on land in much the same way as the boarding house keeper from which they wished to defend them. The success of the London Sailors' Home saw other port cities follow suit, with the Liverpool Sailors' Home opening in 1852 in Canning Place, followed by Cardiff in 1856 see Milne, *People, Place and Power,* pp.152-153.

[43] TNA, MT 9/292, Bye-Laws as to Seamen's Lodging-houses, Liverpool, 1887, p.4.

[44] TNA, MT 9/292, Scale of Charges for 16 St James' Street, 1887.

T Farricker
Licensed Seamen's
Boarding House Keeper
16 St James St Liverpool

Dietary & Hours

Breakfast	from	8 to 10am
Dinner	"	12.30 " 2.30pm
Tea	"	5.30 " 7pm
Supper	"	9.00 " 10pm

Board & Lodging 2/6 per day

Cartage

Queen's and Salt House Docks 1s/ and 3d per dock extra North or South. Birkenhead Docks 3s Garston 3s/6d

Clothing Department etc for Lodgers

Suits 19/ 30/ 35/ 40/ 50/ 55/
Shirts White Oxford & Working 1/6 2/6 3/6 4/ 4/6 5/6 6/6
Single Cotton & Woollen 1/6 2/6 3/6 4/ 4/6 5/
Drawers Cotton & Woollen 1/6 2/6 3/6 4/ 4/6
Neckties 3d 9d 1/ 1/6
Overcoats 18/6 21/ 30/ 40/
Jackets(various) 15/ 21/ 25/ 30/
Working Trousers Dungaree Cloth & Serge 2/ 2/6 3/ 4/ 5/ 6/ 7/6
Jumpers & Jackets 1/6 2/6 3/ 3/9
Socks 6d 9d 1/ 1/6
Braces 1/ 1/6
Handkerchiefs 3d 6d 1/ Silk 1/11 2/6
Cardigan Jackets 3/6 4/6 7/6 9/6 15/
Blankets per pair 7/6 Rugs 4/6 7/6
Leather Jackets 20/ 21/ 22/
Mufflers 1/6 2/ Silk 2/11 3/6 4/6
Oil Suits 8/6 10/6 12/6
Long Oil Coats 8/ 12/ 15/ 20/
Sea Boots 16/ 21/ 28/
Garters 7/6 10/6 12/6
Derby Ties 6/6 10/6
Bluchers 6/6 8/6 10/
Beds 2/ 3/6 4/6
Tins per set 1/
Soap per bar 6d 9d 1/
Knives 6d 9d 1/ 1/6
Chests 8/6 10/6 12/6
Accordions 3/6 6/6 9/6 12/6 15/
Studs per set 1/ 2/6 7/6
Watches 15/ 21/ 30/ 40/ 60/ 70/
Rings Neck 1/ 2/ Finger 1/ 2/ 6/6
Charms 2/ 3/6

Various Articles of Jewellery etc
Watches from 15/ Charms Rings etc Accordions from 3/6 and upwards
Notes cashed 1/ per £
NB - no intoxicants
Houses closed at 12 o'clock PM

Figure 1: Scale of costs for 16 St James' Street, Liverpool. (Source: TNA, MT 9/292, T. Farricker, Licensed Seamen's Boarding House Keeper, 16 St James Street, Liverpool, 1887.)

The seamen's boarding house keeper, much like the boarding houses that they kept, can prove ephemeral. However, census data, supported by the London register, suggests that the seamen's boarding house trade in the nineteenth century was predominantly a male occupation. According to the census, in Liverpool between 1881 and 1911 men made up, on average, 70% of seamen's boarding house keepers. This trend of male dominance is repeated in both Cardiff and London. Contemporary sources reflected this demographic with the most common description employed for those who were employed in the profession being 'boarding master'. Many of these men started out as seamen themselves before settling in port cities and establishing a seamen's boarding house. Abraham Lawrence, originally from Jamaica, ran several boarding houses for predominantly Caribbean seamen in Liverpool for over three decades. First at 64 Gilbert Street, then at 14 Kent Street and finally at 18 Upper Pitt Street. Initially, he is listed in census returns of 1881 and 1891 as a mariner and sailor respectively, suggesting he ran his boarding business concurrently with his seafaring activities. However, from 1901, at the age of 54, it seems he finally gave up his seafaring life and became a full-time seamen's boarding house keeper. Similarly, another Jamaican, Uriah Erskine, began his career at sea as a ship's cook before opening and operating a large boarding house in Cardiff at 36-37 Maria Street. For seamen tired of a life at sea moving into the boarding house trade marked a logical alternative profession for those wishing to to settle. Their seafaring experience placed these men in an optimum position to understand the needs of the seaman whilst on land. However, the transition from transient seamen to settled boarding house keeper was not necessarily straightforward as a seamen would have needed capital to get themselves set up in the trade. However, if they were able to acquire the necessary funds, the seamen's boarding house trade provided seamen such as Lawrence and Erskine, with access to a certain level of social mobility at a time when such movements were complex, especially for black men in Britain. Joining these ex-seafarers in the trade were many publicans, outfitters and other assorted sailortown tradespeople who looked to maximise their income from the seaman in port.

The gendered terminology of 'boarding master' does however disguise the significant number of female boarding house keepers active within the trade. The census reveals that whilst it was common for women to work running the day to day operations in the boarding house alongside their husbands, many operated their businesses alone whilst their husbands were away, usually at sea. For example, Abraham Lawrence's first wife Alice appears to have been very active in the running of their business. To run a seamen's boarding house was one of the few trades available to women that allowed them to make a living in the masculine space of sailortown.

Operating a boarding house could be a pragmatic choice for the wives of seafaring. As these men were away for extended periods of time, the trade provided enterprising women with an opportunity to bring in much needed income in order to survive. Single women did run seamen's boarding houses and examples of unmarried women operating in the trade are rare but do exist. More commonly, widowed women turned to keeping a boarding house as a means of supporting themselves. Female boarding house keepers highlight an alternative but important role that women played in the migrant experience. Relationships between migrant boarders and local landladies could transition into the most common, or as Laura Tabili argues, simply the best documented role women play in the migrant experience, that of the wife. To see them simply as wives, however, undermines the essential services and stability that they provided to the transient seaman, services that even the harshest critics of the boarding house keeper acknowledged were essential.[45]

As well as highlighting the gender dynamics of the profession, census data has helped reveal that the occupation of seamen's boarding house keeper was predominantly a migrant trade. This included not only external migration from other parts of the world but also internal migration from within Britain. For example, for the 1881 census returns for Liverpool, of the 65 people listed explicitly as boarding house keepers only 7 had been born in the city. This trend continues for both London and Cardiff. Indeed, in Cardiff for the same year, there was not a single keeper born in the city. However, there was substantial local migration from the surrounding rural area and from other parts of Wales. This movement of people was part of a broader trend of inward urban migration from rural areas throughout the nineteenth century towards industrial and commercial centres. By 1851, newcomers would outnumber natives among the adult population by as much as 66% in many of Britain's urban areas.[46] Sources highlight that just before the First World War of the roughly 180 seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff, all but 30 were run by someone born outside Britain.[47] For example, William Graffunder who would become one of the most vocal advocates for the boarding house trade in Cardiff in the latter half of the century was originally from Germany and spent twelve years at sea before settling in the city and becoming a boarding house keeper.[48] The diverse demographics within the profession not only reflects the

[45] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* pp.153-154.
[46] David Feldman, 'Migration', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 3: 1840–1950* ed. Martin Daunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.185.
[47] 'Cardiff "Man-Traps"', *Western Mail,* 1/3/1913.
[48] BPP, 1896, XL.1, 57, XLI.1, *Board of Trade Committee to inquire into Manning of British Merchant Ships. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Digest and Index of Evidence, List of Ships,* p.454.

cosmopolitan character of the seamen that they kept but also the wider melting-pot of sailortown. Foreign boarding house keepers could be found to operate boarding houses for their compatriots as common language and customs helped create a familiar space in a strange land. Whilst in a purely commercial sense, as Brad Beaven argues, this affiliation also allowed keepers to leverage their nations seafaring community for profit.[49] Whether culturally or ethnically akin or not, the intimate relationship between the more settled boarding house keeper and their transient boarders was paramount for the latter during their time in Britain.

The trend of seamen of the same nationality and ethnicity boarding together appears universal. For example, in the late nineteenth century, Cardiff had numerous seamen's boarding houses that catered exclusively to Greek seamen, whilst similarly, seamen from Spain and Italy stayed in their own boarding houses when in the Welsh port. As the twentieth century progressed, there was a rise in boarding houses that catered to Arab and Somali seamen in the city. Religious considerations made it unusual for Arab seamen to lodge with non-Muslim seamen. Muslim run Arab boarding houses were unique as they often had their own prayer spaces.[50] However, even with a shared religious affiliation between Muslim Arab and Somali seamen there was still a desire to board exclusively with compatriots from their homelands. The application for a seamen's boarding house licence by Hussein Adan in Cardiff highlights this. Adan wished to open a boarding house for Somali seamen as an insufficient number in the city had forced his compatriots to stay in boarding houses for Arab seamen.[51] In London, boarding houses exclusively for Chinese seamen focused around the area of Limehouse Causeway and Pennyfields are clearly visible within census records, along with a strong Scandinavian presence. By boarding with those with whom they shared a common national, ethnic or religious affiliation could help the transient seaman maintain and build relationships in an alien port, instilling a sense of trust between themselves and their keeper. Embedded within wider transnational networks, these national and ethnic bonds fostered by the boarding house could be crucial in minimising risk for both parties. If a boarding house keeper was found to be untrustworthy he or she could lose out on the valuable custom of the seaman. Conversely, if a seaman caused trouble or reneged on his debts, he could stand to lose a vital support structure

[49] Beaven, '"One of the Toughest Streets in the World"', p.17.
[50] David Motadel, 'The Making of Muslim Communities in Western Europe, 1914–1939'', in *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers*, ed. by Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.20.
[51] GA, D/CONC/7/5/2, Seamen's Lodging Houses: Files or Registration Numbers 41-60, 64, 81-102 and Five Unnumbered - 1909–1964, 'Application of Hussein Adan', 6/11/1937.

in a foreign port. Importantly for this study, it can be seen clearly that black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa likewise had their own boarding houses. As with boarding houses for other ethnic groups, these were often run by one of their compatriots, as with the Jamaican-born Abraham Lawrence. However, there are exceptions, and examples of West African keepers running Caribbean boarding houses and vice versa do exist. The prevalence of mixed boarding houses for black seamen in both Liverpool and Cardiff highlights a more complex relationship not only with the boarding house but between each other. This phenomenon will be explored further in the chapters that follow. A significant number of British born women can also be found running boarding houses for black seamen. They either ran the business in their husband's absence, such as Alice Lawrence or frequently took over the running of a boarding house when their husbands passed away. For example in Cardiff, Welsh born Sarah Phenis ran a boarding house principally for Caribbean seamen at 12 South Church Street for 22 years after the death of her husband.[52]

While many seamen's boarding houses and their keepers came and went, some like Abraham Lawrence had remarkable staying power within the trade. For others, it even became a family business. Eustaquio De La Cruz, originally from Manilla in the Philippines, operated a boarding house for Filipino seamen in Liverpool for over thirty years. He was followed into the trade by his two daughters, Juanita and Augustina, while his Liverpool-born wife Mary-Jane took sole ownership of the business after he passed away, and managed boarding houses close to each other at 21 and 25 Frederick Street. Similarly, in Cardiff, long standing Italian seamen's boarding house keeper Augustus Borinetti was followed into the profession by his son Alfred. However, Cardiff born, second generation Alfred chose not to lodge Italian but catered solely to British seamen suggesting that in some cases national affiliation outweighed heritage within the seamen's boarding house trade as the children of migrants provided services to those they and not their parents shared a common culture with.

The shipping industry’s demand for labour created a constant demand for housing. While labour demands ebbed and flowed, the need to house seamen, even those who found themselves out of work and far from home, remained constant.

[52] GA, DCONC/7/5/2, Seamen's Lodging Houses: Files for Registration Numbers 41-60, 64, 81-102 and Five Unnumbered, 1909–1964, ‘12 South Church Street’.

Unlike many other landlords, seamen's boarding house keepers tended to live on their premises and were heavily involved in the day to day running of the business.[53] This shared space with the seamen they boarded created unique dynamics within the boarding house. Seamen's boarding houses were often family homes, cramped before boarders had even arrived. The Lawrence boarding house included not only the patriarch and his wife but also their six daughters and one son. It was also common for boarding house keepers to be assisted by at least one servant resulting in a considerably crowded house at any given time. The employment of servants highlights another step in the upward urban social mobility that keeping a seamen's boarding house provided formally transient working-class seamen after they had settled.

Like the seamen they boarded, the lack of privacy and personal space in the boarding house extended to the keeper and their family. While occasionally a floor of the property would be retained for private use, it was much more common for there to be only a single private room kept for sole use by the keeper.[54] Boarding houses that lacked a familial dynamic themselves still aimed to create an air of domesticity for their seamen lodgers. Keepers claimed that the home comforts furnished by the seamen's boarding house were responsible for their popularity with many seamen over more spartan institutions such as the Sailor's Homes.[55] Seamen would often return to the same boarding house voyage after voyage and, if well cared for, were likely to recommend it to their shipmates.[56] A seamen's preferred boarding house could provide much needed continuity in their transient lives; however, repeat business was no guarantee of success or longevity for its keeper in a fiercely competitive market.

As can be seen from the cost of services for Thomas Farricker's boarding house in Figure 1, the house had set mealtimes for lodgers that helped foster a sense of community.[57] Edith Pervoe, in her recollections of her time growing up in her father's boarding house in Butetown at the turn of the twentieth century, recalls that her father, John Joseph Pervoe born in Nova Scotia of Afro-Caribbean heritage, was responsible for all the cooking for the men in the house while Edith helped with the washing up and general cleaning. Pervoe would become a prominent and well-respected boarding house keeper for black seamen in Cardiff initially on Peel Street and later West Church Street. Mealtime would be one of the few times that Edith came into contact with

[53] 'Darker Cardiff', *South Wales Daily News*, 22/11/1893.
[54] LMA, LCC/PH/REG/01/019, Register of Seamen's Lodging Houses, undated, c.1901–18.
[55] 'A Chat with a Boarding Master', *Daily Telegraph,* 23/7/1883.
[56] 'Labour and the Poor', *The Morning Chronicle,* 11/4/1850.
[57] TNA, MT 9/292, Scale of Charges for 16 St James' Street, 1887.

seamen as the children were not allowed in the area of the house where seamen slept.[58] The dynamics of the Pervoe household highlight that although the families were often heavily involved in the business's day-to-day running, there was careful management and a desire to create and maintain definite boundaries as to where and how the private sphere of the family home overlapped with the professional sphere of the boarding house.

This demarcation of space within the boarding house was necessary. Although the seamen's boarding house could create an aura of domesticity for their boarders, they were also spaces of conflict and drama. Disputes were common between keeper and lodger. Many often revolved around payment and debts owed to the house or could break out as the result of the detainment of goods belonging to seamen. Mrs Hampson, a boarding house keeper in Liverpool, was taken to court by her lodger John Williams, a Kru seaman from West Africa, for illegally detaining a green parrot that belonged to him. While the hearing of the case caused much amusement to onlookers, the parrot valued at £4 was worth a substantial sum and it is understandable why Williams took legal action to recover his property.[59] While countless articles in the local press saw disputes settled in court, other examples exist where quarrels spilt out of the boarding house and the courts and onto the streets of sailortown. John Davies, originally from Sierra Leone, who kept a boarding house for West African seamen at 11 Frances Street in Cardiff found himself threatened with a revolver whilst conversing with a fellow boarding house keeper on a street corner.[60] The intimate space of the boarding house would also see keepers caught up in altercations between their boarders. Two seamen staying at the Lawrence's boarding house got into a heated argument over a girl in New York. The dispute quickly escalated, and one seaman pulled a gun and fired at the other. As he attempted to escape, the perpetrator fired again, narrowly missing Alice Lawrence who was standing close to the victim.[61] Unfortunately, several years later, Alice would be less fortunate. Whilst in the boarding house's kitchen, she was attacked by a seaman with a knife and hospitalised with two serious wounds to her head. The attacker also wounded Abraham Lawrence in the attack.[62] Episodes such as these highlight

[58] Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), pp.95-97. Edith Pervoe appears under the pseudonym 'Harriet Vincent' when interviewed in Thompson's book and her father, John Joseph Pervoe, simply as 'Mr Vincent. Stephen Bourne later confirmed that Edith and Harriet were in fact the same person. See Stephen Bourne, *Black Poppies: Britain's Black Community and the Great War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014), pp.135-137.
[59] 'Police Court - A Parrot Case', *Liverpool Mercury*, 13/6/1848.
[60] 'Facing a Revolver', *Western Mail,* 3/9/1919.
[61] 'The Alleged Attempted Murder in Liverpool', *Liverpool Mercury*, 20/4/1883.
[62] 'Liverpool Police Court', *Liverpool Mercury*, 24/6/1887.

that the space of the boarding house was not free from and remained entangled in the complex social relationships of the wider space of sailortown.

This close proximity and lack of private space between the seaman and keeper could also breed more positive dynamics and relationships. Many seamen formed remarkably strong relationships with their boarding house keeper continuing to lodge with the same keeper even as they moved from address to address over the years.[63] Indeed, much more personal relationships could blossom, as in the case of Edith Pervoe who would ultimately marry a seaman from Barbados whom she met whilst he was staying at her father's boarding house.[64] Thompson views Pervoe's marriage to a seaman as denoting downward social mobility as the petite bourgeoisie boarding house keeper's daughter becomes the working class seaman's wife.[65] Despite the social mobility the seamen's boarding house offered its keeper and higher status within the social hierarchy of sailortown, a strong negative perception continued to plague the trade.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the reputation of the seamen's boarding house and its keeper had reached a nadir. In the eyes of the authorities and press, the trade as a whole had become synonymous with the crimp and crimping. Boarding house keeper's business relationship with the shipping industry, as mentioned above, operated in a grey area of semi-illegality as the supply of seaman was never officially sanctioned, nor the cashing of advance notes controlled. This lack of regulation left the system open to abuse, and within the trade there were some who in their eagerness to turn a profit, partook in dubious practices that exploited seamen and employment patterns.[66] Despite a rapaciousness within parts of the trade it is important to acknowledge that not all seamen's boarding house keepers were crimps.[67] While exploitation of the seaman and the labour market was a very real problem within sailortown, 'crimp' was a contested, often moralised term used by those that had a vested interest in the port economy to undermine and denigrate those they deemed immoral or who they viewed as a social or economic threat. The crimp themself was a nebulous character, with the authorities, religious and social reformers and even elements within the boarding house trade drawing the line as to who was or was not a crimp in different places. Indeed, the official definition of a crimp as stated

[63] Tabili, *Global Migrants,* p.153.
[64] Thompson, p.99; Bourne, p.137.
[65] Thompson, p.102.
[66] Fingard, p27.
[67] Hugill, p.131.

by the Board of Trade was simply someone, 'who professedly occupies himself in finding employment for seamen.'[68] A section of the boarding house trade in their singular efforts to procure seamen by any means necessary, gained a reputation as both a social and economic evil within the sailortown district and many found themselves branded as crimps. Much like other boarding house keepers, once this section of the trade secured a seaman they controlled how and where he spent his money and once penniless attempted to ship him off often at a significant profit.[69] The real expertise of those accused of crimping was not to rob the seaman but rather persuade him to buy goods and services at massively inflated yet not entirely extortionate prices.[70] Conrad Dixon argues that this most common perception of the crimp is inadequate as it emphasises a predator/victim relationship, which ignores the reality that many seamen voluntarily placed themselves under the control of so-called crimps.[71] Freed from the austerity of life aboard ship some seamen were happy for their every need to be taken care of even if it meant paying a premium for the service. One contemporary source noted that, 'the sailor is such an extraordinary being, that after being plundered and robbed, and he knows that he is robbed, he will go back to the same house the next voyage.'[72]

The press were complicit in cultivating an image of the boarding house keeper as a crimp preying on the innocent seaman. Papers branded them 'parasites', termed them 'hammock-snatchers' and 'landsharks' with one paper describing them as a 'class of vagabonds, consisting of thieves, bullies, pugilists and others of the very lowest grade…' [73] The boarding house keeper was a middleman, and like many middlemen, they suffered from a poor reputation. The fact that they dealt in human beings further lowered their status within the port.[74] The reputation of those branded as crimps and their practices was contested within the shipping industry. There was

[68] BPP, 1886, LIX.197, *Report on Supply of British Seamen,* p.9.
[69] Crimping was not a phenomenon unique to the transient seaman. Jewish migrants to Britain in the late nineteenth century were also a target of their own particular brand of crimp. Under the guise of 'guides' and 'porters', the crimp encouraged the newly arrived migrant into poorly maintained lodging houses charging exorbitant rents. Once penniless, the poor migrant would then be put on a train to some nearby town by the crimps where they would be abandoned and left destitute. However, due to the actions of organisations from within the settled community such as the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, by the turn of the twentieth century the practice had all but been eradicated. See Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England: 1870–1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp.36-37.
[70] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.120.
[71] Conrad Dixon, 'The Rise and Fall of the Crimp 1840–1914', in *British Shipping and Seamen, 1630–1960: Some Studies* ed. Simon Fisher (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984), p.49.
[72] BPP, 1893, LXXX.387, *Dept. Committee to Consider Question of Extension to Ports Abroad of Arrangements in United Kingdom for Transmission of Seamen's Wages,* p.12.
[73] 'The Perils of the Port of London', *Western Mail,* 8/6/1869, p.4.
[74] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* pp.107-108.

toleration from some quarters of those elements of the boarding house trade engaged in more exploitative practices as in their role as labour agents they were, despite this exploitation, crucially, able to deliver on their service to supply seamen to ships.[75] However, it was felt by others that the practice of shipping seamen by any means necessary in order to claim their advance and turn a profit led, they claimed, to their ships often being crewed by inferior seamen.[76] Despite these dubious practices, the abilities of those branded as crimps garnered a begrudging respect with one journalist admiring that, 'it requires exercise of no ordinary qualities and in fact requires physical and mental powers worthy of a better cause.'[77]

The seamen's boarding house was not the only sailortown industry accused of involvement in the crimping system. As mentioned above, most businesses that sought to profit from the seaman, including publicans and outfitters as well as brothel keepers, had exploitative elements within them. Many brothel owners labelled themselves 'boarding house keepers' when touting for business, further undermining the reputation of the seamen's boarding house and fuelling its negative image. One report estimated that as many as 250 brothel keepers were styling themselves boarding house keepers in Liverpool alone.[78]

The modus operandi of the crimping system can be broken down into two parts: inward crimping and outward crimping. Inward crimping was the process of soliciting seamen to become boarders. This part of the process rarely directly involved the boarding house keeper. Instead, they employed runners to board ships as they made their way upriver to the docks and entice seamen to their respective establishments on the crimps' behalf. Onboard the ship, runners offered alcohol and other incentives to entice prospective clients, and on reaching an agreement, they remained on board to keep a watchful eye over their quarry so that once the ship docked, they could ensure the swift transportation of the seaman and his belongings to the boarding house and prevent the loss of their hard-earned prize to a competitor. These services were, of course, at the expense of the seaman. Ship's captains had very little power to defend against the crimp and their agents as they were often overwhelmed by the sheer number that boarded their ship. For example, as many as thirty runners boarded the S.S Alexandria as it approached Cardiff in 1866, and when its captain tried to make them disperse, they simply,

[75] Williams, 'Advance Notes', p.98.
[76] Richard Gorki, '"Purely a Question of Policy": Undermanning and the Late Victorian Merchant Marine', *International Journal of Maritime History,* 19 (2007), p.16.
[77] LRO, 050 LIB, 'The Modern Crimp', *Liberal Review*, 30/08/1879.
[78] 'Meeting of Seamen's Boarding House Keepers', *Liverpool Mercury,* 23/3/1864.

'swore at him, and said "they would go when they like and not before."' [79] The runners took the most risk when it came to inward crimping, and for their services, they were usually paid on a commission basis earning around 8-10 shillings for every seaman they brought to the boarding house.[80] Payment varied from port to port; for example, at Hull, a runner earned a salary as well as his commission for every seaman he brought back.[81] Once the seaman's wages had run dry and his credit exhausted with his boarding house keeper, the process of outward crimping began. The seaman was escorted to the mercantile marine office and signed on to a ship, often voluntarily but sometimes against his will and his advance note claimed. An advance note was only payable on condition that the seaman sailed, and then only three days later, so he continued to be closely supervised for the remainder of his time onshore to ensure he made it onboard.[82] As mentioned previously, the advance note was an essential source of income for sailortown businesses and a point of contention for those trying to prevent the exploitation of seamen. In some extreme cases it was not unusual for a rapacious keeper to encourage a seaman who had already signed articles to desert and sign on with another ship so they could claim another advance note from him. So from arrival at port to shipping out control of the seaman was paramount. To maintain an operation as extensive as this was not cheap. Contemporary sources estimated that to maintain the crimping system in Liverpool, spending on acquiring seamen amounted to as much as £3000-£4000 a year.[83] While some boarding house keepers profited hugely from the crimping system, success was not guaranteed, and many were in no better position financially than the seamen they attempted to exploit.[84]

By the mid-nineteenth century, the British Government felt it necessary to intervene and made its first attempts at trying to tame and control some of the more unruly elements operating in sailortown. In an effort to stamp out inward crimping, the introduction of the Merchant Shipping Act 1854 made it an arrestable offence for anyone, except those in the direct employ of the authorities, to board a ship before it arrived at the dock.[85] However, despite this legislation, by the 1860s, exploitation of seamen continued to be a significant problem in British ports, with

[79] TNA, MT 9/26, Testimony of the Agent for the Ship Alexandria, 24/2/1866.
[80] TNA, MT 9/42, Report of Superintendent of the Thames, 10/5/1865.
[81] Dixon, 'The Rise and Fall of the Crimp', p.52.
[82] *ibid,* p.54
[83] 'River Police', *Liverpool Mercury,* 18/12/1863.
[84] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.124.
[85] *Merchant Shipping Act 1854* (17 & 18 Vict. c.104) p.23; Of all the professions involved with crimping, it is only the boarding house keeper that is explicitly mentioned in the legislation. This highlights that they continued to be, in the eyes of the authorities at least, the principal actor most associated with the practice.

Cardiff gaining particular notoriety for the practice. There appear to be two reasons for this. First, and perhaps crucially, there was difficulty obtaining convictions for the offence. A person could only be prosecuted under the new act if they were found guilty of committing the crime of crimping in its entirety. However, as seen above, there were several moving parts in the procurement and sale of seamen, each undertaken by different agents, making it nearly impossible to obtain a conviction. This practice of avoiding apprehension was most effective when inciting a seaman to desert their current ship. A runner would be engaged to approach the seaman, and once convinced to desert, the boarding house keeper would then harbour him at their property or, in some cases, be transported to another port. Although the port authorities may be certain the two were working in concert, it proved challenging to conclusively prove the keeper had been the one responsible for the desertion.[86] Here the toleration by the shipping industry of dubious business practices employed by the crimping element among boarding house keepers could be counterproductive. Desertion caused delays to ships, and delays cost money while captains searched for new crews. Extreme examples exist of opportunistic keepers forcing captains to pay for their own crews that the keeper themselves had incited to desert.[87]

Another factor behind exploitative practices being able to flourish within sailortown was the more practical issue of a simple lack of manpower to police the ports. A report commissioned on behalf of the Board of Trade into the problem of desertion and crimping in Cardiff found that the police force had only forty-five constables available to them and, although well-trained and acquainted with the problem of crimping, was too small to police such a large port effectively.[88] Like many ports in Britain, Cardiff had seen rapid growth in the nineteenth century. From a population of 1,870 in 1801, by 1861, it had risen to 208,145.[89] In London, tenacious runners evaded port authorities by taking advantage of the length of the Thames and the long journey ships took up the river to reach the docks. They would maintain boats at Gravesend close to the mouth of the river and board ships there before the authorities could intervene and thus keep the seamen they wished to procure under their watchful eye until the ship reached its terminus.[90] Of the three major ports in this study, Liverpool, despite not being free from crimping, was considered by contemporary sources to be the only port where the practice never became a significant concern to the local authorities. This was attributed to the docks' central

[86] TNA, MT 9/26, Mayor of Cardiff on the Subject of Crimping, 1866.
[87] TNA, MT 9/26, Crimping at this Port, 1/6/1866.
[88] TNA, MT 9/26, Crimps and Desertion of Sailors at Cardiff, 28/4/1866.
[89] Daunton, *Coal Metropolis,* pp.1-5.
[90] 'The Perils of the Port of London', *Western Mail,* 8/6/1869.

location and their proximity to the mouth of the Mersey which allowed for better observation and management by the city's police force.[91] The exploitation of seamen in Cardiff reached such levels that there were even accusations that shipping clerks, the only agents legally licensed by the Board of Trade to supply seamen to the shipping industry, were involved in crimping.[92] The Board of Trade sent an inspector to investigate, but he failed to find sufficient evidence to substantiate these accusations fully. However, he highlighted that the shipping clerks practice of issuing advance notes to seamen and then cashing them themselves opened them up to scrutiny as the discounting and cashing of advance notes was open to abuse and a practice deeply associated with crimping.[93]

Local authorities and shipping companies agreed that a more proactive approach to policing in ports was the best way to stamp out crimping and the exploitation of seamen. In 1860 a London based shipping company, Wigram & Sons, received approval to place a constable aboard ships as they made their way from Gravesend to London. This tactic met with success and they reported that no third-parties had attempted to board their ships. The Superintendent of the Thames believed that employing an inspector and three constables to board ships at Gravesend would be sufficient to manage the problem of crimping.[94] Thomas Gray, the assistant secretary to the Board of Trade, agreed and swiftly approved the plan.[95] A similar provision was enacted at Cardiff by placing the policing of crimping in the hands of a small but dedicated force whose sole duty it would be.[96]

There was discord among boarding house keepers about how best to deal with the worst exploitative practices perpetrated by some of those engaged in the trade. Keepers were well aware of the amount of negative attention the activities associated with crimping generated and the effect any increased scrutiny by either the authorities or the shipping industry might have on their trade. There was also a significant degree of self-interest in ridding the trade of the more unscrupulous and rapacious elements. By the time a ship had docked, these keepers and their agents had already procured a large proportion of the seamen, leaving those without the same resources to board incoming ships and fight over those that remained. As early as 1860 there

[91] TNA, MT 9/42, Report of Superintendent of the Thames, 10/5/1867.
[92] TNA, MT 9/26, copy of letter from ‘A Shipowner’ to the Shipping and Mercantile Gazette, 27/4/1866.
[93] TNA, MT 9/31, Crimping System at Cardiff, 1866.
[94] TNA, MT 9/42, Report of Superintendent of the Thames, 10/5/1867.
[95] TNA, MT 9/42, Crimping in the Port of London, Jan. 1868.
[96] TNA, MT 9/26, Crimps and Desertion of Sailors at Cardiff, 28/4/1866.

were movements within the trade to organise and formulate how best to control market share and force out the competition. At a meeting held at the Hoop and Grapes public house on Ratcliffe Highway in the very heart of London's sailortown, there were calls from some boarding house keepers for some kind of licensing. They wished to differentiate what they saw as the 'respectable class of boarding house keepers' and 'protect themselves from the competition of unprincipled persons called 'landsharks' and 'hammock snatchers.'' These keepers, employing the negative language utilised in the press allowed them to position themselves as another victim of the crimping system and discredit their competitors. They argued that only licensed boarding house keepers and their representatives should be able to board ships, and any conviction for malpractice would result in the forfeiture of said licence.[97] The boarding house keepers' attempts to legally gain the privilege to board ships and enter the dock estate would be an ongoing battle with all three city authorities throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. The meeting included a deputation of Liverpool boarding house keepers and highlighted solidarity and shared aims within the trade that extended from port to port. It was only a decade later, in 1872, after crimping had continued to plague the ports that the Marine Department of the Board of Trade followed suit and started to make a case for the licensing of seamen's boarding houses.[98] Even so, it would be another eight years before the first significant attempt at licensing seamen's boarding houses came into effect with the passing of the Merchant Seamen (Payment of Wages & Rating) Act 1880. While the devious, often illegal activities and varying levels of exploitation of the seamen and the labour market were a real problem within the labour market in British ports in the nineteenth century, the hysteria that surrounded them proved a blessing for the shipping industry. There is no doubt exploitative practices among boarding house keepers and other sailortown trades was rife during this period as competing players in the port economy fought for business, however the spectre of the crimp looming over sailortown provided a convenient bogeyman for a shipping industry keen to distract from its own exploitation of seamen as low wages and poor working conditions plagued the industry.[99]

Legislation, Licensing and the Fight for Control of Sailortown

The introduction of the Merchant Seamen (Payment of Wages & Rating) Act 1880 saw a concerted effort on the part of the British Government to assert more influence and control over

[97] 'Seamen's Boarding Houses', *Liverpool Mercury,* 7/9/1860.
[98] TNA, MT 9/63, London Local Marine Board to Board of Trade, 2/2/1872.
[99] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.11.

both British shipping and metropolitan British ports. This move effectively began a three-way battle for the control of sailortown between the authorities, shipping industry and boarding house keepers, each with their own conflicting needs and interests. Valerie Burton associates the increase in governmental supervision throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century to the changing nature of British shipping, which had become so integral to the economy, the state deemed it, along with its workforce, too important to be left entirely to market forces.[100] The seamen's boarding house found itself central to this new legislation with its regulation and control paramount. While this new act posed a threat to boarding house keepers and their trade, it also presented an opportunity. In a highly competitive market, a section of the trade sought to work hand in hand with the authorities and shipping industry to mitigate risk to their business and maximise their control of the market.

Immediately, the 1880 Act began to impact on the trade. It set about introducing more significant penalties for those convicted of soliciting seamen, including a fine of up to £20 or imprisonment for six months for anyone found on board a ship without permission.[101] Perhaps, most importantly, a clause inserted into the legislation would have potentially ruinous consequences for the boarding house trade. After much hand-wringing by policymakers, the Act abolished the seamen's advance note. The authorities had long viewed the advance note as a primary factor in encouraging illegal and exploitative practices, with calls for abolishing it coming as early as the 1860s; they were, nonetheless, unable to recommend any alternative.[102] In abolishing the advance note, representatives from within the boarding house trade felt that there was a lack of understanding from the authorities as to the reality of how the seamen's boarding house, and the broader port economy, operated. As mentioned above, advances were an essential source of income to the seamen's boarding house, especially in a port such as Cardiff. The city gained a reputation as a 'hard-up' port where seamen, having been paid off at London or Liverpool and having subsequently run out of money, often arrived looking for work and in need of credit.[103] In the run-up to legislation, shipping companies had likewise expressed misgivings about the advance note's abolition as they believed that it was essential to the recruitment of seamen and

[100] Valerie Burton, 'Boundaries and Identities in the Nineteenth-Century English Port: Sailortown Narratives and Urban Space', in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, eds. Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp.141-142.
[101] Dixon, 'The Rise and Fall of the Crimp', p.60.
[102] TNA, MT 9/31, Crimping System at Cardiff, 3/12/1866.
[103] M.J Daunton, 'Jack Ashore: Seamen in Cardiff before 1914', *Welsh History Review, 9* (1978), p.179.

without it, seamen would not be forthcoming.[104] The authorities made a significant misstep in abolishing the advance note without a viable alternative to replace it. By removing an integral element that upheld the economy of the port in their myopic pursuit of the crimp, they ran the risk of undermining and destroying the boarding house trade as a whole, potentially causing severe disruption in the supply of labour. This enactment does suggest that the authorities were out of touch with the practical workings of the port economy.

In response, shipping companies introduced an alternative practice of offering cash advances to seamen. However, dealing in cash was much riskier for companies and a much more attractive proposition for those looking to exploit this system.[105] Sensing an opportunity, a collection of Cardiff boarding house keepers presented a workaround to protect the advance that was vital to their trade. In 1881, they formed the Cardiff Boarding Masters Guarantee Society (CBMGS), which negotiated an arrangement with shipping companies and brokers in the city to guarantee the cash advances they paid to seamen. If a seaman deserted his ship, the Society was responsible for refunding any monies that had been advanced.[106] This arrangement was a boon for the shipping company, which saw the lion's share of financial risk placed with the boarding house. While this new system was far from ideal, the CBMGS and its affiliate organisation, the Cardiff Boarding Masters' Association (CBMA), sought to leverage this new relationship to their advantage and gain control of the market. Through formal organisation its members attempted to distance themselves from the reputation of unregulated and unscrupulous crimps and instil trust in their practices. Whilst at the same time through their new relationship with the shipping companies and positioning the organisation's members as the only seamen's boarding houses trusted to deal with the supply of seamen to the industry, members of the CBMGS could form a closed shop and force out their competition. It would be in the interest of shipping companies to use member houses with the financial protection they offered as opposed to the far greater risk associated with an unaffiliated boarding house. While some boarding houses remained associated with crimping, prostitution and illicit drinking dens, many understood that if they wished for their trade to thrive, they would need to be able to prove their respectability in order to continue to secure the cooperation of merchants and brokers.[107] This pragmatic arrangement between boarding house keepers and the shipping industry effectively nullified this initial

[104] Williams, 'Advance Notes', p.92.
[105] *ibid,* p.93.
[106] 'Board of Trade Officials and the Cardiff Boarding Masters' Association', *Western Mail*, 24/2/1885.
[107] Daunton, 'Jack Ashore', p.184.

interference from state authorities. The inability to do away with advances entirely highlights the interdependence that existed between the shipping companies and the seamen's boarding house. However, it was a final clause within the Merchant Seamen Act, 1880 that was perhaps to have the most consequences for the boarding house and its keeper in the long term. This clause stipulated that the local sanitary authorities were now obligated to enact byelaws for regulating and licensing seamen's boarding houses.[108]

Initially, the majority of the byelaws pertaining to the seaman's boarding house that would eventually be introduced were squarely focused on enforcing a higher standard of cleanliness and generally improving the living conditions for seamen whilst on land. This covered basic practices such as regular cleaning of bedclothes and bedding, proper waste disposal, and adequate ventilation in sleeping quarters. To ensure that basic standards of cleanliness were adhered to, seamen's boarding houses were subject to spot inspections from the Medical Officer of Health or a specifically employed inspector of boarding houses at any time of the day or night. These intrusive inspections would not be popular with boarding house keepers, and there were attempts, without success, to get them removed from proposed legislation.[109] The local authorities viewed overcrowding within boarding houses as a significant contributing factor to poor hygiene. If an inspection found the keeper in breach of the fixed number of seamen for their house, they were liable to prosecution. One of the more extreme examples of overcrowding was the discovery of ninety-eight seamen in the Liverpool boarding house of Matthew Hoey, whose property was registered to accommodate just sixteen boarders.[110] Overcrowding would be an issue that would persist within the trade. To understand the prevalence of the problem, 40% of all prosecutions against boarding house keepers in London between 1903 and 1914 were for overcrowding.[111] For a keeper choosing to take in more seamen than was officially sanctioned was a calculated risk. The fines imposed for overcrowding were not particularly steep, and the more seamen they boarded, the more money they could earn and with that extra money they could easily offset any penalty incurred from a spot inspection. However, this was all dependent on shipping seamen quickly. The longer a

[108] *Merchant Seamen (Payment of Wages & Rating Act) 1880* (57 & 58 Vict. c. 60) s.2, s.5, s.9, pp.1-4.
[109] TNA, MT 9/250, Interview Between Thomas Gray and the Cardiff Boarding Masters Friendly Society, 9/11/1882, pp.7-8.
[110] 'Work and Wages', *Liverpool Mercury*, 20/6/1889.
[111] LMA, LCC/PH/REG/1/20, Common Lodging Houses and Seamen's Lodging Houses. Register of Police Court Proceedings, 1895–1914; From the evidence, overcrowding at seamen's boarding houses for Chinese seamen was particularly prevalent accounting for 76% of all prosecutions.

boarding house keeper kept unsanctioned boarders, there was not only the greater chance of discovery by the authorities, but they would also be extending a more significant line of credit. If the keeper ran afoul of the authorities or was unable to ship all seamen, they could end up paying out considerably more than they got back in return from the seamen's advance note.

Boarding house keepers in Cardiff, having secured their mutually beneficial relationship with the shipping industry, turned their attention to the local authorities. With the drafting of model byelaws they viewed this as an opportunity to assert pressure on policy makers, agitating, with mixed results, for greater influence and control. The Cardiff Boarding Masters' Friendly & Protection Society (CBMFPS), an offshoot of the CBMA, led by William Graffunder and Hiram Weeks, was granted an interview with a representative of the Board of Trade to voice its objections to the new byelaws. Graffunder believed that the byelaws, as they stood, exhibited a more general prejudice that marked all boarding house keepers, crimp or not, as the same. As a consequence, this unduly punished those that professed to operate a legitimate, beneficial trade whilst those operating a more illicit business would continue to escape the worst punishments.[112] Within a year of its formation in early 1882, the society claimed membership of around seventy local boarding house keepers. In their own words, the Society's chief aim was to 'raise the character of the seamen's boarding house' whilst 'discouraging [...] and extinguishing the low and objectionable class of house kept by dissolute and irresponsible persons…'[113] Thus, the society, by volunteering to suppress the last vestiges of the crimping system, presented itself as a solution to the problem long troubling the authorities. As with the shipping industry and their guarantee of cash advances, the CBMFPS would guarantee the quality of the boarding house trade through membership to its organisation and by regulation under the new byelaws. Framed as a win-win for the authorities that would see a well-regulated and well-organised boarding house trade, it would also allow for the society to use the byelaws and further regulations to carve up and control the market. Ultimately this would guarantee CBMFPS member's monopoly in the valuable supply of seamen to the shipping industry.[114]

However, a significant obstacle lay in the way of the CBMFPS aims; licensing was not compulsory. As legislation stood, nothing was preventing unlicensed premises from carrying on their trade, which, the society argued in an interview with the Board of Trade, ultimately made

[112] 'Seamen's Boarding Houses - To the editor', *South Wales Daily News,* 6/10/1882.
[113] TNA, MT 9/250, Morgan & Scott to the Health Committee, Cardiff, 23/9/1882.
[114] Daunton, 'Jack Ashore', p.184.

the new byelaws redundant.[115] The representative from the Board of Trade was Thomas Gray, who previously had been heavily involved with suppressing exploitative practices in the labour market in London. His experience appears to have prejudiced his view of the Cardiff boarding house keepers, and throughout the interview, he stresses and draws attention to disreputable and 'objectionable lodging house people'.[116] Despite CBMFPS's insistence that illegal activities were the result of a dishonest minority and offering many examples of their positive work and the valuable role they played in the port and shipping industry, it is clear from Gray's attitude that the boarding house keeper was still struggling to escape the negative image attached to their trade in the 1880s. In understanding why Thomas Gray was so dismissive of the deputation, one only has to look at a handwritten note attached to the copy of the interview which lists the various misdemeanours committed by the members present. There were accusations against Hiram Weeks of charging high commission on advances and illegally supplying seamen, whereas William Graffunder had previous convictions for harbouring deserters, both crimes long associated with crimping.[117] In the case of his convictions for harbouring deserters, Graffunder argued that often the boarding house keeper was unaware that the seaman had deserted his ship and, once discovered, if they were to throw them out as they are legally obliged to do, they stood to lose the money hitherto invested in that seaman. Graffunder argued that when it came to harbouring deserters, it is, in fact, the legitimate boarding house keeper who was the true victim of the crime and asked for more leniency.[118] Only the keeper themselves could honestly know if they deliberately harboured deserters or not, and they did often find themselves at the mercy of absconding seamen. However, Graffunder was a seasoned professional in the ultra-competitive boarding house trade and whether he incited desertion himself or not, much like in the case of overcrowding, may have chosen to turn a blind eye in order to earn a lucrative advance. These misdemeanours committed by two of the leading members of the CBMFPS, do somewhat undermine its self-presentation as the legitimate and honest wing of the trade and further strengthened the authorities' hand that it was desperately in need of reform. The view of Graffunder and Weeks' business practices highlights the ethical and professional grey area within which the boarding house keeper operated, where the line between legal and illegal practices blurred. The interview between the two parties

[115] TNA, MT 9/250, Interview Between Thomas Gray and the Cardiff Boarding Masters Friendly Society, 9/11/1882, p.3.
[116] *ibid,* p.4.
[117] TNA, MT9/250, Handwritten note attached to Interview Between Thomas Gray and the Cardiff Boarding Masters Friendly Society, 9/11/1882.
[118] TNA, MT 9/250, Interview Between Thomas Gray and the Cardiff Boarding Masters Friendly Society, 9/11/1882, pp.11-12.

concluded without the Board of Trade conceding much ground to the Cardiff's boarding house keepers.

Undeterred by his failure with the Board of Trade, William Graffunder pressed on with his campaign. He argued that if licensing was to truly achieve its objective of eradicating crimping and illegal business practices once and for all, there needed to be more benefits and incentives for the boarding house keeper to take out a licence and harsher punishment for those that break the rules. He maintained that as the byelaws stood, and with no compulsory registration, 'the very class of people whose evil practises the legislation intended to crush would be able to evade the control of the licensing authority, as they would find it more convenient for their purposes to remain unlicensed.'[119] He outlined a four-point plan that he believed would benefit all parties. First, seamen staying at licensed premises should have preference at the mercantile marine office for work over those staying at unlicensed premises. Secondly, licensed boarding houses should be placed on equal standing and granted the same privileges as, namely, the Sailors' Home. Thirdly, a licence holder should be permitted to provide substitute seamen from their establishment if one should fail to join their ship. Finally, the mercantile marine office should keep a list of all licensed boarding houses and instructions given to encourage seamen to lodge at those houses.[120] Indeed, if the Cardiff authorities had granted these concessions, it would have made it very difficult to operate a seamen's boarding house as a commercial enterprise without a licence. It would also have meant that licensed keepers would be in a position of unrivalled power and influence in the local port economy by having de facto control not only over the seaman on land and his access to work but through organisations such as the CBMA and CBFPS they would be able to dictate who could and could not operate as a boarding house keeper. As testimony to the improved character of the boarding house keeper, worthy of these concessions, Graffunder presented positive practices introduced to the benefit of the seaman and shipping industry, such as allowing seamen to contest their final bill in front of a witness to ensure all charges were fair and above board.[121] He claimed that as a result of the

[119] 'Licensing Seamen's Lodging Houses', *Liverpool Mercury,* 24/7/1883.
[120] Boarding house keepers were resentful that the local authorities actively encouraged seamen to use the Sailors' Home above that of the private seamen's boarding house. The Board of Trade also granted certain concessions to Sailor's Homes. They could establish their own outfitters and clothiers inside the premises while some were even allowed to sell alcohol. Perhaps, most importantly, the Home was also legally allowed to supply seamen directly to ships. It was felt by boarding house keepers that these privileges put the Sailors' Home at an unfair advantage; see Palmer 'Seamen Ashore' pp.58-59; 'Trading at the Sailors' Home', *Liverpool Mercury*, 2/5/1883; 'The Prosecution Against the Sailors' Home', *East London Observer,* 22/6/1878.
[121] 'A Chat with a Boarding Master', *The Daily Telegraph,* 23/7/1883.

work of the city's boarding house keepers in ensuring that seamen made it aboard their ships, they had helped keep desertion in Cardiff to as low as 4%.[122] However, despite continued assurances that a fully regulated trade under the stewardship of the members of boarding house organisations would be to the benefit and not the detriment of the port and the shipping industry, fears of abuse still persisted. As a consequence, the authorities were unwilling to cede this level of control to a sailortown stakeholder that they continued to view as problematic.

Cardiff boarding house keepers were not alone in their attempts to control the market and force out competition in their city; their peers in Liverpool were similarly locked in a duel with the local authorities to try and influence their proposed byelaws. Henry Thompson, Chairman of the Liverpool Boarding Masters Guarantee Company (LBMGC), agreed with his sister organisation in Cardiff, arguing that as the byelaws stood, there was no practical use to being licensed besides hanging a sign in the window announcing them as such.[123] As in Cardiff by attempting to influence legislation, the LBMGC and its affiliate organisations looked to secure an unrivalled position of power. The Liverpool keepers had their own suggestions on how best to improve the licensing situation. These suggestions involved placing the services the boarding house had traditionally provided, and that some had chosen to exploit, within the remit of the licence. In a formal proposal presented to the Board of Trade, Thomas Farriker, on behalf of the LBMGC made three recommendations he felt would be beneficial not only to their trade but to both the authorities and shipping companies. Firstly, licensed keepers would be allowed to enter the dock estate and solicit seamen to become lodgers. Secondly, licensed keepers should be allowed to officially supply seamen directly to captains and ship owners, and if found to be supplying unseaworthy or poor quality men, it would result in the immediate revocation of their licence. Finally, they should be allowed to supply clothing and equipment to lodgers staying at their houses.[124] Licensed keepers argued that if they were able to provide these services under the authority of the Local Marine Board, it would not only stamp out crimping once and for all but fully legitimise the vital service that the boarding house keeper offered the shipping industry by equipping and supplying seamen. If these proposals were to be accepted it would see a privileged group come to dominate and control the Liverpool market. The Board of Trade took

[122] 'Licensing of Seamen's Lodging Houses', *South Wales Daily News,* 13/9/1882; The official figures agree that desertion at Cardiff was indeed low at around 5%. However, it is difficult to corroborate how much of this was due to the efforts of the boarding house keepers themselves. See TNA, MT 9/292, Licenses for Bdg Houses, Cardiff, 3/2/1886.
[123] 'Licensed Boarding Houses and Shipment of Seamen', *Liverpool Mercury,* 19/7/1883.
[124] TNA, MT 9/292, Licensed Seamen's Boarding Houses, Dec. 1886.

these suggestions seriously enough that they reached out to their Superintendents of the Local Marine Board at several ports, including Cardiff and London, to try and assess the viability of the suggestions. While there was some consensus among the superintendents that there could be some concession regarding the supply of seamen to ships and the sale of clothing, they concluded that none be given regarding the solicitation of seamen. The Board of Trade felt that allowing boarding house keepers to solicit seamen would undermine the progress they had made in eradicating crimping.[125] The long shadow of the crimp continued to loom large over the trade. A theory for the local authorities in Liverpool's more amenable approach to suggestions from the city's boarding house keepers may lie in the fact that unlike in Cardiff crimping had never been considered a serious problem in Liverpool and thus the trade had a slightly better reputation.

Liverpool passed their byelaws in 1887, which immediately allowed keepers to provide clothing and equipment to their lodgers. As a concession, the following year the Local Marine Board granted experimental licences to fifteen seamen's boarding house keepers to test the viability of allowing them to officially and legally supply seamen directly to merchant ships. Of these fifteen, the seamen's boarding house of Abraham Lawrence at 14 Kent Street was one of those deemed fit to hold such a licence. After six months, the Local Marine Board considered the results from these experimental licences so positive that they decided to extend them for another year. However, by the end of 1889, it was decided not to extend these licences any further with the Board of Trade giving no reason for the sudden change of heart. In the full year that the experimental licences were valid, these fifteen privately run seamen's boarding houses in Liverpool were responsible for shipping 1071 seamen from their properties, which was roughly the same number, 1074, as the Sailors' Home in London managed to ship.[126] The Liverpool authorities' decision to rescind the experimental licences could lie with the seamen's boarding house having been a victim of its own success. The authorities preferred seamen to use the various Sailors' Homes that were initially introduced as both an alternative and a means to wrest some of the control from the traditional boarding house, and were deemed a more positive and wholesome environment. That just fifteen boarding houses were able to ship almost as many seamen as a single Sailors' Home meant that extending the licence to the trade as a whole could have resulted in an imbalance and control of labour falling back exclusively

[125] TNA, MT 9/292, Summary of Correspondence re. Licensing of Seamen's Boarding Houses, 1886.
[126] TNA MT 9/356, List of Persons Who Hold Licenses to Supply Seamen', 10/1/1890.

into the hands of the seamen's boarding house keeper; something that the authorities seemed determined not to happen.[127]

Cardiff lagged behind Liverpool in not passing their initial byelaws until 1891. These were not a great success. As predicted by William Graffunder and the CBMA, boarding house keepers in the port preferred to remain unlicensed and, therefore, able to continue conducting their business without interference or constraint. As of 26 July 1895 there had not been a single application for a licence nor any proceedings brought against any boarding house keeper under the new byelaws. Initially, some members of the local authorities at Cardiff were relatively sanguine about this lack of uptake. From their perspective, houses that wished to be registered as licensed seamen's lodging houses were already required to be registered as common lodging houses which came under the authority of the Common Lodgings House Act 1851, and, therefore subject to the latter's sanitary conditions and regulation.[128] In light of this negative uptake, the Cardiff authorities decided to draft new byelaws that would make licensing compulsory for all seamen's boarding houses. With compulsory registration impending, the boarding house keepers renewed their efforts to gain concessions for their trade and assert influence over policy makers which would have proved crucial to protecting their interests.

William Graffunder was again at the forefront of these renewed efforts. However, now as the General Secretary of a new trade union, the National Amalgamated Union of Boarding Masters and Tradespeople of Great Britain & Ireland, he acted in the interest of not only boarding house keepers but all trades that had historically made their living from the seaman on shore in sailortown.[129] Founded in 1892, the National Amalgamated Union marked a natural evolution as industrial action moved from a local to a national effort. The boarding house keepers and affiliated trades looked to protect their interests and maintain pressure on the authorities and shipping industry as they continued their quest for recognition as viable, valuable and legitimate

[127] Furthermore, the Sailors' Home's relationship, or lack thereof, to non-white seamen is crucial to acknowledge. The institute's policy towards black and other non-white seafarers varied from port to port but many enacted discriminatory practices. Black seamen did lodge at the London Sailors' Home and at Cardiff, but this seemed to be only at the discretion of the management, and they were just as likely to be refused as accepted. Importantly for this study, as British shipping grew more reliant on African, Asian and Arab seamen to crew their ships, the failure of the Sailor' Homes to welcome non-white seamen would result in the seamen's boarding house being given a new impetus in the early twentieth century. See Milne, *People, Place and Power*, p.169.

[128] TNA MT 9/529, Cardiff Town Clerk to Board of Trade, 26/7/1896.

[129] TNA, FS 7/18/801, Registry form National Amalgamated Union of Boarding Masters and Trades People of Great Britain and Ireland, 1892-1893.

businesses within the port economy. An early example of this new national effort was a push by the union in 1893 to make the advance note, which had been reinstated in 1883 in varying forms, a legally binding document. If successful this would have secured a vital source of income, lowering the financial risks intrinsic to running a boarding house. The London branch of the union petitioned the Board of Trade and explained that their business continued to rely heavily on the seamen's advance note. However, they stated that even when they were fulfilling the terms of the note, some shipping companies were not honouring them. As the notes had no legal standing, boarding house keepers were often struggling to recover the money owed to them, resulting in heavy losses for keepers who argued that they would no longer be able to take seamen in on credit, nor outfitters supply them with clothing, if there was not some guarantee that they would be able to recover these costs. These factors combined, they argued, would leave the seaman in an unseaworthy condition and have a detrimental effect on the shipping companies business.[130] In Cardiff, Graffunder argued that the current arrangement was unfair since it placed all the financial risk on the boarding house. Furthermore, due to the dubious enforceability of the advance note and the difficulty in verifying whether a seaman had indeed sailed or not, he asserted that the shipping companies effectively had the law on their side whether they chose to pay or not. The union wanted a change in the law that would mean advances would be payable the moment a keeper handed a seaman over to his ship rather than several days after it had sailed. If the seaman were to desert between that moment and when the ship sailed, the burden of responsibility would fall on the shipping company and relieve a substantial burden on the finances of the seamen's boarding house.[131] Despite providing such a valuable service to the shipping industry, shipping companies were able to take advantage of its unofficial relationship with the seamen's boarding house keeping the balance of power firmly in their favour. The shipping industry continued to benefit from a steady labour supply with relatively low risks and low costs, whilst the boarding house continued to shoulder high costs matched with high risks. While the Board of Trade was willing to consider the union's demands, they would be hard-pressed to convince the shipping companies to alter this arrangement.

Despite having been vociferously in favour of compulsory licensing since its inception, when local authorities in Cardiff introduced their revised byelaws, they came as a shock to the city's boarding house keepers. Rather than standing to benefit from licensing, they now felt they

[130] TNA, MT 9/480, Petition of the National Amalgamated Union of Boarding Masters and Tradespeople of Great Britain & Ireland, 27/5/1893.
[131] 'Advance Note', *South Wales Star*, 17/2/1893.

would significantly impinge on their ability to conduct business. The main focus of this opposition was clause six of the new byelaws that stated:

> A licence shall not be granted to a person who holds a license for the sale of intoxicating liquor or who is engaged or interested in the business of a clothier, outfitter, or slop dealer; nor shall a license be granted in respect of any house where intoxicating liquor is sold, nor in respect of any house occupied or used for the purpose of the business of a clothier, outfitter, or slop-dealer…[132]

Indeed, this clause was problematic for many sailortown businesses. As explained above, seamen's boarding house keepers often operated more than one trade in order to maximise the value of the seamen in their care and subsidise their earnings from keeping lodgers. William Graffunder, in addition to operating his seamen's boarding house, also ran a public house, whilst Hiram Weeks operated an outfitting business. Despite being accepted business practices within sailortown, the authorities continued to equate any monopolising of the seamen's time and money on land with the devious practices of the crimp. The byelaws and compulsory licensing that they had supported wholeheartedly a decade earlier now stood to force them, as opposed to their competitors, out of business. William Graffunder's primary cause of contention with clause six was that publicans, for example, were required to provide several testimonies as to their character in order to gain a licence to sell alcohol. He was frustrated as to why, if his character had already been proven under one licence that this would be insufficient for a licence to operate a seamen's boarding house.[133]

The boarding house keepers had support in their opposition to clause six. The relatively newly established National Sailors' and Firemen's Union believed that the clause infringed the personal rights of the seamen to take lodgings wherever they chose.[134] There was also support from within Cardiff council where several members feared that, although it was better to have establishments that were fully under licence and, therefore, answerable to the police and magistrates, the adoption of the clause by the authorities might drive an underground trade and see a rise in shebeens, brothels and underground clubs.[135] This dissenting group accused the

[132] TNA, MT 9/4377, Cardiff Bye-Laws, 30/4/1896.
[133] 'Cardiff Seamen's Lodging Houses', *South Wales Daily News,* 27/6/1894.
[134] 'Seamen's Boarding Houses', *South Wales Daily News,* 24/12/1895.
[135] 'Cardiff Borough Council - Seamen's Boarding-House Question', *South Wales Daily News,* 14/1/1896.

new byelaws of being unnecessarily 'grandmotherly' and were of the opinion that it would interfere too much with the 'respectable' seaman who could be trusted onshore.[136] Like the boarding house keeper struggling to escape the brand of the crimp, many continued to view seamen on land as childlike innocents in need of protection from evils such as alcohol. Despite this opposition, the byelaws came into force in Cardiff on 1 January 1897; after this time, any house that let lodgings to seamen without a licence were liable to prosecution. However, the business operations of William Graffunder, it transpired, were not going to be affected by their introduction. In early 1896, after running seamen's boarding houses for two decades, it emerged that he had been fighting bankruptcy for many years. This was attributed to both his boarding house being expensive to run and to money lost by seamen who had absconded without paying. During this time it was in fact his wife who had been operating the boarding house for the past eleven years.[137] The experience of Graffunder's business is not atypical. Indeed, the seamen's boarding house remains an elusive institution to research as many keepers and houses only operated their businesses for a few years before abandoning the trade. As a consequence, the careers of keepers such as that of Abraham Lawrence are all the more exceptional.

The sporadic and lacklustre introduction and application of the byelaws highlight the complexity of intervening in the power dynamics in sailortown. By 1895, the licensing authorities in Liverpool had granted a total of only twenty-two licences, seven of which had been given up, leaving only fifteen on the active register.[138] In London, the Local Marine Board, as late as 1895, was not in favour of introducing byelaws as to the licensing of boarding houses in their port. As had been the case in Cardiff they believed that the existing powers under the Common Lodging Houses Act 1851 were more than satisfactory.[139] The city authorities eventually introduced byelaws in 1901, but they do not seem to have applied them with much rigour. While the London byelaws contained a clause that mirrored Cardiff's clause six, the register of licensed seamen's boarding houses for the city lists numerous properties operating as outfitters and public houses as well as boarding houses in contradiction to the new byelaws.[140] Cardiff

[136] 'Licensing of Seamen's Boarding Houses', *South Wales Echo,* 12/6/1894.
[137] 'Cardiff Bankruptcies', *South Wales Echo*, 20/3/1896.
[138] TNA, MT 9/529, Liverpool Medical Officer of Health, 19/2/1895.
[139] TNA, MT 9/529, Local Marine Board, Well Street to Board of Trade, 30/4/1895.
[140] LMA, LCC/PH/REG/1/19, Register of seamen's lodging houses, 1901–1918**;** For example, Charles Henry Carter's boarding house at 28 West India Dock Road was licensed to take seven lodgers on the upper floors whereas the ground floor and basement are given over to a public bar and taproom along with a beer cellar and kitchen.

witnessed a little more success and within six months of introducing the revised byelaws, the city registered approximately one hundred boarding houses. The local authorities rejected a further twenty-one applicants whom they deemed unsuitable to hold a licence and had prosecuted twelve boarding houses for various infringements.[141]

Conclusion

The seamen's boarding house was representative of the complex space of the sailortown in which it existed. Much maligned contemporarily, it was a unique and vital institution within the ports of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. At once private home and commercial business, it sat bestride two worlds. As a home away from home, it occupied a space at the centre of the seamen's time on land, allowing him to surround himself with a familiar culture while simultaneously providing a professional service and facilitating his access to the labour market. The trade came to be dominated by migrants, many providing shelter for their compatriots in a distant foreign port. The boarding house keeper could be a friend and a confidant to the seaman, and while examples of conflict existed, the boarding house provided a space that allowed for the formation of strong relationships both personal and professional. As a trade, it offered one of the few viable opportunities for social mobility for the migrant seamen, in particular, to transition from a transient life at sea to a more settled status in Britain. However, the support system provided by the boarding house was complex and expressed relationships characterised by power and dependence as well as benevolence. Integral to the labour market and pivotal to the seaman's time on land, initially unregulated the trade operated in an environment of semi-illegality that left it open to exploitation by rapacious keepers. The boarding house keeper became synonymous with the figure of the crimp and presented as the primary antagonist of sailortown. However, in contradiction to the popular contemporary opinion and earlier historiography, while swindlers and racketeers existed that took advantage of seamen and abused the ill-defined working practices of the port economy, the power and influence of those accused of crimping appears to have been overstated. Many of the crimes laid against the crimp were simply the methods of conducting business within a highly competitive sailortown economy. By the late-nineteenth century, the term crimp has cemented itself as a moralised term used by parties with a vested interest in the social and economic life of the port. The image of the crimp provided a useful bogeyman for the boarding house keeper wishing to undermine

[141] 'Seamen's Boarding Houses', *South Wales Daily News,* 13/8/1897.

competition, a shipping industry wanting to distract from poor pay and working conditions and social reformers and authorities that wished to raise the moral character of sailortown.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the seamen's boarding house found itself locked in a battle for the control of sailortown, with both state and local authorities as well as the shipping industry. However, a lack of understanding of the complex interdependence and entanglements that propped up the port economy frustrated attempts by the authorities to tame and control what they saw as the unruly elements within the port. The main focus of the authorities' energies was the boarding house itself with the introduction of byelaws that looked to control and temper the trade. These new byelaws were seen as both a threat and an opportunity to seamen's boarding house keepers. Across all three cities, boarding house keepers fought to influence local legislation and gain concessions, minimising the risks involved in running a boarding house and safeguarding their trade financially. The byelaws also presented an opportunity for an organised sector of the trade to leverage this new legislation to force out their competition and control the market in the lucrative supply of seamen to the shipping industry. However, the poor reputation that the seamen's boarding house had acquired saw these attempts meet with heavy resistance from the authorities. While the shipping industry, happy with the status quo that saw the lion's share of risk placed on the boarding house keeper, remained apathetic to any changes.

Despite a concerted effort, boarding house keepers never achieved the control they desired within the port economy. A precarious trade financially, fierce competition and a poor reputation undermined attempts by the seamen's boarding house to sufficiently organise and resist intrusion from both the state and local government. However, a handful of seamen's boarding house keepers such as Abraham Lawrence showed remarkable staying power as they navigated these intrusions as well as competition from institutions such as the Sailors' Home. However, as a result, by the end of the nineteenth century and as their business practices came under ever greater scrutiny their position as a major stakeholder in the port economy came under threat and much of their power and influence within sailortown had begun to wane.[142] However, while true to a certain extent the trade had lost a considerable amount of its prestige by the turn of the twentieth century, the following chapters will investigate how, for black seamen in particular, the seamen's boarding house endured and remained a vital institution.

[142] Milne, *People, Place and Power,* p.152.

Chapter Two

'Black Jack' at Sea and Ashore: Labour and Settlement Patterns of Caribbean and West African Seamen in Liverpool & Cardiff

Introduction

This chapter explores the growth and development of areas of black settlement in the port cities of Liverpool and Cardiff and examines how the seamen's boarding house helped shape them.[1] From the late nineteenth century, the labour demands of the British Merchant Marine saw seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa employed in increasing numbers on ships sailing to and from Britain. While it is true that Caribbean and West African, indeed all non-white seamen from within the British Empire, were to one extent victims of imperial exploitation they were also able to leverage those same structures and systems for their own benefit. The freedom of movement afforded by going to sea afforded new opportunities for Caribbean and West African men, many of which could be found in the metropole itself. The seamen's boarding house, central to a seaman's time on land, was especially important for black seamen in Britain. Through its multifaceted role as a social, economic and cultural hub to both transient and settled migrants it provided a valuable social space to Caribbean and West African seamen within the multiethnic space of sailortown. The centrality of the seamen's boarding house to black seamen's lives is reflected in the central role it would come to play in the growth and development of areas of black settlement in British port cities. Furthermore, by utilising the seamen's boarding house as a prism through which to view black seamen's migration and settlement in Britain it provides unique insights into their social and economic lives as well as the demographics of Britain's black population during this period. The seamen's boarding house offers an opportunity to explore and understand the complex relationships within areas of black settlement between Caribbean and West African seamen themselves as well as the wider multiethnic space of the maritime quarters themselves. Finally, this chapter will consider the

[1] London also exhibits similar trends to both Liverpool and Cardiff as to the role the seamen's boarding house played in the growth and development of areas of black settlement in the city. However, due to the size and complexity of the city's docklands in East London and the time constraints of this research project, it was not possible to produce a comparable and satisfactory data set as with Cardiff and Liverpool. For that reason, London has not been included as a comparative example in this chapter. However, a brief contextual exploration of the growth and development of the city's black settlement has been included towards the end of the chapter.

important role women played both to black seamen, the development of areas of black settlement and the seamen's boarding house itself.

Caribbean and West African Labour in British Shipping, the Seamen's Boarding House and Early Migration and Settlement in Liverpool and Cardiff

Map 4: Map of Cardiff with main area of black settlement highlighted. (Source for all Cardiff map sheets used in this chapter: Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Glamorgan XLIII.SE, Published: 1901, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022; Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Glamorgan XLVII.NE, Published: 1901, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.)

Map 5: Map of Liverpool with main areas of black settlement highlighted. (Source for all Liverpool map sheets used in this chapter: Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Lancashire. CVI.14 Published: 1908, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022; Ordnance Survey Maps - Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952, County/Tile: Lancashire. CXIII.2, Published: 1908, National Library of Scotland, Downloaded: 29 August 2022. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.)

From the mid-nineteenth through to the early twentieth century, the British Mercantile Marine was at its zenith. Between 1850–1914 British based shipping companies accounted for one-half of the world's sea carrying capacity.[2] Britain was able to achieve this dominance through its ability to draw on an unparalleled pool of labour from its vast colonial possessions. Seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa were a vital part of this labour pool and had been present working on British ships in noticeable numbers since at least the eighteenth century.[3] However, while ships utilised black seamen from both sides of the Atlantic throughout this early period, diametrically opposite experiences defined these relationships; on the one side by enslaved labour and on the other, free. Philip D. Morgan has highlighted the dichotomy experienced by many black seamen during this period. He argues that while the ship was the site of some of the worst horrors suffered by people of African origin it was also a place that, under certain conditions, allowed them to realise the most freedom.[4] For free black men in the Caribbean, for example, a life at sea offered the opportunity for them to make a living for themselves outside of the plantation dominated society and where economic opportunities for black people were few and far between.[5] Patrick Manning in his cultural study of the African diaspora goes further and argues that it was the two great processes of emancipation and industrialisation that fundamentally transformed the lives of those within the diaspora.[6] Both emancipation and industrialisation brought new opportunities and unprecedented mobility for black Caribbeans. The advent of steam shipping promised economic, social and perhaps, as Alan Cobley argues, even psychological independence after slavery came to an end. It also offered an alternative for black Caribbean men to plantation labour which continued to dominate the Caribbean economy in the late nineteenth century.[7]

While black Caribbean seamen's early experiences were defined by enslavement, West African labour that was utilised by British shipping was, for the most part, free and independent. Initially,

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[2] Ronald Hope, *A New History of British Shipping* (London: John Murray, 1990), p.331.
[3] Jonathan Hyslop, 'Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c.1880–1945', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 44 (2009), p.50.
[4] Philip D. Morgan, 'Black Experience in the Maritime World', in *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1760–1840*, ed. David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.107.
[5] Alan Cobley, 'That Turbulent Soil: Seafarers, the "Black Atlantic" and the Shaping of Afro-Caribbean Identity', in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures and Transoceanic Exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kren Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), pp.156-157.
[6] Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.17.
[7] Alan Cobley, 'Black West Indian Seamen in the British Merchant Marine in the Mid Nineteenth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, 58 (2004), p.259.

British ships engaged in the slave trade relied on the local expertise of African seamen on the coast, where they worked as pilots and canoe-men, ferrying goods between ships and land. They also came to be employed in ancillary roles such as cooks and porters as well as translators. These services provided by local African seamen would prove crucial to the success of slave voyages.[8] While Europeans employed many different West African ethnic groups, labour services up and down the west coast of Africa came to be dominated by one group, the Kru. The Kru originally hailed from Liberia. However, a significant number had migrated to the growing British settlement in Sierra Leone attracted by employment opportunities and the prospect of wage labour.[9] The monopoly they came to hold over transport between ships and shore gave them substantial leverage when dealing with British ships.[10] West African labour would remain vitally important to British shipping. So much so, that as Diane Frost argues, even by the twentieth century it was near impossible for shipping companies trading with West Africa to pursue their commercial interests in the area without the utilisation of local labour.[11]

It is difficult to estimate the number of black seamen aboard British ships during the period of this study. While the Board of Trade counted 'lascars' as a separate labour force, black seamen, as British subjects, were included in any count of British seamen on merchant ships.[12] To further obfuscate matters, significant numbers of black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa lacked proper documentation leading the authorities to count these men as foreign.[13] However, by 1859 the imprisonment of black seamen from British ships by authorities in the southern states of the United States had created such a problem that the Board of Trade felt the need to issue a warning to all ship's masters trading at these ports. That the government felt the need to take such a step highlights the significant black seafaring population working on British ships by this time. One estimate from 1878 puts the number of non-white seamen engaged aboard

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[8] Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.11.
[9] George E. Brooks, *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium* (Newark: Liberian Studies Association in America, 1972), pp.3-4.
[10] David A. Chappell, 'Kru and Kanaka: Participation by African and Pacific Island Sailors in Euroamerican Maritime Frontiers', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 6 (1994), p.97.
[11] Diane Frost, 'Racism, Work and Unemployment: West African Seamen in Liverpool 1880s–1960s', in *Ethnic Labour and British Imperial Trade: A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the UK*, ed. by Diane Frost (London: F. Cass, 1995), p.25.
[12] 'Lascar' is a nebulous term. While primarily used to describe seamen from the Indian subcontinent it also found use as a more general term to describe all seamen of Eastern origin including Arabs and Chinese seamen see Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London: Pluto, 1986), p.53.
[13] Laura Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice', Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.47.

British merchant ships at 20,000 of which 5,000 were lascars.[14] Unfortunately, for the reasons noted above, it remains difficult to ascertain how many of the remaining 15,000 were black seamen of Caribbean or West African heritage. Vitally, unlike say lascar seamen who were denied equal rights and wages, from the earliest moments of emancipation from slavery black seamen born in British Caribbean colonies were considered as much a British subject as white Britons born in the metropole.[15]

As the previous chapter has explored, the seamen's boarding house was vital to the maintenance of seamen during their time in British ports. For Caribbean and West African seamen, it went beyond a simple resting place, acting as a social and cultural hub as well as facilitating access to the labour market. As the number of black seamen employed on British ships increased from the latter half of the nineteenth century, an ever-greater number found themselves working ships travelling to and from Britain. As a consequence, black seamen became a more visible presence in metropolitan ports and an increasing number of seamen's boarding houses were needed to meet their needs. Similar to seamen of other nationalities, black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa relied on their own network of seamen's boarding houses between voyages for the myriad of services both personal and professional that it provided. As time went on, networks of black seamen's boarding houses grew and developed in metropolitan British port cities including Liverpool and Cardiff. While the majority were operated by their compatriots, local British women often married to Caribbean or West African men as well as some entrepreneurial foreign nationals could also be found running these boarding houses for black seamen. In both Cardiff and Liverpool, it would be this network of black seamen's boarding houses characterised by complex multiethnic relationships that would ultimately form the core around which areas of black settlement later grew and developed.

The earliest seamen's boarding house for black seamen uncovered in Liverpool can be found in the 1851 census. Ann Jones, a laundress residing at 5 Court, 14 Wright Street, let rooms to four men identified as 'Kroomen seamen'. However, further evidence suggests that this single boarding house belies a larger, established and more active black presence in Liverpool by the

[14] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians : English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester University Press, 1978), pp.39-40.
[15] BPP, 1847–1848, 340, *Select Committee of House of Lords on Policy and Operation of Navigation Laws. First Report, Minutes of Evidence,* p.10.

1850s. An article in the *Liverpool Mercury* from 1857 reports on a well-attended dance night in the city and 'the "fashionable life" of the coloured seamen in Liverpool.' The reporter describes, that on entering the venue, he found 'the counter surrounded by ebony gentlemen, with super fine coats of the "fastest" cuts, linen of snowy whiteness or the most flashy pattern, rings upon their fingers, and shirt studs of the greatest lustre and most enormous size.'[16] Mid-nineteenth century Liverpool became a favoured port of call for African-American seamen who welcomed the freedoms and acceptance that the port offered.[17] While the broad, multiethnic diversity of sailortowns made them some of the more tolerant spaces, racial antipathy could still prevail in certain quarters as competing groups carved out their own cultural spaces within them. As one newspaper described a particular street in Liverpool:

> Dennison-street, is wholly occupied with lodging and boarding houses and public houses […] This street is frequented almost wholly by American sailors, who look upon it as so entirely their own, that they have established a rule forbidding a "darkey" or coloured man to enter it […] If a coloured man, unaware of the fact, should accidentally stray into this pro-slavery preserve, he would run the risk of being mobbed.[18]

Faced with this level of animosity it could help to explain why as black seamen began to visit British ports in ever greater numbers, they too felt a need to establish and maintain their own spaces. So much so that by the end of the decade, black seamen in London had their own well-established social spaces, which a contemporary observer attributed as a reaction in some measure to the pervasiveness of American racism in ports.[19]

As with the port itself the black presence in Cardiff developed slightly later than Liverpool. This research has identified the first seamen's boarding houses for black seamen in Cardiff two decades later. In 1871 two boarding houses were operating in the city catering to a mix of black seamen from the Caribbean, West Africa and the United States. The first of these, at 12 South Church Street, was located just north of Loudoun Square. The square, in the heart of Cardiff's

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[16] 'Liverpool Life', *Liverpool Mercury,* 3/8/1857.
[17] John Belchem, 'Port Cities, Cosmopolitanism and "Otherness" : The (Mis)Representation of Liverpool'', in *Regenerating Culture and Society Architecture, Art and Urban Style within the Global Politics of City Branding*, ed. by Jonathan Harris and Richard J. Williams (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p.284.
[18] 'Labour and the Poor', *Morning Chronicle,* 26/8/1850.
[19] 'Down Our Way', *East London Observer,* 13/9/1859.

docklands, Butetown, would develop as the very centre of the city's historic black community around which settlement would grow.[20] No.12 was run by an ex-seaman from Cape Verde, part of Portuguese West Africa, Emmanuel Phenis. Cardiff would become home to a significant Cape Verdean presence and several prominent black boarding house keepers in the city hailed from the islands over the years. The second boarding house was at 21 Charlotte Street, again north of the Loudoun Square area and was run by Charles Armstrong from the Caribbean. This street and the adjacent Whitmore Lane were infamous in Cardiff for their criminality, with one contemporary source describing the streets as a place where "drunkenness and immorality were open and unabashed…"[21] The seamen's boarding house reputation, already struggling in the nineteenth century, was further hampered with its affiliation with areas such as these. Both streets were so notorious that, in order to rehabilitate it, Whitmore Lane would eventually be renamed and Charlotte Street would be knocked down altogether in the late 1880s.

By 1881 both Liverpool and Cardiff had seen an increase in black seamen's boarding houses with the census highlighting seven and six respectively. These houses catered predominantly to Caribbean seamen with very few West African seamen visible in British ports at this time. While it initially appears that the latter half of the nineteenth century was beginning to present a steady growth in the black presence in Britain, seamen's boarding house data indicates the opposite. Between 1881 and 1891 there was a significant decline in the number of black seamen's boarding houses with only two remaining in either city by the time of the 1891 census. This would suggest that in a ten year period there was a noticeable decline in the number of black seamen visiting British ports. The early 1880s appear to be a particularly hard time for black seamen especially in Liverpool with many struggling to obtain work on ships due to a colour bar. This bar left many black seamen destitute and homeless, forcing them to sleep amongst bales of cotton stored at the docks. Jacob Christian, originally from the Caribbean, who ran a seamen's boarding house for his compatriots at 69 Beaufort Street spoke at a meeting of black seamen in the city to discuss this problem. He stated that when he took seamen from his boarding house to sign on shipowners refused them outright on account of their colour.[22] The difficulties faced by black seamen trying to obtain work during this period was not unique to Liverpool but part of a wider issue affecting their employment in Britain. A report commissioned

[20] Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London: Routledge, 1948), p.56.
[21] 'In the Sixties', *Cardiff Times,* 4/5/1901.
[22] 'Coloured Seamen and their Grievances'. *Liverpool Mercury*, 25/8/1880.

by the Board of Trade observed that in Cardiff in terms of employment 'the men who suffer first in hard times are the coloured seamen.'[23]

This discrimination in the labour market would have had a profound effect on the seamen's boarding house. The fortunes of the boarding house keeper were intrinsically linked to the fortunes of the seamen. If keepers like Christian were unable to find work for their boarders they would not be able to claim their advance note, the primary source of income for the seamen's boarding house trade, and recoup the credit they had invested whilst caring for the seamen. Moreover, the longer a seaman was unemployed, the longer the boarding house had to keep them on credit alone, further impacting their financial position. The financial problems faced by boarding house keepers in Liverpool were further exacerbated by charitable organisations actively helping black seamen travel to other ports in the hope of finding work.[24] Large outlays and low income matched together with a reduction in seamen in the city would explain a decrease in the number of seamen's boarding houses as they were no longer able to sustain a viable trade. A similar trend can be observed following the First World War when widespread and persistent unemployment among West African and Caribbean seamen saw seamen's boarding houses struggle and many close due to lack of income.[25] This discrimination in the labour market affecting black seamen draws attention to a burgeoning settled presence beginning to take shape in Liverpool. A further meeting convened by black seamen to voice their anger at their treatment highlighted that many of the men affected had married and settled in Britain. Members of this settled population argued that as British subjects themselves, they should be afforded the same opportunities for work as white seamen. Again, Jacob Christian took a prominent role in this meeting highlighting that from this early period seamen's boarding house keepers can be found actively participating in the welfare and support of black seamen in Britain.[26] That Cardiff returned a similar decrease in seamen's boarding houses would suggest that the problems of discrimination and unemployment were not unique to Liverpool port but affected black seamen in other British ports.

In Cardiff, the two surviving black seamen's boarding houses present in 1891 would become an enduring presence and form the kernel for black settlement as it grew and developed in the city.

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[23] BPP, 1886, LIX.197, *Report on Supply of British Seamen, Number of Foreigners on British Merchant Ships and on Crimping, by Assistant Secretary to Board of Trade,* p.31.
[24] 'The Distressed Coloured Seamen', *Liverpool Echo,* 9/9/1880.
[25] TNA*,* CO 323/879, King George's Fund for Sailors to Colonial Office, 10/6/1921.
[26] 'Meeting of Coloured Seamen', *Liverpool Echo,* 20/1/1881.

These were the Phenis boarding house at 12 South Church Street and the boarding house of John Joseph Pervoe at 36 Peel Street (see map 6.1). The Phenis family formed something of a boarding house dynasty in the city. After Emmanuel Phenis passed away in 1900 his second wife Sarah, who was born in Newport, took over the running of 12 South Church Street before finally passing the business on to their son Isaac in 1923. Issac continued to run the boarding house into the 1950s, finally forced to give up his licence in 1951 at the age of 78 due to ill health.[27] This longevity was impressive, particularly as running a seamen's boarding house was a notoriously precarious profession. Not only were the Phenis family able to sustain their business in a fiercely competitive and challenging economic environment, they also managed to weather and survive repeated economic downturns all while they occupied the same property throughout the decades; by the twentieth century it had become a Butetown institution. Pervoe would also remain a central figure within Cardiff's area of black settlement in Butetown taking on a prominent role in the social life of the area and acting as a figurehead for other black residents. A local resident remembers him as:

> The man who always took the lead in every black funeral procession in Tiger Bay […] Pervoe would be immaculate in black topper and morning coat, white gloves, spats and looking quite splendid, as he headed a retinue of similarly dressed black men walking in front of the hearse.[28]

Pervoe cut a distinctive figure within the area due to the fact that he was missing his right arm, the result of an accident before arriving in Wales. However, this handicap did not stop him doing all the cooking in his boarding house and even making fresh pastry daily for his boarders.[29] These two houses catered primarily to seamen from the Caribbean. However, a single West African seamen was found to be boarding with his Caribbean peers at 12 South Church Street.

The year 1901 saw only a modest increase in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff with five identified (see Map 6.2). These houses continued to provide accommodation for predominantly Caribbean seamen, with three solely occupied by seamen from Caribbean Islands. The other two were mixed and included seamen from the USA as well as an increasing

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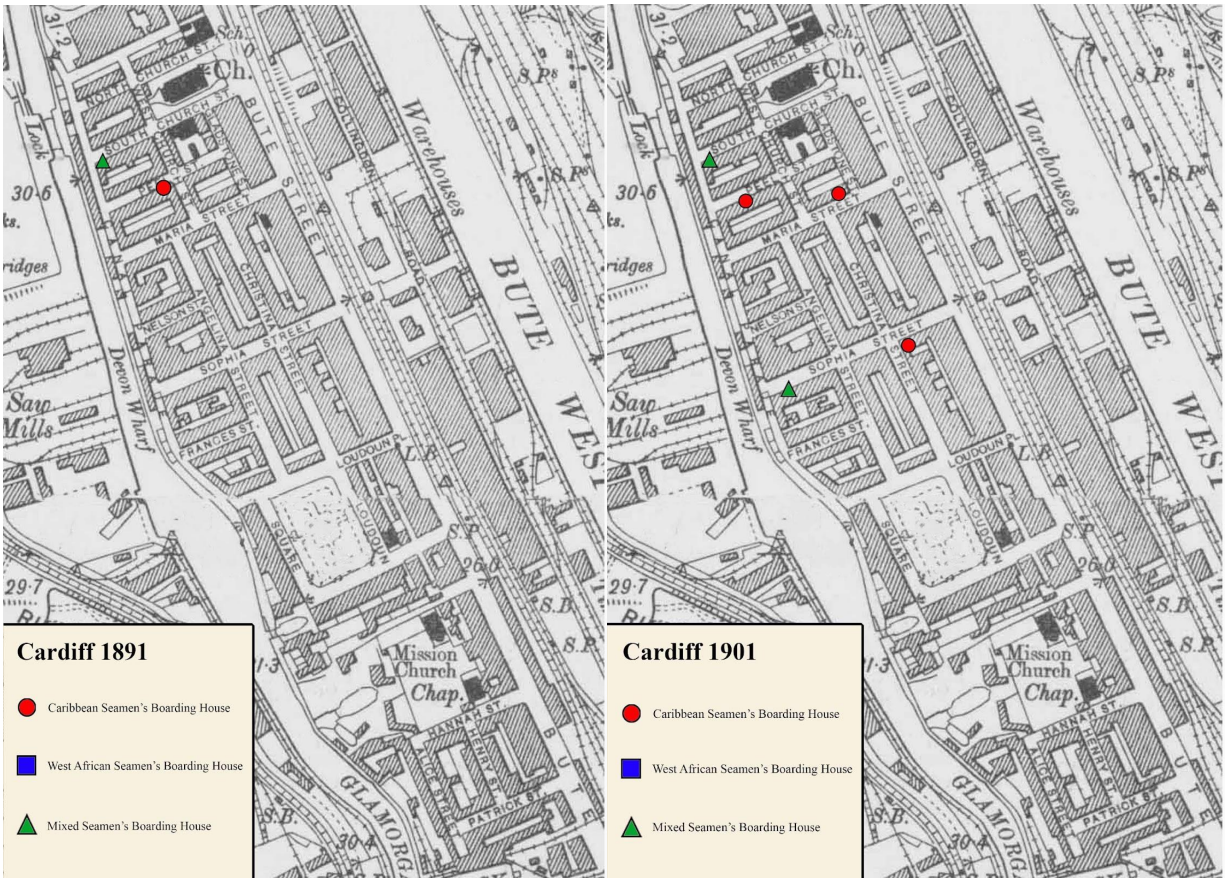
[27] GA, DCONC/7/5/2, Seamen's Lodging Houses: Files for Registration Numbers 41-60, 64, 81-102 and Five Unnumbered,1909–1964, '12 South Church Street'.
[28] Donald John interviewed in Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp.60-61.
[29] Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p.98.

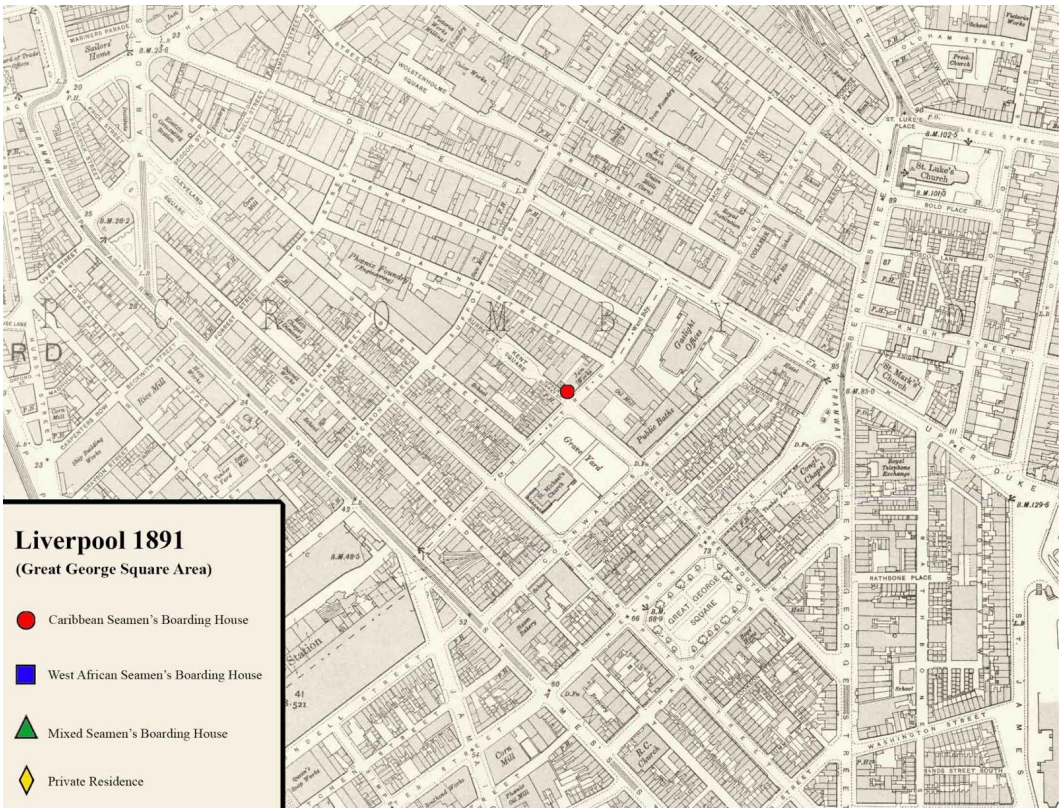
number from West Africa. These early boarding houses and their clientele reflect the diversity and fluidity that would come to characterise Cardiff's black population. It also indicates that from this early period black seamen's boarding houses were not always run by a compatriot of the same nationality or ethnicity. While Phenis' boarding house was mixed, his Cape Verdean peer Peter Silver operated an exclusively Caribbean boarding house at 28 Sophia Street. As will be explored in further detail below, examples of West Africans running Caribbean boarding houses and vice versa in both Cardiff and Liverpool would continue to be a feature of areas of black settlement as they continued to expand in the first decades of the twentieth century.



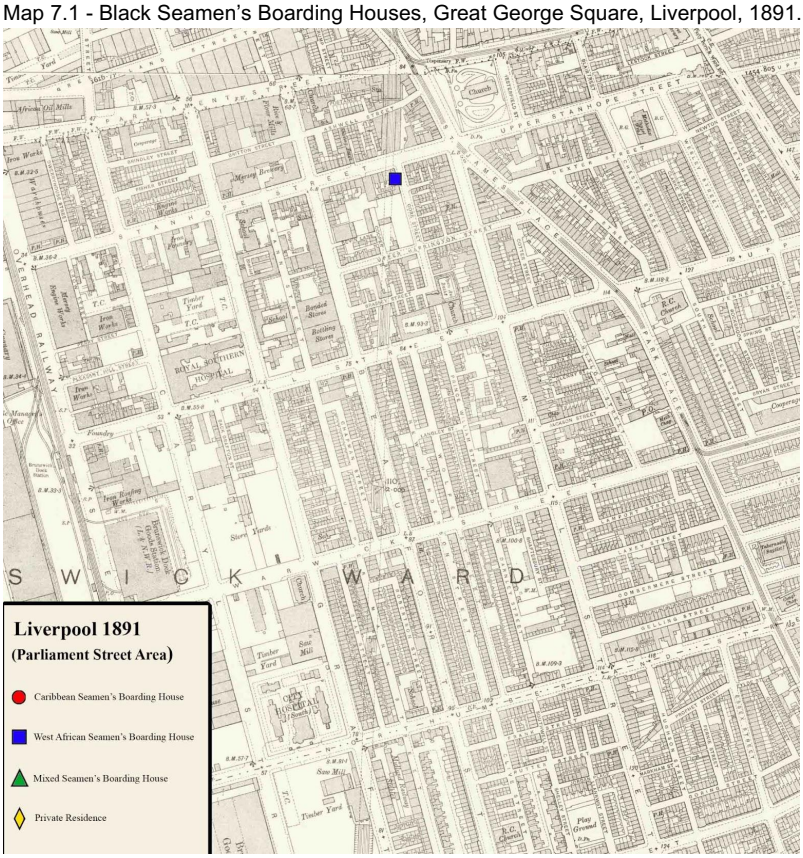
Map 6.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, Loudoun Square, Butetown, Cardiff, 1891
Map 6.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, Loudoun Square, Butetown, Cardiff, 1901

The Liverpool dock area was substantially larger and its geography less restrictive than that of Cardiff and the growth and development of Liverpool's black settlement reflected this. Unlike Cardiff, which saw its black settlement confined largely to a single, small area around Loudoun Square, the less restrictive boundaries of the south end of Liverpool's docklands saw two main areas of black settlement develop over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially this was in the streets surrounding Great George Square, with a further area

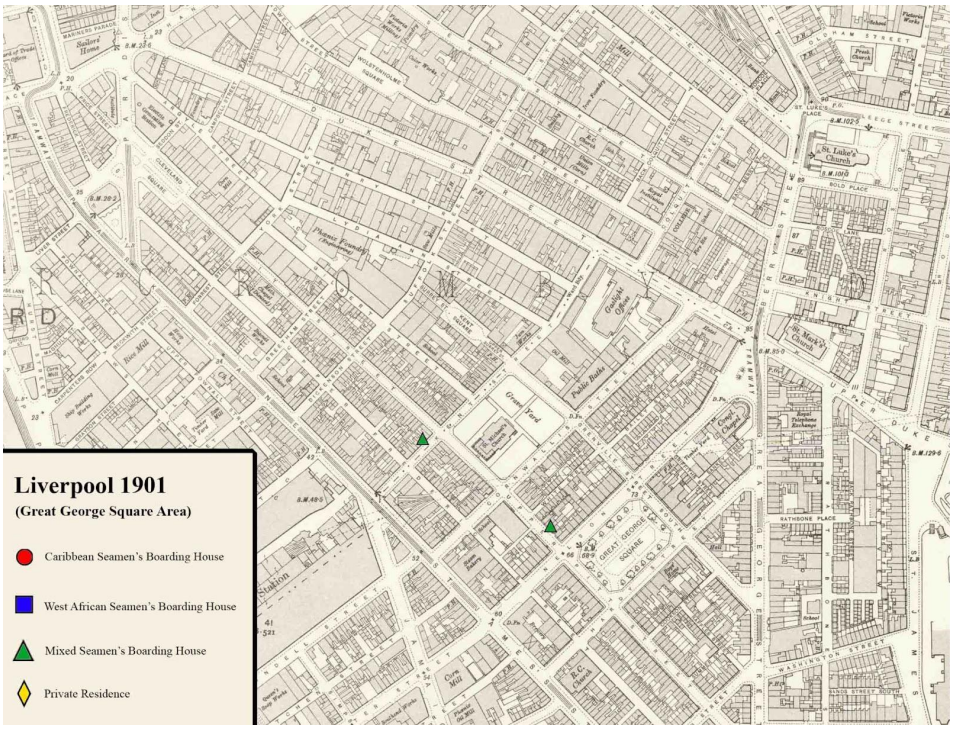
developing over a large area south of Parliament Street. These areas would see a particular concentration of black seamen's boarding houses and subsequent development of settlement surrounding them. Two seamen's boarding houses would form the genesis of Liverpool's black settlement in these areas from 1891. The first belonged to Jamaican boarding house keeper Abraham Lawrence who had been well-established in the trade the city since at least 1881, initially providing boarding for primarily Caribbean seamen first at 64 Gilbert Street and subsequently at 14 Kent Street near Great George Square. The latter was situated in the area south of Parliament Street. Here, Liverpool born Ann Hughes ran her seamen's boarding house for West African seamen at 1 Gore Street (see Maps 7.1, 7.2). Similar to Cardiff, the 1901 census returned only a small increase to four boarding houses split evenly over these two areas. With the exception of Hughes' boarding house that continued to serve West African seamen exclusively, seamen from the Caribbean and the Americas dominated Liverpool's black presence during this early period (See Map 8.1, 8.2). While the Lawrence boarding house never took in West African seamen, he was flexible with his clientele and in 1901 his boarding house catered to seamen from both the Caribbean and West Africa.



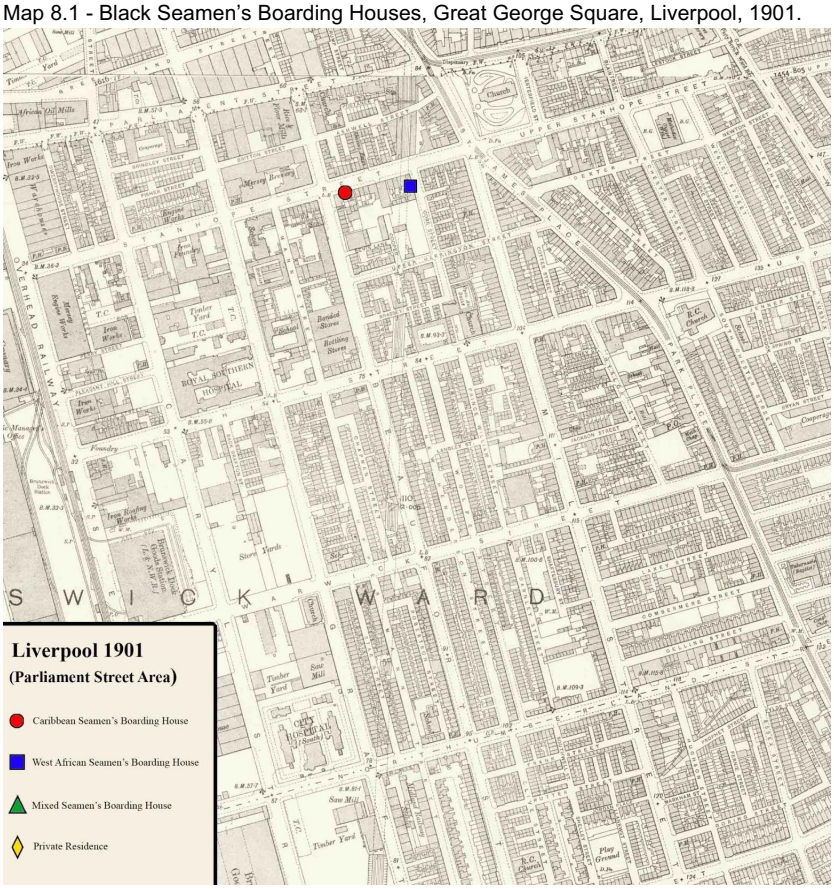
Map 7.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, Great George Square, Liverpool, 1891.



Map 7.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, South of Parliament Street, Liverpool, 1891.



Map 8.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, Great George Square, Liverpool, 1901.



Map 8.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, South of Parliament Street, Liverpool, 1901.

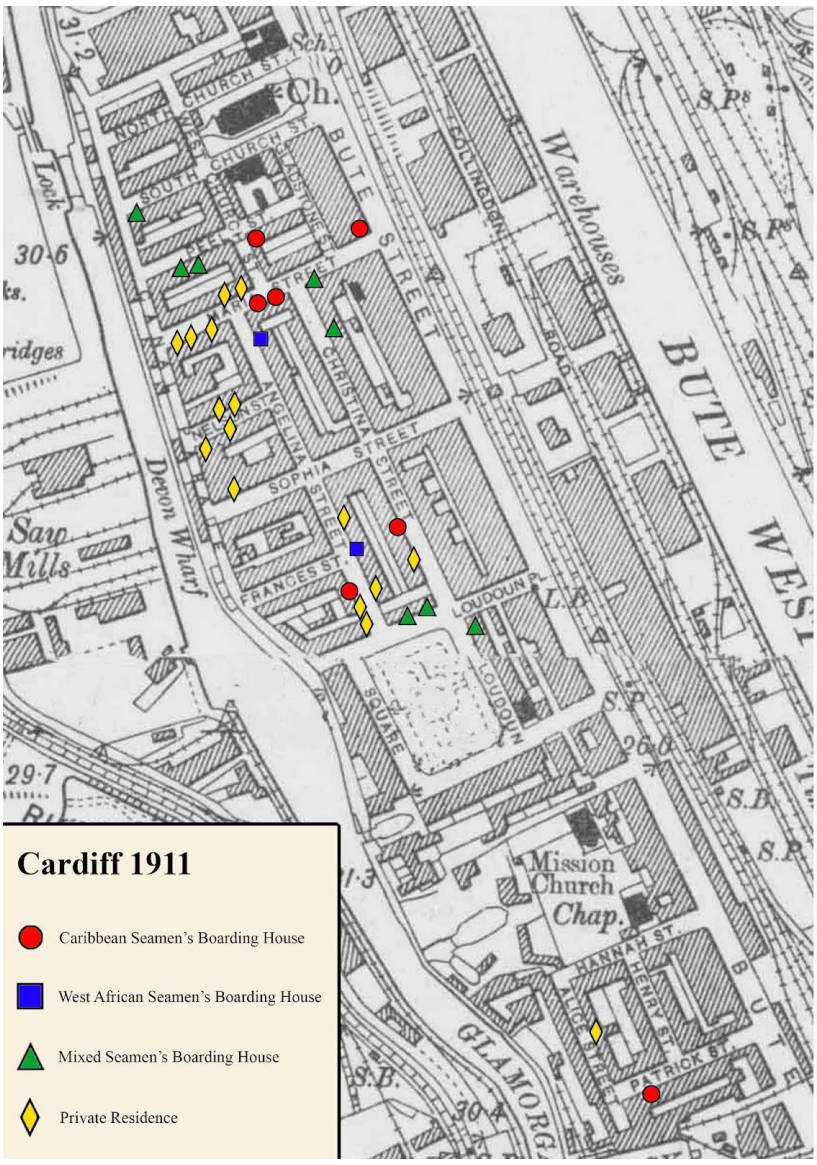
1911: The Expansion and Development of Areas of Black Settlement in Liverpool and Cardiff

The year 1911 presents a watershed for areas of black settlement in Britain and a step change in their development. Throughout these earlier decades, while some Caribbean and West African seamen had begun settling in Britain the metropolitan black presence in port cities remained small and predominantly characterised by its transience. However, from 1911, areas of black settlement in both Cardiff and Liverpool began to be characterised by a significant increase in size and a greater sense of permanency. This change in dynamics is often attributed primarily to the First World War. However, this research contends that the dynamics that came to define post First World War areas of settlement were already becoming well-established by 1911.

By 1911 there had been a significant increase in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff with the number increasing to seventeen; seven for Caribbean seamen, two for West African and eight mixed boarding houses.[30] This sharp increase, also reflected in Liverpool where the number of boarding houses in that city rose to sixteen, suggests that the first decade of the twentieth century saw a marked increase in the use of black labour on British merchant ships. Laura Tabili contends that the turn to black labour within British shipping was in response to growing international competition. In order to remain competitive in the face of fierce competition, British ship owners recruited cheaper labour from the colonies.[31] The prevalence of mixed boarding houses in Cardiff reflected the diverse demographics within the city's black population dictated, in part, by the labour market in the port. Cardiff was almost exclusively a tramp shipping port.[32] Tramp shipping was ships with no fixed route or cargo that hired crews on a more ad hoc basis. By the early twentieth century, tramps made up 60% of all tonnage and working on these ships, rather than those owned by steam liner companies, often provided the best opportunities and a greater degree of freedom for black seamen.[33] However, with the freedom that tramp shipping provided came consequences. Alan Cobley has described seamen who served on tramp ships as the 'flotsam and jetsam of the shipping industry.'

[30] Mixed seamen's boarding houses are defined in this thesis as boarding houses that did not cater to a single group or nationality but were home to a mix of ethnic groups. While focus is given to the significant number that were mixed West African and Caribbean as the major groups of this study there are also examples of other ethnic and national groups found sharing these spaces. The significance of this shall be discussed later in this chapter.
[31] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice'*, p.3.
[32] M. J Daunton, 'Jack Ashore: Seamen in Cardiff before 1914', *Welsh History Review*, 9 (1978), p.189.
[33] Cobley, *That Turbulent Soil,* p.159.

Particularly isolated and rootless as a result of this more precarious employment these seamen were prone to longer periods on shore.[34] This greatly increased their reliance on the boarding house not only in its professional capacity in helping find employment but also through its provision of pastoral care provided by the keeper to their boarders. However, longer lines of credit due to unemployment together with longer gaps in claiming advance notes once employment was eventually found would have made conducting trade in the city a challenge.



Map 9 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Loudoun Square, Butetown, Cardiff, 1911

That nearly half of all seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff in 1911 were mixed presents questions to the historian as to the dynamics within these early areas of black settlement in the

[34] *ibid,* pp.159 -160.

city. Mixed boarding houses could simply appear to be emblematic of demand beginning to outstrip supply, obliging Caribbean and West African seamen to board together. However, there has been some suggestion that a certain amount of animosity existed between these two groups.[35] Indeed one Barbadian seaman speaking to the local Cardiff press in the wake of the 1919 ethnic riots was quoted as saying they are as different as 'chalk and cheese.'[36] The prevalence of mixed West African and Caribbean boarding houses suggests that the level of animosity may have been overstated. As discussed in the previous chapter, living conditions within the boarding house were intimate, with very little personal space available, and there is no evidence to suggest that these mixed houses were particularly fractious in comparison with others. Scholars who have studied the relationship between the two groups argue that the relationship between people of West African and Afro-Caribbean heritage has historically always been complex and characterised as much by cooperation as conflict.[37] This relationship and the level of intolerance between these two groups has been the subject of debate.[38] However, some scholars have argued that extreme intolerance, such as intraethnic racism, is an oxymoron or at the very least a contradiction, as black groups have never had enough power over each other to prevent access to valuable social resources or create an oppressor/oppressed relationship.[39] Indeed, the most valuable social resource available to black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain during this period was the seamen's boarding house and evidence that either group denied access to this resource to the other is lacking.

In fact, the prominent number of mixed seamen's boarding houses, such as those of Emmanuel Phenis, a West African man who operated boarding houses for predominantly Caribbean seamen, or that of George Dias, a Jamaican, who, in 1911, was running his West African boarding house at 6 Dexter Street in Liverpool, suggests quite the opposite. These serve as examples that relationships between black seamen from West Africa and the Caribbean were based more on cooperation rather than conflict during this early period, in metropolitan Britain at

[35] Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p.9.
[36] 'White Versus Black', *South Wales Argus,* 14/6/1919.
[37] Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Relations between Africans, African Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans: Tensions, Indifference and Harmony* (Dar es Salaam: New Africa Press, 2007), p.80.
[38] Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, '"We All Black Innit?": Analysing Relations between African and African-Caribbean Groups in Britain', *Sociological Research Online*, 22 (2017), pp.1-14; Rodney Clark, 'Interethnic Group and Intraethnic Group Racism: Perceptions and Coping in Black University Students', *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30 (2004), pp.506-526.
[39] Clark, p.507.

least. Ray Costello also suggests that cultural barriers between groups may have started to be broken down earlier while these men were at sea. The nature of the work and the conditions with which it was undertaken brought black seamen together as 'members of a unified community of the sea, battling with the elements in a way that engenders a degree of conformity and common interests.'[40] A ship's port of call determined the composition of its crew.[41] As tramp shipping in Cardiff attracted a broad and diverse labour force, including both Caribbean and West African seamen, this would help explain the significant number of mixed seamen's boarding houses in the city. Both on land and at sea, black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa would be living and working in close proximity to one another and faced similar social and economic circumstances. While not denying that conflict existed, the experiences of working-class black seamen from both the Caribbean and West Africa regularly sharing the engine room of ships, the space of sailortown as well as the intimate space of the boarding house, would suggest a certain level of cooperation defined these relationships from this early period of migration and settlement.

Joanna Bourke in her study of working-class cultures highlights the importance that space plays in the development of communal consciousness. She argues that low spatial mobility can consign an individual to membership of a local group.[42] The nature of the labour market confined black seamen from both sides of the Atlantic to dockside neighbourhoods whose geography, particularly in the case of Cardiff, kept them segregated from the rest of the city. While confinement to these areas was not exclusive, those that did move and settle in other parts of the city were often met with hostility from their neighbours.[43] Even within black neighbourhoods, black seamen and their families tended to not move very far. Abraham Lawrence and his family are a striking example of this. Between 1881 and 1901 Lawrence, whose family and business were initially at 64 Gilbert Street, moved first to 14 Kent Street and then finally to 18 Upper Pitt Street. All three addresses were within one street of each other near Great George Square in Liverpool.

Liverpool, like Cardiff, saw a significant increase in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in 1911. However, this early development of Liverpool's black settlement begins to differ

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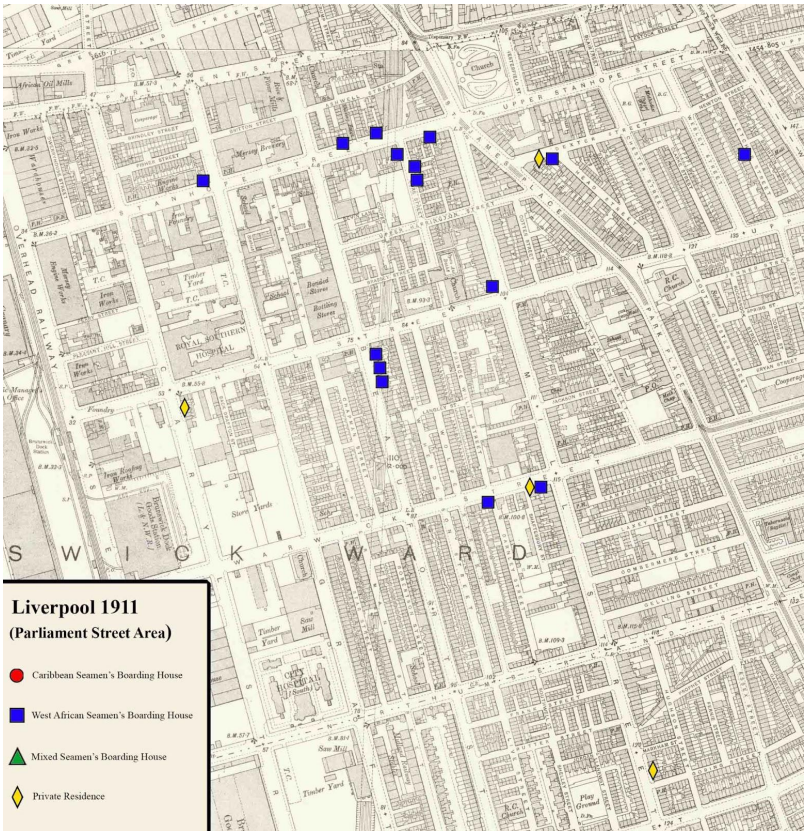
[40] Costello, *Black Salt*, p.113.
[41] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.51.
[42] Joanna Bourke, *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890–1960 : Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.139.
[43] Neil Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots of 1919', *Llafur*, 3 (1980), p.9.

somewhat from Cardiff. From this period onwards Liverpool underwent a distinct demographic change and the city became characterised by a considerable West African presence. Of the sixteen boarding houses operating in the city at this time, fifteen catered exclusively to West African seamen. All fifteen of these seamen's boarding houses occupied the area south of Parliament Street which began to become the main focal point of black settlement from 1911. However, the single seamen's boarding house for Caribbean seamen run by Abraham Lawrence, now at 18 Upper Pitt Street, maintained a reduced but resolute presence in the area around Great George Square. While Cardiff's diverse black settlement reflected the employment patterns and varied trading routes of tramp shipping, Liverpool black presence was informed by the port's close trading ties with West Africa. Liverpool had a long history of trade with West Africa stretching back to its involvement in the slave trade. By the end of the nineteenth century, one Liverpool based shipping company, Elder Dempster, practically controlled the trade with West Africa. There is a direct correlation between the growth of Elder Dempster and the growth of Liverpool's West African presence. From a fleet of twenty-one ships in 1879 the company had increased its fleet to one hundred and nine by 1909.[44] A need to retain a reserve pool of labour to man these ships explains the sharp rise in the need for accommodation, and higher wages offered in Liverpool, as opposed to ports in West Africa, meant it was more attractive for West African seamen to base themselves in the city.[45] Systems of recruitment at the source of labour in West Africa that saw seamen from the region, in particular the Kru from Sierra Leone, rely on ethnic and tribal structures for their hiring practices, played a significant role in their establishment as a major demographic within the city's black population. Despite the prominence of West African seamen in the city and the lack of mixed boarding houses, Liverpool does exhibit some of the trends of cooperation similar to those identified in Cardiff. For example, four West African boarding houses in the city were run by Caribbean boarding house keepers.

[44] Diane Frost, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p.17.
[45] Diane Frost, 'Racism and Social Segregation: Settlement Patterns of West African Seamen in Liverpool since the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22 (1996), p.87

Map 10.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Great George Square, Liverpool, 1911.



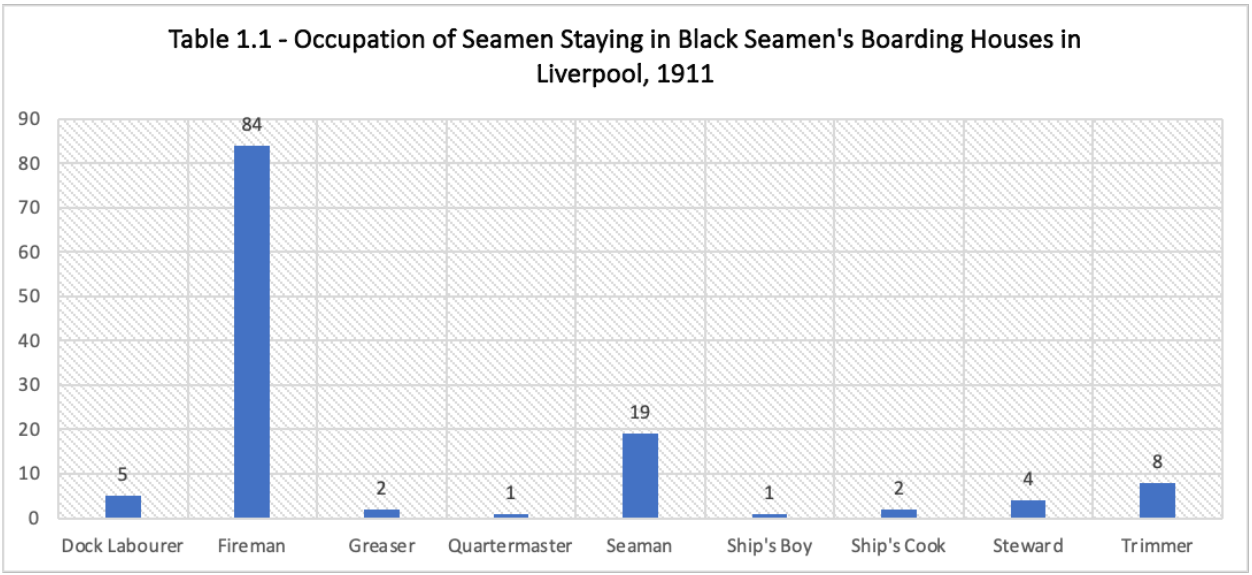
Map 10.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Parliament Street, Liverpool, 1911.

From 1911 onwards, a key factor that contributed to an increased need for accommodation in British port cities was that better wages were being paid to seamen if they signed on in a metropolitan port as opposed to a colonial one. The increasing number of Caribbean and West African seamen in British ports appears to be a result of these men exercising their right as British subjects and basing themselves in Britain as they looked to take advantage of this increase in pay. The disparity in pay between British and colonial ports was significant. From evidence gathered by Diane Frost from ships trading with West Africa, she ascertained that in the first decade of the twentieth century, firemen who signed on in West Africa were paid £2 a month compared to £4 if they had signed on in Britain.[46] Cardiff also offered some of the better wages within the shipping industry that attracted black migration both globally, as well as internally from other ports within Britain.[47] Caribbean and West African seamen in metropolitan Britain, as British subjects, had picketed with white British seamen during a series of seamen's strikes in 1911 in Cardiff and were eligible to be paid at the same rates.[48] However, this increase in wages for British seamen won in 1911 was partly funded by a reduction in wages paid to West African seamen on the West African coast.[49] This further reduction encouraged black seamen to settle in Britain to take advantage of the better rates of pay. However, a disparity in wages persisted for those seamen working the liner trade out of Liverpool and the tramp trade out of Cardiff. This led to West African seamen beginning to migrate between the two cities in search of better wages.[50] This would account for the growth of the West African presence in Cardiff from 1911. The ebbs and flows of the labour market as a result of economic and political factors promoted, as well as dictated, a near constant movement between the two cities as men from both Liverpool and Cardiff sought to maintain a living in Britain.

Through analysis of 1911 census entries of black seamen's boarding houses, they can provide further insight into the demographics of the seamen who migrated to and from British port cities in the early twentieth century (See Table 1.1, Table 1.2, Table 2.1, Table 2.2, Table 3.1, Table 3.2). By 1911, British shipping employed black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in a variety of shipboard roles. A large number worked as seamen: an entry-level, relatively unskilled

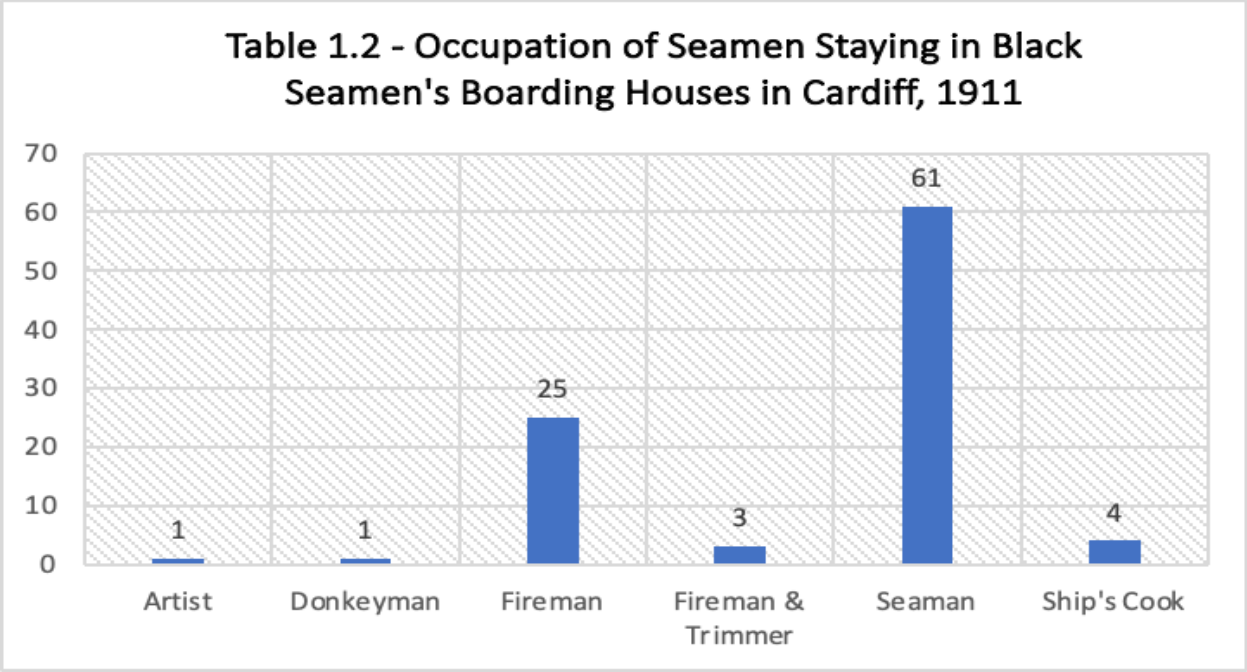
[46] Frost, *Work and Community,* p.61.
[47] Marika Sherwood, 'Racism and Resistance: Cardiff in the 1930s and 1940s', *Llafur*, 5 (1991), p.51.
[48] Neil Evans, 'Across the Universe: Racial Violence and the Post-war Crisis in Imperial Britain, 1919–25', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 13 (1994), p.73.
[49] Frost, *Work and Community* p.61.
[50] *ibid,* pp.78-79.

role that required little experience and saw men perform a variety of maintenance and general repair jobs during the voyage.[51] Many black seamen also found themselves employed as the ship's cook. This role was an unenviable position among a ship's crew as due to meagre amounts and poor quality of the food, a ship's cook was often unpopular with their crewmates and could suffer poor treatment at their hands.[52] However, Caribbean and West African seamen found themselves overwhelmingly employed in the heavy labour roles in the engine room as firemen, trimmers and greasers. West Africans were initially employed in these roles as part of a wider, racialised belief that men from tropical climates were better suited to the sweltering heat of the engine room than Europeans.[53] But as black labour became more established on British steamships, labour roles became increasingly segregated and moved towards a hierarchy that correlated the position held by the seaman onboard ship with ethnicity that would see black, as well as Asian and Arab, seamen firmly relegated below deck and below the waterline.[54] For example, in Liverpool, 66% of all black seamen in the city worked as firemen.



Source: 1911 Census (accessed via https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census).

[51] Maritime History Archive, *Glossary-Merchant Seafaring Occupations,* https://mha.mun.ca/mha/mlc/toolkit/glossary/mso.php [accessed 20 September 2022].
[52] Cobley, 'That Turbulent Soil', p.159.
[53] Diane Frost, 'West Africans, Black Scousers and the Colour Problem in Inter-War Liverpool', *North West Labour History*, 20 (1995), p.52.
[54] Costello, *Black Salt,* p.137.



Source: 1911 Census (accessed via https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census).

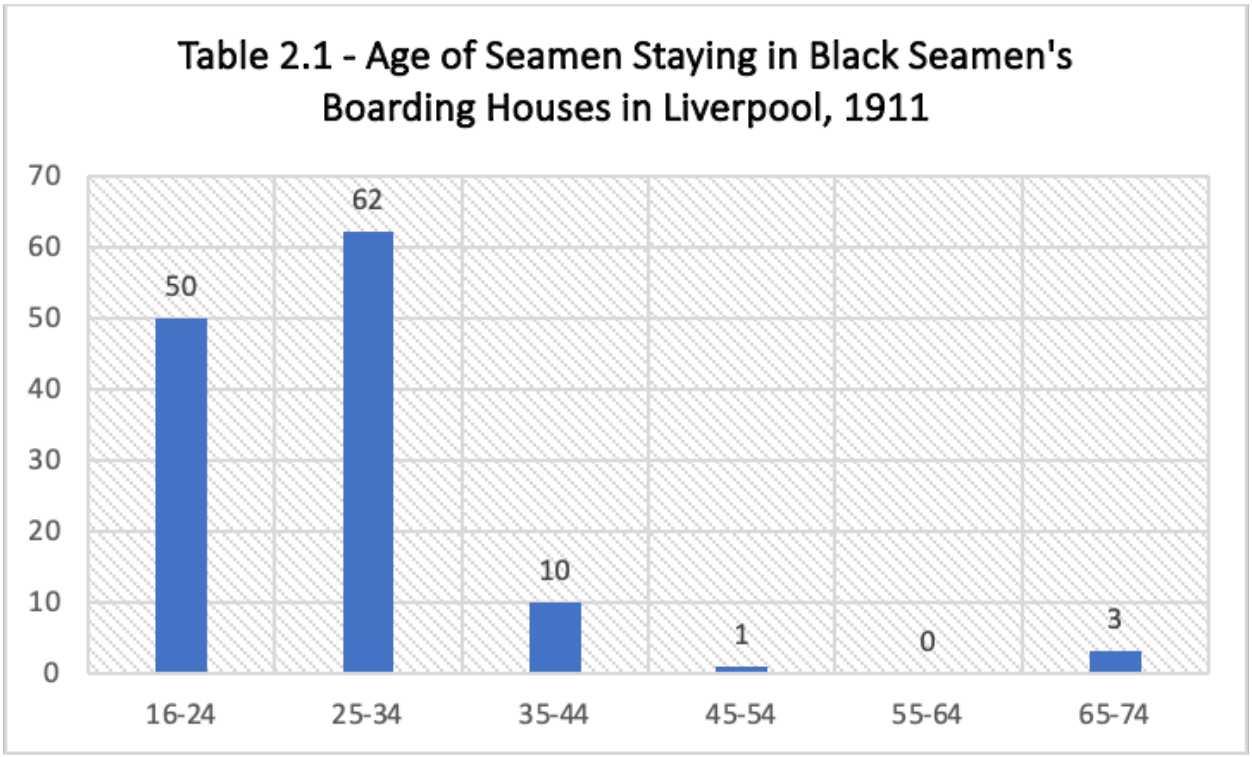
While historians acknowledge the labour roles of black seamen very few give detail about what the lived experience of these jobs would have been and how it may have shaped black seamen. Those who worked in the engine room were collectively known as 'the black gang' operating under hard, dirty and often dangerous conditions.[55] Though classed as 'unskilled' labour, this undervalues the difficult nature of the job. By the turn of the twentieth century a cargo steamer burnt on average 68 tonnes of coal a day. All this coal had to be manhandled by the fireman and trimmers.[56] The fireman, responsible for feeding coal into, and maintaining the furnaces, had to be able to judge the condition of the fire from its colour in order to anticipate changes in pressure. Furnaces on a British steamship could be as large as 8ft and the tools used were often large and unwieldy. To feed coal through the narrow grate a fireman required a combination of judgement, physical strength as well as dexterity.[57] Trimmers meanwhile were responsible for transporting the coal to the fireman. The trimmer would fill wheelbarrows with coal from the bunker and traverse a precarious path to the stokehold where they would deposit it at the furnace. At the start of a journey, with the bunker full, this was a relatively easy job. However, as time went on and the engines consumed more coal, the distances trimmers had to

[55] Edward Carpenter, 'The Black Gang', in *Seaman's World: Merchant Seamen's Reminiscences*, ed. by Ronald Hope (London: Harrap, 1982), p.13.
[56] Hope, p.342.
[57] Alston Kennerley, 'Stoking the Boilers: Firemen and Trimmers in British Merchant Ships, 1850–1950', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 20 (2008), p.198.

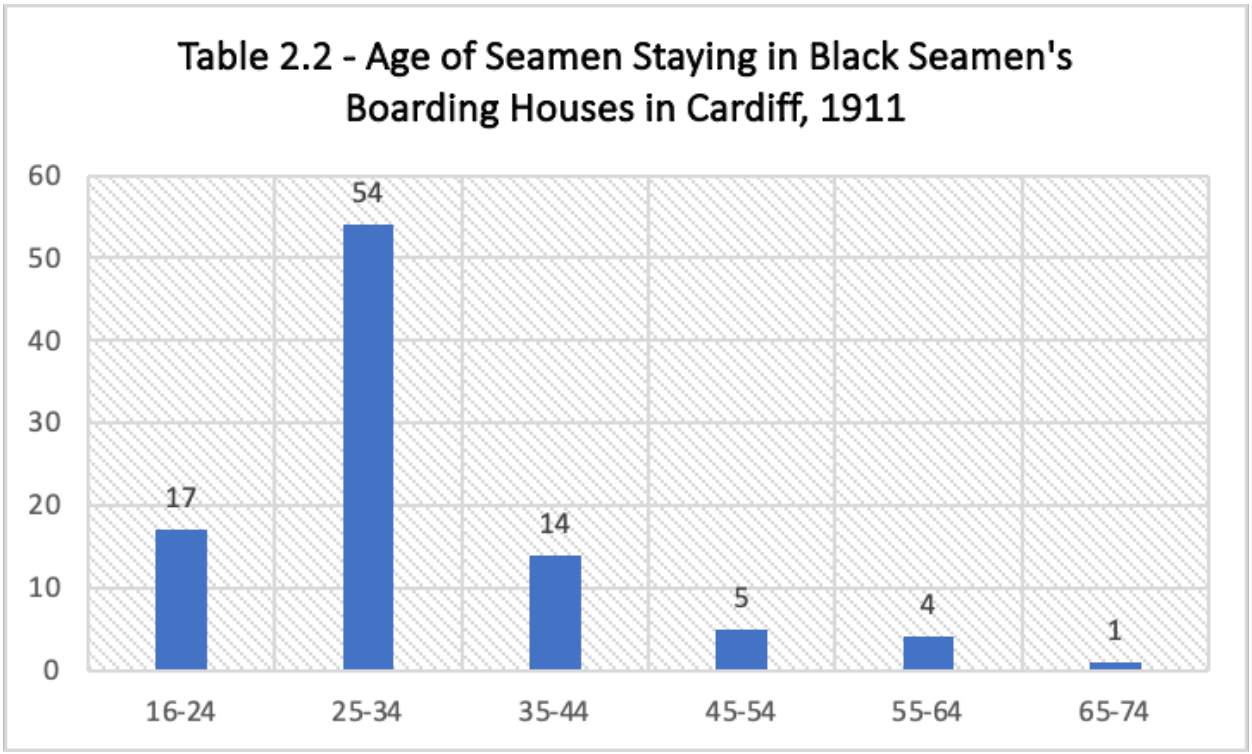
travel increased. To add to the challenge the trimmer had to contend with the pitching and rolling of the ship. A trimmer could be identified by his 'badges', permanent bruises on his body caused by repeatedly being flung against the hull of the ship.[58] Finally, there was the greaser responsible for ensuring the machinery remained well oiled. All of this work was conducted in searing temperatures that in tropical climates could reach as high as 50–60°C.[59] The engine room has been described as an 'industrial hell' with those working under the constant threat of being burned by the furnaces, crushed by coal, choked by dust and fumes or simply overcome by heat exhaustion.[60] Members of the 'black gang' took pride in both their skills and the physical toughness needed to bear such a working environment. However, these working conditions and the tough character needed to endure them meant that these men were more often prone to discipline problems. In the ten-year period between 1917–1927 firemen and trimmers accounted for 63.4% of onboard disciplinary incidents.[61]

The early black presence in Britain was characterised by youth. In Liverpool, 89% of black seamen in the port's boarding houses in 1911 were aged between 16–34; in Cardiff, this number stood at 75% (See Table 2.1 & Table 2.2). The demanding physical nature of seafaring work undertaken by Caribbean and West African seamen, most commonly in the engine room, dictated this demographic. Some older men continued to work as seamen and firemen into their 40s and 50s, however they were in a minority, and the eldest of those still working on ships into their sixties tended to work in less labour-intensive roles such as a ship's cook.

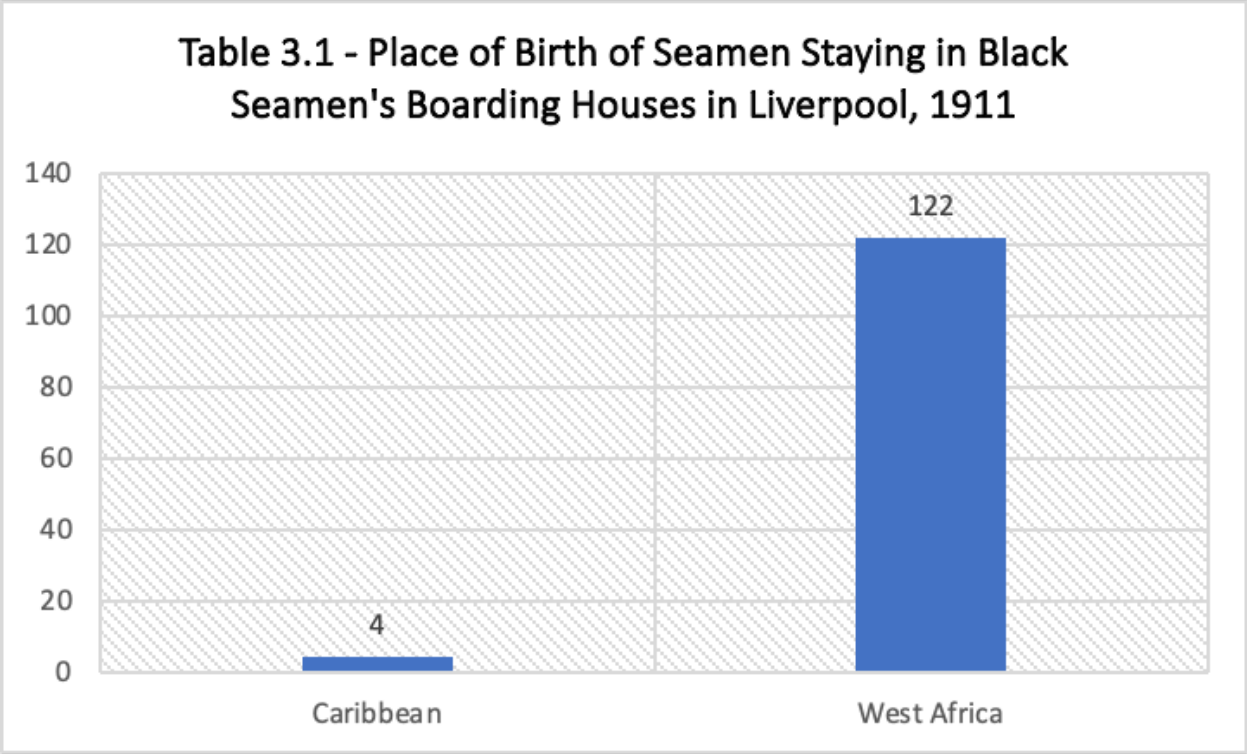
[58] *ibid,* p.194.
[59] Carpenter, pp.14-15.
[60] Hyslop, p.56.
[61] Kennerly, pp.213-215.



Source: 1911 Census (accessed via https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census).



Source: 1911 Census (accessed via https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census).



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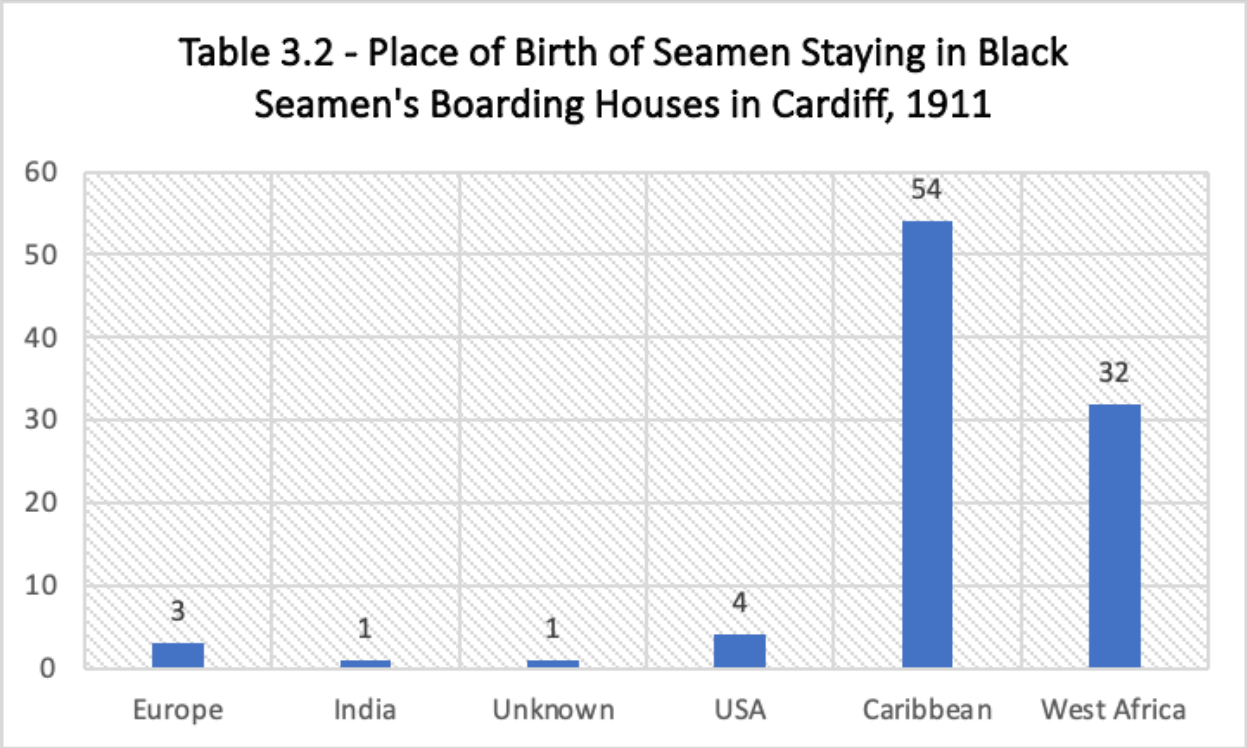


Source: 1911 Census (accessed via https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-census-land-and-surveys/and_census).

Importantly, from 1911, a modest indication of a more settled presence in the area surrounding seamen's boarding houses began to appear. This can be seen most clearly in Cardiff. Due to the condensed space of Butetown, this research has identified a particular concentration of family homes of black seamen and local white women on Maria Street, Angelina Street and Nelson Street (see Map 9). Evidence also emerges of more informal relationships with unmarried local women sharing properties with black seamen. While examples of single women running boarding houses do exist, they are rare, and this evidence would suggest cohabitation. Similarly, a very small number of private family homes can be identified beginning to appear in Liverpool close to established seamen's boarding houses in both the Great George Square area and south of Parliament Street in 1911. (See Map 10.1,10.2). Founding a household was an important process of the migrant experience for West African and Caribbean seamen. It was through this process that the transient seaman established domicile in Britain.[62] Establishing domicile was particularly important for black seamen in Liverpool, as a disparity in pay with liner companies remained for those who were not domiciled.[63] While this early settled presence in both cities remained small it hints at the growth that was to come.

Boarding house keepers such as Abraham Lawrence in Liverpool and Emmanuel Phenis and John Joseph Pervoe in Cardiff formed some of the longest most established black and mixed families in port cities. Other seafaring migrants from the Caribbean and West Africa were also beginning to make Britain their home and establish families. Three generations of the Guy family lived under one roof at 231 Mill Street in Liverpool. The head of the household, 55-year-old Theophilus, originally from Jamaica and living in the city since at least 1901, continued to work as a seaman and lived with his Devon born wife Charlotte and their three children and three grandchildren. This presence of long established mixed black and white families meant that by 1911 many of their children of mixed-heritage had already reached adulthood and became a more prominent demographic group living and working in these neighbourhoods. Abraham and Alice Lawrence's eldest daughter Elizabeth was born in 1879 and his youngest Eliza in 1890. While their now 30 year old son Dwaney lived and worked in the area as a butcher. Local women of mixed-heritage as they reached adulthood also formed relationships with, and married, black seamen. In 1908, John Joseph Pervoe's daughter Edith married a Barbadian seamen James Newton Grant whom she had met as a boarder in her father's seamen's boarding house. They would relocate to the Rhondda valley where James worked in

[62] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice'*, p.144.
[63] Frost, *Work and Community,* p.61.

the coal mines before returning to Butetown in 1912.[64] Often attributed to the onset of the First World War and the subsequent boom in black migration that accompanied it, this evidence from 1911 highlights that the social dynamics that came to define areas of black settlement as they grew and developed were already becoming firmly established. By this time migratory black seamen were prominent in sailortown neighbourhoods as they negotiated relationships, personal and professional, with the local multiethnic population.

1921: New Insights into Post-War Areas of Black Settlement in Liverpool and Cardiff

Historians acknowledge that the First World War was a significant stimulus of growth for Britain's early black presence. Within 48 hours of the declaration of war some 8000 merchant seamen had joined Britain's armed forces and the industry lost a further 9000 foreign seamen now classified enemies. Black seamen from Britain's colonies in the Caribbean and West Africa were called on to fill these labour shortages in British shipping, many of whom chose to remain in Britain when the conflict ended.[65] War service in the merchant marine was a dangerous occupation with the constant threat of German submarines patrolling British shipping lanes. Many ships carrying black crews were torpedoed and sunk, suffering significant casualties. The Liverpool based shipping company Elder Dempster lost twenty-nine ships and a total of four hundred and twenty men to enemy action during the war.[66] While these crews were not exclusively black, Caribbean and West African seamen were in a particularly vulnerable and dangerous position on board merchant ships working as they did in the engine room below the waterline.

Seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa who had settled in Britain also enlisted in the armed forces. There was no official policy on the recruitment of black men in Britain during this period. Despite many being refused on account of their colour, the army and the navy did accept a number of black recruits. Historians have attributed this to haphazard recruitment as a result of unclear protocols and the whims of recruiting officers varying from place to place.[67] At least forty black seamen resident in Liverpool after the war had served in either the army or the

[64] Bourne, p.137.
[65] Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots', p.8.
[66] Peter N. Davies, *The Trade Makers: Elder Dempster in West Africa, 1852–1972* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp.203-204.
[67] Winston James, 'The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. by Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.356.

navy. This included Nelson Kendal from Demerara who served with the British Army and saw service in Russia as part of the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War. There was also Nigerian seamen's boarding house keeper Benjamin Ladipo Pratt who after the war ran a boarding house for West African seamen at 14 Jackson Street in Liverpool and had served in the Royal Navy between 1917–1919.[68]

The First World War was a boom time for all seamen, especially those from Britain's colonies. After decades of poor wages and tenuous employment the demand for seamen and the dangers of operating on a merchant ship in wartime saw wages skyrocket. The monthly rate for seamen on foreign trade rose from £5 10s in 1914 to £9 in 1916 and reached their peak in 1918 at £14 10s. This meant that a seaman paid off after 6 months service could have a considerable sum in his pocket.[69] As a result, the seamen's boarding house profited from this boom. Not only were their houses full, seamen were in a financial position to settle their bills fully as well as perhaps purchase some of the more expensive items from the boarding house's stores. This boom also encouraged boarding house keepers to seek out new opportunities in new ports. Jamaican Charles Rowe and his English wife Amelia, who had been running a mixed seamen's boarding house at 41 Maria Street in Cardiff relocated to Liverpool and by 1919 were running one of the larger mixed boarding houses in the city at 113 Duke Street. Business was so good for some boarding house keepers that they were able to expand their business. Cardiff boarding house keeper Uriah Erskine who ran his large boarding house for Caribbean seamen at 36/37 Maria Street, was one of these. In 1915 he invested in a second property at 54 Loudoun Square purchasing the lease for £230 and subsequently converted it into a second seamen's boarding house.[70]

The fortunes of Uriah Erskine are a prime example of the extent of social mobility that the seamen's boarding house could afford black seamen migrating to Britain in the early twentieth century; one that is often overlooked. Due to the success of his business ventures, Erskine was able to transcend both the physical and social barriers of the early black settlement around Loudoun Square and Butetown, moving himself and his family out of the docks and out towards the suburbs to a home near Victoria Park in the Canton area of the city. It had long been the practice of successful middle-class merchants to mark their status by moving out of dockside or

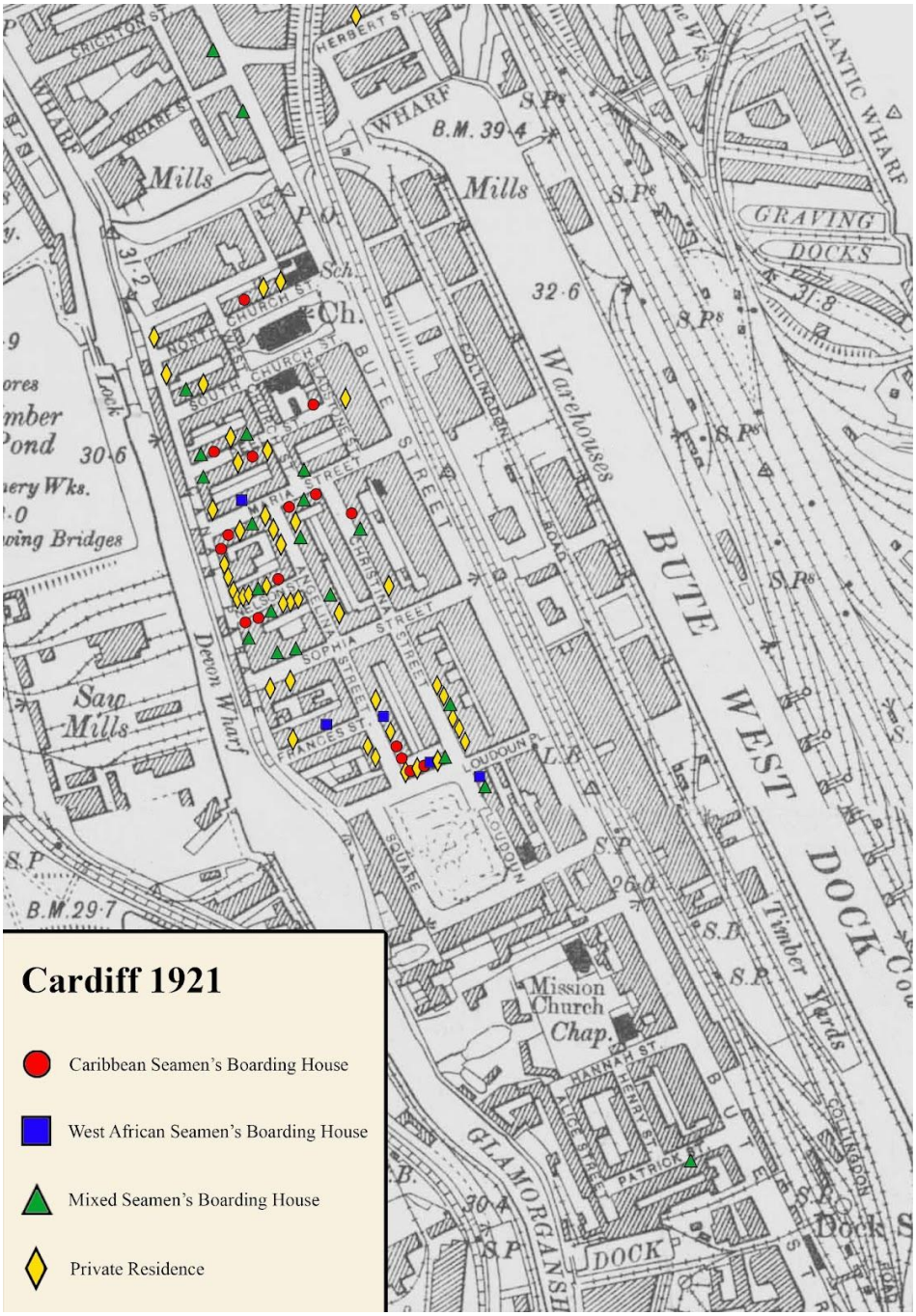
[68] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.
[69] Evans, 'South Wales Race Riots', p.9.
[70] 'Property Market', *Western Mail,* 16/7/1915.

industrial areas and into the suburbs.[71] Uriah Erskine followed in this tradition marking a transformation from working-class migrant to flirting with the metropolitan middle-classes . This feat was particularly impressive for a time when social mobility for working-class black men in Britain was severely limited. Erskine also shows that some black men and their families were able to challenge the low spatial mobility that characterised early black migrants. Another striking example of black seamen who had settled in Britain challenging social and spatial mobility was Barbados-born Horatio Straker. Straker had obtained the position of a union official for the National Union of Seamen in Cardiff. Straker's role as a black union official during this period is noteworthy. To have gained such status within the NUS, notorious for its ambivalence and often outright antagonism towards its black members, should not be underestimated.[72] Straker was not afraid to challenge institutional structures. His outspoken position led him to fall foul of his union which took disciplinary action against him for going against a white colleague in support of black seamen during a labour dispute in 1922.[73]

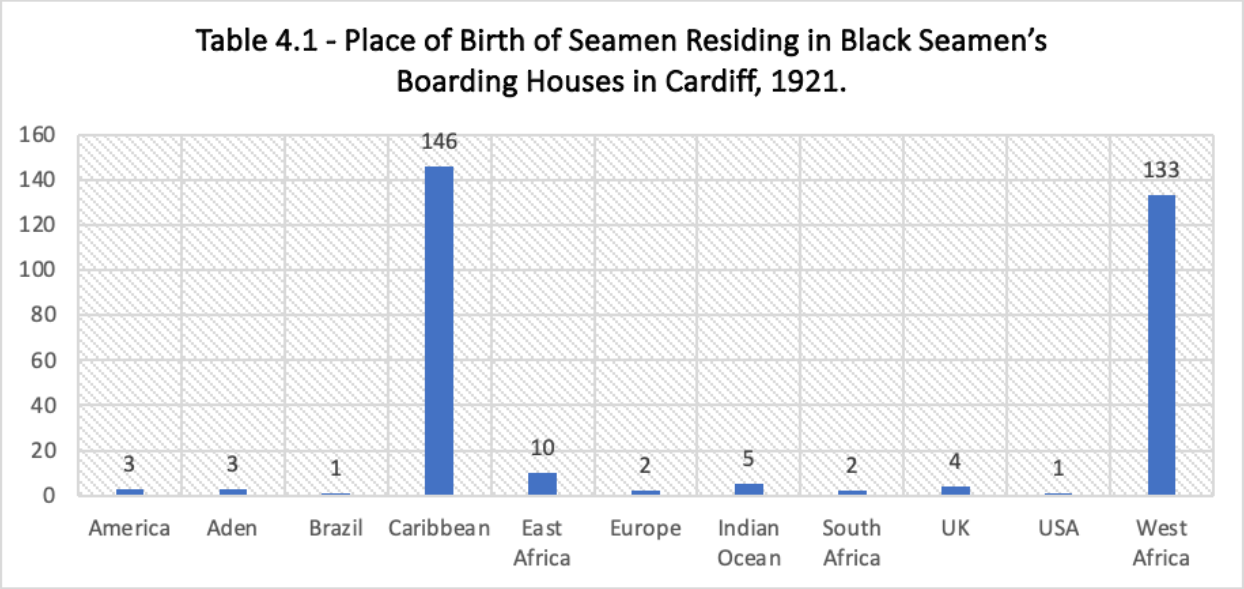
It has been notoriously difficult for historians to estimate the size of post-war black settlements and accurate figures have proven elusive. Ray Costello cites that the war expanded Cardiff's black population from around 700 in 1914 to about 3000 by the close of hostilities.[74] The recently released 1921 census and data extracted from black seamen's boarding houses now allows for a more qualitative approach to understanding the growth of Britain's black population as a result of the First World War. The 1921 census reveals a total of forty-two black seamen's boarding houses in the city; thirteen Caribbean, five West African and twenty-four mixed. A significant increase on a decade earlier. There are also a further ten properties in the area listed as having one black seaman listed as a boarder.[75] That over 50% of black seamen's boarding houses in the city were mixed in 1921 reflects the high level of diversity within Cardiff's black population. Available data from seamen's boarding houses found in 1921 census highlights near parity in the number of Caribbean and West African seamen in the city (See Table 4.1). The Loudoun Square area, and Butetown more generally, was one of the most diverse places in

[71] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* , 3rd Edition (London: Routledge, 2019), p.243
[72] Tabili, 'We Ask For British Justice', p.82.
[73] David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), pp.73-75.
[74] Costello, *Black Salt,* p.159.
[75] From the sources and data available these do not appear to be commercial licensed seamen's boarding houses. However, it has not been possible to ascertain whether these were unlicensed houses simply taking in the odd seamen for the extra income or whether this indicates more personal relationships. Due to this they have been included in Map 11 as 'Private Residences'.

Britain by the interwar years. In this relatively small area, there were seamen's boarding houses that catered to Yemeni Arab, Scandinavian, Somali, Maltese, Greek, Spanish, Japanese, Chilean, Italian and Chinese seamen, among many others.



Map 11 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Loudoun Square, Butetown, Cardiff, 1921.



Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).

The large number of mixed seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff in 1921 also continue to reflect the complexity of the relationships between the different ethnic groups within Butetown. As mentioned above, whether through choice or mere circumstance, Caribbean and West African seamen boarding together challenges the perception of the level of animosity that existed between the two groups during this period. Indeed, the further discovery of diverse ethnic groups boarding together presents questions to the historian.

For example, the boarding houses at 54 Loudoun Square run by Adensese boarding house keeper Nagi Nasser and 258 Bute Street run by the Cardiff born wife of an Arab seaman, Florence Faros, let rooms to a mixture of West African and Arab seamen. These houses are of particular note since a degree of animosity existed between these two groups. During the war, such enmity had boiled over and clashes between black and Arab seamen over the supposed undercutting of wages had taken place in the city[76] Likewise, Jamaican boarding house keeper George Henry Groves at 23 Patrick Street let rooms to Scandinavian seamen. A long-running animosity had existed between black and Scandinavian seamen that was also related to competition in the labour market. So much so that this tension between the two groups has been cited as one of the catalysts for the outbreak of rioting in Liverpool in 1919.[77] That these

[76] 'Round Tiger Bay', *South Wales Daily News,* 2/9/1916; GA, DCONC/1/1/5, Reports of the Chief Constable to the Watch Committee, 'Riot at Butetown', 13/8/1916.
[77] Jenkinson, *Black 1919,* pp.79-80; Joseph Radcliffe, 'The 1919 Seaport Riots in Liverpool: The Black British Response', *unpublished MA thesis* (Birkbeck, University of London, 2019), p.25.

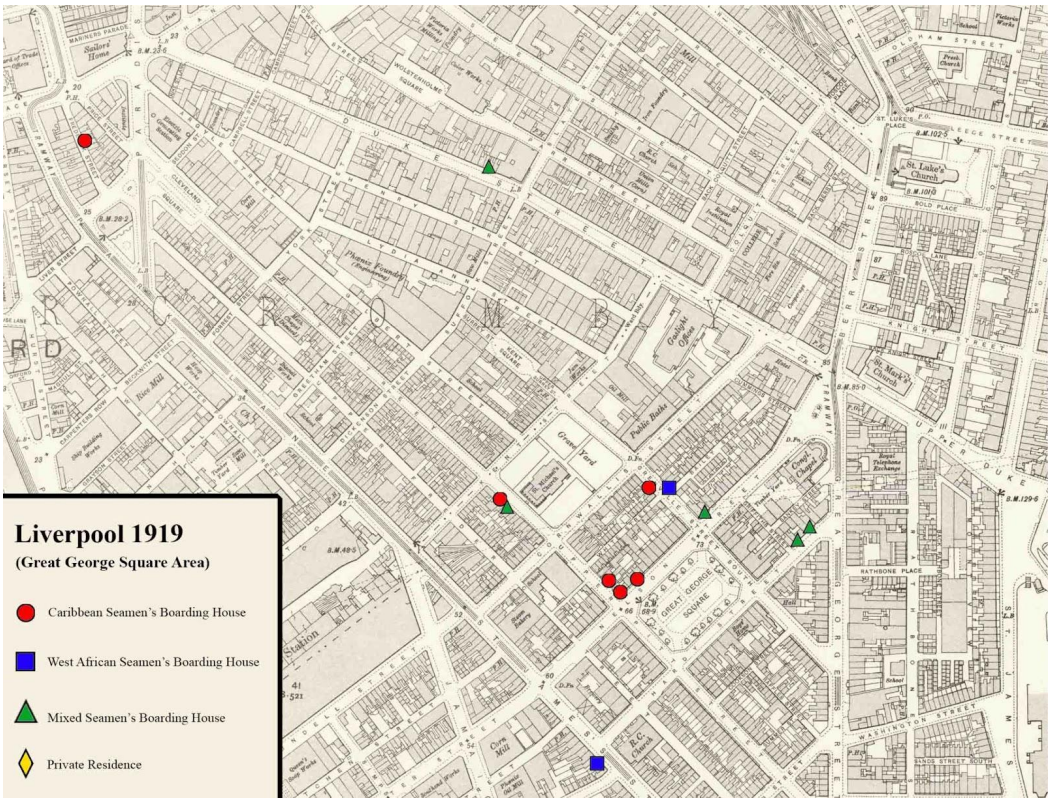
seamen were also found to be lodging together only serves to highlight that conflict and cooperation within multiethnic sailortown neighbourhoods were far from mutually exclusive.

There has been much debate as to the size of both Liverpool's pre and post First World War population among historians, with accurate figures near impossible to obtain. The near parity in the number of seamen's boarding houses in Cardiff and Liverpool in 1911 would suggest that Liverpool's black population was of a similar size to the 700 estimated for Cardiff. Figures for Liverpool's post-war black presence likewise remain hazy. Contemporary sources put the city's black population at somewhere in the region of 2000-3000.[78] For Liverpool, sources generated as a result of the 1919 ethnic riots can now be used in conjunction with the 1921 census to provide added insight into the growth and development of Liverpool's black settlement as a result of the war and in the years thereafter. Thirty-seven black seamen's boarding houses were operating in 1919; eight Caribbean, sixteen West African and ten mixed.[79] Three further seamen's boarding houses have been identified from compensation claims following the riots and referred to as a 'Negroes House' but it is unknown exactly which demographic they boarded.[80] These figures would suggest that in 1919 Liverpool's black population in the city's sailortown area was roughly the same size as that of Cardiff. The area south of Parliament Street continued to be the main focal point of settlement in Liverpool and continued to include the majority of seamen's boarding houses used by West Africans. However, the historic black presence around Great George Square that had been in decline before the First World War was reinvigorated (See Maps 12.1, 12.2). Its reputation as black neighbourhood through the unbroken presence and long-standing reputation of the Lawrence seamen's boarding house could help to explain this revival. While not exclusive, this area remained home to the majority of Caribbean seamen in the city at the time. That the area south of Parliament Street remained dominated by its West African presence and Great George Square by Caribbean confirms that kinship and social ties remained an important factor for a seaman when choosing a place to stay, as men of the same ethnic group gravitated towards the same areas. Diane Frost details the particularly strong kinship ties that existed among Kru seamen from Sierra Leone and how the establishment of informal networks in Liverpool encouraged newly arrived migrants to seek

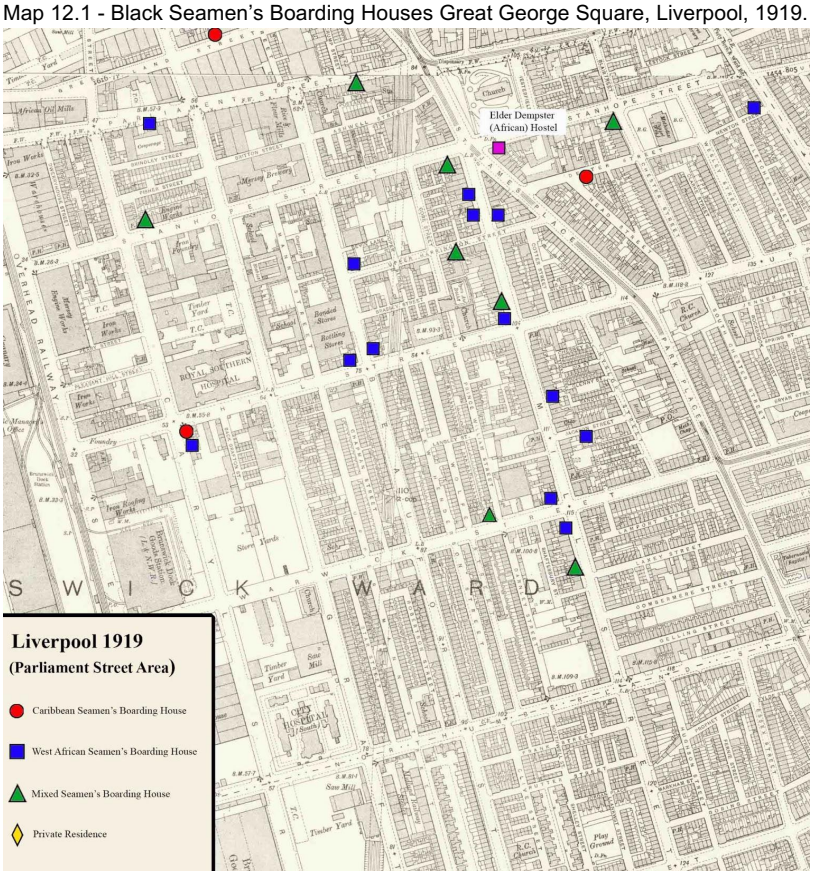
[78] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969**,** Letter from the Assistant Head Constable of Liverpool, L. Everett, to the Home Office, 10/61919.
[79] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Aliens. Repatriation of Coloured Seamen etc.,1919–1920.
[80] LRO, 352 MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee Town Clerk's Papers, Feb–Oct 1919, 17/6/1919.

out other Kru and provide them with help and support.[81] This would explain such a large and distinct area of West African settlement south of Parliament Street as opposed to the more disparate Caribbean presence in the city. The seamen's boarding house was a vital part of this support network. However, similar to Cardiff, the picture is complicated by the continued presence of a substantial number of mixed boarding houses, as well as men from both the Caribbean and West Africa, being present in both areas. This evidence suggests that while ethnic, cultural and national solidarity were important to black seamen from both sides of the Atlantic, these factors appear to have remained flexible when faced with navigating their time in Britain.

[81] Frost, *Work and Community,* p.190.



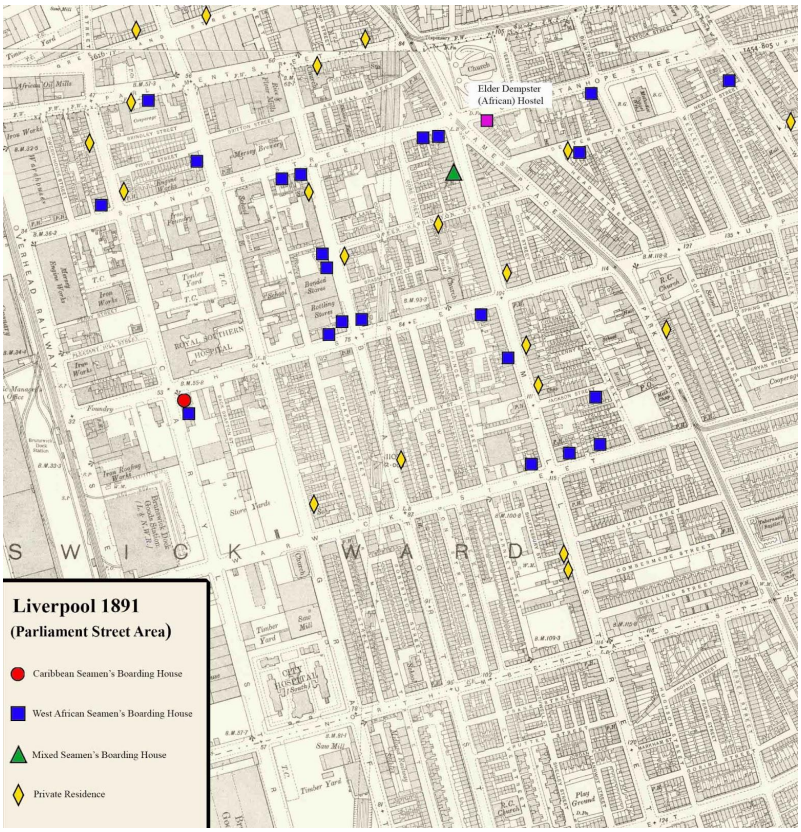
Map 12.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses Great George Square, Liverpool, 1919.



Map 12.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses, Parliament Street, Liverpool, 1919

Between 1919 and 1921, there was an overall decrease in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in Liverpool with the census returning only thirty-four in 1921. This suggests that there was already an overall decline in the city's black population. However, on closer inspection a more nuanced picture appears. This period saw a dramatic reduction in the number of Caribbean seamen in the city with only a single Caribbean boarding house remaining in operation at 54 Caryl Street alongside seven mixed boarding houses. In stark contrast 1921 saw a marked increase in West African boarding houses with their number rising to twenty-six. The reduction in the number of Caribbean seamen's boarding houses and thus Caribbean seamen in the city is reflected in the relative decline in the black presence in what had previously been a predominantly Caribbean area of black settlement around Great George Square. By 1921 only a handful of mixed boarding houses remained in the area, including the Lawrence's perennial boarding house at 18 Upper Pitt Street. Abraham had died in 1914 and the boarding house was now run by his second wife and widow Margaret and assisted by their two daughters. However, the area south of Parliament Street continued to exhibit a strong presence and included the majority of West African boarding houses (see Maps 13.1, 13.2).

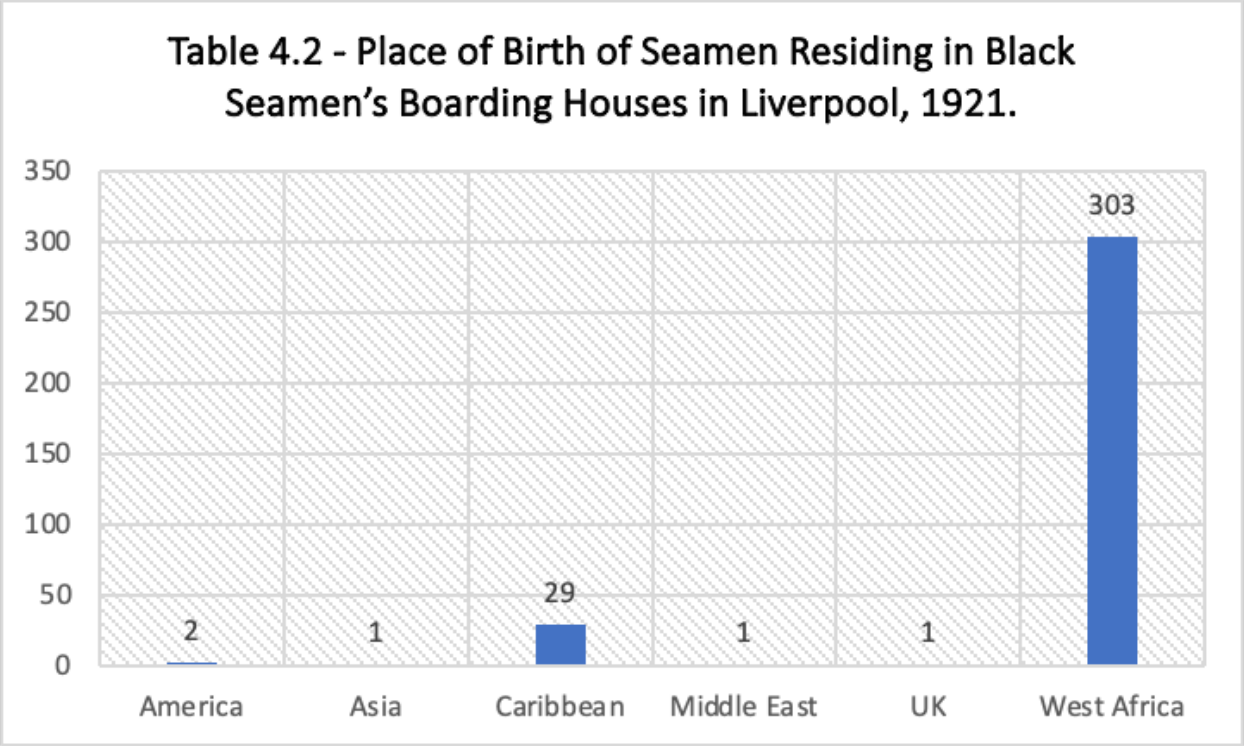
Map 13.1 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Great George Square, Liverpool, 1921.



Map 13.2 - Black Seamen's Boarding Houses & Private Residences, Parliament Street, Liverpool, 1921.

Evidence from the 1921 census highlights that Liverpool's areas of black settlement had more fluid boundaries then that of Cardiff. While Great George Square and the area south of Parliament Street continued to be the focus of black settlement in the city, a handful of West African seamen's boarding houses operated outside these areas and closer towards the centre of the city near the central train station around Brownlow Hill. Unlike Cardiff, the less restrictive geography of Liverpool's docklands meant that the city's black presence, while employment patterns still dictated a need to remain close to the docks, was less confined and spread over a wider area. Despite this fluidity, Caribbean and West African seamen and their families remained firmly confined to the south end area of the city.

As in Cardiff the relationship of the boarding house keeper and the seaman himself reflects the complexity of social relationships within the city's multiethnic sailortown. For example, of the twenty-six West African seamen's boarding houses in the city, only six were directly run by West Africans; twelve were run by metropolitan-born women, one by Liverpudlian Hugh Laverty, three had a keeper from the Caribbean and the rest came from a mix of Poland, Russia and the Baltic states. Despite some diversity, by 1921 Liverpool's black population was firmly characterised by its West African presence reflecting the dominance of trade with the region in the city. It is unclear why in a city with such a strong presence there were so few dedicated West African seamen's boarding house keepers. Regardless, whether the keeper may have been from a different ethnic or national background, West African seamen still chose to utilise these boarding houses and settle close by much like their Caribbean and West African peers in Cardiff. West Africans were the dominant demographic not only among the transient but also, as will be seen below, the settled population of Liverpool. The city's West African population had far surpassed that of Caribbeans and Sierra Leoneans dwarfed all other groups from West Africa making up 71% of all black seamen in the city by 1921 (see Table 4.2).



Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).

To manage the large number of West African seamen in their service in Liverpool, Elder Dempster established their own hostel in the city at 2 Upper Stanhope Street. This was within the area of black settlement south of Parliament Street (see Map 13.2). The company opened the hostel in 1915 and it would become known colloquially as the 'African Hostel'. The press described it in a benevolent fashion 'as a centre for social and religious work among Africans in their [Elder Dempster's] employ'.[82] Its primary use was to house the company's West African workforce in Liverpool until they could find a berth on a ship. However, this was not exclusive and examples of Caribbean seamen boarding at the hostel can be found in the 1921 census. Beside dormitory sleeping quarters the hostel provided social spaces for black seamen residing there including a billiard room, reading room, two kitchens as well as a concert space that could hold up to 250 people. The hostel proved so successful that in 1917 it was expanded to accommodate up to 160 men.[83] While Elder Dempster owned the hostel it employed West African staff to oversee the day to day running of the building. In overall charge was Chaplain-Superintendent Reverend E.A Ejesa-Osora. A native of Sierra Leone, Ejesa-Osora had come to England in 1901 and been educated at Oxford University before being ordained in 1914 by the

[82] 'Africans in Liverpool', *Liverpool Daily Post,* 4/2/1915.
[83] 'Extension of Liverpool West African Hostel', *West Africa [London]*, 10/2/1917, p.38.

Bishop of Liverpool.[84] The hostel deducted the 6d a night fees for board directly from the seamen's wages when he signed on to a ship.[85] Unlike the Sailors' Homes that independent, charitable organisations ran, behind its facade of pastoral and religious care, the hostel granted Elder Dempster more control over their workforce while in Britain. The hostel not only guaranteed a pool of labour for Elder Dempster ships, it completely cut out any interference from middle men in employment such as the seamen's boarding house keeper, affording them greater control over their metropolitan-based workforce. The company was also able to recoup the costs for the hostel's maintenance directly from its workforce. All West African seamen in the employ of Elder Dempster were required to pay 4s a week for the upkeep of the hostel even if they did not use it. This caused a certain amount of resentment among the settled population in the city who had their own homes to maintain and no longer utilised the temporary accommodation in the city.[86] Despite the cost, the African Hostel remained well used by black seamen in the city with 118 residents and staff recorded in the 1921 census and continued to offer a variety of social activities, even fielding a football team that played in a local league.[87]

This overall decrease in the number of seamen's boarding houses between 1919 and 1921 reflected the poor economic climate in Britain after the First World War. This post-war economic depression affected Liverpool, as well as other port cities, as international trade slumped.[88] Another factor was the policy of repatriation introduced by both local and national government following the 1919 ethnic riots that sought to remove Caribbean and West African seamen from Britain. While these policies had limited success, they had some influence in the decline of Britain's black presence and will be explored in further detail in the following chapter. Another factor was Elder Dempster's domination of trade in Liverpool and their choice to employ predominantly West African seamen. As a consequence, with less work available to them it would explain why Caribbean seamen had begun to avoid the city in search of employment elsewhere. Cardiff, with its long reputation as a 'hard-up' port, presented a suitable destination for seamen who hoped to find employment in the tramp trade with the Welsh port maintaining its large Caribbean presence. However, tramp shipping was also vulnerable to the economic

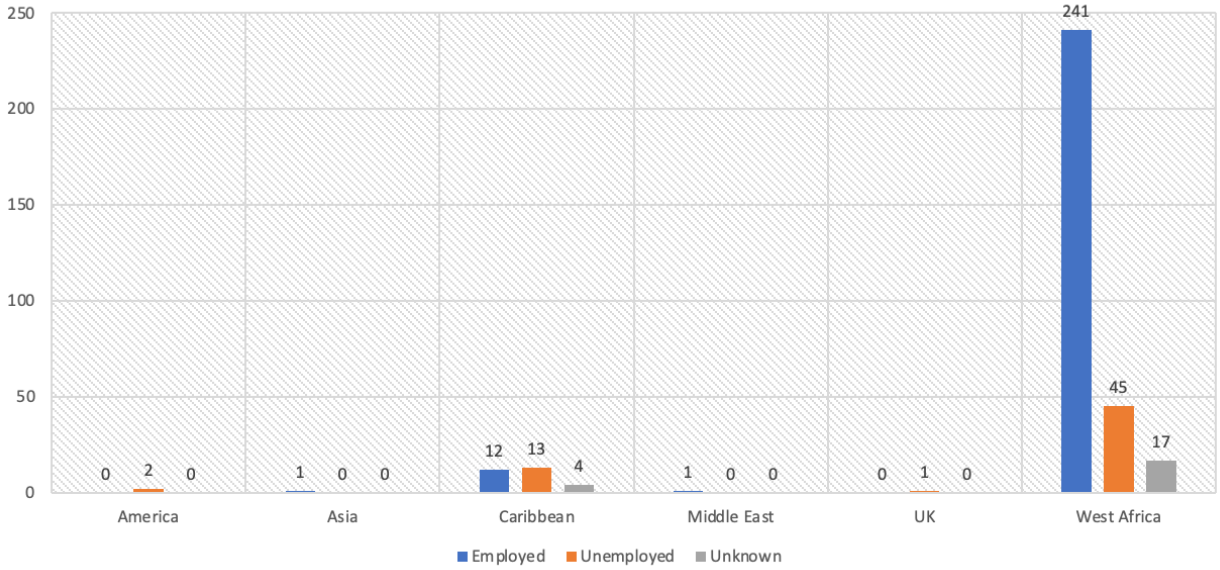
[84] 'Liverpool's Hostel for Africans', *West Africa [London],* 17/3/1919, p.13.
[85] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p.58; Frost, *Work and Community,* p.80.
[86] 'From Liverpool', *Workers' Dreadnought,* 23/5/1923.
[87] 'Other Matches', *Liverpool Echo,* 22/11/1930; The result was South Hill 4 - African Hostel 0.
[88] Belchem, *Before the Windrush*, p.41.

depression that hit trade and employment in the port hard.[89] Despite this, with its relatively easy accessibility from Liverpool the city's Caribbean seamen could be tempted to try their luck finding work in South Wales.

For the first time in 1921, the census included information about a person's employment status, helping to add further depth to our understanding of the post-war economic fortunes of black seamen. Historians have acknowledged that black seamen were hit particularly hard by both post-war economic depression and discrimination within a fiercely competitive labour market.[90] These factors led to substantial unemployment among black seamen in British ports. For example, in Liverpool in 1919 76% of black seamen interviewed by police at their boarding houses were unemployed.[91] The situation was similarly bleak in Cardiff where roughly 1200 black seamen were unemployed in the port surviving on government support of 29s a week, a gross reduction after having been earning as much as £15 a month during the war.[92] With boarding houses charging 14s a week it left very little for these men to survive on. By 1921 the situation appeared to have improved considerably for Liverpool's black population with 76% of black seamen residing in the city's boarding houses now listed in employment. However, on closer inspection, it can be seen that this turn in fortune only really affected one of the two groups of this study: West Africans. In the city, 241 of 255 employed seamen in the city were West African and the majority from Sierra Leone. Importantly, Elder Dempster employed over 90% of these men which further highlighted the dependence West African seamen had on the company. In contrast only 41% of the relatively small number of Caribbean seamen remaining in the city were listed as employed in the census (see Table 5.1).

[89] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.37.
[90] Frost, 'Racism, Work and Unemployment', p.27.
[91] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.
[92] Little, p.57.

Table 5.1 - Employment Status of Seamen Residing in Black Seamen's Boarding Houses in Liverpool, 1921

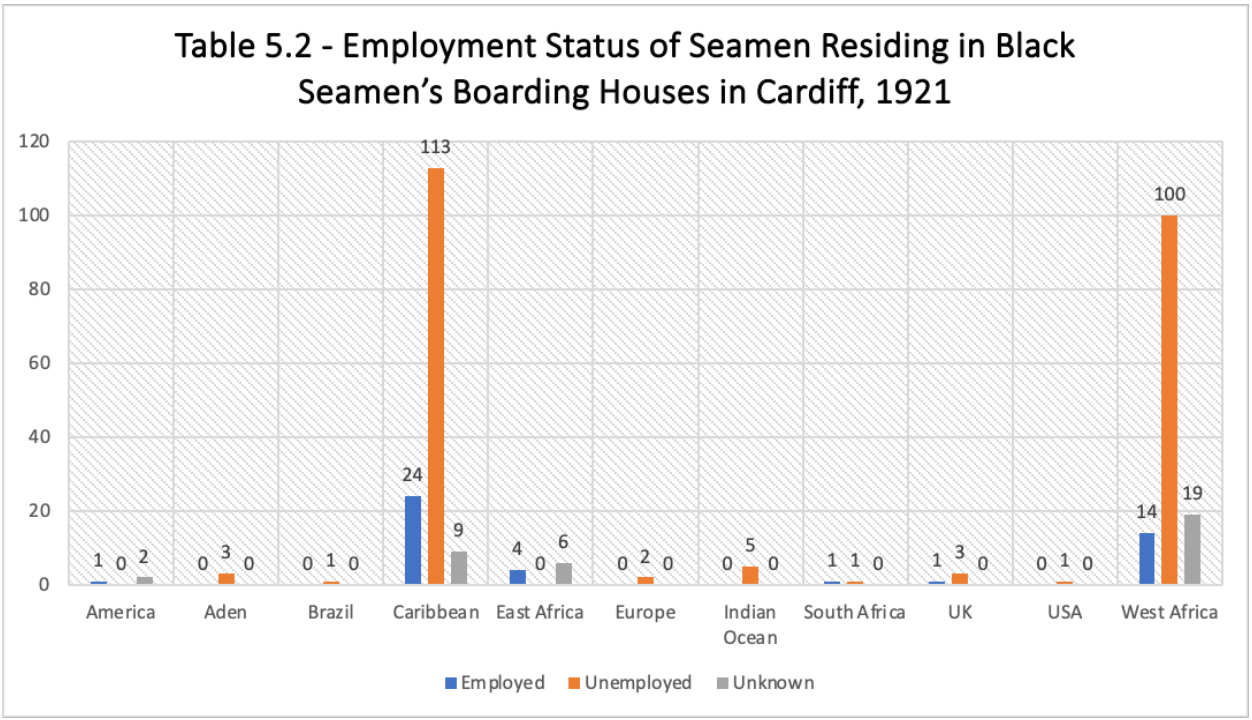


Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).

Unlike Liverpool, the employment situation for black seamen in Cardiff by 1921 remained poor. Unemployment was endemic in the port and two thirds of Caribbean and West African seamen resident in black seamen's boarding houses in the city remained out of work. (see Table 5.2) The dramatic discrepancy between the two ports in the fortunes of black seamen highlights the disparity in the fortunes of the different aspects of maritime trade upon which they depended. In the early 1920s, as attempts to restore merchant tonnage to pre-war conditions failed in the face of competition from cheaper foreign shipping, a depression hit British maritime trade. Tramp shipping in particular was hit hard as the market for heavy goods moved from tramp to liner shipping companies that were deemed more reliable.[93] The employment figures from the 1921 census reflect that Liverpool as a liner port for companies such as Elder Dempster and John Holt had seen its labour force benefit from this change at the expense of Cardiff's tramp crews. The economy of Cardiff had been severely affected by the First World War and the city never recovered from the disruption to the coal export trade on which it relied. In 1914, its port shipped

[93] Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice',* p.37.

10.3 million tons of coal, however, by 1930 its coal exports had halved and were running at under 5 million tons.[94]



Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).

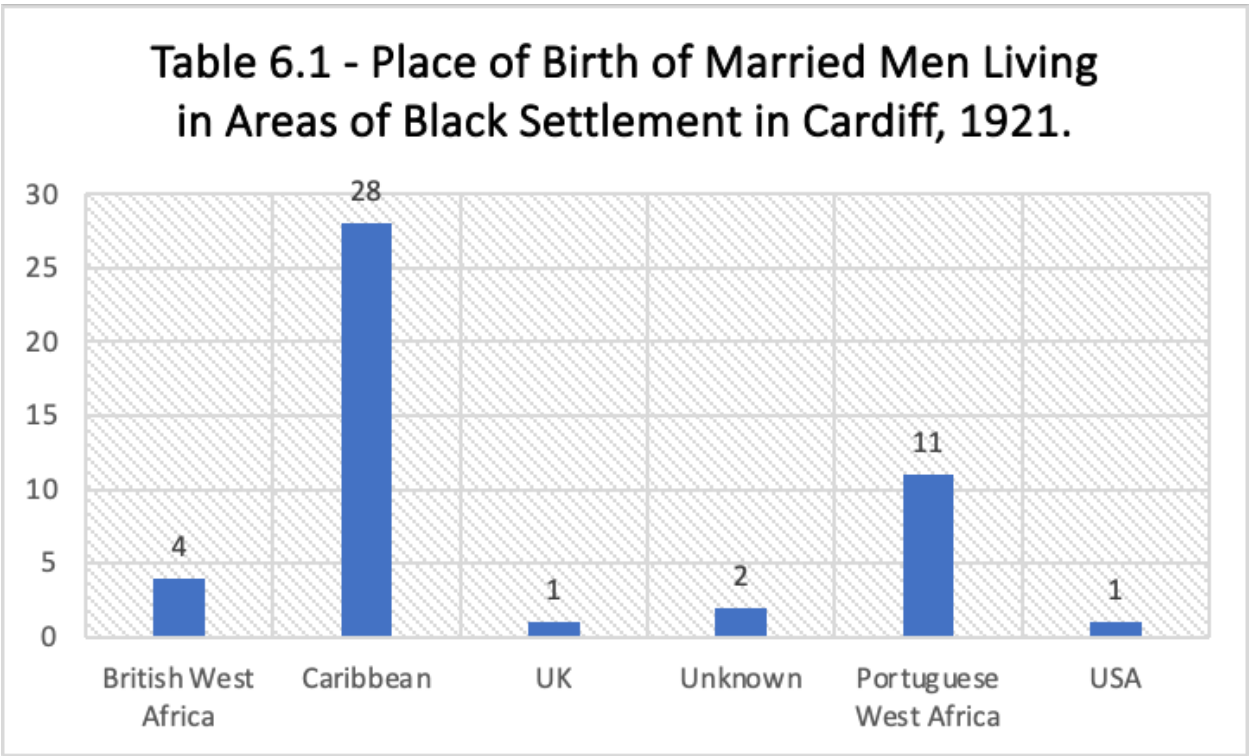
The 1921 census not only reveals the increase in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in Britain but it also highlights the significant growth in the settled black population in both Cardiff and Liverpool that had taken place since the First World War. In Cardiff, this research has identified forty-seven properties as family homes of seamen originally from the Caribbean and West Africa in the streets surrounding Loudoun Square (see Map 11). While some of these men had moved into shore-based professions, nearly 80% still relied on maritime work to make a living. All these men would have passed through the conduit of the seamen's boarding house, and the fact they settled close by is significant. Boarding house keepers remained influential figures in these early settlements. Through their trade, they would have key insight into the local social and economic climate with an intimate knowledge of the workings of the local state and the ebb and flow of the shipping industry. The seamen's boarding house itself also continued to act as a key social space for black seamen. Many operated as

[94] M. J. Daunton, *Coal Metropolis, Cardiff 1870–1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p .226.

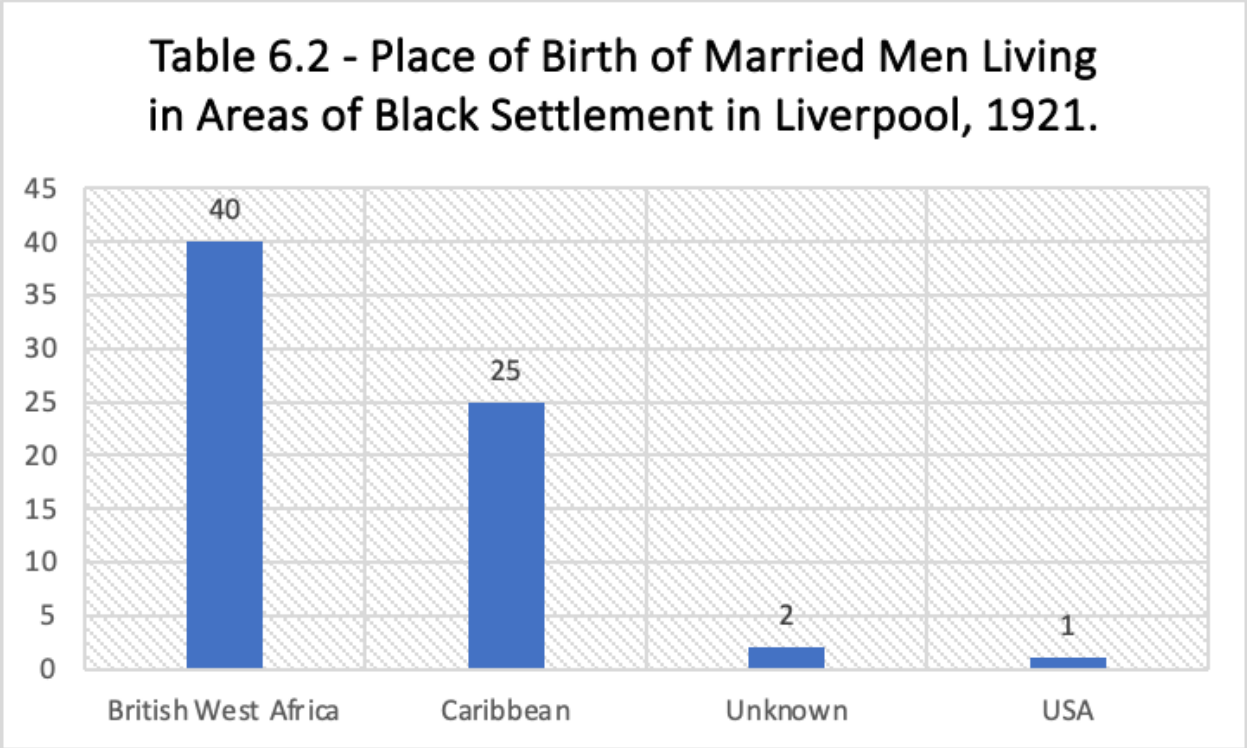
refreshment shops where men could meet, socialise, and buy a cup of tea or something to eat, and both the Phenis' boarding house at 12 South Church Street, and John Joseph Pervoe's, now at No.6 North Church Street, provided these services. Running such a social hub was not limited to the boarders in their direct care but rather would have supported the needs of a wider community. The seamen's boarding house could also be the centre of more illicit social activities. In 1914, Pervoe was arrested and fined £50 for running an illegal betting operation from his boarding house.[95] Once settled, this social aspect of the boarding houses would also explain the desire of black seamen to remain close. The constant flow of black seamen in and out of the nearby boarding houses would also be a vital source of news and information, keeping settled migrants connected with their homeland.

Liverpool, as in Cardiff, saw a similar substantial increase in its settled population due to the First World War. This research has identified fifty-eight families of black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa, in 1921, clustered in the streets surrounding seamen's boarding houses across both of the main areas of black settlement around Great George Square and South of Parliament Street, (see Map 13.1, 13.2) with a further ten in the north-eastern part of the South End around Brownlow Hill and the area known as the Georgian Quarter. Thirty-eight of these men were married to local Liverpool-born women with a further eleven born in areas surrounding the city in the North-West of England. Similarly, over half of black seamen in Cardiff were married to women either born in the city or the immediate surrounding area of South Wales. The 1921 census also reveals insights into the demographics of settled black seamen in Cardiff that reflected the diversity of the transient population. While predominantly Caribbean it is also worth noting that among settled West Africans in the city, those from Portuguese West Africa outnumbered those from British West Africa (see Table 6.1). This settlement was facilitated by the long established presence of Portuguese West African boarding houses in the city, such as those run by Peter Soares who had operated several seamen's boarding houses in the area since 1903.[96] In Liverpool, while West Africans dominated the transient presence, the settled presence was more nuanced with 36% of settled married men in the city from the Caribbean to 58% from West Africa (see Table 6.2).

[95] 'Coloured Man As Bookmaker', *Western Mail,* 27/6/1914.
[96] GA, DCONC/7/5/3, Seamen's Lodging houses: Files for Registration Numbers 1-16, 1909–1964, 'Elizabeth Soares'.



Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).



Source: 1921 Census (accessed via https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census).

The living arrangements of married couples in both cities speaks to the complexity of these multiethnic neighbourhoods. While Cardiff sees the majority of married couples residing in single occupancy residences, Liverpool returns a much higher proportion of shared housing. Though it appears common for married couples in the city to share with only one or two others there are examples of as many as five married couples sharing one property. For example, 160 Mill Street sees five married couples and two single men living at the address, while another five married couples share 4 Hardy Street, with three of these families also having young children. Both these properties are distinctly mixed with the husbands coming originally from both the Caribbean and West Africa all living together. This highlights the substantially mixed nature of settled men in areas of black settlement in Liverpool despite the dominance of West Africans in the city. Other properties again act as a microcosm and reflected the wider melting pot of multiethnic sailortown neighbourhoods in the 1920s in which areas of black settlement were located. A prime example of this was 79 Mill Street that was home to a mix of men from the Caribbean, West African, Metropolitan Britain as well as from the Middle East and their spouses living together. The lack of fully segregated living identified in the seamen's boarding house was reflected in the living arrangements of settled black seamen and their families.

Through an investigation of 1921 census returns, this research has identified a number of mixed married couples living in established seamen's boarding houses. At least five boarding houses in Liverpool and one in Cardiff, were housing married couples, some with children, alongside their regular seamen boarders. There could be two reasons for this. Firstly, this arrangement indicates a certain pragmatism on the part of these boarding house keepers. As noted, due to the poor economic climate and repatriation, there were fewer transient seamen visiting British ports meaning it was harder for keepers to keep their boarding houses full. It would make financial sense to rent out empty beds or rooms to married couples in need of accommodation. Margaret Lawrence at 18 Upper Pitt Street appears to be pragmatic in this way. In 1921, she rented beds in her boarding house to Jeremiah Anderson from Jamaica and James Clarke originally from Barbados together with their metropolitan-born wives. While there is no clear stipulation in the Liverpool byelaws as to renting beds or rooms to married couples, in Cardiff keepers were legally allowed to offer a single bed to a married couple and maximum of one child.[97] Secondly, mixed couples faced a certain amount of discrimination in the housing market.

[97] TNA, MT 9/4377, Bye-Laws as to Seamen's Lodging Houses, 1925, p.11.

Often being forced to pay more for poorer quality housing.[98] A family struggling financially and not in the position to meet weekly rental costs may turn to the seaman's boarding house. An informal arrangement with a sympathetic landlord for as short or as long a time as a family required would provide a pragmatic solution for both parties. This arrangement would also allow the husband to utilise the vital services that the boarding house keeper usually provided to transient black seamen; namely credit and access to the keeper's connections in the labour market, in order to find work. In return the keeper would get to claim a valuable advance note. Married couples relying on and residing in seamen's boarding houses highlight that the transition from transient to settled migrant was not always straightforward for black seamen. Even as black seamen's circumstances became characterised by a greater degree of permanency in Britain through relationships and marriage the turbulent nature of trade and the port economy in the early interwar years meant their position was far from secure. In a very practical way, the seamen's boarding house remained a cornerstone supporting black seamen's settlement.

Women, alongside the seamen's boarding house, were at the core of early black settlements in British ports, not only through their personal relationships, but also professionally, as boarding house keepers. These relationships and marriages between black seamen and local white women played a major role in the growth of settlement in British port cities. Due to the gendered nature of maritime work, unions between black men and white women were most common. Black men would continue to outnumber black and mixed-heritage women within areas of black settlements well into the first half of the twentieth century.[99] Relationships and marriages between black seamen and white women were often met with hostility and resistance especially in the press. One outside observer in Cardiff described his visit to Butetown in language that would become common throughout the early twentieth century:

> I can only say that the conclusion I have arrived at, as a result of "things seen" is that black people by themselves and white people by themselves in this quarter may furnish acceptable excuses for their manners and their methods, but for the

[98] Laura Tabili, 'Women "of a Very Low Type": Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain', in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. by Laura Levine Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.180.

[99] Diane Frost, 'The Maligned, The Despised and the Ostracised: Working-Class White Women, Interracial Relationships and Colonial Ideologies in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Liverpool', in *The Empire in One City? Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past*, ed. by Sheryllynne Haggerty, Anthony Webster, and Nicholas J. White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p.151.

> black and white domestic "mixing" there can be nothing but condemnation. There is a state of things in the relationship of the black man and the white woman which makes not only socially and morally, but physically, for evil.[100]

The press even went as far as to blame these relationships as instigators of conflict between the black and white populations in Britain's port cities, a theory much adhered to in the wake of the 1919 ethnic riots.[101] However, newspapers and other observers overstate that there was a persistent base level animosity between black seamen and their white neighbours as men from the Caribbean and West Africa had been living in dockside neighbourhoods in increasing numbers from the early twentieth century and while examples of conflict between white and black residents existed in the past they were not as common as the press made out. Historians have argued that outside observer's focus on, and negativity towards, relationships between black seamen and white women was so acute because they viewed them as a threat to the racial and gender barriers that upheld British Imperial power.[102] In reality, as Lucy Bland contends, white women themselves did not appear to view their relationships with black men as counter-intuitive or unnatural.[103] Rather than creating conflict, Laura Tabili argues that women were pivotal in promoting cohesion in the multiethnic space of sailortown in which areas of black settlement grew and were a source of order and stability bridging the ethnic and cultural boundaries between white and black residents.[104] Beyond these personal relationships, women as boarding house keepers, whether married, widowed or single, provided an invaluable level of professional support for black seamen in Britain as settlement developed and were as pivotal in this role as their settled compatriots from the Caribbean and West Africa.

Women had been prominent as seamen's boarding house keepers from the earliest point of black migration to British port cities as Ann Jones' boarding house for West African seamen in Liverpool in 1851 serves to illustrate. As was discussed in Chapter One, male boarding house keepers from the Caribbean and West Africa being both ex-seamen and from a shared ethnic and cultural background were able to provide black seamen with the familiarity of home and a

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[100] 'Human Wales-XV', *Western Mail*, 10/7/1907.
[101] Race Riots: The Root Cause, *Daily Herald,* 13/6/1919; 'Black and White Liverpool', *The Times,* 10/6/1919.
[102] Tabili, 'Women "of a Very Low Type"', p.183.
[103] Lucy Bland. 'White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War', *Gender & History*, 17 (2005), p.37.
[104] Tabili, 'Women "of a Very Low Type"', p.183.

shared understanding of their experiences of work and migration. Female boarding house keepers provided a different but equally important role by offering the services traditionally associated with the wife in working-class families; keeping a home, providing food and offering a general air of domesticity. However, in the context of this relationship women were not in a subordinate position, but rather a position of power, not least by having some control over black seamen's entry into the labour market, as well as aiding the navigation of the social space of sailortown for new and returning migrants. Furthermore, it was only through women's amenability to establishing personal relationships that black seamen could set up a home and take up domicile in Britain, which as mentioned earlier, was vital to both improved wages and settlement. Tabili argues that women's position within the multiethnic space of dockside neighbourhoods both as wives and tradeswomen was so powerful it effectively made them gatekeepers for migrants into British society.[105] When Mohammed Sali from Aden wished to establish a seamen's boarding house for his compatriots in Cardiff in 1921, he was unable to speak English and enlisted the help of an English woman to assist him.[106] The exact nature of their relationship is unknown but whether personal or purely a business arrangement, without this help Sali would not have been able to navigate the necessary bureaucracy needed to establish his trade.

Women who married or maintained relationships with black seamen unfairly gained a reputation as being of a 'very low type' and of poor character in the eyes of the authorities and other outside observers.[107] Similarly, the landlady had historically suffered from a poor reputation, having been viewed in a negative light as far back as the eighteenth century. A pervasive view that Gillian Williamson blames on both gender and class prejudice, compounded by a cultural connection between lodging and sex.[108] However, the women who ran seamen's boarding houses, many of whom were also married to black seamen, undermined this dual stigmatisation. For example, in Cardiff, as part of the procedure required to attain a licence the applicant needed to obtain a letter from both the local health committee and the police that

[105] Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841–1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.10.
[106] GA, DCONC/7/5/2, Seamen's Lodging Houses: Files for Registration Numbers 41-60, 64, 81-102 and Five Unnumbered, 1909–1964, 'Mohammed Sali'.
[107] TNA, HO 45/12314, 'E.N Cooper to Home Office', 4/1/1926; LRO, 352.26 FLE, M.E Fletcher, *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports* (Liverpool: Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children, 1930), pp.20-22.
[108] Gillian Williamson, 'The Georgian Landlady: Surrogate Mother, Love Interest or Hard-Nosed Businesswoman?', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44 (2021), p.383-387.

attested that they were ‘a fit and proper person’ of excellent character before one would be issued.[109]

In addressing the question how and why did local women end up running boarding houses for black seamen, as mentioned previously the majority of women who chose this profession were married to men from either the Caribbean and West Africa. They either ran the business concurrently with their spouse or operated it while their husbands were away. Women also became keepers of Caribbean and West African boarding houses through a loophole in the licensing procedures. Cardiff local authorities admitted that the criteria for applying for a licence to run a seamen’s boarding house were rather elastic and open to manipulation. It was not an uncommon practice for black seamen wishing to open a boarding house to encourage their wives to apply for a licence. Recently arrived migrants often had their application denied due to lack of information available to the authorities or they simply may fail to meet the necessary criteria, whereas the authorities looked on their metropolitan-born wives more favourably.[110] Widowed women having built a relationship and understanding exhibited a certain pragmatism and continued to operate boarding houses for black seamen after their husbands had passed away. Several of these women were stalwarts of areas of black settlements for many years; women such as Sarah Phenis at 12 South Church Street and Elizabeth Soares who took over 23/24 Angelina Street when her West African husband Peter passed away suddenly in 1922.[111]

As Annie Pablo, a prominent Liverpool boarding house keeper, discovered taking over the business was not always straightforward. Annie’s husband, Francisco, was imprisoned in 1905 and she subsequently took over responsibility of their boarding house at 123 Stanhope Street. Francisco died a year later leaving Annie in sole charge of the business. However, the following year, Annie was convicted of unlawfully supplying seamen to ships and charging her boarders a fee for non-existent berths that left men stranded. For these offences she was fined £33 10s.[112] Not only could this financial penalty have resulted in her business collapsing, if she gained a reputation for bad practices among seamen, she would struggle to attract boarders to her establishment. Despite this conviction Annie managed to retain her licence and rebuild her reputation and by 1919 she was one of the more successful boarding house keepers in

[109] GA, DCONC/1/6, Reports of the Chief Constable to the Watch Committee,1918–1921, pp.161-163.
[110] *ibid.*
[111] GA, DCONC/7/5/3 - Seamen's Lodging Houses: Files for Registration Numbers 1-16, 1909–1964, ‘Elizabeth Soares’.
[112] ‘Liverpool Lady’s Enterprise’, *Liverpool Daily Post* 5/10/1907.

Liverpool. As with Uriah Erksine in Cardiff, Pablo was pragmatic and experienced enough to take advantage of the boom in wartime shipping and the subsequent increase in black seamen on British ships opening a second boarding house at 7 Mill Street. Unfortunately, this second business could not withstand the economic downturn that followed the war and by 1921 it had closed. However, 123 Stanhope Street remained a popular choice among West African seamen and continued to be well utilised. The fortunes of Annie Pablo shows that women were just as tenacious in the cut-throat boarding house trade as men.

Another striking example of single women turning to the seamen's boarding house trade is Liverpool born Mary Laverty who was left the sole breadwinner after both her parents were jailed in 1911.[113] With her four younger siblings to care for aged between 1 and 15 years old, the 18 year old Laverty operated a boarding house for West African seamen at 80/82 Warwick Street. It is through this business that she met her future husband Issac Mensah, originally from Sekondi in the Gold Coast who had been working casually as a dock labourer while boarding with Laverty in 1911. They eventually married in 1913 and by 1921 they ran a West African boarding house together at 58 Caryl Street. As with Edith Pervoe and her husband this is a further example of the seamen's boarding house providing a conduit through which black seamen could meet local women and offering a space where relationships could develop.

1921 saw a significant increase in the number of female boarding house keepers, the once male dominated trade now saw near parity of male and female keepers in Cardiff. However, in Liverpool more women could be found running boarding houses for black seamen than men. This suggests a significant dynamic shift in early black settlements with women playing a more prominent and visible role. As with black seamen, the First World War saw women fill numerous labour roles vacated by men called up for war service and as Lucy Bland notes by the end of the war 'had proved their ability, flexibility and resourcefulness'.[114] Local women, rather than a fellow migrant from the Caribbean or West Africa were now more often than not the initial point of contact for black seamen on arrival in Britain. With many of these women being either married to black men or living and working in an area of particularly dense black settlement may have helped them develop a certain amount of cultural understanding. The rise in female boarding house keepers in both Cardiff and Liverpool during the war suggests they stepped into this important trade also. As the war went on, running a boarding house became an increasingly

[113] 'Assault on Police', *Liverpool Daily Pos*t, 10/1/1911.
[114] Bland, pp.30-31.

more lucrative business as there was not only an increase in seamen but they were regularly employed and much better paid. This increase in pay and job prospects could explain this gender shift. The prospect of high wages enticing black seaman's boarding house keepers who had settled in British ports back to sea leaving their wives in charge meaning they could maximise their earning power. Conversely the economic downturn of the immediate post-war years would suggest that families needed to continue to diversify their income in order to stay afloat with men continuing to go to sea when they could and women running the boarding house back home. For some women working or running a boarding house was one of the few options of employment open to them within sailortown. Whereas men who struggled to find work on land always had the option of going to sea, women had no such options. Often working in a boarding house was the only opportunity available to them.[115] Having established themselves so prominently in the trade women were perhaps unwilling to give up their position so easily. The importance and centrality of women to both areas of black settlement and the seamen's boarding house trade cannot be underestimated.

London

The city of London has so far been noticeably absent from this chapter. Like Liverpool, the city saw one of the earliest established seamen's boarding houses for black seamen. Kru seamen from West Africa boarded at a seamen's boarding house on the West India Dock Road in Stepney. Known as 'Green's Home', this boarding house operated its trade between 1854 and 1873.[116] However, despite this early black presence London presents unique challenges to the historian. The sheer size and sprawl of the city's vast docklands meant that it was not possible to take the same methodological approach to researching the capital as the two other, more compact cities. Due to the time constraints under which this research was undertaken, it was not possible to analyse the enormous amount of census data available for London to the same extent and depth as with Liverpool and Cardiff. Future work conducted by this researcher or others will hopefully seek to apply the methodological approach of this thesis using the seamen's boarding house with the aim of continuing to build on and deepen our understanding of migration and settlement growth in London. Nonetheless, by looking at a small area of known

[115] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, 'Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff', 8/1/1929, p.7.
[116] Michael Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Cape, 1955), p.27.

black settlement around the Victoria Dock Road in Canning Town, this research has been able to uncover similar patterns of permanent settlement developing around the seamen's boarding house in London. Scholars have traced London's black presence back to at least the sixteenth century, and by the early eighteenth century, a noticeable resident population was visible in and around the borough of Stepney, part of the historical sailortown district. Two areas in particular, Limehouse and Bow were identified as the heart of London's black settlement until the mid-twentieth century.[117] However by the late nineteenth century another small area of black settlement consisting mainly of Caribbean seamen grew up further east around Canning Town.[118] By 1921, Victoria Dock Road and the surrounding streets were the focal point of this settlement. This research has identified a small number of black semen's boarding houses, five in total, catering to predominantly Caribbean seamen, with three on Victoria Dock Road itself and a further two on Crown Street that was set just behind it. As with Liverpool and Cardiff these boarding houses are surrounded by a small but distinct presence of family homes of black seamen married to local women. As with the other cities, while the area around Canning Town had a strong black presence it was never wholly segregated. Indeed, contemporary local residents nicknamed Crown Street 'Draughtboard Alley' due to its broad mix of white and black residents.[119] The work of social investigator Nancie Sharpe supports this limited data set. Her social survey of 1933 confirms that the settlement patterns identified in this research for both Cardiff and Liverpool also apply to London. Her map, displaying the distribution of black working-class families in London, highlights a broad presence that touches nearly every borough of the city (see Figure 2). Significantly, the densest concentration of black settlement can be seen in the traditional sailortown districts of East London beginning in Stepney and following the River Thames east through Poplar to Canning Town. Importantly, even in London's vast docklands, the seamen's boarding house can be seen sitting at the centre of these areas of black settlement.[120] Sharpe's data and maps will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

[117] Jenkinson, *Black 1919,* p.15.
[118] Banton, p.27.
[119] Howard Bloch, 'Black People in Canning Town and Custom House between the Wars', *Association for the Study of African, Caribbean and Asian Culture and History in Britain*, 14 (1996), p.5.
[120] Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).

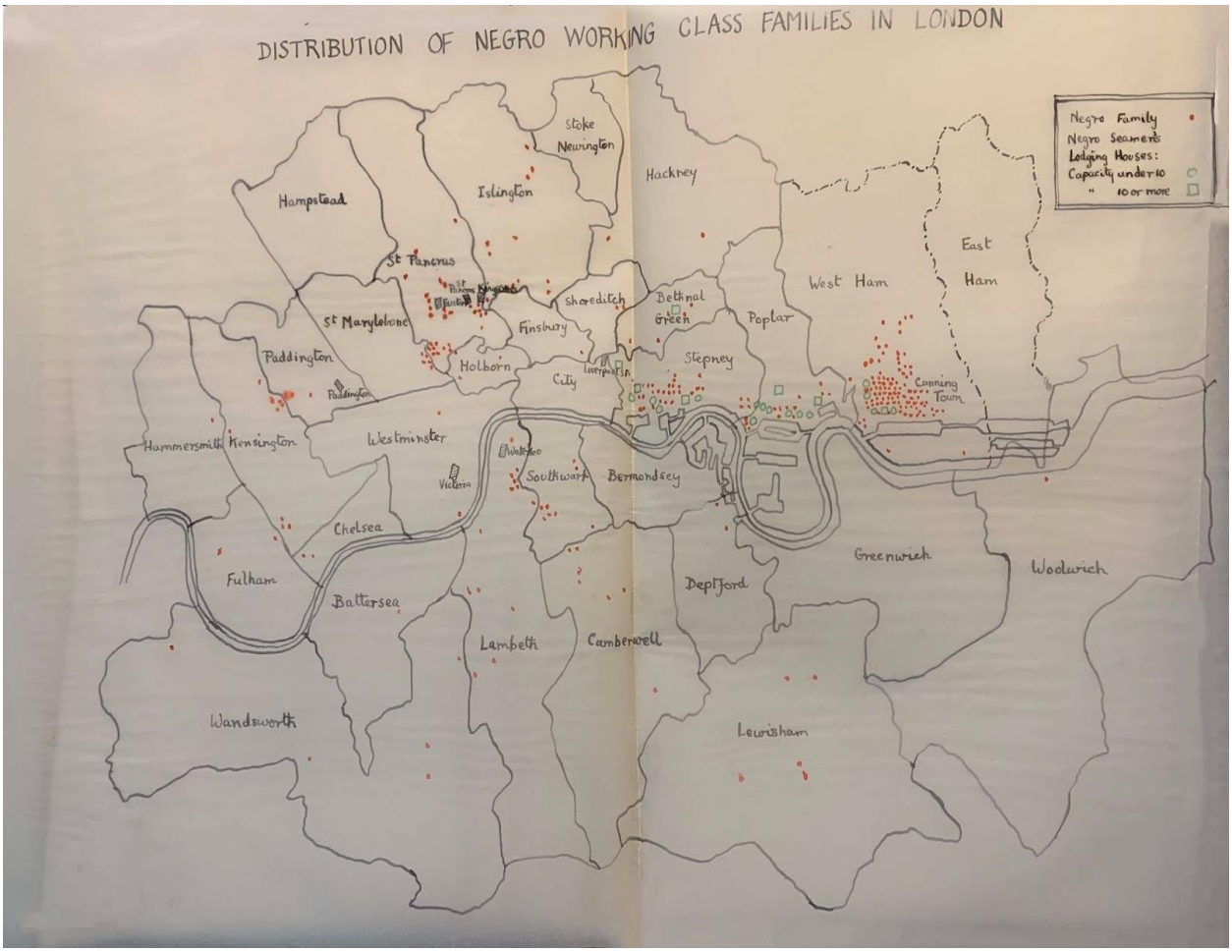

Figure 2: Distribution of working-class families with a black head of household in London (Source: Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).

Conclusion

This chapter set out to add depth to the historical understanding of the growth and development of areas of black settlement in the British port cities of Cardiff and Liverpool from the late nineteenth-century through to 1921. Through the prism of the seamen's boarding house, it has provided a qualitative approach that allows for a richer insight into the understanding of settlement growth and the size of the black population in Britain during this period. Furthermore, it has amplified and added detail to the knowledge of demographics within these areas of black settlement. From a handful of seamen's boarding houses in the nineteenth century, the trade grew to accommodate a significant presence of black seamen in British ports by the end of the First World War. While the number of seamen's boarding houses and the size of Britain's black population may have reached a peak as a result of the world conflict, this chapter shows that

areas of black settlement and the dynamics that would come to define them were already well-established by 1911. The seamen's boarding house presented a focal point for black seamen as they settled. A significant number of family homes of Caribbean and West African men married to local white women can be observed clustered around established seamen's boarding houses as they continued to provide a vital social space within the multiethnic space of sailortown for settled migrants. Moreover, by this period metropolitan-born Britons of mixed-heritage made up an important demographic group within areas of black settlement and were already an active part of the social and economic lives of these cities. The First World War may have expanded these settlements but post-war migrants from the Caribbean and West Africa arrived into areas already rich with a long and diverse black presence that had its genesis in the seamen's boarding house.

Importantly, the prominence in both cities of a significant number of mixed seamen's boarding houses, as well as Caribbean boarding house keepers running West African boarding houses and vice versa, provides a valuable insight into the relationships and social dynamics between these two groups. Whilst such were often viewed as being antagonistic, the fact that Caribbean and West African seamen can be seen regularly boarding together, and that, as keepers belonging to one ethnic group they would, through the boarding house, provide social and economic services for members of another, suggests that, as these men navigated the social space of Britain's port cities, relationships between them were defined more by cooperation than conflict. The presence of other ethnic groups in predominantly black seamen's boarding houses also illustrates the complexity of relationships, not only within these spaces, but also in the wider multiethnic space of sailortown. The seamen's boarding house exposes the fact that conflict and cooperation amongst ethnic groups was by no means mutually exclusive.

Finally, local white and mixed-heritage women both professionally as boarding house keepers and personally as wives and partners, were shown to play a vital role in the maintenance and development of early black settlement in Britain. As wives to black seamen, white and mixed-heritage women helped sustain black settlement, facilitating the establishment of domicile in the metropole and playing an important role in the transition from transient to settled migrant. However, this transition was not always simple or straightforward as couples faced harsh economic and social conditions. Instances of married couples continuing to live in boarding houses in both cities underlines its continued importance as a support system. While women had a long tradition of running seamen's boarding houses for black seamen, as areas of black

settlement grew and developed, they took on this role in increasing numbers. In this dual role, women found themselves important gatekeepers into British society, and by 1921 Caribbean and West African seamen were just as likely to be staying in a boarding house run by a local metropolitan-born female keeper as one of their compatriots.

Chapter Three

Attack on Settlement: The 1919 Ethnic Riots, Repatriation and the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925

Introduction

This chapter explores the turbulent years faced by Britain's black population and the seamen's boarding house in the aftermath of the First World War. Britain's Caribbean and West African presence having grown considerably between 1914–1918 became the focus of increased antagonism that, as the country recalibrated after conflict, expressed itself on both a social and political level. The year 1919 saw a series of ethnic riots break out in British port cities as white Britons attacked their black neighbours and laid siege to the areas in which they had settled. In response to this ethnic violence both state and local government began to view black and other non-white people in Britain as a 'problem' in need of solving. When attempts at removing Britain's black population through voluntary repatriation schemes proved unsuccessful, the British government turned to legislation in the form of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925 that sought to prevent further black migration and settlement altogether. By viewing these events through the prominent role played by the seamen's boarding house, this chapter will provide a more in-depth examination of the challenges faced by Britain's interwar black population, both transient and settled, together with the effect that these events had on the growth and development of areas of black settlement in port cities. It will also explore the changing position of the seamen's boarding house within areas of black settlement. While the boarding house remained central to black settlement in Britain, the challenging socio-economic environment within Britain's port cities throughout the 1920s would see the trade and its keeper face increasing pressures that would have significant impact on their power and influence.

The 1919 Ethnic Riots and the Seamen's Boarding House

Between January and August 1919, ethnic riots rocked major port cities throughout Britain. Violence broke out first in Glasgow and soon spread to South Shields, Salford, Hull, London, Newport, Barry, with some of the worst violence affecting Liverpool and Cardiff. The myriad of social and economic reasons that led white working-class Britons to turn on their black

neighbours has been covered extensively within the historiography of early black British history. Jacqueline Jenkinson's authoritative account *Black 1919* remains the definitive source explaining how a perfect storm of mass demobilisation, economic downturn and a worsening unemployment situation left poor and overcrowded sailortown neighbourhoods ripe for unrest.[1] Earlier scholarship from Neil Evans alongside Roy May and Robin Cohen provides further detailed research specific to individual port cities. In the case of the former, Cardiff, and the latter's, Liverpool.[2] In London, Liverpool and Cardiff, the seamen's boarding house played an important role during the riots as both a place of refuge for black men and their families, and also their prominence and place at the heart of areas of black settlement led to them becoming conspicuous targets for white rioters looking to unsettle black Britons.

Black seamen's boarding houses have had a history of being targeted during periods of violence motivated by ethnic differences. In 1879, a dispute between black and Greek seamen in Cardiff spilled over into violence and a large group of Greek seamen attacked the boarding house run by Emmanuel Phenis, throwing bricks through the windows, one of which narrowly missed Phenis' sleeping child.[3] In the multiethnic and multinational milieu of sailortown, because the seamen's boarding house trade was, by this period, well-established and well-known to both operate and provide housing along national and ethnic lines, this resulted in them being able to be used by one group to clearly identify and target another; in this case, for attack during a dispute. Furthermore, seamen, and in particular foreign seamen, would have understood how important the boarding house would have been to black seamen in Cardiff as a cultural and private space maximising the impact of this attack. Another example of the targeting of black seamen's boarding houses occurred during the First World War in London. In 1917, a white crowd numbering one thousand attacked between a dozen and twenty black seamen's boarding houses and homes in the area around Victoria Dock Road in Canning Town; an area that had become increasingly associated with black settlement, and where significant numbers of Caribbean and West African seamen were known to live. The reasons behind this sudden explosion in violence remain opaque. The police blamed black seamen's relationships with local white women as the reason for violence and that 'the blacks were getting a little too big'.[4]

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[1] Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), see Chapter One, 'The Wider Context of the Seaport Riots' pp.38-71.
[2] Neil Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots of 1919', *Llafur*, 3 (1980), pp.5-29; Roy May, and Robin Cohen, 'The Interaction Between Race and Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919', *Race & Class*, 16 (1974), pp.111-126.
[3] 'Foreign Sailors at Cardiff', *South Wales Daily News,* 15/2/1879.
[4] 'Tidal Basin - Baiting Black Men', *The Boro' of West Ham, East Ham and Stratford Express,* 7/7/1917.

Relationships between black men and white women have often been cited by both contemporary sources and historians as a catalyst for conflict.[5]

An acute housing shortage in Britain's dockside neighbourhoods further compounded the growing discontent that surrounded the employment situation in 1919. For example, in Cardiff, between 1915 and 1918 half as many houses were built in the city as were built in a normal year. By 1919, there was such a shortage that the city council estimated that three thousand houses would need to be built in the next three years to alleviate the problem.[6] This lack of sufficient housing increased the reliance both transient and settled Caribbean and West African seamen had on the seamen's boarding house as they remained a vital housing option. As the previous chapter explored, by 1921, increasing numbers of married couples were found to be residing in seamen's boarding houses. However, the economic situation was beginning to put the seamen's boarding house and its keeper under mounting financial pressure. During the war when employment had been high, large numbers of well-paid and regularly employed seamen were passing through the seamen's boarding houses of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. However, by 1919, the majority of black seamen found themselves without work. For example, in Liverpool, 76% of West African and Caribbean seamen in the city were now unemployed and near permanent residents in their boarding houses. It fell to the boarding house keeper to support them, extending ever greater lines of credit to their boarders.[7] With the employment situation remaining bleak, boarding house keepers stood little chance of seeing any sort of return on their investment. The progressively more tenuous position of seamen's boarding houses corresponded with a deepening dependency on them by increasingly more vulnerable black seamen in British port cities.

As spring turned to summer, the growing febrile atmosphere in London, Liverpool and Cardiff was close to exploding, and it was a West African seamen's boarding house that found itself at the centre of the first spark of violence in South Wales. Late in the evening of 6 June 1919 in Newport, another port city about 40 km to the east of Cardiff, a confrontation between a group of white men and West African seamen came to blows after it was alleged that one of the seamen had made an offensive remark to a white woman. Following an initial melee, the black seamen

[5] Race Riots: The Root Cause, *Daily Herald,* 13/6/1919; 'Black and White Liverpool', *The Times,* 10/6/1919.
[6] Evans, *The South Wales Race Riots,* p.13.
[7] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/19.

retreated to their seamen's boarding house run by Sierra Leonean keeper, John Davies, at 3/4 George Street. Soon a crowd of as many as five thousand had gathered in George Street and, in the ensuing violence, during which stones were thrown and pistol shots fired, the boarding house came under direct attack with the rioters smashing all the windows and doors. As a result, the police arrested twenty-two men altogether, of which twenty were black seamen and only two white men. After they were taken away the rioting crowd stormed the house removing furniture, clothes and any other personal belongings they could get their hands on before setting fire to them in the street.[8] This attack also illustrates how settled black residents and their families quickly became entangled in episodes of violence. Like many boarding house keepers, Davies lived on the premises with his young family and he witnessed not only his business, but his family home, entirely wrecked. The targeting and destruction of Davies' boarding house alongside other black properties in the area was to set a precedent. White rioters would come to employ the tactic of using the seamen's boarding house to similarly target black residents across the cities of Cardiff, Liverpool and London.

By Wednesday, 11 June 1919, the violence had spread from Newport to the port of Barry before reaching Cardiff later that evening. A group of black men and their white female companions, returning in cars from a day trip outside the city, attracted the attention of a large white crowd. The catalyst is unclear but soon a fight broke out between the two groups.[9] Neil Evans argues that within these vehicles, white men could see a 'seductive' explanation for all their problems. While they were experiencing economic hardship, black men were affluent enough to afford day trips out of the city while simultaneously usurping them in relationships with local women.[10] Furthermore, the local press was instrumental in promoting the narrative that black seamen had done well out of the war and were continuing to profit at the expense of demobilised white seamen. The Cardiff press painted the picture of the frivolous black seaman who would:

> spend his money freely in arraying himself in the "swankiest garb" he could obtain. Then with a flashily dressed white girl, it was his delight to parade the streets and visit houses of entertainment.[11]

[8] 'Newport Riot Renewed', *Western Mail*, 9/6/1919.
[9] GA, D/CONC/1/6, Chief Constable's Report to the Watch Committee on the 'Colour Riots', 9/7/1919, p.1.
[10] Evans, *The South Wales Race Riots,* p.15.
[11] Cause of Trouble', *Western Mail,* 13/6/1919.

Meanwhile, the Liverpool Courier stoked animosity by reporting that:

> large numbers of demobilised soldiers are unable to find work while the West Indian negroes […] are able to "swank" about in smart clothes on the proceeds of their industry.[12]

However, rather than denoting a profligacy and irresponsibility as the press contended, this behaviour, by black Caribbean seamen in particular, demonstrated a more important cultural aspect. The figure of the Black Dandy was well-established in the Caribbean. Historically, black colonised subjects had deployed fashionable attire in order to assert their independence and unique identity that allowed them to transcend the discipline and poverty of the plantation system.[13] Black seamen in Britain had long asserted a cultural identity in this way and many had commented on "the '"fashionable life" of the coloured seamen in Liverpool' and other cities since the mid-nineteenth century.[14] In reality the portrayal of black seamen as unusually affluent was far from the truth. While some still managed to find employment, very few West African and Caribbean men in Britain were in work by the summer of 1919. For example, the number of unemployed in the Cardiff dock area was thought to be around two thousand, with as many as one thousand of these being black and Arab seamen displaced by returning white seamen.[15]

After this initial confrontation, the violence in Cardiff soon spread, with the Chief Constable reporting that white crowds in the city 'rushed from point to point in a riotous manner and used violence towards any coloured man upon whom they could lay hands.'[16] It was at this point that the restrictive geography of Butetown and the Loudoun Square area in which black settlement had formed, provided a rare benefit to its residents. There were only two narrow bridges that acted as entryways and led into the area and in response to the growing violence, police drew up a cordon blocking these direct approaches at Canal Parade and Bute Street and, by doing so succeeded in denying access to Loudoun Square and its black residents.[17] While this police

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[12] 'Black and White', *Liverpool Courier*, 11/6/1919.
[13] Richard Smith, '"The Black Peril": Race, Masculinity and Migration During the First World War', in *Gendering Migration: Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-War Britain*, ed. by Louise Ryan and Wendy Webster (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), p.25.
[14] 'Liverpool Life', *Liverpool Mercury* 3/8/1857.
[15] Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots', p.12.
[16] GA, D/CONC/1/6, Chief Constable's Report to the Watch Committee on the 'Colour Riots', 9/7/1919, pp.1-.2.
[17] *ibid.*

cordon offered those inside some protection from the violence, West African and Caribbean men, as well as other non-white residents, unlucky enough to be caught outside came under attack by crowds numbering around two thousand with black property being a specific target. White rioters broke into and ransacked a house on Adam Street that belonged to a black man named Fisher, wrecking the interior before carrying out his furniture and bedding into the street and destroying it.[18] While the majority of West African and Caribbean seamen's boarding houses were in the Loudoun Square area, a handful were located outside of it, and they also found themselves targeted. At one of these, 253 Bute Street, a relatively large mixed boarding house, Jamaican fireman James Sargeant found himself confronted by white rioters who had forced their way into the property. Forced to flee, Sergeant fruitlessly sought safety in other houses as white rioters targeted and attacked those properties on Bute Street they knew housed black and Arab men. He eventually found refuge for several days in the Salvation Army Hall.[19] In Cardiff, a significant number of Arab and Somali residents had settled and resided in this northern dock area and, as a consequence, bore the brunt of the ethnically motivated violence. Rioters attacked and burned many Arab and Somali run shops, boarding houses and private residences. In order to escape the rioters, a Somali priest, Hadji Mahomet, at the insistence of his white wife, was forced to climb a drainpipe and hide on the roof of his home at 1 Homfrey Street to escape white rioters. It was from this vantage point that he was forced to watch as they reduced his home to a shell.[20]

The reaction of black residents behind the police cordon highlights a high level of organisation and cooperation not only between West African and Caribbean residents but also the diverse multiethnic population that had made Loudoun Square and the surrounding area their home. Transcending their own differences, groups of men, women and some children organised amongst themselves and kept a constant watch as they prepared to defend their homes against any sort of incursion, if it came to it.[21] At one point several hundred people had managed to push down Bute Street but again they were halted by police and only those that lived or worked in the docks were allowed to pass.[22] That white workers who lived and worked in the Butetown area were allowed to pass freely through the cordon with no violence ensuing speaks volumes. Many of the main instigators of violence came from other parts of the city or from outside the

[18] 'Racial Feud at Barry and Cardiff', *South Wales News,* 12/6/1919.
[19] TNA, CO 318/349, Statement of James Sargeant, 4/8/1919.
[20] 'Fatal Riots in Wales', *Western Mail,* 12/6/1919.
[21] 'A Walk Through "Negroland"', *South Wales News,* 14/6/1919.
[22] 'Renewed Riots at Cardiff', *South Wales News,* 13/6/1919.

metropolitan area entirely. A substantial portion of the crowd appeared to be young miners from neighbouring collier towns who came to Cardiff, as one newspaper phrased it, 'bent on fun.'[23] As explored in the last chapter, areas of black settlement in Cardiff had been firmly established since at least 1911 and white locals who lived and worked in the multiethnic space of Butetown did not appear to view their black neighbours with the same level of animosity as those who came from outside of the area. However, as a consequence of these neighbourhoods being long established and well-known meant that the white rioters coming into Cardiff from the surrounding areas knew precisely where black residents lived and where to target their violence. It was only due to a geographical quirk of the area that the majority of West African and Caribbean men and their families, together with their homes, businesses and seamen's boarding houses, escaped the worst of the violence in Cardiff. Their peers in other cities, much like their Arab and Somali neighbours in the north of Butetown, were less fortunate.

In Liverpool, the progression and spread of the violence, first in the Great George Square area of settlement then to the area of black settlement south of Parliament Street denotes two distinct phases of the riots in the city. What began as a local dispute between two competing and conflicting groups of seamen soon escalated into a broader outbreak of social unrest that saw some of the worst and most sustained attacks on black residents in Britain. There had been a growing friction in the city between black seamen and those from Scandinavia as it was felt by the former group of men that the latter were being given preferential treatment in employment at their expense.[24] Jamaican seaman, Thomas Archer, who was an eyewitness to the events that followed, explained how, on the 5 June 1919, black seamen, who were angry at a lack of police response to an attack the previous evening on West African seaman John Johnson, felt compelled to take matters into their own hands and confronted a group of Scandinavian seamen at a local pub on Bailey Street in the Great George Square area of black settlement.[25] News of Johnson's assault had spread quickly among black neighbourhoods and it was widely believed that the perpetrators were Scandinavian.[26] The animosity that already existed between the two groups of seamen over jobs in the city was perhaps a key reason black seamen were quick to

[23] 'The Colour Trouble at Cardiff', *Manchester Guardian*, 16/6/1919.
[24] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p.41.
[25] TNA, CO 318/349, statement of Thomas Archer, 4/8/19.
[26] LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's Report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/1919, p.252.

accuse those from Scandinavia.[27] The confrontation quickly escalated and the two groups engaged in a running battle resulting in severe injury to one Scandinavian seamen. In response to this violence, the police took the decision to raid all the black seamen's boarding houses in the Great George Square area in a search for suspects and weapons.[28] This decision would have fatal consequences and was the precursor to the more serious violence that followed.

Among the seamen's boarding houses raided was the Lawrences' long-standing boarding house for Caribbean seamen at 18 Upper Pitt Street at the heart of the Great George Square area of settlement. At 10pm, the police, following a tip off from an unnamed witness that the men inside were the principal instigators of the violence, entered the property with thirteen officers and arrested all but one of the boarding house's residents. One of the men, 24-year-old Bermudan seaman and Royal Navy veteran Charles Wootten, managed to evade police custody by escaping through an entryway and out onto the street. However, once outside, a large crowd that had formed of between two and three hundred spotted Wootten and pursued him down the street to Queen's Dock.[29] Despite the police catching up with Wootten at the dock, the crowd succeeded in wrenching him from their custody. Thomas Archer, who claimed to have witnessed the death of Wootten was adamant that the crowd threw him into the water and then proceeded to throw stones at him until he drowned.[30] Indeed the local press reported that chants of 'let him drown' could be heard from the crowd.[31] Despite the official report proving equivocal as to the fate of Charles Wootten, a letter later sent by the Assistant Head Constable to the Home Office in the immediate aftermath of the riots corroborated Archer's testimony and stated that Wootten had indeed been thrown into the dock.[32] The raid on the Great George Square black seamen's boarding houses seen in the wider context of the riots, presents the beginning of a paradigm shift. The boarding house, long established as a place of refuge and respite for Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain, was now finding its boundaries breached and its reputation as a safe space in Britain compromised. The intervention of the police, together with the raids on 18 Upper Pitt Street and other black seamen's boarding

[27] Joseph Radcliffe, 'The 1919 Seaport Riots in Liverpool: The Black British Response', *unpublished Master's Thesis* (Birkbeck, University of London, 2019), p.24.
[28] LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/1919, pp.252-256; It is important to note that there is no record of any Scandinavian or other seamen's boarding houses used by white seamen being raided by police.
[29] 'The Drowned Negro', *Liverpool Courier*, 11/6/1919.
[30] TNA, CO 318/349, Statement of Thomas Archer, 4/8/19.
[31] 'The Drowned Negro', *Liverpool Courier*, 11/6/1919.
[32] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Letter from the Assistant Head Constable of Liverpool to the Home Office, 10/61919.

houses in the area, had not only led to the death of a Caribbean seaman but had brought about the beginning of a new role for the seamen's boarding house; now a place of interest, the authorities would begin to employ it as a tool to be used against black seamen and as a means to monitor and control the wider Caribbean and West African population.

A couple of days of relative calm followed the death of Wootten. However, on 8th June 1919 violence erupted again and for the next 3 days black residents in Liverpool found themselves under siege.[33] While the initial phase of the riots in Liverpool took place in and around the Great George Square area of black settlement, this second outbreak of violence was more sustained and focused squarely on the larger, more prominent area of settlement south of Parliament Street. In his article mapping the Notting Hill riots in London in the 1950s, Christopher Hilliard observed similar shifts over time with white gangs moving from one area of black settlement to another. He posited that this could have resulted from the rioters learning the geography of the area, guided by those with local knowledge.[34] While the initial conflict appeared to be a local dispute between stakeholders from within the sailortown economy, the later rioting involved a broader demographic that included many people from other parts of the city. As in Loudoun Square, the area south of Parliament Street was by this period, a well-established and well-known area of black settlement and it also contained some of the more prominent spaces utilised by black seamen in Liverpool, such as the African Hostel. The more notable black presence south of Parliament Street by 1919 appears to have acted as a draw for those with a less intimate knowledge of the sailortown area. However, unlike Cardiff neither the geography nor the police afforded much protection to black neighbourhoods or residents in Liverpool. White crowds were free to roam unopposed as they chased down and attacked any black person they could find. Sierra Leonean seamen Ernest Marke recalled:

> They started shouting 'Niggers, niggers, stop them niggers.' A lady heard the shout […] She beckoned to us, ran downstairs and opened her door to us and then let us out quickly into the back alley, from where we manoeuvred ourselves through other back lanes […] No sooner had we reached the main thoroughfare when we were spotted by another mob. A tram car was going southward where we lived; we ran for it, the mob on our heels. I caught it but my friend was

[33] Jenkinson, *Black 1919,* p.83.
[34] Christopher Hilliard, 'Mapping the Notting Hill Riots: Racism and the Streets of Post-War Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 93 (2022), p.56.

> unlucky. That was the last I saw of him. I learned later that he was beaten unconscious and left for dead.[35]

Marke had a lucky escape; others, like his friend, were less fortunate with police reporting at least 3 other black men stabbed near Mill Street. Police estimated that at its peak, the crowd of rioters in the city numbered almost ten thousand.[36]

The seamen's boarding house, as in both Cardiff and London, soon became the main target of attack. White rioters smashed windows, destroyed furniture and looted property. Rioters broke into Annie Pablo's West African boarding house at 123 Stanhope Street and stole £120 before stripping the house of its contents and setting fire to it in the street, whilst the boarding house of metropolitan-born mixed-heritage keeper Annie Richards at 59 Parliament Street was attacked in a similar fashion suffering damages that the police estimated to be £226. However, one of the worst incidents occurred at the West African boarding house at 4 Jackson Street that was run by 22-year-old Elizabeth Walker and her Sierra Leonean husband Cratue Walker. At least nineteen rioters breached the boarding house and began destroying property and attacking residents. Four men, Thomas Strangers, Charles Davies, William Davies and James Manny were wounded in the attack.[37] The Elder Dempster Hostel also came under attack on both 9 and 10 June and suffered substantial structural damage worth in the region of £200.[38] Money and personal property of black lodgers was also looted during these attacks which in the aftermath proved difficult to recover.[39]

The violence south of Parliament Street continued unabated and the authorities, unable to offer adequate protection to Liverpool's black residents, and perhaps fearing further deaths, made the decision to move as many as possible to the Main Bridewell at Cheapside. Between 1am and 2am on 10 June, the police removed hundreds of black residents from their homes and

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[35] Ernest Marke, *In Troubled Waters: Memoirs of my Seventy Years in England* (London: Karia, 1986), pp.30-31.

[36] LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's Report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/191, pp.257-258.

[37] LRO, 347 MAG/2/1/98 - Register of Lock-Up Cases - 'Special Court', 5/12/1917–19/12/1919.

[38] TNA, CO 318/352, Superintendent's Report 'Racial Riots', 18/6/1919.

[39] For example, West African seaman James Kofi put in a claim for £37.10.5 in respect of property stolen from his boarding house at 1 Chester Street. His claim was denied by the authorities as it was received outside the time frame allotted by the Riot (Damages) Act. 1886 see LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's Report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/1919, pp.719-720.

marched them through the streets to the Bridewell. In total 720 men, women and children were placed in protective custody. A further seventy were cared for by Aleifasakure Toummavoh at the Ethiopian Hall.[40] However, this group too would eventually be moved to the Bridewell as the police feared that the hall itself may come under attack.[41] Conditions at the Bridewell were poor with black residents allotted a daily ration of only two slices of bread and two mugs of cocoa.[42] With the area emptied of its black residents, white rioters were free to continue their rampage through the Parliament Street neighbourhood.

The situation in Liverpool was only finally brought under control and the crowds dispersed after the police mounted several baton charges assisted by mounted police.[43] After two days, the authorities finally allowed black residents sheltering in the Bridewell to return home but they were warned not to leave their homes or boarding houses and they should rely on their landlady to obtain what they needed.[44] What greeted West African and Caribbean men and their families on their return to their neighbourhoods was a scene of devastation. The local press described the area of black settlement south of Parliament Street as having:

> a very unpicturesque appearance today. Wrecked houses, dispoiled of their furniture, gaping holes in plate glass windows, shops which have been broken open by hooligans and emptied of their contents by thieves, and charred patches in the road to denote the bonfire made of some innocent person's furniture…[45]

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[40] Aleifasakure Toummavoh, from Sierra Leone, had originally arrived in Liverpool as a medical student. However, by 1919 he was running a general store on Upper Parliament Street serving the city's black residents and was a founder member and General Secretary of the Ethiopian Association. Founded as 'An Institute for the Advancement of Coloured People in Great Britain and Ireland', the organisation was based at the Ethiopian Hall at 43 Russell Street, close to Brownlow Hill. The association offered a weekly programme of educational and social activities including music classes and lectures. It also provided entertainment and recreational activities such as a billiard table and spaces where men could meet and socialise. Following the economic downturn that followed the war it had also taken on a more charitable role providing out of work seamen and their families with financial aid as well as free meals. Toummavoh would go on to become an important spokesman for Liverpool's black residents. See LRO, 352 MAY/1/28, 'Letterhead for Ethiopian Hall', undated; 'The Ethiopian Association, Liverpool', *West Africa*, 13/9/1919 p.808.

[41] 'Colour Riots', *Liverpool Evening Express,* 11/6/1919; 720 is the official figure of those in protective custody given by the Head Constable in his report to the Watch Committee. See LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's Report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/1919, pp.258.

[42] TNA, CO 318/349, Petition to Acting-Governor Bryan from Repatriated Caribbean Seamen, 29/8/1919.

[43] LRO, 352/MIN/WAT/1/56, Minutes of the Watch Committee, Head Constable's Report 'Racial Riots', 17/6/1919, pp.258.

[44] TNA, CO/318/349, Petition to Acting-Governor Bryan from Repatriated Caribbean seamen, 29/8/1919.

[45] 'Colour Riots', *Liverpool Evening Express,* 11/6/1919.

However, areas of black settlement that had grown over the decades proved to be resilient and the black residents and their families resolute in their refusal to be driven from their homes. The significant black presence that remained in the area in 1921, serving as testament to such resilience. Many seamen's boarding houses, likewise, doggedly refused to be subdued. Those that could, submitted their insurance claims and rebuilt, and some of those worst affected, such as 1 Chester Street and Annie Pablo's at 123 Stanhope Street, continued to operate and provide an important base for black seamen in Britain into the 1920s.

London saw sporadic outbursts of ethnic violence throughout the spring and summer of 1919. Again, like in the other cities, black neighbourhoods and property were the main targets of attacks with the seamen's boarding house garnering particular attention. Crowds assembled in the streets where black seamen were known to live and attacked any black man they suspected of having relationships with white women. However, these crowds were disorganised and it was reported that they generally ended up attacking black men indiscriminately.[46] At times crowds as large as 3000-5000 were involved in the violence and enduring institutions that had long served London's non-white seafarers such as The Strangers' Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders on West India Dock Road found themselves besieged. By August 1919 the violence had spread east from the Stepney and Poplar area to the more recently formed area of black settlement in Canning Town.[47] An altercation between a white man, William Grantham, and Antiguan boarding house keeper, Thomas Pell, led to an outbreak of violence in the area. Grantham, walking past the mixed boarding house at 3 Crown Street that was run by Pell, directed a racial slur towards the keeper. Pell chose to ignore the insult; however, Grantham persisted and pushed him in the chest. Pell struck back and a scuffle ensued drawing a crowd. Pell was pulled back into his boarding house by his wife, Amelia, whereupon Grantham smashed a pane in the front window to the boarding house, grabbed a guitar off a table inside and proceeded to smash the rest of the window with it. The crowd took this as a signal and violent disorder erupted in the area with other black residences and boarding houses attacked.[48] This was not the first time Thomas Pell and his home and business had been the victim of ethnically motivated violence, since his boarding house had been one of those targeted during

[46] 'Negroes in the East End', *The Times,* 30/5/1919.
[47] Jenkinson, *Black 1919,* pp.77-78
[48] 'Racial Antagonism', *The Boro' of West Ham, East Ham and Stratford Express*, 16/8/1919; The newspaper describes Thomas Pell's wife, Amelia Pell, as a 'woman of colour' and was born in London in 1881.

the violence that had flared up in the area in 1917. Having survived attacks in both 1917 and 1919, Pell's boarding house remained well used and central to the burgeoning area of black settlement around the Victoria Dock Road in Canning Town in 1921.

Britain's black residents in London, Liverpool and Cardiff, having endured and survived the social unrest of the ethnically motivated rioting of 1919 almost immediately found themselves the main focus of further attacks, this time politically driven. Moreover, the seamen's boarding house that had played such a crucial role in protecting them would also face their own challenges as the poor economic climate of the 1920s began to seriously impact on the trade.

The Seamen's Boarding House, Repatriation, Support and the Economic Challenges in Interwar Britain

In response to the ethnic violence of 1919, state authorities branded not only unemployed black seamen but all black residents in Britain's port cities as being a 'problem'. The government's solution to this 'problem' was to attempt to remove as many as possible.[49] While those who were not British could be subject to deportation orders, the Home Office admitted that while:

> it is not possible to deport compulsorily any coloured men who are British subjects it is considered desirable that so far as possible all unemployed coloured men should be induced to return to their own countries as quickly as possible.[50]

Indeed, the Liverpool authorities had wasted no time in approaching black seamen in the city in order to begin the process. The very next day after police had released the final black residents from the Bridewell, detectives were sent to all the seamen's boarding houses in the city to ascertain how many West African and Caribbean seamen would be willing or could be induced to repatriate.[51] The local authorities were now subverting the well-developed and important social and cultural black space of the seamen's boarding house. What had become an instrumental part of West African and Caribbean seamen's migration network bringing them to Britain was now being used to scrutinise and monitor its residents in order to affect their removal. The issues that came to disrupt the repatriation scheme highlights both the important

[49] Michael Rowe, 'Sex, "Race" and Riot in Liverpool, 1919', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 19 (2000), p.62.
[50] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Home Office to Chief Constable, Liverpool, 17/6/1919.
[51] TNA, CO 318/349, Petition to Acting-Governor Bryan from Repatriated Caribbean Seamen, 29/8/1919.

role the seamen's boarding house continued to play in the lives of Caribbean and West African men in Britain as well as the complexity of areas of black settlements that had been developing since the late nineteenth century.

This was not the first time the government had considered a policy of repatriation; there had been discussions as early as January 1919 at the Board of Trade to repatriate black seamen as a solution to the unrest that was felt to be fomenting between white and black seamen as a consequence of unemployment. The discrimination in the labour market towards Caribbean and West African seamen that would become a notorious part of the black experience in Britain in the interwar years was already becoming firmly entrenched. The Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine in London estimated that there were 500 unemployed black seamen in the city and their chances of finding employment was near impossible as ship's owners and masters were refusing to employ them.[52] In February 1919 it was agreed by the Board of Trade to repatriate West African and Caribbean seamen who were unable to provide evidence that they had been employed by the Merchant Navy before the war. Those who were eligible for repatriation were to be given a maintenance allowance of 4s a day until a ship could be arranged to transport them.[53] This would have been a lifeline for out of work black seamen who were not domiciled and therefore ineligible for out of work payments. As unemployed black seamen were mostly kept by seamen's boarding houses at the keeper's own expense, this money would also have been a welcome relief since they were beginning to find themselves under increasing financial strain as they looked after growing numbers of out of work men. Nonetheless, despite such financial incentives, this initial effort at repatriation was unsuccessful for the government and many seamen, undeterred by the difficult economic climate, chose to remain in Britain and fight for jobs.

There also appears to have been a failure on the part of both local and state government to consider, or acknowledge, at this early stage, that not only had men of West African and Caribbean heritage living in the multiethnic neighbourhoods in London, Liverpool and Cardiff, as British subjects, made the metropole their home for decades, but that by 1919, a significant number had been born and raised in Britain. As the press acknowledged, a source rarely kind to people of colour in Britain, these men and women were not only British but they were living 'in

[52] TNA CO 323/798, J.W Mosey to Accountant General, Board of Trade, 24/1/1919.
[53] TNA CO 323/798, Out of Work Donation and Repatriation of Destitute Coloured Seamen, 17/2/1919.

their native place'[54] Moreover, a lack of consideration and understanding of the position of both metropolitan-born black Britons and those of mixed-heritage in contemporary political discourse that surrounded both the riots and repatriation demonstrates a lack of recognition that would set a precedent for the marginalisation of these early areas of settlement and their residents that would continue into the 1930s.

However, when according to the police survey of black seamen in Liverpool's boarding houses, over half of those approached were willing to consider repatriation, it is important to consider why so few men eventually returned to the Caribbean and West Africa.[55] Firstly, the time and circumstances under which these men were first approached may have influenced their response to the offer of repatriation. These men had only been released from custody in the city's Bridewell a day earlier and many would have returned to their boarding houses or homes to find them wrecked and what little personal property they had, if not stolen, had either been set fire to or destroyed. Some black seamen faced with this situation and unsure if further violence was imminent believed they were left with little option but to repatriate. As one group repatriated to Jamaica explained:

> That seeing the resolution of the whites [and] the attitude of the Government we were by force of the atrocities done by them in the Motherland and for the safety of our lives we had to make up our minds to be repatriated…[sic][56]

However, as the days passed and the immediate threat of violence abated, others appear to have changed their mind. More black seamen refused to repatriate when they saw the conditions under which they were expected to sail. The men were appalled when they found out they were expected to undertake the 2-3 week voyage down in the cargo hold and had not been provided with even the most basic amenities, such as somewhere to sit or sleep. There was anger that this was how the government rewarded black seamen who had risked their lives in the war.[57] A striking example of the extent to which the terms of the repatriation scheme were unpopular among some black seamen is evident when the Home Office offered a remission of sentence to nine black men jailed in Liverpool for their involvement in the riots. Four refused

[54] 'British Subjects: Why Repatriation is Out of the Question', *Western Mail,* 14/6/1919.
[55] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/19.
[56] TNA, CO 318/349, Petition to Acting-Governor Bryan from Repatriated Caribbean Seamen, 29/8/1919.
[57] 'Refusal to Sail', *Liverpool Echo,* 20/6/1919.

outright, preferring to see out their sentence and remain in Britain; the rest would only consider the offer if they were to receive back pay that they were still owed from their time in the Royal Navy.[58]

Some of the strongest resistance to repatriation came from within the seamen's boarding house trade itself. As mentioned above, by 1919 as the economic situation worsened, seamen's boarding houses found themselves looking after increasing numbers of unemployed men. Despite a history of providing goods and services on credit, the prolonged and widespread nature of unemployment among black seamen began to place a strain on the trade. Having invested significant sums of money supporting unemployed black seamen, it became vital for keepers to ship at least some of these men in order to recoup their losses as many of these men were now heavily indebted to their boarding house. In a letter to the *South Wales News,* Arab boarding house keeper, Abby Farrah, explained the position that many of Cardiff's boarding house keepers found themselves in:

> practically every boarding-house master in Cardiff is owed large sums of money by the boarders. Some of the men have been in Cardiff from nine to twelve months, and during that time they have paid nothing for their board and lodgings […] Many of us twelve months ago were in affluent positions. Now as a result of having to support and maintain these men for months, many are on the verge of ruin.[59]

If the government repatriated their boarders, they stood to lose the money they had invested and thus risked insolvency. As one boarding house keeper put it bluntly, 'if the Government intend repatriation of these men they must recompense us for our loss.[sic]'[60] While boarding house keepers never professed to be running an altruistic, charitable organisation and ultimately they were gambling on an improvement in the job market to find work for the men in their care, by looking after these men the seamen's boarding house was providing an invaluable social service without which hundreds of black seamen would have been left destitute and homeless on the streets of Britain's ports. Not wanting to lose sight of their debtors, the influence and

[58] TNA, CO 323/833, Home Office to Colonial Office, 8/1/1920; TNA, CO 323/833, T. Preston, Sgt. CID to Chief Inspector CID, 21/1/1920.
[59] 'Cardiff Boarding-House Masters', *South Wales News*, 19/7/1919.
[60] 'Colour Problem', *Western Mail*, 30/6/1919.

control that the seamen's boarding house keeper had historically exerted over the seamen in their care may have helped dissuade and prevent many of these men from taking up the government's offer. It is also important to recognise that many of the men themselves were not looking for charity or free passage but rather insisted on working their passage and being paid, in full, as crew members, if they were to return to the Caribbean or West Africa.[61] Black seamen were still, for the time being at least, best placed to achieve this through their boarding house and its keeper. Not all were successful in preventing the repatriation of some of their boarders. Farrah serves as an example of the level of losses that boarding house keepers stood to make if they were not successful in preventing repatriation. Farrah claimed that he was personally still owed an estimated £2300 by his boarders when they were repatriated, 'not a penny of which I will probably ever receive' he lamented.[62]

Liverpool's seamen's boarding house keepers found themselves in a similarly difficult situation to their peers in Cardiff and the relationship between the seaman and his boarding house reveals deeper insights into the precarious position of both in 1919. As part of the survey compiled by Liverpool police regarding repatriation, the authorities also took detailed notes as to debts held by black seamen in the city.[63] Of the 283 West African and Caribbean seamen recorded, 113 owed money to either their boarding house, pawnbrokers or, in many cases, both. While debt appears endemic throughout the entire trade, some seamen's boarding houses were suffering worse than others. For example, at the mixed boarding house at 113 Duke Street, 13 out of 17 lodgers owed money to their keeper Charles Rowe. The average debt of black seamen in Liverpool to their boarding house has been estimated at £6 and gives a rough indication of how long they had been kept by their boarding houses. At 2 shillings a night board, this equates to two months on average that boarding houses had been keeping men on credit. However, some of these seamen were in a far worse financial situation. Sierra Leonean fireman George Pearce owed his boarding house keeper at 15 Parliament Street £36, suggesting that he had been without income and supported by his boarding house for an entire year. Likewise, the Caribbean seamen staying at Demerara born Hubert Lewis's mixed boarding house at 3 Upper Pitt Street returned higher than average debts. In 1919 this boarding house had 7 boarders, 5 of whom owed the keeper a combined £78. However, not all seamen's boarding houses appeared to be struggling during this period. Experienced boarding house keeper Annie

[61] May and Cohen, p.120.
[62] 'Cardiff Boarding-House Masters', *South Wales News*, 19/7/1919.
[63] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.

Pablo, who had 18 predominantly West African seamen in her care across her two boarding houses, was only owed a total of £1 6s by 3 of her boarders. This suggests that, while unemployment among black seamen was widespread, some were still able to find some sort of casual work that allowed them to pay for their lodgings, and while evidence is scarce, it could also imply that some of the more experienced and established keepers, such as Pablo, remained adept at finding seafaring work for their boarders.

With no work and spiralling debts, many black seamen pawned what little they had. The nature of the assets pawned is very indicative as to the level of poverty in which many of these men now found themselves in. 98% of Caribbean and West African seamen recorded by the police as in debt had exclusively pawned their clothing. This not only suggests that, by 1919, the only assets of worth that these men owned were their clothes, it also meant that many Caribbean and West African seamen in the city at the time of this survey had nothing to their name except the clothes on their back. The scale of these debts owed by black seamen to their boarding house keepers and others reinforces the inadequacy of the grant the government was offering to these men as an incentive to these men to repatriate. This stood at a flat £5 resettlement grant with a further £2 to settle any debts the seamen may have had in the UK.[64] While this money may have been sufficient for some, for many of the black seamen and the boarding house keepers that kept them, it was woefully inadequate. For example, in the case of Jamaican seaman George Williams, the grant was neither sufficient to cover his £20 debt to his boarding house nor close to the £17 needed to recover his clothing from the pawnbroker. While Williams is an extreme example, his situation was not unique among black seamen in Britain to which the 1919 police survey bears witness to.[65] In these circumstances it would be in the professional interest of Britain's seamen's boarding house keepers to oppose any repatriation scheme as, if successful in removing all black seamen from Britain, as was hoped, it stood to wipe out their trade. As Chapter One has explored, boarding house keepers had proven pragmatic throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century in challenging interference from the state in their trade. Despite the difficulties they now faced, seamen's boarding houses maintained their prominent position both in areas of black settlement and in the social and economic lives of black seamen and they proved effective in keeping the state at arm's length in the hope that an upturn in trade would see them recover some of their losses.

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[64] Laura Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice', Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.137.
[65] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.

Contemporary sources suggest that alongside the seamen's boarding houses another important stakeholder in Britain's early black settlements similarly strongly opposed the idea of repatriation: married men.[66] Despite being true to some extent, a significant number of West African and Caribbean men who had settled in Britain and married local white women did show an interest in repatriation. In Liverpool 20 of the 26 men who had married local white women expressed a willingness to repatriate.[67] This desire on the part of black seamen to return with their families to the countries of their birth caused a great deal of anxiety among British and Colonial authorities. Laura Tabili has argued that one of the greatest threats to colonial ideologies of superiority were marriage and sexual relations particularly between white women and black men. These relationships transgressed and therefore compromised established colonial racial hierarchies.[68] In order to prevent this from happening, while these authorities had no official policy preventing white wives from travelling with their husbands they did what they could to impede the process in what Carina E. Ray has termed a 'Policy of Prevention.'[69] The Home Office was adamant from the outset that they were unwilling to provide funds for passage for the wives of black seamen.[70] This refusal by the authorities effectively denied repatriation. Like their transient peers, large numbers of settled men had fallen into serious poverty and were unable to pay travel costs for themselves, let alone their wives. While the policy to deny repatriation to wives and children was initially framed as a practical issue, one of cost and lack of space on ships, it soon became clear that the decision that lay behind it was increasingly more ideological.

There was a noticeable class, as well as racial, element visible around the decision whether to allow white wives of black seamen to settle in British colonies. Colonial authorities had allowed some mixed-couples to settle in West African colonies, allowing a handful of wealthy West African men who were able to demonstrate that they could provide a standard of living for their white wives deemed suitable to Europeans to settle.[71] Likewise in Caribbean colonies the Colonial Office conceded that white women married and lived with black men but noted that this

[66] 'Coloured Men Going', *Western Mail,* 28/6/1919.
[67] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.
[68] Laura Tabili, 'Empire Is the Enemy of Love: Edith Noor's Progress and Other Stories', *Gender & History*, 17 (2005), pp.5-6.
[69] Carina E. Ray, '"The White Wife Problem": Sex, Race and the Contested Politics of Repatriation to Interwar British West Africa', *Gender & History*, 21 (2009), p.628.
[70] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Home Office Memo, undated 1919.
[71] Ray, p.629.

was in the 'better classes of the community'.[72] It was felt by colonial authorities that white women married to black working-class men living in working-class neighbourhoods might have too much of a destabilising effect on colonial social structures which were rigidly based not only on social class but on views of racial superiority and could call into question the whole notion of European racial prestige.[73] As in West Africa, Caribbean colonial authorities resisted accepting repatriating mixed-couples as Cyprian Robinson discovered when he attempted to return to St Vincent from Cardiff with his Welsh wife. St Vincent colonial authorities argued that:

> While there is but little racial feeling in St Vincent, it is very likely that a European woman married to a man of Robinson's class would become the object of petty annoyances and persecution on the part of ill-disposed persons which might ultimately lead to trouble and it most undesirable that such a contingency should be allowed to arise, if it can possibly be prevented.[74]

This 'Policy of Prevention' appears to have been largely successful in dissuading married black men and their white wives from leaving Britain and settling in the colonies. Benjamin Ladipo Pratt, who wished to return to Nigeria with his Liverpool born wife Ellen in 1919, when met with such obstacles chose to remain in Liverpool, and by 1921 he was running a West African boarding house at 14 Jackson Street. Inadvertently this policy played a key role in maintaining Britain's black settlements. Like the seamen's boarding house, black men who laid down roots in Britain and married local women were at the core of black areas of settlement and pivotal to their growth and development. It is unknown what sort of destabilising effect a large exodus of settled black men and their families would have had on these nascent communities, however, the sustainability of these very same areas was helped by the fact that the majority appeared to have remained, with some, like Pratt, taking on traditional roles such as that of the boarding house keeper that had hitherto proven instrumental in the advancement of migration and settlement.

Despite the resistance to the repatriation scheme, at least 800 West African and Caribbean seamen throughout Britain were repatriated in the 6 months after the 1919 ethnic riots followed

[72] TNA, CO 318/349, Draft letter to George Fiddes, Colonial Office, 6/10/1919.
[73] Ray, pp.633-634.
[74] TNA, CO 318/349, G.H Haddon-Smith, Governor of Grenada, Forwarded Report from Government House, St Vincent to Colonial Office, 8/11/1919.

by hundreds more over various schemes throughout the subsequent year.[75] Shipping companies also began to take an active role in repatriating black seamen who had been part of their workforce. Elder Dempster in Liverpool was responsible for repatriating 100 West African seamen in the immediate aftermath of 1919 followed by a further 627 between February 1920 and August 1921.[76] The repatriation scheme itself was to have little effect on the size and development of Britain's black presence and the areas in which they settled. As Chapter Two has shown, whilst there was a slight decrease in black seamen's boarding houses in Liverpool between 1919 and 1921 that denoted a decline in demand, such decreases were not enough to reverse the significant increase in Britain's black population that had been generated by the First World War.[77] Britain's black and mixed-heritage population remained substantially larger than it had been in the pre-war period. Nonetheless, whereas areas of black settlement survived the attacks and attempts at their resident's removal, the 1920s would continue to bring more challenges for black Britons and their families.

The early 1920s were a particularly tough period for Caribbean and West African seamen, both transient and settled, in Britain. Unemployment remained a significant problem in port cities as demand for merchant seamen continued to fall due to a mixture of industrial mismanagement and economic depression.[78] Employment prospects for black seamen also continued to be hampered by widespread discrimination within the labour market. Despite the best efforts of the seamen's boarding house, the trade journal *West Africa* reported that at least 250 West African seamen were homeless and living in a state of semi-starvation in London, Cardiff, Liverpool and Glasgow, with a large proportion having served in the merchant marine during the war. One of these men, Stanley Willard, originally from Elmina on the Gold Coast, had been unemployed since October 1920. Willard turned up at the docks in London everyday only to be turned away each time on account of his ethnicity. Desperate for work and on hearing there may be a chance of signing onto a ship in Southampton, Willard walked the 130 km from London to the southern English port only to be met by failure once again and forced to walk back to the capital.[79] Since June 1919, there had been an accusation that the main seamen's union, the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, had been further encouraging discrimination within the labour market,

[75] Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2022), pp.268-269.
[76] Belchem, *Before the Windrush,* p.58.
[77] See Chapter Two, p.119.
[78] Laura Tabili, 'The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), p.72
[79] 'West African Seamen Stranded', *West Africa,* 6/8/1921, p.798.

supporting white seamen's refusal to sail with black seamen and insisting that no black crews should be hired if white crews were available.[80] As Caribbean and West African seamen sought to assert their rights and status as British subjects, the boarding house, long interwoven into the social and economic life of black seamen, now took a vital and central role in early black political activism in Britain.

Figure 3: Stanley Willard (third from left in cap) among fellow unemployed West African seamen searching for work in London, 1921. (Source: *West Africa [London]*, 6/8/1921).

It was in a West African seamen's boarding house at 2 Newton Street, in the area of black settlement south of Parliament Street in Liverpool that saw the founding of Britain's first black led trade union promoting and supporting black labour interests. Frustrated by their lack of representation in the NSFU a group of West African seamen, led by Nigerian born Annene Ezenwaegbu, founded the National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union on 1 September 1920. The union set out to 'promote the interests of West African workers, either on sea or shore, at home or abroad [and] to use all lawful means for their betterment…' while simultaneously aiming 'to promote amity and better understanding between the coloured races and others of a different race.'[81] That black seamen founded the NASFU at 2 Newton Street speaks to the continued importance that the seamen's boarding house as a base afforded them in Britain. The

[80] TNA, CO 323/848, Enquiry Re. Coloured Employment, 1/12/1920.
[81] TNA, FS 11/266, National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union, 15/12/1920.

boarding house remained one of the few spaces where black men could come together, meet and organise and the utilisation of this space in a political capacity highlights both its endurance and evolution, having remained relevant during turbulent times. The active role of 2 Newton Street's keeper, Liverpool born Mary McWatt, in the founding of the union also speaks to the continuing close, entangled relationship between keeper and boarder within the boarding house. McWatt is listed as a trustee of the union responsible for supporting the running of the union and ensuring that it was run in accordance with its stated aims and objectives. This further highlights the importance of local women in the lives of black seamen in Britain denoting a cooperation that transcended both ethnicity and gender. There appears to be no Caribbean membership of the union; the officers of the NASFU were West African, it was founded in an exclusively West African boarding house and the union explicitly represented West African seamen. However, the lack of Caribbean representation may not be indicative of exclusion but merely reflective of the fact that by 1920 only a small percentage of Liverpool's black population originated from the Caribbean with the majority of black seamen in the city being of West African origin.

From its position at 2 Newton Street the NASFU was able to launch its first campaign to combat the exploitation of black seamen by their employers in Liverpool. The union intervened in a labour dispute between West African seamen and senior staff at Elder Dempster. S.S.Ross, the secretary of the union, made an allegation to Liverpool police against the Elder Dempster overseer, Andrew Neizer, the man ultimately responsible for the signing on of West African seamen to ships owned by the company in Liverpool. Andrew Neizer had originally come from the Gold Coast and had been living in Liverpool since he was at least 18 years old. In his early years he had been a founding member of the Ethiopian Progressive Association, an early black political organisation formed at Liverpool University in 1904 that had both West African and Caribbean members.[82] Neizer's West African origins together with his higher education would explain how he managed to occupy such an important and influential position within Elder Dempster. Ross alleged that Neizer was demanding sums of between £10 and £20 from senior black crewmen of Elder Dempster ships who in turn demanded money from lower-level firemen and trimmers in exchange for employment. If West African seamen refused to pay, Neizer would decline to sign them on.[83] Nezier was also accused of exploiting junior crewmen directly. 26-year-old trimmer Lloyd Polly, originally from Sierra Leone and member of the NASFU, explained in a statement to police that Neizer had demanded 35s in payment to sign him on. Polly, without

[82] BCA, GREEN 1/26, Constitution of the Ethiopian Progressive Association, 1904.
[83] TNA, CO 323/848, Enquiry Re. Coloured Employment, 1/12/1920.

the cash to hand, and on the understanding of guaranteed employment, borrowed the sum from the landlady of his boarding house Mary McWatt. However, when he arrived at the ship, Neizer demanded a further £1 and when Polly was unable to pay Neizer refused to sign him on or return the initial 35s.[84] This left Polly not only unemployed but now in debt to his boarding house.

Andrew Neizer was not the only senior Elder Dempster employee accused of leveraging his position within the hierarchy of the company to personally enrich themselves. Two West African seamen, Samual Dickson and James Brown, accused the head fireman of the S.S Abinsi, Thomas Campbell, of bringing them to Liverpool under false pretences as stowaways for a fee and on the promise of work only for Campbell to abandon them once the ship docked. This practice of bringing stowaways into Britain not only exacerbated the unemployment problem but, just as importantly, with no proper facilities in place to care for these men, left them reliant on the already overstretched seamen's boarding house trade. The NASFU supported Dickson and found him lodgings at 2 Newton Street, while Sierra Leonean Brown was given free lodging at the African Hostel and his fellow countrymen clubbed together and provided him with food.[85] Support among West African seamen and their boarding houses remained strong despite the financial struggles of both. However, the behaviour of both Neizer and Campbell showed that there was not universal solidarity among black seamen in Britain, and their use of illegal employment practices were not dissimilar to those associated with the crimp in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Liverpool police suggested that Campbell should be prosecuted under legislation that was brought in partly to deal with the problem of crimping: the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894. Campbell did end up before the local magistrates but was found not guilty. Similarly, Neizer escaped prosecution because the police were unable to corroborate the allegations against him believing that the NASFU merely had a personal vendetta against him.[86] Black seamen, frustrated by the lack of police action, took matters into their own hands. Fifty seamen, that included some members of the NASFU, surrounded a pub in which Neizer was drinking and demanded that he be turned over to them. When he eventually appeared, the crowd attacked him with only swift police intervention avoiding any serious injury.[87]

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[84] LRO, 352 MAY/1/90, Statement of Lloyd Polly, 21/10/1920.
[85] LRO, 352 MAY/1/87, Statement of Samuel Dickson, 18/10/1920; LRO, 352 MAY/1/88, statement of James Brown, 18/10/1920.
[86] TNA, CO 323/848, Enquiry Re. Coloured Employment, 1/12/1920.
[87] 'Coloured Men's Union', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph,* 4/1/1921.

Despite this initial flurry of activity, the NASFU would be short-lived. The last committee of the union was active until May 1921 and it was declared defunct in June 1923. Of its original officers all but a handful had returned to West Africa, including Ezenwaegbu who had travelled to Lagos to set up a branch of the union but would be imprisoned for misappropriating the funds. Of the four that remained in Britain two continued to work as seamen and one, Tom Oroma, was working as a labourer in Liverpool, whilst the secretary, S.S. Ross had moved to Cardiff and had gone to sea.[88] As Laura Tabili highlights, despite its ambitions the NASFU suffered from the two factors that hampered all seamen's organisations and made maintaining a political agenda difficult: unemployment and mobility.[89] The founding of the NASFU marks a watershed moment in the development of black working-class political organisation in Britain and this would not have been possible without the support of the seamen's boarding house.

By 1921, the seamen's boarding house continued to shoulder much of the social care and financial burden associated with supporting unemployed black seamen in Britain; it was, however, a trade in decline. The fortunes of the seamen's boarding house had always been intrinsically linked to those of the seamen and, therefore, dictated by the maritime industry. With the long hoped for sustained upturn in trade failing to materialise, the seamen's boarding house trade found itself in serious trouble. The King George's Fund for Sailors, a seamen's charity based in London, sent a delegation to Cardiff to report on the situation in the port. What the charity discovered was a trade close to collapse. A large number of seamen's boarding houses in the city, having kept seamen without any sort of income for many months, even years, had finally exhausted their own line of credit with their suppliers and a significant number now faced bankruptcy. Financial problems were further exacerbated by the fact that very few black seamen received any sort of financial aid with only domiciled men in Britain being eligible for the £1 a week maintenance support under the Unemployment Insurance Act. Domiciled men were married and, for the most part, no longer directly relied on the services of the boarding house. However, of the 900 or so unemployed seamen of all ethnicities in the city in receipt of this benefit the charity discovered only a very small number of black seamen received it.[90] This corroborates that the majority of seamen residing in seamen's boarding house were not domiciled and, as such, they were not eligible for this vital support. The keepers of at least 44 of

[88] TNA, FS 11/266, National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union, Superintendent Liverpool Police to Registrar of Friendly Societies, 6/7/1923.
[89] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice',* p.157.
[90] TNA, CO 323/879, King George's Fund for Sailors to Colonial Office, 10/6/1921.

the worst affected boarding houses, who provided accommodation for a broad range of nationalities and ethnicities notified the Lord Mayor that, without the immediate promise of assistance, they would be forced to turn out all their boarders. This would have meant that overnight at least 639 men, of whom over half were from West Africa and the Caribbean, would find themselves homeless and on the streets of Butetown. Cardiff's boarding house keepers eventually managed to negotiate with the local authorities a grant of 10s per week for each seaman in their care for up to 1,150 men. However, whilst this was welcomed, the authorities were keen to stress that this money was only a loan and still fell significantly short of the amount needed to house and feed out of work seamen sufficiently.[91]

In London, seamen's boarding houses and their keepers were faring little better than their peers in Cardiff. West African boarding house keeper James Doe Royal wrote on behalf of the 'loyal West Africans' resident in East London to another local seamen's charity explaining the dire situation in which they now found themselves. He explained that, 'yet another of our Boarding House Keepers has had to close doors, which means that our people have nowhere to sleep if eviction follows…'[92] The 37-year-old Royal was a Kru seamen from Sierra Leone, and after having spent a life at sea from the age of 14, he had finally settled in London and opened a seamen's boarding house and refreshment shop at 90 Cable Street, an important thoroughfare running through London's traditional sailortown district in Stepney.[93] While homelessness and malnutrition posed immediate threats to the well-being of West African and Caribbean seamen following the closure of seamen's boarding houses, there was arguably a longer term social impact on areas of black settlement. The decline in the number of seamen's boarding houses would see an important social space and support structure disappear from these communities. Moreover, and perhaps of greater importance, is that the vital primary role that the boarding house assumed, that of facilitating employment, and, as this thesis argues, its ancillary role of advancing migration and settlement, would be emphatically lost. This would have a potentially significant negative effect on the continued growth and development of areas of black settlements in Britain.

Another consequence of seamen's boarding houses being forced to close their doors was the development of a serious problem of overcrowding. Cardiff, one of the cities worst affected by

[91] *ibid.*
[92] TNA, CO 323/881, JD Royal to British and Foreign Sailors' Society, 4/10/1921.
[93] 'Stranded West African Seamen', *West Africa,* 20/8/1921 p.908.

the high unemployment among black seamen, suffered particularly badly, and a report by the city's inspector of lodging houses revealed the scale of the problem. For example, at the time of the report, the West African boarding house run by Sierra Leonean John Davies at 11 Frances Street housed seventeen men when the city licensed him for only nine. One of the more extreme examples was fellow Sierra Leonean Joseph William Tucker's mixed boarding house at 52 Loudoun Square that was providing accommodation for thirty-seven men, more than double the fifteen he was legally licenced to board.[94] With boarding houses buckling under the financial pressure and going out of business the problem continued to worsen. With fewer places to stay, out of work seamen crowded into those surviving businesses and by the time the census was taken in June 1921, two months after this report, Tucker had at least forty seamen staying at his boarding house, all of them unemployed. Historically, having treated them with a certain amount of hostility and contempt, the authorities now praised the 'wonderful' seamen's boarding house keepers for shouldering much of the social burden and continuing to provide support even at such great personal expense to themselves. However, rather than providing more, much-needed financial support one immigration officer suggested that out of work West African and Caribbean seamen should be placed, together with other non-white seamen, in concentration camps until the shipping industry recovered.[95]

Not only were seamen's boarding houses declining in number but the early 1920s marked a further decline in their influence and power within the labour market. A pivotal moment that affected this decline was the introduction in 1922 of the PC5 work ticket by the NSFU. Seamen had to obtain a PC5 to show that they were fully paid-up members of the union and without it they were unable to ship out of Britain.[96] The PC5 became an essential tool in regulating maritime labour and the NSFU used it to exclude rival unions from the labour market. This put non-white seamen in a difficult position as, despite discrimination by the NSFU, they needed to join the union in order to acquire a PC5. In this regard the NSFU, as David Featherstone argues, was never whites only. However, non-white seamen found themselves members on decidedly unequal terms.[97] The introduction of the PC5 presented an irrevocable shift in the power dynamics of the port economy. As Gopal Balachandran notes, the NSFU 'increasingly

[94] TNA, HO 45/11897, Cecil G. Brown Town Clerk Cardiff to Home Office, 21/4/1921.
[95] TNA, HO 45/11897, Immigration Officers' Report, 1921.
[96] David Byrne, 'The 1930 "Arab Riot" in South Shields: A Race Riot That Never Was', *Race & Class*, 18.3 (1977), p.262
[97] David Featherstone, 'Maritime Labour, Transnational Political Trajectories and Decolonization from below: The Opposition to the 1935 British Shipping Assistance Act', *Global Networks*, 19 (2019), p.543

resembled an employment brokerage for seafarers loyal to the union, employers and the state.'[98] The PC5 effectively shifted the power and control of entry into the labour market. Access to employment, which had historically been tightly held by the seamen's boarding house for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, shifted away from the trade and towards the unions. This was a blow to its status from which the seamen's boarding house would never recover.

The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen Order), 1925 and the Restricting of Black Settlement in Metropolitan Britain

The failure of the various repatriation schemes and the continued chronic unemployment galvanised the Home Office to introduce one of the more controversial pieces of legislation in British history: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen Order) 1925. However, as Laura Tabili has described, the 1925 Order was merely the first example of state-sanctioned racial subordination to come to widespread attention.[99] The British government had a history of introducing legislation that sought to control and exclude people of colour deemed 'undesirable' from Britain.[100] In the early 1920s there were some in the Home Office already expressing a displeasure that they were unable to exclude and remove unemployed black seamen from Britain under the current Aliens Order, introduced in 1920, due to them having British nationality and, therefore, not covered by this legislation. E.N Cooper, the Superintending Inspector of Immigration for the North of England, concluded that black and Arab seamen in Britain could only be removed gradually and voluntarily and suggested that the Home Office's efforts, rather than focusing on removal, should be placed on preventing arrival.[101] In Cardiff, the Chief Constable urged the Home Secretary to extend legislation that would allow 'undesirable' black

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[98] Gopal Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers World Shipping, c.1870–1945* (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 255.
[99] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice',* p.114.
[100] For example, in the early nineteenth century the government had introduced the 1832 Lascar Act in response to the growing presence of seamen from the Indian subcontinent in metropolitan Britain. This legislation severely curtailed the rights of lascar seamen both in employment within the merchant navy and within Imperial hierarchies themselves. As, although they came from a British colony the act legislated that lascars, 'although born in territories subject to His Majesty, shall not at any time be deemed British sailors except in ships sailing East of the Cape of Good Hope'. The unabashed racist overtones of the 1832 Lascar Act gave the government the right to restrict and remove Indian seamen from Britain. It also highlights a long history of the recodification and manipulation of 'Britishness' by the British Government to suit its political needs. See Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) p.39; *1823 Lascar Act,* 4 Geo IV, c.80, cited in Marika Sherwood, 'Race, Nationality and Employment among Lascar Seamen, 1660 to 1945', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 17 (1991), p.231.
[101] TNA, HO 45/11897, E.N Cooper to Home Office, 17/2/1921.

seamen to be classed as vagrants and be brought before the courts to facilitate the removal of those unwilling to repatriate.[102] White Britons in positions of authority within both metropolitan and colonial governments rarely perceived the colonised non-white subjects that they governed as British, despite the fact that, irrespective of ethnicity, they were all British subjects. Being British during this period was not defined by geography but by allegiance to the crown, a status that had been reaffirmed in 1914.[103] The British status of many Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain, both transient and settled, was problematic for the authorities and the introduction of the 1925 Order sought to challenge and undermine this status allowing them to pursue a policy of exclusion. The 1925 Order, along with the declining fortunes of the boarding house was to have a serious effect on migration and the continued development of areas of black settlement in Britain.

When it was introduced on 6 April 1925 in selected British ports, including Liverpool and Cardiff, the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen Order), 1925 required all 'coloured' seamen who were unable to provide documentary proof of their status as British subjects to register with local police.[104] As historians have highlighted the term 'coloured' was left undefined and remained ambiguous, meaning that it was often left to the discretion of local police and immigration officers as to whom exactly the order was to be applied to.[105] The onus of proof was placed on black seamen themselves to prove their status, something that proved difficult for many. Documents that had formally served as proof of identity were now declared invalid. For example, the 1925 Order invalidated the use of the continuous discharge book, commonly used by seamen as proof of identity, for black seamen. However, it continued to remain valid for white seamen.[106] Authorities were under the impression that some boarding house keepers were collecting the continuous discharge books of seamen who had died, either at sea or ashore, in order to furnish unqualified men, usually stowaways, with appropriate documentation.[107] Accusations of trafficking in discharges appear to have been levelled mainly at Arab boarding house keepers and, as a consequence, their businesses came under increased scrutiny from

[102] TNA CO 323/833, Chief Constable David Williams to Home Office, 12/12/1919.
[103] David Killingray, '"A Good West Indian, a Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher": Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire, 1760-1950', *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 36 (2008), p.363.
[104] TNA, HO 45/12314, Registration of Coloured Alien Seamen Under The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925, Home Office Memo, undated 1925.
[105] Tony Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire: The Case of the Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 13 (1994), p.105.
[106] Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p.83.
[107] TNA, HO 45/12314, Aliens Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order 1925, 6/4/1925.

the marine department at the Board of Trade.[108] However, the prevalence of such practices among boarding houses more widely proves harder to quantify and there is little evidence of accusations against West African and Caribbean boarding house keepers. Decisions such as the blanket invalidation of continuous discharge books as identification for all non-white seamen but not white began to create a two-tier system. One that placed black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa, as well their Arab and Somali counterparts, at a significant disadvantage as they attempted to prove their British status and navigate governmental bureaucracy.

Caribbean and West African seamen who only a few years ago had little trouble proving their British status now found themselves at risk of deportation. John Morris, a West African seaman from Calabar in the British colony of Nigeria, who had been issued with a British passport in London during the war came up against this barrier when he tried to renew his expired documents. Cardiff police, unsure how to proceed in Morris' case, reached out to the Home Office and the short reply came back that if the passport had expired then Morris should be registered as an alien. Furthermore, the Home Office informed the Chief Constable that it was 'not now the practice of this office to grant British passports to coloured seamen nor to renew existing ones…'[109] Morris, like many other black seamen, were unaware that these bureaucratic lines had been redrawn and now found himself registered as an alien losing his rights as a British subject as a consequence. Documentation that had been easy to obtain now proved impossible and the denial of documents to black seamen would become policy as the government tried to stem black migration to Britain.

Even those who held valid documents were not always safe from the rigorous implementation of the new order. Documented evidence exists of instances of black seamen presenting valid British passports to alien registration officials in Cardiff only for them to be refused and the men compelled to register as aliens.[110] Many black seamen saw their passports and other identity documentation either confiscated or altered by local police as they sought to execute this new Home Office policy.[111] By the end of September 1925, roughly 6 months after its implementation almost 7,500 men had been registered under the 1925 Order. Cardiff returned the highest figure

[108] TNA, HO 45/13392, Coloured Alien Seamen, Notes of Conference held at the Home Office, 28/1/1928.
[109] TNA, HO 45/12314, Draft letter to Chief Constable Cardiff, May 1925.
[110] 'Coloured Seaman', *Western Mail,* 12/3/1926.
[111] Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p.85.

of alien registrations of any port with over 4,200, whereas authorities in Liverpool had registered only 260.[112] Notwithstanding, these figures tell their own story. A large number of those registered in Cardiff were not in fact aliens but, like John Morris, were in reality undocumented British subjects. This is supported by evidence from the late 1920s that showed that as many as 50% of seamen registered under the order, upon further investigation, proved to be British subjects.[113] The small number in Liverpool likely results from the fact that the majority of West African seamen in the city were registered under a separate, private agreement with the shipping company, Elder Dempster.

Being classed as an 'alien' caused a great deal of anger among undocumented Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain particularly as many felt they had more than proved their loyalty as British subjects through their service in the war. A letter signed by nineteen Caribbean and eight West African seamen based at Barry called on the government to rectify what they believed must be a mistake because as they argued:

> If we are classed as aliens our brothers who have made the supreme sacrifice on various battle fields of The Great War for the preservation, flag, prestige, honour and future welfare of the British Empire can be termed mercenaries. [sic][114]

This letter, in response to the increasing political hostility directed towards them, stands as a further example of the growing alliance between Caribbean and West African seamen in interwar Britain. The cooperation and solidarity that this thesis argues began through a shared experience of the seamen's boarding house, and was subsequently bolstered during their response to the ethnic violence of 1919, was now being further strengthened as they organised amongst themselves to find common ground and assert their shared rights as British subjects.

In response to these complaints the various governments of Britain's Caribbean colonies gave instruction that any Caribbean seamen travelling to Britain would now require necessary proof of their British nationality. If they did not have a passport they could obtain, free of charge, a

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[112] TNA, HO 45/12314, Coloured Alien Seamen's Order, 1925, 24/9/1925
[113] TNA, HO 45/13392, Home Office to F.J Adams, India Office, 19/5/1928; see also Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p.89.
[114] TNA, HO 45/12314, Caribbean and West African seamen to Under Secretary of the State for the Colonies, 30/5/1915.

Certificate of British Nationality from the local shipping master.[115] Laura Tabili has viewed the Certificate of British Nationality and Identity issued to Caribbean seamen as a 'second-class passport' used to further recolonise black British subjects in Britain.[116] Such implications aside, what the certificate offered to Caribbean seamen was the continued ability to move freely within the sphere of the British Empire and, perhaps most importantly, it presented no hindrance to settling in Britain. It is at this point that the experience of Caribbean seamen began to diverge from that of their West African peers

From the outset, it was government policy to deny similar concessions and considerations to West African seamen. Certain functionaries within the Home Office immigration department in Liverpool continued to argue the well-trodden, but unproven narrative that West African seamen were only interested in coming to Britain so they could settle down, marry a white woman and have children so they could qualify for benefit payments. The salary of a West African fireman in the employ of Elder Dempster was £6 10s a month which was not much more than the maximum amount of benefit an unemployed married seamen could draw.[117] However, this wage was, in fact, artificially depressed. The monthly wage for merchant seamen since 1922 stood around £9.[118] The reluctance to issue West African seamen with British identity documents was largely down to an agreement that had been struck between Elder Dempster and the Home Office. The Elder Dempster Agreement had been made in 1921 and was a system of registration that allowed Elder Dempster to keep a reserve pool of labour in Liverpool whilst simultaneously allowing for them to pay lower rates and exert a greater control over West African seamen in their employ. However, the company ran into a problem. As many as 60% of men in their employ held British passports thus limiting their ability to control their workforce.[119] As British subjects these men were not tied to Elder Dempster and were free to find jobs with other shipping companies or even settle and find employment on shore. As a result, representatives from the company lobbied West African colonial governments not to issue West African seamen employed on their ships with passports.[120] Elder Dempster compelled many of those West African seamen who did have passports to give them up in order to sign up to the

[115] TNA, HO 45/12314, Notice to British West Indian Seamen, March 1926.
[116] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice',* pp.122-123.
[117] TNA, HO 45/12314, E.N Copper to Home Office, 4/1/1926.
[118] Ronald Hope, *A New History of British Shipping* (London: John Murray, 1990), p.373.
[119] TNA, CO 544/93/14, The Elder Dempster Agreement, 1933.
[120] TNA, HO 45/12314, E.N Cooper, Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925, 24/9/1925.

company's 'Green Card'.[121] This document was the Elder Dempster equivalent of the PC5 without which seamen were unable to sign on to their ships. This placed much of the power with Elder Dempster preventing, or at least severely hampering, interference in their employment practices by both the seamen's unions and the seamen's boarding house. While the 'Green Card' kept West African seamen closely tied to Elder Dempster they were still not still totally dependent on the company and were free to seek work elsewhere.

This changed with the 1925 Order. With the introduction of the legislation and the subsequent importance of having valid documentation proving their status as British subjects, this agreement gave Elder Dempster extraordinary control over their West African workforce. Many who had once thought of themselves as British subjects found that now this was no longer the case. If they lost their employment with Elder Dempster they would instantly lose their right to reside in Britain, even temporarily, and without documentation be termed 'aliens' and deported. The agreement together with the 1925 Order presented the most stringent impediment to the further migration and settlement of West African seamen in Liverpool. While this disproportionately affected new transient migrants it would also become problematic for domiciled West African seamen too and highlights a further position of vulnerability of Britain's black residents and their families.

A striking example of this vulnerability can be seen in the case of John Zarliah. Zarliah first arrived in Liverpool in 1915 at the age of 20 as a fireman. By 1919 he had married a local woman, Vera Jones, and was working at the Caryl Street gas works in the Parliament Street area of black settlement. A slight confusion exists as to his country of birth listed in the 1919 police report as being from the Gold Coast, where the 1921 Census has his birth country as Nigeria.[122] Regardless these were both at the time part of British West Africa and thus Zarliah was a British subject. Zarliah had even been called up for war service but his position at the gas works was deemed of national importance to the war effort and he was exempted.[123]

In 1928, John Zarliah became the subject of a heated debate in the House of Commons. At some point in the intervening years, he had lost his job at the gas works. Black workers in Liverpool faced severe discrimination in employment since the early 1920s. Discrimination that

[121] Belchem, *Before the Windrush,* pp.57-58.
[122] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.
[123] TNA, MT 9/2735, House of Commons, 21/6/1928.

one black charitable organisation argued was effectively an economic boycott of black workers in the city that had seen hundreds lose their jobs.[124] Indeed, Liverpool authorities admitted in a letter to the Home Office that some 350 black workers, mainly employed in sugar factories in Liverpool, had been discharged from their jobs.[125] As a consequence, like many other black residents in Britain, and with few options available to him, Zarliah returned to seafaring. However, at some point, he fell afoul of Elder Dempster and was blacklisted by the company.[126] Now unemployed, he reported to the Labour Bureau but without his Elder Dempster 'Green Card' and possessing no other identity documents to prove he was a British subject, he was promptly transferred to the Immigration Office, imprisoned in the Bridewell and from there placed aboard the S.S Abinsi for immediate deportation. He was granted a mere fifteen minutes to say goodbye to his wife and child.[127]

This is not the first time Zarliah and his family had become entangled in government bureaucracy targeted at black seamen in Britain. In 1919 he had been one of the many married black seamen in Liverpool willing to repatriate but like Benjamin Ladipo Pratt and many others his white wife was refused repatriation alongside him.[128] The reason that the case of John Zarliah became a touchpoint in Parliament was not only that his deportation had left his wife and child destitute and dependent on the state but that he had been deported to Sierra Leone. MPs challenged the Home Secretary in a debate as to why a supposed alien had been deported to a British colony; a question the Home Secretary struggled to answer, simply stating that if Zarliah could prove his British status he would be allowed to return Britain.[129] However, previously discussed, West African colonial governments had been advised not to issue such identity documents to West African seamen, leaving Zarliah in a state of bureaucratic limbo. Although the fate of John Zarliah and his family remains unknown, there is evidence that the African and West Indian Mission, a local charitable organisation in Liverpool, was still providing financial aid to his wife Vera several years later.[130] The case of John Zarliah proved such an embarrassment

[124] LRO 352 MAY/1/62, A Petition to the Lord Mayor of Liverpool from the African Christian Association, 17/8/1920.
[125] LRO 352 MAY/1/67, Lord Mayor of Liverpool to the Home Office, 6/9/1920.
[126] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice',* p.75.
[127] Belchem, *Before the Windrush,* p.58.
[128] TNA, HO 45/11017/377969, Repatriation of Negroes, 26/6/1919.
[129] TNA, MT 9/2735, House of Commons, 21/6/1928.
[130] Bodleian Library, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 23 / H1 / 17, Committee for the Welfare of Africans in London in association with E Adkins, African and West Indian Mission, Liverpool, 12/7/1931.

to the government that in the future they actively discouraged the deportation of married men.[131] The treatment and experience of Zarliah highlights just how vulnerable the position of black residents in Britain had become by the end of the 1920s as unemployment and the 1925 Order combined to exert pressure on areas of black settlement.

However, it is important to observe that migration did not stop altogether. Despite the increased vulnerability of areas of black settlement caused by the unforgiving economic climate together with legislation that placed restrictions on the migration and settlement of black seamen, some still managed to find a way around colonial bureaucracy and continue to make Britain their home. For example, William Kari-Kari, a West African seaman from Accra who had been working ships to and from the Gold Coast and Liverpool, and who had been staying in the city in between voyages since 1924, decided that he wished to make the metropole his home. In 1925, Kari-Kari, aware that passports were not being issued to seamen in West Africa, lied about his occupation claiming to be a 'clerk'. The deception was successful and authorities issued him with a British passport.[132] Now settled in Liverpool, he married a local woman at Brownlow Hill Registry Office in 1927 and had one child with whom he shared a home with at 138 Windsor Street south of Parliament Street. However, despite his resourcefulness in obtaining the right to remain in Britain, Kari Kari was unable to avoid the unemployment that was endemic among black residents and found himself without work and in receipt of parish relief payments.[133] The example of Kari-Kari illustrates that not all black seamen were ignorant of their ever-changing status and demonstrated the possibility of usurping colonial bureaucracy in order to continue to make their home in Britain. However, by the late 1920s such men appear to be in the minority and certainly not enough to continue to generate significant growth in areas of black settlement.

Conclusion

The implementation of The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen Order) 1925 was the culmination of a myriad of social, economic and political factors that had a dramatic effect on the migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen as well as the seamen's boarding house that had historically supported them. After a period of such rapid growth, it appears that by the end of the 1920s, black migration to Britain and the growth of settlement had stagnated. In a review in 1928 into the effectiveness of the 1925 Order held by the Home

[131] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice'* p.75.
[132] TNA, HO 45/14299, Immigration Officer's Report, Kari-Kari, William Jacob Berku, 7/9/1925.
[133] TNA, HO 45/14299, Immigration Officer's Report, William Jacob Berku Kari-Kari, 20/4/1931.

Office, the Assistant Chief Constable of Liverpool believed that since implementation, migration and settlement in the city had all but ceased with the black population remaining static.[134] That migration and settlement to Britain may have reached a peak and was now tapering out can be corroborated by some later sources. Nancie Sharpe who was employed to conduct a social survey of Cardiff and London in the early 1930s, and who was later employed by the League of Coloured People to continue this work suggested that in 1934 the non-white population of Cardiff was around 3000, over 2000 of whom she believed to be of Caribbean or West African heritage.[135] This was a sizable but not catastrophic reduction from the figure of 3000 widely circulated for the immediate post-war size of the city's black population.[136] However, while the 1925 Order certainly had an effect on black settlement in Britain, it was the lack of employment opportunities in merchant shipping more generally, together with the discrimination that the black population experienced finding work in Britain, that played a key role in this stagnation. As a consequence, the metropole became a far less attractive and more hostile environment, deterring many who previously may have chosen to settle.

It is also important to consider the effect that the decline in the seamen's boarding house had on maintaining areas of black settlement in Britain in the immediate post war years and throughout the 1920s. White crowds targeted the boarding house during the ethnic violence of 1919 identifying it as a symbol of the black presence and valuable refuge for Caribbean and West African seamen. Anthony Cohen argues that members of a community find their identities as individuals through the occupancy of the community's social spaces, 'if outsiders trespass in that space, then its occupants' own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced'.[137] That rioters breached this important social space would have had a profound psychological impact on Caribbean and West African men in Britain. Historians have often cited the violent events of 1919 as the formative event in the establishment of a black British community identity as men and women from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds came together in their resistance to this racially motivated violence. Others go as far as to say that these early black communities were born from crisis of which the riots were an essential factor.[138] However, while the year

[134] TNA, HO 45/13392, Coloured Alien Seamen, Notes of Conference held at the Home Office, 28/1/1928.
[135] 'Cardiff's Coloured Population', *The Keys,* Vol.1, No.3, Jan. 1934, p.44.
[136] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 304; see also Chapter 2.
[137] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), p.109.
[138] Diane Frost, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p.189; Raymond Costello, 'The Making of a

1919 does present a coming together to a certain extent, it would be wrong to look at it as being the formative event in an onward and upward trajectory towards the formation of a black community in the modern sense. While solidarity between Caribbean and West African seamen had been forming more gradually over many years through spaces such as the seamen's boarding house, the economic and political challenges throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s would come to identify areas of black settlement as something more idiosyncratic, fragile and complicated.

The seamen's boarding house had been vital in supporting Caribbean and West African men in Britain and in resisting the wholesale removal of unemployed black seamen from Britain through various repatriation schemes introduced by the government. The boarding house keeper's reasons behind this resistance was not entirely altruistic as they were ostensibly protecting their own business interests. However, their skills at keeping the state at arm's length, skills that had been honed over decades, helped protect and maintain these men. This resistance and support came at a cost and as boarding houses began to close, areas of black settlement not only began to lose an important social space, it also led to the loss of a vital component of Caribbean and West African seamen's migration network further adding to the stagnation in settlement growth. The seamen's boarding house was further undermined by the rise in the power and influence of the seamen's union's particularly the NSFU, that, in turn, saw their own power and influence decline as they lost their monopoly and control of the labour market. The seamen's boarding house never recovered from these social and economic challenges to its trade in the 1920s. Yet despite such challenges, the seamen's boarding house still managed to provide a high level of support to Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain; support that facilitated and encouraged black seamen to begin to express themselves politically and additionally provided a base from which their voices could be heard as they fought back against exploitation and discrimination. As the seamen's boarding house trade atrophied, areas of black settlement in Britain were losing one of the major building blocks on which they were founded. This decline, along with the social and economic pressures of the 1930s, would see a reshaping of areas of black settlement as they and their residents adapted and transitioned.

Liverpool Community: An Elusive Narrative', in *Britain's Black Past*, ed. by Gretchen Gerzina (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p.113.

Chapter Four

The 1930s, Areas of Black Settlement and the Decline of the Seamen's Boarding House

Introduction

As British society continued to weather serious economic depression during the interwar years, the 1930s presented significant challenges for both Britain's black population and the seamen's boarding house in London, Liverpool and Cardiff. As the last chapter concluded, a mixture of social, economic and political pressures had seen the migration of West African and Caribbean seamen to Britain, which, with the exception of the war years 1914–1918, had always been steady rather than large-scale, all but slow to a trickle. Despite this, areas of black settlement did not fade and disappear but continued to endure and with the decline in migration came a shift in the social dynamics within these spaces as they came to be defined less by transience and more by their settled population. The endurance of these neighbourhoods was, in part, down to the solid foundations that the seamen's boarding house had helped establish. However, by the 1930s the presence and importance of the seamen's boarding house within areas of black settlement was in decline. The persistent interwar economic depression and political interference by both the state and local players in the port economy saw Britain's black residents and the seamen's boarding house itself become increasingly marginalised. This chapter will explore what role, if any, the seamen's boarding house continued to play in supporting black seamen and the maintenance and development of areas of black settlement in British port cities more broadly. Furthermore, with the declining role of the boarding house, it will also seek to understand how as the economic depression worsened and as social dynamics within areas of black settlement changed, Caribbean and West African seamen and their families navigated the social and economic challenges of the 1930s.

Development of Areas of Black Settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff in the 1930s

Crucial to the historical understanding of the dynamics and development of areas of black settlement in the 1930s are a collection of social surveys published throughout the decade that placed Britain's black and mixed-heritage population at the centre of their study. Very few contemporary sources provide the same level of insight into the social and economic lives of working-class black Britons during the interwar period as these social surveys. The three most prominent were *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other*

Ports by Muriel Fletcher, published in 1930*,* (the Fletcher Report)[1] *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* by Nancie Sharpe, published in 1933, (the Sharpe Report)[2] and finally, *Social Conditions in Ports and Dockland Areas* by Captain F.A Richardson published in 1935. (the Richardson Report).[3] These publications provide not only rich insight into the lived experience of black and mixed-heritage Britons and the development of areas of black settlement, they also serve as an instrument through which to understand the prejudice suffered by these men and women as they navigated the economic depression of the 1930s.

However, despite their importance as sources these social surveys are not without problem. On publication, rather than helping black and mixed-heritage Britons, they often compounded well-entrenched negative beliefs, in particular with regards to those of mixed-heritage, leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation. Some scholars have deemed some of these social surveys so problematic and imbued with racism, in particular the Fletcher Report, as to make it irrelevant to academic study.[4] Furthermore, the social surveys also suffered from poor methodology. For example, some contemporary observers regarded the Fletcher Report as 'an extraordinarily able document and full of the most impressive and authoritative detail.'[5] However, in reality, the Fletcher report contained serious methodological and ethical failings. For example, as Mark Christian highlights of the 450 families that Fletcher proposes to have found in Liverpool, she claims to have directly observed 91 of these when in reality the number was only 13, or 3%, of all the black and mixed families in the city.[6] Likewise, Richardson's methodology in his social survey can be challenged as he had very little direct contact with the black and mixed-heritage residents in London, Liverpool and Cardiff and relied heavily on the police for the majority of his information.[7] Sharpe, however, understood and acknowledged the limitations of such social

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[1] LRO, 352.26 FLE, M.E Fletcher, *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports* (Liverpool: Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children, 1930).
[2] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).
[3] LSE, The Women's Library, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Seamen: Publications incl. - pamphlet 'Social conditions in ports and dockland areas. London, Liverpool, Cardiff', survey conducted by the Joint Council of the British Social Hygiene Council and the British Council for the Welfare of the Mercantile Marine (1935).
[4] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p.62.
[5] Bodleian Library, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.23/H1/18, Sir John Harris, Anti-Slavery Society, to Ernest Adkins, African & West Indian Mission, Liverpool, 22/12/1931.
[6] Mark Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930: A Historical Case Study of Contested Black Mixed Heritage Britishness', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 21 (2008), p.222.
[7] Michael Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Cape, 1955), p.36.

surveys. She admitted that the lack of time available and access not only made it difficult to gather data on harder to quantify groups such as mixed-heritage young adults outside of school age but also to build confidence and relationships with local people in order to develop trust and share personal information.[8] Nonetheless, while the Sharpe Report framed black and mixed-heritage Britons in a more sympathetic light, it also suffers from similar biases affecting the other social surveys. For instance, as Simon Jenkins highlights, the negative conceptions that surrounded non-white sexuality prevalent in the Fletcher Report are also evident in Sharpe's.[9] However, as Mark Christian has argued in his critique of the Fletcher Report, despite their biases and methodological shortcomings, rather than falling into irrelevance these social surveys provide rich insight into the social and economic status of Caribbean and West African seamen and their families and are key to our understanding of the historic black experience in Britain in the decade before the Second World War.[10]

Moreover, the inclusion in both the Fletcher Report and the Sharpe Report of maps highlighting settlement patterns of working-class Caribbean and West African men and their families in London, Liverpool and Cardiff provide valuable insight into changes and developments in areas of black settlement in these cities by the 1930s. Data for these maps came from a variety of sources. While Sharpe is not explicit as to the organisations that provided the information for her maps, Fletcher drew on a host of different sources for her data, including local schools, welfare organisations, employment exchanges and religious institutions who provided information on the 450 families included on her map.[11] This reliance on local welfare organisations has led some scholars to accuse her sample size of being unduly biased and focused on poor working-class families, and thus, her map failed to include the full spectrum of the social and economic status of mixed families living in Liverpool at the time.[12] However, whilst this shortcoming is important

[8] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.4-5.
[9] Simon Jenkins, 'Aliens and Predators: Miscegenation, Prostitution and Racial Identities in Cardiff, 1927–47', *Cultural and Social History*, 11 (2014), p.581.
[10] Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930', p.238.
[11] Fletcher does acknowledge some duplication in her data while also acknowledging that a small minority included were not of African origin see LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, pp.10-11; For her data set Sharpe acknowledges the difficulty of balancing information from 'outside sources' as she terms them as well as information from her own personal connection with families, see CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.4-5.
[12] Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930', p.222; While not the focus of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that by the interwar period Britain was home to a burgeoning black middle-class that was beginning to express itself more vocally both socially and politically within metropolitan British society. Some notable examples include John Richard Archer who was head of the African Progress Union following the war and had the honour of being London's first black mayor when he was elected in Battersea in 1913 see Sean Creighton, '"I am Lancastrian bred and born…" The Life and Times of John

to acknowledge, for the scope of this research that focuses on working-class black seamen these maps are extremely relevant and have been utilised.

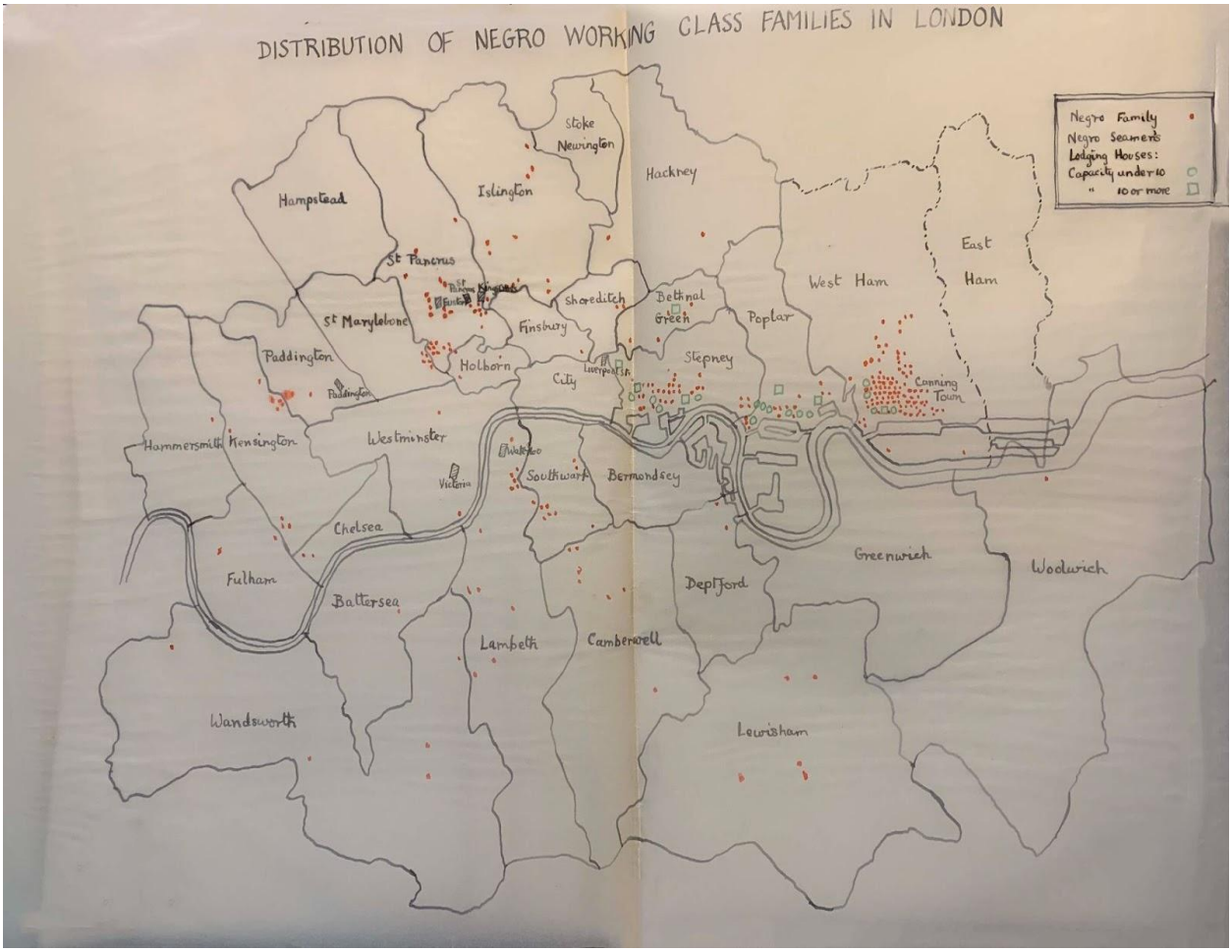

Figure 4: Distribution of working-class families with a black head of household in London, 1933 (Source: Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).

Archer, 1863–1932', North West Labour History, 20 (1995-1996), pp. 73-85; Edward T. Nelson who had been born in British Guiana and studied law at Oxford and who had acted as defence counsel for fifteen black men arrested during the 1919 ethnic riots in Liverpool see Jeffrey P. Green, 'Edward T. Nelson (1874–1940)', *New Community*, 12.1 (1984), pp.149–154. More broadly see Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

Figure 5: Distribution of families with a black head of household in Liverpool, 1930 (Source: LRO, 352.26 FLE, M.E Fletcher, *Report on the Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports* (Liverpool: Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children, 1930).

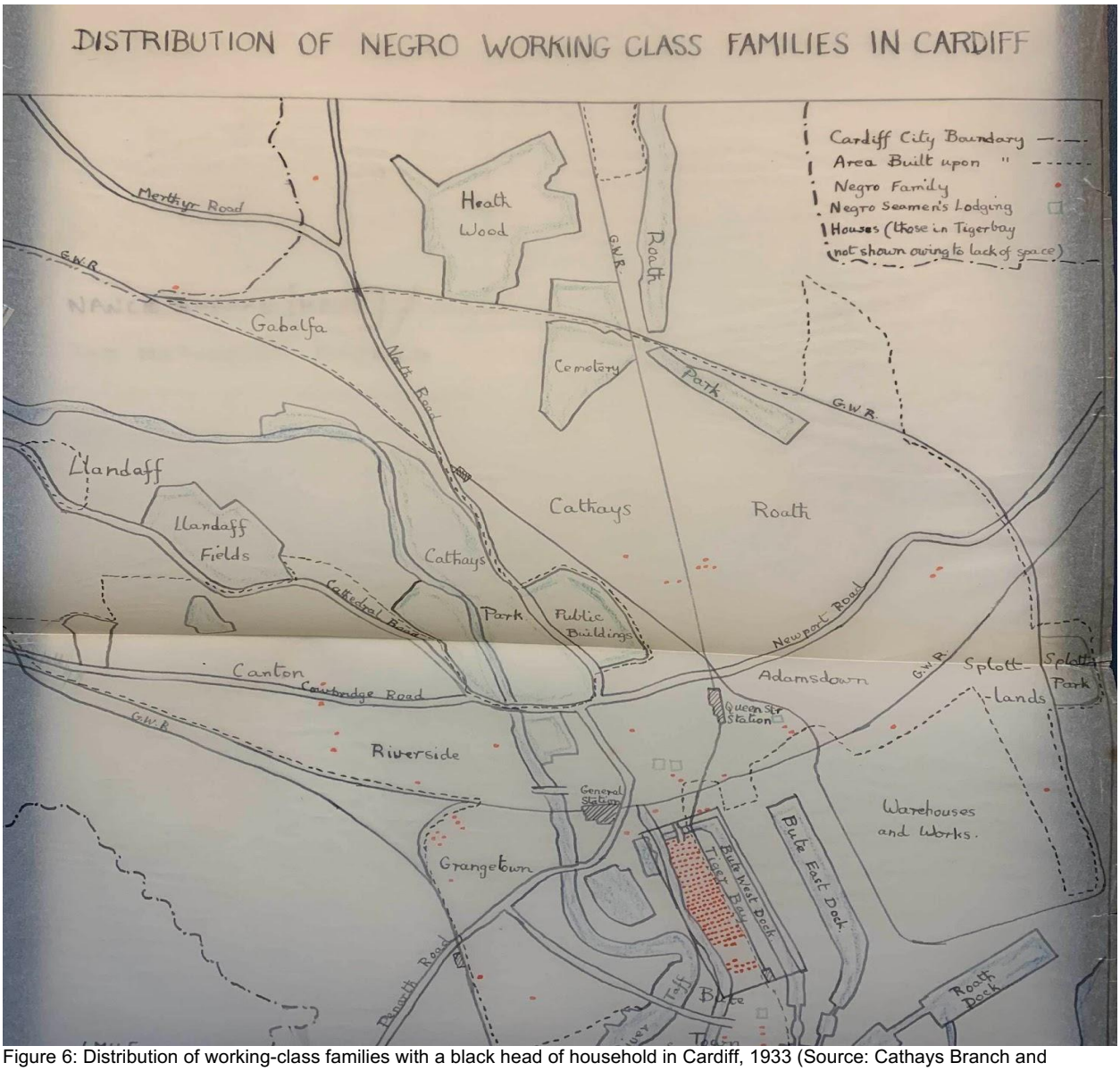

Figure 6: Distribution of working-class families with a black head of household in Cardiff, 1933 (Source: Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, LC84:301.185 SHA, Nancie Sharpe, *Report on the Negro Population in London and Cardiff* (London: The Methodist Church, 1933).

All three maps highlight that British port cities by the 1930s were home to a diverse black presence spread throughout the cities. Yet, despite this spread, by far the largest concentration of Caribbean and West African men and their families remained firmly situated within established areas of black settlement that had developed since the late nineteenth century in the old sailortown districts of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. These traditional areas of settlement remained the focal point of Britain's black presence during the decade, as although there had been some diversification in employment opportunities, the majority of working-class West African and Caribbean men in Britain remained dependent on seafaring employment.

London returns perhaps the broadest spread of black working-class families of all three cities (see Figure 4). Many of those who had moved out of the historic areas of black settlement had transitioned away from seafaring and into alternative employment, taking advantage of the entertainment industry in the West End and finding employment as actors and musicians. However, as noted by Sharpe most of these men had at one time been seamen or, at the very least, had worked their passage to Britain as seamen. London was in fact home to a significant number of West African and Caribbean men who had migrated from other port cities.[13] For instance, one of these men was Uriah Erskine, who had left the seamen's boarding house trade in Cardiff and was now running The Erskine Club on Whitfield Street in the West End.[14]

As illustrated in Sharpe's map of London, a strong black presence remained close to the docks in Stepney and Poplar, which were home to some of the earliest West African and Caribbean settlement in the city. However, by 1933, Canning Town, which had been developing as an area of black settlement in the city since the First World War, had become home to the largest, most concentrated population of black working-class families in not only East London but the city as a whole. Sharpe estimated that there were roughly 1500 unmarried black seamen in the East London docklands areas including West Ham, with between 250-300 families with West African or Caribbean heads of household, 247 of whom she had directly traced. [15] So, while in London the diversification of employment had seen some Caribbean and West African men move to other areas of the city, the largest number of black working-class families remained near the docks sustaining traditional areas of black settlement.

Furthermore, unique to her London map, Sharpe included seamen's boarding houses, of which a significant number remained active at the heart of areas of black settlement near the docks. This presence would seem to suggest there was still a certain amount of demand for their services from black seamen in the city in the early 1930s. However, as will be explored in more detail below, despite this presence, the seamen's boarding house that had once proven pivotal to the maintenance of Caribbean and West African men and areas of black settlement themselves began to take a less central role. Continued economic hardship, combined with fewer transient black seamen visiting and areas of black settlement now defined by a more

[13] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.74.
[14] 'Black and White - Police Stories of Raid on Coloured Man's Club', *Daily News (London)*, 3/1/1925.
[15] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.21.

settled presence, all began to place a pressure on the trade and exacerbate the decline that had already begun in the 1920s.

As can be observed in Fletcher's map of Liverpool (See Figure 5), by the 1930s West African and Caribbean seamen in the city maintained a visible and notable presence across a wide area in the south end of the city. While the black population was not as spread as London, the fluidity in the boundaries of areas of black settlement in the city saw them less contained by geography of Liverpool's dockside neighbourhood compared to Cardiff (see Figure 6). Despite this and similar to London, the densest concentration of black residents and their families in the city remained in the traditional areas of black settlement. These were around Great George Square (Figure 5 (A)) and south of Parliament Street (Figure 5 (B)). Additionally, north of these traditional areas, a significant concentrated black presence was prominent in the area around Brownlow Hill (Figure 5 (C)). This area had begun to develop around a collection of seamen's boarding houses outside the two more prominent areas of black settlement in 1921, highlighting the strong foundations the seamen's boarding house laid in the development of areas of black settlement in Britain.

In Cardiff, Sharpe estimated that there were between 1500-2000 black seamen in the city, two-thirds of whom were Caribbeans, with the remainder from British and Portuguese West Africa and a small number of African Americans. However, unlike with her figures for London, Sharpe failed to differentiate between single, unmarried seamen and settled men who had married and started families in Cardiff.[16] Significant and evident in Sharpe's map of Cardiff is the limited spread of the city's black population (See Figure 6). While a handful of families were living in other parts of the city, black and mixed families were still firmly concentrated in the Loudoun Square area. Sharpe suggested that one reason for this lack of mobility was that unlike a city the size of London, where alternate trades and professions beyond that of seafaring had attracted black men to other parts of the city, Cardiff, having less alternative employment options open to working-class black men, meant that the vast majority remained near the docks and its maritime employment.[17] Furthermore, Butetown's restrictive physical and social geography also played an influential role in the low spatial mobility of Cardiff's black residents.

[16] *ibid*.
[17] *ibid*, p.18.

Effects of Social Change and Economic Depression on The Seamen's Boarding House and Areas of Black Settlement

As demonstrated by the maps above, interwar areas of black settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff remained home to a large, visible and diverse population. However, examination of these maps in isolation neglects to acknowledge the more complex picture that needs to be considered when regarding the development and growth of these areas of settlement. By the 1930s the migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen in British port cities had slowed considerably. A persistently poor economic climate throughout the 1920s alongside the hardening political legislation aimed at restricting settlement had played a decisive role. The extent to which migration and settlement had slowed in Britain during the interwar period can be most clearly observed through the data collected as part of a social survey undertaken in Liverpool in 1939. *The Economic Status of Coloured Families in the Port of Liverpool* was compiled by David Caradog Jones and published in 1940, however, H.F. Prescod, a black resident of Liverpool originally from British Guiana conducted the majority of the fieldwork for this report.[18] Having taken a sample size of 190 black men resident in Liverpool, Caradog Jones and Prescod observed that:

> Only 1 had been in the country for less than 5 years, 19 had lived here for five but less than 10 years, 48 for ten but less than 20 years, 100 for twenty but less than thirty years, and 22 for thirty years or more.[19]

These figures support that after the boom in migration that took place between approximately 1910 and the end of the First World War, there was a steady and significant decline in new migrants settling in Liverpool across the following decades.

While some transient black seamen continued to visit British ports, the more hostile social, economic and political environment that had begun with the 1919 ethnic riots and hardened still further through policies such as repatriation and the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925, had not only reduced their number but, significantly, had also made Britain a far less attractive and more difficult place for West African and Caribbean seamen to

[18] LRO, 309.1 UNI, David Caradog Jones, 'The Economic Status of Coloured Families in the Port of Liverpool' in *New Merseyside Series: Reports Issued in Continuation of the Social Survey of Merseyside, 1934–1950* (Liverpool: The University Press of Liverpool, 1940).
[19] *ibid,* p.11.

both seek employment and settle. In spite of the impact of the attempts by the state and shipping companies to prevent the migration and settlement of Caribbean and West African seamen since the end of the First World War, migration was not entirely impeded and some still managed to bypass restrictions and settle. For example, in Liverpool in 1931 where there had been 33 applications for domicile by West African seamen, local authorities had accepted 27 as these men had been able to produce British passports.[20] By 1933, the Home Office estimated that out of the 371 West African seamen that Elder Dempster had initially registered under the agreement negotiated with the government in 1921, in part to actually prevent their settlement, some 213 had passed beyond its control, settled in Liverpool and started families.[21] However, while greatly reduced, this small amount of continued settlement was enough to stoke anxiety among those charged with handling migration. As a result there were renewed calls, from both the head immigration officer in Liverpool and Elder Dempster, for tighter control on the issue of passports and other identity documents to West African seamen in the hope of preventing further settlement.[22] Yet, even with the call for tighter immigration controls, restrictions around the movement of Caribbean seamen continued to be less stringent, and while both metropolitan and colonial authorities advocated against the issue of passports to these men, they actively encouraged those not already in possession of one to apply for a Certificate of Nationality when travelling to Britain, a document that, as previously discussed, proved their status and rights as a British subject.[23] However, on the whole, despite attempts by a tenacious few, numbers of new migrants settling in Britain was negligible compared to 1914–1918.

However, despite the decrease in new migrants, areas of black settlement continued to endure in the 1930s. Mixed families of West African and Caribbean men and metropolitan-born white and mixed-heritage women, who had always been vital to the social dynamics of areas of black settlement, began to take on a more central role as these areas came to be sustained more by these settled families. As these areas of black settlement began to be defined by a more settled presence, a growing mixed-heritage population became vital to their sustenance and development. Britons of mixed-heritage had always been a key but somewhat hidden presence within areas of black settlement since their foundation. The substantial migration of Caribbean

[20] TNA, MT 9/2735, Immigration Officer's Report, Elder Dempster Agreement-Coloured Seamen, 8/3/1932.
[21] TNA, CO 554/93/14, Minutes of Interdepartmental Meeting to Discuss Amendments to Elder Dempster Agreement, 3/3/1933.
[22] TNA, CO 554/93/14, E.N Cooper to Colonial Office, 21/4/1933; TNA, CO 554/93/14, Gerald F. Forring to HM Inspector Immigration Office, Liverpool, Issue of Passports to West Africans, 19/7/1933.
[23] TNA, HO 45/12314, Notice to British West Indian Seamen, March 1926.

and West African seamen that took place during the First World War, significantly increased the numbers of mixed-heritage children living in London, Liverpool and Cardiff, and by the 1930s they had become a more prominent demographic group.

Ascertaining accurate figures for the number of mixed-heritage young people in areas of black settlement in the 1930s proves challenging. As mentioned above, the flawed methodology of the Fletcher report cited by Christian and the lack of time for her research cited by Sharpe, impacted the accuracy of the figures in their social surveys. On the other hand, the figures included in the social surveys still prove useful for a broad understanding of the number of mixed-heritage children and young adults and will be used considerately for this purpose. Fletcher claimed that in 1930 there were an estimated 1,350 children of mixed-heritage in Liverpool with an average of 3.3 per family, but argued that, in many cases, this number was as high as 5.1.[24] However, Fletcher's figures appear considerably inflated when compared with Sharpe's for 1933 in London and Cardiff. In her figures for East London, Sharpe estimated the number of mixed-heritage children aged between infant and fourteen years and over at 301, with a further 226 in the rest of the city making a total of 527. In Cardiff, she estimated the number to be 331.[25] Sharpe highlights that black and mixed families in East London averaged 2.9 children per family, which was about the average number of children for a white working-class family in those same districts.[26] Caradog Jones and Prescod, in 1939, suggests that the reason for Fletcher's more inflated figures may have been due to a measure of duplication in her results.[27] Richardson supports Sharpe's more balanced estimates for Cardiff in his social survey, placing the number of mixed-heritage children in the port at about 400 by 1935. Likewise, he admits though that this number is moderate and only includes those of mixed-heritage who were of school age.[28]

As this thesis has demonstrated in previous chapters, areas of black settlement in Cardiff and Liverpool appeared to have grown and developed at a similar rate and maintained a comparable size since their establishment. The emergence of a large mixed-heritage demographic is emblematic of the more settled dynamics that had come to define areas of black settlement in British port cities by the 1930s. As these metropolitan-born and settled families became key to

[24] LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, p.11.
[25] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.147.
[26] *ibid*, pp.47-48.
[27] LRO, 309.1 UNI, 'The Economic Status of Coloured Families', p.10.
[28] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.19.

the growth and development of black neighbourhoods the same cannot be said of the seamen's boarding house. As social and economic dynamics began to change there came a decline in the influence and role of the seamen's boarding house. Most notably, by their very nature of being metropolitan-born, mixed-heritage men and women already had their roots firmly established in Britain and did not require the transitional space of the seamen's boarding house in the same way as their migrant parents had once done. However, they were not completely irrelevant to this demographic group. As will be explored below, women of mixed-heritage in particular developed a close relationship to the trade during this period. This change in social dynamic from transient to predominantly settled would prove significant for the seamen's boarding house as the trade relied on a constant stream of transient seamen for their income without which they could not survive.

Three factors would have a profound effect on the seamen's boarding house; the decline in migration, the shift in the social dynamics and economic status of areas of black settlement and economic depression. As has been established in this thesis so far, the trade was intertwined and dependent on both the transience of seamen and a robust shipping industry. The economic troubles that had been affecting the seamen's boarding house trade since the 1920s, depression in British shipping, as well as a loss of much of its power and influence to other actors in the port economy, such as the seamen's unions, all became more acute, and the 1930s would, as a consequence, see the trade go into significant decline. 1921 onwards saw a notable decrease in the number of black seamen's boarding houses in British port cities, as will be seen with licensing information available for London this was part of a wider trend of a decline in their number more generally. Due to the assiduous application of the byelaws in Cardiff, the city's police and licensing authorities kept detailed records of seamen's boarding houses. This source allows for the historian to observe the decrease in the city in more detail. Reports made by Cardiff City Police to the local Health Committees reveal that of the forty-two seamen's boarding houses that had catered to West African and Caribbean seamen in 1921, only fourteen remained in operation by 1927.[29] Only two years later, in 1929, this number had decreased further, with the Chief Constable James Wilson reporting to the Watch Committee that only eight remained that exclusively catered to black seamen, five for West Africans and three for Caribbean. Wilson stated that it was not the authorities that had closed these

[29] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Seamen's and Common Lodging Houses: Reports to Health Committee, with some Correspondence about Applications for Licences, 1927–1956.

businesses down but a lack of patronage.[30] Furthermore, the 1930s would only see one application for a new boarding house for black seamen in Cardiff. In 1932, authorities granted Mary Freeman, the metropolitan-born white wife of a West African seaman, a licence to board West African seamen at 30a Angelina Street. However, Cardiff police noted in her file that she was initially unable to house any seamen due to the lack of funds needed to purchase the necessary beds and bedding. Despite this, Freeman was able to open her home up to provide regular meals to West African seamen.[31] Freeman's difficulties in establishing herself in the trade is reflective of economic challenges faced by boarding house keepers by this period as well as residents of areas of black settlement more broadly. By the eve of the Second World War in 1939, there would only be five black seamen's boarding houses remaining, including Issac Phenis' enduring business at 12 South Church Street.[32]

In contrast to Cardiff, record keeping in London and Liverpool was less stringent. While specific figures that demonstrate the decline in black seamen's boarding houses in London are difficult to uncover, in her social survey from 1933, Sharpe identified sixteen black seamen's boarding houses operating in Stepney and Poplar with a further five in Canning Town.[33] The London County Council reported a general decline in the number of applications for the renewal of licences for seamen's boarding houses under their authority throughout the 1920s, from fifty-four in 1920 to only twenty-six in 1929.[34] It would be unlikely that 61% of the remaining seamen's boarding houses in Stepney and Poplar catered solely to West African and Caribbean seamen. As mentioned in Chapter One, London appeared to be less rigorous in the application of their byelaws regarding seamen's boarding houses, and some of those that Sharpe observed in her report may have been unlicensed businesses. Figures for Liverpool are even more difficult to quantify as their byelaws had been repealed in 1933 and licensing records before that time have been lost. Overall, while empirical evidence for Liverpool is lacking, there is an evident decline in the number of seamen's boarding houses both in Cardiff and London impacted, in part, by a decrease in migration and the reduction in transient seamen alongside the growth of a more settled population. However, this was not the sole factor behind the

[30] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff, 8/1/1929, pp.3-4.
[31] DCONC/7/5/3, Seamen's lodging houses: files for registration numbers 1-16 1909–1964, '30a Angelina Street'.
[32] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Seamen's and Common Lodging houses: Reports to Health Committee, with some Correspondence about Applications for Licences, 1927–1956.
[33] See Figure 4.
[34] LMA, LCC/PH/REG/1/23, Annual meeting for Licensing Seamen's Boarding Houses, 1911–1929.

decline of the trade in the 1930s and it is vital to consider further social and economic factors that impacted both the fortunes of the seamen's boarding house and areas of black settlement.

As the 1930s progressed, the traditional sailortown neighbourhoods in which areas of black settlement had developed, were severely impacted by economic depression due to their continued reliance on British shipping. All the contemporaneous social surveys, from Fletcher in 1930 through to Caradog Jones and Prescod in 1939, concur that they represented some of the most deprived areas, not only in the port cities of London, Liverpool and Cardiff, but in Britain more widely. Richardson opens his survey by explaining:

> The outstanding feature […] without exception mercantile docks appear to be embedded in very poor or slum areas, and the fact that there is a general air of neglect in the administration of such districts.[35]

Similarly, Sharpe describes the dockside neighbourhoods of London and Cardiff, 'as a poor uninteresting quarter' where one, 'has to go a long way before he arrives at anything better.'[36] The administrative neglect that Richardson refers to had manifested itself in a distinct lack of amenities available to residents in these areas. Notably, with very few exceptions, there was a near-total absence of green spaces, playgrounds or parks. Loudoun Square, in the heart of the area of black settlement in Cardiff, provided one of these rare exceptions and was home to a small and well-used children's playground. Additionally, opportunities for leisure were also severely limited with many of these areas lacking commonplace entertainment attractions such as a cinema.[37] Nonetheless, there were attempts at providing at least some social activity for children organised mainly through local religious institutions. For example, in Cardiff, there was an infant welfare and play centre three days a week at the school on South Church Street, while for older children, the local Wesleyan church in Loudoun Square was home to a scout troop.[38] Similarly, in Liverpool, the African Churches Mission provided a boy scout and girl guides group alongside a well-attended Sunday school from their premises in the heart of the well-established area of black settlement south of Parliament Street at 122/124 Hill Street. Established in 1922 by Nigerian-born Pastor George Daniels Ekarte, the Mission was an important black Liverpool

[35] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.4.
[36] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.27.
[37] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.5.
[38] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.90-91.

institution that provided both religious and social services to its predominantly, but not exclusively, West African congregation and their families.[39] However, despite these community driven attempts at providing social activities for the area they were extremely limited.

Correspondingly, for adults living in dockside neighbourhoods, entertainment was to be found in the significant number of public houses and cafes that provided one of the few distractions to residents in the area. The Richardson Report, looking to emphasise the bleak social environment in which areas of black settlement had developed in London, observed that in Canning Town, 'what light, warmth and welcome there is on the Victoria Dock Road, London, comes from the windows and doors of its public houses.'[40] While pubs were popular, Sharpe noted that for Caribbean and West African seamen it was the cafes where they tended to spend most of their social time.[41]

Cafes in the late 1920s became the focus of particular social concern by the authorities, particularly in Cardiff.[42] Unconstrained by licensing laws, unlike pubs, cafés often remained open into the early hours. The Chief Constable of Cardiff accused the cafes of illegal practices such as selling liquor without a licence. Additionally, due to their practice of employing white women, he levelled accusations that they acted as a covert cover for prostitution. However, he was forced to admit that authorities often struggled to secure convictions for brothel keeping against cafe owners due to lack of evidence.[43] Richardson, having heavily relied on the police for information for his report, paints the sailortown cafe in a very negative light, describing them euphemistically as 'places of rendezvous.'[44] However, as Jenkins has argued, fears of cafés as brothels were framed around wider anxieties in regard to these spaces being sites of miscegenation encouraging relationships between black men and white women.[45] Similar accusations had been levelled against black seamen's boarding houses as their numbers

[39] LRO, Acc.4910, George Daniels Ekarte, African Churches Mission to The Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund (Surplus) 21/4/1934; see also Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission Liverpool 1931–1964* (London: Savannah, 1994).
[40] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.5.
[41] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.90-91.
[42] Jenkins, 'Aliens and Predators', p.580.
[43] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff, 8/1/1929, p.6. Prostitutes did utilise some cafes to work their trade. A police crackdown on streetwalking forced prostitutes to employ alternative tactics, one of which was the cafe, in order to keep working and evade the authorities. See Simon Jenkins, 'Inherent Vice? Maltese Men and the Organization of Prostitution in Interwar Cardiff', *Journal of Social History*, 49 (2016), p.931.
[44] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.13.
[45] Jenkins, 'Aliens and Predators', p.581.

increased and became more prominent in the early twentieth century, with black keepers accused of running disreputable houses and keeping white women who lived with them as 'white slaves.'[46]

Whilst cafes provided important social spaces in areas of black settlement their rise within the culture of port cities in the 1920s and 1930s presented an increasing encroachment on the valuable role the seamen's boarding house played as a social space for Caribbean and West African seamen. Seamen's boarding houses had historically faced competition for black seamen's time and money from other trades in sailortown whilst on land. However, this shift in social dependency alongside the decline of the seamen's boarding house in terms of number had a direct impact on their influence and role in the port community. As Chapter Two previously explored, some seamen's boarding houses often operated an ancillary business acting as refreshment shops, with some providing illicit activities such as gambling.[47] Some cafes likewise operated as shebeens, illegally selling alcohol and permitting men and women to dance without a licence. Cafes, similar to the seamen's boarding house, were commonly organised along ethnic lines and became increasingly valuable as a social space for black seamen, both transitory and settled, in these neighbourhoods.[48] However, as with the boarding house this was not exclusive. For instance, in Cardiff, one ethnic group would come to corner the market and by the late 1920s Maltese proprietors dominated the trade.[49] With few exceptions, seamen of all nationalities and ethnicities frequented these cafes making them a further important space of interethnic interaction and cooperation that typified sailortowns in twentieth century Britain.[50] Further impact to the boarding house can be observed as it became increasingly difficult to maintain a profitable business as a boarding house keeper, those who had previously run a dual trade opted to give up their licence in order to focus on simply running a cafe. Benjamin Jemmott, originally from Barbados, demonstrated this decision. By 1928,

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[46] 'Human Wales', *Western Mail,* 10/7/1907.
[47] See Chapter 2, pp.126-127.
[48] MT 9/3952, Seamen's Welfare: Report on Condition of life of coloured population in Stepney and comments on general conditions of seamen, white and coloured, 1944 p.24; CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.80.
[49] Jenkins, 'Inherent Vice?', pp.932-933.
[50] GA, DCONC/7/7, Premises in Cardiff in Respect of which the Chief Officer of Police for the City of Cardiff Makes Application to the Secretary of State for a Special Order under Section 10 of the Aliens Order, 1920, 23/9/1927; Four settled black seamen ran popular cafes in Butetown. These were: Arthur Cox, from Barbados, who ran 'The Electric Cafe' at 250 Bute Street. George Wilkie, from an unspecified island in the Caribbean, ran the 'Cafe De Paris' at 236 Bute Street. Eddie Gomez, also from the Caribbean, who ran the 'Casa Blanca Cafe' at 174 Bute Street. Finally, Charles Downs from West Africa who ran 1 Bute Lane.

Jemmott who had run a Caribbean boarding house and refreshment shop in 1921 at 49 Bute Street had given up his licence and converted his business to a cafe.[51]

Overall, the rise of cafe culture and a shift to their use as a social space highlight the changes in social dynamics taking place within areas of black settlement. Cafes fulfilled the needs of a more settled population, who in absence of other amenities in the area sought out a drop-in space, as opposed to the seamen's boarding house that offered more extensive and multifaceted support tailored to the needs of more transient seamen. Moreover, it can be argued that although cafes provided competition to the boarding house as a social space, these businesses were not a direct cause of the decline of the seamen's boarding house. Instead, cafes were in fact beginning to fill a gap in the market left by their decline in numbers and the shift in the requirements of a more settled community.

Perhaps the most significant threat to the seamen's boarding house trade in the 1930s was the increase in unlicensed competition in the market. Unlicensed boarding houses operated under what the authorities termed the 'furnished room' or 'apartment' system. This method allowed for households to skirt the byelaws and board seamen without a licence. The Chief Constable in Cardiff observed that many former seamen's boarding houses in the Butetown area were now operating in this fashion.[52] Richardson explained in his report how this system worked:

> It is all too easy for those who for any reason are not eligible for licences to let rooms for seamen to live in [...] All that is necessary for the householder who is forbidden a licence to do, is to let an unfurnished room to whom he likes, and the person becomes his "sub-tenant" and not his lodger. This gives rise to the very common practice whereby the would-be occupant of a room simply purchases the few articles of furniture in a room to satisfy Police or Sanitary Authorities that he did in fact take an unfurnished room, and thereby become a sub-tenant. Often this "purchase" of furniture is never troubled about, and a fictitious receipt for a sum of money paid for furniture is all that is required to place the Authorities in a helpless position and the law in defeat.[53]

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[51] GA, DCONC/7/7, To the Chief Constable, Re. Refreshment Houses and Cafes, Butetown area, 30/1/1928.
[52] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff, 8/1/1929, pp.4-5.
[53] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.7.

One of the main objections to the 'furnished room' system from the authorities was that they believed it was merely a covert method of running a brothel.[54] Whilst, undoubtedly, some properties did indeed take advantage of the grey area surrounding this system to operate brothels, more complex reasons could explain why others chose to operate an unlicensed business in this manner. Since the introduction of byelaws as part of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894, prospective keepers had to undergo a character reference by the police attesting to their suitability and good character to operate a seamen's boarding house. They were also susceptible to random spot checks throughout the day and night that were carried out by the police and local health committee in order to ensure that keepers were running their business in accordance with the byelaws. This breach of the seamen's boarding house's space had always been unpopular with keepers. The 'furnished room' system provided those struggling to maintain a commercially viable trade in the difficult economic climate of the 1930s with an alternative. By giving up their licence it offered a certain flexibility and allowed them to continue boarding seamen unconstrained by the strict licensing laws and thus minimised interference from the authorities. Additionally, for those unable to afford a licence, or as Richardson explained, those who may have, for a variety of reasons, failed to pass the stringent characters tests, it also offered the opportunity to skirt the byelaws and rent rooms to seamen and bring in extra income.

Furthermore, in 1935, in response to the struggling licensed trade Cardiff authorities suspended the granting of any new seamen's boarding house licences.[55] This decision would have had a significant impact on the growth of the unlicensed trade as this would have been the only avenue available to those who wished to board seamen from this moment onwards. 'Furnished rooms' were not unique to Cardiff but were prevalent in all port cities where byelaws remained in place.[56] The competition from unlicensed boarding houses placed added pressure on the already struggling licenced trade as they competed for the same, but greatly reduced, business. Furthermore, the growing number and influence of unlicensed boarding houses meant that transient seamen had more of a choice of where to stay and no longer needed to rely on established licensed seamen's boarding houses. As a consequence, the historic authority of the

[54] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff, 8/1/1929, pp.4-5.
[55] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Sergeant Davies to Deputy Chief Constable - Application for Boarding House Licences, 8/7/1935.
[56] BL, IOR/L/E/9/457, Promotion of Seamen's Welfare in Ports, November 1939, p.21.

licensed trade within areas of black settlement would have been severely impacted.

Inadequate housing more generally proved problematic for residents of areas of black settlement as they continued to be affected by economic depression. It is accepted across all three social surveys that the housing conditions of Britain's black population was particularly poor, with overcrowding viewed as a severe impediment to the social life and health of those living in dockside neighbourhoods. The shift towards a more settled presence exacerbated this overcrowding as demand for permanent homes increased and temporary accommodations such as the seamen's boarding house, that previously held a primary role in housing black seamen, became less relevant. Sharpe observed that in London and Cardiff some 43% of families were living in overcrowded conditions. To compound matters, many houses in these areas were in serious need of repair, while others lay low to the ground meaning damp was a serious problem for family homes.[57] Sharpe describes a typical housing situation:

> Five or six families may share a six-roomed house, with a common staircase, one lavatory in bad repair […] There is a joint kitchen which, of course, leads to difficulties […] Rooms are often small […] ventilation is rarely good, and sometimes the walls are verminous. When this is so, only the destruction of the house is sufficient.[58]

Indeed, some housing was so bad in Cardiff that between 1936-1938, many houses inhabited by black men and their families in Butetown were eventually condemned.[59] A further factor that intensified overcrowding and restricted spatial mobility were social restrictions that meant it was often difficult for mixed families with a West African or Caribbean head to move out of traditional areas of black settlement to other areas of port cities. Fletcher observed that in Liverpool that mixed families were not welcomed, and in some cases had been actively hindered, in their attempts to move to other areas of the city, whereas in traditional areas of black settlement in the south end of the city they were generally more accepted.[60] As Figure 6 highlights, Cardiff's large black and mixed-heritage population had perhaps the lowest spatial mobility of all three cities. The traditional area of black settlement around Loudoun Square was one of the smallest

[57] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.45-47.
[58] *ibid,* p.46.
[59] Neil Evans, 'Regulating the Reserve Army: Arabs, Blacks and the Local State in Cardiff, 1919–45', in *Race and Labour in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. Kenneth Lunn (London: Frank Cass, 1985), p.97.
[60] LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, p.20.

and most physically confined and, compounded by a lack of income, the size and concentration of the population in this area would account for the acuteness of the overcrowding among the city's black population.

Unemployment, Social Welfare and The Seamen's Boarding House

To compound the difficulties faced by areas of black settlement and the seamen's boarding house in the 1930s was the problem of long-term and widespread unemployment among Caribbean and West African seamen that would prove endemic throughout the decade. The symbiotic relationship between the seaman and the boarding house remained paramount as the fortunes of the former continued to dictate the success of the latter. By the 1930s, the interwar economic depression that had begun in the 1920s was reaching its zenith, the primary consequence of which was high levels of unemployment. Between January 1931 and December of that year, unemployment in Britain nearly doubled from 1.5 million to 2.7 million.[61] The poor economic climate greatly impacted British shipping. By the time of the Fletcher Report in 1930, the slump in British shipping had led to more than 20,000 seamen out of work, and drove severe competition for what little work remained.[62] Tramp shipping, the backbone of the mercantile marine, and the primary source of employment for seamen in Cardiff declined by two-thirds between 1914–1938.[63] Innovation on British ships further exacerbated the employment situation as the interwar years saw more and more companies adopting newer ships fitted with diesel engines as opposed to traditional coal-fired ones. Oil-fired ships were popular with shipping companies as they required smaller crews in the engine room and were therefore cheaper to run.[64] With the majority of Caribbean and West African seamen in all three cities continuing to rely on employment in engine room positions, they were disproportionately affected. As will be explored below, attempts to alleviate the difficulties faced by British shipping and seamen through legislation by the state and measures taken by the seamen's union would have a profound negative effect on both black seamen and the seamen's boarding house.

[61] Stephanie Ward, 'The Impact of the Interwar Depression on the Working Class', in *20th Century Britain Economic, Cultural and Social Change*, ed. by Francesca Carnevali, Nicole Robertson, John Singleton, and Avram Taylor (London: Routledge, 2022), p.274.
[62] Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2022), p.293.
[63] Julian Greaves, 'Managing Decline: The Political Economy of British Shipping in the 1930s', *Journal of Transport History*, 28 (2007), p.60.
[64] S.G Sturmey, *British Shipping and World Competition* (St. John's: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2010), pp.69-71.

At the local level, the National Unions of Seamen undertook the first of the most notable interventions in August 1930. The Union introduced a rota system as a solution to the severe unemployment affecting tramp shipping ports in Britain. Agreed with the shipping federation, the rota was initially aimed at Arab and Somali seamen and forced those who were unemployed to be registered and issued with a numbered pink card. When a ship required a crew, priority would be given to men with the lowest number on the register. Their card also acted as another level of proof that they were legally in Britain.[65] While the focus was on Arab and Somali seamen, there were also calls to extend the rota system to West African and Caribbean seamen.[66] The rota was part of a campaign by the NUS to consolidate their control of the labour market that had begun with the introduction of the PC5 work ticket, and wrestle the final fragment of power from the seamen's boarding house keepers. While the union presented the introduction of the rota explicitly as a solution to stamp out the last vestiges of corrupt hiring practices, its implicit intention was to further their control of the labour market and inhibit non-white seamen from obtaining jobs and promote stricter enforcement of the 1925 Order. In their attempts to try and positively promote the rota system, the NUS framed it as a 'fair shake' for Arab seamen withheld from them by the corrupt boarding house keeper.[67]

Nevertheless, having previously denounced the boarding house keeper as a 'parasite', the NUS, understanding their power and influence, required boarding house keepers to promote and persuade their boarders to sign up to the new system. Highlighting that despite the reduction of their status and influence in the port economy, ultimately, even the NUS recognised the importance of the seamen's boarding house keeper as a conduit through which to reach and attempt to control migrant seamen. Despite this, the reliance on using the boarding house keeper to enforce the rota system was met with complete failure. Boarding house keepers in tramp shipping ports such as Cardiff recognising the effect that this new rota system would likely have had on their ability to operate their trade meant they resisted its introduction. Moreover, when the rota was finally introduced in Cardiff and the rest of South Wales, not a single Arab or Somali seaman or boarding house keeper was present at the meeting that passed the new measure.[68] However, boarding house keepers' resistance to the new rota system proved

[65] Evans, 'Regulating the Reserve Army', p.82.
[66] 'Coloured Seamen in Dock Fight', *Daily Herald,* 20/8/1930.
[67] Laura Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice', Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.106.
[68] David Byrne, 'The 1930 "Arab Riot" in South Shields: A Race Riot That Never Was', *Race & Class*, 18 (1977), p.270.

fruitless and its implementation still went ahead with significant impact to the trade. Sharpe observed that after its introduction, the rota system had all but robbed Cardiff's boarding house keepers of their power in the labour market. Even so, the rota system did not succeed in entirely ending the boarding house keeper's role in the employment of seamen. Despite their loss of status, power and influence in cities unaffected by the implementation of the new rota, such as London, the seamen's boarding house keeper continued to act as an unofficial employment agent for their boarders.[69]

On a national level, the enactment of The British Shipping (Assistance) Act in 1935 by the British government further impeded black and other non-white seamen's ability to find employment, thus, further undermining the seamen's boarding house trade. The government introduced the act with the aim of supporting and reviving the tramp shipping industry, and in isolation the new legislation was not problematic. However, combined with the spectre of The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order 1925, it had serious consequences for the employment prospects of West African and Caribbean seamen. Subsidies offered by the act were conditional on the understanding that they would go to ships that would prioritise British crews. While the act did not explicitly exclude non-white seamen from British ships, debates about it in parliament and its reporting in the press were often overtly racialised.[70] Cardiff, as a major hub for tramp shipping and home to a large and diverse non-white population, was one of the port cities most affected by the act's introduction. The lack of clarity around hiring requirements necessary to qualify for the subsidy proved problematic. A continued myopia surrounding West African and Caribbean seamen's status as British subjects on account of their ethnicity meant that as a result many ship owners who wished to avoid any doubt and to be seen in a more favourable light when applying for a subsidy chose to substitute their established black crews for white crews.[71] As a consequence, by 1936, out of a total of 690 unemployed firemen in Cardiff, 599 were non-white.[72]

Notably, a report conducted by the League of Coloured People in part in response to the negativity generated by the Richardson Report reveals how the persistent misapplication of the

[69] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA Sharpe, pp.29-30.
[70] David Featherstone, 'Maritime Labour, Transnational Political Trajectories and Decolonization from Below: The Opposition to the 1935 British Shipping Assistance Act', *Global Networks*, 19 (2019), p.540.
[71] *ibid,* p.549.
[72] Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), p.70.

1925 Order severely impacted the employability for black seamen after the introduction of The British Shipping (Assistance) Act in 1935. The report revealed that in the ten years since the introduction of the 1925 Order, authorities were still compelling West African and Caribbean men holding valid documentation as to their British status to register as aliens. This continued misregistration as aliens meant they were often precluded from employment on subsidised British ships. Evidence collected by the LCP found at least twelve clear cases where the 1925 Order had wrongfully dispossessed men of their nationality. After sending the information to the Home Office, seven had their British nationality restored while the remaining five remained under consideration.[73] C.R Philips, the secretary of the Cardiff branch of the LCP, explained in the local press that the process through which individual black seamen could challenge their registration as aliens and obtain identity cards took upwards of three months, during which time the men were unable to work.[74] The contesting of and continual need to prove their British status highlights the vulnerability and marginalisation of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain during this period and helps to explain why even those that did make it to Britain found it more difficult to lay down roots and settle compared to earlier migrants.

What is more, even Caribbean and West African seamen who could prove their status as British subjects faced further financial obstacles in their attempt to return to work. For example, if they found work on a ship, it was expected of men who were members of the National Union of Seamen to clear any arrears that may have accrued in their membership whilst out of work before they could sign on to a ship.[75] For seamen who had been unemployed for an extended period, this was often money that they did not have. Indeed, the challenging economic climate presented an opportunity for some to exploit the high demand for jobs on ships with unscrupulous characters accused of crimping desperate black seamen. Despite the pivotal role of boarding house keepers who continued to support unemployed black seamen, the long shadow of the crimp continued to hang over them and as a consequence they found themselves accused of taking the lead in this exploitation. However, reports from Cardiff suggested that these 'independent agents', as they were termed, were usually senior crewmen whose duty it was to engage men, with some demanding between £1 and £3 from men in order to secure a

[73] 'Cardiff Report - General Survey', *The Keys,* Vol 3 No 2 October–December, 1935, pp.16-18.
[74] 'Coloured Seamen', *Western Mail*, 24/4/1935.
[75] Bodleian Library, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 23 / H1 / 22, Mr J.A.G Lawson, Missioner African and West Indian Mission, Liverpool, to John Harris, Anti-Slavery Society, 11/4/1935.

job on a ship.[76] Non-union members were particularly vulnerable to this practice, and in Liverpool, due to the Elder Dempster Agreement the majority of West African seamen in the city were not a member of any seamen's union. In the port, payments could be as high as £3 to £5 for those looking for a position of head fireman on a ship who in turn would then charge between 5 shillings and £1 to seamen depending on the shipboard role they hoped to obtain.[77] This type of exploitation of black labour had long been a problem in the city, with the National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union exposing and attempting to stamp out this practice in Liverpool in the early 1920s.[78]

Black seamen both long and short-term unemployed, found themselves in an almost impossible situation with many of the routes into work requiring considerable sums of money.[79] Seamen had always had to pay some sort of commission to access the labour market but this had historically been through the seamen's boarding house. These actions by the NUS and other actors within the port economy further highlight the decline of the seamen's boarding house and its keeper as they ceded further control as labour agents for Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain and failed to be the one to profit from their employment. This increased competition for control of the labour market and the valuable commissions that went with it would have had a severe impact on the boarding house's finances.

Unemployment in black areas of settlement was further compounded with alternative employment opportunities for Caribbean and West African men outside of seafaring being increasingly difficult to find. In both London and Cardiff, out-of-work seamen substituted their income where possible with unskilled labouring work. However, like with most casual work, it was rare for those who found jobs as dock labourers to obtain a full week's work. Sharpe highlights that employment problems faced by Caribbean and West African men were due to a lack of opportunity and variety in the work available rather than a lack of enterprise on their part.[80] Discrimination in the Liverpool labour market that the African Christian Association, in

[76] Bodleian Library, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 23 / H1 / 22, John Harris, Anti-slavery Society to Charles G. Ammon, 17/4/1935.
[77] Bodleian Library, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 23 / H1 / 22, Mr J.A.G Lawson, Missioner African and West Indian Mission, Liverpool, to John Harris, Anti-Slavery Society, 11/4/1935.
[78] TNA, CO 323/848, 'Enquiry Re. Coloured Employment, 1/12/1920.
[79] Tabili, '*We Ask for British Justice',* p.109.
[80] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.36-37.

1921, had maintained as being tantamount to an economic boycott of black workers in the city,[81] remained firmly entrenched. The Fletcher Report contacted nineteen firms in the city where West African and Caribbean men had traditionally found shore work, primarily in sugar refineries, oil-cake manufacturers and seed crushes. Of the seventeen that replied, thirteen did not employ black workers, while two had done so during the war but had since replaced them with white labour. Only two firms employed black workers, employing eleven men between them. This high level of discrimination within alternative labour markets compounded the bleak conditions for settled migrants and continued to leave Caribbean and West African men with little option but seafaring work.[82]

As explored above, the economic depression of the 1930s, further compounded by local and national state intervention saw many black seamen struggling to find and maintain employment. As a result of so many black seamen out of work and the ever-increasing competition and disruption to their trade the seamen's boarding houses troubles only worsened as the 1930s went on. By 1935, Cardiff authorities observed that the majority of the seventy-seven licensed boarding houses that catered to all nationalities and ethnicities in Butetown were struggling due to insufficient boarders to maintain their business.[83] The high unemployment among seamen in Cardiff had seen many shun the city in search of opportunities elsewhere. West African seamen, in particular, travelled to Liverpool in search of work on Elder Dempster ships, as well as other companies trading with West Africa. There had been a long history of internal migration between the two cities, and representatives of Elder Dempster explicitly cited the British Shipping (Assistance) Act 1935 as a driving force. However, the promise of work was not always realised, and Liverpool saw a 35% increase in West African seamen drawing unemployment relief in the city between August 1934 and August 1935.[84] In Cardiff, at least thirteen boarding house keepers were themselves in receipt of public assistance, while a further thirty-five had fallen into arrears with their rates. The authorities conducting the report observed that only four seamen's boarding houses in the city were full. These were all Arab boarding

[81] LRO 352 MAY/1/62, A Petition to the Lord Mayor of Liverpool from the African Christian Association, 17/8/1920.
[82] LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, p.14.
[83] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Detective Sergeant Davies to Deputy Chief Constable - Application for Boarding House Licences, 11/6/1935.
[84] TNA, MT 9/2735, Minutes of Meeting held at Home Office to Consider the Question of Termination Elder Dempster Agreement, 10/9/1935.

houses and were only at capacity due to shipping companies discharging Arab seamen from British ships in favour of proven British subjects due to the Shipping Act.[85]

Furthermore, most seamen's boarding houses were only at around 50% capacity and heavily in debt as keepers continued to support long-term unemployed seamen at significant cost to themselves. To compound matters, a habit had formed amongst some seamen who eventually found employment at sea, whereby, upon their return to port cities such as Cardiff, they would take up at a new boarding house without attempting to settle their previously accrued debts with their old keeper. As previously mentioned, to help support the struggling trade, and also in an attempt to halt the practice of seamen reneging on their debts, in 1935 Cardiff licensing authorities took the decision to suspend the issue of any new seamen's boarding house licences.[86] That many Caribbean and West African seamen no longer felt the need to maintain a relationship with their keeper, once key, speaks to the decline of not only the number but also to the changing dynamics and status of the seamen's boarding house within both the port economy and their migration network as the relationship became ever more transactional and based less on deeper relationships. The steady erosion of its power and status within the port economy, alongside the growth of an established and rooted black presence meant that new and returning migrants were no longer wholly reliant on its services.

In order to survive during extended periods of unemployment, black seamen had little option other than to rely on state-funded public assistance and unemployment benefits to support themselves and their families. A negative narrative had long surrounded Caribbean and West African seamen and unemployment relief in Britain. Even amongst those at the highest level within the Home Office, there were accusations levelled against black seamen that their singular ambition was to come to Britain not to work but to settle, find themselves a wife and thus qualify for unemployment benefits.[87] This view had become well entrenched by the 1930s, and the social surveys reflected as much. Richardson claimed that unemployment presented an opportunity for black seamen to remain 'on shore in idleness, but not in want. By marriage and with a family of children it is possible for them to live without work, and in receipt of more money

[85] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Detective Sergeant Davies to Deputy Chief Constable - Application for Boarding House Licences, 11/6/1935.
[86] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Detective Sergeant Davies to Deputy Chief Constable - Application for Boarding House Licences, 8/7/1935.
[87] TNA, HO 45/12314, E.N Copper to Home Office, 4/1/1926.

than if they go to sea.'[88] However, as Stephanie Ward has argued, many working-class men and women prided themselves on their ability to avoid public assistance, and even during the mass unemployment of the 1930s, viewed it as a last resort. To apply for public assistance suggested failure, destitution and an inability to support one's family.[89] Nonetheless, examples of black seamen choosing to remain on public assistance rather than work do exist but these need to be understood in the context of specific labour markets in a city. In Liverpool, three West African seamen were brought before the court accused of neglecting their families through their refusal to look for work. During the trial, the prosecutor argued that it was due to the scale of relief in the city being too high that the men refused to work. The three men had been long term unemployed and received more than 30 shillings a week from the Public Assistance Committee. They had been ordered to sign on to an Elder Dempster ship however they refused as they argued that the 22s 6d a week wages offered by Elder Dempster was simply not enough to support their families.[90] Furthermore, in Liverpool, West African seamen in the city continued to be paid at a lower rate than their peers in other cities due to the agreement negotiated between Elder Dempster and the government. At the time of the Fletcher Report in 1930, this remained £6 10s a month.[91] As a consequence, it can be argued, this illustrates that it was the depressed wages for West African seamen in Liverpool that were deterring some seamen from seeking work as opposed to abnormally high unemployment relief. Figure 7 provides examples of the amount of unemployment relief paid to unemployed men in Liverpool depending on family unit size. If these men were in receipt of over 30 shillings a month it would suggest that they had at least 3 children to support.

[88] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/03, 'Social Conditions', p.18.
[89] Stephanie Ward, *Unemployment and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.98-99.
[90] 'Better on Relief', *Liverpool Echo,* 13/10/1932.
[91] LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, pp.24-25.

Claimant	Amount per week (shillings)
18-Under 21	14/
21-Under 65	17/
Over 18 and over with one dependent (wife)	26/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 1 child	28/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 2 children	30/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 3 children	32/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 4 children	34/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 5 children	36/
18 and over with one dependent (wife) 6 children	38/

Figure 7: Rates of unemployment relief in Liverpool, 1930. (Source: F G. Hanham, *Report of Enquiry into Casual Labour in the Merseyside Area* (Liverpool: Henry Young and Sons Ltd, 1930), p.97.)

The argument that unemployment benefits were too high, affording black seamen and their families a high standard of living was unfounded. Social and economic support provided by the state and local authorities for unemployed families was already showing as woefully inadequate. As part of her social survey, Nancie Sharpe observed 66 families in London and Cardiff, noting both their income when in and out of employment, together with rent and insurance contributions and worked out the minimum financial needs of each family. Sharpe defined these minimum needs as:

> the weekly amount required, per person, to provide the bare minimum of food, light, cleaning materials and clothes […] it allows for no saving for emergencies of any description, no amusements, newspapers or tobacco and no holidays.[92]

For 73% of families, their unemployment income failed to meet these minimum needs and, in a further twelve cases, even their employment income proved to be insufficient.[93] Insufficient

[92] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.151-156.
[93] *ibid.*

income when employed was, in part, down to wage stagnation. In 1933, in London and Cardiff, where wages for black seamen were the same as for white seamen, Sharpe reported that the monthly wage remained £9.10s a month,[94] the same as a decade previously.[95] Fletcher similarly observed that it was low pay and the costs associated with maintaining a family meant that many families of West African seamen in Liverpool as in Cardiff fell below the poverty line even when the father was in work.[96] By 1935 wages had not only failed to improve in some cases such as in Liverpool they had in fact decreased further with the average pay now £6 2s 6d a month for a fireman and only £5 12s 6d for a trimmer. By this period, it was not only Elder Dempster paying such wages in Liverpool but all shipping companies that utilised West African labour.[97]

Furthermore, the rates at which local authorities paid unemployment relief reveal a stark inequality. Harold Moody of the League of Coloured People highlighted that benefits were means tested and, as such, Caribbean and West African men had been deemed to require less than white and, as a consequence, received less financial aid.[98] In November 1931, the British Government introduced a household mean test. The test required every unemployed person who had received twenty-six weeks of insured unemployment benefit to prove their need through a Public Assistance Committee administered means test. This new policy forced a two-tier system on black seamen and their families: one where claimants received flat-rate insurance benefits and one that received transitional means tested benefits. The means test took into account all resources available to the claimant, including earnings, pension, savings and investments as well as, controversially, the income of other household members. It was up to an investigator to decide whether the level of resources available were sufficient for a family and, if they deemed enough existed, transitional benefits could be reduced or even halted altogether.[99] As has previously been observed in this thesis, the shipping industry, and black seamen, in particular, throughout this period were beset by long-term unemployment and thus, under these new rules, would have likely meant they would fall under the means test. Poverty among black seamen and their families was further compounded as despite local authorities having deemed that they require less money than white working-class families in a similar

[94] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, p.57.
[95] Ronald Hope, *A New History of British Shipping* (London: John Murray, 1990), p.373.
[96] LRO, 352.26 FLE, Fletcher, pp.24-25.
[97] TNA, MT 9/2735, General Register & Record Office of Shipping and Seamen, 16/9/1935.
[98] 'Neglect of Coloured Community', *Western Mail,* 17/4/1934.
[99] Ward, *Unemployment and the State,* pp.66-68.

position to meet their subsistence needs, they were also often obliged to pay higher rents for housing than their white neighbours living in the same area across all three cities.[100]

These factors formed a 'poverty trap' for black seamen and their families further hampering their social status within British port cities. Similarly, for single, unemployed Caribbean and West African seamen the situation with state funded unemployment relief was just as poor and they received the bare minimum from the local Public Assistance Committee. For example, in Cardiff these men received 12s 3d a week and left to survive the best they could in the care of the seamen's boarding house.[101] Therefore, whilst the state did provide some financial support to unmarried, out of work seamen, this was far from adequate and as a consequence despite their own struggles and decline the seamen's boarding house and its keeper continued to play a significant role in the practical day to day support of these men as they had been doing since the 1920s.

The approach of the state towards unemployment relief and public assistance during the interwar years highlights a reconfiguration of British society as they made a more active attempt at providing social welfare to citizens. As Jeffrey Cox observed in the context of the decline of the influence of the Church within the social lives of average Britons, by the 1920s the philanthropic apparatus that institutions such as these had historically provided supporting local communities was in the process of being dismantled. This decline was a result of both state and local governments beginning to provide social services in a more systematic fashion themselves, and for many by the interwar years, it was now assumed that the state had responsibility for such services.[102]

While the seamen's boarding house never presented itself as a charitable or social welfare institution, its intimate, historic and intertwined relationship to Caribbean and West African seamen saw it steered into this role by local authorities struggling to deal with the level of poverty and unemployment among black seamen. The authorities had never officially recognised the seamen's boarding house for the social service that it provided to both transient and destitute non-white colonial seamen; however, they continued to rely on the trade to provide

[100] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe, pp.151-156; LRO, 309.1 UNI, 'The Economic Status of Coloured Families', pp.16-18.
[101] 'The Coloured Folk of Cardiff Dockland are Patient and Peaceful', *Western Mail,* 7/4/1936.
[102] Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.273-274.

support. For example, in Cardiff, local authorities called for more seamen's boarding houses to care for an increase in unemployed seamen as a result of a further economic downturn in 1938.[103]

Similarly, in Liverpool, the seamen's boarding house proved vital to local authorities in supporting an increase in destitute seamen in the city. The increased barriers put in place for West Africans to obtain valid documentation in the 1930s saw an increase in the number of stowaways arriving in Britain, in particular in Liverpool, from the region with no money and little prospect of finding work. Immigration authorities in Liverpool claimed that due to 'the depressed state of affairs in West Africa', these men, knowing no work would be available for them, were paying black crews of ships to smuggle them into Britain with the expressed intention of claiming unemployment relief from the Public Assistance Committee indefinitely upon arrival.[104] However, in reality, men were paying large sums of money to senior black crew members of British ships to be smuggled into the country on the promise of future employment; a promise those charging the sums often had no intention of keeping. One such stowaway, Charles Hanson, who had arrived from the Gold Coast on being uncovered, found himself held by the local immigration authorities. While they awaited a decision as to Hanson's fate the immigration officer, unsure of what to do with Hanson, placed him in the care of local Jamaican seamen's boarding house keeper Eustace A. Lynch, who ran a boarding house for Caribbean seamen at 16 Great George Square.[105] Local authorities called on the seamen's boarding house to provide a social service that they themselves appeared reluctant to provide. Lynch was a longstanding boarding house keeper in the Great George Square area of settlement, also active within the wider black population in the city and was a supporter of the African Churches Mission.[106] A Jamaican, Lynch, caring for West African, Hanson, highlights the continued extent of cooperation between Caribbeans and West Africans in Britain during this period and further highlights the level of solidarity amongst, and the shared support structures at the disposition of, all black residents of the city.

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[103] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Seamen's and Common Lodging Houses: Reports to Health Committee, with some Correspondence about Applications for Licences -1927–1956, Need for Additional Licensed Seamen's Boarding Houses, 11/12/1938.
[104] TNA, HO 144/22432, Home Office to L.N Ure, 3/3/1934.
[105] TNA, HO 144/22432, Charles Bannerman Hanson, West African Stowaway Landed at Liverpool, 25/1/1934.
[106] LRO, Acc: 4910, The African Churches Mission and Training Home - Subscription and Donations, 1943–1946.

Furthermore, although the seamen's boarding house had been in significant decline for over a decade, and despite the greater state support for black seamen and their families in extreme social deprivation, there was still a reliance on the social and economic services provided by the trade and its keeper. Whilst these services were greatly diminished this was the access to financial credit as well as the chance of employment being found. As Sharpe observed, many settled men hit hard by unemployment found themselves forced back into the care of the boarding house keeper.[107] However, as previously explored, the amount of financial support offered to both transient and settled seamen often proved inadequate not only for the men themselves but also the seamen's boarding house tasked with their care. This lack of sufficient income would continue to take a financial toll on the trade that facilitated a further decline in its status and influence further diminishing the services it could provide. The reliance of local authorities and the continued needs of black seamen, in the face of inadequate state support, reveals that whilst in a decline in role in and number the seamen's boarding house had not yet faded into complete insignificance within the social and economic life of areas of black settlement.

Additionally, the seamen's boarding house remained a crucial trade for an important demographic group within areas of black settlement; women. In the 1930s, the labour market was particularly hostile to young mixed-heritage women, and the chances of finding employment were bleak. Faced with the difficulty of finding work both in and outside of areas of black settlement for many women of mixed-heritage, particularly in Cardiff, often the only employment option available to them was the seamen's boarding house.[108] The seamen's boarding house had historically provided one of the few employment opportunities for women in sailortown, and it continued to do so in the interwar years. For example, in 1927, female boarding house keepers ran ten out of the fourteen remaining black seamen's boarding houses still operating in Cardiff.[109] However, the effect of the steady decline in the number of seamen's boarding houses on areas of black settlement throughout the interwar years due to the economic depression and decreased migration of West African and Caribbean seamen, had the repercussion of depriving a valuable source of employment for women that was not readily replaceable. By the mid-1930s

[107] CBHL, LC84:301.185 SHA, Sharpe p.88.
[108] LSE, WL, 3AMS/B/08/02, Problems Peculiar to the Bute Town Area or Shipping Quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff, 8/1/1929, p.7; 'Dock Area Problem - Employment Wanted for Half-Caste Girls', *Western Mail,* 20/2/1929.
[109] GA, DCONC/7/5/1, Seamen's and Common Lodging Houses: Reports to Health Committee, with some Correspondence about Applications for Licences, 1927–1956.

Sharpe observed in *The Keys* that there was so little work available for women in areas of black settlement that it was increasingly difficult to bring in auxiliary income to support the family, helping to push many near the poverty line.[110]

In 1939, there came a reprieve for the seamen's boarding house trade. With the outbreak of war there was a considerable rise in the number of British and other Allied seamen in British port cities. The return to a war economy had reversed its decline as the authorities identified a need for more seamen's boarding houses to accommodate this increase in seamen.[111] However, though the Second World War may have saved the seamen's boarding house trade from dying out entirely, its position within the port economy had irrevocably changed. For instance, in Liverpool, while some still operated as independent businesses, many boarding houses in the city were now contracted to individual shipping companies, supplying seamen directly to them. Of seven boarding houses in the Great George Square area of settlement, five operated under this arrangement.[112] The seamen's boarding house had once been one of the major pillars of the port economy, that controlled the supply of labour to the shipping companies, but it was now the shipping companies that controlled the supply of seamen to and from the boarding house. Rather than shipping companies relying on them, the reverse was now true: it was the boarding house that relied on the shipping company. This loss of independence of the seamen's boarding house within maritime quarters in British port cities quietly heralded the end of the dominance the trade once held within it.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored what role the seamen's boarding house continued to play within the areas of black settlement it had helped to establish in London, Liverpool and Cardiff. The seamen's boarding house faced many challenges to its trade in the 1930s and its decline together with changes in the social and economic dynamics and demographics of areas of black settlement in British port cities all saw its power and influence greatly diminished.

As a consequence of a persistently poor economic climate and continued political intervention in the 1930s, the number of transient seamen, as well as new settled migrants, from the

[110] 'Cardiff's Coloured Population', *The Keys,* Vol.1 No.3, January 1934.
[111] TNA, MT 9/4412, Licensing of Seamen's Lodging Houses. Surveys by the Seamens' Welfare Officers of Local Byelaws, 28/9/1942.
[112] *ibid.*

Caribbean and West Africa decreased considerably. Despite this reduction in migration, areas of black settlement that had been present since the late-nineteenth century rather than vanish continued to endure. These well-established black neighbourhoods came to be sustained by a more settled presence that included a growing mixed-heritage population. However, this shift in dynamics from a transient to more settled population saw a reduction in the demand for the services of the seamen's boarding house as well as a significant loss of income for keepers who remained in the trade. Furthermore, by the 1930s, the maritime quarters of British port cities had, after years of neglect and underinvestment as British shipping declined, had come to represent some of the poorest areas in Britain affecting both residents and the seamen's boarding house. Caribbean and West African migrants in Britain faced widespread discrimination in nearly all social and economic aspects of their lives. Housing was more expensive, unemployment relief was often lower, and they experienced discrimination as they attempted to find work outside of seafaring. The continued misapplication of 1925 Order and discriminatory hiring practices compounded by the British Shipping (Assistance) Act 1935 in Cardiff, while in Liverpool, the exploitative practices of West African shipping companies such as Elder Dempster compounded both poverty and unemployment of black seamen in Britain. The symbiotic relationship between Caribbean and West African seamen and the seamen's boarding house meant that the long-term and widespread unemployment and poverty among the former had a dire impact on the fortunes of the latter.

Lack of trade and poverty caused by economic depression saw the seamen's boarding house trade go into terminal decline in the 1930s. Once dominant in their control of the sailortown labour market, the decade also saw them lose the final fragments of their power and influence within the port economy. Their historic competitors, such as the shipping companies and seamen's unions consolidated their dominance within this space of the maritime quarter and relegated the boarding house to an ancillary position. The seamen's boarding house also faced increased pressure as it competed with the growing unlicensed trade for a piece of the shrinking market of transient seamen. Additionally, the encroachment of the sailortown cafe as a social space further undermined its role in the lives of Caribbean and West African seamen in Britain. That by the 1930s a significant number of transient black seamen no longer felt the need to maintain a strong relationship with boarding house keepers, a relationship once essential to the maintenance of both their social and economic life in Britain, speaks to this loss of power and influence amongst competition.

Nevertheless, despite personal economic struggles amidst this loss of prestige among those that remained, the seamen's boarding house had not fallen into complete irrelevance. While the state began to take a more active role in the support of unemployed seamen in Britain's port cities, this support proved far from adequate for the needs of Caribbean and West African men and their families in Britain. As a consequence, both the state and local authorities continued to rely on the seamen's boarding house to provide social welfare support to unemployed and destitute seamen in Britain. Additionally, the boarding house continued to provide vital employment for women in the maritime quarter whose opportunities were particularly limited. While no longer central to them, these responsibilities highlight that despite its decline and a loss of independence it is vital to acknowledge that the seamen's boarding house and its keeper continued to play a role in supporting and maintaining areas of black settlement as it had historically done during both their development and the early interwar years. However, seamen's boarding house, once a pillar of the old sailortown economy and the beating heart of areas of black settlement throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the eve of the Second World War, amidst their fading power and influence, few remained.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the vital role the seamen's boarding house played in the migration and settlement of seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain before the Second World War. It has traced the relationship the boarding house and its keeper had to both black seamen and the areas of black settlement it helped found. It has also considered its role within the broader space of the dockside neighbourhoods of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. Moreover, using the seamen's boarding house as a prism throughout this thesis has facilitated a qualitative approach to the understanding of migration and settlement growth whilst simultaneously providing insight into the complex demographics that defined areas of black settlement. This thesis offers a social history of the experiences of black migrants from the British Empire as they settled in Britain and navigated the politics and space of the port as they transitioned from colony to metropole and from transient to settled migrant.

This thesis contributes to and expands on several historical themes. Firstly, it extends our knowledge of black history in Britain before the Second World War. By bridging the gap from nascent settlements of a handful of Caribbean and West African migrants to established, vibrant neighbourhoods, it has illuminated a hitherto less explored area within the historiography of black Britain. Through investigation of black settlement growth, this thesis has identified the complexity of their development and maintenance as well as the challenges faced by these early migrants as they settled in Britain. Secondly, as a piece of social history, this approach has allowed for a better understanding of the lived experience of Caribbean and West African migrants and their families, not just during specific moments but over a broad period providing a more detailed historical account of how they navigated the maritime space of the port as well as British society. The use of three port cities has provided insight into the trends that dictated movement and settlement, both unique and shared, as well as highlighting how areas of black settlement developed throughout Britain and were woven intricately into the fabric of maritime quarters of port cities by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thirdly, this thesis contributes to the field of maritime history. The historiography of the seamen's boarding house has tended to remain focused on its heyday in the nineteenth century. By taking this essential maritime institution beyond this period and into the twentieth century, this study has allowed for a fuller understanding of its changing role within the port economy and the complex relationship it maintained with seafaring migrants over a broader period. Finally, this thesis has wider

ramifications within the development of the historiography of black British and black Atlantic history. While there was a coming together of Caribbean and West African seamen in British ports, through this exploration of their relationship to the seamen's boarding house, a local network embedded within the broader transnational networks of cultural exchange taking place across the black Atlantic, it has provided greater and more nuanced understanding of the contradictions present within these developing black solidarities beyond simply anti-racist or anti-imperial action. Rather than a focus purely on cooperation, the simultaneity it had with conflict proves just as important for the way we conceptualise the development of black social and political formations in both Britain and globally before the Second World War.

By the nineteenth century, the seamen's boarding house had developed as one of the central pillars of the port economy of British port cities, and it was through this position that it took a central role in the lives of transitory black seamen. The seamen's boarding house was a complex space and represented a unique and vital institution to the seaman in port. Primarily it provided a base in a foreign port, a home away from home for transient seamen where shared cultural and national affiliations helped them navigate the social space of sailortown. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly it also provided valuable access to the labour market. As a result, a strong relationship developed between the boarding house keeper and the seaman. This relationship was one defined by a balance of power and dependence that changed over time and in some instances left it open to abuse by both parties. Operating a seamen's boarding house was a precarious trade and a symbiotic relationship developed between its keeper and the seaman which saw the fortunes of the former dictated by the success of the latter. This shared prosperity is reflected in the ebb and flow of the trade highlighted most clearly when a turn against black labour in the 1880s saw a nascent growth of seamen's boarding houses for Caribbean and West African seamen stall and decline before a reinvigoration in the first decade of the twentieth century as British shipping began employing black seamen again in significant numbers.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the other major actors in the port economy, primarily the shipping companies, local and state authorities and, subsequently, the seamen's unions, came to dislike the power and influence that the seamen's boarding house held over the seaman whilst on land. As a consequence, as the century progressed the trade came under increased scrutiny from the authorities as they sought to stamp out illegal practices within the sailortown labour market. The 'crimp' became the primary antagonist of sailortown and the authorities and

press viewed the seamen's boarding house as the principal perpetrator engaged in systemic abuse and manipulation of the labour market and the seaman himself. In portraying the trade as a whole as crimps, the authorities and contemporary observers undermined the boarding house's important role within the port economy. This thesis aligns with Graeme Milne's argument that while nefarious characters operated within the trade, the image of the crimp was a convenient bogeyman to help deflect from wider structural issues within the shipping industry, such as the shipping companies' own exploitation of seamen and poor working conditions.[1] As a result of the crimping system and the fear of the economic threat exploitative practices in the labour market could have on the shipping industry, the authorities sought to curtail the boarding house keepers influence and regulate the trade through a series of byelaws. Whilst initially resistant to this intrusion by the state, eventually, the pervasive negative attitude and the precarious nature of the trade hampered attempts of boarding house keepers to organise themselves sufficiently to influence and block the new legislation effectively. Once the boarding house and its practices came under the microscope of the authorities, its power and influence within the labour market began to wane. Even so, despite these challenges the seamen's boarding house continued to sit at the centre of the seamen's time on land. Importantly, it remained vital in supporting migrant black seamen when they arrived in Britain as it continued to provide a range of essential social and economic services into the twentieth century.

This thesis has identified that the seamen's boarding house trade had historically been a trade operated by migrants. This included both immigrants from around the world as well as a significant number of internal migrants from other parts of Britain, as part of a wider movement of people to industrial areas during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is through national, cultural and ethnic affiliations that the seamen's boarding house became a vital part of the migration network for Caribbean and West African seamen. For early migrants to Britain, it also provided a valuable employment option for seamen looking to settle in Britain and facilitated the transition from transient to settled migrants. Moreover, it was these early migrants, such as Abraham Lawrence in Liverpool and Emmanuel Phenis and John Joseph Pervoe in Cardiff, who established seamen's boarding houses that would come to form the core of early black settlement in these cities. Consequently, the seamen's boarding house provided a mechanism for social mobility for these men, as the working-class seaman transitioned to business ownership. This thesis has utilised the seamen's boarding house to explore the

[1] Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront : Sailortown* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.11.

migration and settlement of black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa, however, this same methodology could be expanded to investigate the migration and settlement of other national or ethnic groups of seafaring migrants to contribute further to our understanding of both ethnic and cultural diversity in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the presence of seamen's boarding houses in maritime quarters across the globe also indicates that further research could also include a transnational approach; for example, this approach could provide further understanding of the migration and settlement of black seamen in the German port city of Hamburg.

Through the prism of the seamen's boarding house, this thesis has added to our knowledge and understanding of the growth and development of areas of black settlement in Liverpool and Cardiff, and in this way contributes to the historiography of early black Britons. The steady increase in boarding houses for Caribbean and West African seamen from the late nineteenth century reflected the increasing number of black seamen in these British ports. Earlier historiography has long acknowledged and agreed that the First World War played an important and decisive role in the expansion of the black presence in Britain.[2] Data on black seamen's boarding houses uncovered in the recently released 1921 census revealed a detailed insight into this explosion in population growth, with their numbers more than doubling between 1911 and 1921. However, in Liverpool, the 1921 census used in conjunction with additional source material generated as a result of the 1919 ethnic riots reveals a more complex picture. While the number of black seamen's boarding houses had increased during the decade between the two censuses, by 1921 the trade had, in fact, already begun to decline. The poor economic climate for British shipping that followed the war, matched with an increasing social and political hostility towards black seamen, made metropolitan British ports a less attractive destination for transient black seamen. Although some settled seamen and their families, due to poverty, continued to rely on the boarding house, the reduction in transient seamen made it challenging to sustain the large trade that had developed between 1914 and 1918. The focus on larger, post-war populations places an inaccurate emphasis on black seamen arriving in Britain in significant numbers merely as a result of the war. This view conceals that areas of black settlement in Britain had seen steady growth and development since 1891 as British shipping companies turned to cheaper black labour from Britain's colonies and that by 1911 the demographics and

[2] Neil Evans, 'The South Wales Race Riots of 1919', *Llafur*, 3 (1980), p.7; Ian Law and June Henfrey, *A History of Race and Racism in Liverpool 1660–1950* (Liverpool: Merseyside Community Relations Council, 1981), pp.29-30.

social structures that defined post war settlements were already firmly established. By broadening the period of research and drawing a line connecting pre and post war areas of black settlement, this thesis emphasises that new, wartime migrants were moving into already vibrant and well-established neighbourhoods.

The comparative approach taken in Chapter Two of the port cities of Liverpool and Cardiff has allowed this thesis to examine the similarities and differences that dictated the migration of Caribbean and West African seamen and how areas of black settlement developed in specific ways to each city. The trade specific to each port played a significant factor in the demographics of migrant seamen. Liverpool's dominance of the West African trade saw seamen from the area, in particular Sierra Leone come to dominate the city's presence. In Cardiff, the less fixed trade routes of tramp shipping attracted job-seeking seamen from other British cities and as a result saw the city develop a more diverse black presence. Additionally, geography also played a crucial role in dictating the development of areas of black settlement. The rigid physical boundaries of Butetown in Cardiff saw black settlement firmly contained and developed in one central area around Loudoun Square. However, in Liverpool, the more fluid boundaries of its dockside neighbourhoods initially saw two main areas of black settlement develop: the first around Great George Square and the second south of Parliament Street. By the interwar years, while the city's black residents remained concentrated in these traditional areas, unrestricted by the geography of the port, they began to branch out from these traditional areas, and new pockets of settlement began to develop around seamen's boarding houses in other areas within the south end of the city. However, despite these differences, areas of black settlement in Cardiff and Liverpool throughout this period developed at the same rate and remained of a similar size.

Importantly, the seamen's boarding house formed the core of areas of black settlement and acted as an anchor around which a more settled presence could establish itself. The seamen's boarding house keepers themselves, such as John Joseph Pervoe in Cardiff and Eustace Lynch in Liverpool, even began to act in the capacity of proto-community leaders for black working-class residents in these areas. As some of the earliest settlers and due to their elevated social position, they facilitated and supported new arrivals and took on a prominent role within the social life of areas of black settlement. While London could not be used in a direct comparison with Liverpool and Cardiff owing to its size complicating data collection, this thesis acknowledged and highlighted some similar patterns of settlement that developed around a core

of seamen's boarding houses in Canning Town, an area that would become the focus of the black presence in the city in 1920s and 1930s. However, further work on London is required to develop our understanding of its areas of black settlement to a similar level of Liverpool and Cardiff.

The identification of a prevalence of mixed seamen's boarding houses has raised questions as to the relationship and social dynamics between Caribbean and West African seamen as well as other ethnic groups within the multiethnic space of port cities as they migrated and settled. Often portrayed as at odds or ill-disposed to one another, the fact that these two groups of migrant seamen can be seen regularly boarding together throughout the decades, as well as keepers from the Caribbean running boarding houses for West African seamen and vice versa suggest that this relationship was more complex than previously thought and that it was defined as much by cooperation as conflict. These social dynamics are further complicated by other ethnic groups also residing in predominantly black seamen's boarding houses, in particular Arab seamen in Cardiff. Relationships between black and Arab seamen had historically been fraught as they competed for work in the engine rooms of British ships. Black seamen had picketed against them, and the two groups of seamen had even come to blows during the First World War.[3] That these men boarded together, whether out of choice or necessity, speaks to the complexity of relationships within areas of black settlement and that conflict and cooperation amongst ethnic groups were by no means mutually exclusive. This thesis aligns itself with the arguments of Laura Tabili and more recently Brad Beaven. Both historians contend that although conflict existed, migrant seafaring ethnic groups and the incumbent population that had made these maritime spaces their home, not only tolerated each other but that they encountered a mutual cultural accommodation that allowed for significant integration into these working-class communities.[4] Furthermore, this thesis has argued that rather than periods of conflict, such as the 1919 ethnic riots, acting as the main driving force behind cooperation among Caribbean and West African seamen, this process was more gradual and sustained, facilitated by the important social space of the seamen's boarding house.

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[3] GA, DCONC/1/1/5, Reports of the Chief Constable to the Watch Committee, 'Riot at Butetown', 13/8/1916.

[4] Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.236; Brad Beaven, 'Foreign Sailors and Working Class Communities: Race, Crime and Moral Panics in London's Sailortown 1880–1914', in *Migrants and the Making of the Urban-Maritime World : Agency and Mobility in Port Cities, c. 1570–1940*, ed. by Christina Reimann and Martin Öhman (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp.87.

The interplay between Caribbean and West African seamen in port cities also raises questions as to the nature of their relationships and whether it can be argued that these early migrants came together and formed a black British community in early twentieth century Britain. The complex relationship between Caribbean and West African seamen and other ethnic groups, as well as the importance of white women and those of mixed-heritage would suggest not. Black seamen's social and economic lives were intrinsically linked with the lives of other ethnic groups, and areas of black settlement were never segregated but fully embedded within the multiethnic space of sailortown. Similarly, the central role of white women, to the sustenance and growth of areas of black settlement both professionally as seamen's boarding house keepers as well as personally within family units meant it was always a mixed community. As a consequence, early black migrants from the Caribbean and West Africa were forerunners but did not necessarily present a throughline to post-Second World War black communities from the Commonwealth. Rather than forming a community based on colour, black seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa were part of something unique, a multiethnic seafaring community distinctive to port cities.

The thesis has also acknowledged women's integral role within the migration network of black seamen and areas of black settlement. Scholars such as Laura Tabili, have strongly argued women's importance to migrant seamen both personally and professionally.[5] As wives and partners, women were essential to the migration of black seamen as they helped them to establish domicile and lay down roots in Britain. However, by placing the seamen's boarding house at the centre of the narrative, this study has further emphasised their importance in a professional capacity. Female keepers ran some of the earliest recorded boarding houses for black seamen and many more would go on to be linked to the trade either directly or indirectly through their Caribbean or West African husbands. As the twentieth century progressed and in particular during the First World War women began to take a leading role in the trade. So much so that by 1921, it was likely that for seamen from the Caribbean or West Africa, on their arrival in Britain, their first contact was a woman rather than a compatriot. This role made women vital agents within black seamen's migration network. Their prominence as keepers meant that with the decline of the trade in the 1920s and 1930s, a profession that granted a certain amount of agency and independence for women within the male-dominated port economy was lost.

[5] Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841–1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.10.

Furthermore, as Chapter Three has explored, following the First World War the seamen's boarding house proved fundamental to protecting and maintaining areas of black settlement in Britain as both came under immense pressure socially, economically and politically. The prominence of the black seamen's boarding house had seen them targeted and attacked by white rioters during the ethnic riots of 1919 as they identified non-white seamen as scapegoats for the discontent they felt as a result of the poor economic climate that followed the war. The seamen's boarding house initially acted as a shelter from the violence for black seamen. However, both rioters and police breached the perimeter of this important space and either looted or destroyed black property. As a result, one Caribbean seamen, Charles Wootten, lost his life. While many seamen's boarding houses managed to weather these attacks, the authorities soon identified them as a vehicle through which they could control and monitor Caribbean and West African seamen in order to effect their removal from Britain through repatriation. However, it would be the boarding house itself that played an integral role in resisting repatriation and the ultimate failure of the policy.

The symbiotic relationship that had developed between the seamen's boarding house and black seamen would turn out to be key in resisting government repatriation efforts of black seamen following the First World War. As chronic unemployment among black seamen in port cities throughout Britain remained rife, it had fallen to the seamen's boarding house keeper to support these men, often at great expense to themselves. Although there was some acknowledgement from local authorities of this valuable social service the seamen's boarding house provided, they offered limited support. As a consequence of keeping so many unemployed men for extended periods many struggled financially, while others closed down completely. While cultural and ethnic solidarity played a part, particularly among West African seamen who had a culture of supporting fellow compatriots in need, the reasons behind seamen's boarding houses resisting repatriation were not always altruistic. As the struggling trade sought to protect their investments, it was through resistance to the state and retaining seamen in Britain in the hope of finding them work that keepers stood the best chance of recouping some of their losses and maintaining their trade. Regardless of their reasons, the seamen's boarding houses and their keepers played a crucial role in preventing the wholesale removal of black seamen from Britain through repatriation and, as this thesis contends, were integral to maintaining areas of black settlement in the early interwar period.

After the failure of repatriation, the introduction of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925 would profoundly affect the migration and settlement of seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa. The recodification and shifting lines of who was and was not considered a British subject highlight a point at which the Caribbean and West African migrant experiences began to diverge. The authorities did not challenge Caribbean seamen's British identity in the same way they did West African, and many could still access identification documentation to facilitate their migration and settlement in Britain. However, they denied these same considerations to West African seamen and their British status was challenged and contested. Even those who had settled and started families, as the case of John Zarliah highlighted, found their position in Britain more tenuous. A primary reason for this divergence was the actions of private companies such as Elder Dempster, who influenced the British government to restrict documentation for West African seamen as they looked to control their workforce and maximise profit. This interference on the part of Elder Dempster speaks to the entangled role British shipping played in the migration and settlement of seafaring migrants. Unable to prove their British status, many West African seamen were refused a right to remain legally theirs and deported. However, some still managed to leverage their knowledge of intra-imperial bureaucracy to usurp restrictions and settle in Britain. However, these numbers were significantly reduced compared to a decade earlier. While the introduction of legislation such as the 1925 Order had a profound effect on migration and settlement, in practice a more effective deterrent proved the lack of job opportunities and discrimination within the labour market that saw Caribbean and West African seamen exercise a level of agency and avoid the metropole leading to the stagnation of settlement growth. Furthermore, the 1925 Order further impacted the already struggling seamen's boarding house trade as the decrease in transient black seamen in British port cities negatively affected their ability to operate a commercially viable business. State interference in black seamen's lives through repatriation and legislation throughout the interwar years highlights that areas of black settlement, although well-established, remained fragile.

The interwar years not only represented a decline for the seamen's boarding house in terms of physical numbers but also represented a further decline in their power and influence as a stakeholder in the port economy. The rise of the NSFU, later the NUS, had a profound effect on the trade. Through the introduction of measures such as the PC5 work ticket and the rota system in tramp shipping in ports such as Cardiff, the union was successful in wresting almost total control from the seamen's boarding house the historic dominance they held over the

seaman's entry into the labour market. However, despite its immediate post-war struggles and decline, the seamen's boarding house remained a valuable space utilised by black seamen as they sought to assert themselves both socially and politically in Britain and pushed back against discrimination. For example, the founding of the National African Sailors' and Firemens' Union, the first black-led trade union in Britain in a West African seamen's boarding house at 2 Newton Street in Liverpool, was an important moment. Well-established seamen's boarding houses, such as 2 Newton Street, provided a grounding for black seamen in Britain. The central role both the boarding house space and its keeper, Mary Mcwatt, played in the foundation of the union speaks to the importance of those relationships that had been allowed to develop over time. In this instance, the seamen's boarding house was a space that empowered West African seamen in the city and allowed for a growing political consciousness to flourish in Britain.

The 1930s presented a change in the social dynamics within areas of black settlement as they came to be defined by a less transient and more settled presence. A persistently poor economic climate and decades of neglect meant that the old sailortown districts in which areas of black settlement had formed in Britain now presented some of the poorest areas not just in the port cities of London, Liverpool and Cardiff but Britain more broadly. Unemployment, compounded by discrimination, was endemic among black seamen in Britain. Consequently, there continued to be a decline in the number of new migrants both transient and settled from the Caribbean and West Africa settling in British ports.

As a consequence, the decade saw the seamen's boarding house go into significant decline in terms of both number and in its power and influence within the port economy. From their heyday during the First World War, by 1939 few black seamen's boarding houses remained. In the harsh economic climate and the changing social circumstances of the 1930s within areas of black settlement, seamen's boarding house keepers struggled to maintain a financially viable trade. Competition from unlicensed 'furnished rooms' operations impacted their market share as they competed for the reduced number of transient seamen in the port. The growth of the cafe trade likewise weakened the ancillary trade they had historically operated as refreshment houses and as the primary social spaces for black seamen. Also, having lost their control of entry into the labour market and as their position became more diminished, competing players with the port economy overtook them as them as the main power brokers in the maritime labour market. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the change in social dynamics within areas of

black settlement meant that the more settled population and the growing number of Britons of mixed-heritage no longer relied on the temporary accommodation that it provided.

From its position as one of the main pillars of the port economy, by the eve of the Second World War the seamen's boarding house had all but been relegated to a minor role. Many of those that survived did so at the loss of their independence, attached directly to shipping companies and reliant on them to provide seamen. Rather than controlling the supply of seamen to the shipping industry as they had historically done, the power dynamic had now reversed. However, despite its decline, the seamen's boarding house did not fade into complete irrelevance within areas of black settlement. As state and local authorities failed to provide adequate social and financial relief to unemployed and destitute black seamen, they turned to the boarding house to fill the gap and provide critical social welfare support. While its fortunes and positions within the social and economic landscape of port cities had greatly diminished, the seamen's boarding house still had some role to play in supporting and maintaining both black seamen and areas of black settlement in Britain.

The prominence and subsequent decline of the seamen's boarding house throughout the period of this study can be viewed as representative of the decline of the broader space of sailortowns themselves. This decline in the second half of the twentieth century would ultimately go onto further impact on the growth and development of these traditional areas of black settlement. After the Second World War new migrants from the Commonwealth tended to avoid established areas of black settlement in port cities. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, as Neil Evans has discussed in regards to Cardiff specifically, post-war migrants were not readily welcomed into Butetown by the resident population in the years following the Second World War who saw them as competition for jobs in the area. And while a minority did choose to make the city their home, these newer migrants settled outside of the traditional areas of black settlement and moved into areas such as Grangetown forming new communities away from the old sailortown neighbourhoods.[6] Similar to Cardiff, the resident population of London likewise expressed resentment towards newcomers arriving in established areas of black settlement.[7] Secondly a further decline in British shipping made port cities a less attractive destination. For

[6] Neil Evans, 'Immigrants and Minorities in Wales, 1840–1990: A Comparative Perspective', in *A Tolerant Nation?: Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, ed. by Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans, and Paul O'Leary (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), p.40.
[7] Michael Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Cape, 1955), p.18

example, in Liverpool, high levels of unemployment after the war saw new migrants encouraged to move on from the city to other industrial centres in Britain.[8] Those that did remain and joined established black residents saw the changing nature of work as well as limited housing options gradually moved them out of the traditional areas of black settlement near the waterfront in the 1940s and 1950s towards more central areas in the South End.[9] The relationship between pre and post-Second World War migrants from the Caribbean and West Africa is worthy of further academic study. Some discussion has begun, most notably in Liverpool by Raymond Costello.[10] A thorough understanding of the interplay and interaction between these groups, in particular in major contact spaces such as London, Liverpool, and Cardiff, will continue to challenge the 'Windrush myth' and help deepen our understanding of the rich and complex history of black Britons.

Ultimately, this thesis has argued that the seamen's boarding house played an integral role in the social and economic lives of early migrants from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain. It was a key piece of their migration network and vital to their settlement in Britain from the late nineteenth century. As a transitional space, all migrant seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa would have, at some point, passed through the space of the boarding house. This thesis acknowledges that the seamen's boarding house did not operate in isolation, and myriad social, economic and political factors affected the migration and settlement of seamen from the Caribbean and West Africa in Britain. However, the seamen's boarding house not only provided a base for black seamen but also played a pivotal role in anchoring areas of black settlement in London, Liverpool and Cardiff. Without this crucial institution, the position of black seamen in Britain would have been more tenuous and the establishment of areas of black settlement less assured, fundamentally changing the social landscape of British port cities and affecting ethnic diversity in Britain before the Second World War.

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[8] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in Twentieth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), pp.122-123.
[9] Diane Frost, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp.191-192.
[10] Raymond Costello, 'The Making of a Liverpool Community: An Elusive Narrative', in *Britain's Black Past*, ed. by Gretchen Gerzina (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp.114-118.

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